

EUROPEAN
ISLAMOPHOBIA
REPORT
2020

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)



EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT

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Islamophobia Research &
Documentation Project



ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES CENTER
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For more information about the EIR:

www.islamophobiareport.com

FOREWORD

We are pleased to present to you the sixth consecutive edition of the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) covering the year 2020. For this edition, 37 colleagues from the academic world and civil society have contributed to the coverage of 31 European countries. As in the past years, we have highlighted the developments of Islamophobia in key fields such as employment, education, media including the internet, the legal system, and politics. As usual, the authors of this year's country reports have provided their valuable country-specific policy recommendations to counter this phenomenon and a detailed chronology of events. The EIR continues to provide policymakers, scholars, community leaders, and ordinary readers a unique collection of European-wide analyses of anti-Muslim racism in Europe.

We are pleased to continue this project with new cooperation partners. First and foremost, we are happy to have the support of the International Islamophobia Studies and Research Association (IISRA) based in Berkeley, California. The IISRA is the first academic institution of its kind, bringing together numerous academic institutions and scholars who have been working on Islamophobia around the globe for more than a decade. We would also like to thank the Othering & Belonging Institute at the University of California, Berkeley, Rutgers University's Center for Security, Race and Rights, the Berkeley-based International Islamophobia Studies Center, the Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project (IRDP) at the Center for Race and Gender (CRG) at the University of California, Berkeley, the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED) Studies program at San Francisco State University, and last but not least, the Vienna-based Leopold Weiss Institute. We feel that this academic framework is an ideal fit for the work that we have accomplished with the EIR in the last years.

Looking back at the last six years, many observers will unanimously agree that the state of Islamophobia in Europe not only has not improved, but has worsened, if not reached a tipping point. This is also one of the reasons why we chose the image of a politician for the front cover of this year's edition - a politician who is widely regarded as representing a centrist and mainstream political movement. This very fact serves as a further revelation that the center has become more extreme in relation to Islamophobia. French and Austrian Muslims have been left in the hands of brutal state violence that has been legitimized in the name of counterterrorism laws. The closure of the French monitoring body Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France (CCIF, Collective Against Islamophobia in France) is an example of how far state Islamophobia has developed.

These new developments warrant making the daily reality of Islamophobia visible with a greater urgency than ever before, and urge us not to be silent in the face of the increasing pressure on the human rights of Muslims in Europe and beyond.

Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez
The Editors

THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE IN 2020

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

The year 2020 was shaped globally by the COVID-19 pandemic which also spread widely in Europe. As of mid-March, and again in mid-October, the WHO considered Europe the pandemic's most active center.¹ The pandemic had quite different effects on the role of Islamophobia. On the one hand, in some countries, with the forced retreat of everyday life to the intimate private sphere, physical Islamophobia has decreased. Yet, at the same time, Islamophobia has moved to the private sphere and is being spread especially in social media. A report by the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group in the UK and several authors in our report suggest this.² Especially with the outbreak of the pandemic in Europe, the world watched how images of Islam and Muslims were linked to the pandemic - be it in mainstream magazines like *The Economist*, where articles were quickly taken down, or the *New York Times*.³

Authors of *EIR 2020* report that with the numerous lockdowns imposed by authorities and the shutting down of daily life as people knew it before the outbreak of the pandemic, 2020 saw a decrease in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attacks. Conversely, other authors report that the anti-Muslim hate crimes did not decrease as documentation in some countries reveals. According to the author of the German report, Soner Tauscher, 901 Islamophobic crimes were committed across Germany in 2020, 146 of which targeted mosques and 48 of which targeted people. At the same time, anti-Muslim social movements organized their rallies in spite of the pandemic.

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1. Cameron Jenkins, "WHO: Europe Again 'the Epicenter' of Coronavirus Pandemic with 10 Million Cases," *New York Post*, 29 October 2020, <https://nypost.com/2020/03/13/who-says-europe-is-new-epicenter-of-coronavirus-pandemic/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).
 2. Imran Awan and Roxana Khan-Williams, *Coronavirus, Fear and How Islamophobia Spreads on Social Media, Research Briefing Report 2020*, Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/Islamophobia-AntiMuslim/Civil%20Society%20or%20Individuals/ProfAwan-1.pdf, (Access date: 15 July 2021).
 3. "Scooping Low: World Media Uses the Coronavirus to Fuel Islamophobic Tropes.," TRT World, 26 March 2020, www.trtworld.com/magazine/scooping-low-world-media-uses-the-coronavirus-to-fuel-islamophobic-tropes-34884, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

PEGIDA held at least 16 rallies in 2020 next to several other protests by other local initiatives. Other authors show that the pandemic has drowned out public debate on prejudice, social divisions, and hate crime.



Figure 1: Screenshot of *New York Times* story which shows Taksim Mosque under construction in Istanbul under the article title “Trump Suspends Travel from Europe for 30 Days.”⁴



Figure 2: Screenshot of CNN International story, which shows the interior of a historical mosque in Istanbul while discussing the global spread of the pandemic.⁵

4. Elmira Bayrasli @endeavoringE, Twitter, 12 March 2020 https://twitter.com/endeavoringE/status/1237923121690226693?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1237923121690226693%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.trtworld.com%2Fmagazine%2Fscoping-low-world-media-uses-the-coronavirus-to-fuel-islamophobic-tropes-34884, (Access date: 15 July 2021).
5. Akin Unver @AkinUnver, Twitter, 12 March 2020 <https://twitter.com/AkinUnver/status/1238077235858456580/photo/1>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

This short glimpse into Islamophobia in 2020 reveals the ongoing necessity for reporting Islamophobia. The *EIR 2020* includes a general assessment of Islamophobia in Europe in 2020 and 31 country reports that include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Montenegro. The *EIR 2020* has brought together 36 scholars, experts, and civil society activists from various European countries who are specialized on racism and Islamophobia studies. They cover various issues from media, politics, and the justice system to the Internet, and offer concrete policy recommendations for civil society and politics. As our audience grows to include practitioners, scholars, and the general public, our website has acquired a global audience, and the *EIR* and its findings have been cited frequently by international organizations, politicians, NGOs, scholars, and local and international media outlets. Indeed, the findings of the *EIR* have been cited more than 250 times in academic articles or books. Since 2016, the *EIR* is also a regional contributor to the Annual Hate Crime DATA by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which monitors and report hate crimes in the OSCE region.

The year 2020 was an eventful year for Islamophobic developments, even setting the global spread of COVID-19 aside. The cover of this year's report shows French President Emmanuel Macron, who have severely cracked down on Muslim civil society and anti-racist activists and scholars in France. With the "Law Confirming the Principles of the Republic" (originally entitled "Law against Separatism"), the Macron government further institutionalized Islamophobia and adopted an authoritarian style. France witnessed an increasing number of police searches, threats of eviction, as well as mosques and school closures, including the dissolution of a humanitarian NGO and a human rights organization defending Muslims in France against racism and discrimination. All together these threatened the fundamental freedoms of Muslims, in specific, and more broadly reveal a shift towards a restriction of citizens' rights and freedoms. France has arrived at a state where the French interior minister Gérald Darmanin even singled out the long-time Islamophobic far-right party leader Marine Le Pen for "being too soft on Islam."⁶ Similarly, in Austria a raid against proponents of alleged "political Islam" was made one week after the murderous attack on November 2 in Vienna. The home of several civil society activists were also raided and their bank accounts and assets were frozen on the suspicion of being terrorists that want to topple the Egyptian regime, destroy Israel, and create a worldwide caliphate.⁷ The raid was based on a report written by Lorenzo Vidino that argues that

6. Yasser Louati, "From Left to Right: The Islamophobia Consensus in France," 16 February 2021, www.yasserlouati.medium.com/from-left-to-right-the-islamophobia-consensus-in-france-d41a75508d75, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

7. Farid Hafez, "Austria Raids: How I Was Turned into a 'Terrorist' Overnight," Middle East Eye, 31 March 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/austria-raids-islamophobia-how-i-was-turned-terrorist-overnight>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

Islamophobia is a combat term used by political Islamists “to foster a siege mentality within local Muslim communities, arguing that the government and Western societies are hostile to them and Islam in general.”⁸ Hafez had already criticized this report as a method used in a systematic way to “produce knowledge to define vocal and representative actors of the Muslim civil society as potentially radical and Islamist, which then should lead to state and civil society exclusion.”⁹

What Is Islamophobia?

There are numerous definitions of Islamophobia which are influenced by different theoretical approaches such as racism and prejudice studies or decolonial perspectives.¹⁰ As we have outlined already in the first edition of the EIR in 2015, we use a working definition of Islamophobia that theorizes Islamophobia as anti-Muslim racism. “When talking about Islamophobia, we mean anti-Muslim racism. [...] Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilizing and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of a constructed ‘we’. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static ‘Muslim’ identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalized for all Muslims. At the same time, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary in different contexts, because Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about the Muslims/Islam.”¹¹ With this working definition, we focus on the power structures and with it the marginalization and injustices stemming from power structures. When we record and write about Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism in this report, it is to problematize exclusionary and dehumanizing structures that are manifested in the ways we conceive the world and the place of Muslims and Islam therein today, as well as acts that represent this exclusion and dehumanization. Problematizing Islamophobia is not always a clear-cut mechanism – it demands special attention to the power structures that are at play. It is therefore irrelevant if the person that reproduces Islamophobic structures, is himself or herself Muslim or not. As much as racism is not only about intentional racist attitudes, but maintaining, defending, and stabilizing the privileges and power structures of a society structured by a racist epistemic, this also holds true for anti-Muslim racism. Hence, we do not see Islamophobia as the exclusive problem of Muslims, but rather as a problem of the structural and

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8. Lorenzo Vidino, “The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria,” 2017, Program on Extremism/George Washington University.
 9. Farid Hafez, “Muslim Civil Society under Attack: The European Foundation for Democracy’s Role in Defaming and Delegitimizing Muslim Civil Society,” in: John L. Esposito and Derya Iner (eds) *Islamophobia and Radicalization: Breeding Intolerance and Radicalization*, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
 10. Farid Hafez, “Schools of Thought in Islamophobia Studies: Prejudice, Racism, and Decoloniality”, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 4, 2 (2018), pp. 210-225.
 11. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, “Introduction”, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, eds. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2016), pp. 5-8.

systemic racism that characterizes a whole society. Islamophobia not only directly devalues the lives of otherized people, but questions the humanity of a society that pretends to stand for the equality of all humans.

Combating Islamophobia at European and International Institutions

Combating Islamophobia at a national level is vital but not enough. The struggle at the European and international level is equally significant. Last year, a number of EU and international institutions published reports and organized events that dealt directly or indirectly with the increasing Islamophobia in Europe and beyond. In this section we would like to draw attention to the findings of these reports and activities.

European Commission (EC)

On May 29, the coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred of the European Union organized a virtual roundtable event. The meeting was attended by the representatives of 25 civil society organizations both Brussels-based (e.g., ENAR, Open Society Foundations) and country-based (Spain, Austria, Greece, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, UK, Croatia); and representatives of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).¹² Jelena Jovanovic, coordinator of the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) in the European Parliament (EP), stressed the importance of finding ways in which the EP and other organizations can work together to combat Islamophobia.

In June, the European Commission released "Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online: 5th Evaluation of the Code of Conduct," which revealed the diverse grounds for online hate speech. In accordance with the data, 9.4 percent of the hate speech online stemmed from anti-Muslim hatred.¹³

On June 17, the European Commission released the "Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025" that was produced as a result of discussions between the European Commission, the European Parliament, and civil society organizations working against racism. The action plan is seen as an important milestone in the EU's work against racism and racial discrimination since it recognizes anti-Muslim hatred as a form of racism.¹⁴

12. "Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred, Activities and Events", European Commission, <https://ec.europa.eu/news-room/just/items/50085>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

13. "Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online: 5th Evaluation of the Code of Conduct", European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/codeofconduct_2020_factsheet_12.pdf, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

14. "E-005017/2020", European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-005017-ASW_EN.pdf, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

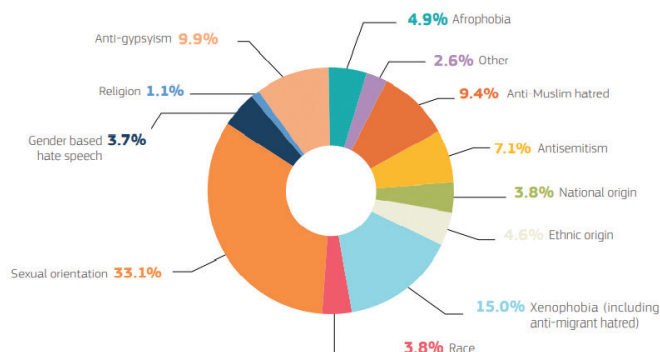


Figure 3: Online Hate Speech in Europe

On June 18, the coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred chaired a virtual conference on “Fighting Discrimination on Grounds of Religion and Ethnicity: Vulnerabilities of Muslim Communities and the Effects of the Coronavirus Crisis” in cooperation with the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European network of Equality Bodies, EQUINET.¹⁵

On November 20, the coordinator co-organized and moderated a working group on “Protecting Vulnerable Groups. A Focus on the Dimensions of Education, Youth and Communication in the Fight against Discriminations towards Muslims at the Local Level” as part of the “CommunicAction” General Conference of the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism. The working group featured good practices by a variety of cities in Europe. A key recommendation that emerged from the discussion was the proposal to establish a permanent working group within the network in order to institute a regular exchange of initiatives on fostering inclusion of Muslim communities at the city level.¹⁶

European Parliament (EP)

On the European Action Day Against Islamophobia, the EP Intergroup on Anti-Racism and Diversity (ARDI) and the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) hosted an event. Michael O’Flaherty, the director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, gave a keynote speech. The speakers included Helena Dalli, European commissioner for equality; Evin Incir, MEP and co-president of ARDI; Samira Rafaela, MEP and co-president of ARDI; and Hande Taner the head of campaigns at the FEMYSO.¹⁷ In the opening speeches,

15. “Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred, Activities and Events”, European Commission, <https://ec.europa.eu/news-room/just/items/50085>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

16. Ibid.

17. “Tackling Gendered Islamophobia in Europe”, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/event/2020/tackling-gendered-islamophobia-europe>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

MEPs shared their concerns over the rise of Islamophobia and hate crimes against Muslim women in Europe. They committed to continue working to tackle this dangerous development. Helena Dalli also introduced the newly released “EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025” and explained the EU Commission’s plans for its implementation.

In his op-ed for Euractiv, Magid Magid, former British MEP, argued that Europe has an Islamophobia problem perpetuated by a poorly regulated media and sustained by agenda-driven think tanks. He debated that Muslims have been selectively scapegoated for the ills of society, and relentless suspicion has been unfairly and unjustly cast their way for merely existing.¹⁸

EU Agency For Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Survey data released by the FRA in June 2020 shows that 22 percent of the general population in the EU would not feel comfortable having a Muslim as a neighbor; 31 percent would not feel comfortable with a member of their family marrying a Muslim; and 21 percent feel that it would be acceptable not to hire a Muslim woman because she wears a headscarf.¹⁹

On December 19, the FRA took part in a Brussels seminar on a working definition of anti-Muslim hatred/Islamophobia. The meeting was organized by the European Commission coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred. The FRA spoke about the update of its anti-Muslim hatred database. It also covered the agency’s work on hate crime reporting, related technical assistance building on best practices, and consultation with public authorities and civil society organizations.²⁰

Court of Justice of the European Union

On December 17, the Court of Justice of the EU ruled that member countries may ban the practice of ritual slaughter in order to promote animal welfare, without infringing the rights of religious groups.²¹ In Belgium, the Muslim and Jewish communities which make up approximately 6 percent of the population argue that the decision prohibiting animals from being slaughtered without being shocked and put to sleep restricts their religious freedoms and is disrespectful.

18. Magid Magid, “Europe Has an Islamophobia Problem. Who’s Going to Stop It?”, Euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/freedom-of-thought/opinion/europe-has-an-islamophobia-problem-whos-going-to-stop-it/>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

19. “Fighting Discrimination on Grounds of Religion and Ethnicity”, FRA, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/speech/2020/fighting-discrimination-grounds-religion-and-ethnicity>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

20. “Towards a Working Definition of Islamophobia”, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2020/towards-working-definition-islamophobia>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

21. “Judgment in Case C-336/19”, Court of Justice of the European Union, <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2020-12/cp200163en.pdf>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

Council of Europe (CE)

In a welcoming development, the European Council created a new position to tackle growing Islamophobia in Europe. On October 7, 2020, the Council of Europe's Director of Communications Daniel Hölting was appointed to the new position of "Special Representative on Antisemitic and Anti-Muslim Hatred and Hate Crimes." In his statement with regards to this appointment, the secretary general of the CE stated,

On Friday it will be one year since the deadly antisemitic attack at a Synagogue in Halle, Germany, on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. In February this year, a far-right extremist killed 10 people, several of them with a Muslim background, in Hanau. These are no longer isolated events. We are witnessing an alarming increase in antisemitic and anti-Muslim attacks in many parts of Europe today, often incited and aggravated by hate speech online.

Like Judaism, Islam is part of today's Europe. Jews and Muslims should not live in fear of hatred against individuals and their communities. The fight against antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred and hate crimes is a pan-European task. My Special Representative will work to join forces at the European level and ensure the collective expertise of the Council of Europe is put to full use in our common effort to prevent antisemitic and anti-Muslim acts.²²

On the European Action Day Against Islamophobia (September 21, 2020), the Advisory Council on Youth, an initiative launched by the Council of Europe, reiterated the importance of fighting against all forms of racism. The council commemorated and remembered all victims of Islamophobia, including the Srebrenica Genocide, the murder of believers in the Christchurch Mosque attack, and the Hanau attack. The council also recognized the suffering caused by daily physical and verbal Islamophobic harassment, and the continuous institutionalization of Islamophobia through new legislation and policies.²³

European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

The ECRI, the Council of Europe's independent expert body against racism and intolerance, published its annual report for the year 2019 on February 27, 2020. The Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić declared that "Europe is facing a shocking reality: anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and other racist hate crimes are increasing at an alarming rate, the most recent example being the extremist shooting in Hanau, Germany, in which 9 people were killed and several wounded. Such hei-

22. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/secretary-general-appoints-special-representative-on-antisemitic-and-anti-muslim-hatred-and-hate-crimes>, (Access date: 30 May 2021)

23. "European Action Day against Islamophobia", Council of Europe, <https://rm.coe.int/european-action-day-against-islamophobia/16809f9fbf>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

nous acts are often precipitated by poisonous words and conspiracy theories spread on social media and the internet.”²⁴

On March 17, the ECRI published a report titled “ECRI Report on Germany,” in which it argues that public discourse has become increasingly xenophobic and notes high levels of Islamophobia.²⁵

United Nations

The UN did not publish a direct report on Islamophobia in 2020. However, there are important findings about the situation of Muslims in the reports published on the state of human rights around the world in 2020. According to the report²⁶ published by the UN Human Rights Council in 2020, hate speech towards Muslims is increasing, especially on social media. It is stated in the report that Muslim and Jewish communities in European countries, especially in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Greece, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Georgia, are exposed to hate speech more and more every day. The report finds that social media platforms such as Facebook are a key tool for the circulation of “real and constructed hatred towards religious minorities,” especially in India and Myanmar.

The report also highlights the Islamophobic attitudes towards the headscarf, emphasizing that “this situation constitutes discrimination especially in the field of education.” It has been pointed out that prohibiting the wearing of certain types of religious attire in public places, particularly in Western Europe, jeopardizes access to education for women who choose to wear a headscarf/veil because of their religious, cultural, or personal identity or belief. In this context, the UN Human Rights Committee emphasized that such prohibitions could somehow prevent students from continuing their education and create a kind of “intersectional discrimination” against Muslim women who choose to cover their hair or face.

In 2020, the UN Human Rights Council published another report titled “Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination in the Name of Religion or Belief.”²⁷ The report remarks on important findings on the violence and discrimination experienced

24. “Ultra-Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, Anti-Muslim Hatred: Anti-Racism Commission Raises Alarm over Situation in Europe”, Council of Europe, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/ultra-nationalism-anti-semitism-anti-muslim-hatred-anti-racism-commission-raises-alarm-over-situation-in-europe>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

25. “ECRI Report on Germany”, ECRI and Council of Europe, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-germany-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4be>, (Access date: 30 May 2021).

26. “A_75_385” 75th Session of the General Assembly, “Safeguarding Freedom of Religion or Belief for the Successful Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomreligion/pages/annual.aspx>, (Access date: 25 July 2021).

27. “A/HRC/43/48”, To the 43rd Session of Human Rights Council on 2 and 3 March 2020, “Report on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Gender Equality”, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/ReportGenderEquality.aspx>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

by Muslim women. According to the report, women and girls from religious minority communities living in South and Southeast Asia are often at a “special risk of violence,” including violence associated with “forced religious conversion” and “forced marriage.” Along with the violence, it was underlined that the “fight against extremism” measures taken by the governments made minority Muslim women the “target of rape”, “forced sterilization”, and “forced abortion”.

In the report titled “Countering Islamophobia/Anti-Muslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief”²⁸ published by the UN Human Rights Council at the beginning of 2021, the restrictive aspect of increasing Islamophobia in terms of freedom of religion and belief was emphasized and highlighted.

This report shows that despite their widespread effects, Islamophobia and hatred against Muslims are still not fully understood and discussions on “how to deal with their effects are often full of tensions.” In specific, four policy recommendations come to the fore in the report’s findings regarding increasing global Islamophobia: (i) the need to “unpack the concept of Islamophobia, including the processes of essentialization and racialization that propel this form of bias”; (ii) the need to “document the experiences of affected communities and the human rights impacts”; (iii) the imperative to “affirm the relevant international human rights framework”; and last but not least (iv) the proposal of “recommendations to address and mitigate the impacts of Islamophobia consistent with international law.”

OSCE

In the guide titled “Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes: Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities,”²⁹ published in May 2020, the OSCE focused on what can be done about those responsible for addressing hate crimes against Muslims and the security needs of Muslim communities. The guide drew attention to the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of Islamophobia. It was emphasized that Islamophobia can cause Muslim individuals’ a variety of fears the increasing security needs of Muslim communities were highlighted.

It is underlined that increasing Islamophobic attacks may create fear of “attending prayer ceremonies”, “entering mosques”, or “wearing distinctive religious clothing or symbols”. This situation negatively affects the rights of individuals and communities to express their religion or beliefs. It has been emphasized that not being easily

28. “A/HRC/46/30”, To the 46th Session of Human Rights Council on 4 & 5 March 2021, “Countering Islamophobia/Anti-Muslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief”, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomreligion/pages/annual.aspx>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

29. “Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes: Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities,” Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), <https://www.osce.org/files/f/ documents/9/0/448696.pdf>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

identified as a Muslim and not being able to express one's religious identity can lead to exclusion from the public sphere. What is more, such psychological, emotional, and physical effects and fears can cause young children to grow up with a sense of fear and vulnerability.

The report also stated that increasing hostility towards Muslims increases the fears of Muslim communities in the OSCE region. The report points out that the fear of Muslim institutions such as mosques and community centers being targeted by anti-Muslim groups, and the need for security for these institutions are increasing day by day. It has been emphasized that the need to increase security measures will impose a new financial burden on these institutions, and may adversely affect their religious, cultural, and educational activities.

The report, which also includes the findings of the latest research conducted during the year on Islamophobia, revealed the current perception of Muslims in many European countries. For example, in nine of the ten European countries surveyed, it was revealed that “at least 50 percent of the respondents believe that Muslims do not want to integrate” into European society. This view was most prevalent in countries such as Greece (78 percent), Hungary (76 percent), Spain (68 percent), Italy (61 percent), and Germany (61 percent).

In this context, the report calls on the OSCE states to “recognize, record, and report” hate crimes against Muslims. It also draws attention to the threats of hate crimes to the security and social cohesion of individuals, as well as their potential to lead to conflict and violence.

The report ends by listing a series of measures for governments to solve the problem of anti-Muslim hatred. In this context, a series of suggestions were put forward such as “acknowledging the problem”, “risk assessment and prevention of attacks”, “building trust”, “recognizing and recording the problem”, “providing evidence of security needs”, and “supporting research by civil society and academics”.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation published its 13th report on Islamophobia in November 2020.³⁰ In the report, the developments between March 2019 and October 2020 were examined. The report stated that anti-Muslim rhetoric has become the main theme of the campaigns of the far right.

Given incidents such as the burning of mosques, provocative statements on social media, mail threats, burning and disrespecting the Qur'an, physical attacks, verbal abuse, etc., it was emphasized that the United States and Europe continue to be

30. “Thirteenth OIC Report on Islamophobia”, https://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=182&p_ref=61&lan=en, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

the main hotspots of Islamophobia. In addition, the report also underlined that Islamophobia is increasing in non-Western countries and regions such as Kashmir and Rohingya. For this reason, the report added that “apart from Western countries, countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and China should be followed closely in terms of Islamophobia.”

The report emphasized that negative narratives and hate speech on social media, often holding Muslim minorities responsible for spreading COVID-19, increased significantly in some countries. It is even claimed that certain Islamophobic leaders are using COVID-19 as a tool for their anti-Muslim agenda. Since the face veil ban was questioned during the pandemic, when people were obliged to wear masks, the report highlights that there are indications that “some countries may revise their ban policy in the foreseeable future.”

The report also underlines that there were positive developments in 2020 regarding the fight against Islamophobia. In this context, developments such as the initiation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech,³¹ the encouragement of the full implementation of the OHCHR’s UN Resolution 16/18, and the EU’s new initiative of “Combating Racism and Xenophobia” were emphasized.³²

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation also published the “Islamophobia Monitoring” report in December 2020.³³ The report included important Islamophobic incidents that took place throughout the year. It included many cases from France such as the raid on 76 mosques on charges of discrimination/separatism, the dissolution of the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) due to political pressure, the controversial separatism law, and the conviction of far-right activists because of an investigation by Al Jazeera. In addition to these, the attacks on mosques in Germany and the Netherlands and the cancellation of a British journalist’s book contract due to the Islamophobic tweets were included.

Hate crime

As a consequence of the spread of anti-Muslim attitudes, data on hate crime only confirms the rise of anti-Muslim attitudes in many European countries. The overwhelming majority of European states do not record Islamophobic incidents as a separate category of hate crime. In most countries, anti-Muslim hate crime is simply not documented. In the OSCE region, 15 states claim to report anti-Muslim hate crimes,

31. “United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech”, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/hate-speech-strategy.shtml>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

32. “EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025”, European Commission, 17 June 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

33. OIC, Islamophobia Monitoring, https://www.oicoci.org/upload/islamophobia/2020/MB_December_2020.pdf, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

while in 29 states, NGOs also prepare reports.³⁴ Many countries like Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Kosovo, Malta, Russia, and Serbia do not record hate crimes at all. And some countries like Finland, Greece, and Italy do not specify anti-Muslim hate crimes. For the states that document (anti-Muslim) hate crimes, often, the data published by the state and NGOs are far apart.

The recording of anti-Muslim hate crimes by the authorities as a separate category of hate crime is essential to uncovering the real extent of Islamophobia and developing counterstrategies to combat it. At the same time, as the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has revealed in a report, we have to be aware that it is only a small minority of Muslims (about 12 percent) who have reported cases of discrimination.³⁵ Given the wide discrepancy between the documented numbers of anti-Muslim hate crimes, it is impossible to compare the data. Police authorities in Germany, for instance, have documented 31,472 cases of hate crimes including 901 anti-Muslim hate crimes, while France has only recorded a total of 1,142 hate crimes including 235 anti-Muslim hate crimes. Rather than suggesting that more hate crimes against Muslims occur in Germany than in France, one can suggest questioning how seriously the French authorities document hate crimes in general or how reluctant French Muslims are to report such crimes to the authorities.

Media

The media alongside politics are the most influential spaces where Islamophobia can be either challenged or disseminated and further strengthened. While in some countries, the media challenge power structures to some extent, in most countries, the media are very much connected to power structures and represent different camps along ideological lines or corporation.

As already mentioned above, on the one hand, the media identified the COVID-19 pandemic with Muslims in an unusual way, while on the other, overall, the pandemic led to less reporting on Islam and Muslims. Still, several media outlets reproduced certain images when reporting on racism. Obviously, the tabloid press often plays a problematic role. The German tabloid *Bild-Live* reported on the racist militant attack in Hanau, speculating that the deeds took place in a "criminal milieu,"³⁶ portraying the shisha bar owner as a criminal who was involved in the shooting for protection money or supremacy. The British *Daily Mail* covered the Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha with a

34. OSCE ODIHR, "Bias against Muslims," OSCE, <https://hatecrime.osce.org/what-hate-crime/bias-against-muslims>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

35. "Press Release: Muslims in the EU: High Levels of Trust Despite Pervasive Discrimination", FRA, 21 September 2017, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2017/muslims-eu-high-levels-trust-despite-pervasive-discrimination>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

36. BILD Blog, Twitter, 20 February 2020, <https://twitter.com/i/status/1230494839034318848>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

picture of a site covered in blood. The Irish *The Liberal* covered Eid al-Adha similarly, saying that “the pitch of Ireland’s largest stadium will soon be saturated in the blood of terrified animals slaughtered with knives and blades,”³⁷ relating it to the “blood of Irish civilians gunned down by British forces during the War for Independence.”³⁸

In Bosnia, the newspaper *Danas* covered the racist statement of Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik calling for the “sterilization” of territories from immigrants.³⁹ As the author of the Greek report shows, the sports newspaper *Sportime* even framed a story as “Greece...Europe...Islamization!” In Montenegro, news outlets like <http://www.ins4.net> and www.borba.me/ spread the idea that Bosnians and Kosovars wanted to create a caliphate, denying the genocide in Srebrenica and asserting that “Bosniaks provoked Srebrenica.” News reporting showing Muslim women as faceless persons, covered, and not participating in society is still often published. The Swiss news outlet *Blick* covered a youth camp by a Turkish Muslim association as an “Islamist camp,” giving voice to people who call it “a poison for pupils’ integration in Switzerland.”⁴⁰ The murder of French teacher Samuel Paty gained a lot of attention. Journalists of the Slovenian Nova24 gave space to people like Gregor Preac, a traveler, who argued that 90 percent of Muslims support the beheading of a French teacher and “20,000 Islamic terrorist attacks” happen every year.⁴¹ The Romanian newspaper *EVZ* published a piece with the title “France Puts on the Turban: Macron’s Republic is Undergoing Islamization Rapidly,” thus reaffirming anti-Muslim conspiracy theories.

Online Islamophobia

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the anti-Muslim incidents reported to monitoring bodies, were online. Since private life shifted largely into the digital realm, the Internet and social media became the primary space for interpersonal relationships. Social media and especially Facebook have become a hotspot for the documentation of anti-Muslim hate crime, as the author of the Danish report Amani Hassani reveals.⁴²

37. “The Alliance of Former Muslims Ireland has hit out at the GAA allowing Croke Park to be used for Eid Al Adha festivities”, *The Liberal*, 15 July 2020, <https://theliberal.ie/the-alliance-of-former-muslims-ireland-has-hit-out-at-the-gaa-allowing-croke-park-to-be-used-for-eid-al-adha-festivities/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

38. Ibid.

39. “Dodik: Područje RS „sterilisati od migranata”, *Danas*, 21 June 2020, <https://www.danas.rs/svet/dodik-podrucje-rs-sterilisati-od-migranata/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

40. “Erdogan-Camp: Türkei indoktriniert Schweizer Schüler”, *Blick*, 5 January 2020, <https://www.blick.ch/schweiz/kinder-im-islamisten-camp-tuerkei-indoktriniert-schweizer-schueler-id15689311.html>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

41. “Poznavalec islama o trenutni situaciji v Evropi: Islam se ne more civilizirati, integrirati, asimilirati in je skupen anarholevičarstvu!”, *Nova 24 Tv*, 3 November 2020, <https://nova24tv.si/slovenija/poznavalec-islama-o-trenutni-situaciji-v-evropi-islam-se-ne-more-civilizirati-integrirati-asimilirati-in-je-skupen-anarholevicarstvu/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

42. National Police, October 2020, <https://politi.dk/-/media/mediefiler/landsdaekkende-dokumenter/statistikker/hadforbrydelse/hadforbrydelse-2019.pdf?la=da&hash=86E26E960D6896CD33EBBB8ECE8487499BF986D3>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

The authors of the Hungary report, Nadia Jones-Gailani and Gabi Göbl, reveal that far-right anti-Muslim social movements like the Generation Identity have tried to mobilize especially online.⁴³ The authors of this year's report have documented several tendencies that could be observed in 2020. Aristotle Kallis has shown in his report on the UK that during the first wave and the lockdown, "all sorts of conspiracy theories originated and gained traction - and predictably anti-Chinese, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic content topped the depressing online misinformation charts."⁴⁴ Regarding Sweden, Masoud Kamali,⁴⁵ the author of the country report, argues that fake news and accusations against Muslims and people of color are disseminated – also with the help of robots – by websites that are "in near cooperation with leading figures in the Anti-Muslim and racist party," the Sweden Democrats (SD). Akvilė Kriščiūnaitė argues in her report on Lithuania that while Islamophobia remains largely unaddressed in general, especially law-enforcement mechanisms do not effectively tackle anti-Muslim hate crime online.

Politics

Islamophobia has become quite mainstream in the political discourse of many European countries. As several studies reveal, especially the racist discourse of the far right, even if in opposition, has an impact on the overall debate about Islam and Muslims,⁴⁶ and continuously extends the boundaries of reasonable and acceptable speech. Far-right politicians, such as the member of the Swiss SVP Andreas Glarner,⁴⁷ claim to mobilize against an alleged "preference for Islam."⁴⁸ When the far right is in power, Islamophobia becomes legalized. In Staffanstorp and Skurup, two municipalities of Sweden, where the far-right Sweden Democrats are governing, the hijab was banned.⁴⁹ When a school principal resisted, he received death threats by anti-Muslim and racist groups.⁵⁰

43. Political Capital, "Egyszerűen senkik vagytok", Political Capital, 15 February 2019, https://politicalcapital.hu/konyvtar.php?article_read=1&article_id=2449, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

44. Giulia Dessi, "Religious Hatred during the COVID-19 Pandemic", Media Diversity, 7 April 2020, <https://www.media-diversity.org/in-search-of-a-scapegoat-religious-hatred-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

45. "Det här är rasistiska sajter som främjar näthat", *Nyheter 24*, Swedish Television, <https://nyheter24.se/nyheter/kronikor/783780-det-har-ar-rasistiska-sajter-som-framjar-hat>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

46. Biard, Benjamin, Laurent Bernhard, and Hans-Georg Betz, "Do They Make a Difference? The Policy Influence of Radical Right Populist Parties in Western Europe", ECPR Press, 2019.

47. Elia Blülle, Carlos Hanimann, "Bereit für das Bad in der Gülle", *Republik*, 21 January 2020, <https://www.republik.ch/2020/01/21/bereit-fuer-das-bad-in-der-guelle>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

48. Fabian Hägler, "Andreas Glarner: 'Weichspüler-Politiker haben uns keinen Erfolg gebracht'", *Aargauer Zeitung*, 16 January 2020, <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/aargau/kanton-aargau/andreas-glarner-weichspueler-politiker-haben-uns-keinen-erfolg-gebracht-136236178>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

49. "Skurup – Inför slöjförbud i skolan", *Sveriges Television*, 17 April 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/skanel/skurup-infor-slojforbud-i-skolan>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

50. "Rektor dödshotats efter slöjdebatt", *Lag&Avtal*, 20 February 2020, <https://www.lag-avtal.se/nyhetsarkiv/rektor-dodshotas-efter-slojdebatt-6988466>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

But it is not only the obvious and blatant Islamophobic speech by far-right politicians like the Austrian FPÖ chairman Norbert Hofer, who said during a party convention “Corona is not dangerous. The Koran is much more dangerous,”⁵¹ that exacerbates the public discourse on Islam and Muslims. It is also the - nominally speaking - mainstream politicians that have fully embraced an anti-Muslim agenda, although in a much more subtle way. Following a police raid on November 9, 2020 that targeted Muslim civil society and not alleged “terrorists,” Chancellor Sebastian Kurz stated, “We have to fight two challengers: First, the corona pandemic and second to fight even stronger against terrorism and radicalization in Austria and Europe.”⁵² Similarly, other governing parties that do not belong to the far-right political camp, are supporting an anti-Muslim discourse. An MP from the governing Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy) in Greece spoke about the niqab as “violating women’s rights,”⁵³ raising the question of regulating it by the state. Following a discussion on migration in Brussels with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Hungary’s prime minister Viktor Orbán stated publicly, “We don’t think a mixture of Muslim and Christian society could be a peaceful one and could provide security and a good life for people.”⁵⁴ Finnish Minister of the Interior (Greens) Maria Ohisalo pointed out, “Freedom of speech also comes with responsibility. Speech about immigration turns into hate speech when it is directed at individuals or certain groups in a derogatory way.”⁵⁵ This is what we are witnessing on a wide scale by several politicians in power.

Still, it is not a far-right government, but the Emmanuel Macron-led French government that concerned people around the world in 2020. France has become the most worrisome example of state Islamophobia. Following the murder of Samuel Paty, politicians such as Minister of the Interior Gerald Darmanin (who is portrayed next to Emmanuel Macron on this year’s cover of our report) or the mayor of Nice Christian Estrosi publicly called for the circumvention of the rule of law in order to fight what they call “political Islam” and “Islamist separatism.”⁵⁶ The French intelligence agencies have claimed to undertake mass surveillance of a large part of the French Mus-

51. “FPÖ-Chef Hofer: ‘Koran gefährlicher als Corona’”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 16 June 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2173786>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

52. Bundeskanzleramt: Bundeskanzler Kurz: Terrorismus und politischen Islam mit allen Mitteln bekämpfen, 11 November 2020, <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/bundeskanzleramt/nachrichten-der-bundesregierung/2020/bundeskanzler-kurz-terrorismus-und-politischen-islam-mit-allen-mitteln-bekaempfen.html>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

53. “Μπογδάνος: Ερώτηση για το ζήτημα της μπούργκας στην Ελλάδα”, *Εθνος*, 29 September 2020, <https://cutt.ly/qgkqEYI>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

54. “Mix of Muslim, Christian Society Not Possibly Peaceful, Hungary’s Orbán Says,” Reuters, 25 September 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/mix-of-muslim-christian-society-not-possibly-peaceful-hungarys-orban-says>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

55. Maria Ohisalo, Työ on oleskeluluvan peruste siinä missä suojelun tarvekin, 21 October 2020, <https://intermin.fi/ajankohtaista/blogi/-/blogs/tyo-on-oleskeluluvan-peruste-siina-missa-suojelun-tarvekin>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

56. David Doukhan “Face au terrorisme des appels à contourner l’Etat de droit”, *Le Parisien*, 29 October 2020.

lim population and Amnesty International heavily criticized that these new counter-terrorism measures “violate the principles of non-discrimination, non-refoulement, and the right to freedom of association.”⁵⁷ As Chafika Attalai and Dahina Moussi have revealed in their report on France, “the state has engaged in a veritable witch hunt and has raided and shut down dozens of Muslim establishments and associations considered a national threat or an ‘enemy of the Republic’. Nevertheless, Darmanin also publicly admitted that those raids were only a way to send a message, in other words combating the so-called ‘war on terror’ by terrorizing and stigmatizing a whole group.”⁵⁸ The proposed bill against separatism announced by Macron made headlines in the news and will be decided upon in 2021. Critics rightfully fear that it will lay the ground for dissolving Islamic organizations without any legal proceeding or due process, forbid non-religious activities for religious organizations and thus de-politicized Muslims in France, implement coercive controls on anti-racist civil society organizations, and expand the hijab bans. This authoritarian move to crack down on Muslims and civil society is equally reflected in the attack by French government officials on anti-racist scholars, who engage in gender and postcolonial studies, and who have become a matter of concern for the ruling French elite.⁵⁹

Following Brexit, the European Parliament currently counts 705 members. While the far-right political group Identity and Democracy (formerly Europe of Nations and Freedom) did not become the fifth-strongest party group in the elections for the European Parliament in 2019, after Brexit, it became the fourth-strongest party, passing the Greens.⁶⁰ With 76 seats, Identity and Democracy represents the most successful political group whose members share an anti-Muslim agenda.⁶¹

Justice System

Institutionalized Islamophobia is the outcome of a hegemonic Islamophobia that is shared across several political camps in power. Legislation and administration reflect the ideologies of elected officials and people in accountable positions. Simultaneously, the independence of the justice system based on the rule of law can still defend basic liberties such as the freedom of religion and belief or the freedom of speech.

57. Amnesty International “FRANCE: COUNTER-TERROR MEASURES FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF SAMUEL PATY RAISE HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS” <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/documents/eur21/3281/2020/en/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

58. Chafika Attalai and Dahina Moussi in this report on France.

59. Norimitsu Onishi and Constant Meheut, “Heating up Culture Wars, France to Scour Universities for Ideas That ‘Corrupt Society’”, *New York Times*, 21 February 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/world/europe/france-universities-culture-wars.html>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

60. European Parliament, Parliament’s Seven Political Groups, 2 July 2019 (Updated 2 March 2020), <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20190612STO54311/parliament-s-seven-political-groups>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

61. Farid Hafez, “Shifting Borders: Islamophobia as Common Ground for Building Pan-European Right-Wing Unity”, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 48, 5 (2014), pp. 479-499.

Far-right political parties try to increase their influence by using the anti-Muslim climate to introduce legislation. While their proposals are often met with opposition if they are not the governing parties, sometimes their claims translate into legislation much later. In December, the far-right Danish People's Party proposed a bill in parliament to ban the Islamic headscarf in all public institutions,⁶² which did not pass. Also, on several occasions, the Dutch PVV leader Geert Wilders suggested banning the headscarf and religious slaughter.

In some political systems like Switzerland with its direct democracy, proposals might even go further, as we have already seen with the ban of the minaret and the mobilization for the face veil ban. National Councilor Jean-Luc Addor of the far-right SVP requested that a law for the "prohibition of headscarves at the counters of the federal administration and companies controlled by the federal government" be drafted.

Other countries have further implemented anti-Muslim legislation. The Belgian Constitutional Court issued a ban of political, philosophical, and faith symbols on the grounds of neutrality, but it was clear from the beginning that this ban would disproportionately impact Muslim women who wear the headscarf.⁶³

Diminishing space for Muslims in public life is a central manifestation of Islamophobia and can be found in administrative regulations that are not open per se to democratic deliberation, but rather are under the control of the ruling bureaucracy. In Munich, a female honorary judge was suspended and impeachment proceedings initiated because she had worn a headscarf during oral proceedings.⁶⁴

There are other laws that do not explicitly focus on Islam and Muslims but can potentially affect them as they intersect with how Muslims are positioned. In its report on the expanding so-called war on terror, Amnesty International worded it as such: "The recent wave of counter-terrorism measures also breaches one of the foundational principles of the EU, that of non-discrimination. Often, the measures have proved to be discriminatory on paper and in practice, and have had a disproportionate and profoundly negative impact, particularly on Muslims, foreign nationals or people perceived to be Muslim or foreign."⁶⁵ One striking example is the case of Mo-

62. "B 47 Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om forbud mod at bære islamisk tørklæde i offentlige institutioner", Folketinget, 22 October 2020, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20201/beslutningsforslag/B47/index.htm>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

63. "Cour constitutionnelle, arrêt n° 2020-81 du 4 juin 2020", Strada Lex, https://www.stradalex.com/fr/sl_src_publ_jur_be/document/cconst_2020-81, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

64. "Wegen Kopftuch: Amtsenthebung einer ehrenamtlichen Richterin in München", TRT Deutsch, <https://www.trtdeutsch.com/news-inland/wegen-kopftuch-amtsenthebung-einer-ehrenamtlichen-richter-in-in-munchen-3495521>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

65. Amnesty International, *Dangerously Disproportionate. The Ever-Expanding National Security State in Europe*, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0153422017ENGLISH.PDF>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

ammed Abdulqader, which Aziz Nazmi Şakir documents in his report on Bulgaria. The young man, who won Bulgaria's youth national championship in wrestling three times, is accused of "terrorist activities abroad" with poor evidence. Similarly, other legislation disproportionately affects Muslims and increases their vulnerability in Europe such as cases where tougher immigration laws are designed that involve the loss of citizenship in cases of dual citizenship.⁶⁶

At the same time, the fight against Islamophobia continues on a legal basis through the courts. In Austria, one of the most important victories against Islamophobia was the Constitutional Court's repeal of the ban of the hijab in elementary school in December 2020.⁶⁷ The Constitutional Court thus red-carded the ban that was implemented by the coalition of the ÖVP and the FPÖ, and which the new coalition of the ÖVP and the Greens wanted to expand to secondary school. The struggle against anti-Muslim discrimination with legal means has to be understood as a way of protecting the constitutions which include legislation on anti-discrimination and freedom of religion or belief.

The Rise of Militant Islamophobia

The role of white supremacist militant groups is becoming more and more a concern in Europe, and we have been dealing with this issue for a few years now.⁶⁸ In Germany, a right-wing militant killed nine people with an immigrant background, his mother, and himself in Hanau. The perpetrator specifically sought out venues frequented predominantly by people with an immigrant background. The perpetrator was known to the authorities, but police did not act. People with an immigrant background who were well known in the media, as well as many politicians, received threatening letters with the signature "NSU 2.0" – a reference to the National Socialist Underground which had murdered immigrants in Germany in the past.⁶⁹

As Aristotle Kallis reveals in his report on the UK, Muslim places of worship remained vulnerable not only to performative vandalism, but also to physical attacks. In the UK, most incidents were recorded following the relaxation of the restrictions due to the pandemic.⁷⁰ An arson attack took place against the mosque on Aylsham

66. "Kyselytunti 22.10.2020", Facebook, 23 October 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/mykkanenkai/videos/440801446898488>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

67. VfGH: Verhüllungsverbot an Volksschulen ist verfassungswidrig, 11 December 2020, https://www.vfgh.gv.at/medien/Verhuellungsverbot_an_Volksschulen_ist_verfassungswidrig.de.php, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

68. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, "The State of Islamophobia in Europe" in *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, eds. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2019), pp. 20-26.

69. "Der Anschlag von Hanau - eine Chronologie", Hessenschau, <https://www.hessenschau.de/gesellschaft/100-tage-nach-dem-rassistischen-terror-der-anschlag-von-hanau---eine-chronologie,hanau-100tage-chronologie-100.html>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

70. Kate Proctor, "MPs Fear Rise in Islamophobia as Mosques in England Reopen", *The Guardian*, 15 June 2020 - <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/jun/15/mps-fear-rise-in-islamophobia-as-mosques-in-england-reopen-coronavirus>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

Road in Norwich in July.⁷¹ As a consequence of several physical intimidation tactics of far-right groups, community initiatives were initiated to protect mosques and Islamic centers.

Symbols of violence like the swastika have been documented in various places throughout Europe. In the Swedish municipality of Åstorp, swastikas were drawn along graffiti stating “Bloody Muslims,” not on mosques or Muslim institutions, but on a simple private house resided by Muslim families.⁷²

Education

Education can be crucial - be it for reproducing or combatting anti-Muslim racism in a society. As Aziz Nazmi Şakir argues in his report on Bulgaria, “the Bulgarian education system continued to reproduce the image of the historical enemy: Ottomans enslaving Christian Bulgarians and forcibly converting them to Islam.”⁷³ In the case of Sweden, Masoud Kamali argues that “a governmental inquiry into racism and discrimination from 2006 showed that discrimination against immigrants in general and Muslims in particular is an integrated part of the Swedish school curriculum.”⁷⁴ In their report on Poland, Anna Wilczyńska and Karol Wilczyński argue that “fear-mongering, lack of systemic education as well as hateful media campaigns and news are the main reasons why Polish people are prejudiced about Islam.”⁷⁵

The educational performance of Muslims is also suffering because of Islamophobia. Research conducted by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) revealed that “Dutch citizens of Moroccan and Turkish origins and Muslims still face fairly much discrimination to the extent of it turning into chronic discrimination, itself leading to the victims retreating from society, losing their faith in institutions or simply giving up when it comes to education or finding a job.”⁷⁶

An additional level of concern is to criminalize Muslim institutions in order to create so-called independent educational institutions. In Sweden, the far-right Sweden Democrats have suggested introducing a bill that outlaws all Muslim schools in Sweden.⁷⁷ Although the law did not pass, the ruling parties agreed to forbid the estab-

71. “Police Investigating Arson Attack at Norwich Mosque”, *The Independent*, 27 July 2020 - <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/norwich-mosque-arson-attack-police-investigation-a9640546.html>, (Access date: 15 July 2021)..

72. “Helsingbros Dagbladet”, 13 September 2020, <https://www.hd.se/2020-09-13/rasistiskt-klotter-pa-lagenhetshus-i-nyvang>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

73. Aziz Nazmi Şakir in this report on Bulgaria.

74. Sawyer Lena and Kamali Masoud, “Utbildningens dilemma: Demokratiska ideal och andrafrerande praxis”, (Fritzes Stockholm: 2006).

75. Anna Wilczyńska and Karol Wilczyński in this report on Poland.

76. Amina Smits Akilma in this report on the Netherlands.

77. Richard Jomshof, “Förbud mot muslimska friskolor”, Sveriges Riksdag, 5 October 2018, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/forbud-mot-muslimska-friskolor_H602599, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

ishment of new religious schools,⁷⁸ which – according to Masoud Kamali in his report on Sweden – was “a decision that in reality aimed at forbidding Muslim schools in the country.”⁷⁹

Another highly problematic aspect is Islamophobic knowledge production and its dissemination through channels of power. One example is the establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam (*Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam*) by the Austrian government with an annual budget of 500,000 Euros. It is “part of the national strategy of extremism prevention and deradicalization”⁸⁰ and is supposed to provide the “creation of an overview map of problematic networks and associations in Austria that can be attributed to political Islam (a combat term used by the Austrian government to criminalize Muslim civil society). The aim is to make visible structures, actors, and goals of the representatives of this dangerous ideology. Financial, organizational, and ideological connections (abroad) are also to be investigated and disclosed.”⁸¹ One of its directors is a former employee of an institution close to the state that has become infamous for spreading Islamophobia.⁸² Its director is a Muslim theologian that regularly supported the anti-Muslim policies of the conservative ÖVP and the far-right FPÖ.⁸³ Other members include some of Austria’s most well-known anti-Muslim authors Susanne Schröter,⁸⁴ Lorenzo Vidino,⁸⁵ and Heiko Heinisch.⁸⁶

Step Forward and Policy Recommendations

We can only reiterate the recommendations that we have presented in the last five annual publications of our *European Islamophobia Report* from 2015 to 2019. As discussed in our introduction to *EIR 2019*, anti-Muslim militancy has become a major problem that has to be taken seriously by European states.

Security policies especially, including the role of secret services, have to be reassessed. With Austria and France choosing an even more brutal way of surveilling and

78. Karlsson Pär, “Då kan nya religiösa friskolor förbjudas”, *Aftonbladet*, 31 January 2019.

79. Masoud Kamali in this report on Sweden.

80. Job advertisement for the board of the Documentation Center for Political Islam, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/amtsblatt/aktuelle_ausgabe/artikel/?id=4409041, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

81. “Dokumentationsstelle nimmt Extremismus ins Visier”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 15 July 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2192166>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

82. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Austrian Integration Fund, 4 November 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-austrian-integration-fund-osterreichische-integrationsfonds-oif/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

83. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Mouhanad Khorchide, 15 March 2021, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-mouhanad-khorchide/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

84. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Susanne Schröter, 13 January 2021 <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-susanne-schroter/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

85. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Lorenzo Vidino, 22 April 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-lorenzo-vidino/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

86. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Saïda Keller-Messahli, 12 March 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-saida-keller-messahli/>, (Access date: 15 July 2021).

cracking down on Muslim civil society, anti-Islamophobia scholars, and institutions, these new policies have to be met with decisive opposition. This opposition must be mounted by civil society, non-ideological bureaucrats, and allied nation states that do not share an approach that further pushes the Muslim community to the margin and creates a new ground for replacing a democratic order with an illiberal version of democracy.

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. (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 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 across the countries allude to different degrees of awareness and organization.

BELGIUM

- According to the statistical report published in 2020 by *Le Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique* (CCIB), in the preceding year 90.6% of recorded Islamophobic cases pertaining to individuals were enacted against women, compared to 9.4% against men. This is up from 75% of all victims being female in 2018.
- 26.3% of Islamophobic cases were related to employment.
- 48% of Islamophobic cases were recorded in Brussels, 23% in Wallonia, and 4% in Flanders. (Source: CCIB, *Rapport Chiffres 2019*)

AUSTRIA

- In 2020, 812 anti-Muslim hate crimes were documented in Austria, which is more than double the number of 2019 with 385 cases. (Source: ZARA)
- Due to COVID-19, the number of online hate crimes increased. A total of 3,215 cases were documented - compared to 1,822 digital hate messages in 2019. Of these cases, 144 had anti-Muslim content.

(Source: *Anti-Discrimination Styria*)

BOSNIA

- A total of 9 incidents were reported.

(Source: *Commission for Freedom of Religion*)

DENMARK

- Muslim women who wear a hijab have to send 60% more job applications than white Danish women. Minority ethnic women have to send 18% more job applications than white Danish women.

(Source: Institute for Human Rights)

CZECH REPUBLIC

- Seven incidents related to anti-Muslim prejudice were recorded by a human rights organization. (Source: In Iustitia)

FRANCE

- The *Observatoire National de Lutte contre l'Islamophobie* recorded 235 Islamophobic acts from January 1 to December 31 2020 (compared to 154 for the year 2019), i.e., a 53% increase. There was a 14% increase in acts and a 79% increase in threats.

(Source: Observatoire National de Lutte contre l'Islamophobie)

SLOVENIA

- The most frequently alleged personal ground of discrimination in cases completed in 2019 was gender (14%). This is followed by nationality, race, and ethnic origin (13%). The alleged personal ground of disability occurred in 11% of cases, followed by sexual orientation (5%), age (5%), religion or belief (4%), place of residence (3%), social status (2%), language (2%), citizenship of another member state (2%), and citizenship of a third country (1%).

(Source: Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2019)

UNITED KINGDOM

- In the wake of the first UK lockdown religiously aggravated hate crimes increased by more than a third in comparison to the same period in 2019.
- Half of all religiously aggravated hate crime incidents recorded in 2019 were Islamophobic. *(Source: UK Home Office)*
- Muslim individuals and households are four times more likely to experience hate crime than those who identify as Christians. *(Source: Office of National Statistics)*
- More than half of the governing Conservative party's members think of Islam in negative or very negative terms; nearly half consider it a "threat" to British society. *(Source: Hope Not Hate)*

IRELAND

- In 2019, Muslims experienced 14% of reported crime cases, 14% of discrimination case, and Muslims were targeted in hate speech on 45 reported occasions. *(Source: Irish Network Against Racism)*

NETHERLANDS

- According to the second report of the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, SCP*) on discrimination experienced in the Netherlands, people with a migration background (especially Turkish and Moroccan) and Muslims experience relatively high discrimination, stating they feel strongly stigmatized, discriminated and excluded, to the extent of people retreating from society, losing their faith in institutions or simply giving up when it comes to education or finding a job. *(Source: Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau)*

SPAIN

- There was an overall 6.8% increase in hate crimes: from a total of 1,706 complaints, 66 relate to religion (4.3% less than in 2018) and 515 to racism and xenophobia (20.9% more than in 2018). No segregated statistics for anti-Muslim bias are available. *(Source: National Office for Hate Crimes, 2019)*

GERMANY

- In 2020, 901 Islamophobic crimes were registered by the Federal Criminal Police Office throughout Germany.
- In the same year, at least 16 rallies of *PEGIDA Förderverein* in Dresden, one rally of the *Der III. Weg* in Haiger, and a rally of *Aufbruch Leverkusen* in Leverkusen with the slogan that they were against the “Islamization of Germany” took place.
- In 2019, there was a total of 31,472 (13.8% increase) extremist crimes with a political background compared to the previous year (27,656). Of these offenses, 21,290 had a right-wing extremist background. In other words, there was a 9.7% increase compared to the previous year.
- Extremist violent crimes (925) decreased by 13.7% in 2019 compared to the previous year. Among the violent acts, 828 assaults were assigned right-wing extremist ideology.
- 8,585 offenses were ruled to be hate crimes. Of these, 2,032 are anti-Semitic and 950 are Islamophobic crimes.
- In the new thematic field “xenophobic,” which has been in effect since January 1 2019, 3,703 offenses were registered for 2019, of which 506 were violent offenses.
- In the category of crimes against asylum shelters, there was a drop in 2019 (121) compared to the previous year (169).

(Source: Bundeskriminalamt, Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat)

SWITZERLAND

- According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) and their 2019 “Language, Religion and Culture Survey,” 35% of Muslim individuals have been victims of discrimination based on their religious affiliation in at least one specific situation in Switzerland.

(Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office, FSO)

FINLAND

- The number of suspected hate crimes in 2019 retreated by 1.21% to 899 cases compared with 910 cases the year before.
- Contrarily, the number of suspected ethnic agitation cases rose to 105 from 34. As in previous years, Muslims were the most targeted group.
- The majority of suspected hate crime cases were due to the person's ethnic background (72.3%) followed by religious background (14.8%).
- Somalis suffered the most attacks totaling 37 out of 10,000 people, Iraqis 34 out of 10,000, Turks 33-34 out of 10,000 people.

(Source: Police University College (Poliisiammattikorkeakoulu))

SWEDEN

- According to police authorities, 562 Islamophobic incidents were documented in 2018 against 439 in 2016 (28% increase). This was an increase of 72% compared to 327 cases in 2013. Among these 562 incidents, 36 concerned physical attacks (6%), 218 concerned criminal threat/assault (39%), and 181 incitement and discrimination (32%).

(Source: Hatbrottsstatistik, Bra.se)

LITHUANIA

- From January to November 2020, a total of 47 criminal offenses were registered on the grounds foreseen under the Chapter XXV of the Criminal Code “Crimes and Misdemeanors against a Person’s Equal Rights and Freedom of Conscience.” Forty-two of these crimes occurred on the grounds foreseen under Article 170 “Incitement against Any National, Racial, Ethnic, Religious or Other Group of Persons.” Two of them were incitement based on religion.

(Source: Data on criminal offences committed in the Republic of Lithuania)

POLAND

- 557 procedures in hate crimes cases were initiated by the police in 2020, 14 of which concerned hate crimes against Muslims.
- The police data speaks of approximately 44 crimes committed based on the target’s ethnicity that might be linked to Islam (Arabs, Bengalis, Turks, etc.) *(Source: Security Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration)*

ROMANIA

- 68% of Romanians have a lack of trust in relation to people of Muslim faith, while 62% of those interviewed think that Muslims are potentially dangerous.
- Around 39% of the respondents would not accept having a Muslim relative, 28% would not accept having a Muslim friend, and 19% would not accept a Muslim co-worker.

(Source: National Council for Combatting Discrimination, NCCD)

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.

BOSNIA

- In Srebrenica, a group of Serb students from elementary school attacked a girl (F.S.) for wearing a hijab.

CROATIA

- Graffiti stating “Ustaše Brda 1950” and “Death to Muslims” appeared on the notch of the railway, in front of the entrance to the tunnel in Dujmovaca, in the town of Split.

CZECH REPUBLIC

- A threatening message was left on the Brno Mosque: “Do not spread Islam in the Czech Republic or we will kill you!”

DENMARK

- Two men followed a Muslim man, questioning him: “Are you Muslim?” and “Why are you here?” The men followed him home, broke into his apartment, and severely beat him. They were charged with racially motivated violence.

ESTONIA

- A masked man dropped pig heads at the door of the Islamic Centre in Tallinn, the Embassy of Turkey, and the Embassy of Azerbaijan.

FINLAND

- A young Muslim was chased and physically attacked by townspeople of Teuva, a city in Western Finland. The victim ended up in hospital because of his wounds. No charges were brought against the perpetrators but the investigating officer has not ruled out a hate crime.

FRANCE

- Two veiled women were stabbed near the Eiffel Tower. The first victim, aged 19, was stabbed three times with a knife. The second, a 40-year-old woman, was injured by six blows, one of which punctured her lung. The attackers called both women “dirty Arabs” and told them, “You are not at home here.” One of them also referred to the veil the victims wore as “that thing you have on your head.”

GERMANY

- A right-wing extremist terrorist shot nine people with an immigrant background, his mother, and himself in Hanau. The perpetrator specifically sought out venues frequented predominantly by people with an immigrant background.

GREECE

- Vandals attacked Kursum Mosque/Osman Shah Mosque, a historical Ottoman structure, in Trikala, Central Greece, throwing stones and breaking the glass doors.

IRELAND

- A male Muslim youth (under 18 years old) was attacked by two youths while walking home. He reported that this wasn't the first time he had been attacked.

ITALY

- On August 28, in the city of Magenta, blogger Francesco Maria Bienati was attacked as a result of his support of a local Muslim association. His injuries required medical treatment.

KOSOVO

- On April 4, 2020, a mosque was burnt in Vërboc, a village about 40 kilometers west of Prishtina, Kosovo's capital.

MONTENEGRO

- Windows were broken at the local Islamic Community office, and the message “Pljevlja will be Srebrenica” was thrown through a window.
- Three people of Bosniak nationality were attacked and beaten. The attackers used nationalist insults like “It's time for you to go Turks” and “You are not welcome here.”

NETHERLANDS

- According to *Meld Islamofobie's* report, Muslimas with and without facial veils have indicated becoming more often a target of Islamophobia ever since the ban on the facial veil was implemented.

NORTH MACEDONIA

- In the city of Bitola, two newly reconstructed mosques, Haidar Kadi and Ishak Mosques, were covered in graffiti with the message: "Hagia Sofia was and will remain a church."

RUSSIA

- Attack on Muslim cemeteries in the village of Burayevo (Bashkortostan).

SERBIA

- A man crashed his car into a migrant center in Obrenovac shouting, "I don't want my girlfriend to be attacked by migrants ... I don't want a Muslim state ... I don't want to give Orthodoxy to Muslims and I won't give it to them, believe me!"

SPAIN

- In Málaga, two Muslim women were threatened and attacked physically with their hijabs being pulled repeatedly in front of their children by unknown women.

SWEDEN

- In Åstorp municipality, "Bloody Muslims" and swastikas were sprayed on a residence where Muslims live.

SWITZERLAND

- A pig carcass was placed anonymously in the mailbox of a Muslim family in Zürich-Schwamendingen.

ISLAMOPHOBIC STATEMENTS BY 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.

ALBANIA

- MP Ralf Gjoni, former member of a left-wing party, during his speech about depopulation of the country stated, "The departure of people will bring as a consequence the fact that in Albania only old people, children of criminals, and hijabi women will remain."

AUSTRIA

- The president of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka (ÖVP) demanded Austria's Muslims acknowledge the constitution.
- FPÖ chairman Norbert Hofer stated during a party convention, "Corona is not dangerous. The Koran is much more dangerous."
- FPÖ politician Harald Vilimsky called for a "Mohamed-free Vienna."

BELGIUM

- The right-wing populist party *Vlaams Belang* posted the following on their Francophone social media: "After Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, here is #Schaerbeek who is putting the question of neutrality into the heart of #communal administration. Carry on like that and ten years from now Brussels will be a Muslim area. *Vlaams Belang* says loud and clear: NO to #ghettoisation, NO to Islamism and above all NO TO THE #HEADSCARF"

BOSNIA

- Srdjan Mazalic a member of the parliament of the Bosnian Serb entity, Republika Srpska, shared a tweet stating, "Albanians should be accepted as equal human beings," even though according to his calculations of autosomal DNA, there is a "genetic distance to different ethnic groups."

BULGARIA

- Krystian Szkwerek, a representative of the group of European Conservatives and Reformists for Bulgaria (Europe's leading conservative movement), stated, "This is the first known caricature of Muhammad from Cluny Abbey dating back to 1142 [a drawing of the 12th-century abbot Peter the Venerable showing the Prophet as a monstrous siren]. 'Charlie Hebdo' is not the pioneer in our reasonable mockeries of the Arab cutthroat, who slept with underage girls, and of the disgusting religion he created."
- Angel Dzhambazki, a member of the European Parliament and vice-chairman of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, stated, "Hundreds, perhaps thousands of ISIS militants entered Europe during the greatest immigration pressure. Today, they live here and are waiting for the moment when your extreme Marxism and liberal Bolshevism will lead to the collapse of the European nation-states and they will see in this collapse a chance to establish their so-called caliphate..."

CROATIA

- The city councilor from the city of Split, Martin Pauk, created an event on his social media profile titled "Throwing Cracklings and Bacon on the State Border." In it, he pointed out that by doing so he will protect Croatia from migrants.

CZECH REPUBLIC

- Minister of Education Jean-Michel Blanquer stated, "Mothers should not be allowed to wear a headscarf during school trips."

DENMARK

- Regarding the Muslim dowry, Foreign and Integration Minister Mattias Tesfaye stated, "This kind of bazaar trade between clans must be stopped, it should not exist in 2020."

ESTONIA

- Jaak Madison, a member of the European Parliament and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia, in response to the attacks in France stated, "We have repeatedly seen in Europe in recent years how even these so-called peaceful Muslims are silent when their comrades-in-arms detonate bombs, attack the Christmas markets with lorries or cut off heads with machetes. Islam is not suitable for Europe." He added that "decades of politics of tolerance and equality do not work and will not work."

FRANCE

- President Emmanuel Macron stated, “The problem is Islamist separatism. It is a conscious, theorized, politico-religious project, which takes the form of repeated deviations from the values of the Republic, which often results in the constitution of a counter-society and whose manifestations are the dropping out of school of children, the development of sport communities supporting cultural practices, which are the pretext for teaching principles that do not conform to the laws of the Republic. It is indoctrination and through it, the negation of our principles, equality between women and men, human dignity. The problem is this ideology, which asserts that its own laws are superior to those of the Republic.”

GERMANY

- Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD) spokesman and parliamentary group leader of the AfD in the Thuringian state parliament Björn Höcke tweeted, “Trafficking-icon Carola Rackete: I imported torture, sexual violence, human trafficking and murder.”



GREECE

- Konstantinos Bogdanos, MP of the ruling party Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy), stated, “It is of high concern and more common in Greece - especially in the Athens center - the image of women who follow the Muslim dressing, burqa and niqab, which cover their whole bodies, the head and the face, leaving only the eyes free in some cases. Although burqa and niqab are being worn by an Islamic order, the state is not interested in that from a religious point of view. However, burqa and niqab consist at the same time a security problem, since they can make anyone invisible to the other citizens and the authorities, while at the same time they violate women’s rights, when they are obliged to wear them, via intimidation and repression, something completely unacceptable for the country’s dominant culture and its legal culture.”

[...] Since Greece is and owes to continue to be a safe country, where women are absolutely equal and free citizens, I ask you Mr. Minister [of Justice]: the female Muslim dressing of burqa and niqab, which hide from public view all human characteristics, are they an issue of public and parliamentary deliberation, towards a legal resolution of the problems they create?"

HUNGARY

- "In Hungary, we are very strict that we would not like to have a parallel society, or open society or a mixed-up culture. We don't think a mixture of Muslim and Christian society could be a peaceful one and could provide security and a good life for the people." PM Orbán

IRELAND

- Gemma O'Doherty, a candidate in the general election of 2020, said, "For more Female Genital Mutilation (5k+ cases here so far), ISIS training camps in our mountains, Imams promoting child marriage, jihadi factories, subjugation of women and barbaric halal, vote Sinn Fein, #FFFG and Marxist Left today #GE2020. To end it, #VoteGemma2020".
- Justin Barrett, the leader of the National Party since stated, "Ireland will be nationalist and free, or, under Shariah law."

ITALY

- The leader of Lega Nord party, Matteo Salvini, stated, "In my opinion, it [spread of antisemitism in Europe] is also due to the increasing of Islamic extremism and fanatics (...) the great presence of immigrants coming from Muslim countries contributes to the spread of antisemitism in Italy too."

LITHUANIA

- Egidijus Vareikis, a Christian Union candidate who was not elected to parliament, stated, "In the eyes of Islamic practitioners (perhaps not all, but at least some), liberal public administration sows clutter, reduces discipline and responsibility, and weakens faith and loyalty to one's tribe and state."

NETHERLANDS

- In reaction to a Flemish news article about a young man of non-Dutch descent who was "only" sentenced to community service, *Burger Partij Amersfoort* (BPA) party foreman Hans van Wegen wrote on Twitter, "His name is Youssef and not Henk, so he gets away with it."

NORTH MACEDONIA

- During election campaigning, the president of political party Levica stated, "So what is the problem with us? See the whole country Islamized, the Imams sing like in an Islamic republic. Do you not see the Islamization that is happening from Bit Market (Old Town) onwards, do you not see radical Islam entering here, Wahhabism?"

POLAND

- Zbigniew Ziobro, minister of justice, prosecutor general, and a leader of the party *Solidarna Polska*, tweeted and said during television interview that Islam is alien to Polish culture and suggested that Poland should defend itself against it.

ROMANIA

- In July 2020, two parliamentarians from the Social Democratic Party (PSD) got into an argument with the Turkish cashier of a fast-food restaurant in Bucharest after the latter asked them to wear face masks while in the restaurant. In reply, one of the parliamentarians started insulting the cashier and asked to see his work permit. According to the video camera recording, the PSD MP Adrian Solomon told the cashier, "Yo, Mustafa, you are in Romania here. Hello, Mustafa! Show me you have a working permit here! Yo, tramp!"

SLOVENIA

- Branko Grims, Slovenian Democratic Party member and member of parliament stated, "The simultaneous invasion of Islamists (who are still misleadingly called 'refugees' by many) and the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic pose the Slovenian police with the impossible task of managing all these security tasks at the same time. There are too few of them and they are overwhelmed."

SPAIN

- Santiago Abascal, president of Vox and congressman during a non-related plenary session, stated, "Macron is expelling more than 200 suspects of jihadism [...] he has realized that Islam becomes a danger to the civilization that hosts it. Jihadism must be ended, because it continues to behead people shouting 'Allah is great.' Not only do they act with knives, they also do it through education, despising women [...] If the renegades managed to break Spain, they would only be able to form the Catalan Islamic Republic."

SWEDEN

- The leader of the Liberal Party, Nyamko Sabuni, stated that “the vision of a multicultural society must be buried” and “religious schools must be forbidden.”

SWITZERLAND

- National councilor Andreas Glarner announced in his party speech that he will address “fie” topics - Islam and Muslims. He confessed Islam as one of his core issues and announced “the preference for Islam” as a problem, to be defended against.

UNITED KINGDOM

- The Conservative MP Craig Whittaker blamed BAME communities - and Muslims in particular - for a spike in COVID-19 cases in the north of England in the summer of 2020.

LEGALIZING ISLAMOPHOBIA

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

AUSTRIA

- The Documentation Center Political Islam was established.
- Raids took place against alleged members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, which targeted scholars and aid organizations.
- Constitutional Court repealed the hijab ban in elementary school.

BELGIUM

- The Belgian Constitutional Court issued a ban of political, philosophical, and faith symbols on the grounds of neutrality. The ban would disproportionately impact Muslim women who wear the headscarf.

BULGARIA

- The Specialized Prosecutor's Office accused Mohammed Abdulqader, a Bulgarian youth champion in wrestling born to a Bulgarian mother and Syrian father, of participating in "terrorist activities abroad." The only evidence was a few photos he posted on social media that were taken in 2015-2016 in Syria, in which the then 16-year-old teenager was wearing military uniform and holding various weapons.

DENMARK

- The Danish People's Party proposed a bill in parliament to ban the Islamic headscarf in all public institutions. The bill did not pass.

FINLAND

- Former minister of the interior, Kai Mykkänen, asked Minister of the Interior Maria Ohisalo if the government plans to move ahead with the passing of tougher immigration laws proposed by the previous government (2015-2019). Some of the changes would involve the loss of Finnish citizenship if a person is convicted of a serious crime. Loss of citizenship can only take place if the person convicted has dual citizenship.

FRANCE

- A bill was proposed against so-called separatism including an amendment to prohibit the wearing of the veil for women under the age of 18 in public spaces, an amendment prohibiting the burkini in public swimming pools, and an amendment prohibiting veiled mothers from accompanying their children on school trips.

GERMANY

- An honorary judge in Munich was suspended and impeachment proceedings were initiated against her for wearing a headscarf at an oral proceeding.

ITALY

- With sentence N. 4330 released on October 28, the Court of Appeal of Milan authorized health facilities to use signs with graphic representations to prohibit access to women wearing a burqa.

NETHERLANDS

- On several occasions, PVV leader Geert Wilders suggested banning the headscarf and religious slaughter.

SWEDEN

- The minister of education, Anna Ekström, told the daily journal *Dagens Nyheter* that “the government has decided to stop the establishment of new religious schools.” This is a result of a debate on the establishment of Muslim schools in Sweden.

SWITZERLAND

- According to Jean-Luc Addor, SVP national councilor, headscarves and other Islamic symbols should not be tolerated in public companies, as they contradict local traditions and the constitutional principle of equality between men and women. He requested that a law be drafted entitled “Prohibition of Headscarves at the Counters of the Federal Administration and Companies Controlled by the Federal Government.”

UNITED KINGDOM

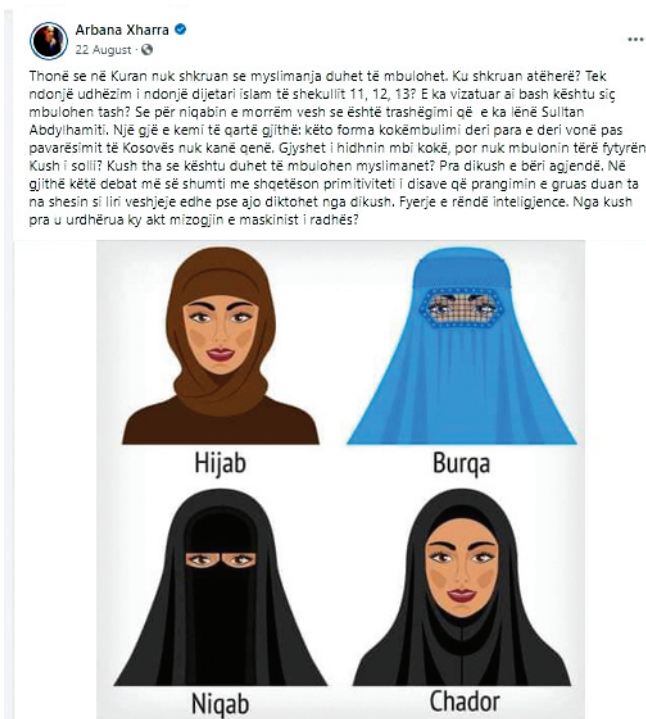
- On Twitter, high-profile Conservative party activist Theodora Dickinson asked Labour party MP Naz Shah, who was born in Bradford, the following: “If racist Naz Shah hates this country so much why doesn’t she go back to Pakistan?!”

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE MEDIA

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

ALBANIA

Journalist Arbana Xharra stated, “The hijab is a misogynistic and sexist act. The primitiveness of some who want to sell the handcuffing of a woman as freedom of expression!”



AUSTRIA

Die Presse journalist
Gudula Walterskirchen
supported a hijab ban.

Die Presse Nachrichten Meinung Magazin

Quergeschrieben

Das Kopftuch ist für Mädchen diskriminierend, nicht ihre Haare!

Islamische Fundamentalisten wollen in Europa ihr Programm umsetzen und erhalten dabei leider auch Schützenhilfe von christlicher Seite.

19.01.2020 um 18:18
von Gudula Walterskirchen
Folgen

DERSTANDARD | Diskurs

SUPPORTER ABO IMMOB

INTERNATIONAL INLAND WIRTSCHAFT WEB SPORT PANORAMA KULTUR ETAT WISSENSCHAFT

1.041 Postings

Es ist nicht überraschend, dass Vertreter der muslimischen Gemeinde gegen das geplante Kopftuchverbot bis 14 in der Schule Sturm laufen. Aber liberale Muslime, die sich möglichst viel Integration wünschen, sollten den Schritt eigentlich begrüßen.

Das Kopftuch benachteiligt junge Frauen in der Ausbildung und später am Arbeitsmarkt. Das mag zwar unfair sein, ist aber eine Realität. Wäre das Kopftuch tatsächlich eine völlig freiwillige Entscheidung, müsste man Mädchen dieses Recht dennoch zugestehen. Doch das ist es nur in seltenen Fällen. Anfangs kommt der Druck von den Eltern, später von Gleichaltrigen, vor allem von muslimischen Burschen, die sich gerne als Glaubenswächter aufspielen.

Frauen schützen

Davor sollte der Staat junge Frauen schützen, und das geht am besten, indem die Schule zur kopftuchfreien Zone erklärt wird. Damit wird in einer prägenden Lebensphase islamisierenden Tendenzen entgegengewirkt.

Dass einige Musliminnen vor dem Schultor das Kopftuch wieder aufsetzen und andere aus Trotz sich noch stärker der Religion zuwenden, lässt sich nicht vermeiden. Aber kopftuchfreie Klassen und Schulhöfe wären ein starkes Zeichen für eine Gesellschaft, in der nicht ein Geschlecht weniger Freiheiten genießt als das andere.

Idealerweise gäbe es in der Schule gar keine auffallenden religiösen Zeichen, auch keine Kreuze an der Wand. Ein Kopftuchverbot wäre zumindest ein erster Schritt dorthin. (14.1.2020)

Der Standard journalist Eric Frey claimed that in most cases Muslim girls do not opt to wear the hijab on their own terms, but under the pressure of their parents, peers, and especially Muslim boys.

Startseite > Politik > Außenpolitik

"Nicht religiös verankert" | Weltlich eingestellte Muslime in Deutschland und Schweiz für Kopftuchverbot

"Wie können wir als offene Zivilgesellschaft akzeptieren, dass eine Religionsgemeinschaft sagt, sobald unsere weiblichen Mitglieder geschlechtsreif werden, müssen sie sich verhüllen? Das macht die Mädchen zu Sexualobjekten."

08.39 Uhr, 18. Jänner 2020

ARTIKEL MERKEN

The daily *Kleine Zeitung* covered an article published by the ÖVP-owned *Oberösterreichisches Volksblatt* with Seyran Ates. Ates argued, "How can we, as an open civil society, accept that a religious community says that as soon as our female members reach sexual maturity, they must cover themselves? That turns the girls into sexual objects."

BOSNIA

Danas published a statement by Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik calling for the “sterilization” of territories from migrants.



Ivica Šola: Ovo je rat protiv Europe i ostatka ostataka kršćana

Objavio Ivica Šola · 10. studenoga 2020. u 07:30



Foto: Fah, Sisačka biskupija; fotomontaža: Narod.hr

CROATIA

Columnist Ivica Šola wrote an article titled “This Is a War against Europe and the Rest of the Christian Remnants.”

ESTONIA

In an article, Minister of the Interior Mart Helme stated that there is a strong pressure to build mosques in Estonia, which would “become centers for radical Islam, where measures are planned that endanger members of society.”

„Probleemiks on Eestis varem esindamata ja õpirände tulemusel suurenevad rahvuste kogukonnad, kellel on meist oluliselt erinev ajalooline, kultuuriline ja religioosne taust. Oma maa konfliktid tuuakse asukohariiki kaasa. Kui emamaal on vastastikune sallimatus, siis võib see ka meile üle tulla. Üsna tugev surve on islami pühamute püstitamiseks Eestisse. Need saavad ka radikaalse islami kontsentratsioonikohtadeks, kus kavandatakse ühiskonnaliikmeid ohustavaid meetmeid. Me räägime siin konkreetsest füüsilisest ohust,“ selgitas Helme. Ta lisas, et Eesti on juba praegu tohutult suure demograafilise surve all ega suuda kogu maailma valu ja kannatust kanda. „Suurte arvude seadused on nende numbrite taga ja kui me ei hoia neid numbreid mõistlikkuse piirides, siis me jääme ühel hetkel selle laviini alla,“ lisas ta.

FINLAND

A story by Finland's biggest daily, *Helsingin Sanomat*, suggested that violent crimes in Helsinki are on the rise and committed by so-called youths of migrant backgrounds. The newspaper retracted its earlier claims after the police, Minister of the Interior Maria Ohisalo, and experts challenged the paper's sensationalist claims that labelled, among other matters, brown Finns as violent criminals.

HELSINGIN SANOMAT Etusivu Uutiset Lehdet Asiakaspalvelu Tilaa Kirjautu Valikko

ULKOMAAT: Miehen kuolema sairaalan vessaan kuvastaa Etelä-Italian pahenevaa koronavirustilaa

PÄIVÄN TIMANTTI: Kun paikka tulee tällisesi, jaa se näin - Taloustieteen professori arvioi "hillopurkkimenetelmän", joka lupaa vaivatonta vaurastumista

MAINOS: Vaali tietoa. Tutustu nyt Hesarin 2 viikkoa maksuttai!

Kaupunki | Nuorisrikollisuus

Helsingin keskustassa liikkuu nyt joukoissa yli sata mahdollisesti vaarallista nuorta – Asiantuntijoiden mukaan taustalla on uusi maahanmuuttoon liittyvä ilmiö

Huolen kohteena olevat nuoret eivät ole yksi yhtenäinen ryhmä. He liikkuvat vaihtelevissa joukoissa ja verkostoituvat esimerkiksi sosiaalisessa mediassa.

[Tilaa ille](#)



Ostasta Helsingiä ei primeään aikaan enää ole turvallista kaikkille nuorille. Se johtuu poliisin ja jalkautuvaa nuorisotyötä tekevien mukaan siitä, ettei osa kaduilla aikansa viettävisä nuorista enää sähidä väkivaltaakaan saadakseen haluamaansa omaisuutta toiselta nuorelta. Kuvassa Puhoksen ympäristö Itäkeskuksessa. KUVA: VILLE MAALI / HS

FRANCE

Cinquième Colonne stated, "The state closes Muslim schools by all means: the rector Daniel Auverlot confirms it."

Cinquième Colonne

Cinquième Colonne > Messages juin 2020 > L'état ferme les écoles musulmanes par tous les moyens: le recteur Daniel Auverlot le confirme

28 juin 2020

L'état ferme les écoles musulmanes par tous les moyens: le recteur Daniel Auverlot le confirme



Bobigny : une école clandestine accueillant des dizaines d'enfants fermée

Selon une source policière, des parents d'enfants accueillis dans cet établissement « sont connus pour être en lien avec l'islam radical ».



Le Parisien published the following article "Bobigny: An Underground School Welcoming Dozens of Children Closed."

GERMANY

Bild-Live reported immediately after the Hanau attack and speculated that the deeds took place in a “criminal milieu” and the operator of the shisha bar was immediately portrayed as a criminal who was involved in the shooting for protection money or supremacy.





GREECE

The front page of sports newspaper *Sportime* stated: “Greece...Europe...Islamization!”

HUNGARY

The popular new site Origo published the headline: “We don’t believe in the virus, we believe in Allah – praying crowds may spread the infection.”



IRELAND

Headline: “The Alliance of Former Muslims Ireland has hit out at the GAA [Gaelic Athletic Association] allowing Croke Park to be used for Eid al -Adha festivities.” The main text includes, “While the pitch of Ireland’s largest stadium will soon be saturated in the blood of terrified animals slaughtered with knives and blades without any form of sedation, just a century ago the field of Croke Park was reddened by the blood of Irish civilians gunned down by British forces during the War for Independence.”



The Alliance of Former Muslims Ireland has hit out at the GAA allowing Croke Park to be used for Eid Al Adha festivities

ITALY

The Farefuturo Foundation (*Fondazione Farefuturo*) published the “First Annual Report on Europe’s Islamization.” It was co-published with the Fratelli d’Italia party (2020).

KOSOVO

The *Washington Times* published an article about Kosovo built around the “Great Replacement” theory according to which Orthodox Christian Serbs, as “real” Europeans, lost Kosovo to “Oriental” Muslim Albanians after the war ended in 1999. The article included the following sentence: “Kosovo’s most famous exports are jihadists.”



Let Bill Clinton’s failed Kosovo strategy wither amid the COVID-19 pandemic

Taxpayer money funds American troops there to keep locals from killing one another

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FRONT PAGE PODCAST

LITHUANIA

A post accompanying an article about the murder of Samuel Paty on the official Facebook page of the news portal *Alfa.lt* included the following, “It’s already nothing strange to laugh at the French, Germans or Swedes for opening the borders and accepting refugees, they fooled themselves and refused to see the reality. But it seems that the patience of the French has run out.”



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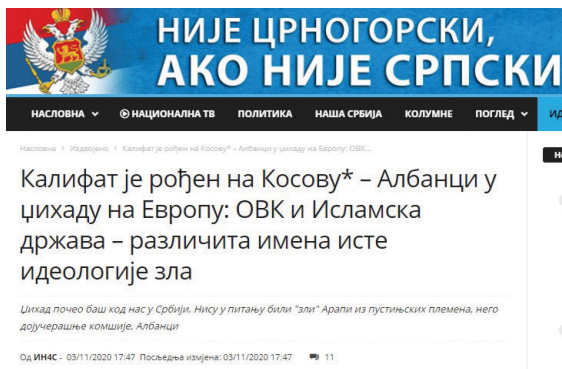
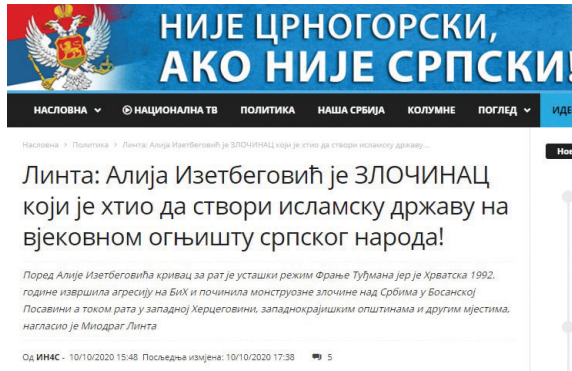
Alfa.lt
3 mins · 🌐

Pas mus jau nieko keisto juoktis iš prancūzų, vokiečių ar švedų, kad, atvėrę sienas ir priėmę pabėgėlius, jie apsikvailino ir atsisako matyti tikrovę. Tačiau rodos, kad šįkart bent prancūzų kantrybės taurė buvo perpildyta

ALFA.LT
Prancūzai įsiuto: aštuoniolikmetis nuprovė mokytojui galvą, nes šis rodė Muhamedo kari...

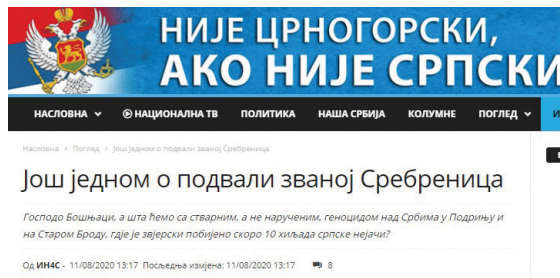
MONTENEGRO

Headline: "Alija Izetbegovic Is a Criminal Who Wanted to Create an Islamic State on the Serbian Land."



Headline: "Caliphate Is Born in Kosovo (Jihad Started in Serbia and It Is Not Started by 'Evil' Arabs from Far East But by Our Recent Neighbors - Albanians."

Headline: "Once More about the Fraud Called Srebrenica."



POČETNA POLITIKA DRUŠTVO SRBIJA CRNA HRONIKA KOLUMNE/DRUGI PIŠU



Kad DPS dijeli državni novac: Za Srbe mrvice, a Hrvatima i Muslimanima milioni

Headline: "State Gives Millions to Muslims and Croats, for Serbs Only Crumbles."



POČETNA POLITIKA DRUŠTVO SRBIJA CRNA HRONIKA KOLUMNJE/DRUGI PIŠU

Home > Srbija > Budući ambasador SAD u Nemačkoj: Na Kosovu je postavljena muslimanska narko-mafija posle 1999. godine

Headline:
 "Future USA Ambassador in Germany Says: 'There Is Muslim Narco Mafia in Kosovo since 1999.'"



SRBIJA

Budući ambasador SAD u Nemačkoj: Na Kosovu je postavljena muslimanska narko-mafija posle 1999. godine

NETHERLANDS

A new report released by S.P.E.A.K. on the representation of Muslims in the photo database of the *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau BV* (ANP), the largest news agency in the Netherlands, concluded that the pictures of the press agency's database give a monotone impression of Muslims. Most of them are images of covered women, not visible as active citizens participating in society nor as individuals in their own social environment.



dichtbij



midden



veraf

screenshot ANP

Brutalna islamizacija Europy Zachodniej

publikacja: 20.10.2020, 19:30



Ludzie we Francji wychodzą na ulice, aby oddać cześć zamordowanemu brutalnie nauczycielowi. Po ataku terrorystycznym - w którym osiemnastoletni zamachowiec obciął nauczycielowi głowę - służby aresztowały piętnaście osób. Islamizacja we Francji i innych krajach zachodniej Europy przybiera na sile.

POLAND

Polish national television published a short feature on the "Brutal Islamization of Western Europe."

ROMANIA

Reporting on a study concerning the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in France, the daily EVZ used the following misleading title for its article: "France Puts on the Turban: Macron's Republic Is Undergoing Islamization Rapidly."

SERBIA

Headline: "Albanians Are Preparing Riots for Christmas. Islamist Groups from Kosovo and Metohija Are Involved."



Popotnik, novinar in pisatelj Gregor Preac. (Foto: Nova24TV)

Novinar, pisatelj in popotnik Gregor Preac se zadnjih šest let intenzivno trudi levici in tako imenovanim dobrim katolikom, ki nastavljajo drugo lice in pomagajo migracijam v dobri veri, da gre za beg iz vojne, dopovedati, da gre dejansko za veliko prevaro islama: "90 odstotkov muslimanov podpira obglavljenje francoskega učitelja, še besedno so oskrunili obglavljenega učitelja, po svetu divjajo protesti proti Franciji. Ob 20 tisoč islamskih terorističnih napadih letno so to dodatni jasni dokazi, da je islam rojevalec nasilja, psihopatsva in sociopatsva." Poudarja, da so tako levičarske kot tudi neoliberalne in globalistične vlade vse preveč podpirale migracije, sicer iz različnih motivov, da je zaradi tega v EU sedaj preko 20 milijonov muslimanov ali štiri odstotke prebivalstva.

SLOVENIA

Gregor Preac, a journalist, publicist, and traveler, stated the following:

"Ninety percent of Muslims support the beheading of a French teacher, they have verbally desecrated the beheaded teacher, and protests against France are raging around the world. With 20,000 Islamic terrorist attacks a year, this

is further clear evidence that Islam is the birthplace of violence, psychopathy and sociopathy."

"Many theorists of religious and ideological books compare the Qur'an to *Mein Kampf* in terms of violence. Islam also kills those who renounce Islam, those who insult their families, and those who insult Muhammad, Allah, the Qur'an, in short, it kills all the time."

"I have been traveling, living, working around the world and Islam for 33 years, speaking their languages, delving into literature, the lives of Islamic



people, writing articles, books - why is there so much poverty, illiteracy, gender inequality, religion, so much violence in Islam?"

"The negative consequences of a free migration policy are already strong across Europe: Islamism, terrorism, beheadings, violence, crime, drugs, growing ghettos in major European cities, chaos in the streets, burning churches, and slowly attacking aqueducts and museums, cultural institutions, divisions in society, the rise of hatred, left and right extremism, Islamism."

SWEDEN

Swedish television covered and distributed the anti-Muslim propaganda by the racist party Sweden Democrats and their suggestions regarding the prohibition of Muslim women's headscarf.



SWITZERLAND



Blick published an article on a children's winter camp described as an "Islamist camp" in which it was claimed that "Turkey indoctrinates Swiss children."



Muslims slaughter cattle, camels and sheep in bloody sacrifice to celebrate Eid al-Adha



Muslims sacrifice animals to celebrate Eid al-Adha
dailymail.co.uk

1:45 PM · 02/08/2020 · SocialFlow

UK

There was negative, stereotype-driven coverage of the Eid al-Adha holiday in the UK press – some examples follow.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ALBANIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

NADA DOSTI

The Author

Nada Dosti is the author of “Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2019” in *European Islamophobia Report 2019*. She holds a master’s degree in English Teaching from the University of Tirana, Albania, and a master’s degree in Media and Communication Studies from the Faculty of Communication, Ankara University, Turkey. With an experience of twelve years as a journalist and an activist trying to be a voice for Muslim women in Albania, Dosti responds publicly to Islamophobic attacks in media - especially on the topic of the hijab - by giving interviews and participating in public debates. She is the founder of Muslimania.al, a portal dedicated to Muslim women that promotes success stories, challenges Islamophobia, and gives a voice to Muslim women, while also providing a space for them to share their concerns and opinions. Email: nada.dosti@gmail.com

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 the cooperating partners. No representation, either expressed or implied, is made of the accuracy of the material in the national reports. The editors of the European Islamophobia Report and the cooperating partners cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The reader must make his or her own evaluation of the accuracy and appropriateness of the material.

To cite this report: Nada Dosti: *Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2020*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2020*, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

Executive Summary

This report records and analyzes Islamophobic incidents that occurred in Albania in 2020. Different international political and social events, the two crucial ones being the murder of the teacher Samuel Party in Paris and the terror attack in Vienna, and national and local occurrences influenced the course of the anti-Muslim rhetoric. This rhetoric is characterized by Islamophobic hate speech and anti-Turkish narrative as well. During 2020, Islamophobia was mostly directed against local Muslims who have a voice and an impact in society by putting them under pressure and forcing them to condemn the “terrorist attacks” in the world. Islamophobia was also directed against imams who were mocked publicly by well-known journalists and analysts. The online domain, including news portals and social media, remains the main hub for promoting anti-Muslim hate speech. The online platforms are used by journalists, public figures, and citizens to spread anti-Muslim sentiments.

Përmbledhje e shkurtër

Ky raport analizon incidentet islamofobe që ndodhën gjatë perjudhës midis janar-dhjetor të vitit 2020. Ngjarje të ndryshme politike dhe shoqërore ndërkombëtare, veçanërisht dy kryesoret si vrasja e mësuesit në Paris, Party Samuel, dhe sulmi në Vjenë; si dhe ngjarje kombëtare dhe vendase ka ndikuar në përforcimin e retorikës anti-muslimane. Kjo retorikë karakterizohet nga gjuhë islamofobe dhe gjuhë urrejtje e shoqëruar me narrativë antiturke gjithashtu. Gjatë vitit të kaluar, islamofobia u drejtua kryesisht kundër myslimanëve vendas të cilët kanë një zë dhe një ndikim në shoqëri, duke i vendosur ata nën presion dhe duke u detyruar të dënojnë “sulmet terroriste” në botë, dhe gjithashtu kundër imamëve duke u tallur publikisht nga gazetar dhe opinionistë. Platforma të ndryshme në internet, përfshirë portalet e lajmeve dhe rrjetet sociale, mbeten mënyra kryesore për promovimin e gjuhës së urrejtjes anti-muslimane. Platforma të cilat përdoren nga gazetarë, figura publike dhe qytetarë për të përhapur ndjenja anti-muslimane.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Albania

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Constitutional republic

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

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

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

Total Population: 2,898,782 million (as of January 2020, INSTAT)

Major Languages: Albanian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Islam (56.7%), Catholicism (10%), Orthodoxy (6.75%), Bektashism (2.1%), Non-affiliated (5.49%), Undeclared (13.8%), Atheists (2.5%), Other Christians (0.14%) (INSTAT/Census 2011)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 1.587 million (56.7%) (INSTAT/Census 2011)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: The Muslim Community of Albania (*Komuniteti Musliman i Shqipërisë*, KMSH); The Albanian Imam's League (*Lidhja e Hoxhallarëve të Shqipërisë*, LHSH); The Muslim Forum of Albania (*Forumi Musliman i Shqipërisë*)

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: The Muslim Forum of Albania (*Forumi Musliman i Shqipërisë*)

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burqa Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

In recent years, Muslims in Albania have experienced an intensification of Islamophobia in various spheres of life, especially in politics, media representation, and the justice system, with negative opinions and stereotyping, as well as hate speech on mainstream media, social media, and other online platforms. This discrimination against Albanian Muslims has been fueled by numerous media pundits, journalists, and politicians in Albania as this report will show. The overall impression propagated by the Albanian online media is that of a growing Islamic extremism and radicalism, with the Albanians allegedly playing a part in this. For instance, in the aftermath of the Vienna terrorist attack where one of the attackers was of Albanian origin from North Macedonia, the mainstream media in Albania were eager to discuss the topic and try to analyze the reasons behind the radicalization of the young attacker, focusing mainly on its religious and ethnic origin.¹ Nevertheless, many reports and seminars organized on the topic of discrimination and hate speech in Albania failed to recognize and address Islamophobia as a crucial part of the hate speech discourse, focusing mainly on discrimination against groups like the LGBT community and the Roma.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an effect on hate speech and Islamophobia worldwide and has increased the tendency to promote Islamophobia, even in Albania, by presenting Muslims as responsible for the spreading of the virus especially during the Ramadan and Eid celebrations. With the arrival of Ramadan, there was an attempt by the main Albanian-speaking portals in Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia to import this narrative of fear and panic into the Albanian reality as well.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The Tabak Mosque is in danger of disappearing from the collective memory in the city of Vlora, due to the placement of a statue in honor of Osman Haxhi, a local patriot. On August 27, 2020, on the official website of the municipality of Vlora,² the mayor announced the inauguration of the statue in a place where the Tabak Mosque used to exist. The mosque is thought to have been built after the twentieth century, in front of today's municipality and was demolished and replaced by another build-

-
1. "Islamofobia Arbana Xharra: Shqiptarët kryejnë aktivitetete ekstremiste në Zvicër", *Gazeta Impakt*, date of publication unspecified, <https://gazetaimpakt.com/islamofobia-arbana-xharra-shqiptaret-kryejne-aktivitetete-ekstremiste-ne-zvicer/> (Access date: 10.10.2020).
 2. "Per vendosjen e bustit "OSMAN HAXHIU" ne sheshin "4 heronjte", 27 August 2020, Municipality of Vlora <http://vlora.gov.al/2020/08/27/per-vendosjen-e-bustit-osman-haxhiu-ne-sheshin-4-heronjte/> (Access date: 06.11.2020).

ing in 1962 by the regime of the time. More than a year ago, during the works for the rehabilitation of the historic center of Vlora, the walls of this old mosque were discovered. This was an important discovery not only for the Regional Directorate of National Culture of Vlora but also for the Muslim community. However, following the discovery, everything remained in the framework of papers and promises which guaranteed that at least one part of the walls would be left as a symbol of the existence of the mosque and of the city's Islamic heritage. Soon thereafter, the walls were covered with cement. Today, the memory of the once magnificent mosque is being obscured by the construction of a statue.³

Employment

According to the report by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, published in 2020,⁴ the total number of complaints in the field of employment, which were dealt with during the first half of the year, was 23. Among the various reasons for discrimination in employment there were no reports related to religion. The Muslim Forum of Albania, an organization dealing among other things with monitoring Islamophobic and racist incidents in different fields, didn't receive any complaints either.⁵

However, as in the past, women with hijabs complain about being discriminated due to their religious identity.⁶ A Muslim journalist indicated that several times she was not hired because of her headscarf. She claimed that after being called for a job interview, she was told that the institution can't hire her.

In addition, there are many cases of men and women who have faced various forms of discrimination, especially in the case of a visible religious identity, during their job interviews; however, they refused to make their stories public due to fear of repercussions.⁷

Education

According to the Albanian constitution, schools are secular. This means that the curricula approved by the Ministry of Education must not have a religious content.⁸

3. "Bashkia zhduk xhaminë e Tabakëve në qendër të Vlorës...", date of publication unspecified, Mexhliis.com, <https://mexhliis.com/2020/09/02/bashkia-zhduk-xhamine-e-tabakeve-ne-qender-te-vlores/> (Access date: 06.11.2020).

4. Raporti 6 mujor Janar- Qershor 2020, Komisioneri për Mbrojtjen nga Diskriminimi <https://www.kmd.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Raporti-KMD-6-mujori-i-l-re-i-vitit-2020.pdf> (Access date: 15.11.2020).

5. Forumi Musliman i Shqipërisë, <http://www.forumimusliman.org/english/raporto.html>, (Access date: 15.11.2020).

6. Besnik Sinani and Elton Hatibi, Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2017, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, Istanbul, SETA, 2018, p. 40.

7. Olsi Jazexhi, Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2018, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, Istanbul, SETA, 2019, p. 67.

8. Juliana Ajdini, Islamophobia in Albania. National Report 2015, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016, p.16.

Related to a sexual abuse story, after the statement that one of the perpetrators had been a “teacher of the Islamic religion,” the imam Ahmed Kalaja was invited to the TV program “Ftesë në 5,” where he suggested that in the education system and school curricula, besides the subject of sexual education, religion education should be included as a non-compulsory subject, as is the case in other developed countries. He stated that the subject’s aim must be to introduce pupils to some basic knowledge of Islam and to focus on ethics such as love and respect for people, for our parents, etc.

Politics

On July 15, the National Center for Books and Reading, founded by the Ministry of Culture,¹⁰ organized a competition for choosing Albanian books to be translated into foreign languages. Among the twelve authors, only six were selected and among those six there was a book by Ben Blushi, a politician and writer known for his Islamophobic stances.¹¹ Blushi’s novel *Othello, The Arab of Vlora*, which contains racist and Islamophobic content, was chosen to be translated into Greek.¹² This means that the ministry’s funds will be spent on the promotion of hatred, as this book is offensive towards the majority of the Albanian population, namely Muslims.

A debate on religious grounds was included in the proceedings of the plenary session of the Assembly on October 7, 2020.¹³ The debate was initiated by Ralf Gjoni, an Albanian MP and former member of the LSI, a left-wing party, who while talking about depopulation said that the departure of people will result in an Albania where only old people like Spartak Braho, children of criminals, and hijabi women will remain.¹⁴ After Gjoni’s speech, the chairwoman of the plenary session, Vasilika Hysi, intervened and warned him about the insulting language. MP Halit Valteri said that Gjoni should wash his mouth when talking about women with headscarves, as “they are hundred times more honored than him.” Valteri then asked the chairwoman to expel “people with strong Islamophobe attitudes” from the parliament.

9. “Jo edukatë seksuale në shkolla por edukatë fetare”/ Ahmed Kalaja: Më është nxjerrë fjala nga konteksti, ja çfarë dua të them...” Top Channel, 9 June 2020, <https://top-channel.tv/2020/06/09/jo-edukate-seksuale-ne-shkolla-por-edukate-fetare-ahmed-kalaja-me-eshte-nxjerre-fjala-nga-konteksti-ja-çfare-dua-te-them/> (Access date: 15.11.2020),
10. Qendra Kombëtare e Librit dhe Leximit, <https://qkll.gov.al/rreth-qkll/vendimi-i-krijimit/> (Access date: 15.11.2020).
11. Nada Dosti, Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2019, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020, p. 9.
12. Përkthimi i autorëve shqiptarë/ Qendra Kombëtare e Librit ka hapur një fond për përkthimet nga shqipja në gjuhë të huaj, Top Channel, 15 July, 2020, <https://top-channel.tv/2020/07/15/perkthimi-i-autoreve-shqiptare-qendra-kombetare-e-librit-ka-hapur-nje-fond-per-perkthimet-nga-shqipja-ne-gjuhe-te-huaj/> (Access date: 15.11.2020),
13. “Plas debati fetar në Kuvend/ Ralf Gjoni bën deklaratën e çuditshme: Shpopullimi do të bëjë që këtu të ngelet vetëm gra me shami, i kthehet keq Valteri: Laj gojën mirë kur...” FaxWeb.al, 7 October, 2020 <https://www.faxweb.al/gjoni-valteri-parlament-7-shtator-2020/> (Access date: 06.11.2020).
14. “Sherr për Erdoganin dhe gratë me shami në Parlament/ Valteri i përgjigjet Gjonit: Laj gojën para se...” *Gazeta Shqip*, 7 October 2020 <https://www.gazeta-shqip.com/aktualitet/sherr-per-erdoganin-dhe-shamine-ne-parlament-valteri-i-pergjigjet-gjo-4424> (Access date: 06.11.2020).

In the aftermath of the Vienna attack, Spartak Ngjela, who was an MP between 2001 and 2009, claimed on a television program that “our medieval history was characterized by Islamic terrorism, that’s the only thing they (Muslims) know to do well: killing, massacres etc....” The journalist Fitim Zekthi immediately answered saying Ngjela was nothing more than an ignorant Islamophobe who has read only two books and is a failed politician.¹⁵

Media

As in past years, the anti-Turkish propaganda continues to be spread by sharing content that is not relevant to the Albanian social and political context. Turkophobia was also promoted by the fake news published by the newspaper *Gazeta Express* “Marry Your Rapist,” where it was claimed that a new scandalous draft law in Turkey legitimizes rape, child marriage, and sexual abuse.¹⁶

The well-known Islamophobe Kastriot Myftaraj has compared Turkey’s support for the process of the rehabilitation after the devastating earthquake of November 26, 2019, to “Turkish charity with 500 apartments, or neo-Ottoman investment: Turkey donated us 500 ‘crumbs’ from the ‘baklava’ of its profits in Albania.”¹⁷ According to Myftaraj, the Turkish government can afford to play the role of being charitable in Albania by building a neighborhood of 500 apartments. He claims that by doing so, they will, of course, build a mosque and a Turkish school in the middle of the neighborhood. “Given the official neo-Ottoman policy of Islamization pursued by the Turkish government, it is not known whether this Turkish neighborhood should be called Turkish charity or Turkish investment. It is no coincidence that the city of Lac, with a majority Catholic population, was chosen to strengthen the Muslim presence there. Every 1 million dollars of Arab and Turkish aid in Albania is provided on the condition that a minaret must be built too, which requires at least one mosque,” he added on his post on Facebook.¹⁸

The Albanian writer Silvana Berki, a resident of Finland, published the article “STOP - These Turkish Movies, Which Are Infecting Albanian Screens.”¹⁹ This claim is despite the fact that there are not only Turkish soap operas on Albanian media, but also Indian, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and English movies and series.

15. “Islamofob që ke lexuar 2 libra”, Zekthi shpërthen ndaj Ngjelës (Avokati: Jam superior)”, Top Channel, 3 November 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDUcM3ci_wA (Access date: 15.11.2020).

16. “Martohu me përdhunuesin”, projektligji i ri skandaloz në Turqi” (Marry Your Rapist, The New Scandalous Draft Law in Turkey), *Gazeta Express*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/martohu-me-perdhunuesin-projektligji-i-ri-skandaloz-ne-turqi/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

17. Kastriot Myftaraj, 15 January 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kastriotmyftaraj1966/posts/2763151457076974>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

18. Ibid.

19. “STOP – këtyre filmave turq, me të cilët po infektohen ekranet shqiptare” (STOP - These Turkish Movies, Which Are Infecting Albanian Screens), date unspecified, February 2020, <https://zgjohushqiptar.com.al/2020/02/20/stop-ketyre-filmave-turq-me-te-cilet-po-infektohen-ekranet-shqiptare/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

Another public figure in the Islamophobia network, Fahri Xharra,²⁰ also contributed to the anti-Turkish rhetoric with a call to all Albanians against Turkey. According to Xharra, the Ottoman regime disconnected Albanians from their roots and heritage, and if we rely on Turkey, we will again be denied our identity as Albanians. Xharra added that it is because of the Ottomans that Albanians converted from Catholicism and Orthodoxy to Islam.

Albanian political actors not infrequently choose to address and give messages to citizens with citations from the Bible or the Qur'an. Mustafa Nano, a journalist who is well-known for his Islamophobia, stated that such messages are public shows. According to Nano,²¹ their use is inappropriate "because politics is something different and religious belief is something else", meaning that politics and religion should not be mixed. In his monologue during his TV program "Provokacia"²² titled "If there was a God, the first in hell would be Trump, Erdogan, Netanyahu, and their people in Albania" he claimed, "Trump, Erdogan, and Netanyahu can be believers. Still, they do not hold the Bible, the Qur'an, or the Tanakh in their hands as believers. They hold them in their hands as politicians. Whoever does the show with faith, does not do so in the name of faith. He does so in the name of politics. Secularism is a value and shows like those of Trump, Erdogan, and Netanyahu compromise this value. Here in Tirana, the day has not yet come for a politician to take to the streets and squares with a Bible or the Qur'an in his hand, but that day will also come. They are just warming up."

In the same program, Nano also mocked the imam and mufti of Shkodra, by saying, "We do not deny that Muhamet Sytari believes in God. We do not deny that he is also Albanian. By the way, Muhamet Sytari paid homage these days to Mehmet II, the sultan who conquered Constantinople, the sultan who conquered all the areas where Albanians live today. This is not normal. With this he did not do a religious thing. He did a political thing. In this case he is not a Muslim. He is Turkish. He eats the bread of the Albanians and makes *dua* (prays) for the Turks."²³

On another occasion,²⁴ during a debate about the Prophet Muhammad cartoons and the murder of Samuel Paty in France, Nano claimed that he feels offended by

20. "Islamofobi Fahri Xharra: Nëse i përkulemi të kaluarës Osmane, do të shkëputemi nga Shqiptaria", *Gazeta Impakt*, exact date unspecified, July 2020, <https://gazetaimpakt.com/islamofobi-fahri-xharra-nese-i-perkulemi-te-kaluares-osmane-do-te-shkeputemi-nga-shqiptaria/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

21. "Po të kishte Zot, të parët në ferr do ishin Trumpi, Erdogani, Netanahu"- Mustafa Nano provokon: Edhe në Shqipëri, po vjen dita kur...!", 9 June 2020, <http://www.panorama.com.al/po-te-kishte-zot-te-paret-ne-ferr-do-ishin-trumpi-erdogani-netaniahu-mustafa-nano-provokon-edhe-ne-shqiperi-po-vjen-dita-qe/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

22. "Nano: Po te kishte Zot, te paret ne ferr do ishin Trumpi, Erdogani, Netaniahu", ABC News Albania, 9 June 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkOj8hiqBUs>, (Access date: 05.11.2020).

23. Ibid.

24. "Open – "Muhamedi-Macron-Erdogan", Mustafa Nano përballet me Redi Shehun, Kapexhiun dhe Ramkajn", Top Channel, 29 October 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QebZPa0-gg, (Access date: 10.11.2020).

the Muslim women with hijabs,²⁵ that hundreds of Muslims believe that women are below men,²⁶ and that some people may be offended by the *adhan*, so let them be (is their right to feel so).²⁷

The Albanian journalist from Kosovo Arbana Xharra continues her anti-Muslim propaganda, this time by “warning” that “Albanians are carrying out extremist activities in Switzerland.” She claimed that the Albanian people are playing a terribly prominent role in extremist activities in Switzerland²⁸ and in the suburbs of large cities like Zurich, St. Petersburg, Gallen, Bern, and Basel, where imams “roam” against the West. “A few days ago, a Kosovar imam was deported from Switzerland, who was accused of beating his wife and his religious sermons were contrary to Swiss law, or another whose sermons were approaching anti-Semitism,” she added. The imam in question has denied all accusations.²⁹

Following the Vienna terror attack, Xharra posted the article “I Was Right” – a reference to the fact that the terrorist was of Albanian heritage. According to her almost-prediction, “I was declared Islamophobic and still carry this epithet. For years, as I struggled to raise awareness of the great danger of this cancer, propaganda was made against me with slander, to lose my credibility when I talk about Islamist extremists. During these eight years, I have seen that Albanians are fulfilling the agenda of Serbia, what for 100 years this regime tried to portray to the world, ‘Islamist terrorist Albanians - Middle East and the Balkans.’ They are filling the mosques of Europe with Albanians calling for jihad, they took part in terrorist attacks like the last one in Vienna, days ago they demanded the departure of Kosovo’s ambassador to France because he criticized an Islamist terrorist who beheaded a teacher ...”³⁰ Xharra also claims that at the University of Pristina, public and private

25. “Mustafa Nano në ‘Open’: Unë fyhem kur shikoj femra të mbuluara”, Top Channel, 28 October 2020, https://top-channel.tv/2020/10/28/mustafa-nano-ne-open-une-fyhem-kur-shikoj-femra-te-mbuluara/?fbclid=IwAR1Y-zce8IPjU4M_uvYn_DfmSLOUw4PZFR1JJISQa_hKrqvly-0BmjVwjXc, (Access date: 10.11.2020).

26. “Mustafa Nano në Open: Qindra myslimanë mendojnë se gruaja është nivel poshtë burrit”, Hapur.al, 28 October 2020, http://www.hapur.al/2020/10/28/mustafa-nano-ne-open-qindra-myslimane-mendojne-se-gruaja-eshte-nivel-poshte-burrit/?fbclid=IwAR2Dtc9WJuNUoW0rt3x3dtyIV_rabO_9ptr9oJb4W2dD_-KLat-2pO59bmPM, (Access date: 10.11.2020).

27. “Mustafa Nano: Dikush mund të fyhet se dëgjon 5 herë ezanin, le të fyhet”, Top Channel, 28 October 2020, https://top-channel.tv/2020/10/28/mustafa-nano-dikush-mund-te-fyhet-se-degjon-5-here-ezanin-le-te-fyhet/?fbclid=IwAR2J8AXFSDkC7Aj3jF85dib8Z30J4Wvygs5WiYN5iW8Kd818m0r6XFC_w_M, (Access date: 10.11.2020).

28. “Islamofobia Arbana Xharra: Shqiptarët kryejnë aktivitetete ekstremiste në Zvicër”, *Gazeta Impakt*, date of publication unspecified, <https://gazetaimpakt.com/islamofobia-arbana-xharra-shqiptaret-kryejne-aktivitetete-ekstremiste-ne-zvicer/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

29. “Zvicra përzhë imamin shqiptar që rrahu dhe dhunoi gruan, ai ka disa fjalë”, Kosova.info, 19 December 2019, <https://kosova.info/zvicra-perzhe-imamin-shqiptar-qe-rrahu-dhe-dhunoi-gruan-ai-ka-disa-fjale/>, (Access date: 28.12.2020).

30. “Islamofobia Arbana Xharra sulmon myslimanët shqiptarë, janë shumë aktivë në qarqet islamike dhe bëjnë thirrje për xhihad”, *Gazeta Impakt*, publication date unspecified, 2020, <https://gazetaimpakt.com/islamofobia-arbana-xharra-sulmon-muslimanet-shqiptare-jane-shume-aktive-ne-qarqet-islamike-dhe-bejne-thirrje-per-xhihad/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

institutions, and influential people are campaigning in favor of Erdogan and against voices that criticize “Islamist agendas.” “Albanians like the one that filled the front pages of the media today (the Vienna attacker) have been recruited by the imams of Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania. In the name of the ‘religion of peace,’ today more than ever Albanians are on the black list of Islamist extremists in the world. This is just the beginning, we will see what will happen in a few years!” she added on her post.³¹

The TV program on RTV Ora, PoltikOn of November 5 was entitled “Albanian Jihad.”³² Starting from the very title and later the opening monologue, the video insert, etc., the program was built on an Islamophobic narrative, by emphasizing expressions such as “Islamists”, “radical Muslim”, “Islamic terrorist”, “jihadist”, “Islamic propaganda”, etc. The debate moderator, a journalist known for other Islamophobic incidents as well,³³ Alfred Lela, started his monologue by saying that the mosques have reverted people to religion but not people to God. According to him “tele-imams” or electoral imams are installing a political Islam that suggests choosing between Erdogan and Gülen, and what is left can be given to the next Eastern Cezar. “The cult objects are not building for the believers but for the followers, and all this seems like Muslim-related troubles but in fact is related to all Albanians,” Lela added in his monologue. It should be mentioned that the two most prominent figures of Islamophobia in Albania were invited to the debate: the journalists Arbana Xharra and Mustafa Nano.

Related to the issue of the “freedom of expression” discourse, according to the political scientist Ermal Hasimja, “It is better to suffer from the consequences of freedom of expression than from its absence as a restriction.”³⁴ Hasimja said that what has further increased the tensions in France is related to the strengthening of some factions, which do not allow Muslims’ integration into society and lead to such acts.³⁵

In October 2020, Qendrim Gashi, Ambassador of Kosovo in France, shared a post on his Twitter account³⁶ from *Le Figaro* with a report of the chronological events dealing with the reactions in the aftermath of the publications featuring Charlie

31. “Shqiptaret terroriste islamiste ky eshte vetem fillimi” Arbana Xharra, Newspaper Tema Online, 4 November 2020, <http://www.gazetatema.net/2020/11/04/shqiptaret-terroriste-islamiste-ky-eshte-vetem-fillimi/> (Access date: 04.11.2020).

32. “Shqiptaret dhe Islami politik”, YouTube, Streamed live on 5 Nov 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-aoeiD_-kM, (Access date: 15.11.2020).

33. Besnik Sinani (2017): Islamophobia in Albania. National Report 2016, in: Enes Bayraktılı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017, p. 21.

34. “Macron dhe Islami”, Ermal Hasimja: Më mirë të vuash pasojat e lirisë së shprehjes se sa mungesën e saj si liri, Euronews Albania, 2 November 2020, https://euronews.al/al/ilva-now/2020/11/02/franca-dhe-islami-hasimja-me-mire-te-vuash-pasojat-e-lirise-se-shprehjes-se-sa-mungesen-e-saj-si-liri?fbclid=IwAR1X-pG8J2Ee2N9iA-lFVx-kKEKGzqzGoMJbiFyj8RWk50mdnwK9k_9W2uk.

35. Ibid

36. Official Twitter account of Mr Qendrim Gashi, Ambassador of Kosovo to France. <https://twitter.com/qendrimrgashi> (Access date:25.01.2021).

Hebdo cartoons representing the Prophet Muhammed and the murder of Party.³⁷ The post was later deleted by the Ambassador, followed by a statement where he explained his stance on the issue³⁸. The Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK) condemned the Ambassador's post on Twitter and even required his resignation. Following BIK's reaction, the journalist Mero Baze,³⁹ owner of the newspaper *Gazeta Tema*, published an article titled "Talibanism Requires a Governmental Reaction".⁴⁰ Baze said that the Islamic Community of Kosovo should have first condemned the "act of execution" of the French teacher; if they didn't do so, it means that they agree with this kind of execution. Later, he mocked the Muslim intellectual Kim Mehmeti, who called the ambassador in question a "monster, who is better locked in a cage in the zoo so even if he barks, at least he can't bite anyone."⁴¹

The national television channel Top Channel, this year, as in the past, has fostered Islamophobia with different media contents, but especially with the television programs that have been analyzed in this report. One of the most controversial such occasions was the TV show "Dua te te bej te lumtur" (I want to make you happy) which was broadcast on June 6.⁴² On the show, stories of sexual abuse were disclosed and specifically the story of an orphan who claimed to have been regularly abused during her stay at the orphanage in the city of Shkodra. The 27-year-old Adriana made the shocking confession that the abuser was a teacher of Islamic religion. The first shadow of doubt regarding the accusation was that at the orphanage in Shkodra - or at any other orphanage in the whole country - there is no teacher of religion, be it Islam or Christianity. Antonjeta Pero, the social worker who worked at the orphanage, confirmed this and stated, "The orphanage has never had Islamic or Christian teachers in its staff."⁴³ There were other reactions as well who defined the case as slander: Justinian Topulli from the Muslim community; Agron Hoxha, a member of the Muslim Community of Albania (KMSH); and the human rights lawyer Gentian Sejrani.⁴⁴

37. "Kosovo MP wears 'I Love Muhammad' face mask" AA, 26 October 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/kosovo-mp-wears-i-love-muhammad-face-mask/2018926> (Access date: 28.01.2021)

38. Flet Qëndrim Gashi: Jam ambasador i të gjithëve, i atyre që besojnë e s'besojnë, *mediafokus.info*, 21 October 2020, <https://mediafokus.info/flet-qendrim-gashi-jam-ambasador-i-te-gjitheve-i-atyre-qe-besojne-e-sbesojne/> (Access date:25.01.2021).

39. Mero Baze, "Talebaniizmi kerkon nje pergjigje shteterore", *Gazeta Tema*, 21 October 2020, http://www.gazetatema.net/2020/10/21/talebaniizmi-kerkon-nje-pergjigje-shteterore/?fbclid=IwAR0Hb1858Yk9YN-YozKUH-BiIXEYendNpmgjF8m-_EcWC4m32RpFcDK9TDWg, (Access date:13.11.2020).

40. Kim Mehmeti, "Ambasadorë si ai i Kosovës në Paris nuk janë të denjë për të përfaqësuar një kopsht zoologjik", *Syri.net*, 20 October 2020, https://www.syri.net/syri_kosova/politike-lajme/176147/kim-mehmeti-ambasadore-si-ai-i-kosoves-ne-paris-nuk-jane-te-denje-per-te-perfaqesuar-nje-kopsht-zoologjik/, (Access date:13.11.2020).

41. *Ibid*

42. "Vajza jetime denoncon abuzimet seksuale – Dua të të bëj të lumtur, 6 June 2020", Top Channel, 7 June 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAXeuZ11iYA>.

43. "Doza islamofobie të theksuar nga Arbana Osmani dhe Top Channel", *Mexhllis.com*, 7 June 2020, <https://mexhllis.com/2020/06/08/doza-islamofobie-te-theksuar-nga-arbana-osmani-dhe-top-channel/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

44. *Ibid*

It comes as no surprise that Top Channel, whose general manager is Ben Blushi, a well-known Islamophobe,⁴⁵ would choose to highlight an aspect of the story where the villain does not have a name, a face, or a concrete address, but is a random character with an “Islamic religious denominator.” This certainly serves the scandal and provokes extraordinary reactions and great indignation in the audience, regardless of the consequences. The statement that one of the perpetrators had been a “teacher of the Islamic religion” unbalances the narrative and provides information which rather than giving details about the perpetrator or his identity, stigmatizes and creates distrust of a certain category of people (Muslim) that identify with this common denominator (“Islamic”).

The reaction of the media, portals in particular, was even more problematic.⁴⁶ In the domain of Albanian portals, which operate more in the format of tabloids, the truth and the avoidance of general harm have never been part of their work ethic.

Instead, the “teacher of the Islamic religion” as the rapist was the headline,⁴⁷; this unknown perpetrator became the biggest concern⁴⁸ of any portal and the main culprit in the media dock.⁴⁹

The way Adriana’s story was reflected in the media, but also many other cases, shows that we are dealing with a trend in the Albanian media and a serious problem with the way such incidents are reported, especially when the event is closely related to Islam and Muslims. This is a problem that this report on Islamophobia in Albania has pointed out, emphasizing that certain media has the tendency to report or write systematically about Islam and Muslims focusing only on negative aspects and events filled with stereotypes and prejudices.

Justice System

On September 12, 2020, an “online petition” on the Change.com platform,⁵⁰ was initiated by a group of Albanian citizens in defense of imam Genc Balla, who is under the “41 Bis” system - a way of punishment implemented in Albania since August

45. Nada Dosti: Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2019, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020, p. 60.

46. “Media si dhunuese e dinjitetit njerëzor dhe nxitëse e paragjykimeve”, Observer.al, 10 June 2020, <https://observer.al/media-si-dhunuese-e-dinjitetit-njerëzor-dhe-nxitëse-e-paragjykimeve/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

47. “Rrëfimi i Adrianës: Mësuesi i fesë islame abuzonte me ne në jetimore.” TiranaToday, 6 June 2020, <https://tiranatoday.al/rrëfimi-i-adrianës-mësuesi-i-fesë-islame-abuzonte-me-ne-në-jetimore/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020)

48. “27-vjeçarja bën rrëfimin tronditës: Mësuesi I fesë islame në jetimore abuzonte me ne. Na fuste në bodrum, ishin 10 vjeçe”, Dosja.al. 6 June 2020, <https://dosja.al/27-vjeçarja-ben-rrëfimin-tronditës-mësuesi-i-fesë-islame-ne-jetimore-abuzonte-me-ne-na-fuste-ne-bodrum-ishin-10-vjeçe/>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

49. “Vajza e abuzuar nga polici në Fushë Arrëz bën deklaratën rrëqethëse: Mësuesi i fesë islame na fuste në bodrum, na rreshtonte dhe abuzonte seksualisht me ne (E PLOTË)”, NewsBomb.al., 7 June 2020, <https://www.newsbomb.al/vajza-e-abuzuar-nga-polici-ne-fushe-arrez-ben-deklaraten-rrëqethese-mësuesi-i-fesë-islame-na-fuste-ne-bodrum-na-rreshtonte-dhe-abuzonte-seksualisht-me-ne-e-plote-209352>, (Access date: 10.10.2020).

50. Edi Rama: ndalo torturen kunder imam Genci Balles! (PM Edi Rama: Stop Torture against Imam Genci Balles!) https://www.change.org/p/edi-rama-edi-rama-mos-e-vrit-me-tortura-imam-genci-balles?recruiter=1011742107&recruited_by_id=91eb4f90-f5ee-11e9-8f09-8d123db54c77&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=petition_dashboard, (Access date: 05.11.2020)

1, 2020. The “41 Bis” system is dedicated to prisoners with high risk and potential threat (drug trafficking, homicide, aggravated robbery and extortion, kidnapping, terrorism, and attempting to subvert the constitutional system). However, Balla was detained in 2014 under the accusation of terrorism. According to the petition, Balla has not engaged in any terrorist act.⁵¹

His family members claim that he is denied any contact with his family and that he cannot receive books or food. It has been reported that he was under treatment due to health problems as he was denied halal food. For a period of time, he was given intravenous feeding because he refused to eat non-halal food.⁵²

On October 2, 2020, the individuals behind the petition applied for permission to conduct a democratic protest in front of the Ministry of Justice in Tirana against this torture, which was rejected by the police. Among the activists was also the historian and journalist Olsi Jazexhi who declared that has received phone calls from police officers warning him not to attempt to approach the institutions⁵³. Mr Jazexhi was detained during the time when the protest was supposed to be held, and then was released later that day.⁵⁴

Internet

The journalist Arbana Xharra wrote a post about the hijab on her social media account,⁵⁵ after a long debate⁵⁶ related to the beginning of the new academic year in Kosovo. (Fig. 1) The focus of the debate, which involved very important political actors and policy-makers, was the decision of whether to allow hijabs in the public schools of Kosovo. In her post, Xharra stated that in the Qur'an the fact that a Muslim woman should be covered is not mentioned, but that this is the legacy of Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid. She called the hijab a “misogynistic and sexist act.”⁵⁷ According to Xharra, the hijab has become someone's agenda and what worries her the most is “the primitiveness of some who want to sell the handcuffing of a woman as freedom of expression.”

51. Ibid

52. “Mbështetësit e imamit Genci Balla përfundojnë qeli, mes tyre edhe gazetari që hartoi peticionin për lirimin”. Shekulli.com, 25 September 2020, http://shekulli.com.al/mbeshtetesit-e-imamit-genci-balla-perfundojne-qeli-mes-tyre-edhe-gazetari-qe-hartoi-peticionin-per-lirimin/?fbclid=IwAR0IEcwo3HVCLjh76Xp_4nB89ksIIs9EsI1o6hBviak5IECDAjcrZlgtMps, (Access date:05.11.2020).

53. A petition demanding the end of torture against Imam Genci Balla, Olsi Jazexhi, 11 October 2020, <https://ol-sijazexhi.wordpress.com/2020/10/11/a-petition-demanding-the-end-of-torture-against-imam-genci-balla/>, (Access date: 05.11.2020).

54. “Mbështetësit e imamit Genci Balla përfundojnë qeli, mes tyre edhe gazetari që hartoi peticionin për lirimin”, Shekulli.com. 25 September 2020, (http://shekulli.com.al/mbeshtetesit-e-imamit-genci-balla-perfundojne-qeli-mes-tyre-edhe-gazetari-qe-hartoi-peticionin-per-lirimin/?fbclid=IwAR0IEcwo3HVCLjh76Xp_4nB89ksIIs9EsI1o6hBviak5IECDAjcrZlgtMps), (Access date: 05.11.2020).

55. Ibid.

56. “Hixhabi në shkollat publike në Kosovë: së shpejti merret vendimi”, Muslimania.al, 22 August 2020, <https://muslimania.al/hixhabi-ne-shkollat-publike-ne-kosove-se-shpejti-merret-vendimi/>

57. Same place, Arbana Xharra, Facebook, 22 August 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/axharra/posts/10219541875672414>, (Access date: 04.11.2020).

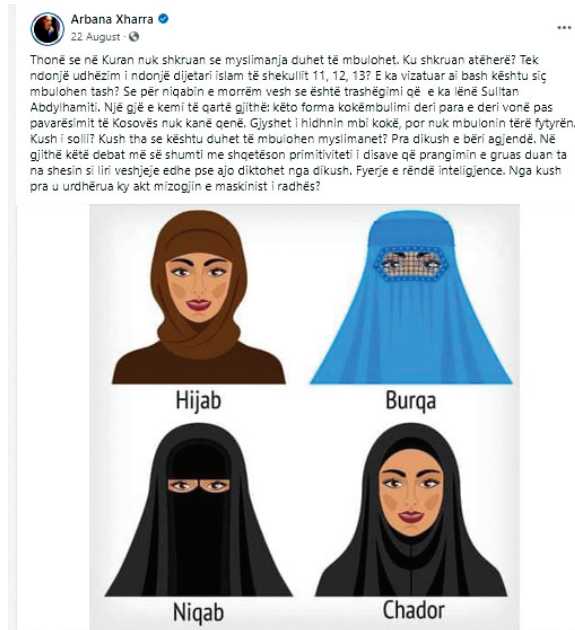


Figure 1: The journalist Arbana Xharra's post on her Facebook account about the hijab.⁵⁸

On his social media account on Facebook, Kastriot Myftaraj has posted a series of posts⁵⁹ in 2020 mocking and spreading slanders against the imam Elvis Naçi⁶⁰, his family members (his wife and mother), and the imam Osman Musliu.⁶¹ Myftaraj called Musliu an Arabic-speaking Turkophile and an Albanian speaker who has no connection with Albania, except that he declared himself Albanian in the censuses of the population in Northern Macedonia due to the fact that in his mosque, “without any concern, even with pride,” he recites the call for prayer for the Albanian believers five times a day in Arabic.

Regarding the imam Naçi, Myftaraj created conspiracy theories such as connections with Greece; connections with powerful, rich people and politicians; and stories regarding the imam’s “obscure” past, which according to Myftaraj he has very strong reasons to hide. He called him “a minority, uneducated imam, and paid by Wahhabi circles” and also a “philanthropist with the money of others, a luxury beggar on behalf of the poor, miserable, and people in need.”⁶² (Figs. 2, 3)

58. Arbana Xharra, Facebook, 22 August 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/axharra/posts/10219541875672414>, (Access date: 04.11.2020).

59. Kastriot Muftaraj, Facebook, 04 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kastriotmyftaraj1966/posts/3007825925942858>, (Access date: 25.01.2021).

60. Kastriot Muftaraj, Facebook, 04 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kastriotmyftaraj1966/posts/3007238806001570>, (Access date: 25.01.2021).

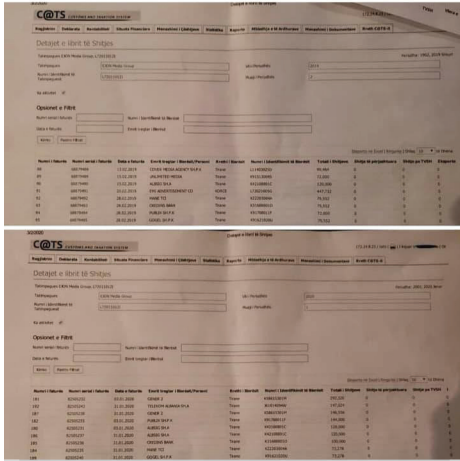
61. Kastriot Muftaraj, Facebook, 12 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kastriotmyftaraj1966/posts/3026442667414517>, (Access date: 25.01.2021).

62. “Elvis Naçi është minoritar, i pashkolluar për hoxhë dhe i paguar nga qarqet vehabiste”, Revista Drini, 9 October 2020, <https://revistadrini.info/elvis-naci-eshte-minoritar-i-pashkolluar-per-hoxhe-dhe-i-paguar-nga-qa>

← Kastriot Myftaraj



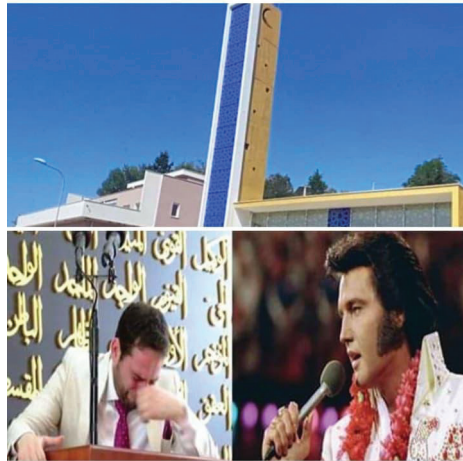
përhap portali i Elvit nuk duhet të rrinë të qetë, duke menduar se nuk do të kenë pasoja, pasi ata janë të vetëdijshëm se Elvi nuk mund ta mbante fabrikën e tij të shpifjeve pa ndihmën e tyre. A thua do ta marrin ata me sportivitet nëse jeta dhe punët e tyre do të shqyrtohen me metodat e përdorura nga Elvi?/Kastriot Myftaraj



← Kastriot Myftaraj



vonë. Sesi I përdor hoxha i nderuar paratë e dhuruara, apo të donatuara siç thotë ai. Në fotografinë bashkëngjitur do të shikoni pamjen e pjeshme të vilës ku banon Hoxhë Elvisi, të mbuluar pjesërisht nga Xhamia e Artë, që tani është xhamia personale e tij./Kastriot Myftaraj



Figures 2 and 3: Posts from Kastriot Myftaraj’s Facebook account with slanderous accusations against imam Elvis Naçi.⁶³

Anton Zefi is known on the Internet as the “radical Catholic” and in the past he was wanted by the authorities for insulting Albanian Muslims.⁶⁴ On November 22, he posted another video on TikTok with hate speech towards the Kosovo Albanian “hero” Adem Jashari and his family, who was one of the founders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), and with blasphemous content towards Allah and the Prophet Muhammed.⁶⁵

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In September 2020, the author Ilda Londo and the Albanian Media Institute (*Instituti Shqiptar i Medias*) published the research paper “Hate Speech, Propaganda, and Disinformation in Albanian Media” under the regional project “Resilience: Civil Soci-

rqet-vehabiste/?fbclid=IwAR0T4aYpwNSPbJJpA3H4Zr--TV9aeaZPa3JP_Vix0v7OU3PKR2fQakVcP8Q, (Access date: 19.11.2020).

63. Kastriot Muftaraj, Facebook, 04 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kastriotmyftaraj1966/posts/3007825925942858>, (Access date: 25.01.2021).

64. “Two Albanian Catholics Are Declared Wanted After Insulting Albanian Muslims”, Ocnal.com, date unspecified, 2019, <https://www.ocnal.com/2019/08/two-albanian-catholics-are-declared.html>, (Access date: 25.11.2020).

65. “Rikthehet ekstremisti katolik nga Shqipëria, shanë e fyen rëndë Adem Jasharin”, Insajderi.org, 22 November 2020, <https://insajderi.org/rikthehet-ekstremisti-katolik-nga-shqiperia-shane-e-fyen-rende-adem-jasharin/?fbclid=IwAR0108HqMNXy7G7NyrVAND5xAHHh10Do28wElloV-wrtaKDNfWvU70Fn16Y>, (Access date: 25.11.2020).

ety Efforts to Consolidate Media Freedom and Fight Disinformation and Hate Propaganda in the Western Balkans and Turkey.” The project was organized with the support of the European Union and partner organizations SEENPM, Albanian Media Institute, Media Centar Sarajevo, Kosovo 2.0, Montenegrin Media Institute, Macedonian Media Institute, Novi Sad School of Journalism, Peace Institute, and Bianet.⁶⁶ When discussing hate speech, the research paper does not mention Islamophobia or anti-Muslim propaganda. The main focus of the paper was first on the LGBT community and second on the Roma.

The section “Influence and propaganda from other countries in the Albanian media” mentions that “some online media show some closeness and connection with other countries, mainly with Turkey and Iran. Although these media outlets do not have influence, they display hateful tendencies and messages, or publish propaganda materials that support foreign countries, and denigrate their rivals or political opponents.”⁶⁷ This is followed by a list of three media outlets with a brief description, namely *Gazeta Impakt*, ePerditshmja.com, Frekuenca.net. Those portals are owned by Muslim public figures and project a Muslim-friendly and Turkish-friendly agenda. According to this paper, these media “contains pro-Turkey pro-Muslim; pro-Islamic, against Islamophobia propaganda.”⁶⁸

The most prominent Islamophobic individuals currently active in Albania have been mentioned throughout this report: the journalists Arbana Xharra, Mustafa Nano and Kastriot Myftaraj.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There are no organized political initiatives to counter Islamophobia in Albania. However, some NGOs and news portals like the Muslim Forum of Albania, the League of Albanian Imams, Observer.al, Muslimania.al, *Gazeta Impakt*, Tesheshi.com, and Mexhlisi.com monitor and report anti-Muslim hate speech.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

There are certain developments in the context of discrimination and hate speech discourse, as well as attempts to fulfill the international standards that have been published as recommendations from the relevant EU institutions and agencies. In this regard many seminars are organized and reports are written with the main focus on

66. Ilda Londo, “Resilience: Civil Society Efforts to Consolidate Media Freedom and Fight Disinformation and Hate Propaganda in the Western Balkans and Turkey”, September 2020, <https://seenpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Resilience-research-publication-1-ALB-ENG.pdf>, (Access date: 05.11.2020).

67. Ibid. p.14

68. Ibid. p.16

hate speech. However, Islamophobia is not mentioned nor is it recognized as a crucial part of the hate speech discourse. Anti-Muslim propaganda must be recognized and included as an important aspect of discrimination and hate speech discourse. As we saw in the case of the report by the Albanian Institute of Media “Resilience: Civil Society Efforts to Consolidate Media Freedom and Fight Disinformation and Hate Propaganda in the Western Balkans and Turkey” when it comes to hate speech, the focal point of the narrative is the LGBT community and the Roma. Similarly, the Ombudsman of Albania Erinda Ballanca attended an online conference on the topic “Hate Speech and Discrimination in Online Media and Television” organized by the group Pro LGBT with the support of the German Federal Foreign Office.⁶⁹ During the event, Ballanca emphasized that the language of communication or expression through these means of communication, contains elements of hatred and insult, especially towards individuals belonging to vulnerable or most disadvantaged groups in Albanian society such as “women, Roma and Egyptians, LGBT, people with disabilities, etc.”⁷⁰ Ballanca largely ignored the anti-Muslim discourse in Albania.

The report “Internet Governance in Albania and Its Role in Media Freedom” published by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)⁷¹ founded by the EU, has a whole section on hate speech, which of course, again focuses on the hate speech directed “against groups or communities, in particular Roma and other ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ+ community and women,”⁷² and makes no mention of Islamophobia.

To conclude, we suggest the following recommendations:

- Muslim NGOs and other civil society organizations should cooperate more closely to address the issue of Islamophobia.
- Muslim NGOs, in particular, should cooperate more closely and come up with a common action plan to address the issue of Islamophobia in various fields.
- Media should avoid the use of anti-Muslim stereotypes to the maximum extent possible. They should also avoid reporting unverified news on Muslims and should correct any fake news in this regard.
- The authorities in Albania should investigate any hate crime against people or sites. They should also monitor, officially recognize, and address the continuous hate speech incidents in the media and social media, especially when the perpetrators are prominent public figures.

69. “Avokatja E Popullit Flet Një Aktivitetin “Gjuha E Urrejtes Dhe Diskriminimi Një Mediat Online Dhe “Tv”, Avokatipopullit.al, 20 October 2020, <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/articles-layout-1/media/news/this-article-is-available-only-in-albanian-526/>, (Access date: 15.11.2020).

70. Ibid.

71. “Qeverisja e internetit ne Shqiperi dhe roli i saj ne lirine e medias”, BIRN, July 2020, <https://birn.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Qeverisja-e-internetit.pdf>.

72. Ibid., p. 52.

Chronology

- **06.06.2020:** The scandal of the orphanage in Shkodra.
- **27.08.2020:** The decision of the municipality of Vlora to build a statue in a place where a mosque used to exist.
- **September 2020:** The publication of the report “Resilience: Civil Society Efforts to Consolidate Media Freedom and Fight Disinformation and Hate Propaganda in the Western Balkans and Turkey” by the Albanian Media Institute.
- **12.09.2020:** An online petition on the platform Change.com was initiated by a group of Albanian citizens in defense of the imam Genc Balla who is imprisoned under very strict conditions.
- **07.10.2020:** MP Ralf Gjoni uses hate speech against hijabi women, listing them among the criminals he mentions during a speech.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
AUSTRIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

In January, a new coalition government was formed by the ÖVP and the Greens. The ÖVP was able to continue consistently its Islam policies that had already started during its coalition with the FPÖ. The battle against so-called political Islam became a “top priority.” The Documentation Center for Political Islam was established in July and in December, the first report was presented to the public. The COVID-19 pandemic hit Austria quite hard. Consequently, there was a historical high unemployment rate that especially afflicted the working poor, many amongst them people of color. On November 9, a raid took place against 30 alleged “terrorists” under the slogan of fighting political Islam, which targeted scholars like me as well as aid organizations, traumatizing children and damaging public reputation. In July 2021, the raid was declared unlawful. Following an attack on November 2 and the unrelated raid one week later, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP) suggested making political Islam a criminal offense. A new anti-terrorist package is planned for spring 2021, although a parliamentary investigative commission came to the conclusion that the legal framework was sufficient to tackle such atrocities and pointed to the apparent failure of the secret service to prevent the attack and to take appropriate steps. This package includes a new anti-terrorist law and amendments to the Islam Act, the Citizenship Right Act, the Symbol Act, and the act governing so-called Confessional Communities (*Bekennnisgemeinschaften*). In December, the hijab ban was lifted by the Austrian Constitutional Court, which ruled that the ban in elementary schools was unconstitutional because it violated the principle of equality in conjunction with the right to freedom of religion.

Zusammenfassung

Im Jänner kam es zu einer neuen Koalition von ÖVP und Grünen. Die ÖVP konnte dabei ihre Islampolitik, wie sie diese bereits mit der FPÖ begonnen hatte, ungebrochen weiterführen. Zu einem Schwerpunkt der Regierung wurde der Kampf gegen den sogenannten politischen Islam. Im Juli wurde dann auch die Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam gegründet und im Dezember erschien noch der erste Bericht. Die durch COVID-19 ausgelöste Pandemie traf Österreich sehr schwer. Dementsprechend kam es zu einer Rekordarbeitslosigkeit, die insbesondere die arme Arbeiterschaft und darunter auch People of Color traf. Am 9. November fand eine Razzia statt, die sich unter dem Vorwand des Kampfes gegen den politischen Islam gegen 30 vermeintliche „Terroristen“ richtete. Opfer dieser Razzia, die im Juli 2021 für rechtswidrig erklärt wurde, wurden Wissenschaftler wie ich wie auch Hilfsorganisationen. Die Razzia hinterließ neben großen öffentlichen Schaden auch traumatisierte Kinder. Nach dem militanten Anschlag vom 2. November und der damit nicht in Verbindung stehenden Razzia am 9. November verlautbarte Kanzler Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP), den politischen Islam zu einem Straftatbestand zu machen. Ein sogenanntes Anti-Terror-Paket ist auch auf dem Weg und soll im Frühjahr 2021 implementiert werden, obwohl die Parlamentarische Untersuchungskommission zu dem Schluss kam, dass die gesetzlichen Rahmenbedingungen ausreichen seien, um gegen derartige Anschläge vorgehen zu können. Gleichzeitig wurde das Versagen der Sicherheitsbehörden offensichtlich. Das Paket beinhaltet ein neues Anti-Terrorgesetz sowie Abänderungen des Islamgesetzes, des Bekenntnisgemeinschaftengesetzes, des Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetzes und des Symbolgesetzes. Im Dezember hob der Verfassungsgerichtshof das Kopftuchverbot in Volksschulen auf, da er dieses für verfassungswidrig hält und das Gesetz sich insbesondere gegen den Gleichheitssatz sowie Religionsfreiheit richte.

Country Profile EIR 2020

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 the Greens

Opposition Parties: Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), The Greens, NEOS, FPÖ (right-wing)

Last Elections: October 2019, Parliamentary Elections (ÖVP 71 seats [37.5%]; SPÖ 40 seats [21.2%]; FPÖ 30 seats [16.2%]; The Greens 26 seats [13.9%]; NEOS 15 seats [8.1%]).

Government since January 7, 2020: ÖVP and the Greens.

Total Population: 8.9 million

Major Language: German

Official Religion: No official religion. Federal constitution recognizes 16 churches and religious communities. Islam has been legally recognized since 1912.

Statistics on Islamophobia: 812 cases documented by NGO ZARA.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: ZARA documented 1,950 cases.

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, most 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 (now DO5), Info Direkt

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** In kindergartens since 2018. Constitutional Court repealed the ban of the hijab in primary school in December 2020.
- **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

On January 7, 2020, the new coalition government of the conservative ÖVP and the Greens was inaugurated in what the *New York Times* rightly called an “unlikely partnership.” As part of the coalition program, both parties basically agreed to continue the Islam policies of the former government of the ÖVP and the far-right FPÖ,¹ while the Greens were able to soften some proclamations in the government program,² which did not have a serious impact in the implemented policies. According to Chancellor Kurz, the battle against “political Islam” was a “top priority.” The Greens and the ÖVP agreed to introduce a Documentation Center to target religious extremism (which was originally presented and finally implemented as the Documentation Center for Political Islam),³ while the Greens were able to include the goal to have an “Action Plan Against Right-Wing Extremism.” While the Documentation Center for Political Islam was highly subsidized and implemented in 2021, the Action Plan is still waiting to be implemented. Despite the fact that Chancellor Sebastian Kurz was free to choose candidates for the national parliament in 2017 before he came to power with the FPÖ, the old system that privileges the party’s constituent associations and the emerging regional influences on the party resurfaced.⁴ In many ways, even before the awareness regarding the threat posed by COVID-19 initiated the first lockdown on March 16, the strategy of the coalition was based on creating “crises.” As journalist Stefan Weiss said, the ÖVP and the Greens have been repeating over and over again the urgency of challenging two crises: climate (The Greens) and migration (ÖVP). Weiss stated, “The coalition needs the crisis as a permanent condition to keep voters in line.”⁵ Following the first lockdown, a surprisingly large rally was held to support the Black Lives Matter movement, also including a major Muslim participation. More than 50,000 people gathered in the city of Vienna and around 100,000 in all major cities.⁶ But following the end of the first lockdown in summer, Austria managed the COVID-19 pandemic quite unprofessionally, leading the country to become the worst hit country on a global scale at the end of the

1. Judith Kohlenberg, “Integrationspolitik: Alles beim Alten?”, *Wiener Zeitung*, 3 January 2020, <https://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinung/gastkommentare/2044809-Integrationspolitik-Alles-beim-Alten.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).
2. Interview by Farid Hafez with a Green member of parliament who was involved in the government negotiations.
3. Florian Bock, Gerald Heidegger, Georg Krammer, Tamara Sill, Caecilia Smekal and Christian Öser, “Liveticker: Wie sich Kurz und Kogler präsentieren”, ORF, 2 January 2020, <https://orf.at/live/5076-Wie-sich-Kurz-und-Kogler-praesentierten-/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).
4. Conrad Seidl, “Das System Kurz und die Partei dazu – die Machtzentren der Volkspartei”, 5 January 2020, *Der Standard*, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000112904406/das-system-kurz-und-die-partei-dazu-die-machtzentren-der>, (Access date: 27 November 2020).
5. Stefan Weiss, “Türkis-grüne Bedrohungsszenarien: Volle Krise voraus!”, *Der Standard*, 13 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113210887/tuerkis-gruene-bedrohungsszenarien-volle-krise-voraus>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).
6. Farid Hafez, “Black Lives Matter – In Austria Too”, BIAAS, 18 August 2020, <https://botstiberbiaas.org/black-lives-matter/>

year in regards to the rising number of newly infected people per capita. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz blamed this on people returning back from their original countries after vacations (i.e., the racialized whites from the Balkans).⁷ In this way, he racialized the COVID-19 pandemic, which he did not do in the case of privileged skiing sports centers in Ischgl/Tyrolia, which became a hotspot of COVID-19 dissemination throughout Europe. Beyond this racialization, as a consequence of the pandemic, there was a historical high unemployment rate,⁸ which affected to a greater extent the working poor and people of color.

There was also a steep rise in the purchase of weapons alongside these developments. Between March and August, 22,000 more weapons were purchased compared to the year before. Also, 5,000 more people registered for the use of weapons. While six years ago, Austrians owned 838,000 weapons, today, there are 1,132,000 weapons in private hands and the number of registered weapon owners increased from 240,000 to 320,000.⁹ According to a study by the SORA Institute, authoritarian views increased. According to SORA, about 38 percent would like to see an “illiberal democracy” (a term coined by Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán) and many more are following far-right discourses.¹⁰ At the same time, the rise in right-wing extremist acts leading to a total of 797 acts was not seen as a reason to tackle this problem. MP Sabine Schatz (SPÖ) urged the reintroduction of a report on right-wing extremism with no success.¹¹

Following the attack on November 2 by a former sympathizer of Daesh/ISIL, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz initially reacted in a very reasonable and statesmanlike manner, but soon turned to blaming not Jihadism or the failure of the secret service, but so-called political Islam. While the parliamentary investigative commission came to the conclusion that the legal framework was sufficient to tackle such atrocities,¹² the government pushed for a further securitization of Muslims by suggesting making political Islam a criminal offense and changing several legislations such as the already widely criticized Islam Act of 2015,¹³ which will be presented to parliament in 2021.

7. ORF, Auch Koalitionspartner kritisiert Kurz, 3 December 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3192288/>

8. Martin Mohr, “Arbeitslosenquote in Österreich von Dezember 2019 bis Dezember 2020”, Statista, 14 April 2020, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/288887/umfrage/arbeitslosenquote-in-oesterreich-nach-monaten/>

9. Michael Matzenberger, “Zahl der Schusswaffen stieg in Österreich in sechs Jahren um ein Drittel”, *Der Standard*, 26 August 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000119581009/zahl-der-schusswaffen-stieg-in-oesterreich-in-sechs-jahren-um>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

10. Laurin Lorenz and Markus Sulzbacher, “Forscher warnen vor Normalisierung rechtsextremer Sprache”, *Der Standard*, 13 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113249864/forscher-sehen-rechtsextreme-sprache-bei-tuerkis-gruen>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

11. “Rechtsextreme Straftaten 2019 neuerlich gestiegen”, ORF, 7 March 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3156952/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

12. Untersuchungskommission zum Terroranschlag vom 2.11.2020, Zwischenbericht, Geschäftszahl BMI: 2020-0.748.397, 22.10.2020, <https://www.bmi.gv.at/Downloads/Zwischenbericht.pdf>

13. Rijad Dautovic & Farid Hafez, “Institutionalising Islam in Contemporary Austria: A Comparative Analysis of the Austrian Islam Act of 2015 and Austrian Religion Acts with Special Emphasis on the Israelite Act of 2012”, *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, Volume 8, Issue 1, February 2019, pp. 28–50.

A raid was carried out that was designed to hit “political Islam” and alleged terrorists on November 9, but, in fact, only targeted aid organizations¹⁴ and outspoken critics of the government’s Islam policies like me.¹⁵ Chancellor Sebastian Kurz made clear that the fight against so-called political Islam was his top priority. Two days following the raid, he said, “We have to fight two challengers: First, the corona pandemic and second the even stronger fight against terrorism and radicalization in Austria and Europe.”¹⁶

A rather good development was that the hijab ban, which was introduced in primary schools in 2019, was overturned by the Austrian Constitutional Court in December 2020. The Constitutional Court found the headscarf ban in elementary schools to be unconstitutional because it violated the principle of equality in conjunction with the right to freedom of religion. The court’s brief opinion refers to the values of openness and tolerance guaranteed in Article 14 of the Federal Constitutional Law, embodied in the requirement to treat different religious and ideological convictions in accordance with the principle of equality. The Constitutional Court stated that particularly in Austria’s state-organized education sector, the adherence to these constitutionally prescribed values is essential.¹⁷

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The civil society organization *Dokustelle Muslime* documented xy cases of anti-Muslim incidents in 2019. The majority consists of the spread of hate (xy cases), followed by 118 cases of insult, discrimination (xy cases), and others. According to the NGO ZARA, 812 anti-Muslim hate crimes were documented, which is more than double the number of 2019 with 385 cases.¹⁸

Following the militant attacks, ZARA and the *Dokumentationsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit* monitored 60 cases of anti-Muslim hate crime, especially hate crimes targeting women who wear the hijab.¹⁹ Due to COVID-19, the number of online hate crimes increased. The regional Anti-Discrimination Styria (*Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steier-*

14. Rahma Austria, “Operation Luxor blockiert humanitäre Hilfe,” 22 December 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20201222_OTS0130/operation-luxor-blockiert-humanitaere-hilfe-bild

15. Bernhard Ichner, “Operation Luxor: Uni-Professoren stellen sich hinter Farid Hafez”, *Kurier*, 22 January 2021, <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/operation-luxor-uni-professoren-stellen-sich-hinter-farid-hafez/401165178>

16. Bundeskanzleramt: Bundeskanzler Kurz: Terrorismus und politischen Islam mit allen Mitteln bekämpfen, 11 November 2020, <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/bundeskanzleramt/nachrichten-der-bundesregierung/2020/bundeskanzler-kurz-terrorismus-und-politischen-islam-mit-allem-mitteln-bekaempfen.html>

17. “Verhüllungsverbot an Volksschulen ist verfassungswidrig”, Verfassungsgerichtshof Österreich 11 December 2020, https://www.vfgh.gv.at/medien/Verhuellungsverbot_an_Volksschulen_ist_verfassungswid.de.php

18. Interview with ZARA.

19. “Über 60 Meldungen über antimuslimischen Rassismus seit Wien-Anschlag”, *Der Standard*, 13 November 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000121679402/ueber-60-meldungen-ueber-antimuslimischen-rassismus-seit-wien-anschlag>. (Access date: 29 November 2020).

mark) documented a total of 3,215 reported cases (compared to 1,822 digital hate messages in 2019), 144 of which were anti-Muslim hate crimes.²⁰

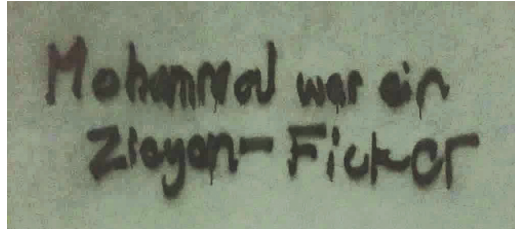


Figure 1: "Mohammad was a goat f*****"²¹

Employment

After the first lockdown to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, which started on March 16, Austria seemed to be doing fairly well. Following the summer, however, Austria soon became one of the worst hit countries on a global scale. This development was accompanied by a historical high unemployment rate. More than 171,000 people - in other words, a third of half a million people - have been without a job for more than a year.²² In a society insensitive to racial injustice, one can only imagine the extent of the repercussions of the economic crisis on people of color and amongst them Muslims.

Education and Science

After a hijab ban was introduced in primary schools in 2019, the Austrian Constitutional Court overturned the ban in December 2020. The Constitutional Court found the headscarf ban in elementary schools to be unconstitutional because it violated the principle of equality in conjunction with the right to freedom of religion. The court's brief opinion refers to the values of openness and tolerance guaranteed in Article 14 of the Federal Constitutional Law, embodied in the requirement to treat different religious and ideological convictions in accordance with the principle of equality. Particularly in Austria's state-organized education sector, the adherence to these constitutionally prescribed values is essential.²³

As in past years, the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), which has been using its platform to promote anti-Muslim views through speakers and reports,²⁴ continued

20. ORF ZIB 1: Hass im Netz während Pandemie verdreifacht, 14 February 2021.

21. Image sent to the author by Mohamed Ahmad, October 2020.

22. Barbara Blaha, "Die Pandemie der Arbeitslosigkeit", Momentum Institut, 16 January 2021, <https://www.momentum-institut.at/news/die-pandemie-der-arbeitslosigkeit>

23. "Verhüllungsverbot an Volksschulen ist verfassungswidrig", Verfassungsgerichtshof Österreich 11 December 2020, https://www.vfgh.gv.at/medien/Verhuellungsverbot_an_Volksschulen_ist_verfassungswid.de.php

24. Bridge Initiative Team, Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), 4 November 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-austrian-integration-fund-osterreichische-integrationsfonds-oif/>

producing one-sided reports. A study of 18 mosques in the city of Graz conducted by the ÖIF between December 2019 and July 2020 was criticized as not bearing the standards of good academic work by academic Wolfgang Benedek, head of the Department of International Law at the University of Graz.²⁵ Later in 2020, the Austrian Court of Audit (*Rechnungshof*) criticized now Chancellor Sebastian Kurz for the commissioned study on Islamic kindergartens.²⁶

A two-year study of Koran schools in Upper Austria began in August 2020 with the participation of the University of Linz, the Teachers Training College, the ÖIF, and the IGGÖ (*Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*, Islamic Religious Community in Austria). Stefan Kainerder (Greens) argued that the study will be conducted in a non-stereotypical way, “not assuming there were extremist movements” involved. Kainerder also criticized the Ministry of Integration’s unwillingness to participate in the research.²⁷ In an interview with activist Rami Ali, the latter stated that the “ÖVP has no credibility when it comes to academic autonomy”²⁸ referring to previous studies commissioned by the ÖIF and conducted by scholars with closeness to the ÖVP.

On February 4, 2020, during a panel organized by the ÖIF, Pascal Bruckner, who authored the book *Un racisme imaginaire – La Querelle de l’islamophobie* (An Imaginary Racism: The Quarrel over Islamophobia), claimed that the “term Islamophobia was invented to silence the critiques of a religion” and that “a society has to distinguish between moderate, liberal Muslims, and radical ones. And we have to support enlightened preachers, imams, and intellectuals with interpreting the Koran in a sophisticated way.”²⁹ According to another panelist, political science graduate Nina Scholz, Islamophobia was a means of political Islam to prevent liberal Muslims’ reforms. Scholz stated, “Political Islam strives to take over the Muslim community in Europe. In the process, ideas for reform or justified criticism are immediately dismissed wholesale as ‘Islamophobic’.”³⁰

25. Julia Wenzel, “Unwissenschaftlich: Pinke Kritik an Grazer Moscheen-Studie”, *Die Presse*, 6 August 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5849117/unwissenschaftlich-pinke-kritik-an-grazer-moscheen-studie>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

26. Fabian Schmid, “Rechnungshof rügt Kurz für Studie zu islamischen Kindergärten”, *Der Standard*, 25 September 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000120236393/rechnungshof-ruegt-kurz-fuer-studie-zu-islam-kindergaerten>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

27. Barbara Eidenberger, “Studie über ‘Koranschulen’ in Oberösterreich läuft an”, *OÖ Nachrichten*, 13 August 2020, <https://www.nachrichten.at/politik/landespolitik/studie-ueber-koranschulen-in-oberoesterreich-laeuft-an;art383,3283492>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

28. Fabian Goldmann, “Der Begriff ‘politischer Islam’ erlaubt einen Generalverdacht gegen Muslime und ihre Einrichtungen”, *heise online*, 5 September 2020 <https://www.heise.de/tp/features/Der-Begriff-politischer-Islam-erlaubt-einen-Generalverdacht-gegen-Muslime-und-ihre-Einrichtungen-4877843.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

29. “Bruckner: ‘Berechtigte Religionskritik und antimuslimische Haltungen nicht vermischen’”, *Österreichischer Integrationsfonds*, 5 February 2020, <https://www.integrationsfonds.at/newsbeitrag/podiumsgespraech-bruckner-5144>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

30. *Ibid.*

The political academy of the FPÖ in Vienna (*Freiheitliche Akademie Wien*) organized a panel on “political Islam” on February 13, 2020 featuring the ex-Jihadist and then secret service agent Irfan Peci, Viennese FPÖ party leader Dominik Nepp, Maximilian Krauss from the academy, and FPÖ politician Stefan Berger.³¹

On the second day in power, the Integration Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP) stated that she considered it a high priority to establish the Documentation Center for Political Islam within the first 100 days of the party’s governance.³² In an interview with *Der Standard*, Minister of Integration Raab defined political Islam in the following way: “This is an ideological, extremist current that wants to infiltrate our society, democracy, the rule of law, and our constitutional values such as equality between men and women. However, it must be clearly distinguished from Islam as a religion.”³³ *Der Standard* journalist Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi criticized the way this term is used to “subliminally target the world religion of Islam as such. But groups (...), which advocate the rule of law and gender equality, are also part of political Islam. And Christianity is also political. The pope is political. The Gospel is political. The Ten Commandments are political (...) Do we really have to watch helplessly as (...) girls who wear headscarves of their own free will and out of pride in their identity are forced to, as they say, ‘undress?’”³⁴

Following attacks by youngsters against a demonstration in Brigittenau/Vienna, Minister of Integration Raab argued for the need to take action against parallel societies and that Austria still had a chance not to become like Britain and France.³⁵ While Ümit Vural, president of the IGGÖ, declared that these incidents were not religious, but were the long arm of Turkish domestic politics and had no place in Austria,³⁶ the incidents were framed by ÖVP politicians as an issue of political Islam. According to integration affairs spokesman Ernst Gödl (ÖVP), the Documentation Center for Political Islam had the mission to analyze such incidents: “The task of this independent body will be to investigate the background of escalations of violence, associations, structures, and backers as well as possible influences from abroad, because political

31. FPÖ Wien, “AVISO: FPÖ: Podiumsdiskussion zum politischen Islam mit Ex-Islamist Peci, Vizebürgermeister Nepp und Stadtrat Krauss”, OTS, 11 February 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200211_OTS0073/aviso-fpoe-podiumsdiskussion-zum-politischen-islam-mit-ex-islamist-peci-vizebuergemeister-nepp-und-stadtrat-krauss, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

32. “Raab: Islamismus-Dokumentationsstelle und Kopftuchverbot zuerst”, ORF, 9 January 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3150355/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

33. Irene Brickner, “Susanne Raab: ‘Ich weiß viele muslimische Mütter auf meiner Seite’”, *Der Standard*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113626707/ich-weiss-viele-muslimische-muetter-auf-meiner-seite>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

34. Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi, “Die Stunde der Zivilgesellschaft”, *Der Standard*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113623831/die-stunde-der-zivilgesellschaft>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

35. “Raab will gegen Parallelgesellschaften vorgehen”, ORF, 3 July 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3172126/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

36. “Regierung beschränkt Extremismus-Dokumentationsstelle auf Islamismus”, *Die Presse*, 15 July 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5839831/regierung-beschaenkt-extremismus-dokumentationsstelle-auf-islamismus>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

Islam is a serious danger for our social coexistence in Austria.”³⁷ He further explained that for the first time in Austria, there is a center that “independently and scientifically deals with the dangerous ideology of political Islam and offers insights into the previously hidden networks. With the establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam, Austria becomes a pioneer in Europe.”³⁸

On July 15, 2020, the establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam was made public in a press release. In contrast to the coalition program that spoke about a “Documentation Center for religiously motivated political extremism,” the name of the center in the end only contained “political Islam.” The center has a yearly budget of €500,000. The Documentation Center was presented to the public by Minister of Integration Susanne Raab, theologian Mouhanad Khorchide, and the so-called expert on extremism Lorenzo Vidino.³⁹ Muslim activist Tarafa Baghajari questioned the academic quality of Vidino. On July 16, 2020, the position of the director of the Documentation Center was advertised for the next five years with a monthly salary of €4,443.90. Qualifications for the position of director include a minimum of a master’s degree.⁴⁰ According to the mission statement, the Documentation Center, which is legally a state fund, is directed towards monitoring movements that do not pose a security-related threat. It is designed to be preventive and informative, and is “part of the national strategy of extremism prevention and deradicalization.”⁴¹ In November 2020, former ÖIF employee, Lisa Fellhofer, became director and Mouhanad Khorchide became the head of the scientific advisory board, which has eight members.⁴² The board includes some of the most well-known anti-Muslim authors like Susanne Schröter,⁴³ Lorenzo Vidino⁴⁴ and Heiko Heinisch.⁴⁵

According to Minister Raab, the Documentation Center allows “for the first time in Austria, (...) to independently and scientifically deal with the dangerous ideology of political Islam and offer insights into the previously hidden networks.”⁴⁶ Raab further

37. ÖVP Parlamentsklub, “Gödl begrüßt unabhängige Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam“, OTS, 15 July 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200715_OTS0117/goedl-begruesst-unabhaengige-dokumentationsstelle-politischer-islam, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

38. Ibid.

39. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Lorenzo Vidino, 22 April 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-lorenzo-vidino/>

40. Job advertisement for the board of the Documentation Center for Political Islam, *Weiner Zeitung*, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/amtsblatt/aktuelle_ausgabe/artikel/?id=4409041 (Access date: 29 November 2020).

41. Ibid.

42. “Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam hat Chefin“, ORF, 18 September 2020, <https://religion.orf.at/stories/3201806/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

43. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Susanne Schröter, 13 January 2021 <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-susanne-schroter/>

44. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Lorenzo Vidino, 22 April 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-lorenzo-vidino/>

45. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Saïda Keller-Messahli, 12 March 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-saida-keller-messahli/>

46. “Dokumentationsstelle nimmt Extremismus ins Visier“, *Kronen Zeitung*, 15 July 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2192166>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

argues, “Because political Islam is poison for our social coexistence and must be fought with all means. With the establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam, Austria becomes a pioneer in Europe.”⁴⁷ Raab wants to have an annual report on extremism as well as the “creation of an overview map of problematic networks and associations in Austria that can be attributed to political Islam. The aim is to make visible structures, actors, and goals of the representatives of this dangerous ideology. Financial, organizational, and ideological connections (abroad) are also to be investigated and disclosed.” The Documentation Center ought also to present a “detailed analysis of the individual networks operating in secret.”⁴⁸ During the presentation, Khorchide argued that political Islam is “wrapped with a cloak of democracy.” He further suggested that the proponents of political Islam would engage in *taqiyya* - dissimulation or denial of religious belief in the face of persecution - by masking their “inwardly” values.

While Raab reaffirmed that this monitoring center was not directed against Islam as a religion, activists like Tarafa Baghajati argued that this might become an “institution of surveillance”⁴⁹ directed against political participation and political voices. Integration spokesman Nikolaus Kunrath (The Greens) contested that the mandate for the Documentation Center was much larger than the focus on political Islam.⁵⁰ The IGGÖ called on the Documentation Center for close cooperation. Nadim Mazarweh, head of the IGGÖ’s Unit for Prevention of Extremism and Deradicalization (*Kontaktstelle für Extremismusprävention und Deradikalisierung*), said, “No one has comparable access to all associations and no one can communicate similarly efficiently with those who may be affected. If the faith community (IGGÖ) were to be ignored again, this would reinforce the existing concern that there is in fact a general suspicion towards all Muslims and the religion of Islam.” A few days later, on July 22, the IGGÖ stated that under the unspecific notion of “political Islam” and due to the identified experts that are hostile to the IGGÖ, it would not be able to cooperate with the Documentation Center.⁵¹ Minister Raab then reframed the IGGÖ’s distance as a “refusal to talk.”⁵² One day later, the president of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka (ÖVP) demanded that Austria’s Muslims acknowledge the constitution. He also claimed to want to “empower a laicist Islam.”⁵³

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. “IGGÖ-Kritik an Dokustelle für ‘politischen Islam’”, ORF, 15 July 2020, <https://religion.orf.at/v3/stories/3004988/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

50. “Grüne reiben sich an Islamismus-‘Dokumentationsstelle’”, ORF, 16 July 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3173864/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

51. IGGÖ, “IGGÖ ad Dokumentationsstelle: Zusammenarbeit unter diesen Umständen unzumutbar”, OTS, 22 July 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200722_OTS0010/iggoe-ad-dokumentationsstelle-zusammenarbeit-unter-diesen-umstaenden-unzumutbar, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

52. “Politischer Islam: Raab kritisiert ‘Gesprächsverweigerung’”, ORF, 23 July 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3174689/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

53. “Sobotka fordert: Österreichs Muslime sollen sich zur Verfassung bekennen”, *Der Standard*, 23 July 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000118913849/sobotka-fordert-oesterreichs-muslime-sollen-sich-zur-verfassung-bekennen>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

Sobotka mentioned the Jewish prayer book Siddur as a positive example of a confession to the state and its representatives and supported the establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam. In a critical op-ed, *Der Standard* journalist Jan Michael Marchart criticized Sobotka for this move and the general suspicion, he claims against ordinary Muslims.⁵⁴ For Green MP Faika El-Nagashi, Sobotka's words were "absolutely unacceptable," since they were stigmatizing. Rami Ali criticized the "authoritarian discourse" regarding Muslims in Austria.⁵⁵ During the presentation of the center, Vidino called the Documentation Center a "pioneering effort." Khorchide claimed that this center was not directed against common Muslims, but against the "dangerous ideology of political Islam."⁵⁶ In an interview with the weekly *Profil*, Amina Baghajati from the IGGÖ said that her "problem" with Mouhanad Khorchide was that "he allows to be misused. His last statements in Vienna sound like those of the spokesperson of the Ministry of Integration."⁵⁷ For her, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and Minister Susanne Raab "represent the FPÖ in a smarter way."⁵⁸ Vice Chancellor Werner Kogler (The Greens) supported the inclusion of Muslims in the center.⁵⁹ In an op-ed in the *Wiener Zeitung*,⁶⁰ I criticized the Documentation Center as an institutionalization of criminalizing Muslim civil society.⁶¹ Several questions were asked regarding the Documentation Center for Political Islam in the national parliament by different MPs from several opposition parties such as the NEOS⁶² and the SPÖ.⁶³

In June 2020, Minister of Integration Susanne Raab met with Lower Austrian Governor Thomas Stelzer to agree on cooperation in the fight against political Islam. Using the usual propagandic terms of the ÖVP government, the governor is quoted

54. Jan Michael Marchart, "Sobotkas Appell an Muslime: Ein fatales Signal", *Der Standard*, 23 July 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000118926088/sobotkas-appell-an-muslime-ein-fatales-signal>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

55. Jan Michael Marchart, "Sobotkas Demokratie-Appell an Muslime für Grüne 'völlig inakzeptabel'", *Der Standard*, 23 July 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000118948327/sobotkas-demokratie-appell-an-muslime-fuer-gruene-voellig-inakzeptabel>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

56. IGGIÖ, "IGGIÖ ad Dokumentationsstelle", OTS, 15 July 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200715_OTS0138/iggioe-ad-dokumentationsstelle, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

57. Clemens Neuhold, "Carla Amina Baghajati: 'FPÖ-Politik im gepflegten Gewand'", *profil*, 5 August 2020, <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/carla-amina-baghajati-fpoe-politik-im-gepflegten-gewand/400992197>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

58. Ibid.

59. "Dokumentationsstelle: Grüne für Einbindung der Muslime", ORF, 19 July 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3174160/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

60. Farid Hafez, "Mit Islam vom U-Ausschuss ablenken", *Wiener Zeitung*, 24 July 2020, <https://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinung/gastkommentare/2069106-Mit-Islam-vom-U-Ausschuss-ablenken.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

61. Farid Hafez, "Institutionalizing the Surveillance of Muslim Activism in Austria", The Bridge Initiative, 15 September 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/institutionalizing-the-surveillance-of-muslim-activism-in-austria/>

62. Parliamentary request by Henrike Brandstötter, 7 July 2020, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVII/M/M_00036/index.shtml, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

63. Parliamentary request by Nurten Yilmaz, 6 July 2020, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVII/J/J_02651/index.shtml, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

as saying, “Integration is one of the central tasks for the future. The fact is: parallel societies and the influence of political Islam must have no place in our country.” Raab argued, “I make a clear distinction between the religion of Islam and the dangerous ideology of political Islam. The planned Documentation Center will fill an existing gap and help us uncover ideological networks in association structures, but also on the Internet, and especially in social networks.”⁶⁴

In an interview with the ÖVP-owned *Volksblatt*, Khorchide defined political Islam as “the attempt to restructure our society according to values that contradict the liberal democratic order.”⁶⁵ He went on to say that “religiously motivated political engagement is welcome” but that the latter “was not political Islam.”⁶⁶ The first report on political Islam that was released on December 23,⁶⁷ explicitly mentions the aforementioned kind of political engagement. All the criteria used to define political Islam, such as patriarchy and polarization, cannot be found in the organizations mentioned in the report.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the ÖIF conducted a survey according to which 70 percent of respondents believe that there are parallel societies in Austria. The only problem that ranks higher in the attitudes of the respondents is the abuse of drugs and alcohol. Minister Susanne Raab used the outcome of the survey to support her project to combat political Islam.⁶⁸

In its annual report on anti-Muslim racism in Austrian politics, *SOS Mitmensch* documented and analyzed 21 cases. While the report for 2018 exclusively covered politicians of the FPÖ, this report also included examples from the ÖVP such as Ministers Karoline Edtstadler and Gernot Blümel.⁶⁹

The principal of a church high school and former vice-mayor (ÖVP) was suspended from his position after he posted on Facebook “Terror in Vienna! Refugees Welcome!...”⁷⁰

64. Bundespressedienst, “Raab/Stelzer: Verstärkte Zusammenarbeit im Kampf gegen den politischen Islam”, OTS, 2 June 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200602_OTS0149/raabstelzer-verstaerkte-zusammenarbeit-im-kampf-gegen-den-politischen-islam-bild, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

65. Manfred Maurer, “Mouhanad Khorchide: Morddrohungen machen Mut”, *OÖ Volksblatt*, 22 September 2020, <https://volksblatt.at/mouhanad-khorchide-morddrohungen-machen-mut/> (Access date: 29 November 2020).

66. Ibid.

67. Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam, *Der Politische Islam als Gegenstand wissenschaftlicher Auseinandersetzungen und am Beispiel der Muslimbruderschaft Grundlagenpapier der Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam In Zusammenarbeit mit Prof. Dr. Mouhanad Khorchide und Dr. Lorenzo Vidino*, December 2020, <https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Der-Politische-Islam-als-Gegenstand-wissenschaftlicher-Auseinandersetzungen-und-am-Beispiel-der-Muslimbruderschaft.pdf>

68. “Studien sehen Parallelgesellschaften bestätigt”, ORF, 14 July 2020, <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3057935/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020)

69. “SOS Mitmensch: Antimuslimischer Rassismus auch bei ÖVP”, ORF, 26 February 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3155720/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

70. “Terror-Posting: Bischof suspendiert Direktor”, ORF, 4 November 2020, <https://burgenland.orf.at/stories/3074443/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

Politics

When the new government was inaugurated, it presented several policies to regulate Islam and Muslims. The ÖVP is in charge of the integration ministry and the newly created integration ministry, which is also in charge of churches and religious communities. The coalition program defines Austria in an exclusionary way as a “cosmopolitan country coined by Christianity.” One of the eight goals of the program is to have a consistent migration and integration policy, which essentially means a restrictive policy vis-à-vis the otherized. Austria’s foreign minister reiterated that Austria will not join the United Nations’ Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. In the first week following the inauguration of the government, Austria’s integration minister stated that the ban of the hijab for pupils up to 14 years old was a top priority to be implemented within the first 100 days of governance. Both positions reflect a seamless transition from the coalition with the far-right to a coalition with the Greens.⁷¹ According to the Minister of Interior Karl Nehammer the ban is “a decisive step toward better integration and a reduction in discrimination. We are thus ensuring that the integration opportunities of young girls increase.”⁷² Raab has also become in charge of women affairs in the Chancellery, while there was no ministry of women affairs. The sole association between women affairs and integration (of immigrants) was criticized heavily by the head of the umbrella organization for Austrian women’s associations (*Dachverband für österreichischen Frauenvereine*), who argued that “equal rights, the struggle for economic independence and against patriarchal violence concerns all women living in Austria.” The Austrian women’s association also criticized the ÖVP-FPÖ government for reducing support for women associations.⁷³

Many of the policies mentioned in the coalition’s program are based on ideas and initiatives that had already been started during the coalition of the People’s Party (ÖVP) with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ). One is to establish a monitoring center that focuses on what they call “political Islam.” This term is nothing but a euphemism for the religion of Islam. In the past, the ban of the hijab in kindergarten and primary school and the attempt to close down mosques (which was later ruled illegal by the Viennese Administration Court) were both legitimized with reference to combatting “political Islam.” The program of the old coalition foresaw that the interior ministry’s security service should write a report on political ex-

71. Clara Akinsoye, “Islam, Ethik und Saudis: Türkis-grüne Religionspolitik”, ORF, 3 January 2020, <https://religion.orf.at/m/v3/stories/2996704/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

72. Bernhard Ichner, “Muslime bringen Kopftuchverbot vor das Höchstgericht”, *Kurier*, 13 January 2020, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/muslime-bringen-kopftuchverbot-vor-das-hoehstgericht/400724913>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

73. “Frauenring: ‘Frauen gehören nicht integriert, sondern gleichgestellt’”, *Der Standard*, 14 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113251484/frauenring-frauen-gehoren-nicht-integriert-sondern-gleichgestellt>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

tremism focusing on “political Islam” in addition to the already existing one. Criminal law should in the future include “political Islam” – a notion yet undefined – as a criminal offence. At the same time, the office for cultural affairs, which now has become part of the ministry of integration, should be equipped with police powers, not only monitoring religious institutions, but also giving them the power to close civil organizations.

Like no other coalition program before, the current one is one-sidedly targeting Muslim educational institutions. It says that especially Muslim kindergartens, Muslim school boarding houses, and Muslim private schools should be controlled. The training of religious teachers is only dealt with in regards to Muslim school education. Eytan Reif has criticized the one-sided support of the Catholic Church by the government and analyzed why the government is planning to intervene in the affairs of the religious education of Muslims.⁷⁴ The IGGÖ criticized the aim to control specifically Islamic religious education in public schools. Also, the Protestant Church criticized the government’s approach of singling out Muslims in their policies.⁷⁵ While the hijab is planned to be banned for Muslim schoolgirls up to 14 years old, neither the Sikh nor the Jewish community are affected by any regulation of religious garments. According to the government, the “task of the state is to empower girls and young women and support them in their self-development.”⁷⁶

The coalition program also suggested to renew the Islam Act of 2015, which had already been criticized as being discriminatory.⁷⁷ According to the IGGÖ, the coalition program reflected a “hostile attitude” which was a continuation of the former coalition between the ÖVP and the FPÖ. The IGGÖ feared a stigmatization and criminalization of Muslims when the government uses terms such as “political Islam.”⁷⁸ Minister of Interior Karl Nehammer replied saying that “[r]eligious freedom is important and therefore remains untouched, of course. However, it is absolutely clear that political Islam is a danger.”⁷⁹

74. Eytan Reif, “Türkis-Grün: Liebesbekundungen und üppige Gaben für die katholische Kirche”, *Die Presse*, 17 January 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5753856/turkis-grun-liebesbekundungen-und-uppige-gaben-fur-die-katholische-kirche>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

75. “Religionsrechtsexperte hinterfragt türkis-grüne Religionspolitik”, *kathpress*, 9 January 2020, <https://www.katholisch.at/aktuelles/128439/religionsrechtsexperte-hinterfragt-tuerkis-gruene-religionspolitik>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

76. Austrian People’s Party: Coalition Program, January 2020, https://www.dieneuevolkspartei.at/Download/Regierungsprogramm_2020.pdf

77. Dautović, Rijad, and Farid Hafez, “Institutionalizing Islam in Contemporary Austria: A Comparative Analysis of the Austrian Islam Act of 2015 and Austrian Religion Laws with Special Emphasis on the Israelite Act of 2012.” *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 8.1 (2019): 28-50.

78. IGGIÖ, “IGGIÖ zum türkis-grünen Regierungsübereinkommen”, OTS, 3 January 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200103_OTS0113/iggoe-zum-tuerkis-gruene-regierungsuebereinkommen, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

79. ÖVP Bundesparteileitung, “VP-Integrations Sprecher ad IGGIÖ: ‘Politischer Islam’ ist eine Gefahr”, OTS, 3 January 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200103_OTS0119/vp-integrations-sprecher-ad-iggoe-politischer-islam-ist-eine-gefahr, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

FPÖ politician Vilimsky called for a “Mohamed-free Vienna.”⁸⁰ The Viennese FPÖ education spokesperson Maximilian Krauss demanded the dismissal of university lecturer Rami Ali at the University of Vienna due to alleged closeness to the Muslim Brotherhood arguing that “Rami Ali and his family milieu are open sympathizers of the radical Islamic Muslim Brotherhood and hence a danger to our society. This alone is a reason to remove this person from the University of Vienna.”⁸¹ During a party convention on June 16, 2020, FPÖ chairman Norbert Hofer said that “Corona is not dangerous. The Koran is much more dangerous.”⁸² On May 20, 2020, Vienna FPÖ leader Dominik Nepp mobilized against the “government burka”⁸³ (*Regierungsburka*) for making the wearing of masks against COVID-19 compulsory in certain places. The president of the IGGÖ asked the FPÖ chairman to apologize for his words, which for him were sedition and vilification.⁸⁴ Several Muslim organizations and opposition politicians like Christian Deutsch (SPÖ) spoke of “vilifying, scandalous words vis-à-vis the Islamic religious community.”⁸⁵ According to the FPÖ, these Muslim organizations would all be Islamists and the IGGÖ should be outlawed.⁸⁶ To be sued, Norbert Hofer’s immunity would have had to be lifted, which did not happen.⁸⁷

In September 2020, Andreas Mailath-Pokorny (SPÖ), president of the Union of Social Democratic Scholars (BSA), criticized an election poster of the FPÖ which showed “that traditionally dressed persons belonging to the Muslim faith in Austria are in any case in favor of radical, armed and militant Islam.” According to Mailath-Pokorny, the FPÖ tramples on human rights and religious freedom.⁸⁸

The Viennese FPÖ declared that the SPÖ, the ÖVP, and the Greens stand for “radical Islam,” while the chairman of the Viennese FPÖ stands for “Our Home.” (Fig. 2)

80. Julya Rabinowich, “Mohamedfrei”, *Der Standard*, 13 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113210850/mohamedfrei?ref=rss>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

81. FPÖ Wien, “FP-Krauss fordert sofortige Abberufung des Uni Wien Lektors Ali Rami”, OTS, 30 March 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200330_OTS0083/fp-krauss-fordert-sofortige-abberufung-des-uni-wien-lektors-ali-rami, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

82. “FPÖ-Chef Hofer: ‘Koran gefährlicher als Corona’”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 16 June 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2173786>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

83. “FPÖ-Demo am Heldenplatz gegen ‘Corona-Wahnsinn’”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 20 May 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2158203>

84. IGGIÖ, “IGGÖ-Präsident Vural: Unfassbare Entgleisung von FPÖ-Hofer”, OTS, 17 June 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200617_OTS0008/iggoe-praesident-vural-unfassbare-entgleisung-von-fpoe-hofer, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

85. Bernhard Ichner, “‘Koran gefährlicher als Corona’: Muslime zeigen Norbert Hofer an”, *Kurier*, 17 June 2020, <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/koran-gefaehrlicher-als-corona-muslime-zeigen-norbert-hofer-an/400942760>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

86. Ibid.

87. “Nationalrat liefert Hofer nicht aus”, ORF, 14 October 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3185158/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

88. Josef Gebhard, “Verhetzung: Anzeige wegen aktuellem FPÖ-Wahlplakat”, *Kurier*, 15 September 2020, <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/verhetzung-anzeige-wegen-aktuellem-fpoe-wahlplakat/401032409>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).



Figure 2: Poster showing FPÖ candidate Dominik Nepp and the slogan “SPÖ, ÖVP & Greens: Radical Islam. Dominik Nepp: Our Home!”⁸⁹



Figure 3: Poster showing the FPÖ candidate Dominik Nepp and the slogan “Dominik Nepp. Let’s reclaim our Vienna... No place for Islamists and zealots.”⁹⁰



Figure 4: Poster showing the FPÖ candidate Dominik Nepp: “Resoluteness: No more cent for this EU. Stop the Islamization of Vienna.”⁹¹

89. Election poster from Viennese election campaign in 2020.

90. Election poster from Viennese election campaign in 2020.

91. Election poster from Viennese election campaign in 2020.

The chairman of the Viennese FPÖ Dominik Nepp claimed that the IGGÖ was part of political Islam. He stated that “legalistic Islamists are at work in the IGGÖ. They want to impose an Islamic state by peaceful means.”⁹² “Legalistic Islamism” is a term used to describe Muslims who are working peacefully in a democratic society by alleging they have a hidden agenda of Islamizing the country. Chairman Hofer then claimed that he was threatened on social media and needed police protection.⁹³ In its election campaign in Vienna, the FPÖ focused as usual on migration and security policies. Party leader Dominik Nepp argued against the coalition of the SPÖ and the Greens in Vienna: “The conditions in Favoriten (10th district) show us how much radical Islam is spreading in Vienna. This problem is homemade - for example through the promotion of Islamist associations by the red-green (Social Democratic and Green) city government.” He went on to say, “For years, people looked the other way, but now parallel cultures have been established and have developed into countercultures.”⁹⁴

Legislation

Asked by the daily *Österreich* regarding her top priorities, Raab stated, “Political Islam has no place in Austria; there is zero tolerance from my side. That is why I would like to launch a Documentation Center for Political Islam in the first 100 days.”⁹⁵ When the journalist further asked if political Islam was such a large problem in Austria, Raab answered, “Absolutely. Especially due to strong migration movements from very patriarchal cultures in recent years, there are influences that we have to counteract. A recent study by Kenan Güngör shows that for 55% of Afghan youth in Vienna, Islam is above Austrian law. And we know that there are extremist tendencies in Islamic associations and the social media that need to be closely monitored.” Asked further about the hijab ban, Raab defended the ban with the following words, “Because every girl who is forced to wear a headscarf is one too many. But, of course, this requires good legal preparation.”⁹⁶ Since the ban in elementary school was already challenged in the Constitutional Court, the journalist asked Raab, if she was confident that the ban will stay. She answered, “From my point of view, the ban was absolutely the right step. We have received a lot of posi-

92. FPÖ Wien; “Nepp: Behörden müssen Verbot der IGGÖ in die Wege leiten”, OTS, 25 July 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200725_OTS0006/nepp-behoerden-muessen-verbot-der-iggoe-in-die-wege-leiten, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

93. Konstantin Auer, “Nach Drohungen gegen Norbert Hofer: Polizeischutz für FPÖ-Chef”, *Kurier*, 19 June 2020, <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/nach-drohungen-gegen-norbert-hofer-polizeischutz-fuer-fpoe-chef/400945712>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

94. FPÖ Wien, “FPÖ präsentiert das Wahlprogramm für die Wien-Wahl”, OTS, 4 September 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200904_OTS0078/fpoe-praesentiert-das-wahlprogramm-fuer-die-wien-wahl, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

95. “Raab: ‘Kopftuch-Verbot ist mein erstes Projekt’”, oe24, 9 January 2020, <https://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/raab-kopftuch-verbot-ist-mein-erstes-projekt/412531054>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

96. Ibid.

tive feedback from the teaching staff and also from Muslim women, who are happy to have support on this issue.”⁹⁷ Raab also claimed that Muslim mothers would support her.⁹⁸ During a panel, Raab stated, “We do not want to have children wear a headscarf in Austria. Especially in schools, we want to give girls a free space to develop.”⁹⁹ She was also supported by Justice Minister Alma Zadic (The Greens): “There should not be a situation in which girls are forced to wear a headscarf.”¹⁰⁰ ÖVP-affiliated Zana Ramadani argued that the hijab was a “purely sexist, political symbol,” which also discriminates against men, because the hijab “insinuates to all men that they are sex offenders because they suddenly ‘see’ female hair.”¹⁰¹ Anti-Muslim spokespersons like Seyran Ates¹⁰² attempted to support the anti-Muslim policies and the framing of the ÖVP-led government: “Adolescents are in the sphere of power of parents and family clans. That is why it is so important that these girls have at least one space, namely school, where they can try out what it is like not to be covered.”¹⁰³ Former Minister of Interior Herbert Kickl (FPÖ) had mentioned that he had visited Seyran Ates, whom he sees as a “declared opponent” of the hijab: “She sees the headscarf as not rooted in religion and interprets it as a means of political expression.”¹⁰⁴

The Austrian National Youth Council criticized a ban of the hijab and claimed that “it is wrong to exclude women wearing a hijab from the public sphere.”¹⁰⁵ Also, the Catholic Family Association (*Katholischer Familienverband*) criticized the hijab ban on two respects: “on the one hand, the protection of the child and on the other hand, the adult woman’s mature practice of religion.”¹⁰⁶ Governor of Burgenland, Hans Peter Doskozil (SPÖ), who represents the rightist camp of his party,

97. Ibid.

98. Irene Brickner, “Susanne Raab: ‘Ich weiß viele muslimische Mütter auf meiner Seite’”, *Der Standard*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113626707/ich-weiss-viele-muslimische-muetter-auf-meiner-seite>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

99. “Kopftuch gehört nicht zu unseren Werten”, *krone.at/brennpunkt*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2083467>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

100. “Kontroversen um Kopftuch und Kreuz”, *Die Tagespost*, (no date), <https://www.die-tagespost.de/politik/aktuell/Kontroversen-um-Kopftuch-und-Kreuz;art315,204674>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

101. “Kopftuch gehört nicht zu unseren Werten”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2083467>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

102. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Seyran Ates, 10 October 2019, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-seyran-ates/>

103. “‘Nicht religiös verankert’ | Weltlich eingestellte Muslime in Deutschland und Schweiz für Kopftuchverbot”, *Kleine Zeitung*, 18 January 2020, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/aussenpolitik/5754188/Nicht-religioes-verankert_Weltlich-eingestellte-Muslime-in, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

104. “Streitthema Kopftuchverbot: ‘Das ist Rassismus’”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 27 January 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2084878>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

105. Bundesjugendvertretung, “Bundesjugendvertretung fordert sachliche Integrationsdebatte”, OTS, 14 January 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200114_OTS0159/bundesjugendvertretung-fordert-sachliche-integrationsdebatte, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

106. “‘Das geht zu weit’ | Katholischer Familienverband gegen Kopftuchverbot für Lehrerinnen“, *Kleine Zeitung*, 15 January 2020, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5752444/Das-geht-zu-weit_Katholischer-Familienverband-gegen-Kopftuchverbot, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

supported the government's hijab ban.¹⁰⁷ Opposition came also from within the ranks of the ÖVP. The ÖVP Tyrolia's executive education *Landesrätin* Beate Palfrader argued that such a ban would not be necessary. Following the hijab ban in elementary school, there was only one case, where the school had to talk to the parents. The afternoon of the same day, she backtracked and announced "no resistance to the government program" and emphasized that "the hijab is a symbol of oppression."¹⁰⁸ The leader of the FPÖ, Norbert Hofer, said he would be happy on the historic day that the Greens stand up and decide in favor of a hijab ban in parliament.

In Salzburg, the ÖVP executive education *Landesrätin* Maria Hutter (ÖVP) supported the ban. Governor Peter Kaiser (SPÖ) and executive education *Landesrat* Jürgen Czernohorszky (SPÖ) called the initiative a "distraction maneuver."¹⁰⁹ In an op-ed, Maria Rösslhumer stated that while women are still victims of violence (one in five experience physical or sexual violence), the government talks about the hijab ban, political Islam, and does not recognize that violence against women is a home-made problem and has no nationality.¹¹⁰

On January 14, 2020, Minister of Integration Raab said she could imagine introducing a hijab ban for teachers in school. According to her, there was a "broad consensus" in the coalition. According to the ÖVP's election program for the 2019 National Council elections, female teachers must comply with a so-called neutrality requirement. The program states, "A headscarf is a clearly visible, demonstrative symbol that can influence students politically. Therefore, it should be forbidden for all female teachers to wear a headscarf at school in the future."¹¹¹ Vice-chancellor and the Greens leader Werner Kogler clearly refuted these claims and stated that his party was not behind such a ban.¹¹² Social democrat MP Nurten Yilmaz criticized Raab's claim as a "non-integration policy" and "continuation of the ÖVP-FPÖ."¹¹³ Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen argued that "it is more important what somebody has

107. Thomas Prior, "Hans Peter Doskozil: Das Kreuz in der Klasse würde ich belassen", *Die Presse*, 16 January 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5753402/hans-peter-doskozil-das-kreuz-in-der-klasse-wurde-ich-belassen>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

108. "ÖVP-Landesrätin lehnt Kopftuchverbot doch nicht ab", *Der Standard*, 20 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113511462/oepv-landesraetin-gegen-ausweitung-des-kopftuchverbots-an-schulen>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

109. "Kopftuchverbot: ÖVP-Landesrätin gegen Ausweitung an Schulen", ORF, 20 January 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3151612/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

110. Maria Rösslhumer, "Schwere Gewalt an Frauen nimmt immer noch zu", *Die Presse*, 19 January 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5754849/schwere-gewalt-an-frauen-nimmt-immer-noch-zu>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

111. "Raab: Kopftuchverbot für Lehrerinnen vorstellbar", ORF, 14 January 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3150890/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

112. "Kogler gegen Kopftuchverbot für Lehrerinnen", ORF, 14 January 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3150943/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

113. "Kopftuchverbot für Lehrerinnen „nicht vorstellbar“, *Kronen Zeitung*, 14 January 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2077878>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

in her head rather than on her head”¹¹⁴ – a statement he said he had heard from a professor at a world-renowned university. The Cardinal of Austria Christoph Schönborn argued that a pluralist society accepts different religious symbols in the public space.¹¹⁵ Even after the first wave of the lockdown, Raab declared that “the pandemic does not change anything regarding the hijab ban.”¹¹⁶

Following the inception of the Documentation Center for Political Islam, former minister of interior (FPÖ) and second chairman of the FPÖ, Herbert Kickl, urged the introduction of a “criminal law against political Islam.”¹¹⁷ This claim was already part of the coalition program of the previous government of the ÖVP and the FPÖ, and was also included in the coalition program of the ÖVP and the Greens. Following the militant attack on November 2, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz announced the intention to make political Islam a criminal offence.¹¹⁸

On October 22, 2020, Minister of Defense Klaudia Tanner (ÖVP) asked the IGGÖ to dismiss its Military Imam in the Austrian Army, because he had shown sympathy with the Jihadist movement in Bosnia. In the media, Tanner said that the cooperation ended here. According to a report in the daily *Krone* based on “investigations” of a former Jihadist and then informant for the German secret service, Irfan Peci, the imam had pressed the “like” button under an image on Facebook which showed a former general of the Yugoslavian army, who was an alleged war criminal. Following this, the military spokesperson of the FPÖ urged the minister to dismiss him.¹¹⁹ Since his contract was with the IGGÖ,¹²⁰ while the IGGÖ publicly criticized the Minister of Defense,¹²¹ they urged the imam to resign in consensus, which he did,¹²² although the alleged war criminal was no war criminal and had even been invited by the Austrian state several times. The alleged war criminal was, in fact, acquitted of all charges in The Hague and was only accused of war crimes in Serbia.

114. “VdB: ‘Wichtiger, was im Kopf ist, als am Kopf’”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 30 January 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2088775>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

115. “Statt Kopftuchverbot will Schönborn auf Bildung setzen”, ORF, 25 January 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3152226/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

116. Johanna Hager, “Raab: ‘Pandemie ändert nichts an Kopftuchverbot’”, *Kurier*, 1 May 2020, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/raab-pandemie-aendert-nichts-daran-dass-wir-fuer-kopftuchverbot-eintreten/400829912>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

117. Herbert Kickl, “Erdogan sät Hass”, *Wiener Zeitung*, 20 July 2020, <https://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinung/gastkommentare/2068590-Erdogan-saet-Hass.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

118. “Austria Govt Agrees to Preventive Arrests, Ban ‘Political Islam’”, Al Jazeera, 11 November 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/11/austria-to-introduce-preventive-detention-after-deadly-attack> (Access date: 29 November 2020).

119. “Verteidigungsministerin feuert Bundesheer-Imam”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 22 October 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2259133>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

120. Nina Weißensteiner, “Ministerin Tanner enthebt Militär-Imam vom Dienst”, *Der Standard*, 22 October 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000121135980/tanner-enthebt-militaer-imam-vom-dienst>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

121. “Militär imam abberufen: Kritik von IGGÖ”, ORF, 24 November 2020, <https://religion.orf.at/stories/3203117/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

122. Interview with the imam.

Following the militant attack in Vienna on November 4, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz did not mobilize against the Jihadist threat that led to the murder of four, but against political Islam: “The EU must fight political Islam, which is the basis of this terrorism, and Islamist terrorism much more resolutely.”¹²³ Kurz further named Emmanuel Macron as his ally. Mouhanad Khorchide and Heiko Heinisch immediately supported the will to combat political Islam alongside Jihadist movements. Heinisch stated, “Therefore, what distinguishes this political Islam from Jihadism is the violence, the basic ideology is the same.”¹²⁴ Nina Scholz published an op-ed in *Der Standard*, where she argued that “not only Jihadists, but also legalistic Islamists, who dominate organized Muslims, separate the world into Muslims and non-Muslims, idealize an Islamic world community, propagate Islamist supremacy, and refuse liberal democracy, general human rights and the separation of religion and state. Jihadists can build on this propaganda.”¹²⁵ According to a report by the *Financial Times*, “France and Austria have pushed for the EU to agree tough common language on Islamist terrorism”¹²⁶ following three deadly attacks. According to the *Financial Times*, the declaration “has been significantly watered down compared with the original draft,” removing the mention of Islam, proposals of sanctioning migrants who refuse to integrate, and toning down rhetoric on EU values.

On November 9, a raid took place that had been prepared for more than a year and which was not related to the militant attack a week before – although it allegedly focused on “terrorists.”¹²⁷ The raid was brutal: it occurred at 5 a.m. and also targeted family members including kids, who were woken up by special forces. As many reported, the children were heavily traumatized by the raid.¹²⁸ I was also a victim of this raid. While lawyers had no access to the files for the first three months, which is very uncommon in Austrian jurisdiction, according to the law there was only a “compacted suspicion,” which means there is no indictment against any of the 30 raided persons. There was also no provisional detention, although the secret services conducted observation for more than 1.5 years and over a total of 21,000

123. Stephan Löwenstein and Eckhart Lohse, “Politischer Islam entschlossener bekämpfen”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 November 2020, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/oesterreichs-kanzler-kurz-politischen-islam-entschlossener-bekaempfen-17036646.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

124. Fabian Schmid and Jan Michael Marchart, “Wiener Attentäter besuchte dieselbe Moschee wie Bombenbastler Lorenz K.”, *Der Standard*, 4 November 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000121434924/attentaeter-besuchte-selbe-moschee-wie-bombenbastler-lorenz-k>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

125. Nina Scholz, “Die unterschätzte islamistische Ideologie”, *Der Standard*, 8 November 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000121508981/die-unterschaetzte-islamistische-ideologie>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

126. Mehreen Khan, Michael Peel, David Hindley, “EU Counterterror Paper Lays Bare Bloc’s Policy Divisions”, *Financial Times*, 13 November 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/57c9f719-b05b-474c-96c9-fd5e2c71e00f>

127. AFP/DPA, “Austria: Police Raid Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas-Linked Targets,” DW Akademie, 9 November 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/austria-police-raid-muslim-brotherhood-hamas-linked-targets/a-55542480>

128. Askın Kiyagan, “Austrian-Muslim Family Cannot Forget ‘Terror Operation’ Mohamad Jamal Morad, Living in Austria for 42 years, Says They Won’t Forget Excessive Force Used by Police”, Anadolu Agency, 24.12.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/austrian-muslim-family-cannot-forget-terror-operation-/2087758>

hours.¹²⁹ The people who were taken for interrogation were asked questions¹³⁰ such as the following: How many non-Muslim friends do you have? Do you visit a mosque and if yes, which mosque? What do you think about the caliphate? What do you think about peace with Israel? Should children raised in Austria be educated to become martyrs? Do you want to introduce Sharia? Do you know the Protocols of the Elders of Zion? What do you understand by the term “Islamophobia”? In your opinion, is this term justified? If so, please explain why and what do you understand by this term? Are Muslims suppressed in Austria? Is Islamist global terrorism possibly the reason for fears emanating from Islam or is it the oppression, especially of women or people of other faiths, by the norms of the Sharia? May your son marry a Christian, unbeliever, or a Jew? Do you designate your son’s spouse? What does the term “Kuffare” (sic) mean for you? Are Christians for you “Kuffare” (sic)? Is one allowed to kill in the name of God? Do you and your wife and your kids observe the prayer times?

The search warrant against me includes three points: I supported the establishment of a private confessional school under public law, which is in fact true and refers to a school project launched by an interreligious board. Second, I spoke to a leader of a political party on the phone and criticized the establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam, which is also true and which I also did publicly, as this report proves. The other accusations are unproven lies based on an alleged “informant,” who is not identified in the search warrant. Generally, the search warrant argues that most people whose homes were raided were members of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is characterized as a “terrorist organization,” which it is not according to the Austrian secret service and other EU member states. The search warrant says that as such, the accused people pursue the objective of (1) toppling the Egyptian governing regime of Sisi, (2) destroying Israel, and (3) creating a global caliphate with Jerusalem as its capital. In legal terms, the allegation is that I am a member of a “terrorist, criminal organization, funding terrorism, and money laundering.” The bank accounts and assets of the accused people were all frozen. Later in 2021, the raid, the preceding wiretapping, as well as the freezing of assets were declared unlawful with all suspects that had made a plea.

Two weeks after the raids, I published a short piece on the website of Georgetown University’s “The Bridge Initiative” with the title “Xingjiang and Kristallnacht in Austria: Freedom of Religion under Threat,” which was misrepresented in the Austrian media. Although I did not equalize the *Kristallnacht* (literally night of the broken glass, which was the start of the pogroms against Jews during the Nazi rule)

129. Laurin Lorenz, Walter Müller, Gabriele Scherndl, “Razzien bei der Muslimbruderschaft: Wie aus „Ramses“ die Operation ‘Luxor’ wurde,” *Der Standard*, 9 November 2020, <https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000121546906/50-razzien-gegen-strukturen-der-muslimbruderschaft-in-oesterreich>

130. PSÖ, <https://www.facebook.com/Pal%C3%A4stina-Solidarit%C3%A4t-%C3%96sterreich-566191377123146>

with the raids, this is what Minister of Interior Karl Nehammer and Minister of Integration Susanne Raab claimed. Nehammer stated, “To equate the Kristallnacht - as one of the first steps towards the genocide of millions of Jews - with the legitimate and determined stand against radical political Islam is not only completely distasteful, but rather an expression of an anti-democratic attitude.”¹³¹ He went on to argue that I would “drive a rift into our society under the guise of science and discredit and thereby weaken our democracy, which has grown since 1945.”¹³² Raab stated, “This outrageous comparison trivializes the terrible crimes of National Socialism and equates them with the legitimate and necessary fight against extremism. Anyone who does this has not understood our history and tramples on the memory of the victims of the National Socialist genocide.”¹³³ Khorchide claimed, “The comparison of the raid against suspected Muslim Brothers with the situation of the Uyghurs in China and, above all, with the November pogroms is not only extremely distasteful and trivializing, but highly scandalous. How can one equate the beginning of the murder of millions of Jews with a raid?”¹³⁴ Given the media coverage of Nehammer and the others, I had to make clear in an interview that I never did and intended to equate these incidents.¹³⁵ Later, a community leader called me to “step down” from my position at the university.¹³⁶ In a column in the weekly *Falter*, Raimund Löw argued that “[b]y demanding that political Islam be banned altogether, Chancellor Kurz is going beyond the scope of democratically guaranteed freedoms. Criminalization of dissenting opinions is familiar to authoritarian states. We experience the effects when the government sends out anti-terror police against the inconvenient political scientist Farid Hafez, as in Operation Luxor [the name given to the raid] in early November. This is also a consequence of the unfortunate construction of political Islam as a danger to the republic. We should free ourselves from this.”¹³⁷

The Identitarian Movement was renamed “Die Österreicher - DO5,” after it became public that Martin Sellner¹³⁸ received money from the Christchurch militant.¹³⁹ Under their new name, they organized similar activities against an alleged “Islamization.”

131. Manfred Maurer, “Uni Salzburg distanziert sich von Politologen”, *ÖO Volksblatt*, 23 November 2020, <https://volksblatt.at/uni-salzburg-distanziert-sich-von-politologen/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

132. Ibid.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

135. Anna Thalhammer, “Farid Hafez: „Ich bin Betroffener der Operation Luxor“”, *Die Presse*, 27 Nov 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5903858/farid-hafez-ich-bin-betroffener-der-operation-luxor> (Access date: 29 November 2020).

136. “Kultusgemeinde fordert Rücktritt von Politologen”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 16 December 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2300061>

137. Nina Scholz, Raimund Löw, “POLITISCHER ISLAM - GIBT ,S DEN DENN?“, *FALTER* 49/20, 2 December 2020, https://www.falter.at/zeitung/20201202/politischer-islam---gibt-s-den-denn/_2151a6c66c

138. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Martin Sellner, 30 April 2019, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-martin-sellner/>

139. Georg Herrmann, “DO5 – Comeback der Identitären?”, *Mein Bezirk*, 27 June 2020, https://www.meinbezirk.at/innsbruck/c-lokales/do5-comeback-der-identitaeren_a4123191, (Access date: 29 November 2020).



Figure 5: A leaflet by the successor organization of the Identitarian Movement, DOS, inviting to a rally against replacement and Islamization, October 2020.¹⁴⁰

Media

In a critical op-ed, the legal scholar Richard Potz criticized the government’s “tendency to make religious law part of integration and security policy”¹⁴¹ and especially criticized the increasing state control of the religious education of Muslims and Protestants. According to Potz, the coalition program’s aim to control especially the IGGÖ regarding the ban of foreign funding was in breach of the principle of equality of churches and religious communities. In his analysis of the government’s program, Protestant theologian Bernhard Lauxmann argued,

Religion is assumed to have a tendency toward extremism. The (nonsensical) talk of “political Islam,” which is used synonymously with “religiously motivated extremism” is omnipresent. Thus, it is assumed that Islam and with it any religion may not be political (which, however, is allowed!) and that Islam in general and with it religion in general are close to extremism (which, of course, is not the case!). (...) However, freedom of religion is not primarily or exclusively about freedom from religion, but about freedom of religion. State-enforced neutralization of religion is something different from religious-ideological neutrality of the state, Mr. Chancellor! The secular constitutional state must never behave as a secularizing state. (...) Where religion is mentioned in the program, Islam is primarily meant. But that should not reassure non-Muslims! As far as religion is concerned, the government program is highly

140. Leaflet for a rally, found in my mailbox.

141. Richard Potz, “Insbesondere Islamisch”, *Die Furche*, 8 January 2020, <https://www.furche.at/politik/insbesondere-islamisch-2031687>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

questionable, polemical, and tends to be hostile to religion. ... Religion, in general, and Islam, in particular, are widely placed under general suspicion.¹⁴²

Der Standard journalist Jan Michael Marchart already argued in February 2020 that the “independent, state-legitimized documentation center for religiously motivated political extremism” that is mentioned in the coalition program is basically targeting “political Islam.” Sociology graduate Kenan Güngör is quoted as a source that legitimizes the existence of the Documentation Center, although he believes that the notion of political Islam is “very vague (...) including everything and nothing (...) from radical to humanistic.”¹⁴³ Also, the head of the Austrian Institute of International Politics questioned the vagueness of the term. Only the history graduate Heiko Heinisch is quoted as defending the term “political Islam” to include “violent Jihadi organizations and legalistic Islamists,” while the second group refers to those “who act within the democratic state, but want its removal.”¹⁴⁴

When Susanne Raab mentioned her idea to ban the wearing of the hijab for teachers as well, theologian Paul Zulehner spoke of an offensive against the hijab (“Kopftuchkränkung”), which would not help religious freedom in Austria. Such an expansion of the hijab ban would “reinforce racist prejudices that exist in parts of the population.”¹⁴⁵ In an op-ed, Menerva Hammad criticized the Islam policies of the government and argued from a feminist perspective that “whoever bans the hijab today will tomorrow regulate the length of your miniskirt.”¹⁴⁶ In another op-ed, Sonia Zaafrani criticized the hijab ban as “discriminatory and against equality” and furthermore is a “humiliation enforced by the state.”¹⁴⁷

Newspapers interviewed school principals that supported the hijab ban,¹⁴⁸ and also asked people from the private sector like the jam producer Staud, who dismissed the hijab ban in an interview.¹⁴⁹

142. Bernhard Lauxmann, “Diese Regierung neugt zur Religionsfeindlichkeit”, *Die Presse*, 17 January 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5753886/diese-regierung-neigt-zur-religionsfeindlichkeit>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

143. Jan Michael Marchart, “Der ‘politische Islam’ als Unbekannte”, *Wiener Zeitung*, 29 February 2020, <https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/politik/oesterreich/2052548-Der-politische-Islam-als-Unbekannte.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

144. *Ibid.*

145. “Kopftuchverbot für Lehrerinnen ‘nicht vorstellbar’”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 14 January 2020, <https://www.krone.at/2077878>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

146. Menerva Hammad, “Kolumne ‘Servus Alaykum!’: Zack, zack, zack mit dem Kopftuchverbot, sagt die Frauenministerin!”, *Wienerin*, 15 January 2020, <https://wienerin.at/kolumne-servus-alaykum-zack-zack-zack-mit-dem-kopftuchverbot-sagt-die-frauenministerin>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

147. Sonia Zaafrani, “Das Kopftuchverbot – eine scheinheilige Debatte”, *Die Presse*, 21 January 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5755687/das-kopftuchverbot-eine-scheinheilige-debatte>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

148. Bernadette Bayrhammer, “Kopftuchverbot: ‘Hilft mehr, als es schadet’”, *Die Presse*, 8 January 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5748390/kopftuchverbot-bdquohilft-mehr-als-es-schadetldquo>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

149. Verena Kainrath, “Marmeladenkönig Staud: ‘Warum beim Kopftuch einmischen?’”, *Der Standard*, 19 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113414699/marmeladenkoenig-staud-warum-beim-kopftuch-einmischen>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

Die Presse journalist Gudula Walterskirchen supported a hijab ban.¹⁵⁰ In a column discussing the pros and cons of an extended hijab ban in school up to 14 years of age, *Der Standard* journalist Eric Frey argued that “liberal Muslims, who want integration, ought to welcome such a step” and further claimed that in most cases, Muslim girls do not opt to wear the hijab on their own terms, but under the pressure of their parents, peers, and especially Muslim boys. This claim, widely spread, lacks any representative empirical evidence.¹⁵¹ *Der Standard* journalist Hans Rauscher wrote in his famous op-ed, “Kurz and the Turquoise [the new color of his rebranded Austrian people’ Party, ÖVP] are trying to ‘preserve Austria’s Christian identity’ by harassing Muslims. This betrays a lack of historical and sociopolitical education. And is counterproductive.”¹⁵² In another op-ed, *Der Standard* journalist Hans Rauscher rightly deconstructed Raab’s claim that the cross was “a clear symbol of Judeo-Christian tradition” as a political spin of the governing new ÖVP.¹⁵³

The daily *Kleine Zeitung* covered an article published by the ÖVP-owned *Oberösterreichisches Volksblatt* by Seyran Ates.¹⁵⁴ Ates argued, “How can we as an open civil society accept that a religious community says that as soon as our female members reach sexual maturity, they must cover themselves? That turns the girls into sexual objects.”¹⁵⁵ Another anti-Muslim writer, Saïda Keller-Messahli,¹⁵⁶ also supported the government’s claim by stating, “The public school may be the only place where a Muslim girl can experience freedom and equality. This space must be protected from religious covetousness.”¹⁵⁷ For Keller-Messahli, the complaint against the hijab ban was a “shameless abuse.” Also, the German head of the Department of Islamic Theology and Religious Pedagogy, Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, argued that “religious symbols shall have no place in school.”¹⁵⁸ He is also the author of the book *You Don’t Have to Wear a Headscarf (Ihr müsst kein Kopftuch tragen)*.

150. Gudula Walterskirchen, “Das Kopftuch ist für Mädchen diskriminierend, nicht ihre Haare!”, *Die Presse*, 19 January 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5754850/das-kopftuch-ist-fur-madchen-diskriminierend-nicht-ihre-haare>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

151. Eric Frey and Nina Weißensteiner, “Pro und Kontra: Kopftuchverbot in der Schule”, *Der Standard*, 14 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113293528/pro-und-kontra-kopftuchverbot-in-der-schule>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

152. Hans Rauscher, “Mit Schikanen für Muslime rettet man die Kirche nicht”, *Der Standard*, 18 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113440005/mit-schikanen-fuer-muslime-rettet-man-die-kirche-nicht>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

153. Hans Rauscher, “Evangelium nach Türkis”, *Der Standard*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113624786/evangelium-nach-tuerkis>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

154. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Seyran Ates, 10 October 2019, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-seyran-ates/>

155. “‘Nicht religiös verankert’ | Weltlich eingestellte Muslime in Deutschland und Schweiz für Kopftuchverbot”, *Kleine Zeitung*, 18 January 2020, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/aussenpolitik/5754188/Nicht-religioes-verankert_Weltlich-eingestellte-Muslime-in, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

156. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Saïda Keller-Messahli, 12 March 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-saida-keller-messahli/>

157. “‘Nicht religiös verankert’”, *Kleine Zeitung*.

158. *Ibid.*

In an op-ed, Catholic theologian Paul Zulehner argued that the Islam policies of the Austrian government were a “collective insult,” claiming integration, but in fact hindering integration. He further argued that “Muslim denominations and institutions are currently put under surveillance like the *Reichsbürger* and the Identitarian movement. Also, the world religion of Islam is permanently misrepresented as a threat to our country in a subtle way. We are converging Viktor Orbán. This integration policy of subtle expulsion is embellished with the misnomer of current religion politics: the fight against ‘political Islam’. This is another example of the abuse of language by politics.”¹⁵⁹ In his op-ed “Politics of Humiliation,” editor-in-chief Otto Friedrich argues that finally under this government, people realize that the horrible positions of the former government that included the far-right FPÖ were actually positions of the ÖVP. The hardliner positions vis-à-vis Islam were “genuine turquoise politics” and “Muslims, refugees, and migrants are humiliated as enemies by the politics of this government.”¹⁶⁰ I also criticized the government’s Islam policies in an op-ed in *Die Presse*¹⁶¹ and argued in another op-ed in the German *TAZ*: “In sum, it can be said that the government program has a one-sided focus on the group of Muslim religious members. Restrictive policies of controlling their educational institutions reflect the insinuation of hostile attitudes, and corresponding measures are announced. It can be assumed that ‘political Islam’ in the ÖVP’s area of responsibility (Interior and Security) continues to mean not political extremism, but Islam. And thus, the Turquoise-Green government agreement is in seamless continuity with the Turquoise-Blue one.”¹⁶² For *Der Standard* journalist Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi, the Documentation Center for Political Islam sounds more like police than integration.¹⁶³ According to Rami Ali, “the notion ‘political Islam’ allows a general suspicion against Muslims and their institutions and allows not to be condemned for racism by arguing that one only targets certain Muslims.”¹⁶⁴

In an op-ed in *Der Standard* by history graduate Nina Scholz, she defended the establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam arguing that it would

159. Paul M. Zulehner, “Die Kopftuchkränkung und ihre fatalen Folgen”, *Der Standard*, 16 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113337139/die-kopftuchkraenkung-und-ihre-fatalen-folgen>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

160. Otto Friedrich, “Politik der Demütigung”, *Die Furchen*, 15 January 2020, <https://www.furche.at/meinung/leitartikel/politik-der-demuetigung-2078457>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

161. Farid Hafez, “Welche Islampolitik bringt Türkis-Grün?”, *Die Presse*, 22 January 2020, <https://www.diepresse.com/5756595/welche-islampolitik-bringt-tuerkis-grun>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

162. Farid Hafez, “Feindbild Islam”, *taz*, 20 January 2020, <https://taz.de/Tuerkis-gruene-Koalition-in-Oesterreich/15654849/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

163. Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi, “Mit Muslimen leben”, *Der Standard*, 6 August 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000119189659/mit-muslimen-leben>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

164. Fabian Goldmann, “Der Begriff ‘politischer Islam’ erlaubt einen Generalverdacht gegen Muslime und ihre Einrichtungen”, *heise online*, 5 September 2020 <https://www.heise.de/tp/features/Der-Begriff-politischer-Islam-erlaubt-einen-Generalverdacht-gegen-Muslime-und-ihre-Einrichtungen-4877843.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

be of help to journalists, experts, and politicians, and that it would also be a helpful tool for the IGGÖ in order “to identify and exclude Islamist positions from its umbrella organization.”¹⁶⁵ For Scholz, political Islam means a “fundamentalist ideological movement, which wants to establish Islam as a state and power structure (*Herrschaftsform*).”¹⁶⁶ Some journalists supported the establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam and its sole focus on so-called political Islam, because “it is not natural to separate the worldly from the religious sphere in Islam.”¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, they saw this as a necessary step to let “Austria and Europe stay as they are.”¹⁶⁸ *Der Standard* journalist Hans Rauscher critically asked whether Minister of Integration Susanne Raab was likely to “speak about Muslims rather than with them.” He also questioned the expertise of Vidino, who had claimed the closeness of the Muslim Youth in Austria (MJÖ, Muslimische Jugend Österreich) to the Muslim Brotherhood without giving any evidence. For him, Raab’s strategy “sounds like confrontation with no clear plan.”¹⁶⁹ In an interview with theologian Mouhanad Khorchide in *Der Standard*, the latter, who was introduced as somebody “who supports the government in establishing the Documentation Center for Political Islam”¹⁷⁰ stated, “Basically, the term describes an anti-human ideology that seeks domination in the name of Islam. Religion serves as a means to manipulate believers. Political Islam is directed against all of us and is much more dangerous than Jihadism and Salafism because it appears much more subtly, namely in a tie and suit. Many politicians I talk to do not see through this yet.”¹⁷¹ He also warned that “a strategy of Islamists will be to put pressure on the Greens to terminate the coalition.”¹⁷² Different voices, old¹⁷³ and new,¹⁷⁴ came to the fore to legitimize the Documentation Center for Political Islam. In a very contradictory way, Khorchide argued that while political Islam was weak in Austria, it was still dangerous, because he fears that “values of freedom and human rights are relativized.”¹⁷⁵ Khorchide argued in an inter-

165. Nina Scholz, “Neue Regierung und der politische Islam: Aufklärung mit Vorbildfunktion”, *Der Standard*, 8 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113025055/tuerkis-gruen-aufklaerung-mit-vorbildfunktion>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

166. Ibid.

167. Rudolf Mitdöhner, “Gut, dass Raab dran bleibt”, *Kurier*, 16 July 2020, <https://kurier.at/meinung/gut-dass-raab-dran-bleibt/400973612>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

168. Ibid.

169. Hans Rauscher, “Über Muslime reden statt mit ihnen?”, *Der Standard*, 19 July 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000118822977/ueber-muslime-reden-statt-mit-ihnen>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

170. Jan Michael Marchart, “Islamtheologe Khorchide: ‘Politischer Islam viel gefährlicher als Jihadismus’”, *Der Standard*, 21 July 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000118871137/islamtheologe-khorchide-politischer-islam-viel-gefaehrlicher-als-jihadismus?ref=article>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

171. Ibid.

172. Ibid.

173. Ednan Aslan, “Raus aus der Opferrolle”, *Der Standard*, 1 August 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000119088433/raus-aus-der-opferrolle>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

174. Marwan Abou Taam, “Sorge vor dem religiösen Populisten”, *Der Standard*, 2 August 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000119091377/sorge-vor-den-religioesen-populisten>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

175. Manfred Maurer, “Mouhanad Khorchide: ‘Morddrohungen machen Mut’”, *OÖ Volksblatt*, 22 September 2020,

view that “terms like Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism have become combat terms of political Islam.”¹⁷⁶

Elias Feroz argued in an op-ed that the notion of political Islam was useless for a factual debate. He criticized Khorchide’s new book *God’s False Attorneys* (*Gottes falsche Anwälte*), where the author argued that “the members of political Islam are often well-integrated, well-educated and have civil courage, confess to Europe and distance from extremism (...) but do this only to grab power.”¹⁷⁷

Natascha Strobl argued in a critical piece for *momentum*¹⁷⁸ that first, the ÖVP did not stick to the governmental program and changed its focus exclusively to political Islam. Second, the Documentation Center is a top-down institution and not like the DÖW (Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance), which monitors far-right extremism and is an institution that works together with civil society. Besides criticizing the notion “political Islam,” Strobl also argued that there are many other religious extremisms in Austria, first and foremost those in the government. Further, she criticized the fact that power is in the hands of patriarchic male clubs that dominate the power structures rather than in the hands of Muslims. Lastly, she argued that the anti-Muslim populism was simply a distraction strategy.

In a critical piece in *Der Standard*, Günther Ogris from the renowned SORA Institute argued that the ÖIF’s research report “Social Hotspots in the Context of Migration and Integration” (*Soziale Brennpunkte im Kontext von Migration und Integration*) is based on one-sided questions that reinforce stereotypes. He concluded his op-ed with the words, “The Integration Fund should remove the report from its homepage, apologize for misleading the public and become aware of its task. Commissioned reports should not serve to reinforce prejudices with propaganda, but to improve its own strategies.”¹⁷⁹

In an op-ed, *Der Standard* journalist Gerald John stated that Minister Susanne Raab is framing Muslims as a cause of problems in her discourse, which in turn leads to seclusion, which the minister pretends to fight.¹⁸⁰

<https://volksblatt.at/mouhanad-khorchide-morddrohungen-machen-mut/> (Access date: 29 November 2020).

176. Ibid.

177. Elias Feroz, “Bezeichnung ‘politischer Islam’: Für eine konstruktive Debatte zu diffus”, heise online, 11 August 2020, <https://www.heise.de/tp/features/Bezeichnung-politischer-Islam-Fuer-eine-konstruktive-Debatte-zu-diffus-4865874.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

178. Natascha Strobl, “Warum die neue Forschungsstelle ‘Politischer Islam’ nicht so sinnvoll ist”, *Momentum* Institut, 16 July 2020, <https://www.moment.at/story/warum-die-neue-forschungsstelle-politischer-islam-so-nicht-sinnvoll-ist>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

179. Günther Ogris, “‘Soziale Brennpunkte’: Wertlose Forschung mit verzerrendem Effekt”, *Der Standard*, 22 July 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000118897814/soziale-brennpunkte-wertlose-forschung-mit-verzerrendem-effekt>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

180. Gerald John, “Integrationspolitik: Susanne Raabs Tunnelblick”, *Der Standard*, 20 August 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000119478070/integrationspolitik-susanne-raabs-tunnelblick>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

Justice System

The complaint made by a Muslim family of Palestinian origin, who wanted to purchase a house, but was initially prevented from doing so by the local council because “Islamic cultures were too different from local ones,” finally met with success. The Lower Austria’s State Administration Court refused the city council’s decree in a first instance, and the family was allowed to buy the house.¹⁸¹

In March 2020, the IGGÖ announced it had made an appeal at the European Court of Human Rights because the Constitutional Court had rejected its case against the public education authority which had renamed the religious confession on a pupil’s school certificate from “Islam” to “IGGÖ.”¹⁸² but it did not walk the talk.

The initial plan of the coalition program was to expand the already existing hijab ban up to the age of 14. Minister Susanne Raab said shortly after her inauguration that “girls never wear the hijab out of free will.”¹⁸³

On October 1, 2020, news was published according to which 211 Turkish Muslim organizations including the ATIB (Austrian Turkish Union of Social Cooperation) and the *Islamische Föderation* (Islamic Federation) were controlled by the tax authority. According to the report, 40% of the associations might lose their non-profit status.¹⁸⁴ The news was published before the associations had received any official writing from the authorities and both the ATIB¹⁸⁵ and the *Islamische Föderation*¹⁸⁶ protested against the allegations, which they saw as a form of prejudice.¹⁸⁷

Internet

The regional Anti-Discrimination Styria (*Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steiermark*), which established the Ban-Hate-Handy-App,¹⁸⁸ documented 1,822 digital hate messages in

181. “Positiver Bescheid für muslimische Familie”, ORF, 14 February 2020, <https://noe.orf.at/stories/3034690/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

182. Bernhard Ichner, “IGGÖ statt ‘Islam’: Muslime fechten Zeugnis-Causa erneut an”, *Kurier*, 30 March 2020, <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/iggoe-start-islam-muslime-fechten-zeugnis-causa-erneut-an/400797776>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

183. “Ministerin Raab forciert sofortiges Kopftuchverbot”, *Der Standard*, 9 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113123848/susanne-raab-forciert-in-zeitungsinterviews-sofortiges-kopftuchverbot>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

184. “Finanz sieht Verfehlungen bei türkisch-islamischen Vereinen”, ORF, 1 October 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3183601/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

185. ATIB, “Kein Bescheid des Finanzministeriums vorliegend - weisen Medienberichte zurück”, OTS, 2 October 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20201002_OTS0019/kein-bescheid-des-finanzministeriums-vorliegend-weisen-medienberichte-zurueck, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

186. Islamische Föderation in Wien, “Islamische Föderation in Wien (IFW) weist Medienberichte zurück!”, OTS, 2 October 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20201002_OTS0008/islamische-foederation-in-wien-ifw-weist-medienberichte-zurueck, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

187. “Türkisch-islamische Vereine sehen Vorverurteilung”, ORF, 2 October 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3183672/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

188. ORF Steiermark: Hass im Netz wächst, 13 February 2021, <https://steiermark.orf.at/stories/3090093/> (Access date: 15 February 2021).

2019. The number nearly doubled in 2020, documenting a total of 3,215 reported cases; 962 cases were conspiracy-related cases, 665 were right-wing extremist messages, 207 were racist messages, and 144 were anti-Muslim messages.¹⁸⁹

Justice Minister Alma Zadić (The Greens) received death threats on social media shortly after being nominated for her new position.¹⁹⁰ Critical journalists such as Olivera Stajić pointed to the fact that although the coalition partner ÖVP defended her, they would not really call out the racial, anti-Muslim, and sexist motivation of these attacks. “The chancellor and the Austrian People’s Party are missing a unique opportunity to make a clear statement condemning the anti-Muslim, xenophobic, racist, and sexist tirades against Alma Zadić. They relativize her and thus weaken cohesion in the new government and in the country as a whole, right from the start.”¹⁹¹

As the Twitter account “FPÖ Fails” has shown, many of the hate crimes were anti-Muslim. Users on Facebook posted names for Zadić like “Islam Pu**y,” “Next step: SHARIA” and other abusive language and death threats.



Figure 6: A collection of abusive posts collected by the Twitter account “FPÖ Fails.”¹⁹²

189. ORF ZIB 1: Hass im Netz während Pandemie verdreifacht, 14 February 2021.

190. “ÖVP stellt sich hinter Zadic”, ORF, 9 January 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3150304/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

191. Olivera Stajić, “Die ÖVP muss antimuslimischen Hass gegenüber Zadić klar benennen”, *Der Standard*, 10 January 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000113135810/die-oevp-muss-den-antimuslimischen-hass-gegenueberzadic-klar-benennen>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

192. Screenshot from “FPÖ Fails” Twitter account, December 2020.

When the Austrian Broadcast TV ORF showed a cleaner wearing a hijab on its primetime news show “Zeit im Bild,” a show that has 1.3 million viewers, on the infographics, many people used Twitter to protest the reproduction of stereotypes. The infographic showed female doctors, nurses, cashiers, and cleaners, while only the last one was wearing a hijab.¹⁹³

On November 28, 2020, Twitter shut down the account of Identitarian leader Martin Sellner.¹⁹⁴



Figure 7: “No joint Easter feast, but a joint fast-breaking for Muslims in Ramadan?”¹⁹⁵



Figure 8: “Resoluteness: Prevent today that the St. Stephen’s Cathedral becomes a mosque in 10 years!”¹⁹⁶

193. “ZiB sorgt mit ‘Kopftuch-Putzfrau’ für Aufregung”, Heute, 1 June 2020, <https://www.heute.at/s/twitter-kritik-fuer-zib-grafik-putzfrau-mit-kopftuch-100084843>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

194. “Zahlreiche Twitter-Accounts der Identitären gesperrt”, ORF, 10 July 2020, <https://orf.at/stories/3173117/>, (Access date: 29 November 2020).

195. Screenshot from Instagram, December 2020.

196. Screenshot from Instagram account of Dominik Nepp, December 2020.



Figure 9: "It is thought-provoking how far things have come. Cheap chumming up or vote-catching at the end of Ramadan? ÖVP, SPÖ and the Greens congratulate Muslims!"¹⁹⁷

Stefan Hermann, a politician of the FPÖ in the city of Graz, posted against an anti-racist initiative started by Mustafa Durmus (SPÖ). Several anti-Muslim racist statements could be read on his Facebook wall, including "Die all you shitty Muslims, you son of bit*****", "Now these Muslims try to undermine us", and "Come on Eugen [referring to Prince Eugene, who fought the Ottomans], he has already once expelled this Volk."

197. Screenshot from Instagram of Mario Kunasek, December 2020.

„Scheiß Moslems beißt alle ins Gras ihr Hurenkinder“
„Her mit Prinz Eugen, er hat es schon einmal geschafft, dieses Volk zu vertreiben.“
„DIE TÜRKEN SIND EINE PLAGE!!!! So wie die pest. bei uns haben sie NICHTS verloren!!!!!!“
„musti geh nach hause nach anatolien solche steinzeit menschen wie ihr es seit brauchen wir hier nicht!“
„...doch diese moslemische Spezies [...] jetzt versuchen sie es durch Unterwanderung.“
„Die sind eine Plage arrogant und herrisch“ - „Türken waren immer unre PLAGE“

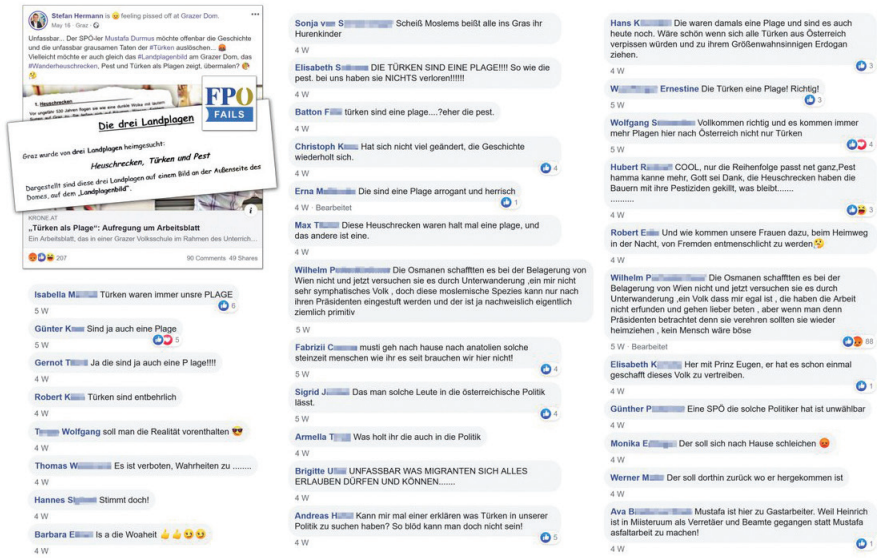


Figure 10: Collection of posts on the Facebook account of a FPÖ politician containing anti-Muslim hate messages.¹⁹⁸

Also, social media accounts of daily newspapers like *Kurier* posted racist representations of Muslims. In one Instagram story, the *Kurier* posted “17-year-old Muslim Stabs His Ex-girlfriend 50 Times and Threatens to Rape Her – 10 Years Prison.” (Fig. 11)

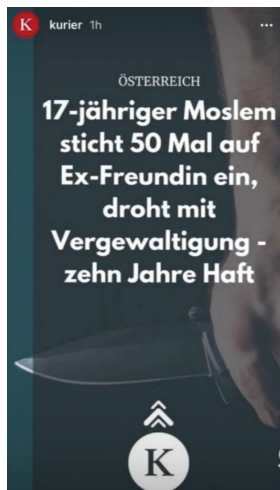


Figure 11: “17-year-old Muslim Stabs His Ex-girlfriend 50 Times and Threatens to Rape Her – 10 Years Prison.”¹⁹⁹

198. Screenshot from “FPÖ Fails” Twitter account, December 2020.

199. Screenshot from the Instagram story of the daily *Kurier*, December 2020.

MP Leo Kohlbauer (FPÖ) wrote on his Facebook account: “Is this representative of the SPÖ-affiliated pupils association AKS, the future of the Social Democratic movement? Will we soon have MPs, executives, and ministers with a strict Islamic headscarf? The ideology of the Muslim Brothers in our parliamentarism? (sic!)” (Fig. 12)



Figure 12: MP Leo Kohlbauer (FPÖ) wrote on his Facebook account: “Is this representative of the SPÖ-affiliated pupils association AKS, the future of the Social Democratic movement? Will we soon have MPs, executives, and ministers with a strict Islamic headscarf? The ideology of the Muslim Brothers in our parliamentarism? (sic!)”

The vice-governor of Upper Austria and leader of the Upper Austrian FPÖ, Manfred Haimbuchner, posted on his Facebook account the slogan “Stop Islamization!” (Fig. 13)



Figure 13: Manfred Haimbuchner: “Stop Islamization!”²⁰⁰

200. Screenshot from Manfred Haimbuchner’s Facebook account, December 2020.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As this report shows, Islamophobia is at the heart of the Islam policies of the government in power, primarily the Minister of Interior Karl Nehammer and the Minister of Integration Susanne Raab. They are supported by academics like Lorenzo Vidino, Susanne Schröter, and Mouhanad Khorchide, and university graduates like Heiko Heinisch and Nina Scholz. While politicians in representative positions established institutions like the Documentation Center for Political Islam and use institutions like the Austrian Integration Fund to promote their agenda of criminalizing Muslim civil society,²⁰¹ scholars and activists write op-eds and give interviews in national media outlets to support the government policies in the public discourse.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

On February 26, 2020, the NGO *SOS Mitmensch* presented its annual report on anti-Muslim racism in Austrian politics with political scientists Benjamin Opratko and Kathrin Stainer-Hämmerle.²⁰² Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, social activism was severely reduced. One of the most important victories against state Islamophobia was the Constitutional Court's repeal of the ban of the hijab in elementary school in December 2020.

Oppositional politicians in the national parliament used their right to submit a questionnaire regarding the Documentation Center for Political Islam²⁰³ and Operation Luxor,²⁰⁴ but a substantial outcry was still absent.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The hegemony of the anti-Muslim discourse is unbroken. The Greens were not able to tame this trend that has been in place since the new ÖVP took over power, first with the FPÖ and now in a coalition with the Greens. The pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns also handicapped people in terms of moving physically and exchanging views more freely, which also impacted anti-racist work in general. Since

201. Bridge Initiative Team, Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), 4 November 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-austrian-integration-fund-osterreichische-integrationsfonds-oif/>

202. SOS Mitmenschen, "MORGEN: Bericht über antimuslimischen Rassismus mit Kathrin Stainer-Hämmerle und Benjamin Opratko", OTS, 25 February 2020, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20200225_OTS0014/morgen-bericht-ueber-antimuslimischen-rassismus-mit-kathrin-stainer-haemmerle-und-benjamin-opratko, (Access date: 29 November 2020)

203. Schriftliche Anfrage der Abgeordneten Nurten Yilmaz, Kolleginnen und Kollegen an die Bundesministerin für Frauen und Integration betreffend Dokumentationsstelle für politischen Islam, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVII/JJ_02651/index.shtml

204. Schriftliche Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Stephanie Krisper, Kolleginnen und Kollegen an die Bundesministerin für Justiz betreffend Hintergründe der Aktion „Ramses/Luxor“ gegen die Muslimbruderschaft am 9. November 2020, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVII/JJ_04756/index.shtml

many anti-Muslim legislations have become part of the new coalition in power, there is still an utmost need to contest the political hegemony of Islamophobia. Since the anti-terror package aims not only to implement a new law against “terrorism,” but also wants to change the Islam Act of 2015 as well as a number of other legislations, this will have severely negative consequences on the Muslim community, which is designed to be even further under the control and surveillance of the state authorities in a discriminatory way compared to other churches and religious denominations. The IGGÖ has to reject fully any further deliberation with the current government on changing the Islam Act toward the worse. Some recommendations follow below.

- The Islam Act has to be legally contested.
- The organized anti-Muslim network has to be uncovered, especially those involved in the Documentation Center for Political Islam and the raid of November 9.
- 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

- **16.06.2020:** During a party convention, FPÖ chairman Norbert Hofer says, “Corona is not dangerous. The Koran is much more dangerous.”
- **15.07.2020:** The establishment of the Documentation Center for Political Islam was presented during a press release by Minister of Integration Susanne Raab, alongside academics Mouhanad Khorchide and Lorenzo Vidino.
- **23.07.2020:** President of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka (ÖVP) demanded that Austria’s Muslims acknowledge the constitution.
- **09.11.2020:** Raids against alleged members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, which targeted scholars and aid organizations and which was declared unlawful in July 2021.
- **11.11.2020:** Following the raid, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz says, “We have to fight two challengers: First, the corona pandemic and second the even stronger fight against terrorism and radicalization in Austria and Europe.”
- **11.12.2020:** The Constitutional Court repeals the hijab ban in elementary school.
- **23.12.2020:** The Documentation Center for Political Islam presented its first publication suggesting a definition of “political Islam” and discussing the Muslim Brotherhood.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
BELGIUM
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

Throughout 2020, and in spite of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Islamophobia has persisted throughout Belgium. Whilst the nature of the localised lockdowns and social distancing has meant that there have been fewer reports of Islamophobic attacks on individuals when compared to previous years, there has been a continued manifestation of Islamophobic attacks on spaces and places perceived to be associated with Belgian Muslimness. For example, Belgian mosques and public spaces have been attacked in various ways, from graffiti to offensive caricatures, and, in a more extreme example, bloodied crosses and swastikas, and animal innards were left at the holiday cottage of a holidaying Muslim family in Lierneux in August 2020.

The year also saw a significant level of structural Islamophobia in Belgium. The Belgian regional ban on ritual slaughter, which affected Jewish and Muslim communities and was implemented in Flanders and Wallonia during the preceding year, was debated in the European Court of Justice in 2020 and an advisory opinion concerning its illegitimacy was issued; however, the ban persists.

Similarly, and perhaps most significant in 2020, was the ban on philosophical, political, and faith symbols that was passed under the framework of neutrality, here somewhat akin to French *laïcité*. The ban on supposedly non-neutral symbols would disproportionately impact Muslim women who wear the hijab and as such the ban was met with strong condemnation and protest; in July 2020, thousands assembled in Brussels to protest the ban under the hashtag #HijabisFightBack.

The globalisation of Islamophobia influencing Belgium was increasingly clear, not only in the above ban, but also in the foiled plan of five Danes to burn the Quran. The Danes were subsequently arrested and extradited by Belgian officials.

Belgian counter-Islamophobia initiatives remain strong and exemplary, apparent in the examples of the CCIB and the UNIA, which are discussed in depth in the relevant section of the report.

Synthèse

Pendant l'année 2020, et malgré la pandémie globale COVID-19, l'Islamophobie a persisté partout en Belgique. Des confinements locaux et de la distanciation sociale ont signifié qu'il y avait eu moins des rapports des attaques Islamophobes sur les individus spécifiquement comparés aux années précédentes, cependant il y avait eu une manifestation continuée des attaques Islamophobes sur les espaces et les endroits présumés d'être liés aux Musulmans en Belgique. Par exemple, des mosquées Belges et les endroits publics ont été attaqués de façons différentes, de graffiti ou des caricatures, et dans un exemple plus sévère des crucifix ensanglantés et des entrailles qui étaient laissés au gîte d'une famille Musulmane pendant ses vacances à Lierneux dans le mois d'août 2020.

L'année a vu aussi un niveau significatif de l'Islamophobie structurelle en Belgique. La prohibition régionale d'abattage rituel qui affecte les communautés Juives et Musulmanes et qui était implémentée en Flandres et Wallonie l'année précédente était discutée au Cour de Justice Européen pendant 2020 et la décision consultative à propos de l'illégitimité de l'interdiction, néanmoins la prohibition persiste.

De façon similaire, et peut-être le plus significatif pendant 2020, était l'interdiction des symboles philosophiques, politiques et religieuses dans le cadre de neutralité – semblable à la laïcité Française. La prohibition sur les symboles soi-disant non-neutres toucherait les femmes Musulmanes qui portent *l'hijab* d'une façon disproportionnée et de ce fait l'interdiction attirerait condamnation forte et manifestations; en juillet 2020 plusieurs de gens réunis pour manifester sous l'hashtag #HijabisFightBack.

La globalisation de l'Islamophobie qui influence la Belgique était de plus en plus clair, pas seulement dans l'interdiction susmentionnée, mais aussi dans le plan, de cinq Danois, déjoué de brûler le *Quran*, qui était par la suite arrêté et extradé par les officiels Belges.

Des initiatives contre l'Islamophobie restent fortes et exemplaires, évident dans les exemples, de CCIB et UNIA, discutés en détail dans cette section du rapport.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Kingdom of Belgium

Type of Regime: Federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy

Form of Government: Representative democratic federal bicameral parliamentary system, headed by the monarch.

Ruling Parties: Coalition government (normal in Belgian politics)

Opposition Parties: Francophone parties include *Mouvement Réformateur* (MR), *Parti Socialiste* (PS), *Centre Démocrate Humaniste* (CdH), *Écolo*, and *Parti Populiste*. Flemish parties include *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (NVA), *Christen Democratische en Vlaamse* and *Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democrate*, *Socialistische Partij Anders*, *Vlaams Belang* (VB), and *Groen*.

Last Elections: The last elections took place in May 2019 and run on a five-year cycle in line with the European Parliamentary elections. The highest-ranking parties were as follows: NVA – 25 seats, PS – 20 seats, VB – 18 seats, MR – 14 seats, and *Écolo* – 13 seats.

Total Population: 11.4 million

Major Languages: Flemish in Flanders (approx. 59% of 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 throughout.

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.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Statistics are compiled by the 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.

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): 6% of the Belgian population (estimated 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 Combatting 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 Militant Organisations: Rather than groups being directly designated as “far-right militant organisations”, far-right actions tend to be condemned.

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No national ban, regional ban in Verviers and individual school-specific bans.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** Flanders since January 2019, Wallonia since September 2019.
- **Minaret Ban:** Only discussion following the Swiss calls for a ban during the early 2010s.
- **Circumcision Ban:** Only discussion.
- **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.
- **Prayer Ban:** There is no specific national or federal ban on prayer in Belgium. However, it is linked to employment discrimination cases.

Introduction

Islamophobia in Belgium has continued to grow during 2020. The global COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns and social distancing have given rise to an apparent evolution in the nature of Belgian Islamophobia. Unlike previous years where attacks on Muslim women dominated, this year has seen a number of attacks on places, including attacks on mosques and Muslim holidaymakers in Lierneux.

Perhaps most significantly, 2020 has seen the entrenchment of Belgian structural intersectional Islamophobia – apparent in the implementation of the allegedly neutrality-based ban on philosophical, political, and religious symbols – which would undoubtedly impact hijab-wearing Belgian Muslim women. The legislated ban sparked significant protests in Brussels.

The political, media, and internet domains continue to be significant platforms for Islamophobic discourse and even hate speech. Notwithstanding, in the aforementioned discursive fields there remain strong initiatives to call out Islamophobia and to support Belgian Muslimness. The year also brought about noteworthy practices in Belgium’s counter-Islamophobia scene including work centred on advocacy and the documentation of Islamophobia.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

As documented in previous editions of the *European Islamophobia Report*, physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks on people and places continued to be prevalent in 2020. The start of the year was marked by a physical Islamophobic attack on Al-Ihsan Mosque in Louvain,¹ thus highlighting the way in which Islamophobia functions via the targeting of perceived Muslim spaces.

Further attacks on space – in a location not explicitly linked to perceived Belgian Muslims – is apparent in the “F**K Muslim” (sic) graffiti tags painted on a road on 31 May 2020. (Fig. 1) The incident was reported online via the *Collectif Contre l’Islamophobie en Belgique/Collectief Tegen Islamofobie in België* (Counter Islamophobia Collective in Belgium) and was met with online hostility as detailed in the section of this report pertaining to Islamophobia on the internet.²

1. Belga, “Une mosquée vandalisée à Louvain”, *Le Soir*, 1 January 2020, <https://www.lesoir.be/270228/article/2020-01-01/une-mosquee-vandalisee-louvain>, (Access date: 14 January 2020).

2. Ibid.



Figure 1: Image showing graffiti tag which reads "F**k Muslim"³



Figure 2: Islamophobic caricatures from the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* stuck onto a mosque in Wallonia.⁴

3. CCIB, Twitter, 31 May 2020, https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/1267020977302573057, (Access date: 15 October 2020).
4. CCIB, Twitter, 1 November 2020, https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/1322899961533652997, (Access date: 15 November 2020).

Additionally, in early November 2020, Islamophobic caricatures were stuck onto a mosque in Wallonia. The caricature contains an image and text taken from the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and specifically, an image of buttocks and hairy legs with the individual bending over. It is accompanied by a caricature of what the magazine claims is the Prophet Muhammed (a clear provocation given that Muslims do not depict God or the Prophets) along with the text “Et le cul de Mahomet, on a le droit?” (And the backside of Muhammed, do we have the right [to draw it]?) (Fig. 2) This use of the *Charlie Hebdo* caricatures in the weeks following the murder of Samuel Paty in neighbouring France, who is believed to have been killed by a student for his use of such images demonstrates the fluidity of Islamophobic ideas across national boundaries. When the francophone European, and even global, debate around the freedom of speech, or perhaps the right to offend, become so central to the national imagination, the way in which particularly sensationalised tools become employed to stoke Islamophobia within Belgian society was seemingly legitimised. The event was reported by the CCIB, as seen in Figure 2.⁵ The Islamophobic and, more generally, racist and insensitive nature of the publication, particularly vis-à-vis Belgium, is discussed further in this section of the report.

A more shocking example of a direct Islamophobic attack took place against a Belgian Muslim family holidaying in Lierneux in late August 2020. The family was, as the Belgian media states, “terrorised” by three masked men.⁶ The men attacked the Muslim family whilst they stayed in a holiday cottage by throwing the innards of slaughtered animals on the pathway of the cottage and also at the family’s car, along with bloodied crosses and swastikas. The media commentary around the event makes it clear that the Islamophobic character of this attack is undeniable;⁷ however, there exists an apparent intersection between ethnic racism and Islamophobia given the multifaceted identities of the family who was attacked. Farida, the mother of the family, speculated that the innards that had been left at the cottage may have been from a pig (and particularly within the context of the ban on ritual slaughter in the federal Belgian communities of Flanders and Wallonia) and specifically that the attack was an Islamophobic provocation. The bloodied items left by the attackers at the crime scene also point to the desecration of Christian symbols. The attackers were believed to be from the identitarian movement.⁸ In many ways, this draws parallels to the at-

5. CCIB, Twitter, 1 November 2020, https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/1322899961533652997, (Access date: 15 November 2020).

6. D.R, “Trois hommes masques terrorisent une famille musulmane en vacances à Lierneux”, La Meuse, 2 September 2020, <https://lameuse.sudinfo.be/632302/article/2020-09-02/trois-hommes-masques-terrorisent-une-famille-musulmane-en-vacances-lierneux?referer=%2Farchives%2Frecherche%3Fdatefilter%3Dlastyear%26sort%3D-date%2520desc%26word%3Dtrois%2520hommes%2520terrorisent>, (Access date: 15 October 2020).

7. Michel Gretry, “La mouvance identitaire ardennaise, à l’origine d’une attaque Islamophobe à Lierneux?”, RTBF.be, 2 September 2020, https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/liege/detail_la-mouvance-identitaire-ardennaise-a-l-origine-d-une-attaque-islamophobe-a-lierneux?id=10574641, (Access date: 15 October 2020).

8. Ibid.

tack perpetrated in Avignon, France, on 29 October 2020, by a member of the *Generation/Mouvance Identitaire* movement⁹ although the attacker here shouted “God is Great” (*Allahuakbar*) in Arabic. This was done presumably to be reported as a Muslim enacting terror. The attacks highlight the increased threat of violence from organised far-right Islamophobic actors.

Comparatively speaking, the level of reported Islamophobic verbal and physical attacks on individuals directly and in person has seemingly decreased compared to previous years as covered by the relevant annual “Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report”. Previous examples include Muslim women and visibly Muslim women in particular being pushed onto the tracks of the Brussels metro or having their headscarves forcibly removed from their heads.¹⁰ Given the current context of the global pandemic and the various national lockdown measures that have been imposed throughout the nation, it is likely that, similar to other citizens and inhabitants, Muslims are less likely to have been in spaces where they are likely to encounter others at close proximity and therefore face Islamophobic attacks in a face-to-face environment. As with all hate crime statistics, the reported physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of the potential volume of Islamophobic attacks given the limitations of reporting biases. Nonetheless, the Statistical Report published by the CCIB in September 2020 pertaining to reported Islamophobia in the year preceding details that of the reported incidents 90% are attacks against perceived Muslim women.¹¹

Employment

Belgium is home to the “Achbita vs G4S” case, which surrounded the question of *neutralité* and the wearing of the headscarf by Achbita. The case was heard in Belgium initially and was subsequently taken to the European Court in 2017. The removal of Achbita from her employment at G4S on the grounds of company neutrality was deemed to be legitimate by the European Court of Justice Attorney General Sharpston. As highlighted in previous editions of the Belgian section of the *European Islamophobia Report*, this European-level legal decision then gives further legitimacy to the discrimination of visible gendered Muslimness in the Belgian labour force. This is compounded by the existing evidence pointing to the discrimination of candidates seeking employment with Muslim-sounding names.¹² Thus,

9. Zoe Tidman & Lizzie Dearden, “Man Shot Dead in Avignon After Threatening Public with Weapon”, *The Independent*, 29 October 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/france-terror-avignon-attack-stabbing-police-shooting-nice-today-b1420399.html>, (Access date: 29 October 2020).

10. See Amina Easat-Daas: *Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2019*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020.

11. CCIB, *Rapport Chiffres 2019*, (Brussels: CCIB, 2020).

12. Attakrit Leckcivizile, “Job Recruiters Discriminate against Muslims, and It Doesn’t End at the Interview Stage”, *The Conversation*, 16 April 2019, <https://theconversation.com/job-recruiters-discriminate-against-muslims-and-it-doesnt-end-at-the-interview-stage-113884>, (Access date: 18 November 2020).

given the empirical evidence coupled with the supranational-level legal decision, it is highly likely that this environment will create limited opportunities for Muslim engagement in employment, and particularly will limit Muslim women's opportunities for employment. Furthermore, it is difficult for both applicants and monitoring bodies to ascertain fully the extent to which candidates are rejected on the grounds of their Muslimness or on the basis of intersectional discrimination in the workplace.



Figure 3: A woman wearing a headscarf who works for DelHaize.¹³

At the same time, this year has been marked by several positive campaigns to reinforce the inclusion of Muslimness in the Belgian workforce. For example, the Belgian food retail company, DelHaize, runs a media campaign which includes a visibly Muslim woman on the advertisement. (Fig. 3) The text in the image boasts of the woman's sociability. Furthermore, the recruitment campaign by DelHaize normalises the presence of visibly Muslim women both in the workforce and in society more generally. As such, the advertisement represents a positive yet simple means of countering gendered Islamophobic perceptions particularly against the background of the legal precedence in the dismissal of hijab-wearing employees.

Education

Arguably the most significant Islamophobic developments in Belgium in 2020 pertain to the educational field. In June 2020, the Belgian Constitutional Court issued a decision seeking to ban faith symbols (including political and philosophical sym-

13. DelHaize, Facebook, 25 January 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/workatdelhaize/posts/589022341520618>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

bols) - and, therefore, including the hijab - from higher education institutions and settings on the grounds of “neutrality”.¹⁴

The Belgian concept of *neutralité* – particularly as it applies in the francophone Belgian regions – has long been applied to limit visible manifestations of Muslimness by individuals in Belgian society and it has similarly long been contested in society. The ban on allegedly non-neutral symbols, and particularly its employment as a tool for the limitation of visible Muslimness and often Muslim women’s headscarves, bears strong resemblance to the debates framed around *laïcité* or secularism in neighbouring France. French *laïcité* has been argued by many to have been transformed by the state from its historical philosophical and ideological grounding in which the Church and state were separated, towards a weaponised mode of targeting Islam and Muslimness in the French nation.¹⁵ Given the centrality of *laïcité* within the French national imaginary, the potential space and possibility for the contestation of Islamophobic French *laïcité* becomes further limited. The resemblance of Belgian *neutralité* and French *laïcité* highlights the fluidity of ideas and concepts that may be employed to promote Islamophobia across national boundaries and its increasing globalisation.

The ban on so-called non-neutral symbols in francophone Belgian universities which would namely impact Muslim women who wear the hijab (NB the full-face veil or niqab is outlawed throughout Belgium since 2011 on the grounds of national security) was met with strong protest by many Belgians. Although the ban was framed as a move towards neutrality, its distinctly gendered Islamophobic implications recalls distinctly colonialist liberation narratives similar to those expressed prior to the implementation of the 2004 French *Loi Stasi*.¹⁶ Such colonialist narratives form a cornerstone of gendered Islamophobia both in Belgium and in the West more broadly. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, “White men are saving brown women from brown men”.¹⁷ Here, and in the case of France, the state under the guise of *neutralité* or *laïcité* – which it incidentally contradicts – as a form of structural whiteness (thus constituting the “white men” who Spivak refers to) seeks to liberate or save Muslim women from the perceived ills of covering, thus demonstrating a clear intersection between misogyny and gendered Islamophobia in state policy. Furthermore, such legislated measures directly impact Muslim women’s education in the present and in the future.

14. Stradalex, https://www.stradalex.com/fr/sl_src_publ_jur_be/document/cconst_2020-81, (Access date 28 September 2020).

15. Karima Laachir, “State Islamophobia in France”, *Thinking Thru’ Islamophobia*, eds. S. Sayyid & Abdookarim Vakil (London: Hurst, 2008), pp. 23–25.

16. The law is commonly referred to as the *Loi Stasi* in French discourse and pertains to the prohibition of “ostentatious faith symbols” in French schools, but ultimately led to the exclusion of Muslim girls who wore the headscarf and a comparatively smaller number of baptised Sikh boys who wore the turban. *Loi du 15 mars 2004-228 encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité, le porte de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, collèges et lycées publics* (Paris, France: Legifrance, 2004).

17. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 271–313.



Figure 4: Image featuring protestors at the #HijabisFightBack demonstration.¹⁸

In response to the clear contradictions of the university-level hijab ban and its distinct gendered Islamophobic nature, on Sunday, 5 July 2020, more than a thousand protestors assembled in the afternoon in Mont des Arts, Brussels to protest the ban and particularly its implications on visibly Muslim women.¹⁹ The event was organised via social media channels under the hashtag #HijabisFightBack. Numerous protestors carried placards at the event which included slogans such as #HijabisFightBack, “Neutrality is not exclusion”, “Don’t touch my hijab”, “Belgium, your Islamophobia is showing”, “My head is covered, not my brain”, “Stop telling women what to do with their bodies”, “They pretend to want to free me by taking away my freedom” and references to Fatima al-Fihri, the Muslim woman who was the founder of the oldest university on record.²⁰ (Fig. 4)

18. Alast Najafi “Hijabis Fight Back” in *Young Feminist Europe*, 23 August 2020, <https://www.youngfeminist.eu/2020/08/hijabis-fight-back/>, (Access date 12 October 2020).

19. LN24, “Bruxelles: manifestation contre l’interdiction du foulard dans l’enseignement supérieur”, LN24.be, 5 July 2020, https://www.ln24.be/2020-07-05/bruxelles-manifestation-contre-linterdiction-du-foulard-dans-lenseignement-superieur?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=48d5513736e65892b770cd53f0f41c6644ca96d0-1609928649-0-AQ3J4sOyhRZAhXSmayQGmQy-G6-_TheV-tYDF_SiN-Ffj4_L6k3Vui9ue6LZwGaijwiX6m97F8HG2licHHq_bhQRmIIQuTzKhxybIE-hwTpvR8o6_-mOVWtpszMnC9k2LWiiR-r6cub3QVIZLNb_moSkM-8anOREFQyUVWx7Gsw5lahBsa_kzW1XiNjMHuUA9xdrTFT6MjOwHIO-0iMr0X7WaiVylqzPnbuwcBtRuu5IoNaX4x04odzG13owER8ZwMKI0Bd8g2kYV36CKueQrVWbaZWucA-JrPfq7ixEV3vxbNeYNxMycSBqWMOUNEHq07MGEUTDPvSwGHpPGA5tvdF71BWYDaBehsV_2FopwBwtSKQ_E8XIJHDLGpDClgglv57LrRdSTHJBfEAk2ZHQPpqYbhSzcRRUtI5ZwF-orcBmNcicwdoshelz-95fUBuKhr7uBAbJ8lUl3LS2S-Vsji8WZDiS69ISywTcC0nfxHxoZqdNST3T8wSw11GzdDNKjDkQ, (Access date: 12 October 2020).

20. SceneArabia, Instagram, 7 July 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CCWOfOhnyag/?utm_source=ig_embed

Subsequently, certain Belgian higher education institutions issued statements noting that the ban would not be enacted on their premises. For example, the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (VUB) stated, “Equality and inclusion are central to the VUB. Diversity is a fact, at our university as well. So, let it be clear that every student is welcome for us regardless of gender, origin or social status. With or without headscarf.”²¹ Similarly, the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (KU Leuven) noted, “Ja, je mag een hoofddoek dragen aan onze universiteit. Als universiteit bieden we ruimte aan religieuze en levensbeschouwelijke diversiteit, en respecteren we het dragen van religieuze symbolen of kleding. Meer informatie vind je hier” (Yes, you can wear a headscarf at our university. As a university, we offer space for religious and ideological diversity, and we respect the wearing of religious symbols or clothing).²² These remarks signal that Belgian universities will continue to maintain inclusion of visibly Muslim women, notwithstanding the fact that the move at the state level still signals and legitimises gendered Islamophobia in the country.

By way of background Belgium does not have a national ban on the hijab, rather, at local level, regions and schools have the freedom to decide whether or not to allow the headscarf. For example, in Verviers, and akin to the French *Loi Stasi*²³ wording, “ostentatious symbols” are prohibited in school – meaning students cannot wear the headscarf.²⁴ Nonetheless, this debate is not restricted to Verviers and surfaces frequently particularly within the context of francophone Belgian education.

Beyond the university-level headscarf ban, notable examples of Islamophobia in education include a schoolteacher being suspended from his position as a result of having shown potentially inflammatory caricatures to his students aged between 10 and 11 in the *Ecole no. 11 aux Sources du Gai Savoir* school in the Molenbeek district of Brussels in October 2020. It is unclear if the teacher intended to cause offence, although it might be argued that this is the overall intent of the images regardless of the teacher’s position. Following the suspension of the unnamed teacher, far-right Flemish MPs in particular came out to condemn the suspension as detailed later in the report.

This comes in the wake of the murder of Samuel Paty in neighbouring France and the global debate that it sparked surrounding the freedom of speech and the right to offend, a debate often marked by the absence of focus on the responsibilities that come with free speech. Furthermore, debates that stem from the *Charlie*

21. Maïthe Chini, “Belgian universities stress that they will not ban headscarves” in *The Brussels Times*, 16 June 2020, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/art-culture/117067/belgian-universities-stress-that-they-will-not-ban-headscarves-in-class/>, (Access date: 9 December 2020).

22. KU Leuven, Twitter, 16 June 2020, https://twitter.com/KU_Leuven/status/1272884748172644353, (Access date: 9 December 2020).

23. *Loi du 15 mars 2004-228 encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité, le porte de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, collèges et lycées publics* (Paris, France: Legifrance, 2004).

24. *Déclaration Politique Générale—Mandature Communale 2013–2018*. (Verviers, Belgium: Verviers Conseil Communal, 2013).

Hebdo caricatures also fail to problematise the character of the caricatures produced by the magazine, including, for example, the depiction of a then minister, Christiane Taubira, as an ape.²⁵

Educational establishments in Belgium also contested growing Islamophobia in neighbouring France as was apparent in the case of the European Benelux University Islamic Studies Department that, in November 2020, launched an appeal to sue the current French President Emmanuel Macron on the grounds of his Islamophobic political discourse.²⁶ Here, arguably Macron's discourse not only stokes Islamophobia both in politics and on the grassroots level, but his increasingly Islamophobic discourse also signals an attempt to pander to the growing far-right electorate in France apparent in the ever-growing success of *Rassemblement National* headed by Marine Le Pen, ahead of the 2022 presidential electoral campaign. The date signals that not only will the rise of Islamophobia in French political discourse be long term, but that it is important to note that ideas circulate beyond geographical boundaries and, in particular, given their shared francophone nature, such political narratives have strong potential to influence neighbouring Belgium.

Under the framework of the national recognition of faith groups, including Islam, in Belgium, February 2020, saw the introduction of university-level training of Belgian imams at the *Katholieke Universitat Leuven*.²⁷ The training of Muslim religious clergy here within the Belgian context reflects wider debate regarding the potential value of the educational formation of clergy within their home context. Whilst the aforementioned training is likely to bring benefit for Belgian Muslims in this context, the debate is often co-opted in wider Islamophobic and xenophobic discourse surrounding immigration and the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) agenda. Given its instrumentalization against the presence of Muslimness in a given nation this, in turn, contributes to Islamophobia. It should be noted that the Belgian context has its own specificities - namely, around the recognition and funding of populous faith communities in the nation - which does not single out this move as unusual within the framework of faith in Belgium.

Politics

The Belgian political domain continues to see Islamophobic political discourse. As with previous years, Flemish Belgian members of parliament tend to lead in this re-

25. Zack Beauchamp, "A New Website Explains Charlie Hebdo Cartoons for Americans", Vox, 14 January 2015, <https://www.vox.com/2015/1/14/7546903/understanding-charlie-hebdo>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

26. Safaa Kasraoui, "Islamic Studies Department at Belgium University Sues Macron for Racism", Morocco World News, 3 November 2020, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2020/11/324612/islamic-studies-department-at-belgium-university-sues-macron-for-racism/>, (Access date: 15 November 2020).

27. Alan Hope, "First Imam Training Course Starts in February", Brussels Times, 26 December 2019, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/belgium-all-news/85950/first-imam-training-course-starts-in-february/>, (Access date: 25 September 2020).

gard.²⁸ For example, following the suspension of the Molenbeek-based teacher for showing inflammatory Islamophobic images, Flemish Belgian MP Theo Francken took to Twitter to condemn the suspension as shocking.²⁹ Whereas francophone Belgian Senator Georges L Bouchez also tweeted to say that he hoped that the news of the teacher’s suspension was incorrect and continued by adding, “Freedom of speech is non-negotiable”.³⁰ This reflects a broader political and global debate surrounding the rights and responsibilities attached to freedom of speech, the right to offend, and Islamophobia.



Figure 5: Image of a tweet taken from Sophie Wilmès’ Twitter wishing Belgian Muslims a Happy Eid al Fitr.³¹

Perhaps reflective of the broader traditions of the growing political polarisation apparent in Belgium and more broadly, this year also saw a growing number of Belgian political representatives coming forward to express support and celebrate Muslim traditions and festivals. For example, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister (and former Prime Minister) Sophie Wilmès took to Twitter on 24 May 2020 to state, “I wish Muslims in Belgium, and beyond, a good festival #EidAlFitr #Ramadan”.³² Similarly, Belgian MP and President of the centrist party Défi tweeted to wish a “Good festival, Eid el-Fitr, to all our Muslim fellow countrymen”.³³ Such social media-based expressions of support are often replicated by parliamentarians across the West more generally, and such tweets contribute towards normalising Muslimness in the country.

During 2020 and against the background of the global COVID-19 pandemic, as in many other nations, medical mask-wearing or face covering was mandated in

28. For more on the Belgian far right see Kris Deschouwer, *The Politics of Belgium*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

29. AFP/Belga, “Belgian Teacher Suspended over Prophet Muhammad Cartoon”, DW, 30 October 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/belgian-teacher-suspended-over-prophet-muhammad-cartoon/a-55454081>, (Access date: 30 October 2020).

30. Ibid.

31. Sophie Wilmès, Twitter, 24 May 2020, https://twitter.com/Sophie_Wilmès/status/1264644810926952453, (Access date: 24 May 2020).

32. Ibid.

33. François de Smet, Twitter, 26 May 2020, <https://twitter.com/francoisdesmet>, (Access date 18 June 2020).

Belgium. Here it is important to highlight that as of 1 June 2011, the covering of one's face has been outlawed throughout Belgium.³⁴ The ban on face coverings in Belgium follows similar and preceding face-covering bans at the federal level.³⁵ Nonetheless, the ban disproportionately impacts Muslim women who wear the niqab or face veil, and much of the discourse around the ban was centred on gendered Muslimness and its visibility. This is in contrast to the remarkably similar and preceding French ban on face coverings in public which was constructed around *laïcité* or secularism. The Belgian niqab ban came into effect in spite of very few Belgian Muslim women wearing the niqab, with some estimates as low as 30 women throughout the country.³⁶ Instead the political debate and the implementation of the legislation was seemingly more about the Islamophobic othering of gendered Muslimness in Belgium. Against this background of the legislated ban on face covering, and given that the concealment of one's face is allegedly deemed to threaten national security alongside the distinctly gendered Islamophobic connotations of the legislated ban, the adoption of medical masks as a means to slow the spread of COVID-19 was considered by the Flemish nationalist far-right political party, *Vlaams Belang*, to be a move towards an alleged "Islamisation", as flagged by the CCIB in July 2020.³⁷ This is evidenced in Figure 6 which displays the alleged steps between wearing a medical mask and the full-face veil.



Figure 6: Image taken from *Vlaams Belang* Facebook, flagged by the CCIB.³⁸

Additionally, on 21 September 2020, on the *Vlaams Beland* Brussels page the party shared images of a headscarf-wearing woman along with the caption “Après Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, voilà #Schaerbeek qui met en doute le principe de neutralité au sein de l’administration #communale. Continuons comme ça et d’ici dix ans

34. Moniteur, *Loi visant à interdire le port de tout vêtement cachant totalement ou de manière principale le visage*, (Brussels, Belgium: Moniteur, 2011).

35. Amina Easat-Daas, *Muslim Women's Political Participation in France and Belgium*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

36. “Belgian Lawmakers Pass Burka Ban”, BBC, 30 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8652861.stm>, (Access date: 24 March 2013).

37. CCIB, Twitter, 28 July 2020, https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/1288176009746042880/photo/1, (Access date: 9 September 2020).

38. Ibid.

Bruxelles est une région musulmane. Le Vlaams Belang dit haut et fort: NON au #communautarisme, NON à l'islamisme et surtout NON-AU #VOILE!" (After Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, here is #Schaerbeek who is putting the question of neutrality into question in the heart of #communal administration. Carry on like that and ten years from now Brussels will be a Muslim area. *Vlaams Belang* says loud and clear: NO to #ghettoisation, NO to Islamism and above all NO TO THE #HEAD-SCARF). (Fig. 7) The caption accompanying the image recalls a significant number of Islamophobic tropes – namely the idea of a Muslim demographic takeover and its embodiment in the headscarf. The caption also contains class-bound ideas in the use of the term “ghettoisation”, a flawed conflation of Muslimness with “Islamism”, and frames Flemish nationalism not in terms of the Franco-Dutch Belgian rivalry, but instead that Flanders and Belgianness are constructed in opposition to Muslimness. Not unsurprisingly, the Facebook post attracted Islamophobic hate speech from those who follow the page online including ideas around Muslims going back home.³⁹



Figure 7: Image of a woman in a headscarf with comments regarding the headscarf in politics taken from *Vlaams Belang's* Facebook page.⁴⁰

Media

The Belgian media continues to be a mouthpiece for Islamophobia in 2020. For example, the Belgian media reports the Islamophobic political discourse shared by *Vlaams Belang* and their followers. This is evident in *The Brussel Times* report published on

39. Vlaams Belang Brussel, Facebook, 21 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/VlaamsBelangBrussel/photos/2814710851963824>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

40. Ibid.

6 February 2020,⁴¹ in which the reporters included a screenshot of a *Vlaams Belang* tweet pertaining to the reported hate speech that occurred following a mass Muslim prayer in Molenbeek to commemorate the recently deceased religious expert and community leader, Rachid Haddache. *Vlaams Belang* posted the following in Dutch “Hallucinante beelden uit #Molenbeek. Duizenden moslims herdenken salafistische haatprediker Rachid Haddach. De straat wordt zelfs afgezet voor de massa e/h gebed. Onvoorstelbaar. Het #salafisme, een fundamentalistische islamstroming, heeft geen enkele plaats in onze maatschappij!” (Hallucinatory images #Molenbeek. Thousands of Muslims commemorate Salafi hate preacher Rachid Haddach. The street is even closed for mass prayer. Unimaginable. It #salafisme, a fundamentalist Islam movement, has no place in our society!) The insensitive quotes which followed the marking of a community member’s death conflated Islam with extremism and further stoked Islamophobia in the nation.

The report added that *Vlaams Belang* followers added comments such as calls to run over the worshippers or to throw grenades at them. Whilst this, on the one hand, platforms Islamophobic views, in this instance the report also documents the way in which a probe into hate speech has been launched following the comments, thus putting into question and calling out the party’s Islamophobic positions. Here, the media has a clear role to play in questioning and problematising Islamophobia.

Justice System

The Belgian justice system holds a dual role in the proliferation and countering of Islamophobia in the country in 2020: it acts both as a maintainer and implementer of Islamophobia, and simultaneously as a tool which may and has been employed to counter growing Islamophobia and particularly countering specific Islamophobic acts in 2020.

Most notably, the Belgian Constitutional Court passed legislation on 4 June 2020 to ban visible political, philosophical, and faith symbols,⁴² namely the hijab, from Belgian higher educational institutions. As noted previously in this report, the ban was legitimised through its framing on the grounds of neutrality, somewhat akin to French *laïcité*. Whilst some Belgian universities have explicitly stated that the ban will not be upheld on their campuses (see section entitled Education for further details) the legislative decision sends a clear signal regarding the acceptability of visible gendered Muslimness in Belgian society. This legislative ban has not occurred in a vac-

41. Gabriela Galindo, “Hate Speech Probe Launched After Mass Prayer for Late Brussels Muslim Leader”, *The Brussels Times*, 6 February 2020, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/brussels/93678/hate-speech-probe-launched-after-mass-prayer-to-honour-late-brussels-preacher-rachid-haddach-molenbeek-vlaams-belang/>, (Access date: 14 September 2020).

42. UNIA, “Arrêt”, 4 June 2020, <https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/2020-081f.pdf>, (Access date 28 September 2020).

uum, but rather it follows the ongoing fixation in the nation with Belgian Muslim women's bodies and dress in their pursuit of education. For example, as highlighted above, the francophone region of Verviers operates a ban on ostentatious faith symbols in schools⁴³ and, similarly (albeit not legislated), the long skirts affair during the summer of 2015 in Brussels.⁴⁴ These examples not only have sexist and Islamophobic implications in the initial instance, but the legalised measures also serve to limit Muslim women's futures. Here, the justice system acts as an implementer and maintainer of gendered Islamophobia.

In 2019, the federal regions in both Flanders and Wallonia implemented a legislated ban ritual slaughter.⁴⁵ This ban impacted the slaughter of both kosher and halal meat as per the Jewish and Islamic faiths respectively, but the legislated ban also reduced the practice of halal for example solely to slaughter, ignoring the wider basis and emphasis on animal rights within the concept of halal and kosher. The ban was often legitimised on the basis and flawed assumption that ritual slaughter is paradoxically somehow more barbaric than conventional slaughter. The debate preceding the implementation of the ban on ritual slaughter was co-opted by animal rights and far-right activists, and often presented distinctly Islamophobic and anti-Semitic undertones.

The way in which both the Jewish and Muslim communities were impacted by the ban on ritual slaughter led to joint appeals by the two faith communities and as such the ban was reheard by the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg in September 2020. The European Court of Justice's Attorney General Gerard Hogan in a non-binding opinion issued on 10 September 2020, deemed the ban not to be legitimate as it contravened European freedom of faith.⁴⁶

Given that Hogan's advisory opinion is non-binding, there is a strong possibility that the advisory opinion will not be implemented and that the ban will persist. The Belgian case and the advisory opinion issued by the European Court of Justice are pivotal given that similar bans exist in Slovenia, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.⁴⁷

The Belgian justice system has also been employed to counter and penalise racist and xenophobic abuse experienced by prominent Belgian Muslims. In July

43. *Déclaration Politique Générale—Mandat Communale 2013–2018*. (Belgium: Verviers Conseil Communal, 2013).

44. Amina Easat-Daas: *Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2015*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016.

45. Amina Easat-Daas: *Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2019*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020.

46. Cain Burdeau, "European Magistrate Backs Ritual Slaughter for Halal and Kosher Meat", Courthouse News Service, 10 September 2020, <https://www.courthousenews.com/european-magistrate-backs-ritual-slaughter-for-halal-and-kosher-meat/>, (Accessed 17 September 2020).

47. Library of Congress Law, "Legal Restrictions on Religious Slaughter in Europe", September 2019, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/religious-slaughter/europe.php>, (Access date: 27 December 2020).

2020, Alain Binet was sentenced to 150 hours of community service for having attacked former Belgian parliamentarian, Mahinur Özdemir, online in 2015.⁴⁸ The justice system's response should dissuade individuals from enacting online hate speech.

Internet

The internet continues to be a mouthpiece and platform for Islamophobia in Belgium and beyond. Specific actors of online Islamophobia include far-right parties via social media channels. For example, as discussed previously in the section of this report pertaining to Islamophobia in Belgian politics, *Vlaams Belang*, routinely uses their social media channels to share Islamophobic posts. These social media posts typically attract further Islamophobic comments and support from their followers.

Furthermore, a report published in April 2020 by the Belgian State Security Service notes that fringe far-right groups are taking to social media to spread Islamophobic hate speech and fake news.⁴⁹ Groups include the Kings of Flanders and the party Nation that employed narratives of scepticism around the COVID-19 virus and later the potential vaccine to stir distrust toward the state and Belgian medical professionals, and to make the false accusation that immigration and the alleged Islamisation of the country are the cause of the underfunding of the Belgian health service.⁵⁰

Similarly, in January 2020, a Belgian customs officer was suspended when it was discovered by the Belgian Federal Public Service Finance department that he had created a YouTube channel, which had around 1,000 followers, to promote Islamophobic and homophobic hate speech.⁵¹ The customs officer described homosexuality as an “abomination” and a “perversion” and he claimed that “Islam is a false religion” and that the “Quran is a forgery.”⁵² Here it becomes clear that the internet provides not only platforms for established political parties, but also individuals who are influenced by the banalisation of Islamophobia and easily and without any checks or scrutiny are afforded a platform to promote hate speech against marginalised members of society. This further contributes to the spread and normalisation of Islamophobia not only in the nation but beyond.

48. Belga, “Propos racistes contre Mahinur Özdemir: une peine de travail pour l'auteur”, BX1.be, 9 July 2020, <https://bx1.be/news/propos-racistes-contre-mahinur-ozdemir-une-peine-de-travail-pour-lauteur/>, (Access date: 17 September 2020).

49. Gabriela Galindo, “Extremist Groups Are Using Coronavirus to Push Fake News on Social Media, Report Warns”, *The Brussels Times*, 8 May 2020, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium/110431/extremist-groups-are-using-coronavirus-to-pump-fake-news-on-social-media-report-warns/> (Access date: 15 October 2020).

50. Ibid.

51. Evie McCullough, “Belgian Customs Officer Suspended for Posting ‘Hate Speech’ on YouTube”, *The Brussels Times*, 13 January 2020, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium/88919/belgian-customs-officer-suspended-for-posting-hate-speech-on-youtube/> (Access date: 15 October 2020).

52. Ibid.

Additionally, the internet provides space for those who seek to challenge those who work to counter Islamophobia. Repeatedly, for example, when the CCIB reports and documents Islamophobic incidents via its social media platforms, the organisation encounters detractors who leave comments on the posts. Such examples include accusing the CCIB and other prominent Belgian anti-racist groups, such as the UNIA, as defending those who submit to an Islamist ideology, rather than Muslims more generally.⁵³ Or, in relation to the graffiti tag incident discussed previously, one commentator stated that the Islamophobic tag was simply “art”.⁵⁴ Regarding the social media posts related to the ban on headscarves at the university level, many lay people came out to praise the maintenance of neutrality, stated that Muslims should adapt to Belgian culture, and gave examples of their “good Muslim” friends who did not wear the hijab or make trouble,⁵⁵ without problematising any of the above. The aforementioned examples illustrate the ways in which those who actively seek to counter Islamophobia in the virtual space readily face online Islamophobic hate speech, perhaps in an attempt to silence their work.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The observed figures that are central to Islamophobia in Belgium are diverse. Primarily, the political far right perpetuates Islamophobia in Belgium – principal examples here include *Vlaams Belang* as discussed in the preceding sections. Increasingly, and given the limitations on gatherings imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, such actors are taking to the online sphere to share their Islamophobic views.

Central to Islamophobia, or perhaps to attempted Islamophobia, in 2020 was the arrest and expulsion from Belgium of five Danish far-right activists. The five members of *Stram Kurs* (Hard Line), headed by Rasmus Paludun, planned to burn the Quran in the predominantly Muslim area of Brussels, Molenbeek, in early November 2020.⁵⁶ The far-right group has committed similar Quran burnings elsewhere on the continent – indicating the increasing globalisation of Islamophobia. The arrest was welcomed by Belgian Secretary of State for Asylum and Immigration, Samy Mahdi, who stated, “In our society, which is already very polarised, we don’t need people who come to spread hatred ... I don’t care whether they are left-wing or right-wing extremists, I care about the safety of our citizens”.⁵⁷

53. CCIB, Twitter, 1 November 2020, https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/1322899961533652997, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

54. CCIB, Twitter, 31 May 2020, https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/1267020977302573057, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

55. AssoLallab, Twitter, 5 July 2020, <https://twitter.com/AssoLallab/status/1279751587158687745>, (Access date: 5 July 2020).

56. AFP, “Belgium Arrests, Expels 5 Danes over Plot to Burn Quran”, *Daily Sabah*, 13 November 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/belgium-arrests-expels-5-danes-over-plot-to-burn-quran>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

57. Ibid.

Islamophobia in Belgium is not restricted to the far right of the political spectrum: the implementation of the ban on visible faith symbols passed under the alleged narrative of neutrality (which subsequently disproportionately impacts visibly Muslim women) required support at the political and judicial levels. Given that the far right does not dominate at these levels, we see clear evidence that Islamophobia permeates more broadly. Arguably, the implementation of the ban on headscarves at the university level in Belgium and the maintenance of the ritual slaughter ban demonstrates the banalisation of legalised Islamophobia in the country. As highlighted previously, these measures signal the legitimacy of Islamophobia in Belgium.

Similarly, as with previous years, 2020 has shown numerous cases of everyday individuals enacting Islamophobia, ranging from the attack on the Muslim family whilst they holidayed in Lierneux to the online Islamophobic hate speech enacted by members of the public and directed at the CCIB. Thus, one must highlight both the potential influence of the central figures in the Belgian Islamophobia network, and the reach and normalisation of Islamophobia beyond these principal figures.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

As with previous years, the CCIB and UNIA continue to be central actors in the effective countering of Islamophobia in Belgium. This efficacy is apparent in specific examples. In September 2020, the UNIA worked with the Brussels authorities to elaborate twenty-five recommendations to combat gendered Islamophobia in the region.⁵⁸ These recommendations include the need for effective and systematic monitoring of Islamophobia and gendered Islamophobia; the training of employers on issues of Islamophobia and gendered Islamophobia given the high incidence of employment-based discrimination; the need to tackle media-based Islamophobia; and a broader awareness training among wider society.⁵⁹

Similarly, the UNIA works with those who have encountered Islamophobia in Belgium. For example, in March 2020, a volunteer candidate was interviewed for a position in an elderly care home, and was asked to remove her headscarf – allegedly for hygiene reasons. The candidate contacted the UNIA who intervened and the care home agreed to allow the woman to wear her headscarf.⁶⁰

58. “UNIA aide les autorités Bruxelloises à lutter contre l’islamophobie Sexiste”, UNIA, 21 September 2020, <https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/unia-aide-les-autorites-bruxelloises-a-lutter-contre-lislamophobie-sexiste>, (Access date 15 October 2020).

59. Pour la Solidarité, “25 recommandations pour lutter contre l’Islamophobie sexiste”, PLS, 18 September 2020, <https://www.diversite-europe.eu/fr/news/25-recommandations-pour-lutter-contre-lislamophobie-sexiste>, (Access date: 15 October 2020).

60. “Une bénévole autorisée à porter le foulard”, UNIA, 23 March 2020, <https://www.unia.be/fr/jurisprudence-alternatives/solutions-negociees/une-benevole-est-autorisee-a-porter-le-foulard>, (Access date: 15 October 2020).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In sum, in spite of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the ways in which it brought about significant health risks for all, regardless of their identities, and the various lockdowns that were imposed and which universally reduced interaction outside of the home, Islamophobia continued to manifest across Belgium in its typically diverse forms, ranging from the damage of property and attacks on individuals to legislation. Particularly concerning, and not limited to Belgium, was the conflation of the COVID-19 virus and Muslimness. This was apparent in the conflation of mask-wearing in Belgium and the flawed claim of an alleged Islamisation (the threat of demographic takeover is a popular Islamophobic narrative)⁶¹ to the persistent portrayal of geographical spaces struggling with COVID-19 alongside images of visibly Muslim individuals - as seen as well in the media coverage of COVID-19 in Leicester in the UK. These examples demonstrate that in Belgium and across Europe not even a global pandemic will lessen the incidences of Islamophobia, but that rather, as with other negative phenomena, Islamophobia is conflated with Muslimness.

In terms of recommendations at the political level there is continued need for political discourse not to constitute or contribute to Islamophobia in Belgium. As this national report in the *European Islamophobia Report* illustrates, there is a distinct presence of far-right actors that fuel Islamophobia in the nation. The latter have significant influence on the political narrative and the passing of legal bills which disproportionately limit Muslimness in Belgium. Similarly, Belgium is home to remarkable levels of Muslim political participation and representation⁶² and a number of MPs who celebrate Belgian diversity. Such Muslims and allies are in a position of power to challenge and call out Islamophobia in the Belgian political sphere.

At the NGO level, Belgium is home to exemplary practice as discussed both in terms of detailed documentation, reporting and analysis of Islamophobia as evidence by the CCIB, and in terms of advocacy as evidenced by the UNIA. The documentation of Islamophobia is crucial in demonstrating the scale and severity of Islamophobia in the nation. As such, the annual *European Islamophobia Report* plays a key role on the continental level. The advocacy work carried out by the UNIA in 2020 and prior occurs both with individuals who have directly experienced prejudice and on a wider level via engagement at the regional level as evidenced in its collaborative work with the Brussels authorities on their 25 recommendations to combat gen-

61. Ian Law, Amina Easat-Daas, Arzu Merali & S. Sayyid (eds.) *Countering Islamophobia in Europe*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

62. Amina Easat-Daas, *Muslim Women's Political Participation in France and Belgium*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

dered Islamophobia.⁶³ Such work recognises the significant impact of Islamophobia on women and as such is a noteworthy example of best practice in countering gendered Islamophobia.

Chronology

- **01.01.2020:** Al Ihssan Mosque in Louvain is attacked.
- **13.01.2020:** Belgian customs officer suspended for promoting Islamophobic and homophobic hate speech on his YouTube channel, which has around 1,000 subscribers.
- **31.05.2020:** “F**k Muslim” graffiti painted in Brussels.
- **04.06.2020:** Hijab ban at universities passed (*Numéro du rôle: 6927, Arrêt n° 81/2020*)
- **05.07.2020:** #HijabisFightBack protest takes place in Brussels in response to the ban on political, philosophical, and faith symbols at Belgian universities; a ban which would significantly impact Muslim women who wear the hijab.
- **30.08.2020:** Muslim family attacked in their holiday cottage in Lierneux. Bloodied crosses and swastikas, and animal innards were left at the scene.
- **08.09.2020:** Muslim women who wear the hijab were stopped from exercising the Stadium Kinetex fitness centre in Schaerbeek, Brussels.
- **10.09.2020:** European Court of Justice advisory opinion issued stating that the federal bans on ritual slaughter in Belgium do not respect religious freedoms.
- **18.09.2020:** The UNIA and Brussels authority publish 25 recommendations to combat gendered Islamophobia.
- **30.10.2020:** Teacher suspended in Molenbeek for showing potentially inflammatory Islamophobic caricatures to his students, aged 10-11. The suspension sparked criticism from Belgian far-right politicians.
- **01.11.2020:** Islamophobic caricatures taken from French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* stuck on a Belgian mosque. This follows the free speech controversy and murder of Samuel Paty in neighbouring France.
- **13.11.2020:** Belgian authorities arrest and deport five Danes from the group *Stram Kurs* who planned to burn the Quran in the predominantly Muslim area of Molenbeek, Brussels in an effort to stoke community tensions.

63. UNIA, “UNIA aide les autorités Bruxelloises à lutter contre l’islamophobie Sexiste”, UNIA, 21 September 2020, <https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/unia-aide-les-autorites-bruxelloises-a-lutter-contre-lislamophobie-sexiste>, (Access date: 15 October 2020).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
**BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA**
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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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 Bosnian Serb politicians, media, and academic circles. The year 2020 saw a decrease in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attacks compared to 2019. The main reason for this is the COVID-19 pandemic, and the nationwide lockdown imposed by authorities. This year marked the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide which was highlighted by the continuation of the denial of the genocide and war crimes by the Serb authorities. The local and regional media contributed to anti-Muslim bigotry with reports about terrorist threats and radical ideology, connecting it with the Bosniak political and religious establishment. Lastly, 2020 saw a decrease in the physical and verbal attacks on mosques and imams, mostly in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity Republika Srpska but also in Croat-majority areas.

Sažetak

Anti-muslimanska netrpeljivost i negativni trendovi prema muslimanima u Bosni i Hercegovini se uglavnom očituju u obrazovnom, političkom i medijskom sistemu. Kao i u prethodnim godinama, glavni generatori islamofobije i anti-muslimanske netrpeljivosti su čelnici bosanskih Srba - politički, medijski i akademski nosioci politike. Tokom 2020. godine došlo je do blagog smanjenja anti-bosanske i anti-muslimanske retorike. Glavni razloga za ovo jeste bila pandemija COVID-19. Ove godine se nastavilo negiranje genocida i ratnih zločina od strane srpskih zvaničnika. Domaći i regionalni mediji doprinijeli su anti-muslimanskim netrpeljivostima kroz izvještavanje o terorističkim prijetnjama i radikalnoj ideologiji, povezivajući ih s bošnjačkim političkim i vjerskim zvaničnicima. Konačno, ove godine je vidljiv nastavak fizičkih i usmenih napada na džamije i imame, većinom u bosanskohercegovačkom entitetu Republika Srpska.

Country Profile EIR 2020

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 Elections: Šefik Džaferović won 36.61% of the vote; Željko Komšić 52.64% of the vote; and Milorad Dodik 53.88% of the vote. Legislative Elections: SDA, 9 seats; HDZ, 5 seats; SNSD, 6 seats. Local elections were held in November 2020.

Total Population: 3,511,372 (2013)

Major Languages: Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian.

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2020, there were 9 reported anti-Muslim attacks.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Islam (50.11%), 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); US - *Ujedinjena Srpska* (United Srpska); HDZ - *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* (Croatian Democratic Union)

Far-Right Movements: Serb Nationalist Chetnik Movement, Croat Neo-Ustasha movement

Far-Right Militant 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

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 while Islamophobia was especially present 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. 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 the period of 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. The vast majority of the victims were Bosniaks whose remains were buried in hundreds of hidden mass graves throughout the country. In addition to this, an estimated 600 mosques and a variety of Islamic religious objects were deliberately destroyed by the Bosnian Serb Army and the 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.

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 as Bosniaks (out of a total of 3,531,159). 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 last 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.

Annex 1 of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina includes 15 main documents on human rights. The constitution states that the rights and freedoms set forth in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols shall apply directly 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 of freedom of religion or belief, including the freedom to profess, or not profess, a religion publicly. 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).

Some of the main events that sparked Islamophobic rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina were related to political instability and the so-called migrant crisis. The year 2020 saw a slight decline in anti-Bosnian rhetoric from Croatia and Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina is usually portrayed by their institutions as a failed state which is a safe haven for terrorists.

The rising so-called migrant crisis 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 encouraged the refugees to go to Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of easing the Serbian migrant

issue. On the other hand, the migrants whom 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 2019, Islamophobic rhetoric by political figures and media is on the rise. In relation to physical attacks, 2020 was a year in which attacks were slightly lower in number than in 2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The following incidents were collected through media reports, direct reporting to the commission, and personal contacts. The Commission for the Freedom of Religion and 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 2020 had not yet been published.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On January 13, unknown perpetrators shattered the window of the Čaršijska Mosque and further damaged the facade of the building in multiple places. The opening of the mosque was scheduled for the summer. This is not the first time the mosque was vandalized.¹ (Fig. 1)

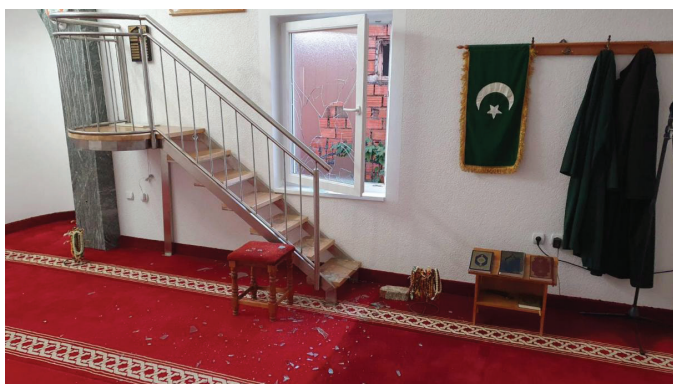


Figure 1: The Čaršijska Mosque in Bosanska Dubica is vandalized.²

On January 27, the children of the elementary school in Srebrenica celebrated the feast day of Saint Sava by glorifying Chetniks (World War II Nazi-collaborators who perpetrated genocidal massacres against Bosniaks) and sharing photographs of

1. "Ponovo napadnuta dzamija u Bosanskoj Dubici", Klix.ba, 13 January 2020, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/ponovo-napadnuta-carsijska-dzamija-u-bosanskoj-dubici/200113163> (Access date: 18 September 2020).
 2. Ibid.

themselves in Chetnik attire. This kind of glorification of war criminals is worrying for Bosniak children who also attend this school.³ (Fig. 2)



Figure 2: Children of the elementary school in Srebrenica glorify Chetniks on the feast day of Saint Sava.⁴

On February 15, in Mostar, slogans such as “Gazi Balije”⁵, “Ustase Mostar”, and “Balije u provalije”⁶ appeared at the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. These offensive fascist slogans were placed on the building the night before anti-fascist visitors gathered to celebrate the liberation of Mostar from fascism in World War II.⁷ (Fig. 3)



Figure 3: Offensive slogans on the Partisan Memorial Cemetery.⁸

3. “Djeca u osnovnoj školi u Srebrenici veličaju četnike”, Faktor.ba, 27 January 2020, <https://faktor.ba/vijest/djeca-u-osnovnoj-skoli-u-srebrenici-velicaju-cetnike/67977>, (Access date: 13 September 2020).
4. Ibid.
5. “Crush Balije“ is a derogatory term for Bosniaks.
6. “Balije into pits“ is a derogatory term for Bosniaks that refers to concealing bodies in mass graves.
7. “Natpisi “Gazi balije”, “Ustase Mostar” i “Balije u provalije” osvanuli na Partizanskom groblju u Mostaru”, Faktor.ba, 15 February 2020, <https://www.faktor.ba/vijest/natpisi-gazi-balije-ustase-mostar-i-balije-u-provalije-osvanuli-na-partizanskom-groblju-u-mostaru/70476>, (Access date: 28 September 2020).
8. “Natpisi “Gazi balije”, “Ustase Mostar” i “Balije u provalije” osvanuli na Partizanskom groblju u Mostaru”, Faktor.ba.

On February 19, in Prijedor, more than 350 people gathered for a celebration of a movie about Draža Mihailović. The event was organized by the party *Ujedinjena Srpska* (United Srpska) of Nenad Stevandić. Many attendees wore Chetniks attire and carried photographs of génocidaires Ratko Mladić and Draža Mihailović.⁹ (Fig. 4)



Figure 4: Supporters in Chetniks attire holding photographs of war criminals.¹⁰

On February 20, in Srebrenica, a group of Serb students from elementary school attacked a girl, F.S., for wearing a hijab. The mother of the girl said her daughter was first bullied for wearing a hijab in school. The bullying continued on her way home where she was stopped and surrounded by ten students, who further bullied her, intimidated her, and asked for her hijab. According to *Preporod* newspaper, the students who bullied the Bosniak Muslim girl are the same students who glorified Chetniks a month earlier.¹¹

On July 11, in Bratunac, on the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, a local Serb pro-Russian NGO celebrated that day as the “Day of Liberating Srebrenica.” Members of the Eastern Alternative of Republic of Srpska celebrated July 11 by glorifying Ratko Mladić as a hero who saved Serbs. His face can be found on posters placed in Srebrenica, openly glorifying the genocide that occurred there.¹² (Fig. 5)



Figure 5: Poster featuring convicted war criminal Ratko Mladić.¹³

9. “Skandalozno, četnici se okupili u prijedorskom pozorištu: Prikazan film o Draži Mihailoviću”, *Oslobodjenje.ba*, 21 February 2020, <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/cetnici-se-okupili-u-prijedorskom-pozoristu-prikazan-film-o-drazi-mihailovicu-533844>, (Access date: 28 September 2020).
10. “Skandalozno, četnici se okupili u prijedorskom pozorištu: Prikazan film o Draži Mihailoviću”, *Oslobodjenje.ba*.
11. “Srpski učenici napali pokrivenu djevojčicu.”, *Faktor.ba*, 21 February 2020, <https://faktor.ba/vijest/srebrenica-srpski-ucenici-napali-pokrivenu-djevojcicu/71213>, (Access date: 15 September 2020).
12. A.J., “Sramotno: ‘Istočna alternativa’ 11. jula obilježava dan oslobođenja Srebrenice”, *Dnevni Avaz*, 7 July 2020, <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/580085/sramotno-istocna-alternativa-11-jula-obiljezava-dan-oslobodenja-srebrenice>, (Access date: 17 October 2020).
13. “Sramotno: ‘Istočna alternativa’ 11. jula obilježava dan oslobođenja Srebrenice”, *Dnevni Avaz*.

On July 13, in Malešić, the Bosniak returnee Sadet Islamović was verbally attacked by one of the sons of Dušan Spasojević Brane, known as a fugitive suspect for war crimes committed against the Jusić residents of Malešić in 1992. Sadet Islamović is a witness for these crimes before the Court of BiH.¹⁴

On July 18, Srdjan Mazalica, a member of parliament in the Bosnian Serb entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, shared his thoughts on social media about Serbs being a superior people in the Balkans. Mazalica tweeted that “Albanians should be accepted as equal human beings,” however according to his autosomal DNA calculations, there is a “genetic distance between different ethnic groups.”¹⁵

On July 30, Bosnian Serb and member of parliament Nebojša Vukanović shared a video showing citizens of Sarajevo allegedly going to Montenegro for organized voting. From the video it can be seen that people from the bus are called out as “Turks.”¹⁶

On October 11, unknown perpetrators stoned the windows of Atik Mosque in Bijeljina. The windows of the adjacent building were also shattered. The mayor of Bijeljina, Mićo Mićić, condemned this criminal act. The Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina asked for a complete investigation from police and the prosecution.¹⁷ (Fig. 6)



Figure 6: Shattered windows at Atik Mosque.¹⁸

Employment

In 2020, there were no registered cases of work-related discrimination. However, a worrying fact is that the number of Bosniaks living and working in Republika Srpska

14. “Jusići: Verbalni napad na povratnika – svjedoka zločina nad Bošnjacima (audio)”, Podrinjemedija.ba, 13 July 2020, <https://podrinjemedija.ba/2020/07/13/jusici-verbalni-napad-na-povratnika-svjedoka-zlocina-nad-bosnjacima-audio/>, (Accessed: 10 September 2020).

15. “Albanians Should Be Accepted as Equal Human Beings to Serbs, Says Bosnian Serb MP”, Exit.al, 19 July 2020, <https://exit.al/en/2020/07/19/albanians-should-be-accepted-as-equal-human-beings-to-serbs-says-bosnian-serb-mp/>, (Access date: 29 September 2020).

16. “Nebojša Vukanović objavio video u kojem Sarajlije nazivaju ‘Turcima’”, Klix.ba, 30 July 2020, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/nebojsa-vukanovic-objavio-video-u-kojem-sarajlije-nazivaju-turcima/200830076>, (Access date: 15 September 2020).

17. “Razbijeni prozori na Atik džamiji u Bijeljini: Gradonačelnik osudio napad”, Al Jazeera Balkans, 11 October 2020, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/razbijeni-prozori-na-atik-dzamiji-u-bijeljini-gradonacelnik-osudio-napad>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

18. Ibid..

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 the result of the perpetually uncomfortable and discriminatory atmosphere against Bosniak employees.

Education

The year 2020 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.

Politics

In 2020, there were no major changes in the standard rhetoric from local and regional political actors who used Islamophobic rhetoric to undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina. The two main events that contributed to this trend were the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide and the local elections held in November 2020. The Bosnian Serb authorities announced in 2019 the formation of two "truth commissions" which would investigate the suffering of Serbs in Srebrenica and Sarajevo.²⁰ On the other hand, certain Bosnian Serb political parties used nationalistic rhetoric in order to mobilize for elections. For example, *Ujedinjenja Srpska* (US) aired a promotional video which portrayed Bosniaks, Albanians, and Croats in a defamatory manner.²¹ The video showed a US party delegate kicking out three enemies of Republika Srpska from a café: a Croat, an Albanian, and a Bosniak. (Fig. 7)



Figure 7: A still image from the *Ujedinjena Srpska* promotional video showing the enemies of Republika Srpska: a Croat, an Albanian, and a Bosniak.²²

19. "Diskriminacija Bošnjaka i Srba u RS i FBiH", TV1, 11 August 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItmaBY48-hU> (Access date: 11 November 2020).
20. Hikmet Karčić, "How Denial of Bosnian War Crimes Entered the Mainstream", *Balkan Insight*, June 30, 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/06/30/how-denial-of-bosnian-war-crimes-entered-the-mainstream/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).
21. Z.Y., "Scandalous Video of the United Srpska Caused Criticism on Social Networks", *Sarajevo Times*, September 20, 2020, <https://www.sarajevotimes.com/168578-2/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).
22. "CIK će razmatrati kontroverzni video spot 'Ujedinjene Srpske'", *Al Jazeera Balkans*, September 20, 2020, <https://>

Media

The anti-Bosnian sentiment in the media was usually followed by Islamophobic rhetoric. The statements made in the media usually associated B&H, Bosniak politicians, or former army officers with radical extremism. Such statements were made by a group of already well-known self-proclaimed experts. Two main events which raised Islamophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric in 2020 were the so-called migrant crisis and the 2020 local elections. Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik stated that the Bosnian Serb entity should be “sterilized” of migrants.²³ In addition, he also stated that there is a threat of “Islamic terrorism” in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said, “Islamic terrorism has a link in BiH with what is called the ‘Islamic State.’ Some families of those Islamic jihadists. BiH is not threatened by any external aggression, but it faces a serious challenge from terrorism.”²⁴ The threat of an “internal conflict” and its links to terrorism was also the subject of an interview conducted by a Bosnian Serb media outlet with a German “terrorism expert.”²⁵ The RS authorities represent themselves as the only institution which deals properly with terrorism.²⁶ Furthermore, Bosnian Serb media published articles in coordination about a “wahabbi” plan to assassinate Serb political leaders, placing the blame on Bosniak returnees in Janja near Bijeljina.²⁷



Figure 8: Fake news on supposed plans by Bosniak returnees to assassinate Serb political leaders; “WAHHABI PLANS ASSASSINATION OF VUCIC, DODIK AND VULIN: Portal Banjaluka.net in Possession of Intelligence Documents.”²⁸

- balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2020/9/20/cik-ce-razmatrati-kontroverzni-video-spot-ujedinjene-srpske
23. “Dodik: Područje RS ‘sterilisati od migranata’”, *Danas*, June 21, 2020. <https://www.danas.rs/svet/dodik-podrucje-rs-sterilisati-od-migranata/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).
 24. G.S., “Dodik: Postoji opasnost od islamskog terorizma”, *Glas Srpske*, 14 December 2020, https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/novosti/vijesti_dodik-postoji-opasnost-od-islamskog-terorizma/343416
 25. Veljko Zeljković, “Irfan Peci, njemački ekspert za bezbjednost, o opasnostima od radikalnog islama u Evropi: Migrantska kriza bi mogla izazvati spiralu nasilja u BiH”, *Glas srpske*, 21 November 2020, <https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/plus/intervju/irfan-peci-njemacki-ekspert-za-bezbjednost-o-opasnostima-od-radikalnog-islama-u-evropi-migrantska-kriza-bi-mogla-izazvati-spiralu-nasilja-u-bih/340762>
 26. “MUP Srpske jedini u BiH ozbiljno pristupa problemu terorizma”, *ATV BL*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.atvbl.com/vijesti/republika-srpska/mup-srpske-jedini-u-bih-ozbiljno-pristupa-problemu-terorizma-7-2-2020>
 27. “VEHABIJE PLANIRALE ATENTAT NA VUČIĆA, DODIKA I VULINA: Portal Banjaluka.net u posedu obaveštajnih dokumenata”, *Novosti Online*, 25 September 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/920597/vehabije-planirale-atentat-vucica-dodika-vulina-portal-banjaluka-net-posedu-obavestajnih-dokumenata>
 28. “VEHABIJE PLANIRALE ATENTAT NA VUČIĆA, DODIKA I VULINA: Portal Banjaluka.net u posedu obaveštajnih dokumenata”, *Novosti Online*, 25 September 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/920597/vehabije-planirale-atentat-vucica-dodika-vulina-portal-banjaluka-net-posedu-obavestajnih-dokumenata>

Justice System

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. However, the 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 the statistics for hate crimes of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), 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. The OSCE B&H also records hate crimes through the Hate Monitor. More than 85% of all hate crimes registered through the Hate Monitor target 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. Nevertheless, use of incendiary language (in the media, by politicians, and others) usually goes unpunished.

Overall, hate crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina are underreported and rarely prosecuted. In 2020, there were no known cases related to anti-Muslim hate crimes.

Internet

Social media remain the main source of anti-Muslim bigotry and Islamophobic rhetoric online. Several Facebook pages, mainly representing Serb nationalistic groups such as *Srbska Čast*, *Zavetnici*, *Vojska Republike Srpske/Srbije*, and *Otačstvo* published articles which spread fear of Bosniaks and included genocide denial. These social media pages remain the same as in previous years. Although there are initiatives to combat hate speech especially during election years, state institutions do not survey these sites.

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 Pre-

drag Ceranić, Miroљjub Jevtić, Dževad Galijašević, and Darko Trifunović. Second, several high-ranking officials in the Serb Orthodox Church such as Bishops Amfilohije and Patriarch Irinej. The third category is politicians and include local Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, as well as Croatian and Serbian politicians such as Milorad Dodik and Mario Karamatić. 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 Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The Commission on Freedom of Religion (*Komisija za slobodu vjere*) is a commission of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina 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. However, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the activities of the commission were limited.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2020, the number of Islamophobic attacks on people and property was slightly lower than in 2019. Similarly to 2019, there were local and regional anti-Bosniak and anti-Muslim activities and rhetoric, especially due to the protests and elections in Montenegro. Overall, in 2020, there was a much milder anti-Muslim atmosphere as a result of the pandemic.

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

- 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 of human rights and freedom of religion and belief should be raised by NGOs, media, etc. The methods of documenting the cases of violation of the rights of Muslims should be enhanced by the Islamic Community, NGOs, the police, and the judiciary.
- Awareness of hate crimes against Muslims, and their proper registration and prosecution should be raised by the Islamic Community, NGOs, the police, and the judiciary.
- Awareness of hate speech (online and offline) by media, politicians, etc. should be raised.

- Awareness of 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” (*Zakon o policijskim službenicima Bosne i Hercegovine*), 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 among citizens and NGOs about reporting offensive media language to the Press Council in B&H and the Communications Regulatory Agency should be raised.
- Awareness among 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

- **13.01.2020:** The Čaršijska Mosque in Bosanska Dubica is vandalized.
- **27.01.2020:** Children of the elementary school in Srebrenica glorify Chetniks on the feast day of Saint Sava.
- **15.02.2020:** Offensive slogans appear at Partisan Memorial Cemetery.
- **19.02.2020:** More than 350 people gather to celebrate and watch a movie about the war criminal Draža Mihailović.
- **20.02.2020:** A group of Serb students attack a girl for wearing a hijab.
- **11.07.2020:** Members of the East Alternative of Republic of Srpska celebrate July 11, the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, by glorifying Ratko Mladić as a hero who saved Serbs.
- **13.07.2020:** Verbal attack on returnee Sadet Islamović in Malešić.
- **18.07.2020:** Srdjan Mazalica, MP of Republic of Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, shares his thoughts about Serbs being a superior people in the Balkans.
- **30.08.2020:** Citizens of Sarajevo are called out as “Turks.”
- **11.10.2020:** The Atik Mosque in Bijeljina is vandalized.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
BULGARIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

In 2020, Bulgaria maintained the downward trend of the last few years in the number of Islamophobic attacks on Muslim individuals, sacred places, and administrative institutions. On the other hand, representatives of the Bulgarian political class and TV presenters used their airtime, Facebook profiles, and even the podium of the European Parliament, to articulate hate speech against the Prophet Muhammad and Muslims, as well as its contemporary representatives, in the face of the refugee flow from the Middle East, the local Muslim communities, and, last but not least, Turkey, labelling all as threats to the Old Continent's values and security.

In July, masked officers from the Bulgarian national security and anti-organised crime agencies, SANS and GDCOP, detained a 21-year-old national wrestling champion accused of “participation in terrorist actions” in Syria, where as a teenager he spent some time with his father. The entire evidence consists of photos taken years ago wherein, as a boy, he is seen holding a weapon in his hand. He shared these photos on social media to impress his peers. On the other hand, the Bulgarian prosecution continues to be ineffective against perpetrators of tens of alleged Islamophobic attacks committed in the last two decades and does not impose any sanctions on anti-Muslim hate speech.

This school year, the Bulgarian education system continued to reproduce the image of the country's (collectively imagined) historical enemy: Ottomans enslaving Christian Bulgarians and forcibly converting them to Islam. In the meantime, hundreds of stickers with caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad appeared in public places in the second largest Bulgarian city, Plovdiv. In November, the Chief Mufti's Office drew public attention to the case of 19 Muslims who died in Bulgarian hospitals of COVID-19 and were buried in coffins with Christian symbols.

Резюме

През 2020 г. в България се запази тенденцията от последните няколко години за намаляване броя на продиктуваните от ислямофобия нападения върху физически лица и сакрални за мюсюлманите места и административни учреждения. За сметка на това, представители на българската политическа класа и водещи на телевизионни предавания, използваха предоставения им ефир, Facebook профилите си, включително и катедрата на Европейския парламент, за да артикулират слово на омразата, насочено както срещу пророка Мохамед и уммата, така и по отношение на заплашващите според тях европейските ценности и сигурност нейни съвременни представители, в лицето на емигрантския поток от Близкия изток, местните мюсюлмански общности и не на последно място – Турция.

В началото на месец юли спец-служители на двете основни служби за сигурност в страната – ДАНС и ГДБОП, задържаха при показна акция 21-годишен републикански шампион по борба за участие в терористични акции в Сирия, където той като тийнейджър е бил на гости на баща си. Целият доказателствен материал се състои от правени преди години снимки с оръжие в ръка на момчето, които той е споделил в социалните мрежи, за да впечатли връсниците си. За сметка на това българската прокуратура продължава да е неефективна по отношение на извършителите на десетки несъмнени ислямофобски атаки от последните две десетилетия, и да не санкционира анти-мюсюлманското слово на омразата.

И през тази учебна година българската образователна система продължи да репродуцира образа на историческия враг в лицето на мюсюлманите; Стотици стикери с карикатури на пророка Мохамед се появиха на обществени места във втория по големина български град – Пловдив, а Главно мюфтийство алармира за погребани в ковчези с християнски символи починали с диагноза Ковид 19 мюсюлмани.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Republic of Bulgaria

Type of Regime: Democracy

Form of Government: Unitary Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: Coalition between Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria – GERB (acronym translated in Bulgarian as “coat of arms”, a right-centrist, populist party) and United Patriots (an electoral alliance formed by the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria [NFSB], the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation [IMRO] and until 25 July 2019, Ataka [“Attack”], all of them conservative, nationalist parties).

Opposition Parties: Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) (center-left, social democratic, left-wing populist with a pro-EU stance); Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) (centrist, liberal); Volya (literally “Willpower”, populist).

Last Elections: 27 October/3 November 2019 (local elections): On the provincial level (from a total of 25), GERB won 16 mayoral positions, BSP: 4; Movement for Rights and Freedoms: 1; Union of Democratic Forces: 1; Direct Democracy: 1; Bulgaria for Citizens Movement: 1; independent candidates: 2.

26 May 2019 (European Parliament elections): The list of parties, seats, and percentage of votes won is as follows: GERB (member of EPP): 6 (31.07%); Bulgarian Socialist Party (member of the Party of European Socialists-PES): 5 (24.26%); Movement for Rights and Freedoms (member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe-ALDE): 3 (16.55%); Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (member of the European Conservatives and Reformists-ECR): 2 (7.36%); Democratic Bulgaria (member of the European People’s Party-EPP): 1 (6.06%).

26 March 2017 (parliamentary elections): The GERB won 33.54% of the vote with 95 of the 240 seats; Bulgarian Socialist Party: 27.93% and 80 seats; United Patriots: 9.31% and 27 seats; Movement for Rights and Freedoms: 9.24% and 26 seats; and Volya party: 4.26% and 12 seats. The GERB formed a coalition with the United Patriots, and Boyko Borisov, the leader of the GERB, was elected prime minister for a third subsequent time.

Total Population: 7,364,570 (2011). The next census will be held in 2021.

Major Languages: Bulgarian, Turkish, Roma

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism). The constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the “traditional religion” of the country.

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2020, the Grand Mufti’s Office did not report any Islamophobic attacks and attacks against places of worship.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There are no special statistics or databases on racism and discrimination.

Major Religions (% of Population): Eastern Orthodox Christianity (76% or 4,374,135); Islam (7.8% or 577,139); No religion (4.7% or 272,264); Protestantism (1.1% or 64,476); Catholicism (0.8% or 48,945); Judaism (0.015% or 1,162).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 7.8% or 577,139 in 2011 (*2011 Population Census in Bulgaria (Final Data)*).

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria (Grand Mufti's Office).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: There is no specific NGO that combats Islamophobia.

Far-Right Parties: Bulgarian National Union – New Democracy, Ataka, National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation

Far-Right Movements: National Resistance, Blood and Honour, Union of the Bulgarian National Legions

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local municipality decisions)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** (30 September, 2016) The parliament adopted the so-called anti-burqa law or “Law for Prohibiting the Wearing of Clothing Concealing One’s Face in Public Spaces”
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Bulgaria is home to the largest indigenous Muslim minority within the boundaries of the European Union. Despite the continuing rise of Islamophobic views with nationalist and xenophobic overtones supported even by high-ranking officials, both Bulgaria's historical Muslim population (Turks, Pomaks, and Roma), and the recently formed, relatively small Arab Muslim community,¹ did not face major conflicts with Bulgaria's non-Muslim majority. Nevertheless, in 2020, there were several cases in which Muslims and Islamic symbols were subjected to various forms of violation. These included biased representations of their religious identity in the media, the arrest and prosecution of Muslims, and, to a lesser degree, vandal attacks on places of worship. All these generated unease and a loss of confidence in public institutions among the representatives of the Muslim community.

After the parliamentary elections in 2017, the extreme nationalist parties known for their anti-Muslim positions (namely the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria [NFSB], Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation [IMRO], and Ataka) formed the United Patriots alliance and became coalition partners with the leading centre-right party Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB). The United Patriots entered politics through the use of hate speech and aggressive stances towards vulnerable groups, such as refugees from the Middle East, ethnic Roma, and Turks belonging to local Muslim communities. Accordingly, Islamophobic hate speech not only remained a common phenomenon in the Bulgarian political and media landscape, but it also found propagators among representatives of the judiciary and the educational system.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There is a tendency in recent years towards a decrease in the number of physical attacks against representatives of the Muslim community and Muslim shrines. Nevertheless, anti-Muslim verbal assaults undertaken even by high-level officials have become commonplace. Given the fact that this type of verbal discourse remains unsanctioned, and thus tolerated by the judiciary, this phenomenon comes as no surprise.

In late October, students from the Medical University in the second-biggest Bulgarian city, Plovdiv, noticed stickers with blasphemous cartoons showing a copulation between a man and a pig, with the names of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad

1. This group consists of immigrants in transit to Western Europe, and former university students who came to the country during the Communist period.

printed in Arabic above the figures. The stickers were placed on information boards of the Rowing Canal (Fig. 1), on tree trunks in the vicinity of the students' dormitories, bus stops, and in various other public places in the city. The Plovdiv Regional Muftiate was notified about the stickers and, in turn, it informed the Prosecutor's Office. The local mufti Taner Veli commented on the case on the official website of the Bulgarian Grand Muftiate with the following words: "Such irresponsible and unceremonious acts are directed against the fundamental principles and values of Islam. Through the prism of democracy, this is not a right to free expression, but a disregard for human rights."²



Figure 1: Blasphemous stickers with profane cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad were placed on an information board of the Rowing Canal in Plovdiv (30 October 2020).³

Similar Islamophobic stickers were noticed in early January (2020) on some of the light posts of Dondukov Garden alongside other stickers with vulgar and racist language such as "Ngrs not wlkm" and ugly allusions related to migrants and people of colour. The stickers were placed next to promotional material for the White Front (*Бял Фронт*), a nationalist organisation with a clear anti-migrant orientation.⁴ (Fig. 2)

On some of the images the slogan "Spisarevski Division-Together for a Bulgarian Future" (*Дивизия Списаревски-Заедно за българско бъдеще*) can be seen. Captain Dimitar Spisarevski (1916-1943) was a Bulgarian fighter pilot known for taking down an American bomber by voluntarily crashing into it during the bombing of Sofia during World War II. He is one of the historical figures favoured by marginalised nationalist groups because of his alleged affiliation to Nazi Germany, which at the time was an ally of the Bulgarian state.

2. Fahredin Mollaahmed, "Оскверняващи карикатури в Пловдив" (Profane Cartoons in Plovdiv), www.grandmufti.bg, 30 October 2020: <https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/10299-2020-10-30-16-14-06.html>, (Access date: 20 January 2021).

3. Ibid.

4. bg-nacionalisti.org, <https://bg-nacionalisti.org/BNF/index.php?topic=686.0>, (Access date: 31 January 2021).



Figure 2: Islamophobic and racist stickers on light posts of the public Dondukov Garden situated in the center of the city of Plovdiv.⁵

On 27 August 2020, Zdravko B. Spasov, a professional photographer specialised in “graffiti hunting”, published a sticker in his online *Graffiti de Пловдивъ City* (Graffiti of Plovdiv City) magazine with the caption “Batak: it was terrifying, but I was not afraid”. (Fig. 3) The sticker, which was photographed near the Freight Station in Plovdiv, portrays an imaginary scene from the so-called Batak Massacre: a controversial historical event dating back to 1876 which has been used widely for more than a century in various educational and patriotic contexts to incite anti-Turkish and Islamophobic reactions within the Bulgarian society. In 2007, Professor Ulf Brunnbauer, chair of Southeast and East European history at the University of Regensburg, collaborated with doctoral student Martina Baleva on a conference titled “Batak as a Place of Bulgarian Memory”. This was part of a larger project at the Free University of Berlin called “Demonising Islam: Past and Present Anti-Islamic Stereotypes in Bulgaria Exemplified by the Myth of the Batak Massacre”.⁶ Both scholars, who tried to reevaluate historical sources dedicated to the tragedy in Batak, were severely attacked by Bulgarian politicians (including then Bulgarian president Georgi Parvanov), representatives of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and several media organs.⁷ Bulgarian media outlets raged about the “denial of the Batak Massacre” and the “criminal mockery” of such a hallowed event in Bulgaria’s national history. Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov declared that the project was a “terrible provocation against our national history” and that the authors were attempting to rewrite history

5. “Вулгарни стикери загрозиха Дондуковата градина по Коледа”, (Vulgar Stickers Ugly Dondukov Garden at Christmas), podtepeto.com, <https://podtepeto.com/novini> (Access date: 1 February 2021).

6. Feindbild Islam – Geschichte und Gegenwart antiislamischer Stereotype in Bulgarien am Beispiel des Mythos vom Massaker in Batak, “Batak als bulgarischer Erinnerungsort”, available at: <http://www.oei.fuberlin.de/geschichte/soe/termine/batak.html>, (Access date: 1 February 2021).

7. Cameron Ean Alfred Whitehead, *The Bulgarian Horrors: Culture and the International History of the Great Eastern Crisis, 1876-1878*, PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2014, pp.100-109, available at: file:///D:/Users/suuser/Downloads/ubc_2014_spring_whitehead_cameron.pdf, (Access date: 1 March 2021).

on “delicate historical topics” which is “not only deeply unacceptable but will also meet the repudiation of the whole Bulgarian society.” The Sofia daily *Monitor* (*Монитор*) erroneously reported that the researchers had been paid a “five-digit Euro amount” by two Turkish foundations.⁸



Figure 3: Sticker with the caption “Batak: it was terrifying, but I was not afraid” photographed near the Freight Station in Plovdiv.⁹

The website mentioned at the bottom of the sticker, patriotbg.com, surprisingly does not belong to an nationalist organization, but is an online shop selling sweat-shirts and T-shirts with various inscriptions (such as “Freedom or Death”) and stamps including the one seen on the sticker in Figure 3. (Fig. 4)



Figure 4: A T-shirt sold by an online shop, patriotbg.com, with a stamp of the sticker image shown in Figure 3.¹⁰

On New Year’s Eve (2021), the iron entrance of the historical Murad Hüdavendigâr Mosque, also known as Jumaya Mosque, in Plovdiv was desecrated with graf-

8. Ibid., pp.101-102.

9. Zdravko B. Spasov, Graffiti de Пловдив City Magazine, No.37, 27 August 2020, https://deathmetalverses.blog.bg/photos/106034/original/118582209_3161092993946087_1407717877422481548_n.jpg, (Access date: 12 February 2021).

10. <https://patriotbg.com/produkt/teniska-batak-plam/>, (Access date: 12 February 2021).

fiti including a swastika and a Celtic cross placed alongside other images which do not appear to have an obvious significance.¹¹ (Fig. 5)



Figure 5: Graffiti including a swastika and a Celtic cross on the entrance of the historical Jumaya Mosque (1363-1364) in Plovdiv.¹²

Both the swastika and the Celtic cross have been adopted by local nationalists and hooligans because of their relation to Nazi ideology. (Fig. 6)



Figure 6: A sticker of the hooligan group Bultras with the Celtic cross – the symbol of the sun cross found on the iron entrance of Jumaya Mosque - and the motto “Urban Order – Defend the City”.¹³

Employment

The main law in Bulgaria banning discrimination based on race, ethnicity, belief, and religion is the Protection against Discrimination Act (PADA).¹⁴ The organ established under PADA as an independent collegiate semi-judicial authority with adjudicating

11. Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria, “Muslim Denomination Strongly Condemns the Desecration of ‘Kurshum Mosque’ in Karlovo”, <https://www.grandmufti.bg/en/za-nas-3/news/7972-myusyulmansko-izpovedanie-osazhda-oskvernyavaneto-na-kurshun-dzhamiya-v-karlovo-2.html>, (Access date: 10 January 2020).
12. Ajansbg, https://ajansbg.blogspot.com/2021/01/filibedeki-muradiye-camisine-cirkin.html?fbclid=IwAR0seuEtZcAvqOWzZVPc-5FFa2-0pAYggIddePa_2YYKwRViNDB8FhEyJE, (Access date: 10 January 2021).
13. Zdravko B. Spasov, Пловдивски графити (Plovdiv Graffiti) No.6/2020, (Photos taken 31 January - 23 February 2020), <https://deathmetalverses.blog.bg/lifestyle/2020/02/23/sp-quot-plovdivski-grafiti-quot-230-broi-6-2020.1697586>, (Access date: 23 February 2021).
14. legislationline.org, https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7046/file/Bulgaria_anti-discrimination_act_2003_2006_am.pdf, (Access date: 4 January 2020).

powers exercising control over its implementation is the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPAD). It is worth mentioning that two of its nine current members, Baki Hyuseinov and Sabrie Sapundzhieva,¹⁵ are Muslims. For 2020, there was no data issued by the CPAD or any other state equality body concerning discrimination cases in the Bulgarian job market based on being Muslim.¹⁶ As a matter of fact, the last annual report by the CPAD was issued for the year 2019.¹⁷ Consequently, official data concerning cases that occurred in 2020 is expected in the next annual report.

Discrimination based on belief and religion is hard to prove, which maybe explains why the majority of Muslims in Bulgaria do not expect their rights to be defended and restrain from reporting them.

Education

The roots of the Islamophobic approach are deeply implanted in the history and literature-related subjects taught in Bulgarian schools. Despite the total revision of all school curricula after the end of the Communist era (1944-1989), history textbooks regarding the Ottoman period still preserve most of their Islamophobic characteristics. In the newest textbooks on the subject “History and Civilizations” for the 6th and 10th grades approved by the Ministry of Education in 2019, the notorious myth about the compulsory individual and mass conversions of Orthodox Christians to Islam is reconfirmed.¹⁸ One of the crucial issues triggering the absolute negation of the Ottoman legacy is the fact that most Bulgarian politicians have never accepted the otherwise obvious fact that for almost five centuries the Bulgarian lands were a significant part of a multiethnic and multicultural texture, and that Bulgarians, as subjects of the Ottoman state, more or less actively contributed to the formation of its common cultural environment. The students are introduced only to the nameless figures of the sultan, the janissaries, the Muslim fanatics, etc., acting along a continuum, spread over the whole Bulgarian territory for centuries-long periods. This fact results in establishing the mindset in students of a trivial, collective image of Muslims as uncivilised conquerors, unjust rulers, and bloodthirsty oppressors. Subsequently, the historical vision of grinning janissaries armed with yataghans, and tax collectors forcing Christian families to devshirme is used as a founding milestone of Islamophobia in present-time Bulgaria.

15. Commission for Protection against Discrimination, <http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/index.php/za-nas/chlenowe>, (Access date: 15 December 2020).

16. Commission for Protection against Discrimination, <https://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/index.php/component/content/article/1625>, (Access date: 15 December 2020).

17. <https://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/images/stories/2015/otchet/ot4et2703.pdf>, (Access date: 15 December 2020).

18. Vesko Yankov Obreshkov, Krasimir Sashkov Krastev, *История и цивилизации 6 клас* (History and Civilizations 6th Grade), Издателство „Архимед и Диоген“, Sofia, 2017, p. 116.

A recent large-scale PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment)¹⁹ survey conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the largest and most detailed international review evaluating students, their teachers, and educational systems, presented in Singapore on 22 October 2020, shows that 15-year-old Bulgarian students are among the most intolerant regarding other ethnicities and cultures. And this is not a “Balkan phenomenon”, as students in countries such as Turkey, Northern Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Romania are at the opposite pole, i.e. they are much more tolerant.²⁰

Politics

On 22 October 2020, Angel Dzhambazki, a member of the European Parliament and vice-chairman of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, made the following statement in front of his amazed colleagues in Brussels: “Hundreds, perhaps thousands of ISIS militants entered Europe during the greatest immigration pressure. Today, they live here and are waiting for the moment when your extreme Marxism and liberal Bolshevism will lead to the collapse of the European nation-states and they will see in this collapse a chance to establish their so-called caliphate.” (Fig. 7)



Figure 7: On 22 October 2020, Angel Djambazki, a Bulgarian member of the European Parliament, stated, among others, “The illegal migration will lead to the establishment of a caliphate in the European Union.”²¹

Dzhambazki, who has earned a reputation in Bulgaria for his outrageous behaviour (getting caught for driving while drunk and attempting to board a plane to Brussels carrying a handgun), is notorious for his numerous public statements against Roma and Muslims. In the first days of May 2020, Dzhambazki publicly called for Roma neighbourhoods (both Muslim and non-Muslim) to be closed during the COVID-19 pan-

19. For PISA see: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/>, (Access date: 1 May 2021).

20. “Етническата омраза в българските учебници и... плачевен резултат” (Ethnic Hatred in Bulgarian Textbooks and... Its Deplorable Result), Rodopite.Net, 20 November 2020, <http://rodopite.net/blog/ietnitcheskaka-omraza-v-blgarskitie-utchiebnici-i/>, (Access date: 1 March 2021).

21. YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0scoowdi4o>, 22 October 2020, (Access date: 13 February 2021).

demic because “Gypsies have a very low health culture”, “have no personal hygiene”, and “are engaged in begging, theft, and prostitution”.²² On the basis of Dzhambazki’s proposed preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19, mayors in Bulgaria began closing Romani ghettos and set up checkpoints at their entrances. This measure selectively restricted freedom of movement on the basis of ethnicity and created a dangerous precedent. Towns with significant Romani populations like Kazanlak, Nova Zagora, Roman, and Sliven closed off the quarters inhabited by Roma and in some cases built temporary walls around them. Such extreme measures were defended by allegations that Romani people do not adhere to the emergency ban on assembly. Bulgarian Interior Minister Mladen Marinov pointed out that the government, if needed, will not hesitate to take even harsher measures against Romani residents. In association with Fakulteta, the biggest Romani neighbourhood in Sofia, he alleged that “using coercive means is justified in this case, as we are obliged to protect the rest of the population.”²³

As a matter of fact, representatives from all levels of the IMRO, Ataka, NFSB, and Vazrazhdane parties exercise anti-Muslim discourse as a major tool of campaigning for votes from voters with nationalist inclinations.

Media

The champion in the category “Islamophobic media” in Bulgaria for 2020 is the television channel Skat TV. This comes as no surprise since this usual suspect is owned by the far-right party NFSB. The list of cases in which anti-Muslim discourse was used on different programmes throughout the year is extremely long. We will confine ourselves to mentioning only a couple of striking examples. On 23 January 2020, the presenter of the TV programme with the meaningful title “Unveiling”, Nikolay Pankov, chose the following provocative theme: “The Muftis Proceed with the Case about Kurshum Mosque. A Green Islamist Dictate after Davos”.²⁴ He suggested that the judiciary tolerated the Chief Muftiate’s struggle to restore waqf properties confiscated by the state during the Communist era. The comments of the host and his guest, Miroslav Popov, were full of dangerous speculations directed at the Muslim Denomination (Grand Mufti’s Office). Similar allegations could be heard in another programme, held on 20 February 2020, in the same series titled “Bulgarian Themis²⁵ Adopted Sharia on the Eve of the Hanging of the Apostle”.²⁶

22. Atanas Stoyanov, European Roma Rights Centre, “Anti-Roma Hate Speech by MEP Angel Dzhambazki”, 4 May 2020, <http://www.errc.org/news/anti-roma-hate-speech-by-mep-angel-dzhambazki>, (Access date: 1 March 2021).

23. “Bulgarian Officials Exploiting Fear of COVID-19 to Discriminate against Roma”, 28 March 2020, Romea.cz, <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/bulgarian-officials-exploiting-fear-of-covid-19-to-discriminate-against-roma>, (Access date: 1 March 2021).

24. Skat.bg, <http://www.skat.bg/products.php?type=10&genre=7004>, (Access date: 15 February 2021).

25. Themis, an ancient Greek Titaness, is a personification of divine order and law. Depiction of her wearing a blindfold and Scales of Justice is adopted as a major symbol of the Bulgarian judiciary.

26. Skat.bg, <http://www.skat.bg/products.php?type=10&genre=7017>, (Access date: 15 February 2021).

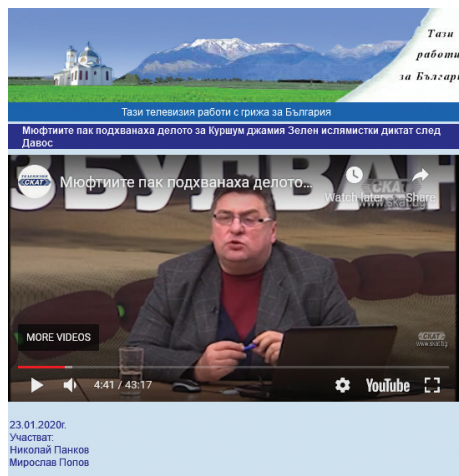


Figure 8: Nikolay Pankov, host of SKAT TV's weekly programme "Unveiling" which aired under the theme "The Muftis Proceed with the Case about Kursum Mosque. A Green Islamist Dictate after Davos".²⁷

On 20 January, Liubomir Zhelev from Skat TV, hosting the weekly edition of his program "On the Bosphorus" under the title "The Deep Turkish State: Sharia, Dirty Money, Weapons, Military Intervention", demonstrated his hostility towards Bulgarian and Turkish Muslim leaders and high officials with blatant, unmasked arrogance. Zhelev called Ali Erbaş, head of the Turkish *Diyanet*, the "first friend of the first Muslim Brother from the Turkish Grand Mufti's Office at Bratia Miladinovi Street". The latter is actually the address of the Bulgarian Grand Muftiate in Sofia - the TV speaker was thus claiming that the Bulgarian Muftiate is controlled by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*).

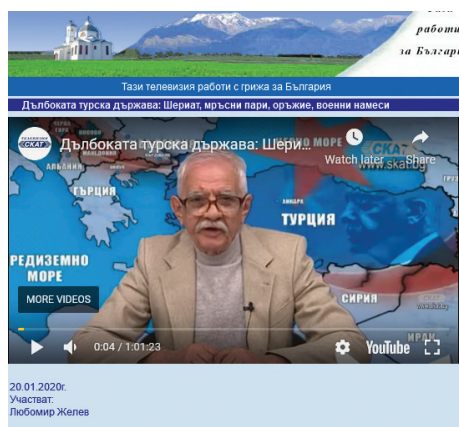


Figure 9: Liubomir Zhelev from Skat TV on his programme "On the Bosphorus" (aired on 20 January 2020) labelling the head of the Turkish *Diyanet* and the Bulgarian grand mufti as "Muslim Brothers".²⁸

27. Skat.bg, <http://www.skat.bg/products.php?type=10&genre=7004>, (Access date: 15 February 2021).

28. Ibid.

Justice System

On 1 July 2020, masked officers of the Bulgarian national security and anti-organised crime agencies burst into an apartment in the port city of Burgas, where Anelia Petrova and her son, Mohammed Abdulqader, were staying. They confiscated all mobile phones and laptops and took all inhabitants - Petrova, her son, her sister, and her family - into custody. Everyone was later released, except 21-year-old Abdulqader who was arrested on terrorism charges. The Specialised Prosecutor's Office has said Abdulqader, a Bulgarian citizen born to a Bulgarian mother and Syrian father, had participated in "terrorist activities" in Syria. As evidence, the prosecution has pointed to a few photos from Syria which Abdulqader had posted on social media and his father's membership in the armed group Sultan Murad Division in Syria. Apropos, the group was part of the Free Syrian Army supported by the Friends of Syria, an international coalition, which Bulgaria was part of. Abdulqader's family claimed he was never involved in the fighting. He had a promising career as a wrestler, having won Bulgaria's youth national championship three times.

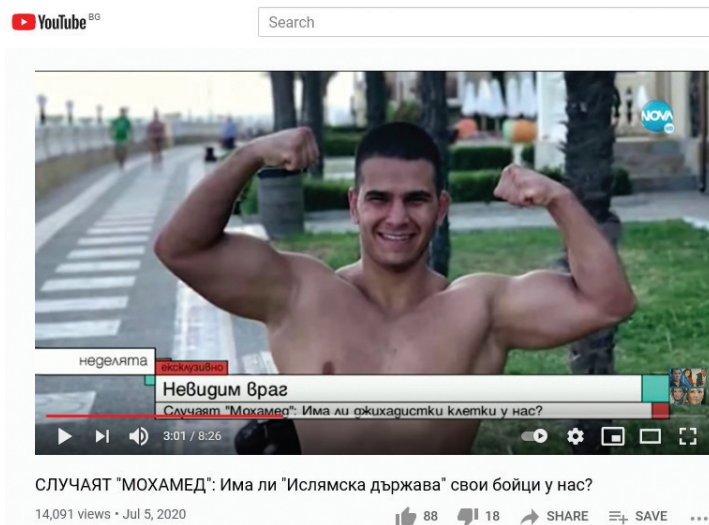


Figure 10: Nova TV announcing wrestling champion Mohammed Abdulqader's arrest with the caption "A Phantom Enemy: Are There Jihadist Cells in Bulgaria?"²⁹

Abdulqader is the first person to be tried in Bulgaria for "terrorist activity abroad" under Law 108A of the Bulgarian Criminal Code. According to the prosecution, Abdulqader has been in Syria multiple times since 2015, where he has "fought alongside different jihadist terrorist groups". It published four photos of the accused wearing military uniform, holding various weapons, and pointing a finger towards the sky. (Fig. 11)

29. YouTube, "The Mohammed Case: Are There ISIS Fighters in Our Country", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbRPS7WLM30>, (Access date: 21 February 2021).



Figure 11: Two of the four photos of Mohammed Abdulqader released by the Specialised Prosecutor's Office on 1 July 2020. The photos were taken in 2015-2016 in Syria when he was 16 years old.³⁰

The prosecution claimed that Abdulqader had a “secret” social media profile under the name “Mohammed, the Jihadi”, and that there is a secret witness against him. Meanwhile, various pundits speculated on Bulgarian television that Abdulqader and his father were involved with the terrorist group ISIS, although in one of the four photos released by the prosecution, only the red flag of the Sultan Murad Division can be seen. Abdulqader was 16 when his supposed crime took place. His lawyer, Ivaylo Naidenov, insisted that there was no proof of him ever participating in fighting, and that he had not seen any substantial evidence put forward by the prosecution. Abdulqader’s mother said her son took photos of himself in Syria to show off in front of his peers and pointed to his social media accounts in Facebook and Instagram, both of which contain images of him in Syria, posted over the past four years. In this period, Abdulqader and his mother would occasionally go to meet his father, mostly in Turkey and on rare occasions in Syria. His wrestling coach Nikolai Dachev, who has trained him since he was 12, was aware of these trips but they were always for a short period. Jammu, Abdulqader’s father, gave up fighting three years ago and currently has a civilian job at a border crossing on the Turkish-Syrian border.³¹ Three months later on 6 October, the Appellate Specialized Criminal Court decided that Mohammed Abdulqader, accused of terrorism abroad, should remain in custody.³² Ruslan Trad, a Syrian-Bulgarian journalist commenting on the “Mohammed Case”, criti-

30. “How a Syrian Bulgarian Wrestler Became a ‘Terror’ Suspect”, Al Jazeera, 10 July 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/syrian-bulgarian-wrestler-terror-suspect-200708195805698.html?fbclid=IwAR3Nhh0YrOiWIMUOW9DCn8O85v8S4HVSOSJD2U8StqLCscx3R8Q-XNSf8-w>, (Access date: 1 February 2021).

31. Ibid.

32. Lachezar Lisitsov, Съдът остави под стража Мохамед от Бургас, обвинен в задграничен тероризъм (The Court left Mohamed from Burgas in Custody on Charges of Terrorism Abroad), Flagman.bg, 6 October 2020, <https://www.flagman.bg/article/225197>, (Access date: 21 February 2021).

cized the actions of the prosecution with the following words: “The people leading this court case have no idea what Sultan Murad Division does in Syria. The expertise is minimal.” According to Trad, there has been increasing pressure by the Bulgarian authorities on the Syrian community over the past few years. In 2019, five Syrian citizens were arrested in Bulgaria for “financing terrorism”, but the charges could not be proven, so they were eventually released.³³



Figure 12: Mohammed Abdulqader has witnessed the war in Syria, but his parents claim he never participated in the fighting.³⁴

Internet

On 19 October 2020, Krystian Szkwarek, a representative of the group European Conservatives and Reformists for Bulgaria, Europe’s leading conservative movement, shared on his Facebook page an opinion (later reflected by media outlets such as blitz.bg and tribune.bg), in which he uses unacceptable qualifications against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. He stated, “This is the first known caricature of Muhammad from Cluny Abbey dating back to 1142 [a drawing by the 12th-century abbot Peter the Venerable showing the Prophet as a monstrous siren]. ‘Charlie Hebdo’ is not the pioneer in our reasonable mockeries of the Arab cutthroat, who slept with underage girls, and of the disgusting religion created by him.”³⁵ The text violates Article 164, Paragraph 1 of the Penal Code, namely “preaching and incitement to discrimination, violence or hatred through speech, press or other mass media, through

33. Ruslan Trad podcast (ep. 102), YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4RM92r7sHs>, (Access date: 21 February 2021).

34. Ibid.

35. novini247.com, https://novini247.com/novini/predstavatelyat-na-grupata-na-evropeyskite-konservatori-i-reformisti-v-balgariya-nbsp-kristiyan_2846530.html, (Access date: 12 December 2020).

electronic information systems or in any other way.” As usually, state security agencies did not react to this anti-Muslim statement.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Major figures triggering Islamophobia in Bulgaria are the leaders - including MPs and MEPs - of the far-right nationalist parties and movements NFSB, IMRO, Ataka, *Vazrazhdane*, Bulgarian National Union – New Democracy, National Resistance, Blood and Honour, and Fortress Europe Alliance. They are backed by various channels for dissemination of anti-Muslim propaganda such as media organs, either owned by their parties or state channels, radio programmes, and the daily press. The producers of these media outlets evaluate the participation of “scandalous” politicians and the broadcasting of hate speech as a source of increased viewer/listener/reader interest and higher ratings - a process undisturbed by any kind of censorship or state control.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

On 8 December 2020, an online meeting titled “Addressing Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes and the Security Needs of Muslim Communities”, initiated by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was held. The online forum, moderated by Christie Edwards, was dedicated to the OSCE publication “Practical Guide on Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes - Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities”.³⁶ Bulgaria’s Muslim community was represented at the conference by Hayri Emin, an expert at the International Affairs Department of the Chief Mufti’s Office. Asked to comment on the results of the local Muslim community’s co-operation with the OSCE, Emin said Bulgaria was one of the countries where ODIHR training for dealing with hate crimes for law enforcement agencies has been successfully completed and that the Chief Mufti’s Office has made an indisputable contribution to this initiative. Nevertheless, bias-motivated crimes are rarely investigated in sufficient detail to reveal the true cause of the misconducts, and usually the latter are treated as hooliganism. In Emin’s opinion, since institutions such as the police and the prosecution are highly homogeneous, encouraging people from minorities to join them is likely to empower positive developments in the fight against antireligious hatred in society.³⁷

36. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/471333>, (Access date: 25 January 2021).

37. “Online Panel Titled: Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes and the Security of Muslim Communities”, Republic of Bulgaria, Muslim Denomination, Grand Mufti’s Office, <https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/10369-2020-12-11-09-55-20.html>, 8 December 2020, (Access date: 25 January 2021).

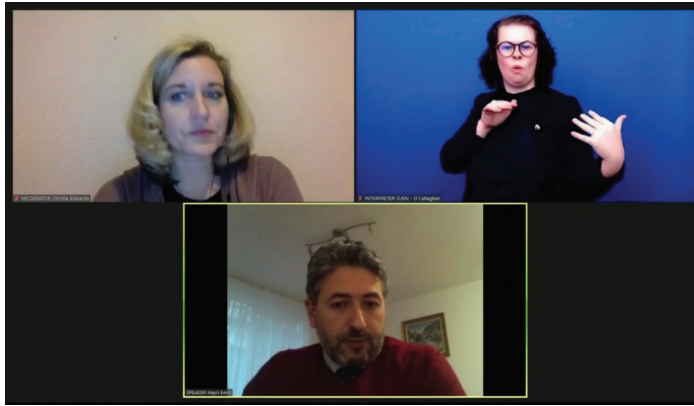


Figure 13: Hayri Emin, an expert at the International Affairs Department of the Bulgarian Chief Mufti's Office, attending the OSCE's online meeting "Addressing Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes and the Security Needs of Muslim Communities".³⁸

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The content of this report shows that in Islamophobic terms, 2020 was dominated by instances of anti-Muslim hate speech rather than physical attacks on Muslims and mosques. Populist politicians took the momentum to unleash hatred towards Muslims by exploiting negative historical sentiments, problems within the Roma communities, and concerns mounted due to the movement of refugees from the Middle East passing through Bulgaria on their way to Europe. Despite the fact that the domestic criminal code contains articles sanctioning this type of discourses, these are rarely applied. Therefore, there is an acute need for NGOs to monitor media on a daily basis, and to generate pressure on the judiciary to take adequate action in cases and events dictated by Islamophobia and to refrain from arresting and charging Muslims for the sake of simulating anti-terror activity. Presumably, over time, this civilian pressure is expected to generate a preventative effect and force politicians to abstain from using hate-speech publicly, and authorities from treating the local Muslim community as a threat to national security. The media should use the opportunities afforded to them to change the negative image of Islam by broadcasting programmes discussing up-to-date Islamic issues. The lack of adequate knowledge about Islam enables the spread of biased stereotypes in the public domain. Educational institutions also have to work towards creating an alternative narrative regarding Muslims. In the long list of authors of history textbooks, there are no Muslims. Keeping in mind that the curricula include topics related to Islam, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education should engage if not an author, at least an adviser appointed by the Chief Muftiate in Sofia to comment on the content from a Muslim perspective. Local Muslims should also be involved in a more objective and constructive rewriting of Bulgaria's history.

38. Ibid.

Chronology

- **01.07.2020:** Masked officers of the Bulgarian national security and anti-organised crime agencies, SANS and GDCOP, arrested 21-year-old Mohamed Abdulqader on terrorism charges based on photos shared by the accused on the internet.
- **19.10.2020:** Krystian Szkwerek, a representative of the group European Conservatives and Reformists for Bulgaria, defended the *Charlie Hebdo* caricatures and called Islam a “disgusting religion.”
- **22.10.2020:** An Islamophobic statement was made by Angel Djambazki, a Bulgarian member of the European Parliament.
- **November 2020:** Muslims who died in Bulgarian hospitals due to COVID-19 were buried in coffins with Christian symbols.
- **End of December 2020:** The entrance of the historical Jumaya Mosque in Plovdiv was desecrated with graffiti.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
CROATIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

In 2020, in Croatia, Islamophobic attacks and hate speech against Muslims were mostly concentrated on social networks. In the sphere of politics, no major Islamophobic incidents were recorded, which is especially significant keeping in mind that 2020 was a year of parliamentary elections in Croatia. Politicians did not play on the card of strengthening Islamophobia because they concluded that this kind of story “does not pass” in the Republic of Croatia, Croatia preferring to lay emphasis on the good integration of local Muslims into Croatian society. There have been sporadic local incidents, but there can be no talk of systemic Islamophobia in the Republic of Croatia. It is worth noting that the cause of the strengthening of Islamophobia in a certain segment was the so-called migrant crisis on the border of Croatia, which is the external border of the European Union with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia where migrants daily try to enter the European Union. In reporting, the media use problematic framing to describe militant events, talking about “radical Islam,” etc. There is a lack of understanding of this kind of discourse in media reporting. The public institutions of the Republic of Croatia, as well as religious communities, spread the messages of unity and respect for each person, and show the will to respect diversity and live together in harmony. This can be partly attributed to the successful integration of local Muslims into Croatian society, and the formal recognition of Islam as an official religion in Croatia. Every global crisis entails a deepening of social differences and tensions, both locally and globally. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it the problems of modern civilization in terms of relationships with the other and the different stemming from increased fear and insecurity – this is especially true in relation to the rise of Islamophobia. In general, we can say that as the pandemic intensified, there were more and more cases of outbursts of racism against minorities, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and Muslims. In summary, anti-Muslim intolerance represents sporadic outbursts by individuals who are certainly in the minority in Croatia. Comparing Croatia with other European countries, we can conclude that even in 2020, Croatian society does not follow the trend of the increasing Islamophobia in the rest of Europe.

Sažetak

U Hrvatskoj u 2020. godini govori mržnje prema muslimanima, te islamofobni napadi su bili većinom koncentrirani u području govora mržnje na društvenim mrežama, odnosno komentarima građana na određene događaje u Europi, posebice terorističke napade u Beču i Parizu. U sferi politike nisu zabilježeni veći islamofobni incidenti vrijedni spomena, što je posebice značajno imajući u vidu da je 2020. godina bila godine parlamentarnih izbora u Hrvatskoj. Političari nisu igrali na kartu jačanja islamofobije jer su zaključili da ta vrsta priče ne prolazi u Republici Hrvatskoj imajući u vidu dobru integriranost domicilnih muslimana u ovdašnje društvo. Bilo je sporadičnih lokalnih incidenata, ali se ne može govoriti o sustavnoj islamofobiji u RH. Vrijedi napomenuti da je uzrok jačanja islamofobije u određenom segmentu bio prema migrantima uslijed migrantske krize na granici RH koja je vanjska granica Europske unije s granicom BiH i Srbije gdje se nalaze migranti koji se svakodnevno pokušavaju domoći EU. U izvještavanju mediji koriste nepsretne kovanice riječi kojima opisuju nemile terorističke događaje, govoreći o "radikalnom islamu" potencirajući da je islam kao religija radikalna, a ne ljudi koji pogrešno tumače vjeru itd. Primjetno je nerazumijevanje takve vrste diskursa u medijskom izvještavanju.

Institucije vlasti u Republici Hrvatskoj kao i druge religijske zajednice širili su poruke zajedništva, poštivanja svakog čovjeka te pokazali volju za poštivanjem različitosti i zajedničkog života. Dijelom se to može pripisati i uspješnoj integraciji domaćih muslimana u hrvatsko društvo i porukama koje šalje Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj, koja promovira uspješan model integracije muslimana u hrvatsko društvo već preko 100 godina. Svaka svjetska kriza sa sobom povlači produbljavanje socijalnih razlika i napetosti kako na lokalnom tako i na globalnom nivou. Pandemija korona virusa sa sobom je donijela probleme suvremene civilizacije kada je u pitanju odnos prema drugom i drugačijem usljed povećanog straha i nesigurnosti, posebice porasta islamofobije. Generalno možemo reći da kako se pandemija zahuktavala tako su se javljali sve češći slučajevi izljeva rasizma prema manjinama, migrantima, izbjeglicama, azilantima, muslimanima. Sumirajući, možemo reći da pokazana antimuslimanska netrpeljivost predstavlja sporadične ispade pojedinaca koji su sasvim sigurno u manjini. Poredeći RH s drugim zemljama Europe, možemo zaključiti da niti u 2020. hrvatsko društvo ne prati trend pojačanog rasta islamofobije kao u ostatku Europe.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Republic of Croatia

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic

Ruling Parties: Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)

Opposition Parties: Social Democratic Party (SDP), Homeland Movement (Domovinski pokret), Bridge of Independent Lists (Most), We can (Možemo), Istrian Democratic Parliament (IDS) and others.

Last Elections: 2020 Presidential Elections: Zoran Milanović won 52.66% of the vote against 47.34% that went to Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović in the second round.

2020 Legislative Elections: HDZ–HSLŠ–HDS–HDSSB: 66 seats; SDP–HSS–GLAS–IDS–HSU–SNAGA–PGS: 41 seats; DPMŠ–HKS–HRAST–BzH–ZL–SU: 16 seats; Bridge of Independent Lists (MOST): 8 seats; Green–Left (M!–RF–NL–ORaH): 7 seats; SIP–Smart–Focus: 3 seats; Croatian People’s Party – Liberal Democrats: 1 seat; People’s Party – Reformists: 1 seat; National Minorities: 8 seats.

Total Population: 4,284,889 (2011)

Major Languages: Croatian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

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%) (2011)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Community in Croatia (*Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj*)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Center for Cultural Dialogue (CCD), The International Red Cross, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Human Rights House Zagreb, Are you Syrious?, Center for Missing and Abused Children, Centre for Peace Studies (CMS, CPS), Centre for Promotion of Tolerance and Preservation of Holocaust Remembrance, Croatian Legal Center.

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Militant 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 legally and institutionally regulated organization of Islam as a religion in the Republic of Croatia has prevented the deepening of Islamophobia in Croatian society. The Islamic Community in Croatia, as institutional organization, continues to play an integrative role in local society. The Republic of Croatia has used the position of the Islamic Community as a role model for Muslim minorities in Croatian society and as an instrument in building its democratic, inclusive, and intercultural state brand.

Along this line, the construction of the Islamic Cultural Center in Sisak continues and with it Croatia will get its fifth mosque (in addition to the ones in Zagreb, Rijeka, Bogovolja, and Gunja). The cornerstone in Sisak was laid in December 2016, and this year, with the installation of the final part, a 40-meter-high minaret was added.¹

A significant international conference entitled “Human Brotherhood - The Foundation of Security and Peace in the World” was held in honor of two documents published in 2019: the Declaration on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Coexistence, which promotes Christian-Muslim relations, and the Charter of Mecca that promotes dialogue between civilizations.

The conference was opened by then President of the Republic of Croatia Kolumba Grabar-Kitarović and the Secretary General of the League of the Muslim World (MWL) Muhammad bin Abdul Kerim Al-Issa with the participation of guests from 36 countries. The conference was organized by the Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia and the World Muslim League in cooperation with the Episcopal Conference of Croatia (HBK). Theses that Croatia is “a wonderful example of building bridges of love, dialogue and understanding” could be heard at the conference.

The conference was attended by the entire Croatian state leadership, high representatives of the Catholic Church, representatives of the Jewish community in Croatia, representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia, and many others.² The conference was held in Zagreb as part of the program of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which focused on human brotherhood as the basis of peace and security in the world.³

The Muslim World League donated US\$300,000 to the Croatian government for combating the COVID-19 pandemic and also donated funds to the Is-

1. “Uoči četvrte godišnjice postavljanja kamena temeljca završen minaret na sisačkoj džamiji”, *Večernji.hr*, 11 November 2020, <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/foto-uoci-cetvrte-godisnjice-postavljanja-kamena-temeljca-završen-minaret-na-sisackoj-dzamiji-1445306> (Access date: 1 December 2020).
2. “Skup ‘Ljudsko bratstvo temelj sigurnosti i mira u svijetu’ Međunarodna konferencija u Zagrebu u ožračju dvaju dokumenata – iz Abu Dhabija i Mekke”, *Jutarnji.hr*, 4 February 2020, <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/skup-ljudsko-bratstvo-temelj-sigurnosti-i-miru-u-svijetu-medunarodna-konferencija-u-zagrebu-u-ozracju-dvaju-dokumenata-iz-abu-dhabija-i-mekke-9935002> (Access date: 1 December 2020).
3. “Danas je posebno važno jačati snagu duha i razumijevanja”, *24sata.hr*, 4 February 2020, <https://www.24sata.hr/news/danas-je-posebno-vazno-jacati-snagu-duha-i-razumijevanja-674066> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

lamic community in Zagreb for the repair of the damage caused by the March 22 earthquake.⁴

Meetings of the heads of the Islamic Community in Croatia with state leaders were frequent. At one of them, Zoran Milanović, the newly elected president of Croatia, emphasized that the Republic of Croatia is an example of good integration and of the tradition of respecting and preserving the religious and cultural foundations of Islam as exemplified in the long-standing, exceptional cooperation of the Islamic Community with all state and local government units in Croatia. Likewise, the representatives of the Meshihat of the Islamic Community pointed to the Republic of Croatia as an example of respecting and promoting the highest standards of religious tolerance in building a society of understanding and trust. According to the statement, Al-Issa praised Grabar-Kitarović's commitment to promoting a policy of peace, tolerance, cooperation, and respect for all religions and peoples.⁵



Figure 1: Former President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović shaking hands with the President of the Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia Aziz Effendi Hasanović in the presence of Secretary General of the League of the Muslim World (MWL) Muhammad bin Abdul Kerim Al-Issa.⁶

4. "Svjetska muslimanska liga donirala Hrvatskoj nvaču pomoć protiv koronavirusa", Index.hr, 9 April 2020, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/svjetska-muslimanska-liga-donirala-hrvatskoj-novcanu-pomoc-protiv-koronavirusa/2173621.aspx> (Access date: 1 May 2020).
5. "Muslimanski čelnik: Hrvatska je zemlja mira, sklada i vjerskih sloboda", Index.hr, 4 February 2020, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/muslimanski-celnik-hrvatska-je-zemlja-mira-sklada-i-vjerskih-sloboda/2153944.aspx> (Access date: 1 December 2020).
6. "Muslimanski čelnik: Hrvatska je zemlja mira, sklada i vjerskih sloboda", Index.hr, 4 February 2020, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/muslimanski-celnik-hrvatska-je-zemlja-mira-sklada-i-vjerskih-sloboda/2153944.aspx> (Access date: 1 December 2020).

The Islamic Community in Croatia hosted a gala dinner to celebrate Eid al-Fitr with the presence of all state leaders whose presence testifies to their good relations with the country's Islamic Community and Muslims. The President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia Andrej Plenković, Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Gordan Jandroković, and President of the Episcopal Conference of Croatia (HBK) Zelimir Puljić expressed their wishes on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to the Mufti and President of the Islamic Community of Croatia Aziz Effendi Hasanović and all Muslims in Croatia with the warm messages of coexistence, respect, and acceptance as values underpinning the intercultural Croatian society.⁷

The Security Intelligence Agency Report (SOA)⁸ for last year states that the security situation in the Republic of Croatia is stable, and that in 2019/2020 there were no events or occurrences that would significantly jeopardize the country's security situation. The report states that there are currently no indications or visible potential for a significant destabilization of the security situation. The militant threat to Croatia remains low. Out of a total of seven people (two men and five women) who traveled to DEASH-controlled areas and who have Croatian citizenship, according to available data, two men and one woman died in 2017 and 2018 in Syria/Iraq, and other women are still in civilian camps controlled by Kurdish-Arab forces in Syria.⁹

One case of a Croatian citizen being arrested by the Turkish police while traveling to Syria to fight in the ranks of ISIL was recorded. He was 20-year-old man from

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7. "Milanović čestitao Kurban bajram svim pripadnicima Islamske zajednice u Hrvatskoj", Direktno.hr, 30 July 2020, <https://direktno.hr/zivot/vjera/milanovic-cestitao-kurban-bajram-svim-pripadnicima-islamske-zajednice-hrvatskoj-202442/> (Access date: 1 December 2020); "Predsjednik Milanović čestitao islamskim vjernicima Ramazanski bajram", Direktno.hr, 23 May 2020, <https://direktno.hr/domovina/predsjednik-milanovic-cestitao-islamskim-vernjcima-ramazanski-bajram-195081/> (Access date: 1 December 2020); "Plenković čestitao Kurban bajram svim građanima islamske vjeroispovijesti", Direktno.hr, 30 July 2020, <https://direktno.hr/domovina/plenkovic-cestitao-kurban-bajram-svim-gradanima-islamske-vjeroispovijesti-202459/> (Access date: 1 December 2020); "Plenković uputio čestitku Islamskoj vjerskoj zajednici u Hrvatskoj", Direktno.hr, 23 May 2020, <https://direktno.hr/domovina/plenkovic-uputio-cestitku-islamskoj-zajednici-u-hrvatskoj-195088/> (Access date: 1 December 2020); "Jandroković čestitao Kurban bajram svim pripadnicima islamske vjeroispovijesti", Direktno.hr, 30 July 2020, <https://direktno.hr/zivot/vjera/jandrokovic-cestitao-kurban-bajram-svim-pripadnicima-islamske-vjeroispovijesti-202444/> (Access date: 1 December 2020); "Jandroković čestitao Ramazanski bajram", Direktno.hr, 23 May 2020, <https://direktno.hr/domovina/jandrokovic-cestitao-ramazanski-bajram-195079/> (Access date: 1 December 2020); "Kardinal Bozanić islamskim vjernicima čestitao Kurban bajram", Direktno.hr, 30 July 2020, <https://direktno.hr/zivot/vjera/kardinal-bozanic-islamskim-vernjcima-cestitao-kurban-bajram-202432/> (Access date: 1 December 2020); "Nadbiskup Puljić uputio čestitku muftiji Hasanoviću povodom Kurban bajrama", Direktno.hr, 30 July 2020, <https://direktno.hr/zivot/vjera/nadbiskup-puljic-uputio-cestitku-muftiji-hasanovicu-povodom-kurban-bajrama-202407/> (Access date: 1 December 2020); "Predsjednik HBK čestitao Ramazanski bajram muftiji Azizu Hasanoviću", Direktno.hr, 22 May 2020, <https://direktno.hr/zivot/vjera/predsjednik-hbk-cestitao-ramazanski-bajram-muftiji-azizu-hasanovicu-195011/> (Access date: 1 December 2020).
 8. "Public Report 2019", Security and Intelligence Agency SOA, <https://www.soa.hr/files/file/Javno-izvjesce-2019.pdf> (Access date: 1 December 2020).
 9. "SOA objavila detaljno izvješće o prijetnjama sigurnosti, pogledajte što sve spominje", Index.hr, 20 September 2020, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/soa-sve-je-vise-kibernetickih-napada-ugroze-stizu-s-jugostoka/2215419.aspx> (Access date: 20 September 2020).

the Croatian town of Koprivnica, who converted to Islam. The daily newspaper *Jutarnji* found out that the man had been under the supervision of the Croatian security services for a long time.¹⁰

During an interview of Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlić-Radman said, “About 63,000 Muslims who live in Croatia are ambassadors who can testify that Croatia is a safe country, respectable in respecting human, national, minority and religious rights.” Mufti Hasanović underlined that part of the Muslim community’s role is to “brand and promote the high standard that are developed in Croatia.”¹¹

The issue of Croatian border safety in relation to migrants heading to Europe was raised several times in public discourse and media. The question of the line between ensuring the security of Croatian territory and a human approach and compassion for refugees was raised.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2020, Croatian Ombudsman Lora Vidović submitted the Ombudsman Report for 2019 to the Croatian Parliament. It stated that Croatia witnessed positive examples of interreligious dialogue. The Association for Religious Freedom in the Republic of Croatia has been a positive example of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for many years. Also, the Islamic Community in Croatia organized numerous conferences, meetings, and other activities within the Center for the Culture of Dialogue, in which mainly young people participated with the aim of spreading ideas of tolerance and combating religious prejudices and stereotypes. The report stated that the events all aimed to strengthen interreligious and intercultural dialogue, respect for human rights, and the prevention of discrimination based on religion.

In addition to fake news, hate speech is present in the public space via newspaper articles, comments below online articles, online user posts, graffiti, pictures, verbal abuse, songs, or gestures. Hate speech is directed, among others, at members of religious communities and migrants. In addition, hate speech was recorded in a small

10. “Uhićen islamist iz Hrvatske: Turska policija uhitila je državljanina RH koji se preobratio na islam, želio se priključiti džihadistima u Siriji”, *Jutarnji.hr*, 6 March 2020, <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/uhicen-islamist-iz-hrvatske-turska-policija-uhitila-drzavljanina-rh-koji-se-preobratio-na-islam-zelijo-se-prikljuciti-dzihadistima-u-siriji-10061659> (Access date: 12 December 2020).

11. “Video Grlić Radman: Hrvatska je model za svijet po pitanju tolerancije prema manjinskim i vjerskim zajednicama”, *Direktno.hr*, 27 October 2020, <https://direktno.hr/domovina/video-grlic-radman-hrvatska-model-svijet-pitanju-tolerancije-prema-manjinskim-i-vjerskim-zajednicama-212038/> (Access date: 1 November 2020).

section of media, publications, and headlines such as “Why Do We Call the Invasion of the Islamic World Migration?”¹²

Few domestic and international NGOs have accused Croatian police of the systematic rejection of migrants trying to enter Croatia and the EU from Bosnia and Herzegovina. NGOs accused the police of extreme violence, collective expulsion of migrants and denial of asylum, which the Ministry of Internal Affairs persistently denies. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has documented an unusually large number of so-called pushbacks, or the forcible return of migrants from Croatia to BiH. The Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović called on Croatian authorities to end “pushbacks” and violence at the border and to start punishing police officers responsible for serious violations of migrants’ human rights.¹³ Different media such as British newspaper *The Guardian* and several German media including *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), *Bild-Zeitung*, *Die Zeit*, and the public service ARD have written about complaints against Croatian authorities and published statements by migrants claiming that they are being forcibly returned to BiH territory.¹⁴

The Croatian government has denied all these accusations and complained that the human approach that the Croatian police has toward migrants is not reported in the media. The Ministries of Internal and Foreign and European Affairs declared that the Croatian police at the border is doing an important job and protecting the EU from illegal migration.

An incident in Zadar based on religious and national intolerance was also reported in the media. Namely, hate speech and an arsenal of threats were heard because of disputed neighborhood rights in an attack on Muslim neighbors by local residents in October in a hamlet in the area of the Municipality of Razanac.¹⁵

The year 2020 was marked by a hate crime where insulting graffiti appeared on the Zagreb Mosque including a message about the first President of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović and the current president of the leading

12. “Report of the Ombudsman 2019”, Office for Ombudsman of the Republic of Croatia, <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/download/izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2019-godinu/?wpdmdl=7580&refresh=602bdd0d150f61613487373> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

13. “Iz Vijeća Europe ponovno pozivaju Hrvatsku da zaustavi nasilje nad migrantima na granici s BiH: Nehumano postupanje nije se smanjilo, nego se povećalo”, Novilist.hr, 21 October 2020, <https://www.novilist.hr/novosti/hrvatska/iz-vijeca-europe-ponovno-pozivaju-hrvatsku-da-zaustavi-nasilje-nad-migrantima-na-granici-s-bih-nehumano-postupanje-nije-se-smanjilo-nego-se-povecalo/> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

14. “Šta kaže RU na nasilje hrvatske policije prema migrantima?”, Dw.com, 27 October 2020, <https://www.dw.com/bs/%C5%A1ta-ka-%C5%BEe-eu-na-nasilje-hrvatske-policije-prema-migrantima/a-55409671> (Access date: 20 December 2020).

15. “Otkad smo kupili kuću u Ražancu svak dan nam prijete. Video: ‘Govna muslimanska, džigericu ću vam iščupat, šta vas Pavelić nije pobija!’”, SlobodnaDalmacija.hr, 28 October 2020, <https://zadarski.slobodnadalmacija.hr/zadar/4-kantuna/otkad-smo-kupili-kucu-u-razancu-svaki-dan-nam-prijete-video-govna-muslimanska-dzigericu-cu-vam-iscupat-sta-vas-pavelic-nije-pobija-1054023> (Access date: 30 October 2020).

Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA) in BIH, Bakir Izetbegović.¹⁶ The Islamic Community in Croatia condemned this act of vandalism.¹⁷ The attack happened immediately before the elections for minority representatives including Bosniaks for the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia.



Figure 2: Insulting graffiti appeared on the Zagreb Mosque including a message about Alija Izetbegović, the first president of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the current president of the leading Bosniak in BIH, Party of Democratic Action (SDA), Bakir Izetbegović.¹⁸

In September 2020, graffiti with the inscriptions “Ustaše Brda 1950”¹⁹ and “Death to Muslims” appeared on the notch of the railway, in front of the entrance to the tunnel on Dujmovaca, in the town of Split.²⁰ Media reported it as a shameful inscription. The Islamic Community in Croatia in its press release stated that they received news about this event with great disappointment and regret.²¹

16. “Uvrjedljivi graffiti na džamiji u Zagrebu: ‘To su bolenski ljudi...’”, 24sata.hr, 24 March 2020, <https://www.24sata.hr/news/uvredljivi-grafiti-na-dzhamiji-u-zagrebu-to-su-bolesni-ljudi-683052> (Access date: 25 March 2020).
17. Islamic Community in Croatia: “Osuda vandalizma na Zagrebačkoj džamiji”, www.islamska-zajednica.hr, 24 March 2020 <http://www.islamska-zajednica.hr/izdvojeno/osuda-vandalizma-na-zagrebackoj-dzhamiji> (Access date: 25 March 2020).
18. “Uvrjedljivi graffiti na džamiji u Zagrebu: ‘To su bolenski ljudi...’”, 24sata.hr, 24 March 2020, <https://www.24sata.hr/news/uvredljivi-grafiti-na-dzhamiji-u-zagrebu-to-su-bolesni-ljudi-683052> (Access date: 25 March 2020).
19. The **Ustaša – Croatian Revolutionary Movement** (Croatian: *Ustaša – Hrvatski revolucionarni pokret*), commonly known as **Ustaše** or by anglicised versions **Ustasha** or **Ustashe**, was a Croatian fascist, ultranationalist and terrorist organization.
20. “Sramotni graffiti osvanuli pred ulazom u tunel na Dujmovaci, policija provodi uvide kako bi se pronašli odgovorni”, Slobodna Dalmacija.hr, 12 September 2020, <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/split/sramotni-grafiti-osvanuli-pred-ulazom-u-tunel-na-dujmovaci-policija-provodi-izvide-kako-bi-se-pronasli-odgovorni-1044159> (Access date: 1 October 2020).
21. Islamic Community in Croatia: “Osuda prijetećih natpisa u Splitu”, www.islamska-zajednica.hr, 14 September 2020, <http://www.islamska-zajednica.hr/izdvojeno/osuda-prijetecih-natpisa-u-splitu> (Access date: 20 December 2020).



Figure 3: Graffiti with the inscription “Death to Muslims” appeared on the notch of the railway in front of the entrance to the tunnel on Dujmovaca, in the town of Split.²²

Local citizens of the city of Pula reacted to the news of the building of a new Islamic cultural center in Pula with protests. Residents of Pula’s Monte Serpa oppose the construction of an Islamic cultural center in their neighborhood, although it is only a matter of moving from an old, unsuitable building in the center of Pula to a new location. Daniel Deković, president of the local board of Busoler, in whose territory the plot for the construction of the Islamic Cultural Center is located, said that the residents “don’t want Vienna in Pula,” alluding to the terrorist attack that took place in Vienna in 2020. Later on, in a statement, he said the above comment was taken out of context, and that he and locals had been declared the biggest Islamophobes. He even said that he had information that the center would accept migrants and integrate them into the community, and that locals feared that extremists would come with them.²³ The announcement of the construction of the Islamic Cultural Center in Pula attracted a great deal of public attention.

22. “Sramotni grafiti osvanuli pred ulazom u tunel na Dujmovachi, policija provodi uvide kako bi se pronašli odgovorni”, SlobodnaDalmacija.hr, 12 September 2020, <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/split/sramotni-grafiti-osvanuli-pred-ulazom-u-tunel-na-dujmovaci-policija-provodi-izvide-kako-bi-se-pronasli-odgovorni-1044159> (Access date: 1 October 2020).

23. “Džamija? Može, ali ne u našem dvorištu”, Dw.com, 23 November 2020, <https://www.dw.com/hr/džamija-može-ali-ne-u-našem-dvorištu/a-55685627> (Access date: 20 December 2020).



Figure 4: Flyer during the organized protest in Pula against the construction of Islamic Cultural Center in Pula. It states, “Miletić (City Mayor) stop violence against the majority, stop the violence against our tradition. NO to the Islamization by the wishes of our City Mayor and his friends. Today the mosque, tomorrow the 30m high minaret... and a day after tomorrow? It is true: Pula is a European city. Pula has 3,000 years of European and Christian tradition before all. State your position clearly and loudly. Does your city need that?”²⁴

Employment

The Croatian Ombudsman received complaints regarding the right of Muslims to a paid non-working day for religious holidays. Several complainants pointed to potential discrimination against non-Catholics for displaying religious symbols in public, primarily in schools and hospitals, while the ombudsman also received a complaint for holding blessings in county offices during business hours.²⁵

Education

The Islamic Community in Croatia delivered a lecture to the participants of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia about Islam, Islamophobia, and the position of Muslims in Europe and the world. Educational programs with an anti-Islamophobic dimension in 2020 were postponed or delivered online as a result of the pandemic.

Politics

The city councilor of Split Martin Pauk created an event on his Facebook profile under the name “Throwing cracklings and bacon on the state border.” In it, he pointed out that he will throw cracklings and bacon at the border to protect Croatia from migrants. Pauk explained that the event that will take place at the Bajakovo border crossing on April 9 and 10 as a “blessing of the state border,” and announced bonus points for those who bring a live domestic pig. He said that since the national government is not showing enough seriousness or preparedness regarding the up-

24. “Puljani protiv izgradnje Islamskog centra: Stop nasilju nad većinom i našom tradicijom”, ipress.hr, 9 December 2020, <https://www.ipress.hr/istra/66081-puljani-protiv-izgradnje-islamskog-centra-stop-nasilju-nad-vecinom-i-nasom-tradicijom?tmpl=component&format=pdf> (Access date: 20 December 2020).

25. “Report of the Ombudsman 2019”, Office for Ombudsman of the Republic of Croatia, <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/download/izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2019-godinu/?wpdmdl=7580&refresh=602bdd0d150f61613487373> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

coming migrant invasion from Turkey, it is time to at least show our readiness to protect all our citizens with humor. He claimed that the current situation is the tip of the iceberg of the developments of recent decades, and that it has only one real name - “The invasion and occupation of Europe.” Pauk stated that the event is a message that Croats must ensure the future of Europe, Europeans and their children.²⁶

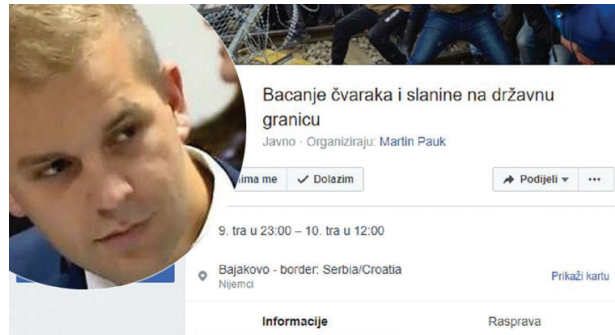


Figure 5: Facebook event entitled “Throwing cracklings and bacon on the state border” organized by the city councillor of Split Martin Pauk.²⁷

The politician and independent parliament member Marijana Petir, known for her statement from 2015 saying that Christians were persecuted by Muslims in wars and that the current “refugee crisis” was in fact an attempt by Muslims to occupy predominantly Catholic European countries including Croatia, suggested a proposal worth 1.5 million HRK in the form of aid to Christians prosecuted for their faith in countries where Islamist militants are in power. The government accepted the proposal.²⁸

On his Facebook profile, the former presidential candidate and former MP Ivan Pernar stated that imams who advocate the theory of global Islamization support mass migrations with the aim of making Muslims the majority in Europe. This is despite the fact, he claimed, that the Muslims who will become the majority will have nothing to do with Europeans, their language, culture, etc. Along the way, he addressed Bosniaks from BIH, saying that they “should be smart” and know how to react to

26. “Ogavno. Splitski vijećnik pokušava biti šaljiv na Facebooku organizira ‘bacanje čvaraka na granicu kako bi odvratio migrante’”, Telegram.hr, 9 March 2020, <https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/ogavno-splitski-vijećnik-pokusava-biti-saljiv-pa-na-facebooku-organizira-bacanje-cvaraka-na-granicu-kako-bi-odvratio-migrante/> (Access date: 1 December 2020).

27. “Ogavno. Splitski vijećnik pokušava biti šaljiv na Facebooku organizira ‘bacanje čvaraka na granicu kako bi odvratio migrante’”, Telegram.hr, 9 March 2020, <https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/ogavno-splitski-vijećnik-pokusava-biti-saljiv-pa-na-facebooku-organizira-bacanje-cvaraka-na-granicu-kako-bi-odvratio-migrante/> (Access date: 1 December 2020).

28. “Pogled izbliza: Slučaj Marijane Petir – dijagnoza aktualne hrvatske države”, Nacional.hr, 25 November 2020, <https://www.nacional.hr/pogled-izbliza-slucaj-marijane-petir-dijagnoza-aktualne-hrvatske-drzave/> (Access date: 1 December 2020).

the current migration events. He called on Bosniaks to put national identity (Slavic) above religious (Islam) identity.²⁹



Figure 6: Ivan Pernar's Facebook post which warms Bosniaks of mass migrations and the invasion of people that will make European culture disappear. He called on Bosniaks to put national identity (Slavic) above religious (Islam) identity.³⁰

One of the media in BIH reacted to Pernar's Facebook post with the following title: "Recruitment of 'White' Bosniaks: Explicit Fascism and Racism by Ivan Pernar."³¹ The mayor of Pula Boris Miletić tried to calm the situation when the announcement of building the new Islamic Cultural Center in Pula was published by stating that locals should be rational and calm the tensions. He stated that the Islamic Center in Pula has existed for more than 50 years and that it is nothing new. He called for tolerance and the reduction of prejudice.³²

Media

Columnist Ivica Sola pointed out in a column written for *Slobodna Dalmacija* (Hanza Media) that the conversion of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul into a mosque is a dangerous message to Croats in BIH.

29. "Ivan Pernar: Braćo Bošnjaci pamet u glavu", RadioSarajevo.ba, 4 March 2020, <https://radiosarajevo.ba/metro-mahala/ja-mislim/ivan-pernar-braco-bosnjaci-pamet-u-glavu/369209> (Access date: 10 December 2020).
30. "Vrbovanje 'bijelih' Bošnjaka: eksplicitni fašizam i rasizam Ivana Pernara", Stav.ba, 4 March 2020, <https://arhiv.stav.ba/vrbovanje-bijelih-bosnjaka-eksplicitni-fasizam-i-rasizam-ivana-pernara/> (Access date: 28 December 2020).
31. Ibid.
32. "U Puli osvanuli transparenti protiv gradnje Islamskog centra; Miletić: smirite se ljudi, to nije nikakva novina", Direktno.hr, 12 November 2020, <https://direktno.hr/domovina/u-puli-osvanuli-transparenti-protiv-gradnje-islamskog-centra-miletic-smirite-se-ljudi-to-nije-nikakva-novina-213857/> (Access date: 20 December 2020).

Columnist for *Slobodna Dalmacija* Visnja Staresina wrote a column titled “The Crown Symbol of the Submission of Christianity to Islam: Erdogan’s Adhan to the West from the Hagia Sophia.” She wrote that in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new strain in U.S.-China relations, defining an EU model to help recover from the pandemic, and domestic post-election issues, it has gone almost unnoticed that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan fulfilled a long-held wish. According to the Staresina, what he announced a quarter of a century ago in the elections for the post of mayor of Istanbul, Erdogan achieved these days as an uncrowned sultan of the Bosphorus.³³

Columnist Davor Dijanović wrote an article entitled “Will Christian Europe Fall under Islamic terrorists?”³⁴ elaborating the question of whether Europe will realize what is happening and finally come to its senses.

Also, columnist and professor Ivica Sola in an interview for *Slobodna Dalmacija* commented on Muslims in Europe by saying that in contrast to Chancellor Kurz and the politically correct European elites who see but do not want or are afraid to tell the truth, he is free to say the following: “This is an invasion, not immigration, this is a war against Europe and the rest of the Christian remnants. Pure jihad out of hatred towards Europe.”³⁵

An exclusive interview with Geert Wilders, the party leader of the PVV (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*), the star of the new European radical right, was reported in the Croatian media *Jutarnji*. He claimed that as soon as he becomes prime minister of the Netherlands, he will immediately stop mass Islamic immigration.³⁶

The Croatian National Television (HRT) broadcasted live Eid prayers in 2020. HRT also reported on the international conference “Human Brotherhood – The Foundation of Security and Peace in the World” that was organized by the Islamic Community in Croatia and supported by the president and prime minister of the Republic of Croatia and the Catholic Archdiocese. Shows on HRT such as “Dnevnik” (Daily News), “Dobro jutro Hrvatska” (Good Morning Croatia), and “Zajedno u duhu” (Together in the Spirit), as well as HR’s show “Susret u dijalogu” (Meeting in Dialogue) broadcast reportages on Islam and Muslims in Croatia.

33. “Krunski simbol podčinjavanja kršćanstva islamu Erdoganov ezan Zapadu iz džamije Svete Sofije”, *SlobodnaDalmacija.hr*, 19 July 2020, <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/vijesti/svijet/krunski-simbol-podcinjavanja-krscanstva-islam-erdoganov-ezan-zapadu-iz-dzamijsvete-sofije-1033256> (Access date: 30 October 2020).

34. “Davor Dijanović: Hoće li kršćanska Europa pasti šaptom pred islamskim teroristima?”, *Narod.hr*, 14 November 2020, <https://narod.hr/eu/davor-dijanovic-hoce-li-krscanska-europa-pasti-saptom-pred-islamskim-teroristima> (Access date: 14 November 2020).

35. “Ivica Šola: Ovo je rat protiv Europe i ostatka ostataka kršćana”, *Narod.hr*, 10 November 2020, <https://narod.hr/eu/ivica-sola-ovo-je-rat-protiv-europe-i-ostatka-ostataka-krscana> (Access date: 10 December 2020); “Ivica Šola: Islam i Europa. Moj obračun s njima”, *SlobodnaDalmacija.hr*, 9 November 2020, <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/vijesti/svijet/islam-i-europa-moj-obracun-s-njima-1056446> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

36. “Ekskluzivno: Intervju s čelnikom radikalne desnice ‘Čim postanem premijer Nizozemske, odmah ću napraviti dvije stvari...’, *Jutarnji.hr*, 1 February 2020, <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/svijet/ekskluzivno-intervju-s-celnikom-radikalne-desnice-cim-postanem-premijer-nizozemske-odmah-cu-napraviti-dvije-stvari-9919324> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

Despite the recommendation of the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia that religious services should be broadcast on television and radio, only the services of the Catholic Church were transmitted and those of other religious minority communities weren't.

Justice System

We can say that the citizens in the Republic of Croatia, even when they are discriminated due to their religious affiliation, are reluctant to report such cases. This is the reason why there is no real insight into the number of cases of discrimination against Muslims in Croatia. Unfortunately, regarding the insulting messages on the Zagreb Mosque, the perpetrator has not been found as of yet. Croatian Ombudsman initiated proceedings due to the alleged dissatisfaction of citizens regarding the planned construction of the Islamic Center in Pula.

Internet

Croatian news portal narod.hr shared columns that Ivica Sola wrote for *Slobodna Dalmacija* in which Islam was mentioned in a negative context. One of them was titled "This Is a War against Europe and the Rest of the Remnants of Christians," alluding to the fact that Christian Croats should be careful of Islam and Muslims.

Via the Internet on behalf of the Croatian government and his own person, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković congratulated the President of the Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia, Mufti Aziz Effendi Hasanović, and all citizens of the Islamic faith on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. "Let this holiday season be an opportunity to reminisce about the importance of a culture of dialogue, mutual tolerance and understanding, and an opportunity for further progress in nurturing existing good relations, of which we are particularly proud," the Croatian prime minister said.³⁷

The international conference "Human Brotherhood – The Foundation of Security and Peace in the World" was held in Zagreb in February 2020. It was given significant attention in online media, spreading the messages of dialogue.

However, it should be noted that migrants are often portrayed in an unacceptable way and certain media continue to market content filled with hate speech.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The central figures that portrayed Islam in a negative context, spreading hatred, can be divided into politicians and the media sector. The first group consists of politicians such as Martin Pauk, Ivan Pernar, and Mirjana Petir. The second group con-

37. "Plenković čestitao Kurban-bajram: Neka ovo bude prigoda da se sjetimo važnosti culture dijaloga", Jutarnji.hr, 30 July 2020, <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/plenkovic-cestitao-kurban-bajram-neka-ovo-bude-prigoda-da-se-sjetimo-vaznosti-kulture-dijaloga-15011131> (Access date: 25 October 2020).

sists of journalists and columnists like Ivica Sola, Davor Dijanović, and Visnja Staršina who wrote for different media outlets such as *Slobodna Dalmacija* (Hanza Media) and *Hrvatski tjednik*.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The Islamic Community in Croatia is an associate of the Center for Cultural Dialogue in implementing the project “New Neighbors - Inclusion of Persons Granted with International Protection in Croatian Society.” This covers 200 people who have been granted asylum, is organized to last for three years, and is valued at about 14.4 million HRK. The project is being co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which is managed by the Interior Ministry and partially from the state budget.³⁸

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The Islamophobic incidents mentioned in the report do not have wider public support, a significant number of followers, or even a driving potential. They can be treated as individual outbursts and actions by single individuals. No kind of extremism has the driving force or potential to overthrow a democratic constitutional order, provoke violence, incidents, or large-scale conflicts. Although, we can still note the peaceful coexistence between Muslims and other religious groups in Croatia, we can also track raised prejudices towards Muslims in light of the murders in Vienna, Paris, and Nice that occurred in 2020.

Government efforts showcased a will to strengthen intercultural Croatian society making it more inclusive, empathetic, and resilient, and to fight growing mistrust and polarization in Europe.

Incidents that can be characterized as Islamophobic - even though some of them have the indicators of hatred based on nationality - were treated institutionally with condemnation and were processed systematically by the supervisory authorities.

The easily available online tools and the apparent anonymity of authors on the Internet provided a space for spreading hate speech in the virtual world, which is usually overlooked by authorities. Hate speech should be strategically reduced. The line between hate speech and the human right of freedom of expression should be more precisely defined. Public figures, such as politicians, and public influencers, such as journalists, should be closely reviewed and held accountable for spreading hatred.

38. “Počeo projekt za uključivanje azilanata u hrvatsko društvo”, Index.hr, 18 June 2020, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/poceo-projekt-za-ukljucivanje-azilanata-u-hrvatsko-drustvo/2191411.aspx> (Access date: 15 October 2020).

Chronology

- **4.3.2020.** On his Facebook profile, the former presidential candidate and former MP Ivan Pernar stated that imams who advocate the theory of global Islamization support mass migrations with the aim of making Muslims the majority in Europe despite the fact that the Muslims who will become the majority will have nothing to do with Europeans, their language, culture, etc.
- **24.03.2020:** Offensive graffiti appeared on the Zagreb Mosque with insulting messages targeting present and former officials of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- **09-10.04.2020:** The city councilor of Split Martin Pauk created an event on his Facebook profile called “Throwing cracklings and bacon on the state border.”
- **13.09.2020:** Graffiti stating “Ustaše Brda 1950” and “Death to Muslims” appeared in Split.
- **23.11.2020:** There was a revolt of the inhabitants of the local community in Pula, where an Islamic cultural center is planned to be built.
- **28.11.2020:** Hate speech and an arsenal of threats were made during an attack on Muslim neighbors by locals in the area of the Municipality of Razanac because of disputed neighborhood rights.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE
**CZECH
REPUBLIC**
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The general phenomenon of Islamophobia in the Czech Republic may be analysed on four levels: Islamophobic acts, expressions of intolerance, hostile or prejudiced stereotypes, and anti-Islamic discourse. Islamophobic hate crimes are marginal and have been in decline since 2016: seven incidents have been recorded by a human rights organisation during the first three quarters of 2020. One was of a particular symbolic violence: a threat was spray-painted on the mosque in Brno in January. Public expressions of intolerance continue to be feared especially by veiled women, but few have been recorded. With the pandemic leading to limited physical contact, most expressions of public intolerance occur on the Internet. In 2020, three people were given suspended sentences for condoning last year's attacks in Christchurch. During the year in question, there was no information about similar incidents in the aftermath of the terror attacks in Paris, Nice, Dresden, and Vienna. On a positive note, mainstream media reported on those attacks in a generally dispassionate tone and largely without hostile stereotypes. The far-right SPD party, especially its leader Tomio Okamura, remains the most influential source of anti-immigrant and anti-Islam discourse. On the other hand, a sizeable and influential disinformation media scene has emerged in which the attacks were framed in a hostile way. In this milieu, a new phenomenon has been developing: a more complex version of anti-Islamic discourse. Whereas the first influential public expressions of Islamophobia originated in single-issue anti-Muslim activism, recently an "identitarian" scene has been consolidating around the myth of the Great Replacement which includes an explicit hostility to Islam, liberal elites, and the EU. In the summer of 2020, the second meeting of a small number of former politicians, far-right MPs and activists, anti-Islamists, and disinformation media editors received the official backing of Miloš Zeman, the Czech president. If his own anti-Muslim rhetoric has declined, the identitarian scene seems to thrive.

Shrnutí

Fenomén islamofobie lze analyzovat na čtyřech úrovních: jako islamofobní činy, veřejné projevy nesnášenlivosti, nepřátelské nebo předsudečné stereotypy a antiislámský diskurz. Islamofobní předsudečné činy zůstávají okrajovým jevem a od roku 2016 klesají: během prvních tří čtvrtletí roku 2020 zaznamenala specializovaná organizace pro lidská práva sedm incidentů. Jeden však byl zvláště symbolicky násilný: mešita v Brně byla v lednu posprejována násilnou hrozbou. Veřejných projevů nesnášenlivosti se nadále obávají zejména zahalené ženy, ale zaznamenáno jich bylo málo. Pandemie omezila omezený fyzický kontakt na veřejnosti a nesnášenlivost se projevovala na internetu a na sociálních sítích. V roce 2020 dostali tři lidé podmínečné tresty za schvalování loňských útoků v Christchurch. V letošním roce zatím nebyly zaznamenány žádné informace o podobných činech po džihádistickém násilí v Paříži, Nice, Drážďanech a Vídni. Pozitivní je, že mainstreamová média o těchto útocích informovala obecně nezaujatým tónem a bez nepřátelských stereotypů. Nejvlivnějším zdrojem anti-imigrantského a antiislámského diskurzu zůstává krajně pravicová strana SPD, zejména její vůdce Tomio Okamura. V České republice se také rozvinula vlivná dezinformační scéna, ve které byly útoky nepřátelsky komentovány. V tomto prostředí vzniká nový fenomén: složitější verze antiislámského diskurzu. Jestliže byl původní anti-islamistický diskurz zaměřený pouze na nepřátelství k islámu, v poslední době se „identitářská“ scéna upevňuje kolem mýtu o tzv. velké výměně, které zahrnuje výslovné nepřátelství vůči islámu, ale i liberálním elitám a EU. V létě 2020 druhé setkání malého počtu bývalých politiků, krajně pravicových politiků a aktivistů, anti-islamistů a redaktorů dezinformačních médií dostalo oficiální podpory českého prezidenta Miloše Zemana. Sám se letos zdržel protimuslímských projevů, ale že identitářská scéna se rozvíjí.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Czech Republic

Type of Regime: Parliamentary democracy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic

Ruling Parties: Since 2017, ANO 2011 (centrist, populist) and Czech Social Democratic Party (centre-left).

Opposition Parties: Civic Democratic Party (centre-right), Czech Pirate Party (liberal center), Freedom and Direct Democracy (far-right), Christian Democratic Union (centre-right), TOP 09 (centre-right), Mayors and Independents (local issues party), Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (far-left)

Last Elections: 2018 Presidential Elections: Miloš Zeman won 51.37 % of the vote in the second round. 2017 Legislative Elections: ANO 2011, 78 seats; Civic Democratic Party, 25 seats; Czech Pirate Party, 22 seats; Freedom and Direct Democracy, 22 seats; Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, 15 seats; Czech Social Democratic Party, 15 seats; Christian Democratic Union, 10 seats; TOP 09, 7 seats; Mayors and Independents, 6 seats.

Total Population: 10.65 million

Major Languages: Czech

Official Religion: No official religion/defam

Statistics on Islamophobia: Statistics available refer to hate crimes generally - Defamation of an Ethnic, (§355), or Other Group and Incitement to National and Racial Hate (§356) – and not to Islamophobic acts specifically. There were 153 recorded cases of incitement to hate as of mid-November, that is, a similar rate to 2019. There were 7 recorded prejudiced acts against Muslims.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the statistics of the Ombudswoman's office, for the period 1 January-8 June 2020, the numbers of discrimination cases were similar to 2019 (167), and most concerned access to social security.

Major Religions (% of Population): According to the 2011 census: 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 2011 census, 3,358 individuals (0.03%); according to estimates, 22,000 (0.2%).

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Centre of Muslim Communities, General Union of Muslim Students in the Czech Republic, Muslim Union

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: *In Iustitia* (collects data on hate crimes and provides legal aid), OPU (Organisation for Aid to Refugees), Czechs Help, We Help People on the Run, ROMEA, Multicultural Centre, People in Need

Far-Right Parties: Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), Trikolóra

Far-Right Movements: National Democracy, National and Social Front, Workers' Party of Social justice, Workers Youth

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No. The court decision of exclusion of a high-school student wearing a hijab from a medical secondary school in 2016 was annulled by the Supreme Court.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The year 2020 progressed under the sign of the Covid-19 pandemic. The country was under lockdowns from 12 March to 30 May, and again from 5 October onwards. In this context, public attention was concerned with the public health crisis and the consequences of the restrictions on social and economic life. Therefore, public and political activities slowed down significantly, and along with them racist and xenophobic activities. During the first two months of 2020, public debates were stirred by several issues: the killing of Qasem Soleimani, the change of the public defender of rights (ombudsman), and several court cases. All three issues were picked up by anti-Islam activists in early 2020. In October and November, however, when the terror attacks occurred in Paris, Nice, Dresden, and Vienna – in the vicinity of the Czech Republic – the country was preoccupied by the strain on the public health system, the record death toll and, to date, no significant anti-Islam acts followed.

Anti-Islam activism has several sources in the Czech Republic. The primary source had long been single-issue anti-Islam online activism. After exiting the margins and entering mainstream media and political debates in 2015-2016, the various anti-Islam formations failed to start political parties and to enter local councils or parliament, and ended up as internal conflicts. Their rhetoric has largely been “stolen” by the parliamentary far-right populists. Anti-Islam activists either published books and exited activism or adopted other issues (such as larger conspiracy theories and anti-gender activism) or morphed into neo-conservative groups that attract a large number of rightist politicians, journalists, and other public figures. If their anti-Islam activism has lost its original edge, their discourse has since entered a conservative mainstream, including a series of stereotypes about Islam and migration.

Today’s main source of anti-Islam activism is the populist far right (currently represented by the SPD party of Tomio Okamura and Trikolóra of Václav Klaus Jr) who use anti-migrant, anti-Islam, and anti-EU activism to stir the public constantly and to remain relevant. As elsewhere in Europe, the pandemic has put the government in the spotlight and deprived the far right of media space. Since early 2020, with the exception of several smaller episodes in the summer of 2020, the far right has been rather invisible.

On the other hand, the pandemic will only increase the impact of online media and networks, whose negative impact on hate speech and hate crimes was discussed in early 2020. Significantly, throughout 2020, it was possible to observe the online spreading and consolidation of a new master frame for an anti-Islam conspiracy theory, the so-called Great Replacement.

With the above exceptions, 2020 has confirmed the gradual - if slow - tackling of anti-Islam prejudice by state institutions (police, courts), the side-lining of the an-

ti-Islam agenda of far-right parties in the context of public health crisis, and also the unchecked spread of more sophisticated and complex forms of prejudice.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On 3 January, the mosque in Brno, the second-largest city in the Czech Republic, was sprayed with the threatening graffiti “Do not spread Islam in the Czech Republic or we will kill you!”. According to the leader of the local community, there had not been an attack of this kind against the mosque since 2016. After a period of calm, this attack came in a form of direct threat.¹ The community requested a police presence during Friday prayers, and the police guarded the mosque for three weeks.² The act was condemned by Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, leaders of TOP09, and the Christian democratic parties.



Figure 1: “Do not spread Islam in the Czech Republic or we will kill you”. The graffiti was sprayed on the mosque in Brno on 3 January 2020.³

1. “Na mešitě v Brně se objevil výhrůžný nápis, případ řeší policie,” 4 January 2020, https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/3020690-na-mesite-v-brne-se-objevil-vyhruzny-napis-pripad-resi-policie?fbclid=IwAR1tN5_y7oHRiCiF-99YgLOGxwXm9Yi_ViSDkcRf6duUBFIJjAhBTxXVdk
2. “Zpráva o projevech extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti na území České republiky v roce 2019,” <https://www.mvcr.cz/soubor/zprava-o-projevech-extremismu-a-predsudecne-nenavisti-na-uzemi-ceske-republiky-v-roce-2019-pdf.aspx>
3. “V Brně někdo posprejoval mešitu, šířitelům islámu hrozí zabitím,” *Idnes.cz*, 4 January 2020, <https://www.idnes.cz>

Mainstream media reminded the public of the earlier culmination of anti-Islam acts in the aftermath of the 2015 so-called refugee crisis and connected the mosque attack to the intense public debate that followed the killing of Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad.⁴ The killing was interpreted as a reckless act that could cause a larger Middle East conflagration. The Czech anti-Islam scene accused Muslims of this act – the ex-Muslim and today's main authority in the anti-Islam scene Lukáš Lhořan elaborated on this accusation on the anti-Islam portal eurabia.cz.⁵

The available state statistics refer to hate crimes generally (defamation of an Ethnic or Other Group [§355] and Incitement to National and Racial Hate [§356]) and not to Islamophobic acts specifically. There were 153 recorded cases of incitement to hate as of mid-November, which is roughly similar to the numbers of 2019. There were 64 cases of recorded hate crimes in the first 6 months of 2020.⁶ According to the Ministry of Interior's report on extremism and hate crime for 2019, there were 5 cases of violent injury and 27 cases of violence or threat of violence against a group of people; 26 cases of offense of a racist or similar character; and 46 cases of hate mongering against a race or/and ethnic group.⁷

Islamophobic incidents remain a marginal phenomenon. Most often, Roma are the victims of hate crimes. Only a fraction of recorded hate crime incidents was directed at Islam or Muslims. The In Iustitia human rights organisation specialising in helping victims of hate crimes recorded seven incidents of anti-Muslim prejudice in the first three quarters of 2020.⁸ However, one of them was particularly violent: in July, an Arab man was brutally attacked and abused for his ethnic identity by the well-known neo-Nazi Vladan Weiss. The perpetrator was sentenced to 5.5 years in prison but without taking into account the prejudiced content of the attack.⁹ According to the statistics of the Ministry of Interior, the number of hate crimes has nevertheless been steadily decreasing in the last ten years: from the high numbers of 248 (2006), 265 (2009), and 252 (2010) to 143 (2016), 153 (2017), 179 (2018), and 170 (2019). There were 144 indictments and 19 sentences concerning general hate crimes in 2020.¹⁰

idnes.cz/brno/zpravy/brno-mesita-sprej-napis.A200104_130321_brno-zpravy_bur

4. Barbora Janáková, "Nenávist na přelomu roku. V Brně někdo posprejoval mešitu, v Jičíně rozstřílel ceduli na židovském hřbitově," Deník N, 6 January 2020, <https://denikn.cz/263871/nenavist-na-prelomu-roku-v-brne-nekdo-posprejoval-mesitu-v-jicine-rozstrilel-ceduli-na-zidovskem-hrbitove/?ref=list>
5. Barbora Janáková, "Nenávist na přelomu roku. V Brně někdo posprejoval mešitu, v Jičíně rozstřílel ceduli na židovském hřbitově " Deník N, 6 January 2020, <https://denikn.cz/263871/nenavist-na-prelomu-roku-v-brne-nekdo-posprejoval-mesitu-v-jicine-rozstrilel-ceduli-na-zidovskem-hrbitove/?ref=list>
6. "Projevy extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti. Souhrnná situační zpráva. 1. pololetí roku 2020." Czech Ministry of Interior. <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ctvrtdetni-zpravy-o-extremismu-odboru-bezpecnostni-politiky-mv.aspx>
7. "Zpráva o extremismu na území České republiky v roce 2019," Czech Ministry of Interior. <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/zprava-o-extremismu-na-uzemi-ceske-republiky-v-roce-2019.aspx>
8. "Zpráva o předsudečném násilí", In Iustitia, <https://www.in-ius.cz/ke-stazeni/zprava-o-predsudecnem-nasilii/>
9. Kateřina Čopjaková, „V Brně násilí z nenávisti oficiálně neexistuje, připadám si tam jako v 90. letech,“ 20 November 2020, <http://www.hatefree.cz/blo/rozhovory/3911-kalibova-brno>
10. "Statistické přehledy kriminality za rok 2020", <https://www.policie.cz/clanek/statisticke-prehledy-kriminality-za-rok-2020.aspx>

Islamophobic incidents have also been declining after a peak in the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016.¹¹ There might, in fact, be a real decrease as a result of the fact that Islam has not been presented as the number one public threat for some time. Another explanation is the incapacity or unwillingness of state prosecutors to classify criminal acts as crimes motivated by hate because of the legal and practical difficulty to impute motivations to crimes such as vandalism.¹²

Muslims, just behind Roma, remain the most frequent victims of public expressions of hate speech. According to a lawyer of In Iustitia human rights organisation, especially women wearing the hijab have practically all experienced bullying, verbal abuse, or discrimination.¹³ In Iustitia has recorded one incident involving Islamophobic hate speech directed at a veiled woman at a supermarket in the second part of 2020.¹⁴ The fear of discrimination, of being verbally attacked or, at the very least, receiving displeasing remarks accompanies many veiled women when they move through public space. According to the testimony widely covered by mainstream media, many veiled women prefer to take private cars to avoid public transport, avoid bathing in full-body bathing suits, or cover their heads with baseball caps. There are around 1,000 Muslims in the Czech Republic who wear a veil.¹⁵ Because of few but recurring incidents, Islamic communities tend to keep a low profile in fear of reactions.¹⁶ Still, representatives of Muslim communities have not recorded any other major incident this year apart from the graffiti on the mosque in Brno.¹⁷

Employment

As stated in previous reports on Islamophobia in the Czech Republic, there is no data available on employment of Muslims in particular, and there is no indication of a discrimination complaint made by a Muslim. The Muslims who have lived in the Czech Republic for a long time are well integrated socially. Asylum seekers or newly arrived migrants who have weak language skills or little local knowledge are at a greater risk. There is a network of state-sponsored Integration Centres that offer language courses, legal advice, and personal assistance to legal migrants from outside the EU. They em-

11. Karel Černý, "Anatomie české islamofobie v éře migrační krize", *Lidé a města* 21/3, 2019
12. Martin Štorkán, "Počet stíhaných případů zločinů z nenávisti klesl. Žalobci často jedou na jistotu," kritizuje právníčka " , iRozhlas, 18 June 2020, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/trestne-ciny-zlocin-z-nenavisti-rasova-nenavist-rasismus_2006180644_sto
13. Barbora Janáková, "Nenávist na přelomu roku. V Brně někdo posprejoval mešitu, v Jičíně rozstřílel ceduli na židovském hřbitově," *Deník N*, 6 January 2020, <https://denikn.cz/263871/nenavist-na-prelomu-roku-v-brne-nekdo-posprejoval-mesitu-v-jicine-rozstrelil-ceduli-na-zidovskem-hrbitove/?ref=list>
14. "Zpráva o předsudčném násilí", In Iustitia, <https://www.in-ius.cz/ke-stazeni/zprava-o-predsudcnem-nasilii/>
15. Jana Ustohalová, "Největší terč hned po Romech. České muslimky mění ze strachu šátky za kšiltovky", *Deník N*, 1 March 2019, <https://denikn.cz/81604/nejvetsi-terc-hned-po-romech-ceske-muslimky-meni-ze-strachu-satky-za-ksiltovky/?ref=in>
16. Lukáš Houdek, "„Některí dřívější odpůrci brněnské mešity jsou dnes naši přátelé," říká Muneeb Alrawi " 5 hate Free Culture, October 2020, <http://www.hatefree.cz/blo/rozhovory/3735-alrawi?fbclid=IwAR1mhHI5aoSKo-6fEi80eX2267D7cTR-Om-ma0FnWRq3goxR6LmD1ko-OLfg>
17. Personal communication, October 2020

ploy Arabic speakers who attend to the needs of people dealing with administration and the labour market. There are several organisations offering free legal advice to asylum seekers and private Christian groups that support Arab refugee families in their job seeking and in the education needs of their children.

Education

Schools are not shielded from wider social trends such as the spread of anti-Islam conspiracy theories. *The Teachers' Journal* published a long interview with the leading anti-Islam figure Petr Hampl under the title “Europe Is Surely in the Process of Islamisation” in January 2020.¹⁸ (Fig. 2) Hampl is a sociologist who completed his doctorate in 2015 and who is the main proponent of the so-called replacement theory in the Czech Republic. Hampl has warned against an “Islamisation” of Czech schools that he described as “the greatest cultural change since the arrival of Slavic people on our territory.”¹⁹ Because the *Teachers' Journal* is an independent weekly widely subscribed by school headmasters, the interview provoked a reaction by the respected education NGO Eduin and a media debate. Eduin expressed its regret that a specialised journal had joined the “politically incorrect” trend of the disinformation media on account of anti-Islam and also anti-climate change attitudes.²⁰

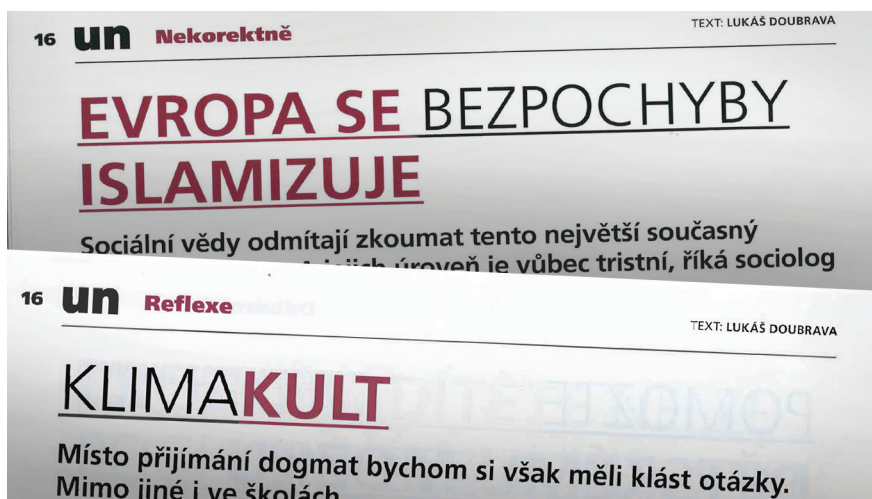


Figure 2: “Europe Is Surely in the Process of Islamisation”. The title of an interview with Petr Hampl in *The Teacher's Journal* (January 2020).

18. Martina Heroldová, “Učitelké noviny daly prostor protimuslmskému aktivistovi i dezinformacím o klimatu”, *Aktuálně, cz*, 24. January 2020, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/ucitelske-noviny-daly-prostor-protimuslmskem-aktivistovi/r-3f7212d83b5a11ea84c6ac1f6b220ee8/>
19. Jan Moláček, “Nenápadné Učitelké noviny: rozhovor s islamofobem, obhajoba chemtrails i špička obřího byznysového ledovce”, *Deník N*, 23 January 2020, <https://denikn.cz/275612/nenapadne-ucitelske-noviny-rozhovor-s-islamofobem-obhajoba-chemtrails-i-spicka-obriho-byznysoveho-ledovce/?ref=tit>
20. “Tisková zpráva: Týdeník pro učitele dal prostor extremistickým názorům”, *EDUin.cz*, 16 January 2020, <https://www.eduin.cz/tiskove-zpravy/tiskova-zprava-tydenik-pro-ucitele-dal-prostor-extremistickym-nazorum/>

Several initiatives have been working on giving teachers access to teaching materials and general sources of information on, among others, Islam, multicultural societies, and conflicts in the Middle East. The NGO People in Need has a programme entitled “One World in Schools” that brings debates around human rights films to secondary schools throughout the country and regularly updates related teaching material. Individual teachers invite Islam experts for lectures on current issues. The closing of schools has pushed many such initiatives online, depriving both teachers and pupils of meaningful interaction with new knowledge and current events. The long-term effect of the 2020 lockdowns may be the strengthening of the above-mentioned tendency towards opinion bubbles and conspiracy theories.

Politics

The populist far-right party SPD has been classified as the “most influential subject inciting hate in the Czech society” in the “2019 Report on Extremism in the Czech Republic” published by the Ministry of the Interior in 2020.²¹ The SPD gained 10% in the 2017 parliamentary elections and secured several influential parliamentary positions, including the position of the vice-president of the assembly. It has used its position in the parliament to convene anti-migrant and anti-Islam events. In January 2020, the SPD again raised its hostile position to the Islamic veil during a debate about the selection of a new ombudsman. In reaction to the parting of the former ombudswoman Anna Šabatová, Tomio Okamura criticised her for defending the veiled medical school student in parliament. A controversy ensued, where rightist and populist MPs from the SPD, ANO, and Trikolóra faced criticism from the Pirate Party.²² In 2018, the SPD had proposed a bill to ban head covering and the niqab, referring to similar bans in Europe.²³ The proposals were not even discussed, but the SPD keeps the matter alive through various controversies. The subsequent lockdown limited public appearances and the popularity of the SPD has been in decline.

In October 2020, municipal and senate elections were held despite the rising Covid-19 cases. The elections brought a sensible setback to the ruling parties and proved that migration-related fear mongering no longer paid off. In two instances, a centre-right politician (Petr Bendů, ODS) and a centre-left one (Jan Groins, ČSSD) tried to use the issue of migration to win electoral votes but in both cases failed to get elected.

21. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/2019-report-on-extremism-in-the-czech-republic>

22. “Hádka o šátky. Zákaz zahalování by zrušil i závoje nevěst, řekl Pirát Píkal.
Zdroj: https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/zakaz-zahalovani-snemovna-spor-pikal-okamura-sabatova.A200123_145916_domaci_kop”, Idues.cz, 23 January 2020, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/zakaz-zahalovani-snemovna-spor-pikal-okamura-sabatova.A200123_145916_domaci_kop

23. “Hnutí SPD chce zakázat zahalování obličeje na veřejnosti. Za porušení by hrozila až desetitisícová pokuta”, iRozhlas.cz, 18 November 2018, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/zakaz-zahalovani-obliceje-spd-pokuta_1811180630_dok

On the other hand, outgoing or former politicians continue to make use of their public notoriety and to keep up their public relevance by continued reference to the migration issue. President Miloš Zeman, who introduced anti-Islam activists to the public domain back in 2015, has largely been silent during the past year, probably due to age-related exhaustion. In the summer of 2020, he officially supported the gathering of neo-conservative, xenophobe conspiracy theorists (more below). The former president Václav Klaus, who employs many of those figures, resurfaced on the national holiday of 28 October – without a face mask. In a subsequent interview, he downplayed the severity of the pandemic and said that “face mask-wearing people are migrant welcomers.”²⁴ In this manner, he linked two anti-systemic sectors of public opinion: those who demonise migration and those who reject Covid-19 as a conspiracy and refuse to wear the mandatory mask. It is not surprising that migration has ended up linked to Covid-19 by similar conspiracy theory logic.

The Czech Republic continues to refuse to give humanitarian asylum to underage migrants from Greek refugee camps, despite local preparedness, the willingness of Czech organisations,²⁵ and the humanitarian disaster on the islands. In January, Minister of Interior Jan Hamáček justified the refusal by saying that the Greek lists contain mostly young Afghans and Pakistanis of 16 to 18 years of age who are considered a security risk by the Czech government.²⁶

Media

Two instances of Islam-related violence (the killing of Qasem Soleimani and the terror attacks in France and Austria) revealed an increasing division in the media landscape. Whereas mainstream media report in a largely dispassionate and rational way, the so-called alternative scene promotes an increasingly coherent conspiracy theory interpretation of current crises. It has not been always so. Mainstream printed and online journals, and TV shows have made a long journey since the sensationalist and stereotyping coverage of the so-called migrant crisis. Today’s discussion of Macron’s Islam policies and the Vienna shooting may be largely classified as correct and dispassionate, albeit with occasional stereotypes, lack of depth, or intentional openness to controversial opinions. Investigative, analytical, and critical outlets (such as *Respekt*, *Hlídací Pes*, *Deník N*, *A2Larm*, etc.) usually show more nuance than the mainstream media, and even more than partly sensationalist outlets such as *Reflex*, but the difference is not huge.

24. “Rouškaři jsou samozřejmě vítací migrantů, míní Klaus. Sám si roušku 28. října nenasadí”, *Novinky.cz*, 14 November 2020, <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/clanek/rouskari-jsou-samozrejme-vitaci-migrantu-mini-klaus-sam-si-rousku-28-rijna-nenasadi-40342272>

25. “Fakta a čísla k současnému apelu na přijetí opuštěných dětí z uprchlických táborů.” *Amnesty.cz*, 25 May 2020, <https://www.amnesty.cz/zprava/4821/debata-o-prijeti-nedoprovazenych-detskyh-uprchliku-z-reckych-taboru>

26. Lída Rakušanová, “Česko nezletilé uprchlíky nepřijme, ať to stojí cokoliv”, *iRozhlas*, 18 April 2020, https://www.irozhlas.cz/komentare/koronavirus-pandemie-uprchlici-uprchlicka-krize-evropa-evropska-unie-solidarita_2004180629_mim

On the other hand, there is a whole “alternative scene” of websites that repost, translate, and sometimes produce news, often linked to “disinformation” webs such as the Russia-based Sputnik or the Czech website Aeronet. The list keeps changing and currently involves the following websites: pravyprostor.cz, pravdive.cz, megazpravy.cz, pokec24.cz, svobodnenoviny.et, www.svobodny-svet.cz, dfenz-cz.com, prvnizpravy.cz, cz.sputniknews.com, and the longest-serving eurabia.cz. The web of mutually reposting platforms is presided by aeronet.cz and parlamentnilisty.cz. Especially the latter, an outlet partly owned by the entrepreneur in the gambling business and former senator Ivo Valenta, produces its own content but gives space to so-called alternative news.

Today’s outright anti-Islam content is almost entirely driven by such “alternative media”. The “alternative scene” spreads conspiracy theory-based readings of current events, involving anti-EU and pro-Russian positions, hostility to migration, multiculturalism, vaccination, liberalism, feminism, etc. Islam and migration no longer stand alone. They are now part of larger conspiracy theories. The Great Replacement is frequently cited. Originating in France, it purports that global liberal elites favour and organise Muslim migration to Europe in order to destroy European culture and better control their capitalist ventures. Several of the above-mentioned outlets bring master thinkers from Europe to the Czech public (e.g. Eric Zemmour) or give space to Czech proponents of such theories (Benjamin Kuras, Petr Hampl). They spread fake news such as that the Muslim Brotherhood helped Biden win the U.S. elections, or that Muslims are taking over power in France.²⁷ They give space to SPD politicians such as Radim Fiala. Foreign inspiration has given a unifying discursive frame to different positions: from anti-Islam, anti-liberal, anti-EU, anti-globalist to anti-feminist and pro-Russian. According to the Ministry of Interior’s report on extremism, “The pandemic was described as a pretext for disguising migration from Turkey to the Greek islands or as a secret tool for restricting personal freedoms and establishing a ‘new world order’.”²⁸

Unlike four years ago, anti-Islam discourse no longer dwells on purported flaws of Islam as a religion (such as accusing Prophet Muhammad of perversity), but it comfortably sits within a larger political and ideological frame of conspiracist illiberalism. Whereas instances of open anti-Muslim racism have significantly decreased in Czech public discourse, a more subtle form of discriminatory discourse is gaining ground. This “identitarian” discourse includes a contempt and hostility towards Islam, among other hostilities.

27. “Sociolog pohrozil: Muslimská komunita přebírá moc. Po ulicích chodí muslimové se samopaly a mohou si dojít pro kohokoliv. Proto je potřeba...”, 5 November 2020, Parlamentní listy, <http://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/rozhovory/Sociolog-pohrozil-Muslimska-komunita-prebira-moc-Po-ulicich-chodi-muslimove-se-samopaly-a-mohou-si-dojit-pro-kohokoliv-Proto-je-potreba-642940>

28. Projevy extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti. Souhrnná situační zpráva. 1. pololetí roku 2020. <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ctvrtletni-zpravy-o-extremismu-odboru-bezpecnostni-politiky-mv.aspx>

In between the mostly dispassionate mainstream and the conspiracist “alternative media”, there are online servers that cannot be classified as alternative but that provide space for a mainstream version of Islam-sceptical discourse. The conservative, government-critical Echo 24 publishes anti-Islam articles such as “How Islam Conquers France Step by Step. With the Help of the Left”²⁹ based on selective arguments. On aktualne.cz, the public interest lawyer David Záhumenský keeps a blog dedicated to unmasking “political Islam”, with posts such as “Almost All of the World Is Affected [Infected] by Islam, Not Just France”.³⁰ During the first pandemic wave, he called face masks “facilitators of political Islam”.³¹ Islam-sceptical authors like Záhumenský do not express an open or violent hostility to Islam but develop intense scepticism towards Islam based on selective argumentation, similar to French *néo-laïcité* positions. Their higher degree of factual knowledge and argumentation skills make them trusted channels for stereotypes and biases, and ultimately give credence to conspiracies.

In the first half of 2020, the Internet “continued to be flooded with anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim contributions” and “refugees were identified as vectors of the virus”,³² according to the Ministry of Interior’s report on extremism. The 2019 report, which was published in 2020, considers that disinformation media have become an influential tool for spreading hatred.³³ There are measurable consequences to widespread beliefs in conspiracy theories. According to a poll commissioned by the Ministry of Interior,³⁴ 29% of respondents trust the disinformation portals; 50% believe that the “EU organises a migrant wave from non-European countries”; and 60% believe that the “Muslim community in the Czech Republic poses as serious a threat as Muslim communities in Germany or France”.³⁵ A cool reading of this polling question will detect a problem (the implication that Muslim communities pose a threat). In the case of the Ministry of Interior this bias is hardly an intention and rather a matter of discursive bias: the Ministry of the Interior has repeatedly refuted any danger coming from the Czech Muslim community and has made efforts towards a bal-

29. “Jak islám krok po kroku dobývá Francii. S pomocí levice” Echo 24, 28 Januray 2020, https://echo24.cz/a/SgEec/jak-islam-krok-po-kroku-dobyva-francii-s-pomoci-levice?fbclid=IwAR3P5142HMWbThaIG5W2wflz-vYfLL_XTo1QGtforTtGzyOL-MEergxVVOV0

30. Vendula a David Záhumenský, “Téměř celý svět je zasažený islámem, nejen Francie”, 21 July 2020, <http://blog.aktualne.cz/blogy/david-zahumensky.php?itemid=37342>

31. Vendula a David Záhumenský, “Burky4all aneb je Evropa podroušená?” 15 May 2020, <http://blog.aktualne.cz/blogy/david-zahumensky.php?itemid=36854>

32. Projevy extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti. Souhrnná situační zpráva. 1. pololetí roku 2020, Ministry of Interior, <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ctvrtletni-zpravy-o-extremismu-odboru-bezpecnostni-politiky-mv.aspx>

33. “Zpráva o extremismu na území České republiky v roce 2019”, Ministry of Interior, <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/zprava-o-extremismu-na-uzemi-ceske-republiky-v-roce-2019.aspx>

34. Lukáš Prchal, “Dezinformační weby skoro nikdo nezná, jejich smyšlenky ale ovlivňují většinu národa, zjistilo vnitro”, Deník N, 9 June 2020, <https://denikn.cz/376014/dezinformacni-weby-skoro-nikdo-nezna-jejich-smyslenky-ale-ovlivnuji-vetsinu-naroda-zjistilo-vnitro/>

35. Lukáš Prchal, “Dezinformační weby skoro nikdo nezná, jejich smyšlenky ale ovlivňují většinu národa, zjistilo vnitro”, Deník N, 9 June 2020, <https://denikn.cz/376014/dezinformacni-weby-skoro-nikdo-nezna-jejich-smyslenky-ale-ovlivnuji-vetsinu-naroda-zjistilo-vnitro/>

anced assessment of radicalisation risks. In its 2020 report, the ministry suggested that Islamophobia leads to an increased social “isolation” of the Muslim communities. The report stated, “Extremists from both the majority and the Muslim minority contribute to the fact that whole groups are a priori perceived as at risk, dangerous and extremist. An environment of mistrust, which also comes from hateful content on social networks, is a breeding ground for radicalisation.”³⁶

Justice System

The Ombudsman Office registered just one court case related to religious discrimination. Most of the 90 discrimination cases dealt with in the Czech courts between 2015 and 2019 concerned labour discrimination - religious discrimination cases are extremely rare.³⁷ The report mentions the Supreme Court’s decision to reject a ban of the hijab in classes as discriminatory.

In 2020, a new ombudsman was elected to the office: Stanislav Křeček, former deputy ombudsman. He vowed to continue the work of public defender of rights, but without so much focus on anti-discrimination. He was a candidate nominated to the office by President Miloš Zeman – known for his anti-Roma and anti-Muslim rhetoric, and his cold relations with the former ombudswoman Dr. Šabatová.³⁸ Several of his early public statements have caused public outcry. In an interview for the server Seznam.cz, he stated, “Europe is being occupied by Muslims, they want to replace us, they want Muslim states and Sharia law.” The statement was subsequently widely shared by far-right parties such as SPD and alternative media.³⁹ In an interview to *Respekt* weekly he claimed, “Muslims do not recognise the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They reject it and have their own, in which human rights are subject to sharia,” and went on to reiterate the replacement conspiracy.⁴⁰ Křeček expresses stereotypes that are widespread in the Czech society - taking the opposite stance to his predecessor in the office. After assuming office, he nevertheless spoke against the abuse of the freedom of speech, especially on the Internet; called for precision in the definition of hate speech; and for making the recently increased efforts to prevent hate speech by the police, the Ministry of Justice, and the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic more effective.⁴¹

36. Zpráva o projevech extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti na území České republiky v roce 2019, Praha 2020, p. 15

37. “Jak české soudy rozhodují o diskriminaci”, 1 October 2020, <https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/tiskove-zpravy-2020/jak-ceske-soudy-rozhoduji-o-diskriminaci/>

38. Jana Ustohalová, “Křeček jako zástupce ombudsmanky sdílel hoaxy, zastával se Babiše a zlehčoval diskriminaci”, 15 January 2020, <https://denikn.cz/271377/kreckek-jako-zastupce-ombudsmanky-sdilel-hoaxy-zastaval-se-babise-a-zlehcoval-diskriminaci?ref=list>

39. <https://www.facebook.com/hnutispd/posts/2997185510312274>

40. Marek Švehla, “Stanislav Křeček: dnes se nazývá rasismem kdeco”, 12 February 2020, <https://www.respekt.cz/tydenik/2017/2/dnes-se-nazyva-rasismem-kdeco>

41. “Nenávist na internetu nelze „hájit“ svobodou slova”, 8. June 2020, <https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/tiskove-zpravy-2020/nenavist-na-internetu-nelze-hajit-svobodou-slova/>

In 2020, two prominent cases involving Muslims ended. First, the court recognised an additional compensation of 202,000 CZK to Vladimír Sáška, the former head of the Islamic community in Prague, for unlawful prosecution. In 2014, Sáška was accused of supporting and promoting a movement aimed at suppressing human rights and freedoms after he published a translation of *The Bases of Tawheed* by Bilal Philips. Sáška was cleared of all charges in 2019 after the Supreme Court decided that Salafism was not a movement but a conservative theological school of thought. In total, Sáška was paid 380,000 CZK (15,500 Euro) in compensation. Sáška had asked for 10 million CZK (250,000 Euro) and a public apology.⁴²

Second, the long-drawn “hijab case” ended in 2020 after Ayan Jammal Ahmednuurová, a refugee from Somalia, dropped the charges. She was not formally enrolled in a secondary medical school in Prague on account of her hijab in 2013. The then ombudswoman Dr. Šabatová defended the student, stating that the school had committed a discriminating act. Ahmednuurová sued the school in 2016. She lost her first and second court trial in 2017. In 2019, the Supreme Court annulled both court decisions, stating, “The applicant did not infringe the norms of social conduct, including clothing, by using a Muslim headscarf, since covering hair generally does not provoke outrage; it is common for women not only outside but also indoors. The fact that wearing the hijab is a foreign element in our society does not mean a violation of the norms of social behaviour, ethics or morality”.⁴³ Ahmednuurová also sued the medical school for 60,000 CZK (2,200 Euro) and an apology. The hearing caused a lot of controversy. Her accusation was first rejected by the local court, then the Supreme Court annulled the rejection, stating clearly that it is possible to wear a hijab in school as a matter of individual freedom of religion. The highest court also gave a redefinition of the consequences of the secular nature of the state. Whereas the lower court argued that separation of state and religion secures the right to profess a faith and the right to be without a religious confession and the right not to be exposed to religious symbols, the highest court argued a hijab ban has not been justified in legal terms and that the pupil was the object of indirect discrimination in her quest for education.⁴⁴

42. “Za nezákonné stíhání kvůli Základům tawhídu vysoudil arabista Sáška dalších 200 tisíc”, Novinky.cz, 17 August 2020, https://www.novinky.cz/krimi/clanek/za-nezakonne-stihani-kvuli-zakladum-tavhidu-vysoudil-arabista-saska-dalsich-200-tisic-40333603?fbclid=IwAR29r4oyzrbGe1-DDV4n11-bKqbj8smiaNga9PJP-BemJ70WXzk_ULi-Bbo#seq_no=4&source=hp&dop_ab_variant=400520&dop_req_id=UVpO1Hx-CYNF-202008171445&dop_source_zone_name=novinky.szhnp.box&utm_campaign=&utm_medium=z-boxiku&utm_source=www.seznam.cz

43. Irena Válková, “Analýza rozhodnutí NS v kauze „hidžáb“: ČR musí akceptovat a tolerovat náboženský pluralismus”, *Ceska-justice.cz*, 10. 12. 2019, <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2019/12/analiza-rozhodnuti-ns-v-kauze-hidzab-cr-musi-akceptovat-a-tolerovat-nabozensky-pluralismus/>

44. Rozhodování českých soudů o diskriminačních sporech 2015–2019. Výzkum veřejného ochránce práv 2020. Úřad ombudsmana, Brno 2020, p. 90.

Ahmednuurová eventually dropped the charges in 2020. According to her lawyer, the reason was her exhaustion from continuous attacks and hostility, and the difficulty to secure accommodation and employment.⁴⁵ Ahmednuurová is grateful for her asylum and does not want her case to be misused for hate-mongering against refugees and people of different faiths. The school appealed against her dropping the charges.⁴⁶

Internet

The most widespread Islamophobic violence takes the form of acts of hate speech and incitement to hate on the Internet. Because of the increase in the number and virulence of online threats, online hate speech has been actively dealt with by the public office of the Ombudsman. Under Dr. Anna Šabatová, ombudswoman until February 2020, the office focused on online hate speech and discrimination starting in 2016, directly after the increase in hate speech in the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis and the subsequent normalisation of public expressions of Islamophobia and xenophobia. After a seminar on online hate speech in the Czech Parliament in October 2019, Šabatová published a report on hate speech on the Internet motivated by stereotypes and prejudices against a person's colour, nation, and ethnic group, sex or sexual identity, religion, age, or health status that included detailed recommendations for Czech institutions.⁴⁷ The recommendations were based on an earlier report on 49 court decisions in matters of hate speech from 2019 that stated that most hate speech cases were acts directed against the Roma minority (49%) and against Muslims (23%) on Facebook (83%).⁴⁸ Only a small number of online hate speech is prosecuted and perpetrators usually leave with suspended sentences – oftentimes because they are otherwise law-abiding citizens or because they are not aware, or claim not to be aware, of the severity of such acts.⁴⁹

In 2020, there were four verdicts against individuals who condoned the violent attack on the Christchurch mosque in 2019. The three men and one woman were convicted to suspended sentences between 2 and 3 years. One of them was a 31-year-old sympathiser of the far-right Workers' Party who shared a video about the Christchurch attacks with the commentary "Well done". The other three defendants expressed re-

45. Jan Moláček, "Mýty kolem „šátkové kauzy“ jsou opět v kurzu. O čem soudy opravdu rozhodly?" Deník N, 20 February 2020, <https://denikn.cz/296269/myty-kolem-satkove-kauzy-jsou-opet-v-kurzu-o-cem-soudy-opravdu-rozhodly?ref=list>

46. <https://denikn.cz/296269/myty-kolem-satkove-kauzy-jsou-opet-v-kurzu-o-cem-soudy-opravdu-rozhodly?ref=list>

47. "Nenávistné projevy na internetu – výzkum a doporučení", ochrance.cz, 22. May 2020, <https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/tiskove-zpravy-2020/nenavistne-projevy-na-internetu-vyzkum-a-doporuceni/>

48. "Nenávistné projevy na internetu. Kvantitativní obsahová analýza soudních rozhodnutí, Výzkum Veřejného ochránce práv". Ombudsman Office, Brno, 2019

49. Jana Ustohalová, "Kdo píše nenávistné komentáře? Dosud netrestaný muž z majority, nejčastěji vyhrožuje Romům a muslimům", Deník N, 13 January 2020, <https://denikn.cz/265818/kdo-pise-nenavistne-komentare-dosud-netrestany-muz-z-majority-nejcasteji-vyhrozuje-romum-a-muslimum/?ref=list>

gret or said that they have been misunderstood.⁵⁰ Eight other motions to indict for condoning the attacks in Christchurch, Breivik's attacks in Norway, and attacks on Czech soldiers in Afghanistan were handed to the courts.⁵¹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The most influential figure in spreading anti-Islam positions is Tomio Okamura, the leader of the far-right SPD. The party has a single consistent line, the rejection of migration, with a related hostility to Islam. Okamura is a proponent of anti-Islam laws in the parliament and keeps posting hostile messages concerning migrants and Muslims, and reposts from Matteo Salvini on his Facebook account (263k likes) and the SPD website. The SPD has made use of anti-migration and anti-Islam rhetoric developed by single-issue anti-Islam activists (such as M. Konvička, P. Hampl, and E. Hřindová) who have not managed to transform their momentary popularity into electoral success. Besides populist co-optation, Facebook has several times closed the platform of the anti-Islam movement IVČRN (We do Not Want Islam in the Czech Republic) and only smaller groups remain active.

Since 2019, a new scene began to form. Many former anti-Islam activists and former politicians, and current far-right and extremist figures started to gather around a “patriotic” theme at a “Patriotic Meeting” (*Vlastenecké setkání*) in Příčovy in Central Bohemia. In 2020, several figures were present: the “anti-Islamist” Martin Konvička, as he is called by mainstream media⁵²; SPD MPs (Tomio Okamura, Jiří Kobza); several figures from the disinformation scene, e.g. Petr Hájek (Protiproud.cz, a secretary of former president Václav Klau), Petr Žantovský (journalist, host, close to Hájek); the conservative, anti-Islam publicists Benjamin Kuras and Petr Hampl; the Catholic fundamentalist Michal Semín; Presidential Spokesman Jiří Ovcáček; figures from the paramilitary Home Defence; former diplomats and physicians; a Czech émigré; and Alternative for Germany (AfD) member Jan Bartoň. The “patriotic scene” includes the “Association of Friends of a White Heterosexual Man”, the Catholic D.O.S.T., and the Institute of Vaclav Klaus. The “patriotic scene” has absorbed former anti-Islam activists into a larger narrative of a decline of the West, an anti-EU stance, and conspiracy theories involving the so-called Great Replacement, anti-vaccination movement, and hostility to globalised elites, “neo-Marxism”, and feminism.

50. “Pěkně provedená práce, napsal muž ke zprávě o útoku na mešitu. Dostal podmínku”, *Aktualne.cz*, 8. July 2020, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/dobra-prace-napsal-muz-ke-zprave-o-teroristickem-utoku/r-d718223ec-0f811ea842f0cc47ab5f122/>

51. “Projevy extremismu a předsudečné nenávisli. Souhrnná situační zpráva. 1. pololetí roku 2020.” <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ctvrtletni-zpravy-o-extremismu-odboru-bezpecnostni-politiky-mv.aspx>

52. Jana Klímová, “Prezident zařadil kontroverzní setkání vlastenců, kde vystoupí členové SPD nebo KSČM”, *Ihned.cz*, 8 July 2020, <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-66787940-prezident-zastitil-kontroverzni-setkani-vlastencu-kde-vystoupi-clenove-spd-nebo-kscm>

If many conspiracists are former or failed politicians, they nevertheless represent anti-system positions that have helped them succeed in getting close to a parliamentary party (SPD) and gain political leverage, i.e. in the Supervisory Board of public media. Also, unlike last year, President Miloš Zeman accepted to endorse the meeting.⁵³ They, thus, represent the far-right part of the political scene intent to copy European populist radical right such as the AfD and Lega Nord.

A look at anti-Islam literature in the Czech Republic presents a similar picture of broadening agendas. Until recently, there was one dedicated anti-Islam resource centre: the multilingual Internet platform Centre for Research of Political Islam (CSPI), which propagates the books of the American anti-Islam activist Bill Warner.⁵⁴ The CSPI is a registered non-profit organisation in the Czech Republic and has a Czech director, but publishes in all Eastern European languages. Recently, the ex-Muslim convert and current anti-Islam publicist Lukáš Lhoťan created a local resource centre: an e-shop that sells all available Czech and Slovak anti-Islam literature, from Lhoťan's and Konvička's works to those of Bill Warner.⁵⁵ Besides, Lhoťan's e-shop also sells foreign books translated into Czech: Michel Houellebecq's *Soumission* (Submission), Renaud Camus's *The Great Replacement*, Richard B. Spencer's *Blogging the Qur'an*. He also sells books by Petr Hampl (*The Road from Serfdom*) and Jan Keller, a renowned sociologist and former MEP who has embraced far-right views on Islam and Europe. Hence, not only is there a market for anti-Islam publications, but anti-Islam has been incorporated into a larger illiberal train of thought.

Concerning violent-prone far-right groups, the Ministry of Interior report on extremism in 2019 concluded that all three existing paramilitary groups – aiming to “defend Czech traditional values against migrants and Muslims” – were rather small and stagnant structures. While their online presence is quite substantial, their members are estimated at some 200 people, mostly retired men, and their membership is in decline.⁵⁶

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There are several long-term initiatives that specifically aim at countering intolerance. For example, the project Hate Free Culture that was started with the aid of

53. Petr Bittner, “Vlastenci v Příčovech podruhé: Capslocková conference”, Deník Referendum, 19 August 2020, <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/31551-vlastenci-v-pricovech-podruhe-capslockova-konference>

54. <https://www.cspii.org/cz/>

55. <http://www.lukaslhotan.cz/>

56. “Projevy extremismu a předsudečné nenávisťi. Souhrnná situační zpráva. 1. pololetí roku 2020.”, <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ctvrtletni-zpravy-o-extremismu-odboru-bezpecnostni-politiky-mv.aspx>, p. 11

the Czech government and Norwegian funds continued to promote a civilised debate on issues that divide society. Among others, the project's website shares inspiring stories of Muslims living in the Czech Republic, such as the stories of refugees who have started successful businesses,⁵⁷ media projects,⁵⁸ etc. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Hate Free Culture could not continue public intercultural events. Another initiative, the Scouting Institute planned "intercultural meetings", including several dedicated to Islam.⁵⁹ The cultural festivals "Half-Moon above Prague" and "Arabfest" in Plzeň regularly present Islam-related themes. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organises a public conference on intercultural and interfaith dialogue annually; the conference is organised in collaboration with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.⁶⁰ This year's edition featured religion's responses to the pandemic. The student initiative Encyclopaedia of Migration presents facts and analyses of the Muslim world and beyond.⁶¹

The Ombudsman's Office is active in preventing hate speech on the Internet through seminars, leaflets, and work with schools. It was involved in a high-school "Olympics of Human Rights" dealing, among others, with hate speech on the Internet.⁶²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2020 saw a decline in Islamophobic activity and the side-lining of the anti-Islam agenda of far-right parties in light of the public health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, 2020 also witnessed the unchecked spread of more sophisticated and complex forms of prejudice. Gradually, if slowly, state institutions (police, courts) are tackling anti-Islam prejudice, assisted by an increasingly professional civil society and a growing number of civic initiatives. If outright anti-Islam attacks are less numerous, diffused public animosity against Muslims has not subsided. The negative trend has to do with a broadening of an identitarian, neo-nationalist agenda that combines anti-Islam prejudice with hostility to liberalism, the EU, feminism, etc. The myth of the Great Replacement has been imported from France and diffused itself in the so-called alternative media.

57. Kateřina Gamal Richterová, "Alaadinovy nakládačky jsou hit! Syřan pěstuje na Moravě zeleninu, vyvinul unikátní výměnné aplikace", Hate Free Culture, 11 November 2020, <http://www.hatefree.cz/blo/clanky/3776-alaadinova-farma>

58. Lukáš Houdek, "Egyptský youtuber natáčí populární videa o Praze v arabštině. „Je můj nový domov,“ říká", 19 October 2020, Hate Free Culture, <http://www.hatefree.cz/blo/rozhovory/3750-mohamed-akrab>

59. "Interkulturní setkání islám, 1 April 2020, <https://www.citybee.cz/poznani/:akce/100970-interkulturni-setkani-islam/o-projektu>

60. "Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue: Enriching Future Communities," <https://www.iir.cz/article/save-the-date-intercultural-and-interfaith-dialogue-enriching-future-communities>

61. <https://www.encyclopediaofmigration.org/en/>

62. "Zpráva veřejného ochránce práv o činnosti za I. čtvrtletí roku 2020" 25 May 2020, <https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/tiskove-zpravy-2020/cinnost-ombudsmana-v-1-ctvrtleti-2020/>

Recommendations:

- To tackle further Internet-based hate speech with youth education and justice reforms.
- To continue to embed Islamophobia within the larger problem of racist activities and not to single it out.
- To continue to develop civic initiatives that foster communication across class, ethnic, regional, and age divides.
- To monitor and understand identitarian and neo-nationalist agendas.
- To involve Muslim communities in public activities.
- To work within EU-wide structures (Amnesty International, ENAR, ODIHR).
- To support female activism of all sorts and to include Muslimas.
- To support general knowledge and acquaintance with Islam and its place in Europe.

Chronology

- **03.01.2020:** Graffiti attack on Brno mosque.
- **23.01.2020:** Debate about the Islamic veil ban in the parliament prompted by the far-right SPD.
- **27.04.2020:** The asylum seeker who sued a medical school for compensation after being rejected because of her headscarf withdrew from the prolonged legal process.
- **06.06.2020:** A neo-Nazi violently beat an Arab resident of Brno.
- **07.07.2020:** A man was sentenced to three years suspended sentence for condoning the Christchurch attack.
- **15.08.2020:** “Patriotic meeting” of the far-right scene in Příčovy.
- **17.08.2020:** A court decided to raise the compensation given to the former Islamic community leader for unlawful persecution.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
DENMARK
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The following report highlights some of the most significant examples and developments of Islamophobia in Denmark in 2020. In many aspects of political, social, public, and religious life, Muslims seem to be targeted based on their beliefs and perceived incompatibility with “Danish values”. Islamophobia remains, however, an ill-understood concept within Danish society. Politicians, media, and the public continue to resist the need to address Islamophobia as a type of racism targeting Muslims and people assumed to be Muslim.

Physical and verbal attacks on Muslims continue to be high. As the most targeted religious community, Muslims experienced 45% of all religiously motivated hate crimes in 2020. Recent studies in employment demonstrate that Muslim women are highly disadvantaged compared to white women when applying for jobs despite professional qualifications. Still, politicians claim that Muslim women’s higher unemployment rates are due to family control. Although the claim that the family is at fault remains unsubstantiated, the government has implemented nationwide campaigns on this issue, neglecting the discrimination Muslim women experience in the job market.

Since the current government was elected in 2019, it has sought to ban state funding for Muslim faith-based schools. The only thing stopping the government from implementing such a ban is the Danish Constitution, which prevents discrimination based on religion or ethnicity. In 2020, however, the Justice Ministry ruled it would *not* be a breach of the constitution to implement a ban of funding for Muslim schools without further explanation.

Political rhetoric in 2020 focused particularly on Muslims’ personal, social, and religious freedoms in everyday life. The rhetoric was not always blatantly bigoted in limiting Muslims’ civil rights. Instead, it was often hidden behind a veneer of liberation rhetoric attempting to ‘save’ Muslim youth, particularly young Muslim women, from a perceived inherent psychological violence of Muslim men and Muslim religious communities.

Along this trend in political rhetoric, a number of new laws were introduced to control and surveil Muslim faith communities, e.g. requiring religious sermons in Danish and attempting to ban state funding for Muslim schools.

This report gives an indication of the trends in 2020 and where Denmark is heading in relation to protecting the rights of minority groups and freedoms.

Sammenfatning

Rapporten fremhæver nogle af de vigtigste eksempler på islamofobi i Danmark i 2020. Muslimer bliver ofte fremhævet som uforenelige med “danske værdier”, hvilket kommer til udtryk via målrettede politiske kampagner og lovpakker, som specifikt rammer muslimers politiske, sociale, offentlige og religiøse liv. Islamofobi er dog fortsat ikke et anerkendt begreb i det danske samfund, hvor politikere, medier og den generelle offentlighed ikke anerkender behovet for at behandle islamofobi som en form for racisme rettet mod muslimer og folk, der antages at være muslimer.

Fysiske og verbale angreb på muslimer er fortsat højt, og som det mest udsatte trossamfund, oplevede de 45% af alle registrerede religiøst motiverede hadforbrydelser i 2020. Nyere undersøgelser viser, at muslimske kvinder er dårligere stillet i forhold til hvide danske kvinder, når de søger job. Alligevel hævder politikere, at muslimske kvinders højere arbejdsløshed skyldes ’negativ social kontrol’ af specielt mandlige familiemedlemmer, der nægter at lade disse kvinder arbejde. Selvom disse påstande ikke er underbyggede, har regeringen gennemført landsdækkende kampagner om emnet, der fremmer denne forestilling, samtidig forsømmer de kvindernes oplevelser af racisme og diskrimination på arbejdsmarkedet.

Regeringen har forsøgt at forbyde statsfinansiering til muslimske friskoler siden de blev valgt i 2019. Det eneste, der forhindrer regeringen fra et sådant forbud, er den danske grundlov, som forbyder forskelsbehandling på grund af religion eller etnicitet. I 2020, kunne justitsministeriet dog erklære, at det ikke ville være en overtrædelse af den danske grundlov at gennemføre et forbud mod finansieringen af muslimske friskoler.

Den politiske retorik i 2020 har især fokuseret på muslimers personlige, sociale og religiøse friheder som udtrykt i hverdagslivet. Den islamofobiske retorik er ikke nødvendigvis åbenlys fordomsfuld med henblik på at begrænse muslimers rettigheder, men i stedet skjult bag en frigørelsesretorik, der forsøger at “redde” muslimske unge, især unge muslimske kvinder, fra en forestillet psykologisk vold fra muslimske mænd og deres religiøse samfund. Som resultat, er der blevet indført en række nye love til at kontrollere og overvåge muslimske borgere og deres trossamfund, ved f.eks. at påkræve religiøse prædikener på dansk eller forsøget på at forbyde statsfinansiering til muslimske friskoler.

Denne rapport er langt fra en dybdegående gennemgang af islamofobi i Danmark og hvordan den hænger sammen med andre typer af racisme, men den giver en indikation af hvilke tendenser, der har været i 2020, og hvor Danmark er på vej hen i forhold til at værne om minoritetsgruppers rettigheder og friheder.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Denmark

Type of Regime: Constitutional monarchy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentarism

Ruling Parties: Social Democratic Party (single-party minority government with possibility of creating political alliances with parties on both the left and right of the political spectrum)

Opposition Parties: *Venstre* - Denmark's Liberal Party, Danish People's Party, Liberal Alliance, Conservative People's Party, The New Right, The Alternative, Danish Social Liberal Party, Red-Green Alliance, Socialist People's Party, independent MPs

Last Elections: 2019 General Elections: The Social Democratic Party won 25.9% of the vote against 23.4% of *Venstre*.

Total Population: 5.8 million

Major Languages: Danish

Official Religion: Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark (Church of Denmark)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According the 2020 Hate Crime Report by the National Police of Denmark (*Rigspolitiet*), there were 194 religiously motivated hate crimes registered in Denmark. 87 cases involved Muslims or Muslim institutions. This means that around 45% of religiously motivated hate crime registered with the police, targeted Muslim in 2020.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According the 2020 Hate Crime Report by the National Police of Denmark, there were 635 cases of hate crime registered with the police in 2020.

Major Religions (% of Population): Protestant Christians (74.7%), Islam (est. 5.5%), Catholics (0.6%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): est. 320,000 (5.5%)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: *Dansk-Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse*, *Det Islamiske Trossamfund* (DIT), *Dansk Islamisk Center* (DIC), *Muslimsk Ungdom i Danmark* (MUNIDA), *Dansk Islamisk Trossamfund*, *Minhaj-ul-Quran Denmark*, *Dansk Muslimsk Ungdom*, *Dansk Muslimsk Union* (DMU), *Dansk Islamisk Råd*, *Imam Ali Moskeen*, *Muslimernes Fællesråd*

Main NGOs combatting Islamophobia: Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark (CEDA), *Sameksistens.dk*, *SOS Racisme*, *Kvinder I Dialog* (Women in Dialogue), European Network Against Racism-Denmark, *Center for Forebyggelse af Eksklusion* (Centre for Prevention of Exclusion)

Far-Right Parties: Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*), The New Right (*Nye Borgerlige*), Hard Line (*Stram Kurs*)

Far-Right Movements: *Generation Identitær*, *For Frihed* (For Freedom, former Pegida), *Nordfront*, *Nordisk Modstandsbevægelse* (Nordic Resistance Movement).

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No. The parliament rejected a bill-proposal to ban public servants from wearing religious symbols in December 2020.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No, although there is a ban on slaughtering a non-stunned animal, which to some Muslims is a crucial part of halal slaughter.
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** A bill-proposal to ban circumcision has been proposed but not yet put forward for a vote in parliament.
- **Burka Ban:** Yes, the ban on covering one's face is still in effect despite the requirements of face masks on public transportation and shops to protect against the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

In February 2020, the Danish Parliament voted for a common statement agreeing that “[t]he Parliament condemns anti-Semitism in any form and has noted with concern that anti-Semitism is not only growing in neo-Nazi but also in Islamic circles.”¹ Later, the word “Islamic” was corrected to “Islamist”.² The statement came as a response to the vandalisation of Jewish tombstones at a cemetery committed by members of the far-right organisation Nordic Resistance Movement (*Nordisk Modstandsbevægelse*). When questioned on the matter, none of the political parties (across the political spectrum) who voted in favour of the statement nor the Justice Minister could offer substantial proof that anti-Semitism is rising among Islamists—a categorisation of Muslims the government has yet to define.³ The unsubstantiated claim vilifying Muslims as particularly anti-Semitic, which was supported by traditionally left-leaning parties, is a small example of how Muslims have been increasingly targeted – often with little or no substance.

Late in November 2020, this tendency culminated with the Parliament passing the following statement: “The Parliament believes that it is very worrying that Islamist forces are trying to turn Muslim citizens against Denmark and thereby divide our society. The Parliament considers it crucial to get rid of extreme Islamism and the challenges associated with it, in order to safeguard the cohesion and democracy in Denmark”. This statement, which speaks to a moral panic in its lack of a clear definition of ‘Islamist forces’, was voted in favor by all left-center parties with the exception of independent MPs.⁴

The American Black Lives Matter movement sparked a global awareness of racism and inspired a similar momentum in Denmark—including Islamophobia as a form of racism. Nevertheless, it seems the Danish government has been indifferent to the grassroots mobilisation that seeks to challenge its discriminatory policies aimed at ‘non-Western immigrants and descendants’ (official state category), oft racialised to Muslims in the public imaginary.

This report is not an exhaustive overview of Islamophobia in Denmark in 2020. Rather, it is a brief insight into how Islamophobia has developed and gained further prominence within political structures, media discourse, and everyday life.

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1. Kim Kristensen, “Justitsminister leder forgæves efter beviser på stigende antisemitisme i ‘islamiske kredse’”, *Solidaritet*, 13 February 2020, <https://solidaritet.dk/justitsminister-leder-forgaevs-efter-beviser-paa-stigende-antisemitisme-i-islamiske-kredse/> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
 2. “Folketinget retter omstridt tekst om muslimers antisemitisme”, *Arbejderen*, 11 February 2020, <https://arbejderen.dk/indland/folketinget-retter-omstridt-tekst-om-muslimers-antisemitisme> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
 3. “Folketinget hænger muslimer ud som jødehadere uden dokumentation”, *Arbejderen*, 6 February 2020, <https://arbejderen.dk/indland/folketinget-h%C3%A6nger-muslimer-ud-som-j%C3%B8dehadere-uden-dokumentation> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
 4. Rasmus Stoklund and Halime Oguz, “V 12 Om den stigende islamisering af Danmark”, *Folketinget*, 12 November 2020, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20201/vedtagelse/V12/index.htm> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Out of 635 registered cases of hate crimes, the National Police of Denmark documents that there has been an increase of 12% of all registered cases from 2019 to 2020.⁵ As reported in the EIR 2019, the police launched an awareness campaign titled “Stop the Hate” urging minority communities to report experiences of hate crime. As the numbers indicate, this campaign may have had a positive effect on the reporting of hate crimes. The majority of hate crime cases were racially motivated (360 cases) followed by religiously motivated hate crimes (194 cases). For the sake of this Islamophobia report, I will focus on the religiously motivated hate crimes; however, I do not dismiss the fact that black and brown people in Denmark are often racialised as Muslims in the public’s perception. In other words, many *racially* motivated hate crimes could potentially also be Islamophobic in intent but were never registered as such.

Out of the 194 cases of religiously motivated hate crimes around 45% were directed at Muslims, demonstrating that Muslims bear the brunt of religiously motivated hate crimes followed by the Jewish population (41%). The police report explains that Muslims are the largest religious minority group, which is why they expect more reports from Muslim citizens. This conclusion seems problematic as it assumes that *because* Muslims are the largest religious minority, they will report more hate crimes. It is true that Muslims make up more people in terms of numbers, but statistically speaking, the percentage of reported hate crimes is still higher for Muslims than any other religious minority group; Muslims being a larger group does not affect that number. There was however a 12% decrease in Islamophobic hate crimes in 2020 from 61% in 2019. The explanation for this might be that the police reported a surge in Islamophobic hate crimes in 2019, especially online, immediately following the terrorist attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand⁶.

Unfortunately, the yearly hate crime report does not provide information on the gender and age of the victims of the attacks, but based on a literature review of news media articles, it seems that visibly Muslim women are more vulnerable to physical and verbal attacks. For instance, Women in Dialogue, a collective of Muslim women

5. Rigspolitiet, Nationalt Forebyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser i 2020: Rigspolitiets årsrapport vedrørende hadforbrydelser”, November 2021, <https://politi.dk/-/media/mediefiler/landsdaekkende-dokumenter/statistikker/hadforbrydelser/hadforbrydelser-2020.pdf?la=da&hash=0B32A5EFAFB9E02BAFC9288F18FCB436CB5EE104>, (Access date: 14 December, 2021).

6. Rigspolitiet, Nationalt Forebyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser i 2019: Rigspolitiets årsrapport vedrørende hadforbrydelser”, October 2020, Rigspolitiet, Nationalt Forebyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser i 2019: Rigspolitiets årsrapport vedrørende hadforbrydelser”, November 2021, <https://politi.dk/-/media/mediefiler/landsdaekkende-dokumenter/statistikker/hadforbrydelser/hadforbrydelser-2020.pdf?la=da&hash=0B32A5EFAFB9E02BAFC9288F18FCB436CB5EE104>, (Access date: 14 December, 2021)

who wear the niqab, have raised awareness over the physical and verbal harassment they experience in public spaces. In April 2020, a woman wearing the niqab on the train was harassed by a fellow passenger who photographed her (and later publicised her picture on social media) and called the police. The woman received a ticket for wearing the niqab, while the police questioned the man whether he said anything racist to the woman. Unsurprisingly, the man confirmed he had not said anything racist and was allowed to leave.⁷ This is an important incident to unpack. First, the incident took place after the COVID-19 pandemic began, and the woman wore her niqab according to the guidelines for face masks on public transport, whereby one is permitted to wear a piece of fabric instead of a medical mask. Despite COVID-19 measures, the police were fining women for covering their face in public outside of these spaces.⁸ Second, the harassment could not be reported as a hate crime, because the man insisted, he was reporting a “crime” according to Danish law. However, COVID-19 regulations have highlighted the intended targeting of Muslim women in the prohibition of face coverings in Danish law, which was implemented in 2018. The parliament had to phrase the niqab-bill without any direct reference to Muslim women to avoid transgressing the Danish constitution. Yet, in a context where the pandemic regulations require face coverings in public transport and other public places, the law relies on the police’s ability to understand the spirit of the law, producing an overtly racist differentiation between Muslim women wearing niqab and those wearing a face mask solely for medical purposes. This means that a woman wearing a niqab rather than a face mask can be charged with a fine of DKK 1,000 (EUR 135), which increases up to DKK 10,000 (EUR 1,000) for repeat offenders, while still being required to wear a mask even if she were to take off her niqab.

Despite the heightened awareness of the police to register and compile statistics on hate crime – physical, verbal, and online – it seems that it can still be a complicated process. The project manager at Centre for Muslims’ Rights in Denmark (CEDA) describes reporting a flyer found in a residential neighbourhood with a large number of minorities that encourages coughing on a minority. This flyer was found at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak indicating that people cough on minorities and infect or at least scare them to believe they’ve been infected with the corona virus. After evaluating the complaint, the state prosecutor decided not to proceed with any charges because they could not figure out who made and distributed the flyer or what ‘Coronawaffen Division’ refers to. In addition, the prosecutor gave the following explanation:

7. Kvinder i Dialog (Women in Dialogue), Facebook, 25 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kvinde-ridialog/photos/615894209102727> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

8. “Kvinde sigtet for at bære niqab i Aarhus”, *Aarhus lokalavisen*, 3 September 2020, https://aarhus.lokalavisen.dk/112/2020-09-03/-Kvinde-sigtet-for-at-b%C3%A6re-niqab-i-Aarhus-7524410.html?fbclid=IwAR182u66_M7hElGicH3Sbdpzkg3eU1R1BBX2jT8i2vm2DvNYpEjs1pCOtE (Access date: 10 December 2020).

I have further emphasised that even if the originator of the flyer could be found, the content of the flyer does not, after full sufficient certainty, fulfill the content of the offense in section 266b of the Criminal Code. Thus, notwithstanding that the content of the flyer may appear offensive, it cannot be established that the flyer expresses a threat, insult or humiliation of a group of persons on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation within the meaning of the provision.⁹



Figure 1: Flyer found in a residential neighbourhood in Greater Copenhagen with a high number of minority ethnic residents encouraging coughing on minority residents. It was reported as a hate crime, dismissed by state prosecutor but registered by the national police.¹⁰

Even though the prosecutor did not view the flyer as a threat against minorities, the police did contact CEDAR’s project manager five months after the initial report and reassured her that the complaint had been taken seriously and filed as a hate crime. This reveals how the determination of hate crimes is a rather bureaucratic process which relies heavily on the person interpreting the incident. In this case, the state prosecutor and the national police seemed to differ on their views of the flyer.

It is not difficult then to understand a Muslim’s reluctance to contact the police whenever they experience discrimination (Islamophobic or otherwise), as noted previously. According to a documentary questioning the fairness of hate crime laws in Denmark and the difficulties in reporting physical and verbal attacks as a hate crime, people have little faith in the police handling these cases, since the benefit of the doubt is often given to the assailer when proving their attack was not motivated by hate. Likewise, the focus of the “Stop the Hate” police campaign was solely to encourage victims of hate crime to report these crimes to the police; it completely neglected the

9. State prosecutor, written response (letter) to the complainant, 28 June 2020. (Original letter shared with author).

10. Flyer found by complainant in their residential neighbourhood. It was photographed and reported as a hate crime on 23 March 2020.

problematic elements within hate crime's legal framework which privileges the assailers' motivations for physically and/or verbally abusing a minority. This means that racist verbal utterances need to be proved as the sole motivator for the abuse with no other motivations prior to the abuse.¹¹

Employment

According to a recent study by the University of Copenhagen, minority ethnic women need to send 18% more applications compared to white women, while women who wear the hijab need to send 60% more applications compared to white women to get shortlisted for a job interview. According to the Institute for Human Rights, these research findings are important information as they attest to how Muslim and ethnic minority women are excluded from the workforce, despite being highly educated. According to one study referenced in an article by the institute, there has been a 21% increase in minority ethnic women obtaining professional degrees between 2008 and 2019. Yet, minority ethnic women with professional degrees are 12% more likely to be unemployed – a figure that is twice the number of white women. One of the reasons for this discrepancy, the report concludes, is the fact that women wearing the hijab may experience discrimination by employers when there is no other valid reason to be found (private companies are allowed to refuse to hire women wearing the hijab based on company policies on secularism)¹² This is the first time that a quantitative study has looked into experiences of racial and Islamophobic discrimination on the job market. The stark numbers indicate that it is not merely a question of suitability and professional competence but implies actual discrimination against Muslim and/or minority ethnic women. The lead researcher on the project, Malte Dahl, explains that the results challenge the Danish labour market ideal, which is built on meritocratic principles (education, experience, competence, etc.), and indicates there are financial implications when excluding Muslim women from the labour market by employers¹³.

A newly published research project by economists at the University of Copenhagen highlights how, amongst 56,000 surveyed households, the majority of these would prefer to hire domestic help by “Anders” rather than “Ali”.¹⁴ This is an impor-

11. “Kriminelt: Rejs hjem til dit abeland”, *DR*, 19 November 2020, https://www.dr.dk/drtv/se/kriminelt_-rejs-hjem-til-dit-abeland_214904?fbclid=IwAR1SgyND3rIN7M9eZghgbAFODzIPaHCp-G7wMtFhkkgpq-sIvdccbcZIkF38 (Access date: 2 December 2020).
12. “Minoritetskvinder med tørklæde bliver fravalgt på arbejdsmarkedet”, *Institut for Menneskerettigheder*, 6 March 2020, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/minoritetskvinder-toerklæde-fracvalgt-paa-arbejdsmarkedet> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
13. Freja Marquardt and Oscar Scott Carl, “For første gang har forskning kortlagt, at kvinder med tørklæde vælges fra på arbejdsmarkedet – Afnan var en af dem”, *Berlingske*, 6 March 2020, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/for-foerste-gang-har-forskning-kortlagt-at-kvinder-med-toerklæde-vaelges> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
14. Flemming Christiansen, “Denne pjece afslører, at vi har mere tillid til Anders end til Ali”, *Politiken*, 25 October 2020, https://politiken.dk/del/7uXsl_AAVBWQ (Access date: 2 December 2020).

tant indication of the unconscious bias that Muslim jobseekers in general have to deal with when applying for jobs. This research is another indicator of the challenges that Muslims face when applying for jobs, apprenticeships, and placements. There is little impetus to address these patterns of employment bias both in the private and public sector. Danish hiring policies often lag behind in ensuring equal opportunities for minorities; they often simply add a generalised standard statement of “we encourage anyone of any ethnic, religious or gender background to apply”. However, with no apparent objective to be more inclusive in the workforce, these statements are mere performances that do not address the challenges of being shortlisted for a position, let alone being hired, with a non-Western name—especially Muslim.

The two research projects described here are important for understanding the challenges minorities face in gaining access to the job market. Nevertheless, in order to meet the challenges of racism in hiring processes, such research must be followed by clear policies from the government to address employer’s unconscious bias when refusing to hire non-Western employees, and particularly Muslim women.

Education

Following up on last year’s EIR report, which highlighted how the government was putting increased surveillance on Muslim faith-based schools based on the number of ‘non-Western’ students they have enrolled, it seems the government is now working towards a total ban of state funding for Muslim schools (as opposed to the general entitlement of all faith-based or alternative schools). This could essentially amount to the closure of Muslim schools altogether –indeed the ban was an election pledge by the current government, the Social Democrats. But the Danish constitution—paragraph 70 which reads that no one’s rights and freedoms can be violated because of their religious beliefs or ethnic origin¹⁵ - had previously prevented the government from directly banning all funding for Muslim schools.

Yet in the fall of 2020, the justice ministry remarkably declared that banning state funding for Muslim schools (24 schools in total) cannot be understood as a violation of Danish constitution. The justice ministry did not justify their reasoning and there remain disagreements among Danish jurists how the ministry came to this new interpretation of paragraph 70. Jurists critical of the justice ministry’s declaration argue that, regardless how the bill is phrased, the government has explicitly admitted it is targeting Muslim schools by focusing on the number of non-Western pupils a school has enrolled –basically targeting religious schools by proxy of students’ ethnic origins.¹⁶

15. Paragraph 70, Constitutional Act of the Realm of Denmark (Danish Constitution), Folketinget, <https://www.ft.dk/da/dokumenter/bestil-publikationer/publikationer/grundloven/danmarks-riges-grundlov/kapitel-7/paragraf-70> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

16. Naja Dandanell, Ekspert er dybt forundrede: Justitsministeriet foretager kovending om muslimske friskoler”, *Skoleliv*, 24 September 2020, <https://skoleliv.dk/nyheder/art7934456/Justitsministeriet-fore->

Although the justice ministry has changed its interpretation of the constitution in this regard, the majority of parties, including the opposition *Venstre*, seem unwilling to transgress neither the Danish Constitution nor international human rights conventions in their efforts to ban Muslim schools. The Social Democrats, however, promise to find a ‘technical’ solution to address these concerns, stating they will hold off on presenting a bill this year. It seems to be merely a matter of time before they manage to formulate a bill that will appease the concerns of constitutional and human rights lawyers. It is important to mention that in spite of the debate on withdrawing all funding for Muslim schools, none of the opposition is highlighting the explicit Islamophobia in wanting to ban these schools. Their objection is not about discriminating against Muslims per se—it is an internal hesitancy as to how far the boundaries of rights can be moved.

The ombudsman has looked into the government’s increased investigation and its withdrawal of funding for Muslim schools, which resulted in their closure. For the past three years, the increased scrutiny has resulted in the closure of three primary schools and two boarding schools – all with a Muslim ethos. In two of these five cases, the schools have raised a complaint to the ombudsman who will investigate decision of the Danish Agency for Education and Quality (STUK). Lawyers and the Danish Free School Association highlight that the increased surveillance of Muslim schools is politicised and lacks legal certainty. One of the issues with the increased surveillance is that it is not based on the schools’ performances or objective criteria but rather on the agency’s own assessments. According to one lawyer, the schools have no way of addressing the issues raised by STUK as its only course of action has been to immediately withdraw funding with no recourse for correction. This leaves the schools in a legally precarious position with their futures depending completely on STUK’s elusive appraisals, rather than actual school performances.¹⁷

While the government’s targeting of Muslim schools is deeply concerning, it is made worse when Muslims also face barriers in accessing public schools. A recent study by political scientists at the University of Copenhagen surveyed all public primary schools in Denmark (1,698 in total), investigating discrepancies in school transfers of students with Danish names and Muslim-sounding names.¹⁸ They found Danish students had a 25% success rate in public school transfers, while Muslim students only had 15%. The study also highlighted that Muslim parents must navigate addi-

tager-kovending-om-muslimske-friskoler?fbclid=IwAR1do51oC0wZ7Sy70nr3JcCEaxMj6zQEziY-xBP-4ZB-ITUCHsri-Ye6XA5Y (Access date: 2 December 2020).

17. Lise Richter, “Flere muslimske friskoler har fået frataget statstilskud – nu går Ombudsmanden ind i sagen”, *Information*, 12 October 2020, <https://www.information.dk/indland/2020/10/flere-muslimske-friskoler-faaet-frataget-statstilskud-gaar-ombudsmanden-sagen> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

18. Asmus Leth Olsen, Jonas Høgh Kyhse-Andersen and Donald Moynihan, “The Unequal Distribution of Opportunity: A National Audit Study of Bureaucratic Discrimination in Primary School Access”, *American Journal of Political Science*, (2020), pp. 1-16.

tional administrative demands when transferring schools, compared to their non-Muslim counterparts.

Politics

On her Facebook page, the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen responded to the terrorist attacks in France and Austria by claiming that “Islamic terror has hit us Europeans again [...]”¹⁹. With no recognition of the conflation between Islam and terror in her statement, Frederiksen inadvertently affirmed the racialised division between “us Europeans” and Muslims.

In another instance on her Facebook page, Frederiksen exclaimed, “Sharia doesn’t belong in Denmark”.²⁰ This was a response to learning about an imam consulting and negotiating a divorce agreement between a couple. The incident was reported in *Berlingske* with only fragments of the agreement translated from Arabic to Danish; the case launched politicians into a frenzy, vilifying imams and Muslim men as the primary offenders towards Muslim women’s rights in marriage and divorce cases.²¹ In response, the government promised to introduce harsher policies to deal with what they call “negative social control” – i.e. Muslim families who restrict the social activities of young women (friendships, romantic relationships, etc.).²²

In 2020, scholars at Roskilde University published a state commissioned report on minority ethnic women’s experience of male/family social control. The report, “*Power and inequality/possibility: Negotiations of conformity, authority and mobility amongst ethnic minority citizens in Denmark*”, took a critical position on the government’s understanding of needing more surveillance of Muslim communities to address ‘social control’. Instead, the report offered a more complex and nuanced analysis of how young resourceful Muslim women negotiate and challenge familial and cultural expectations based on their religious beliefs as well as a description of their experiences with increased discrimination from the broader society.²³ In this regard, as a surprising infringement on academic freedom, the Minister of Immigration and

19. Mette Frederiksen, Facebook, 3 November 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/mettefrederiksen.dk/posts/10158620846287719/> (Access date: 22 January 2021)

20. Mette Frederiksen, Facebook, 26 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/mettefrederiksen.dk/posts/10158533606272719/> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

21. Christian Birk, “Omstridt imam lavede skilsmissekontrakt, hvor muslimsk kvinde kunne miste børnene: ‘Det er psykisk vold udført med en shariakontrakt’”, *Berlingske*, 24 September 2020, <https://www.berlingske.dk/danmark/omstridt-imam-lavede-skilsmissekontrakt-hvor-muslimsk-kvinde-kunne-miste> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

22. National Strategy Against Honour Related Conflicts, “Hvad er social kontrol?”, *The National Board of Health and Welfare*, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rcrct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=8&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiS5K7_q7DtAhU4TRUIHffxDVoQFjACegQIBRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fuiim.dk%2Ffiler%2Fintegration%2Fhvad-er-social-kontrol.pdf&usq=AOvVaw023o9vFwLgu91zkymoRJ3m (Access date: 2 December 2020).

23. Lise Paulsen Galal and Louise Lund Liebmann. „Magt og (m) ulighed: Forhandlinger af konformitet, autoritet og mobilitet blandt etniske minoritetsborgere i Danmark“, Roskilde University, 29 May 2020, https://forskning.ruc.dk/files/67849011/RUC_MagtOg_M_ulighed_rapport_web.pdf (Access date: 2 December 2020).

Integration Mattias Tesfaye, removed the report from the ministry's website.²⁴ Tesfaye explained that although it is very unusual to censor a commissioned academic report from the government's website, he argued that he did not want the Danish public to mistake the report's findings for the ministry's opinion.²⁵

The complete rejection of the report by the Ministry of Immigration and Integration raises questions of academic freedoms, including the ability to introduce critical assessments in state-commissioned reports. Several law professors have questioned the ability to remove a government commissioned report from the Ministry's website that was deemed academically sound. They have indicated that this was a political decision rather than one based on an objective evaluation of the report's content. It seems the government sought to direct research rather than allowing research to direct policy.²⁶ What is especially problematic about this reaction from the ministry is how revealing it is of restrictions on academics to criticise government policies, especially those which seek to increase control and surveillance of Muslim citizens and their lifestyles.

Ironically, not long before the Integration Minister censored the abovementioned report, the Ministry of Justice launched a new state commissioned report on freedom of speech. The report concluded that 76% of immigrants from Muslim countries want to make criticism of Islam illegal. This led Tesfaye to infer, "Some people have come to Denmark to become part of our prosperity and security, but who do not recognise that it is based on some freedoms, e.g. freedom of speech."²⁷

The policies introduced by the Integration Minister seek to surveil and control Muslims' family and social life so that they adhere to the government's idea of how citizens should socialise (particularly youth and women). In this regard, Tesfaye has urged Muslim community leaders to endorse premarital sex.²⁸ He has also targeted the Muslim dowry, which provides the woman a material gift when entering a marriage contract. He calls this a "bazaar deal between two clans", indicating that Mus-

24. Thomas Böttcher, "Professor: Ministers makulering af RUC-rapport kan være ulovlig". *Akademikerbladet*, 6 November 2020,

https://www.akademikerbladet.dk/aktuelt/2020/november/professor-ministers-makulering-af-ruc-rapport-kan-vaere-ulovlig?fbclid=IwAR20aW_DHNXITGcXU3Hu8UFU8RLSJmSzL8UuUqQW9ZGj2OzpkMUVffjacM8 (Access date: 2 December 2020).

25. Andreas Wind, "Minister fjerner omstridt integrationsrapport om social kontrol", *Altinget*, 3 November 2020, <https://www.alinget.dk/social/artikel/minister-fjerner-integrationsrapport-om-social-kontrol> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

26. Andreas Wind, "Minister fjerner omstridt integrationsrapport om social kontrol", *Altinget*, 3 November 2020

27. Klaus Dohm, "Indvandrere fra muslimske lande i ny undersøgelse: Det bør være ulovligt at kritisere islam" *Jyllands-Posten*, 1 May 2020, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/ECE12109646/indvandrere-fra-muslimske-lande-i-ny-undersogelse-det-boer-vaere-ulovligt-at-kritisere-islam/> (Access date: 2 December 2020). The translation is by the author.

28. Ritzau, "Teskfaye: Muslimske kvinder har ret til sex før bryllupsnat", *Jyllands-Posten*, 2 October 2020, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE12458789/tesfaye-muslimske-kvinder-har-ret-til-sex-foer-bryllupsnat/> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

lim families sell their daughters into marriage.²⁹ It is important to note that one of the young women who Tesfaye was responding to in an article, clarified her position, explaining that she was not against the concept of dowry. Rather, she was against misusing the concept as a way to receive large sums of money. This is a conversation that has been happening within the Muslim community in Denmark for a while, with religious leaders advising women and their families to ask for modest amounts in dowry as to facilitate marriage among young couples.³⁰

In January 2020, 96 families received eviction notices to vacate their social housing as a consequence of the controversial ghetto policies implemented in 2018.³¹ Several families sued the homeowners' association for discriminatory evictions based on the ghetto legislation, which explicitly targets 'non-Western' residents.³² Unfortunately, the municipal courts ruled the evictions lawful, and residents must vacate their homes.³³ Recently, residents in other social housing estates have taken legal action against the government for the same reason: the ghetto legislation deliberately discriminates against 'non-Western' residents and leaves its residents in precarious situations.³⁴ It will be important to follow these legal proceedings in 2021, as residents and grassroots organisations have increasingly mobilised to challenge the government's implementation of its racist ghetto policy.

Media

Mainstream media often play a vital role in perpetuating Islamophobia by reinforcing the idea – promoted by politicians – of problematic Muslim citizens. Interestingly, the *European Islamophobia Report 2019* (EIR) became a discussion item in one of the largest Danish newspapers, *Berlingske*. These reactions are worthy summarising, given how revealing they are of how Islamophobia in the media operates as a way of silencing Muslims' experiences of racism. In covering the launch of the report in the summer 2020, *Berlingske* presented the Danish chapter, which I authored, as a project by a think tank with close ties to the Turkish government. It insinuated that I was col-

29. Henrik Mikaelson, "Karia og Leyla sagde nej til guld og kontanter, da de blev gift: 'Nogle mener, vores mænd har fået os gratis'", *DR*, 17 November 2020, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/regionale/fyn/karia-og-leyla-sagde-nej-til-guld-og-kontanter-da-de-blev-gift-nogle-mener> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

30. Kevin Ahrens og Henrik Mikaelson, "Ekspert om 'groteske' beløb ved muslimske ægteskaber: 'Det er direkte uislamisk'", *DR*, 17 November 2020, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/ekspert-om-groteske-beloeb-ved-muslimske-aegteskaber-det-er-direkte-uislamisk> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

31. Sofie Myhre, "Endelig afgørelse: 96 familier bliver tvangsflyttet fra deres hjem", *TV2 Lorry*, 29 January 2020 <https://www.tv2lorry.dk/helsingoer/endelig-afgoerelse-96-familier-bliver-tvangsflyttet-fra-deres-hjem> (Access date: 31 December 2020).

32. Lamies Nassr and Amani Hassani, "Hvad taler vi om: 'ghettoloven' som struktürel racisme", *Respons*, 27 November 2020 <https://www.responsmedie.dk/racisme-3/> (Access date: 31 December 2020).

33. Christina Gerion, "Retsag: Lejere skal flytte fra ghetto trods protest", *TV2 Lorry*, 20 November <https://www.tv2lorry.dk/helsingoer/retssag-lejere-skal-flytte-fra-ghetto-trods-protest> (Access date: 31 December 2020).

34. Sidsel Overgaard, "Facing Eviction, Residents Of Denmark's 'Ghettos' Are Suing The Government", *NPR*, 15 August 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/15/900874510/facing-eviction-residents-of-denmarks-ghettos-are-suing-the-government> (Access date: 22 January 2021)

laborating with the Turkish government to make Denmark and its government appear Islamophobic. The journalist managed to get a response from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jeppe Kofod, who expressed anger over the report and wanted funding for the EIR investigated.³⁵ The editor-in-chief of *Berlingske*, Tom Jensen, wrote an op-ed describing the report as openly threatening any critique of Islam. In this regard, he described the report as exaggerated and distorting facts to make Danish politicians, media and individuals appear Islamophobic and by extension threatening Danish freedom of speech.³⁶ Steffen Groth, a journalist outraged by the insinuations and the complete dismissal of the content in the report, responded with an opinion piece published by the *Berlingske* criticising the problematic approach of *Berlingske's* journalists and its editor-in-chief.³⁷

This harsh response by *Berlingske* is a repetition of how the newspaper targeted the authors of the 2018 report on Islamophobia in Denmark and demonstrates the powerful position mainstream media have in de-platforming Muslim voices and concerns of Islamophobia – a topic that is neglected and dismissed because it is often perceived to cull criticism of Islam. Muslims' critiques of discrimination are reserved to opinion pieces and are rarely given space to be debated within mainstream media. In the coverage of the 2019 EIR report, the journalists reached out to me for a comment, but the focus was geared towards the accusation of conspiring with the Turkish government – an insinuation I refused to entertain, demanding that the conversation should be on the topic of Islamophobia in Denmark and not geopolitical issues between Denmark and Turkey.

Justice System

The government is proposing a bill that will enforce the use of the Danish language as a prerequisite in all religious sermons, whether in the form of simultaneous translation or a follow-up translation. The government does not single out Muslims in the proposed bill because that would be unconstitutional. Nevertheless, the government has made it clear to the public that the intended target is the Muslim community and what they perceive to be a threat of radicalisation within mosques.³⁸ The

35. Christian Birk, "Radikal toppolitiker hænges ud i ny rapport om islamofobi fra Tyrkiet. Udenrigsministeren er 'oppe i det røde felt'", *Berlingske*, 3 August 2020 <https://www.berlingske.dk/danmark/radikal-toppolitiker-haenges-ud-i-ny-rapport-om-islamofobi-fra-tyrkiet> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

36. Tom Jensen, "Den tyrkiske SETA-rapport er et instrument til at sætte ytringsfriheden under pres", *Berlingske*, 28 August 2020, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/den-tyrkiske-seta-rapport-er-et-instrument-til-at-saette-ytringsfriheden> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

37. Steffen Groth, "Berlingskes monumentale mistænkliggørelse af dansk ph.d.", *Berlingske*, 31 August 2020, <https://www.berlingske.dk/kommentarer/berlingskes-monumentale-mistaenkliggørelse-af-dansk-phd> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

38. Maja Hagedorn Hansen, "Regeringen vil have prædikener og forkyndelse på dansk: 'Vores hensigt er at undgå parallelsamfund'", *Altinget*, 12 October 2020, <https://www.altinget.dk/artikel/regeringen-vil-have-praedikener-og-forkyndelse-paa-dansk-vores-hensigt-er-at-undgaa-parallelsamfund?fbclid=IwAR3UZC9e58EsDxthcS-DhDijis0LPyZsa8h6S1eneouBk-qj7MnNrj1V99Z0> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

representative MP of the Faroe Islands – a self-governing archipelago that is part of Denmark (with a similar colonial history as Greenland) – asked whether this bill would be extended to the islands. Frederiksen explained Islamism is the target of the bill³⁹. She added that Denmark historically never had problems with religions from outside, but is only now experiencing problems with Islamism and Islamists, which is why the government deems it necessary to enforce language demands over religious sermons (negating the years of stark anti-Semitism that was rife in Denmark pre-WW2).

The importance of this exchange is crucial to understand the dynamics of how Islamophobia plays out in Danish political discourse. The bill was introduced in a colour-blind veneer, hiding the political intent in requesting religious communities to conduct sermons in Danish. Only when the Faroe Islands MP questioned Frederiksen in parliament, did she reveal that the intent of the bill is to manage Muslim citizens' religious practices. However, it would be a breach of the Danish Constitution to create a bill that directly discriminates against the Muslim faith community. Although in this exchange Frederiksen uses the words "Islamism" and "Islamist", these are elusive concepts that she has made no effort in differentiating from conventional Islamic practices. In fact, on her Facebook page, she described the terror attacks in France as *Islamic* terror, thus describing Islam as terrorism's source.⁴⁰

The Ministry of Immigration and Integration has proposed a bill to address what the government calls 'negative social control and honour-related violence', its offenders to be sentenced up to three years in prison. Amongst the examples of 'social control', the minister wants to include religious leaders advising or negotiating divorce agreements; religious leaders conducting religious marriage ceremonies of minors (it is already illegal to get a civil marriage as a minor). The bill will allow the government jurisdiction to take the passports of minors if parents are suspected to want to travel abroad with their child to force marriage, and it will enable the possibility of deporting any religious leader or parent found guilty of such charges.⁴¹ The bill was accompanied with a larger national campaign to increase attention to Muslim women's victimhood to their families' social control (i.e., control over their social, romantic, and even professional lives).

39. Mette Frederiksen, Extended Question Time with the Prime Minister, 10 November 2020, <https://www.ft.dk/aktuelt/webtv/video/20201/salen/13.aspx?from=10-11-2020&to=10-11-2020&selectedMeetingType=Salen&committee=&cas=1#player> (Access date: 22 January 2021)

40. "Rasende lokalpolitiker truede med at forlade S efter Mette F. Facebookopslag", *TV2Lorry*, 6 November 2020, <https://www.tv2lorry.dk/roskilde/truede-med-forlade-s-hvis-mette-f-ikke-undskyldte-ny-fortryder-byraads-medlem> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

41. Foreign and Integration Ministry, "Negativ social kontrol skal i højere grad straffes som psykisk vold", 7 October 2020, <https://uim.dk/nyheder/negativ-social-kontrol-skal-i-hojere-grad-straffes-som-psykisk-vold> (Access date: 2 December 2020).



Figure 2: Social media video campaign by the Municipality of Copenhagen, “Social control must never prevent women from working”.⁴²

In 2014, Said Mansoor was convicted, stripped of his Danish citizenship, and deported to Morocco for inciting terror on Facebook. He was deported in 2019 by the previous government, led by Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (*Venstre*), with the assurance that if he was deported, he would not be given a death sentence pending terrorist charges in Morocco.⁴³ In October 2020, however, Mansoor’s trial in Morocco found him guilty of terrorism in Casablanca in 2003 and gave him a death sentence.⁴⁴ The current Danish government have responded to the criticism of allowing a former citizen to be extradited to a so-called torture state. They claimed that there is a moratorium on the death penalty in Morocco that has been in effect since 1993.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it raises questions whether Denmark is only performatively living up to international treaties of human rights in this case.

Internet

Hate crime committed online is an increasingly worrying phenomenon in Denmark. The police report on hate crimes highlights that 22% (128 cases) of registered hate crimes in 2019 happened online (particularly Facebook).⁴⁶ Many of these were Islamophobic in nature; far-right groups and individuals were reported for Islamophobic speech (18 cases) particularly following the Christchurch attacks.

42. Copenhagen Municipality, LinkedIn, 26 November 2020, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/kobenhavns-kommune_ikkeketjob-dksocial-socialkontrol-ugcPost-6737273623528173569-94yK/ (Access date: 2 December 2020). The translation is by the author.

43. Anton Lind, “Efter afsonet fængselsdom: Boghandleren fra Brønshøj skal blive i fængsel”, *DR*, 18 February 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/efter-afsonet-faengselsdom-boghandleren-fra-broenshoej-skal-blive-i-faengsel> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

44. “Marokko bekræfter dødsdom over Said Mansour”, *BT*, 1 November 2020, <https://www.bt.dk/krimi/marokko-bekraefter-doesdom-over-said-mansour?referrer=RSS> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

45. “Marokko bekræfter dødsdom over Said Mansour”, *Jyllands-Posten*, 1 November 2020, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/international/Afrika/ECE12528116/marokko-bekraefter-doesdom-over-said-mansour/> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

46. National Police, October 2020, <https://politi.dk/-/media/mediefiler/landsdaekkende-dokumenter/statistikker/hadforbrydelser/hadforbrydelser-2019.pdf?la=da&hash=86E26E960D6896CD33EBB8ECE-8487499BF986D3> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

Social media seems to be an important platform for right-wing pundits to promote hate towards Muslims. One example is the leader of the Danish *For Frihed* (For Freedom, formerly known as Pegida) who posted a picture of a young Muslim in niqab, describing how he called the police on her and ensured she was fined for covering her face. It is interesting to note how the man in the background in the picture is also covering his face because of the requirement in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic of wearing a mask in public transport.⁴⁷



Figure 3: Picture of woman wearing a niqab in a train, photographed by the leader of *For Frihed* who reported her to the police and shared this picture on his Facebook page.⁴⁸

This illustration demonstrates how bills targeting Muslims allow for the proliferation of hate crimes both in public space and online. *For Frihed* is an organisation known especially for harassing Muslims, and the niqab ban gave them the formal legitimacy in the guise of upholding the law.

During the Danish lockdown, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the intercultural/interreligious organisation *Brobyggerne* (Bridge Builders) organised an online Ramadan dinner, “RamaDanmark”, with 300 participants, including imams, rabbis, priests, artists, and politicians. The inclusive and celebratory dinner was in-

47. Kvinder i Dialog, Facebook, 25 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kvinderialog/posts/615894252436056> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

48. Kvinder i Dialog, Facebook, 25 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kvinderialog/posts/615894252436056> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

errupted by *Generation Identitær* who had encouraged their members and supporters to take action against the event, interrupting speeches with signs saying “Stop Islamisation”. The online event was then disrupted by a hacker posting child pornography.⁴⁹ *Generation Identitær* only admits to interrupting the dinner with posters and denies any involvement in posting the pornographic video, which was reported to the police.⁵⁰ This horrific incident demonstrates how even peaceful and inclusive events are targeted with both hate speech and deeply offensive and criminal disruptions.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There were several cases of racial violence that received increased attention amongst the Danish public. The focus on Black Lives Matter over the summer and a rising interest in anti-racism has given a momentum to highlight these issues within the Danish context, including Islamophobia and how it intersects with anti-black and xenophobic racism.

While Rasmus Paludan enjoys the freedom to vocally abuse Muslims in Denmark, several other European countries have restricted his entry. He was ruled a threat to national security and order in Sweden and France, where he wanted to join demonstrations. He was refused entry in Sweden for two years in violation of police orders.⁵¹ Furthermore, he was arrested in France for wanting to burn the Quran in front of the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris.⁵²

Tommy Robinson, the British pundit convicted of racism and violence, and who founded the EDL, was given a Danish award by *Trykkefrihedsselskabet* (The Free Press Society), an organisation whose objective is to defend freedom of speech, but often do this by targeting Islam and Muslims. They explained that they were giving him the award for his ‘fight for freedom of speech’. Robinson’s violence and problematic character is well-known in the British context, yet in Denmark he is heralded for his very blatant racism (especially towards Muslims) as a proponent of free speech. It goes to demonstrate the challenges minorities experience in Denmark, where someone can racially abuse you in the guise of freedom of speech. *Trykkefrihedsselskabet* defended their decision, explaining: “We do not give him the freedom of expression award for

49. Malthe Sommerand, “Online ramadan-middag afbrudt af børneporno: ’Det er chokerende at se’”, *DR*, 1 May 2020, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/online-ramadan-middag-afbrudt-af-boerneporno-det-er-chokerende-se> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

50. Generation Identitær, “Fredelig Corona-aktion til online ramadan-middag: Stop islamisering!”, 30 April 2020, <https://identitaer.dk/2020/fredelig-corona-aktion-til-online-ramadan-middag-stop-islamisering> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

51. Thomas Berndt and Mette Grube Condrup, “Paludan afvist ved grænsen: Nægtes adgang til Sverige i to år”, *Politiken*, 28 August 2020 <https://politiken.dk/udland/art7902628/N%C3%A6gtes-adgang-til-Sverige-i-to-%C3%A5r> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

52. Ritzau, “Stram Kurs-stifter Rasmus Paludan er anholdt i Paris”, *Kristligt-Dagblad*, 13 November 2020, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kultur/rasmus-paludan-er-anholdt-i-paris> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

the sentences he has received. We do not reward him for that. We reward him for the work he has done in the service of free speech".⁵³

The far right seems to be becoming increasingly prominent in Denmark with organisations like *Generation Identitar* protesting against Muslims.⁵⁴ One can be concerned that although there are a few far-right organisations, there are many individuals who remain unknown and unnoticed by the public. One extreme example is a 31-year-old man who attempted to manufacture weapons and a bomb in his home. Based on the pictures on the walls, the police suspect he had ties with the Nordic Resistance Movement (*Nordisk Modstandsbevægelse*). The man was found guilty of illegally manufacturing weapons, but the courts ruled there was no evidence that he had the intention use the bomb. He is now serving a 3-year sentence.⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that the man was not accused of wanting to commit terror as the prosecution doubted that they could gather evidence that he had the intent to destabilise Danish society with his action – a requirement for charges of terrorism.⁵⁶ The benefit of the doubt given to the accused—who was found in his home with home-manufactured bomb—is stark in comparison to previous terror cases in Denmark, where Muslim men have been charged and convicted of terror offences based on much weaker evidence.⁵⁷

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society's attention and response to combatting Islamophobia seems to have increased in 2020, especially in light of the general attention the public has given racism over the summer of 2020. Not only have mosques and Muslim organisations become more attuned to calling out and understanding how Islamophobia is played out in the Danish context, but some public figures have become more aware of political and populist discrimination faced particularly by Muslim citizens.⁵⁸ One umbrella

53. Cathrine Lakmann, "Dansk pris til britisk højrefløjsaktivist: 'Han er en ledende ytringsfrihedsforkæmper'", *DR*, 19 January 2020, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/inland/dansk-pris-til-britisk-hoejrefloesaktivist-han-er-en-ledende> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
54. Jeppe Rafn, "Højreorienterede islamkritikere anholdt i Gellerup", *Aarhus Lokavisen*, 5 September 2020, <https://aarhus.lokalavisen.dk/112/2020-05-09/-H%C3%B8jreorienterede-islamkritikere-anholdt-i-Gellerup-7364640.html> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
55. Kasper Daugbjerg Dønbo, "Bombemand får 3 års fængsel", *Sjællandske Nyheder*, 19 May 2020, https://sn.dk/Halsnaes/Bombemand-faar-3-aars-faengsel/artikel/944082?fbclid=IwAR0S4aOf1fBHbUHJmFcDZgPsD4tu-VB71W3iW0D4oD9TwH4h50_276RyetB4 (Access date: 2 December 2020).
56. Kasper Daugbjerg Dønbo, "Tiltalt bombemand slipper for terroranklage", *Sjællandske Nyheder*, 14 May 2020, <https://sn.dk/Halsnaes/Tiltalt-bombemand-slipper-for-terroranklage/artikel/942312> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
57. Kristoffer Pinholt, "19-årig frifundet for terror for anden gang", *Jyllands-Posten*, 11 March 2008, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/inland/ECE3938951/19-%C3%A5rig-frifundet-for-terror-for-anden-gang/> (Access date: 24 January)
58. Ida Sophia, "Ida-Sophia: 'Det er muslimerne der er under angreb'", *Ekstrabladet*, 8 November 2020, <https://ekstrabladet.dk/flash/megafonen/ida-sophia-det-er-muslimerne-der-er-under-angreb/8354292> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

organisation for mosques, the Muslim Council (*Muslimernes Fællesråd*) has decided to dedicate its work to address Muslims' experiences of discrimination.⁵⁹ The Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark (CEDA) has collaborated with 10 NGOs on a report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) as well as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to highlight issues of racism and discrimination by minority groups in Denmark.⁶⁰

Opposing media and political outcry, the National School Songbook Committee included a song by the artist Isam B titled "Ramadan in Copenhagen" (*Ramadan i København*).⁶¹ Right-wing critics argued that the song has no place in the songbook, which is seen as a national cultural treasure. Nevertheless, the committee decided to include the song because it added a localised way of experiencing Ramadan as Danish Muslims.⁶²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report has demonstrated how Islamophobia continues to worsen in Denmark, both explicitly and implicitly directed at Muslim citizens and people imagined to be Muslim (i.e., non-Western immigrants and descendants).

Hate crime towards Muslims remains high, including physical, verbal, and on-line abuse. Recent studies in employment demonstrate that employees who appear to be Muslim are disadvantaged when applying for jobs. Meanwhile, politicians claim that Muslim women's higher unemployment rates are due to family control. Although these claims are refuted by academic research, the government has implemented nationwide campaigns on the issue.

The government seems to be one step closer to banning state funding of Muslim faith-based schools with the Ministry of Justice ruling that it would not be a breach of the Danish Constitution to do so. Concerns from the political opposition, *Venstre*, is that it may transgress international human rights treaties.

Political rhetoric against Muslims seems to particularly target Muslims' personal, social, and religious freedoms when it comes to everyday life. The rhetoric is not necessarily blatantly illiberal in limiting Muslims' civil rights, but instead is hidden behind a veneer of liberal rhetoric attempting to 'save' Muslim youth, and particularly

59. Muslimernes Fællesråd, Facebook, 14 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/MuslimernesFaellesrad/posts/3293016274068935> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

60. "Ngo'er afleverer racismerapport til FN", *Arbejderen*, 12 November, https://arbejderen.dk/indland/ngoer-afleverer-racismeraapport-til-fn?fbclid=IwAR0GMnaXPaOL9NH7dFu_QF3Rg-x6fboaxfEeHEOhrELEu0_YRf7DMjqUDy8 (Access date: 2 December 2020).

61. Amani Hassani, "Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2019", *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, eds. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (Istanbul, SETA: 2020).

62. Ritzau, "Ramadan-sang kommer med i ny Højskolesangbog", *Kristeligt-Dagblad*, 6 November 2020, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kultur/ramadan-sang-kommer-med-i-ny-hojskolesangbog?fbclid=IwAR2oyb6-Nt-0DkHLT102FFMtq51QivCmhiwgE51ILArSEhhCR4sYeDBWcaxU> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

young Muslim women, from the perceived inherent psychological violence of Muslim men and Muslim religious communities.

Along this trend in political rhetoric, a number of new laws have been introduced to control and surveil Muslim faith communities, e.g., requiring sermons in Danish and criminalising imams counselling their congregation on personal matters such as divorce agreements.

Based on the observations noted in this report, the following are policy recommendations geared towards politicians, Muslim institutions, anti-racist NGOs, and the general public in Denmark.

- Public and political recognition of Islamophobia as a type of racism targeting Muslims and people perceived to be Muslim.
- Governmental commitment to condemn Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred.
- Incorporation of the UN human rights conventions into Danish legislation to ensure that the Danish government adheres to these, in particular the “International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination” and “International Convention on Civil and Political Rights”, and “International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights”.
- Government commitment to create a wide strategy to tackle racism and inequalities faced by all ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, including Muslims.
- Development of a politically independent equality department to oversee and ensure that all new legislation does not target and discriminate against ethnic, racial, and religious minorities in cause or effect.
- Investment in appropriate resources to tackle hate crime effectively and reassess whether hate crime legislation is fit for purpose to address the harm caused by racial, ethnic, and religious discriminatory abuse, especially when the claim behind the abuse is not racially motivated.
- Investment in resources for producing research which explores different aspects and experiences of racism, and more specifically, Islamophobia as a type of racism, from structural and political forms to everyday microaggressions.
- Increase efforts to develop wider anti-racist collaborations with civil society organisations as well as individuals working to tackle both structural and everyday forms of racism affecting minority citizens.

Chronology

- **23.01.2020:** Mosque vandalised with graffiti stating “Muslims, Islam = cancer”.
- **29.01. 2020:** As part of the ghetto laws, 96 families received eviction notices to vacate their social housing.

- **30.01.2020:** The parliament issued a joint statement about rising concerns of anti-Semitism in neo-Nazi and Islamic circles (“Islamic” was later corrected to “Islamist”). The claim of the rise in anti-Semitism among Muslims was later proved to be unsubstantiated, yet the statement remains.
- **06.03.2020:** Citizenship ceremonies were postponed because COVID-19 measures ban the shaking of hands, which conflicts with the law enforcing handshaking as an essential part of the granting of citizenship. This law has since been paused while the pandemic is still a concern.
- **19.05.2020:** Far-right extremist is given a 3-year prison sentence for manufacturing a bomb.
- **08.08.2020:** Eid celebrations and a Somali funeral blamed for spike in COVID-19 cases.
- **20.08.2020:** A Muslim man was severely beaten in a religiously motivated hate crime, the courts rule.
- **04.09.2020:** Political and public debate on banning non-medical circumcision of boys.
- **24.09.2020:** Odense Municipality reports an imam to the police for negotiating a non-legally binding divorce agreement.
- **07.10.2020:** The government proposes charging imams with a three-year prison sentence for counselling in divorce negotiations.
- **09.10.2020:** The government proposes a bill to require all religious sermons be conducted in Danish or translated into Danish.
- **12.10.2020:** More Muslim faith-based schools get their funding taken away by the government.
- **14.11.2020:** The government introduces a nationwide campaign against ‘negative social control’.
- **01.11.2020:** It is confirmed that Said Mansoor, a former Danish citizen deported to Morocco, was given a death sentence after being found guilty of terrorist charges in Morocco.
- **12.11.2020:** The parliament issued a statement agreeing that “Islamist forces” are turning Muslim citizens against Denmark and declare that it is essential to combat them in order to safeguard Danish democracy and social cohesion.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ESTONIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

In 2020, three Islamophobic hate crimes committed by one perpetrator were reported to the police in Estonia. A masked man dropped pig heads at the door of the Islamic Centre in Tallinn, the Embassy of Turkey, and the Embassy of Azerbaijan. The police identified the perpetrator and initiated misdemeanour proceedings for incitement to hatred.

In the political discourse, Islamophobia was not prominent in 2020. However, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), which became part of the ruling coalition after the elections in 2019, continued to spread Islamophobic stereotypes in the context of their anti-immigration platform.

In the media, Islamophobic content was present in opinion pieces and interviews by the members of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia. Apart from these, there were a few opinion stories on issues related to Islam from authors presenting different views.

There were no specifically Islamophobic laws or regulations introduced in 2020. However, when justifying legal amendments concerning foreign students, the Minister of the Interior, Mart Helme, stated that more restrictions need to be put in place to protect to public order and national security, particularly outlining Muslims wishing to build mosques in Estonia as a source of threat. The Estonian Internal Security Service also expressed the opinion that the laws, which make it easier for foreigners to work and study in Estonia, are a threat to national security.

In October 2020, the European Commission initiated an infringement procedure against Estonia, since the Estonian Penal Code does not adequately ensure that that perpetrators are held accountable for hate speech and hate crimes against minority groups, including Muslims.

Kokkuvõte

2020. aasta jooksul raporteeriti Eestis kolmest islamofobsest vaenukuriteost, mis pandi toime ühe inimese poolt. Nimelt viskas maskis mees seapead Tallinna Islami Keskuse, Türgi saatkonna ja Aserbaidžaaani saatkonna ukse ette. Politsei tuvastas süüdlase ja alustas väärtemenetlust vaenu õhutamise paragrahvi alusel.

Poliitilises arutelus ei kerkinud 2020. aasta jooksul islamofobseid seisukohti eriliselt esile. Samas jätkas 2019. aasta valimiste tulemusel valitsuskalitsiooni kuuluv Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond (EKRE) immigratsioonivastase platvormi kontekstis islamofobsete stereotüüpide levitamist.

Meedias oli islamofobne sisu nähtav EKRE liikmete arvamusalugudes ja intervjuudes. Lisaks avaldati islamiga seotud teemadel paar arvamusalugu teistelt autoritelt, kes esindasid erinevaid vaateid.

Aastal 2020 ei võetud vastu islamofobse iseloomuga seadusi. Välisüliõpilasi puudutavate seadusemuudatuste põhjendamisel väljendas siseminister Mart Helme, et avaliku korra ja riikliku julgeoleku kaitseks tuleb nimetatud valdkonda rohkem piirata, eriti tuues ohullikana välja moslemid, kes soovivad moskeede ehitamist Eestisse. Eesti Kaitsepolitseiamet tõi samuti välja, et seadused, mis hõlbustavad välismaalaste Eestis töötamist ja õppimist, on ohuks riigi julgeolekule.

2020. aasta oktoobris alustas Euroopa Komisjon Eesti vastu rikkumismenetlust, kuna Eesti ei ole endiselt nõuetekohaselt kriminaliseerinud vaenukõne ja vaenuritegusid erinevate vähemusgruppide, sealhulgas moslemite vastu.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Republic of Estonia

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: Centre Party, Conservative People's Party of Estonia, Pro Patria (coalition)

Opposition Parties: Reform Party, Social Democratic Party

Last Elections: 2019 Parliamentary Elections (Reform Party: 34 seats, Centre Party: 26 seats, Conservative People's Party of Estonia: 19 seats, Pro Patria: 12 seats, Social Democratic Party: 10 seats, Total: 101 seats); 2017 Municipal Council Elections (Centre Party: 27.3%, Citizens' elections coalitions: 26.8%, 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%); 2016 Presidential Elections (Kersti Kaljulaid was elected President of the Republic of Estonia with 81 votes in the Parliament).

Total Population: 1.3 million (est., 2020)

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 (28%), No religion (54%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 1,508 (0.12%) according to the last national census in 2011.

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Estonian Islamic Centre, Estonian Islamic Congregation

Main NGOs Combatting 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, the Johannes Mihkelson Centre, the International House Tartu, and the Integration Foundation.

Far-Right Parties: Conservative People's Party of Estonia

Far-Right Movements: Soldiers of Odin

Far-Right Militant 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

Estonia has a relatively small Muslim population, although it is difficult to estimate its exact size. During the last national census in 2011, 1,508 people in Estonia identified as Muslims. However, it is estimated that the actual number is somewhere between 1,500 and 10,000.¹

Historically, Islam reached Estonia through the Tatars. During the Soviet period, all religions were for the most part eradicated, as is characteristic of the communist worldview. However, in 1989, the re-establishment of the Estonian Islamic Congregation began. At present, the Estonian Islamic Congregation consists mainly of the Tatar, Azerbaijani, Kazakh, and Uzbek communities living in Estonia.² It has been noted that there has been a surge in the growth of the Islamic community in 2016–2017, explained by the addition of immigrants and refugees.³

Most Muslims living in Estonia reside in or near the capital Tallinn. In Tallinn, there is the Estonian Islamic Centre, where Friday prayers, gatherings, lectures, and other events take place. The joint activities in the building are organised by members of the Estonian Islamic Centre or the Estonian Islamic Congregation, as well as other active representatives of the Muslim community in Estonia.⁴

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On 25 October 2020, a masked man dropped pig heads at the door of the Islamic Centre in Tallinn, the Embassy of Turkey, and the Embassy of Azerbaijan. The perpetrator stated that the pig heads were thrown in front of the embassies to “draw attention to the jihad by Azerbaijan and Turkey against the Armenians”. Both of the pig heads included incisions, one of them spelling “Islam” and the other “Muhammad”. With the pig head thrown in front of the Islamic Centre, the man claimed to express his opinion about the fact that Muslims have not condemned certain verses in the Qur’an that “humiliate Jews and Christians and call for violence against them”. He contacted different media outlets to announce that if the embassies and the Islamic Centre do not condemn Muhammad and the said verses in the Qur’an within ten days, more pig heads will be delivered.⁵

1. Islam Eestis (Islam in Estonia), <http://www.islam.pri.ee/index.php?id=66>, (Access date: 18 October 2020)

2. Ibid.

3. Ege Lepa, “Eesti islamikogukonna dünaamika pärast taasiseseisvumist”, (PhD Thesis, Tartu University, Tartu, 2019), p. 163.

4. Ibid., p. 9.

5. “Tallinna Islami keskuse ning Aserbaidžaaani ja Türgi saatkonna ette visati seapead”, Reporter, 25 October 2020, <https://reporter.elu24.ee/7094001/reporter-tallinna-islami-keskuse-ning-aserbaidžaaani-ja-turgi-saatkonna-ette-visati-seapead>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

The day after, on 26 October 2020, the police reported that they had identified the perpetrator and initiated misdemeanour proceedings on the basis of a provision that focuses on incitement to hatred. The police added that the exact charges will be determined during the proceedings.⁶ Provision **§151 of the Penal Code** states that “activities which publicly incite to hatred, violence or discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, colour, sex, language, origin, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, or financial or social status, if this results in danger to the life, health or property of a person, are punishable by a fine of up to three hundred fine units or by detention.”⁷

Employment

No discrimination cases against Muslims or persons perceived as Muslims were reported in the job market, according to the Labour Inspectorate of Estonia⁸ and the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner.⁹

Education

There have been no reports of Islamophobic content becoming a part of curricula, textbooks, or other educational materials.

Politics

During the period under review, no elections took place in Estonia, so there was less Islamophobia in the public political discourse. Nevertheless, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), which became part of the ruling coalition after the elections in 2019, continued to promote Islamophobic stereotypes in the context of their anti-immigration platform. For example, on their radio show “Räägime asjast”,¹⁰ Minister of Finance Martin Helme and Minister of the Interior Mart Helme discussed the topic of the “Islamic invasion” of Europe. Mart Helme stated that as a result of high birth rates and immigration, Muslims will eradicate the local Belgians.¹¹

Media

In 2020, the Estonian media predominantly concentrated on issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Estonian Public Broadcasting published a few opinion

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6. Riho Nagel, “Islami keskuse ja kahe saatkonna juurde sea pea viinud mehe suhtes alustati väärteomenetlust”, Delfi, 26 October 2020, <https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/krimi/islami-keskuse-ja-kahe-saatkonna-juurde-sea-pea-viinud-mehe-suhtes-alustati-vaarteomenetlust?id=91474508>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).
 7. Riigi Teataja, Penal Code (*Karistusseadustik*), § 151, 6 June 2001, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/515072020011/consolide>, (Access date: 18 February 2021).
 8. Labour Inspectorate of Estonia, response to request for information.
 9. Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, 18 September 2020, response to request for information.
 10. Tre Raadio, Räägime asjast, <http://rapla.tre.ee/shows/raagime-asjast/> (Access date: 3 November 2020).
 11. Mixcloud, Räägime asjast, 23 February 2020, <https://www.mixcloud.com/raadiosaade/raagime-asjast-23022020/>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

stories on issues related to Islam by authors presenting different views. For example, a member of the Estonian Defence League wrote about Islamic extremism, jihad, and martyrdom.¹² The article includes statements such as, “Not building mosques does not restrict the religious freedoms of Muslims, but protects non-Muslim citizens from Islamist policies, as the mosque is governed by Sharia law.” In response, a member of the Estonian Refugee Council wrote an opinion piece presenting a broader view of Muslims and Islam outside the battlefield, condemning the opinion that all Muslims are potential sources of danger because of their faith.¹³

Islamophobic content in the Estonian context can be found in opinion pieces and interviews of members of the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia. For example, the Minister of Interior Mart Helme, who is also the former Head of the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia, in an interview stated that he is worried from a security policy point of view because the Islamic community in Estonia is “becoming more and more aggressive, more and more demanding” as they “want to get their mosques.”¹⁴

Justice System

There have been no specifically Islamophobic laws or regulations introduced in 2020. However, when justifying the amendments to the Aliens Act (*Välismaalaste seadus*), aiming to restrict the rules for foreigners to stay, study, and work in Estonia, the Minister of the Interior Mart Helme stated that the current regulation concerning foreign students in Estonia must be changed because it does not sufficiently protect public order and national security. He claimed that the problem is “the previously unrepresented and growing communities of foreign nationals in Estonia, who have a significantly different historical, cultural and religious background”. He added that there is quite a strong pressure to build mosques in Estonia, which would “become centres for radical Islam, where measures are planned that endanger members of society”.¹⁵

In addition, the Estonian Internal Security Service has outlined the laws that make it easier for foreigners to work and study in Estonia as a threat to national security. Despite recognising that the likelihood of a terrorist attack in Estonia remains as low as it has been in previous years, the Internal Security Service considers Islamic

12. “Margus Kuul: džihad – pilet paradiisi”, ERR, 29 March 2020, <https://www.err.ee/1070221/margus-kuul-dzihad-pilet-paradiisi>, (Access date: 19 October 2020).

13. “Hille Hanso: hooletustest üldistustest ebaõigluseni ehk avaram pilt islamist”, ERR, 3 October 2020, <https://www.err.ee/1142343/hille-hanso-hooletustest-uldistustest-ebaogluseni-ehk-avaram-pilt-islamist>, (Access date: 19 October 2020).

14. Margus Mikomägi, “Mart Helme: tuuleparkidest ei piisa, peame algatama diskussiooni tuumajaama rajamise üle”, Maaleht, 30 June 2020, <https://maaleht.delfi.ee/uudised/intervjuu-mart-helme-tuuleparkidest-ei-piisa-peame-algatama-diskussiooni-tuumajaama-rajamise-ule?id=90312043>, (Access date: 21 October 2020).

15. Johanna-Kadri Kuusk, Triinu Laan, “Mart Helme rändepoliitikast: Eesti inimene ei tohi oma tööst ilma jääda, sest odav Ukraina tööline on juba ees”, Õhtuleht, 11 September 2020, <https://www.ohtuleht.ee/1011836/mart-helme-randepoliitikast-est-i-inimene-ei-tohi-oma-toost-ilma-jaada-sest-odav-ukraina-tooline-on-juba-ees>, (Access date: 19 October 2020).

terrorism the biggest source of danger in Estonia today. According to the Internal Security Service, in a few years, the number of people from countries belonging to the “terrorist risk group”, such as India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Iran, has increased dramatically in the country. The Internal Security Service finds that as Islamic communities grow stronger in Estonia, this will also increase the interest of conservative and radical Islamic organisations in expanding into Estonia. The latter, according to the Internal Security Service, will be facilitated by the laws that enable foreigners to work and study in Estonia.¹⁶ Foreign students have previously been outlined in relation to the threats of legal migration in annual reviews of the Internal Security Service.¹⁷

Furthermore, the current Estonian legislation still does not provide an effective possibility for prosecuting hate crime and hate speech against Muslims, as well as other groups. The Penal Code includes provision §151 for “incitement to hatred”, however, since the provision requires the existence of “danger to the life, health or property of a person”, it is not effective in practice. For this reason, in October 2020, the European Commission started an infringement procedure against Estonia. According to the commission, Estonian national laws do not fully and accurately transpose the EU rules on combatting racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, stressing that Estonia has not correctly criminalised hate speech and has not provided for adequate penalties. In addition, the Estonian Penal Code does not ensure that the bias motivation of crimes is taken into account as an aggravating circumstance so that hate crimes could be effectively and adequately prosecuted.¹⁸ In response, the Estonian Minister of Justice, Raivo Aeg, stated that freedom of speech and media freedom cannot be attacked, while agreeing to analyse the European Commission’s position.¹⁹

Internet

There are no websites specifically dedicated to covering topics related to Islam. The main website that regularly spreads Islamophobic stereotypes is the governing Conservative People’s Party of Estonia’s (EKRE) news portal *Uued Uudised* (The New News),²⁰ which also has 18,000 followers on its Facebook page.²¹ In 2020, it published around twenty articles in which Islamic themes were covered, promoting the

16. Oliver Kund, “Kapo aastaraamat: kasvanud terrorioht, korrumppeerunud ametnikud ja lobireeglite puudus”, Delfi, 14 April 2020, <https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/kapo-aastaraamat-kasvanud-terrorioht-korrumppeerunud-ametnikud-ja-lobireeglite-puudus?id=89548481>, (Access date: 23 October 2020).

17. Internal Security Service, *Annual Review 2018*, <https://www.kapo.ee/en/content/annual-reviews.html>, (Access date: 18 January 2021), p. 32.

18. “October Infringements Package: Key Decisions”, European Commission, 30 October 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_20_1687, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

19. “Euroopa Komisjon käivitas Eesti suhtes kaks rikkumismenetlust”, ERR, 30 October 2020, <https://www.err.ee/1153363/euroopa-komisjon-kaivitas-estis-suhtes-kaks-rikkumismenetlust>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

20. Uued Uudised, <https://uueduudised.ee>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

21. Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/uueduudised/>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

narrative that Islam is taking over Europe and is violent by its nature. Some headlines of these articles include, “Islamist Bioweapon: Two Men Who Deliberately Spread the Virus Were Detained in Tunisia”²²; “A Lost Battle against Islamism? How to Win a War against Islamists”²³; “Islam Is Embedded in the Already Weak Bundeswehr – Imams, or Potential ‘Holy War’ Preachers, Are Wanted There”.²⁴ Furthermore, *Uued Uudised* has published numerous anti-immigration articles, one of which claims that Muslims “often prefer to earn a living in a way which is illegal in the West”.²⁵ The portal also raised alarm when Tallinn’s city development strategy included a picture of a woman in a headscarf, demanding to know “when have the voters given a mandate to turn the Estonian capital into a multicultural metropolis”.²⁶

Such articles do not usually transfer to the mainstream media; however, they are actively shared on social media, particularly in far-right supporter groups on Facebook, resulting in hate speech against Muslims in the comments.

In 2020, a new topic that emerged in these Facebook groups was accusing Muslims in other countries of not following the restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, when an article about people ignoring restrictions in Bangladesh was shared in an EKRE supporter group, the comments included degrading and Islamophobic statements such as the notion that these people must be fulfilling Allah’s will to die of the virus.²⁷

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The Conservative People’s Party of Estonia (EKRE) and their online news portal *Uued Uudised* are the central sources of Islamophobic content in Estonia. The website published the following opinion by Jaak Madison, a member of the European Parliament and the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia, in response to the attacks in France: “We have repeatedly seen in Europe in recent years how even these so-called peaceful Muslims are silent when their comrades-in-arms detonate bombs, attack the Christ-

22. “Islamistide biorelv: Tuneesias peeti kinni kaks tahtlikult viirust levitanud meest”, *Uued Uudised*, 14 April 2020, <https://uueduudised.ee/uudis/maailm/islamistide-biorelv-tuneesias-peeti-kinni-kaks-tahtlikult-viirust-levitanud-meest/>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

23. “Kaotatud lahing islamismi vastu? Kuidas siiski olla võidukas sõjas islamismiga”, *Uued Uudised*, 4 May 2020, <https://uueduudised.ee/uudis/maailm/islamistide-biorelv-tuneesias-peeti-kinni-kaks-tahtlikult-viirust-levitanud-meest/>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

24. “Islam kinnistub niigi nõrka Bundeswehri – sinna tahetakse imaame ehk võimalikke “püha sõja” jutlustajaid”, *Uued Uudised*, 4 May 2020, <https://uueduudised.ee/uudis/maailm/islam-kinnistub-niigi-norka-bundeswehri-sinna-tahetakse-imaame-ehk-voimalikke-puha-soja-jutlustajaid/>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

25. “Kolmandast maailmast tulevad kahejalgsed probleemid, mitte lahendused”, *Uued Uudised*, 30 August 2020, <https://uueduudised.ee/uudis/eesi/kolmandast-maailmast-tulevad-kahejalgsed-probleemid-mitte-lahendused/>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

26. “Tallinna arengukava „2035“ näeb Tallinnat paigana, kus annavad tooni pearättidega moslemid”, *Uued Uudised*, 15 October 2020, <https://uueduudised.ee/uudis/eesi/tallinna-arengukava-2035-naeb-tallinnat-paigana-kus-annavad-tooni-pearattidega-moslemid/>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

27. Facebook group EKRE Soome Rootsi Norra ja Taani sõbrad, post from 18 April 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/236750843883691/permalink/536530370572402/>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

mas markets with lorries or cut off heads with machetes. Islam is not suitable for Europe, and this has been said for years by the ‘evil right-wing extremists’”. He added that “decades of politics of tolerance and equality do not work and will not work”.²⁸ Madison is a member of the far-right group Identity and Democracy (ID) in the European Parliament.²⁹

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In January 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs published a series of videos in the framework of the campaign *Kõik on erinevad, kuid sama palju inimesed* (Everyone is different, but equally human), focusing on stories of school bullying, migrant workers, national minorities, religious beliefs, and people with disabilities. One of the videos depicts a friendship between two boys in kindergarten, one of whom is a Muslim. The videos promote showing kindness and goodwill towards all people.³⁰ However, the Minister of the Interior, Mart Helme, stated that the campaign depicts a distorted society, claiming the campaign is born of an abnormal way of thinking.³¹ The Minister of Finance, Martin Helme, called the campaign “a total provocation”.³²

In October 2020, the Estonian Refugee Council’s social enterprise *Siin & Sääl* started a series of cultural events, through which migrants and refugees introduce their countries of origin. The first cultural evening focused on Syria. The Estonian Refugee Council explained that since fear is often caused by what is strange and unknown, the cultural events aim to bring together different communities living in Estonia by introducing their backgrounds so as they get to know each other better.³³

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In Estonia, Islamophobic attitudes usually arise in the context of immigration, particularly encouraged by the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia, a far-right politi-

28. “Jaak Madison: eurooplaste pead lendavad terroristide käe läbi, sallivuspoliitika ei hakka kunagi tööle”, Uued Uudised, 29 October 2020, <https://uueduudised.ee/uudis/maailm/jaak-madison-eurooplaste-pead-lendavad-terroristide-kae-labi-sallivuspoliitika-ei-hakka-kunagi-toole>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

29. “Far-Right Parties Form New Group in European Parliament”, DW, 14 June 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/far-right-parties-form-new-group-in-european-parliament/a-49189262>, (Access date: 18 January 2021).

30. “Kõik on erinevad, kuid sama palju inimesed”, Ministry of Social Affairs, 24 January 2020, <https://www.sm.ee/et/sama-palju-inimene>, (Access date: 2 November 2020).

31. Riho Nagel, “Mart Helme: sotsiaalministeeriumi kampaania on väärastunud mõtteviisist sündinud”, Delfi, 22 January 2020, <https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/video-mart-helme-sotsiaalministeeriumi-kampaania-on-vaarastunud-motteviisist-sundinud?id=88715573>, (Access date: 2 November 2020).

32. “Tanel Kiik: tundub, et Mart Helmele pole sallivuskampaania sõnum kohale jõudnud”, Õhtuleht, 23 January 2020, <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/990118/tanel-kiik-tundub-et-mart-helmele-pole-sallivuskampaania-sonum-kohale-joudnud>, (Access date: 2 November 2020).

33. “Eesti Pagulasabi sotsiaalne ettevõtte Siin & Sääl alustab kultuuriürituste sarja”, Pagulasabi, 5 October 2020, <https://www.pagulasabi.ee/uudised/eesti-pagulasabi-sotsiaalne-ettevote-siin-saal-alustab-kultuuriuritude-sarja>, (Access date: 2 November 2020).

cal party currently in the government. It is therefore complicated to combat these expressions of Islamophobia, since attempts to promote tolerance are met with criticism from politicians in power. A 2019 study demonstrated that there is a link between prejudices and the country's general immigration policy – countries with a more liberal policy usually have less prejudice among the general population.³⁴ It is therefore essential to adjust the national immigration policy and stop spreading Islamophobic stereotypes on the national level.

The same study found that the size of the country's Muslim community reduces prejudices – the larger the community, the less prejudice.³⁵ Since the Estonian Muslim community is small and most Estonians have never had a personal connection with anyone from a Muslim background, it is important to keep organising events on the local level where communities with different religious and ethnic backgrounds have the opportunity to become acquainted with one another.

In addition, to ensure effective prosecution of incidents of hate speech and hate crime against Muslims and other minority groups, the Estonian Penal Code should be reviewed and necessary amendments should be adopted in order to bring Estonian legislation in line with EU law, and in particular the Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA.

Chronology

- **30.06.2020:** Minister of the Interior Mart Helme stated that the Islamic community in Estonia is “becoming more and more aggressive, more and more demanding” as they “want to get their mosques”.³⁶
- **11.09.2020:** Minister of the Interior Mart Helme claimed that there is quite a strong pressure to build mosques in Estonia, which would “become centres for radical Islam, where measures are planned that endanger members of society”.³⁷
- **25.10.2020:** A masked man dropped pig heads at the door of the Islamic Centre in Tallinn, the Embassy of Turkey, and the Embassy of Azerbaijan.³⁸

34. “Uuring: millest tulenevad eelarvamused moslemitest sisserändajate suhtes?” ERR Novaator, 12 March 2020, <https://novaator.err.ee/918988/uuring-millest-tulenevad-eelarvamused-moslemitest-sisserandajate-suhtes>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

35. Ibid.

36. Margus Mikomägi, “Mart Helme: tuuleparkidest ei piisa, peame algatama diskussiooni tuumajaama rajamise üle”, *Maaleht*, 30 June 2020, <https://maaleht.delfi.ee/uudised/intervjuu-mart-helme-tuuleparkidest-ei-piisa-peame-algatama-diskussiooni-tuumajaama-rajamise-ule?id=90312043>, (Access date: 21 October 2020)

37. Johanna-Kadri Kuusk, Triinu Laan, “Mart Helme rändepoliitikast: Eesti inimene ei tohi oma tööst ilma jääda, sest odav Ukraina tööline on juba ees”, *Õhtuleht*, 11 September 2020, <https://www.ohuleht.ee/1011836/mart-helme-randepoliitikast-est-i-inimene-ei-tohi-oma-toost-ilma-jaada-sest-odav-ukraina-tooline-on-juba-ees>, (Access date: 19 October 2020).

38. “Tallinna Islami keskuse ning Aserbaidžaaani ja Türgi saatkonna ette visati seapead”, *Reporter*, 25 October 2020, <https://reporter.elu24.ee/7094001/reporter-tallinna-islami-keskuse-ning-aserbaidzaani-ja-turgi-saatkonna-ette-visati-seapead>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

- **29.10.2020:** MEP Jaak Madison stated in response to the attacks in France that Islam is not suitable for Europe, claiming, “We have repeatedly seen in Europe in recent years how even these so-called peaceful Muslims are silent when their comrades-in-arms detonate bombs, attack the Christmas markets with lorries or cut off heads with machetes.”³⁹

39. “Jaak Madison: eurooplaste pead lendavad terroristide käe läbi, sallivuspoliitika ei hakka kunagi tööle”, Uued Uudised, 29 October 2020, <https://uueduudised.ee/uudis/maailm/jaak-madison-eurooplaste-pead-lendavad-terroristide-kae-labi-sallivuspoliitika-ei-hakka-kunagi-toole>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
FINLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

Anti-Muslim racism continues to grow and deepen its roots in Finland. Despite some positive efforts to clamp down on hate speech and ethnic agitation such as outlawing neo-Nazi associations like *Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike* (PVL) and the conviction in 2018 of the former editor of *MV-lehti*, an Islamophobic online publication, Islamophobia continues to be the elephant in the room. Some reasons for this predicament are that this racism is still played down and not given enough attention and resources by the authorities. President Sauli Niinistö's speech during the opening session of parliament in February was encouraging but also a disappointment. He said that Finland should "be resolute in opposing" anti-Semitism and racism but did not mention Islamophobia once. This should not surprise us since Yaron Nadbornik, the president of the 1,100-member-strong Jewish Community of Helsinki, said in an interview that it was only in 2018-2019 when the authorities started to recognize anti-Semitism as a problem.

On top of the suspicion that the Muslim community faces, matters have been made worse and efforts and positive steps have been stymied by the presence of an Islamophobic party, the PS, which has played an important role in the country's political scene since 2011 when it won 39 seats from 5 seats in the previous parliamentary election. Even if Islam is the second most popular religion in Finland and the first Muslims (Tatars) migrated to the country at the end of the nineteenth century, Muslims continue to be perceived as outsiders whose practices are incompatible with Finland's way of life. Considering the scant political, economic, and social power that Muslims enjoy, it's clear that Islamophobia will not recede for the time being but will grow in Finland.

Tiivistelmä

Muslimien vastainen rasismi kasvaa edelleen ja syventää juuriaan Suomessa. Huolimatta positiivisista askeleista kuten vihapuheen ja etnisen kiihottamisen haastaminen, Pohjoismaisen uusnatsiyhdistyksen (PVL) lakkauttaminen ja MV-lehden verkkojulkaisun päätoimittajan tuomitseminen (2018), on islamofobia edelleen vaiettu tosiasia. Ilmiötä ei tunnisteta tai sitä väheksytään eikä rasismin torjumiseen kiinnitetä riittävästi huomiota eikä ohjata resursseja. Tasavallan presidentti Sauli Niinistön puhe eduskunnan avajaistilaisuudessa helmikuussa 2020 oli samalla positiivinen ja myös pettymys. Hän sanoi, että Suomen on antisemitismin ja rasismin torjunnassa ”oltava päättäväinen”, mutta ei maininnut islamofobiaa. Tämän ei pitäisi yllättää meitä, koska Yaron Nadbornik, Helsingin juutalaisen 1100-jäsenisen seurakunnan puheenjohtaja kertoi haastattelussa, että vasta 2018-2019 viranomaiset alkoivat tunnustamaan antisemitismin ongelmaksi.

Muslimien epäilyksi lisäksi, hallituksen ja viranomaisten positiivisia askeleita ovat esittäneet islamofobinen puolue Perussuomalaiset, jolla on ollut näkyvä paikka Suomen politiikassa vuodesta 2011, jolloin se voitti 39 kansanedustajan paikkaa verrattuna 5 edellisiin eduskuntavaaleissa. Vaikka islam on toiseksi suurin uskonto Suomessa ja ensimmäiset muslimit (tataarit) muuttivat maahan jo 1800-luvun lopulla, muslimeja pidetään edelleen ulkopuolisina, joiden tavat ovat ristiriidassa suomalaisen elämäntavan kanssa. Ottaen huomioon muslimien oma vähäinen poliittinen, taloudellinen ja sosiaalinen valta, on selvää, ettei islamofobia vielä väisty, vaan edelleen kasvaa Suomessa.

Country Profile

EIR 2020

Country: Republic of Finland

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Form of Government: Republic

Ruling Parties: Social Democratic Party, Centre Party, Green League, Left Alliance, and Swedish People's Party.

Opposition Parties: Finns Party, National Coalition Party, Christian Democrats, Movement Now, and Parliamentary Group Ano Turtiainen.

Last Elections: 2019 Parliamentary Elections (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); 2019 European Parliament Elections (National Coalition Party: 3 seats, Green League: 2 seats, Social Democratic Party: 2 seats, Finns Party: 2 seats, Centre Party: 2 seats, and Left Alliance: 1 seat).

Total Population: 5,525,292 (31 December 2019)

Major Languages: Finnish and Swedish

Official Religion: N/A

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Police University College of Finland, which publishes suspected hate crime statistics with a one-year lag, reported that hate crimes totaled 899 cases in 2019, which is 1.21% less from 910 cases in the previous year.¹ The number of convictions in 2019 was 22 (12 cases for ethnic agitation, 10 cases for assault), but the amount of suspected ethnic agitation cases rose to 105 from 34.²

As in previous years, the lion's share (87.1%) of suspected cases were due to a person's ethnic (72.3%) or religious (14.8%) background. In the former case, Somalis suffered the most attacks (37 out of 10,000 people) followed by Turks (33-34 out of 10,000 people) and Iraqis (34 out of 10,000), which was a 50% versus 2018. As in previous years, the majority of hate crimes due to religion targeted Muslims.³ One of the questions that arises from the Police University College hate crime report is the low number of women victims compared with men victims. According to the report,

1. Jenita Rauta, "Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2019," Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 16/2020, https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/345708/Polamk_katsaus_16_Viharikos_B5_web.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

2. Ibid., p. 3, (Access date: 1 November 2020).) email correspondence with Police Inspector Måns Enqvist (23 October 2020).

3. Ibid., p. 36, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

63% of the cases involved men and 37% women. In countries like France, Muslim women are the most vulnerable, accounting for 81.5% of Islamophobic attacks. The corresponding figure for the Netherlands is over 90%, according to the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).⁴

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Some annual hate crime reports such as those by the Police University College, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Council of Europe Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman of Finland have called on Finland to take a tougher stance on hate speech and racism.

Major Religions (% of Population): Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church 3,796,918 (68.7%);⁵ Islam (est.) 110,000-120,000 (1.99% and 2.2%);⁶ Finnish Orthodox Church 56,246 (1.02%); Jehovah's Witnesses 17,083 (0.31%); Finnish Free Church 15,205 (0.28%); Catholic Church 14,224 (0.26%); Pentecostals 12,501 (0.23%); Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 3,269 (0.6%); Baptist Church 2,456 (0.04%); Buddhist 1,792 (0.03%); United Methodist Church 1,403 (0.03%); and Judaism 1,101 (0.02%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): Estimated at 110,000-120,000 (1.99% and 2.2%).

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Federation of Islamic Organisations of Finland (*Islamilaisten järjestöjen liitto*), Turun Islamilainen Yhdyskunta, Islamic Council of Finland (*Suomen Islamilainen Neuvosto*), *Resalat Islamilainen Yhdyskunta* (Resalat Islamic Society), *Suomen Islam-Seurakunta*, Helsinki Islam Keskus, *Suomen Muslimiliitto*, *Suomen Muslimien Foruumi* (Muslim Forum of Finland), *Nuoret Muslimit*, *Nuorten muslimien foorumi*, and *Amal*.

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Finland's anti-Islamophobic organizations are few, lack sufficient resources and are fragmented. Some organisations that address the social ill are the Islamic Council of Finland, Amal, the National Forum for Cooperation of Religions in Finland, *Nuoret Muslimit*, *Helsingin Muslimit*, Anti-Hate Crime Organisation Finland, Anti-Racist Forum, and Migrant Tales.

Far-Right Parties: The Finns Party (radical right), *Suomen Kansa Ensin*

Far-Right Movements: *Kansallismielisten liittouma*, *Kobti vapautta!* (formerly outlawed neo-Nazi *Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike* [PVL]), Soldiers of Odin, Finnish Defence League, *Suomen Sisu*, *Suomi Ensi* (Finland First), and *Sinimustaliike*.

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

4. European Network Against Racism (ENAR), "Muslim Women, Forgotten Women?" 2 June 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2K_SwDjCGo&feature=emb_title, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

5. Email (27.10.2020) from Jussi Sohlberg of the research center of the Finnish Evangelical Church.

6. Email (09.11.2020) from Teemu Pauha of the University of Helsinki Religion, Conflict and Dialogue Research Center.

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** In discussion.
- **Burka Ban:** No, but there have been unsuccessful attempts in parliament by Islamophobic parties like the PS to ban the burka and the niqab.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The government program of Prime Minister Sanna Marin aims to create “a more equal and equitable country where everyone is valuable and where trust in others and society augments.”⁷ A positive step in this direction was announced by Green League Minister of the Interior Maria Ohisalo, who stated that one of the aims of the government is to recruit people of different ethnic backgrounds into jobs like the police.⁸ Another positive sign was a video published in May by the government with four imams who wished everyone a “Happy Ramadan” with the additional message that social distancing should be observed during the holy month due to the Covid-19 pandemic.⁹ There are reportedly government plans in 2021 to do away with the tightening of the immigration act that occurred in 2016,¹⁰ which shortened appeal times for asylum seekers and made family reunification more difficult.



Figure 1: In an article written in 2014, Yle asked if the hijab could form part of the Finnish police uniform. Contrary to the police in Sweden and Scotland, among others, the Finnish police as of yet does not allow the use of the hijab.¹¹

In the face of these positive steps in support of the Muslim community, anti-Muslim racism continues to raise its head. This is in part fueled and spread by the PS and other opposition parties like the National Coalition Party and the Christian Demo-

7. Sanna Marin's Government Program, 2020, <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme/fair-equal-and-inclusive-finland>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).
8. Tom Kankkunen, "Mitkä ovat valmiuslain ja poikkeustilan jakamisen edellytykset? Ykkösaamu, 12 June 2020, <https://areena.yle.fi/audio/1-50511141>, (Access date: 24 October 2020).
9. Valtioneuvosto, "#suomitoimi #yhdessä," 12 May 2020, <https://twitter.com/valtioneuvosto/status/1260141757947314177>, (Access date: 25 October 2020).
10. "Amnesty International Report 2016/17", Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1048002017ENGLISH.PDF>, p. 159. (Access date: 16 January 2021).
11. Kati Leskinen, "Voisiko suomalainen poliisi näyttää tältä?" Yle, <https://yle.fi/utiset/3-7145449>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

crats. The Finnish media is another culprit that maintains and, willingly or unwillingly, promotes Islamophobia. An article in November by Finland's biggest daily, *Helsingin Sanomat*, blamed groups of violent youths of mostly "migrant backgrounds" for crimes in the capital.¹² "A person of migrant background" is a code word for Muslim or brown Finns. Even if *Helsingin Sanomat* published a subsequent article refuting its earlier claims by stating that youth crime was not rising in Helsinki and that Finland was not on course of suffering social problems with migrants like in Sweden,¹³ parties such as the PS used the news to spread their vengeful agenda of "harmful immigration" and of how the country should stop accepting asylum seekers from Muslim and African countries.¹⁴ The story created a sense of collective panic and showed once again how the "Muslim story" is an incendiary topic. A story that dominated headlines at the end of the year was the ongoing repatriation of Finnish women, who are alleged to have assisted "Isis" terrorists, and their children from the al-Hol refugee camp in Syria.¹⁵ After a year, for the first time, the Finnish government repatriated two mothers and six children from the camp.¹⁶ The repatriation has been a political hot potato that called for Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto's resignation.¹⁷ The PS and other groups received further ammunition to demonize Muslims when parliament voted to criminalize female genital cutting.¹⁸ Furthermore, the PS aims to prohibit the circumcision of boys.

Just like in many democratic Western societies, politics have become polarized in Finland as well and have come to resemble in some respects the bombastic language of former U.S. President Donald Trump who sees Muslims as a threat. The result of the U.S. presidential elections was a blow to Islamophobes and populist parties like the PS, whose politicians support Trump. PS Chairperson Jussi Halla-aho in 2019 tweeted that Trump is "the best that could have happened to the United States

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12. Yle News, "Police Seek to Soothe Concerns over Youth Violence," 10 November 2020, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/police_seek_to_soothe_concerns_over_youth_violence/11641338, (Access date: 12 November 2020).
 13. Kaisa Moilanen, "Onko Suomi matkalla Ruotsin tielle nuorten jengiväkivallassa? Asiantuntijoiden mukaan Suomella on merkittävä ero naapuriiin verrattuna, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 11 November 2020, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000007611281.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).
 14. Jukka Auramies, "Raju yhteenotto nuorisorikollisuudesta: 'Kaikki Ruotsin ongelmat tulevat Suomeen,' jos emme radikaalisti muuta linjaamme' – SDP:n mukaan Suomi ei ole Ruotsin tiellä," MTV uutiset, 11 November 2020, <https://www.mtvuutiset.fi/artikkeli/raju-yhteenotto-nuorisorikollisuudesta-kaikki-ruotsin-ongelmat-tulevat-suomeen-jos-emme-radikaalisti-muuta-linjaamme-sdp-n-mukaan-suomi-ei-ole-ruotsin-tiella/7979952?fbclid=IwAR2cPe0JKpePd4IzmIKTnhG-rh6xCIXwXhN7-UVkkOldG9ZMIrBaLgAHIko#gs.klvpk3>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).
 15. Enrique Tessieri: Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2019, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020, p. 270.
 16. Yle, "Finland Repatriates Eight Citizens from Syria", 20 December 2020, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finland_repatriates_eight_citizens_from_syria/11707855, (Access date: 16 January 2021).
 17. Yle, "Haavisto 'Relief' as Committee Finds No Basis for Prosecution", 9 December 2020, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/haavisto_relief_as_committee_finds_no_basis_for_prosecution/11689841, (Access date: 16 January 2021).
 18. Anne Orjala, "Eduskunta äänesti: Tyttöjen sukupuolielinten silpominen tehtävä rangaistavaksi vielä nykyistä selkeämmin," Yle, 6 November 2020, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11634102>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).

and the Western world.¹⁹ An unfortunate example of double standards was the Finnish parliament's failure to lift PS MP Juha Mäenpää's immunity from prosecution after he referred to asylum seekers in a parliamentary session as "an invasive species."²⁰ Contrarily, MP Ano Turtiainen was expelled from the PS parliamentary group²¹ after publicly mocking George Floyd's death.²²

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Contrary to previous years, there were no reports in 2020 of mosques being vandalised. The last person to vandalise the Oulu mosque in 2019 – this was the ninth such incident in the same year – was an unemployed Finn who was sentenced and fined 400 euros for the crime.²³ There were two cases involving violence against Muslims that received national attention: in April, an eighteen-year-old Somali Finn was killed after being stabbed in Helsinki;²⁴ and in July, a group of townspeople from Teuva in Western Finland allegedly racially harassed, chased, and physically assaulted a young Muslim, who ended up in hospital for the treatment of his wounds.²⁵ While the white Finn who killed the Somali youth was handed a five-year sentence for manslaughter, no charges were brought against the perpetrators of the Teuva incident in December and was still under investigation by the police despite it happening in June. The victim, Fares Al-Obaidl, stated, "The fact that I know nothing about my case [and the charges] gives me the impression that what happened to me isn't important to the police. Those who attacked me are walking freely with no consequences."²⁶ The evidence of the case points to a hate crime. Meanwhile, the mother and father of the Somali

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19. Enrique Tessieri, "(Migrant Tales 24.12.2020):Ask the Perussuomalaiset If They Still 'Love' US President Donald Trump", *Migrant Tales*, 7 January 2021, <https://www.migranttales.net/migrant-tales-24-12-2020-ask-the-perussuomalaiset-if-they-still-love-us-president-donald-trump/#more-58044>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).
 20. Enrique Tessieri, "Finnish Parliament Does Not Lift Juha Mäenpää's Immunity from Prosecution," *Migrant Tales*, 26 June 2019, <https://www.migranttales.net/finnish-parliament-blocks-juha-maenpaas-immunity-from-prosecution/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).
 21. Enrique Tessieri, "Closes Your Eyes and Repeat (Again): The PS of Finland Isn't a Neo-Nazi Party," *Migrant Tales*, <https://www.migranttales.net/close-your-eyes-and-repeat-again-the-ps-of-finland-isnt-a-neo-nazi-party/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).
 22. Enrique Tessieri, "Ano Turtiainen, The Finnish MP Who Mocked George Floyd's Death, Gives a Thumbs Up to Greece's 'Open Sea' Policy," *Migrant Tales*, <https://www.migranttales.net/ano-turtiainen-the-finnish-mp-who-mocked-george-floyds-death-now-greeces-outlandish-open-sea-policy/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).
 23. Telephone call (22 September 2020) with Dr. Abdul Manan, the Oulu mosque imam.
 24. Enrique Tessieri, "Keyse Abdifata Maalesh's Parents Are Unhappy with the Involuntary Manslaughter Sentence. Plan to Appeal," *Migrant Tales*, 20 September 2020, (Access date: 11 October 2020).
 25. Enrique Tessieri, "Why Is Due Justice Taking so Long in the Suspected Teuva Hate Crime Case of Finland?" *Migrant Tales*, 4 October 2020, (Access date: 11 October 2020).
 26. Enrique Tessieri, "Remember the Muslim Youth Violently Attacked by a Group of Enraged Townspeople of Teuva?" *Migrant Tales*, 11 December 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/remember-the-muslim-youth-violently-attacked-by-a-group-of-enraged-townspeople-of-teuva/>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

youth who was killed are not satisfied with the sentence. “The person [who stabbed my son] alleged that he was scared by my son’s presence, of that dark-skinned person was walking towards him down the stairs,” said the mother.²⁷



Figure 2: The car of the victim after he was attacked by a group of angry townspeople in June with a racist term for migrant sprayed on the victim’s car. The police tweeted in the summer that they have not ruled out what happened a hate crime.²⁸

Some hate crimes may even be overlooked by the police. One such case might be that of an Iraqi asylum seeker who was threatened in July 2019 with a knife in the Central Finnish town of Jämsänkoski.²⁹ According to the asylum seeker, a white Finn threatened him with a knife and called him “a f**king asylum seeker” and “f**king foreigner.” The victim said that despite having told the police about the racist slurs, which is a bias motivator in a hate crime, they were not cited in the charges. Under the Finnish Criminal Code, a bias motivator such as ethnic background is grounds for enhancement of punishment.³⁰ The suspect was sentenced to a one-month prison term and forced to pay the victim 700 euros in damages.³¹

27. Tessieri, “Keyse Abdifata Maalesh’s Parents Are Unhappy with the Involuntary Manslaughter Sentence.”

28. Enrique Tessieri, “The Assault That Happened in Teuva against a Muslim Should Be Treated as a Hate Crime,” Migrant Tales, <https://www.migranttales.net/the-assault-that-happened-in-teuva-against-a-muslim-should-be-treated-as-a-hate-crime/>, (Access date: 26 September 2020).

29. Enrique Tessieri, “When the Police Do Not See (or Want to See) Bias Motivation in a Hate Crime,” Migrant Tales, 22 September 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/when-the-police-do-not-see-or-wants-to-see-bias-motivation-in-a-hate-crime/>, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

30. See Section 5 – Grounds for Increasing the Punishment (564/2015) of the Finnish Criminal Code, https://finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1889/en18890039_20150766.pdf, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

31. Enrique Tessieri, “27-Year-Old Iraqi: an Asylum Seeker is an Animal and Becomes a Human Being in Finland Until He Gets a Residence Permit,” Migrant Tales, 22 January 2021, <https://www.migranttales.net/27-year-old-iraqi-an-asylum-seeker-is-an-animal-and-becomes-a-human-being-in-finland-until-he-gets-a-residence-permit/>, (Access date: 17 February 2021).



Figure 3: Police photo of the knife used to threaten the asylum seeker in Jämsänkoski.³²

Among the consequences of Islamophobia are the social vulnerability and poverty that impact groups like Muslims especially hard. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) said in a statement that one in four people who don't speak Finnish, Swedish, and Sami as their mother tongue have been infected by the coronavirus.³³ The proportion is especially high considering that the former group account for about 8% of Finland's total population. A case in point is when members of the Somali community were singled out and labelled in a statement by Helsinki Mayor Jan Vapaavuori.³⁴ In April, Vapaavuori said that cases among the Somali-speaking community were much higher than among the rest of the population. "Close to 200 cases have been identified to date, which translates to 1.8% of the Somali community in the capital, compared with the 0.2% average among all of Helsinki residents." The pandemic also triggered hostile reactions from the PS against the Muslim community. The tweet below by the party's secretary, Simo Grönroos, is an example.

A study by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman reinforced the findings of previous studies that showed that the majority of People of African Descent (PAD) face racism in Finland on a daily basis.³⁵ Racist encounters can occur at the workplace,

32. Police photo of the knife used to threaten the Iraqi asylum seeker.

33. The Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare (THL), "Diverse Communications and Collaboration with Key Community Representatives as Strategies to Prevent Covid-19 among Migrant Origin Populations", 4 December 2020, <https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en/-/diverse-communications-and-collaboration-with-key-community-representatives-as-strategies-to-prevent-covid-19-among-migrant-origin-persons>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

34. City of Helsinki statement, "Increase in Coronavirus Infections among Helsinki's Somali Community," 14 April 2020, <https://www.hel.fi/uutiset/en/kaupunginkanslia/coronavirus-infections-among-somali-community>, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

35. Enrique Tessieri, "Non-discrimination Ombudsman Report Reinforces That Racism against People of African Descent Is Widespread in Finland," Migrant Tales, 9 June 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/non-discrimination-ombudsman-report-reinforces-that-racism-against-people-of-african-descent-is-widespread-in-finland/>, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

school, and in public spaces. The biggest PAD group in Finland is the Somali community with some 21,920 members who speak Somali as their mother tongue.³⁶ Rainer Hiltunen, the acting Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, said that the report's findings confirm that racism is deeply rooted in Finnish society. The report stated that 67% of the respondents faced discrimination or harassment at school and 60% at the workplace. As many as 61% of respondents who were victims of racial discrimination did not report it to the authorities.



Figure 4: “Yle [Finnish Broadcasting Company] offers news briefs about (the) Corona (pandemic) in [the] Somali, Kurdish, Persian and Arabic [languages]. On morning TV, they cried out for the expansion of news [broadcasts] in foreign languages. This is not the way to go. If you want to hear news in Arabic paid by [Finnish] taxes, you should then move to a country where they speak Arabic.”³⁷

Another study by Onjen Obućina and Ilari Imakunnas revealed that poverty and overcrowded housing are more prevalent among immigrant children and vulnerable groups like Muslims than among white Finnish children.³⁸ The study, which does not correlate Islamophobia with poor living conditions,³⁹ showed that as many as 60% of migrant children had experienced poverty for at least a year during the first five years of their lives, while 45% of migrant children faced overcrowding. The corresponding figure for white Finnish children was 25%.

36. Statistics Finland, “11rl -- Language According to Age and Sex by Region, 1990-2019,” https://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11rl.px/, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

37. Simo Grönroos, Twitter, 9 April 2020, <https://twitter.com/SimoGronroos/status/1248106878346854400>, (Access date: 22 November 2020).

38. Enrique Tessieri, “Another Study That Sheds Light in Finland on Disadvantaged Migrants and Their Children,” *Migrant Tales*, 6 September 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/another-study-that-sheds-light-in-finland-on-disadvantaged-migrants-and-their-children/>, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

39. Email from Onjen Obucina (11 October 2020 published with the consent of the author), where she states the following:

- “We have no information on religion. We can identify children from predominantly Muslim countries, but we cannot be sure what share of them are actually Muslims.
- Children from Muslim countries (Iraq, Iran, Somalia) are indeed among the most vulnerable groups, especially when it comes to income poverty (although their disadvantage with respect to overcrowding is substantial as well).
- Nevertheless, it is important to point out that, given that you are writing a report on Islamophobia, we do not know whether and to what extent these results are due to discrimination (or, more particularly, due to Islamophobia). For instance, attitudes towards participation in the labor market (especially among women) may be a very important factor as well. There are, however, Finnish studies who looked at discrimination of immigrants in different social settings.”

Employment

The most recent Diversity Barometer of the Finnish Institution of Occupational Health (FIOH) states that workplace attitudes concerning diversity have changed. Today, 78% of those polled accept and encourage people to be open to difference at the workplace compared with 61% in 2011.⁴⁰ Moreover, the FIOH barometer claims that attitudes towards work-related immigration have changed with 86% of those surveyed promoting such immigration compared with 59% in early 2010. While such barometer findings are encouraging, unemployment rates tell another story about Finland's labor market, which is as racialized and segregated as in other EU countries.

The unemployment rate of people who don't speak Finnish, Swedish, or Saami as their mother tongue, stood at 19.3% in 2018 versus the national average of 8.96%, according to the latest Statistics Finland figures.⁴¹ Some of the Muslim-dominant language groups that reported the highest unemployment levels were Chechen speakers (47.7%), Arabic speakers (45%), Somali speakers (35.8%), Kurdish speakers (35.6%), Pashto Afghan speakers (35.6%), Persian-Farsi speakers (31.5%), Azerbaijani speakers (30.3%), Turkish speakers (22.5%), and Urdu speakers (17.3%). By sex, the national unemployment rate for men and women during the period under review was 10.3% and 7.6% respectively. Unemployment among Muslim women was higher than for men in the same group even if they had the same educational background. The unemployment rate for Arabic-speaking women was 60.2% and for Somali-speaking women 40.3%. The corresponding figure for men was 39.3% and 32.6% respectively. Of all the Nordic countries, Finland has performed the worst when it comes to employing migrant women. The employment rate of migrant women was 55% while for migrant men it was 72%.⁴²

Education

In Finland, religious education is compulsory in comprehensive school (7-16 years), and in senior and upper secondary school (16-19 years).⁴³ Students have the right to classes consistent with their own religious beliefs if there is a minimum of three pu-

40. Press release by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health on diversity attitudes at the workplace, 14 October 2020, <https://www.ttl.fi/en/diversity-barometer-2020-anonymous-recruitment-is-a-challenge-that-organizations-find-interesting/>, (Access date: 22 October 2020).

41. "Population by Main Type of Activity, Language, Occupational Status, Sex, Age and Year 2000-2018", Statistics Finland, https://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__tyokay/statfin_tyokay_pxt_115g.px/ (Access date: 20 September 2020).

42. "Report: Finland Trails Nordics in Employing Immigrant Women", Yle News, 22 January 2020, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/report_finland_trails_nordics_in_employing_immigrant_women/11170260?fbclid=IwAR3NliQqNCiwxxk-NHFJPbzy2wucqFA5-eMFIJIS0hxzl-Wt6iLRINRQ_cc, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

43. Suomen uskonnon-opettajain liitto ry, "Religious Education in Finland," 2019, <https://www.suol.fi/index.php/religious-education-in-finland>, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

pils from the same group. An often-heard complaint from Muslim parents is that their children are getting deficient schooling on Islam because teachers are mostly unqualified and few are Muslims, who can also be unqualified.⁴⁴ The *Salam* series, which was published by the Finnish National Agency for Education (*Opetushallitus*) for comprehensive and middle school, is a positive sign. The new *Salam* series for grades 7-9 was published in spring.

Politics

Finland has been gripped by a populist, Islamophobic party with fringe, radical-right elements ever since the parliamentary elections of 2011,⁴⁵ when the Finns Party (PS) won a historic 39 seats. An especially worrying sign for Muslims and other visible migrants and minorities in Finland is the close relationship between the PS and parties like the National Coalition Party (*Kokoomus*), the third-largest party in parliament with 38 seats. *Kokoomus*' Chairperson Petteri Orpo did not rule out the possibility of forming a government with the PS in October and accepting its chairperson, Jussi Halla-aho, as the future prime minister.⁴⁶ Such future cooperation may, however, be easier said than done. Halla-aho is a controversial figure in Finnish politics and was convicted for ethnic agitation and breaching the sanctity of religion in 2012.⁴⁷ He has a long history of Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, misogynist, and homophobic blog posts dating from the 2000s. Even if he is trying to give the impression that he has moderated his radical and racist views, many believe this to be a spoof.



Figure 5: Apart from liking U.S. President Donald Trump and Hungarian strongman Viktor Orbán, Halla-aho tweets that we'd have "no reason to masturbate" if there were no news about migration and asylum seekers.⁴⁸

44. Telephone conversation with Imam Abbas Bahmanpour. He stated that the majority of teachers teaching Islam are unqualified.

45. Enrique Tessieri, "Finland 2011 Election: A Perilous Watershed," *Migrant Tales*, 18 April 2011, <https://www.migranttales.net/finland-election-a-perilous-watershed/>, (Access date: 22 October 2020).

46. Sanna Ukkola Live 07.10.2020, AlfaTV, <https://www.permanto.fi/fi/web/alfatv/player/vod?assetId=69780400>, (Access date: 18 October 2020).

47. Yle News, "Supreme Court Orders Halla-Aho to Pay for Hate Speech," 8 June 2012, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/supreme_court_orders_halla-aho_to_pay_for_hate_speech/6171739, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

48. Jussi Halla-aho, Twitter, 22 May 2020, https://twitter.com/halla_aho/status/1263796082481475584, (Access date: 22 November 2020).

In order to understand the immigration and asylum mindset of the PS, we should cast our attention on the Danish People's Party (DPP) with which it has long-standing ties. The DPP has been instrumental in turning Denmark into one of the most Islamophobic countries in the EU. Apart from turning a blind eye to far-right elements in the party, Halla-aho, like his party secretary Simo Grönroos,⁴⁹ has stated that asylum seekers from Muslim and African countries should be stopped "because they have great difficulties in integrating" in Finland and are prone to committing crimes.⁵⁰

In many respects, the PS is a cut-and-paste job of the Islamophobic rhetoric spewed throughout Europe. One of these is fearmongering that white Finns will become a minority in the country due to asylum seekers, which is a code word for Muslim.⁵¹ At least five PS MPs are members of *Suomen Sisä*, an association that promotes the writings of former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke and Alfred Rosenberg, a Nazi war criminal hanged in Nuremberg in 1946 for crimes against humanity. The PS has ties with far-right and neo-Nazi groups like *Kansallismielisten liitouma* (KL), which was established in 2018 and has attracted party members from the far-right vigilante group Soldiers of Odin, and the now-outlawed Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL).⁵² The party's language is toxic and it commonly labels asylum seekers as "harmful migration." They go as far as to refer to asylum seekers as "an invasive species" as happened during a session of parliament.⁵³

Sometimes, the far-right and xenophobic rhetoric of the party can turn against it. This happened in July when Pekka Kataja, a PS councilor of Jämsänkoski, was brutally attacked at his home by two people. One of the suspects is in police custody for attempted murder charges and is a former member of the PS. The suspect, Teemu Torssonen, had allegedly a personal score to settle with Kataja who excluded him for running for MP in 2019 due to his far-right views.⁵⁴ In April 2021,

49. Enrique Tessieri, "What Happened in France Was Horrendous, The Reaction of Islamophobes Is Just as Bad," *Migrant Tales*, 18 October 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/what-happened-in-france-was-horrendous-the-reaction-of-islamophobes-is-just-as-bad/>, (Access date: 18 October 2020).

50. Ykkösaamu, "Jussi Halla-aho," *Yle TV1*, 7 November 2020, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50331175#autoplay=true>

51. Enrique Tessieri, "The PS and Its Riikka Purras: Spreading Hatred of Minorities and Migrants Is Ok," *Migrant Tales*, 8 August 2019, <https://www.migranttales.net/the-ps-and-its-riikka-purras-spreading-hatred-of-minorities-and-migrants-is-ok/>, (Access date: 22 October 2020).

52. Varis Antifasistinen verkosto, "Persujen ampumaharjoituskohu vain jäävuoren huippu, puolueen natsiyhteydet perattava maanlaajuisesti," 12 July 2019, <https://varisverkosto.com/2019/07/persujen-ampumaharjoituskohu-vain-jaeevuoren-huippu-puolueen-natsiyhteydet-perattava-maanlaajuisesti/>, (Access date: 19 October 2020); "KKO:2020:68 – Disbandment of an Association," Supreme Court (Korkein oikeus), 22 September 2020, <https://korkeinoikeus.fi/en/index/ennakkopaatokset/shortsummariesofselectedprecedentsinenglish/2020/kko.html>, (Access date: 18 October 2020).

53. Enrique Tessieri, "Finnish Parliament Does Not Lift Juha Mäenpää's Immunity from Prosecution," *Migrant Tales*, 26 June 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/finnish-parliament-blocks-juha-maenpaas-immunity-from-prosecution/>, (Access date: 22 October 2020).

54. Enrique Tessieri, "Pekka Kataja's Attackers Are Two Far-Right Activists. Have the Finnish Authorities Awoken to the Threat of Such Groups?" *Migrant Tales*, 11 September 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/pekka-kataja-attackers-are-two-far-right-activists-have-the-finnish-authorities-awoken-to-the-threat-of-such-groups/>, (Access date: 18 October 2020).

Finland will hold municipal elections and all eyes are on how parties like the PS will fare.



Figure 6 (left): PS MP Veikko Vallin took pictures secretly of a nursery in Helsinki and published them on social media. Some of the faces of the people and children could be recognised. He called the nursery school helper wearing a hijab “an Isis wife.” He commented sarcastically that such a dress worn by the woman was “trendy.”⁵⁵

Figure 7 (right): MP Vallin apologised for taking and publishing the pictures but stated, “I still won’t change my critical opinion of these full-body black religious dresses used at the nursery.” It should be noted that Islamophobic politicians attempt to get their message across to their voters in this way: you do or say something outrageous on social media and then apologise, but it does not matter because the story is already out there.⁵⁶

Media

A provocative story published by *Helsingin Sanomat* on youth crime in Helsinki caused a furor.⁵⁷ The daily retracted its original article 15 hours later.⁵⁸ The retraction stated that based on police statistics youth crime was declining in Helsinki and not rising as the original article claimed. Another article published following day interviewed experts who assured readers that Finland was not on the same path as Sweden concerning failed integration policies (sic).⁵⁹ The first publication brought memories of how the media handled the reporting of the Oulu sexual assault cases,⁶⁰ which fanned the

55. Veikko Vallin (via Dimitry Gurbanov), Twitter, 22 August 2020, <https://twitter.com/Dimmu141/status/1297225608498491393/photo/1>, (Access date: 22 November 2020).

56. Veikko Vallin, Twitter, 23 August 2020, <https://twitter.com/MailVeikko/status/1297543777041747969>, (Access date: 22 November 2020).

57. Kaisa Moilanen, “Onko Suomi matkalla Ruotsin tielle nuorten jengiväkivallassa? Asiantuntijoiden mukaan Suomella on merkittävä ero naapurisiin verrattuna,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 11 November 2020, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000007611281.html>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).

58. Veera Paananen, “Alaikäisten tekemien rikosten määrä Helsingissä ei ole kasvussa, paljastavat tilastot – Poliisia huolettavat ‘hatkaajat’ ja lisääntyneet teräaseet,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 10 November 2020, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000007611034.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

59. Kaisu Moilanen, “Onko Suomi matkalla Ruostin tielle nuorten jengiväkivallassa? Asiantuntijoiden mukaan Suomella on merkittävä ero naapurisiin verrattuna,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 11 November 2020, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000007611281.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

60. Enrique Tessieri, “Yle’s Coverage of the Oulu Sexual Assault Cases Is an Example of Overkill and Islamophobia,” *Migrant Tales*, 14 February 2019, <https://www.migranttales.net/yles-coverage-of-the-oulu-sexual-assault-cas->

flames of fear and Islamophobia. *Helsingin Sanomat* published a column⁶¹ two days after the first story claiming that the commotion the article had caused revealed how difficult it still is to debate migration issues in Finland. The columnist wrote that the news story did not mean to imply that all youths with so-called migrant backgrounds are criminals. Despite such retractions, the PS used the article to promote its Islamophobic agenda.

Factors like the lack of cultural and ethnic diversity ensure that the national media continue to be biased and underreport topics of importance to Muslims from their perspective. The hysteria caused by the media reports on the Oulu sexual assault cases in 2019 is a low point in Finnish journalism.⁶² Dr. Abdul Mannan said that the Oulu daily, *Kaleva*, never published any pictures of the vandalism against the mosque in that city. “The stories were small and they [*Kaleva*] never published pictures and gave little coverage [of the news],” said Dr. Mannan. “We asked the previous interior minister [Kai Mykkänen] for 30,000 euros to build a wall around the mosque but we never received the money even if the Jewish community was allocated one million euros [since 2015] to improve security.”

One has only to do a search on the *Helsingin Sanomat* website to see how little reporting there is on a topic like Islamophobia. During the first ten months of the year, only four stories were published on the topic. Three of them are from abroad and only one focuses on Finland and specifically on the topic of the Muslim LGBTQ community. The Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) does not do any better. The reporting of news that impacts the Muslim community reveals bias and that the media is part of Finland’s Islamophobia problem.

Justice System

Finland criminalised female genital cutting (FGC) and there are plans by the PS to prohibit the circumcision of boys with the help of a citizens’ initiative.⁶³ In neighboring Sweden, where FGC is criminalised as well, very few cases have appeared. The debate on the practice appeared more like an exercise in Islamophobia for the PS which strived to show its voters how incompatible Islam is with the West. Very little was mentioned about how to offer help to the victims of such a practice. On the terrorism front, Finland plans to tighten legislation concerning the financing of terrorism. If a person is found guilty of financing a terrorist group, imprisonment will rise

es-is-an-example-of-overkill-and-islamophobia/, (Access date: 20 October 2020), and Ibid., “Luottavtko vahemmistöt Suomen median?” *Karjalainen*, 15 March 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/karjalainen-luottavtko-vahemmistot-suomen-mediaan/> (Access date: 21 February 2021).

61. Lari Malmberg, “Uutinen nuorisorikollisuudesta paljasti taas maahanmuutosta keskustelemisen vaikeuden,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 12 November 2020, (Access date: 12 November 2020)

62. Tessieri, “Yle’s Coverage of the Oulu Sexual Assault Cases Is an Example of Overkill and Islamophobia” and
63. Kansalaisaloite, “Poikien sukuelinten silpomisen kieltäminen,” <https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/7482>, (Access date: 15 November 2020).

from a fine or a maximum of three years to a minimum of four months and a maximum of six years.⁶⁴

Internet

The Internet continues to be the springboard for spreading anti-Muslim racism by Islamophobic groups and parties like the PS. In 2019, Måns Enqvist of the National Board of Police of Finland said that there were at the most 10 police officers monitoring online hate speech.⁶⁵ While the number of police officers is small, the group that monitored online hate speech has been merged with other units that monitor the Internet. Enqvist said that such a decision has produced good results with ethnic agitation cases rising three times to 105 in 2019 from 34 in 2018.⁶⁶ In the face of hate speech cases, only 29 reached the district court in 2019, which was down from 31 in the previous year. All of these statistics are, however, only the tip of the iceberg. The most common platform where hate speech occurred in 2019 was clearly Facebook, but there were also cases on Twitter, YouTube, Ylilauta, and Periscope.⁶⁷ Websites that spread Islamophobia are *Suomen Uutiset* (the official newspaper of the PS); *Oikea media*; *Uusi MV-lehti*; *Nykysuomi*; *Laiton lehti*; *kansallisromantikko.fi*; and *PT-media*. Far-right and neo-Nazi sites include the Soldiers of Odin; *Kohti vapautta* (a site run by the outlawed neo-Nazi party PVL); *Kansallismielisten liittouma*; *Sinimustaliike*, a new political party; and the YouTube channel of *Monokulttuuri FM/Vihapuhe FM*. Reporting hate speech, death threats, and defamation on the Internet to the police is usually a long process and it can take months before their cases are addressed - if ever. Only a minority of such cases ever go to court.

Silakkaliike, or the Baltic Herring Movement, is an anti-racism Facebook page that was founded in December 2019. Two weeks after its launch, it had attracted over 24,000 likes on Facebook and 13,700 followers on Twitter. On 14 November 2020, *Silakkaliike* had 28,900 likes and 14,500 followers.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

All of the Finns Party's (PS) 38 lawmakers as well as Ano Turtiainen who was banned from the parliamentary group, had one matter in common: spreading and promoting Islamophobia. Some of the most "notable" representatives of this network were: Jussi Halla-aho, Riikka Purra, Ville Tavio, Laura Huhtasaari, Sanna Antikainen, Mauri Peltonkangas, Juha Mäenpää, Mari Rantanen, Veikko Vallin, and others like Matias Turk-

64. Regeringens proposition RP 135/2020 rp, https://www.eduskunta.fi/SV/vaski/HallituksenEsitys/Sidor/RP_135+2020.aspx, (Access date: 15 November 2020).

65. Enrique Tessieri: Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2019, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020.

66. Email from Måns Enqvist on 23 October 2020.

67. "Viharikosten määrän kehityminen Suomessa," yhdenvertaisuus.fi, <https://yhdenvertaisuus.fi/viharikostilastoja>, (Access date: 8 November 2020).

kila and Asseri Kinnunen, the former PS Youth leader. Others worth noting are National Coalition Party politicians like Wille Rydman, Atte Kaleva, and Seida Sohrabi; Sarah Essayah and Päivi Räsänen of the Christian Democrats; and Junnes Lokka and Tiina Wiik, far-right councilpersons of Oulu.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

If we approach the leaders of the Muslim community, many of them will state that the best way to counter Islamophobia is more contact and a candid dialogue with white Finns. While Finland's official integration policy promotes two-way adaptation in theory, in practice it is a different story. In the Nordic welfare state tradition, social equality, like gender equality, is especially promoted, but how to attain social equality is not emphasised or encouraged enough to newly arrived migrants. Erna Bodström's doctoral dissertation highlights some of the problems of the integration program, which are even worse among Muslims and people of color due to their low socio-economic status. New migrants are taught how to use social services and how to find employment but there is too little on cultural integration and how to challenge discrimination. "As for interaction [in the brochures], the texts guide the migrants to integrate first and foremost into the welfare state and not with the local citizens," Bodström writes.⁶⁸

As mentioned earlier, the rhetoric against Muslims in Finland is spread by the PS, which warns about Islamisation and how white Finns will become a minority in their country. While there is some pushback on these types of conspiracy theories, there is still not enough. This could be attributable to the fact that cultural and ethnic diversity is a relatively new phenomenon in Finland or simply to the undercurrent of well-entrenched racism in Finnish society. As the foreign population grows, we may well see a rise in racism. Compared with other EU countries, Finland's foreign-born population is still small amounting to 404,179 people in 2019 (7.3% of the total population).⁶⁹

While the aims of Prime Minister Marin's government program and sensible Finns want to tackle social inequality,⁷⁰ one good starting point would be to accept that Muslims and other minorities are here to stay and that Finland is their home.

68. Erna Bodström, "Welcome to Fantasy Finland: Integration as a Cultural Process in Information Packages of Finnish Ministries in years 2000-2018," (PhD Thesis, Helsinki University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Helsinki, 2020), p. 171.

69. Statistics Finland, "Country of Birth According to Age and Sex by Region, 1990-2019," https://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11rp.px/, (Access date: 7 November 2020).

70. Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government 2019, "Finland Will Be a More Equal and Equitable Country Where Everyone Is Valuable and Where Trust in Others and Society Augments," <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme/fair-equal-and-inclusive-finland>, (Access date: 25 October 2020).

Instead of labeling their Finnish-born children as “people of migrant background,” a language that promotes inclusion should be used. Moreover, while parties like the PS claim that people of color are a drain on taxes and a burden on society, leadership by politicians is needed to drive home the fact that it is more effective to integrate rather than to exclude groups like Muslims. The journey to a more equitable society is a long one, but the journey must begin now. Islamophobia must be challenged head on.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Even if Finland’s Muslim population is small when compared with other EU countries, it faces many of the same challenges. Below are some recommendations on how to raise public and political awareness of Islamophobia:

- Treat Islamophobia as a social ill that threatens society.
- Encourage a stronger adherence by the authorities to enforcing anti-discrimination laws.
- Allocate more resources to monitor effectively hate speech, hate crime, discrimination and racism cases in general.
- Deliver faster justice in court cases of racism, discrimination, hate speech, and hate crime.
- Instead of only advocating social equity, there should be more emphasis on promoting equity.
- Create more cultural and ethnic diversity in civil servant jobs like the police.
- Prohibit holding a public office for politicians who have been convicted of ethnic agitation or other serious crimes.
- Invest in studies that continue to reveal the toxicity and threat of Islamophobia for society.
- Promote and enforce the fact that Muslims and other minorities are equal, and encourage them to be active members of society.
- Since Muslims are also Finns, the language used to label them should change. Finns must stop referring to Muslim children as “people of foreign or migrant background”.
- Anti-racism education should be mandatory starting in comprehensive school.
- Integration is a two-way process, not a one-way process.
- Each culture has their own public space in Finland, and it should be promoted, protected and respected.

Chronology

- **28.01.2020:** “What happened [vandalising the Turku Synagogue on Holocaust Remembrance Day] is a general trend [in Finland] and should be seen in such a light,” stated Harry Serlo, a spokesperson of the Jewish Community

of Turku. “I don’t like to talk just about anti-Semitism but how all minorities are targets of such hatred [these days].”⁷¹

- **23.02.2020:** Former PS Youth Vice President, Toni Jalonen, admitted, “I am an ethnonationalist, traditionalist, and a fascist.”⁷²
- **12.06.2020:** Interior Minister Maria Ohisalo of the Green League, admitted that even if there is a lot of trust in the police, this is not the case among all minority and population groups. “The aim of the Ministry of the Interior, as well as what is written in the joint Government program, is to recruit people of different ethnic backgrounds to be trained in the police [service].”⁷³
- **17.6.2020:** An editorial in the Teuva newspaper *Tejuka* strongly condemned the attack against a young Muslim in June. “We should not allow racism under any circumstances or in any form. It is very sad that the other weekend we had to see that such [an attack] happen in 2020 Finland. Matters must change: it is the duty of the whole society to work to do away with prejudices, to accept cultural diversity, and to build a Finland that is more acceptant [of difference].”⁷⁴
- **01.10.2020:** Speaking before a session of parliament, PS Chairperson Jussi Halla-aho scapegoated Muslims by stating that their numbers are growing especially in the Helsinki region. “This demographic development worsens the municipal and state housing situation, it brings more crime and uncertainty. These are cold statistics. Immigration from Africa and the Middle East is harmful and becomes more harmful as their numbers grow.”⁷⁵
- **19.10.2020:** “If upright politicians would speak out against Islamophobia like they do against other forms of racism, it would be a big step in the right direction,” said the imam of the Resalat Islamic Society of Finland, Abbas Bahmanpour. “Unfortunately, we often see them stepping aside and making way for far-right politicians. It is time for those who have a say to step up and be a voice for the voiceless. It’s time for value-based leadership. It’s time for real leadership.”
- **20.10.2020:** “You cannot do efficient work [against Islamophobia] without proper resources. If there is no debate [in society] and nothing is done to pro-

71. Enrique Tessieri, “Turku Synagogue: The Vandalism Is a Sign of a General Trend in Finland,” *Migrant Tales*, 28 January 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/turku-synagogue-the-vandalism-is-a-sign-of-a-general-trend-in-finland/>, (Access date: 18 October 2020).

72. Enrique Tessieri, “PS Youth Vice President: ‘I Am an Ethnonationalist, Traditionalist, and a Fascist,’” *Migrant Tales*, 23 February 2020, [migranttales.net/ps-youth-vice-president-i-am-an-ethnonationalist-traditionalist-and-a-fascist/](https://www.migranttales.net/ps-youth-vice-president-i-am-an-ethnonationalist-traditionalist-and-a-fascist/), (Access date: 23 October 2020).

73. Tom Kankkunen, “Mitkä ovat valmiuslain ja poikkeustilan jakamisen edellytykset? Ykkösaamu, 12 June 2020, <https://areena.yle.fi/audio/1-50511141>, (Access date: 24 October 2020).

74. “Sivistyksen mitta,” *Tejuka*, 17 June 2020, only in print, p. 2.

75. “Eduskunnan kyselytunti to 1.10.2020”, Yle, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50331294#autoplay=true>, (Access date: 2 October 2020).

mote it [anti-racism], it will not be seen as a problem. It is a lengthy process,” said Hunderra Assefa, the representative of Young Muslims Finland (NUMU) at the advisory board on non-discrimination (*Yhdenvertaisuusasioiden neuvottelukunta*).⁷⁶

- **20.10.2020:** “There is no room in Finland for parallel societies (sic) where the laws of the land and its way of life are not respected. We seek to improve equality and our Western values – not send them backwards. For example, Finland is not an Islamic country – just to state the obvious – and Finns do not have to change their way of life. It is the other way around,” said PS MP Veikko Vallin.⁷⁷
- **21.10.2020:** “Speaking about my experiences, othering is the biggest issue that Muslims continue to face in Finland. It appears in a lot of discussions on the Internet. Muslims are not seen as “us” [by society] or even as Finns. I see this as a big problem [in 2020],” said Nuha Abuzaid, chairperson of the association Young Muslims.
- **22.10.2020:** In a session of parliament, PS MP Leena Meri asked about the Islamist suspect who beheaded the French teacher Samuel Paty.⁷⁸ “Do you plan to expel Islamist extremists from Finland like France, and how can you guarantee that nothing of the sort happens in Finland and defend freedom of expression?”
- **21.12.2020:** Social Democrat MP Hussin al-Tae responding to PS MP Riikka Purra on AlfaTV stated, “In a country founded on the rule of law, we do not distinguish who is a [real] Finn. If a person is a Finn, then he is a Finn.”⁷⁹

76. Telephone interview (20.10.2020) with Hunderra Assefa.

77. Veikko Vallin, “What Is Sustainable Migration?” Helsinki Times, 20 October 2020, <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/columns/columns/mp-talk/18193-what-is-sustainable-migration.html>, (Access date: 22.10.2020).

78. “Eduskunnan kyselytunti to 22.10.2020,” Yle, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50331291#autoplay=true>, (Access date: 23 October 2020).

79. Sanna Ukkola Live 22.12.2020, AlfaTV, https://www.permanto.fi/fi/web/alfatv/player/vod?assetId=80752455&fbclid=IwAR0fVE75VAmFVqbRjly2l0UKv63LuA3XblUJ_FXwt-Mk5gQc_cKYU5E0gwE, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
FRANCE
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The year 2020 will be remembered in France as a major turning point in terms of public policy and political discourse reminiscent of a dark period in its history. Through the latter, a complex process of otherness based on the sign of real or supposed belonging to Islam is initiated (signals of radicalisation, discourse on separatism, etc.). By otherness we mean reducing the intentions, social actions, and perceptions of real or supposed Muslims to an exclusively essentialized religious action. Indeed, this year has been marked by the debates around the bill “for the reinforcement of Republican principles”, in which many measures could be described as a serious infringement of various fundamental freedoms. President Macron has repeatedly expressed the will to create an “Islam of the Enlightenment”, an “Islam of France”. In the media, the spread of Covid-19 has been correlated with Muslims and has exacerbated already entrenched issues.

Authoritarian aberrations are becoming more and more noticeable and common this particular year, by means of procedures such as “systematic hindrance” which makes use of mechanisms provided in the SILT law (closure of places of worship, home visits), and use of other legal instruments to hinder or close down activities that are disturbing or on which there is the slightest suspicion (independent Muslim schools, places of worship, associations defending the rights of Muslims, humanitarian associations, etc.). In addition, there is a sociological phenomenon of increased “femonationalism” with the instrumentalisation of gender equality in the name of prerogatives and issues that are used for racial purposes. There is a will to show that the problem of women’s status is only concentrated in areas such as suburbs or linked to Muslim populations in order to use the feminist issue for specific purposes.

The *modus operandi* already in place was reinforced by the tragic assassination of Samuel Paty, history professor at Conflans-Sainte-Honorine. In the wake of the tragedy, humanitarian NGOs (BarakaCity), anti-racist NGOs (CCIF), schools where the Koran is taught (*Association Apprendre et Comprendre*) but also mosques (Pantin) and schools (MHS Paris) were dissolved or closed down administratively for unfounded reasons - except for their proximity to “Muslims”. Under the pretext of the fight against “radicalisation” and “separatism”, fundamental freedoms are being flouted, and this, as part of a well-orchestrated political agenda.

Note de synthèse

En 2020, la France va être le théâtre d'un tournant majeur dans les politiques publiques et les discours politiques tenus. Par ces derniers, un processus complexe d'altérisation qui s'appuie sur le signe d'appartenance réelle ou supposée à la religion musulmane est amorcé (cf. signaux faibles, discours sur le séparatisme...etc.). Par altérisation, nous entendons le fait de réduire les intentions, l'agir social, et les perceptions des musulmans réels ou supposés, à un agir religieux exclusif. En effet, cette année a été rythmée par les débats autour du projet de loi "confortant les principes républicains", dans lequel de nombreuses mesures pourraient être qualifiées d'atteinte grave à diverses libertés fondamentales. Assurément, le Président Macron est allé jusqu'à manifester la volonté de créer un « islam des lumières », un « islam de France ». La propagation de la Covid-19 elle-même a fait l'objet de corrélation avec les musulmans de France dans les médias et a exacerbé les problématiques déjà bien ancrées.

Les dérives autoritaires sont intensifiées et rythment cette année particulière, par des procédés tels que l'« entrave systématique » qui vont se servir de mécanismes prévus par la loi SILT (fermeture des lieux de culte, visites domiciliaires), et d'autres instruments de droit permettant d'entraver voire fermer les activités qui dérangent ou sur lesquelles pèsent le moindre soupçon (écoles hors-contrat musulmanes, lieux de cultes, associations de défense des droits des musulmans, associations humanitaires etc.). En outre, on observe un phénomène sociologique de « fémonationalisme » accru avec l'instrumentalisation de l'égalité homme-femme, au nom de prérogatives et d'enjeux qui sont utilisés à des fins raciales. On fait croire que le problème de la condition féminine est uniquement concentré dans des zones comme les banlieues ou lié aux populations musulmanes pour user de la question féministe à des fins particulières et motivées.

Ce mode opératoire déjà en place a été renforcé par le tragique assassinat de Samuel Paty, professeur d'histoire à Conflans Sainte Honorine. A la suite de ce dernier, ce sont des ONG humanitaires (Barakacity), de défense des droits humains (CCIF), des écoles où l'on enseigne le coran (Association Apprendre et Comprendre) mais encore des mosquées (Pantin) ou des établissements scolaires (MHS Paris) qui se sont vus dissouts ou fermés administrativement pour des motifs infondés si ce n'est leur proximité de près ou de loin avec « les musulmans ». Sous couvert de lutte contre la « radicalisation » et contre le « séparatisme » ce sont des libertés fondamentales qui sont bafouées, et cela, dans le respect d'un agenda politique bien orchestré.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: France Republic

Type of Regime: Unitary constitutional republic

Form of Government: Semi-presidential system

Ruling Parties: *La République En Marche!* (right)

Opposition Parties: *Le Rassemblement National*, *Les Républicains*, *La France Insoumise*

Last Elections: 2019 European Elections (*Le Rassemblement National* [far right] won 23.34%, *La République en Marche!* (right) 22.42%, and *Europe Ecologie les Verts* (green) 13.48%); 2017 Presidential Elections (Emmanuel Macron won 66.1% of the vote against 33.9% of far-right leader Marine Le Pen); 2017 Legislative Elections (*La République En Marche!* [Macron's right]: 297 seats; *Les Républicains* [anti-Macron's right]: 104 seats; *Mouvement Démocrate* [pro-Macron's right]: 46 seats; *Socialistes* [left - ruling party in 2012-2017]: 30 seats; UDI, *Agir et Indépendants* [right]: 27 seats; *Libertés et Territoires* [center]: 20 seats; *La France Insoumise* [far left]: 17; *Gauche démocrate et républicaine* [far left]: 16; Independent [many far right ideologues]: 20).

Total Population: 66.99 million (2019)

Major Languages: French

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The *Observatoire National de Lutte contre l'Islamophobie* recorded 235 Islamophobic acts from 1 January to 31 December 2020 (compared to 154 for the year 2019), i.e. 53% more acts. There was a 14% increase in acts and a 79% increase in threats. In addition, attacks on places of worship increased by 35%. Cemeteries were vandalised three times in 2020 compared to seven times in 2019. The regions most affected by anti-Muslim acts were Île-de-France, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA), and Rhône-Alpes. Data from the CCIF could not be collected due to its dissolution by the state.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The number of racist and xenophobic incidents increased in 2019, with 1,142 incidents recorded (compared with 496 in 2018). Most of these incidents fall under the category of "threats" (977).

Major Religions (% of Population): The compilation of official statistics based on religious beliefs is not permitted by French law. Depending on the methodology applied by the surveys, the figures may differ. For example, according to a note published in GeoConfluences, 64% of the French are Catholics (of which 4.5% regularly go to Sunday mass), 63% have no religion, 6.4% are Muslims, and 0.5% are

Jews (see various studies on this subject in “Statistiques sur la pratique religieuse en France”, GeoConfluences, December 2016).

However, according to a survey commissioned by the *Observatoire de la laïcité* at the Vivavoice Institute, 34% of people claim to belong to no religion, 3% of people feel they belong to Islam, 3% to Protestantism, 2% to Buddhism, 1% to Judaism, 1% to Orthodox Christianity, 1% others, 48% to Catholicism, and 7% of those surveyed did not wish to answer.

Muslim Population (% of Population): The compilation of official statistics based on religious beliefs is not permitted by French law. According to the Pew Research Center, the Muslim population may stand between 6 and 10.5% of the total French population.

Main Muslim Community Organisations: CFCM (*Conseil français du culte musulman*), UMF (*Union des mosquées de France*), *Islam de France*, DITIB, *Milli Görüş*, *L.E.S Musulmans*, *Association musulmane pour l’islam de France*, and *Musulmans de France* (ex-UOIF).

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: CCIF (*Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France*) which was closed by government decree in late 2020; CRI (*Coordination contre le racisme et l’islamophobie*); CJL (*Comité Justice et Libertés pour tous*); and ADM (*Action Droits des Musulmans*).

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 Militant Organisations: AFO (*Action of Operational Forces*), *Les Barjols*.

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** Ban of religious symbols including Muslim headscarf from primary school to high school (2004); The El Khomri Law (2016) now allows each French company to introduce the “principle of neutrality” into its internal regulations. In a ruling of 23 July 2019, the Lyon Administrative Court of Appeal ruled that parents of pupils, just like teachers, are required to respect the principle of neutrality during school activities organised in the classroom.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** *CJUE Arrêt C-336/19 Centraal Israëlitisch Consistorie van België e.a.* states that in order to promote animal welfare in the context of ritual slaughter, member states may, without disregarding the fundamental rights enshrined in the charter, impose a reversible stunning procedure that is not likely to result in the death of the animal.
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decisions)

- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Law 2010-1192 of 11 October 2010 prohibiting the concealment of the face in the public space, the purpose of which is to prohibit the wearing of “clothing intended to conceal one’s face”, came into force on 11 April 2011.
- **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

The year 2020 marks a turning point in Islamophobia and in the treatment of Muslims in France. The repercussions of the assassination of Samuel Paty added to the already established “systematic hindrance” and the effects of the SILT Law (Law for the reinforcement of internal security and the fight against terrorism) proved the year 2020 to be the most repressive year of the last decade for the French Muslim community. The state targeted through different means both individuals (whether they be adults or children) and Muslim establishments and associations, hence restricting individual freedoms and violating several international texts and conventions as well as a number of well-rooted human rights such as freedom of speech, religion or belief, and association.

If, for some years now, the French government has been misusing the concept of “laïcité” (French version of secularism) to make it a weapon to the disadvantage of French Muslims and Islam - leading to socio-economic exclusion of many Muslims, and in particular Muslim women wearing headscarves -, in 2020, it largely reinforced the offensive to justify more than ever the intrusion of the state in the religious and political practices of Muslims, even going so far as to create an “Islam of France” by recruiting and training imams itself and drafting a “Charter of Principles for the Islam of France”.¹

According to the latest study by the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH),² racially motivated crimes increased by 11% during 2019 with a 54% increase in Islamophobic acts compared to the previous year. The Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF)³ reported rising anti-Muslim sentiment in France and found that in 2019, there were nearly 800 anti-Muslim acts, a 77% increase in two years. The CCIF, a leading French anti-racist organisation combatting Islamophobia, would have published the data for the year 2020 like it had been doing since 2003 if it had not been targeted and dissolved by the government for denouncing state Islamophobia and as part of the generalised governmental crackdown on Muslims and associations fighting Islamophobia.

There is increasing evidence that institutions are one of the main perpetrators of racial discrimination against Muslims in France, especially since the state of emergency in 2015-2017 that was then institutionalised in common law.⁴ According to

1. “La ‘charte des principes’ de l’islam de France approuvée par la majorité des fédérations du CFCM”, *Le Figaro* 17/01/21.
2. “La lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la xénophobie année 2019”, Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme, https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/rapport_racisme_-_v_definitive_08_06_2020.pdf (Access date: 15/01/21).
3. “Rapport 2020 Islamophobie en France”, Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France, <https://www.islamophobie.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/RAPPORT-CCIF-2020.pdf> (Access date: 15/01/21).
4. “Protection of Civil Society Organisations and Human Rights Defenders Working against Structural racism in the EU - The Case of the Collective against Islamophobia in France”, ENAR, Policy Briefing, November 2020.

Amnesty International, “French authorities disproportionately targeted Muslims with heavy security measures without due process leading to long-term consequences for the targeted individuals and their family members including fear, stress and other health-related issues.”⁵ The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms shared her concern that while countering terrorism French Arab and/or Muslim communities “are being constructed as a per se ‘suspect group’ through the sustained application of counterterrorism law.”⁶

The recent developments including the horrific murder of teacher Samuel Paty have fuelled anti-Muslim rhetoric and paved the way for a legitimate and overt punishment of French Muslims through legal and illegal means. Political figures such as the Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin or the Mayor of Nice Christian Estrosi, have publicly called for the circumvention of the rule of law in order to fight “political Islam” and “Islamist separatism”.⁷ Bypassing a century’s established rule of law is dangerous enough, but bypassing it to fight notions that are vaguely defined and ravenously lack scientific and social conceptualisation is even more dangerous. Ultimately, it will only harm the French Muslim community.

Intelligence services have also mentioned they will undertake mass surveillance of a large part of the French Muslim population. Amnesty International has recently raised concerns that these new counter-terrorism measures “violate the principles of non-discrimination, non-refoulement, and the right to freedom of association”.⁸

In practice, the state has engaged in a veritable witch-hunt, and has raided and shut down dozens of Muslim establishments and associations considered a national threat or an “enemy of the Republic”. Nevertheless, Darmanin publicly admitted that those raids were only a way to send a message; in other words, combatting the so-called war on terror by terrorising and stigmatising a whole group.

In the end, the bill against separatism announced by Macron in 2020 raises concerns over the labelling of imams; the possibilities for local authorities to dissolve Islamic organisations without any legal proceeding or due process; the forbidding of any non-religious activities for religious organisations; the coercive controls on civil society organisations who work on Islamophobia; and the enlargement of headscarf bans.

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5. “France: Disproportionate Emergency Measures Leave Hundred Traumatized”, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/02/france-disproportionate-emergency-measures-leave-hundreds-traumatized/> (Access date: 15/01/21).
 6. “Preliminary Findings of the Visit: UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism Concludes Visit to France”, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23128&LangID=E> (Access date: 15/01/21).
 7. David Doukhan, “Face au terrorisme des appels à contourner l’Etat de droit”, *Le Parisien*, 29/10/20.
 8. “FRANCE: COUNTER-TERROR MEASURES FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF SAMUEL PATY RAISE HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS”, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/documents/eur21/3281/2020/en/> (Access date: 15/01/21).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The *Observatoire National de Lutte contre l'Islamophobie* (National Observatory for the Fight against Islamophobia) has just published its annual report on Islamophobic acts in France. It notes a 53% increase in such acts compared to 2019 with 235 anti-Muslim acts compared to 154 the previous year.⁹ It indicates an increase in what it describes as Islamophobic “actions” by 14%, “threats” by 79%, and “places of worship” by 35%. It notes that the geographic regions most affected by Islamophobia are Paris and its suburbs (Île-de-France), Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA), and Rhône-Alpes. Nevertheless, it points out that these figures do not reflect reality because many people in charge of places of worship do not wish to lodge a complaint, considering that investigations are rarely successful.

Indeed, several studies including the one of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights have shown the lack of confidence of victims of racism in the public authorities and that as a result they do not file complaints.¹⁰ The phenomenon of the under reporting of racist acts, including Islamophobic acts, at police stations increases the dark figure of racism and, in this case, the dark figure of Islamophobia.

The notion of a dark figure encompasses all criminal acts that are not registered and spotted by the legal system and which, thus, distort the real data of racism, inevitably entailing consequences on the victims and on society as a whole. The dark figure is an issue that antiracist organisations face daily in their fight against Islamophobia; however, surveys and reports show that this phenomenon is rampant in all forms of racism and discrimination. Several explanations are provided, in particular the lack of knowledge when it comes to the concept of discrimination. Victims and the police do not always know what discrimination is about. The same goes for the concept of Islamophobia and the definition of hate crime, among other things. Police officers who are not trained in these concepts tend not to register the complaint and/or make the complaint process difficult. The bad reception of the victims at the police stations, bad care, and the lack of confidence and mistrust in the public authorities also explain the dark figure phenomenon. The data then registered by the Ministries of the Interior in Europe and by anti-racist organisations only represents the tip of the iceberg, and hamper the proper visibility of the problem.

9. “2020: les actes islamophobes en augmentation de 53 % en France”, Mizane info, 30/01/2021.

10. “La lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la xénophobie année 2019”, Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme, https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/rapport_racisme_-_v_definitive_08_06_2020.pdf (Access date: 15/01/21).

Thus, neither the figures of the Ministry of the Interior nor even those of the *Observatoire National de l'Islamophobie* reflect the Islamophobic reality in France. The data that came closest to the Islamophobic reality was that of the *Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France* (CCIF). If the data differs between the two bodies (Ministry and CCIF), it is because the former only records complaints lodged at police stations while the latter takes into account all complaints of Islamophobia received through its hotline or website that are not necessarily reported to the police.

As a result, in 2019, the Ministry of the Interior reported 154 Islamophobic incidents¹¹ whilst the CCIF received 789 report forms referring to 1,043 Islamophobic incidents.¹²

However, for the year 2020, the CCIF has not been able to publish its annual data on Islamophobia since it has been dissolved by the government as will be discussed in the section entitled “Politics”.

This means that no detailed Islamophobic data classified by category and nature with precise analyses, like those provided by the CCIF annually, is available at the moment for France – Europe’s most Islamophobic country. Data is scarce, nonetheless, examples of physical and verbal attacks are numerous.

According to the OSCE,¹³ hate crimes are criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people. To be considered a hate crime, the offence must meet two criteria. The first is that the act constitutes an offence under criminal law. The second is that the act must have been motivated by bias.

On 18 October 2020, two days after the assassination of Samuel Paty, two veiled women were stabbed near the Eiffel Tower. The two suspects were charged for “violence in group aggravated by the use of a weapon, drunkenness, and racist remarks,” said a judicial source.¹⁴ The alleged perpetrator was placed in pre-trial detention and her friend was left free under judicial supervision, according to sources close to the case. The attack is allegedly linked to the presence of their dog, which was considered threatening to a group of women with their children, two of whom were consequently attacked. During the altercation, the main suspect pulled out a knife and stabbed the two women. According to *Le Point*,¹⁵ the case was widely reported on social networks, with some Internet users denouncing a “media silence” on this “Islamophobic” attack. The victims’ lawyer, Arié Alimi, filed a complaint for the investigation to be reclassified as “attempted murder on the grounds that the victim belonged

11. “Statistiques 2019 des actes antireligieux, antisémites, racistes et xénophobes”, Ministry of the Interior, <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/Communiqués/Statistiques-2019-des-actes-antireligieux-antisémites-racistes-et-xenophobes> (Access date: 15/01/21).

12. Ibid.

13. “What is Hate Crime?”, OSCE, <https://hatecrime.osce.org/> (Access date: 14/01/21).

14. “Femmes voilées poignardées à Paris: deux suspectes mises en examen”, *Le Point*, 22/10/20.

15. Ibid.

to a race or religion". The first victim, aged 19, was stabbed three times with a knife. The second, a 40-year-old woman, was injured by six blows, one of which punctured her lung. The attackers called both women "dirty Arabs" and told them "you are not at home here", while one of them also referred to the veil the victims wore as "that thing you have on your head". According to the victims' lawyer, "the motive is clearly racist because they targeted the veiled women and tried to tear it off." The homicidal intent is not in doubt either, since the first blow was aimed at the head.

Other Islamophobic acts such as vandalism of mosques were recorded by the CCIF in 2020. On 26 July, several tags including a swastika were found on the façade of the Agen mosque.¹⁶

On 7 August 2020, the mosque in Bron¹⁷ was burnt down and almost 100 square meters of the ground floor were totally destroyed by the fire. The fire started in a room annexed to the mosque. According to the public prosecutor, the initial findings led to favour the criminal hypothesis, given that two fires were observed in two different places on the premises. After more than two hours of intervention, the firefighters managed to bring the fire under control. The Lyon public prosecutor's office has launched an investigation into "deliberate damage caused by fire".

On 13 August 2020,¹⁸ a few days after the fire at the Bron mosque, the Essalam mosque in Lyon was also burnt down. Here again, the Lyon public prosecutor's office favoured the criminal hypothesis.

On 2 September 2020, it was the mosque of Tarbes¹⁹ that was vandalised by Islamophobic tags and cartoons representing the Prophet Muhammad. Tags such as "Islam Out" were found.

An inhabitant of La Baule (Loire-Atlantique) was sentenced to a 400 euro fine and a citizenship course by the Saint-Nazaire criminal court for his call on Facebook on 17 October to "burn down the mosque"²⁰ in Béziers (Hérault). The day after Samuel Paty's murder, the man wrote, "You want to pay tribute to him? Go and burn down the mosque of Béziers in order to spread the message that you're fed up with it."

Employment

The bill for the reinforcement of Republican principles contains several provisions specifically aimed at public services. Article 1²¹ provides for an extension of religious

16. "Agen: Une mosquée ciblée par des tags dont une croix gammée", RTL, 26/07/20.

17. "Rhône: tentative d'incendie à la mosquée de Bron", Le Parisien, 7/08/2020.

18. Anthony Faure "Incendies de mosquée à Lyon: la communauté musulmane a peur", Le Parisien, (13/08/20).

19. Salomé Vincendon "La mosquée de Tarbes vandalisée avec des tags anti-Islam et des caricatures", BFMTV, 02/09/20.

20. "400 euros d'amende pour avoir appelé à «cramer la mosquée» de Béziers sur Facebook", Le Parisien, 05/01/2021.

21. "Projet de loi n° 3649 confortant le respect des principes de la République", Assemblée nationale, 9 December 2020, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/textes/115b3649_projet-loi#tocUniqId3, (Access date: 10/01/2021).

neutrality to persons delegating public services.²² This means that the principle of religious neutrality will be extended to a large number of companies such as kindergartens, swimming pools, buses and metro networks, or casinos.

It seems that under the guise of fighting separatism, radicalisation, and communitarianism, the state wants to eliminate any sign of religious affiliation or any manifestation of opinion.

Indeed, on 4 October 2020, Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin explained on the radio Europe 1 that this measure would even allow a company to consider as serious misconduct the fact that an employee delegating a public service refuses, for example, to shake the hand of a female colleague.²³

However, it is not the only employment-related provision covered by this project. Indeed, the Minister Delegate in charge of Citizenship, Marlène Schiappa, recently declared that she wants to create a new charter of secularism to be signed by all associations receiving public subsidies.²⁴

Associations legitimately wonder about the purpose of this text in a context where the term “laïcité” (secularism) has “deviated” from its meaning and is used to stigmatise the Muslim community.

In September 2020, the city of Montpellier initiated the process. Mayor Michaël Delafosse (socialist) announced that he would make public subsidies offered to associations conditional on the signature of a seven-point document issued by the government.²⁵ He explained that this text aims to “fight against the attempts of those who think that the law of faith is superior to that of civil law.”²⁶

The compulsory ratification of the charter could lead, as presented by Delafosse and Schiappa, to a major restriction of freedoms on a national scale. It is important to remember that the associations created under the 1901 law are private.²⁷

22. Mathilde Elie et Romain Gaspar, “Séparatisme: les délégués de service public dans le collimateur”, *La Gazette*, 21/01/2021, <https://www.lagazettedescommunes.com/718199/separatisme-les-delegataires-de-service-public-dans-le-collimateur/>, (Access date: 22/01/2021).

23. Romain David, “Nous allons imposer la neutralité religieuse à tous ceux qui concourent au service public”, *promet Darmanin*, *Europe 1*, 04/10/2020, <https://www.europe1.fr/politique/nous-allons-imposer-la-neutralite-religieuse-a-tous-ceux-qui-concourent-au-service-public-promet-darmanin-3996101>, (Access date: 10/01/2021).

24. Aude Lorriaux, “Une charte de la laïcité obligatoire pour toutes les associations subventionnées”, *20minutes*, 30/07/2020, <https://www.20minutes.fr/politique/2832039-20200730-charte-laicite-obligatoire-toutes-associations-subventionnees>, (Access date: 10/01/2021).

25. Augustine Passily, “Les associations de Montpellier soumises à une charte de la laïcité”, *Reforme*, 15/09/2020 mise jour le 11/12/2020, <https://www.reforme.net/politique/2020/09/15/les-associations-de-montpellier-soumises-a-une-charte-de-la-laicite>, (Access date: 10/01/2021).

26. Françoise Deletraz, “Montpellier, première métropole à mettre en place une Charte de la laïcité”, *Le Figaro*, 18/10/2020, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/montpellier-premiere-metropole-a-mettre-en-place-une-charte-de-la-laicite-20201018>, (Access date: 11/01/2021).

27. Antoine Flandrin, “Le principe de laïcité s’impose à l’Etat, pas aux associations, ni au citoyen”, *Le Monde*, 06/11/2020, https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/11/06/le-principe-de-laicite-s-impose-a-l-etat-pas-aux-associations-ni-au-citoyen_6058763_3224.html, (Access date: 11/01/2020).

Yet, Eric Vinson, who has a doctorate degree in political science with a focus on secularism, explains that “[i]n France, it is the Republic that is secular, not society. However, associations under the 1901 law are private institutions”.²⁸ It is, therefore, Muslim organisations or those perceived as such that risk being stigmatised.

Wearing a headscarf is often the main criterion of discrimination experienced by women. A recent study on discrimination against veiled women at work in France was carried out as part of workshops of the Observatory on “Societal and Public Action”. The results of the latter show discrimination towards veiled Muslim women.²⁹ The study highlights the fact that veiled women are forced to take into account the various polemics on the veil, religion, and separatism in France. A series of semi-directive interviews were conducted with 30 veiled women between 2018 and 2020, using a qualitative method, in order to understand how veiled women integrate and combine their career plans while working with the veil.³⁰

The study of this data identified six different career bifurcation strategies: career reorientation, social downgrading, finding a welcoming company, entrepreneurial career, international mobility, and career abandonment.³¹ Among men, wearing a beard is often the main criterion of discrimination, but the Council of State has issued a decision that will allow for a clarification of the legal framework.

On 12 February 2020,³² the Council of State ruled that the beard of a civil servant does not in itself constitute a sign of ostensible manifestation of religious affiliation, not even when the agent is aware of the perception that his beard may provoke among his colleagues and service users.

In 2013, a trainee doctor was asked to trim his beard by the director of the Saint-Denis’s hospital because it was considered a religious sign. The trainee refused and the hospital terminated his agreement in February 2014. After two unfavourable judgments, the doctor whose rights had been infringed, appealed to the Council of State, which in 2020 ruled in his favour. The Council of State, in fact, decided to over-

28. Augustine Passily, “Les associations de Montpellier soumises à une charte de la laïcité”, *Reforme*, 15/09/2020 mise jour le 11/12/2020, <https://www.reforme.net/politique/2020/09/15/les-associations-de-montpellier-soumises-a-une-charte-de-la-laicite>, (Access date: 10/01/2021).

29. Sara Chenigle, François Grima and Olivier Meier, “Stigmatisation: les femmes voilées en entreprise contraintes de réorienter leurs carrières”, *The Conversation*, 07/10/2020, <https://theconversation.com/stigmatisation-les-femmes-voilees-en-entreprise-contraintes-de-reorienter-leurs-carrieres-147504>, (Access date: 12/01/2021).

30. R.H, “France: les femmes voilées discriminées dans le milieu professionnel”, *Bladi*, 09/10/2020, <https://www.bladi.net/france-femmes-voilees-discrimination,74755.html> (Access date: 12/01/2021).

31. Oussama, “Une étude démontre que les femmes voilées sont discriminées en entreprise”, *Alnas*, 08/10/2020, <https://www.alnas.fr/actualite/communaute/une-etude-demonstre-que-les-femmes-voilees-sont-discriminees-en-entreprise/?fbclid=IwAR04uruoTsnEFh6XKnIzhJTHhQDJbLPFwnqpAeFBUH39E8WXMAAtNRGMo1aA>, (Access date: 12/01/2021).

32. “Base de jurisprudence”, *Conseil d’Etat*, 12/02/2020, <https://www.conseil-etat.fr/fr/arianeweb/CE/decision/2020-02-12/418299>, (Access date :13/01/2021).

turn the Versailles administrative Court of Appeal's decision and to order Saint-Denis's Hospital to pay the doctor 3,000 euros.³³

This decision is of capital importance since it will help avoid hasty interpretations regarding the wearing of a beard or other signs that may appear religious.

According to the Human Rights Defender, "The prohibition of discrimination based on physical appearance should protect men against a ban on wearing beards at work, whether in the public or private sector."³⁴

Education

In 2020, in the field of education, Islamophobia manifested itself by a reinforcement or even a diversion of public policies aimed not at French Muslims, but rather at private institutions perceived as such. Some of its manifestations are found in cases of exclusion and harassment of young women for wearing clothes considered too "oriental", or wearing a veil at university during sports classes.

However, in terms of diverted public policies, France seems to be reoffending. Indeed, the law of 15 March 2004 which, in application of the principle of secularism, regulates the wearing of signs or clothing showing religious affiliation in public schools, middle schools, and high schools was explicit at the time. It was presented as a tool to force recalcitrant pupils to remove their veils, under the threat of disciplinary boards and expulsions. But 16 years later, the record remains the same: this law has neither set back "communitarianism" nor has it favoured access to public education for young women. Moreover, the many debates generated by this law have led to amalgams and, ultimately, have cast opprobrium on French Muslims.³⁵

Public Policies Affecting Freedom of Education

On 10 January 2020,³⁶ the circular issued by the Minister of Justice relating to the protection of secularism and the fight against radicalisation and communitarianism underlined the importance attached to the fight against the so-called school avoidance phenomenon which "paves the way to independent private schools or online

33. Coline Vazquez, "Le Conseil d'Etat donne raison au médecin limogé pour avoir porté une barbe", *L'Express*, 13/02/2020, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/justice/le-conseil-d-etat-donne-raison-au-medecin-limoge-pour-avoir-porte-une-barbe_2118195.html, (Access date: 13/01/2021).

34. "Décision-cadre 2019-205 relative aux discriminations fondées sur l'apparence physique", *Défenseur des droits*, 02/10/2019, https://juridique.defenseurdesdroits.fr/index.php?lvl=notice_display&cid=30201, (Access date: 13/01/2021).

35. Aala Abdelgadir and Vasiliki Fouka, "Political Secularism and Muslim Integration in the West: Assessing the Effects of the French Headscarf Ban", January 2019, <https://vfouka.people.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiyb-j4871/f/abdelgadirfoukajan2019.pdf>, (Access date: 14/01/2021).

36. "Circulaire relative à la protection de la laïcité et à la lutte contre la radicalisation et le communautarisme", *Ministère de la justice*, 10/01/2020, http://circulaire.legifrance.gouv.fr/pdf/2020/01/cir_44926.pdf, (Access date: 15/01/2021).

teaching, likely to constitute as many vectors fuelling communitarian fractures and future violent extremism.”

While the announcement of this circular seems laudable, the statements made by former Minister of the Interior Castaner on 12 February 2020,³⁷ during the presentation of the annual report on the law on the fight against terrorism, have only confirmed, if not aggravated, the statements made in the November circular.

Indeed, before the Law Commission, the minister of the interior announced the government’s strategy of resorting to “systematic hindrance”. Systematic hindrance uses the tools provided in the SILT law (Law for the reinforcement of internal security and the fight against terrorism), including the closure of places of worship, home visits, and other legal instruments that make it possible to obstruct activities that are considered disruptive or questionable. Some of the mechanisms include health and safety standards, social security, prefectural administrative measures, and the mobilisation of more than 15,000 private agents for the exercise of certain security measures. Those tools encourage the violation of freedom of religion of French Muslims. The minister of the interior then gave the following figures: “In the last 23 months, 15 mosques, 4 private Muslim schools, 12 religious and associative establishments, and even 152 drinking establishments have been closed down.”³⁸

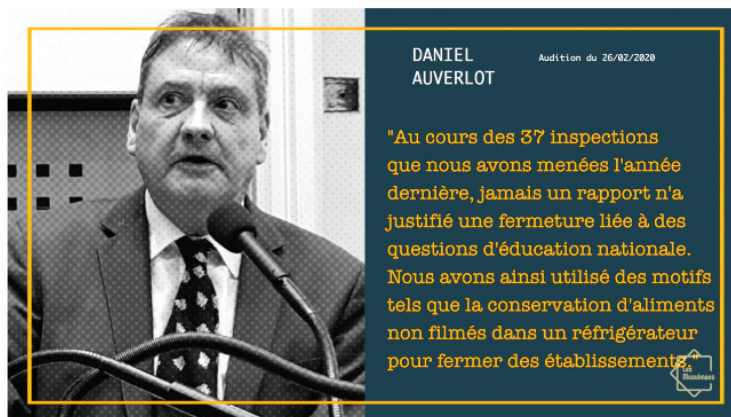


Figure 1: Daniel Auverlot’s speech at the Senate Committee.³⁹

37. “Audition de M. Christophe Castaner, ministre de l’Intérieur, sur le deuxième rapport du Gouvernement au Parlement relatif à la mise en œuvre de la loi n° 2017-1510 du 30 octobre 2017 renforçant la sécurité intérieure et la lutte contre le terrorisme (Mme Yaël Braun-Pivet, MM. Eric Ciotti et Raphaël Gauvain, rapporteurs)”, Assemblée nationale, 12/02/2020, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/comptes-rendus/cion_lois/115cion_lois1920045_compte-rendu, (Access date: 15/01/2021).

38. “Radicalisation: 4 écoles musulmanes et 7 lieux de culte fermés en un an”, L’Express, 11/04/2019, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/radicalisation-4-ecoles-musulmanes-et-7-lieux-de-culte-fermes-en-un-an_2072454.html

39. “L’état ferme les écoles musulmanes par tous les moyens: le recteur Daniel Auverlot le confirme”, Cinquième colonne, 28/06/20.

The will to target Muslim establishments is particularly apparent from the remarks made during the hearing of the Senate Committee for the fight against radicalisation whose report was published on 7 July 2020.⁴⁰ It is possible to see Daniel Auverlot, Chancellor of the Universities and Rector of the Créteil Academy, saying, “During the 37 inspections that we carried out last year, a report never justified a closure linked to questions of national education. We have used reasons such as the conservation of unsealed food in refrigerators to close down establishments.”⁴¹ (Fig. 1)

Moreover, on 19 February 2020, the Minister for Education Blanquer stated, in response to a question about the number of independent public schools and Muslim schools he had closed:

So first you have the ones you prevent from opening and then you have the ones you close. So, I prevented, for example, last year, 27 schools from opening on the basis of the Gatel Act that we had passed. This is a very important point. And I closed 4 schools last year, and I will be closing more in the next few months. Closing is harder than preventing the opening. (...) Now, we have greater legal means, but it is true that we are in a state of law and therefore there are a certain number of rules to be respected. But I say this to the mayor of Mulhouse, as I do to every mayor in France: “We are at your side in this kind of approach.”⁴²

The Gatel Act gives public authorities the possibility to oppose the opening of a private establishment on the basis of the interest of public order. However, the concept of public order in French law suffers from an insufficient conceptualisation, which leads to the possibility of a broad interpretation. Public disorder may be a disturbance of social order, security, public health and tranquillity, public morality or human dignity. The systematic nature of the refusals issued in regard to the opening of private Muslim schools, as established by the abnormally high number of these refusals, indicates that the Ministry for Education is exploiting this broad legal framework to thwart the creation of independent Muslim schools.

On 8 October 2020 in Bobigny, the association *Apprendre & Comprendre* (Learn & Understand),⁴³ which offers children the opportunity to learn the Koran, received a decree of closure for a period of one month, notably because it was accused of be-

40. “Commission d’enquête sur la radicalisation islamiste et les moyens de la combattre”; “Rapport de Mme Jacqueline EUSTACHE-BRINIO, fait au nom de la commission d’enquête”, Sénat, 07/07/2020, <http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2019/r19-595-1-notice.html> (Access date: 15/01/2021).

41. “Commission de la honte”, Les Musulmans, 25/06/2020, <https://lesmusulmans.fr/videos/commissiondela-honte/>, (Access date: 15/01/2020).

42. “Interview de M. Jean-Michel Blanquer, ministre de l’éducation nationale et de la jeunesse, à France Info le 19 février 2020, sur le “séparatisme islamiste” et le déroulement des épreuves du nouveau bac”, Vie publique, 21/02/2020, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/273820-jean-michel-blanquer-19022020-separatisme-islamiste-nouveau-bac>, (Access date: 16/01/2021).

43. “Le CCIF annonce la réouverture de l’association Apprendre & Comprendre”, Medyaturk, 24/11/2020, <https://www.medyaturk.info/france/2020/11/24/le-ccif-annonce-la-reouverture-de-lassociation-apprendre-comprendre/>, (Access date: 16/01/2020).

ing a “clandestine school”.⁴⁴ The association totally refuted this characterisation. The president of the association refused to sign the order and called on the CCIF to lodge an application for interim measures. At the time of the closure, the ministry’s spokesperson justified the decision by saying, “The girls were veiled and the teachers were all dressed in religious clothing and the Koran was being taught.”⁴⁵ This process caused a real uproar on social media.

Indeed, during a television interview, Darmanin admitted having carried out these operations to “get a message across.”⁴⁶ “While waiting to change the laws through the project ‘reinforcing Republican principles’, the government is ready to threaten and challenge the rule of law, even if it means demonstrating this drift on an international scale,” he said.

In May 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry for Education and Youth disseminated a fact sheet entitled “Covid-19 and Sectarian Aberrations”.⁴⁷ It states that the civil servants of national education are requested to

Identify the situations of pupils at risk of sectarian aberrations. As children are dependent on their environment, attention must therefore be paid to pupils whose legal guardians, followers of certain ideologies or beliefs, are reticent or opposed to the recommendations made in terms of public health: circumventing lockdown for gatherings, refusing treatment, medical examinations or blood tests, etc.⁴⁸

Teachers are thus obliged to report any withdrawal behaviour they witness. These records are of concern because of their infringement of many fundamental freedoms such as freedom of opinion, speech, and religion or belief. In addition, they can be the vehicle for many abusive reports.

The bill aiming at strengthening secularism and reinforcing Republican values⁴⁹ puts an end to homeschooling. The bill has conveyed many emotions, reactions, and debates for its various provisions, including the one that aims to end homeschool-

44. H.H. avec V.G. et J.-M.D., “Bobigny : une école clandestine accueillant des dizaines d’enfants fermée”, *Le Parisien*, 08/10/2020, <https://www.leparisien.fr/seine-saint-denis-93/bobigny-une-ecole-clandestine-accueillant-des-dizaines-d-enfants-fermee-08-10-2020-8399259.php>, (Access date: le 15/01/2021).

45. Ministère de l’intérieur, Twitter, 09/10/2020, https://twitter.com/Interieur_Gouv/status/1314618260579647489?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1314618260579647489%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%26ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.medyaturk.info%2F-france%2F2020%2F11%2F24%2Fle-ccif-annonce-la-reouverture-de-lassociation-apprendre-comprendre%2F, (Access date: 15/01/2021).

46. “Lutte contre l’islamisme. Gérald Darmanin annonce des opérations de police en cours”, *Ouest-France*, 19/10/2020, <https://www.ouest-france.fr/politique/gerald-darmanin/lutte-contre-l-islamisme-gerald-darmanin-annonce-des-operations-de-police-en-cours-7020739>, (Access date: 15/01/2021).

47. “Coronavirus et risques de replis communautaristes”, Ministère de l’éducation nationale et de la jeunesse, May 2020, https://www.ac-paris.fr/portail/upload/docs/application/pdf/2020-05/fiche-replis-communautaires_1280695.pdf (Access date: 10/01/2021).

48. *Ibid.*

49. “Projet de loi confortant les principes de la République”, *Assemblée nationale*, 09/12/2020, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/textes/l15b3649_projet-loi, (Access date: 15/12/2020).

ing for all children from the age of three (except for medical reasons). Public debates around this article also reveal the willingness of the French government to re-enrol Muslim children in school establishments denying them the opportunity to be homeschooled.

Indeed, Agnes Thill, French MP, said in an interview when asked whether the government is taking advantage of this bill to have greater control over children's education: "Yes, I think it is taking advantage of this health crisis where people are focused on survival and cannot mobilise. (...) The law against separatism must reinforce Republican principles, and the laudable objective is to fight against the teaching of rigorist Islam. But Article 21 punishes everyone, including those who are totally virtuous with their children, who declare themselves, and accept controls."⁵⁰

Indeed, the article "establishes the principle of compulsory schooling for all children aged between 3 and 16 in a school establishment at the beginning of the 2021 school year." Home schooling by parents, which would only concern around 50,000 children,⁵¹ would become the exception if the text is adopted, moving from a simple declaration system to a much more restrictive authorisation system.

Discriminations

It has been noted that discrimination due to the wearing of the headscarf persisted in 2020. During the summer, students at the University of Lille reported the discrimination they suffered from a sports professor. The young women were conditioned access to English boxing classes on the removal of their veil or turban.⁵²

In a sound recording, the professor was heard giving discriminatory explanations: "In combat sports, I don't take women with veil. There are other classes elsewhere, it's fine if other teachers accept veiled women but I don't, and I do whatever I want." In the end, he repeated the words "health" and "safety".

Although the legal framework is clear in this type of situation, for the University of Lille this case reveals "an error of appreciation on the part of a professor," explains Nicolas Postel, the University's First Vice-President. He went on to say, "And it shows that the teachers were clearly not sufficiently equipped to apply the law properly."

However, we note that it is not possible to qualify this as an error of appreciation, as the record provided by the female students reveals a clear willingness to re-

50. Alexis Colin, "Agnès Thill : «La loi sur le séparatisme supprime cette liberté d'enseignement qu'est l'instruction en famille»", *L'incorrect*, 19/01/2021, <https://lincorrect.org/agnes-thill-la-loi-sur-le-separatisme-supprime-tout-simplement-cette-liberte-denseignement-quest-linstruction-en-famille-lincorrect/>, (Access date: 20/01/2021).

51. Huffpost, "Qui sont ces 50 000 élèves qui font l'école à la maison?", *Terrafemina*, 09/10/2020, https://www.terrafemina.com/article/ecole-a-la-maison-qui-sont-les-50-000-eleves-concernes_a355414/, (Access date: 12/12/2020).

52. Elodie Rabé, "À l'université de Lille, des étudiantes refusées en cours de sport parce qu'elles portent le voile", *La voix du nord*, 18/06/2020. <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/766706/article/2020-06-18/l-universite-de-lille-des-etudiantes-refusees-en-cours-de-sport-parce-qu-elles>, (Access date: 10/01/2021).

ject these young women because of their veil. The CCIF explained at the time that this incident was far from being isolated.⁵³

Eventually, a few days after the tribute paid to Samuel Paty, the teacher of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine's middle school, the Minister for Education hammered the point home on RTL (French radio): when it comes to attacks on secularism, no teacher is unaware of what their superiors expect of them – “No incident should go unreported.”⁵⁴

As a result, nearly 800 incidents relating to a student body of 12 million have been reported in the margins of this tribute, according to a report released by the Ministry for Education on 3 December. The figures show that among those “situations of violation of the principle of secularism”, 48% of these incidents took place in secondary school, 23% in primary school, 18% in general and technological high school, and 11% in vocational high school. Most of the incidents (90%) were committed by pupils, and around sixty incidents involved parents.⁵⁵

Massive number of reports are made by schools and illustrate a lack of dialogue, understanding, and a certain psychosis fuelled by the government for the benefit of a society of vigilance and denunciation. It is because of these systematic reports that children found themselves arrested by the police, for comments that they are sometimes not even aware they have made.

As an example, on 5 November, four 10-year-old pupils in Albertville were arrested at their home.⁵⁶ During the homage to Samuel Paty, the children had reportedly expressed their dissatisfaction in class about the use of cartoons towards the Prophet of Islam by the late teacher. Reported by the school to the authorities, these remarks were qualified as an apology for terrorism and justified four searches, the hearing, and the detention of the children for almost 11 hours. This procedure is justified by the government as “without any disturbance of public order”.

In the south of France, several pupils including two middle school pupils and one high school pupil were taken into police custody - one of them for having said “that they were fed up with flouting Islam.”⁵⁷

53. Gilles Durand, “Lille: Interdite de boxe à cause d'un foulard, une étudiante brise le tabou d'une discrimination”, 20 minutes, 06/07/2020, <https://www.20minutes.fr/lille/2815699-20200706-lille-interdite-boxe-cause-foulard-etudiante-brise-tabou-discrimination>, (Access date: 16/01/2021).

54. Mattea Battaglia, “Après l'assassinat de Samuel Paty, le ‘dilemme’ des enseignants face aux signalements”, Le Monde, 18/11/2020, https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/11/18/apres-l-assassinat-de-samuel-paty-le-dilemme-des-enseignants-face-aux-signalements_6060183_3224.html, (Access date: 27/12/2020).

55. “Assassinat de Samuel Pat : près de 800 incidents pendant la minute de silence ont été signalés, en majorité dans les collèges”, France info, 03/12/2020, https://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/terrorisme/enseignant-de-capite-dans-les-yvelines/assassinat-de-samuel-paty-pres-de-800-incidents-pendant-la-minute-de-silence-ont-ete-signales-en-majorite-dans-les-colleges_4205891.html, (Access date: 28/12/2020).

56. Ümit Dönmez, “France: 4 enfants de 10 ans ‘terrorisés’ par la police pendant 11h pour ‘apologie du terrorisme’”, Anadolu Agency, 05/11/2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/monde/france-4-enfants-de-10-ans-terrorises-par-la-police-pendant-11h-pour-apologie-du-terrorisme-/2033750>, (Access date: 23/01/2021).

57. Raphael Maillouchon, “Hommage à Samuel Paty: plusieurs élèves en garde à vue après des incidents dans les bouches-du-Rhône”, BFMTV, 03/11/2020, <https://www.bfmtv.com/police-justice/hommage-a-samuel-paty->

These two examples may raise questions about the excessiveness of the procedures and the force used when dealing with statements made by children of such an early age.

Politics

In 2019, two years after his election and in the wake of a terrorist attack killing 4 police officers, Macron promoted a “society of vigilance”⁵⁸ against the “Islamist hydra”, calling for the “automatic reporting” of anyone suspected of “radicalisation”, providing a list of “weak signals” to identify them. Those include growing a beard, the regular and ostentatious practice of ritual prayer, eating halal food, a rigorous religious practice, particularly exacerbated during the month of Ramadan, etc.⁵⁹

In October 2020, Macron announced his plan “against separatism”, which transparently focuses on the political, ideological, theological, and financial control of Muslim communities. This was massively rejected by grassroots organisations and local communities. However, Macron secured the support of the traditional CFCM (French Council for Muslim Faith), by threatening to replace them if they do not comply and do not sign the charter of principles for French Islam.

The plan against separatism includes:⁶⁰

- Mandatory registration and approval of imams by the state.
- Powers granted to local authorities to dissolve Islamic organisations without any legal proceedings.
- Taxing hajj to finance “anti-radicalisation” programmes.
- Prohibition of any non-religious activities for religious organisations.
- Coercive controls on all Islamic organisations (use of sanitary, security, tax, and legal inspections to close organisations which do not support the government).

In October 2020, after the murder of the teacher Samuel Paty, the government exploited the murder for racist purposes. The far right called for revenge. The government followed and designated two organisations as “the enemy of the Republic”: the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) and BarakaCity. The government wanted to raid 123 Muslim homes and organisations (56 raids had already been conducted). Minister of Interior Darmanin admitted that those had

plusieurs-eleves-en-garde-a-vue-apres-des-incidents-dans-les-bouches-du-rhone_AN-202011030297.html. (Access date: 21/01/2021).

58. “La République en actes: discours du Président de la République sur le thème de la lutte contre les séparatismes”, Elysée, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/10/02/la-republique-en-actes-discours-du-president-de-la-republique-sur-le-theme-de-la-lutte-contre-les-separatismes> (Access date: 29/12/20).

59. “Un document pour repérer les ‘signaux faibles’ de radicalisation crée une polémique à l’université Cergy” Ouest France 1/10/19.

60. “Projet de loi confortant les principes de la République”, Vie Publique, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/loi/277621-loi-separatisme-confortant-le-respect-des-principes-de-la-republique> (Access date: 29/12/20).

nothing to do with the assassination of Samuel Paty but were solely conducted to “send a message”.⁶¹

The Dissolution of the CCIF and BarakaCity

The *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF, Collective Against Islamophobia in France) is a leading human rights organisation, specialised in supporting victims of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism, collecting data on Islamophobia in France, and raising awareness about the phenomenon. Created in 2003, the organisation was recognised nationally and had 10,500 members and 15 regional offices. They had supported around 4,000 victims in the last five years and established strong institutional partnerships both nationally (French equality body *Défenseur des Droits*, CNCDH) and internationally (UN, Council of Europe, European Commission, European Parliament). The CCIF was also active in building cross-group alliances through its membership at ENAR and the French anti-racist platform together with Black, Roma, and Jewish organisations. Civil society organisations like the CCIF are essential in a democratic society, especially as they defend a highly discriminated group by using and promoting peaceful and legal methods.

On 16 October 2020, Samuel Paty, a history teacher at Conflans-Sainte-Honorine middle school, was murdered for showing his students Charlie Hebdo's cartoons embodying the naked Prophet Muhammad. A father of a student outraged by the teacher's act posted a video on social networks calling for the resignation or dismissal of Samuel Paty, and also filed a complaint at the police station. After posting the video, the angry parent called the CCIF phone line to explain the teacher's actions, which he described as Islamophobic, and mentioned the video posted online. The CCIF's legal assistant then expressly instructed him to remove the video, saying that it would only aggravate the situation and could be turned against him. However, the parent did not remove it. On its part, the CCIF did not open any file.

However, the French government instrumentalised the heinous murder for political purposes and publicly declared on all television channels that the CCIF is the enemy of the Republic and that it is involved in the campaign of harassment that led to the murder of Samuel Paty. The government declared that it wanted to dissolve the CCIF as soon as possible. As a result of these slanderous accusations, tens of thousands of death threats and insults were received by the CCIF on social networks. This outpour of hatred endangered the members of the CCIF who no longer felt safe. However, the CCIF defended itself from the false accusations made against it and its involvement in the murder of Samuel Paty was quickly dismantled by the press. Indeed, the accusations were not based on any factual or legal reality. They were clearly an attempt to criminalise the fight against Islamophobia by exploiting a ter-

61. “Assassinat de Samuel Paty: on vous décrypte les annonces de Gérald Darmanin”, France Info, 20/10/20.

rorist act and the national emotion. Under the guise of freedom of expression, the French government wanted to muzzle all speech that called into question its effectiveness or even its involvement in endemic Islamophobia in France. In fact, the CCIF, supported by statistical data it collected every year, did not fail to denounce state Islamophobia. Continuing its fight against “separatism” and “radicalisation”, the government has taken repressive and undemocratic public measures which have had the sole merit of fuelling withdrawal, isolation, and rejection.

After attempting to demonise the CCIF by calling it “an Islamist backroom that does not condemn the attacks”,⁶² and implicating it in Paty’s murder, Darmanin was forced to admit publicly that the CCIF was ultimately not involved in the teacher’s murder, but that the government still had the will to dissolve the CCIF, which it considered to be an “enemy of the Republic”. The government, then, no longer hesitated to resort to defamation of the CCIF, which had several times and through several channels condemned the terrorist act as well as those that followed in Nice. Once the procedure had been set in motion and following an initial meeting in the Council of Ministers, the government spokesperson declared that the government was still determined to dissolve the CCIF but considered that this would require substantial legal work. In other words, the government had no tangible legal basis for dissolving the CCIF since the latter had never been condemned or acted illegally. Its sole crime was to denounce Islamophobia in France and especially state Islamophobia, and to defend the rights of French Muslims through French law.

After the long legal work was announced, the government finally sent a notice of dissolution to the CCIF on the grounds of apology for terrorism and public order disturbance. There is no legal basis for the notice and most of the accusations are spurious. In the notice, one can read for example that “the leaders of the association, past and present, are supporters of a radical Islam, in line with the Muslim Brotherhood, whether its successive presidents, its former treasurer, Abdelhakim Séfrioui, founder of the collective Sheikh Yassin, its spokesman Marwan Muhammad, or some leaders of local branches of the CCIF.”⁶³ Accusations that the CCIF has publicly refuted by explaining that it was not at all linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and that this is not the first time they have publicly attested that this accusation is simply slander. Above all, the CCIF declared that Abdelhakim Séfrioui was neither the treasurer nor an employee, a member, or even an adherent of the CCIF, and that the government undoubtedly confuses the CCIF with the CIF, the “Council of Imams of France”. In their view, this error is evidence of the government’s incompetence or its bad faith. In another of its accusations, the government accuses the CCIF of being both friendly

62. “Le CCIF est ‘une officine islamiste’ qui oeuvre ‘contre la République’, estime Gérald Darmanin”, *Le Figaro*, 27/10/20.

63. CCIF, <https://www.islamophobie.net/les-nombreuses-contre-verites-sur-le-ccif/>, (Access date: 30/12/20).

to the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism, two diametrically opposed movements of which the CCIF is not a member, as it has repeatedly stated. On its social networks, the CCIF dismantled each of the accusations contained in the notice of dissolution. They demonstrated that it was based on unfounded, biased, or misleading elements.

On 26 October, following the violent backlash on social media and the sentiment of physical insecurity felt by its members, the CCIF decided to activate a major plan to deploy a large portion of its activities abroad.⁶⁴ As a result, the CCIF said that the dissolution notice received on 19 November was not applicable, since it no longer exists as a structure in France. The various actions that were at that time still being implemented were merely related to the liquidation procedure.

On 29 October, the Board of Directors⁶⁵ announced the voluntary dissolution of the CCIF. They stated that their assets had been transferred to partner associations that will take over the fight against Islamophobia at the European level.

Despite this, with a decree on 2 December, the government decided to dissolve an already dissolved association.

Using the authority under Article L212-1 of the Internal Security Code, the government alleged that the CCIF's activities provoke or propagate theories tending to encourage or justify discrimination, hate, or violence on the basis of a person or group's origin, ethnicity, nationality, race, or religion, and that it has engaged in actions aimed at provoking acts of terrorism in France or abroad. The fact that an organisation describes certain counterterrorism measures as Islamophobic should not be equated with spreading or supporting ideas that can give rise to acts of hatred, discrimination, or violence. The reasoning provided in the decree of 2 December suggests that the French government's decision is based on this misguided and dangerous conflation.

Human Rights Watch, alongside other international and French human rights organisations and lawyers, have found the work of CCIF important in documenting the discriminatory impact of counterterrorism measures.

According to Human Rights Watch,⁶⁶ the French government's decision to shut down a leading anti-discrimination group threatens basic human rights and liberties including freedom of expression, association, and religion, and the principle of non-discrimination. "Shutting down an organisation that raises legitimate concerns about anti-Muslim prejudice is blaming the messenger rather than addressing existing discrimination."⁶⁷

64. Ibid.

65. "Communiqué final", CCIF, <http://www.islamophobie.net/plan/> (Access date: 18/01/21).

66. "France: Dissolving Anti-Discrimination Group Threatens Rights", Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/04/france-dissolving-anti-discrimination-group-threatens-rights# 04/12/20>

67. "FRANCE: COUNTER-TERROR MEASURES FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF SAMUEL PATY RAISE HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS", Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/documents/eur21/3281/2020/en/> (Access date 01/01/21).

The analysis that can be made of this situation is the government's clear willingness to keep a tight grip on Islamophobia and to muzzle it. Darmanin repeatedly emphasised that the CCIF was fighting against “state Islamophobia” and that this was unacceptable. The government decided to overstep its rights, using violations of a number of human rights and circumventing the rule of law as explicitly stated on several occasions by several political figures including Darmanin and Estrosi (Nice's mayor), for political purposes: to muzzle the discourse denouncing structural Islamophobia in France. The CCIF episode is a perfect example of the will and plan of the French government to criminalise Muslims and the fight against Islamophobia. The CCIF has never ceased to present itself as an anti-racist association that promotes human rights, and not as a religious association, and has never ceased to refute this false accusation. However, the CCIF has never ceased to be accused of being Islamist clerics and to be perceived as a religious association. This desire to confuse the two notions illustrates the idea that it is a problem in France to be in charge of an association fighting racism when the people in charge are racialised people.

Consequently, you are no longer judged on your expertise or on what you have denounced, but you are attacked on your sociocultural and religious background; you are no longer an equal actor, but rather an enemy of the Republic. This happened with the CCIF, but the CCIF is not an isolated case. Myriam Pougetoux, Vice-President of UNEF (*Union nationale des étudiants de France*, National Union of Students of France), was taken to task during her hearing at the National Assembly by deputies who decided to boycott the session because she was wearing a veil.⁶⁸ The young woman was present to talk about the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on children and youth, but it was not her expertise that was noticed – it was her veil. (Fig. 2)



Figure 2: Myriam Pougetoux during her hearing at the National Assembly.⁶⁹

68. Romain Herreros, “Maryam Pougetoux, l’étudiante voilée à l’Assemblée divise (encore) la majorité”, HuffPost, 18/09/20.

69. “Qui est Maryam Pougetoux, vice-présidente de l’Unef qui s’est présentée voilée à l’Assemblée?”, LCI, 18/09/20.

According to Amnesty International, the dissolution of an organisation is an extreme measure that can be justified only in very limited circumstances. For example, according to European human rights law, a dissolution may be justified in light of a close and direct connection between an organisation and a crime or the engagement of an organisation in activities that constitute an imminent infringement of the rights of others or that fundamentally reject democratic institutions and the rule of law. According to Amnesty International, the dissolution of the CCIF would be a blow to the right to freedom of association and would have a chilling effect for all human rights defenders engaged in combating racism and discrimination. The French authorities have failed to provide to date any evidence that could justify the dissolution of the organisation. Nothing shows that the CCIF is a clear and imminent danger to national security or public order, which could justify its dissolution.

To conclude, French law does not provide for proper due process before the dissolution of associations, which is in violation of human rights standards and can be extremely damaging to civil society and human rights defenders. As the European Human Rights Law points out, the dissolution of an association in Europe is an exceptional restriction of the freedom of association that must always be a measure of last resort, based on strong legal grounds, and compliant with human rights standards.⁷⁰ In addition, it must be proven necessary and not target dissent or punish individual actions. If the French government wants to fight terrorism, it cannot conflate it with the policing and criminalisation of Muslims and those who defend their fundamental rights. The French government has an obligation to protect freedom of expression and association in its territory, and must refrain from unlawful measures that effectively deny these rights to a segment of society in the name of protecting these very rights.

Another human rights leading organisation which suffered from the governmental criminalisation of French Muslims is BarakaCity. BarakaCity is a humanitarian and charitable association based on Islamic values, which aims to help the most destitute populations in France and internationally through humanitarian development and social aid operations in France and around the world. BarakaCity participates in the elaboration of sustainable development projects, and conducts research and actions aimed at preventing and halting serious violations of all the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights texts. They are specialised in food emergencies, health crises, medical emergencies, water-related problems (construction of wells, sanitation, repairs, etc.), the care of refugees, reconstruction and rehabilitation of buildings and infrastructure (hospitals, schools, etc.), and the implementation of sustainable projects (agriculture, livestock, industries, etc.).

70. "When and How Associations Can Be Dissolved?", ECNL, 3/11/20.

However, since the start of October 2020, BarakaCity has come under increasing pressure from the government. Its offices were raided by elite security forces.⁷¹ The president of BarakaCity Idriss Sihamedi was arrested and detained on two occasions.⁷² The French government publicly declared BarakaCity as an “enemy of the Republic”.⁷³ Their bank accounts were frozen without any warning. On 28 October, BarakaCity was dissolved before the Council of Ministers.



Figure 3: Pictures of the raid conducted at the home of the president of BarakaCity, Idriss Sihamedi.⁷⁴

The decree pronouncing its dissolution reproached it as propagating “ideas advocating radical Islamism”.⁷⁵ “Through the personal Twitter account of its president, as well as the association’s Facebook and Twitter accounts, it disseminates and invites the dissemination of hateful, discriminatory and violent ideas,” the decree continued. The lawyers of the NGO announced that they received a mandate to “urgently challenge before the Council of State” the decision of the Council of Ministers.

The president of the association proved that a terrorism investigation had been launched from 2015 to 2019 and it concluded that Idriss Sihamedi had never been linked to any terrorist group. In fact, Sihamedi was targeted by the government following a series of tweets he posted that questioned the integrity of certain political

71. Sihame Assbague, Twitter, 14/10/20, https://twitter.com/s_assbague/status/1316268487724146689 (Access date: 02/01/21).

72. BarakaCity International, Twitter, 14/10/20, <https://twitter.com/barakacity/status/1316268830428102657> (Access date: 02/01/20).

73. “CCIF, BarakaCity... Darmanin souhaite la dissolution d’associations ‘ennemies de la République’”, *Le Figaro*, 19/10/20.

74. BarakaCity, Twitter, “Perquisitions ce matin au domicile du Président de Barakacity”, 14/10/20, (Access date: 11/01/21).

75. “Le Conseil d’Etat confirme la dissolution de BarakaCity et la fermeture de la mosquée de Pantin”, *Le Monde*, 25/11/20.

figures. Sihamedi's tweets (self-described as a "whistle-blower") were then supported by irrefutable evidence against those targeted. Following the publication of the tweets, the two political figures targeted by the president of the association filed a complaint for harassment. This was followed by a violent search of Sihamedi's home, where he was assaulted, as evidenced by the photos of his face and home on his Twitter account. (Fig. 3)

BarakaCity's premises were also searched because the government established a direct link between the isolated acts of the association's president and the association itself. Based on the assessment of the isolated acts of BarakaCity's president, and without any causal link between the activities of the individual and the association, the French government, still in the wake of the instrumentalisation of national emotion following the assassination of Samuel Paty, without any strong legal basis dissolved a world-renowned humanitarian association that cleaned up water in poor countries.

Government Crackdown on French Muslims

A repressive Islamophobic public policy implemented on the entire national territory

In 2018, French governance issued a new public policy entitled "systematic hindrance",⁷⁶ which aims to prevent acts of terror and the rise of "radicalisation". From 2018 to late 2019, that method was unofficial, unknown to the public and restricted to specific areas. It was publicly mentioned for the very first time by Christophe Castaner, the former Minister of the Interior, on 12 February 2020, when questioned by the Constitutional Laws Commission. On that day, he announced this method was to be generalised to the entire national territory.

In order to facilitate the general implementation, on 27 November 2019, the government created the Departmental Cells against Islamism and Social Withdrawal, whose purpose is the supervision and application of "systematic hindrance".

The starting date of the public policy was also unknown until 13 October 2020, when the Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin presented an overview of its results.⁷⁷ From February 2018 to October 2020, 356 "sites" were closed down: public houses, mosques, Islamic schools, and cultural establishments. Moreover, the SILT law, which was established to prevent acts of terror, permitted the temporary closure of 7 mosques from 2018 to February 2020.

76. "Commission des lois constitutionnelles, de la législation et de l'administration générale de la République", Assemblée Nationale, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/comptes-rendus/cion_lois/l15cion_lois1920045_compte-rendu.pdf (Access date: 20/01/21).

77. "Conférence de presse commune de Gérald Darmanin et Marlène Schiappa du 13 octobre: le dossier de presse", Ministère de l'Intérieur, <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Espace-presse/Dossiers-de-presse/Conference-de-presse-commune-de-Gerald-Darmanin-et-Marlene-Schiappa-du-13-octobre-le-dossier-de-presse> (Access date 20/01/21).

Furthermore, Darmanin announced the closure of 73 “sites of radicalisation” in 2020 only. In one month, 650 controls took place.⁷⁸ It is necessary to recall that “radicalisation” is a notion which is not clearly defined. The sociological dynamics leading a man or a woman (whatever their religion) to commit violent crimes is still to be fully apprehended and understood. That specific knowledge is still being researched: it is then very unlikely that any state can establish and implement efficient and non-abusive policies based on knowledge which does not exist, or is still being discussed by academics. Moreover, the range of indicators used by state actors only describe peaceful and common Islamic practices. Therefore, it is only a natural conclusion to believe Muslims are targeted because of their Muslimness. The Islamophobic characteristic of the policy objectively derives from the reasoning and thinking process used by the state whilst it established it. Hence, the numbers revealed are thought-provoking: the extremely high cases of closures and controls demonstrate the willingness to harass an entire community or, as the Minister of the Interior stated at a later date, the willingness to “send a message”.

The repercussions of Samuel Paty’s murder

After the horrible murder of Samuel Paty, an already difficult situation has been aggravated. The terrible act strengthened the state in its methodology, rather than creating a will to understand its errors. Instead of establishing an atmosphere of comprehension and calmness, extreme actions have been undertaken.

In a primary school in Albertville (Savoie), 4 Muslim children aged 10 were questioned and held in a police station for more than 10 hours, accused by their teacher of condoning the murder and, therefore, of having indulged in making apologies for terrorism.⁷⁹

The state closed down the Pantin Mosque accusing it of having a role in the murder since the latter had notably relayed on its Facebook page a video denouncing Samuel Paty’s course on the cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed. The state also dissolved a major humanitarian NGO, BarakaCity, considering that “the incriminated remarks of the president of the association can be attributed to the association itself and constitute speech inciting discrimination, hatred or violence, which can justify dissolution.” Indeed, the Council of State confirmed the dissolution of the humanitarian association BarakaCity and the closure of the Pantin mosque on 25 November 2020. In both cases, the judge of the Council of State rejected the requests for suspension.⁸⁰

78. “Lutte contre le séparatisme: deux lieux de “radicalisation” fermés dans l’Hérault en septembre”, *Midi Libre*, 13/10/20.

79. Bastien, “Quatre enfants de 10 ans arrêtés à Albertville pour ‘apologie du terrorisme’”, *Libération*, 6/11/20.

80. “Le Conseil d’Etat confirme la dissolution de BarakaCity et la fermeture de la mosquée de Pantin”, *La dépêche*, 25/11/2020, <https://www.ladepeche.fr/2020/11/25/le-conseil-detat-confirme-la-dissolution-de-barakacity-et-la-fermeture-de-la-mosquee-9220733.php>, (Access date: 02/01/2021).

In addition, the independent Muslim school Meo High School in Paris 19e was closed while the board insured that it complied with the rules of the French national education system. It is difficult to see this new closure as a mere “coincidence”. Indeed, its closure took place when the bill “reinforcing Republican principles” ‘was presented to the Council of Ministers on Wednesday, 9 December 2020, one of the key educational measures of which concerns the reinforced supervision of private schools (1,700 structures, 85,000 pupils). The Police Headquarters and the Paris Public Prosecutor’s Office announced, in a joint communiqué, the closure in the following words: “It is a high school with ‘Muslim ethics’. Since its opening in 2015, it has been subject to four administrative controls, which have highlighted its community roots”. The school had been on the radar of the departmental unit for the fight against Islamism and community withdrawal for some time, without specifying the factual reproaches made to this establishment.⁸¹

A prayer room in Thiers (Puy-de-Dôme) and eight other prayer rooms and mosques were closed, including eight for administrative reasons, according to the Minister of the Interior Darmanin, before the start of the parliamentary debate on the bill “reinforcing Republican principles”. He added, “Of the 18 places of worship which were under particular surveillance at my request, 9 were able to be closed.”⁸²



Figure 4: Muslim establishments shut down on Darmanin’s order.⁸³

81. “La fermeture de l’école MHS à Paris entraîne des incompréhensions”, 11/12/2020, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/education/20201211.OBS37402/la-fermeture-de-l-ecole-mhs-a-paris-entraîne-des-incompréhensions.html>, (Access date: 15/12/2020).

82. Solene Barlot, “Puy-de-Dôme: une salle de prière de Thiers fermée pour défaut des normes de sécurité”, France Info, 18/01/2021, <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/auvergne-rhone-alpes/puy-de-dome/thiers/puy-dome-salle-priere-thiers-fermee-defaut-normes-securite-1916416.html>, (Access date: 21/01/2021).

83. Gérald Darmanin, Twitter, “Séparatisme, neuf mosquées fermées en un mois”, 15/01/21 (Access date: 15/01/21).

These statements demonstrate that all means are being used to close down places of worship or other places with any kind of connection to the Muslim community. Indeed, in his statements on Twitter Darmanin states that he is taking “determined action against Islamist separatism.” (Fig. 4) Nevertheless, it is still important to note that we are faced with a new demonstration of “systematic hindrance” as eight of these places have been closed for administrative reasons.⁸⁴

Islamophobic Political discourses

Islamophobia can be described as a political phenomenon which has become part of French governance. In other words, it cannot be exclusively correlated to a specific political party: the narratives expressed are widely shared by the entire political spectrum. Hence, the ideological consensus leads to the implementation of discriminatory public policies. Islamophobic discourses ultimately become normative.

In February 2020, the ex-Minister of the Interior Christophe Castaner was heard by a Parliament Commission. He was asked to report on the application of a law voted in 2017, which aims to prevent acts of terror. During his hearing, Castaner highlighted the plan applied by his administration to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism, and the results obtained in the last 23 months. The plan was entitled “Systematic Hindrance”. Here are some extracts of his hearing:⁸⁵

In particular, I would like to stress that I have asked prefects and law enforcement agencies to step up their action in the fight against radicalisation and to make it a priority. In this respect, fifteen priority neighbourhoods have been identified and all the incubators of hatred that we could find have been tracked down. We have achieved promising results, and we must now extend them. This is why I have asked that the measures put in place, and the so-called systematic hindrance method deployed in these neighbourhoods, be generalised to the whole territory.

This plan led to the closure of 152 drinking establishments, 15 places of worship - including 2 under the SILT law -, 4 schools, and 12 religious, and associative establishments.⁸⁶

Since radicalisation (which has not been defined scientifically) is established through a range of indicators describing peaceful and common Islamic practices,

84. Gerald Darmanin, Twitter, 15/01/2021, https://twitter.com/GDarmanin/status/1350165513582899202?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1350165513582899202%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ffrance3-regions.francetvinfo.fr%2Fauvergne-rhone-alpes%2Fpuy-de-dome%2Fthiers%2Fpuy-dome-salle-priere-thiers-fermee-default-normes-securite-1916416.html, (Access date: 16/01/2021).

85. “Commission des lois constitutionnelles, de la législation et de l’administration générale de la République”, Assemblée Nationale, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/comptes-rendus/cion_lois/l15cion_lois1920045_compte-rendu.pdf (Access date: 20/01/21).

86. Ibid.

“systematic hindrance” must be understood as a plan sanctioning Muslim individuals (as well as legal entities run by Muslims) because of their Muslimness.

On 18 February, President Macron gave a speech on “Islamist Separatism”, a non-demonstrated sociological and political phenomenon he described in these words:⁸⁷

This is why our enemy is, in this respect, separatism, that is to say this phenomenon we witnessed for decades which is a will to leave the Republic, to no longer respect its rules, a movement of withdrawal which, because of beliefs and belonging, aims to leave the Republican field, and that is not acceptable.

The following day, Minister for Education Jean-Michel Blanquer, answering a journalist’s question regarding the number of Muslim private schools closed by the government, announced his refusal to open 27 schools and the closing of 4 existing schools.

These three political discourses, by the head of the state and two ministers, announced the renewed willingness of the state to reshape the everyday life of the Muslim community. Moreover, it highlighted how the public policies adopted were driven by a strong securitarian and restrictive approach to the religious freedom of an entire minority.

Nevertheless, some political actors believed these announcements were not nearly enough, demonstrating their blind and almost fanatical approach to the issues regarding Muslim’s religious freedom. Marine Le Pen, head of the far-right party, wrote a letter to the minister of the interior after an imam in Lyon performed the Islamic call to prayer during the pandemic as a gesture of national solidarity and support (churches rang their bells for the Annunciation the same day). She expressed her disapproval in these terms:

We are thus witnessing a new escalation in the illegal occupation of the public domain by groups that seek to seize every opportunity to reject the principles of laicism of our Republic and thus openly defy the Republican state.⁸⁸

G rard Darmanin was appointed as minister of the interior on 6 July 2020. Two days later, he addressed the National Assembly defining “political Islam” as “a mortal enemy to the Republic”.⁸⁹ He tried to define radicalisation in August as “a sectarian excess of religion”. He outlined how “France represented the promotion of a secularised Islam”, demonstrating once again the state’s willingness to reshape the beliefs

87. “Prot ger les libert s en luttant contre le s paratisme islamiste : conf rence de presse du Pr sident Emmanuel Macron   Mulhouse”, Elys e, 18/02/20, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/18/protoger-les-libertes-en-luttant-contre-le-separatisme-islamiste-conference-de-presse-du-president-emmanuel-macron-a-mulhouse>

88. “Appels   la pri re islamique: Marine Le Pen d nonce ‘une nouvelle escalade’”, *Le Figaro*, 04/04/20.

89. “Pour G rard Darmanin, l’islam politique est ‘un ennemi mortel pour la R publique’”, *Ouest France*, 08/07/20.

and teachings of Islam. Marlène Schiappa, delegated minister, discussed the future Anti-Separatism Law on 13 September. She declared how the state's struggle against separatism was not only a legal issue, but also a "cultural struggle".⁹⁰

On 2 October, Emmanuel Macron finally announced the dispositions included in the Anti-Separatism Law. Here are some extracts of his speech, entitled "The Republic in Action".⁹¹

The problem is Islamist separatism. It is a conscious, theorised, politico-religious project, which takes the form of repeated deviations from the values of the Republic, which often results in the constitution of a counter-society and whose manifestations are the dropping out of school of children, the development of communities sporting and cultural practices which are the pretext for teaching principles that do not conform to the laws of the Republic. It is indoctrination and through it, the negation of our principles, equality between women and men, human dignity. The problem is this ideology, which asserts that its own laws are superior to those of the Republic.

As we said, Islamophobic discourses should never be seen as a mere electoral communication with limited concrete applications. The year started with the announcement of the strengthening of a severe and freedom-destroying public policy, namely "systematic hindrance", along with the classical "war on terror" narrative. The state, through its different bodies and representatives, tried to convince the public of its fundamental interest in fighting extremism and terror, and of its efficiency in doing so.

Covid-19 exacerbating Islamophobia

From March to April 2020, the overcrowding of mortuaries in France with bodies of deceased Muslims who had died from the Covid-19 virus was commonplace.⁹² As a result, Muslim officials sounded the alarm about the lack of Muslim areas in communal cemeteries. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted a problem that had not been sufficiently addressed. Previously, 80% of French Muslims preferred to bury their deceased in their country of origin, regardless of its location (Sub-Saharan Africa, Maghreb, etc.). Nevertheless, the closure of airspace and the suppression of international flights put a brutal end to this practice.⁹³

90. Olivier Beaumont et Jean-Michel Décugis "Gérald Darmanin et Marlène Schiappa: 'La France est malade de son insécurité'", *Le Parisien*, 06/09/20.

91. "Protéger les libertés en luttant contre le séparatisme islamiste: conférence de presse du Président Emmanuel Macron à Mulhouse", *Elysée*, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/18/protoger-les-libertes-en-luttant-contre-le-separatisme-islamiste-conference-de-presse-du-president-emmanuel-macron-a-mulhouse>

92. Randa Takieddine, "Victims of COVID-19 Fill Muslim Cemeteries in France", *The Muslim Times*, 19/05/2020, <https://themuslimtimes.info/2020/05/19/victims-of-covid-19-fill-muslim-cemeteries-in-france/>

93. Isabelle Piroux, "Coronavirus : l'épidémie révèle le manque criant de carrés musulmans dans les cimetières franciliens", *France bleu*, 04/05/2020, <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/societe/coronavirus-l-epidemie-revele-le-manque-criant-de-carres-musulmans-dans-les-cimetieres-franciliens-1588513850>, (Access date: 12/01/2021)



Figure 5: Mosque of Paris calls for the creation of new spaces for Muslims in cemeteries.⁹⁴

In a press release dated 13 April, the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) called for “urgent intervention by the public authorities” and asked the mayors in charge of managing the cemeteries to take “responsibility for the suffering and pain of those families who have lost a loved one and who find themselves in great difficulty burying their dead.”⁹⁵ (Fig. 5)

According to CFCM figures, there are about 300 Muslim areas in cemeteries in France, each with about 100 places. On 23 April 2020, during an audio conference, the CFCM asked Macron to create new spaces.⁹⁶

Mayors such as those of the cities of Gennevilliers or Mantes-la-Jolie⁹⁷ have enlarged the pre-existing Muslim areas in cemeteries, others have undertaken to do so, and yet others such as Dominique Baert, mayor of Wattrelos, categorically refuse to create such sites. Indeed, the latter was approached by the Human Rights League (LDH) of Roubaix for the creation of a Muslim area in one of the cemeteries of Wattrelos, but he firmly opposed it, explaining that it is “a non-case”.⁹⁸

The Muslim community in France thus found itself confronted with a double pain: the loss of loved ones, to which were added the difficulties, if not the impossibility, of carrying out religious funeral rites or simply burying the deceased.

94. Hafiz Chems-eddine, Twitter, “La mosquée de Paris appelle à la création de nouveaux espaces d’inhumation pour les musulmans”, 12/04/20, (Access date: 15/12/20).

95. “N’ajoutons pas à la douleur des familles, la souffrance de ne pas pouvoir honorer leurs morts”, CFCM, 13/04/2020, <https://www.cfc-officiel.fr/najoutons-pas-a-la-douleur-des-familles-la-souffrance-de-ne-pas-pouvoir-honorer-leurs-morts/>, (Access date: 09/01/2021).

96. “Coronavirus: face au manque de places, des responsables musulmans appellent à créer de nouveaux espaces d’inhumation”, France Info, 14/04/2020, https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sante/maladie/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-a-la-saturation-les-responsables-musulmans-appellent-a-creer-de-nouveaux-espaces-d-inhumation_3914639.html, (Access date: 09/01/2021).

97. “Coronavirus: Gennevilliers contraint d’agrandir son carré musulman”, Le Parisien, 25/04/2020, <https://www.leparisien.fr/hauts-de-seine-92/coronavirus-gennevilliers-contraint-d-agrandir-son-carre-musulman-25-04-2020-8305800.php>, (Access date: 15/01/2021).

98. Aurélie Jobard, “Dominique Baert refuse la création d’un carré musulman dans les cimetières de Wattrelos”, La Voix du Nord, 16/06/2020, <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/765583/article/2020-06-16/wattrelos-pourquoi-dominique-baert-refuse-la-creation-d-un-carre-musulman-dans>, (Access date: 09/01/2021).

The other discriminatory element that arose during the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 was the management of religious holidays. Indeed, on 4 May 2020, the former prime minister declared, “I had indicated that it would be necessary to wait until 2 June for services and prayers in places of worship to open again to believers. Many worshippers have made proposals to reconcile the conduct of their meetings with the demands of physical distancing. I know, in particular, that the period from 29 May to 1 June corresponds, for several cults, to feasts or important stages in the religious calendar. This is why, if the health situation does not deteriorate during the first weeks of the lifting of the lockdown, the government is prepared to study the possibility of religious services resuming in 29 May.”⁹⁹

Indeed, it is surprising that the government did not consider the celebration of Eid (a religious celebration of the Muslim faith) which should have been celebrated less than a week (the weekend of 24 May 2020) before the celebration of Pentecost.

However, a cross-reading of the judge’s decision in the context of an appeal by several Christian authorities on 11 May 2020 against the CCIF’s appeal on 22 May 2020, i.e. only 10 days later, raises questions as to the differential treatment by the court toward the different religions.

Indeed, in the context of the appeal by the Christian bodies seeking the amendment of the government provisions prohibiting assembly and meetings in places of worship, the judge ordered the government “to amend, within eight days of notification of this order, pursuant to Article L. 3131-15 of the public Health Code, Provision III of Article 10 of Decree No. 2020-548 of 11 May 2020,¹⁰⁰ by taking measures strictly proportionate to the health risks incurred and appropriate to the circumstances of time and place applicable at the start of the deconfinement, to regulate gatherings and meetings in places of worship.”

However, when it comes to the legal proceedings launched by the CCIF, the urgency is rejected by the judge, who only retains the declarations of the CFCM to reject the urgency. The latter had affirmed “its appeal to the Muslims of France to watch over the last nights of Ramadan in our homes” then declared that “given the health situation in our country, the resumption of religious ceremonies in the mosques, which must be gradual, cannot take place on the occasion of large gatherings such as Eid or Friday prayers.”¹⁰¹

99. H.D, “Les offices religieux pourraient reprendre à partir du 29 mai au lieu du 2 juin”, *La Voix du Nord*, 04/05/2020, <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/748234/article/2020-05-04/coronavirus-les-offices-religieux-pourraient-reprendre-partir-du-29-mai-au-lieu>, (Access date: 21/01/2021).

100. Conseil d’État, Juge des référés, 18/05/2020, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/ceta/id/CETATEXT000041897157/>, (Access date: 21/01/2021).

101. Conseil d’État, 22/05/2020, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/ceta/id/CETATEXT000041920166/>, (Access date: 21/01/2021).

Therefore, on reading these two decisions, it is easy to see that the word of the Muslim community is ignored in favour of that of the CFCM, a body which the majority of Muslims in France do not recognise, and that two different religious holidays taking place less than a week apart are treated significantly differently by the court.

The issues of cemeteries and religious celebrations are not the only problems that have risen during the pandemic. Others have simply been exacerbated.

Indeed, the pre-existing inequalities within working-class neighbourhoods were aggravated and deepened by the Covid-19 pandemic. The department of Seine-Saint-Denis is the poorest department of France and has a very large Muslim population, perhaps the largest in France. The latter was the most affected by the pandemic with a mortality rate of +130% between 1 March and 27 April 2020. This very high mortality rate can be explained by a department that is much less medically equipped than others, inevitably leading to unequal access to healthcare.

Beyond the lack of information on government health measures linked to a digital divide that is present in these neighbourhoods, the population living in Seine-Saint-Denis is the population most exposed to the risk of contamination because it provides the necessary goods and services during the lockdown. Indeed, it should be noted that a large number of healthcare workers, garbage collectors, supermarket employees, housekeepers, delivery staff, and workers are Muslims that come from Seine-Saint-Denis. These people, whose activities do not allow them to work from home, have had no other choice but to continue to run the French economy by going to work, being in contact with a large public, and thus allowing the more privileged to access what they need.¹⁰²

Camille Polloni, a journalist at *Mediapart*, stated in this respect that “the causes of this over-representation of minorities among serious cases and deaths due to coronavirus are multiple and interrelated, but for the most part already known. They have little to do with genetic factors, but much to do with the socio-economic status of racialised people in the countries concerned. People from ethnic minorities are highly represented among the lowest paid occupations involving permanent contact with the public. They are more likely to live in dense urban areas, sometimes in overcrowded housing. As the American cardiologist Clyde W. Yancy writes, a combination of factors deprived African Americans of the ‘privilege’ of being able to stop working or to do so at a distance, withdraw from social life and limit their contacts.”¹⁰³

102. “Coronavirus: une surmortalité très élevée en Seine-Saint-Denis”, *Le Monde*, 18/05/2020, https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/05/17/coronavirus-une-surmortalite-tres-elevee-en-seine-saint-denis_6039910_3224.html, (Access date: 21/01/2021).

103. Camille Polloni, “Covid-19 et minorités: un non-dit français”, *Médiapart*, 15/05/2020, https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/150520/covid-19-et-minorites-un-non-dit-francais?page_article=2, (Access date: 21/01/2021).

Affected by a higher mortality rate and greater economic insecurity, these neighbourhoods are also targeted by the police.

On 23 April, in an interview with RMC, Castaner stated that 220,000 checks had been carried out in Seine-Saint-Denis, i.e. “more than double the national average”. The newspaper *Libération* also published data from the Ministry of the Interior indicating that the rate of fines in the same department is three times higher than the national average, 17% compared to 5.9%.¹⁰⁴

Tension then rises in the suburbs where “targeted and violent police checks” have been taking place every day since the beginning of the lockdown. In fact, a multitude of inhabitants of working-class suburbs denounced police violence, with supporting videos, during checks.

On 19 March, in Aubervilliers in Seine-Saint-Denis, the young Ramatoulaye, a 19-year - old veiled woman, was controlled by the police after running some errands.

She declared, “I showed them my handwritten certificate and the eight policemen made fun of me.” The tone quickly escalated and “degrading” insults started flying. Luckily, a neighbour filmed the scene from his window in which a policeman is seen using his taser for no apparent reason. The young woman collapsed and tried to get up again and was then violently pinned to the ground. (Fig. 7) The young woman was taken away and placed in a cell for one hour. Following the violence, she was given 5-day medical leave from a doctor.



Figure 7: Video of a young veiled woman beaten by the police.¹⁰⁵

104. Emmanuel Fansten, “Confinement: en Seine-Saint-Denis, un taux de verbalisation trois fois plus important qu’ailleurs”, *Libération*, 26/04/2020, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/04/26/confinement-en-seine-saint-denis-un-taux-de-verbalisation-trois-fois-plus-important-qu-ailleurs_1786462, (Access date: 22/01/2021).

105. l’Ananass, Twitter, “bavure contre une adolescente voilée”, 19/03/20, (Access date: 16/12/20).

On 23 March 2020, one week after the beginning of the lockdown in France, Yassin, 30 years old, posted a video. “They smashed my head twice against the wall and hit me with a Flash-Ball.” (Fig. 8)

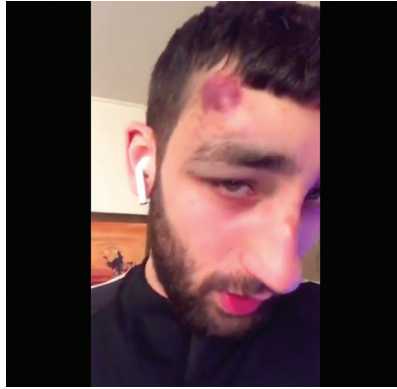


Figure 8: Man hit by the police with a Flash-Ball.¹⁰⁶

These two testimonies are only the visible tip of the iceberg of systemic discrimination practiced by the police since long before the start of the pandemic. This discrimination, however, has been exacerbated by the lockdown triggered by the health crisis.¹⁰⁷

Former Defender of Rights (Ombudsman) Jacques Toubon denounced the “systemic discrimination” practiced by the police just before the end of his mandate.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, a landmark decision taken by the Defender of Rights in 2020 recognises and describes systemic discrimination and discriminatory harassment in relation to repeated acts of checks, searches, abuse, racist insults, arbitrary detention, etc. by police officers against “the undesirable people” (in the words of the police) in Paris (12th arrondissement).¹⁰⁹

For Michel Kokoreff, professor of sociology at the University of Paris-VIII-Vincennes-Saint-Denis, the police cultivate a form of impunity in working-class neighbourhoods, even more visible during the pandemic.¹¹⁰

106. Léa Guedj “Confinement: plusieurs personnes affirment avoir été brutalisées et insultées lors de contrôles de police”, France Inter, 5/04/20.

107. “Vidéos. En banlieue, des habitants dénoncent des violences policières pendant le confinement”, Sud Ouest, 10/04/2020, <https://www.sudouest.fr/2020/04/10/videos-en-banlieue-des-habitants-denoncent-des-violences-policieres-pendant-le-confinement-7402028-4697.php>, (Access date: 22/01/2021).

108. “Le Défenseur des droits dénonce un cas de ‘discrimination systémique’ par la police”, Libération, 02/06/2020, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/06/02/le-defenseur-des-droits-denonce-un-cas-de-discrimination-systemique-par-la-police_1790094, (Access date: 22/01/2021).

109. Pascale Pascariello, “Le Défenseur des droits dénonce la discrimination systémique pratiquée par la police”, Médiapart, 02/06/2020, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/020620/le-defenseur-des-droits-denonce-la-discrimination-systemique-pratiquée-par-la-police?onglet=full>, (Access date: 22/01/2021).

110. “Michel Kokoreff: ‘es territoires jouent le rôle de boucs émissaires’”, Libération, 21/04/2020, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/04/21/ces-territoires-jouent-le-role-de-boucs-emissaires_1785978, (Access date: 23/01/2021).

Media

Two days after the beginning of the lockdown, i.e. 19 March 2020, Eric Zemmour, a French polemicist and racist, declared on French television that according to an “official” source, the measures of social distancing would not be respected by “Africans” who, at the sight of a revolt against the police, shouted, “It’s a white man’s disease, we are protected by Allah.”¹¹¹

The correlations made by people between Muslims and Covid-19 continue. On 11 May 2020, Professor Pascal Astagneau, infectologist at the Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital answered the question “Is spitting in the street dangerous for others?” by saying, “Then, of course, there are stories related to religious rites, Ramadan for example...” referring to the urban legend that says that Muslim cannot swallow their saliva during Ramadan.¹¹²

This year again, the media tried to steer public opinion through a strong stigmatisation of Muslims on unfounded issues and by making far-fetched correlations. They covered up priority issues behind polemical and discriminatory topics based on false information. They manipulated information by showing non-compliance with measures advocated during the deconfinement by showing videos of young people from precarious neighbourhoods, but at the same time not showing the quays of the Seine or the crowded parks in Paris.

To date, it is very important to note that there is no independent body in charge or capable of regulating hate speech on French television channels. The *Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel*, the watchdog for television channels, is seeing reports multiply, but its credibility is diminishing due to the lightness of its warnings. It has no deterrent effect, which leaves the entire field open for media to outbid each other in the dissemination of hate.

Justice System

The bill aiming at strengthening secularism and reinforcing Republican principles was presented to the Council of Ministers on 9 December 2020. The Minister of Interior presented a multidisciplinary approach and recommended the implementation of the following measures:¹¹³

- The neutrality of public services, even when they are provided by private individuals, by giving the public authorities the means to act when it is not respected. This bill would therefore make it possible to enshrine in legislation

111. “Eric Zemmour: ‘les africains (en banlieue) disent que c’est une maladie de Blancs, qu’ils sont protégés par Allah’”, Issue, 20/03/2020, <https://issues.fr/eric-zemmour-africains-coronavirus-allah/>, (Access date: 24/01/2021).

112. “VIDEO Morandini Live: un médecin choque avec ses propos hallucinants sur le Ramadan”, Msn, 11/05/2020, <https://www.msn.com/fr-fr/divertissement/celebrites/video-morandini-live-un-m%C3%A9decin-choque-avec-ses-propos-hallucinants-sur-le-ramadan/ar-BB13UzFi>, (Access date: 24/01/2021).

113. “Projet de loi confortant le respect des principes de la République”, Assemblée Nationale, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/textes/115b3649_projet-loi, (Access date: 03/01/21).

obligations related to the neutrality of private law agents entrusted with a public service mission. In addition, it would provide the means for the delegator to enforce the delegate's obligations of neutrality. For example, a prayer room within the premises of a private body, whether a delegate or a public service provider, would therefore be prohibited.

- The notion of “Republican deficiency” which allows the prefect to suspend the decisions or actions of a local organism that seriously disregards the neutrality of the public service, under the supervision of the administrative judge (examples: schedules in swimming pools, selection of books in municipal libraries). This would result in extending neutrality to users of public services.
- To ensure that associations benefiting from public funding and resources respect Republican principles and values, and intend to fight more effectively against associations that “disregard” the laws of the Republic. The bill plans to broaden the grounds for the dissolution of these associations in the Council of Ministers. It also provides for combatting separatism by putting an end to homeschooling for all children from the age of three (except in the case of medical reasons), as well as strengthening the supervision of independent private schools (teaching content, staff career paths, funding). The bill thus strengthens measures that already existed unofficially under the guise of monitoring health, safety, and other legal mechanisms targeting mainly Muslim schools.
- To go back on the principles of the law of 9 December 1905 for the organisation of religions by reinforcing the supervision of religious associations through the application of new obligations such as the “labelling of imams” by the CFCM. The provisions in terms of policing of religions will be strengthened to protect places of worship from any action and/or dissemination of ideas and/or remarks hostile to the laws of the Republic.

On 1 November, Darmanin announced that the offense called “separatism” may include a 5-year jail sentence and 75,000 euro fines for patients who refuse to be treated by a doctor of the opposite gender. However, a patient's free choice of doctor is enshrined in the Code of Ethics (Article 6).

It is important to recall that the obligation of neutrality does not prohibit freedom of conscience and worship, it only prohibits a public agent from manifesting their religious opinions in the course of their duties. The obligation of neutrality applies to all public services, including those provided by a legal person under private law. However, the European Court of Human Rights specifies that the obligation of neutrality must not disproportionately interfere with the freedom of conscience and religion of public agents.¹¹⁴

114. European Court of Human Rights “Affaire EBRAHIMIAN c. France” https://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/contenu/piece-jointe/2015/11/affaire_ebrahimian_c._france.pdf, 26/11/15.

Furthermore, making the payment of public aid for associations conditional on the signature of a contract of commitment to respect the values of the Republic and the minimum requirements of life in society infringes the freedom of assembly and association provided for in Article 12 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The educational aspect introduced in the bill entails a de facto breach of Article 2 of the First Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights allowing parents to educate their children in accordance with their religious and philosophical convictions; Article 5 of the UN Declaration of 25 November 1981; and Articles 14 and 18 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations.

Lastly, the strengthening of religious associations and state interference in the exercise of religion inevitably leads to a violation of the freedom of association provided for in Article 12 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and of the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion provided for in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and in amending Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Human Rights Committee, in its General Comment No. 22: Article 18 (right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion), observes that the performance of religious rites and practices includes such customs as observance of food prohibitions, wearing religious clothing or head coverings, and participation in rites of passage and the use of a religious language. Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects traditional ways of life. Furthermore, it recalls that most of the population shall not adopt discriminatory measures which restrict, in a special way, the practice of minority religions.

Moreover, President Macron announces a true project for society in which any deviation of conscience, deviating from the philosophical principles adopted by the elite in place, can be legally prohibited or administratively repressed. Thus, several establishments (mosques, private Islamic schools) have already been subject to violent administrative searches. It is indeed the conscience and the way of life of a whole religious minority, which is today the object of state persecution.

On 10 January, the Minister of Justice released her circular on the protection of *laïcité* (secularism) and the fight against radicalisation and communitarianism.¹¹⁵ The circular is the continuity of that of the Minister of the Interior dated 27 November 2019, the purpose of which is to fight against Islamism and against the var-

115. “Circulaires relatives à la protection de la *laïcité*, à la lutte contre l’islamisme, la radicalisation et le communautarisme”, Gouvernement, <https://www.gouvernement.fr/circulaires-relatives-a-la-protection-de-la-laicite-a-la-lutte-contre-l-islamisme-la-radicalisation> (Access date: 05/01/21).

ious attacks on Republican principles. Following the files gathered by public prosecutors' offices, the minister affirms in her circular the existence of a form of identity withdrawal as well as the development of communitarianism which would threaten social cohesion in certain territories of the Republic. She mentions the implementation of plans to combat radicalisation in the suburbs. With a view to combatting communitarianism, the minister emphasises the importance of combatting so-called school avoidance phenomena (mentioned in the education section of this report). She describes the latter as vectors that can lead to communitarian fractures or violent extremism.

The comments made by the Minister of Justice in her circular are worrying since they are based on the dangers of notions that are too vague and insufficiently conceptualised. Indeed, the notions of “radicalisation”, “communitarianism”, and “separatism” are poorly and dangerously defined. The notion of “separatism”, for example, has been constantly used by the government since the beginning of 2020, along with the adjective “Islamist”, which therefore refers to a particular religion. However, the notion of “Islamist separatism” also raises the question of its meaning and the risks of stigmatisation that it entails. Nowadays, the word “Islamist” is used in France to denigrate someone and to bring them down out of hatred, ignorance, or political shenanigans.

Following the various polemics on the subject and the transparent stigmatisation of a religion and its followers by laws and public policies, the adjective “separatist” was gradually abandoned in France. Nevertheless, the aim of this circular and of the various texts remains the same and continues to stigmatise French Muslims. It is ironic to read the Minister of Justice describing situations of identity withdrawal or social isolation of Muslim citizens from suburbs when many studies and anti-racist associations have warned of the very consequences that this type of public policy can have on Muslim citizens. These consequences include the withdrawal and isolation of a social group that feels persecuted by its own government through media hype, anti-Islamic propaganda, and openly Islamophobic legal texts.

A large number of organisations regularly warn public authorities about the dangers the counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism plans pose for minority populations. The Special UN Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Fionnuala Ni Aolá, several times alerted the French government to the discriminatory effects and human rights violations caused by the implementation of anti-terrorist measures.¹¹⁶

116. Fionnuala Ni Aolá, “Preliminary Findings of the Visit: UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism Concludes Visit to France”, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23128&LangID=E> (Access date: 05/01/21).

Internet

On 18 February 2020, the website of the newspaper *Marianne* published an article entitled “Islam: Letter Alerting Macron to Which He Never Replied”. The article explains the contents of a letter signed by a number of personalities and handed to President Macron in person to alert him to “the dangers of organising Islam in France ‘from above’, as such a structure is almost inevitably doomed to fall into the hands of supporters of political Islam.” The letter contained paragraphs such as “This secessionist Islam is itself diverse, riddled with internal rivalries, yet united by a literal reading of the Koran and by its hegemonic ambitions. It is the Islam of violent jihadists, but also of Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood, of Wahhabism and the Islamic World League, of Milli Görüs and Ditib, of Tabligh. No accommodation will satisfy them. Any concession will only convince them of our weakness and encourage them to demand more and more.”¹¹⁷

During the lockdown and in particular from 24 March 2020 onwards, a large number of fake news spread on the web with the aim of dividing communities. In a fake news post published on a far-right Twitter account, one could read, “Humiliation of France and the French in #Lyon: While the churches have been closed, *manu militari*, the mosques remain open.”¹¹⁸ (Fig. 9)



Figure 9: Fake news about mosques during lockdown.¹¹⁹

117. Tribune collective, “Islam: la lettre alertant Macron à laquelle il n’a jamais répondu”, *Marianne*, 18/02/2020, <https://www.marianne.net/debattons/tribunes/islam-la-lettre-alertant-macron-laquelle-il-n-jamais-repondu>, (Access date: 21/12/2020).

118. Rémi Banet, “Coronavirus: non, les mosquées et synagogues ne sont pas les seuls lieux de culte à pouvoir rester ouverts en France”, *AFP Factuel*, 27/03/2020, <https://factuel.afp.com/coronavirus-non-les-mosquees-et-synagogues-ne-sont-pas-les-seuls-lieux-de-culte-pouvoir-rester>, (Access date: 15/12/2020).

119. Napoléon, “Humiliation de la France et des Français à Lyon”, *Twitter*, 24/03/2020, (Access date: 18/12/20).

In reality, places of worship – such as churches, mosques, and synagogues – “are allowed to remain open” in France, but “any gathering or meeting within them is prohibited with the exception of funeral ceremonies within the limit of 20 people” according to a decree of 23 March published in the *Bulletin officiel* (Official Journal).¹²⁰

These false allegations directly targeting places of worship have no other objective than to divide French citizens, regardless of their faith. However, during the pandemic, online hatred has reached a rarely seen level to the point of rejoicing at the death of others.

Indeed, while the large number of deaths during the first wave of Covid-19 was an international shock, some people drew attention by the symbolism of their role during this crisis. This is the case of Aïcha, 52 years old, a cashier at Saint-Denis and a member of the General Labour Confederation. Aïcha died by Covid-19. Her colleagues saluted “a great woman with a great heart”. She was one of those workers on the front line who provide for the needs of the most privileged who were able to work from home and to isolate themselves fully in accordance with the recommended government measures. She was the first Covid-19 victim within the Carrefour group.¹²¹

Following numerous publications made to pay tribute to her, hateful comments such as “One less Aïcha, yaaay !!!!!!!” were also published. (Fig. 10)



Figure 10: Hateful comment following the death of a cashier from Covid-19.¹²²

120. Décret n° 2020-293, prescrivant les mesures générales nécessaires pour faire face à l'épidémie de covid-19 dans le cadre de l'état d'urgence sanitaire, 23/03/2020, Bulletin officiel (Légifrance), <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000041746694/>, (Access date: 16/12/2020).

121. “Aïcha, 52 ans, caissière de Carrefour, est morte du coronavirus”, L'Obs, 27/03/2020, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/coronavirus-de-wuhan/20200327.OBS26691/aicha-caissiere-de-carrefour-meurt-du-coronavirus.html>, (Access date: 17/12/2020).

122. Comment by “Lily Terhal”, Facebook, 27/02/2020, (Access date: 19/12/20).

However, although on social networks Islamophobic hatred is often expressed anonymously, in a sneaky way, there are times when detractors do not bother to hide their identity and intentions or even to think about the consequences of their words on their professional position.

Indeed, it was possible to read the hateful remarks of an elected representative of the town of Haguenau. In a public post published on his Facebook account, Christian Steinmetz, allowed himself some Islamophobic hate speech. Steinmetz declared, speaking of the women wearing headscarves he saw when he went to the pharmacy, “At the beginning of the afternoon I went to the pharmacy to look for medicine for my mother, on the way back I saw four veiled Fatma with the kids in the street.” Under this post, his friends openly called out to violence. “You should have eliminated them all at once,” wrote Marc while Laurent commented “I have weapons in case Christian!!!! If they don’t understand it differently.” Both comments were liked by the elected representative, tacitly validating his friends’ recommendations.¹²³ (Figs. 11 and 12)

This behaviour on the part of an elected representative is more than worrying and alarming, and highlights the trivialisation of Islamophobic hatred that is particularly present on the Internet, as a place that is too poorly regulated and where individuals think they can act with impunity.



Figure 11 and 12: Hateful comments of an elected representative and his friends on Facebook.¹²⁴

In a tweet, the executive director of the NGO Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth, made a remark that did not leave notorious Islamophobes unmoved. He retweeted an article from the *Washington Post* and wrote the following caption: “Can Islamophobia be any more transparent? The French government mandates masks but still bans the burqa”. (Fig. 13) Indeed, between the mandatory wearing of the mask, which therefore no longer shows the face except for the eyes, and the wearing of the niqab, prohibited in France by the law of 2010, there is a lot to question.¹²⁵

123. “Un élu de Haguenau épinglé pour des publications islamophobes”, Des dômes et des minarets, 21/03/2020, <https://www.desdomesetdesminarets.fr/2020/03/21/un-elu-de-haguenau-epingle-pour-des-publications-islamophobes/>, (Access date: 18/12/2020).

124. Christian Steinmetz, “Au retour fatma voilé avec les gamins dans la rue”, Facebook, 18/12/20, (Access date: 19/12/20).

125. Kenneth Roth, Twitter, 11 May 2020, <https://twitter.com/kenroth/status/1259727061977051137>, (Access date: 31/12/2020).



Figure 13: Statement by the executive director of the NGO Human Rights Watch.¹²⁶

Furthermore, it is important to note that women wearing the veil today combined with the mask due to the pandemic, are similar to the ones wearing the niqab and that there has been no disturbance of public order regarding this issue, no problem of identification since the mask has to be lowered when necessary (just as a niqab could be). The implementation of a long-term state of health emergency proves that the exception has become, for now, the general rule.

A promoter of a multicultural society, the French professor of political science at the University College London Philippe Marlière makes the same observation: “Read the *Washington Post* and point out the schizophrenia of the government: a woman wearing the niqab must remove it and pay a fine. From 11 May, she must remove it and immediately cover her face with a mask, otherwise she will have to pay another fine!”¹²⁷ (Fig. 14)



Figure 14: French professor Philippe Marlière criticising the ban of the niqab and the obligation of face masks.¹²⁸

126. Kenneth Roth, “Can Islamophobia Be Any More Transparent?”, Twitter, 11/05/20, (Access date: 28/12/20).

127. “Port du masque, port du voile intégral: la France au centre d’une polémique née outre-Atlantique”, RT France, 14/05/2020, <https://francais.rt.com/international/75100-port-masque-port-voile-integral-france-centre-une-polemique-nee-outre-atlantique>, (Access date: 08/01/2021).

128. Philippe Marlière, “Lire le Washington Post et relever la schizophrénie du gouvernement”, Twitter, 11/05/2020, (Access date: 28/12/20).

Islamophobic discourse online is leading to an increase in negative prejudices against Muslims. The use of fake news is becoming commonplace, as if the driving force behind the information were anti-Muslim hatred. Polemics emerge at times when the whole world is supposed to come together, but the omnipresence of these messages is deliberately divisive. Through these various manifestations of hatred there is a desire to create a “Muslim problem”.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Fields	Examples of Figures (non-exhaustive)	Examples of Islamophobic behaviours (2020)
Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Republic 2) Christophe Castaner, Former Minister of the Interior 3) Gérald Darmanin, Minister of the Interior 4) Jean-Michel Blanquer, Minister of National Education and Youth 5) Marlène Schiappa, Minister Delegate to the Minister of the Interior, in charge of Citizenship 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Speech after the attack on the prefecture in October 2019: “a relentless fight” against the “Islamist hydra”.¹²⁹ Points to a single adversary, namely Islam, calling for a society of vigilance. Announcement of the “bill against separatism”. 2) “Weak signals”, “systematic hindrance”. 3) “Systematic hindrance”: closures of associations (CCIF, BarakaCity, etc.), schools, places of worship (Mosque of Pantin), searches of masses, etc. 4) Prevents independent Muslim schools from opening since “closing is more difficult than preventing opening”, and the post-lockdown sheets entitled “Covid-19 and Sectarian Aberrations”.¹³⁰ 5) Charters of secularism for associations subsidised by the state in order to control Muslim associations better. Relentless Islamophobic rhetoric.¹³¹

129. “Cérémonie nationale d’hommage aux victimes de l’attaque du 3 octobre 2019 à la Préfecture de Police de Paris”, Elysée, 03/10/2019, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2019/10/07/ceremonie-nationale-dhommage-aux-victimes-de-lattaque-du-3-octobre-2019-a-la-prefecture-de-police-de-paris>, (Access date: 20/01/2021).

130. “Déconfinement: le ministère de l’Education nationale a-t-il publié une fiche sur le risque de replis communautariste?”, Libération, 6 May 2020, https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2020/05/06/deconfinement-le-ministere-de-l-education-nationale-a-t-il-publie-une-fiche-sur-le-risque-de-replis_1787548, (Access date: 19/01/2021).

131. “Une charte de la laïcité obligatoire pour toutes les associations subventionnées”, 20 minutes, 30/07/2020, <https://www.20minutes.fr/politique/2832039-20200730-charte-laicite-obligatoire-toutes-associations-subventionnees>, (Access date: 20/01/2021).

Political Field	<p>1) Anne-Christine Lang</p> <p>2) Aurore Berger</p> <p>3) Valérie Pécresse and Eric Ciotti</p> <p>4) Marine Le Pen</p> <p>5) CFCM, etc.</p>	<p>1) Leaves the hearing because of Pougetoux's veil.¹³²</p> <p>2) Amendment to prohibit the wearing of the veil by minors.¹³³</p> <p>3) Fight against the wearing of the burkini in leisure parks and tabling of an amendment in the upcoming law "reinforcing Republican principles" to ban the burkini on beaches and in swimming pools definitively.</p> <p>4) Interminable Islamophobic discourses. Fake news. Controversial statements "Can one walk in SS dress in the streets? No? Well, no one should be able to walk in Salafist dress either."¹³⁴</p> <p>5) Among other controversies, the CFCM has formally approved a "Charter of Principles" for Islam in France. This text paves the way for the creation of a National Council of Imams, responsible for "labelling" imams practising in France.¹³⁵ In this way, they participate in silencing and controlling Islam as planned by the French government, which is trying to eradicate the Muslim religion in favour of a model devised by the French state. The charter represents a threat to Muslims globally. It builds a foundation for racist and rights violations against them. It sets a dangerous precedent that threatens the presence of Islam/Muslims in Europe. It's a basis for the target of any faith minority community in the world.</p>
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Non-Governmental Groups	1) <i>Riposte laïque</i> , <i>Résistance républicaine</i> , VPF, and <i>Français de souches</i> , etc.	Relentless Islamophobic rhetoric
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132. "À l'Assemblée, la présence d'une syndicaliste voilée provoque le départ de plusieurs députés", Le Figaro, 17/09/2020, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/a-l-assemblee-la-presence-d-une-syndicaliste-voilee-provoque-le-depart-de-plusieurs-deputes-20200917>, (Access date: 20/01/2021).

133. "Séparatisme: les amendements de Bergé contre le port du voile pour les petites filles jugés 'irrecevables'", Le Figaro, 15/01/2021, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/loi-separatisme-aurore-berge-depose-un-amendement-contre-le-port-du-voile-pour-les-petites-filles-20210115>, (Access date: 20/01/2021).

134. "Comment Marine Le Pen veut mettre l'islamisme hors la loi", Le Point, 29/01/2021, https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/marine-le-pen-veut-mettre-l-islamisme-hors-la-loi-29-01-2021-2411755_20.php, (Access date: 29/01/2021).

135. "Toutes les fédérations du CFCM approuvent la 'charte de principes' de l'islam", Le Point, 18/01/2021, https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/toutes-les-federations-du-cfmc-approuvent-la-charta-de-principes-de-l-islam-18-01-2021-2409991_23.php, (Access date: 19/01/2021).

Media and Guests	TV, radio, newspapers: CNEWS, LCI, BFM TV, <i>Le Figaro</i> , <i>Valeurs Actuelles</i> & guests: Zineb el Rhazoui, Sifaoui, Zemmour, Judith Waintraub	Islamophobic rhetoric on television
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Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In 2020, a number of citizens' initiatives were put in place to combat Islamophobia in France. During the overt Muslim crackdown set up by the French government, including the dissolution of two leading human rights organisations, international civil society did not retreat but joined forces to denounce strongly the authoritarian excesses of the French state towards its Muslim citizens.

This is how the international coalition against Islamophobia was born, which brings together more than sixty international associations whose primary objective is to prepare plans and strategies to fight against state Islamophobia in France and to put an end to abuses against French Muslims.

To this end, several campaigns have been set up in the form of working groups under the aegis of the British association CAGE. A tweetstorm campaign was set up on Twitter with the hashtag #StopMacron, which was the #1 trend in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany, and #4 trend in the UK.

The associations of the coalition mobilised to seize the international press and denounce the situation of Muslims in France, which as a result gave international visibility to the numerous violations of Muslim rights by the government and put some pressure on Macron who was forced to justify himself on Al Jazeera and to censor some newspapers like the *Financial Times* by finding supposed factual flaws, as in the article by Mehreen Khan "Macron's War on Islamic Separatism Only Divides France Further".¹³⁶ The launch of an international boycott of French products also pushed Macron to defend himself and his public policies in the international press.

The other notable action by this coalition is the filing of a complaint at the UN denouncing the Islamophobic public policies of the French government and its persecution of Muslims. For this action, no less than 36 NGOs from 13 countries signed the complaint to the UN Human Rights Council.¹³⁷

136. Bruno Maçães, Twitter, 3/11/20, <https://twitter.com/jalalayn/status/1323732438959476737?s=19> (Access date: 16/01/21).

137. "Tackle French 'Abuse' of Muslims, Civil Society Groups Tell UN", Al Jazeera, 18/01/21,

Speaking to Anadolu Agency,¹³⁸ Managing Director of the UK-based CAGE Advocacy Group Muhammad Rabbani said the French government's policies have led to the "securitisation" of Muslim life and the shutdown of their places of worship, charities, and NGOs. "In the last few days, the French Interior Minister has closed down another nine mosques. France is attempting to export its model of Islamophobia across the EU," he said.¹³⁹ According to Rabbani, "France is arguably the testing laboratory for European Islamophobia. It is, therefore, crucial that it is challenged robustly and in an organized fashion, so it does not expand beyond the French borders."

The press covered the initiative and the coalition called upon the UN to ensure that France upholds and enforces the UN Universal Declaration/International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UDHR/ICCPR) and every directive on the prohibition of discrimination and racism. The coalition also urges France to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination and to "take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion in this matter."

Another consortium of European Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including ENAR, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc. undertook actions in European institutions to denounce the crackdown on French Muslims and the discriminatory public policies. They published press releases, recommendations, and have been advocating to political figures such as Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli, European Commission Vice-President Vera Jourova, and many MEPs to convince them to take a stance denouncing the Islamophobic actions of French government.

The group "Fighting Islamophobia" is a Facebook group that was set up in 2018. Its primary purpose was to report hateful content against Muslims on the social network Facebook. The group has removed hundreds of profiles, groups, and pages from the Facebook social network with the sole intention of stirring up hatred against Muslims. Then, in 2020, due to the oppressive context towards French Muslims, the members of this group started writing and reacting to the political and media treatment of Muslims. They agreed that together they had the capacity and sufficient skills to counterbalance these denigrating and stigmatising discourses. Thus, the participatory media "CALAM" was born in 2020.

In the form of an association, the members have given themselves the mission to offer information in an objective way, as close as possible to reality and without sensationalism, on the current events of the French Muslim community. CALAM's members intend to deconstruct certain xenophobic and/or Islamophobic discourses that are now firmly rooted in the collective imagination, produce counter-discourses, and produce articles and video reports promoting the integration of Muslims in France by highlighting their contribution to economic and civic life. CALAM hopes to be-

138. Burak Dag, "Voluntary Groups Petition UN to End Islamophobia in France", Anadolu Agency, 18/01/21

139. Ibid.

come a real force on social networks quickly in order to make the voice of Muslims and all minorities oppressed by President Macron and his government heard.

Conclusion and Policy recommendations

The year 2020 marks a turning point in Islamophobia in France, which is more ingrained than ever in institutions, political and media discourse, and public policy and collective consciousness. The future of the fight against Islamophobia in France looks unpromising if no civil organisation capable of collecting real data on Islamophobia and protecting the rights of French Muslims by combatting Islamophobic discrimination and violence - such as the CCIF - takes up the torch that has been unjustly withdrawn.

Our recommendations are numerous and do not only concern the French government but also international institutions.¹⁴⁰ We call for actions that would adequately respond to the crisis and tackle the structural manifestations of Islamophobia by mainstreaming it in key policy areas. Some of these recommendations are the results of a collective reflection from a coalition of civil society organisations that fight Islamophobia.

We ask for France to

1. Recognise Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and fight it adequately in all spheres.
2. Stop criminalising Muslim individuals, establishments, and associations that fight Islamophobia using public policies and political discourses. Abandon the bill against separatism since it overly targets and criminalises French Muslims.
3. Appoint an efficient watchdog organ to monitor hate speech and particularly hate speech towards Muslims on television.
4. Appoint an independent organ to measure the impact of counter-terrorism legislation and the upcoming bill against separatism on Muslim citizens.
5. Thoroughly define the notions of radicalisation, separatism, and communitarianism, and stop using them to create blurring and confusion as well as the stigmatisation and marginalisation of French Muslims.
6. Diminish the dark figure of Islamophobia by implementing a relation of trust between Muslim citizens and the police, and by training police officers, teachers, and civil servants on the notions of Islamophobia, discrimination, and hate crime.

140. "ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA: A RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND BROADER INEQUALITIES", European Coalition Against Islamophobia, <https://www.enar-eu.org/Addressing-Islamophobia-A-response-to-the-Covid-19-crisis-and-broader>, (Access date: 15/01/21).

7. Allow ethnic profiling statistics to determine the real characteristics of Islamophobia and racism, and to measure its intersectional impact.

8. Secure mosques and religious centres.

We ask for European institutions to

9. Ensure that funding programmes have specific allocation criteria to benefit Muslim people (or those perceived as such) and civil society organisations supporting them, so that they can develop long-term projects for victim support, capacity building, strategic litigation, educational programmes, etc. This should be included in the current EU budget negotiations.

10. Ensure that the new recovery instrument Next Generation EU include measures that address the specific situation of Muslim communities, especially in the REACT-EU (Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe) which targets the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, in line with the objectives of an inclusive and fair recovery for all. The process for the disbursement of funds should involve Muslim communities in consultative mechanisms with the governments.

11. Explore the possibility to initiate infringement proceedings based on the Employment Directive (2000/78/EC) to address the systemic discrimination faced by Muslim women wearing the headscarf in certain EU member states.

12. Assess the restrictions of freedom of religion and belief in the upcoming revised Strategy on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and adopt recommendations for member states.

13. Assess and acknowledge the discriminatory impact of counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism measures, and ensure that counter-terrorism measures comply with fundamental rights safeguards, especially when implementing the recently adopted EU counter-terrorism directive.

We ask for Member states to

14. Support the adoption or improvement of national policies against racism, such as National Action Plans against Racism, with specific measures or strategies to recognise and counter Islamophobia as a form of racism.

15. Develop and promote harmonisation of data collection in areas of hate crime and equality, including and systematically recognising anti-Muslim bias as a category. These data should be disaggregated by multiple grounds of discrimination (including gender, race, ethnicity, and religion) while respecting self-identification and full anonymity. This is central to assess the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Muslims and design tailored responses and policies, particularly in the forthcoming recovery phase.

16. Adopt and implement guidelines/measures to combat racism in law enforcement (including prohibiting racial profiling, adopting more severe sanctions against police violence, increasing racial diversity and trainings, etc.).

We ask for the Fundamental Rights Agency and OSCE-ODIHR to

17. Support civil society in collecting data and carrying out research specifically on the impact of Covid-19 on Muslim communities.

Chronology

- **2020:** 72 schools, madrasas, and Muslim-owned businesses have been shut down in 2020.
- **10.01.2020:** Circular issued by the Minister of Justice relating to the protection of secularism and the fight against radicalisation and communitarianism.
- **19.02.2020:** Minister for Education says he prevented 27 Muslim schools from opening and closed 4 others.
- **May 2020:** Fact sheet entitled “Covid-19 and Sectarian Aberrations”.
- **June – August 2020:** Two veiled women discriminated by a sports professor.
- **07.07. 2020:** Chancellor of the Universities and Rector of the Créteil Academy states he closed Muslim establishments using sanitary reasons.
- **26.07.2020:** Mosque of Agen is vandalised with Islamophobic tags.
- **07.08.2020:** Mosque in Bron is burnt down.
- **13.08.2020:** Mosque in Lyon is burnt down.
- **02.09.2020:** Mosque in Tarbes is vandalised with Islamophobic tags.
- **02.10.2020:** Macron announces his “plan against separatism”, which is only focused on Islam and Muslims (73 occurrences in his speech).
- **08.10.2020:** The association “Apprendre & Comprendre” (Learn & Understand), receives a decree of closure for a period of one month, because “the girls were veiled and the teachers were all dressed in religious clothing and the Koran was being taught”.
- **14.10.2020:** The home of Idriss Sihamedi, head of BarakaCity, a leading international charity organisation, is raided by elite troops. Pictures emerge revealing he was a victim of police violence in front of his wife and children. His lawyer reveals that a French police unit was sent at 6am to arrest him.
- **17.10.2020:** Inhabitant calls to burn down of a mosque to revenge Paty.
- **18.10.2020:** Two Muslim women are repeatedly stabbed beneath the Eiffel Tower.
- **19.10.2020:** French minister states that operations launched against “dozens of individuals” who are “not linked with the investigation around the beheading but to whom we want to send a message.” Therefore, the French gov-

ernment exploited the murder to pursue aggressively its predetermined plan against innocent Muslims citizens.

- **20.10.2020:** Minister formally starts procedure to dissolve BarakaCity and announces same intention for CCIF, the largest anti-racist organisation in France.
- **28.10.2020:** BarakaCity dissolved by the government.
- **November 2020:** Massive reports of children. Children reported by their teachers for “doubtful behaviours”.
- **20.11.2020:** The CCIF receives a notice of dissolution from the government.
- **02.12.2020:** The CCIF is dissolved by the government.
- **09.12.2020:** The government releases in detail its bill of the law on separatism.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
GERMANY
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic shook the whole world in 2020. All countries have tried to control the spread of the pandemic. For this purpose, governments took measures such as exit and contact restrictions, mandatory masks, travel bans, etc. Despite the many measures, the numbers of “politically motivated crimes” did not decrease. In 2020, 901 Islamophobic crimes were committed across Germany, 146 of which targeted mosques and 48 of which targeted people. Of the 901 crimes, police were only able to arrest one person, while the attorney general did not open a single investigation into alleged Islamophobic and anti-Muslim crimes at the Federal Supreme Court. In the same year, at least 16 rallies of *PEGIDA Förderverein* in Dresden, a rally of *Der III. Weg* in Haiger, and a rally of *Aufbruch Leverkusen* in Leverkusen with the slogan “Against the Islamization of Germany” took place. In Germany, not only Muslims are exposed to physical and verbal attacks, but people of color in general are strongly affected by discrimination. From 1990 to 2020, 179 people died in police custody in Germany (12 in 2020). The majority of those who have died in custody were Blacks and Muslims. As the Fundamental Rights Reports published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows, racial profiling is a structural problem in the police. A study conducted by the Ruhr University of Bochum also confirms that a structural behavioural problem exists in the police against people of colour and people with an immigrant background. In addition to this problem, political hate speech and right-wing extremism against Muslims and refugees are becoming the “common language” in Germany. According to the Network Enforcement Act, supporters of the New Right and right-wing extremists conduct their hate speech and conspiracy theories against Muslims in alternative social networks, such as Gap, Telegram, or Voat. In Hanau, a right-wing extremist terrorist acting as a “lone wolf” shot and killed nine people with an immigrant background, his mother, and himself. The perpetrator specifically sought out venues frequented predominantly by people with an immigrant background. The terrorist had two weapons possession cards, although he was mentally ill and known to the police. People with an immigrant background who were well-known in the media, as well as many politicians, received threatening letters with the signature “NSU 2.0”. Their personal data was retrieved from computers in Wiesbaden’s 3rd and 4th police precincts, and Frankfurt’s 1st precinct. The annual increase in the number and types of attacks against Muslims finally caught the attention of the government. Thus, in November, a catalogue of measures, 89 in total, to combat right-wing extremism and racism was published by the Cabinet Committee. It is a good start in combating Islamophobia, but improvements still need to be made on many points, such as the reform of the General Equal Treatment Act, an expansion of the existing competence networks, the complete independence of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, and in the federal states, the establishment of a reporting system to record anti-Muslim incidents.

Zusammenfassung

Im Jahre 2020 erschütterte die COVID-19 Pandemie die ganze Welt. Alle Länder versuchten die Ausbreitung der COVID-19 Pandemie unter Kontrolle zu bringen. Dafür wurden von den Regierungen Maßnahmen wie Ausgang- und Kontaktbeschränkungen, Maskenpflicht, Verzicht auf Reisen etc. getroffen. Trotz der vielen Maßnahmen sind die Zahlen der „politisch motivierten Kriminalität“ nicht runtergegangen. Im Jahre 2020 wurde in ganz Deutschland 901 islamfeindliche Straftaten, davon 146 auf Moscheen und 48 auf Menschen verübt. Von der 901 Straftaten konnte die Polizei nur eine Person festnehmen und der Generalbundesanwalt hat beim Bundesgerichtshof keine Ermittlungsverfahren wegen mutmaßlicher islamfeindlicher und antimuslimischer Straftaten eingeleitet. Im selben Jahr haben mindestens 16 Kundgebungen des „PEGIDA Fördervereins“ in Dresden, ein Kundgebung des „Der III. Weg“ in Haiger und eine Kundgebung des „Aufbruch Leverkusen“ in Leverkusen mit dem Motto „Gegen die Islamisierung Deutschlands“ stattgefunden. In Deutschland sind nicht nur Muslime körperlichen und verbalen Angriffen ausgesetzt, sondern auch Menschen mit anderer Herkunft sind stark von der Diskriminierung betroffen. Von 1990 bis 2020 starben in Deutschland 179 Menschen (12 im Jahr 2020) in Polizeigewahrsam. Die Mehrheit der Verstorbenen sind Schwarze und Muslime, kurz gesagt, Nicht-Deutsche. Wie der von European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights veröffentlichte Fundamental Rights Reports zeigt, Racial Profiling ist bei der Polizei ein strukturelles Problem. Auch eine von der Ruhr Universität Bochum durchgeführte Studie bestätigt, dass ein strukturelles Verhaltensproblem bei der Polizei gegen People of Color und Personen mit Migrationshintergrund existiert. Zu diesem Problem kommt noch hinzu, dass die politische Hassreden und Rechtsextremismus gegen Muslime und Flüchtlinge zur „Gemeinsprache“ in Deutschland wird. Nach dem Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz führen Anhänger der Neuen Rechten und Rechtsextremisten ihre Hassreden und Verschwörungstheorien gegen Muslime in alternativen sozialen Netzwerken, wie Gap, Telegram oder Voat. Ein als „einsamer Wolf“ agierender rechtsextremistischer Terrorist erschoss neun Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund, seine Mutter und sich selbst in Hanau. Der Täter suchte gezielt Lokale aus, die vorwiegend von Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund besucht werden. Der Attentäter besaß zwei Waffenbesitzkarten, obwohl er psychisch krank und polizeibekannt war. In den Medien bekannte Personen mit Migrationshintergrund sowie viele Politiker erhielten Drohbriefe mit der Signatur NSU 2.0. Ihre persönlichen Daten wurden von Computern aus dem Wiesbadener 3. und 4. Polizeirevier, und dem 1. Frankfurter Revier abgefragt. Jährliche Zunahme der Angriffszahlen und -arten gegen Muslime erweckte endlich die Aufmerksamkeit der Regierung. So wurde im November von Kabinettsausschuss ein Maßnahmenkatalog zur Bekämpfung von Rechtsextremismus und Rassismus veröffentlicht. Der aus 89 Maßnahmen bestehende Katalog ist ein guter Anfang für die Bekämpfung der Is-

lamfeindlichkeit, aber in vielen Punkten müssen noch Verbesserungen durchgeführt werden wie zum Beispiel: Reformierung des Allgemeinen Gleichbehandlungsgesetzes, eine Erweiterung der bestehenden Kompetenznetzwerke, die vollständige Unabhängigkeit der Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes und in den Bundesländern, Errichtung eines Meldesystems zur Erfassung antimuslimischer Vorfälle.

Country Profile

EIR 2020

Country: Federal Republic of Germany

Type of Regime: Federal and representative democracy

Form of Government: Federal parliamentary republic with a chancellor as the head of government

Ruling Parties: Christian Democratic Party (CDU)/Christian Social Union (CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD)

Opposition Parties: The Greens, The Left, FDP (The Liberals), Alternative for Germany (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), The Left 9,2% (69 seats), Greens 8,9% (67 seats)

Total Population: 83.1 million (December 2020, Federal Statistical Office)

Major Languages: German

Official Religion: Christianity

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2020, 901 Islamophobic crimes were registered across Germany by the Federal Criminal Police Office; 146 of these targeted mosques and 48 targeted people. The number of Islamophobic attacks committed against Muslim religious sites is 122. In addition to the official statistics, the initiative *brandeilig* counted 141 (for the year 2019) and 146 (for the year 2020) mosque attacks. In the same year, at least 16 rallies of *PEGIDA Förderverein* in Dresden, a rally of *Der III. Weg* in Haiger, and a rally of *Aufbruch Leverkusen* in Leverkusen with the slogan “Against the Islamization of Germany” took place.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2019, there was a 13.8% increase in extremist crimes with a political background (31,472) compared to the previous year (27,656). Of these crimes, 21,290 of the criminal offenses had a right-wing extremist background. This means a 9.7% increase compared to the previous year. Extremist violent crimes (925) decreased by 13.7% in 2019 compared to the previous year. Among the violent acts, 828 assaults are to be assigned to right-wing extremist ideology. In the subject area of hate crime, 8,585 offenses were ruled. Of these, 2,032 were anti-Semitic and 950 were Islamophobic. In the new thematic field “xenophobic”, which has been in effect since January 1, 2019, 3,703 offenses were registered for 2019, of which 506 were violent offenses. In the category of crimes against asylum shelters, there was a drop in 2019 (121) compared to the previous year (169).

Major Religions (% of Population): Christians (66%), Without Religion (26.3%), Islam (6.9%) Judaism (0.3 %)

Muslim Population (% of Population): Between 4.4 and 4.7 million (estimated, Federal Ministry of Interior).

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB); Islamic Community *Millî Görüş* (IGMG); Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD); *Koordinationsrat der Muslime* (KRM); Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Germany (AMJ); Union of Islamic Cultural Centres (VIKZ); Islamic Community of Shia Communities in Germany (IGS); *Islamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken in Deutschland e.V.* (IGBD); *Union der Islamisch Albanischen Zentren in Deutschland* (UIAZD).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: *Netzwerk gegen Diskriminierung und Islamfeindlichkeit (Alliance against Islamophobia and anti-Muslim)* (CLAIM) lists 40 NGOs: *Wer sind wir? Denken, Sprechen Handeln in der Islamdebatte; Multikulturelles Forum (MkF) e.V.; Raum 3 – Empowerment junger Muslim*innen durch Medienarbeit; Sozialdienst muslimischer Frauen (SmF) e.V.; Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (ISD) e.V.; streetwork@online; Verband muslimischer Lehrkräfte (VML) e.V.; Katholische Erwachsenenbildung im Land Sachsen-Anhalt (KEB) e.V.; Gesicht Zeigen! Für ein weltoffenes Deutschland e.V.; Muslimisches Jugendwerk; Interkulturelles Institut für Inklusion (I.I.I.) e.V.; Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland (TGD) e.V.; Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Evangelischen Jugend in Deutschland; Junge Islam Konferenz; La Red e.V.; Rat muslimischer Studierender und Akademiker (RAMSA) e.V.; Fair International; Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus; NIR – Netzwerk gegen Islamfeindlichkeit und Rassismus Leipzig e.V.; WoW – With or Without; ufuq.de; Inssan e.V.; RAHMA; Minor; YALLAH!; Begegnungs- und Fortbildungszentrum muslimischer Frauen e.V.; Al-Etidal Bremen – Gegen Radikalisierung & Extremismus; AntiDiskriminierungsbüro Köln; Muslimrat München e.V.; JUMA — jung, muslimisch, aktiv; Bildungsteam Berlin Brandenburg e.V.; Antidiskriminierungsnetzwerk Berlin des Türkischen Bundes in Berlin-Brandenburg; Zentrum für Europäische und Orientalische Kultur e.V.; Verband binationaler Familien und Partnerschaften; Mosaik e.V.; Anlaufstelle für Diskriminierungsschutz an Schulen (ADAS); Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen; Abrahamisches Forum; Stiftung gegen Rassismus; Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland e.V.; and Kompetenznetzwerk Islam- und Muslimfeindlichkeit.*

Far-Right Parties: Alternative for Germany (AfD), National Democratic Party Germany (NDP), *Die Rechte*, *Der III. Weg*, *Bürgerbewegung Pro NRW*

Far-Right Movements: *Identitäre Bewegung*, *Reichsbürgerbewegung*, PEGIDA, *Ring Nationaler Frauen*, *Junge Nationalisten*, *Der Flügel*, *Junge Alternative für Deutschland*

Far-Right Militant Organisations: *Nordadler*, *Kameradschaft Aryans*, *Atomwaffen Division*, *Combat 18*, *Gruppe S*.

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** There is a hijab ban for those who work in schools (schoolteachers), in the judiciary, and the police force. Until the ruling of the First Senate of the Federal Constitutional Court in 2015, the states of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, Berlin, Bremen, Hesse, Lower Saxony, and Saarland had a hijab ban for schoolteachers and academic staff. On January 27, 2015, the “First Senate of the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that a blanket ban on religious manifestations in public schools by the external appearance of educators is not compatible with their freedom of belief and confession (Article 4 [1] and [2] of the Basic Law).” (1 BvR 471/10, 1 BvR 1181/10). Despite this ruling, it is quite possible, especially in Berlin, that a headscarf-wearing teacher or teacher candidate will be discriminated against. According to a ruling of the European Court of Justice, private companies have the right to appear neutral to the outside world. This means that in certain cases, private companies can demand a “neutral appearance” from their employees. While prospective female prosecutors in Berlin are allowed to wear headscarves, judges and prosecutors in Lower Saxony cannot wear religious items or clothing, including headscarves, in the courtroom.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** Slaughter without stunning is generally prohibited in Germany. However, exemptions from this prohibition may be granted for religious reasons.
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Women civil servants, soldiers, and judges are not allowed to wear a burka – neither are women drivers. In some federal states, female pupils and students are not allowed to wear a burka in schools or universities.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

According to reports by important European institutions such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the intolerance towards foreigners and Muslims is alarming in Germany. The intolerance and antipathy towards the Muslim community not only set a double standard in society and institutions but also create physical and verbal violence. Even the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 with all its societal restrictions could not bring about a decline in violent acts against Muslims and in the levels of Islamophobia. Racial profiling by police against people of colour or death traps in police custody are prominent signs of structural racism among security agencies. The state not only has a structural racism problem in its security agencies, but also in the school system, military, and other state institutions. The private sector mirrors this structural racism in fields such as the media and labour market.

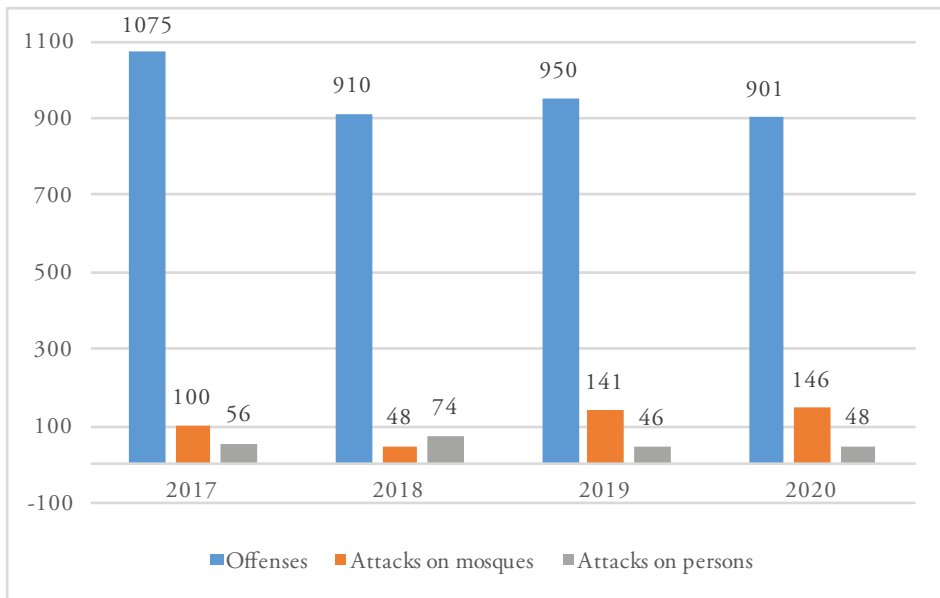
Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The first COVID-19 case in Germany was confirmed in Bavaria on January 27, 2020. On March 22, the federal and state governments agreed on exit and contact restrictions, forcing millions of people living in Germany to stay home. The restrictions were partially lifted by mid-summer. On October 15, the federal and state governments again had to determine further measures, which lasted until 2021.¹⁴¹ Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and numerous curfews, the numbers of physical and verbal attacks against Muslims did not decrease compared to previous years. As can be clearly seen in Table 1 below, the numbers of anti-Muslim crimes have remained almost the same. Since 2017, Islamophobic crimes have been registered separately by the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI). The subcategory “Islamophobic” was added to the category “politically motivated crime”. In 2017, 1,075 attacks were carried out against Muslims and their institutions. Over 100 attacks were on mosques and 56 on people. In 2018, the number of Islamophobic crimes with 910 registered cases, including 48 crimes against mosques, had somewhat decreased. In contrast, significantly more people (at least 74 people) were injured. In 2019, the number of Islamophobic crimes again increased to 950 with 90.1% of criminal offenses committed by right-wing extremists.¹⁴² The initiative *brandeilig* counted 141 mosque attacks

141. “Die Chronik der Corona-Krise”, mdr, <https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/chronik/corona-chronik-chronologie-coronavirus-102.html>, (Access date: 05 January 2020).

142. “Politisch motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2019 Bundesweite Fallzahlen”, BMI, https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/2020/pmk-2019.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&cv=11#:.-:text=

Table 1: Attacks on Muslims in Germany in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020¹⁴³

for the year 2019 and 146 for the year 2020.¹⁴⁴ In 2020, 901 Islamophobic crimes were committed across Germany, 146 of which targeted mosques and 48 of which targeted people. Of the 901 crimes, the police were able to arrest only one person, while the attorney general at the Federal Supreme Court did not open a single investigation into the alleged Islamophobic and anti-Muslim crimes. In the same year, at least 16 rallies of *PEGIDA Förderverein* in Dresden, a rally of *Der III. Weg* in Haiger, and a rally of *Aufbruch Leverkusen* in Leverkusen with the slogan “Against the Islamization of Germany” took place.¹⁴⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic and curfew restrictions have not stopped right-wing extremists and criminals from attacking Muslim people and religious sites. Attacks on places of worship, mosque associations, or other Islamic institutions are not included in the statistics of the Federal Criminal Police Office. As the German Institute for Human Rights recommends in its statement on the planned measures of the Cabinet Committee for Combating Right-Wing Extremism and Racism, not only should the transparency of the constant evaluation

t=Im%20Jahr%202019%20wurden%20insgesamt,1%20%25%20an%20den%20Straftaten%20ausmacht, (Access date: 05 January 2020).

143. “Bericht zur Polizeilichen Kriminalstatistik 2019”, BAK; “Timeline”, brandeilig, <https://brandeilig.org/timeline/?jahr=2021>, (Access date: 06 January 2020).

144. “Timeline”, brandeilig, <https://brandeilig.org/timeline/?jahr=2021>, (Access date: 06 January 2020).

145. “Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten im zweiten Quartal 2020”, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/228/1922886.pdf> and “Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten im dritten Quartal 2020”, https://www.ulla-jelpke.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Islamfeindlichkeit_3_Q_2020.pdf; “Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten im vierten Quartal 2020”, https://www.ulla-jelpke.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/KA-19_26078-5.pdf, (Access date: 06 January 2020).

of the planned measures be made possible,¹⁴⁶ but the data on violent crimes against Muslims should be collected by the police even more transparently and comprehensively, and the possibility of including civil society in the data collection should be considered.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its 6th report on Germany in March 2020. The commission is concerned with the “high level of Islamophobia” in Germany and it points to the increase of xenophobia in public discourse. In addition, the commission warns about the rise in the numbers of violent right-wing extremists. The report also mentions that the police do not cooperate with civil society to a sufficient extent in order to detect and register hate crimes. This leads to hate crimes in Germany virtually becoming an unpunished act. The deportation of asylum seekers who have been victims of hate crimes also makes it very difficult to combat hate crime. This is because the deportations usually take place before they can make their statements for the criminal proceedings.¹⁴⁷ In a recently published global report by the Pew Research Center, Germany has the highest level of social hostility in the European Union. According to this report, among all social groups in Europe, Muslims face the highest levels of social hostility.¹⁴⁸ A religion monitor published by the *Bertelsmann Stiftung* confirms the findings of the Pew report. According to the report, 54.5% of the German population see Islam as a threat, while religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism are perceived as an enrichment of social culture.¹⁴⁹

The perception of the “Other” as a threat to society is not directed only to religious minorities, but extends to different ethnic groups. The murder of George Floyd by police in the U.S. on May 25, 2020 has again led to a discussion about racism in society and among the German police. From 1990 to 2020, 179 people died in police custody in Germany, 12 of whom in 2020. The majority of the deceased are Blacks and Muslims.¹⁵⁰ As the Fundamental Rights Reports published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows racial profiling in the police is a structural problem.¹⁵¹ Although the Federal Minister of the

146. “Stellungnahme zu den geplanten Maßnahmen des Kabinettsausschusses zur Bekämpfung von Rechtsextremismus und Rassismus”, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, <https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/publikationen/detail/stellungnahme-zu-den-geplanten-massnahmen-des-kabinettsausschusses-zur-bekaempfung-von-rechtsextremismus-und-rassismus>, October 2020, p. 3.

147. “ECRI-Bericht über Deutschland”, Council of Europe, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-germany-sixth-monitoring-cycle-german-translation-/16809ce4c0>, March 2020, pp. 8-9.

148. Samirah Majumdar, Virginia Villa. *In 2018, Government Restrictions on Religion Reach Highest Level Globally in More Than a Decade*, Pew Research Center: 2020, pp. 30, 60.

149. Religionsmonitor, Pickel Gert, *Weltanschauliche Vielfalt und Demokratie, Wie sich religiöse Pluralität auf die politische Kultur auswirkt* Bertelsmann Stiftung, July 2019, p. 80.

150. “Todesfälle in Gewahrsam”, <https://deathincustody.noblogs.org/recherche/>, (Access date: 08 January 2021).

151. “European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Rights Report 2019”, Publications Office of the European Union, 2019, pp. 97-99, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-fundamental-rights-report-2019_en.pdf, (Access date: 09 January 2021).

Interior Horst Seehofer denied that there is a structural racism problem in the police,¹⁵² scientific studies show different results. According to a study conducted by Ruhr-University Bochum, there is a structural behavioural problem in the police against people of colour and people with an immigrant background. According to the study, the discriminatory incidents experienced are not individual problems of individual police officers, but a structural problem of police practice. In other words, it is an engrained part of the way the police behave when carrying out their duties.¹⁵³ One police officer who participated in the study explained how some officers engage in racist behaviour: “Today we’re going to hunt Turks. Then they would go on targeted searches during patrols. Little things - for example, if someone forgot to signal - would then be blown out of proportion.”¹⁵⁴ Amnesty International also issued a statement on structural racism in the police stating, “Addressing institutional racism is overdue. All security forces must receive appropriate mandatory anti-racism training to also end unintentional discrimination against people of colour and marginalised groups. Allegations of unlawful police violence must be independently and swiftly investigated.”¹⁵⁵

Adding to this problem, political hate speech and right-wing extremism against Muslims and refugees are becoming the “common language” in Germany.¹⁵⁶ Thus, serious tensions arise in society, which occasionally lead to a confrontation between minorities and the police. An example of this is the Stuttgart riots on the night of June 20-21, 2020. During a police check in the park Schlossgarten, the situation escalated between the security forces and the revellers. Of the 400-500 people who took part in the riot, 25 were arrested. Among them were 12 German citizens (including three individuals with an immigrant background) while the remaining were foreigners.¹⁵⁷ Following the arrests, the individuals with an immigrant background and the refugees became the targets of some politicians. Right away, Baden-Württemberg’s Interior Minister Thomas Strobl (CDU) commented on the topic with the following words: “Multiculturalism has its clear limits in the applicable laws, especially the criminal laws. And there is no discount whatsoever in Stuttgart and Baden-Würt-

152. “Seehofer: „Keine Rassismus-Studie in der Polizei“, BMI, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2020/10/keine-studie-rechtsextremismus-polizei.html>, (Access date: 09 January 2021).

153. “Diskriminierungserfahrungen bei rechtswidriger polizeilicher Gewalt”, RUB, <https://news.rub.de/presseinformation/wissenschaft/2020-11-11-projekt-zwischenbericht-diskriminierungserfahrungen-bei-rechtswidriger-polizeilicher-gewalt>, (Access date: 09 January 2021).

154. “Studie gibt Hinweise auf rassistische Polizisten”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/extremismus-bochum-studie-gibt-hinweise-auf-rassistische-polizisten-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-201111-99-293833>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

155. “Europa: Diskriminierung durch Polizei während COVID-19-Lockdowns”, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.de/informieren/aktuell/europa-und-zentralasien-europa-diskriminierung-durch-polizei-waehrend-covid-19>, (Access date: 13 January 2021).

156. “Fundamental Rights Report 2019”, FRA, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2019/fundamental-rights-report-2019>, p. 19, (Access date: 09 January 2021).

157. “Wer sind die Stuttgarter Randalierer?”, Frankfurter Allgemeine, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/25-festnahmen-wer-sind-die-stuttgarter-randalierer-16829090.html>, (Access date: 09 January 2021).

temberg.”¹⁵⁸ The parliamentary director of the CSU in the Bundestag Stefan Müller made direct associations between the migrants and alcohol and drugs. Thus, discussions were held on respect for the police, the integration problems of migrants, and the failure of multiculturalism.



Figure 1: Stefan Müller, parliamentary director of the CSU in the Bundestag, posts a tweet about the riots in Stuttgart. In his tweet, migrants are portrayed as a social problem and they are directly linked to alcohol and drugs.¹⁵⁹

The failure of the police and politicians to pursue hate crime consistently, which has become structural racism, and the Islamophobic discourse of politicians, which becomes daily political rhetoric, not only led to the riots in Stuttgart, but on occasion prepared the ground for right-wing, extremist terrorist attacks like the one in Hanau.

In Hanau, a right-wing terrorist acting allegedly as a “lone wolf” shot nine people with an immigrant background, his mother, and himself. The perpetrator specifically sought out venues frequented predominantly by people with an immigrant background.¹⁶⁰ The terrorist had two weapons possession cards, although he was mentally ill and known to the police.¹⁶¹ As with the attacks in Oslo, Christchurch, and Halle, the Hanau attack¹⁶² received widespread media attention in terms of whether the attacker was sane or not. When terrorist attacks are committed by far-right groups or individuals, the question that remains in the background and is never addressed is

158. “Strobl zu Stuttgart: Sollten es mit Multikulti nicht übertreiben”, *Junge Freiheit*, <https://jungefreiheit.de/politik/deutschland/2020/strobl-zu-stuttgart-sollten-es-mit-multikulti-nicht-uebertreiben/>, (Access date: 09 January 2021).

159. Stefan Müller, Twitter, 22 June 2020, <https://twitter.com/smuellermdb/status/1275085021829828610?lang=de>, (Access date: 09 January 2021).

160. “Der Anschlag von Hanau - eine Chronologie”, *Hessenschau*, <https://www.hessenschau.de/gesellschaft/100-tage-nach-dem-rassistischen-terror-der-anschlag-von-hanau---eine-chronologie,hanau-100tage-chronologie-100.html>, (Access date: 10 January 2021).

161. “Attentäter von Hanau besaß zwei Waffenbesitzkarten – trotz Zwangseinweisung”, *Spiegel Panorama*, <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/attentaeter-von-hanau-drei-waffenscheine-trotz-zwangseinweisung-a-44fe1fd4-1dfd-435b-8bf6-d98eed94bb23>, (Access date: 10 January 2021).

162. “Wie krank ist Anders Breivik?”, *Der Tagesspiegel*, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/meinung/medizinische-klas-sifikation-wie-krank-ist-anders-breivik/6069140.html>; “Psycho-Gutachten für Neonazi-Attentäter von Halle”, *Bild*, <https://www.bild.de/regional/sachsen-anhalt/sachsen-anhalt-news/killer-neonazi-von-halle-psycho-gutachten-fuer-stephan-balliet-65531898.bild.html>; “Psychisch krank – und ein Rassist”, *Spiegel Panorama*, <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/hanau-anschlag-neues-gutachten-zum-taeter-psychisch-krank-und-ein-rassist-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000174211404>; “Rechte Tat, aber kein rechter Täter?”, *tagesschau*, <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/ndr-wdr/hanau-taeter-bka-101.html>, (Access date: 11 January 2021).

how the system radicalizes people so that they carry out terrorist attacks against Muslims or immigrants.

Structural racism is not only a police phenomenon in Germany – it also takes place on a daily basis in other state institutions. In schools, children with an immigrant background do not receive the support they need and are disadvantaged when it comes to grades. In the field of science, the situation is no different. Non-European scientists have difficulties publishing their articles in prestigious journals, and their work does not find its way into curricula and textbooks. Immigrants are also worse off than other citizens when it comes to the healthcare system. They are usually poorly informed about the healthcare system and their rights. Most patients feel that they are not taken seriously by medical staff.¹⁶³

Reported Attacks: A Selection

January 2020: A 55-year-old man burned a Koran in front of the Selimiye Mosque in Hanover.¹⁶⁴

February 2020: A right-wing extremist terrorist shot nine people with an immigrant background, his mother, and himself in Hanau. The perpetrator specifically sought out venues frequented predominantly by people with an immigrant background.

A right-wing terrorist cell planned a terrorist attack on a mosque modelled on the Christchurch attack. After raids, 12 right-wing extremists were arrested in six states. Lawyer Seda Başay-Yıldız, who had represented NSU victims as a joint plaintiff, received repeated threatening letters from “NSU 2.0.” She received four letters with death threats against herself, her family, and her young daughter.

March 2020: The third-largest mosque in Germany, Fatih Mosque, received an envelope with a powdery substance and a threatening letter. The hate letter contained racist and Islamophobic threats, said a spokesman for the Islamic Federation Bremen.¹⁶⁵

April 2020: During the COVID-19 pandemic, the PEGIDA leadership and sympathisers could only organize limited public events. In order not to lose sympathisers, Lutz Bachmann organised several “virtuelle Abendspaziergänge” (virtual evening walks) on his YouTube channel. His guests were from the circles of right-wing extremist and Islamophobic groups. On April 13, his “Zweiter virtuelle Abendspaziergänge” (second virtual evening walk) featured Martin Sellner, the leading activist

163. “Was ist struktureller Rassismus?”, Mediendienst Integration, <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/was-ist-struktureller-rassismus.html>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

164. “55-Jähriger soll Koran vor Moschee verbrannt haben – Polizei ermittelt”, Hannoversche Allgemeine, <https://www.haz.de/Hannover/Aus-der-Stadt/Hannover-Misburg-55-Jaehriger-soll-Koran-vor-Moschee-verbrannt-haben-Polizei-ermittelt>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

165. “Moschee erhält Drohbrief”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/rassismus-moschee-erhaelt-drohbrief-1.4826663>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

of the far-right Identitarian Movement (IB) in German-speaking countries, and Michael Stürzenberger, the central figure of the Islamophobic scene in Bavaria, which is relevant to constitutional protection. In the conversation it often came up that migrants/Muslims do not adhere to the legal pandemic regulations, that Muslims only respect “eigenes Gesetz” (their own law) and that they are the “Vorbote des großen Jihad” (harbingers of the great Jihad). Muslims were repeatedly labelled with disparaging language such as “Gruppe der Rechtgläubigen” (group of orthodox) or “bei diesem Klientel” (with this clientele), and stigmatised because of their beliefs as a danger to internal security and to the health of individual citizen.¹⁶⁶

May 2020: A group of youths attacked several asylum seekers in Brandenburg. The group, which consisted of about 15-20 people, encircled and insulted immigrants sitting in the park and then went after them. The attackers beat immigrants coming from Guinea and Morocco, and called them racist names.¹⁶⁷

June 2020: A gym in Dudweiler refused to allow a woman to work out because of her headscarf. Such house bans in fitness studios have been observed in Germany for years. The owners interpret that wearing a headscarf during training is dangerous, so they plead in favour of health precautions for their members and their actions are not considered an act of discrimination.¹⁶⁸ Yet, in almost every sport there are female athletes wearing headscarves who have not yet suffered any health damage as a result.

According to the Military Counterintelligence Service (MAD), there are more than 600 suspected cases of right-wing extremists in the Bundeswehr, the armed forces of Germany. The counterintelligence service singled out the elite special forces military command unit *Kommando Spezialkräfte* (KSK) with 20 suspects.¹⁶⁹

Another case of a right-wing extremist causing bodily harm to people of a different faith occurred in Leipzig when a 25-year-old Syrian was mobbed and beaten up by four perpetrators.¹⁷⁰

A young Muslim woman in Nuremberg was insulted and attacked in an Islamophobic manner by an unknown person.¹⁷¹

166. “Verfassungsschutzinformationen Bayern 1. Halbjahr 2020”, Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, für Sport und Integration, https://www.verfassungsschutz.bayern.de/mam/anlagen/halbjahresinformationen_2020.pdf, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

167. “Gruppe Jugendlicher soll Flüchtlinge attackiert haben”, Spiegel Panorama, <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/guben-jugendliche-attackieren-fluechtlinge-a-582eb39f-8ed4-4c31-a8ee-d272adc657f7>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

168. “Muslimin darf wegen Kopftuch nicht im Fitnessstudio trainieren”, Islamiq, <https://www.islamiq.de/2020/06/30/muslimin-darf-wegen-kopftuch-nicht-im-fitnessstudio-trainieren/>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

169. “Militärgeheimdienst sieht neue Dimension von Rechtsextremismus”, Zeit Online, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2020-06/bundeswehr-rechtsextremismus-reichsbuenger-kommando-spezialkraefte-militaer-geheimdienst>, (Access date: 17 January 2021).

170. “Syrier in Leipzig-Lindenau von vier Männern attackiert”, Mdr Sachsen, <https://www.mdr.de/sachsen/leipzig/leipzig-leipzig-land/syrier-lindenau-koerperverletzung-100.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

171. “Muslimin islamfeindlich beleidigt und angegriffen”, Islamiq, <https://www.islamiq.de/2020/06/18/muslimin-islamfeindlich-beleidigt-und-angegriffen/>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

In Germany, more and more people of Islamic faith are being attacked on the streets by right-wing extremists for no reason. For the seventh time, the Damascus bakery in Berlin-Neukölln was the victim of a right-wing attack. For years there have been attacks of the right-wing extremists on migrants and leftists. They smear Nazi symbols on the walls, smash shop windows, and set cars on fire. According to the police, there were 72 acts, 23 of which are arsons. Only in 2017, two charges were brought against suspects for Nazi graffiti, without conviction. All 72 acts remained unpunished.¹⁷²

July 2020: Cabaret artist Idil Baydar received threatening letters with the signature “NSU 2.0”. Her personal data was retrieved from a computer in the 4th precinct of the Wiesbaden police headquarters, as was the personal data of lawyer Seda Başay-Yıldız (1st precinct in Frankfurt) and Hessian Left Party leader Janine Wissler (3rd precinct in Wiesbaden). Although the police had been aware of the query of Idil Baydar’s data since March 2019, Baydar was not informed.¹⁷³ Left-wing politician Gökdeniz Özçetin and Mannheim member of the Bundestag Gökay Akbulut received emails with death threats which also carried the signature “NSU 2.0”.¹⁷⁴ Within a month, severed pig heads were found twice at an Islamic cultural centre in Greifswald. In both cases, there is no evidence leading to the suspects.¹⁷⁵

August 2020: In Erfurt, three men from Guinea were attacked by a right-wing extremist group. One of the three men was seriously injured and in critical condition. Police reported a “xenophobic attack”.¹⁷⁶ In southern Hesse, Fürth and Wahlen, threatening letters with racist content were sent to two DITIB mosques and private individuals. The case was investigated in connection with the NSU 2.0 threats. The mosques were threatened with arson and sprayed with “NSE 2020”.¹⁷⁷ Such threatening letters are also received by journalists, lawyers, and many other political figures.¹⁷⁸ In addition, a chat group among police officers in which right-

172. “Rechtsextreme Anschläge in Neukölln: Demo am Freitag”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/extremismus-berlin-rechtsextreme-anschlaege-in-neukoelln-demo-am-freitag-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-200624-99-545762>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

173. “Idil Baydar: Erneut Drohmails an Kabarettistin und Linken-Politikerinnen”, Frankfurter Rundschau, <https://www.fr.de/politik/20-spur-fall-baydars-fuehrt-polizei-13831153.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

174. “Morddrohung per Mail: Politiker Gökdeniz Özçetin wird Opfer von ‘NSU 2.0’ – Ehepaar im Verdacht”, Ludwigshafen24, <https://www.ludwigshafen24.de/region/goekdeniz-oezçetin-morddrohung-mail-nsu-bad-kreuznach-polizei-schauspieler-politiker-ehepaar-90012391.html>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

175. “Wieder Schweinekopf vor Islam-Zentrum in Greifswald”, Nordkurier, <https://www.nordkurier.de/mecklenburg-vorpommern/wieder-schweinekopf-vor-islam-zentrum-in-greifswald-2940177707.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

176. “Gewalttäter greifen drei Männer aus Guinea an”, Zeit online, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2020-08/erfurt-angriff-rechtsradikalismus-rassismus-gewalt>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

177. “Drohbriefe an zwei DITIB-Moscheen in Hessen”, Islamiq, <https://www.islamiq.de/2020/08/06/drohbriefe-an-zwei-ditib-moscheen-in-hessen/>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

178. “NSU 2.0: Auch der hessische Innenminister Peter Beuth (CDU) erhält Drohschreiben”, Frankfurter Rundschau, <https://www.fr.de/politik/polizei-deutschland-frankfurt-nsu-20-peter-beuth-linke-rechter-terror-zr-90008105.html>; “Auch Chebli erhält rechtsextreme Drohmail”, Rbb, <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2020/07/berlin-nsu-2-0-drohmails-morddrohungen-chebli-yuecel.html> (Access date: 12 January 2021).

wing extremist content was exchanged was discovered during the investigation. In recent years, there have been 13 right-wing extremist cases in the North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and nearly 200 similar cases in police ranks throughout Germany.¹⁷⁹ A similar chat group was found to have been set up at the professional fire department in Bremen.¹⁸⁰

September 2020: In Heidenau, Saxony, a young Muslim woman was insulted and attacked by three men on the street. The attackers tore off her headscarf.¹⁸¹ In Neubrandenburg, a pig head was placed on the terrace of a Syrian tenant by unknown persons.¹⁸² In a police operation near Hamburg, 250 firearms and several thousand rounds of ammunition were seized from a man with right-wing views.¹⁸³ The realisation of the existence of such arms depots in Germany or in Europe and of submerged right-wing extremists with terrorist potential arouse great concern among minorities.

October 2020: In Berlin, a disproportionate raid by Berlin police took place at the Mevlana Mosque in Kreuzberg. As a result of a suspected Corona emergency aid fraud amounting to €70,000, the police conducted a large-scale search with 150 officers.¹⁸⁴ Such a disproportionate use of security forces at a religious site is incomprehensible. Since the mosque's congregation poses no threat to officials or the public, and the raid is not about suspected "terrorism" but about a suspected financial fraud, such provocative actions by the police only confirm the suspected structural racism in their ranks.

November 2020: The same police approach with the large-scale raid at the Mevlana Mosque in Kreuzberg was witnessed in the deployment of the Berlin police at Furkan e.V. in Neukölln, this time with 90 police officers. The association is said to have applied for unauthorized aid in April.¹⁸⁵ The provocative and disproportionate

179. "Hitlergruß und Waffenlager", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/vorgeschichte-hitlergruss-und-waffenlager-1.5035097>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

180. "Bremen: Rechtsextreme Chatgruppe bei Berufsfeuerwehr - Hitler-Bilder verschickt", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, <https://www.fr.de/politik/bremen-feuerwehr-bilder-chat-adolf-hitler-rassistisch-rechtsextrem-frau-migration-shinterhrund-90111944.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

181. "Junge Frau wird beleidigt und geschlagen – dann reißen Täter ihr das Kopftuch weg", *Welt*, <https://www.welt.de/vermischtes/article216504472/Heidenau-bei-Dresden-Junge-Frau-mit-Kopftuch-beleidigt-und-geschlagen.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

182. "Schweinekopf in Garten eines Syrsers gelegt: Ermittlungen", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/panorama/kriminalitaet-neubrandenburg-schweinekopf-in-garten-eines-syrers-gelegt-ermittlungen-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-200916-99-589039>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

183. "Großer Waffenfund: Polizei stellt knapp 250 Schusswaffen sicher", *Landeskriminalamt Niedersachsen*, <https://www.lka.polizei-nds.de/a/presse/pressemitteilungen/groer-waffenfund-polizei-stellt-knapp-250-schusswaffen-sicher-114984.html>, (Access date: 17 January 2021).

184. "Türkei beklagt deutschen 'Hass' nach Razzia", *Der Tagesspiegel*, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/verdacht-auf-corona-soforthilfe-betrug-tuerkei-beklagt-deutschen-hass-nach-razzia/26304052.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

185. "Coronahilfen-Betrug! Razzia bei islamischem Verein in Neukölln", *BZ*, <https://www.bz-berlin.de/berlin/neukoelln/betrug-bei-corona-hilfen-razzia-in-islamischem-verein-in-neukoelln>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

police operations against Islamic associations and mosques only serve to criminalize Muslims in public.¹⁸⁶

December 2020: Security authorities were searching for 475 right-wing extremists, among whom about 70 potential terrorists, who had gone into hiding.¹⁸⁷ After a search of a huge arsenal of weapons in Austria, several suspects were arrested in Bavaria, NRW, and Austria. Austrian Interior Minister Karl Nehammer suspected that the arsenal might have been used to build up a right-wing militia.¹⁸⁸ The imam of the Islamic Cultural Centre, who lives in Wolfsburg, found an unstamped envelope in his private mailbox. Inside the envelope was a picture of a coffin and on it were the words “You will be here soon. Dirty.”¹⁸⁹ Muslims living in Germany receive such death threats daily. Another case was reported from Offenbach. A man on a bus called a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf Islamophobic names and threatened other passengers with a knife.¹⁹⁰ Yavuz Sultan Selim Mosque in Offenbach was smeared with political slogans¹⁹¹ and near Ömer Mosque in Sulz am Neckar a note was hung on a streetlight. On the note were right-wing extremist slogans such as “Germany belongs to the Germans” or “Foreigners out”.¹⁹² The outer façade of a kindergarten in Wolfenbüttel was smeared with right-wing extremist, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic slogans and symbols.¹⁹³ In Hamburg, a 51-year-old woman tried to tear off the headscarf of a young Muslim woman. In the process, the attacker hit, kicked, and scolded her.¹⁹⁴

There are many examples of attacks on mosques and Muslims. Although some action is being taken against Islamophobia, whether by the state or civil society, it’s

186. In another case of suspected fraud related to COVID-19 emergency aid, 100 police officers were summoned to action. But this time it was about a fraud gang with 13 defendants and subsidies amounting to €1.2 million. For this purpose, the raids were not carried out in a single location, but in several cities in NRW and in Austria. “Razzia nach Betrug mit Corona-Soforthilfe in großem Stil - falsche Anträge in Millionenhöhe”, Ruhr Nachrichten, <https://www.ruhrnachrichten.de/nachrichten/razzia-nach-betrug-mit-corona-soforthilfe-in-grosem-stil-falsche-antraege-in-millionenhoeh-1580070.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

187. “Polizei fahndet nach 475 untergetauchten Rechtsextremisten”, Islamiq, <https://www.islamiq.de/2020/12/31/polizei-fahndete-nach-475-untergetauchten-rechtsextremisten/>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

188. “Waffenarsenal bei Rechtsradikalen in Österreich ausgehoben”, Der Tagesspiegel, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/eine-der-groessten-funde-der-letzten-jahrzehnte-waffenarsenal-bei-rechtsradikalen-in-oesterreich-ausgehoben/26713350.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

189. “Morddrohungen gegen Wolfsburger Imam”, Wolfsburger Nachrichten, <https://www.wolfsburger-nachrichten.de/wolfsburg/article231227964/Morddrohung-gegen-Wolfsburger-Imam.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

190. “Mann sprüht im Bus mit Pfefferspray und bedroht Mitfahrer mit Messer”, op-online.de, <https://www.op-online.de/region/seligenstadt/landkreis-offenbach-mann-bus-pfefferspray-hainburg-bedrohung-beleidigung-90132570.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

191. “Offenbach DİTİB Yavuz Selim Camii’ne Boyalı Saldırı”, Perspektif.eu, <https://perspektif.eu/2020/12/11/offenbach-ditib-yavuz-selim-camiine-boyali-saldiri/>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

192. “Islamfeindliche Zettel nahe Moschee angebracht”, Islamiq, <https://www.islamiq.de/2020/11/21/islamfeindliche-zettel-nahe-moschee-angebracht/>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

193. “Wolfenbütteler Kita mit rechtsextremen Botschaften beschmiert”, Wolfenbuetteler Zeitung, <https://www.wolfenbuetteler-zeitung.de/wolfenbuettel/article231069722/Wolfenbuetteler-Kita-mit-rechtsextremen-Botschaften-beschmiert.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

194. “Frau versucht, Muslimin Schleier vom Gesicht zu reißen”, Welt, <https://www.welt.de/regionales/hamburg/article220826520/Islamfeindlichkeit-Angriff-in-Hamburg-Frau-schlaegt-und-tritt-Muslimin.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

still not enough to bring the structural and social Islamophobia under control. As many Muslims have reported, women with headscarves are afraid of being insulted, beaten, or attacked on the street or in the subway in Germany.¹⁹⁵ A police operation in Wuppertal against a 22-year-old Muslim woman wearing a headscarf makes it clear why Muslim women are increasingly afraid of security forces or of simply being in public. An eyewitness described the case as follows: “the young mother had left the dentist’s office with a stroller and had forgotten to put her mask back on. Immediately, three police officers allegedly restrained her and also handcuffed her. Her arms were twisted so that the woman screamed in pain.” Nine police officers participated in the operation against the woman with the stroller.¹⁹⁶

Employment

People are discriminated against for various reasons in society. People are discriminated against because of their age, gender, physical appearance, ethnic origin, disability, or religion. The same happens in the labour market or when looking for a job. A study conducted by the Social Science Research Center Berlin shows that applicants with an immigrant background have less success in finding a job than “German” applicants. According to the study, 60% of applicants with German names receive positive feedback. For applicants with an immigrant background, this was only 51%. Not only ethnic origin plays an important role in integration in the labour market, but the religious affiliation of applicants is also significant. While 57% of Christians and 53% of Buddhists and Hindus could look forward to a positive response, only 46% of Muslims received a positive message from the employer. There is also a difference in the positive feedback rate when an applicant with an immigrant background signals closeness to Christianity in their application as opposed to an applicant who signals closeness to Islam (about 9%). This shows that it is not the “non-Christians” but the Muslims in specific who face discrimination.¹⁹⁷ The study covers occupations such as hotel manager, cook, industrial clerk, salesperson, plant mechanic, mechatronics technician, and medical and dental assistant. The study shows that discrimination is greater in highly skilled professions such as engineering, medicine, architecture, science, etc. For example, in the beginning of 2020, it became known that a man was discriminated against because of his origin. He applied for an internship at an architectural office in Berlin and as a response he received an internal company email, which was mistakenly sent to him, saying

195. “Frauen mit Kopftuch haben doppelten Grund zur Angst”, *Der Tagesspiegel*, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/islam-in-deutschland-frauen-mit-kopftuch-haben-doppelten-grund-zur-angst/26753996.html>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

196. “Polizei rechtfertigt Vorgehen gegen muslimische Frau”, *Islamiq*, <https://www.islamiq.de/2020/12/24/polizei-rechtfertigt-vorgehen-gegen-muslimische-frau/>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

197. Ruud Koopmans, Susanne Veit and Ruta Yemane, “Ethnische Hierarchien in der Bewerberauswahl: Ein Feldexperiment zu den Ursachen von Arbeitsmarktdiskriminierung”, *Discussion Paper, SP VI 2018-104*, <https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2018/vi18-104.pdf>, (Access date: 10 January 2020).

“no Arabs please”.¹⁹⁸ Most of the time it is very difficult to prove discrimination because it is often expressed verbally; however, in this case, there was written proof.

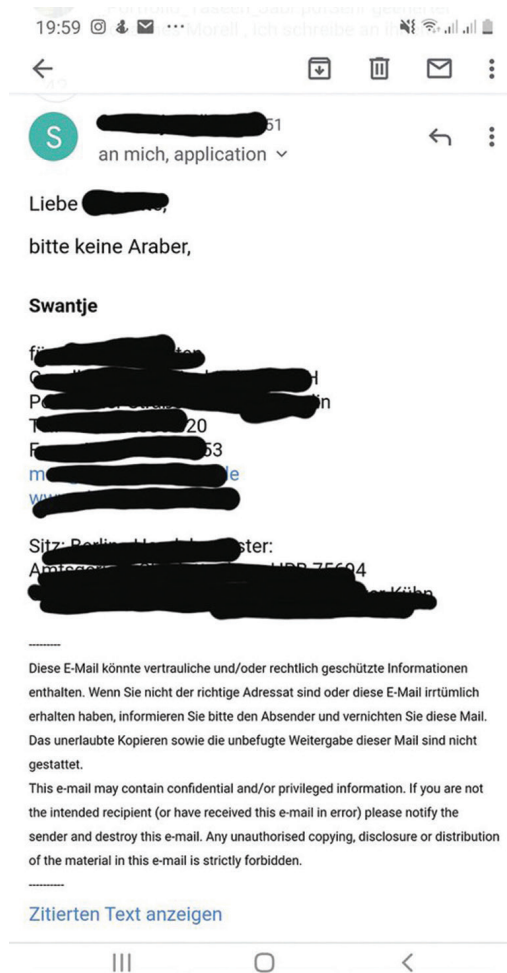


Figure 2: An example of racist discrimination against Muslims in the labour market.¹⁹⁹

Similar results were presented in another study. According to this study, 53% of the majority candidates receive a positive response, while 49% percent of candidates of Turkish origin can look forward to a positive response from an employer.²⁰⁰ This leads to the idea that, in the eyes of employers, Muslims and immigrants with Turkish origin are quickly rejected. A report on Germany shows that 50.57% of the ma-

198. “Araber sprechen kein Chinesisch”, Taz, <https://taz.de/Rassismus-auf-dem-Arbeitsmarkt/!5654116/>, (Access date: 18 January 2021).

199. Bahar Aslan, Twitter, 15 January 2020, https://twitter.com/BaharAslan_/status/1217240060011126785, (Access date: 18 January 2021).

200. Lex Thijssen, Bram Lancee, Susanne Veit, Ruta Yemane, “Discrimination against Turkish Minorities in Germany and the Netherlands: Field Experimental Evidence on the Effect of Diagnostic Information on Labour Market Outcomes”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (2019), pp.1-18.

majority candidates received a positive response from an employer, where only 44.34% percent of the standard Muslim and 40.59% of the overtly Muslim candidates received a call-back when applying for a job.²⁰¹

According to a study by the Institute for Employment Research, Germans' trust in people from other countries varies greatly by country. The less the trust in the country a migrant comes from, the more the migrant suffers from discrimination in the labour market. Germans trust Poles the least (21%), which seems to stem more from historical reasons. Trust in people from Turkey is 34% with trust in Italians at 55% and Austrians at 78%. Trust also varies greatly by state. Trust in Turks is 27% in Hesse, but in Berlin it is 42%. There is a strong correlation between trust and duration of unemployment. If the confidence of Germans in a country triples, the average duration of unemployment for this group could be cut in half.²⁰²

Some examples of discrimination from the business world follow: a man looking for an apprenticeship applied to a Brandenburg company. He was immediately rejected by e-mail. The managing director wrote in his letter, "Among the seven applications, there are other, more suitable candidates. Furthermore, working in our company as a practicing Muslim is undesirable. In my eyes, Islam cannot be reconciled with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD). [...] Nevertheless, I wish you all the best for the future and hope that you will find your way back to your homeland and can live there according to your principles, just as we Germans want to live in our homeland of Germany according to our liberal principles."²⁰³ The letter showcases how everyday racism is considered a normal code of conduct or even a manifestation of patriotism. Most likely, the managing director did not understand that his Islamophobic and xenophobic behaviour was violating the very constitution he so highly praises in his letter – he probably believes that the constitution applies only to biological Germans and not to "pass Germans or foreigners".

A single mother with one child applied for an apprenticeship as an office management assistant at a tax consulting company. Since she had a picture with a headscarf on her application, the managing director wrote to her that the application was an "alibi letter for ALG II (Unemployment Benefit II)" and that "as a tip for the future, the applicant should also do without her 'headdress' in a serious application".²⁰⁴

201. Valentina Di Stasio, Bram Lancee, Susanne Veit, Ruta Yemane, "Muslim by Default or Religious Discrimination? Results from a Cross-National Field Experiment on Hiring Discrimination", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (2019), p. 11.

202. "Zugewanderte, denen man weniger vertraut, bleiben länger arbeitslos", IAB-KURZBERICHT, <http://doku.iab.de/kurzber/2020/kb1020.pdf>, (Access date: 20 January 2021).

203. "'Mitarbeit als Moslem unerwünscht': Kolkwitzer Unternehmen lehnt Azubi ab", *Rbb 24*, <https://www.rbb24.de/panorama/beitrag/2020/10/brandenburg-bewerbung-strassenbaufirma-rassistische-mail-muslime.html>, (Access date: 20 January 2021).

204. "Tipp, auf 'Kopfschmuck' zu verzichten, kostet Steuerberater 1.500 Euro", *Legal Tribune Online*, <https://www.lto.de/recht/nachrichten/n/lag-rheinland-pfalz-3sa13219-kopftuch-arbeitsrecht-bewerbung-steuerberater-religion-agg/>, (Access date: 20 January 2021).



Figure 3: An example of racist discrimination against Muslims in the labour market.²⁰⁵

A 16-year-old girl from Hamburg applied for a job as a summer temporary employee at the Edeka supermarket. On the very first day of the trial, the store manager came and allegedly said, “Take off your headscarf or you can’t work here.” Following the incident, she quit her job.²⁰⁶

Education

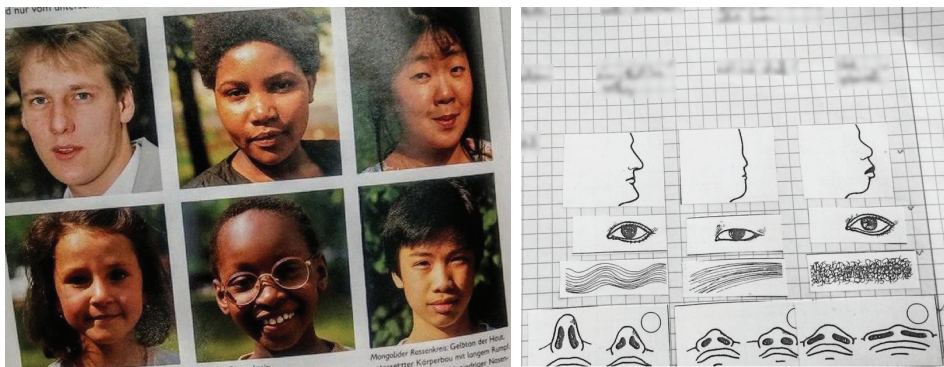
The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) report on Germany emphasizes that parents or students from sub-Saharan Africa (18%) and from Turkey (15%) feel discriminated against in German educational institutions. Not only students with an immigrant background have a hard time at school, 16% of all 15-year-old Germans experience bullying a few times a month. It is not difficult to imagine what students from other backgrounds must have to experience. In addition,

205. Malik, Twitter, 11 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/DerTurkistaner/status/1315391015407300608>, (Access date: 20 January 2021).

206. “Weil sie ein Kopftuch trägt: Schülerin als Supermarktaushilfe abgelehnt”, RND, <https://www.rnd.de/panorama/wegen-kopftuch-edeka-lehnt-schulerin-als-aushilfe-ab-6RISV5SWJRD2VKBR3QU6TIUCH4.html>, (Access date: 20 January 2021).

teacher training is insufficient when it comes to teaching in a diverse environment. Human rights, teaching in diverse classes, and dealing with discrimination and bullying are not mandatory components of teacher licensure, teacher training, or in-service training. Textbooks and teaching materials continue to contain stereotypes and derogatory portrayals with regard to origin, religion, or gender. The diversity of the German nation is not sufficiently conveyed in textbooks as teaching material.²⁰⁷

An example of the stereotyping of refugees in a Berlin textbook is the following: “For refugees from poor countries, the right of asylum offers the opportunity to live with us and participate, albeit modestly, in German prosperity.” Textbook publishers could also play a role in improving the representation of diversity in textbooks. However, the experts needed for this are either underpaid by publishers or not paid at all.²⁰⁸



Figures 4 and 5: Excerpt from the theme booklet *Natural Science Biology, Chemistry, Physics - Colours*, which was used in a Saxon school until 2018. As an assignment, students were asked to match the different eyes, noses, and hair types to specific “racial circles.”²⁰⁹

Although some publishers try to remove clichés, stereotypes, and generalisations from their instructional material, this is a more deeply rooted problem than changing a few words or pictures. In addition to school material, the traditional rules, habits, routines, and organisational structures of a school affect racism in education.²¹⁰ For example, in a 3rd grade textbook, people in Africa are generally portrayed as being so poor that they don’t have real houses but straw huts, and their children can’t go to school. “The students are then asked about this, [and] why they have it better.”²¹¹ Until the end of 2018, the thematic booklet *Natural Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics - Colors*, which was published in 1998 by the former GDR publishing

207. ECRI Bericht 2020, p. 14.

208. “Wie Diskriminierung beigebracht wird”, Taz, <https://taz.de/Rassismus-in-Schulbuechern/!5587743/>, (Access date: 21 January 2021).

209. Ibid.

210. Jule Bönkost. “Dekonstruktion von Rassismus in Schulbüchern. ‘Verbesserte’ Schulbuchinhalte reichen nicht aus. Eckert”. *Dossiers 1* (2020), p.15.

211. “Wir essen jeden Tag Reis’: Rassismus weit verbreitet in Schulbüchern”, Neue Westfaelische https://www.nw.de/nachrichten/zwischen_weser_und_rhein/22861669_Wir-essen-jeden-Tag-Reis-Rassismus-weit-verbreitet-in-Schulbuechern.html, (Access date: 21 January 2021).

house *Volk und Wissen*, was used in school lessons in Dresden. The people pictured below are assigned to the “Negrid”, the “Europid”, and the “Mongolid racial circle”. “The students are asked to assign different eyes, noses, and hair types to certain “racial circles”.”²¹²

The structural analysis of history and politics textbooks in Germany shows a simplistic portrayal of Islam while Muslims are shown as a non-European “Other”. According to this, Islam and a “modern Europe” exist as homogeneous entities that are mutually exclusive. The evaluation of “Islam” as an antiquated and premodern “Other” that does not fit into Europe can have a promoting effect on cultural racism. Most of the topics that are related to Islam are related to decolonisation, the Middle East conflict, international terrorism, Islamism, the “new world order”, and the “clash of civilizations”. In social studies, Islam is treated alongside such topics as migration, the headscarf, and the mosque dispute. Also, from the cultural point of view, “Islamic” and “Arab” are treated as identical stereotypes. Inner-Islamic diversity is overlooked. Again and again, the books build up a link back to the foundation of Islam and its expansion in the Middle Ages and the importance of the Koran for Muslims. Muslims are generally associated with pictures from Mecca or as camel riders in the desert. While the depiction of Islam in the Middle Ages is linked to jihad and expansion interpretations, “conflict” is considered the central concept with references to war, terrorism, and fundamentalism in the context of international politics and migration in the modern depiction of Muslims.²¹³

Racism in German textbooks appears not only in topics such as Islam, Muslims, or Turks, but everything “different” from Western European gets its share. For example, people from Africa are represented in two ways: by Afro-pessimism and Afro-romanticism. According to Afro-pessimism, the continent of Africa is a place of misery and incapacity, and according to Afro-romanticism it is an exotic, natural, and untouched land. Both representations are based on the ideology of racial hierarchy.²¹⁴

Politics

The strongest far-right and Islamophobic party in 2020 remained the Alternative for Germany (AfD). According to the foundation Bertelmann Stiftung’s Populism Barometer 2020, just under 8% of voters in Germany are manifestly right-wing ex-

212. “Rassismus in Schulbüchern”, Spiegel Panorama, <https://www.spiegel.de/fotostrecke/rassismus-in-schulbuechern-fotostrecke-166482.html>, (Access date: 21 January 2021).

213. Susanne Kröhnert-Othman, Keine Chance auf Zugehörigkeit? Schulbücher europäischer Länder halten Islam und modernes Europa getrennt, Ergebnisse einer Studie des Georg-Eckert- Instituts für internationale Schulbuchforschung zu aktuellen Darstellungen von Islam und Muslimen in Schulbüchern europäischer Länder, *Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung*, 2011, http://www.gei.de/fileadmin/gei.de/pdf/publikationen/Expertise/fulltext/Islamstudie_2011.pdf, (Access date: 22 January 2021).

214. Marmer, Elina, Rassismus in deutschen Schulbüchern am Beispiel von Afrikabildern, *Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik* 36 (2013) 2, pp. 25-31.

tremists and 24% are latently right-wing extremists. In all parties there are more or less right-wing extremist voters: in the CDU 6% are manifestly right-wing extremists and 18% are latent right-wing extremists; in the Greens' electorate the proportion of manifestly right-wing extremists is 2% and 8% are latent extremists. But the concentration of right-wing extremists in the AfD electorate is remarkable. Among them, 29% are manifest right-wing extremists and 56% latent right-wing extremists. Their attitudes toward far-right ideology should also be noted. Fifteen per cent of AfD voters are in favour of a right-wing dictatorship, 13% in favour of trivialising National Socialism, 13% are anti-Semitic, 54% are chauvinists, and 65% are xenophobes.²¹⁵ What was not asked in the barometer is the respondents' opinion about Islam and Muslims. But one gets a strong indication of this from the link between AfD voters and xenophobia. Accordingly, it can be assumed that two-thirds of AfD supporters are Islamophobic. As right-wing extremism researcher Matthias Quent explains, the AfD's electoral success in eastern Germany has most likely contributed to its radicalisation. The AfD electorate is also aware of the party's right-wing radicalism.²¹⁶ Right-wing extremist Björn Höcke-led *völkisch*-nationalist AfD group *Der Flügel* was classified by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution as a "secured right-wing extremist effort against the free democratic ground order." As a result, *Der Flügel* "dissolved" itself at the end of March 2020.²¹⁷ Despite the alleged dissolution, according to the president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution Thomas Haldenwang, supporters of the group continue to hold key positions in internal party elections.²¹⁸ The AfD and its even more extremist subgroups are a danger not only to Muslims, Jews, or Germans who think differently, but also to democracy and human rights in Germany and Europe as a whole. A good example is the government crisis in Thuringia in February 2020. The plot of the AfD, and specifically Höcke, to elect FDP candidate Thomas Kemmerich as prime minister with the votes of the FDP and the CDU shook the entire German democracy. This AfD "strategy" cost the posts of Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer as CDU federal chairwoman, Mike Mohring as CDU state chairman and parliamentary group chairman in Thuringia and *Ostbeauftragte* (Eastern Commissioner) of the

215. Robert Vehrkamp, Wolfgang Merkel, Populismusbarometer 2020, Populistische Einstellungen bei Wählern und Nichtwählern in Deutschland 2020, Bertelsmannsstiftung, https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Bibliothek/Doi_Publikationen/ZD_Studie_Populismusbarometer_2020.pdf, (Access date: 25 January 2021).

216. Vincenzo Capodici, "Die AfD wird als rechtsradikale Partei gewählt", Tages Anzeiger, 02 September 2019, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ausland/europa/die-afd-wird-als-rechtsradikale-partei-gewaehlt/story/21777646>, (Access date: 26 January 2021).

217. "AfD-„Flügel“ löst sich offenbar auf", BR24, <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/deutschland-welt/afd-fluegel-beschliesst-selbstaufloesung,RrtIXQy>, (Access date: 26 January 2021).

218. Handelsblatt, Verfassungsschutz warnt: Höcke-Flügel treibt Radikalisierung der AfD voran, 11 October 2020, <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/afd-verfassungsschutz-warnt-hoecke-fluegel-treibt-radikalisierung-der-afd-voran/26264214.html?ticket=ST-263049-TeEz0bRc1UKgcfawr47O-ap3>, (Access date: 26 January 2021).

federal government, and of Christian Hirte as parliamentary state secretary. What is even more alarming are the comments welcoming the support of the AfD by top FDP politicians such as FDP leader Christian Lindner who stated, “Who [...] supports our candidates in a secret ballot, that is not in our power”²¹⁹ or FDP Vice Chairman Wolfgang Kubicki who claimed, “It is a great success for Thomas Kemmerich. A candidate of the democratic centre has won. [...] What the constitution provides for should not be discredited.”²²⁰

The AfD adopted its *Program for Germany* at the federal party congress in Stuttgart on April 30/May 1, 2016. In its party program with the subtitle “7.6 Islam in Tension”, the AfD places Islam in a discriminatory manner alongside the Judeo-Christian and humanistic foundations of German culture. Immediately afterwards, it becomes clear what is actually meant by this, namely “7.6.1 Islam Does Not Belong to Germany”, which cannot actually be true since many Muslims have been born in Germany or have built their lives in Germany. By denying this, the more than 4 million Muslims living in Germany will not simply disappear. The denial of entire religious groups or “alien species” is a typical symptom of right-wing extremists. In this manner, the AfD proposes a “democratic” defamation of Islam with its “religion criticism” agenda which exclusively targets Islam. The AfD wants to disguise its Islamophobic and racist attitude towards Islam and Muslims as a whole. Where Christians can allow their faith to be freely shaped by churches and Jews by their synagogues, the AfD would like to impose their own worldview on Islam and Muslims, and prevent the practice of religion by laws. However, this is incompatible with the German Constitution (“No one may be disadvantaged or favoured because of his faith or religious beliefs, Article 3 Paragraph 3) and freedom of religion (Article 4 GG). The AfD’s campaign “Together for the Constitution” also serves to instrumentalize Islam for political purposes; whether the campaign supports the constitution or questions its legitimacy is highly questionable. Thus, the public controversially talks about Islam no longer as a faith but as an ideology, and mostly as a security risk for German culture or even for the state, which is to be restructured according to the “will of the majority” or the federal government. Some examples of the deconstruction of the Islamic faith are terms like political Islam, Islamism, legalistic Islamism, Euro Islam, German Islam, *Islamkritik*, *Muslimenkritik*, and enlightened Islam. Actually, such “Islam-critical” discourses, so much adorned with charm and alleged “freedom of speech” statements, are only modern exclusion strategies of the right-wing extremists who want to exclude Muslims from society, as happened in the recent past with Jews in Germany.

219. Ulrich Schulte, “Lindners Legende”, 06 February 2020, Taz, <https://taz.de/Die-FDP-und-Thueringen/!5658334/>, (Access date: 25 January 2021).

220. “Kubicki: Großer Erfolg für FDP-Kandidat Kemmerich”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/landtag-berlin-kubicki-grosser-erfolg-fuer-fdp-kandidat-kemmerich-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-200205-99-787764>, (Access date: 26 January 2021).

CDU city councillor Wolfgang Jacobi from Radebeul participated in the Islamophobic and racist 200th PEGIDA march in Dresden.²²¹ The rapprochement of some CDU politicians with the Islamophobic AfD and PEGIDA is worrying for Muslims living in Germany.

In the Bavarian state of Swabia, a German entrepreneur, Şener Şahin, wanted to be the CSU's candidate for mayor. Although he was born near Wallerstein in Swabia, he had to withdraw his candidacy after fierce protests from the local CSU association because of his Muslim faith. Şahin has only German citizenship, has a Protestant wife, was born in Germany, and is a successful entrepreneur. However, he was not considered a good candidate by the CSU local association because of his foreign roots and being a Muslim.²²² Although one in four citizens in Germany has an immigrant background, they are underrepresented in politics. Only 8% of members of the Bundestag and 4% of members of the Landtag have an immigrant background.²²³ A recent study by the Council of Experts on Integration and Migration shows that migrant associations are important actors in civil society in Germany and make an important political contribution, particularly in integration work.²²⁴ A proportional representation of people with an immigrant background in German politics would undoubtedly ease many areas of tension in daily politics.

Media

Since the 1970s, Muslim immigrants have been portrayed in the media as unemployed, welfare recipients, and criminals. Especially since the New Year's Eve of 2015 in Cologne, they have been also represented by right-wing extremists as rapists - this opinion has been even more reinforced after the riots in Stuttgart. With their "reporting" on the right-wing scene, the media are becoming the mouthpieces of right-wing extremists across Germany.

If you look at the official figures of the Federal Criminal Police Office on crime, the reports and the facts do not match. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, the total number of crimes and of crimes committed by immigrants have been decreasing since 2015, contrary to what is claimed in the media and by populist and extreme politicians.

221. "CDU-Stadtrat aus Radebeul marschierte bei PEGIDA mit", *Der Tagesspiegel*, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/rechtsradikale-in-sachsen-cdu-stadtrat-aus-radebeul-marschierte-bei-pegida-mit/25584720.html>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

222. "Heftige Proteste der Basis - Muslim zieht Bewerbung für CSU zurück", *Spiegel Politik*, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/csu-muslim-zieht-nach-heftigen-protesten-kandidatur-zurueck-a-1303665.html>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

223. "Wo ist die Tür für Migranten? ", *Deutschlandfunk*, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/einstieg-in-die-politik-wo-ist-die-tuer-fuer-migranten.862.de.html?dram:article_id=478461, (Access date: 01 February 2021).

224. "Vielfältig engagiert – breit vernetzt – partiell eingebunden? Migrantenorganisationen als gestaltende Kraft in der Gesellschaft," *Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration*, Berlin: 2020, <https://www.svr-migration.de/publikationen/migrantenorganisationen-in-deutschland/>, (Access date: 01 February 2021).

Table 2: Total offenses (2005-2019)²²⁵

Year	Population	Change	Offenses	Change	Offenses (without violations of immigration law)	Change
2005	82,501,000	0.0	6,391,715	-3.6	6,287,780	
2006	82,438,000	-0.1	6,304,223	-1.4	6,203,074	-1.3
2007	82,314,900	-0.1	6,284,661	-0.3	6,195,622	-0.1
2008	82,217,800	-0.1	6,114,128	-2.7	6,036,828	-2.6
2009	82,002,400	-0.3	6,054,330	-1.0	5,980,089	-0.9
2010	81,802,300	-0.2	5,933,278	-2.0	5,859,125	-2.0
2011	81,751,602	-0.1	5,990,679	1.0	5,912,355	0.9
2012	81,843,743	0.1	5,997,040	0.1	5,908,011	-0.1
2013	80,523,746	(x)	5,961,662	-0.6	5,851,107	-1.0
2014	80,767,463	0.3	6,082,064	2.0	5,925,668	1.3
2015	81,197,537	0.5	6,330,649	4.1	5,927,908	0.0
2016	82,175,684	1.2	6,372,526	0.7	5,884,815	-0.7
2017	82,521,653	0.4	5,761,984	-9.6	5,582,136	-5.1
2018	82,792,351	0.3	5,555,520	-3.6	5,392,457	-3.4
2019	83,019,213	0.3	5,435,401	-2.1	5,270,782	-2.3

Table 3: Non-German suspects in Germany (2013-2019)²²⁶

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Suspects	1,896,221	1,931,079	1,974,805	2,022,414	2,011,898	2,054,441	2,028,991
German Suspects	1,318,980	1,342,886	1,376,450	1,406,184	1,456,078	1,532,112	1,555,711
Non-German Suspects	577,241	589,200	599,357	616,230	555,820	522,329	473,280
thereof immigrants	151,009	165,769	167,268	174,438	114,238	-	-

225. "Bericht zur Polizeilichen Kriminalstatistik 2019", BAK.

226. Ibid.

The misdirected reporting or defamation of Muslims in the media is not just a matter of bias on the part of those employed in the sector. It indicates the existence of a structurally ordered elitist ecosystem that is adopted by almost every employee in the media industry. Peter Frey, editor-in-chief from ZDF (Second German Television), explains this situation as follows, “But the question is how much in quotes minority status actually remains when someone works in such an established medium and in such an exposed situation. So even the one or two who come rather from the fringes of society grow. And that is also positive. On the one hand, thank God, then into the middle, so to speak, and represents the middle. And at the same time, it loses a bit of the status and the role and the function of representing a minority. But I also observe this phenomenon not only among people with a Muslim, Turkish, Arab background. I also observe it among East Germans.”²²⁷

The study by the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) shows how few people with an immigrant background and East Germans are represented in the German elite. Only in the area of religion people with an immigrant background are represented proportionately to their demographic share; however, in areas such as security (0%), justice (1.3%), military (2.0%), administration (4.6%), unions (3.0%), politics (7.7%) and media (16.4%) they have almost no or little participation.²²⁸

Bild Live, a television channel, reported immediately after the Hanau attack and speculated that the deeds took place in a “criminal milieu”. The operator of the shisha bar was immediately portrayed as a criminal who was involved in the shooting for protection money or supremacy. Even the places of the events were described as “not bourgeois enough”.²²⁹

Justice System

A right to pastoral care is particularly important for people who are in prison. According to the Ministry of Justice and the Migration Commissioner of Thuringia, there are problems with pastoral care for Muslim inmates in prisons. Muslim inmates do not receive the same pastoral care as Christian inmates because there is a lack of chaplains. Muslim chaplains have no degree that can be compared to Christian chaplains, which makes hiring difficult. For 100 prisoners of Roman Catholic faith and 80 of Protestant faith, there are seven Protestant chaplains and three Roman Catholic chaplains

227. Hristio Boytchev, Christine Horz, Malin Neumüller, “Viel Wille, kein Weg”. Diversity im deutschen Journalismus, Neue deutsche Medienmacher*innen, May 2020, pp. 43-44, https://www.neuemedienmacher.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200509_MdM_Bericht_Diversity_im_Journalismus.pdf, (Access date: 05 February 2021).

228. Vogel Lars, Zajak Sabrina. “Teilhabe ohne Teilnahme? Wie Ostdeutsche und Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund in der bundesdeutschen Elite vertreten sind”, *DeZIM Research Notes*, 2020, p. 13.

229. Bildblog, 20 February 2020, <https://twitter.com/i/status/1230494839034318848>, <https://twitter.com/i/status/1230494844658814981>, (Access date: 10 February 2021).

in Thuringia. But for 160 imprisoned Muslims, there is not a single state-approved Muslim chaplain.²³⁰ A lack of Muslim chaplains is a problem not only in Thuringia but throughout Germany. For example, for around 1,000 prisoners of Muslim faith in Lower Saxony, there are only 23 Muslim chaplains.²³¹

A perennial Islamophobic controversy in Germany is whether or not wearing headscarves is allowed in courtrooms. While prospective female prosecutors in Berlin are allowed to wear headscarves,²³² judges and prosecutors in Lower Saxony cannot wear religious items or clothing, including headscarves, in the courtroom.²³³ In the same year (2020), a woman wearing a headscarf was appointed as a district judge for the first time in Great Britain,²³⁴ while in Munich, a female honorary judge was suspended and impeachment proceedings were initiated against her because she wore a headscarf during oral proceedings.²³⁵

The Federal Prosecutor General at the Federal Supreme Court has undertaken only one preliminary investigation from the 901 Islamophobic crimes reported in Germany, of which 146 were against mosques and 48 against people. The preliminary investigation involved the preparation for an arson attack on Muslim people. The other 900 crimes went unpunished.

Internet

Since 1992, the judiciary has tracked data on xenophobic and far-right crimes, and since 2019, it has collected data on hate crime nationwide. In 2017, 7,913 cases were attributed to hate crime, of which 2,270 hate comments were spread on the internet. Unfortunately, there is no knowledge of what the judiciary does with this data. Will the data be forwarded to the police by the judiciary²³⁶ so that they can be investigated and sentenced or will there be no investigation opened against them by the Attorney General at the Federal Supreme Court, similarly to the Islamophobic

230. "Probleme bei Gefängnisseelsorge für Muslime", Zeit Online, <https://www.zeit.de/news/2020-12/04/gefängnisseelsorge-beauftragte-warnt-vor-radikalisierungen>, (Access date: 08 February 2021).

231. "Niedersachsen will die muslimische Gefängnisseelsorge verbessern", Braunschweiger Zeitung, <https://www.braunschweiger-zeitung.de/niedersachsen/article228461141/Niedersachsen-will-die-muslimische-Gefängnisseelsorge-verbessern.html>, (Access date: 10 February 2021).

232. "In Berlin dürfen angehende Staatsanwältinnen nun Kopftuch tragen", Welt, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article215031714/Berlin-Justizsenator-erlaubt-angehenden-Staatsanwaeltinnen-Kopftuch.html>, (Access date: 10 February 2021).

233. "Verbot für Justiz: Keine religiösen Symbole", NDR, https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/niedersachsen/hannover_weser-leinegebiet/Verbot-fuer-Justiz-Keine-religioesen-Symbole,neutralitaet102.html, (Access date: 10 February 2021).

234. "Großbritannien: Erste muslimische Richterin mit Kopftuch", TRT Deutsch, <https://www.trtdeutsch.com/news-europa/grossbritannien-erste-muslimische-richterin-mit-kopftuch-2024073>, (Access date: 10 February 2021).

235. "Wegen Kopftuch: Amtsenthebung einer ehrenamtlichen Richterin in München", TRT Deutsch, <https://www.trtdeutsch.com/news-inland/wegen-kopftuch-amtsenthebung-einer-ehrenamtlichen-richterin-in-munchen-3495521>, (Access date: 10 February 2021).

236. ECRI Bericht 2020.

crimes? In 2017, the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) came into force in Germany. This makes it possible to learn the numbers of hate speech deleted by social network companies. According to its transparency report, in 2020, 194,440 comments - specifically 176,774 in 2019 and 159,676 in 2018 - containing hate speech or political extremism were reported to Google. Of these, 50,498 were removed from the network in 2020, 48,259 in 2019, and 44,739 in 2018.²³⁷ On Facebook, there were 10,439 complaints in 2020, which led to the deletion of 3,584 pieces of content.²³⁸ Unlike the other social networks, Twitter received 1,577,184 complaints in 2020 and took action against 241,099 of these complaints. Before that, it received 1,346,991 complaints and took action in 183,873 cases.²³⁹ Facebook and Twitter are still the most used platforms for hate comments. After all, the Christchurch right-wing terrorist live-streamed his act on Facebook. Although companies do a lot to prevent hate crime, only just under one-third of complaints resulted in action; on Twitter, this number was almost one-tenth. It is a known fact that only the comments that are considered as hate speech by companies are actually deleted or receive an administrative warning. It is also uncertain whether any prosecution will arise from these comments.

After the Network Enforcement Act came into force in 2017, hate comments were continuously deleted on a large scale by the established social network companies. The deletion of the content causes the right-wing extremists to change platforms. They now use VK, the Russian equivalent of Facebook, Gab (and before that Parler) instead of Twitter, or Voat instead of Reddit. As is explained in an analysis of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, despite the high numbers in major platforms, right-wing extremists use smaller alternative platforms for recruitment. The right-wing terrorist groups operate anonymously, react quickly to deletions of their platforms, and despite the anonymity, they succeed in attracting new members. These groups usually operate globally and the members, called “anons”, often do not know each other. Through subcultural codes, language, and symbols they find their way to each other. For closer networking, they use messenger services like WhatsApp, Wire, Element, Signal, and especially Telegram with its closed groups. Other communication channels are the imageboards or forums where people can anonymously publish topics or posts. Providing a passage to the darknet, they offer bomb- or weapon-making guides or announce their terror plans, as was done by the right-wing terrorists of

237. Google, Entfernungen von Inhalten nach dem Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz https://transparencyreport.google.com/netzdg/youtube?hl=de&items_by_reason=period:Y2018H2&clu=items_by_reason, (Access date: 18 February 2021).

238. Facebook veröffentlicht fünften NetzDG-Transparenzbericht, <https://about.fb.com/de/news/2020/07/facebook-veroeffentlicht-fuenften-netzdg-transparenzbericht/>; Facebook veröffentlicht sechsten NetzDG-Transparenzbericht, (Access date: 29 January 2021); <https://about.fb.com/de/news/2021/01/facebook-veroeffentlicht-sechsten-netzdg-transparenzbericht/>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

239. Twitter, Network Enforcement Act, <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/reports/countries/de.html>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

Christchurch, Poway, El Paso, and Bærum. One of the most famous imageboards is 4Chan with its subforum “Political Incorrect” alongside 8kun, Endchan, Krautchan, Anon Cafe, Volkfront, and Stromfront. Besides YouTube and Vimeo, other popular video platforms are Bitchute, Bitube, DLive, Rumble, and DonnerSender. Gaming platforms, such as Discord, Steam, and Twitch, are also often used for right-wing extremist propaganda. On the Discord platform, the far-right demonstration in Charlottesville “Unite the Right” Rally 2017 was organized. At the demonstration, a right-wing terrorist drove his car into counter-demonstrators and killed Heather Heyer.²⁴⁰

According to its report, the Digital Analysis Unit at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) identified 379 far-right and right-wing populist channels on ten alternative platforms: 129 on Telegram, 115 on VK, 79 on Bitchute, 38 on Gab, 8 on Reddit, 5 on Minds, and 5 on Voat. About 15,000 to 50,000 German speakers with far-right views use these platforms. According to the report, most channels are close to Islamophobic users and neo-Nazis. Identitarian groups have the largest reach. Of the 379 groups and channels identified by the ISD, 104 channels focused on rejection of Islam and Muslims, immigration, and refugees. Among them, the most popular Islamophobic channel has 18,000 followers. Islamophobic content by right-wing extremists is published more frequently on Gab than on other platforms. Posts about Islam and Muslims often use Islamophobic clichés, such as that Islam is a threat to European culture. Discrimination against Muslims is justified and Islam is portrayed as a monolithic, alien, and inferior religion.²⁴¹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Once again, it can be claimed that the AfD spokesman and parliamentary group leader of the AfD in the Thuringian state parliament Björn Höcke is one of the most important figures of the Islamophobic network in 2020. In the past years, Höcke has made a name for himself with statements such as “#Islam has a homeland and it’s not called #Europe!”, “There must be an end to ‘Mohamed, Muezzin & Minaret’ at the Bosphorus!” and “Islam has its homeland, but this homeland is not called Erfurt, it is not called Thuringia. This homeland is not called Germany.” His relations with the Islamophobic PEGIDA also caused quite a stir. On February 17, 2020, at the 200th rally of PEGIDA, Höcke was at the forefront.²⁴² He also planned a remigration project in his book *Nie zweimal in denselben Fluss* (*Never twice in the same river*), 2018, where human hardships had to be shown²⁴³.

240. Thilo Manemann, *Rechtsterroristische Online-Subkulturen Analysen und Handlungsempfehlungen*, Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, Berlin: 2020, pp. 17-20.

241. Guhl Jakob, Ebner Julia, Rau Jan, *Das Online-Ökosystem rechtsextremer Akteure*, ISD, London, Washington DC, Beirut, Toronto: 2020.

242. “PEGIDA in Dresden”, Phoenix das ganze Bild, <https://www.phoenix.de/pegida-in-dresden-a-1508765.html>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

243. Björn Höcke, *Nie zweimal in denselben Fluss*, (Manuscriptum Verlagsbuchhandlung, Berlin:2018), p. 254.



Figure 6: On February 17, 2020, at the 200th rally of PEGIDA, Höcke was at the forefront of the event.²⁴⁴

In 2020, Höcke again showed his xenophobic and Islamophobic side with a tweet directed against Carola Rackete, the German ship captain who works for the sea rescue organisation Sea-Watch. The public prosecutor’s office in Mühlhausen saw in the tweet a suspicion of incitement and stigmatization of certain groups of people - in this case refugees - as criminals. As a result, the prosecutor’s office requested the lifting of Höcke’s immunity,²⁴⁵ which was granted by the judicial committee of the state parliament in Erfurt.²⁴⁶



Figure 7: Björn Höcke’s tweet about Carola Rackete: “I imported torture, sexual violence, human trafficking and murder.”²⁴⁷

244. “Sturm um Höcke”, Zeit Online, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2020-02/pegida-dresden-demonstration-bjoern-hoecke>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

245. “Höckes Immunität soll aufgehoben werden”, LTO, <https://www.lto.de/recht/nachrichten/n/bjoern-hoecke-antrag-aufhebung-immunitaet-verdacht-volksverhetzung/>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

246. “Abgeordnetenimmunität von Ramelow und Höcke aufgehoben”, Spiegel Politik, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/thueringen-abgeordneten-immunitaet-von-bodo-ramelow-und-bjoern-hoecke-aufgehoben-a-44962742-0493-491b-8137-d8e99a4a39db>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

247. Lotta ka, Twitter, 03 June 2020, https://twitter.com/lotta_kaa/status/1268206904762945538, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

In March 2020, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution classified Höcke and Brandenburg parliamentary group leader Andreas Kalbitz, as “right-wing extremists”.²⁴⁸ The Saxon AfD member of the Bundestag Jens Maier has also been classified as a right-wing extremist by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution.²⁴⁹ Brandenburg’s new AfD parliamentary party leader Hans-Christoph Berndt is a “proven right-wing extremist” according to Jörg Müller, the head of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Berndt is the head of the right-wing association *Zukunft Heimat* and for years was also a central figure in organizing demonstrations against the influx of foreigners in Cottbus.²⁵⁰

Another important figure of the Islamophobic network is the founder of the PEGIDA movement Lutz Bachmann. During the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions when no public events could take place, he organised “virtuelle Abendspaziergänge” (virtual evening walk) on his YouTube channel. The second “virtual evening walk” was attended by Martin Sellner, the leading activist of the right-wing extremist Identitarian Movement (IB) and Michael Stürzenberger, the central figure of the Islamophobic scene in Bavaria, which is relevant for the protection of the constitution. Michael Stürzenberger is an author for the far-right and Islamophobic blog “Politically Incorrect” and is monitored by the Bavarian State Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Stürzenberger compares the Koran with *Mein Kampf*.²⁵¹ For him and many other supporters of the New Right, Islam is not a religion but an ideology.²⁵² In a live video, the containment measures for the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed. Again and again, there was talk about how migrants or Muslims oppose the pandemic rules, while the “Germans” follow them. It was said that the migrants only obey their “own law” and they are as “harbingers of the great jihad” in Germany.²⁵³

248. “Verfassungsschutz: AfD-‘Flügel’ von Höcke jetzt Beobachtungsobjekt”, MDR Thüringen, <https://www.mdr.de/thueringen/verfassungsschutz-hoecke-beobachtungsfall-afd-100.html>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

249. “Verfassungsschutz stuft AfD-Politiker als rechtsextrem ein”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/extremismus-dresden-verfassungsschutz-stuft-afd-politiker-als-rechtsextrem-ein-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-201005-99-834220>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

250. “Kalbitz-Nachfolger laut Verfassungsschutz ‘Rechtsextremist’”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/extremismus-potsdam-kalbitz-nachfolger-laut-verfassungsschutz-rechtsextremist-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-201026-99-90249>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

251. “Der große Agitator”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/islamgegner-michael-stuerzenberger-der-grosse-agitator-1.1654428>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

252. “Im Hass vereint”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/kommunalwahlkampf-in-muenchen-im-hass-vereint-1.1906303>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

253. “Halbjahresinformationen des Verfassungsschutzes 2020”, Bayerisches Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz, https://www.verfassungsschutz.bayern.de/ueberuns/medien/aktuelle_meldungen/halbjahresinformationen-verfassungsschutz-2020/, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In November 2020, the Cabinet Committee published its catalogue of measures to combat right-wing extremism and racism. The catalogue, consisting of 89 measures, was welcomed by CLAIM, a broad social alliance against the exclusion of Muslims, intolerance, discrimination, Islamophobia and Muslimophobia, and other civil organizations. Regarding some points, CLAIM demanded improvements such as the reform of the General Equal Treatment Act; a “further development” of existing competence centres and networks; the expansion of phenomenon-specific, community-based monitoring; and the introduction of a nationwide reporting system to record anti-Muslim incidents.²⁵⁴

In January 2020, the Competence Network Islam and Muslimophobia was founded. The network includes CLAIM and is supported by *Teilseind e.V.*, *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Evangelischen Jugend in Deutschland e.V. (aej)*, and the Center for European and Oriental Culture e.V. (ZEOK). According to its own statement, the network’s goal is “to bundle and further develop expertise on the topic of Islam and Muslim hostility and anti-Muslim racism and to make it available to education, politics, administration and civil society in the coming years”.²⁵⁵

The Ministry of the Interior has appointed a 12-member²⁵⁶ independent expert committee from academia and from the field under the name *Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Muslimfeindlichkeit (Independent expert group on anti-Muslim hostility) (UEM)*. The group will “analyse current and changing manifestations of Muslim hostility and examine them for intersections with anti-Semitic attitudes as well as other forms of group-based hostility”.²⁵⁷

254. “Maßnahmenkatalog gegen Rechtsextremismus und Rassismus: Erste wichtige Schritte für die Bekämpfung von Rassismus und konkret antimuslimischem Rassismus, aber viele Punkte bleiben vage”, CLAIM, <https://www.claim-allianz.de/aktuelles/news/massnahmenkatalog-gegen-rechtsextremismus-und-rassismus-erste-wichtige-schritte-fuer-die-bekaempfung-von-rassismus-und-konkret-antimuslimischem-rassismus-aber-viele-punkte-bleiben-vage/>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

255. “Neues Kompetenznetzwerk Islam- und Muslimfeindlichkeit will antimuslimischen Rassismus in der Gesellschaft abbauen”, CLAIM, <https://www.claim-allianz.de/aktuelles/news/neues-kompetenznetzwerk-islam-und-muslimfeindlichkeit-will-antimuslimischen-rassismus-in-der-gesellschaft-abbauen/>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

256. The experts are Iman Attia, Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin; Karim Fereidooni, Ruhr University Bochum; Kai Hafez, University of Erfurt; Anja Middelbeck-Varwick, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt; Mathias Rohe, Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen Nuremberg; Christine Schirrmacher, Friedrich Wilhelm University Bonn and Catholic University Leuven; Yasemin Shooman, German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM); Karima Benbrahim, Information and Documentation Center for Anti-Racism Work (IDA); Saba-Nur Cheema, Anne Frank Educational Center; Yasemin El-Menouar, Bertelsmann Foundation; Özcan Karadeniz, Association of Binational Families and Partnerships; and Nina Mühe from CLAIM.

257. “Seehofer beruft Mitglieder für Unabhängigen Expertenkreis Muslimfeindlichkeit”, Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, Bundesinnenminister <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2020/09/expertenkreis-muslimfeindlichkeit.html>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

The Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) issued a declaration directed against Islamophobia under the title *No to Hate and Incitement - Christians and Muslims together against Islamophobia*. In this way, the ZdK wants to make an interreligious contribution to social dialogue.²⁵⁸

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The German government has taken some long-needed steps against the spread of racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. These include the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG), which came into force in 2017, the separate recording of Islamophobic crimes in the police crime statistics of the Federal Criminal Police Office, the appointment of an Independent Group of Experts on Muslimophobia, and a catalogue of measures to combat right-wing extremism and racism. Creating laws and measures is one thing, but implementing them is another. Although every year there are over thousands of racist attacks on Muslims and migrants, and hundreds of attacks on mosques and religious sites, hardly any arrests or investigations are carried out. The same goes for hate speech in the media and social networks. No one knows how many people suffer discrimination and Islamophobia on a daily basis because Germany-wide independent reporting centres are either understaffed or do not exist at all. The state institutions such as security agencies or school authorities, which should be considered hotlines, suffer from structural racism themselves. In addition to proper prosecution of racism, which is also particularly important, there is a need to invest in victim education, awareness campaigns, and democratic education that is equal and free of racism. Suggestions for improvement in the individual areas of life for combating Islamophobia and discrimination are explained below.

- The authorities must strengthen human rights education in the school system with special attention to diversity, equity, and democracy. Improved training for teachers who teach students from different backgrounds and cultures is required.
- The authorities must also strengthen cooperation between the judiciary and security authorities with the aim of enabling prosecution toward the conviction of physical and verbal Islamophobia and discrimination, as well as hate speech and incitement of individuals or groups.
- In order to be able to fight structural racism in the state authorities, studies for possible racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia should be conducted not only in the police, but also in the school system, the military, the Federal Employment Agency (BA), and the health system.

258. "Nein zu Hass und Hetze - Christen und Muslime gemeinsam gegen Islamfeindlichkeit", ZdK, 20 November 2020, <https://www.zdk.de/veroeffentlichungen/erklaerungen/detail/Nein-zu-Hass-und-Hetze-Christen-und-Muslime-gemeinsam-gegen-Islamfeindlichkeit-263X/>, (Access date: 20 February 2021).

- The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency should be fully independent and well-funded. Independent equality bodies should also be established in federal states.
- Measures should be considered to reduce discrimination in the labour market, and anonymous application procedures should be implemented.
- In the last two years, weapon caches and attack plans of right-wing extremist groups and individuals are being discovered more frequently. With the increase in gun ownership and illegal importation by right-wing extremists, we are seeing more right-wing terrorist attacks on Muslims and Jews. There should be a strict ban on gun ownership across all of Germany. Especially unstable individuals, like the terrorist of Hanau, should not be able to get gun licenses.
- The representation of people with an immigrant background in sectors such as media, police, academia, politics, etc. is not proportional to their share in the population. Only quotas like those that exist in the U.S. or Canada can eliminate the disadvantage of migrants and their children.

Chronology

- **26.01.2020:** According to the president of the Military Counterintelligence Service (MAD), Christof Gramm, there are 550 suspected cases of right-wing extremism in the Bundeswehr. The Special Forces Command is particularly hard hit, he said. In June of the same year, the number of suspected cases will rise to over 600.
- **05.02.2020:** According to a study conducted in Hesse, 28% of police officers fear Islam.
- **16.02.2020:** A right-wing terrorist cell was planning a terrorist attack on a mosque modelled on the Christchurch attack. Following the raids, 12 right-wing extremists were arrested in six German states.
- **18.02.2020:** AfD politician Björn Höcke took part in PEGIDA's 200th rally. Höcke was invited by PEGIDA to give a speech on stage.
- **19.02.2020:** During an event of the AfD-NRW colouring books with racist content were distributed. In the colouring books, people with weapons are shown in a motorcade under the Turkish flag.
- **20.02.2020:** In a right-wing terrorist attack in Hanau, 9 people with an immigrant background were killed and several injured. The terrorist also shot his mother and himself.
- **01.03.2020:** The Fatih Mosque in Bremen received a threatening letter with racist and Islamophobic threats. In addition, a powdery substance was scattered in it. According to the police investigation, the substance was not dangerous.

- **18.05.2020:** A group of about 15 to 20 youths insulted and beat up several asylum seekers in a park in Brandenburg. The asylum seekers are from Guinea and Morocco.
- **24.06.2020:** In Leipzig, a person of Syrian origin was attacked by four men. While the victim was on the road, the four men shouted xenophobic and right-wing extremist slogans at him and assaulted him.
- **27.07.2020:** A number of famous people with an immigrant background, such as cabaret artist Idil Baydar, lawyer Seda Başay-Yıldız, or German politicians like Hesse's Left Party parliamentary group leader Janine Wissler, received threatening letters with the signature NSU 2.0. Their personal data was retrieved from computers at the Wiesbaden or Frankfurt police headquarters.
- **06.08.2020:** In Fürth and Wahlen, threatening letters with racist content were sent to two DITIB mosques. The letters bore the signature "NSE". The mosques were threatened with arson.
- **24.09.2020:** In Heidenau, Saxony, a young Muslim woman was insulted and attacked by three men on the street. The attackers tore off her headscarf.
- **24.10.2020:** In Berlin, a disproportionate raid by Berlin police took place at the Mevlana Mosque in Kreuzberg. As a result of a suspected Corona emergency aid fraud of €70,000, the police conducted a large-scale search with 150 officers.
- **04.12.2020:** The outer façade of a kindergarten in Wolfenbüttel was smeared with anti-Semitic and Islamophobic slogans and symbols.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
GREECE
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The situation with regard to Islamophobia in Greece in 2020 did not change significantly compared to the previous years based on all the existing findings. Islamophobia is primarily found on the discursive level while physical attacks with religious motivation targeting mosques, cemeteries, Muslim migrants or refugees, which are actually difficult to record, remain fewer compared to other European countries. Politics, religion, media, and the Internet are the four primary realms that continued to play a significant role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public domain throughout 2020 without major differentiations from previous years. Islamophobia in Greece was expressed by political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, (self-proclaimed) neoliberals, figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece, printed and electronic media, and journalists including their posts on social media. The main issues that contributed to the reproduction of Islamophobia in 2020 were the so-called immigration/refugee problem, the conflictual situation which emerged at the Greek-Turkish borders in February-March, the negative attitudes toward refugees who reside in Athens and some of the Aegean islands, and the discussions and decisions on the transfer of migrants and refugees from the islands to the mainland. Another issue that gave spark to anti-Islamic reactions at various levels was the decision of the Turkish government to alter the use of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul from a museum to a mosque. This led to another wave of not only anti-Turkish views and attitudes, but of openly Islamophobic content. Finally, the opening of the 'official' Mosque of Athens in November a few days after the deadly terrorist attacks in Paris, Nice (October 2020) and Vienna (November 2020) sparked a series of Islamophobic narratives.

Περίληψη

Η κατάσταση όσον αφορά την ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα το 2020 δεν έχει μεταβληθεί ριζικά συγκριτικά με τα προηγούμενα χρόνια με βάση όλα τα διαθέσιμα ευρήματα. Η ισλαμοφοβία εντοπίζεται πρωτίστως στο επίπεδο του δημόσιου λόγου, ενώ βίαιες επιθέσεις με θρησκευτικά κίνητρα με στόχο τζαμιά, νεκροταφεία, μουσουλμάνους μετανάστες ή πρόσφυγες, οι οποίες στην πραγματικότητα είναι δύσκολο να καταγραφούν, εξακολουθούν να λαμβάνουν χώρα αλλά παραμένουν λιγότερες σε σύγκριση με άλλες ευρωπαϊκές χώρες. Η πολιτική, η θρησκεία, τα μέσα μαζικής ενημέρωσης και το Διαδίκτυο είναι τα τέσσερα βασικά πεδία τα οποία συνέχισαν να διαδραματίζουν σημαντικό ρόλο στην αναπαραγωγή της ισλαμοφοβίας στον δημόσιο χώρο καθ' όλη τη διάρκεια του 2020. Συγκεκριμένα η ισλαμοφοβία εκφράστηκε από ορισμένα πολιτικά κόμματα και πολιτικούς της δεξιάς και της ακροδεξιάς, ορισμένους (αυτοαποκαλούμενους) νέο-φιλελεύθερους, ορισμένους εκπροσώπους της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδας, ορισμένα έντυπα και ηλεκτρονικά μέσα ενημέρωσης και δημοσιογράφους, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των δημοσιεύσεών τους στα κοινωνικά δίκτυα. Τα κύρια ζητήματα που συνέβαλαν στην αναπαραγωγή της ισλαμοφοβίας το 2020 ήταν το λεγόμενο «μεταναστευτικό/ προσφυγικό πρόβλημα», κυρίως η συγκρουσιακή κατάσταση που έλαβε χώρα στα ελληνοτουρκικά σύνορα κατά τους μήνες Φεβρουάριο-Μάρτιο, η παρουσία μεταναστών και προσφύγων στην Αθήνα και στα νησιά του Αιγαίου, καθώς και οι συζητήσεις και αποφάσεις για τη μεταφορά μεταναστών και προσφύγων από τα νησιά στην ηπειρωτική Ελλάδα. Ένα δεύτερο ζήτημα που προκάλεσε αντι-ισλαμικές αντιδράσεις σε διάφορα επίπεδα ήταν η απόφαση της τουρκικής κυβέρνησης να τροποποιήσει τη χρήση της Αγίας Σοφίας στην Κωνσταντινούπολη από μουσείο σε τζαμί, γεγονός που οδήγησε σε ένα κύμα απόψεων και στάσεων όχι μόνο αντιτουρκικών, αλλά και με ένα ανοιχτά ισλαμοφοβικό περιεχόμενο. Τέλος, το άνοιγμα του 'επίσημου' τζαμιού της Αθήνα τον Νοέμβριο, λίγες ημέρες μετά τα τρομοκρατικά χτυπήματα στο Παρίσι, τη Νίκαια (Οκτώβριος 2020) και τη Βιέννη (Νοέμβριος 2020), πυροδότησε μια νέα σειρά Ισλαμοφοβικών αφηγήσεων.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Greece

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Form of Government: The prime minister is the head of government. The president, elected by the 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: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy)

Opposition Parties: SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), KINAL (Movement of Change), KKE (Greek Communist Party), Elliniki Lissi (Greek Solution), MERA25

Last Elections: 2019 Parliamentary Elections: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy) 39.85% (158 seats); SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) 31.53% (86 seats); KINAL (Movement of Change) 8.1% (22 seats); KKE (Greek Communist Party) 5.13% (15 seats); Elliniki Lissi (Greek Solution) 3.7% (10 seats); MERA25 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: Annual data is made available in the following year. The Racist Violence Recording Network in 2019 reported 100 racist incidents with more than 104 victims, while in 2018 it recorded 117 incidents with more than 130 victims. In 51 incidents, the victims were migrants or refugees who were assaulted on grounds of ethnic origin, religion, and colour; associations of third country nationals; and human rights defenders as a result of their connection with refugees and migrants. The Police Department against Racist Violence recorded 282 incidents with probable racist motive for 2019, while in 2018 the department recorded 226 incidents.

Major Religions (% of Population): There is no official data available, since religious affiliation is not included in the national census. According to the World Values Survey (WVS) (2018) Orthodox Christians comprise 91% of the population, people with no religion comprise 3.8%, other Christians 0.6%, Muslims 2.9%, and other religions 0.8%.

Muslim Population (% of Population): There is no official data available, since religious affiliation is not included in the national census. Apart from the WVS mentioned above, 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.

Far-Right Parties: Elliniki Lyssi (Greek Solution), Xryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn), Nea Dexia (New Right), Dynami Ellinismou (Power of Hellenism), Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness), Ellines gia tin Patrida (Greeks for the Fatherland)

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Militant 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

The situation with regard to Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitudes in Greece in 2020 did not change significantly compared to the previous years. Islamophobia is primarily found on the discursive level while physical attacks with religious motivation targeting mosques, cemeteries, Muslim migrants or refugees, which are actually difficult to record, remain fewer compared to other European countries. Politics, religion, media, and the Internet are the four primary realms that continued to play a significant role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public domain throughout 2020 without major differentiations from previous years from previous years. In 2020, Islamophobia in Greece was expressed by political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, (self-proclaimed) neoliberals, figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece, printed and electronic media, and journalists including their posts on social media. The main issues that contributed to the reproduction of Islamophobia in 2020 were the so-called immigration/refugee problem, the conflictual situation which emerged in the Greek-Turkish borders in February-March, the negative attitudes toward refugees who reside in Athens and some of the Aegean islands, and the discussions and decisions on the transfer of migrants and refugees from the islands to the mainland. A second issue that gave spark to anti-Islamic reactions at various levels was the decision of the Turkish government to alter the use of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul from a museum to a mosque. This led to another wave of not only anti-Turkish views and attitudes, but of openly Islamophobic content, which is discussed in the current report. Finally, the opening of the 'official' Mosque of Athens in November a few days after the deadly terrorist attacks in Paris, Nice (October 2020) and Vienna (November 2020) sparked a series of Islamophobic narratives. This report is based on data collected in 2020 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 by NGOs, international organisations and state authorities, and formal or informal contacts with members of the Muslim communities.¹

1. It is worth noting that Greece has 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 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 on 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.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There was no change during 2020 with regard to the statistical documentation of Islamophobic incidents in Greece. What this means is that despite the need to collect and categorise physical and verbal attacks against Muslims and Islamic places, no initiative was taken towards this direction, leading to a significant gap in the collected data on racism and xenophobia. It is obvious that a broader but crucial issue with regard to Islamophobia is that it is not always easy to document the motives behind racist attacks against migrants and refugees, although in many cases such motives directly or indirectly underlie the attacks. That said, one should not neglect the fact that while targeting Muslim immigrants is not rare within Greek society, the religious background and motive are not always clearly stated and easily documented.

Similarly to the previous reports, an effort has been made to collect all relevant information with regard to physical and verbal attacks against Muslims and Islamic places through personal contacts, media, NGO reports, and Muslims' own disclosure of relevant instances. In 2020, a series of violent attacks against Muslim migrants and refugees were recorded in major Greek cities (e.g. Athens) and especially on the islands that host refugee camps. However, when these attacks are reported, the religious motive usually is not recorded. The Racist Violence Recording Network in its latest report recorded 51 incidents. Those targeted in these incidents were migrants, refugees, or asylum-seekers on the grounds of ethnic origin, religion and/or colour; human rights defenders as a result of their connection with refugees and migrants; accommodation sites for unaccompanied minors; and in one incident, the target was a Muslim cemetery.² In one of the cases recorded by the network the following is mentioned,

Week after week, whenever he saw us outside, myself and my girlfriends, he was harassing us [...] we could understand that he was insulting us in Greek [...] before going into the apartment building, he saw me at the entrance and pushed me back violently [...] to one of my girlfriends he pulled her headscarf to take it off [...] while I was waiting at the bus stop, he suddenly hit me on the head and told me "Muslim no good."³

One of the authors of the report was an eyewitness to a similar incident in central Athens, in Pagrati, on June 25, 2020, at a bus stop. A Muslim family consisting of both parents and two small children, the woman wearing a headscarf, was wait-

2. "RVNR Annual Report 2019", RVNR, <https://cutt.ly/ogAIUYr>, (Access date: 3 November 2020). Here, it is useful to note that there is no single NGO in Greece founded for the purpose of fighting Islamophobia in the country. All the NGOs stated here tackle physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks under main principles of human rights such as equality and non-discrimination.

3. Ibid., pp.17-18.

ing for the bus. A man, in his 50s passed by, looked at them with aversion, and swore three times in Greek, “Fuck Islam”. Such incidents are usually mentioned by Muslims in informal conversations or research interviews regarding Islamophobia and racism. Sometimes Muslims themselves publicise Islamophobic incidents. In one such case the story of a Muslim woman who argued that she and her child had been treated this way was made public through a website that is run by Muslims, while in another case the administrator of the website openly stated that he has received threatening messages by right-wing extremists following a publication on one of his blogs.⁴

In September, conflicts between Greeks and migrants erupted on the island of Crete with regard to economic differences at a local enterprise. A few days later, a demonstration was organised by the locals against the migrants. After the demonstration, a group of Greeks attacked the migrants’ prayer house, while there were reports of three people being injured during the incidents.⁵ Another attack took place in the city of Xanthi, where the window belonging to the electricity meter of the Hürriyet Mosque was smashed.⁶

In a case in Thessaloniki, a video recording emerged of a Greek obliging a Muslim migrant to make the symbol of the cross and pray in Greek. The incident led to the local public persecutor’s intervention asking for the video to be examined so that the person be found and arrested based on anti-racist legislation.⁷

After the implementation of Turkey’s decision to convert Hagia Sophia museum in Istanbul into a mosque, groups of people reacted in Greece vandalising a historic Ottoman mosque in Trikala in Central Greece, by throwing stones and breaking the glass on the front door. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1: The front door of Kursum (Kurşunlu)/Osman Shah Mosque in Trikala, Thessaly, after the attack.⁸

4. For these cases see Islamforgreeks, 24 June 2020, <https://cutt.ly/0gAl4gE> and Islamforgreeks, 23 October 2020, <https://cutt.ly/WgAI6kw>, (Access date: 24 October 2020).
5. “Racist Attack against a Prayer House and a Migrant House in Tybaki”, *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 9 September 2020, <https://cutt.ly/HgAOtNs>, (Access date: 16 October 2020).
6. “Açıklama – İskeçe Hürriyet Camii’ne Saldırı”, 6 August 2020, Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığı İskeçe Müftülüğü, <https://cutt.ly/SgAOpL9> (Access date: 3 November 2020).
7. “Extreme Racist Violence”, Flash, 21 April 2020, rb.gy/igtgfn, (Access date: 3 November 2020).
8. “Trikala: Vandalisms against the Kursum Mosque as a Reply to Erdogan about Hagia Sophia”, Trikalaneews, 13 July 2020, <https://cutt.ly/CgAZ7FC> (Access date: 3 November 2020).

Similarly, the minaret of the historical Diomidia (Hemitli) Mosque, located close to the city of Xanthi, was attacked in July by unidentified person(s) causing severe damage to the structure. (Fig. 2) The mosque is among the mosques in Greece that need immediate restoration so as not to collapse fully.



Figure 2: Damage following an attack on the minaret of the Diomidia (Hemitli) Mosque, Xanthi.⁹

Another violent incident was the attack by a group on a Muslim tourist of Danish citizenship in July in central Athens while the police stood nearby and did not react. The victim was severely injured and needed to be taken to hospital for medical attention.¹⁰

In addition to these attacks, a series of demonstrations across Greece targeted Islam and Muslims while all the time claiming to be against the Islamisation of Greece and illegal migration. On May 10, a demonstration against the Islamisation of Greece was organised in Thessaloniki with the participation of Golden Dawn. (Fig. 3)



Figure 3: The demonstration against the 'Islamisation of Greece' in Thessaloniki.¹¹ The banner writes, "For the FATHERLAND, the NATION, and ORTHODOXY".

On May 15, a series of demonstrations were organised by extreme-right groups, Covid-19 deniers, and anti-vaxxers in various cities around Greece such as Athens,

9. "Hemitli'de minareye saldırı!", 16 July 2020, <https://cutt.ly/Pjh9PWA> (Access date: 3 November 2020).

10. Afroditis Tziantzi, "Racist Attack against a Danish Tourist with the Police Just Watching", *Efimerida ton Synaktikon*, 27 July 2020, <https://cutt.ly/vgA00tg>, (Access date: 16 October 2020).

11. "A Nationalist Demonstration in Thessaloniki against the Islamisation of the Country", *Ellinikiafipnisis*, <https://cutt.ly/ygj6cZT> (Access date: 17 October 2020).

Thessaloniki, Volos, Patra, Rhodes, and Kastoria. Among the nine points/themes of the demonstrations, two were directly related to Islam and Muslims. Point Six was related to “[t]he continuous flows of illegal migrants in our islands and the alienation of the population” and Point Seven stated, “We say ‘Yes’ to the Holy Communion and open churches, we say ‘No’ to the Islamisation of the country”.¹²

Finally, demonstrations were organised against the relocation of migrants and refugees from the islands to the mainland. In one such demonstration, in Macedonia, the local authorities and citizens reacted to such a possibility by arguing,

We don't want them to be relocated here permanently, so that we and our children should live next to 2,500 Muslims. Tomorrow they might ask for a mosque and perhaps the day after tomorrow they will elect a mayor. [...] No to the Islamisation of Paionia.¹³

It is very interesting that even priests were present in this gathering, arguing that the relocation of migrants and refugees is an organised conquering and that eventually this ‘national’ problem will become a ‘religious’ one.¹⁴ (Fig. 4)



Figure 4: Demonstration in Polykastro, 1 July 2020.¹⁵

A slightly different display of Islamophobia took place in the city of Didymoticho. A Greek flag was hung on the minaret of the city's historical mosque. Based on the statements of the mayor, it was taken down in the morning.¹⁶

Overall, the lack of an observatory mechanism to monitor anti-Islamic physical and/or verbal attacks or a more specific section within the current structures (state

12. “Demonstration 15 of May, Volos”, Ekklesiasionline, 15 May 2020, <https://cutt.ly/RgAOSoI>, (Access date: 16 October 2020).

13. “Large Demonstration in Polykastro: No to the Islamisation of Paionia”, Eidisis, 23 May 2020, <https://cutt.ly/tgj6YuX>, (Access date: 16 October 2020).

14. “The ‘Swaggers’ with the Blue”, *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 2 July 2020, p. 24.

15. Ibid.

16. “Unknown Person Hanged the Greek Flag at an Historic Mosque in Didymoticho”, *Tourkika Nea*, 1 June 2020, <https://cutt.ly/0gAPx73>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

or civil society) is a severe barrier in the effort to document and, as consequence, to confront Islamophobia in Greek society.

Apart from the above incidents that are clear expressions of Islamophobia, there are other cases as well that despite not being included in the categorisation of Islamophobia, are perceived as such by members of the Muslim communities in Greece. In June, the Greek government closed down one of the oldest sites of prayer for Muslims in Piraeus.¹⁷ The decision was based on the lack of a state permit and as such it could be argued that it is not an attack on Islam and Muslims. However, due to the continuous delays in the opening of the official Mosque of Athens, such a decision was seen as Islamophobic by a section of the community that believed this to be an infringement of their freedom of religion by the Greek state. In another case, on August 13, a group of fully equipped soldiers from the Greek Special Forces conducted a military exercise at the entrance of the village of Sminthi (Gökçeşinar) in the mountains of Xanthi. The operation took place next to the village's Muslim cemetery and caused anxiety and discomfort among villagers since neither the local authorities nor the villagers had been informed beforehand.¹⁸

Employment

With regard to employment because of the lack of any official data on religious discrimination in the job market, it is not possible to provide an overview. Based on the sources available, the media, and personal communication, there appear to be no records on any official level (NGOs and/or the state authorities) about relevant incidents.

Education

Similarly to last year, in regard to education and in relation to the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education, the ministry has recorded no direct Islamophobic incidents. However, there are certain issues related to education that should be mentioned. The most important one again is related to the reactions against the integration of refugee and migrant children in the Greek educational system. In some regions of Greece, in the islands and the mainland, reactions were recorded although not to the same extent as in the first years when the programme of the incorporation of the children in schools started. This year, the parents' reactions were also related to the Covid-19 pandemic. In one such case, in the town of Mytilene, the capital of Lesbos, parents published an open letter arguing that they didn't want migrant children to go to the same school as their children because

17. "We Will Pray Secretly in Apartments". A Muslim Prayer House Is Closing in Piraeus", *Vice*, 1 July 2020, <https://cutt.ly/EgAEFkg> (Access date: 3 November 2020).

18. "Batı Trakya'da Komandolar Köy İçinde Silahlı Eğitim Yaptı!", 13 August 2020, <https://cutt.ly/dgAPKRR> (Access date: 3 November 2020).

of the high number of Covid-19 cases among the migrants and refugees on the island.¹⁹

Related to the above, there was a directive circulated by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs that stated that in order to attend school, migrant children were required to take a Covid-19 test and bring the result to school.²⁰ However, the document caused the reaction of the opposition that characterised it as racist, and this led to the ministry stepping back and withdrawing it and the relevant guidance sent to schools.²¹

Politics

One of the main political proponents of anti-Islamic rhetoric inside and outside the Greek Parliament is the new actor in the extreme-right milieu, i.e. the party of Greek Solution and its leader Kyriakos Velopoulos. Through his speeches in the parliament, parliamentary questions, and question in the European Parliament, where the party is also represented, Greek Solution tries to urge the government and Greek society against Islam and Muslims. The main arguments are that Turkey's plan is to Islamise Greece; that the government party of New Democracy despises Orthodoxy, but extends immunity to Islam; and that people should know how Muslim organisations are being funded.²² The party also submitted a law proposal as an addition to the existing anti-racist legislation in order to combat, as it was argued, 'Christianophobia' and blasphemy against the Orthodox religion. The proposal's introductory essay mentions,

Lately the term 'Islamophobia' has been circulated as an accusation against all those who might criticise Islamism and arguing that they supposedly incite hatred of Islam as a cultural difference. But when Christianity is 'attacked' by all means, acts and words, when for every social, economic, political and any other problem, Christianity and the Church are being accused, this conceals in the same way hatred of the Christian religion and its believers.²³

Apart from Greek Solution, Golden Dawn, despite its fall and conviction in a court of law, continues to reproduce anti-Islamic discourse. Meanwhile, in June 2020, the former Golden Dawn MP and elected member of the Municipal Council of Athens, Ilias Kassidiaris, founded his new extreme-right wing party,

19. "They Don't Want Refugee Children in a Primary School in Mytilini Because of Covid-19...", Lesvosnews, 28 September 2020, <https://cutt.ly/mgbC0cU>, (Access date: 16 October 2020).

20. See the directive here: <https://cutt.ly/JglV7DG> (Access date: 17 October 2020).

21. "The Ministry of Education Withdrew the Obligation of a Negative Covid-19 Test for Refugee Children", *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 12 September 2020, <https://cutt.ly/7gbVwYi> (Access date: 16 October 2020).

22. For the above see the party's website and particularly the following links: cutt.ly/BgkqrLY, cutt.ly/cgkqymh and cutt.ly/xgkqooo, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

23. The proposal can be found here: cutt.ly/rgkqlhB, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

Ellines gia tin Patrida (Greeks for the Fatherland). The party's main theses were made public on its official website and apart from the main slogan of 'Greece belongs to the Greeks', two points should be mentioned, namely points two and ten below.

2. A definite confrontation of illegal migration

Deportation of all foreigners who are living illegally in Greece and have turned our country into an Islamic colony. A definite end of the free housing, money assistance, and all the privileges the government of Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy) offers generously to foreigners.

10. Greek Education

'The foundation of each city is the education of the youth', Pythagoras taught. On the contrary Kissinger, who was against the Greeks, used to say that 'Greeks should be attacked upon their roots, i.e. their language, religion and spiritual and historical resources'. Against this international conspiracy towards Hellenism we need to preserve the eternal values of the Greek Education by all means. We need to learn every aspect of our history, so that in the future we will be able to live moments of great glory; we need to preserve our Civilization and our Traditions; to defend Orthodoxy against the great threat of Islamisation.²⁴

In September, an MP of the right-wing ruling party of New Democracy, who is known for his extreme views and opinions, asked a question in the Greek Parliament about the wearing of burqa and niqab by Muslim women in Greece, especially in the streets of Athens. He stated,

It is of high concern and more common in Greece -especially in the Athenian centre- the image of women who follow the Muslim dressing, burqa and niqab, which cover their whole bodies, their head and face, leaving only the eyes free in some cases. Although the burqa and niqab are being worn based on an Islamic order, the state is not interested in that from a religious point of view. However, the burqa and niqab consist at the same time a security problem, since they can make anyone invisible to other citizens and the authorities, while at the same time they violate women's rights, when they are obliged to wear them, via intimidation and repression, something completely unacceptable for the country's dominant culture and its legal culture. [...] Since Greece is and owes to continue to be a safe country, where women are absolutely equal and free citizens, I ask you Mr. Minister [of Justice]: The female Muslim dressing of burqa and niqab, which hide from public view all human characteristics, are they an issue of public and parliamentary deliberation, towards a legal resolution of the problems they create?²⁵

24. For these theses see: ellhnes.net/theseis-1, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

25. "Bogdanos: Question about Burqa in Greece", *Ethnos*, 29 September 2020, cutt.ly/qgkqEYI, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

In May 2020, the government appointed a number of new directors to the refugee camps in different parts of the country. Among them, was an individual who had written extensively on Islam and Muslims, reproducing stereotypes and Islamophobic views. For example, he mentions female circumcision without clarifying that this has nothing to do with Islam; he argued that Islam is not a religion of peace using images of Muslims wearing masks and holding a rifle in one hand and the Koran in the other. In addition, he published a book under the title *Minarets: The Spears of Islam in Europe* with a front cover that is inspired by the anti-minaret campaign in Switzerland and a photo that was regularly reproduced by Islamophobic and extreme-right wing groups in social media.²⁶ (Fig. 5)



Figure 5: The front cover of the book by Christos Tsiachris, *Minarets: The Spears of Islam in Europe*, Athens, Thoule Books, 2014.²⁷

A very interesting case is the self-proclaimed liberal party of Dimiourgia Xana (Creation Again) and its leader Thanos Tzimeros. This is a party of neoliberal economic ideology, but with strong identitarian elements. The party originally started as an openly neoliberal one and to a great extent it is, but only on the economic level. However, in the last years, the party's leader has developed a strong nationalistic public discourse which is primarily characterized by racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia, proceeding also to collaborations and synergies with other radical-right parties like the aforementioned New Right and its leader Failos Kranidiotis. Dimiourgia Xana is a very interesting hybrid of economic and political ideology. In January 2020, the party and its leader participated in a demonstration at Syntagma Square, Athens against migration. (Fig. 6)

26. Alexandros Sakellariou, "Normalising and Rewarding Islamophobia", *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 25 May 2020, p. 28.

27. Thoule Books, cutt.ly/4gkqSTF, (Access date: 17 October 2020).



Figure 6: "Protest demonstration against the racism towards Greeks, against the colonisation of our country, 19 January 2020, Athens:"²⁸

In its press release regarding the demonstration, the party wrote,

[...] in their vast majority the invaders are Muslims. Islam, we have repeatedly underlined it, is not only a religion. It is a legal-social-military system totally incompatible with European values, which under the pretext of religion and exploiting the tolerance of the Western culture tries to conquer it from the inside [...]. We want to live with our culture, our traditions, our mores and customs, with our positive and negative features. We don't want our country, 200 years after the Greek Revolution [of 1821, against the Ottoman Occupation], to start becoming a Muslim colony.²⁹

Finally, at a local level, as was mentioned in the first section of the report, local authorities have been reacting against the possibility of relocating migrants and refugees from the islands to the mainland, and with regard to other issues like the Hagia Sophia case in Istanbul. In one such case in Katerini, Macedonia, a meeting was organised with the participation of local authorities to discuss the rise in numbers of Muslim migrants and refugees in the region. The arguments were as follows,

There is a problem in the whole city of Katerini, because Katerini is touristic and the image that a person will see after nine o'clock in the night in the city centre, is Muslim families with 5-6 kids each one and female Muslims with headscarves being everywhere in the area and this is not the best for tourism in the region.³⁰

In another example, the prefect of the North Aegean Sea, after the conversion of Hagia Sophia museum in Istanbul into a mosque, officially asked the Greek govern-

28. "Migration Issue: A Demonstration of Fear in Syntagma", Flash, 19 January 2020, <https://cutt.ly/ZgbVNTW>, (Access date: 17 October 2020). During this demonstration, some extreme-right groups attacked a photographer of Deutsche Welle. Mina Karamitrou, "A Photo-Reporter Was Attacked by Extreme-Right Wingers in the Athens City Centre", CNN, 19 January 2020, <https://cutt.ly/ggbVV1d>, (Access date: 19 October 2020).

29. "Creation Again Supports the Protest Demonstration about the Migration Issue", <https://cutt.ly/ogkq16D>, (Access date: 19 October 2020).

30. "But How Will Russian Female Tourists Swim Next to Refugees?", *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 18 June 2020, <https://cutt.ly/CgbV4PY>, (Access date: 19 October 2020).

ment to stop all the restoration works of the Ottoman-era Valide Mosque on the island of Lesbos, which had been initiated in 2017, as a measure of retaliation.³¹

Media

Unsurprisingly, Islamophobic views and articles are regularly published in extreme-right newspapers such as *Golden Dawn*, *Makeleio*, *Stobos*, *Eleftheros Kosmos*, and *Eleftheri Ora* which are among the most well-known and influential in the extreme-right milieu. In most of cases, the main issues are the so-called illegal migration and the ensuing threat of the biological and cultural alienation of the Greek nation and society. As expected, the explosive situation at the Greek-Turkish borders in March gave the extreme-right press the opportunity to reproduce even conspiracy theory scenarios such as that “mass murders by rioting illegal migrants” will soon take place, that “the enemy is already inside, they [i.e. dark powers] ask from the illegal migrants to riot all over the country”, or even that “illegal migrants-jihadists are ready to blow up basic electricity and water infrastructures in big cities”. (Fig. 7)



Figure 7: Front page of *Eleftheri Ora*. Among others, it reads, “Illegal Migrants-Jihadists Are Ready to Blow Up Basic Electricity and Water Infrastructures in Big Cities”, 1 February 2020.³²

However, there are also other media which do not belong to the extreme right, but nevertheless reproduce anti-Islamic views and stereotypes. One such example in 2020 was a sports newspaper, *Sportime*, which on at least two occasions reproduced Islamophobic views. On one occasion, it was reported that Muslims ate a dog and that this is something that is not incompatible to their religion, which is false, while on a different occasion the newspaper, although ostensibly a sports publica-

31. “In the Same Line with Voridis, Moutzouris Asks for Retaliation Measures for Hagia Sophia”, *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 14 July 2020, <https://www.efsyn.gr/node/252081>, (Access date: 19 October 2020).

32. Photograph by A. Sakellariou.

tion, published a political front page related to the crisis on the Greek-Turkish borders in Thrace. (Fig. 8)



Figure 8: Front page of *Sportime*: “Greece... Europe... Islamisation!”, 1 March 2020.³³

The newspaper *Dimokratia* has also reproduced similar views with regard to Islam and migration often on its front page. (Fig. 9)



Figure 9: The newspaper *Dimokratia*, “Invasion of Turks and Chechens. How the Riot of Migrants on Our Islands Was Organised in Full Detail. How They Acted 70 Jihadists of ISIS”, 4 May 2020.³⁴

After the opening of the Mosque of Athens in November, *Dimokratia* published a front page against this decision. (Fig. 10)

33. Photograph by A. Sakellariou.

34. Photograph by A. Sakellariou.



Figure 10: “Was the Mosque What We Were Missing Most? At the same time, Turkey provokes us and desecrates Hagia Sophia, and Islamists bloodshed European cities, the government gave permission for Muslim prayers”, *Dimokratia*, 4 November 2020.³⁵

The newspaper’s editorial after the opening of the mosque read, “The situation is so unfavorable for the opening and the operation of a mosque in Athens, that even the most bona fide observers are forced to wonder if it is negligence, error, superficiality or a fraudulent plan to Islamise our country and satellite the country to Turkey”.³⁶



Figure 11: “Terror for a Jihadist Attack. ‘Safari’ for ‘Lone Wolves’ of Islam in Athens and the ‘Flammable’ Places”, *Espresso*, 4 November 2020.³⁷

35. Photograph by A. Sakellariou.

36. “Greece Is Being Islamised”, *Dimokratia*, 4 November 2020, <https://cutt.ly/YgJG20w>, (Access date: 7 November 2020).

37. Photograph by A. Sakellariou.

The terror attacks in Paris, Nice (October 2020) and Vienna (November 2020) in combination with the opening of the mosque in Athens influenced media discourses, which up to that point displayed a different picture. In two other examples shown below, the threat of Islam was presented in newspapers of different backgrounds – a gossip/lifestyle newspaper and one of the political centre. (Figs. 11 and 12)



Figure 12: "Alarm in Greece After the Terrorist Jihadist Attack in Austria. Illegal Mosques Turned into Places of Extreme Islamists Have Been Monitored", *Kontra*, 4 November 2020.³⁸

Apart from the abovementioned media, there are also others which are considered of a liberal or centrist political ideology that nevertheless regularly host opinion pieces by self-proclaimed liberals who openly express Islamophobic views and stereotypes. Since these articles are written by specific people, they will be discussed in the section on the central figures of the country's Islamophobia network. However, in one such case, the liberal newspaper *Kathimerini* hosted an article by a constitutional law professor and the honorary vice-president of the Council of State who openly argued that Islam is not compatible with democracy.

As a consequence, there is no chance that Muslims would accept any democratic value, neither do they want to fall under the western rules of democratic government, since their religion regulates their everyday life, and that is why every effort of the great powers to 'democratise' Muslim countries failed. This is also because democracy cannot be implemented by the use of the guns. For Muslims, then, the Enlightenment that will turn against their religion and upgrade them culturally will take very long!³⁹

38. Photograph by A. Sakellariou.

39. Petros Pararas, "Islam and Democracy, Incompatible Concepts", *Kathimerini*, 5 July 2020, <https://cutt.ly/lgb-BcQV>, (Access date: 20 October 2020).

The same newspaper published, earlier in March, a cartoon affiliating the pandemic Covid-19 with Islam - a crystal-clear indication how Islamophobia is caricatured and promoted through the media. (Fig. 13)



Figure 13: Cartoon of Ilias Makris, *Kathimerini*, 21 March 2020.⁴⁰

Justice System

When it comes to the justice system, Islamophobic incidents mentioned either by Muslims or reported in the media have not been recorded. On the other hand, the Greek Helsinki Monitor⁴¹ has proceeded to a series of lawsuits against individuals (e.g. politicians, journalists) who reproduce Islamophobic rhetoric and hate speech in their public discourse (e.g. texts, articles, Internet).⁴² Until the end of year, none of these lawsuits made it to court. However, in the summer, a court convicted a member of an extreme-right terrorist organisation (Crypteia) for the attack perpetrated in 2018 against the offices of the Union of Afghan Migrants and Refugees in Athens recognising and accepting the racist motive behind the attack.⁴³ The accused was convicted to five years imprisonment but was set free until the appealed case is tried in a higher court.⁴⁴ In addition, and although also not related directly to Islamophobia, Golden Dawn, the neo-Nazi political party, was convicted in October as a criminal organisation and for organising a series of racist attacks, including the murder of

40. Ilias Makris, Cartoon, 21 March 2020, cutt.ly/ogAAp2i (Access date: 3 November 2020).

41. 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 greekhelsinki.wordpress.com, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

42. For all these legal cases see the DHM racist crimes watch blog cutt.ly/ZgkwtYr, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

43. Ali Huseyinoglu, Alexandros Sakellariou: *Islamophobia in Greece: National Report 2018*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, Istanbul, SETA, pp. 415-416.

44. Giota Tetsi, "Guilty for the Activity of Crypteia", *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 2 July 2020, p. 3. Crypteia in Ancient Sparta was an organization that resembled a secret police body. It was 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.

a Pakistani immigrant (Shehzad Luqman) in 2013. The founder and Golden Dawn leader Nikos Michaloliakos, apart from the life sentence for the murderer of Pavlos Fyssas, was sentenced to 13 years of incarceration, while other ex-MPs received sentences ranging between 5 and 13 years.⁴⁵

Internet

The Internet and social media, in particular, have been a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and hate speech against Islam and Muslims, especially when it comes to migrants and refugees.⁴⁶ 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, and to argue that the "Islamisation" of Greece is taking place.⁴⁷ 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 (*xrisiavgi.com*); *ethnikismos.net*, which is related to GD, since many articles appear on both websites; the websites of other extreme-right parties (*elasyn.com* and *elliniki-lisi.gr*); the website of a journalist, writer, and Turcologist (sic), i.e. a specialist in the study of Turkish history and society, and Greek-Turkish relations, (*nikosxeiladakis.gr*), in which a special section is dedicated to Islam; and, of course, all the websites of the newspapers mentioned in the media section of the report which belong to the extreme right (*stoxos.gr*, *makeleio.gr*, *elora.gr*, *elkosmos.gr*). Finally, there are many Facebook and Twitter accounts, both personal pages and groups, which reproduce messages, videos, and texts against migrants and refugees and, of course, against multiculturalism, Islam, and Muslims and the construction of the mosque in Athens. A couple of examples are a Facebook page about 'illegal' migrants and the danger they pose to Greece under the name 'Lathro' which means 'smuggled', 'illegal' and is the first part of the word 'lathrometanastis', i.e. illegal, smuggled migrant. Another account is under the name 'Islam in front of our doors', underlying the danger of Islam for Greece and Greek culture.⁴⁸

In addition, it has to be noted that especially in social media, fake news with regard to Islam and Muslims and more particularly migrants and refugees is being re-

45. For the trial of Golden Dawn see facebook.com/Goldendawnwatch/ and goldendawnwatch.org/, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

46. For the role of the social media in the extreme-right milieu see the output report of the EU project, Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality, A. Sakellariou and N. Pathon (2020), *Country Level Reports on Drivers of Self-radicalisation and Digital Sociability: Greece*, DARE project, http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/5.1_greece.pdf (Access date: 17 October 2020).

47. Eleni Papadopoulou, 'Islamisation and Degradation of Greece...', *Tourkika Nea*, 23 April 2020, tourkikanea.gr/recent/troorkk/ (Access date: 10 November 2020).

48. See facebook.com/LathroGR/ and cutt.ly/lgkwj9J, (Access date: 17 October 2020).

produced. In most cases, fake news about migrants and refugees on the Greek islands and about the way other countries have been dealing with Islam (e.g. Japan) is reproduced. Almost all this fake news is disseminated via extreme-right blogs, websites, and social media pages. In many cases, these stories have been exposed as such by a Greek website that debunks hoaxes and fake news.⁴⁹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In the above sections some of the most important figures in the Islamophobia network have already been mentioned, especially when it comes to the extreme right, such as Kyriakos Velopoulos, Ilias Kassidiaris, and Nikos Heiladakis. Apart from the extreme right, another field where one can find some of the key Islamophobic figures is neoliberalism, e.g. Thanos Tzimeros, the leader of *Dimiourgia Xana* (Creation Again), who has also been mentioned above. However, there is another point that needs to be underlined. After the publication of last year's *EIR* report, Tzimeros uploaded a post on his Facebook page accusing the authors of the report as traitors and announced the establishment of an observatory which will observe the activity of those who document Islamophobia in Greece – as of yet this is not known to have been established.⁵⁰

Another central figure is Andreas Andrianopoulos, a neoliberal and former minister with the right-wing party New Democracy. In the last years, he has written articles and books, and made lots of comments mainly on Twitter and on Facebook openly expressing his anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim views and suggestions. His opinion pieces are also hosted on mainstream online news media like *in.gr*. A sample of his articles are the following: “Who Is a Refugee?”, where he asks the question, “Why only Muslim migrants come to Greece? Why are they mostly young people? Why have the great flows of migrants from everywhere started with the appearance of the Islamic State? Who is financing the movement of so many ‘unaccompanied minors’

49. See for example: Spyridoula Markou, “Japan Is NOT Implementing Restrictions about Islam and Muslims”, *Ellinika Hoaxes*, 17 June 2020, cutt.ly/Sgkw1f0 and Stelios Pournis, “Moria: The Refugee Selfie in Front of the Burning Camp Has Been a Forgery”, *Ellinika Hoaxes*, 11 September 2020, cutt.ly/xgkw2cq. (Access date: 17 October 2020).

50. “Observatory of the Fifth Column”, 22 June 2020, <https://cutt.ly/CglbiZT> (Access date: 20 October 2020). The post included the authors' photos and accused them as fifth-column members, as traitors, etc. Tzimeros did not use any academic or other ideological arguments to respond to the report, he just argued that his followers should learn about the authors' activities; that they are paid by the EU and Turkey to promote Islamophobia as a concept; and he asked his followers to help him establish an observatory mechanism so that all Greek patriots learn about such anti-Greek initiatives like the *EIR*. The comments on his page were not polite towards the authors; they called them traitors, that they will pay for their actions in the future, that they are George Soros's instruments, bastards, homosexuals, mentally ill, etc. Insults were also made targeting their families. There were several instances that the police's Cyber Crime Division could have easily intervened. In addition, the post was disseminated and retweeted by many extreme-right personal pages, making the authors targets for broader extreme-right audiences.

and why? Some answers are necessary...”; “Erdogan, Islam and Crusades”, where he argues that the Crusades took place because of the aggressiveness of Islam; “Islamic Imperialism”; and “Is Islam Compatible with Democracy?”, where predictably he argues that it isn’t.⁵¹

Soti Triantafyllou is another neoliberal key figure when it comes to Islamophobia in the public sphere. Her articles continuously reproduce anti-Islamic opinions making ample use of her favorite term which seems to be ‘Islamofascism’.

Today Europe not only underestimates Islamofascism, but it considers it as a ‘justified’ and ‘equal’ global factor with which it should and could communicate both at the state level, e.g. Turkey, and community (‘minorities’) level within the European borders.⁵²

In an interview she gave after the terrorist attack in Paris, she argued,

All European leaders behaved like little people, for decades they counted the votes and wanted to go to paradise by doing good deeds. The good deeds for the ‘Muslims’ turned out to be bad for all the others. They did not take into account the basics: that Islam is not a ‘culture’, it is an aggressive religion and imperialist policy.⁵³

Apart from political ideologies, another field where one can find Islamophobic views is that of religion and more particularly the Orthodox Church of Greece. Clarifying from the very beginning that the Church on the whole and the Holy Synod have never taken an open Islamophobic or anti-Muslim decision, several church figures have openly expressed such views in the last years. A figure who often reproduces Islamophobic public discourse is Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim, who stimulated by the conversion of Hagia Sophia museum into a mosque, argued one more time that “Islam is a fake religion, a human-made political, economic and military system of violence, of depredation, murder, crime, and fraud”.⁵⁴ According to Metropolitan of Konitsa Andreas, “Islam as we all can see nowadays, was and still is a religion that cultivates the inexorable hatred against the non-Muslim peoples”.⁵⁵ In addition, following the attempted murder of a Greek Orthodox priest in Lyon, France in October, a few days after the attacks in Paris and Nice (October 2020), the archbishop made a public statement arguing,

51. All the articles are published in in.gr. See: cutt.ly/egbMrXr, cutt.ly/7gbMyrT, cutt.ly/QgbMu9C, and cutt.ly/bgbMonW (Access date: 20 October 2020).

52. Soti Triantafyllou, “Chickens with Combs”, *Athensvoice*, 17 July 2020, cutt.ly/PglQrkS, (Access date: 20 October 2020). The title of the article loosely translates as “Extreme Cowards”.

53. “Soti Triantafyllou: Islam and Islamo-Left Are Dissolving Little by Little Europe”, *Liberal*, 27 October 2020, <https://cutt.ly/1gJHAjO> (Access date: 7 November 2020).

54. Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim, “Greece Has to Respond Dynamically to the Sacrilege and Barbaric Transformation of the Great Church of Christ into a Mosque of the Fake Religion of Islam”, *imp*, 10 July 2020, rb.gy/u5mvvm, (Access date: 20 October 2020).

55. Metropolitan of Konitsa, “Islam Is Still a Religion That Cultivates Inexorable Hatred”, *Romfea*, 20 August 2020, cutt.ly/1glWaYw, (Access date: 20 October 2020).

This horror transcends human reason. A religion arms the hands blinded by the hatred of terrorists. And extremely intolerant and fanatical people, fundamentalists of violence and death, use a religion as a sphere aimed at the heart of freedom, and in particular the religious freedom of others, as a weapon to eliminate all opposing views of every person in the civilized world who has the inalienable right to express it, as a knife that slaughters human rights.⁵⁶

It was soon revealed that the attack against the Orthodox priest had nothing to do with terrorism, but the archbishop had already rushed to make a statement relating the attack to Islam. Regardless of the fact that the Orthodox Church as an organisation and the Holy Synod have never expressed Islamophobic views and opinions especially in relation to the Koran and Prophet Muhammad, it should be noted that such discourse has not been condemned by the church authorities either.

Observed Civil Society, Political Assessments and Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The principal state policy that could be considered as important in confronting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in 2020 was the programme of the Ministry of Education on the incorporation of refugee children that continued to be implemented in 2020 in various regions of Greece. This was despite the local reactions and obstacles, which, however, were fewer compared to the previous years. This said, the directive asking migrant/refugee children to take a Covid-19 test was not a decision towards this direction - on the contrary - but nevertheless the ministry withdrew it at the last moment.

On the political level the Ministry of Justice introduced the first draft of the National Action Plan against Racism and Bigotry. The draft was sent to human rights organisations for consultation and public deliberation. While this is a very important step, there is a crucial point of criticism that needs to be underlined: despite the fact that there are references to other forms of racism, intolerance, and bigotry, the draft of the National Plan makes no mention of Islamophobia or anti-Islamic views and attitudes. There are parts that refer to migrants and refugees, but there is no specific reference to Islam and Muslims and this was mentioned as a point of criticism by the Hellenic League for Human Rights in the process of reviewing the draft.⁵⁷ In any case, racism against migrants and refugees has a clear religious and cultural element and is not neutral.

56. "Jeronymos for the Attack against a Priest in Lyon: A Religion Arms the Hands of Terrorists", *Newsit*, 31 October 2020, cutt.ly/1gJJ7k, (Access date: 7 November 2020). For the developments in this case and evidence that it was not a terror-related incident see: "Developments on the Case of the Attack against the Greek Priest in Lyon", *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 7 November 2020, efsyn.gr/node/267614 (Access date: 9 November 2020).

57. The draft received critical comments by A. Sakellariou, one of the current report's authors.

A political decision that could assist in the confrontation of Islamophobia - although at the beginning it sparked Islamophobic public discourse - was the opening of the Mosque of Athens in November. The opening was pending for more than a year, and created grievances and sentiments of disappointment among Muslims. The General Secretary of Religions stated after the official opening, “One of the strongest messages of the mosque is the stable and clear condemnation of Islamophobia. Our country has nothing to fear of Islam”.⁵⁸

Despite the fact that there are no NGO’s and organisations specifically against Islamophobia, there are, however, civil society organisations like the Greek Helsinki Monitor mentioned previously that are trying to put pressure on state authorities with regard to Islamophobia through legal activism. On the media level, it should be mentioned that the Greek Centre of Educational Activity and Intercultural Communication participates in a European project⁵⁹ “Get the Trolls Out” and has a special section with regard to the confrontation of Islamophobia in the media.⁶⁰

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Based on the above analysis it could be argued that Islamophobia in Greece in 2020 is almost at the same level as the previous year, although the lack of statistical data makes comparisons difficult. Islamophobia is primarily manifested in public discourse; groups of Greek citizens demonstrating against the ‘Islamisation’ of the country; programmes of political parties and politicians mainly of the extreme right; among certain higher clergy members of the Orthodox Church of Greece; and in platforms of the Greek media, particularly the Internet and social media, which are a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia. However, it is important to underline that Islamophobia in Greece is also found 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 but their impact on the reproduction of Islamophobia in Greece remains quite limited. Also, reactions from parents of schoolchildren against the incorporation of migrant children continued to take place, but were fewer in number and smaller in impact compared to those of previous years. The four main incidents that produced large amounts of anti-Islamic discourse and attitudes in Greece were the migration/refugee issue, especially after March 2020 and the conflictual situation in the region

58. Melpomeni Maragidou, “We Followed a Greek Muslim at the First Prayer in the Votanikos Mosque”, *Vice*, 5 November 2020, cutt.ly/2gZP1PL (Access date: 9 November 2020).

59. The website of the centre is karposontheweb.org/ (Access date: 20 October 2020).

60. For more information on this project see: getthetrollout.org/resources/islamophobia (Access date: 20 October 2020).

of Evros, at the Greek-Turkish borders; the conversion of Hagia Sophia museum in Istanbul into a mosque; the opening of the Mosque of Athens; and the terror attacks in Paris, Nice, and Vienna. As a consequence, at the moment, the initiatives of civil society, academia, and media organisations through the implementation of relevant projects could actually play a more crucial role in the study and confrontation of Islamophobia, while the government should be more determined towards this direction.

Among the primary issues that need to be addressed with regard to monitoring and confronting Islamophobia are the following:

- First, 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 the level of both discourse and physical attacks. A first step towards this direction would be the collaboration of existing state mechanisms and civil society networks in order to achieve a better level of Islamophobia monitoring.
- 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 should 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 and Muslims remains highly limited, which provides another space for Islamophobia to flourish and grow inside the Greek society. For the same purpose, training seminars provided particularly for those journalists, teachers, police officers, coastguards, and other civil servants who have contact with Muslims should be implemented.
- Fifth, 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 established. A platform is necessary where views of Muslims will be taken fully into consideration by Greek decision makers in Greece's fight against Islamophobia.
- Finally, changes must be incorporated into the draft of the National Action Plan against Racism and Bigotry, so that Islamophobia is clearly described and included in order to confront the phenomenon more effectively through public authorities, research projects, and relative policies.

Chronology

- **19.01.2020:** Demonstration in Athens, Syntagma Square, against migration and the ‘colonisation of Greece’ in which Golden Dawn and Dimiourgia Xana participated, two parties with open Islamophobic discourses.
- **21.04.2020:** A native Greek obliges a Pakistani migrant in Thessaloniki to make the symbol of the cross and say a Christian prayer and films it.
- **10.05.2020:** Demonstration in Thessaloniki with the participation of Golden Dawn among other right-wing extremists ‘against the Islamisation of Greece’.
- **May 2020:** Appointment of new directors of refugee camps. Among them, there is a person who has written extensively on Islam and Muslims, reproducing stereotypes and Islamophobic views.
- **15.05.2020:** Demonstrations all over Greece organised by mask deniers and the extreme right. The demonstrations include a statement against the ‘Islamisation of Greece’.
- **23.05.2020:** Demonstration in Polykastro, Macedonia, with the main slogan ‘No to the Islamisation of Paionia’.
- **04.06.2020:** A former Golden Dawn MP, Ilias Kassidiaris, founded his own political party with a clear Islamophobic ideology.
- **25.06.2020:** Verbal attack (‘Fuck Islam’) against a Muslim family at a bus stop in Athens city centre.
- **01.07.2020:** A member of the extreme-right terrorist group Crypteia found guilty of a series of racist and Islamophobic attacks.
- **13.07.2020:** Attacks against Kursum (Kurşunlu) Mosque in Trikala, Central Greece; front door glass is shattered.
- **16.07.2020** Attack on the minaret of the historical Diomidia (Hemitli) Mosque located close to the city of Xanthi.
- **27.07.2020:** A violent attack against a Danish Muslim tourist in Athens city centre.
- **05.08.2020:** The electricity meter of the Hürriyet Mosque in central Xanthi was vandalised.
- **09.09.2020:** Attack against a prayer house and the homes of Muslim migrants in Crete.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
HUNGARY
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

Anti-migration narratives that target Muslims in Hungary continue to be at the forefront of the FIDESZ national government agenda to reconstitute a climate of fear of those who would “invade” Europe. With the majority of the country’s media controlled by the government, the “migrant threat” that Hungary faces is reiterated effectively even when the numbers reflect a significantly different reality. Over the past years, the government has repeatedly emphasized the historical Christian identity of the country in its campaigns. Viktor Orbán, Hungary’s Prime Minister, is vocal in national and international channels about the rejection of the possibility of Muslims being integrated into Hungarian society. Only a day after discussing migration in Brussels with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyden, PM Orbán stated publicly that, “In Hungary, we don’t think a mixture of Muslim and Christian society could be a peaceful one and could provide security and a good life for people.”¹

The anti-migration campaign and securitization have been gradually extended from the constructed image of the “migrant other” to other enemies of the Hungarian illiberal state. The focus of the state’s campaign is on internal actors such as civil society organizations, independent media, the judiciary system, academic and cultural institutions, and political opposition parties. Although figures on hate crimes in Hungary are reported and collected, the Hungarian Working Group Against Hate Crimes (GYEM), a team of advocacy group experts, is raising awareness about the fact that the Hungarian police is still not taking hate crimes seriously. This is despite the fact that there is a new protocol in place to identify and register such acts.

1. John Chalmers and Gabriela Baczyńska, “Hungary’s Orbán Rejects Criticism Over Rule of Law, Says he is a ‘Freedom Fighter,’” *Reuters*, 25 September, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-orban-interview-idUSKCN26G26Q>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

Összefoglaló

A muszlim- és bevándorlásellenes narratíva továbbra is a FIDESZ nemzeti kormány-politikájának meghatározó eleme: célja fenntartani a félelmet azoktól, akik „meghódítják” Európát. A média túlnyomó része kormánypárti ellenőrzés alatt áll, napirenden tartva a Magyarországot fenyegető „migráns veszélyt”, annak ellenére, hogy a számok egészen mást mutatnak. Az elmúlt években a kormány számtalanszor hangsúlyozta az ország történelmi keresztény identitását. Orbán Viktor, Magyarország miniszterelnöke gyakran beszél hazai és nemzetközi fórumokon a muszlimok magyar, illetve európai társadalomba integrálásának akadályairól. Orbán mindössze egy nappal azután, hogy Brüsszelben tárgyalt migrációs kérdésekről az Európai Bizottság elnökével, Ursula von der Leyennel, kijelentette, hogy nem támogatja a muszlim-keresztény „párhuzamos társadalmat”. „Nem gondoljuk, hogy a muszlim és keresztény társadalom keveréke békés és biztonságos lehet, hogy jó életet biztosíthat az emberek számára” - fogalmazott a magyar miniszterelnök. A bevándorlásellenes kampány, és nyomában a biztonságot fenyegető narratíva fokozatosan terjedt ki a „bevándorló idegen” gondosan megalkotott képe mellett az illiberális állam más ellenségeire is. A kormánybarát médiában is megjelenő harc célba vette a civil társadalmat, a független médiát, a független igazságszolgáltatási rendszert, az akadémiai és kulturális intézményeket, valamint az ellenzéki pártokat is. A magyar származású milliárdos filantróp, Soros György által alapított szervezetek, a Nyílt Társadalom Intézet és a Közép-európai Egyetem, melyek korábban a civil társadalom számos szereplőjével együttműködtek, üldözöttek lettek és végül távozni kényszerültek az országból. Habár a gyűlölet-bűncselekmények egy részét bejelentik és gyűjtik is, Gyűlölet-bűncselekmények Elleni Munkacsoport (GYEM) szakértői felhívják a figyelmet arra, hogy a rendőrség továbbra sem veszi komolyan a gyűlölet-bűncselekményeket, holott a nemrég elfogadott új protokoll lehetőséget adna ezen cselekmények azonosítására és az ellenük való hatékonyabb fellépésre.

Country Profile EIR 2020

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%); Socialists Party (MSZP-PÁRBESZÉD) (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 state religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholics (39%), Other Christianity (15%), Judaism (0.1%), Islam (0.1%), Unaffiliated (18.2%) (Central Statistical Office 2011 census)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 5,579 or 0.4% of the population (Central Statistical Office 2011 census)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: The Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, Menedék Association for Migrants, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Amnesty International Hungary

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Organization of Muslims in Hungary (*Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza*), Hungarian Islamic Community (*Magyar Iszlám Közösség*)

Far-Right Parties: FIDESZ (FIDESZ – Hungarian Civic Alliance), Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*), Our Homeland Movement (*Mi Hazánk Mozgalom*)

Far-Right Movements: The Army of Outlaws (*Betyársereg*), Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (*Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*), Hungarian Legion (*Légió Hungária*), Hungarian Self-Defense Movement (*Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom*), Force and Determination (*Erő és Elszántság*)

Far-Right Militant Organizations: None

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's Muslim population is extremely small in relation to the constructed threat of Muslim migrants that is central to the FIDESZ government's political campaign.² In 2011, only 5,579 persons who identified as Muslim were recorded in the national census, with the majority being followers of Sunni Islam. In 2020, the Muslim population is estimated to be 50,000, of which only 0.50% of the total population of Hungary.³

A slow process is underway in Hungary that aims to strip away the legal protections of registered churches and religious associations. With the passing of the “Law on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on Churches, Religions and Religious Communities,” in July 2011, only 14 of 358 retained their legal recognition.⁴ Before their status was officially revoked, the Islamic Church (IE - *Iszlám Egyház*) was the largest Muslim organization in Hungary. Community Muslim organizations are small in number and include the Hungarian Islamic Community (MIK - *Magyar Iszlám Közösség*) and the Organization of Muslims in Hungary (MME - *Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza*).⁵ 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. A leading representative organization for Muslims in Hungary 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 following the constitutional changes.⁶

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Islamophobia continues to be a strong undercurrent in Hungarian political discourse, drawing upon historical and deeply embedded anti-Semitic and anti-Roma sentiments. News outlets have reported over the past five years on how the con-

2. Dorothy Manevich, “Hungary Less Tolerant of Refugees, Minorities than Other EU Nations,” *Pew Research Center*, Washington, D.C., 30 September 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/30/hungarians-share-europes-embrace-of-democratic-principles-but-are-less-tolerant-of-refugees-minorities>, (Access date: 4 January 2020).
3. “Muslim Population by Country 2020,” *World Population Review*, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-population-by-country>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).
4. Jonathan Luxmoore, “Churches Divided on Hungary's New Religion Law,” *Huffpost*, 19 July 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/hungary-religion-law_n_902032?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9lb-i53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnLw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAGK1A1O6I5mAQdhgCFDUWA3b4Z8rilqZx-RC49VByxT3O1uChdaJprWduGbPv91BonsQ1HGkPOP81belfYUcyJ1xfOcw2WmHgxowNA0dqromPXy-uWC6FI0Mg668uvAKCQFg7UjxqEq4GBHObuXjRrF9EgcAFty-NhyxyAHeNJe, (Access date: 5 September 2020).
5. “Általános kérdések,” *iszlam.com*, <http://iszlam.com/kerdes-valasz/altalanos-kerdesek/item/2093-magyarorszagony-hany-fore-teheto-az-iszlam-hivokszama-es-a-tobbseg-siita-vagy-szunnita>, (Access date: 1 December 2018).
6. “Nyilvános a lista az elismert egyházakról”, *HVG*, 23 April 2012, http://hvg.hu/itthon/20120423_elismert_egyhaziak/, (Access date: 8 January 2019).

tinued demonization of the figure of the migrant is used as the scapegoat for the country's social and economic conditions.⁷ Central to pro-government news platforms are illustrations that present racialized photos of the “peril” of non-white men desperately walking Europe's borders.⁸ The illegalization of providing information or resources to migrants has driven watchdog organizations such as *Migsaw* Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary underground, further eroding connections between Muslim grassroots community organizations and the Hungarian civil society framework.⁹



Figure 1: The above image of migrant men walking the Balkan Route has been used repeatedly by government-supported media to incite fear that men are invading the borders of Hungary. The image was shot in 2015.¹⁰

According to a Muslim community leader who would speak to us only anonymously, most of the Hungarian population is suspicious of Muslims, especially in regions where they are more visible due to their clothing or ritual practices.¹¹ After the recent terror attacks in Europe (Paris, Nice, Dresden, and Vienna), waves of racial hatred targeting Muslims emerged in online spaces, since the pandemic has meant there are less overall incidents reported of intersubjective violence in public places. Without revealing the name of the Imam or his congregation, it was reported to us that the mosque has suffered online attacks as well as minor incidents such as a lo-

7. Elzbieta M. Gozdziaik, “Using Fear of the “Other, Reshapes Migration Policy in a Hungary Built on Cultural Diversity,” *migrationpolicyinstitute-europe.org*, 10 October 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicyinstitute-europe.org/article/Orbán-reshapes-migration-policy-hungary>, (Access date: 5 June 2020).
8. “Kleine Zeitung: EU Owes Debt of Gratitude to Orbán for 1015 Migration Policy,” *Hungary Today*, 9 March 2020, <https://hungarytoday.hu/kleine-zeitung-Orbán-migration/>, (Access date: 1 July 2020).
9. Migsaw Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary, “Desperate Times Call for New Measures,” *Migsaw*, 24 April 2018, <http://www.migsaw.com/blog/>. (Access date: 8 January 2019).
10. Photo by Csaba Krizsán/MTI, *hungarytoday.hu*, (2015).
11. Anonymous phone interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, 27 November 2020, Budapest.

cal man who repeatedly took his dog to urinate on the mosque in the aftermath of the Vienna terror attack.

It is difficult as of yet to calculate the impact of the pandemic on Muslims in Hungary. One informant, a woman and member of a Budapest Muslim community, was cautiously optimistic that incidents of Islamophobia seem less critical over the past year because the global pandemic has drawn people's attention to a common enemy: a virus. With the increase in people covering their faces and heads since the start of the pandemic, women in hijab are far less visible in public places. The interviewee believed that this temporary relief that Muslim women in particular feel now that they are not the center of attention due to their head covering will subside in the aftermath of the pandemic.¹²

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Following the terror attack in Vienna on 2nd November 2020, independent-news portal *444.hu* and government-affiliated portal *Mandiner* reported alarmist coverage of the growing “jihadist” problem across Europe. *444.hu* praised the two bystanders, Austrians of Turkish descent, who helped women and police to safety, noting that not all Muslims were killers and a few were even heroes. The newspaper *Mandiner* printed commentary by political scientist, István Pócza, who confirmed a new pattern in international terrorism following the terror attacks in France and in Austria. Implying that Islamist terror cells are now targeting countries in the region, Pócza strongly confirmed the Hungarian government's position on creating further restrictions that will make so-called illegal immigration impossible and will curb the spread of Islamic radicalism.¹³

In *Heti Világgazdaság*, Muslim Imam József Bordás argued openly in May 2019 that the Hungarian government's anti-Muslim rhetoric will weaken Christian churches in the long run. Accusing the government of using religion for political purposes, Bordás made a historical comparison by pointing out that “Muslims are the new Jews.” Going on to compare the government to the Taliban in Afghanistan, Bordás predicted that the use of Christianity for political reasons will alienate Christians from their faith and ultimately signal future instability for Hungary.¹⁴

Employment

Interviews with members of Hungarian Muslim communities have repeatedly revealed discrimination cases at job interviews and workplaces. Such incidents continue to be largely unreported and unregistered by the state. In most cases, Muslim employ-

12. Ibid.

13. “Vienna Shooting in the Spotlight,” *Budapest*, 5 November 2020, <https://www.budapest.eu/2020/11/vienna-shooting-in-the-spotlight/>, (Access date: 20 November, 2020).

14. “Conflicting Takes on Islamism,” *Budapest*, 6 May 2019, <https://www.budapest.eu/2019/05/conflicting-takes-on-islamism/>, (Access date: 3 April, 2020).

ees conceal their religion at their workplace, or alternately, become self-employed. In one interview, a Muslim student was racially targeted and accused of being a “sleeper agent” during a shift at a department store. In another example, an interviewee described a job interview when the director of the company implied that he wanted to hire a Hungarian and instead ended up interviewing an “Ali” (with the implied reference that an “Ali” cannot also be Hungarian). The interviewee did not get the job, and took no further steps against this occurrence of discrimination.¹⁵

Education

The new Hungarian National Curriculum was completed and accepted by the government in January 2020. The new curriculum is arguably more insular than the last, and lacks any comprehensive insight on the religion of Islam despite the fact that religious studies are a mandatory part of the primary school curriculum.¹⁶

Pork-free meals are not available for Muslim children in public schools, and in some cases, students are not able to bring in alternatives for lunch in the school. Parents can refer to health reasons to avoid pork and receive vegetarian meals but that also requires going through a lengthy and invasive bureaucratic process where parents are required to have a medical note referring to health reasons rather than citing religious considerations for the dietary restrictions.¹⁷

Politics

Leading Hungarian politicians always refer to the “Hungarian people,” an undefined term, that is not the same as Hungarian citizens. This phenomenon serves as an example in everyday social interactions.¹⁸

Islamophobia continues to be linked to the anti-migration narrative of Hungary’s far-right government. Framed within the context of the securitization of migration and the protection of Hungarian citizens, misinformation about the “growing migrant threat” is pervasive in government-affiliated media sources.¹⁹ Conspiracy theories linked to migrants and Muslims in Hungary, including the infamous Soros Plan,²⁰ continue to be popular rhetorical devices that are frequently employed in national and local media pro-government sources.

15. Anonymous phone interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, 27 November 2020, Budapest.

16. “The Orbán Regime Begins Educating its Children in Earnest,” *Hungarian Spectrum*, 3 February 2020, <https://hungarianspectrum.org/2020/02/03/the-orban-regime-begins-educating-its-children-in-earnest/>, (Access date: 1 February 2020).

17. Anonymous phone interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, 27 November 2020.

18. Anonymous phone interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, 27 November 2020.

19. Zoltan Kovacs, “The Growing Migration Threat: Here Are the Latest Figures,” *abouthungary.hu*, 3 March 2020, <http://abouthungary.hu/blog/the-growing-migration-threat-here-are-the-latest-figures/>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

20. Vit Novotny, “The ‘Soros Plan’: What to Keep and What to Scrap,” *Euroobserver*, 28 November 2017, <https://euobserver.com/opinion/140053>, (Access date: 4 February 2020).

Spreading misinformation about the numbers of so-called illegal migrants apprehended at Hungary's southern border, a government-affiliated media source alleged that illegal border-crossing attempts had "increased more than fourfold, from some 1,300 and 1,500 to well over 6,500."²¹ In fact, the numbers of asylum claims made in Hungary are dropping substantially. The global SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has provided an excuse for the government of Hungary to further restrict asylum claims made at its borders. On June 17, 2020, the government adopted the "Act LVIII on Transitional Rules and Epidemiological Preparedness Related to the Cessation of the State of Danger."²² This law severely limits access to the territory of Hungary, by designating two Hungarian embassies outside the European Union (in Ukraine and Serbia) where asylum seekers have to submit their declaration of intent, in person, to receive permission to travel to Hungary in order to submit the asylum application itself.²³ This legal loophole makes it virtually impossible for refugees to submit asylum claims, and it allows the government to skirt its responsibility as a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention.

As a leading figure in the anti-migration network, PM Orbán has drawn more praise and ire over the past year for his steadfast opposition to helping alleviate the burden of settling refugees in Europe. Pro-government supporter and Hungarian journalist Boris Kálnoky claims, "Orbán has done an intellectual, material service to Europe. He was berated for it, as the devil incarnate. Orbán was right."²⁴ In May 2020, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that the practice of constructing prison-like "transit zones" is illegal. The Hungarian government has effectively removed itself from the Common European Asylum System by shifting the responsibility of registering asylum claims to Serbia. According to the Helsinki Committee, the rate of admission has declined from roughly 10 people per working day in 2016 to perhaps one person per day in 2018. In 2019, only 22 people received refugee protection in Hungary, a country with a population of over 10 million people.²⁵

In early March, PM Orbán blamed a group of Iranian students studying in Hungary for bringing the coronavirus to the country.²⁶ Authorities accused the Iranian

21. Zoltan Kovacs, "The Growing Migration Threat: Here Are the Latest Figures," *abouthungary.hu*, 3 March 2020, <http://abouthungary.hu/blog/the-growing-migration-threat-here-are-the-latest-figures/>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

22. "Access to Asylum Further at Stake in Hungary – UNHCR," *unhcr.org*, 29 July 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/6/5efa0f914/access-asylum-further-stake-hungary-unhcr.html>, (Access date: 1 July 2020).

23. Neuberger Eszter, "Ami elsőre a jogvédők nagy győzelmének tűnt, abból a menedékjog teljes kiüresítése lett," *444.hu*, 30 June 2020, <https://444.hu/2020/06/30/ami-elsore-a-jogvedok-nagy-gyozelmenek-tunt-abbol-a-menedekjog-teljes-kiuresite-se-lett/>, (Access date: 4 January 2020).

24. "Kleine Zeitung: EU Owes Debt of Gratitude to Orbán for 1015 Migration Policy," *hungarytoday.hu*, 9 March 2020, <https://hungarytoday.hu/kleine-zeitung-Orban-migration/>, (Access date: 1 July 2020).

25. Todor Gardos, "Lost in Transit: How Hungary Scrapped Asylum," *Balkan Insight*, 10 November 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/11/10/lost-in-transit-how-hungary-scrapped-asylum/>, (Access date: 16 December 2020).

26. Szabolcs Panyi, "Iranian Students Expelled from Hungary during the Pandemic May Be Able to Return,"

students of breaching the quarantine rules, and consequently expelled them from the country. Government statements repeatedly underlined the students alleged aggressive behavior, while Orbán publicly linked illegal migration to the spread of coronavirus and Iran.²⁷ Represented by a lawyer from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, one of the Iranian students concluded that the decision was a “politically motivated show trial.”²⁸ The accusations were never proven and the criminal charges were dropped.²⁹



Figure 2: The image is from Our Homeland Party's (OHP) Twitter feed following the Vienna terror attack. A far-right, anti-migrant party, OHP warns in the tweet that legal and illegal migration should be prevented. The text references László Toroczkai, formerly the VP of Jobbik, who is also the mayor of Ásotthalom, a settlement at the Hungarian-Serbian border who's idea it was to establish the border fence. The text against the green background reads: "We don't give up on '48: we will defend our homeland!" in reference to the 1848 revolution and its implications for mobilizing solidarity in the protection of Hungary's national sovereignty.³⁰

FIDESZ allies within the European Parliament include the French National Rally (RN), Alternative for Germany, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria), and *Legha per Salvini Premier* (LSP).³¹ Following the recent terror attacks

Direkt36, 15 July 2020, <https://www.direkt36.hu/en/ugy-nez-ki-visszajohet-magyarorszagra-tobb-irani-diak-akiket-a-jarvany-elejen-utastott-ki-a-kormany/>, (Access date: 18 December 2020).

27. "Orbán to EU Counterparts: Clear Link between Coronavirus and Illegal Migration, *MTI-Hungary Today*, 11 March 2020, <https://hungarytoday.hu/orban-to-eu-counterparts-clear-link-between-coronavirus-and-illegal-migration/>, (Access date: 18 December 2020).

28. "Hungary to Expel 14 Iranians amid Virus 'Show Trial' Claim," *The Daily Star*, 15 April 2020, <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/World/2020/Apr-15/504443-hungary-to-expel-14-iranians-amid-virus-show-trial-claim.ashx>, (Access date: 18 December 2020).

29. "Továbbra sem tartja be a szabályokat a megfigyelt iráni betegek egy része," *Híradó*, 9 March 2020, <https://hirado.hu/belfold/kozelet/cikk/2020/03/09/elo-az-operativ-torz-sajtotajekoztatoja>, (Access date: 18 December 2020).

30. "Our Homeland Movement," *Twitter*, 5 November 2020, <https://twitter.com/MiHazank/status/1324461715380183046>, (Access date: 22 November 2020).

31. Alexandra Brzozowski, "Fidesz-PiS talks point towards potential exit from EPP," *Euractiv*, 8 January 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/fidesz-pis-talks-point-towards-potential-exit-from-epp/>, (Access date: 11 February 2020).

in Paris, Nice, Dresden, and Vienna by so-called Islamic State sympathizers, European leaders are once again rallying behind the call to root out “political Islam” in Europe.³² PM Orbán had previously been in talks with Austria Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, to continue rejecting “Political Islam” and to help Hungary in its fight to defend Europe from migrants.³³ A leader in a Budapest Muslim community leader revealed that members fear Hungary will follow Austria’s example and criminalize “Political Islam.”³⁴ Such legislation could create the means to indiscriminately persecute Muslims in Hungary.³⁵



Figure 3: The tweet is again by László Toroczkai, leader of Our Homeland Movement. Published in reference to the Nice terror attack, the tweet portrays the danger to Europe of extending a helping hand to Muslim migrants.³⁶

Media

One can present Islam and Muslims in [the] media however one wants without any consequences.³⁷

Since 2015, FIDESZ has continued to portray all Muslim migrants as part of the “invasion of Europe.” Dominating the state-run media are anti-migrant and Islamophobic sentiments which have been documented in the following sources; *Origo*, the

32. Jamie Dettmer, “In Europe, Calls Grow Louder for United Front Against ‘Political Islam,’” *Voanews*, 5 November 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/europe-calls-grow-louder-united-front-against-political-islam>, (Access date: 16 December 2020).

33. Márk Herczeg, “Orbán reméli, hogy az új osztrák kormány nemet mond a politikai iszlámra,” *444.hu*, 10 September 2019, <https://444.hu/2019/09/10/Orban-remeli-hogy-az-uj-osztrak-kormany-nemet-mond-a-politikai-islamra>, (Access date: 2 March 2020).

34. Sam Jones, “What Is Behind Austria’s Plan to Outlaw ‘Political Islam?’,” *Financial Times*, 1 December 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/3c8f761d-94cc-405f-904c-0785a11891a7>, (Access date: 7 December 2020).

35. Lorenzo Vidion, “Austria, Not France, Is the Model for Europe’s Crackdown on Islamists,” *Foreign Policy*, 11 November 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/09/the-future-of-europe-for-better-or-worse-is-sebastian-kurz%20/>, (Access date: 5 December 2020).

36. László Toroczkai, *Twitter*, 1 November 2020, <https://twitter.com/toroczkailaszlo/status/1322878340429172736>, (Access date: 22 November 2020).

37. Anonymous phone interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, 27 November 2020, Budapest.

rebranded *Magyar Nemzet* (formerly *Magyar Idők*),³⁸ *Hír Tv*, *Echo Tv*, *PestiTv*, and *888.hu*. These media outlets fuel distrust and hatred by making false claims that Muslims in Hungary are conspiring to flood the country with Muslim migrants, drawing attention once to the securitization of Hungary. For example, Figure 5 demonstrates how, in response to the Vienna terror incident, the public response in the right-wing media is threats and abuse against Muslims who are speaking out against the attack. In this case, Hungarian Islamic Community, Zoltán Bolek, is told that Islam should be banned, that Bolek should disappear, and that he is a “welfare Muslim” in Hungary.³⁹



Figure 4: The title of an episode of “Libernyakok,” part of pro-government television coverage, reads “A peaceful Muslim in the Christian Sea.”⁴⁰

mandiner | Címlap | Belföld | Makronóm | Precedens | Podcast | GörbEUBorka | Vélemény | Amerika | Java | Hetilap | Előfizetés

| Vélemény | Ausztria | Bécs | terrortámadás | Bolek Zoltán | Magyar Iszlám Közösség

Ajánló 62 ember kedveli. Az ismerőseid közül te lehetsz az első.

Összesen 44 komment

Jelenleg csak a hozzászólások egy kis részét látja.
Hozzászóláshoz és a további kommentek megtekintéséhez **lépjön be, vagy regisztráljon!**
A kommentek nem szerkesztett tartalmak, tartalmuk a szerzőjük álláspontját tükrözi.

SZŰRÉS: **IDŐRENDBEN** FORDÍTOTT IDŐRENDBEN ÉRTÉKELÉS SZERINT

Teknős 2020. november 3. 8:47 👍 13 🗨️

@Peppa
Bolek úr? Egy személtáda megélhetési muzulmán! Menjen oda, ahová én most gondolom! Be kell tiltani az iszlámot, amint megerősödünk egy kicsit! Takarodj Zoli a tiedhez, ne innen írj részvét táviratot, hanem húzz el a francba! Találkoztam ezzel az aljadékkal egyszer!

Figure 5: The image is from the Mandiner online news portal, showing comments made in response to the leader of the Hungarian Islamic Community, Zoltán Bolek, and in reference to the Vienna terror attack.⁴¹

38. Steve Anthony, “Government Recaptures Magyar Nemzet Brand,” *Budapest Business Journal*, 6 February 2019, https://bbj.hu/politics/government-recaptures-magyar-nemzet-brand_161127, (Access date: 30 April 2019).
39. Zoltán Bolek, “Nyílt Levél Ausztriába,” *Mandiner.hu*, 3 November 2020, https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20201103_nyilt_level_ausztriaba#, (Access date: 11 November 2020).
40. “Egy békés muszlim a keresztény tengerben,” *pestitu.hu*, 30 September 2020, <https://pestitu.pestisracok.hu/2020/09/30/egy-bekes-muszlim-a-kereszteny-tengerben-libernyakok/>, (Access date: 11 November 2020).
41. Zoltán Bolek, “Nyílt Levél Ausztriába,” *Mandiner.hu*, 3 November 2020, https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20201103_nyilt_level_ausztriaba#, (Access date: 11 November 2020).

Justice System

Official data and figures on crime in Hungary are reported and collected by the Unified System of Criminal Statistics of the Investigative Authorities and of Public Prosecution. The majority of Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racially-motivated attacks either remain unreported or uninvestigated as hate crimes. The Hungarian Working Group Against Hate Crimes (GYEM), a team of advocacy group experts, raises awareness of the fact that the Hungarian police is still not taking hate crimes seriously, although the National Chief of Police adopted a new protocol that is mandatory for the entire police forces, which came into effect in July 2019.⁴² András László Pap, an expert member of the GYEM, adds that amidst the dramatically shrinking space for cooperation between NGOs, expert organizations, and public authorities, the collaboration between the GYEM and the police is a constructive example and an important stage towards the recognition and adequate state response to hate crime.⁴³

Muslim prison inmates report insufficient detention conditions, as institutions fail to provide pork-free meals. The prison jargon calls this type of meals “moha” referring to Mohammad. The interviewee commented that this expression is similarly degrading to “negro” in reference to African Americans.⁴⁴ Others reported not being able to practice their religion, unless they bring a certificate verifying that they belong to a Muslim denomination. To obtain such certificates is quite difficult because of the bureaucratic structures in place.

In 2020, a large number of laws were passed related to national security, including amendments to the Fundamental Law. The government used the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 to gain sweeping powers as part of the state of emergency and passed the Enabling Act,⁴⁵ a ruling by decree that reduces the limitations on the duration of the term or parliamentary oversight for the party in power. Freedom House and others have warned that these changes to the Fundamental Law, that Hungary can no longer be considered a democracy.⁴⁶ Changes to the Fundamental Law on 10 November 2020 (the ninth series of changes to be made since 2011) ensures that a Hungarian child is brought up based on national self-identification and a commitment to Christianity.⁴⁷

42. Joanne Perry, Tamás Dombas & Andrea Kosáry, “Facing all the Facts: Connecting on Hate Crime Data in Hungary,” *facingfacts.eu*, <https://www.facingfacts.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2019/11/Facing-Facts-Country-Report-Hungary-with-Self-Assessment-271119.pdf>, (Access date: 31 January, 2020).

43. Phone interview with András László Pap, expert member of the Hungarian Working Group Against Hate Crimes (GYEM), conducted by Gabi Göbl, 20 March 2020, Budapest.

44. Anonymous phone interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, 27 November 2020.

45. Kriszta Kovács, “Hungary’s Orbánistan: A Complete Arsenal of Emergency Powers,” *Verfassungsblog*, 6 April 2020, <https://verfassungsblog.de/hungarys-Orb%C3%A1nistan-a-complete-arsenal-of-emergency-powers/>, (Access date: 19 December 2020).

46. “Nations in Transit 2020,” *Freedom House*, May 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/hungary/nations-transit/2020>, (Access date: 5 December 2020).

47. Shaun Walker, “Hungarian Government Mounts New Assault on LGBT Rights,” *The Guardian*, 11 November 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/11/hungarian-government-mounts-new-assault-on-lgbt-rights>, (Access date: 19 December 2020).

The Equal Treatment Authority, a body previously tasked with ensuring equal treatment in the workplace and in public life, has been abolished,⁴⁸ thus depriving vulnerable groups and individuals whose rights were violated from seeking legal remedy. The Commissioner for Fundamental Rights took over the Equal Treatment Authority's duties. Human rights and advocacy NGOs expressed their concerns as the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights has a track record of being loyal to the government.⁴⁹

Internet

Attempts to curb the spread of hate speech and misinformation across social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter since 2018 have been largely unsuccessful in Hungary as organizations quickly rebrand in order to continue their online activities.⁵⁰ Examples of social media sites, including Facebook, that circulate this kind of virulent hate online are *Dzsihádfigyelő*, *Patrióta*, *Vadhajtások* and *Migrációkutató Intézet*. Other websites include *dzsihadfigyelo.com*, *vadhajtasok.hu* (commonly known as the “wildest right portal”), *generacio.eu*, and *breitportal.hu* - the last two are linked to the group Generation Identity.⁵¹ As Figures 6 and 7 below indicate, Islamophobia is so common and widespread, that abusive and hateful comments can be found virtually anywhere linked to contents about Muslims or Islam.



Figure 6: A post in a Hungarian Facebook expat group (Austria) after the Vienna terror attack on 2 November 2020. The post uses derogatory and abusive language in reference to migrants and “multicultural” Vienna, and it also illustrates how Muslim migrants are seen as both less than human and also a drain on the state’s resources.⁵²

48. “18 civil szervezet tiltakozik az Egyenlő Bánásmód Hatóság megszüntetése ellen,” *Magyar Narancs*, 20 November 2020, <https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/18-civil-szervezet-tiltakozik-az-egyenlo-banasmod-hatosag-megszunte-tese-ellen-135083>, (Access date: 10 December 2020).
49. Eszter Polgári, Tamás Dombos, “A New Chapter in the Hungarian Government’s Crusade against LGBTQI People,” *Verfassungsblog*, 18 November 2020, <https://verfassungsblog.de/a-new-chapter-in-the-hungarian-governments-crusade-against-lgbtqi-people/>, (Access date: 10 December 2020).
50. Oroszi Babet, “Orbán’s Media Empire,” *atlatszo.hu*, 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-Orbán/>, (Access date: 18 December 2019).
51. “Egyszerűen senkik vagytok,” *Political Capital*, 15 February 2019, https://politicalcapital.hu/konyvtar.php?article_read=1&article_id=2449, (Access date: 10 January 2020).
52. Hungarian expat group in Vienna, *Facebook*, 3 November 2020, (Access date: 30 November 2020).



Figure 7: Comment left on a Hungarian Facebook expat group (Austria) following the terror attack on 2 November 2020. Even in translation the virulent hatred towards Muslims is evident: “I seriously would eliminate such garbage, they should be shot dead right after they come out of their mothers, alongside their families.”⁵³

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Incze Nikoletta, director of the Center for the Study of Political Islam (*Politikai Iszlám Tanulmányok Központja*) is a well-known figure spreading Islamophobic ideas online and in public for a in Hungary.⁵⁴

The pro-government media, including *Origo*, the rebranded *Magyar Nemzet* (formerly known as *Magyar Idők*), *Hír Tv*, *Echo Tv*, *PestiTV*, and *888.hu* often feature “security experts” whose task is to underline the governing party’s propaganda on security threats related to migration and Islam. These “experts” lack relevant professional background. Far-right organizations, such as the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement, the Army of Outlaws, Hungarian Legion, or the Hungarian Self-Defense Movement all share similar views on how Islam is culturally (and in other ways) incompatible with the Hungarian national identity.⁵⁵

There is a range of sources online that openly promote a targeted hatred of Muslims. *Dzsihádfigyelő* has developed what it claims to be a “jihad watcher,” and frequently cites Geert Wilders and other right-wing politicians who speak out about Muslim migration to Europe. Taking concepts from Islamic history, the site manufactures false claims that migration is part of *jihad* in Islamic doctrine through a process of forced migration (incorrectly referencing the historic migration known as the *hijra*).⁵⁶ *Kuruc.info* is another site that incites hatred on the basis of religious and/or perceived racial difference. Targeting in particular Jews and Roma, the site is a hotbed of misinformation and even calls for a “Jewish confrontation.”⁵⁷

53. Ibid.

54. Gábor Czene, “Megelégtették az iszlamofóbiát,” *Népszava*, 2 January 2019, https://nepszava.hu/3020249_megelgeltettek-az-islamofobiat, (Access date: 30 January 2020).

55. Krekó, Hunyadi, and Szicherle, “Anti-Muslim Populism in Hungary: From the Margins to the Mainstream,” 24 July 2019, *Brookings Institute*, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/anti-muslim-populism-in-hungary-from-the-margins-to-the-mainstream>, (Access date: 22 February 2020).

56. “Hidzra Európába: “menekültek” gyarmatosítják a kontinenst,” *Dzsihádfigyelő*, 14 October 2019, <http://www.dzsihadfigyelo.com/category/eurabia/>, (Access date: 21 February 2020).

57. “The Hunters and the Hunted: Kuruc.info’s List of Anti-Hungarians,” *Hungarian Spectrum*, 24 July 2012, <https://hungarianspectrum.org/2012/07/24/the-hunters-and-the-hunted-kuruc-infos-list-of-anti-hungarians/>, (Access date: 21 February 2020).

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The government continues to hold a two-third majority in parliament, which makes the opposition forces weak in terms of their ability to object and prevent government policies or legislative processes that impact vulnerable groups in Hungary. 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. As British member of the European Parliament (Green Party) Magid Magid declared publicly in January 2020, it is time to address Europe's Islamophobia problem which is perpetuated by a "poorly regulated media and sustained by agenda-driven think-tanks and self-professed 'experts' who brazenly deny the existence of anti-Muslim bigotry." Magid makes clear the manifestation of Islamophobia in its most explicit form as an existential threat to all who suffer in its shadow. As a Muslim politician in the UK, Magid argues that the hopes of a brighter future for the millions of Muslim EU citizens seem far off.⁵⁸

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia

Confronting Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racist stereotypes remains an uphill struggle for the relatively small number of NGOs and grassroots initiatives who work tirelessly to counter government propaganda.⁵⁹

The Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association in Hungary (*Magyar Iszlám Jogvédő Egyesület* - MIJE) remains the only Hungarian NGO for Muslim rights in Hungary. MIJE has been active since its foundation in 2016. Its main activity focuses on Islamophobic media appearances, offering legal aid to victims of hate crimes and discrimination, and counteracting anti-Muslim government propaganda. Balázs Bakó, leader of the organization, mentions that expanding the membership of the organization is difficult as people often prefer to help anonymously instead of officially joining the organization due to their fear of becoming a target of Islamophobia. The organization cooperates with Hungarian and international NGOs and organizations, and lately appears on the international platform with a focus on countering Islamophobia.

The Subjective Values Foundation focuses on promoting inclusion and social cohesion by implementing projects emphasizing cultural diversity. They focus on informal education and address conflicts arising from social inequalities. Their mission includes creating a sustainable society.

58. Magid Magid, "Europe Has an Islamophobia Problem: Who's Going to Stop It?," *Euractiv*, 17 January, 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/freedom-of-thought/opinion/europe-has-an-islamophobia-problem-whos-going-to-stop-it/>, (Access date: 20 November, 2020).

59. Anita Komuves, "Target or Ally? Hungary Faces the Elections Battle," *VSQUARE*, 3 April 2018, <https://vsquare.org/russia-target-or-ally-hungary-faces-the-elections-battle/>, (Access date: 21 December 2018).

The Menedék Association for Migrants continues to hold workshops in local schools that attempt to educate people about strong prejudices towards Muslim-majority countries fueled massively by government propaganda.

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) is a human rights NGO protecting human dignity through legal and public activities. The organization supports refugees, detainees, and victims of law enforcement violence. Besides holding a series of talks to present information based on cases they are working on, in 2018-19, the HHC launched the project “Right to Faith: Protecting the Right to Freedom of Religion in Hungary” with the support of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Budapest.⁶⁰

Amnesty International Hungary is part of the Amnesty International movement. Its activities include participation in joint international campaigns led by the movement’s members and local campaigns focusing on specifically Hungarian human rights violations and matters.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In Hungary, the governing party has continuously instrumentalized parliamentary legislation to promote its ideology and political agenda. By observing democratic backsliding since FIDESZ gained power in 2010, the authors of this report are concerned that the dismantled system of checks and balances leaves both domestic and international institutions essentially unable to either influence the Hungarian government or hold it accountable for its actions.

FIDESZ’s recent battle (joining forces with Poland) against the European Union over the Multiannual Financial Framework and the COVID-19 pandemic recovery package underlined again that the governing party continues to avoid any scrutiny on the rule of law in Hungary. Eventually, Hungary and Poland dropped the veto threat, and an agreement was reached, stating that the rule of law clause will only apply if a member state’s action harms the financial interests of the European Union.

In this report, we have written extensively about human rights violations, attacks against democratic institutions, against the media, the opposition, vulnerable groups, civil society, minorities, and vulnerable groups. This continuous assault on democracy in Hungary by its own governing party gives no cause for optimism. However, we consider that looking for solutions that will at least partially solve these problems remains critical. Thus, we underline the importance of considering the recommendations from the previous years’ reports, and focusing on stopping growing xenophobia and intolerance against minorities, people of color, and the small community of Muslims and migrant individuals. Our recommendations include,

60. “Project Right to Faith: Protecting the Right to Freedom of Religion in Hungary,” *The Hungarian Helsinki Committee*, 2 December 2019, <https://www.helsinki.hu/en/project-right-to-faith/>, (Access date: 18 February 2020).

- Strengthening independent media and cooperation between human rights advocates, NGOs, and expert groups who will work with public offices and authorities to help defend democracy in Hungary.
- Restoring the independence of the judiciary system.
- Restoring freedom of education and addressing the tackling misinformation and bias towards combating fake news.
- Restoring freedom of expression since it has been severely damaged by the government's interference in many cultural institutions.
- Stronger control of the EU's post-accession conditions on member state compliance with common values and the rule of law.

Chronology

- **20.03.2020:** PM Orbán blames migration for the Coronavirus.⁶¹
- **30.08.2020:** Hungary's government once more extends the so-called state of emergency due to mass migration without any legal basis.
- **17.10.2020:** PM Orbán declares the task to raise children as "Homo Christianus."⁶²
 - o The Fundamental Law is amended for the ninth time (since 2011) and changes include that Hungary will protect and ensure children's upbringing based on national self-identification and the Christian culture.⁶³
- **01.12.2020:** Parliament votes to abolish the Equal Treatment Authority, a body that focuses on discrimination cases.⁶⁴

61. Lydia Gall, "Hungary Weaponizes Coronavirus to Stoke Xenophobia," *Human Rights Watch*, 19 March 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/19/hungary-weaponizes-coronavirus-stoke-xenophobias>, (Access date: 29 October 2020).

62. "Orbán: Our Task Is to Raise Children as 'Homo Christianus'," *Hungary Today*, 17 October 2020, <https://hungarytoday.hu/Orban-our-task-is-to-raise-children-as-homo-christianus/>, (Access date: 29 October 2020).

63. Euronews and AFP, "Hungarian Parliament Adopts Anti-LGBT Laws Including De Facto Ban on Adoption by Same-Sex Couples," *Euronews*, 15 December 2020, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/12/15/hungarian-parliament-adopts-anti-lgbt-laws-including-de-facto-ban-on-adoption-by-same-sex->, (Access date: 18 December 2020).

64. "18 civil szervezet tiltakozik az Egyenlő Bánásmód Hatóság megszüntetése ellen," *Magyar Narancs*, 20 November 2020, <https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/18-civil-szervezet-tiltakozik-az-egyenlo-banasmod-hatosag-megszuntelese-ellen-135083>, (Access date: 23 November, 2020).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
IRELAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The “Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2020” presents worrying reading. Drawing on data provided by the Irish Network Against Racism among others, experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination by Muslim men, women, and children are recalled with depressing clarity. In the political domain, the far right in Ireland grow apace with up to thirty candidates espousing such platforms in the general election held in early 2020. As further detailed below, the far right in Ireland are clearly connected to their counterparts in the broader international contexts. Activity at an Eid al-Adha celebration in Dublin demonstrates that these groups are not only present online. In the Irish media, evidence of problematic co-location of terms such as ‘Islamic’ and ‘terrorist’ maintain as in previous years. Other reporting practices that can serve to stigmatise Muslim communities are also in evidence wherein a linear logic of converting to Islam is presented as a first step on the road to supporting terrorism. In the online space, evidence presented below further demonstrates the toxicity of social media for Muslims with personal attacks towards a newly appointed mayor in Limerick attracting attention on various platforms. At a number of points in this report, initiatives/good practices in the face of Islamophobia are presented. However, much is left to be done to address Islamophobia in Ireland and this report concludes with recommendations including for the introduction of new hate crime legislation and revised hate speech legislation; improved recording and reporting of Islamophobia by the state; and the development of initiatives at the level of the state and civil society, including the latter holding the former to account, to challenge the growth of the far right.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Ireland

Type of Regime: Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary democracy

Ruling Parties: Coalition of Fine Gael (Centre Right), Fianna Fáil (Centrist), Green Party (Centrist Green)

Opposition Parties: Sinn Féin, Social Democrats, Solidarity People Before Profit, Aontú, Labour

Last Elections: General Election 2020: (Seats followed percentage of first preference votes) Sinn Féin 37 (24.53%); Fianna Fáil 38 (22.18%); Fine Gael 35 (20.86%); Green Party 12 (7.13%); Labour 6 (4.38); Social Democrats 6 (2.90%); Solidarity People Before Profit 5 (2.63%); Independents/Others 21 (15.39%).

Total Population: 4.8 million in 2016 Census

Major Languages: Irish, English

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Irish Central Statistics Office does not currently publish recorded crime data due to reliability issues. For 2019, INAR data indicate that “Muslims experienced 14 per cent of reported crime cases, and 14 per cent of discrimination cases” and that Muslims were targeted in hate speech on 45 reported occasions. (Data from iReport.ie: Reports of Racism in Ireland 2019). Although relating to 2019, in November 2020, otherwise unavailable official data were released by Irish authorities via the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights ‘Hate Crime Reporting Database.’ These official data indicate that there were 9 reports of crimes with a ‘Bias against Muslims’ (type of crime is not reported) (15 hate crimes against Muslims were reported to authorities for 2018). (OSCE Hate Crime Reporting Database). In the same database, third-party data for the same period stood at 23 anti-Muslim crimes, including 14 violent attacks, 6 attacks against property and 3 threats.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The official Irish Central Statistics Office does not currently publish recorded crime motivated by discrimination due to reliability issues. (Central Statistics Office). The Irish Network Against Racism published data for 2019 in May of 2020. These included 112 criminal offences; 111 reports of discrimination; 130 other recordable racist incidents; and 174 reports concerning hate speech. In these data, 50 racist assaults were reported (a highest-ever figure for INAR); the figure of 92 represents the highest level of reports of repeat harassment as reported to INAR to date; meanwhile, low levels of reporting of such in-

cidents to the police maintain. (Data from iReport.ie: Reports of Racism in Ireland 2019)

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 Organisations: 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 Combatting Islamophobia: Irish Network Against Racism Ireland, Immigrant Council of Ireland

Far-Right Parties: National Party, Irish Freedom Party, Identity Ireland

Far-Right Movements: Síol na hÉireann, Anti-Corruption Ireland

Far-Right Militant 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

The “Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2020” presents again the realities of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Ireland. As in previous years, the report for 2020 commences with the breakout of anti-Muslim incidents, including attacks on individuals and institutions, online and offline. This is followed by a presentation of insights on the experiences of Muslim youth in the education context before moving to the political and media domains. In the context of politics, the continued rise of the far right in Irish politics is demonstrated below. The Irish media landscape, as in previous years, remains problematic in terms of reportage on Muslim communities/Islam both in mainstream and fringe outlets. From here, the report engages with evidence of online anti-Muslim hostility, before moving to reflect on who the key actors are in propagating Islamophobia in Ireland. The report concludes with recommendations for state and civil society organisations vis-à-vis challenging Islamophobia in Ireland.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Research published in the summer of 2020 presented some interesting insights on the public perceptions of Muslims and Islam in Ireland. Published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the Economic and Social Research Institute, the experimental study focused on “people’s hidden attitudes to minorities in Ireland.” Key findings include that when asked, people were more likely to express more support for Black people to come to Ireland than Muslims; that as a result of “social pressures” people were more inclined to present a more welcoming *public* front vis-à-vis immigration of Black people over Muslims; that people did not ‘mask’ their negative opinions of the immigration of Muslim people; and that women (40%) are much less in favour of more Muslims coming to Ireland than men (67%).¹ Given these negative attitudes, it is perhaps no surprise that Muslim men, women, and children in Ireland experience anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination.

In May of 2020, the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) released data on levels and experiences of racism in Ireland, including those directed towards Muslims. These data revealed experiences of physical assault, threats, harassment, verbal abuse, and discrimination.² Unfortunately, there is very little difference for 2020. Data de-

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1. “New Research Examines People’s Hidden Attitudes to Minorities in Ireland,” Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, <https://www.ihrec.ie/new-research-examines-peoples-hidden-attitudes-to-minorities-in-ireland/>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).
 2. Michael, “Data from iReport.ie: Reports of Racism in Ireland 2019”.

rived from the iReport third-party reporting mechanism provided to the author by the Irish Network Against Racism for 2020 again evidences hostility and discrimination towards Muslims in Ireland.³

In one report to INAR, a witness detailed how they saw:

“A Muslim woman struggled to fit her buggy in the bus... an agitated man in his 40s-50s cursed at her and said ‘Irish Only’”

A Muslim man reported how his roommates repeatedly harassed him and repeatedly associated “terrorism, nationality, and Islam.”

Public service institutions in Ireland do not require the removal of religious head coverings for identity photographs.⁴ Despite this, when accessing public services, a hijab-wearing Muslim woman of European origin reported:

“I went to...the office to apply (social services) card.... [Staff member] said she would take my photo for the card. She said I had to open my head[scarf] for photo. I said no. I can not open my head[scarf]. She said this is rule. I said again I can not open. She went to ask somebody then... she said I do not need to open my headscarf [fully] but I have to [show] my ears.”

The Muslim woman in question was later apologised to in a different branch after taking the issue further.

In an example of serious assault, a male Muslim youth (under 18 years of age) recalled how when walking home he was “attacked by 2 youths, one had a balaclava on.... this isn’t the first time I have been attacked... I have filed numerous reports to the guards (police) and nothing was done.” Interestingly, despite being of Arab background, the assailants in this instance: “screamed... ‘paki you’re dead.’” Research in Ireland evidences the manner in which ‘Paki’ is often directed at Muslims of varying backgrounds as an interchangeable term of abuse.⁵

The above examples further point up the issue of intersectionality in the experiences of hostility and discrimination lived by Muslims in Ireland, whether based on gender identity and/or the presumption that Muslimness is foreign to Ireland.

In addition to personal experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination, reports to INAR also made reference to social and mainstream media posts, which will be discussed further below. Reports also provided evidence of anti-Muslim graffiti in public places as Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate.

3. The author would like to thank Shane O’Curry, Director of the Irish Network Against Racism, and Dr Lucy Michael from Lucy Michael Research for providing access to the iReport data for 2020.

4. Religious head coverings are permitted for passport photographs in Ireland once facial features can be seen - <https://www.dfa.ie/passportonline/passportonlinephotofaqs/>. Information on photo requirements for Public Services Cards was not publicly available at the time of writing.

5. James Carr, *Experiences of Islamophobia: Living with Racism in the Neoliberal Era*, (Routledge: London, 2016).



Figures 1 and 2: Anti-Muslim images taken near Poolbeg Lighthouse, Dublin.⁶

In February, in a high-profile case of anti-Muslim discrimination, Ryanair Chief Executive Michael O’Leary was heavily criticised for suggesting that Muslim men in particular should be the focus of security checks at airports as terrorists “will generally be males of a Muslim persuasion.”⁷ O’Leary later apologised for his comments which he claimed were taken out of context and/or misquoted in the media.⁸

In an interview on the topic of increasing racism in Ireland with the newspaper *Irish Sun* in March, Irish Muslim Lorraine O’Connor from the Muslim Sisters of Éire, recalled her experiences of anti-Muslim racism, noting on how she was “in the bank one day with a Muslim friend and we were egged. I heard them shouting ‘Go back to your own f*****g country you P*****s.’” As above, despite her white Irishness, Lorraine was classed as a foreigner on the basis of her religious dress.⁹

In August, Niall McConnell, leader of the far-right group *Stól na hÉireann*, discussed further below, harassed Catholic parish priest Stephen Farragher of St. Patrick’s Church in Ballyhaunis, County Mayo, accusing him of ‘heresy’ because he invited two Muslim men to participate in the final blessing at a mass in his church. In video footage of the incident shared on social media, McConnell refers to Mus-

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6. Images reported to INAR on their iReport system and kindly shared with the author.
 7. Jade Wilson, “Ryanair’s Michael O’Leary under Fire for Comments on Muslim Men,” *The Irish Times*, 22 February 2020.
 8. Wilson, “Ryanair’s Michael O’Leary under Fire for Comments on Muslim Men”.
 9. Aoife Finneran, “Rise of Racism. Irish Muslim Tells How Racists Told Her to ‘Go Back to Where You Came from’ – Despite Being Born in Dublin’s Coolock,” *The Irish Sun*, 20 March 2020.

lims as “foreign, satanic cultists.”¹⁰ Remaining in Ballyhaunis, McConnell and his far-right group targeted a mosque in October in a banner protest against Sharia law (Figs. 3 and 4); local butchers were also targeted on the day regarding the sale of halal meat products.¹¹



Figures 3 and 4: *Síol na hÉireann* approaching and displaying a banner outside a mosque in Ballyhaunis, County Mayo.¹²

Education

In July 2020, the Ombudsman for Children published the report “Direct Provision: Children’s Views and Experiences of Living in Direct Provision”.¹³ People living in Direct Provision (DP) are in the process of seeking asylum. While not focusing solely on education, the report highlighted the experiences and fears of schoolgoing Mus-

10. Tell MAMA, “Gardaí Investigate after the Far-Right Target Mosque,” <https://tellmamauk.org/gardai-investigate-the-far-right-targeting-of-a-mosque-in-ireland/> (Access date: 13 November 2020).

11. Tell MAMA, “Gardaí Investigate after the Far-Right target Mosque”.

12. Tell MAMA, “Gardaí Investigate after the Far-Right Target Mosque,”; Niall McConnell – *Síol na hÉireann*, Twitter, 21 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/NiallMcConnell5/status/1318824503502360580>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

13. “Direct Division Children’s Views and Experiences of Living in Direct Provision, A Report by the Ombudsman for Children’s Office 2020,” Ombudsman for Children, <https://www.oco.ie/app/themes/oco/images/direct-provision/pdf/Ombudsman-for-Children-Direct-Division-Report-2020.pdf>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

lim children from DP. One child quoted in the study recalled strategies to avoid anti-Muslim racism by responding to questions from peers.

“Are you Muslim?”, and I go, “No, I’m not Muslim”, just to like avoid them saying those things. “Oh, you have a gun at your home” or “You’re a terrorist”, or this, this, this.”¹⁴

Similarly, the report’s authors also note how “some girls were afraid to wear traditional dress such as the hijab (headscarf) as this exposed them as Muslim and therefore a target for hostility.”

The report quotes a child saying, “[If]you have it in a religious event or anything you would wear it [hijab], and there’s always this fear that they would, you know, just bully us or something...”¹⁵

While there were some examples of good practice on the part of schools, including the provision of prayer rooms by principals, others “had banned the wearing of the headscarf citing health and safety or a uniform code as the reasoning behind this decision. This led to some girls having to remove their headscarves at the school gates or opting for other schools that allowed it.”¹⁶ Poignantly, one handwritten contribution to the research by a Muslim child, simply but powerfully stated “not safe for headscarf.”¹⁷

Politics

Thirty candidates espousing far-right positions ran in the general election in Ireland in early 2020. These candidates ran on anti-immigration platforms and as evidenced below and in previous Islamophobia reports on Ireland, some were clear in their positions towards Muslims/Islam in Ireland.¹⁸ These far-right parties and candidates, including candidates from the National Party, the Irish Freedom Party (which ran candidates in twenty-one different locations), and others performed dismally in the general election albeit to varying degrees. Deputy leader of the National Party, James Reynolds, polled 1.74% of the votes in his constituency; the Irish Freedom Party ran ten candidates with their highest returning representative acquiring only 2.06%. Gemma O’Doherty, founder of the unregistered political party Anti-Corruption Ireland (ACI), ran in what was her third election in as many years and returned 1.97% in her constituency of Fingal.¹⁹ As evidenced in the following posts from social me-

14. Ibid., p. 37.

15. Ibid., p. 38.

16. Ibid., p. 56.

17. Ibid.

18. Conor Gallagher, “Election 2020: Far-Right Candidates Put in Dismal Showing,” *The Irish Times*, 10 February 2020; “Home,” European Islamophobia Report, <https://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/>, (Access date: 8 November 2020).

19. Ibid.; Stephen McDermott, “Far-Right Parties Barely Register After Polling Less Than 1% in Most Constituencies,” *The Journal.ie*, <https://www.thejournal.ie/far-right-parties-ireland-election-2020-5001966-Feb2020/>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).

dia (Twitter has currently suspended her account), O’Doherty actively occupied an anti-Muslim/Islam position in the run-up to the election.

“For the safety of the Irish people, ACI will close mosques until we know what is being preached in them. Islam promotes child marriage, female genital mutilation, the subjugation of women, rape within marriage, barbaric Halal and Jihad against Christians. #GE2020 #VoteGemma2020”.²⁰

“For more Female Genital Mutilation (5k+ cases here so far), ISIS training camps in our mountains, Imams promoting child marriage, jihadi factories, subjugation of women and barbaric halal, vote Sinn Fein, #FFFG and Marxist Left today #GE2020. To end it, #VoteGemma2020”.²¹

Similarly, although he did not run in the election himself, footage of Justin Barrett, leader of the National Party, circulated in the run-up to the election wherein he claimed that in fifty years’ time, “Ireland will be nationalist and free, or, under Shariah law.”²² Writing on the National Party website in January 2020, on relations between Iran and the United States of America, Barrett referred to people seeking refuge in Ireland as having an “ongoing commitment to Radical Islamic Jihad” and that Iran demonstrates that “Arabs are not alone in being open to the viral madness of fundamentalist Islam which, wherever it goes and whatever its ethnicity, befouls the nations infected by it.”²³

Although not associated with the figures mentioned thus far, it is worth noting that Verona Murphy, elected as an independent candidate in Wexford, has in the past made comments regarding people seeking asylum in Ireland, suggesting that they have been “infiltrated by ISIS” in the run-up to an unsuccessful byelection attempt in 2019.²⁴

According to Europol’s (2020) European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report, “known criminal elements have been identified as affiliated with right-wing protests” in Ireland.²⁵ Furthermore, “several high profile right-wing extremist online figures [in Ireland] ask for online donations, partially in cryptocurrencies.”²⁶ Referring to far-right activities in Ireland, Europol states these include “incidents associated with antiimmigrant ideology, including arson attacks on immigrant housing fa-

20. Gemma O’Doherty, Twitter, 29 January 2020, pic.twitter.com/gmjcFh6vdQ (Account suspended by Twitter).

21. Gemma O’Doherty, Twitter, 8 February 2020, pic.twitter.com/txjnkqdfmh (Account suspended by Twitter).

22. Piaras Mac Éinrí, Twitter, 2 February 2020, <https://twitter.com/pmaceinri/status/1224005366813483008>, (Access date: 7 November 2020).

23. National Party, “A Persian Requiem? – US/Iran Tensions and What It Means for Ireland,” <https://nationalparty.ie/a-persian-requiem-us-iran-tensions-and-what-it-means-for-ireland/#>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

24. Conor Gallagher, “Election 2020: Far-Right Candidates Put in Dismal Showing”; Jennifer Bray, “Verona Murphy Apologises ‘Wholeheartedly’ for Isis Migrants Claim,” *The Irish Times*, 18 November 2019.

25. “EUROPEAN UNION TERRORISM SITUATION AND TREND REPORT (TE-SAT) 2020,” EUROPOL, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2020>, (Access date: 10 November 2020), p. 21.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

cilities and a vehicle... in 2019. There is a growing anti-immigrant movement consistent with right-wing ideology.”²⁷

In terms of growing their base, media reports indicate that far-right groups in Ireland such as the National Party, the Irish Freedom Party, and others such as the “avowedly apolitical” Yellow Vest Movement, which has links to the Irish Freedom Party, have utilised the COVID-19 pandemic as a recruitment platform drawing on conspiracy theories, and anti-mask and anti-lockdown positions.²⁸ One of the protests against pandemic restrictions included a colour party from the “tiny ultra-Catholic faction... Síol na hÉireann,” led by Niall McConnell.²⁹ McConnell has previously spoken at an EU Parliament event wherein he asserted that “jihadi Islamists” were being brought to Europe by the “Zionist elite.”³⁰ McConnell ran as a candidate in the general election earlier in the year, returning only five-hundred votes. Interestingly, in the context of the Irish far right, McConnell has connections to “Scottish loyalist” Jim Dowson, a founding member of extreme far-right UK group, Britain First, while Dowson himself has ties with former leader of the British National Party leader Nick Griffin.³¹ As noted in previous Islamophobia reports on Ireland, these relationships underscore that the Irish far right have connections to some of their European counterparts - this is further explored in the section on internet activity below.³² This point is reiterated by Europol in their report wherein it states, “Ireland reported a strong international network involving right-wing extremists from Ireland, other European countries and the USA.”³³ Notably though, only five arrests were made in 2019 relating to terrorism and all these were related to “Jihadist terrorism” - there were no arrests for the remaining categories of terrorist activity.³⁴

In July 2020, approximately two-hundred Muslims celebrated Eid al-Adha in the iconic setting of Croke Park, the stadium of the national Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). The Qur’an was recited and speakers representing the state and Muslim

27. Ibid., p. 67.

28. Ian Curran, “‘The Infodemic’: Ireland’s Weak Far-Right Hopes to Gain from Online Conspiracies and Misinformation,” *The Journal.ie*, https://www.thejournal.ie/far-right-presence-ireland-covid-nationalists-5208949-Sep2020/?utm_source=shortlink, (Access date: 14 November 2020); Orla Dwyer, “Health Minister Says Campaigns to Erode Trust in Public Health ‘Deeply Concerning’ After Dublin Protest,” *The Journal.ie*, <https://www.thejournal.ie/protests-dublin-12-september-5203230-Sep2020/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020); Cormac O’Keefe, “Diarmuid Martin Warns Anti-mask Protestors Are ‘Dangerous Influence’ on Young People,” *Irish Examiner*, 16 October 2020.

29. Curran, “‘The Infodemic’: Ireland’s Weak Far-Right Hopes”.

30. “Tensions at Croke Park as Far Right Gathered to Protest against Eid Celebration,” *The Beacon*, <https://the-beacon.ie/2020/07/31/tensions-at-croke-park-as-far-right-gathered-to-protest-against-eid-celebration/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020); see also <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2659777357432053>.

31. Curran, “‘The Infodemic’: Ireland’s Weak Far-Right Hopes”.

32. Ibid.

33. “EUROPEAN UNION TERRORISM SITUATION AND TREND REPORT (TE-SAT) 2020,” EUROPOL, p. 68.

34. Ibid., p.85

communities spoke at what was widely received as a positive event for Ireland.³⁵ Predictably, the event was also the target for far-right groups. Niall McConnell's group *Siol na hÉireann* ran a petition to stop the event going ahead.³⁶ The petition was titled "Help Stop the Islamisation of Ireland" and was signed online 23,515 times.³⁷ McConnell, and up to sixty others, including QAnon followers and Gemma O'Doherty also protested outside the Eid event. The latter reportedly claimed that holding the event in Croke Park was an example of "creeping Sharia."³⁸ The Catholic Archbishop for Dublin Diarmuid Martin had his car attacked outside Croke Park on the day of the Eid celebrations by people he referred to as "very aggressive", noting that he could hear Catholic hymns being played in the background as the attack occurred and efforts were made to overturn his car.³⁹ Writing on their website in the days following Eid, in addition to criticising the GAA, a member of the National Party referred to the event as humiliating, to Muslims as an "alien people," and that Ireland was in the process of being planted with immigrants.⁴⁰

Media⁴¹

Media reportage relating to Muslim communities in Ireland over the past number of years, as documented in previous Islamophobia reports has evidenced the problematic use of language, for example co-locating Muslim/Islam(ic) with terms such as

35. Gráinne Ní Aodha, "Muslims Pray at Croke Park for the First Time in Celebration of Eid al-Adha," *The Journal.ie*, <https://www.thejournal.ie/eid-celebrations-in-croke-park-5164698-Jul2020/>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).
36. *Siol na hÉireann*, "Stop Islamic Celebration at Croker", https://www.irishpatriots.com/stop_eid_celebration_at_croker, (Access date: 14 November 2020).
37. *Ibid.*
38. "Tensions at Croke Park as Far Right Gathered to Protest against Eid Celebration", *The Beacon*.
39. Vivienne Clarke, "Anti-mask Protesters a Dangerous Influence on the Young, Says Diarmuid Martin," *The Irish Times*, 16 October 2020; Cormac O'Keefe, "Diarmuid Martin Warns Anti-mask Protestors Are 'Dangerous Influence' on Young People," *Irish Examiner*.
40. "The Question of Territory: Croke Park, Eid and the GAA," National Party, <https://nationalparty.ie/the-question-of-territory-croke-park-eid-and-the-gaa/#>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).
41. As with previous reports on Ireland in the *European Islamophobia Report*, an analysis of media in Ireland was undertaken for 2020 using the Nexis database online search tool. See Nexis UK, 'Home,' <https://advance.lexis.com/bisnexishome/?pdmfid=1519360&crd=86790095-5897-4a20-aafc-f74a84db668e>, (Access date: 12 November 2020). The focus of this analysis centred on media reporting in Ireland of four key issues: (1) The ongoing legal case of Lisa Smith, who recently returned from territory formerly controlled by the so-called Islamic State; (2) Media reports in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Paris wherein schoolteacher Samuel Paty was murdered; (3) Media reports in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Nice, which also included some references to the November attacks in Vienna; and (4) Media reports of Eid al-Adha celebrations in Croke Park. In the case of Lisa Smith, the search terms applied to the Nexis database were: Islam* or Muslim* AND Lisa AND Smith, for the period from 1 January to 1 November 2020; for the attack in Paris, the search terms used were: Islam* OR Muslim* AND Paty, for the period from 16 October to 30 October; for the Nice attack, the search terms used were: Islam* or Muslim* AND Nice for the period from 29 October to 4 November; finally, for the Eid celebrations, the search terms used were Islam* OR Muslim* AND Croke for a four week period from 13 July to 16 August incorporating the announcement of and holding of the actual event. The returned articles were then subjected to analysis. The media publications included in these searches of the Nexis media database were *Sunday Independent* (Ireland); *Sunday Business Post*; *RTE News*; *Metro Herald* (Ireland); *The Irish Times*; *Irish Independent*; *Irish Examiner*; *Irish Daily Mail*; *Evening Herald* (Ireland); and *IrishMirror.ie*.

terrorism, extremism, etc., thus potentially stigmatising an entire faith community, as well as reductive discussions of an alleged ‘clash of civilisations’ in the aftermath of terrorist acts.⁴² There is evidence that this practice remains in Irish media with publications in the aftermath of the attacks in Paris, Nice, and Vienna referring to “Muslim extremists”;⁴³ of a “clash of two different cultures” in France, thus suggesting that Muslims cannot be Muslim *and* French;⁴⁴ referring to the perpetrators of the horrific terrorist attacks as “Muslim attackers”;⁴⁵ and referring to such acts as “religious terrorism”.⁴⁶ All of these practices, as noted above, have a potentially stigmatising effect on all members of Muslim communities.

Reports relating to Lisa Smith were, unlike 2019, far less sensationalist but nonetheless there remained some problematic elements to the coverage of Smith’s legal case. Central here was the repeated and arguably unnecessary references to the fact that Smith had converted to Islam. For example, reports referring to Smith included, “The former Irish Defence member – who had left Ireland in recent years and married after she converted to Islam – had been found in a Syrian refugee camp”;⁴⁷ “The Co Louth mother of one, who left Ireland and married after converting to Islam, was returned here from Turkey...”;⁴⁸ Smith “had travelled to Syria several ago [sic] after she converted to Islam”.⁴⁹ The repeated reference to the fact that Smith had converted to Islam and later travelled to Syria could be understood as presenting a cause - converted to Islam - and an effect - travelled to Syria to join the so-called Islamic State. As with the co-location of terms such as ‘Muslim/Islam’ with attackers, this ‘cause and effect’ frame has the potential to characterise and stigmatise people who convert to Islam.

On a more positive note, the mainstream media coverage of the Eid al-Adha celebration held in Croke Park was overwhelmingly positive. Headlines included “Eid al Adha 2020: Irish Muslims make history as Eid celebrations in Croke Park send message of diversity to world; Around 200 members of the Muslim community gathered at the home of Irish sport to celebrate event”⁵⁰ and “Message of

42. “Homepage,” European Islamophobia Report, <https://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/#> (Access date: 15 February 2021).

43. Emine Sinmaz and George Odling, “Beheading Horror at Church; New Terror in Nice as Islamist Knifeman Kills Three Catholics,” *Irish Daily Mail*, 30 October 2020; Philip Jenne, “One Dead After ‘Terror’ Shooting at Vienna Synagogue; Austria,” *Irish Independent*, 3 November 2020.

44. Mark Almond, “Savagery That Could Lead to Civil War,” *Irish Daily Mail*, 30 October 2020.

45. Lara Marlowe, “Three Fatally Stabbed as Terror Attack Targets Worshippers in Nice Basilica; Man Shot Dead When He Tried to Attack Police with a Knife in Avignon,” *The Irish Times*, 30 October 2020.

46. “A Teacher Is Beheaded in the Street – And the Silence Is Deafening,” *Irish Independent*, 24 October 2020.

47. Tom Tuite, “Lisa Smith’s Lawyers Want Case Dropped; Defence Delivers Plea to DPP,” *Irish Daily Mail*, 9 January 2020.

48. Andrew Phelan, “Lisa Smith ‘Anxious to Prove Innocence’ as Terror Case Is Adjourned,” *Irish Independent*, 5 March 2020.

49. Áine McMahon, “Alleged Isis Member to Be Tried in Special Court,” *Irish Daily Mail*, 1 August 2020.

50. Andrew Byrne, “Eid al Adha 2020: Irish Muslims Make History as Eid Celebrations in Croke Park Send Message of Diversity to World; Around 200 Members of the Muslim Community Gathered at the Home of Irish Sport to Celebrate Event,” *Irishmirror.ie*, 31 July 2020.

peace’ as Croke Park hosts Eid”⁵¹ to mention but two. It is also understood that the broadcast of the entire event on national television was the first of its kind in a society wherein Muslims are in the minority.⁵² Despite this, there were some outlying detractors. In the days following the announcement that Eid festivities, the fringe online publication *The Liberal.ie* ran an article headlined “The Alliance of Former Muslims Ireland has hit out at the GAA allowing Croke Park to be used for Eid Al Adha festivities.”⁵³ The following text was in the main body of the article originally published on 15 July.

While the pitch of Ireland’s largest stadium will soon be saturated in the blood of terrified animals slaughtered with knives and blades without any form of sedation, just a century ago the field of Croke Park was reddened by the blood of Irish civilians gunned down by British forces during the War for Independence.⁵⁴

The article was submitted to a ‘fact check’ process by the more mainstream, *Journal.ie* which debunked the above claims that animals would be slaughtered in Croke Park, classing them as “NONSENSE”.⁵⁵ On foot of the journal’s fact check exercise, the *Liberal.ie*, somewhat interestingly, amended its article to state that “no animals to be slaughtered on site” and that “Croke Park will not host a Muslim large blood sacrifice ritual and the pitch of Ireland’s largest stadium will not soon be saturated in the blood of terrified animals.”⁵⁶

Remaining on the fringes of media publications, the aforementioned *Síol na hÉireann* published a sixteen-page ‘newspaper,’ *The Irish Patriot*, in January 2020, again, in the run-up to the election.⁵⁷ The publication in question made specific reference to Muslims and other minority communities in the context of an alleged “New Plantation.” It was also replete with anti-abortion, homophobic, and racist statements/arguments. The paper was sold in locations such as local markets as opposed to reputable newsagents. The following images are taken from the discussed copy of the *Irish Patriot*.⁵⁸ (Figs. 5-8)

51. Michael McHugh “‘Message of Peace’ as Croke Park Hosts Eid,” *Irish Examiner*, 1 August 2020.

52. Ibid.

53. “The Alliance of Former Muslims Ireland Has Hit Out at the GAA Allowing Croke Park to Be Used for Eid Al Adha Festivities,” *The Liberal.ie*, <https://theliberal.ie/the-alliance-of-former-muslims-ireland-has-hit-out-at-the-gaa-allowing-croke-park-to-be-used-for-eid-al-adha-festivities/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

54. Ibid.

55. Laruen Boland, “FactCheck: No, Croke Park Will Not Be Used for Animal Slaughter during Eid Al Adha,” *The Journal.ie*, <https://www.thejournal.ie/eid-al-adha-croke-park-factcheck-5150881-Jul2020/>, (emphasis in the original), (Access date: 10 November 2020).

56. “Eid Al Adha Festival to Be Held in Croke Park with No Animals to Be Slaughtered on Site,” *The Liberal.ie*, <https://theliberal.ie/mass-slaughter-of-live-animals-planned-for-croke-park-as-muslims-will-celebrate-eid-al-adha-in-stadium/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

57. *The Irish Patriot*, January 2020.

58. Ibid.



Figures 5 and 6: Front cover of the *Irish Patriot* newspaper with enlarged excerpt of text to the right.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, back home, Dublin has in recent years become a major European centre for the Muslim Brotherhood(Ikhwan). Yusef al-Qaradawi, the former leader of Ikhwan, has strong links with the European Council of Fatwa and Research in Clonskeagh, Dublin.

Why hasn't this terrorist entity been shut down?

DEMOGRAPHICS

"Muhammad" breaks into top 10 US baby names for the first time

●● The popular Islamic name "Muhammad" has broken into the top ten United States baby names for the first time ever in American history. And it's nothing to do with people remembering the 'Greatest' Boxer!

"Demographics is destiny!"



Figures 7 and 8: Excerpts from inside the *Irish Patriot* which refer to the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland in Clonskeagh, Dublin and demographic changes.⁶⁰

Finally, turning to the topic of sensationalism in mainstream media, in April, Virgin Media One aired the documentary "Ireland's Jihadis: True Lives." As noted in the 2018 Islamophobia report on Ireland after it was originally aired, this programme includes interviews with a Muslim woman who claims that she was previously radicalised and also acquainted with individuals involved in terrorism. The documentary feeds narrative discussed in previous Islamophobia reports wherein Ireland is presented as a soft target for terrorism and a base for 'Islamic extremists.'

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

Justice System

In June, then Minister for Justice and Equality Charlie Flanagan and colleague David Stanton announced the membership of a new Anti-Racism Committee (ARC). This committee is an independent body established with the aim of drafting a new National Action Plan Against Racism.⁶¹ Chaired by Prof. Caroline Fennell from University College Cork, the committee is comprised of individuals from across academia, civil society, and the private sector. The terms of reference for the ARC include:

- A review of evidence on racism in Ireland;
- To examine international practice in combatting racism;
- To hold stakeholder dialogues to identify the views of wider civil society; members of the public; members of the Oireachtas; the business sector; media and other relevant parties;
- To produce an interim report to government not more than three months after its first meeting identifying priority issues and a programme of work for the committee;
- To provide a draft anti-racism strategy, containing a clear action plan, at the end of one year.

In terms of stakeholder dialogues, it is understood that conversations have taken place with academics on the experiences of Muslim women in Ireland.

In December, the Department of Justice published the “Legislating for Hate Speech and Hate Crime in Ireland: Report on the Public Consultation 2020.”⁶² As indicated in the title, the report drew from public consultations with a range of stakeholders in Ireland. Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, claimed that the consultation process was a “significant step toward new criminal legislation to deal with hate crime and incitement to hatred.”⁶³ Some of the key conclusions in the report include,

- Current incitement to hatred legislation is unfit for purpose and should be replaced.
- New offences vis-à-vis incitement legislation are required and these should prohibit:
 - o “deliberately or recklessly inciting hatred against a person or group of people due to their association with a protected characteristic” which may be based on perception of membership or association;

61. “Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland to Be Drawn up by New Independent Anti-Racism Committee,” Department of Justice, <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR20000115> (Access date: 14 November 2020).

62. “Legislating for Hate Speech and Hate Crime in Ireland: Report on the Public Consultation,” Department of Justice, http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Legislating_for_Hate_Speech_and_Hate_Crime_in_Ireland_Web.pdf/Files/Legislating_for_Hate_Speech_and_Hate_Crime_in_Ireland_Web.pdf, (Access date: 17 December 2020).

63. Department of Justice, “Legislating for Hate Speech and Hate Crime in Ireland”.

- o “displaying or distributing material inciting hatred” – “there should be no requirement for the material to be threatening, abusive or insulting in itself.”
- In the context of hate crime, new legislation should include specific “aggravated forms of existing criminal offences” (narrowly defined as those most common to experiences of hate crime) with associated provision for enhanced sentencing; in addition to recognising these events as hate crime, the creation of specific offences will also enable the clear recording and tracking of same throughout the criminal justice process.⁶⁴

Internet

As noted above, in the context of the 2020 general election in Ireland, the online space has been utilised to disseminate anti-Muslim positions. Reports in October note that individuals such as Niall McConnell are active online, whether in posting tweets in response to international events such as the re-opening of Hagia Sophia for Islamic prayers, or engaging with other far-right actors in social media discussions.⁶⁵ (Fig. 12) McConnell has engaged in online discussions with members of various neo-fascist individuals/groups from across Europe including the NDP (Germany); the New Right (Romania); *Democracia Nacional* (Spain); E. Michael Jones, who has been referred to as an anti-Semitic author; Dan Eriksson (*Europa Terra Nostra*); Roberto Fiore (*Forza Nuova*); Nick Griffin (former leader of the British National Party); the aforementioned Jim Dowson, who is referred to as a “central pillar in the Christian militant group Knights Templar International”; and Greek Golden Dawn associate Athanasios Konstantinou.⁶⁶ As the Tell MAMA report notes, and as referred to above, McConnell has previously shared a platform at an event in the EU Parliament hosted by Konstantinou that included far-right groups, including the Alliance for Peace and Freedom. The latter organisation is led by Nick Griffin and Gonzalo Martin Garcia of *Democracia Nacional*, amongst others.⁶⁷

In July, news emerged of the intense personal harassment meted out to and about newly elected Deputy Mayor for Limerick Azad Talukdar online.⁶⁸ Talukdar, the first Muslim person to be elected as councilor in Limerick, was targeted by far-right groups/individuals that invoked common anti-Muslim tropes.⁶⁹ (Figs. 9-14) Some of these posts obviously emanate from within the Irish context. However, some also suggest a broader international element may be involved. In the images below refer-

64. Ibid.

65. Tell MAMA, “Gardaí Investigate after the Far-Right Target Mosque”.

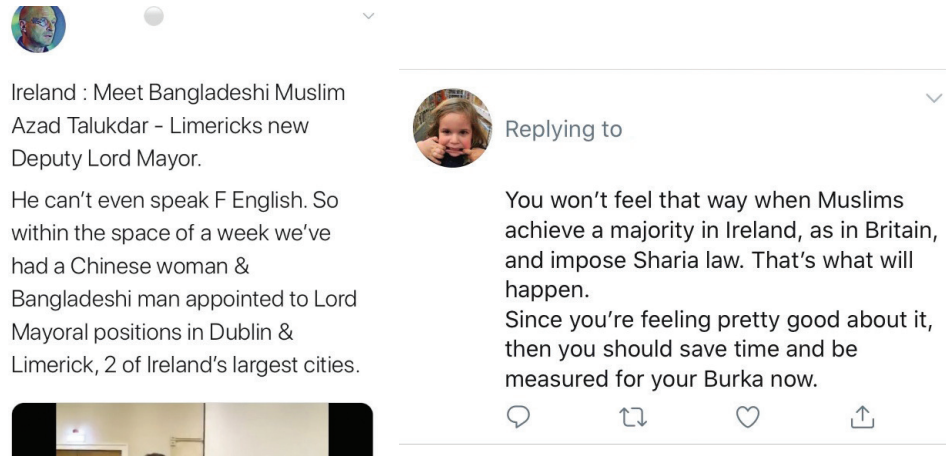
66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. “Racist Attack on Limerick’s New Deputy Mayor,” Live95fm, <https://www.live95fm.ie/news/live95-news/racist-attack-on-limericks-new-deputy-mayor/> (Access date: 8 November 2020).

69. Ibid.

ences are made to an alleged imposition of ‘Shariah’ law in Ireland in the future and that the election of Talukdar is a step on the way to this end; that unless ‘Patriots’ react, the Ireland of the future will be Islamic in a context of population replacement and the ‘globalist’ agenda.



Figures 9 and 10: Online messaging regarding the election of Deputy Mayor Azad Talukdar and erroneous, incorrect claims he cannot speak English and that Shariah law is on the way for Ireland.⁷⁰



Figures 11 and 12: Gemma O'Doherty responds to the election of Talukdar.⁷¹

70. Content shared by individuals on Twitter, identities have been withheld by the author.

71. Gemma O'Doherty, Twitter, date unavailable, account suspended.



Figure 13: Tweet referring to the election of Talukdar and that his election is part of a 'globalist'-led invasion.⁷²



Figure 14: Niall McConnell claiming on Twitter that there is a "war on Christianity" along with an image of Hagia Sophia.⁷³

The aforementioned online outlet, Liberal.ie, posted an article on the election of Talukdar headed "Fianna Fail's newly appointed Deputy Mayor of Limerick is Bangladeshi Muslim Azad Talukdar", wherein it made claims that "[f]or his part, the Fianna Fail man is understood will try and help migrants get housed in Ireland's fourth largest city."⁷⁴ In another article on Talukdar's election, the Liberal.ie ran a headline that repeated some of the claims made online about the new Deputy Mayor of Limerick: "He can't even speak English properly', 'Let him get on with it' – Mixed reactions to new Deputy Mayor of Limerick Bangladeshi Muslim Azad Talukdar."⁷⁵

72. Content shared by individuals on Twitter, identities have been withheld by the author.

73. Niall McConnell – Síol na hÉireann, Twitter, 3 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/NiallMcConnell5/status/1301561609144471553> (Access date: 14 November 2020).

74. "Fianna Fail's Newly Appointed Deputy Mayor of Limerick Is Bangladeshi Muslim Azad Talukdar," The Liberal.ie, <https://theliberal.ie/finna-fails-newly-appointed-deputy-mayor-of-limerick-is-bangladeshi-muslim-azad-talukdar/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

75. "He Can't Even Speak English Properly' 'Let Him Get On with It' – Mixed Reactions to New Deputy Mayor of Limerick Bangladeshi Muslim Azad Talukdar," The Liberal.ie, <https://theliberal.ie/he-cant-even-speak-eng->

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As detailed above, the central figures most active in what could loosely be understood as an Islamophobia network in Ireland during 2020 include Justin Barrett and his National Party, the Irish Freedom Party, Niall McConnell and his group *Síol na hÉireann*, and Gemma O'Doherty and her group Anti-Corruption Ireland. Peter O'Loughlin and his party, Identity Ireland, who featured in previous Islamophobia reports on Ireland seemingly continue as a group, although parts of their website have not been updated for some time and online activity seems low.⁷⁶ Although previously mentioned in Islamophobia reports, it emerged in January that the Identitarian group in Ireland, Generation Identity Great Britain and Ireland, had disbanded.⁷⁷

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In the run-up to the general election in 2020, the Irish Network Against Racism relaunched its Anti-Racism Election Protocol (AREP). Announcing the relaunch, INAR noted “the context of the increase in racist discourse and the rise of xenophobic populism in Ireland...”⁷⁸ On signing the AREP, political parties are committing not to incite hatred, or take a platform on racist grounds, including towards religious communities, during their campaigns.⁷⁹ The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) have also engaged in a number of anti-racism campaigns across 2020. In March, ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the ICI engaged with a number of community leaders, including Lorraine O'Connor of the Muslim Sisters of Éire to launch their new racism reporting mechanism.⁸⁰ In October, the ICI relaunched its partnership with Transport for Ireland to campaign against racism on public transport.⁸¹ Given the COVID-19 context and discussions of Black Lives Matter, a range of webinars on the topic of racism were held across the year, including those that specifically included Muslim voices.

lish-properly-let-him-get-on-with-it-mixed-reactions-to-new-deputy-mayor-of-limerick-bangladeshi-muslim-azad-talukdar/, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

76. Identity Ireland, “Home,” <https://identityireland.org/> (Access date: 10 November 2020).

77. “Group Previously Known as Generation Identity UK and Éire Disbands,” *The Beacon*, <https://the-beacon.ie/2020/01/23/group-previously-known-as-generation-identity-uk-and-eire-disbands/>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

78. Irish Network Against Racism, “Anti-Racism Election Protocol,” <https://inar.ie/anti-racism-election-protocol-2020/>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

79. Irish Network Against Racism, “Anti-Racism Election Protocol”.

80. “How to Defeat #EverydayRacism- Together & As Allies,” Immigrant Council of Ireland, <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/news/how-defeat-everydayracism-together-allies>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

81. “Transport for Ireland and Immigrant Council of Ireland Launch New Anti-racism Campaign on Public Transport,” Immigrant Council of Ireland, <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/news/transport-against-racism-202>, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The following list is non-exhaustive but presents a starting point in terms of recommendations for challenging Islamophobia in Ireland. Some of the points here have been raised in previous Islamophobia reports for Ireland. The fact that they remain here as recommendations underscores the need for state institutions to take Islamophobia seriously.

- The recording of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination must be improved at the level of official bodies. As the Irish state is not publishing data on Islamophobia, it must be assumed that these are not being collected.
- Trust must be built with Muslim communities by state institutions in order to encourage the reporting of Islamophobia; one way to do this is to take reports of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination seriously.
- State institutions must take immediate action to address the growing threat from the far right in Ireland.
- Hate crime legislation must be introduced in Ireland and revised hate speech legislation must be enacted as soon as possible; the latter must incorporate online communication.
- Civil society organisations have been at the fore in the challenge of the far right; this should continue while also holding state institutions to account in a formalised manner.

Chronology

- **09.01.2020:** The National Party post a publication on their website referring to Islam as a virus, infection.
- **29.01.2020:** Gemma O’Doherty posts one of her Islamophobic messages on Twitter, ahead of the general election: “For the safety of the Irish people, ACI will close mosques until we know what is being preached in them. Islam promotes child marriage, female genital mutilation, the subjugation of women, rape within marriage, barbaric Halal and Jihad against Christians. #GE2020 #VoteGemma2020”.
- **08.02.2020:** Gemma O’Doherty posts one of her Islamophobic messages on Twitter ahead of the general election: “For more Female Genital Mutilation (5k+ cases here so far), ISIS training camps in our mountains, Imams promoting child marriage, jihadi factories, subjugation of women and barbaric halal, vote Sinn Fein, #FFFG and Marxist Left today #GE2020. To end it, #VoteGemma2020”.
- **22.02.2020:** Michael O’Leary makes comments that refer to Muslim men as terrorists.

- **24.02.2020:** Anti-Racism Election Protocol relaunched by Irish Network Against Racism.
- **20.03.2020:** Lorraine O'Connor, from the Muslim Sisters of Éire, discusses experiences of Islamophobia in the newspaper *Irish Sun*.
- **03.04.2020:** *Síol na hÉireann* target and harass Catholic priest in Ballyhaunis, County Mayo for inviting Muslim men to offer blessings at the end of a mass service.
- **July 2020:** *Síol na hÉireann* publish online petition to stop the use of Croke Park for Eid al-Adha celebration.
- **01.07.2020:** Deputy Mayor for Limerick Azad Talukdar subjected to serious online abuse from far-right groups.
- **31.07.2020:** Far-right groups target Eid al-Adha celebration in Croke Park stadium.
- **20.10.2020:** *Síol na hÉireann* target protests at mosque and butchers in Ballyhaunis, County Mayo.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ITALY
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The year 2020 has been characterised by the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on social, economic, and political life all over the world. Its concrete consequences led to an objective reduction of crime - including hate crime - because of the imposition of temporary lockdowns and the shift of attention towards issues considered more urgent in this new context. Thus, the lack of official data, detected in the previous report, continues to be a problem in analysing the level of Islamophobia in Italy and in taking measures to counter it.

At the same time, the instrumental use of religious issues is confirmed at the political level. On the one hand, historically far-right parties continued to talk about the necessity to reduce Muslim presence in Italy assuming the country is a victim of Islamic colonisation. On the other hand, parties with different origins seem to use the Muslim presence only on the occasions that allow them to obtain political goals. The employment and educational sectors greatly suffered from the consequences of the health emergency in terms of layoffs and in the interruption of educational programs; there is no available data to explore better these phenomena. At the same time, the lack of striking discriminatory episodes in the health sector - detected in the 2019 report and mainly concerning the wearing of the veil by doctors and nurses - allows us to assume that in emergency conditions people are able to redefine their priorities and distinguish between real problems and false ones. This does not mean that the health emergency solved the problem of integration by promoting a dynamic of solidarity. On the contrary, the general social dynamics force one to take into account the risk of social fragmentation that can be caused by a global emergency like the Covid-19 pandemic with pretexts such as religion or skin colour.

Sintesi

Il 2020 è stato caratterizzato dall'emergenza Covid-19 e dall'impatto sociale, economico e politico che questa ha avuto in tutto il mondo. Le sue concrete conseguenze hanno portato ad una oggettiva riduzione del numero di crimini commessi - inclusi i crimini d'odio - a causa dell'imposizione di temporanei Lockdown e allo spostamento dell'attenzione su temi considerati più urgenti in questo nuovo contesto. Per questo, la mancanza di dati ufficiali già rilevata nel precedente Report rappresenta ancora un problema nell'analisi del livello di Islamofobia al fine di contrastarla.

Nonostante questo, l'uso strumentale del tema religioso è confermato sul piano politico: da un lato, partiti storicamente di estrema destra continuano ad argomentare la necessità di ridurre la presenza dei Musulmani in Italia, presentandola come vittima di una colonizzazione Islamica; dall'altro lato, partiti con una diversa matrice sembrano usare il tema della presenza dei Musulmani solo in quelle occasioni che gli consentirebbero di raggiungere determinati obiettivi politici. Occupazione ed educazione sono settori che hanno fortemente subito le conseguenze dell'emergenza sanitaria - in termini di licenziamenti e interruzione dei percorsi scolastici - tanto che non vi sono sufficienti dati che consentano una loro migliore analisi. Allo stesso tempo, la mancanza di eclatanti episodi discriminatori nel settore sanitario - rilevati nel Report 2019 e riguardanti principalmente l'utilizzo del velo da parte di medici e infermieri - consente di ipotizzare che in condizioni di emergenza le persone siano capaci di ridefinire le proprie priorità distinguendo tra problemi reali e non. Questo non significa che l'emergenza sanitaria risolva il problema dell'integrazione promuovendo dinamiche di solidarietà. Al contrario, le attuali dinamiche sociali obbligano a considerare il rischio di frammentazione sociale che potrebbe essere determinato da una emergenza globale come quella che tutto il mondo sta vivendo, al di là di specifici pretesti come la religione o il colore della pelle.

Considerando i recenti sviluppi nella politica interna Italiana, si ritiene di dover precisare che il presente report tiene conto di eventi economici, politici e sociali avvenuti nel corso del 2020.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Italy

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary government

Ruling Parties: *Movimento 5 Stelle* (Five Star Movement), *Partito Democratico* (Democratic Party), *Liberi e Uguali* (Free and Equal), *Italia Viva* (05/09/2019 - 26/01/2021). After Giuseppe Conte resigned as Prime Minister on 26 January 2021, a new government is going to be formed by the new Italian prime minister-designate, former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi.

Opposition Parties: *Lega Nord* (Northern League), *Forza Italia*, *Fratelli d'Italia* (Brothers of Italy) (05/09/2019 - 26/01/2021). After Giuseppe Conte resigned as Prime Minister on 26 January 2021, a new government is going to be formed by the new Italian prime minister-designate, former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi.

Last Elections: 2018 Legislative elections: Chamber of Deputies: *Movimento 5 Stelle*, 133 seats; Centre-Right, 151 seats (Lega Nord: 17.3% equal to 73 seats); Centre-Left, 88 seats; Left, 14 seats; Far Right, 0 seats; Senate of the Republic: *Movimento 5 Stelle*, 68 seats; Centre-Right, 77 seats (Lega Nord: 17.6% equal to 37 seats); Centre-Left, 43 seats; Left, 4 seats; Far-Right, 0 seats.

Total Population: 60.317 million (2020)

Major Languages: Italian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The last data was presented in the Hate Crime Reporting 2019 in which the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights indicated 5 incidents against Muslims - reported by other sources such as the local association Lunaria - including violent attacks against people (4), and threats (1).

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The last data presented by the OSCE ODIHR - including information from the Italian police database (SDI) and the Italian Observatory for Security against Acts of Discrimination (OSCAD) - refers to 2019. According to this data, police authorities recorded 1,119 hate crimes among which anti-Muslim crimes are not registered as a separate category.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (80.8%), No religion (13.4%), Islam (4.9%), Judaism (1%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 2,960,000 (4.9%) (Pew Research Center 2015)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: *L'Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia* (UCOII), *Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana* (CoReIs), CoReIs Italian Muslim Youth.

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Lunaria, Amnesty International Italia, UCOII, CoReIs, *Giovani Musulmani d'Italia*, Amsi (*Associazione medici di origine straniera in Italia*), *Un Ponte Per*.

Far-Right Parties: *Forza Nuova*

Far-Right Movements: Casa Pound

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No - depends on local decision. Behind the general ban concerning the impossibility to have access in public places with a covered face - introduced with Law n.152, in 1975, during the so-called Years of Lead - the possibility to wear a hijab or a burka in public places depends on local government. The ban introduced in October 2019 in some Italian regions such as Lombardy, Veneto, and Friuli is still valid.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No - depends on local decision.
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No - depends on local decision (see Hijab Ban).
- **Prayer Ban:** No - depends on local decision.

Introduction

As was underlined in the *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, the lack of official data released by governmental institutions and the difficulties in detecting the real number of hate crimes represent the main problems in researching the level of anti-Muslim crimes in Italy. Thus, it is necessary to integrate the available official data with unofficial data released by media and non-governmental organisations.

These technical limits have been exacerbated by two other important issues that have emerged and have international implications. First, the spread of Covid-19, its impact on the social, economic, and political dimensions of life, and the use of the pandemic as a pretext by far-right, neo-Nazi movements to try to destabilize public order.¹ Second, George Floyd's murder and the consequent movement against racism that spread, first, in the United States and later in Europe. Different episodes of "pure" racism committed on the basis of skin colour have been recorded across Italy.² In light of the above, if the data presented in 2019 underlined the spread of a feeling of fear towards migrants and Muslims in particular, in 2020, attention seems to have been shifted towards other kinds of targets: blacks and foreigners in general are accused of contributing to the spread of Covid-19, and Jewish people are accused of constituting a lobby that influences the management of Covid-19.

In Italy, the actual political context is considerably different from last year. The right-wing Lega Nord party is no longer a member of the government and the migration policy pursued by the new Minister of Interior adopted a different perspective. In particular, public security decrees introduced by the former Minister of Interior Matteo Salvini have been amended with interventions such as an extended prohibition of refoulement, the lifting of penal sanctions on NGOs for their rescue actions, and clearer rules concerning residence permits.³ Political instability is still a characteristic element in the Italian context but the instrumental use of traditional issues, such as the Muslim presence and unemployment, has been replaced by the debate concerning the way in which the government should face the pandemic.

Considering the religious affiliations of foreigners regularly living in Italy, there are not significant differences compared to the previous year despite a trend of changing numbers. In particular, ISMU (*Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità*) records an

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1. Giulia Ferri, "Neonazisti, franchisti e ultradestra: la rete fascista che cavalca le proteste in tutta Europa", *L'Espresso*, 11 November, <https://espresso.repubblica.it/plus/articoli/2020/11/11/news/neonazisti-fascisti-proteste-covid-1.355775?preview=true> (Access date: 11 November 2020).
 2. Cronache di ordinario razzismo, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/tag/violenza-razzista/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).
 3. "Via libera alla Camera al decreto Sicurezza che riscrive le norme di Salvini sui migrant", *La Repubblica*, 9 December 2020, https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/12/09/news/via_libera_alla_camera_al_decreto_sicurezza-277675031/ (Access date: 13 January 2021).

increase in the number of foreigners living in Italy confessing the Christian religion, passing from 53.6% in 2019 to 54.1% (2,900,000) on 1 January 2020.⁴ This year too, the Christian component is followed by the Muslim one that represents 29.2% (1,574,000), recording a slight decrease compared to 2019.⁵ Thus, even if the percentages are almost unchanged, opposite trends have been recorded. Concerning the countries of origin, according to the ISMU report, Muslims living in Italy come mainly from Morocco (449,900), Albania (205,300), Bangladesh (138,800), Pakistan (119,700), and Senegal (108,500).⁶

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The restrictive measures applied to contain the health emergency included a national lockdown from 11 March to 3 May. One of the main concrete consequences of the obligation to stay at home was the dramatic reduction of the number of crimes. In the period between 1 and 22 March, the Italian Department of Public Security recorded a 64.2% decrease in committed crimes passing from 146,762 in 2019 to 52,596 in 2020, including hate crimes.⁷ This can be considered as one of the main reasons why physical and verbal attacks based on religious motivation are recorded just after the end of the lockdown period.

An event with national relevance concerns the release of Silvia Aisha Romano, a young Italian volunteer kidnapped in Kenya and who remained in captivity for 18 months. In May 2020, Romano was freed and returned to Italy. Regarding her conversion to Islam, certain right-wing national newspapers, such as *Liberio*, and *Il Giornale*, wrote “We Freed a Muslim or “Muslim and Happy, Silvia “The Ungrateful”. Moreover, a large number of insults and threats were posted on social networks so that authorities decided to conduct an anti-terror investigation trying to verify the existence of possible links between the posts’ authors and far-right groups.⁸

In August, in the city of Milan, the blogger Francesco Maria Bienati was involved in a fight that took place after he was targeted with insults towards his per-

4. Data includes Orthodox Christians (29.3%), Catholic Christians (20.1%), Evangelical Christians (3.1%), and Coptic Christians (0.3%).

5. ISMU, “Comunicato stampa: Immigrati e religioni in Italia”, 16 September 2020 <https://www.ismu.org/immigrati-e-religioni-in-italia-comunicato-stampa-14-9-2020/>, (Access date: 11 November 2020).

6. ISMU, “Comunicato stampa: Immigrati e religioni in Italia”.

7. Dipartimento della pubblica sicurezza, Minister of Interior. Dossier Viminale 1 agosto 2019 - 31 luglio 2020 (2020).

8. “Silvia Romano, cocci di bottiglia lanciati contro il palazzo in cui abita: scientifica sul posto. Si indaga sulle minacce social”, *La Repubblica*, 13 May 2020, https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/05/13/news/silvia_romano_libera_inchiesta_minacce_social_procura_ros-256494578/ (Access date: 11 November 2020).

son and the local Muslim association that he supports. He required medical treatment following the fight.⁹

In September, Assia Belhadj, an Italian-Algerian Muslim decided to stand in local elections, in Veneto, supporting as a centre-left candidate. After publicly declaring her candidacy a series of hate messages were posted on her Facebook page such as “Go back” or “You have to go away or you will be in trouble”.¹⁰

Employment

As was reported in the last *European Islamophobia Report* regarding 2019, discrimination in the workplace was recorded at the beginning of 2020 and had external religious signs - such as the wearing of the veil - as a pretext and triggering factor. Regarding 2020, there have been no official records of layoffs motivated by prejudice against Muslims.

The health emergency determined by the spread of Covid-19 imposed a dramatic change in the economic context that probably affected this development.

First, the lockdown imposed by the national government obliged the closure of a great number of economic activities and brought about a dramatic loss of revenue. In this context, unemployment increased and finding a job became almost impossible regardless of possible discriminatory practises. The number of people in employment from January to July 2020 dropped by 1,766,653.¹¹

Second, the last report underlined how the healthcare sector employs a large number of foreign workers and, at the same time, witnesses and records a large number of discriminatory instances. There was a 35% increase of such instances between 2016 and 2019.¹² Despite this, the health sector manifests a specific characteristic in this new situation: it was not affected by forced closures and due to the sanitary measures that must be adopted for facing Covid-19, wearing a veil has less relevance when wearing a mask became a duty for all citizens.

Education

Education was one of the fields most severely affected by the pandemic considering the closure of schools and universities. Thus, there is no significant data on the

9. Graziano Masperi, “Magenta, aggressione in centro: uomo in ospedale”, *Il Giorno.it*, 28 August 2020, <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/magenta-aggressione-in-centro-uomo-in-ospedale-1.5454347> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

10. Annalisa Girardi, “Regionali in Veneto, insulti razzisti e minacce online alla candidata italo-algerina”, <https://www.fanpage.it/politica/regionali-in-veneto-insulti-razzisti-e-minacce-online-alla-candidata-italo-algerina/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

11. INPS, “Osservatorio sul precariato. Dati sui nuovi rapporti di lavoro”, https://www.inps.it/docallegatiNP/Mig/Dati_analisi_bilanci/Osservatori_statistici/Osservatorio_precariato/Osservatorio_Precariato_Gen-Lug_2020.pdf (Access date: 11 November 2020).

12. Antonia Roberta Siino: Islamophobia in Italy: National Report 2019, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020.

actual conditions of Muslim students. One issue that emerged this year, just like in the previous one, concerns school meals. In this sense, the situation largely varies depending on the position assumed by the school director and the local administration: in the Municipality of Valsamoggia, in the Emilia-Romagna region, a halal menu for the school year 2020-2021 - together with other special diets - is directly available on its website;¹³ in the city of Lodi, in the Lombardy region, at the beginning of this year, the request for a specific menu was proposed by the local Muslim community for about 200 children and will be discussed for the next year;¹⁴ in February 2020, a member of the Municipality of Rapallo, in the Genova region, announced her intention to introduce ethnic meals in schools - such as cous-cous and halal meat - which elicited the strong opposition of her Lega Nord party colleagues.¹⁵

Politics

The current Italian government was formed after the 2019 crisis when the Lega Nord and Fratelli d'Italia withdrew from the government. The pursued migration policy and the new European political conditions led to the definition of a mechanism of managing migration that allows for a quicker resolution of the crisis determined by the arrivals of migrants, and a higher degree of cooperation among European countries concerning their relocation.¹⁶

In general, it is possible to notice that Islam and the presence of Muslims in Italy is not the focus of actual political debate. Analysing posts published on the Facebook pages of the main political actors and comparing them with the results published of the *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, it is possible to confirm that the religious issue is a political instrument that today has been substituted by other, more urgent issues such as those linked to Covid-19. For instance, on the official page of Matteo Salvini, often accused of being too flexible and adjusting his opinions to the political goal, it is possible to detect verbal attacks on Muslim or Islam before the start of the pandemic. On 19 January 2020, during an interview for the journal *Israel Ha-Yom* on the spread of anti-Semitism in Europe, Salvini stated, "In my opinion, it is also due to the increase of Islamic extremism and fanaticism (...) the great

13. Comune di Valsamoggia, "Menu anno scolastico 2021", <https://www.comune.valsamoggia.bo.it/index.php/mensa-trasporto-e-prolungamento/98-aree-tematiche/scuola-e-giovani/servizi-scolastici/565-menu-bazzano> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

14. Cristina Vercellone, "Carne halal nella mensa scolastica, la richiesta della comunità islamica", https://www.il-cittadino.it/stories/Cronaca/carne-halal-nella-mensa-scolastica-la-richiesta-della-comunita-islamica_53779_96/ (Access date: 11 November 2020).

15. "Rapallo: nessuno sapeva che in pentola bolliva il cous cous", 14 February, Levante News, <http://www.levantenews.it/index.php/2020/02/14/rapallo-nessuno-sapeva-che-in-pentola-bolliva-il-cous-cous/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

16. Amnesty International, "Rapporto 2019-2020", <https://www.amnesty.it/rapporti-annuali/rapporto-2019-2020/italia/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

presence of immigrants coming from Muslim countries contributes to the spread of anti-Semitism in Italy too”.¹⁷

As mentioned above, such posts and declarations were published before the spread of the health emergency or, just after the lockdown, responding to a specific case such as that of Silvia Aisha Romano. These cases illustrated, as in the last report, that the differentiation between an “acceptable” Islam and a violent one is still present in the media.



Matteo Salvini ✓

13 maggio · 🌐



Il problema non è Silvia Romano, una ragazza mandata allo sbaraglio, usata dai terroristi per ottenere soldi e armi, esibita velata alle telecamere di tutto il mondo da un governo incapace di gestire l'emergenza, prima sanitaria, oggi economica e sociale.

Lasciamo stare Silvia, cui auguro vita lunga e felice, e guardiamo al vero nemico, al vero pericolo per i nostri figli, per l'Italia, per il mondo, per la Libertà: l'Islam fanatico, integralista, violento, assassino. Nessuno spazio, nessuna tolleranza, nessuna pubblicità o sostegno a questi delinquenti che nel nome del loro Dio portano morte, buio e paura in tutto il mondo. Mai più cedimenti ai terroristi, mai più riscatti, mai più silenzi. Viva la Libertà. Sempre.

Figure 1: “The issue is not Silvia Romano, a young woman sent there, used by terrorists to obtain money and weapons, shown with the veil to the world by a government unable to manage the emergency, at the beginning healthy and now economic and social. Forget Silvia, to whom I wish a long and happy life, and let’s see the real enemy, the real danger for our sons, for Italy, for the world, for Freedom: fanatic Islam, fundamentalist, violent, an assassin. No room, no tolerance, no support to those criminals who in the name of their God bring death, darkness, and fear all over the world. Never again appeasing terrorists, never again ransoms, never again silence. Long live Liberty. Always.” Post published by Matteo Salvini on his Facebook page.¹⁸

In considering the Muslim issue as one that is used politically, it must be noticed that the first Italian Muslim mayor, Moreno Marsetti, was elected on 21 September 2020 in the northern province of Venice, with the support of the Lega Nord party.¹⁹

Silvio Berlusconi condemned a small fraction of the Muslim world, when he commented on the brutal murder of the French professor Samuel Paty, in Paris. (Fig. 2)



Silvio Berlusconi ✓

1 novembre alle ore 10:30 · 🌐



Il rispetto per tutte le religioni ci impone di non chiudere gli occhi sulla gravità di quanto sta accadendo. Esiste una minoranza di fondamentalisti islamici, piccola ma pericolosa, che si considera in guerra contro la nostra Europa e il nostro Occidente cristiano e liberale.

Figure 2: “The respect for all religions requires us not to close our eyes on the gravity of what is happening. A minority of Islamic fundamentalists exists, small but dangerous, that considers itself in war against our Europe and our Christian and liberal West.” Post published by Silvio Berlusconi on his Facebook page.²⁰

17. “Salvini: ‘L’antisemitismo in Italia? Colpa degli immigrati musulmani’”, *lastampa.it*, 19 January, <https://www.lastampa.it/politica/2020/01/19/news/salvini-l-antisemitismo-in-italia-colpa-degli-immigrati-musulmani-1.38352161> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

18. Matteo Salvini, Facebook, 13 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/salviniofficial/posts/10157707776858155>.

19. Mario Esposito, “Eletto il primo sindaco musulmano: è della Lega”, 24 September 2020, <https://www.occhionotizie.it/moreno-marsetti-sindaco-musulmano-lega/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

20. *Ibid.*

On the contrary, direct and general attacks are largely present in the official page of Giorgia Meloni, the leader of Fratelli d'Italia that has a strong far-right orientation. (Fig. 3)

 **Giorgia Meloni** ✓
4 settembre · 🌐

L'ultima trovata dell'Islam politico dell'UCOII, spalleggiato dalla solita sinistra nostrana, per favorire l'islamizzazione dell'Italia è la menzogna secondo la quale in Italia "non ci sono luoghi dove seppellire i musulmani". E con questa scusa infondata sinistra e musulmani radicali pretendono "cimiteri islamici dedicati". La verità è che nulla e nessuno vieta a un musulmano di essere sepolto nei cimiteri pubblici come qualsiasi altro cittadino cristiano, buddista, induista o ateo che sia. A meno che qualcuno pensi che sia indegno per un musulmano essere sepolto vicino a degli "eretici" o in una terra "lordata dagli infedeli". L'unica utilità dei cimiteri islamici è la conquista di terra e spazio in Europa da porre sotto la legge islamica: un disegno pianificato e ben conosciuto. Quella raccontata dalla sinistra e dalla propaganda islamista è una mistificazione sbugiardata anche da chi ha sepolto, senza alcun problema, i suoi cari di fede islamica nei cimiteri comunali delle nostre città.



ILGIORNALE.IT
Le mosse dell'islam politico per prendersi i nostri cimiteri
La campagna dell'Ucoii per la moltiplicazione dei cimiteri islamici. Ma dietro c'è solo la volo...

👍👎👤 20.147 Commenti: 4361 Condivisioni: 5455

Figure 3: "The last word of political Islam of UCOII, abetted by our usual left, to favour the Islamisation of Italy is the lie by which in Italy 'there are no places where Muslims are buried'. And thanks to this unfounded excuse, the left and radical Muslims pretend to create 'dedicated Islamic cemeteries'. The truth is that nothing and no one forbids a Muslim to be buried in public cemeteries just like any other Christian, Buddhist, Hinduist, or atheist citizen. Unless someone thinks that it is unworthy of a Muslim to be buried next to 'heretics' or in a land 'that has got dirty by infidels'. The only real use of Islamic cemeteries is to conquer the land and space of Europe and to submit it to Islamic law: a planned and well-known project. That tailed by left and Islamist propaganda is a mystification debunked also by those who have buried, without any problem, their Muslim loved ones in the municipal cemeteries of our cities." Post published by Giorgia Meloni, leader of Fratelli d'Italia, on her Facebook page.²¹

In general, it is possible to affirm that the Covid-19 emergency led to a change in the priority given to political issues, and that critical positions against Islam and

21. Giorgia Meloni, Facebook, 4 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/giorgiameloni.paginaufficiale/posts/10158559766557645>

Muslims are still present in the messages spread by the parties with a strong far-right identity. These positions are not just expressed online but through traditional media as well, such as the introduction written by the leader of Fratelli d'Italia for the "First Report on Europe's Islamization."²²

Media

At the beginning of 2020, the "First Report on Europe's Islamization" was presented by the Farefuturo Foundation. The report, published in September 2019, was introduced with a paragraph written by Giorgia Meloni, leader of Fratelli d'Italia, that centred on the risk of a new type of colonisation that is possible thanks to the Muslim population's growth and its high birth rate.²³ Adolfo Urso, president of the foundation and a senator, in the introduction expresses the main goal of this new annual report in the following words,

This report, curated by the Farefuturo Foundation with the contribution of the Ufficio Studi di Fratelli d'Italia, has the objective of detecting, year by year, if, how and in what way a new threat of Islamization of Europe is being realized, with what instruments and objectives and if, at the same time, there are effective public policies of defence and which can be realized in the State, in the European organizations and in the international ones.²⁴

A couple of chapters later, Alessandro Meluzzi, a psychologist, psychiatrist, and professor, writes,

Certainly, the risk of an ethnic substitution (where the Islamic couples have five children as a result of polygamy and Italians have one child per couple) makes us reflect more on the future of our Nation, our identity and our way of life. (...) We will not surrender our Italy to either the Nigerian mafia or the muezzins, because we still prefer to hear the bells ringing than to hear them sing from minarets.²⁵

Some of the contributors offer analyses that deserve serious attention, such as the contribution of Giuseppe Cerere, a professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Bologna. Nevertheless, the general objective of the publication

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22. Fondazione FareFuturo, "Primo rapporto sull'islamizzazione d'Europa", <https://farefuturofondazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TESTO.pdf> (Access date: 11 November 2020). <https://farefuturofondazione.it/editoria/il-rapporto-annuale-della-fondazione-farefuturo-sulla-islamizzazione-deuropa-eng/>
 23. Giorgia Meloni, "Primo rapporto sull'islamizzazione d'Europa", <https://farefuturofondazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TESTO.pdf> (Access date: 11 November 2020). <https://farefuturofondazione.it/editoria/il-rapporto-annuale-della-fondazione-farefuturo-sulla-islamizzazione-deuropa-eng/>
 24. Adolfo Urso, Introduction, "Primo rapporto sull'islamizzazione d'Europa", <https://farefuturofondazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TESTO.pdf> (Access date: 11 November 2020). English version: <https://farefuturofondazione.it/editoria/il-rapporto-annuale-della-fondazione-farefuturo-sulla-islamizzazione-deuropa-eng/>
 25. Alessandro Meluzzi, "L'Islamizzazione è un piano globalista", <https://farefuturofondazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TESTO.pdf> (Access date: 11 November 2020). English version: <https://farefuturofondazione.it/editoria/il-rapporto-annuale-della-fondazione-farefuturo-sulla-islamizzazione-deuropa-eng/>

seems to be to diffuse the idea that Italy is at risk of being “colonized” as a result of its openness to different cultures.

Among the national newspapers, *Libero* attests to its far-right orientation with articles such as the one published by Fabio Rubini on 13 September 2020, entitled “Silvia Romano Testimonial against Bad White Men” referring to the participation of the Italian volunteer in the European campaign against Islamophobia.

Libero

Silvia Romano testimonial contro i bianchi cattivi

La cooperante milanese convertitasi durante la prigionia in Somalia diventa volto della campagna Ue sull'islamofobia

13 set 2020 FABIO RUBINI



Silvia Aisha Romano, ex ostaggio dell'Isis convertita all'islam

▪ I paladini dell'islamicamente corretto da oggi avranno un'icona in più: Silvia Aisha Romano, la cooperante milanese

partita cattolica e tornata convertita dopo un an...

Figure 4: “Silvia Romano Testimonial against Bad White Men. The Milanese aid worker, convert to Islam during her imprisonment in Somalia, becomes the face of the EU campaign on Islamophobia.” Article published by Fabio Rubini in the newspaper *Libero*.²⁶

Justice System

As exhibited in a specific case, the Italian justice system shows a great capability in balancing different claims coming from different groups of the population.

In June 2020, the Administrative Regional Tribunal (TAR) of Tuscany accepted the claim lodged by the local Muslim community to obtain a permit for the construction of a mosque in the city. The project was stopped by the municipality, which preferred the construction of a stadium, led by the Lega Nord.²⁷ One month later, in July, Municipality itself announced an appeal to the Council of State.²⁸

26. Fabio Rubini, “Silvia Romano Testimonial against Bad White Men”, *Libero*, 13 September 2020, <https://www.pressreader.com/italy/libero/20200913/281741271835110>.

27. “Tra stadio e moschea: polemiche a Pisa dopo la decisione del Tar”, <https://larno.ilgiornale.it/2020/06/03/tra-stadio-e-moschea-polemiche-a-pisa-dopo-la-decisione-del-tar/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

28. La Repubblica, “Pisa, il Comune ricorre al Consiglio di Stato contro la moschea”, 6 July 2020, https://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/07/06/news/pisa_il_comune_ricorre_al_consiglio_di_stato_contro_la_moschea-261141567/ (Access date: 11 November 2020).

Another example demonstrating the way in which the Italian justice system faces different and unexpected issues that arise from the cohabitation of different cultures comes from Milan. On 26 March, the mayor of the city replied positively to the request of the local Muslim community regarding the need for Muslim cemeteries due to the impossibility of repatriating the deceased to their country of origin due to the pandemic.

Internet

The fundamental role of social networks, websites, and blogs - already underlined in the previous report - seems to have become even more central. In a context in which people are obliged to stay at home and working remotely is encouraged (and sometimes compulsory), technological instruments became even more powerful channels of communication.



Figure 5: Post published by Vittorio Sgarbi, member of the Italian Parliament, on his Facebook page.

Regarding 2020, statistics on hate speech online are not available yet. However, it is possible to analyse web reactions on specific events. For example, in the case of Silvia Aisha Romano, data released by Datamediahub shows how the positions expressed about this news story were polarized despite the fact that 33% of positive reactions prevailed over 16% of negative ones.²⁹ Among these, the post of Vittorio Sgarbi on his Facebook page read,

29. Marco lo Conte, "Sui social le tre ondate pro e contro Silvia Aisha Romano, Il Sole 24 Ore, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/sui-social-tre-ondate-pro-e-contro-silvia-aisha-romano-ADxDrp> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

If the mafia and terrorism are similar, and if they represent the war against the State, and if Silvia Romano is radically converted to Islam, she must be arrested (in Italy she is already under house arrest) for external partnership with terrorist association. She either regrets or she is an accomplice of terrorists.³⁰

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Similar to the *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, the data collected does not allow one to claim that an Islamophobia network really exists in Italy. However, certain political actors are engaged in underlining the supposed risk of a new form of colonisation.

Political actors such as Giorgia Meloni and her Fratelli d'Italia party - together with some media representatives such as *Libero* - are among those who promote the necessity to avoid the increasing presence of Muslims in Italy (and of foreigners in general). In this sense, the Farefuturo Foundation which authored the "First Report on Europe's Islamization" should be considered in this section. Indeed, in this publication, the foundation promotes Italian culture and places importance on organizing public events and projects to "reaffirm common, classic and Christian roots other than the civil, social and political values of the European Civilization".³¹ Its president Adolfo Urso started his political career at the beginning of the 1980s with the right-wing Italian Social Movement (MSI). Today, he is a senator of the Italian Republic and a member of the party Fratelli d'Italia,³² whose Study Office contributed to the publication of the report. Thus, Islamophobic positions seem to be driven by fascist-inspired political representatives.

On the other hand, the role of Pope Francis and the representatives of Muslim communities are relevant in trying to promote a positive integration of all society's components. Moreover, the reduced influence and electoral success of far-right movements such as Forza Nuova should be noted - even if in the new context of Covid-19 one must be careful of the risk of negative extremist tendencies.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The international campaign "Words Are Stones", promoted by Lunaria (Italy) in collaboration with associations from different countries such as Antigone (Greece),

30. Vittorio Sgarbi, Facebook, 10 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/SgarbiVittorio/posts/3197480233641695> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

31. Fondazione FareFuturo, "Primo rapporto sull'islamizzazione d'Europa", <https://farefuturofondazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TESTO.pdf> (Access date: 11 November 2020). English version: <https://farefuturofondazione.it/editoria/il-rapporto-annuale-della-fondazione-farefuturo-sulla-islamizzazione-deuropa-eng/>

32. See Farefuturo Foundation website: <https://farefuturofondazione.it/la-fondazione/organigramma/>

SOS Racism (Spain), Grenzeloos (Austria), and ADICE (France), took place between January and February 2020 in order to sensitize the public to a responsible use of words and to avoid the spread of xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia.³³

Universities are actors directly involved in awareness initiatives such as the series of meetings organized at the University of Cagliari on “strengthening our networks to counter the media’s impact on social cohesion and Muslim marked culture” with the participation of the association *Un Ponte Per*.³⁴ Moreover, the University of Trento with the involvement of associations of Italy, France, and United Kingdom promoted the Hatemeter project, a hate speech tool for monitoring, analysing, and tackling anti-Muslim hatred online, that aimed to increase the knowledge about anti-Muslim hate online.³⁵

Apart from specific projects to counter Islamophobia, the Covid-19 emergency led to some relevant initiatives of solidarity toward local communities. Among them, the UCOII (Union of Italian Islamic Communities) collected more than 500,000 euros to donate to hospitals, civil protection, municipality, and volunteer associations,³⁶ and encouraged Muslim communities to donate blood in response to the call from AVIS (Association of Voluntary Italian Blood Donors).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is an important element that must be taken into account when discussing Islamophobia in 2020. In this unexpected context, the attention has shifted on specific kinds of issues such as the organization of the health service, and the economic and social measures that need to be adopted in order to contain both the spread of the virus and its impact. Thus, it is not surprising that the lack of official data and analyses has not been addressed, considering the new challenge facing all countries around the world.

Moreover, the lockdown itself resulted in a dramatic decrease in the crimes committed and it must be considered as a contributing factor to the limited number of recorded hate crimes.

In light of the above, a general reflection can be put forward. As already mentioned, the Covid-19 emergency forces all of us to redefine our priorities. If wear-

33. Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione, 8 January, <https://www.asgi.it/ultima-ora-aggiornamenti/le-parole-sono-pietre-campagna-contro-lhate-speech/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

34. https://www.unica.it/unica/page/it/islamofobia_ciclo_di_incontri_per_5_giovedi?contentId=NTZ213613

35. Università degli Studi di Cagliari, 3 March, “Islamofobia. Ciclo di Incontri”, <https://livingwomen.net/2020/05/14/progetto-hatemeter-parliamo-di-odio-online-islamofobia-ed-hate-speech-con-elisa/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

36. Ufficio Stampa UCOII, 23 April, <https://ucoii.org/2020/04/23/presidente-ucoii-piu-di-500-mila-euro-donati-dalle-comunita-islamiche/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

ing the veil was the pretext to refuse medical treatment from a Muslim doctor, it is an excuse that cannot be used any longer in the new context in which doctors and nurses must wear full-body protective gear. Paradoxically, wearing a mask can reduce certain discriminatory dynamics. But, the core in this case is to underline how emergency conditions can allow us to overcome issues that evidently are not so relevant.

The analysis of the political dimension and the media confirms the findings of the previous report as far as the instrumental use of the Muslim issue and the necessity to be aware always of the speaker/author's real goal. Italy can still be considered a country that is open to other cultures. Even if it is necessary to pay attention to every type of extremism, this openness cannot be considered a weakness.

Chronology

- **19.01.2020** Milan: During an interview for the journal *Israel Ha-Yom* about the spread of anti-Semitism in Europe, the former Minister of Interior Matteo Salvini stated, “In my opinion, it is also due to the increase of Islamic extremism and fanaticism (...) the great presence of immigrants coming from Muslim countries contributes to the spread of anti-Semitism in Italy too.”
- **14.02.2020** Rapallo (Genova): A member of the Municipality of Rapallo, in the Genova region, announced her intention to introduce ethnic meals in the schools - such as couscous and halal meat - which elicited the strong opposition of her party colleagues.
- **26.03.2020** Milan: The city mayor replied positively to the request of the local Muslim community for Muslim cemeteries due to the impossibility of repatriating the deceased to their country of origin due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **13.05.2020** Rome: Volunteer Silvia Aisha Romano is freed and returns to Italy. Regarding her conversion to Islam, certain right-wing national newspapers, such as *Libero*, and *Il Giornale*, wrote “We Freed a Muslim” or “Muslim and Happy, Silvia ‘The Ungrateful’”.
- **03.06.2020** Pisa: The Administrative Regional Tribunal (TAR) of Tuscany accepted the claim lodged by the local Muslim community to obtain a permit for the construction of a mosque in the city. The project was stopped by the municipality, which preferred the construction of a stadium, led by the Lega Nord. One month later, in July, municipality itself announced an appeal to the Council of State.
- **28.08.2020** Magenta (Milano): In the city of Magenta, the blogger Francesco Maria Bienati was involved in a fight following insults that targeted him and the local Muslim association that he supports – his injuries required medical treatment.

- **12.09.2020** Belluno: Assia Belhadj, an Italian-Algerian Muslim decided to stand in local elections, in Veneto, supporting as a centre-left candidate. After publicly declaring her candidacy, a series of hate messages were posted on her Facebook page such as “Go back” or “You have to go away or you will be in trouble”.
- **13.09.2020** Milan: Fabio Rubini published an article in the newspaper *Libero* with the title “Silvia Romano Testimonial against Bad White Men” referring to her participation in a European campaign to counter Islamophobia.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
KOSOVO
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

In 2020, far-right public figures in the West continued to reproduce Islamophobia against Kosovo. Such attacks included the former U.S. president Donald Trump who announced the “economic normalisation agreement” between Serbia and Kosovo by denying Albanian indigenes in Europe due to their Muslimness. In France, a conservative politician referred to an Orientalist Kosovo metaphor to speak about riots in Dijon, whereas an anti-Albanian racist statement by a far-right politician was revealed in Germany.

Anti-Albanian racism has also been prevalent in Serbia in 2020. In September, the country’s minister of defence Aleksandar Vulin publicly used the Serbian anti-Albanian racist s-word, which fundamentally denies humanity to Albanians by representing them as ‘non-humans’, at least six times. Given the fact that mass graves of victims of the Kosovo War were still being discovered in Serbia in the same year, this racist language is a reminder of how discriminatory language and the genocides in the Balkans in the 1990s are interlinked.

In light of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the diasporic presence of Kosovars has been problematised in many states in Europe, especially during the summer holiday season. A widely watched news programme in Germany used Islamophobic semiotics to blame returning Kosovar travellers for ‘bringing back’ the virus. Similar arguments were used in other European countries with a considerable Kosovo-Albanian population such as Switzerland and Finland.

In Kosovo, it was also noticeable that public figures decidedly spoke out against Islamophobia in the Albanian context. When the construction of a new central mosque in the country’s capital Prishtina was announced, anti-mosque arguments were not only challenged, but it was argued that Islamophobia is an elite project in Kosovo – this was the argument of theologian Mustafë Bajrami on a televised debate. This assumption implies that crucial incongruences exist between the elite’s hegemonic positions regarding Islam and the population’s omnipresent lived practices derived from diverse Islamic traditions.

In conclusion, this year’s report suggests that it is misleading to distinguish between ‘external’ and ‘internal’ Islamophobia in the Kosovo context for Islamophobia cannot simply be divided into subsections; rather, it is expressed differently according to changing circumstances.

Përmbledhje ekzekutive

Në vitin 2020 figura të njohura të së djathtës ekstreme në perëndim kanë vazhuar të riprodhojnë ligjërim islamofob kundër Kosovës. Një sulm i tillë ka ardhur nga ish-presidenti i ShBA-ve Donald Trump, i cili në postimin e tij në profilin zyrtar në Twitter rreth “marrëveshjes për normalizimin e marrëdhënieve ekonomike” ndërmjet Kosovës dhe Serbisë, ka mohuar ekzistencën autoktone të shqiptarëve në Evropë për shkak të përkatësisë fetare. Në Francë, një politikan konservator i është referuar një metafore orientaliste në lidhje me Kosovën për të folur rreth trazirave në qytetin e Dijonit, ndërsa një deklaratë raciste antishqiptare e bërë nga një politikan i së djathtës ekstreme në Gjermani, ka qenë prezente në media edhe gjatë vitit 2020.

Racizmi antishqiptar ka qenë i përhapur edhe në Serbi gjatë po këtij viti. Në shtator, ministri serb i mbrojtjes, Aleksandar Vulin e ka përdorur publikisht të paktën gjashtë herë fjalën serbe antishqiptare e cila ua mohon njerzimin shqiptarëve duke i paraqitur si ‘jonjerzorë’. Pasi varre massive me të zhdukurit e luftës në Kosovë janë gjetur në Serbi gjatë këtij viti, ky përdorim racist i gjuhës tregon ndërlihdjen ndërmjet gjuhës diskriminuese dhe gjenocideve që kanë ndodhur në Ballkan në vitet e 90-ta.

Si rezultat i përhapjes së pandemisë së Koronavirus-it, prezenca diasporike e kosovarëve në shumë shtete evropiane është problematizuar, sidomos gjatë pushimeve verore. Në një emision të lajmeve shumë të shikuar në Gjermani është përdorur një semiotikë islamofobe për të fajësuar kosovarët të cilët kanë ‘transportuar’ virusin në Gjermani pasi janë kthyer nga pushimet. Argumente të ngjashme janë përdorur edhe në shtete tjera evropiane me një popullatë shqiptare të konsiderueshme, për shembull Zvicra apo Finlanda.

Në Kosovë, poashtu, është vërejtur që kritika kundër islamofobisë shqiptare është shprehur në ligjerimet publike më zëshëm se sa vitet e kaluara. Në lajmërimin për ndërtimin e *Xhamisë Qendrore* në Prishtinë, argumentet kundër saj jo vetëm që janë sfiduar, por edhe është argumentuar që islamofobia në Kosovë është projekt i elitave, siç e ka bërë teologu Mustafë Bajrami në një debat televiziv. Kjo hipotezë nënkupton që ekziston një mospërputhje thelbësore midis qendrimeve hegjemonike të elitës në lidhje me islamin dhe zakonet e praktikuar nga populli të cilët rrjedhojnë nga tradita të ndryshme myslimane.

Për të thënë ndryshe, ky raport argumenton se dallimi nërmjet islamofobisë “së mbrendshme” dhe “së jashtme” nuk është aq i saktë për shkak se islamofobia nuk mund të ndahet në seksione të veçanta. Më e saktë është hipoteza që islamofobia shprehet ndryshe në varësi të rrethanave në të cilat vepron.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Republic of Kosovo

Type of Regime: Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary government

Ruling Parties: Coalition between *Lëvizja Vetëvendosje* (LVV, left-wing) and *Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës* (LDK, centre-right) led by Prime Minister Albin Kurti. As of June 2020: coalition between LDK and *Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës* (AAK, centre-right), *Nisma Socialdemokrate* (centre-left), *Aleanca Kosova e Re* (AKR, centre-left), and *Lista Srpska* (Serbian right-wing) led by Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti.

Opposition Parties: LVV (left-wing) and *Partia Demokratike e Kosovës* (PDK, centre-right)

Last Elections: 2019 snap parliamentary elections (left-wing LVV: 29 seats; centre-right party LDK: 28 seats; centre-right party PDK: 24 seats; centre-right AAK: 13 seats; centre-left *Nisma Socialdemokrate*: 4 seats; centre-left AKR: 2 seats; reserved for minorities 20 seats – 10 of those seats went to Serbian right-wing party *Lista Srpska*)

Total Population: 1.7 million (2011)

Major Languages: Albanian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: No official state or NGO data available

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Although current statistics on this matter are lacking, a 2017 Civil Rights Defender report on the situation of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian (RAE) communities stated that “[these] communities remain the most vulnerable and discriminated against groups in Kosovo”.

Major Religions (% of Population): Muslim 95.6%, Roman Catholic 2.2%, Serbian Orthodox 1.5%

Muslim Population (% of Population): 1.6 million (95.6%) in 2011

Main Muslim Community Organisations: *Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës* (BIK, Islamic Community of Kosovo), and *Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës* (BTK, Union of Kosovo Tarikats)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: N/A

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No, but limitations and controversies regarding the wearing of headscarves in public institutions are ongoing.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No, but limitations and controversies regarding the wearing of headscarves in public institutions are ongoing.
- **Prayer Ban:** No, but Kosovo limited police officers' rights to attend prayers during their working hours in 2018.

Introduction

Rooted in Europe's colonial past, Islamophobia seems to be inescapable when it comes to the power dynamics at play between the Euro-Atlantic hegemony and Kosovo's political elites. Discussions about a potential accession of this Muslim-majority country¹ to the European Union (EU) has often led to a climate where, as Piro Rexhepi puts it, "The nested Orientalist anxieties and Islamophobia of local elites and their EU counterparts cause them to ascertain that when Kosovo joins the EU, its Muslim subjects will be multiculturalized; that is, they must be assimilated to fit a designated identitarian representational mandate compatible with EU multicultural politics."²

Islamophobia is not only an understudied topic in the Kosovo context.³ It is also a phenomenon rendered unintelligible in a wider geopolitical setting: race – including the racialisation of Islam – tends to be banned from scholarly debates across continental Europe.⁴ Fatima El-Tayeb describes the EU's ambivalent relationship with race as follows: "The key problem in addressing and potentially deconstructing Europe's ideology of racelessness might indeed be that while the implicit though not at all subtle racialization of Europeaness as white and Christian and thus of racialized minorities as non-European seems indisputable, public – and too often academic – discourse nonetheless rejects this observation as meaningless within an intellectual framework shaped by an Enlightenment universalism that for centuries has managed to claim race as irrelevant while simultaneously treating it as all important."⁵ These discursive structures have been imported by Kosovo's political elites in an attempt to convince their Western counterparts of their 'Europeaness'.⁶

In the 2018 report, dynamics and characteristics of Albanian Islamophobia within discourses in Kosovo stigmatising both Muslimness in the diaspora and in the Muslim-majority homeland were elaborated.⁷ The 2019 report pointed to how central fig-

1. Islam in Kosovo should be not conceived as a monolithic block. Whereas the majority of Muslims are Sunnis (see *Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës* (BIK) Islamic Community of Kosovo), there are also Sufis (see *Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës* [BTK] Union of Kosovo Tarikats).
2. Piro Rexhepi, "From Orientalism to Homonationalism: Queer Politics, Islamophobia and Europeanization in Kosovo", *Southeastern Europe*, 40 (2016), p. 48.
3. Isa Blumi, "Battles of Nostalgic Proportion: The Transformation of Islam-as-Historical-Force in Western Balkan Reconstitutions of the Past", *Nostalgia, Loss and Creativity in South-East Europe*, ed. Catharina Raudvere, (Palgrave Macmillan, London: 2018), p. 40.
4. Gail Lewis, "Unsafe Travel: Experiencing Intersectionality and Feminist Displacements", *Signs*, 38 (2013), pp. 875–880.
5. Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: 2011), p. xxix.
6. 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; Enis Sulstarova, *Arratisja nga Lindja: Orientalizmi shqiptar nga Naimi te Kadareja*, (Shtëpia botuese "Dudaj", Tirana: 2007, third edition [first edition in 2006]), p. 10.
7. Adem Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018", *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2019), pp. 497–520.

ures of the European Islamophobia network like the former German social democrat Thilo Sarrazin, the Austrian Nobel laureate novelist Peter Handke, and the French far-right ‘Islam critic’ Eric Zemmour attacked Kosovo’s statehood.⁸ This year’s report will suggest that the distinction between ‘external’ and ‘internal’ Islamophobia in the Kosovo context is misleading for Islamophobia cannot simply be divided into subsections; rather, it is expressed differently according to changing circumstances.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On April 4, 2020, a mosque was burnt in Vërboc, a village about 40 kilometres west of Prishtina, Kosovo’s capital.⁹ The roof and the interior of the mosque were heavily damaged, and the case is still under investigation.¹⁰ (Fig. 1) However, like in the years before, statistics documenting the wider state of Islamophobia have not been collected by any NGO or governmental institution.¹¹ Whereas the reasons for this lack of data collection are manifold, the failure to acknowledge Islamophobic dynamics within Kosovo’s political and cultural mainstream discourses could be seen as one of its main reasons.



Figure 1: The burnt mosque in the village of Vërboc in Drenas Municipality. The roof and interior were seriously damaged.¹²

8. Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019”, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, ed. Enes Bayraktar and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2020), pp. 455–480.
9. Arbisa Shefkiu, “Digjet xhamia në fshatin Vërboc të Drenasit, Lladrovci dënon aktin”, *Kallxo.com*, 18 April 2020, <https://kallxo.com/lajm/digjet-xhamia-ne-fshatin-verboc-te-drenasit-lladrovci-denon-aktin/>, (Access date: 11 November 2020).
10. “Digjet xhamia në Vërboc të Drenasit, Lladrovci dënon aktin”, *Koha Ditore*, 19 April 2020, <https://www.koha.net/kosove/218260/digjet-xhamia-ne-verboc-te-drenasit-lladrovci-denon-aktin/>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).
11. Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018”, p. 505; idem, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019”, p. 463.
12. “Digjet xhamia në Vërboc të Drenasit, Lladrovci dënon aktin”, *Koha Ditore*, 19 April 2020, <https://www.koha.net/kosove/218260/digjet-xhamia-ne-verboc-te-drenasit-lladrovci-denon-aktin/>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).

Nearly eight years after the foundation stone was laid, the construction of a new mosque called *Xhamia Qendrore* (Central Mosque) to be built in the city centre of Prishtina started on July 15, 2020.¹³ (Fig. 2) As far back as 2017, people opposing the building of the mosque committed several Islamophobic crimes including defacing several mosques with anti-Islam graffiti.¹⁴

The debate following the announcement of the construction of Prishtina's new mosque could be characterised as one of the topics that was discussed in the most controversial manner in 2020. Protests expressing discontent with the building of the mosque took place in Prishtina on July 22, which also generated protests in favour of the building.¹⁵ Although relatively small in numbers and scope, the anti-mosque protests were disproportionately reported in newspapers¹⁶ and television channels.¹⁷ The mosque's location (in the capital's city centre), the financing of the construction (major funding coming from the Republic of Turkey Directorate for Religious Affairs, *Diyamet*), and the architectural style (Ottoman) were polemically debated.¹⁸ (Fig. 3)

On the one hand, there were Islamophobic outbursts during these discussions. Perhaps one of the most famous outbursts was the op-ed published by Kosovo's most popular newspaper *Gazeta Express*: "This religion [Islam] is primitive and is embraced by primitive and lazy peoples in the Near and Middle East. We, the Albanian people, have not benefited in any way from these peoples, really noth-

13. "Fillon ndërtimi i Xhamisë Qendrore në Prishtinë", *Koha Ditore*, 15 July 2020, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/229611/fillon-ndertimi-i-xhamise-qendrore-ne-prishtine/>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).
14. These incidents have been addressed in detail in the 2018 national report on Islamophobia in Kosovo. See Adem Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018", p. 505.
15. While offering a detailed account of the protest day, the article tends implicitly to frame Muslims voicing criticism against the anti-mosque protesters as irrational and extremist – thus perpetuating the Islamophobic conflation of practising Islam with violence: "Kundërshtohet ndërtimi i xhamisë në Prishtinë - detajet se çfarë ndodhi gjatë protestës", *Bota Sot*, 22 July 2020, <https://www.botasot.info/aktuale-lajme/1339140/kundershtohet-ndertimi-i-xhamise-ne-prishtine-detajet-se-çfare-ndodhi-gjate-protestes/>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).
16. Three examples of leading newspapers include Taulant Qenaj, "Xhamia e madhe me probleme të mëdha", *Radio Evropa e Lirë*, 23 July 2020, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/xhamia-e-madhe-ne-prishtine-probleme/30743564.html>, (Access date: 13 November 2020); Nexhat Tovërlani, "Protestë dhe kundër-protestë rreth ndërtimit të xhamisë në Prishtinë", *Koha Ditore*, 22 July 2020, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/230417/proteste-dhe-kunderproteste-rreth-ndertimit-te-xhamise-ne-prishtine/>, (Access date: 13 November 2020); Xhorxhina Bami, "Turkish-Financed Mosque Sparks Rival Protests in Kosovo", *Balkan Insight*, 22 July 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/07/22/turkish-financed-mosque-sparks-rival-protests-in-kosovo/> (Access date: 13 November 2020).
17. Three examples of leading television broadcasters include "Imazh - protestat kundër ndërtimit të xhamisë në Prishtinë – vazhdojnë reagimet ndaj Speciales", RTK, 22 July 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KpDgsi0iUI>, (Access date: 13 November 2020); "Protestë e kundër-protestë në kryeqytet për xhaminë", Kohëvision-KTV, 22 July 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFxHTal4Klk>, (Access date: 13 November 2020); "Protestohet për dhe kunder ndertmit te xhamise - 22.07.2020 - Klan Kosova", Klan Kosova, 22 July 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fatdb9n4OOk>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).
18. Bekim Shehu, "Prishtinë: Pro dhe kundër ndërtimit të Xhamisë së Madhe", *Deutsche Welle*, 24 July 2020, <https://www.dw.com/sq/prishtine/C3%AB-pro-dhe-kund%C3%ABr-nd%C3%ABrimit-t%C3%AB-xhamis%C3%AB-s%C3%AB-madhe/a-54306750>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

ing good.”¹⁹ Interestingly, the author uses the Quranic and Albanian word “hajr” (“khayr”) for “good” here.

On the other hand, there were also public figures who spoke out against Islamophobia on this occasion. One example is the theologian Mustafë Bajrami referring to “reports on Islamophobia published by the European Union”²⁰ that argued that Islamophobia is an elite project in Kosovo – small in number, but huge in effect.²¹ The assumption here is that incongruences exist between the elite’s hegemonic positions regarding Islam and the population’s diverse lived practices derived from different Islamic traditions.²²



Figure 2: A news article by Kosovo’s most popular daily newspaper *Koha Ditore* with a picture of the Grand Mufti of Kosovo Naim Tërnavaj announcing the construction of the Central Mosque (*Xhamia Qendrore*) in Prishtina.²³

19. Translated from Albanian into English by the author of this report. Serton Ajeti, “Xhamitë”, *Gazeta Express*, 5 August 2020, <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/xhamite/>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).
20. Bajrami refers most probably to the executive summary of the following publication: Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018”, pp. 500–501.
21. “Debat Plus me Ermal Pandurin - Xhamia”, RTV Dukagjini, 21 July 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAsxtCM7fAc&t=2566s>, (Access date: 13 November 2020). This citation was also quoted in Deutsche Welle: Bekim Shehu, “Prishtinë: Pro dhe kundër ndërtimit të Xhamisë së Madhe”, Deutsche Welle, 24 July 2020, <https://www.dw.com/sq/prishtine%C3%AB-pro-dhe-kund%C3%ABr-nd%C3%ABrimit-t%C3%AB-xhamis%C3%AB-s%C3%AB-madhe/a-54306750>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).
22. The academic work by scholars like Piro Rexhepi (2016 and 2018), Behar Sadriu (2017), or Isa Blumi (2018), and many more deal with similar concerns. For a discussion of this relationship see Adem Ferizaj, “Othering Albanian Muslim Masculinities: A Case Study of Albanian Football Players”, *Occhiali - Rivista sul Mediterraneo islamico*, 5 (2019), pp. 71–93.
23. “Fillon ndërtimi i Xhamisë Qendrore në Prishtinë”, *Koha Ditore*, 15 July 2020, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/229611/fillon-ndertimi-i-xhamise-qendrore-ne-prishtine/>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).



Figure 3: The architectural plan of the Central Mosque (*Xhamia Qendrore*) to be built in the city centre of Prishtina. Construction of the mosque commenced on July 15, 2020.²⁴

Employment

The year 2020 offered several insights into how the Kosovo-Albanian diaspora in the West has been facing Islamophobic discrimination at the workplace and in the labour market. Research in different fields suggests structural reasons for this racism.²⁵

As highlighted in the two previous EIR reports, Kosovo's economy remains barely functional and is characterised by many structural problems like youth unemployment, old-age poverty, and emigration.²⁶ This interlocked set of oppressing dynamics including racist elements, like global Islamophobia and economic elements like neo-colonialism, are better understood with what Cedric Robinson has defined as “racial capitalism” than with classical economic analyses.²⁷ Consequently, a strict na-

24. Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës, Facebook, 9 August 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/birk2015/photos/a.939280429441994/3185598948143453/?type=3&theater>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

25. Isa Blumi, “Neither Eastern Nor Welcome: The Confused Lives of Berlin’s Balkan Migrants, 1950–2000”, *The German Wall: Studies in European Culture and History*, ed. Marc Silberman, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011), pp. 145–164; Isa Blumi, “Defining Social Spaces by Way of Deletion: The Untold Story of Albanian Migration in the Postwar Period”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29 (2003), pp. 949–965; Adem Ferizaj, “‘Shaci’ as Another Product of Albanian Orientalism”, *Prishtina Insight*, 30 October 2018, <https://prishtinainsight.com/shaci-as-another-product-of-albanian-orientalism/>, (Access date: 23 November 2020); Ruud Koopmans, Susanne Veit, Ruta Yemane, “Ethische Hierarchien in der Bewerberauswahl: Ein Feldexperiment zu den Ursachen von Arbeitsmarktdiskriminierung”, *Discussion Paper SP VI 2018-104*, (WZB Berlin Social Science Center, 2018), pp. 1–43; Besnik Sinani, “Pikëtakimet e Albanofobisë dhe Islamofobisë”, *E-Zani i Natës*, 8 February 2012, <http://www.e-zani.com/2012/02/08/piketakimet-e-albanofobise-dhe-islamofobise/>, (Access date: 3 December 2020).

26. Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018”, pp. 507–508; idem, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019”, p. 468.

27. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism, The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Zed Books, London: 1983).

tion-state-centred approach cannot grasp the extent of Islamophobia Kosovo-Albanians experience in employment since a crucial part of them work in blue-collar jobs in the West which are *always already* racialised in the Global North. The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 added a new layer to these interlocked forms of oppression.

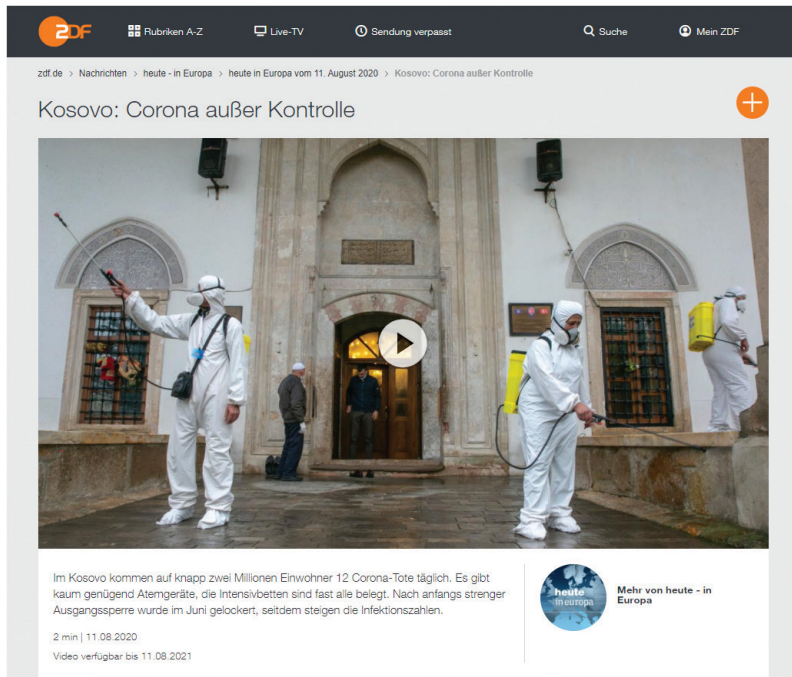


Figure 4: An example of Islamophobic semiotics in media coverage related to the spread of COVID-19. The cover image of the German TV report “Kosovo: Corona out of Control” depicts a scene where three persons in protective masks and clothes use special disinfecting devices to clean the entry of a mosque in the Balkan country.²⁸

In the summer months, the spread of COVID-19 was partly blamed on the Albanian diaspora who was accused of bringing the disease to Germany, after spending their holidays in Kosovo.²⁹ Emblematic of this attitude is a television report by a widely watched German news programme where the Kosovo-Albanian diasporic community of Germany was portrayed with allusions to their complicity in the uncontrolled spread of the virus in Germany.³⁰ The way Islamophobia has been incor-

28. “Kosovo: Corona außer Kontrolle”, ZDF.

29. Michael Martens, “Risikogebiet Balkan: Die Corona-Gefahr von Nachtclubs und Großhochzeiten”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 August 2020, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/viele-coronainfektionen-der-balkan-als-virenschleuder-16915383.html>, (Access date: 27 November 2020); “ZDF heute Sendung vom 16.08.2020”, ZDF, 16 August 2020, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/heute-19-uhr/200816-heute-sendung-19-uhr-100.html>, (Access date: 27 November 2020, only available until 16 August 2020). “Mehrheit der infizierten Rückkehrer aus Kosovo und Türkei”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21 August 2020, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/gesundheit/gesundheits-duesseldorf-mehrheit-der-infizierten-rueckkehrer-aus-kosovo-und-tuerkei-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-200821-99-255792>, (Access date: 27 November 2020).

30. “Kosovo: Corona außer Kontrolle”, ZDF, 11 August 2020, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/heute-in-europa/kosovo-corona-ausser-kontrolle-100.html>, (Access date: 27 November 2020, only available until 11 August 2020).

porated in semiotics is unprecedented in this instance. The cover image of the report depicts a scene where three persons in protective masks and clothes use special disinfecting devices to clean the entry of a mosque in Kosovo.³¹ (Fig. 4) Similar framings could be observed in other European countries with considerable Kosovo-Albanian populations like Switzerland and Finland.³² Furthermore, it could be argued that the way media conflated the spread of the 2020 pandemic with Islamophobic semiotics was a 'new' phenomenon on a more structural level in many Western European countries.³³



Figure 5: A headline by Swiss tabloid *Blick* pertaining to a Kosovo-Albanian whose application for Swiss citizenship has been rejected for no apparent reason for at least 4 years. In the title of the article, the man in question is referred to as a “sweatpants-wearing Kosovar” - a term illustrating how the Albanian population is othered in Switzerland.³⁴

31. Ibid.

32. Fabienne Kinzelmann, “Im Kosovo steigen die Zahlen rapide an: 50 Prozent der Getesteten sind positiv!” *Blick*, 10 July 2020, <https://www.blick.ch/ausland/im-kosovo-steigen-die-zahlen-rapide-an-50-prozent-der-getesteten-sind-positiv-id15983668.html>, (Access date 27 November 2020); Jussi Kontinen and Anni Härkönen, “Skopjen-lennoilla on saapunut Suomeen vain kourallinen makedonialaisia – Turussa epäillään, riittäkö yhden lentoyhteyden katkaiseminen suitsimaan epidemian leviämistä?”, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 19 August 2020, <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006606315.html>, (Access date: 27 November 2020).

33. Fatima Rajina, “Coronavirus: How the Media Scapegoats Muslim Women”, *Middle East Eye*, 9 August 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/coronavirus-how-media-scapegoats-muslim-women>, (Access date: 27 November 2020); Gudrun Heise, “Coronavirus: Does Fasting during Ramadan Raise the Infection Risk?”, *Deutsche Welle*, 5 June 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-does-fasting-during-ramadan-raise-the-infection-risk/a-53334953>, (Access date: 27 November 2020).

34. “Bubendorf BL zieht vors Kantonsgericht: «Trainerhosen-Kosovare» noch immer nicht eingebürgert”, *Blick*, 11 September 2020, <https://www.blick.ch/schweiz/basel/gemeinde-zieht-vors-kantonsgericht-trainerhosen-kosovare-noch-immer-nicht-eingebuergert-id16089052.html>, (Access date: 28 November 2020).

After *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) politician Andreas Winhart filed charges against the famous comedian Enissa Amani, police investigation started on June 10, 2020.³⁵ Previously, Amani had countered Winhart's racist statements including insults toward Black people in Germany portraying them as potential transmitters of illnesses while using the n-word, and insults toward Kosovo-Albanian nursing staff presenting them as untrustworthy and thievish.³⁶ The context of the latter insult is the 2019 economic agreement facilitating the migration of Kosovo-Albanian nurses to Germany in order to overcome Germany's shortage of care workers – the racialised aspect of this incident has been analysed in last year's report.³⁷ The politician's statement could be considered Islamophobic in so far as it was based on the racialisation of migrants coming from Muslim-majority countries. Moreover, tropes like "untrustworthy" and "thievish" have already been present in Karl May's Orientalist 1892 novel *Durch das Land der Skipetaren* (Travelling through Albanian Lands) which marks a foundational moment in the normalisation of anti-Albanian stereotypes in German discourses.³⁸ In 2020, similar events also occurred in other European countries with a considerable Albanian presence like Switzerland.³⁹ (Fig. 5)

Education

Aired on November 23, 2020, a morning show interview with *Partia Demokratike e Kosovës* (PDK) MP Besa Ismaili addressed a range of topics related to education and Islamophobia in Kosovo.⁴⁰ (Fig. 6) Here, Ismaili first argued that Islamophobia, especially in the form of the dominant stereotypes against Albanian rural women wearing the hijab, has its roots in Serbia's decades-long colonising and racist policies against Albanians within the former Yugoslavia. Ismaili suggested that as part of this structural oppression, this attitude has been internalised by the oppressed, in this case the Kosovo-Albanians.

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35. Simon Küpper, "In Köln-Kalk Enissa Amani: „Jeder soll zur Polizei gehen und Anzeige erstatten“", *Express*, 10 June 2020, <https://www.express.de/news/promi-und-show/in-koeln-kalk-enissa-amani---jeder-soll-zur-polizei-gehen-und-anzeige-erstatten--36832830?cb=1606512048651>, (Access date: 27 November 2020).
36. Christoph Gschoßmann, "Nach umstrittenem Post: Wegen „Bastard“-Post: AfD-Mann erstattet Anzeige gegen Moderatorin Enissa Amani", *Merkur*, 1 Mai 2020, <https://www.merkur.de/politik/andreas-winhart-enissa-amani-bayerischer-afd-mann-erstattet-wegen-bastard-post-anzeige-gegen-moderatorin-zr-11973389.html>, (Access date: 27 November 2020).
37. Adem Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019", pp. 468–469.
38. Adem Ferizaj, "'Shaci' as Another Product of Albanian Orientalism".
39. "Bubendorf BL zieht vors Kantonsgesicht: «Trainerhosen-Kosovare» noch immer nicht eingebürgert", *Blick*, 11 September 2020, <https://www.blick.ch/schweiz/basel/gemeinde-zieht-vors-kantonsgesicht-trainerhosen-kosovare-noch-immer-nicht-eingebuegert-id16089052.html>, (Access date: 28 November 2020); Sermin Faki, "SVP fordert Risiko-Prämien: Sollen Kosovaren mehr Arbeitslosen-Beiträge zahlen?", *Blick*, 21 June 2020, <https://www.blick.ch/politik/svp-fordert-risiko-praemien-sollen-kosovaren-mehr-arbeitslosen-beitraege-zahlen-id15949327.html>, (Access date: 28 November 2020).
40. "#gjesi: Zëri i Besa Ismailit brenda dhe jashtë Kuvendit", T7, 23 November 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQSuLV1NHJM&ab_channel=T7, (Access date: 28 November 2020).

In the interview, Ismaili described the presence of the hijab as something usual and unspectacular in Kosovar society. Referring to her own teaching experience, she explained how limiting a headscarf-wearing woman only to this aspect of her life crucially restricts the academic exchange by preliminarily defining social roles. Therefore, she stated that “the headscarf is an issue that shouldn’t be one in Kosovo”. In the last two years, no incidents involving discrimination against hijab-wearing girls or young women at school were mediatised, but this trope has been already instrumentalised for Islamophobic purposes.⁴¹

Furthermore, on the show, Ismaili highlighted an existing double standard. Whereas Islam tends to be scrutinised, the way Christian Orthodoxy is dealt with within the Serbian minority continues to represent a blind spot in Kosovar politics, she explained. Hence, the politician argued in favour of the creation of institutional oversight of religious matters in Kosovo which could include optional religious education in the country’s schools in order to fight existing religious stereotypes. Thus, Besa Ismaili publicly put forward a policy recommendation that has already been suggested in the Kosovo section of the 2018 report.⁴²



Figure 6: Invited to a morning show, PDK MP Besa Ismaili eloquently tackled Islamophobic tendencies within the educational system in Kosovo.⁴³

Politics

In Kosovo, ‘anti-Americanism’ was a word used in many key political debates in 2020.⁴⁴ It arose in a context of a Kosovar governmental foreign policy trying to safe-

41. Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018”, p. 509; idem, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019”, p. 469; Arbër Fetiu, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2015”, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2016), pp. 302–306.

42. Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018”, pp. 518–520.

43. “#gjesi: Zëri i Besa Ismailit brenda dhe jashtë Kuvendit”, T7.

44. “Debat Plus me Ermal Pandurin - (Anti)Amerikanizmi i VV-së”, RTV Dukagjini, 9 September 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK_8zkP3Wj0&list=PLDUlAfTA06zqm96UZ3Xa-feWaD9fsnyoM&index=209&tab_channel=Dukagjini, (Access date: 6 December 2020); Eraldin Fazliu, “Questioning US Policy Is Not Anti-Americanism”, *Prishtina Insight*, 7 March 2020, <https://prishtinainsight.com/questioning-us-policy-is-not-anti-americanism/>, (Access date: 5 December 2020).

guard its interests against Serbia in a way that the Trump administration, and especially U.S. special envoy to Kosovo Richard Grenell, had directly advised against.⁴⁵ Led by Prime Minister Albin Kurti, this government was dissolved a few weeks later, on March 25, 2020.⁴⁶ Certain international commentators alluded to the event as a *coup d'état*.⁴⁷ The inflationary use of 'anti-Americanism' in political discourse is conspicuous. On the one hand, it suggests that politicians are aware of how their position as a small and relatively powerless Muslim-majority country can easily be transformed into Islamophobic arguments against them. On the other hand, reproducing Islamophobia in the Kosovo context because of a lack of agency is nothing less than the enhancement of a vicious circle that eventually works against Kosovo's foreign policy interests by reinforcing Islamophobic stereotypes that are associated with Albanians in Western political discourse.

The "economic normalisation agreement" between Serbia and Kosovo was reached at the White House on September 4, 2020.⁴⁸ It was criticised that, hereby, Kosovo served Trump's election campaign by offering him another 'win' for his foreign policy, while it deteriorated Kosovo's position on the international stage by tacitly agreeing with Serbia's refusal to acknowledge the independence of the formerly colonised territory.⁴⁹ This criticism can also be read as an intervention against Islamophobia in foreign policy, for Serbia's anti-Kosovo policy is fuelled by anti-Muslim racism and genocide denial as the awarding of the 2019 Nobel Prize in Literature to Austrian novelist Peter Handke brought to the forefront.⁵⁰ That the similar experiences of the colonial oppression of Palestinians and Kosovo-Albanians have been ignored in this diplomatic deal is emblematic of Islamophobic discursive dynamics in Western-dominated foreign policy.⁵¹ Instead, it was agreed upon that for Israel to

45. "Grenell kundër reciprocitetit ndaj Serbisë", Koha Ditore, 10 February 2020, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/207999/grenell-kunder-reciprocitetit-ndaj-serbise/>, (Access date: 5 December 2020).

46. Luljeta Krasniqi-Veseli and Arton Konushevc, "Bie Qeveria Kurti", *Radio Evropa e Lirë*, 25 March 2020, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30508373.html>, (Access date: 5 December 2020).

47. Patrick Kingsley, "Coronavirus Helps Bring down Kosovo's Government, with Nudge from U.S." *The New York Times*, 25 March 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/25/world/europe/kosovo-serbia-coronavirus.html>, (Access date: 5 December 2020); Adelheid Wöfl, "Regierungsende: US-Gesandter Grenell bringt den Kosovo in Aufruhr", *Der Standard*, 20 March 2020, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000115944199/us-gesandter-grenell-bringt-den-kosovo-in-aufruhr>, (Access date: 5 December 2020).

48. Vivian Salama, "Serbia and Kosovo Sign Economic Normalization Agreement in Oval Office Ceremony", *CNN*, 4 September 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/04/politics/serbia-kosovo-agreement/index.html>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

49. Enis Sulstarova, "Mosmarrëveshjet", *Shenja*, 4 October 2020, <https://shenja.tv/mosmarreveshjet/>, (Access date: 6 December 2020); Elis Gjevari, "Kosovo's Sovereignty Has Been Limited in Favour of Serbia", *TRT World*, 11 September 2020, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/kosovo-s-sovereignty-has-been-limited-in-favour-of-serbia-39679>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

50. Adem Ferizaj, "Peter Handke: Poetische Befehung", *Neues Deutschland*, 19 October 2019, <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/1127382.peter-handke-poetische-befehung.html>, (Access date: 5 January 2021).

51. Denijal Jević, "Trump's Kosovo-Serbia Normalisation Deal Is All about Israel", *Al Jazeera*, 28 September 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/9/28/trumps-kosovo-serbia-normalisation-deal-is-all-about-israel/>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

recognise Kosovo, the latter has to open an embassy in Jerusalem, a step that the EU has criticised.⁵²

Former U.S. president Donald Trump announced this diplomatic arrangement as follows on Twitter: “Another great day for peace with Middle East – Muslim-majority Kosovo and Israel have agreed to normalize ties and establish diplomatic relations. Well-done! More Islamic and Arab nations will follow soon!”⁵³ (Fig. 7) If one puts this statement in the context of the rising popularity of the far right’s Islamophobic view of Kosovo in European discourse, one could suggest that Trump’s use of racist semantics – denying Albanian indigenesness in Europe due to their Muslimness – is alerting.⁵⁴ Taking into consideration Trump’s political affiliations, which include the global Islamophobia network, reinforces this claim.⁵⁵



Figure 7: Following the announcement of the “economic normalisation agreement” between Serbia and Kosovo, former U.S. president Donald Trump presented the latter as a Muslim-majority country of the Middle East on Twitter.⁵⁶ The racist semantics used by Trump are in line with the raising popularity of the far right’s Islamophobic view of Kosovo in European discourses.

Even though widely ignored in the West, anti-Albanian racism in relation to Kosovo and Albania was present in Serbian politics in 2020. Two examples suggest the scope of this phenomenon which has been present in Serbian politics since the

52. “EU Warns Serbia and Kosovo over Jerusalem Embassy Plans”, Deutsche Welle, 7 September 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/eu-warns-serbia-and-kosovo-over-jerusalem-embassy-plans/a-54845226>, (Access date: 6 December 2020); “Turkey Has ‘Deep Concern’ over Serbia, Kosovo Moving Embassies to Jerusalem”, *Daily Sabah*, 6 September 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-has-deep-concern-over-serbia-kosovo-moving-embassies-to-jerusalem>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

53. Donald Trump, Twitter, 4 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1301924019147616257?lang=en> (Access date: 6 December 2020).

54. Adem Ferizaj, “Pasojat e racizmit antimusliman në Evropë për Kosovën”, *E-Zani i Naltë*, 7 September 2020, <http://www.e-zani.com/2020/09/07/pasojat-e-racizmit-antimusliman-ne-evrope-per-kosoven/>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

55. Prashant Waikar, “Reading Islamophobia in Hegemonic Neoliberalism through a Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump’s Narratives”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 38 (2018), pp. 153–179; Piro Rexhepi, “Europe Wrote the Book on Demonising Refugees, Long before Trump Read It”, *The Guardian*, 21 February 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/21/europe-demonising-muslim-refugees-legitimise-trump>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

56. Donald Trump, Twitter, 4 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1301924019147616257?lang=en> (Access date: 6 December 2020).

end of the 19th century.⁵⁷ First, in September, Serbia's defence minister Aleksandar Vulin publicly used the Serbian anti-Albanian racist s-word, which fundamentally denies humanity to Albanians by representing them as 'non-humans', at least six times.⁵⁸ Second, in December, a mass grave of victims of the Kosovo War was discovered in Serbia, and more hidden mass graves most likely exist.⁵⁹

Media

In 2020, the rising popularity of far-right discourses in Euro-Atlantic circles continued to impact negatively the way Western media reported on Kosovo. To what extent this can lead to blatant Islamophobia against Kosovo is demonstrated by an article in the *Washington Times* stating, "Kosovo's most famous exports are jihadists".⁶⁰ Furthermore, this polemic piece of writing was built around the right-wing extremist 'Great Replacement' theory according to which Orthodox Christian Serbs, as 'real' Europeans, lost Kosovo to 'Oriental' Muslim Albanians after the war ended in 1999.

Interesting dynamics were to be observed in France. On the one hand, the conservative French politician Eric Ciotti described the Dijon riots of June 2020 in a television interview in an Orientalist way: "The streets of Dijon resembled the streets in Kosovo with groups armed with Kalashnikovs."⁶¹ On the other hand, an academic article addressing the Islamophobic use of Kosovo in contemporary French political discourse was published.⁶² While offering a good overview about the operating Islamophobia network in France with regards to their views on Kosovo, this work omits links between anti-Muslim racism in France and in the Balkans.

Justice System

On January 10, 2020, the outgoing Kosovo prime minister Ramush Haradinaj approved of the payment of 250,000 euros from the state budget to the Global Coali-

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57. Norman L. Cigar, *Role of Serbian Orientalists in Justification of Genocide against Muslims in the Balkans*, (Logos A: Prishtina: 2020); Julie Mertus, "Gender in Service of Nation: Female Citizenship in Kosovar Society", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 3 (1996), pp. 261–277.
58. Bekim Bislimi, Ljudmila Cvetkovic and Andy Heil, "Serbian Officials Double down on Ethnic Insult, Stoking Tensions with Albanians", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 9 October 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/serbian-officials-double-down-on-ethnic-insult-stoking-tensions-with-albanians/30883836.html>, (Access date: 8 December 2020).
59. Aleksandar Vasovic, "Serbia Uncovers Mass Grave from Kosovo War", Reuters, 4 December 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-warcrimes-serbia-kosovo-idUSKBN28E23I>, (Access date: 8 December 2020); Adem Ferizaj, "Unidentified Serbian War Criminals, and Albanian Mass Graves, Exposed in New Documentary", *OpenDemocracy*, 21 August 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/unidentified-serbian-war-criminals-and-albanian-mass-graves-exposed-in-new-documen/>, (Access date: 8 December 2020).
60. J. Michael Waller, "Let Bill Clinton's Failed Kosovo Strategy Wither amid the COVID-19 Pandemic", *The Washington Times*, 22 April 2020, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/apr/22/let-bill-clintons-failed-kosovo-strategy-wither-am/>, (Access date: 16 December 2020).
61. Eric Ciotti, Twitter, 17 June 2020, <https://twitter.com/eciotti/status/1273159256414588928?s=21>, (Access date: 16 December 2020).
62. Jean-Arnault Dérens and Laurent Geslin, "Le Kosovo, obsession d'extrême droite: La fiction d'un laboratoire musulman en Europe", *Revue du Crieur*, 3 (2020), pp. 138–153.

tion against Daesh/Isis.⁶³ As Skender Perteshi, a researcher at the Kosovo Centre for Security Studies, pointed out, it would have been more useful, if the money had been invested in preventing violent extremism in Kosovo.⁶⁴ Instead of addressing these matters constructively, there is a tendency to use these debates as foreign policy means to pre-empt the accusation of Islamism from Western politicians by repeating time after time the mantra of being ‘good and European’ Muslims – a phenomenon that has already been analysed in detail.⁶⁵

The appointment of the Minister of Internal Affairs Agim Veliu as “National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight against Terrorism” on July 14, 2020, follows the same logic.⁶⁶ Whereas this regulation can be criticised from many perspectives, it could be highlighted that it is another government decision prioritising the consideration of Islam through the lens of security policy, and hence neglecting that Islam is covered by the democratic principle of freedom of religion.



Figure 8: A screenshot from the television report by *Klan Kosova* about the decision by the Basic Court of Prishtina that Indira Mujaj, who was fired from her job as police officer in 2015 due to her headscarf, can return to her previous position.⁶⁷

63. “Kosovo Govt Allocates €250,000 to Fight against ISIS”, *Balkan Insight*, 10 January 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/10/outgoing-government-allocates-e250000-to-the-fight-against-isis/>, (Access date: 20 December 2020).

64. *Ibid.*

65. 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.

66. Taulant Osmani, “Agim Veliu emërohet Koordinator Nacional për Luftën Kundër Terrorizmit”, *Kallxo.com*, 14 July 2020, <https://kallxo.com/lajm/agim-veliu-emerohet-koordinator-nacional-per-luften-kunder-terrorizmit/>, (Access date: 20 December 2020); “Clarification of the Government of Kosovo”, The Prime Minister Office, 14 July 2020, <https://kryeministri-ks.net/en/clarification-of-the-government-of-kosovo/>, (Access date: 20 December 2020).

67. “Gjykata e kthen ne pune, Policia e largoi per shami - 30.12.2020 - Klan Kosova”, *Klan Kosova*, 30 December 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxIxEyXPL4&feature=emb_logo&cab_channel=KlanKosova, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

On December 30, 2020, Kosovar media reported that the Basic Court of Prishtina decided that Indira Mujaj who was fired from her job as police officer in 2015, due to her headscarf, can return to her previous position.⁶⁸ Hereby, the court issued an important precedent that will be of importance in the ongoing question of whether it is allowed for civil servants to wear the hijab.⁶⁹ (Fig. 8)

Internet

On October 19, 2020, Kosovo's ambassador to France Qëndrim Gashi retweeted an article in *Le Figaro* featuring the *Charlie Hebdo* Mohammed caricatures.⁷⁰ The post caused headlines in Kosovo.⁷¹ Condemning the terrorist murder of the teacher in France, the Islamic Community of Kosovo (*Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës*, BIK) criticised Gashi's behaviour for "contributing to intolerance and hatred based on religion", while demanding the country's foreign ministry distance itself from this un-diplomatic act.⁷² (Fig. 9)

In an interview for the Albanian edition of *Le Monde diplomatique* published in October 2020, the social scientist Besnik Sinani agreed with the BIK statement by arguing that the ambassador's retweet violated his primary function – to represent his people – by promoting intolerance and prejudice against Muslims, who constitute the majority of his country's population.⁷³

Furthermore, Sinani pointed to a more dilemmatic phenomenon characterising discursive dynamics pertaining to Islamophobia in this interview. According to Sinani, the online threats of physical violence against Qëndrim Gashi polarise the debate by making it difficult to take a stance where one can be both against the murder of the teacher in France, or the threats against Gashi, and against the hatred spread by the *Charlie Hebdo* caricatures.

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68. "Gjykata e kthen në punë policen që u përjashtua për shkak të shamisë (VIDEO)", Zëri, 30 December 2020, <https://www.zeri.info/aktuale/385537/gjykata-e-kthen-ne-pune-policen-qe-u-perjashtua-per-shkak-te-shamise-video/>, (Access date: 4 January 2021); "Gjykata e kthen në punë, Policia e largoi për shami - 30.12.2020 - Klan Kosova", Klan Kosova, 30 December 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxIxBgEYXPL4&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=KlanKosova, (Access date: 4 January 2021).
69. "Gjykata Themelore në Prishtinë merr vendimin meritor për policen me shami", Muslimania.al, 30 December 2020, <https://muslimania.al/gjykata-themelore-ne-prishtine-merr-vendimin-meritor-per-policen-shami/>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).
70. Qëndrim R. Gashi, Twitter, 19 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/qendrimgashi>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).
71. Valon Fana, "Bashkësia Islame i reagon ambasadorit Qëndrim Gashi", *Kallxo.com*, 19 October 2020, <https://kallxo.com/lajm/bashkesia-islame-i-reagon-ambasadorit-qendrim-gashi/>, (Access date: 2 January 2021); "BIK-u i kërkon autoriteteve të Kosovës të distancohen nga veprimi i ambasadorit Qëndrim Gashi", Radio Evropa e Lirë, 19 October 2020, <https://www.evropalire.org/a/30901438.html>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).
72. "Deklaratë për opinion", Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës, <https://bislame.net/deklarate-per-opinion-5/>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).
73. Besnik Sinani and Ardian Gola (interviewed by Shkodran Hoti), "Kosova dhe Shqipëria midis lirisë së shprehjes dhe lirisë së besimit: Midis identitarizimit të fesë dhe fetarizimit të identitetit", *Le Monde diplomatique shqip*, October 2020, <https://lemondediplomatique.al/midis-identitarizimit-te-fese-dhe-fetarizimit-te-identitetit/>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).



Figure 9: The official statement by the Islamic Community of Kosovo (*Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës*, BIK) criticising Kosovo ambassador to France Qëndrim Gashi for sharing an article in *Le Figaro* featuring the *Charlie Hebdo* Mohammed caricatures on Twitter and demanding the country's foreign ministry distance itself from this behaviour.⁷⁴

Another event that received barely any media attention in Kosovo was a video containing anti-Albanian racist slurs commonly used by far-right Serbs⁷⁵ which was posted by NBA basketball player Luka Doncic on his social media pages. Doncic, a Slovenian national who plays for the Dallas Mavericks, later apologised for sharing the racist content and deleted the post.⁷⁶ The fact that it needed the reaction of Albanian social media users, including the renowned online personality Deni Hoxha, to expose this scandal suggests that Euro-Atlantic popular discourses tend to be unable to recognise Islamophobia with regards to anti-Albanian racism.⁷⁷ (Fig. 10)

74. "Deklaratë për opinion", Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës, <https://bislame.net/deklarate-per-opinion-5/>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

75. In the video shared by Luka Doncic, fans sing the racist song "Kill Albanians" involving the anti-Albanian s-word in Serbian during an NBA basketball game.

76. Luka Doncic, Twitter, 1 April 2020, <https://twitter.com/luka7doncic/status/1245211887593275393>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

77. Paolo Songco, "Mavs Star Luka Doncic Apologizes for Accidentally Posting Racist Video", *ClutchPoints*, 1 April 2020, <https://clutchpoints.com/mavs-news-luka-doncic-apologizes-accidentally-posting-racist-video/>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).



Figure 10: An article by U.S. sports magazine *ClutchPoints* about Luka Doncic's apologies after sharing an anti-Albanian racist video post on his social media.⁷⁸

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As has been argued elsewhere, it is difficult to speak about concrete structures and institutions promoting Islamophobia in political and cultural discourses in Albanian-majority societies.⁷⁹ Islamophobia in Kosovo is diffused and has to be contextualised in the current inescapability of Eurocentrism. Explicit Islamophobic statements are often located in political journalistic circles including public figures like Arbana Xharra or Visar Duriqi.⁸⁰ The two, for instance, expressed their Islamophobic views in a widely watched television debate about the construction of the new mosque in Prishtina, broadcasted on July 21, 2020.⁸¹

However, Islamophobia also circulates in Western discourses about Kosovo, especially in far-right political circles. This disconcerting phenomenon was elaborated in last year's report and includes widely known figures in Europe like the Austrian nov-

78. Ibid.

79. Besnik Sinani and Elton Hatibi, "Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2017", *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayrakli and Farid Hafez (SETA, Istanbul 2018), p. 45; Nada Dosti, "Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2019", *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, ed. Enes Bayrakli and Farid Hafez (SETA, Istanbul 2019), p. 76.

80. "Lista e analistëve islamofobë të Kosovës, Shqipërisë dhe Maqedonisë", Observer.al, 13 October 2017, <https://observer.al/lista-e-analisteve-islamofobe-te-kosoves-shqiperise-dhe-maqedonise/>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

81. "Debat Plus me Ermal Pandurin - Xhamia", RTV Dukagjini, 21 July 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAsxtCM7fAc&t=2566s>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

elist Peter Handke, German former politician Thilo Sarrazin, and French far-right ‘Islam critic’ Eric Zemmour.⁸² This year’s events have shown that prominent figures like former U.S. president Donald Trump, far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) politician Andreas Winhart, and the French conservative politician Eric Ciotti should be included in the global network reproducing Islamophobia while using the example of Kosovo. It should also be noticed that these Islamophobic views on Kosovo are rooted in Serbian nationalism.⁸³ Since populist far-right parties are still on the rise in Europe, this development is not likely to stop in the next years.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In contrast to previous years, 2020 saw many initiatives to counter Islamophobia in Kosovo – as several examples have already shown in this report. Magazines devoted to Muslim life in Albanian societies like *Observer.al*, *E-Zani i Naltë*, and *Muslimania.al* were very active in deconstructing Islamophobic prejudices that have been imported from Western discourses into present mainstream Albanian discourses for decades. An interview with researcher Besnik Sinani, published by *Observer.al*, is particularly worth mentioning for eloquently addressing the links between Islamophobia in the West and Albanian societies – a much-needed intervention because these connections tend to be ignored in mainstream Albanian discourses.⁸⁴

The culture scene witnessed several works addressing the effects of anti-Muslim racism directed against the Albanian diaspora in the West. Directed by Blerta Neziraj and written by Jeton Neziraj, the 2020 theatrical work *The Return of Karl May* (*Entertaining Play for the German People*) tackled the Orientalist and Islamophobic depiction of Albanians in German-speaking discourses since the 19th century.⁸⁵ (Fig. 11) The rap album *Fast Life 2* by Azet and Albi was one of the most important releases in Germany in 2020 and represents a detailed illustration of diasporic Albanian life in German-speaking Europe including the racialisation and criminalisation of Muslim

82. Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019”, pp. 469–472, 476–477.

83. Adem Ferizaj, “Folgen des antimuslimischen Rassismus in Europa für den Kosovo”, TRT Deutsch, 23 August 2020, <https://www.trtdeutsch.com/meinung/folgen-des-antimuslimischen-rassismus-in-europa-fur-den-kosovo-2561009>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

84. Besnik Sinani (interviewed by Latif Mustafa), “Intervistë me Besnik Sinanin: Islamofobia tek shqiptarët ka natyrë identitare”, *Observer.al*, 4 August 2020, <https://observer.al/interviste-me-besnik-sinanin-islamofobia-tek-shqiptaret-ka-natyre-identitare/>, (Access date: 4 January 2021). The interview was first published in a 2019 special edition by the cultural magazine *Shenja* addressing Islamophobia.

85. Natasha Tripney, “Handke and the Frog”, *Nachtkritik.de*, 21 October 2020, https://nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18734:a-letter-from-kosovo-the-return-of-karl-may-by-jeton-neziraj-premierer-in-prishtina&catid=1789&Itemid=99, (Access date: 4 January 2021); Edona Kryeziu, “‘The Return of Karl May’”, *Kosovo 2.0*, 2 November 2020, <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/the-return-of-karl-may/>, (Access date: 4 January 2021); Kreshnik Bektashi, “Premiera e shfaqjes ‘Kthimi i Karl Majit’”, *Koha Ditore*, 19 October 2020, <https://www.koha.net/express-ktv/241980/premier-e-shfaqjes-kthimi-i-karl-majit/>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

masculinities.⁸⁶ (Fig. 12) Furthermore, the 2020 drama *Exil* by Visar Morina demonstrated how racism, as experienced by the Albanian diaspora in Germany, is rooted in Islamophobia by illustrating that even the most ‘assimilated’ Albanian is not capable of escaping from the image of being Muslim in the workplace.⁸⁷ (Fig. 13)

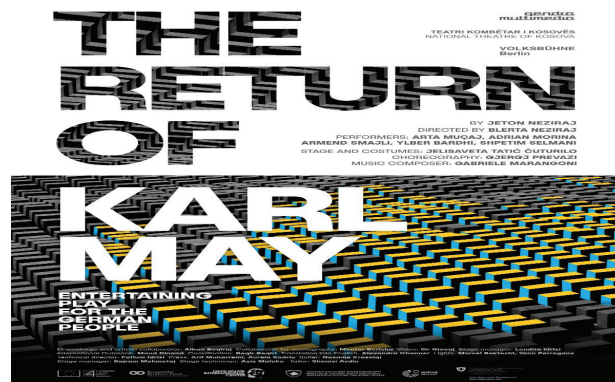


Figure 11: The cover of the play *The Return of Karl May (Entertaining Play for the German People)* by Blerta Neziraj and Jeton Neziraj addressing the prevalent Orientalist and Islamophobic depiction of Albanians in German-speaking countries.⁸⁸



Figure 12: The official album cover of *Fast Life 2* by Azet and Albi illustrating the racialisation and criminalisation of Albanian Muslimness in German-speaking Europe.⁸⁹

86. “Azet & Albi sprechen über “Fast Life 2” & den Tod ihres Vaters“, Hiphop.de, 22 July 2020, <https://hiphop.de/magazin/news/azet-albi-fast-life-2-tod-vater>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

87. Visar Morina (interviewed by Paul Katzenberger), “Rassismus und Film: “Gruppen können schnell etwas Bedrohliches haben““, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 22 August 2020, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/rassismus-und-film-gruppen-koennen-schnell-etwas-bedrohliches-haben-1.5006304>, (Access date: 4 January 2021); Edona Kryeziu, “Beyond the National“, *Kosovo 2.0*, 26 June 2020, <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/beyond-the-national/>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

88. Qendra Multimedia, Twitter, 7 October 2020, https://twitter.com/qendra_mm/status/1313851888761278466, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

89. Azet, Facebook, 9 July 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/AZETKMN/photos/a.1600954316806286/2722597837975256/?type=3&theater>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).



Figure 13: A photo of the protagonist Xhafer of the 2020 drama *Exil* by Visar Morina. The film illustrates how even the most 'assimilated' Albanian is not capable of escaping racist discrimination in the German workplace.⁹⁰

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2020, Islamophobia in Kosovo showed two different tendencies. On the one hand, anti-Muslim tropes within mainstream Kosovar discourses were reproduced. Yet, unlike previous years, these tropes were often challenged by public figures. On the other hand, Islamophobic arguments against Kosovo, especially put forward by extreme right-wing circles, are on the rise in Europe and represent a blind spot in the fight against anti-Muslim racism. Given the current political trends in Europe favouring populist right-wing parties, this development is likely to increase in the next years. Therefore, countering this global Islamophobia network, including influential personalities like the Austrian novelist Peter Handke, German former politician Thilo Sarrazin, and French far-right 'Islam critic' Eric Zemmour, is of primordial importance. In order to do so, Kosovo government officials should consider collaborating with institutions and NGOs in Europe that are fighting Islamophobia like the European Network against Racism (ENAR).

Chronology

- **10.01.2020:** The outgoing Kosovo prime minister Ramush Haradinaj approved of the payment of 250,000 euros from the state budget to the Global Coalition against Daesh/ISIS.
- **25.03.2020:** Prime Minister Albin Kurti's left-wing coalition government (*Lëvizja Vetëvendosje* and *Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës*) was dissolved after being in power only for approximately two months.

90. Exil – der Film, Facebook, 22 August 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/exil.derfilm/photos/a.158214802495148/173051264344835/?type=3&theater>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

- **01.04.2020:** NBA basketball player Luka Dončić posted a video containing anti-Albanian racist slurs commonly used by nationalistic Serbs. He later apologised for sharing racist content and deleted the post.
- **04.04.2020:** A mosque was burnt in Vërboc, a village about 40 kilometres west of Prishtina, Kosovo’s capital.
- **22.04.2020:** In a polemical article in the *Washington Times*, it was stated that “Kosovo’s most famous exports are jihadists”. The piece applied the right-wing extremist ‘Great Replacement’ theory to explain the Kosovo War.
- **10.06.2020:** Police investigation started against the famous comedian Enisa Amani, after *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) politician Andreas Winhart filed a charge against her. Previously, Amani had countered Winhart’s racist statements including insults toward Black people in Germany portraying them as potential transmitters of illnesses while using the n-word, and toward Kosovo-Albanian nursing staff presenting them as untrustworthy and thievish.
- **17.06.2020:** The conservative French politician Eric Ciotti described the Dijon riots of June 2020 in an Orientalist way in a televised interview: “The streets of Dijon resembled the streets in Kosovo with groups armed with Kalashnikovs.”
- **14.07.2020:** Minister of Internal Affairs Agim Veliu was appointed “National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight against Terrorism”.
- **15.07.2020:** The construction of a new mosque called *Xhamia Qendrore* (Central Mosque), to be built in the city centre of Prishtina, was announced. This led to a controversial debate in society.
- **11.08.2020:** A TV report of a widely watched German news programme portrayed the Kosovo-Albanian diasporic community of Germany by alluding to their complicity in the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 in Germany. During the summer, similar framings could be observed in other European countries with considerable Kosovo-Albanian populations like Switzerland and Finland.
- **04.09.2020:** The “economic normalisation agreement” between Serbia and Kosovo was reached at the White House. On the same day, former U.S. president Donald Trump presented Kosovo as a Muslim-majority country in the Middle East on Twitter. By using racist semantics, Trump denied Albanian indigenes in Europe due to their Muslimness.
- **09.10.2020:** An article in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was published indicating that Serbia’s defence minister Aleksandar Vulin had publicly used the Serbian anti-Albanian racist s-word, which fundamentally denies humanity to Albanians by representing them as ‘non-humans’, at least six times in September.

- **19.10.2020:** Kosovo's ambassador to France Qëndrim Gashi retweeted an article in *Le Figaro* featuring the *Charlie Hebdo* Mohammed caricatures. This caused a polemical debate in society.
- **23.11.2020:** The *Partia Demokratike e Kosovës* (PDK) MP Besa Ismaili gave an interview on a morning television show criticising Islamophobia in education.
- **04.12.2020:** According to Reuters, another mass grave of victims of the Kosovo War was discovered in Serbia. More hidden mass graves are very likely to exist.
- **30.12.2020:** Kosovar media reported that the Basic Court of Prishtina decided that Indira Mujaj who was fired from her job as a police officer in 2015 due to her headscarf, can return to her previous position.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
LITHUANIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

As the Muslim population in Lithuania remains small, there is relatively little politicisation at the national level of Muslims and Islam. This could be said about both the communication and programmes of political parties as well as the far-right platforms. Instead, it is anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes that are more often utilised by public and political figures, and most Islamophobic rhetoric emerges within the latter paradigm.

Although it is evident that Islamophobia is highly prevalent in the society, there are few effective measures of addressing anti-Muslimness. Based on the results of a public opinion poll, Muslims are the most negatively viewed religious community, and among the four most stigmatised groups in Lithuania. Moreover, a recent study revealed that hate crime is largely underreported, while Muslims experience discrimination and derogatory comments in a broad range of everyday situations. The official statistics, hence, cannot be relied upon to describe the situation at hand, and a significant gap, both in terms of awareness and trust, exists between the government institutions responsible for monitoring and tackling hate crime and the Muslim communities. While there have been important positive developments in the attempt to address such disconnection at the institutional level, these issues continue to define the situation in 2020, just as they did in the past years.

While widespread, Islamophobia remains largely unaddressed: the law enforcement mechanisms do not effectively tackle anti-Muslim hate crime and discrimination, especially, if they occur online, while due to the lack of attention given to Islamophobia in the media, there is little discussion and therefore visibility of the issue in the public sphere. It could be said that the issue of Islamophobia for the most part remains invisible to the wider society in Lithuania.

Santrauka

Lietuvoje gyvenančių musulmonų yra itin nedaug, todėl nusiteikimas prieš musulmonus ir islamą šalyje yra gana retai eksploatuojamas tiek politinių partijų komunikacijoje ir programose, tiek ir radikaliosios dešinės judėjimuose. Galima teigti, kad islamofobiški teiginiai dažniausiai pasirodo imigracijos ir pabėgėlių klausimų kontekste – šios temos viešojoje erdvėje yra aptariamoms dažniau.

Kita vertus, akivaizdu, kad islamofobija yra paplitusi visuomenėje, tačiau pasigendama priemonių, kurios šią problemą efektyviai spręstų. Pagal 2020 m. atliktos visuomenės nuostatų apklausos rezultatus, musulmonai yra labiausiai stigmatizuojama religinė bendruomenė, ir viena iš keturių negatyviausiai vertinamų visuomenės grupių. Be to, neseniai atlikta kokybinė studija atskleidė, jog apie neapykantos nusikaltimus dažnai nėra pranešama atsakingoms institucijoms, nors musulmonai patiria diskriminaciją ir sulaukia į juos nukreiptų žeminančių komentarų įvairiose kasdienėse situacijose. Dėl šių priežasčių akivaizdu, kad oficialioji neapykantos nusikaltimų statistika neatskleidžia problemos masto. Pastebima, jog valstybinių institucijų darbuotojams trūksta suvokimo apie islamofobiją, o musulmonai nepasitiki šalies teisėsaugos sistema. Nors per pastaruosius metus instituciniame lygmenyje įvyko svarbių pokyčių, kurie galimai prisidės prie efektyvesnės kovos prieš islamofobiją ateityje, 2020 m. pasižymėjo islamofobijos latentišku ir pasyviu institucijų atsaku.

Nors akivaizdžiai paplitusi visuomenėje, islamofobija nėra efektyviai adresuojama: teisėsaugos mechanizmai neužtikrina deramo atsako į diskriminaciją ir neapykantos nusikaltimus prieš musulmonus, ypač, jei incidentai vyksta internetinėje erdvėje, o žiniasklaidoje apie priešišumą, kurį Lietuvoje patiria musulmonų bendruomenė, yra kalbama itin retai. Dėl to islamofobiją Lietuvoje galima laikyti „nepastebima problema“, apie kurią retai išgirsta plačioji visuomenė.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Republic of Lithuania

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Semi-presidential system

Ruling Parties: *Tėvynės sąjunga-Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai* (Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats), *Liberalų sąjūdis* (Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania), *Laisvės Partija* (Freedom Party)

Opposition Parties: *Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga* (Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union); *Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija* (Social Democratic Party of Lithuania); *Darbo partija* (Labour Party)

Last Elections: 2020 Parliamentary Elections: Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (50 seats); Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (32 seats); Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (13 seats); Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (13 seats); Freedom Party (11 seats); Labour Party (10 seats); Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance (3 seats); Lithuanian Social Democratic Labour Political Group (3 seats); Order and Justice (1 seat); Lithuanian Green Party (1 seat); 4 seats went to self-nominated candidates.

2019 Presidential Elections: Gitanas Nausėda won 66.5 per cent of the vote against 33.5 per cent for Ingrida Šimonytė.

Total Population: 2.794 million (beginning of 2020)

Major Languages: Lithuanian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2020, the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson received two complaints of discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, convictions, and views. Both complaints were made by Muslims and addressed discrimination in detention facilities.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: From January to December 2020, a total of 52 criminal offenses were registered on the grounds foreseen under the Chapter XXV of the Criminal Code “Crimes and misdemeanours against a person’s equal rights and freedom of conscience”. Fifty of the cases were on the grounds foreseen under Article 170 “Incitement against Any National, Racial, Ethnic, Religious or Other Group of Persons” and three of these were incitement to hatred based on religion. There was also one registered criminal offense based on Article 171 “Disturbance of Religious Ceremonies or Religious Celebrations”, and none under Article 169 “Discrimination on Grounds of Nationality, Race, Sex, Descent, Religion or Belonging to Other Groups” during the reported period.

Major Religions (% of Population): Roman Catholic (77.3%), Orthodox (4.1%), Old Believers (0.8%), Evangelical Lutheran (0.6%), Evangelical Reformed (0.2%), Other religion (0.9%), No religion (6.1%) (Lithuanian 2011 Population Census).

Muslim Population (% of Population): According to the data of the Lithuanian 2011 Population Census, 2,727 persons consider themselves Sunni Muslims, or 0.09% of the total population. Four-hundred of these persons identify as ethnic Lithuanians.

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Association Ahmadiyya Lithuania (*Asociacija Ahmadija Lietuva*), Sunni Muslim Religious Centre (*Lietuvos musulmonų sunitų dvasinis centras*), Islamic Culture and Education Center, Islam to All.

Main NGOs combatting Islamophobia: European Foundation of Human Rights, Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights (LCHR), Lithuanian Red Cross Society, Artscape.

Far-Right Parties: National Alliance, Union of Intergenerational Solidarity-Cohesion

Far-Right Movements: *Pro patria*

Far-Right Militant Organisations: No

Limitations to Islamic Practices

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

Introduction

Due to the Tatars who are thought to have migrated to the present-day territory of Lithuania in the 14th century, Islam is recognised as one of the country's nine traditional religions.¹ And yet, the Muslim population in Lithuania is not numerous: based on the population census of 2011, only 2,727 persons, or 0.09 per cent of the total population, identify as Sunni Muslims.² This can be partially explained by the fact that in the period between World War II and the re-established independence in 1990, immigration to the country was largely limited to movement from other parts of the Soviet Union,³ while the Tatar population has remained relatively small.⁴ Even though immigration after independence has diversified, the independent Republic of Lithuania has not become a major country of destination.

The Lithuanian society, hence, is predominantly homogenous, both in terms of religion and ethnicity. Most residents view themselves as Roman Catholics (77.2 per cent) with the second largest religious group, Orthodox, accounting for only 4.1 per cent of the population. Similarly, 84.2 per cent of the country's residents identify as ethnic Lithuanians. The second-largest ethnic groups are Poles and Russians who respectively make up 6.6 and 5.8 per cent of the total population.

It is important to note, however, that since the 2011 population census, Lithuania underwent significant socio-demographic changes. Steadily growing for the past few years, in 2019 immigration exceeded emigration for the first time in 28 years.⁵ By the beginning of 2021, 87,269 people who were born abroad were living in Lithuania, which is more than twice as many as there were in 2014 (35,500).⁶ While there is no data being collected on what religion the newly arriving migrants profess, the upcoming 2021 population census might reveal a change both in the religious and ethnic composition of the country's residents.

Despite the number of Muslims in Lithuania being low, they remain the most stigmatised religious group in the country. Based on the results of a representative poll

1. Jakubauskas, Adas, Sidtykov Galim and Dumin, Stanislav, *Tatars of Lithuania in History and Culture (Lietuvos totoriai istorijoje ir kultūroje)*, (Union of Lithuanian Tartar Communities, Kaunas: 2009).
2. Statistics Lithuania, *Results of the Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Lithuania*, <http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).
3. Zibas, Karolis, "Immigration Policies in Lithuania: Institutional and Legislative Developments, Challenges and Opportunities", *Social Policy Issues*, 31: 59-79 (2015).
4. Norvilaite, Vaida, and Raciunas, Egdunas, "Musulmonu bendruomeniu reakcija i sekularizacijos procesus Lietuvoje", *Kultura ir visuomene*. 2(3): 49-66 (2011). Available online: <http://culturesociety.vdu.lt/wp-content/uploads/> (Access date: 5 January 2021).
5. Official Statistics Portal, Demographic trends, 14 January 2020, https://osp.stat.gov.lt/informaciniai-pranesimai?articleId=7094145&fbclid=IwAR0f4dnKO1uhdSzsJPQx3uaNHuc2tuvAzBXyKqYVul97M3txNcT58_Q5oHI, (Access date: 29 January 2021).
6. Migration Department, "In 2020, the number of foreign nationals living in Lithuania increased by 18 per cent", 19 January 2021, <https://www.migracija.lt/-/2020-aisiais-lietuvoje-apsigyvenusi%C5%B3-u%C5%BE-sienie%C4%8Di%C5%B3-skai%C4%8Dius-padid%C4%97jo-23-proc.?redirect=%2F>, (Access date: 29 January 2021).

measuring public attitudes towards different social, ethnic, and religious groups carried out in October 2020, 41 per cent of Lithuanian residents would not like to have Muslims as their neighbours, 28 per cent would not like to have them as co-workers, and almost 39 per cent would not like to have Muslim tenants. Only Roma, recently released prisoners, and persons with psychosocial disabilities were viewed more negatively than Muslims.⁷ Furthermore, it is quite evident that being a Muslim plays a key role in determining who is welcome in Lithuania, according to the country's residents: only 34 per cent agreed that Lithuania should accept war refugees that are Muslims, compared to 62 per cent who would agree to accept war refugees that are Christians.⁸ Such findings mark no significant change from 2019.⁹ Considering the low numbers of Muslims residing in Lithuania and the increase of negative perceptions in response to the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, public perceptions towards Muslims are arguably shaped by external factors such as media representations rather than personal experiences.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

From January to December 2020, a total of 52 criminal offenses were registered on the grounds foreseen under the Chapter XXV of the Criminal Code "Crimes and misdemeanours against a person's equal rights and freedom of conscience". Fifty of the cases were on the grounds foreseen under Article 170 "Incitement against Any National, Racial, Ethnic, Religious or Other Group of Persons" and three of these were incitement to hatred based on religion. There was also one registered criminal offense based on Article 171 "Disturbance of Religious Ceremonies or Religious Celebrations", and none under Article 169 "Discrimination on Grounds of Nationality, Race, Sex, Descent, Religion or Belonging to Other Groups" during the reported period.

Yet, a recently published report commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior confirms that anti-Muslim crimes and discrimination are significantly more widespread and underrepresented in official government statistics. Based on data from focus groups and individual interviews with Muslims and persons of different ethnicity, respondents have reported verbal and physical abuse; discrimination and bullying in public spaces, including detainment facilities and public institutions, shops, restaurants, airports, and workplaces; discriminatory behaviour by strangers in the streets, by

7. The public opinion poll took place in October 2020 and was participated by a total of 1,029 Lithuanian residents (15 years of age and older) at 118 sampling points. The survey was initiated by the Lithuanian Social Research Centre (Institute for Ethnic Studies). The results are available online, <http://www.ces.lt/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Visuomen%C4%97s-nuostatos-apklauskos-rezultatai-2020.pdf> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

8. Ibid.

9. The changes (2019 to 2020) do not exceed the survey standard error.

family members and relatives (in cases when Muslims had Lithuanian spouses), property-owners, students and sometimes teaching staff both in schools and higher education institutions.¹⁰ The subjects expressed feeling ‘observed’ and insecure in public spaces, due to the (perceived) visibility of Muslim identity (the latter being associated with identifiable clothing attributes, especially for women), or because of the subjects’ darker skin complexion. The respondents were told to ‘go home’, were called terrorists, and heard derogatory comments about their physical appearance and/or clothing; some, especially men, have experienced physical attacks. Such incidents had significant impact on the subjects’ well-being, personal relationships, and careers; some have reported attempts to become ‘less visible’; many said they do not feel welcome and consider leaving the country as a result.¹¹

The study also looked into why Muslims and persons of different ethnicity often do not report incidents to the police. While some situations are addressed unofficially (i.e., through a complaint to the employer of the perpetrator), many remain unaddressed as subjects fear revenge from the perpetrators, lack knowledge about the rights and procedures required to report such incidents, or do not trust the law enforcement institutions. Others are hindered by the language barrier. Some subjects thought that reporting might demand too much time and energy, did not see the situation as serious enough, or believed that hate crime would be difficult to prove. While the reported incidents analysed in the study took place before 2020 and were not limited to a single calendar year, this report revealed the latency of anti-Muslim hate crimes that, given the prevailing public attitudes and deep-rooted issues in addressing and preventing hate crime is likely to be relevant for understanding the situation in the foreseeable future.

Based on the study’s findings and on a series of discussions between the police officers, prosecutors, and representatives of vulnerable groups in different regions of Lithuania, a practical guide for law enforcement officials on cooperation with vulnerable communities in addressing hate crimes was released.¹² The guide aims to provide key information on social, ethnic, and religious communities in Lithuania (including Muslims) and map organisations that can be consulted in order to identify and respond better to hate crimes. Furthermore, the Ministry of the Interior commissioned and disseminated recommendations for public servants who might en-

10. Labanauskas, Liutauras, “Hate Crimes: Qualitative Research Report on Vulnerable Communities”, Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Lithuania, 2019, <https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Pa%C5%BEeid%C5%BEiam%C5%B3%20bendruomeni%C5%B3%20kokybinio%20tyrimo%20ataskaita.pdf> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

11. Ibid.

12. Human Rights Monitoring Institute and the Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights, “Cooperation in Addressing Hate Crime with the Vulnerable Communities: A Practical Guide for the Law Enforcement Officers”, Ministry of the Interior, 2020, https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/LT_versija/Viesasis_saugumas/Praktinis%20vadovas_LT.pdf (Access date: 5 January 2021).

counter hate crime in their work on how to apply the criminal code on hate crimes and hate speech.¹³ The qualitative study, the practical guidance, and the recommendations were all commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior, as part of the EU-funded project “Strengthening the Response to Hate Crimes and the Language of Hate in Lithuania”.¹⁴

Employment

The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson has received no complaints of employment-related discrimination against Muslims in 2020. In 2019, no such incidents were reported either.¹⁵

On the other hand, the recently disseminated qualitative study investigating experiences of hate crime and hate speech by members of vulnerable groups found that, as in many other areas, discrimination against Muslims and ethnic minorities at work is prevalent, but often goes unreported. Discrimination is being displayed both by co-workers and managerial staff, which, in the latter case, make reporting of such incidents even more complicated for the subjects affected as it might compromise their work relations or their job status.¹⁶ The prevalence of negative attitudes towards Muslims in Lithuania is also reflected in the results of a representative public opinion poll: almost 3 in 10 residents in Lithuania (28 per cent) would not like to have Muslims as their co-workers.¹⁷

Education

The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson received no complaints on education-related discrimination against Muslims in 2020.¹⁸ No cases of Islamophobic content in educational materials and curricula were reported by civil society organisations or emerged within the public sphere.

Yet, the qualitative study investigating experiences of hate crimes and hate speech by members of vulnerable groups suggests that education is not free from Islamophobia, and both students and teaching staff might share and act upon discriminatory

13. Murauskiene, Dovile, “Recommendations for Application of Criminal Code for Cases of Hate Crime and Hate Speech”, Ministry of the Interior, 2020, [https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Rekomendacijos%20d%C4%97l%20baud%C5%BEiamosios%20atsakomyb%C4%97s%20taikymo\(1\).pdf](https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Rekomendacijos%20d%C4%97l%20baud%C5%BEiamosios%20atsakomyb%C4%97s%20taikymo(1).pdf) (Access date: 5 January 2021).

14. Ministry of the Interior, “A Project to Strengthen Response to Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania Was Launched”, <https://vrm.lrv.lt/en/news/a-project-to-strengthen-response-to-hate-crimes-and-hate-speech-in-lithuania-was-launched> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

15. The Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, “Annual Report 2019”, p. 34, https://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2020/03/lr_lygiu_galimybiu_kontrolieriaus_2019_m_veiklos_ataskaita.pdf (Access date: 5 January 2021).

16. Labanauskas, “Hate Crimes: Qualitative Research Report on Vulnerable Communities”.

17. Lithuanian Social Research Centre, Institute for Ethnic Studies, “Results of the Public Opinion Poll on Social Distance, 2020”.

18. Correspondence with a representative of the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson.

views towards Muslims.¹⁹ Such manifestations of Islamophobia, however, are difficult to monitor if cases remain underreported.

Politics

In October 2020, parliamentary elections took place in Lithuania. While the Christian identity was central in the communication of some political parties, during the election campaigns Islam was discussed or touched upon rather rarely. Furthermore, none of the far-right parties that have consistently or unambiguously defined Christianity as central to their political identity passed the electoral vote threshold of 5 per cent.

Based on the findings of the political communication monitoring conducted by the initiative Media4change, the party that utilised religion for campaigning most often was the newly founded Christian Union.²⁰ Established in March 2020, the party declares itself as led by the principles of Christian democracy and Christian social policy. Even though Islam is not mentioned in its manifesto or core political campaign messages, one of the party founders, Egidijus Vareikis, has made Islamophobic statements. Specifically, he claimed that personal freedoms are diminishing in Muslim-majority states, and made generalised statements about Muslims as principally opposing the liberal democratic tradition of the European states. He stated, “In the eyes of Islamic practitioners (perhaps not all, but at least some), liberal public administration sows clutter, reduces discipline and responsibility, and weakens faith and loyalty to one’s tribe and state”.²¹

The National Alliance, another socially conservative right-wing party, established in March 2020, also frames its identity around Christianity. The party aims to ‘strengthen statehood and Christian tradition and morality’. While Muslims or Islam are not mentioned directly, the manifesto conflates Christianity with universal moral norms.²² The party is closely linked to *Pro patria*, one of the most influential far-right platforms and movements in Lithuania.²³

Anti-immigrant views more generally, rather than anti-Muslim discourses specifically, were more prevalent in the political campaigns. The Lithuanian Centre Party, the National Alliance, and the Union of Intergenerational Solidarity-Cohesion have expressed negative views towards immigration and migrants, arguing that they are an economic threat to the Lithuanian society.²⁴ However, the aforementioned parties did not receive enough votes to enter parliament.

19. Labanauskas, “Hate Crimes: Qualitative Research Report on Vulnerable Communities”.

20. Media4change, “Report on Political Communication”, 2020, <https://www.media4change.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Politines-komunikacijos-ataskaita.pdf> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

21. Vareikis, Egidijus, “Battles against... freedom”, Christian Union, 8 September 2020, <https://krikscioniu.lt/kovos-pries-laisve/> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

22. Media4change, “Report on Political Communication”.

23. *Pro Patria*, <http://www.propatria.lt/search?q=nacionalinis+susivienijimas> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

24. Media4change, “Report on Political Communication”.

None of the parties of the newly formed ruling coalition have made Islamophobic statements or remarks in their election campaigns. However, while the two smaller coalition parties, the Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania and especially the Freedom Party, have built their campaigns around the respect for human rights and individual freedoms (including the right to conscience and religion), neither of them addressed the subject of anti-Muslimness in the country extensively. Only one newly elected parliament member (Freedom Party) has briefly touched upon the importance of inclusive discussion and dialogue with Muslims on issues such as Islamophobia.²⁵

Media

Just as Islam is not high on the agendas of political parties, in the media also, Islam and Muslims were rarely mentioned when national or local events were discussed. For the most part, coverage concentrated on events abroad. The overall tendency is that most articles about Muslims are related to violent incidents and terrorism, and hence, while often indirectly, they nevertheless reinforce the association between Muslimness and opposition or even hatred of the liberal democracies of the European states.²⁶

In comparison to previous months, an increase in articles mentioning Muslims or Islam was noticed in October, following the murder of a teacher Samuel Paty and a knife attack in Nice and Macron's public statements responding to the incidents. While most articles maintained the separation between Islam and religious extremism, the inclusion of Muslims' perspectives was very rare: in only 14 from the 631 articles containing Islam-related content in October were Muslims given an opportunity to speak for themselves.²⁷ In previous months, Muslims or Islam were mentioned while covering the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the persecution of Uighurs in the Xinjiang province of China, the discrimination of Muslims in Myanmar, and politics in the Middle East. On a few occasions, articles aimed to inform the readers about Muslim communities in Lithuania, their initiatives, heritage, and traditions.²⁸

There are no media outlets of significant readership that systematically produce Islamophobic content, yet, incidents when individual journalists working at major media companies have expressed Islamophobic opinions or released negatively biased articles have occurred. Alfa.lt, a well-known news portal in Lithuania, shared

25. Siuksta, Valdemaras, "Jauniausias Seimo naujokas Matijošaitis: apie dvigubą pilietybę, patirtį emigracijoje ir galimą pokalbį apie kanapes su konservatoriais", Lrt.lt, 27 October 2020, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1262731/jauniausias-seimo-naujokas-matijosaitis-apie-dviguba-pilietybe-patirti-emigracijoje-ir-galima-pokalbi-apie-kanapes-su-konservatoriais> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

26. Media4change, "Media Monitoring: September 2020", <https://www.media4change.co/lt/naujienos/ziniasklaidos-monitoringas-rugsejis-2020/> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

27. Ibid.

28. For example, see Gabriele Klioniunaitė, "Muslims of Lithuania Have Cooked for over 500 Employees of the National Cancer Institute to Thank Them for the Hard Work", Lrt.lt, 21 May 2020, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/gyvenimas/13/1180862/lietuvos-musulmonai-pavaisino-per-500-nacionalinio-vezio-instituto-darbuotoj-dekodami-jiems-uz-sunku-darba> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

an article covering the murder of Samuel Paty on Facebook. While the information in the article itself was largely fact-bound, the social media post accompanying the article was a personal, non-factual statement entailing and normalising prejudice against (Muslim) refugees. “It’s already nothing strange to laugh at the French, Germans or Swedes for opening the borders and accepting refugees, they fooled themselves and refused to see the reality. But it seems that the patience of the French has run out”.²⁹ Allegedly, the post was initiated by an individual journalist, and was later deleted. Another instance of strongly biased and emotive language appeared in an article authored by a journalist at another news portal of considerable readership, *Respublika.lt*, which discussed the protests of the movement ‘Stop Islamisation of Norway’ in Oslo.³⁰

Justice System

In 2020, two incidents of discrimination in detention facilities on the grounds of religion, belief, convictions, and views were reported by Muslims.³¹ In March, a Muslim detainee submitted a complaint against Kaunas Remand Prison for not being allowed to receive a religious item (a piece of jewellery) from his visiting family members. The Seimas Ombudsmen’s Office who examined the case rejected the complaint, stating that due to regulations set in the law, religious items cannot be passed from family members, and that as an alternative solution the detainment facility was working on introducing a similar item in the facility’s shop.³² Another incident was reported in August 2020 by an incarcerated person who submitted a complaint against Marijampole Correction House and the Prison Department for refusing to offer a non-vegetarian catering option that would be free of pork. An investigation initiated by the Seimas Ombudsmen’s Office concluded that the law was not violated as the institution offers vegetarian food. Yet, the ombudsman stressed that state authorities should take measures to ensure that incarcerated persons are provided with food in full accordance with their religious beliefs.³³ This case illustrates that the current regulations on which decisions of the ombudsman are based are not particularly favourable to the specific needs of detainees who want to observe their religious beliefs and do not fully ensure equal treatment of incarcerated Muslim persons in correctional facilities.

29. The post is no longer available. The text is taken from a screenshot.

30. Cekutis, Ricardas, “Islamists Are Violently Protesting in Scandinavia Again”, *Respublika.lt*, 2 September 2020, https://www.respublika.lt/lt/naujienos/pasaulis/nusikalimai_ir_nelaimes/skandinavijoje_vel_siauteja_islamistai/ (Access date: 5 January 2021).

31. Correspondence with a representative of the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson.

32. “Decision on the Complaint against Kaunas Remand Prison”, Seimas Ombudsmen’s Office, <https://www.lrski.lt/documents/pazyma-del-skundo-pries-kauno-tardymo-izoliatoriu/> (Access date: 7 January 2021).

33. “Decision on the Complaint against Marijampole Correction House and the Prison Department under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania”, Seimas Ombudsmen’s Office, <https://www.lrski.lt/documents/pazyma-del-x-skundo-pries-marijampoles-pataisos-namus-ir-kalejimu-departamenta-prie-lietuvos-respublikos-teisingumo-ministerijos/> (Access date: 7 January 2021).

In March 2020, the Prosecutor General's Office issued methodological recommendations for the peculiarities regarding the conduct, organisation, and management of the pre-trial investigations into hate crimes and hate speech. While a positive development in its own right, the document has included a rather controversial definition of Islamophobia as an “unfounded fear of or prejudice against Islam or people who profess it (Muslims)”.³⁴ A representative of an NGO has raised an issue with the term ‘unfounded’, as it implies that Islamophobia can be ‘founded’.³⁵ As a result, the definition is currently under review.

Internet

In terms of the Internet, the situation has not changed much since 2019. Just as in previous years, messages containing Islamophobic claims were found on far-right, socially conservative websites such as *Pro Patria* and *Alkas*. For example, *Pro Patria* translated an article by Athanasius Schneider who criticises the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” signed by Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, and Pope Francis, and argues that “the only enduring universal fraternity is the fraternity in Christ.”³⁶

Just as in previous years, posts in certain Facebook groups such as *Pabėgėliams-ne! Demografiniam lietuvių bumui ir šeimos rėmimui -taip!* (“No to refugees! Yes to a demographic boom of Lithuanians and family support”) and *Lietuva – Šeimininkams* (“Lithuania – for the hosts”) contain mainly anti-immigration messages, but also, on occasion, Islamophobic messages. Arguably the worst situation, however, is in the comment section of certain news portals where anonymous comments can be left (i.e., *Delfi.lt*, *Respublika.lt*, *tv3.lt*). Often, the comments contain direct hate speech. For example, one of the many discriminatory comments under the article on a terrorist attack published by *Respublika.lt* calls Muslims parasites and asks for a vaccine against them: “Lice on a healthy person’s body, they attack us like Colorado beetles attack potatoes. Maybe someone knows a vaccine against them [Muslims]?”³⁷ There is no effective mechanism in place for monitoring and effectively addressing discriminatory statements made by anonymous commentators, and law enforcement agen-

34. The Prosecutor General's Office, “Methodological Recommendations for the Peculiarities of the Conduct, Organisation and Management of a Pre-trial Investigation into Hate Crimes and Hate Speech”, March 2020, https://www.prokuraturos.lt/data/public/uploads/2020/04/neapykantos_nusikaltimu_tyrimo_metodines_rekomendacijos.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3jNSeYz3LPyn4KXjRmiyozoUzLnhFbOKIHY9iRJo-eDW87N8IPtflvS5Y (Access date: 5 January 2021).

35. Informal communication with a member of the working group for the effective response to hate crimes and hate speech under the Ministry of the Interior, in which the definition was criticised and discussed.

36. *Pro Patria*, “Athanasius Schneider. Katalikai ir musulmonai tiki ne tą patį Dievą ir negarbina jo tuo pačiu būdu”, 5 July 2020, <http://www.propatria.lt/2020/07/vysk-athanasius-schneider-katalikai-ir.html> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

37. Cekutis, Ricardas, “Islamists Are Violently Protesting in Scandinavia Again”, *Respublika.lt*, 2 September 2020, https://www.respublika.lt/lt/naujienos/pasaulis/nusikaltimai_ir_nelaimes/skandinavijoje_vel_siauteja_islamistai/ (Access date: 5 January 2021).

cies rarely start investigations even if such cases are reported by NGOs or individuals on their own initiative.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There were no systematic Islamophobic campaigns and/or lobbying for Islamophobic policies, and there do not appear to be specific networks of figures actively stirring up Islamophobia in Lithuania. Due to the limited visibility of Muslims in the country, Islam is not a frequently or strongly politicised subject. It is worth noting, however, that institutional links exist between right-wing figures and organisations that have been associated with Islamophobic and anti-immigrant statements in the past. The movement and website *Pro Patria* is closely linked to the Christian-centric and anti-immigrant political party National Alliance, as evidenced by some of its leaders joining and campaigning as members of the party in the 2020 parliamentary elections.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

While there are no organisations whose activities solely focused on combatting Islamophobia, two groups of important actors can be distinguished: (i) the ombudsmen's offices and NGOs working in the areas of human rights, diversity, and migrant integration, and (ii) Muslim communities. The ombudsmen and NGOs act as 'watchdogs' and monitor human rights abuses (Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights, the European Foundation of Human Rights, the Human Rights Monitoring Institute, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office), as well as implement awareness-raising, community-building projects and provide integration services (Artscape, Lithuanian Red Cross Society). Meanwhile, Muslim communities organise initiatives that help spread the message of their communities' positive contributions to Lithuanian society. For instance, in May 2020, Muslim communities in the capital Vilnius cooked traditional Uzbek dishes for the employees at the National Cancer Institute as a gesture of appreciation for their hard work saving people's lives.³⁸

While no political initiatives aimed specifically at combatting Islamophobia took place in 2020, a positive development was the establishment of the working group for tackling hate crimes and hate speech under the Ministry of the Interior.³⁹ The group consists of representatives from relevant state institutions and human rights

38. Klioniunaite, "Muslims of Lithuania Have Cooked for over 500".

39. Minister of the Interior, "Order of the Establishment of the Working Group", 24 February 2020, Nr. 1V-162, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/de8241d056d611ea931dbf3357b5b1c0/asr> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

experts and activists. Furthermore, the outcomes of the project “Enhancing Response to Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Lithuania”, such as the already discussed qualitative study on experiences of hate crimes, a practical guide for law enforcement officials on cooperation with communities of vulnerable groups, and recommendations on the application of the criminal code of tackling hate crime and hate speech are all encouraging steps towards a better mechanism for addressing and preventing hatred. The initiatives, however, signify only the start of addressing the deep-rooted issues of widespread discrimination, negative attitudes, and hate crimes against Muslims and other vulnerable groups in an efficient manner, with a lot more progress needed to be made.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Even though Islam and Muslims are not particularly politicised or extensively discussed topics in the Lithuanian public sphere at the moment, it is evident that Islamophobia is highly prevalent. At the same time, there is a clear disconnection between the everyday discrimination experienced by Muslims and the state institutions that seem to lack awareness of the scale of anti-Muslim racism and that are only now starting to develop mechanisms through which such discrimination could be addressed more efficiently. Perhaps the most worrisome aspect is that there is little public discussion about Islamophobia as such, meaning that anti-Muslimness, even if widespread, remains largely invisible to the wider society.

Recommendations

- Increase visibility of Muslims, their everyday lives, and experiences within the media, and give more attention to the prevalence and problematisation of Islamophobia.
- Promote responsible and ethical media reporting on Muslim-related events.
- Enhance further the capacities of law enforcement officials not only in recognising anti-Muslim hate crimes and discrimination, but also in proactively building trust and reaching out to Muslim communities.
- Ensure the provision of support for persons who have experienced anti-Muslim hate crime, hate speech, or discrimination.
- Continue funding, supporting, and developing initiatives that monitor incidents of discrimination and Islamophobic claims made by politicians, journalists, and other public and non-public figures.
- Enhance the prevention of hate crimes and discrimination and promote better understanding of both Islam and the experiences of Muslims living in Lithuania through awareness-raising campaigns, intercultural competence trainings, and the development of critical literacy skills in all age groups.

Chronology

- **08.01.2020:** The report of a qualitative study investigating experiences of hate crime and hate speech by members of vulnerable groups (including Muslims) was published by the Ministry of the Interior.
- **28.01.2020:** Recommendations on how to apply the criminal code for hate crimes and hate speech were published by the Ministry of the Interior.
- **24.02.2020:** A working group for the effective response to hate crimes and hate speech was launched under the Ministry of the Interior.
- **30.03.2020:** A Muslim detainee submitted a complaint against Kaunas Remand Prison for religious discrimination. The complaint was later recognised as unfounded by the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office.
- **30.03.2020:** The Prosecutor General's Office issued methodological recommendations for the peculiarities regarding the conduct, organisation, and management of the pre-trial investigations into hate crimes and hate speech.
- **05.05.2020:** The Ministry of the Interior published practical guidance for law enforcement officials on the cooperation with vulnerable communities in addressing hate crimes.
- **11.08.2020:** A Muslim detainee submitted a complaint regarding catering options against the Marijampole Correction House and the Prison Department under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania. The Seimas Ombudsmen's Office concluded that the law had not been violated in this case.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
MALTA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

In 2020, Malta was shocked by the COVID-19 pandemic, like many other countries in the World, and this has dominated the events of the year. Therefore, whilst Malta remained on the route of the global circulation of Islamophobic statements and images, the visibility has decreased when compared to other years. The materials presented 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. This was especially evident during the European Parliament elections, where candidates from two different parties ran. 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 organisations and agencies were also taken into consideration. Some of the publications quoted in the report are from 2019 and others predate 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 initiation of a public consultation for a National Action Plan against Racism and Xenophobia, the murder of Ivorian migrant Lassana Cisse Souleymane, and the COVID-19 immigration situation. 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. In closed groups, the Muslim community complains about 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 most documented cases of discrimination and Islamophobia are in the *FRA Fundamental Rights Report 2020*.

Sommarju Eżekuttiv

Fl-2020, Malta, bħal hafna pajjiżi oħra fl-Ewropa kienet ixxukkjata bil-pandemija COVID-19 u dan iddomina l-avvenimenti tas-sena. Għalhekk, filwaqt li Malta baqgħet parti minn ċirklu globali ta' 'dikjarazzjonijiet u stampi Islamofobiċi, il-vizibilità naqset meta mqabbla ma' snin oħra. Il-materjali fuq il-gruppi ppreżentati kienu spiss tradotti minn sorsi barranin u adattati għall-kuntest lokali minn 'patrijotti' –jew, b' mod iktar korrett, partiti tal-lemin estrem.

L-istabiliment kontinwu ta' 'partijiet tal-lemin estrem li jhaddnu opinjonijiet Izlamofobiċi u ksenofobiċi qiegħed jiżdedied. Dan kien evidenti b' mod speċjali waqt l-elezzjonijiet tal-Parlament Ewropew, fejn kandidati minn żewġ partiti differenti kkontestaw. Il-kumpilazzjoni ta' 'dan ir-rapport hija bbażata fuq informazzjoni primarjament mill-Internet, li tinkludi websajts ta' gruppi Izlamofobiċi, il-midja, u wkoll midja soċjali. Flimkien ma' 'dan, ġew ikkunsidrati wkoll studji u rapporti mmexxija minn organizzazzjonijiet u aġenziji Ewropej. Uhud mill-pubblikazzjonijiet ikkwotati fir-rapport huma mill-2019 u oħrajn huma 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-iktar punti prominenti diskussi f' dan ir-rapport jinkludu l-bidu ta' 'Konsultazzjoni Pubblika, għal Pjan ta' Azzjoni Nazzjonali kontra r-Razziżmu u l-Ksenofobija, il-qtil tal-migrant Ivorjan Lassana Cisse, u s-sitwazzjoni tal-Immigrazzjoni COVID-19. Pubblikazzjonijiet u portijiet mill-ġdid f' Malta li juru dejta statistika huma skarsi hafna. Hemm ftit riċerka mill-istituzzjonijiet Maltin dwar l-Islamofobija. Hemm htieġa evidenti għal riċerka u politika addizzjonali f' Malta, speċjalment minn entitajiet governattivi. Fi gruppi magħluqa, il-komunità Musulmana tilmenta dwar il-qgħad bħala riżultat ta' diskriminazzjoni fejn jidhul impjeg. Fuq livell nazzjonali, minbarra l-pubblikazzjonijiet u l-inizjattivi mwettqa mill-NGOs, l-aktar dokumentati jinsabu fir-Rapport 2020 tad-Drittijiet Fundamentali tal-FRA.

Country Profile

EIR 2020

Country: The Republic of Malta

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary system

Ruling Parties: Labour Party and Nationalist Party

Opposition Parties: *Alleanza Bidla*, Democratic Alternative, *Moviment Patrijotti Maltin*

Last Elections: Labour Party won by a majority of 54.83% (39 seats), Nationalist Party holds 30 seats.

Total Population: 460,297 (2017) (Eurostat)

Major Languages: Maltese and English

Official Religion: Catholicism

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

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)

Major Religions (% of Population): Roman Catholicism 93.9% (*Malta Today* survey)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 0.3% of the overall Maltese population (*Malta Today* Survey)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: World Islamic Call Society and *Ah-madiyya Muslim Jamaat Malta*

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: aditus, Integra, People for Change Foundation

Far-Right Parties: *Imperium Europa*

Far-Right Movements: *Moviment Patrijotti Maltin*

Far-Right Militant 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

The recent Eurobarometer on integration in the EU, published in September 2019, shows that many citizens in Malta still have a perception that there are high levels of discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin, and religion or belief.¹ Specifically on the integration of migrants, more than half of the participants in the survey responded that immigration from outside the EU is a problem in Malta.² As a result, this has an effect on the integration of migrants in society, frequently leading to discrimination in the community.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There are no official statistics on hate crime published in 2020 or recent years in relation to physical attacks specifically related to Islamophobia which reflect the domestic situation. However, as a reflection of the global anti-racism movement and increased local tensions over immigrations, hate crime reports were doubled in June when compared to those filed the month before (May 2020).³ Other than the protests organised in Malta in 2020 as part of the global protests with respect to the murder of George Floyd, the most shocking domestic attacks in 2019 was the racially motivated killing of Lassana Cisse Souleymane and the wounding of two other African migrants in Hal Far on 6 April 2019, which is still pending final judgment. A memorial dedicated to Lassana was held in 2020 which was attended by the Junior Minister for Equality and Reforms and NGOs whereby they recalled the horrendous consequences of racism and hate crimes. The NCPE (National Commission for Promotion of Equality) in response to this said that all cases of racism, discrimination, and intolerance are an affront to a democratic society and as such they should be treated with the utmost seriousness. The NCPE envisaged a strengthening of its reach through the establishment of a Human Rights and Equality Commission (HREC).⁴ This has created national recognition of the high levels of intolerance, and public figures have been reminding the public that hate has no place in

1. Special Eurobarometer 493, Discrimination in the European Union, fieldwork of May 2019, published in September 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/special/surveyKy/2251>, (Access date: 15 December 2020).
2. "Lassana Cisse Murder: One Year on Racism Still Looms", *Times of Malta*, 6 April 2020, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/lassana-cisse-murder-one-year-on-racism-still-looms.783719>, (Access date: 20 December 2020).
3. "Hate Crime Reports Soar amid Racism Protests", *Times of Malta*, June 14 2020, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/hate-crime-reports-soar-amid-racism-protests.798408>, (Access date: 20 November 2020).
4. National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, Press Statement: Need for Soul-Searching After Racially Motivated Murder, April 2019, https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/News_and_Events/Press_Releases/2019/Press_Statement_murder_race.pdf, (Access date: 12 December 2020).

Malta, and that they hope that maximum efforts will be made to combat racism, xenophobia, and discrimination.⁵

Employment

Discrimination of migrants in places of employment has always been a problem, and studies by the UNHCR have noted this many times in reports. Problems occur in the process of being issued the adequate work permits, in the workplace, and not being offered employment following job interviews.⁶

A more recent study, compiled with the help of Jobsplus, the Malta Employers Association (MEA), the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), and African Media Association Malta (AMAM),⁷ identified specific challenges employers face, including the cost of work permits. It also encouraged site-specific language courses and cultural training for those who employ refugees, as well as the development of appropriate tools to bridge the gap between refugees and employers. The study also noted that female refugees especially struggled to get jobs.

Whilst the aforementioned report is targeted toward ensuring access to English and Maltese language classes, the report further highlighted the need for sources which would assure that migrants have access to learning their rights and obligations under Maltese law. This would ensure that they are not discriminated, and if they face such discrimination, they are informed of the adequate mechanisms and tools for reporting such discrimination, as well as being aware of their rights. There were also calls to establish a body to assess and recognise the skills of refugees who do not have recognised certificates or refugees who no longer have the certificates in their possession.

The report also revealed that those interviewed as part of the research said they were discriminated against for religious and cultural reasons, often feeling like they were not shortlisted for an interview because of their last name. The employers remarked that they are discouraged from employing refugees due to colleagues not being welcoming or customers submitting complaints. This is not only limited to refugees but, of course, extends to all migrants. In this regard, the UNHCR Malta, when commenting on the work being undertaken by the government in this regard, also urged it, to ensure that public policy and targeted measures support these efforts and

5. PR: UNHCR Deeply Perturbed That Murder of Lassana Cisse Was Racially Motivated, <https://www.unhcr.org/mt/4364-pr-unhcr-deeply-perturbed-that-the-murder-was-racially-motivated.html>, (Access date: 22 December 2020).

6. Daphne Cassar, "The Existence of Discriminatory Attitudes on Refugees Who Live and Work in Malta", <https://www.tvn.com.mt/mt/news/jezisti-agir-diskriminatorju-kontra-xi-refugjati-li-jghixu-u-jahdmu-malta-il-unhcr/>, (Access date: 30 October 2020).

7. "Employers Struggle with Paperwork for Employing Refugees in Malta – UN", *The Times of Malta*, 3 December 2019, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/employers-struggle-with-paperwork-for-employing-refugees-in-malta-un.754570>, (Access date: 3 January 2020).

the institutionalisation of new measures, as their success will ultimately be in the best interest of everyone.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 in the country and a leader of the Muslim community in Malta, requested that religion lessons on Islam 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 the secondary school level instead of Catholicism lessons. However, students in primary school do not have an alternative to the lessons on Catholicism. This also follows a controversy in 2017 regarding religion classes on Islam in public schools.⁹ Presently, a voluntary programme is being designed to introduce religion teachings on Islam in government schools; however, it is still in its infancy.

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

In the 2019 MEP elections, Norman Lowell's far-right party emerged as Malta's strongest third party in the elections with more than 8,000 votes.¹⁰ Together with the anti-immigrant *Moviment Patrijotti Maltin*, far-right voters in Malta stand at 3.5%.¹¹ Unless this is countered by strong political will for integration from the other two parties, the growth of the far right may become a permanent fixture in Maltese politics. This year, the first National Action Plan against Racism and Xenophobia (NAPRAX) was launched for public consultation, whereby the government has sought submissions from the public to address racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance.¹²

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8. "Together A UNHCR Report on Employment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Malta", https://www.unhcr.org/mt/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2019/12/UNHCR-Employment-report_WORKING-TOGETHER_web.pdf, (Access date: 4 January 2020).
 9. Sara Ezabe Malliue, "Islamophobia in Malta: National Report 2018" in *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, ed. Enes Bayrakli, Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul 2019), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Malta.pdf>, (Access date: 22 January 2020).
 10. James Debono, "Resizing Norman Lowell: Far Right Candidate Gets 3% But Leads Small Parties", https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/europe-2019/95285/resizing_norman_lowell_far_right_candidate_gets_3_but_leads_small_parties#.XkGYFi2ZNQI, (Access date: 27 May 2019).
 11. Ibid.
 12. "First National Action Plan against Racism and Xenophobia", *Times of Malta*, October 9, 2020, <https://time-sofmalta.com/articles/view/first-national-action-plan-against-racism-and-xenophobia.823615> (Access date: 20 December 2020).

Moreover, the Guardian for Future Generations Maurice Mizzi has hit out at irregular immigration in Malta, arguing that Muslims are “taking over” and insisting the country should stop migrants from entering.¹³ The *Times of Malta* noted that “Mr Mizzi’s declaration contradicts the former Prime Minister’s statement about the need for more workers, irrespective of religion, origin or colour.”¹⁴ Mizzi, who has headed the government-appointed Guardian Commission since it was reconstituted in 2017, unprompted later in the interview returned to the issue, repeating his view that Muslims were taking over by a demographic shift, raising fears of fundamentalist “Sharia Law” punishment, and insisting children born to migrants should not be given Maltese citizenship. NGOs immediately demanded that the commissioner be dismissed. He went on to say,

We should stop these people coming from abroad without a passport, with their children and with a different religion. We are living in a Catholic country, and when I die, I want to die in a Catholic country. At the moment, there are so many Muslims coming – they’re all having nine babies, next to our two – and they will take over eventually.¹⁵

He eventually resigned three weeks after his statement. This was also the view shared by the mayor of a locality where numerous people from different nationalities reside. Alfred Grima, the mayor of Saint Paul’s Bay, has stated that if his locality had to serve as a pilot project for integration in Malta, it would result in a failure. He also expressed anti-immigrant sentiments and concluded that integration in Malta has failed.¹⁶

Media

Lovin Malta, *Malta Today*, and *Times of Malta* are amongst the media outlets which encourage inclusion and integration of Muslims in Malta. As a newspaper, *Times of Malta*, has blocked the comments section when reporting on sensitive matters such as immigration and Muslims to avoid racist and Islamophobic comments. Furthermore, the news portal Lovin Malta creates content which challenges in a positive way the perception of Maltese people about Muslims.

On 24 April 2020, Lovin Malta, shared information about the month of Ramadan and wished the Muslim population “Ramadan Mubarak.” This is novel, when it comes to recognizing different religious communities in Malta.¹⁷

13. “Maurice Mizzi’s Anti-Muslim Tirade Sparks Calls for Dismissal”, *Times of Malta*, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/guardian-for-future-generations-launches-anti-muslim-tirade.710971>, (Access date: 20 November 2020)

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Albert Gauci Cunningham, “F’dari hemm il-bieb bieb niddecidi jien min bidhol, l-istess pajjizna”, *Illum*, 7 October 2019, http://www.illum.com.mt/ahbarijiet/politika/57092/sindku_laburista_jisaq_lintegrizzjoni_falliet?fbclid=IwAR0PICPyHlkShSH26-qIHPS3woN6ZJncqoZu6LgZnGdgG9LflQrWGFVnwLE#.XkNV-LC2ZNQL, (Access date: 20 November 2020)

17. “Ramadan Kareem! Here’s Malta’s Fasting Timetable for Islam’s Holy Month”, Lovin Malta, 24 April 2020, <https://lovinmalta.com/news/ramadan-kareem-heres-maltas-fasting-timetable-for-islams-holy-month/> (Access Date 15 November 2020)

Justice System

International human rights monitoring bodies reiterated their concerns about existing gaps in national criminal codes in addressing hate crime and hate speech. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) expressed its concerns that the criminal code in Malta¹⁸ does not contain provisions that criminalise “the creation or leadership of a group which promotes racism or support for such a group” and “participation in its activities”.¹⁹ Maltese authorities were urged to add to the criminal code “incitement to discrimination; defamation; public dissemination, public distribution, production or storage, with a racist aim, of written, pictorial or other material”.²⁰ However, to date, the criminal code has not been amended to include these recommendations, and under Article 82A of the criminal code only incitement to racial hatred is included.²¹

Internet

The image displays two screenshots of Facebook posts from the 'Moviment Patrijotti Maltin' (Patriot Movement). The left screenshot shows a post by Shamima Begum with the text: "PATRIJOTTIMALTIN.ORG Shamima Begum, li harbet lejn is-Sirja biex tissieheb ma I-ISIS se tirritorna fir-Renju Unit". Below the post are several comments, including: "Go back to your shithole", "Financed and sponsored by an ex UK PM's wife!", "Imbasta marret I hero !!!", "Din kienet mil grupp li qatel nies innocent f Manchester u trid tmur lura?", "Prosit ghal Joseph Muscat ghax hu kien jipritka ghal MULTIKULORARIZMU, w dahak bina ghax wijed il pushback u beza mil EU w waqa aneijk mal poplu MALTI ja bzih fejn jirid ara fejn qabilu kelu kuracc", and "Simply two words KILL HER". The right screenshot shows a post by the same user with a photo of two women and the caption: "PATRIJOTTIMALTIN.ORG Shamima Begum, li harbet lejn is-Sirja biex tissieheb ma I-ISIS se tirritorna fir-Renju Unit".

Figures 1 and 2: A Facebook post by the *Moviment Patrijotti Maltin* (Patriot Movement) claiming that multiculturalism results into giving birth to terrorists who fight against one's own country. The comments in Figure 2 illustrate strong sentiments of misunderstanding and hate.²²

18. Council of Europe, ECRI (2018), ECRI Report on Malta (fifth monitoring cycle), Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 15 May 2018. <<https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-malta/16808b592b>, (Access date: 20 December 2019).
19. Fundamental Rights Report 2019, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-fundamental-rights-report-2019_en.pdf, (Access date: 3 January 2019).
20. The Laws of Malta, Chapter 8 of the Laws of Malta, Criminal code, Article 82A.
21. Ibid.
22. <https://www.facebook.com/patrijottmalti/>

The Internet is the space where Islamophobic comments are most prevalent. Social media pages such as that of the *Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin also known as Moviment Patrijotti*, continue to serve as a platform for Islamophobic comments and posters.²³ It is very difficult to monitor these platforms and to hold people responsible for their online comments and the fake news which is spread (and is not monitored by any institution). Hate speech is codified under Maltese Criminal Law Article 82A (1) which includes “written or printed material” and on the basis of religion, amongst others. However, case law is sparse on this subject although hate speech is always on the rise. One of the most important campaigns has been the Council of Europe’s “No Hate Speech Movement”. On the website for this campaign the reporting procedures of the respective party countries are included to facilitate reporting.²⁴

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As outlined in the section on politics, the primary foundation of the Islamophobia network in Malta is the *Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin* movement. Another group is *Imperium Europa*, which shares the same far-right ideology, and supports fascism and nationalism. However, in the last three to five years, *Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin* has taken 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. Moreover, Alex Pisani and Henry Battistino, the moderators and leaders of this movement, are responsible for the organisation of such events and sharing material, which is then further circulated and shared.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

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, the National Commission for Promotion of Equality (NCPE), the aditus foundation, and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). The NCPE is the governmental agency for equality; however, it focuses more on gender equality than on interfaith issues. NGOs in Malta focus primarily on racism and discrimination faced by foreigners (immigrants & refugees) rather than by Maltese Muslims.

23. Sara Ezabe Malliue, “Islamophobia in Malta: National Report 2018”, in: Enes Bayraklı, Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, Istanbul, SETA, 2019.

24. Hate speech in Malta - <https://antihatespeech.tumblr.com/> (Access date: 20 December 2020).

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 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 the situation. Nonetheless, NAPRAX provides a promising start for a better focus on this matter. 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, this 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 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.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
MONTENEGRO
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

In comparison with other ex-Yugoslavian countries, Montenegro follows a progressive EU integration process. Montenegro has introduced many laws that should provide the full extent of social, political, and economic rights to minorities. On the other hand, the country has a fragile economy and poor rule of law followed by a deep political crisis. The crisis deepened after the alleged coup in 2017 due to NATO succession and protests in 2018/19 because of the Law on Religion and Belief. The law was voted at the end of 2019, and protests organized by the Serbian Orthodox Church became bigger and spilled over to neighboring Serbia. In this manner, greater ethnic polarization was incited.

The rule of the Democratic Party of Socialists came to an end after thirty years. Although this party and its leader, Milo Đukanović, can be described as increasingly authoritarian and their corruption is well documented, there was no place for the celebration of their loss because their opponents and soon to be new leadership of Montenegro represents a bigger threat to democracy. The opposition coalition, which won the election, is mainly composed of pro-Serbian (pro-Russian) parties and led electoral campaigns by flaming ethnic nationalist sentiment. Immediately after the results of the election were published and the Serbian community in Montenegro started celebrating, Muslims across the country reported incidents. The highest tensions were in the city of Pljevlja, where the Islamic Community's local office was attacked and Bosniak residents were verbally and physically assaulted. This city is situated 40km east of the Bosnian border. Pljevlja was almost ethnically cleansed in 1992 when Muslims were persecuted, tortured, and killed. The message left at the Islamic Community's office stated "Pljevlja will be Srebrenica." The Srebrenica genocide was the most common reference in other assaults as well sending a clear message to the Muslim community.

The opposition coalition announced they will continue European integration and remain a member of NATO although ethnic and national minorities including Bosniaks and Albanians won't be part of newly constituted Government, for the first time since 2006.

Izvršni rezime

U poređenju sa osalim državama bivše Jugoslavije, Crna Gora prati progresivni evropski integracijski proces. Crna Gora je donela više zakona da bi obezbjedila socijalna, politička i društvena prava manjinama. S druge strane, slaba ekonomija i loša vladavina prava su praćene dubokom političkom krizom. Ova kriza je postala jača nakon navodnog državnog puča 2017. Godine, a Zakon o slobodi vjeroispovjesti je doneo proteste širom zemlje 2018/19. Godine. Zakon je izglasan krajem 2019. Godine, proteste koje organizuje Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva proširili su se i u susednu Srbiju te inicirali veću etničku polarizaciju.

Vladavina Socijalne Demokratske Partije je došla kraju pose trideset godina. Iako vladavina ove partije i njenog lidera Mila Đukanovića može opisati kao autoritarna sa dokazanim slučajevima visoke korupcije, njihov poraz se nije mogao slaviti jer je pobjednik ovih izbora koalicija uglavnom sastavljena od pro Srpskih pro Ruskih partija čije kampanje su stalno podržavale etno nacionalističke narative. Odmah nakon proglašenja pobjednika u izbornoj noći, Muslimani širom države su počeli prijavljivati incidente. Najgora situacija bila je u Pljevljima gde su kancelarije Islamske zajednice kamenovane a poruka „Pljevlja će biti Srebrenica“ ostavljena na vratima. Muslimani u Pljevljima su u narodnim danima bili verbalno i fizički vrijeđani i zaplašivani. Pljevlja se nalaze na samo 40km od bosanske granice, grad je 90tih zamalo etnički očišćen jer su Muslimani bili gonjeni, mučeni i ubijani. Incidenti su prijavljeni i iz ostalih gradova a genocid U Srebrenici je bila glavna referenca svih incidentata, što je bila jasna poruka za Muslimane Crne Gore.

Opozicija je najavila da će Crna Gora ostati na evropskom putu i članica NATO-a, osnivanje Vlade se još uvijek čeka lijesigurno da etničke i nacionalne manjine neće biti deo vladajuće većine.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Montenegro

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: Alliance: Zdravko Krivokapić-For the Future of Montenegro, Aleksa Bečić-Peace is Our Nation, and Dritan Abazović- Black on White.

Opposition Parties:Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)

Last Elections: Parliamentary elections in 2020 ended the near 30-year-rule of Milo Đukanović's Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS); they won 40 out of 81 seats. The opposition won a wafer-thin majority with 50.7% of the votes or 41 out of 81 seats in the Montenegrin parliament. The opposition consists of three blocs or alliances: For the Future of Montenegro, Peace is Our Nation, and Black on White.

Total Population: 629,364 (based on the latest estimates by the United Nations, 2019)

Major Languages: Montenegrin (national and official), Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian, Croatian (in official use)

Official Religion: No official religion

Statistics on Islamophobia: Montenegro has reported information on hate crimes to the ODIHR, counting 31 hate crimes but the data for 2020 is not published yet. Besides the numbers, no additional information is available. Montenegro's Criminal Code contains a general penalty enhancement and a substantive offense provision. Hate crime data is collected by the Montenegrin Prosecutor's Office and the Supreme Court. Data on hate crime is not publicly available. There are no statistics on Islamophobia available.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2020, the Ombudsman received 53 complaints in regard to racial, national, ethnic and religious discrimination. Ombudsman's Annual report for 2020 concludes that there is strong discrimination of all minorities in the job market especially Roma people. The report also states that negative sentiment and ethnic distance towards Muslims has been visibly increased.

Major Religions (% of Population): Orthodox Christianity (72%), Islam (15,97%), Catholic Christianity (3.43%)

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 NGOs Combating Islamophobia: The Islamic Community is the most important institution for the Muslim community and its most relevant representative; however, it doesn't monitor or collect any data on anti-Muslim hate crimes or speech. Moreover, it does not have any initiatives or projects dealing with Islamophobia specifically. It is important to add that the Islamic Community has the unique status of a religious institution; in other words, it doesn't belong to the NGO or state sector. The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, a state institution, deals with human rights in general. It collaborates with the Islamic Community and other minority representatives successfully, and has initiated many policies and initiatives that were beneficial for the Muslim community. However, so far it has not recognized Islamophobia as a problem that should be addressed. The same goes for local or international NGOs present in Montenegro.

Far-Right Parties: The Democratic Front is a coalition of several right-wing parties that at the moment form the opposition. Although they describe themselves as a center-right coalition, their narrative promotes Serbian nationalistic ideology, and they openly support The Hague-convicted war criminals like Radovan Karadžić. They have the full support of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro and Serbia as well as the support of far-right parties from Serbia.

Far-Right Movements: *Ravnogorski pokret* (Ravnogorski or Ravna Gora movement, also known as Chetniks) which is outlawed by the state.

Far-Right Militant 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

When speaking about Islamophobia within ex-Yugoslavian countries one must underline the strong presence of intersectionality among national, ethnic, and religious identity. Muslims from these countries belong to various ethnic and national communities. Discrimination is therefore sometimes biased to their religious identity and sometimes to their national/ethnic identity. This explains why in the context of Islamophobia some minorities are more discriminated and more targeted than others. Speaking specifically about Montenegro, we can observe that Muslims belong to the Bosniak, Albanian, Roma, and Egyptian minorities. Bosniaks identify more through their religious identity and this is the reason why they are the most targeted group in the cases of religious intolerance, whereas discrimination towards Albanians is equally biased on both ethnic and religious identities. Roma and Egyptian communities are the most disadvantaged groups in all social spheres. Intolerance and discrimination towards the last two groups primarily stem from a racial bias.

This year was one of the most difficult years for the Muslim community in Montenegro. The Bosniak minority has been targeted in a series of attacks after the election ended in a new majority dominated by nationalists. The tension that started two years ago because of the Law on Religion and Belief reached its peak. The law was voted at the end of 2019 and the Serbian Orthodox Church organized rallies throughout the entire year demanding its withdrawal. The Church used rallies to campaign against the ruling party, openly supported the opposition, and had a massive influence on the electoral outcome. Although the ruling party promoted EU integration and the opposition used the fight against corruption as their priority, the electoral campaign was dominated by national identity issues. Rallies with strong nationalist narrative spilled over to Serbia, with the support of far-right groups, and were usually followed by incidents. After a rally in the city of Berane, local Bosniaks found graffiti with explicit language on their houses. The graffiti featured a picture of Chetnik leader Dražo Mihajlović and were left only on Bosniaks houses, which tells us that this was a well-organized act. This brought a lot of anxiety and fear within the Muslim community but it was just a beginning.

Later in the year, COVID-19 measures didn't stop the rallies. The situation calmed down only for the post-election celebrations to burst into a series of violent acts and incidents where Muslims were targets. The most affected were Bosniaks in the city of Pljevlja, a city 40km from the Bosnian border that was almost ethnically cleansed from Muslims in the 1990s.

The 30-year rule of the Democratic Socialist Party ended and now the opposition alliance is in charge. The alliance is comprised mainly of Serb nationalist parties that seek closer ties with Belgrade and Moscow, but their glue is the third-block civic initiative Black on White led by young progressive Dritan Abazović. Although they

confirmed that Montenegro will follow the EU integration process further and that they aim to improve democracy, differences in their ideologies raise a lot of concern not only among Muslims, but among all progressive people who are clearly worried about the future of Montenegro.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Due to the victory of the right-wing block, the Muslim community mainly of Bosniak ethnicity suffered a series of attacks and vandalism incidents in post-election celebrations across the country. Some incidents took place before the election; for instance, a member of the Bosniak Cultural Community, a resident of Luxembourg, in his visit to Montenegro (specifically to the city of Bar), found his car damaged with the threatening message, “We will report you to the Ministry of Internal Affairs because you came to vote.”¹



Figure 1: The portrait of a Serb war criminal painted on Muslim houses in the city of Berane, northwest of Montenegro, accompanied by explicit language.²

Another more frightening assault happened on August 9 when Muslims in the city of Berane woke up to find their houses vandalized with graffiti with portraits of Draža Mihajlović and Pavle Đurišić, Serbian war criminals from WWII who orchestrated the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in the Balkans between 1940 and 1945, resulting in the death and displacement of thousands. Besides the portraits, there was explicit language - swearing targeting Muslim “Turkish” mothers.³ (Fig. 1)

The preceding event of this assault happened a day earlier, in the village Gornje Zaostro, near Berane, when far-right groups gathered to commemorate Pavle Đurišić.

1. “Preventive Intimidation: Threatening Messages and Damaged Car for Bosniaks Before Elections”, PvInformer, 16 August 2020, <https://www.pvinformer.me/preventivno-sijanje-straha-prijetnje-bosnjacima-i-prije-izbora-ostavili-prijetece-poruke-i-ostetili-auto/> (Access date 10.11.2020).
2. Ibid.
3. “Berane: Chetnik’s Graffiti after Commemoration of Pavle Đurišić”, Al Jazeera, 9 August 2020, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/berane-cetnicki-grafiti-nakon-okupljanja-sljedbenika-pavla-durisica> (Access date: 05.10.2020).

This village was Đurišić's base during the war, from where he sent reports to Draža Mihajlović about the many atrocities he committed, one of them stating the following: "The operation destroyed the Muslim population regardless of gender and age. Our victims count 22 dead, 32 wounded. Muslim victims count 1,200 soldiers, 8,000 others: woman, elderly, and children."⁴ The vice president of the local parliament attended the commemoration. The local government condemned the graffiti, but no sanctions for local officials who attended the commemoration or any charges regarding the graffiti were pressed.

Most of the post-election attacks happened in the city of Pljevlja, situated 40km east of the Bosnian border. In 1992, Pljevlja was almost entirely ethnically cleansed when local Muslims were persecuted, tortured, and killed. On election night, Emir Pilav, a resident of Pljevlja, was attacked and got away with slight injuries.⁵ On the other side of the city, a father and son were also attacked by a group of hooligans in a local restaurant.⁶ Both attacks were followed by insulting shouts of "Turks, get out of here" and "Go away, you cannot stay here anymore." A resident, Abid Šabanović (22), explained to Al Jazeera that some far-right supporters drove through Bosniak neighborhoods in the following days with the sole aim of provoking residents there. They usually left nationalist and insulting messages. (Figs. 2 and 3) "Such slogans have nothing to do with the election, rather they represent an expression of nationalism," Šabanović said, adding that there is "fear, [and] anxiety" among Bosniaks.⁷



Figure 2: Graffiti stating, "Go away Turks". The picture was published by the local imam on social media.⁸

Figure 3: Graffiti at the entrance of a village near the city of Pljevlja. The Chetnik symbol of the "45" cross can be seen.⁹

4. "V.Bobetić: Rehabilitation of Draža Mihajlović", Al Jazeera, 29.03.2012, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/blogs/2012/3/29/rehabilitacija-draze-glogov-kolac-za-sve-zrtve> (Access: 05.11.2020)
5. "A.Aljović: Bosniaks in Pljevlje Live in Fear", Al Jazeera, 31 August 2020, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/bosnjaci-pljevalja-u-strahu> (Access 02.11.2020).
6. Ibid.
7. "M.Gadzo: Bosniaks in Montenegro Live in Fear and Anxiety Following the Elections", Al Jazeera, 5 September 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/5/bosniaks-in-montenegro-live-in-fear-anxiety-following-election> (Access date: 06.09.2020).
8. "New Graffiti in Pljevlja", SanaPress, 3 September 2020, <https://sanapress.info/2020/09/03/u-pljevljima-jutros-osvanuli-novi-grafiti-s-pogrđnim-porukama-bosnjacima/> (Access date: 10.09.2020).
9. Ibid.

In the following days, the glass of the local office of the Islamic Community in Pljevlja was broken and unknown felons left the message “Pljevlja will be Srebrenica.”¹⁰ (Fig. 3) Reference to the Srebrenica genocide was the most common among these hate crimes. For example, at the entrance of a village near Pljevlja, the name “Srebrenica” was written on the welcoming road sign and messages “Go away Turks” on the roads. (Fig. 3) While the head of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Husein Kavazović, called on the Montenegrin authorities to protect the country’s Muslim minority saying that this all brings back the ideologies that have already led to war crimes and genocide in the region during the 1990s.¹¹ A local imam, Samir Kadribasić, claimed that the judiciary facilitated further violence by its decision to categorize this act as a misdemeanor and not as a punishable offence.¹² According to Montenegrin legislation, misdemeanors don’t require analysis of evidence but punishable offences do, and, therefore, the messages were not analyzed and CCTV videos were not investigated. In this way, the chances of finding the felons were severely diminished. Kadribasić later resigned due to the overall pressure.¹³



Figure 3: Shattered glass at the entrance of the Islamic Community’s office in the city of Pljevlja. A threatening note was left that stated “Pljevlja will be Srebrenica.”¹⁴

10. “Shattered Glass of Islamic Community’s Office in Pljevlja”, PvInformer, 2 September 2020, <https://www.pvinformer.me/kamenovane-prostorije-islamske-zajednice-u-pljevljima/> (Access date: 02.09.2020).
11. “S. Kajošević: Ethnic Tension Rise as Muslims Are Targeted after Montenegro Elections”, Balkan Insight., 2 September, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/09/02/ethnic-tensions-rise-muslims-targeted-after-montenegro-elections/> (Access date: 05.09.2020).
12. “Kdribašić: Judge Has Only Encouraged Future Assaults on Religious Institutions”, Portal Analitika, 7 September 2020, <https://www.portalanalitika.me/clanak/kadribasic-tenzije-se-smirile-ljudi-dozivjeli-linc> (Access date: 10.09.2020).
13. Ibid.
14. “Shattered Glass of Islamic Community’s Office in Pljevlja”, PvInformer, 2 September 2020, <https://www.pvinformer.me/kamenovane-prostorije-islamske-zajednice-u-pljevljima/> (Access date: 02.09.2020).

A day after the Islamic Community's office was vandalized, other nationalist messages were sprayed on venues of local Bosniaks such as "Srebrenica", "Turks", and the "4S" cross - an old Serbian symbol used by Serbian far-right nationalists.¹⁵ (Fig. 4)



Figure 4: Venue owned by Bosniak Muslim vandalized. Sprayed messages read "Srebrenica" and "Turks" with the "4S" symbol of Serbian nationalists.¹⁶

Insulting messages and hate incidents started occurring in other cities, too. Another northern city, Rozaje, with predominantly Muslim residents, found the "4S" cross graffitied all over the city.¹⁷ In the city of Berane, a football match between local team Buducnost and a visiting team from the city of Plav (with a predominantly Muslim population) was interrupted due to the nationalist chants and insults from local fans. A car from a visiting fan was heavily damaged.¹⁸

Employment

Earlier this year, the Bosniak National Council stated that there is no direct discrimination of Bosniaks in Montenegro, but that there is a strong presence of institutional discrimination. Northern cities, where Muslims are mainly situated, remain the poorest part of the country with no significant investments. These cities witness large economic migration of people into Western European countries.

It is not possible to uncover whether Islamophobia-based discrimination exists in the employment sphere since information is not publicly available - only statisti-

15. "New Graffiti in Pljevlja", SanaPress, 3 September 2020, <https://sanapress.info/2020/09/03/u-pljevljima-jutros-osvanuli-novi-grafiti-s-pogrdnim-porukama-bosnjacima/> (Access date: 10.09.2020).

16. Ibid.

17. "Graffiti All over Rozaje", Pobjeda, 3 September 2020, <https://www.pobjeda.me/clanak/rozaje-osvanulo-u-grafitima-sa-4s-prefarbani-u-toku-dana> (Access date: 15.09.2020).

18. "Hooligans in Berane Insulted Visiting Team and Demolished Fan's Car, Four Persons Charged", AntenaM, 10 October 2020, <https://www.antenam.net/drustvo/hronika/173522-huligani-u-beranama-vrijedjali-ekipu-jezera-demoliran-automobil-privedene-cetiri-osobe> (Access date: 05.11.2020).

cal data is available. Based on the latter, there is certainly discrimination present but the information does not list the grounds of the alleged discrimination.

Education

One of the main challenges for Montenegro is the lack of willingness for the normative legislature to be put into practice. This problem is visible in almost all spheres including education, where the Bosniak National Council warns that the “Strategy for Minority Policies 2019-2023” can lead to failure. For instance, Bosniak students have the right to education in their mother tongue since 2007.¹⁹ Nevertheless this has never been practiced and all efforts of the Bosniak National Council to practice this right have been unsuccessful. The Bosniak Party has advocated in the parliament that content about Islamic cultural heritage should be added to the curriculum as well as content of the most prominent Bosniak writers and poets from recent history who influenced Montenegrin literature in the best way.²⁰

Politics

This election brought historical change since the rule of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) came to an end after almost thirty years. The DPS with the support of its small allies, including two Albanian coalitions and the Bosniak Party, got 40 out of 81 seats, while the far-right opposition For the Future of Montenegro won 41 out of 81 seats.²¹ The opposition For the Future of Montenegro is comprised mainly of Serb nationalist parties that seek closer ties with Belgrade and Moscow. Ethnic minorities (the Albanian coalition with one seat and the Bosniak Party with 3 seats) have been officially invited to join the new government.²² They rejected the offer, stating that the call was only a formality and that there is a lack of trust on the side of the soon-to-be ruling coalition due to the earlier nationalistic attitude of the pro-Serbian bloc.²³

For the first time after 1998, ethnic minorities won't be present in the government. The head of Civil Alliance NGO, Boris Raonic, warned that it was a problem that there are no minority representatives in the new government. “This means minorities will be excluded from decision-making at the state level. The future PM didn't

19. According to the constitution of 2007, all national minorities have the right to education in their mother tongue. The Albanian minority has been able to practice this right since 1963. Blagojevic, Goran. *Constitutional Regulation of Language Usage*. Podgorica: Research Institute of Montenegro's Parliament, 2018.

20. “Ibrahimovic: Islamic Art and Culture Should Be Part of Curriculum for Primary and High Education”, Bosniak Party, 25 July 2020, <https://www.bscg.me/skupstinske-diskusije/ibrahimovic-islamska-umjetnost-i-literatura-da-budu-dio-udzbenickih-kompleta-za-osnovno-i-srednje-obrazovanje/> (Access date: 05.11.2020).

21. “S. Kajošević: Montenegro's Ethnic Minorities Parties Consider Joining New Govt”, Balkan Insight, 15 September 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/09/15/montenegros-ethnic-minority-parties-consider-joining-new-govt/> (Access date: 05.11.2020)

22. Ibid.

23. “Husović: Decision Not to Enter New Government Is the Most Important Decision after Referendum”, Bosniak Party, 31 October 2020, <https://www.bscg.me/aktuelnosti/husovic-na-radiju-antena-m-odluka-bs-da-ne-ud-u-vladu-je-najvaznija-odluka-partije-poslije-referenduma/> (Access date: 06.11.2020).

do enough to convince ethnic minority parties to enter the government,” Raonić told Balkan Investigative Reput Network.²⁴

Montenegro didn't experience conflict on its soil during the 1990s wars and in comparison with other ex-Yugoslavian countries, it has the least violent past. Nevertheless, Montenegro played a role in the war that has never been researched. The topic itself is highly avoided in all public spheres including education. Regarding this, the Montenegro Parliament made a significant step by opening the War Crimes Documentation Centre that will collect material related to the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s and the role played in them by Montenegro, stressing that the country must face up to its wartime past.²⁵ Oana Cristina Popa, the head of the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro, praised the establishment of this research center, but emphasized that a strategy hasn't been fully developed.

The unwillingness to address the recent past means that Montenegro has had only eight trials for war crimes and these involved only the lowest level suspects, like cooks and drivers. The last verdict of a crime trial was in December 2019 when former Yugoslav Army soldier Vlado Zmajević was sentenced to 14 years in prison for the murder of four ethnic Albanian civilians in Kosovo in 1999.²⁶

Media

The leader in the promotion of anti-Muslim hatred, the website ins4.net has opened a television station, located in Belgrade.²⁷ Although it is still not working at full capacity, the content of this media service is quite similar to the content of the website, but with guests, discussions, and interactive material. For Srebrenica's anniversary, they broadcasted a discussion on the topic of Srebrenica 25 years later, referring to the genocide as a fabricated event to crown Serbs as “genocidal people.”²⁸ The opening of this TV station didn't draw major attention in Montenegro.

The Bosniak National Council expresses strong dissatisfaction with the rights of the Bosniak minority in the field of media and information. Yet again, as a minority, they have the right to a media service in their mother language, and more importantly, they have the right to media content that promotes Bosniak Islamic cul-

24. “S. Kajošević: Montenegro's Ethnic Minorities Refuse to Join New Gov.,” Balkan Insight, 15 September 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/09/15/montenegros-ethnic-minority-parties-consider-joining-new-govt/>, Access date: 5.10.2020)

25. “S. Kajošević: Montenegro Parliament Opens War Crimes Documentation Centre”, Balkan Insight, 5 October 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/10/05/montenegro-parliament-opens-war-crimes-documentation-centre/> (Access date: -8.10.2020).

26. Ibid.

27. “In4s Starts Its Own National TV in Belgrade Soon”, IN4S, 25 July 2020, <https://www.in4s.net/redakcija-in4s-ubeogradu-pocinje-sa-radom-uskoro-nacionalna-tv-in4s/> (Access date: 05.11.2020)

28. “Srebrenica Is Fabricated Event in Order for Genocidal Crown to Be Put on Serbian Heads”, IN4S, 25 July 2020, <https://www.in4s.net/video-nacionalna-tv-srebrenica-je-fabrikovani-pokusaj-stavljanja-genocidne-krune-srbima-od-strane-vatikana-njemacke-i-sad/> (Access date: 08.11.2020).

ture and tradition. Nevertheless, such content doesn't exist on the National Public Media Service. The Bosniak National Council suggests that the latter should also always include young people from minority communities in order for them to have an opportunity for better education and to gain experience in the media sector. The council adds that among the employees at the National Public Media Service there are only few Bosniaks.²⁹

The Center for Civic Education had conducted more detailed research on the media in the context of the upcoming elections and the electoral campaign where they covered six TV stations, eight websites, and the most popular pages on social networks. For the first time, research was also expanded to the comment sections. The research concludes that anti-Muslim speech is found on the websites in4s.net and Borba.me, both of which have been mentioned in an earlier report.³⁰ There is a significant rise of anti-Muslim speech in the comment sections and in popular social media pages, and particularly on Facebook.³¹

Internet

On online platforms, pro-Serbian websites continue to promote nationalist narratives towards other ethnic groups. Anti-Muslim hatred usually increases when the world commemorates the Srebrenica genocide anniversary or when terrorist attacks take place across Europe. In previous months, articles with the following headlines were published: "Alija Izetbegović³² a Criminal Who Wanted to Create an Islamic State on Serbian Land",³³ "A Caliphate Is Born in Kosovo (Jihad Started in Serbia and It Was Not Started by 'Evil' Arabs from the Far East But by Our Recent Neighbors-Albanians)",³⁴ and "Once More about the Fraud Called Srebrenica".³⁵ Another website, Borba.me, the newest one in this field, is also known for its racist statements and follows the pattern of inS4.net. It usually copies the material of the latter, for instance,

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29. Ombudsman for Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro. *Annual Report, 2019*. Podgorica, March 2020. p.207
30. Amina Šemsović, "Islamophobia in Montenegro: National Report 2018", *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, ed. Enes Bayraktar and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018), p. 18.
31. "Centre for Civic Education: Presentation of Media Monitoring in Montenegro", *Vijesti*, 15 August 2020, <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/politika/460631/cgo-predstavio-prve-nalaze-monitoringa-medija> (Access date: 03.11.2020)
32. Alija Izetbegović became the first president of the newly independent Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He served in this role until 1996, when he became a member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, serving until 2000.
33. "Alija Izetbegović Is a Criminal Who Wanted to Create an Islamic State on Serbian Land", IN4S, 10 October 2020, <https://www.in4s.net/linta-alija-izetbegovic-je-zlocinac-koji-je-htio-da-stvori-islamsku-drzavu-na-vjekovnom-ognjistu-srpskog-naroda/> (Access date: 3.11.2020).
34. "A Caliphate Is Born in Kosovo (Jihad Started in Serbia and It Was Not Started by 'Evil' Arabs from the Far East But by Our Recent Neighbors-Albanians)", IN4S, 3 November 2020, <https://www.in4s.net/kalifat-je-rodjen-na-kosovu-albanci-u-dzihadu-na-evropu-ovk-i-islamska-drzava-razlicita-imena-iste-ideologije-zla/> (Access date: 10.11.2020).
35. "Once More about the Fraud Called Srebrenica", IN4S, 26 June 2020, <https://www.in4s.net/jos-jednom-o-podvali-zvanoj-srebrenica/> (Access date: 16.08.2020).

headlines like “Bosniaks Provoked Srebrenica” or “State Gives Millions to Muslims and Croats, for Serbs Only Crumbles”,³⁶ and “Future USA Ambassador to Germany Says: “There Is a Muslim Narco-Mafia in Kosovo since 1999.”³⁷

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The Serbian Orthodox Church remains the main actor in inciting national/religious hostilities and hatred. There have been no legal consequences for such behavior as of yet. With the full support of neighboring Serbia and its Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church of Montenegro enjoys huge public support. The political party Democratic Front positioned itself as a defender of the Church and Serbian identity, and its politicians were the most vocal Islamophobes in parliament.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There are no NGOs or any initiatives dedicated to the suppression and monitoring of hate and hostilities against Muslims in Montenegro. The Islamic Community is the most important institution for the Muslim community and its most relevant representative; however, it doesn't monitor or collect any data on anti-Muslim hate crimes or speech. Moreover, it does not have any initiatives or projects dealing with Islamophobia specifically. It is important to add that the Islamic Community has the unique status of a religious institution and that it doesn't belong to the NGO or state sector. The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, a state institution, deals with human rights in general. It collaborates with the Islamic Community and other minority representatives successfully, and it has initiated many policies and initiatives that were beneficial for the Muslim Community. Yet, so far, the ministry has not recognized Islamophobia as a problem that should be addressed.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Observing previous reports on Islamophobia in Montenegro we can conclude there is an obvious increase in anti-Muslim sentiment in this country with no strategy to fight it. The previous government coined legal frameworks but there has not been significant effort to implement them fully. Unfortunately, the latter cannot be expected from the newly established government.

In regard to the current situation and circumstances, the Muslim Community

36. “State Gives Millions to Muslims and Croats, for Serbs Only Crumbles”, Borba, 9 October 2020, <https://borba.me/kad-dps-dijeli-drzavni-novac-za-srbe-mrvice-a-hrvatima-i-muslimanima-milioni/> (Access date: 03.11.2020).

37. “Future USA Ambassador to Germany Says: “There Is Muslim Narco-Mafia in Kosovo since 1999”, Borba., 18 August 2020, <https://borba.me/buduci-ambasador-sad-u-nemackoj-na-kosovu-je-postavljena-muslimanska-narko-mafija-posle-1999-godine/> (Access date: 03.10.2020).

in Montenegro should mobilize and strengthen its position. The Muslim Community should seek the assistance and support of local, national, regional, and international NGOs, and especially from Muslim NGOs across Europe. It can learn good practice from them and create a new mechanism to advocate and push implementation of already existing laws.

Due to the increased number of incidents towards Muslims, there is a strong recommendation for the establishment of a regional and national reporting mechanism. Besides its primary role, such a mechanism should stimulate stakeholders and other relevant actors in Montenegro to decrease anti-Muslim sentiment and stop further incidents. The regional reporting mechanism should address Islamophobia in the context of the Western Balkans, which in comparison to the rest of Europe has a specific historical background and therefore requires a different approach to Islamophobia and its consequences.

Chronology

- **09.08.2020:** Muslim houses in the city of Berane were vandalized by graffiti in which two Serbian war criminals were portrayed alongside explicit language.
- **16.08.2020:** The car of a member of the Bosniak Cultural Community organization was damaged and a threatening message was left.
- **01.09.2020:** Three people of Bosniak nationality were attacked and beaten. The attackers used nationalist insults: “It’s time for you to go Turks” and “You are not welcome here.”
- **01.09.2020:** Few local shops owned by Muslims were vandalized.
- **02.09.2020:** Windows were broken at the local Islamic Community office, and the following message was thrown through a window: “Pljevlja will be Srebrenica.”
- **02.09.2020:** “4S” cross graffiti showed up in several locations in the city of Rozaje.
- **03.09.2020:** The graffiti “Go away Turks” appeared in several locations in the city of Pljevlje.
- **04.09.2020:** Nationalist messages were sprayed on venues of local Bosniaks: “Srebrenica”, “Turks” and the “4S” cross - an old Serbian symbol used by Serbian far-right nationalists.
- **05.09.2020:** Graffiti appeared at the entrance of a village near the city of Pljevlja. A picture of the graffiti was published by the local imam on social media.
- **04.10.2020:** Interrupted football match due to nationalist chants, the car of a visiting Muslim supporter was damaged.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
THE NETHERLANDS
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

In 2020, attacks against mosques continued to be reported, swastikas this year being a favorite and frequently painted onto walls of mosques or on the pavements in the vicinity. Protests against new projects for mosques and against the call for prayer were very common this year as well. According to research by the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP) the level of discrimination remained about the same as five years ago, and while the numbers have officially decreased, Dutch citizens of Moroccan and Turkish origins, and Muslims still face fairly high levels of discrimination. This occurs to the extent that it has turned into chronic discrimination, leading to the victims retreating from society, losing their faith in institutions, or simply giving up when it comes to education or finding a job.

Research by *Meld Islamofobie* illustrates that the ban on the facial veil (burqa and niqab) became the source of further polarization, creating hostility and problems where there weren't any before. Especially with the global COVID-19 pandemic, as a result of which the partial covering of the face became the norm for many people and even obligatory in some public spheres, this hostility started to reach new heights as Muslim women were often accused of wearing a facial veil, even being denied access on some occasions, while they were just wearing a protective mask. According to an analysis by an anti-discrimination organization, the pandemic has led to the discrimination and exclusion of a broad group of Dutch citizens, namely those with an East Asian, Eastern European, Turkish, or Moroccan background.

The threat assessment reports by the National Coordinator of Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) continue to state that while the possibility exists for a far-right extremist terrorist attack in the Netherlands, such an attack will most likely be conducted by a "lone wolf," radicalized by the internet. Most attacks on Muslims (the copycat ones in particular), according to the NCTV, are usually not a result of far right extremism but a result of aggravations with society and politics leading from a mixture of personal grief and psychological problems. The NCTV refers to these loners as "Wutbürger," that is angry, system-hating citizens.

Samenvatting

Dit rapport bespreekt de Islamofobische gebeurtenissen in Nederland die plaatsvonden in 2020. Aanvallen op moskeeën worden nog steeds gerapporteerd, met dit jaar de swastikas als favoriet, vaak geschilderd of gekalkeerd op de muren van de moskeeën of op de stoepen in de buurt. Protesten tegen nieuwe moskeeën en de oproep tot het gebed waren ook veel voorkomend dit jaar. Volgens onderzoek door de SCP het niveau van discriminatie is min of meer hetzelfde gebleven als vijf jaar geleden en hoewel de cijfers officieel zijn gezakt, Nederlandse burgers van Marokkaanse en Turkse origine en Moslims hebben nog vrij veel te maken met discriminatie, tot zoverre dat het de vorm van chronische discriminatie aannemt, wat op zichzelf leidt tot het terugtrekken van de slachtoffers vanuit de samenleving, het verliezen van hun geloof in instituties of tot het simpelweg opgeven wanneer het een opleiding of het vinden van een job betreft.

Onderzoek gedaan door Meld Islamofobie illustreert dat het verbod op de gezichtssluijer (boerka en nikab) de bron van verdere polarisatie werd door het creëren van vijandigheid en problemen waar deze vroeger niet bestonden. Vooral met de globale COVID-19 pandemie, door dewelke het gedeeltelijk bedekken van het gezicht de norm werd voor veel mensen, zelfs verplicht in sommige openbare ruimtes, bereikte deze vijandigheid nieuwe hoogtes wanneer Moslim vrouwen vaak werden beschuldigd van het dragen van een gezichtssluijer, soms zelfs de toegang werden ontzegd, terwijl ze slechts een masker droegen. Volgens een analyse gedaan door een anti-discriminatie organisatie leidde de coronacrisis tot de discriminatie en uitsluiting van een grote groep Nederlandse burgers, namelijk die met een Oost-Aziatische, Oost-Europese, Turkse of Marokkaanse achtergrond.

De NCTV's rapporten genaamd Dreigingsbeeld Terrorism Nederland blijven nog steeds constateren dat, hoewel in Nederland de mogelijkheid bestaat op een rechtse terroristische aanval, deze waarschijnlijk zouden gepleegd worden door een 'eenzame wolf', geradicaliseerd door het internet. Volgens de NCTV zijn de meeste aanvallen op Moslims (vooral de copycat aanvallen) meestal niet het gevolg van een duidelijk rechts-extremistisch gedachtegoed maar eerder het resultaat van grieven over the samenleving en de politiek die voorstammen uit een mengeling van persoonlijk leed en psychologische problemen. De NCTV refereert naar deze eenlingen als 'Wutbürger', boze systeem-hatende burgers.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Netherlands

Type of Regime: Parliamentary representative democracy, constitutional monarchy, and a decentralized unitary state.

Form of Government: The government constitutionally consists of the king and the cabinet ministers. The king's role is limited to the formation of government.

Ruling Parties: People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Christian Democrats (CDA), Democrats 66 or D66, and the faith-based Christian Union (*ChristenUnie*)

Opposition Parties: (far-right) Party for Freedom (PVV), *GroenLinks* (Green-Left), Animal Party (Pvd), Labour Party (PvdA), (far-right) Forum for Democracy (FvD)

Last Elections: 2019 provincial elections: In terms of seats, the new far-right party FvD of Thierry Baudet won the most votes of the top three parties, with almost double those of the PVV. 2019 European elections: The PvdA won 6 seats, doubling the number compared to the last elections, while the VVD won 4. The FvD, again, came out the true victor of the elections by winning 3 seats, despite being a brand-new party (by comparison, the PVV won no seats).

Total Population: 17,418,465 (2020)

Major Languages: Dutch

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP) published the second report on their research on discrimination experienced in the Netherlands stating that Muslims experience relatively high levels of discrimination and that they feel strongly stigmatized, discriminated, and excluded - to the extent of people retreating from society.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the aforementioned report, the amount of discrimination has more or less stayed the same compared to five years ago, when the report was first published. The research states that there are concerns about discrimination taking chronic or institutional forms. Thirty-three percent of Muslims have stated that they face a negative attitude and unequal treatment.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (40%), No religion (53%), Islam (5%), 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 Moskeeorganisaties in Nederland* (UMMON); *Stichting Platform Islamistische Organisaties Rijnmond* (SPIOR); *Samenwerkingsverband Islamitische Organisaties Regio Haaglanden* (SIOR-H); *Islamitische Stichting Nederland-ISN-DIYANET*, *Raad van Marokkaanse Moskeen Nederland* (RMMN); *Stichting Milli Gorus Netherlands*; *Stichting Islamitische Centrum Nederland* (Suleymanci Movement), *Al Nisa*, *Mind Nederland*, *Fahm Instituut*

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: *Meld Islamofobie*, *Collectief tegen Islamofobie*. *SPIOR*, *Republiek Allochtinie*, *Geloven In Samenleven*, *Religion Research*, *Mind Nederland*, *Al Nisa*

Far-Right Parties: PVV, FvD

Far-Right Movements: *Voorpost*, *Identitair Verzet*, *PEGIDA Nederland* (PEGIDA Netherlands), *Erkenbrand*

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** In 2019, the Party for Animals submitted a new bill proposal to have slaughter without sedation completely banned by law, but it didn't pass the Chamber of Representatives. In 2018, there were already restrictions set in place that stated that if an animal is not insensitive to pain within 40 seconds of slaughter, 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." The ban went into effect in August 2019.
- **Prayer Ban:** No, it depends on local decision since the European Court of Justice ruled in March 2017 that employers can ban their staff from displaying religious symbols, including taking time off for prayers.

Introduction

The year 2020 has been a very different year for all, with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting many to most aspects of our lives including Islamophobia. While physical attacks, in general, seem to have become fewer in 2020, one must not forget that this is most likely due to the fact that there were several lockdowns, people were not allowed to get together, and, in general, it was recommended to stay at home as much as possible – and hence there was less opportunity for Islamophobic acts and less incitement. In the past, the mere presence of Muslims used to be enough for Islamophobic acts to take place such as insulting or spitting. Now, the focus of Islamophobia has turned to mosques, with many mosques being protested against, swastikas being chalked on them or in the vicinity, and the call for prayer being considered a nuisance. Already several reports have been released stating their concern about the polarization of society when it comes to COVID-19, and about the fact that several immigrant groups (amongst them Muslims as well) are being targeted and accused of spreading the disease and not adhering to the rules. While not being explicit, one finds articles about areas close to mosques being more frequently tested, mosques being suspected of being a source of infection, and “signs Eid has already led to an increase in infections.”¹ The year 2020 has gone down in history as a year with more reports on discrimination and Islamophobia (be it a subtopic or on its own), with clear statements that this research is only the tip of the iceberg. Many refrain from reporting as they believe it won’t change anything, they won’t be taken seriously, or the incident itself is not severe enough, indicating a severe lack of faith in the governmental institutions that are supposed to be there to help civilians. Furthermore, a fear is often expressed, be it directly or indirectly, of discrimination and Islamophobia being chronic and institutionalized. On the other hand, 2020 was also a year where racism and Islamophobia were more clearly expressed by certain politicians, especially PVV founder Geert Wilders. While Wilders expressed his dismay about Islam openly before as well, it was still less frequent and somehow hidden behind statistics on what the people think of Muslims, stating that Islam doesn’t belong in the Netherlands. This year, he was much more explicit, stating again and again that Islam is a monster that needs to be gotten rid of.

1. Adrienne de Koning, “Eerste signalen dat Offerfeest tot nieuwe besmettingen heeft geleidt”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 16 August 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/eerste-signalen-dat-offerfeest-tot-nieuwe-besmettingen-heeft-geleid-a64d857b/> (Access date 10/11/2020).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On January 6, a possible arson attempt was made against the now infamous Islamic high school Cornelius Haga Lyceum in Amsterdam. Students discovered that a brick had been thrown through a window, while also finding a tin of lighter fluid in the playground. According to principal Soner Atasoy the inflammable liquid was poured inside and the teacher's chair was soaked in it. The school called the police for further investigation. According to Atasoy, he's been receiving threatening emails ever since the commotion around the school triggered by the National Defense Agency stating that the school allegedly has ties with terroristic organizations.²

On the night of March 22, posters of protest were attached against the doors and windows of the Al-Himmah Mosque in Poelenberg, a neighborhood in Zaan-dan. The posters illustrate a mosque with a red ban sign over it, with the text "No mosque" written as well. The posters were hung in name of the movement *Rechts in Verzet* (Right in Resistance). The chairman of the mosque stated that they went to the police but were advised not to take any further steps.³

On April 2, the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP) published the second report of its research on discrimination in the Netherlands; the first report was published in January 2014. It reached the conclusion that 27% of the Dutch population experiences discrimination, a percentage roughly the same as five years earlier. However, the rise of the amount of discrimination is the most significant in the educational sector (22%). Discrimination in education is often of a serious nature such as violence, threats, and sexual harassment. On the job market, the percentage of discrimination is quite high: 13% of job seekers is certain they have experienced it and another 13% suspect they have experienced discrimination, without being entirely certain. It is very difficult to prove that one was eliminated in a selection process due to discrimination. Discrimination by official authorities, while having decreased, is still experienced by 9% to 16% of all the Dutch. Additionally, second-generation immigrants experience more discrimination than first-generation immigrants. These experiences include discrimination in the house market and in their contact with the police. The results are major: people retreat from society, lose their faith in institutions, give up when it comes to education or finding a job, or indicate having

2. Ewoud Butter, "Coronacrisis leidt tot discriminatie en uitsluiting", *Republiek Allochtonie*, 19 May 2020, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/coronacrisis-leidt-tot-discriminatie-en-uitsluiting>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

3. "Moskeebestuur geschrokken van haatposters: wij staan voor saamhorigheid en niet voor verdeeldheid", *NHNieuws.nl*, 23 March 2020, <https://www.nhnieuws.nl/nieuws/264248/moskeebestuur-geschrokken-van-haatposters-wij-staan-voor-saamhorigheid-en-niet-voor-verdeeldheid>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

to accept a job way below their educational level. While the Turkish and Moroccan Dutch experience less discrimination than in 2013, they still belong to the groups of people who experience the most discrimination. People with a migration background (in particular the aforementioned ethnic groups) and Muslims experience relatively high levels of discrimination (in sharp contrast, elders and the native Dutch experience relatively little), stating they feel strongly stigmatized, discriminated, and excluded. While the discrimination experienced by this group has diminished in the (semi)public sphere and on the job market, they experience more severe and chronic discrimination. The research also showed that discrimination is barely reported to the organizations that register discrimination. Discrimination in the form of vandalism, threats, and violence is experienced relatively less, but is reported more often. Those who report discrimination stated that their reasons for doing so were not so much their need for the discrimination to stop and the discriminator to be punished as their need to tell their story, to make clear that discrimination is happening, and to process what happened. While discrimination experienced during job hunting is one of the types least reported, discrimination *at* the workplace is the form most reported. As a result of discrimination, fear, loneliness, and feelings of insecurity can develop, and people start to turn away from the assumed perpetrators or even people with a similar profile, avoiding places, and situations that might be risky.⁴

At the end of May, the Utrecht branch of the PVV called on people to protest against the call for prayer being magnified by loudspeakers. The party launched a website where residents of Utrecht can object to the call for prayer by the local mosques. Residents can sign a protest letter, found on the PVV website, and forward it to the municipality. According to the PVV, many residents are against these calls for prayers. The letter writes,

The mosque calls out to prayer for four minutes and this twice a day in a foreign language. As a resident, I disagree with this. With this letter I wish to appeal to your common sense and empathy to stop this nuisance.⁵

According to the party, the letter has been signed a couple of dozen times.⁶

On September 21, a report was published on the effects of the burqa ban that started being implemented in August 2019. According to research by *Meld Islamofo-*

4. "Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland II", Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 02 April 2020, <https://www.scp.nl/publicaties/publicaties/2020/04/02/ervaren-discriminatie-in-nederland-ii>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

5. Josselin Gordijn, "Utrechtse PVV roept op tot protest tegen versterkte gebedsoproepen: 'Vier minuten lang, twee keer per dag, in een vreemde taal'", *Algemeen Dagblad*, 26 May 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/utrechtse-pvv-roept-op-tot-protest-tegen-versterkte-gebedsoproepen-vier-minuten-lang-twee-keer-per-dag-in-ee-vreemde-taal-a8c1f190/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

6. Josselin Gordijn, "Utrechtse PVV roept op tot protest tegen versterkte gebedsoproepen: 'Vier minuten lang, twee keer per dag, in een vreemde taal'", *Algemeen Dagblad*, 26 May 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/utrechtse-pvv-roept-op-tot-protest-tegen-versterkte-gebedsoproepen-vier-minuten-lang-twee-keer-per-dag-in-ee-vreemde-taal-a8c1f190/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

bie (Report Islamophobia), the ban is mainly used as an excuse to exclude, discriminate, and verbally and physically attack women with a facial veil as well as women Muslim women without. While the ban claimed to target the improvement of communication and security, it did anything but that. In its press release, *Meld Islamofobie* stated that there are three important conclusions to be drawn from this report:

1. Muslimas with and without a facial veil have indicated often becoming a target of Islamophobia ever since the law started being implemented.
2. Muslimas are especially victimized in places where the ban does not apply, such as parks, shops, and on the street.
3. The police are often not fully up to date as to what exactly the scope of the ban is, making them an unreliable party to turn to.⁷

There is also a reference to an article published earlier in *Algemeen Dagblad* (AD), one of the more popular newspapers in the Netherlands, about the burqa ban. In the article, the newspaper informed its readers that according to the law, they are allowed to implement the ban. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1: The article instructs the reader when and how to approach a woman wearing a burqa, informing them that they can call the police. The rights explained in the article are based on the statement of a spokesman of the Public Prosecution Service.⁸

According to *Meld Islamofobie*, this statement led to all kinds of online calls for burqa witch hunts. While no massive witch hunts occurred, a wave of verbal and physic Islamophobic attacks on Muslim women took place. Furthermore, the report stressed that the sectors where the ban is applicable had not requested such a ban. The Council of State, Amnesty International, and the *College voor de Rechten van de*

7. “Perbericht: Publicatie zwartboek boerkaverbod”, 21 September 2020, <https://www.meldislamofobie.org/pers-bericht-publicatie-zwartboek-boerkaverbod/> (Access date 10/11/2020).

8. “Boerkaverbod leidt tot toename moslimhaat”, Republiek Allochtonie, 29 October 2020, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/boerkaverbod-leidt-tot-toename-moslimhaat>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

Mens (The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights) expressed harsh criticism of the ban. In the end, the ban created problems where there were none. Hence, *Meld Islamofobie* has called for the annulment of the ban.⁹

Around the same period, a number of copies (the exact number is not known) of an anonymous, provocative letter was distributed in Nieuwe Kadekwartier in Arnhem. The discovery of the letter was shared via social media by the chairman of the platform for chronically ill and disabled people, Dick Cochius. From the envelope it was clear that the letter was addressed to the residents of the Nieuwe Kadekwartier and the center for the chronically ill. The letter was openly anti-Islamic and aimed to warn against the relocation of the Ayasofya Mosque. The mosque intends to move from another neighborhood to a new building in Nieuwe Kadekwartier. The letter makes a connection between Islamization and the loss of freedom in World War II, and writes about reconquering what the Dutch fought and died for in Arnhem. Cochius expressed his disgust with the letter and forwarded it to the mayor of Arnhem, Ahmed Marcouch, who stated that the police are investigating the matter.¹⁰

According to an analysis published in September, based on the 139 reports filed to anti-discrimination organizations, the pandemic led to the discrimination and exclusion of a broad group of Dutch citizens, namely those with an East Asian, Eastern European, Turkish, or Moroccan background. *Discriminatie.nl*, the national umbrella organization of anti-discrimination instances, expressed its concern, sharing that there were several complaints about people of color being approached and held accountable because of the ban on assemblies. One report mentioned being struck by the fact that on news reporting on COVID-19 migrants with headscarves were often portrayed.¹¹

On September 13, tens of slogans were found written in chalk in the vicinity of a site where there are plans to construct a new mosque. The slogans were written by sympathizers of *Rechts in Verzet*, an extreme-right protest group similar to PEGIDA, and included statements such as “No mosque in our street” and “Influence Erdogan to zero.”¹²

On the night of September 21, a couple of swastikas were found chalked on a street in Enschede, along with “SS” signs. While the perpetrator is still unknown,

9. Ibid.

10. John Bruinsma, “Opruiende anonieme brief over moskee verspreid in Arnhemse wijk”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 12 September 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/arnhem/opruiende-anonieme-brief-over-moskee-verspreid-in-arnhemse-wijk-a4d8ffb2/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

11. Roemer van Oordt, “Steen door ruit en mogelijk poging brandstichting bij Haga Lyceum”, *Republiek Allochtonie*, 29 October 2020, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/steen-door-ruit-en-mogelijk-poging-brandstichting-bij-haga-lyceum>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

12. Mandy de Jong, “Tegenstanders ‘megamoskee’ in Enschede creatief met krijtspray: ‘Geen moskee in onze straat’”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 13 September 2020 <https://www.ad.nl/enschede/tegenstanders-megamoskee-in-enschede-creatief-met-krijtspray-geen-moskee-in-onze-straat-a0d6c6a6/>, (Access date 28/12/2020).

recently a similar event took place where messages against the opening of a mosque planned at the location were chalked on the pavement.¹³

On the morning of September 30, a resident in Transvaal, The Hague, discovered a copy of the Qur'an torn into pieces and spread all across the pavement. After filming it, the resident cleaned up the mess and contact the local police. The chairman of Islam Democrats Tahsin Çetinkaya stated that it was a clear provocation and unacceptable, and that he intended to take the matter to the municipality. The police, however, stated on their Twitter page that they are in possession of the video, that they have researched the matter, and there is "strong evidence" that the person responsible is someone who is already known to the police as showing "confused behavior." They went on to state that he is already being helped by healthcare and that they intend to see how they can further help this person.¹⁴

On November 10, a brick was thrown at a window of the Osmanlı Mosque in Zaandam. Mosque volunteer Oğuz Han stated that they had no idea what the intention was, and that they had not faced a similar event in the past. Next to the broken window there was a camera which recorded a person being addressed by a member of the mosque, asking if he needed help, upon which the person immediately fled. He later returned to throw the brick. Luckily, the building was empty at the time. The mosque filed a complaint to the police who agreed to make more frequent rounds in the neighborhood.¹⁵

On December 13, three swastikas were painted on the door and the wall of the Ulu Mosque in Utrecht and on two synagogues in the vicinity. Witnesses saw the perpetrator painting the swastikas on Saturday night, and the police managed to arrest him. The minister of security and justice stated on Facebook that he intends to arrange more police protection around the mosque. Board chairman Yüce Aydemir expressed his worry about the safety and well-being of all mosque-goers. "We need to keep in mind there are people with serious feelings of hate towards Muslims, who might be capable of switching to more drastic measurements," he added.¹⁶ Later, it turned out that in the past, the suspect had disrupted the Friday prayer held in the Ulu Mosque. The board recognized the perpetrator as being the same person who in

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13. Erwin Waanders, "Hakenkruizen op wegdek gekalkt in Enschede", *Algemeen Dagblad*, 22 September 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/enschede/hakenkruizen-op-wegdek-gekalkt-in-enschede-af134558/>, (Access date 10/11/2020).
 14. Tara Riem, "Spoeddebat na verscheurde Koran: 'Kant-en-klare provocatie'", *Algemeen Dagblad*, 30 September 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/den-haag/spoeddebat-na-verscheurde-koran-kant-en-klare-provocatie-a70b1371/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).
 15. Tom van Midden, "Zaanse moskee krijgt baksteen door de ruit", *NHNieuws.nl*, 11 November 2020, <https://www.nhnieuws.nl/nieuws/276009/zaanse-moskee-krijgt-baksteen-door-de-ruit>, (Access date 28/11/2020).
 16. Indra Jager and Richard Hoving, "Utrechtse moskee en twee synagoges beklad met hakenkruizen: 'Wij worden elke dag uitgescholden voor kankerjood'", *Algemeen Dagblad*, 13 December 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/utrechtse-moskee-en-twee-synagoges-beklad-met-hakenkruizen-wij-worden-elke-dag-uitgescholden-voor-kankerjood-ac1d2020/>, (Access date 24/12/2020).

April of the year before, had grabbed the microphone at the beginning of the service and said, “You killed four Dutch, kill me as well then. I fought against Turks. You Turks are all terrorists.” According to Aydemir, this is the third time the same man harasses the mosque as in 2018 another incident had taken place. After the second incident, the person had to appear in court, which ruled that he was not accountable for his actions as he was psychotic at the time. The court told the man “to take great care of himself so it wouldn’t happen again, as many people were severely startled by what happened.”¹⁷ A couple of days after the third incident, he was conditionally released. One of the conditions was for the suspect to seek medical treatment since according to the investigation the man’s actions stemmed from a mental disorder. He is also not to show himself near the mosque; if he does, he is to be arrested again.¹⁸

Employment

In April 2019, a young man founded a new enterprise in the education sector that focused among others on Islamic knowledge. He wanted to open a business account at Bunq, a Dutch bank that carries the slogan “Bank of the Free,” but his application was rejected. As a reason the bank stated that according to their acceptance policy they don’t open accounts for religious organizations. The rejection email stated the following,

Your company was indeed denied for being a religious organization and it falls out of acceptance policy. It concerns every single religion. This is in line with our current acceptance policy and risk profile, and is because we are still a relatively young player in the market. This can, however, change in the future, so if you like, we can let you know when that is the case.¹⁹

Upon this, the young man filed a complaint at *Meld Islamofobie*, who advised him to present his case to the *College voor de Rechten van de Mens* (CRM, The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights), which he did. On June 22, 2020, the CRM decided that Bunq, with their acceptance policy, is guilty of direct discrimination based on religion because they make a clear distinction between organizations with a religious signature and those without, which is forbidden unless there is a lawful exception. Bunq claimed there is a lawful exception, namely preventing money laundering and the financing of terrorism, two specific laws in the Dutch justice system. The CRM, however, rejected Bunq’s reasoning by stating that these laws do not com-

17. Maarten Venderbosch, “Utrechter was psychotisch toen hij in moskee riep: ‘Alle Turken zijn terroristen’”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 19 July 2019, <https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/utrecht-was-psychotisch-toen-hij-in-moskee-riep-alle-turken-zijn-terroristen-ad486f28/>, (Access date 26/12/2020).

18. Peter Koop, “Utrechtse moskeebekladder heeft stoornis en zit nu in een kliniek”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 17 December 2019, <https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/utrecht-was-psychotisch-toen-hij-in-moskee-riep-alle-turken-zijn-terroristen-ad486f28/>, (Access date 24/12/2020).

19. “De Bunq-Casus: Zo ziet institutionale Islamofobie eruit”, *Meld Islamofobie*, 29 October 2020, <https://www.meldislamofobie.org/de-bunq-casus-zo-ziet-institutionele-islamofobie-eruit/>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

pel the exclusion of individuals or organizations without further research merely because they adhere to or represent a certain religion, and, therefore Bunq's approach is forbidden by law. Bunq ended up changing their acceptance policy. *Meld Islamofobie* considers this case as the perfect example of institutionalized Islamophobia as it is clear that in this instance Islam is automatically correlated with terrorism. It has called on all Muslims faced with similar types of discrimination to come forward and report their cases.²⁰

Education

At the end of November, a high school in Leiden became the focus of criticism on social media. During religion class, a teacher gave the students a couple of questions to answer in an essay. These questions, however, caused much dismay among some students and they posted the questions on Twitter, causing protest all over the country. The questions were:

What does the freedom of religion mean for a Muslim who commits an attack? How can we protect ourselves against fundamentalism? Why are attacks being committed in the name of Islam? Why do people believe in a religion that causes so much violence? Why are there so many Muslim terrorists?²¹

The head of the school, Ron Onderwater, made a statement that the school distanced itself from "a couple of essay questions" and that they do not judge any religion or religious belief as a whole based merely on the acts of a small group. He added that the school was aggrieved that some felt hurt by this essay as it was not their intention. While some praised this statement, others criticized the lack of total distancing and the fact that the issue of such questions ending up in a classroom was not adequately addressed and dealt with. Especially after the murder on Samuel Paty in Paris, the insinuation that all Muslims are terrorists hit a particularly raw nerve.²²

The brutal murder of Samuel Paty caused a lot of commotion both within and outside of the educational sphere. After the attack, the mayor of Amsterdam, Femke Halsema, stated that she intended to sit down with teachers in order to find out if they feel threatened while doing their jobs and what they need. She claimed to have received signals that teachers are ill at ease at the moment and she argued that it was known for a longer time that teachers don't feel free to discuss all topics because of

20. "De Bunq-Casus: Zo ziet institutionale Islamofobie eruit", *Meld Islamofobie*, 29 October 2020, <https://www.meldislamofobie.org/de-bunq-casus-zo-ziet-institutionele-islamofobie-eruit/>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

21. "School neemt afstand van vragen uit 'haatzaaiende' schrijfpdracht over islam", *Algemeen Dagblad*, 21 November 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/school-neemt-afstand-van-vragen-uit-haatzaaiende-schrijfpdracht-over-islam-ab7c6298/>, (Access date 26/11/2020).

22. "School neemt afstand van vragen uit 'haatzaaiende' schrijfpdracht over islam", *Algemeen Dagblad*, 21 November 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/school-neemt-afstand-van-vragen-uit-haatzaaiende-schrijfpdracht-over-islam-ab7c6298/>, (Access date 26/11/2020).

the classroom atmosphere or the attitude of the parents. Amsterdam has been focusing on citizenship education, also called “Amsterdamhood,” for a while now, dealing with sensitive topics such as discrimination and anti-Semitism.²³ However, Prime Minister Mark Rutte, in reaction to all the unrest after the murder, stated that he felt free to discuss every topic with his students. Rutte has been teaching social sciences for ten years at the Johan de Witt College and stressed that he does not experience any obstruction when discussing any topic whatsoever.²⁴

After all the commotion about the cartoons illustrating the Prophet Muhammed, during which especially extreme-right figures called on people to display and share these cartoons to show they “won’t bow to Islam,” the imam of the Blue Mosque in Nieuw-West Yassin Elforkani called for a law to penalize insulting the Prophet Muhammed. In response, Elforkani received heaps of death threats and decided, after meeting with the mosque’s board, not to hold any Friday sermons at the mosque for the time being. Elforkani explained that these were far from the first threats he has received. He said, “The police have a whole file. But the last couple of days, I’m being overwhelmed by threats via social media and other channels.”²⁵ Mayor Femke Halsema stated that the police are investigating the threats. According to Halsema, it is “unacceptable and indigestible” that Elforkani is the constant target of intimidation and threats, as he holds a civilized and democratic debate on blasphemy, adding him to a long Dutch tradition in which religious and political speakers openly speak out on the extent of freedom of speech, and adding that he is an example of public figures who consequently condemn violence and intimidation.²⁶ A petition was started by imam Ismail Abou Soumayyah from a mosque in The Hague to penalize the insulting of the Prophet Muhammad and has gathered over 120,000 signatures.²⁷ Elforkani eventually resigned from his position as imam of the Blue Mosque because of the pressure caused by all of the threats. He stated that he was not caving in to the threats, but that despite having far heavier security than ever before, the situation has never been this extreme.²⁸

23. Ruben Koop, “Halsema wil in gesprek met Amsterdamse leraren na onthoofding franse docent”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 22 October 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/amsterdam/halsema-wil-in-gesprek-met-amsterdamse-leraren-na-onthoofding-franse-docent-aeca148d/>, (Access date 26/11/2020).

24. Anne Kompagnie, “Premier Rutte over cartoonrel: ‘Ik voel me niet belemmerd in de klas’”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 06 November 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/den-haag/premier-rutte-over-cartoonrel-ik-voel-me-niet-belemmerd-in-de-klas-aad71246/>, (Access date 26/11/2020).

25. Bas Soetenhorst, “Imam Blauwe Moskee staakt vrijdagpreken vanwege bedreigingen”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 05 November 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/amsterdam/imam-blauwe-moskee-staakt-vrijdagpreken-vanwege-bedreigingen-ac43345a/>, (Access date 26/11/2020).

26. Bas Soetenhorst, “Imam Blauwe Moskee staakt vrijdagpreken vanwege bedreigingen”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 05 November 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/amsterdam/imam-blauwe-moskee-staakt-vrijdagpreken-vanwege-bedreigingen-ac43345a/>, (Access date 26/11/2020).

27. Ismail Abou Soumayyah, “Strafbaar stellen beledigen van de Profeet”, *petities.com*, 01 November 2020, https://www.petities.com/strafbaar_stellen_beledigen_van_de_profeet/, (Access date 30/11/2020).

28. Bas Soetenhorst, “Yassin Elforkani vertrekt als imam bij de Blauwe Moskee na bedreigingen”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 04 December 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/amsterdam/yassin-elforkani-vertrekt-als-imam-bij-de-blauwe-moskee-na-bedreigingen-a10cbefe/>, (Access date 24/11/2020).

Politics



Figure 2: Geert Wilders illustrating how he wishes to kick out the EU, Islam, and Turkey (personified in this instance by its president Erdogan), which he perceives as an Islamic threat.²⁹

The year 2020 saw Geert Wilders, founder and head of the PVV (Party for Freedom), become particularly active and outspoken against Islam. Before he would often refer to Islam not belonging in the Netherlands and the West in general, supporting his opinions by polls, his most provocative act being a call for the drawing of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad by his followers on Twitter, himself sharing a cartoon portraying him as a vicious, violent man. In 2020, he made this a recurrent trend, especially after the murder of Samuel Paty in Paris, which occurred after the latter had shown a similar cartoon. Alongside this, he was more openly outspoken not only against Islam but towards the Prophet Muhammad, referring to him as a cruel, vicious man; and his religion and himself as oppressive towards women, barbaric, and violent in general. He claimed that the headscarf is a sign of oppression and does not belong in the Netherlands - and neither does Islam in general.³⁰

At the end of October, a racist comment on Twitter made by the BPA (*Burger Partij Amersfoort*) party foreman Hans van Wegen caused a lot of dismay among fellow politicians, who claimed that this time van Wegen had crossed a line. At least one councilor intends to file a complaint. In reaction to a Flemish news article about a young man of non-Dutch descent being sentenced “only” to community service for purposefully colliding into his driving instructor, he wrote, “His name is Youssef and not Henk, so he gets away with it.”³¹ A couple of days after the tweet, the mayor of

29. Geert Wilders, Twitter, 06 November 2020, <https://twitter.com/geertwilderspvv>, (Access date: 28/11/2020)

30. Geert Wilders, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/geertwilderspvv>, (Access date: 28/11/2020).

31. Artwin Kreekel, “Raadslid Hans van Wegen onder vuur om ‘racistische tweet’: ‘Hij heet Youssef en geen Henk en dus ontspringt hij de dans’”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 31 October 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/amersfoort/raadslid-hans-van-wegen-onder-vuur-om-racistische-tweet-hij-heet-youssef-en-geen-henk-en-dus-ontspringt-hij-de-dans-a25bbc3d/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

Amersfoort Lucas Bolsius addressed van Wegen in exceptionally harsh words because of his “very disrespectful” and “utterly damaging” words. He stated that as mayor it is his duty to guard the integrity within politics and that van Wegen ignores all rules, having no respect for the office he is holding, thus damaging the council, politics as a whole, and the city.³²



Figure 3: “Every Islamic headscarf is a label for Muslimas and a victory for the oppressive imperialistic Islam. They do not belong in governmental buildings and wearing a headscarf there should be forbidden. Islam does not belong in the Netherlands.”³³



Figure 4: “Islam discriminates and legitimizes violence against women.”³⁴

In 2017, a crisis in the department of deradicalization of the municipality of Amsterdam began. Deradicalization expert Saadia Ait-Taleb was accused of fraud and of having an inappropriate relationship with a contractor in 2016. They were said to have messed with the bills, filing invoices for work that has never been done, thus having committed fraud, causing for her immediate dismissal. After three years of fruitless investigation, nothing whatsoever was found against her to justify the accusations and her dismissal. In reality there was a secret campaign held by the late mayor Eberhard van der Laan, who wished to change the minds of radicalizing youth by recording short films. The money claimed by the invoices was indeed used to produce these short films, leaving all accusations unjustified³⁵ The court cleared both of all blame at the beginning of July. However, Ait-Taleb’s dismissal has not yet been withdrawn. While the court approved, it is currently under appeal.³⁶ The municipality and Ait-

32. Artwin Kreekel, “Bolsius pakt raadslid aan: ‘U toont geen respect’”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 05 November 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/amersfoort/bolsius-pakt-raadslid-aan-u-toont-geen-respect-ae348040/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

33. Geert Wilders, Twitter, 06 November 2020 <https://twitter.com/geertwilderspvv>, (Access date: 28/11/2020)

34. Geert Wilders, 27 June 2020, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/geertwilderspvv>, (Access date: 28/11/2020)

35. Marcel Wiegman, “Saadia Ait-Taleb kan na drie jaar rekenen op vrijspraak”, *Het Parool*, 25 June 2020, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/saadia-ait-taleb-kan-na-drie-jaar-rekenen-op-vrijspraak-b3d2a7a5/>, (Access date 30/11/2020).

36. Marcel Wiegman, “Ex-ambtenaar Saadia Ait-Taleb vrijgesproken van fraude”, *Het Parool*, 09 July 2020, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/ex-ambtenaar-saadia-ait-taleb-vrijgesproken-van-fraude-bf28a2de>, (Access date 30/11/2020).

Taleb have sat down to discuss the arrangement concerning her forced dismissal ordered by van der Laan in 2017. According to insiders, however, these discussions are very difficult.³⁷ None of the accusations have even been dismissed by anyone, neither fellow colleagues nor prominent members of government, nor has any research been done, making this matter “extremely painful,” as the city council expressed. The council wishes to know what role the municipal Bureau of Integrity played as they were the ones who transferred the case to the Public Prosecution Service. Furthermore, they want to know if institutional racism was the cause behind all this. Several witnesses stated that van der Laan no longer trusted Muslims to work on the deradicalization file. The current mayor of Amsterdam Femke Halsema stated that she felt Ait-Taleb’s pain but that it was not possible to make any comments on the case before all procedures are completed. At the end of August, a large part of the city council asked for a public apology towards Ait-Taleb. Halsema, however, has refused to do so to date.³⁸ As of November 2020 the department of deradicalization of Amsterdam has still not recovered. Many politicians complain of a lack of efficiency when it comes to the department, claiming that their network of informants is not up to date and properly in touch with society. Furthermore, the way Ait-Taleb and her network of key figures were pushed aside causes distrust within the Amsterdam Muslim society towards the municipality to this day. Because of this, the municipality is not aware of what’s going on within the Muslim community and signals of possible radicalization reach the municipality far too late. Especially after the attacks in Paris and Vienna, the situation in the department became more urgent.³⁹ At the beginning of November, more than forty functionaries of the municipality of Amsterdam complained about an unsafe work atmosphere. The main cause of this, they claimed, was the treatment Ait-Taleb received throughout the past three years. According to the functionaries (mostly native Dutch), colleagues of non-Western descent often feel mistrusted, especially those who are Muslim. Since Ait-Taleb’s case, many don’t feel comfortable anymore at work and even stay at home sick after seeing how a colleague was under attack and was not protected by the municipality. They say, even a functionary accused of misconduct deserves a “more reasonable, just and humane treatment.”⁴⁰ According to the functionaries, it is high time the municipality recognizes its mistakes, quickly and generously

37. Olaf Heyblom & Marcel Wiegman, “Ruim veertig ambtenaren klagen bij Halsema over onveilige werksfeer”, *Het Parool*, 03 November 2020, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/ruim-veertig-ambtenaren-klagen-bij-halsema-over-onveilige-werksfeer-b3a654dc/>, (Access date 30/11/2020).

38. Marcel Wiegman, “Nog geen excuses voor anti-radicaliseringsambtenaar Ait-Taleb”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 27 August 2020, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/ex-ambtenaar-saadia-ait-taleb-vrijgesproken-van-fraude-b-f28a2de>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

39. Bas Soetenhorst, “Critici: gemeente weet niet meer wat er speelt in de moslimgemeenschap”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25 November 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/amsterdam/critici-gemeente-weet-niet-meer-wat-er-speelt-in-de-moslimgemeenschap-a3813d8e/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

40. Olaf Heyblom & Marcel Wiegman, “Ruim veertig ambtenaren klagen bij Halsema over onveilige werksfeer”, *Het Parool*, 03 November 2020, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/ruim-veertig-ambtenaren-klagen-bij-halsema-over-onveilige-werksfeer-b3a654dc/>, (Access date 30/11/2020).

covers the damage done, and makes negotiations more public. Denk party member Mourad Taimounti stated that he had talked to several functionaries who had dealt with the Bureau of Integrity before and that none of them had had any positive experiences, and one was at home with PTSD. According to Taimounti, the staff at the Bureau of Integrity are called “Moroccan-hunters.” Taimounti regrets Halsema’s lack of willingness to make a clean sweep after all the abuses of her predecessor.⁴¹ In response to the letter, Halsema stated that she was well aware of what is going on in the city, thanks to the current (in)formal networks and contacts, who are, unlike the key figures, not exclusively focused on fighting radicalization.⁴²

Media

In October, a new report entitled “Muslima – A Research on the Representation of Muslimas in the Photo Database of the ANP” was released by the Muslima organization S.P.E.A.K. The research was conducted by Çiğdem Yüksel and focused on the way Muslim women are represented on photographs uploaded onto the Dutch photo database ANP (*Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau*, General Dutch Press Bureau), the largest news agency in the Netherlands that was founded in 1934. In order to do so, the search term “Moslima” (Muslima) was used to narrow down the results, which were then again subcategorized into three different time periods: 1995-2000 (only 10 pictures), 2005-2010 (2,016 photographs), and 2015-2020 (2,456 photos).

In 60% of the pictures the portrayed Muslims are alone, in 20% of them they appear in a pair, and in 11% three or more persons are depicted. More than half of the pictures were taken on the street, the marketplace, or on public transportation; others were taken on a daytrip or at school; 5% were taken in a religious environment; and only a couple of pictures were taken of Muslimas visiting a cultural institution, doing sports, or working. Those who were photographed while working were often cashiers. Eighty-two percent of the portrayed women had a headscarf, and 13% of them doing sports wore a niqab or burqa. Women wearing a niqab appeared more often in close-ups (45%) and were recognizable (51%). When it comes to emotions expressed in the pictures, 37% of the pictures portrayed women with no clearly recognizable emotion, 38% of the pictures where emotions were visible portrayed Muslim women looking serious, with only 16% looking cheerful. By comparison, while the Getty Images database shows similarity when it comes to portraying Muslim women on the streets and during events, these images are alternated by a much larger range in variety of settings and background when using the key word “Muslima,” e.g., a

41. Olaf Heyblom & Marcel Wiegman, “Ruim veertig ambtenaren klagen bij Halsema over onveilige werksfeer”, *Het Parool*, 03 November 2020, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/ruim-veertig-ambtenaren-klagen-bij-halsema-over-onveilige-werksfeer-b3a654dc/>, (Access date 30/11/2020).

42. Bas Soetenhorst, “Critici: gemeente weet niet meer wat er speelt in de moslimgemeenschap”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25 November 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/amsterdam/critici-gemeente-weet-niet-meer-wat-er-speelt-in-de-moslimgemeenschap-a3813d8e/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

Muslima on her yoga mat, a Muslima in a business setting, behind her laptop and on the phone, a Muslima driving, a Muslima being a referee during a soccer match, etc. In the Getty Images database words and descriptions are added that are directly linked to the photograph, illustrating what is portrayed, while in the ANP database, more often than not, words are added that are not directly linked such as “Salafism” and “orthodox Muslims.” The research concludes that the database’s pictures give a monotone impression of Muslimas regarding all facets of life with pretty much all of them being covered (usually in the same style as well), not portrayed as active citizen participating in society, nor as individuals within their own social environment, as for example, a mother hugging her child.⁴³

Justice System

On September 4, the court decided that Geert Wilders was guilty of insulting Moroccans as a group during an election night on March 19, 2014. According to the court, Wilders consciously uttered those infamous words in front of a camera. Given that only a few days earlier, he had made a similar remark at a marketplace at The Hague, it was decided that he was conscious of the consequences of his actions. Wilders had been found guilty before and took matters to appeal. However, he will not be sentenced to any punishment. Nor is he found guilty of inciting hatred or discrimination as the aim of Wilders was not focused on driving his audience to hatecrimes or racism.⁴⁴ In reaction to the verdict, at the press center right outside of the court, Wilders stated what he had allegedly been saying throughout the trial as well: that the Netherlands has become a corrupt country. Wilders announced that he intended to fight the verdict and this time take matters to the Supreme Court.

Internet

The *Dreigingsbeeld Terrorism Nederland* (Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands) is a report published three times a year to summarize the investigations on any possible threat(s) faced by the Netherlands by the National Coordinator of Security and Counterterrorism (*Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid*, NCTV). The NCTV’s most recent publications (52 and 53) state more or less the same thing: while the possibility exists for a far-right extremist terrorist attack in the country, this attack will most likely come from a “lone wolf.” The NCTV draws this conclusion from the fact that these Dutch loners are likely to be radicalized and pushed to carry out a terrorist attack via the internet given that the Dutch extreme right organizations are very fragmented and lack a leader to drive their followers

43. Çiğdem Yüksel, “‘Moslima’ Een onderzoek naar de representatie van moslima’s in de beeldbank van het ANP”, S.P.E.A.K., October 2020, <https://www.we-speak.nl/acties/moslima-s-in-beeld/>, (Access date 28/11/2020).

44. Karolien Koolhof and Raymond Boere, “Wilders schuldig aan belediging Marokkanen als groep, maar hof legt geen straf op”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29 October 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/wilders-schuldig-aan-belediging-marokkanen-als-groep-maar-hof-legt-geen-straf-op-ac19e391/>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

to acts of terror. According to the NCTV, the real threat of loners lies in the fact that they can radicalize in an unorganized fashion online, and they manage to stay off the radar for a longer time because they have no ties to a (registered) organization. The terrorist attack in Christchurch is thought to have found resonance with a number of individuals in the Netherlands; however, according to the NCTV, this is not a result of clear-cut, right-extremist thought but more the result of aggravations with society and politics stemming from a mixture of personal grief and psychological problems. The NCTV refers to these loners as “Wutbürger,” that is angry system-hating citizens. On the other hand, the NCTV states that while these loners are not part of a (local) neo-Nazi organization, they often feel part of a larger worldwide online society. Glorification of similar attacks on extreme right forums is a source of inspiration for the like-minded. Far-right extremists worldwide are more and more active on alternative platforms and chat forums such as 4chan and Gab, on messenger apps such as Telegram, and gaming apps such as Discord. The far-right online communities and channels are roughly dividable into three categories: “anti-Muslim and anti-migrants”, “national socialistic”, and “identitarian and ethno-nationalistic.” The anti-Semitic and racist periodical *Siege*, which was published throughout the eighties, is still present in the narratives on international online forums. The *Siege* narrative is about systematically and randomly stirring as much unrest as possible with the aim of causing a “race war,” leading to the great *kladderdatsch* (crash) and democracy vanishing, only to be replaced by a state where the superior white race is in charge.⁴⁵

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NCTV stated that the negative socio-economic and sociopolitical consequences could be important for the threat development. Under the pressure of the politicization and economic impact of the crisis, the social cohesion could come under threat and there could be a possible opening of more space for extreme points of view. Nationalistic and xenophobic tendencies have increased in the West throughout the past couple of years and these will most likely increase even more, alongside attacks on the liberal international legal order and the national democratic legal state. According to the NCTV, as a consequence of the worsening circumstances, people might become more susceptible to psychosocial and psychiatric problems, making them more vulnerable to radicalization.⁴⁶

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

For many years now, Geert Wilders is the first name to pop into one’s mind when Islamophobia in the Netherlands is discussed. His criticism of Islam and his Is-

45. “Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 52”, NCTV, 20 May 2020, <https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/05/07/dreigingsbeeld-terrorisme-nederland-52>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

46. “Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 53”, NCTV, 15 October 2020, <https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/10/15/dreigingsbeeld-terrorisme-nederland-53>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

lamophobic views have been voiced ever since 9/11 in particular; however, he had started expressing his concerns on “Muslim extremism” as early as 1999. In 2020, he reached a new peak in the number of Islamophobic statements, especially in parliament and on Twitter, where time and again he stated that Islam does not belong in the West, that it is a threat to Dutch society (and all Western society for that matter), and that the Prophet Muhammad was cruel and blood-thirsty (see previous section on politics).

A more recent player in the field is Thierry Baudet’s FvD (Forum for Democracy). Originally founded as a think tank and turned into a party in 2016, the FvD participated in the 2017 general elections, where it won 2 seats. In the 2019 provincial elections, the FvD won 86 seats across the 12 provinces. In South Holland, North Holland, and Flevoland, it became the largest party, drawing double the votes of the PVV. A third of the FvD’s voters originally voted for the PVV in 2017.⁴⁷ The FvD expressed its unwavering support to Israel as, according to the party, it is a successful business partner and a democracy. The FvD also supports Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian Civil War. The party wants the Netherlands to withdraw from the EU, restrict migration, and enshrine into law the preservation of Dutch culture while restricting Islamic practices.⁴⁸ An interesting note is that both parties – the FvD and the PVV – openly support Israel and Jews, while many of their far-right followers are in fact anti-Semitic. In November 2020, claims were made that Baudet had made several severely racist and anti-Semitic statements during a dinner with party members. One of the members shared this information via a letter to the party leadership and the content of the letter was confirmed by two other party members present. However, after a vote of confidence within the party, 75% of the party members were in favor of Baudet remaining the party leader.⁴⁹

The main Islamophobic organizations and movements in the Netherlands are PEGIDA and *Identitair Verzet*, the Dutch wing of the pan-European Identitarian movement. PEGIDA, too, is pan-European with German roots, and stands for *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident). As is clear from its name, its main - if not only concern - is Islam and its so-called threat to Western civilization. It was founded in 2014, with its Dutch offshoot being founded in 2015. The head of *PEGIDA Nederland* (PEGIDA Netherlands) is Edwin Wagenveld.

47. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2019/04/24/why-europe-should-worry-about-thierry-baudet/> (Access date: 1 April 2020).

48. “European Union Elections: A Breakdown of Europe’s Nationalist Parties”, TRT World, 22 May 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/european-union-elections-a-breakdown-of-europe-s-nationalist-parties-26867>, (Access date: 01/04/2020).

49. “Thierry Baudet emotioneel na harde woorden ex en ex-partijgenoot Eva Vlaardingbroek”, Hart van Nederland, 26 November 2020, <https://www.hartvannederland.nl/nieuws/2020/thierry-baudet-emotioneel-na-harde-woorden-ex-en-ex-partijgenoot-eva-vlaardingerbroek/>, (Access date: 26/12/2020).

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

According to the latest yearly report (2019) published by the *College voor de Rechten van de Mens* (*The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights*) two-thirds of the people who have faced discrimination on the streets, online, or on public transportation, show adaptive or avoidance behavior. The Institute calls out to the government to appoint a coordinator to deal with discrimination in the public sphere. According to the report, the large number of anti-racist demonstrations proves the severity of the problem. It concluded that discriminating behavior takes place in all facets of life, from education and the work floor to the public sphere. The numbers illustrate that 28% of the people that experience discrimination in the public sphere, face such behavior because of their background (skin color, national or ethnic background, or language). One in five people who have faced discrimination on public transportation have indicated that they no longer take the train, tram, bus, or metro. Furthermore, there are religious people who because of experiencing discrimination no longer openly come forward with their religious identity. Thus, discriminative behavior also impedes other human rights such as freedom of religion. The Institute suggests the appointment of a coordinator to deal with these types of discrimination in public spaces. This coordinator can make sure that the government develops an overarching, integral, and structural method to deal with all forms of discriminative behavior. The Institute also warns against the normalization of discriminative behavior. To prevent this from happening, the Institute finds that the government needs to play a central role, to keep working on awareness, and continue sending across the message that everyone has a place in Dutch society. Dutch leaders and politicians should come forth when severe cases of discrimination take place. As several researches have indicated so far, very few people report the discrimination they have faced to the police. The Institute also concluded that 7 in 10 people have not filed a report to the police as they have very little confidence their reports will actually lead to something, or they believe that the incident was not severe enough to report. This illustrates that discrimination already has been, to some degree, normalized.⁵⁰

According to the Euro-Mediterranean Centre Migration & Development (EM-CEMO) and the Collective against Islamophobia and Discrimination (Collectief tegen Islamofobie en Discriminatie), the attacks by “a handful of fanatics lead to Muslims in the Netherlands and Europe to be even more stigmatized and that their daily life, already heavily affected by discrimination, racism and Islamophobia and all forms of exclusion, becomes even more complicated”.⁵¹

50. Roemer van Oordt, “Coördinator nodig voor structurele aanpak discriminatie”, *Republiek Allochtonie*, 10 June 2020, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/stop-terrorisme-en-stop-haatzaaien-tegen-moslims>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

51. “Stop terrorisme en stop haatzaaien tegen moslims”, *Republiek Allochtonie*, 29 October 2020, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/stop-terrorisme-en-stop-haatzaaien-tegen-moslims>, (Access date 10/11/2020).

The municipality of Amsterdam launched a campaign to stop discrimination, which is still prominent in the city. With the support of several famous Dutch citizens, it placed posters all across the town calling on people to be an “Amsterdammer,” a true resident of the city, one who is open to different cultures, religions, and lifestyles, and who values this richness. The campaign not only calls on people to be more tolerant, but actually to speak up against injustice and when they see discrimination, to intervene rather than turn away.⁵²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

During this research on the current status quo of Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands in 2020 several red flags popped up: polarization, low reportage of discrimination, chronic Islamophobia, institutionalized Islamophobia, and the concept of “Wutbürger” introduced by the NCTV. While they might seem unrelated at first, they are actually accelerating one another, affecting one another, dragging everything into a vicious circle that is becoming harder and harder to break loose from. While the fact that there is more research on discrimination is undeniably a step in the right direction, it will remain nothing but a small step if these reports are not heard by the relevant governmental institutions, which seems largely not to have been the case in 2020. In order to be able to make a change in the oncoming years, one needs to pay close attention to the aforementioned red flags and deal with them as soon as possible.

Firstly, governmental institutions need to realize that polarization is partly the result of a severe lack of trust experienced by many Muslims towards governmental institutions. While research shows that many blame social media for the growing polarization, one must not forget that social media is an accelerator, feeding on what is already there, that social media nurture the seeds of feelings and perspectives already present in us. However, it is these seeds that one must focus on: why are the seeds of distrust towards governmental instances that lead to a general distrust towards society and the “other” even present in the first place? An important note here is that most research by governmental institutions on Islamophobia is actually not directly or mainly on Islamophobia, but on “discrimination based on religion” and/or on “descent.” This in itself illustrates how Islamophobia and all the acts of discrimination experienced by Muslim citizens in the Netherlands are not (yet?) important enough to deserve their own research. This reflects exactly how many Muslims in the Netherlands actually feel – i.e., not important enough to be dealt with, to be helped. In order to remove this lack of trust towards governmental institutions, the government needs to understand that some Muslims might have a different perspective on life due

52. Gemeente Amsterdam, “Wees nooit bang om je uit te spreken, het maakt een wereld van verschil”, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29 October 2020, <https://www.ad.nl/branded/wees-nooit-bang-om-je-uit-te-spreken-het-maakt-een-wereld-van-verschil-a547f7e7/>, (Access date 24/12/2020).

to their religion and their cultural background, making them often misunderstood or not heard by people who do not share their perspectives, especially non-Muslim, native Dutch citizens. Thus, the government needs to make its institutions more accessible to Muslims by making sure that they have access to people who share or, at least, understand their background, and by placing Muslim employees in all different levels of governmental service along with non-Muslim employees. In this way, Muslim citizens will feel represented, and the government will send out a strong anti-polarization message by showing *all* Dutch citizens are represented.

This brings us to the second topic - coping with chronic and institutionalized Islamophobia. As illustrated by the research by Yüksel on the photo database of the Netherlands' biggest press agency, Muslim women are severely mis- and unrepresented in the media. They are turned into almost unhuman beings, beings that are stripped of all feelings, interests, and opinions, facilitating the otherization and objectification of Muslims as something so different, so other than the Dutch native woman. Following this, they need to be either excluded from society or liberated from their Islamic change, and introduced into the real, liberal Dutch society. Either stance is a clear form of Islamophobia, albeit they both express themselves differently. It is exactly this purposeful misrepresentation in the media along with the aforementioned underrepresentation of Muslims that has led to Islamophobia taking on a chronic and/or institutionalized form. It is up to the government to counter the misrepresentation of a significant part of its citizens by developing policies that lead to the correct representation of its Muslim citizens. One way of doing this, along with the aforementioned policy recommendation is by introducing new regulations for the way Muslims, and Muslim women in particular, are represented in the media, on the news, and in newspapers, and not showing them as faceless ghosts wallowing around from one place to another. They should be presented as the active and participating citizens that they truly are.

Lastly, in order for the aforementioned policies to have any effect, the government needs to rethink and readdress this new concept of "Wutbürger" coined by the NCTV. Pretty much all the attacks on Muslims and mosques by native Dutch citizens are not referred to as terrorist attacks inspired by an ideology that spans time and space, but as a sudden act by a "lone wolf" or, as NCTV now seems to prefer to call them, a "Wutbürger." Meaning angry citizen, this type of person does not act out of clear, far-right extremist ideology, but more as the result of aggravations with society and politics stemming from a mixture of personal grief and psychological problems. This type of perpetrator is, then, often triggered into action under the influence of the internet with its radicalizing forums. The double standard here is particularly shocking, especially when one considers that the government does not seem able to spot it itself and at the same time, it wonders why there is so much polarization and a

lack of faith in governmental institutions by Muslims. Even throughout this research, many events were presented in which Muslims were the victims and the perpetrators were native Dutch. More often than not, somehow the perpetrator was considered to be “not normal”, “suffering from psychoses”, in need of “guidance and help”, etc. The statements claim that their acts were, in fact, not directed towards Muslims, but the world in general as a result of severe dismay. One cannot but wonder why Muslim Dutch citizens, especially the ones who have been in the Netherlands for several generations, are not treated with the same understanding, leniency, and outstretched hand extended to the native Dutch. When someone with a Muslim background commits an act of violence, always a connection of some kind is made to radical groups that the perpetrator once in their lifetime might have visited online, a sermon made by a sheikh that may or may not possibly have ties to a group considered to be anti-Western, etc. One does not ever bother to consider the fact that this Muslim perpetrator is as much dismayed as the non-Muslim one, that their acts might also be a result of desperation and malcontent stemming from the current political landscape, perhaps a result of all the discrimination and its effects on Muslims seen throughout this report and supported by other research on discrimination, maybe a result of being under- or misrepresented in Dutch society and having no faith in governmental institutions. In order to stop polarization and chronic Islamophobia, the government needs to understand that Muslim Dutch citizens are as much deserving of the government’s help as anybody else, and that those who commit a crime, more often than not, are a “Wutbürger” as well, turning to violent measures as a result of sheer desperation and psychological issues stemming forth from constant discrimination and otherization. In order to do so, the government has to apply the previous recommendations, and finally start to view Muslims as real Dutch citizens.

Chronology

- **20.01.2020:** The court in Amsterdam ruled that there were not sufficient reasons to justify Minister for Primary and Secondary Education and Media Arie Slob’s actions towards the Cornelius Haga Lyceum e.g.. cutting off of subsidies, intervening in the school’s leadership, etc.
- **22.03.2020:** Posters of protest were placed on the doors and windows of the Al-Himmah Mosque in Poelenberg, a neighborhood in Zaandam. The posters showed a mosque with a red ban sign over it and the text “No mosque.”
- **02.04.2020:** The Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP) published the second report of their research on discrimination in the Netherlands stating that people with a migration background (especially Turkish and Moroccan) and Muslims experience relatively high levels of discrimination, and that they feel strongly stigmatized, discriminated, and excluded. The latter affect the

victims to the extent of them retreating from society, losing their faith in institutions, or simply giving up when it comes to education or finding a job.

- **26.05.2020:** The Utrecht branch of the PVV called on people to protest against the call for prayer being magnified by loudspeakers. The party launched a website where residents of Utrecht can object to the call for prayer by the local mosques.
- **09.07.2020:** Deradicalization expert Saadia Ait-Taleb of the municipality of Amsterdam was cleared of both the accusations of fraud and of having an inappropriate relationship with a contractor in 2016. The role of the Bureau of Integrity is now under investigation alongside the role played by institutional racism in the incident.
- **04.09.2020:** The court decided that Geert Wilders was guilty of insulting Moroccans as a group during an election night on March 19, 2014. According to the court, Wilders consciously uttered the infamous words in front of a camera.
- **21.09.2020:** A report was published by *Meld Islamofobie* on the effects of the burqa ban that started being implemented in August 2019. It stated that the ban is mainly used as an excuse to exclude, discriminate, and verbally and physically attack women with a facial veil and non-covered Muslim women.
- **October 2020:** A new report entitled “Muslima – A Research on the Representation of Muslimas in the Photo Database of the ANP” was released by the Muslima organization S.P.E.A.K. It concluded that the database’s pictures give a monotone impression of Muslimas regarding all facets of life: most are covered, and do not appear as active citizens who participate in society nor as individuals with their own social environment.
- **10.11.2020:** A brick was thrown at a window of the Osmanlı Mosque in Zaandam.
- **13.12.2020:** Swastikas were painted on the door and the wall of the Ulu Mosque in Utrecht. This was the third time the same perpetrator attacked the mosque.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
**NORTH
MACEDONIA**
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The reporting year was very difficult in all segments of social life. The assembly was dissolved, calling for new parliamentary elections. A technical government was formed, which by law has the obligation to create democratic processes for announcing the elections. But due to the declaration of the Covid-19 pandemic, the elections were delayed. The pandemic affected overall developments in North Macedonia.

The Islamic Religious Community (IRC) initially showed great awareness of the situation and immediately closed the mosques. However, due to the internal problems of this institution, the statements made by the Reis-ul-ulema Sulejman Rexhepi, regarding the coronavirus, caused a critical and disparaging attitude towards this institution and towards Islam generally among the population. The IRC dismissed its president Sulejman Rexhepi in the middle of 2020.

The election campaign in North Macedonia lasted a long time, and took place under special conditions due to the pandemic. Hate speech that is characteristic of every election in our country, this year was most present in the new political party LEVICA, which in their first parliamentary elections included announcements of religious restrictions. The verbal attack on Islam and Muslim activists was part of their election campaign.

Terrorist attacks in Europe have had a major impact on the spread of Islamophobia in North Macedonia. The topic of terrorism was intensified after the attack in Vienna, because the terrorist had Austrian and North Macedonian citizenship.

Pandemics, terrorism, political crisis, economic crisis, closed educational institutions, closed borders - all together these brought to the surface all the hatred, polarization, and intolerance that is present in society.

Извршно резиме

Репортираната година беше навистина тешка во сите сегменти на општествениот живот. Собранието се распушти и Владата поднесе оставка, со распишаа нови парламентарни избори на почетокот на годината. Беше формирана техничка влада која согласно законот има обврска да создава демократски процеси за распишување на изборите. Но, поради прогласувањето на пандемијата со Ковид 19 изборите беа пролонгирани. Пандемијата влијаеше во целокупните случувања во нашата држава.

Исламската Верска Заедница на почетокот покажа голема свесност за состојбата и веднаш ги затвори џамиите. Но, поради внатрешните проблеми на оваа институција, и изјавите кои ги даваше реисот Сулејман Реџеми поврзани со ковидот, кај населението предизвикуваа критички и омаловажувачки однос кон оваа институција и кон исламот. ИВЗ го разреши реисот на средината на оваа година.

Изборната кампања траеше долго и во посебни услови. Говорот на омраза кој е својствен за секои избори, оваа година беше најприсутен кај новата политичка партија Левица која за прв пат дури и во својата изборна платформа содржеше најави за верски ограничувања. Вербалниот напад врз исламот и муслиманските активисти, беше дел од нивната изборна кампања.

Терористичките напади во Европа имаа големо влијание во ширењето на исламофобијата и во Македонија. Темата тероризам посилно беше актуелизирана по нападите во Виена, каде еден од напаѓачите имаше и македонско државјанство.

Пандемија, тероризам, политичка криза, економска криза, затворени образовни институции, затворени граници и тоа како ги извадија на површина сета омраза и нетолеранција која владее во општеството.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: North Macedonia

Type of Regime: Representative democracy

Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: SDSM and the Coalition *Možeme*, DUI (center-left), BESA and DPA

Opposition Parties: VMRO-DPMNE and Coalition *Za podobra Makedonija* (center-right), AA, Alternativa and LEVICA

Last Elections: 2020 Parliamentary Elections: SDSM and BESA in the coalition *Možeme*, 46 seats (38.4%); VMRO DPMNE, 44 seats (36.6%); DUI, 15 seats (12.5%); Alliance for Albanians and Alternativa, 12 seats (10%); LEVICA, 2 seats (1.6 %); DPA, 1 seat (0.9%). Current government coalition is center-left.

Total Population: 2,022,547 (2002 census)

Major Languages: Macedonian and Albanian

Official Religion: Separation of church and state (secularism). The constitution lists five religious groups: Macedonian Orthodox Church, Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia, Catholic Church, Evangelical Methodist Church, and 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 Combatting 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 Militant 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 fertile ground of the North Macedonian society for polarization on several grounds seems to have come to light again. In light of such social susceptibility to divisions, the coronavirus was put into operation. The daily increase in the number of newly infected people after the easing of the measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic seems to recycle the increasingly awakened stereotypes that seek to divide the population, both in the party-political plan and in the ethnic-religious sense. Also, the parliamentary elections that took place in 2020 reinforced the basis of polarization in society. In these elections, the coalition *Možeme*, won again, led by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (*Социјал демократски сојуз на Македонија*), which for the first time in the history of the parliamentary system ran in the elections together with the ethnic Albanian party BESA. The election was marred by hate speech, which state institutions have never sanctioned. However, the level of hate speech that was manifested by the president of the party LEVICA (The Left), Dimitar Apasiev, reached such a level that several criminal charges both by NGOs and the Ministry of Interior were initiated against him. For the first time this year, a procedure for hate speech against Muslims was initiated before the judicial authorities – and specifically against the prementioned Apasiev.

For a society to be able to eradicate Islamophobia and all the other forms of discrimination, it must first eliminate these phenomena from educational institutions. The books in primary and secondary education are permeated with lessons that create prejudices and stereotypes towards Muslims. However, the effort of the Faculty of Philosophy at the state university of North Macedonia to introduce the subject of Islamophobia in its teaching material is very important - although one part of the curriculum is aimed at strengthening Islamophobia in society rather than eliminating it.

Terrorism is a topic that has never ceased to be outside the interests of the media and the public. This year, North Macedonia is in the public spotlight in relation to terrorist attacks that took place in Europe. The trial for the terrorist attack that took place in Germany has revealed the identity of one of the suspects, a Macedonian citizen, Filan Mitrev, a convert to Islam. This news caused mixed feelings in North Macedonia, especially the suspect's radicalization which became evident only after his conversion to Islam, even though he already had a criminal record. The news about Filan was still current in our society, when the terrorist attack in Vienna took place and the perpetrator had a dual Austrian and North Macedonian citizenship.

The current report is based on extensive research on reported cases and incidents related to Islamophobia and particularly the reports of the Office of the Ombudsman, media reports, contacts with NGOs and their reports, discussions with religious institutions, organizations and individuals that have helped in finding cases with subtle

nuances of discrimination based on religious belief. Information has been gathered in the local languages¹ spoken by the Muslim communities in the country.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In the city of Bitola, two newly reconstructed mosques, Haidar Kadi and Ishak Mosques were covered in graffiti with the same message. The message was “Hagia Sophia was and will remain a church.” This was a reaction to the news from Istanbul regarding Hagia Sophia. The case was reported to the police by the mufti in Bitola.² In relation to the news of Hagia Sophia being proclaimed a mosque, the media in Macedonia shared the message of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew who stated, “The Christians will turn against Islam if Hagia Sophia becomes a mosque.”³

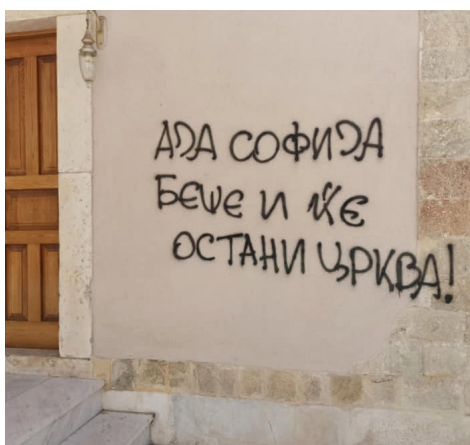


Figure 1: “Hagia Sophia was and it will remain a church.”⁴ City of Bitola, 29 July 2020

Figure 2: “Hagia Sophia was and it will remain a church.”⁵ City of Bitola, 29 July 2020

Employment

The law on labor of North Macedonia forbids any kind of discrimination based on racial or ethnic belonging, skin color, sex, age, religious, political, or other convic-

1. In the current report, translations from local languages (Albanian, Macedonian, Turkish, Bosnian) to English are by the author.
2. “Испишани графити на две џамии во Битола”, TV TERA, 30 July 2020 <https://tera.mk/ispishani-grafiti-na-dve-dhamii-vo-bitola/>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).
3. “Вартоломеј: Христијаните ќе се свртат против исламот ако Света Софија стане џамија”, Lider, 1 July 2020, <https://lider.com.mk/svet/vartolomej-hristijanite-ke-se-svrtat-protiv-islamot-ako-sveti-sofija-stane-dzami-ija/>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).
4. “Испишани графити на две џамии во Битола”, TV TERA, 30 July 2020 <https://tera.mk/ispishani-grafiti-na-dve-dhamii-vo-bitola/>, (Access date: 05 November 2020).
5. Ibid.

tion.⁶ There is no official proceeding before relevant institution/s and/or basic courts regarding discrimination against Muslims on a religious basis in the country. A recent job interview of a Muslim woman wearing a hijab was presented to the author as a case of discrimination. The applicant was called for a job interview in one of the biggest telecommunication companies in Macedonia to be informed that she is not a good candidate for the job due to the company's summer uniforms having short sleeves. The applicant responded that she is willing to wear the winter or long sleeve uniform in the summer period and asked for a written response to the reason for rejection of her application. She asked if there is an internal manual that includes a summer and winter uniform sleeve rule. She was denied any such documents by the company. However, the Muslim woman didn't want to start a legal procedure against the company or report the case to local human rights organizations that litigate discrimination cases.

Education

At the Faculty of Philosophy of the state-owned Saints Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje as part of the program International and Intercultural Studies, the subject "Islamophobia and Otherness" is offered.⁷ The description of the subject's curriculum states the following: *Definition of Islamophobia; Roots of Islamophobia; Reasons for the Emergence and Intensification of Islamophobia in the Modern World; Islamic Fundamentalism and Jihad; Conceptual Definition of Fundamentalism; The Place and Role of Holy War in the Ideology of Islamic Fundamentalism; The Holy War against Christians and Jews, New Tendencies in Islamic Fundamentalist Movement, Perspectives of the Islamic Fundamentalism; Al-Qaeda Roots; Jihad in Contemporary International Relations; Islamization as a Factor of Albanisation of the Western Balkan Region; European Islam or Islamic Europe; The Renaissance of the Idea of Jihad in the Unique State for All Albanian Population; The Global Jihad and the World Islamic League; Global Jihad and the Islamic Council; Joint Action of Islamic Organizations in Preparation for Jihad; Neo-ecumenism versus Pan-Islamism; The Influence of Religion on the Unification of the Old Continent; the Arabization of Non-Arab Muslims and the Anthropological Change of the Arabs; The impact of Modern Turkey on Reducing Islamophobia in Europe; Islamophobia and Democratization of the Countries in the Western Balkans Region.*

The literature that is used and recommended for the university course includes Lean Nathan, *The Islamophobia Industry*; Green Todd, *The Fear of Islam*; Miroљub Jevtic, *Problem of Political Science of Religion*, Center for Study of Religion and Reli-

6. "Закон за работни односи": https://mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/trud_2017/pravilnici/16,11-%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%A0%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%9E%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B8.pdf; (Access date: 1 November 2020).

7. Филозофски факултет Скопје, МИС602: „Исламофобија и другоета“, <http://fzf.ukim.edu.mk/%d0%b-%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%bc%d0%b5%d1%82-%d0%bf%d1%80-1-2-2-2-4-4-3-10-6-6-7-7-2/?fbclid=IwAR1cRrvC4JoiXjltV8L32ABefn-3j-XXaGo5RBrdvq45lZg3mchXOUSPyc4>; (Access date: 1 November 2020).

gious Tolerance; Miroljub Jevtic, *Religion and Power*, Belgrade: Center for Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, 2008; Miroljub Jevtic, *Modern Jihad as War*; Miroljub Jevtic *Religion a Challenge to Political Science*. . The books are mostly literature by academic authors from Serbia.

If we take a closer look at the curriculum on the subject of Islamophobia, we will see literature that supports misleading narratives and encourages students to support such ideologies, instead of a list of scholars that understand and try to combat Islamophobia. This is especially true of the recommended literature such as the books of Miroljub Jevtic.

In the national reports on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in *European Islamophobia Report 2019*⁸, Professor Miroljub Jevtic is one of the central figures who contribute to the spread of Islamophobia in these two countries. Studying his books at the University of North Macedonia contributes to the spread of fake perceptions of Islam and encourages Islamophobia among academics and students.

At the Faculty of Security at St. Kliment Ohridski University in Skopje an academic paper was published entitled “Modern Forms of Terrorism-Foreign Fighters from the Western Balkans.”⁹ The paper was filled with false information, yet was published under the mentorship of Prof. Dr. Zlate Dimkovski, who specializes in the field of international terrorism.

The Ministry of Education and Science has developed a strategy for removing content that encourages religious and ethnic intolerance from the curriculum at all the levels of education. However, there is still a primary school named “Njegosh,” after the Montenegrin bishop and ruler, Petar Petrovich Njegosh, the poems and literary works are full of hate speech against Muslims in the Balkans. A lot of scientific works have been written in the region about how his works served to encourage the genocide that took place against Muslims in the Balkans.,¹⁰ Also, the book *Mountain Wreath* that consist poems in which he addresses Muslims with derogatory names is still read in secondary education.¹¹

8. EIR 2019, chapter Bosnia and Hercegovina: “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 Patriarch Irinej.”

9. “Современи форми на тероризам – странски борци од Западен Балкан“, Скопје, 2020: <https://fb.uklo.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Spetsijalistichki-trud-Sovremeni-formi-na-terorizam-Stranski-bortsi-od-Zapaden-Balkan-Jordan-Nedeski-2020.pdf>, (Access date: 29 October 2020).

10. “NJEGOŠEV GORSKI VIJENAC KAO INSPIRATOR GENOCIDA NAD BOŠNJACIMA: Ujedno su ovce i kurjacizdružilo se Turčin s Crnogorcem, odža riče na ravnom Cetinju! Kako smrde ove poturice! Opažaš li ti štogod, Rogane? (They are both sheep and wolves, a Turk hung out with a Montenegrin, imam roars on flat Cetinje! How these scum (Muslims) smell! Do you notice anything, Rogan?) The verses emphasize the stench of people converting to Islam during the time of the Ottoman Empire. Bošnjaci.net, 1 November 2020 <https://www.bošnjaci.net/prilog.php?pid=47283> (Access date: 29 October 2020).

11. Наставна програма за македонски јазик и литература за III година средно образование, Биро за развој на Образованието: https://www.bro.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Nastavna_programa-Makedon-

Politics

The Assembly of North Macedonia voted for the early parliamentary election of late January, 2020 to be held in April 2020.¹² The political party LEVICA, formed in 2016, appeared in this election with far-right rhetoric. In their election program, they promised to propose taxes for religious groups, a secular state with “no religious fanatics,” and to reduce the volume of religious temples. (Fig. 3)



Figure 3: “I vote to reduce the volume of religious temples.”

There were other election pamphlets by LEVICA, in which reads:



Figure 4: “I vote for a secular state with

Figure 5: “I vote for taxes for churches and mosques.”¹³ no religious fanatics.”¹⁴

The president of the party Dimitar Apasiev made a guest appearance on the show “Only Truth,”¹⁵ broadcasted on a national TV station and said, “So, what is the prob-

ski_jazik_i_literatura-III_GO-mkd.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2vKMexo4idYf80wr3S3mq0hytC20V-6YErGviRDb-Kc2iDY9tsR9IorQIE, (Access date: 29 October 2020).

12. Собранието се распушта на 11. февруари, Џафери нема намера „пост фестум“ да свика вонредна седница за НАТО, 30 March 2020, IRL, <https://irl.mk/sobranieto-se-raspushta-na-11-fevruari-aferi-nema-namera-post-festum-da-svika-vonredna-sednitsa-za-nato/>, (Access date: 29 October 2020).

13. Левица/ Е мајта / Levica, Facebook, 4 July 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/PartijaLevica/photos/a.257980395128476/604969253762920>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

14. Ibid.

15. „Само Вистина“ – Канал 5, VIDEO: 1 July 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RkFyZEtGRE>, (Access date: 28 October 2020).

lem with us? See the whole country is Islamized, the imams sing like in an Islamic republic. Do you not see the Islamization that is happening from Bit Pazar (Old town) onwards, do you not see radical Islam entering here, Wahhabism? Macedonian students brought back from Saudi Arabia by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are studying radical Islam there!”

The author of the current report published a statement on her Facebook account accusing Apasiev of spreading Islamophobia.¹⁶ The post attracted a great deal of attention on social media. A few days later, Apasiev posted the following political post on his Facebook profile, during the election campaign:

Greetings to my colleague, anti-Semite, Mujahedeen, Mersiha Smailovikj, from SDS-patriarchal-party.

He went on to share the poster of the party election propaganda and to state, “I am voting for a secular Macedonia, without religious fanatics.”



Figure 6: The screenshot of Dimitar Apasiev’s Facebook post, “Greetings to my colleague, anti-Semite, Mujahedeen, Mersiha Smailovikj, from SDS patriarchal-party.” The poster of the party election propaganda reads, “I am voting for a secular Macedonia, without religious fanatics.”¹⁷

As a result of this post, the local branch of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights filed criminal charges against Apasiev.¹⁸

On the occasion of Teacher’s Day, March 8, MP Arta Toci wrote a post on her Facebook profile, thanking teachers for their work by stating, “Great respect for your

16. Mersiha Smailovic, Facebook, 3 July 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/mersiha.smailovic/videos/3466860720004578>, (Access date: 28 October 2020).

17. Димитар Апасиев, Facebook, 4 July 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/defensor.plebei/posts/3110048789060438>, (Access date: 6 December 2020).

18. “Смаиловиќ го тужи за тоа што беше наречена муџахединка, Апасиев не се кае ќе одговори со против тужби”, LOKALNO: <https://lokalno.mk/smailovic-go-tuzhi-za-toa-shto-beshe-narechena-mudhahedinka-apasiev-ne-se-kae-ke-odgovori-so-protiv-tuzhbi/>, (Access date: 27 October 2020).

mission to eradicate illiteracy and remove the headscarf on Albanian girls.” The post caused a great reaction on social networks, especially since in the past, in certain places in the Balkans, our grandmothers and mothers were forced to remove their headscarves if they wanted to attend primary school. After the public reaction, Toci deleted the post.



Figure 7: “Love and devotion to teachers who with their behavior and enthusiasm at work created the model to be followed. How they made the language the standard of communication, for the pronunciation of each Albanian letter in relation to the roots. Much respect for their mission to eradicate illiteracy and remove the hijab among Albanian women.” Personal Facebook profile of MP Arta Toci, at 8-of March, 2020.

The leader of the Democratic Party of Albanians, Menduh Thaci, directly blamed Muslims for the growing number of people infected with the Covid-19 virus. “I think the irresponsibility of Bujar Osmani and the current Islamic religious community put public pressure to open the mosques for the Ramadan Bairam holiday. They are the main culprits for this situation.”¹⁹

Media

The celebration of the month of Ramadan during the Covid-19 pandemic was the most abused media topic in so far as the customs practiced this month were presented as the main reasons for the spread of the virus. Over five media outlets reported fake news that the residents of certain municipalities in North Macedonia are banned from entering Greece with the headline, “Greece Bans Entry for the Municipalities from Macedonia with the Most Infected - Among Them Tetovo and Čair.”²⁰ Municipalities with a predominantly Muslim population were targeted. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that this was fake news, after which certain media only withdrew the news, without apologizing for the damage they had caused.²¹

19. „Бужар Османи и ИВЗ се главни виновници за зголемување на инфичираните, обвини Мендух Тачи“, РЕЛИГИЈА МК, 4 June 2020, <https://religija.mk/bujar-osmani-i-ivz-se-glavni-vinovnici-za-zgolemuvanje-na-inficirani-obvini-menduh-tachi/>, (Access date: 27 October 2020).

20. „Грција забрани влез за жителите од општини со најмногу заразени во Македонија“, 03 June, 2020: <https://lider.com.mk/makedonija/grcija-zabrani-vlez-za-zitelite-od-opshinite-so-najmnogu-zarazeni-vo-makedonija/>. (Access date: 27 October 2020).

21. „Поттикнување етнички и верски тензии со манипулативната лажна вест за Грција“, Krikthink, 7 July 2020, <https://crithink.mk/pottiknuvane-etnichki-i-verski-tenzii-so-manipulativnata-lazhna-vest-za-grcija/>, (Access date: 27 October 2020).

With the daily spread of the virus and the restrictive measures taken by the authorities, citizens spent a lot of time on social networks arguing over who is to blame for the spread. Due to the publication of the numbers of those infected by the municipalities, it was easy to acquire a picture of the ethnic and religious affiliation of most of those infected with the virus. However, reports in the print media that focused on negative news about non-compliance with measures, quarantine, etc. often opted for images dominated by Islamic symbols.



SLOBODENPECAT.MK

Тие што бегaa од решението за изолација, сега им го прегореа телефонот на инспект...



SLOBODENPECAT.MK

Во Чаир најмногу заразени - 402, потоа Гази Баба, Бутел, Сарај - Слободен печат

Figure 8: "Those Fleeing Isolation Decisions Have Now "Burned" out Inspectors' Phones." The criminal act as fleeing from isolation, has been it is forwarded with photographs on which is the Stone bridge, a legacy from the Ottoman period and has women with a headscarf, which leads the reader to say that those fleeing isolation are Muslims.²²



SDK.MK

ГРАНИЦИТЕ СЕ ОТВОРААТ В ПЕТОК 26 ЈУНИ, АЕРОДРОМИТЕ НА 1 ЈУЛИ, ИДНАТ...

Figure 10: "The Borders Open on Friday, June 26, The Airports on July 1, Next Wednesday, Without Any Restrictions."²³

22. „Тие што бегaa од решението за изолација, сега им го прегореа телефонот на инспекторите!“ , Слободен Печат, 21 June 2020, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/tie-shto-begaa-od-reshenieto-za-izolacija-sega-im-go-pragea-telefonot-na-inspektorite/>, (Access date: 25 October 2020).
23. Границите се отвораат во петок, 26 јуни, Аеродромите идната среда, 1 јули без никакви ограничувања.“ Web portal СДК, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/granitsite-i-aerodromite-se-otvoraat-v-petok-26-juni-bez-nikakvi-ogranichuvana/>, (Access date: 25 October 2020).

The news that the borders are opening without restrictions has provoked a negative reaction among the people. And the picture of a Muslim family tells readers that Muslims will be the only ones to enter Macedonia without restrictions.

The news about the arrested terrorist in Germany of Macedonian origin, Filan Mitrev, son of a renowned cardiologist, received a lot of attention in the North Macedonian media. One of the newspapers carried the headline, “Naive Salafist Rejects Comfortable Life Because of Terrorism.”²⁴ Further in the text, it writes, “The Salafism he embraced was an ultra-conservative movement within Sunni Islam that emerged in the second half of the 19th century. His doctrine is considered a fundamentalist approach to Islam. ‘Love of God’ remained with him after his release in April last year, but he also developed hatred for the West.” The debate went on due to his famous father, the surgeon Zhan Mitrev, who owns one of the biggest private hospitals in the country.²⁵

The terrorist attack in the city of Vienna hit the headlines in the media in North Macedonia due to the Macedonian origin of the acclaimed terrorist, Kujtim Fejzulahu.

Ljubco Zlatev, the editor of the web portal *Lider*, wrote on his Facebook page,

One of the terrorists who attacked Vienna yesterday is of Macedonian origin. Do you know what is one of the reasons France is questioning our EU membership? One of the reasons is that the country does not have any strategy to deal with Islamic extremism and has long been an exporter of Islamic terrorists. Here I will mention the hundreds of ISIS fighters who come from here, but also the son of a famous doctor. This is not the only case.²⁶

This terrorist attack caused a great surge of Islamophobia in North Macedonia. The media used terms such as “Islamist terrorism”, “Islamist”, “Islamic extremism”, “Islamic fanaticism”, “Islamic fascism”, and “Muslim terrorist.” They didn’t refer to it as a terrorist /terrorist attack, but Islam was constantly added as the cause behind his actions.

Most media outlets linked his identity and radicalism to the Balkans. In the national newspaper *Nova Makedonija*, the headline read, “Vienna Attack a Harbinger of New Terrorist Wave in Europe?”²⁷

24. „Наивниот селефист кој го отфрли удобниот живот“ *Нова Македонија*, 12 September, 2020, <https://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija/hronika/Naivniot-Selefist/>, (Access date: 27 October 2020).

25. “Д-р Жан Митрев за Сител: Филан избра погрешен пат и за тоа ќе сноси одговорност” *Sloboden Pecat*, 12 September 2020, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/d-r-zhan-mitrev-za-sitel-filan-izbra-pogreshen-pat-i-za-toa-ke-snosi-odgovornost/>, (Access date: 27 October 2020).

26. Златев: Без стратегија за справување со исламскиот екстремизам нашата интеграција во ЕУ затворен, *Lider*, 3 November 2020, <https://lider.com.mk/makedonija/zlatev-bez-strategija-za-spravuvanje-so-islamskiot-ekstremizam-nashata-integracija-vo-eu-e-zatvorena/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020)

27. “Нападот во Виена предвесник на нов терористички бран во Европа?”, *Nova Makedonija*, 5 November 2020, <https://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/svet/napadot-vo-viena-predvesnik-na-nov-teroristicki-bran/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

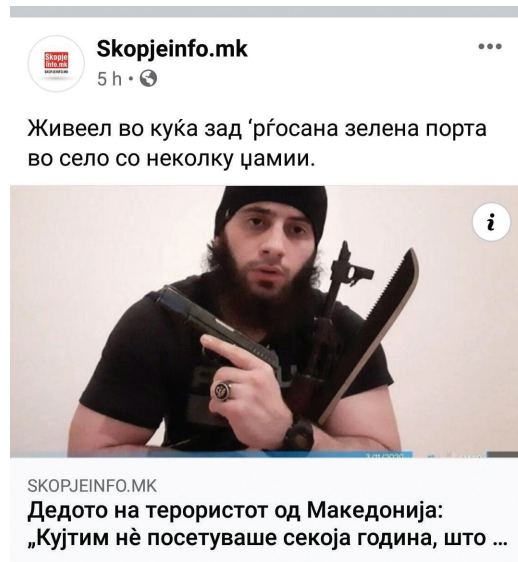


Figure 11: “He lived in a house behind a rusty green gate in a village with several mosques” and “In the title of this article, are the words of his grandfather and its written: *The grandfather of the terrorist from Macedonia: “Kujtim visited us every year, what can we do, he made trouble for himself.”*”²⁸

The article stated, “The family of Kujtim Fejzulai, a 20-year-old jihadist who was killed by police after his rampage through the Austrian capital, lived in a house behind a rusty green gate in a village with several mosques before moving to Austria in 2000.”²⁹

On the web portal Tocka, the following was written about the terrorist act in Vienna: “... the young man, originally from North Macedonia, was raised according to the Islamic faith and became a Salafist-jihadist supporter of political Takfirism.”³⁰

The TV show “What’s Not Clear” dedicated an episode to the attack in Vienna, using the term “radical Islamist sect.” It was stated that these terrorists “hate liberal societies and aim to destroy these societies.” Particularly worrying were the statements that there are training centers in Macedonia, where terrorist attacks are being prepared.³¹

28. Дедото на терористот од Македонија: „Кујтим нè посетуваше секоја година, што можеме да сториме, тој си направил беља“, Skopje Info online, 4 November 2020, <https://skopjeinfo.mk/dedoto-na-teroristot-od-makedonija-kujtim-ne-posetuvash-sekoja-godina-shto-mozheme-da-storime-toj>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

29. Ibid.

30. Убиецот од Виена обучуван на Балканот? Кујтим Фејзулај посетувал џамија во која веќе познати терористи регрутирале джихадисти! Tocka, online, 5 November 2020, <https://tocka.com.mk/vesti/358728/ubiecot-od-viena-obucuvan-na-balkanot-kujtim-fejzulaj-posetival-dzamiya-vo-koja-veke-poznati-teroristi-regrutirale-dzihadisti/>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

31. TV Show: What’s Not Clear” TV ALFA, 6 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xolvJQM-41Hw&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0TyUPtwR1OQeGBhluGL2lb72s9MLJhoWA9Cth4A58NUb-FNNy-CiXt6048>, (Access date: 15 November 2020).

Justice System

The new law on the protection and prevention against discrimination came into force in 2020. The law governs only general matters (*lex generalis*); in other words, it does not regulate in detail every area to which it refers. The new law includes general provisions, which are regulated in more detail in specific laws.³²

The law prohibits any discrimination based on race, skin color, national origin or ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, marginalized group, language, citizenship, social origin, education, religion or belief, political belief, other belief, disability, age, or marital status, property status, health status, personal status and social status, or any other basis.

The law envisages the establishment of a special commission that will have competencies on the prevention of discrimination and will be able to initiate procedures for the protection against discrimination *ex officio*, as well as numerous other competencies.³³

Internet

Civil activist Jasmin Redjepi, after 10 years of participating in the International Humanitarian Flotilla for Gaza, also known as Mavi Marmara, was attacked by a prominent Islamophobe, Ljupce Zlatev, in a special video edition in which he said, “Jasmin Redjepi, the husband of Mersiha Smailovikj, in June 2010 was deported from Israel to Macedonia because he was found on the ship ‘Mavi Marmara’ who wanted to attack Israel. He was found on the ship together with two other Macedonian citizens, Sali Emin and Sead Asipi. Mersiha’s husband, along with his companions, clashed with Israeli soldiers trying to stop this terrorist ship from attacking Israel. There are recordings of this.”³⁴ Jasmin Redjepi is a well-known activist in North Macedonia and has initiated a defamation lawsuit against Zlatev.³⁵

On March 17, the IRC decided to ban the Jumah prayers and other group prayers in mosques in order to prevent the spread of the virus.³⁶ On March 18, a State of

32. “Шахпаска: Законот за спречување и заштита од дискриминација обезбедува сигурност и заштита на правата на граѓаните” Vlada na RSM, 6 November 2020, <https://vlada.mk/node/22738>, (Access date: 15 November 2020).

33. “ЗАКОН ЗА СПРЕЧУВАЊЕ И ЗАШТИТА ОД ДИСКРИМИНАЦИЈА”, Министерство за труд и Социјална Политика, <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/zakoni/2019/27,5-Zakon%20za%20zastita%20od%20diskriminacija.pdf>, (Access date: 15 November 2020).

34. „ЕКСПЛИЦИТНО ВИДЕО: Сопругот на Мерсиха од СДСМ во терористичка акција!“ ЛИДЕР online, 20 January 2020, <https://lider.com.mk/hronika/eksplisicno-video-soprugot-na-mersiha-od-sdsm-vo-teroristicka-akcija/> (Access date: 1 November 2020).

35. “Активистот Јасмин Реџеџи ќе поднесе тужба против Љупчо Златев за лажното обвинување за тероризам” STANDARD online, 21 January 2020, <https://standard.mk/makedonija/aktivistot-jasmin-redzhepi-kje-podnese-tuzhba-protiv-ljupcho-zlatev-za-lazhnoto-obvinuvanje-za-terorizam/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

36. „ИВЗ – нема организирани молитви во џамиите поради коронавирусот“, E-MAGAZINE, 17 March, 2020, <https://emagazin.mk/ivz-nema-organizirani-molitvi-vo-amiite-poradi-korona-virusot/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

Emergency was declared across the country which brought with it restrictions on movement and closures across the entire country.³⁷ The Islamic Community issued a statement in early April announcing the complete closure of mosques as a measure to prevent the spread of Covid-19, a move of special significance given the approach of Ramadan.

The controversial journalist Zoran Bozinovski, who has 21,603 followers online, on one of his Facebook profiles, used the trend of news related to religious holidays and the pandemic to publish several manipulative posts. On April 16, he first published a post with a spectacular headline: “Atomic Test in Kumanovo.”³⁸



Figure 12: “Atomic test in Kumanovo. Last Friday, April 10, a prayer took place in illegal mosque, run by the Imam Sadula Bajrami. There were few hundreds of believers and his followers. He has over 50 K followers on social media. The explosion of Covid-19 virus in Kumanovo happens after this prayer as we see the consequences today. Sadula Bajrami implemented the threat of Zarko Redzepi, to call the believers to a mass attendance in mosques if they don’t get the money asked from the Government. The Friday prayer with Sadula Bajrami is the first act of the realization of the threat that Zarko made, so the government would know what happens when Zarko explodes!!! Tomorrow is Friday, new day to congregate at Sadula Bajrami place...”³⁹

Imam Sadula Bajrami sent an official disclaimer, where he stated, “I emphasize that this news is DEFAMATION and that it is completely piled up by fake sources. I categorically deny and also declare with full responsibility that such an

37. “Прогласена вонредна состојба“, МИА, 18 March 2020, <https://mia.mk/pretsedatelot-pendarovski-proglasi-vonredna-sosto-ba/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

38. Facebook group: BUREVESNIK, 16 April, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/www.burevesnik.news/permalink/3104529026253543>, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

39. BUREVESNIK, Facebook page, 16 April 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/burevesnik.net/posts/604661143457554>, (Access date: 7 December 2020).

event did not happen, that it is so-called slander and that our appeals to the believers who follow us have always been in full compliance with the recommendations of the institutions.”⁴⁰

The first day of the opening of the mosques was for Eid al-Fitr. Due to the proclaimed State of Emergency, the weekends for Easter and other holidays were under total lockdown. However, the government decided for the day of Eid that the lockdown would start at 11:00 a.m., and the IRC called the public to an Eid Prayer, following all the protocols. This decision caused a great reaction in society and above all on social media.⁴¹ The announcement of a lockdown led to polarization among the citizens; pictures of crowded mosques were shared on social media, instigating hate speech.⁴²

The twitter profile *Efo*, at May 24, at the night of Easter, he placed a picture of an empty church and on the other side a picture of a mosque, whose courtyard is full of believers. Wanting to show how the state banned gatherings for Easter and allowed the same for Eid.



Figure 13: “For Easter empty churches and 3 days lockdown, for Ramadan full mosques, lockdown lifted from the request of the coalition partners, Filipche [Minister of Health] tonight on press conference will speak again about how well he dances with corona.”⁴³

40. “Bajrami: Demantoi akuzat e gazetarit Bozhinovski dhe përkrahësve të tij, janë shpifje tendecioze!”, Aktuale.mk, online, 16 April, 2020, <https://www.aktuale.mk/bajrami-demantoi-akuzat-e-gazetarit-bozhinovski-dhe-perkraheseve-te-tijjane-shpifje-tendecioze/>, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

41. “ДОМА ЗА УТРИНСКА МОЛИТВА, ВО ЏАМИЈА ЗА РАМАЗАН БАЈРАМ, ОДЛУЧИ ИВЗ”, 24Vesti, 21 May 2020 <https://www.24.mk/details/doma-za-utrinska-molitva-vo-dzamiya-za-ramazan-bajram-odluchi-ivz>. (Access date: 10 October 2020).

42. “(ВИДЕО) Муслиманските верници масовно на утринската молитва за Рамазан Бајрам”, Lider online, 24 May 2020, <https://lider.com.mk/makedonija/video-muslimanskite-vernici-masovno-na-utrinskata-molitva-za-ramazan-bajran/>, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

43. Efo Antivirus, Twitter, 24 May 2020, https://twitter.com/Efo_Antivirus/status/1264502563606495234, (Access date: 10 October 2020).



Figure 14: “They closed Christians for Ester and now they are forbiding them from going to a memorial service. For Eid they deliberately adjusted it so they could go in the mosque. Because they want to build one society for all.”⁴⁴

On the day of Ramadan for the Eid prayer, there was high presence of media outlets, where the Imam Sulejman Rexhepi made the following statement: “We expect in the period to come to beat the bad and all of you should know that from today on I proclaim Covid-19 dead, given that we beat him and that’s why we are present here.”⁴⁵ This statement continues to this day to be used as a parody on social media - a satirical Facebook page was opened, “Reis-ul-ulema Sulejman Rexhepi’s Fan Club.”

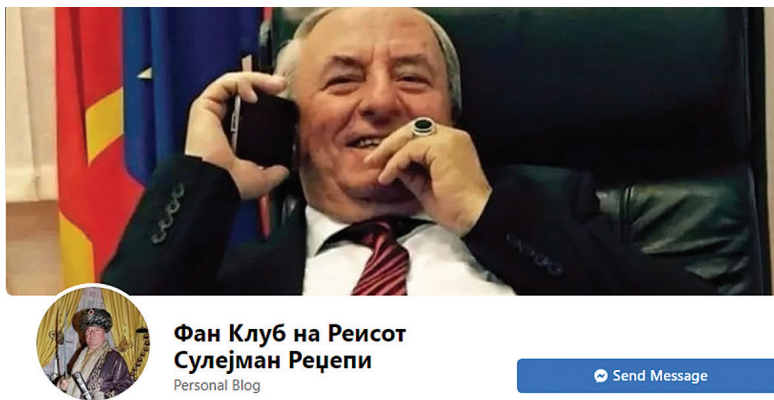


Figure 15: Facebook account “Fan Club of the Reis-ul-ulema Sulejman Redjepi.”⁴⁶

On May 27, the head of the IRC, Sulejman Rexhepi, was dismissed, following numerous scandals related to his 20 years of running this institution.⁴⁷

Professor and academic Katica Kulavkova wrote on Twitter, “We pay the price of coexistence with our lives.”⁴⁸ This tweet came after the publication of the numbers of the newly infected which showed that areas predominantly populated by Muslims

44. Hank Chinaski, Twitter, 3 June 2020, https://twitter.com/hank__chinaski/status/1268244530429640705, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

45. “Реисот Сулејман Реџеџи го прогласи вирусот Ковид-19 за мртв”, TV21, 24 May 2020, <https://mk.tv21.tv/reisot-sulejman-redhepi-go-proglasi-virusot-kovid-19-za-mrtov/>, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

46. Фан Клуб на Реисот Сулејман Реџеџи, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/FanKlubnaSulejmanRedjepi-111561940575116>, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

47. „Разрешен поглаварот на ИВЗ, Сулејман Реџеџи.“ МИА, 27 May 2020, <https://mia.mk/razreshen-pretse-datelot-na-ivz-sule-man-re-epi/>, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

48. “Академик Кулавкова објави твит со говор на омраза, по неколку часа го избриша”, META online, 6 June, 2020, <https://meta.mk/akademik-kjulavkova-objavi-tvit-so-govor-na-omraza-po-nekolku-chasa-go-izbri-sha/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

had higher numbers. Kulavkova implied that the reason for the spread of the virus is interethnic relations, not the widespread non-compliance with the measures. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor's Office against Kulavkova for the statement that encourages intolerance between ethnic communities.⁴⁹

On the day of the terrorist attack in Vienna, the former Minister of Justice and professor at the Faculty of Law Renata Deskovska expressed her condolences to the victims by stating: "Therefore, terrorism is not a crime against individuals or property. It is a crime against our values, using the death of innocent people and the destruction of property to intimidate us... And when we react out of fear, when we change our habits, our policies, terrorists succeed - even if their attacks fail." University Professor at Faculty of Law, Karolina Ristova Asterud commented, "Well, this terrorism has a name - ISLAMIC - (and that is a euphemism, it should be - Islamo-fascist)."⁵⁰



Figure 16: "Therefore, terrorism is not a crime against individuals or property. It is a crime against our values, using the death of innocent people and the destruction of property to intimidate us... And when we react out of fear, when we change our habits, our policies, terrorists succeed - even if their attacks fail..." Facebook post by Prof. Dr. Renata Deskovska, November 3, 2020.⁵¹

49. "Хелсиншкиот комитет поднесе кривична пријава против академик Катица Кулавакова", PRAVDIKO online, 8 July 2020, <https://www.pravdiko.mk/helsinshkiot-komitet-podnese-krivichna-prijava-protiv-akademik-katitsa-kulavkova/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

50. Renata Deskovska, 3 November 2020, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/renatadeskoska>, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

51. Рената Дескоска, Facebook, 3 November 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/renatadeskoska/posts/2861930720752696>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The continuity of hate speech steadily increased in 2020, partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic and partly due to hate speech caused by parliamentary elections. In order to flatter the voters, the new political party LEVICA focused on restoring the country's old name, attracting a large number of nationalists as supporters. Regarding Islamophobia, the party president Dimitar Apasiev had made statements in the past that were Islamophobic. This year, in his public appearances he continued to insult Islam and Muslims, and included this rhetoric in his party's election campaign and program. After it became public that the Helsinki Committee had filed criminal charges against Apasiev, for his hate speech against Muslims, LEVICA shared the news on its Facebook page where comments of support and Islamophobia abounded.



Figure 17: Today the president of the LEVICA - Prof. Dr. Dimitar Apasiev was summoned to testify before the Public Prosecutor's Office, after criminal charges were filed against him for hate speech by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Tanja Milevska and Mersiha Smailovikj. In his statement, he emphasized that it is a matter of political pressure from structures close to the government at a time when LEVICA is factoring in the political scene. Apasiev announced that in the coming period criminal charges will be filed for endangering security due to received threats, and the Prosecution is expected to act promptly. Although the president of LEVICA is entitled to parliamentary immunity, Apasiev decided not to use it and gave a statement to the Public Prosecutor's Office.⁵²

This news caused huge discussions on social networks, and Apasiev's supporters commented on almost every post. Given the fact that the author of this report, who filed the complaint against Apasiev, has been active in public life for a long time and

52. Левица / *E majta* / *Levica*, Facebook, 16 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/PartijaLevica/posts/659929778266867>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

constantly speaks about Islamophobia in society, it is the first time that the reaction from critics was so strong and full of Islamophobia.

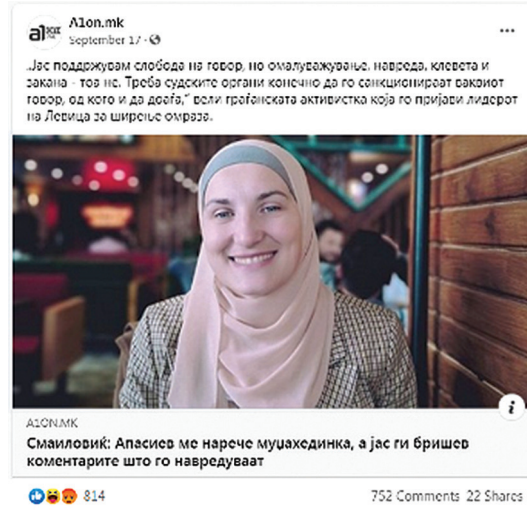


Figure 18: Photo taken from social media, with the title, "Smailovic: Apasiev Called Me Mujahid, But, I Was Deleting the Comments Who Were Offending Him." The article had 752 comments, many of them Islamophobic and made by Apasiev supporters.⁵³

Supporters of Apasiev even made posters mocking Islam and Muslims. This posters for published on several FB profiles, whose owners erased them occasionally and reposted them again after several days.



Figure 19: Poster slandering the present author: "Islam Everywhere Destroys the Human Rights: Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon and Pakistan."

Figure 20: Poster slandering the present author: "Muhammed: Two Mersihah Worth One Apasiev."

53. „Апасиев ме нарече муџахединка, а јас ги бришев коментарите кои го навредуваат.“ 17 September 2020, <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/smailovikj-apasiev-me-nareche-mudzhahedinka-a-jas-gi-brishev-komentarite-sh-to-go-navreduvaat/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).



Figure 21: Poster slandering the present author: "Muhammed: Your Husband Can Beat You."



Figure 22: Poster slandering the present author: "Muhammed: You Will Go to Hell; Most There Are Women"

One member of the LEVICA presidency, Jovana Mojsoska, repeatedly wrote Islamophobic tweets on Twitter.



Figure 23: "That's why Kosovo is the only Muslim country in Israel. Because the others America is bombing or they appoint bribed believers, like Mersiha, as dictators."⁵⁴ Writing about Mersiha that she is false believer, with the aim of humiliating her.



Figure 24: "Is the jurisprudence in Brussel familiar with the Wahhabi Mersiha?"⁵⁵, posting a picture of the criminal charges filed by the LEVICA, for 6 persons who allegedly threatened the president of LEVICA, Dimitar Apasiev and his family.

54. Mojsoskata, Twitter, 2 October 2020, https://twitter.com/Mojsoskata/status/1311971601458618369?s=19&fbclid=IwAR3qwWv2rjV2n_HX02x4xo3a2edlQjyzYOJf_m7vB_DL-OnHzWNhsKNyyAE, (Access date: 8 December 2020).

55. Ibid.

Several criminal charges were filed against Apasiev in 2020, namely by Mersiha Smailovikj Tanja Milevska (journalist), and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. There was also a report on a crime committed by Apasiev, from the Ministry of Interior, which, according to the ministry refers to two Facebook statuses and one tweet.⁵⁶ Until the end of this year, the Public Prosecutor office didn't file charges against him nor did it dismiss the lawsuits. However, four months after the present author accused him of Islamophobia on her Facebook profile, Apasiev filed charges against Smailovikj and six others who are unknown to both Smailovickj and the Ministry of the Interior.⁵⁷

Apasiev is a member of the Macedonian Assembly. His style of speaking is the same at the parliamentary rostrum, the same he has been practicing for years in his public appearances – it is violent. It becomes a paradigm for violence that is a dominant feature of our society, in its various forms. Its popularity is growing and the number of his supporters is constantly increasing.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Despite the numerous Islamophobic instances and intolerance that our society experienced in 2020, Muslim organizations remained indifferent to eradicating this phenomenon. They did not come out with declarations condemning Islamophobic speech nor did they develop strategies on how to combat it as a society. However, several initiatives and processes were initiated in 2020, and were outstanding in combating fake news, prejudice, and Islamophobia.

The OSCE Mission to Macedonia has launched a project called “Loud against Rumors,”⁵⁸ which fights against prejudices imposed by society on Muslim women by focusing on examples of Muslim women in Macedonia. Personal instances of specific prejudices faced by Muslim women are highlighted in short publications.

The Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups is a state institution, which this year published the book “A Guide to Islam.”

One of the organizations that work very well in the fight against fake news is the organisation *Nexus Civil Concept*, from Skopje, North Macedonia.⁵⁹ In weekly

56. “Апасиев со контрапријави до оние што го пријавија за ширење говор на омраза”, 365 online magazine, 16 September 2020, <https://360stepeni.mk/apasiev-so-kontraprijavi-do-onie-shto-go-prijavija-za-shirene-govor-na-omraza/> (Access date: 15 October 2020).

57. “Димитар Апасиев поднесе кривична пријава против Мерсиха Смаиловиќ“, А1 ОН, 2 October 2020, <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/apasiev-podnese-krivichna-prijava-protiv-mersiha-smailovikj/>, (Access date: 15 October 2020).

58. Glasno protiv Glasini, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/GlasnoProtivGlasini/>, (Access date: 15 October 2020).

59. The official website of Nexus Civil Concept, from Skopje, North Macedonia <https://nexus.org.mk/>, Access date: 15 October 2020).

and monthly reports, the organization addresses fake news related, among others, to Muslims. The reports highlight Islamophobia in the media, the Internet, and in the speeches of politicians. The reports are published on their website.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of North Macedonia is an organization whose core work regards human rights. It raises its voice when there is an incident that has Islamophobic elements. The organization is also contacted by Muslims who feel that they need to report an incident.⁶⁰

The NGO Legis organizes training for young people in several cities across North Macedonia. The training covers discrimination, Islamophobia, and xenophobia as phenomena in our society and encourages young people to fight against all forms of discrimination through various online campaigns.

The NGO Civil, as an advocate of free speech and fighting discrimination, has proved to be a platform in the last years that has been active in calling out cases that contributed to inciting Islamophobia, especially in the context of the media.

Webpages such as orient.mk and religija.mk publish religious articles in the Macedonian language and are accessible platforms for writing articles about Islam and Islamophobia. Orient.mk writes specifically about various forms of Islamophobia in our society.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia is a phenomenon that must be constantly monitored and documented. It is necessary to develop an overall strategy for its eradication in countries that are multireligious. Failure to report Islamophobia and impunity for instigators of Islamophobia has been a long-standing problem. Of particular concern are the growing emergence of Islamophobia, on the one hand, and the silence of the relevant Muslim institutions and Muslim organizations, on the other. In order to fight Islamophobic incidents in the country, the following policies are recommended:

- Islamophobia should be recognized as a part of hate speech and hate crime in national legislation.
- A record of cases and incidents related directly to Islamophobia should regularly be updated and published by the Ministry of Interior and other relevant institutions.
- The Ministry of Education should remove all material that causes Islamophobia and prejudice from educational material.
- Islamophobic statements on social media should be criminally charged and fined, but also automatically deleted from the Internet by the Ministry of Interior.

60. 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: 15 October 2020).

- The office of the Ombudsman should work more extensively in encouraging members of the Muslim community in North Macedonia to report cases of Islamophobia.
- Training of the media and journalists on Islam should be organized. A guidebook for reporters on how to report on Islam and to educate them on Islam should be written.
- In the hate speech training curriculum, Islamophobia should be included as a separate chapter.
- Reporting platforms created by NGOs should make Islamophobia a specific category within the reporting options.
- Muslim NGOs should make an effort to fight this phenomenon and focus their work on educating Muslim youth and the Muslim community on the exact characteristics of Islamophobia and how to detect it. They should create an accessible platform for reporting it.
- Muslim NGOs should build a coalition against Islamophobia and publish joint announcements where hate speech is condemned.
- The Islamic Community of North Macedonia should take more initiatives for the rights of the Muslims, and in creating channels and platforms for the detection of Islamophobia.

Chronology

- **08.03.2020:** On her Facebook profile, Arta Tochi welcomed the efforts by Albanian teachers in the past to remove the headscarves of Albanian girls.
- **01.07.2020:** The president of the political party LEVICA, Dimitar Apasiev, attacked Islam and Muslims on a TV show.
- **30.07.2020:** Graffiti appeared on the two mosques in the city of Bitola with the message, “Hagia Sophia was and will remain a church.”

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
POLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

ANNA WILCZYŃSKA, KAROL WILCZYŃSKI

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Executive Summary

Fearmongering, lack of systemic education, and hateful media campaigns and news are the main reasons why Polish people are prejudiced against Islam. The growing problem of threats, insecurity, and instability for Muslims living in Poland finds no specific answer from the Polish government. The systematic work of the Polish Ombudsman's Office and other institutions like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) shows that there is a growing problem of underreported hate crimes; only a margin of the crimes committed is reported to the police.

The coronavirus pandemic did not improve the difficult situation of Polish Muslims, but rather - just like in other parts of the world - intensified the inequality and persecution of minorities. People who experienced exclusion on various levels on a daily basis were particularly vulnerable to the effects of health and safety restrictions. This group consisted mostly of migrants, refugees, and people applying for international protection in Poland - many of whom were Muslims. The government, which is dealing with the pandemic and the police, which is dealing with the results of the coronavirus, are not interested in protecting Polish Muslims or actively reacting to the problem of the worsening situation of minorities in Poland.

The presidential election campaign conducted in the first six months of 2020 was also an occasion for politicians to make Islamophobic statements. Though rarer than in previous years, it still shows that fearmongering against the Muslim community continues to gain political attention. That is why the government media like TVP and other right-wing media still publish a lot of news showing Islam and its followers in a one-sided, negative manner.

There were just a small number of positive initiatives by few activists and NGOs to counter the widespread Islamophobia. However, spreading stereotypes and false, negative information is a process and as a result, without systematic work, without changing the political and media language and the school curricula, the black-and-white, prejudiced view of Muslims in Polish society will not change.

Streszczenie

Podleganie do strachu, brak systemowej edukacji, a także pełne nienawiści kampanie medialne i informacje to główne powody, dla których tak wielu Polaków jest uprzedzonych co do islamu. Narastający problem zagrożeń, sytuacja niepewności i niestabilności muzułmanów mieszkających w Polsce nie znajduje konkretnej odpowiedzi ze strony polskiego rządu, który ignoruje ten problem, nie uznając, że istnieje on naprawdę. Systematyczna praca Biura Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich oraz innych instytucji i organizacji, takich jak Organizacja Bezpieczeństwa i Współpracy w Europie (OBWE), pokazuje, że narasta problem braku zgłaszania przestępstw z nienawiści - na policję zgłaszany jest jedynie margines rzeczywistych przestępstw.

Pandemia koronawirusa nie poprawiła trudnej sytuacji polskich muzułmanów, ale raczej - podobnie jak w różnych częściach świata - pogłębiła problem nierówności i prześladowań mniejszości. Osoby, które na co dzień doświadczają wykluczenia na różnych płaszczyznach, są szczególnie narażone na skutki wprowadzanych w związku z pandemią ograniczeń. Taką grupę stanowią migranci i migrantki, uchodźcy i uchodźczynie oraz osoby ubiegające się w Polsce o ochronę międzynarodową, szukający w Polsce schronienia - często są to muzułmanie. Rząd zajmujący się pandemią i policja zajmująca się jej skutkami nie są zainteresowane ochroną polskich muzułmanów, ani aktywnym reagowaniem na problem gorszej sytuacji mniejszości mieszkających w Polsce.

Kampania prezydencka przeprowadzona w I półroczu 2020 roku była także okazją do wypowiedzenia się przez polityków w sposób islamofobiczny. Choć tego typu wypowiedzi były zdecydowanie rzadsze niż w poprzednich latach, to pokazują, że podsycanie strachu przed społecznością muzułmańską wciąż jest paliwem do zdobywania uwagi politycznej. Dlatego też media rządowe, takie jak TVP i inne media prawicowe, wciąż publikują wiele informacji ukazujących islam i jego wyznawców w jednostronny, negatywny sposób.

Niewiele działaczy i organizacji pozarządowych podjęło tylko kilka pozytywnych inicjatyw, które miały przeciwdziałać szerzącej się islamofobii. Proces szerzenia się stereotypów i fałszywych, negatywnych informacji jest jednak procesem i dlatego bez systematycznej pracy, zmiany języka politycznego i medialnego oraz programu nauczania nie zmieni się czarno-biały pogląd pełen uprzedzeń względem muzułmanów w polskim społeczeństwie.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Poland

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Semi-presidential

Ruling Parties: PiS – Law and Justice (right-wing, national-conservative, Christian democratic)

Opposition Parties: PO – Civic Platform (centre-right)

Last Elections: 2020 Presidential Election (Andrzej Duda, the PiS candidate, won 51.03% of the vote against the PO candidate Rafał Trzaskowski 48,97%); 2019 Legislative Election (PiS: 235 seats, PO: 134 seats, SLD [left]: 49, PSL [agrarian, conservative]: 30, *Konfederacja* [nationalist, far-right]: 11, German minority: 1)

Total Population: 37.97 million (2019)

Major Languages: Polish

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to official data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, 736 procedures in hate crimes cases were initiated by the police in 2020, 27 of which concerned hate crimes against Muslims. Data was made available after an e-mail inquiry to the Security Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration. According to this data, the number of hate crimes is decreasing: in 2019, there were 972 procedures about hate crimes initiated and 33 of these concerned Muslims. In 2018, there were 1,124 procedures, of which 62 concerned Muslims. The police data speaks of 44 crimes committed based on the target's ethnicity that might be linked to Islam (Arabs, Bengalis, Turks, etc.).

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: For the first 10 months of 2020, the official police statistics provide the figure of 665 hate crimes of which 577 were based on national, ethnic, and racial affiliation of the victim or the victim's political, religious, or non-denominational status. However, recent research conducted by the Office of the Ombudsman indicates that hate crime is severely underreported and, in specific, that among people from Muslim-majority and sub-Saharan African countries only 5% of racist incidents are reported.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (93.2%), Non-believers (3.1%), Jehovah's Witnesses (0.2%), Other (0.2%) (data for 2018 based on information from the Main Office for Statistics; GUS 2018).

Muslim Population (% of Population): Depending on sources, between 10,000 and 30,000 (around 0,05%).

Main Muslim Community Organizations: The Muslim Religious Association (*Związek Muzułmanów Polskich*) and the Muslim League in the Polish Republic (*Liga Muzułmańska RP*)

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: The Polish Ombudsman's Office, Never Again Association, Centre for Monitoring Racist and Xenophobic Behaviors, Hate Stop, Stefan Batory Foundation (*Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego*), Center for Research on Prejudice

Far-Right Parties: Confederation (*Konfederacja*), National Movement (*Ruch Narodowy*), National Revival of Poland (*Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski*)

Far-Right Movements: All-Polish Youth, National Radical Camp, Independence March Association

Far-Right Militant 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 coronavirus pandemic dominated narratives in Polish society, politics, and media. Despite the pandemic, the growing Islamophobia, the lack of education about Islam, the Islamophobic utterances of Polish politicians, and the consolidation of stereotypes through fake news and the manipulation on the Internet and mainstream media did not stop. Almost all events perceived as negative in Poland in 2020 were marked with attempts to somehow associated them with Islam.

Right before the outbreak of the coronavirus, certain Polish politicians started the presidential elections campaign with Islamophobic statements. At the brink of the election campaign Krzysztof Bosak (MP and the far-right *Konfederacja* candidate in the 2020 presidential elections) tweeted that “Islam has nothing to do with freedom, therefore its development in Poland should be stopped.” A month before the planned date of the presidential elections in April, Zbigniew Ziobro (Minister of Justice, Prosecutor General, and a leader of *Solidarna Polska* party) tweeted that “Islam is alien to our culture” and suggested that Poland should defend itself against it. Using Muslims as scapegoats is still a present and quite popular strategy in specific political circles in Poland (cf. Politics section)

The change connected with the global pandemic affected members and leaders of the Catholic Church. Although the Catholic media - including leading media such as *Gość Niedzielny* or the Polish section of Vatican Radio - continue to lead the way in publishing Islamophobic content, when it comes to clergy and hierarchs, they are no longer as active in the field of fearmongering against Islam as they were in the previous years. The Day of Islam organized by the Catholic Church in Poland became an occasion for positive statements from several bishops (cf. Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia section). Pre-occupied with the pedophilia scandal and media crisis connected to, the Church focused on attacking the LGBT+ community and the main figures of Catholic Islamophobia were not active this year (cf. Central Figures of Islamophobia section)

Polish authorities admit that according to the official data hundreds of hate crimes occurred in 2020, and the actual statistics for hate crimes may be as much as 20 times higher. The coronavirus pandemic intensified the inequality and persecution of minorities. People who experienced exclusion on various levels on a daily basis were particularly vulnerable to the effects of restrictions introduced in connection with the pandemic. This group consisted mostly of migrants, refugees, and people applying for international protection in Poland - many of whom were Muslims. According to the Polish Ombudsman's Office, which is constantly ignored by the Polish government, the authorities focused on the pandemic and the anti-government women rights demonstrations, and were not interested

in protecting Muslims and other minorities.¹ (cf. Physical and Verbal Attacks section)

As our Twitter research has shown, Polish media readers and social media users are still interested in propelling Islamophobic content. Especially during the period when there was increased interest in Muslim-majority countries (Iran in January 2020 or Hagia Sophia in summer 2020) and immediately after terrorist attacks (not necessarily committed in the name of Islam), the number of publications and discussion on Islam increases significantly. Polish Internet users - very often with little knowledge of Islam - write about Muslims mainly negatively (over 90 percent of the content), presenting the problems related to Islam in black and white. (cf. Internet) The presence of people with an Islamophobic attitude among TVP journalists and other mainstream media outlets is a big concern (cf. Media section)

However, it is worth mentioning that in 2020 journalists promoting reliable information about Muslim communities were more active. More and more books are being published both on Islam abroad and on the traditions of Polish Muslims living in the country from the Middle Ages. In 2020, a virtual iftar was organized gathering over 100 Polish Muslims and the right-wing weekly magazine *Gazeta Polska* was punished for its racist publication. Still, without systemic work, the prejudiced view of Muslims in Polish society will not change.²

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Research cited by the Office of the Ombudsman shows that only 5% of hate crimes against Ukrainians, and migrants from Muslim and sub-Saharan African countries were reported to the police.³ Consequently, the actual scale of hate crimes including verbal and physical attacks is greatly underestimated. Additionally, 18-23% of the victims of hate crimes show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder while the average percentage of PTSD symptoms in the Polish population is 5%. According to official data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, 557 procedures in hate crimes cases were initiated by the police in the first 11 months of 2020. Fourteen

1. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, „Potrzeba całościowej strategii przeciwdziałania przestępstwom z nienawiści - pisze Adam Bodnar do premiera Mateusza Morawieckiego”, <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-do-premiera-o-calosciowej-strategii-przeciwdzialania-przestepstwom-z-nienawisci>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
2. This report could not have been written without the assistance of the volunteers at Islamista Blog / Salam Lab. We would like to thank Maciej Gorywoda, Klaudia Sułek, Martyna Machowska, Nikol Tomar, Natalia Urbańczyk-Adach, Magdalena Hana, Amaal Julia Paterczyk, Karolina Ewa Wierzbowska, and Radosław Pociask.
3. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, „O przestępstwach z nienawiści wobec mniejszości. Adam Bodnar na posiedzeniu sejmowej komisji”, <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/o-przestepstwach-z-nienawisci-wobec-mniejszości>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

of them concerned hate crimes against Muslims.⁴ According to police sources, there were 665 hate crimes in the first 10 months of 2020, 577 of which were based on national, ethnic, and racial affiliation of the victim or the victim's political, religious, or non-denominational status, and 44 crimes were committed based on the target's ethnicity that might be linked to Islam (Arabs, Bengalis, Turks, etc.).

Incidents of hate speech and attacks documented by NGOs in 2020 include many cases of discrimination based on the assumption that Muslims and people of ethnicity that might be linked to Islam are spreading the coronavirus. Such incidents include the refusal of service and orders to leave stores or places of service provision to customers of Muslim faith or foreign ethnic origin under the unsubstantiated suspicions that they will infect the staff with the coronavirus. Similar statements directly declaring that Muslims and refugees are spreading the disease were presented by public figures on the state-owned television channel TVP and were published on Twitter by journalists cooperating with the station. These statements resulted in the spread of Islamophobic content and provoked comments inciting hatred, violence, and expressing sickness and death wishes toward Muslims.⁵ Racist and Islamophobic comments also appeared under the online appeal made by the mayor of Poznań, Jacek Jaśkowiak, to stop discriminating against foreigners and people of other faiths, and to stop blaming them for the spread of the coronavirus.

The Ministry of Interior Affairs sees no need to regulate the issue of hate speech as has been recommended by international bodies.⁶ Furthermore, the Ombudsman reminded Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki that over two years ago he signaled the need to create a comprehensive strategy to counteract hate crimes. Despite the 20 systemic recommendations for changes in law and practice published by the Ombudsman in 2019, nothing has changed.

Employment

Our group interviews with Muslims have showed that they are often discriminated against in their workplaces and are asked to conceal their religion because of employers' fears of scaring off potential customers. Muslims experience Islamophobic jokes, gossip, are suspected of dishonesty, and are rejected by their co-workers who do not want to co-operate with them because of prejudices against Islam. Women are particularly vulnerable to discrimination in the workplace. In the group interviews, re-

4. Data as of November 26, 2020, was made available after an e-mail inquiry to the Security Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration.

5. Stowarzyszenie Nigdy Więcej, „Wirus nienawiści. Brunatna Księga czasu epidemii”, https://www.nigdywiecej.org/docstation/com_docstation/172/wirus_nienawisci_brunatna_ksiega_czasu_epidemii.pdf, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

6. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, „O przestępstwach z nienawiści wobec mniejszości. Adam Bodnar na posiedzeniu sejmowej komisji”, <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/o-przest%C4%99pstwach-z-nienawi%C5%9Bci-wobec-mniejszo%C5%9Bci-adam-bodnar-na-posiedzeniu-sejmowej-komisji>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

spondents stated that they experienced unequal treatment in relation to followers of other religions (e.g. wearing religious symbols of Christianity in the workplace was common despite top-down prohibitions, but wearing the hijab resulted in immediate orders to remove it), ridicule, public humiliation, and threats of dismissal due to covering their hair in the workplace. Chronic stress resulting from an atmosphere of prejudice caused by revealing their religious affiliation in some cases resulted in the interviewees quitting their work. A common strategy among Muslims in Poland is to hide their religious affiliation and avoid displaying symbols pertaining to Islam in their workplace.

The situation of foreign workers, including Muslims, became exceptionally difficult during the coronavirus pandemic. Refugees and migrants in need of appropriate work permits were often condemned to significantly extended waiting periods resulting in them not being able to get employment. In the face of the impending recession and taking advantage of the lack of knowledge of the labor law among migrants, employers reduced their salaries or, without prior warning, dismissed foreigners often employed illegally or on temporary contracts.

Additionally, Muslims may have encountered prejudices when trying to rent a flat. Cases of refusal to rent an apartment to a Muslim result from the belief that they do not keep their houses and themselves clean. Muslims may also have experienced a significant increase in their rents because of the belief that all Muslims in Poland are foreigners who do not know the rental market prices or Polish law.

Education

According to the primary and secondary public school curricula, topics concerning Islam are obligatory in history and religion classes. Education on Islam in history lessons boils down to a narrow introduction to the genesis of Islam, a basic characterization of its principles, and the introduction of early conquests and scientific discoveries.⁷ Outside of the Middle Ages, Islam is presented only in the context of conflicts between Muslim-majority and European states, and depicted as a foreign and distant cultural circle. Teachers who on their own initiative decide to take up topics such as Islam, religious diversity, the contemporary situation in the Middle East, or migrations, add them as a footnote to other subjects, as an extracurricular activity at the expense of their free time, without pay, and risking a conflict with the local Board of Education, the school principal, or the students' parents. During primary and secondary education on religion - which for a vast majority of students is understood as the Catholic catechesis - the topics related to non-Christian religions appear in one thematic block in secondary school. The curriculum specifies that in this block the cat-

7. Podstawa Programowa, „Historia”, <https://podstawaprogramowa.pl/Liceum-technikum/Historia>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

echist is to present basic information on Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, characteristics of religious sects, and the consequences of belonging to them. In this context, the catechist is also required to explain the concepts of religious fanaticism and religious indifference.⁸ The new core curriculum for teaching religion introduced in Poland on September 1, 2020, removed the obligation to teach the foundations of the most important non-Christian religions, instead emphasizing the uniqueness of Christianity over other religions and the paths of interreligious dialogue chosen by the Catholic Church. It is no longer required to teach the topics of religious fanaticism, but instead the curriculum mentions showing respect for other faiths.⁹

The growing problem in the Polish system of education is the lack of adequate support for the children of foreign and mixed backgrounds, and their parents. Children of migrants or of mixed origin, children of color, and children of the Muslim faith might have encountered high levels of prejudice from other students, their parents, and school staff. Our interviews with a group of several Muslim families has shown that the harassment often did not meet any reaction from school employees, and significantly affected the mental state of Muslim and migrant students.

Additionally, during the coronavirus pandemic, there was a visible lack of school and parental support in remote education for students with a migration background. This resulted from the parents' lack of appropriate ICT skills, the language barrier, and marginalizing the problems of migrant children in Polish schools.¹⁰ The difficult situation of migrant students in Polish schools was confirmed by a report by the Supreme Audit Office of 2020 which showed “a complete lack of interest in this issue by the Minister of National Education” and stressed that “the ministry does not monitor the situation, does not perform appropriate analyses, has practically no knowledge about it and has done nothing to obtain it.”¹¹

Politics

One could expect that during a pandemic and because of the poor economic situation and the catastrophe in the healthcare system, politicians would resign from the populist, fear-mongering style of rhetoric. Unfortunately, it is not the case. In 2020, the Polish political scene witnessed several serious Islamophobic statements during the presidential elections campaign and after it. What is important is that right-wing politicians have managed to create and maintain the widespread belief that a Muslim

8. “Podstawa programowa katechezy kościoła katolickiego w Polsce”, Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, WAM, 2010, p. 58.

9. “Podstawa programowa katechezy kościoła katolickiego w Polsce”, Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, Święty Paweł, 2018, p. 212.

10. Tygodnik Powszechny, Karol Wilczyński „Wyższa Szkoła Alienacji”, <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/wyzsza-szkola-alienacji-165308>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

11. Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, „NIK o kształceniu dzieci cudzoziemców i obywateli polskich powracających do kraju”, <https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/ksztalcenie-dzieci-cudzoziemcow-i-powracajacych-do-kraju.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

equals an immigrant, and that usually it means a terrorist (which is often, and improperly, used interchangeably with the term “Islamist” who originally meant a scholar of Islam in the Polish language). That is why statements on terrorist attacks connected with migration or/and refugees are also treated here as examples of Islamophobia - one of their aims is fearmongering against Islam and its believers.

Generally, there are three groups of politicians using Islamophobic discourse in their public speech or other forms of expression. First, there are the politicians connected to the far-right, nationalist party *Konfederacja* (Confederation) and other nationalist groups. This group includes Krzysztof Bosak (MP, *Konfederacja* party’s candidate in the 2020 presidential elections) who at the brink of the election campaign tweeted that “Islam has nothing to do with freedom, therefore its development in Poland should be stopped”;¹² Robert Winnicki (MP, leader of National Movement) who said that the Independence March is comprised of people who “do not want to follow their wrong path - multiculturalism, the path of mass migration, the path of cultural savagery and desolation”;¹³ Grzegorz Braun (MP) who is infamous for his anti-Semitic statements, but is identified as a member of a wider Islamophobic movement;¹⁴ Janusz Korwin-Mikke (MP) who is constantly warning that “Muslims will come and conquer us”;¹⁵ and Robert Bątkiewicz (a leader of the March of Independence Association) who appealed to the participants of the 2020 Independence March to become “knights” ready to “conquer Jerusalem.”¹⁶

The second group consists of politicians from the ruling party and its allies. This group includes some top politicians who were active this year, especially Joachim Brudziński (a former Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, currently a European MP) who associated the Nice attacks with the policy of welcoming refugees,¹⁷ and Zbigniew Ziobro (Minister of Justice, Prosecutor General, and a leader of the *Solidarna Polska* party), who one month before the planned date of the presidential elections tweeted that “Islam is alien to our culture” and claimed that Poland is defending its sovereignty by not welcoming refugees.¹⁸ Furthermore, Ziobro has built

12. Twitter, Krzysztof Bosak, <https://twitter.com/krzysztofbosak/status/1212381249240752128>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

13. Polonia Christiana, “Robert Winnicki na Marszu Niepodległości: won gorszycielom, won lawendowej mafii z Kościoła!” <https://www.eng.pch24.pl/robert-winnicki-na-marszu-niepodleglosci--won-gorszycielom--won-lawendowej-mafii-z-kosciola--79858,i.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

14. Oko.press, Anna Mierzyńska, “Neofaszysta Roberto Fiore w Warszawie zagrzewał Grzegorza Brauna do walki o nacjonalistyczną Europę”, <https://oko.press/neofaszysta-roberto-fiore-w-warszawie-zagrzewal-grzegorza-brauna-do-walki-o-nacjonalistyczna-europe/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

15. Korwin-Mikke.pl, “Korwin: Większość rzadko ma rację” <https://korwin-mikke.pl/jkm/korwin-wiekszosc-racja/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

16. Facebook, OkoPress Profile, https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2811010725827126&tid=1683534065241470, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

17. Twitter, Joachim Brudziński, <https://twitter.com/jbrudzinski/status/1321866908996698114>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

18. Twitter, Zbigniew Ziobro, <https://twitter.com/ziobropl/status/1247036878047584256?s=21>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

a milieu of politicians who effectively use Islamophobic and fearmongering messages about Islam to gain political influence. These include Patryk Jaki (currently a European MP, famous for creating one of the most Islamophobic election spots in October 2018)¹⁹ who claimed that Islam or anarchy will fill the empty spaces left by Christianity;²⁰ Dominik Tarczyński (currently a European MP) who warned in March 2020 that “sharia is barbarism and its opposing our system”;²¹ local politicians like Dariusz Matecki, a member of a local council in Szczecin, an editor of the fan pages of Ziobro and the Ministry of Justice,²² and author of one of the most popular Islamophobic fan pages in the EU (No to Islamization of Europe, ndie.pl); and around 30 others.²³

There are also often, but not systematic, Islamophobic statements coming from less important or local politicians of the ruling party PiS like Kazimierz Smoliński (MP), who in 2020 tweeted that “immigrants are tormenting homosexuals in Sweden”²⁴ using the popular right-wing Islamophobic myth that presents Sweden as a huge “no-go zone” and spreading fake information about an unspecified group of immigrants (implicitly referring to Muslims) attacking homosexuals. There are also statements like that of Józef Kardys, the governor of Kolbuszowa, a small town in southeastern Poland, who claimed that the young people who protested against the near total ban on abortion imposed by the ruling party in the end of October 2020 should “go to mosques, they leave headless,” suggesting they would be beheaded by the believers of Islam who allegedly have no tolerance.²⁵ We can say that this Islamophobic stance is quite common among members of *Konfederacja* and PiS, but that only specific politicians use Islamophobia as a fuel to gain attention. The figure connecting the environment of *Konfederacja* and PiS is Adam Andruszkiewicz, who is a PiS MP and the Secretary of State and who used to be a member of the National Movement and the All-Polish Youth. He is one of the most active Islamophobic pol-

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19. The spot was contested by the Ombudsman’s Office. Despite the court’s repeated recommendations to deal with the case, the prosecutor’s office, led by Zbigniew Ziobro, discontinued the investigation several times. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, RPO po raz kolejny skarży umorzenie sprawy antyuchodźczego spotu PiS z 2018 r., <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/content/rpo-po-raz-kolejny-umorzenie-sprawy-antyuchodźczego-spotu-pis-z-2018>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 20. Facebook, Patryk Jaki, <https://www.facebook.com/PatrykJaki/posts/2734762389961154>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 21. Facebook, Dominik Tarczyński, <https://www.facebook.com/posel.tarczynski2015/posts/2236801326614167>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 22. wprost.pl, Maski opadły. Facebook ujawnił, kto edytował profile znanych osób i fanpage, <https://biznes.wprost.pl/technologie/internet/10288414/maski-opadly-facebook-ujawnil-kto-edytowal-profile-znanych-osob-i-fanpage.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 23. The prosecutor’s office, led by Zbigniew Ziobro, discontinued the investigation in February 2020. Matecki claimed that he was “persecuted for his Catholic convictions.” Wirtualne Media, Prokuratura umorzyła sprawę Dariusza Mateckiego i fanpage’y z mową nienawiści, <https://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artukul/prokuratura-umorzylo-sledztwo-dot-dariusz-matecki-i-fanpage-y-z-mowa-nienawisci>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 24. Twitter, Kazimierz Smoliński, <https://twitter.com/KaziSmolinski/status/1317409598991642624>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 25. RadioZet.pl, Mikołaj Pietraszewski “Starosta PiS o protestujących: niech idą do meczetów, wyszliby bez głów”, <https://wiadomosci.radiozet.pl/Polska/Polityka/Starosta-PiS-o-protestach-kobiet-niech-protestuja-w-meczetach.-J.-Kardys-chce-dyktatury>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

iticians in Poland, trying to show the so-called connection between immigration, Islam, terrorist attacks, and the policy of the opposition parties.²⁶

What is important is that these common Islamophobic stances affect the anti-immigration policy of the ruling party. One striking example is that EU funds for immigrants and asylum seekers are going to be used to buy 308 limousines and cars for ministries and other state offices. The news emerged in the end of October, at the very peak of the coronavirus pandemic.²⁷

The third group of politicians using Islamophobic fuel are opposition politicians who are constantly comparing the PiS government to “Islam” or “Islamic countries.” A good example is Krzysztof Brejza, a member of the Polish Senate from the party *Platforma Obywatelska*, who, in October 2020, tweeted: “The prosecutor’s office of Ziobro lets out the perpetrator of a woman-beater - so it encourages bandits to beat women. After forcing them to give birth to dead children, consent to beatings is the next stage of PiS fundamentalism. Women are like objects. As in some Islamic countries.”²⁸ Among the supporters of the opposition, there is a certain phenomenon that can be described as comparing the ruling party to Muslims which, of course, is supposed to be a form of depreciation. The term “PiSlam,” connecting Islam and PiS, is often used.

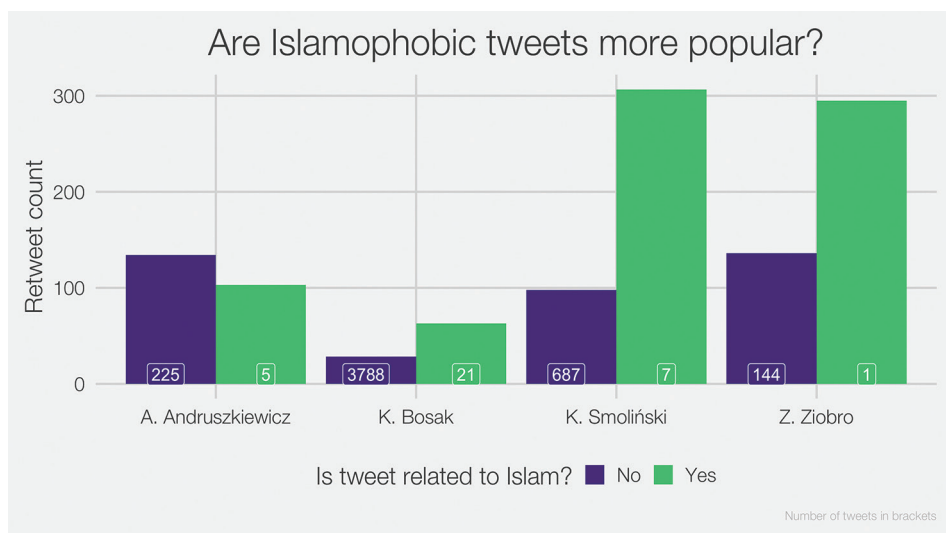


Figure 1: „Are Islamophobic tweets more popular?”²⁹

26. For instance: Twitter, Adam Andruskiewicz: <https://twitter.com/Andruskiewicz1/status/1319277272650575878>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

27. wyborcza.pl, Karol Rębisz „Rząd kupuje 308 nowych limuzyn. Za pieniądze z funduszu UE dla imigrantów”, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,155287,26465022,rzad-kupuje-308-nowych-limuzyn-za-pieniadze-z-unijnego-funduszu.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

28. Twitter, Krzysztof Brejza, <https://twitter.com/KrzysztofBrejza/status/1322492269732208641>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

29. Figure was compiled by Karol Wilczyński and Piotr Sobczyk based on research on Twitter between 11th Oct 2020 and 31st Dec 2020.

Generally, our research on Twitter shows that Islamophobic tweets help politicians gain attention and that Islam mobilizes the audience, especially emotionally. (Fig. 1)

Media

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, there were a lot of Islamophobic media events in Polish media in 2020. There are three main groups of media reproducing harmful Islamophobic stereotypes and Muslim racism: the mainstream media, the far-right media, and the nationalist and Catholic media. Among the mainstream media, the most important is the Polish state TV (TVP), currently under total control of the ruling party, which frequently broadcasts Islamophobic material. Examples include “the new demographic attack on Europe”,³⁰ “the brutal Islamization of Europe”³¹ or “the European left who want to secularize Muslims” but have not succeed and therefore Islam is still a serious danger.³² TVP hires journalists who often publish Islamophobic views on their personal Twitter accounts. A good example is Dominika Cosic, a reporter based in France, who claimed, for instance, that “Muslims are taking advantage of their growing strength and impose their rules”³³ or Michał Rachoń, a TVP presenter, who warned that welcoming immigrants ends up in “Muslims attacks and riots.”³⁴ Another PiS-owned state media outlet devoted to promoting Islamophobic stereotypes is the local radio station in Szczecin (Radio Szczecin), which is connected to Dariusz Matecki (cf. Politics section). It publishes a lot of material on “Muslim migrants” organizing riots in Sweden,³⁵ and terrorist networks that infiltrate the country through religious schools and institutions.³⁶

Ignorance or a kind of fear of Islam is rather widespread among Polish journalists. Usually, they do not know how to report, they do not know the situation in countries with Muslim-majority societies, and they follow foreign agencies in, for example, emphasizing the religious affiliation or nationality of the terrorists -

30. TvpInfo.pl, Witold Repetowicz, “Nowy atak demograficzny na Europę”, <https://www.tvp.info/46912498/nowy-atak-demograficzny-na-europe>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

31. WiadomosciTVP.pl, „Brutalna islamizacja Europy Zachodniej” <https://wiadomosci.tvp.pl/50418041/brutalna-islamizacja-europy-zachodniej>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

32. TvpInfo.pl, Petar Petrović, “Atak za atakiem – Francja w narożniku. Czas oddać islamistom sierpowym” <https://www.tvp.info/50704173/marzenia-europejskiej-lewicy-o-zlaicyzowaniu-swoich-muzulmanow-okazy-sie-plonne>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

33. Twitter, Dominika Cosic, <https://twitter.com/dominikacosic/status/1317398565937909761>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

34. Facebook, Mięła Dwudziesta Fanpage, <https://www.facebook.com/MRMinela20/posts/638704720055340>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

35. Radio Szczecin, Przemysław Gołyński, “Last night in Sweden” <https://radioszczecin.pl/364,166,last-night-in-sweden>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

36. Radio Szczecin, Przemysław Gołyński, Islamscy ekstremiści prowadzą w Szwecji kilkanaście szkół, <https://radioszczecin.pl/6,406593,islamscy-ekstremisci-prowadza-w-szwecji-kilkanas>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

as long as the nationality is Arab and the religion is Muslim. There are figures like former editor-in-chief of *Super-Express*, one of the biggest newspapers in Poland, Sławomir Jastrzębowski, who tweeted that “he sees a threat in Islam.”³⁷ On the other hand, a lot of liberal media and journalists use the term “PiSlam” to criticize the government. Most left-wing and anti-government media outlets republished the Charlie Hebdo Islamophobic caricature comparing the cult of Pope John Paul II to the cult of the Prophet Muhammad.³⁸ Poland under PiS rule is often called “Catotaliban” and anti-government journalists often warn that the government will soon impose a Catholic version of sharia in Poland. Another, smaller trend in mainstream media which was relevant in 2020 is portraying Pakistan as a “typical Islamic country,” where minorities are persecuted and people are forced to be Muslims. This trend is an example of how right-wing and biased media influence the mainstream.³⁹

In the polarized Polish media scene, it is hard to find mainstream journalists trying to overcome the biased and negative view of Islam and its followers. Editors and authors of Polish mainstream media who frequently publish reliable stories on events in countries with Muslim-majority populations are Marcin Żyła and Wojciech Jagielski (*Tygodnik Powszechny*); Bartłomiej Rumieńczyk (Onet.pl); Patryk Strzałkowski (Gazeta.pl); Marta Urzędowska and Blanka Rogowska (*Gazeta Wyborcza*); Agnieszka Lichnerowicz (Tok FM); and Marta K. Nowak (Oko.press). Freelance journalists and authors who are sources of reliable information include Paweł Pieniążek, Ludwika Włodek, or less-known media projects like Outride.rs, and blogs (*Stosunkowo Bliski Wschód*, *ReOrient*, *Polka na Pustyni*, *Zwykły Zeszyt*). There are researchers and academics like Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska (Szkola Główna Handlowa, Warsaw) or Karolina Rak (Jagiellonia University, Kraków) who try to be active in media. Finally, there is IslamistaBlog.pl, a project run by the authors of this report, which is currently the most popular platform on Islam in Polish (since 1st March 2021 its new name is SalamLab.pl). Still, there are very few sources of reliable information on Islam in the Polish language and there is a great need for workshops for journalists covering stories about Muslims and/or migration (cf. Policy Recommendation section).

Obviously, there is a whole section of right-wing and/or nationalist media which frequently feed their readers with negative (and often fake) news about Islam and Muslims. These include, among others:

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- 37. Twitter, Sławek Jastrzębowski, <https://twitter.com/sjastrzebowski/status/1317452340681736193>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 - 38. Facebook, Jolanta Saacewicz Profile, <https://www.facebook.com/288749518582747/photos/a.288754038582295/581490462641983/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 - 39. o2.pl, Ewelina Kolecka “Pakistan. 13-latka została porwana i zmuszona do przejścia na islam” <https://www.o2.pl/informacje/pakistan-13-latka-zostala-porwana-i-zmuszona-do-przejscia-na-islam-6570547196725952a>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020)

- wpolityce.pl - one of the most influential and popular right-wing platforms in Polish, closely connected to the PiS ruling party.⁴⁰
- “Najwyższy Czas” – a media outlet connected to Janusz Korwin-Mikke, *Konfederacja* MP.⁴¹
- Nationalistic media outlets such as pantarhei24.com,⁴² tysol.pl,⁴³ wiadomosci.eu,⁴⁴ (connected to Dariusz Matecki and ndie.pl), Media Narodowe,⁴⁵ konserwatyzm.pl,⁴⁶ and Magna Polonia.⁴⁷
- Websites with a Christian “vibe” but officially not connected to any religious institutions such as Fronda.pl,⁴⁸ annur.pl,⁴⁹ and pch24.pl.⁵⁰

The problem with these websites and media outlets is not only that they publish Islamophobic and biased content but that they also spread it across social media,

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40. For example: 1. wgospodarce.pl, „Były szef wywiadu Niemiec: Islam zagrożeniem dla Europy” <https://wgospodarce.pl/informacje/75594-byly-szef-wywiadu-niemiec-islam-zagrozeniem-dla-europy>
2. wpolityce.pl, “Islam kontra republika. Muzułmanie coraz agresywniej wchodzą do francuskiej polityki”, <https://wpolityce.pl/swiat/516480-islam-kontra-republika> (access: 15th Nov 2020).
41. For example (last accessed: November 15, 2020): 1. nczas.com, “Muzułmanie wykorzystują czas zarazy do rozpychania się w przestrzeni publicznej” <https://nczas.com/2020/03/30/muzulmanie-wykorzystuja-czas-zarazy-do-rozpychania-sie-w-przestrzeni-publicznej/>;
2. Twitter, Tomasz Sommer, <https://twitter.com/1972tomek/status/1317206077595918337> (tweet by editor-in-chief).
42. Example: pantarhei24.com, “Impas lewicy w Szwecji: Imigranci znęcali się nad homoseksualistami” <https://pantarhei24.com/impas-lewicy-w-szwecji-imigranci-znecali-sie-nad-homoseksualistami/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
43. Example: TySol.pl, “Wojna z katolicyzmem? Muzułmański Związek Religijny w RP poparł “Strajk Kobiet”” <https://www.tysol.pl/a55756-Wojna-z-katolicyzmem-Muzulmanski-Zwiazek-Religijny-w-RP-poparl-Strajk-Kobiet#.X5nq8L0CDzA.twitter>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
44. Example: wiadomosci.eu, “Chcą usunąć chrześcijańskie symbole religijne, aby muzułmanie czuli się komfortowo” <https://www.wiadomosci.eu/informacje/p,wlochy-usuwanie-chrzescijanskich-symboli-religijnych-aby-muzulmanie-czuli-sie-komfortowo.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
45. Example: medianarodowe.com, “Burmistrz Londynu-muzułmanin atakuje Polskę w żydowskiej gazecie” <https://medianarodowe.com/burmistrz-londynu-muzulmanin-atakuje-polske-w-zydowskiej-gazecie>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
46. Examples: 1. konserwatyzm.pl, “Smuniewski: Nacjonalizm i populizm w Europie, prawa człowieka w Izraelu, Brexit vs. Polesxit”, <https://konserwatyzm.pl/smuniewski-nacjonalizm-i-populizm-w-europie-prawa-czlowieka-w-izraelu-brexit-vs-polesxit/>;
2. konserwatyzm.pl, Mateusz Sanicki, “Kontrowersje islamu”, <https://konserwatyzm.pl/sanicki-kontrowersje-islam/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
47. Examples: 1. MagnaPolonia.org, „Niemcy: Gazeta „Bild” wzywa do przyznania, że islamscy ekstremiści są zagrożeniem dla Europy”, <https://www.magnapolonia.org/niemcy-gazeta-bild-wzywa-do-przyznania-ze-islamscy-ekstremisci-sa-zagrozeniem-dla-europy/>;
2. MagnaPolonia.org, „Anglia: W Londynie mężczyzna zerwał Krzyż z kościoła w Chadwell Heath”, <https://www.magnapolonia.org/anglia-w-londynie-mezczyzna-zerwal-krzyz-z-kosciola-w-chadwell-heath/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
48. Examples: 1. fronda.pl, Jan Bodakowski, “Kobieta w islamie. Czyli o potwornym upodleniu...”, <https://www.fronda.pl/a/kobieta-w-islamie-czyli-o-potwornym-upodleniu,142905.html>
2. fronda.pl, “Francja coraz bardziej czarnoskóra i islamska” <https://www.fronda.pl/a/francja-coraz-bardziej-czarnoskora-i-islamska,149727.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
49. Example: annur.pl, Aziz Mansour, “Islamizacja Niemiec – kolejny etap”, <http://annur.pl/islamizacja-niemiec-kolejny-etap/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
50. Example: pch24.pl, Bogdan Dobosz, “Francja: zbrodnicze komando islamistów podpałilo kościół”, <https://www.pch24.pl/francja--zbrodnicze-komando-islamistow-podpalilo-kosciol,78871,i.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

provoking racist and hateful comments. The editors leave comments like “the Islamic plague should be kneaded like bedbugs.”⁵¹

The last category is the Catholic media, in other words, the media that is owned by the Catholic Church or Catholic institutions, which, considering the size, could be included into mainstream media section. The Islamophobia present in such media has a special character, because it presents Islam as a threat to the Church and Christian values. Those who write in these media outlets also use the discourse of the conflict between religions.⁵² One of the main examples is *Gość Niedzielny*, one of the most popular weeklies and websites in Poland.⁵³ Second is KAI (Catholic News Agency in Poland), which constantly republishes⁵⁴ Islamophobic content from the Polish section of Vatican Radio.⁵⁵ This news is then published by most of the Catholic media in Poland like *Niedziela*, *Deon.pl*, *Stacja 7*, etc. Another example is *Radio Maryja*, a very controversial and Catholic fundamentalist media outlet, that is constantly fueling Islamophobic sentiments among its readers.⁵⁶

All in all, however, we can observe that the number of Islamophobic publications decreased in 2020, probably due to the pandemic (cf. Internet section).

Justice System

In 2020, the Ministry of the Interior Affairs published information on the incidents caused by hatred towards or with the participation of national and ethnic minorities in Poland in 2018-2019 stating that the number of incidents motivated by hatred significantly dropped.⁵⁷ But according to the Polish Ombudsman’s Office, these figures are significantly understated and do not reflect the nature of the problem.

Twenty years after Poland adopted the directive implementing the principle of equal treatment of persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000), the country still lacks a comprehensive strategy for counteract-

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51. Example: wpolityce.pl, Grzegorz Górny, “Włoska wolontariuszka, więziona przez muzułmańskich terrorystów, przeszła na islam”, <https://wpolityce.pl/swiat/500179-wieziona-wloska-wolontariuszka-przeszla-na-islam> cf. comment section, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 52. For more information see Anna Wilczyńska, Karol Wilczyński (2020), “In Poland the Stranger Threatens Christianity: Polish Catholics and Their Attitude towards Refugees”, in: M. Jacobsen et al. (ed.) *Cosmopolitanism, Migration and Universal Human Rights*, Basel: Springer.
 53. Examples: 1. [gosc.pl](https://www.gosc.pl), Franciszek Kucharczak, “Co to będzie” <https://www.gosc.pl/doc/6537378.Co-to-bedzie/2>. [gosc.pl](https://www.gosc.pl), Franciszek Kucharczak, “Życzenie dla kanałii” <https://www.gosc.pl/doc/6310346.Zyczenie-dla-kanalii/2>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 54. Example: ekai.pl, “Islamscy ekstremiści współodpowiedzialni za wybuch pandemii w Azji?” <https://ekai.pl/islamscy-ekstremisci-wspolodpowiedzialni-za-wybuch-pandemii-w-azji/> (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 55. Examples: 1. [vaticannews.va](https://www.vaticannews.va), „Szwecja: narastają napięcia społeczne, chrześcijanie są bezsilni” <https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/swiat/news/2020-09/szwecja-narastaja-napiecia-spoeczne-chrzescijanie-sa-bezsilni.html>. 2. [vaticannews.va](https://www.vaticannews.va), Krzysztof Ołdakowski, “W roku 2019 roku wzrosła chryścianofobia w Europie” <https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/kosciol/news/2020-01/raport-gatestone-institute.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 56. Example: [radiomaryja.pl](https://www.radiomaryja.pl), “6 tys. dolarów za przejście chrześcijańskiej rodziny na islam”, <https://www.radiomaryja.pl/informacje/6-tys-dolarow-za-przejscie-chrzescijanskiej-rodziny-na-islam/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).
 57. [gazetaprawna.pl](https://www.gazetaprawna.pl), “MSWiA: Spada liczba przestępstw z nienawiści” <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/1490894,mswia-przestepstwa-z-nienawisci-rasizm.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

ing hate crimes. For the last two years, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has been reminded of the need to create such a strategy by the Office of the Ombudsman but despite the 20 recommendations for systemic changes in law and practice proposed by the office in 2019, no changes were introduced.⁵⁸

Monitoring conducted by the Polish Ombudsman's Office shows that migrants, Muslims, representatives of certain national and ethnic minorities, LGBT+ people, and activists of civil society organizations in Poland have the biggest problems with obtaining protection against hate crimes. The prosecutor's office often refuses to initiate proceedings in such cases, discontinues them, or conducts them on a long-term basis for no apparent reason.⁵⁹ According to the Office of the Ombudsman, law enforcement agencies contribute to the promotion of racist ideology or to the spread of hatred based on prejudice.

In 2020, after the intervention of the Office of the Ombudsman, the court ordered the prosecutor's office to re-examine the case of the Islamophobic PiS party election spot accused of incitement to hatred and used in the 2018 local elections campaign. In the opinion of the Office of the Ombudsman, the spot violates the law prohibiting incitement to hatred on the basis of national, ethnic, racial, or religious differences. In September 2020, the prosecutor's office discontinued the proceedings in this case⁶⁰ – following a similar pattern with such cases.

In September 2020, parliament passed an act limiting ritual slaughter in Poland only to the needs of local religious associations. In October, the senate adopted an amendment to this law removing restrictions on the ritual slaughter of poultry. The new regulations on limiting ritual slaughter will come into force at the end of 2025.⁶¹

Internet

As mentioned above, there are a lot of websites and media which publish Islamophobic content. However, we can observe a decreasing interest in biased information about Islam on the Internet and social media. Many previously Islamophobic websites - often connected to the ruling party, nationalist parties or organizations, or the

58. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, "Potrzeba całościowej strategii przeciwdziałania przestępstwom z nienawiści - pisze Adam Bodnar do premiera Mateusza Morawieckiego", https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-do-premiera-o-calosciowej-strategii-przeciwdzialania-przestepstwom-z-nienawisci?fbclid=IwAR3vM2DjF5MJeeWt7tDTJXtPblu5XoDEQGodVe_nsaX-5hY3dDmple5e5k, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

59. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, "30 przykładów spraw "mowy nienawiści", w których działania prokuratury budzą wątpliwości", <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/30-przykladow-mowy-nienawisci-w-ktorych-dzialania-prokuratury-budza-watpliwosci-RPO?fbclid=IwAR1qzBolvhppq78b63K2wPaYNMDfhMkq8THYX-DWKU0ocxIR0J1d-XYEDY578>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

60. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, "RPO po raz kolejny skarży umorzenie sprawy antychodźczego spotu PiS z 2018 r." https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-po-raz-kolejny-umorzenie-sprawy-antychodzczego-spotu-pis-z-2018?fbclid=IwAR39q7_V42yXxzESCqAWR9RNuFvd0vWCau5xpob2LUyUQ-K8o1Oiod2UJk8, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

61. Onet Wiadomości, "Ubój rytualny. Senat podjął decyzję" <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/uboj-rytualny-senat-podjal-decyzje/ymv38f7>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

Catholic Church - are now turning to news about the “fake virus” or promoting not wearing protective masks, etc.⁶² Ndie.pl (“No to Islamization of Europe”) owned by Dariusz Matecki, an associate of Zbigniew Ziobro, the Minister of Justice and Prosecutor General, is still publishing some Islamophobic content but with clearly lower frequency,⁶³ similarly to other outlets.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, there are still many active groups and communities, which often publish comments, which are not openly islamophobic on current events like murders by Muslim migrants, etc. Leaders of these group use a lot of keywords like “cultural enrichment” to let you know what their thoughts are, but not say it out loud. Those who comment on these entries allow themselves a lot more, and the moderators do nothing about it. A good example is the “Polish Defense League in Mazowsze”⁶⁵ and its moderator, Dariusz Biały.⁶⁶ There are radical Catholic groups which publish or distribute Islamophobic content, appealing to the defense of Poland and the Church from Islam.⁶⁷ There is also the media group *Idź pod prąd* (Go against the current) led by protestant pastor Chojecki, who attacks the pope and the Catholic Church for its official (though, not popular in Poland) stance⁶⁸ to build dialogue with Islam and accuses Muslims of terror, killing gays, and Americans.⁶⁹

Islamophobic authors are also active on Twitter. They include journalists (cf. Media section), but also regular supporters of the PiS or *Konfederacja* parties,⁷⁰ or even fantasy novel writers.⁷¹ We analyzed Islamophobic entries on Twitter in the last quarter of 2020 and a few common trends can be observed, apart from the increase of the

62. A good example is the following profile on Facebook, Kamieni Kupa: <https://www.facebook.com/Kamieni-Kupa1/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

63. Examples: 1. Facebook, Nie dla islamizacji Europy <https://www.facebook.com/ndiepl/posts/2942303922562830>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

2. Facebook, Nie dla islamizacji Europy <https://www.facebook.com/ndiepl/posts/2938721172921105>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

64. Example: Facebook, Raz prozą, raz rymem - walczymy z propagandowym reżimem, <https://www.facebook.com/razproza/posts/2656229534588463>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

65. Facebook, Polska Liga Obrony - Dywizja Mazowiecka, <https://www.facebook.com/PolskaLigaObronyDywizjaMazowiecka/posts/3556943801094860>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

66. Facebook, Dariusz Biały, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=191700822293271&id=100043600625592, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

67. Examples (last accessed: November 15, 2020):

1. <https://www.facebook.com/ZolnierzeChrystusa/posts/3358124147635171>

2. Facebook, Żołnierze Chrystusa, <https://www.facebook.com/ZolnierzeChrystusa/posts/3112274742220114>

3. Fundacja Fileo, “Chrześcijańskie misjonarki gwałcone i ścięte, chrześcijańscy chłopcy torturowani i ukrzyżowani!” <https://fundacja-fileo.pl/chrzescijanskie-misjonarki-zgwalcone-i-sciete-mezczyzni-i-chlopcy-torturowani-i-ukrzyzowani/>.

68. Idź Pod Prąd, “Imam w katolickim programie TVP atakuje chrześcijan z IPP!” <https://idzpodprad.pl/aktualnosci/imam-w-katolickim-programie-tvp-atakuje-chrzescijan-z-ipp/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

69. Facebook, Idź Pod Prąd, <https://www.facebook.com/idzpodprad/videos/651988648716732>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

70. 1. Twitter, Wojciech Batug, <https://twitter.com/BatugWojciech/status/1315181707126079490>,

2. Twitter, Stefan Wójcik, <https://twitter.com/Szczery2015/status/1317154697799737344>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

71. Twitter, Jacek Piekara, <https://twitter.com/JacekPiekara/status/1320375058238492672>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

reach of Islamophobic tweets by politicians (cf. Politics section). First, we can observe that there is always a correlation between the number of tweets on Islam and terrorist attacks (even if they are not carried out by Muslims). (Fig. 2)

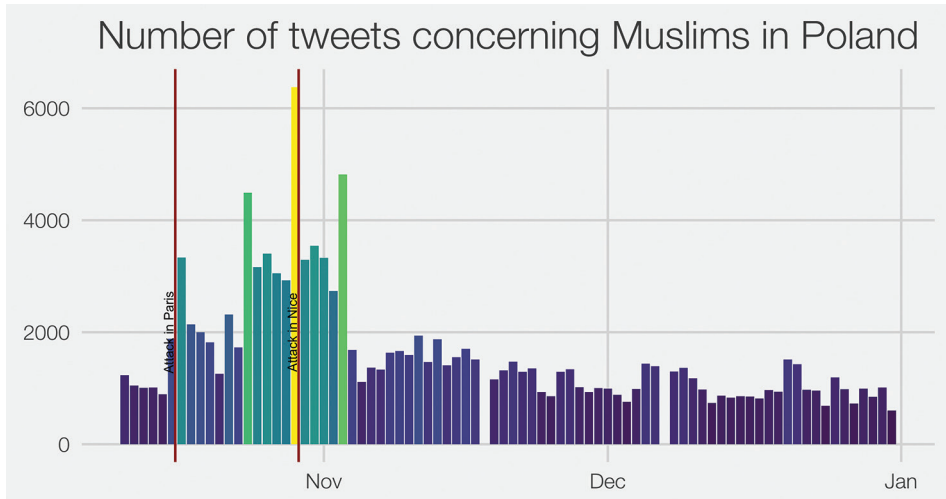


Figure 2: Number of tweets concerning Muslims in Poland.⁷²

Another trend is that positive stories are often neglected by the users of Polish Twitter. After the attack in Vienna, we checked the popularity of the story of the three Muslim men who saved the life of a woman and a policeman. Unfortunately, it was retweeted or commented by only less than 1.5% of users. (Fig. 3)

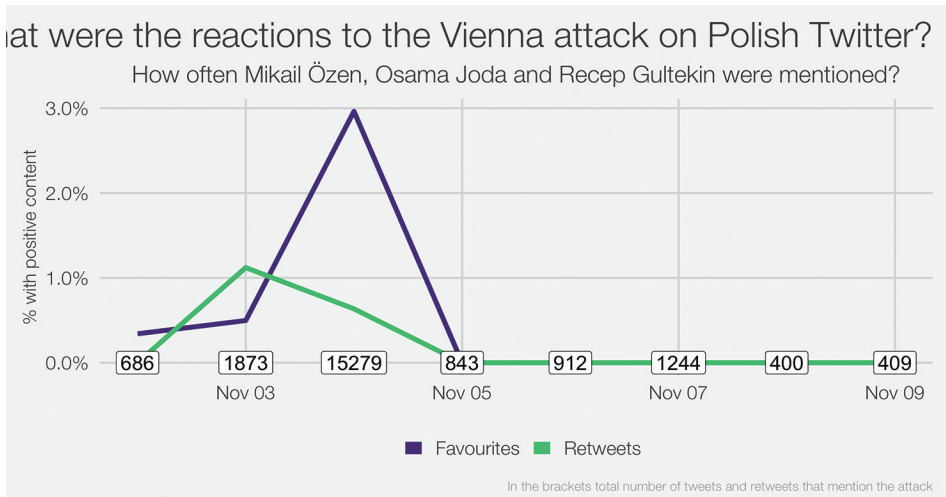


Figure 3: What were the reactions to the Vienna attack on Polish Twitter?⁷³

72. Figure was compiled by Karol Wilczyński and Piotr Sobczyk based on research on Twitter between 11th Oct 2020 and 31st Dec 2020.

73. Ibid.

We also analyzed how often Polish Twitter users use the term “PiSlam.” which - surprisingly - is also correlated with the dates of terrorist attacks and also with the days of intense critique of the Polish government (see November 9 in the figure below). (Fig. 4)

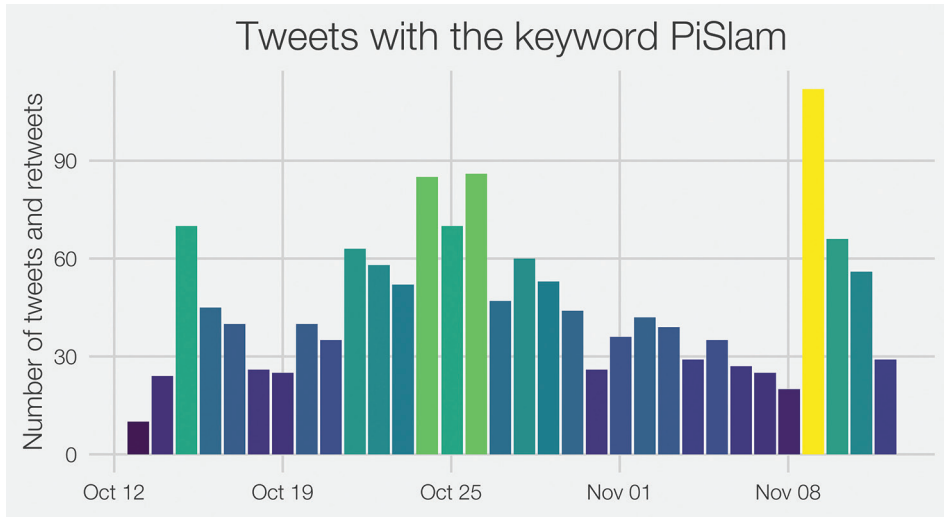


Figure 4: Tweets with the keyword PiSlam..⁷⁴

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As was mentioned above, central figures in the Polish Islamophobic networks still receive significant institutional support which provides them with financial stability. Being anchored to governmental institutions, far-right media outlets, think tanks, and the Catholic Church, they are able to spread their messages across different socioeconomic groups.

Two important members of Islamophobic networks in the country are Dominik Tarczyński (cf. Politics section), a European MP from the ruling party PiS; and Dariusz Matecki, a member of the local city council in Szczecin and a close associate of Zbigniew Ziobro, the Minister of Justice in the PiS government and a Prosecutor General. Their Islamophobic messages in 2020 contain stereotypes like “police being afraid of offending *Muslim criminals*”;⁷⁵ repeating the discriminatory slogan that a Muslim equals a terrorist;⁷⁶ and that “Latin civilization” is under threat from “Barbaric Islam.” In church circles, the figure spreading Islamophobia is Dariusz Kowalczyk, a Catholic priest, a Jesuit, a Polish professor of theology working at Vatican

74. Ibid.

75. Facebook, Dariusz Matecki, <https://www.facebook.com/DariuszMateckiFanPage/posts/1377665145738727>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

76. Facebook, Dariusz Matecki, <https://www.facebook.com/DariuszMateckiFanPage/posts/1379192482252660>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

universities in Rome, and a journalist in the Polish Catholic press. His Islamophobic entries relating to the clash of civilizations theory and ridiculing the idea of interreligious dialogue can be found on his Facebook profile.⁷⁷

As was observed at the end of 2019, in 2020, the main Islamophobic websites, social media channels, and important individuals (cf. Media and Internet sections) focused more on questioning the existence of the pandemic and attacking the LGBT+ community, usually combining homophobia and Islamophobia in one message. Some of mainstream Islamophobic channels were deleted by social media corporations. The most well-known cases were deleting the Facebook profile of Janusz Korwin-Mikke (cf. Politics section) followed by 800,000 users, and the Facebook profile “Based Poland” with around 200,000 followers. The Based Poland profile was led by Adam Starzyński, a TV Republika journalist and a member of the international far-right Islamophobic group MEGA (“Make Europe Great Again”).⁷⁸ The most important Catholic figures of the Islamophobia network, such as the priests Dariusz Oko or Roman Kneblewski, were devoted to fighting the LGBT+ community, and were not recorded as engaging in Islamophobic speech this year.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

As in previous years, there were no systematic and countrywide initiatives to counter Islamophobia. The most important official institution fighting xenophobia and Islamophobia quite systematically is the Office of Ombudsman and Ombudsman Adam Bodnar. A 2020 report of the Ombudsman Office, appeals to the Prime Minister in the following words, “Fear and resentment towards migrants - reinforced by an unskillful and often even deliberately manipulated public debate - contributes to an increase in hate crimes against foreigners, especially people from the Middle East and followers of Islam. This proved that in mass-threatening situations it does not take much for hatred to escalate, especially against groups traditionally exposed to such crimes.”⁷⁹

77. Examples of his posts: (1) Facebook, Dariusz Kowalczyk, <https://www.facebook.com/dariusz.kowalczyk.104/posts/2713832938653261> (last accessed: November 15, 2020); (2) Facebook, Dariusz Kowalczyk, <https://www.facebook.com/dariusz.kowalczyk.104/posts/3229544603748756>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020). He also shares the Islamophobic content of Vatican Radio on his profile, for example: Facebook, Dariusz Kowalczyk, <https://www.facebook.com/dariusz.kowalczyk.104/posts/3474204329282781>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

78. Oko.press, Andrzej Górski, “Polski żołnierz islamofobicznej siatki bije rekordy w sieci. #MEGAgate cz. 4” <https://oko.press/polski-zolnierz-islamofobicznej-siatki-bije-rekordy-w-sieci-megagate-cz-4/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

79. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, “Potrzeba całościowej strategii przeciwdziałania przestępstwom z nienawiści - pisze Adam Bodnar do premiera Mateusza Morawieckiego” <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-do-premiera-o-calosciowej-strategii-przeciwdzialania-przestepstwom-z-nienawisci>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

For the first time since 1989, the court sentenced the owner of the far-right weekly magazine *Gazeta Polska* for publishing a racist photomontage. The District Court in Gdańsk ordered the publisher to apologize to the authors of the original works Rafał Wojczal and Wojciech Wilczyński, and to pay the amount of PLN 20,000 (c. EUR 4,500) for the Polish Humanitarian Action.⁸⁰ The cover showed a group of people from the Middle East with the words “Refugees brought deadly diseases. Shocking German report!”



Figure 5: The cover of the far-right weekly magazine *Gazeta Polska* (August 2017 issue) with the cover story entitled “Refugees Brought Deadly Diseases. Shocking German Report!”⁸¹

There were also positive messages from the Catholic bishops on the occasion of the Day of Islam in the Catholic Church, which is traditionally celebrated at the end of January every year. Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski sent a letter to Muslims from Krakow and bishop Henryk Cierieszko said that bishops “are not afraid to be open to Islam.” The initiative, dating back to late 1990s, however, is not popular in Poland.⁸²

80. Wirtualne Media, „Gazeta Polska” ma przeprosić fotoreporterów ws. okładki „Uchodźcy przynieśli śmiertelne choroby”, <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/gazeta-polska-musi-przeprosic-fotoreporterow-ws-okladki-uchodzczy-przyniesli-smiertelne-choroby>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

81. Ibid.

82. ekai.pl, Tomasz Królak, “Bp Cierieszko: Nie boimy się krytyki za otwartość na islam” <https://ekai.pl/nie-boimy-sie-krytyki-za-otwartosc-na-islam-rozmowa-z-bp-henrykiem-cierieszko/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

There was also a great initiative by European MP Janina Ochojska, the leader and founder of *Polska Akcja Humanitarna*, who organized an exhibition with works of Moria refugees which also focused on the role of Muslim women. There was also an article and popular crowdfunding campaign to support young Muslim girls providing education in refugee camps in Greece conducted by Anna Alboth, a journalist and activist.⁸³

It is good to note that an initiative by a part of the Muslim community of Poland to support Polish women during Women's Strike, which opposes the near total ban on abortion in Poland, was very popular among the participants.⁸⁴

It is also worth mentioning that there were a few books published by Polish authors on Islam and Muslim communities: *Lajla znaczy noc* (Layla means night) about the coexistence of Muslim and Christian communities in Andalusia by Aleksandra Lipczak;⁸⁵ *U nas każdy jest prorokiem* (Everyone is a prophet here) on Tatar Muslims living in Poland by Bartosz Panek;⁸⁶ *Gorsze dzieci republiki* (The worse children of the Republic) on Algerians living in France by Ludwika Włodek;⁸⁷ and *Wojownicy o szklanych oczach* (The warriors with the glass eyes) on Turkey by Agnieszka Rostkowska.⁸⁸ All these works were an opportunity to start a debate in mainstream media and to promote a more nuanced view of Islam and Muslim communities (cf. Media section to see names of mainstream journalists and media projects which help to spread knowledge and reliable information about Muslims).

The authors of this report, we are involved in constantly trying to change the situation and to create a more complex and nuanced view of Islam. We have created the most popular platform on this topic in Polish, namely islamistablog.pl (since 1st Mar 2021 it is called SalamLab.pl). This year, we created a Muslim map of Poland to persuade Poles to visit attractive spots and symbols of Muslim presence in Poland.⁸⁹ We also provided Polish readers with hundreds of news concerning Muslim communities, organized a "Virtual Iftar" at the end of Ramadan, and online discussions about Islam. The lack of funding and institutional support, however, remains a challenge.

83. Wysokie Obcasy, Anna Alboth, "Poznały się w obozie Moria na Lesbos. Mają po 17 lat i robią, co mogą, żeby walczyć z łatką „uchodźczyńi”" <https://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,163229,26372269.poznaly-sie-w-obozie-moria-na-lesbos-maja-po-17-lat-i-robja.html>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

84. Facebook, Muzułmański Związek w RP, <https://www.facebook.com/MZRRP/posts/3025667070993800>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

85. charakter.pl, *Lajla znaczy noc*, <https://www.karakter.pl/ksiazki/lajla-znaczy-noc>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

86. czarne.com.pl, „U nas każdy jest prorokiem” <https://czarne.com.pl/katalog/ksiazki/u-nas-kazdy-jest-prorokiem>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

87. czarne.com.pl, „Gorsze dzieci republiki”, <https://czarne.com.pl/katalog/ksiazki/gorsze-dzieci-republiki>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

88. wydawnictwopoznanskie.pl, „Wojownicy o szklanych oczach”, <https://wydawnictwopoznanskie.pl/produkt/wojownicy-o-szklanych-oczach-w-poszukiwaniu-nowej-turcji/>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

89. The First News, Joanna Jasińska, „Couple create interactive Muslim map of Poland to show the many faces of Polish Islam” <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/couple-create-interactive-muslim-map-of-poland-to-show-the-many-faces-of-polish-islam-14557>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

There is a dire need to regulate the issue of hate speech as has been made clear in the recommendations from international bodies, and a need to create a comprehensive strategy to counteract hate crimes using the systemic recommendations provided by the Ombudsman in 2019.⁹⁰ Specific changes should contain the following:

- A) introducing a statutory definition of hate speech in Polish law;
- B) amending the provisions of the Criminal Code in terms of penalizing membership in organizations promoting or inciting racial hatred or participation in all types of such activities;
- C) introducing a state-supported hate crime online monitoring system;
- D) introducing an obligation on the part of Internet service providers and media outlets to notify law enforcement authorities in the case of hate speech activities under threat of a proportionate administrative sanction;
- E) creating and financing effective systemic solutions aimed at providing foreigners (especially refugees) with a sense of belonging to the community, adequate social and living support;
- F) providing financial and organizational support for NGOs fighting against hate crimes.

Additionally, it is necessary for NGOs to engage intensively in activities related to the education in the field of hate crimes, and to offer training for students, teachers, public institutions, media, and other entities in the field of counteracting hate crimes and discrimination with the support of state and local authorities. It is also recommended to introduce actions to make the administrators of commercial Internet news portals aware of the wide range of obligations (moderating, filtering, removing comments) in relation to entries that may constitute hate speech.

A month before the planned date of the presidential elections in April 2020, Zbigniew Ziobro, Minister of Justice, Prosecutor General, and a leader of the party *Solidarna Polska*, tweeted that “Islam is alien to our culture” and suggested that Poland should defend itself against it.

Chronology

- **01.01.2020:** At the brink of the election campaign, Krzysztof Bosak (MP and the far-right *Konfederacja* party’s candidate in the presidential elections in 2020) tweeted that “Islam has nothing to do with freedom, therefore its development in Poland should be stopped.”

90. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, „Potrzeba całościowej strategii przeciwdziałania przestępstwom z nienawiści - pisze Adam Bodnar do premiera Mateusza Morawieckiego”, <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-do-premiera-o-calosciowej-strategii-przeciwdzialania-przestepstwom-z-nienawisci>, (last accessed: November 15, 2020).

- **12.01.2020:** Polish Radio quotes foreign members of anti-Islamic parties and fosters fearmongering about the growing number of Muslims.
- **23.01.2020:** A case of French teenager, Milo, offending Islam becomes viral in most Polish mainstream media without any comment.
- **10.03.2020: Dominik Tarczyński, European MP from the PiS ruling party, posted a Facebook video where he said that “Sharia law is a barbarism.” There were almost 2,000 reactions to this post and it was shared almost 500 times.**
- **02.04.2020:** The news on TVP1 published a piece accusing refugees in camps in Greece of spreading the coronavirus. The TVP broadcast was full of manipulations and false news, the Court of Justice of the European Union judgment was used to present refugees as an epidemiological threat, and to identify them once again with “Muslim terrorists” responsible for attacks in Europe. Since 2015, the latter has been a constant theme on public television. In addition, the report broadcast clusters of pictures deprived of context. It is not known where and when it was recorded: they showed groups of refugees loaded with luggage, crowding along the Turkish border behind barbed wire, or dark-skinned men and women in hijab watched by a policeman. These images were juxtaposed with snapshots taken during terrorist attacks.
- **04.04.2020:** Via Twitter, the TVP correspondent in Germany, Cezary Gmyz, shared information accusing Muslims in Berlin of allegedly gathering in front of a mosque, which could have created a threat of spreading the coronavirus. This material was made available from an account of the far-right AfD party. Gmyz’s post sparked a wave of anti-Islamic comments visible on his profile.
- **06.04.2020:** In an interview on the main state television station, the Minister of Justice and Prosecutor General said, “We defended our sovereignty from a culture of Islam which is alien to us and which was forced upon us.” The tweet containing this part of the interview was published on his official Twitter account and retweeted more than 300 times.
- **08.04.2020:** During the program “Biedrzycka Express,” aired on YouTube on the Super Express channel, which was mainly devoted to the problem of the coronavirus pandemic, Janusz Korwin-Mikke (Confederation), a member of the Polish Parliament, made the following statement, “Men must know how to kill. If we don’t know how to kill, we’ll be slaughtered by Arabs, by Chinese, by anyone.” The journalist, Kamila Biedrzycka, did not comment on this statement in any way.
- **18.05.2020:** On the radical right-wing internet YouTube television channel *Idź Pod Prąd*, Paweł Chojecki, the leader of a religious group called the New Covenant Church, insulted members of the association *Nigdy Więcej* and Pope Francis, by saying that the pope is “a worshiper of pagan idols. This is a man

who claims that Catholics believe in the same God as the followers of Muhammad, so he is a spiritual impostor.”

- **30.05.2020:** Janusz Kowalski, secretary of state in the Ministry of State Assets and a member of the parliament from the *Solidarna Polska* (Solidarity Poland) party, posted an entry on his Twitter profile calling for rejecting migrants coming to Poland because of their Muslim background. He stated: “The deputy head of the Civic Platform, Rafał Trzaskowski, was in 2015 the face of the idea of accepting Muslim immigrants at the request of Brussels. This politician, in my opinion, will accept any number of culturally alien Muslim immigrants at Berlin’s call. Do you want this?”. Kowalski published this comment during the campaign before the elections in which Trzaskowski ran for the president of the Republic of Poland⁹¹.
- **25.07.2020:** The decision to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque sparks Islamophobic comments across far-right websites.
- **10.08.2020:** The journalist and writer Rafał Ziemkiewicz made Islamophobic comments on YouTube channel wRealu24. When asked by presenter, Piotr Szlachetowicz, about the situation in Lebanon and the reasons for the explosion, which took place in Beirut on August 4 (as a result, 190 people were killed and over 6,500 were injured), he said, inter alia: “In the 1960s, Lebanon was the Switzerland of the Near East. A wonderful, beautiful, rich country where everyone would like to live; [it was a] Christian country. Later, Muslims began to appear there. And when Muslims appear somewhere, sooner or later the jihad starts, the war begins”⁹².
- **23.09.2020:** Janusz Korwin-Mikke, a far-right politician and MP of *Konfederacja* party, published a blog entry stating “we will most probably be conquered by Arabs or some other Muslims, which are powerful, because men are ruling there.”
- **29.10.2020:** Joachim Brudziński, a prominent PiS ruling party politician and an MP, after the Nice attack, posted a tweet connecting terrorism with refugees from Tunisia.
- **06.11.2020:** A spokesman for the District Prosecutor’s Office in Ostrów Wielkopolski, Maciej Meler, announced that a 32-year-old resident of Pleszew, Przemysław R., was convicted of “public incitement to racial, ethnic and religious hatred. With his entry, he insulted people who profess Islam and women who were in relationships with the followers of this religion”. The man posted the following comment on the social network: “It’s not a Pole anymore, but a *ciapate* rag! A Polish woman who lives with a Muslim is no longer a Pole!”. The District Court in Pleszew ordered the perpetrator to a fine of

91. This information was obtained thanks to Nigdy Więcej Association.

92. This information was obtained thanks to Nigdy Więcej Association.

PLN 2,000 (around 450 euros) and obliged him to pay the costs of the court proceedings⁹³.

- **11.11.2020:** Far-right and nationalist organizations carried out the illegal March of Independence. The leader of the march, Robert Bąkiewicz, appealed to the participants to become “true knights” who are able to “conquer the Jerusalem.”
- **18.12.2020:** A former Catholic priest and far-right nationalist activist and speaker, Jacek M., was acquitted by the court in Wrocław. In a film posted on social media, and later deleted, the former priest, according to the prosecutor’s office, said, “Brenton had a little right to behave like this. Why? Because he saw the direction in which this supposedly civilized world is going.” He added, “He had the moral right to chop the heads of Muslims who died in the hands of hundreds of whites.” “In defense of the white race and Latin civilization, those specific invaders who threaten us must be murdered.” In his decision, among other things, the judge wrote that the words quoted by the prosecutor’s office were taken out of context, and that the defendant “at no point in his speech approved of the acts of the killer Brenton Tarrant and did not call for racially motivated murders.” The court included an expert opinion in the field of forensic linguistics who stated that Jacek M.’s statements were not hate speech.

93. This information was obtained thanks to Nigdy Więcej Association.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ROMANIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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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 an issue that draws minor interest on the political and public agenda.

Although no significant incidents regarding Muslims and immigrants have been recorded in Romania during 2020, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant rhetoric was present, especially in nationalist and Christian Orthodox media outlets. Activities in cyberspace of anti-Islam activists and sympathisers of extremist political parties had low visibility during the reporting period. Hate speech directed at Muslims was recorded, although to a lesser extent than in previous years.

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.

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 2020 nu s-au înregistrat incidente semnificative cu privire la musulmani și imigranți, retorica anti-imigrație, și ostilitatea față de musulmani a continuat să fie prezentă, în special în mass-media naționalistă și creștin ortodoxă.

În spațiul online, vizibilitatea activiștilor anti-Islam și a simpatizanților partidelor politice extremiste a fost redusă pe durata perioadei raportate. Au fost înregistrate cazuri de discurs instigator la ură directionat împotriva musulmanilor, însă într-o manieră 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 continuare, 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.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Romania

Type of Regime: Republic

Form of Government: Unitary semi-presidential republic

Ruling Parties: National Liberal Party – PNL (Liberal), USR-PLUS 2020 Alliance (Centre-Right), Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania - UDMR (Centre-Right)

Opposition Parties: Social Democratic Party – PSD (Social Democratic), Alliance for the Unity of Romanians – AUR (Right wing)

Last Elections: 2019 Presidential Elections (Klaus Iohannis of PNL – National Liberal Party won with 66.09% of votes against Viorica Dancila of PSD – Social Democratic Party 33.91%); 2020 Legislative Election (PSD: 157 [Centre-Left], PNL: 134 [Centre-Right]; USR-PLUS: 80 [Centre-Right]; Alliance for the Unity of Romanians – AUR [Right wing]: 47; UDMR: 30 [Centre-Right]; Minorities: 17); 2019 European Parliamentary Elections (PNL: 10 MEP mandates, PSD: 9, USR-PLUS 2020 Alliance [Centre-Right]: 8, ProRomania [Centre-Left]: 2, PMP: 2, UDMR: 2). Parliamentary elections are to be held on 6 December 2020.

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: A 2019 survey from the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) revealed that 68% of Romanians have a lack of trust in relation to people of Muslim faith, and 62% of those interviewed think that Muslims are potentially dangerous. Around 39% of the respondents would not accept having a Muslim relative, 28% would not accept having a Muslim friend, and 19% would not accept a Muslim co-worker.

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 Combating Discrimination (NCCD), in 2019, there were 904 petitions registered, out of which the largest number of petitions received were on the grounds of belonging to a social category (386) and the smallest numbers were on grounds of race (1) and HIV status (4). There were 32 petitions submitted on the grounds of religion and beliefs. The NCCD found discrimination in 192 cases, out of which only 9 were on grounds of religion and beliefs.

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 Combatting 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*)

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** N/A
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** N/A
- **Minaret Ban:** N/A
- **Circumcision Ban:** N/A
- **Burka Ban:** A legislative proposal for banning face covering with any material that prevents the recognition of physiognomy in educational institutions, launched in December 2017, after being rejected by the Chamber of Deputies in April 2018, was further submitted to the Senate for deliberation. In March 2019, the Senate decided to terminate the legislative procedure with a definitive rejection.
- **Prayer Ban:** N/A

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.¹ Romania had the fifth largest emigrant population in member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).² 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 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 In the last census, Muslims accounted for 0.34% of the population.⁴

Despite the small number of immigrants living in Romania, some hostility towards Muslims and anti-immigrant rhetoric were present, albeit sporadically, in the public sphere during the year. The results from a survey published by the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) were released in February 2019 and revealed that 68% of Romanians have a lack of trust in relation to people of Muslim faith, while 62% of those interviewed think that Muslims are potentially dangerous. Around 39% of the respondents would not accept having a Muslim relative, and 28% would not accept having a Muslim friend, and 19% would not accept a Muslim co-worker.⁵

1. 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-lucul-doi-in-lume-emigratie-motive-consecinte-1_599473bc5ab6550cb80c2cdc/index.html (Access date: 20 October 2020).
2. Based on 2015/16 data. OECD, "Talent Abroad: A Review of Romanian Emigrants", OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/talent-abroad-a-review-of-romanian-emigrants_bac53150-en#page28 (Access date: 11 November 2020).
3. "Law 489/2006 on Religious Freedom and the General Status of Religions, Jan. 8, 2007" (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 October 2020).
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: 10 October 2020).
5. "National Survey Regarding the Level of Discrimination in Romania and the Current Perceptions on Hate Crimes" (Sondaj de opinie la nivel național privind nivelul discriminării în România și percepțiile actuale asupra infracțiunilor motivate de ură), National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), February 2019, https://main.components.ro/uploads/1d3a0bf8b95391b825aa56853282d5da/2019/02/Sondaj_de_opinie_NoIntoHate_2018.pdf (Access date: 11 November 2020).

In an article in Al Jazeera, however, it is noted that as opposed to other countries in Eastern Europe “Romanian Muslims say their experience has largely been one of peaceful coexistence.”⁶ Vlad Stoicescu, a Romanian journalist who coordinates an investigation about religious cults in Romania, stated that the Muslim community in southern Romania is well-integrated and while anti-Islamic discourse is present among some nationalist intellectuals, among ordinary people it is seldom heard.⁷

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 Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) mentions in their 2019 report the shortcomings of the Romanian system’s capability of data collection on hate speech and hate-motivated crimes in a systematic manner.⁸ The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-FRA) also noted that Romania’s law enforcement agencies do not record the bias motivations of hate crimes.⁹

Civil society groups and international expert organisations assess that hate crime is generally underreported by victims due to a lack of trust in the willingness or ability of the authorities to investigate these cases effectively.¹⁰ Moreover the lack of understanding among police officers regarding what a hate crime is and how to investigate the bias motive of a crime contribute to underreporting. Criminal law action is very rarely taken against hate crimes, and provisions on racist motivation as aggravating circumstances are also rarely applied.

The OSCE ODIHR’s reporting on hate crime in Romania notes that law enforcement agencies have not recorded the bias motivations of hate crimes.¹¹ The last

6. “Romania, A Beacon of Coexistence for Muslims in Eastern Europe”, *Al Jazeera*, 20 August 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/romania-beacon-coexistence-muslims-eastern-europe-190819101957640.html> (Access date: 2 November 2020).

7. Ibid.

8. ECRI, Report on Romania (Fifth Monitoring Cycle), Published 5 June 2019, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-romania/168094c9e5> (Access date: 4 October 2020)

9. Hate Crime Recording and Data Collection Practice across the EU, 2018, p. 78, European Fundamental Rights Agency, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-hate-crime-recording_en.pdf

10. Council of Europe (CoE), Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Fourth Opinion on Romania - adopted on 22 June 2017, 16 February 2018, p. 22, <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-opinion-on-romania-adopted-on-22-june-2017/168078af76> (Access date: 2 October 2020).

11. Data on Romania’s hate crime reporting to the OSCE ODIHR is available at <http://hatecrime.osce.org/romania> (Access date: 5 November 2020).

available data was for 2018 and revealed there were only 2 hate crimes recorded by the police and 2 ensuing prosecutions.¹²

In one publicized case which took place in August 2020, seven migrants (six Syrians and an Egyptian) attempting to cross the Romanian border from Serbia claimed that they were physically assaulted by the Romanian border police with whips, sticks, and batons. The Romanian border police denied the allegations, while Romanian NGOs working on monitoring asylum procedures said they were not aware of alleged violence at the border.¹³ During 2020, there were no significant anti-Muslims/immigration protests or campaigns recorded.

Employment

No significant developments with regard to the employment of Muslims were reported during the period under investigation. In the last data available (for 2019), the NCCD registered 432 petitions about access to employment. In 41 of these cases, fines were issued, while another 37 received a warning. However, the data is not disaggregated by criteria such as ethnic origin or religion.¹⁴

In 2020, the largest number of foreign workers in Romania were of Turkish citizenship, with 5,575 active employees.¹⁵ The number of work permits issued for foreign workers between January and October 2020 was 17,578, almost 6,000 less than the previous year. The decrease in the number of work permits issued was due to the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁶ Media outlets have reported that because of the pandemic many foreign workers in Romania have lost their jobs, have not received their salary or have received partial payments.¹⁷

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

12. Ibid.

13. "Whips, Sticks and Batons: Romanian Border Police Accused of Violence against Migrants", Euronews, 23 September 2020, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/22/whips-sticks-and-batons-romanian-border-police-accused-of-violence-against-migrants> (Access date: 10 October 2020).

14. National Council for Combating Discrimination, Annual Report 2019, 2020, <https://main.components.ro/uploads/1d3a0bf8b95391b825aa56853282d5da/2020/05/activity-report-cncd-2019-21x30-ro-cc-r4-online-en-r1.pdf> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

15. La muncă în România, chiar și în vremea coronavirusului: 10 țări din afara granițelor UE din care vin cei mai mulți angajați străini, Wall Street, <https://www.wall-street.ro/articol/Careers/259065/la-munca-in-romania-chiar-si-in-vremea-coronavirusului-10-tari-din-afara-granitelor-ue-din-care-vin-cei-mai-multi-angajati-straini.html?full#graf> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

16. Adevarul, România va accepta până la 30.000 de angajați străini anul viitor. Domeniile în care nu se găsesc angajați români, 29 October 2020, https://adevarul.ro/economie/stiri-economice/romania-accepta-30000-angajati-straini-anul-viitor-domeniile-nu-gasesc-angajati-romani-1_5f9ab3e95163ec427154cc45/index.html (Access date: 10 October 2020).

17. Stările ProTv, Coșmarul străinilor care au venit la muncă în România. Cum supraviețuiesc în pandemie, 19 May 2020, <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/cosmarul-strainilor-care-au-venit-la-munca-in-romania-cum-supravietuiesc-in-pandemie.html> (Access date: 10 October 2020).

minimum number of pupils in minority languages at various levels.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ Turkey offers scholarships for graduates of the college but due to the shrinking number of Muslims in Romania very few apply.²⁰

During the reporting period, there were no recorded cases of discrimination of Muslims in education.

Politics

Legislative elections were held in December 2020. In the aftermath of an inconclusive vote, the centre-right National Liberal Party (PNL), the centrist USR PLUS, and the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), which represents Romania's ethnic Hungarians, formed a coalition government. The Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR), a newly formed right-wing party managed to obtain 9% of the vote in its first electoral showing.²¹ The AUR is regarded as an anti-system party with strong nationalistic, Orthodox Christian, and Eurosceptic undertones.²² The elections and its aftermath were dominated by health and economic measures aimed at tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Immigration and the integration of foreigners in Romania were absent from the political agenda of the current parliamentary parties.²³

Elections for the European Parliament were held in May 2019, and according to the European Web Site on Integration none of the winning parties in this elec-

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18. 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: 10 October 2020).
 19. "The State and the Religious Affairs" (Statul și cultele religioase), State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, <http://culte.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BookRO.pdf>, p. 162.
 20. 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: 8 November 2020).
 21. "What Is, Where Does AUR Come from and What Does It Want, The Far-Right Party That Has Reached the Electoral Threshold from Just over Zero" (Cine este, de unde vine și ce vrea AUR, partidul de extremă dreapta care a ajuns de la puțin peste zero la pragul electoral), 6 December 2020, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/ce-este-de-unde-vine-si-ce-vrea-aur-partidul-de-extrema-dreapta-care-a-ajuns-de-la-putin-pest-pe-zero-la-pragul-electoral-1413193> (Access date: 20 February 2021).
 22. "Political Program of the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians" (Programul Partidului Politic Alianta pentru Unirea Romanilor), Alianta pentru Unirea Romanilor, 2020, https://www.partidulaur.ro/program_aur (Access date: 20 February 2021).
 23. "Comparison between PNL, PSD and USR-PLUS Governing Programs: What Do the Investments Look Like in the Vision of the Three Parties" (Comparație între programele de guvernare PNL, PSD și USR-PLUS: Cum arată investițiile în viziunea celor trei partide), Hotnews, 20 November 2020, <https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-companii-24431844-comparatie-intre-programele-guvernare-pnl-psd-usr-plus-cum-arata-investitiile-viziunea-celor-trei-partide.htm> (Access date: 20 February 2021); "What We Saw in the Most Contagious Electoral Campaign" (Ce am văzut în cea mai virusată campanie electorală), G4media, 4 December 2020, <https://www.g4media.ro/ce-am-vazut-in-cea-mai-virusata-campanie-electorala.html> (Access date: 20 February 2021).

tion included in their programmes any information about integration of migrants or refugees. The National Liberal Party, the Social Democratic Party, and Alliance 2020 (Save Romania Union [USR] and the Freedom, Unity and Solidarity Party [PLUS]) have discussed migration only with respect to border security, while other parties such as the PRP (Pro Romania Party) and the UDMR (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania) did not include the subject of migration at all in their platforms. The only elected party (2 seats) whose programme included initiatives on migration and refugees was the Popular Movement Party (PMP). Their manifesto included ideas on making integration compulsory for migrants, by proposing EU-level regulations which would require acceptance of “the Christian traditions, culture, and habits which are specific to Europe”.²⁴

In September 2019, the mayor of Iași Mihai Chirica (former PSD member and currently a member of PNL) made racist statements referring to Congolese, Somalis, Syrians, and people from other nations, which he referred to as “[nations] that just came down from the trees”.²⁵ In January 2020, the NCCD fined the mayor following an investigation.²⁶

In an incident reported in July 2020, two parliamentarians from the Social Democratic Party (PSD) got into an argument with the Turkish cashier of a fast-food restaurant in Bucharest after the latter asked them to wear facemasks while in the restaurant. In reply, one of the parliamentarians started insulting the cashier and asked to see his work permit. According to the video camera recording, Adrian Solomon told the cashier: “Yo, Mustafa, you are in Romania here. Hello, Mustafa! Show me you have a working permit here! Yo, tramp!” the PSD MP said. The police issued fines against both MPs for using vulgar language and insults in public, as well as for not respecting the measures imposed by the authorities to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. The NCDD opened an investigation into the case.²⁷

24. “European Parliament Elections – What Do Parties in Romania Say about Integration?”, Europe Website on Integration, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/european-parliament-elections-what-do-parties-in-romania-say-about-integration>, (Access date: 10 October 2020).

25. “Mihai Chirica, New Racist Declarations: Congolose, Somali, Syrian and Other Nations That Came down from the Trees Will Come to Take Us Over”(Mihai Chirica, noi declarații rasiste: O să vină peste noi congolezii, somalezii, sirienii și alte națiuni coborâte din copac), Digi 24, 6 September 2019 <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/mihai-chirica-noi-declaratii-rasiste-o-sa-vina-pestea-noi-congolezii-somalezii-sirienii-si-alte-natiuni-coborate-din-copac-1183994> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

26. “Chirica, amendat pentru afirmațiile despre națiunile ‘coborâte din copac’”, Radio Romania Libera, 29 January 2020, <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/chirica-amendat-de-cncd-natiunile-coborate-din-copac/30404273.html>

27. CNCD s-a autosesizat după ce Digi24.ro a publicat înregistrarea scandalului provocat de deputații PSD Solomon și Stativă la șaormărie, 8 July 2020, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/cncd-s-a-autosesizat-dupa-ce-digi24-ro-a-publicat-inregistrarea-scandalului-provocat-de-deputatii-psd-solomon-si-stativa-la-saormarie-1334977> (Access date: 10 November 2020).

Media

Over the years, the media discourse in Romania has used words such as “Islam threat” and “Muslim invasion” to overemphasise the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 in the European Union. Immigration ceased to be an issue on the public agenda during the last couple of years and as such, very few publications, online or otherwise, continued to use bombastic headlines and factual misinterpretations to attract attention to migration or refugees. Among the ones that continued to depict Muslims using stereotypes, or who deliberately manipulated the facts to distort the public opinion, are nationalistic or Orthodox media outlets.

In 2020, some private media outlets continued to depict Muslim refugees or Muslim citizens of European countries as a threat because of their religion. It is worth noting that the vast majority of articles exhibiting Islamophobia refer to the situation and events involving Muslims living in other European countries, rather than the Muslim community in Romania.

Examples of headlines that illustrate the use of stereotypes and misinformation to promote Islamophobia are offered in the figures that follow.



Islamizarea și sfârșitul Europei europene

Figure 1: “The Islamisation and End of a European Europe”²⁸

This type of reporting has been limited to a small number of publications, as most media outlets use a balanced, factual approach in reporting news on refugees, immigrants, or Muslims.

28. “The Islamisation and End of a European Europe”, *Evenimentul Zilei*, 5 February 2020, <https://evz.ro/islamizarea-si-sfarsitul-europei-europene.html> (Access date: 11 November 2020).



Figure 2: "On the Day of the Filthy Muslim Prayer in the Chora Church, Transformed into a Mosque, Turkey Was Struck by a 7 Degrees Earthquake."²⁹



Franța își pune turban: Republica lui Macron se islamizează într-un ritm galopant

Figure 3: "France Puts on the Turban: Macron's Republic Is Undergoing Islamisation Rapidly"³⁰

29. "On the Day of the Filthy Muslim Prayer in the Chora Church, Transformed into a Mosque, Turkey Was Struck by a 7 Degrees Earthquake", *OrtodoxInfo*, 30 October 2020, <https://ortodoxinfo.ro/2020/10/30/in-ziua-spurcatei-rugaciuni-musulmane-in-biserica-chora-transformata-in-moschee-turcia-a-fost-lovita-de-un-cutremur-de-7-grade/> (Access date: 11 November 2020).
30. "France Puts on the Turban: Macron's Republic Is Undergoing Islamisation Rapidly", *Evenimentul Zilei*, 5 November 2020, <https://evz.ro/franta-isi-pune-turban-republica-lui-macron-se-islamizeaza-intr-un-ritm-galopant.html/2> (Access date: 11 November 2020).

Justice System

In 2020, no significant legal developments affecting the rights of Muslims were recorded. Available judicial statistics indicate low levels of hate crime in Romania despite regular reporting in the last years on cases of hate crimes. This discrepancy is attributed mainly to the insufficient and/or incorrect gathering of data as well as to a lack of training in personnel who are not sufficiently equipped to tackle this issue.³¹

The ECRI noted in its 2019 report on Romania that the criminal justice system fails to provide an adequate response to hate crimes due to underreporting of cases, lack of coherent data collection on hate-motivated violence, insufficient training of authorities, and the absence of racial motivation as aggravating circumstance in the criminal prosecution of cases.

It recommended that the authorities take action in a number of areas in this context, such as putting in place a system of data collection and producing statistics offering an integrated and consistent view of cases of racist and homo/transphobic hate speech and hate crime brought to the attention of the police and pursued through the courts, and making this data available to the public.³²

Internet

The radical groups that were fuelled by the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 have slowly faded from public attention, but sporadically still promote anti-Muslim sentiment in the context of migration in the European Union. However, according to the U.S. Department of State's report on human rights in Romania "conspiracy theories and antagonistic speech against Muslims continued to appear frequently in social media."³³

Most anti-immigration and anti-Islam promoters have ties with nationalistic movements such as the New Right Party (*Partidul Noua Dreaptă*). In 2020, the mentioned party has been mostly absent from the public scene, together with most activists linked to it.

The fifth evaluation of the Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online, an initiative by the European Commission, has seen continuous progress in the rapid removal of online hate speech by IT companies. Across the EU, reported hate speech has been mostly on the grounds of hate speech (33.1%), xenophobia, including anti-migrant hatred (15.5%), anti-gypsyism (9.9%), and anti-Muslim ha-

31. 10 ani de la transpunerea in legislatia Romaniei a Deciziei-cadru a Consiliului 2008/913/JHA dub 28 Noiembrie 2008 pentru combaterea rasismului si xenofobiei, Institutul pentru Politici Publice, March, 2020 http://www.ipp.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Studiu_CNCD.pdf (Access date: 10 November 2020).

32. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Report on Romania (Fifth Monitoring Cycle), Published 5 June 2019, <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-romania/168094c9e5> (Access date: 10 November 2020).

33. US Department of State, 2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Romania, 10 June 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/romania/> (Access date: 10 November 2020).

tred (9.4%). In Romania, 86 cases of illegal online hate speech were reported with a rate of removal of 96.5%.³⁴

The Facebook page “We don’t want a mega-mosque in Bucharest”,³⁵ initially created to oppose the project of building a grand mosque in Bucharest, which was cancelled, still shares various articles to provoke and manipulate the public opinion. While the page has reduced the frequency of posting significantly, some of the posts shared still promote an anti-immigration or anti-Muslim perspective. However, they receive low to moderate engagement. One such post is the photo below, shared on 9 March 2020, that states “We don’t want Islamic refugees in Romania. Stop the invasion”. (Fig. 4)



Figure 4: “We Don’t Want Islamic Refugees in Romania. Stop the Invasion”.³⁶

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The main actors who were promoting Islamophobia in recent years were small far-right movements and parties that use a strong stance on immigration and xenophobic rhetoric in hope of getting popular support. Most of these movements are relatively

34. “Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online 5th Evaluation of the Code of Conduct”, European Commission Directorate for Justice and Consumers, June 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/code_of_conduct_factsheet_7_web.pdf (Access date: 10 November 2020).

35. The page can be consulted at <https://www.facebook.com/NuVremMegaMoscheeInBucuresti> (Access date: 12 November 2020).

36. “We Don’t Want Islamic Refugees in Romania. Stop the Invasion”, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/paROdox.ro/photos/a.2090216214346990/2826319404069997/> (Access date: 10 November 2020).

obscure and group themselves around the more established *Noua Dreaptă* (PND), which was registered as a political party in 2015. The PND combines a nationalistic agenda, Orthodox Christian religious convictions, and elements of the fascist ideology of the Legionary Movement (the Romanian fascist movement during World War II). 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.³⁷ At the 2020 legislative elections, the PND got only 0.06% of the votes.

During the year, their activity lacked major visibility and there is no record of any significant campaigns directed against Muslims.

The centre-right People's Movement Party (PMP) stood out in the last couple of years by being the main initiator of a 2017 legislative proposal to ban face covering in educational institutions which was ultimately rejected, and by the controversial statements regarding migration in the EU made by former president of Romania and current PMP MEP Traian Basescu.³⁸ At the 2020 legislative elections, the PMP obtained 4.8% of the votes, failing to meet the electoral threshold.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The National Council for Combating Discrimination has become increasingly effective in its work. It has received a growing number of petitions over the years and has provided its expert opinion on judicial proceedings.³⁹

The NCCD completed a project aimed at evaluating the transposition of the EU Council Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia at the country level. As part of the activities of the project, 12 training sessions on registration and reporting of hate crimes were organised for 144 police and judicial staff.⁴⁰

37. "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%9F%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: 8 November 2020).

38. "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-migratie-anulezi-constitutia-romaniei-1_5bfe55badf52022f75e26bc1/index.html (Access date: 8 January 2019).

39. UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 5 April, 2018, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/084/74/PDF/G1808474.pdf?OpenElement> (Access date: 3 November 2020).

40. Institutul de Politici Publice, Comunicat de presa: La zece ani de la adoptarea Deciziei cadru 2008/913 privind combaterea anumitor forme și expresii ale rasismului și xenofobiei prin intermediul dreptului penal, în România încă nu este cunoscut numărul real al infracțiunilor motivate de ură, 30 March 2020, <http://www.ipp.ro/comunicat-de-presa-no-into-hate-2018/> (Access date: 3 November 2020).

In 2019, almost 800 refugees and persons with subsidiary protection were participating in the governmental integration programme. The majority were from Syria (349), Iraq (136), and Afghanistan (51). Apart from the integration programme carried out by state institutions, a series of projects run by NGOs were funded through the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, with the aim of supporting the integration of refugees and migrants across the country.⁴¹

The Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees (CDMiR), established in 2017 and comprising of 22 NGO members and five supporters (among them the Romanian UNHCR Office), continued to be the leading civil society initiative aimed at improving the perception of migrants and refugees in the public space, as well as their access to basic rights and services.⁴²

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")⁴³ and *Liga Islamica si Culturala din Romania* (The Islamic and Cultural League in Romania).⁴⁴

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The presence of Muslims in Romania remains a marginal issue on the political and public agenda. Despite the fact that no major internal developments affecting Muslims were registered during the reporting period, the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims in the media continued, albeit at a lower level compared to previous years. Underreporting of hate crimes coupled with the authorities' lack of preparation and collaboration in tackling racism and discrimination, remain issues that need to be addressed.

Based on the findings, a series of recommendations are made for relevant authorities and civil society, as follows:

- The authorities should put in place a system to collect, integrate, and publish data on cases of hate speech and hate crime investigated by the police and pursued through the courts.
- 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.
- Hate crime, hate speech, and anti-discrimination legislation should be included in the compulsory initial and continuous training of all law enforcement and legal professionals.

41. Inspectoratul General pentru Imigrari, Evaluarea activitatii politistilor Inspectoratului General pentru Imigrari in 2019, 18 February 2020, <http://igi.mai.gov.ro/ro/comunicat/evaluarea-activitatii-politistilor-inspectoratului-general-pentru-imigrari-in-2019>

42. More information about the coalition and its recent activity can be found on their website <https://cdmir.ro/wp/>

43. Further information about the NGO can be found at <http://www.islamulazi.ro/>

44. Further information about the NGO can be found at <https://islamromania.ro/contact/>

- Relevant authorities should ensure that monitoring mechanisms aimed at preventing hate speech in mass media and cyberspace (such as the EU Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online) are widely implemented.
- NGOs should strengthen their relationship with the Muslim community and enhance their legal capacity to assist victims of discrimination and hate crime.

Chronology

- **06.09.2019:** Mihai Chirica, the current mayor of Iași, made racist statements referring to Congolese, Somalis, Syrians, and people from other nations as “[nations] that just came down from the trees”.⁴⁵ In January 2020, the mayor was fined by the NCCD for his statements with the sum of 10,000 RON (approximately 2,000 EUR).
- **07.07.2020:** Two parliamentarians from the Social Democratic Party (PSD) got into an argument with the Turkish cashier of a fast-food restaurant in Bucharest after the latter asked them to wear facemasks while in the restaurant. In reply, one of the parliamentarians started insulting the cashier and asked to see his work permit. The police issued fines against both MPs for using vulgar language and insults in public, as well as for not respecting the measures imposed by the authorities to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. The NCDD opened an investigation into the case.⁴⁶
- **19.08.2020:** Seven migrants (six Syrians and an Egyptian) attempting to cross the Romanian border from Serbia claimed that they were physically assaulted by the Romanian border police with whips, sticks, and batons. The Romanian border police denied the allegations, while Romanian NGOs working on monitoring asylum procedures said they were not aware of alleged violence at the border.⁴⁷

45. “Mihai Chirica, New Racist Declarations”, Digi 24.

46. CNCD s-a autosesizat după ce Digi24.ro a publicat înregistrarea scandalului provocat de deputații PSD Solomon și Stativă la șaormărie, 8 July 2020, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/cncd-s-a-autosesizat-dupa-ce-digi24-ro-a-publicat-inregistrarea-scandalului-provocat-de-deputatii-psd-solomon-si-stativa-la-saormarie-1334977>

47. “Whips, Sticks and Batons: Romanian Border Police Accused of Violence against Migrants”, Euronews.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
RUSSIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

Despite the Covid-19 crisis, the situation with Islamophobia in Russia is generally in line with the trends outlined in 2019. While Islamophobia is not part of the official state agenda, there is a flip side to the official discourse of a traditional (Russian) Islam, which emanates from the dichotomy of a “good” vs. “bad” Islam. At the official level, Islam is confirmed as belonging to the traditional religions of Russia. Islamophobia often manifests in relation to discourses on migration. For example, the campaign launched in the Russian media and on social networks in connection with the funeral of Abdullah Anzorov, the man who murdered French teacher Samuel Paty. But this campaign can hardly be called Islamophobic - despite certain statements about the “barbaric nature of Islam,” the main protest cannot be associated with the Islamic factor but instead with the Chechen factor. We should note the persistence and strengthening of the discourse of securitization, which is manifested in the polarization of the image of Islam between “correct” traditional and criminalized “radical Islam,” as well as the consideration of Islamic issues in the context of providing security. The tendency to criminalize the activities of certain Muslim movements, abuses in the field of countering terrorism and extremism, and the banning of Muslim literature persist. In 2020, as in 2019, most cases of Islamophobia in Russia were related to the justice system and law enforcement. The most notable remains the persecution of members of the Hizb at-Tahrir, which is banned in Russia. In 2020, there were about 30 sentences under articles related to participation or distribution of materials of this organization. Finally, it is worth noting that a number of Muslim figures have managed to use the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic to counter Islamophobia in the media.

Резюме

Несмотря на кризис, связанный с пандемией ковид-19, ситуация с исламофобией в России в целом укладывается в обозначенные в 2019 году тенденции. Исламофобия в России не носит систематический характер, оставаясь востребованной у ограниченного круга общественных и политических движений. Исламофобские материалы и сообщества в соцсетях единичны и не представляют собой организованной сети. На официальном уровне подтверждается принадлежность ислама к традиционным религиям России. На уровне отдельных конфликтов зачастую исламофобия является производным элементом дискурсов мигрантофобии и ксенофобии. Например, медийную кампанию, развернувшуюся в СМИ и соцсетях, в связи с похоронами обвиняемого в убийстве французского преподавателя Самюэля Пати, едва ли можно назвать исламофобской – несмотря на отдельные высказывания о «варварской природе ислама», основной протест был связан не столько с исламским, сколько с чеченским фактором. Нельзя не отметить сохранение и укрепление дискурса секьюритизации, что проявляется в поляризации образа ислама между «правильным» традиционным и криминализируемым радикальным исламом, а также рассмотрением исламской проблематики в контексте обеспечения безопасности. Сохраняется тенденция на криминализацию деятельности отдельных мусульманских движений, злоупотребления в области противодействия терроризму и экстремизму (особенно, в вопросах, касающихся исламского экстремизма), запрет мусульманской литературы. В 2020 году, как и в 2019, большинство случаев исламофобии в России было связано с системой правосудия и правоохранительной системой. Наиболее заметным остается преследование членов запрещенной в России террористической организации «Хизб ат-Тахрир»: в 2020 году было вынесено около 30 приговоров по статьям, связанным с участием или распространением материалов этой организации. Наконец, стоит отметить, что ряду мусульманских деятелей удалось использовать чрезвычайные обстоятельства пандемии для противодействия исламофобии в медийном поле.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Russian Federation

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Semi-presidential system

Ruling Parties: Edinaya Rossiya (United Russia) (right-wing, centrist-right)

Opposition Parties: Communist Party, LDPR, A Just Russia, Civic Platform

Last Elections: 2016 Presidential Elections (Vladimir Putin won 76.69% of the vote, other candidates: Pavel Grudinin – 11.77%, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy – 5.65%, Kseniya Sobchak – 1.68%, Grigory Yavlinsky – 1.05%, Boris Titov – 0.76%, Maksim Suraikin – 0.68%, Sergey Baburin – 0.65%); 2016 Legislative Elections (United Russia: 343 seats, Communist Party: 42 seats, LDPR: 39 seats, A Just Russia: 23 seats, Rodina: 1 seat, Civic Platform – 1 seat)

Total Population: 146.7 million (2019)

Major Languages: Russian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: No special statistics on Islamophobia

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: No special statistics on racism and discrimination. There is data from the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis that monitors human rights violations including ethnic discrimination.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (71%), No religion (15%), Islam (10%) Other (4%) (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 13 million (9%) in 2010 (population census)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Central Spiritual Board of Muslims, Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russian Federation, Coordination Center of Muslims of North Caucasus

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: SOVA Center for Information and Analysis; MEMORIAL: An International Historical, Educational, Human Rights and Charitable Society

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** N/A
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** N/A
- **Minaret Ban:** N/A
- **Circumcision Ban:** N/A
- **Burka Ban:** N/A
- **Prayer Ban:** N/A

Introduction

The pandemic has become the main transforming factor for almost all spheres of life in 2020. The same cannot be said about Islamophobia in Russia: here we can speak only of a limited influence, while the main trends have remained the same. Islamophobia in Russia is not systematic, remaining in demand among a limited number of social and political movements. At the official level, Islam is confirmed as belonging to the traditional religions of Russia. At the level of individual conflicts, Islamophobia is often a derivative element of discourses of migrant-phobia and xenophobia. The discourse of the securitization of Islam remains constant and is only slightly embedded in the changing circumstances of the pandemic. Thus, the year 2020 saw an increase in migrant-phobic tendencies (not only in Russia, but also in many European states), as migrants became associated with carriers of the disease. Islamophobia, being an organic element of this xenophobic discourse, has also intensified. At the same time, anti-Islamophobic rhetoric from official Muslim clergy has also taken on a new dimension in the context of growing social tensions.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There were several physical and verbal attacks on Muslims in 2020 in Russia.

In February 2020, there were several incidents relating to Muslim prisoners in the Republic of Mordovia. On the night of February 13-14, a group of prisoners rioted in correctional facility № 5. Ibrahim Bakaniev, one of the rioters, was subjected to torture by the heads of the colony. On February 20, a Koran was found in the possession of Nabi Hajiyev in correctional facility № 7. The colony administration demanded that the prisoner surrender the book, which he refused to do and was severely beaten. In response to the wrongful actions of the prison staff, Hajiyev cut his wrists, and his example was followed by a group of other prisoners professing Islam.¹ Violence in prisons by staff members against inmates is a fairly common problem, not only in the context of sectarian conflicts. However, Muslims, especially those convicted of terrorist offences, often suffer abuse in the hands of prison staff. In addition, so-called prison jamaats also attract special attention from prison staff, which are almost impossible to control. "Prison jamaats" refers to well-organized hierarchical communities of Muslims, many of whom are neophytes who have converted to Islam while in prison. This topic is often politicized. Due to the lim-

1. "Tiuremshchiki zadevaiut religiiu i natsional'nost' dlia usileniia effekta", Kavkaz Reali, 28 February 2020, <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/30459747.html> (Access date 10.01.2021).

ited access of researchers to this environment, it is almost impossible to obtain objective data on the number of neophytes, while in the media one can often find material in which the authors have manipulated the data on Muslims in prison, creating a climate of fear about the rapid spread of ideas of radical Islam. According to lawyers dealing with such cases, correctional officer, in exceeding their authority, specifically seek to affect the religion and nationality of the convicts. “Muslims have an inner core, they continue to fight and resist in the prison more often than not. That’s why the prison employees are infuriated by the fact that they cannot be broken, that they are not subject to control,” states lawyer Marat Ashimov regarding the Islamophobic behavior of prison staff.²

In September 2020, in Kaliningrad, five Muslim men washed their shoes in the holy spring of an Orthodox chapel, and the process was filmed and posted online, causing an extremely negative reaction not only among Christians in the region. The men were promptly detained and soon released. One of them later apologized for what he had done, recording the video and posting it on social media. Representatives of the Muslim community of the region do not exclude the possibility of provocation against Muslims as well, calling Kaliningrad an Islamophobic region.³ As a reminder, there is still an acute shortage of mosques there, and last year, there was an increase in social tensions related to the demolition of the prayer house in Chernyakhovsk, which I wrote about in last year’s report.

In November 2020, in Astrakhan, there was a police raid in the area of the Astrakhan mosque. After Friday prayers at the Red Mosque in Astrakhan, law enforcement officers met worshippers at the exit of the temple. Law enforcement officers demanded that Muslims show IDs, while selectively taking worshippers into police buses. The law enforcement officers refused to explain the reasons for the raid.⁴ They took Muslims to the police station and after checking their documents, they released them.

- Mosque Building Restrictions

Back at the end of 2019, Muslims received a permit from the Yekaterinburg authorities for the construction of a mosque in the Sortirovka neighborhood. Moving to the temporary mosque in the new area was scheduled to September 2020. In January, residents of the neighborhood began collecting signatures to cancel the construction of the Nur-Usman Mosque. Among the main arguments were the transport issue during Muslim holidays, the loud sound of the azan, and the fact that “the proximity to

2. “Tiuremshchiki zadevaiut religiiu i natsional’nost’ dlia usileniia effekta”.

3. “A my real’no nogi moem”. Skandal vokrug sviatogo istochnika v Kaliningrade”, Kavkaz Realii, 23 September 2020, <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/30853225.html> (Access date 10.01.2021).

4. “V astrakhanskoi mecheti proshel piatnichnyi reid silovikov (VIDEO)”, IslamNews, 27 November 2020, <https://islamnews.ru/news-v-astrakhani-proshel-pyatnichnyy-reyd-silovikov-na-mechet> (Access date 10.01.2021).

the mosque will badly affect the safety and development of the pupils of the kindergarten, which is located nearby.” Abdul-Kudduss Asharin, the head of the Religious Department of Muslims of the Sverdlovsk region, responded to the claims of the residents of Sortirovka by saying, “Other people’s fears are the worst disease. When any crime happens, they immediately say that it is related to our religion, although these crimes are committed by people who are far from Islam and Muslims.”⁵

In 2020, the Muslims of Rostov-on-Don continued to work to return the historic mosque building to the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Rostov Region.⁶ However, on January 2, 2021, it became known that the building of the former cathedral mosque in Rostov-on-Don was given to a jazz school. The city administration explained this decision by the lack of money in the budget for the construction of a new building for the school.⁷

- Raids in Muslim Cemeteries

In January 2020, there was an attack on a Muslim cemetery in the village of Buraevo in the Republic of Bashkiria. Trees were cut down in the territory of the old part of the cemetery, which destroyed graves as they fell. It is reported that fences surrounding at least five graves were damaged.⁸

In May 2020, 11 Muslim graves were destroyed in the Chernorechensky cemetery in Surgut.⁹

Such deeds are punishable under Article 244 of the Criminal Code “Desecration of the Bodies of the Dead and Their Burial Places” and foresee a fine of up to 40,000 rubles, correctional labor, or imprisonment up to three months.

Employment

Numerous studies show that discrimination in the labor market is primarily related to ethnic discrimination, rather than discriminatory perceptions of Islam. Thus, one can speak with some caution about discrimination against Muslims, but it is mediated by their ethnicity. We are not aware of any specific studies on the marginalization of Muslims in the labor market.

5. “Musul'mane otvetili zhiteliam Sortirovki, kotorye vystupili protiv stroitel'stva novoi mecheti”, E1, 28 January 2020, https://www.e1.ru/news/spool/news_id-66466663.html (Access date 10.01.2021).
6. “Musul'mane Rostovskoi oblasti namereny borot'sia za zdanie byvshei mecheti”, Kommersant, 2 September 2020, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4475883> (Access date 10.01.2021).
7. “Konfiskovannuiu istoricheskuiu mechet' Rostova peredali dzhazovoi shkole”, Islam News, 2 January 2021, <https://islamnews.ru/news-konfiskovannuyu-istoricheskuyu-mechet-rostova-peredali-dzhazovoy-shkole> (Access date 10.01.2021).
8. “V Bashkirii na kladbishche ustroili pogrom”, MK, 13 January 2020, <https://mkset.ru/news/society/13-01-2020/v-bashkirii-na-kladbishche-ustroili-pogrom> (Access date 10.01.2021).
9. “V Surgute vandaly razgromili musul'manskii mogily”, SIA Press, 26 May 2020, https://siapress.ru/news_surgut/96080-na-kladbishche-v-surgute-usilyat-ohranu-posle-pogroma-musul'manskih-mogil (Access date 10.01.2021).

Education

We are not aware of any cases of distortion of the image of Muslims in educational material that would lead to any conflict. However, attention must be paid to framing “Islam as a problem” through a discourse of securitization, of which “spiritual security” as an organic part.

In July 2017, the Research Institute of Spiritual Security and Development of Spiritual Education at BSPU was opened in Ufa and named after M. Aknulla. The vast majority of the events are devoted to the prevention of extremism and terrorism in the youth environment.¹⁰ However, even if Islam is not mentioned in the title of the event, in most cases the agenda is to discuss the problem of an alleged radicalization of Muslims.

Two books by Roman Silantyev, known for his critical stance on Islam, were published simultaneously in 2020: the textbook *Fundamentals of Destructology* and the popular science version of this textbook named *Destructology: How to Lose Money and Health Quickly and Reliably. 10 Steps to Success*. In 2019, Silantyev announced the emergence of a new science, namely destructology, and in 2020, he presented the first fruit of his labor. Destructive ideologies are understood as a range of movements from Christian sects to supporters of alternative history, and Islamic extremism is also among them. Moreover, the interpretation of Islamic extremism is extremely broad. For example, Silantyev ironically writes in his popular scientific publication, “To touch the richness of Muslim sects, you don’t have to join the primitive Wahhabi. There are much more original fellows, who will eagerly explain the advantages for one’s health of whippings or offer to take part in building the global caliphate on six acres.”¹¹ Thus, here we are also talking about considering Islam exclusively in the context of security, which contributes to the stigmatization of the image of Muslims in the public space.

Politics

It should be emphasized once again that due to the special Russian context, the rhetoric of Islamophobia is hardly in demand in the political discourse because of the official discourse of traditional religions, of which Islam is an integral part. Islamophobia thus becomes a consequence of the rigid dichotomy between “good” and “bad” Islam – or, Islam that is loyal and disloyal to the authorities. It is not Islamophobia that forms in the official political discourse and in the discourse of official representatives of the Muslim community, but on the contrary, the concept of “traditional Islam” opposing threats from radical Islam and being loyal to the authorities. That’s why both secular and religious authorities adhere to the rhetoric of traditional values.

10. Dukhovnaia bezopasnost’ i religioznoe obrazovanie Nauchno-issledovatel’skii institute, <https://vk.com/mni-crmo> (Access date 10.01.2021).

11. Silantyev R., Chekmaev S. (2020) *Destrunktologii: Kak bystro i nadezhno lishit’sia deneg i zdorov’ia. 10 shagov k uspekhu*. M.: Piatyi Rim.

For example, the most striking manifestation of this symbolic policy was Vladimir Putin's meeting with representatives of traditional religions on the relatively new National Unity Day, celebrated on November 4. There, the Russian leader, in addition to reciting three holy texts - the Bible, the Torah, and the Koran - promised a "worthy" celebration of the 1100th anniversary of the adoption of Islam in the modern Volga region and responded to a request from Ravil Gainutdin for the reconstruction of the Moscow Historical Mosque.¹²

The pandemic, in turn, somewhat altered the rhetoric of the official Muslim clergy in terms of demonstrating loyalty to the authorities. A striking example of this is how Muslims use the theme of celebrating the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War, which is a very strong indicator of a willingness to be involved in the political mainstream. Not surprisingly, parallels are being drawn between the victory in the Great Patriotic War and the victory over the coronavirus - united by the metaphor of the plague: "... a full mark of our gratitude will be a categorical prevention of the respread of the brown plague of national and racial superiority, which our ancestors won in that war."¹³

Media

Two of the most high-profile events in 2020 stimulated a rise in Islamophobic sentiments in various segments of the media. The first was the murder of French teacher Samuel Paty by Chechen Abdallah Anzorov. However, the Russian conservative segment of the media was not so much affected by the event as by the funeral of Anzorov in his homeland of Chechnya. Particular attention was paid to the "exculpatory" statements of the republic's leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, and also to the broad support given to the criminal by the local population. Numerous news reports were devoted to how many people went to the funeral, and also to the fact that a street in the village was renamed after him almost immediately. In addition to the violent reaction in social networks,¹⁴ condemnations came from public figures as well. Thus, on October 27, famous public figure Kseniya Sobchak called French leader Macron her hero, and criticized statements by the head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, for being "medieval." The anchorwoman also wrote that people were "intimidated by fanatics" into believing that jokes about Islam "can get their heads cut off" and reported threats against her by "people with a Caucasian accent."¹⁵ The media campaign launched in the Russian

12. "Putin: RF dostoino otprazdnuet 1100-letie priniatiia islama na territorii sovremennogo PFO", TASS, 4 November 2020, <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/9915031> (Access date 10.01.2021).

13. Zariipov, I.Kh. "Lessons from the Great War of Pandemic and Ramadan", DUM RF, 8 May 2020, <http://dumrf.ru/islam/sermon/17074> (Access date 10.01.2021).

14. For example, see comments regarding the news on YouTube: "Opublikovano video stolknoveniia politseiskikh s ubiitsei uchitelia...", Euronews (Russia), 18 October 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tJf3JFIVk (Access date 10.01.2021).

15. "Sobchak nachala poluchat' ugrozy iz-za podderzhki kritika islama", Lenta.ru, 28 October 2020 https://lenta.ru/news/2020/10/28/sobchak_ugrozy/ (Access date 10.01.2021).

media and on social networks in connection with the funeral of Anzorov can hardly be called Islamophobic - despite certain statements about the “barbaric nature of Islam,” the main protest was not so much connected to Islam but to the Chechen factor.

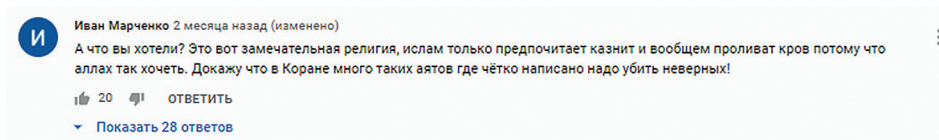


Figure 1: One of the comments on the news about the Samuel Paty case on YouTube: “What do you want? This is a great religion, Islam only prefers to execute and generally shed blood because Allah wants it that way. I will prove that there are many *ayat* in the Quran where it is clearly written that infidels must be killed!”¹⁶

The second significant event was the report, circulating in the mainstream media, on a fatwa issued by the Spiritual Muslim Department of Russian Federation on the prohibition of marriages between Muslims and non-Muslim women. The document was adopted back on November 19, 2019, and published on July 18, 2020, but it did not become widely known until November 2020. In addition to the intensification of Islamophobic sentiments in social networks when discussing this news,¹⁷ most representatives not only of regional DUMs, but also some ulema in Moscow, spoke against this fatwa.¹⁸

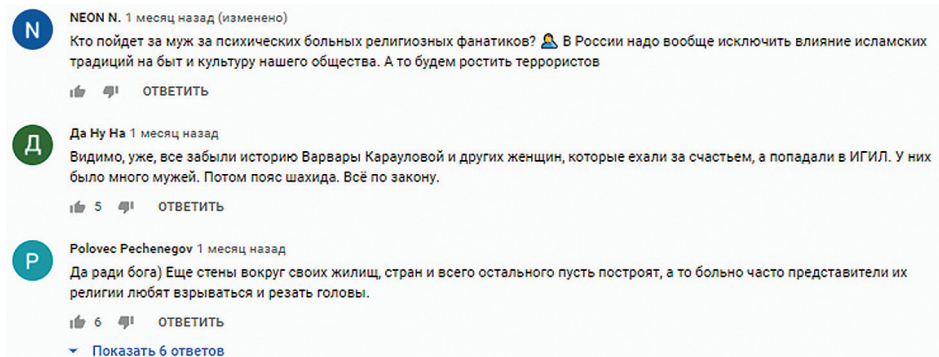


Figure 2: Several comments on the news about this fatwa on YouTube:

NEON N.: “Who would marry mentally ill religious fanatics? In Russia we need to eliminate the influence of Islamic traditions on the everyday life and culture of our society. Otherwise, we will raise terrorists.”

Да Ну На: “Apparently everyone has forgotten the story of Varvara Karaulova and other women who traveled for happiness but ended up in ISIS. They had many husbands. Then a Shahid’s belt. Everything according to the law.”

Polovec Pechenegov: “For God’s sake) Let them build more walls around their homes, countries and everything else, because it’s too common that members of their religion like to blow themselves up and cut heads off.”¹⁹

16. “Video of Police Confrontation with Teacher Killer Published...” [Comments on the video], Russian Euronews YouTube channel, 17 October 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tJfj3JFIVk (Access date 10.01.2021).

17. For examples, see comments on YouTube: “Musul’manam Rossii zapretili braki s predstaviteliami drugikh religii”, Moscow 24, 11 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYXewjmxzio> (Access date 10.01.2021).

18. “V DUM RF proiasnili situatsiiu s zapretom brakov s nemusul’mankami”, Interfax, 11 November 2020, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/736547> (Access date 10.01.2021).

19. “Muslims in Russia Banned from Marrying Members of Other Religions” [Comments on the video], Moscow 24 YouTube channel, 10 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYXewjmxzio> (Access date 10.01.2021).

Finally, among the less high-profile media events but an event worth mentioning is the translation of a short article in the daily conservative online magazine *American Thinker* (sometimes described as a far-right edition) about the significance of the 14th-century Battle of Kulikovo in Russian history, which drew a fairly enthusiastic response from the Russian audience.²⁰ The material is a fragment of the book *Sword and Scimitar: Fourteen Centuries of War between Islam and the West*, in which the author describes Russia's confrontation with the Golden Horde as a confrontation with Islam. The material was discussed on the platforms of a number of conservative media.²¹

Justice System

Thanks to the activities of a number of human rights organizations, mass media, and research centers monitoring abuses in the fight against terrorism and extremism and related human rights violations, it is possible to provide an accurate overview of the law enforcement practice of Russian legislation that in some manner criminalizes the activities of Muslims and Muslim organizations. We have identified several groups of measures that to some extent affect the interests of Muslims.

- *The Criminalization of Certain Muslim Organizations*

1. Hizb ut-Tahrir. By a decision of the Russian Supreme Court, Hizb-ut-Tahrir was declared a terrorist organization in 2003. This decision has elicited a number of criticisms. The main arguments have been that, first, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a truly radical organization, but it does not use violent methods to achieve its goals.²² Second, the active struggle²³ that has taken place since its recognition as a terrorist organization has been waged not only against its members, but also against Muslims who have nothing to do with radical activities. Since 2012, the practice of accusing individuals not only of participating in a banned organization, but also of preparing a conspiracy to overthrow the constitutional order in Russia has been added.²⁴ Since 2014, the number of cases related to participation in the activities of Hizb-ut-Tahrir has increased dramatically due to the persecution of Muslims in Crimea; in Ukraine, the activities of this organization are not criminalized.

20. "Kulikovskaia bitva: kak russkie osvobodilis' ot musul'manskoi Ordy", InoSmi, 16 September 2020, <https://inosmi.ru/science/20200916/248130939.html> (Access date 10.01.2021).

21. For example, "Kulikovo pole u nikh ne otniat": Kak russkim khoteli naviazat' islam - American Thinker, Tsargrad, 17 September 2020, https://tsargrad.tv/news/kulikovo-pole-u-nih-ne-otnjat-kak-russkim-hoteli-navjazat-islam-american-thinker_281609 (Access date 10.01.2021).

22. "Malashenko: Moskve nuzhno osteregat'sia provokatsii v Krymu", Islam News, 10 September 2014, <http://www.islamnews.ru/news-432444.html>, (Access date: 10.01.2021).

23. Malashenko A. and Starostin A., "Islam na sovremennom Urale", Moscow Carnegie Center, April 2015, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_Malashenko_Ural_web_Rus1.pdf, (Access date: 10.01.2021).

24. Alexandra Vagner, "„Koshmarnoe uzhest ochenie srokov“. Kak i pochemu presleduyut musul'man v Rossii i Krymu", Krym.Realii, 3 November 2019, <https://ru.krymr.com/a/pochemu-presleduyut-musulman-v-rossii-i-krymu/30250949.html>, (Access date: 10.01.2021).

According to the SOVA Center, in 2020, about 30 sentences were passed on articles related to the participation or distribution of materials of a terrorist organization banned in Russia. These sentences related to the following articles of the Russian Criminal Code: Article 205.5. Organization of and Participation in the Activities of a Terrorist Organization; Article 205.1. Facilitation of Terrorist Activities, Russian Criminal Code; Article 205.2. Public Calls for Terrorist Activities, Public Justification of Terrorism or Propaganda of Terrorism; and Article 280. Public Calls to Carry Out Extremist Activities. “Terrorist articles” presuppose punishment in the form of long imprisonment (more than ten years and up to life).

2. Tabligi Jamaat has the status of an extremist organization. The religious association was banned in Russia in 2009. Articles relating to extremist activities (Article 282. Incitement to Hatred or Enmity and Violation of Human Dignity; Article 282.1. Organization of an Extremist Community; Article 282.2. Organization of the Activities of an Extremist Organization; Article 282.3. Financing of Extremist Activities) allow for shorter sentences compared to “terrorist articles,” and even include the possibility of receiving a suspended sentence. According to the SOVA Center, in 2020, about 30 sentences were passed on articles related to the participation or distribution of materials of an extremist organization banned in Russia.
3. The activities and followers of the Turkish preacher Said Nursi (Nurdzhular movement) were criminalized. At the end of December 2019, the case of Denis Zhukov, a follower of Islamic theologian Said Nursi, who was accused under Part 2 Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of participating in the banned organization “Nurjular” was dismissed. The decision to dismiss the case was made on the basis of a note to this article, which exempts from liability persons who committed a crime for the first time and voluntarily ceased participation in the organization. Zhukov himself did not agree with this, as he did not admit guilt.²⁵ In April 2020, Gabdrakhman Naumov, a well-known Islamic activist and lecturer of the Russian Islamic University, was arrested on charges of establishing the Tatarstan branch of Nurdzhular.²⁶

- Muslim Literature Ban

Prohibitions of Muslim literature based on their designation as extremist are a fairly common practice by the Russian law enforcement agencies. As of December 2020, the list includes more than 5,000 entries, where not less than 300 are connected with Islam. Lawyers have repeatedly drawn attention to the imperfection of procedural mechanisms in the process of designating materials as extremist. For example, in such

25. “Neppravomernyi antiextremizm v marte 2020 goda”, Center for Information and Analysis SOVA, 2 April 2020, <https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/publications/2020/04/d42258/> (Access date 10.01.2021).

26. “V Tatarstane izvestnyi islamskii deiatel’ obviniaetsia v sozdanii otdeleniia “Nurdzhular””, Golos Islama, 20 April 2020, <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=38433> (Access date 10.01.2021).

processes, the application of the principle of competitiveness and equality of the parties in the proceedings is limited (in such cases, the court is exempt from the need to involve persons whose rights are directly affected as an equal party in the case).²⁷ A question is raised about the competence of judges who decide on such cases: cases of designating (or not) certain materials as extremist are resolved by district courts at the place of discovery of such materials. Lawyers, emphasizing the particular importance of such cases, speak of the need for a special court at the federal level.²⁸ One of the most frequent mistakes in such processes is the designation of material as extremist, which is not actually extremist. Such mistakes are quite regular with regard to Muslim literature.

In 2020, there were several cases concerning persecution of dissemination of extremist literature.

In April 2020, the Krasnoglinsky District Court of Samara recognized as extremist a popular *tafsir* of the Koran in the Russian-speaking space, namely *The Interpretation of the Holy Quran. Relief from the Most Gracious and Merciful* by Abdurrahman As-Saadi. This is the second time there has been an attempt to ban As-Saadi's *tafsir*. On August 7, 2018, the Laishevsky District Court of Tatarstan rejected the claim of the Volga Transport Prosecutor's Office to recognize the interpretation of the Holy Quran and a collection of reliable hadiths as extremist material.²⁹ Lawyers intend to appeal against the ban, appealing to violations of the examination procedure.³⁰

Other material that became a reason for prosecution is listed below.

- The book *The Fortress of a Muslim* (a collection of prayers to be recited daily).
- *The Book of Monotheism* by Muhammad ibn Sulaiman at-Tamimi (Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab) with commentaries by the theologian Abdurrahman ibn Nasir al-Saadi.
- The book *An Excellent Explanation of the Book - The Difference between the Benefactors of the Most Merciful and the Benefactors of Satan* by Sheikh Ahmad ibn Abd al-Halim ibn Taymiyyah with commentary by Sheikh Salih ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Sheikh.
- *The Life of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Him)* by Safi al-Rahman al-Mubarakfuri.
- The book *Selected Hadith* by Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf Kandehlavi.
- The film *Wonders of the Quran*.

27. Victor Mikhailov, "Protsedura priznan iia materialov ekstremistskimi trebuat korrektsii", *Administrativnoe parvo*, 2015, <https://www.top-personal.ru/adminlawissue.html?349>, (Access date: 10.01.2021).

28. Aleksey Elaev, "Ob ekstremistskikh ma terialakh zamolvite slovo", *Zakon*, 16 November 2015, https://zakon.ru/blog/2015/11/16/ob_ekstremistskix_materialax_zamolvite_slovo, (Access date: 10.01.2021).

29. "Sud v Samare priznal ekstremistskim tolkovanie Sviashchennogo Korana", *Golos Islama*, 20 August 2020, <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=39095> (Access date 10.01.2021).

30. "Advokaty gotoviatsia obzhalovat' zapret tolkovaniia Korana", *Golos Islama*, 3 September 2020, <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=39134> (Access date 10.01.2021).

- The book *The Future Belongs to Islam* by Sayyid Qutb.
- The book *The Personality of a Muslim, As Islam Seeks to Give It through the Qur'an and Sunnah* by al-Hashimi.
- Al-Nawawi's book *The Gardens of the Righteous*.

- Muslim Organization Ban

On May 19, Item 76 was added to the Federal list of extremist organizations. Under Item 76, the autonomous non-profit organization Ak Umut (Bright Hope), a charitable boarding house, was included on the list. The reason for banning the boarding house as extremist was the result of inspections, during which the prosecutor's office found Islamic literature included in the Federal List of Extremist Materials on its premises.³¹

Internet

There are no projects in the Russian Internet space that systematically utilize the rhetoric of Islamophobia. Single statements can be found on social networks of individual users, but they have no significant political influence.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Although the figures mentioned in the 2019 report continue to feature heavily in the media, the year 2020 was not marked by any further activities.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

It is worth noting the systematic activities of a number of human rights organizations that monitor human rights violations, including cases of religious discrimination. The information and analytical center SOVA publishes the monthly monitoring *Illegal Anti-Extremism*, which keeps track of the main and most significant events in the sphere of illegal application of anti-extremism legislation in Russia.³² The human rights center Memorial regularly updates the list of those prosecuted for their involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir.³³ The human rights center OVD publishes information on prisoners' rights and monitors processes connected with Hizb ut-Tahrir and Tabligi Jamaat.³⁴

31. "Npravomernyi antiextremizm v mae 2020 goda", Center for Information and Analysis SOVA, 2 June 2020, <https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/publications/2020/06/d42487/> (Access date 10.01.2021).

32. "Npravomernyi antiextremizm", Center for Information and Analysis SOVA, <https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/> (Access date 10.01.2021).

33. "Spisok presleduemykh v svyazi s prichastnost'iu k "Khizb ut-Tahrir' (obnovliaetsia)", Memorial, https://memohrc.org/ru/news_old/spisok-presleduemykh-v-svyazi-s-prichastnostyu-k-hizb-ut-tahrir-obnovlyaetsya, (Access date: 10.01.2021).

34. "Ekstremizm", OVD-Info, <https://ovdinfo.org/story/ekstremizm> (Access date 10.01.2021).

In the conditions of increasing social tension, the statement of the official Muslim clergy about Muslims' special observance of the quarantine regime, became a kind of response to the Islamophobic statements about the Muslim communities and appeared very timely. He stated, "We heard many times that the huge crowds of Muslims near mosques were caused not by the religious need at all, but by the desire to show force and show their muscles. Today's event proved the complete invalidity of those hypotheses. On the contrary, we decided to rule out mass participation for the duration of the pandemic, without any outside orders, guided exclusively by Islamic moral principles and the desire to protect society from danger."³⁵

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

While Islamophobia is not part of the official state agenda, there is a flip side to the official discourse of a traditional (Russian) Islam, which emanates from the dichotomy of a "good" vs. "bad" Islam. Islamophobia is entangled with the racialization of migrants and is based on the securitization of Islam. The latter takes on particular significance in light of the criminalization of certain Muslim movements, abuses in countering terrorism and extremism (especially in matters related to Islamic extremism), restrictions on the construction of mosques, and the prohibition of Muslim literature.

Chronology

- **13.01.2020:** Attack on Muslim cemeteries in the village Buraevo (Bashkortostan).
- **01.02.2020:** The Central District Military Court found 10 people from Kazan guilty of participation in the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir under Part 1 and Part 2 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code and sentenced them to imprisonment ranging from 11 to 22 years in a strict regime colony. Furthermore, Eduard Nizamov was found guilty under the same laws as a leader of the Russian branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir. He was sentenced to 23 years of imprisonment in a strict regime colony and a fee of 200,000 rubles (approx. 2,700 USD).
- **02.02.2020:** In the Orenburg region, Magomed Kadyrov was fined for the distribution of extremist materials (*Fortress of a Muslim*).
- **13.02.2020:** Ibrahim Bakaniev, a Muslim prisoner in a penal colony in the Kostroma region, was tortured by the colony's leaders.
- **20.02.2020:** Nabi Hajiyev, a prisoner in a colony in the Kostroma region, was found in possession of a Koran. The administration of the colony demanded that the book be surrendered. The inmate refused and was severely beaten.

35. Damir, Mukhetdinov "Razmyshleniia Damira Mukhetdinova ob itogakh pervogo v istorii Moskvy dzhuma-onlain", Sovet muftiev Rossii, 21 March 2020, <https://muslim.ru/articles/277/26753/> (Access date 10.01.2021).

- **14.02.2020:** In the middle of the month, seven followers of the Islamic movement Tablighi Jamaat were found guilty of organizing and participating in the activity of an extremist organization.
- **11.03.2020:** The Central District Military Court sentenced Ildar Akhmetzianov on charges of involvement in the party Hizb ut-Tahrir to 17 years in prison.
- **14.03.2020:** In the middle of the month, several followers of the Islamic movement Nurdzhular were arrested and accused of organizing and participating in the activity of an extremist organization.
- **01.04.2020:** Baymak District Court (Bashkortostan) fined Zilya Mukhametzyanova for reposting a publication on a social network (*Vkontakte*) that contained files with banned literature (*The Book of Unity*).
- **16.04.2020:** The Abzelilovsky District Court of Bashkortostan fined Aigiz Asylguzhin for reposting the film *Wonders of the Koran*, which is included on the list of banned materials.
- **19.04.2020:** Gabdrakhman Naumov, a well-known Islamic activist and teacher at the Russian Islamic University, was arrested on charges of establishing the Tatarstan branch of Nurdzhular.
- **06.05.2020:** R. Bagautdinov was fined in Bashkortostan for reposting the film *Wonders of the Koran*, which is included on the list of banned materials.
- **13.05.2020:** The Central District Military Court sentenced Rais Gimadiev on charges of involvement in the party Hizb ut-Tahrir to 16 years in prison.
- **19.05.2020:** The Muslim organization Ak Umut (Bright Hope), a charitable boarding house, was banned because of forbidden extremist literature found on its premises.
- **19.05.2020:** Raid on Muslim cemeteries in the village Vladislavovka, Crimea.
- **26.05.2020:** Raid on Muslim cemeteries in Surgut in the Khanty-Mansi autonomous region.
- **01.06.2020:** The Second West District Military Court sentenced the follower of Hizb ut-Tahrir Hokim Abdulkhalimov to 10 years of imprisonment.
- **10.06.2020:** In Moscow and the Moscow region, searches were conducted on supporters of the Islamic movement Tablighi Jamaat. One person was arrested.
- **22.06.2020:** In the Elektrogorsk (Moscow region), a tile with a quotation from the Koran recently installed on the building of the Muslim cultural center was knocked down.
- **01.07.2020:** In early July, seven Muslims were detained in Crimea after a series of searches on charges of distributing banned Hizb ut-Tahrir material.
- **31.07.2020:** Seven followers of the Islamic movement Tablighi Jamaat were arrested and accused of participating in the activity of an extremist organization.

- **14.08.2020:** Volzhsky District Court of Saratov found six people guilty of participation in the activities of Tablighi Jamaat under Part 1 and Part 2 of Article 282 of the Criminal Code.
- **18.08.2020:** Krasnoglinsky District Court of Samara partially declared extremist the Russian-language editions of two authoritative interpretations of the Quran. The first volume of as-Saadi's *tafsir*, and the second and third volumes of Ibn Kasir's interpretation were banned, except for quotations from the Koran.
- **01.09.2020:** The South District Military Court found eight people guilty of participation in the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir under Part 1 and Part 2 of Article 205.5 and Part 1 of Article 30 of the Criminal Code, and sentenced them between 13 and 18 years of imprisonment in a strict regime colony.
- **02.09.2020:** In August, Sibai City Court of Bashkortostan fined Damir Kuvandikov 1,000 rubles for mass distribution of extremist materials. He gave three banned Islamic religious books to his wife and brother to read.
- **23.09.2020:** In Kaliningrad, five Muslims washed their shoes in the holy spring of an Orthodox chapel, and the process was filmed and posted online, causing an extremely negative reaction in the region.
- **01.10.2020:** In Saransk, the court fined the former mufti of the Regional Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Mordovia Zyaka Aizatullin 2,000 rubles and the mosque Uskudar, where he acted as mufti until mid-August 2020, as a legal entity 100,000 rubles for distributing banned literature (*Selected Hadiths*).
- **01.11.2020:** The South District Military Court found three people guilty of participation in the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir under Part 1 and Part 2 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code and sentenced them to imprisonment between 12 and 17 years in a strict regime colony.
- **02.11.2020:** Radik Safiullin, deputy head of the Muslim community of Kostroma, was fined 1,000 rubles for distributing banned books. He intended to give two books to the prayer room in colony #7 of the Kostroma region; namely, *A Beautiful Explanation of the Book - The Difference Between the Benefactors of the Almighty and Those of Satan* and *The Life of the Prophet, May Allah Bless Him and Grant Him Peace*.
- **06.11.2020:** In Kazan, in early November, the Federal Security Service detained five suspected members of Hizb ut-Tahrir.
- **14.11.2020:** In Karachay-Cherkessia, six citizens were fined for mass distribution of banned literature (*The Future Belongs to Islam*).
- **27.11.2020:** In Astrakhan, police raided the area around the Astrakhan mosque.

- **30.11.2020:** The Central District Military Court sentenced Alexey Botva to 5 years in prison on charges of involvement in the party Hizb ut-Tahrir.
- **07.12.2020:** Kingisepp City Court of the Leningrad region sentenced Ilyasbek Toktonazarov to two years in prison on charges of involvement in the party Tablighi Jamaat.
- **14.12.2020:** In the Bardymy district of Perm region, Malik Muratov, chairman of a local Muslim religious organization, was fined for mass distribution of extremist literature (*The Personality of a Muslim, As Islam Seeks to Give It with the Koran and the Sunna* and *Gardens of the Righteous*).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SERBIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

According to the 2020 Freedom House report, Serbia has moved from a “partially consolidated democracy” to a country with a “hybrid regime.” Apart from Serbia, the same decline was recorded in Hungary. The main reason for this negative development is the significant increase in the authoritarianism of the ruling, populist Serbian Progressive Party.

The best indicator of the political climate in the country can be seen in the parliamentary and local elections that were held on June 21, but which were boycotted by all opposition. The elections were held in extremely irregular conditions, also noted by the European Commission. The pre-election process was marked by irregular electoral lists, media blackouts, threats and intimidation of citizens by the ruling structures.

In addition, the parliamentary and local elections were held despite the risk of the COVID-19 virus spreading, resulting in a significant deterioration of the epidemiological situation in Serbia. Shortly after the election, the epidemiological situation deteriorated significantly in Sandzak, which is predominantly inhabited by Bosniak Muslims. The state’s reaction to the rapid spread of the virus in the Sandzak region was completely inadequate. Also, there are indications that authorities systematically covered up and manipulated the real number of deaths from COVID-19 in Novi Pazar, the largest city in Sandzak.

Furthermore, during 2020 and especially during the election campaign there was a marked increase in the activity and visibility of ultra-right groups that were indirectly supported by the regime. Actions directed against migrants were very frequent, as were incidents inspired by ethnic and religious hatred.

Finally, Serbia has continued to be a source of regional insecurity and a center from which anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobic ideologies and ethnic intolerance is spread.

Izvršni rezime

Srbija je po izveštaju *Freedom House* za 2020. godine prešla iz grupe država “delimično konsolidovane demokratije” u grupu država “hibridnih režima”. Osim Srbije isti pad zabeležila je i Mađarska. Glavni razlog zašto je Srbija postala država “hibridnog režima” jeste značajan porast autoritarnosti vladajuće Srpske napredne stranke na čijem udaru se nalaze opozicione političke partije, kao i slobodni medij.

Kao najprecizniji pokazatelj političke klime u državi mogu da nam posluže parlamentarni i lokalni izbori koji su održani 21. juna i koje su bojkotovale sve opozicione partije u državi. Izbori su održani u krajnje neregularnim uslovima o čemu je izvestila i Evropska komisija u svom godišnjem izveštaju o stanju u Srbiji. Neregularni izborni spiskovi, medijski mrak, pretnje i zastrašivanja građana od strane vladajućih struktura obeležile su predizborni proces.

Osim toga, parlamentarni i lokalni izbori održani su uprkos rizika od širenja virusa COVID-19 što je rezultiralo značajnim pogoršanjem epidemiološke situacije u Srbiji. Ubrzo nakon izbora epidemiološke situacije se najznačajnije pogoršala u Sandžaku koji je predominantno naseljen bošnjačkim muslimanima. Reakcija države na rapidno širenje virusa u sandžačkoj regiji bila je apsolutno neadekvatna. Takođe, predstavnici vlasti su sistematski prikrivali i manipulisali sa pravim brojevima zareženih građana od COVID-19 u Novom Pazaru, najmnogoljudnijem gradu u Sandžaku.

Takođe, u predizornoj kampanji, ali i generalno gledano, tokom 2020. godine došlo je do izrazitog porasta aktivnosti i vidljivosti ultra desničarskih grupa koje su (in)direktno podržavane od režima. Akcije usmerene protiv migranata bile su veoma česte, ali i incidenti inspirisani etničkom i verskom mržnjom.

Na kraju, ono što je takođe veoma važno naglasiti, jeste da je Srbija nastavila da bude izvor regionalne nesigurnosti i centar odakle se šire anti-muslimanska mržnja i islamofobne ideologije, kao i etnička netrpeljivost.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Republic of Serbia

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary republic

Ruling Parties: Serbian Progressive Party (populist, right-wing party)

Opposition Parties: The Democratic Party, The Party of Freedom and Justice, The People's Party, The Serbian Movement "Dveri", The Social Democratic Party, Do not let Belgrade d(r)own (all of these parties boycotted the last parliamentary and local elections).

Last Elections: Parliamentary elections 2020: Serbian Progressive Party won 60.65%, 188 seats; Socialist Party of Serbia and United Serbia won 10.38%, 32 seats; the electoral list Aleksandar Šapić - Victory for Serbia won 3.83%, 11 seats.

Of the minority electoral lists, the electoral list Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians - Istvan Pastor won 2.23%, 9 seats; Bosniak Party of Justice and Reconciliation (SPP) 1%, 4 seats; the coalition Albanian Democratic Alternative-United Valley and Alternative of Democracy Shqiptare 3 seats; and the Bosniak Party of Democratic Action 2 seats.

Total Population: 7.03 million (2017)

Major Languages: Serbian

Official Religion: No state religion. The dominant Serbian Orthodox Church and other "traditional" religious communities (Roman Catholic Church, Slovak Evangelical Church, Reformed Christian Church, Evangelical Christian Church, Islamic community, and Jewish community) receive preferential status based on the "Law on Churches and Religious Communities" adopted in 2006.

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

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 and a significant number of Bosniaks. The reason for the boycott was that there were no questionnaires in their mother tongues. Also, the number of Roma and Ashkali Muslims is much higher, but because of extremely poor conditions they don't possess any documents so they remain "unrecognized citizens." The actual number of Muslims living in Serbia is thus estimated at 400,000-500,000.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Community in Serbia; Islamic Community of Serbia.

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: There is no particular NGO that deals with Islamophobia. Data is collected and work is conducted by individuals.

Far-Right Parties: Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska radikalna stranka*), Serbian Movement “Dveri” (*Srpskipokret “Dveri”*), Serbian Right (*Srpska desdesnica*), Serbian Patriotic Alliance (*Srpski patriotski savez*), Healthy Serbia (*Zdrava Srbija*)

Far-Right Movements: National Avant-garde (*Nacionalna avangarda*), Serbian Right (*Srpska desnica*), Serbian Action (*Srpska akcija*), *Otadžbinski pokret Obraz*, *Srpski sabor “Zavetnici”*, Serbian People’s Movement “Naši” (*Srpski narodni pokret “Naši”*), Leviathan Movement (*Pokret Levijatan*), Serbian People’s Movement “1389” (*Srpski narodni pokret “1389”*), National Serbian Front (*Nacionalni srpski front*), Organization “Alternative” (*Organizacija “Alternativa”*)

Far-Right Militant 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

During the past year, the Republic of Serbia has moved from a state characterized as a “partially consolidated democracy” to a state categorized as a “hybrid regime.”¹ Apart from Freedom House, the report of the European Commission for 2020 stated that Serbia is in a situation where media freedoms are absent, the judiciary is insufficiently independent, and freedom of speech and opinion is significantly endangered.² In addition, one of the worrying ongoing trends since 2012, when the right-wing populist Serbian Progressive Party came to power, is the growth and normalization of (ultra) right-wing movements which, with the blessing of the state, often act as “paramilitary phalanxes” aiming to “discipline” all individuals they consider ideologically unsuitable. As a result of these circumstances, the ideology of exclusivist Serbian nationalism in the country has become the dominant political option, as was the case in the 1990s when ethnic cleansing and genocide were committed against the Muslim population in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Apart from the political sphere, the ideology of “Greater Serbian” nationalism decisively influences and shapes the narratives that dominate the public sphere, and as a result religious and ethnic hatred has become ubiquitous and completely normalized due to its impunity.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Statistics on hate crimes by the state authorities or by NGOs are still not available. However, it is obvious that during 2020 the activities of right-wing groups were significantly more visible in the public space and in particular, anti-migrant activities were on the rise. Thus, on May 6, a man crashed his car into a migrant center in Obrenovac while he filmed himself and broadcast his actions live on Facebook. The video, which soon surfaced on social media, showed a young man driving a car at full speed into a migrant center shouting “I don’t want my girlfriend to be attacked by migrants... I don’t want a Muslim state... I don’t want to give Orthodoxy to Muslims and I won’t give it to them, believe me!” After he parked the car, he was arrested by members of the Serbian Army which secures the center.

Only two days after the incident, the right-wing group People’s Patrol organized an anti-migrant protest on Republic Square, in the center of Belgrade, where, among other things, they displayed a banner that read “Everything has gone the devil’s way. The Earth stinks of Muhammad.” (Figure 1)

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1. “Freedom Haus: Srbija i Crna Gora više nisu u kategoriji demokratija”, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/fri-dom-haus-veliki-pad-za-demokratiju-u-srbiji-i-crnoj-gori/30594586.html> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
 2. The European Commission report on Serbia for 2020 is available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf, (Access date: 23 December 2020).



Figure 1: Anti-migrant protest on Republic Square, Belgrade. The banner reads “Everything has gone the devil’s way. The Earth stinks of Muhammad.”³

During the year, the abovementioned People’s Patrol “patrolled” Belgrade on several occasions at night, and physically and verbally abused migrants they encountered on the streets.⁴ Videos of the protest rally, as well as attacks on migrants, were posted on websites and YouTube channels. On October 25, the same group organized an action called “Let’s clean the park near the Faculty of Economics,” a park where migrants seek refuge. (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Flyer inviting citizens to participate in an action entitled “Let’s clean the park at the Faculty of Economics” organized by the People’s Patrol.⁵

3. “Islamofobija u Beogradu – Citiraju Gorski vijenac i vrijedaju Poslanika Muhammeda, a.s.”, <https://sandzakpress.net/islamofobija-u-beogradu-citiraju-gorski-vijenac-i-vrijedaju-poslanika-muhammeda-a-s/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
4. “Narodne patrolе” najavljuju dalji progon migranata, država čuti, NVO se bune...”, <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a664694/Narodne-patrole-progon-migranata-protest-u-Beogradu.html> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
5. “Skup desničara u parku kod Ekonomskog, kordon i kontra-akcija”, <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a664640/U-parku-kod-Ekonomskog-desnicari-protiv-migranata-kordon-i-kontra-akcija.html> (Access date: 23 December 2020).



Figures 3 and 4: Protests in front of the government of Serbia building entitled “Against the migrants’ invasion.”⁶

The migrant center in Obrenovac was also targeted by the right-wing groups Leviathan, Chetnik Youth, and National Corps, which on May 13 gathered in front of the center and sang The Battle of Kosovo cycle of heroic ballads.⁷ Similar to the People’s Patrol, on October 30, the group Leviathan organized a “Hunt for Migrants” on the streets of Belgrade. During the event, members of the group wore Nazi symbols.⁸



Figure 5: Protest against migrants in Subotica. (left)⁹

Figure 6: Traveling caravan of the organization of the Serbian movement Dveri, which reads “Petition against the government’s migrant policy. A signature that guarantees the safety of your children”.(right)

Various right-wing groups such as Serbian Action, Leviathan, People’s Patrol, and others attended the protest rally with the slogan “Against the migrant invasion” on March 8. Protesters unfurled a banner in front of the Serbian government building that read “Terrorists not welcome” and “You will not replace us.” (Figures 3 and 4) The flags of Serbia and Greece were visible at the event, and the participants wore Chetnik insignia and badges with the image of Ratko Mladić, who has been con-

6. “Protest desničara protiv migranata u Beogradu, među njima i “narodne patrole”, <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a576084/Protest-protiv-migranata-u-Beogradu-medju-okupljenima-i-narodne-patrole.html> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
7. “Grupa ekstremnih desničara ispred migrantskog centra u Obrenovcu pevala himnu kosovskih junaka VIDEO”, https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=05&dd=13&nav_category=11&nav_id=1683625 (Access date: 23 December 2020).
8. “Pod nacističkim simbolima lov na migrante po ulicama Beograda”, <https://www.source.ba/clanak/Region/546390/Pod-nacističkim-simbolima-lov-na-migrante-po-ulicama-Beograda> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
9. “Protest protiv migranata u Šidu, zatraženo da se vrati Vojska”, <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a669783/Protest-protiv-migranata-u-Sidu.html> and “Održan protest protiv migranata”, <https://www.subotica.com/vesti/odrzan-protiv-migranata-id37346.html> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

victed of genocide in Srebrenica and other war crimes and sentenced to life in prison. Apart from Belgrade, protest rallies against migrants were organized on February 29 in Subotica (Figure 5) and on November 8 in Šid. There was also a traveling “caravan” of the organization of the Serbian movement Dveri; the van read “Petition against the government’s migrant policy. A signature that guarantees the safety of your children.” (Figure 6)

In addition to anti-migrant rallies, there were two significant incidents during the year related to the denial of war crimes committed against Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the aggression of the Republic of Serbia. The first incident happened in the ceremonial hall of the Municipality of Stari Grad, which is located in the center of Belgrade. The municipal premises were rented to convicted war criminal Vojislav Šešelj, president of the neo-fascist Serbian Radical Party, in order to promote his three-volume edition *There Was No Genocide in Srebrenica*. (Figure 7) On the occasion of this event, a protest statement was released by the Humanitarian Law Center, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, and Women in Black. Before the beginning of the event, one of the most eminent fighters for human rights and the founder of the Humanitarian Law Center, Nataša Kandić, appeared at the event and was physically attacked by sympathizers of the Serbian Radical Party. As a result of the attack, Kandić was knocked to the ground, after which Šešelj’s supporters forcibly threw her out of the premises of the Stari Grad Municipality.¹⁰



Figure 7: Pamphlet promoting the three-volume edition *There Was No Genocide in Srebrenica* by Vojislav Seselj, a convicted war criminal.¹¹

10. “Kandić: Za 30 godina aktivizma nisam ovako obarana na pod; Bastać osudio događaj”, <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a566952/Kandic-Za-30-godina-aktivizma-nisam-ovako-obarana-na-pod.html> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

11. “U prostorijama opštine Stari Grad ne sme biti mesta za negiranje genocida i promociju osuđenih ratnih zločinaca”, <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=37251> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

Two weeks after the event organized at the Stari Grad Municipality, the second promotion of the same book followed, only this time at the New Belgrade Municipality, where the Serbian Radical Party was part of the ruling municipal coalition. In response, the Humanitarian Law Center, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Women in Black, and the Western Balkans Forum reacted again, asking the authorities to ban this gathering in accordance with the law banning gatherings that violate human and minority rights and freedoms, and which incite religious and ethnic hatred and intolerance. Despite this letter, the police did nothing and the promotional event took place.¹²

On September 24, following the promotion of Šešelj's books, which directly deny the genocide in Srebrenica, the Center for Cultural Decontamination hosted the play *Srebrenica - When We Who Were Murdered Rise Up*, directed by Zlatko Paković. The play was produced by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. It was made to mark the 25th anniversary of the genocide against Bosniak Muslims.¹³ In the last scene of the play, the flag of the Republic of Serbia is shown, on which the names and personal ID numbers of all 8,372 killed in Srebrenica are written, accompanied by a performance of the Serbian national anthem. The play itself passed without incident and due to epidemiological measures was shown to a limited number of people. However, immediately after the play was performed, threats began against Zlatko Paković and all members of the ensemble. The constant persecution, public lynching, and serious death threats lasted for more than three weeks. The authorities took no action whatsoever, while the public media and professional associations in Serbia were completely indifferent. On social networks, Paković was called a "sell-out", "sick", and calls for a "public hanging"¹⁴ were made.

In a similar manner, only two weeks later, Miša Vacić, the leader of the ultra-right Serbian Right, broke into the exhibition *Gateway - When It Hurts, The Truth Is the Cure*, which was also held at the Center for Cultural Decontamination. The exhibition dealt with a crime committed by a Republika Srpska Army unit headed by Novak Đukić in Tuzla on May 25, 1995. Đukić was convicted of the crime by a court in Bosnia and Herzegovina but is hiding and living freely in the Republic of Serbia.¹⁵ After breaking in and interrupting the exhibition, Vacić took the microphone from the host and shouted "that no shelling took place in Tuzla on May 25, 1995, but an

12. "Druga promocija Šešeljeve knjige u Beogradu, NVO tražile zabranu", <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/30445770.html> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

13. "Predstava "Srebrenica. Kad mi ubijeni ustanemo" premijerno u Beogradu", <https://rs.n1info.com/kultura/a653577-predstava-srebrenica.-kad-mi-ubijeni-ustanemo-premijerno-u-beogradu/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

14. "U Srbiji se provodi javni linč nad rediteljem predstave „Srebrenica. Kad mi ubijeni ustanemo“, <https://www.danas.rs/kultura/u-srbiji-se-provodi-javni-linc-nad-rediteljem-predstave-srebrenica-kad-mi-ubijeni-ustanemo/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

15. "U Beogradu izložba o zločinu na tuzlanskoj Kapiji: "I kad boli, istina je lijek", <https://detektor.ba/2020/10/09/u-beogradu-izlozba-o-zlocinu-na-tuzlanskoj-kapiji-i-kad-boli-istina-je-lijek/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

explosive was placed on the square by terrorists.”¹⁶ The narrative “about a set of explosives” is one of the most common ones used by Serbian nationalists to deny this crime.

As in previous years, incidents again accompanied the Mirdita Festival, which was attended by, among others, representatives of the ultra-right group Serbian Action (Figure 8), which used this opportunity to promote anti-migrant messages. On its website, Serbian Action issued a statement against the “Serb-hating festival” and stated, “we will not allow the holding of this ridiculous festival that seeks to promote Shiptar separatism and terrorism; we will not allow the monstrous thesis to be placed in the Serbian consciousness - that Kosovo is a neighbor and not Serbian territory and the legacy of the Serbian people.”



Figure 8: Members of Serbian Action protest against the Mirdita Festival. The flag reads, “Good day, good night to the killers. Kosovo is Serbia.”¹⁷



Figure 9: Graffiti glorifying the convicted war criminal Ratko Mladić in the city of Mannheim, Germany.¹⁸

16. “Miša Vacić upao na izložbu „Kapija – i kad boli, istina je lijek“ u CZKD (VIDEO)”, <https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/misa-vacic-upao-na-izlozbu-kapija-i-kad-boli-istina-je-lijek-u-czkd-video/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
17. “Против „Mirdite“ и мигрантског насиља”, <https://akcija.org/protiv-mirdite-i-migrantskog-nasilja/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
18. “Name of Ratko Mladic Written over Srebrenica Graffiti in Germany”, <http://www.sarajevotimes.com/166208-2/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

Genocide denial has not remained within the region. In the city of Meinham in Germany, a graffiti glorifying the convicted war criminal Ratko Mladić appeared on a mural dedicated to the Srebrenica genocide, while a symbol “only unity saves the Serbs” was drawn over the Srebrenica flower. (Figure 9)

In addition to anti-migrant narratives and public genocide denials, Pavle Bihalji, the leader of the right-wing Leviathan group, which presents itself as an animal protection organization, reacted on his Twitter account to a photo of members of the Bosniak Justice and Reconciliation Party including Misala Pramenković, the first covered MP in the history of Serbian parliamentarism. Bihalji’s reaction was ambiguous. In a Twitter post, he posted a bomb emoticon and wrote “3,2,1” which can be interpreted either as insinuating that the Justice and Reconciliation Party MPs are potential terrorists who will blow up the assembly or as sending them a death threat. (Figure 10)

Voda Levijatana pozvao na ubistvo bošnjačkih predstavnika u Skupštini

Od **sandzacke** - 04/08/2020

26 0



Figure 10: Bihalji’s Twitter post.¹⁹

It is also important to point out that there were countless social media comments about the news of Pramenković’s becoming a member of parliament, which qualified as the most explicit forms of hate speech and religious intolerance. Despite this, the Facebook pages of media houses didn’t remove any of them. Social media and platforms are a space where we encounter persistent threats to members of religious or ethnic minorities.²⁰

Employment

For many years, salaries in predominantly Muslim regions such as Sandzak or the Presevo Valley have been significantly lower than in other parts of Serbia. Thus, for example, according to the data of the Republic Bureau of Statistics, the salary in the

19. <https://sandzaklive.rs/sandzak-2/politika-sandzak-2/voda-levijatana-pozvao-na-ubistvo-bosnjackih-predstavnika-u-skupstini/>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

20. For example, in 2020 compared to previous years, the author of this report has been disproportionately threatened on social media because of posts pointing out religious or ethnic hatred. Also, a very good example is the Facebook page of MP Enis Imamović from the Party of Democratic Action, a Bosniak opposition parliamentary party. His posts are very often deeply controversial and advocate ethnic and religious intolerance.

city with the largest and predominant Muslim population in Novi Pazar is more than 13,000 dinars lower than the average salary in the country.²¹ Meanwhile the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian communities face double discrimination in employment due to the color of their skin and the fact that they are Muslim. According to Ljuan Koka, director of the Center for Education of Roma and Ethnic Communities, “The problem of discrimination against Roma is clearly visible. There are not enough Roma in the public sector, in places where decisions are made, the private sector, in local self-governments, in social institutions as well as in the health system. Therefore, only the Roma minority - in relation to all other minorities - is represented far below its actual number in the official numbers of the total population in all listed sectors.”²²

Education

The most important problem in the education sector is that teaching ethnic minorities of the Islamic faith, such as Bosniaks, Albanians, Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptians, in their own languages is systematically hampered by school institutions. Thus, the problem of books for primary and secondary schools for Albanian children is still unresolved. Also, in the case of Roma, there are primary schools in which more than 90% of Roma students do not have a chance to learn their mother tongue as an elective subject.

In addition, historical revisionism in history textbooks has been at work systematically and over a long period of time, especially regarding the Second World War, where movements led by ultra-Serbian nationalist ideology, which committed mass crimes against the Muslim population in the Sandzak region and eastern Bosnia, are completely distorted.²³

In addition, an issue that perhaps does not directly concern the education system but refers to publishing world, and what the author of this report has written about, is the fact that books that glorify war criminals are sold in the largest Belgrade bookstores. Such books deny crimes committed during the Serbian aggression of the 90s. (Figure 11)

Informal educational programs organized by the Serbian Orthodox Church should also be scrutinized. The Prizren Spiritual Summer School was held on the territory of the Republic of Kosovo. (Figure 12) The backbone of the entire program was the “Kosovo Covenant”, which is the main pillar of centuries of intolerance of Serbs towards Muslims, i.e. “Turks”, premised on the Battle of Kosovo that took place

21. A average salary in Serbia in April 2020 was 54,645 dinars and in Novi Pazar it was 41,458 dinars. “Prosečna plata u Novom Pazaru najmanja u Sandžaku”, <https://www.danas.rs/ekonomija/prosecna-plata-u-novom-pazaru-najmanja-u-sandzaku/>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

22. <https://noizz.rs/big-stories/romi-i-rasizam-u-srbiji/20nxtc3>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

23. Ivana Nikolić, “How Serbia Changed Its Mind about World War II History”, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/06/how-serbia-changed-its-mind-about-world-war-ii-history/>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

between the Serbian army and Ottoman forces in 1389. During the battle, the Serbian leader Tsar Lazar was killed, and very soon after the clash, Serbia fell under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Lecturers included Srdjan Ratković-Fuchs from Jerusalem Institute for Biblical Studies and Arnaud Goullion, one of the former leaders of the French right-wing *Identitaires* movement, who is currently the president of the humanitarian organization Solidarity for Kosovo.



Figure 11: Prominent books at the Delfi bookstore in the center of Belgrade: *General Mladić and the Army of Republika Srpska*, *Epitaph for Bosnia - Bosnia after Alija and Bin Laden*, and *War for Kosovo*.²⁴

ПРИЗРЕНСКА ЛЕТЊА ДУХОВНА ШКОЛА

Школа се организује са благословом Епископа Рашко-призренског Теодосија.

Услед прилика проузрокованих пандемијом вируса ковид 19, Призренска летња духовна школа ће ове године бити организована преко ZOOM интернет платформе.

ПРОГРАМ

1. дан / понедељак 13.7.2020.
протосињет Андреј Дечанац
Васпитавање Косовским заветом
гост предавач Срђан Ратковић-Фукс,
Jerusalem Institute for Biblical Studies
проф. др Милош Ковић
Косовски завет: историја једне идеје

2. дан / уторак 14.7.2020.
архимандрит Сава Јањић, игуман дечански
Сведочење Косовског завета пред странцима и инославницима

3. дан / среда 15.7.2020.
архимандрит Илирион Драганачки
Значај Косовског завета за лични подвиг
Специјални гости Феђа и Блажа, чланови Београдског сендиката

4. дан / четвртак 16.7.2020.
др ум. Мирко Стојковић
Косовски завет у виртуелном свету

5. дан / петак 17.7.2020.
проф. Оливера Радић
Косовски завет и живот Срба у Метохији данас
Арно Гујон, председник хуманитарне организације „Сопидарност за Косово“
Моје искуство Косова и Метохије

Предавања ће трајати од 13. до 17. јула, у периоду од 18 до 21 час.

Предавачи су:

13.7. протосињет Андреј Дечанац и проф. др Милош Ковић, гост предавач Срђан Ратковић-Фукс

14.7. архимандрит Сава Јањић, игуман дечански

15.7. архимандрит Илирион Драганачки
специјални гости Феђа и Блажа (Београдски синдикат)

16.7. др ум. Мирко Стојковић и проф. др ум. Оливера Радић

17.7. проф. Оливера Радић и Арно Гујон

Као и претходних година основна тема школе везана је за значење опредељења за Царство Божје.

Право пријављивања имају студенти основних, мастер, специјалистичких струковних, специјалистичких академских и докторских студија.

Пријављивање ће трајати од 29. јуна до 10. јула преко адресе:

prizrenskaletnjaduhovnaskola@gmail.com

У пријави је неопходно навести:

- Име и презиме
- Назив факултета
- Ниво и година студија
- Контакт телефон

За све додатне информације стојимо вам на располагању.

Figure 12: Online flyer for the event organized by the Prizren Spiritual Summer School Academy to promote the “Kosovo Covenant”.²⁵

24. Ivan Ejub Kostić, “Studentski kulturni centar – od slobode misli do ratnih zločinaca”, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/blogs/2020/7/20/studentski-kulturni-centar-od-slobode-misli-do-ratnih-zlocinaca>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).
25. Arnaud Goullion and his connections with some of the most important French Islamophobes were discussed in more detail in last year’s report. See: Ivan Ejub Kostić: *Islamophobia in Serbia: National Report 2019*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020, pp. 696-697.

Politics

The strategy used by the government in Serbia for several years now is “controlled violence” which is carried out at the behest of the regime. In other words, the regime engages ultra-right wing, hooligan, and neo-fascist groups to create incidents at all events that aim to mark the suffering of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo during the wars of the 1990s. In addition, although the Criminal Code of Serbia was amended a few years ago, which prohibited the denial of genocide, the prohibition of genocide denial according to the verdicts of the Hague Tribunal was intentionally omitted. In this way, it is possible to continue to deny the genocide in Srebrenica, as well as many other crimes committed during the 1990s.²⁶

In the context of genocide and war crimes, it is important to look at the number of convicted war criminals who took part in the last parliamentary and local elections in Serbia. In fact, a special publication by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights was dedicated to this issue.²⁷ As for the regional level, by persistently questioning the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the continued non-recognition of the Republic of Kosovo, Serbia is generating a state of smoldering conflict. Direct statements by Serbian government ministers that proclaim that Serbia is working on “uniting Serbs into one state” are common. Such statements represent an unequivocal continuity of the policy that led to wars and mass crimes in the 1990s. Thus, the Minister of Defense of Serbia, Aleksandar Vulin, stated in his interview for the weekly *Pečat* that “the task of his generation of politicians is to continue the fight for the unification of all Serbs into a single state and political community” (Figure 13). Also, as a guest on a television show, Vulin stated, “The Serbian Army is ready to preserve its combat readiness and to preserve our country and Serbs wherever they are. So, if anyone thinks of invading North Mitrovica or upsetting Republika Srpska, don’t play, we are here. We are safe enough, we have enough people and weapons, everything we need, to protect our country.”²⁸

Figure 13: Serbian Minister of Defense Aleksandar Vulin: “Serbs will be reunited.”²⁹



26. “Veličanje genocida u Srbiji: Vučićev dupli kolosijek”, <https://vijesti.ba/clanak/478461/velicanje-genocida-u-srbiji-vucicev-dupli-kolosijek> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
27. <https://www.yihr.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Ratni-zlocinci-u-izbornoj-kampanji.pdf> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
28. “Ako neko proba da uznemiri RS, vojska Srbije je tu! Imamo dovoljno ljudi i oružja... Mi čuvamo svoju zemlju”, <https://depo.ba/clanak/201044/ako-neko-proba-da-uznemiri-rs-vojska-srbije-je-tu-imamo-dovoljno-ljudi-i-oruzja-mi-cuvamo-svoju-zemlju> (Access date: 23 December 2020).
29. “Aleksandar Vulin, Ministar odbrane Srbije – Testament ministra”, <http://www.pecat.co.rs/2020/09/aleksandar-vulin-ministar-odbrane-srbije-testament-ministra/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

In the context of the “unification of Serbs,” associations that directly cooperate with the authorities in Serbia continue to organize panels throughout the region to advocate for the creation of a “Greater Serbia”. The best example is the forum called “Awakening of Serbian Unity - Serbia, Republika Srpska, Montenegro” organized in Trebinje. Veroljub Arsić, vice president of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, and Milutin Djukanović, president of the Parliamentary Club in the Montenegrin Parliament of the right-wing pro-Serbian Democratic Front, addressed the audience at a tribune organized in Trebinje, Republika Srpska, on February 29. (Figure 14)

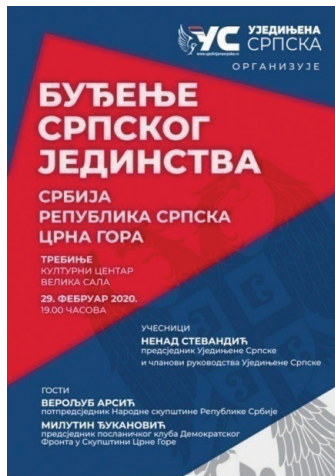


Figure 14: Pamphlet promoting the “Awakening of Serbian Unity.”³⁰

However, the entity which together with the government of Serbia represents the main destabilizing factor in the region is the Serbian Orthodox Church, which, acting across borders, spreads the ideas of radical Serbian “Saint Sava” nationalism.³¹ Last year, the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro organized months of protests against Montenegrin authorities led by the Metropolitan Bishop of Montenegro and the Littoral Amfilohije Radović (Figures 15, 16, 17). During the protests, which preceded the parliamentary elections, the houses of Bosniak Muslims in the Sandžak region of Montenegro were marked in an organized fashion (Figure 18). After the elections in which right-wing pro-Serbian opposition parties managed to win the majority and thus change the government in Montenegro, anti-Muslim hatred escalated immediately and the mosque in the city of Pljevlja was attacked (Figure 19). The opposition coalition group that received the largest number of votes is composed of (ultra) right-wing pro-Serbian parties that are extremely close to the Serbian Orthodox Church.³²

30. <http://www.srna.rs/novosti1/766379/u-trebinju-tribina-budjenje-srpskog-jedinstva.htm>

31. Milorad Popović, “Svetosavski nacionalizam: Kultura laži i smrti”, <https://m.cdm.me/kolumne/svetosavski-nationalizam-kultura-lazi-i-smrti/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

32. Ermin Sinanović, “The Serbian Orthodox Church and the 2020 Montenegro Elections”, <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/the-serbian-orthodox-church-and-the-2020-montenegro-elections>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).



Figure 15: "Nemanjica's flame is burning again. Guys grow up strong as a rock" (left).³³

Figure 16: "Who wants to be honest, it's not too late" (right).³⁴



Figure 17: Metropolitan Bishop of Montenegro and the Littoral Amfilohije Radović with protesters (left).³⁵

Figures 18: Marked houses of Bosniak Muslims with the insulting threats: "We fuck your Turkish mother" (center and right).³⁶



Figures 19: Smashed windows on the mosque in city of Pljevlja. A stone was wrapped in a paper with the message, "A black bird is taking off. Pljevlja will be the new Srebrenica" (left and center).³⁷

Figure 20: Patriarch Irinej with representatives of the Democratic Front, Andrija Mandić and Milan Knežević (right).³⁸

33. <https://www.pcnen.com/portal/2020/02/20/dogadanje-boga/>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

34. <https://www.pcnen.com/portal/2020/02/20/dogadanje-boga/>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

35. <https://mondo.rs/Info/EX-YU/a1074424/Amfilohije-i-mladic-s-kukastim-krstom-Bogojavljenje-podgorica.html>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

36. <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2020/8/9/berane-na-kucama-bosnjaka-osvanuli-portreti-cetnickih-vojvoda>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

37. The author received the photos from the imam of the Islamic Community of Montenegro.

38. "Patrijarh Irinej primio lidere DF: Mandić i Knežević dobili blagoslov za istrajnu borbu u odbrani SPC", <https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/region/patrijarh-irinej-primio-lidere-df-mandic-i-knezevic-dobili-blagoslov-za-istrajnu-borbu-u-odbrani-spc-2019-12-26> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

Furthermore, before the election, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Irinej, met representatives of the right-wing pro-Serbian opposition in Montenegro, Democratic Front, Andrija Mandić and Milan Knežević, in Belgrade and gave them “a blessing to fight everywhere and not give up on defending our holy Serbian Orthodox Church” (Figure 20). In a similar spirit, on Christmas Day, Serbian Patriarch Irinej stated that there are no borders between Serbia and Republika Srpska because it is about one nation that speaks one language and everything that has value is common between them.³⁹ Similar to the Serbian Orthodox Church, Bosko Obradović, leader of the clerical-nationalist Serbian movement Dveri, said it was time for a “Serbian mini-Schengen zone” consisting of Serbia, Montenegro, and Republika Srpska.⁴⁰

Media

In 2020, the terrorist attack in Vienna was the post popular topic in the Serbian media. The media especially emphasized the fact that the attacker was an ethnic Albanian, which was used to affirm the narrative of Serbia as a defender of Christian Europe from the “Muslim East”. In addition, as in previous years, regional disagreements, especially between Kosovo and Serbia, were used to spread hatred towards Albanians. There are also publications that speak about the threat to the Western Balkans and Serbia by jihadists returning from the battlefields of the Middle East, or jihadists who deliberately infiltrate migrant groups in order to be in a position to carry out new terrorist attacks in Europe. Moreover, Hagia Sophia being turned back into a mosque caused great media attention and outrage. The media outlets that insist on such narratives are predominantly the tabloids *Informer*, *Alo*, *Srpski Telegraf*, but also newspapers like *Večernje Novosti*, which are otherwise known for being right-wing. (Figures 21, 22)



Figure 21: “A Bomb Is Ticking in the Balkans”⁴¹; “Ten tens of thousands of Taliban Entered Bosnia”⁴²; “A Jihadist Walks through the Center of Belgrade”⁴³; “Jihadists Are Recruiting again in Serbia and the Region.”⁴⁴ (left to right)

39. Tomislav Marković, “Patrijarhovo brisanje granice na Drini”, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2020/1/14/patrijarhovo-brisanje-granice-na-drini> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

40. “Obradović: Vreme je za „Srpski mini-šengen””, <https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/obradovic-vreme-je-za-srpski-mini-sengen/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

41. <https://informer.rs/svet/balkan/492875/tempirana-bomba-balkanu-200-povratnika-islamske-drzave>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

42. <https://informer.rs/svet/balkan/521227/bosnu-uslo-desetine-hiljada-talibana-dramaticno-upozorenje-strucnjaka-sve-krive-lazne-turisticke-vize>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

43. <https://informer.rs/vesti/beograd/516733/dzihadista-seta-usred-beograda-poruka-njegovim-ledjima-ledi-krv-zilama-gradjani-sokirani>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

44. Print edition of daily newspaper *Blic*, 8 October, 2020.



Figure 22: “Albanians Are Preparing Riots for Christmas. Islamist Groups from Kosovo and Metohija Are Involved”⁴⁵; “Hashim Thaci: I Would Kill Serbs Again”⁴⁶; “A Terrorist from Vienna Trained in a KLA Camp.”⁴⁷ (left to right)

Apart from the print media, as in previous years, television stations such as TV Happy and TV Pink often invite proven Islamophobes who have been present in the public sphere since the 1990s. The two specific television shows that stand out in terms of their problematic content are “Ćirilica” and “Jutarnji Program” on TV Happy where convicted war criminals and the most vocal proponents of Serbian expansionist nationalist politics regularly appear. As a result, hate speech and slurs directed against ethnic and religious minority communities in Serbia are very often heard.

Justice System

As in previous years, the most important issue is the attitude of the judicial system towards cases related to war crimes committed against Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo in the 1990s. Regarding this issue, the Humanitarian Law Center issued the publication “Annual Report on War Crimes Trials 2019”.⁴⁸ The issue was also pointed out by the European Commission in its annual report on Serbia’s progress. The report points out that the national strategy adopted in 2016 for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes is being implemented at a very slow pace, and that Serbia still has more than 2,500 cases in the pre-investigation phase.⁴⁹ Apart from this, no legislation was adopted that would endanger the rights of Muslims in the Republic of Serbia.

Internet

One of the most visited websites in Serbia is the YouTube channel Balkan Info, whose concept is to publish very long conversations with its guests. The topics that are covered mostly concern various conspiracy theories such as Freemasons, Satanists, the Vatican as a center of anti-Serbism, 5G networks, anti-vaccination, the presence of chips in medical masks, hatred of Western countries towards Serbia, globalism, multinational companies, etc. Apart from such topics, during the past year, regular guests included

45. Print edition of daily newspaper *Alo*, 20 December, 2020.

46. Print edition of daily newspaper *Informer*, 1 July, 2020.

47. Print edition of daily newspaper *Alo*, 4 November, 2020.

48. http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Izvestaj_o_sudjenjima_za_ratne_zlocine_u_2019._godini.pdf (Access date: 23 December 2020).

49. The European Commission report on Serbia for 2020 is available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

people who have been promoting notorious Islamophobic attitudes for decades, such as Dževad Galijašević, Srđa Trifković, and Dragoslav Vanja Bokan, as well as ultra nationalist and genocide denier historian Miloš Ković, then war criminal known during the Yugoslav Wars as “Captain Dragan”. A very similar YouTube channel is Helm-Cast, which also has a significant number of interviews related to conspiracy theories, but unlike Balkan Info, they are more focused on the ideological promotion of radical Serbian nationalism, which often promotes ethnic hatred. Novi Standard, another such YouTube channel, for example, hosted Prof. Dr. Darko Tanasković, an academic who insists on Islamophobic attitudes (figure 27) with a special emphasis on neo-Ottomanism (figure 28) and Turkey as a threat to Orthodox Christianity. (Figure 23) There is an interview with Tanasković on YouTube under the title “Erdogan will not give up on the dream of the Ottoman Empire” and an interview on the YouTube channel Sputnik entitled “Hagia Sophia: Erdogan’s challenge to Orthodoxy.” (Figure 24)



Figure 23: Tanasković: “The pandemic will pass, but pan-Islamist Serbophobia will not.”⁵⁰

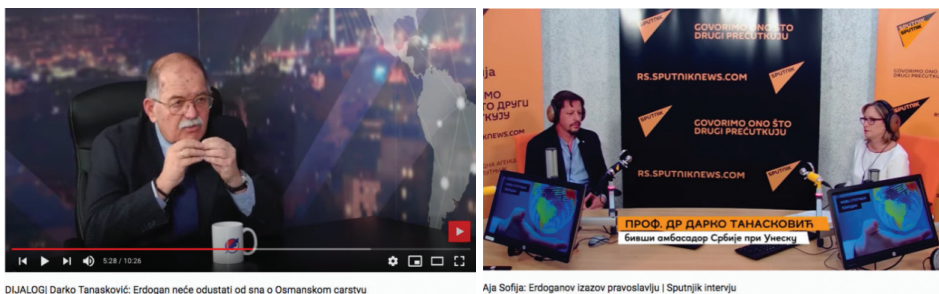


Figure 24: “Tanasković: Erdogan will not give up on the dream of the Ottoman Empire” (left)⁵¹, “Tanasković: Hagia Sophia Erdogan’s challenge to Orthodoxy” (right).⁵²

50. “Танасковић: Пандемија ће проћи, али панисламистичка србофобија – неће”, <https://sveosrpskoj.com/komentari/tanaskovic-pandemija-ce-proci-ali-panislamisticka-srbofobija-nece/?script=lat> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

51. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUIIjwW7jdE> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

52. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fcVeR9Z_K8&t=1s (Access date: 23 December 2020).

Anti-Turkish sentiments are most often used by pro-Russian portals, which also insist on “Christian unity” and Serbia and Austria as defenders against the threat to Europe from “political Islam” or “jihadism.” (Figure 25, left) Texts that refer to the threat to Europe always point out that during the 1990s, Serbia fought against those who sought to create “Islamic states” in the heart of Europe, such as Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Figure 25, center) Also, these media, without exception, give strong support to Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz in his policy towards Islam (Figure 25, right). The most visible such portals are Sputnik and IN4S.

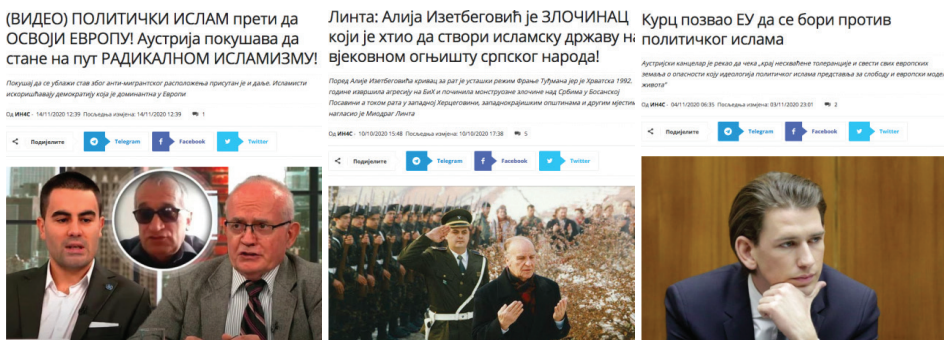


Figure 25: “Political Islam threatens to conquer Europe! Austria is trying to stand in the way of radical Islamism”⁵³;

“Linta: Izetbegović is a criminal who wanted to create an Islamic state on the centuries-old hearth of the Serbian people!”⁵⁴; “Kurz called on the EU to fight political Islam.”⁵⁵ (from left to right)

All of the aforementioned YouTube channels and online portals are also present on Facebook. Apart from them, there are a large number of pages on Facebook that promote exclusivist Serbian nationalism, such as Serbian Honor (*Srpska čast*), Nationalist, Srbin.info, and many others.

In addition to nationally oriented YouTube channels and Facebook pages, the pro-Western Radio Free Europe, as in previous years, spreads orientalist stereotypes about the Muslim world, especially insisting on portraying Muslim women as disenfranchised and emphasizing the absence of gay rights in Muslim countries. Radio Free Europe also has a Facebook page “Not in my name” which exclusively deals with issues of “radicalism and extremism.” The content shared on this page, as a rule, concerns Muslims around the world and in the Balkan region.

53. <https://www.in4s.net/video-politicki-islam-preti-da-osvoji-evropu-austrija-pokusava-da-stane-na-put-radikalnom-islamizmu/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

54. <https://www.in4s.net/linta-alija-izetbegovic-je-zlocinac-koji-je-htio-da-stvori-islamsku-drzavu-na-vjekovnom-ognjistu-srpskog-naroda/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

55. <https://www.in4s.net/kurc-pozvao-eu-da-se-bori-protiv-politickog-islama/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As before, the main generator of Islamophobic policy is the exclusivist nationalist Serbian ideology which for decades has advocated the idea of uniting all those territories where Serbs live in the majority (the case of Republika Srpska) and territories that are perceived as “historical” belonging to Serbia (Kosovo and Montenegro). This ideology, with certain interruptions, represents an absolutely dominant ideological platform in Serbia, which is why it is a constant generator of instability in the entire region. As far as Muslims in the region are concerned, the ideology of “Greater Serbia” has proven to be extremely destructive throughout history, as evidenced by the genocides and ethnic cleansings that Serbs have repeatedly carried out against Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sandžak, and Kosovo from the end of the 19th century to this day. The main proponents of this ideology are the Serbian Orthodox Church and nationalist-oriented intellectuals who have dominated Serbia in the academic space for decades. Also, due to the fact that the idea of “unity of Serbs in one state” is dominant among the public, all parties on the political scene in Serbia are, more or less, led by this ideology or flirt with it.

On October 15, the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs published a very important article by Prof. Ermin Sinanović, who gives a very concise, but also very substantial analysis of the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the most important destabilizing factor in the region.⁵⁶ In addition to the generally accepted radical nationalist ideology nurtured by Serbian Orthodox Church, its strength lies in the fact that it has the ability to operate freely across borders and to have direct access and influence on people and territories outside the Republic of Serbia through churches and monasteries.

Serbia and its nationalist policy are constantly supported by Russia, which, in order to realize its geostrategic interests in the region, uses the idea of the “unity and brotherhood of the Slavic and Orthodox peoples.” In addition to the support that Russia provides to Serbia in its policies in the region, there are active relations between Russian and Serbian right-wing organizations. For example, the right-wing organization Serbian Action conducted an extensive interview with Stanislav Voro-biev, the leader of the Russian Imperial Movement, which has been on the list of terrorist organizations in the United States since last year.⁵⁷

Right-wing organizations have been receiving indirect and tacit support since the populist Serbian Progressive Party came to power in 2012, and the government very often uses them in its confrontations with political dissidents. However, the

56. Sinanović, “The Serbian Orthodox Church and the 2020 Montenegro Elections”.

57. “Интервју вође Руског империјског покрета”, <https://akcija.org/intervju-vodje-ruskog-imperijskog-pokreta/>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

flourishing of the extreme right in Serbia is not only reflected in the protests and excesses these organizations commit with impunity, but also in the fact that they were enabled to participate in the parliamentary and local elections which were held on June 21 despite the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁸

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In 2020, there were several events organized in order to paint over graffiti glorifying war criminals or inciting ethnic and religious intolerance. Such efforts were organized by non-governmental organizations that advocate for respect for human rights (Figure 26, left) and by environmentally oriented movements such as “Do not let Belgrade d(r)own.” (Figure 26, right) In March, a valuable study by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights entitled “Right-Wing Extremism in Serbia” was published, which identified, mapped, and classified ultra-right groups and movements in Serbia.⁵⁹

Also, during the year under consideration, the Center for Advanced Studies published the book *Media Discourse on Islam in the Western Balkans* by Harun Karčić and Ivan Ejub Kostić. The aim of the book was to provide an insight into the major drivers and platforms of anti-Muslim hate speech in the media in two Western Balkan countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia.⁶⁰



Figure 26: Removal of graffiti that glorifies war criminal Ratko Mladić (left),⁶¹ and the removal of a Nazi swastika graffiti (right).⁶²

58. “Firer, kapetan, Levijatan: Marš ekstremista ka Skupštini”, <https://nova.rs/vesti/politika/ekstremni-desnicari-na-izbornim-listicima-vlast-koketira-sa-njima/>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

59. <http://helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/desni%20ekstremizam.pdf>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

60. The book is available free for download at <https://www.cns.ba/cns-izdanja/media-discourse-on-islam-in-the-western-balkans/> (Access date: 23 December 2020).

61. “Prekrečeni antisemitski i neonacistički grafiti u Novom Sadu, reagovala i poverenica”, <https://www.021.rs/story/Novi-Sad/Vesti/233711/FOTO-Ponovo-antisemitski-i-neonacisticki-grafiti-u-Novom-Sadu.html>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

62. “Ne davimo Beograd: Uklonjeni kukasti krstovi i grafiti o ratnim zločincima”, <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a614198/Ne-davimo-Beograd-Uklonjeni-kukasti-krstovi-i-grafiti-velicanja-ratnih-zlocinaca.html>, (Access date: 23 December 2020).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The non-governmental sector in Serbia faces a very difficult situation because the government and state bodies perceive it as hostile. In addition, due to events around the world and the COVID-19 pandemic, Serbia is not on the list of priorities of international actors in a position to provide assistance to a country like Serbia, which largely failed the post-war transition period of the 1990s and has not faced the crimes from the past.

Due to the above circumstances, non-governmental organizations are largely left to their own devices and as a result, many organizations lack adequate financial resources for successful work. International organizations and relevant actors should keep in mind that Serbia is again in a very difficult internal situation and under the threat of ending up once more under a complete dictatorship. In addition, it is of particular importance that once again the exclusivist nationalist policy of the 1990s has become the dominant narrative in the social and public spheres in Serbia, and that younger generations are growing up with the same myths and ideas that resulted in the most heinous crimes against humanity whose victims were, as a rule, Muslims.

Precisely due to the fact that the “Greater Serbia” ideology’s main target are Muslims, it is crucial for Muslims in Serbia to succeed in involving predominantly Muslim states and all Islamic institutions that can provide them with direct assistance through advocacy, lobbying, and financial assistance, and perhaps most importantly, can offer potential training and education to young people to empower the Muslim community as much as possible.

Chronology

- **05.02.2020:** Promotion of the three-volume edition *There Was No Genocide in Srebrenica* by convicted war criminal and president of the neo-fascist Serbian Radical Party Vojislav Seselj, and physical attack on the founder of the Humanitarian Law Center Nataša Kandić.
- **08.03.2020:** Various right-wing groups such as Serbian Action, Leviathan, People’s Patrol, and others organized the protest under the slogan “Against the migrant invasion” in front of the building of the government of the Republic of Serbia.
- **06.05.2020:** A man crashed his car into a migrant center in Obrenovac shouting “I don’t want my girlfriend to be attacked by migrants... I don’t want a Muslim state... I don’t want to give Orthodoxy to Muslims and I won’t give it to them, believe me!”
- **08.05.2020:** An anti-migrant protest by the People’s Patrol on Republic Square, in the center of Belgrade, where among other things, protesters dis-

played a banner that read “Everything has gone the devil’s way. The earth stinks of Muhammad.”

- **13.05.2020:** Protest in front of the migrant center in Obrenovac organized by right-wing groups Leviathan, Chetnik Youth, and National Corps.
- **24.09.2020:** Three weeks of death threats to director Zlatko Paković after his play *Srebrenica - When We Who Were Murdered Rise Up* was staged.
- **09.10.2020:** Miša Vacić, the leader of the ultra-right Serbian Right, broke into the exhibition *Gateway - When It Hurts, The Truth Is the Cure*. The exhibition dealt with a crime committed by the Republika Srpska Army against Bosniak Muslims.
- **25.10.2020:** A call for violent action by the People’s Patrol called “Let’s clean the park near the Faculty of Economics,” a park where migrants usually seek refuge.
- **30.10.2020:** The group Leviathan organized a “*Hunt for Migrants*” on the streets of Belgrade.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SLOVENIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The year 2020 has been heavily burdened by the Covid-19 pandemic. Slovenia experienced the first lockdown for 80 days after the pandemic was officially declared on 12 March 2020, and the second lockdown from 18 October 2020, partially ongoing (March 2021). Slovenian Prime Minister Marjan Šarec resigned on 27 January saying his minority government could not push through important legislation. The new, 14th government of Slovenia was formed on 13 March by the president of the Slovenian Democratic Party (*Slovenska demokratska stranka* – SDS) Janez Janša in coalition with New Slovenia, the Modern Centre Party, and Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia. After the new government of Janez Janša took power, some groups (among them Antifa and Youth Activist Organisation) organised the “Friday Cyclist Protests” in Ljubljana, which started on 27 April and went on every Friday until 23 October. Prime Minister Janez Janša has been accused of eroding the freedom of the media and the press, usurping of power, corruption, and authoritarianism. On 3 February, the first Slovenian mosque was officially opened in Ljubljana and presented to the media, and on 7 February, the first prayer was organised. After more than 50 years, Slovenian Muslims received their first praying space and cultural centre named Muslim Cultural Centre (*Muslimanski kulturni center*).

Islamophobic discourse was propagated by right-wing politicians (members of the SDS and SNS) and affiliated media (*Nova24TV*, *Demokracija*). *Nova24TV* and *Demokracija* publicised the statement of SDS member and MP Branko Grims in connection with the discussion on the transfer of exceptional powers to the army to control the Croatian border, who said that the invasion of Islamists (according to him misleadingly called “refugees”) and the SARS-CoV-2 represent a heavy burden for the Slovenian police. In media, *Nova24TV* newspaper regularly reports and comments about Islam in an extremely negative way, for example stating that “Islam cannot be civilised, integrated, assimilated” and “Islam is the birthplace of violence, psychopathy, and sociopathy”.

Two groups, namely Uprising of Slovenians (*Upor Slovencev*) and Generation Identity Slovenia (*Generacija identitete Slovenija*) who have a very strong conservative, traditionalist, anti-immigration, and anti-Islamic stance are no longer accessible via the internet and/or their Facebook accounts. The paramilitary group Styrian Guard (*Štajerska varda*) and its regional groups/village guards, which formed in 2018 and performed vigilante activities on the borders of Slovenia claiming to offer security and protection from illegal immigrants, have become very active in the last two years. Their leader and organizer is Andrej Šiško, who is also the leader of the Movement United Slovenia (*Gibanje Zedinjena Slovenija*).

Povzetek

V letu 2020 je Slovenijo močno obremenila pandemija virusa Corona / Covid-19. Slovenija je prvo zaustavitev doživela po uradni razglasitvi epidemije 12. marca 2020 za 80 dni, ter od 15. oktobra 2020 naprej do delne sprostitve Marca 2021. Slovenski premier Marjan Šarec je 27. januarja odstopil in dejal, da njegova manjšinska vlada ne more sprejemati odločitev in zakonodaje. Novo, 14. vlado Slovenije je 13. marca sestavil predsednik Slovenske demokratske stranke (SDS) Janez Janša v koaliciji z Novo Slovenijo, Stranko modernega centra in Demokratično stranko upokojencev Slovenije. Po prevzemu oblasti nove vlade Janeza Janše so nekatere skupine (najbolj aktivni Antifa in Mladinska aktivistična organizacija) organizirale petkove kolesarske proteste v Ljubljani, ki so se začeli 27. aprila in so trajali vsak petek do 23. oktobra. Premier Janez Janša je bil obtožen izpodbijanja svobode medijev in tiska, uzurpiranja oblasti, korupcije in avtoritarnosti. 3. februarja je bila uradno odprta in predstavljena prva slovenska mošeja v Ljubljani, 7. februarja pa v njej izpeljana prva molitev. Po več kot 50 letih so slovenski muslimani prejeli svoj prvi molitveni objekt in kulturno središče, imenovano Muslimanski kulturni center.

Islamofobični diskurz je bil najbolj prisoten med desničarskimi politiki (člani SDS in SNS) in z njimi povezanimi mediji (Nova24TV, Demokracija). Nova 24 in Demokracija navajata člana SDS in poslanca Branka Grimsa, v povezavi z razpravo o prenosu izjemnih pooblastil vojski za nadzor Hrvaške meje, da invazija islamistov (po njegovem zavajajoče imenovani "begunci") in SARS-CoV-2 predstavljata preveliko breme slovenski policiji. Časnik Nova24TV redno poroča in komentira o islamu na skrajno negativen način, na primer v izjavi, da: "*islam se ne more civilizirati, integrirati, asimilirati*" in "*islam je rojevalec nasilja, psihopatstva in sociopatstva*".

Dve skupini, Upor Slovencev in Generacija identitete Slovenija, ki imata zelo močno konzervativno, tradicionalistično, protimigracijsko in protislamsko držo, nista več dostopni prek internetnih / Facebook računov. V zadnjih dveh letih je postala zelo aktivna paravojaška skupina Štajerska varda in njene regijske varde / vaške straže, ki so se oblikovale leta 2018 in izvajale vigilante aktivnosti na mejah Slovenije, v imenu ponujanja varnosti in zaščite pred ilegalnimi priseljenci. Njihov vodja in organizator je Andrej Šiško, ki je tudi vodja Gibanja Zedinjena Slovenija.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Republic of Slovenia

Type of Regime: Democratic system

Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), New Slovenia (NSi), Party of Modern Center (SMC); Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) – main ideology: right-wing, Christian democratic, conservative, nationalist.

Opposition Parties: Coalition of List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ); Social Democrats (SD); Party of Alenka Bratušek (SAB); the Left (*Levica*) – main ideology: central-left, liberal, social democratic. Slovenian National Party (SNS) – main ideology: nationalist.

Last Elections: Presidential elections in 2017 (President Borut Pahor won 53.09% of the vote against 46.91% for Marjan Šarec). Parliamentary and local elections in 2018: the 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 were given 1 seat automatically. The 13th government was formed by the coalition of LMŠ-SD-SMC-SAB-DeSUS with the support of the Left, which in late 2019 withdrew its support to the coalition. Since 2020, when the 13th government dissolved after the resignation of Prime Minister Marjan Šarec, the 14th government has been led by Prime Minister Janez Janša and his party Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) in coalition with New Slovenia, the Modern Centre Party, and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (namely NSi, SMC, DESUS).

Total Population: 2,089,310 (1 July 2019)

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 Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2019, the most frequently alleged discrimination on personal grounds in reported cases that took place in 2019

was gender identity (14%). This was followed by discrimination on the grounds of nationality, race, and ethnic origin (13%). The alleged personal ground of disability occurred in 11% of cases, followed by sexual orientation (5%), age (5%), religion or belief (4%), place of residence (3%), social status (2%), language (2%), citizenship of another member state (2%), and citizenship of a third country (1%). The advocate also considered one case of alleged discrimination based on gender identity and one case based on property status (1 case corresponds to approximately 1%).

Major Religions (% of Population): According to the 2002 census: Christian Catholic 57.8%, Christian Protestant 0.8%, Christian Orthodox 2.3%, Muslim 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%) according to the 2002 census (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia).

Main Muslim Community Organisations: The Islamic Community in Slovenia (*Islamska skupnost v Sloveniji*), Slovenian Muslim Community (*Slovenska muslimanska skupnost*), The Slovene Islamic Community of Mercy (*Slovenska islamska skupnost milosti*).

Main NGOs Combatting 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*), Homeland League (*Domovinska liga*)

Far-Right Movements: Movement United Slovenia (*Gibanje Zedinjena Slovenija*), Uprising of Slovenians (*Upor Slovencev*), Generation Identity Slovenia (*Generacija Identitete Slovenija*)

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No, limited to mandatory stunning of animals before slaughter.
- **Minaret Ban:** No, the minaret should not be taller than 40m.
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The year 2020 has been, as elsewhere in the world, marked by the Covid-19 pandemic in Slovenia. Slovenia experienced the first lockdown (80 days) during the first wave after the pandemic was officially declared on 12 March while the second lockdown began on 15 October and partially continues at present (March 2021). Measures comprised a ban on movement outside of municipality of one's residence, compulsory mask wearing, ban of gathering of more than 6 people, and the shutdown of schools, shops, and many workplaces. In 2020, a total of 125,068 were infected by Covid-19 and 2,891 Covid-19-related deaths were recorded. The healthcare system was heavily burdened with lack of intensive care facilities, but more than that, lack of medical staff.

Slovenian Prime Minister Marjan Šarec resigned on 27 January, saying his minority government could not push through important legislation and called for an early election. The governing coalition of five centre-left parties, which took power in September 2018, held only 43 of the 90 seats in parliament and was the first minority government in political history of Slovenia. After losing the informal support of the opposition party Left (*Levica*) in November 2019, due to disagreements and unfulfilled joint plans, the government has found it increasingly difficult to gain sufficient numbers of votes and get bills through parliament.¹ The new 14th government of Slovenia was formed by the President of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) Janez Janša, who was elected with 52 votes in the National Assembly. The government, which was confirmed on 13 March 2020 was formed by a coalition of the Slovenian Democratic Party, New Slovenia, the Modern Centre Party, and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia. The participation of the latter two provoked violent reactions in the media, especially because in the 2018 elections, the two parties assured voters that they would not enter a government with Janša. For this reason, some members of the Modern Center Party quit and protests “against the coalition of hatred” took place in Ljubljana in late February to remind the members of the parliament of their promises.² After its formation, the government took the first measures against the Covid-19 pandemic.

After the new government of Janez Janša took power, some groups (among them Antifa and Youth Activist Organisation) organised the “Friday Cyclist Protests” in Ljubljana. The protests started on 27 April via the initiative of a Facebook group named “Resistance to the government of Slovenia”. The protests went on every Friday until 23 October when further protests were cancelled due to the second wave of the pan-

1. “Šarčeva odstopna izjava že v DZ, na potezi je Pahor”, *Dnevnik*, 29 January 2020, <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042920689>, accessed 15 March 2021.

2. “Ljudi je treba spomniti na njihove obljube”, *Delo*, 28 February 2020, <https://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/ljudi-je-treba-spomniti-na-njihove-obljube/>, accessed 15 March 2021.

demic. The protests were peaceful gatherings of people, mostly on bicycles. Prime Minister Janez Janša and his party have been widely accused of eroding freedom of media and press, usurpation of power, corruption, authoritarianism, spreading hatred and xenophobia, nationalist populism, pressure on judiciary etc.³ In November, two new groups who are not associated with the Friday protestors, staged street protests and caused violence. The police used tear gas and water cannons during its intervention against these protestors.⁴

On 3 February, the first Slovenian mosque was officially opened in Ljubljana and presented to the media, and on 7 February, the first prayer was organised. After more than 50 years, Slovenian Muslims received their first praying space and cultural centre named Muslim Cultural Centre (*Muslimanski kulturni center*).⁵ The centre was visited by then Prime minister Marjan Šarec and other prominent politicians.⁶ The architects received the Plečnik 2020 Award, the most prestigious award for architectural achievements in Slovenia.⁷

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

While there are no recorded or reported physical attacks on Muslims, direct and indirect verbal attacks do occur. They mostly take place in various right-wing media, which will be discussed in the relevant section below.

Employment

Compared to previous years there has been no crucial change in the employment field. Muslims still face problems since there is no legal framework (except for the religious rights as protected nominally by the constitution) guaranteeing the actual

3. "75 akademikov svari pred Janševo vlado", *Dnevnik*, 20 February 2020, <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042922555>, accessed 15 March 2021.
4. "Organizatorji petkovih protestov: "Ne hodite na današnji protest!", *Mladina*, 5 November 2020, <https://www.mladina.si/202582/organizatorji-petkovih-protestov-ne-hodite-na-danasnji-protest/>, accessed 15 March 2021; "Demonstracija moči policije je bila pretirana", *Delo*, 7 November 2020, <https://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/demonstracija-moci-policije-je-bila-pretirana/>, accessed 15 March 2021. Protests organized by Yellow jackets also took place, but they expressed support for the government. Among them were members of neo-Nazi groups with slogans such as "A patriot is not a fascist" and "Anarchists are left fascists", and with the symbols of the DOM (HOME) party (cf. Urška Rus, "Petkovi protesti: Kdo so pravi rumeni jopiči?", *Dnevnik*, 10 July 2020, <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042933854>, accessed 15 March 2021).
5. This is the first mosque in the history of independent Slovenia; however, on its soil there was a mosque built during WWI (from 1916 until 1920) by Bosniak members of the Austro-Hungarian army in Log pod Mangartom.
6. Islamska skupnost v Republiki Sloveniji, 2 March 2020, *Muslimanski kulturni center februarja obiskalo več tisoč oseb*, <https://www.islamska-skupnost.si/novice/2020/03/muslimanski-kulturni-center-februarja-obiskalo-vec-ti-soc-oseb/>, accessed 15 March 2021.
7. Jože Plečnik (1872-1957), after whom the award was named, was one of the most famous Slovenian architects with worldwide recognition.

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).

Most of the discrimination cases occur in regard to access to social and health services, including social protection and social housing (32%), accompanied by discrimination in the employment area (30%), 10% in educational area, and 28% other areas/cases. According to the last available Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2019,⁸ the most frequently alleged discrimination on personal grounds in cases recorded in 2019 was gender identity (14%). This is followed by discrimination on the grounds of nationality, race, and ethnic origin (13%). Alleged discrimination on the grounds of disability occurred in 11% of cases, followed by sexual orientation (5%), age (5%), religion or belief (4%), place of residence (3%), social status (2%), language (2%), citizenship of another member state (2%), and citizenship of a third country (1%). The advocate also considered one case of alleged discrimination based on gender identity and one case based on property status (1 case corresponds to approximately 1%).

Education

In March, the Constitutional Court ruled⁹ that only the compulsory part of the official school programme, but not the extended programme, should be completely financed from the budget. The Constitutional Court decided on the financing of private schools for the third time in two decades. If in 2001 constitutional lawyers decided that it was not unconstitutional for the state to finance only public schools, constitutional judges in a different composition in 2015 decided – indeed with a close result of 5:4 – that the official programmes of private schools should be funded in the same way as public school programmes. The latest decision of the Constitutional Court makes it clear that the state is obliged to finance only the mandatory part of the official curriculum fully, but not the extended programme of private schools. The extended part of the programme includes supplementary classes, morning care and extended stays, as well as various contents offered by individual schools such as cultural and sports events, or religious and cultural classes and spiritual days at Catholic schools.¹⁰ However, in the educational area, in public schools, Muslims still face similar problems as in previous years.¹¹

8. Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2019, http://www.zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Redno-letno-porocilo-2019_splet-1.pdf, accessed 15 March 2021.

9. Odločba Ustavnega sodišča št. U-I-110/16 z dne 12 Marec 2020 (Constitutional Court Decision) (rule officially published on 7 April) <http://www.us-rs.si/odlocba-ustavnega-sodisca-st-u-i-11016-z-dne-12-3-2020/>, accessed 15 March 2021.

10. Franja Zišč, “Država ni dolžna v celoti financirati zasebnih šol“, *Večer*, 7 April 2020, <https://www.vecer.com/slovenija/drzava-ni-dolzna-v-celoti-financirati-zasebnih-sol-10154043>, accessed 15 March 2021.

11. Cf. Ana Frank: Islamophobia in Slovenia: National Report 2018, in: Enes Bayraktı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, Istanbul, SETA, 2019.

Politics

Demokracija and *Nova24TV* quoted the member of SDS and MP Branko Grims in reference to the debate about conveying exceptional powers to the army at the Croatian border of Slovenia (application of Art. 37a of the Defence Act). According to Grims, all those responsible in Slovenia are trying to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus, while on the other hand thousands of illegal migrants, who are now in Bosnia and Herzegovina, would like to invade our country via the southern border. He sees migrations as threat and states,

The simultaneous invasion of Islamists (who are still misleadingly called “refugees” by many) and the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic pose the impossible task for the Slovenian police of managing all these security tasks at the same time. There are too few of them and they are overwhelmed. The military is in fact already on the border, but it has no authority to actually defend it. The situation is more absurd than you can imagine. At the moment, Slovenian soldiers can defend the borders of Kosovo, but they must not defend the borders of Slovenia.¹²

The opposition parties SD, LMŠ, SAB, and the Left party opposed the activation of Article 37a of the Defence Act, which would give the army full powers to protect the southern border with Croatia. On 3 March, Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti, president of SNS, advocated for the necessity of shooting migrants by stating “I think that the country should be defended by all means, sometimes even by shooting... If a policeman is attacked by someone [read: a migrant] with a weapon, a machete or even killed, I hope that policeman next to him shoots. That would be normal in any country. It’s not here yet.”¹³

Media

The main media outlets publishing discriminatory content are right-wing *Nova24TV*, *Reporter*, and *Demokracija*. On 3 November, an article in *Nova24TV*, a right-wing media, entitled “Connoisseur of Islam on the Current Situation in Europe: Islam Cannot Be Civilised, Integrated, Assimilated and Is the Same as Anarcho-leftism!” was published.¹⁴ As the title suggests, the interviewee, Gregor

12. Luka Perš, “SV že leta 2016 dobila začasna pooblastila za varovanje meje na podlagi 37.a člena! Zdaj opozicija nasprotuje istemu ukrepu, ki so ga pred 4 leti sami podprli!” *Nova24TV*, 29 March 2020, <https://nova24tv.si/slovenija/politika/1-sv-ze-leta-2016-dobila-zacasna-pooblastila-za-varovanje-meje-na-podlagi-37-a-clena-zdaj-opozicija-nasprotuje-istemu-ukrepu-ki-so-ga-pred-4-leti-sami-podprli/>, accessed 15 March 2021. The exact same article, written by the same author, was published in the newspaper *Demokracija*, 30 March 2020: <https://www.demokracija.si/en/slovenija/sv-ze-leta-2016-dobila-zacasna-pooblastila-za-varovanje-meje-na-podlagi-37-a-clena-zdaj-opozicija-nasprotuje-istemu-ukrepu-ki-so-ga-pred-4-leti-sami-podprli.html>, accessed 15 March 2021.
13. Primož Cirman and Vesna Vuković, “Predsednik Slovenske nacionalne stranke (SNS) Zmago Jelinčič je včeraj v državnem zboru govoril o streljanju na migrante”, *Necenzurirano.si*, 4 March 2020, <https://necenzurirano.si/clanek/aktualno/video-jelincic-bi-streljal-na-migrante-762202>, accessed 15 March 2021.
14. Sara Rančigaj, “Poznavalec islama o trenutni situaciji v Evropi: Islam se ne more civilizirati, integrirati, asimilirati in je skupen anarholevičarstvu!”, *Nova24TV*, 3 November 2020, <https://nova24tv.si/slovenija/poznava->

Preac, a journalist, publicist, and traveller, stated the following throughout the article:

Ninety per cent of Muslims support the beheading of a French teacher, they have verbally desecrated the beheaded teacher, and protests against France are raging around the world. With 20,000 Islamic terrorist attacks a year, this is further clear evidence that Islam is the birthplace of violence, psychopathy, and sociopathy.

Many theorists of religious and ideological books compare the Qur'an to *Mein Kampf* in terms of violence. Islam also kills those who renounce Islam, those who insult their families, and those who insult Muhammad, Allah, the Qur'an, in short, it kills all the time.

I have been traveling, living, working around the world and Islam for 33 years, speaking their languages, delving into literature, the lives of Islamic people, writing articles, books, about why there is so much poverty, illiteracy, gender inequality, religions, so much violence in Islam.

The negative consequences of a free migration policy are already strong across Europe: Islamism, terrorism, beheadings, violence, crime, drugs, growing ghettos in major European cities, chaos in the streets, burning churches, and slowly attacking aqueducts and museums, cultural institutions, divisions in society, the rise of hatred, left and right extremism, Islamism.¹⁵

He also emphasized that he would like to “help” Muslims to become civilized, so that they can finally reach freedom of spirit, gender, sexuality, thought, art, knowledge, and democracy. He also claimed to be working hard to help the political left and the so-called good Catholics, to tell them about the great deception that Islam represents.

In the article “The Problem of Islamic Fundamentalism” (*Problem islamskega fundamentalizma*) a very narrow, unproblematised view of rape by Islamic fundamentalists against European women is presented:

Why does rape not seem to be a sin to an Islamic fundamentalist who rapes a European woman in Europe, but can even be a sacred act? If we imagine that an Islamic fundamentalist (who, of course, is not necessarily a terrorist at all) came from an Islamic state, which for him is a land of obedience to God (*Dar al-Islam*), to a European country that he understands as a land of war (*Dar al-Harb*), from his point of view, the inhabitants of this European country suffer spiritually because they live immorally and anger the God who will punish them after their death. When an Islamic fundamentalist sees a Western woman dressed in a short skirt and showing her cleavage, he believes she is a very immoral person who dresses similarly to how prostitutes

lec-islama-o-trenutni-situaciji-v-evropi-islam-se-ne-more-civilizirati-integrirati-asimilirati-in-je-skupen-anarholevicarstvu/, accessed 15 March 2021.

15. Rančigaj, “Poznavalec islama o trenutni situaciji v Evropi: Islam se ne more civilizirati, integrirati, asimilirati in je skupen anarholevičarstvu!” *Nova24TV*, 3 November 2020, <https://nova24tv.si/slovenija/poznavalec-islama-o-trenutni-situaciji-v-evropi-islam-se-ne-more-civilizirati-integrirati-asimilirati-in-je-skupen-anarholevicarstvu/>, accessed 15 March 2021.

dress in some Islamic countries. From his point of view, the rape of such a woman is therefore not an act of rejection, but an act of rapprochement with his God and even spiritual help to the rape victim, as he may lead her to the right path of morality and a more pleasing life. Such an Islamic fundamentalist would never rape an orthodox Muslim woman. What is written does not mean that all rapes committed in Europe by migrants of the Muslim faith are conditioned by religious belief. It is certain, however, that at least some of them are conditioned by this.¹⁶

A column written by Aleksander Škorc (probably a pseudonym) in the newspaper *Demokracija* on 3 December led to a criminal complaint¹⁷ against the author and editor on the grounds of spreading hatred and racism, however the outcome of the complaint at the court is not clear yet. The article caused sharp reactions from many media outlets, academics and organisations. It stated,

It will therefore happen that migrants will become inexplicably ill and die, as God will create such a microorganism that will not transmit their DNA. It is therefore possible to create such a virus, which only affects certain people, races, groups, in short, people of certain characteristics. Targeted elimination in short. Just as people target certain types of natural pests, mould, weeds, etc., God can target certain types of harmful people. Since the white race is unable to defend itself against the wave of some races, God will create a virus that will save the most advanced race from destruction. So, is God a racist? Just as much as people who exterminate certain animal and plant species that are harmful to them. It is not about racism; it is about cleansing. Weed removal. If you want a good crop, this is a must. ... Jesus was also white. With a reason. He was neither black nor yellow.¹⁸

The Slovenian Democratic Party owns part of the publishing house that publishes *Demokracija*. The publication clearly shows that explicit racism is very much present in Slovenian politics and in sections of society, and that the current government is directly connected to the media that publishes such material.

Justice System

At its 21st regular session on 18 June 2020, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia decided that the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Dialogue on Religious Freedom should cease to function.¹⁹ According to the Islamic Community, the Council for Dialogue on Religious Freedom was a body that had

16. Tadej Ian, "Problem islamskega fundamentalizma", *Nova24TV*, 15 August 2020, <https://nova24tv.si/svet/problem-islamskega-fundamentalizma/>, accessed 15 March 2021.

17. Boris Vezjak, a philosopher and publicist, failed the criminal complaint against the publication. For a photographed documentation of the text see: <https://vezjak.com/2020/12/07/rasistichni-presezki-bela-rasa-mora-iz-trebiti-druge/>, accessed 15 March 2021.

18. Aleksander Škorc, "Presežki 5" (Excesses 5), *Demokracija*, 3 December 2020, p.6.

19. Government of the Republic of Slovenia, <https://www.gov.si teme/dialog-o-verski-svobodi/>, accessed 15 March 2021.

no executive power. It was an advisory body that opened some issues that also concern the Islamic Community in the Republic of Slovenia, such as the problem of circumcision, the regulation of school meals without pork, spiritual care in hospitals, the army etc. However, according to the Islamic Community, none of the issues listed have ever been resolved. Therefore, the abolition of the Council did not surprise the Islamic Community and was very much expected.²⁰

Internet

Two patriotic/nationalist groups, namely Uprising of Slovenians (*Upor Slovencev*) and Generation Identity Slovenia (*Generacija identitete Slovenija*) who have a very strong conservative, traditionalist, anti-immigration, and anti-Islamic stance are no more accessible on the internet. There is no more access to the social media Facebook page of Generation Identity,²¹ probably as a consequence of Facebook administration banning similar organizations' accounts across Europe.²² Facebook page Upor Slovencev (*The Uprising of Slovenians*), while still accessible, has no posts or new uploads in 2020. A Facebook group called Boycott of Products with Halal Certificate (*Bojkot izdelkov s Halal oznako*), an affiliate of *Upor Slovencev*, regularly posts cases and products of companies that have acquired halal certification in order for its followers to support the boycott. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1: The logo of the Facebook group “Boycott of Products with Halal Certificate”.²³

The paramilitary group Styrian Guard (*Štajerska varda*) and its regional groups / village guards, which formed in 2018 and performed vigilante activities on the borders of Slovenia claiming to offer security and protection from illegal immigrants,

20. Personal communication with the Head of the Service for Religious and Educational Affairs of the Islamic Community, Mr. Nevzet Porić.
21. The only available link is https://vk.com/generacija_id?fbclid=IwAR1b8_Wh5NrTEgqTaGa5QhqOjcx3xs-JYy9tjGt1Bv6mWMEC_L90iwFT4WCw, accessed 15 March 2021, with posts from 2019 or <https://publish-wall.si/generacijaidentitete?fbclid=IwAR2JboMwbwoLO0FD8uOpmtz7GohocvYhQ0uAbdWoaRl23oEc2fy-HFmQp6Lo>, accessed 15 March 2021, with posts from 2018.
22. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, “Facebook Bans Content Related to White Nationalism & Separatism after Pressure from Civil Rights Groups”, 28 March 2019, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/facebook-bans-content-related-to-white-nationalism-separatism-after-pressure-from-civil-rights-groups/>, accessed 15 March 2021.
23. Facebook account: Bojkot izdelkov s Halal oznako, <https://www.facebook.com/BojkotHalal/>, accessed 15 March 2021.

have become very active in the last two years. The so-called Štajerska varda and village guards have regular trainings and gatherings, as well as activities on the internet with their forefront leader and organiser Andrej Šiško, who is also the leader of the Movement United Slovenia (*Gibanje Zedinjena Slovenija*). The movement has a Facebook account under the name Andrej Šiško – United Slovenia (*Andrej Šiško – Zedinjena Slovenija*) and maintains the webpage zedinjenaslovenija.si. The paramilitary organisation *Štajerske varde* is active under the Facebook name Slovenian GUARDS – Civil initiative (*Slovenska VARDA – civilna iniciativa*).

Andrej Šiško, the initiator of *Štajerske varde*, claims that parliamentary deputies of left-wing politicians accept laws that allow illegal foreigners and illegal border crossings by immigrants, who commit criminal acts as burglary, robbery, aggressions, rape, and kidnappings. According to Šiško, right-wing politicians are also following in the same steps. He calls them fascists. Šiško negates the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic and claims that there are fewer dead than during two months of the common flu.²⁴ *Štajerske varde* have become much more active in paramilitary activities in the last few years, wearing army uniforms and carrying weapons. They claim to have the right to self-defence, freedom, and safety.

On their webpage, there is the following picture that depicts Muslims as stuck in gender stereotypes discriminating women. (Fig. 2)



Figure 2: In the Muslim world, the man is a boss and the woman stays in the back. They [women] don't want to decide.²⁵

24. Facebook account *Slovenska VARDA - civilna iniciativa*, <https://www.facebook.com/vardaslovenska/videos/1023763098058184>, accessed 15 March 2021.

25. Facebook account *Slovenska VARDA - civilna iniciativa*, <https://www.facebook.com/vardaslovenska/photos>, accessed 15 March 2021.

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*), the Slovenian National Party (*Slovenska nacionalna stranka*), and the new Homeland League (*Domovinska liga*). Some of these parties are also connected to right-wing media that spread the same ideological messages, such as *Demokracija*, *Nova24TV*, and *Reporter*. Such messages also on occasion appear in the conservative Christian newspaper *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 no longer active, such as Uprising of Slovenians (*Upor Slovencev*), and Generation Identity Slovenia (*Generacija identitete Slovenija*), while Stop the Islamization of Slovenia (*Stop islamizaciji Slovenije*) has become a private Facebook group, and Boycott of Products with Halal Certificate (*Bojkot izdelkov s Halal oznako*) is still active on Facebook.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The NGOs that are active in initiatives to counter Islamophobia in Slovenia 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 organisations and research institutes that are also part of this network include Humanitas 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 (registered in 1976) and the Slovenian Muslim Community (registered in 2006). Recently, in 2018, a third Islamic religious community was officially registered: the Slovene Islamic Community of Mercy (*Slovenska islamska skupnost milosti*).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Taking into account the events and the status of Islamophobia in Slovenia, the following policy recommendations are offered:

- Raising awareness of the dangers of hate speech, xenophobia and (neo)racism in the media and on the internet, but especially in politics, since visible and known politicians explicitly use Islam as a reference to fuel their discriminatory discourse.

- Improving the monitoring and collection of information about discrimination based on religious grounds in the employment area, education area, and social area, since there is a huge lack of available statistics, information, and accounts of the difficulties Muslims face in these areas.
- Implementing an official, state-driven legal change for Islamic practices such as praying at the workplace, halal dietary regimes, and circumcision of boys in hospitals to allow for a legal framework that defines and acknowledges these practices as Muslims' basic rights and needs.
- Facilitating the visibility and participation of Muslims in political, economic, social, and cultural life, as well as in public administration, and supporting mutual dialogue with Muslims in Slovenia.

Chronology

- **03.03.2020:** Zmagor Jelinčič Plemeniti, president of the SNS, advocated for the necessity of shooting migrants.
- **29/30.03.2020:** Member of SDS and MP Branko Grims stated that the invasion of Islamists (misleadingly called “refugees”) and the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic pose an overwhelming burden on the Slovenian police.
- **08.06.2020:** The government of the Republic of Slovenia dissolved the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Dialogue on Religious Freedom.
- **15.08.2020:** Nova24TV presents the argument that the rape of Western women by Islamists is seen by them as an act of rapprochement with their God and spiritual help to the rape victim, to lead her to the right path of morality.
- **02.09.2020:** Andrej Šiško, the initiator of *Štajerske varde*, claims that parliamentary deputies of left-wing politicians accept laws that allow illegal foreigners and illegal border crossings by immigrants, who commit criminal acts as burglary, robbery, aggressions, rape, and kidnappings.
- **03.11.2020:** Nova24TV publishes an article in which a journalist claims Islam cannot be “civilised, integrated, assimilated, and is the same as anarcho-leftism”.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SPAIN
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

The states of alarm and the measures taken during the confinement from March to June due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have exacerbated the socioeconomic deficiencies and reduced the fundamental rights of Muslim communities. Increased racial profiling by the police has left daunting images of violent treatment towards migrants and other racialized individuals. Despite the absence of a formal, legal prohibition of the hijab, a considerable increase has been noted in the instances where hijab-wearing students were denied access to public high schools at the beginning of the school year in September. In addition, hundreds of minors from the North African cities of Ceuta and Melilla are still being denied schooling. The United Nations have issued another nominal resolution regarding this matter. Of the thousands of unaccompanied migrant minors, only a fraction receives education. Far-right and neo-Nazi movements are on the rise and have organized many demonstrations with hateful Nazi chants and slogans. Some of these demonstrations were in fact “organized hunts” of unaccompanied migrant minors. The historical non-compliance with the Cooperation Agreement signed in 1992 between the Spanish state and the Islamic Commission of Spain has generated the saddest situation experienced so far due to the flagrant lack of space for Muslim burials within municipal cemeteries which during the Covid-19 pandemic became even more evident. In public and political discourse it is observed that mixed hatred towards Muslims, migration, and specifically towards unaccompanied migrant minors has been gradually transforming into a clear Islamophobic discourse since October 2, the date of the French president’s speech on “Islamist separatism,” and following the horrific events in France and Austria.

Resumen ejecutivo

La situación de estado de alarma y las medidas adoptadas durante el confinamiento entre marzo y junio de 2020 debidas a la pandemia del Covid-19 han exacerbado las deficiencias socioeconómicas de las comunidades musulmanas y reducido considerablemente sus derechos fundamentales. Las paradas violentas por perfil racial dejaron imágenes dantescas del trato de algunos agentes de las fuerzas de seguridad a las personas migrantes y racializadas. A pesar de la ausencia de una prohibición legal formal del uso del hiyab, se ha observado un aumento considerable de la denegación de acceso a los institutos públicos a estudiantes con hiyab al comienzo del año escolar en septiembre. Además, centenares de menores ceutíes y melillenses siguen sin ser escolarizados, por lo que las Naciones Unidas ha vuelto a emitir otra resolución nominal. De los miles de menores migrantes extranjeros no acompañados, tan solo está recibiendo educación una parte ínfima. Los movimientos de extrema derecha y neonazis han aumentado y han organizado muchas manifestaciones con sus consecuentes cánticos y consignas de odio. Algunas de estas manifestaciones fueron, de hecho, “cacerías organizadas” contra menores migrantes no acompañados. El histórico incumplimiento de los Acuerdos de 1992 entre el Estado y la Comisión Islámica de España ha generado la situación más triste vivida hasta el momento por la flagrante falta de espacio para los entierros islámicos en los cementerios municipales que, durante la pandemia del Covid-19, se hizo aún más evidente. Se observa cómo el discurso público y político que mezcla el odio hacia los musulmanes, la migración y específicamente hacia los menores migrantes no acompañados, se está transformando paulatinamente en un claro discurso islamóforo desde el 2 de octubre, fecha del discurso del presidente francés sobre el “separatismo islamista” y los posteriores trágicos eventos en Francia y en Austria.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Kingdom of Spain

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Democracy

Form of Government: Parliamentary Monarchy

Ruling Parties: Coalition of *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE) and *Unidas Podemos* (coalition of several left-wing parties).

Opposition Parties: *Partido Popular* (right), Vox (extreme right), *Ciudadanos* (centrist-right).

Last Elections: The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) won the general elections on November 10, 2019. Results: Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE): 120/350, Popular Party (PP): 88/350, Vox: 52/350, *Unidas Podemos* (UP): 35/350, Catalan Republican Left (ERC):13, *Ciudadanos* 10/350.

Total Population: 47.3 million (INE, January 1, 2020)

Major Languages: Spanish (official language); Catalan, Valencian, Basque, and Galician (main co-official languages).

Official Religion: None. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 abolished Catholicism as the official state religion, though recognizing its role in Spanish society.

Statistics on Islamophobia: Overall 6.8% increase in hate crime: out of 1,706 complaints, 66 relate to religion (-4.3% compared to 2018) and 515 to racism and xenophobia (+20.9% compared to 2018). No segregated statistics for anti-Muslim bias are available (2019, National Office for Hate Crimes).

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The “2018 Report on Racism in the Spanish State” by *Federación SOS Racismo* was the latest national report published by civil society. No national reports on discrimination are available.

Major Religions (% of Population): Practicing Catholics 19.7%; Non-practicing Catholics 40%; Agnostic 10.9%; Indifferent 11.5%; Atheists 13.6%; Other religions 2.8%. (CIS study n. 3296/2020 for October 2020).

Muslim Population (% of Population): Approx. 4% of the total 2019 population in Spain is Muslim (*Observatorio Andalusi* 2020).

Main Muslim Community Organizations: *Comisión Islámica de España* (CIE) as sole interlocutor with the Spanish state; the CIE is composed of the *Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España* (UCIDE) and the *Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas* (FEERI).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: *Adedcom*, *Asociación de Mujeres Musulmanas Bidaya*, *Asociación Marroquí para la Integración de Inmigrantes*, *Asociación*

Musulmana por los Derechos Humanos, European Network of Women of African Descent, *Fundación de Cultura Islámica*, *G-Chime*, *Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia*, *Observatorio de la Islamofobia en Cataluña*, *Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios*, *SOS Racismo Bizkaia*, *SOS Racisme Catalunya*, *SOS Racismo Madrid*, and *Stop Als Fenòmens Islamòfobs*.

Far-Right Parties: *Vox*, *Hogar Social*, *España 2000*, *Alianza Nacional*, *Avant*, *ADÑ Coalition* (formed by *La Falange*, *Falange Española de las JONS*, *Alternativa Española*, and *Democracia Nacional*), and *Front Nacional de Catalunya* (FNC).

Far-Right Movements: *Acción Juvenil Valencia*, *Málaga 1487*, *Acción Social Asturias*, *Acción Social Cádiz*, *Almería Inconforme*, *Asociación Cultural Alfonso I*, *Asociación Rodrigo de Bastida*, *Alcalá 1247*, *Bastión Frontal*, *Defenem Valencia*, *Devenir Europeo*, *El Galeón*, *Frente Nacional Identitario*, *Getafe NR*, *Hablamos Español*, *Hacer Nación*, *Hazte Oír*, *In Memoriam Juan Ignacio*, *Iberia Cruor*, *Legio VII*, *Lo Nuestro*, *Llibertadors del Regne*, *Soberanía y Libertad*, *Moviment Identitari Català* (MIC), *Somatemps*, *Som Identitaris*, *Último Bastión*, and *Valentia Forum*.

Far-Right Militant 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

According to recent statistics,¹ around two million Muslims reside in Spain, half of whom do not have the privilege of Spanish citizenship, making them vulnerable to various forms of discrimination which are unlikely to be reported to the authorities. While national or nationalized Muslim populations are not exempt from discrimination, including violence, non-national Muslims in Spain frequently feel excluded when it comes to housing, employment, healthcare, education, legal aid, freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of association, etc. This gap between Spanish and foreign citizens became more evident during the first state of alarm and the obligatory confinement due to the Covid-19 pandemic (March 14-June 21).²

The most recent report of the National Office for Hate Crimes³ (2019) does not recognize Islamophobic hate crimes and no segregated data on anti-Muslim discrimination is made available by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Within Spain, only Barcelona's Office for Non-Discrimination acknowledges anti-Muslim bias.⁴ Monitoring anti-Muslim racism remains an arduous, volunteer-based, and unsystematic task.

In November, the "Survey on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Spain," coordinated by the Secretary of State for Migration through the Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE), was published.⁵ According to the report, Muslims are perceived as the least valued social group along with the Roma. Respondents believe that political discourse (74.5%), terrorist acts (73.7%), and media narratives (70.8%) contribute to the increase of Islamophobia. They maintain there are high levels of Islamophobia in Spain (82.8%), such as when renting a house (87.2%), when accessing the labor market (83.2%), or places of prayer (79.3%). Muslim entities affirm that discrimination materializes in difficulties when settling into a neighborhood.

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1. "Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana", Observatorio Andalusi, <http://observatorio.hispanomuslim.es/estademograf.pdf>, (Access date: 31 October 2020).
 2. "Real Decreto 463/2020, de 14 de marzo, por el que se declara el estado de alarma para la gestión de la situación de crisis sanitaria ocasionada por el COVID-19", Boletín Oficial del Estado, <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rd/2020/03/14/463/con>, (Access date: 31 October 2020).
"Ley Orgánica 4/1981, de 1 de junio, de los estados de alarma, excepción y sitio", Boletín Oficial del Estado, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1981-12774>, (Access date: 31 October 2020).
 3. "Informe 2019 de la evolución de los "delitos de odio" en España", Ministerio de Interior, <http://www.interior.gob.es/web/servicios-al-ciudadano/delitos-de-odio/estadisticas>, (Access date: 7 November 2020).
 4. "Informe del Observatorio de las Discriminaciones en Barcelona 2019", Barcelona City Council, https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretsocials/sites/default/files/arxiu-documents/informe_observatorio_discriminaciones_barcelona_2019.pdf, (Access date: 7 November 2020).
 5. "Encuesta sobre intolerancia y discriminación hacia personas musulmanas en España", Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE)- Secretary of State for Migration, <https://prensa.inclusion.gob.es/Web-PrensaInclusion/noticias/inmigracionemigracion/detalle/3937>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Through non-systematic monitoring by volunteers, NGO workers,⁶ and the Office for Non-Discrimination in Barcelona,⁷ in 2020, 311 incidents were registered, among which there were 49 instances of physical aggression (8 against women, 4 against minors, and 37 attacks on men); 14 cases of vandalism (4 against mosques or other Islamic cultural centers, and 10 in other public spaces); 39 verbal attacks and/or threats (11 against women, 2 against minors, and 26 against men); and 181 discriminatory incidents (25 against Muslims in general, 29 against women, 14 against minors, 111 against men, and 2 against Muslim NGOs).

In September, in Coín (Málaga), two Muslim women were physically attacked while with their children on two different occasions on the same day by the same perpetrators. The attack was accompanied by verbal threats and hijab pulling. After slitting the face of one victim with a key, the perpetrators threatened the victims online in order to avoid prosecution.⁸ (Fig. 1) In Lleida, in September, a 22-year-old Muslima was physically and verbally attacked upon leaving her house. A woman pushed, punched, and kicked her, while shouting, “You fucking Moor, go back to your country!”⁹



Figure 1: Images of two separate attacks against two visibly Muslim women who were with their children in Coín, Málaga.¹⁰

6. “Resumen de incidentes contra la población musulmana en 2020”, Asociación Musulmana por los Derechos Humanos, 3 January 2020, <http://amderechoshumanos.org/resumen-de-incidentes-contra-la-poblacion-musulmana-en-2020/>, (Access date 11 January 2020).
One hundred seventy cases reported by the *Oficina de Información y Denuncias (OID)* - *SOS Racismo Madrid*, 13 cases reported by *G-Chime*, 7 cases reported by *Asociación Marroquí Málaga*, and 2 cases reported by *SOS Racismo Bizkaia*.
7. Eleven provisional cases of discriminatory actions provided by the Office for Non-Discrimination in Barcelona on 4 January 2021.
8. Case followed by *Asociación Marroquí Málaga*.
9. ACN, “Piden investigar por delito de odio la agresión de Artesa de Segre”, *Segre.com*, 7 October 2020.
10. BCNLegends, Instagram, 21 September 2020, https://www.instagram.com/tv/CFaGum3i_ha/?igshid=lqh-c73pxf9e4, (Access date 11 November 2020).

During confinement, in March, tragic images of a young man of Moroccan origin with a mental disorder in the San Francisco suburb of Bilbao were recorded by a neighbor from her balcony. Basque police officers asked him to identify himself, and arrested the man with excessive force to which he did not resist. When his mother arrived, she tried to explain that her son suffers from a mental health disorder, but she was also beaten by the Ertzaintza agents. (Fig. 2) Both were taken to the police headquarters. A few weeks later, at least two neighbors were fined for recording and disseminating the images on social media.¹¹ Similar events took place in Madrid,¹² Almedrales,¹³ Valencia,¹⁴ Barcelona,¹⁵ and Gerona.¹⁶

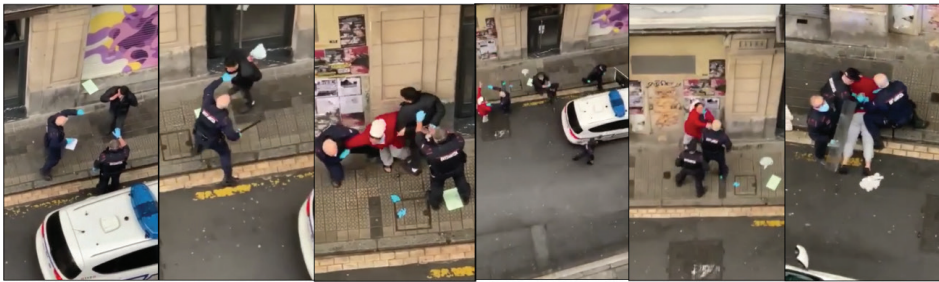


Figure 2: Still images of an instance of recorded aggression toward a young man and his mother by the Ertzaintza in Bilbao.¹⁷

During 2020, several incidents were reported regarding security guards of the RENFE, the state-owned railway company, being physically aggressive towards Muslims and/or migrants, in Alcorcón,¹⁸ Barcelona,¹⁹ and Getafe.²⁰ In June, a video became viral in which a RENFE security guard breaks the walls of the locker room with his baton and repeatedly shouts (apparently high on drugs) “Blood! I’m full of energy!” To his supervisor, he shouts “Team leader, let’s go! For Spain!” His supervisor answers, “Let’s hope you find a little Moor.” Following the incident, the RENFE published a statement assuring the public that they fired the security guard and downgraded the supervisor who had made the racist comment. (Fig. 3)

11. Maialen Ferreira, “La Ertzaintza multa a los vecinos que grabaron la violenta detención a una mujer y su hijo en Bilbao: “Nos han estado acosando para saber quiénes éramos””, *elDiario.es*, 15 April 2020.
12. RIS and IDPAD, *Racism, Xenophobia and Police Brutality during the State of Alarm in Spain*, 9 June 2020, p.15.
13. *Ibid.*, p.16.
14. T.D., “Valencia Acoge denuncia trato vejatorio a una mujer en una comisaría de València”, *Levante*, 3 April 2020.
15. Mohamed Ezzakte, Twitter, 9 April 2020, <https://twitter.com/MEzzakte/status/1248249251227815936>, (Access date 3 November 2020). Anna Punsí, Twitter, 16 November 2020, <https://twitter.com/punsix/status/1328423168533553158>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).
16. EsRacismo, “Agresión policial en Girona”, *Es Racismo*, 18 April 2020.
17. Mailen Ferreira, “VÍDEO | Polémica por los golpes en una intervención de la Ertzaintza a una mujer en el barrio San Francisco de Bilbao”, *elDiario.es*, 29 March 2020.
18. RIS and IDPAD, *Racism, Xenophobia and Police Brutality during the State of Alarm in Spain*, p.16.
19. Redacción, “Renfe investiga a dos vigilantes por una agresión en un tren en Barcelona”, *El País*, 20 May 2020.
20. Redacción, “Podemos solicita investigar unos sucesos violentos en Getafe Central”, *Getafe Capital*, 18 June 2020.



Figure 3: Images showing a RENFE security guard in a locker room holding a baton with rage while a mobile camera recorded him shouting “Blood! Team leader. I’m full!” The response of his supervisor: “Well, let’s hope you find a little Moor.”²¹

During 2020, the instances of neo-Nazi and far-right groups (backed by political and media discourse) chasing minor migrants from the Maghreb became commonplace and were cause for grave concerns. As reported in 2019, thousands of unaccompanied migrant minors (*Menores Extranjeros No Acompañados*, MENA) experience extreme vulnerability. No exact figures exist of the number of these youngsters in Spain.²² Since 2019, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted 14 decisions against Spain for violating the rights to identity, to be heard, and to special protection of children deprived of their family environment.²³ When becoming 18, they are expelled from institutional premises and end up squatting wherever possible. According to *SOS Racisme Catalunya*,²⁴ European countries usually do not consider migrant youngsters as children. Their racialization strips them of their childhood, leading to their criminalization and institutional abandonment. Neo-Nazi groups organize on social media to “hunt MENAs.” The chain events that took place in October in the San Blas neighborhood of Madrid, show how both neo-Nazi and mainstream media manage to project a completely different story. A newly formed neo-Nazi group called *Bastión Frontal*²⁵ promotes the constant harassment of unaccompanied foreign minors in Madrid and even encourages neighbors to exercise violence against them by spreading hoaxes, like the one accusing minors of raping a 13-year-old girl in a nearby neighborhood,²⁶ though the alleged rapist was Spanish.²⁷

21. “VÍDEO: La violencia de un vigilante de Renfe enciende las redes: “Sangre. Estoy a tope””, *El Caso*, 4 June 2020.
22. María Martín, “España no sabe cuántos menores extranjeros no acompañados acoge”, *El País*, 14 May 2020.
23. Oscar Estaire, “La ONU reprocha a España su trato a los menores migrantes no acompañados”, *El País*, 13 October 2020.
24. “De infancia en peligro a infancia peligrosa” (From childhood in danger to dangerous childhood), *SOS Racisme Catalunya*, 25 May 2020.
25. Bastión Frontal, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/bastionfrontal>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).
26. Bastión Frontal, Twitter, 13 October, <https://twitter.com/bastionfrontal/status/1316496313651953664>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).
27. Miquel Ramos y Dani Domínguez, “El presunto violador es español: se desmonta el bulo que sirvió como excusa a los neonazis para atacar a los menores migrantes en San Blas”, *La Marea*, 16 October 2020.

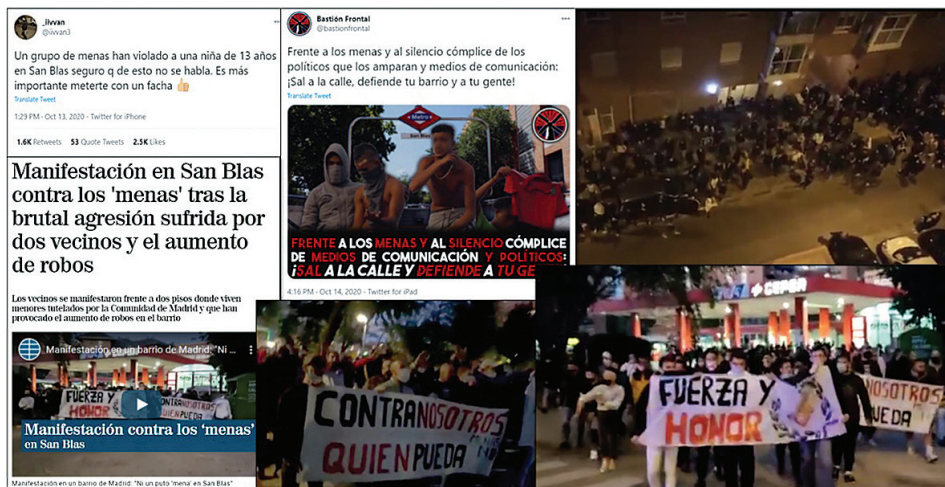


Figure 4: Clockwise: The rape fake news on October 13: “A group of *menas* [MENAS] have raped a 13-year-old girl in San Blas. Surely this is not discussed. It is more important to mess with a fascist.”²⁸ Neo-Nazi *Bastión Frontal* organizes its members through Twitter on October 14, 2020: “In the face of the *menas* and the complicit silence of the politicians who protect them and the media: Go out into the streets, defend your neighborhood and your people!”²⁹ The organized mob recorded from a window that evening: “Madrid will be the grave of the *menas*!”³⁰ A picture of the mob with their slogan: “Strength and honor.” A picture showing the mob doing the Nazi salute in front of the minors’ apartments.³¹ *El Mundo* publishes the following article, “Demonstration in San Blas against the ‘*Menas*’ After the Brutal Attack Suffered by Two Neighbours and the Increase in Robberies.”³²

On the night of October 13, several men intimidated minors in their home. A police patrol avoided a confrontation.³³ Later that night, four people, one of them a young Moroccan, clashed with two neo-Nazis (*Bastión Frontal*).³⁴ Later, one of the latter needed medical assistance. The next evening, some hundred people, including *Bastión Frontal*, gathered again at the home of the minors chanting “not a fuck-ing MENA in San Blas! Madrid will be the grave of the MENAS!”³⁵ while shouting to the police, “Where were you while they were being raped!?”³⁶ All minors were urgently relocated. National newspaper *El Mundo*, among others, published quite a dif-

28. Iivan, Twitter, 13 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/iivan3/status/1315978059267309568>, (Access date: 7 November 2020).
 29. Bastión Frontal, Twitter, 14 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/bastionfrontal/status/1316382437409271808>, (Access date: 7 November 2020).
 30. Youssef M. Ouled, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/ymouled/status/1316715394904797184>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).
 31. Christian Martínez, “Movilización neonazi contra niños y adolescentes migrantes en San Blas”, *El Salto*, 15 October 2020.
 32. Luis F. Durán, “Manifestación en San Blas contra los ‘*menas*’ tras la brutal agresión sufrida por dos vecinos y el aumento de robos”, *El Mundo*, 14 October 2020.
 33. Luis Rendueles and Vanesa Lozano, “Así organizó un grupo de nazis la cacería contra los *menas* en Madrid”, *El Periódico*, 18 October 2020.
 34. Youssef M. Ouled, Twitter, 14 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/ymouled/status/1316400187468808192>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).
 35. Bastión Frontal, Twitter, 14 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/bastionfrontal/status/1316443151972945933>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).
 36. 0324 Crew, Twitter, 15 October, <https://twitter.com/0324Crew/status/1316590296176758784>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

ferent story, titled “Demonstration in San Blas against the ‘MENAs’ After the Brutal Attack Suffered by Two Neighbors and the Increase in Robberies.”³⁷ (Fig. 4) The residents immediately condemned³⁸ the intrusion of neo-Nazis in their neighborhood, calling for a demonstration in support of the migrant minors two days later (attracting many supporters).³⁹ The president of the San Blas neighborhood association explained, “*Bastión Frontal* members are not even from our neighborhood. These minors are living here for about 1.5 years and the area’s security did not worsen because of them, but due to the lack of police.”⁴⁰ The Spanish Immigration and Refugee Assistance Network reported this persecution of minors to the Prosecutor’s Madrid Office.⁴¹ Vox backed the neo-Nazi attack by tweeting on October 16: “They are neither children nor are they fleeing wars.”⁴² Similar organized persecutions of migrant minors and youngsters have occurred throughout 2020 in Premià de Mar⁴³ (Barcelona), Llansa⁴⁴ (Gerona), Los Nietos⁴⁵ (Cartagena), Sant Andreu⁴⁶ (Barcelona), and Mogán (Gran Canaria).⁴⁷

In February, during carnival in Ceuta, a “chirigota” (typical street performance group) sang a couplet with openly racist content aimed at Muslims and Amazighs: “Xenophobia is not part of my mind, but it touches the balls, you cannot imagine that the Moors are coming on so strong [...] Once they become civilized and learn how to ask, they’ll have rights.”⁴⁸ The song also insulted the deputy of *Caballas*, a local political party.⁴⁹ This had happened before in 2006, when the winning “chirigota” was condemned for insults against the Muslim community and paid a fine in order

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37. Luis F. Durán, “Manifestación en San Blas contra los ‘menas’ tras la brutal agresión sufrida por dos vecinos y el aumento de robos”, *El Mundo*, 14 October 2020.
38. Asamblea antifascista de San Blas - Canillejas, Twitter, 14 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/sbcenlucha/status/1316422303677210632>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).
39. EP, “Centenares de personas se concentran en San Blas contra el racismo y el fascismo”, *Europa Press*, 16 October 2020.
40. Luis Rendueles and Vanesa Lozano, “Así organizó un grupo de nazis la cacería contra los menas en Madrid”, *El Periódico*, 18 October 2020.
41. EFE, “Denuncian ante Fiscalía la protesta contra el centro de menores de San Blas”, *La Vanguardia*, 15 October 2020.
42. Vox, Twitter, 16 October 2020, https://twitter.com/vox_es/status/1317055953011904513, (Access date: 13 November 2020).
43. Gessamí Forner, “Premià de Mar apuesta por el diálogo frente a la escalada racista”, *El Salto*, 20 June 2020.
44. Anna Punsí, Twitter, 22 June 2020, <https://twitter.com/punsix/status/1275152962403385346>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).
45. Twitter, Miquel Ramos, 3 July 2020, https://twitter.com/Miquel_R/status/1279092639569186818, (Access date: 4 November 2020).
46. HelpersCAT, Twitter, 18 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/HelpersCAT/status/1307625326651092992>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).
- Youssef M. Ouled, Twitter, 20 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/ymouled/status/1307731360803680269>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).
47. Gabriela Sánchez, “Cruz Roja pide a 6.000 migrantes acogidos en Gran Canaria que se encierren 48 horas por el acoso xenófobo”, *eDiario.es*, 13 December 2020.
48. Redacción, “Ceuta vuelve a tener una chirigota racista después de 14 años”, *El Foro de Ceuta*, 17 February 2020.
49. Redacción, “Una chirigota de Ceuta arremete contra los musulmanes: ‘Toca los cojones que los moros vengan pisando tan fuerte’”, *La Sexta*, 20 February 2020.

to avoid penal prosecution.⁵⁰ Some of the singers present in 2006 also participated in this group. On February 28, around 6,000 people marched in Ceuta “For Social Harmony and Against Racism,” the largest demonstration in Ceuta in recent years. (Fig. 5)



Figure 5: Left: Video of the racist “chirigota” performance in Ceuta.⁵¹ Right: Video of the demonstration in response to the “chirigota.”⁵²

On September 25, a graffiti was found on a building in Premià de Dalt (Barcelona) stating, “Kill an Arab.” Someone published a picture online tagging the City Council, who answered, “Good afternoon. For your information, it is a private property. Therefore, the City Council has no power to act as it concerns a private matter. Thanks.” However, according to the local Coexistence and Citizenship Ordinance, the municipality must erase any discourse inciting hate against any minority.⁵³ Later, someone replaced the word “kill” with “kiss.” (Fig. 6)



Figure 6: Left: Reported graffiti, Premià de Dalt City Council takes no responsibility.⁵⁴ Right: Picture of the wall after somebody replaced “Kill” with “Kiss.”⁵⁵

50. Redacción, “Multan a los miembros de una chirigota de Ceuta por racismo”, La Vanguardia, 2 December 2011.
 51. Redacción, “Ceuta vuelve a tener una chirigota racista después de 14 años”, El Foro de Ceuta, 17 February 2020.
 52. EFE, “Miles de personas se manifiestan en Ceuta contra el racismo tras la polémica chirigota de los carnavales”, La Sexta, 29 February 2020.
 53. “Ordenança de Convivència i Civisme de Premià de Dalt”, Diputació Barcelona, 29 November 2020, https://dibaaps.diba.cat/vnis/temp/CIDO_bop_2008_11_20081129_B903_20081129_111_119.pdf, (Access date: 5 November 2020).
 54. Ajuntament de Premià de Dalt, Twitter, 25 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/ajpremiadedalt/status/1309523879598198785>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).
 55. Youssef M. Ouled, Twitter, 29 October 2020, <https://twitter.com/ymouled/media>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

Employment

In January, a young woman started her nursing internship in a private medical center in Igualada (Catalonia). After a week she was told, “We are very pleased with your work [...] but you have two options: either you take off your hijab or you cannot continue here.”⁵⁶ The trainee nurse requested the internal norms, which were not provided. She was warned “not to make any trouble.” Fortunately, the University of Lleida, where she was studying, published a statement condemning the medical center and providing the student a new place to finalize her internship with a hijab.⁵⁷

In 2020, two judgements brought to light the conditions faced by Muslims in the security forces. A sergeant was condemned by the Second Territorial Military Court of Seville for a physical and verbal attack against a Muslim soldier that occurred in August 2019 in Melilla. The shouts by the sergeant included, “You are a Moor, and you shouldn’t wear those military clothes.” The soldier had to receive medical assistance due to the beating. Military justice also condemned the superior to six months in prison for abuse of authority in the mistreatment of a subordinate.⁵⁸ A.B.H.A., a civil guard, made a complaint about an interview he had undergone during the selection procedure to obtain the rank of officer, in 2015.⁵⁹ According to A.B.H.A., he had been asked almost exclusively about his religion. The disciplinary measures following this claim, included the loss of 15 days of salary (he was considered to have lied), and a monthly suspension from work (for failing to respect his hierarchical superiors). However, the Military Chamber of the Supreme Court annulled both sanctions considering them a “violation of the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, defence and the sanctioning legality.”

In September 2020, a farm manager was arrested for at least 20 sexual assaults on irregular Moroccan rural workers in Murcia.⁶⁰ The trade union explained to the Civil Guard that “if they [the Moroccan workers] didn’t sleep with the manager, they wouldn’t work. Sometimes, he would force them physically.” According to Civil Guard sources, the investigation remains open regarding other possible aggressions. Similar sexual assaults and labor exploitation of migrant workers were reported as having occurred in the strawberry fields of Huelva in 2018 (e.g. the case which involved 17 Mo-

56. EsRacismo, “Islamofobia en la empresa: ‘o te quitas el hiyab o aquí no puedes seguir’”, EsRacismo, 14 January 2020.

57. Redacció, “Una estudiant denuncia l’expulsió ‘per portar hijab’ en un centre mèdic privat a Igualada”, Anoià Diari, 17 January 2020.

58. Laura Galaup, “Condenado un sargento por agredir a un soldado al grito de ‘eres un moro que no tienes que llevar esa ropa militar’”, elDiario.es, 12 December 2020.

59. María Torrens, “El Supremo anula dos sanciones contra un guardia civil musulmán que denunció trato discriminatorio por su religión”, Salam Plan, 5 June 2020.

60. Jairo Vargas, ‘Operación Yawari’: “Si las temporeras no se acostaban con él, no trabajaban”, Público, 29 September 2020.

roccan women); no trial has yet been held.⁶¹ To understand how certain labor becomes racialized and gendered, researchers Fatiha El Mouali and Salma Amzian explain,

Moroccan women pick the strawberries, not the men, since the Spanish colonial imaginary has built us as submissive and obedient beings. It is necessary to understand that, for these jobs, mainly women are hired from rural and impoverished areas, without a formal education and younger than 45 years, leaving minor children in Morocco. All this to subdue and exploit them more easily and to make sure they do not run away [...] Only a comprehension of how race, class, and gender intertwine in the modern colonial order, will help us to understand the structural violence occurring in the Andalusian countryside, exerted by the state and its institutions.⁶²

Education

In September 2020, NGO *G-Chime* registered 12 cases in different regions of Spain of young women who were denied access to high school for wearing a hijab,⁶³ an increase from previous years. Most schools have established internal rules. Apart from the data recorded by *G-Chime*, a 16-year-old student in Santander, was not allowed to enter Alberto Pico High School wearing a hijab and received humiliating comments in front of her schoolmates. Written rules were not provided, but verbally she was told, “You cannot wear hats or hoodies in class.” Another student (Barajas High School, Madrid) had the courage to record a conversation last October with the school management. Their arguments included: “You cannot wear any headgear [...] due to internal norms [...] It’s like if parking is not allowed and you want to park your car inside [...] or if you want to use your mobile in the classroom. It is a norm [...] There are youngsters who want to come in sweatpants, they can’t.” Another student was denied access in the Prado de Santo Domingo High School (Alcorcón, Madrid), which is the second time that this school denies a Muslima her right to education.⁶⁴ Researcher and journalist Youssef Ouled states, “These three schools promote themselves [...] as inclusive spaces that respect diversity and promote multiculturalism, which, as we see, does not materialize regarding the identity, integrity, and personal dignity, the freedom of conscience, nor the ideological, religious and moral conviction of these young women. What we observe is a flagrant violation of their right to equality, dignity, religious freedom and free access to education, among others.”⁶⁵ An instance of best practice in this regard was the 2017 resolution of the Valencia De-

61. Jairo Vargas, “Abandonadas tras la denuncia: la desprotección de las temporeras migrantes víctimas de abusos”, *Público*, 4 October 2020.

62. Salma Amzian and Fatiha El Mouali, “Las moras de la fresa contra el racismo y el sexismo”, *El Salto*, 9 June 2018.

63. Interview with G-Chime, 22 September 2020.

64. Yasmina Baach, “Si quieres estudiar en este centro, no puedes venir con eso en la cabeza”, *Es Racismo*, 26 September 2018.

65. Youssef Ouled, “¿Por qué no pueden ejercer su derecho a la educación sin renunciar a sus convicciones religiosas?”, *elDiario.es*, 5 November 2020.

partment of Education prohibiting public schools from denying access to education to minors wearing a hijab or kippah, among other religious signs.⁶⁶

In 2020, hundreds of minors from the North African Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla are still waiting to start school. In February, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child ordered the access of an 11-year-old girl to school “in order to prevent irreparable damage.”⁶⁷ In October, a few days after she started school, she was notified by the Melilla City Council that she had been deregistered from the civil registry and could not continue her schooling.⁶⁸

Unaccompanied minor migrants are also denied their fundamental right to education. To understand how this denial of rights occurs, one can examine the political discourse referring to these minors. For example, Carlos Verdejo, spokesman for Vox Ceuta and representative in the Ceuta Assembly stated in a plenary session on the right to education for migrant children: “Bringing the MENA into our schools, with our children, with our nephews! Including the MENA in formal education [...]! Is that what we want?!”⁶⁹ Spanish legislation on the improvement of educational quality insists on the principles of normalization and inclusion, as well as non-discrimination and effective equality in access and permanence in the educational system.⁷⁰

The Catalanian Department of Education created a pilot plan regarding Islamic religion in public schools in Barcelona, Baix Llobregat, Girona, and Tarragona for the academic year 2020-2021.⁷¹ The president of PP Cataluña and deputy mayor of Tarragona, Alejandro Fernández and the far-right Vox publicly ignore the 28-year-old legislation which grants Muslim children the right to receive Islamic religion classes in public schools, if requested by a minimum of 10 families per school.⁷² Currently, only 1 in 10 Muslim children have access to Islamic religion classes at their school.⁷³ (Fig. 7)

66. elDiariocv, “Los colegios valencianos permitirán los símbolos de identidad cultural y religiosa”, elDiario.es, 10 July 2017.

67. Alicia Martínez, “La ONU pide la escolarización de una niña para ‘evitarle daños irreparables’”, El Faro de Melilla, 13 February 2020.

68. Francisco Solans Puyuelo, “Indignación ante la amenaza de la Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla a la única niña que ha conseguido escolarizar tras más de un año de lucha”, Abogados Extranjeristas, 18 October 2020.

69. Antonio García, “A Vox Ceuta le escandaliza que un menor marroquí pueda ir al colegio ‘con nuestros hijos’”, El Foro de Ceuta, 6 October 2020.

70. “Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa”, Boletín Oficial del Estado, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2013-12886>, (Access date: 6 November 2020).

71. Redacción, “Cataluña estrenará este curso un plan piloto para impartir religión islámica en clase”, ABC, 2 September 2020.

72. “Ley 26/1992, de 10 de noviembre, por la que se aprueba el Acuerdo de Cooperación del Estado con la Comisión Islámica de España”, Boletín Oficial del Estado, <https://boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1992-24855>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

73. Enrique Mariño, “Radiografía de la asignatura de religión islámica en España: sólo puede estudiarla uno de cada diez alumnos musulmanes”, Público, 11 October 2019



Figure 7: Left: Alejandro Fernández: “We will analyze this closely: any measure violating the equality between men and women imposing on the latter submission to men or obligation to wear a burqa or any other imposition, WILL BE TAKEN TO COURT.”⁷⁴ Right: “Islamism grows in Gerona by 5% a year, amounting to 90,000 believers. The Islamic religion will enter the Catalanian schools this year. Our way of life is threatened by Islamization. We will be the retaining wall. #RecuperemosCataluña” (#RegainCatalonia).⁷⁵

Politics

Per the 1992 Cooperation Agreement between the state and the Islamic Commission of Spain,⁷⁶ Muslims have the right to a space in cemeteries for Islamic burials. For decades now, Muslim communities have been trying to negotiate the creation of such a space. According to the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain, in 2019, only 35 of the 8,131 Spanish municipalities provided a space for Islamic burials.⁷⁷ Usually city councils and administrations wrongfully understand that Muslims will be buried in their country of origin, despite being Spanish and/or born in Spain. During the pandemic, some city councils started to negotiate with the local Muslim communities to habilitate such a space.⁷⁸ Several Muslims were buried in conditions that were against their final wishes.⁷⁹

74. Alejandro Fernández, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/alejandrotGN/status/1301202752832442373>, 2 September 2020, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

75. Twitter, Vox, 11 September 2020, https://twitter.com/vox_es/status/1304373002960764929, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

76. “Ley 26/1992, de 10 de noviembre, por la que se aprueba el Acuerdo de Cooperación del Estado con la Comisión Islámica de España”, Boletín Oficial del Estado, <https://boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1992-24855>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

77. elDiarioex, “La Comunidad, entre las cuatro sin cementerio islámico”, elDiario.es, 9 January 2020.

78. Ricard Cugat, “El Govern pide a los ayuntamientos que busquen espacio en sus cementerios para los musulmanes”, El Periódico, 6 April 2020.

79. Comunidad Islamica Al Huda Mollet, Facebook, 1 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/757133287741483/posts/3283805425074244>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

Two of the six Vox representatives in the Ceuta Assembly left the Vox parliamentary group following racist WhatsApp messages made by party officials.⁸⁰ The leaked conversations include comments such as “We are going to swallow the Moors by the balls”, “The Third World War will be against Islam”, and “Fighting militarily in Ceuta if the political battle fails.” The local MDyC party reported these messages to the Prosecutor’s Office. Ceuta’s Court of Instruction 5 closed the case considering these messages as “isolated expressions.” MDyC’s spokesperson, Fatima Hamed, announced an appeal to the Provincial Court.⁸¹ Vox Ceuta has also tried to cut the funding for NGOs such as *Intercultura Ceuta* and *Digmun*, whose objectives include intercultural activities, assistance to women and children, and Darija and Spanish language classes. While trying to cut the funding, the party has been smearing these entities and the *Caballas* local political party.⁸² After 11 months of social and political tensions, the right-wing PP party broke its agreement with Vox.⁸³ Other political parties are trying to present a motion to expel the party from the vice presidency⁸⁴ due to their systematic hatred against the Muslim population, which stands at 40% of the local population.

In July, Silvia Orriols, former president of far-right and independentist *Front Nacional per Catalunya* (FNC), currently an independent councilor in Ripoll, had to appear in the city’s Investigative Court 1 for an alleged hate crime against the local association *Annour*.⁸⁵ In a plenary session in January, Orriols demanded the prohibition of an opening of a new mosque, accusing *Annour* of “indulging in religious fanaticism” and of “discriminating against women.” Previously, she had accused *Annour* of involvement in the 2017 terrorist attacks. (Fig. 8)

On October 12, “Día de la Hispanidad” (Hispanic Heritage Day), approx. 400 people gathered in front of the Columbus statue in Barcelona, following the call made by far-right *Somatemps* and Vox. The event began with the blessing of an image of Our Lady of the Pillar, the patron saint of the Hispanic world. Videos show how the gathering ended with the neo-Nazi group *Frente Nacional Identitario* burning the Catalanian (unofficial) flag and chanting the fascist anthem “Cara al Sol”, shouting “Heil Hitler”, “Long live Franco”, and “Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera” (founder of the fascist party *Falange Española*).⁸⁶ (Fig. 9)

80. EP, “Dos diputados de Vox en Ceuta dejan su Grupo Parlamentario por comentarios de la cúpula del partido”, Europa Press, 27 January 2020.

81. EP, “Archivan la causa por supuestos mensajes islamófobos de la cúpula de Vox Ceuta al considerarlos “expresiones aisladas””, Europa Press, 5 February 2020.

82. Carmen Echarri, Vox se ceba con la subvención a Intercultura que tilda de “chiringuito de Caballas”, El Faro de Ceuta, 16 December 2020.

83. Gonzalo Testa, El PP rompe su acuerdo con Vox en Ceuta y pacta los presupuestos de 2021 con el PSOE, EID-iario.es, 25 November 2020.

84. ElHuffPost, Twitter, 4 January 2020, <https://twitter.com/ElHuffPost/status/1346048455861538816>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

85. Redacción, “Declara una regidora de Ripoll por un presunto delito de odio contra la comunidad musulmana”, La Vanguardia, 22 July 2020.

86. Júlia Regué, Twitter, 12 October 2020, https://twitter.com/julia_regue/status/1315605302318952448, (Access date: 6 November 2020).



Figure 8: “The association that hired the Salafist imam Es Satty, responsible for the radicalization of the terrorists of the attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, has reported me for hate crime opposing the construction of a 3rd mosque in Ripoll. Can you help me?” (left)⁸⁷



Figure 9: End of the event with participants burning the “estelada” (flag used by nationalists to symbolize the desire for the independence of Catalonia from the rest of Spain) and performing the Nazi salute. (right)⁸⁸

Media

When Muslim women appear in mainstream media, they are often bullied or expected to talk about terrorism. One example is the short documentary titled “Spanish [female] Jihadists in Limbo”⁸⁹ broadcasted during prime time on public television, and considered appropriate for audiences of 7 years and older. According to the program description, the film is about “48 Spaniards who traveled to Iraq and Syria to join the so-called Islamic Caliphate. 12 were women. *Informe Semanal* interviewed three of them and a Moroccan widow of a Spaniard.” The documentary constantly links

87. Silvia Orriols, Twitter, 9 July 2020, <https://twitter.com/orriolsderipoll/status/1281096667807260672>, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

88. Julio Hurtado, “Vox protagoniza el homenaje a la Hispanidad en el monumento a Colón”, *La Vanguardia*, 12 October 2020.

89. *Informe Semanal*, “Yihadistas españolas en el limbo”, RTVE, 13 October 2020 (from minute 16:26 onward).

Islam with terrorism, portraying practices like “stoning” as Islamic. Such television programs often rely on the same “pundits.”⁹⁰

A young Muslim activist, N.B., a former EU elections candidate for the left-wing party *Podemos*, was invited to speak about feminism on the daily television program “Espejo Público.” She joined from outside the studio and was rarely given a moment to speak while those inside the studio were plaguing her.⁹¹ Writer Lucía Etxebarria shouted to her,

What does not seem right to me is that you are defending this with a *jimar* [sic] [...] while there are women who are getting 23 years in prison and 148 lashes for wearing a veil [sic] [...] You cannot wear a symbol of oppression which is your fundamentalist version of Islam. So, if you take off the veil, we talk [...] and you are attacking your Muslim sisters who are killing themselves, who are enduring jail, whipping, everything to defend not wearing a veil. If you sometimes appear with a veil and sometimes without, then I would say “well, okay, you can choose,” but you always appear with a very particular veil, it is not just any veil [...].⁹²

This pressure on N.B. was also felt by other Muslim women who witnessed the “debate.” (Fig. 10) The following days, Etxebarria and her femonationalist followers continued to harass N.B. online.⁹³



Figure 10: Images of the daily television program “Espejo Público” showing how activist N.B. was invited to talk about feminism but was faced with anti-Muslim harassment and shouts mainly by writer Lucía Etxebarria. N.B. was rarely given the word to speak and when she tried, the hosts and co-hosts spoke above her.⁹⁴

90. Redacción, “Exmujer de yihadista crea asociación para tipificar a las víctimas indirectas”, *La Vanguardia*, 11 April 2019.

“Carola García-Calvo”, Real Instituto El Cano, http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/biography/?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcanov2_en/elcanov2/analysts/carola-garcia-calvo, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

“El Ministerio del Interior crea el Centro de Inteligencia contra el Terrorismo y el Crimen Organizado (CITCO)”, Ministerio de Interior, http://www.interior.gob.es/prensa/noticias/-/asset_publisher/GHU8Ap6z-tgsg/content/id/2624738, (Access date: 11 November 2020).

91. Espejo Público, “Bronca entre Nora Baños y Lucía Etxebarria: “No puedes decir que el Islam es feminista cuando hay mujeres 20 años en la cárcel por no llevar velo””, *Antena 3*, 25 February 2020.

92. “Lucía Etxebarria”, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luc%C3%ADa_Etxebarr%C3%Ada, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

93. Instagram, Lucía Etxebarria, 27 February 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/tv/B9ELQ2qH8NK/?igshid=a-5fa5o0vlh7e>, (Access date: 11 November 2020).

94. Espejo Público, “Bronca entre Nora Baños y Lucía Etxebarria: “No puedes decir que el Islam es feminista cuando hay mujeres 20 años en la cárcel por no llevar velo””, *Antena 3*, 25 February 2020.

Newspapers often publish articles mixing “radicalization” and spirituality. On May 9, *El Independiente* published the article, “The End of Ramadan in Full De-escalation Puts Internal Affairs on Guard” where it stated, “CITCO [Center for Intelligence against Terrorism and Organized Crime] advocates to ‘intensify surveillance’ in municipalities with ‘religiously radical’ Muslim communities which [...] call to gather the faithful.”⁹⁵ (Fig. 11) However, no festivities took place for Eid al-Fitr and most of the Eid al-Adha celebrations were suspended.⁹⁶



Figure 11: The article in *El Independiente* “The End of Ramadan in Full De-escalation Puts Internal Affairs on Guard” accompanied by a picture of a black Muslim woman praying in her home.⁹⁷

French President Macron’s speech on October 2 on “Islamist separatism” and the subsequent terror attacks in France and Austria had an impact on Spanish media and their discourse on Islam and Muslim communities. Journalists of different media currents seem to have united. Lately, national newspapers like *ABC*⁹⁸ and *La Razón*⁹⁹ publish at least one article on “Islamic terrorism” or “jihadism” nearly every day. (Fig. 12)



Figure 12: The article in *La Razón* titled “Daesh Cites the Attacks in Barcelona so that Young People Follow the Example of the Teacher’s Murderer” is accompanied by a picture combining an image of the funeral of the murdered teacher in Paris with presumably terror related propaganda. The subtitle reads “It reminds them that if they don’t have explosives, they can take a knife, run over, fire or use poison.”¹⁰⁰

- 95. Antonio Salvador, “El fin del Ramadán en plena desescalada pone en guardia a Interior”, *El Independiente*, 9 May 2020.
- 96. Radio Cartagena, “Se suspende la Fiesta del Sacrificio por la crisis sanitaria”, SER, 27 July 2020.
- 97. Antonio Salvador, “El fin del Ramadán en plena desescalada pone en guardia a Interior”, *El Independiente*, 9 May 2020.
- 98. Tag “Terrorismo islámico”, https://www.abc.es/internacional/terrorismo/terrorismo-islamico/#vtm_origenTags=si, ABC.
- 99. Tag “Yihadismo”, <https://www.larazon.es/tags/yihadismo/>, *La Razón*.
- 100. J.M. Zuloaga, “Daesh cita los atentados de Barcelona para que los jóvenes sigan el ejemplo del asesino del profesor”, *La Razón*, 23 October 2020.

A lawsuit was filed in Seville against the newspaper *ABC* by four Muslims regarding their right to protect their image and honor following a news item related to terrorism which included their image in April 2019.¹⁰¹ Despite the modification of the image following complaints, hundreds of people retweeted or shared the photo and the original news on their social networks (including Vox president, Santiago Abascal) with racist and Islamophobic comments, placing these persons “in a clear situation of danger” since the first publication obtained “a large-scale diffusion” according to the lawsuit.

Justice System

Different state authorities seem to equal terrorism and violent radicalization solely to “jihadism,” while ignoring other kinds of terrorism. This tendency feeds the narrative that “not all Muslims are terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslim.” Both the annual National Security Reports¹⁰² and the updates of the National Strategic Plans against Terrorism¹⁰³ and the National Strategic Plan to Fight Violent Radicalization by CITCO¹⁰⁴ perpetuate this association by constantly using words like “Jihadism”, “DAESH”, “Foreign Terrorist Fighters”, etc. and completely omitting terms like the “far-right”, “neo-Nazi”, etc. As part of the Plan to Fight Violent Radicalization, the authorities collaborate with “[g]roups at risk or vulnerable to the threat of radicalization.” The plan states, “Cooperating actors will be the groups directly affected by the development of the Plan. Once the ideology that sustains the threat listed as a priority has been determined in the first Management Plan, the risk groups or the most vulnerable groups that are affected by it will be identified. The incorporation of these groups into the created structures will be facilitated, through qualified individuals and/or representatives.”¹⁰⁵ Muslim communities are often requested to be present at these meetings as “group at risk”, while far-right radicalization seems to be ignored, though present online, in the media, and on the streets, and constituting a clear menace to national security. This double standard is evident when comparing the outcome of similar actions depending solely on the perpetrator’s perceived religious identity.¹⁰⁶

101. Consuelo Durán, La Asociación de la Prensa de Sevilla considera “mala praxis” el uso de la imagen de musulmanes para ilustrar una noticia de terrorismo yihadista, *elDiario.es*, 1 December 2020.

102. “Informe Anual de Seguridad Nacional 2018”, Departamento de Seguridad, <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/documento/informe-anual-seguridad-nacional-2018>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

“Informe Anual de Seguridad Nacional 2019”, Departamento de Seguridad, <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/documento/informe-anual-seguridad-nacional-2019>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

103. “Estrategia Nacional contra el Terrorismo 2019”, Departamento de Seguridad, <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/documento/estrategia-nacional-contra-terrorismo-2019>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

104. “Plan Estratégico Nacional de Lucha contra la Radicalización Violenta”, Ministerio de Interior, <http://www.interior.gob.es/web/servicios-al-ciudadano/plan-estrategico-nacional-de-lucha-contra-la-radicalizacion-violenta/plan-estrategico-nacional/aplicacion-del-plan>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

105. *Ibid.*

106. “El Tribunal Supremo confirma la pena de ocho años de prisión por difundir en redes sociales contenidos a favor de Daesh”, *Diario Del Derecho*, 3 August 2020.

Last September, in Lleida, the police discovered preparations for a terrorist attack “like the one in New Zealand” by two white supremacists.¹⁰⁷ According to the head of the Catalonian police, “these two detainees admired - and planned to emulate - Brenton Tarrant, the perpetrator of the murder of 51 people in Christchurch [...] considering themselves ‘anti-system’ because they claimed that Western governments in Europe were weakening white families by favoring the immigration of people from North Africa. They had four Telegram channels. In one of these, chats included almost a thousand subscribers.” Within these group chats, manuals were shared for making explosive devices and homemade weapons. (Fig. 13) One user had initiated procedures to acquire firearms and another reported he already had them. It was finally treated as a hate crime and Lleida’s Criminal Court 4 released the two detainees with charges.¹⁰⁸ In December, within the same operation, two other men were detained in possession of weapons in Ronda (Málaga) and Pamplona (Navarra).¹⁰⁹ Similar cases occurred in Almería,¹¹⁰ in Alfarrasí¹¹¹ (Valencia), and in the city of Valencia.¹¹² (Fig. 14)



Figure 13: Left: Images from the police in September 2020 during detention. Their official account tweets: “We arrested two men for exalting terrorist actions aimed at groups of foreigners inspired by the attack on Christchurch (New Zealand) where 51 people died.”¹¹³ Right: Material found during the search.¹¹⁴

107. Guillem Sánchez, “Dos supremacistas blancos planeaban ataques racistas en Catalunya desde Lleida”, *El Periódico*, 22 September 2020.

108. Oriol Solé Altimira, “El juez descarta que los dos supremacistas blancos de Lleida enalteceran el terrorismo y enmarca la causa en un delito de odio”, *eDiario.es*, 22 September 2020.

109. Detenidos dos hombres vinculados a la supremacía blanca que querían financiar grupos armados a través del tráfico de sustancias psicotrópicas, Guardia Civil, https://www.guardiacivil.es/es/prensa/noticias/7689_d.html, (Access date: 5 January 2021).

110. Redacción, “Nueve detenidos en Almería por incitar al odio hacia la comunidad musulmana”, *EFE*, 11 June 2020.

111. EP, “Detenido en Alfarrasí (Valencia) por incitar al odio y a la violencia contra musulmanes desde una red social”, *Europa Press*, 26 February 2019.

112. EP, “Detienen a un hombre de ideología nazi por delitos de odio y amenazas e intervienen un arsenal en su domicilio”, *Europa Press*, 21 December 2019.

113. Mossos, Twitter, 22 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/mossos/status/1308343000733540352>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

114. Oriol Solé Altimira, “El juez descarta que los dos supremacistas blancos de Lleida enalteceran el terrorismo y enmarca la causa en un delito de odio”, *eDiario.es*, 22 September 2020.



Figure 14: Left: Material found following arrest of nine persons in Almeria for inciting hatred towards Muslims in June 2020. They belonged to the neo-Nazi group *Antas Klan*.¹¹⁵ Middle: Material found during the search of the house of an arrested individual in Alfarrasí (Valencia) for inciting hatred and violence against Muslims in February 2019.¹¹⁶ Right: Material found during the search of the house in Valencia of a man of Nazi ideology arrested for hate crimes and threats in December 2019.¹¹⁷

There is a clear tendency among certain security forces and judiciary to use hate crime legislation not only to protect minorities, but to protect perpetrators of aggressions and threats against minorities, such as neo-Nazi groups and individuals.¹¹⁸ Circular 7/2019¹¹⁹ of the State Attorney General's Office, signed by the former State Attorney General, María José Segarra Crespo, made this clear. A lawyer from law firm *Red Jurídica* stated, "I'm concerned that the Circular cites Nazism as an example of a political ideology worthy of protection, when it is precisely this ideology that advocates hatred against all the groups mentioned in the circular. [It] perverts the spirit of hate crimes." In October, the hate crime database *Crímenes de Odio* was published by journalists David Bou and Miquel Ramos, experts in far-right groups and hate crimes.¹²⁰ The collected data follow the OSCE-ODIHR standards,¹²¹ and do therefore not include "ideology" which is protected in the Spanish Penal Code (SPC). The SPC defines "ideology" as "any fact that indicates the existence of a motive of hatred or discrimination towards the victim due to their conception of aspects related to politics, social, economic and cultural system."¹²² As a result, ideology has been used to protect neo-Nazi individuals as victims of hate crimes.¹²³ The aforementioned database

115. Redacción, "Nueve detenidos en Almería por incitar al odio hacia la comunidad musulmana", EFE, 11 June 2020.

116. EP, "Detenido en Alfarrasí (Valencia) por incitar al odio y a la violencia contra musulmanes desde una red social", Europa Press, 26 February 2019.

117. EP, "Detienen a un hombre de ideología nazi por delitos de odio y amenazas e intervienen un arsenal en su domicilio", Europa Press, 21 December 2019.

118. Alejandro Torrús, "La Fiscalía del Estado considera delito la incitación al odio hacia los nazis", Público, 22 May 2019.

119. "Circular 7/2019, de 14 de mayo, de la Fiscalía General del Estado, sobre pautas para interpretar los delitos de odio tipificados en el artículo 510 del Código Penal" Boletín Oficial del Estado, https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2019-7771, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

120. David Bou and Miquel Ramos, "Crímenes de odio", <https://crimenesdeodio.info/en/>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

121. "What Is Hate Crime", OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), <https://hate-crime.osce.org/what-hate-crime>, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

122. "Informe 2019 sobre la evolución de "los delitos de odio" en España", Ministerio de Interior, <http://www.interior.gob.es/documents/642012/3479677/informe+evolucion+2019/631ce020-f9d0-4feb-901c-c3ee0a777896>, pg. 45, (Access date: 1 November 2020).

123. Joan Cantarero, "La Policía detiene por delito de odio "contra nazis" a tres antifascistas mientras ignora la ley contra símbolos franquistas", Público, 13 October 2020.

exposes “101 cases with 103 fatalities since 1990 motivated by hatred or whose perpetrators were linked to extreme right-wing groups or ideologies.”¹²⁴ This research confirms that most murders that fall under the category of a hate crime have never been taken to trial or the perpetrators have been acquitted.

Internet

In October, the report “Disinformation, Religious Minorities and Hate Speech”¹²⁵ was published by Maldita.es,¹²⁶ a non-profit media outlet that focuses on fake news, misinformation, and public discourse through fact-checking techniques and data journalism. This report identified and analyzed misinformation about religious minorities in Spain between 2017 and June 2020. Out of 141 fake news stories on religion, 100 were related to Islam or Muslim culture.¹²⁷ Half of them were about immigration. Fake news linking Muslims to terrorism is frequent: 30 news stories were related to violence and terrorism. According to the Institute for Conflict Studies and Humanitarian Action (IECAH), misinformation about Muslims and terrorism is very much related to language: “When a media outlet says that Islamists killed someone, it links this act with millions of people who practice Islam.”¹²⁸

Harassing Muslim women online is becoming a habit, especially between February 1 (World Hijab Day) and March 8 (International Women’s Day). In 2020, an online campaign was launched before March 8 by the femonationalist current analyzed in the report for Spain for 2019.¹²⁹ Their slogan “Go out without veil, you are not alone”¹³⁰ and the tags #8MSinVelo, #SinVelo (without veil) and #FreeFromHijab went viral. They project foreign contexts and legislation on the Muslim communities in Spain and even hold them responsible for them. (Fig. 15) As a result of not feeling supported by other women, many Muslim women (with and without the hijab) did not join the March 8 demonstrations, either out of fear or indignation. Videos of the small group of Muslimas who joined the march became viral and were disseminated by individuals from different political currents generating online hate speech.¹³¹

124. Redacción, “Una investigación identifica más de cien crímenes de odio en España desde 1990”, La Vanguardia, 6 October 2020.

125. Raúl Magallón, “Desinformación, minorías religiosas y discurso del odio”, Maldita.es, 28 October 2020, https://migracion.maldita.es/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Informe_minorias_religiosas_web-3.pdf, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

126. “Conoce al equipo”, maldita.es, <https://maldita.es/quienes-somos/>, (Access date 2 November 2020).

127. Maldita Te Explica, “El islam: foco de desinformación sobre las minorías religiosas en España”, Maldita.es, 28 October 2020.

128. Maldita Te Explica, El islam: foco de desinformación sobre las minorías religiosas en España, Maldita.es, 28 October 2020.

129. Aurora Ali: Islamophobia in Spain: National Report 2019, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020, pp. 757-8.

130. Tag #8MSinVelo, Twitter, February- March 2020, https://twitter.com/search?q=%238MSinVelo&src=typed_query&f=live, (Access date: 31 October 2020).

131. VLCJason, Twitter, 8-10 March 2020 https://twitter.com/VLCjason/status/1236710257700765696/retweets/with_comments, (Access date: 31 October 2020).



Figure 15: Poster of the #SalSinVelo campaign: “Go out without the veil, you’re not alone!”¹³²

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Far-right disinformation websites, such as *Mediterráneo Digital*, *Diario Patriota*, *Alerta Digital*, *Caso Aislado*, *Euskalnews*, *Periodista Digital*, *OK Diario*, etc., strongly contribute to the far-right social movements.¹³³ Other smaller media outlets generated within the abovementioned femonationalist current, regularly promote hatred against Muslims and Islam while actively rallying for the exclusion of visible Muslims from public space.¹³⁴ Among the politicians who regularly use and spread anti-Muslim rhetoric are the Vox members mentioned throughout this report, including the party’s EU member of parliament, Herman Tertsch,¹³⁵ and Manuel Valls, a member of the Barcelona City Council and president of the *Barcelona pel Canvi* party.¹³⁶

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Rights International Spain (RIS) and the Implementation Team of the International Decade for People of African Descent in Spain (IDPAD)¹³⁷ carried out the study “Racism, Xenophobia and Police Brutality during the State of Alarm in Spain”¹³⁸ in cooperation with several anti-racist civil society organizations. The research is based on the review of incidents and reports, semi-structured telephone interviews with victims of racial discrimination, and an online survey. Its results show over 70 racist incidents

132. Tag #8MSinVelo, Twitter, February- March 2020, https://twitter.com/search?q=%238MSinVelo&src=typed_query&f=live, (Access date: 31 October 2020).

133. In consultation with journalist and expert in far-right groups and hate crimes Miquel Ramos, 6 November 2020.

134. M. Sur, <https://msur.es/>, (Access date: 11 November 2020). No nos tapanán, <http://www.nonostapanan.org/>, (Access date: 11 November 2020).

135. HermanTertsch, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/hermanntertsch>, (Access date: 11 November 2020).

136. Manuel Valls, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/manuelvalls>, (Access date: 11 November 2020)

137. Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/InternationalDecade/Pages/ForumPeopleAfricanDescent.aspx>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

138. RIS and IDPAD, *Racism, Xenophobia and Police Brutality during the State of Alarm in Spain*.

and institutional discriminatory practices, 45% of which refer to violations affecting a particular group. Madrid is the region with the highest number of complaints (40%), followed by Catalonia (21%), and the Basque Country (8%). Those identifying as Black and/or Afro-descendants (32%) suffer the largest number of aggressions, followed by Arab Muslims (30%), Roma (25%), and Latin Americans (8%). Data collected by *SOS Racismo Madrid* documented 13 cases of racial profiling by the police of people purchasing basic goods between March 15 and April 7. The provoked fear led to further self-isolation. The online survey shows that over 70% of the respondents subjected to racial profiling additionally suffered police violence.

The Office for Non-Discrimination of the Barcelona City Council works for the protection of human rights, fighting against all types of discrimination in Barcelona since 1998. It offers socio-educational action services, legal advice, psychosocial care, and conflict resolution, including in cases of Islamophobia through the Barcelona City Council's Municipal Plan to Fight Islamophobia.¹³⁹

NGO SAFI (*Associació Stop Als Fenòmens Islamòfobs*) recently launched the Observatory of Islamophobia in Catalonia (ODIC).¹⁴⁰ Apart from addressing the lack of data on anti-Muslim hatred, its main objective is to centralize and monitor all Islamophobic events that occur in Catalonia by preparing annual reports based on the collected information.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Institutions must acknowledge anti-Muslim racism and include anti-Muslim bias in annual reports on discrimination and hate crimes. Further to the recommendation of UN Rapporteur on Minorities,¹⁴¹ a census that recognizes ethnic-racial diversity should be generated, guaranteeing identity, self-ascription, and anonymity to have more precise information which is necessary to design better-targeted, effective, and evidenced-based government policies and programs, and to measure the impact on marginalized communities. Civil servants should apply the existing codes of conduct regarding the treatment of minorities and minors. Equality bodies should advocate for the inclusion of Muslim women with hijabs in employment and education. The exhaustive revision of educational textbooks regarding Islam, Muslims, the Islamic Spanish heritage, migration, and the recent material on “Terrorism in Spain” is necessary. Human rights should be included in the mandatory school curriculum. The fundamental right to education, as included in the Spanish Constitution, should be applied to all minors residing in the Spanish state. Racial profiling should be made illegal and objective empirical data, in-

139. Putting Everything into Combatting Islamophobia, Barcelona City Council, https://www.barcelona.cat/info-barcelona/en/putting-everything-into-combatting-islamophobia_590042.html, (Access date: 12 January 2020).

140. Observatori de la Islamòfobia a Catalunya, <http://www.odic.cat/>, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

141. “A/HRC/43/47/Add.1: Visit to Spain: Report of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues”, UN Human Rights Council, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/47/Add.1>, Article 28. (Access date: 18 January 2021).

cluding ethnicity and nationality, should be used. To prevent underreporting, officials must assist in the filing of reports in the case of crimes against minorities and should not start a process of expulsion should the victim be in Spain irregularly. Muslim communities should be able to access specialized legal aid permanently and without obstacles, as most of the reported issues could be resolved with the existing legislation.

Chronology

- **05.01.2020:** Regarding the security measures taken for the Three Wise Men parade, Vox Badajoz councillor, Alejandro Vélez, stated, “The consequences of a country without borders and Islamism; the borders are now on our streets.”¹⁴²
- **13.01.2020:** In Lleida, following one week of internship in a private health-care center, a young Muslim woman was told to “either take off your hijab or you cannot continue here.”¹⁴³
- **17.01.2020:** A woman wearing the hijab was verbally abused while trying to buy furniture in Arganda (Madrid) by the owner who said, “I don’t have to let you in with the veil if I don’t want to!”¹⁴⁴
- **24.01.2020:** During a football match between S.C. Puente Genil and A.D. Ceuta, part of the audience insulted players of the Ceuta team by saying, “You are murderous Moors!”¹⁴⁵
- **31.01.2020:** During an exam, a high school teacher in Cáceres summoned two young Muslim women to take off their hijabs “to avoid cheating.”¹⁴⁶
- **31.01.2020:** A resident of Águilas (Murcia) was arrested for inciting hatred on social networks against Muslims and immigrants.¹⁴⁷
- **03.02.2020:** A person was arrested for a racist attack outside a shelter home in Badalona. The aggressor insulted a Moroccan educator and later beat another Moroccan worker and, when the police arrived, he attacked two police officers.¹⁴⁸
- **07.02.2020:** The façade of primary school in Elche was vandalized with the graffiti “Moors are rapists.”¹⁴⁹

142. Redacción, “El imán reacciona a un comentario xenófobo del concejal de Vox”, *El Periódico de Extremadura*, 7 January 2020.

143. Redacció, “Una estudiant denuncia l’expulsió “per portar hijab” en un centre mèdic privat a Igualada”, *AnoiaDiari*, 17 January 2020.

144. Reported to the AMDEH on 17 January 2020.

145. Susana Iñesta, “Sois unos moros asesinos: insultos racistas al Ceuta en el partido ante el Puente Genil”, *El Faro de Ceuta*, 24 January 2020.

146. Reported to the AMDEH on 1 February 2020.

147. Redacción, “Detenido un vecino de Águilas (Murcia) por incitar al odio en redes sociales contra musulmanes e inmigrantes”, *La Vanguardia*, 31 January 2020.

148. Toledano, L., “Un detenido por una agresión racista en un centro de menores de Badalona”, *El Periódico*, 4 February 2020.

149. Nur Heleni, Twitter, 7 February 2020, <https://twitter.com/NurHeleni/status/1225769992634937345/photo/1>, (Access date: 2 November 2020).

- **09.02.2020:** During the game between A.D. Ceuta and Xerez C.D., two players of A.D. Ceuta repeatedly complained to the referee about the continuous Islamophobic insults received from the public. The game had to be stopped twice.¹⁵⁰
- **15.02.2020:** A Muslim woman was continuously threatened by her neighbor: “Shitty Moor, go back to your country, I’m going to shoot you.” She reported the instances numerous times and is awaiting trial.¹⁵¹
- **16.02.2020:** A performance group sang a racist couplet during the carnival celebrations in Ceuta.¹⁵²
- **17.02.2020:** Vox Ceuta accused the deputy and spokesperson of the local MDyC party, Fatima Hamed, of “having ties with the Muslim Brotherhood.”¹⁵³
- **20.02.2020:** A Muslim woman was discriminated by a teacher at a public training center in the Basque Country who told her, “Those of you who come from abroad want to go over the authority [...] you’re going to have problems to work because of the hijab.”¹⁵⁴
- **25.02.2020:** The prosecutor closed the case filed in November 2019¹⁵⁵ regarding the Islamophobic declarations made by the Councillor of Education of the Catalanian government, Josep Bargalló (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*) who conflated the legislated right to have Islamic religion classes in public schools with terrorism.¹⁵⁶
- **28.02.2020:** Painting on the wall of Vilassar de Mar declared “Moors out.”¹⁵⁷
- **28.02.2020:** A Muslim woman with her 6-year-old child was verbally and physically abused by a bus driver in Bilbao, who slapped her hand when she tried to give him the tickets and told her, “You all wear a veil” implying that all Muslim women are the same. He threw them out, while the police decided there is nothing wrong with the expulsion of the mother and her child from the bus.¹⁵⁸
- **06.03.2020:** A graffiti with xenophobic and racist messages appeared in Cinco Puentes (Castilla La Mancha): “PSOE + GITANOS + MOROS” (PSOE [Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party] + Roma + Moors).¹⁵⁹

150. EFE, “Multa de 500€ al Xerez por cánticos racistas contra el Ceuta”, AS, 12 February 2020.

151. Reported by the *Asociación Marroquí Málaga* on 10 November 2020.

152. Redacción, “Ceuta vuelve a tener una chirigota racista después de 14 años”, El Foro de Ceuta, 17 October 2020.

153. E.F., “Vox acusa a Fátima Hamed de tener ‘relación con los Hermanos Musulmanes’”, 17 October 2020.

154. Registered by *SOS Racismo Bizkaia*.

155. “Denuncia presentada a la Fiscalía del Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Catalunya contra el Conseller d’Ensenyament, Josep Bargalló i Valls”, Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia, 25 November 2019, <https://mcislamofobia.org/denuncia-fiscalia-tsjc-conseller-ensenyament-bargallo>, (Access date: 2 November 2020).

156. Redacción, “El Fiscal archiva la denuncia contra Bargalló por islamofobia”, La Vanguardia, 25 February 2020.

157. Twitter, Aladdin Azzouzi, 28 February 2020, https://twitter.com/aladdin_azr/status/1233438039097118720, (Access date: 2 November 2020)

158. Registered by *SOS Racismo Bizkaia*.

159. Redacción, IU condena la aparición de pintadas racistas en Manzanares, Lanza- Diario de la Mancha, 6 March 2020.

- **18.03.2020:** Vulnerable Muslim families received emergency food packages with pork in Madrid, Sevilla, and Catalonia. In the cases where families complained, they were told, “If you don’t take it, then we will understand you don’t need other social services.”¹⁶⁰
- **26.03.2020:** A Muslim woman who was working as a domestic employee in a private home in Madrid became ill. Her employers accused her of being ill with the coronavirus and threw her out in the middle of the enforced confinement.¹⁶¹
- **28.03.2020:** An Algerian man was beaten up by the National Police near the metro station of Embajadores (Madrid). He was under social intervention and medical and psychiatric supervision for a mental disorder and withdrawal syndrome.¹⁶²
- **28.03.2020:** Numerous Muslim women in Elche denounced a pediatrician in the health center due to his degrading treatment towards them.¹⁶³
- **29.03.2020:** A young man from the Maghreb with mental illness was beaten and when his mother arrived, both were beaten and detained by the Ertzaintza police in Bilbao.¹⁶⁴
- **01.04.2020:** Visible Muslim members of an Islamic NGO were distributing food in Alcorcón, (Madrid). Neighbors called the police, and five police cars arrived. After checking the activity and the safe passage of the volunteers, the police left.¹⁶⁵
- **01.04.2020:** The NGO *Valencia Acull* reported “humiliating treatment” by National Police officers towards a Muslim woman that needed to file a report. The witnesses explained that the police did not allow the woman to enter the police facilities, and that she was insulted and threatened with detention and beating.¹⁶⁶
- **06.04.2020:** A Moroccan man reported that he had suffered “shoves and two kicks” by two National Police agents in Almendrales (Madrid).¹⁶⁷
- **08.04.2020:** A Moroccan youngster was physically assaulted by two RENFE (Spanish Railways) security guards at the Alcorcón train station, handcuffed and threatened. The security guards took a picture of his identity card. The National Police, however, let him free.¹⁶⁸

160. Reported to the AMDEH, March-April 2020.

161. Reported to *Musulmanas Bidaya* on 26 March 2020.

162. RIS and IDPAD, *Racism, Xenophobia and Police Brutality during the State of Alarm in Spain*, p.15.

163. Reported to *G-Chime* on 28 March 2020.

164. Mailen Ferreira, “VÍDEO | Polémica por los golpes en una intervención de la Ertzaintza a una mujer en el barrio San Francisco de Bilbao”, *elDiario.es*, 29 March 2020.

165. Reported to the AMDEH on 5 October 2020.

166. T.D., “Valencia Acoge denuncia trato vejatorio a una mujer en una comisaría de València”, *Levante*, 3 April 2020.

167. RIS and IDPAD, *Racism, Xenophobia and Police Brutality during the state of alarm in Spain*, p.16.

168. *Ibid.*

- **09.04.2020:** A Moroccan man was verbally and physically abused by the Mossos d'Esquadra in front of his home in Barcelona.¹⁶⁹ The facts were reported to the duty court.
- **18.04.2020:** In Bisbal d'Empordà, two youngsters were reported by a neighbor while they were at home in their garage. Upon arrival, the agents beat the two boys and their mother, while threatening them with a taser and a regulatory pistol. The City Council (Gerona) announced the suspension of the police officers and opened an investigation.¹⁷⁰
- **27.04.2020:** PP senator for Almería, Rafael Hernando, spread fake news claiming that Muslims skip confinement with a video of a celebration in Valencia in 2018.¹⁷¹
- **30.04.2020:** *Ciudadanos* expelled their Calafell councilor (Tarragona), Javier Álvarez, from the party after he commented online, "Traitors. You and your complicit voters. And those who pray to Allah to fuck is where they have to go."¹⁷²
- **03.05.2020:** A petition in Aavaz.org asked for equality between the expelled Sephardim and the Moriscos. In June of 2015, the Parliament of Spain established the right to Spanish nationality of Sephardi Jews with a connection to Spain.¹⁷³
- **18.05.2020:** A Moroccan passenger with the obligatory mask lowered down to his chin was attacked by two security guards with excessive force, hitting the passenger's face with their fists and a walkie talkie, causing the need for medical assistance. The railway company fired the two agents.¹⁷⁴
- **23.05.2020:** A woman in a demonstration against the confinement in Madrid, yelled to someone who was recording the demonstration: "What do you know about Spain if you are a Moor?"¹⁷⁵
- **30.05.2020:** The Benavente City Council extended wishes to the Muslim communities on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr. Opposition groups and the public complained and projected discrimination towards other religious communities.¹⁷⁶

169. Mohamed Ezzakte, Twitter, 9 April 2020, <https://twitter.com/MEzzakte/status/1248249251227815936>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

170. EsRacismo, "Agresión policial en Girona", Es Racismo, 18 April 2020.

171. Maldito Bulo, "No, este vídeo de una marcha de musulmanes en Valencia no está grabado durante el estado de alarma por el coronavirus: es de noviembre de 2018", Maldita.es, 27 April 2020.

172. José M. Baselga, El concejal de Calafell que insultó a la comunidad musulmana deja Ciudadanos, 30 April 2020, Diari de Tarragona.

173. "Égalité de traitement entre Morisques et Séfarades: Excuses Officielles et réhabilitation", Aavaz.org, 3 May 2020.

174. Redacción, "Renfe investiga a dos vigilantes por una agresión en un tren en Barcelona", El País, 20 May 2020.

175. Yihad Sarasua, Facebook, 23 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/yihad.ishbiliala/videos/10158050975459584>, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

176. J.A.G., "El Ramadán en Benavente, la penúltima bronca plenaria", La Opinión de Zamora, 30 May 2020.

- **10.06.2020:** A video emerged of the 18-year-old Ilias Tahiri being restrained by six men before his death at a juvenile center in Almería in July 2019.¹⁷⁷
- **11.06.2020:** Nine people were arrested in Antas and Garrucha (Almería) accused of inciting hatred against Muslims.¹⁷⁸
- **14.06.2020:** Dozens of people with baseball bats threw stones at an apartment in Premià de Mar squatted by Maghreb youngsters, whom the attackers blamed for a sexual assault committed days before. The Mossos d'Esquadra denied any relation between the youngsters and the crime.¹⁷⁹
- **15.06.2020:** At the Getafe station (Madrid), while four guards held a Moroccan man because he had apparently lowered his mask to his chin, another citizen - who was not wearing a mask - attacked him repeatedly without any intervention by the security guards who held the victim down.¹⁸⁰
- **19.06.2020:** The Barcelona Prosecutor's Office asked for a sentence of five years' imprisonment for the three neo-Nazis who attacked a street vendor of the Sikh faith in a demonstration organized by the Catalan Civil Society (SCC) on October 29, 2017 in Barcelona. Expressions such as "Look little Moor" and "Muslim Moor" were pronounced during the attack. The three attackers already had a criminal record for similar actions.¹⁸¹
- **22.06.2020:** In Llançà (Gerona), around 150 people marched against an increase in crime (denied by the police) to expel Maghrebi youngsters from squatted flats. The march was organized through the now-suspended Twitter account "BCNHelpers."¹⁸² The youngsters had to be escorted out by the Catalanian police.¹⁸³
- **23.06.2020:** A man piled logs, branches, and plastic materials at the entrance of a Mosque in Manlleu (Catalonia) with the intention of setting it on fire for xenophobic motives. A neighbor alerted the police, who were able to identify the 44-year-old man who was arrested on July 28.¹⁸⁴

177. Nick Harley, "Calls for Spanish Investigation into Death of Iliass Tahiri After Video Emerges of Him Restrained in Custody", *The National*, 17 June 2020.

178. Redacción, "Nueve detenidos en Almería por incitar al odio hacia la comunidad musulmana", *EFE*, 11 June 2020.

179. Gessamí Forner, "Premià de Mar apuesta por el diálogo frente a la escalada racista", *El Salto*, 20 June 2020.

180. Redacción, "Podemos solicita investigar unos sucesos violentos en Getafe Central", *Getafe Capital*, 18 June 2020.

181. *EFE*, "La Fiscalía pide cinco años de prisión para tres neonazis por atacar a un vendedor de religión sij", *eD-iario.es*, 19 June 2020.

182. Youssef M. Ouled, *Twitter*, 23 June 2020, <https://twitter.com/ymouled/status/1275361719393583105>, (Access date: 4 November 2020). New Twitter account: *Helpers |CAT*, *Twitter*, <https://twitter.com/HelpersCAT>, (Access date: 12 November 2020).

183. Marta Alcázar, "Concentración de vecinos en Llançà frente a la casa de unos ocupas acusados de robos en domicilios", *Nius Diario*, 23 June 2020.

184. *ACN Manlleu*, "Detenen a un home per intentar cremar un oratori a Manlleu i a un altre per apunyalalar-lo com a revenja", *ACN*, 29 July 2020.

- **25.06.2020:** A question to the European Parliament addressed the death of Marouane Abouobaida at the Zapadores immigrant detention center (CIE) on July 15, 2019.¹⁸⁵
- **03.07.2020:** Six Algerian youngsters arrived in Cartagena in a dinghy. An NGO arranged PCR tests and allocated them for supervised quarantine in one of their apartments in Los Nietos (Murcia) while awaiting the results. Less than 24 hours later, the neighbors organized a protest at the apartment insulting the youngsters¹⁸⁶ while members of the Civil Guard and the NGO were forced to escort them to a safe place out of town. All of them tested negative for the coronavirus.¹⁸⁷
- **11.07.2020:** A woman verbally abused a young Pakistani woman inside the Barcelona Sants metro station, pulled off her hijab, and threw her onto the tracks, where she fortunately could get out with the help of bystanders before the train arrived.¹⁸⁸
- **16.07.2020:** Vox celebrated the following, “On this day, in 1212, the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa took place. A date to commemorate. Like all those who contributed to expelling the Muslim invader from Spain and Europe.”¹⁸⁹
- **28.08.2020:** A Muslim domestic worker reported that her employer forced her to appear not “to be Muslim” and changed her name to “María,” even though her name is common and easy to pronounce.¹⁹⁰
- **01.09.2020:** In Mollet del Vallès (Barcelona), after the refusal of the local socialist government to facilitate a space for Islamic burial in the municipal cemetery, S.D. was buried in the Mollet Cemetery without respecting his tradition and religion.¹⁹¹
- **08.09.2020:** First arson attempt against the Montcada i Reixac Mosque in Barcelona.¹⁹²
- **10.09.2020:** Arson of the Montcada i Reixac Mosque in Barcelona.¹⁹³
- **11.09.2020:** Muslim student wearing hijab was denied access to high school in Santander.¹⁹⁴

185. “The Death of Marouane Abouobaida at the Zapadores Immigrant Detention Centre (CIE)”, European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-003769_EN.html, (Access date: 3 November 2020).

186. Twitter, Miquel Ramos, 3 July 2020, https://twitter.com/Miquel_R/status/1279092639569186818, (Access date: 4 November 2020).

187. EFE, “Protestas en barrios de Murcia donde se ubican migrantes en cuarentena”, *La Vanguardia*, 3 July 2020.

188. Registered by the AMDEH on 18 July 2020.

189. Vox, Twitter, 16 July 2020, https://twitter.com/vox_es/status/1283718533600485376, (Access date: 11 October 2020).

190. Reported by *Asociación Marroquí Málaga* on 10 November 2020.

191. Comunidad Islamica Al Huda Mollet, Facebook, 1 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/757133287741483/posts/3283805425074244>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

192. SAFI: Stop als Fenòmens Islamòfobs a Catalunya, Facebook, 8 September 2020, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1410072442496661&cid=286484064855510&csfn=scwspmo&extid=ilsbeMr5CK-Jx3m2j, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

193. *Ibid.*

194. *Es Racismo*, Primer día de clase, misma islamofobia de siempre, *Es Racismo*, 15 September 2020.

- **11.09.2020:** Two Muslim women were attacked physically and verbally in Coín (Málaga) in front of their children by other parents on several occasions along with threats and tearing of their hijabs.¹⁹⁵
- **11.09.2020:** Two white supremacists were detained in Lleida for planning an attack “like the one in New Zealand” by gathering explosives and arms, but were released with charges.¹⁹⁶
- **18.09.2020:** The Mossos d’Esquadra stop a Catalanian racialized journalist while he was arriving to his workplace. The journalist asked them to let him pass, but he said, “They denied me permission and made me identify while my co-workers were already inside.”¹⁹⁷
- **19.09.2020:** Niqabi woman was denied entrance to the retail shop Primark in Madrid.¹⁹⁸
- **20.09.2020:** In Lleida, neighbors started insulting a young Muslim woman who wanted to swim in the communal swimming pool with her long, authorized swimsuit. They called the police who did not attend the call.¹⁹⁹
- **21.09.2020:** Muslim hijab-wearing student was denied access to high school in Alcorcón (Madrid).²⁰⁰
- **21.09.2020:** Isabel Díaz Ayuso, president of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, during a press conference on the new Covid-19 measures stated, “COVID-19 brings together needs such as problems of crime, squatting, all the problems of the MENA.”²⁰¹
- **22.09.2020:** Muslim hijab-wearing student was denied access to high school in Arnedo (La Rioja).²⁰²
- **25.09.2020:** Graffiti appeared in Premiá de Dalt in Barcelona stating “Kill an Arab.” The City Council took no responsibility,²⁰³ despite its obligation.²⁰⁴
- **28.09.2020:** The *Granada Abierta* Platform, which brings together different memorial and social collectives, criticized the fact that the “Conquest of Gra-

195. AMEDH, Facebook, 18 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/1001467953366156/videos/2266700366809854>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

196. Guillem Sánchez, “Dos supremacistas blancos planeaban ataques racistas en Catalunya desde Lleida”, *El Periódico*, 22 September 2020.

197. Alex Huguet, *Els Mossos obliguen un periodista català a identificar-se per ser magrebí quan anava a treballar*, *La República*, 18 September 2020.

198. Registered by *SOS Racismo Madrid*, 19 September 2020.

199. Registered by the AMDEH, 20 September 2020.

200. Youssef Ouled, “¿Por qué no pueden ejercer su derecho a la educación sin renunciar a sus convicciones religiosas?”, *elDiario.es*, 5 November 2020.

201. La Ser, Twitter, 21/09/20, https://twitter.com/La_SER/status/1308022667262517249, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

202. Reported to *G-Chime*, 22 September 2020.

203. Ajuntament de Premià de Dalt, Twitter, 25 September 2020, <https://twitter.com/ajpremiadedalt/status/1309523879598198785>, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

204. “Ordenança de Convivència i Civisme de Premià de Dalt”, *Diputació Barcelona*, 29 November 2020, https://dibaaps.diba.cat/vnis/temp/CIDO_bopb_2008_11_20081129_B903_20081129_111_119.pdf, (Access date: 5 November 2020).

nada” by the Catholic Monarchs will again be a local holiday in 2021 on January 2, considering that it “favors the advance of the far-right and damages the external image of the city.”²⁰⁵

- **28.09.2020:** A farm manager was arrested for at least 20 sexual assaults on Moroccan rural workers in Murcia.²⁰⁶
- **30.09.2020:** A 22-year-old Muslim woman was physically and verbally attacked outside her house in Lleida.²⁰⁷
- **02.10.2020:** A Muslim student was denied access to high school in the city of Madrid because of wearing the hijab.²⁰⁸
- **02.10.2020:** One hundred habitants of Apolonia (Murcia) demonstrated in the street where the Islamic community plans to inaugurate an Islamic cultural center²⁰⁹ and collected more than a thousand signatures to prevent its opening, with the support of Vox.²¹⁰
- **05.10.2020:** An institutional statement was issued by the *Generalitat Valenciana*, regarding the Day of Valencia on October 9, comparing the Valencian natives - mainly Muslims but also Christians and Jews - conquered by Jaime I (James I of Aragon), with the coronavirus. By midday, the statement was withdrawn, and an apology was issued.²¹¹
- **08.10.2020:** An experiment requested by the Barcelona City Council showed how real estate agents and owners discriminate between Arabic and native names.²¹²
- **15.10.2020:** On Twitter, Santiago Abascal, president of Vox and congressman, blamed refugees and immigrants for the coronavirus. It was reported massively and the post was deleted.²¹³
- **21.10.2020:** The Prosecutor’s Office in Ciudad Real opened a case against three Facebook accounts after a complaint for “incitement to hatred” on social networks following the petition by the *Asociación Marroquí de Derechos de los Inmigrantes* (AMDI) to establish a Muslim cemetery in Puertollano for Islamic burial.²¹⁴

205. R.G., La festividad de la Toma de Granada, otro año más objeto de las críticas, Granada Hoy, 28 September 2020.

206. Jairo Vargas, ‘Operación Yawari’: “Si las temporeras no se acostaban con él, no trabajaban”, Público, 29 September 2020.

207. ACN, “Piden investigar por delito de odio la agresión de Artesa de Segre”, Segre.com, 7 October 2020.

208. Youssef Ouled, “¿Por qué no pueden ejercer su derecho a la educación sin renunciar a sus convicciones religiosas?”, elDiario.es, 5 November 2020.

209. Inma Ruiz, “Movilización en el barrio de Apolonia de Lorca contra la apertura de una mezquita”, La Verdad, 3 October 2020.

210. Inma Ruiz, “Recogen firmas contra la apertura de una mezquita en Lorca”, La Verdad, 1 August 2020.

211. Miquel Ramos, “Un anuncio de la Generalitat Valenciana compara a los nativos valencianos conquistados por Jaime I con el coronavirus”, La Marea, 5 October 2020.

212. Pau Rodríguez, “La misión imposible de encontrar piso con un apellido árabe: un estudio del Ayuntamiento de Barcelona evidencia la discriminación”, elDiario.es, 7 October 2020.

213. Mario Espinoza Pino, Twitter, 11 October 2020, https://twitter.com/El_Moreno_/status/1315257118988087296, (Access date: 13 November 2020).

214. Europa Press, “La Fiscalía decide formular denuncia por presuntos delitos de odio en Facebook contra musulmanes de Puertollano”, elDiario.es, 21 October 2020

- **21.10.2020:** During a plenary session, Santiago Abascal used his “Catalan Islamic Republic” rhetoric to attack Muslims, migrants, and Independentists, and defended Macron’s latest measures against Muslims in an unrelated debate.²¹⁵
- **06.11.2020:** Two members of the Ceuta Assembly accused “many neighborhoods in Ceuta where the measures are not met due to customs”²¹⁶ of the spread of coronavirus. Muslim and Amazigh populations felt targeted.
- **06.11.2020:** Actress Anabel Alonso used “Allahu akbar” in a non-related post which immediately generated hate speech against Muslims.²¹⁷
- **08.11.2020:** A family was denied a flat by its owner because of their Moroccan origin in Vic, Barcelona.²¹⁸
- **12.11.2020:** Light posts in front of a high school in Elche were vandalized with the writing “No Moors.”²¹⁹
- **14.11.2020:** Nazi and Vox graffiti appeared on the castle of Montornès (Benicàssim), a fortress of Arab origin from the 10th century.²²⁰
- **14.11.2020:** A young non-Muslim man was detained by police agents (together with 10 other youngsters) on the streets of Barcelona while driving after curfew. He informed the police officers that they were returning home, but he ended up being beaten and kicked. In the sequence captured by bystanders, one of the police officers was recorded telling the victim, “Do you get it, fucking Moor!?” while his colleague held the victim’s head against the ground.²²¹ The Mossos d’Esquadra provisionally suspended the employment and salary of the perpetrator, and removed three other officers for their participation in the events.²²²
- **17.11.2020:** A protest was held in the neighborhood of La Cañada (Madrid) due to the lack of electricity since September 2020 that has affected over 900 families, mostly Roma and Muslim. The national Vox deputy and councilor of the Madrid City Council, Javier Ortega Smith, recorded and uploaded a video on Twitter during the protest focusing on the images and xenophobic

215. EuropaPress, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/europapress/status/1318849827816509440>, 21 October 2020, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

216. Gloria Núñez, Rebeca Benarroch: “Hay muchos barrios de Ceuta en los que por las costumbres no se cumplen las medidas”, El Foro de Ceuta, 6 November 2020.

217. Anabel Alonso, Twitter, 6 November 2020, https://twitter.com/AnabelAlonso_of/status/1324654774197932032?s=03, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

218. Stop Racisme Lloguers, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/RacismeLloguers/status/1325491113457836032>, (Access date: 10 November 2020).

219. Reported to AMDEH ON 12 November 2020.

220. Miquel Ramos, Twitter, 14 November 2020, https://twitter.com/Miquel_R/status/1327581207564079104, (Access date: 14 November 2020).

221. Anna Punsí, Twitter, 16 November 2020, Minute 00:50 <https://twitter.com/punsix/status/1328423168533553158>, (Access date: 4 January 2021).

222. Guillem Sánchez and Tòni Sust, “Sancionados cuatro antidisturbios por golpear a un joven en el Raval”, El Periódico, 23 November 2020.

comments targeting Muslim women.²²³ Local party *Más Madrid* reported the deputy to the State Attorney General's Office for an alleged hate crime.²²⁴

- **06.12.2020:** A 37-year-old Moroccan temporary worker died in Huelva after being fired and abandoned, after she was diagnosed with cancer. Despite her employment contract, insurance, and social security contributions, neither the employer nor any of the government officials who sign these contracts in her country of origin took charge for the body repatriation costs.²²⁵ After three days of social pressure, the Moroccan consulship agreed to pay the costs.²²⁶
- **11.12.2020:** Further to the demonstration by minors after a 21-day confinement in a section of the overcrowded *La Purísima* shelter in Melilla, police forces entered with dogs and rubber bullet guns. Verbal and physical attacks were reported inside the rooms where more than 80 boys were kept.²²⁷ This compound has accumulated several complaints of unsanitary conditions and other types of violations.²²⁸
- **12.12.2020:** A young Spanish physician of Moroccan origin was searching to rent a flat. The landlord was happy to rent her the flat until he saw her ID with her Arabic family names. He verbally abused her, told her repeatedly that she cannot be a physician, and refused to rent her the flat.²²⁹
- **13.12.2020:** NGO *CiesNo Madrid* reported to the Control Court and to the Ombudsman the systematic physical mistreatment by the personnel of several youngsters detained in the CIE (foreign internment center) of Aluche (Madrid).

223. Javier Ortega Smith, Twitter, 17 November 2020, https://twitter.com/Ortega_Smith/status/1328782187131498499, (Access date: 19 January 2020).

224. David Arenal, "Más Madrid lleva a Ortega Smith a Fiscalía por "odio" a las musulmanas de La Cañada", Europa Press, 23 November 2020.

225. "Fallece una temporera marroquí en Huelva tras ser despedida y "abandonada" cuando se le detectó un cáncer", La Voz del Sur, 10 December 2020.

226. Marta González, Temporeras en Huelva: "Hay muchas Fátimas ahora, nuestros derechos en el campo no existen", El Salto, 14 December 2020.

227. Solidary Wheels, Instagram, 15 December 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci0Uc2_gzpx/?igshid=1puopkthhalpt, (Access date: 7 January 2020).

228. "Melilla Vice- La Ciudad más corrupta de España- Una investigación de Por Causa y El Confidencial", 6 May 2019, https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2019-05-06/melilla-corrupcion-partido-popular_1975922/, (Access date: 13 January 2020).

229. Khadija Bousmaha, "La historia de Randa: le negaron alquilar un piso por sus "apellidos súper árabes": "No me creo que seas médica""", 20 minutos, 17 December 2020.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SWEDEN
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Kamali has extensive research experience and publications in the field of social work and sociology with clear global perspectives on current social problems, such as neoliberalism, war, violence, forced migration, inequalities, and racism and discrimination. Among his recent publications are *Revolutionary Social Work: Promoting Sustainable Justice* (Critical and Radical Social Work, 2019); *Neoliberalism, Nordic Welfare States and Social Work: Current and Future Challenges* (Routledge, 2018); *War, Violence and Social Justice: Theories for Social Work* (Routledge, 2015); *Racial Discrimination: Institutional Patterns and Politics* (Routledge, 2009); and *Fishing for Development: A Question for Social Work* (International Social Work, 2012).

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Executive Summary

Sweden enjoys an international reputation as a welfare state, a democracy, and a country with a high level of tolerance. This is, however, a myth which is increasingly weakening in the face of the country's widespread structural and institutional racism and anti-Muslimism. This report shows that the normalization of anti-Muslim racism in the Swedish political spheres and media has led to the reinforcement of structural and institutional racism and discrimination against Muslims in the Swedish labor market, the justice and education system, and the housing market. Physical and symbolic violence against the Muslim minority in Sweden has dramatically increased in the last years. Increased marginalization of Muslims, which in recent decades has gained an urban geographical seat in the form of marginalized housing areas, is the consequence of a structural and institutionalized anti-Muslim racism that has put the country's social cohesion at risk.

Anti-Muslim racism is not only a chronic problem in Sweden, but also a violent ideology which leads to physical attacks on individuals who are, or are supposed to be, Muslims. This report shows that recent racist attacks in Sweden and other Nordic countries, such as Denmark and Norway, have been greatly influenced by anti-Muslim ideologies and sentiments that are being spread by racist political parties, such as the Swedish Democrats, and the mainstream mass media. The presentation of Muslims as an "enemy within" and Islam as the "religion of the enemy" is not only an act of anti-Muslim and racist extreme right parties and organizations, but also of many mainstream parties, mass media, and public organizations, such as universities and municipal authorities. Since racism has historically had a religious undertone against non-Christian groups presented as the "others", anti-Muslim racism must be addressed in order to be counteracted. The report concludes with some suggestions for action to fight back and reduce anti-Muslim racism in the country.

Svensk sammanfattning

Sverige lever på sitt internationella rykte som ett land med välfärdsstat, demokrati och hög toleransnivå. Detta är dock en fantasi som alltmer bleknar i konfrontation med landets utbreda strukturella och institutionella rasism i allmänhet och anti-muslim rasism i synnerhet. En växande forskning visar att normaliseringen av Anti-Muslimism inom det svenska politiska systemet och media har lett till förstärkning av strukturell och institutionell rasism och diskriminering av muslimer på den svenska arbetsmarknaden, rättsväsendet, utbildningssystemet och bostadsmarknaden. Detta är dock inte bara i Sverige, men ett antal rapporter visar att strukturell rasism och diskriminering av muslimer växer i hela Europa (EUMC, 2006; OSCE, 2008; FRA, 2017; ENAR, 2019; TE-SAT, 2020). Eftersom rasism historiskt har haft en religiös underton mot icke-kristna grupper som kategoriserats som ”de andra”, måste Anti-Muslim rasismen uppmärksammas för att kunna motverkas. Ökad marginalisering av muslimer, som under de senaste decennierna har fått en urban geografisk plats i form av marginaliserade bostadsområden, är en konsekvens av en strukturell och institutionaliserad Anti-Muslimism som sätter den sociala sammanhållningen i landet i fara. Den anti-Muslimiska rasismen är inte bara ett kroniskt problem i Sverige, utan också en våldsideologi som leder till fysiska attacker på enskilda individer som är eller betraktas vara muslimer. De senaste rasistiska attackerna i Sverige och andra nordiska länder, som Danmark och Norge, har påverkats mycket av Anti-Muslimiska ideologier och känslor som sprids av rasistiska politiska partier, som Sverigedemokraterna i Sverige, och massmedier. Presentation av muslimer som ”fiende inifrån” och islam som ”fiendens religion” är inte bara en handling av Anti-Muslimiska och rasistiska extremhögerpartier och organisationer, utan också av många mainstream partier, massmedier och offentliga organisationer, såsom universitet och kommunala myndigheter.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Sweden

Type of Regime: Constitutional monarchy

Form of Government: Parliamentary democracy

Ruling Parties: A coalition of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Green Party (left-wing liberal parties)

Opposition Parties: Moderate Party, Center Party, Liberal Party, Swedish Democrats party, Left Party

Last Elections: 2018 in which the leader of the Social Democratic Party, Stefan Löfven (with 28.26% of votes) with the support of the Green Party (4.41% of votes) and the Left Party (5.49% of votes) became prime minister.

Total Population: 10.23 million (2019)

Major Languages: Swedish

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The number of reported hate crimes against Muslims has risen from 327 in 2013 to 439 in 2016, and to 562 in 2018, when the latest available statistics were made public. This means an increase of 72% in comparison with 2013 and an increase of 28% compared to 2016.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018 (the latest available statistics), 7,090 racist incidents were reported to the police, which shows an increase of 11% compared to 2016 and an increase of 29% compared to 2013.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (52%), No religion (42%), Islam (8.1%), Judaism (0.002%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 810,000 people (8.1%) in 2017 (Hackett, Conrad. "5 Facts about the Muslim Population in Europe", Pew Research Center)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Association of Sweden, The Union of Islamic Associations, The Islamic Shiite Association

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Muslim Youths of Sweden's (SUM), Nyans Muslim, Muslim Human Right Committee (MMRK)

Far-Right Parties: Swedish Democrats (SD) and National Democrats (ND)

Far-Right Movements: *Nordiska motståndsrörelsen* (Nordic Resistance Movement, NMR); *Nordiska nationalsocialister* (Nordic National Socialists), *Nordisk alternativhöger* (Nordic Alternative Right), *Vitmakt* (White Power)

Far-Right Militant Organizations: *Nordiska motståndsrörelsen* (Nordic Resistance Movement, NMR)

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No - depends on local decision. In some municipalities, such as Skurup, in which the right-wing alliance under the leadership of the SD is a majority, there is a veil ban.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No - depends on local decision. In some municipalities where the SD is the majority party, there is a minaret ban.
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No - depends on local decision since some municipalities where the SD is the ruling party, there is a ban on prayer in the workplace.

Introduction

The normalization of anti-Muslim racism in the Swedish political spheres and media has led to the reinforcement of structural and institutional racism and discrimination against Muslims in the Swedish labor market, the justice system, the education system, and the housing market. This is however, not only a Swedish problem: a number of reports show that structural racism and discrimination against Muslims is growing across entire Europe.¹

Since racism has historically had a religious undertone against non-Christian groups categorized as “others,” anti-Muslimism as a prominent form of racism must be addressed in order to be counteracted. The increased marginalization of Muslims, which in recent decades has gained an urban geographical seat in the form of marginalized housing areas, is the consequence of a structural and institutionalized anti-Muslim racism that has put social cohesion in the country at risk. Muslims are no longer “foreign” groups located in distant lands but are part of the Swedish society and make up a substantial body of its citizens. The fact is that they exist “here and now” in Sweden but they are exposed to structural, institutional, and individual racism and discrimination that prevents them from fully participating in society. This means that equal rights for everyone in Sweden does not apply to the rights and opportunities afforded to Muslims.

The structural and institutional contexts of anti-Muslimism must be highlighted and counteracted through short-term and long-term policy measures that promote integration and reinforce democracy and social cohesion in society. The fact that we live in global societies, where the global has become local and the local global, means that we can no longer regard Muslims and other Swedes with an immigrant background as “isolated elements” and enclaves that exist “among us.” Social cohesion, our future, and global peace and coexistence depend on today’s political actions. We need political leaders who take responsibility for the good of everybody and do not divide people into imaginary groups of a “modern and democratic ‘We’” and a “non-modern and undemocratic ‘Them’” that contradict each other. Islam is a Swedish reli-

1. “Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia”, EUMC, February 2006, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2006/highlights-eumc-report-muslims-european-union-discrimination-and-islamophobia>. (Access date: 4 November 2020); “Guidelines for Educators of Countering Discrimination and intolerance against Muslims: Addressing Islamophobia through Education”, OSCE, 2008, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/2/84495.pdf> (Access date: 5 November 2020); “European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT)”, June 2020, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2020> (Access date: 5 November 2020); “Launch Report: Restrictions on Muslim Women’s Dress in 28 EU Member States”, ENAR, February 2019, <https://www.enar-eu.org/25-April-2018-Report-launch-event-Restrictions-on-Muslim-women-s-dress-in-the> (Access date: 2 November 2020); “Databases 2012-2017 on Anti-Muslim Hatred”, FRA, March 2018”, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2018/database-2012-2017-anti-muslim-hatred> (Access date: 20 October 2020). European Islamophobia Report, EIR, 2017 (Access date: 10 October 2020, <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Sweden.pdf>)

gion and Muslims are part of the notion and the reality of “Swedish people.” Social cohesion is possible only if the political system guarantees everyone’s human rights and works for social justice, and equal rights and opportunities for everybody irrespective of ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, and other dividing categorizations.

Racism against Muslims has been a building block in the construction of the “modern and democratic West.” However, hostility to Muslims and Islam did not diminish with the disappearance of the Crusades, but took on new forms and was also made “scientific” and presented as “the clash of civilizations,” where the postcolonial “West” must continue its colonial “civilizing mission” to civilize Muslims. The occupation of Muslim countries, and the demonization of Muslims and Muslim countries cannot, therefore, be called anything other than anti-Muslimism.

Recent racist attacks in Sweden and other Nordic countries, such as Denmark and Norway, have been greatly influenced by anti-Muslim ideologies and sentiments. The Swedish antiracist organization, Expo, has studied the strong connection between extreme right movements in Nordic countries, called the “Alternative Right” (*Alternativhöger*), and has showed that such movements and organizations have a strong anti-Muslim ideology. Further, the Alternative Right has substantial ideological and organizational ties with both established racist parties, such as the Swedish Democrats (SD) in Sweden, and with Trumpism in the USA.²

The presentation of Muslims as the “enemy within” and Islam as the “religion of the enemy” are not only the actions and the production of anti-Muslim and racist extreme right organizations, but are also a part of the policies of many established mainstream parties, mass media, and public organizations, such as universities and municipal authorities.³ During the course of 2019, many mainstream parties in Sweden started to normalize the anti-Muslim and racist party SD and declare their willingness to cooperate with the party in future. The Moderate Party leader, Ulf Kristersson, started the party’s cooperation with the SD by inviting its leader Jimmy Åkesson to lunch.⁴ The Christian Democrats’ leader, Ebba Busch, did the same.⁵ This is a development that should alarm all groups and organizations of the scrambling fascism in the country as well as in other western and even non-western countries.⁶

2. “Nordisk alternativhöger”, EXPO, October 2018, <https://expo.se/fakta/wiki/nordisk-alternativhoger> (Access date: 12 October 2020).
3. Kamali Masoud, *Ett europeiskt dilemma: Strukturell/institutionell diskriminering*, de Los Reyes, p. and Kamali, M, reds. *Bortom Vi och Dom: Teoretiska reflektioner om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering* (Fritzes Stockholm: Fritzes, 2006); Kamali Masoud, *Racial Discrimination: Institutional Patterns and Politics* (Routledge NY: 2008); Kamali Masoud, *War, Violence and Social Justice: Theories for Social Work* (Routledge London: 2015).
4. Anette Holmqvist and Pär Carlsson, “Kristersson och Åkesson i enskilt möte”, *Aftonbladet*, 5 December 2019.
5. Anette Holmqvist, Eva Thornéus and Olof Svensson, “Busch Thor och Åkesson i möte – för politiskt samtal”, *Aftonbladet*, 2 July 2019.
6. Giroux, Henry, *American Nightmare: Facing the Challenges of Fascism*. San Francisco, (City Light Books, San Francisco: 2018).

I have written elsewhere that the crusades against Muslims, Muslim countries, and Islam never stopped, but their shape changed and was modernized.⁷ It should also be said that this has nothing to do with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and that the crusades have been in effect during the entire process of modernization, colonialism, and postcolonialism. Anti-Muslim racism is an established policy in Sweden by which many employees, civil society activists, politicians, and journalists with immigrant backgrounds are forced to either leave their positions and activities or adjust themselves to the policies of anti-Muslimism. Those who deny their Muslim and migrant background seem to be welcome in what is called “the warm circle of Swedishness” and can keep their positions. Those who try to keep their dignity, religion, and critical views are increasingly excluded from “Swedishness” and marginalized. Anti-Muslimism is spreading in western countries, including Sweden, by the “normal functions” of the institutions of education, the justice system, the housing market, mass media, and a democratic system which increasingly adopts open anti-Muslim racism.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

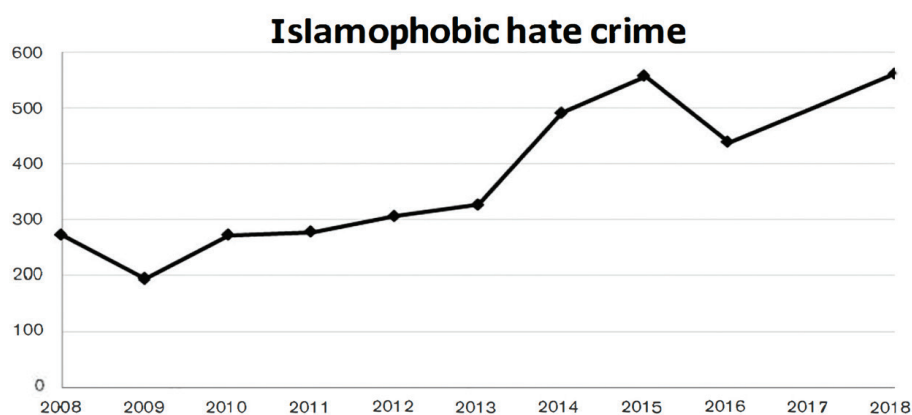


Figure 1: The number of hate crimes with Islamophobic motive reported to the police from 2008 to 2018.⁸

Statistics on hate crime in Sweden are collected and presented by the governmental organ known as the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brå*)

7. Kamali Masoud, *Ett europeiskt dilemma: Strukturell/institutionell diskriminering*, de Los Reyes, p. and Kamali, M, reds. *Bortom Vi och Dom: Teoretiska reflektioner om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering* (Frtzes Stockholm: Fritzes, 2006); Kamali Masoud, *Racial Discrimination: Institutional Patterns and Politics* (Routledge NY: 2008).

8. “Hatbrottsstatistik”, 31 October 2019, <https://www.bra.se/statistik/statistiska-undersokningar/hatbrottsstatistik.html> (Access date: 3 October 2020).

every two years. For this reason, the latest available statistics at the time of writing this report were from 2018. The following figure illustrates the course of hate crime towards members of the Muslim community in Sweden between 2008 and 2018. It must, however, be considered that the figure shows only the anti-Muslim hate crimes which have been reported to the police.

The following figure shows the different categories of hate crimes against Muslims reported to the police in the years 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2018.

The number of identified crimes with Islamophobic motives reported to the police, year 2013-2016 and 2018.												
Category of crimes	2013		2014		2015		2016		2018		Change compare to 2016 (%)	Change compare to 2013 (%)
	Number of incidents	%	Number of incidents	%	Number of incidents	%	Number of incidents	%	Number of incidents	%		
Violent crime	34	10	60	12	46	8	38	9	36	6	-5	6
Criminal threat/assult	152	46	197	40	247	44	220	50	218	39	-1	43
Defamation	28	9	34	7	68	12	44	10	56	10	27	100
Damage/graffiti	18	6	24	5	76	14	64	15	58	10	-9	222
Ineitement against ethnic groups	77	24	153	31	102	18	58	13	179	32	209	132
Discrimination	6	2	10	2	6	1	6	1	2	0	-67	-67
Other crimes	10	3	14	3	12	2	8	2	12	2	50	20
Total	327	100	492	100	558	100	439	100	562	100	28	72

Figure 2: The number of identified crimes with Islamophobic motive reported to the police 2008-2018

As one can see, the number of reported hate crimes against Muslims has risen from 327 in 2013 to 562 in 2018.⁹ Figure 3 illustrates the comparison between different kinds of hate crimes which have been reported to the police between 2008 and 2018. The figure clearly shows that hate crimes with anti-Muslim motivation are the second-largest category of hate crime in the country.

However, the fact that the figures concerning the hate crimes reported to the police are much smaller than the real numbers of hate crimes make the rise in the number of hate crimes even more worrying. As a new study by the Swedish center for opinion studies Novus shows, one-tenth of Swedes have been subjected to hate crimes in 2020. The study shows that although the number of hate crimes is increasing, the real numbers cannot be seen in the statistics of the hate crimes reported to the police.¹⁰

What is more, there have been several other serious accidents and crimes with anti-Muslim motives which added to the difficult situation of Muslims in Sweden.

9. Ibid.

10. "En av tio utsatt för hatbrott", 4 September 2020, <https://polisen.se/aktuellt/nyheter/2020/september/en-av-tio-utsatt-for-hatbrott/> (Access date: 25 October 2020).

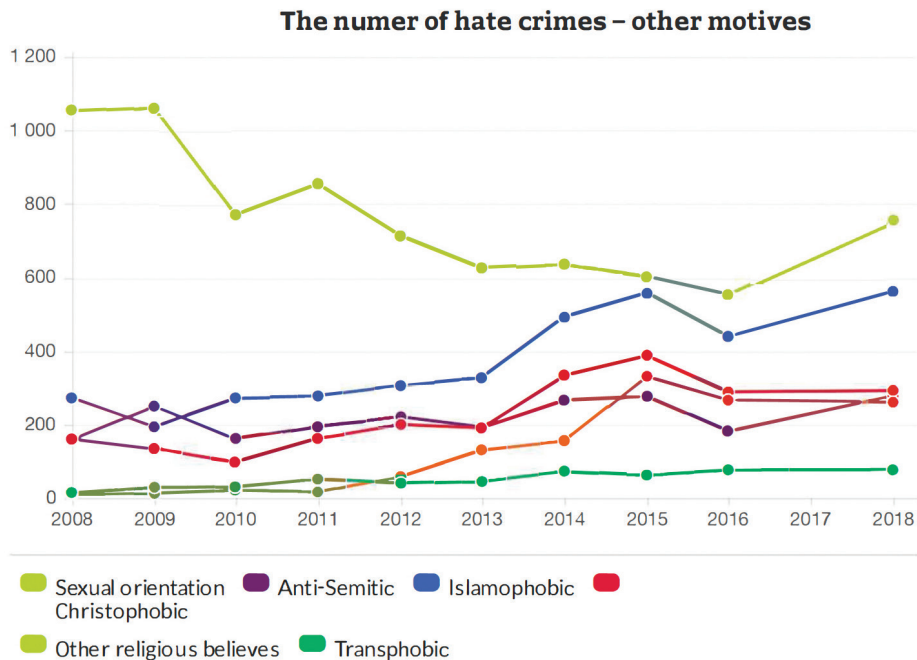


Figure 3: Comparison of hate crimes reported to the police between 2008 and 2018.¹¹

Burning the Quran

Two Danish racists, the so-called artist Dan Park and the Danish extreme right politician Rasmus Paludan applied to the Swedish police in the southern city of Malmö, where many Muslims with immigrant background live, to burn the Quran in the front of the Rosengård Mosque on August 28, 2020 at 12.00. The police initially told the press that they were going to give Park permission. Eik Åberg, the head of the police department in Malmö, told the press, “Our standpoint right now is that we are not going to completely deny permission.”¹² However, the police later refused to grant them permission fearing confrontations with Muslims. When the police stopped the planned Quran burning, Park stated, “It is completely crazy. It shows that Sweden surrenders to Islam.”¹³ However, Park and Paludan received permission to burn the Quran elsewhere in Malmö. This event took place on August 28, 2020 and was participated by Danish and Swedish anti-Muslim groups. As a response, Muslim and marginalized youths demonstrated, which turned into riots in Malmö.¹⁴

11. “Hatbrottsstatistik”, 31 October 2019, https://www.bra.se/download/18.bbb8316de12eace227048/1572445547417/2019_13_Hatbrott%20_2018.pdf. (Access date: 11 November 2020).

12. Peter Herkel, “Flerfaldigt dömd hetsare kan få tillstånd att bränna koranen i Malmö”, *Sydsvenskan*, 19 August 2020.

13. Oskar Ahlqvist, Sören Billing, Anders Johansson, Hussein El-Alawi and Julia Andersson, “Stora protester mot koranbränning i Rosengård”, *Sydsvenskan*, 28 August 2020.

14. “Risk för nya upplopp – polisen förstärker”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 28 August 2020.

The anti-Muslim groups under the leadership of Paludan continued their provocations in order to encourage confrontations between Muslims and the police as part of their desire to encourage crusades between the white Christian majority and the Muslim minority in Sweden. This is, of course, a well-established program which has been planned and is being conducted in many European countries. After Malmö, Paludan applied for permission to burn the Quran in Stockholm. The Quran burning was to take place in the nine marginalized areas of Botkyrka, Fittja, Alby, Tensta, Rinkeby, Akalla, Husby, Sollentuna, and Upplands Väsby on Saturday, September 12. The police denied him and his anti-Muslim colleagues permission on the grounds that the action and demonstration would gather more than 50 persons which is the limit for legal gatherings during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁵ Thus, the police decision was presented as having nothing to do with the anti-Muslim nature of the proposed event but was based on the governmental restrictions concerning the pandemic.

Given the long history of anti-Muslimism and the growing anti-Muslim attitudes and sentiments in Sweden, one cannot be surprised by the police's decision and motivation. The anti-Muslim actions and attitudes that take place publicly in Sweden are always motivated by the "defense of freedom of speech." However, there are laws and rules that can be perfectly applied for hindering the public acts of anti-Muslimism in Sweden. Among such legal means is 16 § of the Swedish Criminal Code (Act 1991:240) which makes it clear that "[a] person who makes noise in a public place, or otherwise behaves publicly in a manner liable to arouse public indignation, is guilty of disorderly conduct and is sentenced to a fixed fine."¹⁶ However, it seems that such codes are applicable only when the rights of majority Swedes are violated.

Attacks on Mosques

Attack on mosques have been increasing in Sweden in recent years. This is a sign of the growing anti-Muslim sentiments and enmity towards Muslims and Islam in the country. A study conducted in 2018 based on a questionnaire given to 167 Muslim organizations and associations with their own mosques in which Friday-prayers are regularly held shows that a large group of mosques have been the target of physical violence.¹⁷

15. "Efter koranberänning i Malmö – nekas demonstrationstillstånd i Stockholm", Sveriges Television, 10 September 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/stockholm/efter-koranbranningen-i-malmo-nekas-demonstrationstillstand-i-stockholm> (Access date: 18 October 2020).

16. "Brottsbalk", Regeringskansliets rättsdatabaser, <https://lagen.nu/1962:700#K16P16S1> (Access date: 19 November 2020).

17. CEMFOR, "Muslimska församlingar utsatthet och osäkerhet i Sverige 2018, (Uppsala Universitet: Uppsala, 2018), <https://fifs.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Mosk%C3%A9rs-och-muslimska-f%C3%B6rsamlingars-utsatthet-och-s%C3%A4kerhet-i-Sverige-2018.pdf> (Access date: 3 November 2020).



Figure 4: The graffiti “Bloody Muslims” and swastikas sprayed on a residence where Muslims live in Åstorp municipality, September 2020.¹⁸

The veil bans

The question of the veil has been a debated subject in the post 9/11 era in Sweden. It was not only the racist and anti-Muslim parties, such as Swedish Democrats (SD), who campaigned for a veil ban, but also some mainstream parties, such as the Liberals. The increasing anti-Muslimism and racism which has led to the electoral success of racist parties and programs, encourages many established parties to adopt a more populist anti-Muslim stance and programs. In August 2019, the party ideologist for Sweden’s second-largest party, the Moderate Party, Gunnar Strömmer, launched an investigation aimed at forbidding the veil in Swedish schools. It was published in the Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet* in order to gain support by anti-Muslim groups.¹⁹ The action was even supported by anti-Muslim members (some with immigrant backgrounds) of other mainstream parties.

A well-established political model in Sweden is the use of individual politicians with immigrant backgrounds for launching and implementing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim policies. There are many such politicians in different Swedish parties, such as Nalin Pekgul in the Social Democratic Party, Hanif Bali in the Moderate Party, and Nyamko Sabuni in the Liberals. These influential individuals are in favor of a veil ban for Muslims in Sweden. Hanif Bali, an MP for the Moderate Party, is one of the most known anti-Muslim politicians with an immigrant backgrounds in Sweden. On November 1, 2018, he tweeted, “The veil is a negative symbolism” and that “it stands for the honor culture and systematic oppression of women.”²⁰

18. “Helsingborgs Dagbladet”, 13 September 2020, <https://www.hd.se/2020-09-13/rasistiskt-klotter-pa-lagenhetshus-i-nyvang> (Access date: 21 October 2020).

19. Olof Svensson, “Moderaterna vill utreda slöjförbud i skolan”, *Aftonbladet*, 23 August 2019.

20. Hanif Bali, Twitter, 1 November 2018, <https://twitter.com/hanifbali/status/1058065242150895616> (Access date: 31 October 2020).



Figure 5: The Moderate Party MP Hanif Bali's tweet condemning the Muslim veil.²¹

Nalin Pekgul, an MP for the Social Democratic Party and the head of the party's women's association, has criticized Muslims several times for terrorism, radicalization, and oppression. She published an article in the daily newspaper, *Göteborg-Posten*, on August 7, 2016 accusing Muslims for forcing the veil on their women and children by "brutal methods."²²

Göteborgs-Posten

Riktig journalistik gör skilln

Nyheter Ekonomi Sport Kultur Ledare Debatt



Mitt GP E-tidning Korsor



Nalin Pekgul: Pekgul: Slöjan sprids med brutala metoder

Figure 6: Nalin Pekgul, an MP for the Social Democratic Party and the head of the party's women's association, continually attacks the Muslim veil as "a sign of oppression of women by Muslim men."²³

Nyamko Sabuni was elected the leader of the Liberal People's Party in 2019 and has a long track of anti-Muslim propaganda and political actions. In 2006, prior to

21. Ibid.

22. Nalin Pekgul, "Slöjan sprids med brutala metoder", *Göteborg-Posten*, 7 August 2016, <https://www.gp.se/ledare/pekgul-sl%C3%B6jan-sprids-med-brutala-metoder-1.3534234> (Access date: 3 November 2020).

23. Nalin Pekgul, "Mannen bakom slöjan", *Fokus*, 10 February 2017 (<https://www.fokus.se/2017/02/mannen-bakom-slojan/>) (Access date: 12 October 2020).

becoming minister of integration in the Swedish right-wing alliance government in November 2006, she declared that “all Muslim girls should be gynecologically examined in order to find out if they have been circumcised or not”²⁴ and that “the veil should be prohibited in schools.”²⁵ In her first interview after her election as the party leader, she stated, “The vision of a multicultural society must be buried.”²⁶ In an interview with Swedish Channel 4, she stated that the “veil is problematic” and that “religious schools must be forbidden.”²⁷



Figure 7: Nyamko Sabuni, the leader of the Liberals, claiming on television that religious schools should be forbidden.²⁸

The veil ban has also been an important electoral slogan and propaganda for the SD. The party has presented several suggestions to forbid “anything which has to do with Islam.” Among such anti-Muslim efforts are the party’s suggestion in Kungälv county, Gothenburg (Göteborg), in August 2018, to forbid “all cloths which can be related to Islam”²⁹ and the implementation of a veil ban in Staffanörp and Skurup, two municipalities run by the SD.³⁰

24. Nyamko Sabuni, “Kontrollera underliv på alla högstadiel elever”, *Expressen*, 17 July 2006 <https://www.expressen.se/debatt/kontrollera-underlivet-pa-alla-hogstadiel elever/> (Access date: 8 October 2020).

25. “Folkpartist vill förbjuda slöjor för flickor”, *Sveriges Radio*, July 17 2006 <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/900367> (Access date: 13 October 2020).

26. Nyamko Sabuni, “Mångkultur är inte något att eftersträva”, *Expressen*, 6 June 2019, <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/nyamko-sabuni-mangkultur-ar-inte-nagot-att-efterstrava/> (Access date: 18 October 2020).

27. Nyamko Sabuni, “Slöjor i skolor är problematisk”, *TV4*, 19 November 2019, <https://www.tv4.se/efter-fem/klipp/nyamko-sabuni-sl%C3%B6jor-i-skolan-%C3%A4r-problematiskt-12510573>, (Access date: 2 October 2020).

28. *Ibid.*

29. “SD förslag – Förbjud alla kläder som kan kopplas till Islam”, *Sveriges Television*, 8 August 2018 <https://nyheter24.se/maktkamp24/911970-sd-forslaget-forbjud-alla-klader-som-kan-kopplas-till-islam> (Access date: 5 November 2020).

30. “Skurup – Inför slöjförbud i skolan”, *Sveriges Television*, 17 April 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/skane/skurup-infor-slojforbud-i-skolan> (Access date: 5 October 2020).

The increasing anti-Muslimism has gone so far that those with Swedish and non-Muslim background who resist such anti-Muslim efforts are subjected to threats and harassments. A principal of a school in Skurup, Mattias Liedholm, who resisted the politicians' veil ban decision received death threats by anti-Muslim and racist groups.³¹



Figure 8: Principal Mattias Liedholm who protested against the veil ban at schools received death threats.³²

Researchers who criticize anti-Muslimism are subjected to hate crime. For example, when a researcher from Lund University - along with 22 other researchers - criticized the anti-Muslim report by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) with the title *Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden* for reinforcing negative attitudes against Muslims in Sweden, he and his family received death threats.³³

The veil ban is going to be an important question in the next parliamentary election since the majority of the mainstream political parties are increasingly adjusting themselves to the new anti-Muslim popular discourses.

Employment

Although the updated Swedish antidiscrimination law (2008:567) is in effect since 2008, many research reports in recent decades have shown that Muslims, in general, and Muslim women who wear a veil or other religious cloths, in particular, are subjected to discrimination in the labor market.³⁴ A report from the Swedish Equal-

31. "Rektor dödshotas efter slöjdebatt", *Lag&Avtal*, 20 February 2020, <https://www.lag-avtal.se/nyhetsarkiv/rektor-dodshotas-efter-slojdebatt-6988466> (Access date: 1 October 2020).

32. Ibid.

33. "Det provocerar när man nyanserar bilden av Islam", Lunds Universitet, 7 May 2019, <https://www.lu.se/artikel/islamologen-det-provocerar-nar-man-nyanserar-bilden-av-islam> (Access date: 29 October 2020).

34. "Religion och annan trosuppfattning som diskrimineringsgrund", Diskriminerings Ombudsmannen, 20 May 2020, <https://www.do.se/om-diskriminering/skyddade-diskrimineringsgrunder/religion-eller-annan-trosuppfattning-som-diskrimineringsgrund/#5> (Access date: 1 November 2020); Kamali Masoud, *Racial Discrimination: Institutional Patterns and Politics* (Routledge NY: 2008).

ity Ombudsman (DO) shows that in 2018 a total of 2,567 reports of discrimination were sent to the DO. Among those, 146 cases concerned discrimination in the Swedish labor market and education system because of the applicants' religion. The majority of reports concerning discrimination are from Muslims or those considered to be Muslims.³⁵ Although there are no explicit statistics on the casual relation between religion and discrimination in Swedish official statistics, many reports indicate the widespread discrimination of minorities based on their religion. A research conducted by the European Social Fund (EFS) concerning discrimination in Sweden in 2017, concluded that “[e]thnic and religious minorities are subjected to discrimination in the Swedish labor market, both in the process of application for employment and at their working places.”³⁶ The report claims that applicants' and employees' birthplace, religion, and name are the main reasons behind employers' negative attitudes towards them.

A European report concerning the discrimination of Muslim women in the Swedish labor market, which was based on interviews with Swedish Muslim women, organizations, and stakeholders, concluded that discrimination of Muslim women, or what the author of the report calls “gendered Islamophobia” undermines Muslim women's access to economic, political, and social equality.³⁷ A study of legal cases at Swedish courts concerning discrimination shows that many veiled women and girls are discriminated against in the Swedish labor market.³⁸ Muslims, both women and men, are discriminated against in different ways. Employers reject Muslim applicants based on their Muslim names. Many studies from 2007 to 2018 have shown this problem in the Swedish labor market.³⁹ The latest report from the Institute for Evaluation of Labor Market and Education Policies has shown that applicants from Muslim countries, such as Iraq and Somalia, are discriminated against compared to applicants with a Swedish background and further discriminated compared to non-Muslim applicants.⁴⁰ For instance, Muslim applicants have 30 percent less chance to be called for a job interview than Christians, and are more discriminated against compared to both majority and minority societies.⁴¹

35. “Religion och annan trosuppfattning som diskrimineringsgrund”, Diskriminerings Ombudsmannen, 20 May 2020, <https://www.do.se/om-diskriminering/skyddade-diskrimineringsgrunder/religion-eller-annan-trosuppfattning-som-diskrimineringsgrund/#5> (Access date: 1 November 2020).

36. “Diskriminering i arbetslivet: Var det finns – och hur vi vet”, *EFS-rådet*, 3 October 2017, [https://www.esf.se/Documents/V%C3%A5ra%20program/Socialfonden%202014-2020/Programinformation/Diskriminering%20i%20arbetslivet_FINAL%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.esf.se/Documents/V%C3%A5ra%20program/Socialfonden%202014-2020/Programinformation/Diskriminering%20i%20arbetslivet_FINAL%20(002).pdf) (Access date: 12 October 2020).

37. Abdullahi Maimuna, *Forgotten Women: The Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Women in Sweden* (ENAR Brussels, 2016).

38. Hadrus Aya, *Muslimska kvinnor med huvudduk: En kvalitativ analys av rättsfall*, (Malmö University, Malmö, 2020).

39. Vernby, Koch and R. Dancygier, *Employer Discrimination and the Immutability of Ethnic Hierarchies: A Field Experiment*, (IFAU Working Paper 2018:17, Stockholm: 2018).

40. Ibid.

41. Eriksson Stefan, Johansson Per och Langenskiöld Sophie, “Vad är rätt profil för att få ett jobb? En experimentell studie av rekryteringsprocessen”, Rapport 2012:3, (IFAU Stockholm: 2012).

Education

A governmental inquiry into racism and discrimination in 2006 showed that discrimination against immigrants, in general, and Muslims, in particular, is an integrated part of the Swedish school curriculum.⁴² Increasing anti-Muslimism and the mainstream political parties' movement to the right have influenced the interest in research on anti-Muslimism in the Swedish education system. The discussion about anti-Muslimism in Swedish schoolbooks has moved on to the question whether 'Muslim schools' should exist. The SD presented several suggestions to the Swedish parliament aimed at passing a law that would make all Muslim schools in Sweden illegal.⁴³ Although such a law did not get enough support in parliament, the mainstream parties – the Social Democrats (ruling party), the Liberals, and the Center Party – made an agreement to forbid the establishment of new religious schools. This decision in reality was aimed at forbidding Muslim schools in the country.⁴⁴

Politics

The climate of the political debates in the Swedish public sphere has dramatically changed since the 1990s. The neoliberalization in Sweden has gone much faster and deeper than in many other European and even Nordic countries, such as Denmark, Finland, and Norway.⁴⁵ This has led to increasing socioeconomic gaps and inequalities.

The rapidly increasing income inequality and the reduction of the redistribution of resources in Sweden have led to the growing socioeconomic, political, and cultural marginalization of many people with immigrant background, including the country's Muslim population. In addition, in the last decades, the country's historical anti-Muslimism, shared with many other western countries, has led to the increasing discrimination of Muslims in the Swedish labor market, housing market, justice system, educational system, mass media, and political system.⁴⁶

The intense framing of Muslims as "culturally deviant", "non-Swedish", "foreign" and "others" helped the new racist and anti-Muslim party Swedish Democrats (SD) to gain a considerable electoral support and enter the Swedish Parliament.

42. Sawyer Lena and Kamali Masoud, *Utbildningens dilemma: Demokratiska ideal och andrafrärande praxis*, (Fritzes Stockholm: 2006).

43. Richard Jomshof, "Förbud mot muslimska friskolor", Sveriges Riksdag, 5 October 2018, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/forbud-mot-muslimska-friskolor_H602599 (Access date: 7 October 2020).

44. Karlsson Pär, "Då kan nya religiösa friskolor förbjudas", *Aftonbladet*, 31 January 2019.

45. See Kamali Masoud & Jönsson, Jessica H., *Neoliberalism, Nordic Welfare States and Social Work: Current and Future Challenges*, (Routledge, London: 2018).

46. See Kamali Masoud, *Racial Discrimination: Institutional Patterns and Politics*. (Routledge, Ny: 2008); Malm, Andreas, *Hatet mot muslimer* (Bokförlaget Atlas, Stockholm: 2009); Bursell Moa, "Diskriminering av svenska muslimer, *Utbildningsradion (UR)*, <https://urplay.se/program/200453-ur-samtiden-diskriminering-av-muslimer-diskriminering-av-svenska-muslimer> (Access date: 29 October 2020); Forum för levande historia, *Antisemitism och islamofobi* (Forum för levandehistoria, Stockholm: 2011).

Debatt

Åkesson: Muslimerna är vårt största utländska hot

PUBLICERAD: MÅN 19 OKT 2009 | UPPDATERAD: MÅN 12 DEC 2016

🗨️ Detta är en debattartikel. Det är skribenten som står för åsikterna som förs fram i texten, inte Aftonbladet.

DEBATT

AFTONBLADET



FOTO: FOTO: JERKER IVARSSON

klargör partiets värdegrunder I dag publicerar Aftonbladet en debattartikel av Sverigedemokraternas Jimmie Åkesson (bilden). D en kan enligt höga jurister uttrycka hets mot folkgrupp men chefredaktör Jan Helin har ändå valt att publicera artikeln. Jimmie Åkessons text är viktig eftersom den mycket tydligt visar på vilka värdegrunder det parti som är på väg in i Sveriges riksdag vilar.

DEBATT En av mångkulturens många inneboende paradoxer är att den, trots sitt universella anspråk, är ett monokulturellt fenomen som endast funnit grogrund i den postmoderna, oikofoba* västvärlden och som därför också tar sin utgångspunkt i västerländska fenomen och erfarenheter när man bedömer och analyserar omvärlden. Den västerländska erfarenheten ses som ett högre utvecklingsstadium, som resten av världen bara inte hunnit uppnå ännu.

Figure 9: The leader of the anti-Muslim party Swedish Democrats says that Muslims are the major foreign threat for Sweden.⁴⁷

Both Åkesson and other party members have tried to single out Muslims and Islam as a “danger” and a “foreign invasion” that threaten Swedish society. In an article, Åkesson wrote, “We Swedes have been naive about the immigration of Muslims to Sweden.”⁴⁸

The party’s racist attacks and its dehumanization of Muslims have been an inseparable part of its political debates and programs ever since its appearance on the Swedish political scene in the 1990s. Yet, in the last years, the party’s anti-Muslim at-

47. “Åkesson: Muslimerna är vårt största utländska hot”, *Aftonbladet*, 19 October 2009, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/VRx8zd/akesson-muslimerna-ar-vart-storsta-utlandska-hot>, (Access date: 7 October 2020).

48. Åkesson: Muslimerna är vårt största utländska hot”, *Aftonbladet*, 19 October 2009, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/VRx8zd/akesson-muslimerna-ar-vart-storsta-utlandska-hot>, (Access date: 7 October 2020).

titudes, which are frequently reported in the press, have become harsher and more overt. In 2014, the SD politician Robert Quiding stated that “I will discriminate Muslims, and Islam should be forbidden in Sweden.”⁴⁹ Another SD politician, Martin Strid, said that “Muslims are not completely human.”⁵⁰ One of the parties that are losing their anti-Muslim votes to the SD is the Liberal People’s Party, which is at risk of not making the requirement for entry to parliament (at least 4 percent of the votes) in the next election, scheduled for 2022. In order to counteract this, they recently elected Nyamko Sabuni, a known anti-Muslim politician with an immigrant background, as their party leader. Out of fear of being forced out of parliament as a result of decreasing electoral support, the Liberals sought popularity by engaging in anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant policies.⁵¹ Sabuni is trying to convince all parties (except the SD and the Greens) to make a deal on migration.⁵²

According to the polls published in the press, the question of migration is one of the most important questions for the Swedish public. This is partly because both Sabuni and the SD related many problems of marginalization and criminality to immigration, in general, and immigration from Muslim countries, in particular. Immediately after her comeback and her election to the post of the party leader, Sabuni declared her anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim plans. In an interview with the Swedish tabloid *Expressen* on June 6, 201, she stated, “The vision of a multicultural society must be buried” and “Fewer must be attracted to Sweden and those who lack asylum reason must be immediately deported to the countries they come from.”⁵³ In the same interview, she defended an anti-Muslim report titled *Rosengårdsrapporten* (The Rosengård [a marginalized neighborhood in the southern city of Malmö] report) that was written by the famous anti-Muslim researcher from the Swedish Defense Institute, Magnus Ranstorp, in 2009. The report, which was highly criticized by many independent researchers in Sweden and was called a “scandal,”⁵⁴ was requested by Sabuni, who was integration minister at the time.

Recently, in an interview with Swedish Television AB, the Swedish national public broadcaster, Sabuni answered the question of cooperating with the racist and anti-Muslim party SD and said, “I am ready and will cooperate with all parties who are

49. Quiding Robert, “Jag vill diskriminera muslimer”, Sveriges television, 20, July 2014, <https://nyheter24.se/nyheter/politik/773498-sd-politiker-jag-vill-diskriminera-muslimer> (Access date: 12 September 2020).

50. Strid Marin, “Muslimer är inte människor fullt ut”, *Expressen*, 26 November 2017, <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/sd-ledamot-muslimer-ar-inte-manniskor-fullt-ut/> (Access date: 23 October 2020).

51. For more discussion see, Kamali Masoud, *Racial Discrimination: Institutional Patterns and Politics* (Routledge, NY: 2008) and Kamali Masoud, *War, Violence and Social Justice: Theories for Social Work*, (Routledge, London: 2015).

52. Nyamko Sabuni, “Låt oss återuppta samtalen om migration”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 16 July 2020.

53. Nyamko Sabuni, “Mångkultur är inte något att eftersträva”, *Expressen*, 6 June 2019.

54. See among other sources, Swedish television (Sveriges Television) 29 January 2009, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/skane/lund-rosengardsrapporten-en-ren-skandal> (Access date: 2 November 2020) and *Aftonbladet*, 7 February 2009, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/p6M6JG/hotet-finns-i-rosenbad-inte-i-rosengard> (Access date: 20 October 2020).

ready to work with us for the implementation of our policies.”⁵⁵ In the same interview, she opened up about cooperation with the SD in the next election. She stated, “We have to have several balls in the air.”



Figure 10: The leader of the Liberals indicates her willingness to cooperate with the anti-Muslim party SD.⁵⁶

Sweden is witnessing a growing cooperation between three right-wing parties who are trying to attract the Liberal party to join them before the next election. The three parties, called the “Blue-Brown Alliance” (referring to a right-wing and fascist ideology) are the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats, and the SD. All three have overt anti-Muslim attitudes and according to the latest opinion poll (September 2020) constitute circa 46 percent of the Swedish electorate.⁵⁷ If the Liberals under Sabuni’s leadership join the alliance, they will seize political power in the next election as the following figure which shows the result of the September 2020 poll indicates.

In the case of a possible future victory of the Blue-Brown Alliance, the anti-Muslim government will reinforce anti-Muslimism - an unprecedentedly devastating development for the Muslim community in Sweden. At the moment, there are examples of what such a political power can do. In the municipalities where such an al-

55. Nyamko Sabuni, “Samarbete mellan L och SD tror jag inte är möjligt”, Sveriges Television, 18 September 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sabuni-om-samarbete-mellan-l-och-sd-tror-jag-inte-ar-mojligt> (Access date: 13 October 2020)

56. Ibid.

57. “Novus/SVT Väljarbarometer, September 2020”, <https://novus.se/valjarbarometer-arkiv/novus-svt-september-s-fortsatter-backa/> (Access date: 5 November 2020).

liance has already been formed and where it holds political power, for example the municipality of Bromölla in southern province of the country, among the first decisions was the prohibition of prayer during working time.

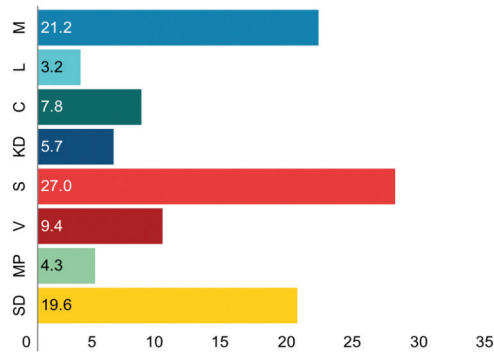


Figure 11: Novous-SVT poll, September 2020.⁵⁸

Media

A Swedish governmental inquiry into the role of mass media in the country concluded that mass media is the third power center in Sweden and has close connections with the first and the second power centers, i.e. the economic and political powers.⁵⁹ This means that Swedish mainstream media have close ties to the Swedish political parties and are used by the parties to disseminate their ideas and give them popularity. In reality, the increasing influence of mass media equals the increasing influence of political parties and market actors.⁶⁰

Although there were a couple of limited publications concerning the problem of racism and Islamophobia in Swedish mass media⁶¹ during the 1990s and early 2000s, the question of racism and anti-Muslimism in media was first seriously discussed in 2006 in a governmental inquiry. The inquiry entitled *Power, Integration and Structural Discrimination*, led by the author of the present report, explored the role of mass media in demonizing and otherizing Swedish migrants, in general, and Muslims, in particular. Several reports in the governmental inquiry dealt with the (miss)presentation of Muslims in Swedish mass media.⁶² However, the Swedish mass media ignored

58. Ibid.

59. Olof Pettersson, *Demokrati och makt i Sverige* (Democracy and Power in Sweden, Governmental Report 1990:44), (Regeringskansliet, Stockholm: 1990).

60. Ibid.

61. See for instance, Brune Ylva, *Mörk magi i vita medier: Svensk journalistik om invandrare* (Dark Magi in White Media: Swedish Journalism about Migrants) (Carlssons bokförlag, Stockholm: 1998).

62. Among others: de Los Reyes, Paulina & Kamali, Masoud (eds) *Bortom Vi och Dom: Teoretiska perspektiv om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering* (Beyond Us and Them: Theoretical Perspectives on Power, Integration and Structural Discrimination) (Fritzes, Stockholm: 2006); Kamali, Masoud, *Den segregering integrationen* (The Segregating Integration Policy) (Fritzes, Stockholm: 2006); Camauër, Leonor & Nohrstedt, Stig Ahrne (eds) *Mediernas Vi och Dom: Mediernas betydelse för den strukturella diskrimineringen* (The Media's Us and Them: The Role of Media in Structural Discrimination) (Fritzes, Stockholm: 2006).

the problems of racism and anti-Muslimism and, as usual, became engaged in a process of self-defense and “putting the blame on the victims” that still continues. The media’s self-defense strategy aimed at legitimizing its role in stigmatizing migrants, in general, and Muslims, in particular.

A report on the mass media reporting on Muslims in Sweden, published by the group Nyans Muslim in 2019, shows the continuation and in some cases even harsher discrimination against Muslims in the media. According to the report *Muslims and Islam in the Media, 2018*, during 2018, Swedish mass media published 64,681 articles in which the words “Islam”, “Muslims” and “Islamism” appeared. The author of the report, Amanj Aziz, writes that the figure excludes reports and articles about Daesh or the so-called Islamic State. The report concludes that an average of 177 articles were written about Islam and Muslims on a daily basis in Sweden and that the majority of the articles were very negative.⁶³

The Swedish media has a history of racism and anti-Muslimism.⁶⁴ The most known anti-Muslim media figures are Per Gudmundson, the author of the editorial of the Swedish daily *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD); Hanna Kjöllér, author of the editorial of the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* (DN); and many other journalists working in the major Swedish dailies, such as *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* (published in Malmö, a city with one of the largest Muslim populations in Sweden) and *Göteborg-Posten* (published in Gothenburg, the third-largest Swedish city) whose editor in chief Alice Teodorescu is known for her anti-Muslim ideas. Anti-Muslimism has been normalized and attacks against Muslims are almost part of daily media reporting. The Swedish public service, TV, and radio, are not an exception. On October 25, 2020, 39 Swedish journalists with immigrant backgrounds who work or had worked for the Swedish Radio (SR), published a protest letter in the major Swedish journal, *Dagens Nyheter* (DN), against racism at the SR. They signed a six-page-long testimony about the ways they were subjected to racism in the Swedish public service media.⁶⁵ In their letter, they wrote,

The opinion about how black Americans are treated can be seen on the surface as foreign news. This is just half of the fact. Not to see the parallels (notwithstanding differences) to the systemic discrimination of and racism against blacks and other racialized Swedes is to fail in its journalistic mission, something we believe that the

63. Aziz, Amanj, *Muslims and Islam in Media* (Muslims and Islam in Media), (Nyans Muslim, Göteborg, 2018), <https://www.nyansmuslim.se/2019/02/01/muslimer-och-islam-i-media-2018/> (Access date: 23 October 2020).

64. Brune Ylva, *Mörk magi i vita medier: Svensk journalistik om invandrare* (Dark Magi in White Media: Swedish Journalism about Migrants) (Carlssons bokförlag, Stockholm: 1998); Camauër, Leonor & Nohrstedt, Stig Ahrne (reds) *Mediernas Vi och Dom: Mediernas betydelse för den strukturella diskrimineringen* (The Media’s Us and Them: The Role of Media for Structural Discrimination) (Fritzes, Stockholm: 2006); Kamali, Masoud (2008) *Racial Discrimination: Institutional Patterns and Politics* (Routledge NY: 2008).

65. “Protestupprop mot rasism på Sveriges Radio i BLM-rörelsens spår”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 25 October 2020, <https://www.dn.se/kultur/protestupprop-mot-rasism-pa-sveriges-radio-i-blm-rorelsens-spar/> (Access date: 3 November 2020).

Swedish Radio in many ways does – has failed. We have all experienced the editorial laziness in listening to Afro-Swedish voices, shortcomings in organized and multifaceted reporting of this subject in Sweden and the lack of the “sense of urgency” about such a question that is shaking the entire world.

A few days later, on October 25, other journalists with immigrant and Muslim backgrounds working at the Swedish Television (SVT) supported their colleagues at the Swedish Radio and pointed out the severe problem of racism at the SVT. Although they do not explicitly mention systemic discrimination of Muslims at the SR, they pointed to a major problem in Swedish media.⁶⁶

Justice System

A well-known Swedish phrase from the 1800s states that “the only real protection for the poor is the law.” A justice system that protects the poor, minorities, and victims against criminal offenders is highly depended on two pillars: the clarity of laws against crimes, hate crimes in this case, and a proper police investigation that can provide a basis for a court decision. Therefore, the justice system is highly depended on the police’s investigation of crimes. However, there are two major problems in the process of the police investigations of hate crimes or other crimes related to anti-Muslimism. The first is the lack of willingness on the side of the police to label such crimes “hate crimes against Muslims.”⁶⁷ Swedish research concerning the shortcomings of police investigations of hate crimes against Muslims or what researchers call “anti-Muslim racism” shows that when there is not a proper investigation of such crimes and the police mislabels hate crimes as something else, the judiciary has no chance of bringing the offenders to justice.⁶⁸

The law on the freedom of religion was introduced in Sweden in 1951, but in reality, it was not examined until the Muslim migration to Sweden which occurred later. Its implementation is not clear and often faces many difficulties since the concept of ‘freedom of religion’ remains vague in many senses.⁶⁹ Discrimination against minorities, in general, and Muslims, in particular, has been observed by researchers and resulted in a report from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brå*) which showed that discrimination against such groups occurs frequently in the Swedish legal system.⁷⁰ Discrimination against minorities and Muslims occurs both in the

66. “Diskriminering på SVT och SR inifrån”, *Expressen*, 24 October 2020, <https://www.expressen.se/premium/diskrimineringen-pa-svt-och-sr-inifran/> (Access date: 4 November 2020).

67. Marta Kolankiewics, “När hatbrott mot muslimer kallas någonting annat”, *Mana*, 2017, no 4.

68. See Sarnecki (2006) and Kolankiewics (2019) among others. Kolankiewics, Marta, *Anti-Muslim Racism on Trial: Muslims, The Swedish Judiciary and Possibility of Justice*. (London, Routledge: 2019).

69. Pia Karlsson och Ingvar Svanberg (red.). *Religionsfrihet i Sverige. Om möjligheten att leva som troende*. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1997), s. 14.

70. BRÅ (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention) *Diskriminering i rättsprocessen* [Discrimination in courts] Report no. 2008:4. https://www.bra.se/download/18.cba82f7130f475a2f180007887/1371914724514/2008_4_diskriminering_i_rattsprocessen.pdf (Access date 10 November 2020).

process of police actions and investigations, as well as in Swedish courts. A study from 2017 showed that being stopped and searched by the police is a common experience for people with Afro-Swedish, Roma, and Muslim backgrounds. They are stopped by police while driving, walking, or being in public spaces, and are treated as potential perpetrators.⁷¹ Another study reinforces this study by showing that Swedish police discriminates against visible minorities, including Muslims, based on routine procedures, established working methods, and informal profiling based on stereotypes.⁷²



Figure 12: A picture published in the Swedish press showing a Muslim man in a mosque who is presented as a leader of a criminal clan.⁷³

The increasing anti-Muslimism and hate crimes against Muslims in combination with the passive reaction and the discriminatory actions of the justice system have forced the Swedish Muslims in Cooperation Network to report the crimes against Muslims and other minorities and the passiveness of the Swedish judiciary to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (OHCHR) in 2018. The report says that the passivity of the Swedish judicial system in fighting against and preventing hate crime have led to Muslims' very low confidence in the Swedish justice system and in the Swedish Equality Ombudsman (DO).⁷⁴ A research report by the Segerstedt In-

71. Schclarek Mulinari, Leandro, "Slumpvis utvald. Ras-/etnisk profilering i Sverige", (Civil Rights Defenders, Stockholm: 2017).

72. Brandt Hillevi, *Diskriminering av synliga minoriteter. Ett utvidgat diskrimineringsförbuds möjligheter och begränsningar i att förhindra sådan diskriminering*, (Lunds Universitet, Lund: 2017).

73. Ibid.

74. "Nätverket svenska muslimer vänder sig till FN", 27 April 2018, <https://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/svenska-muslimer-i-samarbete/pressreleases/naetverket-svenska-muslimer-i-samarbete-vaender-sig-til-fn-2492515> (Access date: 7 October 2020).

stitute at Gothenburg University shows that the policies of countering radicalization and terrorism focus generally on Muslims and view Muslim organizations in Sweden as responsible for jihadism and terrorism.⁷⁵

In August and September 2020, a harsh debate on “gang criminality” dominated the Swedish media and political sphere. The main figures of the debate were politicians and representatives of the Swedish racist party, SD, and the police. The Swedish police chief, Mats Löfving, claimed that there are 40 clans whose members are criminals.⁷⁶ Although the police report about clans included many different groups, the debate mainly concerned “clans with roots in the Middle East” - a notion which is often used to single out Muslims. The Swedish tabloid, *Expressen*, reported on the “clan criminality” mentioned by Löfving by publishing a picture of the so-called clan leader Hashem Ali Khan preaching in a mosque.⁷⁷

Internet

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) sees a growing use of the Internet by extreme right-wing groups for spreading hate propaganda in all European countries.⁷⁸ This trend continues. Already in 2015, the European Commission had declared that hate speech against Jews and Muslims was increasing on the Internet; however, nothing was really done since then.⁷⁹ There are reports from the 2010s that confirm that the Internet had become a major place for disseminating hate and racism against religious minorities, such as Jews and Muslims.⁸⁰ Even the Swedish government declared that the Internet is the most important forum for spreading hate and negative attitudes against Muslims.⁸¹ The organization *Nätthats hjälpen* (Help against Internet Hate) also indicates that the most common hate speech on the Internet is Afrophobia and Islamophobia.⁸²

A report from the Swedish Muslims in Cooperation Network shows that the Internet is a common place for racist attacks against Muslims. The Internet is a place where negative images and stereotypes of Muslims are widely communicated and disseminated. The network reported this to the UN Human Rights Committee and

75. Hez Marcus, *Socialt arbete, pedagogik och arbete mot så kallad våldsbejakad extremism* (Segerstedtinstitutet, Göteborg: 2017).

76. “Klarar polisen gängkriminalitet Mats Löfving?”, Swedish Radio, <https://sverigeradio.se/avsnitt/1562309> (Access date: 27 October 2020).

77. “Familjerna i polisens rapport – Här finns det de 39 klanerna”, *Expressen*, 18 September 2020.

78. “Databases 2012-2017 on Anti-Muslim Hatred”, FRA, March 2018, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2018/database-2012-2017-anti-muslim-hatred> (Access date: 20 October 2020).

79. “Europarådet ser dramatisk ökning av nätthater”, Europa portalen, 9 July 2015, <https://www.europaportalen.se/2015/07/europaradet-ser-dramatisk-okning-av-nathater> (Access date: 10 October 2020).

80. Forum för levande historia, *Antisemitism och islamofobi* (Forum för levandehistoria, Stockholm: 2011).

81. “Sakråd om ytterligare åtgärder för att motverka islamofobi”, 11 September 2017, <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2017/09/sakrad-om-ytterligare-atgarder-for-att-motverka-islamofobi/> (Access date: 28 September 2020).

82. “Ett antisemitiskt perspektiv på nätthater”, *Nätthats hjälpen*, <https://nathatshjälpen.se/a/rasim/> (Access date: 28 October 2020).

asked for their intervention to counteract the Swedish government's passivity in eliminating hate against Muslims on the Internet.⁸³



Figure 13: A representative selection of Swedish racist and anti-Muslim homepages on the Internet.⁸⁴

An examination of several anti-Muslim and racist Internet sites shows that such groups are not only using real individuals, but also robots for the spread of hate against Muslims and other migrant groups. The author of an article in *Nyheter 24* (News 24), Jonathan Lundberg, writes that robots which are engaged in racist social media sites demonize Muslims and people with migrant background by spreading fake news. He wrote that fake news and accusations against Muslims and people with immigrant backgrounds are spread on the Internet and help to reinforce anti-Muslim racism in the country. Many such racist and anti-Muslim sites, such as *Avpixlat*, *Fria Tider*, and *Exponerat*, closely cooperate with leading figures of the anti-Muslim and racist party SD and try to influence the Swedish electorate to vote for the party.⁸⁵ Many anti-Muslim and racist groups in Sweden hope that the SD will soon become the largest party in Sweden and gain even more influence in Swedish politics. According to the Swedish government and the Swedish Security Service (Säpo), anti-Muslim attitudes and propaganda have been increasing in the country, in general, and on the Internet, in particular.⁸⁶ This has caused the Swedish government to give

83. "Nätverket svenska muslimer vänder sig till FN", 27 April 2018, <https://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/svenska-muslimer-i-samarbete/pressreleases/naetverket-svenska-muslimer-i-samarbete-vaender-sig-till-fn-2492515> (Access date: 7 October 2020).

84. "Rasistiska sajter du vill inte dela på sociala medier", *Politism*, 14 December 2014, <https://twitter.com/politismse/status/544039970072432640?lang=sv> (Access date: 2 November 2020).

85. "Det här är rasistiska sajter som främjar näthat", *Nyheter 24*, Swedish Television, <https://nyheter24.se/nyheter/kronikor/783780-det-har-ar-rasistiska-sajter-som-framjar-hat> (Access date, 29 October 2020).

86. "Brottsförebygganderådet får i uppdrag att fördjupa kunskapen om islamofobi och hatbrott", 17 October 2019, <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2019/10/brottsforebyggande-radet-far-i-uppdrag-att-fordjupa-kunskapen-om-islamofobiska-hatbrott/> (Access date: 29 September 2020).

the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention the responsibility of examining the anti-Muslim attitudes in the country.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The following are central figures in the Islamophobia network in Sweden:

- The anti-Muslim political party Swedish Democrats (SD)
- The anti-Muslim party, currently not represented in parliament, National Democrats (ND)
- The leader of the Liberal People's Party, Nyamko Sabuni
- The MP from the Moderate Party, Hanif Bali
- The politician from the Swedish Social Democratic Party, Nalin Peggul
- The leader of the Christian Democrats, Ebba Bush
- The leader of the Moderate Party, Ulf Kristersson
- A MP from Left Party, Amina Kakabaveh. She is excluded from the Left Party because of her overt anti-Muslim attitudes but is still an MP.
- The editorial staff of the following major dailies: *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD), *Dagens Nyheter* (DN), *Göteborgs Posten* (GP), *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, and *Uppsala Nya Tidning* (UNT).
- The think tank OIKOS connected to the SD.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The Swedish government has shown concern about the increasing anti-Muslimism among right-wing extremism in Sweden. Although the government is unable to see its own responsibility and the role of the mainstream parties in the legitimization of anti-Muslimism, it cannot ignore the dramatic increase in anti-Muslimism, which if continued can create a security problem for the country. That is why, as mentioned earlier, the government has given the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brå*) the responsibility to study anti-Muslimism (labelled "Islamophobia" by the government) in Sweden.⁸⁷ However, most initiatives to counter anti-Muslimism come from civil society actors with Muslim backgrounds. Among such initiatives are the following:

- **Muslim Youths of Sweden (SUM).** (SUM) is an Islamic organization of young Muslims in Sweden that is comprised of about 40 Muslim associations and numbers about 5,000 members. The organization is highly active in combating anti-Muslimism. It organizes courses, seminars, and education

87. "Brottsförebygganderådet får i uppdrag att fördjupa kunskapen om islamofobi och hatbrott", 17 October 2019, <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2019/10/brottsforebyggande-radet-far-i-uppdrag-att-fordjupa-kunskapen-om-islamofobiska-hatbrott/> (Access date: 29 September 2020).

camps for members, including one major annual conference on Islamophobia. The SUM has been engaged in common projects with other organizations for combating racism in Sweden. The head of the organization, Rashid Musa, has participated in many TV and radio programs in order to fight anti-Muslimism.

- **Nyans Muslim.** This is an Internet platform for discussing and presenting facts concerning racism, in general, and Islamophobia in particular. The site was formed in 2014 and is highly engaged in the production of digitally accessible reports on Islamophobia in Sweden.⁸⁸
- **Ibn Rushd Educational Association.** The association's main goal is to educate people on religion, diversity, and human rights. It is one of ten associations that provide education, seminars, and cultural activities.⁸⁹
- **Muslim Human Rights Committee (MMRK).** This is an organization established in 2007 that actively fights anti-Muslimism in Sweden. The leader, Kitimbwa Sabuni, and one of the most active members of the organization, Fatima Doubakil, frequently participate in debates and civil society actions against anti-Muslimism.
- **Expo.** This is an antiracist civil society organization that fights against racism by producing critical reports and organizing seminars that fight both racism and anti-Muslim racism.
- **Khalifatet podcast.** This is a podcast in which important issues concerning racism and anti-Muslim racism are discussed and debated.⁹⁰

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Although the Swedish governmental inquiry *Power, Integration and Structural Discrimination*⁹¹ warned the government and other political parties of the problem of racism and the discrimination of marginalized groups with immigrant background and Muslims, in particular, the Swedish government decided to ignore the thirteen reports of the inquiry, its thirty suggestions for changes, and continued its neoliberalization and discriminatory policies.⁹² As a result of the mainstream parties' racist policies, according to which migrants in general and Muslims in particular are considered "backwards", "traditional" and non-compatible with the "modern society of

88. "Om Nyans muslim", *Nyans: Muslim*, <https://www.nyansmuslim.se/om-nyansmuslim/> (Access date: 10 September 2020).

89. Ibn Rushd Studieförbund, <https://www.ibnrushd.se/> (Access date: 29 October 2020).

90. Podden Khalifatet, <https://khalifatet.podbean.com/> (Access date: 22 October 2020).

91. "Utredningen om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering" (2004:04), https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/kommitteberattelse/utredningen-om-makt-integration-och-strukturell_GSB2Ju04 (Access date: 30 October 2020)

92. "Utredningen om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering" (2004:04), https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/kommitteberattelse/utredningen-om-makt-integration-och-strukturell_GSB2Ju04 (Access date: 30 October 2020)

Sweden”, the racist and anti-Muslim party Swedish Democrats (SD) gained considerable electoral support and entered the Swedish parliament in the election of 2010. Ever since, the electoral support for the party has been growing and today the party is the third-largest party in Sweden. The party has an anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim background. The party was founded by racist activists who in the 1980s gathered in a racist network called “Keep Sweden Swedish.” The party leadership and other party members have strong anti-Muslim attitudes, beliefs, and programs, and communicate such beliefs publicly. The party’s electoral success and the mainstream parties’ adjustment of their policies and programs to the SD has had devastating consequences for people with immigrant backgrounds and, in particular, Muslims.

Given the fact that structural and institutional racism and discrimination against Muslims have a political history, counteracting and fighting racism and specifically anti-Muslim racism also requires political decisions and interventions. This can be done in many ways, but first and foremost, political parties need to put an end to thinking in terms of the “voting market,” which makes them adjust themselves to the growing racism and anti-Muslimism sentiments and attitudes. The followings are some suggestions and recommendations in order to combat anti-Muslimism:

1. Anti-discrimination laws must be sharpened, and a new clause in the law concerning anti-Muslim racism should be included in the law.
2. Mainstream parties must stop demonizing and stigmatizing Muslims, and stop cooperation with the racist and anti-Muslim party Swedish Democrats.
3. Given the fact that Muslims make up the majority of marginalized people in Sweden, short-term and long-term anti-marginalization policies should be introduced and implemented by the government. Such policies should not be election-sensitive and must be made part of the country’s long-term social policies.
4. Muslim women’s right to wear a headscarf should be respected as part of their human rights and freedom of religion.
5. Journalists should be held accountable for demonizing Muslims.
6. Schoolbooks and curricula should be reformed, and their anti-Muslim contents should be eliminated.
7. Higher education, in general, and education of journalism and social workers, in particular, should be changed and knowledge of the marginalization and anti-Muslim racism should be included in the higher education curricula.
8. Muslim civil society organizations working against anti-Muslim racism should create a national network and cooperate with other anti-racist organizations.
9. Muslim civil society organizations must actively participate in public debates in order to counter the public demonization of Muslims.
10. Muslim civil society organizations must be more active in using the Internet as their main means of communication.

Chronology

- **01.01.2020:** Skurup municipality led by the SD enact veil ban in schools.
- **20.02.2020:** A school principal, Mattias Liedholm, receives death threats because he refuses to apply the veil ban in his school.
- **06.06.2020:** The leader of the Liberal People's Party, Nyamko Sabuni indicates her willingness to ban the veil and prohibit Muslim schools in Sweden.
- **06.06.2020:** Nyamko Sabuni defends an anti-Muslim report entitled *Rosengårdsrapporten* (The Rosengård [a marginalized neighborhood in the southern city of Malmö] report) in which many Muslim youths are stigmatized as terrorist sympathizers.
- **28.08.2020:** Two Danish racists and anti-Muslims, who are referred to in the media as “artists,” namely Dan Park and the Danish extreme right politician Rasmus Paludan, apply to the Swedish police in the southern city of Malmö, where many Muslims with immigrant background live, to gain permission to burn the Quran in the front of the Rosengård Mosque.
- **28.08.2020:** The two Danish racists and their racist Swedish allies burn the Quran in a park in downtown Malmö.
- **15.09.2020:** The Swedish tabloid, *Expressen*, reports that one of the leading members of the SD, Martin Strid, says that Muslims are not human.
- **16.09.2020:** The leader of the Moderate Party, Ulf Kristersson, writes in the daily *Göteborgs Posten* that “Islam abuses what is meant by the law of freedom of religion” and suggests a law which reduces the freedom of religion.
- **19.09.2020:** Anti-Muslim racists in Åstorp municipality, a city in southern Sweden, spray swastikas and the text “Bloody Muslims” on a house where Muslim families live.
- **03.11.2020:** Ebba Busch, the leader of Christian Democrats in Sweden, states in parliament and writes in the Swedish daily *Svenska Dagbladet* that “the government must act to prevent Islamism and terrorism in Europe.”

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SWITZERLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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Executive Summary

Continuous bias and selective framing of Islam, the Muslim community, and events at the national and international levels among prominent commentators, journalists, politicians, and ordinary citizens has unfortunately been very palpable in 2020. It led to a high level of discrimination and the perception of Muslims as a threat. Muslim individuals, mosques, and Islamic organisations were recklessly labelled as a “threat to national security.” The announcement of a mosque project in Reinach triggered a chain of media reactions following unfounded information by Saïda Keller-Messahli. She claimed that the money (“millions”) for the construction of large Albanian mosques (including those in Wil SG, Netstal GL, and Plan-les-Ouates GE) came from Kuwait. This was followed by the controversy over the German edition of the book *Qatar Papers* with a foreword by Keller-Messahli requesting stricter restrictions and control over Muslims and their respective religious institutions.

Despite the condemnation by the Federal Court of Jean-Luc Addor (SVP national councillor) for his openly racist statements, he carried on his hostile offensive against the headscarf, in particular, and Muslims, in general. He objected to the wearing of the headscarf in public companies, i.e., the Swiss Post and the Swiss Federal Railways, through disseminating protests letters to heads of companies and demanding a popular vote for its legislation in the parliament. Hence, a year of compelled physical distancing led to greater social distancing, meaning a deeper divide between the Muslim community and society at large. Sadly, Muslim women in headscarves became further vulnerable and victimized targets of assaults, abuse, and additional obstacles in apprenticeship and job applications.

Zusammenfassung

Die anhaltende Voreingenommenheit und selektives Framing des Islam, der muslimischen Gemeinschaft und der Ereignisse auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene war im Jahr 2020 durch prominente Kommentatoren, Journalisten, Politiker oder einigen einfachen Bürgern leider sehr deutlich zu spüren. Dies führte zu einem hohen Mass an Diskriminierung und der Wahrnehmung von Muslimen als Bedrohung. Muslimische Einzelpersonen, Moscheen und islamische Organisationen wurden unbedacht und rücksichtslos als „Bedrohung für die nationale Sicherheit“ abgestempelt. Die Ankündigung eines Moscheebauprojekts in Reinach löste eine Kette von Medienreaktionen aus, nachdem Saïda Keller-Messahli's unbegründete Angaben gemacht hatte. Sie behauptete, dass das Geld („Millionen“) für den Bau grosser albanischer Moscheen (u.a. in Wil SG, Netstal GL und Plan-les-Ouates GE) aus Kuwait kam. Dies folgte auf die Kontroverse um die deutsche Ausgabe des Buches „Qatar Papers“ mit einem Vorwort von Keller-Messahli, das zahlreiche Forderungen nach strengeren Restriktionen und Kontrollen über Muslime und entsprechende religiöse Einrichtungen provozierte.

Trotz der Verurteilung von Jean-Luc Addor (SVP-Nationalrat) durch das Bundesgericht wegen seiner offen rassistischen Äusserungen setzte dieser Politiker seine feindselige Offensive gegen das Kopftuch im Besonderen und Muslime im Allgemeinen fort. Er wandte sich gegen das Tragen des Kopftuchs in öffentlichen Unternehmen, z.B. bei der Schweizerischen Post und den Schweizerischen Bundesbahnen, indem er Protestbriefe an die Unternehmensleiter verbreitete und eine entsprechende Gesetzgebung im Parlament forderte.

So führte ein Jahr der erzwungenen physischen Distanzierung zu einer grösseren sozialen Distanzierung, was eine tiefere Kluft zwischen der muslimischen Gemeinschaft und der Gesellschaft im Allgemeinen bedeutet. Dies führte zu einer zunehmenden Feindseligkeit gegenüber Muslimen. Traurigerweise wurden die muslimischen Frauen mit Kopftuch zu weiteren verletzlichen und viktimisierten Zielscheiben von Übergriffen, Beschimpfungen und zusätzlichen Hindernissen bei Ausbildungs- und Stellenbewerbungen.

Résumé

Les préjugés persistants et le cadrage sélectif de l’Islam, de la communauté musulmane continuent malheureusement à être très perceptibles en 2020 chez les commentateurs, journalistes, politiciens ou certains citoyens ordinaires. Cela a conduit à un niveau élevé de discrimination et de la perception des musulmans comme une menace. Les musulmans, les mosquées et les organisations musulmanes ont été qualifiés de manière irréfléchie, douteuse et imprudente de “menace pour la sécurité nationale”. L’annonce d’un projet de mosquée à Reinach a déclenché une chaîne de réactions médiatiques suite à des informations non fondées énoncées par Saïda Keller-Messahli. Elle a affirmé que l’argent (“des millions”) pour la construction de grandes mosquées albanaises (notamment celles de Wil SG, Netstal GL et Plan-les-Ouates GE) provenait du Koweït. Cette annonce a été suivie de la controverse concernant l’édition allemande du livre “Qatar Papers” dont l’avant-propos de Keller-Messahli a provoqué de nombreuses demandes de durcissement des restrictions et de contrôle des musulmans et des institutions religieuses respectives.

Malgré la condamnation par le Tribunal fédéral de Jean-Luc Addor (conseiller national de l’UDC) pour ses déclarations ouvertement racistes, cet homme politique a poursuivi son offensive hostile contre le foulard en particulier et les musulmans en général. Il s’est opposé au port du foulard dans les entreprises publiques, c’est-à-dire à la Poste et aux Chemins de fer fédéraux suisses, en diffusant des lettres de protestation aux chefs d’entreprise et en exigeant le vote populaire de sa législation au Parlement.

Ainsi, après une année de distanciation sociale forcée (due au COVID), l’éloignement sociale s’est accrue, ce qui a creusé le fossé entre la communauté musulmane et la société dans son ensemble. Il en a résulté une hostilité accrue à l’égard des musulmans. Les femmes musulmanes portant le foulard sont malheureusement devenues des cibles de plus en plus vulnérables et victimes d’agressions, d’abus, d’obstacles supplémentaires dans l’apprentissage et les demandes d’emploi.

Country Profile

EIR 2020

Country: Swiss Confederation (Switzerland)

Type of Government: Federal semi-direct democracy under a multi-party parliamentary directorial republic

Ruling/Opposition Parties: Multi-party system with the Federal Council (cabinet) as a seven-member executive council with an annually rotating presidency (2 Swiss Social Democratic Party [SP/PS], 1 Christian Democrat People's Party [CVP/PDC], 2 FDP. The Liberals [FDP/ PLR], 2 Swiss People's Party [SVP/UDC])

Other Parties in the Federal Assembly (Parliament): Swiss Green Party (GPS/PES), Swiss Green Liberal Party (glp/pvl), Conservative Democratic Party (BDP/PBD), Ticino League (Lega), Swiss Evangelical People's Party (EVP/PEV), Federal Democratic Union (EDU/UDF), Swiss Party of Labour (PdA/PST), Solidarity (solidarités)

Last Elections: Federal elections 2019 (Seats: National Council/ Council of States): SVP/UDC (53/6), SP/PS (39/9), FDP/PLR (28/12), GPS/PES (28/5), CVP/PDC (25/13), glp/pvl (16/0)

Total Population: 8.7 million (mid-2020, according to UN data)

Major Languages: German, French, Italian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism), but some recognised religious communities in the cantons.

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to the 2019 *Survey on Language, Religion and Culture* by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO), 35% of Muslim individuals have been victims of discrimination based on their religious affiliation in at least one specific situation in Switzerland.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Annual report "Racism Incidents from Counselling Practice" for the year 2019 by the Counselling Network for Victims of Racism recorded a huping 352 reported cases on racial discrimination. It identified that the third most common motive for discrimination is the "Muslim hostility" category with 55 counselling cases.

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholics 34%, No religion 29%, Protestants 23%, Muslims 5.5% (2019)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 391,703 (15 years of age and over, 2019)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Federation of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (FIOS), Coordination of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (KIOS)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: The intercultural association JASS, National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI)

Far-Right Parties: Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC), Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland (EDU/UDF), The Ticino League (LEGA), Swiss Nationalist Party (PNOS/PNS)

Far-Right Movements: *Résistance Helvétique*

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** Yes (since 1893)
- **Minaret Ban:** Yes (since 2009)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Cantons of Ticino (2016) and St. Gallen (2019)
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

It is noticeable in recent years that most of the organisations fighting against racism faced a reduction in financing. In the editorial of the annual report for 2019 of the Federal Commission against Racism (FCR), Martine Brunschwig Graf, the FCR president, stated how the Secretariat of the Commission necessarily had to operate with fewer employees.¹ In the foreword of the Counselling Network for Victims of Racism annual report on “Racism Incidents from Counselling Practice 2019”, authorities were urged for greater financing of the counselling centres.² As a matter of fact, in Paragraph 7, the sixth “ECRI Report on Switzerland” offered the following as a major recommendation: “Counselling Centres for Victims of Racism are strengthened by increased funding (from a budget separate from the Cantonal Integration Programmes) and human resources”.³

Even the Contact and Legal Advice Centre of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (FIOS),⁴ which has been registering hate crimes against Muslims since January 2018, struggled due to lack of funds. It usually relies on donations from FIOS members to sustain all its functions.⁵

For example, the Canton of Graubünden doesn't have its own counselling centre for reporting racist incidents. Some even claimed that “the canton does not want to create an official body” because “the case reporting could rise sharply”. The executive director of the FCR confirmed extant efforts and initiatives of the Counselling Network for Victims of Racism to establish such a body, yet affirmed that “it is a ‘political decision’”.⁶

According to the *Survey on Language, Religion and Culture*⁷ by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO), published on December 14, 2020, 8.2% of the total population

1. Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus EKR, “Jahresbericht 2019”, p. 4, https://www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/Jahresbericht_2019.pdf, (Access date: 12 January 2021).
2. Beratungsnetz für Rassismosopfer, “Rassismosvorfälle aus der Beratungspraxis: Januar bis Dezember 2019”, April 2020, p. 1, http://network-racism.ch/cms/upload/200421_Rassismusbericht_19_D.pdf, (Access date: 12 January 2021). The Counselling Network for Victims of Racism is coordinated by humanrights.ch and the FCR.
3. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), “Sixth report on Switzerland”, adopted on 10 December 2019, published on 19 March 2020, p. 10, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-switzerland-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4bd>.
4. The Federation of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (FIOS) is the largest Swiss Muslim umbrella organisation. www.fids.ch.
5. With the development of the online reporting form as well as the mobile app (FIDS Report) in January 2018, the FIOS facilitated the reporting of anti-Muslim attacks in Switzerland. FIDS, “Anlaufstelle”, <https://www.fids.ch/index.php/anlaufstelle/>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).
6. Pierina Hassler und Simon Lechmann, “Graubünden ist kein weisser Fleck”, *Bündner Zeitung*, 16 May 2020, p. 3.
7. The *Survey on Language, Religion and Culture (Erhebung zur Sprache, Religion und Kultur - ESRK)* is part of the federal population census system. It was conducted for the first time in 2014 and is repeated every five years. Data is collected using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) and a supplementary online or paper questionnaire. The ESRK covers the permanent resident population aged 15 and older. 13,417 respondents participated in the 2019 survey. According to “Data sources” in the press release: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfsstatic/dam/assets/14856799/master>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

reported to have been the subjects of discrimination⁸ in the preceding year due to religious orientation. (Figure 1) In the 2019 survey, 35% of Muslim individuals were in at least one specific situation victims of discrimination in Switzerland on the basis of their religious affiliation.⁹

Diskriminierungserfahrung aufgrund der Religionszugehörigkeit in den letzten zwölf Monaten in mindestens einer konkreten Situation in der Schweiz, nach Religionszugehörigkeit

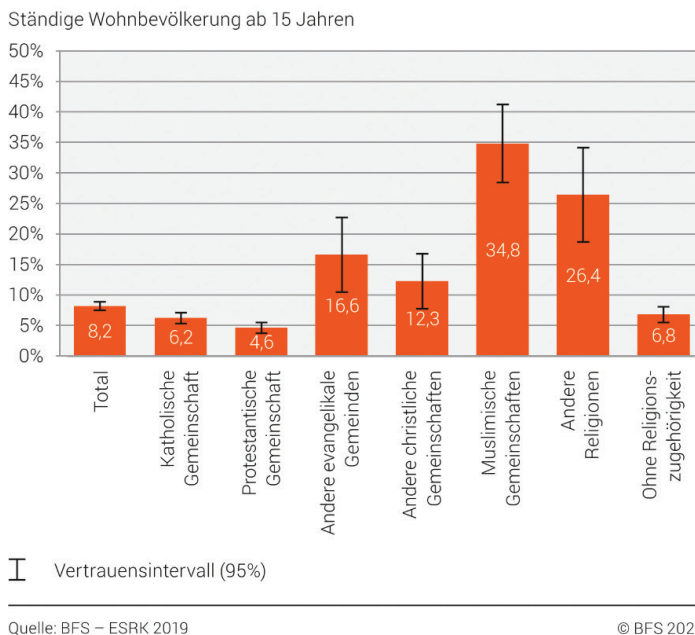


Figure 1: “Experience of discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs in the last twelve months in at least one specific situation in Switzerland, according to religious affiliation.” Graphic from the *Survey on Language, Religion and Culture* (ESRK) by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO), publish on 14 December 2020.¹⁰

In the 2019 annual report, the FCR reiterated that the media’s railroading of “negatively charged” issues such as “radicalisation, wearing the burqa,” etc., caused the segregation and distancing of citizens from the Muslim community.¹¹

The report on Switzerland by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (hereinafter ECRI) corroborated that the “sudden rise” of intolerant dis-

8. “Discrimination describes all practices in which a person (or group of persons) is restricted in their rights, treated unequally or intolerantly, humiliated, threatened or put in danger.” ESRK 2019, p. 28, <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung.assetdetail.15023003.html>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

9. ESRK 2019, p. 29, <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung.assetdetail.15023003.html>, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

10. Ibid.

11. Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus EKR, “Jahresbericht 2019”, April 2020, p. 1, https://www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/Jahresbericht_2019.pdf, p. 5, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

course against Muslims, “particularly in the media,” is likely leading to “legislation or legislative proposals concerning Muslims in particular”.¹² Moreover, it acknowledged that Muslim women with apparent symbols of religious denomination are “especially susceptible to hate speech due to the intersection of gender and religion which leads to isolation and hinders constructive efforts for an inclusive society”.¹³

As indicated in the report “Racism Incidents from Counselling Practice” for the year 2019, the Counselling Network for Victims of Racism recorded a hyping 352 reported cases of racial discrimination.¹⁴ It identified that the third most common motive for discrimination is the “Muslim hostility” category with 55 counselling cases. Additionally, there were 28 counselling cases in the relatable category of “hostility against people from the Arab world”. The two motives were most frequent in neighbourhoods/quarters (17), public spaces (16), and the labour market (11).¹⁵ Likewise, the platform rassismus.ch, which is run by the GRA Foundation against Racism and Anti-Semitism and the Society for Minorities in Switzerland (GMS), is another important source of reported anti-Muslim attacks.¹⁶ Their last report indicated that threats to “dark-skinned people” and Muslims were recurrent out of the 41 attacks registered in 2019.¹⁷

The Canton of St. Gallen noted the doubling of reports of racism and discrimination, and illustrated such reports with a case of a bus driver bypassing people of colour or hijabi women.¹⁸

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

It is a fact that there is no generally accepted term of hatred towards Islam or Muslims in Switzerland and that this topic does not attract enough media attention. However, the existing attempts of designating those who use the terms “Islamophobia” or “anti-Muslim racism” as “Islamists” are alarming. The media gives space to those who

12. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), “Sixth report on Switzerland”, adopted on 10 December 2019, published on 19 March 2020, p. 15, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-switzerland-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4bd>, (Access date: 14 January 2021).

13. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

14. Beratungsnetz für Rassismuseder, “Rassismusederfälle aus der Beratungspraxis: Januar bis Dezember 2019”, April 2020, p. 6, http://network-racism.ch/cms/upload/200421_Rassismusederbericht_19_D.pdf, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

15. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

16. The GRA Foundation against Racism and Anti-Semitism is a foundation registered in Zurich. It works against racially motivated discrimination, in general, and anti-Semitism, in particular. <https://www.gra.ch/gra/ueber-uns/>, (Access date: 14 January 2021).

17. GRA, “Rassismusederbericht 2019: Forderung nach Zivilcourage in der Gesellschaft”, p. 2, https://www.gra.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Rassismusederbericht-2019_Einsch%C3%A4tzung_DE_pdf-zum-downloaddefiniv2.pdf, (Access date: 14 January 2021).

18. “Mehr Anfragen wegen Diskriminierung”, Kanton St. Gallen, 28 February 2020, https://www.sg.ch/news/sgch_allgemein/2020/02/mehr-anfragen-wegen-diskriminierung-.html (Access date: 5 January 2021).

seek to relativise or question Islamophobia regularly. Thus, Prof. Dr. Koopman had the opportunity to communicate his “empirical findings”¹⁹ that Muslims must look for answers of their Islamophobia arguments in the core or foundational Islamic teachings. Moreover, Koopman’s book was promoted in the media and recommended in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)* a Swiss, German-language daily newspaper as an “important reading”. The book enjoyed publicity in the *NZZ* with pompous titles such as “Those Who Dismiss Criticism of Islam as Islamophobia Favour the Hands of the Fundamentalists”.²⁰

In addition to the above, the anti-Muslim polemicist Saïda Keller-Messahli²¹ claimed that the term ‘Islamophobia’ is “spread deliberately by Islamists” to prevent “criticism of political Islam”.²² It is also asserted that the term ‘anti-Muslim racism’ “has been annexed and instrumentalised by Islamists” who “try to garner influence in the guise of anti-racism and equally delegitimise criticism of Islam and Islamist structures”.²³

Physical and Verbal Attacks

It is unfortunate that an increasing number of Muslims continued to be victimised via hate speech and acts amidst the 2020 global pandemic and its drastic impact on Swiss society which led to lockdowns, restrictive measures on gatherings, and physical distancing. Such a state of affairs should have reflected greater social unity and solidarity instead of deepening segregation. However, the actual number of such hate assaults is obscure. Some victims had no clue where to report while others faced police disregard or lack of understanding of the seriousness of the perpetrated crimes. Hence, it is difficult even to estimate the number of such assaults or attacks. Nevertheless, few cases did receive media attention. The inadequate or sometimes reluctant police action in such cases is a real problem and of particular concern.

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19. Alfred Schlienger draws attention to the multitude of gaps in Koopmans’ book: Alfred Schlienger, “kontertext: Islamkritisch oder islamophob? Eine Gratwanderung.”, Infosperber, 12 August 2020, <https://www.infosperber.ch/medien/medienkritik/kontertext-islamkritisch-oder-islamophob-eine-gratwanderung/>, (Access date: 8 January 2021). Pascal Gemperli is also critical of some allegations: Pascal Gemperli, “Ist der Islam der entscheidende Faktor, warum viele muslimische Länder Entwicklungsrückstände aufweisen? Nein, so einfach ist es nicht”, *NZZ Online*, 18 August 2020, <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/islamdebatte-nein-es-liegt-nich-alles-ander-religion-ld.1571752?reduced=true>, (Access date: 8 January 2021).
 20. Ruud Koopmans, “Wer Kritik am Islam pauschal als Islamophobie abtut, spielt den Fundamentalisten in die Hände”, *NZZ Online*, 20 February 2020, <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/kritik-am-islam-pauschal-als-islamophobie-abzutun-ist-falsch-ld.1540587> (Access date: 4 January 2021).
 21. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Saïda Keller-Messahli, 12 March 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-saïda-keller-messahli/> (Access date: 4 January 2021).
 22. Rico Bandle, “Wir sollten hellhörig werden, wenn das Wort ‘islamophob’ fällt”, *Sonntagszeitung*, 8 November 2020, <https://www.derbund.ch/in-schweizer-moscheen-werden-kinder-von-klein-auf-indoktriniert-607956060529>, (Access date: 14 January 2021).
 23. Zara Riffler, “Begriff ‘Antimuslimischer Rassismus’ – Ein islamistisches Pferd”, *Audiatour-Online*, 28 September 2020, <https://www.audiatour-online.ch/2020/09/28/begriff-antimuslimischer-rassismus-ein-islamistisches-pferd/>, (Access date: 14 January 2021).

For instance, a 50-year-old disabled woman with a headscarf was molested while disposing trash outside a mall on 28 March 2020. An adult man hit her fiercely on the right shoulder and continued cursing and punching her. After attempts to call the police, the attacker ripped her headscarf off. He even vowed to kill her by saying, “Do you think I will allow such a creature to live? I will kill you and your species with these fingers. You dirty Muslims have brought filth and viruses to our land [and] polluted it. Wherever you are, deception follows. Murdering you would be my happiest moment.” The attacker left after noticing two people watching it all unfold. The woman followed him to the mall. Meanwhile, the police went to the woman’s home instead of the mall due to miscommunication. During subsequent communication with the police via phone, she was asked to provide further detail about the attackers (i.e., his name, address, etc.). Upon failure to provide the details, the police instructed her to come to the police station instead of investigating the attackers further. The police officers at the station told her that nothing can be done. The police disregarded her appeals to inspect the camera footage in the areas surrounding the mall on the grounds that no cameras exist around the recycling containers. In the end, the embassy of her home country intervened to defend her.²⁴

Another incident on 5 May 2020, indicates how a stranger at the train station insulted a woman wearing a headscarf on her way to work. Fortunately, a passer-by intervened against the stranger’s aggression. The perpetrator’s insults included “Huere Saupack²⁵, go back where you came from, this is a Christian country!”, “Islamist bitch!”, and “Dirty religion!”. An officer at the police station advised the woman not to file a complaint because “she had no witnesses” and as such “there were no assaults, threats, or aggression”. Hence, the officer advised her to record everything if it happens again in the future and seek the help of witnessing individuals to support her and to identify the man.²⁶

In October and November of 2020, a cantonal Islamic federation and several mosques of the canton received anonymous threatening letters containing insults similar to the aforementioned case but with greater intensity and a harsher tone. (Figure 2) Based on a police officer’s transcription of the handwritten letters, the writer expressed that “all organisations begging for donations to support Muslims in our country” should be closed. In following sections, it read: “Our country should be freed from these pigs! All out of our country, these pig *ckers and murderers. Look at Paris!!!”²⁷ These excerpts suffice to reveal the brutality of the written messages.

24. Case report via the FIDS Report App, 28 March 2020, and correspondence with the victim in the following days.

25. Insulting swearing in Swiss German, which means: “Stupid prostitute”.

26. Case report by email to the FIDS Legal Advice and Contact Centre by the victim.

27. Case report sent by email to the Cantonal Police and the FIDS Legal Advice and Contact Centre, 18 November 2020.

Alle Organisationen die für Spenden für
den ganzen Muslimen-Volk in unser Land
betet, werden geschlossen werden!
Unfassbar diese Schweinefische, haben
zu wenig zu essen, aber Fische und
stinkende Ratten!!!
jede Jahr setzen diese Schweine mit
ihren Fischkuchen eine muslimische - Rattke
in unser Land,
jede Organisation sollte diesen Protesten-Volk
100.000 Euro von Kondamnen abgeben!
Tölpel in Trololol nicht man ohne
Fische, jede Familie bezahlt 8-10 Ratten!
Besser wir opfern, waschen wir unser
Geld in den Trololol, dann verkaufen
die Trololol, die jöhrtel den Grund
der Trololol reinigen, loschut,
Trololol nicht man die muslimische
Schwein - Trololol mit 2-3 Ratten
und wieder hochschwingen!
unser Land müde man von diesen
Schwein-Volk losraus! Alle Rats
aus unserem Land, diese Schweine
fische und Morder, siehe in Paris!!!
amman alle muslimische - Trololol
Kontrollieren!!!

Z.B. eine Suppe-Familie in Basel
in der Türkei, Mann 24 Jahre
Frau 27 "
haben bereits mit 4 Ratten an,
nun in den 3 Jahren haben wieder
3 muslimische - Drechratten oben!
Das ist der große Schweine-Volk
in der ganzen Welt. allerstinkende
Ratten!



unser
schwanz!



unser
Fische

Figure 2: A threatening letter sent to an Islamic cantonal organisation.²⁸

On 29 November 2020, flyers with offensive content were found at the entrance of an Albanian mosque. (Figure 3) A case was filed and the investigation is ongoing.²⁹

A teenager was found commenting the following on an online video of the Christchurch attack on the two mosques that killed 51 people: “Someday I want to do the same thing in Switzerland”. He was arrested and subsequently detained for ordering several kilograms of chemical products, which could be used to build bombs, from an online drugstore.³⁰

Figure 3 shows parts of a pig carcass placed anonymously in the mailbox of a Muslim family in Zürich-Schwamendingen.³¹

Furthermore, an investigation report commissioned by Dübendorf City Council stated that in a conversation between municipal officials, a Muslim woman in a burqa, who had visited the social welfare office in Dübendorf, was called a “penguin”.³²

28. Ibid.

29. Case report by the Cantonal Islamic Association on 29 November 2020.

30. Larissa Rhy, “‘Ich kann Bomben basteln, ich habe Waffen’: Ein junger Schweizer eifert dem Täter von Christchurch nach – und wird gestoppt, als er Sprengstoff-Bestandteile legal im Internet bestellt”, NZZ Online, 19 June 2020, <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/sprengstoff-wie-ein-jugendlicher-bombenbastler-gestoppt-wurde-ld.1561819?reduced=true>, (Access date: 7 January 2021).

31. Daniel Krähenbühl, “Unbekannte legen Schweinefleisch in Briefkasten von Muslimen”, 20 Minuten, 31 October 2020, <https://www.20min.ch/story/unbekannte-legen-schweinefleisch-in-briefkasten-von-muslimen-382530381186>, (Access date: 14 January 2021).

32. Martin Sturzenegger, “Beschimpft, überwacht, herabgewürdigt”, Tages Anzeiger, 31 August 2020, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/hetze-im-netz-boeswillige-unterstellungen-exzessive-detektiv-einsaetze-523416920798>, (Access date: 8 January 2021).



Am 9. Oktober haben Unbekannte bei einem Mehrfamilienhaus in Zürich-Schwamendingen Teile eines Schweins in einen Briefkasten gelegt.

Privat

Figure 3: “On 9 October, unknown persons placed parts of a pig in a mailbox at an apartment building in Zürich-Schwamendingen” (Screenshot, “20 Minuten”).³³

Employment

The last report on “Racism Incidents from Counselling Practice” confirmed that the labour market is one of the three most common spaces of expressed hate against Muslims.³⁴ Even the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society (SZIG) prioritised and addressed this in greater detail through a series of workshops on religion in the workplace. The summary of the outcomes of the workshops is available in the *SZIG-Papers 9* entitled “Visible Islam in the Workplace? A Topic for Employees and Employers”.³⁵

Recent debates whether headscarves in places like public company counters should be permissible have become a reason for concern. As soon as the discourse gains popularity in the media, a piece of clothing, the headscarf, will lead to floods of immediate negative reactions. A case of employees at public company counters like the Swiss Post illustrates this. The outrage regarding postal employees wearing a headscarf maintains momentum and caused letters by several readers. One can read the fol-

33. Ibid.

34. Beratungsnetz für Rassismusopfer, “Rassismussvorfälle aus der Beratungspraxis: Januar bis Dezember 2019”, April 2020, p. 6, http://network-racism.ch/cms/upload/200421_Rassismusericht_19_D.pdf, (Access date: 12 January 2021).

35. M. Schneuwly Purdie, F. Biasca, H. Schmid, A. Lang, “Sichtbarer Islam am Arbeitsplatz? Ein Thema für Arbeitnehmende und Abreitgebende”, June 2020, https://doc.rero.ch/record/328731/files/a5_szig_themenheft_9_d_diskrimination_web.pdf, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

lowing in one such letter in the *Zuger Zeitung*: “No women displaying their religion as a weapon against their ‘infidel’ fellow men should work in areas of direct customer service”³⁶; “behind headscarves hide well-developed provocations, instigated by the various well-known Islamic centres in German- and French-speaking Switzerland”³⁷; and “the headscarf is not liberal, but ‘a (politically deployed) symbol of the oppression of women’”.³⁸ Jean-Luc Addor, SVP national councillor, even wrote protest letters to the heads of the Swiss Railways (SBB) and the Swiss Post. He asked the head of SBB, Monika Ribar, for an explanation and wondered how she, as a woman, accepted the wearing of the hijab in the company. He urged it to be banned simply because of the subjective perception that it is “above all a political sign, a symbol of inequality and oppression of women as well as an ostentatious mark of communitarianism”.³⁹

According to Addor, “Customers do not accept that a public company should lend a hand to the advancement of militant Islam in this way”.⁴⁰

After three years of dedicated efforts, the FIDS Legal Advice and Contact Centre registered numerous cases of the unemployability of hijabi women, among whom one finds highly educated candidates, in their respective professions for years despite regular job applications. Most are often afraid to inquire further in cases of rejection.⁴¹ Interestingly, the headscarf became a majorly cited reason for rejection. For instance, a woman was rejected for a social work/counselling position due to views of the hijab as repellent to customers in need of help and counsel.⁴²(Figure 4)

36. “Im direkten Kundenkontakt sollen aber keine Frauen arbeiten, die ihre Religion als Waffe gegen die ‘ungläubigen’ Mitmenschen zur Schau tragen.” Irene Probst, “Was Nonnen und Kopftuch tragende Musliminnen unterscheidet”, *Zuger Zeitung*, 6 January 2020, Ausgaben-Nr. 3 Seite 10.

37. “...hinter dem Kopftuch steckt vielfach eine gehörig ausgeprägte Provokation, angestiftet durch die verschiedenen einschlägig bekannten islamischen Zentren in der Deutschschweiz wie in der Romandie.” Brigitte Matteuzzi, “Kopftuch: Die Post ist liberaler als Migros und Co.”, *Zuger Zeitung*, 9 January 2020, Ausgaben-Nr. 6 Seite 17.

38. “Wenn die Post ihrem Personal das Tragen von Kopftüchern angeblich toleriert, hat das nichts mit ‘liberal’ zu tun. Liberal heisst ‘freiheitlich’ bezogen auf die Weltanschauung, die Selbstverantwortung unterstützend bzw. wahrnehmend. Das religiös motivierte Kopftuch ist aber das pure Gegenteil, nämlich ein (politisch eingesetztes) Symbol für die Unterdrückung der Frau.” Ueli Krasser, “Was heisst hier liberal? ”, *Luzerner Zeitung*, 15 January 2020, <https://www.luzernerzeitung.ch/zentralschweiz/zug/was-heisst-hier-liberal-ld.1185726> (Access date: 1 January 2021)

39. Arthur Grosjean, “Un élu s’insurge contre le port du hidjab aux CFF et à la Poste”, *24heures*, 24 January 2020, <https://www.24heures.ch/suisse/elu-s-insurge-port-hidjab-cff-poste/story/14571139>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

40. Ibid.

41. “‘Wir wollen bestehende Strukturen stärken und etwas Ergänzendes anbieten’ – Interview mit Nermina Ademović (FIDS)”, in M. Schneuwly Purdie, F. Biasca, H. Schmid, A. Lang, “Sichtbarer Islam am Arbeitsplatz? Ein Thema für Arbeitnehmende und Abreitgebende”, June 2020, p. 11, https://doc.rero.ch/record/328731/files/a5_szig_themenheft_9_d_diskrimination_web.pdf, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

42. “In the outreach context, your faith and the wearing of the headscarf could be very helpful in the cultural context of, for example, Albanian families. Then the corresponding language skills would be necessary. With average, ‘normal’ families, this still triggers too much resistance. For the time being, unfortunately, I do not see any possibility at our specialised agency. I assume that the stationary framework promises more success, because after getting to know each other, the resistance in this regard dissolves”. Case report and a copy of the email sent by the victim by email to the FIDS Legal Advice and Contact Centre.

Gesendet: Donnerstag, 18. Juni 2020 um 11:02 Uhr
 Von: [REDACTED]
 An: [REDACTED]
 Betreff: AW: Spontanbewerbung

Guten Tag Frau [REDACTED]

Im aufsuchenden Kontext könnte Ihr Glaube und das Tragen des Kopftuchs im Kulturkreis von zum Beispiel albanischen Familien sehr hilfreich sein. Dann wären die entsprechenden Sprachkenntnisse notwendig. Bei durchschnittlichen, «normalen» Familien löst dies nach wie vor zu grosse Abwehr aus. Bis auf weiteres sehe ich leider keine Möglichkeit auf unserer Fachstelle.

Ich gehe davon aus, dass der stationäre Rahmen mehr Erfolg verspricht, da nach einem Kennenlernen die Widerstände diesbezüglich auflösen.

Alles Gute! [REDACTED]

Figure 4: Screenshot of an email, in which the headscarf is stated as the reason for a job rejection.⁴³

Meanwhile, hijabi women who find a job frequently face challenges because of the constant questioning of their appearance instead of their qualifications to perform the job. Questions like “What is that on your head?” or “Why is it on your head?” are usual. Most of these women feel humiliated, while some of them feel pressured to compromise and opt for what is perceived as attractive hijab styling.⁴⁴

Education

In her dissertation on educational paths of young Muslims in Switzerland, Nathalie Gasser cites the headscarf as a strong educational barrier in vocational training. She stated that none of the study’s interviewees “wearing a headscarf and willing to do an apprenticeship” enrolled in respective educational programmes directly or on merit-based considerations alone. The reasons are the “many socially circulating stereotypes”, but, above all, the lack of state regulation in awarding apprenticeship contracts.⁴⁵ She articulated teachers’ attitudes particularly toward female students who are treated as “experts on Islam”. Her work reveals how the young women suffer by being constantly “interrogated as Muslims” and with an increasing expectation on them to give an opinion “on the topics attributed to Islam, global political conflicts, and terrorist events”.⁴⁶

The study elaborated how a 22-year-old Muslim woman decided to apply for an apprenticeship in the dental practice after three years of trials for an apprenticeship in medicine despite exemplary school grades. On 25 November 2020, a dentist at the respective apprenticeship responded to her that perhaps “someone with a headscarf, which reflects someone’s beliefs obviously” does not really fit the position.

43. Ibid.

44. Daniel Ganzfried, “SO SEHE ICH DAS”, *Schweizer Familie*, 2 July 2020, p. 9.

45. “Frau Ibrahim, was sagt der Islam dazu?”, Pädagogische Hochschule PHBern News, 26 August 2020, <https://www.phbern.ch/ueber-die-phbern/aktuell/news/frau-ibrahimi-was-sagt-der-islam-dazu>, (Access date: 9 January 2021). Gasser Nathalie, *Islam, Gender, Intersektionalität. Bildungswege junger Frauen in der Schweiz*, (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020).

46. Ibid.

Few replies followed afterward and in one of them, the dentist said, “When I go to a Muslim country, I adapt to the conditions there, show respect for the culture of the country. I expect this from you as well”. Hence, a personal interview would be considered only if the young woman were willing to adapt; in other words, to renounce her headscarf.⁴⁷ Once this story became the subject of public deliberation, she was offered legal support and numerous job offers followed.⁴⁸

It is worth mentioning that even the Federal Supreme Court has upheld an appeal by a 28-year-old Iraqi denied admission to study pharmacy at the University of Basel. At first glance, it appeared that the candidate was simply refused admission. However, the incident became viral after it became known that certain media outlets had described the man as a jihadist threat. Among other matters of concern, the Federal Court claimed that the man had no criminal record and therefore, there was no evidence backing the serious accusations that he was a jihadist terrorist. The accused also denied connections to any jihadist or terrorist organisations repeatedly. It was, thus, decided that the University of Basel must re-evaluate the case and compensate the accused with CHF 2,000.⁴⁹

Politics

In addition to his positions in the media, Jean-Luc Addor, SVP national councillor, interpellated the Federal Council to enforce a legal ban on veils at Swiss Post and Swiss Federal Railways counters “so that customers who rely on the services of these companies are not shocked or feel discomfort”. According to Addor, headscarves and other Islamic symbols should not be tolerated in public companies as they contradict local traditions and the constitutional principle of equality between men and women.⁵⁰ Dissatisfied with the information provided by the Federal Council, he requested that a law be drafted on the same matter, namely the “Prohibition of headscarves at the counters of the federal administration and companies controlled by the federal government”. The Federal Council proposed to the Parliament to reject the motion.⁵¹

47. Julian Fölnbacher, “Wegen Kopftuch Lehrstelle verweigert: ‘Das ist einfach nur Diskriminierung und Rassismus’”, *bz – Zeitung für die Region Basel*, 14 December 2020, <https://www.bzbasel.ch/basel/baselbiet/wegen-kopftuch-lehrstelle-verweigert-das-ist-einfach-nur-diskriminierung-und-rassismus-140220024>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

48. Lea Lozano, “Zuerst wegen Kopftuch diskriminiert, jetzt hat sie ein Bewerbungsgespräch”, 20 Minuten, 18 December 2020, <https://www.20min.ch/story/zuerst-wegen-kopftuch-diskriminiert-jetzt-hat-sie-ein-bewerbungsgespraech-844538583503>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

49. “Uni Basel muss mutmasslichen Dschihadisten zum Studium zulassen”, SRF, 14 August 2020, <https://www.srf.ch/news/regional/basel-baselland/bundesgericht-uni-basel-muss-mutmasslichen-dschihadisten-zum-studium-zulassen>, (Access date: 8 January 2021).

50. “Schleierverbot an Post- und SBB-Schaltern?”, Interpellation 20.3856, <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20203856>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

51. “Kopftuchverbot an den Schaltern der Bundesverwaltung und der vom Bund beherrschten Betriebe”, Motion 20.4209, <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20204209>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

The National Council decided not to follow another 2019 parliamentary initiative by Addor labelled “Pupils without head coverings in public schools”.⁵² Another tentative was then undertaken by CVP National Councillor Marianne Binder who sees in veils a discrimination of girls and wants to ban headscarves for schoolgirls at schools and kindergartens. She submitted a postulate and instructed the Federal Council to submit a report on the basis of which a free development of all children without headscarves can be guaranteed.⁵³

It is important to mention some moves by Reimann Lukas, another controversial SVP national councillor, best known for some earlier requests related to “fighting radical Islam in Switzerland” in 2015 that were based on questionable and misleading statistics which he claimed to have obtained from authorities.⁵⁴ In 2020, he searched for new statistics about “Islamists in Switzerland” through a new interpellation with 18 questions in order to address his earlier requests based on inaccurate statistics.⁵⁵

The Federal Council made a counterproposal against the popular initiative “Yes to the ban on face coverings” (known as the Burka Initiative). In March 2020, the Federal Council supported this proposal which includes measures to promote equality between women and men. In the summer of 2020, the National Council supported the Federal Council against the popular initiative. Swiss citizens will have the final say at the ballot box in spring of 2021.⁵⁶

In 2020, the Swiss Parliament adopted the controversial “Federal Law on Police Measures to Combat Terrorism (PMT)”. The police will get greater discretionary authority and additional instruments to deal with so-called terrorist threats. For example, an obligation to report, a refraining order (*Rayonverbot*) or the confinement to one’s own home (“house arrest”) as the last resort are envisaged without the existence of specific criminal evidence. The federal government will be able to order these measures on a case-by-case basis at the request of the cantons even against minors aged 12 onwards.⁵⁷ The law has been sharply criticised by organisations and experts

52. National Council, “Bericht der Staatspolitischen Kommission vom 19. November 2020”, https://www.parlament.ch/centers/kb/Documents/2019/Kommissionsbericht_SPK-N_19.454_2020-11-19.pdf, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

53. “Keine Kinderkopftücher in Schulen und Kindergärten. Eine Frage der Gleichberechtigung, des Kinderschutzes und nicht der Religion”, Postulate 20.4728, 18 December 2020, <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20204728>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

54. Martin Wilhelm, “Reimann operiert mit fragwürdigen Zahlen”, *BaZ*, 13 February 2020, <https://www.bazonline.ch/schweiz/standard/reimann-operiert-mit-fragwuerdigen-zahlen/story/12488889>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

55. “Islamisten in der Schweiz”, Interpellation 20.4313, <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20204313>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

56. “Ja zum Verhüllungsverbot. Volksinitiative und indirekter Gegenvorschlag”, Business of the Federal Council 19.023, <https://www.parlament.ch/DE/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20190023>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

57. “Polizeiliche Massnahmen zur Bekämpfung von Terrorismus. Bundesgesetz”, Business of the Federal Council 19.032, <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20190032>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

within Switzerland and abroad.⁵⁸ Several newly formed parties⁵⁹ have even launched a referendum against the new police law to combat terrorism.⁶⁰

The new president of the SVP Aargau, national councillor Andreas Glarner, described as an “Islam hater”, “far-right arsonist”, a person who “attracts media attention with a radical style” and “seeks his clientele in a heated climate”⁶¹, in his party speech announced that he will address “five” topics - Islam and Muslims.⁶² In his statements, he clearly presented Islam as one of his core issues (in addition to foreigner ratio, migration, and problems in schools) and announced “the preference for Islam” as a problem, to be defended against.⁶³

Another report by the reporter Kurt Pelda provoked numerous reactions. Pelda reported about the Muslim preacher Abu Ramadan (Ben Salem Salah), who is the subject of two criminal cases: one on suspicion of welfare fraud and another on suspicion of racial offense.⁶⁴ Based on footage taken in a mosque, Abu Ramadan, who officially does not hold any position, allegedly incited the struggle against “infidels” and gave lessons about it in religious studies at the Ar’Rahman Mosque in Biel.⁶⁵ In addition to the failed call to close Ar’Rahman Mosque, the following controversial tweet by CVP National Councillor Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter ended with a criminal complaint: “We have enough legal basis to deport such well poisoners.⁶⁶ Let’s do it!”⁶⁷

Finally, Silvan Fischbacher (SP), the councillor of the Dietikon City Council, and 11 co-signatories submitted an interpellation on 5 November 2020 to discover why Dietikon does not have a burial ground for Muslims and to what extent the

58. Amnesty.ch, “GRUNDRECHTE UND RECHTSSTAAT ALS KOLLATERALSCHADEN”, 25 September 2020, <https://www.amnesty.ch/de/laender/europa-zentralasien/schweiz/dok/2020/antiterror-gesetze-grundrechte-als-kollateralschaden>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

59. Young parties are organizations for youth i.e. younger party members or sympathizers up to the age of 35 that are more or less firmly tied to a political party. See Hirter Hans: “Jungparteien”, in: Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS), 13.06.2012, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/025756/2012-06-13/>.

60. “NEIN zum Willkürparagraf”, <https://willkuerparagraf.ch/index.php#komitee>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

61. Elia Blülle, Carlos Hanimann, “Bereit für das Bad in der Gülle”, Republik, 21 January 2020, <https://www-republik.ch/2020/01/21/bereit-fuer-das-bad-in-der-guelle>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

62. “Nationalrat Andreas Glarner ist Präsident der SVP Aargau”, Watson, 16 January 2020, <https://www.watson.ch/schweiz/aargau/389004803-andreas-glarner-wird-praesident-der-svp-aargau>, (Access date: 1 January 2021).

63. Fabian Hägler, “Andreas Glarner: ‘Weichspüler-Politiker haben uns keinen Erfolg gebracht’”, *Aargauer Zeitung*, 16 January, <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/aargau/kanton-aargau/andreas-glarner-weichspueler-politiker-haben-uns-keinen-erfolg-gebracht-136236178>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

64. Kurt Pelda, “Abu Ramadan hetzt gegen Schweizer ‘Ungläubige’”, *Sonntagszeitung*, 2 February 2020, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard/abu-ramadan-hetzt-wieder-gegen-unglaeubige/story/10958848>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

65. Ibid.

66. The word “well poisoner” (*Brunnevergifter*) was used in the Middle Ages to slander Jews across the board. Among other things, they were supposed to be to blame for the spread of the plague.

67. Hannah Frei, “Wir können die Moschee nicht schliessen”, *Bieler Tagblatt*, 4 February 2020, p. 2. “CVPLerin bezeichnet Imam als ‘Brunnevergifter’”, 20minuten.ch, 3 February 2020, <https://www.20min.ch/story/cvplerin-bezeichnet-imam-als-brunnevergifter-933418710427>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

cemetery and burial ordinance would have to be adapted to enable a Muslim burial ground.⁶⁸

Media

The significant role of the Swiss media in inciting and spreading prejudice and intolerance against Muslims remains insufficiently addressed in Switzerland. International sources point to this fact repeatedly. According to the ECRI report, “There has been a sharp rise in intolerant discourse against Muslims generally and in the media particularly”.⁶⁹

In January, *Blick* focused on a children’s winter camp described as an “Islamist camp” in which “Turkey indoctrinates Swiss children” and which is organised by the Turkish Islamic Foundation for Switzerland (TISS).⁷⁰ (Figure 5)⁷¹ Numerous comments on the article, most of which fall under hate speech, indicate the grievous danger of such articles.

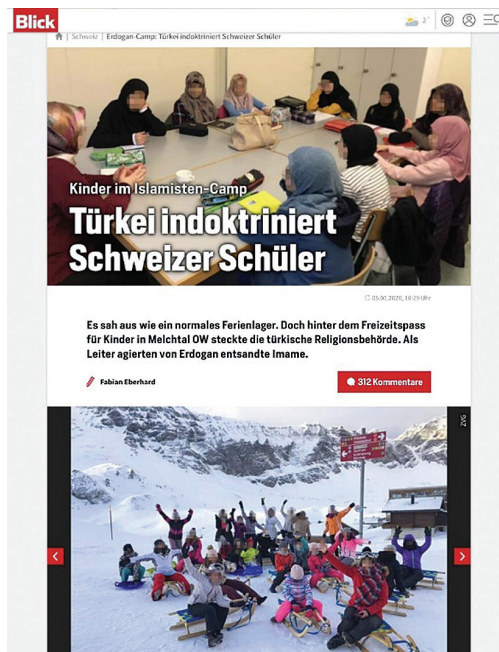


Figure 5: “Children in Islamist camp, Turkey indoctrinates Swiss pupils” (Screenshot, *Blick*).⁷²

68. Stadt Dietikon, “Mitteilung des Gemeinderates: Interpellation F4.02.01: Muslimische Grabfelder”, 11 November 2020, https://www.dietikon.ch/_docn/2848196/Muslimische_Grabfelder_Mitteilung_GR.pdf, (Access date: 10 January 2021).

69. Sixth ECRI Report on Switzerland, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-switzerland-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4bd>, (Access date: 27 December 2020).

70. Türkisch Islamische Stiftung für die Schweiz: <https://diyanet.ch/de/>, (Access date: 27 December 2020).

71. Fabian Eberhard, “Kinder im Islamisten-Camp, Türkei indoktriniert Schweizer Schüler”, *Blick*, 5 January 2020, <https://www.blick.ch/schweiz/kinder-im-islamisten-camp-tuerkei-indoktriniert-schweizer-schueler-id15689311.html>, (Access date: 27 December 2020).

72. Ibid.

All media publications demand great responsibility and accountability, and should be supported by thorough fact checking before disseminating biased information. Unfortunately, several media outlets in Switzerland fail to uphold and diverge from such responsible, accountable, and conscientious reporting. This is apparent in the trend of addressing genuine acts of discrimination, segregation, violence, or terror whereby the common causal denominator is levelled deliberately to faith. This is especially so after the recent horrific attacks in Europe when newspaper columns were crammed with shallow analyses by bigoted and dangerous “experts”. Thus, a spokesman for the diocese of Chur from the Giuseppe Gracia media, commenced his sweeping column entitled “Islam and Violence” in *Blick* with the following: “Paris, Nice, Vienna: In recent weeks, Muslims have again slashed, beheaded and shot innocent women and men”. He is also saying that it has become “delicate” to publicise that murder is “done for Mohammed and Allah”.⁷³ Ulrich von Schwerin is one of the rare journalists who warns against such acts of generalisation toward Muslims or Islam, and approaches this complex issue in a different and more thoughtful and systematic manner by deriving information from genuine sources of knowledge. He argues that “any rhetoric deepening the exclusion and polarisation” benefits extremists and fails to tackle the cases of radicalisation from its social and psychological perspectives in addition to theological/religious, dogmatic, or ideological points of view. Each carries distinct meanings, yet all are mutually relatable. Furthermore, he mentions that the perpetrators were not necessarily genuinely religious before they were radicalised. It is precisely such thoughts and arguments that are deliberately left aside in the mainstream discourse.⁷⁴

In a statement on the construction of the new Albanian mosque in Reinach AG, Saïda Keller-Messahli questioned it in terms of legitimacy through what later turned out to be questionable correlations. She claimed that the money (“millions”) for the construction of large Albanian mosques (including those in Wil SG, Netstal GL, and Plan-les-Ouates GE) came from Kuwait.⁷⁵ The Albanian-Islamic Community Reinach rejected her claims that were based on “apparent false information”.⁷⁶ The Islamic scientist Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, who has dedicated years of research on building projects for immigrant religious communities in Switzerland, strongly criticised Saïda Keller-Messahli. According to Tunger-Zanetti, all “Saïda Keller-Messahli owes

73. Giuseppe Gracia, “Islam und Gewalt”, *Blick*, 9 November 2020, <https://www.blick.ch/meinung/kolumnen/kolumne-weltanschauung-islam-und-gewalt-id16185611.html>, (Access date: 10 January 2021).

74. Ulrich von Schwerin, “Der Kampf gegen den Terror beginnt mit dem Ergründen seiner Ursprünge”, *NZZ Online*, 9 November 2020, <https://www.nzz.ch/meinung/terror-in-europa-auf-der-suche-nach-den-urspruengender-gewalt-ld.1585262?reduced=true>, (Access date: 10 January 2021).

75. “Prominente Islam-Kennerin misstrauisch: Kommt das Geld für die grösste Aargauer Moschee aus Kuwait?”, *Aargauer Zeitung*, 3 June 2020, <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/aargau/wyna-suhre/prominente-islam-kennerin-misstrauisch-kommt-das-geld-fuer-die-groesste-aargauer-moschee-aus-kuwait-138018238>, (Access date: 6 January 2021).

76. “Albanisch-Islamische Gemeinschaft widerspricht: Moschee mit Spenden und Bankkredit finanziert”, *Aargauer Zeitung*, 10 June 2020, <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/aargau/wyna-suhre/albanisch-islamische-gemeinschaft-widerspricht-moschee-mit-spenden-und-bankkredit-finanziert-138126366>, (Access date: 6 January 2021).

the public so far is reliable evidence for claims on all addressed cases”. He pointed out that her “conjectures in the media” “too often” stand without journalistic fact-checking, which “creates an impression of general suspicion” and as such has the immense potential to backfire.⁷⁷ Her allegations caused discussions over the building of the mosque in Reinach to fall under serious scrutiny at the National Council where Andreas Gafner, EDU national councillor, interpellated, “Does the intelligence service of the Confederation and other authorities have information that confirms financing of the Tulipan mosque in Reinach from abroad?”⁷⁸

An article by Kari Kälin about the publication of the German edition of the book *Qatar Papers* by Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot and a foreword by Saïda Keller-Messahli provoked a series of reactions among politicians. The article referred to the book when saying that the non-governmental organisation Qatar Charity (QC) “financed mosques, Islamic associations and projects in Switzerland” with nearly 3.7 million euros. Keller-Messahli warned that the “Qatar Charity actively promotes the formation of parallel societies in Europe” and therewith vigorously attempts to seed confusion “about imams as representatives of political Islam radicalising the youth in mosques”.⁷⁹ According to the book, Qatari money mostly finances associations linked to the Muslim Brotherhood whom Keller-Messahli addresses as “not only the largest and most influential Islamist movement in the world today, but also the matrix of all Islamist terrorist organisations”.⁸⁰ In September 2019, SVP National Councillor Walter Wobmann used this claim at the National Council to inquire about the “dangerous development”, that “according to media reports, Swiss mosques and the museum in La Chaux-de-Fonds are financed by millions of francs by Qatar (Qatar Charity)” which is “ideologically and directly linked with the extreme Muslim Brotherhood as well”.⁸¹ A week later, CVP National Councillor Marianne Binder-Keller demanded at the National Council an expert opinion via interpellation on the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Switzerland. She intended to discover whether the Federal Council is aware of such activities and whether it considers the Muslim Brotherhood extreme.⁸²

77. “Die Moscheebauten sind ‘made in Switzerland’: Wissenschaftler widerspricht Kritik von Islam-Kennerin”, *Aargauer Zeitung*, 8 June 2020, <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/aargau/wyna-suhre/die-moscheebauten-sind-made-in-switzerland-wissenschaftler-widerspricht-kritik-von-islam-kennerin-138107824>, (Access date: 6 January 2021).

78. “Stecken radikale Muslime und ausländische Geldgeber hinter der Moschee Tulipan in Reinach?”, Interpellation 20.3780, <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20203780>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

79. Kari Kälin, “Millionen für Schweizer Moscheen: Was bezweckt Katar mit seinem finanziellen Engagement?”, *Luzerner Zeitung*, 5 August 2020, <https://www.luzernerzeitung.ch/schweiz/millionen-fur-schweizer-moscheen-ld.1244064>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

80. “Katars islamistische Missionierung Europas”, *Volksblatt.at*, 26 August 2020, <https://volksblatt.at/katars-islamistische-missionierung-europas/>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

81. “Katar finanziert Schweizer Moscheen”, Question time 20.5664, 15 September 2020, <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20205664>.

82. “Expertise zu den Aktivitäten der Muslimbruderschaft in der Schweiz”, Interpellation 20.4217, 25 September 2020, <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20204217>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

Moreover, after a knife attack on a 28-year-old mentally ill female convert to Islam in a department store in Lugano, which according to a crime prevention expert was “hastily called an act of terrorism”,⁸³ Saïda Keller-Messahli called for a ban on radical Islamist organisations in Switzerland in an interview for “20 Minuten”. According to Keller-Messahli, the Muslim Brotherhood has an offshoot in Switzerland for over six decades which regularly communicates and cooperates with respective authorities, whether in the area of refugee aid, pastoral care, or so-called deradicalisation.⁸⁴ The Federal Office of Police (Fedpol) of Switzerland stated on Twitter that the woman tried to go to Syria in 2017 because she was in love with a jihadist fighter, but was intercepted, placed under psychiatric custody, and ever since had no relations to any terrorism matters.⁸⁵ Three days after the attack, *Blick* wrote that the woman doesn’t wear a headscarf and has no apparent contact with “Salafists”, but that her only link with Islam is her mourning over her “disappeared” husband.⁸⁶

In the first months of 2020, one could observe how pictures of recognisable Muslim women in headscarves, which had absolutely no relationship with the topic, were increasingly pushed into COVID-19 news headlines. (Figures 6, 7, and 8)



Figure 6: Photo of an advertising billboard by the Swiss news portal *Watson* at the train station.⁸⁷

83. Iwan Santoro, “Gewaltforscher: ‘Kein klassischer Fall eines Terroranschlags’”, SRF, 25 November 2020, <https://www.srf.ch.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.srf.ch/article/19243611/amp>, 16 January 2021.

84. Lucas Orellano, “Die Politik muss über die Bücher – uns drohen weitere Attacken”, 20 Minuten, 25 November 2020, <https://www.20min.ch/story/der-bundesrat-muss-beim-islamistischen-terror-endlich-ueber-die-buecher-719293960264>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

85. Fedpol, Twitter, 25 November 2020, <https://twitter.com/fedpolch/status/1331543698535043075>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

86. Myrte Müller, Ulrich Rotzinger, “Tessiner IS-Braut gibt weiter Rätsel auf”, *Blick*, 28 November 2020, <https://www.blick.ch/schweiz/tessin/drei-tage-nach-der-blutigen-messer-attacke-tessiner-is-braut-gibt-weiter-raetsel-auf-id16215985.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

87. Sent by email to the author.

Corona-Virus: Die Ostschweizer Kantone sind in Alarmbereitschaft – gesucht werden noch mehr Quarantänemöglichkeiten

Sollte sich das Corona-Virus ausbreiten, stehen in der Ostschweiz Krisenstäbe bereit. Sie suchen noch nach Quarantänemöglichkeiten.

Larissa Flammer und Noemi Heule

24.02.2020, 20.03 Uhr



Figure 7: Screenshot of an article in *Tagblatt*.⁸⁸

Daniel Fritzsche, Stefan Hotz

22 Kommentare →

26.05.2020, 05.00 Uhr



Nur wenige Fahrgäste tragen im Tram Schutzmasken.

Annick Ramp / NZZ

Figure 8: Screenshot of an article in *NZZ*.⁸⁹

Justice System

The Federal Intelligence Service (NDB) provides the FCR with the cantonal court rulings and decisions regarding Art. 261bis Criminal Code (racism penal norm) in anonymised form. In 2019, four verdicts were placed regarding cases of victimised Muslims.⁹⁰

The Federal Supreme Court has endorsed the conviction of SVP National Councillor Jean-Luc Addor after the Valais Cantonal Court found him guilty of racial discrimination. The criminal complaint was triggered with his tweet “On en redemande!” (“Let’s have more!”), minutes after a man was shot in a mosque in the eastern city of St. Gallen in 2014. The Federal Supreme Court characterised the rejoicing over the suffering of members of a particular religion as “an expression of aversion”, “an essential characteristic of hatred”, and as discrimination and incitement to hatred.⁹¹ The

88. Larissa Flammer und Noemi Heule, “Corona-Virus: Die Ostschweizer Kantone sind in Alarmbereitschaft – gesucht werden noch mehr Quarantänemöglichkeiten”, *Tagblatt*, 24 February 2020, <https://www.tagblatt.ch/ostschweiz/corona-virus-die-ostschweizer-kantone-sind-in-alarmbereitschaft-gesucht-werden-noch-mehr-quarantaenemoeglichkeiten-ld.1197914>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

89. Daniel Fritzsche, Stefan Hotz, “Zu Beginn der Krise hörte man vom BAG, dass Masken nicht viel bringen. Diese Verwirrung, die geschaffen wurde, ist nun ein grosses Problem”, *NZZ*, 26 May 2020, <https://www.nzz.ch/zuerich/zvv-direktor-kaum-ein-passagier-traegt-eine-schutzmaske-ld.1558011?reduced=true>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

90. Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus EKR, “Sammlung Rechtsfälle: Strafrecht”, <https://www.ekr.admin.ch/dienstleistungen/d518.html?db=N#results>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

91. Tobias Tscherrig, “SVP-Nationalrat Jean-Luc Addor ist ein Rassist”, *Infosperber*, 6 November 2020, <https://www.infosperber.ch/politik/schweiz/svp-nationalrat-jean-luc-addor-ist-ein-rassist/>, (Access date: 10 January 2021).

cantonal court emphasised in its ruling that Addor was not only a public figure, but also “an Islamophobia instigator”. Moreover, in his postings he had used a form of expression whose “brutality and conciseness could be understood literally and undifferentiated by a less experienced average reader”.⁹²

On an afternoon in October 2018, in Wetzikon, a pedestrian in a headscarf was hit and seriously injured while crossing a pedestrian area divided by a central island. The court acquitted the perpetrator. The Hinwil District Court even validated the driver’s arguments of inability to see her because of her headscarf and black clothing or that the woman’s headscarf blocked her from seeing the vehicle.⁹³

On another occasion, a Muslim inmate at Thorberg Prison was asked to take a urine drug test, which was not possible due to an inability to urinate during fasting in the month of Ramadan. The inmate was not known as a drug user and offered a blood sample. The prison refused and punished the Muslim with eight days in an isolation cell. The Supreme Court upheld an appeal by the inmate and overturned the disciplinary measure on grounds that it was a “disproportionate encroachment on the constitutionally protected freedom of religious practice”.⁹⁴

Another case raising suspicions against an imam inciting violence against women in a mosque could not be proven. He was suspected of instigating violence against women in an August sermon of 2019 in the Dar-Assalam Mosque in Kriens and was arrested on 9 October.⁹⁵ According to the Lucerne public prosecutor’s office, the arrest proved to be “unjustified in retrospect” and the imam received a compensation of CHF 200 for nine hours of detention.⁹⁶

Moreover, the former SVP national councillor Yvan Perrin was acquitted by the police court in Neuchâtel of racial discrimination charges for spreading an ideology of denigration against Muslims. Perrin used his Facebook account to start a controversy about the Museum of Islamic Civilisations in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Neuchâtel, and Muslims in general. His posts were related to an article in the newspaper *24 heu-*

92. Tobias Tscherrig, “Notorisch islamfeindliche Meinungen” eines SVP-Nationalrats”, *Infosperber*, 5 May 2020, <https://www.infosperber.ch/politik/schweiz/notorisch-islamfeindliche-meinungen-eines-svp-nationalrats/>, (Access date: 10 January 2021).

93. Ernst Hilfiker, “Fussgängerin angefahren – Autofahrer freigesprochen”, *Zürcher Oberländer*, 4 February 2020, p. 2. Ernst Hilfiker, “Auto erfasst Fussgängerin auf Zebrastrreifen – Fahrer freigesprochen”, *Zürst*, 2 February 2020, <https://zuerst.ch/blaulicht-und-verkehr/2020-02-02/auto-erfasst-fussgaengerin-auf-zebrastrreifen-fahrer-freigesprochen>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

94. Hans Ulrich Schaad, “Gläubigen Muslim zu Unrecht in Arrestzelle gesteckt”, *Berner Oberländer*, 21 March 2020, <https://www.berneroberlaender.ch/insasse-zu-unrecht-in-arrestzelle-gesteckt-566384472892> (Access date: 5 January 2021).

95. “Untersuchung gegen Krienser Imam eingestellt”, *SRF*, 5 May 2020, <https://www.srf.ch/news/regional/zentralschweiz/aufruf-zu-gewalt-in-predigt-untersuchung-gegen-krienser-imam-eingestellt>, (Access date: 6 January 2021).

96. Robert Knobel, “Jetzt spricht der Krienser Imam”, *Luzerner Zeitung*, 10 June 2020, p. 19, https://www.luzerner.ch/uploads/media/AR-GLP-luz_20200610_0_0_19_1_1_pdf, (Access date: 7 January 2021).

res about the *Qatar Papers* and the Muslim Brotherhood.⁹⁷ Currently, the Neuchâtel prosecutor's office is appealing against Perrin's acquittal.⁹⁸

The Law on the Recognition of Public Utility of Religious Communities (LRCR), passed by the Grand Council of Neuchâtel on 2 September, offers the possibility of recognising other religious communities in addition to the three historically recognised churches.^{99, 100} The SVP and the FDP rejected the law and have independently proposed a referendum take place to determine the issue. Niels Rosselet-Christ, the SVP parliamentary group leader, said the requirements that the municipalities must fulfil were incomplete and that he aimed to avoid "excesses in the mosques".¹⁰¹

Furthermore, in another case the district court sentenced a retiree to a fine for racial discrimination because of besmirching his neighbour's reputation by sending flyers with racist contents and threats. The flyers contained sentences such as "The whole Islamic world must be destroyed" or "Down with the whole Arab filthy world". In addition, the accused allegedly wrote the name and address of his neighbour on the flyer to denounce him.¹⁰²

Internet

Numerous comments under newspaper articles, blogs, profiles on social networks, and posts on the subject of Islam and Muslims reveal the extent to which hate speech on the internet is directed against Islam and Muslims. The most and least controversial columns with comments on social media profiles of prominent figures stand out too. The fact that there is no adequate solution and that it is difficult to combat such voluminous hatred against Muslims is evident through the example of the intercultural association JASS (Just a simple Scarf),¹⁰³ whose Facebook page "became the recipient of group-specific hatred on the platform" and had to be deactivated due

97. Keystone-SDA, "Ex-SVP-Nationalrat Perrin von Rassendiskriminierung freigesprochen", Swissinfo.ch, 15 July 2020, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/alle-news-in-kuerze/ex-svp-nationalrat-perrin-von-rassendiskriminierung-freigesprochen/45905722>, (Access date: 8 January 2021).

98. SDA, "Neuenburger Staatsanwaltschaft will gegen Perrin-Freispruch vorgehen", Nau.ch, 24 July 2020, <https://www.nau.ch/news/schweiz/neuenburger-staatsanwaltschaft-will-gegen-perrin-freispruch-vorgehen-65749603>, (Access date: 8 January 2021).

99. Loi sur la reconnaissance d'intérêt public des communautés religieuses (LRCR): https://www.ne.ch/legislation-jurisprudence/pubfo/ld/Documents/2020/L_LRCR.pdf, (Access date: 9 January 2021).

100. The Reformed Church of the Canton of Neuchâtel EREN, the Roman Catholic Church and the Christian Catholic Church.

101. Raphaël Zbinden, "Referendum gegen Anerkennung von Religionen", cath.ch, 28 September 2020, <https://www.kath.ch/newsd/neuenburg-referendum-gegen-die-erkennung-weiterer-religionen-ergriffen/>, (Access date: 9 January 2021).

102. GRA, "Die Chronologie 'Rassismus in der Schweiz'", 14 September 2020, Weinfelden (TG), <https://www.gra.ch/chronologie/>, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

103. The intercultural association JASS was founded with the intention to protect members of minorities. They promote inclusive society, respect, tolerance, and are against discrimination, prejudice, and racism: <https://www.jass-mit.ch/ueber-uns/>, (Access date: 1 January 2021).

to the vast number of anti-Muslim comments.¹⁰⁴ Most comments, according to Andrea Buhler from JASS, related to the headscarf. According to her assessment, these are mostly attacks from the left spectrum: “Among them were some old-school and early feminists, who want to stir up hatred against Muslim women and Muslims”.¹⁰⁵

IKEA’s response to a racist comment by a customer led to a barrage of insults between pro and anti-Islam advocated on the client’s Facebook profile.¹⁰⁶ (Figure 9)



Figure 9: Screenshot from a company review on IKEA in Aubonne (VD). Search profile: “It’s a shame to find a veiled cashier. I won’t set foot there anymore” and IKEA’s response.¹⁰⁷

The Facebook profile of Mireille Vallette’s “Swiss Vigilance Islam Association” (Association Suisse Vigilance Islam ASVI) is known for its orientation toward the right-wing extremist Identitarian movement.¹⁰⁸ (Figure 10)

An analysis of the internet forum “Iron March” led to distinct findings about right-wing radicals worldwide, among whom was a Swiss national. Radicalisation on the internet is nothing new for the Swiss authorities because the Swiss far-right scene is on the rise. The National Action Plan (NAP) programme for the prevention and countering of radicalisation and violent extremism does not provide any proactive measures to address the far right because “the focus is on Islamist radicalisation”.¹⁰⁹ It

104. Corinne Plaga, “Plötzlich war mein privater Facebook-Account voll mit Hasskommentaren: Was ein Shitstorm mit Betroffenen macht und wie man sich dagegen wehren kann”, *NZZ*, 10 January 2020, <https://www.nzz.ch/wochenende/gesellschaft/shitstorms-wie-betroffene-mit-dem-hass-im-internet-umgehen-ld.1527886?reduced=true>, (Access date: 1 January 2021).

105. Ibid. Original quote: “Darunter waren einige Altachtundsechziger und frühe Feministinnen, die Hass gegen Musliminnen und Muslime schüren wollen”.

106. Yannick Weber, “Ikea au cœur d’un échange d’insultes autour de l’islam”, 20 minutes, 4 February 2020, <https://www.20min.ch/fr/story/ikea-au-cur-d-un-echange-d-insultes-autour-de-l-islam-724533008304>, (Access date: 2 January 2021).

107. Ibid.

108. Oliver Wäckerlig, “Islamophobia in Switzerland, National Report 2019” in: Enes Bayraktı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020, <https://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2019eir-SWITZERLAND.pdf>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

109. Barnaby Skinner, “Im Neonazi-Chat tummelt sich auch ein Schweizer ‘Volksgrenadier’”, *Tages Anzeiger*, 4 February 2020, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/leben/gesellschaft/so-hetzen-neonazis/story/26712536>, (Access date: 5 January 2021).

seems that the Swiss Parliament “spared left- and right-wing violent extremism” deliberately. Knowing that the Federal Intelligence Service (NDB) is not allowed to follow activities of left- or right-wing extremists in contrast to those of violent Islamists explicitly clarifies the matter.¹¹⁰



Figure 10: Image on the Facebook page of “Association Suisse Vigilance Islam” on 17 December 2020.¹¹¹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

On her blog “Boulevard of Islamism”, Mireille Vallette wrote about Giorgio Ghiringhelli’s “Stop Islamisation Award” (formerly called “Stop Islam Award”) for which she also sought donations.¹¹² (Figures 11 and 12)



Figure 11: Screenshot of Mireille Vallette’s blog.¹¹³

110. Kurt Pelda, “Zahnlos gegen Rechtsterrorismus”, *Der Bund*, 9 March 2020, <https://www.derbund.ch/schweiz/standard/zahnlos-gegen-rechtsterrorismus/story/10504760>, (Access date: 5 January 2021).

111. Association-Suisse-Vigilance-Islam, Facebook, 17 December 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Association-Suisse-Vigilance-Islam-793113944144556/>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

112. Mireille Vallette, “Prix ‘Stop Islamization’ 2020: ouvrez votre bourse!”, *Le Blog de Boulevard de l’islamisme*, 4 March 2020, <https://boulevarddelislamisme.blog.tdg.ch/archive/2020/03/04/prix-stop-islamization-2020-ouvrez-votre-bourse.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

113. Ibid.



Figure 12: Screenshot of the Mireille Vallette's post on Facebook.¹¹⁴

The winners of the “Stop Islamisation Award” in 2020 were Uli Windisch (Founder of the Web journal *LesObservateurs.ch*), Shafique Keshavjee (professor of theology and author of the controversial book *Conquering Islam*¹¹⁵) and Stefano Piazza (columnist at *Corriere del Ticino*). They were “rewarded for their courageous fight against Islamisation and radicalism” as announced in a statement by Giorgio Ghiringhelli.¹¹⁶ Hans Stutz, author of the chronology of racist incidents in Switzerland, included this event in his chronology, and wrote, “Giorgio Ghiringhelli announces which people he considers the best Swiss Islamophobes of the past year”.¹¹⁷ Among the nominees were also Thilo Sarrazin and Hamed Abdel-Samad.¹¹⁸

Zukunft.ch¹¹⁹ hosted an online lecture “Is Islam compatible with our democracy?” on 26 January 2021 with the presence, among others, of Fabienne Alfandari, president of the Association Suisse Vigilance Islam.¹²⁰

Zukunft.ch is also a strong supporter of the Egerkinger Committee’s “Yes to the Veiling Ban” and launched an information campaign on the initiative for the ballot on 7 March, 2021. This was the reason for making information and awareness flyers for the vote on the veiling ban.¹²¹ (Figure 13)

114. Mireille Vallette, Facebook, 4 March 2020, <https://de-de.facebook.com/mireille.vallette.5>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

115. For a analysis of S. Keshavjee’s book: Pascal Gemperli, “Et la poutre qui est dans ton œil ? Une analyse commentée du livre de S. Keshavjee”, 21 May 2019, <https://blogs.letemps.ch/pascal-gemperli/2019/05/21/et-la-poutre-qui-est-dans-ton-oeil-une-analyse-commentee-du-livre-de-s-keshavjee/>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

116. Mireille Vallette, “Stop islamisation: les lauréats 2020”, *Le Blog de Boulevard de l’islamisme*, 9 May 2020, <https://boulevarddelislamisme.blog.tdg.ch/archive/2020/05/09/stop-islamisation-les-laureats-2020-306361.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

117. Hans Stutz, *Chronologie: Losone TI*, 8. Mai 2020, <https://hans-stutz.ch/meldungen-zu-rechtsextremismus-und-rassismus-in-der-schweiz/losone-ti-0>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

118. March 2020, <https://boulevarddelislamisme.blog.tdg.ch/archive/2020/03/04/prix-stop-islamization-2020-ouvrez-votre-bourse.html>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

119. On “Zukunft CH” see: Oliver Wäckerli, “Vernetzte Islamfeindlichkeit”, p. 195 f.

120. Zukunft.ch, Online-Vortrag “Ist der Islam mit unserer Demokratie vereinbar?”, <https://mailchi.mp/2b5109efd759/hl8uff2mmp-5060022e=379edd33f8>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

121. Verhüllungsverbot: Informations- und Sensibilisierungs-Flyer zur Abstimmung über das Verhüllungsverbot: <https://www.flyer-ueberall.ch/burka/>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).



Figure 13: Flyer of Zukunft.ch for the vote on the veiling ban.¹²²

SVP-affiliated magazine *Schweizerzeit* also actively promotes the initiative with flyers and advertisements.¹²³ (Figures 14, 15)



Figure 14: Flyer “Schweizerzeit - YES to the ban on veiling”.¹²⁴



Figure 15: Advertisement by *Schweizerzeit* for “Yes to Veiling Ban”.¹²⁵

122. Ibid.

123. Schweizerzeit, “JA zur Schweiz, NEIN zum Islamismus”, <https://schweizerzeit.ch/vvi/>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

124. Schweizerzeit-Magazin, Nr. 24, 18 December 2020, p. 14, <https://epaper.schweizerzeit.ch/download/ausgaben-2020/?wpdmdl=452&ind=1608273527214>, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

125. Schweizerzeit, Special print, https://schweizerzeit.ch/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2020/12/FINAL_SZ_A4-4seitig_Sonderdruck-VI-Verhu%CC%88llung_20-12-02.pdf, (Access date: 16 January 2021).

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

As part of the “Participation” programme, the government council in Zurich aims to strengthen cooperation with Muslim communities by establishing the Association of Islamic Organisations in Zurich (VIOZ) as a reliable partner and authority on the concerned matters.¹²⁶

The head of the Directorate of the Interior and Justice, Evi Allemann, believes that it is no longer justified for the Canton of Bern to limit relations with the four national churches only.¹²⁷ She strives to examine how to mitigate the unequal treatment of Muslims in terms of training, funding, and pastoral care.¹²⁸

Moreover, the Lucerne Cantonal Council President Ylfete Fanaj (SP), known for her inspiring life story, breaks down prejudices through exemplification and wants to give “a voice to those who have none” through political activism.¹²⁹ She openly advocates the inclusion of minorities in dialogues and sees exponential and potential cooperation through integration with Islam a chance “to clarify misunderstandings and reduce fears”.¹³⁰

In addition to the above, the city council decided to provide the Muslim faith community with a burial place for deceased residents of the city of Wil. This is the result of the efforts of a working group consisting of representatives of the city of Wil and the Umbrella Association of Islamic Communities of Eastern Switzerland.¹³¹

The visit of the delegation “Commission for the Dialogue with Islam” to the mosque in Wil (SG) is a reminder of the neglected role of mosques, dialogue with mosques, and the dismantling of prejudices.

The mosque in Will (SG) was very hospitable toward students, politicians, and all open-minded individuals who wanted to learn first-hand about Islamic life and beliefs as result of the efforts of the mosque’s imam Bekim Alimi and the management board.¹³²

126. SDA, “Der Kanton Zürich will enger mit Muslimen zusammenarbeiten”, Nau.ch, 13 August 2020, <https://www.nau.ch/ort/zurich/der-kanton-zurich-will-enger-mit-muslimen-zusammenarbeiten-65760785>, (Access date: 8 January 2021).

127. The national churches recognized by public law in Switzerland are: The Protestant (Evangelical-Reformed) church, the Roman Catholic church, Judaism and the Christian Catholic (Old Catholic) church.

128. Sophie Reinhardt, “Ich muss mir nicht auf der Strasse Gehör verschaffen”, *Der Bund*, 8 July 2020, <https://www.derbund.ch/ich-muss-mir-nicht-auf-der-strasse-gehoeer-verschaffen-208933475634>, (Access date: 8 January 2021).

129. Stephan Weber, “Denen eine Stimme geben, die keine haben”, *Willisauer Bote*, 4 September 2020, Nr. 70, p. 3, https://ylfetefanaj.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-09-04_Willisauer-Bote_Seite_3.pdf, (Access date: 9 January 2021).

130. Stefan Calivers, “Minderheiten in den Dialog einbeziehen”, *Willisauer Bote*, 18 September 2020, Nr. 74, p. 3, https://ylfetefanaj.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/20200918_WB.pdf, (Access date: 9 January 2021).

131. “Grabstätte für muslimische Glaubensgemeinschaft auf dem Friedhof Bronschhofen”, Stadt Will, 8 April 2020, <https://www.stadtwil.ch/aktuellesinformationen/908281>, (Access date: 5 January 2021).

132. “Katholiken auf Besuch in der neuen Moschee von Will”, *Katholische Welt*, Nr. 08/2020, <https://moschee-wil.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Katholiken-auf-Besuch-in-der-neuen-Moschee-von-Wil.pdf>.

Another positive platform of interreligious dialogue and integration of women with different cultural background is the Café-Treff for women, a project of the Interreligious Dialogue Group Dietikon, which promotes the exchange of views and understanding between different religions. The meetings take place alternately in a mosque and a church building.¹³³

Among the most recent instances of integration and harmonisation in the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic was the successful setting up of a shopping service for Spitex customers by Spitex employees and members of the mosque in Grenchen.¹³⁴ At a later time, the executive director expressed extensive appreciation to the members of the mosque Ebu Hanife for their empathy and purchases for Spitex clients.¹³⁵ It is interesting to note that this mosque was unfortunately a target of several racist attacks during the construction phase.¹³⁶

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Hatred and enmity towards Muslims and Islam are damaging the peaceful and neutral image of Switzerland. These sentiments are becoming increasingly rooted in society and doors to professional practices are closing for women who wear a headscarf. The increasing number of hostile interventions by politicians in the parliament, and the increasing prejudice in the media and attacks on the streets against those unable to defend themselves is increasingly worrying to Muslims. This disturbs the religious and social harmony in Switzerland. A nation like Switzerland, known for its global legislative reputation, should not allow unfounded statements and regular fake information in newspapers to become a source of inspiration for legislation. Furthermore, it should ensure safety and peace of mind to all its citizens and residents through instructing, for instance, the police to take affirmative action instead of letting it neglect the voices of the oppressed. As a nation esteemed for the quality of its education globally, it should protect against the employment discrimination of hardworking students and protect them from being marginalised.

Moreover, while the question “Who funds mosques?” has been asked for years, especially by those who do not enter mosques, it would be fair to ask the question “Who is funding the hatred against Muslims in Switzerland?” A more proactive and

133. Joël Decurtins, “Dietikerinnen diskutieren an Café-Treff über Vorbilder”, *Schweiz am Wochenende / Bauern-Zeitung*, 29 February 2020, Ausgaben-Nr. 9, p. 50.

134. “Bei der Spitex läuft es aktuell rund”, *Grenchner Tagblatt*, 27 March 2020, Ausgaben-Nr. 73 p. 23. «Die Spitex kann ihren «normalen» Betrieb auch in Coronazeiten aufrechterhalten», *Luzerner Zeitung*, 26 March 2020, <https://www.luzernerzeitung.ch/solothurn/grenchen/die-spitex-kann-ihren-normalen-betrieb-auch-in-coronazeiten-aufrechterhalten-ld.1414664>, (Access date: 5 January 2021).

135. André Weyermann, “Eine berührende Anzahl an Freiwilligen und Mithelfenden”, *Grenchner Tagblatt*, Issue 134, p. 19, <https://www.grenchnertagblatt.ch/solothurn/grenchen/spitex-konnte-auf-eine-beruehrende-anzahl-an-freiwilligen-und-mithelfenden-zaehlen-138148621#>, (Access date: 7 January 2021).

136. Ademović-Omerčič, Nermina, “Islamophobia in Switzerland, National Report 2017” in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, Istanbul, SETA, 2018.

vigilant state needs to explore and expose Islamophobic networks of unnumbered actors, organisations, and media – namely what Dr. Oliver Wäckerlig conceptualised in his book as the “Islamophobic network” (*Vernetzte Islamfeindlichkeit*).¹³⁷

The following is recommended:

- To launch a new study against the bias on Islam and Muslims in the Swiss media and to implement more practically the recommendations that came out of the previous study led by Dr. Ettinger, a researcher of the University of Zürich.¹³⁸
- To increase the monitoring of hate speech on both social media and in the media in general.
- To prevent further discrimination against women wearing headscarves, the state should regulate the awarding of apprenticeship contracts. This is the concluding recommendation in Dr. Nathalie Gasser’s dissertation on the educational paths of young Muslims in Switzerland.¹³⁹ Similarly, as stated in the paper “Visible Islam in the Workplace? An Issue for Employees and Employers” by the SZIG, awareness of cultural and religious diversity and its practice should be nurtured among employers, both private and public.¹⁴⁰
- Existing structures of counselling centres must be further reinforced. Each canton should have an adequate counselling centre to relieve the burden on counselling centres responsible for few cantons and funding should be increased. Although there is a diverse infrastructure of subsidised counselling centres, there is none in the counselling network for victims of racism that solely specializes in anti-Muslim hatred.
- To reinforce the development of regular training on living in diversity and antiracial awareness for school employees and police officers.

Chronology

- **15.01.2020:** Andreas Glarner, a national councillor, is the new president of the SVP Aargau and confessed in his party speech that Islam is one of his core challenges.

137. Oliver Wäckerlig, “*Vernetzte Islamfeindlichkeit. Die transatlantische Bewegung gegen ‘Islamisierung’. Events – Organisationen – Medien*”, (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019).

138. Patrik Ettinger, “Qualität der Berichterstattung über Muslime in der Schweiz”, Eine Studie im Auftrag der Eidgenössischen Kommission gegen Rassismus EKR (Bern: 2018), https://www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/Studie_Qual_Berichterst_D.pdf.

139. Gasser Nathalie, *Islam, Gender, Intersektionalität. Bildungswege junger Frauen in der Schweiz*, (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020).

140. M. Schneuwly Purdie, F. Biasca, H. Schmid, A. Lang, SZIG Paper 9: “Sichtbarer Islam am Arbeitsplatz? Ein Thema für Arbeitnehmende und Abreitgebende”, June 2020, https://doc.rero.ch/record/328731/files/a5_szig_themenheft_9_d_diskrimination_web.pdf, (Access date: 15 January 2021).

- **03.02.2020:** CVP National Councillor Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter addressed imam Abu Ramadan from Biel as a “well poisoner” on Twitter, for which he sued her.
- **04.02.2020:** IKEA’s response to an Islamophobic comment by a customer led to a barrage of insults between pro- and anti-Islam activists on the client’s Facebook profile.
- **04.03.2020:** Mireille Vallette called for donations to the “Stop Islamisation Award” on her blog “Boulevard of Islamism”.
- **09.05.2020:** The winners of the “Stop Islamisation Award” in 2020 were Uli Windisch, Shafique Keshavjee, and Stefano Piazza.
- **03.06.2020:** Saïda Keller-Messahli questioned the construction of a new mosque in Reinach AG.
- **19.06.2020:** A teenager was found commenting the following on an online video of the Christchurch attack: “Someday I want to do the same thing in Switzerland”. He was arrested for ordering several kilograms of material that can be used to build bombs.
- **15.07.2020:** Former SVP national councillor Yvan Perrin was acquitted by the police court in Neuchâtel of racial discrimination charges for spreading an ideology of denigration against Muslims.
- **05.08.2020:** The publication of the German edition of the book *Qatar Papers* led to a series of newspaper articles, about Qatar Charity funding many Swiss mosques and organisations.
- **15.09.2020:** SVP National Adviser Walter Wobmann discussed allegations pertaining to Qatar Charity in the National Council.
- **25.09.2020:** CVP National Councillor Marianne Binder-Keller demanded in the National Council via an interpellation an expert opinion on the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Switzerland.
- **31.10.2020:** Unknown persons placed parts of a pig carcass in the mailbox of a Muslim family.
- **24.11.2020:** Knife attack in a shopping centre in Lugano. A mentally ill Swiss woman was intercepted when trying to join militant jihadists in Syria a few years ago. She returned to Switzerland, was placed in psychiatric custody, and injured two women with a knife. The attack was immediately characterised as terrorism.
- **18.12.2020:** CVP National Councillor Marianne Binder submitted a postulate planning the ban of headscarves for schoolgirls at schools and kindergartens.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
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Executive Summary

The year 2020 was anything but ‘business as usual’. What started with a fresh government enjoying a strong parliamentary majority and the promise of putting behind the Brexit turmoil of the past four years ended up being crushed by the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unsurprisingly the crushing effect of the pandemic has drowned out public debate on prejudice, social divisions, and hate crime. The forced retreat of everyday life to the intimate private sphere has made detecting and recording Islamophobia even more difficult and contested. The near-total absence of debate in the midst of a deadly pandemic has muffled voices and shaded other concerns out of the picture. Relatively little was heard of Islamophobia in 2020, in spite of the fact that the governing Conservative party continues to be generating the wrong kind of headlines for its ingrained anti-Muslim prejudice.

All this in no way means that Islamophobia in the UK has been in retreat in 2020 - quite the opposite in fact. It is becoming increasingly clear that anti-Muslim hate crime grew in intensity and volume during the pandemic, finding a host of new forms of, and outlets for, public expression. Hate crime figures continued their familiar upward trajectory, bolstered by more than a third after the first lockdown. Racially and religiously aggravated attacks registered loud and clear on the radar. The largest and governing UK mainstream political party (Conservatives) continued to wrestle with structural anti-Muslim prejudice while the major opposition (Labour) party did not escape criticism, since a significant proportion of its Muslim-background members reported that they had experienced or witnessed Islamophobia within the party. Meanwhile cases of discrimination against members of ethnic, religious, and/or racial minorities extended across all spheres of life. What is of further note, however, is how quickly and effortlessly the Islamophobic currents adapted to the new extraordinary situation caused by COVID-19, how they were redirected to new - predictably, mostly online - outlets, and how they morphed into new divisive tropes.

The rising threat of the far/radical right continues to be felt in recorded hate crime incidents, offline and especially online. However, this should not distract from the growing realisation that Islamophobia is a major problem of the British mainstream. It feeds from and into ingrained realities of everyday, institutional and structural racism. It is pervasive, routinised, normalised and detoxified, reproduced and reinforced more subtly under supposedly respectable tropes such as ‘free speech’. It remains encrypted in core public attitudes to identity, sovereignty, and security. It is far from an outlier, the preserve of extremists beyond the fringes of mainstream society. This ongoing and deepening embedding of Islamophobia into otherwise mainstream discourses and practices deserves much closer scrutiny for its cumulative effect on normalising anti-Muslim prejudice and racism in contemporary Britain.

Country Profile

EIR 2020

Country: United Kingdom

Type of Regime: Unitary parliamentary 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); Liberal Democrats; regional parties (Scottish National Party; Plaid Cymru; Democratic Unionist Party; Sinn Féin); Green Party; Brexit Party (since 2019).

Last Elections: 2019 Parliamentary Elections: the Conservative Party won 43.6% of the vote and 365 out of 650 parliamentary seats in the House of Commons, achieving a parliamentary majority of 86; the Labour Party came a distant second with 32.1% and 202 seats, with the Liberal Democrats third (in votes) with 11.5% but only 11 seats; and the Scottish National Party fourth with 3% but with a larger share of 48 seats (all in Scotland). The recently formed Brexit Party, which had emerged as the largest party in the May 2019 elections for the European Parliament, managed only 2% of the vote and did not elect any MPs.

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 (Christian Anglican) in England only; no established religion in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Statistics on Islamophobia:

The official Spring 2019 - Spring 2020 reporting cycle for England/Wales does not include data from the period of the pandemic. Nevertheless, it shows an 8% overall increase in the number of reported hate crime cases. The closest equivalent figures regarding religiously motivated hate crime for Scotland showed a rather more significant increase of 24% from 2018-19 - the same percentage that was also recorded in Northern Ireland. The 2018-20 Crime Survey for England and Wales highlights that recorded hate crime incidents are nearly four times higher in the case of individuals and households with Muslim background than the countrywide average figure, and seven times higher in comparison to cases involving those identifying as Christians. Nevertheless, preliminary figures for the first half of 2020 show that the number of racially or religiously aggravated offences ended up growing by 34% in June-July 2020 in comparison to the same period of 2019.

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 or 4.8% of total UK population), 3,372,966 (2017-18 Annual Population Survey); 47% are British-born.

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), Muslim Association of Britain

Main NGOs Combatting 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 Militant 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 year 2020 was anything but ‘business as usual’. For the UK the year started with the promise on turning the page of more than three years of political upheaval caused by Brexit and its aftermath. With a fresh government in place enjoying the strongest parliamentary majority for nearly two decades and the country’s official withdrawal from the EU in January 2020, it was hoped that a more meaningful public debate could have resumed after such a long time of introspection and obsession with all things Brexit. By March, it was becoming painfully clear that there was a new elephant in the room - a deadly pandemic that very soon brought life to an unprecedented state of near-standstill, literally and metaphorically alike.

Yet, racist prejudices of all kinds have always evidenced their resilience and evolutionary adaptability. Embedded in everyday practices, sustained by deep-rooted cultural patterns, and anchored on the structures of present-day society, ‘othering’ actually thrives in situations where the public sphere is silenced and life presents itself as a profound existential crisis.¹ Even in the absence of officially published figures it is clear that Islamophobia in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic grew in intensity and volume, finding a host of new forms and outlets for public expression. In some respects, it was indeed ‘business as usual’: hate crime figures continued their familiar upward trajectory; racially and religiously aggravated attacks registered loud and clear on the radar; mainstream political parties continued to wrestle with structural anti-Muslim prejudice; and cases of discrimination against members of ethnic, religious, and/or racial minorities extended across all spheres of life. This said, in a year where physical life retreated to the most intimate private spaces and opportunities for in-person social interaction were severely constricted, it is still striking how quickly and effortlessly the Islamophobic currents were redirected to new - predictably, mostly online - outlets and morphed into new divisive tropes.

A survey of Islamophobia incidents and trends requires making a number of qualitative and quantitative distinctions: between on- and offline occurrences; between physical and verbal expressions; between racial, religious, ethnic/cultural, or other motives; between extremist and quotidian manifestations; between radical and mainstream, individual and institutional, cliché and malicious, and so on. These distinctions are undoubtedly valid and help introduce nuance to the discussion of the state of Islamophobia in a country. However, they also run the risk of increasing the analytical resolution so much that one may lose sight of how interconnected and mutually reinforcing all these diverse currents are. In the last two or so years, the UK has at last taken the threat presented by the radical/far right seriously enough, with the

1. Salter, P. S., Adams, G., & Perez, M. J. (2018). “Racism in the Structure of Everyday Worlds: A Cultural-Psychological Perspective”, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27(3), 150–155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721417724239>.

country's security services implementing a far-reaching reorganisation in order to respond more effectively to the escalating challenge.² This is welcome news of course, as is the ongoing public scrutiny regarding structural Islamophobia and/or anti-Semitism in the two main political parties (Conservative and Labour). Yet the narrative is also strangely comforting for mainstream British society for it displaces the source of Islamophobia to the fringes of the political spectrum, presenting hate crime as equivalent to an extreme 'exception' to the rule. If anything, the last two years have demonstrated how even an increasing public focus on, and fight against, Islamophobia does not easily translate into equivalent changes in the broader ideas, beliefs, and behaviours that feed anti-Muslim prejudice or normalise aspects of it.³ Without confronting the reality of everyday, institutional and structural racism (of which Islamophobia is both one among many manifestations *and* one of the most prevalent, yet also most normalised form) in contemporary Britain, any welcome focus on Islamophobia as a social and political outlier will do little to address the experience of quotidian discrimination for millions of British citizens with a Muslim background.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the number of recorded Islamophobic incidents will not be known until well into 2021, when the UK and devolved governments publish their annual round of official statistics about hate crime for the preceding year. At the time of compiling this report, the most recent published data cover only a small part of 2020 and thus do not capture any changes effected by the spread of the pandemic and the country's serial lockdowns during the year.⁴ For reasons of comparison, the Spring 2019 - Spring 2020 official reporting cycle for Eng-

2. Kim Sengupta, "Violent Right-Wing Extremism Is a 'Major Threat' in the UK, MI5 Boss Says", *The Independent*, 15.10.2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/right-wing-extremism-terrorism-violence-uk-mi5-ken-mccallum-b1039501.html>; Charles Hymas, "MI5 Shake-up to Combat Rise of Far Right Terror Threat", *The Telegraph*, 2.10.2020, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/10/02/mi5-shake-up-combat-rise-far-right-terror-threat/>.
3. Omar Khan, "Islamophobia and Racism Aren't Restricted to a Few Tories and Far-Right Thugs", *The Guardian*, 10.3.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/10/islamophobia-racism-tories-far-right-british-society>.
4. For England and Wales see UK Home Office, *Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2019/20*; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>. For Scotland see Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service, *Hate Crime in Scotland 2019-20*, <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media-site-news-from-copfs/1887-hate-crime-in-scotland-2019-20>. For Northern Ireland see Police Service of Northern Ireland, *Trends in Hate Motivated Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2019/20: Annual Bulletin Published 20 November 2020* (there are annual and quarterly variants of these official police statistics), <https://www.psnipolice.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/>; and Public Prosecution Service of Northern Ireland, *Statistical Publication: Cases Involving Hate Crime 2019/20*, <https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/publications/statistical-publication-cases-involving-hate-crime-201920>.

land/Wales shows an 8% overall increase in the number of reported hate crime cases. Regrettably this figure excludes data from the UK's third-largest police body (Greater Manchester Police). Under the 'religion' flag, the latest report records a small drop in the number of reported cases (5%) but this figure comes with the important caveat that a number of crimes involve more than one motive and it is practically impossible to separate key categories such as race (as per previous years, by far the largest category with 69%) and religion. Exactly half of the reported religious hate crime involved Muslims (yet another small increase year-on-year). The closest equivalent figures regarding religiously motivated hate crime for Scotland showed a rather more significant increase of 24% from 2018-19 - the same percentage that was also recorded in Northern Ireland under the 'faith/religion' flag that excludes sectarian hate crime. Attacks with explicit anti-Muslim motive are also recorded in the hate crime statistics published by the London Metropolitan Police,⁵ as well as in response to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. In most of these sources for 2019 and parts of 2020, the trend is broadly similar - a muted upward trajectory, more or less in line with 2019, without significant deviations.

By comparison, the triennial Crime Survey for England and Wales offers a much broader and less statistically rigorous but more intimate picture of how 'othering' is woven into everyday spaces and practices that so often go undetected by big data or official reporting. During the 2018-20 census period, the survey recorded 120,000 personal hate crime incidents and 70,000 further cases involving households. These figures represent a rate of 0.2% across the entire population. but it is almost four times higher in the case of individuals and households with Muslim background (or more than seven times when compared to hate crimes against those identifying as Christians). This figure is significantly higher in comparison to any other targeted group defined according to religion, racism, or ethnicity. In addition, the report highlights a range of intersectionalities between identity and class, with those living in the most deprived areas of the UK twice as likely to be targets of hate crime.⁶

Given the exceptional situation caused by COVID-19, this year's official published surveys often include an annex that provides further provisional data from 2020 in an attempt to capture the effects of the pandemic and the lockdowns. Although, as previously mentioned, the full dataset for 2020 will not be available until at least the spring of 2021 and thus any insights based on these provisional figures should be treated with caution, it is clear from a series of reports that hate crime during the pandemic was affected by two contradictory realities: on the one hand, the significantly reduced presence and visibility of minority groups in the public space due to the re-

5. The figures from the London Metropolitan Police are published in a hate-crime 'dashboard', available at <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/hate-crime-dashboard/>

6. Office of National Statistics, Crime in England and Wales; <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice>

peated lockdown restrictions, and, on the other, the negative effect of the pandemic in terms of restricting social empathy and stoking fear and hatred vis-à-vis ‘others’. This in essence means that the figures already published for the first half of 2020 come with a significant caveat - they cannot capture how much the pandemic stoked distrust and fuelled prejudice because the lockdown has (temporarily) reduced the opportunities for *public* hate crimes that such surveys usually record. Still, the emerging picture is stark: during the first half of 2020, racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police increased significantly overall. The curve captures the contradictory forces in effect: the number of hate crime offences fell significantly during March-May (the period of the first lockdown in the UK) but rose sharply immediately afterwards, almost mirroring the effect witnessed in previous years in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in the UK and globally. In fact, provisional figures for June and July 2020 show that racially and religiously aggravated hate crime recorded by the police rose by about a third in comparison to 2020.⁷

Figure A1: Number of racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police, January to July 2019 and 2020

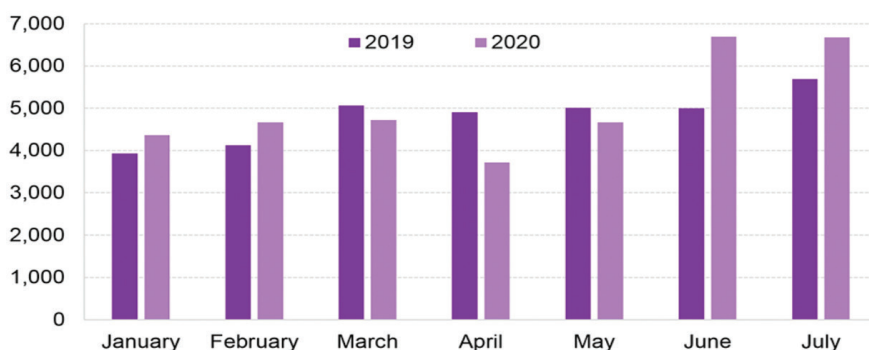


Figure 1: Difference between racially/religiously aggravated and non-aggravated crime in England (2015-20).⁸

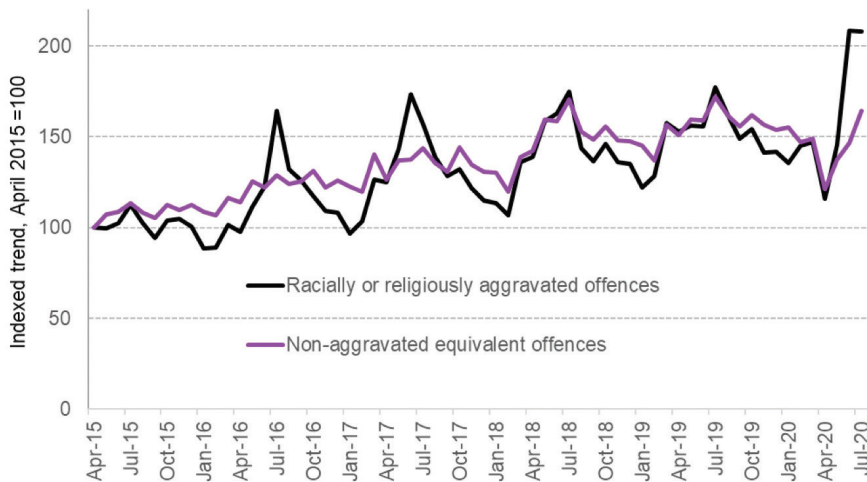
If the (brief) decline in the number of recorded hate incidents against Muslims during the first UK lockdown is easily explainable and hardly surprising, it belies a more complex story. Unsurprisingly, the significant rise in online hate acts against minority communities - and Muslims in particular - during the lockdown reflected the enforced shift in social interaction from the physical to the virtual sphere. At the same time, however, the increased spread of all kinds of conspiracy theories⁹ and

7. Home Office, Hate Crime in England and Wales, 2019-20, Figure A1; Hate crime, England and Wales, 2019 to 2020: data tables

8. *Hate crime, England and Wales, 2019/20*; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>

9. Awan, Imran. “Coronavirus: Conspiracy Theories and Fake Videos Fuel Rise in Islamophobia”, *The Conversation*, 24.4.2020, <http://theconversation.com/coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-and-fake-videos-fuel-rise-in-islamophobia-137107>.

false stories on the internet set the foundations for a veritable post-lockdown spurt in both off- and online hate incidents against Muslims.¹⁰ In the midst of the first lockdown in the spring of 2020, the far-right hate group Free-Handers posted stickers in a number of cities in northern England blaming immigration and ‘open borders’ for the spread of the virus in Britain.¹¹ The result of all these on- and offline campaigns was that Islamophobia emerged both quantitatively and qualitatively strengthened from the first UK lockdown, reaching new outlets and taking on a range of new discursive forms but still reinforcing the same stereotypes and key divisive messages.¹² In fact, the cumulative effect of local and global far-right activism during the pandemic has strengthened its core narrative against globalisation, multiculturalism, and immigration, making minority groups significantly more vulnerable to hate both on- and offline.¹³



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office. Figures exclude GMP.
See Table 1.1 for list of offences covered.

Figure 2: Number of racially or religiously aggravated offences by the police (2019-20).¹⁴

10. “COVID-19 Sparks Online Islamophobia as Fake News and Racist Memes Are Shared Online, New Research Finds”, Birmingham City University, <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/coronavirus-information/news/covid-19-sparks-online-islamophobia-as-fake-news-and-racist-memes-are-shared-online-new-research-finds>; “Dangerous’ Conspiracy Theories Could Spark Wave of Islamophobic Attacks When Lockdown Lifts, Report Warns”, *The Independent*, 19.4.2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-muslim-lockdown-conspiracy-theories-tommy-robinson-katie-hopkins-a9471516.html>.
11. “Coronavirus: Arrests over ‘Disgusting’ Racist Covid-19 Stickers”, BBC News, 16.4.2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-52314222>.
12. “COVID-19: How Hateful Extremists Are Exploiting the Pandemic”, Commission for Countering Extremism, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-hateful-extremists-are-exploiting-the-pandemic>; “Snapshot: How Extremist Groups are Responding to Covid-19”, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, May 2020, <https://institute.global/policy/snapshot-how-extremist-groups-are-responding-covid-19-6-may-2020>.
13. Ariza, Cristina. “Covid-19 and the Global Far Right”, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 14.4.2020, <https://institute.global/policy/covid-19-and-global-far-right>.
14. Ibid.



Figure 3: Data regarding increase in hate crime targeting East Asian and South East Asian communities.¹⁵

These and other changes will no doubt be reflected in statistics that will be published in 2021. At this stage, it is safe to assume that the breakdown of anti-Muslim hate crime captured by the official 2019-20 figures will look significantly different in next year's report. For the census period ending in March 2020, hate crime recorded under the 'religion' flag showed a much higher incidence rate of criminal damage and arson attacks than in any other classification.¹⁶ This included a wide range of incidents ranging from physical attacks to either person or property to verbal abuse to lower-level pervasive intimidation directed at individuals and/or local communities. Every now and then reports highlight the extent of the attritional effect of everyday intimidation and discrimination: for example, in February, it was revealed that four out of ten Muslims living in Scotland have been experiencing Islamophobia on a near-daily basis; and four out of five Scottish Muslim women had suffered from significant, repeated, and widespread abuse in every public space from education and employment to transport and the high street.¹⁷ Muslim communities themselves have warned against the adverse effect of the pandemic and the lockdown on community cohesion: local Muslim leaders in the north of England, for example, warned the authorities that the everyday experience of Islamophobia has become significantly more

15. "COVID-19: How Hateful Extremists Are Exploiting the Pandemic", Commission for Countering Extremism.

16. Home Office, Hate Crime in England and Wales, 2019-20, p. 14.

17. Hutcheon, Paul. "Scotland's Islamophobic Shame Exposed with Most Muslims Facing Race Hate", *Daily Record*, 26.2.2020, <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/race-hate-reality-modern-scotland-21574705>.

pervasive since the lockdown, generating local community tension that is often impossible to detect in official statistics.¹⁸ A recently published report commissioned on the effects of the pandemic and the associated (first) lockdown on communities with Muslim background commissioned by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) highlighted the perfect storm of *significantly* higher infection rate and COVID-related mortality among BAME communities;¹⁹ loss of community interaction in the wake of the long suspension of religious, social, and cultural activities during the lockdown; and the negative depiction of Muslims in the UK media.²⁰

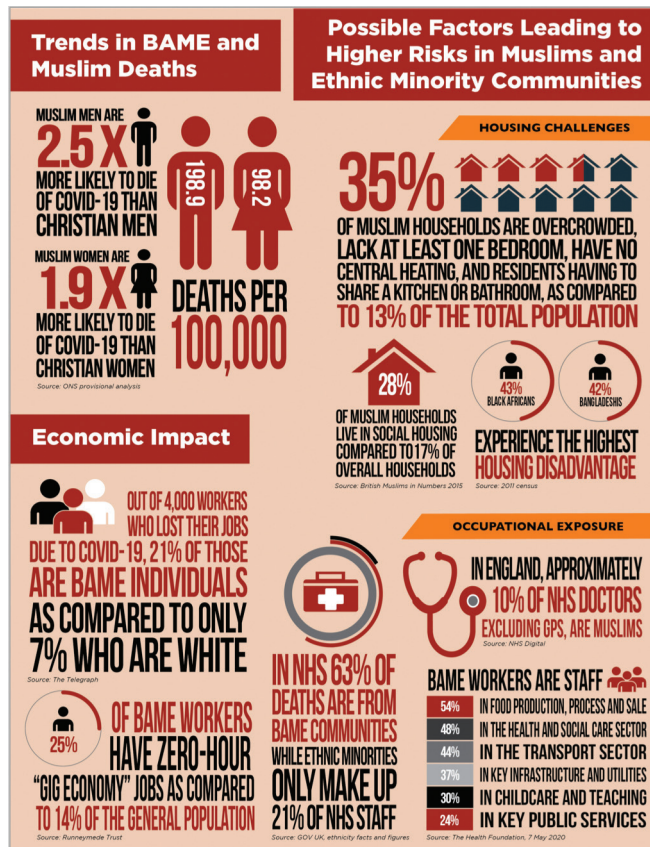


Figure 4: The diverse ways that COVID-19 has impacted Muslim communities.²¹

- Helen Pidd, Josh Halliday, Amy Walker and Nazia Parveen. "Islamophobia Surges amid Lockdown Warn Civic Leaders in North of England", *The Guardian*, 5.8.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/aug/05/islamophobia-surges-amid-lockdown-warn-civic-leaders-in-north-of-england>.
- Ashitha Nagesh. "How Coronavirus Tore through Britain's Ethnic Minorities", BBC News, 2.6.2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52894225>. See also the detailed written evidence submitted by the MCB to the UK Parliament on this topic in late April 2020, estimating that the mortality rates amongst BAME communities were between two and four times higher than in the case of white groups. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3726/pdf/>.
- Together in Tribulation: British Muslims and the COVID-19 Pandemic*, MCB, November 2020, <https://mcb.org.uk/report/covid-and-muslims/>.
- Ibid.

In line with previous years, Muslim places of worship remained extremely vulnerable to performative vandalism and physical attacks - but the parabola of 2020 shows that the overwhelming majority of these incidents occurred either before or after the first lockdown. The year 2020 literally started with the spraying of racial slurs on walls adjacent to the North Brixton Islamic Cultural Centre in London.²² In March, the Hussainia Mosque and Community Centre in Birmingham were also targeted with offensive graffiti. But it was after the relaxation of the restrictions brought the reopening of places of worship that most of the incidents were recorded, confirming fears that the lockdown hiatus was only a temporary respite.²³ Arson attacks such as the one against the mosque on Aylsham Road in Norwich (July),²⁴ and acts of vandalism such as the spraying of offensive slogans on the walls of the Farooq E Azam Islamic Centre in Bowesfield Lane and the Jamia Al-Bilal Mosque in Northcote Street in Durham (June) are the shocking visible tip of an iceberg that often overshadow the alarming rise and devastating cumulative effects of quotidian Islamophobic practices in community and public spaces. The escalating physical intimidation tactics of far-right groups such as Britain First have prompted community initiatives to protect mosques and Islamic centres. Initiatives of this kind, such as the one reported in South Yorkshire in January 2020, underline both the growing threat of the far right and the increasing inadequacy of state protection extended to Muslim places of worship.²⁵ It is telling that only 27 mosques received modest government funding for upgrading their security arrangements.²⁶ A further government consultation about improving the protection of places of worship launched in March had not reported its findings or recommendations at the time of writing.²⁷

Employment

The workplace remains one of the most vulnerable habitats of Islamophobia in the UK, with Muslims receiving on average between 13 and 21% less pay, and having

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22. "Anti-Islamic Slogans Spray-Painted near Mosque in Brixton", *The Guardian*, 1.1.2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/01/anti-islamic-slogans-spray-painted-near-mosque-in-brixton>; "UK Mosques Become Targets of Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes", *Daily Sabah*, 2.1.2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2020/01/02/anti-muslim-slogans-painted-near-mosque-in-london>.
 23. Kate Proctor, "MPs Fear Rise in Islamophobia as Mosques in England Reopen", *The Guardian*, 15.6.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/jun/15/mps-fear-rise-in-islamophobia-as-mosques-in-england-reopen-coronavirus>.
 24. "Police Investigating Arson Attack at Norwich Mosque", *The Independent*, 27.7.2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/norwich-mosque-arson-attack-police-investigation-a9640546.html>.
 25. "Rotherham Muslims Launch 'Guardian' Group after Far-Right Threats", *The Guardian*, 29.1.2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/29/rotherham-muslims-launch-guardian-group-after-far-right-threats>; "Extra Police Patrols after 'Far-Right Idiots' Target Rotherham Mosques", *The Rotherham Advertiser*, 24.1.2020, <https://www.rotherhamadvertiser.co.uk/news/view,extra-police-patrols-after-farright-idiots-target-rotherham-mosques34915>.
 26. *Places of Worship Scheme Provides Record Levels of Funding*, UK Home Office, 15.3.2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/places-of-worship-scheme-provides-record-levels-of-funding>.
 27. *Protecting Place of Worship. A Government Consultation*, UK Government, 15.3.2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>.

to try much harder than white employees - whether British or from Western Europe and North America - to get hired. For years now research on conditions of work for BAME employees has unearthed a disturbing landscape of ongoing conscious and unconscious bias, as well as multiple barriers to upward mobility, whereby race, religion, ethnicity, and gender very often intersect to reinforce discrimination. However, the profound changes in workplace practices caused by the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 (especially the shift to working from home) have also underlined the significance of the workplace in terms of strengthening community spirit, deconstructing racial and religious stereotypes, and fostering better understanding between different communities.

Of course, the ongoing health crisis has put the spotlight on the places of work that have become so crucial in the fight against the pandemic. Rigorous empirical research and anecdotal evidence paint a distressing picture of rife Islamophobia in NHS work settings: four in five Muslim employees revealed they had experienced Islamophobia or racism within the NHS, more than two-thirds believed that the situation has been getting significantly worse in recent years, and 43% have considered quitting their job because of the abuse they have experienced. The well-documented higher vulnerability of BAME people from COVID was illustrated in the context of the NHS frontline: the first four doctors to die from COVID were of Muslim background, and, more generally, Muslim NHS staff were twice as likely to die from the disease while working than their white colleagues. Meanwhile prejudice and abuse, already well-documented in the interactions of Muslim medical staff with some patients (for example, reports that the organisation tends to treat BAME doctors as 'outsiders'), were reproduced even in the crisis-hit medical spaces during the COVID pandemic.

In a year when Raffia Arshad became the first hijab-wearing Muslim woman appointed as judge for the Midlands Circuit having herself been subjected to all forms of discrimination while working in courts, different pieces of research put particular focus on the significant and ongoing difficulties that women with a Muslim background face in their everyday life and workplace. This group remains about three times more likely to be affected by unemployment. With professional environments failing to support the particular needs of both women and BAME employees, with practices that foster exclusion continuing to be rife (for example, the fetishisation of a drinking culture as one of the primary conduits for team-building in the workplace), the professional spaces continue to be hostile to many Muslims - and Muslim women in particular. The need for a safe, discrimination-free, and culturally sensitive workplace in the UK has been further underlined in 2020 by the case of Zeinab Alipourbabaie, a senior electrical engineer at Dyson who won an unfair dismissal case against her employer on grounds of repeated religious and racial discrimination. She had been forced to resign because of harassment, bullying, and discrimination by a

senior company manager who made it clear on numerous occasions to her that he ‘disliked Muslims’ and thought they ‘were violent’.

Education

In a country where 93% of all school headteachers are white and nearly half of BAME teachers hesitate to report discrimination or bullying because of a belief that they were unlikely to be supported by the school authorities, it is not surprising that education has for years been a primary area of concern regarding Islamophobia. Education, especially primary and secondary, is crucial in challenging existing prejudices and fostering a deeper understanding of difference among younger Brits.²⁸ In March, a primary school teacher in the south of England was banned from working after repeatedly using racist language on social media - for example calling Islam ‘cancer of the world’ and a ‘vile, vile, vile religion’.²⁹ Racist bullying in schools has continued to rise in recent years, typically spiking in the wake of periods of crisis (terror attacks, COVID crisis, etc.), leading to the exclusion of thousands of Muslim students from education.³⁰ Meanwhile the government’s draconian counter-radicalisation rules meant that the Birchfield Independent Girls School in Birmingham was assessed as ‘inadequate’ because of a controversial ‘inflammatory’ leaflet found in its library that dated back to 1994 and, according to the inspectors, amounted to ‘pupils not being safe from potential radicalisation’.³¹

But, in 2020, the focus also moved to higher education - a very important space for young Muslims in the UK that had until recently received less attention in the context of Islamophobia research. A large-scale research project investigating perceptions of Islam in British university campuses has revealed a very different picture to the standard perception of universities as spaces of pluralism that welcome and defend diversity.³² With students from Muslim background making about 9% of the UK student population, the emerging picture of widespread suspicion towards Islam that verges on hostility, mistrust of Muslim students, and perceptions of Islam and Muslims as a culturally awkward fit or even a threat to Britain, is a further alarming reminder of

28. Lat Blaylock, “Teaching Islam: Challenging prejudices”, SecEd, 3.11.2020, <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/teaching-islam-challenging-prejudices-re-today-interfaith-week-religious-education/>; “Racism within UK Schools”, MEND, 8.9.2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/racism-within-uk-schools/>.

29. Adam Forrest, “Primary Teacher Banned from Schools after He Described Islam as ‘Cancer of the World’”, *The Independent*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/primary-school-teacher-banned-philip-turner-somerset-islamophobia-facebook-a9409506.html>.

30. “Standing Up to Islamophobic Bullying”, MEND, 25.11.2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/standing-up-to-islamophobic-bullying/>.

31. Nazia Parveen, “Birmingham Islamic School Sues Ofsted after Being Failed for Leaflet”, *The Guardian*, 26.1.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jan/26/birmingham-islamic-school-sues-ofsted-after-being-failed-for-leaflet-birchfield-girls-inadequate>.

32. Guest, M., Scott-Baumann, A., Cheruvallil-Contractor, S., Naguib, S., Phoenix, A., Lee, Y. and Al Baghal, T. (2020) *Islam and Muslims on UK University Campuses: Perceptions and Challenges*. Durham: Durham University, London: SOAS, Coventry: Coventry University and Lancaster: Lancaster University, p. 26.

how embedded Islamophobia has become in contemporary British society and what a significant disempowering effect it is having on young Muslims.³³ The government's counter-radicalisation and -terrorism strategy Prevent, in particular, has been singled out as a key driver of negative perceptions vis-à-vis Muslims in university campuses, promoting a stereotypical image of Islam as a security threat linked to terrorism even at a time when Prevent referrals relating to the far right are growing at an alarming pace and have overtaken any other category.³⁴ The research project confirms what has been feared for some time now, namely that Prevent - in its current format at least - does much more to reinforce systemic Islamophobia than to combat radicalisation.³⁵

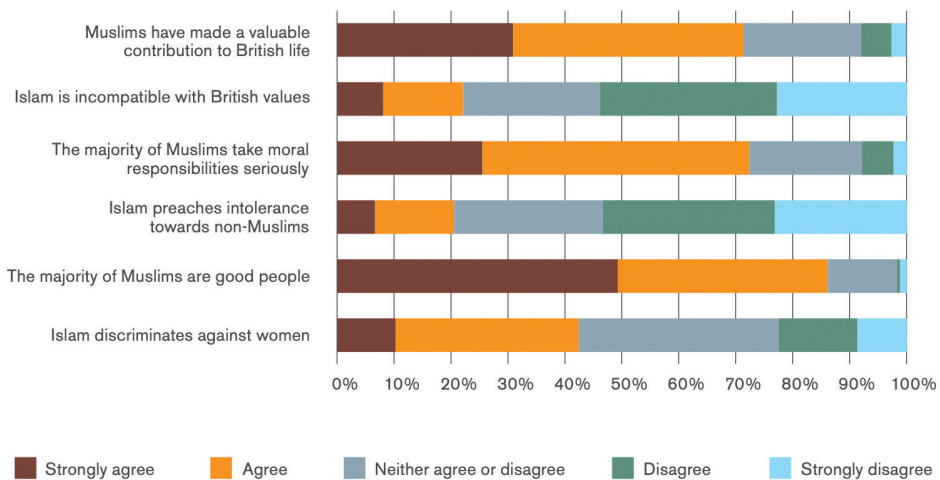


Figure 5: Views about Islam and Muslims among UK university students.³⁶

It should not come as a huge surprise that certain sectors of the UK media and politics have constantly criticised initiatives against discrimination in universities by deploying their favourite weapon - freedom of speech. *The Daily Mail* produced a piece that accused universities of 'severe crackdowns on freedom of speech' and 'censorship'.³⁷ The article utilised a report published by the right-wing think tank Civitas that ranked universities according to how restrictive their policies were regarding

33. Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor, "Government Policy Has Left Muslim Students Feeling Unable to Speak up on Campus", *The Conversation*, 15.7.2020, <https://theconversation.com/government-policy-has-left-muslim-students-feeling-unable-to-speak-up-on-campus-142610>.

34. Jamie Grierson and Dan Sabbagh, "Largest Number of Prevent Referrals Related to Far-Right Extremism", *The Guardian*, 26.11.2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/26/just-one-in-10-prevent-referrals-found-at-risk-of-radicalisation>.

35. Scott-Baumann, Alison. "Prevent Doesn't Stop Students Being Radicalised. It Just Reinforces Islamophobia | Alison Scott-Baumann", *The Guardian*, 14.11.2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/14/prevent-doesnt-stop-students-being-radicalised-it-just-reinforces-islamophobia>.

36. Guest et al., *Islam and Muslims on UK University Campuses: Perceptions and Challenges*, p. 26.

37. White, Josh. "'Severe' Crackdowns on Freedom of Speech at a THIRD of Universities", *Mail Online*, 16.12.2020, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9061241/Severe-crackdowns-freedom-speech-universities-report-claims.html>.

views deemed offensive, discriminatory, or racist.³⁸ Again the report was picked up by both the tabloid and broadsheet newspapers typically promoting the ‘free speech’ agenda.³⁹ The University of Cambridge was particularly singled out by being placed in the ‘red’ tier (‘performing badly’ in terms of alleged ‘censorship’) in the Civitas report. This is because the university has been in the headlines, partly because of a number of disinvitations regarding controversial academics and speakers, but also because its governing body debated the institution’s freedom of speech policy. A very public debate concerning the merits of ‘respect’ or ‘tolerance’ of different (and controversial) views escalated into something akin to a symbolic battle of a much deeper culture war. The overwhelming support of the university’s governing body for the ‘tolerance’ formula⁴⁰ is unlikely to settle the broader issue or indeed appease the champions of ‘free speech’ as an overriding and uncompromising entitlement. Unsurprisingly, following the Cambridge vote, an emboldened Toby Young of the Free Speech Union (FSU) has started campaigning to demand that the university re-invite Jordan Peterson on the grounds of this very ‘tolerance’ of different view. Peterson had been disinvited from a university fellowship in 2019 for his extreme and inflammatory views on anything from gender equality and racism to Islamophobia (which he considers a ‘word created by fascists to manipulate’).⁴¹

Politics

Compared to the high political drama of the previous years, 2020 was rather underwhelming in political terms, with public discourse overcome and practically silenced by the pandemic. Yet once again, under the grave shadow of the health crisis and the sense of existential threat, a lot went almost under the radar. The relative shortfall of headline-grabbing political stories makes it easier for this year’s UK report to shift the focus on Islamophobia in the political sphere not as an exception driven by the fringes but as a structural, normalised practice of mainstream politics and society.⁴²

It is indeed depressing that each of the two main political parties of the UK are struggling to deal with accusations that they are rife with bigotry on both the

38. “Academic Freedom in Our Universities: The Best and the Worst”, Civitas, December 2020 - <https://www.civitas.org.uk/publications/academic-freedom-in-our-universities/>

39. Indicatively, Simon Osborne, “Cambridge University with Growing “Cancel Culture” Named One of the Worst for Free Speech”, *Daily Express*, 17.12.2020, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1373560/cambridge-university-free-speech-cancel-culture-no-platform-woke-movement-civitas>; and “Cambridge University Plunges into “Red” Category for Free Speech amid Rise of “Cancel Culture”, *The Telegraph*, 17.12.2020, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/12/17/cambridge-university-plunges-red-category-free-speech-amid-rise/>.

40. “University of Cambridge Free Speech Vote: Tolerance Wins over Respect”, *Cambridge Independent*, 9.12.2020, <https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/university-of-cambridge-free-speech-vote-tolerance-wins-over-respect-9144582/>.

41. Ben Quinn, “Cambridge University Urged to Re-Invite Rightwing Academic Jordan Peterson”, *The Guardian*, 10.12.2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/dec/10/cambridge-university-urged-to-re-invite-rightwing-academic-jordan-peterson>.

42. On ‘mainstreaming’ see Mondon, Aurelien, and Aaron Winter. “Articulations of Islamophobia: From the Extreme to the Mainstream”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 13 (2017): 2151–79.

national and the local levels.⁴³ The year 2019 came and went with the Conservative Party accused of endemic Islamophobia and the Labour Party investigated for pervasive anti-Semitism. The year 2020 began with promises of catharsis for both political families.⁴⁴ Yet such hopes were proved shallow quickly. The Conservative Party backtracked on its earlier assumed promise to conduct a full-scale investigation specifically on Islamophobia amongst its ranks,⁴⁵ opting instead for an abstract enquiry into ‘discrimination (including on the grounds of alleged Islamophobia)’.⁴⁶ The switch of focus was criticised as an evasive manoeuvre and a facade, essentially renegeing on the very public promise by prime minister Johnson to conduct an enquiry specifically on Islamophobia.⁴⁷ What is equally distressing, however, is that the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) decided not to hold its own investigation into ‘discrimination and Islamophobia’ in the party because ‘in the light of the decision by the Party to institute an independent investigation, ... it would not be proportionate to initiate our own investigation at this stage’.⁴⁸ The party’s own enquiry started months after its terms were published and is ongoing. In September 2020, the HOPE Not Hate (HnH) anti-fascism campaign published a devastatingly detailed and effective submission dossier to the enquiry, which covered both a forensic examination of structural Islamophobia in all levels of the Tory party but also exposed the gross inadequacies in the party’s investigative and disciplinary mechanisms. The report reiterated a range of shocking findings: more than half of the party’s members think of Islam in negative or very negative terms; nearly half consider it a ‘threat’ to British society; nearly 80% of members rejected the idea that Islamophobia was a problem within the party; four in ten did not believe that Islamophobia was a problem in Britain; and the extent of anti-Muslim prejudice expressed by the party membership is significantly higher than either the national average or the equivalent figure vis-à-vis other minority/religious groups such as Jews or Hindus⁴⁹

43. Amber Khan, “The Battle Isn’t Labour Anti-Semitism vs Tory Islamophobia—It’s Everyone against Hatred”, *Prospect*, 1.11.2019, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/politics/the-battle-isnt-labour-anti-semitism-vs-tory-islamophobia-its-everyone-against-hatred>.

44. Chris Allen, “Islamophobia in the Labour and Conservative Parties: When Will This Problem Be Taken Seriously?”, *The Conversation*, 25.11.2020, <https://theconversation.com/islamophobia-in-the-labour-and-conservative-parties-when-will-this-problem-be-taken-seriously-150673>.

45. Cf. European Islamophobia Report 2019, report on the UK.

46. *Independent Investigation Terms of Reference*, Conservative Party, 12.12.2020, <https://www.conservatives.com/investigation>.

47. “Conservative Investigation into Prejudice and Discrimination Branded ‘a Facade’ by Muslim Council of Britain”, MCB, 12.5.2020, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/conservative-investigation-into-prejudice-and-discrimination-branded-a-facade-by-muslim-council-of-britain/>.

48. See the relevant announcement at <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/complaints-raised-about-islamophobia-conservative-party>

49. The report “Conservative Party Inquiry on all Forms of Racism including Islamophobia: Hope Not Hate Submission of Evidence” was published on 30.9.2020 by Hope Not Hate and can be accessed at <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/09/30/the-deep-roots-of-islamophobia-in-the-conservative-party/>

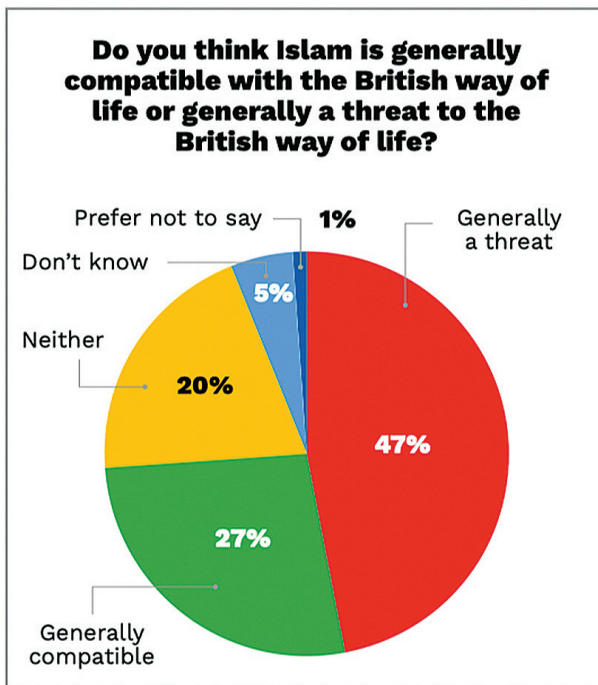


Figure 6: Attitudes to Islam among members of the Conservative Party.⁵⁰

As calls for an additional independent enquiry into *specifically* Islamophobia within the Conservative Party gather momentum,⁵¹ it is clear that the problem continues to be so pervasive and systemic that it cannot simply be wished away. The MCB submitted an updated dossier of evidence of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party to the EHRC in March 2020, which implicated 300 party figures from individual activists and local government figures to members of parliament, members of the cabinet, and government special advisors.⁵² Taken together, the two different dossiers from the MCB and HnH add further up-to-date evidence to the already substantial documentation on Tory on- and offline Islamophobia collated in previous years by these and other campaigns. The party responded by suspending a number of the members exposed by the reports⁵³ - typically local councillors and activists like Theodora Dickinson who attacked the Labour MP Naz Shah by asking her to ‘go back

50. “Conservative Party Inquiry on All Forms of Racism Including Islamophobia”, Hope Not Hate Submission of Evidence, September 2020, <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/conservative-party-investigation-islamophobia-2020-09-v5.pdf>.

51. Qais Hussain, “It Is Time for an Investigation into Islamophobia in the Conservative Party”, *The Independent*, 2.11.2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/islamophobia-conservative-party-boris-johnson-b1534835.html>.

52. “MCB Submits New Dossier of Conservative Islamophobia to EHRC, with Evidence of over 300 Individuals”, *Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)*, 5.3.2020, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/mcb-submits-new-dossier-of-conservative-islamophobia-to-ehrc-with-evidence-of-over-300-individuals/>.

53. “Conservative Party Members Suspended over Islamophobia Claims”, BBC News, 2.3.2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-51709197>.

to Pakistan'.⁵⁴ But what about those like Bob Blackman - a Tory MP with considerable pedigree in anti-Muslim initiatives - accepting an invitation to address an event that also hosted Katie Hopkins (who featured as one of the central figures in the UK Islamophobia network in the 2019 report)?⁵⁵ Or, the junior health minister Nadine Dorries - again a known entity for her long-standing propagation of all kinds of anti-Muslim stereotypes involving the niqab or grooming and for sanctioning Islamophobic content from objectionable online sources - uncritically retweeting a doctored video of the Labour Party leader Keir Starmer posted by an account linked to far-right online agitation?⁵⁶ Or, Craig Whittaker, another Conservative MP, blaming BAME communities - singling out Muslims as an example - for a COVID spike in the north of England in July?⁵⁷

Furthermore, it is overly simplistic to present the problem of structural racism in the UK mainstream parties as one of Conservative Islamophobia versus Labour anti-Semitism. Each party has been weaponising their opponents' discrimination woes in order to detract attention from their own failings as inclusive political families. In fact, recently published research found that the two main political parties show very similar (that is, high) levels of discrimination across a wide range of minority groups.⁵⁸ According to another research report published by the Labour Muslim Network, 29% of Muslim members have experienced Islamophobia in the party, 37% have witnessed it, 48% do not believe that the party has robust mechanisms to deal with discrimination complaints, and more than half do not trust the leadership to deal with the problem effectively.⁵⁹ In March, the party took the decision to suspend Trevor Phillips,⁶⁰ a controversial figure whose intellectual journey started with him pioneering research on Islamophobia in the 1990s but has ended up epitomising a mainstream flavour of 'Islamophobia scepticism' and has turned into a taboo-breaking free speech fighter.

54. "Tories Suspend Activist over 'Back to Pakistan' Comment about Labour MP", BBC News, 19.6.2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-53106605>.

55. Adrian Zorzut, "Tories Urged to Take Action against Brexiteer MP Who Spoke alongside Islamophobic Voices", *The New European*, 13.7.2020, <https://www.theneweuropen.co.uk/brexit-news/brexit-backing-mp-and-katie-hopkins-speak-at-same-conference-85742>.

56. Lizzie Dearden, "Tory MPs Reprimanded by Party for Sharing 'Far-Right' Video Smearing Keir Starmer", *The Independent*, 14.5.2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/keir-starmer-grooming-gangs-video-nadine-dorries-tories-a9514781.html>

57. Peter Walker and Josh Halliday, "Tory MP Condemned for Claim BAME People Breaching Lockdown Most", *The Guardian*, 31.7.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/31/tory-mp-craig-whittaker-condemned-claim-bame-people-most-covid-19-lockdown-breaches>.

58. Lee Crawford and Ukasha Ramli, "How Anti-Semitic and How Islamophobic Are Local Politicians?", LSE Blogs on British Politics and Policy, 3.12.2020, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/how-anti-semitic-and-how-islamophobic-are-local-politicians/>.

59. Damien Gayle, "Over Half Muslim Labour Members 'Do Not Trust Party to Tackle Islamophobia'", *The Guardian*, 14.11.2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/14/over-half-muslim-labour-members-do-not-trust-party-to-tackle-islamophobia>. The report by the Labour Muslim Network can be found at <https://www.labourmuslims.org/press>.

60. "Trevor Phillips Suspended from Labour over Islamophobia Allegations", BBC News, 9.3.2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51797316>.

Predictably the decision has been controversial, with the free speech brigade out in full force working hard to reduce the entire discussion to a putative choice between freedom and tyranny.⁶¹ Controversial though this decision has been,⁶² it serves as a reminder that Islamophobia has long ceased to be a fringe concern and has become normalised within the public sphere to the extent that it makes distinctions between radical and mainstream politics increasingly problematic in this respect.

Of course, all this focus on Islamophobia *in mainstream politics* in no ways means that the trademark toxicity of the far-right discourses on Islam and Muslims was tamed by the lockdown. For years the discourse of ‘freedom of speech’ has provided a convenient fig leaf to disguise, justify, and thus normalise divisive political agendas for the radical right - and many more, alas. The year 2020 was a vintage year in this respect and it started with a bang for the British far right when three of its key figures, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon who is mostly known as Tommy Robinson, Carl Benjamin, and Catherine Blaiklock, founded a new political group called ‘Alliance of Free Speech’. Its professed goal was to bring together a broad-based national movement capable of ‘challenging the liberal agenda and educating the public and providing the tools to push back the tide’ on behalf of the fabled ‘silent majority’. At the Alliance’s launch party held in central London in late February, the three founders were joined by Pastor Wale Babatunde, senior minister of the World Harvest Christian Centre in Nigeria, known for his ultra-nationalist and culturally ultra-conservative views, and author of the aptly titled trilogy *Great Britain Has Fallen; Awake! Great Britain and Great Men and Women That Made Great Britain Great: How Christians Can Change Society*. Since its launch, the Alliance has hit at the widest range of targets under the convenient guise of freedom of speech: ‘political correctness’, ‘gender confusion’ and ‘LGBTQ ideology’, ‘cynical political elites’, ‘woke Anglophobia’, ‘fake news’ allegedly promoted by mainstream media, ‘uncontrolled immigration’, and so on. Yet the well-known Islamophobic calibre of the three founders means that the Alliance made no attempt to disguise its anti-Muslim ideology. It called for a ‘conversation on Islam’,⁶³ with its spokesperson, Peter McIlvenna (another ex-UKIP figure) stressing that ‘neither the Islamisation of our culture nor the grooming gang scandal has been enough to wake people up’.⁶⁴

61. Martyn Frampton, Sir John Jenkins, Khalid Mahmood, “The Trial: The Strange Case of Trevor Phillips: How the Accusation of Islamophobia Is Used to Stifle Free Speech”, Policy Exchange, 2020 - available at <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/the-trial-the-strange-case-of-trevor-phillips/>

62. Julian Baggini, “Trevor Phillips Is No Islamophobe—But He Is Playing with Fire”, *Prospect*, 13.3.2020, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/philosophy/trevor-phillips-is-no-islamophobe-but-he-is-playing-with-fire-muslims-religion-free-speech>.

63. Karim El-Bar, “UK’s Far-Right Set to Launch New Group”, Anadolu Agency, 25.02.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/uks-far-right-set-to-launch-new-group/1744916>.

64. Jonathon Read, “Brexit Party Founder Forms New Group with Tommy Robinson”, *The New European*, 24.2.2020, <https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/brexit-news/catherine-blaiklock-and-tommy-robinson-form-new-group-72920>.



Figure 7: Photograph of the event marking the launch of the Alliance of Free Speech.⁶⁵

In this and other similar initiatives in the fringes of the radical right, the anti-Muslim agenda (linked to the ‘grooming gangs’ trope so beloved by the British far right)⁶⁶ sits alongside the familiar rants against immigration, gender, and national identity, all marching together under the banner of freedom and self-defence from a supposed threat. But it was the news that Robinson was allowed to join an otherwise branded as ‘mainstream’ initiative taken in the same name of free speech - Toby Young’s Free Speech Union (FSU) – that drew attention to the alarming slippage between far right and mainstream. As a figure, Young has controversially straddled the radical-mainstream political schism. He has been politically close to the Conservative Party but at the same time has expressed a range of radical and controversial views on sensitive topics (e.g. support for eugenics and for ‘free’ [non-public] schools). Young’s FSU initiative was set up as a ‘non-partisan, mass-membership public interest body that stands up for the speech rights of its members’. For this platform he earned support from significant mainstream constituencies attacking ‘political correctness’ and ‘cancel culture’ who in the past have questioned the need for a legal definition of Islamophobia. Young’s ‘free speech’ church, however, sports a very broad canopy - so broad in fact that in April it defended the Free-Handers’ campaign of blaming immigration for COVID.⁶⁷

Media

The year 2020 was the year that the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) finally published its Guidance on (press) Reporting of Muslims and Islam.⁶⁸

65. <https://www.ruptly.tv/es/videos/20200228-058-UK-Tommy-Robinson-Carl-Benjamin-Catherine-Blaklock-launch-Alliance-of-Free-Speech>

66. Cockbain, Ella, and Waqas Tufail, “Failing Victims, Fuelling Hate: Challenging the Harms of the ‘Muslim Grooming Gangs’ Narrative”, *Race & Class*, 61/3 (2020): 3–32.

67. Kate Plummer, “Toby Young’s Free Speech Union Defends Far-Right, White Supremacist Group”, *Scram*, 20.4.2020, <https://scramnews.com/toby-young-free-speech-union-defends-far-right-group/>.

68. The full guidance document can be found at <https://www.ipso.co.uk/member-publishers/guidance-for-journalists-and-editors/guidance-on-reporting-of-muslims-and-islam/>.

It was a long time coming too: by the time that it was published in November 2020 it was almost a year late. The focus on accurate, balanced, evidence-based reporting that resisted the temptation to generalise, used visual content and headlines judiciously, and deployed measured language that was free from ‘prejudicial or pejorative language about an individual’s religion’, ought to be welcome. However, the guidance has been criticised as amounting to a ‘toothless tiger’.⁶⁹ This has largely to do with the nature of IPSO itself - a voluntary body chosen by the press editors themselves, product of a compromise between introducing (more) rigorous press standards and maintaining editorial and journalistic freedom.⁷⁰ But the transparent attempt to pre-empt criticism from the defenders of ‘freedom of speech’ is too obvious to miss, with prescriptive guidance kept to a minimum and prefaced with statements such as

...neither IPSO nor the Code seeks to specify or limit the language that journalists can use to report on Islam or Muslims in the UK. This would curtail freedom of expression and the ability of the press to challenge, scrutinise, and debate...

or

Clause 12 (journalists must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual’s religion ... and must only publish details of an individual’s religion ... if it is genuinely relevant to the story) should not be interpreted as preventing criticism merely because, as is inescapable, many individuals subscribe to that faith. Were it otherwise, the freedom of the press to engage in discussion, criticism and debate about religious ideas and practices would be restricted.⁷¹

It is not a coincidence that mainstream figures who in the past have questioned the utility of the term ‘Islamophobia’ and campaigned against the efforts to adopt an official definition as ‘anti-Muslim racism’ are also leading the charge against media regulation. The way that the IPSO guidance on reporting on Muslims is deflected once through the prism of ‘freedom of speech’ underlines a growing tendency to use the latter trope to lessen the impact of interventions against Islamophobia in the media. What has changed, however, is the embedding of the ‘freedom of speech’ discourse as a barricade to any effort to penalise expressions of hate and wilful discrimination that have been proven to cause distress or even mental and physical harm to so many individuals and communities across the country.

69. Michal Munnik, “IPSO: Press Regulator’s ‘Guidance’ for Reporting on Muslims Is Not Fit for Purpose”, *The Conversation*, 26.11.2020, <https://theconversation.com/ipso-press-regulators-guidance-for-reporting-on-muslims-is-not-fit-for-purpose-150809>.

70. “‘Toothless’ Press Watchdog Ipsos Not Delivering in Key Areas, Say MPs”, *The Guardian*, 13.9.2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/sep/13/press-watchdog-ipso-mp-sir-alan-moses>.

71. “Guidance on Reporting of Muslims and Islam”, Independent Press Standard Organisation (IPSO), <https://www.ipso.co.uk/member-publishers/guidance-for-journalists-and-editors/guidance-on-reporting-of-muslims-and-islam/>.

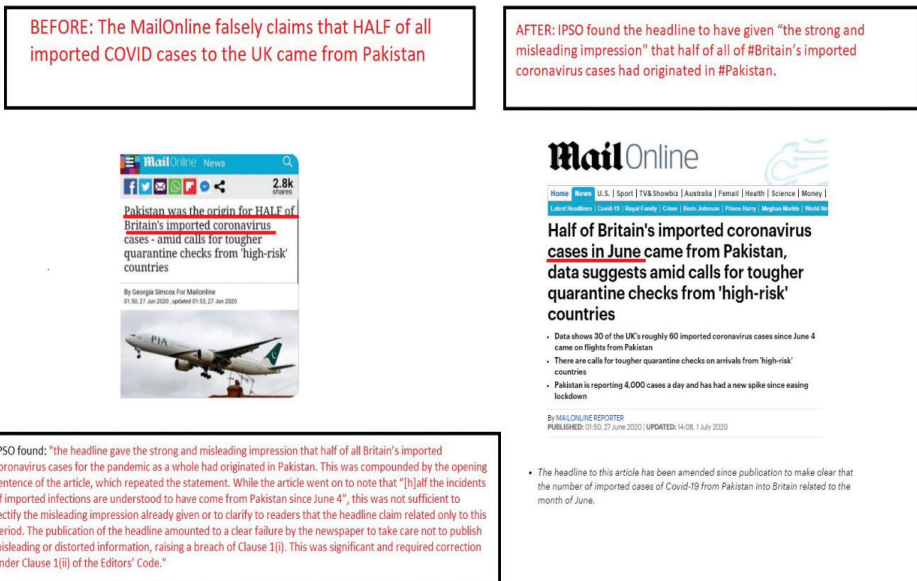


Figure 8: Evidence of the CfMM's effective work in holding British press to account when it comes to instances of inaccurate reporting in relation to Muslim communities and Islam.

How much the UK needs both the clarity of a legally adopted definition of Islamophobia *and* clear guidelines about media reporting on Muslims and Islam has been underlined during the period of the first lockdown in the spring and early summer of 2020. In addition to the by now familiar concerns about representations of Muslims in the media (disproportionate focus on Muslims when reporting in terrorism,⁷² use of generalising language and sensational cliché imagery, influence of media representations in mainstream public perceptions of Islam and Muslim communities,⁷³ etc.), the COVID-19 pandemic provided new excuses and outlets for negative coverage of Muslims in the UK media. The continuing important work carried out by the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) in terms of scrutinising standards of reporting in media has already unearthed a significant body of negative coverage and false reporting regarding Muslims. The CfMM has taken action against these incidents and has scored significant victories. For example, in the case of *The Daily Mail's* and *The Sun's* reporting in June 2020 that 'Pakistan was the origin for HALF of Britain's imported COVID cases', IPSO found that the headline represented a 'clear failure by the newspaper to take care not to publish misleading or distorted information'. This was because the claim could only be held accurate in relation to the month of June (30 cases in total as the amended headline in *The Sun* stressed) and not across

72. Faisal Hanif, "How the British Media Reports Terrorism", Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM), August 2020, available at <https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-special-report-how-british-media-reports-terrorism/>.

73. See, for example, Laurens de Rooij, *Islam in British Media Discourses: Understanding Perceptions of Muslims in the News* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

the entire period of the pandemic as the original article appeared to claim. The catalogue of press infractions identified by the CfMM is very long – and, encouragingly, so is the list of the cases where media outlets were forced to issue apologies and corrective statements in response. The problem, however, remains: the review process is protracted, published apologies remain disturbingly low-key, and the entire operation is based on monitoring ex post facto and damage-limitation precisely because voluntary self-regulation has simply not worked.

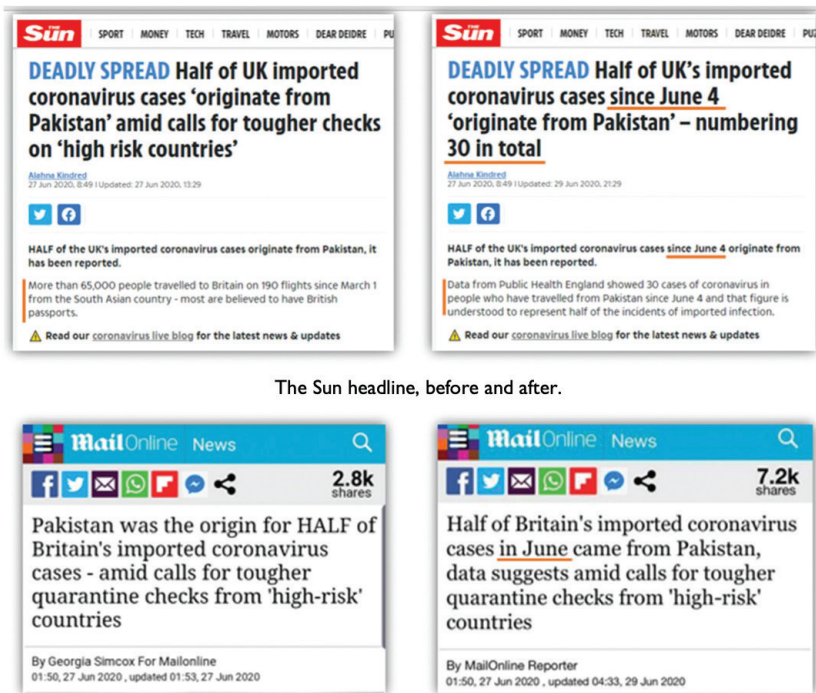


Figure 9: The original misleading story in *The Sun* and the subsequent correction published after the IPSO ruling following the complaint by the CfMM.⁷⁴

The coincidence of the first national lockdown with the month of Ramadan, and the sudden announcement of a series of local lockdown in the north of England on the eve of the festival of Eid al-Adha, in July-August gave rise to further negative coverage of Muslim communities in mainstream press. *The Mail* presented the Eid al-Adha celebration as ‘slaughter’ and ‘bloody sacrifice’, accompanying the charged language with imagery deliberate chosen to provoke instinctive aversion and thus reinforce the stereotypical view of Islam as brutal and Muslims as culturally regressive.⁷⁵

74. “Report on COVID-19: The Impact on British Muslim Communities. Submission by Centre for Media Monitoring”, APPG on British Muslims, 30 August 2020, p. 11, <https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CfMM-Submission-to-APPG-British-Muslims-Report-on-Covid19-impact-on-British-Muslims.pdf>

75. Anmol Irfan, “A Slaughter, Not a Sacrifice: How UK Media Portrays Muslims on Eid”, Media Diversity, 13.8.2020, <https://www.media-diversity.org/a-slaughter-not-a-sacrifice-how-uk-media-portrays-muslims-on-eid/>.

Still the problem was not confined to tabloid journalism. The story about imported cases from Pakistan had in fact originated in the conservative broadsheet *The Telegraph* a few days earlier. Meanwhile in April *The Times* used disturbingly allusive language that suggested a link between Ramadan and a rise in the COVID caseload across the UK.⁷⁶ The article was reported to IPSO by the CfMM, and was subsequently revised to reflect that it was based on speculation and prevention. Yet, when read together with its subtitle (“The [British Medical Association] has called for an inquiry into why people from ethnic minorities seem disproportionately affected”), its message remained problematic as it continued to suggest that Muslim cultural and religious practices were to blame for the disproportionately high number of COVID cases and related deaths among BAME communities.

Justice System

It is revealing of how far a strain of mainstream ‘Islamophobia scepticism’ has become completely normalised in the UK that the new head of the country’s discrimination watchdog - the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) - was opposed to efforts to legally define Islamophobia.⁷⁷ Baroness Kishwer Falkner, a member of the UK Upper Chamber, had publicly expressed her opposition to the 2018 definition of Islamophobia proposed by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims: appearing in front of the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee, she claimed that the definition was overgeneralised, too wide and lacking in precision, unenforceable, and too heavy-handed, claiming that because of her views she had been a victim of ‘reverse Islamophobia’ (‘told that I am not sufficiently Muslim’).⁷⁸

The EHRC attracted the wrong kind of headlines in relation to discrimination on a further number of occasions during 2020. As mentioned earlier (see ‘Politics’), it eventually dropped its original plan to lead an investigation of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party. In November, the same body decided not to take action against the Tory MP Michael Fabricant, who responded to criticism from Miqdaad Versi, director of CfMM at the Muslim Council of Britain, with a tweet mentioning ‘Anglo-Muslim relations’ and the allusion to an incompatibility between (Muslim) religion and English/British ethnic identity.⁷⁹ At around the same time, one of EHRC’s

76. Nicholas Hellen, Andrew Gregory and Christina Lamb, “Expert Fears a Spike in UK Coronavirus Cases if Communities Gather for Ramadan”, *The Times*, 12.4.2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/expert-fears-a-spike-in-uk-coronavirus-cases-if-communities-gather-for-ramadan-rwrzs7q3r>.

77. Simon Hooper, “New Head of UK Equality Watchdog Opposed Efforts to Define Islamophobia”, *Middle East Eye*, 4.12.2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/new-head-uk-equality-watchdog-opposed-efforts-define-islamophobia>.

78. Proposed definition of Islamophobia discussed, Home Affairs Committee, UK House of Commons, 17.5.2019, <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/news/100618/proposed-definition-of-islamophobia-discussed/>.

79. Adrian Zorzut, “Outrage after Tory MP Accused of Islamophobic Tweets Evades Punishment”, *The New European*, 19.12.2020, <https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/brexit-news/westminster-news/tory-mp-evades-punishment-over-islamophobic-tweets-6354678>.

board members came under increasing scrutiny for his social media activity that suggested endorsing controversial views on homophobia, racism, and Islam. This bit of news came to join a stream of other reports regarding newly appointed commissioners to the EHRC by the equalities minister Liz Truss.⁸⁰ Truss has deservedly been censured for her insensitive and ‘negligent’ approach to the very brief she is holding,⁸¹ making a number of key appointments to the watchdog known for their expressed divisive and politically charged views. Evidence of their indirect endorsement of views expressed by controversial figures such as the recently deceased philosopher Roger Scruton or Douglas Murray, raised considerable alarm that the ideologically shifting composition of the UK equalities watchdog was likely to affect its ability to intervene decisively and take constructive action against all forms of discrimination.



Figure 10: The exchange between Miqdaad Versi and Michael Fabricant on Twitter.⁸²

80. Haroon Siddique, “EHRC Board Member under Scrutiny over Social Media Use”, *The Guardian*, 30.11.2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/nov/30/ehrc-board-member-under-scrutiny-over-social-media-use>.

81. Alain Tolhurst, “Liz Truss Has Been Accused of ‘Gross Negligence’ over a Controversial Appointment to the Equalities Watchdog”, *Politics Home*, 16.11.2020, <https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/liz-truss-goodhart-ehrc-racism-watchdog>.

82. Miqdaad Versi, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/1329110424051212289>

As 2020 draws to an end, it is still not clear when and how the government will embark on the long-awaited review of its controversial counter-terrorism programme Prevent.⁸³ News, however, that the frontrunner for leading the review was William Shawcross - a person closely linked with the Henry Jackson Society that is well-known for its controversial views on Islam and its protracted battles against UK Muslim organisations⁸⁴ - cast a grave shadow on the prospects of meaningful change emerging from this review.⁸⁵ The securitisation of Muslim otherness fostered by counter-extremism and -terrorism⁸⁶ has crept deeper into more and more everyday life settings, from street policing and airport security checks⁸⁷ to education (see above) and the workplace. Research published by the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) on Muslim perceptions of policing and extremism has generated significant controversy because it claims to have encountered much higher-than-expected levels of support - and less negative concern - for Prevent among Muslim respondents.⁸⁸ The report's findings have been picked up by the Commissioner for Countering Extremism as putative evidence of the government's success in its counter-extremism strategy; they have also been strategically and selectively used to refute criticisms of Prevent by Muslim organisations in the UK.⁸⁹ The findings of the project do not question the well-evidenced view that Prevent has had a disproportionately negative effect on Muslim communities. In fact, yet another piece of research published in 2020 in relation to the health and care settings underlines the urgent need for reviewing Prevent as part of a strategy of combatting institutional racism and fighting against Islamophobia.⁹⁰

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83. "Independent Review of Prevent", <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-prevent>. See also Paul Thomas, "Britain's Prevent Strategy: Always Changing, Always the Same?". In: Busher J., Jerome L. (eds) *The Prevent Duty in Education*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45559-02>.
84. "Factsheet - Henry Jackson Society", Bridge Initiative Team, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-henry-jackson-society/>.
85. Charles Hymas, "Ex-Charity Commission Chief Emerges as Frontrunner for Government Anti-radicalisation role", *The Telegraph*, 6.11.2020, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/11/06/ex-charity-commission-chief-emerges-frontrunner-government-anti-/>
86. Tarek Younis, "The Psychologisation of Counter-Extremism: Unpacking PREVENT", *Race & Class*, published online in September 2020 - doi:10.1177/0306396820951055.
87. Mark Townsend, "Met Police Concedes Forcing Woman to Remove Hijab at Airport Was Wrong", *The Guardian*, 14.3.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/mar/14/metropolitan-police-concede-forcing-woman-to-remove-hijab-wrong>.
88. Jon Clements, Dan Forman, Manon Roberts, "Listening to British Muslims: Policing, Extremism and Prevent", CREST, 2.3.2020, <https://www.crestadvisory.com/post/listening-to-british-muslims-policing-extremism-and-prevent>.
89. "Lead Commissioner's Statement on Crest Report: Listening to British Muslims: Policing, Extremism and Prevent", Commission for Countering Extremism, 2.3.2020, <https://extremismcommission.blog.gov.uk/2020/03/02/lead-commissioners-statement-on-crest-report-listening-to-british-muslims-policing-extremism-and-prevent/>.
90. Piyush Pushkar, "Time to Tackle Institutional Racism", 9.7.2020, <https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/time-to-tackle-institutional-racism>. The research project by Medact 'False Positives: The Prevent Counter-Extremism Policy in Healthcare' can be accessed at <https://www.medact.org/2020/resources/reports/false-positives-the-prevent-counter-extremism-policy-in-healthcare/>.

Internet



Figure 11: Intervention by Tell Mama UK in response to misleading claims made on Twitter about the behaviour of Muslims praying on the street in contravention of COVID restrictions.⁹¹

For some time now social media have been by far the most significant source of misinformation about Islam and Muslims, in both volume and influence, in the UK as in all other countries. Given how pervasive social media platforms have become in our private and public lives alike, their role in disseminating and reinforcing broader racial, religious, and cultural stereotypes about Islam and Muslims cannot possibly be exaggerated.⁹² In 2020, however, the pandemic tipped the balance much further: during the lockdown, use of social media not only soared in quantitative terms but also transformed the landscape of content consumption and production. During and after the first UK lockdown, more than a third of the UK population reported significant increase in use of the internet - and of social media in particular - mostly for

91. Tell MAMA UK, Twitter. For the whole story see <https://tellmamauk.org/no-the-muslims-praying-in-this-video-arent-ignoring-the-coronavirus-lockdown-its-far-right-fake-news/>.

92. Imran Awan, "Social Media Helps Reveal People's Racist Views – So Why Don't Tech Firms Do More to Stop Hate Speech?", *The Conversation*, 26.6.2020, <https://theconversation.com/social-media-helps-reveal-peoples-racist-views-so-why-dont-tech-firms-do-more-to-stop-hate-speech-140997>.

information and news, entertainment, and social interaction.⁹³ Although the picture varies significantly across generations, the increase in use patterns applies fairly uniformly across the entire demographic sample.

All this means that, especially during the peak of the first wave and the lockdown, social media played the most egregious role in disseminating and amplifying misinformation campaigns claiming that individuals and communities with Muslim background were allegedly flouting social distancing rules and acting as super-spreaders. It was in social media that all sorts of conspiracy theories originated and gained traction - and predictably anti-Chinese, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic content topped the depressing online misinformation charts.⁹⁴

Unsurprisingly the far right - globally, nationally, and locally - has exploited the pandemic in order to increase the resonance and reach of its message in the midst of the crisis by turning COVID into a platform for further discrediting its key targets.⁹⁵ Muslims were typically presented as spreading the virus faster whether as part of an alleged conspiracy against western 'Christian' countries (something that Daesh is known to have called for in India⁹⁶ but which the far right weaponised and turned into an allusion of a worldwide jihad) or by disrespecting safety measures (again seized by far-right sources by circulating images of prayer crowds in mosques that were either doctored or taken before COVID rules came into effect).⁹⁷ Social media platforms have increased their monitoring of the published material, removing offensive content and banning users from using the services. For example, stories about a 'secret mosque' in Birmingham or about Muslim prayers flouting lockdown restrictions on religious services in Shropshire were removed but only after the original content and imagery had been allowed to circulate and has been widely reproduced.⁹⁸ Twitter, which has been working closely with the Cross Government Working Group on Anti-Muslim Hatred to target and conduct research on the propagation of bigoted

93. "Media Consumption and Sport", Global Web Index, April 2020, p. 12, <https://blog.globalwebindex.com/chart-of-the-week/social-media-amid-the-outbreak/>; "UK's Internet Use Surges to New Highs during Lockdown", *BBC News*, 23.6.2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-53149268>.

94. Giulia Dessi, "Religious Hatred during the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Media Diversity*, 7.4.2020, <https://www.media-diversity.org/in-search-of-a-scapegoat-religious-hatred-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>.

95. Cristina Ariza, "From the Fringes to the Forefront: How Far-Right Movements across the Globe Have Reacted to Covid-19", Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 1.7.2020, <https://institute.global/policy/fringes-forefront-how-far-right-movements-across-globe-have-reacted-covid-19>; Imran Awan, "COVID-19 Drives Conspiracy Theories and Islamophobia", *Fair Observer*, 18.9.2020, <https://www.fairobserver.com/coronavirus/covid-19-drives-conspiracy-theories-and-islamophobia/>.

96. Brian Glyn Williams, "Islamic State Calls for Followers to Spread Coronavirus, Exploit Pandemic and Protests", *The Conversation*, 24.6.2020, <https://theconversation.com/islamic-state-calls-for-followers-to-spread-coronavirus-exploit-pandemic-and-protests-136224>.

97. "Photo Circulating of Busy Mosque Was Taken before Lockdown", *Full Fact*, 31.3.2020, <https://fullfact.org/online/coronavirus-mosque-shut-lockdown/>.

98. Nazia Parveen, "Police Investigate UK Far-Right Groups over Anti-Muslim Coronavirus Claims", *The Guardian*, 5.4.2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/05/police-investigate-uk-far-right-groups-over-anti-muslim-coronavirus-claims?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other.

anti-Muslim content under the guise of COVID (mis)information,⁹⁹ finally permanently banned Katie Hopkins from its platform in June for serially violating its policy on posting hate content.¹⁰⁰ Before switching off, however, Hopkins asked her followers to keep in touch via her Instagram account - a useful reminder that social media remains a network of interconnected spaces that work together to construct reality and massify public information, where platform-specific restrictions are of limited effect. In fact, recent research has shown that Instagram has been the fastest-growing social media platform in 2020, with its uses extending from entertainment and social interaction to opinion and information.¹⁰¹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

At the launch event of the far-right Alliance of Free Speech in February, the organisers awarded a special ‘Hearts of Oak’ award for free speech to Amy Dalla Mura.¹⁰² Dalla Mura was the candidate in the constituency of Broxtowe for the far-right English Democrats in the December 2019 elections and ended up in jail for harassing and threatening one of her co-candidates, the prominent and vocal ex-Conservative anti-Brexit politician Anna Soubry.¹⁰³ The notoriety of her behaviour notwithstanding, Dalla Mura secured a rather underwhelming 0.8% of the vote; yet, she has somehow managed to become a cherished figure for the far right in the UK.



Figure 12: Amy Dalla Mura addressing the launch of the Alliance of Free Speech in February 2020.¹⁰⁴

99. Imran Awan and Roxana Khan-Williams “Coronavirus, Fear and How Islamophobia Spreads on Social Media”, Research Briefing Report 2020, Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group.
100. “Katie Hopkins: The Viral Power of an Anti-Muslim Falsehood on Twitter”, Tell MAMA, 24.2.2020, <https://tellmamauk.org/katie-hopkins-the-viral-power-of-an-anti-muslim-falsehood-on-twitter/>.
101. Sabina Civila, Luis M. Romero-Rodríguez, and Amparo Civila, “The Demonization of Islam through Social Media: A Case Study of #Stopislam in Instagram”, *Publications* 8/52 (2020), <https://www.mdpi.com/2304-6775/8/4/52/htm>.
102. The award was captured on video and posted on Tommy Robinson’s YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTuG7TlJF9g&list=PLuF0f24C4zXbplHDvZQNg_StuGmLXshzG&index=3.
103. Andrew Tettenborn, “The Case of Anna Soubry vs Amy Dalla Mura”, *The Critic Magazine*, 12.8.2020, <https://thecritic.co.uk/the-case-of-anna-soubry-vs-amy-dalla-mura/>.
104. YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GPAiljy8Kc>.



Figure 13: Tommy Robinson arrested after his Hyde Park illegal protest in November 2020.¹⁰⁵

It is customary for this section of the report to focus on those individuals and groups, typically associated with the radical and/or far right, who have used their prominent public role (in politics, traditional and social media, culture, etc.) to promote and normalise extreme anti-Muslim views and stereotypes, spread fear and suspicion, and/or distinguish themselves in becoming amplifiers of disinformation. In some respects, this has been our version of awarding mocking ‘prizes’ to those who have contributed to fostering, embedding, and/or normalising anti-Muslim racism in the UK. However extraordinary 2020 was, the stars of the Islamophobic platform in Britain have remained strikingly similar. In fact, some of them appeared on stage during the February launch of the new UK populist formation Alliance of Free Speech Activists on 28 February 2020: Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), the celebrity YouTuber Carl Benjamin (aka Sargon of Akkad), and Catherine Blaiklock, the former UKIP politician and founder of the Brexit Party. A lot can be said about each of them, but Robinson in particular has once again excelled in Islamophobic notoriety. Over the years he has been attracting near-constant notorious publicity for his political *mésalliance* with UKIP, his imprisonment as a self-proclaimed martyr for free speech, and his habitual reinvention as resourceful agent provocateur of the British radical populist right.¹⁰⁶ This year too he worked on every possible front to promote and spread a divisive Islamophobic agenda - with his Alliance of Free Speech as an attempt to unite the fragmented forces of the UK far right; with his incessant work in promoting conspiracies and disinformation about the behaviour of Muslims during the national lockdown; with his call for a protest march against ‘Muslim rape gangs’ outside the parliament in August; or with his cameo appearance at the so-called

105. Twitter, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/tommy-robinson-arrest-video-coronavirus-hyde-park-london-speakers-corner-b1511393.html>.

106. Eleanor Perry, “The Martyrdom of Tommy Robinson: Free Speech and the Far-Right”, Verso Books Online Blog, 10.8.2018, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3969-the-martyrdom-of-tommy-robinson-free-speech-and-the-far-right>. (Accessed 23 Dec. 2020).

Speakers Corner in Hyde Park in November protesting against ‘Muslim intolerance’ of ‘free speech’, an appearance that led to his arrest for violation of COVID rules regarding public events.¹⁰⁷

However, there is a very different informal ‘network’ that has for a long time been disrupting the battle against Islamophobia in the UK. This is not a network that is associated with the Islamophobic far/radical right but is situated politically at the very heart of the British political mainstream. It has no stars or personality cults either; its strength lies in the attritional cumulative effects of its discourses, publications, reports, public events, and high-profile campaigns directed at efforts to combat institutional Islamophobia in the UK. Its apostles do not use openly racist or bigoted tropes. They do not shatter taboos with provocative speech acts or behaviours. Instead, they are at home deploying subtle attenuation by choosing softer targets - whether political correctness or alleged censorship of freedom of expression or, more recently, ‘cancel culture’ and even the fabled ‘right to offend’. When two years ago the UK came close to acquiring a legally binding definition of Islamophobia proposed by a cross-party parliamentary group as ‘anti-Muslim racism’, they rejected it on the grounds that it allegedly restricted the freedom to criticise Islam and misleadingly presented ‘Muslims’ as a ‘racial’ group.¹⁰⁸ (see above) The ‘network’ is full of respectable mainstream figures, working in or for important mainstream organisations, and expressing arguments that, while provocative and controversial, are very different from the hateful and deliberately divisive pronouncements of, say, the founders of the Alliance of Freedom of Speech.¹⁰⁹ And yet ... while the anti-Muslim hatred of the latter is almost transparent and crude, the more subtle dissenting voices of the former have contributed far more to the *mainstreaming* of Islamophobic tropes in the public sphere. Using the mantra of ‘free speech’, the actor-turn-activist Laurence Fox recently criticised the decision to cancel a book contract by the controversial journalist Julie Burchill (who, in turn, had presumably thought she was expressing her sacred freedom of expression when she equated being a Muslim to ‘worshipping a paedophile’¹¹⁰) by calling Islamophobia ‘a lie and ... a meaningless word scramble of rubbish’. Alongside the horrific discursive and performative excesses emanating from the populist, radical, and extreme right, it is this ongoing embedding of Islamophobia (as

107. “Tommy Robinson Arrested under Coronavirus Regulations in London’s Hyde Park”, *The Independent*, 1.11.2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/tommy-robinson-arrest-video-coronavirus-hyde-park-london-speakers-corner-b1511393.html>.

108. The latter argument was used by no other than Trevor Phillips in his defence against the Labour party’s decision to suspend him and investigate charges of Islamophobia against him. Kate Proctor and Peter Walker, “Sayeeda Warsi Chides Trevor Phillips over Muslim Comments”, *The Guardian*, 9.3.2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/mar/09/labour-suspends-former-head-of-ehrc-over-alleged-islamophobia>.

109. Baggini, “Trevor Phillips Is No Islamophobe—But He Is Playing with Fire”, *Prospect*.

110. Annabel Nugent, “Julie Burchill Book Contract Terminated by Hachette after Islamophobia Accusation”, *The Independent*, 15.12.2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/julie-burchill-islamophobia-book-hachette-b1774398.html>.

well as other discriminatory and racist tropes) into otherwise mainstream discourses that deserves much closer scrutiny for its cumulative effect on normalising anti-Muslim prejudice in contemporary Britain.

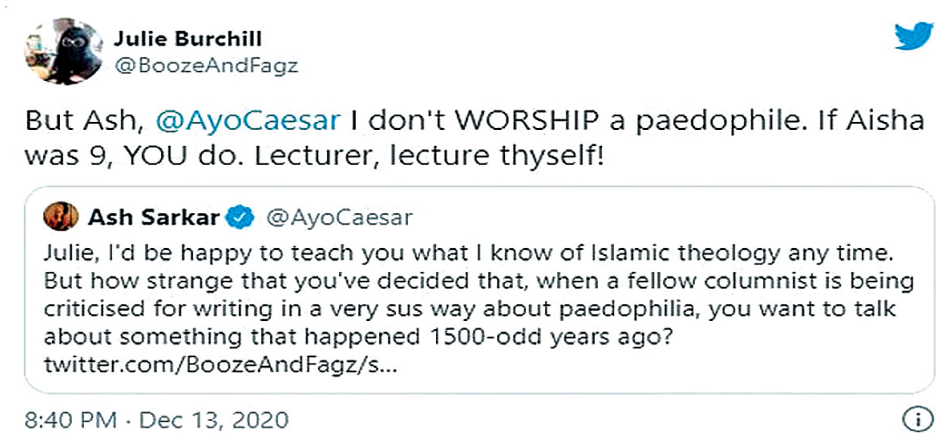


Figure 14: Julie Burchill's original tweet and Laurence Fox's posted comment.¹¹¹

111. Julie Burchill, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/1339287948190158856>.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

For the kind of year that was 2020, positive initiatives to counter Islamophobia on the local and national level deserve even more effusive praise and place of honour.

Civil society organisations have continued their invaluable research, public interventions, and initiatives - more needed than ever at a time of enforced silence and stillness, reduced visibility and contact. It is no surprise that organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain, Tell MAMA, Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), and HOPE Not Hate have continued to be at the very forefront of the everyday battle against Islamophobia - producing evidence-based knowledge and positive counter-narratives, holding power to account, exposing misinformation and negative stereotypes, protecting Muslim individuals and communities, and together informing the wider public about the corrosive effect of nationalism and racism on community cohesion.

One political initiative that deserves particular mention this year is the adoption of the new hate bill legislation by the Scottish Parliament just before the end of the year.¹¹² The Edinburgh parliament has been investigating Islamophobia since 2018, courtesy of a cross-party parliamentary group put together by the Labour MSP Anas Sarwar in response to growing anti-Muslim hatred in Scotland.¹¹³ Even if the Scottish hate crime bill has not had the easiest of runs, having been criticised as ‘authoritarian’ and restrictive in terms of freedom of speech by some, and as not strong enough in its provisions by others,¹¹⁴ it remains a landmark piece of legislation and a decisive step - both real and symbolic - in the direction of empowering authorities to fight against any form of hate crime.

The catalogue of civil society initiatives against Islamophobia has been inspiringly long and more varied and resourceful in 2020 than ever before. The following indicative list does not do justice to the initiatives but is intended to celebrate the energy and ingenuity of efforts to challenge Islamophobia in the UK even in the midst of a pandemic and a national lockdown:

112. Gina Davidson, “Scottish Hate Crime Bill Gets MSPs Backing, But with Demands for More Changes”, *The Scotsman*, 15.12.2020, <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-hate-crime-bill-gets-msps-backing-demands-more-changes-3069497>.

113. “Islamophobic Abuse Directed at Muslim Public Figures in Scotland”, MEND, 24.7.2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/islamophobic-abuse-directed-at-muslim-public-figures-in-scotland/>

114. Chris Clements, “Hate Crime Bill: Ministers Have ‘Open Mind’ over Controversial Laws”, BBC News, 24.11.2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-55046068>; “Proposed Scottish Hate Crime Legislation Leaving Minorities Susceptible to Hate Crimes”, MEND, 26.10.2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/proposed-scottish-hate-crime-legislation-leaving-minorities-susceptible-to-hate-crimes/>.

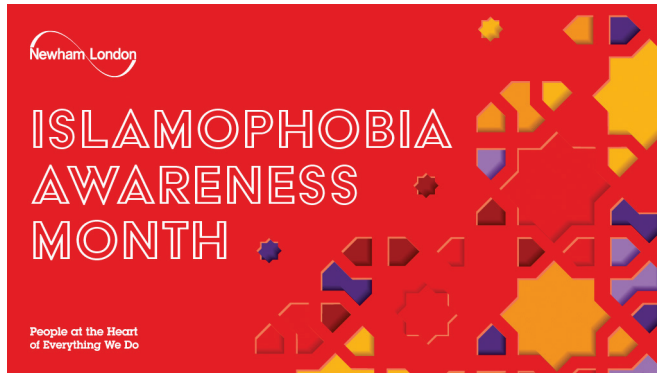


Figure 16: Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM, November 2020), a positive success story that over the years has become fixed on the yearly calendar.¹¹⁵

- A number of initiatives launched by students in Leeds aimed at challenging ‘hurtful’ misconceptions of the Muslim faith in the local community.¹¹⁶
- The resourcefulness of the Oldham Interfaith Forum - organisers of the annual inter-faith Festival of Light in Oldham Greater Manchester - who responded creatively to COVID restrictions and held their cross-faith festival online, thus bringing together Hindi, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, and other local communities in joint celebration and community spirit.¹¹⁷
- An official pledge by Leeds City Council and local organisations (police, NHS, businesses) to ‘beat Islamophobia’.¹¹⁸
- The imaginative and fruitful contribution of so many individuals and organisations (over 250 in total) to this year’s month-long Islamophobia Awareness Week (IAM2020) in November, an annual symbolic container of a wide range of events combatting anti-Muslim hatred that this year had to be re-invented but lost none of its energy or importance in the process.
- MACFEST, a festival celebrating Muslim arts and culture that was put together by Qaisra Shahraz, as an attempt to overcome the scars from the 2017 Manchester Arena terror attack, was held in January 2020, having grown into a major cultural event for the city lasting fifteen days; plans for the 2021 festival were well underway at the time of writing this report.¹¹⁹

115. Newham Council, London, <https://www.newham.gov.uk/events/event/21/newham-s-islamophobia-awareness-month-2020>

116. Abbey Maclure, “Inspiring Leeds Students Launch Anti-Islamophobia Projects Challenging ‘Hurtful’ Misconceptions of Faith”, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 28.11.2020, <https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/people/inspiring-leeds-students-launch-anti-islamophobia-projects-challenging-hurtful-misconceptions-faith-3047497>.

117. Muhammad Khan, “A Festival Celebrating Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas and Eid”, *Asian Image*, 24.12.2020, <https://www.asianimage.co.uk/news/18968930.festival-celebrating-diwali-hanukkah-christmas-eid/>.

118. “Leeds Pledges to Beat Islamophobia”, Leeds City Council, 13.11.2020, <https://news.leeds.gov.uk/news/leeds-pledges-to-beat-islamophobia>.

119. “MACFEST 2020: How One woman’s Mission to End Divisions after Manchester Terror Attack Became a Celebration of Community”, *Manchester Evening News*, 12.1.2020, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/macfest-2020-how-one-womans-17541290>.

- A pilot programme of twinning a church and a mosque as part of this year's celebration of the national Inter Faith Week in November.
- Saltley Stallions football club in Birmingham with three teams (two men and one women) and many board members and players of South Asian descent responding to growing racist and Islamophobic abuse by reaching out to the very people who were abusing them online and offline, and using football to unite different local communities.¹²⁰

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The 2019 report on Islamophobia in the UK highlighted the urgent need to 'shift the balance towards inoculating society vis-à-vis disinformation and hate narratives.'¹²¹ The ongoing pandemic has given a very different topicality to any mention of 'inoculation' at the end of the tumultuous 2020 – yet, the basic premise of redoubling efforts to make people and communities less receptive to Islamophobic and more broadly racist currents remains even more true, relevant, and urgent today. Islamophobia has deep roots in UK politics and society that go well beyond any particular party. They also extend - no doubt in different forms and intensity but still ... - across extreme, radical, populist, and mainstream political and social spaces. Islamophobia remains encrypted in public attitudes to identity, sovereignty, and security. It remains woven into all spheres of public and private life, off- and online. It has also become pervasive, routinised, normalised, and detoxified - almost invisible and difficult to pinpoint, wrapped into cosy mainstream narratives about 'freedom of speech', legitimised through mainstream channels of political and cultural authority. Put bluntly, it has taken hold, propagating much faster and wider than even the most concerted efforts to counter and/or eliminate it. Only if it is confronted as a mainstream problem - in its institutional and everyday forms - can the long-term upward trend be effectively and sustainably reversed.

In response to what happened in 2020, the following action areas are identified:

- continuous pressure to government and authorities to accept a legally binding definition of Islamophobia;
- reframing of the public debate on Islamophobia by focusing as much on its institutional 'mainstream' drivers and spaces as on its exceptional and 'extreme' manifestations, typically associated with the far right;
- more accurate, agile, and nuanced recording of hate crime that accounts for the complex intersectionality of racial, religious, ethnic, and gender discrimination;

120. Rakeem Hyatt, "The Birmingham Football Team Fighting Islamophobia and Racism One Goal at a Time", *Birmingham Live*, 8.11.2020, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birmingham-football-team-fighting-islamophobia-19215658>.

121. Aristotle Kallis: *Islamophobia in the United Kingdom: National Report 2019*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, Istanbul, SETA, 2020, pp. 823-4.

- monitoring social media platforms more effectively by deploying technological and legislative instruments to trace online users who are producing and/or disseminating content but are currently hiding behind anonymity;
- effective review and revision of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, with critical feedback from civil society/grassroots organisations, a wide range of professional practitioners in all settings (education, health, workplace, etc.), as well as community leaders;
- promoting an understanding of Islamophobia in the UK as an expression of a broader dynamic fed by broader racial, social, and cultural prejudices;
- robust scrutiny and meaningful regulation of traditional media, accompanied by more robust official guidelines and more effective intervention powers by regulators and relevant watchdogs;
- active measures to encourage a culturally sensitive workplace that promotes gender, race, and religious equality;
- adequately resourced campaigns to enhance the safety and well-being of Muslim communities and their important spaces (especially mosques and cultural centres);
- effective assistance to civil society organisations to enhance their constructive input in the process of generating a range of counter-narratives about Islam and Muslims in contemporary Britain;
- stronger pressure on social media platforms to improve their systems of monitoring of hate content and employ more robust definitions of unacceptable online behaviour; and
- the need to continue to foster international co-operation in the fight against hate crime, disinformation, and extremism, especially in relation to online hate crime.

Chronology

- **January 2020:** Muslim community in Rotherham, south Yorkshire launch neighbourhood protection groups in response to the growing mobilisation and intimidation tactics used by local far-right organisations.
- **01.01.2020:** Racial slurs are sprayed on walls adjacent to the North Brixton Islamic Cultural Centre in London.
- **24.02.2020:** A new far-right informal campaign group under the name 'Alliance of Free Speech' is launched, featuring Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (known as Tommy Robinson), Carl Benjamin, and UKIP founder Catherine Blaiklock.
- **02.03.2020:** The Conservative Party suspends an undisclosed number of members for posting offensive online comments, following damning dossier of evidence submitted by HOPE Not Hate.

- **09.03.2020:** The Labour Party suspends Trevor Phillips, former chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, over Islamophobia claims.
- **17.03.2020:** A mosque and community centre in Birmingham is targeted with offensive graffiti.
- **12.05.2020:** The Conservative Party itself backtracks from its original promise of an enquiry into Islamophobia, opting instead of a broader – and diluted – focus on ‘discrimination’. On the same day, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announces that it will not proceed with its original plan to launch an independent enquiry into allegations of Islamophobia in the ranks of the Conservative Party.
- **27.05.2020:** Raffia Arshad becomes the first hijab-wearing Muslim woman appointed as court judge in the UK.
- **20.06.2020:** Twitter permanently suspends the account of the far-right agitator Katie Hopkins.
- **July 2020:** UK tabloid (*Sun, Daily Mail*) and broadsheet (*Telegraph*) newspapers misleadingly report that half of the imported cases of COVID-19 came from Pakistan. The story was condemned as misleading by IPSO in December 2020, prompting the newspapers to issue a correction.
- **27.07.2020:** Arson attacks against the mosque on Aylsham Road in Norwich.
- **31.07.2020:** Craig Whittaker, Conservative MP for the Calder Valley, claims that the majority of people violating COVID lockdown restrictions are from BAME – and Muslim, in particular - communities.
- **02.08.2020:** British tabloid *Daily Mail* reports Eid al-Adha celebrations as a ‘slaughter’ and a ‘bloody sacrifice’.
- **01.11.2020:** Tommy Robinson is arrested for violating COVID restrictions after he organised and attended a rally in Hyde Park, London.
- **09.11.2020:** The Independent Press Standards Office (IPSO) publishes its long-overdue Guidance on Reporting of Muslims and Islam. Upon its release it is criticised for being like a ‘toothless tiger’.

By gathering 37 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized in racism and human rights, the sixth edition of the *European Islamophobia Report* addresses a still timely and politically important issue. All 31 country reports included in this book follow a unique structure that is convenient, first, for comparing countries and, second, for selected readings on a particular topic such as politics, employment, or education with regard to Islamophobia across Europe.

The present report investigates in detail the underlying dynamics that directly or indirectly contribute to 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 and threaten the whole of society. As a result, the *European Islamophobia Report 2020* discusses the impact of anti-Muslim racism on human rights such as freedom of association, freedom of speech, and religious freedom, and the state of law in Europe. This sixth edition of our report highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the mobilization of Islamophobia, and how states like Austria and France have implemented their anti-Muslim legislation and measures to threaten Muslim civil society. The 31 country reports demonstrate how governments and mainstream media participate in reproducing discourses that put the fundamental rights of European citizens in jeopardy and how one can counteract these developments.

This compendium of useful insights and data aims to provide European policy-makers, institutions, and NGOs with recommendations on how to tackle anti-Muslim racism in Europe systematically.

