EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2021

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)



















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FOREWORD

We are pleased to present to you the seventh consecutive edition of the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) covering the year 2021. For this edition, 35 colleagues from the academic world and civil society have contributed to the coverage of 27 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.

As last year, this project has been materialised with the support of the International Islamophobia Studies and Research Association (IISRA) based in Berkeley, California and 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; the Vienna-based Leopold Weiss Institute; and the Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism (CEMFOR) at Uppsala University (Sweden).

The state of Islamophobia in Europe continues to be problematic with many policies which we have criticised in previous reports being further implemented, such as the dissolution of Islamophobia watchdog organisations in France. Such developments show the end of a journey, built on Islamophobic exclusions, for politicians. This is

why we have chosen Sebastian Kurz's portrait for the cover of this year's edition of the European Islamophobia Report. Kurz, who was hailed as a one-time political wunderkind by domestic Austrian and international media, came to power by making Islam and Muslims his number one target in election campaigns. More than that, he was the leader of a conservative government that implemented one anti-Muslim policy after the other, from hijab bans to the closure of mosques. Finally, the overwhelming allegations of corruption, especially in regards to the relationship between his government and the news media, forced him to step down. His political 'career' can be read as a textbook example of hegemonising Islamophobia and, at the same time, of how empty populism which is essentially built on anti-Muslim racism can end. Sebastian Kurz accumulated immense power by scapegoating and securitising Muslims, which in the end turned out only to be a screen to hide alleged corruption and increasing authoritarianism. Former justice minister Clemens Jabloner expressed this succinctly: Sebastian Kurz's regime was "a first step in the direction of a new system of government (Staatsform)." Previous national reports on Austria in our European Islamophobia Report clearly show how the heavy investment in anti-Muslim policies by Kurz's government were a marker of his increasingly manipulative and authoritarian policies. Eventually, the latter were terminated not least by the independent justice system that rescinded most of his anti-Muslim laws and measures from the hijab ban to the unlawful closure of mosques.

The developments described in this year's *European Islamophobia Report* taken together with the previous six editions ask us to stay critical and continue to question and criticise policies that normalise and spread Islamophobia in Europe.

Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez
The editors

THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE IN 2021

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This year's European Islamophobia Report, which brings together the work by 35 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialised in racism and human rights covers 27 European countries and discusses the events that occurred between January 1 and December 31, 2021. Many of the pressing problems we have been discussing in the previous six reports, starting in 2015, remain unresolved, while small steps in the right direction have been made in several countries. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its "General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination" in December 2021, which was adopted and later published on 1 March 2022. It is the first official document by a European institution that explicitly does not refer to the problem of Islamophobia as 'anti-Muslim hatred', thus psychologising and downplaying the phenomenon, but explicitly speaks of 'anti-Muslim racism' and thus includes structural aspects of this phenomenon.1 Furthermore, the United Nations has unanimously accepted a resolution presented by Pakistan on behalf of the Oganization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to declare 15 March as 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia'. This is a historical moment in the struggle against Islamophobia. It is worth noting that besides India, the representative of France and the representative of the European Union expressed criticism of this resolution during the meeting; however, neither India, France, or the European Union delegation op-

 [&]quot;ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 5 (revised) on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination", European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-5-revised-on-preventing-and-comb/1680a5ae44, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

 [&]quot;General Assembly Unanimously Adopts Texts on Combating Islamophobia, Protecting Rangelands, Tackling Difficulties for Widows, Bicycles as Public Transportation", United Nations, https://press.un.org/en/2022/ ga12408.doc.htm, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

posed the resolution.³ This also shows that there are major forces within Europe, and especially countries like France, that are investing less in the fight against Islamophobia, and more – as the example of France reveals – into normalising Islamophobia.

Islamophobia and the Decline of Liberal Democracy

The persistence of anti-Muslim racism has also to be seen against the backdrop of a general worrisome trend: the decline of liberal democracy in Europe. The University of Gothenburg's research project Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) measures different attributes of democracy and produces an annual report based on a global dataset. In its 2022 report covering the year 2021, V-Dem observed several trends in Eastern and Western Europe that raise red flags. On the one hand, V-Dem only qualifies two countries in Eastern Europe as liberal democracies, namely Estonia and Latvia. In 2021, one country was also downgraded from being a liberal democracy to becoming an electoral democracy, namely Austria. According to the report, this is due to "a significant decline on the indicator for transparent laws and predictable enforcement."4 Also, "democratic qualities decayed substantially in more than twice as many countries – seven – over the last ten years: Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and Slovenia." Hungary was already downgraded to an electoral autocracy in 2018. The tendency of increasing autocratisation is also affecting Belarus, Slovenia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Greece. In Eastern Europe, "freedom of expression and the media are the most common aspects of democracy to decline."7 While no single country in Western Europe improved over the last decade, Greece even went in the opposite direction and became more autocratic over the last ten years.8 Especially in Greece and Poland, there was a "substantial and significant decline in the legislature's propensity to investigate the executive over the last decade."9 But it is not only East Europe that is affected by illiberal tendencies. In Western Europe, V-Dem sees a slight increase in domestic government misinformation. While in the past, governments in Western Europe according to V-Dem "almost never used to spread misinformation through digital and social media [...] the use of misinformation for both domestic and international audiences is most frequent in Malta, the United Kingdom [...] in 2021".10

^{3.} Ibid

V-Dem Institute, Democracy Report 2022. Autocratization Changing Nature?, Department of Political Science University of Gothenburg, March 2022, www.v-dem.net/media/publications/dr_2022.pdf, 14.

^{5.} Ibid., 19.

^{6.} Ibid., 25.

^{7.} Ibid., 20.

^{8.} Ibid., 19.

^{9.} Ibid., 20.

^{10.} Ibid., 36.

The decline of religious freedom, which is one amongst many criteria to measure democracy in the V-Dem project, has been well documented by the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom in its annual "International Religious Freedom Report". The reports on countries, where governments were crucial in the institutionalisation of Islamophobia such as Austria, ¹¹ Denmark, ¹² and France, ¹³ are well documented.

According to the fourteenth report on Islamophobia by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that covered incidents of Islamophobic assaults and anti-Muslim hatred between December 2020 and January 2022, Europe accounts for most of the cases of anti-Muslim discrimination worldwide, especially in relation to policy.

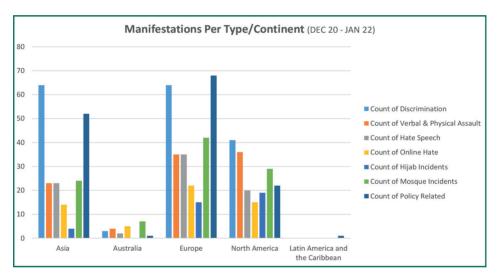


Figure 1: "Manifestations Per Type/Continent (Dec 20-Jan 22)" from the report "Fourteenth OIC Report on Islamophobia - December 2020-January 2022", Organization of Islamic Cooperation, March 2022, https://www.oic-oci.org/upload/islamophobia/2022/14th_Annual_Report_on_Islamophobia_March_2022_r2.pdf

As stated in the report, Islamophobia is still an increasing trend in 2021. According to the report, especially the United Kingdom and France are the main spots of anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobic incidents. Furthermore, anti-Muslim campaigns of far-right parties in EU member states dominate the discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities.¹⁴

www.islamophobiareport.com

^{11.} Office of International Religious Freedom, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Austria, 2 June 2022, https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/austria/

^{12.} Office of International Religious Freedom, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Denmark, 2 June 2022, https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/denmark/

Office of International Religious Freedom, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: France, 2 June 2022, https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/france/

^{14. &}quot;Fourteenth OIC Report on Islamophobia - December 2020 – January 2022", Organization of Islamic Cooperation, https://www.oic-oci.org/upload/islamophobia/2022/14th_Annual_Report_on_Islamophobia_March_ 2022_r2.pdf, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

The Champions of Institutionalised Islamophobia

Already during Austria's EU Council Presidency in 2018, when the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) was still in coalition with the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), Interior Minister Herbert Kickl claimed that there should be more emphasis on the fight against 'political Islam'. ¹⁵ In December 2020, the Austrian Minister of Integration Susanne Raab (ÖVP) during a video conference agreed to conduct a European conference on extremism and 'political Islam' with the following politicians: Belgian Interior Minister Annelies Verlinden; Danish Minister for Immigration and Integration Mattias Tesfaye; French Minister for Citizenship Marlène Schiappa; German State Secretary Markus Kerber representing Interior Minister Horst Seehofer; and Dutch Minister of Social Affairs and Employment Wouter Koolmees. ¹⁶

In February 2021, Integration Minister Raab had a one-hour call with the Swedish Minister of Justice and Migration, Morgan Johansson, to discuss extremism and 'political Islam'. The exchange was about the Documentation Center Political Islam and more generally the fight against so-called political Islam. Raab stated,

We were able to agree on even closer cooperation between Austria and Sweden in the fight against extremism and Islamism. Particularly against the backdrop of rising radicalisation tendencies throughout Europe, there is a need for strong solidarity against radicalisation and political Islam throughout Europe.¹⁷

On 28 October, Raab organised the "Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in Integration" in the city of Vienna. According to the media, 100 experts were invited to this event that was not open to the public. The conference hosted the Danish Minister of Immigration and Integration Mattias Tesfaye; Associate Minister of Citizenship in the French Ministry of Interior Marlène Schiappa; and EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Ilkka Salmi. Experts such as Gilles Kepel, including academics who have long been supporting anti-Muslim initiatives by several governments like Magnus Ranstorp, Mouhanad Khorchide, and Lorenzo Vidino, were also invited.¹⁸ In the long term, Raab intends to make Vienna a "competence

^{15.} Former Interior Minister Kickl on EU Council Presidency 2018: "The fight against political Islam and anti-Semitism must be higher on the EU agenda", 21. November 2018, available from https://www.bvt.gv.at/news.aspx?id=53427A316B4E54373268343D (Access date: 25 November 2021).

 [&]quot;Konferenz zu Extremismus und politischem Islam 2021 in Österreich", Tiroler Tageszeitung, 4 December 2020, https://www.tt.com/artikel/30766228/konferenz-zu-extremismus-und-politischem-islam-2021-in-oesterreich (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{17. &}quot;Integration Minister Raab: Exchange with Swedish counterpart on preventing extremism and political Islam" available from the website of the Federal Chancellery Republic of Austria, 12 February 2021, https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/bundeskanzleramt/nachrichten-der-bundesregierung/2021/02/integrationsminister-in-raab-austausch-mit-schwedischem-amtskollegen-zu-extremismuspraevention-und-politischem-islam.html (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{18. &}quot;Große Konferenz zu politischem Islam in Wiener Innenstadt", Vienna.at, 21 October 2021, https://www.vienna.at/grosse-konferenz-zu-politischem-islam-in-wiener-innenstadt/7165066 (Access date: 25 November 2021).

center against political Islam."19 Another long-term goal of the conference, which is intended to take place annually, is to create more alliances and exchange in the battle against 'political Islam'. According to Raab, the impact of foreign countries on European Muslim communities is especially harmful.²⁰ Regarding the forum, Raab stated, "Islamism and terror do not start when they become violent, but much earlier. The point is that we remove the breeding ground for segregation and radicalism."21 During the conference, the Austrian Documentation Center Political Islam produced a report authored by writers such as Lorenzo Vidino and Heiko Heinisch, who were both key to the investigation of Operation Luxor, a raid that occurred in November 2020 in Austria and which was declared unlawful by the Higher Court of Graz in July 2021.²² The Documentation Center also republished the Islam Map, which created a huge national and European backlash as it endangered the entire Austrian Muslim religious infrastructure including more than 600 mosques and Muslim associations, and private homes.²³ A series of new legislation allegedly targeting 'terrorism' was introduced by the Austrian government including an amendment to the already highly contested Islam Act of 2015.²⁴ Several other civil liberties got curtailed in the wake of this new legislation.

For all the above reasons, we have chosen Sebastian Kurz's portrait for the cover of this year's edition of the *European Islamophobia Report*. Kurz, who was hailed as a one-time political *wunderkind* by domestic Austrian and international media, came to power by making Islam and Muslims his number one target in election campaigns. More than that, he was the leader of a conservative government that implemented one anti-Muslim policy after the other, from hijab bans to the closure of mosques. Finally, the overwhelming allegations of corruption, especially in regards to the relationship between his government and the news media, forced him to step down. His political 'career' can be read as a textbook example of hegemonising Islamophobia and, at the same time, of how empty populism, essentially built on anti-Muslim

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^{19. &}quot;"Vienna Forum | "Europäische Zusammenarbeit im Kampf gegen Islamismus", Kleine Zeitung, 18 October 2021, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/aussenpolitik/6053288/Vienna-Forum_Europaeische-Zusammenarbeit-im-Kampf-gegen-Islamismus (Access date: 25 November 2021).

 [&]quot;Österreich geht mit anderen EU-Ländern gegen politischen Islam vor", Die Presse, 28 October 2021, https:// www.diepresse.com/6053344/osterreich-geht-mit-anderen-eu-landern-gegen-politischen-islam-vor (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{21. &}quot;Integration Minister Raab: European shoulder-to-shoulder stance against political Islam" available from the website of the Federal Chancellery Republic of Austria, 28 October 2021, https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/bundeskanzleramt/nachrichten-der-bundesregierung/2021/10/integrationsministerin-raab-europaeis-cher-schulterschluss-gegen-den-politischen-islam.html (Access date: 25 November 2021).

Kid Möchel, Dominik Schreiber, Michaela Reibenwein, Muslimbruderschaft: Weitere Schlappe für Staatsanwalt, 15 Sept 2021, https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/muslimbruderschaft-weitere-schlappe-fuer-staatsanwalt/401734461

^{23.} See Farid Hafez "Islamophobia in Austria: National Report 2021" in current volume.

^{24.} For critique of the legislation, see: Farid Hafez (2021), Islamophobia in Austria, in: Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 81-122. For a discussion of the legislation see Farid Hafez "Islamophobia in Austria: National Report 2021" in current volume.

racism, can end. Kurz accumulated immense power by scapegoating and securitising Muslims, which, in the end, turned out to be a screen to hide alleged corruption and increasing authoritarianism. Former justice minister Clemens Jabloner expressed this succinctly: Sebastian Kurz's regime was a "first step in the direction of a new system of government (*Staatsform*)." Previous national reports on Austria in our *European Islamophobia Report* clearly show how the heavy investment in anti-Muslim policies by Kurz's government were a marker of his increasingly manipulative and authoritarian policies. Eventually, the latter were terminated not least by the independent justice system that rescinded most of his anti-Muslim laws and measures from the hijab ban to the unlawful closure of mosques. ²⁶

The French and Danish governments, which seem to be part of the coalition of countries where elites are fostering Islamophobic policies, introduced new legislation curtailing civil liberties by discursively targeting Muslims. As Kawtar Najib outlines in her report on France in this volume, the implementation of the Separatism law (a law allegedly confirming respect for the principles of the Republic) on 24 August is a case in point. This law is a promulgation of two other laws, the Global Security law of 25 May and the law relating to the prevention of acts of terrorism and intelligence of 31 July, which reinforce the 2017 law strengthening internal security and the fight against terrorism, as well as the law implementing the state of emergency in 2015. As Najib argues in her report, the Separatism law

...will in fact amplify suspicion and abuse against Muslim populations. The Separatism law targets in its 103 articles everyday Muslimness as well as the Muslim civil society in France. In a logic of 'Systematic Obstruction' policy (implemented in February 2018), the Council of Ministers of January 2022 lists an impressive cumulative total of 24,887 controls, 718 closures and 46 million euros seized.²⁷

The Systematic Obstruction policy of the French government ended in 101 government units nationwide tasked with monitoring Islam and Muslims; 24,887 Muslim organisations and businesses placed on a secret blacklist and under strict monitoring; the closing of 718 Muslim-owned organisations and businesses including at least 4 schools, 37 mosques, 210 businesses, and two organisations; and 46,000,000

Christa Zöchling, "Irgendjemand muss es ja sagen", Profil, 4 July 2022, https://www.profil.at/morgenpost/ir-gendjemand-muss-es-ja-sagen/402061762 The whole debate can be listened to here: https://www.falter.at/falter/radio/62cc08dd11734100123a0518/das-vertrauen-brockelt-772

^{26.} See especially: Farid Hafez, See especially Farid Hafez, "Islamophobia in Austria: National Report" for the years 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 in the respective European Islamophobia Reports. For an analysis on Kurz's strategies in regards to Muslim educational institutions, see: Farid Hafez (2020): Rassismus im Bildungswesen: Zur Disziplinierung des muslimischen "Anderen" im Bildungswesen am Beispiel des Diskurses zu islamischen Kindergärten in Österreich (Racism in Education: On the Disciplining of the Muslim "Other" in Education. The Discourse on Islamic Kindergartens in Austria), in: Manfred Oberlechner, Reinhard Heinisch, Patrick Duval (Hg.): Nationalpopulismus bildet? Lehren für Unterricht und Bildung (National populism educates? Lessons for teaching and education), Frankfurt/M.: Wochenschau Verlag, 100-122.

^{27.} https://www.gouvernement.fr/conseil-des-ministres/2022-01-12

euros seized as of January 2022.²⁸ While the Ministry of Interior originally argued in favour of closing several civil society organisations that are fighting anti-Muslim racism such as the Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI) and the Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) on the grounds of supporting terrorism, the Council of State rejected this argument, but still confirmed their official closure in September 2021. For the rapporteur, the CCIF's recognition of state-sponsored Islamophobia constitutes incitement to hatred which goes beyond the framework of the protection of freedom of expression. Other abusive closures in 2021 affected mosques, bank accounts, schools, etc. Similar repercussions occurred with the infamous racist police raid 'Operation Luxor' in Austria. In its ongoing investigation following the unlawful raid, the Austrian secret service stated,

In the strategy papers for the establishment of a parallel state or caliphate [...] it is defined that a public discourse must take place by means of the term 'Islamophobia'. For this reason, representatives of political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood frequently use the term 'Islamophobia' in the media.²⁹

Hence, whoever speaks about Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism (as the investigation files further argue) is suspected of trying to establish a 'caliphate'. This discourse is also prevalent in French political circles. The discourse on Islamo-leftism (*Islamo-gauchisme*) is intimidating academics, who use critical race theory, postcolonial studies, and Islamophobia studies to criticise the French government. In contrast to Austria, where large parts of the academia remained silent,³⁰ a large part of French and international academics denounced the witch-hunt of critical scholars³¹ and the threat of academic authoritarianism.³²

The intimidation and weakening of Muslim civil actors in the name of anti-terror legislation can also be witnessed elsewhere. In Germany, the Federal Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU) banned the association Ansaar International following raids with more than 1,000 police officers in 70 locations and seized 23 bank accounts with 800,000 euros. In Seehofer's view, Ansaar spread the anti-democratic worldview of the Salafist scene under the guise of humanitarian aid, and the association's activities were directed against the constitutional or-

^{28.} CAGE (2021). Fact Sheet: France's Systematic Obstruction policy on Muslims, 23 July 2021, www.cage.ngo/fact-sheet-frances-systematic-obstruction-policy-on-muslims

^{29. 16} St 52/19t, Investigation Files of the State Prosecutor of Graz, ON 1144, 19 May 2021, 121.

^{30.} Support for Farid Hafez, co-editor of the *European Islamophobia Report*, who is being investigated on the suspicion of being a terrorist, is documented on two websites. For the letter "International Statement Opposing Use of Counter-Terrorism Powers to Target Islamophobia Expert", primarily signed by scholars outside of Austria, see: https://www.supporthafez.com/open-letter/

^{31.} https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/02/20/islamo-gauchisme-nous-universitaires-et-chercheurs-demandons-avec-force-la-demission-de-frederique-vidal_6070663_3232.html

^{32.} https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/open-letter-the-threat-of-academic-authoritarian-ism-international-solidarity-with-antiracist-academics-in-france/

der and the idea of international understanding. This ban was welcomed by Berlin Senator of the Interior Andreas Geisel (Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD), who said that the "network of associations was a gathering place for Salafists and enemies of the State of Israel."³³ The association appealed against the closure.³⁴ Meanwhile individuals such as local politicians who donated to the association were soon blamed for being in contact with terrorists.³⁵

An example of even further excessive employment of anti-terrorism legislation comes from Russia, where certain Muslim movements such as the non-militant Tablighi Jama'at and the Nurcular movement are banned and members are being jailed for more than a decade. Furthermore, the Russian bureaucracy has a list of books on Islam that are banned including historical theological works. The anonymous author of the Russia report in this volume reveals how even elders are being persecuted for disseminating religious knowledge via publications. As the report shows, several people have been detained for years on the suspicion of terrorism, either for publishing books, disseminating literature on Islam, or similar activities.

Within Western Europe as the supposedly more democratic part of Europe, the French government has been a major force in trying to proselytise European institutions to follow its path in exacerbating Muslim life in Europe. A video published in November 2021 by the Council of Europe that empowered veiled Muslim women to promote a more tolerant, free, and inclusive society was met with pressures from the French government (and also from French far-right groups) resulting in the council finally removing the videos. ³⁶ The French government's reaction to the campaign for more diversity³⁷ by the Council of Europe's Anti-Discrimination Department sparked criticism from many human rights activists who could not comprehend the reaction. A party member of Macron's La République En Marche! (LREM) party, Sarah Zemmahi, wore a headscarf in support of the campaign. LTEM's co-founder, Stanislas Guerini, wrote on Twitter that wearing a headscarf was incompatible with the values of the LREM. In addition, he said that the campaign photo would be changed or the LREM would withdraw its support for the campaign. Although this position was contested within his own party, for example the critique of LREM lawmaker Naima

^{33.} Frank Jansen, "Seehofer verbietet Verein Ansaar International – Razzien auch in Berlin", Der Tagesspiegel, 05 May 2021, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/harter-schlag-gegen-die-islamistenszene-seehofer-verbietet-verein-ansaar-international/27160438.html (Access date: 18 November 2021).

^{34.} Ansaar International Update 2022 + Gute Nachrichten! - Abu Rahma, 27 april 2022, www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7GRUQuOyRA

Julia Ley, Kontaktschuld-Vorwürfe Als Islamist gebrandmarkt, 11 July 2021, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/kontaktschuld-vorwuerfe-als-islamist-gebrandmarkt-100.html

 $^{36.} https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/entry/cette-campagne-du-conseil-de-leurope-celebrant-la-liberte-dans-le-hijab-a-du-etre-retiree_fr_6181d9e4e4b055e47d72e137$

 [&]quot;The Attack On The Council Of Europe's Hijab Campaign Is An Attack On Human Rights", Forum of European Muslim Youth And Student Organisations, https://femyso.org/the-attack-on-the-council-of-europes-hijab-campaign-is-an-attack-on-human-rights/, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

Moutchou and Caroline Janvier calling Guerini's statements a form of discrimination and a way to appeal to far-right voters,³⁸ the intervention was successful.



Figure 2: Photo from the campaign shared by Jordan Bardella on Twitter.³⁹

For the French Youth Secretary of State Sarah El Haïry, the video encouraged hijab wearing as a form of identity politics. ⁴⁰ When several French ministers criticised a meeting of Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli with FEMYSO (Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations), who were involved in this campaign, they were applauded not only by the conservative Austrian ÖVP, ⁴¹ but also by far-right political parties. ⁴²

^{38.} Cady Lang, "Who Gets to Wear a Headscarf? The Complicated History Behind France's Latest Hijab Controversyhttps", Time, https://time.com/6049226/france-hijab-ban/, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

^{39.} Jordan Bardella, Twitter, https://twitter.com/J_Bardella/status/1391805581787283474?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw %7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1391829596102877189%7Ctwgr%5E07867c7a010679c09 df6d54a8ab7cb8b1ffa2694%7Ctwcon%5Es3_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ftime.com%2F6049226%2 Ffrance-hijab-ban%2F, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

 [&]quot;Europarat zog Kampagnentweets zu Kopftuch zurück", ORF, 03 November 2021, https://orf.at/stories/ 3235202/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

SOS Mitmensch, Antimuslimischer Rassismus in der österreichischen Politik Antimuslimische Abwertungs-, Ausgrenzungs-, Feindbild-, Generalisierungs- und Hetzkampagnen im Jahr 2021, March 2022, https://www.sosmitmensch.at/dl/qnuLJKJkLnKJqx4KJK/SOS_Mitmensch_Bericht2021_AntimuslimischerRassismus_ Maerz2022_pdf

^{42.} The Austrian far-right FPÖ, for example, reproduced the allegation that FEMYSO is said to have contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood. The FPÖ also criticised the fact that other Muslim organisations, such as Islamic Relief, or projects, such as the current *European Islamophobia Report*, received funds from the EU arguing that the "EU Commission should immediately stop any kind of contacts, cooperation or promotion of organisations with Islamist background." "FPÖ – Vilimsky: "Hat die EU-Kommission eine Nähe zu Islamisten?", OTS, 24 November 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20211124_OTS0046/fpoe-vilimsky-hat-die-eu-kommission-eine-naehe-zu-islamisten (Access date: 18 November 2021).

It is hardly surprising that French President Emmanuel Macron's targeting of Muslim civil society has led to growing protest. This includes an initiative by a coalition of 36 civil society organisations from 13 countries, who have submitted a complaint to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) urging the body to take action against France over "entrenching Islamophobia." ⁴³ In the letter, they request that it opens formal infringement procedures against France's government for structurally discriminating against Muslims. Critical notes on an international level could be heard at different moments. During an online event, then coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred (a position that has been void since the end of July 2021) delivered a keynote speech at the UN Human Rights Council event organised by the EU and Canada on March 5, 2021, where he stated that discrimination against Muslims has reached an alarming magnitude and that this is a big obstacle to enjoying fully the fundamental human right of religious freedom. He also mentioned that Muslims are often exposed to the risks of stigmatisation and discrimination in the context of security and counter-terrorism policies, which in turn decrease Muslims' trust in democratic institutions in Europe. 44 Also, during an event on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2021, the European Commission organised a summit, attended by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, addressing the implementation of the "European Anti-Racism Action Plan" at various levels with the involvement of EU institutions, member states, civil society, equality bodies, and grassroots organisations.⁴⁵ The only Muslim spokesperson, Layla Azzouzi, co-founder of the Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique (CCIB), discussed anti-Muslim racism and emphasised the impact of counter-terrorism policies on ordinary Muslims who are perceived as radicalised individuals and are falsely defined as a security threat to society. 46

Institutionalised Islamophobia in also present in Sweden, as the report authored by Anna Ardin, Mattias Irving, and Emin Poljarević shows. They reveal that a "network of individuals working in academia and journalistic outlets" - which they describe as "thought leaders in Swedish Islamophobic discourse" and which is related to other central figures like Lorenzo Vidino -⁴⁷ has been central in producing a "num-

^{43.} Rayhan Uddin, UN urged to take action against France over 'entrenching Islamophobia', Middle East Eye, 18 January 2021, www.middleeasteye.net/news/france-islamophobia-un-human-rights-council

 [&]quot;Anti-Muslim Hatred as an obstacle to the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief", EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u76s8smSFcs&ab_channel=EUDelegationtotheUNinGeneva, (Access date: 28 August 2022).

^{45. &}quot;EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025", European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en, (Access date: 28 August 2022).

^{46. &}quot;Report", European Anti-Racism Summit, https://www.antiracism-eusummit2022.eu/media/kiujgfxq/just_anti-racism-summit_report_eu-anti-racism-summit.pdf, (Access date: 28 August 2022).

^{47.} Bridge Initiative Team, 'Factsheet: Lorenzo Vidino', Georgetown University – The Bridge Initiative, 22 April, https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-lorenzo-vidino/ For a detailed analysis of this network, see: Farid Hafez, "Muslim Civil Society under Attack: The European Foundation for Democracy's Role in Defam-

ber of ideologically charged reports and opinion pieces portraying Muslim political and civil society engagement as an internal security threat" that have been funded by the Department of Psychological Defence at the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).⁴⁸ According to the authors, several of these people succeeded in their strategy to defund Muslim organisations.

The allegation of representing 'political Islam' or the Muslim Brotherhood is a weapon used by Islamophobes to silence and exclude Muslims from the public sphere as can be seen in the example of Belgium. As Amina Easat-Daas reveals in her report on Belgium in this volume, when the first and only hijab-wearing Belgian Muslim woman Ihsane Haouach was appointed as government commissioner for the Institute of Gender Equality in May by Minister for Equality and Diversity Sarah Schiltz harsh attacks followed. She was attacked for her hijab and also for alleged links to the Muslim Brotherhood. Haouach finally resigned citing that "the context of mistrust and violence towards me, make it impossible to exercise my role efficiently."

Similarly, a group of people in Switzerland is pushing to adopt hawkish measures against the local Muslim population. The author on the national report on Switzerland, Oliver Wäckerlig, problematises the fact that a Lega/Swiss People's Party (SVP) motion from late 2020 called for introducing a criminal offence of "political Islam" based on a draft by the Austrian government. Again, a reference is made to central Islamophobic figures such as Saïda Keller-Messahli. In March 2021, the Swiss Security Policy Committee of the Council of States submitted a postulate that would like to have the "introduction of a licensing procedure for imams, a public imam register, as well as the introduction of a ban on foreign financing for mosques" examined, has already been introduced in Austria. In May, a postulate by the Christian Democratic People's Party of Switzerland (CVP) referred to the establishment of the Documentation Centre for Political Islam in Austria and called for research on 'political Islam' in Switzerland as well. In June, the far-right SVP published a position paper "On Islam and Islamism in Switzerland", where it calls for a "ban on political Islam";

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ing and Delegitimizing Muslim Civil Society," in: Esposito, John L., and Derya Iner, eds. *Islamophobia and radicalization: Breeding intolerance and violence*. Springer, 2019, 117-137.

^{48.} Since January 2022, the department is a separate public agency.

RTBF. "Démission d'Ihsane Haouach: elle invoque des raisons personnelles et nie tout lien avec les Frères musulmans" RTBF. 10 July 2021. https://www.rtbf.be/article/demission-dihsane-haouach-elle-invoque-desraisons-personnelles-et-nie-tout-lien-avec-les-freres-musulmans-10801756P.

Lorenzo, Quadri (Lega/SVP parliamentary group), National Councillor, Motion 20.4568 from 17 December 2020: "Political Islam is to become a criminal offence in Switzerland as well". URL: https://www.parlament. ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20204568 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{51.} Councillor of States Thomas Minder for the Security Policy Commission, Postulate 21.3451 of 25 March 2021: "Imams in Switzerland". URL: https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20213451 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{52. &}quot;Position Paper of the Swiss People's Party on Islam and Islamism in Switzerland" of 14 June 2021. URL: https://www.svp.ch/wp-content/uploads/Positionspapier-SVP-Schweiz-Islam-DE.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

"the dissolution of associations that spread political Islam"; "the closure of mosques and Islamic cultural centres where political Islam is propagated"; "the introduction of an Islam law based on the Austrian model"; and a "ban on foreign imams and pastors". ⁵³ In other words, the former Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz's infamous Islam policies served as an exemplary model that was duly imitated.

Yet, the problem goes beyond these single countries and is in fact systemic. A report published by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) in 2021 with the title "Suspicion, Discrimination and Surveillance: The impact of Counter-terrorism Law and Policy on Racialised Groups at Risk of Racism in Europe" utters a similar critique. As Karen Taylor, chair of ENAR, writes, counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation strategies impact discrimination against Muslim communities in Europe. Furthermore, the report focuses on how security measures have led to psychological and traumatic experiences for individuals and communities. Although counter-terrorism strategies are developed for the security of European countries, the report highlights possible harmful effects on Muslim communities. Based on 96 interviews with policymakers, practitioners, legal experts/human rights NGOs, other civil society organisations, researchers and academic experts in Germany, France, Hungary, Poland, and Spain since October 2018, 54 the key findings are summed up as follows:

At its inception, the EU's counter-radicalisation policies focused exclusively and explicitly on Muslims and Islam. In placing suspicion and scrutiny on Muslim identities and religious practices it enabled discrimination. As Member States adopted, developed, and implemented their counter-radicalisation policies and action plans, supported by EU coordination and sharing of best practice, they replicated and reinforced a focus on Muslim religious identities and practices. At the same time, the development of pre-emptive offences that criminalise actions that occur before there is any plan to commit an act of terrorism underpins and legitimises prosecutions that rely heavily on evidence of associations and identities that are deemed dangerous. The data from our research suggests that these developments have contributed to a securitised suspicion of Muslim religious practices and expressions of religious identity, making them a source of fear and anxiety, that trigger further investigation by police or other state officials. This suspicion extends to mosques, Islamic classes, the act of prayer, and even to Arabic language classes... The research found that suspicion and fear of any civic activism or mobilisation around Muslim religious identities curtailed an individual's ability to participate in public life in ways that are meaningful to them.⁵⁵

^{53.} Ibid., p. 6.

^{54. &}quot;Suspicion, Discrimination and Surveillance: The impact of counter-terrorism law and policy on racialised groups at risk of racism in Europe", European Network Against Racism, https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/suspicion_discrimination_surveillance_report_2021.pdf, (Access date: 28 August 2022).

^{55.} Ibid.

According to this analysis, there is a need to rethink the EU's counter-radicalisation policies fully in order to free Muslims from systemic suspicion. Similar results can be found in a report published by the EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) "Directive (EU) 2017/541 on Combating Terrorism - Impact on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms". The report's main aim is to raise awareness on the issue that counter-terrorism strategies affect the human rights of certain groups. For the report, fieldwork in the form of 100 interviews was conducted in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Hungary, and Sweden. These countries were chosen because the research aimed to gather diverse experiences and establish regional balance. The participants were judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, law enforcement officers, and experts from oversight institutions, non-governmental organisations, and academia.

The report mentions several aspects and measures of counter-terrorism and how they have a discriminatory effect on Muslims. The report highlights the fact that individuals who actively practice their religion are more likely to be subjected to counter-terrorism policies. In fact, in all member states counter-terrorism policy focuses on religious terms like 'jihadism', which are misinterpreted and therefore associated with terrorism. The experts who participated in the interviews for the report, underlined the fact that individuals who practice their religion are in danger of being associated with radicalisation. ⁵⁶

In February 2021, Amnesty International and the Open Society Foundations jointly published the report "A Human Rights Guide for Researching Racial and Religious Discrimination in Counter-Terrorism in Europe". The report aims "to provide guidance to human rights and antiracism activists, researchers, NGOs, and oversight bodies seeking to document and prove discrimination, as defined in human rights law, in the counter-terrorism context in Europe." Similar to the FRA report, the publication focuses on how counter-terrorism strategies by policymakers affect the increasing discrimination against Muslims in Europe, and highlights that discrimination in regard to counter-terrorism is neglected compared to other violations of human rights.

Politics

Politics remains the essential driver of Islamophobia.⁵⁸ In a nutshell, Kawtar Najib describes the essential core of institutionalised Islamophobia seen in countries such as France as follows, "Islamophobia in France is primarily the result of the State, which

 [&]quot;Directive (EU) 2017/541 on Combating Terrorism - Impact on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms", EU
Agency For Fundamental Rights, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2021-directive-com-bating-terrorism_en.pdf, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

^{57. &}quot;A Human Rights Guide for Researching Racial and Religious Discrimination in Counter-Terrorism in Europe", Open Society Foundation, https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/a-human-rights-guide-for-researching-racial-and-religious-discrimination-in-counterterrorism-in-europe, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

^{58.} Massoumi, Narzanin, Tom Mills, and David Miller. What is Islamophobia? Racism, social movements and the state, Pluto Press, 2017.

seeks to establish an 'Islam of France' which removes self-determination from French Muslims to make them 'Muslims without Islam'."⁵⁹

The dissemination of Islamophobia can be seen by politicians from the right to the left. As Nadia Jones-Gailani and Gabi Gőbl show in their report on Hungary, "the so-called threat of Muslim migrants 'flooding' Hungary and shattering its Christian foundations continues to frame a political discourse that has brought Islamophobia from the periphery and into the center of public debate." ⁶⁰ Unsurprisingly, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has stated that he believes "migration should be stopped because only Muslims are coming, and this is changing the Christian cultural identity of Europe."

At the same time, anti-clerical, left-wing parties use anti-Muslim mobilisation for their cause, as Mersiha Smailovikj reveals in her report on North Macedonia. There, a candidate for the office of mayor of Skopje from the party Levica (Left), organised a public prayer to cause a public stir. Centrist-left Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša retweeted that "no other book has caused more death, suffering, oppression, impover-ishment, and social backwardness than the Koran," comparing it to the Communist Manifesto. The author of the Slovakia report, Jozef Lenč, reveals that former prime minister Robert Fico (Direction – Slovak Social Democracy, SMER-SSD), who is currently chairman of the strongest opposition party, directly attacked him for authoring a previous national report on Islamophobia for the publication at hand, saying that he was not 'objective' because of his religion (Islam) and urging him to "not work as a political scientist in a Christian country" – the Islamophobic attack was registered by the U.S. Department of State' International Religions Freedom Report for 2021.

Aristotle Kallis reveals in his report on the UK that there is a deep problem of Islamophobia running not only through the rank-and-file of the Conservatives, but even the Labour Party. Kallis argues that the long-awaited Singh enquiry into Islamophobic attitudes within the ruling Conservative Party showed that "Islamophobia remains a problem within the party but is still falling far short of being granted equal status with other forms of discrimination such as Antisemitism." ⁶⁴ At the same time,

^{59.} See Kawtar Najib, "Islamophobia in France: National Report 2021" in current volume.

^{60.} See Nadia Jones-Gailani, Gabi Gőbl, "Islamophobia in Hungary: National Report 2021" in current volume.

^{61.} Siol.net, Orban: S prihodom muslimanov se spreminja krščanska identiteta Evrope, 1 September 2021, https://siol.net/novice/slovenija/orban-s-prihodom-muslimanov-se-spreminja-krscanska-identiteta-evrope-560362 (Access date: 23 March 2022).

^{62. 24}ur.com, *Turški medij: Janša na Twitterju znova delil protiislamska stališča*, 24 Februar 2021, https://www.24ur.com/novice/slovenija/islamska-skupnost-v-sloveniji-kriticna-do-jansevega-deljenja-tvita-o-koranu.html (Access date: 25 March 2022).

^{63.} United States Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom (2022), International Religious Freedom Report for 2021, p. 9.

^{64.} Allen, Chris. "Islamophobia in the Conservative Party: Key Points from the Inquiry on Discrimination." The Conversation, May 26, 2021. http://theconversation.com/islamophobia-in-the-conservative-party-key-points-from-the-inquiry-on-discrimination-161532.

the opposition Labour Party, which has accepted the findings of the Labour Muslim Network report on Islamophobia within the party, is very much doubted by Muslims to be a leading force in the fight against Islamophobia.

In some countries with a negligible number of Muslims, like the Czech Republic (0.05% according to 2021 census and 0.2% according to estimations), there seems to be a trend of decreasing anti-Muslim hate crime and Islamophobic populism in political discourse due to the decreasing relevance of immigration issues compared to 2015, when this trend was at its peak and subsequently politicised. In 2021, mobilising against 'covid totalitarianism' was much higher on the agenda of the far right than Islamophobic discourses, although the latter still remained existent, as Zora Hesová's report on the Czech Republic tells us. In Romania, Adriana Cupcea tells us that Islam has become a less politicised issue in mainstream politics, while the far-right is still holding on to its anti-Muslim discourse.

Some churches and denominations can also play a crucial role both in the dissemination and countering of Islamophobia. With statements such as "Islam, [and] its followers, is not a religion, it is a political party and they are the people of war," ⁶⁶ which the Archbishop of the Orthodox Church of Greece gave during an interview on the 200-year anniversary of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottomans, standing against Islam and Muslims becomes part of a religiously sanctioned cosmic war. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) organized an event alongside several Greek governmental bodies titled "Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes - Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities: Launch of ODIHR's Practical Guide in Greece" in December 2021 to discuss the main causes of intolerance, discrimination, and hate crimes against Muslims in the country. At the event, the security needs of the local Muslim communities in Greece were also debated. ⁶⁷

Far-Right Parties

Although formally in opposition, far-right political parties such as the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) were able to bring in discriminatory motions that were accepted by governing coalitions of center-right parties. In the Netherlands, the majority of the parliament decided that special investigating officers (Dutch: *boa*) could no longer wear a hijab as part of their uniform, arguing that this was in conflict with the job's 'neutrality'.

^{65.} Farid Hafez (2018) Street-level and government-level Islamophobia in the Visegrád Four countries, Patterns of Prejudice, 52:5, 436-447.

^{66. &}quot;Archbishop Ieronymos: Islam is not a religion but a political party, its citizens are the people of war", newsbeast.gr, 14 January 2021, https://bit.ly/3m64SVn (Access date: 23 May 2022).

^{67. &}quot;Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes - Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities: Launch of ODIHR's Practical Guide in Greece", Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, https://www.osce.org/odihr/507131, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

On International Women's Day, 8 March 2021, the Albanian politician Alma Lame, former ambassador of Kosovo to Italy, announced the Swiss burqa ban on social media and made a call for Kosovo to follow in Switzerland's footsteps. It bears repeating here that Kosovo has a Muslim majority of 95.6%.

As the author of the report on Bosnia and Hercegovina, Hikmet Karčić, reveals, many politicians used nationalist rhetoric and Islamophobic tropes in their attempts to undermine a country in Europe that is populated by a Muslim majority. Bosnia and Herzegovina is often depicted as a safe haven for 'terrorism' and 'extremists', and as a manifestation of a demographic 'threat'.

The theory of the Great Replacement and the anxiety around the demise of white civilisation is a driving idea in the discourse of many far-right politicians and has also made its way into mainstream discourse, as examples above have shown. For instance, the Norwegian leader of the far-right Progress Party Sylvi Listhaug has complained that Muslims are able to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, seeing in it "the deletion of one's own culture and traditions." Similarly in Spain, politicians of the far-right VOX called Muslims a threat to "Christian culture". VOX also launched a "Stop Islamisation" campaign as part of its electoral campaign for the regional elections in Catalonia.

In countries such as Finland, conservative political parties like the National Coalition Party (NCP) have no issues in forming a coalition with far-right parties such as the Finns Party (PS), and have already co-opted the anti-Muslim policy claims of the radical far right.

Internet

The internet remains a place of wide dissemination of hate speech. In Italy, two reports have revealed the extent to which anti-Muslim hate speech is central to this phenomenon. The Italian Observatory on Rights, which analysed tweets posted between January and October 2021, found that among the 797,326 tweets analysed, 19.57% targeted Muslims - an increase of 12.01% compared to 2020. Another report on hate speech conducted by Amnesty International, which surveyed 36,269 contents published online, found that 46% of original posts and tweets were classified as anti-Muslim.

^{68.} https://newsbeezer.com/norwayeng/bahareh-letnes-in-the-throat-of-sylvi-listhaug-in-the-dispute-over-religious-bolidays/

^{69.} La diputada de Vox protagoniza un vídeo en el que presenta a los musulmanes ceutíes como una amenaza para la »cultura cristiana«. Ceuta actualidad, 11 August 2021.

Vox - Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti, http://www.voxdiritti.it/la-nuova-mappa-dellintolleranza-6/ (Access date: 23 March 2022).

^{71.} Amnesty International, "Barometro dell'odio", April 2021, https://d21zrvtkxtd6ae.cloudfront.net/public/uploads/2021/04/Amnesty-barometro-odio-2021.pdf (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Incidents

State authorities in several countries like Italy or Russia do not identify anti-Muslim hate crime in their statistics. But where there is research, the shocking reality becomes apparent. The report by the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Tackling Islamophobia has revealed that four-fifths of Muslims living in Scotland have experienced Islamophobic abuse. Perceptions of Muslims are still largely negative. As the Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies shows in research, 31% of respondents in Norway agreed with the statement "Muslims want to take over Europe" and half of them agreed with the statement that Islamic values were wholly or partly incompatible with Norwegian society. A report published by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) states that numerous "hate speech cases are not reported to the police or other competent authorities." The public debate (is dominated by xenophobic and anti-migration discourse, which constitutes, normalises, and popularises hate speech and increases prejudice

In their report on Norway, Richard McNeil-Willson and Iris Beau Segers show that the majority of religiously motivated hate crime recorded in Norway in 2020 seems to be targeting Muslims. While national authorities in Norway do not yet differentiate between the specific targets within their hate crimes statistics, regional authorities such as the Oslo Police does and their numbers clearly show that the majority of religion-based hate crime victims are Muslims.

In her report on the Netherlands, Amina Smits shows that systematic attacks on mosques can be a frequently encountered experience of intimidation in the lives of Muslims in the country. In France, according to a report conducted by the Service central du renseignement territorial (SCRT), 213 anti-Muslim acts were recorded. Half of them (109) concerned damage to Muslim places of worship, cultural centres, and cemeteries, including six arson attacks against mosques, while 22% of anti-Muslim hate crimes were attacks on persons including three cases of physical violence.⁷⁵

In his report on Bosnia and Hercegovina, Hikmet Karčić reveals that in comparison to 2020, where the pandemic dominated public life, there was an increase in physical and verbal attacks on mosques and imams in 2021. Symbols of racial supremacy like the Ustasha symbol were drawn in front of a cemetery and threatening graffiti was written on three fence pillars belonging to a historical mosque in the Old Town of Trebinje.

Hopkins, Peter. 'Scotland's Islamophobia: Report of the Inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland by the Cross-Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia'. University of Newcastle, 2021. https://secureservercdn.net/160.153. 137.40/13n.f55.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Islamophobia-public-inquiry-report-1.pdf.

^{73.} https://blogs.prio.org/2021/07/why-did-muslims-become-the-new-enemy-in-norway-and-europe/

^{74. &}quot;ECRI Report on Norway", European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, https://rm.coe.int/6th-report-on-norway-/1680a17dd8, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

^{75.} https://www.vie-publique.fr/sites/default/files/rapport/pdf/284641.pdf

In their report on Spain, Sergio Gracia and Inés Bolaños reveal several incidents where people of colour with a Muslim background were stabbed, killed, tortured, or attacked in streets. In Denmark, the increasing media coverage of violence against Muslims in 2021 has led to a hearing with the Justice Minister Nick Hækkerup who publicly declared that the police must be attentive to hate crime particularly against Muslims. This led to the minister favouring the idea of creating a national action plan against racism and discrimination by the end of 2021, as Amani Hassani writes in her report on the country. In other countries, a comprehensive strategy against racism, in general, and anti-Muslim racism, in specific, is still waiting to be addressed. In Malta, the government took the first steps to launch a national strategy against racism in 2019, as Sara Ezabe Malliue reports in this volume.⁷⁶

Reports investigating the treatment of Muslims, especially refugees, have shown the amount of violence they experience. In Slovenia, a report from 2021 described the testimony of a Muslim beaten by the police while he was lying on the ground the police told the people present that "they did not want Muslims in Slovenia"

In January 2021, the European Commission organised a workshop with Equinet (European Network of Equality Bodies). Among the aspects addressed was how to build trust between equality bodies and the victims of anti-Muslim discrimination in order to solve the problem of underreporting of discrimination against Muslims.⁷⁷ The participants found that the problem of hate speech against Muslims, especially at the institutional level of equality bodies, needs to be brought more into focus. The problem is that despite the fact that equality bodies are best suited to raise awareness of this problem, the topic is not adequately discussed.⁷⁸ At the same time, the obstacles to cooperation between equality bodies and civil society organisations were discussed. The main problem is that equality bodies do not always act independently as politicians often hold leading positions in such institutions – and politicians are not immune to anti-Muslim stances which significantly impedes cooperation with civil society organisations. The dissolution of the Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) was presented as a popular example. 79 The workshop discussed the extent to which future cooperation can be further improved and proposed five points: values and representation, channels of cooperation, learning from each other's expertise, communication, and inclusion of more actors.80

^{76. &}quot;Malta's first anti-racism strategy", *Malta Independent*, 30 September 2021, https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/first-national-action-plan-against-racism-and-xenophobia.823615 (Access Date: 15 July 2022).

Working Together To Tackle Discrimination And Intolerance Against Muslims, European Network of Equality Bodies, https://equineteurope.org/working-together-to-tackle-discrimination-and-intolerance-against-muslims/, (Access date: 29. August 2022).

^{78. &}quot;Tackling Discrimination and Intolerance Against Muslims", European Network of Equality Bodies, https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Tackling-Discrimination-Intolerance-against-Muslims-Workshop-summary-1.pdf, (Access date: 29. August 2022).

^{79.} Ibid.

^{80.} Ibid.

Labour Market

In Norway, unemployment among those born in or born to parents from Asia (10.3%) or Africa (13.7%) was significantly higher than the average unemployment in Norway (3.9%) in 2020,81 thus affecting Muslims much more than other groups. According to research, 35% of Muslim immigrants have experienced discrimination in job applications. Job applicants with an ethnic Norwegian name were shown to be 25% more likely to be invited to a job interview, compared to equally qualified applicants with a Pakistani name on their CV.82 Similarly in the Netherlands, a recent report by Dutch social scientist Ineke van der Valk exposed that 50% of the individuals interviewed had faced discrimination on the basis of their female Muslimness. In Austria, the Documentation Center Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism documented 1,061 cases of anti-Muslim racist acts including 8.2% of all cases that were reported in the labour market.83

In Denmark, since the catch-all category of "non-Western heritage" has been introduced by the Ministry of Interior to categorise unemployed citizens, research has shown that unemployed individuals under this category seeking jobs were called in for eight times more meetings at the job center than their white male counterparts, and seven times more meetings compared to white female counterparts.⁸⁴

Another challenge for Muslims in several European countries is that their religious holidays are not recognised in a similar manner to the religious holidays of Christian churches. The authors of the Spanish report, Sergio Gracia and Inés Bolaños, show that although the celebration of Muslim religious festivities is enshrined in the law, 85 these rights are being contested in regions by far-right parties like VOX, which voted against the inclusion of protected festivities such as Eid al-Fitr. 86

In his report on Finland, Enrique Tessieri discusses how according to the annual 2021 report to the parliament by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, people with "Finnish-sounding names" had four times better chances of getting a job interview than those with so-called foreign-sounding names, no matter how good they spoke Finnish.⁸⁷

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^{81.} Statistisk Sentralbyrå (2020). Registrerte arbeidsledige blant innvandrere [Registered unemployment among immigrants]. https://www.ssb.no/innvarbl

^{82.} Midtbøen, A. H. (2016). Discrimination of the Second Generation: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Norway. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 17, 253-272.

^{83.} Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und Anti-Muslimischer Rassismus, Antimuslimischer Rassismus Report 2021, Mai 2022, https://dokustelle.at/fileadmin/Media/Reports/2021/Antimuslimischer_Rassismus_Report_2021.pdf

^{84.} Therese Moreau & Frederik Kulager, "Vi har skilt jobcentrenes algoritme ad", *Zetland*, (June 10, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://www.zetland.dk/historie/sOMVZ7qG-m8yvMbM4-83f81

Ley 26/1992, 10 November 1992, whereby the Acuerdo de Cooperación del Estado con la Comisión Islámica de España is approved.

^{86.} Vox monta un nuevo incendio en Ceuta porque el calendario laboral incorpora otra Pascua musulmana. ElDiario.es, 23 September 2021.

^{87.} Yle News, "Researcher: "If There's a Worker with a Finnish Name, They'll Probably be Hired," 21 October 2019, 11 February 2021 (updated), https://yle.fi/news/3-11026589, (Access dater: 23 April 2022).

Tessieri clearly reveals the impact of this discriminatory policy: according to data published in December 2020, the unemployment amongst people with non-native first language skills was 23.8% compared to the national average of 12.6%.⁸⁸

Media

Media can play an important role by investigating and uncovering problematic structures such as the case of the Dutch newspaper *NRC* uncovering the illegal surveillance of Muslims with government money. It was revealed that in the Netherlands illegal surveillance of mosques occurred in at least ten municipalities within the past couple of years with the purpose of producing secret reports. *NRC* exposed that this research was paid for by the Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security, NCTV), under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and Security.

In the report on Slovenia, Maja Pucelj shows how far-right media in countries with a very small Muslim population like Slovenia, which is home to an approximately 2.4% Muslims, disseminate ideas such as the Great Replacement that warns of a Muslim takeover in Europe and Slovenia. But, as for instance the authors of the Greece report Ali Huseyinoglu and Alexandros Sakellariou show, not only far-right, but so-called progressive and liberal media cover Islam and Muslims in a highly problematic way in the Greek media landscape. They give the examples of the website *Liberal.gr* that speaks of the fear of "Europe turning into a Muslim region"⁸⁹ and the liberal newspaper *Kathimerini* that defends conspiracy terms such as 'Islamo-leftism' taken from the French debate.⁹⁰ Even in countries with a Muslim majority population such as Albania,⁹¹ one of the most well-known TV broadcasts, Vizion Plus,⁹² invited and interviewed former Donald Trump advisor and far-right media strategist Steve Bannon to give him a forum for spreading his views.

Education

Education can be one of many means to counter Islamophobia, but can also be used for the opposite, that is to nurture a future generation that holds on to stereotypes. In her report on Slovenia Maja Pucelj reveals a new study by Ela Porić and Aleš Črnič

^{88.} Statistics Finland, "115g -- Population by Main Type of Activity, Language, Occupational Status, Sex, Age and Year, 2000-2020," https://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin_vrm_tyokay/statfin_tyokay_pxt_115g.px/, (Access date: 13 April 2022).

^{89.} Sakis Moumtzis, "If you don't like our culture, go home", Liberal.gr, 15 May 2021, https://cutt.ly/gHPBfbE (Access date: 20 May 2022).

^{90.} See, for example, Takis Theodoropoulos "Immigrants, the Left and political correctness", Kathimerini, 4 April 2021, https://cutt.ly/FHPVBUz (Access date: 20 May 2022).

^{91.} For an analytical account, see: Rezart Beka, "Islamophobia in the contemporary Albanian public discourse," Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), Islamophobia in Muslim majority societies, Routledge, 2019, 45-58.

^{92.} Steve Bannon pa filtra / Konservatorizmi Amerikan dhe ai Shqiptar, Vizion Plus, 6 October 2021 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyIn17zfTp0 (Access date: 04.04.2022).

that shows that Slovenian primary school textbooks present a distorted representation of Muslims that supports stereotypes.

The structural barriers that many Muslim minorities face by administrative bodies is an even more problematic phenomenon. In Slovenia, Muslims have been trying to establish a private elementary school since 2014, a right enjoyed by other religious communities, but practically out of sight for Muslims. This example speaks to the general structural problems that were identified by Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, which found that Muslims "experienced discrimination in their efforts to access goods and services, including in public transport, airports, administrative offices, shops and restaurants."

Muslims also face structural barriers when it comes to religious freedom. Antonia Roberta Siino, author of the report on Italy, problematises restrictions to religious practice in school. For example, the Istituto Comprensivo Statale "Ermanno Olmi" imposed a ban on fasting during the month of Ramadan to all students in primary and secondary schools.⁹⁴

In Denmark, the Danish government implemented a plan that was initially supported by the far-right Danish People's Party (DPP) and goes back to 2016. Amani Hassani in her report on Denmark reveals that based on the assumption that high numbers of so-called non-Western students make a school disadvantaged and threaten the social cohesion of society, a policy was implemented to start regulating student intake in the country's high schools. The Islamophobic reasoning of the far right is clear; as one spokesperson said, "The DPP wants to combat the consequences of a failed foreign policy in high schools, in order to avoid French and Swedish conditions with parallel societies and Islamisation."

A series of important research was published by international organisations. On 13 April, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief Ahmed Shaheed published the report "Countering Islamophobia/anti-Muslim hatred to eliminate discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief". The key points of the report were a presentation of the concept of Islamophobia; the documentation of the experiences of the affected communities and the impact on human rights; the affirmation of international human rights; and recommendations for mitigating the impacts of Islamophobia regarding consistency with international

www.islamophobiareport.com

^{93.} Ahmed Shaheed, Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, 13 April 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/report-countering-islamophobiaanti-muslim-hatred-eliminate-discrimination-and (Accessed date: 28 March 2022).

^{94. &}quot;Ramadan 2021, una scuola vieta il digiuno agli studenti. Infuria la polemica", Glistranieri.it, 9 April 2021, https://www.glistranieri.it/ramadan-2021-una-scuola-vieta-il-digiuno-agli-studenti-infuria-la-polemica/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{95.} https://www.tv2lorry.dk/lorryland/ny-aftale-kan-lukke-for-optag-paa-flere-gymnasier-i-hovedstadsomraadet

^{96.} https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2021/jun/210610-ny-aftale-om-elevfordeling-bremser-polarisering--parallelsamfund-og-hjaelper-gymnasier

law.⁹⁷ Earlier in March, Special Rapporteur Shaheed delivered a speech at the Human Rights Council warning of the normalisation of discrimination and violence against Muslims and Muslim communities.⁹⁸

Justice System

As the debates in the European Council show, the hijab as a visible sign of Muslimness is being contested by countries like France. In fact, even in countries with a majority of Muslims like Kosovo (95.6%), the hijab is an embattled religious practice, as Adam Ferizaj reveals in his report. Shortly before re-election, in April 2021, the German parliament passed the "Act on the Regulation of the Appearance of Civil Servants and on the Amendment of Other Service Regulations" (Gesetz zur Regelung des Erscheinungsbilds von Beamtinnen und Beamten sowie zur Änderung weiterer dienstrechtlicher Vorschriften). The plenary waved it through without discussion, even though it included "features of appearance with religious or ideological connotations" which can be "restricted and prohibited if they are objectively capable of impairing trust in the neutral conduct of the office by the civil servant."

The decision of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in 2021,¹⁰⁰ that employers may prohibit their employees from wearing visible signs of political, ideological, or religious beliefs in the workplace under narrow circumstances could exacerbate the already unfavourable employment situation of covered Muslim women. This decision opens the door to future discrimination in this regard based on a ruling of the ECJ, and can also be interpreted as standing in contrast to the European Convention on Human Rights. The statement by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) "that employers can restrict the wearing of 'religious symbols' such as Islamic headscarves, but only in limited circumstances" opened the door for a legal ground of banning the hijab in certain areas. While the CJEU underlines that such decisions should be made in an "undifferentiated way" and should be based on evidence, due to the ruling being binding for all 27 member states of

^{97. &}quot;A/HRC/46/30: Countering Islamophobia/anti-Muslim hatred to eliminate discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief - Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief", Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4630-countering-islamophobiaanti-muslim-hatred-eliminate, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

^{98. &}quot;UN expert says anti-Muslim hatred rises to epidemic proportions, urges States to act", Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/03/un-expert-says-anti-muslim-hatred-rises-epidemic-proportions-urges-states?LangID=E&NewsID=26841, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

 [&]quot;Bundestag ermöglicht bundesweites Kopftuchverbot", Der Tagesspiel, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/erscheinungsbild-von-beamtinnen-bundestag-ermoeglicht-bundesweites-kopftuchverbot/27124744.html (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{100.} Court of Justice of the European Union, A prohibition on wearing any visible form of expression of political, philosophical or religious beliefs in the workplace may be justified by the employer's need to present a neutral image towards customers or to prevent social disputes, 15 July 2021, https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/p1_3575059/en/(Access date: 26 March 2022).

the European Union, the decision was heavily criticised by human rights activists because of its potential restrictive effects on Muslim women's career opportunities. It is also seen as a step back in the fight for improved rights for Muslim individuals in Europe. ¹⁰¹

Combating Islamophobia at European and International Institutions

As already mentioned throughout the introduction, several European and international institutions took small steps towards fighting Islamophobia. The most important step symbolically might be the UN declaration of 15 March as 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia.'102 Unfortunately, the European Commission is still tardy in reinstalling the position of the coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred, which has been void since the end of July 2021. In January 2021, the coordinator held a workshop with Equinet (European Network of Equality Bodies) and more than 50 civil organisations from several EU member states and candidate countries to discuss new methods to tackle anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination. The coordinator also delivered a keynote speech at the UN Human Rights Council event organised by the EU and Canada on 5 March 2021. On 21 March 2021, the European Commission organised a "Summit against Racism" to mark 'International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination' addressing the implementation of the "European Anti-Racism Action Plan" at various levels with the involvement of EU institutions, member states, civil society, equality bodies, and grassroots organisations. 103 Apart from the European Commission, other supranational organisations such as the OCSE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) organised workshops. On 10 December 2021, the ODIHR together with the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs of Greece and the MOHA Research Center organised the event "Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes - Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities: Launch of ODIHR's Practical Guide in Greece". 104

We have already mentioned several important reports critically discussing the surveillance of Muslims and how anti-terrorism legislation negatively impacts Muslim lives in Europe. The FRA report "Directive (EU) 2017/541 on Combating Terrorism - Impact on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms" and the ENAR report "Sus-

^{101. &}quot;ECJ Reaffirms Restrictions Excluding Muslim Women in the Workplace", Open Society Justice Initiative, https://www.justiceinitiative.org/newsroom/ecj-reaffirms-restrictions-excluding-muslim-women-in-the-work-place, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

^{102. &}quot;General Assembly Unanimously Adopts Texts on Combating Islamophobia, Protecting Rangelands, Tackling Difficulties for Widows, Bicycles as Public Transportation".

^{103. &}quot;EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025".

^{104. &}quot;Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes - Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities".

^{105. &}quot;Directive (EU) 2017/541 on Combating Terrorism - Impact on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms".

picion, Discrimination and Surveillance: The Impact of Counter-terrorism Law and Policy on Racialised Groups at Risk of Racism in Europe"¹⁰⁶ are both important references for European institutions to rethink and change their own policies. In February 2021, Amnesty International and the Open Society Foundations jointly published the report "A Human Rights Guide for Researching Racial and Religious Discrimination in Counter-Terrorism in Europe". The report is described as a guide which is "the outcome of a joint initiative between Amnesty International and the Open Society Foundations to provide guidance to human rights and antiracism activists, researchers, NGOs, and oversight bodies seeking to document and prove discrimination, as defined in human rights law, in the counter-terrorism context in Europe."¹⁰⁷ Also noteworthy is the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance's "General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination" that was finally adopted on 1 March 2022 and which presents a novel approach on a European level to tackle Islamophobia as a form of systemic racism.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The *European Islamophobia Report 2021* establishes that Islamophobia was as pressing a problem in 2021 as it was in previous years. Compared to the first report which covered the year 2015, a lot has changed for the better and a lot has changed for the worse. The Islamophobia becoming normalised and institutionalised by liberal democracies such as Austria, Denmark, and France is alarming. While the Macron government is continuing with its crackdown on Muslim associations and mosques, ¹⁰⁹ many of the measures taken and laws implemented by the Austrian government have been largely defeated by the justice system. Yet, the victims of these policies remain traumatised and left to deal with the repercussions of their haunting experiences.

With respect to the many recommendations that we have presented to policy-makers and political institutions in the last six reports, we want to emphasise three specific recommendations based on the latest events in 2021/2022:

 We urge European countries to bring life and energy to the most recent and unanimously accepted resolution of the United Nations declaring March 15 as 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia'.

^{106. &}quot;Suspicion, Discrimination and Surveillance: The impact of counter-terrorism law and policy on racialised groups at risk of racism in Europe".

^{107. &}quot;A Human Rights Guide for Researching Racial and Religious Discrimination in Counter-Terrorism in Europe".

^{108. &}quot;ECRI Report on Norway", European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, https://rm.coe.int/6th-report-on-norway-/1680a17dd8, (Access date: 29 August 2022).

^{109.} CAGE (2022). "We Are Beginning To Spread Terror": The State-Sponsored Persecution Of Muslims In France," https://www.cage.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ENG-_We-are-beginning-to-spread-Terror_report-2022.pdf

- We urge European institutions, especially the member states of the Council of Europe, to take the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance's "General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination" seriously and to implement it. The recommendations should also be included in the various national action plans against racism of European Union member states.
- European and national institutions should take the findings of the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) as presented in the "Directive (EU) 2017/541 on Combating Terrorism - Impact on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms" seriously and recognise the damage of anti-terrorism legislation on Muslim communities across Europe.

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 organisation.

BELGIUM



- 89% of dossiers handled by Le Collectif pour l'Inclusion et contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique (Collective for Inclusion and against Islamophobia in Belgium, CIIB) pertain to Islamophobia against women. (Source: CIIB)
- 46% of cases of Islamophobia reported to the CIIB relate to discrimination online and in the media. (Source: CIIB)

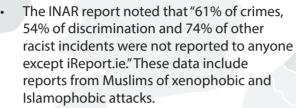
AUSTRIA



- The Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus documented 1,061 cases of anti-Muslim hate crime, detected primarily online (68%), which emanated from politicians (32%) and in the public sphere (25%). The vast majority of perpetrators were male (76.9%) and the victims were primarily women (69%). Most cases were reported in June, when the infamous Islam Map was presented by the Documentation Center Political Islam.
- The anti-racist NGO SOS Mitmensch monitored nearly 70 cases of anti-Muslim racism in Austria's politics for its fourth annual report.
- According to the anti-racist organisation ZARA, which documented a total of 1,977 racist cases, racist and anti-Muslim acts in the public primarily targeted women at the intersection of sexism and racism.

IRELAND







NETHERLANDS

- The fourth edition of *Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie* (Monitor Muslim-discrimination) indicated that Muslims face harsh and subtle forms of exclusion from the job market. The research for the report consisted partly of a survey with 315 participants, indepth interviews, and group conversations. Of these 315 participants, 75% indicated having faced discrimination on the job market based on their (assumed) religion. This discrimination occurred most often during job interviews. More than 50% of the women faced discrimination based on their headscarf.
- Men also faced discrimination based on their beard or specific clothes. Many of the
 respondents faced prejudicial and discriminating questions about their religion
 which were not in the least part relevant to the job position.
- Between a third to half of the respondents admitted to not having taken any action after facing discrimination. A little over half of the respondents discussed these matters with friends and family, a quarter reported the matter to a manager, whereas only 5-10% reported discrimination to the police or an anti-discrimination organisation.



SPAIN

During 2021, the Spanish Ministry of Interior looked into 1,802 hate crimes, a 41% increase from five years ago. From these crimes, 678 (37.6%) were racially motivated or xenophobic. These statistics are not disaggregated by hate crime type, so they cannot show specific anti-Muslim hate crimes. Nevertheless, the report on hate speech in social media by the Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia (Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia, OBERAXE) picked up on an increase of 9.5%-14.7% in Islamophobic hate speech.

UNITED KINGDOM

- The most recent official figures of hate crime in the UK (2020-21) showed a continuing increase in the overall number of reported cases (9% compared to the previous year). Forty-five percent of all incidents recorded under the category of religiously aggravated hate crime still involved people of Muslim faith and background. In the last ten years, the number of these crimes has increased by 291%.
- According to TellMAMA, during the period of growing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians (May-June 2021), the number of reported Islamophobic hate crimes recorded a spike of up to 430%.

GERMANY

According to current estimates, 55,048 politically motivated crimes were committed in 2021, out of which 23,604 were of a right-wing background. In total, 1,042 of these cases were reportedly violent. In terms of Islamophobic incidences, the data currently available suggests a decrease of the phenomenon by 28.65%, leaving the number at 732 registered Islamophobic crimes across Germany, of which 54 targeted mosques and 43 targeted individual persons.

(Source: Schriftliche Fragen, Bundesregierung, 14 January 2022)



FRANCE

 The Service Central du Renseignement Territorial (SCTR) recorded 213 anti-Muslim acts in 2021. Among them, half (109) concern damage to Muslim places of worship, cultural centres, and cemeteries, and 22% concern attacks on persons.

(Source: SCTR)

SWEDEN

Complaints based exclusively on religious grounds numbered 996 between 2017 and 2021, a small fraction of the total 14,710 complaints during the same period. However, most complaints of religious discrimination were directly related to ethnic discrimination, numbering 4,298 during this period. Alongside the reported cases, the experience of discrimination has increased. Muslim children are overrepresented in statistics published by the Swedish public health agency where almost 20% of non-European children, have experienced abusive treatment due to their ethno-religious background and more than 15% have experienced discrimination in school.

FINLAND

- Suspected hate crimes in 2020 totalled 852 versus 899 suspected cases in 2019, according to the latest figures of the Police University College of Finland. Most of the hate crimes (88.5%) were due to national-ethnic origin (75.8%) and religion (12.7%). (Source: Jenita Rauta, "Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2020," Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 19/2021).
- In the category of suspected hate crimes based on national-ethnic origin, Iraqis, Afghans, and Somalis were the most targeted. Afghans suffered close to 50% more attacks than the previous year. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), reported 1,177 hate crimes during the same year. Contrary to the Police University College, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) figures use a different methodology where offences suspected of being hate crimes are also tabulated. A total of 48 cases were prosecuted with 42 receiving sentences, according to the OSCE ODIHR.

SLOVAKIA

• In terms of monitoring Islamophobia in Slovakia, a crucial source of information is the statistics and research of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, which conducted a survey among Muslims in 2021. Based on this research, we know that Muslims in Slovakia are most often victims of verbal attacks (73%) and only 7% of Muslims admitted to having been the victim of a physical attack. The majority of attacks took place in public spaces (53%), followed by attacks in online spaces (38%), attacks at school or in the workplace (25%), with a relatively high rate of attacks also taking place in families (17%).





SWITZERLAND

 According to the 2021 report Diversity and Coexistence in Switzerland by the Federal Statistical Office, 12% of the population exhibit hostile attitudes toward Muslims and 34% tend strongly toward negative stereotypes.



KOSOVO

According to the Kosovo Prosecutor's Council, 70 cases of hate speech occurred in 2021. However, it is not clear from these official figures how many were related to Islamophobia, as the category 'hate speech' is an umbrella term including racist, ethnic, or religious incidents.

CZECH REPUBLIC

According to the human rights organisation In Iustitia, of the 80 recorded cases of incitement to hate or prejudiced acts in 2021, one had an explicitly anti-Muslim content. According to the Ministry of Interior, of the 108 hate crimes recorded, there were seven hate crimes against Muslims, two of which were solved by the police.

ROMANIA

• 68% of Romanians lack trust in relation to Muslims, while the scale of social distance indicates a high intolerance towards people of the Muslim faith (39% do not accept to be their relatives, 28% do not accept to be their friends, and 19% do not accept them as co-workers).

(Source: National Council for Combatting Discrimination, NCCD)

SLOVENIA

Islamophobic acts. Accordingly to the last available Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2020, disability (14%) and discrimination on the grounds of nationality, race, and ethnic origin (13%) were the most frequently alleged discriminations on personal grounds in reported cases that took place in 2020. (Source: "Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2020," Advocate of the Principle of Equality, April 2021)

BULGARIA

• According to the Chief Mufti's Office, a couple of Islamophobic graffitti "incidents" were documented in 2021 (against one in 2020): The entrances of the historical Jumaya Mosque in Plovdiv and the walls of the historical Jumaya Mosque in Kazanlak were desecrated with graffiti with obscene and vulgar content. Besides these anonymous acts, officially backed archaeological excavations inside and in the vicinity of the historical Kurshum Mosque in Karlovo, led to the desecration of the religious monument. There were numerous other acts concerning discrimination and hate speech, but they are not part of any official statistics.

VIOLENT ACTS AGAINST MUSLIMS IN EUROPE

Violent acts are an outcome of the violent ideology of racist dehumanisation. Across Europe, Muslims are increasingly becoming victims solely because of their faith.

ALBANIA

- On 19 April, a man attacked five Muslim worshippers in Albania's Dine Hoxha Mosque in the capital city of Tirana. Rudolf Nikolli, entered the mosque after the end of the afternoon prayer and stabbed them. One of the victims underwent surgery while the other four victims were discharged from hospital. After the police detained Nikolli, he exclaimed, "All Muslims should be punished".
- In November, unidentified persons attacked the mosque in the city of Lushnja. Police launched an investigation into the attack in question following a report made by the mufti of the city.

DENMARK

 A young Muslim woman was severely assaulted physically and verbally in broad daylight in a store parking lot by a white Danish man in his 60s. Although the man admitted to shouting slurs, the court ruled that there was not sufficient evidence to rule it a racially motivated hate crime.

FINLAND

• In June 2020, an eighteen-year-old Iraqi was racially harassed, chased, and physically assaulted by a group of townspeople in Western Finland. No formal charges were brought against the suspects. While the police initially suggested that what happened could be a hate crime, no hate crime charges were brought against the suspects, according to an interview by Enrique Tessieri, author of the "Islamophobia in Finland National Report 2021", with the regional prosecutor in June 2022. The slow pace of the criminal investigation has also raised questions among some NGOs about due process in Finland.

FRANCE

• A septuagenarian man crushed a Muslim man with his car in front of his family. The aggressor clearly made racist remarks "Come closer, bicot. Stand in front of the car" ('bicot' is an old racist insult targeting Arabs living in France who are systematically assimilated to Muslims) and violently hit the victim against the fence of his house. (Source: Personal video of the victim's wife and French television channel BFMTV)

GERMANY

Since April 2021, residents of several districts of Jena – including Lobeda and Winzerla – were affected by Islamophobic, racist mail. Insulting caricatures, burnt Qur'an pages, and slaughtered parts of pigs were placed repeatedly in mailboxes. Those affected worried that violent attacks could follow. The DITIB mosque in Wächtersbach received a rightwing extremist letter threatening the mosque. In addition to swastikas, the letter contained explicit threats such as "You will no longer be safe."
 The mosque had already received a threatening letter in December 2020.

GREECE

 A violent attack took place against a shelter for unaccompanied refugee children and young people in Thessaloniki, Northern Greece. At least ten people holding knives and iron bars attacked the shelter at night shouting Islamophobic slogans like "Fuck Allah" and "Go back home". The attack resulted in serious damages to the shelter and four people had to be hospitalised for medical treatment.

IRELAND

- In the city of Dublin a woman wearing a hijab was assaulted with witnesses reporting the assailant "looked at the woman in the hijab and then turned around and hit only her".
- Several instances of Islamophobic discrimination were reported in Direct Provision Centres; for example, during Ramadan individuals were told by staff "to go back to their jungle if they don't like it" in reference to the meal provided. Source: Irish Network Against Racism.

ITALY

 In the northern city of Trento, the newspaper Next reported the case of Sara Qasmi, an Italian citizen of Moroccan origin, who claimed to have suffered an invasive check by a policewoman before her driving test. She stated that she was taken to the bathroom and was asked not only to remove her veil, but to undress completely.

NETHERLANDS

Threatening letters were found at tens of mosques, consisting of a diaper with the message, "Easter present for all the whiners of our society!!" The diaper contained a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad with a turban shaped as a bomb and the writing "Muhammed terrorist" and "No Islam Yes (to) Freedom", along with a page from the Qur'an torn into pieces. Shortly after a fire was instigated at a mosque in Gouda.

NORTH MACEDONIA

 In the village of Vinicani, Gradsko Municipality, unknown perpetrators tore down the fence that was set up around the village mosque by the Islamic religious community. The mosque was built more than five centuries ago.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

• In April-May 2021, 25 inmates of the colony located in Smolensk region, went on a dry hunger strike, 10 of whom had their mouths sewn shut. They are protesting against discrimination on religious grounds and unjustified punishments (transfer to a zone with strict conditions of detention, punitive isolation wards). At the end of April, most of the demands had been met, but one of the participants was subjected to a stricter regime in the colony because of the publicity surrounding the hunger strike.

SPAIN

 After being fired, a former work colleague attacked Momoun Koutaibi with an iron bar in Alhama de Murcia (Murcia), killing him. Several days later, Younes Bilal was assassinated in Mazarrón (Murcia) after being shot three times. In Cartagena, a 40-year-old man of Moroccan origin was stabbed twice. Likewise, two individuals shot a Moroccan minor who was walking down the street in Ceuta.

SWEDEN

 Two violent school attacks characterised as both xenophobic and Islamophobic were committed in 2021 in Eslöv and Kristianstad. The attackers, aged 15 and 16, inspired by extreme-right propaganda, separately attacked students and teachers in two different schools.

SWITZERLAND

In the report "Racism Incidents from Counselling Work 2021", the case study
of a minor and queer refugee is described. She experienced discrimination
in various places, most often in public spaces or in the youth centre. She
was physically attacked and insulted because of her skin colour and her
headscarf, and was isolated from others.

ISLAMOPHOBIC STATEMENTS BY POLITICIANS

Islamophobic language by high-ranking politicians, mostly from the far right, normalises a dehumanising 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 legitimises discrimination of Muslims as citizens and as human beings.

ALBANIA

• On International Women's Day, 8 March 2021, the Albanian politician Alma Lame, former ambassador of Kosovo in Italy, announced the ban on the burqa in Switzerland, and expressed her support. She stated, "Good job to Switzerland for this" and called for Kosovo to follow in the same footsteps. "On International Women's Day, it is worth noting that Switzerland has banned the wearing of the burqa in public places. Kosovo must do the same," Lame wrote on her Facebook profile. She expressed the hope that Kosovo, with a Muslim majority of 95.6%, takes the example of Switzerland, where Muslims account for around 5.5% of the population.

AUSTRIA

- Integration Minister Susanne Raab presented an amended Islam Act as part of the new anti-terrorism legislation: "This is an important step. I am glad that with the amendment of the Islam Act as part of the anti-terror package we can now give the authorities further important tools they need in the consistent fight against radical ideologies and extremism."
- Susanne Raab praised the Islam map that showed all of the 600 Muslim
 institutions in Austria including private addresses of representatives
 saying it is "not about the fight against Muslims. It is about the fight
 against political Islam. Political Islam is poison for our society and the
 opposite of integration."
- Raab said, "I want to develop Austria as a center of excellence against political Islam. We will strengthen networking and launch a European alliance against political Islam in the next few weeks."

BELGIUM

- Following the appointment of Ihsane Houach to the post of government commissioner for the Institute of Gender Equality political controversy arose. For example, in June 2021, Darya Safai, member of parliament for Nieuw Vlaamse Allantie (New Flemish Alliance, NVA) described Haouach's appointment as "particularly cynical", adding, "How can Ihsane Haouach guarantee equality between men and women when she herself displays the symbol of inequality with her headscarf?"
- Similarly, Mouvement Réformateur (MR) party president, Georges Bouchez, argued that the appointment of Haouach "compromised state neutrality": "Wearing a headscarf must remain a guaranteed individual freedom, but the neutrality of the state must not be questioned in order to satisfy the communitarianism of parties that want to charm voters... It is no problem to wear the headscarf freely, but need we remind that certain families or in certain countries, a headscarf is a means of dominating women?"

BULGARIA

Angel Dzhambazki, member of the European Parliament and vice-chairman of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, as part of a discussion in the EP concerning Europe's strategic partnership with Turkey (18 May 2021) stated, "Turkey, as it is now, namely a sultanate, cannot be a member of the EU, and talks about it must be terminated as soon as possible. This country is not a strategic partner of the EU, as the rulers in Brussels think, but an enemy of our civilisation."

CZECH REPUBLIC

 The far-right Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party ran an election campaign with the slogan: "NO to the unadaptables, NO to migrants and NO to Islam in the Czech Republic!"

DENMARK

• During the pandemic, the party leader of the New Right, Pernille Vermund, said in a Facebook post: "It is intolerable that the Danes have to pay such a high price as we do, because there are still problems with stopping the infection in cities and areas dense with immigrants. And it is decidedly irresponsible that the government continues to be reckless, and time and time again refuses to put a harder and far more targeted focus on where the problems are. Think how freely and safely we could live if we hadn't had Muslim parallel societies in Denmark."

FINLAND

• Shortly before being elected as chairperson of the Finns Party, Riikka Purra reiterated her hard-line immigration stance on the television talk show "A-studio": "If it were up to me, the Finns Party will never form part of a government that does not successfully [and] significantly tighten Finnish immigration policy." Apart from her hope for zero asylum seekers from outside the EU, she said that citizenship requirements should rise from 5 to 10 years.

FRANCE

• The Islamophobic journalist and candidate for the 2022 presidential election Eric Zemmour stated on the most watched television news show in France, broadcast at 8 p.m. on TF1: "I do not distinguish between Islam and Islamism because they are the same. It is a false distinction. On the other hand, I distinguish between Islam and Muslims, and I call on all Muslims to assimilate and renounce the practice of Islam which consists of imposing a legal and political code". (Source: TRT World Twitter account).

GERMANY

• In its manifesto, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) declared its intention to put numerous restrictions on Muslims and Islam in Germany. Among others, the AfD declared a "ban" on the financing and operation of mosques in Germany by Muslim-majority countries.

GREECE

• The parliamentary political party Elliniki Lyssi (Hellenic Solution) and its leader Kyriakos Velopoulos were major agents in reproducing Islamophobic discourse in the political sphere. In one of the party's most notorious Islamophobic and anti-immigrant interventions it was argued that "at a time when Europe is rocked by unprecedented Islamist terrorist attacks, the prime minister's anti-nativist [against the local population] government invites in illegal immigrants, some of whom are now proven to be dangerous. Elliniki Lyssi demands the transfer of all illegal immigrants to uninhabited island infrastructures until their deportation. Negligence is a great national danger."

HUNGARY

 Prime Minister Viktor Orbán stated, "I am doing my best to convince Europe's great leaders that the Balkans may be further away from them than from Hungary, but how we manage the security of a state in which two million Muslims live (in Bosnia) is a key issue for their security too."

IRELAND

Parliamentary by-elections were held in certain constituencies, including
within constituencies in the capital, Dublin. The election resulted in
campaigning for Justin Barrett, leader of the right-wing National Party.
Barrett received 1.3% of first preference votes, with the National Party
campaigning for Barrett under the slogan "Right So Far". Despite the
party's unsuccessful by-election bid, the party continued advocating antiMuslim and anti-immigration policies, criticising government ministers'
immigration policies and the separation of church and state in Ireland.

KOSOVO

 On 10 October 2021, public figure, Marion Maréchal, a former member of the far-right Front National, made the following remark in a televised debate: "Demography makes history, just look at Kosovo. This predominantly Serbian Orthodox country has been colonised for decades by Muslim Albanians."



NETHERLANDS

 PVV frontman Geert Wilders published a picture of politician Fonda Sahla wearing a hijab and a face mask, captioned "No, it's not an ISIS attack, but a D66 Member of Parliament". Sahla was a member of The Hague's municipal council up to October, but at the time of the remark was temporarily replacing Rens Raemakers in the House of Representatives.

NORTH MACEDONIA

• In May 2021, the politician Petar Bogojeski, leader of the small and new political party in Macedonia named Macedonian Concept (Македонски Концепт), began to spread Islamophobic content on his Facebook page and on his personal webpage. After a peaceful protest in Macedonia, in solidary with Palestine, he began to write articles against Muslims, Islam, and the ruling government.

ROMANIA

• In August 2021, Mihail Neamţu, a far-right politician, member of the Popular Movement Party (PMP), posted the following on social media: "What do the Taliban believe in? Jihad, the Qur'an, and political Islam". In one of his podcast statements, he criticized the 2006 Muslim protests in the context of the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. He emphasized the intolerance of political Islam towards humor and irony, in contrast to Christianity which he described as a religion that is open and tolerant towards humor and human laughter.

SLOVAKIA

Attacks on Muslims appear with regularity in various parliamentary debates on, for example, the abortion ban. At the end of June 2021, probably the most resonant statement was made by MP Stanislav Mizík (K-LSNS), who stated in a speech, "Yes, those who are in favour of abortion, those who want it, those who promote various perverse ideologies, those who want migrants and what kind of migrants they want, but especially from Africa and the Middle East. What to add to that? They are mostly Muslims, and they do not recognise or permit abortion. So, I am somehow missing the logic of these people, these liberals, in this. Well, is that a coincidence? I don't think so. I think it's a hellish plan that has apostles in all countries. It is also, unfortunately, a reality in Slovakia." In a single speech, he combined the scaremongering of migrants, liberals, and people from the LGBT community, and saw in all of it a "hellish plan" to subvert traditional values. It is also worth noting that former prime minister Robert Fico (Direction – Social Democracy, Smer-SD) in a Facebook post in August 2021, called on Jozef Lenč, the author of "Islamophobia in Slovakia: National Report 2021", "as a Muslim not to do politics in a Christian country". The deputy chairman of the Smer-SD party, Ľuboš Blaha, supported this statement.

SLOVENIA

Slovenian prime minister retweeted a text from "All Briefs" (assumingly a fake Instagram profile) that stated, "On 21 February 1848, the Communist Manifesto, written by German leftists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was first published. No other book has caused more death, suffering, oppression, impoverishment, and social backwardness except the Koran." The statement triggered a verbal reaction from Muslims in Slovenia and beyond the country's borders. (Source: 24ur. com, "Turški medij: Janša na Twitterju znova delil protiislamska stališča,", February, 2021)

SPAIN

According to the president of the political party Vox in Ceuta, "The Popular Party (PP) has given itself to the 'Moroccanization' [of Ceuta], together with its far left pro-Moroccan partners. It is shamelessly and remorselessly open to the Islamization of this city." As for the Vox spokesman in the Ceuta Assembly, Carlos Verdejo, he addressed Mrs. Hamed saying, "She is a book fanatic, an anti-Semite and a racist," and stated that Mr. Ali "not criticising the king (Mohamed VI) shows where his loyalties lie."

SWEDEN

 A noteworthy new level in anti-Muslim rhetoric was set when the Christian Democratic Party leader called for police to shoot more "Islamists" following rallies and riots against a series of Qur'an burning events in April 2022.

SWITZERLAND

• The Swiss People's Party (SVP) published a position paper entitled "Position Paper of the Swiss People's Party on Islam and Islamism in Switzerland" on 14 June 2021. Under "The Problems with Islam - And What We Must Do about It", there are calls for, among others, a "ban on political Islam"; "the dissolution of associations that spread political Islam"; "the closure of mosques and Islamic cultural centres where political Islam is propagated"; "the introduction of an Islam law based on the Austrian model"; and a "ban on foreign imams and pastors".

UNITED KINGDOM

A very important parliamentary debate took place in September 2021. This was an opportunity for MPs from all political parties to express their views on the proposed APPG 2018 (a landmark report compiled by the All-Party Parliamentary Group [APPG] on British Muslims in 2018) definition of Islamophobia and, for Muslim-background MPs in particular, to share their personal experiences. The Labour MP for Coventry Zarah Sultana broke down in tears as she recounted years of abuse and discrimination on the grounds of her religion, gender, and ethnicity, leading to her questioning whether she was an "enemy of the country I was born in, as if I don't belong". Calls for a formal definition to be adopted as soon as possible came loud and clear from all sides, including MPs of the ruling Conservative Party such as Paul Bristow, underlining the detrimental effect of its absence for the Muslim communities but also the fact that such a situation "holds us back as a country".

LEGALISING 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

- A mosque that was immediately closed by the Ministry of Interior following a series of shootings on 2 November 2020 in Vienna, but which was completely unrelated to the incident, was re-opened.
- In response to nine appeals by victims of the infamous police raid 'Operation Luxor,' the Higher Regional Court of Graz (OLG Graz) declared that all nine of the raids were unjustified as there were insufficient grounds for suspicion. The OLG Graz also ruled that the initial denial of access to the files was illegal. In December, the OLG Graz ruled that the phone tapping that led to the raid had been unlawful and that the freezing of assets was also unlawful.
- Several opinions that were published by legal scholars or anti-racist institutions such as Amnesty International and that heavily criticised the new anti-terrorism legislation were widely ignored in the final draft of the new legislation.

BELGIUM

• Ritual slaughter (withour prior stunning) continues to be prohibited in the Belgian federal regions of Wallonia and Flanders.

BULGARIA

 The Specialized Prosecution handed 22-year-old Mohammed Abdulqader (arrested 1 July 2020) over to the court on 19 February 2021 on alleged "terrorist activities abroad" charges based on a few photos from Syria shared by the accused on the internet, in which the then 16-year-old wears a military uniform and holds various weapons. In August 2021, the remand measure was changed to "house arrest". (On 17 January 2022, the Specialised Criminal Court unanimously found Abdulkader innocent and set him free.)

DENMARK

 The government started categorising non-Western migrants and descendants from Muslim-majority countries as 'MENAPT' citizens. The category of 'MENAPT' became an acceptable part of political rhetoric and policies in 2021. It is a way for the Danish state to infer citizens' religious background and make policies that particularly target Muslim citizens.

FINLAND

• The National Coalition Party's announcement of plans to tighten social security benefits to foreigners shows how Finland's second-biggest opposition party targets the most vulnerable migrants, who are mostly Muslims and people of colour. While this was a political stunt, since such a move is unconstitutional, it showed the extent to which political parties will go to attack certain groups of migrants. A new Animal Welfare Act, which will probably be voted on in the second half of 2022, aims to prohibit halal and kosher slaughter.

FRANCE

• The anti-separatism law, whose official name is the "Law Confirming Respect for the Principles of the Republic", was promulgated on 24 August 2021. Its 103 articles plan to reduce displays of the Islamic faith in public life on a daily basis and seek, among others, to control religious and cultural associations; to cancel the right to refuse a doctor of the opposite sex; to ban home schooling; to extend the ban on religious symbols in Municipal Councils and in private companies performing public service missions; and to implement referees of laïcité to ensure the respect of republican values among public services employees. Many human rights associations, mosques, schools, publishing houses, restaurants, and bars have been closed through this new law. (Source: Légifrance)

GERMANY

In April 2021, the German parliament passed the "Act on the Regulation of the Appearance of Civil Servants and on the Amendment of Other Service Regulations" (Gesetz zur Regelung des Erscheinungsbilds von Beamtinnen und Beamten sowie zur Änderung weiterer dienstrechtlicher Vorschriften). The plenary waved it through without discussion, even though it included "features of appearance with religious or ideological connotations" which can be "restricted and prohibited if they are objectively capable of impairing trust in the neutral conduct of the office by the civil servant".

GREECE

• In October, the Council of State published a decision (1751/2021) with which the ministerial decision 951/44337/21.4.2017 with regard to kosher and halal procedures has been non-compliant with the existing legal framework regarding animal protection and respect. This decision caused reactions from both Muslim and Jewish organisations, and was seen as a source of potential serious problems in the everyday lives of the members of both communities and as posing obstacles to the performance of their religious duties. The decision has not been officially announced or published in full to the responsible state authorities, and as of yet, the legal status has not changed.

ITALY

 In Pavia, the Public Prosecution Office disposes the closure of complaint by Assia Belhadj, an Italo-Algerian woman, who was heavily insulted for publishing pictures of herself wearing the hijab on social media. The Judge for Preliminary Investigations affirmed that it was not possible to identify those responsible because "the network does not allow access to Facebook".

KOSOVO

• The wearing of hijab in high schools was a largely debated topic in 2021. Kosovo's Human Rights Committee, chaired by Duda Balje, met with education minister Arbërie Nagavci on 7 June 2021, to discuss the right to wear the hijab in high school. The result of this meeting was a reluctance from the current government to take a stance since covering one's head for religious reasons in high schools is, at best, still a legal grey area or, at worst, de facto forbidden despite the lack of a legal basis for such a restriction.

NETHERLANDS

• The majority of the House of Representatives declared they wish the headscarf to be banned for boas (short for buitengewoon opsporingsambtenaren, special investigating officers), or at least obstructed in other ways. A motion on this matter filed by the Party for Freedom (PVV) was accepted. Most parties claim that the code of conduct of 'lifestyle neutrality' should apply to these officers as well, as police officers should appear "neutral".

SPAIN

 Educational centers took advantage or created new "internal codes" prohibiting the use of the Islamic veil inside their institutions. Women have been discriminated for wearing a hijab at the workplace, having been successful in the selection process for a placement prior to the instances of discrimination.

SWEDEN

Muslim civil society and faith-based organisations are being broadly scrutinised, restricted, and denied public funding due to alleged violations of increasingly arbitrary "democracy criteria". These organisations, including schools, lack the resources to appeal against such administrative decisions. Added to this it is difficult to appeal on the basis of discrimination since the legal statutes on discrimination apply only to individuals and not to collectives of individuals or organisations.

SWITZERLAND

• On 7 March 2021, a national popular initiative was accepted with 51.2% votes in favour of a ban on veils.

UNITED KINGDOM

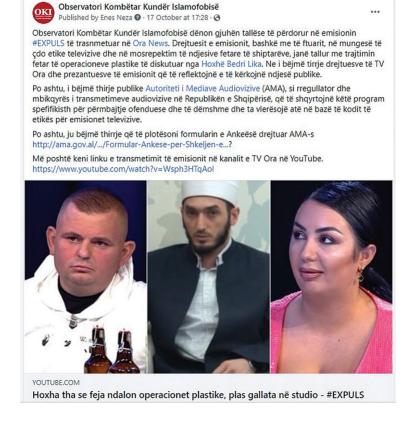
• The case of the cricketer Azeem Rafiq, who was a player for Yorkshire County Cricket Club (YCCC), received due media attention in 2021 after a series of interviews he gave in 2020. Given the public interest in these allegations, the case soon gained traction and in 2021 resulted in an investigation by the club, in a legal case brought by Rafiq against his former club, and in a government parliamentary hearing on discrimination in sport. As Rafiq himself mentioned, it was not only the extent of racism that he experienced, eventually costing him his career, but also the shocking lack of interest to address it that underlined how his devastating personal experience was symptomatic of 'institutional racism' and Islamophobia.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE MEDIA

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

ALBANIA

On 17 October, during the television programme broadcast on Ora News "EXPULS", the hosts of the show, together with the guests, mocked the declaration of imam Bedri Lika related to Islamic law about plastic surgery. The incident was reported to the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), as the national regulator and supervisor of audiovisual broadcasts, and after numerous reactions and denunciations in the form of requests to report the lack of media ethics, the video was removed from TV Ora's YouTube channel.



AUSTRIA

The newspaper Exxpress portrayed the progressive Black social democratic politician Mireille Ngosso as a "denier of political Islam".

BULGARIA

Krystian Szkwarek, representative of the group **European Conservatives and** Reformists for Bulgaria, was a quest on the popular podcast "Legends" titled "Europe Alone Against All" (6 December 2021) and spoke about a scenario



in which the Western and Russian civilisations by tolerating their Muslim communities generate an imaginary future Islamic threat for all European nations. "If the South, all the Uzbeks, Tajiks, etc. from central Asia, Islamises them [Russia], and their Christian cities like Petersburg and Moscow become Muslim, and if we are Africanised and Arabised by the global South, it will be "game over" for both civilisations [Russian and Western European]... There will be no one to fight..." (Source: https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=B08D1OaQ85c, Minutes 37-38)

CZECH REPUBLIC

"According to some calculations, the Netherlands will be majority Muslim in 2044 and Sweden in 2065. Unfortunately, these are just facts," said Andrej Babiš in his commentary for the daily Právo.

Piráti migranty prostě vítají



níž se naše děti a vnuci mohou ve vlastní zemi

ocitnout v menšině v červnu 2 ským prer

FINLAND

On her talk show, Marja Sannikka and guests Esko Valtaoja and Kurdish-Finn Renaz Ebrahim attempted to reveal that promoting ideologies like anti-racism miss the mark because they fuel confrontation and hatred. The n-word was used twice by Valtaoja on the show without any objections from the host. Her television programme went viral in Finland and was exemplary of how white Finnish journalists can fall victims to their opinionated, ignorant views on racism and white privilege.



FRANCE

In October 2021, French television channel CNews staged the public unveiling of a veiled Muslim woman under the strong injunction of

Eric Zemmour and the encouragement of the journalist presenting the scene. The woman was forced to remove her hijab publicly in order to prove that she is a 'free woman'. (Source: French television channel CNews)

GERMANY

In early 2021, a group of Muslim university students faced a vicious online campaign after meeting Norbert Röttgen, a politician from the Christian



Democratic Party. The politician and the Muslim student group from the Avicenna Studienwerk, a Muslim student service, met to engage in a political discussion. The managing director of the Avicenna Studienwerk, Hakan Tosuner, was part of the digital meeting and saw first hand the Islamophobic backlash. "We had never experienced it to this extent before," Tosuner told Deutsche Welle. "But," he said, "it was only a question of time before Islamophobia also hit us in this way."

GREECE

The front page of the newspaper Paraskinio states, "A revealing confidential report of EYP [Secret Service]. 'Invasion' of Jihadists in Greece".



HUNGARY

The news website *Origo* stated, "Mass immigration brought terror and grief, yet Péter Márki-Zay [candidate of the party United for Hungary who unsuccessfully challenged prime minister Viktor Orbán in the 2022 parliamentary election) wants to deny it".



Terrort és gyászt hozott a tömeges bevándorlás, Márki-Zay Péter mégis le akarja tagadni

ITALY

The journalist Lorenza Formicola, interviewed by the independent online blog *La Fenice Tricolore*, stated, "In Italy, we live a silent Islamisation. There are very few evident events, also due to an unprepared political class, often completely uninformed and that allow room for manoeuvre to the Italian Muslim community. (...) We are in the middle of a new attempt of Islamising Europe. Something announced decades ago, but punctually ignored. The Europe we know is going to be torn away becoming Eurabia."

NORTH MACEDONIA

In the absence of real cases that would spread Islamophobia in North Macedonia, the media started to translate world news and cases with the intention of spreading hate speech and Islamophobia, and encouraging negative feelings towards Muslims. The most watched television channel in North Macedonia, Kanal 5, announced the following news: "Afghans Killed Their Sister in a Horrible Way in Germany, Because She Behaved in a Modern Way".

NETHERLANDS

Famous Dutch reality soap star family known as "de Meilandjes" caused great controversy with the publication of mother Erica Meiland's autobiography. In it, she speaks derogatively of women who wear a burqa. For example, she wrote, "Get lost man, with your burqa. I once saw three of those penguins walking around in Noordwijk, that's not normal right?" In another instance, she commented, "Islam brings misery such as terrorism, but also the oppression of women and cultural things such as circumcisions and all sorts of crazy habits."



KOSOVO

On 17 May 2021, journalist Emmanuel de Gestas claimed, "The Great Replacement, as Renaud Camus

explains, has already existed in history. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Orthodox Serbs of Kosovo represented 90% of the population of this territory whereas Muslim Albanians represented only 10%."

SWEDEN

Several extreme and far-right media websites have started receiving public subsidies in Sweden, despite maintaining a long history of Islamophobic rhetoric and skewed reporting. These changes arguably provide Islamophobic and extreme right rhetoric with an increased sense of legitimacy due to public funding.



SLOVENIA

Gregor Preac, published an article on 25 May 2021 in *Demokracija* under the title "The Left Is Creating the Conditions for Terrorism in Slovenia", where he stated, "Islamophobia is often only a logical consequence of Islamic jihadism, terrorism, Islamofascism and medieval violence across the EU ... If there is no terrorism in the EU this year (yet), it does not mean

that Muslims have integrated, assimilated, Europeanised, but that billions of euros for the police, counter-terrorism units, security services, observation of mosques and Islamic extremists are at least temporarily working. Until they invent new forms of terrorism. Maybe biological. A pandemic with a new coronavirus is giving anyone ideas for biological weapons." (Source: Demokracija, "Levica ustvarja razmere za terorizem v Sloveniji", *Demokracija*, May 2021)

UNITED KINGDOM

In May 2021, the Conservative MP Michael Fabricant used Twitter to call those taking part in pro-Palestine protests in London as "primitives [who] are trying to bring to London what they do in the Middle East".



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN ALBANIA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

NADA DOSTI

The Author

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Executive Summary

In 2021, different important international political and social events, such as the case of the Norway bow and arrow attack, and national and local occurrences, such as the elections and the draft proposal by the government to introduce the Turkish language in the education system, influenced the course of the anti-Muslim rhetoric in Albania. This rhetoric is characterized by Islamophobic hate speech alongside anti-Turkish narratives. During 2021, Islamophobia was mostly directed against young Muslim girls, in secondary state schools, who have been asked to leave school or to take off the hijab. Two attacks happened, one against a mosque whose window was shattered by stones, and another against Muslim worshipers in one of the most frequented mosques in the capital of Albania. After the general media, the online domain, including news portals and social media, remains the main hub for promoting anti-Muslim hate speech. Online platforms are used by journalists, public figures, and citizens to spread anti-Muslim sentiments.

Përmbledhje e shkurtër

Ky raport përshkruan dhe analizon incidentet islamofobe të ndodhura në Shqipëri nga janari deri në dhjetor 2021. Ngjarje të ndryshme të rëndësishme politike dhe sociale ndërkombëtare, si rasti i Norvegjisë sulmi me shigjeta, si dhe ndodhi kombëtare, si zgjedhjet dhe drafti propozimi i qeverisë për futjen e gjuhës turke në sistemin arsimor, ndikuan në rrjedhën e retorikës anti muslimane në Shqipëri. Kjo retorikë karakterizohet nga gjuha islamofobe e urrejtjes dhe narrativa antiturke gjithashtu. Gjatë vitit 2021, islamofobia u drejtua kryesisht kundër vajzave të reja muslimane, kryesisht në shkollat nëntëvjeccare shtetërore, të cilave janë kërcënuar me përjashtim nga shkolla ose të heqin shaminë. Mund të përmendim këtu edhe dy sulme, një kundër një xhamie, dritaret e së cilës u thyen me gurë dhe një tjetër kundër besimtarëve muslimanë në një nga xhamitë më të frekuentuara në kryeqytetin e Shqipërisë. Hapësira online, duke përfshirë portalet e lajmeve dhe rrjetet sociale, mbeten platformat kryesore për promovimin e gjuhës së urrejtjes anti muslimane pas mediave kryesore. Platformat online përdoren nga gazetarë, figura publike dhe qytetarë për të përhapur ndjenjat anti-muslimane.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Republic of Albania

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary 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 Combating Islamophobia: The Muslim Forum of Albania (Forumi Musliman i Shqipërisë)

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

- Minaret Ban: No

- Circumcision Ban: No

- 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 Albanian politicians 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, the ardent
desire of the Albanian media to link any terrorist attack to Islamic religious affiliation does not legitimize the haste and dissemination of unconfirmed information.
This was the case for the Norway attack: when even local police had not confirmed
any religious affiliation of the attacker, online Albanian media rushed to publish
sensational headlines with unverified information aimed at spreading anti-Muslim
hatred.

Although there is no ban on the hijab, prayer, or on the right to gather and protest about social injustice, the Muslim community still faces obstacles: Muslim girls are asked to leave their school due to wearing a hijab, Muslim men who work in state or private institutions cannot attend the Friday prayer, and Muslim activists cannot gather and protest in solidarity with Palestine because they can be detained, as happened on May 2021 (see section "Justice System")

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On April 19, a man attacked five Muslim worshippers in Albania's Dine Hoxha Mosque in the capital city of Tirana. Rudolf Nikolli, entered the mosque after the end of the afternoon prayer and stabbed them. One of the victims underwent surgery while the other four victims were discharged from hospital. In a statement to local media outlet Balkanweb,¹ the suspect's father stated that Nikolli had been depressed due to loss of opportunity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. After the police detained Nikolli, he exclaimed, "All Muslims should be punished." In November, unidentified persons attacked the mosque in the city of Lushnja. Police have launched an investigation into the attack in question following a report made by the mufti of

 [&]quot;Më ndjekin njerëz nga prapa"/ Flet babai i autorit të sulmit në xhami: Kurohej për depresion. Jemi katolik, në demokraci u konvertua në mysliman, falej çdo vakt" Balkanweb, 19 April 2021 https://www.balkanweb.com/ me-ndjekin-njerez-nga-prapa-flet-babai-i-autorit-te-sulmit-ne-xhami-kurohej-per-depresion-jemi-katolik-nedemokraci-u-konvertua-ne-mysliman-falej-cdo-vakt/ (Access date: 01.04.2022).

the city, Gramoz Blliku. He was informed by the imam of the mosque that when he had gone to the mosque in the morning, the mosque's window was smashed. "We are working to identify and apprehend the perpetrators after the head of the Mufti of Lushnja, reported that unidentified persons broke the window of the mosque. The materials were transferred to the same Prosecution of the First Instance of Lushnja for further inspections," the official announcement stated.²

The Muslim Forum of Albania, an organization dealing among other things with monitoring Islamophobic and racist incidents in different fields, reported that after a "complaint" received from a citizen, the local police forces in the Great Mosque of Durrës appeared during the Friday sermon and asked the imam to interrupt the sermon and prayer. Around six police officers were present during this forced procedure. The imam gave the necessary clarifications to one of the officers, who persistently asked, without any knowledge of how the Friday sermon is performed, to end it as soon as possible. A representative from the Mufti of Durrës asked the Durrës Police Forces for clarifications on the unnecessary police presence during the Friday sermon. At the same time, the measures taken by the Mufti of Durrës according to the circulars of the Muslim Community of Albania on the occasion of the COVID-19 pandemic have been clarified, meaning that no law was broken.³

Employment

The Muslim Forum of Albania has claimed that they have started negotiations with the relevant government agency to solve the problem of "Friday prayer hour" hoping to find a solution for the category of Muslim believers working in the public administration, and also for employees in the private sector, who require time off to perform prayers. In most cases, the private sector has had and still has a more positive approach to this basic human right of believers.⁴

In the context of discrimination, according to the half-year report (January-June 2021) by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination,⁵ the total number of complaints in the field of employment was 94. Among the various reason for discrimination in employment there were no reports by the Muslim community related to religion.

E pandodhur më parë në Shqipëri: thyhet një xhami, Tesheshi.com, 8 November 2021, https://tesheshi.com/e-pandodhur-me-pare-ne-shqiperi-thyhet-nje-xhami/?fbclid=IwAR2Xvuxehy0ORzoY9_bc_htGhyiF-DYhMeob9_ISWmWVA8WpkmCavYTNPJ8A (Access date: 01.04.2022).

Raporti i Islamofobisë në Shqipëri 2021, 24 January 2022, http://www.fmsh-al.org/new/2022/01/24/raporti-i-islamofobise-ne-shqiperi-2021/?fbclid=IwAR09mXo8kekVmO_P-FWz9DCIFcaRORSWKfrXIL-RoweuY2UCeQ4sfzrOVZDE (Access date: 01.04.2022).

^{4.} Ibid.

Half-year report, Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, https://www.kmd.al/wp-content/up-loads/2021/09/Raporti-KMD-6-mujor-2021-Perfundimtar.pdf (Access date: 01.04 2022).

Education

According to the Albanian constitution, schools are secular. There is no official ban on the hijab in Albanian public schools, but the decision to allow it or not depends on the school itself. Many cases of discrimination due to the hijab have been reported by the Muslim Forum of Albania⁶ and have been solved in collaboration with the League of Albanian Imams (Lidhja e Hoxhallarëve të Shqipërisë, LHSH).⁷ On April 2021, in one of the schools in the capital, specifically "26 November" Selite, a Muslim pupil was not allowed to attend classes because she decided to wear the hijab. With the intervention and mediation of an activist from the Muslim Forum of Albania, it became possible for the girl to resume regular classes.

In one of the secondary schools in a village in Kavaja there was another case involving two Muslim sisters who were threatened with expulsion from school because they started wearing the hijab. Another case occurred in a secondary school in the city of Gramsh on November 30, a month and a half after the beginning of the new academic year. Other such cases occurred in two different secondary schools in Tirana, one of which is named, ironically, Hoxha Tahsin.⁸ The last case occurred in another school in the suburbs of Tirana, more precisely the secondary school "Lidhja e Prizrenit" in Paskugan.

Politics

On International Women's Day, March 8, 2021, the Albanian politician Alma Lame, former ambassador of Kosovo in Italy, announced the ban on the burqa that happened in Switzerland, and yes she showed her support to this ban as well, literally she said "good job to Switzerland for this" and called for Kosovo to follow the footsteps of Switzerland. In the midst of a pandemic, where the failure to wear a face mask should in principle be punished by law, Lama demanded that a woman must be punished if she partially covers her face.

Lama hopes that Kosovo, with a Muslim majority of 95.6%,⁹ takes the example of Switzerland, where Muslims account for around 5.5% of the population as a minority.¹⁰ "On the International Women's Day, it is worth noting that Switzerland has

Raporti i Islamofobisë në Shqipëri 2021, 24 January 2022, http://www.fmsh-al.org/new/2022/01/24/raporti-i-islamofobise-ne-shqiperi-2021/?fbclid=IwAR09mXo8kekVmO_P-FWz9DCIFcaRORSWKfrXlL-RoweuY2UCeQ4sfzrOVZDE (Access date: 01.04.2022).

Vajza e mbuluar i rikthehet bankave të shkollës, 29 April 2021, http://www.lidhjahoxhallareve.com/l/vajza-e-mbuluar-i-rikthehet-bankave-te-shkolles/ (Access date: 01.04.2022).

^{8.} Hoca Tahsin7 April 1811 – 3 July 1881, Hoxhë Hasan Tahsini, or simply Hoxha Tahsim, was an Albanian Muslim alim, astronomer, mathematician, and philosopher. He was the first rector of Istanbul University and one of the founders of the Central Committee for Defending Albanian Rights.

Adem Ferizaj: Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

Nermina Ademović-Omerčić: Islamophobia in Switzerland: National Report 2020, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

banned the wearing of the burqa in public places. Kosovo must do the same," Lame wrote on her Facebook profile.¹¹



Ne Diten Nderkombetare te Gruas vlen te theksohet se Zvicra e ndaloi mbajtjen e burkas ne vendet publike. Te njejten duhet te beje edhe Kosova!



Figure 1: The politician Alma Lama's post on her Facebook account about the burga ban.

An important moment during 2021 was the parliamentary elections held on April 25, which were won by Albania's left-wing Socialist Party (SP), thus securing its third consecutive mandate. On the eve of the elections, a scandal related to the publication of a network of espionage, known as "patronage" were revealed, 12 which influenced the Muslim community as well. According to *Le Figaro*, the "SP won by old security methods." 13

During the communist regime in Albania, but also now that the ruling party is Socialist Party (Communist) every single citizens is being spied by a personal spy in patronage to find out something that concern the party. Nowadays those group of people, part of the political party, spied on a group of possible voters. In the section of the infamous "patronage" commentators on the spied citizens, some prejudicial comments about Muslims came to light. As can be seen in Figure 2, the "patronage," who are mentioned by name and surname, call non-voting Muslims "extremists," claiming that "they do not vote because they are religious" and therefore are "extremist Muslims." Every citizen has the right to choose whether to vote with-

^{11.} Alma Lama, Facebook, 08 March 2021, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2212779502189877&set=a.119042261563622 (Access date: 04.04.2022).

^{12.} Zbulohet lista e patronazhistëve të PD: Me numra telefoni, numër ID, historiku i votimit dhe të gjitha të dhënat e tjera konfidenciale të shqiptarëve, Gazeta Tema, 20 April 2021, https://www.gazetatema.net/2021/04/20/zbulohet-lista-e-patronazhisteve-te-pd-me-numra-telefoni-numer-id-historiku-i-votimit-dhe-te-gjitha-te-dhenate-tjera-konfidenciale-te-shqiptareve/ (Access date: 04.04.2022).

^{13.} L'Albanie et les fantômes de la Sigurimi d'Enver Hoxha, Le Figaro, 24 April 2021, https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/l-albanie-et-les-fantomes-de-la-sigurimi-d-enver-hoxha-20210524 (Access date: 04.04.2022).

out being judged about it and no matter how scandalous such comments are, unfortunately they are, in fact, a reflection of an anti-religious mentality that the Muslims of the Republic of Albania face every day when it comes to their choices and principles.

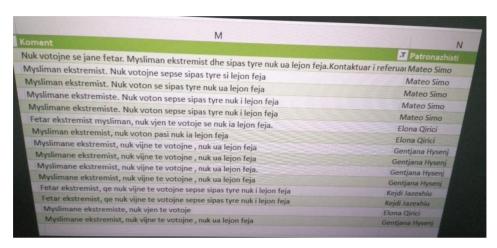


Figure 2: The list of voters with the comment "extremist, does not vote due to religion." ¹⁴



Figure 3: The piece of Le Figaro

l e siège de la Sigurimi, à Tirana, a été reconverti en Musée national de la surveillance secrète surnommé la «Maison de

^{14.} Observatori Kombëtar Kundër Islamofobisë, 21 April 2021 https://www.facebook.com/ObservatoriOKI/photos/skandali-islamofob-i-patronazhist%C3%ABven%C3%AB-seksionin-e-komenteve-t%C3%AB-patronazis t%C3%ABve-f/2869068253359306/ (Access date: 24.05.2022)

Media

As in the past years, Islamophobic discourse is being spread mostly on media platforms. The favorite entertainment form of TV programs is currently broadcasting debates.

On October 5, Vizion Plus, one of the oldest and most well-known national TV stations, interviewed former Donald Trump strategist Steve Bannon.¹⁵ One cannot help but wonder what motivates Vizion Plus to bring the right-wing extremist Steve Bannon to Albanian audiences and to promote his image. He is the man who once claimed that "Islam is not a religion of peace, but a religion of submission" and that the "West is at war with Islam."

The so-called human rights activist and journalist Zhaklin Lekatari, ¹⁸ who collaborates with BIRN (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network) and with Reporting Diversity Network 2.0, ¹⁹ was invited to the TV show "Zona Zero" on Top News. ²⁰ There she expressed hateful language towards a Muslim psychologist with a hijab, who had also been invited to the studio to talk about a draft law on the right of LGBT families to adopt children. Displaying low tolerance for her fellow panelist, she constantly attacked the psychologist trying her best not to allow her to express the opinion for which she was invited. According to Lekatari she was "spreading Islamic propaganda" and accused her of being homophobic and a hypocrite. The show's moderator claimed he hadn't invited the Muslim psychologist for her religious views or as a representative of the Muslim community but due to her profession as a psychologist.

Frrok Çupi, a journalist and well-known political analyst with an Islamophobic background, in a debate show on Top Channel, also a prominent Islamophobic media outlet, declared that a political figure in the Democratic Party is aiming to create "anti-Americanism and Islamism riots in Albania."²¹

The post of the former Albanian ambassador to Italy, Alma Lama, where she called for a ban on the burga in Kosovo, was discussed in a debate on the Albanian

^{15.} Steve Bannon pa filtra / Konservatorizmi Amerikan dhe ai Shqiptar, Vizion Plus, 6 October 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyIn17zfTp0 (Access date: 04.04.2022).

 [&]quot;Steve Bannon in 2010: Islam is not a religion of peace. Islam is a religion of submission", CNN, 1 February 2017, https://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/31/politics/kfile-bannon-on-islam/index.html (Access date: 04.04.2022).

 [&]quot;Steve Bannon allegedly said he believes the West is at war with Islam", The Independent, 14 February 2017 https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/steve-bannon-war-islam-muslims-alt-right-donald-trump-a7580336.html (Access date: 04.04.2022).

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, Facebook, 14 October 2021, https://www.facebook.com/BIRNNetwork/photos/a.1520560881527726/2932098610373939/?type=3 (Access date: 05.04.2022).

Reporting Diversity Network 2.0, Facebook, 7 July 2021, https://www.facebook.com/reporting.diversity2.0/ photos/181472927283952 (Access date: 05.04.2022).

^{20. &}quot;Gazetarja ikën nga emisioni 'Mos më fto me homofobë Zona Zero Top News", 3 November 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsXIFbHuQqc (Access date: 05.04.2022).

^{21. &#}x27;Hahen dhëmbë për dhëmbë' live në emision, plas debati Hoxha dhe Çupi, Breaking Top News, 16 September 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrbjcFVufzw (Access date: 05.04.2022).

TV program "Shqiperia Live" in March, three days after her post. She explained her post and said that her proposal comes as she believes face-covering burqas are discriminatory against women. "They come from the Arab culture that does not coincide with our Albanian culture. It is also a matter of principles. I do not believe that women in the Arab world choose it willingly. I know many Arab women who have had it imposed on them," she said.²²

The same TV program, "Shqiperia Live," which already has been very active on pushing debates among Islamophobic figures and representatives from the Muslim community, organized a debate about the "massive building of mosques vs the absence of building schools and hospitals with foreign donations." The debate was first initiated by Gani Mehmetaj with his piece from 2020 entitled "With 800-1000 Mosques We Won't Ever Be Accepted in the European Union"23 where he explained that during twenty years of democracy, Albania failed in its ascend to the EU, like Turkey, because one country can't be both in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and part of the EU. During the show, where he was invited with other Islamophobe colleagues such as Arbana Xharra and Milaim Zeka, confronting their counterpart Muslim opinionist, he added that the decision of the government to allow this massive construction of mosques is a "corrupted and abusive decision," because they represent a political attempt to reconvert Albanians into Muslims. He added, "I have seen those places, are empty, they are not a solution to the crowded space of prayer. Not even two percent of the population pray there." On the other hand, Xharra said that those funds came from Islamic groups which have extremist and radical views, and their main aim is to punish the West with the help of Turkey. Zeka also supported the thesis of Mehmetaj that this massive construction "hides some dark intentions and corruptive decisions."

On October 17, the National Observatory Against Islamophobia (OKI) reacted to a television program broadcast on Ora News by denouncing the mocking language used on the "EXPULS" show broadcast on Ora News.²⁴ The hosts of the show, together with the guests, contrary to any television ethics and in disrespect to the religious sentiments of Albanian Muslims, mocked the declaration of imam Bedri Lika related to Islamic law about plastic surgery. (Fig. 4) OKI has publicly called on the hosts of TV Ora and the presenters of the show to reflect and apologize publicly. OKI also denounced this video to the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), as the regulator and supervisor of audiovisual broadcasts in the Republic of Albania, and asked it

^{22. &}quot;Të hiqet burka", debat në studio mes besimtarëve mysliman - Shqipëria Live 11 Mars 2021, 11 March 2021https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7te8zc9ZTM&t=1s (Access date: 05.04.2022)

Me 800-1000 xhami nuk të pranojnë në Bashkimin Evropianë, 11 July 2020, https://www.botasot.info/aktuale-lajme/1331710/mehmetaj-me-800-1000-xhami-nuk-te-pranojne-ne-bash-kimin-evropiane/ (Access date: 05.04.2022)

Observatori Kombëtar Kundër Islamofobisë, Facebook, 17 October 2021, https://www.facebook.com/ObservatoriOKI/posts/2999290363670427 (Access date: 05.04.2022)

to review this program due to offensive and harmful content and to evaluate it based on the code of ethics for TV shows. After numerous reactions and denunciations in the form of requests to report the lack of media ethics, the video has been removed from TV Ora's YouTube channel.²⁵

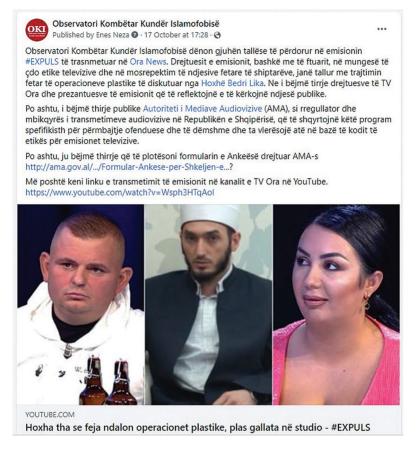


Figure 4: The YouTube video of EXPULS with the headline: "The Imam Said Islam Forbids Plastic Surgery, A Lot of Fun in the TV Studio."

Justice System

As reported by the Muslim Forum of Albania,²⁶ around 50 Muslim believers were detained at the Tirana Police Commissariat for organizing and attending a protest in solidarity with the Palestinian people on May 16. The demonstration was conducted in a peaceful way in Skanderbeg Square in Tirana, but those in attendance were asked by the officers of the law to leave the square. The denunciation comes from the law-

^{25.} Hoxha tha se feja e ndalon operacionin plastik, plas gallata ne studio, 17 October 2021 (the video is no longer available), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wsph3HTqAoI (Access date: 05.04.2022)

Raporti i Islamofobisë në Shqipëri 2021, 24 January, 2022 http://www.fmsh-al.org/new/2022/01/24/raporti-i-islamofobise-ne-shqiperi-2021/?fbclid=IwAR09mXo8kekVmO_P-FWz9DCIFcaRORSWKfrXIL-RoweuY2UCeQ4sfzrOVZDE (Access date: 01.04.2022)

yer Gentian Sejrani from the Association "Social Justice," who closely followed all developments and assisted the detained protestors at the police station.

Following this incident, on May 20, two activists of the Muslim Forum of Albania went to the Tirana Police Directorate to make the official announcement in accordance with the law in order to organize a protest of solidarity with the people of Palestine. After hours of talks, the activists were informed that they would not receive a positive response, although Albanian law requires only a formal notification to law enforcement, and in this case no other additional request is mandatory. The activists were constantly asked for additional documents and there were obvious delays in receiving an answer. Unofficially, it became clear to them from one of the officers at the police station, that they would not receive any response for this activity, and that the police forces were causing them intentional inconvenience in order to prevent them from carrying out the protest which eventually never happened.

Internet

Again, the activist Zhaklin Lektari, who this year was very active with her Islamophobic assaults, shared a story on her Instagram profile showing Muslim woman wearing burqini. The picture was shared from another profile and included the comment, "I don't think it is a free choice." (Fig. 5)



Figure 5: Zhaklin Lektari shared a story on her Instagram profile showing a Muslim woman wearing burqini. The picture is shared from another profile and it writes, "I don't think it is a free choice."

The comedian Mario Shitka during a comedy show, at the Corner Comedy Club, made a rude joke by calling the call to prayer (*adhan*) a song which is "impossible to participate in Top Fest with" while the *adhan* was being performed in the background. A video of this was shared on the club's Instagram page (which later will be reported to have been blocked due to a large number of reports about mockery). The video went viral, causing the anger of the entire Muslim community. Endless messages were sent to Shitka and the Corner Comedy Club show. A few days later, both the actor and the producers of this show reacted by apologizing publicly, stating that they did not intend to hurt the feelings of believers.²⁷

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The most prominent Islamophobic individuals currently active in Albania have been mentioned throughout this report; these are the journalists Alma Lama, Zhaklin Lekatari, and Arbana Xharra.

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 together with the League of Albanian Imams contribute to such efforts by publishing a yearly report on different Islamophobic incidents; by defending Muslim girls when they are denied entrance to schools due to the hijab; and by defending Muslims' religious freedom in general by providing legal support. Also, web portals such as Observer. al, Muslimania.al, and Tesheshi.com monitor and report anti-Muslim hate speech in the Albanian media.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In conclusion, the Muslim community is still facing basic human rights violations such as the right to manifest their religion by praying and wearing the hijab, and also their right to protest. To conclude, we offer the following recommendations:

- Muslim NGOs and other civil society organizations should cooperate more closely to address the issue of Islamophobia, 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.

Mbyllet lokali në Tiranë, pas talljeve publike me ritet myslimane, Reporteri.net. 18 August 2021 https://reporteri.net/lajme/shqiperia/mbyllet-lokali-ne-tirane-pas-talljeve-publike-me-ritet-myslimane/ (Access date: 05.04.2022)

- 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.
- Policymakers, human rights organizations, and the authorities must take into
 consideration the right of the members of Muslim community to do whatever
 they want during their lunch break; therefore, they must be allowed to pray
 and have official permission to adhere to Friday praying hours. Also, Muslims
 have the right to protest and to be granted permission to protest for causes
 they believe in and which do not go against local and international laws.
- Human rights organization, especially those which work in the field of women's rights and gender issues, must speak up and fight for the rights of Muslim girls who are continuously threatened to be expelled from school because of the hijab, especially when it comes to compulsory education, namely primary and secondary school.

Chronology

- **19. 04. 2021:** An assault against Muslim worshipers in Dine Hoxha Mosque takes place.
- **16. 05.2021:** Around 50 Muslim believers are detained as a result of a protest in solidarity with Palestine.
- 8.11.2021: An act of vandalism against the mosque in Lushja.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN AUSTRIA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

The Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus (Documentation Center Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism) documented 1,061 cases of anti-Muslim racist acts with primarily male perpetrators and female victims with a third of cases being detected in politics and 8.2% of all cases reported in the labor market. The Documentation Center Political Islam produced several reports using McCarthyist methods of linking Muslim civil society actors with an alleged Islamist threat. While most authors' names were not disclosed, some were authored by the usual anti-Muslim writers such as Lorenzo Vidino and Heiko Heinisch, who were both also key figures in the investigation that led to Operation Luxor. The operation was declared unlawful by the Higher Court of Graz in July. The Documentation Center republished the Islam Map, which created a huge national and European backlash. A series of new legislation allegedly targeting "terrorism" was introduced by the government including an amendment to the already highly contested Islam Act of 2015. Several other civil liberties were curtailed in the wake of this new legislation. In October, Minister Susanne Raab organized the Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in Integration to raise its problematization of so-called political Islam to a European level. Some media became increasingly critical of the Islam-related politics of the government. The media coverage of Operation Luxor was critical, but limited given that it was the largest peacetime police operation in Austria since 1945.

Zusammenfassung

Die Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus dokumentierte 1061 Fälle von antimuslimisch-rassistischen Handlungen mit überwiegend männlichen Tätern und weiblichen Opfern, wobei ein Drittel der Fälle in der Politik festgestellt wurde. 8,2 % aller Fälle wurden im Bereich des Arbeitsmarktes gemeldet. Das Dokumentationszentrum Politischer Islam erstellte mehrere Berichte, in denen mit McCarthy-Methoden muslimische Akteure der Zivilgesellschaft mit einer angeblichen islamistischen Bedrohung in Verbindung gebracht wurden. Während die Namen der meisten Autoren nicht offengelegt wurden, stammten einige von den üblichen antimuslimischen Autoren wie Lorenzo Vidino und Heiko Heinisch, die beide auch eine Schlüsselrolle bei den Ermittlungen im Rahmen der Operation Luxor spielten. Auch diese Operation wurde im Juli vom Oberlandesgericht Graz für unrechtmäßig erklärt. Das Dokumentationszentrum veröffentlichte auch die Islamkarte, was auf nationaler und europäischer Ebene harsche Reaktionen auslöste. Die Regierung führte eine Reihe neuer Gesetze ein, die angeblich gegen sogenannten Terrorismus gerichtet seien, darunter auch eine Änderung des bereits sehr umstrittenen Islamgesetzes von 2015. Mehrere andere bürgerliche Freiheiten wurden im Zuge dieser neuen Gesetzgebung beschnitten. Im Oktober organisierte Ministerin Susanne Raab das "Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in Integration", um die Problematisierung des sogenannten politischen Islam auf eine europäische Ebene zu heben. Einige Medien wurden zunehmend kritischer gegenüber der islambezogenen Politik der Regierung. Die Medienberichterstattung über die Operation Luxor war kritisch, aber wenig, wenn man bedenkt, dass es sich um den größten Polizeieinsatz in Friedenszeiten seit 1945 handelte.

Country Profile EIR 2021

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), 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: 1,061 cases documented by NGO Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit & antimuslimischer Rassismus

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: ZARA documented 1,977 cases.

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholics 55%, Muslims 8.3%, Orthodox 4.9%, Protestants 3.8%

Muslim Population (% of Population): 645,600 (8.3%) according to Statistik Austria (2022)

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, ACT-P (Assisting Children Traumatised by Police)

Far-Right Parties: FPÖ

Far-Right Movements: DO5 (Die Österreicher, previously the Identitarian movement), Info Direkt

Far-Right Violent Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: In kindergartens since 2018. Constitutional Court repealed the ban on the hijab in primary school in December 2020.
- Halal Slaughter Ban: Partly banned
- Minaret Ban: In the counties of Carinthia and Vorarlberg
- Circumcision Ban: NoBurka Ban: Yes, since 2017

Introduction

The year 2021 was a year of political upheaval. Following Chancellor Sebastian Kurz's reelection as ÖVP party chairman with 99.4% during the party convention,1 the work of journalists, such as editor-in-chief of Falter Florian Klenk, covering the investigations against Kurz and many of his associates created pressure on him and his core team to step down in October 2021. Investigations alleged that Kurz "gained success by producing fake news with taxpayers' money, spreading this fake news in daily newspapers with taxpayers' money and finally charging the taxpayer for the whole thing."2 Klenk asked if Kurz "turns off the control mechanisms of the security apparatus of the republic, the judicial screw, the parliamentary control screw, the media screw, the screw of the independent experts, and now also the screw of demoscopy, of opinion research?"3 Kurz had to step down and his plans to ban media outlets from quoting ongoing investigations alongside several other measures to take over control of the state never materialized.⁴ Since then, leading ÖVP politicians have tried to circumvent legal inquiries from parliamentary investigation committees which are investigating alleged criminal acts. Journalists, the opposition, and even the federal president have been warning that legal rule is under threat when leading politicians do not respect the decisions of the justice system.⁵ When former interior minister Karl Nehammer,⁶ who had been in charge of the infamous racist Operation Luxor, became chancellor, Gerhard Karner, who was heavily criticized because of previous anti-Semitic statements and a non-critical attitude towards the Austro-Fascist past, followed in his footsteps.⁷ This crisis and the end of Kurz's leadership of the ÖVP may induce a slight cushioning effect on anti-Muslim racism emanating from the leading governing party in the years to come, whereas established institutions such as the Documentation Center Political Islam are still in place and plague Muslim organized religious institutions.

On a societal level, many young Muslims were especially hit by the pandemic, since "even before Corona, the labor market would have been highly segregated by

 [&]quot;Rückenwind für Kurz bei ÖVP-Parteitag", ORF, 28 August 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3226573/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

Daniel Ryser, "Sebastian Kurz fummelt im Sicherungskasten der Demokratie", Republik, 21 October 2021, https://www.republik.ch/2021/10/21/sebastian-kurz-fummelt-im-sicherungskasten-der-demokratie (Access date: 25 November 2021).

Ibid

 [&]quot;Kooperation mit anderen EU-Ländern gegen 'politischen Islam", ORF, 28 October 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3234517/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

Oliver Scheiber, "Vom Ausbau zur Verteidigung unseres Rechtsstaats", Der Standard, 31 May 2021, https:// www.derstandard.at/story/2000126957536/vom-ausbau-zur-verteidigung-unseres-rechtsstaats?ref=article (Access date: 20 November 2021).

The Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet Factsheet: Karl Nehammer, 1 Feb 2022, https://bridge.georgetown.edu/ research/factsheet-karl-nehammer/

Lara Hagen, Der designierte Innenminister und das Dollfuß-Museum in seiner Heimat, Der Standard, 5 Dec 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000131678077/der-designierte-innenminister-und-das-dollfuss-museum-in-seiner-heimat?ref=article

origin and gender." Migration researcher Judith Kohlenberger explains that people of color who have immigrated and are often Muslims work primarily in gastronomy and tourism, which is why the pandemic has hit them particularly hard. People with shorter employment periods were dismissed more quickly.⁹

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

According to the anti-racist organization ZARA, which documented a total of 1,977 racist cases, racist and anti-Muslim acts in the public domain primarily targeted women at the intersection of sexism and racism. According to the Ministry of Interior, there was a rise in racist attacks in 2020 (104 cases), and also in regards to Muslims (16 cases). The anti-racist NGO SOS Mitmensch monitored nearly 70 cases of anti-Muslim racism in Austria's politics in its fourth annual report. 12

The Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus (Documentation Center Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism) documented 1,061 cases of anti-Muslim hate crime, detected primarily online (68%), which emanated from politicians (32%) and in the public sphere (25%). The vast majority of perpetrators were male (76.9%) and the victims were primarily women (69%). Most cases were reported in June, when the infamous Islam Map was presented by the Documentation Center Political Islam.

A study conducted during the pandemic by Peter Hajek for the ÖIF (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, Austrian Integration Fund)¹⁴ found that when it comes to matters of integration, Austrians fear "political Islam" the most. In August 2020,

Andreas Danzer, "Altes Problem für junge Menschen: In der Krise nimmt die Diskriminierung zu", 27 May 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000126947213/altes-problem-fuer-junge-menschen-in-der-krisenimmt-die (Access date: 20 November 2021).

Ibid. Around 33% of employees in the food industry and 30% in construction are foreign nationals. Given
that the percentage of foreign nationals within the total population is only 17%, this is an enormous overrepresentation.

^{10.} Zara (2022), Rassismus Report 2021, March 2022, https://assets.zara.or.at/media/rassismusreport/ZARA-Rassismus_Report_2021.pdf, p. 8

^{11.} Christine Steinmetz, "Österreich: Mehr rassistische Vorfälle im Vorjahr", Kronen Zeitung, 12 March 2021, https://www.krone.at/2363981, (Access date: 20 November 2021).

SOS Mitmensch, Antimuslimischer Rassismus in der österreichischen Politik Antimuslimische Abwertungs-, Ausgrenzungs-, Feindbild-, Generalisierungs- und Hetzkampagnen im Jahr 2021, March 2022, https://www.sosmitmensch.at/dl/qnuLJKJkLnKJqx4KJK/SOS_Mitmensch_Bericht2021_AntimuslimischerRassismus_ Maerz2022_pdf

Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und Anti-Muslimischer Rassismus, Antimuslimischer Rassismus Report 2021, Mai 2022, https://dokustelle.at/fileadmin/Media/Reports/2021/Antimuslimischer_Rassismus_Report_2021. pdf

The Bridge Team, Factsheet: Austrian Integration Fund (Österreichische Integrationsfonds, ÖIF), 4 Nov 2020, https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-austrian-integration-fund-osterreichische-integrationsfonds-oif/

66% of respondents observed what has been called "parallel societies." In the first quarter of 2021, this percentage rose to 73%. According to Hajek, this was mostly related to the violent attack in Vienna in autumn 2020. While only 27% of respondents argued that living with Muslims was "good" or "very good," 59% argued it was "rather bad" or "bad." The contradiction between proclaiming anti-racist attitudes and supporting anti-Muslim policies becomes obvious with these figures: while 73% support more measures against racism and discrimination, 74% of respondents simultaneously believe that Islamic religious classes should be controlled by the state. 16

Underground right-wing militancy is still an issue. Since 2019, 20 weapon depots have been discovered. Huge arsenals of illegal weapons have also been found in Baden, Lower Austria. The groups involved are linked to Nazism and had been preparing for "Day X" to overthrow the government.¹⁷ While the government proclaimed that it would work on a "National Action Plan Against Right-Wing Extremism" along with several other initiatives, nine raids took place on July 1 against neo-Nazi groups in Austria and Germany. According to the Ministry of Interior, they found munition and Nazi symbols. According to anti-racist activist Andreas Peham, the fact that even the minister of interior warned of far-right violence reveals the urgency of this ever-growing problem.¹⁸

In August in the city of Vöcklabruck, Upper Austria, unknown persons erected an Islamophobic banner saying "Here arises: Islamist Center Upper Austria" and a six-meter-high wooden cross on the construction site for the Bosnian-Austrian Cultural and Educational Center. According to mayor Elisabeth Kölblinger (ÖVP), this was "reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan," accusing the Identitarian movement of being behind it.¹⁹ The banner made reference to Chancellor Sebastian Kurz with his statement that it is necessary to take action against those who are not terrorists themselves, but who prepare the breeding ground for them. NEOS candidate Felix Eypeltauer accused the ÖVP that its populist policies and rhetoric have contributed to the division of society.²⁰

 [&]quot;ÖIF-Integrationsbarometer: Erwerbstätigkeit und Selbsterhaltungsfähigkeit zentral für den Integrationsprozess", OTS, 15 April 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210415_OTS0182/oeif-integrationsbarometer-erwerbstaetigkeit-und-selbsterhaltungsfaehigkeit-zentral-fuer-den-integrationsprozess (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{16.} Ibid

^{17.} Markus Sulzbacher, "Waffen für den Tag X? Seit 2019 wurden 20 Waffenlager ausgehoben", Der Standard, 12 November 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000131054363/waffen-fuer-den-tag-x-seit-2019-wurden-20-waffenlager?ref=article (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{18. &}quot;Rechtsextremes Netzwerk: Weitere Hausdurchsuchungen", ORF, 10 July 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3220511/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{19. &}quot;Islamfeindliche Aktion auf Moscheebaustelle", ORF, 24 August 2021, https://ooe.orf.at/stories/3118150/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{20.} Ibid.

Employment

According to the Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus, 8.2% of all cases reported in the analog world were related to the labor market. ²¹ According to the anti-racist organization ZARA, which documented a total of 1,977 racist cases, racist and anti-Muslim acts in the public domain primarily targeted women at the intersection of sexism and racism. ²² According to the Ministry of Interior, there was a rise in racist attacks in 2020 (104 cases) and also in regards to Muslims (16 cases). ²³ The anti-racist NGO SOS Mitmensch monitored nearly 70 cases of anti-Muslim racism in Austria's politics for its fourth annual report on anti-Muslim racism. ²⁴

Here are some exemplary cases of how Islamophobia informed discrimination in work or the workforce. N. was seen praying in his office by his supervisor and for no apparent reason, was given notice of termination the next day. A 27-year-old man is regularly asked "joking" questions by his supervisor at work such as "How are you, bomber?" or "Where did you hide your bags this time?" A trained male nurse was asked about his name at a job interview. After explaining that it was an Arabic name, he was insulted as a "camel jockey" in the course of the interview. A 16-year-old apprentice at a large company in Linz, Upper Austria, who works at the reception desk, was told by a customer "that he certainly wouldn't let someone with a headscarf serve him" and insisted that someone else be sent to the reception for him. Her employer and supervisor calmed her down and even wrote a personal letter to the customer, emphasizing that she was one of the best employees and such discriminatory behavior would not be tolerated in their company.²⁵

Education

In May 2021, the Documentation Center Political Islam presented the Islam Map, which will be discussed later, and three reports. Along with Mouhanad Khorchide, Elham Manea, and Minister of Integration Susanne Raab (ÖVP), three research papers on the Islamische Föderation (Millî-Görüş), ATIB (related to the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs, Diyanet), and the Türkische Föderation (Turkish Federation) were presented. Khorchide claimed that Milli-Görus was a Turkish association

^{21.} The report had not been launched at the time of writing this report. I would like to thank the team of the Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und Antimuslimischer Rassismus for providing me with the information, which will be available online at their website https://www.dokustelle.at/

^{22.} Zara (2022), Rassismus Report 2021, March 2022, https://assets.zara.or.at/media/rassismusreport/ZARA-Rassismus_Report_2021.pdf, p. 8

^{23.} Christine Steinmetz, "Österreich: Mehr rassistische Vorfälle im Vorjahr", Kronen Zeitung, 12 March 2021, https://www.krone.at/2363981, (Access date: 20 November 2021).

SOS Mitmensch, Antimuslimischer Rassismus in der österreichischen Politik Antimuslimische Abwertungs-, Ausgrenzungs-, Feindbild-, Generalisierungs- und Hetzkampagnen im Jahr 2021, March 2022, https://www.sosmitmensch.at/dl/qnuLJKJkLnKJqx4KJK/SOS_Mitmensch_Bericht2021_AntimuslimischerRassismus_ Maerz2022_pdf

^{25.} These examples are from the Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und Antimuslimischer Rassismus.

close to the Muslim Brotherhood,²⁶ allegedly against which the infamous racist Operation Luxor had occurred in November 2020. The Islamic Federation of Austria (Islamische Föderation) commented on the report about its organization on November 17, 2021. According to Abdi Tasdögen, the report "is far from any objectivity."²⁷ The Documentation Center reacted by reiterating its research findings.²⁸

Another report on the Islamische Liga der Kultur was presented in September 2021, which was covered by several media outlets.²⁹ The Documentation Center Political Islam published two more reports. Heiko Heinisch³⁰ and Lorenzo Vidino,³¹ both members of the academic advisory board, authored the report "Organizations of Political Islam and Their Impact in Europe and Austria."³² In October 2021, following the Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in Integration, the report "The Muslim Brotherhood's Pan-European Structure," written by Vidino and Sergio Altuna, was published. Like many of the preceding reports, it has many factual errors and represents a political attempt to connect any Muslim civil society with acclaimed political Islam.

Olga Lackner and Lorenz Potocnik from the regional party LINZ PLUS – Independent citizens' list for Linz commissioned Heiko Heinisch to conduct research on sermons in Turkish mosques run by the Islamische Föderation (Millî-Görüş), ATIB, and the Türkische Föderation. According to Heinisch, a history graduate with no knowledge of Turkish, "a mindset prevails in the sermons that actively seeks to hinder integration into society." According to Potocnik, there was a close and problematic relationship between the SPÖ in Linz and extremist Turkish associations. 34

A new institution dedicated to CVE was established, the Research Cluster "Counter-Terrorism, CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) and Intelligence" at

www.islamophobiareport.com

 [&]quot;Kein Generalverdacht gegen Muslime", orf.at, 27 May 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3214929/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{27.} Islamic Federation of Austria, Islamische Föderationen legen Stellungnahme vor, OTS, 17 Nov 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20211117_OTS0023/islamische-foederationen-legen-stellungnahme-vor

^{28.} Moscheenbetreiber wehren sich gegen "Milli Görüs"-Vorwurf, ORF, 17 Nov 2021, https://orf.at/stories/ 3236816/

Bernhard Ichner, "Dokustelle ortet Verbündete der Muslimbrüder in Österreich", Kurier, 08 September 2021, https://kurier.at/politik/inland/dokustelle-ortet-verbuendete-der-muslimbrueder-in-oesterreich/401728227 (Access date: 25 November 2021); "Dokustelle ortet Verbündete der Muslimbrüder in Österreich", ORF, 08 September 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3227829/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{30.} The Bridge Team, Factsheet: Heiko Heinisch, 3 March 2021, https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/fact-sheet-heiko-heinisch/

^{31.} The Bridge Team, Factsheet: Lorenzo Vidino, 22 Apr 2020, https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-lorenzo-vidino/

Documentation Center Political Islam, Neue Berichte zu Strukturen des Politischen Islam, OTS, 26 Nov 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20211126_OTS0078/neue-berichte-zu-strukturen-des-politischen-islam

^{33.} Jürgen Affenzeller, "Integrationsexperte untersuchte Predigten in drei Linzer Moscheen", 22 September 2021, https://www.tips.at/nachrichten/linz/wirtschaft-politik/546225-integrationsexperte-untersuchte-predigten-indrei-linzer-moscheen (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{34.} Ibid.

the Danube University Krems.³⁵ The cluster is designed to work for five years in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and a budget of nearly EURO 900,000 to advise the newly restructured intelligence service, the DSN (Direktion für Staatsschutz und Nachrichtendienst, Directory of State Security and Information Service).³⁶

Politics

The anti-racist NGO SOS Mitmensch published its fourth annual report on anti-Muslim racism and criticized politicians of the far-right FPÖ and Minister Raab of the ÖVP for disseminating anti-Muslim racism.

Six months following the violent attack in November 2020, the government presented several legislations as a "counterterrorism-package." The first draft presented in December 2020 had already been criticized heavily by the Higher Court of Vienna (OLG Wien) and the Supreme Court (OGH). When the discussion reemerged in May 2021, Minister of Interior Nehammer argued during the presentation of the new legislation: "Sometimes it is necessary for the freedom of the many to circumvent the freedom of the few." The Citizenship Act (Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetz) was amended to allow dual citizens to be stripped of their Austrian citizenship in order "to allow them to be extradited to other countries more easily."

As part of the legislation, the former domestic secret service BVT was restructured to become the DSN (Direktion für Staatsschutz und Nachrichtendienst, Directory of State Security and Information Service). Retired and former head of the domestic secret service's desk on extremism, Sibylle Geißler, harshly criticized the new legislation governing the DSN, whose basic imperative is to separate security issues from information service. The fact that the future director of the DSN would not have to have a legal background was also criticized³⁹ besides his informal affiliation to the ÖVP.⁴⁰

The government's idea of making "political Islam" a criminal offense was slightly amended to create a new criminal offense named "religiously motivated criminality." The Catholic Church heavily criticized this step as it argued that this would make re-

BMI: Terrorismus Auf neue Entwicklungen reagieren, Öffentliche Sicherheit, Ausgabe 1-2/2022, https://bmi. gv.at/magazin/2022_01_02/Terrorismus.aspx

 [&]quot;Donau Uni Krems erforscht Terrorismus", ORF, 15 November 2021, https://noe.orf.at/stories/3130002/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{37. &}quot;Anti-Terror-Paket kommt wie geplant", orf.at, 07 May 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3212181/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{38.} Ibid.

^{39.} Fabian Schmid, "Massive interne Kritik an BVT-Gesetz: 'Im Wesentlichen praxisuntauglich'", Der Standard, 10 May 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000126530134/massive-interne-kritik-an-bvt-gesetz-im-wesentlichen-praxisuntauglich?ref=article (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{40.} ORF Redaktion, Haijawi-Pirchner wird neuer Chef des Staatsschutzes, 15 Sept 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3228642/

ligion "on a whole connected to terrorism." ⁴¹ The Bishops' Conference (Österreichische Bischofskonferenz) saw this as a stigmatization of believers. Integration Minister Susanner Raab (ÖVP) reaffirmed that "all of this is not an attack on a special religious community." ⁴² Rather, she claimed to be saving Muslims.

Another part of the anti-terrorism package was the amendment of the Islam Act of 2015. This included the creation of a list of imams in order to have more "transparency," an initiative that was initially also supported by the IGGÖ to strengthen its power vis-à-vis the Muslim masses. Minister Karoline Edtstadler said to a German newspaper that she was "in favor of creating a European directory of imams, following the example of Austria, in the fight against political Islam." While in the past, the ÖVP had usually argued that the Islam Act was no security law, the tone has changed. Susanne Raab presented an amended Islam Act as part of the new anti-terrorism legislation. She stated, "This is an important step. I am glad that with the amendment of the Islam Act as part of the anti-terror package we can now give the authorities further important tools they need in the consistent fight against radical ideologies and extremism." Her press release reads as follows,

Among other things, the amendment to the Islam Act expands the provisions of the ban on foreign financing of mosques. In the future, not only mosques but also associations or foundations behind mosques will have to submit their financial documents. In this way, circumvention constructions can be avoided in the future. 45

Another core element of the amendment is the introduction of a uniform register of imams. "In concrete terms, this means that it must be disclosed who preaches in mosques - this also applies above all to imams who come to Austria from abroad," explained Raab. "Thus, we will know exactly which imams preach in which mosques. This will create more transparency and enable us to take targeted action against hate preachers and the spread of radical ideas." In addition, the amendment to the Islam Act will also enable the authorities to close radical mosques more quickly in the future. This is intended to prevent people from becoming radicalized and spreading dangerous extremist ideologies under the guise of religious freedom. "Today, another

^{41. &}quot;BVT-Reform: Bischöfe kritisieren Begriff 'religiös motivierte Kriminalität'", Die Presse, 06 May 2021, https://www.diepresse.com/5976091/bvt-reform-bischofe-kritisieren-begriff-religios-motivierte-kriminalitat (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{42. &}quot;Anti-Terror-Paket kommt wie geplant", orf.at, 07 May 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3212181/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{43. &}quot;Edtstadler für 'europaweite Registrierung von Imamen'", Kurier, 02 January 2021, https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/edtstadler-fuer-europaweite-registrierung-von-imamen/401144907 (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{44. &}quot;Integrationsministerin Raab: Islamgesetz-Novelle passiert Verfassungsausschuss", OTS, 10 June 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210610_OTS0221/integrationsministerin-raab-islamgesetz-novelle-passiert-verfassungsausschuss (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{45.} Ibid.

important step was taken to put a stop to extremist currents in our country as well as harmful influence from abroad and to put a stop to the organizations and networks behind them," concluded Integration Minister Raab.⁴⁶

According to the opposition party NEOS, the draft was the "first sensible measure taken by the federal government after a series of populist shams, such as the Islam Map." Also, the largest opposition party, the SPÖ, supported the anti-terrorism package. The anti-terrorism package also included the Citizenship Act, the Symbols Act, and the Driver's License Act. The Symbols Act was expanded to include the symbols of the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Turkish Marxist-Leninist group DH-KP-C, and the far-right Identitarian movement.

The IGGÖ called for equal treatment and threatened the government with taking legal action. ⁵⁰ The Muslim Youth Organization of Austria (MJÖ) protested the new anti-terrorism package, saying it means "for Muslims an existence as second- or third-class citizens as well as the danger of being criminalized by stretchable laws." ⁵¹

Austrian far-right MEPs use their position to mobilize against the European funding of Muslim institutions such as Islamic Relief, the European Muslim Union, or the Weimar Institute insinuating they were Islamists, extremists, or affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵²

Several politicians including Ursula von der Leyen participated in Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's "Christchurch Call" two years after the killing of 51 Muslims in New Zealand's Christchurch by a white supremacist. But while discussing white supremacism, Chancellor Kurz and French President Emmanuel Macron discussed other issues. Kurz solely focused on "the battle against political Islam" and "especially Islamist motivated terrorism." ⁵³

^{46.} Ibid.

 [&]quot;NEOS zu Islamgesetz: Wichtige Maßnahme in einer wehrhaften Demokratie", OTS, 10 June 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210610_OTS0199/neos-zu-islamgesetz-wichtige-massnahme-in-einerwehrhaften-demokratie (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{48. &}quot;Asyl – Leichtfried kritisiert 'würdeloses Hin und Her der Regierung' und Schuldzuweisungen", OTS, 07 July 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210707_OTS0167/asyl-leichtfried-kritisiert-wuerdeloses-hin-und-her-der-regierung-und-schuldzuweisungen (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{49. &}quot;Anti-Terror-Paket passierte Innenausschuss", ORF, 03 June 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3215787/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

 [&]quot;IGGÖ ad Islamgesetz: Für das Recht auf Gleichbehandlung!" OTS, 07 July 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210707_OTS0011/iggoe-ad-islamgesetz-fuer-das-recht-auf-gleichbehandlung (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{51. &}quot;Anti-Terror Paket entgegen Warnungen von ExpertInnen im Nationalrat beschlossen", OTS, 07 July 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210707_OTS0186/anti-terror-paket-entgegen-warnungen-von-expertinnen-im-nationalrat-beschlossen (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{52. &}quot;FPÖ-Vilimsky: Finanzierung von Islamisten durch EU-Kommission sofort stoppen!", OTS, 26 April 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210426_OTS0053/fpoe-vilimsky-finanzierung-von-islamisten-durch-eu-kommission-sofort-stoppen (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{53. &}quot;Kurz irritiert mit 'Kampf gegen politischen Islam'" bei Gipfel nach Terror gegen Muslime, Der Standard, 15 May 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000126662166/kurz-irritiert-mit-kampf-gegen-politischen-islam-bei-gipfel-nach (Access date: 20 November 2021).



Figure 1: Sebastian Kurz talking to Emmanuel Macron and other politicians during Minister Jacinda Ardern's "Christchurch Call". Source: Sebastian Kurz's Twitter account

Co-host Macron also discussed jihadism. Kurz is regularly being quoted with stark statements such as the ones below. When he gave an interview to the best-selling *Bild*, a German tabloid, speaking about "immigrant Islamism" he said, "I don't want this sick ideology in Europe." During the ÖVP's party convention, Kurz suggested implementing a "Sharia ban." 55

On May 27, the Documentation Center Political Islam presented the Islam Map, prepared by Professor of Islamic Religious Pedagogics Ednan Aslan many years ago. Along with Mouhanad Khorchide, Elham Manea, and Minister of Integration Susanne Raab (ÖVP), Aslan presented his Islam Map which included 600 mosques and the names of their legal representatives and, in some cases, their private addresses. "Imagine if a similar map was drawn up for Judaism or Christianity," said Tarafa Baghajati. ⁵⁶ The ÖVP and the far-right FPÖ applauded the relaunch of this project, while the ÖVP's coalition partner criticized the initiative. ⁵⁷ According to Minister Raab, this was "not about a fight against Muslims. It is about the fight against political Islam.

Paul Ronzheimer, "Österreichs Kanzler Kurz über eingewanderten Islamismus 'Ich will diese kranke Ideologie nicht in Europa", Bild Zeitung, 25 July 2021, https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/sebastian-kurz-exklusiv-ich-will-diese-kranke-ideologie-nicht-in-europa-77190376.bild.html (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{55.} Katharina Mittelstaedt and Walter Müller, "Wie könnte ein 'Scharia-Verbot' in Österreich aussehen?", Der Standard, 30 August 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000129287799/wie-koennte-ein-scharia-verbot-in-oesterreich-aussehen (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{56. &}quot;Austrian government comes under fire over 'Islam map'", thelocal.at, 28 May 2021, https://www.thelocal.at/20210528/austrian-government-comes-under-fire-over-islam-map/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{57. &}quot;El-Nagashi/Bürstmayr: 'Islam-Landkarte' ist kontraproduktiv", OTS, 27 May 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210527_OTS0211/el-nagashibuerstmayr-islam-landkarte-ist-kontraproduktiv (Access date: 20 November 2021).

Political Islam is poison for our society and the opposite of integration."⁵⁸ According to Raab, the information presented on the map could be relevant for authorities for instance when it comes to deciding if an association should be funded or partnered with to support integration.⁵⁹ MP Faika El-Nagashi stated,

Muslim institutions are mixed up with Islamist ones, in the media there is talk of hundreds of organizations on a state "watch list." The stigmatization of Muslim communities by this list is massive and from our point of view not suitable to contribute to a better coexistence.⁶⁰

According to MP Yannick Shetty (NEOS), the Documentation Center Political Islam is about "partisan calculation to foster a general suspicion against Muslims." Social democratic Vienna Council members Aslihan Bozatemur, Omar Al-Rawi, and Safak Akcay criticized the Islam Map. According to them, the "Islam Map declares all Muslims as targets of attacks and puts all Muslims living in Austria under suspicion." Chairman of the Austrian Muslim Youth (MJÖ), Adis Šerifović, criticized that "under the guise of transparency and willingness to engage in dialogue, Islamic organizations and institutions are being exposed to a massive security risk." MJÖ Chairwoman Hager Abouwarda said, "We see our democracy and universal human rights at risk. For years, we have had a governing party that has consistently worked to divide and polarize society." Later, the IGGÖ also criticized the map stating that it would mark all Muslims as a potential threat. Its president, Ümit Vural, argued that "the fear of a political influence and instrumentalization of academia by the Documentation Center Political Islam has been confirmed today." The rector of the University of Vienna, Heinz Engl, distanced himself from the project and forbade to con-

Gabor Agardi, "Mit Islam-Landkarte Kampf gegen Radikalisierung", Kronen Zeitung, 27 May 2021, https:// www.krone.at/2423830 (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{59. &}quot;Kein Generalverdacht gegen Muslime", orf.at, 27 May 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3214929/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

Jan Michael Marchart, "Dokustelle gräbt alte 'Islam-Landkarte' aus, massive Kritik der Grünen", 27 May 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000126965156/dokustelle-graebt-alte-islamlandkarte-aus-und-widmet-sich-dachverbaenden (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{61. &}quot;Kein Generalverdacht gegen Muslime", orf.at, 27 May 2021, https://orf.at/stories/3214929/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{62. &}quot;Bozatemur/Al-Rawi/ Akcay (SPÖ): 'Islam-Landkarte' erklärt Muslime zur Zielscheibe für islamfeindliche Attacken", OTS, 27 May 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210527_OTS0235/bozatemural-rawi-akcay-spoe-islam-landkarte-erklaert-muslime-zur-zielscheibe-fuer-islamfeindliche-attacken (Access date: 20 November 2021).

 [&]quot;Islam-Landkarte: Gefährliches Beispiel für den Generalverdacht gegen MuslimInnen", OTS, 27 May 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210527_OTS0180/islam-landkarte-gefaehrliches-beispiel-fuer-den-generalverdacht-gegen-musliminnen (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{64. &}quot;Muslimische Jugend Österreich (MJÖ): Für eine Ent-Islamisierung der österreichischen Politik!", OTS, 26 May 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210526_OTS0120/muslimische-jugend-oesterreich-mjoe-fuer-eine-ent-islamisierung-der-oesterreichischen-politik-bild (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{65. &}quot;IGGÖ ad 'Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam': Verknüpfung mit 'Islamlandkarte' bedenklich!", OTS, 27 May 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210527_OTS0218/iggoe-ad-dokumentationsstelle-politischer-islam-verknuepfung-mit-islamlandkarte-bedenklich (Access date: 20 November 2021).

tinue using the logo of the university given that people were asked to send "information on associations and mosques."

According to the tabloid press Kronen Zeitung, the head of the academic advisory board for the Documentation Center Political Islam, Mouhanad Khorchide, was called an "enemy of God" on an Instagram account, which would be the equivalent of a death threat. The account does not exist today and was screenshot by Kronen Zeitung with 23 followers. Khorchide was quoted saying, "We will not be intimidated. This is what these people want, because our work reveals their strategies. We will continue our academic work with the Documentation Center Political Islam."67 Journalists of the Kronen Zeitung supported this discourse to frame the agents of the Documentation Center, including Minister Raab, as the real victims, arguing that they would be the ones threatened by death. 68 Also, the weekly quality magazine Profil portrayed Khorchide as a victim with the headline "Reform Islam: Why liberal Muslims in Europe Need Police Protection." 69 Profil journalist Christa Zöchling republished an interview with Khorchide, who argued that "many well-intentioned people have fallen for the strategy of political Islam."⁷⁰ Chancellor Kurz supported the project, which according to him is a project of established professors. 71 Vienna mayor Michael Ludwig (SPÖ) criticized the map and argued that he would "fully reject the stigmatization of religion."72 Minister Raab defended the project and argued that the map would show "where mosques are controlled by Erdogan [...] and where antisemitism is spread."73

According to Stefan Hermann, regional party secretary of the far-right FPÖ, "The Islam Map shows that Austria has become a center of Islamic associations in recent decades. It is necessary to closely monitor all Islamic institutions and consistently

^{66.} Information on the so-called "Islam-Map" by Rector Engl, 27 May 2021, online from: https://www.univie.ac.at/ueber-uns/weitere-informationen/27052021/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{67. &}quot;Islam-Karte: Drohungen gegen Experte Khorchide", Kronen Zeitung, 28 May 2021, https://www.krone. at/2424583 (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{68.} Conny Bischofberger, "Morddrohungen: Was muss noch passieren?", Kronen Zeitung, 01 June 2021, https://www.krone.at/2427229 (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{69.} Christa Zöchling, "Reform-Islam: Warum liberale Muslime in Europa mit Polizeischutz leben", Kronen Zeitung, 01 June 2021, https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/reform-islam-warum-liberale-muslime-in-europa-mit-polizeischutz-leben/401398563 (Access date: 25 November 2021). In the article, the author writes: "Khorchide suspects that he owes the recent wave of hate mail and death threats to headlines in Turkish and Arab media, indirectly to political scientist Farid Hafez. In interviews with Turkish and Arab platforms, Hafez had criticized the newly created Documentation Center Political Islam and Khorchide, its academic director. It was reported -with reference to Hafez- that Khorchide wanted to have the mosques in Austria closed. Hafez according to Anadolu Agency, "Khorchide, who has a wide reputation as a 'moderate' Muslim, is known for his categorical support for the closure of mosques by Austria's former far-right government."

Christa Zöchling, "Viele gutwillige Menschen sind hereingefallen auf die Strategie des politischen Islam", Kronen Zeitung, 01 June 2021, https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/islamwissenschafter-khorchide-ueber-morddrohungen-und-den-politischen-islam/401398578 (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{71.} Ibid.

David Krutzler and Gabreiele Scherndl, "Heftige Kritik von Bürgermeister Ludwig an der Islam-Landkarte", Der Standard, 30 May 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000127027529/heftige-kritik-von-buergermeister-michael-ludwig-an-der-islam-landkarte (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{73.} Ibid.

dismantle possible Islamist structures in order to prevent radical Islam from spreading further. From the point of view of the Freedom Party, associations with a radical background must be dissolved immediately."⁷⁴ Markus Wölbitsch and Caroline Hungerländer (ÖVP) defended the Islam Map and argued that the Viennese government would ignore the problem of so-called political Islam.⁷⁵

Daniel Höltgen from the European Council heavily criticized the Islam Map and called for it to be shut down. ⁷⁶ According to the council, the "publication of Austria's 'Islam Map' is hostile to Muslims and potentially counterproductive." ⁷⁷ Also, the Turkish ambassador in Vienna protested with strong words. ⁷⁸ The MJÖ demanded police protection for the people whose addresses were published in the map. ⁷⁹ Markus Ladstätter from the Catholic Austrian Bishops' Conference criticized the map. ⁸⁰

Following the protest from the social democrats in Vienna, the ÖVP Vienna hosted a press conference titled "No step back in the fight against political Islam in Vienna."⁸¹ At the same time, a far-right movement allegedly related to the Identitarian movement put yellow warning signs near five spots mentioned in the Islam Map. In a publication, it claimed,

The 'Islam Map' showed us the extent of Islamization in Austria. We are now also educating local people about political Islam and Salafism in their neighborhood. In front of 5 of the most radical mosques in Vienna, warning signs were put up saying "Beware! Political Islam in your neighborhood." 82

^{74. &}quot;FPÖ-Hermann: "Informationen des Integrationsministeriums bestätigen Islamismus-Problem!", OTS, 27 May 2021 https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210527_OTS0149/fpoe-hermann-informationen-des-integrationsministeriums-bestaetigen-islamismus-problem (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{75. &}quot;Wölbitsch/Hungerländer: Kein Schritt zurück im Kampf gegen den Politischen Islam in Wien", OTS, 02 June 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210602_OTS0123/woelbitschhungerlaender-keinschritt-zurueck-im-kampf-gegen-den-politischen-islam-in-wien (Access date: 25 November 2021).

 [&]quot;Islamkarte: Europaratsbeauftragter empfiehlt Zurückziehen", ORF, 31 May 2021, https://religion.orf.at/stories/3206848/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{77. &}quot;Publication of Austria's 'Islam map' is hostile to Muslims and potentially counterproductive", Council of Europe, 31 May 2021, https://www.coe.int/en/web/antisemitic-anti-muslim-hatred-hate-crimes/-/publication-of-austria-s-islam-map-is-hostile-to-muslims-and-potentially-counterproductive (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{78.} QA-24, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Tanju Bilgiç in Response to a Question Regarding the Statements Made by the Austrian Minister for Integration Susanne Raab at a Press Conference, 28 May 2021, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-24_-db-sozcusu-be-tanju-bilgic-in-avustu-rya-entegrasyon-bakani-susanne-raab-in-basin-toplantisinda-yapmis-oldugu-aciklamalar-hk-sc.en.mfa

Daniela Kittner, "Islam-Landkarte provoziert Übergriffe, Polizeischutz gefordert", Kurier, 01 June 2021, https:// kurier.at/politik/inland/islam-landkarte-provoziert-uebergriffe-polizeischutz-gefordert/401399028 (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{80. &}quot;Polizei entfernte Islam-'Warnschilder'", ORF, 02 June 2021, https://wien.orf.at/stories/3106609/ (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{81. &}quot;EINLADUNG: MORGEN: Pressegespräch der neuen Volkspartei Wien: 'Kein Schritt zurück im Kampf gegen den politischen Islam in Wien'", OTS, 01 June 2021 https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210601_OTS0160/einladung-morgen-pressegespraech-der-neuen-volkspartei-wien-kein-schritt-zurueck-im-kampf-gegen-den-politischen-islam-in-wien (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{82. &}quot;Achtung Islamisten – Islamlandkarte sichtbar machen 'Warnt eure Nachbarn vor Gefährdern!'", patrioten-in-bewegung.info, (no date), https://patrioten-in-bewegung.info/wp/portfolio/achtung-islamisten-islamkartenaktion/ (Access date: 21 November 2021).



Figure 2: Individuals began to use the Islam Map to "out" certain locations as Muslim with posters and signs reading or "Beware! Political Islam is here." Source: Patrioten in Bewegung, https://patrioten-in-bewegung.info/wp/portfolio/achtung-islamisten-islamkartenaktion/

The Viennese police removed the signs, which were even criticized by Minister Raab. MP Nurten Yilmaz (SPÖ) criticized the signs as reminders of the "darkest days in our history." NGOs like SOS Mitmensch and Viennese councilor Christoph Wiederkehr (NEOS) argued that with the Islam Map, Muslim "associations were judged arbitrarily and without evidence and thus their members become virtually fair game for right-wing extremist activists." In an open letter to Minister Raab, the Documentation Center Political Islam and the Institute of Islamic-Theological Studies and Islamic Religious Pedagogics (Institut für Islamisch-Theologische Studien Islamische Religionspädagogik) from the religious communities of the IGGÖ warned that the Islam Map would threaten the security of mosques and the members of the Muslim community. Also, the Austrian National Youth Council (Bundesjugendvertretung, BJV) criticized the government for endangering Muslim life in Austria.

^{83. &}quot;Polizei entfernte Islam-'Warnschilder'", ORF, 02 June 2021, https://wien.orf.at/stories/3106609/ (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{84.} Ibid.

^{85. &}quot;Kultusgemeinden der IGGÖ: Die 'Islamlandkarte' gefährdet die Sicherheit unserer Einrichtungen und Mitglieder!", OTS, 02 June 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210602_OTS0176/kultusgemeinden-der-iggoe-die-islamlandkarte-gefaehrdet-die-sicherheit-unserer-einrichtungen-und-mitglieder (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{86. &}quot;Bundesjugendvertretung: Dialog mit Religionen statt Generalverdacht", OTS, 02 June 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210602_OTS0168/bundesjugendvertretung-dialog-mit-religionen-statt-generalverdacht (Access date: 21 November 2021).

According to the Protestant Church, the Islam Map should be taken down from the internet. The church claimed that the publication of the Islam map shows that the "Ministry of Integration does not find the right attitude toward religious freedom." Superintendent Thomas Hennefeld argued, "In an Islamophobic social climate of suspicion, hostility, and hatred, I find such a publication to be highly negligent and extremely irresponsible. I see the transparency praised by operators and supporters as an invitation to Islam haters to attack Muslim institutions."

While the map was taken down from the internet following the massive national and international protests, it was relaunched again a few days later. Several student unions of the Greens and the Communists protested this relaunch. According to Khorchide, "The debate about the Islam Map pleases only the extremists."

Media

An investigation report on the violent deadly attacks on November 2, 2020 by Ingeborg Zerbes revealed that the authorities were too busy with Operation Luxor, the largest peacetime police operation in Austria since 1945, which targeted parts of Muslim civil society, to prevent the attacks. Political scientist Daniela Pisoiu of the Institute for International Politics argued in an interview: "You can see, for example, that very specifically a conversation with the future terrorist was postponed because they needed these resources for 'large-scale Operation Ramses' [Operation Luxor, FH]." Also, the TV station *Puls24*, in a critical long piece, analyzed why the violence that killed 4 people and injured more than 23 was not prevented by the secret service. Amongst others, the personnel were preoccupied with the infamous racist Operation Luxor against alleged members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The piece summed up as follows:

After the raids, Nehammer spoke of an important blow against international terrorism. The action is meanwhile regarded by lawyers and critics as a blow in the water, however, and to date there have been no indictments. What's more, at the beginning of August 2021, the action was declared partially illegal by the Graz Higher Regional Court. Several of those affected are now defending themselves against the accusations and are taking legal action against the Republic.⁹²

^{87. &}quot;Kritik an Islam-Landkarte aus Evangelischer Kirche", Evangelical Church of Austria, 28 May 2021, https://evang.at/chalupka-islam-landkarte-schnell-wieder-vom-netz-nehmen/ (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{88.} Ibid

^{89. &}quot;ÖH Uni Wien verurteilt antimuslimischen Rassimus der Uni Wien und der Bundesregierung", OTS, 25 June 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210625_OTS0006/oeh-uni-wien-verurteilt-antimuslimischen-rassimus-der-uni-wien-und-der-bundesregierung (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{90.} Georg Renner, InterviewMouhanad Khorchide: "Die Debatte um die Islam- Landkarte freut nur die Extremisten", Kleine Zeitung, 4 June 2021, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5989365/Interview_ Mouhanad-Khorchide_Die-Debatte-um-die-IslamLandkarte

^{91. &}quot;Anschlag: Prozess um Schadenersatz vertagt", ORF, 17 May 2021, https://wien.orf.at/stories/3104078/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{92. &}quot;Anschlag in Wien: Protokoll des Versagens", Puls 24, 13 September 2021, https://www.puls24.at/news/chronik/anschlag-in-wien-protokoll-des-versagens/243948 (Access date: 25 November 2021).

Generally, more and more media outlets started covering the infamous and racist Operation Luxor through a critical lens. However, only the daily *Kurier* covered the academic support I received by Austrian, German, and U.S. scholars as a victim of Operation Luxor.⁹³

Also, more and more critics of the new anti-terrorism legislation appeared. Legal scholar Veronika Hofinger from the University of Innsbruck and political scientist Daniela Pisoiu from the Austrian Institute of International Politics argued in an op-ed that the anti-terrorism legislation was more about symbols than real change. They especially criticized the inclusion of the new criminal offense of "political Islam." According to them, creating a new criminal offense is "neither legally necessary, nor democratically justifiable." Both scholars argued,

Instead of responding to these concrete threats, policymakers focused on a diffuse construct, "political Islam," supported by "scientific" expert opinions that it was more dangerous than Salafism or jihadism. The decision on October 21, 2020, to devote all resources to a major raid against the Islamist-legalist Muslim Brotherhood and to put surveillance and targeting of the eventual assassin on hold had particularly dramatic consequences [leading to the death of 4 and wounding of 23, while the Operation Luxor targeted parts of Muslim civil society, FH]⁹⁶

Several pieces were published that criticized the Islam Map of the Documentation Center Political Islam. In a critical piece for *FM4*, Ali Cem Deniz analyzed the Islam Map as a tool of the Austrian integration policy to "detect, limit, and control the Muslim community." In an op-ed in *Der Standard*, Rami Ali criticized the relationship between the ÖVP and Islamic studies, and more generally the academic community. The German Green politician Lamya Kaddor criticized her fellow Green politicians in an op-ed in *Der Standard* for allowing the ÖVP to continue its structural racism with the Documentation Center Political Islam's publication of the Islam Map. She argued, "Above all, Susanne Raab, ÖVP politician and confidant of Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, has acted more as an exclusion minister than as an inte-

^{93.} Michaela Reibenwein, "Operation Luxor: Farid Hafez bekommt Unterstützung", 27 May 2021, https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/operation-luxor-farid-hafez-bekommt-unterstuetzung/401394636 (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{94.} Veronika Hofinger and Daniela Pisoiu, "Zu viel Symbolpolitik im Anti-Terror-Gesetz", Der Standard, 12 May 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000126574345/zu-viel-symbolpolitik-im-anti-terror-gesetz?fbclid=I-wAR3LBhgWredvhcYyE6D7RYJO7oUyhvMy14cGUn-uwU6LL5bdc9UNK_8qfLs (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{95.} Ibid.

^{96.} Ibid.

^{97.} Ali Cem Deniz, "Was die 'Islam-Karte' wirklich abbildet", FM4 Radio, 31 May 2021, https://fm4.orf.a31 May 2021, t/stories/3015372/ (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{98.} Rami Ali, "Die ÖVP pervertiert den Kampf gegen Extremismus", Der Standard, 01 June 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000127053679/die-oevp-pervertiert-den-kampf-gegen-extremismus (Access date: 20 November 2021).

gration minister since taking office." Op-eds were also published outside of Austria to criticize the Islam Map. 100 Markus Sulzbacher, a journalist for *Der Standard*, criticized the fact that media outlets published photos that were taken by alleged members of the far-right Identitarian movement. 101

Hans Rauscher, a journalist for *Der Standard*, hit the nail on the head in a commentary titled "The Tendency toward Authoritarianism Is a Worrying Phenomenon in the Longer Term." He argued,

[While] Muslim immigration is the main problem for many, [...] the tendency toward authoritarianism that has partly resulted from it is probably the really troubling phenomenon in the longer term. Some mainstream conservative parties, like the ÖVP in Austria and the Tories in Britain, have become almost indistinguishable from the right-wing. 102

In a report by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF, legal scholar and expert of law of religion Prof. Richard Potz was featured regarding the impact of the discourse on so-called political Islam on religions in general. Potz observed an increasing influence and control of churches, religious and faith communities by the state, saying, "If Muslims come under stronger state supervision, this creates the danger that other religious societies will then also be drawn into this maelstrom." According to Potz, Austria has lost its position as an international role model in terms of its relationship with Islam due to the Islam Act of 2015, which has been criticized by constitutional lawyers.

Legal scholar and professor at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Matthias Rohe, in an interview on Radio Vatican, said that the notion of political Islam "is currently being used in an extremely blurred way and is therefore problematic." ¹⁰⁴ He further warned of the need "to be careful not to immediately make blanket suspicions of all religious communities that perhaps pursue a more traditional religious policy and adhere to certain religious practices or traditions and assign them to political Islam." ¹⁰⁵

^{99.} Lamya Kaddor, "Die Islamlandkarte und die Grünen: Einfach zu wenig", Der Standard, 07 June 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000127182607/gruene-zu-islamlandkarte-einfach-zu-wenig?ref=article (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{100.} Ömer Erzeren, "Gezielte Brandstiftung", 07 June 2021, taz, https://taz.de/Oesterreichs-Islam-Landkarte/!5773153/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{101.} Markus Sulzbacher, "Beispiel Islam-Landkarte: Wie die Identitären einige Medien narrten", Der Standard, 24. Junie 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000127583697/beispiel-islam-landkarte-wie-die-identitaeren- einige-medien-narrten (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{102.} Hans Rauscher, "European Way of Life", Der Standard, 10 September 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/consent/tcf/story/2000129569283/european-way-of-life?ref=article (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{103. &}quot;Experte: Verschiebung bei Staat-Kirche-Verhältnis", ORF, 17 June 2021, https://religion.orf.at/stories/3207187/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{104.} Michael Hermann, "Debatte zu Politischem Islam: 'Religionsgemeinschaften nicht pauschal verdächtigten'", Vatican News, 29 October 2021, https://www.vaticannews.va/de/kirche/news/2021-10/religion-islam-politik-extremismus-rohe-deutschland-muezzin.html (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{105.} Ibid.

Given the rise of femicides, *Der Standard* journalist Olivera Stajić rightly criticized Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP), who is also in charge of women affairs, that a "strict division between alleged 'culturally based' violence in migrant communities and the violence experienced by women who do not have a history of migration is concerning and dangerous." ¹⁰⁶ In a satirical piece, Rainer Nikowitz criticized the decision made during the ÖVP's annual convention to ban "Sharia." ¹⁰⁷

After coming back from maternity leave, Minister Raab declared in an interview with the largest tabloid press *Kronen Zeitung* that she wants an "alliance against political Islam." Reflecting on the criticism against the Islam Map, Raab said, "I am convinced that the right approach is for us to create transparency together with the scientific community. I want to develop Austria as a center of excellence against political Islam. We will strengthen networking and launch a European alliance against political Islam in the next few weeks." Asked about how this alliance should look like, she said, "It is important that we reach an understanding across borders. In many cases, similar actors are active, and we need to identify them. And it is important to gather knowledge, for example about hate preachers who are active in several countries. There will be a symposium in Vienna, I will also travel to other countries to strengthen the alliance, and ministerial colleagues will come to Vienna." ¹⁰⁸

Islamophobic actors such as Heiko Heinisch were still quoted as "experts", but far less, by mainstream media. The yellow press *Krone* featured an article based on an interview with Vidino and Raab, uncritically reproducing Vidino's statements against the alleged threat of so-called political Islam. The newspaper *Exxpress* portrayed the progressive Black social democratic politician Mireille Ngosso as a "denier of political Islam." *Exxpress* also covered the local MP Caroline Hungerländer's (ÖVP) critique of the Viennese government's support of a conference on anti-Muslim racism.

^{106.} Olivera Stajić, "Femizide: Raab ist auf einem Auge blind", Der Standard, 12 May 2021, https://www.derstand-ard.at/story/2000126595668/femizide-raab-ist-auf-einem-auge-blind?ref=article (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{107.} Rainer Nikowitz, "ÖVP-Parteitag: Jessas Scharia!", Profil, 28 August 2021, https://www.profil.at/meinung/oevp-parteitag-jessas-scharia/401485615 (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{108.} Doris Vettermann, "Raab will 'Allianz gegen politischen Islam'", Kronen Zeitung, 11 September 2021, https://www.krone.at/2504388 (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{109.} Katharina Mittelstaedt and Walter Müller, "Wie könnte ein 'Scharia-Verbot' in Österreich aussehen?", Der Standard, 30 August 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000129287799/wie-koennte-ein-scharia-ver-bot-in-oesterreich-aussehen (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{110.} Christoph Matzl, "'Polit-Islam' gefährlicher als Islamisten-Terror", Kronen Zeitung, 30 October 2021, https://www.krone.at/2543769 (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{111. &}quot;Leugnete politischen Islam: Dämpfer für umstrittene SP-Politikerin", exxpress.at, 11 September 2021, https://exxpress.at/leugnete-politischen-islam-daempfer-fuer-umstrittene-sp-politikerin/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{112. &}quot;Stadt Wien fördert fragwürdige Islamkonferenz mit 40.000 Euro", exxpress.at, 26 May 2021, https://exxpress.at/40-000-euro-steuergeld-neos-stadtrat-unterstuetzt-islamkonferenz/ (Access date: 25 November 2021).

Justice System

In April 2021, a mosque under the umbrella of the Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ) that was immediately closed following the violent attack on November 2, 2020, was reopened. Initially, the IGGÖ had backed the closure on its behalf, 113 but the mosque appealed against the decision of the Ministry of Interior and won the case. Due to the weak political position of Muslims, there is a great need to fight unconstitutional measures taken by the conservative government to counter legal discrimination and fight for more equality. 114

The investigations against an imam, who fell victim to the infamous Operation Luxor, were ended. More importantly, the Higher Regional Court of Graz (OLG Graz) in response to nine appeals declared that all nine of the raids were unjustified as there was insufficient ground for suspicion. In September, the OLG Graz ruled that the initial denial of access to the files was illegal. In December, the OLG Graz ruled that the phone tapping that led to the raid had been unlawful and that the freezing of assets was unlawful. Also in December, the State Prosecutor stopped the procedures against the former president of the IGGÖ Anas Schakfeh (1997-2011), who had become a defendant in this case. Along with him, the investigations against another defendant were ended by the State Prosecutor. Lawyer Andreas Schweitzer called the investigation a "politically motivated activity." At the same time, several teachers targeted in the operation remain suspended from their jobs at public schools.

^{113.} Erich Kocina, "Geschlossene Moschee darf wieder öffnen", Die Presse, 10 April 2021, https://www.diepresse.com/5963923/geschlossene-moschee-darf-wieder-offnen, (Access date: 20 November 2021).

^{114.} Farid Hafez, "Die ÖVP gegen den 'politischen Islam'": Ein verfassungswidriger Kreuzzug, Mosaik, 01 April 2021, https://mosaik-blog.at/politischer-islam-oevp-verfassungsgerichtshof/, (Access date: 20 November 2021)

^{115. &}quot;Ermittlungen gegen Wiener Imam eingestellt", ORF, 02 November 2021, https://wien.orf.at/stories/3128287/ (Access date: 25 November 2021); Manfred Seeh, "Doch kein Terror: Strafverfahren beendet", Die Presse, 02 November 2021, https://www.diepresse.com/6055258/doch-kein-terror-strafverfahren-beendet (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{116.} Anna Thalhammer, Operation Luxor: Razzia laut OLG Graz rechtswidrig, 3 August 2021, https://www.die-presse.com/6016465/operation-luxor-razzia-laut-olg-graz-rechtswidrig

^{117.} Kid Möchel, Dominik Schreiber, Michaela Reibenwein, Muslimbruderschaft: Weitere Schlappe für Staatsanwalt, 15 Sept 2021, https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/muslimbruderschaft-weitere-schlappe-fuer-staatsanwalt/401734461

Wilfried Rombold, und Bernd Hecke, Operation LuxorAuch Telefonüberwachung war unrechtmäßig, Kleine Zeitung, 16 Dec 2021, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/6074629/Operation-Luxor_Auch-Telefonueberwachung-war-unrechtmaessig

^{119.} Gerald Stoiber, Nach Razzia gegen Muslimbrüder: Gericht gibt Liegenschaften frei, Salzburger Nachrichten, 6 Dec 2021, https://www.sn.at/panorama/oesterreich/nach-razzia-gegen-muslimbrueder-gericht-gibt-liegen-schaften-frei-113626204

^{120.} Operation "Luxor": Ermittlungen gegen Anas Schakfeh eingestellt, Kurier, 28 December 2021, https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/operation-luxor-ermittlungen-gegen-anas-schakfeh-eingestellt/401855354

^{121.} Gerald Stoiber, Nach der "Operation Luxor": Mutmaßliche Muslimbrüder wehren sich mit Dutzenden Einsprüchen, Salzburger Nachrichten, 26 July 2021, https://www.sn.at/panorama/oesterreich/nach-der-operation-luxor-mutmassliche-muslimbrueder-wehren-sich-mit-dutzenden-einspruechen-107143309

^{122.} Dritter steirischer Islamlehrer wurde freigestellt, Kronen Zeitung, 28 May 2021, https://www.krone.at/2350218

The Muslim Youth Organization of Austria (MJÖ) filed a complaint against the University of Vienna, the Documentation Center Political Islam, and the author of the Islam Map, stating the map violated data privacy rules.¹²³

During the investigation into Operation Luxor, a former anonymous informant revoked his original statement that incriminated me and others. He was then uncovered by the Austrian secret service. Following this, a Muslim theologian incriminated the same people and publicly reiterated these false allegations, and was sued by myself and others. 124 He lost in trial court and appealed.

Several opinions that were published by legal scholars or anti-racist institutions such as Amnesty International which heavily criticized the new anti-terrorism legislation.¹²⁵ were widely ignored in the final draft of the new legislation.

As reported by the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom, the Vienna Prosecutor's Office declined to prosecute the far-right FPÖ for incitement after the party posted slogans that equated traditionally dressed Muslims with violent Islamism during the Vienna municipal elections in October 2020. 126

Internet

In its 127-page-long report, SOS Mitmensch has primarily monitored social media accounts of politicians and exposed the anti-Muslim statements published on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Pages 55 to 119 include a list of online anti-Muslim propaganda by politicians including high-profile political leaders of the far-right FPÖ such as former presidential candidate and third president of the National Parliament, Norbert Hofer; Viennese FPÖ Chairman Dominik Nepp; Upper Austrian FPÖ Chairman Manfred Haimbuchner; Vice-mayor of Linz (FPÖ) Markus Hein; former Defense Minister and FPÖ Chairman of Styria Mario Kunasek; Tyrolean FPÖ Chairman Markus Abwerzger; MEP Helmut Vilimsky (FPÖ); FPÖ General Secretary Michael Schnedlitz; FPÖ Chairman Herbert Kickl; and many other FPÖ politicians with lower profiles, but also Minister of Integration Susanne Raab from the conservative ruling party ÖVP. Themes of their propaganda in-

^{123.} Zeit Online, Muslimische Jugend will gegen Islam-Landkarte klagen, 29 May 2021, https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2021-05/oesterreich-politischer-islam-landkarte-klage-muslime-jugend-mjoe?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

^{124.} Farid Hafez, Facebook Post, 3 August 2021, https://www.facebook.com/ferithafez/posts/3058443751094779/

^{125.} Opinion on the draft of a law to combat terrorism (TeBG) at the University of Innsbruck by Univ.-Prof. Dr Klaus Schwaighofer - Univ.-Prof. Dr. Andreas Venier, 01 February 2021, online from: https://www.uibk.ac.at/strafrecht/strafrecht/stellungnahme_tebg.pdf (Access date: 21 November 2021).

^{126.} Office of International Religious Freedom, 2 June 2022, State Department, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Austria, https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/austria/

^{127.} SOS Mitmensch, Antimuslimischer Rassismus in der österreichischen Politik Antimuslimische Abwertungs-, Ausgrenzungs-, Feindbild-, Generalisierungs- und Hetzkampagnen im Jahr 2021, March 2022, https://www.sosmitmensch.at/dl/qnuLJKJkLnKJqx4KJK/SOS_Mitmensch_Bericht2021_AntimuslimischerRassismus_ Maerz2022_pdf

cluded spreading fears of an alleged Islamization and the discursive exclusion of Muslims in Austria.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Since the establishment of the Documentation Center Political Islam, it has become the hub for actors who disseminate their alarmist agenda of securitizing and criminalizing Muslim civil society and Muslims' political agency. This report's section on education and research, and the discussion about the Islam Map, which was relaunched by the center, clearly reveal that people such as Lorenzo Vidino, Heiko Heinisch, Elham Manea, Mouhanad Khorchide, and Ednan Aslan, are key figures in the dissemination of these views via central political institutions alongside political leaders such as Minister of Integration Susanne Raab from the conservative governing party ÖVP. Lorenzo Vidino also served as a witness during the ongoing investigations into Operation Luxor. 128 Vidino is also a research fellow of the Hedayah Center in Abu Dhabi, UAE, 129 which Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg (ÖVP) visited to discuss the prevention of extremism. 130 As Andreas Krieg from King's College London has revealed, other people like Swedish Magnus Ranstorp "turned Muslim Brotherhood expert overnight in 2017 – suspiciously around the same time he became an advisor to the UAE's state-funded Hedayah Center."131 Sian Norris from Byline Times revealed that Vidino was a proponent of the Great Replacement theory. 132 Not only was Vidino's contested report of 2017¹³³ a basis for the raids, but the expert opinions of Heiko Heinisch and Nina Scholz were also utilized. This shows that some of these academics are deeply involved on a personal level in the legitimization of criminalizing Muslim civil society.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

On March 31, the anti-racist NGO SOS Mitmensch launched the website antimus-limischer-rassismus.at/ for anti-Muslim racism educational purposes.

^{128.} ON16, 16 St 52/19t

^{129.} Introducing a world-leading CVE team, https://hedayah.com/about/team/

Johannes Arends, "Terrorismusbekämpfung beginnt in der Schule", Kurier, 11 September 2021, https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/terrorismusbekaempfung-beginnt-in-der-schule/401732649 (Access date: 25 November 2021).

^{131.} Andreas Krieg, How the UAE Nurtured Sweden's Islamist Bogeyman, Politics Today, 9 Nov 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20211110175547/https://politicstoday.org/how-the-uae-nurtured-swedens-islamist-bogeyman/

^{132.} Sian Norris, Austrian Government Anti-Muslim Raids Inspired by Advocate of Racist Great Replacement Theory, Byline Times, 9 November 2021, https://bylinetimes.com/2021/11/09/austrian-government-anti-muslim-raids-inspired-by-advocate-of-racist-great-replacement-theory/

^{133.} Hafez, Farid. "Muslim Civil Society under Attack: The European Foundation for Democracy's Role in Defaming and Delegitimizing Muslim Civil Society." Islamophobia and Radicalization. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019. 117-137.

In April, the Dokustelle Muslime hosted an online discussion, critically discussing and reflecting on Operation Luxor and the anti-terrorism package. ¹³⁴ Several anti-racist NGOs condemned Operation Luxor. ZARA wrote that "Operation Luxor with all its far-reaching consequences was only possible because of many years of an ongoing institutionalization of anti-Muslim racism." ¹³⁵ In November, CAGE & ACT-P (Assisting Children Traumatised by Police), a newly established NGO following Operation Luxor, published the first critical report on the infamous racist Operation Luxor entitled "Operation Luxor: Unravelling the Myths behind Austria's Largest Ever Peacetime Police Raids." ¹³⁶

In November, artist and curator Asma Aiad presented the festival "Muslim*Contemporary" that critically engaged with racism and anti-racist strategies.¹³⁷

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

While the hegemony of the anti-Muslim discourse is still strong, the resignation of Sebastian Kurz as chancellor and his withdrawal from politics has given a chance to the ÖVP to rethink its Islam-related politics, which did not happen in 2021, but to some extent occurred early in 2022. The very few Kurz loyalists such as Susanne Raab are still part of the government and with institutions such as the Documentation Center Political Islam, a system of surveillance and criminalization has been established that must be abolished. The old guard of the ÖVP has the chance to rethink its approach towards organized Muslims in order to end many of the policies that have not survived litigation. Amongst the recommendations, I especially highlight and reiterate some of the older recommendations from previous years:

- The Documentation Center Political Islam' project 'Islam Map' has to be abolished
- 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 2020.
- The Documentation Center Political Islam has to be abolished.
- Training on racism, especially Islamophobia, should be offered to journalists, lawyers, and police (security officials) by qualified personnel rather than by people related to institutions that harm Muslim life in Austria.

^{134.} Dokustelle Muslime (2021), Operation Luxor & das Anti-Terror-Paket, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-pc--JRJrLg&t=1s

^{135.} ZARA, ,Operation Luxor, 'https://zara.or.at/de/wissen/aktuelles/n/news/vBZvWUEfN/Operation_Luxor

^{136.} CAGE & ACT-P, Operation Luxor: Unravelling the myths behind Austria's largest ever peacetime police raids, https://www.cage.ngo/product/operation-luxor-unravelling-the-myths-behind-austrias-largest-ever-peacetime-police-raids-report

^{137.} Muslim*Contemporary, Muslim*What?, https://muslimcontemporary.at/muslimwhat

- 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

- 14 May: During Minister Jacinda Ardern's "Christchurch Call," Chancellor Sebastian Kurz spoke about the "battle against political Islam" rather than violent white supremacism.
- 27 May: The Documentation Center Political Islam presented the Islam Map.
- 2 June: Individuals began to use the Islam Map to "out" certain locations as Muslim with posters and signs reading "Beware! Political Islam in your Neighborhood."
- 15 June: The Islam Map was again published online after being offline for two weeks.
- 28 October: Minister Susanne Raab organized the "Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in Integration" to make Vienna a center in the fight against so-called political Islam.
- 28 October: Anti-Muslim writers Heiko Heinisch and Lorenzo Vidino presented their report "Organizations of Political Islam and Their Impact in Europe and Austria."

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN BELGIUM NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

The current report on Islamophobia in Belgium in 2021 highlights that there has been a distinct and clear continuation of the phenomenon throughout the country. Regarding the nature and manifestation of Islamophobia, whilst explicit interpersonal Islamophobia – or Islamophobia enacted on perceived Muslims by others – remains apparent and pertinent across the nation, this report underlines the centrality of systemic and structural Islamophobia which, in particular, has been at the fore in Belgium in 2021. Specific examples include the clear targeting of Belgian Muslim women, especially when these women are visibly perceivable as Muslims, oftentimes through their dress and headscarf. For example, Belgian Muslim women faced direct exclusion from the labour force at the stage of job advertising, the recruitment process, and exclusion from the world of work once they occupy a position. Furthermore, a particularly noteworthy case is that of Ihsan Haouach, who in May 2021 was appointed to the post of government commissioner for the Institute of Gender Equality. In spite of the generally high levels of political participation and representation of Belgian Muslim women in politics, Haouach's appointment was attacked both in the media and across the political spectrum. Her visibility as a Muslim woman and assumptions made around her neutrality and beliefs were heavily scrutinised, leading to her stepping down from the appointed role in July 2021.

As is constitutive of Islamophobia, Muslim practices and spaces associated with Muslimness remained key targets of Islamophobia in the period under review. For example, the prohibition of ritual halal and kosher slaughter (without prior stunning) in both Belgian federal regions of Flanders and Walllonia remains in place. The contestation of this legislative measure has brought Belgian Jewish and Muslim communities together in joint legal appeals to counter the bans. Meanwhile, Belgium remains home to effective anti-racist and counter Islamophobia efforts both through state-backed national initiatives and grassroots civil society efforts.

Synthèse

Cette partie du rapport souligne qu'il y a eu une continuation distincte et claire de l'islamophobie en Belgique en 2021. En ce qui concerne la nature et la manifestation de l'islamophobie, bien que l'islamophobie interpersonnelle explicite - ou l'islamophobie directée aux musulmans perçus, reste apparente et pertinente à travers la nation, cette section du rapport souligne la centralité de l'islamophobie systémique et structurelle qui, en particulier, a été au premier plan en Belgique en 2021. Des exemples spécifiques d'islamophobie structurelle et systémique en Belgique dont on a été témoin en 2021 incluent le ciblage clair des Musulmanes Belges, en particulier lorsque ces femmes sont visiblement perceptibles en tant que Musulmanes, souvent par leur tenue vestimentaire et le foulard. Par exemple, en 2021, les Musulmanes Belges ont été directement exclues du marché du travail au niveau de la publication des offres d'emploi, du processus de recrutement et de l'exclusion du monde du travail une fois qu'elles sont en poste (tous détaillés plus loin dans cette section du rapport). Par ailleurs, un cas particulièrement remarquable ici est celui d'Ihsan Haouach, qui a été nommé en mai 2021 au poste de commissaire du gouvernement auprès de l'Institut pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes. Nonobstant, et malgré les niveaux généralement élevés de participation politique et de représentation des femmes musulmanes belges en politique, la nomination de Haouach a été attaquée à la fois dans les médias et dans l'ensemble du spectre politique. Sa visibilité en tant que femme musulmane et les hypothèses formulées autour de sa neutralité et de ses croyances ont été scrutées, ce qui l'a amenée à démissionner de son poste en juillet 2021.

De plus, et constitutif de l'islamophobie, les pratiques Musulmanes et les espaces associés à la 'Musulmanité' restent des cibles clés de l'islamophobie en Belgique en 2021. Ici, par exemple, l'interdiction de l'abattage rituel à la fois *halal* et *casher* (sans étourdissement préalable) dans les deux régions fédérales belges de Flandre et de Wallonie reste en place. Néanmoins, la contestation de cette mesure législative a réuni les communautés juives belges et musulmanes belges dans des recours juridiques conjoints pour contrer les interdictions. De même façon, comme détaillé dans cette section du rapport, la Belgique continue d'abriter des efforts efficaces de lutte contre le racisme et l'islamophobie, à la fois par d'initiatives nationales soutenues par l'État et d'efforts de la société civile.

Country Profile EIR 2021

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 (N-VA), Christen-Democratische en Vlaams and Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten, Socialistische Partij Anders, Vlaams Belang (VB), and Groen.

Last Elections: The last elections took place in May 2019 and run on a five-yearly cycle in line with the European Parliament elections. The highest-ranking parties were as follows: N-VA-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, while 0.7% of the total population is German-speaking and based in francophone Liège. English is also widely spoken throughout the country.

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 Belgiqie – CCIB/Collectief Tegen Islamofobie en België, CTIB) documents statistics annually on Islamophobia, based on evidence derived from the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (Unia) and direct reports.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Statistics are compiled by Unia, under 17 of the 19 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 Muslim Executive of Belgium (Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique/ Executief van de Moslims van België, EMB) serves as the official national interlocutor on Islam and Muslim communities in the country (under the official recognition of Islam), comprising representatives from the federal regions. It oversees the registration of mosques and clergy, chaplains, Muslim/Islamic religious education teachers in state schools, ritual slaughter certificates, and announcing religious festivals among other key details in the function of Islam in Belgium.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Indicatively, CCIB, Unia, the European Network against Racism - ENAR, Actiris

Far-Right Parties: Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang, VB)

Far-Right Movements: Katholiek Vlaams Hoogstudentenverbond, Nationalistische Studentenvereniging, Schild en Vrienden, Voorpost

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: Rather than organisations being directly designated as far-right terrorist 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 in 2021 is marked by continuation: continued generalised growth in Islamophobia in the nation, but also a continued increment in specific discursive fields of Islamophobia. As with previous years, Muslim women (or perceived Muslim women) tend to encounter comparatively higher incidences of Islamophobia, ranging from explicit verbal and physical attacks to denial of services and exclusion from society – particularly in the fields of employment and education. Islamophobia in Belgium traverses systemic, structural, and interpersonal fields. Put simply, Islamophobia ranges from legislative measures such as prohibition on practices associated with Muslimness like ritual slaughter to institutional policies and direct attacks on Muslims and sites associated with Muslimness. This report seeks to cover these key moments, instances, and examples of Islamophobia in 2021, whilst also highlighting the contextual nuances of the Belgian case and key recommendations that emerge from this analysis.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

The specific nature of Islamophobia in Belgium over the course of 2021 highlights the continuation of established trends in the manifestation of Islamophobia and also the structural, systemic, and normative mechanisms through which it takes place. In terms of explicit Islamophobia, Belgium still appears to have comparatively high levels of gendered Islamophobia, that is to say that Muslim women in Belgium continue to be disproportionately impacted by the phenomenon. Instances of this range from interpersonal attacks and denial of services (as covered in significant depth in previous editions of the Belgian section of the *European Islamophobia Report*) to the legislated exclusion from schooling and education; the bans on faith symbols (read Muslim women's headscarves) from Belgian higher education in Wallonia and Flanders; the continued exclusion from the Belgian labour force across all levels; the removal of Muslim women from politics; the employment of Belgian normative narratives around secularism and neutrality; and the mapping of the latter onto broader dominant patterns of Islamophobia.¹

Furthermore, in 2021 Belgium has continued to see sustained attacks on Muslim freedoms and practice of faith, as is apparent in the case of the bans on ritual slaughter in Flanders and Wallonia. Meanwhile, this legislated ban has led to a continued collaboration between Belgian Jewish and Muslim communities in order to contest the measures.

See Law, I., Easat-Daas, A., Merali, A., and Sayyid S., Countering Islamophobia in Europe. Germany, Springer International Publishing, 2019 for further information.

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The year 2021 saw the continuation of physical and verbal attacks against Muslims, perceived Muslims, and Muslim sites/practices. The Collectif pour l'Inclusion & contre l'Islamophobie – CIIB, formerly known as CCIB Collective Against Islamophobia in Belgium, in their annually published report, detail the ways in which the online sphere is mobilised to incite violence against Muslimness in the nation.

In terms of explicit manifestations, of note is the physical attack against CIIB President Mustapha Chairi, who upon being invited to a debate on neutrality organised by Mouvement Réformateur (MR) on 8 December 2021 in the already heavily politicised Brussels area of Molenbeek, was physically assaulted by the event's security guard.² In his public social media presence, Chairi describes the attack and his sentiments in the aftermath as follows:

After 5 minutes, a security guard picks me up in this room that had no more than 20 people at the time and asks me to accompany him to the lobby for further identity verification. When I arrived in the lobby, the guard asks me for my identity card. Something I obviously refuse, I go to the exit, telling him that I didn't come to be checked 10 times. The security guard catches up with me, tackles me against the bay window, immobilises me, chokes me with its strong body and tells me that I cannot leave without checks on my identity. All this in daylight. During this short period of time that seemed endless to me, I am immobilised. Being physically controlled with so much strength and violence and at the age of 61 this situation put me in difficulty... and all this without any seemingly valid reason. I was literally in shock. The security guard called two police officers who were on the other side of the road to intervene. What would have happened to me if the two police officers had not been so benevolent?³

The violent attack on Chairi, albeit somewhat different from the seemingly countless physical and verbal attacks particularly against visibly Muslim women detailed in the Belgian chapter of previous editions of this report, exemplifies the way in which Muslim males in particular are securitised (Muslim men are constructed as imminent and inevitable violent threats that must allegedly legitimately be regulated) and the way in which they often come to experience physical and verbal Islamophobia through individual actors legitimised by institutional and systemic Islamophobic policies. In short, in this particular example, the security guard is able to exercise physical violence through increasingly globalised Islamophobic narratives and policies legitimating control and regulation of Muslimness.

Barnarts, Maïli. "Le vigile m'a plaqué contre une vitre, m'étouffant sans raison": le président du CCIB dit avoir été agressé lors d'un débat organisé par le MR." DH, 24 June 2921, https://www.dhnet.be/actu/ faits/2021/12/24/le-vigile-ma-plaque-contre-une-vitre-metouffant-sans-raison-le-president-du-ccib-dit-avoirete-agresse-lors-dun-debat-organise-par-le-mr-TEGRJQZPN5FJ5JAMFEI7AYN4XU/.

Chairi, Mustapha. Testimonial Following Attack by Security Guard. Facebook. 22 December 2021. https://www.facebook.com/100067618758519/posts/238656088398348/?sfnsn=mo.

Employment

As with previous years, the Belgian labour market remains a key site of Islamophobia. The nation is home to the well-known Achbita case, whereby Ms Achbita, a Belgian Muslim employee at G4S, in 2006, adopted the headscarf having already worked for the company for three years. Whereupon, she was dismissed since G4S deemed her visible Muslimness to be in contradiction to the company's outward appearance of neutrality. The case was heard by the Anvers Court in 2009, escalated to the national Court of Cassation in 2015, and was subsequently heard by the European Court of Justice in 2017. The latter ruled that as a private company, G4S could regulate employee dress for those employees who were in direct contact with the public,⁴ but that employees wishing to wear faith insignia had the right to redeployments to a non-public facing role. The case was heard once again by the Court of Ghent which ruled that there had not been unfair discrimination against women who opt to wear the headscarf. Arguably the Achbita case sets the tone and indicates potentially normative attitudes towards visible gendered Muslim presence in the Belgian labour force.

In the year under review, reports emerged that headscarf-wearing or visibly Muslim women continue to face workplace discrimination – this time in the field of domestic cleaning employment. Visibly Muslim women who wear the headscarf are explicitly signalled as individuals whom prospective clients would not want to have working in their homes providing cleaning services. Similarly, clients also stated that they would not welcome male domestic workers or those of immigrant background to clean their homes. These clear examples of racial and gendered discrimination not only appear to reduce domestic work to being the role of a woman, but also expose xenophobic and Islamophobic attitudes within the nation. Specifically, the intersection of this gendered, racialised, and Islamophobic discrimination, and its normalisation highlight the multiple ways in which Belgian Muslim women are adversely affected and face disadvantage in the workplace.

Similarly, Belgian Catholic school, Sainte Geneviève d'Etterbeek, found itself at the centre of controversy when it published a job vacancy, which explicitly stated the prohibition of headscarves in the establishment.⁶ The prohibition of Muslim faith symbols demonstrates again the gendered impacts of Islamophobia in Belgian edu-

UNIA. "Qu'est-ce que l'affaire Achbita?" UNIA. 15 March 2017. https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/quest-ce-que-laffaire-achbita).

Bernaerts, Maïli. "Des clients refusent les hommes ou les femmes voilées': le secture du nettoyage victim de racism et de discriminations" *La Libre*. 28 October 2021. https://www.lalibre.be/belgique/societe/2021/10/28/ des-clients-refusent-les-hommes-ou-les-femmes-voilees-le-secteur-du-nettoyage-victime-de-racisme-et-de-discriminations-AET3XJOCYFCK7AO3JTV4ZHLEHU/.

CIIB. "'Port du voile interdit dans l'établissement': discrimination directe dans l'emploi" CIIB. 28 September 2021. https://ccib-ctib.be/index.php/2021/09/28/port-du-voile-interdit-dans-letablissement-discrimination-directe-dans-lemploi/

cation and workforce. Furthermore, the advertisement underlines the apparent potential discord between the Belgian state recognition and therefore permissibility of state-funded faith educators in Belgian schools, and the normalisation of models of secularism (particularly French secularism) which seek to eliminate the presence of visible faith in public life, including schools. This incident echoes wider patterns of gendered Islamophobia in the nation, but also corroborates evidence indicating that minimal numbers of teachers in Belgian schools are allowed to teach whilst wearing the headscarf.7 This exclusion, or lack of presence of visibly Muslim women, in Belgian education comes when the nation is facing a shortage of teachers across the federal regions. As Smits Akilma points out, this continued exclusion juxtaposed with the national teacher shortage points to the normative perceived alterity of visibly Muslim women in Belgium.8 Even though the country is in distinct need of educators, those who are deemed appropriate must fit a narrow conception of what it means to be Belgian. In addition, the exclusion of visibly Muslim women from Belgian schools and educational establishments also has the effect of limiting the potential presence of positive role models in young people's lives who happen to be visibly Muslim women and thus has a knock-on effect of limiting the counter Islamophobia potential of such every-day interactions.

Even when not explicitly stated, Muslim women continue to bear the brunt of explicit Islamophobia. In May 2021, the Brussels Employment Tribunal ruled against the Société des Transports Intercommunaux de Bruxelles (STIB, Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company) for having twice rejected a candidate on the grounds of her headscarf, deeming her unfairly rejected application to be constitutive of discrimination.⁹

Similarly, in April 2021, the Verviers Employment Court heard the case of a Belgian Muslim woman who worked in a pharmacy in the region and was dismissed from her post once she adopted the headscarf. The court ruled in favour of the employer citing policies of outward neutrality and equality between employees.¹⁰

On a statistical level, the 2022 report by the Belgian Counter Islamophobia Collective, now rebranded the Collectif pour l'Inclusion & contre l'Islamophobie (Collective for Inclusion and against Islamophobia), published in September 2021, highlights that 15% of the 48 dossiers it handled that year pertained to workplace dis-

Smits Akilma, Amina. "How Islamophobia is Leading to a Teacher Shortage in Belgium" *Politics Today.* 31 December 2021. https://politicstoday.org/how-islamophobia-is-leading-to-a-teacher-shortage-in-belgium/).

^{8.} Ibio

UNIA. "La STIB condamnée pour discrimination à l'embauche d'une femme portant le foulard." UNIA. 5
May 2021. https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/la-stib-condamnee-pour-discrimination-a-lembauche-dune-femme-portant-le-foulard

^{10.} UNIA. "Cour du travail de Liège, section Verviers, 30 avril 2021" *UNIA*. 18 May 2021. https://www.unia.be/fr/jurisprudence-alternatives/jurisprudence/cour-du-travail-de-liege-30-avril-2021.

crimination.¹¹ Similarly the statistical report also reveals that 89% of cases handled by the organisation relate to Islamophobia against women,¹² underlining the key role of gender in the likelihood of experiencing Islamophobia in the country.

Education

The Belgian education sphere remains a key site in the presence and normalisation of Islamophobia in the nation. This influence ranges from exclusion in the educational professional labour market (see above) through prohibitive vacancy advertisements such as the case of the Saint Geneviève d'Etterbeek school which stated that headscarves were not permitted in their establishment, ¹³ or assertions that Islamophobic attitudes are contributing to the wider teacher shortage across the nation. ¹⁴ Ultimately Muslim women are deprived from entering the Belgian educational arena, but at the same time society is deprived of the positive influence that these educators can bring.

In 2020, controversy arose around the permissibility of faith symbols (namely Muslim women's headscarves) in Belgian higher education establishments in the federal regions of Wallonia and Flanders. The proposed bans on faith symbols in higher education sparked major protests across the nation¹⁵ – these protests coincided with broader anti-racist protests in the nation, namely Belgian anti-colonial protests and those mapping onto global Black Lives Matter protests. In July 2020, a collective of Muslim women, with the support of the pan-Belgian Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (Unia) sought to challenge the federal bans. The case was heard by the Belgian National Constitutional Court which deemed that the ban on faith symbols in francophone Belgian higher education did not constitute discrimination or contravene principles of neutrality in the Wallonia and Brussels federal regions. ¹⁶ Unia spoke out to express its dissatisfaction with the ruling at the time it was issued. ¹⁷ At the time, individual academic institutions, such as Vrije Universiteit Brussels (Free University of Brussels), tweeted,

CIIB. Rapport chiffres 2020: l'état de l'Islamophobie en Belgique. CCIB. September 2021. https://ccib-ctib.be/ wp-content/uploads/2021/10/20210921_RAPPORT_CHIFFRES_CIIB_2020.pdf.

^{12.} Ibid.

CIIB. "Port du voile interdit dans l'établissement': discrimination directe dans l'emploi" CIIB. 28 September 2021. https://ccib-ctib.be/index.php/2021/09/28/port-du-voile-interdit-dans-letablissement-discrimination-directe-dans-lemploi/

^{14.} Smits Akilma, Amina. "How Islamophobia is Leading to a Teacher Shortage in Belgium" *Politics Today.* 31 December 2021. https://politicstoday.org/how-islamophobia-is-leading-to-a-teacher-shortage-in-belgium/).

Easat-Daas, Amina. Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2019, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Istanbul, SETA 2021.

^{16.} European Commission. *Constitutional Court ruling on headscarf ban in schools of higher education.* European Commission. 20 July 2021. https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/5181-belgium-constitutional-court-ruling-on-headscarf-ban-in-schools-of-higher-education-75-kb).

^{17.} UNIA. "Signes convictionnels dans l'enseignement supérieur : Unia déçu par un arrêt de la Cour constitutionnelle" UNIA. 5 June 2021. https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/signes-convictionnels-dans-lenseignement-superieur.

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 with us regardless of gender, origin or social status, with or without headscarf. ¹⁸

Similarly, the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven) tweeted, "Yes, you can wear a headscarf at our university." The aforementioned were among a handful of Belgian universities that spoke out to indicate that irrespective of the federal positioning they would seek to welcome those with visible faith symbols, including the headscarf.²⁰

In January 2021, the contention against the ban on faith symbols in Belgian higher education was once again presented in appeal to the courts, and it was deemed that the ban would be unlawful in the francophone Brussels region.²¹ As such, the ban was overturned in the latter as of the new academic year beginning September 2021. Anti-racism activists were quick to commend and recognise the renewed possibilities for Muslim women who wear the headscarf and wantto pursue university level education in Belgium.²²

Whilst there has been positive legal and institutional movement toward the inclusion of visibly Muslim women (and by extension those who wear discernible faith symbols) in Belgian non-compulsory education, arguably the events of 2020 and the normalisation of a narrative (permissible) exclusion of visibly Muslim women in the country has already contributed to further trivialising the exclusion of Muslim women in Belgian society, arguably now borne out in the numerous examples of direct gendered Islamophobia in this report.

Politics

The Belgian political arena continues to be a key site in the perpetuation of Islamophobia in the country. This influence works through the promotion of political discourse and the passing of legislation, but also problematises the presence of Muslimness in the Belgian political sphere and wider society.

In 2021, national political controversy arose with the appointment of Ihsane Haouach to the post of government commissioner for the Institute of Gender Equality

^{18.} Detailed further in Easat-Daas, Amina. *Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2020*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2020*, Istanbul, SETA 2021.

^{19.} Ibid

^{20.} Belga. "Belgian universities stress that they will not ban headscarves." *The Brussels Times*. 16 June 2020. https://www.brusselstimes.com/117067/belgian-universities-stress-that-they-will-not-ban-headscarves-in-class.

UNIA. "Interdire les signes convictionnels dans l'enseignement supérieur par un règlement d'ordre intérieur est discriminatoire" UNIA. 2 December 2021. https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/interdire-les-signes-convictionnels-dans-lenseignement-superieur.

^{22.} Declerq, Fanny. "Signes convictionnels dans le supérieur: «Je ne voulais pas changer de choix d'études»" *Le Soir.* 14 September 2021, https://www.lesoir.be/394889/article/2021-09-14/signes-convictionnels-dans-le-superieur-je-ne-voulais-pas-changer-de-choix.

in May. Haouach was appointed by the government minister for equality and diversity, Sarah Schiltz, and at the time of her appointment (and to date) remains the first and only headscarf-wearing Belgian Muslim woman to have occupied this high-profile post. In spite of the significant gains made in terms of minority representation and inclusion in the diverse multilevel political arena of Belgium, Haouach's appointment sparked widespread polemic and criticism – particularly from the right of the political spectrum. For example, in June 2021, Darya Safai, a member of parliament for Nieuw Vlaamse Allantie (N-VA, New Flemish Alliance), the conservative nationalist political party, described Haouach's appointment as "particularly cynical" adding "how can Ihsane Haouach guarantee equality between men and women when she herself displays the symbol of inequality with her headscarf?" Safai's comments normalise the construction of the headscarf and visible gendered Muslimness as automatically anti-feminist and contrary to gender equality thus contributing to broader Islamophobic narratives. ²⁴

Similarly, centrist party Mouvement Réformateur (MR) president, Georges Bouchez, argued that the appointment of Haouach "compromised state neutrality" adding that one could either be a referee or a player, arguably questioning both Haouach's neutrality and integrity. Bouchez went on to tweet, "Wearing a headscarf must remain a guaranteed individual freedom, but the neutrality of the state must not be questioned in order to satisfy the communitarianism of parties that want to charm voters."25 He added, "It is no problem to wear the headscarf freely, but need we remind that certain families or in certain countries, a headscarf is a means of dominating women?"26 He went on to question what women fleeing Islamic regimes might think of Belgium should they see Haouach occupying her new political function.²⁷ Bouchez's online remarks again essentialise wearing the headscarf and reduce headscarf-wearing Muslim women to being against gender equality; reduce Islamic governance to being anti-democratic and antithetical to nations like Belgium; and, like Safai who was mentioned above, frame the headscarf as a patriarchal instrument of control. Such simplistic generalisations contribute to Islamophobic narratives, but also deny Muslim women voice and agency.

Finally and in a similar vein, others directly attacked Schiltz arguing that she had contravened Belgian secular democratic principles in nominating Haouach

^{23.} Safai, Darya. "Benoeming Ihsane Haouach is cynisch en onaanvaardbaar" N-VA. 3 June 2021. https://www.n-va.be/nieuws/benoeming-ihsane-haouach-is-cynisch-en-onaanvaardbaar

See Law, I., Easat-Daas, A., Merali, A., and Sayyid S., Countering Islamophobia in Europe. Germany, Springer International Publishing, 2019 for further information.

^{25.} Chini, Maïthé. "'Either a referee or a player': liberals oppose Equality Commissioner with headscarf" *The Brussels Times*. 2 June 2021. https://www.brusselstimes.com/171992/walloon-liberals-oppose-appointment-of-government-commissioner-with-headscarf-ihsane-haouach-georges-louis-bouchez-mr-stib-neutrality-of-the-state.

^{26.} Ibid.

^{27.} Ibid.

to the post, and argued that they could no longer trust Schiltz.²⁸ Such paternalistic criticism echoes the critique voiced in the case of Ilham Moussaïd in Avignon, France in 2010,²⁹ whereby a visibly Muslim woman far-left candidate was heavily criticised on the grounds of her headscarf, and demonstrates the ways gendered Islamophobia often infantilises Muslim women. Schiltz spoke out publicly to argue that since Haouach did not occupy a federal role her presence did not contravene the nation's secular democratic principles.³⁰ Here we see the conflation and borrowing of secular norms that are often articulated in neighbouring France, which currently seek a complete elimination of faith symbols in the public sector for employees (and also often service users) evident in cases such as the prohibition of headscarves for schoolgirls, mothers collecting their children from school, or government employees. Arguably this leakage of normative ideas around secularism and state neutrality into Belgium, a nation that notably recognises and funds faith groups, is part of a wider pattern of the globalisation of Islamophobic narratives.

Following the intense political scrutiny and the emergence of allegations of Haouach's links to the Muslim Brotherhood, Haouach wrote to Schiltz to resign from her new post. Haouch cited "the context of mistrust and violence towards me, make it impossible to exercise my role efficiently."³¹

Haouach's critics such as Bouchez were quick to comment stating, "I am surprised that we are surprised. This kind of information has been leaking for weeks." Similarly, George Dallemend of the Centre Démocrate Humaniste (CDH, Humanist Democratic Centre) took to Twitter suggesting, "The Muslim Brotherhood have the same agenda as the Salafists, that is to say that they want to divide society, to have a vision of Islam turned in on itself. These people are dangerous for democracy." 33

The remarks made by key figures in the Belgian political arena, publicised by social media and traditional media channels, function to perpetuate several intersecting and often flawed Islamophobic myths; namely, the reduction of the headscarf to

^{28.} Belga. "Après la désignation d'Ihsane Haouach, Denis Ducarme réplique à Sarah Schlitz: 'Vous n'aurez plus mon soutien acquis'" *La Libre.* 2 June 2021. https://www.lalibre.be/belgique/politique-belge/2021/06/02/apres-la-designation-dihsane-haouach-denis-ducarme-ne-sestime-plus-tenu-par-la-solidarite-de-majorite-a-legard-de-sarah-schlitz-BDLFSZ52MJG4FP6EIS7ZLDLYPY/

^{29.} Easat-Daas, Amina. Muslim Women's Political Participation in France and Belgium. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Belga. "Après la désignation d'Ihsane Haouach, Denis Ducarme réplique à Sarah Schlitz: 'Vous n'aurez plus mon soutien acquis'" La Libre. 2 June 2021. https://www.lalibre.be/belgique/politique-belge/2021/06/02/apres-la-designation-dihsane-haouach-denis-ducarme-ne-sestime-plus-tenu-par-la-solidarite-de-majorite-a-legard-de-sarah-schlitz-BDLFSZ52MJG4FP6EIS7ZLDLYPY/.

RTBF. "Démission d'Ihsane Haouach: elle invoque des raisons personnelles et nie tout lien avec les Frères musulmans" RTBF. 10 July 2021. https://www.rtbf.be/article/demission-dihsane-haouach-elle-invoque-des-raisons-personnelles-et-nie-tout-lien-avec-les-freres-musulmans-10801756P.

^{32.} Ibid.

^{33.} Ibid.

being an anti-feminist garment employed by Muslim men to control and subjugate Muslim women (rather than possibly being chosen by some Muslim women), reinforcing Orientalist, gendered stereotypes. The narratives further these stereotypes through the way in which Schiltz was targeted for permitting Haouch's nomination, evoking paternalistic notions, and removing Haouach's voice and agency – and overall contributing to dominant gendered Islamophobic ideas. Additionally, the (ultimately unfounded) allegations of Haouch's links to the Muslim Brotherhood evoke narratives of political entryism by Muslims, which is essentially the notion that any political participation by Muslims is disingenuous and solely a means of gaining political and societal control, in particular via the insertion of so-called Muslim ideals antithetical to 'Western' society.³⁴

It should also be noted that the Belgian far right has continued to mobilise around key events and narratives in the ongoing halal/kosher slaughter debate, which is discussed in the section pertaining to the justice system.³⁵

Media

The Belgian media remains a key platform in the dissemination of Islamophobic headlines. For example, in reference to the preceding year, the CIIB's 2021 published statistical report highlights that of all the dossiers handled that year, 46% pertain to Islamophobia online and in the media. 36 This figure represents a stark increase compared to the figures reported in previous years. This may be linked to the recording of these cases during the pandemic year - that is to say that given the change in activity and spaces occupied by both Belgian Muslims and members of the wider Belgian public, interpersonal Islamophobia during the pandemic year shifted in nature from being explicit and often verbal/physical to explicit and virtual. Whilst the Belgian media does not occupy a non-partisan role, it often is compelled to report both pro and counter Islamophobic headlines. For example, during the Ihsane Haouach affair, media reported the comments by Islamophobic members of the Belgian political system, thus further stoking/normalising Islamophobia in Belgium and particularly Islamophobia directed towards Belgian Muslim women. However, the media also highlighted reports such as the shutting down of pro-Jürgen Conings social media pages in the midst of the Conings affair (see "Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network").

^{34.} See Law, I., Easat-Daas, A., Merali, A., and Sayyid S., Countering Islamophobia in Europe. Germany, Springer International Publishing, 2019 for further information.

Kanji, Azeezah. "Kosher and Halal bans: Fur-washing factory farming's brutality" Al Jazeera. 3 November 2021. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/11/3/kosher-and-halal-bans-fur-washing-factory-farmings-brutality.

CIIB. Rapport chiffres 2020: l'état de l'Islamophobie en Belgique. CCIB. September 2021. https://ccib-ctib.be/ wp-content/uploads/2021/10/20210921_RAPPORT_CHIFFRES_CIIB_2020.pdf.

Justice System

In 2019, the federal Belgian regions of Wallonia and Flanders passed legislation banning ritual slaughter.³⁷ From this point onwards, ritual slaughter could only take place in either of these federal regions if stunning of the animal prior to slaughter occurred regardless of the fact that this contravened the religious principles of both the Jewish and Muslim communities. The combined way in which this ban in the Wallonia and Flanders impacts the two communities has brought about increased collaborative rebuttal efforts with September 2021 seeing the Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique (EMB, Muslim Executive of Belgium) and the Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de Belgique (CCOJB, Coordinating Committee of Belgian Jewish Organisations), among others, coming together to appeal the federal decisions in the Belgian Constitutional Court. Whilst the court recognised the potential of the ban to restrict certain religious freedoms in Belgium, it stated that "the protection and well-being of animals, as sentient beings, constitutes a legitimate general interest", adding that "the freedom of thought, conscience and religion should be interpreted in light of current life and normative thought of our times in democratic states."38

Shortly after the Belgian Constitutional Court's ruling, reports emerged that the groups would look to appeal the decision further at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg. In a collective statement the organisations stated, "Current religious slaughter techniques constitute a full-fledged alternative to stunning animals and are fully compatible with public health, food safety, and animal welfare requirements."39 The statement added, "The stunning obligation, on the other hand, is only an emotional symbolic measure, which simply serves, to the detriment of religious minorities, to appease the conscience of the average consumer and to obscure the reality that animals are raised as objects of consumption in industrial mega-stalls."40 Perhaps, quite rightly, the organisations point out the hypocrisy and double standards entailed within the ban, in that potentially the ban constitutes a means of not only legitimising and legalising anti-Semitic and Islamophobic religious discrimination, but also obfuscates from pressing issues surrounding the broader ethics of the meat industry, namely the mass production and consumption of animal products. The implementation and maintenance of the federal bans on ritual slaughter in Belgium send a clear signal both within the nation and across the continent con-

^{37.} Easat-Daas, Amina. *Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2019*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2020*, Istanbul, SETA 2021.

^{38.} Belga. "Abattage: la Cour constitutionnelle confirme l'obligation d'étourdissement préalable" *RTBF.* 39 September 2021. https://www.rtbf.be/article/abattage-la-cour-constitutionnelle-confirme-l-obligation-d-etourdissement-prealable-10851692?id=10851692

^{39.} Woussen, Wouter. "Steunpagina voor Jurgen Conings telt op één dag duizenden leden" *De Standaard.* 21 May 2021. https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20210521_95381258.

^{40.} Ibid.

cerning religious rights and legislated discrimination, and thus hold the potential to set growing precedence in Belgium, Europe, and globally.

Internet

The internet and online world remain key domains in the proliferation and presence of Belgian Islamophobia. Although given its breadth, spread, and, in particular, the potentially hidden online spaces, it becomes hard to fully understand the absolute scale of online Islamophobia in Belgium. Essentially, we see just the tip of the iceberg.

Each year, the CIIB's publishes a statistical report pertaining to the quantitative nature and state of Islamophobia in the nation the preceding year, expanding and highlighting key examples. The edition published in 2021 highlights two peaks in Islamophobia in February and April 2020 respectively. Furthermore, these two peaks relate to online Islamophobia. In February, the report highlighted the Islamophobic comments posted on Facebook inciting physical violence against Belgian Muslims on the occasion of the funeral of well-known Belgian Muslim professor, Rachid Haddach, with a commentator stating, "Des grenades dans cette foule de dégénérés. On est en Belgique bon sang de bon soir ... dommage que je n'ai plus mon camion" ([Throw] grenades among this crowd of degenerates. For God's sake we are in Belgium).⁴¹

Similarly, the CIIB's report highlights examples from the preceding April having received over twenty complaints about a particular Facebook user's comments, who had stated, for example,

"Call in the army otherwise we'll make our own laws and I won't be lenient. [I] [d]on't give a shit about parasites. Let them go home [to where they come from]! If I ever get my hands on a weapon like the FNP90, I'll have to go to the mosque. I find it unacceptable in our Catholic country. They are the ones who come to us and they should comply with our demands! Out of the question! Let them die. They are animals."

Overall, in 2021, Facebook has been quick, or at least quicker than in previous instances, to respond to online Islamophobic and far-right groups, evident in the way in which the support group for Jürgen Conings, which had 11,500 followers in

^{41.} Detailed further in: Easat-Daas, Amina. *Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2020*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2020*, Istanbul, SETA 2021.

^{42.} CIIB. Rapport chiffres 2020: l'état de l'Islamophobie en Belgique. CCIB. September 2021. https://ccib-ctib.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/20210921_RAPPORT_CHIFFRES_CIIB_2020.pdf. Original text reads: Appelez l'armée sinon on ferra notre propre loi et je ne serrai pas tendre. Rien à foutre de crs parasites. Qu ils rentrent chez eux! Si jamais je met la main sur une arme comme le FNP90, faudra allez à la mosquée. Ce que je trouve inadmissible dans notre pays catholique. Ce sont eux qui viennent chez nous et on devrait se plier à leur exigences! Hors de question! Qu'ils crèvent. Ce sont des animaux.

its first 24 hours of opening, was shut down within five days, by which time it had reached more than 45,000 followers.⁴³

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Developments in the Belgian context, additional to those discussed elsewhere in this section of the *European Islamophobia Report*, revealed the ever-present, but also increasingly pressing threat, posed by populist far-right sympathisers and activists in the nation. As of late May 2021 through to June 2021, Belgium and much of Europe was gripped by the manhunt for renegade Belgian soldier Jürgen Conings, believed to be heavily armed. The 46-year-old specialist marksman and corporal disappeared from his barracks loaded with arsenal including anti-tank missile launchers on 17 May 2021, with investigators finding his booby-trapped car. It soon emerged that Conings was on the national anti-terror watchlist given his extreme right sentiments, racist views, and due to threats that he had previously made online via social media. The revelations naturally sparked concern and high-risk sites, including mosques and individuals like virologist Mark van Ranst, whom Conings had previously publicly threatened, were quickly alerted - in the case of van Ranst, he was put in a safehouse, while Belgian mosques were offered increased security.⁴⁴

Commentators highlighted that the Conings affair accentuated internal issues of separatism, increasingly normalised racisms (including Islamophobia), the growth and normalisation of far-right parties at the polls, and issues of potentially dangerous individuals' access to life endangering arms. For example, parallels were raised between the Conings case and the open letter issued by 18 active French army staff who raised their concerns over the alleged dangers posed by 'Islamism' and large ghettoised Muslim spaces in France. Similar concerns have been echoed in Germany regarding support among military personnel for populist and Islamophobic stances. 45

Upon the announcement of Conings' disappearance, online support communities were quick to be set up. The Flemish page "Als 1 Achter Jürgen" (As One Behind Jürgen) was set up on 20 May 2021 and within its first 24 hours had gained 11,500 supporters. This number swelled to 45,800 by 25 May 2021 when the page was shut down by Facebook. Whilst the online sphere represented a quick and relatively easy way for sympathisers to gather and express their support for Conings, this support

^{43.} Woussen, Wouter. "Steunpagina voor Jurgen Conings telt op één dag duizenden leden" *De Standaard*. 21 May 2021. https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20210521_95381258.

^{44.} Moens, Barbara. "Belgium's most wanted man ignites a culture war" *Politico*. 5 June 2021. https://www.politico.eu/article/belgium-jurgen-conings-manhunt-culture-war/.

^{45.} Peel, Michael. "Renegade soldier is a worrying sign of far-right sympathies in Europe" *Financial Times.* 10 June 2021. https://www.ft.com/content/0daf4a88-87c3-4ac6-844b-d78b8b2c557f

Woussen, Wouter. "Steunpagina voor Jurgen Conings telt op één dag duizenden leden" De Standaard. 21 May 2021. https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20210521_95381258.

was not restricted to the virtual world. Approximately 150 individuals gathered in Maasmechelen to demonstrate in support of Conings, with some allegedly making the Nazi salute. Similarly, upon the discovery of Conings' body, some 150 supporters gathered to hold a vigil for the renegade soldier on 20 June 2021.

The intersection of Conings' links to the armed forces, growing political support for the far-right, and normalisation of Islamophobia, wider racism, and conspiracy theories highlight a broader pattern underlining the threat of violent political action posed by far-right supporters, but also demonstrate the potential ills of increasingly normalising Islamophobia within the political and public arenas.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In terms of key observed civil society and political actions to effectively counter Islamophobia in Belgium in 2021, a number of grassroots and state-funded activist anti-racist organisations remain at the fore. This rich but also effective and collaborative counter-Islamophobia scene in Belgium stems from a multitude of principal reasons such as the active national and pan-European anti-racism organisations operating from within the country. Of these key organisations and initiatives, those cited throughout this report such as the CIIB, Unia, and Actiris have made a significant, positive impact throughout 2021. Examples of continued and effective challenging of Islamophobia in the nation include the way in which Unia has continued to monitor statistics pertaining to Islamophobic hate crimes and provide advocacy and legal support for those experiencing and challenging Islamophobia; or the way in which both Actiris and the CIIB have shone a light on pertinent examples of Islamophobia in the nation, such as the case of the discriminatory job advertisement that excluded applications from visibly Muslim women.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia in 2021 in Belgium can be characterised by the ways in which it has been sustained and continued from preceding years. Belgian Islamophobia has remained constant particularly in terms of its manifestation, namely its gendered focus. Islamophobia in Belgium tends to impact Belgium Muslim women more and this disproportionate effect is only heightened further when Belgian Muslim women are visibly Muslim, often through their outward attire. The argument regarding the increased numbers of visibly Muslim women experiencing Islamophobia is apparent throughout this national report and is borne out explicitly in personal cases such as that of Ihsane Haouach, more generalised prejudicial attitudes as seen in the field of employment, or finally legislated as seen in the case of the ban (which was subsequently overturned) on headscarves in Belgian higher education.

In particular, explicit interpersonal, structural, and systemic Islamophobia as seen during 2021 has highlighted the operationalisation of normative attitudes vis-à-vis secularism, so-called and often undefined Belgian values and neutrality – concepts which are often borrowed or inherited from across the continent.

The nature of Islamophobia in Belgium in 2021 also highlights the ways in which Islamophobia goes beyond Muslims or perceived Muslims to compromise Muslim religious freedoms. This is apparent in the ban on ritual slaughter, operational since 2019, in two of three Belgian federal regions and impacting both the Belgian Jewish and Muslim communities. Nonetheless, as this report has underlined, the way in which this ban has affected the two communities has led to joint legal challenges and appeals being brought forward by both faith communities.

In terms of recommendations, the Belgian anti-racism and counter-Islamophobia scene remains robust and noteworthy. The way in which these organisations are configured, funded, and function represents best practice in countering Islamophobia.

However, given the increasing mobilisation of legislation in Belgian Islamophobia both during 2021 and in preceding years it is important to recognise this steady evolution and be mindful that legislated Islamophobia is likely to remain a key area in counter-Islamophobia efforts.

Chronology

- January 2021: Ban on headscarves in Belgian higher education case heard by the Belgian Constitutional Court. The prohibition is overturned effective as of September 2021.
- April 2021: Case of visibly Muslim Belgian woman who adopted the headscarf whilst employed by a pharmacy is heard by the employment law tribunal. Court rules in favour of employer on grounds of neutrality.
- May 2021: Société des Transports Intercommunaux de Bruxelles (STIB, Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company) tribunal concerning unfair rejection of two-times employment applicant, deemed to be rejected on the grounds of her headscarf, is heard. The courts rule in favour of the complainant.
- May 2021: Ihsane Haouach is appointed to the role of government commissioner for the Institute of Gender Equality by Minister Sarah Schiltz. Haouach faces months of intense Islamophobic scrutiny, politicisation, and mediatisation before resigning in July 2021.
- May 2021: Renegade Islamophobic soldier Jürgen Conings goes on the run heavily armed. Muslim sites and key figures among those warned by Conings are offered security. Conings is found dead in June 2021.
- **July 2021:** Ihsane Haouach resigns following intense Islamophobic scrutiny.

- **September 2021:** Appeal case regarding ritual slaughter as brought forward collaboratively by Belgian Jewish and Muslim communities heard by the Belgian Constitutional Court the ban is upheld.
- **September 2021:** Ban on headscarves/faith symbols in Belgian higher education formally overturned with the start of the new academic year.
- **September 2021:** Collectif pour l'Inclusion & contre l'Islamophobie CIIB's statistical report published online.
- September 2021: Belgian Catholic school, Sainte Geneviève d'Etterbeek, published job vacancy advert explicitly calling for no headscarf-wearing candidates

 the advert is flagged by Actiris.
- October 2021: Reports emerge indicating that visibly Muslim women are not preferred for domestic work by Belgian clients.
- **December 2021:** Mustapha Chairi, president of the CIIB, reports physical attacks by a security guard at a debate on neutrality organised by centrist party Mouvement Réformateur (MR) in Molenbeek, Brussels.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

During 2021, anti-Muslim bigotry towards Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina was evident mainly in the educational, political, and media sectors, trending towards an overall worsening situation. 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 2021 saw an increase in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attacks in comparison to 2020. The main reason for this is the rise of extreme nationalist rhetoric and political turmoil in the region. This year marked the 26th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, which has highlighted the continued denial of genocide and war crimes by the Serb authorities. The local and regional media contributed to anti-Muslim bigotry with reports about terrorist threats and radical ideology, connecting it with the Bosniak political and religious establishment. In comparison to the previous year, 2021 saw an increase 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 2021. godine došlo je do blagog smanjena anti-bosanske i anti-muslimanske retorike. Glavni razloga za ovo jeste bila porast regionalne nacionalisticke retorike. 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 2021

Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Type of Regime: Parliamentary representative democracy **Form of Government:** Three-member presidential system

Ruling Parties: Party for Democratic Action (SDA), Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)

Opposition Parties: Social Democratic Party (SDP), Serb Democratic Party (SDS), Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ 1990)

Last Elections: 2018 Presidential Election: Šefik Džaferović won 36.61% of the vote; Željko Komšić 52.64% of the vote; and Milorad Dodik 53.88% of the vote. 2018 Legislative Election: SDA 9 seats, HDZ 5 seats, and SNSD 6 seats. Local elections were held in November 2020.

Total Population: 3,511,372 (in 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); 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: NoPrayer Ban: No

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) is a specific example of Islamophobia. Anti-Muslim bigotry has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a long time. This Islamophobia reached its peak during the mass atrocities (including genocide) committed during the Bosnian War (1992-1995). Although anti-Muslim bigotry has deep roots in the region's history, contemporary Islamophobic statements only appeared in the late 1980s and were made by scholars, Orientalists, and self-proclaimed Islam "experts" at the University of Belgrade. It became common to portray Slavic Muslims as traitors of Orthodox Christianity, people with weak genes who converted to Islam. In a global context, this concept of faith-betrayal is an interesting form of Islamophobia, limited mainly to Slavic Muslims. After the Serbian aggression and genocide of 1992-95, Islamophobia has remained a powerful force both in the country and in the wider region. This Islamophobia manifests itself through political statements, in the media, and in physical attacks, most of which are aimed at Bosniak returnees in Republika Srpska and in Croat-majority areas. The largest concentration of Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) is in Bosnia and Herzegovina's other entity, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there were almost no attacks other than the occasional Islamophobic statements or writings. The 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 media, justice, education, etc.

Bosniaks are an indigenous Slavic ethnic group, who converted to Islam upon its arrival to Bosnia with the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century. Today's Bosnian Muslims are overwhelmingly Sunnis. For more than 55 years, communist rule (1945-1990) in Yugoslavia kept religion in the dark. However, after Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito's death in 1980, the rise of Serb nationalism first incited anti-Albanian and later anti-Muslim rhetoric. Centuries-old ideas of establishing a homogenous greater Serbian state were revived by the Yugoslav regime under Slobodan Milošević. During 1992-95, an international armed conflict and genocide the aim of which was 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. Several decades 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.

According to the census conducted in 2013, 50.11% (1,769,592) of Bosnia and Herzegovina's inhabitants declared themselves to be 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 often overlap, this figure is usually taken as indicative of the number of adherents to Islam. Due to the war-related deaths, expulsions, 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, however. 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 Bosnian Constitution includes the 15 core 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 apply directly to Bosnia and Herzegovina. A special law, the "Law on Freedom of Religion and the Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina," was adopted in 2004, which provided for the freedom of religion and religious non-discrimination, as well as the legal status of churches and religious communities. According to this law everyone has the right to freedom of religion or belief, including the freedom to publicly profess, or not profess, a religion. Along with this, the "Law on the 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).

The year 2021 saw an increase in anti-Bosnian rhetoric from Croatia and Serbia, a result of the political instability in the region which in turn, is connected to some of the main Islamophobic rhetorical discourse in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina is usually portrayed by Croatia as a failed state which is a safe haven for terrorists and in which Croats are at risk.

The rising so-called migrant crisis did not initially affect Bosnia and Herzegovina, but after Serbia and Hungary closed their borders, the migrants tried to find their way to Europe through Bosnia and Herzegovina. In most cases, the Serbian au-

thorities encourage them to go to Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of easing the Serbian migrant issue. The resultant influx of migrants (most of whom were Muslim) was one of the main causes of Islamophobia and gave rise to a raft of conspiracy theories, pushed by the Bosnian Serb politicians and media. The authorities of the Republika Srpska (RS) have refused to share the burden of looking after the refugees and they are confined solely to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Once these refugees try to leave Bosnia, and enter Europe through Croatia, the Croatian police often capture them and send them back over the border to Bosnia and Herzegovina, often covered in bruises and wounds. Bosnian Serb nationalists have found a common cause with their fellow Islamophobes in Hungary. These ties were strengthened during the migrant crisis, but it is not only the Muslim immigrants who have been the target of Hungarian Islamophobia. In a recent interview, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán explicitly stated that Bosnia and Herzegovina could not be integrated further into the EU as a result of its Muslim population.¹

Following on from 2020, the Islamophobic rhetoric of political figures and media is on the rise. However, in 2021 physical attacks were slightly fewer than in 2020.

Information on the following incidents was 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 the current report was being written, the data for 2021 had not yet been published.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On April 24, 2021, L.V.M., in Kotorski near Doboj in the Bosnian entity of RS, a woman religion teacher, was verbally assaulted in front of a Bingo supermarket by a Serb worker with the initials S.R. The teacher reported, "Getting into the car, she angrily started shouting at me: 'Never forget where you are and where you live, never forget.' I experienced this as a threat and asked her, 'Are you threatening me and warning me that with the scarf I have to know that I live in RS?' She said 'Yes,' and began to wave her finger while whistling that I should leave RS."²

 [&]quot;Shameful and rude': Orban slammed over remark on Bosnia's Muslims", EURONEWS (December 12, 2022) retrieved January 20, 2022: https://www.euronews.com/2021/12/23/shameful-and-rude-orban-slammed-over-remark-on-bosnia-s-muslims

Nihad Mehmedović et al (eds), Report on Registered Cases of Violations of The Right To Freedom of Religion of Muslims In Bosnia And Herzegovina in 2021 (Sarajevo: Riyasat Of The Islamic Community in Bosnia And Herzegovina, Commission For Freedom of Religion, 2022) 22.

On November 21, 2021, the Hajdar-Dedo Mosque in Karići was desecrated. The front door was forcibly broken, and electrical installations and the water fountain used during prayer were torn apart and taken away. Following the report of this act of vandalism, the *Majlis* (Council) of the Vareš Islamic Community reported this case to the local police.

On January 13, 2021, the mosque in Orahovo in Gradiška was broken into. The Orahovo police station was informed and police officers were able to discover that the perpetrators were S.B. and a minor Đ.H., both from Orahovo. Further investigation established that they had found the keys to the mosque, and they broke in, opened the charity boxes with voluntary donations, and stole a significant amount of money. The Gradiška Police Department reports that another mosque in Orahova had been broken into in the same way in October of last year.

On February 19, 2021, the Aladža Mosque in Foča was the target of shooting. According to unofficial information, another shooting also took place on February 17, 2021. The Foča Central Police Station conducted an investigation in the mosque's complex.

On September 14, 2021, a threatening, fascist Ustasha symbol was drawn on the front of the martyrs' cemetery in Prozor. As can be seen in the photo, the vandals wrote "HOS" on the steps in front of the gate and drew an Ustasha symbol. The police there have not yet responded, although the case has been duly reported.



Figure 1: The Ustasha symbol and HOS written on the doorsteps of the martyrs' cemetery in Prozor.³

A.K., "Vandalizam: Napisali "HOS" i nacrtali ustaški simbol ispred šehidskog mezarja u Prozor-Rami", Dnevni Avaz, (September 19, 2021) retrieved May 29, 2022 from https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/681409/vandalizamnapisali-hos-i-nacrtali-ustaski-simbol-ispred-sehidskog-mezarja-u-prozor-rami

On October 1, 2021, unknown persons wrote threatening graffiti on three pillars of the fence of the Osman Pasha Resulbegović Mosque in the Old Town of Trebinje, Republika Srpska. On December 20, 2021, the police in Trebinje arrested a person with the initials D.K. who is suspected of writing the graffiti.⁴

On November 10, 2021, in Bijeljina, unknown vandals painted crosses with four "Ss," a Serb nationalist symbol, on the new courtyard walls of the Salihbegović Mosque in Bijeljina. Officers from the Bijeljina *Majlis* informed the police, whose members went to the scene and recorded what had happened. Police officers and competent authorities were asked to take measures to find the perpetrators and protect the buildings and mosques of the Bijeljina *Majlis*.⁵



Figure 2: Four "Ss," a Serb nationalist symbol, drawn on the courtyard walls of the Salihbegović Mosque in Bijeljina.⁶

On February 20, 2021, in Skakovica, insulting graffiti glorifying the genocide and convicted war criminal Ratko Mladić was unveiled at a local water fountain in the Sapna municipality of Republika Srpska, where Serb returnees live.⁷

www.islamophobiareport.com

Vesna Duka, "Trebinje: Ispisala grafite na stubićima džamije", Nezavisne Novine (December 20, 2021), retrieved April 20, 2022 from https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/hronika/Trebinje-Ispisala-grafite-na-stubicima-dzamije/696909

 [&]quot;Bijeljina: Uvredljivi grafiti na ogradi Salihbegović džamije", Preporod Info (November 11, 2021), retrieved April 20, 2022 from https://www.preporod.info/bs/article/26825/bijeljina-uvredljivi-grafiti-na-ogradi-salihbegovic-dzamije

 [&]quot;Bijeljina: Uvredljivi grafiti na ogradi Salihbegović džamije", Preporod Info (November 11, 2021), retrieved April 20, 2022 from https://www.preporod.info/bs/article/26825/bijeljina-uvredljivi-grafiti-na-ogradi-salihbegovic-dzamije

 [&]quot;Skakovica, općina Sapna: Uvredljivi grafit koji veliča genocid i ratnog zločinca", Preporod Info (20 February, 2021), retrieved April 23, 2022, from https://www.preporod.info/bs/article/21990/skakovica-opcina-sapna-uvredljivi-grafit-koji-velica-genocid-i-ratnog-zlocinca

On April 19, 2021, in Foča, a mural with the image of the convicted Mladić was painted in the town. The mural is painted in such a way that a war criminal salutes passersby in the street near a restaurant and a school, and the slogans "In the fire and in the storm your name is hummed throughout Republika Srpska" and "We thank your mother" are also written on a nearby building.⁸

On April 25, 2021, in Foča, a mural of Milorad Pelemiš, a commander of the 10th Sabotage Detachment of the Republika Srpska Army, the unit responsible for the Srebrenica genocide, was unveiled. Pelemiš and his unit took part in the shooting at the Branjevo farm near Zvornik, killing at least 1,200 Bosniaks. He was a witness for the defense of Ratko Mladić, and although he himself took part in the wars throughout Yugoslavia, he was never officially convicted. After the news that he passed away the day before in Belgrade, his sympathizers in Foča painted a mural in his honor.⁹

On November 15, 202,1 in Prijedor, three graffiti glorifying Mladić, a commander in the Republika Srspka Army convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity, appeared in the town, which was also the site of massacres and most infamously, concentration camps during the genocide.¹⁰

On December 22, 2021, again in Prijedor, offensive graffiti was written in the town's center stating "Ratko Mladić" and "A young *balija*¹¹ runs through the field, I catch up with him and slaughter him!"¹²

Employment

In 2021, there were no registered cases of work-related discrimination against Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Worryingly, the number of Bosniaks living and working in Republika Srpska is decreasing however. For example, in Republika Srpska institutions, out of a total of 5,066 employees, only 43 are Bosniaks. ¹³ This trend of Bosniaks leaving Republika Srpska is the result of the perpetually uncomfortable and discriminatory atmosphere against Bosniak employees.

 [&]quot;U još jednom bh. gradu osvanuo novi mural s likom Ratka Mladića", Radiosarajevo.ba, (April 19, 2021), , retrieved April 30, 2022.from https://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/bosna-i-hercegovina/u-jos-jednom-bh-gradu-osvanuo-novi-mural-s-likom-ratka-mladica/414379

Jasmin Agić, "Dobrodošli u Republiku Srpsku: Fočanska posveta 'krvniku' Miloradu Pelemišu", Al Jazeera (April 28, 2021), retrieved on April 27,2022, from https://balkans.aljazeera.net/teme/2021/4/28/focanska-posveta-miloradu-pelemisu

 [&]quot;Pojavili se u toku noći: Mještani u Prijedoru prekrečili grafite posvećene Ratku Mladiću", Faktor.ba (November 16, 2021), retrieved on April 17,2022,from https://faktor.ba/vijest/pojavili-se-u-toku-noci-mjestani-u-prijedoru-prekrecili-grafite-posvecene-ratku-mladicu-/144606

^{11.} The term "balija" is an extremely offensive, Islamophobic slur used against Bosniaks.

 [&]quot;Grafit u Prijedoru: Mlad balija trči poljem ja ga stižem pa ga koljem", NI (December 22, 2021), retrieved April 20, 2022 from https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/grafit-u-prijedoru-mlad-balija-trci-poljem-ja-ga-stizem-pa-ga-koljem/

^{13. &}quot;Diskriminacija Bošnjaka i Srba u RS I FBiH", TVI (11 August 2017), retrieved on April 20, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItmaBY48-hU

There was one recorded incident in the Bosnian & Herzegovinan armed forces. Two members of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AF BiH) submitted a complaint, citing unconstitutional and illegal violations of religious freedoms within the army. Members of the AF BiH are not allowed to have a beard or wear a headscarf. Furthermore, the plantiffs state that this problem has entered a new, more serious phase, because the Minister of Defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina, issued instructions which stated. "If a person declares that he violates regulations for religious reasons, he should immediately consider it a conscious violation of the regulations and this must be sanctioned by imposing a disciplinary measure (which sets an example to others in terms of personal appearance and demeanor and initiates proceedings to terminate the Agreement on Admission to Professional Military Service for non-compliance with Article VIII)." In the end, the plantiffs point out that the instruction of the minister is completely clear, precise, and unambiguous: keep the beard and leave the BiH Armed Forces, or shave the beard and stay in the BiH Armed Forces. At its session held on December 2, 2021, the Constitutional Court issued a decision establishing that these provisions are not in accordance with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, ordering the Ministry of Defense to harmonize its regulations.¹⁴

Education

The year 2021 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 enrol their children in school. In turn, 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.

In Doboj, Republika Srpska, on January 5, 2021, a school reduced a Bosniak girl's grade of conduct because she celebrated the Statehood Day of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This sixth-grade student at the Petar Kočić Elementary School in the Bosniak returnee village of Sjenina Rijeka, was punished because she did not attend classes, but celebrated the Statehood Day of Bosnia and Herzegovina with her parents and friends.¹⁵

Politics

In 2021, there were no major changes in the standard rhetoric from local and regional political actors who used Islamophobic rhetoric to undermine Bosnia and Herzegovi-

^{14.} Nihad Mehmedović et al (eds), Report On Registered Cases..., 21.

^{15.} Ibid., 39.

na's statehood. The 26th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide was again used as an opportunity for nationalist outbursts. Bosnian Serb and Serbian politicians, as well as certain Bosnian Croat and Croatian politicians used nationalist rhetoric in their attempts to undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina. This rhetoric returns to the usual Islamophobic tropes such as that of Bosnia and Herzegovina being a safe haven for "terrorism" and "extremists," and the demographic "threat" posed by Bosniak Muslims.

On March 3 2021, Bosnian-Serb leader and member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Milorad Dodik stated on Republika Srpska's main TV channel that Bosniaks are "converts" who are a "submissive people," and that "there are not enough of them, they don't have enough capacities, they don't have character in themselves.... [t]hey are not a nation-building people, they are a subject people" whose submissiveness is "pathological." Dodik continued, "In the sixties of the last century, they were called Serbs of the Mohammedan faith here, and then they became Muslims with a small 'm' because it was necessary for Tito because he made relations with the Non-Aligned to show that he has a good relationship with Muslims... Well, then they started something to homogenize, so that by 1993, as Muslims, with a small 'm' at the beginning, they would declare themselves Bosniaks with the intention of making the term intriguing enough to integrate all Serbs and Croats and create a Bosnian nation, a Bosnian alphabet, Bosnian language..." Dodik's espousal of such views, which strike at the very ontological (and factual) foundations of Bosniak identity, is extremely cynical and clearly openly bigoted.

During an interview regarding the election process in Bosnia, on December 28, 2021, Dodik stated, "They [Bosniaks] bring a man and the mosque says choose this man now, Komšić, and these people obey the mosque, i.e., their religious officials ... Because of the electorate, Muslims have the comfort to choose their Croat at will." Here, Dodik is accusing the Muslim religious community of directly interfering in the political process.

On December 30, 2021, the leader of the Bosnian-Croatian political party Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), President Dragan Čović, in an interview for news outlet HRT Dnevnik, commented on Dodik's statement that "the mosque appoints a Croat representative," by stating that he too believed that the Islamic Community has had a special place in Bosnia and Herzegovina's politics for a long time and that it was not hidden. He said, "It could be seen in local elections. But also, when members of the Presidency were elected in the last general elections. I am sure that a clear

 [&]quot;Dodik: Bošnjaci su konvertiti i podanički narod, a ne državotvorni", Al Jazeera (August 04, 2021), retrieved April20, 2022 from https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2021/8/4/dodik-bosnjaci-su-konvertiti-i-podanicki-narod-a-ne-drzavotvorni

^{17. &}quot;Dodik provocira na HRT-u: Džamija je izabrala Komšića, bez trećeg entiteta nema BiH", *Radiosarajevo.ba* (December 28, 2021), retrieved April 20, 2022 fromhttps://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/bosna-i-hercegovina/dodik-provocira-na-hrt-u-dzamija-je-izabrala-komsica-bez-treceg-entiteta-nema-bih/441837

plan, strategy and logistics have been made with the Islamic Community and the policy of Bosniaks to elect two Bosniak members of the Presidency, and that is what happened. It is quite certain that the representatives of the Islamic Community are fully involved in this process."¹⁸

Media

Anti-Bosnian sentiment expressed by politicians was usually followed by Islamophobic rhetoric in the media. This rhetoric often seeks to portray B&H, Bosniak politicians, or former army officers as radical extremists. These statements are normally made by a group of already well-known self-proclaimed "experts." Two main events which further raised Islamophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the media in 2021 were the rise of nationalist rhetoric by Serb nationalists and the political turmoil in neighboring countries such as Montenegro and Kosovo.

Justice System

Hate crime is a specific crime, motivated by intolerance towards certain groups in society. Some of the several criminal codes in B&H contain limited provisions that allow more severe punishment to be imposed for crimes committed with a motivation of bias. Use of these provisions is inconsistent and relatively rare. For example, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District¹⁹ 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 Federation's 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 Federation, 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 such as 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 are due to ethnicity/religion. Unfortunately, the statistics are not segregated by religion. When it comes to hate speech regulations, the FB&H and Republika Srpska laws do not specifically pro-

^{18. &}quot;Čović: Islamska zajednica umiješana u izbor dva 'bošnjačka' člana Predsjedništva", *Al Jazeera* (December 30, 2021), retrieved April 20, 2022 https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2021/12/30/covic-izetbegovic-bih-dozivljava-kao-pasaluk-u-kojem-on-ima-posebno-mjesto

^{19.} Brčko District is Bosnia and Herzegovina's third entity.

scribe hate speech, but prohibit acts that cause ethnic, racial, or religious hatred. Nevertheless, usage of incendiary language in the media, by politicians, and others usually goes unpunished.

After almost two decades of legal battle, the Bosnian Serb authorities ordered the removal of the Serb Orthodox church built on the private property of Fata Orlović in Konjević polje near Srebrenica.²⁰ The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2019 ruled for the Bosnian authorities to demolish the unauthorized church.

Overall, hate crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina are underreported and rarely prosecuted. In 2021, 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, have continually published articles which spread fear and hatred of Bosniaks and include genocide denial. These social media pages remain the same as in previous years. Additionally, several Bosnian Croat web portals continued their anti-Bosniak discourse using Islamophobic rhetoric. 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 Predrag Ceranić, Miroljub Jevtić, Dževad Galijašević, and Darko Trifunović. Second, several officials from the Serb Orthodox Church such as Luka Babić, the abbot at the Karno Monastery near Srebrenica who in December 2021 lead a group singing anti-Muslim Serb nationalist songs. The third category is politicians and include lo-

^{20. &}quot;Bosnia starts removing unauthorized church on Muslim woman's land", AA, (June 5, 2021) retrieved May 20, 2022, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/bosnia-starts-removing-unauthorized-church-on-muslim-womans-land/2264670#:-:text=Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20on%20Saturday,War%20between%201992%-20and%201995...

^{21. &}quot;ZAPAD PALI BURE BARUTA NA BALKANU: Trifunović otkrio šta stoji iza NAJVEĆE KRIZE u istoriji BiH! HOĆE DA POKAŽU MIŠIĆE NA SRBIMA!" (October 28, 2021) retrieved May 20, 2022, https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3797243/zapad-pali-bure-baruta-na-balkanu-trifunovic-otkrio-sta-stoji-iza-najvece-krize-u-istoriji-bih-hoce-da-pokazu-misice-na-srbima. "AKTUELNO! DZEVAD GALIJASEVIC - TALIBANI, SERIJAT, RUDE, POLJA MAKA I HEROIN 08.16.2021", Serbian Radio Chicago, (August 17, 2021) retreived May 20, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN0V-nHUNng. Predrag Ceranić, "Da li povampirena Islamska država nišani BiH?", *Standard RS*, (September 5, 2021) retreived May 20, 2022, https://standard.rs/2021/09/05/da-li-povampirena-islamska-drzava-nisani-bih/

^{22. &}quot;What is happening in Bosnia near the Drna, the Serbian Chetniks came down from the mountains. They are not afraid of Allah, they are not afraid of mines, they are not afraid of the Ustashas or the mujahedin." E.L., "Predsjednik Prave Srbije provocira u Srebrenici: "Šta se ono u Bosni, pokraj Drine zbiva...", Faktor.ba, (De-

cal Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats such as Milorad Dodik, Dragan Čović, and Mario Karamatić as well as politicians from Croatia and Serbia.²³ In the majority of cases, these are elected MPs in the parliamentary assemblies. These political subjects give statements which are anti-Muslim and Islamophobic, and are 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 established by 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 the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities of the commission were limited.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2021, the number of Islamophobic attacks on people and property was slightly increased compared to 2020. Similar to 2020, there were local and regional anti-Bosniak and anti-Muslim activities, especially due to the protests and elections in Montenegro.

Considering the state of Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the following policy recommendations to combat Islamophobia effectively are offered:

- Continued cooperation between governments (state level, entity level, and district 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 documentation of cases of violation of the rights of Muslims should be enhanced by the Islamic Community, NGOs, the police, and judiciary.
- Awareness of hate crimes against Muslims, and their proper registration and prosecution should be raised by the Islamic Community, NGOs, the police, and judiciary.
- Awareness of hate speech (online and offline) by media, politicians, etc. should be raised.

cember 2, 2021) retrieved May 20, 2022, from https://www.faktor.ba/vijest/predsjednik-prave-srbije-provo-cira-u-srebrenici-sta-se-ono-u-bosni-pokraj-drine-zbiva-/146123

I.C., "Karamatić: Muslimani autističnom politikom dovode do raspada BiH", Bild.ba, (April 13, 2021) retrieved May 20, 2022, from https://www.bild.ba/nase-price/karamatic-muslimani-autisticnom-politikom-dovode-do-raspada-bih/

- Awareness about Islamic practice (prayer, jumaah, and the headscarf) and available ways to accommodate this in education and employment should be raised. Regulations should be adjusted accordingly.
- Laws that stipulate that public officers or officials "shall refrain from public manifestation of their religious beliefs" (*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 High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC).
- 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 also be raised.
- Commitment to countering violent extremism, focusing on far-right and extreme nationalist ideology and movements, should be established.

Chronology

- 13.01.2021: The mosque in Orahovo in Gradiška was broken into.
- 19.02.2021: The Aladža Mosque in Foča was the target of shooting.
- **20.02.2021:** In Skakovica in the Sapna municipality, graffiti glorifying genocide was written on a local water fountain.
- 19.04.2021: A mural with the image of the convicted war criminal Ratko Mladić was painted in Foča.
- **24.04.2021:** A religion teacher was verbally assaulted in front of a Bingo supermarket by a Serb worker in Kotorski near Doboj in the Bosnian entity of Republika Srpska.
- 25.04.2021: A mural of Milorad Pelemiš, commander of the 10th Sabotage Detachment of the Republika Srpska Army responsible for the Srebrenica genocide, was unveiled in Foča.
- **14.09.2021:** An Ustasha symbol was drawn in front of the martyrs' cemetery in Prozor.
- 01.10. 2021: Unknown persons wrote threatening graffiti on three pillars of the fence of the mosque of Osman Pasha Resulbegovic in the Old Town of Trebinje.
- 10.11.2021: In Bijeljina, unknown vandals painted crosses with four "Ss," a Serb nationalist symbol, on the courtyard wall of the Salihbegović Mosque in Bijeljina.

- **15.11.2021:** Three graffiti glorifying Ratko Mladić, a commander of the Republika Srpka Army convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity, appeared in Prijedor, in northwestern Bosnia.
- 21.11.2021: The Hajdar-Dedo Mosque in Karići was desecrated.
- **22.12.2021:** Offensive graffiti appeared in the center of Prijedor stating "Ratko Mladić" and "A young *balija* runs through the field, I catch up with him and slaughter him!"

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN BULGARIA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

In 2021, in Bulgaria there were no reported Islamophobic attacks on Muslim individuals. Nevertheless, representatives of the Bulgarian political class, and TV and online podcast presenters used their airtime, social media profiles, and even the podium of the European Parliament, to articulate hate speech against Muslims, in the face of the refugees from the Middle East, the local Muslim communities striving to regain their mosques and waqf properties by legal means, and, last but not least, Turkey, labelling all as threats to Europe's civilizational values and security.

In February 2021, the Specialized Prosecution brought 22-year-old Mohammed Abdulqader before the court; he was arrested in July 2020 on terrorism charges based on naive photos taken six years earlier in Syria and shared by the convicted himself on the internet. In August, Abdulqader's remand measure was changed to "house arrest." On 9 June, the Supreme Administrative Court ruled that Krasimir Karakachanov, the deputy prime minister and minister of defense of the previous government, discriminated against the Muslim Roma community in Voyvodinovo, Plovdiv with an anti-Roma statement made in January 2019. This decision was not subject to appeal and given the official level of the convicted person, it was a first of its kind in Bulgaria's modern history.

Throughout the year archaeological excavations in the territory of the Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo led to the desecration of the religious monument. A significant number of historical mosques and tekkes across the country are announced as museums by the Ministry of Culture, or function as touristic information centers; others are left to destruction, due to the fact that they are not governed by the Muslim Denomination, whose appeals for renovation are left unheard by most (both national and local) authorities.

Резюме

През 2021 г. в България няма регистрирани нападения, продиктувани от ислямофобия върху физически лица. Тя запазва силни позиции главно под формата на реч на омразата, която си позволяват представители на българската политическа класа, водещи и гости на телевизионни предавания и подкасти, използващи предоставеното им ефирно време, социалните мрежи, включително и катедрата на Европейския парламент, за да артикулират мюсюлманската заплаха за европейските цивилизационни ценности и сигурност, в лицето на емигрантския поток от Близкия изток, местните мюсюлмански общности, водещи юридически битки за отнетите им през комунистическия период вакъфски имоти и не на последно място – Турция.

През месец февруари 2021 г. Специализираната прокуратура предаде 22-годишният Мохамед Абдулкадер (арестуван през юли 2020 г.) на съд с обвинение за участие в терористични акции в Сирия, като основният доказателствен материал се състои от правени шест години по-рано снимки с оръжие в ръка на момчето, които то впоследствие е споделило в социалните мрежи. През август мярката му за неотклонение е изменена на "домашен арест". На 9 юни, Върховния административен съд осъди бившия Заместник-министър председател и Министър на правосъдието Красимир Каракачанов, за реч на омразата, дискриминираща мюсюлманската ромска общност в пловдивското село Войводиново (м. януари 2019 г.). Предвид високото официално ниво на "осъдения", решението, което е без право на обжалване, е първо по рода си в новата история на България и заслужава адмирации.

Археологически разкопки на територията на Куршум джамия в град Карлово доведе до оскверняването на храма. Значителен брой от историческите джамии и текета на територията на страната са обявени от страна на Министерство на културата за музеи или функционират като туристически информационни бюра; други, които не са стопанисвани от Мюсюлманското вероизповедание, са оставени постепенно да се разрушават, а призивите на Главно мюфтийство за реставрирането им, остават нечути от официалните институции както на национално така и на местно ниво.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Republic of Bulgaria

Type of Regime: Democracy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary republic

Ruling Parties: Coalition between We Continue the Change (newly founded centrist, pro-European), There Is Such a People (populist, nationalistic), Bulgarian Socialist Party—BSP (center-left, social-democratic, left-wing populism with a pro-EU stance), and Democratic Bulgaria (liberal, conservative, member of EPP)

Opposition Parties: Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria – GERB (acronym translated in Bulgarian as "coat of arms", a right-centrist, populist party); Movement for Rights and Freedoms – MRF (a centrist, liberal party); Revival (a populist, far-right party)

Last Elections: 14 November 2021 (parliamentary elections): They were the country's third parliamentary elections within 2021, with no party able to form a government after elections on 7 April and 11 July. We Continue the Change won 25.67% of the vote with 67 of the 240 seats; GERB: 22.74%, 59 seats; Movement for Rights and Freedoms: 13.00%, 34 seats; The Bulgarian Socialist Party: 10.21%, 26 seats; There Is Such a People: 9.52%, 25 seats; Democratic Bulgaria: 6.37%, 16 seats; and Revival: 4.86%, 13 seats

14 November/21 November 2021 (presidential elections): Incumbent president Rumen Radev gathered 66.72% of the vote, defeating university professor Anastas Gerdzhikov in a runoff

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 are as follows: GERB (member of EPP): 6 (31.07%); Bulgarian Socialist Party (member of PES): 5 (24.26%); Movement for Rights and Freedoms (member of ALDE): 3 (16.55%); Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (member of ECR): 2 (7.36%)

Total Population: 6,520,000 (2021, compared to 7,364,570 in 2011)

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 2021, the Grand Mufti's Office reported two graffiti attacks against places of worship.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There are no special statistics and database 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). The results of the 2021 census regarding the number of believers belonging to different denominations are to be publicized in fall 2022.

Muslim Population (% of Population): 7.8% or 577,139 in 2011. (2011 Population Census in Bulgaria, www.nsi.bg/Census_e/Census_e.htm)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria (Grand Mufti's Office)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: No specific NGO is combating Islamophobia

Far-Right Parties: Bulgarian National Union – New Democracy, Ataka, National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, Vazrazhdane

Far-Right Movements: National Resistance, Blood and Honour, Union of the Bulgarian National Legions

Far-Right Violent Organizations: 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"

Introduction

Bulgaria is home to the largest indigenous Muslim minority within the boundaries of the European Union. Despite the continuing rise of Islamophobic hate speech practiced even by high-ranking officials, both Bulgaria's historical Muslim population (Turks, Pomaks, and Roma), and the recently formed, relatively small, Arab Muslim community, did not face major conflicts with Bulgaria's non-Muslim majority. Nevertheless, in 2021, there were few cases in which Muslims and Islamic symbols were subjected to various forms of violation. These included biased representations by the media of religious and juridical activities initiated by the chief and regional muftiates, prosecution of Muslims, generating unease and loss of confidence in public institutions among the representatives of the community, and, to a lesser degree, vandalized places of worship.

A total of three parliamentary elections—a regular on 4 April, and a couple of early ones on 11 July and 14 November, the latter combined with a presidential one—were held in 2021. The extreme nationalist parties known for their anti-Muslim positions, namely the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB), the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), and Ataka, forming the United Patriots alliance, which had ruled as coalition partners with the leading center-right party, Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) in the period 2017-2021, could not enter any of the newly established (45th, 46th, and 47th) parliaments. 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. Nevertheless, two new political actors pretending to represent the interests of the patriot voters managed to pass the 4% barrage and entered the parliament: the first, considered a less nationalistic party is called "There Is Such a People" (Ima Takav Narod) and became part of the coalition to form a regular government (after a couple of provisional ones appointed by the president); the second, Vazrazhdane (Revival), can be placed in the group of far-right parties. The leader of the latter, Kostadin Kostadinov, and MPs, who consider themselves a future ruling alternative, have not been involved in Islamophobic activities to date.

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. Never-

This group consists of immigrants in transit to Western Europe and former university students who came to the country during the communist period.

theless, anti-Muslim verbal assaults undertaken even by high-level officials have become a routine. According to the annual "Report on International Religious Freedom" submitted by the U.S. Department of State to Congress, the Chief Muftiate said Muslims were targets of periodic hate speech, such as at a protest in November in front of the Embassy of Turkey in Sofia against the alleged interference of Turkey in the general elections, where participants chanted "Death to Turks." According to the Muftiate, since most of the Muslim population in the country is ethnically Turkish, Bulgarian society frequently conflates "Muslim" and "Turk." The Muftiate also cited several instances of offensive graffiti on Muslim properties, such as a swastika on a mosque in Plovdiv in January and obscenities spray-painted on a mosque in Kazanlak.² Anti-Muslim graffiti can be observed in most Bulgarian cities, but is rarely reported or publicized. Atanas Shinikov, Islamic studies specialist and photographer specialized in graffiti "hunting," came across an original series, close to a central area of the Bulgarian capital Sofia, known for its numerous Arab stores. From the modest selection published here, the first picture depicts an imaginary representation of the Prophet Muhammad with a "bomb-hat." (Fig. 1)



Figure 1: Graffiti representing the Prophet Muhammad with a "bomb-hat" photographed in the center of Sofia.3

https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bulgaria/, (Access date: 2 June 2022)

^{3.} Photoarchive of the Arabist Atanas Shinikov, Global Service Management Certifications Lead at HP.

The second one shows an inscription calling for "Ban of Islam with a Law" accompanied by a cross, and the third portrays three Muslim women with niqabs holding alcoholic drinks titled "Veiled Democracy." (Figs. 2 and 3)



Figure 2: Graffiti calling for "Ban of Islam with a Law."

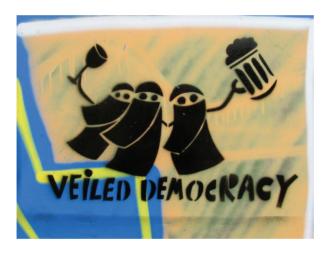


Figure 3: Graffiti depicting three veiled Muslim women holding alcoholic drinks (a beer stein and a wine glass).⁵

In October, the Chief Muftiate expressed concern that municipal authorities had excavated the area around the historic Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo and piled up a large amount of dirt in the yard, calling it a "desecration." (Fig. 4) In a subsequent meeting with the regional mufti of Plovdiv Taner Veli, Karlovo mayor Emil Kabaivanov explained the piles of dirt were the result of archaeological excavations dating back three years. The mayor presented to the mufti the intentions of the municipality to submit a project for approval to the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage for the restoration and conservation of the complex, which is a cultural monument of national importance. At year's end, the Muftiate's litigation, which the Muslim institution initiated in 2012, against Karlovo Municipality regarding ownership of the mosque was pending in the Sofia Appellate Court.⁶

^{4.} Ibid.

Ibid

 $^{6. \}qquad https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/10839-2021-10-14-11-52-51.html, (Access date: 20 April 2022). \\$



Figure 4: Archaeological excavations inside and in the vicinity of the historical Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo, leading to the desecration of the religious monument.⁷

Employment

The main law in Bulgaria banning discrimination based on race, ethnicity, belief, and religion is the Protection against Discrimination Act (PADA).8 The organ established under PADA as an independent collegiate semi-judicial authority with adjudicating 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,9 are Muslims. For 2021, 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. 10

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.

^{7.} Ibid.

^{8.} https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7046/file/Bulgaria_anti-discrimination_act_2003_2006_am.pdf, (Access date: 4 January 2022).

^{9.} http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/index.php/za-nas/chlenowe, (Access date: 15 December 2020).

https://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/index.php/component/content/article/1625, (Access date: 15 March 2022).

Education

In 2021, the Bulgarian education system continued to reproduce the image of the country's "historical enemy": Ottomans enslaving Christian Bulgarians and forcibly converting them to Islam. Inevitably, Muslim students attending classes in which their ancestors are depicted as grinning janissaries armed with yataghans, and tax collectors forcing Christian families to pay their "blood-tax" are prone to develop a guilt complex. In this regard, 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, history text-books regarding the Ottoman period still preserve most of their Islamophobic characteristics. The students are introduced only to nameless figures of sultans, janissaries, Muslim fanatics, etc., acting in a continuum, spread over the whole Bulgarian territory for a five-centuries-long period. This fact results in establishing the mind-set in students of a trivial collective image of Muslims as uncivilized conquerors and bloodthirsty oppressors.

On 31 March 2021, the Chief Muftiate officially submitted for approval new textbooks for the subject "Religion–Islam" for students from the 6th to the 12th grade in public schools to the Ministry of Education and Science. (Fig. 5) If the ministry approves them, they will be put into use in the next academic year. Currently, more than 2,900 students from 1st to 12th grade study the subject "Religion–Islam" in public schools in the form of optional and elective classes.¹¹



Figure 5: Chief Mufti Hadji (in the middle) and his team present the new textbooks for the subject "Religion–Islam" in public schools.¹²

https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/10483-2021-04-06-13-58-57.html , 6 March 2021, (Access date: 13 April 2022).

^{12.} Ibid.

Politics

In April, ahead of Ramadan, President Rumen Radev invited Chief Mufti Hadji to meet with him "as a token of respect to the traditions and culture of Bulgarian Muslims." The head of state subsequently issued an Eid al-Fitr greeting addressed to the country's Muslim population, citing a national culture of tolerance and sharing.¹³

In 2021, the regional muftiates claimed that several municipalities, including Sofia, Stara Zagora, and Gotse Delchev, continued to reject, on what they said were non-transparent grounds, their requests to build new, or rehabilitate existing, religious facilities. Chief Mufti Hadji said he had raised the issue in several meetings with Sofia mayor Yordanka Fandakova, including in March and October, but the mayor's office had not provided by year's end any information on the reasons for the city's continued rejections of the construction applications.¹⁴

On 9 June 2021, the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) ruled that Krasimir Karakachanov, the deputy prime minister and minister of defense of the previous government (2017-2021), had discriminated against two Roma brothers. This follows his statement ("Gypsies in Bulgaria have become extremely arrogant... It's a fact that in the last year or two, they have started adopting Islam"15) of 8 January 2019 after an altercation between the two Roma brothers and a commando of Bulgarian ethnic origin in the village of Voyvodinovo.¹⁶ The decision was final and not subject to appeal. The conflict in question was not religious in nature, but it was a source of interethnic tensions, backed by hate speech emitted by TV stations and numerous discussions on social networks. After his speech, Karakachanov proposed that the Council of Ministers approve a "Concept for Changes in the Policies for the Integration of the Gypsy Ethnicity," which has gained popularity as a "Concept for Combating Gypsyization." The document violated basic constitutional provisions and came in stark contrast to key principles for the protection of human rights. Many Roma and human rights organizations reacted sharply to Karakachanov's remarks, and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) and Roma activist Acho Yordanov filed a lawsuit with the Commission for Protection against Discrimination. After both the CPAD and the Administrative Court in Sofia did not consider Karakachanov's statement to be discriminatory, the BHC referred the case to the SAC.¹⁷ With its decision, the

^{13.} https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/10485-2021-04-09-13-02-59.html, (Access date: 16 April 2022).

^{14.} https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bulgaria/, (Access date: 2 June 2022).

^{15.} Emiliya Milcheva, "Как вярата променя живота на българските роми" (How Faith Changes the Life of the Bulgarian Romanis), 10 January 2019, https://p.dw.com/p/3BIvO, (Access date: 13 February 2020).

For detailed information related to the case see: Aziz Nazmi Şakir: Islamophobia in Bulgaria: National Report 2019, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2019, Istanbul, SETA, 2020, p.145-146.

^{17. &}quot;Съдът: Красимир Каракачанов е насаждал нетърпимост към ромите" (The Court: Krasimir Karakachanov has instilled intolerance towards the Roma), 14.06.2021, in: https://www.bghelsinki.org/bg/news/20210614-press-karakachanov, (Access date: 15 March 2022).

SAC annulled the rulings of the CPAD and the Sofia Administrative Court. The reaction of the former deputy prime minister after the announcement of the decision was also indicative: he said he would pay the fine, but would continue to behave in the same manner. The decision of the SAC included very good reasoning, which should be used as a precedent by other courts and by the CPAD: "Such generalization of the personalities of anyone who self-identifies as Roma and stereotyping the image of Roma as 'impudent' members of society, towards whom the tolerance of Bulgarians is 'exhausted,' can undoubtedly harm and undermine the dignity of the ethnic group, while contributing to the creation of permanently negative, potentially hostile and conflict-generating attitudes…" ¹⁸

On 19 May 2021, Angel Dzhambazki, a member of the European Parliament and vice-chairman of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, made the following anti-Turkish statement in Brussels: "Turkey, as it is now, namely a sultanate, cannot be a member of the EU, and talks about it must be terminated as soon as possible. This country is not a strategic partner of the EU, as the rulers in Brussels think, but an enemy of our civilization."¹⁹

Media

Unlike politicians, who are centers of attention for journalists and NGOs, the media is rarely subjected to public censure and never comes under the law for "minor" offenses such as the use of Islamophobic speech. In 2021, in Bulgaria, the most active "providers" of anti-Muslim hate speech were the television channels Skat TV and Alfa TV. This comes as no surprise since the latter are owned by the far-right parties NFSB and Ataka. The list of cases in which anti-Muslim discourse has been used in different programs through the year is too long, and we will confine ourselves to mentioning only one striking example. On 1 July 2021, the presenter of the TV program with the provocative title "Unveiling," Nikolay Pankov, made a programs entitled "Ottomanism, The New Ideology of Islamism!" Part 2 suggesting that the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) used the imams of the Chief Muftiate to fight in favor of establishing a caliphate in Europe.

Parallel to these speculative words, a video showed the president of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) Ali Erbaş and Chief Mufti Mustafa Hadji accompanied by the mayor of Kardjali Municipality Hasan Azis entering the newly built mosque in Kardjali as part of the official visit of Erbaş to Bulgaria in April 2021.²⁰ (Fig. 6)

 [&]quot;Politicians in Bulgaria have become extremely impudent": Kr. Karakachanov was convicted of discriminating for his anti-Roma statements", 17 June 2021, in: https://amalipe.bg/en/politicians-in-bulgaria-have-become-extremely-impudent-kr-karakachanov-was-convicted-of-discriminating-against-his-anti-roma-statements/, (Access date: 15 March 2022).

^{19.} https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jh_nHFYMhQg, (Access date: 31 December 2021).

^{20.} https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDq1XzNpDmk, (Access date: 15 April 2022).



Figure 6: The head of the Turkish Diyanet, the Bulgarian Grand Mufti, and the mayor of Kardjali Municipality, enter the newly built mosque in Kardjali behind the title "Ottomanism, the New Ideology of Islamism" of Skat TV's program "Unveiling."²¹

Justice System

On 19 February 2021, the Plovdiv Appellate Court confirmed the Pazardjik District Court's 2019 verdict convicting 12 Romani Muslims on charges of supporting ISIS, assisting foreign fighters, propagating Salafi Islam, characterized by the government as an antidemocratic ideology, and incitement to war. These allegations have no basis and since the courts from the lower levels dealing with this case lacked motives and proof, expectedly it will be remanded by the Supreme Court of Cassation for reconsideration. "Expert" assessments of Salafi Islam as dangerous, used as an argument by the prosecutors, are strongly at odds with the country's official relations with Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, where this ideology reigns Two other Romani Muslims who were part of the original case did not appeal their convictions or sentences. The appellate court also confirmed the lower court's sentences: 8.5 years in prison for the group's leader, Islamic preacher Ahmed Mussa, and incarceration ranging from 12 to 42 months for ten of the other Romani, all men. The twelfth Romani, the only woman in the group, received a two-year suspended sentence. A final appeal of the case to the Supreme Cassation Court by both defendants and prosecutors was pending at year's end.22

^{21.} Ibid

^{22.} https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bulgaria/, (Access date: 2 June 2022).

On 20 February 2021, the Specialized Prosecution brought 22-year-old Mohammed Abdulqader before the court; he was arrested on 1 July 2020 on terrorism charges based on photos he shared of himself on the internet. In August 2021, his remand measure was changed to "house arrest." Various media outlets incited hatred towards the youth wrestling champion with loud titles like: "Mohammed from Burgas, Who Killed for the Jihadists in Syria, Is on Trial for Terrorism," and demonstrated their disappointment that "the legal process is proceeding unusually quickly and is even nearing completion: less than a year after it has begun." There is not a single piece of evidence that the young man ever fired a single bullet, but media confidently claimed that he killed for jihadists and that "brainwashed Mohamed Abdulqader turned out to be the young man, who planned to bleed Bulgaria with an assassination."



Figure 7: Mohammed Abdulqader chained in court as a heavy criminal.²⁸

In 2021, the Chief Muftiate continued to search for ways to litigate its recognition as the successor to all pre-1949 Muslim religious communities for the purpose of reclaiming approximately 30 properties, including eight mosques, two schools, two bathhouses, and a cemetery seized by the former communist government. Pending a decision on who was the rightful successor to the Muslim religious communities, some courts continued to suspend action on all restitution claims by the Chief Muftiate. In May, the Targovishte District Court ruled against the Muftiate's claim regarding a former mosque and Muslim school in Popovo, stating the office was not the accepted successor. In October, the Varna Appellate Court confirmed the lower court's decision. Again, in October, the Tutrakan Regional Court ruled against the Muslim

For detailed information related to the case see: Aziz Nazmi Şakir: Islamophobia in Bulgaria: National Report 2020, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021, p.183-185.

^{24.} https://www.flagman.bg/article/256778, (Access date: 29 December 2021).

^{25.} https://www.flagman.bg/article/234845 , 20 February 2021, (Access date: 29 December 2021).

^{26.} https://www.flagman.bg/article/256778, 27 December 2021, (Access date: 29 December 2021).

https://www.novinite.bg/articles/190362/Borecat-Mohamed-Abdulkader-gotvel-teroristichen-akt-u-nas-vijte-go-s-avtomat-SNIMKA, (Access date: 2 June 2022).

^{28.} https://trud.bg/%D0%B2%D0%BA%D1%81-%D0%B2%D1%8A%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D1%81%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%89%D1%83-14-%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B8, (Access date: 1 February 2022).

Denomination's claim to a former Muslim school converted to a secular school during communism, refusing to recognize the Muftiate as the official successor.²⁹ According to a report by the Chief Mufti for the period 24.01.2016-28.05.2021, delivered on 29 May 2021, in Sofia, during a general assembly of the Denomination, thanks to the efforts exerted by its "Waqf" and "Legal" departments, the Muftiate acquired new waqf properties through donation, bequest, or legal succession, including 24 buildings and plots of land with an area of over 5,500 sq m of meadows, and vineyards with a total area of 329 acres. Construction of waqf properties was carried out comprising 13 mosques, 7 minarets, and 14 commercial establishments. Furthermore, 104 mosques and 41 commercial establishments were repaired. The total value of the construction and repair of waqf properties was over BGN 12 million.³⁰

Internet

On 6 December 2021, Krystian Szkwarek, a representative of the group European Conservatives and Reformists for Bulgaria, was a guest on the popular podcast "Legends" hosted by the popular vlogger and public activist Asen Genov. There he spoke about a scenario in which the Western and Russian civilizations could turn into an Islamic threat in future: "If the South, all Uzbeks, Tajiks, etc. from central Asia, Islamizes them [Russia] and their Christian cities like Petersburg and Moscow become Muslim, and if we are Africanized and Arabized by the global South, it will be "game over" for both civilizations [Russian and Western European civilizations]... There will be no one left to fight..."³¹

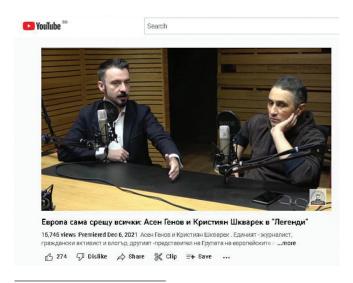


Figure 8: A snapshot from "Europe Alone against All: Asen Genov and Krystian Szkwarek in "Legends."³²

^{29.} https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bulgaria/, (Access date: 2 June 2022).

^{30.} https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/10566-otchet444.html, (Access date: 2 June 2022).

^{31.} https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B08D1OaQ85c, (Access date: 1 March 2022).

^{32.} Ibid.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Major figures triggering Islamophobia in Bulgaria are the leaders (including EPMs) of the far-right nationalistic 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 (such as NFSB's Skat TV and Ataka's Alfa TV), or daily press (inews.bg/, flagman.bg/, telegraph.bg/telegraphplus/, etc.), whose producers 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 state control.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

On 3 March 2021, the Bulgarian NGO Bulgarian Mothers against Fascism, Racism, Islamophobia and Homophobia "with experience in the field of migration, integration, education, civil society and gender studies" announced via its Facebook group page the initiative "Boycott 3 March! This is an Islamophobic Holiday!" and "3 March insults our Turk and Pomak citizens! Let's send Islamophobia to the past!" (Fig. 9) These invocations were used as captions to a photo of the Shipka Monument, one of the country's national symbols, where each year patriots gather to celebrate Bulgarian Liberation Day, an official national holiday on 3 March. The date is believed to have put an end to Ottoman domination because of a treaty, which was never applied de facto, signed between the Russian and Ottoman monarchs in 1878. The poster was followed by only a few Islamophobic comments, showing that the boycott idea was not welcomed by a small number of the 816 followers of the group. For instance, Boyan Sudenov's response was short, but striking: "Let there be a boycott of the mosques and the synagogues, it will have a better impact on Bulgaria."³³

In April-December 2021, Partners Bulgaria Foundation, took part in the MEET – More Equal Europe Together project for preventing Islamophobia against women and girls through the development of local observatories to monitor episodes of discrimination and to propose action plans to local authorities. It was co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union and involved six European countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy, and Poland).³⁴ In each of the partner countries, young people aged 12-18, Muslim and non-Muslim, with the help of experts in film storytelling techniques and thanks to the women and

^{33.} https://www.facebook.com/bulgarianmothers/, (Access date: 18 February 2022).

^{34.} https://partnersbg.org/en/meet-more-equal-europe-together/, (Access date: 18 February 2022).

girls who shared their stories and experiences with them, were encouraged to reflect on the stereotypes and prejudices faced by Muslim women and girls, and to create a counter-narrative capable of preventing and combating Islamophobia. In Bulgaria, the video-cartoon and the web series produced by the Bulgarian youth can be found on the Partners Bulgaria Foundation YouTube channel.³⁵ As part of the project's work package "Step up collective action in Europe," Local Observatories on Islamophobia (LOI), engaging key stakeholders, have been set up in each of the countries with the task of monitoring acts of discrimination and racism against Muslim women and girls. Each of the six LOI met five times and finally produced an action plan to prevent Islamophobia at local level, addressing root causes and proposing concrete steps towards integration and equality for Muslim women and girls, and have presented the action plan to local authorities. In each partner country, two focus groups have been held, with more than 120 participants in total, to inquire on the level of discrimination suffered by Muslim women and the perception of Muslim women within the society. In the six partner countries, 13 events have been held with the aim of fostering dialogue and social cohesion among communities. Such events, held both offline and online (due to the pandemic), have been organized as virtual tours, cooking sessions, mountain trips, etc.³⁶

БОЙКОТИРАЙ 3-ТИ МАРТ! ТОВА Е ИСЛЯМОФОБСКИ ПРАЗНИК!



3-ТИ МАРТ ОБИЖДА НАШИТЕ СЪНАРОДНИЦИ ТУРЦИ И БЪЛГАРО-МОХАМЕДАНИ. НЕКА ЗАЕДНО ИЗПРАТИМ ИСЛЯМОФОБИЯТА В МИНАЛОТО!

Figure 9: "Boycott 3 March! This is an Islamophobic Holiday!": Facebook poster calling for a boycott of one of Bulgaria's official national holidays.³⁷

^{35.} https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbZktzqRMUH-9LEJ7uc3M7A.

^{36.} MEET – More Equal Europe Together, EU Manual To Prevent Anti-Muslim Hatred against Women and Girls, https://partnersbg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/EU-Manual-REVISED-30.03.pdf , p.4-6 ().

^{37.} Ibid.

In 2021, the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues organized a human rights monitoring and reporting training course for Roma human rights defenders from ten participating states including Bulgaria (alongside Albania, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, North Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom). Following this training, the ODIHR supported selected participants in conducting human rights monitoring activities at the national level, and provided them with tailored coaching and guidance. This enabled Roma rights defenders and members of civil society organizations from Bulgaria to carry out high-quality and objective human rights monitoring independently.³⁸

On 7–10 June 2021, the OSCE realized the "Police and Roma – Effective and Human Rights – Compliant Policing" course involving the online training of 12 (9 men and 3 women) trainers from Bulgaria. The training-of-trainers curriculum was aimed at the capacity building of police officers working in multi-ethnic and multi-religious environments, and the prevention of ill-treatment by the police in Bulgaria.³⁹

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In Islamophobic terms, in 2021, Bulgaria was dominated by anti-Muslim hate speech rather than physical attacks on Muslims.

There is an acute need for NGOs to monitor media and generate pressure on the judiciary to take adequate action in cases dictated by Islamophobia and to restrain from arresting and charging Muslims for the sake of simulating anti-terror activity. 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 Muslim community as a threat to national security. The country still lacks political initiatives to counter Islamophobia; nevertheless, the year 2021 was rich in terms of international projects involving domestic civil organizations and volunteers trained by experienced specialists.

National media should exert more sufficient efforts to change the negative image of Islam by broadcasting programs 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.

^{38. &}quot;Democracy and Human Rights in the OSCE - The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Annual Report 2021", available in: https://www.osce.org/odihr/annual-report/2021 and then https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/a/514462_0.pdf, p. 42 (Access date: 14 February 2022).

^{39.} Ibid., p. 57, 66.

Chronology

- **01.01.2021:** The entrance of the historical Jumaya Mosque in Plovdiv was desecrated with graffiti.
- **20.02.2021:** The Specialized Prosecution brought Mohammed Abdulqader, 22, before the court. He was arrested on 1 July 2020 on terrorism charges based on photos he had shared of himself on the internet. In August 2021, his remand measure was changed to "house arrest."
- **09.06.2021:** The Supreme Administrative Court ruled that Krasimir Karakachanov, the deputy prime minister and minister of defence of the previous government, had discriminated against two Roma people with his anti-Roma statement of 8 January 2019 in the Plovdiv village of Voyvodinovo. The decision is final and not subject to appeal.
- **23.07.2021:** On the third day of Eid al-Adha, the walls of the historical Jumaya Mosque in Kazanlak were desecrated with graffiti with obscene and vulgar content.
- 14.10.2021: The regional mufti of Plovdiv Taner Veli and the mayor of Karlovo Emil Kabaivanov discussed the problems caused by archaeological excavations on the territory of the Kurshum mosque in Karlovo, leading to the desecration of the religious monument.
- 06.12.2021: Krystian Szkwarek, a representative of the group European Conservatives and Reformists for Bulgaria, was a guest on a popular podcast and spoke about a scenario in which the Western and Russian civilizations could turn into a future Islamic threat.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

The year 2021 saw no major Islamophobic incidents, a further decline in Islamophobic activity, and the side-lining of the anti-Islam agenda of far-right parties due to the public health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and other crises. At the same time, far-right parties continued their Islamophobic election campaigns. Courts and police authorities have continued to tackle anti-Islam prejudice, especially in the form of online hate speech. If outright anti-Islam attacks are less numerous, diffused public animosity against Muslims has not subsided, at least among the public that is prone to conspiracies, illiberalism, and declinism. 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.

Shrnutí

V roce 2021 nedošlo k žádným větším islamofobním incidentům. I proti-islámská a proti-migrační rétorika krajní pravice oslabila v důsledku krize veřejného zdraví způsobeného pandemií Covid-19 a dalším krizím. Soudy a policie pokračovaly v potírání protiislámských předsudků, zejména v oblasti nenávistných projevů na internetu. Jestliže přímé protiislámské útoky jsou méně četné, rozptýlená veřejná nevraživost vůči muslimům je stále přítomná, přinejmenším u veřejnosti otevřené konspiracím, antiliberalismu a deklinismu.. Negativní trend souvisí s rozšiřováním identitární, neonacionalistické agendy, která kombinuje protiislámské předsudky s nepřátelstvím vůči liberalismu, EU, feminismu atd.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Czech Republic

Type of Regime: Parliamentary democracy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic

Ruling Parties: Since 2021, a coalition of five parties: Civic Democratic Party (centre-right), Christian Democratic Union (centre-right), TOP 09 (centre-right), Mayors and Independents (local issues party), Czech Pirate Party (liberal center)

Opposition Parties: Freedom and Direct Democracy (far-right), ANO 2011 (centrist, populist)

Last Elections: 2018 Presidential Elections: Miloš Zeman won 51.37 % of the vote in the second round. 2021 Legislative Elections: ANO 2011 (72 seats), Civic Democratic Party (34 seats), Mayors and Independents (33 seats), Christian Democratic Union (23 seats), TOP 09 (14 seats), Czech Pirate Party (4 seats), Freedom and Direct Democracy (20 seats)

Total Population: 10.52 million

Major Languages: Czech

Official Religion: No official religion

Statistics on Islamophobia: There were 80 recorded cases of incitement to hate or prejudiced acts in 2021, one of which had an explicitly anti-Muslim content; this number is lower than in 2020. Out of 153,233 crimes committed in 2021, there were 108 hate crimes recorded, 7 of which were anti-Muslim hate crimes. Statistics on prejudiced acts are collected by watchdogs, and statistics on hate crimes are collected by the Ministry of Interior. Both watchdogs and the ministry refer to prejudiced acts and hate crimes in general terms (defamation of an ethic group, \$355, or other group, and incitement to national and racial hate, \$356), and do not refer to Islamophobic acts specifically.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The Ombudsman's Office has received 543 complaints about discrimination, 10 of which were related to religion or worldview. Only 16 out of 543 were found to be substantiated and solved, and were mostly related to the pandemic.

Major Religions (% of Population): According to the 2021 census: No religion (68.3%); Catholics (7%); Protestants (0.5%); Believers with no affiliation to religious institutions (9%); Undeclared, No answer (30%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): According to the 2021 census, 5,132 individuals (0.05%); according to estimates, 22,000 (0.2%)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: 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, Volný blok

Far-Right Movements: National Democracy, National and Social Front, Workers' Party of Social Justice, Workers Youth

Far-Right Violent Organizations: 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: NoPrayer Ban: No

Introduction

In 2021, the Czech Republic registered only a small number of hate crimes and prejudiced incidents against Muslims, and this number has been falling in the past years. There were no major Islamophobic incidents in 2021. There are several reasons for this. First, most Islamophobic incidents had been linked to the so-called refugee crisis and subsequent populist usage of fear of migration. This issue wasn't prominent in the last parliamentary campaign and remains reserved to the parliamentary far right. Secondly, the Czech Republic's institutions have started to deal with hate speech and hate crimes more effectively, and the habitual sources of Islamophobic discourse have started to express themselves in more cautious terms. Thirdly, the year 2021 was marked by the Covid 19 pandemic which led to new forms and targets for popular anger, mostly the government's anti-pandemic measures. Finally, apart from the religious politics in France, there were no substantial foreign events that would prompt anti-Islam debates.

The populist far right (currently represented by the SPD party of Tomio Okamura and Trikolóra of Václav Klaus Jr) and a growing, but still marginal "patriotic movement", remain the main sources of anti-Islam and anti-migration discourse. President Miloš Zeman, who was known for Islamophobic utterances, has kept out of the limelight in the past year. Generally, both half a year of lockdowns and the fight against the pandemic deprived the far right of media time. Also, the 2021 electoral campaign was concentrated on the united opposition against the previous populist government and was less confrontational in terms of racism or anti-migrant rhetoric.

Although the so-called alternative media scene continues to target migration and Islam, the pandemic, Russia following the Vrbětice affair, and assorted conspiracies have become more salient. According to the Ministry of Interior, in 2021, "Xenophobic populist entities and activists partially abandoned attacks on Muslims, migrants, Roma and the LGBTQ+ community." The ministry continues, "Their central theme became opposition to the alleged introduction of 'covid totalitarianism,'" on purported sources and profiteers of the pandemics. While the attacks on Roma and LGBTQ+ people have returned since the end of the last pandemic wave, Islam has not been a major issue in the Czech Republic in 2021. Nevertheless, Islamophobia continues to figure as a sort of discursive junction between anti-globalisation and anti-elitism in the alt-right scene, while becoming less visible..

Zpráva o extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti na území České republiky v roce 2021, page 10, https://www. mvcr.cz/soubor/zprava-o-extremismu-a-predsudecne-nenavisti-2020-fin-pdf.aspx

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Physical and verbal attacks against Muslims were very few in 2021. According to the In Iustitia human rights organisation, there were 80 recorded cases of incitement to hate or prejudiced acts in 2021. Most were directed against LBGTQ+ people and against Roma and Jews, and only one incident had an explicitly anti-Muslim content.² According to the Ministry of Interior, out of overall 153,233 crimes committed in 2021, 108 were hate crimes. There were seven recorded hate crimes against Muslims, two of which were solved by the police.³

Statistics on prejudiced acts are collected by watchdogs, and statistics on hate crimes are collected by the Ministry of Interior. Both watchdogs and the ministry refer to prejudiced acts and hate crimes in general terms (defamation of an ethic group, §355, or other group, and incitement to national and racial hate, §356), and do not refer to Islamophobic acts specifically – only when a particularly serious threat or a case of physical abuse is recorded, details are given. Because no details have been offered, we assume that those seven incidents were cases of verbal abuse.

Unlike in 2020, when a mosque was sprayed with graffiti, there is no recorded major Islamophobic incident in 2021. Islamophobic incidents remain a marginal phenomenon. Most often, Roma are the victims of hate crimes. In 2021, especially members of the LBGTQ+ community have been increasingly targeted, and there were several incidents related to resistance to pandemic measures.

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 employ 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 and needs of their children.

See "Kvartální zprávy o předsudečném násilí v roce 2021" on In Iustitia's web: https://in-ius.cz/zpravy-o-predsudecnem-nasili/

Zpráva o extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti na území České republiky v roce 2021, available at: https://www. mvcr.cz/clanek/extremismus-vyrocni-zpravy-o-extremismu-a-strategie-boje-proti-extremismu.aspx

Education

During the 2021 pandemic waves, the Czech government kept schools closed for more than half of the school year on average which makes the country's pandemic measures the most restrictive in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Developmen.⁴ Accordingly, online tuition, school results, examinations, and school abandonment were 2021's major issues - Islam did not feature among them.

Politics

The year 2021 saw legislative elections in the Czech Republic. The campaign was held in a rather moderate tone, as its main issue was the attempt by a "democratic coalition" to unseat the previous populist government. As a result, most attention was given to mostly liberal challenger parties. Islam became a subject of political attack by the incumbent prime minister, the populist Andrej Babiš (ANO). He accused the liberal Pirate Party of being pro-migration, stating, "The Pirates just welcome the migrants." Babiš spread the conspiracy theory according to which Muslims will demographically overtake Europe. The Pirate Party's chairman Ivan Bartoš has been defensive on account of Islam as his openness towards migration and Islam was systematically targeted by the ANO. In a TV interview, Bartoš said that he now had a problem with "Muslim Europe" since there are issues with integration of Muslims and "no-go zones". His positions reflect the very widespread notion that Muslims have difficulties in adapting to Western societies. Those stereotypes are often supported by Western politicians, i.e., by the French discourse of "Muslim separatism".

Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), the party of Tomio Okamura, remains, according to the Czech Ministry of Interior's "Extremism Report", "the most important grouping with the dominantly xenophobic and exacerbated nationalist elements". The SPD continues with its aggressive anti-migrant and anti-Islam positions and raises the threat of the "Islamisation of Europe." Among this year's SPD's election slogans was "NO to the unadaptables, NO to migrants and NO to Islam in the Czech Republic!" The term "unadaptables" is a reference to the Roma. In the elections, the SPD won 20 seats with 9.14% of votes, as opposed to 22 seats (10.64% of votes) in 2017. On the other hand, two smaller far-right parties did not pass the 5% threshold: Trikolóra of Václav Klaus Jr. (2.76%) and the Volný blok, a conspiracist and disinformation political group around a former SPD MP Lubomír Volný, (1.33%). Unlike the ideologically opportunist and mainly anti-migration and an-

https://eurozpravy.cz/domaci/skolstvi/doba-uzavreni-skol-v-cesku-odpovidala-prumeru-zemi-oecd-mini-resort. d644129f/

Zpráva o extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti na území České republiky v roce 2021, page 8, https://www. mvcr.cz/soubor/zprava-o-extremismu-a-predsudecne-nenavisti-2020-fin-pdf.aspx

ti-Roma SPD, Trikolóra and Volný blok have portrayed themselves as more ideological and explicitly anti-liberal. Their failure makes the anti-Islam SPD, an established political party and part of the current Czech party landscape, dwarf all other anti-establishment and patriotic forces, and remain the steady source of anti-migrant, anti-Roma, and anti-Islam rhetoric.

In contrast to the pre-pandemic period, the SPD has taken less anti-Muslim initiatives. One exception was the 'migration crisis' in the fall of 2021 on the Polish and Belorussian border. Tomio Okamura warned against "crowds of illegal migrants" and said that "states have the right to use all force, including firearms, to stop illegal migration. We have the right to defend our country, that country is ours and not of some Arab or Muslim migrants." Both Okamura (SPD) and Babiš (ANO), the former prime minister, systematically use the threat of migration in their political rhetoric. It is to be expected that food crises-related migration will be met with an increased anti-migration and anti-Islam discourse.

The refusal to consider refugees who are mostly Iraqi Kurds at the Polish-Belarus border as legitimate asylum seekers in the fall of 2021 stands in stark contrast to the later acceptance of 300,000 Ukrainian refugees beginning in February 2022.

Media

The Czech public media has largely been receiving praise for tackling divisive social issues. Privately owned press and tabloids tend to offer more sensational and divisive reporting, especially in times of major foreign events. *Mladá Fronta* and its website Idnes.cz, and *Lidové Noviny* and its website lidovky.cz are owned by the former prime minister Babiš. The smaller TV station TV Barrandov draws controversial personalities, including far-right figures.

The year 2021 was not rich in Islam-related controversies apart from the coverage of the French Islam policy and policing in Sweden. For example, mainstream media have uncritically written about "Islamic separatism" and migration-related criminality in Sweden. A handful of critical newer online and print media such as *Deník N*, Hlídací Pes, Voxpot, and Alarm, on the other hand, continue to bring investigative journalism and reporting, somewhat balancing the commercial sphere, especially when it comes to foreign policy. *Deník N* brought up the case of anti-Muslim and anti-migration comments by an SPD political advisor, for which he was later tried (see below).

^{6.} https://www.spd.cz/davy-nelegalnich-islamskych-imigrantu-smeruji-z-beloruska-k-hranicim-polska/

https://cnn.iprima.cz/okamura-lotyssko-by-melo-vystoupit-z-eu-a-v-nejhorsim-pripade-do-migrantu-i-strilet-31421

Martin Ehl, Migranti se blíží! Strašidlo české předvolební politiky versus skutečná situace na hranicích Evropské unie, Hospodářské noviny, 18. 7. 2021, https://archiv.hn.cz/c1-66956080-migranti-se-blizi-strasid-lo-ceske-predvolebni-politiky-versus-skutecna-situace-na-hranicich-evropske-unie

Justice System

The Czech justice system continues to prosecute online hate speech. After three earlier suspended sentences last year, Benedikt Čermák was sentenced to six years in prison for condoning the Christchurch attacks in 2019 and propagating terrorism. This is the harshest sentence so far since the defendant figured under the nickname "Ssman" and commented directly on a website specialised in publishing terror videos. Czech police traced the nickname back to the 22-year-old Czech man. The sentence was later commuted to a suspended sentence of three years after the defendant expressed regret. In another court hearing, a 33-year-old was handed a two-year suspended sentence also for condoning the Christchurch attacks. He had commented on the news about the attack by "a grenade into each mosque", but expressed regret during the court proceedings and reportedly left all social media. In media.

A court also sentenced Michal Walter Kraft, an assistant to SPD MP Jaroslav Foldyna, to a fine of c. 1,200 Euro or 60 days in prison for inciting hatred. In 2019, Kraft published an article under the title "Is the Future of Europe Islamic?" on the website "Czech Society for Civilizational Studies" in which he wrote about an "invasive culture" and suggested drowning boats in the Mediterranean. The independent *Deník N* had drawn attention to the article.¹²

Internet

The level of aggressiveness in the growing disinformation and conspiracy sphere, as well as in public space, has generally risen, the target being mostly the government and the "system." The pandemic has generally strengthened the "alternative scene" of websites that repost, translate, and sometimes produce news, often linked to "disinformation" websites such as the Russia-based Sputnik or the Czech website Aeronet. According to a poll, 79% of Czech respondents believe at least some conspiracy theory concerning the pandemic, such as its intentional spreading, anti-vax conspiracies, etc.¹³ As the "alternative media scene" successfully undermined Czech in-

Za chválu teroru v mešitách padlo šest let, obhajoba otazníků nezabrala, IDNES, 16. 3. 2021, https://www.idnes.cz/brno/zpravy/soud-brno-muz-internet-schvalovani-strelba-mesita.A210316_102844_brno-zpravy_mos1

Z vězení je podmínka. Soud snížil trest za velebení teroru na Zélandu, IDNES, 20. 5, 2021, available at: https://www.idnes.cz/brno/zpravy/schvalovani-utoku-novy-zeland-terorismus.A210520_102902_ brno-zpravy_klu

Do każdej mešity granát, napsal muž k článku o terorismu. Do vězení nepůjde. IDNES, 27. 5., https://www.idnes.cz/ostrava/zpravy/soud-schvalovani-teroristicky-utok-novy-zeland-mesita. A210527_094733_ostrava-zpravy_woj

^{12.} L. Prchal, J. Moláček, Foldynův asistent dostal od soudu pokutu za podněcování k nenávisti. Psal, že je potřeba posílat lodě s migranty ke dnu, Deník N, 16. 2. 2021, https://denikn.cz/563539/foldynuv-asistent-dostal-od-soudu-pokutu-za-podnecovani-k-nenavisti-psal-ze-je-potreba-posilat-lode-s-migranty-ke-dnu/?ref=inm

Jana Mertová, Pandemie nakopla dezinformace. Žádné nevěří jen pětina Čechů, Forbes, 8. 4. 2021, https:// forbes.cz/pandemie-nakopla-dezinformace-zadne-neveri-jen-petina-cechu/

stitutions and basic political trust in public policies, the pandemic has revealed the degree of vulnerability of the Czech public to disinformation.

Pandemic disinformation has been spreading on the same websites that have previously published conspiracy theories about Islam. The list keeps changing and currently involves the following websites: pravyprostor.cz, pravdive.eu, vlasteneckenoviny.cz, aeronet.cz, megazpravy.cz, pokec24.cz, svobodnenoviny.et, svobodny-svet.cz, dfenz-cz.com, prvnizpravy.cz, and cz.sputniknews.com. The website most prominent among them is parlamentnilisty.cz that hosts the earlier Islam-specialised Eurabia, as well as blogs by prominent anti-Islamists such as Petr Hampl. In contrast to the heyday of anti-Islam discourse between 2015 and 2016, today's alternative media scene operates with a larger declinist conspiracy theory that serves the interpretation of various current events. Hostility to Islam is coupled with hostility to the EU and technocratic elites.

In 2021, the disinformation scene also focused on prominent issues other than Islam and migration: on Russia after the Vrbětice affair, an explosion in an ammunition depot presumably caused by Russian GRU (Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation) agents in 2014 whose involvement was uncovered in the summer of 2021 and led to mutual expulsion of diplomatic staff between Russia and the Czech Republic; and more recently on the origins of Covid 19, on Covid-19, vaccines, and Covid-19 treatments;, etc. Among several hundred hoaxes or fake news registered by the web Manipulatori.cz, there was only one about Islam in 2021.¹⁴

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Tomio Okamura, the leader of the far-right SPD, remains the most prominent anti-Islam and anti-migration figure in the Czech Republic. His party has just a few consistent lines: the rejection of migration and minorities, with a related hostility to Islam, and a stark anti-EU position. The SPD was a one-man party with few other political personalities besides Okamura. He maintained SPD public presence through his Facebook (286k likes) and Twitter (44k) account and other media appearances. In 2021, two prominent former members of the socialist party (ČSSD) with far-right and pro-Russian views, Jaroslav Foldyna and Jaroslav Bašta, joined the SPD and became MPs, thus deepening the SPD's far-right identity.

With the far-right arrivals and thanks to the SPD's electoral support that has currently stabilised at around 10%, the party is establishing itself as a permanent feature of Czech politics. In April 2021, the SPD created a Facebook profile of the movement's youth organization "Mladí Espédáci" (Young SPD members, MES). In

^{14.} See the list of hoax: https://manipulatori.cz/lexikon/hoax/

November 2021, the SPD announced the creation of an eponymous political think tank, using a Czech financial scheme open to political parties that have successfully competed in two subsequent elections since 2018.¹⁵ The German Alternative für Deutschland is also setting up a much better endowed political institute. It is to be expected that already existing transnational anti-EU, anti-Muslim, and anti-migration far-right networks will normalise and strengthen the general illiberal discourse in Central Europe. Normalisation would mean mainstreaming: a growing acceptance and justification to positions that were previously held only in the margins.

In parallel to the consolidation of a far right in politics, a newer "patriotic scene" continues to develop. The patriotic discourse was largely started by the former "anti-Islamic movement" 16 (Martin Konvička, Petr Hampl, Benjamin Kuras). The anti-Islam movement has lost out in the political field to the SPD, but managed to introduce anti-Islam fears into the general public. In the words of Petr Hampl, who terms himself an anti-Islamist, "We no longer need to shout that Islamic migration is a problem. It's mainstream. That's what everybody says, except a few fanatics and conspiracy theorists at Czech Television, the Multicultural Center Prague, Prague City Hall and elsewhere". 17 Hampl and a handful of anti-Islam influencers have built it up into a larger narrative of a decline of the West, and conspiracy theories involving the so-called Great Replacement, and hostility to globalised elites, "neo-Marxism", and feminism. Meeting every summer in Příčovy in Central Bohemia since 2019, an eclectic mixture of former anti-Islamists, Catholic fundamentalists, National Home Guard activists, alternative media figures, and right-wing extremists have started to shape into a consolidated anti-liberal, anti-globalisation, and anti-EU scene under the aegis of President Zeman.

In a process similar to the SPD, this "patriotic scene" is undergoing a sort of normalisation. Unlike in 2020, when several political figures from the Czech and German far right were present, the 2021 meeting featured only one SPD speaker and several lesser-known figures, thus creating a more acceptable image. They debated current issues such as migration, forestry, and history. The "patriotic scene" seems to develop a Czech version of the alt-right, with a visible presence of Generation Identity, that increasingly stands in unspoken opposition to the parliamentary far right.

The "patriotic scene" also continues a build-up of prospective institutions and publishing houses, such as the prementioned "Czech Society for Civilizational Studies" (a project of Hampl) and the publishing house of the anti-Islam activist Lukáš Lhoťan. The former commercial sociologist and anti-Islam activist Hampl has be-

Tomio Okamura zakládá vlastní think-tank, E15, 3. 11. 2021, https://www.e15.cz/domaci/tomio-okamurazaklada-vlastni-think-tank-o-nazvu-strana-jeste-debatuje-1384954

This is Petr Hampl's term from a blog post from 23. 9. 2021: https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/nazory-a-petice/Petr-Hampl-Jak-dal-s-obranou-Zapadu-677936

^{17.} Ibid.

come its most visible figure. He has published two short, didactic, quasi-academic books. In a declinist approach, he criticises the effects of globalisation, and the purported global elites' attempts to undermine and emasculate national cultures. Migration from Muslim countries is framed as colonisation that is purportedly instrumentalised by controlling, cosmopolitan elites. Stopping short of outright conspiracy, Hampl nevertheless develops an anti-system thought that allows for the integration of very heterogenous alt-right elements with a slight reference to legitimate social grievances. Islam is no longer the dominant issue, but rather an integrating element of an array of anti-globalisation positions.

So far, these initiatives remain marginal and far from mainstream. But they feature an increasing discursive integration and public activism. Former anti-Islam activists use their anti-Islam notoriety and increasingly comment on various current events from an alt-right perspective – from the Green New Deal, Covid-19, Afghanistan, abortion, and LGBTQ+ to Ukraine. A patriotic or nationalist (*vlastenecký*, *národovecký*) scene is in the process of becoming an alternative to forward-looking liberal politics.

Because the "patriotic scene" does not have an explicit ideology, but rather a reactive anti-system stance, it is not surprising that its main figures differ as to divisive issues such as vaccines and Russia. Some have, for example, refused to vote for the SPD because of its anti-vaccination stance, while other former anti-Islamists have fully embraced the vaccination conspiracies.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Between 2015 and 2020, the Czech Republic has seen a series of state- and foreign-sponsored and grassroot initiatives that increased knowledge about Islam, fought stereotypes, and generally helped foster social communication (see Islamophobia Report 2020). Many of those projects (by the humanitarian organisation People in Need, and the project Hate Free Culture) have been running for years and have enlarged the scope of various other social issues like women's rights, mental health, etc. A large number of academic and journalistic texts, including dozens of BA and MA theses, have analysed Czech Islamophobia, the image of Islam in the Czech media, and the position of Muslims in Czech society.

The fall of 2021 saw several specific initiatives that attempted to draw attention to human rights abuses against mostly Kurdish migrants at the Polish-Belorussia border. A theatre performance¹⁸ and a petition¹⁹ have sought to call upon the Polish and

^{18.} https://www.otevrenakultura.cz/cs/hranice-co-chteji-co-chceme

^{19.} Such as this one: https://www.petice.com/zona_smrti_na_polsko-bloruske_hranici_-_kvli_politicke_he_zstavaji_v_lesich_lide_vetn_malych_dti_a_kojenc_bez_jidla_vody_a_lekaske_pee

Czech governments to respect international law, allow humanitarian aid, and stop the practice of pushbacks, but to little political and diplomatic avail.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2021 saw a further decline in Islamophobic activity and the side-lining of the anti-Islam agenda of far-right parties due to the public health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The courts and police authorities have continued to tackle anti-Islam prejudice, especially in the form of online hate speech. If outright anti-Islam attacks are less numerous, diffused public animosity towards 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.

Seven years after the 2015 migration and terror shocks, the Czech Republic seems more resilient in terms of hate speech and knowledge. The information gap has been partly covered by balances and professional media, while two years of pandemic and public health concerns, natural catastrophes (draught, deforestation, tornados), and the constant threat of the war in Ukraine have shifted public attention to other perceptions of threats.

On the other hand, some anti-Islam and anti-migration positions seem to have entrenched themselves in a broader declinist anti-globalisation discourse that is in risk of continuing to grow if social grievances and future crises are not prevented by responsible policies.

In light of all the above, the following actions are recommended:

- 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 such as Amnesty International, ENAR, and 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

- **16.2.2021:** A first instance court sentenced an assistant to a far-right MP for incitement to violence expressed in an anti-Islam article.
- **16.3.2021:** A first instance court sentenced a man for propagating terrorism in an internet post condoning the Christchurch massacre.
- **8.10.2021- 9.10.2021:** Parliamentary elections bring a steady presence of the anti-migration far-right SPD, but other far-right start-ups fail.
- 21.08.2021: "Patriotic meeting" of the far-right scene in Příčovy.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN DENMARK NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

This year's Islamophobia report shows worrying signs of how structural barriers for Muslims are increasing through new policies and legislation in Denmark. One particularly disturbing development is the new statistical category of MENAPT, which is an abbreviation for "Middle East North Africa Pakistan Turkey". This category enables the government to specifically target Muslim citizens by inferring their Muslimness based on their countries of origin. The category was officially introduced in late 2020, but it has quickly become an important part of political rhetoric. As such, the new citizenship restrictions implemented in 2021, indicated that MENAPT applicants would be categorised separately from "non-Western" applicants; this will allow politicians to explicitly discriminate against Muslim citizenship applicants with little public oversight.

The citizenship requirements and restrictions are particularly worrying since a report published in 2021 by the Danish Institute of Human Rights demonstrated that 35% of all descendants of migrants – many of whom are Muslim and born in Denmark – do not have Danish citizenship and can therefore not participate on equal footing as their Danish peers in the Danish democratic system. They now face increased barriers in access to social housing as the government has introduced new "ghetto" policies to regulate the demographic make-up of neighbourhoods with more than 30% "non-Western" immigrants and descendants, as opposed to previously where they only focused on neighbourhoods with more than 50% "non-Westerners".

This year's EIR report demonstrates how the government has become embold-ened to further distinguish Denmark's Muslim population in statistical data with the implementation of the MENAPT category. In the coming year, it will be important to closely monitor the ways the government and public institutions will implement the MENAPT category as a new "Muslim" category based on people's origin in Muslim-majority countries and how this will create barriers for Muslims' access to public services, housing, employment, education, and their treatment within the judicial system.

Sammenfatning

Islamofobi-rapporten i år viser bekymrende tegn på, hvordan nye politikker og lovgivning er med til at øge de strukturelle barrierer for muslimer. En særlig foruroligende udvikling er den nye statistiske kategori MENAPT, som står for "Middle East North Africa Pakistan Turkey". Denne kategori gør det muligt for regeringen at målrette deres politik og lovgivning mod muslimer ved at udlede deres muslimskhed baseret på deres oprindelseslande. Kategorien blev officielt introduceret i slutningen af 2020, og er hurtigt blevet en vigtig del af den politiske retorik. MENAPT-kategorien anvendes bl.a. i forbindelse med statsborgerskabsansøgninger, hvor MENAPT-ansøgere nu vil blive kategoriseret separat fra "ikke-vestlige" ansøgere; dette vil give politikere mulighed for eksplicit at diskriminere muslimske statsborgerskabsansøgere med meget lidt offentligt tilsyn.

De nye indfødsretskrav er særligt bekymrende, idet en rapport offentliggjort i 2021 af Institut for Menneskerettigheder påviste, at 35 % af alle efterkommere af indvandrere – hvoraf et stort antal udledes at have muslimsk baggrund - ikke har statsborgerskab. De kan således ikke deltage i det danske demokratiske system på lige fod med deres danske jævnaldrende. De møder nu øgede barrierer i adgangen til almene boliger, idet regeringen har indført nye regler i parallelsamfundsloven for at regulere den demografiske sammensætning af nabolag med mere end 30 % "ikke-vestlige" indvandrere og efterkommere, i modsætning til tidligere, hvor de kun fokuserede på boligområder med mere end 50 % "ikke-vestlige".

Dette års EIR-rapport viser, hvordan regeringen formår at være mere eksplicit i sin differentiering af den muslimske befolkningsgruppe i både statistiske data og politisk retorik ved hjælp af implementeringen af MENAPT-kategorien. I det kommende år vil det være vigtigt at nøje overvåge, hvordan regeringen og offentlige institutioner implementerer MENAPT-kategorien som en "muslimsk" kategori baseret på folks oprindelse i lande med en muslimsk majoritet, og hvordan dette vil skabe barrierer for muslimers adgang til offentlige serviceydelser, boliger, beskæftigelse, uddannelse samt i retssystemet.

Country Profile EIR 2021

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: The 2021 Hate Crime Report by the National Police of Denmark (Rigspolitiet) has not been published yet, and so statistics on Islamophobia in 2021 are not available.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Similar to above, statistics on racism and discrimination are currently not available.

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 Organizations: 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 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 (ENAR Denmark), Center for Forebyggelse af Eksklusion (Centre for Prevention of Exclusion), DEMOS

Far-Right Parties: Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti), The New Right (Nye Borgerlige)

Far-Right Movements: Generation Identitær, For Frihed (former Pegida Danmark), Nordfront, Nordisk Modstandsbevægelse (Nordic Resistance Movement)

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: Feuerkrieg Division

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: No
- Burka Ban: Yes, it is illegal to cover one's face without a valid reason in public places; religion is not considered a valid reason.
- Prayer Ban: No

Introduction

In late 2020, the integration minister, Mattias Tesfaye, introduced a new statistical category to further differentiate between Denmark's so-called non-Western population: MENAPT (an abbreviation for "Middle East North Africa Pakistan Turkey") is a list of countries that only include Muslim-majority populations. By specifically including countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Pakistan, and Turkey, but excluding countries in the same region such as Israel, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, which are not predominately Muslim, the government's intention to create policies and sanctions that explicitly target Muslims is clear. The category "non-Western", although often assumed to be Muslim, includes several non-Muslim countries that seem to obscure the government's intent to single out Muslims in public statistics.²

With the MENAPT category, Tesfaye has been able to make politically explicit what was already popularly known: when politicians make policies regarding "non-Westerners", they in fact mean Muslims and with this new terminology, the government has a stronger tool to create statistics and policies that enable their Islamo-phobic rhetoric. The MENAPT category has quickly become an important category in 2021 to distinguish between people originating from Muslim-majority countries and others from non-Muslim countries. To pre-empt new policies that will potentially replace the "non-Western" category with the MENAPT category to regulate Muslims access to housing, social services, benefits, etc., this year's EIR chapter on Denmark will include more examples of how the "non-Western" category, and particularly the MENAPT category, has been used to introduce and implement both ethnically racist and Islamophobic policies.

There have been several political developments in 2021 that have made it more difficult for Muslims in Denmark. This includes making it tougher for people from Muslim-majority countries to get citizenship and increasing barriers for them to access social housing. These points will be expanded below. At the same time, there has been significant progress in anti-racist mobilisation, which has also been an important development for anti-Islamophobia work. One win for the anti-racist struggle has been that the government with the support of left-centre parties approved a national action plan against racism. It is not entirely clear what this action plan will entail, however, it has inspired municipalities to continue in a similar direction by including local versions of an action plan against racism where civil society organisations are invited to collaborate with local authorities to work towards a more inclusive city.

Michala Clante Bendixen, "Denmark: New statistics category for migrants from Muslim countries", European Commission, (December 11, 2020), retrieved June 27, 2022, from https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/denmark-new-statistics-category-migrants-muslim-countries_en

Kim Kristensen, "Så mange fra ikke-vestlige lande kommer fra muslimske lande", Berlingske, (November 2020), retrieved July 12, 2022, from https://www.berlingske.dk/danmark/hver-femte-ikkevestlige-indvandrer-er-kristen

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Like previous years, Muslims experience a high number of physical and verbal attacks. Muslims are more vulnerable to hate crime because many people of colour are assumed to be Muslim as well. In this sense, ethnic minority Muslims risk both racist attacks on their assumed foreignness and Islamophobic attacks based on their assumed Muslimness. The national police force has not yet released its yearly hate crime report for 2021, and there are currently no other civil society organisations which collect data on Islamophobic attacks, so the following section relies on media reports on Islamophobic hate crime attacks. In this regard, there has been an increased number of news reports in 2021 particularly about Muslim women experiencing physical and verbal attacks,³ as well as Muslim-owned businesses which experienced harassment and vandalism.⁴ The amount of media reports on violence against Muslims in 2021 instigated a hearing with Justice Minister Nick Hækkerup who declared that the police must be attentive to hate crime particularly against Muslims.⁵

This is an important recognition and progress, as the police force has previously been criticised for neglecting reports of hate crime, mainly because Danish law has been unclear on what can be categorised as a racially motivated hate crime. In other words, the reason for assault must be motivated by apparent racist reasoning and cannot be accompanied by any other reason for assault. One such example in 2021 was of a young Muslim woman who was severely physically and verbally assaulted by a white Danish man in his 60s. Though the man clearly used racist slurs, the court ruled that there was not sufficient evidence to rule it a racially motivated hate crime. The woman's lawyer was surprised with the court's decision and remarked: "It is difficult to get someone convicted of a hate crime, if it is not enough that the accused himself admits it in court" – thereby highlighting how the accused had admitted in court that he had said something racist.

 [&]quot;Minister efter overfald på Muslimer: Politiet skal blive mere lydhøre overfor hadforbrydelser", Arbejderen, (April
9, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://arkiv.arbejderen.dk/indland/minister-efter-overfald-på-muslimer-politiet-skal-blive-mere-lydhøre-overfor-hadforbrydelser

^{4.} Louise Bruun H

øfler, "12 pizzeriaer og kebabhuse chikaneret af nazister: Falske smiley-rapporter h

ængt i vinduerne", Amtsavisen, (March 15, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://amtsavisen.dk/artikel/12-pizzeriaer-og-kebabhuse-chikaneret-af-nazister-falske-smiley-rapporter-h

ængt-i-vinduerne

 [&]quot;Minister efter overfald på Muslimer: Politiet skal blive mere lydhøre overfor hadforbrydelser", Arbejderen, (April 9, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://arkiv.arbejderen.dk/indland/minister-efter-overfald-på-muslimer-politiet-skal-blive-mere-lydhøre-overfor-hadforbrydelser

Ditte Lynge, "Mand dømt for at overfalde muslimsk kvinde på parkeringsplads: I retten brød hun grædende sammen", Heartbeats, (May 19, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://heartbeats.dk/mand-doemt-forat-overfalde-muslimsk-kvinde-paa-parkeringsplads-i-retten-broed-hun-graedende-sammen/

In another instance, a young Muslim family recorded a white Danish man spewing racist and Islamophobic slurs against them and their young children. The video went viral and instigated a public debate on the rise of hate crime against ethnic and Muslim minorities. The blatant racist barrage was addressed by the prime minister who admitted that this sort of behaviour should not be tolerated. As these cases culminated in public debate, the organisation "Protect Minorities" (Beskyt Minoriteter) collected over 50,000 signatures to mobilise left-centre parties to request a clarification of the hate crime legislation. A majority in Parliament – mainly left-centre parties – voted to specify the hate crime legislation to include hate crime that is only partially motivated by hate, thereby potentially making it easier to charge and convict people of hate crime.

Employment

In last year's EIR report, we highlighted how people with Muslim-sounding names and particularly hijab-wearing women are discriminated against in Danish employment. While not much progress has been made in tackling this discrimination in 2021, Danish job centres, which are public services to help unemployed people gain employment, came under increased scrutiny for using an algorithm to categorise their unemployed customers according to their ethnic heritage since 2015. The Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (STAR), a subdivision of the Ministry of Interior and Employment, was using a catch-all category of "non-Western heritage" to categorise unemployed citizens, who are migrants or descendants of migrants from "non-Western" countries.

In our EIR report from 2019, we demonstrated how the job centres accessed the information provided by STAR about a jobseekers' ethnic background through their CPR number (social security number), rather than jobseekers volunteering this information themselves. ¹² In so doing, neither agency nor the job centres gave jobseekers the choice to opt out of this data-gathering tool that supposedly creates algorithms

Casper Fauerholdt, "Video deles igen og igen – familie overfuset på gaden på grund af deres etnicitet", TV2
 Nyheder, (May 24, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2021-05-24-familie-overfuset-paa-gaden-hvorfor-pisser-i-ikke-af-til-jeres-eget-land

Freja Sofie Madsen, "Mette Frederiksen reagerer på opsigtsvækkende video", TV 2 Nyheder, (May 25, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2021-05-25-mette-frederiksen-reagerer-paaopsigtsvaekkende-video

^{9.} Dina Hashem and Cecilie Fjeldberg Hjarsen, "Beskyt Minoriteter: Alle skal have lovgivningen i ryggen", *Respons*, (December 9, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.responsmedie.dk/om-hadforbrydelser-13/

Ministry of Justice, "Regeringen og støttepartier vil ændre straffelovens bestemmelse om hadforbrydelser", (November 11, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://www.justitsministeriet.dk/pressemeddelelse/regeringen-og-stoettepartier-vil-aendre-straffelovens-bestemmelse-om-hadforbrydelser/

^{11.} Amani Hassani, "Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2020". In: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

^{12.} Amani Hassani, "Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2019". In: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2019, Istanbul, SETA, 2020.

to help determine risk factors in long-term unemployment. In a study published in 2021, it became clear that the algorithm puts "non-Western" jobseekers in an unfavourable position compared to their Western counterparts.¹³

Confirming the study's statistical results, one job centre manager confirmed that if the algorithm predicts a risk of long-term unemployment, a jobseeker would be called in for a meeting twice a month instead of only once a month. The argument here is that the job centres are offering added support to jobseekers at risk of long-term unemployment. Nevertheless, the Institute for Human Rights Denmark has pointed out that there is significant risk in employing algorithms to public services such as the one used in the Danish job centres; one important risk factor being indirect discriminatory practices.¹⁴

The main contributing factor in the algorithms used by STAR, which predicts "non-Western" migrants' and descendants' long-term unemployment, is ethnicity regardless of levels of education or employment experience. This is an important point to emphasise given the fact that studies highlighted in last year's EIR report have shown that jobseekers with Muslim-sounding names and who are visibly Muslim are discriminated against in the Danish job market.¹⁵ The job centres' argument of providing added support for these jobseekers to learn to write better CVs seems to put the responsibility on the jobseekers for the discrimination they experience in the Danish job market based on their ethnic and/or religious background. Instead, it would seem more productive if the agency focused on Danish employers becoming less discriminatory and more inclusive of minorities in their search for new employees. A recent and positive development in this case has been that STAR have ceased the use of this algorithm since March 2022.¹⁶

Education

In 2018, the Social Democrats, the current governing party, promised to reduce the number of "non-Western" students in primary schools with a high number of minority students. In 2021, the government received criticism for not following through with their pledge. Parties from the right and left criticised the government for their lack of planning and vision to see this pledge to fruition. The Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DPP) leader, Morten Messerschmidt, criticised the Social Democrats, stat-

Therese Moreau & Frederik Kulager, "Vi har skilt jobcentrenes algoritme ad", Zetland, (June 10, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://www.zetland.dk/historie/sOMVZ7qG-m8yvMbM4-83f81

^{14.} The Danish Institute for Human Rights, "Risiko for discrimination i det offentliges brug af profilerings modeller", *Menneskeret.dk*, (October 11, 2021), retrieved June 24, 2022, from https://menneskeret.dk/udgivelser/risiko-diskrimination-offentliges-brug-profileringsmodeller

Amani Hassani, "Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2020". In: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, "ECRI Report on Denmark (sixth monitoring cycle)", Council of Europe, (June 9, 2022), retrieved July 14, 2022, from https://rm.coe.int/6th-ecri-report-on-denmark-/1680a6d5e4

ing, "This is very lacking. Everyone knows that it is highly damaging to the teaching and to the calmness in the classroom that there are so many bilinguals, especially Muslims, in certain primary schools." The education spokesperson for the Danish Social Liberal Party (Radikale Venstre), Lotte Rod, pointed out, "So far, too little has happened. This is very unfortunate, I think, because it is important that we attend school with each other. That the classes are mixed, so we meet each other across the board, and the schools are not so divided." While parties across the political spectrum may disagree why so many Muslim students are allegedly problematic, they certainly agree high numbers of Muslim and "non-Western" students within a school pose a challenge for the school setting, which the government is responsible for solving.

In the hopes of diversifying the ethnic make-up of schools, several school districts - particularly in the second largest city, Aarhus - have been busing "non-Western" primary school children to schools outside of their catchment areas. ¹⁹ This practice has been going on in Aarhus since 2006, yet according to one recent report by researchers from Aarhus University, these minority students are lagging in their education compared to their white school peers and the national average. ²⁰ The schools they attend offer very little academic support to help these students and there is a significant attainment gap that is not adequately dealt with. Socially, these students often experience feelings of exclusion and connect better with other "bus children" (i.e., other racialised children) instead of their white classmates. ²¹

A broad consensus across the political spectrum in the Danish Parliament agreed to start regulating student intake in the country's high schools as well. One important component of the policy is to distribute the number of "non-Western" students enrolled in high schools with a large intake of minority students. The policy has meant that several high schools had to completely stop the enrolment of new students for a full year to ensure a better distribution of "non-Western" students. The Islamopho-

^{17.} Morten Henriksen and Rasmus Bøttcher Christensen, "Tre år efter S-løfte: Andelen af skoler med over 30 procent ikke-vestlige elever er uændret", *DR*, (August 5, 2021), retrieved June 24 2022, from https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/tre-aar-efter-s-loefte-andelen-af-skoler-med-over-30-procent-ikke-vestlige-elever-er

^{18.} Morten Henriksen and Rasmus Bøttcher Christensen, "Tre år efter S-Jøfte: Andelen af skoler med over 30 procent ikke-vestlige elever er uændret", *DR*, (August 5, 2021), retrieved June 24 2022, from https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/tre-aar-efter-s-loefte-andelen-af-skoler-med-over-30-procent-ikke-vestlige-elever-er

Heikke Yding & Flemming Nielsen, "Aarhus sender stadig flere tosprogede børn med bus til andre skoler", DR, (April 13, 2021), retrieved June 26, 2022, from https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/regionale/oestjylland/aarhussender-stadig-flere-tosprogede-boern-med-bus-til-andre-skoler

Damm, Anna Piil, Elena Mattana, Helena Skyt Nielsen, and Benedicte Rouland. "Academic achievement and wellbeing of dual language learners: Evidence from a busing program." *Journal of Urban Economics* 126 (June, 2021), p. 1-31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2021.103358

^{21.} Martin Littau Herlevsen, "Trods mistrivsel blandt busbørn: 48 kommende skoleelever tvinges væk fra den lokale skole", *TV2 Østjylland*, (April 13, 2021), retrieved June 26, 2022, from https://www.tv2ostjylland.dk/aarhus/trods-mistrivsel-blandt-busboern-48-kommende-skoleelever-tvinges-vaek-fra-den-lokale-skole

Signe Julie Andersen, "Ny aftale kan lukke for optag på flere gymnasier i hovedstadsområdet", TV2 Lorry, (June 10, 2021), retrieved June 26, 2022, from https://www.tv2lorry.dk/lorryland/ny-aftale-kan-lukke-for-optag-paa-flere-gymnasier-i-hovedstadsomraadet

bic reasoning for reducing the number of "non-Western" students in particular high schools is clearly expressed by the DPP's education spokesperson, Maria Krarup, who points out, "The DPP wants to combat the consequences of a failed foreign policy in high schools, in order to avoid French and Swedish conditions with parallel societies and Islamification […]".²³

In general, there has been little critique in Danish public discourse of the government's rationale behind its attempts to forcibly diversify schools. There seems to be political consensus that high numbers of "non-Western" students make a school disadvantaged and threaten the social cohesion of society. ²⁴ In turn, there is little scrutiny into what schools and the school system in general do to contribute to the attainment gap among racialised students, and how schools can be hostile environments for students of colour, particularly Muslim students. The introduction of busing, closing of local high school admissions, and other initiatives to forcibly scatter minority ethnic children and youth into white schools seem to be an ill-informed political decision that refuses to learn from the traumatic racial histories of the UK and US, which implemented forced busing on racial minorities in the 1960-80s to the detriment of these students' social and academic well-being. ²⁵

Politics

Since 2018, the Danish government has implemented several housing policies focused on neighbourhoods with more than 50% "non-Western" residents. To change the demographic make-up of these neighbourhoods, housing blocks have been demolished; residents have been evicted and relocated; the police are given power to temporarily implement double penalty zones in which crimes committed in designated zones could lead to double sentencing; and compulsory 25-hours-aweek nursery for 1-year-olds have been implemented. These policies have been internationally criticised by the UN for their discrimination against "non-Western" residents. These policies have been internationally criticised by the UN for their discrimination against "non-Western" residents.

^{23.} Ministry of Children and Education, "Ny aftale om elevfordeling bremser polarisering og parallelsamfund og hjælper gymnasier i yderområder", *Ministry of Children and Education*, (June 10, 2021), retrieved June 26, 2022, from https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2021/jun/210610-ny-aftale-om-elevfordeling-bremser-polarisering--parallelsamfund-og-hjaelper-gymnasier

^{24.} Morten Henriksen and Rasmus Bøttcher Christensen, "Tre år efter S-løfte: Andelen af skoler med over 30 procent ikke-vestlige elever er uændret", *DR*, (August 5, 2021), retrieved June 24 2022, from https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/tre-aar-efter-s-loefte-andelen-af-skoler-med-over-30-procent-ikke-vestlige-elever-er

^{25.} Olivier Esteves, The "desegregation" of English schools: Bussing, race and urban space, 1960s–80s. (Manchester University Press, 2018).

Regeringen, "Ét Danmark Uden Parallelsamfund. Ingen Ghettoer i 2030", Regeringen, (March 1, 2018), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.regeringen.dk/media/4937/publikation_ét-danmark-uden-parallelsamfund.pdf.

Press Release, "UN human rights experts urge Denmark to halt contentious sale of 'ghetto' buildings", OHCHR, (October 23, 2020), retrieved June 27, 2022, from https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/10/un-human-rights-experts-urge-denmark-halt-contentious-sale-ghetto-buildings

Nevertheless, in June 2021, a broad majority in Parliament voted to expand the policies' outreach to include neighbourhoods "at risk of becoming parallel societies", which means any residential area with more than 1,000 residents which has more than 30% "non-Western" residents. The aim of this expansion is to change the residential demographic so there are no neighbourhoods with more than 30% "non-Western" residents by 2030.²⁸

In practice, the policy will now restrict municipalities' ability to offer social housing to people who are not Danish/EU/EEA citizens, as well as people who have been convicted of a crime in the past or have received social benefits in the last two years. Even more controversially, municipalities are now allowed to demolish residential housing blocks if they feel they must do so to change the residential demographic. Furthermore, there are elements of a privatisation of the affordable housing market in the new agreement, as municipalities will be allowed to refer up to 30% of housing applicants to private housing associations if they deem it necessary to change the demographic make-up of these neighbourhoods at risk of becoming "parallel societies".²⁹

While the government has been focused on expanding the reach of the ghetto policies, thereby rendering socio-economically vulnerable "non-Western" residents even more precarious, there have been significant wins in the mobilisation efforts against these policies. Residents in one targeted neighbourhood, Mjølnerparken, who are suing the Ministry of the Interior and Housing and its ghetto policies for ethnic discrimination, had their case approved to proceed to national court. The Ministry of the Interior and Housing had attempted to get the case rejected, but the national court found the residents should have their case heard in court. According to the lawyer representing the residents, their case is focused on whether these policies are legal since the defining criteria to be regarded as a "ghetto" is the number of "non-Western" residents in an area.³⁰

Media

Danish mainstream media play an important role in reproducing and reinforcing stereotypes of the Muslim population. One such example was depicted by the na-

^{28.} Daniel Bue Lauritzen, "Aftale på plads: Sådan vil partier forebygge parallelsamfund", *Altinget*, (June 15, 2021), retrieved June 27, 2022, from https://www.altinget.dk/by/artikel/aftale-paa-plads-saadan-vil-partier-forebygge-parallelsamfund

^{29.} Indenrigs og boligministeriet, "Aftale mellem regeringen (S), V, DF, SF, KF, og LA om: Blandede boligområder – næste skridt i kampen mod parallelsamfund", *Indenrigs og boligministeriet*, (June 15, 2021), retrieved June 27, 2022, from https://im.dk/Media/637593535640548234/Aftale%20om%20Blandede%20boligområder%20-%20næste%20skridt%20i%20kampen%20mod%20parallelsamfund%20(forebyggelsesområder)%20-%20 15.%20juni%202021.pdf

^{30.} Ritzau, "Beboere vinder delsejr i kampen mod regeringens ghettoplan", *Politiken*, (December 15, 2021), retrived June 27, 2022, from https://politiken.dk/indland/art8528943/Beboere-vinder-delsejr-i-kampen-mod-regeringens-ghettoplan

tional broadcasting network DR, which during a news segment on more immigrant women getting jobs showed an illustration of a niqab-wearing woman with two children. The network received heavy criticism from citizens arguing that the picture was not representative of the subject because very few women wear nigab in Denmark. More importantly, the image enforces the stereotype that Muslim women are choosing not to work and instead stay at home with their children and live on social benefits. Conflating newly arrived migrant women's difficulties in gaining employment in Denmark with Muslim citizens is a common occurrence in both media and political discourse, where Muslims are often represented as foreigners leeching on Danish welfare society. DR later apologised for the mistake in representation and admitted the illustration should never have been published.³¹ Nonetheless, the debate demonstrates how editorial rooms are still white spaces, with very few racial and religious minorities represented. This is an important insight that is becoming increasingly noticeable as mainstream media often refuse to critique or challenge political discourse regarding minority groups - particularly Muslims - in the country.



Figure 1: A screenshot of a news segment on the national broadcasting channel, DR, cited in journalisten.dk32

As a response to this bias in media rhetoric and representation, the organisation Responsible Press (Ansvarlig Presse) was formed in 2007 and gained more traction and popularity in 2021. By offering affected communities media training and workshops to understand how the Danish media landscape operates and communicates, they work to empower minoritised communities to better tackle media representations and media narratives.³³

^{31.} Nanna Bay Madsen, "DR i brøler: - Det er en kæmpe fejl", *Ekstra Bladet*, (June 3, 2021), retrieved June 27, 2022, from https://ekstrabladet.dk/underholdning/filmogtv/dr-i-broeler-det-er-en-kaempe-fejl/8608388?ilc=c

^{32.} Kerstin Bruun-Hansen, "DR beklager: Grafik med niqab-klædt kvinde var 'helt ved siden af skiven'", *Journalisten.dk*, (June 3, 2021), retrieved July 14, 2022, from https://journalisten.dk/dr-beklager-grafik-med-niqab-klædt-kvinde-var-helt-ved-siden-af-skiven/

^{33.} Ansvarlig Presse, retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://ansvarligpresse.dk

Justice System

In May 2021, the government introduced new policies to make it even more difficult to acquire Danish citizenship.³⁴ The policies include further restrictions and requirements on gaining Danish citizenship, as well as increased possibilities of having one's citizenship revoked.³⁵ These guidelines seem to dismiss a report published by the Danish Institute of Human Rights in February 2021 which highlights the democratic problems of a growing number of people who are struggling to gain citizenship and thus excluded from participating in national elections.³⁶ The report emphasises that the number of citizenship allocations is already the lowest it has been in 40 years. On average, it takes 19 years to gain Danish citizenship, and more gravely, 35% of descendants of immigrants – people who are born or raised in Denmark – do not have citizenship and must apply through the same harsh requirements as more recent migrants.³⁷ Many of these descendants are of Muslim background.³⁸ The Danish Institute for Human Rights conclude that Denmark is breaching international obligations by not easing the citizenship process for people born or raised in the country.³⁹

The new citizenship requirements make it difficult for people in precarious employment as well as students to become eligible for citizenship, as they need to prove full-time employment for over 3.5 years and financial self-sufficiency, meaning they also must have paid back any student debts. Furthermore, a prison sentence (regardless of length) will exclude one from ever being able to apply for citizenship, and a fine above 3,000 DKK (approx. 400 EUR), depending on the reason, will put a 6-year quarantine before one is allowed to apply for citizenship. With the implementation of these new requirements, applicants will be categorised in the following groups: Nordic countries, other Western countries, MENAPT countries, and other "non-Western" countries. ⁴⁰ The number of applicants from non-European countries will be monitored, so these do not

^{34.} Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet, "Cirkulæreskrivelse om naturalisation", *Retsinformation*, (May 6, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/retsinfo/2021/9298

^{35.} Michala Clante Bendixen, "Krav til dansk statsborgerskab strammes igen", *Refugees*, (April 22, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from http://refugees.dk/aktuelt/2021/april/krav-til-dansk-statsborgerskab-strammes-igen/?fbclid=IwAR38rPHlTJwHyzezpMNYypGFWlhSahGn7gK4tTBZ5TAz2HV2vaOVavzRmlc

^{36.} Ligebehandlingsafdelingen, "Fremmed i eget land", Danish Institute for Human Rights, (February 8, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://menneskeret.dk/sites/menneskeret.dk/files/media/document/Statsborgerskab_Fremmed%20i%20eget%20land.pdf

^{37.} Ligebehandlingsafdelingen, "Fremmed i eget land", Danish Institute for Human Rights, (February 8, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://menneskeret.dk/sites/menneskeret.dk/files/media/document/Statsborgerskab_Fremmed%20i%20eget%20land.pdf

^{38.} Mattias Tesfaye and Anette Görtz, "Spørgsmål nr. 32", *Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet*, (October 20, 2020), retrieved July 13, 2022, from https://www.ft.dk/samling/20201/almdel/uui/spm/32/svar/1703380/2266598. pdf

^{39.} Ligebehandlingsafdelingen, "Fremmed i eget land", Danish Institute for Human Rights, (February 8, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://menneskeret.dk/sites/menneskeret.dk/files/media/document/Statsborgerskab_Fremmed%20i%20eget%20land.pdf

Michala Clante Bendixen, "Krav til dansk statsborgerskab strammes igen", Refugees, (April 22, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from http://refugees.dk/aktuelt/2021/april/krav-til-dansk-statsborgerskab-strammes-igen/?fbclid=IwAR38rPHITJwHyzezpMNYypGFWIhSahGn7gK4tTBZ5TAz2HV2vaOVavzRmlc

exceed more than 25% of the average of last four year. ⁴¹ With these categories (particularly the focus on applicants from MENAPT countries, i.e., Muslims) and the citizenship test, which will now include several questions on "Danish values" related to freedom of speech and religion, it is clear that there is a targeting of Muslim citizenship applicants, attempting to limit the number of citizenships allocated Muslims in the country. ⁴²

These new citizenship requirements are creating a racialised class of second-class residents, who may even have been born in Denmark, but who will never be able to gain citizenship, and whose children who will not be Danish by birth. This will curb these people's political agency in participating in Danish democracy since they are banned from participating and voting in national elections. Furthermore, given the expansion of housing policies to limit the possibility of non-Danish or EU/EEA citizens getting social housing in areas with more than 30% "non-Western" residents (see Politics section), it is apparent that the growing number of non-citizens who are born and raised in Denmark, will not only be excluded from participating in the democratic processes in Denmark, but will also face barriers in accessing social services. To raise public awareness around the growing difficulties in acquiring Danish citizenship, the new organisation Us Outside (Os Udenfor) has been set up to focus especially on young people born or raised in Denmark who are not eligible to apply for Danish citizenship because of these new rules.

As of 2021, there were still 19 Danish children in the North Syrian al-Hol and al-Roj camps. The Danish government refused to allow their mothers to return to Denmark, and consequently let the children remain in the camps under bleak and dangerous conditions. In 2021, a majority in Parliament agreed to bring the children back to Denmark but without their mothers. 45 Yet, this has been a politically controversial case, with several politicians arguing that the mothers, three of whom have had their Danish citizenships revoked and three of whom remain Danish citizens, should be able to return to Denmark with their children to face court proceedings. 46

^{41.} Udlændninge- og Integrationsministeriet, "Cirkulæreskrivelse om naturalisation", *Retsinformation*, (May 6, 2021), retrieved July 14, 2022, from https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/retsinfo/2021/9298

^{42.} Michala Clante Bendixen, "Krav til dansk statsborgerskab strammes igen", *Refugees*, (April 22, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from http://refugees.dk/aktuelt/2021/april/krav-til-dansk-statsborgerskab-strammes-igen/?fbclid=IwAR38rPHITJwHyzezpMNYypGFWIhSahGn7gK4tTBZ5TAz2HV2vaOVavzRmlc

^{43.} Kåre Kildall Rysgaard, "Mor og datter er begge født og opvokset i Danmark, men er ikke danske statsborgere: 'Det er en dybt bekymrende udvikling'", *DR*, (November 25, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/mor-og-datter-er-begge-foedt-og-opvokset-i-danmark-men-er-ikke-danske-statsborgere?cid=soc_facebook_drnyheder_post_m6xw2u2e&fbclid=IwAR27ZXkUKt3F8cgwySaU9Zr3iyExdd5F-WybCEPWiUhxz4ik8_jDnOAmQEe8

^{44.} Os udenfor, retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/osudenforbevaegelsen/about/?ref=page_internal

Maiken Brusgaard Christensen, "Aftale om børn i fangelejre i Syrien på plads", TV2 Nyheder, (March 30, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2021-03-30-aftale-om-boern-i-fangelejre-i-syrien-paa-plads

Emilie Haaber Lynggaard and Morten Nielsen, "Dele af Venstres bagland vil have Syrien-børn hjem:-Uværdigt for Danmark", TV2 Nyheder, (March 25, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2021-03-25-dele-af-venstres-bagland-vil-have-syrien-boern-hjem-uvaerdigt-for-danmark

Internet

For the first time in Denmark, a digital algorithm has mapped out the occurrence of hate speech on Facebook.⁴⁷ It concludes that Muslims are often the main target of online hate and the three politicians who have most comments from the public expressing hatred towards Muslims are three MPs from the Danish People's Party. This is unsurprising, since the DPP is outspoken in their hatred of Muslims, migrants, and refugees in general. The algorithm has analysed over 63 million comments on Facebook, focusing on 199 different politicians and several media outlets' posts. According to the results, 3.3 million comments were classified as verbal attacks that were stigmatising, insulting, derogatory, or threatening. In discussions on Islam, Muslims, immigrants, or integration, 13% of comments are classified as an attack.⁴⁸ According to the algorithm, Muslims are clearly the population group that experience the most hatred on Facebook.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In 2021, the previous integration minister (2015-2019), Inger Støjberg, was impeached and put on trial for instructing her staff in 2016 to indiscriminately separate Syrian asylum-seeking couples in refugee centres, if one or both parties were under 18 years old. In total, 34 couples were forcibly separated without having their individual cases reviewed. The courts convicted Støjberg of breaching the Ministerial Accountability Act and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and she was sentenced to 60 days in prison. In response to the verdict, Støjberg told reporters, I think it wasn't just me that lost today, it was Danish values that lost today, thereby making her abuse of power and illegal decision to separate young Syrian couples a symbol of Danish values. Støjberg became internationally infamous in her time as integration minister for publishing ads in Lebanese newspapers discouraging people from seeking asylum in Denmark, and introducing a law that would

^{47.} Analyse & Tal, "Angreb i den offentlige debat på Facebook", www.ogtal.dk, (May 2021), retrieved June 27, from https://strapi.ogtal.dk/uploads/966f1ebcfa9942d3aef338e9920611f4.pdf

^{48.} Ritzau, "Algoritme kortlægger had på facebook: Muslimer er skydeskive", *Journalisten*, (May 23, 2021), retrieved June 27, 2022, from https://journalisten.dk/algoritme-kortlægger-had-paa-facebook-muslimer-er-skydeskive/?fbclid=IwAR3DJR1zU3CNU6V8c4TyZX6lrJBs8apVKyYqFhkhPW7JC22rhT89gm7GGys

Mads Pedersen, "Grafik: Her er de 34 unge asylpar, som Støjberg ville skille ad – og deres alder", *Politiken*, (May 22, 2017), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://politiken.dk/indland/politik/art5962175/Her-er-de-34-unge-asylpar-som-Støjberg-ville-skille-ad-og-deres-alder

Rigsretten, "Rigsretten har afsagt dom i sagen mod fhv. minister Inger Støjberg", Rigsretten, (December 13, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://rigsretten.dk/aktuelt/2021/12/rigsretten-har-afsagt-dom-i-sagen-mod-fhv-minister-inger-stoejberg/

^{51.} Charlie Duxbury, "Ex-Danish minister convicted over 2016 asylum ruling", *Politico*, (December 13, 2021), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.politico.eu/article/ex-danish-minister-inger-stojberg-convicted-asylum-policy/

^{52.} Stav Ziv, "Denmark Places Anti-Refugee Ads in Lebanese Newspapers", *Newsweek*, (July 9, 2015), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.newsweek.com/denmark-places-anti-refugee-ads-lebanese-newspapers-369492

allow Danish authorities to seize jewellery and cash from asylum seekers and other migrants who do not have a right to remain in Denmark.⁵³

While Inger Støjberg belonged to the right-centre party Liberals (Venstre) during her ministerial period, her replacement, Mattias Tesfaye from the left-centre Social Democrats has not shied away from continuing with the harsh Islamophobic and anti-migration policies and discourse. ⁵⁴ What is important to highlight with these politicians and their different ideological approaches to vilifying Muslims and Islam, is that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments have become a mainstream political point to gain popularity amongst electorate across the political spectrum.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

According to a survey released in 2021 by Megafon, 42% of the Danish public agree or partly agree that racism is a widespread problem in Denmark. This is an increase from only 32% the previous year. Several hate crime incidences that were recorded and went viral on social media have helped increase awareness of the ongoing issues of racism particularly against Muslims. This increased recognition of racism among civil society is an important development and may have influenced a greater political interest in condemning racist abuse in public.

The development has meant that both the government and Copenhagen Municipality have pledged to establish an action plan against racism and discrimination engaging with several civil society organisations to help develop the action plan. It is important to notice that several organisations working against Islamophobia have been invited to engage with political officials on these action plans, including the Centre for Muslim Rights in Denmark (CEDA), which has been campaigning for Muslims' rights in Denmark since 2016. It has been rare for Danish officials to be willing to meet and work with organisations explicitly campaigning against Islamophobia, so this is a step in a positive direction.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This year's EIR report on Denmark shows some worrying signs of how structural barriers for Muslims are increasing with new policies and legislation. One particu-

Rick Noack, "Denmark wants to seize jewellery and cash from refugees", Washington Post, (December 18, 2015), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/12/17/denmark-wants-to-seize-jewelry-from-refugees/

^{54.} Amani Hassani, "Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2020", in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, (Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021).

Cæcilie Dohn Christensen, "Flere danskere ser racisme som et udbredt problem", TV2, (June 7, 2021), retrieved June 27, 2022, from https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2021-06-07-flere-danskere-ser-racisme-som-etudbredt-problem

larly worrying development is the new statistical category of MENAPT, which enables the government to specifically target Muslim citizens by inferring their Muslimness based on their countries of origin. By creating statistics that differentiate between "Western" and "non-Western", and now "MENAPT", the government has the tools to make policies that specifically target Muslims. The MENAPT category was introduced in late 2020, so we are only seeing the beginning of how this new category will play out in future legislation and policies. Nonetheless, there were already indications in 2021 that this new category will have a detrimental effect on Muslims' access to public services, particularly with the expansion of the ghetto policies and the new restrictions on citizenship applications.

In terms of the new ghetto policies, municipalities seen as at risk of becoming parallel societies because of the number of "non-Western" residents, will now be able to decline housing applicants who are not Danish or EU citizens. This will particularly effect socio-economically vulnerable "non-Western" residents. Furthermore, these new housing policies must be considered in connection with the new citizenship application requirements, which will make it difficult for "non-Western" applicants, particularly those from MENAPT countries, to acquire citizenship. This development is very worrying as it became apparent in 2021 following a report by the Danish Institute of Human Rights that 35% of descendants of migrants are not Danish citizens. This is an incredibly high number of people born, raised, and living in Denmark who not only do not have the right to vote in national elections – thus deeming them politically insignificant for politicians in Parliament – but who are now facing barriers to affordable social housing.

The 35% of descendants of migrants who are not Danish experience heightened citizenship barriers with the new citizenship policies. These new policies will in the future distinguish between MENAPT and "non-Western" applicants, and potentially limit the number of citizenship allocations non-European applicants, if these exceed the average of previous years. It will be important to closely monitor the ways the government and public institutions will implement this new Muslim category based on people's origin in Muslim-majority countries and how this will limit Muslims' access to public services, housing, employment, education, and the justice system.

Many of the following policy recommendations draw on the work of colleagues at the Centre for Muslim Rights in Denmark (CEDA) 56 and other anti-racist coalition reports on Denmark. 57

Centre for Muslim rights in Denmark, "Anbefalinger til Handlingsplan mod Racisme", CEDA.nu, (June 2022), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.ceda.nu/_files/ugd/198d48_98996a9218d447748ed52a6d05355282. pdf

^{57.} Coalition of anti-racist civil society organisations, "Alternative Report on Denmark 2020 to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination", CERD, (2020), retrieved July 5, 2022, from https://www.ceda.nu/_files/ugd/198d48_437422eadf3b4221ac5ae1ed6a8097ae.pdf

- A national coordinator should be appointed with the responsibility for coordinating the Danish efforts against Islamophobia and racism. They should be well-acquainted with Muslim communities to uncover experiences of Islamophobia.
- Politicians should recognise Islamophobia as a type of racism that affects Muslims and place particular emphasis on the prevention and combatting of Islamophobia in the National Action Plan against Racism.
- Politicians should recognise that there is structural racism in Denmark and identify conscious and unconscious structural racism and discrimination in norms, routines, algorithms, attitudes, and behaviours in public institutions and spaces.
- The government should simplify the requirements for permanent residence permits and Danish citizenship, and it should be made less difficult to become a Danish citizen.
- The right of all foreign nationals born and raised in Denmark to be naturalised by declaration should be reintroduced.
- The ghetto policy and all its contents should be repealed.
- Equal access to the affordable rental housing market (*almene boliger*), including for non-EU/EEA citizens should be ensured.

Chronology

- **14.01.2021:** Parliament votes to impeach previous integration minister Inger Støjberg for illegally separating young asylum-seeking couples.
- 22.04.2021: Harsher requirements to attain Danish citizenship introduced.
- **07.05.2021:** Denmark is criticised by the UN, particularly for its treatment of foreigners and asylum seekers.
- 15.06.2021: New policies to prevent parallel societies are implemented.
- 13.12.2021: The previous integration minister, Inger Støjberg, is found guilty and sentenced to 60 days in prison for breaking the ministerial oath and human rights.
- **15.12.2021:** Resident affected by the racist ghetto policies and are suing the government for discrimination, get their lawsuit approved to proceed in court.



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Executive Summary

After crowning Finland for the fifth consecutive time as the world's happiest country, some minorities, like Muslims, wonder what it means to live in such a country. Are Muslims equal members of society? What about equity? One researcher contextualized it as follows: "A racist party [the far-right populist Finns Party (PS), which is the biggest opposition party in parliament] is third in polls in the world's happiest country." In many respects, this claim raises a lot of questions. How can an affluent Nordic welfare state, which bases its values on social equality and fairness with one of the best education systems in the world, fall into the trap of racism? Societies with double standards that exclude other groups' "happiness" relegate their society to a permanent state of conflict. How can you support human rights for your group but deny them to others?

The rapid growth of the number of residents who don't speak Finnish, Swedish, or Saami as their mother tongue has grown rapidly from 4.53% (244,827 persons) in 2011 to 8.25% (458,042) in 2021. After Russian and Estonian, Arabic is the third most spoken language in Finland, and Islam is the second-largest religion after the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church. If the latest 2020 hate crime report is anything to go by, Muslims continue to suffer the most from hate crime attacks. Due to their "foreign-sounding" names, discrimination in the labour market is also a problem. Moreover, racism in the police continues to be a blow to trust, and the blind spot of the media to Islamophobia is equally worrying. While it is difficult to ignore the Muslim community of Finland due to its growing size, the biggest challenge is recognition and inclusion as equal members of society. These are still challenging tasks, but they are not impossible and can be overcome.

Tiivistelmä

Kun Suomi kruunattiin viidettä kertaa peräkkäin maailman onnellisimmaksi maaksi, jotkut vähemmistöt, kuten muslimit, ihmettelivät, mitä tarkoittaa elää tällaisessa maassa. Ovatko muslimit tasa-arvoisia yhteiskunnan jäseniä? Entä oikeudenmukaisuus? Eräs tutkija ilmaisi asian seuraavassa yhteydessä: "Rasistinen puolue on maailman onnellisimman maan mielipidemittauksessa kolmantena." Rasistisella puolueella turkija viittasi äärioikeistopopulistiseen perussuomalaisiin (PS), jotka ovat eduskunnan suurin oppositiopuolue. Väite herättää monessa suhteessa paljon kysymyksiä. Miten vauras pohjoismainen hyvinvointivaltio, joka perustaa arvonsa sosiaaliseen yhdenvertaisuudeen ja oikeudenmukaisuuteen ja jolla on yksi maailman parhaista koulutusjärjestelmistä, voi langeta rasismin ansaan? Yhteiskunnat, joissa sovelletaan kaksinaismoraalia, joka sulkee pois muiden ryhmien "onnellisuuden," ajavat itsensä jatkuvaan konfliktitilaan. Miten voidaan tukea oman ryhmänne ihmisoikeuksia, mutta kieltää ne muilta?

Vieraskielisten määrä on kasvanut Suomessa nopeasti: 4,5 prosentista (244 827 henkilöä) vuonna 2011 8,3 prosenttiin (458 042) vuonna 2021. Arabia on venäjän ja viron jälkeen kolmanneksi puhutuin kieli Suomessa, ja islam on toiseksi suurin uskonto Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon jälkeen. Jos viimeisimmästä vuoden 2020 viharikosraportista on jotain pääteltävissä, muslimit kärsivät edelleen eniten viharikoksista. Heidän "vierasperäiset" nimensä aiheuttavat syrjintää työmarkkinoilla ja se on ongelma. Lisäksi poliisin rasismi on edelleen isku luottamuksen syntymiselle, ja yhtä huolestuttavaa on lehdistön sokeapiste islamofobialle. Vaikka Suomen muslimiyhteisöä on vaikea sivuuttaa sen kasvavan koon vuoksi, suurin haaste on sen tunnustaminen ja muslimien osallisuus yhdenvertaisina yhteiskunnan jäseninä. Nämä ovat edelleen haastavia, mutteivät mahdottomia päämääriä, jotka voidaan voittaa.

Léo Custódio, "Facebook Léo Custódio: Racist Party in Finland and the World's Happiest Country," Migrant Tales, 30 March 2019, https://www.migranttales.net/facebook-leo-custodio-racist-party-in-finland-and-the-worlds-happiest-country/, (Access date: 26 April 2022).

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Republic of Finland

Type of Regime: Parliamentary republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary representative democracy

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 Power Belongs to the People (VKK)

Last Elections: 2022 County Elections: National Coalition Party (21.6%/289 seats), Social Democrats (19.3%/277), Centre Party (19.2%/297), Finns Party (11.1%/155), Left Alliance (8.0%/100), Green League (7.4%/90), Swedish People's Party (4.9%/76), Christian Democrats (4.2%/57), Liike Nyt (1.8%/20), and Valta kuuluu kansalle (1.3%/10). 2021 Municipal Elections: National Coalition Party (21.4%/1,552 councilpersons), Social Democrats (17.7%/1,451), Centre Party (14.9%/2,445), Finns Party (14.5%/1,351), Green League (10.6%/433), Left Alliance (7.7%/508), Swedish People's League (5%/463), Christian Democrats (3.6%/311), Liike nyt (1.6%/49), and others (2.1%/292). 2019 Parliamentary Elections: Social Democrats (40 seats), Finns Party (39), National Coalition Party (38), Centre Party (31), Green League (20), Left Alliance (16), Swedish People's Party (9), Christian Democrats (5), Movement Now (1), and Åland Coalition (1). 2019 European Parliament Elections: National Coalition Party (3 seats), Green League (2), Social Democratic Party (2), Finns Party (2), Centre Party (2), and Left Alliance (1).

Total Population: 5,548,241 (31 December 2021)

Major Languages: Finnish and Swedish

Official Religion: N/A

Statistics on Islamophobia: Suspected hate crimes in 2020 totalled 852 versus 899 suspected cases in 2019, according to the latest figures of the Police University College of Finland. Most of the hate crimes (88.5%) were due to national-ethnic origin (75.8%) and religion (12.7%).² Of national-ethnic origin suspected hate crimes, Iraqis, Afghans, and Somalis were the most targeted. Afghans suffered close to 50% more attacks than the previous year.³

Jenita Rauta, "Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2020," Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 19/2021, https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/506683/POLAMK_Katsauksia 19.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, (Access date: 29 March 2022).

^{3.} Ibid., p. 33, (Access date: 29 March 2022).

Major Religions (% of Population): Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church 3,796,918 (68.7%);⁴ Islam (est.) 120,000-130,000 (2.17% or 2.34%);⁵ 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 120,000-130,000 (2.17% or 2.34%).

Main Muslim Community Organizations: 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 Foorumi (Muslim Forum of Finland), Nuoret Muslimit Helsinki, Nuorten muslimien foorumi

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Finland's anti-Islamophobia organisations 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 Muslimien Foorumi, and Mahdin nuoret.

Far-Right Parties: The Finns Party, Suomen Kansa Ensin (Finnish People First), Valta kuuluu kansalle (Power Belongs to the People), and Sinimusta Liike (Blue-and-Black Movement).

Far-Right Movements: Kansallismielisten liittouma, Kohti vapautta! (formerly outlawed neo-Nazi Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike [PVL]), Soldiers of Odin, Finnish Defence League, Suomen Sisu, Suomi Ensi (Finland First), and Sinimusta Liike

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No
- Halal Slaughter Ban: The New Animal Welfare Act is being drafted and aims to ban halal and kosher slaughter.⁶
- Minaret Ban: No
- Circumcision Ban: No
- Burka Ban: No

^{4.} Email (30.04.2021) from Jussi Sohlberg of the Research Centre of the Finnish Evangelical Church.

Email (30.03.2022) from Teemu Pauha of the University of Helsinki Religion, Conflict and Dialogue Research Center. The present estimate compares with 110,000-120,000 in 2020. Some, like imam Abdul Mannan, claim that the number of Muslims in Finland could be as high as 150,000.

Drafting of Animal Welfare Act, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, https://mmm.fi/hanke2?tunnus= MMM051%3A00%2F2020&fbclid=IwAR3f8jzGapxTbBXQ124ZlQAGBdqq93WPQNtKDtaROFER9L_ BJvkIj7Ceazg, (Access date: 6 April 2022).

Introduction

As in the previous year, Covid-19 continued to impact Finland. An artificial intelligence one-off study showed close to 300,000 examples of hate speech in the time period of two months after analysing 12 million comments and articles on different Internet forums.⁷ Most of these messages appeared on online Finnish-language websites targeting minorities like Muslims. In December, the police of the western city of Kankaanpää arrested five white youths for planning militant attacks. The police and the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (Supo) classified it as the country's first terrorism investigation involving the far right.⁸ Despite police objections, a court released the suspects from custody.⁹ The police said that the investigation into their alleged terrorist activities is still ongoing.



Figure 1: Pictures apprehended by the police from the suspected terrorists of Kankaanpää.¹⁰

Finland's first far-right terrorist case laid bare how the media treats terrorism.¹¹ It took Finland's largest daily, *Helsingin Sanomat*, five days to write an editorial warning about the far-right threat to the country. In contrast, in 2017, when Abderrahman

Yle News, "Study: 300,000 examples of hate speech found on Finnish sites," 22 April 2021, https://yle.fi/ news/3-11896654, (Access date: 9 April 2022).

^{8.} Press Release by Supo, "The Level Of the Terrorist Threat in Finland Not Raised By the Kankaanpää Terrorism Investigation," 3 December 2021, https://supo.fi/en/-/the-level-of-the-terrorist-threat-in-finland-not-raised-by-the-kankaanpaa-terrorism-investigation, (Access date: 12 April 2022).

Yle News, "Court Frees Kankanpää Neo-Nazi Suspects," 6 January 2022, https://yle.fi/news/3-12260889, (Access date: 17 April 2022.

^{10.} Yle News, "Yle Investigation: Kankaanpää Neo-Nazi Gang Had History of Intimidation, Harassment, Assaults," 20 December 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-12239622, (Access date: 27 April 2022).

Enrique Tessieri, "How We Treat Terrorism in Our Society Depends on Your Ethnic and Religious Background," Migrant Tales, 8 January 2022, https://www.migranttales.net/how-we-treat-terrorism-in-our-society-depends-on-your-ethnic-and-religious-background/, (Access date: 12 April 2022).

Mechkah attacked and killed people with a knife in Turku, the reaction of the media was different:¹² the militant act committed by a Moroccan Muslim was given more space and reported with sensationalism versus the approach toward the white Finns.¹³ In addition, as opposed to last year, some noted that Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government did not give any greetings to the Muslim community during Ramadan.

In the face of the many challenges facing the Muslim community of Finland, there are some encouraging signs. One of these is Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government plan to make Finland a "fair, equal, and inclusive" country founded on the rule of law. ¹⁴ Apart from the plan, numerous programmes are being launched to speed up the integration of migrants. Such steps include, among others, migrant women's inclusion in the labour market and challenging social attitudes that are toxic to migrants. ¹⁵

The growing size and presence of the Muslim and other minority communities mean that their presence and needs no longer can and should be ignored. Last year, the number of people who don't speak Finnish, Swedish, or Saami as their mother tongue was at 8.3% (458,042 people) of the country's total population compared with 4.53% (244,827) ten years ago. In the capital Helsinki, their numbers stood at 17.3% (59,610), and as high as 20.1% (59,610) in Espoo and 22.9% (54,953) in Vantaa.¹⁶

Some important milestones achieved by members of Finland's Muslim community was Suldaan Said Ahmed, representing Helsinki, becoming the first Somali-born MP.¹⁷ Ahmed, together with Hussein Al-Taee, are the only Muslim members of Finland's 200-seat parliament. Others, like director Khadar Ayderus Ahmed won numerous international awards for the production of *Guled & Nasra* (*The Gravedigger's Wife*), ¹⁸ which became the first Finnish film ever to be nominated for the Cannes Film

^{12.} Enrique Tessieri, "Downplaying and Whitewashing the Far-Right Threat in Finland, Migrant Tales, 8 December 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/downplaying-and-whitewashing-the-far-right-threat-in-finland/, (Access date: 12 April.2022).

^{13.} Enrque Tessieri, , "YLE Coverage of Sexual Assaults Committed by White Finns and Migrants is Unbalanced, Racialized and Opinionated," Migrant Tales, 10 April 2022, https://www.migranttales.net/yle-coverage-of-sexual-assaults-committed-by-white-finns-and-migrants-is-unbalanced-racialized-and-opinionated/, (Access date: 12 April 2022).

^{14.} Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government Programme, Finnish Government, 10 December 2019, https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme, (Access date: 12 April 2022).

Finnish Government, "Government Report Proposes Extensive Programme to Speed up Integration of Immigrants," 17 June 2021, https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410877/government-report-proposes-extensive-programme-to-speed-up-integration-of-immigrants, (Access date: 13 April 2022).

Statistics Finland, "11rm -- Language According to Sex by Municipality, 1990-2021," https://statfin.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/fi/StatFin/StatFin_vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11rm.px/, (Access date: 13 April 2022).

^{17.} Yle News, "Suldaan Said Ahmed becomes Finland's first Somali-born MP," 29 June 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-12000526, (Access date: 14 April 2022).

^{18.} Guled & Nasra Awards, IMDB, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4440842/awards/?ref_=tt_awd, (Access date: 29.4.2022).

Festival's Semaine de la Critique (International Critics' Week)¹⁹ and won Africa's most coveted FESPACO (Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou, FES-PACO) award.²⁰ Omar Abdi Nuh, who starred in the movie, was awarded by the African Movie Academy Awards as the best actor and best male actor at the Carthage Film Festival for his role in *The Gravedigger's Wife*,²¹ a movie about a 45-year-old man who hunts dead bodies for a living.

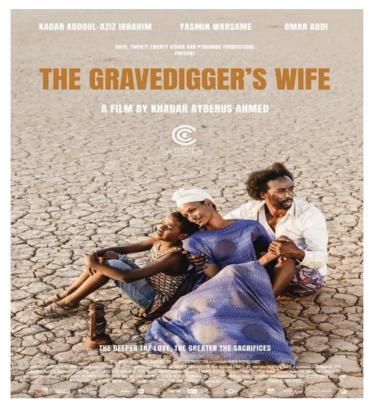


Figure 2: Omar Abdi Nuh won several awards for acting in *Guled & Nasra* (*The Gravedigger's Wife*) directed by Khadar Ayderus Ahmed.²² The Finnish film won numerous international awards.

Apart from acting, Nuh is an activist for brown and black youths' rights. He has been outspoken in the ongoing debate about crimes committed by brown and black youths, how they are framed by the media, and the assumptions made about them.²³

Semaine de la Critique Cannes 2022, https://www.semainedelacritique.com/en/edition/2021/movie/the-gravediggers-wife, (Access date: 29 April 2022).

Africanews, "Somalia's Khadar Ahmed Wins Top Prize at Fespaco Film Festival," 25 October 2021, https:// www.africanews.com/2021/10/25/somalia-s-khadar-ahmed-wins-top-prize-at-fespaco-film-festival/, (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{21.} The Finnish Film Foundation, "The Gravedigger's Wife," https://www.ses.fi/catalogue/film/the-gravediggers-wife/, (Access date: 23 April 2022).

^{22.} Imdb, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4440842/.

^{23.} Enrique Tessieri: Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2020, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021, p 49.

"The media acts as the lens through which we look at the world today," he said. "We blindly believe most of the news; even today, many believe that crimes committed by [youths of] immigrant backgrounds are due to their immigrant background."²⁴

Some of the biggest challenges that lie ahead for Finland is how to include Muslims and other minorities as equal members of society. This means granting and sharing public spaces, learning to live with difference, and helping Muslims and their community to realise their full potential.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There were no major acts of vandalism reported against mosques last year; however, the premises of the Nuoret Muslimit Helsinki ry (NUMU), a Muslim youth association, were vandalised. On New Year's Day and in mid-February, NUMU's windows were shattered, according to Noor Assad, NUMU chairperson. When we rented our club premises in 2016, it was clear our presence was not welcomed in this neighbourhood, and [people put] trash through our letterbox, but it does not happen anymore, said Assad. Because of that experience, we were afraid of publicly advertising our address online due to concerns for the safety of our members aged 7-29 years who attend our events. Assad said that NUMU receives most of its hate messages regularly on Facebook and that these messages increase in volume when a post on social media goes viral. Hate messages include "You are a problem" and "You are parasites."





Figures 3 and 4: The windows of Nuoret Muslimit Helsinki ry (NUMU) premises were shattered twice: on New Year's Day and in mid-February. Source: NUMU ry.

Omar Abdi Nuh, "The Use of the Term 'Immigrant' In the Finnish Media," Diaspora Glitz Magazine, 17
April 2021, https://diasporaglitzmagazine.com/the-use-of-the-term-immigrant-in-the-finnish-media-omar-ab-di-nuh/, (Access date: 11 April 2022).

^{25.} Telephone interview (1 April) with NuMu chairperson Noor Assad.

"I used to believe that everyone is treated equally by our society's institutions like the police and overall justice system," continued Assad. "But my experiences from volunteer work with Muslim youths have proved me wrong. Many Muslims face unjust treatment by officials. Hate crimes are not taken seriously and are sometimes processed as 'normal crimes without the hate motive' even if it is apparent." ²⁶

The Police University College of Finland, which publishes suspected hate crime statistics with a one-year lag, reported that suspected hate crimes in 2020 stood at 852 versus 899 in the previous year. The lion's share (88.5%) of all hate crimes were motivated by national-ethnic origin (649/75.8% of all cases) and religion (108/12.7%). That was followed by sexual orientation (68/5.4%) and disability (30/3.5%).²⁷ The Iraqis were the group that suffered most attacks due to national-ethnic origin; the most attacks concerning religion were, as in the previous year, against Muslims. After Iraqis (33 cases out of 10,000 people), the second- and third-highest targeted groups were Afghans (31 out of 10,000) and Somalis (25 out of 10,000). Afghans suffered close to 50% more attacks in 2020 than in 2019.²⁸ Contrary to other countries like France and the Netherlands, 64% of all cases in Finland involved men and 36% women.

Suspected hate crimes 2014-2020

| The numbers of suspected hate crime | SII | n 2011–2020: |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------|
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------|

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| Ethnic or national background | 678 | 991 | 831 | 813 | 634 | 650 | 646 |
| Religion or belief | 68 | 133 | 149 | 235 | 155 | 133 | 108 |
| Sexual orientation, gender identity or expression of gender | 47 | 61 | 57 | 60 | 73 | 72 | 68 |
| Disability | 29 | 65 | 42 | 57 | 48 | 44 | 30 |
| Total | 822 | 1,250 | 1,079 | 1,165 | 910 | 899 | 852 |

Figure 5: Number of suspected hate crimes categorised by bias factor between 2014 and 2020.²⁹

^{26.} Email (25.4.2022) from Nour Assad.

Jenita Rauta, "Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2020," Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 19/2021, https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/506683/POLAMK_Katsauksia19.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, (Access date: 29 March 2022).

^{28.} Ibid., p. 33, (Access date: 29 March 2022).

Police University College, "The Number of Suspected Hate Crimes Continued to Decline Last Year," 11 November 2021, https://polamk.fi/en/-/the-number-of-suspected-hate-crimes-continued-to-decline-last-year, (Access date: 27 April 2022).

According to hate crime statistics provided by the Police University College to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE),³⁰ hate crimes reported during 2020 by the police stood at 1,177 compared with the Police University College of Finland's 852 suspected cases.³¹ The OSCE statistics state that of the total, 48 were prosecuted, and 42 received sentences. That compares with 22 and 17, respectively, in the previous year.

While hate crime figures offer insight into such a social ill, experts see the number of cases as the tip of the iceberg. EU bodies like the 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 crime, hate speech, and racism as well as offer more support to assist victims.

Apart from the little trust in the judicial system and other state institutions by some Muslims, the slow pace of due process continued to be a problem. A case in point is an ongoing investigation of one of Finland's worst alleged hate crime cases in 2020, when a young Iraqi was racially harassed, chased, and physically assaulted by a group and ended up in hospital for the treatment of his wounds.³² So far, after almost two years since the incident took place, no charges have been filed. The author of this report spoke to the victim in December 2020 and March 2021. The young Iraqi, eighteen years old at the time of the assault, was clearly traumatised and said that what had happened changed his life. Apart from moving to southern Finland, he regularly takes sleeping pills and medication to relieve stress and depression. "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," said the victim. "Those who attacked me are walking freely with no consequences."33 In a surprise ruling (31 August), the Southern Ostrobotyhnia Administrative Court of Seinäjoki sentenced only one person who attacked Al-Obaidi.³⁴ He said he was very disappointed [with the sentence. It was a very, very bad decision [by the court]." Al-Obaidi has appealed the ruling.

^{30.} OSCE ODIHR, Hate Crime Reporting Finland, https://hatecrime.osce.org/finland#incidents-reported, (Access date: 6 April 2022).

^{31.} The difference in the figures is due to statistical methodology. The OSCE figure may include other offences suspected of being hate crimes while the Police University College cites the number of suspected hate crimes exclusively. Email (7.4.2022) from Jenita Rauta, Police University College spokesperson.

^{32.} Enrique Tessieri, "Finnish Police do not Rule Out Hate Crime in Teuva Against a Muslim," Migrant Tales, 15 June 2020, https://www.migranttales.net/finnish-police-do-not-rule-out-hate-crime-in-teuva-against-a-muslim/, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{33.} 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: 10 April 2022).

^{34.} Enrique Tessieri, "Case Teuva: Prosecutor to bring charges probably next week – hate crime or not?" Migrant Tales, 26 August 2022, https://www.migranttales.net/case-teuva-prosecutor-to-bring-charges-probably-next-week-hate-crime-or-not/, (Access date: 12 September 2022).

In the tragic case involving the stabbing and death of an eighteen-year-old Somali Finn in Helsinki in April 2020, it took about half a year for the court to convict the white Finn suspect.³⁵ The parents of the Somali Finnish youth appealed the sentence, and in February 2022, a court raised the involuntary manslaughter conviction from 5 to 9 years.³⁶ Some believe that only aggravated cases reach the courts. One such case was the violent stabbing of a Pakistani in 2018. The three white Finnish youths were handed convictions three months after their arrest.³⁷ In these above-mentioned cases, the police did not see them as hate crimes although some would disagree.

The imam of the Resalat Islamic Society, Abbas Bahmanpour, complained of unequal treatment by the ministry of the interior. Last year, the ministry had granted financial aid to Helsinki's synagogue, which has seen security costs soar to 450,000 euros in 2021 from 200,000 euros in 2017.³⁸ "We have applied for [similar] funds from the ministry without any luck," said Bahmanpour.³⁹

While there were few stories about the prohibition of hijabs, one such case was about Finnish Somali Fardowsa Mahamoud, who was not permitted to serve in the Finnish army because of her hijab. The twenty-year-old woman wanted to enrol in the army and serve as a peacekeeper, which she said was her dream job. Her pursuit ended when the Karelia Brigade told her that she was not permitted to wear a hijab as part of the uniform. The brigade cited safety concerns, and the notion that uniforms could not stand out.⁴⁰ "I was disappointed to learn this," said Mahamoud. "I wouldn't have applied for service if I didn't accept what they wear in the army, but the hijab is my choice and decision. It's important to me."⁴¹ Contrarily, the Subway National League, the top female football league in Finland, announced that it would start giving Nike sports hijabs to girls and women as a part of their uniform.⁴²

^{35.} Enrique Tessieri, "Keyse Abdifatah Maalesh's Parents are Unhappy with the Involuntary Manslaughter Sentence. Plan to Appeal." Migrant Tales, 20 September 2020, https://www.migranttales.net/keyse-abdifata-maaleshs-parents-are-unhappy-with-the-involuntary-manslaughter-sentence-plan-to-appeal/, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{36.} Enrique Tessieri, "Helsinki Court of Appeal Increases Involuntary Manslaughter Sentence to Nine Years for Stabbing Somali-Finnish Youth," Migrant Tales, 24 February 2022, https://www.migranttales.net/helsinki-court-of-appeal-increases-involuntary-manslaughter-sentence-to-nine-years-for-stabbing-somali-finnish-youth/, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{37.} Enrique Tessieri, "'Justice Was Served' with the 9.5-Year Prison Sentence for Brutally Attacking a Pakistani Migrant in February," Migrant Tales, 25 May 2018, https://www.migranttales.net/justice-was-served-with-the-9-5-year-prison-sentence-for-brutally-attacking-a-pakistani-migrant-in-february/, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{38.} Enrique Tessieri, "Kirkko ja Kaupunki: Security Costs at the Helsinki Synagogue Soar," Migrant Tales, 29 November 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/security-costs-at-the-helsinki-synagogue-soar/, (Access date: 25 April 2022).

^{39.} Telephone interview (25.4.2022) with the imam of Resalat Islamic Society Abbas Bahmanpour.

^{40.} Enrique Tessieri, "Back to Square One: to Hijab or not to Hijab," Migrant Tales, 25 May 2022, https://www.migranttales.net/back-to-square-one-to-hijab-or-not-to-hijab/, (Access date: 13 April 2022).

^{41.} Yle News, "Finnish Military Hijab Ban Sparks Debate," 23 May 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-11944802, (Access date: 13 April 2022).

^{42.} Yle News, "Finland's National League Offers Players Sports Hijabs," 13 May 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-11929955, (Access date: 14 April 2022).

In another case, Husein Hamiid called a real estate agent in Espoo in summer to inquire about renting a restaurant and hotel. The real estate agent, Esa Törmälä, was also an Espoo city municipal candidate for the far-right Finns Party. To Hamiid's surprise, Törmälä asked him a series of personal questions about his family and religion. ⁴³ (Fig. 6) Hamiid filed charges with the police, but the case was dropped four months later. The police concluded that the real estate agent's behaviour was not discriminatory. ⁴⁴



Figure 6: Questions addressed to Husein Hamiid by Esa Törmälä, a real estate agent and Espoo city municipal candidate for the far-right Finns Party, when he inquired about renting a restaurant and hotel: "How old are you? What kind of family and relatives do you have? What is your religion? How much rent could you pay jointly for the restaurant and hotel? How long of a rent agreement would you want? Could you send me a picture of your family? What year did you come to Finland? Answer these questions first, and then I will call the owner!"45

Employment

In Finland's racialised and segregated labour markets, the national origin of a person can be an obstacle to employment. 46 In an article by *Raster*, an anti-racist research network created in 2015 by university researchers, cited the following factors that hinder

^{43.} Enrique Tessieri, "A Finnish Real Estate Agent Wants a Picture of the Clients Family and Information on His Religious Background," Migrant Tales, 28 July 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/a-finnish-real-estate-agent-wants-a-picture-of-the-clients-family-and-information-on-his-religious-background/, (Access date: 14 April 2022).

^{44.} Enrique Tessieri, "The Police Give You Permission to Pry into a Person's Background Even if These Are Inappropriate and Offensive," Migrant Tales, 20 November 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/the-police-give-you-permission-to-pry-into-a-persons-background-even-if-these-are-inappropriate-and-offensive/, (Access date: 14 April 2022).

^{45. &}quot;A Finnish Real Estate Agent Wants a Picture of the Client's Family and Information on His Religious Background," Migrant Tales (28 July 2021), https://www.migranttales.net/a-finnish-real-estate-agent-wants-a-picture-of-the-clients-family-and-information-on-his-religious-background/, (Access date: 11 June 2022).

^{46.} Jawara Khan, Olivia Maury, Quivine Ndomo, "Why does Finland seek talent from abroad, but neglect highly skilled foreigners in the country?" Raster, 30 June 2021, https://raster.fi/2021/06/30/why-does-finland-seek-talent-from-abroad-but-neglect-highly-skilled-foreigners-in-the-country/, (Access date: 4 April 2022).

the employment of foreigners and racialised minorities: a strict residence permit system, too high language proficiency requirements, inadequate networks by foreigners, and the lack of equity.⁴⁷ Even if labour discrimination is widely known and acknowledged by the authorities thanks to numerous studies, too little is still being done to enforce and challenge discrimination.

The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, in its annual 2021 report to parliament, alluded to labour discrimination as an ongoing problem.⁴⁸ It said that people who had Finnish-sounding names had four times better chances of getting a job interview than those with so-called foreign-sounding ones, even if they had the same qualifications and spoke impeccable Finnish.⁴⁹

Interview invites per 500 job applications

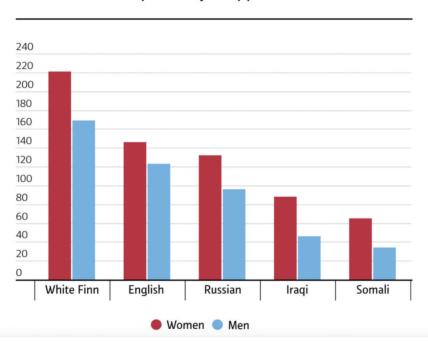


Figure 7: Job applicants in the study by Akhlaq Ahmad cited by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman according to their ethnic background and sex. SOURE White Finnish women got the most job interview invitations while Iraqis and Somalis got the least. All job seekers for low-paying jobs had the same qualifications and spoke impeccable Finnish.⁵⁰

^{47.} Enrique Tessieri, "The more proof that labor discrimination is king in Finland, the less is done to tackle the problem," Migrant Tales, 21 November 2022, https://www.migranttales.net/the-more-proof-that-labor-discrimination-is-king-in-finland-the-less-is-done-to-tackle-the-problem/, (Access date: 4 April 2022).

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman report to parliament (Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutetun eduskuntakertomuksen julkaisutilaisuus), 31 March 2022, https://stream.sst.fi/cast/yvv-julkistamistilaisuus, (Access date: 9 April 2022). See also: Yle News, "Researcher: "If there's a worker with a Finnish name, they'll probably be hired," 21 October 2019, https://yle.fi/news/3-11026589, (Access date: 9 April 2022).

^{49.} Yle News, "Researcher: "If There's a Worker With a Finnish Name, They'll Probably be Hired," 21 October 2019, 11 February 2021 (updated), https://yle.fi/news/3-11026589, (Access dater: 23 April 2022).

^{50.} Yle News, "Researcher: 'If there's a worker with a Finnish name, they'll probably be hired," 21 October 2019 (updated 11 February 2021), https://yle.fi/news/3-11026589, (Access date: 28 April 2022).

Job discrimination can happen even at Helsinki University. Theology students of Islam at Helsinki University with Finnish surnames were picked over those with so-called foreign-sounding ones to teach at a primary school. Antti Räsänen, the dean of the theology department, said that there was an ongoing investigation concerning what happened. "This procedure was wrong," he said. "There is of course no reason for such a procedure and it is not part of the faculty's policies. On the contrary, we are very strict about fairness and equal treatment for everyone." 51

In December 2020, the unemployment rate in Finland of people aged 18-64 who don't speak Finnish, Swedish, or Saami as their mother tongue was 23.8% versus the national average of 12.6%, according to the latest Statistics Finland figures.⁵²

Muslim-dominant language groups that reported high unemployment were Arabic speakers (45.3%), Somali speakers (39.7%), Kurdish speakers (38.6%), Persian-Farsi speakers (30.9%), and Turkish speakers (28%). Smaller language groups included Chechen speakers (49.8%), Pashto Afghan speakers (29.8%), Azerbaijani speakers (29.8%), Urdu speakers (20.1%), and Bosnian speakers (17.6%). The unemployment rate among Muslim women was higher than for men in the same group, even if some had a broader educational background. The unemployment rate for Arabic-speaking women was 55.8%, and for Somali-speaking women, 39.4%. The corresponding figure for men was 41.4% and 39.9%, respectively.⁵³ Contrarily, the employment rate of all women who did not speak Finnish, Swedish, or Saami as their mother tongue was 49.03%, and for men, 57.1%. That compares with 73.2% and 69.4% for Finnish, Swedish, and Saami speakers, respectively.⁵⁴ The employment of migrant women in Finland is the worst among Nordic countries.

Education

As in previous years, Muslim parents share the same complaints concerning Islam classes at school for their children. One of these issues is that the vast majority of the teachers of Islam are unqualified.⁵⁵ There are still too few minorities in teacher roles at Finnish schools. The *Salam* series, which the Finnish National Agency for Education (Opetushallitus) published for comprehensive and middle school pupils, is considered a good textbook.⁵⁶

^{51.} Yle News, "Iltalehti: Helsinki University Offered Jobs Based on 'Finnish-Sounding' Names," 22 October 2022, https://yle.fi/news/3-12156402, (Access date: 15 April 2022).

Statistics Finland, "115g -- Population by Main Type of Activity, Language, Occupational Status, Sex, Age and Year, 2000-2020," https://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin_vrm_tyokay/statfin_tyokay_pxt_115g.px/, (Access date: 13 April 2022).

^{53.} Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid

^{55.} Telephone conversation (2.4.2022) with Imam Abbas Bahmanpour.

^{56.} Ibid.

Politics

In August, the Finns Party (PS) elected MP Riikka Purra as its new chairperson.⁵⁷ While former chairperson Jussi Halla-aho's resignation came as a surprise to many, one factor must have been the disappointing municipal election result of June. While some opinion polls before the election placed the PS in second place, gaining 18% of the vote, the party hoped to come on top with its usual Islamophobic and anti-immigration rhetoric. Some of their slogans, like "Take Finland Back," were a direct copy from Brexit, while some of their ads alleged that migrants jump public housing queues in Helsinki.⁵⁸ Despite these campaign messages, the PS came in fourth place with 14.5% of the votes after its Centre Party rival. Despite the poor showing, the Islamophobic party did gain 5.6 percentage points compared to the previous municipal election, which was a gain of 581 councilpersons bringing its total to 1,351.⁵⁹

Two board members of the party elected at the its annual congress had a record of ethnic agitation charges. Sebastian Tynkkynen, PS third vice president, has been convicted on three occasions, ⁶⁰ while a court in December acquitted second vice president Mauri Peltokangas on ethnic agitation charges. The prosecutor plans to appeal the ruling. ⁶¹

One recent ethnic agitation conviction in January 2022⁶² involved Jyrki Åland, a PS deputy councilperson from Turku. He was fined 1,200 euros for posting two Islamophobic videos on Facebook and YouTube in 2019 and 2021. In the first video, he stated that he hoped that Covid-19 would kill people in Varisuo, a neighbourhood near Turku where 48% of its inhabitants don't speak Finnish or Swedish as their mother tongue. "Yes, I would place an order for some [Covid-19 deaths] here for Turku's Varisuo [suburb]," he said. "It is a neighbourhood where migrants live, and possibly a small Corona cleansing job would do a lot of good

^{57.} Enrique Tessieri, "Jussi Halla-aho Announces He Will Step Down as PS Chair in August," Migrant Tales, 21 June 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/jussi-halla-aho-announces-he-will-step-down-as-ps-chair-in-august/, (Access date: 16 April 2022); Yle News, "Riikka Purra Elected Finns Party Leader," 14 August 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-12059036, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{58.} Charlie Duxbury, "Finnish Far Right Hopes to Use Local Elections as National Springboard," Politico, 12 June 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/finland-far-right-local-election-finns-party-immigration-eu/, (Access date: 16 April 2022).

^{59.} Yle Municipal Elections Result service, 13 June 2021,https://vaalit.yle.fi/kv2021/en, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

Enrique Tessieri, "PS MP Sebastian Tynkkynen Gets a Third Ethnic Agitation Conviction," Migrant Tales, 4
October 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/ps-mp-sebastian-tynkkynen-gets-a-third-ethnic-agitation-conviction/, (Access date: 16 April 2022).

^{61.} Mirva Ekman, "Valtakunnansyyttäjä on Ilmoittanut Tyytymättömyytensä Kansanedustaja Mauri Peltokangasta Koskevaan Vapauttavaan Tuomioon," Yle, 17 December 2021, https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-12235938, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{62.} DF Report, "Perussuomalaiset Leader Fined for Ethnic Agitation," Daily Finland, 19 February 2022, https://www.dailyfinland.fi/national/25984/Perussuomalaiset-leader-fined-for-ethnic-agitation/print, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

there."⁶³ Two months after the statement, Åland published another provocative post with the headline of the infamous Nazi phrase used at Nazi German concentration camps like Auschwitz in World War II, "Arbeit macht frei" (Work will set you free).⁶⁴

The PS's strong Islamophobic and far-right, nativist nationalistic campaign message explains in great part why the party did well in the 2011, 2015,⁶⁵ and 2019 parliamentary elections. In each of these elections, an incident involving migrants boosted the party's prospects. In 2019, for example, we saw how the party used the overblown sexual assault cases in Oulu to its advantage.⁶⁶ The next parliamentary elections in Finland will be held in April 2023.

Islamophobic knee-jerks in Finland come in different forms and sizes. One such reaction was in the fall when Belarus dictator Alyaksandar Lukashenka invited Middle East asylum seekers to enter Poland and the EU through his country. The incident not only added fuel to the PS's toxic anti-immigration message, but also to that of the conservative National Coalition Party (NCP), the second-biggest opposition party. Some of the suggestions proposed by the PS were building a 1,340-kilometre fence on the border with Russia and the right to temporarily suspend refugees' right to seek asylum. Kimmo Sasi, a former long-serving NCP MP and minister, wrote that the use of violence is admissible if needed in order to push back such refugees at the Finnish-Russian border. In a speech given to parliament in October, another NCP MP, Heikki Vestman, proposed a tighter immigration policy. Vestman, like many of his MP colleagues, offered simplistic Islamophobic talking points. These included, "They will not integrate," "Anchor babies pose a terrorist threat," and that asylum seekers from Muslim countries are not "real" refugees. Each of the Size of

Next year's parliamentary elections will determine the direction of the country's immigration policy. If the PS and NCP win enough seats and form a government, it will spell hard times for the Muslim community.

^{63.} Enrique Tessieri, "PS' Jyrki Åland Wishes Corona to Kill Migrants in Varissuo, Turku," Migrant Tales, 5 January 2022, https://www.migranttales.net/ps-jyrki-aland-wishes-corona-to-kill-migrants-in-varisuo-near-turku/, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{64.} Enrique Tessieri, "The Perussuomalaiset: Promoting Nazi Concentration Camp Slogans," Migrant Tales, 5 April 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/the-perussuomalaiset-promoting-nazi-concentration-camp-slogans/, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{65.} Enrque Tessieri, "What We Should Learn from the Tapanila Sexual Assault Case," Migrant Tales, 27 June 2015, https://www.migranttales.net/what-we-should-learn-from-the-tapanila-rape-case/, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{66.} Enrique Tessieri, "Actions of the Finnish Police and Yle Reveal Multicultural Incompetence in Coverage of Oulu Sexual Assault Cases," Migrant Tales, 24 April 2019, https://www.migranttales.net/actions-of-the-finnish-police-and-yle-reveal-multicultural-incompetence-in-coverage-of-oulu-sexual-assault-cases/, (Access date: 17 April 2022).

^{67.} Kimmo Sasi, "Suomi voi käyttää väkivaltaa estääkseen laittoman maahantulon," Verkkouutiset, 12 November 2021, https://www.verkkouutiset.fi/a/suomi-voi-kayttaa-vakivaltaa-estaakseen-laittoman-maahantulon/#1c 200f38, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{68.} Enrique Tessieri, "Why do Some Politicians, Who Know Better, Spread and Feed Us Racism," Migrant Tales, 25 October 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/why-do-some-politicans-who-know-better-spread-and-feed-us-racism/, (Access date: 11 April 2022).

Media

Even if Finland ranked second after Norway in the Reporters Without Borders' "2021 Press Freedom Index", 69 similar questions to those that rise from the "World's Happiest (Country) Index" award follow: Which people do these surveys refer to? Is Finland's media unbiased towards Muslims? One of the media's most common coverage issues is that it rarely contacts leaders and experts of the Muslim community. Marja Sannikka's talk show in the fall on racism was a monumental flop because the host attempted to impose her ethnocentric views on how to challenge racism with poorly investigated opinions and colour-blind solutions. 70 (Fig. 8)



Figure 8: Marja Sannikka's show was a flop since, with her guest Esko Valtaoja and Kurdish Finn Renaz Ebrahim, she attempted to prove how to make the world a better place without racism with colour-blind logic (sic). Valtaoja, used the n-word twice on the show without any objections from the host. The television programme went viral in Finland and showed how white Finns can trip over their opinionated views of racism, and ignorance of white privilege.⁷¹

Muhammad Ahsan Qureshi, a dissertation researcher at Tampere University, researches the media discourse surrounding the failed attempt to build the Grand Helsinki Mosque. Some of the findings of Qureshi's research showed that the debate sur-

^{69.} Reporters Without Borders, 2021 World Press Freedom Index, https://rsf.org/en/ranking, (Access date: 5 April 2022).

^{70.} Enrique Tessieri, "Marja Sannikka's Talk Show on Racism is the Worst I Have Ever Watched," Migrant Tales, 21 November 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/marja-sannikkas-talk-show-on-racism-is-the-worst-i-have-ever-watched/, (Access date: 17 April 2022).

^{71.} Marja Sannikka, "Hyviä Asioita Ajetaan Huonoilla Keinoilla," Yle, 19 November 2021, https://areena.yle.fi/1-50667789, (Access date: 10 April 2022). See also: Enrique Tessieri, "Marja Sannikka's Talk Show on Racism Is the Worst I Have Ever Watched," Migrant Tales, 21 November 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/marja-sannikkas-talk-show-on-racism-is-the-worst-i-have-ever-watched/, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

rounding the project was "saturated with Islamophobic and colonial rhetoric," and instantly framed by the media as a potential security issue by linking it to international terrorist organisations. Moreover, according to Qureshi, the selective list of stakeholders interviewed encouraged a constructed image of a "good Muslim" and Finnish Islam. "Most interestingly, journalists seemed to get away with rather facile analyses and were able to offer sweeping statements about Islam, Muslims, or the organisers/donors of the project," added Qureshi. "[It was done] without encountering any scrutiny or offering any retraction."

The lack of diversity in the newsroom continues hindering reporting about Muslims and other minorities in Finland. A quick search of Islamophobia mentioned by the State Broadcasting Company (Yle) and Finland's largest daily, *Helsingin Sanomat*, will yield very few results. The search result reveals that Islamophobia is still not seen as a serious problem and that Muslims aren't topical unless the story deals with 'terrorism and sexual crimes.'

When the topic of a news story includes Muslims or immigrants, there is too often little pushback or openly questioning of politicians.⁷² Making outrageous or half-truth claims about Muslims is one of the oldest stunts used by politicians to connect with their voters. Riikka Purra, who was running for PS chairperson last year, energised her supporters by claiming that the PS would never be part of any government that would not significantly tighten immigration policy. Some of the measures she mentioned were making family reunification even harder and raising citizenship requirements from 5 years to 10 years.⁷³ Not a single editorial in Finland questioned how such measures would hinder migrants, never mind Muslims and how they would fuel the country's hostile environment. Another example is the NCP, which in July proposed a nine-point programme to lower social security to migrant recipients. Any legal scholar can tell you that such a measure is unconstitutional and that it has been proposed on other occasions in the past.⁷⁴ If Finland were to lower social security payments to one group, it would have to lower them to all groups in order for this to be constitutional.⁷⁵

^{72.} Enrique Tessieri, "How Finland's biggest daily Helsingin Sanomat loses its teech and watchdog role," Migrant Tales, 10 August 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/how-finlands-biggest-daily-helsingin-sanomat-loses-its-teeth-and-watchdog-role/, (Access date: 5 April 2022).

^{73.} Enrique Tessieri, "Riikka Purra's promise of 'significantly' tightening immigration policy is nothing more than a snowjob," Migrant Tales, 13 October 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/riikka-purras-promise-of-significantly-tightening-immigration-policy-is-nothing-more-than-a-snow-job/, (Access date: 5 April 2022).

^{74.} Enrique Tessieri, "The Finnish Government's Eighty-Point Tightening of Immigration Policy Is All Politics and Saving Face, Nothing More," Migrant Tales, 10 December 2015, https://www.migranttales.net/the-finnish-governments-eighty-point-tightening-of-immigration-policy-is-all-politics-and-saving-face-nothing-more/, (Access date: 28 April 2022).

^{75.} Enrique Tessieri, "Kokoomus Gives Nod to Perussuomalaiser's Plan to Tighten Immigration Policy," Migrant Tales, 24 July 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/kokoomus-gives-nod-to-perussuomalaisets-plan-to-tight-en-immigration-policy/, (Access date: 28 April 2022).

Not only are Muslims' voices excluded from news stories, but the voices of Jews are as well. In August, a Helsinki District Court acquitted five persons of ethnic agitation charges for carrying Nazi flags at an Independence Day demonstration in 2018.⁷⁶ *Helsingin Sanomat* and Yle did not approach any representative of the Jewish community to comment about the acquittal.

Justice System

As in previous years, there is no indication that due process in Finland is moving at a faster pace or that it prioritises racism and discrimination cases. Generally speaking, Sara Salmani, a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) consultant, believes that institutional racism is one reason why racism and discrimination aren't prioritised in Finland. "We need more studies on Islamophobia," she said. "There are too few, and it is not recognised as a real problem [by the authorities]. These kinds of studies would help us to prove that Islamophobia is an alarming problem." Researcher Muhammad Ahsan Qureshi considered "in-depth" research on Islam in Finland as "a rare pursuit." "The prevalent research is largely limited to categorising and explaining them [Muslims] through the lens of integration issues and ethnical diversity," he said.

Apart from more research on Islamophobia in Finland, among others, there needs to be more anti-racism training and education at schools starting from a young age, targeted at both staff members and public servants. Salmani added that more effective laws should be enforced against social ills like hate speech.

The police have sacked officers due to their online Islamophobic and anti-Semitic hate speech.⁷⁹ During July to September, at least five police officers were under investigation for engaging in anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic communication.⁸⁰ One of them even advised a far-right group on how to hide weapons and how to beat up asylum seekers without getting caught.⁸¹ A report by Yle News noted that the police are rarely punished after complaints about racist behaviour.⁸²

^{76.} Mark Odom, "Court dismisses incitement charges against Independence Day swastika flag wavers," Yle News, 30 August 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-12078420, (Access date: 5 April 2022).

^{77.} Telephone conversation (13 April 2022) with Sara Sulmani.

^{78.} Email (26.4.2022) from Ahsan Qureshi.

^{79.} Yle News, "Second Helsinki Police Officer Sacked for Far-Right Hate Speech," 16 June 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-11984750, (Access date: 15 April 2022).

United States Department of State, "International Religious Freedom Report for 2021: Finland," Office on International Religious Freedom, 3 June 2022, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ FINLAND-2021-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf, (Access date: 14 June 2022)

^{81.} Enrique Tessieri, "The Finnish Police's Racism Problem and Ties With Far-Right Groups Like Kansallismielisten liittouma," Migrant Tales, 5 March 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/the-finnish-polices-racism-problem-and-ties-with-far-right-groups-like-kansallismielisten-liittouma/, (Access date: 15 April 2022).

^{82.} Egan Richardson, "Police Rarely Punished After Complaints Over Racism, Yle News, 8 May 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-11922658, (Access date: 15 April 2022).



Figure 9: Green League chairperson of the City Council of Helsinki, Fatim Diarra, said that almost without exception, racism investigations by the police are dropped because they are considered of minor importance. Above tweet: "[I] have been active in society since 2007 and have almost always filed charges after racist insults [against me]. Nothing ever follows from them. Thank you, @UjuniAhmed." Lower tweet: "I got information from the police last Friday that a case [I have filed] will not move ahead. But loved ones, we are not moving anywhere. Finland is our home."

In the tweet above by Diarra, she thanks Ujuni Ahmed, Yle's Somali-language newscaster, whose complaints of racist harassment had fallen on deaf ears. Her charges of racist harassment were dropped by the police and state prosecutor, who said that the case was too minor to go ahead.⁸³

In 2016, the government of Prime Minister Juho Sipilä passed several laws that aimed at doing away with so-called pull factors to discourage asylum seekers from coming to Finland. Some of the changes in the law included eroding due process⁸⁴ by denying legal counsel, shortening appeal times, and much stricter family reunification laws.⁸⁵ While changes last year reinstated the deadline for appeals for asylum

^{83.} Yle News, "Prosecutor Drops Probe into Racial Abuse of Somali Newsreader," 27 February 2021, https://yle. fi/news/3-11813226, (Access date: 10 April 2022).

^{84.} Enrique Tessieri, "Asylum Seekers' rights in Finland to Appeal Will be Severely Undermined Thanks to a New Law that Will Come into Force on September 1," Migrant Tales, 12 August 2016, https://www.migranttales.net/asylum-seekers-rights-in-finland-to-appeal-will-be-severely-undermined-thanks-to-a-new-law-that-will-come-into-force-on-september-1/, (Access date: 9 April 2022).

^{85.} Beri Jamal and Enrique Tessieri, "Finland tightens family reunification laws and denies migrants the right to a family," Migrant Tales, 18 June 2016, https://www.migranttales.net/finland-tightens-family-reunification-laws-and-denies-migrants-the-right-to-a-family/, (Access date: 9 April 2022).

seekers back to 30 days from 21 days and the right to counsel, ⁸⁶ there are still concerns about the appeal process to the supreme administrative court. Some of the family reunification obstacles were still being drafted in April 2022 by the ministry of interior, which has also proposed to grant undocumented migrants who came in 2015-2016 temporary residence permits. ⁸⁷ While the Green League has made such a proposal, it has faced opposition from government members like the Social Democrats and Centre Party. A citizen's initiative passed the 50,000-signature threshold in April 2022 to grant undocumented migrants four-year residence permits. ⁸⁸ The initiative's fate is still unclear and it remains to be seen whether it will get the green light from parliament. Amnesty International has reported that Finland's asylum policy violates the human rights of children. ⁸⁹

Internet

According to police superintendent Jari Taponen, the same conspiracy theories that one finds abroad are spread in Finland with the help of the Internet. The same people who are today anti-vaxxers tend to spread hate speech, and far-right and rightwing talking points, according to Taponen. "Three things are needed to tackle the problem of hate speech on the Internet," he continued. "Resources, more effective moderation, and leadership, where people would speak out against hate speech and protect targeted victims." 90

The ministry of justice signed a one-off agreement⁹¹ with Utopia Analytics to track hate speech on the Internet with artificial intelligence. The cooperation led to a two-month study last year published in April 2022 that detected close to 300,000 examples of hate speech.⁹² The study used a sample of 12 million comments and articles appearing on online message boards and Finnish-language websites. The most popular of these was Ylilauta.org, a popular imageboard where one can post anonymously accounted for 96% of all hate speech messages identified by the study. Other websites included Twitter and Instagram, but to a minor degree. The study showed

^{86.} Enrique Tessieri, "Finnish parliament improves asylum rights, but there is still a long way to go," Migrant Tales, 24 June 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/finnish-parliament-improves-asylum-rights-but-there-is-still-a-long-way-to-go/, (Access date: 9 April 2022).

^{87.} Yle News, "Finnish government to ease residence for some undocumented migrants," 6 May 2021, https://yle. fi/news/3-11918426, (Access date: 9 April 2022).

^{88.} Yle News, "Parliament to Debate Automatic Residency for Longtime Asylum Seekers," 23 April 2022, https://yle.fi/news/3-12415134, (Access date: 23 April 2022).

^{89.} Enrique Tessieri, "Amnesty International Report 2020/21: Shame on Finland," 9 April 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/amnesty-international-2020-21-report-shame-on-finland/, (Access date: 15 April 2022).

^{90.} Telephone interview (19 April 2022) with Police Superintendent Jari Taponen.

^{91.} Harry Menear, "Finnish government to use AI to track online hate speech," Mobile11 November 2022, https://mobile-magazine.com/technology-and-ai/finnish-government-use-ai-track-online-hate-speech, (Access date: 9 April 2022).

^{92.} Yle News, "Study: 300,000 examples of hate speech found on Finnish sites," 22 April 2021, https://yle.fi/news/3-11896654, (Access date: 9 April 2022).

that blogs, comment sections, and Facebook posts accounted for 0.02% of hate speech detected by the study. While 26% of all hate-speech comments used the word "Muslim," ten persons accounted for 11% of the posts.

Taponen said that other platforms for hate speech include the Islamophobic Hommaforum and forum that debates crime cases, Murha.Info. "There are several reasons [why hate speech spreads], and if we look at the political landscape, we notice that political parties are active in spreading hate speech and flirt with it to polarise society," he added. "Even if there are other factors like fear of outsiders, power is the main factor that motivates hate speech."

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

All of the Finns Party's 38 lawmakers and VKK's Ano Turtiainen, who was first banned from the PS parliamentary group and later sacked from the party, 93 have one matter in common: Islamophobia. Some names belonging to this disreputable list are Riikka Purra, Jussi Halla-aho, Ville Tavio, Laura Huhtasaari, Sanna Antikainen, Mauri Peltokangas, Juha Mäenpää, Sebastian Tynkkynen, Mari Rantanen, Veikko Vallin, and others like Jyrki Åland and Matias Turkkila, editor of the party's newspaper. Some Islamophobic voices within the NCP are MPs Wille Rydman, Atte Kaleva, Pia Kauma, and politicians like Seida Sohrabi. Others include Christian Democrat MPs like Päivi Räsänen.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Many of Finland's Muslims come from war-ravaged countries and have endured hardships on their long journeys and present lives in Finland. Setting aside the country's first Muslims, the Tartars, who came in the nineteenth century, Islam has grown rapidly from the 1990s when the Somalis arrived after the collapse of the Soviet Union that coincided with the beginning of the Somali civil war, and in 2015, when over 30,000 Iraqis and Afghans sought asylum. Even if many Muslims see Finland as their home, there is a credibility gap as NUMU chairperson Noor Assad pointed out earlier in the report. Muslim leaders will readily say that open dialogue is a good way to build bridges of understanding with the rest of society. As we have asked in previous reports, who and how will such dialogue be initiated, what will the agenda be, how will decisions be implemented, and when will white Finns accept Muslims as equal members of society? Small steps are better than nothing, considering the chal-

^{93.} Enrque Tessieri, "Former PS MP Ano Turtiainen Gets Sacked from the Party," Migrant Tales, 27 February 2021, https://www.migranttales.net/former-ps-mp-ano-turtiainen-gets-sacked-from-the-party/, (Access date: 23 April 2022).

lenge and the time these changes require. Some positive steps have been taken such as Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government programme that strives to create a more inclusive society and other efforts mentioned in the report. How rapidly change occurs depends on political will and leadership from all sides. The goodwill shown to Ukrainian refugees in 2022 by the EU and Finland versus the hostile treatment of Muslim refugees in Belarus should paradoxically give us hope that there's a way forward provided there is enough will.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

As in the previous year's *European Islamophobia Report*, ⁹⁴ the following recommendations - some new ones added from the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman ⁹⁵ - are still topical for fostering inclusion of Muslims and public awareness of Islamophobia.

- The recognition of Islamophobia as a form of racism.
- More studies on racism and Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism in particular.
- The mainstream media should acknowledge and step up its reporting of Islamophobia as a form of racism.
- Since Muslims are also Finns, the language used to label them should change.
- Finns must stop referring to Muslim and minority children as "people of foreign background" or "migrant background".
- The promotion of cultural and ethnic diversity in civil servant jobs like the police.
- The dismantling of institutional structures that maintain racism and practices of discrimination.
- The guarantee of the rights of victims of racism and discrimination by making due process swifter.
- Each culture has its own public space in Finland, and it should be promoted, protected, and respected.
- Stronger adherence to enforcing anti-discrimination laws.
- More funding and resources for effective monitoring of hate speech, hate crime, discrimination, and racism cases, and for training against their occurrence in the first place.
- Anti-racism education should be mandatory starting from comprehensive school and extending to other sectors like businesses and the public sector, among others.

^{94.} Enrique Tessieri: Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2020, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

^{95.} Non-Discrimination Ombudsman report to parliament (Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutetun eduskuntakertomuksen julkaisutilaisuus), 31 March 2022, https://stream.sst.fi/cast/yvv-julkistamistilaisuus, (Access date: 15 April 2022).

- Instead of only advocating gender equality, which is essential, there should be the same enthusiasm for promoting equity for all minorities and vulnerable groups.
- The prohibition of politicians with convictions for ethnic agitation, hate crime, and other serious crimes from holding office.
- Exemplary leadership by ministers, politicians, the media, and public officials is needed to encourage to challenge the negative perception of groups like Muslims and create public spaces for them.
- An understanding that integration is a two-way process (in theory), not a oneway process (in practice).

Chronology

- 20 April 2021: "When a person with an immigrant background commits a crime, his or her background is emphasised as if it were related to the criminal act. If a person with an immigrant background succeeds, the media turns him or her into a Finn. For example, when a person with an immigrant background succeeds in sports, his or her foreign roots are not even mentioned," said actor Omar Abdi Nuh on Facebook.
- 16 June 2021: "There have been no previous suspicions of a far-right police network. The Helsinki Police Department is no place for far-right activities," Helsinki Deputy Police Chief Heikki Kopperoinen said after sacking another officer for the same offense during the same month.
- 8 July 2021: "If it were up to me, the Finns Party will never form part of a government that does not successfully [and] significantly tighten Finnish immigration policy," said Riikka Purra, who was running for PS chairperson in August. One of the measures to tighten immigration law that she mentioned in the television talk show "A-studio" in August that citizenship requirements should rise from 5 to 10 years.
- 15 August 2021: Newly elected chairperson of the Finns Party, Riikka Purra, stated in her inaugural speech: "We want changes in border policy and so-called humanitarian and social migration. Our goal is zero asylum seekers [to Finland], as is the case with [Mette Fredriksen's] Danish Social Democrat-led government."
- 4 September 2021: Shortly after the United States and other allies abandoned Afghanistan in August, PS Chairperson Riikka Purra tweeted: "No experts, human rights activists, defenders of the rule of law, feminists, journalists. No Afghans to Finland. No requests from the United States, NATO, the EU, or UNHCR. No debt of honour, four-year residence permits, family reunifications, citizenship."

- 25 October 2021: At a Tampere city council meeting, PS Councilperson and MP Veikko Vallin said he was opposed to refugees from Muslim countries: "The difference between the majority culture and Muslims from developing countries is too great that they will never mix. Little Mogadishus, Baghdads, Kabuls appear in different cities and throughout Europe. These types of neighbourhoods consist of only one ethnic group."
- 11 November 2021: "Finland can use violence to thwart illegal immigration [asylum seekers] to Finland. Finland can also build a wall if it deems it necessary to ensure its security. This is what, among other [countries], they have done in Norway with its eastern border [with Russia]," wrote Kimmo Sasi, former National Coalition Party minister (1999-2003) and MP (1983-2015).
- 21 November 2021: "Wouldn't it be high time to think that the mixing of people, religions, and cultures in the West is not such a good matter? The development of mass migration and violent cultures is A PROBLEM. Beheading a person is only one example," said Rikka Purra, PS chairperson.
- 29 November 2021: "[T] hey try to give the impression that the Finns Party is cold, is inhumane, but it's not this way at all. We put the Finns ahead of everybody else. In Finland, we have poor people in need of well-being. It is very important; we have to be concerned. I wonder if terrorists can come to Finland, how do you [the government] plan to prevent this?" said PS MP Minna Reijonen during a question-and-answer session of parliament between the opposition and government.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN FRANCE NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

The year 2021 has been a very difficult year for French Muslims, notably with the implementation of the anti-separatism law which has been severely criticized by many observers such as human rights defenders, academics, activists, and opposition politicians because of its restrictive and repressive nature. This law, which is supposed to provide a strong response against "terrorism" and "radical Islam," has in fact provoked a violent crackdown on Muslim visibility and organization. It affects first the most visible Muslims by extending the ban on religious symbols to many other spaces and criminalizes any attempt to organize independent Muslim worship and fight Islamophobia by carrying out abusive closures. Indeed, the arbitrary closure or dissolution of many Islamic bodies or bodies perceived as such (associations, schools, mosques, restaurants, publishing houses, etc.) has very often been justified by unconvincing reasons. In particular, the dismantling of Muslim associations and NGOs reduces the possibility of providing detailed and diversified data on Islamophobia in France. Thus, beyond listing all the anti-Muslim acts that took place in 2021, it is also important to question the intentions of the French government in implementing a policy that goes so far as to criminalize Muslimness. Islamophobia in France is primarily the result of the state, which seeks to establish an "Islam of France" which removes self-determination from French Muslims to make them "Muslims without Islam." This narrative that imposes assimilation on French Muslims was particularly amplified by the mainstream media and representatives of identitarian groups, especially in late 2021 during the start of the 2022 presidential campaign. In the end, 2021 bore witness to a higher level of violence in France both in terms of language (with increasingly hateful and worrying Islamophobic discourses) and approach (with laws repressing religious, visible, organized and vocal Muslims)—a violence that highlights the secondary place granted to French Muslims in their own country.

Note de synthèse

L'année 2021 a été une année très difficile pour les Musulmans Français notamment avec la mise en place de la loi anti-séparatisme qui a été beaucoup critiquée par de nombreux observateurs (défenseurs des droits humains, universitaires, militants et politiciens de l'opposition) à cause de son caractère liberticide et répressif. Cette loi, censée apporter une réponse ferme contre le "terrorisme" et "l'Islam radical", a en fait provoqué une violente répression à l'encontre de la visibilité et de l'organisation musulmane. Elle affecte en effet d'abord les Musulmans les plus visibles en étendant l'interdiction des signes religieux dans d'autres espaces et criminalise toute tentative d'organisation indépendante du culte musulman et de lutte contre l'islamophobie en procédant à des fermetures abusives. En effet, la fermeture ou dissolution arbitraire de nombreuses structures musulmanes ou perçues comme telles (des associations, des écoles, des mosquées, des restaurants, des maisons d'édition, etc.) ont très souvent été justifiées par des motifs très peu convaincants. En particulier, le démantèlement du tissu associatif musulman réduit la possibilité de fournir des données détaillées et diversifiées sur l'islamophobie en France. Ainsi, au-delà d'inventorier tous les actes antimusulmans qui ont eu lieu en 2021, il s'agit aussi avant tout de questionner les intentions du gouvernement français pour mettre en place une telle politique allant jusqu'à criminaliser la musulmanité. L'islamophobie en France est d'abord le fait de l'État qui cherche à instaurer un "Islam de France" qui enlève toute auto-détermination aux Musulmans Français pour en faire des "Musulmans sans l'Islam". Ce récit imposant l'assimilation aux Musulmans Français a particulièrement été amplifiée par les médias mainstream ainsi que par les représentants des groupes identitaires notamment à la fin 2021 lors du début de la campagne présidentielle de 2022. Au final, l'année 2021 aura témoigné d'un niveau de violence supérieure en France à la fois en termes de langage (avec des discours islamophobes de plus en plus haineux et inquiétants) et d'approche (avec des lois réprimant les Musulmans pratiquants, visibles, organisés et portant une voix)— une violence qui met en évidence la place secondaire accordée aux Musulmans Français dans leur propre pays.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: France

Type of Regime: Unitary constitutional republic
Form of Government: Semi-presidential system
Ruling Parties: La République En Marche! (center)

Opposition Parties: Le Rassemblement National, La France Insoumise

Last Elections: June 27, 2021 Regional Elections: The abstention rate is record-high this year with a total of 66%. The Union à gauche avec des écologistes (left) won 20.3%, Union à Droite (right) 19.8%, Rassemblement National (far right) 19%, Union à gauche (left) 10.5%, Union au centre et à droite (center right) 9.4%, Les Républicains (right) 8.4%, Union au centre (center) 5.2%. Macron's party (La Republique en Marche!) won only 0.4% (none of the fourteen French regional councils is led by a president from this party). In terms of seats, right-wing parties won a total of 784 seats, left-wing parties 681 seats, far-right parties 252 seats, center parties 124 seats, and far-left parties 85 seats.

Total Population: 67.8 million in 2021 according to the Institut Nationale de la Statistique et des Études Économiques, INSEE (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies)

Major Languages: French

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Ministry of Interior recorded a 32% increase in anti-Muslim acts: 171 in 2021 compared to 129 in 2019. The Service Central du Renseignement Territorial (SCRT) recorded 213 anti-Muslim acts. The Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Europe (CCIE) has dealt with 384 cases in 2021. The Observatoire National de Lutte contre l'Islamophobie and the Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme have not yet published their annual reports.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the SCRT, the total number of racist acts decreased from 1,983 (2019) to 1,461 acts (2020), i.e., a decrease of 26%.

Major Religions (% of Population): The compilation of official statistics based on religious beliefs is not permitted by French law. According to the European Values Study (EVS) in 2018, 58% of French people claim to belong to no religion, 32% are Catholics (including 19% non-religious Catholics), 6% Muslims, 2% Protestants, and 2% another religion. However, according to a survey commissioned by the Observatoire de la laïcité at the Vivavoice Institute, 48% of French people claim to belong to Catholicism, 34% to no religion, 3% to Islam, 3% to Protestantism, 2% to

Buddhism, 1% to Judaism, 1% to Orthodox Christianity, and 1% to another religion while 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 populations represented 8.8% in 2016.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: CFCM (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman), UMF (Union des Mosquées de France), Fondation de l'Islam de France, DITIB, Milli Görüş, L.E.S Musulmans, Association Musulmane pour l'Islam de France (AMIF), and Musulmans de France (ex-UOIF)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Observatoire national de lutte contre l'Islamophobie, CLS (Coordination Contre la Loi Séparatisme), ADM (Action Droits des Musulmans), CJL (Comité Justice et Libertés pour tous)

Far-Right Parties: The National Rally (Rassemblement national, RN), France Arise (Debout la France), The Patriots (Les Patriotes), Reconquest (Reconquête launched in 2021)

Far-Right Movements: Riposte Laïque, Bloc identitaire, Egalité & Reconcilation, Réseau Remora, Volontaire Pour la France (VPF), Soldats d'Odin Breizh

Far-Right Militant Organizations: Action des Forces Opérationnelles (AFO) Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: Ban of religious symbols including the 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 July 23, 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 organized in the classroom. The 2021 anti-separatism law targets the religious symbols of members of Municipal Councils (Article 6) and employees of private companies performing a public service mission (Article 1) such as public transport drivers and social housing concierges.
- Halal Slaughter Ban: No
- Minaret Ban: No (depends on local decisions)
- Circumcision Ban: No
- Burka Ban: Law 2010-1192 of October 11, 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 April 11, 2011.
- Prayer Ban: No

Introduction

The year 2021 has been a very difficult year for French Muslims in France with the introduction of new anti-Muslim measures which have caused the closure of many Muslim organizations or bodies perceived as such. With the dissolution of NGOs fighting against Islamophobia, the statistical collection of anti-Muslim acts is much smaller and less varied. As the data from the annual reports of the National Observatory for the Fight against Islamophobia (Observatoire National de Lutte contre l'Islamophobie) and the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme, CNCDH) have not yet been published, only the data from the Ministry of Interior are presented here. In 2021, a total of 171 anti-Muslim acts were recoded, representing an increase of 32% compared to 2019.1 This total, which is difficult to access, was revealed by the French Minister of Interior in the press in comparison with other anti-religious acts. The comparison shows that anti-Christian and anti-Jewish acts recorded in the same year are respectively four times and three times more numerous than anti-Muslim acts. Although these statistics show a drop in anti-Christian and anti-Jewish acts and an increase in anti-Muslim acts between 2019 and 2021, it is still surprising to see that in such an Islamophobic context anti-Muslim acts are so few and, above all, fewer than the other anti-religious acts. The annual communication of the Ministry of Interior on this topic is based more precisely on the census work of the Central Territorial Intelligence Service (Service Central du Renseignement Territorial, SCRT) which in a report provides slightly higher statistics (213 anti-Muslim acts in 2021).2 The Collective against Islamophobia in Europe (Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Europe, CCIE, based in Belgium), which is often presented as the heir of the Collective against Islamophobia in France (Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en France, CCIF, dissolved in 2021), also presents a higher total with 384 files in 2021 just for France.³

With the difficult access to data, it will also not be possible to provide details on the nature of these anti-Muslim acts (discrimination, aggression, or degradation). But Islamophobia in France in 2021 raises fewer questions about the acts themselves than about the political measures put in place to control the Muslim faith. In particular, the anti-separatism law voted in 2021 has aroused significant criticism for its restrictive and repressive nature. Indeed, this law tends not only to reduce the everyday signs of Muslimness in the public space but also to criminalize any attempt of organization on the part of Muslims to manage their worship themselves and to fight Islam-

M.F., Agence France-Presse (AFP), "Gérald Darmanin assure que près de 1.400 actes antireligieux ont été recensés en France en 2021", 20 minutes, December 14, 2021. https://www.20minutes.fr/societe/3197319-20211214-gerald-darmanin-assure-pres-1400-actes-antireligieux-recenses-france-2021

^{2.} Florennes I., Mendès L., Les actes antireligieux en France, *Gouvernement Liberté Égalité Fraternité*, March 29, 2022, 55 p. https://www.vie-publique.fr/sites/default/files/rapport/pdf/284641.pdf

^{3.} According to a key informant from the CCIE interviewed in March 2022.

ophobia. This law, discussed just after the terrible beheading of Samuel Paty (October 2020), is presented as the response of the French government to "terrorism" and the fight against "radical Islam." A firm reaction had to be found to stop such barbarism, but many observers, including political scientist Olivier Roy,⁴ explain that this new measure will not prevent future atrocities. In addition, Roy shows that this law, which restricts the individual freedoms of Muslims, is at odds with republican values that the French constitution is supposed to defend such as the freedoms of religion, belief, conscience, opinion, thought, and speech. Thus, French Muslims are caught between a type of terrorism that claims the worst atrocities in the name of their own religion and their own government that cracks down on the display of their Muslimness instead of strengthening the mechanisms for reducing terrorism.

This law is the continuation of an Islamophobic policy that has been deployed for nearly two decades in France and, in particular, since the very first law prohibiting the hijab in public schools in 2004. From this law, it is easy to note that the method is always the same: it is initially simple populist discussions which then become draft bills which end up being established in official laws. Although motivated by polemics related to Islam and Muslimness, these laws make more general references to appear less Islamophobic and thus avoid the accusation of being discriminatory. For example, the 2004 law motivated by the hijab is called the "law against ostensible religious symbols," the 2010 law motivated by the niqab is called the "law against facial concealment," etc. All these increasingly Islamophobic controversies, discussions, and laws also fuel confusion in people's minds, thus provoking sometimes unfounded anti-Muslim discrimination on the ground. Even the most knowledgeable people on the subject no longer know what falls under the law or not. Today in France, there are indeed so many debates on Islam and Muslims—halal food; the burkini; the headscarf for minors in the street, for nannies, for mothers participating in school trips; the headscarf at university, in sports, etc.— that one could almost predict the next laws that will come into force in the future.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Very little data exist in 2021 regarding anti-Muslim acts and almost no reports detailing the nature of these acts have been published. Only the Service Central du Renseignement Territorial (SCRT) report shows that among the 213 anti-Muslim acts, half (109) concern damage to Muslim places of worship, cultural centers, and cemeteries,

Roy O., "French battle against Islamist 'separatism' is at odds with commitment to Liberty", Financial Times, November 7, 2020. https://www.ft.com/content/1f2f66c9-ce39-47dd-a1e9-a8687ff8ee2c

including six arson attacks against mosques. Twenty-two percent of anti-Muslim acts concern attacks on persons including three cases of physical violence.⁵ These assaults are not documented in detail in this report, but when the victims took the initiative to share the story of their assault on social media, serious experiences were found.

This is the case of Adil Sefrioui who experienced a terrible assault in April 2021 just outside his home in the small town of Dole (Jura). The shocking video filmed by his wife (Laetitia) shows that a septuagenarian man crushed Adil Sefrioui with his car in front of his family.





Figure 1: Screenshot of the physical aggression and the damaged fence. Source: personal video of Laetitia Sefrioui⁶ and French television channel BFMTV.⁷

More precisely, the story begins with an altercation between Laetitia Sefrioui and the man who parked his car in front of the fence of the couple's house. Laetitia Sefrioui accuses him of having taken photos of her children without her permission. Thus, a quarrel begins, and the aggressor clearly insults Adil Sefrioui by making racist remarks: "Come closer, *bicot*. Stand in front of the car." "Bicot" is an old racist insult targeting Arabs living in France (who are systematically assimilated to Muslims). After this first verbal aggression, the older man gets into his car and violently hits Adil Sefrioui against the fence of his house. The victim's lawyers, some of whom work for an NGO fighting racism and Islamophobia, maintain that it was a racially motivated attempted murder. The septuagenarian, found guilty of wilful violence

Florennes I., Mendès L., Les actes antireligieux en France, Gouvernement Liberté Égalité Fraternité, March 29, 2022, 55 p. https://www.vie-publique.fr/sites/default/files/rapport/pdf/284641.pdf

AFP, "Ce que l'on sait sur la violente agression raciste filmée à Dole, dans le Jura", L'Express, April 29, 2021. https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/ce-que-l-on-sait-sur-la-violente-agression-raciste-filmee-a-dole-dans-le-jura_2149856.html

BFMTV., "Victime d'une aggression raciste à Dole, il témoigne auprès de BFMTV", BFMTV, May 28, 2021. https://www.bfmtv.com/societe/victime-d-une-agression-raciste-a-dole-il-temoigne-aupres-de-bfmtv_ VN-202105280269.html

Allemand S., "Agression raciste à Dole: le septuafénaire condamné à trois and de prison ferme, avec mandate d'arrêt", France Bleu Besançon, France Bleu, July 6, 2021. https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/faits-divers-justice/ agression-raciste-a-dole-le-septuagenaire-condamne-a-trois-ans-de-prison-ferme-1625560929

with a weapon and racist insults, was sentenced to three years in prison, including two years suspended sentence⁹.

The press also reports significant vandalism of religious buildings and mosques. This is the case of the Dar Ennour institute located in Martigues (Bouches-du-Rhône) which was tagged in July 2021 with Islamophobic inscriptions. The inscriptions are clearly insults against Muslims and refer to the horrific armed attacks perpetuated in the name of Islam that France has experienced in recent years. They range from "Muslim=pig", "Arab outside", "Save the whites" to calls for justice for the victims of the Bataclan, Nice, and Charlie Hebdo attacks. These acts of vandalism are justified by equating the Muslim faith with such atrocities.



Figure 2: Screenshot of the Islamophobic inscriptions on the Dar Ennour institute's wall. Source: French regional daily newspaper *La Provence*.¹⁰



Figure 3: Screenshot of the Grenier Mosque in Pontarlier with graffiti depicting Crosses of Lorraine. Source: French regional daily newspaper *L'Est Républicain*.¹¹

AFP, «Agression raciste à Dole: l'auteur définitivement condamné, sa peine allégée", Libération, November 18, 2021. https://www.liberation.fr/societe/police-justice/agression-raciste-a-dole-lauteur-definitivement-condamne-sa-peine-allegee-20211118_QNREGM6XZNDLNGN2BKDAL512SM/

Tillet V., "Martigues: des tags islamophobes inscrits sur le centre de formation des imams", La Provence, July 4, 2021. https://www.laprovence.com/article/faits-divers-justice/6412759/martigues-des-tags-islamophobes-in-scrits-sur-le-centre-de-formation-des-imams.html

Loriol L., "La mosquée de Pontarlier et deux bâtiments abritant des associations de la communauté turques victimes de dégradations", L'Est Républicain, November 7, 2021. https://www.estrepublicain.fr/faits-diversjustice/2021/11/07/l-association-des-turcs-de-pontarlier-et-la-mosquee-philippe-grenier-victimes-de-degradations?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1636279801-2

French mosques were also the target of Islamophobic graffiti in 2021, notably the drawing of Crosses of Lorraine, such as in Pontarlier (Doubs). The Cross of Lorraine, depicted by one vertical and two graded horizontal bars, was the symbol of Free France during World War II (the liberation of France from Nazi Germany and Vichy France) and of Gaullism. In this context, it takes on the meaning of the so-called resistance against the perceived colonization of France by French Muslims.

Employment

Islamophobic discriminations in the workplace in France very often concern veiled Muslim women who work in a private company since the public sector is completely subject to religious neutrality because of the laïcité principle. In private companies, religious freedom remains the norm. But the El Khomri law of 2016 allows employers to impose religious neutrality on their employees in their company's internal regulations in certain specific cases. That said, there are still situations of illegal discriminations. This is the case of two previous dismissals of saleswomen in clothing stores which were finally legally recognized in 2021 as discriminatory. Indeed, Nadia and Farah were fired from their respective companies Camaïeu and ZARA because of the hijab that they decided to wear when they returned from parental leave. The two saleswomen took their case to the Labour Court (Conseil de Prud'hommes) and justice was rendered to them after several years of legal battles. The two hijabi women explained in videos broadcast by the CCIE, which followed their case, that they dedicate their long fight to their daughters and to all the women who want to work in France with a headscarf.

Another file followed and disseminated by the CCIE is that of Emira who performs temporary missions with a turban in a public primary school via her professional integration company. During her second month of work, Emira's director explained to her that she can no longer wear her turban due to outside pressures. To justify this decision, the director highlighted the principle of religious neutrality in schools and suggested: "you can work in the cleaning of the school, but not as a school assistant." Thus, head covering no longer seems to disturb when the wearers occupy specific low-paid jobs, and in this case, the principle of neutrality is even forgotten. This last remark shows that Muslim women's headscarves are accepted when these women occupy menial jobs. This Islamophobic nuance has already been demonstrated by the sociologist Sara Farris who sheds light on this process of instrumentalizing Western values to keep Muslim women, and more generally women from racial minorities, in low-skilled jobs.¹²

^{12.} Farris S. R., In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism (Duke University Press, 2017), 272 p.

Education

Education is also an area that experiences major Islamophobic pressures. In French universities, such pressures can come from the government and can directly affect and intimidate scholars working on racial, postcolonial, and Islamophobia studies. By assimilating them to Islamo-leftism or even to Islamism, academic freedom in France is seriously endangered. In February 2021, the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation asked the French National Centre for Scientific Research (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, CNRS) to conduct a survey to identify all the studies in question. This request outraged a large part of French and international academics who denounced a witch hunt of critical scholars¹³ and the threat of academic authoritarianism. 14 French universities are also the place where many discriminations against veiled Muslim students are recorded even though there is no law prohibiting the wearing of the headscarf. For example, at the start of the 2021 academic year, the CCIE identified several forms of discrimination, especially in the medical sciences sector. This is the case of Yasmina, a veiled student in a nursing school, who was asked to remove her hijab to be able to have lunch in the school canteen because of the principle of religious neutrality.

With regard to primary and secondary education, the anti-separatism law facilitates the closure of Muslim schools and the severe restriction of home schooling, which is no longer a choice granted to parents but a possibility submitted to a very stringent regime of authorization. While the Islamic educational system is already underdeveloped in France, Muslims who wish to send their children to Muslim schools or educate them at home find their options drastically reduced. For example, in July 2021, the mayor of Albertville (Savoie) withdrew the building permit of a Muslim school which the state sees as a "separatist" project. The project was criticized for being carried out by an association close to Turkey, but the reasons used to justify the blocking of construction refer to concerns related to road safety. The reasons for dissolution of Muslim organizations are very often unconvincing and are mainly based on safety and health issues. This testifies to a relentless oppression against Muslims since these technical problems, which could be easily and quickly solved, in no way

^{13.} Collective, "Islamo-gauchisme: Nous, universitaires et chercheurs, demandons avec force la démission de Frédérique Vidal", *Le Monde*, February 20, 2021. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/02/20/islamo-gauchisme-nous-universitaires-et-chercheurs-demandons-avec-force-la-demission-de-frederique-vidal_6070663_3232.

^{14.} Lentin A. (and co-signatories), "Open letter: The threat of academic authoritarianism - International solidarity with antiracist academics in France". *Open Democracy*, November 5, 2021. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/open-letter-the-threat-of-academic-authoritarianism-international-solidarity-with-antiracist-academics-in-france/

^{15.} MCP, "Projet d'école musulmane à Albertville: le permis de construire retire après un recours de l'Etar", Franceinfo: France 3 Auvergne Rhône-Alpes, July 28, 202. https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/auvergne-rhone-alpes/savoie/albertville/projet-d-ecole-musulmane-a-albertville-le-permis-de-construire-retire-apres-un-recours-de-l-etat-2196265.html

justify a permanent (or even temporary) closure. Instead, warnings or financial sanctions could be given.

In the end, Muslims are under pressure and even their children suffer and internalize this exceptional regime. This exceptionality was notably illustrated in posters from a campaign promoting the values of laïcité in schools launched in August 2021 by the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports. The posters portray children perceived by their first name as Muslim in various school life situations while fueling racial and religious stereotypes and fantasies linked to the impossible mixing of young girls and boys, for example at the swimming pool, in the playground, or in the library. Here, children are reduced to their racial and religious differences, and laïcité is perceived as having to be reinforced because of some of them. This form of racist and Islamophobic exceptionalism has no place in a space like school which is supposedly opposed to all forms of inequality.



Figure 4: Screenshot of the national campaign promoting laïcité in schools. Source: website of the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports. ¹⁶

Politics

The year 2021 was eminently political with the implementation of the anti-separatism law, whose official name is the "Law Confirming Respect for the Principles of the Republic." This new Islamophobic law was officially promulgated on August 24 and follows the promulgation of two other laws (global security law of May 25 and the law relating to the prevention of acts of terrorism and intelligence of July 31) which reinforce former laws, namely the 2017 law strengthening internal security

^{16.} Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Jeunesse, "Lancement d'une campagne nationale de promotion de la laïcité à l'école", education.gouv.fr, retrieved April 6, 2022, from: https://www.education.gouv.fr/lancement-d-une-campagne-nationale-de-promotion-de-la-laicite-l-ecole-324737

and the fight against terrorism as well as the law implementing the state of emergency in 2015. These laws, which seem necessary at first glance because they were put in place just after terrible attacks, will in fact amplify suspicion and the abuse of Muslim populations. The anti-separatism law's 103 articles target everyday Muslimness and Muslim civil society in France¹⁷. Within the logic of the "systematic obstruction" policy, implemented in February 2018, the Council of Ministers of January 2022 lists an impressive cumulative total of 24,887 controls, 718 closures, and 46 million euros seized.¹⁸

More specifically, the state has set up departmental cells for the fight against Islamism and communitarian withdrawal targeting Muslim or perceived Muslim organizations. Human rights associations, mosques, schools, publishing houses, restaurants, and bars (including kebab restaurants and hookah bars) have been closed through this new restrictive political measure. The anti-separatism law clearly plans to reduce displays of the Islamic faith in public life on a daily basis and seeks, among other things, to control religious and cultural associations, to cancel the right to refuse a doctor of the opposite sex, to ban home schooling, to extend the ban on religious symbols in Municipal Councils and in private companies performing public service missions, to implement referees of laïcité to ensure the respect of republican values among public services employees, etc. It is difficult to see the effectiveness of such measures in the fight against terrorism. The French state, in fact, criminalizes Muslim visibility by repressing it unequally compared to other religious visibilities. For example, Rabbi Hagaï recognized this double standard by showing his solidarity with the dismissal of Imam Bouzid in Gennevilliers (Hauts-de-Seine) for a sermon referring to modesty in Islam in June 2021. He explained: "I could have said this kind of thing in one of my sermons because modesty is part of Torah teaching, but I know that if I did, I would not suffer the same fate as this imam." 19 This double standard can also be observed a few months later when the President of the Bishops of France was not dismissed by the Ministry of Interior after saying that "the secrecy of confession is higher than the laws of the Republic."20

The anti-separatism law has been strongly criticized. With its application, the CNCDH indicates that the Republic is losing rights and liberties (association, religion,

Légifrance, "Loi n°2021-1109 du 24 août 2021 confortant le respect des principes de la République (1)", Legifrance.gouv.fr, retrieved April 10, 2022, from: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000043964778

^{18.} Gouvernement Liberté Egalité Fraternité, "Compte rendu du Conseil des ministers du 12 janvier 2022", gouvernement.fr, retrieved April 15, 2022, from: https://www.gouvernement.fr/conseil-des-ministres/2022-01-12

^{19.} Disnon, "L'imam écarté de la Mosquée El Nour", Twitter, July 28, 2021. https://twitter.com/disnonc/status/1420323147857997825

AFP, "Le secret de la confession 'au-dessus des lois': Darmanin convoque Mgr de Moulins-Beaufort", Le Parisien, October 7, 2021. https://www.leparisien.fr/societe/le-secret-de-la-confession-au-dessus-des-lois-mgr-de-moulins-beaufort-convoque-par-darmanin-07-10-2021-TM6ZGFO4ORHN7AZVH3Q5GXFYEE.php

conscience, belief, opinion, etc.). ²¹ This restrictive law and all previous ones are against Muslims, just like all the other tools that allow discrimination against them. In 2021, new tools were provided by the state such as the "Vade Mecum on Laïcité," published in December 2021, allowing a school director to impose religious neutrality on mothers participating in school trips; or the Charter of Imams, launched in January 2021, allowing the subordination of Islam to the French Republic. Indeed, the political will of the French government is clearly to establish an "Islam of France" and reject an "Islam in France." By interfering in the management of the Muslim faith, the French government goes against the principles of state neutrality and laïcité. It is also contrary to individual freedoms and especially to freedom of conscience which guarantees everyone the possibility of determining their religious identity on their own terms. In a podcast organized in March 2022 by the Coordination against the Separatism Law (Coordination contre la Loi Séparatisme, CLS, created in early 2021), the political scientist Farid Hafez more specifically denounced the desire for the domestication of Islam by the French authorities in order to discipline French Muslims. He explained that the desire is "to create a French Islam that submits to the French authorities without an independent agency to criticize the French government."22 This colonial approach to deny French Muslims their own religious self-determination is not respectful of cultures and religions and not acceptable in the 2020s. Such an approach, which aims to de-Islamize French Muslims, can have devastating effects on their everyday lives. This Islamophobic policy can even push some of them who aspire to a better life to leave France²³ for Anglo-American countries, Middle Eastern countries, or their countries of origin.²⁴

Media

French media have a great deal of responsibility in the dissemination of Islamophobic discourses and sometimes even the most fascist theses. Indeed, it is enough to see the enormous place the mainstream media give to the Islamophobic journalist and candidate for the 2022 presidential election Eric Zemmour despite his numerous court convictions for incitement to racial hatred. The authority regulating audiovisual and digital communication in France has studied the speaking time of political figures in the media in the four quarters of 2021 and highlights an overexposure of this candidate, particularly on the television channels CNews and C8 as well as on the radio sta-

^{21.} Reporterre, "La loi séparatisme, un danger pour 'les droits et libertés' selon la commission des droits de l'Homme", Reporterre, March 26, 2021. https://reporterre.net/La-loi-separatisme-est-dangereuse-pour-les-droits-et-libertes-s-inquiete-la-commission

^{22.} La Coordination Contre la Loi Séparatisme, "The State goes against common muslimness" (interview with Farid Hafez), YourPodcast, YouTube, March 12, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obPIOXc7FXY

Onishi N., Alami A, "The Quiet Flight of Muslims From France", The New York Times, 13 February 13, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/13/todayspaper/quotation-of-the-day-the-quiet-rising-flight-of-muslims-from-france.html

Najib K., Spatialized Islamophobia (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), 178 p. https://www.routledge.com/Spatialized-Islamophobia/Najib/p/book/9780367894788

tion France Culture.²⁵ CNews goes very far in the industry of Islamophobia: in November 2021, the channel invited the Islamophobic French writer Renaud Camus, who in 2010 introduced in France the dangerous racist theory of the Great Replacement mentioned in the manifestos of many white supremacist murderers. CNews also goes very far in the dissemination of violent Islamophobic images by staging in October 2021 the public unveiling of a veiled Muslim woman in front of Eric Zemmour in Drancy (Seine-Saint-Denis).²⁶ Even if this woman claims to be free to wear or remove the hijab whenever she wants, she is still forced to remove it publicly to prove that she is a free woman under the strong injunction of Zemmour and the encouragement of the journalist presenting the scene. These images of violent indecency and humiliation refer back to the public unveiling ceremonies that took place in Algeria in 1958 during the colonial era. The French obsession with the unveiling of Muslim women continues to have a strong colonial, imperial, and orientalist connection to this day, and questioning these women's ability to exercise their freedom of conscience and their own agency is racist, sexist, and Islamophobic.



CCIE @CCIEurope · 29 oct. 2021

Figure 5: Screenshot of a CCIE tweet blurring the public unveiling of a Muslim woman in front of Eric Zemmour. Source: CCIE Twitter account.²⁷

At the level of mainstream media, there is an everyday Islamophobic hysteria in France. The controversies and media debates bring out sensational analyses that are not rational, without worrying about the pain and harm caused to the French Muslim populations. Such practices de-demonize the far right and even fascism, which

AFP, "Présidentielle 2022. Eric Zemmour est surexposé sur C8 selon le gendarme de l'audiovisuel", Ouest France, February 10, 2022. https://www.ouest-france.fr/elections/presidentielle/presidentielle-2022-eric-zemmour-est-surexpose-sur-c8-selon-le-gendarme-de-l-audiovisuel-7628293

Tribble J.B., "Eric Zemmour, French Far-Right Expert, Asks Woman To Take Off her Hijab On Television", *IMOS Journal*, October 26, 2021. https://imos-journal.net/eric-zemmour-french-far-right-expert-asks-wom-an-to-take-off-her-hijab-on-television/

CCIE, "Une chaîne télévisée orchestra un dévoilement public d'une femme musulmane", Twitter, October 29, 2021. https://twitter.com/CCIEurope/status/1454077452502831108

are gaining ever more momentum in France. Today, these racist currents have succeeded in imposing an Islamophobic consensus in the French media, thus testifying to a first cultural victory of this dangerous ideology.

Justice System

The justice system also has major flaws in its mission of impartial judgment. Even the highest administrative court in France, the Council of State (Conseil d'État), seems to be under the influence of the government. As previously explained, the year 2021 was strongly marked by numerous closures on the basis of unconvincing reasons. For example, the dissolution of the CCIF was justified in political and media debates by very serious allegations related to the apology of terrorism that even the Council of State totally rejected. Indeed, according to a CCIF press release published in a CCIE tweet, ²⁸ the rapporteur of the Council of State brushed aside the complaints made by the Ministry of Interior but still confirmed its official closure in September 2021 for a single reason: the only grievance retained was the denunciation of state-sponsored Islamophobia by the CCIF. The CCIF denounces several types of Islamophobias, including institutional. And for the rapporteur, this in itself constitutes incitement to hatred which goes beyond the framework of the protection of freedom of expression.

This decision marks a major turning point in the justice system and in the institutionalization of administrative and political arbitrariness. It weakens the rule of law in France and increases the risks of applying the crime of opinion. It also opened the door to other abusive dissolutions, such as that of another NGO fighting Islamophobia, the Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia (Coordination Contre le Racisme et l'Islamophobie, CRI), only one month later for the same reasons. What can be said for a justice system that allows the official dissolution of NGOs on the sole basis that they denounce the documented mechanisms of systemic racism and institutionalized Islamophobia? In a full democratic state, human rights organizations are not criminalized; on the contrary, they are considered as stakeholders in political debates and decision-making. Denouncing the unequal treatment of minority groups is a democratic right even if it challenges state practices. By not allowing this, the French Republic is in regression and becomes a flawed and incomplete democracy. A decision such as that to close the CCIF seriously damages the country's reputation as a champion of freedom of expression and association, an issue that was raised by many French and international NGOs such as the Human Rights League (Ligue des Droits de l'Homme), the Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples (Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples), the European Network Against Racism, and Amnesty Europe.

CCIE, "Le rapporteur a balayé l'accusation d'apologie au terrorisme du Ministère de l'Intérieur", Twitter, September 3, 2021. https://twitter.com/CCIEurope/status/1433847278683541508



Figure 6: Screenshot of an Amnesty EU tweet denouncing the unfair dissolution of the CCIF. Source: Amnesty EU Twitter account.²⁹

Many other abusive closures have been observed in 2021 (mosques, bank accounts, schools, etc.) and the victims are trying to make their voices heard and defend their rights within the French justice system. France needs a strong and impartial justice system that can carry out its advocacy work for rights of individuals and associations without any outside influence. But knowing that anti-Muslim racism is itself embedded in certain laws, achieving a strong and impartial system will not be possible without re-examining all existing Islamophobic laws in France today. State Islamophobia is one of the most powerful types of Islamophobias,³⁰ and this type of domination is likely to affect other groups and organizations because of their dissenting positions. This is already the case in France with the recent request for dissolution of pro-Palestinian and antifascist associations by the Minister of Interior.

Internet

Islamophobia is also very present on the Internet especially since the pandemic, as stated in the previous *European Islamophobia Reports*. During the lockdowns, people were forced to remain confined in their homes and to use social networks to maintain a minimum of social ties. Thus, Islamophobic comments and intimidation on social networks, known to be very violent, are also observable in 2021 and certainly its first half where the French were all confined. The most violent are first directed against famous racialized persons perceived as Muslim who denounce the anti-Muslim racism of the media, the state, the police, or far-right groups. French-Algerian veiled journalist Nadiya Lazzouni, founder of the Speak Up channel, explained on several occasions that she is the target of cyberbullying, but that in 2021 a higher level of violence was reached. In April 2021, she revealed on Twitter that she received a terrifying anonymous Islamophobic letter directly to her home threatening her with "a bullet

Amnesty EU, "The court confired that the CCIE did NOT instigate others to commit terrorism-related offences", Twitter, September 27, 2021. https://twitter.com/amnestyeu/status/1442527102125944840

^{30.} Peter Hopkins, "What is Islamophobia", *YouTube*, January 18, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2p-FJarUuI-k

in the neck" so that France is "free of Muslims and Islamists."³¹ Lazzouni, who constantly spreads peaceful and tolerant messages, called on the French authorities to ensure her personal safety. The Minister Delegate for Citizenship publicly supported her.



Figure 7: Screenshot of Nadiya Lazzouni's tweet exposing the death threat letter she received in April 2021. Source: Nadiya Lazzouni's Twitter account.³²



Figure 8: Screenshots of Taha Bouhafs's tweets exposing the list of anti-Islamophobia activists and the hashtag promoting his remigration. Source: Taha Bouhafs's Twitter account.³³

Le Parisien, "une balle dans la nuque': la journaliste Nadiya Lazzouni menacée de mort dans une lettre raciste", Le Parisien, April 9, 2021. https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/la-journaliste-et-productrice-nadiya-lazzouni-menacee-de-mort-dans-une-lettre-raciste-09-04-2021-PYY3TZLEEVH6DNQ5RPNBIWFZXI.php

^{32.} Nadiya Lazzouni, "J'ai toujours essayé de diffuser un message d'espoir", *Twitter*, April 8, 2021. https://twitter.com/nadiyalazzouni/status/1380124406349959170

^{33.} Taha Bouhafs, "Début août, je découvrait l'existence d'un fichier très suspect", Twitter, September 17, 2021. https://twitter.com/t_bouhafs/status/1438640228923842562; Taha Bouhafs, "Je subi un harcèlement très violent de la part de l'extrême droite", Twitter, September 18, 2021. https://twitter.com/T_Bouhafs/status/1439285721760665606

During the second half of 2021, French-Algerian journalist and activist Taha Bouhafs also suffered significant cyberbullying, especially in September 2021, after revealing the existence of a file listing the names of the organizers and participants of a successful march against Islamophobia which took place in November 2019. This file, released on a far-right website, digitally stores personal data that (in)directly reveal people's racial and religious origins as well as political and philosophical opinions without their consent. This list is obviously illegal according to French law and constitutes a significant threat for all the people whose names are on it. Nearly 150 activists have filed complaints against this intimidation for crime of opinion.

Just the day after his revelation, Bouhafs tweeted to explain that he is the target of far-right activists who insult, intimidate. and threaten him very violently on social networks. They have even created a special hashtag on Twitter calling for his remigration.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In France, racist and Islamophobic speech is normalized and is now part of the mainstream. There are so many Islamophobic figures operating in the French mainstream media, political spaces, and social networks that it is difficult to isolate and name them. In 2021, the most talked about figure in France and beyond was Eric Zemmour. His racist and particularly Islamophobic theses have been known and disseminated for decades, but they have become politically more alarming in 2021 with the creation of his new political party Reconquest (Reconquête).³⁴ Enjoying a relative high popularity and "sympathy" due to his former television talk-shows and radio and press columns, Zemmour is confident enough to publicly harass French Muslims who do not want to assimilate into French culture by renouncing their visible religious practices. Rejecting the concept of integrating minority groups while respecting their cultural and religious practices, he obsessively focuses on Muslims and in December 2021 stated, on the most watched television news show in France broadcast at 8 p.m. on TF1, "I call on all Muslims to assimilate and renounce the practice of Islam which consists of imposing a legal and political code."35 In this same speech, he also clearly equated Islam to Islamism, but distinguished Islam from Muslims. His narrative openly exposes his desire to de-Islamize French Muslims and make them "Muslims without Islam."

These types of Islamophobic discourses clearly influence the political measures implemented in recent years in France to the point that in February 2021, even the current Minister of Interior criticized the leader of the far-right party National Rally

^{34.} The name is in reference to the Reconquista of the medieval Iberian Peninsula where military campaigns were carried out by Christian kingdoms to "liberate" the territories "occupied" by Muslim Moors.

TRT World, "Far-right French TV pendit Eric Zemmour has recently decided to run for president of France", Twitter, December 1, 2021. https://twitter.com/trtworld/status/1466124942701838340

for being "too soft" in her positions on laïcité and Islamism. ³⁶ These debates and measures are first motivated by the hostility to Islam and end up into restrictive anti-Muslim laws. Based on people's fears and on references to terrorism, the Great Replacement and political Islam, the political and media majority falls into irrational thinking—populist, simplistic, essentialist, extremist, orientalist, colonialist, imperialist, racist, and Islamophobic—without the presence of a strong opposition to refocus it towards something more serene and peaceful.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Notable initiatives can be found both at the national and international level in 2021. First, at the national level, the Coordination against the Separatism Law organized the first demonstration against the bill in the French capital city on February 14. A month later (on March 21), it organized a march which gathered more people and which was also carried out in other French cities such as Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, and Montpellier.



 $\textbf{Figure 9:} Screenshots of the march against the anti-separatism law in Paris. Source: online information site Saphirnews. \\ ^{37}$

In March 2021, on a television debate on BFMTV about the Charter of Imams, whose real name is the "Charter of Principles for Islam of France," the famous antiracist journalist Rokhaya Diallo strongly criticized the charter which is signed, among others, by the French Council for Muslim Faith (Conseil Français du Culte Musul-

AFP, "Vous avez la parole': Le Pen 'molle!' Des élus LREM prennent leurs distances avec les propos de Darmanin", 20 minutes, February 14, 2021. https://www.20minutes.fr/politique/2976979-20210214-parole-penmolle-elus-lrem-prennent-distances-propos-darmanin

^{37.} Affaf M., "Des manifestations contre la loi séparatisme qui mobilisent peu la France", *SaphirNews*, March 22, 2021. https://www.saphirnews.com/Des-manifestations-contre-la-loi-separatisme-qui-mobilisent-peu-en-France_a27922.html

man, CFCM). According to Diallo, the charter is opposed to laïcité and freedom of expression because it refers to verses of the Koran on defamation to prevent the denunciation of state racism. In France, people are normally free to say that there is state racism (whether it is true or not) and free to believe it or not, and the government is normally supposed not to use a holy book to dictate its policy. Diallo ended the debate by explaining that this charter "echoes a form of colonial and infantilizing management of Islam of France." This form of management can even be observed in the injunction of the President of the Republic urging imams to sign the charter within 15 days of its publication.

The anti-separatism law has also been criticized by opposition politicians in the National Assembly and, in particular, by Stéphane Peu of the Communist Party who explained in June 2021 that this law is "a law of authority, a law of control and even a law of stigmatization as the obsessive debates on the headscarf have amply demonstrated (...) [and finally] a law of division." In June 2021, Alexis Corbière of the far-left party La France Insoumise went as far as to reveal that the French government itself, especially the Prime Minister and the Intelligence Services, already acknowledged during the hearings that this anti-separatism law will not prevent future violent armed attacks. Finally, the president of the party La France Insoumise, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, gave a speech in July 2021 stating that the anti-separatism law is anti-republican and hypocritical because it targets Muslim populations in an odious way.

At the international level, many NGOs have taken note of the French state's criminalization of its Muslim citizens and have implemented numerous initiatives to denounce it. These include:

• In March 2021, a first important initiative was observed with the development of a global coalition of 25 civil society organizations and NGOs across 11 countries that urged European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen through a detailed letter to investigate France at the European Court of Justice for systematic rights violations against Muslims and against the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. ⁴¹ The letter calls for immediate actions against France for its state Islamophobia and for excluding visibly religious Muslims from civil, political, and social sectors.

^{38.} Stephane Peu, "nous avons assisté à nouveaux aux débats obsessionnels sur le voile que j'ai dénoncé", *Facebook*, June 30, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=324532419150674

CCIE, "La loi séparatisme a été définitivement votée", Twitter, July 26, 2021. https://twitter.com/CCIEurope/ status/1419648006295539713

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, "A bas votre loi contre les musulmans", Youtube, July 23, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4p84ZsF8mcM

^{41.} CAGE, "Global coalition urges European Commission President to investigate France at the European Court of Nustice for systemic rights violations against Muslims and imposition of discriminatory 'Imam's Charter'", cage.ngo, Press Release (March 8, 2021), retrieved April 17, 2022, from: https://www.cage.ngo/global-coalition-urges-european-commission-president-to-investigate-france-at-the-european-court-of-justice-for-systematic-rights-violations-against-muslims-and-imposition-of-discriminatory-i

- The London-based advocacy organization CAGE has recently published a report entitled "State-Sponsored Persecution of Muslims in France" which covers the unprecedented crackdown on French Muslims these recent years and particularly in 2021. The report draws attention to the "systematic obstruction" policy of France by denouncing "a form of maximum pressure policing whereby overwhelmingly Muslim institutions are monitored, surveilled, investigated for minor infractions and sanctioned up to the point of dissolution by order of government ministers."
- The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) received a complaint from various international NGOs against the French government for systematically entrenching Islamophobia and discrimination against French Muslims.
- The CCIE and human rights lawyers decided to file a complaint against the Minister of Interior and prefects regarding the abusive closure of mosques and the unfair dismissal of certain imams for abuse of authority.



Figure 10: Screenshots of the Council of Europe's video promoting religious tolerance which was withdrawn following pressure from the French government.

Source: HuffPost website. 43

Overall, international human rights and anti-Islamophobia organizations are examining the French case, and France's discriminatory practices have been deemed sufficiently alarming to launch concrete actions against the country. The threat of exporting such practices is also very serious. Indeed, the French government already

^{42.} CAGE, "We are beginning to spread terror': the state-sponsored persectution of Muslims in France", CAGE, March 2, 2022, 47 p. https://www.cage.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ENG-_We-are-beginning-to-spread-Terror_-report-2022.pdf

^{43.} AFP, "Cette campagne du Conseil de l'Europe celebrant 'la liberté dans le hijab' a dû être retiree", *Le HuffPost*, November 3, 2021. https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/entry/cette-campagne-du-conseil-de-leurope-celebrant-la-liberte-dans-le-hijab-a-du-etre-retiree_fr_6181d9e4e4b055e47d72e137

influences other countries such as India, Canada, Switzerland, Austria, etc. and has a very strong impact on international institutions, especially European ones. For example, pressures on the Council of Europe from the French government, and also from French far-right groups, were so important that it removed one of its videos featuring veiled Muslim women to promote a more tolerant, free, and inclusive society. This video, published in November 2021, was intended to explain that women with or without a headscarf ultimately deserve the same respect and the same rights.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia in France is a political enterprise⁴⁴ since the implementation of the 2004 law banning the headscarf in public schools under the principle of laïcité. In 2004, the principle was revised and deviated from its original meaning following the first hijab cases in the late 1980s and has since turned into a weapon against Muslims. Originally, laïcité was a respectable value that guaranteed the neutrality of the state, the right to express a belief or non-belief, and was specifically implemented to protect religious minority groups. But today, laïcité in France has become a synonym of Islamophobia. As a result, French Muslims feel betrayed by the failure of the French authorities to guarantee them the right to be Muslim, and above all religious, visible, vocal, and organized Muslims. Because of how laïcité is now defined in France, there is a shift requiring religious neutrality of the public space to religious neutrality in the public space. This new vision, accentuated by political narratives and laws stigmatizing Muslims, has ultimately led to the hypernormalization and even legalization of Islamophobia in France. The French Islamophobic policy was first illustrated by a silent repression targeting Muslim executives and leaders who were beginning to gain legitimacy with French Muslims, then by the abusive closures of Muslim organizations (or organizations perceived as such), and later by a witch hunt of scholars and journalists who denounced this injustice. The recent anti-separatism law shows that this repression intends to target other spaces such as public services and private companies.

Since 2004, anti-Muslim laws have become increasingly restrictive and repressive to the point where one wonders if there will be a real limit to such legalized Islamophobia. Adding to this, the media discourses against Islam and Muslims are also more and more violent and worrying. Indeed, speeches calling for the remigration, a polite term for "deportation," of French Muslims are broadcast on mainstream media platforms as if it were just one innocent vision among many. The humiliation and harassment of French Muslims are constant. French Muslims are treated as second-class citizens and know very well, even more so in the 2020s, that there is no

^{44.} Lorcerie F., La Politisation du voile: L'affaire en France, en Europe et dans le monde arabe (L'Harmattan, 2005), 266 p.

place granted to them in France because of their Muslimness. This expression of Muslimness is therefore criminalized, as is any independent attempt to organize the Muslim faith and the fight for Muslim rights. French Muslims are accused of a common desire to replace the French people, as if they are not themselves French. This racist and dangerous suspicion was attributed to other populations throughout history, first targeting the Jewish populations of Europe, then the non-white immigrant populations, and now the Muslim populations. This suspicion has always been instrumentalized to protect white supremacist interests. In the end, it is about understanding that Muslims do not want to dominate society, they just want to be granted an honorable place within it alongside other religious groups—a place they and their ancestors and descendants deserve.

Finally, the French government presents significant liberal contradictions by discriminating against Muslims and restricting their rights and freedoms in the name of the Enlightenment. The government betrays certain republican values in the name of others and notably in the name of secularism, security, and gender equality. For example, in the name of gender equality and to "save" French hijabi women from their alleged oppression, the government chooses to oppress them by denying them access to schools, work, sports, children's school trips, etc. This "liberal" program comes with great injustices that highlight strong links with colonization, assimilation, and racism. Some policy recommendations that can curb these injustices can be found below.

- First, the highest national and international authorities need to recognize the anti-Muslim nature of many French laws implemented over the past two decades and thus re-examine and repeal them. Civil rights must be strengthened in France by addressing the glaring absence of an inclusion policy based on that existing in Anglo-American countries in order to guarantee equal treatment between all citizens and, in particular, French Muslims subjected to an exceptional regime. The inclusion of all minority groups within French society should be regarded as an essential criterion for France to be recognized as free, plural, democratic, egalitarian, and republican.
- Second, the fact that such anti-Muslim laws have emerged in a country that sees neither race nor religion in its official data is also very significant. Indeed, it is also because of this racial and religious blindness that there are very few political measures in France to fight discrimination whether at the local, regional, or national level. These measures have failed to develop further and become institutionalized because of the non-recognition of racial and religious minorities which necessarily leads to a more difficult recognition of the discrimination they suffer. It is, therefore, imperative to recognize racial and religious groups legally in order to develop strong anti-discrimination laws to protect minority groups.

• Third, the imperial tendency of France to assimilate postcolonial subjects should be abandoned in favor of a more tolerant and respectful integration of their religious and cultural identities. Intimidating, attacking, humiliating, discriminating, disciplining, and oppressing French Muslims, who are defenseless and powerless politically, economically, and educationally, will not lead them to renounce their religion and its practice. French society as a whole deserves a more peaceful and united context in which constitutional values must be better respected. What will ultimately harm France is not the Muslim presence but rather the stirring up of anti-Muslim hatred and the proliferation of anti-republican laws that result from it.

Chronology

- 17.01.2021: The "Charter of Principles for Islam of France," known colloquially as the "Charter of Imams," was approved and signed by the leaders of the French Council for Muslim Faith.
- March 2021: Closure of several mosques, officially for administrative reasons.
 Among others, the mosques were located in Pré-Saint-Gervais, Sevran, Neuilly-Plaisance, Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, Vitry-sur-Seine, Villiers-le-bel, Montmagny, Goussainville, Bobigny, Belfort, and Thiers.
- **26.06.2021:** Public circular on equal opportunities in republican reconquest districts where it is explained that the "obstruction policy" will be reinforced by a future law confirming the principles of the Republic.
- **08.07.2021:** Dismissal of the imam of the Ennour mosque in Gennevilliers for a sermon on modesty.
- **24.08.2021:** Promulgation of the law confirming republican principles, known as the anti-separatism law.
- **25.09.2021:** Official liquidation of the Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) confirmed by the Council of State.
- 29.09.2021: Dissolution of the Islamic publishing house Nawa.
- **20.10.2021:** Dissolution of the Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI)
- 11.11.2021: The Great Mosque of Paris was excluded from the Armistice commemoration ceremony.
- 17.11.2021: Two ultra-right activists calling for violent actions were arrested in France with several weapons of all kinds.
- **05.12.2021:** Eric Zemmour enjoined Muslims into assimilation by erasing their Muslimness in his first political rally in Villepinte.
- 16.12.2021: "Vade Mecum on Laïcité" in schools was published.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN GERMANY NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

The year 2021, as the year 2020, was heavily impacted by COVID-19, subsequent virus mutations, and the death toll rising. Germany was hit by three waves of the Coronavirus and responded to this with the usual restrictions such as lockdown, exit and contact restrictions, home office where possible, the wearing of mandatory masks, and travel bans from certain countries. Albeit these measurements and particularly the reduction of public life generally, the numbers of "politically motivated crimes" did not decrease. Instead, they increased by about 23.17%. According to current estimates, 55,048 politically motivated crimes were committed, out of which 23,604 were of a right-wing background. In total, 1,042 of these cases were reportedly violent. In terms of Islamophobic incidences, the data so far available suggests a decrease of the phenomenon by 28.65%, leaving the number at 732 registered Islamophobic crimes across Germany, of which 54 targeted mosques and 43 targeted individual persons. In addition, 2021 was dominated by various discursive events which again and again reproduced Muslims and Islam as threatening, dangerous, and conflictive figures within Germany. Quite prominently, the debate on political Islam dominated 2021, arriving in Germany through the Austrian discourses taking place from 2019 onwards. Furthermore, the debate consequently led to the establishment of a group of experts by the Ministry of Interior. The group, which consists of eleven people invited by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, will convene for one year. Finally, 2021 was also marked by the debate on "confrontative practice of religion," a neologism coined and disseminated during the year and attempting to frame social conflicts in schools in Berlin as primarily religious conflicts.

Zusammenfassung

Auch das Jahr 2021 war stark von COVID-19, Virusmutationen und der steigenden Zahl pandemiebedingter Todesopfer gekennzeichnet. Deutschland wurde während 2021 von drei Wellen des Coronavirus heimgesucht und reagierte mit den üblichen Einschränkungen wie Lockdown, Ausreise- und Kontaktbeschränkungen sowie Reiseverbote aus bestimmten Ländern. Trotz dieser Einschränkungen ging die Zahl der politisch motivierten Verbrechen nicht zurück, sondern stieg um 23,17%. Nach aktuellen Einschätzungen wurden 2021 55.048 politisch motivierten Verbrechen, von denen 23.604 einen rassistischen und rechtsextremistischen Hintergrund hatten. Insgesamt waren 1.042 dieser Vorfälle gewalttätig. Mit Bezug auf islamophobe Vorfälle lässt sich allerdings ein Rückgang von 28,65% festhalten, so dass 732 Fälle regestiert wurden, wovon 54 der Vorfälle Angriffe auf Moscheen waren und 43 auf Einzelpersonen. Ebenso war aber das Jahr 2021 von diskursiven Events getragen, die ihre Spuren durch das ganze Jahr hindurch hinterlassen haben und Muslim*innen und Islam als gefährlich, bedrohlich und konfliktiv rahmten. Im Besonderen ist hier die Debatte über den politischen Islam zu nennen, die über österreichische Auseinandersetzungen auch Zugang in deutsche Debatten fand. In Konsequenz führte die Debatte um den politischen Islam auch zu der Etablierung des Expertenkreises Politischer Islamismus durch das Bundesministerium des Inneren. Der Expertenkreis ist zunächst für ein Jahr geplant und besteht aus 11 Personen. Schlussendlich war 2021 auch durch den Neologismus "konfrontative Religionsausübung" gekennzeichnet, der unter anderem durch Martin Hikel Verwendung fand, um soziale Konflikte als dezidiert religiöse Konflikte zu Rahmen.

Country Profile EIR 2021

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: Social Democratic Party (SPD), Alliance 90/The Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), and Free Democratic Party (FDP)

Opposition Parties: Left Party (DIE LINKE), Christian Democratic Party (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU), Alternative for Germany (AfD), independent candidates

Last Elections: September 2021: SPD 25.7% (206 seats), Greens 14.8% (118 seats), FDP 11.5% (92 seats), The Left 4.9% (39 seats), CDU 18.9% (152 seats), CSU 5.2% (45 seats), AfD 10.3% (83 seats), no party affiliation (4 seats)

Total Population: 83.2 million (December 2021, Federal Statistical Office)

Major Languages: German

Official Religion: Germany has no official religion

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2021, 732 Islamophobic crimes were registered across Germany by the Federal Criminal Police Office. This is a decline of Islamophobic offenses by 28.65%. However, 80.33% were incidences related to the far right; 54 of these targeted mosques and 43 targeted people. In addition to these official statistics, the initiative brandeilig counted 63 mosque attacks in 2021. In the same year, at least four rallies of PEGIDA Förderverein in Dresden took place.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2021, Germany saw another increase of 23.17% in the already high number of crimes with a political background. In 2020, 44,692 crimes were committed, out of which 23,604 crimes had a rightwing background. In 2021, 55,048 crimes with a political background were committed. The statistical data suggests that the overall rate already marked the highest crime rate in the last 20 years. Of the 55,048 politically motivated crimes, 21,964 had a right-wing background, and 1,042 were classified as violent crimes.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (51%), Undenominational (41%), Islam (6.4-6.7%), Judaism (0.1%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): Between 5.3 and 5.6 million (estimated, Federal Ministry of Interior)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB); Islamic Community Milli Gürüş (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: The Netzwerk gegen Diskriminierung und Islamfeindlichkeit (Alliance against Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim) (CLAIM) lists 45 NGOs: Deutsche Islam Akademie (DIA) e.V., Regionale Arbeitsstellen für Bildung, Integration & Demokratie (RAA) Berlin e. V., FödeM Bildungsinitiative, AMuRa – Servicestelle zur Sensibilisierung für antimuslimischen Rassismus und zur Stärkung intersektionaler Feminismen, SWANS Initiative, 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 Europ.ische 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), Arminius-Bund des deutschen Volkes, Aufbruch deutscher Patrioten-Mitteldeutschland, Deutsche Liga für Volk und Heimat, Die Rechte, Die Republikaner (REP)

Far-Right Movements: Anti-Antifa, Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland (IBD), Reichsbürgerbewegung, PEGIDA, Ring Nationaler Frauen, Junge Nationalisten, Der Flügel, Junge Alternative für Deutschland, Der III. Weg, Bürgerbewegung Pro NRW, Bürgerbewegung pro Deutschland, Freie Kameradschaften

Far-Right Militant Organizations: Kameradschaft Aryans, Atomwaffen

Division, Combat 18

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: As the highest court at the federal level, the Federal Constitutional Court has already dealt twice with the prohibition of wearing a hijab for people working in the public service. In the first case, in 2015, it was decided that a blanket prohibition for teachers to wear a headscarf was unconstitutional. It infringed upon the freedom of belief (Article 4 Para. 2 of the Basic Law). However, concrete prohibitions are allowed if the headscarf constitutes a danger to peace at schools (Case Nos. 1 BvR 471/10, 1 BvR 1181/10). A different ruling was passed in the second case, which a legal trainee brought to the Federal Constitutional Court in 2020. Because of her "tasks of public authority" during her legal traineeship, she was prohibited from wearing a headscarf as it supposedly impacted the duty of neutrality of public officials. The Federal Constitutional Court distinguished between the two decisions on the ban on wearing a headscarf: in schools, religious avowals mirrored the "religious-pluralistic society" and, therefore, did not restrict any duty of neutrality while the same did not hold for legal trainees. (Case No. 2 BvR 1333/17). Furthermore, on June 28, 2021, the German Federal Parliament passed a bill regulating the appearance of civil servants, in which the conduct of a civil servant was equated to their appearance. The bill explicitly mentions the prohibition of wearing religiously connoted symbols as a civil servant so as a neutral administration is not hindered.
- 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 full-face veil. In some federal states, female pupils and students are not allowed to wear a burka in schools or universities.

Introduction

Racist attitudes are still prevalent in German society and among the population. According to a representative study conducted by the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) in May 2022, racist attitudes are widespread: almost half of the population (49%) still believes in the existence of human "races," while a third of the population (33%) finds that some peoples or ethnic groups are "inherently more diligent" than others. Ninety percent of the population believe that racism exists in Germany, and 61% that it marks an everyday reality. More than a fifth (22%) of the population said to have already experienced racism themselves. In comparison, 58% of those identifying as racialized minorities reported having experienced racism at one point in their lives. The survey also said that almost half of the population (45%) has already observed a racist incident.¹

The year 2021 was marked by yet another increase in criminal offenses motivated by far-right and racist hatred. And, albeit the data of these instances is somewhat incomplete, given the high degree of underreporting, the statistics by the BKA (Federal Criminal Police Office), and reports from media and civil society, show that numbers have been rising for years now. In 2021, according to the data, 55,048 politically motivated crimes were committed, out of which 23,604 were declared to be of right-wing background, and 1,042 classified as violent.² Due to the significance of COVID-19, the rise of the "Querdenker" (lateral thinker) movement in Germany has contributed to the increase of right-wing, racist, and antisemitic attitudes in Germany's public discourse, during demonstrations, and on the Internet.³ According to the Interior Ministers' Conference in December 2020, a third of the "Querdenker" protesters were "right-wing extremists." As the German Institute for Human Rights notes, not only the increasing incidence of racist violence in Germany is alarming but also the "blatancy with which racist, antisemitic and extreme-right positions are being expressed in the public and political areas."

No author, "Rassistische Realitäten," Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (DeZIM), retrieved April 30, 2022, from https://www.rassismusmonitor.de/fileadmin/user_upload/NaDiRa/CATI_Studie_ Rassistische_Realit%C3%A4ten/Zusammenfassung_DeZIM-Studie_Rassistische-Realit%C3%A4ten.pdf.

No author, "Schriftliche Fragen", Bundesregierung (January 14, 2022), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/004/2000428.pdf, p. 17.

^{3.} Benjamin Steinitz, "Antisemitismus im Kontext der COVID-19 Pandemie", Bundesverband RIAS e.V., (2020), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://report-antisemitism.de/documents/2020-09-08_Rias-bund_Antisemitismus_im_Kontext_von_covid-19.pdf.The "Querdenker" movement is a movement mobilizing and executing demonstrations against the laws and regulations that German state authorities issued against the COVID pandemic. The protests began in March 2020 and aimed at restrictions on fundamental rights such as freedom of assembly or freedom of movement. However, the movement was joined by right-wing groups, conspiracy theorists, and other groups.

No author, "IMK-Chef: Ein drittel Querdenker rechtsextrem", ZDF (December 5, 2020), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/maier-querdenker-ueberpruefung-verfassungsschutz-100. html).

Claudia Engelmann et al., "Developments of the human rights situation in Germany July 2020 – June 2021.
 Executive Summary", German Institute for Human Rights (December 09, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022

Several key events throughout the year illustrate the alarming normality, effective dissemination, and depth of anti-immigrant, racist, and Islamophobic sentiments and practices in Germany. In January 2021, the neo-Nazi Stephan Ernst was found guilty of murdering German politician Walter Lübke in June 2019.6 February 19 marked the first commemoration of the nine victims of the racist shooting in Hanau in 2020. Migrant communities, anti-racist initiatives, notably the Initiative 19. Februar Hanau, and families mourned the deaths of Ferhat Unvar, Hamza Kurtovic, Said Nesar Hashemi, Vili Viorel Paun, Mercedes Kierpacz, Kaloyan Velkov, Fatih Saracoglu, Sedat Guerbuez, and Goekhan Gueltekin, demanding justice for the dead as well as effective inquiries into the institutionalized structures of racism. Here, especially the police forces were critiqued.⁷ However, the commemoration also gave rise to a more extensive debate about racism within German society.8 Also, in February, Germany's domestic intelligence put the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party formally under surveillance due to its extremist links, identifying far-right extremism as the biggest threat to German democracy.9 In March 2021, the Syrian refugee Tareq Alaows withdrew his bid for a German parliament seat after receiving racist threats. Rather than taking his candidacy as an opportunity to showcase the potential of refugees, Alaows was exposed to massive racism instead. ¹⁰ In May 2021, the German army officer Franco A., with right-wing affinities, was put on trial for planning to murder at least one politician in 2017, using a fake identity of a Syrian asylum seeker to provoke anti-migrant sentiments. 11 Also in May, the provincial government of Hesse, the same federal state mourning the racist killings of nine persons in February, voted against the accessibility of records dealing with the far-right and Neo-Nazi terrorist group National Socialist Underground (NSU) records, keeping them sealed for the next decades.¹² Among Germany's security forces, in May, illegal weapons, ammunition, and explosives were found in the house of a soldier from an elite army unit, commando special forces (KSK). The defense minister had already dis-

from https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Publikationen/Menschenrechtsbericht/Executive_Summary_Annual_Report_Development_Human_Rights_Situation_Germany_2021.pdf, p. 5.

- 7. "Initiative 19. Februar Hanau", https://19feb-hanau.org/ (Access date: 30 April 2022)
- 8. Ozan Zakariya Keskinkılıç, "Hanau ist überall", ZDF (February 19, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/hanau-jahrestag-gastkommentar-keskinkilic-100.html.
- Christoph Kehlbach/Frank Bräutigam, "Unter Beobachtung was heißt das?", tagesschau (March 3, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/faq-afd-101.html.
- No author, "Syrian refugee withdraws bid for German parliament", DW (March 30, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.dw.com/en/syrian-refugee-withdraws-bid-for-german-parliament-seat-after-threats/a-57051621.
- No author, "German army officer on trial for planning attack posing as Syrian refugee", Reuters (May 30, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-officer-trial-planning-attack-posing-syrian-refugee-2021-05-20/.
- 12. Matthias Lohr, "NSU-Akten: Grüne stimmen gegen Freigabe und geraten weiter unter Druck", HNA (May 13, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.hna.de/kassel/nsu-akten-bleiben-zu-90575114.html.

Ben Knight, "Neo-Nazi convicted of German politician's murder", DW, https://www.dw.com/en/neo-nazi-convicted-of-german-politicians-murder/a-56366905 (Access date: 30 April 2022).

solved part of the KSK group in 2020 over right-wing extremism.¹³ In June, a special unit in Frankfurt was disbanded after it was publicized that some of its members had been involved in far-right extremist chat groups.¹⁴ Also, in the same month, a Bundeswehr army platoon stationed in Lithuania was repatriated due to anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism allegations.¹⁵ While in September new legislation was introduced against hate speech, October marked the indictment of Alexander Horst, accused of being responsible for writing the NSU letters between August 2018 and March 2021 and threatening, among others, lawyer Seda Başay-Yıldız.¹⁶

The above incidents indicate the discursive, structural, and political context within which Islamophobic incidents gained their force, reach, and depth in the German society in 2021.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Several representative surveys have indicated the high number of incidents of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiments and violence in Germany. According to the findings of the Leipzig Authoritarismus-Studie (Study of Authoritarianism), published in 2020, almost half of the German population (46.8%) agreed with the statement that "due to the many Muslims here, I sometimes feel like a stranger in my own country." Furthermore, more than a quarter of the respondents (24.7%) believe that Muslims should be banned from immigrating to Germany. If looking at East Germany alone, the figures are much higher. Due to the Muslim presence, 55.1% of East Germans feel like strangers in their own countries, and 40.2% believe that Muslims should not be immigrating to Germany. In its 2019 representative survey, the data collected by Bertelsmann Stiftung suggested that only about one in three respondents considered Islam to be enriching for society. The remaining respondents perceived Islam as a threat. Although the negative perception of Islam has decreased slightly, the survey suggested that it remains at a relatively high level in the German population

^{13.} No author, "KSK soll durchleuchtet werden', tageschau (May 3, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/ksk-pruefung-rechtsextremismus-101.html.

No author, "Germany: Frankfurt police unit to be disbanded over far-right chats", DW (June 10, 2022), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.dw.com/en/germany-frankfurt-police-unit-to-be-disbanded-over-farright-chats/a-57840014.

No author, "Germany to repatriate army platoon accused of right-wing extremism", ExBulletin (June 16, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://exbulletin.com/world/994911/.

^{16.} No author, "Staatsanwaltschaft Frankfurt am Main erhebt Anklage gegen 53-jährigen", Der Spiegel (October 28, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/nsu-2-0-staatsanwaltschaftfrankfurt-am-main-erhebt-anklage-gegen-53-jaehrigen-a-b0a7200e-7006-4b4d-a9dc-7fd346ed41e9.

^{17.} Oliver Decker and Elmar Brähler (Ed.), "Autoritäre Dynamiken. Alte Ressentiments - Neue Radikalität", Gießen: Psycho-sozial Verlag, p. 64, https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2020-11/Decker-Braehler-2020-Autoritaere-Dynamiken-Leipziger-Autoritarismus-Studie.pdf?dimension1=ds_leipziger_studie#page=64.

as a whole since 2021. Accordingly, half of the German population (52%) considered Islam threatening, and only 29% of East Germans and 38% of West Germans expressed the belief that Islam is enriching for Germany. Consequently, many people today no longer understand Islam as a religion but as an anti-democratic and extremist ideology. According to the report, the reasons are primarily media reports that depict Islam and Muslims in almost exclusively negative contexts.¹⁸

In 2021, the discourse about Islam threatening Germany and its population became manifested and fuelled by the German debate about so-called political Islam. Gaining currency and significance within the discursive frame of a war on terror, the term "political Islam" became a prominent signifier indicating an "ideology of domination" interested in influencing and transforming German society, culture, and state. ¹⁹ The term and the narrow approach toward the phenomenon was heavily disputed and criticized, indicating its hostile and Islamophobic portrait of Muslims and Islam. Political scientist Ozan Zakariya Keskinkılıç, among others, argues that the term has been collectively drawing suspicion towards Muslims, curtailing their fundamental rights, and has become a projection screen for Muslims perceived as deviant and inimical. Moreover, within German civil society, the term silences Muslim voices by accusing them of hiding their true intentions or establishing guilt by association while depriving the accused Muslim voices of any chance of social and democratic participation. ²⁰

Regarding Islamophobic incidences, the previous years have seen an enormous increase in attacks on Muslims in Germany. 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 with over 100 attacks 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) were injured. In 2019, the number of Islamophobic crimes again increased to 950, with 90.1% of criminal offenses committed by right-wing extremists. In 2020, 901 Islamophobic crimes were committed across Germany, 146 of which targeted mosques and 48 of which targeted people.²¹

Gert Pickel (2019), "Weltanschauliche Vielfalt und Demokratie", Bertelsmann Stiftung, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Religionsmonitor_Vielfalt_und_Demokratie_7_2019.pdf, p. 12.

Mouhanad Khorchide, "Der Politische Islam als Gegenstand wissenschaftlicher Auseinandersetzungen", Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam (December 2020), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Der-Politische-Islam-als-Gegenstand-wissenschaftlicher-Auseinandersetzungen-und-am-Beispiel-der-Muslimbruderschaft.pdf, p. 3.

Ozan Zakariya Keskinkılıç, "Antimuslimischer Rassismus. Vorsicht Generalverdacht", ZDF (July 1, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/rassismus-islam-muslime-100.html.

^{21.} Soner Tauscher (2020), Islamophobia in Germany. National Report 2020, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://islamophobiareport.com/islamophobiareport.pdf, p. 362-363.

In 2021, the available data suggests a decrease of Islamophobic incidents by 28.65%, leaving the current number at 732 registered Islamophobic crimes across Germany, of which 54 targeted mosques and 43 individuals.²² Of the 732 crimes, the police were able to arrest only three persons. At the same time, the attorney general at the Federal Supreme Court did not open a single judicial inquiry into the alleged Islamophobic and anti-Muslim crimes. In the same year, at least three rallies of PEGIDA Förderverein in Dresden, with the slogan "Against the Islamization of Germany" took place.²³ However, despite the decline, Left Party MP Petra Pau sees no reason to give an all-clear signal. "Of course, I am glad that the figures are below the threatening level of recent years," said Pau. "But in light of the second anniversary of the Hanau attack, we must be aware of the deadly ideology behind all forms of racism."²⁴

Police brutality, racism, and racist incidents by Germany's security forces continued in 2021, bringing attention once more to the structural linkages between fascist ideas, racism, and state structures inherent in the nature of these forces .²⁵ However, these incidences were further heightened by several charges against the police in Hanau related to the racialized killings of nine people on February 19, 2020.²⁶ However, deeper investigations are still hampered by the lack of an independent complaints mechanism at the federal and state level. Only seven federal states plan to establish such a mechanism, while this is not the case in the remaining nine federal states. Furthermore, only the federal state of Hesse mentions a concrete module in the curriculum of police training explicitly dedicated to the prevention of extremism

^{22.} No author, "Politisch motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2021", BKA (May 10, 2022), retrieved May 16 May, 2022 from https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/nachrichten/2022/pmk2021-factsheets.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1.

^{23.} No author, "Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischem Straftaten im ersten Quartal 2021", Bundesregierung (May 20, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/299/1929988.pdf; No author, "Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischem Straftaten im zweiten Quartal 2021", Bundesregierung (August 9, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/318/1931846.pdf; No author, "Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischem Straftaten im dritten Quartal 2021", Bundesregierung (December 6, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/001/2000182.pdf; No author, "Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischem Straftaten im vierten Quartal 2021", Bundesregierung (February 15, 2022), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/007/2000716.pdf.

No author, "Weniger Straftaten gegen Muslims", tagesschau (February 23, 2022), https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/kriminalitaet-straftaten-muslime-101.html.

^{25.} Denis Giessler, "Die lange Liste der Einzelfälle", taz (October 21, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://taz.de/Verdachtsfaelle-Rassismus-bei-der-Polizei/!5806075/; No author, "Rechtsextreme in Sicherheitsbehörden," Mediendienst-Recherche (October 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/Dateien/Infopapier_NSU_neu_Rechtsextreme_in_Sicherheitsbeho__rden.pdf#page=3.

^{26.} Danijel Majic, "Experte beklagt mangelnde Fehlerkultur bei der Polizei", hessenschau (March 18, 2022), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.hessenschau.de/gesellschaft/anschlag-von-hanau-experte-beklagt-mangelnde-fehlerkultur-der-polizei,hanau-anschlag-ausschuss-kritik-100.html; Julian Staib/ Luise Glaser-Lotz, "Neue Vorwürfe gegen die Polizei", FAZ (January 28, 2021), retireved April 30, 2022 from https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/attentat-von-hanau-neue-vorwuerfe-gegen-die-polizei-17169279.html; Diane Hielscher, "Initiative 19. Februar fordert Aufklärung gegen Rechtsterrorismus", deutschlandfunk (February 15, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.deutschlandfunknova.de/beitrag/hanau-initiative-19-februar-fordert-konsequenzen.

among its ranks.²⁷ In a recent publication, the German Institute for Human Rights suggested that although the federal government took several steps to combat racism and right-wing extremism in 2020/2021, "there is still a great deal that needs to be done." Among its suggestions was to "eliminate legal provisions conductive to racist identity checks by police)" and to "set up bodies to receive complaints from and assist persons affected by racist police practices."²⁸

In addition, the discourse on integration was equally widespread in 2021, positioning Muslims and Islam in Germany outside the national boundaries and German community. Among others, the premier of Baden-Würtemberg, Winfried Kretschmann, commented on the issue by saying that through "immigration, a strong force has grown on the part of Islam, which, however, is not integrated."²⁹ His comments in an issue of the religious magazine *Herder Korrespondez* sparked discussions in parts of the Muslim community.³⁰ Additionally, similar debates and sentiments regarding integration were sparked regarding Cologne's initiative to allow mosques to broadcast the call for prayer (*adhan*) for Friday prayers. The city launched a pilot project that was welcomed by Muslim representatives.³¹ At the same time, Islamophobic figures such as Necla Kelek or Seyran Ates racialized and Orientalized Muslims as genuinely patriarchal and misogynous.³²

Employment

Several studies conducted in previous years indicate that people with a migrant background are heavily disadvantaged when looking for a job. Most of the studies are so-called correspondence tests, meaning that fictitious applications are sent that differ only in one characteristic: one test person has a German name, the other a for-

^{27.} No author, "Rechtsextreme in Sicherheitsbehörden," Mediendienst-Recherche (October 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/Dateien/Infopapier_NSU_neu_Rechtsextreme_in_Sicherheitsbeho__rden.pdf#page=3.

Claudia Engelmann et al., "Developments of the human rights situation in Germany July 2020 – June 2021.
 Executive Summary", German Institute for Human Rights (December 09, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Publikationen/Menschenrechtsbericht/Executive_Summary_Annual_Report_Development_Human_Rights_Situation_Germany_2021.pdf, p. 5-6.

Senada Sokollu, "Experte: Kretschmanns Islam-Kritik ist 'sehr gefährlich' und 'verletzend', SWR Aktuell (October 29, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/baden-wuerttemberg/was-tut-deutschland-fuer-die-integration-von-muslimen-100.html.

Senada Sokollu, "Experte: Kretschmanns Islam-Kritik ist 'sehr gefährlich' und 'verletzend', SWR Aktuell (October 29, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/baden-wuerttemberg/was-tut-deutschland-fuer-die-integration-von-muslimen-100.html.

^{31.} No author, "Kölner Moscheen dürfen öffentlich zum Freitagsgebet rufen", IslamIQ (October 8, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.islamiq.de/2021/10/08/modellprojekt-muezzins-duerfen-zum-freitagsgebet-rufen/.

^{32.} No author, "Drei Viertel sehen den Gebetsruf nicht als selbstverständlich", IslamIQ (October 14, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.islamiq.de/2021/10/14/drei-viertel-der-deutschen-sehen-den-gebetsruf-nicht-als-selbstverstaendlich/; Veronika Wawatschek, "Pilotprojekt in Köln: Muezzinruf auch in Bayern denkbar?", BR24 (October 14, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.br.de/nachrichten/bayern/pilotprojekt-in-koeln-muezzin-ruf-auch-in-bayern-denkbar,SlnO7rH.

eign-sounding name. According to a study from 2018, people with a migration background are significantly less likely to receive positive feedback on their applications than people with no migration background. The chances varied depending on the country of origin: people with an Albanian, Moroccan, or Ethiopian migration background had particularly poor chances. Applicants with a migration background from a Western European country and Japan or China had slightly better chances. Muslim women who wear a headscarf are particularly affected by discrimination. For example, a study from 2016 suggested that Muslim women with a Turkish name and who wear a headscarf have to apply four times as often to be invited for as many interviews as applicants with a German name who do not wear a headscarf. Mean study from 2016 suggested that Muslim women with a Turkish name and who wear a headscarf have to apply four times as often to be invited for as many interviews as applicants with a German name who do not wear a headscarf. Mean study from 2016 suggested that Muslim women with a formal form

Education

Discrimination against pupils with a migrant background can only be proven in very few cases. Nevertheless, there are numerous indications that it is taking place. For example, a 2015 OECD study showed that children from socially disadvantaged or immigrant families have poorer chances of higher education than other children, suggesting that the "link between socio-economic background and education outcomes is relatively strong and youth dropping out early from the education system have poor lifetime job prospects."35 Equally, several studies in the past years have indicated that students with a migrant background must perform better than their fellow students without a migrant experience in order to be recommended for high school.³⁶ In 2020, the European Consortium for Political Research (ECRI) published its report on Germany, highlighting its concern that "18% of people originating from sub-Saharan African countries and 15% of people originating from Turkey felt discriminated in the German educational institutions as a student or a parent." Of particular concern is that the report highlighted that teachers are not adequately prepared to teach in diverse class environments and that "neither human rights, teaching in diverse classrooms or addressing discrimination and bullying have been made an obligatory part of the teacher training at

^{33.} Ruud Koopmans/ Susanne Veit/ Ruta Yemane (2018), "Ethnische Hierarchien in der Bewerberauswahl: Ein Feldexperiment zu den Ursachen von Arbeitsmarktdiskriminierung", retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2018/vi18-104.pdf#page=27, p. 21-23.

^{34.} Doris Weichselbaumer (2016), "Discrimination against Female Migrants Wearing Headscarves", retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://docs.iza.org/dp10217.pdf#page=14, p. 12-13.

OECD (2015), "Germany" in Economic Policy Reforms 2015: Growing for Growth, Paris: OECD Publishing, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/economic-policy-reforms-2015/ger-many_growth-2015-21-en#page1.

^{36.} Hartmut Ditton (2007): "Der Beitrag von Schule und Lehrern zur Reproduktion von Bildungsungleichheit", retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-531-90339-2_9; Mechtild Gomolla/ Frank-Olaf Radtke (2009): "Institutionelle Diskriminierung: Die Herstellung ethnischer Differenz in der Schule", retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-531-91577-7; Christine Baur (2010): Bildungsbenachteiligung von Kindern mit Migrationshintergrund, Expertise für die Heinrich Böll Stiftung, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://heimatkunde.boell.de/2010/04/01/bildungsbenachteiligung-von-kindern-mit-migrationshintergrund.

university."³⁷ In fact, teachers can and have been a contributing factor in discriminating against Muslim pupils. For example, in the year under consideration, a schoolteacher ripped off a headscarf from a Muslim pupil, expressing Islamophobic sentiments, and claiming that wearing the headscarf is prohibited. The student was already bullied for a long time while repeated requests from the mother to talk to the school management were rejected. The family ended up complaining to the supervisory school authority.³⁸

Another topic creating enormous discursive incitement in the second half of the year was the coinage of the term "confrontative practice of religion" (konfrontative Religionsausübung), particularly circulated by Berlin's borough mayor Martin Hikel, but also supported by undersecretary Mark Rackles, and Aleksander Dzembritzki, all belonging to the Social Democratic Party (SPD). This neologism was an attempt to name a social phenomenon within schools in Berlin-Neukölln and label a supposedly confrontative practice of religion by Muslim pupils (toward liberal Muslims and non-Muslims alike). "Boys who bully others because they eat pork, girls who deny their classmates their belief because they don't wear a headscarf. 'Confrontational practice of religion' is what it is called in technical jargon when people want to impose their religion on others."39 The initiative was heavily criticized while also finding supporters. On the political level, Neukölln district councilor Ahmed Abed, from the Left Party, considered the project to be highly Islamophobic, "anti-Muslim," and "very dangerous." Additionally, he complained about the lack of "multiple perspectives": the students' view of incidents was never considered. 40 Anthropologist Werner Schiffauer sharply criticized a survey by the Association for Democracy and Diversity (DEVI) on "Confrontational Religious Practices in Neukölln." He criticized the study for not making precise distinctions and attributing all possible causes of conflicts to Islam. There is just as little differentiation between the need to express religion, such as wearing a headscarf or the desire for a prayer room, and confrontational religious behavior that is geared toward conflict. If one were to look at the statements in the study in a differentiated manner, Schiffauer suggested, a clear picture would emerge that confrontational religious practice is on the decline.⁴¹

^{37.} ECRI Report on Germany (2020), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-germany-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4be, p.11.

^{38.} No author, "Chronik 2021", ReachOut, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.reachoutberlin.de/de/Unsere%20Arbeit/Angriffe%20in%20Berlin/2021.

Luise Samman, "Konfrontative Religionsausübung an Schulen", Deutschlandfunk Kultur (June 11, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/konfrontative-religionsausuebung-an-schulen-neukoelln-will-100.html.

^{40.} Susanne Memarnia, "Schulprojekt gegen Religionskonflikte", taz (December 27, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://taz.de/Schulprojekt-gegen-Religionskonflikte/!5820200/; Nikolas Schäfer, "Religionsstreit an Berliner Schulen?", Mediendienst Integration (January 28, 2022), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/religionsstreit-an-berliner-schulen.html.

^{41.} Werner Schiffauer, "Stellungnahme zur DEVI-Studie: Bestandsaufnahme Konfrontative Religionsbekundungen in Neukölln", Rat für Migration (January 2022), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://rat-fuer-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Konfrontative-Religionsausu%CC%88bung_final-1.pdf.

Politics

The most Islamophobic and far-right party in 2021 remained the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland). As the year under consideration was marked by parliamentary elections in Germany, the party's election program constructed "Islam" and "Muslims" as deviant and dangerous, and attached both to many political, social, and cultural conflicts. 42

In 2021, the Syrian refugee Tareq Alaows withdrew his bid for the German parliament seat after receiving racist threats. Rather than taking his candidacy as an opportunity to showcase the potential of refugees, Alaows was exposed to massive racism instead. Alaows, who fled Syria and arrived in Europe in 2015, had announced his intention to run as a Green Party candidate for his hometown district of Oberhausen (North Rhine-Westphalia). However, he quickly became the target of social media attacks and decided to withdraw his candidacy. The high level of threat for me and especially people close to me is the most important reason for withdrawing my candidacy, he said. He added that his example shows that we need strong structures to counter structural racism and help those affected. Alaows received a lot of solidarity from various politicians and initiatives, who criticized the racism Alaows encountered in Germany due to his candidacy and were shocked by his decision to withdraw his candidacy.

Also, in the year under review, the Ministry of Interior initiated and established a group of experts working on "political Islamism". The group, which consists of eleven people invited by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, will convene for one year. This initiative highlights the heightened debate on "political Islam" in Germany and attempts to further govern political currents within Islam. Experts from various academic fields such as Islamic studies, Islamic theology, public law, political science, and social sciences, have been involved, enabling, as the ministry suggests, the "topic of political Islamism to be viewed from different perspectives." The group of ex-

^{42.} Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl der zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag, "Deutschland. Aber normal.", AfD, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.afd.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2021/06/20210611_AfD_Programm_2021.pdf.

^{43.} No author, "Syrian refugee withdraws bid for German parliament", DW (March 30, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.dw.com/en/syrian-refugee-withdraws-bid-for-german-parliament-seat-after-threats/a-57051621.

No author, "Flüchtling zieht Bundeskandidatur wegen Bedrohung zurück", Der Spiegel (March 30, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundestagswahl-syrischer-fluechtlingzieht-kandidatur-wegen-bedrohung-zurucck-a-f5af6177-b056-4f89-b0fd-b2510419b783.

^{45.} See in particular the #SolidaritätMit Tareq, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://mobile.twitter.com/hashtag/solidarit%C3%A4tmittareq?src=hash.

^{46.} Pressemitteilung, "Neuer Expertenkreis zum politischen Islamismus", BMI (June 15, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2021/06/expertenkreis-politischer-extremismus.html. What is important to note here is that the German political discourse continuously attempts to draw distinctions between what it defines as a religion (Islam) and a political ideology (Islamism). Thus, not political Islam but political Islamism has been the key term addressing politicized versions of religion to be censored.

perts will analyze current and changing phenomena of political Islamism from a scientific perspective and develop recommendations for action that are intended to supplement the measures taken by the security authorities with sociopolitical and scientific approaches.⁴⁷ However, the initiative was heavily disputed and criticized, indicating to many its hostile and Islamophobic portrayal of Muslims and Islam. Political scientist Ozan Zakariya Keskinkılıç, among others, argues that the term has been collectively drawing suspension towards Muslims, curtailing their fundamental rights, and has become a projection screen for Muslims perceived as deviant and inimical.⁴⁸ Eminent Islamic studies scholar Gudrun Krämer opposed the criminalization of "political Islam." As long as the laws are observed, political activity on an Islamic basis must be allowed, said the scholar. As in Austria, efforts to introduce a separate criminal offense of "political Islam" were described by Krämer as "absurd" as long as there is no precise definition of what is to be understood by the term. 49 Despite this criticism, the Christian Democratic Party and the Christian Social Union published a position paper, referring to Austria's Documentation Centre Political Islam. The paper used the term "political Islamism" to frame Muslims and Islam as security threats while reproducing what usually is seen as far-right conspiracy theories about the infiltration of Europe by Muslims.⁵⁰ Such debates and incidents obviously contribute to the increased surveillance and restrictions of Muslim life in Germany.

Media

Reporting on immigrants and refugees is often distorted as was proven in a study by the University of Mainz and Stiftung Mercator in 2021. The research team carried out a quantitative analysis of 5,822 media reports in six leading newspapers between 2016 and 2020. According to this study, many media reports emphasize crime (13%) in connection to flight and immigration, but only in 3% of cases in connection to violence against refugees. Concerning immigration, the media most often emphasized its perceived negative consequences for the security of the population (57%). However, there were differences here: reports in *BILD* or *FAZ* (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) emphasized negative aspects more than the *SZ* (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*). Another finding was that reporting on refugees decreased significantly in the period under study.⁵¹ Equally, stud-

Pressemitteilung, "Neuer Expertenkreis zum politischen Islamismus", BMI (June 15, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2021/06/expertenkreis-politischer-extremismus.html.

Ozan Zakariya Keskinkılıç, "Antimuslimischer Rassismus. Vorsicht Generalverdacht", ZDF (July 1, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/rassismus-islam-muslime-100.html.

^{49.} No author, "Forscherin: 'Politischen Islam' nicht kriminalisieren", IslamIQ (January 18, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.islamiq.de/2021/01/18/forscherin-politischen-islam-nicht-kriminalisieren/.

Fabian Goldmann, Unionspolitiker im Kampf gegen die Religionsfreiheit, IslamIQ (May 16, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.islamiq.de/2021/05/16/unionspolitiker-im-kampf-gegen-die-religionsfreiheit/.

Marcus Maurer, Pablo Jost, Simon Kruschinski, Jörg Haßler (2021): Fünf Jahre Medienberichterstattung über Flucht und Migration, Institut für Publizistik, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.stiftung-mercator. de/content/uploads/2021/07/Medienanalyse_Flucht_Migration.pdf.

ies show that reporting on Islam and Muslims is often stereotypical and negative. More than three-quarters of all reports evaluated by the research institute Media Tenor International in a long-term study in 2016 painted a negative image of Muslims and Islam. Older studies came to similar conclusions. 52 However, these results do not mean that the media reports are Islamophobic in general or in explicit terms, according to Tim Karis from the Center for Religious Studies (CERES). The problem is more of a subliminal, recurring theme or the recourse to stereotypical images of Islam. 53

Justice System

In 2021, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) dealt with two cases on the ban on headscarves in private-sector German companies. The first case concerned a curative education nurse of the Muslim faith who decided in 2016 to wear the hijab in the workplace. However, in 2018 the non-profit association issued a service instruction according to which employees in the workplace should not bear any visible signs of political, ideological, or religious beliefs. The Muslim employee refused to remove her headscarf, and was warned twice before issuing a complaint with the Labour Court in Hamburg, which, in turn, appealed to the ECJ. The second case concerned a woman who worked as a cashier in a drugstore. Returning to her work after parental leave in 2014, she wore a Muslim headscarf – unlike before. Because the company has always had a dress code that prohibited the wearing of headgear, the store manager told her that she would not be employed unless she would take off her headscarf. The employee took legal action against such a decision. While the legal proceedings were ongoing, the company created a regulation that required to appear for work "without large-scale religious, political, and ideological signs." The case went to the Federal Labor Court, which submitted it to the ECJ. In February 2021, the Advocate General of the ECJ argued that a ban on the headscarf in companies, in general, complies with European law (ECJ, Press Release No. 25/21) if the deviation from neutrality within the company puts the company at an economic disadvantage as a consequence. In July 2021, the ECJ ruled that wearing any visible sign of political, ideological, or religious belief could be prohibited and justified under the employer's need to convey an image of neutrality to customers or avoid social conflicts.⁵⁴ Albeit not binding, such a decision expands the legal means through which Muslim women are discriminated against in workplaces. And even if the ECJ, as well as the German companies, included ideological and political signs, it is the discrimination

^{52.} Christian Kolmer, "Das Medienbild des Islam treibt die Angst", Media Tenor, retrieved April 30, 2022 from http://de.mediatenor.com/de/bibliothek/newsletter/1100/das-medienbild-zum-islam-treibt-die-angst-bedford-strohm-und-papst-franziskus-setzen-positive-aktzente-fuer-ihre-kirchen.

Mediendienst Integration (Ed.), "Handbuch Islam und Muslime", retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/Dateien/MDI_HBI_Neuauflage.pdf, p.109-115.

^{54.} Cynthia Lange, "The European Court of Justice Ruling on Headscarf Ban in the Workplace", Ogletree (August 11, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://ogletree.com/insights/the-european-court-of-justice-ruling-on-headscarf-bans-in-the-workplace/.

of Muslim women with headscarves that is expanded by and through such regulations. While de jure many different groups are addressed, de facto, the rulings primarily target Muslim women.

Furthermore, in April 2021, the German parliament passed the "Act on the Regulation of the Appearance of Civil Servants and on the Amendment of Other Service Regulations" (Gesetz zur Regelung des Erscheinungsbilds von Beamtinnen und Beamten sowie zur Änderung weiterer dienstrechtlicher Vorschriften). The plenary waved it through without discussion, even though it included "features of appearance with religious or ideological connotations" which can be "restricted and prohibited if they are objectively capable of impairing trust in the neutral conduct of the office by the civil servant."55 This act emerged in 2017 when the Federal Administrative Court dismissed a police officer with highly overt and visible tattoos of Nazi symbols and texts up to his neck. Identifying a view that contradicted the value system of the German constitution (Grundgesetz) in such a way was not just unacceptable, but specific provisions had to be taken on the level of legislation. While MPs of the Coalition defended the law, saying that it is not directed against Muslim women wearing headscarves, the Coalition of Muslim Women for Action (Aktionsbündnis Muslimischer Frauen) highlighted that the act further manifested an exclusion of Muslim women and Jewish men from civil service as both groups were to be met with increased suspicion. Filiz Polat from Alliance 90/The Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) criticized the fact that the bill passed without much prior discussion about the complex equation of ideological, political, and religious signs. Christine Buchholz from the Left Party (DIE LINKE) emphasized that the Left Party had to refrain to vote against prohibiting Nazi symbols because the bill also included prohibitions against religious symbols. That the two had been put into one bill was highly problematic and led to her party's decision. Buchholz said that both issues "could have been arranged separately and [prohibiting Nazi symbols] without any connection to religious clothing."56

Internet

The Special Commissioner against Antisemitism and Islamophobia of the Council of Europe published a preliminary report assessing the scope, nature, and dangers of hate speech on the internet. Muslim associations in several member states of the Council of Europe were consulted, including Germany. Although the results are nei-

^{55.} Andrea Dernbach, "Bundestag ermöglicht bundesweites Kopftuchverbot", Der Tagesspiel (April 23, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/erscheinungsbild-von-beamtinnen-bundestag-ermoeglicht-bundesweites-kopftuchverbot/27124744.html.

Andrea Dernbach, "Weder durch die Hintertür – noch durch die Vordertür ein Kopftuchverbot", Der Tagesspiegel (April 25, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/gesetz-ueber-erscheinungsbild-von-beamtinnen-und-beamten-weder-durch-die-hinter-noch-durch-die-vordertuer-ein-kopftuchverbot/27129148.html.

ther complete nor representative, they indicate an increase in hate speech on the internet. Seven out of eight national Muslim associations explicitly mentioned incitement to violence and death threats as a dangerous trend. At the same time, all respondents reported an increase in anti-Muslim conspiracy theories on the internet. Common accusations against Muslims were that they were responsible for the "Islamization of the West/Europe," that "they are taking over the government," or that they wanted to "ban Christianity."

Furthermore, Muslims are called "extremists," "terrorists," and supporters of "political Islam." Additionally, they were accused of being "pedophiles," "woman abusers," or practicing "taqiya" to cover their lies. Due to the Covid pandemic, Muslims were accused of spreading the pandemic as "super-spreaders." The majority of the associations stated that hate speech on the internet was mainly written anonymously. However, it was observed that the inhibition level had decreased, and real names are used more often. The chairman of Germany's Central Council of Muslims, Aiman Mazyek, criticized the fact that Islamophobia remained under-researched and less recorded, emphasizing that Islamophobia, as anti-Semitism and antigypsyism, are dangerous to the entire society.⁵⁸ An example of an Islamophobic incident on the internet occurred early in 2021 when a group of Muslim university students faced a vicious online campaign after meeting Norbert Röttgen, a politician from the Christian Democratic Party. The politician and the Muslim student group from the Avicenna Studienwerk, a Muslim student service, met to engage in a political discussion. The managing director of the Avicenna Studienwerk, Hakan Tosuner, was part of the digital meeting and saw firsthand the Islamophobic backlash. "We had never experienced it to this extent before," Tosuner told Deutsche Welle "But," he said, "it was only a question of time before Islamophobia also hit us in this way."59

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The most Islamophobic and far-right figures in 2021 remained the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland), particularly Björn Höcke. As the year under consideration was marked by parliamentary elections in Germany, the party's election program constructed "Islam" and "Muslims" as deviant and dangerous, and responsible for several

^{57.} Special Representative on Antisemitic and Anti-Muslim Hatred and HateCrimes, "Hass und Hetze im Netz werden immer gefährlicher. Vorläufige Ergebnisse einer Befragung einiger muslimischer Verbände in Europa", Working Paper (July 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://rm.coe.int/survey-1-7-21-de-online-2782-6225-2804-1/1680a31735.

^{58.} No author, "Gefährlicher Trend", Domradion.de (July 6, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.domradio.de/artikel/gefaehrlicher-trend-muslimische-verbaende-werten-hetze-im-netz-als-sehr-bedrohlich.

Peter Hille, "Muslim students face Islamophobia after meeting with CDU deputy", DW (February 14, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.dw.com/en/german-students-face-islamophobia-after-meeting-cdu-deputy/a-56563465.

political, social, and cultural conflicts.⁶⁰ Furthermore, on September 13, 2021, two weeks into the federal elections, PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of Europe) organized an Islamophobic demonstration where Björn Höcke was invited as a speaker.⁶¹ At the same time, Islamophobia has been fostered by mainstream figures as well. Especially, debates about so-called political Islam contributed to the rise of Islamophobic sentiments. Here, figures such as Mouhanad Khorchide or Ahmad Mansour contributed to the increase of such sentiments by continuously framing political tendencies as threatening, dangerous, and deviant to democratic structures.⁶²

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

CLAIM (Netzwerk gegen Diskriminierung und Islamfeindlichkeit, Alliance against Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim) initiated a project to document incidents of Islamophobia nationwide by recording cases of vandalism, harassment, and violent attacks through www.i-report.eu/melden. Verified incidents, then, are systematized, evaluated, and published.⁶³

In November 2020, the Cabinet Committee published its catalogue of 89 measures to combat right-wing extremism and racism. In 2021, these measures entered into force on July 1, 2021. The steps are directed toward increasing awareness of racism and anti-Semitism, forging alliances between civil society, police, and prosecutorial authorities, establishing better state structures for combatting racism, and developing adequate protections for victims.⁶⁴

With the federal elections in September 2021, not only the German parliament increased in terms of diversity,⁶⁵ but the new government's coalition agreement included

^{60.} Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl der zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag, "Deutschland. Aber normal", AfD, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.afd.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2021/06/20210611_AfD_Programm_2021.pdf.

Julius Geiler, "Pegida-Anhänger greifen Journalisten und Geflüchtete in Dresden an", Der Tagesspiegel (September 14, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/hoecke-hetzt-und-wird-gestoert-pegida-anhaenger-greifen-journalisten-und-gefluechtete-in-dresden-an/27611170.html.

^{62.} Norbert Schäfer, "Politischer Islam ist Angriff auf die DNA unserer Gesellschaft", PRO – Das christliche Medienmagazin (March 23, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.pro-medienmagazin.de/politischerislam-ist-angriff-auf-die-dna-unserer-gesellschaft/; Bridge Initiative Team (December 12, 2021), "Factsheet: Documentation Political Islam", retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-documentation-center-political-islam-dokumentationsstelle-politischer-islam/.

^{63.} Pressemitteilung CLAIM, "Erste bundesweite Erfassung von antimuslimischen Diskriminierungen und Übergriffen" (June 23, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.claim-allianz.de/aktuelles/news/pressemitteilung-gegen-die-hohe-dunkelziffer-erste-bundesweite-erfassung-von-antimuslimischen-diskriminierungen-und-uebergriffen-startet/.

^{64.} Claudia Engelmann et al., "Developments of the human rights situation in Germany July 2020 – June 2021. Executive Summary", German Institute for Human Rights (December 09, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Publikationen/Menschenrechtsbericht/Executive_Summary_Annual_Report_Development_Human_Rights_Situation_Germany_2021.pdf, p. 5.

^{65.} Jennifer Lichnau, "Diese Menschen machen den Bundestag diverser", Die Zeit (September 27, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.zeit.de/zett/politik/2021-09/diversitaet-bundestag-bundestagswahl-frau-

the fight against right-wing extremism and racism, stressing the need to develop it further, secure it financially in the long term, and appoint the first anti-racism officer.⁶⁶

Furthermore, in early 2021, the state of Berlin established a commission of experts whose main aim is to tackle Islamophobia in the state's political and administrative institutions. The commission is supposed to publish its findings and recommendation in 2022.⁶⁷

In 2021, an independent commission issued its report on the phenomenon of racism against Roma and Sinti in Germany, emphasizing this ongoing form of racism and setting the task of combatting both in the executive and society alike.⁶⁸

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The German government has taken crucial steps toward combatting racism, far-right extremism, anti-Semitism, and antigypsyism. These included putting into force the catalogue of 89 measures to fight right-wing extremism and racism, commissioning an independent report on antigypsyism, and the announcement to appoint Germany's first anti-racism officer. However, the discourse and actions against so-called political Islamism have again hardened the nexus between religiosity, criminality, and dangerousness. Furthermore, while German society and politics have begun to address racism and right-wing extremism more seriously, structural racism remained a more minor issue. For example, studies on racism among the security forces and police still need to be conducted while racial profiling is still a practice, and the NSU records are sealed. The following suggestions are made to combat Islamophobia and discrimination:

- The authorities must strengthen human rights education in the school system
 with particular 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 to enable prosecution with the goal of conviction of physical and verbal Islamophobia and discrimination, as well as hate speech and incitement of individuals or groups.

en-transgender-junge-menschen-migrationshintergrund; Jan Zimmermann, "Der neue Bundestag: größer, jünger, diverser, BR24 (October 26, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.br.de/nachrichten/bayern/der-neue-bundestag-groesser-juenger-diverser,SmsKX1A.

^{66. &}quot;Mehr Fortschritt wagen", SPD, https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf, p. 95-96 (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{67.} No author, "Berlin setzt Kommission gegen antimuslimischen Rassismus ein", rbb (February 19, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2021/02/berlin-kommission-gegen-antimuslimischen-rassismus.html.

^{68.} Gilda-Nancy Horvath, "UKA-Bericht: 800 Seiten über Antiziganismus in Deutschland", DW (July 13, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.dw.com/de/uka-bericht-800-seiten-%C3%BCber-antiziganismus-in-deutschland/a-58166481.

- 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.
- 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 labor market, and anonymous application procedures should be implemented.
- In the last two years, right-wing extremist groups' and individuals' weapon caches and attack plans are being discovered more frequently. With the increase in gun ownership and illegal importation by right-wing extremists, we see more right-wing terrorist attacks on Muslims and Jews. There should be a strict ban on gun ownership across all of Germany. Volatile individuals should not be able to obtain gun licenses.
- The representation of people with an immigrant background in sectors such as media, police, academia, politics, etc., is not proportional to their population share. Only quotas like those that exist in the U.S. or Canada can eliminate the disadvantage of migrants and their children.

Chronology

- **01.01.2021**: The Sontheim DITIB Fatih Mosque was the target of an attack. Unknown perpetrators smashed the window of the mosque with a bench.
- **27.01.2021**: An arson attack was carried out on a mosque in Frankfurt. The perpetrator lit a fire, which did not spread, in the middle of the prayer room.
- 31.01.2021: A woman wearing a headscarf was racially insulted and offended by another woman in Berlin. The unknown perpetrator attempted to hit the Muslim woman.
- 02.2021: A 52-year-old attacked, racially insulted, and spat on a Muslim woman in Hamburg. In addition, the attacker tried to tear the veil off the Muslim woman's head.
- 03.2021: In an Erfurt tram, ticket collectors conducted racially motivated controls of people of color. In the process, the controlled were violently attacked and humiliated.
- 15.03.2021: In Berlin, a woman and her daughter were insulted and threatened by a man. The attack was motivated by Islamophobia. A person who approached to help was also racially insulted and attacked.⁶⁹

^{69.} No author, "Chronik 2021", ReachOut, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.reachoutberlin.de/de/Unsere%20Arbeit/Angriffe%20in%20Berlin/2021.

- 15.03.2021: A mosque in Frankfurt was the target of an attack. Unknown perpetrators covered the front door of the mosque with swastikas. The mosque was the target of several attacks in early 2021. In January, an arson attack was carried out, while in February, unknown perpetrators painted swastikas on the mosque's front door.
- 01.04.2021: Since April 2021, residents of several districts of Jena including Lobeda and Winzerla were affected by Islamophobic, racist mail. Insulting caricatures, burnt Koran pages, and slaughtered parts of pigs were placed repeatedly in mailboxes. Those affected worried that violent attacks could follow. The DITIB mosque in Wächtersbach received a right-wing extremist letter threatening the mosque. In addition to swastikas, the letter contained explicit threats such as "You will no longer be safe." The mosque had already received a threatening letter in December 2020.
- **05.2021**: In Frankfurt, an older man loudly racially insulted two women with headscarves on a tram after one of them accidentally pushed him slightly in passing and apologized several times. He also verbally insulted two other people who wanted to rebuke him. At another incidence, in a training course for employees of various authorities in Hesse, the responsible lecturer repeatedly reproduced explicitly Islamophobic clichés. This was done as part of his explanations of "intercultural competence," not accepting criticism of several participants, and insisting on the appropriateness of his generalizing examples. In Dortmund, a DITIB mosque was attacked. A perpetrator attempted to enter the mosque but was stopped by the community leader. The perpetrator then pulled out a household knife and unsuccessfully tried to injure the imam.
- **09.05.2021**: Shots were fired with an alarm gun in front of a DITIB mosque in Neumünster. The parishioners asked an unknown man listening to loud music in front of the mosque to turn the music down. As a result, there were disputes between the man and the mosque members. Shortly after, the man left, but came back a short time later with an alarm gun and the gun was shot four to five times. The police arrested the man, but he was released within a few hours.
- **07.2021**: A drunk man threw an ashtray at a woman wearing a headscarf from his balcony. The woman was not hit, according to witnesses. The act was racially motivated, and the perpetrator confessed to the investigators that he threw the ashtray because he could not stand "foreigners".
- 18.08.2021: The Turkish community in the Nuremberg metropolitan region was concerned about a case of racism and Islamophobia in Hersbruck in the Nuremberg region. Handwritten notepads with Islamophobic insults

^{70.} No author, "Chronik", Hessenschauthin, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://hessenschauthin.de/chronik/.

and threats were attached to the house of a Herbruck woman. "Die, you dirty Islamists" and "Allah will be torn into 1000 pieces by Jesus."⁷¹ In a racist attack in Berlin, a 39-year-old Muslim woman was seriously injured. The rightwing extremist hit her several times, tore off her headscarf, and threw his bicycle into her back.

- 09.2021: A young woman from Bergheim was denied her right to vote during Germany's national elections. The election team sent her away on the ground of the veiling ban in Germany. It saw the veil ban, which addresses the burqa rather than the headscarf, as legitimate ground. In September, there was an attack on a mosque in Kelsterbach. An unknown man threw glass bottles in the direction of the mosque during the night prayer. As a result, the atrium was full of glass splinters. The parishioners determined from the surveillance cameras that the man stopped twice within three minutes with a red car in front of the mosque.
- **07.12.2021**: After an argument, a woman was pushed by another woman against an arriving bus, along with her stroller in which her 15-month-old son was sitting. The woman later tried to tear off the victim's headscarf.⁷² An unknown perpetrator attached a pig's head to the entrance gate of a mosque in Dortmund. After this, he took a selfie of himself and the pig's head.

^{71.} Nicolas Eberlein, "Rassistische und antimuslimischem Drohung in Herbruck", BR24 (August 18, 2021), retreived April 30, 2022 from https://www.br.de/nachrichten/bayern/rassistische-und-antimuslimische-drohung-in-hersbruck,SgSL9Hq.

^{72.} No author, "Frau mit Kinderwagen gegen Bus geschubst", SZ (December 7, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/muenchen-polizei-angriff-bus-kinderwagen-1.5482238.



ALI HUSEYINOGLU AND ALEXANDROS SAKELLARIOU

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Executive Summary

The situation with regard to Islamophobia in Greece did not change significantly in 2021 compared to the previous years based on all the existing findings. Islamophobia is primarily found on the discursive level. Physical attacks with religious motivation whether targeting Islamic sacred places such as mosques and cemeteries or Muslim people, migrants, or refugees, in particular, remain fewer compared to some other European countries. Based on tough Covid-19 restrictions, hate-motivated physical attacks and reactions of groups occurred in different parts of the country with religious motivation targeting Muslims remaining limited. Still, some incidents did spark major anti-Islamic reactions and protests such as *The Walk* of Amal, a 3.5-meter puppet representing displaced immigrant children or ones separated from their families.

Politics, religion, media (both printed and online), and the Internet continued to be the primary four realms playing a significant role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the Greek public domain throughout 2021. Islamophobia in Greece was expressed primarily by certain political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, (self-proclaimed) neo-liberals, 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 2021 were the statement of the Archbishop of the Orthodox Church of Greece, Ieronymos, who stated that "Islam, and its followers, are not a religion; it is a political party and they are the people of war"; the organised reactions against *The Walk* of Amal; and politicians referring to the so-called Islamisation of Greece while tackling Muslims *per se* or to issues such as halal slaughter.

Περίληψη

Η κατάσταση όσον αφορά την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα δεν άλλαξε σημαντικά το 2021 σε σύγκριση με τα προηγούμενα χρόνια με βάση τα υπάρχοντα ευρήματα. Η Ισλαμοφοβία εντοπίζεται κυρίως σε επίπεδο λόγου, ενώ οι φυσικές επιθέσεις με θρησκευτικά κίνητρα που στοχεύουν είτε σε Ισλαμικούς ιερούς χώρους, όπως τζαμιά και νεκροταφεία είτε μουσουλμάνους, μετανάστες ή πρόσφυγες ειδικότερα, παραμένουν λιγότερες σε σύγκριση με ορισμένες άλλες ευρωπαϊκές χώρες. Λόγω και των αυστηρών περιορισμών για την πανδημία του Covid-19, οι φυσικές επιθέσεις με κίνητρο το θρησκευτικό μίσος και οι αντιδράσεις με θρησκευτικά κίνητρα από ομάδες, που σημειώθηκαν σε διάφορα μέρη της χώρας με στόχο τους μουσουλμάνους ήταν περιορισμένες. Ωστόσο, ορισμένα περιστατικά προκάλεσαν σοβαρές αντι-ισλαμικές αντιδράσεις και διαμαρτυρίες, όπως η πορεία της Αμάλ, μιας μαριονέτας 3,5 μέτρων που αντιπροσωπεύει τα εκτοπισμένα παιδιά μεταναστών ή αυτά που έχουν χωριστεί από τις οικογένειές τους.

Η πολιτική, η θρησκεία, τα μέσα ενημέρωσης (τόσο έντυπα όσο και ηλεκτρονικά) και το διαδίκτυο συνέχισαν να είναι οι τέσσερις βασικοί τομείς που διαδραματίζουν σημαντικό ρόλο στην αναπαραγωγή της Ισλαμοφοβίας στην ελληνική δημόσια σφαίρα καθ' όλη τη διάρκεια του 2021. Η Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα εκφράστηκε κυρίως από ορισμένα πολιτικά κόμματα και πολιτικούς της δεξιάς και της ακροδεξιάς, (αυτοαποκαλούμενους) νεοφιλελεύθερους, στελέχη της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος, έντυπα και ηλεκτρονικά μέσα ενημέρωσης και δημοσιογράφους συμπεριλαμβανομένων των αναρτήσεών τους στα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης. Τα κύρια ζητήματα που συνέβαλαν στην αναπαραγωγή της Ισλαμοφοβίας το 2021 ήταν η δήλωση του Αρχιεπισκόπου της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος, Ιερώνυμου, ο οποίος δήλωσε ότι «το Ισλάμ, οι πολίτες του, δεν είναι θρησκεία, είναι πολιτικό κόμμα και είναι άνθρωποι του πολέμου», οι οργανωμένες αντιδράσεις κατά της πορείας της Αμάλ, και ορισμένοι πολιτικοί που έκαναν λόγο για «εξισλαμισμό της Ελλάδας», αναφορικά με τους μουσουλμάνους ή ορισμένα από τα βασικά ζητήματα που τους απασχολούν, όπως το Χαλάλ.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Hellenic Republic

Type of Regime: Unitary parliamentary republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary system

Ruling Parties: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy)

Opposition Parties: SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), KINAL (Movement of Change), KKE (Greek Communist Party), Elliniki Lyssi (Hellenic 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 Lyssi (Hellenic Solution) 3.7% (10 seats), MERA25 3.44% (9 seats).

Total Population: 10,816,286 in 2011 (national census)

Major Languages: Greek

Official Religion: Church of Greece (Eastern Orthodox Christianity)

Statistics on Islamophobia: No statistics on Islamophobia available

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Annual data is made available only later during the following year. The Racist Violence Recording Network in 2020 reported 107 racist incidents. In 50 of these incidents, more than one victim was reported. In 2019, the network recorded 100 incidents with a total of more than 104 victims. In 74 of these incidents, the victims were migrants or refugees who were targeted on grounds of ethnic origin, religion, colour, associations of third country nationals, and human rights defenders due to their connection with refugees and migrants. The Police Department against Racist Violence recorded 222 incidents with probable racist motive for 2020, while in 2019 the department recorded 282 incidents. In 31 of these incidents, the alleged motive was religion, but without any further details from the part of the authorities.

Major Religions (% of Population): No official data is available, since religious affiliation is not included in the national census. According to the World Values Survey (WVS) (2018), Orthodox Christians consist 91% of the population, people with no religion 3.8%, other Christians 0.6%, Muslims 2.9%, and other religions 0.8%.

Muslim Population (% of Population): 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 Organizations: 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 Network¹

Far-Right Parties: Elliniki Lyssi (Hellenic Solution), Chryssi 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 Violent Organizations: Crypteia, Combat 18 Hellas, Anentahtoi Meadrioi Ethnikistes (Independent Maiandrioi Nationalists), Group Epsilon-EY (Order of Greek Fighters), Blood and Honour

Leading Islamophobic Figures: Kyriakos Velopoulos, Andreas Andrianopoulos, Thanos Tzimeros, Failos Kranidiotis, Ilias Kassidiaris, Giannis Lagos, Konstantinos Bogdanos

Leading Islamophobic Institutions and Groups: The political parties of Elliniki Lyssi (Greek Solution), Ellines gia tin Patrida (Greeks for the Fatherland), Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness), and Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn); RIMSE - Radical Islam Monitor in Southeast Europe

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

- Minaret Ban: No

- Circumcision Ban: No

- Burka Ban: No

It is important 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 the main principles of human rights such as equality and non-discrimination.

Introduction

The situation with regard to Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitudes in Greece during 2021 has not changed 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, media, and the Internet are three primary realms that continued to play a significant role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public domain throughout 2021 without significant alterations, with the Orthodox Church playing a less central role. Islamophobia was expressed by political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, (self-proclaimed) neo-liberals, printed and electronic media, and journalists including their posts on social media, and certain figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece. One of the main issues that contributed to the reproduction of Islamophobia in 2021 was the so-called immigration/refugee problem, although due to the government's anti-immigrant policy and the Covid-19 pandemic, immigration and refugee flows were smaller compared to the previous years and as a consequence not many reactions were reported. A second issue that gave spark to anti-Islamic reactions was *The* Walk of Amal, a 3.5-meter puppet, which from July to November 2021, travelled over 8,000 km embodying the urgent message "Don't forget about us", representing all displaced children, many separated from their families. Amal walked throughout Greece and visited many Greek cities where demonstrations were organised and reactions reported mainly by the extreme-right and local authorities, both religious and political.

This report is based on data collected during 2021 and takes into account local, national, and international events that might have influenced the (re)appearance or the rise of Islamophobia. The material was mainly collected from printed and electronic media, websites and blogs, reports of NGOs, international organisations and state authorities, and formal or informal contacts with members of the Muslim communities.²

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

No significant developments have been recorded in 2021 with regard to the statistical documentation of Islamophobic incidents in Greece. That means that despite the

^{2.} It is worth noting that Greece has also been included in the OSCE Hate Crimes reporting mechanism since 2012. Apart from official statistical data from the Greek state, minority and majority NGOs dealing with human and minority rights in Greece also contribute by reporting Islamophobic actions to this mechanism. The Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association and the Western Thrace Turks Federation in Europe primarily report on biases against Muslims in Western Thrace, Rhodes, and Kos, while the Greek Helsinki Monitor and the Racist Violence Recording Network offer reports on Muslims in the rest of Greece.

need to collect and categorise physical and verbal attacks against Muslims and Islamic places no initiative has been 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.

The main effort of this report has been to collect all relevant information with regard to physical and verbal attacks against Muslims and Islamic places through personal contacts, the media, NGO reports, and Muslims' own disclosure of such cases. During the year, a number of violent attacks against Muslim migrants and refugees were recorded in major Greek cities (e.g., Athens) and especially on the islands which host refugee camps. However, the religious motive usually is not recorded during reporting these attacks. According to the Racist Violence Recording Network and its latest report focusing on 2020,³ 74 incidents were recorded against migrants, refugees, or asylum-seekers on the grounds of ethnic origin, religion, and/or colour; human rights defenders due to their connection with refugees and migrants; and accommodation sites for unaccompanied children.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions there were not many physical attacks against Islamic places and Muslims. One incident that took place at the end of 2020 and was not included in the previous report was a violent attack against a shelter for unaccompanied refugee children and young people in Thessaloniki on December 26. (Fig. 1) At least ten people holding knives and iron bars attacked the location at night shouting Islamophobic slogans like "F*** Allah" and "Go back home". The attack resulted in four people being injured – they had to go to the hospital for medical treatment.⁴



Figure 1: A photo of a violent attack against a shelter for unaccompanied refugee children and young people in Thessaloniki on December 26, 2020.⁵

The network's report is published in the summer of the following year. That is the reason why in our report we include data from the previous year - in this case, data for 2020.

^{4. &}quot;Thessaloniki: Attack against a place for refugee children in Oraiokastro," Voria.gr, 27 December 2020, https://cutt.ly/cHZoPdA (Access date: 23 May 2022).

^{5.} Photo from Voria.gr https://cutt.ly/cHZoPdA (Access date: 23 May 2022).

One of the most important discursive incidents took place in January 2021 when the Archbishop of the Orthodox Church of Greece, Ieronymos, gave an interview for a television programme dedicated to the 200-year anniversary of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 against the Ottomans and the role of the Church in the revolution. In this interview, the archbishop argued that "Islam, and its followers, are not a religion; it is a political party and they are the people of war".6 This statement produced a great number of reactions inside and outside the country. The elected Muftiates of Thrace in Northern Greece, where the oldest Muslim community lives, reacted arguing that "the image which the archbishop used in order to describe our religion does not comply with the reality in our country and insults our religious sentiments". At the same time, the Al-Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism (AOCE) and the International Union of Muslim Scholars also issued public statements in order to protest.8 The Archdiocese of Athens tried to revise this statement arguing that the archbishop was referring exclusively to extremist Muslims, but did not convince Muslim communities since this argument was never mentioned during the interview and the statement about Islam and Muslims was clearly Islamophobic.

Another issue that caused huge debates was *The Walk* of little Amal, a giant puppet travelling 8,000 km in support of refugees. During its procession through many regions of Greece, local political and religious authorities reacted and, in some instances, denied permission to any public events that were organised, including the walk itself. In Kalampaka, Central Greece, which is a famous for its many Orthodox Christian monasteries, the mayor argued that although the people and the authorities are not racists, they cannot accept a 'Muslim doll' in their town, because the region is a religious tourism destination. The local Bishop of Meteora sent a letter to the mayor and the director of the antiquities agency arguing,

We do not allow the realisation and filming of similar activities inside the sanctuary of the Holy Meteora, but also in any other surrounding religious space of our Holy Metropolis Stagon and Meteoron, as they are not in line with the religious character and cultural tradition of the area.¹¹

 [&]quot;Archbishop Ieronymos: Islam is not a religion but a political party, its citizens are the people of war", newsbeast.gr, 14 January 2021, https://bit.ly/3m64SVn (Access date: 23 May 2022).

 [&]quot;Archbishop Ieronymos: The statement about Islam that 'set fire' to Turkey and the clarifications from the Archdiocese", tovima.gr, 18 January 2021, https://bit.ly/3DWFh76 (Access date: 23 May 2022).

^{8. &}quot;Al-Azhar denounces Greek Archbishop's controversial statements on Islam", egypttoday.com, 20 January 2021, https://bit.ly/3EZAvHk (Access date: 23 May 2022).

^{9.} https://cutt.ly/7KWJTYA, (Access date: 13 December 2021).

^{10. &}quot;Meteora said a definite 'no' to the 'refugee girl Amal: 'We are a religious destination", tvxs.gr, 25 August 2021, https://bit.ly/3sbMP3I (Access date: 23 May 2022).

 [&]quot;Strong reactions in Kalampaka about the arrival of Amal – the Metropolis says 'no' to the filming inside the Holy Meteora", Orthodoxia News Agency, https://cutt.ly/HHZdAak 20 August 2021 (Access date: 23 May 2022).

Similar reactions took place in other parts of Greece such as Larissa and Athens, either by Greek Orthodox religious fundamentalist groups or by extreme-right political parties and groups. (Figs 2 and 3)



Figure 2: Demonstration in Larissa against The Walk of Amal.¹²

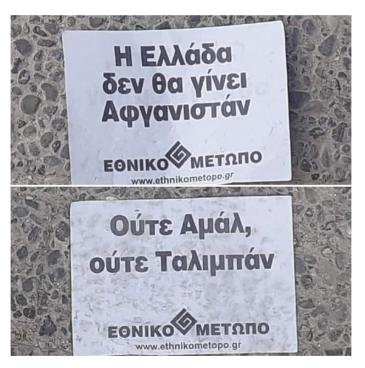


Figure 3: Leaflets against Amal from the extreme-right party National Front (Ethniko Metopo). Above reads, "Greece will not become Afghanistan" and below, "Neither Amal, nor Taliban".¹³

^{12.} Photo from press-gr.com https://cutt.ly/iKWJnsP (Access date: 23 May 2022).

^{13.} Photo by A. Sakellariou.

Finally, in September, more than 160 university professors, former military personnel, journalists, and other public figures published an open letter in a marginal alt-right newspaper about the demographic problem and homosexuality. In this letter, they argued that it is disrespectful to the fatherland to support ideas and suggestions that immigrants of a different origin and religion [i.e., Muslims] could assist in solving the country's demographic problem.¹⁴

Employment

Due to the lack of any official data on religious discrimination in the job market, it is not possible to provide an overview of this field. Based on the available sources, media, and personal communication, no such incidents were recorded at any official level (NGOs and/or the state authorities) nor was there any relevant media coverage.

Education

The Ministry of Education took no Islamophobic decisions in 2021. As in the previous years, the ministry continued to implement education programmes for refugee children, although with serious cuts in funding and infrastructure. Reactions from the part of the parents were very limited probably for three reasons. First, refugee and immigrant flows have been limited in the last two years; second, the pandemic has been the primary issue of concern for the vast majority of the population; and third, society has accepted migrants children's presence in schools and the necessity to be educated. However, a few reactions were recorded. In the municipality of Volvi, in the broader region of Thessaloniki, some locals reacted against the refugee school functioning in the region, although the vast majority of the population embraced the more than 100 refugee children studying in the school. Furthermore, twice this year, in May and June, unknown groups attacked the school and caused severe damages to the infrastructure resulting to serious obstacles in the educational process. Teachers and locals alike believe members of the extreme right were behind the attack based on their previous reactions against the school's establishment. 15 In another case, in Mytilini, a small number of parents reacted against the provision that nine children from Afghanistan and Syria would attend the local high school by organising a demonstration.¹⁶

Politics

In the field of politics, most Islamophobic incidents come either from the political party Elliniki Lyssi (Hellenic Solution) or from a couple of MPs of the ruling right-

^{14. &}quot;Letter of 160 'personages' against LGBTQ- what it says", *aftodioikisi.gr*, 10 September 2021, https://bit.ly/31TBAlY (Access date: 20 May 2022).

^{15.} Apostolos Lykesas, "They vandalised twice the refugee school in Volvi", Efimerida ton Syntakton, 13 June 2021, https://cutt.ly/QHPm9d9 (Access date: 20 May 2022).

^{16.} Anthi Pazianou, "They react against refugees' education", Kathimerini, 6 February 2021, https://cutt.ly/sHPESXE (Access date: 20 May 2022).

wing party Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy). In September, an MP of Nea Dimocratia, who was later expelled from the party for his extreme views and behaviour, through his Twitter account reproduced a children's list from a kindergarten in Athens, initially published by a news website. The list included a majority of foreign names and surnames, and the purpose was to underline the alleged alienation of Greek society by the large number of Muslim immigrants and refugees. The publication of the list caused huge reactions from political parties and human rights organisations, and the intervention of a district attorney since it involved the personal data of minors.¹⁷

The political party Elliniki Lyssi (Hellenic Solution) and its leader Kyriakos Velopoulos have been a major agent in reproducing Islamophobic discourse in the political sphere. In September, Velopoulos asked a question in the parliament about the implementation of halal slaughter in Greece asking the Minister of Agriculture if he intends to ban halal, because, among other arguments, the "Orthodox Christian faith is incompatible with such a method of slaughtering animals". ¹⁸ In another intervention, among the many against Islam and Muslims, the party issued a public announcement arguing the following:

At a time when Europe is rocked by unprecedented Islamist terrorist attacks, the prime minister's anti-nativist [against the local population] government welcomes illegal immigrants, some of whom are now (proven) dangerous. HELLENIC SOLUTION demands the transfer of all illegal immigrants to uninhabited island structures until their deportation. Negligence is a great national danger. 19

Other smaller political parties of the extreme right are also reproducing Islamophobia. Ellines gia tin Patrida (Greeks for the Fatherland) and its leader Ilias Kassidiaris, former MP of Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn) and now in prison after the party's conviction as a criminal organisation, issued a number of public announcements against Islam and the "Islamisation" of Greece. In one of those it is argued,

The Islamisation of the country moves very fast from Mitsotakis [the current PM] and those surrounding him. The only national choice is GREEKS [for the Fatherland]. The true resistance against their anti-Greek plans. The voice of truth, patriotism, and the fight for our Faith and Fatherland.²⁰

Another party of the former Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn), – MP Ioannis Lagos, who is in prison for the same reason as Kassidiaris and a member of Ethniki Laiki

^{17. &}quot;The site MeaCulpa stigmatised small children and Bogdanos fights back and threatens", topontiki.gr, 15 September 2021, https://bit.ly/3GKblwT (Access date: 23 May 2022).

^{18. &}quot;Horror in our plates from Greek companies which produce food implementing Halal", elliniki-lisi.gr, 1 September 2021, https://cutt.ly/DHZnNbK (Access date: 23 May 2022).

 [&]quot;Out of control Islamists are a danger for Greece", elliniki-lisi.gr, 16 October 2021, https://cutt.ly/9HZQlFy (Access date: 23 May 2022).

 [&]quot;The Islamisation of the country by Nea Dimocratia. 'Dance' of millions of euros for illegal immigration!", Ellines.net, 28 May 2021, https://cutt.ly/WH0uzns (Access date: 25 May 2022).

Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness) that emerged after the dissolution of Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn), reproduces Islamophobia through a number of public announcements and press releases. In one such case, the party asked the Greek people to vote against the "Islamisation" of the country sending a letter to the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. (Fig. 4) The open letter states,

We are Greek citizens who are concerned and react to the growing Islamisation of our country through the coordinated settlement of Muslim illegal immigrants. This letter is a cry of agony from all of us who see our Fatherland in just a few years changing her physiognomy and demographically altered with dramatic effects in all areas of life. International experience has shown that illegal immigrants from developing countries of Asia and Africa are never assimilated, are responsible for the rapid increase in crime and create ghettos in the areas where they settle.²¹



Figure 4: The image accompanying the petition sent by the far-right Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness) to President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.²²

Furthermore, the party supported and participated in demonstrations against the so-called Islamisation of Greece and the presence of *The Walk* in Greece, especially in Athens. (Figs. 5 and 6) The party argued that "Amal insults our religion and Orthodoxy" and is not welcomed because "Athens will not become Kabul".²³



Figure 5: An image accompanying Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi's announcements for its demonstrations: "No to the Islamisation of our fatherland".²⁴

^{21. &}quot;Sign you too: No to the Islamisation and colonisation of Greece", 6 June 2021, elasyn.com, https://cutt.ly/aH0seiC (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{22.} https://cutt.ly/aH0seiC (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{23. &}quot;Elasyn says 'no' to the Islamisation of our fatherland", elasyn.com, 1 September 2021, https://cutt.ly/aH0seiC (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{24.} https://cutt.ly/TH0dPeE (Access date: 25 May 2022).



Figure 6: An image accompanying Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi's announcements for a demonstration: "Amal is not welcomed. Athens will not become Kabul".²⁵

Moreover, on September 27, Muslim and non-Muslim residents of Xanthi found flyers by the party Golden Dawn warning them about the growing number of immigrants by indirectly referring to the increasing number of Muslims. (Fig. 7)



Figure 7: Flyer of Golden Dawn reading, "It depends on you whether your child will be a minority in your own country". 26

^{25.} Ibid

^{26.} https://cutt.ly/WKWJJoG (Access date: 28 May 2022).

Media

Islamophobic views and articles are very regularly published in extreme-right newspapers such as *Makeleio*, *Stohos*, *Eleftheros Kosmos*, *Eleftheri Ora*, and *Chryssi Avgi*, which are among the most well-known and influential in the extreme-right milieu. In most of the cases the main issues are the so-called "illegal migration" and the perceived threat to the Greek nation and society, and its cultural alienation. However, even mainstream media have been reproducing Islamophobic opinion pieces and articles. In November 2021, the newspaper *Paraskinio* (Backstage) published a front page with the title "Invasion of Jihadists in Greece". (Fig. 8) In the article, however, it is mentioned that there was only one arrest of a former ISIS fighter and that the National Intelligence Service has authored a report about the possibility that ISIS fighters would try to enter Greece as refugees after the rise to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan. It also argued that a couple of other people are under surveillance. Overall, the article is very vague and offers no evidence of an "invasion", which clearly was chosen to create a sense of panic.²⁷



Figure 8: Front page of newspaper *Paraskinio* (November 13, 2021): "A Revealing Confidential Report by EYP [Greece's National Intelligence Service]. 'Invasion' of Greece by Jihadists".

Dimocratia (Democracy), another right-wing newspaper, published a front page with the main question "Why Are Illegal Mosques Not Being Shut Down?" (Fig. 9)

^{27.} Kostas Papadopoulos, "Jihadists suspects in the dragnet of EYP", Paraskinio, 13 November 2021, p. 13.



Figure 9: Front page of newspaper *Dimocratia* (November 3, 2021): "Why Are Illegal Mosques Not Being Shut Down? Who Protects Them?"

In the article, it is argued that Muslims in Greece are acting beyond the law and nobody controls them because they are still active illegal mosques in the country although the Athens New Mosque opened its doors a year ago. Such illegal mosques, according to the article, are on the rise, although no specific data and information are offered; and all this "has turned part of Athens into Mecca".²⁸

Finally, the centrist newspaper *Ta Nea* (The News) published an allegedly revealing article about the presence of ISIS and "ISIS brides" in Greece on their front page. (Fig. 10)



Figure 10: The front page of the newspaper *Ta Nea*: "Bomb'-research: Brides of ISIS in Greece?"²⁹

^{28. &}quot;They opened the legal mosque in Eleonas but they never closed the illegal ones", Dimocratia, 3 November 2021, https://cutt.ly/tHPZYLq (Accessed date: 20 may 2022).

Photo by A. Sakellariou.

The article, however, is vague and full of misinformation. No specific information is mentioned about the alleged company which plays the role of intermediate between young girls and ISIS, and the analysis is accompanied by vague words like "maybe", "perhaps", "probably", etc. In addition, the author conflated ISIS with the Taliban in his analysis resulting in serious doubts about the motives of the article, which clearly aims to stir panic among the newspaper's readers.

Finally, the monthly periodical *Hellenic Nexus* published an issue about Islam in Europe and the so-called related threats. (Fig. 11)



Figure 11: Front page of magazine *Hellenic Nexus*: "Europe in the Shadow of Islam: The West Confronting the 'Fifth Column' of the East". 30

Even so-called progressive and liberal media, such as the newspaper *Kathimerini* (The Daily) and the website *Liberal.gr*, have published articles and opinion pieces with a clear Islamophobic content. In one such example, the author discusses the need to protect the European way of life.

But this behaviour of yours [Muslims] can explain the reaction of all those who now feel that the European culture is threatened, the European way of life. When slaughtering or shooting those with whom you disagree, then it makes sense to provoke a rally with the demand either to adapt to the way we live, respecting the rules that govern our lives, or we will say, 'Goodbye, go to your homes'. Those of you who really feel like you live in an open prison have no choice but to leave. We will be happy to shake a handkerchief. But to turn Europe into a Muslim region is self-evident that we will never allow.³¹

Kathimerini, a liberal newspaper, has also published articles of similar content reproducing and defending terms such as 'Islamo-leftism'.³²

^{30.} Photo by A. Sakellariou.

^{31.} Sakis Moumtzis, "If you don't like our culture, go home", Liberal.gr, 15 May 2021, https://cutt.ly/gHPBfbE (Access date: 20 May 2022).

^{32.} See for example Takis Theodoropoulos "Immigrants, the Left and political correctness", Kathimerini, 4 April 2021, https://cutt.ly/FHPVBUz (Access date: 20 May 2022).

Justice System

When it comes to the justice system, Islamophobic cases mentioned either by Muslims themselves or reported in the media are not recorded. On the other hand, the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM)³³ has proceeded to a series of lawsuits against individuals, such as politicians and journalists, who reproduce Islamophobic rhetoric and hate speech in their public discourse, for example in texts, articles, and the Internet.³⁴ In December 2021, a Greek court sentenced the editor of *Makeleio*, an extreme-right newspaper, for a racist front page targeting Pakistanis published back in 2017, after a lawsuit by the GHM. The sentence was six months in prison and a fine of 5,000 Euros.³⁵

The Council of State in October published a decision (1751/2021)³⁶ with which the Joint Ministerial Decision No. 951/44337/21.4.2017 with regard to kosher and halal procedures has been deemed to be non-compliant with the existing legal framework regarding the respect and protection of animals. This decision caused reactions from both Muslim and Jewish organisations, and it is considered that it will create serious problems in their everyday lives and in accomplishing their religious duties. However, since the decision was initially published and until the end of 2021, the decision had not been officially announced and published in full to the responsible state authorities; the legal status has not changed; and there has been no information regarding any governmental initiatives in the direction of solving this problem.

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.³⁷ 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

^{33.} The Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), founded in 1993, monitors, publishes, lobbies, and litigates on human and minority rights and anti-discrimination issues in Greece and, from time to time, in the Balkans. It also monitors Greek and, when opportunity arises, Balkan media for stereotypes and hate speech. For information see https://cutt.ly/IKWKiy2 (Access date: 20 May 2022).

For all these legal cases, see the GHM racist crimes watch blog https://cutt.ly/ZgkwtYr (Access date: 20 May 2022).

^{35.} Panayote Dimitras, "The conviction of Makeleio on xenophobia after a GHM lawsuit", Greek Helsinki Monitor, 15 December 2021, https://cutt.ly/PHPUnzR (Access date: 20 May 2022).

^{36.} For the abstract of the decision: https://cutt.ly/BH3Dh0b (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{37.} 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, https://cutt.ly/rKWJNH5 (Access date: 25 May 2022).

reliable, and to argue that there is a threat for the "Islamisation" of Greece. 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 Golden Dawn (GD) *xrisiavgi.com*; *ethnikismos.net*/ which is related to GD, since many articles appear on both websites; the websites of other extreme-right parties such as *elasyn.com* and *elliniki-lisi.gr*/; 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*/, *make-leio.gr*/, *elora.gr*/*portall*/, and *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, Muslims, and the construction of the mosque in Athens. A couple of examples include a Facebook page about 'illegal' migrants and the danger they constitute to Greece under the name "Lathro" which means "smuggled" or "illegal" – *lathro* is the first part of the word *lathrometanastis* which means illegal, smuggled migrant in Greek; and another page under the name "Islam in front of our doors" underlying the danger of Islam for Greece and the Greek culture.³⁸

In addition, it has to be noted that fake news with regard to Islam and Muslims, and, more particularly, migrants and refugees are continuously reproduced especially in social media. In most of the cases the fake news is about migrants and refugees on the Greek islands and about the way other countries, such as Japan, are dealing with Islam. Almost all of these stories are disseminated via extreme-right blogs, websites, and social media pages. In many cases, they have been exposed as fake news by a Greek website debunking hoaxes and fake news.³⁹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In the above sections some of the most important figures in the Islamophobia network have been already mentioned, especially when it comes to the extreme right, e.g., Kyriakos Velopoulos, Ilias Kassidiaris, Giannis Lagos, and others. However, apart from the extreme right, another field where one can find some of the key Islamophobic figures is that of neo-liberalism, e.g., Thanos Tzimeros, the leader of Dimiourgia Xana (Creation Again), who has also been mentioned above. Another central figure is Andreas Andrianopoulos, a neo-liberal and former minister with the right-wing party Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy). In the last years, he has been writing articles, books, and making lots of comments on Facebook and mainly

^{38.} See https://cutt.ly/LKWJ3zM, https://cutt.ly/lgkwj9J, https://cutt.ly/dKWKeuX (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{39.} See for example, Spyridoula Markou, "The images do not show the murder of Christian children by Islamists", Ellinika Hoaxes, 15 February 2021, https://cutt.ly/dH110Wa (Access date: 25 May 2022).

on Twitter openly expressing his anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim views and suggestions. His opinion pieces are also hosted in mainstream online news media like *in.gr.*⁴⁰

Ilias Kssidiaris, a former MP of Golden Dawn who is now in prison after Golden Dawn's conviction as a criminal organisation and who formed his own political party Ellines gia tin Patrida (Greeks for the fatherland), published a book under the title *The Crusade against Islam: The One-Thousand-Year Fight of the Greeks against Turkish Barbarity.* (Fig. 12)

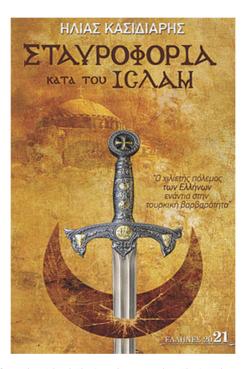


Figure 12: The front cover of Kassidiaris's book *The Crusade against Islam: The One-Thousand-Year Fight of the Greeks against Turkish Barbarity* with a sword stabbing a crescent.⁴¹

The book reproduces the typical stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, and presents Islam as Greece's main enemy and threat especially in relation to Turkey.

Another book with the title *Islamic Vespers* published in 2021 by an extreme-right blogger and former member of Golden Dawn offered a similar content, reproducing the Great Replacement theory and so-called threats associated with the Muslim presence in Europe. (Fig. 13)

^{40.} Some of his articles are: "The ideology of Jihad", in.gr, 1 September 2021, https://cutt.ly/rH173tf (Access date: 25 May 2022), "The population advantage of Islam", in.gr, 23 August 2021 https://cutt.ly/1H17VPd (Access date: 25 May 2022). For the public discourse of some liberal public intellectuals see A. Sakellariou (2021), Public Intellectuals and Islamophobia in Greek Society: Entrenching the Discourses of Fear, Religions, 12 (11), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110995 (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{41.} Photo by A. Sakellariou.



Figure 13: The book cover of *Islamic Vespers* showing a half-naked woman inside a destroyed Orthodox church.⁴²

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There were three main initiatives observed in 2021 by civil society and the state authorities related to tackling Islamophobia. In December 2020, after many delays, the Ministry of Justice published of the National Plan against Racism and Bigotry. The project was funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union and included the first state document on human rights and racism that includes and defines Islamophobia. The plan includes actions towards this direction such as seminars for prison guards about the principles of Islam; however, these are very few and should be multiplied in the future.

Another initiative came from Karpos - Centre for Education and Intercultural Communication which through the project "Get the Trolls Out" in January 2021 organised a workshop on "Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech", including Islam-ophobia. ⁴⁵ The target group was mainly journalists, and the focus was on racism and hate speech in the media and especially on social media and the Internet.

^{42.} https://cutt.ly/5H0hBGJ (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{43.} https://cutt.ly/7H3J0DK (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{44. &}quot;Islamophobia" is defined as a fear or prejudiced view towards Islam, Muslims, and the issues that concern them. It can take the form of everyday forms of racism and discrimination or more violent practices.

^{45.} https://cutt.ly/tH3LLjH (Access date: 25 May 2022).

Finally, in December 2021, in Kavala, Northern Greece, there was a presentation of the translation into Greek of the guide *Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes - Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities: A Practical Guide*, ⁴⁶ published by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. State authorities attended the event and made an address.

Along with the abovementioned steps, it is useful to underline two main state-sponsored developments in 2021 as a positive development regarding Muslims in Greece. First, a total number of 201 Muslim bodies, belonging to people who used to live in the region during Ottoman times, were discovered in the village of Simantra/Gargara in the province of Chalkidiki. The discovery occurred during the construction works of a gymnasium in the garden of the village school. As a show of respect, Greek authorities allowed the reburial of the bones based on the Islamic burial practices in a separate place inside the municipal cemetery. A marble engraved slate was positioned in front of the burial site indicating the burial of the Muslim inhabitants of the village. (Fig. 14)



Figure 14: The marble slate with Turkish and Greek script: "Place of burial and remembrance of the old Muslim inhabitants of Karkara". 48

^{46.} https://cutt.ly/CH3ZfIZ (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{47.} Panagiotis Savvidis, "Reburial of 201 bones of Muslims in Chalkidiki", Protho Thema, 8 December 2021, https://cutt.ly/6KWH1fN (Access date: 25 May 2022).

^{48.} https://cutt.ly/SKWHHDR (Access date: 21 June 2022).

Second, an official approval for the opening of a house of gathering and worship for Alevite Muslims was granted for the first time in the history of modern Greece. In mid-April 2021, the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs granted the official permission for the functioning of the first *cemevi* in Greece located in the village of Mega Derio in the highlands of the Evros subregion of Western Thrace.⁴⁹

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Based on the above descriptive analysis it could be argued that Islamophobia in Greece for 2021 is at almost the same level as in previous years, although the lack of statistical data makes comparisons a difficult task. Islamophobia is primarily manifested in public discourse; by groups of Greek citizens demonstrating against the "Islamisation" of the country; programmes of political parties and politicians mainly of the extreme-right; among higher clergy members of the Orthodox Church of Greece; and on different platforms of the Greek media, particularly, the Internet and social media which are fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia. However, it is important to underline that Islamophobia in Greece is found also among self-proclaimed political and/or economic liberals and not only on the extremes of the political continuum. 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 be displayed, but were smaller in number and had less of an impact on other parents compared to former years. As a consequence, what comes out at the moment is that 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 both the levels of discourse and physical attacks. Towards this direction a first step would be the collaboration of existing state mechanisms and civil society networks in order to achieve a better
level of Islamophobia monitoring.

Apostolos Lakasas, "House of worship for Alevites in Thrace", Kathimerini, 14 April 2021, https://cutt.ly/iK-WHL1t (Access date: 20 June 2022).

- Second, the legal mechanism in Greece is not effectively tackling Islamophobia and the Greek law is not robust enough to discourage Islamophobic actions and more specifically hate speech.
- Third, the Orthodox Church of Greece should not only publicly disapprove
 of its metropolitans who insist on using Islamophobic discourse, but also effectively discourage any attempt of reproduction of anti-Muslim hatred by its
 clerics.
- Fourth, even though Islam is an old religion in Greece dating back to the Ottoman times and the 14th century, knowledge about the fundamentals of Islam and Muslims remains highly limited, which provides another space for Islam-ophobia 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.
- Sixth while the National Action Plan against Racism and Bigotry is an important development, further initiatives should be taken in order to tackle Islamophobia at every state level in a more concrete and well-organised way. Fragmented decisions and initiatives might lose any positive effect without continuation and consistency.

Chronology⁵⁰

- **14.12.2020:** Publication of the National Plan against Racism and Bigotry from the Ministry of Justice which includes Islamophobia.
- 26.12.2020: Violent attack against a shelter for unaccompanied refugee children and young people in Oraiokastro, Thessaloniki.
- 13.1.2021: Archbishop Ieronymos gives an interview for a television programme dedicated to the 200-year anniversary of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 arguing that "Islam, and its followers, are not a religion; it is a political party and they are the people of war".
- 19.01.2021: Karpos Centre for Education and Intercultural Communication organised an online workshop for monitoring hate speech on social media including Islamophobia.

^{50.} A couple of developments took place in December 2020 and were not included in the previous report. For this reason and so as they do not fall through the cracks, we have included them here.

- 05.02.2021: Demonstration against refugee children attending local highschool in Mytilini.
- 19.05.2021: Attack against a refugee school in Volvi.
- **06.06.2021:** Petition of Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness) against the alleged "Islamisation" of Greece.
- **07.06.2021:** Attack against a refugee school in Volvi (second time).
- 19.8.2021: Reactions against *The Walk* of Amal in Kalampaka.
- 03.09.2021: Demonstration against *The Walk* of Amal in Athens.
- 10.09.2021: Letter of 160 "personages" against immigrants and refugees.
- 14.09.2021: Ruling party MP reproduces a children's list from a kindergarten in Athens in order to underline the alleged alienation of Greek society by the large number of Muslim immigrants and refugees.
- 26.10.2021: The Council of State in October published a decision (1751/2021) with which the Joint Ministerial Decision No. 951/44337/21.4.2017 with regard to kosher and halal procedures has been deemed to be non-compliant with the existing legal framework regarding the respect and protection of animals.
- 10.12.2021: Presentation of the Greek translation of the ODIHR guide *Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities*.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN HUNGARY NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

Historically, Hungary has had a small but well-integrated community of Muslims living within its borders. Prior to the 2015 "refugee crisis" and the start of a rampant government campaign targeting Muslim migrants, the Islamic community in Hungary coexisted with relative ease within the broader population. Since 2015, the so-called threat of Muslim migrants "flooding" Hungary and shattering its Christian foundations continues to frame a political discourse that has brought Islamophobia from the periphery into the center of public debate. As the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on anti-Muslim hatred recently found, the numbers of Muslims in Hungary continue to remain fairly low, with a reported population of approximately 50,000 in 2020 (less than 0.5% of the total population).1

With the continued rise of a conservative right-wing movement in Hungary, populist forces are mobilizing against so-called gender ideology, in which the eye of the state is fixated upon gay, queer, and progressive women's activism, including scholar-ship that challenges normative assumptions about gender and sexuality. Using an increasingly state-controlled media apparatus, Bianka Vida and other researchers have found that Prime Minister Victor Orbán's populist government party (Fidesz) is using "gender ideology" as a rhetorical tool to mobilize hate under the banner of fighting back what they consider to be the interference of Brussels and the European Union in the political, cultural, and social life of Hungarians.²

This report investigates discursive events in connection with anti-Muslim attitudes in Hungary during 2021 and aims to put them into their domestic and transnational contexts by drawing upon a survey of relevant media and political discourses as well as interviews with NGO workers and members of the Muslim community in Budapest.

In the same year, 1,206 persons designated 1% of their personal income tax to the Hungarian Islamic Community, and 1,015 persons to the Muslim Church of Hungary. UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, "Hungarian contribution to report of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on anti-Muslim hatred/"Islamophobia" and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief"," 25 February 2021, A/HRC/46/30, https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/report-countering-islamo-phobiaanti-muslim-hatred-eliminate-discrimination-and, (Access date: 30 March 2021).

Bianka Vida, "New waves of anti-sexual and reproductive health and rights strategies in the European Union: the anti-gender discourse in Hungary, Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters," 27:2 (2019): 13-16, DOI: 10.1080/26410397.2019.1610281. See also, István Bereznay, "Viktor Orbán also spoke about gays and Muslims in his Thursday morning interview," *Index.hu*, 2 April 2020, https://index.hu/belfold/2021/02/04/orban-viktor-nem-szeretne-ha-muszlim-lenne-a-veje/, (Access date: 10 May 2021).

Összefoglaló

Történelmileg Magyarország határain belül egy kis létszámú, jól integrálódott muszlim közösség él. A 2015-ös "menekültválságot" és a muszlim menedékkérőket célzó, agresszív kormányzati kampányt megelőzően a magyarországi iszlám közösség viszonylag konfliktusmentesen élt együtt a szélesebb lakossággal. 2015 óta a kormányzati politikai diskurzus "Magyarországot elárasztó és a keresztény kultúra alapjait veszélyeztető", muszlim migránsokkal fenyegető kampánya az iszlamofóbiát a perifériáról a közbeszéd középpontjába helyezte. Az ENSZ vallás- vagy meggyőződés szabadságával foglalkozó különmegbízottja is hangsúlyozta a muszlimellenes gyűlölet kapcsán, hogy a magyarországi muszlimok száma továbbra is alacsony, 2020-ban a jelentések szerint körülbelül 50 000 fő (a teljes lakosság kevesebb mint 0,5%-a). A magyarországi konzervatív jobboldal folyamatos erősödésével a populista erők az úgynevezett "gender ideológia" ellen mozgósítanak, a kormánypárt a meleg, queer és progresszív női aktivizmust veszi célba, beleértve a nemekkel és szexualitással kapcsolatos normatív elvárásokat megkérdőjelező tudományos közeget is. Vida Bianka és más kutatók is megállapították, hogy az államilag ellenőrzött és finanszírozott médiaapparátust felhasználva, Orbán Viktor miniszterelnök populista kormánypártja (Fidesz) retorikai eszközként használja a "gender-ideológiát" a gyűlölet szítására, arra hivatkozva, hogy "Brüsszel" és az Európai Unió (EU), beleavatkozik a magyarok politikai, kulturális és társadalmi életébe. Ez a jelentés a 2021-es magyarországi muszlimellenes attitűdökkel kapcsolatos diszkurzív eseményeket vizsgálja, hazai és transznacionális összefüggéseikben elhelyezve. Vizsgáljuk a releváns média- és politikai diskurzust, valamint interjúkat készítettünk civil szervezetek munkatársaival és a budapesti muszlim közösség tagjaival.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Hungary

Type of Regime: Parliamentary 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

Total Population: 9,614,740

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 (0.5%), Unaffiliated (18.2%) (Central Statistical Office 2011 census)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 50,579 or 0.4% of the population (Central Statistical Office 2011 census)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Subjective Values Foundation, 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 Violent Organizations: None

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

- Minaret Ban: No

- Circumcision Ban: No

- Burka Ban: No

Introduction

The 2015 "migration crisis" was Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán's catalyst for mobilizing far-right, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma, and fringe populist groups towards a central goal of mainstreaming populism in Hungarian public discourse. In coalition with the other Visegrád Four (V4) countries, Orbán positions himself as the guardian of Europe's borders since he sees himself as fending off the settlement of Muslims in Eastern Europe. Orbán and other party leaders have enabled a mainstreaming of Islamophobic populism which "sanitizes" its anti-Muslim sentiments by openly rejecting anti-Semitism. Ivan Kalmar has written extensively about how Orbán's shift towards authoritarianism in Hungary is enabled partly by a practice of declaring himself and his party as anti-anti-Semitic, thus allowing right-wing politicians, pundits, and state-collaborators to distance themselves from Nazism.³ Sharing this rhetoric on an international stage, Orbán claimed in a statement made in December 2021 regarding Muslims in Bosnia that "if such ideologies become the basis on which the policies of a united Europe are based, then it takes us back to the times when the European unity was to build on similar fascist, Nazi, violent and genocidal ideologies that led to the Holocaust and other horrific crimes."4

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE ODIHR) notes that although Hungary appears to prosecute hate crimes effectively, the law enforcement agencies of Hungary do not record the bias motivations of hate crimes. Specific anti-Muslim threats and acts of violence are not reported from Hungary. What we can glean from the scant reporting by Hungary is that in 2020 there were 100 hate crimes reported, and of these 12 were prosecuted.⁵

Ivan Kalmar, "Islamophobia and Anti-Anti-Semitism: The Case of Hungary and the 'Soros Plot'," unpublished paper, (Access date: 13 May 2022); Ivan Kalmar, "The battlefield is in Brussels': Islamophobia in the Vise grad Four in its global context," Patterns of Prejudice, DOI: 10.1080/0031322X.2018. 1512473.

 [&]quot;Hungary's leader denounced in Bosnia for anti-Muslim rhetoric," Aljazeera.com, 23 December 2021, https:// www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/23/hungarys-pm-denounced-in-bosnia-for-anti-muslim-rhetoric, (Access date: 23 December 2021).

^{5.} UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, "Hungarian contribution to report of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on anti-Muslim hatred/"Islamophobia" and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief"," 25 February 2021, A/HRC/46/30, https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/report-countering-islamophobiaanti-muslim-hatred-eliminate-discrimination-and, (Access date: 30 March 2021).

The US Department of State's survey of residents in the country found 41% did not sympathize with Muslims and 15% did not sympathize with Jews; 49% agreed that Jews had substantial influence on world developments and the economy; and 34% believed the Holocaust received too much attention. Muslim leaders said that while physical assaults were rare, verbal insults were frequent, and there were cases of anti-Muslim discrimination.⁶

Muslim women in hijab continue to be targets of harassment and unwanted attention in Hungary. In addition, converts to Islam report feeling policed by members of their own community. Strategies of resistance include active resistance from both individuals and as a collective. Although there is no hijab ban in Hungary, hijabi women working as teachers reported that it was stressful and difficult to find work as teachers while veiled, and many choose to take off the hijab in order to seek employment and to be less visible. In ongoing research in collaboration with Muslim women in Hungary, Esra Aytar and Peter Bodor suggest that verbal assaults against Muslim women continue to proliferate, bolstered by the hostility and extreme intolerance of the public towards those they view as outsiders.

Employment

Interviews with members of Muslim communities confirmed the findings of the earlier reports, namely that discrimination in the workplace is not prevalent, mostly because Muslim employees do not openly reveal or practice their religion.

Education

There are no independent Muslim schools operating in Hungary, mostly owing to the size of the community. Hungary's established Muslim communities have the option of organizing religious education in state schools and within their own congregation for which it is possible to receive a subsidy. There are a number of Muslim students studying in Hungary, with scholarships provided by the *Stipendium Hungaricum* program, which reported providing scholarships for 150 Turkish students annually.⁸

U.S. Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, "2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Hungary," 12 May 2021, https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/hungary/, (Access date: 20th May 2021).

Esra Aytar e Peter Bodor, "Discourses of being a Muslim woman in contemporary Hungary and the *hijab* paradox," *Quaderni di Sociologia* [Online], 80 (2019), online 01 March 2020, http://journals.openedition.org/qds/2609, (Access date: 13 May 2022).

^{8.} UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, "Hungarian contribution to report of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on anti-Muslim hatred/"Islamophobia" and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief"," 25 February 2021, A/HRC/46/30, https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/report-countering-islamophobiaanti-muslim-hatred-eliminate-discrimination-and, (Access date: 30 March 2021).

Politics

I am doing my best to convince Europe's great leaders that the Balkans may be further away from them than from Hungary, but how we manage the security of a state in which 2 million Muslims live is a key issue for their security too.⁹

- Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán

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, remains strong. 10 Conspiracy theories linked to migrants and Muslims in Hungary, including the infamous Soros Plan, are popular rhetorical devices that are frequently employed in national and local media and pro-government sources. 11 Senior government officials continue to confirm what they call a commitment to "Christian Europe." Members of radical right-wing and neo-Nazi groups were again allowed to commemorate Nazis and their collaborators who resisted the Soviet Army in 1945 during the siege of Budapest. State-supported media sources covered the ceremonies which were replete with historical uniforms and insignias.¹² Jewish organizations have criticized the proposed House of Fates, a Holocaust museum that attempts to obscure Hungary's role in the Holocaust. A report by the U.S. Department of State suggests that the U.S. ambassador and other embassy officials held meetings with officials from PM Orbán's office, as well as with local Jewish groups and religious leaders to address issues of religious freedom and tolerance, discussing provisions of the religion law, anti-Semitism, and anti-Muslim rhetoric.



Figure 1: Government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs, Twitter, 21 December 2021, 12.01 p.m.¹³

^{9. &}quot;Hungary's leader denounced in Bosnia for anti-Muslim rhetoric," *Aljazeera.com*, 23 December 2021, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/23/hungarys-pm-denounced-in-bosnia-for-anti-muslim-rhetoric, (Access date: 23 December 2021).

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).

^{11.} Vit Novotny, "The 'Soros Plan': What to Keep and What to Scrap," *eurobserver*, 28 November 2017, https://euobserver.com/opinion/140053, (Access date: 4 February 2020).

U.S. Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, "2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Hungary," 12 May 2021, https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/hungary/, (Access date: 20th May 2021).

^{13.} Zoltan, Kovacs (@zoltanspox). "The challenge with Bosnia is how to integrate a country with 2 million Muslims." Twitter, 21 December 2021. https://twitter.com/zoltanspox/status/1473247333362061323. (Access date: 12 June 2022).

Government spokesman, Zoltan Kovacs, made waves in December 2021 when he tweeted, "The challenge with Bosnia is how to integrate a country with 2 million Muslims." Kovacs' tweet followed a long speech by Hungarian PM Orbán, in which he angered Bosnian officials and religious leaders by calling attention to the "enlargement fatigue that has taken hold of the European Union."14 Also, Orbán said that he believes "migration should be stopped because only Muslims are coming, and this is changing the Christian cultural identity of Europe."15 Grand Mufti Husein, head of the Islamic community in Bosnia, called the PM's statement "xenophobic and racist." The painful memories of the civil war between Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats remains fresh in the minds of many, including Sefik Dzaferovic, a member of the country's tripartite presidency, who responded to Orbán's statement by claiming that "it is not a challenge for the EU to integrate 2 million (Bosnian) Muslims, because we are an Indigenous European people who have always lived here and we are Europeans."16 It has also been widely reported that Orbán openly supports the entry of Serbia to the EU, an attempt to consolidate support from Visegrád Four ally Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, whose hardline policies and support from Russia run the risk of reviving a Bosnian Serb army and judiciary, threatening the safety of all Muslims in the region.¹⁷

Marcell Lőrincz, president of the Subjective Values Foundation, suggests that a coordinated action is necessary in which Muslim communities and human rights defenders form a coalition that can perform joint actions if politics again aggressively targets the Muslim community; in his own words, "Politics can anytime bring the topic to the forefront."¹⁸

Media

Media in Hungary is divided along political lines following the remarkable transfer of ownership of 476 media outlets to the Central European Press and Media Foundation (KESMA) in 2018. The United for Hungary coalition has made several public complaints regarding lack of access and an established system of censorship and ex-

 [&]quot;Shameful and rude': Orbán slammed over remark on Bosnia's Muslims," euronews.com, 23 December 2021, https://www.euronews.com/2021/12/23/shameful-and-rude-orban-slammed-over-remark-on-bosnia-s-muslims, (Access date: 13 May 2022).

Siol.net, Orban: S prihodom muslimanov se spreminja krščanska identiteta Evrope, 1 September 2021, https://siol.net/novice/slovenija/orban-s-prihodom-muslimanov-se-spreminja-krscanska-identiteta-evrope-560362 (Access date: 23 March 2022).

^{16. &}quot;Hungary's leader denounced in Bosnia for anti-Muslim rhetoric," *Aljazeera.com*, 23 December 2021, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/23/hungarys-pm-denounced-in-bosnia-for-anti-muslim-rhetoric, (Access date: 23 December 2021).

^{17. &}quot;Orbán is being criticized in Bosnia and Herzegovina for its anti-Muslim rhetoric," *szabadeuropa.hu*, 23 December 2021, https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/muszlimellenes-retorikaja-miatt-biraljak-orbant-bosznia-hercegovinaban/31623036.html, (Access date: 13 May 2022).

^{18.} Interview with Marcell Lőrincz, president of the Foundation of Subjective Values, conducted by Gabi Gőbl, 28 July 2022.

ternal approval of editorial content.¹⁹ Index as a respected and reliable media source came under government attack in 2020 when a forced takeover occurred, once again severely limiting access to non-state-controlled media and communication. In a collective response, over 70 journalists joined Telex, which now operates as one of the only non-state affiliated media platforms in Hungary.²⁰

The confluence of anti-migrant, anti-gender ideology, and Islamophobic sentiments continues to be documented in the following sources: Origo, the rebranded Magyar Nemzet (formerly Magyar Idők), Hír Tv, Echo Tv, PestiTv, and 888.hu. Since 2020, a new venture of the Fidesz-allied strategist Árpád Habony, the bilingual news site V4 New Agency (V4NA), operates as a conglomerate, circulating misinformation between Hungary, Slovenia, and North Macedonia. Conforming to the Fidesz agenda, V4NA acts to corroborate PM Orbán's fantastical views of "a post-apocalyptic wasteland, overrun by hordes of migrants financed by George Soros." V4NA is now one of the top three main sources of right-wing media misinformation that operates in Hungary. Árpád Habony is claimed to be responsible for engineering the last three Fidesz victories in parliament.²¹



Terrort és gyászt hozott a tömeges bevándorlás, Márki-Zay Péter mégis le akarja tagadni

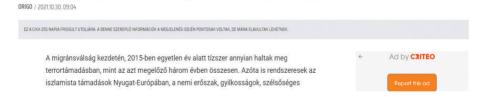


Figure 2: Origo headline during the primaries campaign in 2021: "Mass Immigration Brought Terror and Grief, But Péter Márki-Zay Wants to Deny It." The author accuses the united opposition's prime ministerial candidate of denying that mass migration resulted in terror and grief.²²

^{19.} Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "International Election Observation Mission," 3 April 2022, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/515111.pdf, (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Balint Szalai, "Trying to muzzle Hungary's top news-site was a bad idea," vsquare.org, 23 July 2021, https://vsquare.org/trying-to-muzzle-hungarys-top-news-site-was-a-bad-idea/, (Access date: 25 July 2021).

Márton Sarkadi Nagy, "London-based V4 Agency is Orbán's propaganda machine disguised as global media product," atlatszo.hu, 25 May 2020, https://english.atlatszo.hu/2020/05/25/london-based-v4-agency-is-orbanspropaganda-machine-disguised-as-global-media-product/, (Access date: 25th May 2020).

^{22.} Terrort és gyászt hozott a tömeges bevándorlás, Márki-Zay Péter mégis le akarja tagadni", 13 October 2021, Origo, https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20211028-terrort-hozott-a-tomeges-bevandorlas-marki-zay-megis-eroltetne. html", (Access date: 13 July 2022).

Balázs Bakó, president of the Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, confirmed the tendency in both public discourse and in the media to foster emotionally charged anti-Muslim sentiments..²³ Marcell Lőrincz, president of the Subjective Values Foundation, highlighted Bakó's arguments, adding that at the same time, there was increasingly a more fact-based approach to content related to Islam, and that the printing of outright fabrications was less prevalent than in previous years, although the language is indeed emotionally charged.²⁴

Internet

The majority of media outlets influenced or controlled by the government continue to foster Islamophobic, anti-migrant, racist, xenophobic, and anti-gender narratives.

Justice System

Hungary's Fundamental Law protects freedom of religion, including freedom to choose, change, or manifest religion or belief. The law also forcefully cites "the role of Christianity" in preserving nationhood. The right to information, freedom of association, and freedom of the press have been restricted in recent years, and judicial independence has been weakened by recent legislative changes. Under the current "state of emergency," the government holds extraordinary powers to issue decrees that may restrict certain fundamental rights and freedoms.²⁵ For the purpose of Muslim burial, there are limited spaces available throughout the country.²⁶

The development of a more stringent legal framework of intolerance was initiated ahead of the 2022 Hungarian national election, when the government forced a legal referendum to – as it argued - protect children from LGBTQI+ influences. Parliament adopted a law to shield children from LGBTQI+ propaganda in June 2021, frequently referred to as the "Child Protection Law," which enforces the constitutional amendment of December 2020 that entrenches the heteronormative definition of marriage.²⁷ The Venice Commission, acting on behalf of the European Parliament, called the so-called Child Protection Law another example of state-sponsored discrimination.²⁸ After the adoption of the June 2021 'Child Pro-

Interview with Balázs Bakó, president of the Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, conducted by Gabi Göbl, 14 May 2022.

^{24.} Interview with Marcell Lőrincz, president of Subjective Values Foundation, conducted by Gabi Gőbl, 28 July 2022.

^{25.} Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "International Election Observation Mission," 3 April 2022, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/515111.pdf, (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Interview with Balázs Bakó, president of the Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, conducted by Gabi Göbl, 14 May, 2022.

^{27.} Renáta Uitz, 10 April 2022, "From Shrinking to Closing Civil Society Space in Hungary," VerfBlog, https://verfassungsblog.de/from-shrinking-to-closing-civil-society-space-in-hungary/, (Access date: 10 May 2022).

^{28.} Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "International Election Observation Mission," 3 April 2022, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/515111.pdf, (Access date: 30 April 2022).

tection Law," the European Commission initiated legal action against Hungary for violations of the fundamental rights of LGBTQI+ people, following which Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced his intention to call a referendum. The OSCE ODIHR reports that the referendum questions approved by the parliament in November 2021 urged voters to consider their support for the subjection and promotion of minors to sexual orientation information in public schools or information on, or access to, sex change surgery. This finding echoes the contention of numerous scholars that downgrading gender equality policies and marginalizing their advocates is integral to the current wave of democratic recession across illiberal states in Europe.²⁹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

A pro-government communication apparatus that fuels hatred towards any groups not deemed "Hungarian" or "European" continues to develop in Hungary, including Origo, Magyar Nemzet (formerly Magyar Idők), Hír Tv, Echo Tv, PestiTV, and 888.hu.³⁰

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association in Hungary (Magyar Iszlám Jogvédő Egyesület, MIJE) remains the only Hungarian NGO for Muslim rights in Hungary, cooperating with Hungarian and international NGOs and organizations, such as the Subjective Values Foundation and the Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants. 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. 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. The Hungarian Working Group Against Hate Crimes (GYEM), a team of advocacy group experts, also works in concert with the organizations listed above.

^{29.} Conny Roggeband and Andrea Krizsán, "Democratic backsliding and the backlash against women's rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics," UNWomen.org, No. 35 (2020), https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/discussionpaper-democratic-backsliding-and-the-backlash-against-womens-rights, (Access date: 13 May 2022); Eszter Kovács and Maari Póim eds., Gender as symbolic glue: the position and role of conservative and far right parties in the anti-gender mobilization in Europe, (Budapest: FEPS in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2015).

^{30.} 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).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

We believe that there are grave consequences to the current direction of national and regional right-wing discourses which are feeding xenophobia and intolerance against minorities, people of color, and the small community of Muslims and migrants in Hungary. We reiterate the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's findings, convened by the United Nations General Assembly, calling for Hungary to take immediate action to prevent the incitement and proliferation of racist hate speech, and to "publicly condemn and distance itself from racist hate speech by public figures and strengthen and implement relevant legislation, as well as effectively identify, register, investigate and prosecute cases of racist hate speech or incitement to racial hatred and sanction those responsible."³¹

Our recommendations include an urgent call to the European Commission to hold Hungary accountable for its commitment to the Geneva Convention. This means investigating the limits of an independent judiciary system and restoring freedom of the press and freedom of association. Our report indicates that there is a growing need to hold Hungary accountable to its commitment to EU member state compliance with common values and the rule of law in order to tackle the corruption and political manifestations that contribute to making Hungary a dangerous V4 ally.

Chronology

- **03.03.2021:** Without any legal basis, Hungary's government once again extends the so-called "state of emergency" due to mass migration.³²
- **03.09.2021:** Hungary's government further extends the so-called "state of emergency" due to mass migration.³³
- **15.06.2021:** The so-called Child Protection Act is adopted by the Hungarian parliament. The law conflates sexual minorities with pedophilia and bans gay people from featuring in school educational materials or in television broadcasts dedicated to minors.³⁴

^{31.} United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), "Report from the thirty-ninth session: Compilation on Hungary," A/HRC/WG.6/39/HUN/2, 25 August, 2021, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/234/50/PDF/G2123450.pdf?OpenElement, (Access date: 23 June 2022).

^{32. &}quot;Meghosszabbítja a kormány a tömeges bevándorlás miatti válsághelyzetet," 3 March, 2021, HVG, https://hvg. hu/itthon/20220303_meghosszabbitas_kormany_tomeges_bevandorlas_miatt_valsaghelyzet, (Access date: 23 June 2022).

^{33.} MTI, "A kormány megint meghosszabbítja a tömeges bevándorlás okozta válsághelyzetet," 3 September, 2021, *HVG*, https://hvg.hu/itthon/20210903_kormany_tomeges_bevandorlas_okozta_valsaghelyzet, (Access date: 23 June 2022).

^{34.} Zoltan Kovacs, "Portrayal and promotion – Hungary's LGBTQI+ law explained," 24 June 2021, *Euractiv*, https://www.euractiv.com/section/non-discrimination/news/portrayal-and-promotion-hungarys-latest-anti-lg-bt-law-explained/, (Access date: 23 June 2022).

- **01.09.2021:** PM Viktor Orbán says that he believes "migration should be stopped because only Muslims are coming, and this is changing the Christian cultural identity of Europe."³⁵
- **16.11.2021:** The Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that the "Stop Soros" legislation which criminalizes a number of migration-related activities violates EU law.³⁶
- **23.12.2021:** PM Orbán and his spokesperson claim the future EU integration of Bosnia will be a challenge due to its large Muslim population.³⁷

Zsolt Sarkadi, "Videón, ahogy Orbán azt sulykolja: They are all Muslims," 1 September, 2021, Telex.hu, https://444.hu/2021/09/01/videon-ahogy-orban-azt-sulykolja-they-are-all-muslims, (Access date: 23 June 2022).

^{36.} Maia De La Baume, "Hungarian law criminalizing asylum seeker help breaches EU law, top court rules," *Politico*, 16 November 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-top-court-rules-hungary-breached-eu-law-over-treatment-of-asylum-seekers/, (Access date: 23 June 2022).

^{37.} Euronews, "'Shameful and rude': Orbán slammed over remark on Bosnia's Muslims," 23 December, 2021, *Euronews*, https://www.euronews.com/2021/12/23/shameful-and-rude-orban-slammed-over-remark-on-bosnia-s-muslims, (Access date: 23 June 2022).



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Executive Summary

Drawing from 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 and reported with worrying clarity. The presence of the far right continues to grow in Ireland with connections to their international counterparts. In July, the Eid al-Adha celebration in Dublin's Croke Park attended by government leaders demonstrated a notable shift in recognising the importance of these celebrations for the Muslim community. However, as reported in previous years, responses to such events are not always positive, manifesting as Islamophobic activity both online and offline. In the Irish media, evidence of problematic co-location of terms such as 'Islamic' and 'terrorist' maintain. As in previous years' Islamophobia reports in Ireland, problematic reporting practices continue in mainstream Irish media, including those with the potential to stigmatise Muslim communities. The conflation of religious beliefs and supporting terrorism are widespread in online spaces. This report concludes by noting that much remains to be done to purposefully address Islamophobia within Irish society and politics. This includes introducing revised hate crime/ speech legislation; state-led improvements in the recording and reporting of Islamophobia; and the continued development of initiatives among civil society led by the state as impediments to the growth of the far right.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Ireland

Type of Regime: Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary democracy

Ruling Parties: Coalition of Fine Gael (centre-right), Fianna Fáil – The Republican Party (centrist), Green Party (centrist Green)

Opposition Parties: Sinn Féin, Social Democrats, People Before Profit/Solidarity, Aontú, Labour

Last Elections: General Election 2020 (seats followed percentage of first preference votes): Sinn Féin 37 (24.53%), Fianna Fáil – The Republican Party 38 (22.18%), Fine Gael 35 (20.86%), Green Party 12 (7.13%), Labour 6 (4.38), Social Democrats 6 (2.90%), People Before Profit/Solidarity 5 (2.63%), Independents/Others 21 (15.39%)

Total Population: 5.01 million (April 2021)

Major Languages: Irish, English

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: Due to reliability issues the Irish Central Statistics Office does not currently publish recorded crime data. For 2021, INAR (Irish Network Against Racism) data indicate that "Muslims were targeted in hate speech on 2 reported occasions. (Data from iReport.ie: Reports of Racism in Ireland 2021). Official data for 2021 is unavailable from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 'Hate Crime Reporting Database.'

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). INAR published data for 2021 in July. These included 154 criminal offences, 90 reports of discrimination, and 113 reports concerning hate speech. Of these data, 40 racist assaults were reported; meanwhile, low levels of reporting of such incidents to the police continue with none of those reporting incidents satisfied with the police response. (Data from iReport.ie: Reports of Racism in Ireland 2021).

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholicism (78.3%), No religion (9.8%), Church of Ireland (2.8%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 63,443 (1.3%) in 2016

Main Muslim Community Organizations: In no specific order: Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, Islamic Centre of Ireland, Muslim Association of Ireland, Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre, Irish Sufi Foundation

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: 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 Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

- Minaret Ban: No

- Circumcision Ban: No

- Burka Ban: No

Introduction

The "Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2021" again highlights the realities of anti-Muslim sentiment in Ireland. As reports from previous years have illustrated, attacks both online and offline against individuals foreground the 2021 report. This is followed by a presentation of insights on the Irish media landscape. Following from previous years, the reportage on Muslim communities and individuals continues to be problematic. Simultaneously, a growth in fringe media outlets demonstrates significant anti-Muslim sentiment. From here, the report engages with evidence of online anti-Muslim hostility, before the authors move to reflect on key figures propagating Islamophobia in Ireland. The report concludes with recommendations for recognising and challenging Islamophobia in Ireland going forward.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2021, the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) released its annual report on the experiences of racism in Ireland. The report noted that "61% of crimes, 54% of discrimination and 74% of other racist incidents were not reported to anyone except iReport.ie." These data include reports from Muslims of xenophobic and Islamophobic attacks which revealed instances of discrimination, verbal abuse, physical assault, harassment, and online bullying. This unfortunately does not mark a meaningful change from previous years reports (2019, 2020). Data provided from INAR's third-party reporting mechanism (iReport.ie) for 2021 provide qualitative insights on experiences of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland.³

In one report a witness explained the experiences, published online, of a Muslim person in a direct provision centre. Direct provision is Ireland's current reception system for asylum seekers. Under this system, people are accommodated across the country in communal institutional centres or former hotel style settings. The vast majority of these centres are managed by private contractors on a for-profit basis⁴

A person in direct provision during Ramadan served cold rice and after complaining to the chef told to go back to their jungle if they don't like it. [sic]

Michael L. Reports of Racism in Ireland: Data from iReport.ie – Annual Report2020. Dublin: Irish Network Against Racism, 2021.

Ibid.

The authors thank Shane O'Curry, director of the Irish Network Against Racism, for providing access to the iReport data for 2021.

 [&]quot;Direct Provision," Doras: Promoting and Protecting Human Rights, (May 27, 2021), retrived 17 June 2022, from http://doras.org/direct-provision/.

A second report from a witness described the targeting of women who wore hijab by teenagers in Dublin.

A child about 12 years old shouting racist comments at young adult female while cycling past her on his bike. she was on her own, very distressed and was visiting Dublin to see family [...] He was shouting racist comments to her about wearing hijab.

Similarly, reports including attacks on and hostility towards those wearing hijab was repeatedly featured in the data.

She looked at the woman in the hijab and then turned around and hit only her.

Finally, in an incident that took place in a restaurant, the management intervened to remove a group that had been openly harassing Muslim women.

They targeted the only two Muslim women sitting in a busy restaurant and threw the items over a partition to get them. They were total strangers and there was no verbal exchange between the two before they started hitting them with chips.

Each of these reports share a commonality in that they were unprovoked and took place in public settings. This could signal that Islamophobia is perceived as tolerable by some members of the public who were potentially reluctant to report the incidents or intervene. In addition, these reports also highlight the intersectionality of the discrimination experienced by Muslims in Ireland.

Employment

Data from INAR highlight the experience of an individual who was the subject of racial profiling by their line manager. The conflation of Islam and extremism is apparent in the individual's account.

I started a new job but after a few weeks my leader from [Poland] he asked me a worried questions in front of others: are you come from terrorist countries?

Those who encounter Islamophobic discrimination by employers or colleagues note that discrimination if often ambiguous in that their ethnic or religious beliefs are often assumed and thus present. This could present opportunities for further examination of effective policies and practices in Ireland to combat any such discriminatory behaviours in the workplace.

Education

There were reports of positive practices aimed at creating an anti-discriminatory environment within schools and education institutions.⁵ Secondary school students were

K. Creed, "Women and girls in Ireland celebrate World Hijab Day" RTE News, (February 1, 2022), retrieved April 21, 2022, from https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2022/0201/1277077-world-hijab-day/.

encouraged to celebrate World Hijab Day 2021. Students reported these practices encourage inclusivity and can have the effect of potentially reducing negative prejudices.

Again, data from iReport for 2021 highlight the negative experiences of Muslim students in Irish schools. One report detailed a schoolteacher sharing Islamophobic sentiment in the classroom.

A religion teacher in said school, [name], has repeatedly spoke of his dislike of Muslims.

Strikingly this account details language used in a school context that directly invokes racialised tropes directed against Muslim communities.

Today he said to his class that the world would be better off if Christians had killed all Muslims. This is a constant theme in his class of racist remarks against Muslims, claiming they are all terrorists. I have complained several times to the school and have been ignored and no action taken. He is teaching children to hate Muslims. [...] reported to my child's year head who said she didn't want to hear about it.

The lack of acknowledgement on behalf of school staff is concerning in terms of potential impacts on the health, well-being, and safety of school students.

Moreover, the accountability on behalf of state institutions to prevent experiences such as these could be improved, as will be seen in the recommendations below.

Politics

The year 2021 saw parliamentary by-elections held in certain constituencies, including Dublin Bay South. This constituency was ultimately won by then senator Ivana Bacik with 13,382 votes.⁶ Nonetheless this election resulted in campaigning for Justin Barrett, leader of the right-wing National Party. Barrett received 1.3% of first preference votes, with the National Party campaigning for Barrett under the slogan "Right So Far".

Barret has advocated for the reintroduction of a Catholic Ireland, and previously put forward his anti-immigration perspective. "The refugee advocates are, almost to a man and woman, the abortion advocates, the contraception advocates, the Europhiles, the anti-Catholic bigots. In other words, the whole rotten cabal of the left," he stated. Despite Barrett's unsuccessful by-election bid, the party continues to post on social media, advocating anti-Muslim and anti-immigration policies, criticising local

RTE News, "Live results from the 2021 Dublin Bay South by-election". RTE News, (July 7, 2021), retrieved April 22, 2022, from https://www.rte.ie/news/dublin-bay-south-by-election-2021/results/?msclkid=defdc-421c49311ec847794bc4e66da7e#/constituency.

Arthur Beesley, 'Book rails against whole rotten cabal of the left', The Irish Times, (May 17, 2003), retrieved April 25, 2022, from https://www.irishtimes.com/news/book-rails-against-whole-rotten-cabal-of-the-left-1.359243.

and national politicians and members of government for decisions relating to immigration and the separation of church and state in Ireland. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1: Screen grab of tweets from National Party members criticising reports of immigration policies in 2021.8

Media9

Previous Islamophobia reports noted evidence of problematic language use in Irish media, including the co-location of Muslim/Islam(ic) with terms such as extremist, terrorism, attack etc., potential stigmatising an entire community. As noted in 2020, discussions following terrorist attacks in other European countries¹⁰ follow a 'clash of civilisations' frame that is reductive, including for example, references to "Muslim attackers" and "religious terrorism".

Media reports in response to data released from Europol during 2021 noted "more jihadi-terror related arrests" in Ireland compared to the previous years (2020). Media reporting highlighted the case of Lisa Smith as exemplifying a potential cause-effect

Patrick Quinlan, Twitter post, (December 14, 2021), retrieved April 25, 2022, from https://twitter.com/PQuinlanNP/status/1470882969879515141.

^{9.} In line with previous reports for Ireland in the European Islamophobia Report, an analysis of media in Ireland was undertaken for 2021 using the Nexis online database (https://advance. lexis.com/bisnexishome/?pdmfid =1519360&ccrid=86790095-5897-4a20-aafc-f74a84db668e) (Access date: 19 April 2022). The focus of this analysis was three key issues reported on by Irish media: (1) The ongoing legal case of Lisa Smith, who recently returned from territory formerly controlled by the so-called Islamic State; (2) Muslim communities in the context of Covid-19; (3) 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 31 December 2021; for experiences of Muslim communities in light of Covid-19 restrictions and outbreaks, the search terms used were Islam* OR Muslim* from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021; lastly, 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 the return of the event to Croke Park. The returned articles were subject to analysis. The media publications included in the searches of the Nexis media database were Sunday Independent (Ireland), Sunday Business Post, RTE News (Ireland), The Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner, Irish Daily Mail, Evening Herald (Ireland), and IrishMirror.ie.

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.

illustrated by the co-location of terms 'terrorism', 'attack' 'radicalisation', and 'jihad' with 'Islam/Muslim'. Again, the context of Covid-19 particularly presented possibilities for cause-effect frameworks in reference to engaging with content leading to radicalisation. The publication of Islamophobic speech and online content is outlined in further detail below.

Media coverage of Eid al-Adha celebrations held in Croke Park was largely positive ¹³¹⁴ with reporting noting comments from the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) President Larry McCarthy describing the event as one that "symbolised our ongoing efforts to foster inclusion and diversity". ¹⁵ Attending members of government paid tribute to Muslims in Ireland (the Muslim Sisters of Eire specifically) ¹⁶ for their charitable contributions to the Dublin city community. ¹⁷ Media reporting relating to World Hijab Day noted the celebration of wearing hijab and included personal positive experiences from women of all ages. However, these reports also noted the realities of Islamophobia in Irish society. ¹⁸ The celebration at Croke Park sparked conversation amongst those opposed to the event but these sentiments were largely featured in publications outside of mainstream media. Interestingly, following controversy in 2020, TheLiberal.ie declined to provide coverage of the Eid celebrations in Croke Park. In 2020, articles posted to its website and shared widely on social media were submitted to 'fact check' processes which debunked the claims made in the original article leading to the republication of an edited version. ¹⁹

^{11.} Paul Neilan, "Absolutely gigantic' amount of disclosure ahead of the trial of former Irish Defence Forces member Lisa Smith", *Irish Independent*, (October 20, 2021), retrieved April 17, 2022, https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/absolutely-gigantic-amount-of-disclosure-ahead-of-the-trial-of-former-irish-defence-forces-member-lisa-smith-40968766.html.

^{12.} Robin Schiller, "Gardaí investigating Jihadi terror groups arrested 18 people in Ireland last year", *Irish Independent*, (June 22, 2021), retrieved April 16, 2022, from https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/crime/gardai-investigating-jihadi-terror-groups-arrested-18-people-in-ireland-last-year-40567083.html.

^{13.} GAA.ie, "Croke Park to host the Muslim celebration of Eid Al Adh" *GAA*, (July 12, 2021), retrieved April 21, 2022, from https://www.gaa.ie/news/croke-park-to-host-the-muslim-celebration-of-eid-al-adh/#:~:tex-t=The%20GAA%20is%20pleased%20to,on%20Tuesday%2020th%20July%202021.

RTE News, "Croke Park to host Eid Al Adha for second year in row", RTE News, (July 13, 2021), retrieved April 21, 2022, from https://www.rte.ie/sport/gaa/2021/0713/1234720-croke-park-to-host-eid-al-adha-for-second-year-in-row/.

^{15.} Ibid

^{16.} Muslim Sisters of Eire (MSOE) is a voluntary organisation that provides support to women (in particular Muslim women) and encourages integration for the benefit of society at large, retrieved April 21, 2022, from https://msoe.ie/.

Coleman O'Sullivan "Event held to celebrate Eid al-Adha at Croke Park," RTE News, (July 20, 2021), retrieved April 21, 2022, from https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2021/0720/1236178-eid-al-adha-croke-park/.

^{18.} Sorcha Pollack "World Hijab Day: 'The hijab is a part of me, it's my identity", *The Irish Times*, (February 1, 2021), retrieved April 21, 2022, from https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/world-hijab-day-the-hijab-is-a-part-of-me-it-s-my-identity-1.4473443?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=https%3A%2F%2F-www.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Fsocial-affairs%2Fworld-hijab-day-the-hijab-is-a-part-of-me-it-s-my-identity-1.4473443.

^{19.} Laruen Boland, "FactCheck: No, Croke Park Will Not Be Used for Animal Slaughter during Eid Al Adha," *The Journal.ie*, (July 15, 2020), retrieved April 21, 2022, from https://www.thejournal.ie/eid-al-adha-croke-park-factcheck-5150881-Jul2020/ (emphasis in original).

Justice System

The Minister for Justice Helen McEntee (TD) published the "General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill 2021". This bill will create new, aggravated forms of certain existing criminal offences, where those offences are motivated by prejudice against a protected characteristic. In the Irish context there are nine protected characteristics: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age, race, and membership of the Traveller community. This legislation is expected to be enacted in 2022.²⁰

Internet

Covid-19 restrictions relating to social distancing led to a reduction in the number of in-person events and activities taking place in Ireland in 2021. However, according to Europol, this period also witnessed an expansion of extremist networks and content production online.²¹

Data from iReport²² relate to events that transpired on social media platforms including Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp. These data include verbal and written harassment, misogynistic and sexist insults, and references to terrorism and racial slurs.

One account details the experience of an individual who received unprompted harassment via Facebook Messenger.

I get a message request from this vile racist. This has been tested in EU courts that saying Prophet Mohamed is a paedophile is hate speech. She then went on to describe ME as having sex with anyone whenever I want it. She spelt sex as six, but this is what she meant. She describes vile things that the Qur'an does not say and are wholly untrue. Facebook removed some of her comments as hate speech. So, she wrote to me instead. I have reported the messenger to Facebook but they never seem to act on messenger. This has upset me and my family.

Again, there were difficulties in the reporting of this incident and the recognition of such occurrences as a violation of Facebook's terms of service.

Another report details the experience of a teenager on WhatsApp.

I was in 1st year group chat on what's app on New Year Eve. A boy shared a sexist joke. A girl shared a sexist joke back and I called him 'd!ckhead'. The boy and another from our year started sending videos @me with slurs [sic].

Michael L. Reports of Racism in Ireland: Data from iReport.ie – Annual Report 2020. Dublin: Irish Network Against Racism, 2021.

Europol. European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.

Michael L. Reports of Racism in Ireland: Data from iReport.ie – Annual Report 2020. Dublin: Irish Network Against Racism, 2021.

The report outlines how the individual knew the harassment they were experiencing was Islamophobic in nature because of the language used and the assumptions made about their ethnicity.

They were using being Pakistani and being Muslim as insults. They were suggesting that anyone that is Muslim is a terrorist. I am not even from Pakistan, but they were just using that term to try to offend me.

Media outlets in Ireland reported on the account of an Irish videographer who worked with far-right figure Tommy Robinson. Excerpts from interviews with Caolan Robertson describe the experience of being inducted into YouTube's 'echo chamber': "I formed my worldview based on that, I started to mistrust certain groups of people more, I really started to feel like there was going to be some sort of civil war in European countries in 20 or 30 years because of this growing threat of Islamism". 23 These accounts also detailed editing video footage to present Robinson and others as victims of aggression when they had instigated a confrontation. 24



Figure 2: Screen grab of Twitter posts from Irish Freedom Party account, 2021.²⁵

M. Moloney, "Irishman who escaped the far-right says it was like 'leaving a cult'," Newstalk FM, (April 17, 2021), retrieved April 25, 2022, from https://www.newstalk.com/news/irishman-who-escaped-the-far-right-says-it-was-like-leaving-a-cult-1181353.

C Metz. "An Irish former alt-right YouTuber explains his methods" *The Irish Times*, (April 19, 2021), retrieved April 21, 2022, from https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/tv-radio-web/an-irish-former-alt-right-youtuber-explains-his-methods-1.4539342.

Irish Freedom Party, Twitter post, (October 18 2021), retrieved April 28, 2022, from https://twitter.com/IrexitFreedom/status/1450054786162769924.



Figure 3: Screen grab from Identity Ireland Facebook page, 2021.26

In 2021, social media platforms such as Gettr saw key figures in Ireland's farright and conservative groups and political parties create profiles, such as Justin Barrett, the National Party leader. Groups such as Identity Ireland and the Irish Freedom party continue to post on Twitter and Facebook. However, since 2020, these, along with Síol na hÉireann, have made sharing anti-vaccine and Covid-19 misinformation their objective. Nonetheless, 2021 witnessed both groups sharing content relating to Islam and immigration, criticising the Irish government's policies in relation to topics of religious belief and immigration. (Figs. 2, 3)²⁷²⁸ Alternative platforms, such as Purged.tv, are frequently used by Irish far-right groups to share video content and host livestreams of organised events and protests. Content creators on these platforms cite the frequency of videos, livestreams, and accounts being banned or suspended on YouTube as motivating them to find alternative means of publishing content. In July,

Identity Ireland, Facebook post, (January 20, 2021), retrieved April 28, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/IdentityIreland/posts/pfbid0r2no9HmQGiVJ1WQPPNuakr2sgc3F2MRZJYistLAbGfB9zMedPCWZ-K8eeY4EajhK6l.

Niall McConnell, Twitter post, (December 11, 2021 3:13pm) Retrieved April 27, 2022, from https://twitter.com/NiallMcConnell5/status/1469686676448772099.

Niall McConnell, Twitter post, (December 11, 2021 3:03pm), Retrieved April 27, 2022, from https://twitter. com/NiallMcConnell5/status/1469684341190139906.

Síol na hÉireann shared footage online of members protesting against the Eid al-Adha celebrations taking place at Croke Park.²⁹ The Síol na hÉireann protest included calls to "make Ireland Catholic again" and "no Sharia in Ireland." (Fig. 4)



Figure 4: Screen grab from Twitter of Síol na hÉireann campaigners in July 2021.³⁰

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Previous Islamophobia reports established what could be described as an Islamophobia network in Ireland. Prominent Islamophobic groups in 2021 include Anti-Corruption Ireland (led by Gemma O'Doherty who had been an active candidate for the presidential election in 2020), Identity Ireland, the Irish Freedom Party, the National Party led by Justin Barrett, and Síol na hÉireann led by Niall McConnell. Identity Ireland continues to convene as a group although it is not active within formal Irish politics. As noted above the group's activity online is significantly less than in previous years. (Fig. 3)

^{29.} Siol na hEireann "8pm Live Stream (Purged) | Eid Mubarak - Croke Park | 20/7/21" Purged.tv, (July 20, 2021), retrieved 27 April, 2022, from https://www.purged.tv/l/2905486567/8pm-Live-Stream--Purged----Eid-Mubarak---Croke-Park---20-7-21.

^{30.} Brianna Parkins, Twitter post, (July 20, 2021), retrieved April 25, 2022, from https://twitter.com/parkinsbrea/status/1417398509679042561.



Figure 5: Screen grab of the Irish Freedom Party's Twitter feed relating to Islamophobic sentiment expressed in relation to media reports of proposals to construct a new mosque in Dublin.³¹

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society organisations in Ireland continued to work towards equality by working with community leaders and academics. March 2021 was anti-racism month, with a number of events organised, including initiatives to bring awareness towards the prevalence of Islamophobia in Ireland. The global pandemic curtailed in-person events and resultantly, many meetings and panel discussions were held online.

The National Youth Council (NYC) made a submission in support of the National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR). The submission outlined recommendations for the NPAR informed by experiences of young people in Ireland and those working within the youth work sector. The NYC noted that "figures for young people from Arab or Muslim backgrounds who also experience racism are not included" in reported figures.³² The data in the report found that those in the 18-24-year demographic are more likely than other age groups to consider racism as an important issue, with 79% of those stating it was a significant issue online. Sixty-four per cent of those aged 18-24 also believe that racism is more significant in other coun-

Irish Freedom Party, Twitter post, (October 18 2021), retrieved April 28, 2022, from https://twitter.com/IrexitFreedom/status/1450054786162769924.

^{32.} National Youth Council of Ireland. Submission on the National Action Plan Against Racism 2021, Dublin, Ireland: National Youth Council Ireland, 2021.

tries which may have the effect of negating the serious impact it has on racialised groups in Ireland.³³

The Irish national Coalition Against Hate Crime Ireland (CAHC) similarly made a submission in relation to the aforementioned General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill 2021. The concluding remarks from CAHC members noted that hate crimes (including those incited by religious beliefs) "erode social cohesion and prevent the full and equal participation of all members of society".³⁴ While not specific in reference to Ireland's Muslim communities, this sentiment concurs with data and events reported by the authors of the Islamophobia report for Ireland in 2021.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Challenging Islamophobia in Ireland has encountered obstacles in recent years. As noted in previous reports, the repetition of recommendations highlights the urgent need for serious recognition of Islamophobia on behalf of the state's institutions. The following recommendations are representative of recommendations that could be prioritised to recognise the prevalence of Islamophobia in Ireland and combat its effects.

- As in previous years, the recording of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination must be improved at the level of official bodies.
- Trust must be built with Muslim communities by state institutions in order to encourage the reporting of Islamophobia.
- State institutions must take immediate action to address the growing establishment of far-right groups in Ireland.
- Relatedly, greater action must be taken to address the online propagation of anti-Muslim messaging by individuals and groups based in Ireland.

Chronology

- **09.03.2021:** Relaunch of the "Love Not Hate" campaign by INAR (Irish Network Against Racism) for the provision of hate crime legislation in Ireland.
- 19.03.2021: The Irish National Women's Council and Cultur Migrants Centre held event to mark Anti-Racism Day drawing attention to Islamophobic occurrences around the country.
- 16.04.2021: INAR gave 'cautious' welcome to the publication of aforementioned General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill 2021 for hate crime legislation in Ireland.

^{33.} Ibid.

^{34.} Coalition against Hate Crime Ireland. Submission on the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill 2021. Submission to the Joint Committee on Justice. Dublin, Ireland: National Coalition Against Hate Crime in Ireland, 2021.

- **07.05.2021:** Reports of Irish citizen and suspected ISIS member Lisa Smith winning a court case which fought against her exclusion from the UK.
- 17.06.2021: Musician Sinead O'Connor announced retirement, simultaneously hitting out at far-right anti-Muslimism figures Gemma O'Doherty and John Waters.
- **01.07.2021:** Members of the Irish National Party joined and promoted Gettr, a social media microblogging platform, launched with a commitment to "fighting cancel culture... and creating a true marketplace of ideas".
- 20.07.2021: Eid al-Adha celebrations held in Croke Park, Dublin for the second year due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- 08.2021: Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission submitted report "Developing a National Action Plan Against Racism" to the Anti-Racism Commission of Ireland.
- 11.10.2021: A University College Cork senior lecturer in contemporary Islam met senior Cork politicians after a contentious social media post regarding refugees from Afghanistan.
- 18.10.2021: Ireland's Higher Education Authority published a report on experiences of staff in schools in Ireland, including unclear guidance on reporting racism and hate speech directed towards Muslim students.
- 27.10.2021: Nadim Hussain was discharged from hospital following a nineday hunger strike seeking better living conditions in Direct Provision. Hussain sought asylum in Ireland following anti-Muslim riots in Bengal, India.
- 15.12.2021: The Institute for Strategic Dialogue published their 2020 "Anti-lockdown Activity: Ireland Country Profile," highlighting connections between Ireland's ethnonationalist groups anti-Muslim ideologies and Covid-19 conspiracies.



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Executive Summary

Covid-19 was still a protagonist in the events of 2021. In this second year of the pandemic, its impact on social tissue is the key element to take into account. The measures adopted by government - both at the national and local level - created a great divide within society about what democratic values really are and when individual rights should take precedence over community rights.

Matters are complicated still further by the political instability that characterizes Italy in the last years. In 2021, the Conte II Cabinet resignation led to the appointment of Mario Draghi as prime minister. His government is supported by almost all the Italian political parties, except for the right-wing party Fratelli d'Italia, but each of them promptly started an unofficial political campaign predicting the government's imminent fall.

In this framework, the same phenomenon underlined in the 2020 *European Islamophobia Report* is noted: the attention of civic society is focused on the concrete consequences of pandemic on an economic and social level, while politicians are focused on those attitudes that could guarantee them more consensus in the next elections. Thus, other social issues, like immigration, racism, and discrimination, are pushed to the background. All this is reflected in the failures of the current data collection system and in the detection of a different way of exploiting traditional themes such as Islamophobia. Political debate seems characterized by a less anti-Islamic content, which is still present in online newspapers and social media, while right- and left-wing political parties seem to use this issue each according to their interests.

Sintesi

L'emergenza Covid-19 è ancora protagonista degli eventi occorsi nel 2021. In questo secondo anno di pandemia, il suo impatto sul tessuto sociale è un elemento chiave da tenere in considerazione. Le misure adottate dal governo - sia a livello nazionale che locale - hanno determinato una profonda divisione all'interno della società su cosa siano realmente i valori democratici e in che modo i diritti dell'individuo debbano essere graduati rispetto ai diritti dell'intera comunità.

La situazione è resa ancor più complicata dall'instabilità politica che caratterizza l'Italia negli ultimi anni. Nel 2021, le diissioni del governo Conte hanno portato alla nomina di Mario Draghi come Primo Ministro. Il suo governo ha ricevuto il sostegno di quasi tutti i partiti politici Italiani - eccetto Fratelli d'Italia - ma ognuno di loro ha presto iniziato una campagna politica non ufficiale in previsione di una presunta imminente caduta dello stesso governo.

In questo contesto, emerge quanto già rilevato nel European Islamophobia Report 2020: l'attenzione della società civile è focalizzata sulle concrete conseguenze della pandemia - sul piano economico e sociale - mentre i rappresentanti politici rivolgono l'attenzione a quei fattori che potrebbero garantire di ottenere maggiore consenso alle prossime elezioni. Per questo, altri temi sociali - come l'immigrazione, il razzismo e la discriminazione - risultano essere in secondo piano. Tutto questo si riflette nelle lacune dell'attuale sistema di raccolta dati e nell'individuazione di diverse modalità di strumentalizzazione di temi tradizionali come l'Islamofobia. Il dibattito politico sembra essere caratterizzato da un minore numero di contenuti anti-Islam - ancora presente nei quotidiani online e sui social media - mentre i partiti politici sia di destra che di sinistra sembrano utilizzare il tema ognuno in base ai propri interessi.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Republic of Italy

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary government

Ruling Parties: Article One, Democratic Party, Five Star Movement, Forza Italia, Italia Viva, Lega (Lega per Salvini Premier) (2021/02/13 - ongoing)

Opposition Parties: Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy) (2021/02/13 - ongoing)

Last Elections: 2018 Legislative Election: Chamber of Deputies: Five Stars, 133 seats; Centre-Right, 151 seats (League North: 17.3% equal to 73 seats); Centre-Left, 88 seats; Left, 14 seats; Far Right, 0 seats. Senate of the Republic: Five Stars, 68 seats; Centre-Right, 77 seats (League North: 17.6% equal to 37 seats); Centre-Left, 43 seats; Left, 4 seats; Far-Right, 0 seats

Total Population: 59,236,213 million (2021)

Major Languages: Italian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: Official data on Islamophobia can be usually found in the Hate Crime Reporting annually published by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that includes data released by both states and NGOs. Last official data regards 2020 but in its report the ODIHR does not record any incident against Muslims in Italy (data not available before the publishing of EIR 2020). Italian authorities do not categorize hate crimes by bias motivation but, regarding 2020, anti-Muslim events were also not recorded by NGOs.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the OSCE ODIHR Report 2020 - including information from the Italian police database (SDI) and the Italian Observatory for Security against Acts of Discrimination (OSCAD) - Italian police authorities recorded 1,111 hate crimes based on racism and discrimination, but none has been categorized as anti-Muslim. Behind official data, 5 incidents were made public in newspapers and were reported by the Lunaria Association.

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 Organizations: L'Unione Delle Comunità Islamiche D'Italia (UCOII), Confederazione Islamica Italiana, Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana (CoReIs), CoReIs Italian Muslim Youth

Main NGOs Combating 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 Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

Hijab Ban: No, depends on local decision. According to Italian law, it is forbidden to have access to public places with a covered face without reasons (Law n.152 of 1975), but there is no specific hijab ban. Nevertheless, in some Italian regions a ban of this kind has been introduced - and is still valid - at a local level.

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

- Minaret Ban: No, depends on local decision

- Circumcision Ban: No

- Burka Ban: No, depends on local decision (see above)

- Prayer Ban: No, depends on local decision

Introduction

In the last *European Islamophobia Report*, it was noted how public attention moved from "traditional issues" such as immigration, racism, etc. towards the attempt to identify what were the key factors in spreading the Covid-19 emergency and how to manage the emergency itself.

In 2021, the focus moved away from these aspects and was placed on the economic and social consequences of the sanitary emergency, with a great debate on vaccines and restrictions introduced in promoting the immunization of the highest number of people. The respect for constitutional rights and democratic values was a motive for street demonstrations creating a great divide within civil society. Thus, less attention was given to other social phenomena, including Islamophobia itself, with reference to its different dimensions. For instance, the lack of official data is evident not only with reference to anti-Muslim events of discrimination but also with reference to the number of Muslim people actually living in Italy. The only available data, reported by the ISMU Foundation (Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità), underline how the number of Muslim foreigners living in Italy continues to decrease in 2021.

During the period considered, the Italian political leadership changed again. The end of the Conte government in January 2021 was followed by the appointment of Mario Draghi as prime minister by the president of the Italian Republic Mattarella. Even in the absence of elections, the new government received the endorsement of a very broad majority, leaving only the Fratelli d'Italia party as opposition. Beyond an initial unity of purpose, each political party - some more than others - soon started an unofficial political campaign with the prospect of an (alleged) imminent fall of the precarious government.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In Italy, the pandemic has had an impact on the number and type of committed crimes. Compared to 2020, the total amount of committed crimes slightly increased (+5.4%) with 1,849,253 events even though this number did not reach the level of pre-pandemic events at 2,116,136.² As far as the type of committed crime, the Minister of Interior Report shows that an upward trend concerning increasing cybercrime (+30,5%) started in 2020.

ISMU, "Comunicato stampa: Immigrati e Religioni in Italia", 22 June 2021, https://www.ismu.org/immigrati-e-religioni-in-italia-i-cristiani-sono-piu-del-doppio-dei-musulmani-comunicato-stampa-22-6-2021/, (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Ministero dell'Interno, December 2021, https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-12/presentazione_sac_2021.pdf (Access date: 23 March 2022).

In the Italian investigation crime database, hate crimes are not marked for bias motivation. Thus, it is not possible to investigate the specific category of anti-Muslim crimes.³ In this context, local newspaper and civil associations continue to represent the main source of information about physical and verbal attacks that occur at all latitudes.

In Vicenza, during the debate concerning a policy proposal in matters of anti-discrimination, Nicolò Naclerio, local councillor (Fratelli d'Italia), stated that "the recent case of aggression against gays and lesbians was perpetrated by parents towards their Muslim children."⁴

In the northern city of Trento, *Next* newspaper reported the case of Sara Qasmi, an Italian citizen of Moroccan origin, who reported an invasive check by a policewoman before her driving test. She was wearing a hijab, but was taken to a bathroom and asked not only remove the veil but to undress completely.⁵

In the Province of Rome, a man from Bangladesh and his family were subjected to racial and religious discrimination. On a daily basis, Mizar found signs outside his house with messages like "Italy will never be Islamic. Our beautiful women are free (...) If you are Muslim, why you come to Italy?" or "Italy free from Islam. Let's stop the Islamic expansion."

In Rieti, an Italian Muslim woman was waiting in line to enter a store. Another woman, about a foot away, accused her of not having respected the waiting line and started to insult Charlene and her sons saying that they "carry diseases." The store owner asked Charlene to leave.⁷

Employment

The Judgment of the European Court of Justice (Grand Chamber) of July 15, 2021 will have a direct impact on each member state and the option for workers to wear a headscarf in their workplace.

It remains to be seen whether the judgment of the ECJ could be applied to the case of Assia Belhadj. She applied for a job and passed the interview, but when she sent

^{3.} OSCE ODIHR, 2020, https://hatecrime.osce.org/italy?year=2020 (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Paolo Berizzi, La Repubblica, 24 September 2021, https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2021/09/24/news/ddl_ zan_vicenza_consigliere_fdi_naclerio_frasi_shock_gay_omofobia-319183251/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

 [&]quot;'Togliti tutto, anche le mutandine': la ragazza costretta a spogliarsi all'esame per la patente perché islamica", Next, 9 June 2021, https://www.nextquotidiano.it/togliti-tutto-anche-le-mutandine-sara-qasmi-costretta-a-spogliarsi-allesame-per-la-patente-perche-islamica/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Luisa Monforte, "Roma: Insulti e cartelli a sfondo razziale contro il vicino bengalese", Il Fatto Quotidiano, 15 September 2021, https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2021/09/15/roma-insulti-e-cartelli-a-sfondo-razziale-contro-il-vicino-bengalese-sullo-zerbino-la-scritta-italia-libera-dallislam/6320754/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

 [&]quot;SEI TU IL REPORTER – "Insultata e cacciata da un negozio solo perchè indosso un velo", Rieti in vetrina, 2 July 2021, https://www.rietinvetrina.it/sei-tu-il-reporter-insultata-e-cacciata-da-un-negozio-solo-perche-in-dosso-un-velo/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

her identity card, where she is seen wearing a hijab, the employer replied, "The position is no longer available, we are sorry for the misunderstanding." The employer refused to hire Belhadj - presumably after finding out she wears the hijab - must demonstrate that he applies a non-discriminatory policy in his workplace.

Education

The public Comprehensive Institute "Ermanno Olmi," including primary and secondary schools, imposed a ban on fasting during the month of Ramadan to all students during school time. Some Muslim families opposed this decision affirming that the ban was introduced after certain students requested to be exempted from going to the school canteen. This appears to be a bureaucratic matter rather than a religious one: the headmaster confirmed the ban on fasting at school, but students had the option to go out during lunch time.

Politics

In Italy, the debate on successful integration restarted after the story of Saman Abbas. The youth, originating from Pakistan, disappeared at the end of April 2021; the main hypothesis is that she was killed by members of her family because she refused an arranged marriage organized by her parents in Pakistan.¹⁰ This became the pretext for a political discussion leading the right leader Giorgia Meloni to ask whether "the Italian law does not apply to Muslim people" referring to the attempt to arrange a marriage, and accusing left parties of adopting "politically correct attitudes" on the immigration issue. (Fig. 1)

If what happened to Saman – with the risk of political exploitation always present - was unanimously condemned, there are cases and events that create differences of opinion. This is the case of the European campaign "Beauty is in diversity" aimed at promoting integration between different religious communities. In a tweet published in September 2021, the leader of Lega party wrote, "Using the Italians' money, the Council of Europe promote the use of hijab? Retiring this demented advertising campaign is not enough, someone in Europe have to apologize and resign." ¹¹

^{8.} Davide Piol, "Perde il posto di lavoro per il velo: «Non mi hanno assunta e poi mi hanno presa in giro»", Il Gazzettino, 14 January 2021, https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/belluno/musulmana_velo_longarone_discriminazione_razziale_denuncia_lavoro-5699253.html (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{9. &}quot;Ramadan 2021, una scuola vieta il digiuno agli studenti. Infuria la polemica", Glistranieri.it, 9 April 2021, https://www.glistranieri.it/ramadan-2021-una-scuola-vieta-il-digiuno-agli-studenti-infuria-la-polemica/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{10.} Giuseppe Baldessarro, "Quei 110 giorni senza Saman, il giallo di Novellara ancora irrisolto: non si cerca più il corpo, ma le indagini continuano", La Repubblica, 12 July 2021, https://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2021/08/19/news/saman_non_si_scava_piu_per_cercare_il_corpo_ma_le_indagini_continuano-314558500/?ref=search (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Matteo Salvini, Instagram, 24 September 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CV256E3qsOg/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).



Sulla vicenda di Saman mi chiedo come sia possibile che l'UCOII, sedicente unione delle comunità islamiche in Italia, sia convinta di avere il potere di dettare legge nel nostro ordinamento. Secondo loro i musulmani che vivono in Italia sono sottoposti a una legge diversa da quella dello Stato italiano tanto che servono le loro "fatwa"? Questo non deve esistere. Non accettiamo né fatwa né legge coranica, le regole che valgono sono le stesse per tutti coloro che vivono in Italia. Senza eccezioni. E lo dovrebbero dire tutti, anche la sinistra, invece di accettare tutto ciò senza dire una sola parola di condanna.

Figure 1: "About the story of Saman, I would like to know how is it possible that the UCOII, the self-styled union of the Muslim community in Italy, believes to have the power to dictate law in our legal system. According to them, Muslims living in Italy are subject to a law other than that of the Italian state so that their "fatwa" is needed? This cannot be. We do not accept the fatwa or Koranic law, rules are the same for all those who live in Italy. Without exception. And everybody should affirm it, left too, in spite of accepting all this without saying a word of condemnation." Post published by Giorgia Meloni, leader of Fratelli d'Italia, on her Facebook page. 12

Events concerning a complex process and phenomenon like integration are always subject to different interpretations, misunderstandings, and manipulation. Thus, the same kind of event can be viewed as a positive sign of integration or a threat for local traditions.

For a large part of the local community, what happened in the city of Pavia in February 2021 represents a positive event to counter Islamophobia. The center-right city government decided to assign more space to the Muslim community in the local cemetery. The decision followed the sad case of Emil, a child whose burial took place a month after his death due to the lack of space reserved for Muslims in the local cemetery. This decision was taken in the spirit of better integration. At the same time, in the city of Milan, representatives of the Lega party are fighting against the building of a new mosque. According to Silvia Sardone, some of the main reasons is that "we don't know by whom these places are financed, we don't know what is preached, we don't know anything about who attends them." Indeed, glaring contradiction and attempts of manipulation are evident in local political life and lead to different results.

In Magenta, La Nuova Italia is the first party founded by a Muslim, Munib Asfaq, originating from Pakistan and running for mayor in next local elections. Among the party's goals, the rights of religious and ethnic minorities take precedence.¹⁵

...

^{12.} Giorgia Meloni, Facebook, 19 June 2021, https://www.facebook.com/giorgiameloni.paginaufficiale/videos/174716834613564 (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{13.} Davide Gangale, "A Pavia la giunta di centrodestra allarga lo spazio del cimitero monumentale per accogliere i defunti musulmani", Open, 26 February 2021, https://www.open.online/2021/02/26/pavia-giunta-allarga-cimitero-per-accogliere-defunti-musulmani/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{14.} Francesca Galici, "Prendi la tua croce di m Le minacce choc per la moschea", il Giornale, 27 December 2021, https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/milano/prendi-tua-croce-m-e-minacce-lega-moschea-milano-1998404.html (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{15. &}quot;Statuto", La Nuova Italia, https://www.lanuovaitalia.org/statuto-2/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).



Figure 2: "Using the Italians' money, the Council of Europe promote the use of hijab? Retiring this demented advertising campaign is not enough, someone in Europe have to apologize and resign." Post published on Instagram by Matteo Salvini, leader of Lega party.¹⁶

In Rome, Francesco Tieri, an Italian who converted to Islam 15 years ago, is running as candidate for the Democratic Party primaries. The inclusion of Muslim instances in local politics and the right to pray are key elements in his campaign too. ¹⁷

In the municipality of Pioltello, Lombardia, a candidate of the local election, Claudio Fina, is supported by Lega and Fratelli d'Italia. In a video, recorded on the occasion of a sit-down with representatives of the local Muslim community, the center-right wing candidate promoted the building of a new mosque that could be "the most beautiful mosque in the province of Milan." ¹⁸

Media

The image presented by the media reflects how complex the integration process is and how difficult it is to mark an event or an attitude as Islamophobic. As an example, in January 2021, *Il Giornale*, usually viewed as a right-wing newspaper, published the story of Tasnim Ali, a young woman born in Italy and originating from Egypt, who is a famous fashion influencer talking about Islam and wearing the hijab. The story

Matteo Salvini, Instagram, 24 September 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CV256E3qsOg/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{17.} Sandro De Toni, "L'islam alle primarie del centrosinistra a Roma", 5 July 2021, https://www.terzogiornale.it/2021/07/05/lislam-alle-primarie-del-centrosinistra-a-roma/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{18.} primaLaMartesana.it, 26 September 2021, https://primalamartesana.it/politica/il-candidato-di-lega-e-fratel-li-ditalia-propone-di-realizzare-la-moschea-piu-bella-della-provincia-di-milano/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

was presented without prejudice even when discussing interventions by Tasnim's father, a local imam, in an effort to reply to the more complex questions posted by his daughter's followers on Islamic values and traditions. ¹⁹ Some months later, in the same newspaper, the same author published an article about the candidacy of Francesco Tieri, cited above. The candidacy was presented as a strategic move of the center-left to gain more votes in the next elections, and was criticized for the attention focused by the candidate on the necessity to give more space to places of prayer. ²⁰

In online media, anti-Muslim messages are more often widespread. The journalist Lorenza Formicola, who writes for different journals such as *Il Giornale*, interviewed by an independent online blog, talked about the alleged Islamization of Europe. She said,

In Italy, we live a silent Islamization. There are very few evident events, also due to an unprepared political class, often completely uninformed and that allows room for manoeuvre to the Italian Muslim community. ... We are in the middle of a new attempt of Islamizing Europe. Something announced decades ago but punctually ignored. The Europe we know is going to be torn away becoming Eurabia. ²¹

Justice System

The Public Prosecution Office disposes the closure of complaint made by Assia Belhadj, cited above because protagonist of another story. In 2020, the Italo-Algerian woman was a candidate with a left-wing party in the last regional election in Veneto. During the political campaign, she was heavily insulted for having published a picture of herself wearing the hijab on social media. She made an official complaint against her haters but, at the end of 2021, the complaint was formally closed. The judge for preliminary investigations affirmed that it had not been possible to identify those responsible because "the office network does not allow access to Facebook and other social media."²²

Internet

The internet confirms its role as a space in which people can express opinions behind a veil of anonymity. In its 6th Map, the Vox - Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti (Italian Observatory on Rights) analysed tweets posted between January and October 2021re-

^{19.} Alessandra Benignetti, "Vi spiego io cosa è l'islam Chi è l'influencer musulmana", il Giornale, 28 Jenuary 2021, https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/vi-spiego-cos-lislam-linfluencer-col-velo-spopola-su-tiktok-1920015. html (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Alessandra Benignetti, "Un musulmano per il Municipio: la mossa della sinistra", il Giornale, 25 May 2021, https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/roma/musulmani-campo-sinistra-roma-puntano-presidenza-v-munici-pio-1949458.html (Access date: 30 April 2022).

La Fenice Tricolore, 15 May 2021, https://www.lafenicetricolore.it/lislamizzazione-deuropa-rischio-banlieue-integrazione-sharia-nicholas-pellegrini-intervista-lorenza-formicola/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{22.} ANSA, 5 November 2021, https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2021/11/05/ansa-box-procura-non-ha-fb-archiviata-denuncia-odio-social_14b9f287-a360-4d29-bd29-fb77b9bde8ee.html (Access date: 30 April 2022).

vealing a reduction of the total amount of hate speech counterbalanced by a radicalization of content. Among the 797,326 tweets analyzed in 2021, 19.57% expressed negative contents against Muslims showing a significant increase compared to 12.01% registered in 2020.²³ In these tweets, Muslims are linked to terrorists and the Taliban so much so that the peak was detected to coincide with the rise to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the anniversary of the Twin Towers and Pentagon attacks.

In its last report on hate speech, Amnesty International took into account 36,269 instances of published content on Twitter and Facebook, public profiles, and webpages. Forty-six percent of original posts and tweets were classified as Islamophobic.²⁴

Web and social media have a role not only in spreading real (negative) opinions but fake news as well. In October 2021, a message apparently written by the mayor of the city of Nuoro started circulating on the web. In it, the mayor seemed to reply negatively to the request of Muslim families aiming to eliminate pork from the school canteen. The message was shared many times provoking a great discussion. However, not only was this message fake, but it was already used in 2017 and again in 2019 but with different mayors in different cities of the same region. The official reply published by the mayors involved was not sufficient to curb the attempt to spread hate messages.²⁵

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Nowadays, the identification of key negative players is more difficult compared to the past. Traditional players still *use* this issue but in a different way. Right-wing political representatives, mainly belonging to the parties Fratelli d'Italia and Lega, still use news stories to invoke the so-called threat to traditional European values posed by the alleged increase of Muslim presence in Italy. However, it is difficult to identify specific Islamophobic public actors based on public statements.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There are several positive actors in the fight to counter Islamophobia such as religious leaders who organize joint public events promoting a positive integration;²⁶ police

^{23.} Vox - Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti, http://www.voxdiritti.it/la-nuova-mappa-dellintolleranza-6/ (Access date: 23 March 2022).

^{24.} Amnesty International, "Barometro dell'odio", April 2021, https://d21zrvtkxtd6ae.cloudfront.net/public/uploads/2021/04/Amnesty-barometro-odio-2021.pdf (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{25.} David Puente, "La bufala del sindaco di Nuoro contro i musulmani che non vogliono carne di maiale nella mensa scolastica", Open, 29 October 2021, https://www.open.online/2021/10/29/bufala-sindaco-nuoro-vs-musulmani/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Confederazione Islamica Italiana, "La CII partecipa alla Giornata europea della Cultura ebraica. Alle radici del dialogo euromediterraneo: Ebraismo, Cristianesimo, Islam", http://www.conf-islamica.it/confederazione-islamica-italiana/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

and *carabinieri* who promote the Observatory for security against acts of discrimination (OSCAD) aiming to prevent and fight against hate crime and hate speech; and the local Italian municipalities league (ALI) that celebrates to the International Day against Islamophobia.²⁷

The Italian Network Anti-Islamophobia (NIA), supported by UCOII, organizes successful fundraising to fight hate crimes against Muslims, reduce the underreporting phenomenon concerning discrimination events, raise awareness among local communities, and support data collection about Islamophobic events. The final project includes the creation of a task force, operating at the regional level, and the promotion of training paths and a communication campaign in cooperation with local communities.²⁸

In October 2021, the Italian Muslim Confederation (CII) participated in the European Day of Jewish Culture, together with Christian representatives. This represents an interesting opportunity for discussion among the three great monotheistic religions.²⁹

The Equal Opportunities Department of the Italian Local Autonomies (ALI) abides by the Manifesto of Youth against Islamophobia, promoted by the L'Albero della Vita Foundation, aiming to prevent discrimination against Muslim women.³⁰ The manifesto is part of a greater European project whose goal is to make youth aware of their rights, and capable of preventing and denouncing Islamophobic events.³¹ The awareness campaign "Look beyond prejudice" is part of this project and was behind the video realized by the Italian cartoonist Takoua Ben Mohamed in which the daily difficulties of being a young Muslim woman are described in an ironic way.³²

 [&]quot;Giornata internazionale contro l'islamofobia. Catizone (ALI), donne e ragazze musulmane vittime di discriminazione multipla", 22 September 2021, https://aliautonomie.it/2021/09/22/giornata-internazionale-contro-lislamofobia-catizone-ali-donne-e-ragazze-musulmane-vittime-di-discriminazione-multipla/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

https://crowdfunding.chiodiapaga.it/progetti/nia-network-italiano-anti-islamofobia/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Confederazione Islamica Italiana, "La CII partecipa alla Giornata europea della Cultura ebraica. Alle radici del dialogo euromediterraneo: Ebraismo, Cristianesimo, Islam", http://www.conf-islamica.it/confederazione-islamica-italiana/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

 [&]quot;Giornata internazionale contro l'islamofobia. Catizone (ALI), donne e ragazze musulmane vittime di discriminazione multipla", 22 September 2021, https://aliautonomie.it/2021/09/22/giornata-internazionale-contro-lislamofobia-catizone-ali-donne-e-ragazze-musulmane-vittime-di-discriminazione-multipla/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{31.} Redazione, "Liberi di essere, Liberi di pensare, Liberi di credere gli eventi per la giornata europea contro l'islamofobia", Vita, 16 September 2021, http://www.vita.it/it/article/2021/09/16/liberi-di-essere-liberi-di-pensare-liberi-di-credere-gli-eventi-per-la/160437/ (Access date: 30 April 2022).

^{32.} Martina Pagani, "L'ironia contro l'islamofobia: così una fumettista italiana abbatte gli stereotipi", 21 June 2021, https://europa.today.it/eu4future/combattere-islamofobia-ironia-campagna.html (Access date: 30 April 2022).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

There are three main elements that emerge in the observation of the year 2021. The first is the old problem concerning official statistics. It is true that the number of events and crimes officially recorded against Muslim people is very low. Nevertheless, it is also true that official data are not sufficient to understand how and in which way Islamophobia is changing. It is not just a problem related to the dark number issue but it concerns the general data collection system actually used in Italy. In this system, crimes are not marked for bias motivation and this means that it is not possible to define how and what kind of crimes are committed on religious grounds.

The second element concerns the political exploitation of everything concerning Islam and the Muslim presence in Italy. What is new is that in 2021 Islamophobia is still a political instrument which is being used in a different way. In the last European Islamophobia Report it was evident how right-wing parties manipulate issues related to the integration process to gain more consensus among their voters. Nowadays, this manipulation is less evident. Right-wing parties' representatives only talk about news stories where there is almost universal consensus like the Saman Abbas story discussed above with regard to religious affiliation. Compared to the past, it is more difficult to find specific comments among their public statements on this theme. This can be linked to the increasing challenges posed by the pandemic, which gave less space to the issue of Islam, or the fact that Muslims have started to consider themselves – and to be considered – as voters and this new approach has an impact on political parties' attitudes. This is evident in the foundation of the first Muslim party in Magenta, the candidacy of an Italian convert to Islam for the Democratic Party primaries in Rome, and the attempt of the Lega party's representatives to involve the local Muslim communities in Pioltello in promoting the construction of a new mosque.

The third element concerns the different way left- and right-wing political parties use the Muslim issue. In discussing the sad story of Saman Abbas, right-wing parties accuse left-wing ones of "political correctness." They are accused of not being critical enough when a crime takes into account religious values in an effort not to lose the consensus of Muslim communities. This is not entirely true and not entirely false. Left-wing parties condemned the Abbas family's alleged killing of their daughter for reasons discussed above, but at the same time they seemed to be more cautious in this case considering it as one of the - sadly - numerous femicides committed in Italy. Beyond political exploitation, the case of Saman Abbas is a sign of how the integration process is complex and how it is still not accomplished. If the political parties which claim to respect all cultures and support the idea that a successful integration is possible are not aware of the reality on the ground, the lack of awareness will eventually give more space to those who claim that European values are threatened by others.

Thus, to counter Islamophobia nowadays different kinds of solutions are necessary. From a technical point of view, we need a data collection system in which crimes are identified for bias motivation in order to understand what kind of political intervention is needed. From a political point of view, we need more intellectual honesty in approaching a multidimensional phenomenon like the integration process among different cultures. If a political actor engaged in countering Islamophobia loses objectivity in facing what happens, s/he does not protect others' values but could be in danger of playing into the hands of those who do not believe in the possibility of a real integration. At the same time, common citizens should pay attention to the real message behind politicians' words. If a political party that has always adopted a critical position towards Muslim presence seems to soften this stance, we should ask ourselves whether this is real change or just another way to obtain more votes.

Chronology

- 09.04.2021 Milan: The Istituto Comprensivo Statale "Ermanno Olmi," including primary and secondary schools, imposed the ban on fasting during the month of Ramadan to all students during school time. Muslim families affirmed that the ban was introduced after some students asked to be allowed not to go to the school canteen.
- **09.06.2021** Trento: During her driving test, Sara Qasmi, who was wearing the hijab, was checked by a policewoman. She was taken to the bathroom and asked not only to remove the veil, but to undress completely.
- **01.07.2021** Rieti: An Italian Muslim woman was waiting in line to enter a store. Another woman, about a foot away, accused her of not having respected the waiting line and started to insult Charlene and her sons saying that they "carry diseases." The store owner asked Charlene to leave.
- 15.09.2021 Rome: A man from Bangladesh and his family were subjected to racial and religious discrimination. On a daily basis, Mizar found signs outside his house with messages like "Italy will never be Islamic. Our beautiful women are free (...) If you are Muslim, why you come to Italy?" or "Italy free from Islam. Let's stop the Islamic expansion."
- 24.09.2021 Vicenza: During the debate concerning a policy proposal in matters of anti-discrimination, Nicolò Naclerio, local councillor for Fratelli d'Italia, stated that "the recent case of aggression against gays and lesbians was perpetrated by parents towards their Muslim children."
- 27.10.2021 Nuoro: A message apparently written by the mayor of the city of Nuoro started circulating on the web. In it, the mayor seemed to reply negatively to the request of Muslim families to eliminate pork from the school

- canteen. Not only was this message fake but it had already been used in 2017 and again in 2019 with a different mayor and a different city.
- **05.11.2021** Pavia: The Public Prosecution Office ended the case of the complaint made by Assia Belhadj, an Italo-Algerian woman who had been heavily insulted for having published a picture of herself wearing the hijab on social media. The judge for preliminary investigations affirmed that it had not been possible to identify those responsible because "the network does not allow access to Facebook."

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN KOSOVO NATIONAL REPORT 2021

ADEM FERIZAJ

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Executive Summary

Islamophobia in Kosovo, a Muslim-majority country in Europe, is a phenomenon that could be described as ambiguous, fuzzy, and confusing. The events in Kosovo in 2021 show once again how contradictory Islamophobia occurs in – *and about* – this country.

In 2021, France was the country where far-right, anti-Albanian racism rooted in Serbian nationalism could develop most freely. On October 10, 2021, Marion Maréchal, a former member of the far-right Front National, made the following remark in a televised debate: "Demography makes history, just look at Kosovo. This predominantly Serbian Orthodox country has been colonised for decades by Muslim Albanians". It is worth noting that this is not the first time that Kosovo is used in French mainstream discourse in a way to illustrate the great replacement theory, i.e., a far-right belief that 'Muslim others' are taking over 'white and Christian' Europe because of an allegedly higher birth rate.

In December 2021, the Danish-Kosovar agreement was announced under which Denmark rents prison cells in Kosovo for prisoners with no EU-citizenship who are deported after their sentencing. Although this event is not a direct anti-Muslim act, it does points to an aspect of Islamophobia in Kosovo that has not been covered in detail in previous reports, and yet is crucial for explaining the political origins of this phenomenon: Kosovo-Albanian political elite's embeddedness in 'invisible', structural European Islamophobia. In a situation where far-right arguments have been successively adopted by centre-right and centre-left parties in European political mainstream discourses over the last decades, Islamophobic utterances have become so acceptable that they are no longer even questioned. From this perspective, it can be argued that the Danish-Kosovar agreement does not need to mention Islam, Muslims, or 'foreigners' in Denmark to still be embedded in structural European Islamophobia.

The wearing of hijab in high schools was a largely debated topic in 2021. Kosovo's Human Rights Committee, chaired by Duda Balje, met with education minister Arbërie Nagavci on June 7, 2021, to discuss the right to wear the hijab in high school. The result of this meeting is a reluctance from the current government since covering one's head for religious reasons in high schools is at best still a legal grey area or at worst de facto forbidden, although there is no legal basis for such a decision.

Due to media coverage, it was made clear in 2021 that the religious institutions Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK, Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës) and the Union of Kosovo Tarikats (BTK, Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës), representing more than 95% of the population, were still operating without legal status. Again, the current government was reluctant to take a decision and preferred to postpone it.

On a positive note, Islamophobic tendencies have been challenged this year – a development that has been noticed especially since last year. One difference that gives hope is that in 2021 these critical voices are increasingly coming from positions of political power. On a local level, the former mayor of Mitrovica, Agim Bahtiri, removed Ismet Ferizi, the director of education of the northern Kosovo municipality, from office after he made Islamophobic comments regarding teachers wearing hijab. On a national level, Balje's engagement to finally allow the wearing of hijab in high school is a good example.

Përmbledhje ekzekutive

Islamofobia në Kosovë, një shtet me shumicë myslimane në Evropë, është një fenomen plotë kundërthënie. Ngjarjet e vitit 2021 janë shembuj për karakterin kontradiktor të shafqjes së islamofobisë në – por edhe mbi – këtë vend.

Në 2021, Franca ishte shteti ku racizmi anti-shqiptar i ekstrem së djathtës, i rrënjosur në nacionalizmin serb, u zhvillua gati pa pengesa. Më 10 tetor 2021, Marion Maréchal, një ish-anëtare e "Front National" e ekstrem së djathtës, bëri vërejtjen e mëposhtme në një debat televiziv: "Demografia bën histori, vetëm shikoni rastin e Kosovës. Ky vend me shumicë ortodokse serbe është kolonizuar për dekada nga shqiptarët myslimanë". Është e rëndsishme të theksohet se kjo nuk është hera e parë që Kosova përdoret në ligjërimin dominues francez në një mënyrë që e ilustron teorinë "great replacement theory", pra idenë e së djathës ekstreme që presupozon se 'myslimanet' po e zëvendësojnë Evropën 'e bardhë dhe të krishterë' për shkak të një niveli kinse më të lartë të natalitetit.

Në dhjetor të vitit 2021 u nënshkrua marrëveshja danezo-kosovare, sipas së cilës Danimarka shfrytëzon qelitë e burgjeve në Kosovë për të burgosurit pa shtetësi daneze. Të njëjtit, pas lirimit të tyre depërtohen në 'vendin e origjinës'. Edhe pse kjo ngjarje nuk është një akt i drejtpërdrejtë anti-mysliman, ajo është treguese për një aspekt të slamofobisë në Kosovë që nuk është trajtuar në detaje në raportet e mëparshme, dhe megjithatë është vendimtare për shpjegimin e origjinës politike të këtij fenomeni: Përfshirja e elitës politike kosovaro-shqiptare në islamofobinë evropiane të 'padukshme' dhe strukturore. Në një situatë ku argumentet e së djathtës ekstreme janë pranuar në mënyrë të njëpasnjëshme nga partitë e qendrës së djathtë dhe të qendrës së majtë në diskurset kryesore politike evropiane gjatë dekadave të fundit, islamofobia është bërë aq e pranueshme sa që as nuk vihet në dyshim. Nga ky këndvështrim, mund të argumentohet se marrëveshja danezo-kosovare nuk ka nevojë të përmendë Islamin, myslimanët, apo 'të huajt' në Danimarkë për të qenë pasojë e islamofobisë strukturore evropiane.

Bartja e shamisë në shkollat e mesme ishte një temë shumë e debatuar në vitin 2021. Komiteti i Kosovës për të Drejtat e Njeriut, i kryesuar nga Duda Balje, u takua me ministren e Arsimit Arbërie Nagavci më 7 qershor 2021, për të diskutuar mbi të drejtën e bartjes së shamisë në shkollë të mesme. Rezultati i këtij takimi është një hezitim i qeverisë aktuale pasi mbulimi i kokës për arsye fetare në shkollat e mesme është në rastin më të mirë ende një zonë ligjore e padefinuar ose në rastin më të keq de facto e ndaluar, megjithëse nuk ka bazë ligjore për një vendim të tillë.

Për shkak të mbulimit medial në vitin 2021 u bë gjithashtu e qartë se institucionet fetare Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës (BIK) dhe Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës (BTK), që përfaqësojnë më shumë se 95% të popullsisë, vazhdojnë të veprojnë pa sta-

tus ligjor. Edhe në këtë rast, qeveria aktuale hezitoi të merrte një vendim dhe preferoi ta shtynte atë.

Një zhvillim pozitiv është se tendencat islamofobe janë sfiduar këtë vit – një zhvillim që vihet re veçanërisht që nga viti i kaluar. Një ndryshim që jep shpresë është se në vitin 2021 këto zëra kritikë po vijnë gjithnjë e më shumë nga pozitat e pushtetit politik. Në nivel lokal, ish-kryetari i Mitrovicës, Agim Bahtiri, ka shkarkuar nga detyra drejtorin e arsimit të kësaj komune të Kosovës, Ismet Ferizin, pas komenteve islamofobe që bëri i njëjti për mësuesit me shami. Në nivel kombëtar, angazhimi i Duda Baljes për të lejuar përfundimisht mbajtjen e hixhabit në shkollë të mesme është një shembull i mirë.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Republic of Kosovo

Type of Regime: Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary government

Ruling Parties: Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (LVV, left-wing) led by Prime Minister Albin Kurti

Opposition Parties: Partia Demokratike e Kosovës (PDK, centre-right), Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës (LDK, centre-right), Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës (AAK, centre-right), and minority parties, especially Lista Srpska (Serbian right-wing)

Last Elections: 2021 snap parliamentary elections (left-wing LVV: 58 seats; centre-right party PDK: 19 seats; centre-right party LDK: 15 seats; centre-right AAK: 8 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: No current statistics available, but the 2021 Kosovo report by the European Commission highlights that structural racism and discrimination faced by "Kosovo Roma and Ashkali and other vulnerable communities like the Kosovo Egyptians remains challenging, a fact compounded by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic."

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 Terrorist 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 full-face veils in public institutions are ongoing
- Prayer Ban: No, but the right of police officers to attend prayers during their working hours was restricted in 2018

Introduction

Islamophobia in Kosovo, a Muslim-majority country in Europe,¹ is a phenomenon that could be described as ambiguous, fuzzy, and confusing. It is best explained by postcolonial/decolonial works in social sciences that examine Albanian identity formations in the light of the relationship between European modernity and Islam.²

The events in Kosovo in 2021 show once again how contradictory Islamophobia occurs in – *and about* – this country. Two examples should suffice here, which will be explained in more detail in the report. On the one hand, far-right French public figures misused Kosovo's history this year to illustrate the great replacement theory, i.e., the belief that 'Muslims' are taking over 'white and Christian' Europe due to an allegedly higher birth rate. And, especially in France, it's not the first time that Kosovo's statehood has been represented in such a way as previous *European Islamophobia Reports* have shown.³ On the other hand, the existence of Islamophobia in Kosovo cannot be denied. In 2021, the question whether the hijab in high schools is allowed was widely discussed and has been commented on social media by a former ambassador as follows, "The wearing of Arab headscarves for girls in and out of schools is a big social step backwards. Any other interpretation is deception!" (Fig. 3)

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The 2021 European Commission report on Kosovo states that "overall, data collection on hate crimes remains insufficient". What is striking in this report, however, is that Islamophobia is not addressed. The only religious incident mentioned is the legal quarrel over the Serbian Orthodox monastery in Deçan, West Kosovo, which has been ongoing since at least 2016. Unfortunately, one can only speculate about the

Islam in Kosovo should be not considered a monolithic entity. The majority of Muslims are Sunnis and are represented by the Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK, Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës). However, there are also Sufi orders represented by the Union of Kosovo Tarikats (BTK, Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës).

^{2.} See for example the following works: Piro Rexhepi, "From Orientalism to Homonationalism: Queer Politics, Islamophobia and Europeanization in Kosovo", Southeastern Europe, 40 (2016); Enis Sulstarova, Arratisja nga Lindja: Orientalizmi shqiptar nga Naimi te Kadareja, (Globic Press, Tirana: 2007); Isa Blumi, "The Commodification of Otherness and the Ethnic Unit in the Balkans: How to Think about Albanians", East European Politics and Societies, 12 (1998); Behar Sadriu, "Grasping the Syrian War. A View from Albanians in the Balkans", Nationalities Papers, 45 (2017).

^{3.} These examples include statements by public figures like Eric Zemmour, Marion Maréchal, Dominique Bilde, and Eric Ciotti: Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019", Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), European Islamophobia Report 2019 (SETA, 2020), pp. 469–72; Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020", Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), European Islamophobia Report 2020 (Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021), p. 507.

^{4.} European Commission, Kosovo Report 2021 (2021), p. 30.

^{5.} Ibid.

reasons for the omission of Islam from the section on "Freedom of thought, conscience and religion". According to the Kosovo Prosecutor's Council, 70 cases of hate speech occurred in 2021. However, it is not clear from these official figures how many of these cases have something to do with Islamophobia, as the category hate speech is an umbrella term including racist, ethnic, or religious incidents.

In December 2021, the news that Denmark will rent prison cells in Kosovo for inmates with no EU-Danish to be deported after being sentenced made even international headlines.⁸ The Balkan country's Minister of Justice Albulena Haxhiu announced this agreement on Twitter by stressing that 300 detainees from Denmark will be accepted for a period of 10 years and 210 million Euro per year will be received in return. (Fig. 1)

Although this discursive event is not a direct Islamophobic verbal attack, it does points to an aspect of Islamophobia in Kosovo that has not been covered in detail in previous reports, and yet is crucial for explaining the political origins of this phenomenon: the Kosovo-Albanian political elite's embeddedness in 'invisible', structural European Islamophobia. Therefore, it deserves further analysis. In a situation where farright arguments have been successively adopted by centre-right and centre-left parties in European political mainstream discourses over the last decades, Islamophobic utterances have become so acceptable that they are no longer even questioned. In short, Islamophobia can be considered a norm of mainstream European discourses that is no longer 'actively noticed' or 'seen', since norms in society are, after all, often implemented unconsciously, almost reflexively. Muslim-majority diasporas consequently are associated in these discourses with 'illegal migration' and criminality. In Gail Lewis words, "There is a discursive circuitry in which the signifiers 'race,' 'religion' (read: Islam [...]), 'ethnicity,' and 'culture' are not only linked together through processes of racialization but are also metonymically tied to *crime*, gender despotism, homophobia, cultural invasion, and erosion of 'European values'."10 From this perspective, it can be argued that the Danish-Kosovar agreement does not need to men-

^{6.} Ibid

^{7.} The Kosovo Prosecutor Council emailed these figures to the author of this report on May 31, 2022.

^{8. &}quot;Denmark to Rent 300 Prison Cells in Kosovo to Ease Overcrowding", *The Guardian*, December 15, 2021, retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/15/denmark-rent-300-prison-cells-kosovo-ease-overcrowding; Kai Strittmatter, "Dänemark will Häftlinge exportieren", *Süddeutsche.de*, December 17, 2021, retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/daenemark-gefaengnisse-kosovo-1.5490505; "Prison: le Danemark veut expédier 300 prisonniers au Kosovo", *Le Figaro*, December 15, 2021, retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/prison-le-danemark-veut-expedier-300-prisonniers-au-kosovo-20211215.

Adem Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018", Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), European Islamophobia Report 2018 (SETA, 2019), pp. 497–520; Adem Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019", Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), European Islamophobia Report 2019 (SETA, 2020), pp. 455–80; Adem Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020", Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), European Islamophobia Report 2020 (Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021), pp. 489–516.

^{10.} Gail Lewis, "Unsafe Travel: Experiencing Intersectionality and Feminist Displacements", Signs 38, no. 4 (2013), p. 879, emphasis mine.

tion Islam, Muslims, or 'foreigners' in Denmark to still be embedded in structural European Islamophobia.



Figure 1: Kosovo's Justice Minister Albulena Haxhiu's tweet officially announcing the agreement between Denmark and the Balkan country on the rental of prison cells by the former in the latter.¹¹

Employment

On May 17, 2021, the former mayor of Mitrovica, Agim Bahtiri, removed Ismet Ferizi, the director of education of the northern Kosovo municipality, from office after he made Islamophobic comments regarding teachers wearing hijab. ¹² In a meeting with the Minister of Education Arbërie Nagavci, Ferizi allegedly claimed, "As long as I am director [of this institution], nobody wearing a headscarf will be employed in education." ¹³

In a country with a Muslim population of more than 95%, one might assume that such a firm stance against Islamophobia towards pious employees in state institutions should be a matter of course. The fact is, however, that the question of how the wearing of a head cover for religious reasons is reconciled with the secular principles of the Republic of Kosovo has not been definitively answered since the country's declaration of independence in 2008.¹⁴ As the discrimination against headscarf-wear-

 [&]quot;Pushohet nga detyra drejtori që doli kundër mësimdhënëseve me shami", Koha.net, May 17, 2021, retrieved May 29, 2022 from https://www.koha.net/kosove/271397/pushohet-nga-detyra-drejtori-qe-doli-kunder-me-simdheneseve-me-shami/.

^{13.} Arbisa Shefkiu, "Bahtiri: E shkarkova drejtorin e Arsimit sepse bëri diskriminim në baza fetare", Kallxo.com, May 17, 2021, retrieved May 29, 2022, from https://kallxo.com/lajm/bahtiri-e-shkarkova-drejtorin-e-arsimit-sepse-beri-diskriminim-ne-baza-fetare/. Unless explicitly mentioned, all translations are by the author.

^{14.} On the one hand, there are cases where girls or women with headscarves are rejected at school or at work. On the other, there are two hijab-wearing women serving as MPs, Labinotë Demi Murtezi (LVV) and Besa Ismaili (PDK), in Kosovo's parliament since 2019. For the first, see for example Arbër Fetiu, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2015", Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), European Islamophobia Report 2015 (SETA, 2016), pp. 302–6. For the latter, see Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019", 2020, pp. 467–68.

ing women has been tolerated all too often in Kosovo's institutions in the recent past, Bahtiri's reaction is commendable in that it is an act of combating Islamophobia coming from a politically respected position in society. (Fig. 2)



Drejtorin e Drejtorisë së Arsimit, Ismet Ferizi, e kam liruar nga detyra për shkak se ai në takim zyrtar në Ministrinë e Arsimit me ministren, Arbërie Nagavci, ka thënë: "Sa të jem unë drejtor, askush me shami nuk do të punësohet në arsim". Pas këtij deklarimi skandaloz të njëjtin e kam larguar nga takimi.

Ky diskriminim në baza fetare për mua ka qenë i papranueshëm dhe i patolerueshëm, ku për pasojë më është dashur të marrë veprimin e lirimit nga detyra, pasi që ai nuk ka reflektuar në qëndrimin e tij edhe pas këtij takimi.

Përndryshe, Drejtori i Arsimit nuk ka asnjë kompetencë dhe përgjegjësi për përzgjedhjen e drejtorëve të shkollave, pasi që përzgjedhjen e tyre e bën komisioni i formuar nga Kuvendi i Komunës.

Ndryshe, sot kam miratuar përzgjedhjen e drejtorëve të rinj, të cilët janë rekomanduar nga komisioni. Kjo dëshmon se pretendimet për ndërhyrje në këtë proces nga unë, kanë qenë shpifje ndaj meje si kryetar komune.

Suksese drejtorëve të rinj të shkollave në punën e tyre.

AB

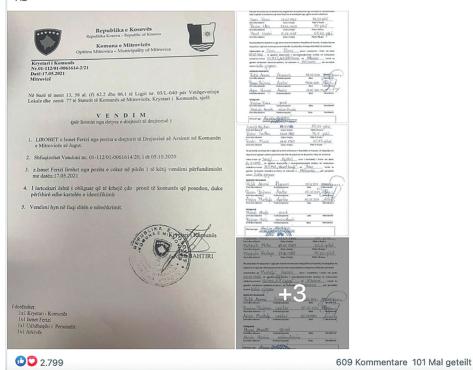


Figure 2: The former mayor of Mitrovica Agim Bahtiri described the discriminatory behavior of Ismet Ferizi, the municipality's director of education, as "unacceptable and intolerable" 15

^{15.} Agim Bahtiri, "Drejtorin e Drejtorisë së Arsimit, Ismet Ferizi, e kam liruar nga detyra për shkak se ai në takim zyrtar në Ministrinë e Arsimit me ministren, Arbërie Nagavci, ka thënë: "Sa të jem unë drejtor, askush me shami nuk do të punësohet në arsim".", Facebook, May 17, 2021, retrieved May 29, 2022 from https://www.facebook.com/Agim.Bahtirii/posts/pfbid0WABVoWcnBmg6M1z6BjGgmHxk3hLP3whktWAA6ahcEpd5FX-Sh3BdD4anPM62oDJF7l.

Education

The wearing of hijab in high schools was a largely debated topic in 2021. This included statements that could be described as 'openly Islamophobic', such as the following words of a former Kosovar ambassador, posted on social media on May 19, 2021: "The wearing of Arab headscarves for girls in and out of schools is a big social step backwards. Any other interpretation is deception!" (Fig. 3) This statement can be classified as Islamophobic for it essentialises Islam on two levels: first, it suggests that Islam is exclusively Arab, and second, it equates Islam with backwardness. In addition, a case came to light this year in which a high school student from Gjakova, a town in western Kosovo, was not allowed to attend school because she covered her head for religious reasons. ¹⁶



Figure 3: The original Facebook post of the former Kosovar ambassador Alma Lama containing discriminatory language: "The wearing of Arab headscarves for girls in and out of schools is a big social step backwards. Any other interpretation is deception!" ¹⁷

Arton Konushevci, "Riaktualizohet çështja e bartjes së shamisë në shkolla", Radio Evropa e Lirë, June 13, 2021, retrieved May 29, 2022, from https://www.evropaelire.org/a/disa-deputete-kerkojne-qeverise-lejoje-shamine-shkolla/31302904.html.

^{17.} Alma Lama, "Veshja e vajzave me shami arabe nëpër shkolla dhe jashtë tyre është një regres i madh shoqëror. Çdo interpretim tjetër është mashtrim!", Facebook, May 19, 2021, retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/alma.lama.9/posts/pfbid032a2t1aScrLHczezv66NQBiSkmLMMaaxeqi5qCSHZ9VapoSDTvo3bzcabYUQaDdXQI.



Figure 4: The Human Rights Committee, chaired by Duda Balje, met with education minister Arbërie Nagavci on June 7, 2021, to discuss the right to wear the hijab at school.¹⁸

In this discursive climate, which revolved around debates on the pros and cons of the headscarf in high schools, Kosovo government's Human Rights Committee, ¹⁹ chaired by Duda Balje, also addressed the issue in a meeting with education minister Arbërie Nagavci on June 7, 2021. (Fig. 4) One of the consequences of this parliamentary assembly was that the current legal situation regarding the wearing of the hijab in schools was communicated to a wider audience through the media. According to Radio Free Europe's Albanian-language service, "Laws and administrative decisions in Kosovo allow Muslim girls to wear headscarves over the age of 18, in universities or at work. However, such a thing is forbidden to girls in primary and secondary school." The use of the term "laws" in this statement can be considered inaccurate, because as Balje herself pointed out in this session, "there is neither legal prohibition nor a permission to wear a headscarf in school. Consequently, schools decide

^{18. &}quot;Nga Mbledhja e Komisionit Për Të Drejtat e Njeriut, Barazi Gjinore, Për Persona Të Pagjetur Dhe Peticione", assemblyofkosovo.org, June 7, 2021, retrieved May 29, 2022, from http://www.assemblyofkosovo.org/shq/per-publikun/lajmi/nga-mbledhja-e-komisionit-per-te-drejtat-e-nj-27153/.

^{19.} The official name of this parliamentary working body is "Committee on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Victims of Sexual Violence During the War, Missing Persons and Petitions." For more information, see the official website https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/eng/comittees/committee/?committee=56, retrieved May 29, 2022.

^{20.} Konushevci, "Riaktualizohet çështja e bartjes së shamisë në shkolla".

on that matter according to their own preferences."²¹ The critical legal document in question prohibiting the hijab in high schools is not a law, but an administrative instruction issued in 2010, then replaced by a new version in 2014.²² From a layman's point of view, the whole matter is only made more confusing when both administrative instructions, the one from 2010 and the one from 2014, were quoted by different politicians in this session.²³ What can be deduced from this is that covering one's head for religious reasons at high schools is still a legal grey area.

On December 13, 2021, the Chairperson of the Committee for Human Rights Duda Balje posted a photo on her official Instagram account wearing a hijab,²⁴ calling for the amendment of the administrative instruction "MASHT 06/2014". (Fig. 5) She highlighted that "there is no law in Kosovo that restricts the freedom of girls and women to express their faith by dressing modestly and wearing a headscarf."²⁵



Figure 5: The Chairperson of the Committee for Human Rights Duda Balje posted a photo on her official Instagram account in which she is wearing a headscarf. Apart from calling for a change in the administrative order banning the wearing of the hijab at high schools, she stresses that from an Islamic perspective, every decision must be made of one's own free will. This also applies to head covering.²⁶

^{21. &}quot;Nagavci për vijimin e mësimit nga vajzat me mbulesa: Kushtetuta e definon qartë këtë çështje", Koha.net, June 7, 2021, retrieved May 29, 2022, from https://www.koha.net/arberi/274492/nagavci-per-mbajtjen-e-mbule-save-nga-vajzat-ne-shkolla-kushtetuta-e-definon-qarte-kete-ceshtje/.

^{22.} This document is referred to either as "MASHT-6/2010" or "MASHT-6/2014". For more information, see the Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=7848, retrieved May 29, 2022.

^{23.} While Nagavci refers to the 2014 version, Eman Rrahmani refers to the original 2010 document, see "Nagavci për vijimin e mësimit nga vajzat me mbulesa: Kushtetuta e definon qartë këtë çështje".

^{24.} Normally, the politician representing the Bosniak minority in Kosovo's parliament does not cover her head. Therefore, this photo can be understood as a political message addressed to the government of Kosovo to give a definitive answer to the question of whether the hijab is allowed in high schools (and other public institutions).

Dude Balje, "Ndryshoni udhezimin administrativ te MASHT-it 06/2014", Instagram, December 13, 2021, retrieved May 29, 2022, from https://www.instagram.com/p/CXbGuzgssKt/.

^{26.} Balje, "Ndryshoni udhezimin administrativ te MASHT-it 06/2014".

Politics

In 2021, Kosovo was used in French public discourse at least two times in an Islamophobic way. On May 17, 2021, journalist Emmanuel de Gestas claimed, "The Great Replacement, as Renaud Camus explains, has already existed in history. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Orthodox Serbs of Kosovo represented 90% of the population of this territory whereas Muslim Albanians represented only 10%." (Fig. 6) On October 10, 2021, another public figure, Marion Maréchal, a former member of the far-right Front National, made a similar remark in a televised debate: "Demography makes history, just look at Kosovo. This predominantly Serbian Orthodox country has been colonised for decades by Muslim Albanians." (Fig. 7) It is worth noting that this is not the first time that Kosovo is used in French mainstream discourse to illustrate the great replacement theory.²⁷ One of the reasons for this Islamophobic use of Kosovo in France could be the presidential election campaign, which was characterised by a mainstreaming of far-right thinking in the public debate.²⁸



Le Grand Remplacement qu'explique @RenaudCamus a déjà existé dans l'Histoire : au début du XXe siècle, les Serbes orthodoxes du Kosovo et Métochie représentaient 90% de la population de ce territoire pour 10% d'Albanais musulmans.

Tweet übersetzen

8:34 nachm. · 17. Mai 2021 · Twitter for Android

Figure 6: The original French version of de Gesta's tweet, in which Kosovo is instrumentalised for a far-right worldview: "The Great Replacement, as Renaud Camus explains, has already existed in history. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Orthodox Serbs of Kosovo represented 90% of the population of this territory whereas Muslim Albanians represented only 10%."²⁹

A major political issue in Kosovo in recent years has been the EU's refusal to grant visa liberalisation to Kosovar citizens. In 2021, the French government was blamed for maintaining the blockade, even though the Balkan country had already met the criteria for visa-free travel within the Schengen area some three years ago.³⁰

These examples include statements by public figures like Eric Zemmour, Marion Maréchal, Dominique Bilde, and Eric Ciotti: Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019", pp. 469–72; Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020", p. 507.

^{28.} Elisabeth Zerofsky, "France's Far Right Turn", *The New York Times Magazine*, March 31, 2022, retrieved July 23, 2022, from https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/31/magazine/new-french-right.html.

^{29.} Emmanuel de Gestas, "Le Grand Remplacement qu'explique @RenaudCamus a déjà existé dans l'Histoire : au début du XXe siècle, les Serbes orthodoxes du Kosovo et Métochie représentaient 90% de la population de ce territoire pour 10% d'Albanais musulmans", *Twitter*, May 17, 2021, retrieved July 23, 2022 from https://twitter.com/EdeGestas/status/1394360696956231683?s=20.

Jack Robinson, "Von Cramon: French reluctance to grant visa liberalisation 'a big mistake'", Prishtina Insight, June 29, 2021, retrieved July 23, 2022, from https://prishtinainsight.com/von-cramon-french-reluctance-to-grant-visa-liberalisation-a-big-mistake/.

Even if this justification is missing in official statements, this EU behaviour could be explained by Islamophobia, or put differently: the fear of 'illegal migration' from a Muslim-majority country. When asked by the leading French newspaper *Libération*, the well-known political commentator from Kosovo, Agon Maliqi, who otherwise rarely if ever comments on anti-Muslim racism, indirectly confirmed such an interpretation: "The countries that block visa liberalisation are generally not countries where Kosovars live. This is where there are some elements of racism, and maybe Islamophobia, in the opinion of some European leaders."³¹



Figure 7: The tweet by Marion Maréchal where she misrepresents Kosovo's history. In the video, the example of Kosovo is used to illustrate her far-right vision of "French identity" in the face of postcolonial immigration from Muslim-majority countries.³²

Media

Since the question whether the hijab is allowed at high school was discussed in Kosovo's institutions in 2021, it is not surprising that this issue also dominated the media. Several articles were published giving different arguments why the headscarf should be

^{31.} Louis Seiller, "Au Kosovo, une jeunesse privée d'Europe", *Libération*, February 2, 2020, retrieved July 23, 2022, from https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2020/02/02/au-kosovo-une-jeunesse-privee-d-europe_1776775/.

^{32.} Marion Maréchal, "C'est la démographie qui fait l'histoire, il suffit de regarder le #Kosovo. Ce pays majoritairement serbe orthodoxe a été colonisé pendant des décennies par des Albanais musulmans. #IFEP", Twitter, October 10, 2021, retrieved July 23, 2022, from https://twitter.com/MarionMarechal/status/1447234425658515471?s=20.

allowed in school.³³ On May 18, 2021, the television debate "Info Magazine", aired on the television channel Klan Kosova, was dedicated to the pros and cons of wearing the headscarf in schools. (Fig. 8) Three guests were invited: the imam Fadil Musliu, the chair of Kosovo's government's Human Rights Committee Duda Balje, and journalist Visar Duriqi. A few minutes before the official end of the debate, Duriqi suddenly took his leave, explaining among other things that he "did not want to listen to lectures by radical imams". This rude gesture was unnecessary given the fact that the debate itself was characterised by a factual tone. Since Duriqi was the only guest in the debate who spoke in favour of a headscarf ban, his unfounded accusation of Musliu being a "radical imam" could be interpreted as Islamophobic.



Figure 8: A screenshot of the TV debate "Info Magazine" on the television channel Klan Kosova discussing whether wearing the hijab at school should be allowed.³⁴

Justice System

On May 31, 2021, the Albanian-language service of Radio Free Europe published a detailed article on the legal status of religious institutions in Kosovo. It pointed out that the Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK, Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës) and the Union of Kosovo Tarikats (BTK, Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës) still operate without legal status. After the previous government passed a new religious freedom bill in

^{33.} Mustafë Bajrami, "Mbulesa në Islam dhe ballafaqimi me shaminë në shoqërinë kosovare!", *Kosovapost.net*, May 27, 2021, retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://kosovapost.net/mbulesa-ne-islam-dhe-ballafaqimi-me-shamine-ne-shoqerine-kosovare-2/; Altina Marmullaku, "Shamia që mbulon mundësitë për shkollim", *Albanian-post.com*, June 16, 2021, retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://albanianpost.com/shamia-qe-mbulon-munde-site-per-shkollim/; "Deputetët kërkojnë që çështja e shamisë në shkolla të rregullohet me ligj", *Kosovapress.com*, June 7, 2021, retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://kosovapress.com/deputetet-kerkojne-qe-ceshtja-e-shamise-ne-shkolla-te-rregullohet-me-ligj/.

^{34. &}quot;Pro dhe kundër bartjes se shamive ne shkolla", *Info Magazin (Klan Kosova)*, May 18, 2021, retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1874aJbXzs&t=1396s&ab_channel=KlanKosova.

2020 that finally would grant legal status to religious bodies, parliament still could not vote on it due to the lack of a quorum. However, this was foreseen in the current government's legislative programme for 2021.³⁵ Similar to the issue of the hijab in public institutions, the current government seems to prefer to postpone important decisions on religious matters.

Internet



Djordje Stefanović on the policy of forced "Serbianization" in the newly seized territories of the Kingdom of Serbia c. 1878, and how this regime served as a "model" for later episodes of anti-Albanian and anti-Bosniak violence.

digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstre...

Tweet übersetzen

878: A 'Model' Ethnic Cleansing?

In 1878, following a series of Christian uprisings against the Ottoman Empire, the Russov-Turkish war, and the Berlin Congress, Serbia gained complete independence, as well as new territories in the Toplica and Kosanica regions adjacent right next to Kossovo.³⁸ These two regions had a sizable Albanian population which the Serbian government decided to deport.³⁹ The Serbian Army Commander insisted that Serbia should not have its Caucasus' and the Prime Minister argued that the Albanian miniority might prepresent a security concern. ⁴⁰ Albanian minority might represent a security concer

In 1909, Serbian intellectual Jovan Hadži-Vasiliević explained that the major In 1909, Serbian intellectual Jovan Hadži-Vasiljević explained that the major motivation for the 1878 deportation was also to create a pure Serbian antion state by cleansing the land of the non-Christians, as the great Serbian port Niegoš argued. 41 Hadži-Vasiljević was here interpreting Njegoš rather loosely, as Njegoš work focused on the Slavie Muslims and not on Albanian Muslims. The ominous implication was that Albanians, as non-Slavs, were not even capable of assimilation. While the Serbian state authorities repeatedly attempted to assimilate the Slavie Muslims, they refrained from attempting to 'Serbianize' he Albanians. 42 While both security concerns and the exclusive nationalist ideology influenced the government's policies, there was also some Serbian resistance to the 'cleansing' of the Albanians. policies, there was also some Serbian resistance to the 'cleansing' of the Albanians of General Jovan Belimarković opposed the deportation and offered his resignation to the government over this issue ⁴³ and journalist Manojlo Dordević also condemned these policies and argued that Serbia should have pursued a policy of peaceful reconciliation towards the Albanians:

In Toplota the Albanians were encountered, and we had nothing more important to d but to expel these warlike, but hard working people from their homes. Instead of making a peace with them as the defeated side – they were without any good reason pushed across the border – so that they'll settle on the other side as the cennies of exercibine Serbian to become the avanerse towards those who nushed them from

everything Serbian, to become the avengers towards those who pushed them from

Despite some voices of dissent, the Serbian regime 'encouraged' about 71,000 Muslims, including 49,000 Albanians 'to leave.' ⁴⁵ The regime then gradually settled

more than one half of the population of Nis, the largest city in the region; by 1884 the Serbian share rose to 80 %, ⁴⁷ According to Ottoman sources, Serbian forces also destroyed mosques in Leskovac, Prokuplje, and Vranje. ⁴⁸

The 'cleansing' of Toplica and Kosanica would have long-term negative The 'cleansing' of Toplica and Kosanica would have long-term negatives effects on Serbian-Albanian relations. The Albanian sexplell from these regions moved over the new border to Kossovo, where the Ottoman authorities forced the Serb population out of the border region and settled the refugees there. '33 janificije Popović, a Kossovo Serb community leader in the period prior to the Balkan Wars, noted that after the 1876-78 wars, the harter of the Turks and Albanians towards the Serbs 'tripled' ³⁰. A number of Albanian refugees from Toplica region, radicalized by their experience, engaged in retaliatory violence against the Serbian minority in Kossovo. ³¹ In 1900 Zivojin Perić, a Belgrade Professor of Law, noted that in retrospect, this unbearable situation probably would not have occurred that the Serbian government allowed Albanians to stay in Serbis'. He also argued that conciliatory treatment towards Albanians in Serbia could have helped the Serbian government to gain the sympathics of Albanians of the Ottoman Empire. ⁵²

Thus, while both humanitarian concerns and Serbian political interests would Thus, while both humanitarian concerns and Serbian political interests woulh have dictated concilitation and moderation, the Serbian government, motivated by exclusive nationalist and anti-Muslim sentiments, chose expulsion. The 1878 cleansing was a turning point because it was the first gross and large scale injustice committed by Serbian forces against the Albanians. From that point onward, both ethnic groups had recent experiences of massive victimization that could be used to justify revenge attacks. Furthermore, Muslim Albanians had every reason to resist the incorporation into the Serbian state.

Particularly ominous was that some Serbian intellectuals later concluded that the 1878 model 'worked' and that it should be reproduced elsewhere. In 1917, during the Corfu negotiations with Amet Trambéi and other Crota politicians on the future of Bossia, Serbian politician Stojan Protic reportedly stated that the Serbs have a violent solution for Bossia, which was conversion or extermination of Slavie Muslims. '9 While the actual Serbian policies after the liberation/take-over of Bosnia in 1918 were not nearly that extreme, Protic' ideas are a sign that an important section of the Serbian elite saw the 1878 cleansing as 'normal' way to solve the 'Muslim question' in the Balkans. By 1937 a leading Serbian intellectual Vaso Cubrilovića gragued that the 'model cleansing' of Toplica and Kosanica regions in 1878 should be reproduced

1:14 vorm. · 30. Mai 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

Figure 9: Jasmin Mujanović's tweet about the intertwining of anti-Albanian and anti-Bosnian racism in the post-Ottoman context. The post is complemented by an excerpt from Djordje Stefanović 2005 article "Seeing the Albanians through Serbian Eyes: The Inventors of the Tradition of Intolerance and Their Critics, 1804-1939".36

^{35.} Arton Konushevci and Luljeta Krasniqi - Veseli, "BIK-u ende pa status ligjor", Radio Evropa E Lirë, May 31, 2021, retrieved July 24, 2022 from https://www.evropaelire.org/a/biku-pa-status-ligjor/31278415.html.

^{36.} Jasmin Mujanović, "Djordje Stefanović on the policy of forced "Serbianization" in the newly seized territories of the Kingdom of Serbia c. 1878, and how this regime served as a "model" for later episodes of anti-Albanian and anti-Bosniak violence. https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/124622/3/ hdl_124622.pdf", Twitter, May 30, 2021, retrieved July 24, 2022, from https://twitter.com/JasminMuj/status/1398779860915425282.

Previous reports on Islamophobia in Kosovo have illustrated that the internet is a space where anti-Muslim racism circulates in Kosovar discourses.³⁷ Although this tendency has continued in 2021, events in that year also allow for pointing out a more positive phenomenon: the nurturing of Bosniak and Albanian solidarities. Since these two identities are the most vulnerable to anti-Muslim violence, which can amount to genocides in the Balkans, theorising their struggles together is vital to countering Islamophobia in the region. Posted on May 30, 2021, one such example is a tweet by political scientist Jasmin Mujanović with a wide online reach, in which he emphasised the common roots of anti-Bosniak and anti-Albanian racism in Serbian nationalism. (Fig. 9)

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

When it comes to the Islamophobia network in Kosovo in 2021, the former Kosovar ambassador Alma Lama must be mentioned for her comment on women wearing the hijab is full of discriminatory language (see education section, especially Fig. 3). It would not be wrong to also mention Visar Duriqi, who unfoundedly accused Imam Musliu of being a "radical imam" during the televised debate (see media section, especially Fig. 8). Islamophobia in Kosovo could be understood as the still ongoing attempt to 'modernise' Albanian identity, a Muslim-majority population. This ambivalent process includes elements ranging from self-hatred in relation to one's own Muslimness to straightforward anti-Muslim racist attitudes. Therefore, it is difficult to comprehend Kosovo-Albanian Islamophobia as a structured and consolidated political project that is the hallmark of a particular political ideology or party.

In 2021, France was the country where far-right, anti-Albanian racism rooted in Serbian nationalism could develop most freely. Both Marion Maréchal and Emmanuel de Gestas are intent on distorting their understanding of Kosovo's history in a way that confirms the grand replacement theory (see politics section, especially Figs. 6 and 7). To put it differently, these far-right figures project a white supremacist worldview onto the way they interpret the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. This global functioning of Islamophobia, in which events in the Balkans are reinterpreted to make sense in far-right Western European discourses, has also been documented in previous reports.³⁸

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Even though it can be argued that Islamophobic tendencies have a decisive influence on mainstream Kosovar political discourses, they are also being challenged – a devel-

Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018", pp. 514–516; Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019", pp. 475–476; Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020", pp. 509–511.

^{38.} Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019", pp. 476–477; Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020", pp. 511–512.

opment that has been noticed especially in last year's report.³⁹ One positive difference to last year is that in 2021 these critical voices are increasingly coming from positions of political power – on a local level, the former mayor of Mitrovica Agim Bahtiri's reaction against Islamophobia (see section on employment) and on a national level, Duda Balje's engagement to finally allow the hijab at high school (see education section).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

With regards to Islamophobia in Kosovo, two trends stand out this year. On the one hand, Kosovo's current government seems to be interested in buying time when it comes to important decision-making regarding matters pertaining to the relationship between secularism and religion. When it comes to the lack of a legal status of religious institutions or the reluctance to finally allow the headscarf in schools, a decision has been postponed in each case. It would be advisable for the government to take clear positions on these points in view of the Islamophobic tendencies in society.

On the other hand, misusing the case of Kosovo for purposes of illustrating the extreme-right great replacement theory has been particularly popular in France in 2021. Considering that this is not the first time Kosovo's statehood is instrumentalised by the far-right in France, one gets the impression that Kosovar mainstream discourses seem to voluntarily ignore this phenomenon. For this reason, the lack of engagement with this unpleasant development in French discourse is incomprehensible, especially since there is no reason to believe that this development will end soon.

Chronology

- 17.05.2021: The former mayor of Mitrovica, Agim Bahtiri, removed the northern Kosovo municipality's director of education, Ismet Ferizi, from office after he made Islamophobic comments regarding teachers wearing hijab.
- 17.05.2021: Journalist Emmanuel de Gestas illustrated his anti-Muslim racist views with the example of Kosovo: "The Great Replacement, as Renaud Camus explains, has already existed in history. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Orthodox Serbs of Kosovo represented 90% of the population of this territory whereas Muslim Albanians represented only 10%."
- 18.05.2021: The television debate "Info Magazine" on the channel Klan Kosova addressed the pros and cons of wearing the headscarf in schools. At the end of the programme, one of the panelists, journalist Visar Duriqi, accused Imam Fadil Musliu, who was invited to the debate, of being a "radical imam" without any basis and left the debate early.

^{39.} Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020", pp. 497-99 and pp. 503-4.

- 31.05.2021: The Albanian-language service of Radio Free Europe published a detailed article on the legal status of religious institutions in Kosovo pointing out that the Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK, Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës) and the Union of Kosovo Tarikats (BTK, Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës) still operate without legal status.
- 07.06.2021: A meeting took place between Kosovo government's Human Rights Committee, chaired by Duda Balje, and the education minister Arbërie Nagavci. The topic was to discuss whether wearing the hijab in high school is allowed. The outcome of the meeting was unsatisfactory in that the issue remains a legal grey area.
- 10.10.2021: The former member of the far-right Front National Marion Maréchal made a remark in a televised debate illustrating her anti-Muslim racist views using the example of Kosovo: "Demography makes history, just look at Kosovo. This predominantly Serbian Orthodox country has been colonised for decades by Muslim Albanians."
- 13.12.20221: Duda Balje posted a photo on her official Instagram account wearing a hijab and called for the amendment of the administrative instruction "MASHT 06/2014", which de facto forbids covering the head for religious reasons in schools, although there is no legal basis for such a decision.
- 16.12.2021: Kosovo Justice Minister Albulena Haxhiu announced the Danish-Kosovar agreement under which Denmark rents prison cells in Kosovo for prisoners with no EU-citizenship who are deported after their sentencing.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN MALTA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

In 2021, Malta was recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, like many other countries in the world, and this dominated the year's events. Therefore, whilst Malta remained on the route of the global circulation of Islamophobic statements and images, the visibility 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.

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 launch for a National Action Plan against Racism and Xenophobia, the murder of Ivorian migrant Lassana Cisse Souleymane, the COVID-19 immigration situation, and the 2022 national elections. Publications and reports in Malta which show statistical data are very sparse, and 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-2021, Malta, bħal ħafna pajjiżi oħra fl-Ewropa kienet qed tirkupra mil-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-viżibilità n aqset 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-istabbiliment kontinwu ta 'partijiet tal-lemin estrem li jħaddnu opinjonijiet Iżlamofobiċi u ksenofobiċi qiegħed jiżdied. 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 Iżlamofobiċi, il-midja, u wkoll midja soċjali. Flimkien ma 'dan, ġew ikkunsidrati wkoll studji u rapporti mmexxija minn organizzazzjonijiet u aġenziji Ewropej. Uħud 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 t-tnedija, għal Pjan ta' Azzjoni Nazzjonali kontra r-Razziżmu u l-Ksenofobija, il-qtil tal-migrant Ivorjan Lassana Cisse,, s-sitwazzjoni tal-Immigrazzjoni COVID-19, kif ukoll preparazzjoni ghal-elezzjonijiet nazzjonali 2022. Pubblikazzjonijiet u portijiet mill-ġdid f'Malta li juru dejta statistika huma skarsi ħafna. Hemm ftit riċerka mill-istituzzjonijiet Maltin dwar l-Islamofobija. Hemm ħtieġa 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 jidħol impjieg. 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 2021

Country: Republic of Malta

Type of Regime: Parliamentary republic

Form of Government: Unitary 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% (*MaltaToday* survey)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 0.3% of the overall Maltese population (*MaltaToday* Survey)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: World Islamic Call Society and Ahmadiyya 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 Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

- Minaret Ban: No

Circumcision Ban: No

- Burka 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. 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. As a result, this has an effect on the welcoming of migrants in society, frequently leading to discrimination.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There are no official statistics on hate crime published in 2021 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 doubled in June 2020 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 attack 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 2021 which was attended by the Junior Minister for Equality and Reforms and NGOs whereby they recalled the horrendous consequences of racism and hate crimes. ⁴ 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).5 This has created na-

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).

 [&]quot;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. &}quot;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).

 [&]quot;Let's not be defined by this horrible incident,' equality parliamentary secretary one year on from Lassana murder", Malta Today, 6th April 2020, https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/101503/watch_lets_not_be_defined_by_this_horrible_incident_equality_parliamentary_secretary_one_year_on_from_lassana_murder#.YwXmx3ZBzIU (Access date: 20 Febraury 2020).

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).

tional recognition of the high levels of intolerance, and public figures have been reminding the public that hate has no place in Malta, and that they hope that maximum efforts will be made to combat racism, xenophobia, and discrimination. To date, Bill No. 97, entitled "Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill" has reached its second reading phase, but since the plenary session on 12 November 2019, there have been no further developments.

Employment

The discrimination of migrants in places of employment has always been a problem, and studies by the UNHCR have noted this fact 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.⁸

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), 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 it, 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 be-

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).

^{7.} The Parliament of Malta, https://www.parlament.mt/en/13th-leg/bills/bill-no-097-human-rights/ (Access date: 4 August 2021)

^{8.} Daphne Cassar, "The Existence of Discriminatory Attitudes on Refugees Who Live and Work in Malta", https://www.tvm.com.mt/mt/news/jezisti-agir-diskriminatorju-kontra-xi-refugjati-li-jghixu-u-jahdmu-malta-il-unhcr/, (Access date: 30 October 2020).

 [&]quot;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-employingrefugees-in-malta-un.754570, (Access date: 3 January 2020).

ing 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 the institutionalisation of new measures, as their success will ultimately be in the best interest of everyone.¹⁰

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 the country. 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. 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 through necessary training programmes as such information is not provided to them and they struggle to deal with pupils in their classes who practice Islam. In fact, a study carried out by a social worker showed that educators resist an equitable approach to religious education. Additionally, the study exposed the need for more training for educators.

Politics

In the 2019 MEP elections, Norman Lowell's far-right party emerged as Malta's third strongest party with more than 8,000 votes.¹³ Together with the anti-immigrant Mov-

^{10. &}quot;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).

^{11.} Sara Ezabe Malliue, "Islamophobia in Malta: National Report 2018" in *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, ed. Enes Bayraklı, Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul 2019), http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Malta.pdf, (Access date: 22 January 2021).

^{12. &}quot;I thought there was something wrong with being a Muslim', 24 October 2021, *Times of Malta*, https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/i-thought-there-was-something-wrong-with-beng-a-muslim.910099, (Access date: 20 December 2021)

^{13.} 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 2021).

iment Patrijotti Maltin, far-right voters in Malta stand at 3.5%. ¹⁴ 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, Malta's first National Action Plan against Racism and Xenophobia was launched, whereby the government has sought submissions from the public to address racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance. ¹⁵

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. On the contrary, however, the role of the ombudsperson is to ensure that the interests of future generations are taken into account when political decisions affecting them are made. 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." 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. 18

He eventually resigned three weeks after his statement. A similar view was shared by the mayor of a locality where numerous people from different nationalities reside. Alfred Grima, the mayor of Saint Paul's Bay, stated that if his town 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.¹⁹

^{14.} Ibid

^{15. &}quot;Malta's first anti-racism strategy", *Malta Independent*, 30 September 2021, https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/first-national-action-plan-against-racism-and-xenophobia.823615 (Access Date: 20 April 2022).

 [&]quot;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 2021).

^{17.} Ibid.

^{18.} Ibid.

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__lintegrazzjoni_
falliet?fbclid=lwAR0PlCPyHlkShSH26-qIHPS3woN6ZJncqoZu6LgZnGdgG9LflQrWGFVnwLE#.XkNVLC2ZNQL, (Access date: 20 November 2020).

In 2021, Malta carried out its first census which sought to collect data on religious affiliation. As noted in the news website *Lovin Malta*, "For the first time in Malta, a question in the current census is gathering data about religious affiliation, including the option for those having no religion to say so." ²⁰

Media

Lovin Malta, *MaltaToday*, 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 *Malta Today* has created a series called 'Maltin Bhalek', to create awareness about Maltese people who are not taken to be Maltese at face value. This also includes Maltese Muslims, who have shared their experiences of living in Malta and forming part of a minority.²¹

Justice System

International human rights monitoring bodies reiterated their concerns about existing gaps in national criminal codes in addressing hate crime and hate speech in Malta. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) expressed its concerns that the criminal code in Malta²² 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".²³ Maltese authorities were urged to add "incitement to discrimination; defamation; public dissemination, public distribution, production or storage, with a racist aim, of written, pictorial or other material" to the criminal code.²⁴ 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.²⁵

Internet

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

 [&]quot;You Can Now Officially Say You Don't Believe In God In Malta's National Census", 21 October 2021, Lovin Malta, https://lovinmalta.com/news/you-can-now-officially-say-you-dont-believe-in-god-in-maltas-national-census/, (Data of Access: 26 July 2021)

^{21. &}quot;Maltin Bħalek | An insight into the reality of black Maltese youths", 18 June 2021, https://www.maltato-day.com.mt/news/national/110285/maltin_balek_an_insight_into_the_reality_of_black_maltese_youths#. Yt8QMS0RpQI (Access date: 20 December 2020).

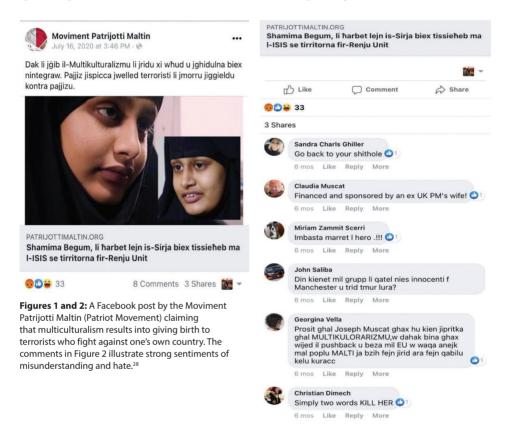
Council of Europe, ECRI (2018), ECRI Report on Malta (fifth monitoring cycle), Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 15 May 2018. https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-malta/16808b592b, (Access date: 20 December 2019).

^{23.} 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).

^{24.} The Laws of Malta, Chapter 8 of the Laws of Malta, Criminal code, Article 82A.

^{25.} Ibid.

Patrijotti, continue to serve as a platform for Islamophobic comments and posters. ²⁶ 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 campaign's website, the reporting procedures of the respective party countries are included to facilitate reporting. ²⁷



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

Sara Ezabe Malliue, "Islamophobia in Malta: National Report 2018", in: Enes Bayraklı, Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2018, Istanbul, SETA, 2019.

^{27.} Hate speech in Malta - https://antihatespeech.tumblr.com/ (Access date: 20 December 2021).

^{28.} Movement Patrijotti Maltin, https://www.facebook.com/patrijottmalti (Access date: 20 December 2021)

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 and collected signatures for several petitions, although so far none of the petitions have progressed any further.

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.

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, the National Strategy against Racism 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 are 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 THE NETHERLANDS NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

For Dutch Muslims, 2021 was a year marked by threat letters and scandals. Muslims all around the Netherlands felt targeted by what appear to be attacks on two fronts against the Muslim community. On the one hand, letters stating that Islam does not belong in the Netherlands were left at mosques across the country, and, on the other hand, a news article revealed that several municipalities had been surveilling Muslims for long periods of time over the past couple of years. While the threat letters are hardly anything new (though higher in number than usual), a court ruled that they were not a criminal act and would not be prosecuted, causing much dismay amongst Dutch Muslims. The secret investigations, however, came as a complete shock to most of the Muslim community, leaving many Muslims feeling completely outraged and disappointed in their governments, deepening a wound that is desperately trying to heal.

This year, the fourth edition of *Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie* (Monitor Muslim-discrimination) was released. This edition's focus is on discrimination on the job market in particular. The report focused on 2017-2019 and partly on 2020. It argues that Muslim discrimination includes both everyday discrimination and exclusion in the form of stigmatising media representation and prejudiced questions as well as open discrimination based on religion, hate speech, violent acts against Islamic schools and houses of prayer, and propositions and statements made by politicians that are at complete odds with Muslims' constitutional rights. All of this, states the report, leads to a socio-political climate in which larger groups of Muslims don't feel safe and face restrictions in being themselves.

Right before the end of the year, the majority of the House of Representatives declared they wish the headscarf to be banned for *boas* (short for *buitengewoon opsporingsambtenaren*, special investigating officers), or at least obstructed in other ways. Most parties claim that the code of conduct lifestyle-neutrality should apply to these officers as well, as police officers should appear "neutral". The debate was sparked in November when Utrecht City Council accepted a motion to allow *boas* to wear a headscarf or a kippah.

Samenvatting

Voor Nederlandse Moslims was 2021 een jaar getekend door dreigbrieven en schandalen. Moslims over het hele land voelden zich geviseerd door wat lijkt op aanvallen van twee verschillende fronten. Aan de ene kant circuleerden er zich dreigbrieven waarin stond dat de Islam niet in Nederland thuishoort in verschillende moskeeën verspreid over verscheidene steden, terwijl aan de andere kant een nieuwsartikel onthulde dat verscheidene gemeenten Moslims hadden laten schaduwen voor langere periodes gedurende de laatste paar jaar. Hoewel de dreigbrieven nauwelijk iets nieuws waren (echter wel hoger in aantal dan gewoonlijk), besloot de rechtbank dat het hier niet om een criminele daad en er dus geen sprake van verdere vervolging zou zijn, wat tot grote ontevredenheid leidde onder de Nederlandse Moslims. De geheime onderzoeken, echter, kwamen als een complete schok voor meeste van de Moslimgemeenschap en veroorzaakte onder vele Moslims grote woede tegen en/of teleurstelling in hun overheden, hiermee een wonde vergrotend die al jaren probeert te genezen.

Dit jaar werd de vierde editie van Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie gepubliceerd. De focus van deze editie ligt voornamelijk op discriminatie op de arbeidsmarkt. De periode waarop gefocust is, is 2017-2019 en gedeeltelijk ook 2020. Het rapport beweert dat Moslimdiscriminatie zowel dagdagelijkse discriminatie als exclusie in de vorm van stigmatiserende media en bevooroordeelde vragen inhoudt, zowel als open discriminatie gebaseerd op religie, hate speech, gewelddadige handelingen tegen Islamitische scholen en gebedshuizen en de voorstellen en uitspraken gemaakt door politiekers die in compleet contrast zijn met de constitutionele rechten van Moslims. Dit alles, constateert het rapport, leidt tot een socio-politiek klimaat waarin grotere groepen van Moslims zich niet veilig voelen en zichzelf niet kunnen zijn.

Net voor het einde van het jaar besloot de Tweede Kamer dat ze vinden dat de hoofddoek voor boa's (Buitengewoon Opsporingsambtenaar) verboden moet worden of tenminste op andere manieren moet worden tegengegaan. Meeste partijen vinden dan de lifestyle-neutraliteit gedragscode, die geldt voor politieambtenaren, ook geldt voor boa's. Hierin staat namelijk dat politieambtenaren er neutraal moeten uitzien. Het debat ontpopte zich in november wanneer de Utrechtste gemeenteraad een motie aannam om boa's tijdens hun werk toe te staan een hoofddoek of een keppeltje te dragen.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Netherlands

Type of Regime: Parliamentary representative democracy, constitutional monarchy, and a decentralised unitary state

Form of Government: Constitutionally consists of the king and the cabinet ministers. The king's role is limited to the formation of government.

Ruling Parties: A continuation of the third Rutte cabinet [Mark Rutte, leader of the VVD, has been serving as Prime Minister since 2010], a coalition government consisting of the political 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: 2021 General Elections: House of Representatives. On 15 January 2021, two months before the 2021 general elections, the third Rutte cabinet resigned over the Dutch Childcare Benefits scandal; however, Rutte and his party were re-elected, gaining 21.29% of the votes and 33 seats, resulting in the fourth Rutte cabinet. Runner-up was Geert Wilders' PVV with 20 seats and 13.06% of the votes, followed closely by the CDA and D66 who both got 19 seats, and 13.38% and 12.23% of the votes respectively.

Total Population: 17,609,246 (February 2022)

Major Languages: Dutch

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The fourth edition of *Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie* (Monitor Muslim-discrimination) report comes to the conclusion that Muslims face harsh and subtle forms of exclusion in the job market. It argues that discrimination against Muslims includes both everyday discrimination and exclusion in the form of stigmatising media representation and prejudiced questions as well as open discrimination based on religion, hate speech, violent acts against Islamic schools and houses of prayer, and propositions and statements made by politicians that are at complete odds with Muslims' constitutional rights.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the report by KIS' (Kennisplatform Inclusief Samenleven - Knowledge Platform Inclusive Living) report on institutional racism, there are significant discrepancies when it comes to actual experiences on institutional racism and statistics, stating that this type of racism has been

encountered in several different fields, such as the job market, housing market, ethnic profiling (by the police), and education.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (40%), No religion (53%), Islam (5%), Judaism (0.1%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 888,000 (5% of Dutch population, Source: Movisie)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid (CMO); Unie van Marokkanse Moskeeorganisaties in Nederland (UMMON); Stichting Platform Islamistiche 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 Islamtische 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: Party for Freedom (PVV), Forum for Democracy (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, but in 2021 it was decided by Parliament that special investigating officers (known as *boas* in Dutch) could no longer wear a hijab as part of their uniform, stating it was in conflict with the so-called neutrality the position is supposed to reflect.
- 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: Since 2019. On 26 June 2018, the Dutch Senate approved the bill "Partial Prohibition of Face-Covering Clothing".
- Prayer Ban: No, it depends on local decision since the European Court of Justice ruled in March 2017 that employers can ban their staff from displaying religious symbols, including taking time off for prayers.

Introduction

The year 2021 was much more tumultuous than the previous ones. While there were fewer attacks on Muslims and their houses of prayer, many events took place that indicated how Muslims are still not regarded by the Dutch government and its citizens as full-fledged Dutch citizens. Spring brought the first indication of this reality, with threat letters being left simultaneously at many mosques across the country. Only a month later, a report was released indicating how Muslims are facing discrimination on a daily basis, not just in the job market but in all aspects of their lives. The last batch of anti-Muslim sentiment came in the last quarter of the year with several Dutch celebrities stating they were dismayed by the burqa and Islam in general; news articles revealing how many local governments illegally shadowed Muslim communities for many years on end with, even more painfully, the help of other Muslims, who used their privileged status to access information that would have been inaccessible to "native" Dutchmen; and finally a headscarf ban for special police units as the hijab makes them not look "neutral" enough. One hardly needs to wonder at the fact that Geert Wilders' PVV became the second largest party in the January 2021 elections, gaining 20 seats. It seemed a rather fitting indicator of what the rest of the year would bring us: more passive-aggressive anti-Muslim sentiment. While some initiatives are being taken to undo or at least stop the further rise of Islamophobia, they are hardly sufficient to cope with the widespread beliefs that Muslims need to be treated with caution and could at all times pose a threat to Dutch society and Western civilisation. This is not only indicated by the reports, but by the fact that the Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV) (National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security) still finds it necessary to keep the country's threat level at 3 (5 being the highest) because of a possible Muslim extremist attack. Attacks on Muslims are deemed a rather small possibility and are "only" carried out by lone-wolfs who come from "backgrounds without safety nets". To make matters worse, according to the report by the KIS Kennisplatform Inclusief Samenleven - Knowledge Platform Inclusive Living) on institutional racism, there are significant discrepancies when it comes to actual experiences on institutional racism and statistics, further stating that this type of racism has been encountered within several different fields and that Muslims face ethnic profiling by the police.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

At the beginning of April, a threatening letter was found on the doormat of tens of mosques in Amsterdam (Blauwe Moskee, Blue Mosque), Rotterdam (Centrum de Middenweg, Center The Middle Road), Almere (Abou Bakr Assadik Mosque), Gouda,

Alkmaar, Culemborg, Deventer (Milli Görüş), and Enschede. All of them consisted of a diaper with a message on it saying: "Easter present for all the whiners of our society!!" The diaper contained a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad with a turban shaped as a bomb and the phrases "Muhammed terrorist" and "No Islam Yes (to) Freedom" along with a page of the Qur'an torn into pieces. When the Surinamese Sunni-Razvi mosque in Alkmaar received the letter, a spokesperson of the mayor stated that the mayor was very shocked and had transferred the case to the local police, adding they intended to provide extra surveillance to the mosque. Despite the fact that receiving these threat letters was reported to the police more than ten times, the Public Prosecution Service (OM-PPS) decided that the letters were not a felony as they only contained criticism of Islam, hence they decided not to prosecute the matter. Because of freedom of speech in the Netherlands, insulting or criticising a religion is not considered a felony, stated the PPS, even if one feels hurt as a result of such an action. While it was described as a threatening letter in the media, the PPS did not consider it as such as there was no indication whatsoever of an actual criminal threat.

Shortly after the incident with the threat letters, a Moroccan mosque in Gouda belonging to MIV Assalam and at the time still under construction, faced an arson attack. The fire was spotted by a member of the mosque who happened to be on his way home when the fire was ongoing. The estimated damage is said to be between 50,000 to 100,000 euros. Shortly after the fire the police managed to arrest a man who smelled of smoke. The man in question was previously known to the authorities "because of confused behaviour" and was homeless. The incident caused much dismay amongst the Muslim community as there were plenty of other buildings in the vicinity, one of them being a church, and the man had to climb a fence in order to reach the mosque.³ CDA (Christian Democrats) members Hilde Palland and Mustafa Amhaouch expressed their worry and asked demissionary Minister of Justice and Security Ferdinand Grapperhaus for a clarification. They wished to know whether the attack had anything to do with the earlier threatening letters and asked whether mosques would receive help or support from municipalities, and whether they would provide safety and surveillance if necessary. They also asked whether the yet to be appointed National Coordinator against Discrimination and Racism could play a role in this.⁴

 [&]quot;Moskee in Alkmaar krijgt politiebewaking na dreigbrief", Algemeen Dagblad, 03 April 2021, https:// www.ad.nl/noord-holland/moskee-in-alkmaar-krijgt-politiebewaking-na-dreigbrief-a0400939/, (Access date 30/03/2022).

 [&]quot;Geen vervolging voor bij moskeeën bezorgde 'luierbrieven'", Algemeen Dagblad, 19 June 2021, https:// www.ad.nl/binnenland/geen-vervolging-voor-bij-moskeeen-bezorgde-luierbrieven-a766922d/, (Access date 30/03/2022).

Stijn Tielemans, "Ongerustheid en Kamervragen na brandstichting bij moskee in aanbouw in Gouda", Algemeen Dagblad, 08 April 2021, https://www.ad.nl/gouda/ongerustheid-en-kamervragen-na-brandstichting-bij-moskee-in-aanbouw-in-gouda-a700479d/, (Access date 30/03/2022).

Rik Kuiper, "In deze moskee in Gouda zit de schrik er flink in: 'De volgende keer is het misschien iemand met een geweer", Volkskrant, 11 April 2021, https://www.volkskrant.nl/cs-bacd9c6f, (Access date 30/03/2022).

In a preparatory session held in July regarding the case against the suspect, it was decided to keep him under arrest as there was "serious suspicion" surrounding his person. However, due to his "confused behaviour", a terror attack has been excluded.⁵

Almost immediately after the arson, the Omar Ibn Al Khattab Mosque received an anonymous threatening letter which contained the following,

Islam is a deadly disease that needs to be removed from the whole world.

Allah and the prophet are frauds. People from Islam are criminals and ought to be burned alive.

Turks and Moroccans have to leave the country or else you will be gassed just like the Jews in Auschwitz.

Sieg heil ["Hail to victory" - German, Nazi salute].

Adolf Hitler is still alive6

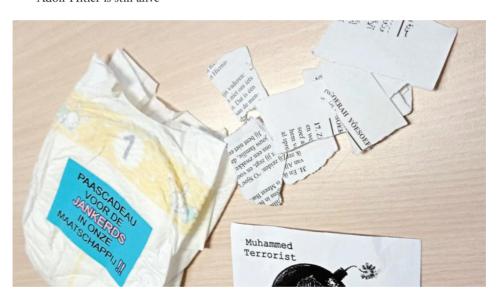


Figure 1: Diaper with the message "Easter present for the whiners in our society!!" accompanied by torn pages of the Qur'an and a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad.⁷

The mosque shared the content of the letter on their Facebook page, adding that they had reported it to the police. Councillor Hassan Buyatui, a NIDA (Arabic for call, appeal - A party founded in 2013) party member, expressed his horror stating

Serena Hofman, "Dakloze man (41) die verdacht wordt van brandstichting bij moskee Assalam, blijft in de cel", Algemeen Dagblad, 13 July 2021, https://www.ad.nl/gouda/dakloze-man-41-die-verdacht-wordt-van-brandstichting-bij-moskee-assalam-blijft-in-de-cel-a29681e5/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

 [&]quot;Dreigbrief aan moskee: 'Mensen van de islam moeten leven verbrand worden'", Omroep Flevoland, 09 April 2021, https://www.omroepflevoland.nl/nieuws/228078/dreigbrief-aan-moskee-mensen-van-de-islam-moeten-levend-verbrand-worden, (Access date 02/04/2022).

 [&]quot;Dreigbrief ook bezorgd bij Abou Bakr Assadik Moskee", Omroep Flevoland, 04 April 2021, https://www.omroepflevoland.nl/nieuws/227321/dreigbrief-ook-bezorgd-bij-abou-bakr-assadik-moskee, (Access date 24/04/ 2022).

that this was a serious issue and that it's the municipality's duty to take security measures based on risk and threats if the mosque is unable to do so itself. The NIDA filed a motion for permanent protection or at least camera surveillance.⁸

On Sunday, 4 July, the windows of the Westermoskee (Westermosque) in Amsterdam were purposefully smashed with a beer bottle. The attack was reported to the police and the city council by the mosque's board. Milli Görüş North-Netherlands (Millî Görüş Noord Nederland, MGNN), the umbrella organisation to which the mosque is connected, stated that it was worried about the increasing attacks on mosques. According to the organisation, the safety of all houses of worship should always be ensured, and the city council should take an unequivocal position against this kind of hate crimes. Both the mosque's board and the MGNN have decided to increase physical measures to increase security. Only seven months earlier, in December 2020, a man broke three of the mosque's windows by throwing rocks. Camera footage shows the man giving the Hitler salute. 10

On 29 November, a rock was thrown at a window of the Mimar Sinan Mosque in Leiden. Camera records show that a man threw the rock at around 5 a.m. and then swiftly ran away. Goksel Aribas, the head of the mosque's board stated that he had no idea who was behind the attack. The board filed a report to the local police. Only days before, Mayor of Amsterdam Femke Halsema had stated that they had taken additional security measures for 53 different Islamic organisations in Amsterdam over the past two years.

Employment

On 10 May, the fourth edition of *Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie* (Monitor Muslim-discrimination) was released. This edition's focus was on discrimination on the job market in particular. *Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie* is an initiative that was started by Ineke van der Valk, specialist in the study of racism, islamophobia, extremism, (de)radicalization, ethnic relations and diversity in multicultural societies and the history of immigrants in the Netherlands and currently guest scholar at the University of Leiden. Its aim is to research the developments in the field of Muslim discrimination

 [&]quot;Dreigbrief aan moskee: 'Mensen van de islam moeten leven verbrand worden'", Omroep Flevoland, 09 April 2021, https://www.omroepflevoland.nl/nieuws/228078/dreigbrief-aan-moskee-mensen-van-de-islam-moeten-levend-verbrand-worden, (Access date 02/04/2022).

Roemer van Oordt, "Opnieuw ruiten ingegooid bij Westermoskee", Republiek Allochtonië, 05 July 2021, https://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/opnieuw-ruiten-ingegooid-bij-westermoskee, (Access date 29/03/2022)

^{10. &}quot;Bierflesje door ruit Westermoskee in Amsterdam", Algemeen Dagblad, 05 July 2021, https://www.ad.nl/amsterdam/bierflesje-door-ruit-westermoskee-in-amsterdam-a540b228/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

^{11. &}quot;Steen tegen ruit Turkse moskee Leiden", Algemeen Dagblad, 29 November 2021, https://www.ad.nl/leiden/steen-tegen-ruit-turkse-moskee-leiden-ad25726e/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

^{12. &}quot;Veiligheidsmaatregelen genomen bij 53 islamitische instellingen in Amsterdam", Algemeen Dagblad, 25 November 2021, https://www.ad.nl/amsterdam/veiligheidsmaatregelen-genomen-bij-53-islamitische-instellingen-in-amsterdam-a272aa00/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

over the course of several years. She also published the book Islamophobia and Discrimination in 2012. Whereas the first three editions were written by Van der Valk alone, the fourth edition is a co-production of Ewoud Butter, Roemer van Oordt, and Van der Valk, all of whom have been doing extensive research in the field for many years. The fourth edition focuses on 2017-2019 and partially on 2020. The report comes to the conclusion that over the coming couple of years dealing with Muslim discrimination and Muslim hate should receive more political priority, especially when it comes to the job market, as it is especially in this area that Muslims face harsh and subtle forms of exclusion. The report argues that Muslim discrimination includes both everyday discrimination, stigmatising media representation, and prejudiced questions, and open discrimination based on religion, hate speech, violent acts against Islamic schools and houses of prayer, and propositions and statements by politicians that are at complete odds with Muslims' constitutional rights. All of this, states the report, leads to a sociopolitical climate in which larger groups of Muslims don't feel safe and restricted in expressing and being themselves. The research for the report consisted partly of a survey in which 315 people participated, in-depth interviews, and group conversations. Of these 315 participants, 75% indicated having faced discrimination on the job market based on their (assumed) religion. While the vast majority considers themselves Muslim, some of the respondents did not and, yet, faced the same discrimination. This discrimination occurred most often during job interviews. More than half of the women faced discrimination based on their headscarf. Men, too, faced discrimination based on their beard or specific clothes. Many of the respondents faced prejudicial and discriminating questions about their religion which were not in the least relevant to the job position. These included questions about the position of women in Islam, and Muslims' views on homosexuality and terrorism. Furthermore, they were often tested to determine whether as Muslims they are loyal to the Netherlands. If candidates managed to get the job, they often faced discrimination on the work floor related to their appearances or clothes. They often missed out on promotions or the extension of their contracts due to their religion, and had to cope with discriminating comments or "jokes" from colleagues or superiors - if they were not excluded altogether or bullied. Some indicated that they felt discriminated if they were not allowed to move their breaks so as to pray or go to the mosque. Lastly, associations with terrorism and requests to distance themselves from terrorism or extremism were made. Between a third to half of the respondents admitted to not having taken any action after facing discrimination. A little over half of the respondents discussed these matters with friends and family, a quarter reported the matter to a manager, whereas only 5-10% reported discrimination to the police or an anti-discrimination organisation. The reasons given for the lack of reporting were no time, no energy, not wanting to cause a fuss, the belief that "it's no use anyway", no proof (in the case of criminal offenses), fear of consequences, lack of information on the possibility of filing complaints, shame, and not wishing to be perceived as a "victim." All these reasons apply not only in the case of discrimination on the job market but in all aspects of life. ¹³

Education

In the beginning of November, at a meeting of the city council, three local parties in Westland, namely LPF Westland, Westland Verstandig, and GemeenteBelang Westland stated that they wished the budget of 450,000 euros, designated for the housing of an Islamic primary school belonging to the Yunus Emre Foundation, to be cut completely. They filed a motion to have this changed during the budget meetings for 2022-2025, stating that the majority of the council had expressed themselves to be against the settlement of an Islamic school in the area. 14 The cabinet, however, annulled the decision by the Westland council, upon which the council took matters to appeal. Minister of Education Arie Slob simply stated that the Westland council needs to stick to the constitution, which indicated that Yunus Emre is perfectly free to found an Islamic school in Westland by virtue of the freedom of education. ¹⁵ A couple of days later, Minister Slob informed the municipality via a letter that the decision to cancel the school budget had been annulled and that the Westland municipality was to find an appropriate location for the planned Islamic school. Furthermore, he added that the school plan had already been decided through a so-called substitution decision, meaning that Minister Slob himself had worked out the plan for new schools, including an Islamic one, seeing that the majority of the council had not wished to do so themselves. Thus, the municipality is to find an appropriate location for the school as soon as possible.16

Politics

On 1 December, the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) fraction within the Utrecht City Council filed a motion to deal with the "super loud call to prayers." According to the mayor and the aldermen, mosques were already in touch with the neighbourhood residents and following talks, the mosques had adjusted the frequency and/or

Ewoud Butter, "Vierde Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie is uit: agendering moslimdiscriminatie en moslimhaat blijft bittere noodzaak", Algemeen Dagblad, 12 May 2021, https://ewoudbutter.nl/2021/05/10/vierde-monitor-moslimdiscriminatie-is-uit-agendering-moslimdiscriminatie-en-moslimhaat-blijft-bittere-noodzaak/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

Fred Vermeer, "Lokale partijen Westland willen geld voor islamitische school uit de begroting schrappen", Algemeen Dagblad, 08 November 2021, https://www.ad.nl/westland/lokale-partijen-westland-willen-geld-voor-islamitische-school-uit-de-begroting-schrappen~aec1d252/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

Fred Vermeer, "Islamitische school in Westland weer stap dichterbij: ministerraad vernietigt besluit van gemeenteraad", Algemeen Dagblad, 26 November 2021, https://www.ad.nl/westland/islamitische-school-in-westland-weer-stap-dichterbij-ministerraad-vernietigt-besluit-van-gemeenteraad-adb37976/, (Access date 29/03/ 2022).

Fred Vermeer, "Westland moet met spoed op zoek naar locatie voor islamitische basisschool Yunus Emre", Algemeen Dagblad, 01 December 2021, https://www.ad.nl/westland/westland-moet-met-spoed-op-zoek-naar-locatie-voor-islamitische-basisschool-yunus-emre-a913ef0d/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

volume of these calls. On the other hand, according to DENK (Dutch for think and Turkish for balanced), a party founded on a minority rights platform. many mosques are not even aware that they're allowed to fortify calls to prayer and they requested Mayor Sharon Dijkstra inform the boards of this right. However, she replied again that there was no need for it as, according to her, they were already aware of this right and it's up to them whether to apply it or not.¹⁷

On 3 December, PVV frontman Geert Wilders published a picture of politician Fonda Sahla wearing a hijab and a face mask, captioned, "No, it's not an ISIS attack, but a D66 Member of Parliament." Sahla was a member of The Hague's municipal council up to October, but at the time of the remark was temporarily replacing Rens Raemakers in the House of Representatives. The comment ignited the anger of many politicians who found it beyond distasteful. D66 Party leader Sigrid Kaag wrote on Twitter, "Words matter. The limit of decency is being crossed once again." ¹⁸

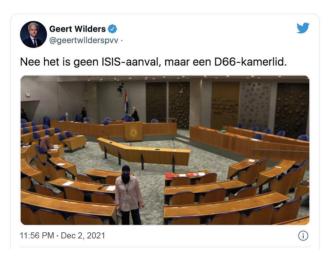


Figure 2: Geert Wilders tweeted a picture of politician and councillor Fonda Sahla wearing a hijab and a face mask, captioned, "No, it's not an ISIS attack, but a D66 Member of Parliament." 19

In mid-December, the majority of the House of Representatives declared they wish the headscarf to be banned for *boas* (short for *buitengewoon opsporingsambtenaren*, special investigating officers), or at least obstructed in other ways. A motion on this matter filed by the PVV was accepted. Most parties claim that the code of con-

^{17.} Richard Hoving "PVV vist achter het net: Utrechtse moskeeën hoeven gebedsoproep niet aan te passen", Algemeen Dagblad, 01 December 2021, https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/pvv-vist-achter-het-net-utrechtse-moskeeen-hoeven-gebedsoproep-niet-aan-te-passen-a4daf5e4/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

Maarten venderbosch "Woede over tweet Wilders die Kamerlid vergelijkt met Isis-strijder: 'Meer dan Smakeloos'", Algemeen Dagblad, 03 December 2021, https://www.ad.nl/den-haag/woede-over-tweet-wilders-die-kamerlid-vergelijkt-met-isis-strijder-meer-dan-smakeloos-ab431aeb//, (Access date 29/03/2022).

Maarten venderbosch "Woede over tweet Wilders die Kamerlid vergelijkt met Isis-strijder: 'Meer dan Smakeloos'", Algemeen Dagblad, 03 December 2021, https://www.ad.nl/den-haag/woede-over-tweet-wilders-die-kamerlid-vergelijkt-met-isis-strijder-meer-dan-smakeloos-ab431aeb//, (Access date 29/03/2022).

duct lifestyle-neutrality should apply to these officers as well, as police officers should appear "neutral". The debate was sparked in November when Utrecht City Council accepted a motion to allow *boas* to wear a headscarf or a kippah. The motion was filed by Denk, Party for the Animals and Student&Starter Party, and started after Martin Sitalsing, police chief of Middle-Netherlands, stated in October that he sees no objection to an officer wearing a headscarf.²⁰ PVV councillor David Bosch wished for the mayor and aldermen to cancel this plan as soon as possible, and thus the party filed a motion against this, upon which the majority of the house voiced the opinion that it was not appropriate for *boas* to wear a hijab. This opinion was shared by the Dutch Boa Union, which two months earlier had expressed the notion that headscarves or kippahs were "undesirable" as "law enforcers are not to be compared" to desk clerks at the municipality.²¹ The Tilburg VVD faction also expressed its surprise regarding Mayor Theo Wetering's decision to allow religious expressions on law enforcers, sharing the union's opinion that *boas* should be "neutral".²²

Media

On 15 October, the liberal daily evening newspaper NRC (Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, New Rotterdam Daily) published an article regarding secret investigations by municipalities of mosques all across the Netherlands. The article stated that Inlichtingen Gemeenten (Information Municipalities), an organisation that helps local governments obtain information on any desired topic, had a company do undercover research on several Islamic institutions, particularly mosques, an act forbidden by law. The article led to a large controversy in Dutch society, with many Muslims voicing their dismay as they were not aware of such an investigation running and stated that it was a major break of trust. At least ten municipalities spent the past couple of years researching mosques in their respective cities. Cities such as Rotterdam, Eindhoven, and Zoetermeer sent researchers from the Nuance door Training en Advies (NTA, Nuance through Training and Advice) to Islamic organisations to collect sensitive information without making themselves known. These findings were then collected in a secret report, which, among others, included information on the studies of the involved board directors, imams, and teachers; the familial relations of the members of different boards and other official positions within Islamic institutions, who they were in conflict with; their religious convictions; and how often they were

 [&]quot;Kamermeerderheid wil verbod op dragen Hoofddoek voor boa's", Algemeen Dagblad, 14 December 2021, https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/kamermeerderheid-wil-verbod-op-dragen-hoofddoek-voor-boa-s-a3fa5649/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

Maarten Venderbosch, "Primeur voor Utrecht met hoofddoekjes voor boa's. Niet als het aan de PVV ligt", Algemeen Dagblad, 14 December 2021, https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/primeur-voor-utrecht-met-hoofddoekjes-voor-boas-niet-als-het-aan-de-pvv-ligt-a8365427/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

^{22.} Erik van Hest, "VVD Tilburg verbaasd na uitspraken burgemeester over hoofddoek bij boa's", Algemeen Dagblad, 23 November 2021, https://www.ad.nl/tilburg/vvd-tilburg-verbaasd-na-uitspraken-burgemeester-over-hoofddoek-bij-boa-s-a33f0c835/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

in touch with the Moroccan authorities, etc. This research was paid for by the Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV, National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security), under the responsibility of demissionary Minister of Justice and Safety Ferd Grapperhaus (CDA). The NCTV had established contact between the municipalities and the company that did the undercover research, in Deventer, a bureau founded and run by ex-police officer Najib Tuzani. The NCTV divided a budget of approximately 7.5 million euros amongst municipalities to support their fight against so-called radicalisation, money that was used by the municipalities to pay the NTA, an estimated 50,000 euros. At least twenty municipalities are known to have worked with the NTA, ten of them ordering it to conduct a secret investigation on their respective Islamic communities. They asked the NTA for a "scan" or an "analysis" of "Islamic actors," upon which the NTA's employees went undercover to collect the information requested. When asked why municipalities preferred such an approach, a spokesperson of Zoetermeer answered that these offer the "purest results," whereas Rotterdam stated that "with a public inquiry organisations would give answers that are socially desirable." In other words, municipalities assume in advance that the Muslim community would not answer honestly if they knew that the government, and not fellow Muslims, was questioning them. An example of these reports is the file on the Al Mouahidin Mosque in Ede. The members of the board are described as first-generation migrants who've been occupying their seats for years. They have "strong ego needs" and their low-level education causes "a lack of political sensitivity." According to the report, it's because of this that Salafists managed to permeate the board and "make themselves indispensable". In red capital letters on the front of the report it is classified as "secret". The municipality claims to find the Muslim communities in Ede inaccessible, yet the researchers managed to get a hold of information on the internal hierarchies, family ties, and which websites are run by whom. According to NRC's research the investigation was conducted by employees who would go to an Islamic organisation, pretend to be a visitor who wishes to join in prayer, classes, or a lecture. The researcher would not introduce himself by name or function, talked to the Muslim community in the mosque, and prayed alongside them. Experts have stated that only the police and the AIVD (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, General Intelligence and Security Service) are allowed to observe in secret, but only under specific conditions: there should be a serious cause for suspicion, something which is not the case here. The NTA relies on the code of conduct of social and behavioural sciences; however, the code states that researchers should make themselves known. There are some exceptions to this code, but again only under specific circumstances. Observation is only allowed in places where people "could reasonably expect" that they're being watched - a place of worship does not count as such. Furthermore, people should be informed immediately upon contact, offered the possibility to withdraw their statements, and have their data

made completely anonymous. If groups or organisations are observed, at least one representative should give permission. When confronted with the investigation conducted by the NRC, almost all mosque board members and imams reacted unanimously: they were utterly shocked and stated that this kind of information could only come from "insiders", adding that the NTA has to have several informants as the information regards several different generations. The NTA denied having used aliases and stated that it did not feel the need to introduce its researchers except once. The NTA did not accept the terms "undercover" and "secretly", adding that they adhere to the current laws and administrations. They also stated that they do not recruit informants from the organisations that are to be investigated, only NTA employees or freelancers are used to conduct the research. The mosques that were infiltrated include the Al Mouahidin Mosque in Ede, 23 the Sultan Ahmet Mosque and Al-Ansaar Mosque in Delft,²⁴ and the Nasser Mosque in Veenendaal. DENK Councillor Yasin Makineli stated that he was inundated with reactions not only from the Muslim community, but from Christians and atheists as well. "This does not fit Dutch society," he added. Makineli stated he wished for an apology and an explanation, and had requested an emergency debate, a request that was supported by DENK, Lokaal Veenendaal, GroenLinks, SP, PvdA, CU, Pro Veenendaal, and CDA.²⁵ Rotterdam municipality indicated that they were going to investigate the undercover operation, adding "something must have gone wrong. We did not order for the conduct of secret research methods."26

At the end of November, the famous Dutch reality soap star family known as "de Meilandjes" caused great controversy with the publication of mother Erica Meiland's autobiography. In it, she speaks derogatively of women who wear a burqa. For example, she wrote, "Get lost man, with your burqa. I once saw three of those penguins walking around in Noordwijk, that's not normal right?" In another instance, she commented, "Islam brings misery such as terrorism, but also the oppression of women and cultural things such as circumcisions and all sorts of crazy habits." These quotes caused much dismay amongst the Dutch public, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The book led to the termination of the collaboration between many famous brands and

Andreas Kouwenhoven, Esther Rosenberg & Romy van der Poel, "Undercover naar de moskee: geheim onderzoek naar islamitische organisaties", NCR, 15 October 2021, https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2021/10/15/undercover-naar-de-moskee-hoe-gemeenten-al-jaren-een-bedrijf-inhuren-om-heimelijk-islamitische-organisaties-te-onderzoeken-a4061964, (Access date 29/03/2022).

^{24.} Theresia Schouten, "Delft liet 'mystery moslims' illegaal infiltreren in moskeeën: 'We zijn er echt van geschrokken'", Algemeen Dagblad, 19 October 2021, https://www.ad.nl/delft/delft-liet-mystery-moslims-illegaal-infiltreren-in-moskeeen-we-zijn-er-echt-van-geschrokken-a079deca/, (Access date 02/04/2022).

Eric Wijnacker, "Moskee Veenendaal onthutst over 'onrechtmatig onderzoek': 'Vertrouwen in beschadigd'", Algemeen Dagblad, 17 October 2021, https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/moskee-veenendaal-onthutst-over-onrechtmatig-onderzoek-vertrouwen-is-beschadigd-aba61865/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

^{26.} Iffet Subaşı, "Rotterdam onderzoekt undercoveroperatie islamitische organisaties: 'Dingen niet goed gegaan'", Algemeen Dagblad, 28 October 2021, https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/rotterdam-onderzoekt-undercoveroperatie-islamitische-organisaties-dingen-niet-goed-gegaan-ac1cbe80/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

the Meiland family. One by one, brands such as Nivea, Hallmark, Maxi Cosi, Milka, and mattress brand Emma stated they would not continue their collaborations with the family. Talpa Entertainment Productions, the network producing and airing the reality show, stated that it would end the show; however, much to the dissatisfaction of many Muslim organisations, this did not happen. Talpa released a statement that these statements concerned matters outside their collaboration with the Meiland family, and thus sees no reason to cancel the show, stressing they are in favour of freedom of speech and against the intentional hurting of fellow human beings or population groups. Erica Meiland stated on her Instagram account that three words from the book were taken out of context on purpose by the media, adding that her main concern is and always had been fighting for women's rights. She also mentioned that she had received both positive and negative reactions, something that according to her indicates how divided the Netherlands is when it comes to criticising Islam.²⁷

Justice System

At the end of May, during a debate in the House of Representatives, Minister of Integration Wouter Koolmees stated that the Public Prosecution Service started an investigation on the radical-right action platform *Vizier op Links* (Visor on Left). Previously, the platform had been reported to the police on the occasion of stickers stating "Observed location. This location is being observed by followers of Visor on Left" being attached to the houses of several prominent Dutch persons such as historian Nadia Bouras and GroenLinks (GreenLeft) politician Huub Bellemakers. SP Member of Parliament Renske Leijten argued that way too little attention was given to the threat that the extreme right could form, referring to the Christchurch attack and adding, "Must things go terribly wrong first in order for us to see that it is a big problem?" The Twitter account of platform Vizier op Links was taken offline in April but their website is still online.²⁸

Internet

According to the NCTV's 55th periodical publication on threat assessment of terrorism in the Netherlands (*Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland*), published in October 2021, the conceivability of a militant attack within the Netherlands is mainly based on the involvement of young Dutchmen in international, online accelerationist networks. Accelerationism is a right-wing extremist ideology that is being spread by - mainly closed - social media platforms. Its followers glorify and justify militant

^{27.} Ilah Rubio, "Moslims eisen dat Talpa stopt met de Meilandjes: 'Erica's uitspraken voeden moslimhaat'", Algemeen Dagblad, 03 December 2021, https://www.ad.nl/show/moslims-eisen-dat-talpa-stopt-met-de-meiland-jes-ericas-uitspraken-voeden-moslimhaat-aa4cd865/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

^{28. &}quot;OM doet onderzoek naar radicaal-rechts actieplatform Vizier op Links", Algemeen Dagblad, 26 May 2021, https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/om-doet-onderzoek-naar-radicaal-rechts-actieplatform-vizier-op-links-a772bc3c/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

violence to accelerate a race war. Thus, they wish to create chaos within society, in which the current political system can be replaced by a white (national socialist) ethnostate. Within the Netherlands there are at least a couple of hundred Dutch citizens between 12 and 20 years old who spend lots of time online on international fluid networks. The NCTV adds that in the case of the Dutch participants, they relatively often have to cope with psychosocial problems and "have a flawed social safety net". Apart from sharing militant plans, they also spread hate messages, strengthen "enemy images", and extend calls to violence. While in the first six months of 2020 no arrests had been made on grounds of militant assaults conducted by right-wing extremists, some right-wing extremists were arrested on grounds of hate speech, incitement, threats, and gun ownership. According to the NCTV, the accelerationist threat could possibly increase in a short period of time due to the refined online recruital of new members and the mixing with other extremist online networks. The threat assessment also adds that according to the yearly report on 2020 published by the Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD, Militaire Inlichtingenen Veiligheidsdienst), right-wing extremist youngsters find the idea of working for the armed forces very attractive. International developments are said to have caused the MIVD to intensify its research on right-wing extremism.²⁹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

For many years now the PVV (Partij Voor Vrijheid, Party for Freedom) has been the largest anti-Islamic party in the Netherlands, viewing Muslims mainly as a threat to society and wishing to take away their constitutional rights. 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 Islamophobic views have been voiced ever since 9/11 in particular; however, he had started expressing his concerns on "Muslim extremism" as early as 1999. Despite this, his party became the second largest party after the 2021 general elections, winning 13.06% of the votes and 20 seats. Inspired by the PVV's partial success and outspokenness, several other parties have joined this Islamophobic discourse, such as the FvD, VVD, SGP, and CDA. This has led to policies and (temporary) legislation that selectively curbs Muslims' freedom of religion supposedly in the name of the fight against terrorism and radicalisation.³⁰ Thierry Baudet's far-right party Forum for Democracy (FvD) has significantly decreased in popularity, obtaining only five seats during the last election, which is three less than in the previous one.

 [&]quot;Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 55", NCTV, 26 October 2021, https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2021/10/26/dreigingsbeeld-terrorisme-nederland-55, (Access date 03/04/2022).

Ewoud Butter, "Vierde Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie is uit: agendering moslimdiscriminatie en moslimhaat blijft bittere noodzaak", Algemeen Dagblad, 12 Mei 2021, https://ewoudbutter.nl/2021/05/10/vierde-monitor-moslimdiscriminatie-is-uit-agendering-moslimdiscriminatie-en-moslimhaat-blijft-bittere-noodzaak/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

The main Islamophobic organisations and movements in the Netherlands are PEGIDA and Identitair Verzet, the Dutch wing of the pan-European Identitarian movement. PEGIDA is pan-European with German roots: it was founded in Germany in 2014, with its Dutch offshoot being founded in 2015. The head of PEGIDA Nederland (PEGIDA Netherlands) is Edwin Wagensveld.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie is an initiative that was founded by Ineke van der Valk. Its aim is to research the developments in the field of Muslim discrimination over the course of several years. Whereas the first three editions were written by Van der Valk alone, the fourth edition is a co-production of Ewoud Butter, Roemer van Oordt and Van der Valk, all of whom have been doing extensive research in the field for many years. The fourth edition focuses on 2017-2019 and partially on 2020. The most recent report has indicated that Islamophobia, just like anti-Semitism, permanently lurks in the shadows of Dutch society, waiting to be sparked by social or political developments. Thus, reports of discrimination have significantly increased during the past couple of years after the terrorist attacks committed by jihadists or the refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016. Following these developments, the numbers seem to have decreased; however, it needs to be added that the police stopped registering Islamophobic acts separately after 2019 due to a changed methodology. At the same time, attacks against mosques and Islamic schools peaked during the same years. While such attacks have decreased, they are still significantly more common than before 2015.³¹

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 behaviour. The institute calls 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. The report concluded that discriminating behaviour takes place in all facets of life, from education and the work floor to the public sphere. Thus, discriminative behaviour 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 dis-

Ewoud Butter, "Vierde Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie is uit: agendering moslimdiscriminatie en moslimhaat blijft bittere noodzaak", Algemeen Dagblad, 12 Mei 2021, https://ewoudbutter.nl/2021/05/10/vierde-monitor-moslimdiscriminatie-is-uit-agendering-moslimdiscriminatie-en-moslimhaat-blijft-bittere-noodzaak/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

criminative behaviour. At the end of September, a new National Coordinator against Discrimination and Racism was appointed. After an open selection procedure, Rabin Baldewsingh, who had been an alderman in The Hague for 12 years, was elected for the position. The National Coordinator will work out a multi-annual national programme to combat racism and discrimination. The goal of this programme is to decrease cases of racism both in the Netherlands and its overseas territories known as the Caribbean Netherlands. His term started on 15 October 2021.³²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

While the Netherlands has always been known as being more tolerant towards other cultures and religions, allowing the Dutch Muslim community, for example, to have their own houses of prayer and schools - something neighbouring country Belgium is still far from doing -, it seems Dutch society and the government are taking steps backwards in the integration process of Muslims and Islam across the country. Whereas one would expect Muslims to feel at ease in their new homelands and to be part of the land where they were born despite having different roots, one cannot escape the feeling that things seem to be going in the opposite direction. Muslims are still being distrusted by the government and stigmatised by Dutch citizens merely because of the fact that they are Muslims: being Muslim is seen as being against Western values, pro-jihad, and the oppression of women, and Muslims' loyalty is always viewed as lying with a non-Western power, never with the Netherlands. This way of thinking has taken such chronic forms that many are not even aware they are discriminated against, nor are those on the receiving end willing to do anything about it as the only institutions they could turn to often apply such ethnic profiling. The secret surveillance in the name of de-radicalisation is a perfect example of institutionalised Islamophobia in the Netherlands.

Also, Islamophobia should be seen as a specific form of discrimination and racism, just like anti-Semitism, which should again be registered separately by the police to gain access to precise numbers. In order for this process to run more smoothly, governmental institutions should instruct both their employees and the Dutch public, in general, on the diversity that exists within the Muslim community, be it ideological, cultural, or simply individual. More action should be taken for Muslims to participate actively in the public sphere. In order to achieve this, a more hospitable climate towards Muslims needs to be fostered. In this context, the government should work together with Muslim organisations to encourage Muslim citizens to report all instances of Islamophobia.

 [&]quot;Benoeming Nationaal Coördinator tegen Discriminatie en Racisme", Rijksoverheid, 28 September 2021, https://ewoudbutter.nl/2021/05/10/vierde-monitor-moslimdiscriminatie-is-uit-agendering-moslimdiscriminatie-en-moslimhaat-blijft-bittere-noodzaak/, (Access date 29/03/2022).

Chronology

- **04.2021:** Threatening letters were found at tens of mosques, consisting of a diaper with the message, "Easter present for all the whiners of our society!!" The diaper contained a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad with a turban shaped as a bomb and the writing "Muhammed terrorist" and "No Islam Yes (to) Freedom", along with a page from the Qur'an torn into pieces. Shortly after a fire was instigated at a mosque in Gouda.
- 10.05.2021: The fourth edition of *Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie* (Monitor Muslim-discrimination) was released illustrating how Muslims are systematically discriminated in the job market and face daily Islamophobia both in the public sphere and at work.
- **04.07.2021:** Windows of the Westermoskee (Westermosque) in Amsterdam were purposefully smashed with a beer bottle.
- **15.10.2021:** The daily evening newspaper NRC (*Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, New Rotterdam Daily) published an article regarding secret investigations by several municipalities on mosques within their respective districts conducted over many years, stating that a private organisation had helped them obtain information on any desired topic through undercover research in several Islamic institutions and mosques in particular.
- **11.2021**: Famous Dutch celebrity and reality TV star Erica Meiland referred to women in burqas as "walking penguins" in her autobiography.
- **03.12.2021:** PVV frontman Geert Wilders published a picture of politician Fonda Sahla wearing a hijab and a face mask, captioned, "No, it's not an ISIS attack, but a D66 Member of Parliament."
- 14.12.2021: House of Representatives stated that boa's (Special Investigative Officers) were not to wear religious signs such as a hijab or a kippah as they are supposed to stay neutral.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

In 2021, the crisis caused by Covid-19 was still an exceptional challenge for the respect and protection of human rights, and especially the rights of marginalised groups who are exposed to frequent violations outside the crisis, without adequate and effective protection. The continuation of the state of emergency in 2021 further concentrates the power in the hands of the executive government, which is empowered to pass decrees with legal force.

Hence, a key assumption in a state of emergency is that basic democratic institutions such as respect and protection of human rights, transparency, and inclusiveness in decision-making will be at risk. The focus was on protecting public health in order to reduce the transmission of the virus and the consequences of Covid-19, and in conditions where human rights awareness is not at a particularly high level and exiting the state of emergency, the state is likely not has them in mind and are easily is making decisions to restrict them easily. Examples of the latter include restricting the right to public expression of religion or belief, especially in its collective form. Thus, the month of Ramadan saw restrictions and mosques announced special measures for protection when they were allowed to open.

There were local elections in 2021 in North Macedonia. In addition to fears of a pandemic and its spread during the campaign, there were fears that the campaign would be abused by politicians in terms of spreading fake news and hate speech. Some politicians used this opportunity to run anti-migrant campaigns.

The challenges of Covid-19 did not stop the government from conducting a census in North Macedonia after 20 years, which resulted in finally having the official number of the country's inhabitants.

Извршно резиме

И 2021-та година, кризата предизвикана од ковид-19 претставуваше и понатаму исклучителен предизвик за почитувањето и заштитата на човековите права, а особено правата на маргинализираните групи кои и надвор од кризата се изложени на чести прекршувања, без соодветна и ефикасна заштита. Продочжувањет на вонредната состојба и во 2021 дополнително ја концентрира моќта во рацете на извршната власт, која добива овластување да донесува уредби со законска сила.

Оттука, клучна претпоставка во услови на вондредна состојба, е дека основните демократски институти какви што се почитувањето и заштитата на човековите права, транспарентноста и инклузивноста во донесувањето на одлуки, ќе бидат изложени на ризик.

Фокусот беше ставен на заштита на јавното здравје со цел да се намали преносот на вирусот и последиците од ковид-19, а во услови во кои свесноста за човековите права не е на особено високо ниво и надвор од вондредната состојба, голема е веројатноста државата да не ги има на ум или пак прелесно да донесува одлуки за нивно ограничување, како што беше и ограничувањето на правото на јавно манифестирање на религија или верување, особено во својата колективна форма, па така и месецот Рамазан беше со рестриктивни мерки и џамиите објавија посебни мерки за заштита, во период кога имаа дозвола да работат.

И во оваа година имавме одржување на локални избори. Покрај стравовите од панедемијата и нејзиното ширење во текот на кампањата, постоеше и страв и на злоупотреба на кампањата од страна на политичарите во ширењето на лажните вести и говорот на омраза, и дел од нив ја искористија во ширење на антимигрантска кампања.

Предизвиците на Ковид19 не ја ограничија Владата да во Северна Македонија по 20 години спроведе Пописот на населението, со што конечно имаме официјална бројка на жители во државата.

Country Profile **EIR 2021**

Country: Republic of North Macedonia Type of Regime: Representative democracy Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: Coalition SDSM "Možeme" and DUI (central left), Alternativa, and DPA

Opposition Parties: VMRO-DPMNE and Coalition "Za podobra Makedonija" (central right wing), AA, BESA, 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 central left.

Total Population: 1,836,713 (2021 Census) Major Languages: Macedonian and Albanian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism), but the constitution lists five legally recognised religious groups: the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Methodist Church, and the Jewish Community.

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Macedonian Orthodox 46.14 %, Muslim 32.17%, Catholics 0.37%, and others (2021 est.)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 590,878 (32.17 %) according to 2021 Census

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: NGO Legis, Liberal Alternative Institute, Fettah Efendi Vakfi NGO Civil.

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Violent Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban**: No

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

Minaret Ban: No

Circumcision Ban: No

Burka Ban: No

Introduction

The year 2021 was one of the most tragic years in the recent history of the Republic of North Macedonia. The pandemic continued to take the lives of thousands of citizens, putting the country at the highest level in the world in terms of mortality. One of the country's most tragic accidents occurred in 2021 when 44 North Macedonian citizens died returning home from a trip to Turkey. Forty-three of those who died belonged to the Muslim community, among whom many prominent and active members. This tragedy was used for political quarrels, but also accusations of so-called Islamic terrorism were not absent. The fertile ground of Macedonian society for polarization on several grounds seems to have come to light again and in the context of such social susceptibility to divisions, the coronavirus was utilized this time. The daily increase in the number of newly infected people after the abolition of the measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic seems to recycle the increasingly awakened stereotypes of the division of the population both in the party-political lines and in the ethnic-religious sense.

Meanwhile, the local elections that took place in 2021 as always were the basis for societal polarisation and hate speech.

For a society to be able to eradicate Islamophobia and all the other forms of discrimination, it must first eliminate this phenomenon from the educational system. However, the books used in primary and secondary education are permeated with prejudices and stereotypes of Muslims.

The media plays a key role in combating Islamophobia, but also in inciting it. The Muslim community in Macedonia is indigenous and their actions rarely give rise to the type of sensationalist headlines sought after by social media. So, in order to spread Islamophobia, the media translates news from all over the world, the content of which has only one purpose stemming from Islamophobia: the spread of false news about Islam and Muslims.

The current report has made extensive research on reported cases and incidents related to Islamophobia looking particularly into the reports of the office of the Ombudsman, media reports, contacts with NGOs and their reports, discussions with religious institutions, and organisations and individuals that have helped in finding cases with subtle nuances of discrimination based on religious belief. The information has been gathered in the local languages spoken by the Muslim communities in the country.⁴

^{1.} С. Македонија меѓу првите пет во светот по смртност од Ковид-19. DW, January 4 2021, https://www.dw.com/mk/, (Access date: April 15 2021).

 [&]quot;Се за трагедијата со македонскиот автобус во Бугарија" DW, November 23 2021, https://www.dw.com/ mk/, (Access date: April 15 2021).

^{3. &}quot;ОТКРИЕН терористот Арап од македонскиот автобус" (The Arab terrorist from the Macedonian bus was DISCOVERED), web portal MKDENES, 26 November 2021, https://mkdenes.mk/post10394/, (Access date April 15 2021).

In the current report, all translations from local languages (Albanian, Macedonian, Turkish, and Bosnian) to English are by the author.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There are numerous mosques in Macedonia that were built 5 centuries ago. Some of them are completely destroyed, but the residents know that they are the remaining structures of what were once mosques. The Islamic Religious Community, working with the local self-government, raises initiatives for their restoration. Until permission is obtained, the Islamic Community and the local Muslim population try to protect the sites, but this has caused intolerance among the non-Muslim population and fears that the mosque will be rebuilt. In the village of Vinicani, Gradsko Municipality, unknown perpetrators tore down the fence that was set up around the village mosque by the Islamic religious community. The mosque in Vinicani was built more than 400 years ago. The locals put a fence around the building in order to protect it from usurpation and complete destruction. However, unknown persons broke the fence, which caused anger and revolt among the local Muslims.⁵ The case was reported to the police, but there is no progress in the investigation. In the direct communication of the author of the report with the communities, they indicated that the perpetrators were known to them, as they had been threatening to commit the act of vandalism for days.



Figure 1: Picture of the ruins of the mosque in the village of Vinicani, Gradsko Municipality. The top photo shows the mosque with a fence around it, before unknown vandals tore it down (photo below).⁶

 [&]quot;Вандализирана џамија стара 400 години, градоначалникот на општина Градско смета дека некој на ваков начин сака да дојде на власт на престојните избори", CIVILMEDIA, February 25 2021, https://civilmedia.mk/vandalizirana-dhamija-stara-400-godini-gradonachalnikot-na-opshtina-gradsko-smeta-deka-nekojna-vakov-nachin-saka-da-dojde-na-vlast-na-prestojnite-izbori/.(Access date: May 05 2022)

^{6.} Вандализирана џамија стара 400 години, градоначалникот на општина Градско смета дека некој на ваков начин сака да дојде на власт на престојните избори", CIVILMEDIA, February 25 2021, , https://civilmedia. mk/vandalizirana-dhamija-stara-400-godini-gradonachalnikot-na-opshtina-gradsko-smeta-deka-nekoj-na-vak-ov-nachin-saka-da-dojde-na-vlast-na-prestojnite-izbori/.(Access date: May 05 2022)

Employment

Labour law in North Macedonia forbids any kind of discrimination.⁷ Currently there is no official proceeding before any relevant institution/s and/or basic court regarding discrimination against Muslims on a religious basis. According to detailed research by the NGO Reactor, entitled "GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND LABOR RIGHTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA", published in 2021, there is no part of the research that has a case from a reported discrimination within the employment on the basis of religious affiliation. In fact, research shows that of the minority ethnic groups, only Roma have been identified as a group that appears to face more discrimination, according to officials, the Ombudsman, the State Labour Inspectorate, civil courts, and CSOs. According to employers they do not want Roma people in their workplace because of the colour of their skin; none of the employers surveyed said they would discriminate on the basis of religion.⁸

Education

In the academic year 2021, the Ministry of Education presented a new concept for inclusive education. Special commissions were set up so that all educational material passed through them. The new concept started in 2021 for first and fourth grade only. The commissions used all human rights filters, including the elimination of content that provokes religious hatred and intolerance. However, educational material, which is not yet part of this new concept, despite the existence of commissions that give consent for textbooks, contains a lot of controversial content. To give an example: the textbook "Sociology" by Nelko Stojanoski, Mileva Gjurovska, and Zoran Matevski, used in the second year of the reformed high school education, states,

We have a high birth rate among Roma, Albanians and Turks. A large percentage of these populations, especially those who are not sufficiently educated, reproduce in a very traditional way, without conscious birth control. In this regard, concrete measures should be taken and a way should be found to bring the birth rate to normal. Those ethnic groups (Macedonians) where the natural increase of the population is low, should be stimulated because the disproportion of the birth rate present in the different ethnic groups has a negative impact on the political, economic and social plan.¹⁰

^{7. &}quot;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: 01 April 2021).

^{8. &}quot;GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND LABOR RIGHTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA", published in 2021, by NGO Reactor.

^{9. &}quot;Царовска: Квалитетното образование е инклузивно, новата концепција тоа го обезбедува", May 28 2021, https://vlada.mk/node/25430, (Access date: April 01 2022).

^{10. &}quot;Реакции за учебникот по социологија: Содржината е навредувачка за етничките заедници.", web portal A1ON.mk, April 08 2021, https://a1on.mk/macedonia/reakcii-za-uchebnikot-po-sociologija, (Access date: April 01 2022)

The author of the report filed a complaint with the Ombudsman's Office and the Commission for Protection and Prevention of Discrimination.

Politics

The lack of political culture is reflected in elections in North Macedonia. In 2021, with the announcement of the local elections,¹¹ the campaign to spread fake news and incitement to hatred began.

The candidate for mayor of a Skopje municipality, Tefik Mahmut, from the left-wing party Left (Levica)¹² organised a public prayer in front of the Government of North Macedonia during the campaign, causing anger among citizens. The anger arose not only because of the call to prayer and the prayer itself, but above all because because Mahmut is a member of a party that is associated with anti-Islamic political action. As a reaction to this the Islamic Religious Community has called not to abuse the religion for political purposes.¹³

With the beginning of the election campaign, anti-immigrant protests started in the municipality of Karposh, against the construction of a refugee camp.¹⁴

In May 2021, the politician Petar Bogojeski, leader of a small and new political party in Macedonia, Macedonian Concept (Македонски Концепт), began to spread Islamophobia on his personal Facebook page and on his personal webpage. ¹⁵ After the peaceful protest in Macedonia, in solidary with Palestine, ¹⁶ he expressed his support of Israel, and began to write articles against Muslims, Islam, and the ruling government.

Media

In the absence of adequate legislation to organise the media space, the latter produces content that spreads hate speech and Islamophobia. In 2021, renowned media in North Macedonia shared news from around the world that was not related directly to the country, but encouraged negative feelings towards Muslims. The most

 [&]quot;Претседателот на Собранието на Северна Македонија Џафери ги распиша локалните избори за 17 октомври 2021 година", Anadoly Agency, August 06 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/mk/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

^{12.} In the Islamophobia 2020 report, this party was the central figure in the spread of Islamophobia.

 [&]quot;ИЗВ бара да не се злоупотребуа религијата за политички поени" (IRC demands that religion not be abused for political points), TV TELMA, 15 Octomber 2021, https://telma.com.mk/2021/10/15/, (Access date, 27 April 2022).

 [&]quot;Нов протест на жителите на Бардовци: Стоп за мигрантски камп.", August 11 2021, https://fokus.mk/ nov-protest-na-zhitelite-na-bardovtsi-stop-za-migrantski-kamp/, https://telma.com.mk/2021/10/15/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

^{15. &}quot;Петар Богојески пријавен во MBP од неколку граѓански здруженија за ширење говор на омраза" Civil Media, May 27 2021, https://civilmedia.mk/petar-bogojeski-prijaven-vo-mvr-od-nekolku-graganski-zdruzheni-ja-za-shirene-govor-na-omraza/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

^{16. &}quot;Во Скопје се одржа протест во подршка на Палестина", Anadolu Agency, May 17 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/mk/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

watched television channel in North Macedonia, Kanal 5, announced the following news: "Afghans Killed Their Sister in a Horrible Way in Germany, Because She Behaved in a Modern Way".¹⁷

The war in Palestine is used in North Macedonia to spread anti-Islamic propaganda. An example of this is the following news by the opposition party, VMRO DPMNE.

After the support of the President of VMRO-DPMNE, Hristijan Mickoski for the right of self-defence of the state of Israel, we saw that there are some, I would say, organised attacks on him by radical Islamist structures that threaten his life and the life of his family, and we have not seen any reaction from the Ministry of Interior in order to protect the party president and his family, said Aleksandar Nikoloski, vice president of the opposition party, during today's visit to the municipality of Karpos.¹⁸

North Macedonia is one of the countries in the region that has accepted a certain quota of evacuated citizens from Afghanistan who had worked in international organisations in their country. But the news was used by the opposition media to spread xenophobia. ¹⁹ Certain portals published news that the government will consider the issue of employment of refugees from Afghanistan, although it had already been alleged that the evacuated Afghans are already employed in international organisations. ²⁰

Justice System

According to the constitution of North Macedonia,²¹ there are five recognised religious communities in the country, including the Islamic Religious Community. The constitution and laws do not allow the registration of other Islamic religious communities. During 2021, Skopje Basic Court II received and approved three new registration applications. In June, it registered the "Bashkesia e Ehli Sunetit dhe Xhe-

 [&]quot;Авганистанци на ужасен начин ја убиле сестрата во Германија, зашто се однесувала современо.", Kanal
 December 28 2021, https://kanal5.com.mk/avganistanci-na-uzhasen-nachin-ja-ubile-sestrata-vo-germani-ja-zashto-se-odnesuvala-sovremeno/a509868, (Access date, April 27 2022).

 [&]quot;Мицкоски добивал смртни закани од радикални исламистички структури.", web portal LIDER, May 16 2021, https://lider.mk/mickoski-dobival-smrtni-zakani-od-radikalni-islamistichki-strukturi/, (Access date, April 27 2021).

 [&]quot;Владата ќе го разгледува прашањето за вработување на бегалците од Авганистан", webportal VECER. MK, August 21 2022, https://vecer.mk/makedonija/vladata-kje-go-razgleduva-prashanjeto-za-vrabotuvan-je-na-begalcite-od-avganistan/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

 [&]quot;Како 450 станаа 780 бегалци, Заев вели можеме и 1800 – колку луѓе од Авганистан ќе прими Македонија?", web page: Skosko Eho, Octomber 26 2021, https://skopskoeho.mk/kako-450-stanaa-780-begaltsi-zaev-veli-mozheme-i-1800-kolku-luge-od-avganistan-ke-primi-makedonija/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

^{21.} In Amendment 7 of the Constitution of North Macedonia, it is stated. "The Macedonian Orthodox Church, as well as the Islamic religious community in Macedonia, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Methodist Church, the Jewish community and other religious communities and groups are separate from the state and are equal before the law." "Уставот на Република Северна Македонија" https://www.sobranie.mk/ustav-na-rm.nspx, (Access date, April 27 2022).

matit(The community of Ehli Sunnah and Jammah)", headquartered in Kumanovo and run by Sadulla Bajrami, a Sunnipreacher. In December, the same court registered two other groups: the Qadiriyya Badawi Group "Zakaria" with headquarters in Kumanovo, and the "Dar al-Hadith" Islamic Salafi Community, headquartered in Skopje. The Islamic Religious Community reacted to the decision to allow the registration of the Islamic Salafi community "Dar el Hadis" and filed a complaint to the Higher Court. ²²

Internet

One of the restrictive measures during the pandemic was the restriction of movement due to lockdowns. During this time, many people used social media to spread hate speech and Islamophobia.

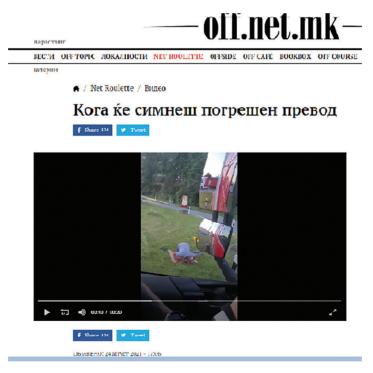


Figure 2: A video from the webpage off.net.mk in which a person performs a Muslim prayer and the person filming it mocks and recites prayers from the Bible. The headline of the article reads "When You Download the Wrong Translation".²³

Following the news of the arrival of evacuated citizens from Afghanistan in North Macedonia, the reactions on social networks were full of hate speech.

ИВЗ: "Регистрацијата на таканаречената Исламска селефиска заедница е штетна и обид за паралелизам" (IRC: "Registration of the so-called Islamic Salafi community is harmful and an attempt at parallelism)" Anadolu Agency, 18 February 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/mk/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

^{23. &}quot;Кога ќе симнеш погрешен превод", webpage OFF.NET, August 24, 2021, https://off.net.mk/net-roulette/video/koga-kje-simnesh-pogreshen-prevod, (Access date, April 27 2022).

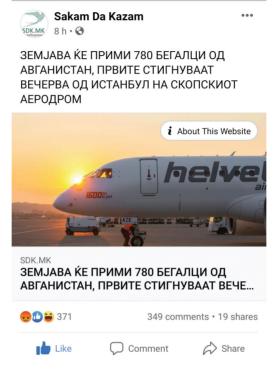


Figure 3: "This country will accept 780 refugees from Afghanistan, the first ones are arriving tonight from Istanbul to the airport in Skopje".²⁴

After the announcement of the hotels in which they will be accommodated, one of the reactions on a social network read, "May God let it [the hotel] burn down. Collateral damage".



Figure 4: Commenting on hotel accommodation to be offered to Afghani refugees in North Macedonia, Snezana Zajkova commented, "May God let it [the hotel] burn down. Collateral damage." ²⁵

 [&]quot;Земјава ќе прими 780 бегалци од Авганистан, првите пристигнуваат вечерва на скопскиот аеродром од Истанбул.", СДК web portal, August 25, 2021, https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/zemjava-ke-primi-780-begaltsi-od-avganistan-prvite-stignuvaat-vecherva-na-skopskiot-aerodrom-od-istanbul/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

^{25.} At the time of writing this report, this comment is no longer available. The person who wrote it, was in a high-ranking position in one of the local banks in North Macedonia. After a letter to the same, by the author of the report, the Bank adopted a rulebook for behavior on social networks of its employees, which after she deleted her comment.

The website *presigntv* often publishes controversial content, which incites hatred such as "Salafism Is Widespread in Macedonia, Its Followers Do Not Use the Internet and Are Isolating Themselves". ²⁶ Among other things, the text reads, "Women play a major role in the so-called 'wedding jihad'. That is when a woman marries a jihadist, to consciously become the widow of a future suicide bomber. It is believed that she will draw closer to God by making herself available as a woman."

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

During the reporting year, the central figure in inciting Islamophobia again is a small political party in Macedonia, *Macedonian Concept* (Македонски Концепт) and its leader, Petar Bogojevski. Apart from being the leader of this party, Bogojevski is employed in a high position in the Ministry of Defense of North Macedonia, as a state advisor, which poses a serious threat to Muslims in the country. His public expressions of Islamophobia started after the peaceful protests in support of Palestine in Skopje, whereupon he posted the following on his Facebook profile:

An anti-Islamist coalition between Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro is urgently needed ... in order to stand in the way of these "human rights fighters" ... to prevent them from making Skopje a new Beirut! Macedonia is the cradle of religions! Here all religions are respected and mutually supportive! Let us not allow such a stain to bring us religious hatred and intolerance in the land of tolerance and diversity! This is Macedonia, not Saudi Arabia.²⁷

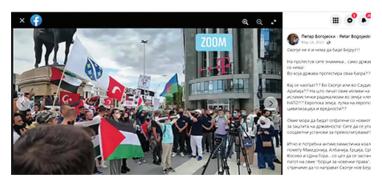


Figure 5: Following the protests in support of Palestine in Skopje and Bogojevski's aforementioned post, a huge debate erupted on his Facebook wall where he insulted people based on their religious or ethnic background, and especially Bosniak and Roma people who reacted to his posts.²⁶

On his personal webpage, Bogojevski published the article "Scandal: Terrorist-Jihadist Cell in SDSM", where he wrote, "There was a public discussion about the ex-

 [&]quot;Салафизмот е раширен и во Македонија, неговите следбеници не користат интернет и се самоизолираат", pressingtv, November 13 2021, https://pressingtv.mk/makedonija/salafizmot-e-rashiren-i-vo-makedonija-ne-govite-sledbenici-ne-koristat-internet-i-se-samoizoliraat/, (Access date, April 27 2022).

^{27.} Offical Facebook page of Petar Bogojeski, publsihed on: May 16 2021.

^{28.} Offical Facebook page of Petar Bogojeski, publsihed on: May 16 2021 (20+) Facebook

istence of a strong jihadist network in Macedonia. She is the organizer of protests in support of terrorist attacks on civilians in Israel."²⁹ The person to whom Bogojevski is referring to is no other than the author of this report, Mersiha Smailovikj, and it's not a first time for me to be a victim on islamophobia attacks.



Figure 6: Petar Bogojevski's article "Scandal: Terrorist-Jihadist Cell in SDSM" published on his personal webpage.30

In another Facebook post he wrote,

We do not need the domination of Islam over Christianity (prayer as loud as a million decibels) or vice versa (the biggest bell in the world), but peace for all citizens of all faiths! You do not need burqas and mantles (see me, marvel) to manifest religious affiliation, but to nurture fundamental religious rites (there were no burqas during the time of Muhammad)! New fashion in religions, imported from the most criminal and warlike regions of the world, will bring us only that, crime and wars! Nothing else!



Figure 7: Petar Bogojevski's Facebook Post

^{29. &}quot;Скандал: Терористичко – џихадистичка ќелија во СДСМ", МКDenes, 17 May 2021, https://mkdenes. mk/post996/, (Access date, 27 April 2022)

^{30.} Offical Facebook page of Petar Bogojeski, publsihed on: May 21 2021.

On May 24, Bogojevski published a post in which he stated, "Actress, it is not my fault that you hate yourself and your Serbian skin in which you were born!" It's not my fault that you hate your tribe where you come from!" This post was intended for Mersiha Smailovikj, a member of the Bosniak community and the author of the current report, who for ten days was the target of continuous attack and hate speech. This post spread racist and xenophobic material and gathered numerous comments and shares. In the comments, Bogojevski shows a high degree of intolerance and hate speech. To a member of the Bosniak community, he replied, "Rizvanovi E Edo, have you not come to your senses yet? In the nineties?!? Do you still want it?" Here, Bogojevski is making a direct reference to the genocide, aggression, rape, and destruction of the Bosniak people that took place in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1991-1995.

The author of this report and other victims of his attacks filed a complaint to the Ministry for Defense, as his employers, and together with numerous NGOs, filed criminal charges with the Ministry of Interior. On May 20, the Ministry of Defence initiated disciplinary proceedings against Petar Bogojevski for xenophobic statements, and the Ministry of Interior launched an investigation.³²

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There have not been many cases of Islamophobia documented or prosecuted in 2021 in North Macedonia. Because this type of discrimination is not talked about publicly, organisations and institutions have not developed models and narratives to combat it. The most important objective is to create trust in the system among the Muslim community so as members feel confident to report instances when they have become victims of Islamophobia.

Meanwhile, several initiatives and processes started in 2021, and performed outstandingly well in combating fake news, prejudice, and Islamophobia.

The Islamic Religious Community, especially the Muftiate of Skopje, has become more transparent in its activities, organising press conferences and addressing the public in the Macedonian language.

NGO Legis and Liberal Alternative Institute are organizing training sessions for young people in several cities in North Macedonia. The training covers discrimination, Islamophobia, and xenophobia as phenomena in our society and has urged

^{31.} Access to this post: https://www.facebook.com/

^{32. &}quot;Покрената е постапка за дисциплинска одговорност против Петар Богојески поради ксенофобични објави", May 20 2021, NOVA TV, https://novatv.mk/pokrenata-e-postapka-za-distsiplinska-odgovornost-protiv-petar-bogojeski-poradi-ksenofobichni-objavi/, (Access date April, 27 2022)

young people to fight against all forms of discrimination through various online campaigns as well as encouraging the community to report it.

Fettah Efendi Vakfi, during the reporting year, organised school sessions and training in the field of human rights with a focus on Islamophobia and freedom of religion and belief.

NGO Civil, 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, in one way or another, contributed to inciting islamophobia, especially in the context of media.

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 multi-religious. 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 organisations on the other. In order to fight Islamophobia in the country, the following policies are recommended:

- Anti-Muslim hate crimes should be included in hate speech and hate crime data in national legislation.
- A record of cases and incidents related directly to anti-Muslim hate crimes should regularly be updated and published by the Ministry of Interior and other relevant institutions.
- The Ministry of Education should remove all the educational material which is causing Islamophobic prejudices.
- The training of media outlets and journalists about Islam should be organized, and a guidebook for reporters on how to report on Islam and the principal tenets of Islam should be prepared.
- In the hate speech training curriculum, Islamophobia should be included as a separate chapter.
- Reporting platforms created by NGOs should make anti-Muslim hate crimes a specific category within the reporting options.
- Muslim NGOs should make an effort to fight Islamophobia and focus their
 work on educating Muslim youth and the Muslim community overall on the
 nature of Islamophobia, how to detect it, and create an accessible platform
 for reporting it.
- Muslim NGOs should build a coalition against Islamophobia and publish joint announcements condemning instances of hate speech.

• The Islamic Community of North Macedonia should take more initiatives for the rights of Muslims and create channels and platforms for detecting, reporting, and combating Islamophobia.

Chronology

- **25.02.2021:** 5 Centuries -old mosque in Vinichani, municipality Gradsko, North Macedonia. was vandalised.
- **17.05.2021:** Petar Bogojeski, leader of the political party *Macedonian Concept*, started his Islamophobic campaign.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NATIONAL REPORT 2021

RICHARD MCNEIL-WILLSON, IRIS BEAU SEGERS

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Executive Summary

There is evidence that Norway has seen a general increase in Islamophobia across the country in recent years. This is partly due to the rise of far-right parties and protest movements, which have focussed particularly on problematising the legitimacy of Muslim communities and the Islamic faith in Norway, leading to the targeting of minority communities and immigration processes. Whilst national records on hate crime do not differentiate on faith, there is evidence of an increase in recent years. This is coupled with significant inequality evident between Muslim-minority and mainstream communities in terms of employment and educational opportunities. There seems to be some polarisation of the term 'Islamophobia' in Norway along a Left/Right axis, although this may obscure instances where the 2021 left-centre government has deployed language and policies that are anti-Muslim and anti-immigration. Ultimately, this report finds the need for Islamophobia to be better understood as an issue facing Norway, and a recognition within the country that it is evident not just amongst far-right milieus but within mainstream debates across the political spectrum. The notable acceptance of certain Islamophobic ideas amongst levels of the Norwegian population - particularly the 'Eurabia' conspiracy theories around the replacement of white populations – is particularly troubling and needs to be urgently challenged. Some progress has been made on both policy and within civil society on combatting Islamophobia in Norway, notably including the implementation of a Government Action Plan. However, greater hate crime legislation and mechanisms for reporting and measuring Islamophobia can still be put in place to better measure the extent of the problem and support more effective responses.

Svensk sammanfattning

Det finnes empirisk bevis på at Norge de siste årene har hatt en generell økning i islamofobi. Dette skyldes delvis fremveksten av høyreekstreme partier og protestbevegelser, som problematiserer legitimiteten av Islam og muslimske miljøer i Norge, noe som har ført til målretting mot minoritetsmiljøer og innvandring. Selv om nasjonale registre om hatkriminalitet ikke skiller på religiøs tilhørighet er det bevis for en økning i anti-muslimske sentiment de siste årene. Dette forekommer samtidig med en betydelig ulikhet mellom muslimske minoriteter og majoritetssamfunnet når det gjelder sysselsetting og utdannings Det ser ut til å være en større polarisering av begrepet "islamofobi" i Norge enn i noen andre land, langs en venstre/høyreakse, selv om dette kan tilsløre tilfeller der midt-venstre regjeringen i 2021 har utplassert språk og politikk som er anti-muslimsk, og anti-innvandring. Til slutt peker denne rapporten på viktigheten av å forstå islamofobi som et større problem i Norge, ikke bare i høyreekstreme miljøer, men også innenfor den politiske hovedstrømmen. Den merkbare aksepten av visse islamofobiske ideer i deler av den norske befolkningen – spesielt «Eurabia» og «Great Replacement» konspirasjonsteoriene om utskifting av hvite befolkninger – er urovekkende og det er en presserende oppgave å konfrontere disse. Når det gjelder bekjempelse av islamofobi i Norge er det gjort viktige fremskritt både på politisk nivå og i sivilsamfunnet for øvrig. Regjeringens handlingsplan mot rasisme og diskriminering er ett eksempel på dette. Likevel er det mulig å få på plass en styrket lovgivning om hatkriminalitet og bedre mekanismer for rapportering og undersøkelse av islamofobi. Slik kan vi bedre måle omfanget av islamofobi og iverksette mer effektive reaksjoner.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Kingdom of Norway

Type of Regime: Constitutional monarchy **Form of Government:** Parliamentary democracy

Ruling Parties: Minority government coalition of the Labour Party and Centre Party (centre-left government) since October 2021

Opposition Parties: The Conservative Party (36 seats), Progress Party (21 seats), Socialist Left Party (13 seats), Red Party (8 seats), Liberal Party (8 seats), Green Party (3 seats), Christian Democratic Party (3 seats), and Patient Focus (1 seat)

Last Election: The 13 September 2021 general election saw the return of the Labour Party, led by Jonas Gahr Støre, as the largest party with 26.3% of votes, translating to 48 seats. A government was formed with the support of the Centre Party (13.5% of votes or 28 seats), as the third-largest party.

Total Population: 5.39 million (2021)

Major Languages: Norwegian (bokmål and nynorsk), Sami

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism). Historically, the state religion was the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway. Since 1 January 2017, the Church of Norway is an independent legal entity rather than a branch of the civil service, although the Church continues to be funded by the state and municipalities.

Statistics on Islamophobia: Since 2006, the Norwegian Police register statistics for hate crimes in BL/STRASAK. These are crimes based on race, religion, sexual orientation, etc. According to these figures, hate crimes in Norway have risen dramatically in recent years, from 347 cases in 2015 to 742 cases in 2020, with a general annual upward trend. The motives behind these hate crimes seem to be largely based on 'race or ethnicity', reported as the motivation for 541 out of 742 cases in 2020. 'Religion' was reported as a motive in 135 cases in 2020, although the Norwegian national police report does not break down statistics of those who experience attacks based on different religious communities.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Of 280 instances of hate speech and discrimination offences investigated by police in 2020, 115 (41%) were classified as solved and 165 (59%) as unsolved.

Major Religions (% of Population): Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway (Den norske kirke) 68.1%, Muslim 3.71%, Roman Catholic 3.1%, other Christian 3.8%, other 9.6%, unspecified 15.4%. There are approximately 21,000 Buddhists, 11,400 Hindus, 4,000 Sikhs, and 1,500 Jews registered in the country. The Norwegian Humanist Association reports approximately 100,000 registered members, making it the largest life stance organisation in the country.

Muslim Population (% of Population): Around 200,000 Muslims in Norway (3.71%) in 2021 (some wider estimates place the number between 200,000 and

250,00 or 3.4-6% of the population). The majority of the Muslim population are registered in Oslo and the surrounding areas (62,562 in the municipality).

Main Muslim Community Organisations: The Islamic Council Norway (Islamsk Råd Norge) represents 41 Muslim congregations, totalling around 60,000 members.

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Norwegian Centre Against Racism, Minotenk, Centre for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities, Minority Network

Far-Right Parties: The fourth-largest party in parliament, Fremskrittspartiet (the Progress Party), is considered to the most right-wing party represented in the Norwegian parliament and may be considered far right. It has called for stricter immigration policy, stronger integration of migrants and the deportation of foreigners who commit crimes. Amongst smaller parties, in the 2021 general election, Alliansen (Alliance – Alternative for Norway) received 2,489 votes (0.1%) and has no representation in parliament. Demokratene (Democrats, known as the Democrats in Norway between 2010 and 2018) – a conservative, Christian-based party with far-right policies towards immigration, who refer to themselves as Norway's only 'anti-globalist' party – received 34,000 votes in the 2021 election (1.1%), and have around 4,500 party members as of November 2021.

Far-Right Movements: Stop the Islamisation of Norway (SIAN), Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR), People's Movement Against Immigration, Vigrid (a largely inactive organisation which currently has no members apart from its leader)

Far-Right Militant Organisations: Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR) has been labelled a terrorist organisation and proscribed in Finland, with attempts to step up efforts against the movement in other Nordic states. It has been noted as having links to international far-right organisations, including the Russian Imperial Movement and National Action. The Norwegian chapter is founded and chaired by Haakon Forwald and organised into four subchapters ('nests').

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No
- Halal Slaughter: No
- Minaret Ban: No (depends on local decision)
- Circumcision Ban: No
- Burqa Ban: On 5 June 2018, the Norwegian parliament passed a law prohibiting the covering of the full face when teaching in educational establishments. Whilst the law was articulated with ambiguity so as to target all face coverings in line with Norwegian constitutional safeguards on freedom of religious expression it was interpreted as being primarily directed towards Muslims and the wearing of the niqab and burqa. There is no ban in wearing items which cover the face outside of educational settings.
- Prayer Ban: No

Introduction

In Norway, Islamophobia is strongly tied to discussions on immigration, something which may be partly linked to Norway experiencing later instances of migration than other Nordic countries. The first groups of Muslim migrants to arrive in Norway in the 1960s and 1970s were mostly guest workers originating from Pakistan and Turkey, until the governmental decision to halt labour migration in 1975. Despite these new limits on labour migration, from the 1980s onward, the number of Muslims arriving in Norway increased due to a combination of family reunions and the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers from countries such as Iran, Somalia, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Albania, Iraq, and Syria.¹

Muslim communities in Norway are highly diverse, constituting roughly 175,000 members from a variety of backgrounds and communities.² The majority of Muslims in Norway are Sunni, alongside an estimated minority of around 15-20% Shia, and a very small minority of roughly 1,700 Ahmadiyya.³ In recent studies, Norwegian non-Muslims have been shown likely to substantially overestimate the size of Muslim communities in the country, stating on average that 12% of the population were Muslims (instead of roughly 3.71%).⁴ A list of first- and second-generation immigrants in Norway from key Muslim-majority countries is provided below, with the information recorded correct as of 1 January 2022.⁵

Table 1: Country of Origin of Immigrant Communities in Norway

| Country | First-generation immigrants | Second-generation immigrants | Total of first- and second-generation immigrants |
|----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Pakistan | 21,912 | 25,816 | 47,728 |
| Somalia | 28,088 | 16,443 | 44,531 |
| Syria | 34,429 | 5,984 | 40,413 |
| Iraq | 23,301 | 13,551 | 36,852 |
| Iran | 19,297 | 8,490 | 27,787 |

Statistics Norway SSB (2022). Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/innvandrere/statistikk/innvandrere-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldre

Kulturdepartementet (2020). Handlingsplan mot diskriminering av og hat mot muslimer [Action plan against discrimination and hate against Muslims]. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b2a6fd21c6a94bae-83d5a3425593da30/handlingsplan-mot-diskriminering-av-og-hat-mot-muslimer-2020-2023.pdf

Ibid

Knut Lundby and Pål Repstad, "Scandinavia: Traits, Trends and Tensions," in Contesting Religion. The Media Dynamics of Cultural Conflicts in Scandanavia, ed. Knut Lundby (De Gruyter, 2018).

Statistics Norway SSB (2022). Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/innvandrere/statistikk/innvandrere-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldre

| Country | First-generation immigrants | Second-generation immigrants | Total of first- and second-generation immigrants |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Turkey | 13,727 | 12,095 | 25,822 |
| Afghanistan | 18,163 | 5,721 | 23,884 |
| Bosnia- Herzegovina | 12,924 | 7,049 | 20,973 |
| Kosovo | 10,502 | 9,076 | 18,578 |

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Significant national and international 'terrorism-style' attacks by individuals with farright views have significantly shaped concern around the physical safety of Muslims in Norway. An attack on 10 August 2019 at the Al-Noor Islamic Centre Mosque in the municipality of Bærum, 20 kilometres from Oslo, was carried out by 21-yearold Philip Manshaus. After killing his 17-year-old stepsister of Chinese heritage, Manshaus travelled to the Al-Noor Islamic Centre Mosque with two 'shotgun-like' weapons and a pistol. Shooting his way through a locked door, Manshaus found the mosque virtually empty, with prayers ended and only three elders still present. After firing in the room, hitting nobody, he was subdued by the elders, causing mild injury to one, before the police were called and Manshaus was arrested. Manshaus paid tribute to far-right shootings in Christchurch, El Paso, and San Diego in an online post in the hours prior to the attack – specifically referencing the Christchurch shooter Brendan Tarrant. Manshaus was charged and convicted of committing murder and an act of terrorism, and given a 21-year sentence. Although the attack was unsuccessful and security was increased nationally and at the Islamic Centre, Norwegian Muslim groups have expressed concern that the event has led to a significant erosion of safety amongst Muslims communities nationally, particularly in mosques and Islamic centres.6

The large-scale attack in 2011 by Anders Breivik in Oslo and Utøya – which killed 77 individuals, many of them young people at a Labour Party camp, inspired by a white supremacist ideology – has also contributed to a general sense of unease amongst Muslim communities. In 2021, commemorations were held on the tenth anniversary of the attack. The Christchurch attack in New Zealand in March 2019,

BBC (2020). Norway mosque attack and murder trial begins in Oslo BBC https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/ world-europe-52572542

in which 51 Muslim were murdered in a far-right attack, also led to increased security at Islamic places of workshop due to an unease over international far-right narratives that have some foothold in Norway. The Norwegian Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste (Norwegian Police Security Service, PST) has evaluated the 2022 terror threat in Norway as moderate, stating that both right-wing extremists and 'extreme Islamists' are considered most likely to carry out violence,7 with the extreme right likely to target those "with a non-Western appearance, Muslims, Jews, dignitaries, LGBT+, or traditional media".8

Whilst concern from authorities about physical violence against Muslims focusses on far-right attacks, societal hate crimes have risen in recent years. There were 742 cases of hate crimes in Norway recorded for the year 2020.9 The motives behind these hate crimes seem to be largely based on 'race or ethnicity', reported as the motivation for 541 out of 742 cases in 2020. 'Religion' was reported as a motive in 135 cases in 2020, although the Norwegian national police report does not break down statistics between different religious. Whilst national statistics on hate crime motivations and victims do not differentiate between religions, records from the Oslo police do, finding that, of the 49 religiously motivated hate crimes reported in the city in 2020, 44 were recorded as against Muslims (versus one directed towards Christians). This suggests the majority of religiously motivated hate crime recorded in Norway in 2020 was anti-Muslim in nature.

Islamophobic views have also been recorded as being acceptable among a significant proportion of Norwegian society. A study conducted by the Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies found that, as of 2017, 31% of Norwegians agreed with the statement "Muslims want to take over Europe". ¹² Research has found that there is a widespread public sentiment in Norway that Islam is a threat to the national culture – despite many stating opposition to the open expression of hostile attitudes towards foreigners. ¹³ This is also reflected in negative discussions over integration and immigration, with the 2020 Integration barometer (Integreringsbarom-

Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste (2022). Nasjonal trusselvurdering 2022 [National threat evaluation 2022]. https://www.pst.no/alle-artikler/trusselvurderinger/ntv-2022/

^{8.} Ibid.

Stata (2022). Number of reported hate crimes in Norway from 2015 to 2020 https://www.statista.com/statistics/1180606/number-of-reported-hate-crimes-in-norway/

Politiet (2020). STRASAK rapporten - Anmeldt kriminalitet og politiets straffesaksbehandling [STRASAK report - Reported crime and police criminal proceedings]. https://www.politiet.no/globalassets/04-aktuelt-tall-og-fakta/strasak/2020/strasak-2020---anmeldt-kriminalitet-og-straffesaksbehandling.pdf

https://hatecrime.osce.org/norway; Oslo politidistrikt (2021). Hatkriminalitet - Anmeldt hatkriminalitet in 2020 [Reported hate crime in 2020]. https://www.politiet.no/globalassets/dokumenter/oslo/rapporter/anmeldt-hatkriminalitet-oslo/anmeldt-hatkriminalitet-i-oslo-2020.pdf;

Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities (2017). Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017. https://www.hlsenteret.no/aktuelt/publikasjoner/population%20survey%202017

^{13.} Mia Lövheim et al., "Attitudes: Tendencies and Variations," in *Contesting Religion. The Media Dynamics of Cultural Conflicts in Scandanavia*, ed. Knut Lundby (De Gruyter, 2018).

eteret) presented by the Institute for Social Research (Institutt for Samfunnsforskning) finding that half of Norwegian respondents think integration of immigrants in Norway is going badly, and only one-fifth believes integration into Norwegian society is going well.¹⁴

Employment

The Muslim presence in Norway is historically linked to labour migration, mostly from South Asia, North Africa, and Turkey, 15 and whilst statistics are not kept on religious communities' engagement with the labour market, there are figures available on communities from countries of origin. Data from 2020 on employment and wages among immigrant groups shows that unemployment among those born in, or born to parents from, Asia (10.3%) or Africa (13.7%) was significantly higher than the average unemployment in Norway (3.9%) in 2020. 16 Moreover, the average monthly salary of refugees living in Norway is 26% below the overall Norwegian average wage. 17

Data strongly suggests that significant patterns of discrimination exist towards Muslims in the Norwegian labour market. Thirty-five percent of Muslims who applied for a job in 2016 reported that they experienced differential treatment in application process due to their migration background. Bob applicants with an ethnic Norwegian name were shown to be 25% more likely to be invited to a job interview, compared to equally qualified applicants with a Pakistani name on their CV. Together with Roma and Romani people, Muslims have been assessed to be the most discriminated group in Norway, with one in six respondents in a representative survey of the Norwegian population indicating that they would not like to have a Muslim as a neighbour. Ethnic discrimination has been shown to be the most prevalent form of discrimination on the Norwegian rental market. Although

Brekke, Jan-Paul; Fladmoe, Audun & Wollebæk, Dag (2020). Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold i Norge. Integreringsbarometeret 2020 [Attitudes towards immigration, integration and diversity in Norway. Integration barometer 2020]. Report – Institutt for samfunnsforskning. 2020(8).

^{15.} https://ebrary.net/174153/religion/education_islam_norwegian_religious_education

Statistisk Sentralbyrå (2020). Registrerte arbeidsledige blant innvandrere [Registered unemployment among immigrants]. https://www.ssb.no/innvarbl

Statistisk Sentralbyrå (2018). Flyktninger i og utenfor arbeidsmarkedet 2018 [Refugees in and outside of the labour market 2018]. https://www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/artikler-og-publikasjoner/flyktninger-i-og-utenfor-arbeidsmarkedet-2018

^{18.} Statistisk Sentralbyra (2019). Er religiøse innvandrere mindre integrert? [Are religious immigrants less integrated?]. https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/er-religiose-innvandrere-mindre-integrert

^{19.} Midtbøen, A. H. (2016). Discrimination of the Second Generation: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Norway. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 17, 253-272.

Fafo (2019). Holdninger til diskriminering, likestilling og hatprat i Norge. [Attidudes towards discrimination, equality and hate speech in Norway]. https://www.fafo.no/zoo-publikasjoner/fafo-rapporter/holdninger-til-diskriminering-likestilling-og-hatprat-i-norge-2-utgave

Andersson, L., Jakobsson, N. & Kostadam, A. (2012). A Field Experiment of Discrimination in the Norwegian Housing Market: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity. *Land Economics*, 88(2), 233-240.

discrimination affects ethnic minorities of different faith communities, Muslims report higher degrees of discrimination compared to immigrants of different religious backgrounds. ²² Interview data supports this claim and shows young Muslims in Norway face discrimination on a regular basis, especially those who wear a hijab or have a beard, and therefore display more visible identifiers of the Muslim faith. ²³ Meanwhile, research shows that there was greater support amongst the Norwegian general public for public expressions of Christian faith in the workplace over public expressions of Muslim faith. ²⁴

Education

Discrimination in education in Norway is evident in attitudes and policies towards the wearing of Islamic religious clothing in educational institutions and the prevention of Muslim schools by the state. In April 2018, the Muslim foundation Den Muslimske Grunnskole (Muslim Primary School) filed a request to the Norwegian Ministry of Education for permission to establish a Muslim school in Oslo. This was rejected by the Norwegian Directorate of Education (UDIR) as having "negative consequences for students seeking to integrate into Norwegian society". The response and accompanying media and political debate framed Islam as intrinsically linked to problems of integration. The decision is questionable in light of the 200 private schools that already exist in Norway, 72 of which are Christian, as well as a growing pattern of ethnic 'enclavisation' in Oslo that has occurred due to the absence of educational provision for Muslims communities. Whilst the school has the right to appeal, this did not occur by 2021, partly due to a climate of increasing suspicion over the right for Muslim schools to exist in Norway.

The banning of the wearing of the burqa and niqab by the Norwegian parliament in all teaching situations has caused concern amongst Muslim communities and educational institutions. Whilst the law was articulated with ambiguity so as to target all face coverings – in line with Norwegian constitutional safeguards on freedom of religious expression – it was interpreted as primarily directed towards Muslims and the wearing of the niqab and burqa.²⁷ The University of Bergen and the

Statistisk Sentralbyra (2019). Er religiøse innvandrere mindre integrert? [Are religious immigrants less integrated?]. https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/er-religiose-innvandrere-mindre-integrert

^{23.} Jakobsen, S. E. (2020). Hvordan møter unge muslimer hets? Hva gjør det med deg å jevnlig bli kalt «jævla terrorist» eller andre stygge ting? [How do young Muslims encounter harassment? What does it do to you when you are regulalry called 'bloody terrorist' or other ugly things?] Forskning.no. https://forskning.no/islam/hvordan-moter-unge-muslimer-hets/1764443

^{24.} Lövheim et al., 38.

Peiter Wijnen (2019). Is there a need for Muslim schools in Norway? Norway Today. https://norwaytoday.info/education/muslim-school-norway/

Paul Thomas (2017). The Call for Muslim Schools in Norway: The Political Debate. *Norway Studies in Education*. 37(3-4), 166-182. https://www.idunn.no/doi/10.18261/issn.1891-5949-2017-03-04-04

^{27.} Bengt-Ove Andreassen, "The Norwegian Political Discourse on Prohibiting Muslim Garments. An Analysis of Four Cases in the Period 2008-2019," *Changing Societies & Personalities* 3, no. 4 (2019).

Norwegian University of Science and Technology have deemed it unnecessary, the University of Agder and the Norwegian Policy University College have critically opposed it, and the Norwegian School of Economics has branded it "strange and dramatic". ²⁸ The Progress Party, meanwhile, welcomed the ban, stating, "In a few years' time, we believe that Norwegian politicians will be ready to pass a total ban on the niqab in public." ²⁹

Politics

Norway currently features two far-right political parties that have never attained parliamentary representation, but still have considerable impact - although the second has gained some seats in local elections -: Alliansen (Alliance) and Demokratene (Democrats). Alliansen is a one-man party founded by Hans Jørgen Lysglimt Johansen in 2016, and is known for its outspoken anti-Semitic, anti-immigration, and anti-EU agenda. Demokratene was founded in 2002, mostly by former members of the radical right Fremskrittspartiet, along with several former members of other parties. Demokratene is a nationalist and culturally conservative party, and is in firm opposition to immigration, Islam, and environmental policy. It aims to close all asylum facilities, pull Norway out of the Schengen agreement, and ban Islam in Norway. It has also been one of the strongest proponents of banning the hijab in the country.³⁰

Another prominent far-right actor in the Norwegian context is Stopp Islamiseringen av Norge (Stop the Islamisation of Norway, SIAN), which was founded in 2000 and has existed under various names. SIAN is extremely hostile towards Muslims and seeks to provoke Muslim minority youth in urban centres, where it stages controversial protests such as Qu'ran burnings.³¹ Although SIAN turnout at physical protest events is extremely limited (usually featuring only around five to ten activists), they are able to garner some interest by media in Norway and are very active on social media, maintaining a substantial following online. Several protests took place in 2021, including incidents of Qu'ran burning, leading to confrontation with counter-protestors – as well as numerous arrests by Norwegian authorities of counter-protesters and anti-racist activists.

Den nordiske motstandsbevegelsen (Nordic Resistance Movement, DNM/NRM) is a neo-Nazi movement with branches in various Nordic countries, aiming to es-

^{28.} The Local (2018). Norway Bans Burqa and Niqab in Schools, *The Local* https://www.thelocal.no/20180606/norway-bans-burqa-and-niqab-in-schools/

^{29.} Ibid

Hege Storhaug (2020). Domstol overkjører politikerne: Opphever vedtak om hijabforbud i skolen, Human Rights Service. https://www.rights.no/2020/11/domstol-overkjører-politikerne-opphever-vedtak-om-hijabforbud-i-skolem/

^{31.} NRK (2022). Den anti-islamske gruppa Sian [The anti-Islam group Sian]. https://www.nrk.no/nyheter/den-anti-islamske-gruppa-sian-1.15131742

tablish one 'racially pure' Nordic nation. It has used Islamophobic and anti-migrant tropes in its communications, along with racism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism.³² It was estimated to have a few dozen active members in 2018, and "specialises in stretching the boundaries of democracy and the rule of law through the use of harassment, threats and violence."³³ It also has an online presence, although this is more focussed on less mainstream platforms such as Telegram, and produces podcasts which explore and emulate neo-fascist themes. It occasionally organises small activist events and training days for members, but is relatively small in terms of Norwegian membership (estimated at 30-40 activists) and seems to be attracting those aged between 20 and 50, rather than younger members.³⁴ Throughout the 2021 lockdowns and responses to Covid-19, NRM deployed Islamophobic conspiracy theories, which framed Muslims as flouting lockdown rules and encouraging the spread of the virus, as well as linking the spread of disease to a supposed lack of border control in the Nordic states and Europe.³⁵

The right-wing Fremskrittspartiet (Progress Party, FrP), considered to be the most right-wing party to be represented in the Norwegian parliament, focuses on law and order, and has called for stricter immigration policy, stronger integration of migrants, and the deportation of foreigners who commit crimes. In crafting anti-migrant policies and rhetoric, it has often used gender equality, particularly against Muslim communities,³⁶ fusing feminist themes with the stigmatisation of Muslim men to frame Islam as a "quintessentially misogynistic religion and culture."³⁷ As such, there has been an increasing cross-fertilisation of extreme-right Islamophobia with anti-Islamic liberal and secular values.³⁸ During 2021, particular concern was raised by left-wing politicians and activists over the consistent use of the term *snikislamisering* (sneaky/ stealth Islamisation) by outgoing party leader Siv Jensen, and its reiteration by incoming leader Sylvi Listhaug, despite its clear links to the 'Eurabia' conspiracy theories and its prominent use in far-right circles.

^{32.} Richard McNeil-Willson, "Framing in Times of Crisis: Responses to Covid-19 Amongst Far Right Movements and Organisations," *International Centre for Counter-Terrrorism - the Hague* (2020).

^{33.} Ravndal, J. A. & Bjørgo, T. (2018). Hva er problemet med Den nordiske motstandsbevegelse? [What is the problem with the nordic resistance movement?]. *Aftenposten*. https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikk/i/7l3plv/hva-er-problemet-med-den-nordiske-motstandsbevegelsen-ravndal-og-bjoergo

^{34.} Tore Bjørgo (2019). Right-wing extrmemism in Norway: Changes and Challenges, *C-Rex – Centre for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo* https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/right-now/2019/right-wing-extremism-in-norway.html

^{35.} McNeil-Willson.

T. Akkerman, "Gender and the Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Policy Agendas," Patterns of Prejudice 49, no. 1-2 (2015).

^{37.} S. Farris, In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2017)

^{38.} Tore Bjørgo (2019). Right-wing extrmemism in Norway: Changes and Challenges, *C-Rex – Centre for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo* https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/right-now/2019/right-wing-extremism-in-norway.html

Centre- and left-wing parties in Norway have also engaged in anti-minority and anti-Muslim acts. The Labour Party has consistently looked to ensure a tightening of asylum policy in the lead-up to, and the months since, the 2021 election. Following the establishment of the 2021 Labour-Centre government, the Norwegian government passed legislation to send asylum seekers who have arrived via 'safe' countries outside Europe back to these countries. This move was described by Amnesty International as "even more cold and unsupportive than the previous government's policy" and "against human rights", and was interpreted more widely as a move influenced by far-right tendencies within and around government to create a policy to the right of the far-right anti-immigrant Progress Party.³⁹ Concern was also raised over comments made by members of the new government, including the state secretary of health and medicine, Ole Henrik Krat Bjøkholt, who had previously shown admiration for Danish anti-immigration policies, supportively stating that "criminal foreigners together with those with dangerous, infectious diseases are going to be sent to an island without daily ferry connections."

As support for the Progress Party declined in 2021, the Senterpartiet (Centre Party, SP) grew its support base and, whilst the party cannot be considered on the far right, it was able to take up the mantle of a 'protest party' during 2021, attracting voters disaffected with the Progress Party by using rhetoric based on standing up to 'elites' and working for 'ordinary' people. ⁴¹ MPs of the Centre Party have expressed Islamophobic views, with MP Ola Borten Moe publicly linking concerns over Muslim assimilation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and equality between the sexes, as well as stating that "radical Islam represents a human and social system that is diametrically opposed to all of the values that Norwegian society stands for" and that 'Norwegian values' should be asserted with more confidence. ⁴²

Media

Analysis of Norwegian media coverage of Islam and Muslims has shown that around 11% of the total coverage of these topics presented a negative image of Islam and Muslims. Half of this critical content consisted of op-eds and letters from readers.⁴³

Jostein Matre and Nilas Johnsen (2021). Amnesty ut mot regjeringens flyktningpolitikk: – Et alvorlig tilbakeskritt, VG. https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/oW90Xg/amnesty-ut-mot-regjeringens-flyktningpolitikk-et-alvorlig-tilbakeskritt

Mette Wiggen (2021a). Norway – new government moves to the far right on asylum and climate, Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right. https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2021/12/07/norway-new-governmentmoves-to-the-far-right-on-asylum-and-climate/

^{41.} Metter Wiggen (2021b). As Norway's far right declines in popularity, a new populist force rises, *openDemocracy*. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/as-norways-far-right-declines-in-popularity-a-new-populist-force-rises/

^{42.} Mímir Kristjánsson and Lars Unar Størdal Vegstein (2010). Wars for Values, *Klasseskampen*. https://arkiv.klasse-kampen.no/57709/article/item/null/kriger-for-verdier

Retriever (2016). Islam og muslimer i norske medier 2016 [Islam and muslims in Norwegian media 2016]. https://frittord.no/attachments/6821a1e981bafa24fe55aeb2b093b08ddad942f8/204-20220411151715188036.pdf

Meanwhile, the term 'Islamophobia' has struggled to become mainstreamed or established in Norwegian public debates or media and, when it has been recognised and discussed, it has often been tied to political arguments against the Progress Party. This has led to a particularly strong politicisation and polarisation of the term across the left/right spectrum. However, studies have suggested that a more hegemonic understanding of the term is starting to appear in Norway, partly due to increasing mainstream concern over the rise of populist and extreme right-wing milieus.

Norway features three prominent far-right alternative media outlets that are known for their anti-Islam coverage: *Resett, Document.no*, and *Human Rights Service* (HRS). The latter was founded as a civil society organisation in 2001 and became well-known through its close connections to the radical right Progress Party, as well as ties to influential allies in the media, business, and academia.⁴⁴ In this manner, HRS was able to spread its Islamophobic content widely among the Norwegian public. *Dokument.no* was founded as a blog in 2003 and is known for its hostility towards immigration and Islam. The website gained attention in 2011, after it became known that the 22 July terrorist was a frequent user.⁴⁵ *Resett* was launched most recently in 2017 and sparked controversy when the application by its editor to the Association of Norwegian Editor was rejected, as the association claimed he had repeatedly breached the Norwegian Ethical Code of Practice for the Norwegian Press. A 2020 study however, contested this claim.⁴⁶ Like HRS and *Document.no*, *Resett* is staunchly anti-establishment and anti-Islam.

Research by Katrine Fangen found that anti-Muslim views have become more widespread in 2021, with a general increase observed over the last 30 years in Norway. This was largely due to negative representations of Muslims in the media, where the legitimacy of Islam as a religion in Norway was questioned. By 2021, Fangen finds that Islam in Norway is also seen to be represented as dangerous due to generalised coverage of terrorist acts in the media. She states, "References to terrorist events, or mass attacks, or the increased number of Muslim men in rape statistics, or the oppression of women, or the fundamentalist practice of Sharia law, portray Islam in general as a threat."

^{44.} Bangstad, S. & Helland, F. (2019). The rhetoric of Islamophobia: an analysis of the means of persuasion in Hege Storhaug's writings on Islam and Muslims, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(13), 2229-2247, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2019.1615630

^{45.} Langset, K. G. (2011). Dette mener Anders Behring Breivik - Anders Behring Breivik var aktiv på Document. no [That is what Anders Behring Breivik means - Anders Behring Breivik was active on Document.no] https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/RRkrW/dette-mener-anders-behring-breivik

Brække, J. (2020) Frikjennes av forskere [aqcuitted by scientists]. Klassekampen https://arkiv.klassekampen.no/ article/20200203/ARTICLE/200209994

^{47.} Katrine Fangen (2021a). Why Did Muslims Become the New Enemy in Norway and Europe? https://blogs.prio.org/2021/07/why-did-muslims-become-the-new-enemy-in-norway-and-europe/see also Alexa Døving's (2010): Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: A Comparison of Imposed Group Identities, Dansk Tidsskrift for Islamforskning, nr. 2, 2010.

Justice System

Norway was criticised by the Council of Europe's European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance in 2021,⁴⁸ the United Nation's Convention Against All Forms of Racial Discrimination Commission, and the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud for the failure of proper judicial responses to hate speech.⁴⁹

Internet

Social media groups have been shown to be used to spread anti-Islamic statements, aiming to attract individuals with the same stance against both Muslim immigration and Islam. Studies have found that gender is used as a significant theme in the demonisation of Muslims online, with social media groups encouraging language which celebrates gender equality and female political leaders in Norway as a means of advancing tropes about inequality in Islamic communities, whilst simultaneously engaging in the degradation of women through sexist statements. The Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) expects radicalisation to right-wing extremism to occur primarily in online environments, rather than through organised movements in the physical space (although the latter do play a role in the radicalisation of some individuals).

There is online evidence in large Norwegian social media groups (over 10,000 members) of the social acceptance of comments that are supportive of violence towards Muslims. Often, serious Islamophobic language was camouflaged using humour, emojis, or disrespectful jargon, and has been found to tend towards replicating the 'Eurabia' tropes: Muslims as having many children and engaged in a demographic war against the white majority; Muslim women as voluntarily oppressed; and Muslim men as dangerous. ⁵² Many far-right groups in Norway have tended to move activism away from public events and towards online spaces, making use of the internet in the form of websites, blogs, and social media. ⁵³ This process has been particularly exacerbated since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, ⁵⁴ and has seen

^{48.} Council of Europe (2021). Anti-racism commission publishes new report on Norway, conclusions on Spain and San Marino, *Council of Europe Newsroom.* https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/anti-racism-commission-publishes-new-report-on-norway-conclusions-on-spain-and-san-marino

Equality and Anti-Descrimination Ombid (2018). The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud's input to the CRPD Committee's tenth pre-session. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRPD/Shared%20Documents/ NOR/INT_CRPD_ICO_NOR_31847_E.docx

Katrine Fangen. (2021b). Gendered Images of us and them in anti-Islamic Facebook Groups, *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 21(4), 451-468 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21567689.2020.1851872

^{51.} Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste (2022). Nasjonal trusselvurdering 2022 [National threat evaluation 2022]. https://www.pst.no/alle-artikler/trusselvurderinger/ntv-2022/

^{52.} Katrine Fangen (2021a). Why Did Muslims Become the New Enemy in Norway and Europe? https://blogs.prio.org/2021/07/why-did-muslims-become-the-new-enemy-in-norway-and-europe/

^{53.} Tore Bjørgo (2019). Right-wing extrmemism in Norway: Changes and Challenges, *C-Rex – Centre for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo* https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/right-now/2019/right-wing-extremism-in-norway.html

^{54.} McNeil-Willson (2020).

an increase in online hate speech, including threats against community representatives and politicians.⁵⁵

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Over the last ten years, there have been two militant attacks by Norwegian right-wing extremists that were driven by anti-Islam motives: the 2019 attack on the Al-Noor Mosque and the racially motivated murder of the perpetrator's sister, and the 2011 attacks in the Oslo governmental district and the island Utøya. The former, in particular, has had a significant impact on perceptions of safety amongst Muslim communities in Norway, to the extent that many reported feeling unsafe visiting mosques or participating in religious events. The year 2021 marked the ten-year commemoration of the attacks of 22 July, and recent studies show the terror attacks remain a potential source of polarisation among the Norwegian population. In addition, scholars warn that the evolving attitudes towards the 22 July risk turning it into a closed chapter, rather than an opportunity to critically reflect on hostility towards Muslims and the political left.

Mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik has also continued to impinge on Norwegian political debate after killing 77 individuals – many of whom were young people at a Labour Party youth camp – after Norwegian media provided extensive coverage of his parole hearing in January 2022. Although parole was denied, concern has been raised over Breivik consistently using coverage of his case as a public platform to espouse neo-Nazi ideas – with his parole hearing seeing him carrying signs in English that included 'Stop your genocide against our white nations' and 'Nazi-Civil-War', as well as performing fascist salutes.⁵⁹ However, recent analysis has suggested that support for Breivik has waned within Norway's far-right milieus – although support for some of his ideas has not.

Sylvi Listhaug, the leader of the Progress Party since May 2021, has relied heavily on Islamophobic narratives to create a right-wing victimisation narrative. Numerous statements made by Listhaug have singled out Norwegian Muslims as a problem in society: in 2016, as minister for immigration and integration, she seemed to

^{55.} Ibid.

Kulturdepartementet (2020). Handlingsplan mot diskriminering av og hat mot muslimer [Action plan against discrimination and hate against Muslims]. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b2a6fd21c6a94bae-83d5a3425593da30/handlingsplan-mot-diskriminering-av-og-hat-mot-muslimer-2020-2023.pdf

Jupskås, A. R. & Bugge-Solheim, Ø. (2021) How do Norwegians interpret 22 July today? RightNow!, https:// www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/right-now/2021/how-do-norwegians-interpret-july-22-today. html

^{58.} Ibid

^{59.} Victoria Klesty, "Norwegian Killer Breivik Begins Parole Hearing with Nazi Solute," Reuters, 18th January 2022.

^{60.} Astrid Hauge Rambøl (2021). The Progress Party's anti-Islam hinterland, *C-Rex, Centre for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo* https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/right-now/2021/the-progess-party%E2%80%99s-anti-islam-hinterland.html

suggest that Muslims should eat pork and drink alcohol to integrate in Norway; in 2017, she accused certain Islamic scholars as being "wolves in sheep's clothing" at a Muslim youth conference organised by Minhaj ul Quran International, in Sarpsborg – attacking Muslim scholars as acting to "proclaim one view officially but something entirely different when they are speaking to their own communities";⁶¹ and in 2021, she argued that Muslims are able to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, but that the celebration of Christian festivals such as Ascension Day were deemed "not politically correct", and that "the deletion of one's own culture and traditions must come to an end".⁶² Both Listhaug and former Progress Party leader Siv Jensen have both used the term 'sneaky Islamisation' (*snikislamisering*) to give credence to the 'Eurabia' conspiracy that Western leaders have conspired with leaders in Muslim countries to allow mass Muslim immigration, increase Muslim influence in Europe, and enable European countries to become Islamic – evident through what they see as adapting to special demands from a small part of the Muslim population.⁶³

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Some reports suggest that Islamophobia is starting to be recognised as a problem in Norway, along with the implementation of civil society and political initiatives. A 2020 survey, for instance, found that 84% believe and recognise that discrimination occurs to a large extent or to some extent in Norway. On the national political level, the Norwegian government has presented a comprehensive national action plan to address hate and discrimination against Muslims ('Handlingsplan mot diskriminasjon av og hat mot Muslimer'), which is under implementation in the period 2020-2023. Key points addressed in this action plan include facilitating dialogue and awareness around topics of diversity, discrimination and everyday racism; improving the safety and security of religious communities in Norway; gathering and producing knowledge about discrimination and racism in Norway; and international collaboration on religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities worldwide.

^{61.} The Free Library. S.v. Norwegian Minister terms pro-western Islamic scholars 'wolves in sheep's cloths'.." https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Norwegian+Minister+terms+pro-western+Islamic+scholars+%27wolves+in...-a0500011211

Newsbeezer (2021). Bahareh Letnes in the throat of Sylvi Listhaug in the dispute over religious holidays, https://newsbeezer.com/norwayeng/bahareh-letnes-in-the-throat-of-sylvi-listhaug-in-the-dispute-over-religious-holidays/

^{63.} Astrid Hauge Rambøl (2021).

J. Brekke, A. Fladmoe, and D. Wollebæk, "Holdninger Til Innvandring, Integrering Og Mangfold I Norge. Integreringsbarometeret 2020," in *Institute of Social Research report* (2020).

^{65.} Kulturdepartementet (2020). Handlingsplan mot diskriminering av og hat mot muslimer [Action plan against discrimination and hate against Muslims]. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b2a6fd21c6a94bae-83d5a3425593da30/handlingsplan-mot-diskriminering-av-og-hat-mot-muslimer-2020-2023.pdf

Civil society projects such as Minority Protection and Mass Atrocity Prevention are conducting research into international mechanisms for the prevention of severe human rights abuses against minorities (including early warning mechanisms),⁶⁶ whilst "New Religious Anxieties: A Study of Prejudice and Racism in Right-Wing Extremism" is exploring formations of exclusion, prejudice, and racism in Norway.⁶⁷ The European Commission is also funding academic projects amongst institutions in Norway, including the DRIVE project, which explores the role that social exclusion plays in violence, including acts perpetrated by far-right actors against Muslim communities.⁶⁸ Recent funding has focussed on supporting security in faith communities and places of worship. The Al-Noor Mosque, the site of a 2019 attack, has sought to preserve rather than cover up the scars of the attack evident in the building and, as of the start of 2022, is working with the local municipality and faith groups to develop interfaith community and outreach activities at the mosque.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Whilst some steps have been made to combat certain articulations of Islamophobia in Norway, particular attention is needed to address the following persistent challenges related to discrimination of and hatred towards Muslims in the country.

- Although Islamophobia has been increasingly recognised as a problem in Norway, there is an urgent need to challenge mainstream articulations of Islamophobia, particularly the couching of anti-Muslim language in mainstream or liberal language. This could include supporting greater access for Muslims in mainstream politics, as well as creating more positive portrayals of Islam and Muslims in media, with studies showing that positive or complex media portrayal of Muslims is limited.⁶⁹
- Methods for monitoring hate crime and lower barriers for reporting should be improved, with many young Muslims reporting a very high threshold for what they consider worth reporting/talking about, as well as a sense that police will not take concerns seriously.⁷⁰ This could include the recording of crimes with Islamophobia as a motivational factor at a national level, which would improve awareness of the scale of the problem.

HL-Senteret (2017/8). Minority Protection and Mass Atrocity Provention, The Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies. https://www.hlsenteret.no/english/research/Minorities/minority-protection-and-mass-atrocity-prevention/index.html

^{67.} HL-Senteret (2016). New religious Anxieties: A Study of Prejudice and Racism in Right Wing Extremism, *The Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies*. https://www.hlsenteret.no/english/research/Minorities/New-religious-Anxieties%3A%20A-Study-of%20Prejudice-and-Racism-in%20Right-Wing-Extremism/index.html

^{68.} DRIVE Project (2021). DRIVE – Resisting Radicalisation Through Inclusion, *Leiden University* https://www.driveproject.eu/

^{69.} Retriever (2016).

^{70.} Siw Ellen Jakobsen (2020). Hvordan møter unge muslimer hets? Forskning.no https://forskning.no/islam/hvordan-moter-unge-muslimer-hets/1764443

• Introduce policy and practice to combat the polarising impact of Islamophobic public discourse (e.g., FrP) and social movements intended to provoke Muslim communities (e.g., SIAN). Whilst some public Islamophobic movements and events have been managed by authorities enough to avoid polarisation, successful navigation between free speech and protection of minorities requires more robust responses to hate speech and incitement, particularly in light of continued instances of Qur'an burnings, for instance.

Chronology

- **26.02.2021:** Siv Jensen, departing leader of the Progress Party (FrP), attacks Muslims supporting *snikislamisering* (sneaky/stealth Islamisation) "Islamists who have advocated turning European countries into Muslim states."⁷¹
- 08.05.2021: Demonstration by anti-Muslim group "Stopp Islamiseringen av Norge" (Stop the Islamisation of Norway, SIAN) draws around 20-30 supporters in Oslo, and around 100 counter-protestors.⁷²
- 13.05.2021: Sylvi Listhaug, the leader of the Progress Party, argues that Christians in Norway are "deleting their culture" by not being allowed to celebrate Ascension Day due to political correctness, whilst Muslims are able to celebrate Eid al-Fitr.
- **22.07.2021:** The tenth anniversary of the attack by Anders Breivik is marked, where concerns were raised that there is still not enough work being carried out to counter far-right violence in Norway, alongside a lack of understanding amongst authorities that Islamophobia played a key role in motivating the attack.⁷³
- **28.07.2021:** Subsequent leader of the FrP, Sylvi Listhaug, defends the use of *snikislamisering* (sneaky/stealth Islamisation), despite its links to 'Eurabia' conspiracies and use in far-right circles.⁷⁴
- **07.08.2021:** Demonstration by six supporters of SIAN takes place at Byparken, Stavanger, including a Qur'an burning. Several counter-demonstrators are arrested following attempts to prevent the burning, and teargas is used by the police against counter-demonstrators.⁷⁵

^{71.} Siv Jensen (2021). Snikislamisering er ingen konspirasjonsteori. VL https://www.vl.no/meninger/verdide-batt/2021/02/26/snikislamisering-er-ingen-konspirasjonsteori/

News in English Norway (2021). Anti-Islamic demonstrations costly, newsinenglish.no https://www.newsineng-lish.no/2021/05/12/anti-islamic-demonstrations-costly/

Mark Lewis (2021). Norway marks 10th anniversay of anti-Islamic massacre, Press Herald https://www.press-herald.com/2021/07/19/norway-marks-10th-anniversary-of-anti-islamic-massacre/

^{74.} Brede Mathisen (2021). Snikislamisering og Eurabia – FrP bor ta avstand fra disse konspirasjonsteoriene, *Jeune* https://www.jeune.no/innlegg/snikislamisering-og-eurabia-frp-bor-ta-avstand-fra-disse-konspirasjonsteoriene

^{75.} NTB (2021). Flere pågrepet på demonstrasjon i Stavanger, *Document*. https://www.document.no/2021/08/07/flere-pagrepet-pa-demonstrasjon-i-stavanger/; Erling Marthinsen (2021). MDG-topp er rystet over politiets bruk av tåregass under Sian-demo, *Document* https://www.document.no/2021/08/09/mdg-topp-er-rystet-over-politiets-bruk-av-taregass-under-sian-demo/

- **25.08.2021:** A 15-year-old girl was reportedly offered 1,000 kroner by Progress Party politician Christian Tybring-Gjedde to remove her hijab when she visited the party's election stand.
- 02.10.2021: Demonstration by SIAN in Furuset, Oslo⁷⁶
- 13.10.2021: The Kongsberg attack, resulting in five deaths, was carried out by an individual wielding a variety of weapons, including a bow and arrow, in Kongsberg, Buskerud. The attack was initially labelled by Norwegian authorities as a potential "terrorist act" linked to "Islamist extremism" due to the individual being labelled a Muslim convert, fuelling anti-Muslim media reports and social media trends. Following an investigation, doubt was cast on the claims that the suspect was a Muslim, and the terror charges were changed to counts of murder.⁷⁷
- 10.12.2021: A second case is won by Somali refugee Mariya Abdi Ibrahim against the Norwegian government in the European Court of Human Rights over the forced adoption of her son. The child was removed from her and placed with an evangelical couple and forced to cut ties with his biological mother. The court found that Norwegian authorities had failed to account for the boy's religious and cultural background, further fuelling criticism that the Norwegian Child Welfare Services agency is too quick to remove the children of immigrants, particularly those from non-Christian backgrounds.⁷⁸

Groruddalen (2021). SIAN møtt av stor motdemonstrasjon da de demonstrerte på Furuset i dag https://groruddalen.no/mott-av-stor-motdemonstrasjon/19.28974

^{77.} Ellen Francis (2021). Norway revises account of bow-and-arrow attack, casting doubts over terrorism, *Wash-ington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/19/norway-kongsberg-bow-arrow-attack-stab-bing-police/

Molly Quell (2021). Somali refugee wins second case against Norqay over forced adoption. Courthouse News Service. https://www.courthousenews.com/somalia-refugee-wins-second-case-against-norway-over-forced-adoption/

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN ROMANIA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

The Muslim community in Romania numbers 64,337 Muslims, most of whom are Turks and Tatars (almost 48,000), demographically concentrated in the Dobruja region. The rest of the community is scattered in the major regional urban centers of Romania: the capital Bucharest (around 10,000), Timișoara, Cluj Napoca, and Iași. The anti-Muslim protests in 2015 over the project of a large mosque in Bucharest proved the existence of a latent Islamophobia in the Romanian society which errupts only in contexts when Muslims or the Islamic religion are perceived by society as a real, emminent danger. Currently, the existing statistics do not paint an accurate picture and qualitative research is missing, given that many civil society organizations and international organizations have drawn attention to the fact that one of the major problems in the hate crime segment is underreporting by victims due to a lack of trust in the willingness or capability of the authorities to investigate these cases effectively. Representing under 1% of the total population of the country, the interest of the political class in the Muslims in Romania is low and focused only in the historical Turkish and Tatar minorities living in the Dobruja region. The only significant legal development affecting the right of Muslims was the issuance by the Romanian government of a strategy regarding immigration for the period 2021-2014. Although no significant incidents regarding Muslims and immigrants have been recorded in Romania during 2021, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant rhetoric was present, especially in nationalist and Christian Orthodox online media outlets. A study conducted by Active Watch in 2021 shows that hate speech is rarely found in actual posts on social networks, but is more widespread in the comment sections. Qualitative research also shows that any post/article on Muslim immigration to the West causes anti-Muslim reactions/comments in the online environment. Overall, no significant development affecting Muslims during the reporting period was recorded.

Sumar

Comunitatea din România numără 64.337 de musulmani, majoritatea turci și tătari (aproape 48.000), concentrați demografic în regiunea Dobrogei. Restul comunității este dispersată în marile centre urbane ale României, în capitala București (în jur de 10.000), în Timișoara, Cluj Napoca și Iași. Protestele anti-musulmane din 2015 privind proiectul unei mega-moschei la București au dovedit existența unei islamofobii latente în societatea românească care erupe doar în contexte în care musulmanii sau religia islamică sunt percepuți în societate ca un pericol real, apropiat. În prezent, statisticile nu sunt relevante, iar cercetarea calitativă lipsește, având în vedere că multe organizații ale societății civile și organizații internaționale au atras atenția asupra faptului că una dintre problemele majore pe segmentul infracțiunilor motivate de ură este sub-raportarea de către victime din cauza lipsei de încredere în disponibilitatea și capacitatea autorităților de a investiga aceste cazuri în mod eficient. Reprezentând sub 1% din populația totală a tării, interesul clasei politice pentru musulmanii din România este scăzut și se concentrează doar asupra minorităților istorice turce și tătare care trăiesc în regiunea Dobrogei. Singura evoluție juridică semnificativă care afectează dreptul musulmanilor a fost emiterea de către Guvernul României a strategiei privind imigrația pentru perioada 2021-2014. Deși nu au fost înregistrate incidente semnificative cu privire la musulmani și imigranți în România în cursul anului 2019, retorica islamofobă și anti-imigrantă a fost prezentă, în special în mass-media online naționaliste și creștin-ortodoxe. Un studiu realizat de Active Watch în 2021 arată că discursul urii este rar întâlnit în postările reale de pe rețelele de socializare, fiind mai răspândit în comentariile postărilor. Cercetările calitative arată, de asemenea, că orice postare / articol despre imigrația musulmană în Occident provoacă reacții / comentarii anti-musulmane online. Pentru perioada de raportare nu a fost înregistrată nicio evoluție semnificativă care să-i afecteze pe musulmani în perioada de raportare.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Romania

Type of Regime: Republic

Form of Government: Unitary semi-presidential republic

Ruling Parties: Social Democratic Party (PSD) (social democratic); National Liberal Party (PNL) (liberal), Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) (center right, representative organization of the Hungarian Minority in Romania)

Opposition Parties: Save Romania Union (USR) (center right), Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) (far right)

Last Elections: 2019 Presidential Election (Klaus Iohannis of the PNL won with 66.09% of votes against Viorica Dăncilă of the PSD 33.91%); 2020 Romanian Legislative Election (PSD: 157 [center left], PNL: 134 [center right], USR: 80 [center right], AUR: 47 [center right], UDMR: 30 [center right], Minorities: 18; 2019 European Parliamentary Election (PNL: 10 MEP mandates, PSD: 9, USR-PLUS 2020 Alliance [center right]: 8, ProRomania [center left]: 2, PMP: 2, UDMR: 2)

Total Population: 20,121,641 (2011 census)

Major Languages: Romanian (official) 85.4%, Hungarian 6.3%, Romani 1.2%. Others: Ukrainian, German, Turkish, Tatar, Russian, Slovakian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, Greek, Yiddish, Italian, Macedonian, Polish, Ruthenian (2011)

Official Religion: No state religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to the latest survey in 2019 of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), Muslims along with homosexuals and Roma people, represent one of the groups with the lowest level of trust. Seventy-four percent of those surveyed say they do not trust homosexuals and 72% do not trust Roma. Immigrants (69%), Muslims (68%), people living with HIV/AIDS (58%), people of other religions (58%), Hungarians (53%), and Jews (46%) are among the most distrusted groups. The scale of social distance indicates a high intolerance towards Muslims (39% do not accept becoming their relatives, 28% do not accept being their friends, and 19% do not accept them as co-workers).

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 2020, there were 1,039 petitions registered, out of which the largest number of petitions received were on the grounds of belonging to a social category (258) and the smallest number was on grounds of HIV status (7) and one case on the ground of race. There were 138 petitions submitted on the grounds of religion and beliefs, an unprecedented increase compared to 11 petitions in 2019.

Major Religions (**% of Population**): Eastern Orthodox (86.45%), Roman Catholic (4.62%), Reformed Protestants (3.19%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 0.34%

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Muftiate of Romania (the only religious authority for Muslims in Romania, recognized by law).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Islamic and Cultural League in Romania (Liga Islamică și Culturală din România); Cultural Centre "Islam Today" (Centrul Cultural "Islamul Azi"); "Crescent" Cultural Centre Foundation (Fundația Centrul Cultural "Semiluna"); Cultural Humanitarian Association D.U.A. (Asociația Cultural Umanitară D.U.A.); Foundation for Islamic Services (Fundația de Servicii Islamice); Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Romania (Comunitatea Musulamnă Ahmadiyya din România); "Gate of Knowledge" Cultural Islamic Association (Asociația Culturală Islamică "Poarta Cunoașterii"); Fundația Association Cultural Islamic Centre - Al Taqwa (Asociația Centrul Cultural Islamic - Al Taqwa); Foundation Romanian Council for Refugees (Fundația Consiliul Național Român pentru Refugiați-CNRR); Romanian Forum for Refugees (Forumul Român pentru Refugiați-ARCA)

Far-Right Parties: Alliance for the Union of Romanians - AUR (Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor), The New Right - ND (Noua Dreaptă), United Romania Party-PRU (Partidul România Unită)

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Violent Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

Minaret Ban: No

Circumcision Ban: No

Burka Ban: A legislative proposal for banning face covering with any material that prevents the recognition of physiognomy was launched in December 2017 and rejected by the Chamber of Deputies in April 2018. The law was further submitted to the Senate for deliberation which decided to close the legislative procedure with a final rejection. If the law would have passed, the burqa, niqab, or other clothing used to cover the face for cultural purposes (religious or ethnic) or for other reasons, except for medical reasons, would have been prohibited in educational institutions. After the final rejection by the Senate in 2018, the legislative proposal was not resumed in any form. In the 2020 parliamentary elections, the People's Movement Party (PMP), which initiated this legislative project, did not obtain the 5% electoral threshold to enter the Parliament.

– Prayer Ban: No

www.islamophobiareport.com

Introduction

Islamophobia in Romania is directed towards the idea of Islam and Muslims which are coming from outside of the country, against external influences of Islam (transnational), and towards a part of the Muslim community, associated with these influences.

The community numbers 64,337 Muslims,¹ most of them Turks and Tatars (almost 48,000),² demographically concentrated in the Dobruja region in the southeastern part of Romania. The presence of Turks and Tatars in the region is a demographic legacy of the region's Ottoman period (15th-19th centuries), when Dobruja was under Ottoman administration. The rest of the community is scattered in the major regional urban centers of Romania, in the capital Bucharest (around 10,000), Timişoara, Cluj Napoca, and Iaşi.

Thus, one can distinguish among *native Muslims* who are Turks and Tatars; the *new Muslims* who came to Romania during the communist regime, acquired Romanian citizenship, and whose population is currently the second generation to be living in Romania. The *new* Muslims group include also the ones who migrated from different Islamic countries after 1990, for economic or educational purposes, or for political reasons, but who in time acquired Romanian citizenship. Of course, there are also migrants and refugees who do not have citizenship and who are not recorded in the official census.

Islamophobia is a recently imported phenomenon, and also a latent one. International news and developments facilitated a growing trend in this sense. The main vector in importing this phenomenon was the press, by reproducing internally images and news from the international press. The two main topics presented as a threat were the violent attacks and the so-called refugee problem. The phenomenon was imported recently and gradually, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the attack in Madrid (March 11, 2004), and in London (July 7, 2005), in parallel with the critique of multiculturalism, with the securitization and stigmatization of immigration. The takeover of these sort of news by the Romanian press was also a result of a need to be sensationalist. Although the historical community in the Dobruja region represents the majority of the Muslim community, the media does not consider its problems relevant enough to cover them, preferring in the last years to report extensively on the European debate of the so-called refugee crisis and the violent attacks in European countries, and underlining the dangers posed by Muslim immigrants.

Another feature of Islamophobia in Romania is a sort of latency, with roots in the anti-Ottoman imaginary induced to pupils from early in their education years.

National Institute of Statistic, "Population and Housing Census. Stable population by religion - counties, municipalities, cities", 2011, retrieved 20 June, 2022, from http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/

National Institute of Statistic, "Population and Housing Census. Population by ethnicity and religion - categories of localities", 2011, retrieved 20 June, 2022, from http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/

The first information about Islam that any young Romanian student is exposed to is provided by history textbooks, which during communism and also after 1990 were dominated by a biased, ethnocentric approach. The Ottoman Muslims are presented as a constant threat to the independence of Romanian Principalities³ and a permanent threat to the Christian character of the Romanian state and Europe.⁴

The causes of Islamophobia are nationalism, the idea of a homogeneous nation state, the stigmatization of the Other for internal shortcomings; the xenophobia that exists at the level of the Romanian collective mentality, manifested most visibly and most often in relation to the Roma minority, Romania's second-largest minority. Xenophobia came under the influence of images and information provided by the press and in the context of the government decision in 2015 to build a mosque in Bucharest⁶ in collaboration with the Turkish state and under certain stimuli, took the form of hatred towards Muslims. It is clear that an Islamophobia exists latently in Romania with people manifesting it only in contexts when Muslims or the Islamic religion are perceived as a real, close danger.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The decision taken by the Romanian government in 2015 to build a mosque and an Islamic educational center in Bucharest with the financial support of the Turkish state have led to a major wave of anti-Muslim feelings. The initial intention was, in this manner, to counteract the influences of radical Islam, arguing for the choice of the construction site on the basis of the doubling number of Muslims in Romania's capital. The mufti of the Muslim community of Romania, which positions itself as embodying the "good Muslims," has underlined the peaceful character of Romanian Islam⁷ and the fact that through this project "young men will not be attracted to unauthorized mosques where radical propaganda is promoted by Muslims trained in

Romanian Principalities of Moldova and Ţara Românească (or Valahia), today southtern and eastern parts of Romania.

^{4.} Călin Felezeu and Adriana Cupcea, The Image of the Ottoman in the History textbooks from Romania and Bosnia Herzegovina, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2015).

 [&]quot;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), 2018, retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://www.cncd.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Sondaj_de_opinie_NoIntoHate_2018.pdf

^{6.} Sînziana Ionescu, "Cea mai mare moschee din Europa creştină se ridică la Bucureşti. Detaliile unui proiect uriaș, fără propagandă fundamentalistă" (The largest mosque in Christian Europe is built in Bucharest. The details of a huge project, without fundamentalist propaganda), *Adevărul*, (June 10, 2015), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://adevarul.ro/locale/constanta/cea-mai-mare-moschee-europa-crestina-ridica-bucuresti-deta-liile-unui-proiect-urias-propaganda-fundamentalista-1_5576fce9cfbe376e35196fc7/index.html

Corneliu C. Simuţ, "Negative Economy in Romanian Politics and Religion: Anti-Muslim Attitudes in the Bucharest Mosque Scandal during the Summer of 2015", *Religions*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (2015), p. 1370.

institutions from abroad," which the mufti considers "fundamentalist." Still, an online, anti-Muslim campaign was initiated shortly after, supported by several media outlets, and involved politicians, religious leaders, scientists, and the entire Romanian society in this phenomenon of antagonistic positioning towards Muslims and Islam. Soon thereafter, there appeared in Romania the first anti-Islam groups on social networks, the first public protests against Muslims, and more so, the first violent Islamophobic incidents.

For the first time in Romania's post-1990 history, Islamophobic manifestations could be seen in a publicly declared and aggregated manner. The groups that organized the anti-Muslim protests were connected with far-right parties such as the United Romania Party (Partidul România Unită, PRU) and the New Right (Noua Dreaptă, ND),⁹ and publicly adopted an anti-immigrant position and a xenophobic rhetoric. Given the context of the decision to build the mosque in 2015, a new Facebook page of the same type was created, but with an even more specific objective: "We do not want a mega-mosque in Bucharest." This group instigated the same type of violent message, managing to attract 23,000 followers to its page – currently this number stands at 20,193. ¹⁰

The height of the forms of protest and anti-Islam actions was reached in the second half of 2015 in successive waves, during which groups of young people protested publicly on the land granted by the government for the building of the mosque, militating against its construction. The position they adopted was a radical one and they resorted to violent acts in order to desecrate the land.¹¹

In the end, in 2018, the Muftiate of the Muslim Community in Romania (Muftiatul Cultului Musulman din România) announced that it would drop the project due to insufficient financial resources. Even though the project was abandoned, it brought forward a latent, Islamophobic discourse, instigating hatred and violence

^{8.} Sînziana Ionescu, "Cea mai mare moschee din Europa creştină se ridică la București. Detaliile unui proiect uriaș, fără propagandă fundamentalistă" (The largest mosque in Christian Europe is built in Bucharest. The details of a huge project, without fundamentalist propaganda), *Adevărul*, (10 June, 2015), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://adevarul.ro/locale/constanta/cea-mai-mare-moschee-europa-crestina-ridica-bucuresti-deta-liile-unui-proiect-urias-propaganda-fundamentalista-1_5576fce9cfbe376e35196fc7/index.html

Roxana Ruscior and Mihai Voinea, "Manifestație împotriva construirii Mega Moscheii la București. Mitingul a fost organizat de Noua Dreaptă" (Demonstration against the construction of the Mega Mosque in Bucharest. The rally was organized by the New Right), Adevărul, (20 July, 2015), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/menifestatie-construirii-mega-moscheei-bucuresti-mitingul-fost-organizat-noua-dreapta-1_55ad30c0f5eaafab2cc2604e/index.html

^{10.} See https://www.facebook.com/NuVremMegaMoscheeInBucuresti.

^{11. &}quot;Un nou protest pe terenul destinat construcției unei moschei în București" (A new protest on the land intended for the construction of a mosque in Bucharest), Mediafax, (15 September, 2015), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from http://www.mediafax.ro/social/un-nou-protest-pe-terenul-destinat-constructiei-unei-moschei-in-bucuresti-fo-to-video-14713068; Un nou protest pe terenul pentru moschee-peste 200 de oameni au înfipt acolo 500 de cruci" (A new protest on the ground for the mosque-over 200 people stuck 500 crosses there), HotNews, (19 September, 2015), retrieved 20 June, 2020, from https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-20437948-nou-protest-terenul-pentru-moschee-peste-200-oameni-infipt-acolo-500-cruci.htm

with nationalist, right accents. This was an unprecedented discourse in Romania's post-communist history. In 2016, when this topic dominated the debates about Muslims in Romania, 84.6% of Romanians were against refugees or immigrants settling in Romania while in a 2017 study, 24% of respondents were against Arabs coming to Romania, a 6% increase compared to 2015. 12

After this episode, racially motivated violence and incidents directed at Muslims were not reported in the years that followed. However, the statistics do not paint an accurate picture, given that many civil society organizations and international organizations have drawn attention to the fact that one of the major problems in the hate crime segment is underreporting by victims due to a lack of trust in the willingness or capability of the authorities to investigate these cases effectively.

In its report on Romania published on June 5, 2019, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recommended that the authorities put in place a system to collect data and produce 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 that this data is made available to the public. In 2021, the ECRI report noted that there have been no significant changes in the collection of hate crime data and underlined that the Romanian authorities have not yet developed improved procedures for recognizing bias motivations. The report emphasized that the proper qualification of hate crimes is imperative for ensuring the effective functioning of the criminal justice system against such acts. Overall, the conclusion of the ECRI report pointed to the fact that little or no action was taken to address underreporting and, in particular, to enhance cooperation between law enforcement officials and the communities concerned, including the Muslims.

Employment

No significant developments regarding the employment of Muslims were reported in the period under investigation. In the last data available (2018), the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) registered 365 petitions about access to em-

^{12.} Mirela Bărbulescu, "Sondaj INSCOP: 84,6% dintre români nu sunt de acord ca refugiații/ imigranții să se stabilească în România" (INSCOP Survey: 84,6% of Romanians Are against Refugees/Immigrants Settling in Romania), Agerpres, (18 April, 2016), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://www.agerpres.ro/social/2016/04/18/sondaj-inscop-84-6-dintre-romani-nu-sunt-de-acord-ca-refugiatii-imigrantii-sa-se-stabileas-ca-in-romania-12-08-39

^{13.} Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Council of Europe, "Fourth Opinion on Romania", (16 February, 2018), p. 22, retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://rm.coe.int/fourth-opinion-on-romania-adopted-on-22-june-2017/168078af76

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "ECRI Conclusions on the Implementation
of the Recommendations in respect of Romania", (7 December, 2021), p. 4, retrieved 20 June, 2022, from
https://rm.coe.int/ecri-conclusions-on-the-implementation-of-the-recommendations-in-respe/1680a59af0,

^{15.} Ibid., p. 5.

ployment. In nine of these cases, fines were issued, while another 10 received a warning. However, the data is not disaggregated by criteria such as ethnic origin or religion. However, the data is not disaggregated by criteria such as ethnic origin or religion. The persons entering Romania based on an asylum application can have free access to the labor market either based on a residence permit, confirming the form of protection obtained, or based on a certificate attesting that the application has been processed. A Deloitte study in 2022 points out that there are work opportunities in Romania for citizens who are forced to leave their country because of war, but that immigration regulations are still rigid and should be made more flexible. For example, the processing of asylum applications could be accelerated (currently the deadline is 30 days, but it can be extended indefinitely by the authorities), and certain immigration processes could be simplified, at least by removing the requirements for official documents issued by the authorities of origin, which in such circumstances are impossible to obtain. Also, other solutions worth investigating are the abolition of the long-stay visa in these situations or the possibility to apply for a visa in Romania, given the difficulty of traveling. The process of the possibility to apply for a visa in Romania, given the difficulty of traveling.

Education

The Education Law of 2011 guarantees the right of national minorities to use their mother tongue at all levels, forms, and types of education (Art. 118), based on requests from communities. Also, the Education Law stipulates the obligation to insure that national minorities who attend schools where all teaching is conducted in Romanian have the right to study subjects, such as their mother tongue, literature, and the history and traditions of their respective national minority.¹⁸

Thus, besides pupils who attend schools where they are taught in their mother language, an important number of pupils belonging to the national minorities choose to attend schools where teaching is conducted in Romanian and study their mother language upon request. ¹⁹ This is especially true of pupils from the small minorities, ²⁰ like the Turks and Tatars, who are concentrated demographically in the region of Dobruja.

The Turks have opted for an education system with partial teaching in their mother tongue, which works in their case in parallel with the Romanian language-based edu-

National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), "Annual Report 2018", retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://main.components.ro/uploads/1d3a0bf8b95391b825aa56853282d5da/2019/05/Raport_de_activitate_CNCD_2018_var_online.pdf

^{17.} Raluca Bontas and Mihaela Vechiu, "Residence conditions and work opportunities for Ukrainians in Romania", (2 March, 2022), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://www2.deloitte.com/ro/en/pages/tax/articles/conditii-de-sedere-si-oportunitati-de-munca-pentru-ucraineni-romania.html

Oana Chelaru-Murăruş, National minorities in Romania revisited. Educational policies and the protection of the lingustic (human) rights, (Bucureşti: Editura Universității Bucureşti, 2017), p. 49.

^{19.} Gabriel Andreescu, "RAXEN_CC National Focal Point Romania. Ombudspersons for National Minorities. Report on minority education in Romania", 2004, p. 17, retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/278-edu-romania-final_1.pdf

^{20.} Ibid, p. 7.

cation system. Under this regime, minority children study in both Romanian and the minority language. Turkish-Romanian pupils study at the Kemal Atatürk National College in Medgidia (Dobruja region), which is also the only educational institution in Romania that has a department of Islamic theology. Despite the legislative framework, to this day, the Tatars do not any form of teaching in their mother language. Instead, since the '90s, they are included in the Turkish educational system based on the Turkish-Islamic component of their identity.

At the level of Muslim immigrants, the situation is different. At the beginning of 2020, there were 15,794 young foreign nationals (aged under 19) with the right to stay in Romania, according to the General Inspectorate for Immigration. Although the National Education Law stipulates that they have a right to education without any discrimination, the reality is different. Many civil society organizations pay particular attention to migrant children and young people from non-European countries, asylum seekers, or beneficiaries of some form of international protection. The obstacles they face in exercising the right to education are related to the lack of educational documents, the lack of knowledge of the Romanian language, and the difficulties in adapting to the new social, cultural, and educational context.²¹

Politics

In the last elections in December 2020, none of the winning parties' programs included policy claims regarding the integration of migrants or refugees. The topic is not present on the political agenda in Romania. All political statements regarding Muslims are congratulatory messages addressed on the occasion of Ramadan by the Romanian Presidency or the prime minister. The messages are specifically addressed to the Turks and Tatars in the Dobruja region, the Muslim historical minorities in Romania, and explicitly do not mention the Muslims immigrants of other ethnic backgrounds living in Bucharest and other big cities in Romania.

Following the protocol of political collaboration signed in the electoral year 2020 between one of the government coalition parties, the National Liberal Party (PNL), Constanța branch, and the Tatar representative organization, UDTTMR, the latter returned to the Romanian Parliament after four years of absence. The UDTTMR has 37 Tatar representatives in the local councils of Constanța County, one of the counties of Dobruja, where Tatars are demographically concentrated. Among them, there is a representative in the most important local administration in the county: Constanța City Council. The representative started her term in February 2021.²²

^{21.} Iulia Stancu, "Cum ajunge un tânăr din Irak elev în România", Childhub, (24 February, 2022), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://childhub.org/ro/stiri-protectia-copilului/cum-ajunge-un-tanar-din-irak-elev-romania

^{22. &}quot;Ateş Casimceali va fi noul consilier municipal al Constanței" (Ateş Casimceali will be the new municipal counsellor of Constanța), Ziare,com, (12 January, 2021), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://ziare.com/constanta/stiri-actualitate/ates-casimceali-va-fi-noul-consilier-municipal-al-constantei-8352770

In March 2021, within the same political protocol, Secyl Suliman was appointed by the Romanian government, in one of the two positions of deputy-prefect of Constanța County. She is a representative of the Tatar community, an economist, and a leading member of the UDTTMR leadership.²³

Media

In 2020-2021, certain private media outlets presented minority groups as a threat. In October 2021, an article published by the news site activenews.ro mentioned the alleged religious affiliation of several government officials to the Baha'i, Unitarian, Reformed, Muslim, or Roman Catholic faiths, and called them "Taliban persecuting Orthodox Christians" for imposing restrictions on religious activities in order to limit the spread of COVID-19. A post on a social media site promoting the article argued that one of the officials tasked with the proposed restrictions against the spread of COVID-19 is a follower of the Baha'i faith. The text of the post described Baha'i followers as a group that "wants to abolish all religions." The Baha'i community has reported that several media outlets have published offensive articles against members of the Baha'i faith and the affiliation of Baha'i to several public figures.²⁴

In 2021, several conservative Christian Orthodox websites published articles portraying immigration and Islam as a threat to women's rights and security across Europe, reporting alleged attacks and sexual harassment of white women. The articles present no clear evidence in this regard, but only general statements, and argued by simple reference to the name of Ayaan Hirsi Ali,²⁵ who is known for his criticism of Islam.²⁶

Other examples of Islamophobic media articles involve examples of Islamic radicalization from Western countries; associating the idea of Islam and Muslim immigrants with the phenomenon of radicalization and crimes; and inducing the idea that Muslims represent a threat to society. Titles such as the following were published by mainstream media outlets: "The Saga of a Family of Turkish Immigrants from Germany Who Helped Their Boys Become ISIS Suppliers: <Mom, Send Me Money>";²⁷

^{23. &}quot;Noii subprefecți ai județului Constanța, Secyl Suliman (UDTTMR) și Mihai Vîlcu (USR) depun astăzi jurământul" (The new sub-prefects of Constanța county, Secyl Suliman from UDTTMR and Mihai Vîlcu from USR take the oath today), Amprenta newspaper, (4 March, 2021), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://ziarulamprenta.ro/stirile-zilei/noii-subprefecti-ai-judetului-constanta-secyl-suliman-udttmr-si-mihai-vil-cu-usr-depun-astazi-juramantul/81887/

^{24.} U.S. Embassy in Romania, "Report on International Religious Freedom: Romania", 2020, retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://ro.usembassy.gov/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom-romania/.

Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Ayaan Hirsi Ali, (16 June, 2017), retrieved 14 July, 2022, from https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-ayaan-hirsi-ali/

^{26. &}quot;Imigranți musulmani acuzați de violență și hărțuire", *Info Creștin*, (10 November, 2021), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://infocrestin.com/imigranti-musulmani-acuzati-de-violenta-si-hartuire/

^{27.} Cristina Ene, "Saga unei familii de imigranți turci din Germania care și-a ajutat băieții să devină furnizori pentru ISIS: «Mamă, trimite-mi bani»" (The saga of a family of Turkish immigrants from Germany who helped their boys become ISIS suppliers: "Mom, send me money"), Adevărul, (29 June, 2021), retrieved 21 June, 2022, from

and "Social Democrat Sweden's Transition from <My Europe Welcomes Refugees and Does Not Build Walls> to Restrictive Immigration Policies / Crime Has Risen Alarmingly in Recent Years."²⁸

Justice System

In 2021, the only significant legal development affecting the right of Muslims was the issuance by the Romanian government of a strategy regarding immigration for the period 2014-2021. The document clearly uses an alarmist language embedded in Islamophobic knowledge production that addresses the issue from the securitization perspective and provides for the need to verify the possible "terrorist" connections of persons coming in "illegal migration flows," including operatives sent with tasks to Europe and former members of "terrorist organizations" infiltrated in "illegal migration flows." The document mentions that very frequently migrants do not have documents or use false documents, and outlines that the possibilities to verify their identity and history in their origin countries (facing chronic insecurity, civil wars, "terrorism") are limited. The document emphasizes that from a security point of view, the presence of such persons in migration flows, in transit, or wishing to settle in Romania generates direct risks to the security climate by (1) establishing support points for "terrorist"/jihadist organizations on the national territory; (2) testing of travel routes for the recruits of these organizations in/from the Syria-Iraq area; (3) the "radicalization" of the Muslim communities in Romania/Europe; and (4) the direct involvement in violent ("terrorist") acts in Romania/Europe, taking into account their expertise or combatant past.²⁹

Internet

The sixth evaluation of the Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online (2021), 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 grounds of sexual orientation and xenophobia, including anti-migrant hatred (18.2% and 18%, respectively) followed by antigypsyism (12.5%) and anti-Muslim hatred (8,5%). In Romania, the rate of re-

 $https://adevarul.ro/international/europa/saga-familii-imigranti-turci-germania-si-a-ajutat-baietii-devina-furni-zori-isis-mama-trimite-mi-bani-1_60dab9325163ec427191fccb/index.html$

^{28. &}quot;Cum a trecut Suedia condusă de social democrați de la <Europa mea primește refugiați și nu construiește ziduri> la politici restrictive de imigrație/Criminalitatea a crescut alarmant în ultimii ani" (Social Democrat Sweden's transition from "My Europe welcomes refugees and does not build walls" to restrictive immigration policies / Crime has risen alarmingly in recent years", g4media.ro, (18 November, 2021), retrieved 21 June, 2022, from https://www.g4media.ro/cum-a-trecut-suedia-condusa-de-social-democrati-de-la-europa-mea-primeste-refugiati-si-nu-construieste-ziduri-la-politici-restrictive-de-imigratie-criminalitatea-a-crescut-alarmant.html

^{29. &}quot;Strategia națională din 19 august 2021, privind imigrația pentru perioada 2021-2024" (National Strategy of 19 August 2021, on immigration for the period 2021-2024), (2 September, 2021), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/245996

moval in 2021 was 100%, an increase compared to 2019 when the rate removal was 92.2%.³⁰

According to the Active Watch Report, which identifies the incidents most likely to generate waves of hatred in Romania, 73 events were identified and analyzed for the studied chapter, which generated hundreds of posts and thousands of comments, the vast majority being on Facebook. The study found that hatred is rare in actual social media posts and is more common in the comment sections. In most cases, comments target the Hungarian, Roma, and LGBT minorities.³¹

As for hatred of Muslims, the wave of anti-Muslim sentiment generated by the so-called migration crisis of 2015 and the project to build the great mosque in Bucharest has diminished over time. However, qualitative research shows that any post/article on Muslim immigration to the West causes anti-Muslim reactions/comments in the online environment.

The Facebook page "We don't want a mega-mosque in Bucharest," which was initially created to oppose the project of building a grand mosque in the capital – a project that was later cancelled – still shares various articles to provoke and manipulate the public opinion. Even though the page has reduced the frequency of posting significantly, it has become a platform for constant xenophobic, anti-Muslim, anti-Roma, and anti-democratic speech in Romania. An example which contains all these elements is the podcast "What do the Taliban believe in? About jihad, the Qur'an and political Islam," posted in August 2021 by Mihail Neamţu, a conservative intellectual, critic of multiculturalism and immigration in Romania, and one of the main opponents of the project of the great mosque in Bucharest.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The main actors who are promoting Islamophobia are small far-right movements and parties that combine a nationalistic agenda, strong Orthodox Christian religious convictions, and elements of the fascist ideology of the Legionary Movement, the Romanian fascist movement during World War II. They are active in trying to gain public exposure and political support by adopting a strong stance on Islam and immigration, and use a racist rhetoric.

Didier Reynders, Commissioner of Justice (European Commission), "Countering illegal hate speech online 6th evaluation of the Code of Conduct", (7 October, 2021), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://ec.eu-ropa.eu/info/sites/default/files/factsheet-6th-monitoring-round-of-the-code-of-conduct_october2021_en_ 1.pdf

^{31.} Active Watch, "Raport privind identificarea incidentelor cu cea mai mare probabilitate de a genera valuri de ură" (Report on identifying incidents most likely to generate hate waves), 2021, retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://rm.coe.int/ro-deliverable-2-1-report-on-indicators-to-assess-hs-incidents-to-spre/1680a25dbc

^{32. &}quot;În ce cred talibanii? Despre jihad, Coran și Islamul politic" (What do the Taliban believe in? About jihad, the Qur'an and political Islam), *NewsNetCreștin*, (22 August, 2021), retrieved 14 July, 2022, from https://www.newsnetcrestin.ro/mihai-neamtu-in-ce-cred-talibanii-despre-jihad-coran-si-islamul-politic/

The most prominent actor promoting racism at this moment is the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR, far right). It is a new party, established in Romania, which entered the Parliament in the parliamentary elections of December 2020 with a 9% percentage, and was massively supported by the Romanian diaspora (23%).³³ In recent years, the leader of this party, George Simion, and its ideologist, Sorin Lavric, have become the central figures of the nationalist-conservative and racist discourse in Romania, which mainly targets the Hungarian, Roma, Jewish, and LGBT communities. Populist anti-immigration rhetoric is present in the speech of the People's Movement Party (PMP), which lost parliamentary representation in the 2020 parliamentary elections. The first well-known Romanian politician to have introduced an anti-immigration rhetoric was Traian Băsescu, former president of Romania and founder of the PMP. Currently, Mihail Neamţu, mentioned above, is a central figure in the critique of multiculturalism and Muslim immigration in Romania.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) 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. ³⁴ The NCCD launched 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. Envisaged activities include training for police involved in the registration and reporting of hate crimes. ³⁵

The Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees (CDMiR), established in 2017 and comprising of 22 NGO members and five academic and international supporters (among them the Romanian UNHCR Office), continued to be the lead-

^{33. &}quot;Alegeri parlamentare 2020, rezultate finale: PSD - 28,9%; PNL - 25%; USR PLUS - 15%, AUR 9%. PMP şi Pro România nu intră în Parlament" (2020 parliamentary elections, final results: PSD - 28,9%; NLP - 25%; USR PLUS - 15%, AUR 9%. PMP and Pro Romania do not enter the Parliament), *Digi24.ro*, (9 December, 2020), retrieved 20 June, 2022, from https://www.digi24.ro/alegeri-parlamentare-2020/alegeri-parlamentare-2020-rezultate-finale-psd-289-pnl-25-usr-plus-15-aur-98-pmp-si-pro-romania-nu-intra-in-parlament-1415280,.

^{34.} UN Human Rights Council, "Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. (National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21. Romania", Twenty-ninth session, (15-26 January 2018), retrieved 14 July, 2022, from https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/369/14/PDF/G1736914.pdf?OpenElement

^{35.} National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), "10 ani de Implementare a Deciziei Cadru UE privind rasismul şi xenofobia în România: provocări şi abordări noi ale acțiunilor privind infracțiunile motivate de ură' - NoIntoHate2018" (10 Years of Implementing the EU Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia in Romania: Challenges and New Approaches to Hate Crimes' - NoIntoHate2018), (13 January, 2021), retrieved 14 June, 2022, from https://www.cncd.ro/proiecte/10-ani-de-implementare-a-deciziei-cadru-ue-privind-rasismul-si-xenofobia-in-romania-provocari-si-abordari-noi-ale-actiunilor-privind-infractiuni-le-motivate-de-ura-nointohate2018/

ing 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.³⁶ LOGS - Social Initiatives Group (LOGS - Grup de Initiative Sociale) is an organization from western Romania, which since 2019 promotes the integration of vulnerable groups of migrants and fights against human trafficking.

The main Islamic NGOs in Romania are the Centrul Cultural Islamic "Islamul Azi" (The Islamic Cultural Centre "Islam Today"); Liga Islamica si Culturala din Romania (The Islamic and Cultural League in Romania); "Crescent" Cultural Centre Foundation (Fundația Centrul Cultural "Semiluna"); and the Cultural Humanitarian Association D.U.A. (Asociația Cultural Umanitară D.U.A). Having a humanitarian and cultural religious character, they protect and advance the interests of Muslims in Romania.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The presence of Muslims and Muslim immigration is a marginal topic for the public opinion in Romania. Despite the lack of reported hate crimes against Muslims, recent studies show that Romanians are not eager to accept Muslim in their vicinity. According to a poll conducted by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES) at the request of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), more than 60% of Romanians consider Muslims as potentially dangerous, while 52% believe that immigrants should be stopped at Europe's borders. According to the same study, the scale of social distance indicates an increased intolerance towards Muslims, placed in third place, following homosexuals and immigrants. If in the case of immigrants, 39% of Romanians do not accept them as relatives, while 30% do not accept them as friends, as far as Muslims are concerned, a similar 39% of Romanians do not want to be related with them and 28% would not accept the friendship of a Muslim.³⁷ The studies that that have been published so far on the Islamophobic phenomenon in Romania identify the following causes: the current Romanian media and the intolerant discourses of politicians, along with the reminiscing in the Romanian collective mentality of the interwar far-right, ultraorthodox, nationalistic, and xenophobic Legionary Movement.³⁸

Based on all the above, a series of recommendations are made below for the authorities and civil society.

^{36.} See https://cdmir.ro/wp/despre-noi/.

^{37.} Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES). "Sondaj de opinie la nivel național privind nivelul discriminării în România și percepțiile actuale asupra infracțiunilor motivate de ură" (National opinion poll on the level of discrimination in Romania and current perceptions of hate crimes), 2018, retrieved 14 June, 2022, from https://ires.ro/articol/367/discriminare-si-discurs-al-urii-in-romania--2019.

Corneliu C. Simut, "Negative Ecodomy in Romanian Politics and Religion: Anti-Muslim Attitudes in the Bucharest Mosque Scandal during the Summer of 2015", *Religions*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (2015), p. 1371.

- The authorities should put in place a system to collect and publish data on cases of hate speech and hate crime investigated by the police and pursued through the courts.
- The relevant authorities should develop data collection in areas of hate crime and racism, recognizing anti-Muslim bias as a category.
- Qualitative research on the experiences of Muslims in their interactions with the legal, economic, educational, and service system in Romania should be conducted; these studies may underpin future public policy.
- A review of textbooks in which Islam and Muslims are presented is necessary, eliminating prejudices and stereotypes about Islam and presenting Muslim minorities in the chapters dedicated to ethnic minorities.
- The creation of dialogue groups between the political class, media, the NGOs that defend the rights of Muslim immigrants, and academics who study the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

Chronology

- 15.03.2021: The news site activenews.ro published the article by Iulian Capsali, "We Cannot Let a Baha'i Like Raed Arafat, Sick by the Power Exercised on a Christian Nation, to Condition Our Holy Easter!" The article was part of a series of press material published during the coronavirus pandemic (2020-2021), which targeted the religious affiliation of a government official to the Baha'i faith, suggesting that he is persecuting Orthodox Christians on the basis of imposing restrictions on religious services to limit the spread of COVID-19.
- 13.07.2021: The mother of a Muslim student from the Tudor Vianu National College of Informatics in Bucharest told the press that her son was discriminated in a summer camp due to his Islamic faith. The woman claims that her son did not receive food according to the restrictions imposed by his religion and was treated aggressively by the coordinating teacher because of the family requirements in this regard.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN RUSSIA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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^{1.} The name is a pseudonym.

Executive Summary

The events of 2021 demonstrated the adaptability of the discourse of Islamophobia in the Russian context. Negative stereotypes about Muslims are becoming an element of a whole range of discourses related to migration or the Caucasus, as can be seen in certain media campaigns or the persecution of Muslims in correctional institutions. The criminalisation of the activities of certain Islamic organisations and the banning of Islamic literature stimulates a division of Islam into 'bad' and 'good', which ultimately leads to the entrenchment of certain Islamophobic practices at the institutional level (for example, obstacles to obtaining permits to build mosques). There were several stories that ran in the media in 2021 which saw participants engage in anti-Muslim rhetoric. Wide public discussions were stimulated by news of the construction of a halal eco-village called "Aminovka" and the video "I buy from Russians". Hate speech within the Muslim community was detected when the popular Dagestani fighter Khabib Nurmagomedov refused to comment on the Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan. The intensification of pressure on the Muslim community is taking place against the backdrop of a growing traditionalist discourse in Russian public space. In this connection, the controversy between Patriarch Kirill and First Deputy Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation Damir Mukhetdinov at the end of March 2021 attracts special attention. In fact, for the first time in recent years the problem of Islamophobia, caused by artificial categorisations and marginalisation of certain trends in Islam, was raised at the level of the top leaders of religious communities, as well as the fact that these ideas are often broadcast by experts close to church circles. Several civil society initiatives were implemented to counteract the negative image of Islam. The textbook Civic Identity of Russian Muslims was published as "a response to indiscriminate accusations of Islam as a religion for acts of terror in Russia". Human rights organisations, such as SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Memorial, and others continued monitoring human rights violations, including various forms of discrimination on the basis of religion.

Резюме

События 2021 года показали адаптивность дискурса исламофобии в российском контексте. Негативные стереотипы в отношении мусульман становятся элементом целого ряда дискурсов – например, мигранто- или кавказофобии, что заметно на примере отдельных медиакампаний или же преследований мусульман в исправительных учреждениях. Криминализация деятельности отдельных исламских организаций и запрет исламской литературы стимулирует разделение ислама на «плохой» и «хороший», что в конечном счете приводит к закреплению отдельных исламофобских практик на институциональном уровне (например, препятствия для получения разрешений на строительство мечетей). В 2021 году в нескольких медийных сюжетах участники использовали антимусульманскую риторику. Широкое общественное обсуждение вызвали новости о строительстве халяльного экопоселения «Аминовка» и видеоролик «Я покупаю у русских». Обращение к языку вражды внутри мусульманского сообщества было обнаружено, когда популярный дагестанский боец Хабиб Нурмагомедов отказался комментировать приход талибов к власти в Афганистане. Усиление давления на мусульманское сообщество происходит на фоне усиление традиционалистского дискурса в российском публичном пространстве. В связи с этим особое внимание привлекает полемика, развернувшаяся в конце марта 2021 между патриархом Кириллом и первым зампредом Духовного управления мусульман Российской Федерации Дамиром Мухетдиновым. Фактически, впервые за последние года на таком уровне высших руководителей религиозных общин была поднята проблема исламофобии, вызванной искусственными категоризациями и маргинализацией отдельных направлений в исламе; а также и того, что трансляторами этих идей зачастую выступают эксперты, близкие к церковным кругам. Для борьбы с негативным образом ислама было реализовано несколько инициатив гражданского общества. Учебник «Гражданская идентичность российских мусульман» был опубликован как «ответо на начавшиеся огульные обвинения ислама как религии в актах террора в России». Правозащитные организации, такие как СОВА, Мемориал и другие, продолжали отслеживать нарушения прав человека, включая различные формы дискриминации по религиозному признаку.

Country Profile **EIR 2021**

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–For Truth, New People

Last Elections: 2018 Presidential Elections: Vladimir Putin won 76.69% of the vote; other candidates: Pavel Grudinin (11.77%), Vladimir Zhirinovsky (5.65%), Kseniya Sobchak (1.68%), Grigory Yavlinsky (1.05%), Boris Titov (0.76%), Maksim Suraikin (0.68%), and Sergey Baburin (0.65%). 2021 Legislative Elections: United Russia (324 seats), Communist Party (57 seats), LDPR (21 seats), A Just Russia – For Truth (27 seats), Rodina (1 seat), New People (13 seats).

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: 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

Introduction

Among the main trends influencing Islamophobia in Russia in 2021 is the tendency since 2019-2020 toward the strengthening of the conservative traditionalist discourse. The political establishment remains wary of the Muslim community, and the securitisation discourse, which views Islam as a problem to be solved, and various manifestations of racism towards migrants and people from the Caucasus - of which Islamophobia is an element - are still in demand. None of the cases recorded in this report show a radical deterioration or improvement in the situation.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There were several physical and verbal attacks on Muslims in 2021 in Russia that we have divided into groups.

- Discriminating Muslims in prison

Human rights activists often draw attention to violations of rights and violent actions against Muslims in correctional institutions. The most frequent victims are from the North Caucasus: in such cases, the ethnic factor comes to the fore and one can talk about racism towards Caucasian peoples alongside Islamophobia. As was pointed out in the reports of previous years, among the factors stimulating such racism one should first of all mention the so-called Chechen Wars of the late 1990s-2000s and the memory of that conflict. Muslims from the North Caucasus are often subjected to torture, and discrimination by both security forces and fellow inmates. Food in correctional facilities usually does not include a special diet for Muslims, and the colony's routine denies them the opportunity to observe fasting during Ramadan.² In 2021, several such cases were reported in different regions of Russia.

In March 2021, an inspection was initiated in Penal Colony No.1 in the Yaroslavl region, where two natives of the Caucasus, from Chechnya and Georgia, had been the victims of torture. The lawyers obtained a video from 2016 showing the beating of the two inmates. According to a native of Chechnya, on the eve of the beating, special forces entered the colony in order to conduct a search. "They [colony's officers] threw all the food on the floor, [and] started throwing things around. I am a Muslim.

^{2.} This was considered in details in the report "On the situation of residents of the Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia in the penitentiary system over the period" published in 2015 by the Civic Assistance Committee and Secours Catholique - Caritas France with the support of the European Commission. It can be accessed at "O polozhenii zhitelei Chechenskoi Respubliki i Respubliki Ingushetiia v uchrezhdeniiakh penitentsiarnoi sistemy za period", Kavkazskii Uzel, 31 March 2015, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/361312/(Access date 09.05.2022).

I cannot touch the Quran without ablution. I expressed indignation when they started throwing food and throwing the Quran on the floor. I am not a scum of society. Yes, I am condemned for what I have done. But no one can do that to my belongings."³

In December 2019, the Investigative Committee initiated a case on the creation of a terrorist community in Colony No. 2 in Kalmykia. In May 2021, the case was taken to court, with the investigation identifying 40 defendants. According to law-yer Zurab Aliyev, the number of defendants in the case may grow, although most of them only attended the prayer room and that alone became the ground for the accusation of terrorism.⁴

In April-May 2021, 25 inmates of a colony located in the Smolensk region, went on a dry hunger strike, 10 of whom had their mouths sewn shut. They were protesting discrimination on religious grounds and unjustified punishments (transfer to a zone with strict conditions of detention, punitive isolation wards). At the end of April most of the demands had been met, but one of the participants was subjected to a stricter regime in the colony because of the publicity regarding the hunger strike.⁵

- Police raids in mosques

The official reason for police raids on mosques is to ensure security in crowded places, but it often turns into a form of pressure on Muslims. In the North Caucasus republics, such raids can result in being placed on the preventive register in the 'extremist' category, forcing Muslims to attend mosque less often. It's worth noting that scaring Muslims away from going to mosque in this way encourages radicalisation and the creation of illegal communities, contrary to the goals stated by the law enforcement agencies.

Regular raids on the Tangim mosque in Makhachkala (Dagestan) have continued unabated since 2020.⁶ The police check documents and there have been reports of police officers photographing worshippers. Over the entire period of the raids across several years, it is estimated that police officers have taken several thousands of the mosque's worshippers to their offices and checked their details.⁷

On 20 August 2021, a raid was reported at the Muslim center of Kotelniki (Moscow region) during Friday prayer. The official aim of the operation was to search for

 [&]quot;Zashchita soobshchila o desiati podozrevaemykh v pytkakh kavkaztsev v iaroslavskoi kolonii", Kavkazskii Uzel, 1 March 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/361312/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;Advokaty soobshchili o 40 obviniaemykh po delu o terroristicheskoi iacheike v kolonii", Kavkazskii Uzel, 19 May 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/364047/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;Shamil' Nurmagomedov v znak protesta zashil rot v kolonii", Kavkazskii Uzel, 30 May 2021, https://www. kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/364418/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;Vozobnovilis' politseiskie reidy vozle dzhuma-mecheti Tangim", Novoe delo, 19 July 2020, https://ndelo.ru/ profuchet/vozobnovilis-policejskie-rejdy-vozle-dzhuma-mecheti-tangim (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;Siloviki vozobnovili reidy u mecheti Tangim v Makhachkal, Kavkaz Realii, 19 January 2021, https://www.kavkazr.com/a/31048791.html (Access date 09.05.2022).

illegal migrants; approximately 600 people were detained.⁸ The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Moscow Region issued a statement condemning such actions by the police.

Muslims in Russia are patriots and law-abiding citizens of their country. Our religious organisations are open to dialogue and co-operation with all governmental and non-governmental organisations. At the same time, we can't silently observe how our rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation are trampled and how they show disregard for what is sacred for us. Therefore, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Moscow region, having reconstructed in detail the chronology of the events and supporting it with facts, will submit official applications to the relevant authorities and departments, in order to prevent further inspections in such an insulting and violating the rights of believers. We fully hope that this blasphemous practice will be replaced by an open dialogue for the benefit of peace and harmony in our multi-ethnic society.⁹

- Mosque building restrictions

The lack of mosques is one of the most acute problems for the Muslim community in Russia. Despite the fact that Muslim community leaders including at the highest level (for more details see Politics section) regularly try to draw attention to this and receive approval from the authorities, Muslims often face insurmountable bureaucratic obstacles.

In April 2021, Rushan Abbyasov, first deputy chairman of the Council of Muftis of Russia, again drew attention to the problem of a shortage of mosques in Moscow. "On 1 January, when Friday fell on a day off, 35,000 people came to pray at the Moscow Cathedral Mosque. The capacity of Sobornaya Mosque is 10,000, if packed. Now we allow 5,000 due to distance requirements. If Friday falls on a workday, then 13,000 to 15,000 visitors come to the Cathedral Mosque," the mufti said. At the same time, the crowds of praying Muslims encourage, if not Islamophobic, then at least wariness on the part of the capital's non-Muslim population, heightening interconfessional tensions. Reports of discontent on the part of the non-Muslim population come regularly from various Russian cities.

The impossibility to register a mosque in Ussuriisk (Primorskiy krai) which was built 10 years ago was recalled by the imam-hatib of the mosque in Ussuriisk, Dep-

^{8. &}quot;Politsiia zaderzhala sotni musul'man vo vremia oblavy na mechet' v Kotel'nikakh (VIDEO)", IslamNews, 21 August 2021, https://islamnews.ru/2021/8/21/politsiya-zaderzhala-sotni-musulman-vo-vremya-oblavy-na-mechet-v-kotelnikakh-video (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;Zaiavlenie DUMMO v sviazi s reidom pravookhranitelnykh struktur v musulmanskom tsentre v Kotelnikakh", Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation, 22 August 2021, https://www.dumrf.ru/common/regnews/19402 (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;Rushan Abbiasov: desiatki tysiach moliatsia na ulitse iz-za nekhvatki mechetei", IslamNews, 13 April 2021, https://islamnews.ru/news-rushan-abbyasov-desyatki-tysyach-molyatsya-na-ulitse-iz-za-nekhvatki-mechetey (Access date 09.05.2022).

uty Mufti of the Far East Aydar Garifullin. In his opinion, it's connected with negative stereotypes concerning Muslims: "Despite the fact that Tatars are an indigenous people of the Far East and have lived here for many years, unfortunately, negative notions about Muslims are still widespread here. Without taking into account objective indicators, we get a knowingly negative, prejudiced attitude towards Muslims," Garifullin said.¹¹

Since October 2021 the court of Voronezh Oblast has been considering a lawsuit for the "demolition of an unauthorised construction", which was filed by the administration of Nizhnekarachan rural settlement against local resident Sardorbek Saliyev. The disputed building is a Muslim prayer house. It was built as an annex to a private house in a community where members did not have enough space for the traditional namaz. At that time, a special permit was required to build a religious building and to convert the land plot into a special category. In the Voronezh region there is not a single mosque in operation, but the authorities argue that this is a property dispute and the religious background does not play a role here.¹²

- Other incidents

In November 2021, several residents of the Stavropol region were prosecuted for celebrating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. The authorities regarded their actions as an uncoordinated public religious event. Alibeg Dibirov, a resident of Pyatigorsk, was fined 20,000 rubles,¹³ and in another administrative proceeding three residents of Stavropol were issued a warning.¹⁴ Both these cases involved a meeting, whose announcements had been posted on social networks, attended by around 200 people.

Employment

As was noted in previous reports, ethnic discrimination is more likely to occur in the labour market while there is no confirmed data on the marginalisation of Muslims.

Education

We are not aware of any systematic practice of promoting negative images of Muslims. Individual cases that could be interpreted as Islamophobia have not gained significant public resonance.

 [&]quot;Musul'mane Ussuriiska na protiazhenii 10 let ne mogut zaregistrirovat' mechet'", IslamNews, 26 September 2021, https://islamnews.ru/news-musulmane-ussuriyska-na-protyazhenii-10-let-ne-mogut-zaregistrirovat-mechet (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{12. &}quot;Obshchina chuvstvuet sebia otstroenno", Kommersant, 17 December 2021, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5131430 (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{13. &}quot;Zhitel' Piatigorska oshtrafovan za prazdnovanie v chest' proroka Mukhammeda", Kavkazskii Uzel, 11 November 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/370023/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{14. &}quot;Troe stavropol'skikh musul'man nakazany za nesoglasovannye s vlastiami religioznye pesnopeniia", Kavkazskii Uzel, 6 November 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/369826/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

Politics

On 2 July 2021, a new National Security Strategy was approved. The new document emphasises the protection of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, culture and historical memory, and countering Western influence, especially on the internet. Against this background there is a strengthening of traditionalist discourse. Despite the fact that Islam is recognised by the authorities as a traditional Russian religion and official representatives of the Muslim community, along with the Christian community, actively address the rhetoric of traditional values in public space, one cannot but notice a cautious attitude towards the Muslim community on the part of both the political establishment and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). The controversy between Patriarch Kirill and First Deputy Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation Damir Mukhetdinov is revealing in this context.

On 26 March 2021, in his speech at a meeting of the Supreme Church Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill noted solidarity with Muslims on the issue of protecting traditional values and the family.¹⁵ On 30 March 2021, Damir Mukhetdinov responded to the patriarch's words with a detailed interview.¹⁶ While reaffirming his commitment to the consensus on traditional values, Mukhetdinov nevertheless voiced criticism of the ROC over its relations with Saudi Arabia.

However, the ROC's active dialogue with Saudi theologians seems to me personally to be the height of slyness: even today, a number of figures who position themselves as 'Islamic scholars from the ROC' slander and smear everything related to Saudi Arabia as 'Wahhabi,' equating this term itself with terrorism. That is, there is practically no deep, scientific understanding (let alone theological understanding) of Saudi Wahhabism in our country. It is under the influence of the media, some of which try to position themselves as 'pro-church', that the topic of Wahhabism has been tabooed for scholars and public figures.¹⁷

In fact, for the first time in recent years, the problem of Islamophobia, caused by artificial categorisations and marginalisation of certain trends in Islam, has been raised at such a high level. Also, the propagators of these ideas are often experts close to church circles. In addition, Mukhetdinov drew attention to the need for

 [&]quot;Vystuplenie Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na zasedanii Vysshego Tserkovnogo Soveta 26 marta 2021 goda", Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov, 26 March 2021, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5791727.html (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{16. &}quot;Damir Mukhetdinov o perspektivakh dialoga pravoslaviia i islama", Dukhovnoe upravlenie musulman Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 30 March 2021, https://dumrf.ru/regions/77/interview/18707 (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{17. &}quot;Damir Mukhetdinov o dialoge Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi s islamskim mirom. Naskol'ko verny ego otsenki?", Otdel vneshnikh tserkovnykh sviazei Moskovskogo patriarkhata, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5804076. html (Access date 09.05.2022).

real action on the part of the Russian Orthodox Church, not just dialogue, for example, on the issue of building mosques. He stated, "Any church hierarchy which speaks positively on the issue of building mosques in Moscow will gain enormous authority in the Muslim milieu." The patriarch's response, published on 30 April 2021, described such assessments as "insulting" and "unsubstantiated by factual evidence." 19

It is worth noting that although Mukhetdinov does not use the term 'Islamo-phobia', in his subsequent 2021 speeches he also drew attention to "the process of squeezing many religious traditions out of the general Russian socio-cultural space." ²⁰ Mukhetdinov stated,

Have you ever wondered why the Orthodox facility built in Patriot Park is called the 'Main Temple of the Armed Forces'? The word 'temple' applies to religious buildings of many religions and confessions - world religions and those recognised as traditional in Russia. For a Muslim, a temple is a mosque; for a Jew, a synagogue; for a Christian, a church. For Russians as a civic and socio-cultural community 'temples' are cathedrals, mosques, synagogues and Buddhist places of worship. By equating the notion of 'temple' only with an Orthodox building of worship, we lay down the notion that places of worship of believers of other religions are not temples.²¹

Media

In 2021, there were several news stories that stimulated Islamophobic sentiments and discussions in the media.

At the end of January, the video "I buy from Russians" reappeared on the internet. The authors of the video suggested that viewers should ignore any services provided by migrants, be it taxis, courier deliveries, or food sales. The first appearance of the video was in December 2020, when it began to appear as an advertisement to internet users. Despite the blocking of the individual sources that distributed the video, it appeared on other YouTube channels and other resources. Although such an agenda is primarily part of anti-migrant and nationalist discourse, Islamophobia is often implicitly included in these messages, as can be clearly seen in the relevant comments under the posted videos. As a response to the video "I buy from Russians" blogger Rasul Tavdiryakov in his Telegram channel called to

^{18.} Ibid.

^{19.} Ibid.

 [&]quot;Damir Mukhetdinov: na dele idet vydavlivanie mnogikh religioznykh traditsii iz rossiiskogo prostranstva", IslamNews, 11 July 2021, https://islamnews.ru/news-damir-mukhetdinov-na-dele-proiskhodit-vydav-livanie-mnogikh-religioznykh-traditsiy-iz-rossiyskogo-prostranstva-2 (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{21.} Ibid.

^{22. &}quot;Prizyv ne pokupať u nerusskikh "reabilitirovalsia' za sutki", Kommersant, 11 February 2021, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4683742 (Access date 09.05.2022).

support "our brothers" in the "I buy from migrants" flash mob. He backed up his words with the following quotes: "Allah helps His servant as long as he helps his brother" and "To him who helps his brother in his need, Allah will help in his own need."²³

The news of the construction of a halal eco-village called 'Aminovka', 140 km from Moscow, drew no less public attention. The person behind the idea was Amina Shabanova, a Moscow-based Muslim clothing designer and founder of the IRADA brand. The advertisement does not position the village as a Muslim one, but it prescribes a number of rules for its inhabitants: one cannot drink alcohol, smoke, walk "in an indecent manner", or raise pigs.24 The project received support from the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Moscow region. The media often describe the project as a "closed state for Muslims", a "religious enclave", or a "jamaat". The well-known conservative Orthodox TV channel Tsargrad warned of the emergence of Wahhabis and stated that "there is not the slightest doubt that if we let the process go on its own, there will soon be many such settlements."25 According to various representatives of the Muslim community, the negative attitude towards the initiative is linked primarily to the negative stereotypes about Muslims broadcast in the media: on the one hand, a closed settlement is associated with suburban Muslim ghettos around European cities (which are described as zones of instability not under the control of the authorities), and, on the other hand, it has negative connotations in Russian-language discourse (in media discourse jamaats are most often understood to mean armed Islamic militants). Despite the information about a possible inspection by the Investigative Committee regarding the possible establishment of a sect, as of early 2022 the project still exists.²⁶

In October 2021, the Russian TV series "Penguins of My Mother", which was released by MTS online cinema,²⁷ drew a wide response from the Muslim community. In the first episode, the protagonist jokes about religion and Islamic values during his performance at a stand-up club, in particular mocking namaz carpets and the practice of sacrifice. Many Muslim bloggers have initiated various flash mobs to boycott MTS services.²⁸

^{23. &}quot;Rossiiskii bloger zapustil antirasistskuiu aktsiiu "Ia pokupaiu u migrantov", IslamNews, 20 January 2021, https://islamnews.ru/news-rossiyskiy-bloger-zapustil-antirasistskuyu-aktsiyu-ya-pokupayu-u-migrantov (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;Chto takoe Aminovka: opasnyi dzhamaat pod bokom u Moskvy ili voploshchenie natsional'noi idei Rossii?", Realnooe vremia, 30 Augurst 2021, https://m.realnoevremya.ru/articles/223866-za-chto-travyat-ekoposelenie-aminovka-v-podmoskove (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;'Aminovka' vyzvala voprosy", Kommersant, 30 August 2021, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4965708 (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{26.} Aminovka. https://aminovka.ru/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{27.} One of the main Russian providers of mobile communications.

^{28. &}quot;Musul'manskie blogery prizvali boikotirovat' MTS posle shutok v seriale", Kavkazskii Uzel, 25 October 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/369457/ (Access date 09.05.2022).



Figure 1: Comments on Khabib Nurmagomedov's Instagram account following his refusal to comment on the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, August 2021..²⁹

While in the above cases the Islamophobic rhetoric was initiated primarily by members of the non-Muslim community, we would next like to draw attention to the practice of resorting to hate speech within the Muslim community. In August 2021, the popular Dagestani fighter Khabib Nurmagomedov refused to comment on the Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan. "What do you have to do with Afghanistan? Neither do I. That's why I wouldn't like to discuss political events occurring a thousand kilometers away from here."³⁰ Such a response triggered a wave of criticism on social media. It is worth noting that Nurmagomedov is extremely pop-

^{29. &}quot;40 min bor 'by kazhdoe utro i u vas ne budet bolet' spina", Instagram, khabib_nurmagomedov, 20 August 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CSytMUdMrtS/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{30. &}quot;Khabib Nurmagomedov: "Skazal Taisonu, chtoby ETOGO na stole ne bylo' / pro Fedora, Afganistan, Karpina", Youtube, Ushataika channel, https://youtu.be/FpRhc5u6Pqc?t=1449 (Access date 09.05.2022).

ular among Russian Muslims. In his image aired on social media, he combines the narrative of a successful athlete (which fits well with the discourse of masculinity and machismo prevalent in Russia, including among Caucasian peoples) and the narrative of a devout Muslim (for example, by posting pictures from the Hajj). This is largely why his dismissal of the global Ummah - as events in Afghanistan were sometimes interpreted at the time - sparked outrage and accusations that he was a 'fake' Muslim. Sometime later, Nurmagomedov apologized at another conference, citing that he had been misunderstood and that he was referring solely to the political environment.³¹

Justice System

Thanks to the activities of a number of human rights organisations, mass media, and research centres monitoring abuses in combating 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 criminalises the activities of Muslims and Muslim organisations. We have identified several groups of measures that affect the interests of Muslims to some extent.

- The criminalisation of certain Muslim organisations³²
- 1. The persecution of representatives or those accused of having links to the organisation of Hizb ut-Tahrir continues. These individuals are accused of organising the activities of a terrorist organisation. The status of the organisation and the evidence of its involvement in terrorist activities have been discussed in previous reports. Twenty-three people were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment ranging from 11 to 23 years in a high-security penal colony. In 2021, at least 35 defendants in new criminal cases were arrested in different regions of Russia on charges of involvement in Hizb at-Tahrir activities. This number is probably higher, but law enforcement and media reports do not allow the determination of the exact number of new defendants.
- 2. In 2021, at least 13 people were convicted under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code for continuing the activities of the religious movement Tablighi Jamaat, which has been deemed extremist. In addition, new criminal cases were initiated against alleged followers of Tablighi Jamaat under Part 2 of Article 282, in particular, against a resident of Ivanovo region and against a resident of Saratov. In Omsk Oblast, 11 people were detained under Part 1, 2 of Arti-

^{31. &}quot;Nurmagomedov izvinilsia za molchanie po povodu situatsii v Afganistane", RBK-Sport, 23 August 2021, https://sportrbc.ru/news/6123ae229a7947705d263211 (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{32.} The source of the data on the persecution of members of these organisations and the Muslim literature ban is the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis's Illegal Extremism Project. "Nepravomernoe primenenie antiekstremistskogo zakonodatel'stva v Rossii v 2021 godu", SOVA, 24 February 2022, https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/publications/2022/02/d45847/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

- cle 282 of the Criminal Code, three of whom became defendants in the case, another four were witnesses, while the rest (citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan) were deported from Russia by court order.
- 3. The Nurjular movement, although it does not exist in the territory of Russia, was banned in 2008. Muslims are persecuted for distributing the theologian Said Nursi's books. On August 31, 2021 Naberezhnochelninsk City Court sentenced Nakia Sharifullina, 63, to two years of suspended imprisonment under Part 1 Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code. Sharifullina was found guilty of creating a Nurjular cell in 2015 and, under the guise of conducting classes on the Quran and the Turkish language, gathering citizens and introducing them to the writings of Said Nursi. In the Sharifulina case, on April 19, the Naberezhnochelninsk City Court declared 163 publications in different languages extremist, 160 of which were works by Said Nursi. However, on July 9, the Supreme Court of Tatarstan overturned this decision and sent the case back to the city court for a new hearing, which has not yet been completed as the court has sent the books for translation from Turkish. Trials were also held against those suspected of distributing Said Nursi's materials in Kazan, Tatarstan, and several criminal cases were reported against alleged followers of Said Nursi in Dagestan.

- Muslim literature ban/Persecution for distribution of religious literature

In 2021, SOVA recorded 17 prosecutions under Article 20.29 of the Code of administrative offenses. In five cases, the reason for administrative prosecution was the distribution of the film *Wonders of the Koran* in the Mari El Republic; in six cases, the collection of prayers *Fortress of a Muslim* in the Karachay-Cherkessia Republic; and in six cases, the book *The Future Belongs to Islam* by Sayyid Qutb also in the Karachay-Cherkessia Republic.

On 9 December, the Laishevsky District Court of the Republic of Tatarstan declared the following publications extremist material: the first volume of *The Interpretation of the Holy Quran* by Abdurrahman ibn Nasir al-Saadi translated by Elmir Kuliyev; one of the main Sunni hadith collections *Sahih al-Bukhari* summarised by Imam al-Zubaidi in the 15th century and translated by Vladimir Nirshi; the collection of hadiths from the 14th and 15th centuries *Bulug al-Maram* translated by Imam al-Zubaidi; and the book *Bulug al-Maram* by al-Askaliani translated by Kuliyev.

- Persecution of Muslim activists
- 1) Case of Abdulmumin Gadzhiev

The investigation into the case of Abdulmumin Gadzhiev, editor of the 'Religion' section of the Dagestan newspaper *Chernovik*, who was detained in June 2019,

is continuing. He has been charged under Article 205 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation for "participation in the activities of terrorist organisations". According to the investigators, Gadzhiev, together with Abubakar Rizvanov, head of the Ansar charitable foundation, and businessman Kemal Tambiyev, under the pretext of building mosques and helping poor Muslims, collected 68 million rubles (approximately \$975,000) and \$200,000, which they gave to alleged terrorists. They are accused of being connected to the well-known Salafi preacher and founder of the Islamic foundation Mukhajirun known as Abu Umar Sasitlinsky who is on the international wanted list.³³ Pickets and rallies in support of Gadzhiev were held throughout the year. Human rights activists consider the persecution of Gadzhiev illegal and the journalist himself a political prisoner, and compare this process to the more high-profile Ivan Golunov case of 2019. Human rights activists attribute what is happening to the increasing pressure on the journalist community in Russia.

2) Case of Aslambek Ezhaev

On 28 April 2021, Aslambek Ezhayev, head of the Umma publishing house, was detained in his flat on suspicion of financing terrorism. According to the investigation, based on the testimony of 'secured' witnesses, he collected and transferred 34 million rubles (approximately \$490,000) to the terrorist community.³⁴ Murad Musayev, the lawyer of the accused, considers that the charges are unfounded. He stated, "They have concocted a legend which has been proclaimed to the world and which must form the basis of the future verdict: the money for Ezhaev was not for books at all, but to overthrow lawful governments and establish a worldwide caliphate."35 On 7 May 2021, the public committee Freedom of Conscience circulated an open letter in connection with Ezhaev's arrest, which focuses on the risks involved in publishing Islamic literature in Russia. "The publication of Islamic literature... in modern Russia, with its restrictions on freedom of conscience and religion and hundreds of politically motivated cases on religious grounds, is a conscious risk and an act of asceticism."36 The religious and Islamic community has repeatedly spoken out in defense of Ezhayev, describing him as a decent man and his activities as aimed at combating religious ignorance and intolerance.³⁷ The Umma publishing house is currently one of the most authoritative publishers of Muslim literature in Russia.

^{33. &}quot;Piketchiki v Makhachkale podderzhali Abdulmumina Gadzhieva", Kavkazskii Uzel, 7 December 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/370969/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

 [&]quot;Arestovan knigoizdatel' Aslambek Ezhaev", Kavkazskii Uzel, 29 April 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/363420/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{35.} Ibid.

^{36. &}quot;Komitet "Svoboda sovesti' prizval prekratit' presledovanie Ezhaeva", Kavkazskii Uzel, 8 May 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/363685/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{37. &}quot;Kavkazovedy otmetili politicheskuiu podopleku v dele Ezhaeva", Kavkazskii Uzel, 2 May 2021, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/363495/ (Access date 09.05.2022).

Internet

There are no online websites run in Russia that systematically utilise 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

The figures mentioned in the 2019 report continue to feature heavily in the media. The year 2021 was not marked by any loud Islamophobic statements on their part.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

On 31 August 2021, the presentation of a new textbook entitled *Civic Identity of Russian Muslims* took place. The book was authored by Ali Vyacheslav Polosin, deputy director of the Foundation for the Support of Islamic Culture, Science and Education; Rafik Mukhametshin, chairman of the Council for Islamic Education; and Ibrahim Ibragimov, associate professor at Pyatigorsk State University.³⁸ Asked about the purpose of preparing such a publication, Polosin says the following,

The idea of stating one's civic position to the whole society crystallised quite a long time ago. It was a response to indiscriminate accusations of Islam as a religion for acts of terror in Russia and around the world. The necessity arose to declare our views on society, on the state, and on non-Muslims, not through a theological document little understood by non-Christians, but rather through a civil document, a public declaration stating the position of Islam on all current issues and supported by sacred texts.³⁹

In October 2021, a six-week course of lectures and workshops was held in Crimea to support women who had recently converted to Islam. The project was initiated by the psychologist Nidika Izmailova with the help of activists from the Crimean Muslim Women's Organization Bullyur at the Women's Resource Centre in Simferopol.⁴⁰

Reports in previous years have noted the great contribution of a number of human rights organisations, such as SOVA, Memorial, and others monitoring human rights violations, including various forms of discrimination on the basis of religion.

^{38.} Polosin V.S., Mukhametshin R.M., IbragimoI.D. Grazhdanskaia identichnost musulman Rossii. M., 2021.

 [&]quot;Ali Polosin: musul'mane zaiavliaiut svoiu grazhdanskuiu pozitsiiu vsemu obshchestvu", IslamNews, 8 October 2021, https://islamnews.ru/news-ali-polosin-musulmane-zayavlyayut-svoyu-grazhdanskuyu-pozitsiyu-vsemuobshchestvu (Access date 09.05.2022).

^{40. &}quot;Krymchanki nashli sposob podderzhat' novoobrativshikhsia musul'manok", IslamNews, 6 October, https://islamnews.ru/news-krymchanki-nashli-sposob-podderzhat-novoobrativshikhsya-musulmanok (Access date 09.05.2022).

In 2021, the organisations continued these activities, and in this report, we have also provided data by these organisations.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The events of 2021 demonstrated the adaptability of the discourse of Islamophobia in the Russian context. Negative stereotypes regarding Muslims are becoming an element of a whole range of discourses, especially on migration and the Caucasus. The criminalisation of the activities of certain Islamic organisations and the banning of Islamic literature stimulates a division of Islam into 'bad' and 'good', which ultimately leads to the entrenchment of certain Islamophobic practices at the institutional level such as restrictions on the construction of mosques. Among the recommendations are the following:

- To encourage the process of building new mosques in line with the right to religious freedom.
- To make the procedure of expertise in matters related to the recognition of Islamic texts as extremist more transparent.
- To improve the system of ensuring human rights in correctional institutions, including with regard to religious rights and freedoms.
- To create a safe space for Islamic non-profit organisations and individual Muslim activists who advocate inter-religious dialogue and can contribute to a positive image of Islam.

Chronology

- **01.01.2021:** Appearance of the video "I buy from Russians" on the internet.
- 12.01.2021: The Southern District Military Court handed down a sentence in the so-called Belogorsk case of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Crimea. Enver Omerov was sentenced to 18 years in prison and Aider Japparov to 17 years under Part 1 Article 30, Article 278 of the Criminal Code (preparation for a violent takeover of power), and Part 1 Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code (organisation of activities of a terrorist organisation). Riza Omerov, son of Enver, was sentenced to 13 years in prison under Part 1 of Article 30, Article 278, and Part 2 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of a terrorist organisation).
- **05.03.2021:** The Central District Military Court in Yekaterinburg sentenced Ildar Ibragimov from Kazan to 16 years in prison under Part 1 of Article 205 in a case related to Hizb at-Tahrir.
- 02.04.2021: The Central District Military Court in Samara passed a sentence
 in the case of Radik Khayrutdinov and Elmar Mamedov for their involvement
 in Hizb at-Tahrir. Mamedov was sentenced to 12 years in prison under Part 2

of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code and Part 2 of Article 2052 of the Criminal Code (public calls for terrorist activity committed on the internet), and Khayrutdinov was sentenced to 11 years in a colony under Part 2 of Article 205.5. On June 17, the appeal military court of Russian Federation cancelled this sentence and sent the case for a new hearing to the Central District Military court.

- 22.04.2021: The Central District Military court in Yekaterinburg found Rais Mavlyutov, detained with Khayrutdinov and Mamedov in Tolyatti, guilty under Part 1 of Article 205.1 of the Criminal Code (CC) (inclination to terrorist activity), Part 2 of Article 205.2 of the CC, and Parts 1 and 2 of Article 205.5 of the CC, and sentenced him to 23 years in prison.
- 28.04.2021: Aslambek Ezhaev, head of the Umma publishing house, was detained.
- 18.05.2021: Babushkinsky District Court of Moscow sentenced a citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic, Altynbek Kozonov, on charges under Part 1 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code (organisation of extremist organisation) in the case connected with Tabligi Jamaat.
- **07.07.2021:** The Babushkinsky District Court of Moscow issued a guilty verdict against six more citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic who were detained at the same time as Kozonov. Artyk Kalbaev and Aibek Mamajunusov were charged under Part 1 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code, while Sh. Asan uulu, Murzy Kushuev, M. Seydaliev, and Aibek Khalmatov were charged under Part 2 of the same article (participation in the activities of an extremist organisation).
- **05.08.2021:** The Central District Military Court found prisoner Asgat Khafizov guilty under Part 2 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code and Part 1.1 of Article 205.1 of the Criminal Code (involvement in a terrorist organisation and terrorist financing) and sentenced him to 16 years in prison; in 2017, Khafizov was sentenced to 19 years in prison for involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir, bringing his total sentencing to 23 years.
- 16.08.2021: The Southern District Military Court sentenced four Crimeans involved in the Alushta Hizb ut-Tahrir case. Lenur Khalilov and Ruslan Mesutov were found guilty under Part 1 of Article 30, Article 278, and Part 1 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code and sentenced each to 18 years in prison. Ruslan Nagaev was sentenced to 13 years in prison and Eldar Kantimirov to 12 years under Part 1 of Article 30, Article 278, and Part 2 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code.
- 19.08.2021: Proletarskiy District Court of Saransk fined Ryais Tyshkin and Aysa Aizatullin 500,000 rubles under Part 1 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code, and Khafiz Aizatullin was fined 300,000 rubles under Part 2 of Article

282.2 of the Criminal Code. The Supreme Court of Mordovia found such verdict too lenient and on October 21, sentenced Aysa Aizatullin to three-year imprisonment to be served in a general regime colony with prohibition for two years of activities connected with management and participation in work of public and religious organisations; Tyshkin was sentenced to three years in a general regime colony; and Khafiz Aizatullin to one year in a general regime colony.

- 20.08.2021: Police raid in the Muslim centre of Kotelniki (Moscow region).
- 25.08.2021: Saratov Volga District Court passed a sentence on a 46-year-old Muslim man from Volgograd region. He was found guilty under Part 2 of Article 282 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to two years of suspended sentence and six months of restricted freedom in the case connected to Tabligi Jamaat.
- **31.08.2021:** Naberezhnochelninsk city court sentenced 63-year-old Nakiya Sharifullina to two years of suspended sentence under Part 1 of Article 282 of the Criminal Code. Sharifullina was found guilty of setting up the Nurjular cell in 2015.
- 29.10.2021: Southern District Military Court sentenced four Crimeans from Bakhchysaray. Seytumer Seytumerov was sentenced to 17 years in prison under Part 1 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code and Part 1 of Article 30 and Article 278 of the Criminal Code. Osman Seytumerov, Rustem Seytmemetov, and Amet Suleymanov were sentenced to deprivation of liberty for 14, 13, and 12 years respectively, under Part 2 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code, together with Part 1 of Article 30 and Article 278.
- **01.11.2021:** In November, in Kazan and Naberezhnye Chelny, six people were detained and then arrested under Parts 1 and 2 of Article 282. According to the investigation, they were members of a Nurjular cell.
- **02.11.2021:** The Privolzhsky district court in Kazan sentenced former imam and teacher Gabdrakhman (Albert) Naumov under Article 282 Part 1 and Article 282 Part 1 of the Criminal Code (financing extremism). He was sentenced to six and a half years in a general regime penal colony.
- 02.12.2021: Sovetskiy District Court of Volgograd sentenced Mikhail Kolotilin to three years in a minimum-security penal colony under Part 1 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code in a case related to Tabligi Jamaat.
- 21.12.2021: At an offsite session in Ufa, the Central District Military Court sentenced Azat Lukmanov to 11 years in a penal colony under Part 2 of Article 2055 of the Criminal Code in a case related to Hizb at-Tahrir.
- 23.12.2021: The Apsheronsky District Court of Krasnodar Territory sentenced a 32-year-old resident of the village of Sredny Karachan in the Voronezh region to seven years in a minimum-security penal colony with restriction.

- tion of freedom for one and a half years under Part 1.1 (recruitment to an extremist organisation) and Part 2 of Article 282 of the Criminal Code in a case related to Tabligi Jamaat.
- 24.12.2021: The Second Western District Military Court in Moscow sentenced eight citizens of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. Marifjon Mamadaliev and Ikboljon Sultonov were sentenced to 16 and 18 years of imprisonment under Part 1 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code; Kamaldin Abdullayev, Farhodjon Kimsanov, Marufjon Malikov, Ikromiddin Tukhtasinov, Gulomjon Kholdarov, and Azizbek Kholmatov were found guilty of participating in the activities of a cell under Part 2 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code and were sentenced to 11 to 12 years of deprivation of liberty.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SLOVAKIA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

Public expressions of Islamophobia in 2021 were mainly focused on social media and were partly influenced by the situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. Some expressions of Islamophobia were also recorded in the Slovak Parliament, where, although no specific law was debated that would affect the Muslim community in Slovakia, this did not prevent members of the far right from occasionally focusing their speeches on spreading an Islamophobic narrative.

Politicians have used Islamophobic language in criticism of measures taken against the pandemic, and also in various ad hoc situations across the year. A large number of politicians repeatedly ignored the fact that Muslims are citizens of the Slovak Republic and that they have the same rights and obligations as citizens of other – now registered – churches and religious communities in Slovakia. Slovak Muslims are still indirectly associated with terrorism, so-called illegal migration, and labelled as a security threat to Slovakia.

In this light, it is a positive change compared to previous years that the legislative status of Muslims in Slovakia has not deteriorated. Slovak Muslims have been partly publicly defended by President Zuzana Čaputová. In 2021, a number of NGOs in cooperation with the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia engaged in a series of discussions related to interfaith dialogue with the aim of mitigating the effects of political Islamophobia on society.

Zhrnutie

Verejné prejavy islamofóbie sa v roku 2021 sa sústredili najmä na sociálne siete a boli čiastočne ovplyvnené situáciou ohľadom pandémie covid-19. Niektoré prejavy islamofóbie sme zaznamenali aj na pôde slovenského parlamentu, kde sa síce neprerokovával žiaden konkrétny zákon, ktorý by sa týkal moslimskej komunity na Slovensku, čo však nebránilo poslancom krajnej pravice, aby sa vo svojich vystúpeniach občas zamerali aj na šírenie islamofóbneho naratívu.

Politici využívali islamofóbne vyjadrenia v rámci kritiky prijímaných opatrení voči pandémií a tiež v rôznych ad hoc situáciách naprieč celým rokom. Veľká časť politikov opakovane ignorovala fakt, že moslimovia sú občanmi Slovenskej republiky, a že majú rovnaké práva a povinnosti ako občania iných – dnes registrovaných cirkví a náboženských obcí. Slovenskí moslimovia sú tiež stále nepriamo spájaní s terorizmom, nelegálnou migráciou a označovaní za bezpečnostnú hrozbu pre Slovensko.

V tomto svetle je pozitívnou zmenou oproti minulým rokom to, že sa legislatívne postavenie moslimov na Slovensku nezhoršilo. Slovenských moslimov sa čiastočne verejne zastala aj prezidentka Zuzana Čaputová. V roku 2021 sa viaceré mimovládne organizácie v spolupráci s Islamskou nadáciou na Slovensku zapojili do série diskusií spojených s medzináboženským dialógom s cieľom zmierniť dopady politickej islamofóbie na spoločnosť.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Slovak Republic

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary republic

Ruling Parties: OĽaNO-NOVA-KÚ-ZMENA ZDOLA (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities; conservative-populist); Sloboda a Solidarita (Freedom and Solidarity; nationalist-liberal and Eurosceptic); Sme rodina (We Are Family; national-conservative, social-populist); and Za ľudí (For the People; centrist, pro-European)

Opposition Parties: SMER-SSD (Direction – Slovak Social Democracy; national-populist, social-conservative); K-LSNS (Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia; neo-fascist); HLAS-SD (Voice – Social Democracy; social-democratic); Republika (Republic; right-wing populist); and several independent MPs

Last Elections: 2020 Legislative Elections: OL'aNO-NOVA-KÚ-ZMENA ZDOLA, Igor Matovič: 53 seats; SMER-SSD, Robert Fico, Peter Pellegrini: 38 seats; Sme rodina, Boris Kollár: 17 seats; K-LSNS, Marián Kotleba: 17 seats; SaS, Richard Sulik: 13 seats; Za ľudí, Andrej Kiska: 12 seats. 2019 Presidential Elections: Zuzana Čaputova (independent) won 58.41% of the vote against 41.59% of Maroš Šefčovič (SMER-SSD)

Total Population: 5.45 million (in 2021)

Major Languages: Slovak

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Slovak Republic doesn't have official statistics that report Islamophobia and hate crimes against Muslims.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: No statistics

Major Religions (% of Population): Roman Catholic Church in the Slovak Republic (55.8%), No Religion (23.8%), Evangelic Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia (5.3%), Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia (4.0%), Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia – Calvinist (1.6%), Orthodox Church in Slovakia (0.9%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): According to the official result of the census, 3,862 people (0.07%) in 2021; according to the estimate of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, approx. 7,000 Muslims

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (ISN), Foundation al-Huda in Kosice, Association of Muslims in Central Slovakia – al-Bakara

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, Forum of the World Religions Slovakia, Open Society Foundation, Centre for Research of Ethnicity and Culture

Far-Right Parties: Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia (Kotlebovci – Ľudová strana naše Slovensko, K-ĽSNS), Republika (Republic)

Far-Right Movements: Slovak Revival Movement (Slovenské hnutie obrody, SHO), Our Homeland Is the Future (Naša vlasť je budúcnosť, NVB)

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: No

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No
- Halal Slaughter Ban: No
- Minaret Ban: No. In 2017, members of the far-right and the populist party
 We Are Family (Sme Rodina) submitted a draft bill banning the construction of mosques to the parliament, which was not accepted.
- Circumcision Ban: No
- Burka Ban: No

Introduction

The level of Islamophobia in Slovakia in 2021 was directly influenced by objective factors that also affected the behaviour of political elites, the topics they addressed, and the subsequent reactions of the public. In particular, the Covid-19 pandemic, which de facto overshadowed other political issues for a whole year, played a major role in the media, politics, and political debates.

Attacks against Muslims have become irrelevant for media and politics. Apart from the traditional actors who repeatedly propagate an Islamophobic narrative or feed the social fear of Islam and Muslims (migrants), the topic of Islam, Muslims, and migration has become a peripheral topic of the political discourse. The portrayal of Islam and Muslims in most audiovisual and print media has been neutral or not deviating from the common - partly tabloid - image of Muslims (Muslim women in the niqab or burqa; angry crowds of Muslim men; or actors and victims of terrorist attacks). Some exceptions have been the so-called alternative (conspiracy) media and media with links to ultra-conservative organisations and communities.

In terms of attacks on Muslims by Slovak politicians, the key actors in these attacks have not changed. Islamophobia, as one of the tools of the politics of fear, has been used mainly by politicians of the far right, specifically from the K-LSNS and Republika¹ (ex-Kotleba)² parties, and somewhat more often than in the past also by SMER-SSD politicians (Robert Fico, Ľuboš Blaha, and others). Other politicians represented in the National Assembly of the Slovak Republic from various political parties have not directly expressed negative views on Islam, Muslims, or migrants. However, among some conservative politicians there have been views regarding the protection of "Christian values" or "Christian Europe", which have an inherently Islamophobic accent.³

A breakthrough in gaining knowledge about Islamophobia in Slovakia was a survey conducted by the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, which in 2021 asked members of the Slovak Muslim community to comment on their experiences of hate speech triggered by their faith through an online questionnaire. The survey revealed that up to 60% of the respondents (72 women and 55 men) had been (or had a relative that had been) a victim of discrimination, bullying, threats, intimidation, physical assault, or another form of hate crime. The vast majority (73%) were verbal attacks (insults). Seven per cent of respondents reported that they had also had personal experience of a physical attack on their person. A striking finding was that only 10% of respond-

^{1. &}quot;REPUBLIKA", Hnutie Republika, retrieved May 25, 2022, https://www.hnutie-republika.sk/en/

SITA, "Odídenci od Kotlebu sa už prezentujú vlastnou stranou", SME, (March 9, 2021), retrieved May 25, 2022, https://domov.sme.sk/c/22613521/odidenci-od-kotlebu-sa-uz-prezentuju-vlastnou-stranou-zalozili-hnutie-republika.html

Zuzana Hasna, Nataša Pluliková (eds.), FRAMING: Mediálny obraz islamu a moslimov na Slovensku, (Bratislava: Islamská nadácia na Slovensku, 2022), pp. 21-29.

ents said they had contacted the police after an assault. The research also revealed that respondents consider the media portrayal of Islam and Muslims to be a crucial aspect that leads to discrimination against Muslims in Slovakia (70%), compared to the activities of extremists and the far right, which only 41% of respondents consider to be the cause of their discrimination.⁴

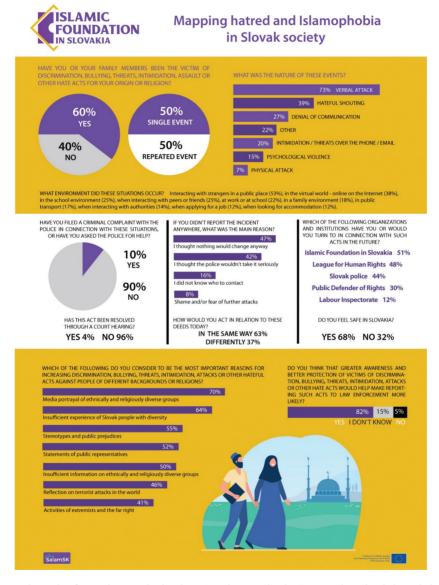


Figure 1: The results of research in 2021 by the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia: "Mapping hatred and Islamophobia in Slovak society" 5

Zuzana Hasna, Maroš Žofčín, Mapovanie nenávisti a islamofóbie v slovenskej spoločnosti in: Silvia Letavajová (eds.) Súčasné migrácie a ich reflexia v spoločenskom vedomí, (Nitra: FF UMF, 2021), pp. 213-217

 [&]quot;Prieskum: Monitorovanie islamofôbie na Slovensku", IslamOnline, retrieved May 30, 2022, https://www.islamonline.sk/salamsk/#prettyPhoto/1/

As the results of the research do not relate only to 2021, we present them here only as an indication of the long-term perception of Islamophobia in Slovakia on the part of members of the Muslim community.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The Slovak Republic does not provide official statistics on attacks motivated by hatred against a particular religion. Physical or verbal attacks against Muslims, which have been mentioned in past reports on Islamophobia in Slovakia, have been reported to the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, which has informed the public about them. Some of the attacks were directly directed at representatives of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia or at Muslims who appear in the media on its behalf.

In 2021, the most notable attack came from Robert Fico (SMER-SSD), former prime minister and now chairman of the strongest opposition party, who in August 2021 publicly attacked the author of this report on Facebook saying that he was not naturally objective because of his religion (Islam) and urging him not to be "a political scientist in a Christian country".



Predstavitelia SMERU – sociálna demokracia nie sú politické trasorítky a neboja sa svojho tieňa ako hlasisti. Každý, kto krivo SMER – SD obviní, musí rátať s tvrdou

Najskôr k denníku Pravda, ktorý tvrdí, že SMER sa otvorenými listami navzájom ohovára s nejakými slovenskými neoliberálnymi indivíduami v Furópskom parlamente. Tak prepáčte v Pravde, že sa ozývame. Neznámi slovenskí europoslanci klamú, že 1. septembra 2021 organizujeme v Košiciach protest proti očkovaniu s Kotlebovcami. Na tomto klamstve je pravda len dátum a miesto. Žiadny protiočkovací protest, ale odmietnutie deštrukcie právneho a sociálneho štátu. A žiadni Kotlebovci, toto je čisto protest SMERU – sociálna demokracia. To sme mali

V tom istom článku Pravdy sa do nás obúva politológ Lenč. Podľa Lenča sa vraj blížime ku konzervatívnym a konšpiračným stranám. Čím pán Lenč? Že chceme nižšie ceny elektriny a plynu, 13. dôchodky, obedy zadarmo, silné odbory, vyššiu minimálnú mzdu, sociálny dialóg, že podávame návrhy na ÚS SR na ochranu ľudských práv, že chceme dobrovoľnosť v očkovaní? Politológ Lenč nás nemá rád a dlhodobo to doslova kričí z jeho "politologických" úvah. Keby ste sa stali ako Slovák na Slovensku moslimom v rýchlokurze ako Lenč, musíte ako politológ – moslim útočiť na SMER, aby ste znížili svoju nedôveryhodnosť, lebo Vám vo Vašej náboženskej orientácii nikto prirodzene neverí. Veď sme to my, ktorí otvorene hovoríme, že sme proti povinným kvótam pre migrantov a uceleným moslimským komunitám na Slovensku. Neviem čo viedlo politológa Lenča k tomu, že sa z neho na Slovensku stal moslim a že o tom hovorí verejne. Sám bez zábran hovorí, že byť moslimom je úžasné. V poriadku, plne Vás pán Lenč rešpektujeme, máte slobodu vyznania. Ale potom, vážený pán Lenč, nerobte v kresťanskej krajine politológa a v duchu hejslováckej pesničky "nerežte a nerúbte do krve po smeráckej kotrbe". Akú politologickú objektivitu a neutralitu môžu mať Vaše vyjadrenia na adresu SMERU? Očakávam aj od Pravdy, že sa nad Lenčom trochu zamyslí, či to je ten najvhodnejší človek, ktorého potrebujú, keď treba udrieť SMER po "kotrbe"

Figure 2: Facebook status of Robert Fico, chairman of the SMER-SSD and former prime minister of the Slovak Republic (2006-2010; 2012-2018), in which he attacked Slovak political scientist Jozef Lenč, the author of the current report, urging him not to work as a Muslim political scientist in a Christian country (August 2022).6

Robert Fico, "Lenc: Byť moslimom je úžasné", FB Robert Fico, (August 22, 2021), retrieved May 30, 2022) https://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/posts/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7coG2kTWoDyW1a5NDGrNjTdo5d-ntps://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7cofficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7cofficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDMEP7cofficosk/pfbid02ga8TDDDimdnyQDrQowY3ZgEcpdRfNp5fBvzl

This statement was noticed not only by the Slovak media,⁷ but was also included in the annual report on religious freedom in Slovakia published by the U.S. Department of State.⁸

Employment

From the available sources, it is not possible to find any data relating to Muslim women or men in Slovakia being discriminated against on the basis of their religion when looking for employment. NGOs report only occasional problems in the employment of foreign migrants; however, these are not preferentially declared as a result of religious discrimination against job applicants. The majority of Slovak Muslims are self-employed or are employed by fellow Muslims.

Education

It is a long-standing problem in Slovakia that most Slovak history textbooks describe the period of the Ottoman Empire's invasion of Hungary (the territory of Slovakia) as a dark period of our history, full of oppression, and violence on the part of the Turks. This interpretation of history is one of the reasons for the negative view of Islam in Slovak society. This historical interpretation is also used by some Christian communities or far-right political parties to spread a negative image of Muslims. The most frequent argument for the current attitude towards Muslims is the unsuccessful siege of Vienna (1683) by the Ottomans and the victory of Christians over Muslims, which is interpreted as a key event in the defence of 'Europe' against 'Islam.'

Politics

In terms of a critical analysis of the political discourse on Islam and Muslims, we looked at the statements made by politicians in the parliamentary debates that took place on the floor of the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2021. These form a realistic picture of how Islam and Muslims are discussed by the relevant part of the political spectrum in Slovakia. First, it should be noted that such statements form a marginal part of speeches out of the total number of debate contributions during the period under review. The degree of effectively invisible discourse results from the following factors: (a) the general reverberation of the migration issue, which, compared to 2015-6, has become marginalised among political parties; (b) the focusing of political debates on the Covid-19 pandemic; (c) and the polarisation of the coalition-opposition political debate, which has been limited to topical political issues only.

Natalia Jaburková, "Robert Fico (SMER-SD) sa pustil do politológa Jozefa Lenča. Ste xenofóbny fašista, odkázal mu odborník", Noviny Plus, (August 23, 2021), retrieved June 3, 2022, https://plus.noviny.sk/626464robert-fico-smer-sd-sa-pustil-do-politologa-jozefa-lenca-ste-xenofobny-fasista-odkazal-mu-odbornik

US Department of State, "Slovak Republic 2021 International Religious Freedom Report", U.S. Embassy in Slovakia, retrieved June 3, 2022, https://sk.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/193/SLOVAKIA-2021-IN-TERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf, p.9

In spite of this, some MPs nevertheless resorted to tried-and-tested debate strategies aimed at fomenting negative (hostile) sentiments towards Muslims. In the analysis of the debates, we identified the following strategies: (a) the choice of nominations and references (migrants/Muslims were presented as a threat to society and Slovak traditions); (b) the prediction or attribution of specific attributes to social actors in order to negatively portray their impact in and on our society; (c) the attempt to justify or excuse the xenophobic nature of the speech; (d) the perspectivisation, respective to depicting events or the relationship to events from the perspective of only one group ("I went to see and I saw"; "see how it looks in the West", etc.); and (e) intensification of expressive means (invoking migrants; influx of criminals, etc.). To a lesser extent than in the past, we found an upward trend of strongly stereotyping utterances that dehumanised Muslims and migrants, and gave them deliberately derogatory names or adjectives. The stigmatisation of the Muslim community and the attribution of collective guilt to all Muslims and migrants repeatedly emerged.⁹

On rare occasions, we have witnessed some MPs on the floor of the Slovak Parliament standing up for Islam or warning of the devastating impact of Islamophobia on Slovak society and the values on which the European Union is built. It is worth mentioning the speech of Martin Hojsik, a member of the European Parliament (Renew Europe), who in June 2021, said in the Slovak Parliament that the "European Union must, in my opinion, stand up for the protection of liberal values, both at home and abroad. It must be more action-oriented, we must be able to prevent racism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and be beautiful in our diversity." ¹⁰

Media

The indirect support of entrenched stereotypes about Islam and Muslims is a phenomenon that repeatedly appears in the Slovak media. The year 2021 was no exception, with Slovak media repeatedly exploiting the tabloid nature of information about Muslims and Islam in news and commentary. The themes that dominated the portrayal of Islam and Muslims were terrorism, extremism, and war conflicts in Muslim states. In reporting on Muslims, some media have adopted a form of reporting used by conspiracy media (fake news).¹¹

The most common phenomenon in the presentation of Islam is the use of inappropriate accompanying pictorial material as part of the text. In most cases, when

^{9.} Zuzana Hasna, Nataša Pluliková (eds.), FRAMING: Mediálny obraz islamu a moslimov na Slovensku, (Bratislava: Islamská nadácia na Slovensku, 2022), pp. 21-29

Martin Hojsík, "Vystúpenie v NR SR", MediaPortál Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, (June 18, 2021), retrieved: June 27, 2022, https://tv.nrsr.sk/videokanaly/osoba/8/Martin.Hojsík?id=244523

Zuzana Hasna, Nataša Pluliková (eds.), FRAMING: Mediálny obraz islamu a moslimov na Slovensku, (Bratislava: Islamská nadácia na Slovensku, 2022), pp. 52-57

they publish a report about Islam, they use the image of a woman in a niqab or burqa, or display a violent event that took place in the Middle East or cities in Western Europe. Such illustrative images support deep-rooted stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, the inequality of women in Islam, and the violent nature of Islam. Letavajová (2022) reports that, "Muslims are portrayed as a population that is rejected, unacceptable, that must not enter Europe, that nobody wants as neighbours, that is a threat to Europe's Christian values, that is a terrorist, that should be deported, that should adapt to European culture, that is being watched by German nationalists, that is misunderstood and criticised, that society is terrified of. Another image of Muslims presented by the media is that of victims of genocide or online and of-fline hate speech."¹²

Thus, the stylised media coverage of topics about Islam and Muslims fosters the public's fear of Islam. Most of the Slovak media also use the word "jihad" as a synonym for terrorism. They create a common view that all Muslims who perform jihad are terrorists and that terrorism is an essential part of Islam. Women and children are portrayed as victims or witnesses of violence by Muslim men. The media present the position of women in Islam in a way that contradicts our values and reinforces prejudices about Islam and Muslims in the minds of readers. Children are depicted as poor, neglected, and suffering: a huddled child, children in the arms of a mother mourning an attack victim in the street, children huddled in a shelter, children screaming in front of a barbed wire fence, children wrapped in blankets on the ground in a refugee camp, children doing physically difficult work, a child in the ruins of a house, an injured child on a stretcher, etc.¹³

Most of the conspiracy media has given only marginal coverage to Islam and Muslims. At the time of the pandemic crisis, other topics dominated their pages. Tibor E. Rostas's website Zem a Vek continued to spread Islamophobia. Among the media that report truthfully on Islam and Muslims are the daily newspapers *Pravda*, *SME*, *Denník N, Aktuality.sk*, and *RTVS*. These media also convey the views of representatives of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia. On the borderline between Islamophobia and journalism, which also provides truthful information about Muslims, is the news portal Postoj (Konzervatívny denník).

^{12.} Ibid. p. 58

^{13.} Ibid. pp. 68-84

Iveta Michalíková, "O krok bližšie k islamizácii Slovenska", Zem a vek, (January 31, 2021), retrieved: June 26, 2022, https://zemavek.sk/o-krok-blizsie-k-islamizacii-slovenska/

Rudolf Sivý, Martin Slíž, "Afganský professor z Bratislavy: S Talibanom by som nekomunikoval, na Slovensku nám teraz uviazli študenti, ktorí majú doma rodiny", Aktuality, (August 27, 2021), retrieved: June 26, 2022, https:// www.aktuality.sk/clanok/ey441sm/afgansky-profesor-z-bratislavy-s-talibanom-by-som-nekomunikoval-na-slovensku-nam-teraz-uviazli-studenti-ktori-maju-doma-rodiny/?_ga=2.142137970.1355384245.1656407719-140120011.1581406570

Iva Mrvová, "Rozpoltenosť duše európskych moslimov", Postoj, (June 2, 2021), retrieved: June 26, 2022, https://www.postoj.sk/80185/rozpoltenost-duse-europskych-moslimov

Justice System

Since 2017, legislation has been tightened in Slovakia. The National Council of the Slovak Republic finally approved to amend Law No. 308/1991 Coll. on freedom of religious faith and the status of churches and religious communities. The law (a) increased the number of signatures required to register churches and religious communities in Slovakia from 20,000 to 50,000; (b) the condition that the signatories must be citizens of the Slovak Republic who are members of the Church or religious community has been determined; and (c) the signatories must confirm their signature by submitting personal data. These conditions of registration are discriminatory because only four churches from the eighteen currently registered churches and religious communities in Slovakia meet the conditions. Of these, thirteen did not meet the original registration requirement, i.e., 20,000 believers. The most common argument in favour of a change in the law was the alleged threat of the "Islamisation" of Slovakia.

In 2021, there were no further manifestations of Islamophobia by the Slovak judiciary. No part of the judiciary dealt with the issue of Islamophobia, nor was it directly involved in proceedings that could be described as discriminatory in the context of the Slovak Muslim community.

Internet

Various conspiracy websites, websites of far-right political parties and movements, and online platforms of Christian associations are regularly disseminating Islamophobia on the internet. Christianitas, a conservative Christian online platform that mainly presents messages warning against the "Islamisation" of Europe, is a space for spreading prejudices about Islam and Muslims.¹⁷ Topics include the decline of the West (progressivism versus Islamisation),¹⁸ and the rise of Muslims in Europe¹⁹ and the world.²⁰ They present Islam as a religion that is incompatible with Christianity and democracy. Among the spreaders of Islamophobia in Slovakia are also websites financed by the K-LSNS that pretend to be news websites. Of these, only Magazin 1²¹ and KulturBlog²² are currently active, and even these have only minimally covered attacks on Islam and Muslims in 2021. The blog and website of the Centre for the Study of Po-

^{17.} Christianitas, retrieved: June 28, 2022, https://www.christianitas.sk/

Mikuláš Hučko, "Budúcnosť Západu? Medzi kalifátom a homolandom", Christianitas, (April 22, 2022), retrieved: June 29, 2022, https://www.christianitas.sk/buducnost-zapadu-medzi-kalifatom-a-homolandom/

^{19.} William Kilpatrick, "Pomalá samovražda Európy a islam", *Christianitas*, (November 17, 2021), retrieved: June 29, 2022, https://www.christianitas.sk/pomala-samovrazda-europy-a-islam-xv-cast-2-diel-zlyhanie-pastierov-brana-pre-prichod-islamu/

Matej Gavlák, "Bude v blízkej budúcnosti dominovať svetu islam?", Christianitas, (August 2, 2021), retrieved: June 29, 2022, https://www.christianitas.sk/islam-a-nie-ateizmus-bude-v-blizkej-buducnosti-dominovat-svetu/

^{21.} Magazín 1, retrieved: June 29, 2022, https://magazin1.sk/

^{22.} KulturBlog, retrieved: June 29, 2022, https://kulturblog.sk/

litical Islam,²³ whose activities were equally minimal in the year under review, were also among the purveyors of Islamophobia.

Most of these websites were shared by politicians from far-right parties (K-LSNS, Republika, etc.). Some politicians, who are not considered politicians of the far right, also gave interviews to the conspiracy portal Hlavné správy, which is currently blocked by the state. 24

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Currently, the most active propagators of Islamophobia in political discourse in Slovakia are the representatives of SMER-SSD, Republika, and K-ĽSNS. The list of those who can be considered as the main figures of the Slovak Islamophobic network in 2021 is comparable to those who have represented this scene in the past. They are mainly members of the former ruling party SMER-SSD (Robert Fico, Ľuboš Blaha); members of the Republika movement (Milan Mazurek, Miroslav Suja); members of the K-ĽSNS (Marián Kotleba, Stanislav Mizík); and nowadays, to a limited extent, representatives of Sme rodinina (Boris Kollár, chairman of the Parliament, and Minister of Social Affairs Milan Krajniak); or members of the Ordinary People and Independent Personalities movement, who have repeatedly expressed themselves in a negative context towards Muslims.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The most active civil society organisation in the fight against Islamophobia is the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, which monitors manifestations of Islamophobia, participates in projects that encourage interreligious dialogue, and creates a platform for the meeting of personalities from the Muslim community and the rest of the society. In addition, the Forum of the World's Religions (Mário Nicolini), the Open Society Foundation (Jana Dravecká), the Human Rights League (Zuzana Števulová), the Upana Ri

^{23.} Blog Centrum pre výskum politického islamu, Centrum pre výskum politického islamu, (August 29, 2021), retrieved: June 29, 2022, https://dennikn.sk/autor/cspi-st/

Filip Struhárik, "Web Hlavné správy je zablokovaný. Postup štátu proti dezinformáciám nie je transparentný", Dennik N, (March 2, 2022), retrieved: June 29, 2022, https://dennikn.sk/2748815/web-hlavne-spravy-je-zablokovany-postup-statu-proti-dezinformaciam-nie-je-transparentny/

 [&]quot;Islamská nadácia na Slovensku usporiadala v Bratislave galavečer s kultúrnym programom", IslamOnline.sk, (September 3, 2021), retrieved: June 20, 2022, https://www.islamonline.sk/2021/09/islamska-nadacia-na-slovensku-usporiadala-v-bratislave-galavecer-s-kulturnym-programom/

^{26.} Stronger Roots for Civil Society; "1001 dôvodov, prečo?" the project of Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, 2020-2021, OSF Slovakia, retrieved: June 20, 2022, https://osf.sk/podporene-organizacie-stronger-roots/

 [&]quot;SalamSK – Bojujeme proti islamofóbii a podporujeme obete nenávistných trestných činov na Slovensku", Hu-man Rights League, (August 1, 2021), retrieved: June 20, 2022, https://www.hrl.sk/sk/co-robime/projekty/aktu-alne-projekty/salamsk-bojujeme-proti-islamofobii-a-podporujeme-obete-nenavistnych-trestnych-cinov-na-slovensku

and the National Democratic Institute (Tomáš Hruštic)²⁸ work against Islamophobia.

Active critics of Islamophobia in the media are photographer and columnist Andrej Bán;²⁹ journalists from *Denník N*,³⁰ *SME*,³¹ *Pravda*,³² and *Postoj*³³; and members of the editorial staff of IslamOnline.sk. A number of religious organisations, the Jewish religious community, and teachers in certain primary and secondary schools are also helping to reduce the manifestations of Islamophobia by creating space in the school curriculum for learning about Islam and Muslims in Slovakia.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Slovakia's biggest problem in the context of Islamophobia is that the latter has moved from social networks to Parliament, and has become part of the political discourse, which also influences people's behaviour and their attitudes towards Muslims. Despite the fact that 2021 was a better year than the previous ones in this respect, we can see from the research of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia that the negative narratives of politicians and the media have direct consequences on the life of Muslims in Slovakia. As the study by Zuzana Hasna and Nataša Pluliková reveals, Islamophobia has become part of politics and the political communication of most political parties.³⁴ An unpleasant finding is that overt or latent Islamophobic content has consciously or unconsciously taken root in all Slovak media (conspiracy, tabloid, and mainstream).

The biggest challenges for the coming period will be to spread awareness that Islamophobia is as dangerous to Slovak society and democracy as any other form of racism. Society – politicians, media, teachers – should realise that the destruction of

^{28.} NDI Slovakia, NDI, retrieved: June 24, 2022, https://www.ndi.org/central-and-eastern-europe/slovakia,

Andrej Bán, "Lenč: Statusom nech ako moslim nerobím v kresťanskej krajine politológa, Fico iba ukázal, že
je xenofóbny fašista", *Dennik N*, (August 27, 2021), retrieved: June 20, 2022, https://dennikn.sk/2516614/
lenc-statusom-nech-ako-moslim-nerobim-v-krestanskej-krajine-politologa-fico-iba-ukazal-ze-je-xenofobnyfasista/

^{30.} Anna Jacková, "Som moslim, som Turek, som Slovák, hovorí Kamil Yilmaz. Azyl na Slovensku mu dal možnosť vybrať si, ako chce žiť", *Dennik N*, (September 21, 2021), retrieved: June 25, 2022, https://dennikn.sk/2544864/som-moslim-som-turek-som-slovak-hovori-kamil-yilmaz-azyl-na-slovensku-mu-dal-moznost-vy-brat-si-ako-chce-zit/

^{31.} Anna Fay, "Muslims were more accepted in Slovakia shortly after the fall of socialism", 16 March 2021, https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22617323/muslims-were-more-accepted-in-slovakia-shortly-after-the-fall-of-socialism.html, (Access date: 25 June 2022)

^{32.} Michal Horský, "Religionista Kovács: Hľadanie vonkajšieho nepriateľa v moslimoch je cynické", *Pravda*, (September 7, 2021), retrieved: June 25, 2022, https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/599900-religionista-kovacs-hladanie-vonkajsieho-nepriatela-v-moslimoch-je-cynicke/

^{33.} Iva Mrvová, "Islam na Slovensku: Riziko radikalizácie je väčšie, ak budú moslimovia fungovať v poloilegalite", *Postoj*, (June 8, 2021), retrieved: June 25, 2022, https://www.postoj.sk/80475/riziko-radikalizacie-je-vaecsie-ak-budu-moslimovia-fungovat-v-poloilegalite

^{34. &}quot;Framing: The portrayal of Islam and Muslims in Slovak media", *European Commission*, (April 30, 2022), retrieved: June 30, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/framing-portrayal-islam-and-muslims-slovak-media_en

democracy and the onset of totalitarianism in the 1930s were triggered by anti-Semitism, which manifested itself in the same concomitant phenomena that characterise Islamophobia in Slovakia today.

Chronology

- January 2021: Parliamentary debate on the "Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic" – statements made by some MPs in the debate had a clear Islamophobic content.
- **21.1.2021:** The start of the SalamSK project of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia and the Human Rights League to monitor Islamophobia in Slovakia (the project runs until June 30, 2022).
- February-March 2021: Population and Housing Census, in which citizens and residents of the Slovak Republic could for the first time declare their adherence to Islam.³⁵
- **22.5.2021:** The fifth edition of the festive *iftar* of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, which again took place only in online form.³⁶
- **July-August 2021:** Series of discussions of interreligious dialogue organised by the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia.³⁷
- **September 2021:** Revival of the topic of migration on the floor of the Slovak Parliament, in which Islamophobic narratives emerged during the debate.³⁸
- November-December 2021: Parliamentary debates on abortion, legal anchoring of same-sex partnerships, etc., which again brought Islamophobic statements to the floor of the Slovak Parliament.³⁹

 [&]quot;Pri sčítaní obyvateľov bude po prvýkrát možné vybrať si aj náboženstvo islam", IslamOnline.sk., (February 8, 2021), retrieved: June 27, 2022, https://www.islamonline.sk/2021/02/pri-scitani-obyvatelov-bude-po-prvy-krat-mozne-vybrat-si-aj-nabozenstvo-islam/

 [&]quot;Slávnostný iftár: piaty ročník opäť v znamení korony", IslamOnilne.sk, (May 22, 2021), retrieved: June 28, 2022, https://www.islamonline.sk/2021/05/slavnostny-iftar-piaty-rocnik-opat-v-znameni-korony/

^{37. &}quot;Imám a dvaja kňazi diskutovali o ľuďoch bez domova v nocľahárni DePaul", IslamOnline.sk, (July 19, 2021), retrieved: June 28, 2022, https://www.islamonline.sk/2021/07/imam-a-dvaja-knazi-diskutovali-o-ludoch-bez-domova-v-noclaharni-de-paul/; "BaBinec: Rande so sebou! Spoznávaj, motivuj sa, inšpiruj!", IslamOnline.sk, (August 12, 2021), retrieved: June 28, 2022, https://www.islamonline.sk/2021/08/babinec-rande-so-sebou-spoznavaj-motivuj-sa-inspiruj/

^{38.} Zuzana Hasna, Nataša Pluliková (eds.), "FRAMING: Mediálny obraz islamu a moslimov na Slovensku", (Islamská nadácia na Slovensku, Bratislava: 2022), pp. 21-29

^{39.} Ibid. pp. 51-66

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SLOVENIA NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

Like 2020, the year 2021 was also marked by COVID-19 and its impact on social, economic, and political life in Slovenia. As the Muslim population in Slovenia remains small, there is relatively little politicisation at the national level. Anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes have prevailed since the beginning of the waves of immigration from North Africa and the Middle East, and most Islamophobic expressions stem from the latter paradigm.

Islamophobic expressions during the strict lockdown due to disease restrictions shifted to online media, but also remained present in physical form, but were underreported in Slovenia, which poses a challenge in analysing the extent of Islamophobia in the country and taking measures to combat it due to the lack of official data. The main actors of Islamophobic rhetoric remained unchanged and belong to rightwing conservative/nationalist parties and movements.

In 2021, Muslims in Slovenia still face the same challenges as in 2020. These challenges include fewer and limited in scope employment opportunities for Muslim women, lack of adequate time for worship in the workplace, lack of adequate spiritual care, lack of access to halal food and official leave on Islamic holidays, lack of access to pork-free meals in public institutions, and the option of religious circumcision of male offspring. Slovenia needs to address adequately the problematic portrayal of Islam and Muslims in Slovenian primary school textbooks, pay more attention to the needs of immigrants in general (including in the education system), and reflect on possible legislative changes to regulate hate crimes better. Furthermore, the country needs to work harder to promote peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding in a pluralistic democratic society; make additional efforts to reduce the rather high levels of Islamophobia, hate speech, and hate crimes against Muslims; and condemn all forms of discrimination and persecution of Muslims.

Povzetek

Kot leto 2020, je bilo tudi leto 2021 v znamenju covid-19 in vpliva le-tega na družbeno, gospodarsko in politično življenje v Sloveniji. Zaradi dejstva, da je muslimanska populacija v Sloveniji še vedno sorazmerno majhna, je na nacionalni ravni razmeroma malo politizacije navedenega področja. Od začetka priseljevanja iz Severne Afrike in Bližnjega vzhoda prevladujeta protiimigrantska in protibegunska stališča, večina islamofobične retorike pa se pojavlja znotraj slednje paradigme.

Manifestacije islamofobije so se v času strogega družbenega zaprtja kot posledic epidemije preselile na spletne medije, a so kljub temu ostale prisotne tudi v fizični obliki, v Sloveniji pa so ostale premalo poročane, kar zaradi pomanjkanja uradnih podatkov predstavlja izziv pri analizi stopnje islamofobije v Sloveniji in pri sprejemanju ustreznih ukrepov za boj proti le-ti. Glavni akterji islamofobne retorike so ostali nespremenjeni in pripadajo desnim konservativnim/nacionalističnim strankam in gibanjem.

Muslimani v Sloveniji se še vedno soočajo z enakimi izzivi kot leta 2020, in sicer težje zaposlitvene možnosti za muslimanske ženske, zagotovitev: ustreznega časa in prostora za izvajanje bogoslužja na delovnem mestu, ustrezne duhovne oskrbe, možnosti uživanja halal hrane in možnosti koriščenja dopusta med praznovanjem islamskih praznikov, dostopa do obrokov brez svinjine v javnih ustanovah ter izvajanja verskega obrezovanja moških potomcev. Slovenija se bo morala lotiti ustreznega naslavljanja problematičnih upodobitev islama in muslimanov v slovenskih osnovnošolskih učbenikih, posvetiti ustreznemu naslavljanju potreb priseljencev nasploh (tudi na izobraževalnem področju), razmisliti o morebitnih zakonodajnih spremembah za boljšo ureditev sovražnega govora in zločinov iz sovraštva ter si bolj prizadevati za mirno sobivanje in medsebojno razumevanje v pluralistični demokratični družbi, kakor tudi za zniževanje sorazmerno visokih ravni islamofobije, sovražnega govora in zločinov iz sovraštva, usmerjenih proti muslimanom, z obsodbo vseh oblik diskriminacije in preganjanja proti le-tem.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Republic of Slovenia

Type of Regime: Democracy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary republic

Ruling Parties: Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS); New Slovenia (NSi) – rightwing, Christian democratic, conservative, nationalist; Concretely (Konkretno – former Modern Center Party [SMC] and the Economically Active Party [GAS], formed in December 2021) – liberal. **Parties supporting the government:** Slovenian National Party (SNS) – nationalist; and two representatives of Italian and Hungarian national community (one of the Italian and one of the Hungarian national community)

Opposition Parties: Coalition consisting of the List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ); Social Democrats (SD); Party of Alenka Bratušek (SAB); The Left (Levica) – central-left, liberal, social democratic; and Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) - central-left, social justice

Last Elections: The 14th government is led by Prime Minister Janez Janša and his party, Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), in coalition with New Slovenia, Concretely, and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (which on 17 December 2020, left the government, causing the loss of five MPs). On 26 March 2021, three MPs resigned from the SMC parliamentary group and one MP resigned from the DeSUS parliamentary group and formed their own parliamentary group of unaffiliated MPs, which became the opposition, leaving the government with four fewer votes.

Total Population: 2,108,708 (1 October 2021)

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 2020, disability (14%) and discrimination on the grounds of nationality, race, and ethnic origin (13%) were the most frequently alleged discriminations on personal grounds in reported cases that took place in 2020.¹

 [&]quot;Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2020," Advocate of the Principle of Equality, April 2021, http://www.zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Redno-letno-porocilo-Zagovornika-za-le-to-2020-prvi-del.pdf.

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): Approximately 47,000 people (2.4%) according to the 2002 census (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: 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 Combating Islamophobia: Peace Institute (Mirovni inštitut), Slovene Philanthropy (Slovenska filantropija), Amnesty International, Society UP Jesenice (Društvo UP Jesenice), 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); Rumeni jopiči (Yellow jackets), which was organized by the Slovenian neo-Nazi groups Blood & Honour Slovenia and the National Bloc

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: No
- Halal Slaughter Ban: No, limited to mandatory stunning of animals before slaughter
- Minaret Ban: No, but minarets are not to exceed 40m
- Circumcision Ban: No
- Burka Ban: NoPrayer Ban: No

Introduction

The Slovenian government faced several challenges in 2021: constitutional appeal, constructive vote of no confidence, seven interpellations by its ministers, and internal divisions within the two coalition parties. The government ended 2021 as a minority government after DeSUS decided to leave the coalition parties. On 16 December 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation of fundamental rights and the rule of law in Slovenia, where threats to democracy and media freedom in Slovenia were pointed out. These included cancelation of funding for the media, online harassment, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP suits), threats against critical voices, the delayed appointment of delegated prosecutors for the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), the delayed appointment of prosecutors for relevant investigations, and the spread of illiberal political movements, and corruption. "Pride Parade 2021" warned about oppression by the authorities and society, and the increase of hate and discriminatory expressions and hatred in media discourse, social networks, and politics, which are not only directed against the LGBTIQ+ community, but threaten all marginalised groups, minorities, and exploited groups such as refugees and immigrants, Black people, and Muslim women.²

On 1 July 2021, Slovenia took over the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second time since its accession to the European Union. In June 2021, the government decree declaring a COVID-19 epidemic in Slovenia expired, but some restrictive measures remained in place. Due to the rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 infections, the government of the Republic of Slovenia re-introduced RVT restrictions (recovered/vaccinated/tested - Slovenian: PCT) for almost all workers and consumers on 15 September 2021.

According to the 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Slovenia, published on 12 May 2021, Muslims in Slovenia face difficulties in accessing pork-free meals in public institutions, receiving services in hospitals, prisons, and the military, accessing halal food and spiritual care, and having their male children circumcised. A government response to the Muslim community's request to reserve special areas in cemeteries for Muslim graves and to allow gravestones to face Mecca remains under review.³ According to Ahmed Shaheed, the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and author of the Report on Countering Islamophobia/Anti-Muslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief published in February 2021, in the 20 states surveyed, among which is Slovenia, "It was reported that

 [&]quot;V družbi opažamo porast sovraštva in nazadovanje v tem, kar smo že dosegli," RTVSLO.si,: June 19, 2021, https://www.rtvslo.si/slovenija/parada-ponosa-v-druzbi-opazamo-porast-sovrastva-in-nazadovanje-v-tem-kar-smo-ze-dosegli/584886.

^{3. &}quot;Report on International Religious Freedom: Slovenia," US Department of State, May 12, 2021. https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/slovenia/.

Muslims experienced discrimination in their efforts to access goods and services, including in public transport, airports, administrative offices, shops and restaurants."⁴

The first Slovenian mosque "Islamic Religious and Cultural Center" (Muslimanski kulturni center) was opened in Ljubljana on 3 February 2020, after Slovenian Muslims had tried for more than 50 years to get their first prayer room and cultural center. In 2021, the world's leading architecture portal ArchDaily declared the Slovenian mosque the winner of the best architectural solution in the category "Religious Architecture". In June 2021, Nevzet Porić was appointed as the new mufti of the country's Islamic community, replacing the previous mufti, Nedžad Grabus. On 5 November 2021, Prime Minister Janez Janša met the representatives of the European Muslim and Jewish Leadership Council, which was an important contribution to dialogue between the various religious communities and Slovenia.⁵

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There are still no recorded or reported physical attacks on Muslims. However, according to informal discussions with Muslims living in Slovenia, direct and indirect verbal attacks do occur, especially in various right-wing media outlets, on various social media (such as Twitter and Facebook), and on the street (for example, some of the Muslim women pointed out that they had experienced increased discrimination and hate speech directed at them, which manifested itself in an increased fear of walking alone on the street). This could be attributed to the fact that "public debate in Slovenia is increasingly characterised by hostile, intolerant and downright disrespectful communication ... increasingly polarised and hostile public debate, intimidation of civil society actors and disproportionate restrictions on the right to protest in the context of the pandemic COVID-19."6

Employment

Compared to 2020, there have been no decisive changes in employment in 2021. Covered Muslim women still face challenges in finding suitable employment. Even if they could find employment, the employment does not reflect the level of their education or they are employed in jobs, where they are not in direct contact with mem-

Ahmed Shaheed, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief". OHCHR. April 13, 2021. https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/report-countering-islamophobiaanti-muslim-hatred-eliminate-discrimination-and.

 [&]quot;2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Slovenia," SloveniaTimes.com., November 5, 2021, https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/slovenia/.

 [&]quot;Country Memorandum - Memorandum on freedom of expression and media freedom in Slovenia," Council of Europe, June 4, 2021, https://rm.coe.int/memorandum-on-freedom-of-expression-and-media-freedom-in-slovenia/1680a2ae85.

bers of the public (such as cleaners, production workers, or self-employed). The decision of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in 2021 that employers may prohibit their employees from wearing visible signs of political, ideological, or religious beliefs in the workplace under narrow circumstances could exacerbate the already unfavourable employment situation of covered Muslim women. Nevertheless, there has been a slight improvement in the employment sector in recent years, related to the increasing employment of covered Muslim women, as shown by qualitative research conducted through interviews with Muslim women in Slovenia as part of the ongoing second doctoral dissertation of the author of this report.

In the absence of a legal framework and although their religious rights are only nominally protected by the constitution, Muslims in Slovenia have no guarantee of exercising their religious rights in the workplace in terms of being offered the time and place for worship, the possibility to consume halal food, and to take leave during the celebration of Islamic holidays. The most up-to-date information on the extent of discrimination in Slovenia can be found in the *Annual Report of the Advocate for the Principle of Equality for 2020*. Most cases of discrimination were concluded in employment and labour (29%), and mainly concerned the area of employment and working conditions, including termination of employment contracts and wages.⁸

Education

In 2021, the MPs of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), New Slovenia (NSi), and Modern Center Party (SMC) presented a new proposal for the funding of elementary schools with 100% funding for the compulsory program and 85% funding for additional content. As a reminder, in 2020, the Constitutional Court ruled that the state must fully fund the compulsory part of the curriculum of private elementary school, but not 100% of additional classes, morning care, and extended stays. In July 2021, the National Assembly adopted an amendment to the law on financing private schools. Muslims are seeking to open a private Muslim elementary school as of 2014 but have been unsuccessful due to the strict regulations governing the opening of private elementary schools.

The results of Ela Porić and Aleš Črnič's research show that when we examine representations of Islam and Muslims in Slovenian primary school textbooks, we can find examples of seemingly problematic representations, while a variety of smaller distortions and/or exaggerations in the absence of certain themes and/or visual illustra-

^{7. &}quot;A prohibition on wearing any visible form of expression of political, philosophical or religious beliefs in the workplace may be justified by the employer's need to present a neutral image towards customers or to prevent social disputes," Court of Justice of the European Union, July 15, 2021, https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/p1_3575059/en/.

Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2020," Advocate of the Principle of Equality, April 2021, http://www.zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Redno-letno-porocilo-Zagovornika-za-le-to-2020-prvi-del.pdf.

tions form a distorted representation that reproduce certain stereotypes and old fears of Muslims and Islam, and work on the level of explicit exclusion.⁹

Given that among migrant children many are of the Muslim faith, Barbara Gornik, Lucija Dežan, Zorana Medarić, and Mateja Sedmak noted that schools in Slovenia during the COVID -19 pandemic were faced with a lack of information from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport regarding work with migrant students, in part the result of a lack of political will to address the needs of migrants in general. They noted that the greatest challenges are in migrant students' language skills and that distance education, spatial segregation, and social isolation have significant social, linguistic, and educational consequences for students with an immigrant background.¹⁰

Politics

In 2021, the Slovenian prime minister angered the Slovenian Muslim community and the Muslim community beyond Slovenia's borders with a retweeted text from All Briefs (assumingly fake Instagram profile) that stated, "On 21 February 1848, the *Communist Manifesto*, written by German leftists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was first published. No other book has caused more death, suffering, oppression, impoverishment, and social backwardness except the Koran." [Fig. 1] The Islamic Community of Slovenia condemned the statement and the comparison of the Koran with the *Communist Manifesto*.

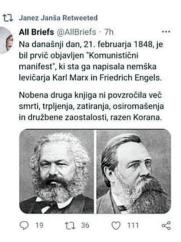


Figure 1: Retweeted content by Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša stating, "On 21 February 1848, the *Communist Manifesto*, written by German leftists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was first published. No other book has caused more death, suffering, oppression, impoverishment, and social backwardness except the Koran." ¹²

Ela Porić and Aleš Črnič, "Representations of Islam and Muslims In Slovenian Primary School Textbooks", Two homeland: migration studies no. 53 (January 2021): 117-133, https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/twohomelands/article/view/9534/8786.

Gornik, Barbara, Dežan, Lucija, Medarić, Zorana and Mateja Sedmak. "Šolanje priseljenih učencev in dijakov v času pandemije covid-19", Slovensko sociološko društvo, Sekcija za medkulturne študije (September 2021), http://www.micreate.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ilovepdf_merged-2.pdf.

^{11. &}quot;Turški medij: Janša na Twitterju znova delil protiislamska stališča,", 24ur.com, February 24, 2021, https://www.24ur.com/novice/slovenija/islamska-skupnost-v-sloveniji-kriticna-do-jansevega-deljenja-tvita-o-koranu.html.

^{12. &}quot;Turški medij: Janša na Twitterju znova delil protiislamska stališča,", 24ur.com, February 24, 2021, https://www.24ur.com/novice/slovenija/islamska-skupnost-v-sloveniji-kriticna-do-jansevega-deljenja-tvita-o-koranu.html.

The leaders' debate on the future of Europe, which took place during the Slovenian presidency at the Strategic Forum in Bled, focused on the issue of migration. At the forum, Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian prime minister, stated that he believes "migration should be stopped because only Muslims are coming, and this is changing the Christian cultural identity of Europe."¹³

The Slovenian National Party (SNS) published a warning on 30 August 2021 entitled "Europe Is Becoming Muslim, Will We Allow It?" It went on to state, "In July of this year alone, the police in Slovenia registered almost 8,000 illegal border crossings. Given the situation in Afghanistan, there is a risk of another wave of migrants. The biggest problem is not the potential terrorists, but the fact that Europe is slowly becoming Muslim, and the original Europeans are being lost." On the same day, the SNS shared the following tweet, "Research shows that in 2050 there will be no Slovenes left in Slovenia. In about 5 to 7 years, Muslims will be the dominant religion in the world. The new wave of immigration does not bode well, it means a faster Islamisation of Europe under the tactics of leftist politics."

The Slovenian far-right extra-parliamentary political party Domovinska liga posted two racist tweets, declaring, "By when will we import African butchers and arsonists? Average IQ Sub-Saharan Africans < 75 Add Islam and you get an explosive mix of psycho- and sociopathy" and problematised the use of the Arabic language in Ljubljana by stating, "What have black people done from once blooming Republic of South Africa. Only robbing, rapes and killings. Yes, something is wrong with African people, that the Africa is as it is" (Fig. 2)



Figure 2: Two racist Twitter posts by far-right extra-parliamentary political party Domovinska liga (DOM) in 2021.¹⁶

 [&]quot;Orban: S prihodom muslimanov se spreminja krščanska identiteta Evrope" Siol.net, September 1, 2021, https://siol.net/novice/slovenija/orban-s-prihodom-muslimanov-se-spreminja-krscanska-identiteta-evrope-560362.

 [&]quot;Evropa postaja muslimanska, bomo to dovolili?", SNS.si, August 30, 2021, https://sns.si/evropa-postaja-muslimanska-bomo-to-dovolili/.

Boris Vezjak. "Rasizem stranke DOM: o afriških klavcih in piromanih brez inteligenčnega kvocienta", Vezjak.com, August 08, 2021, https://vezjak.com/2021/08/12/rasizem-stranke-dom-o-afriskih-klavcih-in-piromanih-brez-inteligencnega-kvocienta/.

Boris Vezjak. "Rasizem stranke DOM: o afriških klavcih in piromanih brez inteligenčnega kvocienta", Vezjak.com, August 08, 2021, https://vezjak.com/2021/08/12/rasizem-stranke-dom-o-afriskih-klavcih-in-piromanih-brez-inteligencnega-kvocienta/.

Media

The main Slovenian media outlets that publish discriminatory content are the right-wing and the core of the SDS media system: Nova24TV and the weekly news and political magazine *Demokracija*. On 11 November 2021, Nova24TV published an article titled "We Are Experiencing a 'Great Displacement' of the White European Population: The Reason Is Mass Migration and High Birth Rates among Migrants," where they refer to words of MEP Éric Ciotti, who warns about the gradual displacement of the native white European population, which is observed in the Western world, due to low birth rates and mass migration from "Third World countries". On 13 December 2021, Nova24TV published an article titled "Islamic Extremists Threatened the Editorial Staff of *Demokracija* Magazine over Yesterday's Report and Demanded That Their Names Be Removed from the Internet, Otherwise ...," in which a Muslim reader stated.

"I warn you to delete [name and surname mentioned]¹⁸ immediately from your article. Because I do not know who gave you permission. If you do not delete the article, we will file a lawsuit against the person who wrote it."

In last year's report, Ana Frank wrote about the Islamophobic rhetoric of Gregor Preac, who writes regularly for *Demokracija*.¹⁹ Preac continued to share his Islamophobic thoughts in 2021, when he published an article on 25 May 2021 in *Demokracija* under the title "The Left Is Creating the Conditions for Terrorism in Slovenia".²⁰ The article stated,

Islamophobia is often only a logical consequence of Islamic jihadism, terrorism, Islamofascism and medieval violence across the EU.

He also argued that Muslims are the main suppliers and distributors of drugs in the EU.

... as the use of opium, hashish and marijuana is not explicitly prohibited in the Koran. Morocco is the EU's main supplier of cannabis, and the main importers and distributors of all forms of drugs are the Moroccan, Algerian, Turkish, Chechen and Albanian mafias, which also fund illegal Islamic migration to the EU, ghettoisation of Europe, mosque building, Islamisation and terrorism.

^{17. &}quot;Smo očividci "velike zamenjave" belega evropskega prebivalstva: Razlog so masovne migracije in visoka rodnost med migranti," Nova24TV, November 11, 2021, https://nova24tv.si/svet/smo-ocividci-velike-zamenjave-belega-evropskega-prebivalstva-razlog-so-masovne-migracije-in-visoka-rodnost-med-migranti/.

^{18.} The name and the surname of the reader have been removed here to ensure anonymity.

Ana Frank, "Islamophobia in Slovenia: National Report 2020." In European Islamophobia Report 2020, edited by Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, 721-737.. Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

 [&]quot;Levica ustvarja razmere za terorizem v Sloveniji", Demokracija, May 25, 2021, https://demokracija.si/komentar/levica-ustvarja-razmere-za-terorizem-v-sloveniji/.

He declared that Ramadan awakens Muslims fundamentalism, jihadism, radicalism, and terrorism.

If there is no terrorism in the EU this year (yet), it does not mean that Muslims have integrated, assimilated, Europeanised, but that billions of euros for the police, counter-terrorism units, security services, observation of mosques and Islamic extremists are at least temporarily working. Until they invent new forms of terrorism. Maybe biological. A pandemic with a new coronavirus is giving anyone ideas for biological weapons.

He also put forth an Islamophobic rhetorical question, "When will the EU be mature enough to ban communism and Islam in addition to fascism and Nazism?"

It was intriguing to read, that on 18 December 2021, *Demokracija* and Mravljisce.si published an article, which could be deliberately produced fake news, that Preac is seeking asylum in Saudi Arabia due to charges of Islamophobia in Slovenia, and is allegedly wanted by the police (referredreferred to as "Slovenian socialist militia") due to a report by "numerous false friends of Islam" for allegedly spreading hate speech against Islam in his reports and columns from Islamic countries.²¹ The aforementioned article, aided by conspiracy theories, intentionally promotes Islamophobic attitudes by attempting to evoke sympathy for individuals who use Islamophobic rhetoric and do not wish to clarify the circumstances of such rhetoric with the Slovenian police. The authors of the mentioned article also deliberately ignore the fact that Islamophobic statements are taken seriously in Slovenia and that an individual is obliged by law to provide clarifications of any such (reported) rhetoric to the authorities if so requested..

Justice System

One of the biggest challenges is the lack of prosecution of hate speech. In 2021, the Center for Human Rights, Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia, published the report *Analysis of Prosecutorial Practice of Prosecution of Public Promotion of Hate, Violence and Intolerance in the Period 2008-2018*. The report found that the majority of cases were acts against members of the LGBTI+ community (23 cases); Roma (15 cases); people from nations of former Yugoslavia (12 cases); people of various political beliefs - communists, right-wing politics, etc. (8 cases); Muslims (7 cases); refugees and migrants (6 cases - two of which were related to the Islamic faith); and Blacks (6 cases). The analysis also suggests that possible legislative changes should be con-

^{21. &}quot;Ekskluzivno na Mravljišču: Kolumnist Demokracije v odgovor na obtožbe islamofobije zaprosil za azil v Savdski Arabiji!" Demokracija, December 18, 2021, https://demokracija.si/rumeno/ekskluzivno-na-mravljis-cu-kolumnist-demokracije-v-odgovor-na-obtozbe-islamofobije-zaprosil-za-azil-v-savdski-arabiji; "Noro! Kolumnist Demokracije zaradi obtožb islamofobije v Sloveniji zaprosil za azil v Savdski Arabiji," Mravljisce.si, December 18, 2021, https://mravljisce.si/mravlje-po-svetu/noro-kolumnist-demokracije-zaradi-obtozb-islamofo-bije-v-sloveniji-zaprosil-za-azil-v-savdski-arabiji/.

sidered in order to regulate hate crimes better.²² In 2021, there were no specific laws and regulations with Islamophobic content, laws that restricted the rights of Muslims in their religious way of life, or laws that were legitimised by reference to Islamophobic narratives.

Internet

The vast majority of Islamophobia in Slovenia in 2021 took place on social media, primarily Twitter or Facebook, and was carried out by politicians and the general public. Islamophobic rhetoric is also practised by two patriotic/nationalist groups: Uprising of Slovenes (Upor Slovencev) and Generation Identity Slovenia (Generacija identitete Slovenija). Both have a very conservative, traditionalist, anti-immigrant, and anti-Islamic stance. While Generation Identity Slovenia restricts access to their website to members only and does not have a Facebook page, Uprising of Slovenians has a freely accessible website and Facebook page. On their webpage, they posted a petition written by DOM (Domovinska liga) against the admission of Afghans to Slovenia in 2021. It stated, "Whoever allows a single Afghan to come to Slovenia is a traitor to the motherland. Islam does not belong in Europe." They also shared the picture below showing migrants and refugees in a plane with the words "PROTI", i.e., "Against." (Figure 3)



Figure 3: Image accompanying a Facebook petition by DOM (Domovinska liga) against the admission of Afghans to Slovenia in 2021. The word "AGAINST" is written in red letters in Slovenian over a picture of migrants and refugees in a plane ²³

A Facebook group called "Boycott of Products with Halal Certificate", (Bojkot izdelkov s Halal oznako), an affiliate of the far-right movement Uprising of Slovenians (Upor Slovencev), is still regularly posting cases and products of companies, which have acquired halal certification for its followers in order to support the boycott. The

^{22. &}quot;Analiza kazenskopravnega pregona sovražnega govora v Sloveniji in razprava", Center za človekove pravice, Varuh človekovih pravic Republike Slovenije, June 17, 2021, https://www.varuh-rs.si/sporocila-za-javnost/novica/analiza-kazenskopravnega-pregona-sovraznega-govora-v-sloveniji-in-razprava/.

^{23. &}quot;Ne novim migrantom", Upor Slovencev, September 9, 2021, https://uporslovencev.wordpress.com/2021/09/09/ne-novim-migrantom/#more-1059.

paramilitary group Styrian Guard (Štajerska varda) and its regional groups/village guards (founded in 2018) are active on various social media and websites through their leader and organiser Andrej Šiško, Movement United Slovenia: zedinjenaslovenija.si, and through the Facebook page "Slovenian GUARDS - Civil initiative" (Slovenska VARDA - civilna iniciativa). The Facebook page of Styrian Guard (Štajerska varda) was not active in 2021. As we can see in Figure 4, the Slovenian GUARDS - Civil initiative (Slovenska VARDA - civilna iniciativa) reflected on an article published by Demokracija.si entitled "Afghan Migrants Arrested in Sweden for Planning Extremist Attack" with the following Islamophobic thoughts,

Massive migrations can be a good cover for the transition of extremists from war and crisis areas, where the terroristic acts can be performed. Why are terroristic acts performed? There are various reasons, which differ from personal resentment to the consequences of ideological brainwashing. It is important that, with increasing immigrants in European countries, we can note also the increase of extremists with the abilities and will to use terrorism, as a mean to assert one's beliefs, be it religious or personal. This is the future of Europe. Will it be also the future of Slovenia?



Figure 4: Facebook page of Slovenian GUARDS – Civil initiative (Slovenska VARDA – civilna iniciativa) containing Islamophobic speech.²⁴

FB page of Slovenian GUARDS – Civil initiative (Slovenska VARDA – civilna iniciativa), accessed date March 25, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/vardaslovenska.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The main political parties that openly express and also trigger Islamophobic ideas in Slovenia belong to the right-wing conservative/nationalist parties and movements: Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska demokratska stranka), Slovenian National Party (Slovenska nacionalna stranka), the new Homeland League (Domovinska liga), Movement United Slovenia (Gibanje Zedinjena Slovenija), Uprising of Slovenians (Upor Slovencev), Generation Identity Slovenia (Generacija Identitete Slovenija), and Rumeni jopiči (Yellow Jackets), organised by the Slovenian neo-Nazi groups Blood & Honour Slovenia and the National Bloc. They are supported by various, mainly right-wing, channels in spreading anti-Muslim propaganda. These include the following online and printed media: Demokracija, Nova24TV, Reporter, and occasionally the conservative Christian newspaper Domovina. In terms of social media, used by various groups, the following stand out: Uprising of Slovenians (Upor Slovencev), Generation Identity Slovenia (Generacija identitete Slovenija), Boycott of Products with Halal Certificate (Bojkot izdelkov s Halal oznako), Movement United Slovenia (Gibanje Zedinjena Slovenia), and Slovenian GUARDS - Civil initiative (Slovenska VARDA - civilna iniciativa).

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In the Border Violence Monitoring Network report on *Combating Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping, Stigmatization, Discrimination, Incitement to Violence, and Violence Against Persons Based on Religion or Belief,* published in 2021, the authors collected testimonies from Muslims confirming the violent and cruel Islamophobia of national police forces, where the report on Slovenia states that: "One testimony from 2021 describes how police beat the interviewee while he was lying on the ground. The authorities then told the group that it was their country, and they did not want Muslims in Slovenia and that they would shoot them the next time they showed up here again."²⁵

The DecontRamination project, recognised as a best practice by the Council of Europe's No Hate Speechcampaign and now led by the Ljubljana Pride Association together with the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) and Loesje Berlin, created an online map of locations where incidents of public hate speech against marginalised groups were recorded. As can be seen in Figure 5, incidents of public hate speech against marginalised groups in Slovenia are mainly recorded in larger Slovenian cities such as Ljubljana and Maribor, and their abundance is worrying.

 [&]quot;Combating Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping, Stigmatization, Discrimination, Incitement to Violence, and Violence Against Persons Based on Religion or Belief", Border Violence Monitoring Network, September 22, 2021, https://www.borderviolence.eu/wp-content/uploads/Report-on-Religious-Intolerance.pdf.















Figure 5: Incidents of public hate speech against marginalised groups in Slovenia awwwnd some examples of such graffiti.²⁶

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

It is crucial that we make additional efforts to raise awareness about the issues of discrimination, diversity, dealing with hate, and the impact of such manifestations of hate on the mental and physical well-being of Muslims. There is also a need to strengthen collaboration between communities, non-governmental organisations, and government agencies to ensure effective support for victims in combating hate speech and crimes. We need to ensure that the issue of hate crime and hate speech is taught at various levels of society in Slovenia, so that society recognises the negative impact on a person's physical well-being and the importance of appropriate legal measures that should be taken in such cases. We should improve ethical standards regarding discriminatory media coverage, while politicians should take a clear public stance and distance themselves from any hateful/(neo-)racist/xenophobic rhetoric that could have a discriminatory effect. Countries need to make legal changes or improve legal procedures to ensure proper investigation and punishment of hate crimes and hate speech. It is of enormous importance that society works for peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding in a pluralistic democratic society, and makes additional efforts to reduce the level of Islamophobia, hate speech, and hate crimes against Muslims, and to condemn all forms of discrimination and persecution of Muslims.

Chronology

24.02.2021: Prime Minister Janez Janša retweets a post claiming that the Koran has caused the most death, suffering, oppression, impoverishment, and so-

 [&]quot;Decontramination Map," The DecontRamination Project, access date March 26, 2022, https://decontramination.org/#map.

- cial backwardness, angering the Islamic community within and beyond Slovenia's borders.
- 12.4.2021: Slovenian GUARDS Civil initiative (Slovenska VARDA civilna iniciativa) problematises the massive (Afghan) migration allegedly used as a cover for the transition of extremists from war and crisis zones where terrorist acts can be committed, and expresses concerns about the future of Europe and Slovenia in this regard.
- **25.6.2021**: *Demokracija* publishes the article "The Left Is Creating the Conditions for Terrorism in Slovenia" (*Levica ustvarja razmere za terorizem v Sloveniji*) by author Gregor Preac, where he states that the main suppliers and distributors of drugs in the EU are Muslims; that Ramadan awakens Muslims fundamentalism, jihadism, radicalism, and terrorism; and finishes with the thought that Europe should ban Islam.
- 10.08.2021: The Domovinska liga party (DOM) equates migrants and refugees from Africa with African butchers and arsonists, and mocks their allegedly low IQ.
- 30.08.2021: The Slovenian National Party (SNS) expresses concern about migration from Afghanistan, which could turn Europe and Slovenia into a Muslim state.
- 11.11.2021: Nova24TV states that we are witnessing a "great displacement" of the white European population, claiming the reason as mass migration and the high birth rate among migrants.
- **18.12.2021:** *Demokracija* and Mravljisce.si share the Islamophobic rhetoric that Gregor Preac, a a well-known Islamophobe and regular columnist for *Demokracija*, is seeking asylum in Saudi Arabia over accusations of Islamophobia in Slovenia.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SPAIN NATIONAL REPORT 2021

SERGIO GRACIA, INÉS BOLAÑOS SOMOANO

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Executive Summary

During the 2021 COVID-19 pandemic, hate crimes have increased around those perceived as different, signalled out and used as scapegoats, most frequently through social media.

This discourse has been amplified and legitimised by the growing far-right movement, which has used immigration as a catalyst to exacerbate societal polarisation and hate. Immigrants have been portrayed as stealing work opportunities or carrying diseases. Consequently, there have been repeated appeals for the closure of borders, the "selection" of immigrants, and the tightening of conditions to access full citizenship.

Far-right groups have exploited this Islamophobic environment and channelled it into a securitised discourse, cashing in on a security threat to our rights and freedoms, which strongly draws on the anti-Islam sentiment existent in Spain since the 1990s.

Exposed to such fearmongering arguments, Spanish society has increasingly hindered and discriminated against Muslim-presenting or non-Caucasian looking individuals. Discrimination occurs from partaking normally in the labour market to access to housing or the creation of places of worship.

Resumen ejecutivo

La llegada de la pandemia no hizo sino acrecentar durante 2021 los delitos de odio en torno al diferente, utilizando y señalando a este como chivo expiatorio, y para ello, el principal medio de difusión fueron las redes sociales debido al confinamiento.

Este discurso ha sido potenciado y legitimado por el creciente movimiento ultraderechista que ha utilizado a la inmigración como catalizador para sacar lo peor de la sociedad, donde se han dedicado a vender que los inmigrantes roban el trabajo o traen enfermedades, y donde han apelado de forma reiterada al cierre de fronteras, a la "selección" de inmigrantes y al endurecimiento de las condiciones para acceder a la plena ciudadanía.

La extrema derecha ha explotado la islamofobia creando en torno a ella un discurso securitario y del miedo, vendiendo una supuesta amenaza de nuestros privilegios, y recuperando para ello el discurso anti islámico que campa por nuestro país desde los años 90.

Ante este discurso del miedo, la sociedad se ha llenado de trabas para toda persona que no reúna los estándares físicos de las sociedades occidentales, donde hay una discriminación generalizada en el acceso al trabajo, a la vivienda o en la instalación de lugares de culto.

Debido a todo esto, durante 2021 tuvieron lugar más de 300 bulos sobre migrantes, refugiados y minorías religiosas en forma de cadenas de WhatsApp, audios, fotos o videos con el único fin de crear odio.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Kingdom of Spain

Type of Regime: Parliamentary democracy

Form of Government: Constitutional parliamentary monarchy

Ruling Parties: Coalition of Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE - Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and Unidas Podemos (coalition of several left-wing parties)

Opposition Parties: Partido Popular (right), Vox (extreme right), Ciudadanos (centrist-right)

Last Elections: The last general elections, on November 10, 2019, were won by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). 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, April 5, 2022)

Major Languages: Spanish (official language); Catalan, Valencian, Basque and Galician (main co-official languages)

Official Religion: None. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 established that "there shall be no state religion". At the same time, Article 16.3 ¹ outlines that the state will cooperate with religious authorities from several confessions, among which chiefly Catholicism.

Statistics on Islamophobia: During 2021, the Spanish Ministry of Interior looked into 1,802 hate crimes, a 41% increase from five years ago. From these crimes, 678 (37.6%) were racially motivated or xenophobic. These statistics are not disaggregated by hate crime type, so they cannot show specific anti-Muslim hate crimes. Nevertheless, the OBERAXE report on hate speech in social media did pick up on an increase of between 9.5% and 14.7% in Islamophobic hate speech. In parallel, the OSCE includes 45 religiously motivated incidents in its 2020 report.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The latest statistics come from the 2021 report by OBERAXE, the "Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia" (*Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia- OBERAXE*)²

Major Religions (% of Population): Practicing Catholics 19.9%; Non-practicing Catholics 39%; Agnostic: 11.7%; Indifferent: 10.8%; Atheists: 14.6%; Other religions: 2.6%. (Report by the "Sociological Research Centre" (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas- CIS*) n° 3344/2021, December 2021)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 4% of the population, with around 2 million Muslims, of which 42% have Spanish nationality (Observatorio Andalusí 2019).

^{1.} Article 16.3 of the Spanish Constitution, "Official State's Bulletin" (*Boletin Oficial del Estado*), https://www.boe.es/biblioteca_juridica/codigos/codigo.php?id=158_Constitucion_Espanola_____The_Spanish_Constitution_&modo=2 (Access date: 14 June 2022).

^{2.} From here onwards referred to by it's English translation, Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: The Comisión Islámica de España (CIE) is the sole interlocutor with the Spanish state, as well as being part of the Muslim Council for Cooperation in Europe (MCCE) ³, a representative body in the European Union. The CIE is composed of the Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España (UCIDE), the Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas (FEERI), and other minority federations.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: 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 Al Fanar, Fundación Cepaim, Fundación de Cultura Islámica, Fundación Euroárabe, Fundación Ibn Battuta, Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia, Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios, SOS Racisme Catalunya, SOS Racismo Madrid, Stop Als Fenòmens Islamòfobs, Unitat contra el feixisme i el racisme.

Far-Right Parties: Vox, Hacer Nación, España 2000, Alianza Nacional, La Falange, Falange Española de las JONS, Alternativa Española, Democracia Nacional, ADŃ, Front Nacional de Catalunya (FNC), Partido Social Patriota, Identitarios, Movimiento Aragonés Social, Renaixença Nacional Catalana (RNC), Som Identitaris, Partido Nacionalsocialista Obrero Español (FNI-PNSOE), Partido Soluciona, Som Catalans, Partido Nacional Bolchevique, and Movimiento Católico Español.

Far-Right Movements: Getafe Nacional Revolucionario, Bastión Frontal, El Empecinado, Españoles en Acción, Resistencia Social Alcalá de Henares, Asociación Cultural Fernando III, Distrito Sur, Revolutio España, Hogar Social Madrid, Talavera Nuestra, Sección Asalto, Murtia Magna, Almería Nacional Sindicalista, Paso al Frente, Córdoba Nuestra, Caserna La Jabea, Alcalá 1247, Acción Juvenil Valencia, Acción Social Navarra, Acción Social Galicia, Hibera Genus, A Nosa Coruña, Caserna Don Pelayo, Asociación Cultural Alfonso I Cantabria, Tas Raices, Centro Social y Nacional Salamanca, Juventud Patriota Valladolid, Devenir Castellano, Asociación Rodrigo de Bastidas, In Memoriam Juan Ignacio, Valentia Forum, Somatemps, Hazte Oír, Asociación Cultural Tradicionalista Fernando III El Santo, Defensa Catalunya, Patriotes Catalans, Cedade, Moviment Identitari Català (MIC). A map covering movements and parties can be found at Cinved.

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

Muslim Council for Cooperation in Europe (Consejo Musulmán de Cooperación en Europa- CMCE) http://www. hispanomuslim.es/panya/cmce.htm (Access date: 9 June 2022).

Introduction

In the 21st century, and due to several events linked in one way or another to militancy, Islamophobic processes have strongly impacted Muslim communities. These processes are cyclical and recurrent, manifesting themselves as diverse degrees of rejection, phobia, and/or hatred towards the otherised Muslim.

In the aftermath of these events, the "essentialist stigmatisation of the Muslim world" has been reinforced. The academic world has begun to analyse and denounce the ensuing misuse of the label "Muslim", and the growing Islamophobic actions and attitudes by sectors in society. Mistakenly and with ill intent, the immigrant population living in Spanish society has been likened to the concept of the "terrorist", creating a national and international alarm that leads to the rejection of everything related to Islam.⁴

These currents - and others - have had a direct influence on the increase in hate speech in the last years, most notably online via social media. The latter have also significantly helped the diffusion of fake news, especially during the months of absolute confinement due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

The rather recent appearance of far-right parties like Vox and movements in the political sphere - openly racist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic - has contributed to the mainstreaming of an intransigent public discourse, which further legitimises the persecution of difference in appearance, creed, and opinion.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2017, the report on Islamophobia carried out by the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia recorded 546 incidents. The 2020 annual report by the Asociación Marroquí compiled Islamophobic instances according to official sources from security forces and bodies, and noted their increase. Data shows 1,598 incidents in 2018, and an increase of 6.8% in 2019, reaching a total of 1,706 incidents. In parallel, the OSCE includes 45 religiously motivated incidents in its 2020 report, of which 20 were crimes against Muslims.

Javier Rosón Lorente, La Islamofobia a debate. La genealogía del miedo al islam y la construcción de los discursos antiislámicos (Madrid: Casa Árabe-IEAM, 2012), p.167-168.

Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia, Informe Anual Islamofobia en España (Valencia: Plataforma Ciudadana Contra la Islamofobia, 2017), p.13.

^{6.} Asociación Marroquí, Informe Anual 2020 Islamofobia (Málaga: Asociación Marroquí, 2020), p. 14

 [&]quot;Hate Crime Reporting Spain 2020", Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), https:// hatecrime.osce.org/spain, (Access date: 23 May 2022).

In turn, a report by CEDRE (Consejo para la Eliminación de la Discriminación Racial o Étnica) highlights that only18.2% of people who have experienced an instance of discrimination report having filled a complaint or report.⁸ In recent times, out of concern about the above developments, the Spanish government has prepared a plan of action in the fight against hate crimes and discriminatory attitudes. The plan will receive more than a million euros for its budget from the Ministry of Interior.⁹

The discourse of insecurity pushed by the far right, outlined above, has had a direct impact at the neighbourhood level. As of a few years ago, there has been an increase in the amount of hate crimes committed, either physical or verbal attacks, against businesses or places of worship. Throughout 2021, there were different actions that have caused casualties, endangered the lives of others, or caused structural damages or damages on private goods.

Among these attacks, there was the stoning of the Antigua Mosque in Fuerteventura. A few days later, an aggression took place against a centre for young migrants in Torredembarra (Catalonia). This was followed by an attack against the San Javier Mosque, in Murcia, which was vandalised, burnt down, and finally graffitied with the words Death to Islam.



Figure 1: Attack on the San Javier Mosque, Murcia. Source: 20Minutos¹³

 [&]quot;Percepción de la discriminación por origen racial o étnico por parte de sus potenciales víctimas en 2020", CEDRE, https://igualdadynodiscriminacion.igualdad.gob.es/destacados/estudiopercepcion.htm (Access date: 25 January 2021).

^{9. &}quot;El Gobierno anuncia un plan para frenar el auge de los delitos de odio: podrían ser el triple de lo que marcan las cifras oficiales", Cadena Ser, 12 April 2022.

^{10. &}quot;Apedrean la puerta de la mezquita de Antigua", Diario de Fuerteventura, 18 January 2021.

^{11. &}quot;Destrozan un centro de menores migrantes en Torredembarra (Tarragona)", EuropaPress, 19 February 2021.

^{12. &}quot;Incendian una mezquita en San Javier donde habían pintado "Muerte al Islam"", 20minutos, 21 February 2021

^{13. &}quot;Incendian una mezquita en San Javier donde habían pintado "Muerte al Islam"", 20 Minutos, 21, February 2021

At the beginning of June, a young man, upon being fired from his job, hit a fellow worker, Moroccan, on his head and back with an iron bar, in Alhama de Murcia, Murcia. Mere days after, a Moroccan young man, Younes Bilal, was shot to death in a cafeteria in Mazarrón, Murcia, explicitly due to his nationality. 15

In July, the mosque of Cabezo de Torres, Murcia, was attacked. A pig's head, pierced with a knife, was displayed in front of the mosque, together with graffiti stating "Stop the invasion" and "No to Islam". The display was completed with a flag of Spain with the writing "Spanish sovereignty is not up to negotiation".



Figure 2: Attack on mosque in the town of Cabezo de Torres, Murcia. Source: La Opinión de Murcia¹⁶

These events all took place in the region of Murcia in south-eastern Spain, where several neo-Nazi groups operate and openly display pro-Hitler symbols.¹⁷

At the beginning of September, a man was assaulted in front of a fast-food restaurant, while he waited for his food. The assailant shouted at him "Do you believe in Alá [Allah]?" ¹⁸

Later, in November, a prosecutor denounced the leader of the neo-Nazi group, Bastión Frontal, for "encouraging" violence against Moroccans and Muslims during a demonstration in front of the Moroccan embassy in Spain.¹⁹

 [&]quot;Cuarto ataque racista en Murcia en menos de un mes: la mezquita de Cabezo de Torres amanece con una cabeza de cerdo y pintadas xenófobas", ElDiario.es, 7 July 2021.

^{15. &}quot;El asesinato agravado por racismo de Younes Bilal", El Mundo, 28 June 2021.

 [&]quot;Una navaja, una cabeza de cerdo y pintadas en un ataque xenófobo contra la mezquita de Cabezo de Torres",
 La Opinión de Murcia, 7 July 2021.

^{17. &}quot;La extrema derecha como contracultura", ElDiario.es, 30 November 2021.

^{18. &}quot;Un hombre denuncia una agresión racista en Madrid: "¿Tú crees en Alá?"", ElDiario.es, 1 September 2021.

 [&]quot;El fiscal denuncia a la líder de Bastión Frontal por "apremiar" a la violencia contra marroquíes y musulmanes", EuropaPress, 8 November 2021.



Figure 3: Screenshot of a message in the *Bastión Frontal* Telegram channel, an anti-Muslim extreme far right group. The message is rallying support for a concentration at the Moroccan embassy protesting its supposed Islamization of Spain.²⁰

According to a report by the Fundamental Rights Agency, Roma people, people from the Maghreb, and African-looking individuals in Spain are subjected to racialised police checks well above the average in Europe. ²¹ This is despite the overall multicultural nature of Spanish society, and testifies to the fact that Spain is not immune to the identitarian speech propagated by the far right. ²²

Employment

Freedom towards one's personal outward appearance is enshrined in several articles of the Spanish constitution, which refer to the individual's right to dignity and to the development of their personality. These articles also recognised the right to equality and to non-discrimination due to class, race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, opinion, or any other condition.

^{20. &}quot;Bastion Frontal", Telegram.hr, 18 May 2021, t.me/BastionFrontal (Access date: 18 May 2021). The message reads, from top to bottom: "Marrocco terrorist state. Demonstration 18/05/2021 at 18h, in front of the Moroccan Embassy. STOP THE INVASION. The f*** embassy better prepare. Not one step back! Today at 18h in front of the Moroccan Embassy. Serrano street 179, Madrid. Share and diffuse". All screenshots unless otherwise indicated are by the authors.

 [&]quot;Gitanos, magrebíes y negros sufren controles policiales 'raciales' muy por encima de la media en toda Europa".
 Cadena Ser, 25 May 2021.

^{22.} Dan Rodríguez-García. "The Persistence of Racial Constructs in Spain: Bringing Race and Colorblindness into the Debate on Interculturalism", MDPI journals: Social Sciences, 11(1), 13 (2022).

Posterior laws, such as the Estatuto de los Trabajadores via the Real Decreto Legislativo 2/2015, recognise the right of workers not to be discriminated against, directly or indirectly, due to their faith or personal believes, either during the selection process or once employed.

Religious freedom can thus be publicly expressed through clothing or other personal items at the workplace. Nevertheless, this can lead to workplace conflicts between the individual and the company, either at the interview phase or once the individual has joined the company as a worker.

This is especially important in the case of discrimination against Muslim women, who despite their various socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, often face multiple discrimination as women, sometimes as immigrants, and always as Muslims.²³

The case of Dina is an example of this type of discrimination. Dina is a Catalonian woman who in late June 2021 was selected for a job position, only to be informed days later that the board of directors of the company demanded she renounced her Islamic veil, as it affected the "secular nature of the company". She was forced to renounce the job.



Hace poco ful objeto de un hecho islamofolos flagrante

Una reconocida empresa catalana, tras haber passado el porceso de selección de la capacidad de un internación de la capacidad de un internación de la capacidad de la

hombres no nos dejan trabajar".

7:26 · 28 jun. 21 · Twitter for Android

Figure 4: Screenshot of the Twitter account describing the facts surrounding a case of workplace discrimination against a veiled Muslim woman, Dina.²⁴

^{23.} Amal Belleyo Belkasem, *El velo islámico, un derecho transgredido*, (Tenerife: Universidad de la Laguna, 2018), p.20.

^{24.} The Tweet reads, from top to bottom: "Recently my friend Dina suffered from a clear case of Islamophobia, in this case it happened in the workplace. The level of effrontery when it comes to Muslims is abhorrent. Then they fill their mouths with the word freedom and say that "our men don't let us work". The image below is a first person account by Dina on a different social network, where she explains how she passed a selection procedure for an employment position, only to be told once she had passed successfully, that she wold have to take off her hijab while working, as the company is "secular" in policy and practice. "Hawa, Twitter, 28 June 2021, https://twitter.com/hawabcn/status/1409382579208400899 (Access date: 7 April 2022).

Another type of employment discrimination is not respecting the celebration of Muslim religious festivities. This right is likewise enshrined in Spanish law, in Article 12.2. of the "State Cooperation Agreement with the Spanish Islamic Commission" (Acuerdo de Cooperación del Estado con la Comisión Islámica de España).²⁵

Nevertheless, far-right parties continue to contest these rights. In September 2021, in Ceuta, far-right party Vox voted against including, among the 2022 constitutionally protected festivities, the Eid al Fitr. According to the Vox President in Ceuta, "the Popular Party (PP) has given itself to the "moroccanization" [of Ceuta], together with its far left pro-Moroccan partners. He is shamelessly and remorselessly open to the Islamization of this city"²⁶.

Education

The Spanish education system considers one of its goals to promote the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms, and the equality of rights and opportunities among men and women. Yet, the prohibition of wearing the Islamic veil due to "internal regulations" instils the very opposite idea.²⁷

These types of problems have aroused once again during the 2021-2022 school year, affecting teenagers who chose to wear the hijab. This is the case of Farah, a 13-year-old pupil, who studied at the Liceo Caracense in Guadalajara, Madrid.²⁸



Figure 5: Protest by the municipal office of education on November 4, 2021, against the municipality's prohibition to wear the hijab at school. Photo: Plataforma Feminista de Guadalajara, ElDiario.es²⁹

 [&]quot;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://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/1992/11/10/26 (Access Date: 24 May 2022).

 [&]quot;Vox monta un nuevo incendio en Ceuta porque el calendario laboral incorpora otra Pascua musulmana", ElDiario.es, 23 September 2021.

Adoración Castro Jover. "El uso del velo islámico en los centros docentes: ciudadanía y libertad religiosa", Cuestiones de Pluralismo, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2021).

^{28. &}quot;Expulsan a una alumna de un instituto de Guadalajara por llevar hiyab", ElDiario.es, 8 November 2021.

^{29. &}quot;Expulsan a una alumna de un instituto de Guadalajara por llevar hiyab", ElDiario.es, 8 November 2021.

A similar case concerns Hana, who sued her high school at the beginning of the school year, as the centre did not allow her to come to class wearing her veil, due to internal regulations.³⁰ The school management told Hana that due to "hygienic reasons" she could not wear anything on her head. Their discourse was justified using the school's internal regulation which compared the hijab to any other fashion accessory, in violation of Hana's fundamental rights. Similar instances of discrimination in schools have continued to occur in 2022 in Málaga, Andalucía.³¹

In these cases, past and future, the focus should be on protecting the religious freedom of the students, as their choice is based on a fundamental freedom.

Another contested area in education is the teaching of Islamic religion as an alternative to Catholic religion in school. Most regions in Spain have started to execute the mandate of the law in this regard, which recognises the students' right to this subject. According to the Spanish legal framework,³² Islamic religious teaching in schools is taught by teachers designated by local Muslim communities belonging to the *Comisión Islámica de España* ("Spanish Islamic Commission") with the approval of their respective federation.

These religious teachings have the goals of arousing the interest of children in good actions, teaching them moral values, participating in festivities and events, and familiarising them with Koranic teachings and characters. These teachings, together with their values, emotions, everyday habits, behaviours and attitudes, constitute an important part of the children's formation process as human beings.³³

In actuality, however, accessing these courses is a veritable bureaucratic labyrinth with multiple steps and actors involved. 34

According to data of the *Observatorio Andalusi* ("Andalusi Obserevatory"), in their 2020 report, the largest Muslim student population is concentrated in Andalucía, Cataluña, Madrid, and Valencia.³⁵

 [&]quot;Hana ha denunciado a su instituto por no dejarle asistir a clase con hijab: "Me siento rechazada y humillada"", Yasss, 7 October 2021.

 [&]quot;Denuncian que un colegio de Málaga "aísla" a una alumna de 14 años por ponerse el hiyab", Europapress, 7 March 2022.

^{32. &}quot;Resolución de 14 de marzo de 2016, de la Dirección General de Evaluación y Cooperación Territorial, por la que se publica el currículo de la enseñanza de Religión Islámica de la Educación Infantil", Boletín Oficial del Estado (Access Date: 24 May 2022).

^{33. &}quot;Resolución de 14 de marzo de 2016, de la Dirección General de Evaluación y Cooperación Territorial, por la que se publica el currículo de la enseñanza de Religión Islámica de la Educación Infantil", Boletín Oficial del Estado, p.20517-20521 (Access Date: 24 May 2022).

^{34. &}quot;El laberinto burocrático para estudiar islam en Madrid", El País, 29 July 2021.

^{35. &}quot;Informe especial 2020. Institución para la observación y el seguimiento de la situación del ciudadano musulmán y la islamofobia en España", Observatorio Andalusí, https://ucide.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/isj20. pdf (Accessed 24 May 2022).

Politics

Throughout 2021, different parties have carried out Islamophobic campaigns directly targeting the Spanish Muslim community. This is the case, for example, with Vox during the regional Catalonian elections in February. Several Catalonian Islamic communities denounced Vox's promotional videos to the public prosecutor, due to blatant Islamophobic content and attacks against their right to freedom of religion and confession. The videos where framed by the party's "Stop Islamisation" campaign, which eventually led to the temporary closure of the party's official Twitter account. Twitter itself closed the account under charges of "hate speech" ³⁶.

Among the party members sharing these videos and participating in the campaign, were Jorge Buxadé,³⁷ a rising politician with national ambitions, and Rocío de Meer,³⁸ a congress woman from Vox who was caught spreading Nazi propaganda videos.



Figure 6: Screenshot and Tweet of an anti-Muslim video, shared by Jorge Buxadé, a rising politician with national ambitions.



Figure 7: Islamophobic tweet by Rocío de Meer, congresswoman from Vox³⁹

Vox's actions in 2021 do not stop there. During the municipal elections in Madrid, Cthe far-right party displayed posters against "MENA" (*Menor Extranjero no Acompañado* or third-country unaccompanied underage national) immigrants in the city's metro system. ⁴⁰ The posters helped fuel online hate during the Madrid elec-

^{36. &}quot;Las comunidades islámicas de Cataluña denuncian los vídeos de Vox ante la Fiscalía por "islamófobos"", RTVE, 1 February 2021.

 [&]quot;Jorge Buxadé: el fulgurante ascenso del número dos de Vox bajo el paraguas de Abascal, ElDiario.es, 29 September 2020.

^{38. &}quot;Rocío de Meer, la diputada de Vox pillada difundiendo vídeos de un canal de propaganda nazi", El Mundo,13 August 2020.

Rocio de Meer, Twitter, 16 February 2021, https://twitter.com/MeerRocio/status/1361765628978339847 (Access Date: 17 February 2021). The Tweet reads, from top to bottom: "Yes, we want to fight the growing islamization of Catalonia. And the rest of the country's too. Stop Islamization".

 [&]quot;La Fiscalía de Madrid recurre el cartel de Vox contra los mena por 'discriminatorio'", El Confidencial, 1 May 2021.

tions. Furthermore, a congresswoman from the same party starred in a video which presented Muslims in Ceuta, a Spanish city on the north coast of Africa, as a threat to "Christian culture". 41



Figure 8: Vox's poster featuring a face-off between MENAs and Spanish grandmothers, during the 2021 Madrid municipal elections⁴²

Another far-right party, España 2000, was also involved in judicial problems because of a possible hate crime against Islam, after a protest on December 18, 2020 in Plaza de los Pinazos (Valencia).⁴³

Finally, the 2021 Fundamental Rights Agency report highlights that ethnic minorities, including migrants, are suffering ever-growing discrimination in all spheres of life; that stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes persist among the general population; and that these trends have intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁴

Media

Media reports on Islamic matters are often incorrect, and outlets become loudspeakers for the far-right and the diffusion of fake news and misinformation. We cannot overemphasise the key influence of such reporting on creating social polarisation and promoting the view of the immigrant and the "other" as a usurper of national resources.

Indeed, during 2021, a number of news stories published by newspapers were outright fake. This is the case of the newspaper *El Español*, which reported misin-

^{41. &}quot;La diputada de Vox protagoniza un vídeo en el que presenta a los musulmanes ceutíes como una amenaza para la "cultura cristiana", Ceuta actualidad, 11 August 2021.

^{42. &}quot;El cartel con los 'menas' de Vox se debate en el Congreso de los Diputados", RTVE, 21 April 2021. The poster reads, from top to bottom: "A MENA (third-country unaccompanied underage national), [gets] 4700eur a month. Your grandmother, [gets] 460eur monthly pension. VOX, Protect Madrid. Vote Safe".

^{43. &}quot;La Fiscalía de Valencia pide juzgar al grupo fascista España 2000 por delito de odio", El Mundo, 15 March

^{44. &}quot;Fundamental Rights Report 2021", European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 10 June 2021, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2021-fundamental-rights-report-2021_en.pdf , (Access Date: 24 May 2022).

formation on how MENAs were receiving payments from different regional governments in Spain.⁴⁵

Another instance of fake news occurred when the newspaper *ABC*, in mid-May, reported that immigrants arriving in Ceuta had stormed four schools and burnt one of them down.⁴⁶

Mediterráneo Digital and *La Gaceta de la Iberosfera*, media outlets allied with Vox, starred in an even more glaring case of fake news. They reported on a physical assault against an underage minor in Ceuta, where the assailants were claimed to be immigrants. Police investigations, however, showed that all assailants were Spanish. ⁴⁷ These news stories were refuted by *Maldita Migración*, "Damned Migration", a journalism channel that researches fake news about immmigration and refugees, using fact-checking tools to establish the veracity of the claims and counter-factually check the facts. ⁴⁸

In a related report "Islamophobia in the Media", the Spanish-Moroccan association Asociación Marroquí argues that "the hate speech found online can manifest in journalistic pieces, in online forum comment sections, on the number of likes on pictures or news, or on commentary provided by the public."

The same report also highlights "gendered Islamophobia", the double discrimination faced by Muslim women. This is often related to the immigrant status, the fear towards the working class and/or the poor, and rampant disinformation. Thus, a perfect storm occurs whereby the media outlets feel justified in attacking immigrants in their publications.⁵⁰

In sum, in the last year, certain political parties used several news channels to advance their interests by means of fake news and misinformation. Vulnerable collectives, such as migrants and religious minorities, have been repeatedly accused of invasion, theft, beatings, or sexual assault. In only a single year, in fact, over 300 instances of such lies have been recorded.⁵¹

^{45. &}quot;La paga mensual de los 'menas' que tanto molesta a Vox va de 400 a 700€: el gasto por autonomía", El Español, 20 April 2021.

 [&]quot;Rutas de autobús desde el interior de Marruecos hasta la frontera de Ceuta: «Está todo perfectamente organizado»", ABC, 19 August 2021.

^{47. &}quot;Siete inmigrantes ilegales de origen marroquí apuñalan a un menor para robarle el bolso en Ceuta", La Gaceta de la Iberosfera, 26 July 2021.

^{48. &}quot;Más de 300 bulos y desinformaciones sobre migrantes, refugiados y minorías religiosas que te están intentando colar en el Día Internacional del Migrante", Maldita Migración, 18 December 2021.

 [&]quot;Islamofobia en los Medios de Comunicación", Asociación Marroquí, 2020, https://www.islamofobia.es/app/download/11086560852/AsociacionMarroqui-IslamofobiaEnLosMedios.pdf?t=1641214965, (Access date: 24 May 2022).

^{50. &}quot;Extranjeras y subvencionadas: el estereotipo que dan los bulos de las mujeres musulmanas con velo", Maldita Migración, 8 March 2022.

^{51. &}quot;Más de 300 bulos y desinformaciones sobre migrantes, refugiados y minorías religiosas que te están intentando colar en el Día Internacional del Migrante", Maldita Migración, 18 December 2021.

Justice System

In Spain, the existence of a diversity of confessions among the population is a reality, but the recognition of their full rights is still a work in progress, in the social, educational, and workplace environments. To this end, and especially in the third case, there is a need to count on a strong judicial framework that ensures peaceful cohabitation of the labour organizational power and the fundamental rights of the workers.⁵²

Some positive developments have, however, taken place at the national level. On April 8, 2021, Seville's *Juzgado de Primera Instancia* (Court of First Instance) confirmed a sentence against the newspaper *ABC*, for violating the right to have one's honour respected. The ruling was in favour of seven members of Seville's mosque, after having been unfairly linked to a jihadist terrorist attack by the newspaper.⁵³

At the end of May 2021, the Public Prosecutor Office in Cantabria requested a sentence of nine months of prison and a fine of 2,400 euros against a citizen of Santander, who was found guilty of a hate crime after stalking and insulting a Muslim citizen in Oviedo, a neighbouring region in the north of Spain.⁵⁴

Finally, and most recently, a woman's request that her children would be allowed to take Islamic religious classes in school was heeded by the *Tribunal Superior de Justicia de la Región de Murcia* ("High Court of Justice of Murcia"). This judicial body considers that the local administration did not act correctly according to the spirit of the law, unnecessarily complicating access to said classes.⁵⁵

Moreover, from the 2021 SOS Racismo report on "Institutional Islamophobia and Securitisation", we can gauge that existent counterterrorism provisions are being linked to an increase in Islamophobia, legitimised by a "coercive legislation" and opening the doors to further discrimination against Muslims in Spain. ⁵⁶ Chiefly among these counterterrorism practices are the surveillance of social and family environments, and the profiling of citizens based on external appearances or the display of behaviours, usually religious, that are understood as signalling a radicalisation process.

Manuela Durán Bernardino. "La frecuente colisión entre el derecho a la libertad religiosa y los intereses empresariales en una sociedad multicultural", MODULEMA. Revista Científica sobre Diversidad Cultural, Vol. 1 (2017), p. 143-163.

 [&]quot;Condenan a Diario ABC por vulnerar el derecho al honor de siete personas al relacionarlas con el yihadismo",
 El Salto Diario, 9 April 2021.

^{54. &}quot;Piden cárcel para una mujer por insultar a una musulmana residente en Oviedo que paseaba con 'hiyab' por Santander", El Comercio, 22 May 2021.

 [&]quot;La Justicia urge al Gobierno de Murcia a dar clases de religión islámica: "Los niños musulmanes también tienen derechos"", ElDiario.es, 15 February 2022.

^{56.} Salma Amazian, Islamofobia institucional y securitización (Madrid: SOS Racismo, 2021).

Internet

Social media has become the perfect vehicle to channel hateful ideology and related political actions, in part thanks to the rise of phenomena such as fake news and the "post-truth". Many citizens experience real difficulties in distinguishing between plausible information and hoaxes, which, in turn, helps to manipulate them. We refer here to an emotional type of manipulation, which political and media discourses acerbate with the help of exaggerations, misinformation, and disinformation.⁵⁷

In order to fight this increment in hateful discourses, on March 18, 2021, the Secretaría de Estado de Migraciones del Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones ("Secretary of State for Migration of the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration") presented a new plan to combat hate speech online, the Protocolo para Combatir el Discurso de Odio Ilegal en Línea ("Protocol to Combat Illegal Hate Speech Online"). The plan's highlight is a daily monitoring exercise of the main social media platforms to highlight instances of hate speech.⁵⁸

According to this monitoring, Islamophobia-related hate speech constituted 12.3% of all recorded hate speech in January-February, 11.4% in March-April, 14.7% in May-June, 14.5% in July-August, 9.5% in September-October, and 14.1%, with a rise of de 4.6% respective to previous years, in November-December.

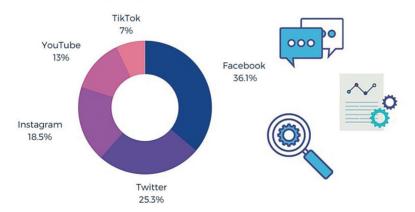


Figura 1. Porcentaje de notificaciones realizadas a cada plataforma

Figure 9: "Percentage of notifications received for hate speech by each social media platform", between January-February, 2021. Source: OBERAXE⁵⁹

Francisco Javier Cantón Correa y Pablo Galindo Calvo. Posverdad, redes sociales e islamofobia en Europa. Un estudio de caso: el incendio de Notre Dame. RAEIC, Revista de la Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación, Vol. 6, No. 12 (2019), p.35-57.

 [&]quot;Protocolo para combatir el discurso de odio en línea", Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBER-AXE)-Secretary of State for Migration, https://www.inclusion.gob.es/oberaxe/ficheros/ejes/discursoodio/PRO-TOCOLO_DISCURSO_ODIO.pdf (Access Date: 24 May 2022).

 [&]quot;Protocolo para combatir el discurso de odio en línea", Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBER-AXE)-Secretary of State for Migration, https://www.inclusion.gob.es/oberaxe/ficheros/ejes/discursoodio/PRO-TOCOLO_DISCURSO_ODIO.pdf (Access Date: 24 May 2022).

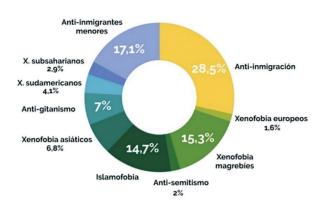


Figura 4. Contenidos de discurso de odio según motivo de discriminación

Figure 10: "Hate speech content online disaggregated by type of target", in May-June 2021. Islamophobia constitutes a 14.7% of all recorded hate speech, but anti-immigration and anti-Moroccan feelings constitute another 28.5% and 15.3% respectively. Source: OBERAXE[∞]

The *Toma de Granada*, the conquest of Granada by Christian forces in the 15th century, is one of the recurrent topics for Islamophobic content online. It is particularly relevant among far-right groups and during the namesake festivity.



Figure 11: Screenshot of a tweet by far-right extremist party *España 2000*, commemorating the *Toma de Granada*, the conquest of Granada, by Christian forces in the 15th century. Shared on the 2nd January, anniversary of the conquest⁶¹.

Figure 12: Screenshot of a tweet by far-right extremist party *La Falange*, also celebrating the conquest of Granada by Christian forces in the 15th century. Shared on the 2nd January, anniversary of the conquest⁶².

 [&]quot;Protocolo para combatir el discurso de odio en línea", Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBER-AXE)-Secretary of State for Migration, https://www.inclusion.gob.es/oberaxe/ficheros/ejes/discursoodio/PRO-TOCOLO_DISCURSO_ODIO.pdf (Access Date: 24 May 2022)..

^{61.} The Tweet reads, top to bottom: Today is the 530 year anniversary of the Conquest of Granada, which would conclude the *Reconquista* of Spain. But we should stay alert, as Islam is not at all dead or defeated. Today as yesterday, the fight continues". The accompanying image reads: Even if endogamic leftists want you to forget it... Spain defeated Islam. 2 January, Conquest of Granada. Proud of our History". España 2000, Twitter, 02 January 2022, https://twitter.com/Espana_2000/status/1477644389040242692 (Access Date: 2 January 2022).

^{62.} The Tweet reads, top to bottom: "Honour to our Catholic Kings on the day of the Conquest of Granada. On the 2nd January 1492, the course of our nation's history changed forever: we defeated Islam and took back Gra-

Instagram has also seen the growth of Islamophobic movements, seen through the rise of hashtags such as #StopIslam, associated with racist and Islamophobic content. This hashtag also served to bring together people interested in demonising Muslims. It proved to be a space hyper-focused on security, politics, and terrorism debates, heightening a sense of insecurity and thus contributing to hate discourses.⁶³

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As mentioned before, there are several media outlets with strong links to far-right political parties and social movements. These outlets promote hate speech against Islam by creating and distributing fake news or misinformation about it. The most prominent such media are, among others, Caso Aislado, Estado de Alarma, Mediterráneo Digital, Libertad Digital, Diario Patriota, Radio Decisión, EsRadio, Alerta Digital, Euskalnews, Periodista Digital, and OKDiario.



Figure 13: Screenshot of a tweet by *Decisión Radio*, a far-right sympathising news medium, sharing an Islamphobic journalist Javier García, on the 19th October 2020⁶⁴

Figure 14: Screenshot of a tweet by *EsRadio*, sharing anti-Muslim statements by journalist Carlos Vidal, who has recently published a book offering a deeply Orientalist reading of the Prophet's life and words⁶⁵.



nada, meaning the end of the Reconquista, and a triumph to Spain and Christianity. Believe again". La Falange, Twitter, 02 January 2022, https://twitter.com/lafalange/status/1477548136252035081 (Access Date: 2 January 2022).

- Sabina Civila, Luis M. Romero-Rodríguez y Amparo Civila. "The Demonization of Islam through Social Media: A Case Study of #Stopislam in Instagram". MDPI journals, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2020).
- 64. The Tweet reads, top to bottom: "Editorial by @javiergarciasac: Is Islam compatible with the West? Freedom of expression vs freedom to offend". Decisión Radio, Twitter, 19 October 2020, https://twitter.com/Radiodecision/status/1318118170310397952 (Access Date: 7 April 2022).
- 65. "A radical Christian prays, but a radical Muslim will take the sword". Javier Somalo interviews César Vidal to find out the secrets of his new book: Muhammad the Guide. César Vidal has a new book. The writer, historian and director of Es la noche de César, has faced one of the most controversial characters of our era: Muhammad. After Jesus the Jew and Buddha the Prince, César Vidal completes his trilogy of the great religions with Muhammad the Guide, edited by Plaza & Janés. Thus, Javier Somalo has invited him to go through the microphones of Debates in Freedom to discover the many aspects of the life and work of Muhammad as well as his myths and beliefs, mostly unknown in the West". "César Vidal: "Un cristiano radical reza, pero un musulmán coge la espada", EsRadio, 8 July 2012.

Among the most representative personalities of the Islamophobic movement in Spain are Javier Esparza, a journalist; Isabel San Sebastián, a journalist; Herman Tertsch, an MEP for Vox; Cristina Seguí, co-founder of Vox party and journalist for *Estado de Alarma*; Javier García Isac, a journalist at Radio Decisión; Yolanda Couceiro, a politician; Javier Negre, a journalist for Estado de Alarma; Noelia de Trastámara, contributor at Periodista Digital, Aquí la Voz de Europa, and El Toro TV; Federico Jiménez Losantos, a journalist at Libertad Digital and EsRadio; and César Vidal, a journalist.⁶⁶



Figure 15: Screenshot of a tweet by journalist Alfonso Rojo, complaining against the Catalonian immigration policy, shared on the 17th August 2017⁶⁷.

Figure 16: Screenshot of a tweet by journalist Isabel San Sebastián, who claims there is no Islamophobia and conflates concerns about it with an apology of violent "Islamism". Shared on the 17th August de 2017⁶⁸.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Since March 2021, the *Fundación Al Fanar* takes part in the MAGIC Project ("Muslim Women and Communities Against Gender Islamophobia in Society"), with the goal of preventing gendered Islamophobia in the media.

Also in March 2021, and as a consequence of the pandemic and the increase in online hate speech, the *Secretaría de Estado de Migraciones del Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones* ("Secretary of State for Migration of the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration") launched a targeted plan, the *Protocolo para Combatir el Discurso de Odio Ilegal en Línea* ("Protocol to Combat Illegal Hate Speech Online").

As part of the project SALAM, another organisation, the La Merced Migraciones, works on the promotion of intercultural and interfaith cohabitation, as well as on the prevention of religious-based discrimination.

Fernando Bravo López. Islamofobia y antimusulmanismo en España: el caso de César Vidal. Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos, vol. 8, (2009), p. 1-27.

 [&]quot;Perhaps we should be holding accountable the politicians who encouraged the immigration of non-Spanish speakers to Catalonia" (translation). Fernando Rojo, Twitter, 17 August 2017, https://twitter.com/AlfonsoRojoPD/status/898244837027307520 (Access Date: 9 April 2022)

^{68. &}quot;I see a lot of goody-goody people being more concerned about a non-existent Islamophobia than about murderous Islamism. Not me. It's a war. Let's win!" (translation). Isabel San Sebastian, Twitter, 17 August 2017, https://twitter.com/isanseba/status/898277977175318529 (Access date: 9 April 2022).

Finally, RENADPI 2022 is the national network for awareness, reporting, and prevention of Islamophobia. This network collaborates with different national and regional partners, one of the most relevant being the Asociación Marroquí. Among other services, RENADPI provides legal advice for victims of Islamophobic incidents, so that they might proceed with legal reporting in an environment of safety, trust, and respect.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

First, it is necessary to keep on fighting for the respect and observation of Muslim religious freedom in Spain, as per the signed agreements and legal frameworks already existing in the country.

Furthermore, the diffusion of online fake news poses an important source of polarisation and is an important factor behind the increase in Islamophobic incidents in Spain. National courts are often unable or lack the resources to tackle this issue; thus, there is an urgent need for a supranational institution, which would be able to persecute such hate crimes in all European Union countries.

Spain's biggest challenge in the battle against hate crime is severe underreporting. Only a very small percentage of those affected by discriminatory incidents ends up reporting or denouncing the facts.

In order to deal with the increasingly widespread mistrust of Islam and Muslims, Spanish society also needs workshops, colloquiums, and talks where those affected by discrimination can present their experiences to students, and more broadly, Spanish citizens. Likewise, an equal distribution of Muslim students among the school population is needed to improve overall integration in the country.

Chronology

- **16.01.2021:** The door of the Antigua Mosque in Fuerteventura (Canary Islands) is stoned.
- **28.01.2021:** Vox launches their "Stop Islamisation" campaign, in view of the regional elections in Catalonia.
- 1.02.2021: The Public Prosecutor's Office investigates social media messages that called for violence against migrants in Gran Canaria (Canary Islands).
- **10.02.2021:** The Court of Instruction Number 5, in Ceuta, calls two congressmen from Vox to appear before court, in light of their partaking in Islamophobic and racist message chains.
- 17.02.2021: A centre for migrant minors is attacked in Torredembarra (Catalonia).

- **21.02.2021:** The door of the San Javier Mosque (Murcia) is graffitied with "Death to Islam" and burnt.
- **15.03.2021**: *España 2000* is brought to court by the Public Prosecutor's Office for a hate crime, after a demonstration on December 18, 2020 that ran under the slogan "No to Islam".
- **23.03.2021:** Football player Mario Hermoso retweeted a message calling immigrants "invaders". He subsequently rectified and deleted it.
- **7.04.2021:** The Public Prosecutor's Office demanded up to ten years imprisonment for 15 ultras, among them the leader of *Democracia Nacional* en Cataluña, for a crime of harassment against the Muslim community of Nou Barris, Barcelona, and attacks against their mosque.
- 19.04.2021: A trial date is set for the leader of *Hogar Social Madrid*, after a 2016 attack against the M-30 mosque, in Madrid.
- **21.04.2021:** A man is sentenced to inciting hatred, after distributing messages against Muslims and immigrants through Twitter and Facebook.
- **21.04.2021:** Vox targets 269 migrant minors and polarises the Madrid regional elections' campaign.
- **4.06.2021:** The Prosecutor's Office requested a year in prison for a defendant for uttering insults and derogatory phrases towards an Islamic-looking woman who was traveling on the Madrid metro wearing a hijab.
- **5.06.2021:** A former colleague attacks Momoun Koutaibi with an iron bar, in Alhama de Murcia (Murcia) after being fired.
- 13.06.2021: Younes Bilal is murdered in Mazarrón (Murcia) after being shot three times.
- **22.06.2021:** A man in Cartagena (Murcia), of Moroccan descent, is stabbed twice.
- **28.06.2021:** Vox accuses Muslim representatives in Ceuta's plenary session of being "pro-Moroccan".
- 7.07.2021: Attack on the mosque of Cabezo de Torres (Murcia), which also appears graffitied with the words "Stop invasion" and "No to Islam", and where a pig's head with a knife is placed.
- 13.07.2021: A teacher from Alcalá de Henares (Madrid) was disqualified for six years after accepting the sentence for insulting and beating a person of North African origin.
- **18.07.2021:** Two residents of Castro Urdiales (Cantabria) investigated for uttering racist insults against an Algerian neighbour.
- **31.07.2021:** A woman receives a six-month prison sentence for insulting a veiled Muslim woman walking through Sardinero (Cantabria).
- **6.08.2021:** A Moroccan migrant recounts in court a xenophobic attack suffered last May in Artà (Majorca) by an unknown person.

- 11.08.2021: A Vox congresswoman stars in a video where she presents Muslims from Ceuta as a threat to "Christian culture".
- 28.08.2021: A Frenchman of Algerian origin was attacked by several teenagers shouting "Do you believe in Allah?" in a fast-food shop in Atocha (Madrid).
- **2.09.2021:** The feminist mural of Santurtzi (Basque Country) is vandalised with Islamophobic and Nazi graffiti.
- **27.09.2021:** A 14-year-old girl is prohibited from entering her high-school class at the IES Moratalaz (Madrid) for wearing a hijab.
- **8.11.2021:** The Prosecutor's Office denounces the leader of Bastion Frontal for "urging" violence against Moroccans and Muslims during a rally held in front of the Moroccan embassy.
- **8.11.2021:** A 13-year-old girl was expelled from her high school in Madrid for wearing a hijab.
- 21.11.2021: On May 18, two individuals, in broad daylight, shot a Moroccan minor who was walking with fellow compatriots on the street in Ceuta. One perpetrator shot a gun while the other recorded the video with his phone, and they later disseminated it online. After the visualization of this filmed evidence by police forces, the investigation conclude the identity of the presumed perpetrator on the 21st of November.
- 20.12.2021: A National Police agent was sentenced to two years in prison for torturing and humiliating a detainee in the cells of the police station: "Moors are only given water".



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^{1.} Emin Poljarevic, "Exploring individual motivation for social change: mobilization of the Muslim brotherhood's youth in pre-revolutionary Egypt," European University Institute, Florence (2012).

Executive Summary

"Islamophobia in Sweden: National Report 2022" presents an overview of rapidly growing Islamophobia in the broader Swedish context, including an increasingly arbitrary securitization of Muslim civil society groups and organizations, as well as increased anti-Muslim radicalization in online spaces and platforms.

In recent years, Islamophobic narratives have quickly entered the political mainstream as political parties and media outlets across the spectrum have engaged in securitization of the Muslim presence in Sweden and calling for increasingly draconian measures against Muslim minorities. A noteworthy new level in anti-Muslim rhetoric was set in the spring of 2022, when the Christian Democratic Party leader called for police to shoot more "Islamists" following riots responding to an anti-Muslim farright Danish extremist burning the Quran.²

As the conservative parties have started cooperating with the previously overtly fascist Sweden Democrats, a long and ongoing history of aggressive Islamophobic rhetoric and politics risk becoming legitimized to many voters.

Local politicians' attempts to regulate traditional Muslim women's garments have largely failed as courts overrule them with reference to the Swedish constitution.

A small but influential group of thought leaders, consisting of a network of politicians, journalists, and academics, has become important for the development of Islamophobic discourse in Sweden in recent years. They produce a range of materials that significantly impacts national and local institutional policies in a consistently negative way for Muslim communities in Sweden.

Muslims are increasingly withdrawing from the public sphere due to widespread accusations of extremism and a lack of political allies. Islamophobic news sites and media channels are now receiving state subsidies meant for support of independent media outlets. Meanwhile, Muslim organizations in civil society find it increasingly difficult to find people willing to act as their spokespeople, due to personal security concerns and frequently unbalanced and negative media coverage of Muslim organizations.

Rebecca Haimi, "KD överväger att bojkotta SR," SVT 2022, https://www.svt.se/kultur/efter-kritiserade-oversattningen-sr-gar-inte-kd-till-motes. Henrik Torehammar, "Busch kritiserar polisen: Varför har vi inte minst 100 skadade islamister?," Sveriges radio (April 22 2022), https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/ebba-busch-kritiserarpolisen-varfor-skot-man-inte-skarpt

Svensk Sammanfattning

Islamofobirapporten 2022: Sverige diskuterar en snabb utveckling inom svensk politik och lagstiftning och ett alltmer godtyckligt förhållningssätt från myndigheters och förvaltnings sida gentemot muslimska civilsamhällesgrupper och organisationer, samt en ständigt växande antimuslimsk radikalisering såväl på nätets ytterkanter som på de stora onlineplattformarna.

Under de senaste åren har islamofobiska narrativ snabbt nått in i den politiska huvudfåran, eftersom partier och medier över hela det politiska spektrumet har ägnat sig åt retorik där muslimsk närvaro i Sverige ses som en säkerhetsfråga, och efterlyst allt mer brutala eller drastiska åtgärder mot muslimska minoriteter. Ett nytt riktmärke för antimuslimsk retorik sattes våren 2022, när Kristdemokraternas partiledare uppmanade polisen att skjuta fler "islamister" efter upploppen som uppstod i samband med att en dansk högerextremist genomförde en serie publika koranbränder.

I takt med att de konservativa partierna har börjat samarbeta med det tidigare öppet fascistiska partiet Sverigedemokraterna riskerar en lång och pågående historia av aggressiv islamofobisk retorik och politik att bli legitim i många väljares ögon.

Lokalpolitikers försök till lagstiftning som främst riktar sig mot muslimska kvinnor som bär traditionell klädsel har till stor del misslyckats till följd av att rättsinstanserna har åsidosatt sådana beslut med hänvisning till den svenska grundlagen.

En liten men inflytelserik grupp tankeledare, bestående av politiker, journalister och akademiker, har kommit att bli centrala för utvecklingen av islamofobi i Sverige idag. De får konsekvent uppbackning av sina partier eller institutioner och producerar material som fått signifikant inverkan på diskursen om islam och muslimer.

Muslimer tystnar alltmer och jagas bort från den offentliga sfären på grund av utbredda anklagelser om extremism, och brist på politiska allierade. Öppet islamofobiska nyhetssajter och mediekanaler får nu statliga subventioner avsedda för oberoende medier. Samtidigt har muslimska organisationer i det civila samhället allt svårare att hitta människor som är villiga att agera som deras talesperson, på grund av oro för deras personliga säkerhet samt starka negativa förväntningar på mediebevakningen av muslimska organisationer.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Kingdom of Sweden

Type of Regime: Constitutional monarchy

Form of Government: Parliamentary democracy Ruling Parties: Swedish Social Democratic Party

Opposition Parties: Moderate Party (Moderates), Sweden Democrats, Centre Party, Left Party, Christian Democrats, Liberal Party, Green Party

Last Elections: General election 2018: Social Democratic Party 28.3%; Moderates 19.8%; Sweden Democrats 17.5%; Centre Party 8.6%; Left Party 8%; Christian Democrats 6.32%; Liberal Party 5.5%; Green Party 4.4%; Feminist Initiative 0.5%; Other parties 1.1%

Total Population: 10.23 million (2019)

Major Languages: Swedish

Official Religion: No official religion, but the head of state must be Christian according to the constitution

Major Religions (% of Population, 2019): Church of Sweden (Evangelical Lutheran) (56.4%), Other Protestants (3.4%), Islam (1.9%), Eastern Orthodox (1.7%), Catholic Church (1.2%), Other Christian (0.3%), Other religions (0.3%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): There are no official statistics, but reports have stated figures up to 810,000 (more than 7%) based on statistics of background in Muslim countries, out of which about one third is estimated to be practicing Muslims. According to the Swedish Agency for Support for Faith Communities there were 242,000 registered members of Muslim faith communities in Sweden 2020.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Association of Sweden, Union of Islamic Associations, Islamic Shiite Association, Ibn Rushd Study Association

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: The Anti-Discrimination Agencies (a network of 18 local NGOs), Amnesty International, Ibn Rushd Study Association, Swedish Committee Against Anti-Muslim Racism, Swedish Network for Research on Anti-Muslim Racism and Islamophobia (FARI), INSAN, Amanah, EXPO, Muslim Human Right Committee (MMRK)

Far-Right Parties: Sweden Democrats (SD), Medborgerlig samling (Citizens United), Alternative for Sweden (AFS)

Far-Right Movements: Nordisk alternativhöger (Nordic Alt-Right)

Far-Right Militant Organizations: Nordiska motståndsrörelsen (Nordic Resistance Movement, NMR, also participates in local and parliamentary elections)

Limitations to Islamic Practices

Several municipalities with Sweden Democrats in ruling positions have introduced limitations to expressions of Muslim identity (perceived religious clothing, food requirements etc.) in schools, workplaces, and public spaces, but most of them have been ruled illegal by courts or other state authorities. Halal slaughter is allowed if the animal is stunned before the slaughter. There are workplace/school related limitations such as lack of prayer rooms.

- Hijab Ban: No

- Halal Slaughter Ban: No

- Minaret Ban: No

- Circumcision Ban: No

- Burka Ban: No

Introduction

This brief overview reports a sharp increase of Islamophobia and subsequent discrimination on the basis of religion and ethnicity in Sweden, including the shrinking public space for Muslim civil society organizations (MCSOs) in recent years.³ There are strong signals of increased hate speech and hate crimes against Muslims both as individuals and as part of larger religious and ethnic minority groups across Swedish society.⁴ At the same time, it is difficult to accurately assess the precise levels of Islamophobia and discrimination because of the lack of official statistics on religious and ethnic belonging in Sweden.

There are however several indicators that suggest that Muslims and Islam are increasingly described and targeted as threats to Swedish society, primarily by farright political groups, and also increasingly, by a number of state authorities. One major indicator is the increased number of state actions targeting MCSOs in forms of arbitrary and disproportionate forms of administrative inspections and audits. Another indicator of rising Islamophobia is the increasing number of verbal attacks on Muslims and perceived Muslims in public spaces and workplaces. These attacks have triggered self-censorship among Muslim civil society actors, which is seriously curtailing their ability to act in the public sphere.⁵ Yet another indicator is the rise of physical attacks against Muslim individuals and those perceived to be Muslim, reported by the police, the Discrimination Ombudsman (DO), and The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet, BRÅ). This situation has not improved since 2018, when the Swedish government received harsh criticism from the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) over the high levels of anti-Muslim attacks in the country.6

Another indicator is the mainstream Swedish media's underreporting of Islamophobic incidents.⁷ The term "Islamophobia" itself seems to be contested in media reporting, resulting in rare usage of the term in relevant media coverage of anti-Mus-

Marie Demker, "Ökat motstånd mot flyktingmottagning och invandrares religionsfrihet " in Larmar och gör sig till, ed. Ulrika Andersson et al. (Göteborgs universitet: SOM-institutet, 2017). Lennart Weibull, "Synen på trosuppfattningar i Sverige," in Storm och stiltje, ed. Ulrika Andersson et al. (Göteborgs universitet: SOM-institutet, 2019)

MUCF, "Kartläggning av hot och hat mot det civila samhället," (2021), https://www.mucf.se/publikationer/ kartlaggning-av-hot-och-hat-mot-det-civila-samhallet; Johanna Olseryd, Lisa Wallin, and Anna Repo, Brå rapport 2021:3 (2021).

Olseryd, Wallin, and Repo, Brå rapport 2021:3. Mattias Gardell, Moskéers och muslimska församlingars utsatthet och säkerhet i Sverige (2018), http://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1253805/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

CERD, "Concluding observations on the combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports of Sweden CERD/C/SWE/CO/22-23," (June 6 2018), https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/170/20/PDF/G1817020.pdf:OpenElement.

Marta Axner, Representationer, stereotyper och nyhetsvärdering: Rapport från medieanalys om representationer av muslimer i svenska nyheter (2015). Klas Borell, "Islamofobiska fördomar och hatbrott: En kunskapsöversikt," SST (2012).

lim violence and attacks.⁸ In 2021, only a handful of mainstream news articles made references to Islamophobia despite frequent anti-Muslim hate speech in public discourse.⁹ A further indicator is a national survey, published in 2022, showing that more than one third of the adult Swedish population believes that Islam and Muslims threaten "Western civilization."¹⁰



Allvarliga brister. Göteborgs skolpolitiker får skarp kritik från Stadsrevisionen efter den uteblivna elevpengen till privata Römosseskolan. Bedömningen är att agerandet inte följer skollagen Foto: Gabriel Tiulander/Markus Andersson

Granskning: Politikerna får hård kritik efter Römosse-skandalen

Göteborgs skolpolitiker får skarp kritik från Stadsrevisionen efter den uteblivna elevpengen till privata Römosseskolan. Bedömningen är att agerandet inte följer skollagen. "Absurt", säger Axel Darvik (L) nämndens ordförande.

Politicians face harsh criticism from city audit following scrutiny after the scandal where a Muslim private school was denied funding. Liberal politician Axel Darvik calls the criticism "absurd".

Figure 1: See footnote 12.

Added to this is the increased usage of discursive tropes such as "Islamist" and "Islamism" in social and mainstream media in relation to Muslim social presence, which signals that publicly or politically active Muslims and MCSOs are perceived as threats to Swedish society. One result is that Muslim schools, MC-

^{8.} Mattias Ekman, "Interaktiv rasism på internet, i pressen och politiken. Policy brief, Delmi, 2021:8.," (2021), https://www.delmi.se/publikationer/policy-brief-2021-8-interaktiv-rasism-pa-internet-i-pressen-och-politiken/.

Ekman, "Interaktiv rasism på internet, i pressen och politiken. Policy brief, Delmi, 2021:8.." Johan Farkas, Jannick Schou, and Christina Neumayer, "Platformed antagonism: racist discourses on fake Muslim Facebook pages," *Critical Discourse Studies* 15, no. 5 (2018/10/20 2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2018.145 0276, https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2018.1450276.

EXPO, ""Kampen om värderingarna: sociokulturella konflikter i en polariserad tid," Report: Data for Democracy " (2022), https://data.expo.se/data-for-demokrati/report.

SOs, and faith-based organizations are suspected and increasingly accused of promoting Islamism and radicalization, resulting in additional investigations that in vast majority of cases clear these organizations of the accusations of extremism. However, such investigations and clearing of accusation have often had little impact and been largely neglected in the local and even national decision-making processes. 12

Media and political labelling of MCSOs and individuals as being somehow "Islamist" is increasingly being used to describe Muslim civil society participation as "extremist," arguably in order to convince the general public that Muslims and Islam represent anti-systemic and anti-democratic forces, and should be treated as national security threats.¹³ Even initiatives against Islamophobia are sometimes considered as Islamist activism.¹⁴

One of the concrete consequences of these developments is that an increasing number of MCSOs, faith-based organizations, and Muslim schools and their members are arbitrarily accused, harassed, and thus hindered from participation in the civil society. One reported difficulty for several Muslim organizations is recruiting spokespeople or personnel for fear of violence and stigmatization associated with the job.¹⁵

^{11.} Erik Amnå, Anna Helander, and Benjamin Settergren, När tilliten prövas: En studie av Studieförbundet Inn Rushds samhällsbidrag, Folkbildningsrådet (2019); 8sidor, "Muslimsk förening fick rätt i domstol," (November 16 2017), https://8sidor.se/sverige/2017/11/muslimsk-forening-fick-ratt-i-domstol/; Göteborgs stad, "Drygt 27 miljoner kronor i bidrag till studieförbunden år 2022 " (March 29 2022), https://goteborg.se/wps/portal/press-och-media/aktuelltarkivet/aktuellt/f6f5a219-2ec4-4c14-8a86-0c2b9e4f0477; "Sidas utredning av Islamic Relief klar," SIDA, updated 15 april 2021, 2021, accessed 5 juli, 2021, https://www.sida.se/om-sida/ nyheter/sidas-utredning-av-islamic-relief-klar; Per Lennerbrant, "Örgryte-Härlanda stadsdelsnämnd i Göteborgs stad kritiseras för att dess förvaltning agerade i strid med objektivitetsprincipen i 1 kap. 9 § regeringsformen när den krävde att en persons medverkan i ett panelsamtal skulle ställas in. (The Örgryte-Härlanda district committee in the city of Gothenburg is criticized for its administration acting in violation of the principle of objectivity in ch. § 9 of the form of government when it demanded that a person's participation in a panel discussion be suspended.)," Justitieombudsmannen (March 31 2021), https://www.jo.se/Page-Files/32496/1414-2019.pdf; TT, "Kritiserad skola fick rätt – ny prövning görs," (January 27 2022), https:// www.svd.se/a/WjWpMg/kritiserad-skola-fick-ratt-ny-provning-gors; Lina Isaksson, "Granskning: Politikerna får hård kritik efter Römosse-skandalen," Göteborg direkt, March 23 2022, https://www.goteborgdirekt.se/nyheter/granskning-politikerna-far-hard-kritik-efter-romosse-skandalen/repvcw!YjC8tAgu5B@tFWnSxcoHFA/;TT, "Kritiserad skola fick rätt – ny prövning görs.".

Isaksson, Lina. (2022, March 23). Granskning: Politikerna får hård kritik efter Römosse-skandalen. (Review: Politicians receive harsh criticism after the Römosse scandal.) Göteborg direkt. https://www.goteborgdirekt.se/ny-heter/granskning-politikerna-far-hard-kritik-efter-romosse-skandalen/repvcw!YjC8tAgu5B@tFWnSxcoHFA/

^{13. &}quot;ECRI revised General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination - adopted on 16 March 2000 and revised on 8 December 2021," 2021, https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/recommendation-no.5. One example is the Swedish Security Service assessment of the Swedish School Consortium "Svenska islamiska skolor," (Sis) and its recommendation to the Swedish National Agency for Education to close several schools due to risks that the children in these schools are "exposed to influence for an Islamist ideology that leads to radicalization of the pupils." A six-page official assessment was prepared for the Swedish National Agency for Education, March, 28, 2022, Dnr.2019-10815-89.1.

^{14.} Aje Carlbom, Islamisk aktivism i en mångkulturell kontext - ideologisk kontinuitet eller förändring?, MSB (2018).

^{15.} Gardell, Moskéers och muslimska församlingars utsatthet och säkerhet i Sverige.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

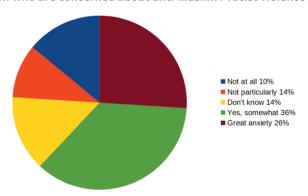
Physical and Verbal Attacks

Attacks on Islamic places of worship and Islamophobic threats are increasingly common in Sweden in recent years. For instance, six out of ten mosques in Sweden have experienced physical assault and over two-thirds of all mosques have received threats. ¹⁶ The following examples are just a few reported instances of Islamophobic attacks and threats against self-identified Muslim individuals, groups, and organizations between January 2021 and April 2022:

A dummy bomb was planted in the main entrance of the largest mosque in Stockholm on January 29, 2021. One of the mosque's imams, Mahmoud Khalfi, told the state radio that threatening letters against the mosque and racist graffiti are "very common," and that the intention is to intimidate the Muslim community.¹⁷

In a survey answered by 106 representatives of Swedish mosques, 90% perceives that there is a threat to Muslims in general, and 81% believe there is a threat to mosques particularly. For the proportion who are concerned about anti-Muslim / racist violence, see figure $2.^{18}$

Proportion who are concerned about anti-Muslim / racist violence



Question: "Do you feel that there is a concern among the parishioners? and the mosque visitors for the mosque / association, themselves, or their relatives and friends to be affected by anti-Muslim or racist violence?"

Source: Gardell, Mattias (2018). Moskéers och islamiska föreningars utsatthet och säkerhet 2018

Figure 2: see footnote 17.

Olseryd, Wallin, and Repo, Brå rapport 2021:3; Gardell, Moskéers och muslimska församlingars utsatthet och säkerhet i Sverige; MUCF, "Kartläggning av hot och hat mot det civila samhället."

^{17. &}quot;Imamen Mahmoud: Inte första gången vi blir hotade," 2021, accessed May 21, 2022, https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/imamen-mahmoud-inte-forsta-gangen-vi-blir-hotade.

^{18.} Figure 2: Gardell, Mattias. (2018). Moskéers och muslimska församlingars utsatthet och säkerhet i Sverige. http://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1253805/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Two violent school attacks characterized both as xenophobic and Islamophobic were committed in 2021 in Eslöv and Kristianstad. The attackers, aged 15 and 16, who attacked students and teachers separately, were inspired by extreme-right propaganda.¹⁹



Figure 3: see footnote 19.

The Swedish Press and Broadcast Authority decided to financially support Exakt24²⁰, an extreme right website characterized by strong Islamophobic sentiment and focused on spreading conspiracy theories. A member of the Swedish Press and Broadcast Authority resigned in protest against the decision, arguing that state subsidies ought not to support hate speech.²¹

^{19.} Sebastian Comar Alm, "15-åringen döms för skolattacken i Eslöv," (December 22 2021), https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/8Q7v7E/15-aringen-doms-for-skolattacken-i-eslov; Pekå Englund, "Skolvärlden granskar: Så kopplas skolattackerna ihop.," Skolvärlden (January 13 2022), https://skolvarlden.se/artiklar/skolvarlden-granskar-sa-kopplas-skolattackerna-med-varandra; SVT, "15-åringens måltavlor: muslimer och prideanhängare," October 20 2021, https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/skane/15-aringens-maltavlor-muslimer-och-prideanhangare; TV4, "Gör två tummar upp – sedan inleder 15-åringen den blodiga skolattacken," October 18 2021, https://www.tv4.se/artikel/6mN1xnqwK1LrTZgHgzJBpj/goer-tva-tummar-upp-sedan-inleder-15-aringenskolattacken-i-esloev

Falkirk, John. (2021). Ledamot slutar i protest mot stöd till hatsajter. Expressen. https://www.expressen.se/ny-heter/ledamot-slutar-i-protest-mot-stod-till-hatsajter/

 [&]quot;Miljonbelopp till högerextrema medier," EXPO, updated March 3, 2022, https://expo.se/2022/03/miljonbelopp-till-hogerextrema-medier; John Falkirk, "Ledamot slutar i protest mot stöd till hatsajter," Expressen (May

A series of book-burning stunts were carried out by Rasmus Paludan, a Danish-Swedish extreme-right politician from the Danish party Stram kurs, during the month of Ramadan (April 2022) and afterwards. Paludan, twice convicted for hate speech in Denmark and a well-known Islamophobe, was given permission by the Swedish police to hold anti-Muslim stunts in several cities in Sweden during which he publicly burned copies of the Quran and spoke about the expulsion of Muslims.²²



Figure 4: see footnote 22.

The rallies and riots were intensely debated in Swedish media, focusing on the importance of the protection of free speech and strategies on maintaining law and order, and much less on the Islamophobic aspects of the Quran burning.²³ A noteworthy new level in anti-Muslim rhetoric was set when the Christian Democratic Party leader called for police to shoot more "Islamists."²⁴

^{28 2021),} https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/ledamot-slutar-i-protest-mot-stod-till-hatsajter/; "Subsidies to media," 2021, https://www.mprt.se/en/subsidies-to-media/.

^{22.} Expo, "Stram Kurs och Rasmus Paludan," (April 28 2022), https://expo.se/fakta/wiki/stram-kurs-och-rasmus-paludan; "SD och Paludan i gemensam hetskampanj mot muslimer," updated April 20, 2022, https://expo.se/2022/04/sd-och-paludan-i-gemensam-hetskampanj-mot-muslimer.

Mattias Gardell, "Det slutar aldrig med bara brända böcker. Elden från det förflutnas bokbål kastar ett oroande ljus på dagens debatt," Aftonbladet (April 27 2022), https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/a/nWxkaJ/mattias-gardell-om-bokbalens-historia.

^{24.} Henrik Torehammar, "Busch kritiserar polisen: Varför har vi inte minst 100 skadade islamister?." https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/ebba-busch-kritiserar-polisen-varfor-skot-man-inte-skarpt

In the Swedish legal code, discrimination is defined in the Discrimination Act 2008²⁵ and was amended in 2014.²⁶ It aims to prevent discrimination and encourage equal rights and opportunities for citizens "regardless of gender, transgender identity, ethnic belonging, religion or any other belief, disability, sexual orientation, or age." This legal code is only concerned with discrimination against individuals and not groups or organizations. Muslim civil society organizations are therefore not considered as legal parties to cases concerning discrimination by individuals or authorities, which skews reported statistics on Islamophobia.



Figure 5: see footnote 23.

The Discrimination Ombudsman (DO) is a government body through which citizens may make complaints. The DO publishes regular surveys and reports for the public and government. The agency's 2022 yearly report shows that the total number of individual discrimination complaints rose from 3,523 cases in 2020 to 5,010 cases in 2021: a 42% increase in complaints.²⁷

Diskrimineringslag, (2008:567). https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattnings-samling/diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567. "Religion eller annan trosuppfattning," updated March 15, 2022, accessed May 24, 2022, https://www.do.se/diskriminering/diskrimineringsgrunder/religion-eller-annan-trosuppfattning-som-diskrimineringsgrund.

^{26.} SFS 2014:958, Lag om ändring i diskrimineringslagen.

^{27.} It is important to note that a part of this increase is related to requirements of the COVID-19 vaccination certificates/passports. DO, "Statistik 2015–2021. Statistik över anmälningar som inkom till Diskrimineringsombudsmannen 2015–2021," (2022), https://www.do.se/download/18.56175f8817b345aa7651d15/1648791921824/Rapport_Statistik-2015-2021.pdf.

Complaints based exclusively on religious grounds numbered 996 between 2017 and 2021, a small fraction of the total 14,710 complaints during the same period. However, most complaints of religious discrimination were directly related to ethnic discrimination, numbering 4,298 during this period.²⁸ Alongside the reported cases, the experience of discrimination has increased. Muslim children are over-represented in statistics published by the Swedish Public Health Agency where almost 20% of non-European children have experienced abusive treatment due to their ethno-religious background and more than 15% have experienced discrimination in school.²⁹

Sweden has no official statistics on citizens' religious or ethnic belonging, making it even more difficult to differentiate between various types of discrimination. Islamophobia is therefore often obscured and sorted under several different categories of discrimination in the DO's reports. From 2016 onward, anti-Muslim discrimination is partly included, and it has been concluded that "discrimination against Muslims is a major problem in today's Swedish society," without detailed analysis of Islamophobic forms of discrimination. Seven detailed analysis of Islamophobic forms of discrimination.

Number of complaints against institutions, by institutional context and type of discriminatory incident.

| Context | Distrusted | Harshly judged | Obstructed | Ignored | Harassed | Rule-driven | Total |
|---------------------|------------|----------------|------------|---------|----------|-------------|-------|
| Education | 4 | 16 | 14 | 14 | 6 | 4 | 58 |
| Healthcare | _ | 1 | 2 | 7 | 1 | _ | 11 |
| Social services | 5 | 1 | 5 | 2 | _ | _ | 13 |
| Social insurance | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | _ | _ | 11 |
| The judicial system | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 17 |
| Other | _ | _ | 4 | 1 | _ | 1 | 6 |
| Total | 11 | 22 | 33 | 33 | 11 | 6 | 116 |

Source: Bursell, Moa (2021). Perceptions of discrimination against Muslims. A study of formal complaints against public institutions in Sweden Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 47(5), 1162-1179.

Figure 6: see footnote 33.

Another report based on a survey conducted by the Swedish National Forum for Voluntary Organizations revealed a strong tendency to associate Muslim individuals with terrorism (76% of Muslim respondents reported being accused of association with terrorism on one or more occasions in the past year), and violence against and oppression of women (90% of respondents reported to have been per-

^{28.} DO, "Statistik 2015–2021. Statistik över anmälningar som inkom till Diskrimineringsombudsmannen 2015–2021."

Samira Abutaleb Rosenlundh, Markus Lundström, and Anna Vogel, "Vuxna - vad gör dom? Barns röster om
rasism i skolan.," (2021), https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/vuxna_vad-gor-dom_webbfil_210708.
pdf/; "Utsatt för kränkande behandling eller bemötande," 2022, https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/folkhalsorapportering-statistik/tolkad-rapportering/folkhalsans-utveckling/resultat/kontroll-inflytande-och-delaktighet/utsatt-for-krankande-bemotande-eller-behandling/

^{30.} Statistics Sweden (SCB) does not record religious, ethnic or supposed racial affiliation of Swedish residents.

^{31.} Emin Poljarević, "An interview with an analyst at the DO," (April 11 2022).

^{32.} Moa Bursell, "Kedjor av händelser. En analys av anmälningar om diskriminering från muslimer och förmodade muslimer," *The Equality Ombudsman* (2016).

ceived as originating from the MENA region) - to a much larger extent than other groups. 33

Employment

Discrimination of Muslims and perceived Muslims in workplaces is one of the most common forms of discrimination. Almost one third of reported cases in Sweden between 2017 and 2021 are related to workplace discrimination. The DO cites several interview studies, where Muslim women in particular reported employers pressuring them to remove their headwear in the workplace. Negative attitudes towards Muslim employees have been well documented for almost a decade. One notable discriminatory occasion in 2021 was brought forth by Civil Rights Defenders, taking legal action against a security firm for not allowing their employee to wear a hijab (a major marker of muslimness).

It has been well established that individuals having "Arab-sounding" names face discriminatory treatment in their contact with public officials, which could arguably be connected to these individuals' perceived muslimness.³⁸ One study showed that private landlords disadvantaged applicants with "Arabic-sounding" names.³⁹

The DO pursued a case of religious discrimination where a black Muslim man died in 2021 when ambulance staff refused to bring him to hospital. The district court

^{33.} Source clarification: This study is unpublished and is statistically unreliable; however, it indicates an area requiring further research and investigation. The study received 213 valid responses and was performed within Civilsamhälle för öppenhet och inkludering (Civil society for an open society and inclusion): https://socialforum.se/vara-verksamheter/verksamheter-och-projekt/

DO, "Statistik 2015–2021. Statistik över anmälningar som inkom till Diskrimineringsombudsmannen 2015– 2021."

^{35.} Moa Bursell, "Perceptions of discrimination against Muslims. A study of formal complaints against public institutions in Sweden " *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47(5) (2021). Bursell, "Kedjor av händelser. En analys av anmälningar om diskriminering från muslimer och förmodade muslimer."

^{36.} Ali Ähmed, "Etnisk diskriminering-vad vet vi, vad behöver vi veta och vad kan vi göra?," Ekonomisk debatt 43, no. 4 (2015); DO, "Statistik 2015–2021. Statistik över anmälningar som inkom till Diskrimineringsombudsmannen 2015–2021."; Oxford research, Forskning om diskriminering av muslimer i Sverige. En översikt av forskning publicerad vid universitet och högskolor i Sverige sedan år 2003, Diskrimineringsombudsmannen (DO) (2013), https://www.do.se/download/18.277ff225178022473141e2a/1618941270230/rapport-forskning-diskriminering-muslimer-sverige.pdf.

^{37.} CRD, "Civil Rights Defenders: Sara fick inte bära slöja på jobbet – nu stämmer vi arbetsgivare för diskriminering," news release, March 2, 2021, https://crd.org/sv/2021/03/02/sara-fick-inte-bara-sloja-pa-jobbet-nu-stammer-vi-arbetsgivare-for-diskriminering/.

^{38.} Per Adman and Hanna Jansson, "A field experiment on ethnic discrimination among local Swedish public officials," Local Government Studies 43, no. 1 (2017); Tamam, Rättvis organisering (2020), http://tamam.se/word-press/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Tamam-rapport-publiceras.pdf; Abutaleb Rosenlundh, Lundström, and Vogel, "Vuxna - vad gör dom? Barns röster om rasism i skolan.."; Ali Ahmed and Mats Hammarstedt, "Ethnic discrimination in contacts with public authorities: a correspondence test among Swedish municipalities," Applied Economics Letters 27, no. 17 (2020); Moa Bursell, "The multiple burdens of foreign-named men—evidence from a field experiment on gendered ethnic hiring discrimination in Sweden," European Sociological Review 30, no. 3 (2014); Mahmood Arai, Moa Bursell, and Lena Nekby, "The reverse gender gap in ethnic discrimination: Employer stereotypes of men and women with Arabic names," International Migration Review 50, no. 2 (2016).

^{39.} Hemrin Molla, Caroline Rhawi, and Elina Lampi, "Name matters! The cost of having a foreign-sounding name in the Swedish private housing market," *PloS one* 17, no. 6 (2022).

ruled in favour of the DO. The DO appealed the decision due to the low damages awarded. The settlement of SEK 300,000 was reached at the end.⁴⁰

Education

There have been several cases related to Muslim teachers and students describing difficulties in exercising prayer during their breaks, observing fast during the month of Ramadan, and above all Muslim girls and women facing discrimination and prejudices for wearing a headscarf.⁴¹

In 2019, in the municipality of Skurup, representatives of the far-right Sweden Democrats (SD) with the support of the main conservative party, the Moderate Party (Moderaterna), succeeded in reaching a majority vote for a headscarf ban under the slogan, "Equality is a norm here!" The decision prompted numerous reactions from MCSOs and was later overruled by the Swedish Administrative Court due to the legal protection of freedom of religion secured in the Basic Law of Sweden, i.e., the Constitution. ⁴² In 2020 and 2021, there were other attempts by SD party representatives to enact a prohibition against wearing Muslim headscarves in Swedish elementary schools both locally and nationally. Most of their motions were rejected by the local councils that argued that there was no legal support to prohibit wearing of headscarves in public spaces. ⁴³

Politics

The political discourse over the entire spectrum pertaining to Islam and Muslims in Sweden has become far more critical during the last decade and especially after 2015.⁴⁴ A key catalyst for increasingly restrictive laws was the terrorist attack by an Uzbek national claiming a link to ISIS, in central Stockholm on April, 7, 2017, killing four persons and injuring over a dozen others.⁴⁵ The incumbent government led by Social

^{40.} Göteborgs tingsrätt, "DOM Mål nr T 17336-19," (May 26 2021), https://www.do.se/download/18.4719c 6e31791a23945f1ac1/1622633070650/Dom-tingsratt-PRO-2019-7-tillganglig.pdf; DO, "Regionen väljer att ingå förlikning," news release, April 11, 2022, https://www.do.se/om-do/pressrum/aktuellt/2022/2022-04-11-regionen-valjer-att-inga-forlikning; DN, "Ambulansen diskriminerade hennes man: "En viktig dom. En sten har släppt."," *Dagens Nyheter*, May 26 2021, https://www.dn.se/sverige/dom-kulturell-svimning-var-diskriminering/.

^{41.} Olseryd, Wallin, and Repo, Brå rapport 2021:3.

^{42.} DN, "Slöjförbudet ruckar på demokratins grunder," January 13 2020, https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/slojforbudet-ruckar-pa-demokratins-grunder/.

^{43.} Chatarina Nilsson, "Muslimer agerar mot slöjförbud," *Skånska Dagbladet*, January 4 2020; Lotta Lille, "Nej till förbud mot slöjor i skolan," *Enköpings-Posten*, January 18 2021; DN, "Slöjförbudet ruckar på demokratins grunder."; DN, "Slöjförbudet ruckar på demokratins grunder."

Nina Jakku, "Islamophobia, Representation and the Muslim Political Subject. A Swedish Case Study," Societies 8, no. 4 (2018).

^{45.} Victor Horn, "Terrorporträttet: En kvalitativ innehållsanalys av hur den misstänkte gärningsmannen för terrordådet i Stockholm den 7 april 2017 skildras i svensk press" (2017); "Lastbil har kört in i folkmassa i Stockholm," Expressen, updated April 7, 2017, accessed May 23, 2022, https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/stockholm/lastbil-har-kort-in-i-folkmassa-i-stockholm/; Rasmus Nordgren and Michelle Bergsten, "Terrordådet som skakade Sverige" (2018)..

Democrats raised concerns about the detriments to security of upholding the freedom of association in Sweden.⁴⁶

One consequence is that the 2018 post-election period experienced a significant shift in Swedish politics. The far-right party SD reached a breakthrough by initiating negotiations with the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Liberal Party. This brought Islamophobic rhetoric and anti-Muslim policies into broader right-wing political discourse, prompting the entire political right to radicalise even further in their views of Muslims and people with immigrant background more broadly. MPs from the Christian Democratic and Moderate Party politicians have adopted increasingly confrontational and populist ethno-nationalist language where Muslims and Islam are increasingly identified as a social, economic, and security problem. This rhetoric has led to politicians calling for more police raids, harsher jail penalties, and collective punishments, such as deporting the families of individuals who might have committed supposed religiously motivated crimes.

Media

In 2015, the DO carried out a review of Swedish media reporting on Muslims and Islam. Most articles reviewed were published in the foreign section of news sites, and wrote about Islam and Muslims as a singular entity whilst reporting on issues of security, terrorism, and military operations. Individuals and groups identified or described as Islamic were most commonly portrayed as perpetrators of various misdeeds.⁵² The media representation of Islam and Muslims in Sweden seems not to have changed significantly since 2015.⁵³ On the contrary, several extreme and far-right media web-

^{46.} Expressen, "Inget förslag till ny terrorlag – regeringen tvingas backa," (March 27 2019), https://www.expressen. se/nyheter/inget-forslag-till-ny-terrorlag-regeringen-backar/; Nils Funcke, "Föreningsfriheten begränsas – förslagen för oss mot en brytpunkt " (2021), https://www.jpinfonet.se/kunskap/nyheter4/foreningsfriheten-begransas--forslagen-for-oss-mot-en-brytpunkt/; SVT Nyheter, "Lagrådet underkänner förslag om ny terrorlag," (March 20 2019), https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/lagradet-underkanner-forslag-om-ny-terrorlag; TT, "Skärpt terrorlag: 'Största förändringen på 20 år' " Svenska dagbladet, February 28 2019, https://www.svd.se/ett-steg-narmare-forbud-mot-terrorsamrore.

^{47. &}quot;European Civic Forum response to the 2022 European Commission stakeholder consultation on rule of law in the European Union - SWEDEN," 2022, https://civicspacewatch.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Sweden-up-dated.pdf; SKMA, "Jomshofs uttalande om islam är inte 'olyckligt språkbruk' ", March 11 2021, https://skma.se/2021/03/jomshofs-uttalande-om-islam-ar-inte-olyckligt-sprakbruk/.

^{48.} Kirsti M Jylhä, Jens Rydgren, and Pontus Strimling, "Xenophobia among radical and mainstream right-wing party voters: prevalence, correlates and influence on party support," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, no. 16 (2022).

^{49.} SVT Nyheter, "Sverigedemokraterna: Myndigheterna bör genomföra gryningsräder," (May 3 2022), https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sverigedemokraterna-myndigheterna-bor-genomfora-gryningsrader.

^{50.} Expressen, "Forssell: "Jag delar Ebba Buschs ilska"," (April 27 2022), https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/forssell-jag-delar--ebba-buschs-ilska/.

^{51.} SVT, "SD-förslag: Dra tillbaka uppehållstillstånd för hela familjer vid grov brottslighet " (2022), https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sd-forslag-dra-tillbaka-uppehallstillstand-for-hela-familjer-vid-kriminalitet

^{52.} Axner, Representationer, stereotyper och nyhetsvärdering: Rapport från medieanalys om representationer av muslimer i svenska nyheter.

^{53.} Linnea Jensdotter and Mia Lövheim, Mellan religionsfrihet och yttrandefrihet: Det mediala samtalet om religion och trossamfund, Myndigheten SST (2021), https://www.myndighetensst.se/kunskap/religionsfrihet/

sites have started receiving public subsidies in Sweden, despite maintaining a long history of racist, antisemitic, and Islamophobic rhetoric and skewed reporting. The public funding increases these websites' sense of legitimacy.⁵⁴

Justice System

Muslim civil society and faith-based organizations are increasingly scrutinized, restricted, and denied public funding due to suspected violations of the "democracy criteria." One controversial example of denial of municipal funding in the city of Gothenburg involves a national MCSO, Ibn Rushd, that has a key role for the Swedish Muslim civil society. The political level of the city government denied funding based on expert witness accounts accusing the organization of promoting religious activities and even supporting "Islamist" opinions. This decision was criticized by Amnesty and contradicted both the city's own civil servants investigation of Ibn Rushd and the Swedish National Council of Adult Education investigation of the organization which concluded that the organization had met the official requirements, including the "democracy criteria," and was eligible for funding.



Figure 7: see footnote 57.

- tema-2021-religions frihet--demokrati/del-8-mellan-religions frihet-och-yttrande frihet-det-mediala-samta-let-om-religion-och-trossam fund. html
- 54. DN, "Hoppar av i protest mot stöd till högerpopulistiska medier," May 31 2021, https://www.dn.se/kultur/hoppar-av-i-protest-mot-stod-till-hogerpopulistiska-medier/; Daniel Poohl, "Mediestödet blev ytterhögerns guldgruva," (June 20 2021), https://expo.se/2021/06/det-nya-mediestodet-goder-ytterhogerns-medier.
- European Civic Forum, "European Civic Forum response to the 2022 European Commission stakeholder consultation on rule of law in the European Union SWEDEN."; "Göteborg granskar Ibn Rushd. Vad har hänt?," 2021, https://demokratisktgoteborg.nu/.
- 56. Demokratiskt Göteborg, "Göteborg granskar Ibn Rushd. Vad har hänt?."
- 57. Bilan Osman, "Sverige längsta visklek? Så stämplades Ibn Rushd som islamister," *Dagens ETC* (June 10 2022); Bilan Osman, "Ranstorp: Ledarskapet för Ibn Rushd är islamister," (June 13 2022), https://www.etc.se/inrikes/ranstorp-ledarskapet-foer-ibn-rushd-aer-islamister.
- 58. Amnesty. (2022, February 23). Beslutet att neka Ibn Rushd bidrag riskerar att hota religions- och yttrandefriheten https://www.amnesty.se/aktuellt/beslutet-att-neka-ibn-rushd-bidrag-riskerar-att-hota-religions-och-foreningsfriheten/
- 59. Göteborgs stad, "Drygt 27 miljoner kronor i bidrag till studieförbunden år 2022 "; Folkbildningsrådet, "Ibn Rushd 2019. Folkbildningsrådets uppföljning av statsbidragsvillkor och statsbidragsberättigad verksamhet 2018.," (2019); Amnå, Helander, and Settergren, När tilliten prövas: En studie av Studieförbundet Inn Rushds samhällsbidrag.

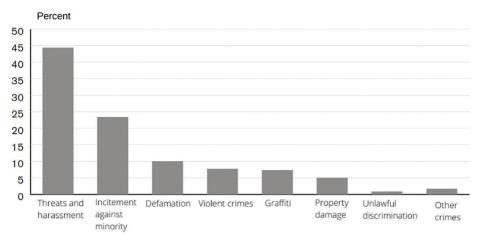


Figure 1. Crime categories after main crime of reported hate crime with identified islamophobic motive (years 2016 and 2018). Quotas in percent. (N=483)

Source: BRÅ (2021). Rapport 2021:3. Islamofobiska hatbrott.

Figure 8: see footnote 61.

Muslim organizations and individuals increasingly report that they are denied bank accounts and financial services due to banks' security concerns over closed audits. ⁶⁰ Oftentimes, there are few or no explicit legal reasons for denying these organizations bank services. ⁶¹

As a result of this process, insurance companies have become increasingly reluctant to insure property owned by MCSOs and faith-based organizations due to the high risk of attacks on the insured property. This has in turn increased risks in denied state funding of MSCOs and faith-based organizations as they might lack bank accounts and/or insurance which are some of the basic requirements for public funding.

These conclusions seem to be correlated with increased politicization and securitization of MCSOs' activities. The broader Islamophobic discourse prompted by right leaning thought leaders and politicians have arguably also influenced the work

^{60. &}quot;Möjliga hål i rättskyddet mot diskriminering på grund av ras eller etniskt ursprung," Ibn Rushd Study Association, 2022, https://www.ibnrushd.se/mojliga-hal-i-rattskyddet-mot-diskriminering-pa-grund-av-ras-eller-etniskt-ursprung/.

^{61.} Pia Karlsson Minganti, "Studera uppåt," in Eftertankar - sex etnologer korsar sina spår (Stockholm: Vulkan förlag, 2019); Ibn Rushd, "Kammarrätten slår fast: fel av Göteborg att hemlighålla dokument," Mynewsdesk (April 21 2021), https://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/ibn_rushd/pressreleases/kammarraetten-slaar-fast-fel-av-goete-borg-att-hemlighaalla-dokument-3091931; Carl Petersson Moberg, "Studieförbundet Ibn Rushd får rätt av kammarrätten," Göteborgs-Posten (April 20 2021), https://www.gp.se/kultur/kultur/studief%C3%B6rbundet-ibn-rushd-f%C3%A5r-r%C3%A4tt-av-kammarr%C3%A4tten-1.45265879.

^{62.} Emelie Weski, Racial Equality Directive - questionnaire for targeted consultation. Contribution from Ibn Rushd (2022), https://www.ibnrushd.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Contribution1ef339e5-a0c9-4223-83d6-c98be-de58af022663.pdf.

^{63.} Olseryd, Wallin, and Repo, Brå rapport 2021:3.

of the Swedish State Security. The State Security have started to recommend closing Muslim-profiled schools, and accusing individuals that are on their school boards of being "Islamists" and thus a threat to state security, based mainly on the opinions of thought leaders and, and the expert witnesses mentioned earlier.⁶⁴

MCSOs, including schools, often lack the resources to appeal against such administrative decisions. Added to this it is difficult to appeal on the basis of discrimination since the legal statutes on discrimination apply only to individuals (see for example Weski, 2022).⁶⁵

Internet

Recent reports from Swedish authorities and democratic watchdogs show a steep rise in extreme and far-right activities. In the mid-2010s, the neo-Nazi site Nordfront increased its users by 4000% according to the Swedish Defence Research Agency. The proliferation of symbols of racialized online hatred and the online environment have become increasingly hostile, especially to Jewish and Muslim minorities. Despite frequent warnings from watchdog NGOs of increased right-wing extremism and propaganda, there are few public initiatives to improve the population's internet literacy in Sweden. Civil Rights Defenders stated that online campaigns of hatred and threats are becoming increasingly systematic in targeting civil society organizations working against political extremism; journalists covering immigration and Islam; and politicians standing up for minority rights. This trend is confirmed by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) report on threats and hate speech towards civil society. As a result, media outlets have begun to self-censor as they lack sufficient protection.

^{64.} Ulrika By and Hamilton Steiner, "Säpo: Män bakom stängda friskolor centrala för islamism i Sverige," *Dagens Nyheter* (May 6 2022), https://www.dn.se/sverige/sapo-man-bakom-stangda-friskolor-centrala-for-islam-sim-i-sverige/; Bilan Osman, "Rapport från Säpo bakom beslutet att stänga skolor "*Dagens ETC*, May 17 2022, https://www.etc.se/index.php/analys/rapport-fraan-saepo-bakom-beslutet-att-staenga-skolor; Daniel Vergara, "Säporapport bakom skolnedstängning sågas av forskare," *Syre* (June 17 2022), https://tidningensyre.se/2022/17-juni-2022/saporapport-bakom-skolnedstangning-sagas-av-forskare/; SÄPO, "Yttrande till Skolinspektionen rörande Framstegsskolan i Rågsved. Dnr.2019-10815-89.2," (2022).

^{65.} Weski, "Möjliga hål i rättskyddet mot diskriminering på grund av ras eller etniskt ursprung."

FOI, Det vita hatet – radikala nationalistiska miljöer på nätet (November 13 2017), https://www.foi.se/nyheteroch-press/nyheter/2017-11-13-det-vita-hatet---radikala-nationalistiska-miljoer-pa-natet.html.

Lisa Kaati and Nazar Akrami, Digitalt hat. Hat och hot mot kommunalpolitiker., Sveriges kommuner och landsting (2018), https://www.foi.se/download/18.3b9d745f1683075a7f639c/1547630458071/Digitalt-hat-ochhot-mot-kommunalpolitiker.pdf.

CRD, När samhället tystnar. En rapport om hot och hat mot oberoende opinionsbildare i det svenska samhället. , Civil Rights Defenders (2019), https://crd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/N%C3%A4r-samh%C3%A4l-let-tystnar-webbsidor.pdf.

^{69.} MUCF, "Kartläggning av hot och hat mot det civila samhället."

^{70.} Kaati and Akrami, Digitalt hat. Hat och hot mot kommunalpolitiker; Internetstiftelsen, "Svenskarna och internet 2018. En årlig studie om svenska folkets internetvanor.," (October 3 2018), https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/ rapporter/svenskarna-och-internet-2018/; Lisa Kaati et al., "Ensamagerande våldsverkare hyllas som hjältar på internetforum," FOI (October 24 2019), https://www.foi.se/nyheter-och-press/nyheter/2019-10-24-ensamagerande-valdsverkare-hyllas-som-hjaltar-pa-internetforum.html; Lisa Kaati and Fredrik Olsson, Hatets anatomi.

The rise of the extreme right's deadly violence has direct operational ties to online extremist forums. Perpetrators of such violence are being praised online, with few legal repercussions. The hate rhetoric in these online forums makes no functional distinction between immigrants and Muslims.⁷¹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The process of defunding of MCSOs in Sweden is oftentimes based on reports and opinions of a network of individuals working in academia and (alternative) media outlets, and who can be described as thought leaders of parts of the Swedish Islam-ophobia discourse. The network has a working relationship with Lorenzo Vidino. Individuals connected to the network have produced a number of reports and opeds suggesting that segments of Muslim political and civil society engagement poses potential domestic security threats. The network has enjoyed support from the Department of Psychological Defence at the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MS-B), which enabled and legitimized the spread of the network's narratives by providing substantial funding to individuals connected to the network as experts and also by facilitating network meetings.

- En undersökning om hat och hot mot journalister i Sverige., TU medier (June 2018), https://tu.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Hat_och_hot_webb.pdf.
- 71. Kaati et al., "Ensamagerande våldsverkare hyllas som hjältar på internetforum."
- 72. Owe Nilsson, "Myndighet försvarar kritiserat stöd," Svenska Dagbladet/TT (June 16 2016), https://www.svd. se/a/4B1o6/myndighet-forsvarar-kritiserat-stod; Magnus Ranstorp, "Ibn Rushd är fortsatt kopplat till islamister," (1 oktober 2020), https://www.expressen.se/debatt/ibn-rushd-ar-fortsatt-kopplat-till-islamister/; Sameh Egyptson, "Forskare: Utred hela skolkoncernen Sveriges islamiska skolor. Dagens Samhälle, Debatt.," (November 15 2021), https://www.dagenssamhalle.se/opinion/debatt/forskare-utred-hela-skolkoncernen-sveriges-islamiska-skolor/; By and Steiner, "Säpo: Män bakom stängda friskolor centrala för islamism i Sverige."; Magnus Norell, Aje Carlbom, and Pierre Durrani, Muslimska brödraskapet i Sverige, MSB (Stockholm, 2017); Aje Carlbom and Lotta Solding, Mötesanteckningar för konferensen Religion & Democracy. Ärende 2017-06779. (6-7 november 2017); Pelle Zackrisson, "Islamistanklagade organisationen Sveriges unga muslimer får rätt till statliga bidrag," Nyheter Idag (February 1 2019), https://nyheteridag.se/islamistanklagade-organisationen-sveriges-unga-muslimer-far-ratt-till-statliga-bidrag/; Magnus Ranstorp, Aje Carlbom, and Peder Hyllengren, "Begär listor över Ibn Rushds samarbetspartners," Corren debatt (February 3 2022), https://corren.se/debatt/artikel/forskarna-begar-listor-over-ibn-rushds-samarbetspartners/lw5d79yl.
- 73. Vidino has been crucial in spreading similar talking points about the Muslim Brotherhood in Austria. More information on Vidino can be found at Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative (Bridge Initiative 2020). Lorenzo Vidino, "Expert: "Tydliga indikationer på Muslimska brödraskapets närvaro i Sverige"," SVT (3 mars 2017), https://www.svt.se/nyheter/utrikes/expert-tydliga-indikationer-pa-muslimska-brodraskapets-narvaro-i-sverige; Charlie Winter et al., "Online extremism: research trends in internet activism, radicalization, and counter-strategies," International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV) 14 (2020); John L Esposito and Derya Iner, Islamophobia and radicalization: Breeding intolerance and violence (Springer, 2018); Bridge Initiative, "Factsheet: Lorenzo Vidino," (April 22 2020), https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-lorenzo-vidino/.
- 74. Norell, Carlbom, and Durrani, *Muslimska brödraskapet i Sverige*; Osman, "Sverige längsta visklek? Så stämplades Ibn Rushd som islamister."; Magnus Ranstorp et al., *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism: Påverkan mot och utmaningar för det svenska samhället* (Försvarshögskolan (FHS), 2018); Aje Carlbom, Magnus Ranstorp och Peder Hyllengren "Statsstödd folkbildning för islamism, del 1 och 2," *Kvartal* (17 juni 2020), https://kvartal.se/artiklar/statsstodd-folkbildning-for-islamism-del-2/.
- 75. Since January 2022 the department is a separate public agency.
- MSB 2017-6779, "Beskrivning av Muslimska brödraskapet (MB) i västvärldens budskap och metoder mot målgrupper i Sverige," (2017); MSB 2018-0743, "Överenskommelse om beskrivning av samhällets sårbarhet



Group of politicians, journalists and academics celebrating the closing of a trial case where two female Muslim activists lost against a Social Democratic politician (fourth from the left in frame) who called them "extremists" and worked to have them deplatformed (see footnote 18). The author of the tweet was called as an independent expert witness in the trial.

Translation: "Yes to extremization. When you stand up for freedom of speech and principles, @soffangbg never stands alone. Yesterday, the trial came to a close in Gothenburg."

Figure 9: source: Magnus Ranstorps personal twitter account: https://twitter.com/MagnusRanstorp/

One of the network's primary focal points has been to help promote the idea that the Muslim Brotherhood is a direct threat to Sweden (and the "West") as this organization is claimed to have infiltrated a number of large Swedish MCSOs. The network has defined the Muslim Brotherhood as a clandestine Islamist organization, guided by a potentially violent ideology at odds with democratic values, and that it aspires to create a parallel society in Sweden. Individuals connected to the network are usually seen as "policy experts" that provide recommendations to sev-

för islamistisk informationspåverkan och möjligheterna att reducera dessa sårbarheter ut ett förebyggande och möta-perspektiv," (2018); Lars Nicander, "Muslimska brödraskapets informationspåverkan," *Försvarshögskolan* (30 juni 2017), https://www.fhs.se/arkiv/nyheter/2017-06-30-muslimska-brodraskapets-informationspaverkan. html; Lars Nicander, "Förnyat miljöstöd till Centrum för asymmetriska hot- och terrorismstudier. Försvarshögskolan.," (December 11 2019), https://www.fhs.se/arkiv/nyheter/2019-12-11-fornyat-miljostod-till-centrum-for-asymmetriska-hot--och-terrorismstudier.html; MSB, "Överenskommelse gällande seminarium om rapporten Islamisk aktivism i en mångkulturell kontext. Ref nr 2017-6779," *Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)* (2018).

eral state institutions. Their explicit recommendations have among other things suggested that the state institutions should significantly increase the scrutiny and closure of Muslim civil society organizations and schools, due to their suspicions and accusations of MCSOs and schools being under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁷ In the official minutes submitted to the MSB by the network meeting with MSB staff in November 2017, a strategic campaign to defund these Muslim organizations was formulated.⁷⁸ All in all, the network's campaign has largely been successful in 2021.⁷⁹

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In March 2017, the Swedish government initiated a fact-finding initiative regarding Islamophobia in Sweden. This was to follow up the National Plan against Racism that states, among other things, that the government will invite annual expert councils on Islamophobia to facilitate and streamline knowledge acquisition and other communication on Islamophobia between the government and civil society organizations. The initiative's aim is to "gain a broader and in-depth knowledge of Muslims' exposure to racism and hate crimes today and at the same time provide an opportunity for civil society organizations to contribute perspectives, ideas and views on the government's work in this area." The last meeting was held in March 2022, with no significant results being presented.

A number of civil society organizations are working to counter Islamophobia, most notably the MCSO, Ibn Rushd that organised several campaigns against Islamophobia through its educational programs.⁸⁰

A group of NGOs within the Swedish National Forum for Voluntary Organizations took the initiative to create a Swedish Committee Against Anti-Muslim Racism, reopened the webpage *islamofobi.se*. The committee also took the initiative to the now independent Network for Research on Anti-Muslim Racism and Islamophobia (FARI). Another civil society initiative called INSAN (formerly Nyans: Muslim) frequently releases reports and accounts on Islamophobia, while a new political party named Nyans (Nuance) is running for parliament on a platform that focuses on issues concerning the Muslim and other minorities in Swedish society.

^{77.} Dawan Raoof and Aje Carlbom, Islamism, demokrati och mångkulturalism. Referat från expertseminarium i juni 2019. Dnr 2018-00743., Försvarshögskolan i Stockholm (3 juni 2019); Anna Ardin, "Vad är Muslimska brödraskapet – enligt vårt psykologiska försvar?," (Februari 25 2022), https://annaardin.wordpress.com/2022/02/25/vad-ar-muslimska-brodraskapet-enligt-vart-psykologiska-forsvar/.

^{78.} Carlbom and Solding, Mötesanteckningar för konferensen Religion & Democracy. Ärende 2017-06779.

^{79.} Osman, "Sverige längsta visklek? Så stämplades Ibn Rushd som islamister."

^{80.} Ibn Rushd, "Islamofobi bekämpas med kunskap," (2018), https://www.ibnrushd.se/islamofobi-bekampas-med-kunskap/.

During 2021, a broad range of Swedish civil society organizations took an initiative for a series of reports and political suggestions for "a new social contract" addressing challenges highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸¹ One of the reports focused on Swedish democracy including civic freedoms, and clearly identified the threats to Muslim minorities as threats to civil society in general.⁸²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This overview of Islamophobic attitudes and discriminatory practices in Sweden shows that previous extreme right Islamophobic discourse has become more accepted and adopted by larger segments of the population, a number of political groups, rightwing political parties, and increasingly by state security authorities. Routine evaluations of civil society organizations are increasingly targeting Muslim civil society and faith-based organizations, adopting more politicized and securitized undertones. The result is a widening institutional distrust of authorities' bureaucratic measures of control and review of Muslim individuals and MCSOs. Even though Swedish anti-discriminatory laws and legal provisions are robust and protect individual religious freedoms, Islamophobic discourse and negative public attitudes towards Islam and Muslims have entered the political mainstream and are being normalized in Swedish society and among policy-makers at large.

For instance, all Swedish conservative parties are currently coordinating several policies with Sweden Democrats in the run-up to the 2022 parliamentary elections. Center and leftist parties are largely silent on issues pertaining to the growing Islamophobia. This development indicates an informal erosion of the principle of equality under the law, and potentially also religious freedom. Moreover, the activities of thought leaders in the development of the broader Islamophobic discourse suggest that there is a risk of institutionalization of Islamophobia in vital state institutions. This development runs contrary to the policy recommendation by the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) from 2018. The results of studies and reports included in this overview also suggest that the situation will most likely continue to deteriorate in the foreseeable future.

A number of Swedish MCSOs are working to counter Islamophobia, but their work has become increasingly hampered by legal struggles for funding and public relations damage control following public accusations and negative publicity.

In sum, there is a substantial need to renew efforts to counter Islamophobia analogous to the broad state and public work against anti-Semitism. Such efforts would be best served if they become an integral part of Swedish authorities' efforts to protect

^{81.} Nysta, "Civilsamhällets nystartsgrupp för ett nytt samhällskontrakt," (2021), https://nysta.nu/.

^{82. &}quot;Vidga det demokratiska utrymmet. Civilsamhällets förlag till åtgärder för en starkare demokrati.," updated June 1, 2021, https://nysta.nu/v-rt-material/delrapporter/delrapport-vidga-det-demokratiska-utrymmet

Jewish and Muslim minorities on an equal basis and on all social levels. This means exhorting effort to develop social and political measures which would strengthen the work against Islamophobic discrimination, and promote equality and social participation of Muslim minorities as an integral part of Swedish society.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SWITZERLAND NATIONAL REPORT 2021

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Executive Summary

On 7 March 2021, a popular initiative from the Swiss People's Party's (SVP) circles for a veiling ban was accepted in Switzerland. This followed bans in the cantons of Ticino (2016) and St. Gallen (2019).

In parliament, there have been many initiatives on Islam-related issues by the SVP, which is strongly oriented towards the political debate in Austria. The Islamic associations in particular see themselves under general suspicion by both politics and media coverage. The activist Saïda Keller-Messahli received enormous media coverage, especially for her commitment to a "burqa ban".

Studies show that there is a negative bias in the reporting on Muslims and Islam, which one third of the population also perceives as such, while another one third considers the picture to be appropriate, and the last one third considers the reporting to be too positive.

There is also a discrepancy between the multi-layered reality of Islam in Switzerland and the way it is portrayed in the media. Muslims in Switzerland, for example, are portrayed as being controlled from outside by the Muslim Brotherhood.

In general, the media talked more often about Muslims than the latter could speak for themselves. This could have consequences for Muslims' sense of belonging, their perception, and acceptance by society.

The population still has a more negative attitude towards the Muslim community than towards other groups. Twelve percent show a rather strong hostile attitude towards Muslims, while 34% of the population tend to have strong negative stereotypes about Muslims.

Various reports show that there is a need for action in the field of education. In general, there is a lack of awareness of racist discrimination, of possible courses of action available to those affected, and of the array of competence among those responsible for dealing with it.

Zusammenfassung

Am 7. März 2021 wurde in der Schweiz eine Volksinitiative aus SVP-Kreisen für ein Verhüllungsverbot angenommen. Dies nach Verboten in den Kantonen Tessin (2016) und St. Gallen (2019).

Im Parlament gab es viele Vorstösse zu islambezogenen Themen durch die SVP, die sich dabei stark an der politischen Debatte in Österreich orientierte. Insbesondere die islamischen Verbände sehen sich dadurch, wie auch durch die Medienberichterstattung, unter Generalverdacht gestellt. Die Aktivistin Saïda Keller-Messahli erhielt eine enorme Medienpräsenz, insbesondere durch ihr Engagement für ein «Burka-Verbot».

Studien zeigen, dass es in der Berichterstattung über Muslime und Islam eine negative Verzerrung gibt, die ein Drittel der Bevölkerung auch so wahrnimmt, ein Drittel hält die Darstellung für angemessen und ein Drittel hält die Berichterstattung für zu positiv.

Festgestellt wird auch eine Diskrepanz zwischen der vielschichtigen Realität des Islams in der Schweiz und der medialen Darstellung. Muslime in der Schweiz würden etwa als bspw. durch die Muslimbruderschaft von aussen gesteuert dargestellt.

Generell würde in den Medien öfter über Muslim:innen geredet, als dass diese selber zu Wort kommen. Dies könne Konsequenzen sowohl für das Zugehörigkeitsgefühl von Muslim:innen, wie auch für die Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz durch die Gesellschaft haben.

Die Bevölkerung ist gegenüber der muslimischen Gemeinschaft nach wie vor negativer eingestellt als gegenüber anderen Gruppen. 12% weisen eine eher bis stark feindselige Einstellung gegenüber Muslimen auf. 34% der Bevölkerung tendieren stark zu negativen Stereotypen gegenüber Muslimen.

In verschiedenen Berichten zeigt sich, dass im Bildungsbereich Handlungsbedarf besteht. Generell fehle es an Sensibilisierung für rassistische Diskriminierung, an Angeboten für Betroffene wie auch an Kompetenzen bei den Verantwortlichen im Umgang damit.

Country Profile EIR 2021

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 The Centre (merger of Christian Democrat People's Party [CVP/ PDC] and Conservative Democratic Party [BDP/ PBD]); 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/BD), 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 (end of 2021, according to Federal Statistical Office [FSO])

Major Languages: German, French, Italian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism), but certain recognised religious communities in the cantons

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to the 2021 report *Diversity and Coexistence in Switzerland* by the Federal Statistical Office, 12% of the population exhibit hostile attitudes toward Muslims, and 34% tend strongly toward negative stereotypes.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The annual report "Racism Incidents from Counselling Practice" for the year 2021 by the Counselling Network for Victims of Racism recorded 630 cases on racial discrimination. It identified that the third most common motive for discrimination is the "Muslim hostility" category with 53 counselling cases.

Major Religions (% of Population): Roman Catholic 33.8%, No religious affiliation 30.9%, Protestant Reformed 21.8%, Islam 5.4% (FSO, 2020)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 388,137 (15 years of age and over, FSO 2020)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Federation of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (FIOS), Coordination of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (KIOS)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Intercultural association JASS, National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI)

Far-Right Parties: Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC), Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland (EDU/UDF), Ticino League (LEGA), Swiss Nationalist Party (PNOS/PNS)

Far-Right Movements: Résistance Helvétique, Swiss Association Vigilance Islam (ASVI).

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: A law on laïcité was adopted in the canton of Geneva in 2019. In November 2019, the Constitutional Court of the Canton of Geneva had lifted the ban on elected representatives of the Grand Council and municipal councils wearing religious signs. The ban remains in place for members of the cantonal and municipal executive and for state employees when they come into contact with the public.
- Halal Slaughter Ban: Yes, since 1893
- Minaret Ban: Yes, since 2009
- Circumcision Ban: No.
- Burka Ban: Cantons of Ticino (2016) and St. Gallen (2019); All of Switzer-land (2021)
- Prayer Ban: No

Introduction

In Switzerland, there are various regular reports on racism and discrimination, which also address Islamophobia.

The report on racist discrimination in Switzerland in 2021 evaluates racism incidents from counselling work. It is published by humanrights.ch and the Federal Commission against Racism (FCR). In total, 630 counselling cases were evaluated, which were collected by 23 counselling centres from all regions of Switzerland in 2021.

In general, the workplace (106 cases) and the field of education/school/day-care (94 cases) are the ones that are most affected in terms of hate crime. Other areas include public space (77 cases), administration (70), neighbourhoods (67), and the police (60). Xenophobia is the most frequently mentioned motive for discrimination with 218 mentions, followed by anti-black racism with 207 mentions.²

Counselling cases related to anti-Muslim racism (53 reports) and in the substantively related category of hostility against people from the Arab region (51 reports) remain frequent. (Fig. 1) In these two categories, incidents occurred most frequently in the workplace (26), in connection with the police (14), and in public spaces (14).³

According to the Racism Report 2021 of the Foundation against Racism and Anti-Semitism (GRA) and the Society Minorities in Switzerland (GMS), the population continued to have a more negative attitude towards the Muslim community than towards other groups. This had also become apparent in connection with the "veiling ban initiative": election posters showed grim-faced veiled women alongside a call to stop extremism. In this way, existing resentments and possible fears and stereotypes, which were often directed against Muslims in general, were both reflected and further fuelled in public campaigns.⁴

In autumn 2021, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) published the report "Living together in Switzerland. In-Depth Analysis of Results 2016-2020." The data since 2016 suggested "that attitudes towards diversity and otherness are basically stable. There are hardly any changes or trend reversals, i.e., both positive and negative attitudes remain." When comparing the 2016 and 2020 surveys, positive attitudes had even increased.

Annual report on "Racism Incidents from Counselling Practice 2021" in German, French and Italian. URL: https://www.ekr.admin.ch/publikationen/d602/1368.html (Access date: 28 April 2022).

^{2.} Ibid., p. 9.

^{3.} Ibid., p. 16.

Report on racism 2021 GRA/GMS, p. 5. URL: https://www.gra.ch/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Rassismus-bericht-2021.pdf;
 French: https://www.gra.ch/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Rapport-Racisme-2021_GRA_FR.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

 [&]quot;Diversity and coexistence in Switzerland. In-depth analysis of the results 2016-2020", FSO. URL: https:// www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/diversity-coexistence-switzerland. assetdetail.19305346.html (Access date: 29 April 2022).

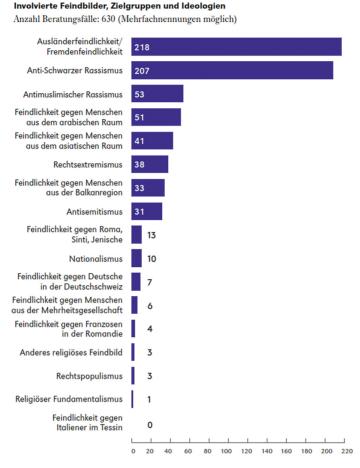


Figure 1: "Enemy images, target groups, and ideologies" involved in counselling cases.6

Although attitudes are positive overall, tensions are evident with regard to certain groups or situations. "The population tends to have a more negative attitude towards the Muslim community than towards other groups," according to the report.

Muslim persons tended to be perceived negatively more often (12%) than black (8%) or Jewish (6%) persons. Among people with stereotypical perceptions, the prevalence of stereotypes about Muslim (34%) and Jewish people (39%) was higher than those about black people (20%). Strong approval of hostile attitudes was more common towards the Muslim community than towards black or Jewish people. For example, 4% of the population expressed hostility towards Muslims; for the other groups, the percentage was only 2%.8

^{6.} Ibid., p. 16. The eight most common categories: Xenophobia, Anti-black racism, Islamophobia, Hostility towards people from the Arab region, Hostility towards people from the Asian region, Right-wing extremism, Hostility towards people from the Balkan region, Antisemitism.

^{7.} Ibid., p. 6.

^{8.} Ibid., p. 7.

Hostility towards Muslims

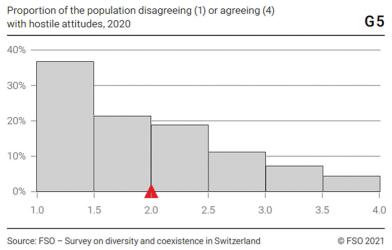


Figure 2: Hostility towards Muslims 20209

The mean value of the index measuring hostile attitudes towards Muslims was 2.0 in 2020. (Fig. 2) For 37% of the population, the value was between 1 (complete rejection of hostile attitudes) and 1.5 (strong rejection). Negative attitudes are less common, with 4% between 3.5 (strongly agree) and 4 (fully agree), and 12% between 3 (agree) and 4 (fully agree). Thirty percent of the population are in the neutral range on the scale between 2 and 3.¹⁰

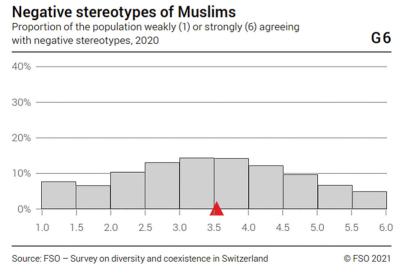


Figure 3: Negative stereotypes towards Muslims 2020¹¹

^{9.} Ibid., p. 11.

^{10.} Ibid., p. 11.

^{11.} Ibid., p. 11.

For the index on anti-Muslim hostility, the average score was 2.2 in 2016, 2.1 in 2018, and 2.0 in 2020. The differences are statistically significant. To this end, the proportion of people who disagreed with negative statements (scores between 1 and 1.5) increased from 27% (2016) to 30% (2018), and then to 37% (2020). However, the proportion of the population who fully agreed with the negative statements (values between 3.5 and 4) decreased only slightly from 2016 (6%) to 2020 (4%).¹²

Stereotypes are characteristics that are attributed to a group in a generalised way. The mean value of the index on negative stereotypes towards Muslims in 2020 was 3.5 on a scale from 1 (weak stereotypes) to 6 (strong stereotypes). (Fig. 3) Thirty-four percent of the population tend strongly towards negative stereotypes with values between 4 and 6.¹³ Those who completely rejected negative stereotypes towards Muslims (4%) are much fewer than those who rejected such stereotypes towards blacks (18%) and Jews (16%).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There is no systematic survey of Islamophobic incidents in Switzerland. Therefore, only individual cases become known through media reports, exemplary counselling cases, or court cases.

The GRA/GMS Racism Report states, "There were isolated anti-Muslim incidents in 2021, mainly involving women wearing a hijab or headscarf. These were primarily verbal attacks in public." ¹⁴

In the report "Racism Incidents from Counselling Work 2021", the case study of a minor and queer refugee is described. She experiences discrimination in various places, most often in public spaces or in the youth centre. She is physically attacked and insulted because of her skin colour and her headscarf, and lives very isolated.¹⁵

Hans Stutz cites a court case from 26 July 2021 in his monitoring: an 18-year-old Muslim woman wearing a headscarf was travelling with a friend in Zurich's main station. While doing so, she was called a "Taliban" by a 36-year-old Swiss man. The man was fined for insulting her. 16

^{12.} Ibid., p. 11.

^{13.} The respondents were asked to comment on the following negative characteristics: fanaticism, aggressiveness, oppression of women, and disregard for human rights.

Report on racism 2021 GRA/GMS, p. 6. URL: https://www.gra.ch/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Rassismusbericht-2021.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{15.} Report "Racism incidents from counselling work January to December 2021", p. 17. URL: https://www.ekr. admin.ch/publikationen/d602/1368.html (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{16.} Stutz. Hans: "Reports on right-wing extremism and racism in Switzerland", URL: https://hans-stutz.ch/meldungen-zu-rechtsextremismus-und-rassismus-in-der-schweiz?jahr%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=2021 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

Employment

The report "Racism Incidents from Counselling Work 2021" describes the case of a woman who had applied for a job with good chances of being hired. When the company found out that she wears a headscarf, they turned her down. When she asked, it was confirmed that the company did not employ anyone wearing a headscarf because a large part of the work took place in public spaces and it was feared that the company would lose orders as a result.¹⁷

Education

Various reports address racism and discrimination in schools. The report "Racism Incidents from Counselling Work" states that after the workplace, education is the area of life most affected by discrimination. Case studies show that in some places racist motives for bullying and discrimination are ignored and made a taboo. 18

The GRA/GMS Racism Report states that significantly more racist incidents in schools were reported to the GRA in 2021 than in the previous year.¹⁹

The Swiss branch of the organisation National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) offers projects and workshops to raise awareness and reduce discrimination. ²⁰ Upon request, NCBI Switzerland reported that 2020 and 2021 were difficult years for workshops in schools due to the pandemic. Teachers were under a lot of pressure and workshops on Islamophobia were often considered "not urgent" by teachers, head teachers, and school social workers. For example, schools pointed out that there were no or only a few Muslim pupils, or that there were no "acute" problems. NCBI Switzerland counters such arguments by arguing that the workshops that have been held for years show that ignorance and prejudice are present in every case. When Muslim students were involved, they reported experiences of discrimination and welcomed the opportunity to talk about them. It was striking that the teachers, school social workers, and head teachers hardly ever had a Muslim background themselves and the question arose as to what extent they themselves were sufficiently sensitised to the topic. ²¹

Politics

In 2015, the Egerkinger Committee, a group of politicians mainly from the SVP and the EDU, which was already responsible for the anti-minaret initiative, launched a popular initiative for a "veiling ban", which was mainly discussed as a "burqa ban". In 2016, the collection of signatures began. (Fig. 4)

Report "Racism incidents from counselling work January to December 2021", p. 23. URL: https://www.ekr. admin.ch/publikationen/d602/1368.html (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{18.} Ibid., p. 12.

Report on racism 2021 GRA/GMS, p. 6. URL: https://www.gra.ch/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Rassismusbericht-2021.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{20.} Deutsch, URL: https://www.ncbi.ch/de/; French: https://www.ncbi.ch/fr/ (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{21.} Information from NCBI Switzerland on 26 April 2022.

NITIATIVE LANCIERT

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SVPler wirbt mit Bomben-Gürtel für Burka-Verbot

SVP-Nationalrat Walter Wobmann will in der Schweiz ein Verhüllungsverbot. Mit vermummten Statisten und Bombengürtel warb er vor dem Bundeshaus dafür.





Einer der Statisten trägt eine Sprengstoffgürtel-Attrappe unter dem schwarzen Gewand

Figure 4: Newspaper report on the popular initiative for a veiling ban: "SVP member campaigns for burqa ban with bomb belt" (screenshot).²²

On 7 March 2021, the national popular initiative was accepted with 51.2% votes in favour of the ban.²³ Human rights organisations such as Amnesty International had opposed the initiative, arguing that it would fuel Islamophobia and stigmatise the Muslim minority in Switzerland.²⁴ The collective "Les foulards violets" also campaigned against the initiative, which it said was against women's self-determination and contradicted constitutional principles.²⁵ Among other things, a joint Jewish-Muslim statement was published on the NCBI website.²⁶

woz/sda, "SVPler wirbt mit Bomben-Gürtel für Burka-Verbot", 20min.ch, 15.03.2018. URL: https://www.20min.ch/story/svpler-wirbt-mit-bomben-guertel-fuer-burka-verbot-580779589731 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{23.} O'Sullivan, Domhnall, "Swiss 'burka ban' accepted by slim majority", swissinfo.ch, 7 March 2021. URL: https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss--burka-ban--vote-too-close-to-call/46420534?utm_campaign=teaser-in-channel&utm_content=o&utm_medium=display&utm_source=swissinfoch (Access date: 29 April 2022).

AI, "Nein zu Diskriminierung, Nein zum Burka-Verbot", amnesty.ch, Undated overview. URL: https://www. amnesty.ch/de/themen/frauenrechte/burka-verbot/nein-zu-diskriminierung-burka-verbot (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{25.} Comment by the collective "Les foulards violets", "7 March 2021: No to the veiling ban!", humanrights. ch, 18.02.2021. URL: https://www.humanrights.ch/de/news/news-verhuellungsverbot (Access date: 29 April 2022)

 [&]quot;GEMEINSAMES j\u00eddisch-muslimisches Statement", NCBI Schweiz. URL: https://www.ncbi.ch/de/gemeinsames-juedisch-muslimisches-statement/ (Access date: 29 April 2022).



Figure 5: Logo of the initiators of the popular initiative (Yes to the veiling ban. In March, it's on! Order your signature sheet now!).²⁷

The following parties decided to vote in favour: SVP, EDU, Lega, and SD.²⁸ The Future CH Foundation also supported the veiling ban.²⁹

The scientific voter follow-up survey showed that "[t]he narrow majority of those voting voted in favour of a veiling ban due to cultural considerations and for internal security. An important motive for this 'Yes' vote was that the display of the niqab and burqa was seen as potentially misogynistic - although a majority of women voted against the initiative." ³⁰

The survey also noted that "[t]hose who want a Switzerland in which equality between men and women is not actively promoted voted much more clearly in favour of the veiling ban [78% yes, ow] than those who want active promotion of equality [45% yes, ow]".³¹

Remarkably, in addition to 89% of those who voted against it, 22% of those who voted for it also agreed that the "initiative purports to solve a problem that does not exist in Switzerland and is therefore symbolic politics at the expense of a small minority."³²

In the National Council and Council of States, the two chambers of the national parliament, there were several ongoing or new submissions regarding Islam in 2021. A selection of these is offered below.

In 2016, the initiators used this logo to promote the collection of signatures for the popular initiative for a veiling ban.

 [&]quot;Initiative für ein Verhüllungsverbot / Burka-Initiative", swissvotes.ch. URL: https://swissvotes.ch/vote/638.00 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

Flyer zur Volksabstimmung: https://www.zukunft-ch.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Zukunft-CH-Flyer-Ver-huellungsverbot-2020.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

gfs.bern, "VOX-Analyse März 2021", "Nachbefragung und Analyse zur eidgenössischen Volksabstimmung vom 7. März 2021", April 2021, S. 4. URL: https://vox.gfsbern.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/d_vox_schlussbericht_def.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{31.} Ibid., p. 18, p. 20.

^{32.} Ibid., p. 24.



Figure 6: Cover of the promotional material published by those behind the initiative for a veiling ban (Keywords: Resist the beginnings; Yes to women's rights; Stop extremism).³³

At the end of 2020, a Lega/SVP motion called for "political Islam" to become a criminal offence based on a draft by the Austrian government. According to the motion, "Political Islam" is "not terrorism per se", but it "prepares the ground for terrorism". It poses "a threat to internal security": "The associations that spread it should be banned, and the mosques and 'cultural centres' where it is preached should be closed." Reference was made to Saïda Keller-Messahli, ³⁴ according to whom "Islamism" is underestimated, which is why it is urgent to "follow Austria's example". ³⁵

In March 2021, the Security Policy Committee of the Council of States submitted a postulate that would like to have the "introduction of a licensing procedure for imams, a public imam register, as well as the introduction of a ban on foreign financing for mosques" examined.³⁶

In May 2021, a CVP postulate referred to the establishment of the "Documentation Centre for Political Islam" in Austria and called for research on "political Islam" in Switzerland as well. The postulate stated that danger from extremism can "also

^{33.} Voting paper "Yes to the veiling ban", Egerkinger Committee. URL: https://verhuellungsverbot.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Abstimmungszeitung_Ja-Verhuellungsverbot_DE_WEB.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{34.} A Tunisian-born activist of authoritarian laicism, who is claimed to be an expert on Islam.

Lorenzo, Quadri (Lega/SVP parliamentary group), National Councillor, Motion 20.4568 from 17 December 2020: "Political Islam is to become a criminal offence in Switzerland as well". URL: https://www.parlament. ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20204568 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

Councillor of States Thomas Minder for the Security Policy Commission, Postulate 21.3451 of 25 March 2021: "Imams in Switzerland". URL: https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20213451 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

emanate from supposedly 'adapted' groups, movements and individuals."³⁷ Research on "political Islam" in Switzerland was already demanded at the end of 2020 in an interpellation with reference to the Austrian Documentation Centre which specifically asked for "research on the infiltration of religious and political institutions" by the "Muslim Brotherhood".³⁸

The SVP published a position paper entitled "Position Paper of the Swiss People's Party on Islam and Islamism in Switzerland" on 14 June 2021.³⁹ Under "The problems with Islam - and what we must do about it", there are calls for, among other things, a "ban on political Islam", "the dissolution of associations that spread political Islam", "the closure of mosques and Islamic cultural centres where political Islam is propagated", "the introduction of an Islam law based on the Austrian model" and a "ban on foreign imams and pastors".⁴⁰

Furthermore, the paper demanded "no cooperation with Islamic associations that spread radical ideas" and "the strengthening of reform forces that represent an Islam in harmony with our constitutional state and our values", e.g., Keller-Messahli's "Forum for a Progressive Islam". She is quoted several times in the position paper in order to place these other Islamic associations under general suspicion.⁴¹

In an interview with the *SonntagsZeitung*, Keller-Messahli described the SVP position paper as "balanced". In her view, an Islam law - even without the recognition of Islamic organisations - would be "an important instrument for Switzerland".⁴² She had already called for such a law earlier, so that politics "independently of Islamic associations" could determine "which Islam we want to have in Switzerland."⁴³

An SVP postulate called for an end to public funding of the "Swiss Centre for Islam and Society" at the University of Fribourg three days after the publication of the position paper.⁴⁴ Already at the end of 2020, there was an SVP question in par-

^{37.} Marianne Binder-Keller (CVP), National Council, Postulate 21.3542 of 5 May 2021: "Investigate infiltration of civil society associations and institutions in a scientific context". URL: https://www.parlament.ch/de/rats-betrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft²AffairId=20213542 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{38.} Marianne Binder-Keller (CVP), National Council, Interpellation 20.4706 of 18 December 2020: "Research on the infiltration of religious and political institutions by legalistically operating Islamist organisations in Switzerland, in particular also by members of the Muslim Brotherhood". URL: https://www.parlament.ch/DE/rats-betrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20204706 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{39. &}quot;Position Paper of the Swiss People's Party on Islam and Islamism in Switzerland" of 14 June 2021. URL: https://www.svp.ch/wp-content/uploads/Positionspapier-SVP-Schweiz-Islam-DE.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{40.} Ibid., p. 6.

^{41.} Ibid., p. 11.

^{42.} Adrian Schmid, "SVP demands a Swiss Islam law", Sonntagszeitung, 19 June 2021. URL: https://www.tage-sanzeiger.ch/svp-fordert-ein-schweizer-islamgesetz-185904773195 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{43.} Andrea Sommer, "'Most mosques are problematic'", interview with Saïda Keller-Messahli, on her book "Islamistische Drehscheibe Schweiz", Basler Zeitung, 21 February 2018. URL: https://www.bazonline.ch/diemeisten-moscheen-sind-problematisch-896787000053 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{44.} Piero Marchesi (SVP), National Council, Postulate 21.3767 of 17 June 2021: "Swiss Centre for Islam and Society in Fribourg. Consider stopping the funding by public money". URL: https://www.parlament.ch/de/rats-betrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20213767 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

liament on the "Swiss Centre for Islam and Society" ("Does it promote or inhibit radicalisation?"), which referred to a report by Mireille Vallette of Swiss Association Vigilance Islam (ASVI).⁴⁵

In September 2021, the National Council rejected the SVP motion "Stop the spread of radical Islam in Switzerland!" This was submitted in 2019 as a new edition of a motion from 2017. Among other things, it called for the permanent monitoring of mosques and imams.⁴⁶



Figure 7: Islamophobic flyer ("Switzerland is not a land of Islam!") for the vote on a religion law in the canton of Neuchâtel distributed by the far-right movement Résistance Helvétique.⁴⁷

In the canton of Neuchâtel, a new law on religion was rejected on 26 September 2021, which would have enabled the state to recognise additional religious communities. The cantonal parliament had previously adopted the law on the recognition of religious communities. With a collection of signatures, the SVP and FDP forced

^{45.} Piero Marchesi (SVP), National Council, Question 20.1076 of 8 December 2020: "Swiss Centre for Islam and Society in Fribourg. Does it promote or inhibit radicalisation? URL: https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20201076 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

Walter Wobmann (SVP), Nationalrat, Motion 19.4005 of 11 September 2019: "Stop the spread of radical Islam in Switzerland!". URL: https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20194005 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{47.} Résistance Helvétique, "Non à la LRCR le 26 septembre!", 8. September 2021. URL: https://resistance-helvetique.org/actions/non-a-la-lrcr-le-26-septembre/ (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{48.} News: "Neuchâtel people want to have their say on religion", SRF, 26 September 2021. URL: https://www.srf. ch/news/abstimmungen/abstimmung-kanton-neuenburg-neuenburger-volk-will-in-religionsfragen-mitreden (Access date: 29 April 2022).

a referendum, recommending the rejection of the law. The group Résistance Helvétique distributed Islamophobic flyers ahead of the referendum.⁴⁹ (Fig. 7)

Media

In a specialist review of the vote on the veiling ban, the media's handling of the topic of "Islam and Islamism" was discussed. The review exposed a "tendency in public debates to recognise expertise only if it corresponds to the existing framing of information on Islam and if it goes along with consistent discursive strategies such as simplification, mono-causal explanation or sweeping attribution." The interpretative grid of "Islamism as a totalitarian ideology" is so dominant that "alternative interpretations and explanations offered by the sciences dealing with Islam cannot be integrated. As a result, public opinion and scientific expertise fall completely apart." ⁵¹

According to Dorothee Arlt, research has clearly shown that reporting on Islam and Muslims is predominantly negative; however, this negative bias is only perceived as such by about one third of the Swiss population. Another third found the reporting adequate, while the last third perceived it as biased in favour of Islam and Muslims and also had the strongest intention to vote in favour of the burqa ban.⁵²

The voting monitor of the Research Centre Public Sphere and Society (fög) at the University of Zurich records the media response and tonality of contributions in the run-up to federal referendums. In the case of the veiling ban, the discussion focused almost exclusively on religious veiling in the form of the burqa and niqab.⁵³ Only the weekly magazine *Die Weltwoche* showed a clearly positive tone, while the newspaper *Basler Zeitung* and *SonntagsZeitung* displayed a positive perspective.⁵⁴

In a first phase, Saïda Keller-Messahli,⁵⁵ in particular, received resonance as an expert with positions in favour of the ban. Later, a study by the University of Lu-

^{49.} Stutz, Hans, "Meldungen zu Rechtsextremismus und Rassismus in der Schweiz", 8. September 2021. URL: https://hans-stutz.ch/meldungen-zu-rechtsextremismus-und-rassismus-in-der-schweiz/neuenburg-2 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

Reinhard Schulze, "Burqa Initiative and Terror, a Review", FINO Talk, S. 1. 9.3.2021. URL: https://www.fino.unibe.ch/e646124/e1048161/files1055300/FINOTalk09_03_2021Rckschau_ger.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{51.} Ibid., p. 3.

^{52.} Dorothee Arlt, "Banning burkas and niqabs? Exploring perceptions of bias in media coverage of Islam and Muslims in Switzerland and their relation to people's voting intention concerning the burkainitiative", Studies in Communication Sciences, 21(1), 2021, p. 9–25 (Here: p. 17–19). URL: https://doi.org/10.24434/j.scoms.2021.01.002 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{53.} Linards Udris, "Vorlagen vom 7. Märrz 2021, Abstimmungsmonitor", Forschungszentrum Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft (fög) / University of Zurich, 5 March 2021. p. 4. URL: "https://www.foeg.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:8a1b-49cb-5008-4be4-941b-f851a476c4fa/Abstimmungsmonitor_M%C3%A4rz_2021.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{54.} Ibid., p. 5.

^{55. &}quot;According to the media database, there have been 1700 mentions of her name in Swiss newspapers over the last ten years. And Keller-Messahli is also omnipresent in the current debate on the veiling ban; she is a key figure in the pro-camp." In: Simon Hehli, "Nobody is safe from her holy wrath", NZZ, 6 March 2021, p. 11.

cerne⁵⁶ and the expertise of the French sociologist Agnès de Féo received attention,⁵⁷ both claiming "that women would voluntarily fully veil themselves - a finding that refutes a core argument of the proponents."⁵⁸



Figure 8: Retweet of the petition "No to civil war imports" by SVP Switzerland.⁵⁹

The SVP-affiliated magazine *Schweizerzeit*, in cooperation with the Egerkinger Committee, launched a petition in autumn 2021 on the occasion of the Taliban's seizure of power in Afghanistan stating that "[t]o prevent the incalculable spread of violence, a temporary halt to the immigration of Muslims is essential. And even if the rigorous stop can be lifted again, Muslims must never again be allowed to enter Switzerland unchecked." The SVP shared these demands on its Twitter account. (Fig. 8)

Justice System

The cantons of Ticino and St. Gallen introduced a ban on full-face veils in July 2016 and January 2019 respectively. In the canton of Ticino, the authorities have since reg-

^{56.} Vgl. Cinzia Venafro, "Does Switzerland have a problem with veiled, oppressed women?", republik.ch, 11.02.2021. URL: https://www.republik.ch/2021/02/11/hat-die-schweiz-ein-problem-mit-verhuellten-unterdrueckten-frauen (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{57.} Daniel Binswanger, "The Nikab is not the sign of submission, but a revolt" Interview with Agnès De Féo, republik.ch, 16.02.2021. URL: https://www.republik.ch/2021/02/16/der-nikab-ist-nicht-das-zeichen-der-unterwerfung-sondern-eine-revolte (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{58. &}quot;Vorlagen vom 7. März 2021, Abstimmungsmonitor", S. 6.

^{59.} Screenshot of the SVP Switzerland retweet from 1 September 2021.

^{60. &}quot;No to civil war import", schweizerzeit.ch, URL: https://schweizerzeit.ch/petition-buergerkrieg/ (Access date: 29. April 2022).

istered 60 violations: 28 cases involved veiled women. In the canton of St. Gallen, no woman has yet been reported or complained about for veiling her face.⁶¹

Internet

A study on the visibility of actors and their positions on the veiling ban in editorial media and on Twitter has shown that in the sphere of Swiss Twitter, "the majority of the response from actors with a Muslim context (78%) came from just two people as supporters of the initiative": Saïda Keller-Messahli and Kacem El Ghazzali, an atheist activist and former Moroccan blogger. These were also among the five actors who tweeted most frequently about the veiling ban. (Fig. 9)⁶²

| | Anteil Tweets | Akzeptanz | Medienbezüge |
|---|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| Kacem El Ghazzali (@kelghazzali) | 8% | +99 | 45% |
| Operation Libero (@operationlibero) | 7% | -95 | 29% |
| Pentti Aellig (@paellig) | 3% | +90 | 62% |
| Saïda Keller-Messahli (@KellerSaida) | 2% | +100 | 88% |
| Reda el Arbi (@redder66) | 2% | -100 | 14% |

Figure 9: Most important actors on Twitter with regard to the veiling ban. 63

The study points out that in the media coverage and in the Swiss Twitter sphere, Muslims were talked about more often than Muslims themselves expressed their opinions. Among Muslims, only a few personalities were more visible, and therefore the social diversity of Muslims was not comprehensively presented. This could have "consequences for the whole of Swiss society", for the sense of belonging of Muslims, and "for the perception of and acceptance towards Muslims and women wearing burkas."

Salome Müller, "Das Tessin verteilt sechs Burkabussen pro Jahr, St. Gallen null", tagesanzeiger.ch, 10.02.2021.
 URL: https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/was-das-verhuellungsverbot-bringt-533464463710 (Access date: 20 May 2022).

^{62.} Linards Udris, Sarah Marschlich, Daniel Vogler, "Abstimmungskampf um das Verhüllungsverbot: Sichtbarkeit von Akteurinnen und Akteuren und ihrer Positionen in redaktionellen Medien und auf Twitter", *Jahrbuch Qualität der Medien*, Studie 4/2021, p. 8. URL: https://www.ekr.admin.ch/publikationen/d107/1364.html (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{63.} Ibid., p. 10. Reading example: Saïda Keller Messahli is one of the five actors who tweeted most frequently about the veiling ban. 2% of all tweets came from her. All of her tweets conveyed support for the initiative (+100). 88% of her tweets were related to editorial media.

^{64.} Ibid., p. 12.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

On 20 February 2021, the group Résistance Helvétique, among others, demonstrated in Geneva in front of the French Consulate General against a ban on the Génération identitaire in France.⁶⁵



Figure 10: Contribution of the Résistance Helvétique to the demonstration supporting the Génération identitaire.66

Since 2018, Giorgio Ghiringhelli from Ticino has been organising a "Swiss Stop Islamization Award" with prize money provided through crowdfunding.⁶⁷ In 2021, three persons or organisations were awarded with CHF 2,000 each for their commitment against an "Islamisation" of Switzerland and Europe: the Association suisse vigilance islam (ASVI); the Egerkinger Committee, which had launched the anti-minaret popular initiative and was largely responsible for the Switzerland-wide "veiling ban" in 2021; and the Ticino SVP politician Eros Mellini, head of the magazine *Il Paese*, who had supported the minaret and veiling bans.⁶⁸ In 2022, the awards went

^{65.} Hans Stutz, "Reports on right-wing extremism and racism in Switzerland", "Genf, 20. Februar 2021", hans-stutz.ch, URL: https://hans-stutz.ch/meldungen-zu-rechtsextremismus-und-rassismus-in-der-schweiz?jahr%5B-value%5D%5Byear%5D=2021&page=1 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

Rédacteurs RH, "Soutien à Génération Identitaire", resistance-helvetique.org, 20.02.2021. URL: https://re-sistance-helvetique.org/actions/soutien-a-generation-identitaire/ (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{67.} Hans Stutz, "Unverhüllte Absichten", Tachles, 19 February 2021. URL: https://hans-stutz.ch/texte/unver-h%C3%BCllte-absichten (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{68.} Mireille Vallette, "Lauréats 2021 du 'Swiss Stop Islamization Award", Blog Boulevard de l'islamisme, 19 April 2021. URL: https://boulevarddelislamisme.blog.tdg.ch/archive/2021/04/18/laureats-2021-du-swiss-stop-islamization-award-314578.html (Access date: 29 April 2022).

to Pierre Cassen (France), Eric Zemmour (France), the Future Foundation CH (Switzerland), and Iris Canonica (Switzerland).⁶⁹

08h32 19 avril 2021

Lauréats 2021 du "Swiss Stop Islamization Award"

& Lien permanent

L'ASVI fait partie des lauréats de l'année, de même que le Comité d'Egerkingen, l'artisan de l'interdiction des minarets et du niqab.



Le but du "Swiss Stop Islamization Award" lancé en 2018 par le mouvement politique "Il Guastafeste" fondé par Giorgio Ghiringhelli est de décerner chaque année une récompense à trois personnes ou associations qui — en Suisse romande, en Suisse italienne et en Suisse alémanique (ou dans les pays limi-

Figure 11: Report on the "Swiss Stop Islamisation Award" on Mireille Vallette's blog "Boulevard de l'islamisme." (Avenue of Islamism)⁷⁰

Saïda Keller-Messahli is omnipresent in Swiss media. Amira Hafner-Al Jabaji⁷¹ accused her of being an "out-of-control bulldozer" after her appearance in a high-profile Swiss television political programme on the burqa ban, flattening "everything that stands in her way argumentatively." (Fig. 12) Hafner-Al Jabaji argued that Keller-Messahli has abandoned the argumentative path and had become "increasingly radicalised in recent years", and that she spreads her ideology with the help of large Swiss media companies. ⁷² Following complaints about the political programme, the Ombudsman's Office referred, among other things, to Keller-Messahli's statement "ac-

^{69.} La rédaction, "Islamisation. Voici les lauréats du "Swiss Stop Islamization Award 2022.", Les Observateurs. ch, 15.03.2022. URL: https://lesobservateurs.ch/2022/03/15/islamisation-voici-les-laureats-du-swiss-stop-islamization-award-2022-mars-2022/ (Access date: 29 April 2022). The previous winners (2018-2020) were Mireille Vallette, Walter Wobmann, and Lorenzo Quadri; Magdi Cristiano Allam, Sami Aldeeb, and Alain Jean-Mairet; Uli Windisch, Shafique Keshavjee, and Stefano Piazza. Cf. URL: https://lesobservateurs.ch/2022/01/08/swiss-stop-islamization-award-2022-lancement-une-campagne-de-collecte-de-fonds-objectif-6000-francs/ (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{70.} Boulevard de l'islamisme, 19 April 2021.

Islamic scholar, president of the interreligious think tank and long-time presenter of "Sternstunde Religion" on Swiss Television (SRF) until April 2021.

^{72.} Amira Hafner-Al Jabaji, "Ausser Kontrolle", Commentary on the Arena of 29 January 2021 on a "burqa ban" in the constitution. 2 February 2021. URL: https://www.interrelthinktank.ch/index.php/texte/texte-der-ein-zelnen-mitglieder/texte-amira2/item/116-ausser-kontrolle (Access date: 29 April 2022).

cording to which a Muslim woman should not publicly identify herself as such", because in "liberal Switzerland", religious faith is allowed to be visible. The statement violates an elementary fundamental right.⁷³

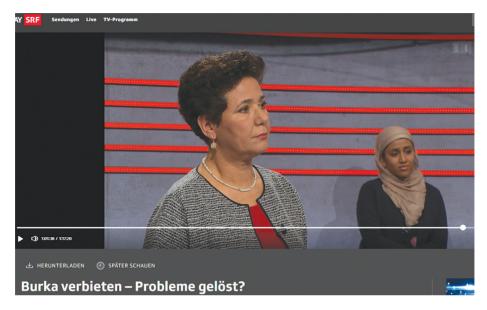


Figure 12: Saïda Keller-Messahli in the political programme "Arena" on Swiss television on the topic of "Banning the Burka - Problem Solved?.⁷⁴

Keller-Messahli claims most of the mosques in Switzerland are part of "political Islam", including the majority of the Islamic associations, in particular the cantonal Association of Islamic Organisations in Zurich (VIOZ) and the Federation of Islamic Umbrella Organisations in Switzerland (FIDS), which are ideologically committed to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁵ She considers VIOZ as a multi-million dollar creation of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁶ Keller-Messahli wants the Muslim Brotherhood to be declared a terrorist organisation and banned.⁷⁷

Reinhard Schulze, professor emeritus of Islamic Studies and Director of The Forum Islam and Middle East (FINO) at the University of Bern, already denounced her generalisations earlier, for example when she insinuated that "the associations are a

^{73.} Report of the Ombudsman's Office of 2 March 2021. URL: https://www.srgd.ch/de/aktuelles/news/2021/03/02/arena-zum-verhullungsverbot-unbefriedigend-aber-gesetzeskonform/ (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{74.} Screenshot of the "Arena" programme from 29 January 2021.

Andrea Sommer, "Die meisten Moscheen sind problematisch", Interview with Saïda Keller-Messahli, on her book Islamistische Drehscheibe Schweiz, Basler Zeitung, 21 February 2018. URL: https://www.bazonline.ch/ die-meisten-moscheen-sind-problematisch-896787000053 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{76.} Rico Bandle, "'Wir sollten hellhörig werden, wenn das Wort dislamophob fällt", Interview with Saïda Keller-Messahli, SonntagsZeitung, 8 November 2020. URL: https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/in-schweizer-moscheen-werden-kinder-von-klein-auf-indoktriniert-607956060529 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{77.} Lucas Orellano, "Die Politik muss über die Bücher – uns drohen weitere Attacken", Interview with Saïda Keller-Messahli, 20min, 25 November 2020. URL: https://www.20min.ch/story/der-bundesrat-muss-beimislamistischen-terror-endlich-ueber-die-buecher-719293960264 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

fifth column of the Muslim Brotherhood".⁷⁸ The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)* wrote that Keller-Messahli was constantly "enlarging the circle of suspects" and placing "almost everyone under general suspicion" who had a different view of Islam than herself. In doing so, the activist often fails to provide evidence for the so-called extremist views of the people she accuses: "A shook hands with B, so they must be brothers in spirit, that is Keller-Messahli's logic."⁷⁹

Schulze criticises the way the term "Islamism" is used, as it denotes "neither a specific ideology with an organisation representing it nor a specific political programme." In the public debate, however, the term asserts an ideological unambiguity that "opens the way to conspiracy theory assumptions" according to which there is a "covert agency" that controls the so-called Islamists, "whose programme is the 'Islamisation' of the West". In the debate on the veiling ban, it had been said again and again that the Muslim Brotherhood would work to achieve the so-called Islamisation of the West."

A study sponsored by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs refutes "the sweeping picture of an externally controlled Islam in Switzerland". 81 The *NZZ* wrote that according to one of the study's authors, "the control of larger groups of Muslims by problematic foreign actors is not obvious." Instead, the cantonal and national umbrella organisations, in which the most diverse theological currents exist, could take on an increasingly important function, for example in contact with the authorities. The researchers noted a discrepancy "between the multi-layered reality of Islam in Switzerland and its portrayal in the media." 83

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) offers workshops for schools specifically to combat Islamophobia. According to the NCBI, it is often observed that much ignorance prevails and that the image of Muslims is strongly influenced by negative reports in the media.

^{78.} Reinhard Schulze, "Populistische Stereotypen", Basler Zeitung, 27 February 2018. URL: https://www.bazon-line.ch/populistische-stereotypen-816052366277 (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{79.} Simon Hehli, "Vor ihrem heiligen Zorn ist niemand sicher", NZZ, 6 March 2021, p. 11.

^{80.} Reinhard Schulze, "Burqa initiative and terror, a review", FINO Talk, p. 1f. 9.3.2021. URL: https://www.fino.unibe.ch/e646124/e1048161/files1055300/FINOTalk09_03_2021Rckschau_ger.pdf (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{81. &}quot;Transnational influences losing importance in Muslim communities", Study by the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society, 30.03.2022. https://www.unifr.ch/news/en/26944/trad? (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{82.} Simon Hehli, "Wie gross der Einfluss von Hasspredigern auf Schweizer Muslime wirklich ist", NZZ, 30.03.2022. URL: https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/wie-gross-der-einfluss-von-hasspredigern-auf-schweizer-muslime-wirklichist-ld.1676954?reduced=true (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{83.} Ibid.

At the end of 2021, the "Reporting Platform for Racist Online Hate Speech" was launched as a pilot project by the Federal Commission against Racism (FCR).⁸⁴

In October 2021, the guide "Racial Discrimination and Protection against Discrimination" was published for social work practice.⁸⁵

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

A systematic survey of Islamophobic incidents by the state, and a separate statistical categorisation and presentation of Islamophobia would be desirable.

According to the Federal Commission against Racism (FCR), the authorities are required to ensure that counselling centres on racist discrimination receive the necessary resources. In particular, racism and discrimination must be further combated in schools, for example through the training and further education of teachers. Schools must also provide places where those affected can find a sympathetic ear and support. Meanwhile, the FCR will begin a nationwide analysis of school textbooks with regard to the treatment of racism. ⁸⁶

Chronology

- 20.02.2021: Activists of the far-right Résistance Helvétique demonstrated in front of the French Consulate General in Geneva against a ban on the Génération identitaire in France.
- **07.03.2021:** The national popular initiative for a ban on veiling was adopted.
- **25.03.2021:** The Security Policy Committee of the Council of States submitted a postulate that would like to have the "introduction of a licensing procedure for imams, a public imam register, as well as the introduction of a ban on foreign financing for mosques" examined.
- **April 2021:** Presentation of the "Swiss Stop Islamization Award" by the Ticino association "Il Guastafeste" of Giorgio Ghiringhelli.
- **05.05.2021**: A CVP postulate referred to the establishment of the Documentation Centre for Political Islam in Austria and called for research on "political Islam" in Switzerland as well.
- 14.06.2021: The SVP published a position paper entitled "Position Paper of the Swiss People's Party on Islam and Islamism in Switzerland." One of its demands is for a ban on "political Islam".

^{84. &}quot;Reporting Platform for Online Racist Hate Speech". URL: https://www.reportonlineracism.ch/g101.html (Access date: 29 April 2022)

^{85. &}quot;Ein Leitfaden für die Praxis der Sozialen Arbeit", Federal Department of Home Affairs, 12.10.2021. URL: https://www.edi.admin.ch/edi/de/home/fachstellen/frb/publikationen/rassistische-diskriminierung2021.html (Access date: 29 April 2022).

^{86.} Annual report on "Racism Incidents from Counselling Practice 2021" in German, French and Italian. p. 2. URL: https://www.ekr.admin.ch/publikationen/d602/1368.html (Access date: 29 April 2022).

- 17.06.2021: An SVP postulate called for an end to public funding of the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society at the University of Fribourg.
- **14.09.2021**: The National Council rejected the SVP motion "Stop the spread of radical Islam in Switzerland!"
- 26.09.2021: In the canton of Neuchâtel, a referendum rejected a new law on religion that would have allowed the state to recognise additional religious communities.
- **30.11.2021:** The FCR launched a reporting platform for racist hate speech on the internet.
- **16.12.2021:** A petition by the SVP-affiliated magazine *Schweizerzeit* together with the Egerkinger Committee called for a ban on Muslim immigration after the Taliban took over power in Afghanistan.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL REPORT 2021

ARISTOTLE KALLIS

The Author

Aristotle Kallis is a professor of modern and contemporary history at Keele University, UK. His research interests revolve around fascism and the contemporary radical/far right in transnational terms, with a particular focus on the 'normalisation' and 'mainstreaming' of extreme views and on the processes that facilitate taboo-breaking language and behaviour. He has published extensively on the history of fascism and the radical right; on the rise of far-right extremism in Greece and Germany; on the mainstream-extremism nexus with regard to a number of key themes in the ideology of the far right including nationalism, sovereignty, and attitudes to particular groups of 'others'; and on Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

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Executive Summary

Since the publication of the landmark report compiled by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims in 2018 the question of the legal definition of Islamophobia has become a deeply symbolic battlefield in this conflict of perspectives. Yet more than three years afterwards, political parties and social stakeholders still debate whether the definition is appropriate or even whether it is needed at all. The lines of the conflict of ideas and perspectives around Islamophobia are clearly drawn by now. On the one hand, there are those who believe that the UK has been failing its citizens with a Muslim background by refusing to own up to the pervasive problem of Islamophobia as both institutional and everyday practice. On the other hand, there are those who view this discourse as unwarranted, exaggerated, and detrimental to freedom of expression. Yet the ongoing refusal of the UK government either to act on the framework recommended by the APPG or to actively produce its own alternative is an ideologically driven choice.

The most recent official figures of hate crime in the UK (2020-21) have shown a continuing increase in the overall number of reported cases (9% compared to the previous year). Forty-five per cent of all incidents recorded under the category of religiously aggravated hate crime still involved people of Muslim faith and background. In the last ten years the number of these crimes has increased by 291%. Significant spikes in reported Islamophobic incidents occurred in late spring and autumn of 2021 as a response to political developments (the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the murder of MP David Amess).

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. Accepting the APPG definition will not instantly remove the problem; but it can serve as a deeply symbolic as well as productive milestone along the path of turning the page on Islamophobia practices.

Exposing misinformation and holding those involved in Islamophobic practices accountable is of critical significance. Yet, if we accept that there *is* a public marketplace for both extremist and mainstream anti-Muslim racism in the UK society, we need to invest far more energy into strategies of building individual and community resilience that will make people less receptive to stereotyping, more critical of hate-mongering, and in the end less likely to engage and reproduce the message itself. The two strategies - rebuttal/mitigation and inoculation against disinformation and hate narratives - will work best when pursued concurrently, symmetrically, and in complementary ways.

Lewandowsky, Stephan, and Muhsin Yesilada. "Inoculating against the Spread of Islamophobic and Radical-Islamist Disinformation." Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications 6, no. 1 (August 19, 2021).

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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; Reform UK (since 2019)

Last Elections: 2019 Parliamentary Election: 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%), and 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 most recent official figures of hate crime in the UK (2020-21) show a continuing increase in the overall number of reported cases (9% compared to the previous year). Forty-five per cent of all incidents under the category of religiously aggravated hate crimes involved people of Muslim faith and background. In the last ten years, the number of these crimes has increased by 291%. Significant spikes in reported Islamophobic incidents occurred in late spring and autumn of 2021 as a response to political developments (escalation of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and murder of MP David Amess).

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 Organizations: 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, Patriotic Alternative, Blood and Honour, British Movement, British Hand

Far-Right Violent Organizations: Combat 18, National Action (proscribed in 2016)

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- Hijab Ban: None, 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: None

- Minaret Ban: None

- Circumcision Ban: None

- Burka Ban: None

Introduction

In yet another year when public debate was dominated and in effect drown by the COVID pandemic, the discussion on Islamophobia in the United Kingdom failed to take off. More than three years after the landmark proposal for a legal definition of Islamophobia produced by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims, political parties and social stakeholders still debate whether the definition is appropriate or, more depressingly, whether it is needed at all. The year 2021 was also shaping up to be a particularly important year for the debate, since a number of public inquiries into serial allegations about the institutionalisation of anti-Muslim racism in mainstream political parties, state structures, and everyday social practice published their final reports. The findings were interesting and for the most part dispiriting, underlining once again the need for a fundamental change in the intellectual, discursive, political-institutional, cultural, and legal frameworks in which Islam and Muslims (alongside race, religion, immigration, and multiculturalism) are viewed, discussed, and understood in the UK. Yet the discussion generated from these reports and other relevant reports did not gain significant social traction.

The lines of the conflict of ideas and perspectives are clearly drawn by now. On the one hand, there are those who believe that the UK has been failing its citizens with a Muslim background by refusing to own up to the pervasive problem of Islamophobia as both institutional and everyday practice. On the other hand, there are those who view this discourse as unwarranted, exaggerated, and detrimental to freedom of expression. Since the publication of the APPG report in 2018 the question of the legal definition of Islamophobia has become a deeply symbolic battlefield in this conflict of perspectives. Yet the ongoing refusal of the UK government either to act on the framework recommended by the APPG or to actively produce its own alternative is an ideologically driven choice. Silence, deferral, deflection, and dilution are the preferred strategic currencies of this government. The diversionary decision to set up its own 'process' for a (different) definition of Islamophobia in response to the APPG report came together with formation of a "cross-government anti-Muslim hatred working group" that at any rate has yet to publish any substantial finding.² Meanwhile the public enquiry into Islamophobic views and practices within the governing Conservative Party finally delivered its report in May 2021. The report was not only late by nearly two years but it also departed from the original commitment to focus on anti-Muslim prejudice within the party by expanding its focus to all forms of discrimination.

In a vintage year of reports, in both number and diversity of topics, perhaps the most sobering findings came from research conducted by the University of Birming-

UK Government, 'New Process Set out to Establish a Working Definition of Islamophobia', 16.5.2019. Accessed 15 May 2022. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-process-set-out-to-establish-a-working-definition-of-islamophobia.

ham that revisited the famous 2011 description of Islamophobia by Baroness Sayeeda Warsi as "dinner-table prejudice". The report stressed that what we may call 'Islamophobia' is actually the combined effects of two prejudices: one anti-Muslim, driven by discriminatory views on race/ethnicity and prevalent among older generations, Conservative voters, Brexit supporters, and people with C2 or DE social grade: the other taking the form of anti-Islam prejudice, based on attitudes to religion and culture, that is pervasive among higher social grades. While different in focus and social complexion, these two Islamophobias reinforce each other, to the point that Muslims are viewed 'very negatively' by 10% of the population and 'negatively' by a quarter-making them the second least-liked group in British society after the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller group (nearly 45%).

In many respects this finding is neither surprising nor unique. After all anti-black racism or anti-Semitism are similarly pervasive but also qualitatively differentiated across sectors of British society. There are extreme and violent expressions, shared by and often recycled among various extreme-right groups or radicalised online lone-actor networks alongside more quotidian versions that reach much deeper into mainstream society and operate in everyday discursive and behavioural settings. Yet this is exactly what supporters of the APPG definition of Islamophobia as 'anti-Muslim racism' have been arguing from the beginning. As MP Naz Shah stressed at the special parliamentary debate on the definition of Islamophobia in September 2021,

if it is absolutely okay for women to understand and define patriarchy and feminism, for Jewish people to define anti-Semitism, for people of colour to define racism and for LGBTQ+ communities to define homophobia, why will this Government not adopt a definition of Islamophobia rooted in the experience of British Muslim communities?⁶

The most recent official figures of hate crime in the UK (2020-21) show a continuing increase in the overall number of reported cases (9% compared to the previous year - Figure 1). While cases of religiously aggravated crime record a decline [Figure 3], 45% of all incidents under this category still involved people of Muslim faith

Baroness Warsi's Sternberg Lecture Speech, 20.1.2011. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/baroness-warsi-ssternberg-lecture-speech; Allen, Chris. Reconfiguring Islamophobia. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020, 103-15.

C2: Skilled manual occupations, 20.94% of the UK population; DE: Semi-skilled & unskilled manual occupations, Unemployed and lowest grade occupations, 26.05% of population

Jones, Stephen H, and Amy Unsworth. 'The Dinner Table Prejudice': Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain'. University of Birmingham, 2021. https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf; Murray, Jessica. 'Middle-Class Britons More Likely to Be Biased about Islam, Finds Survey'. The Guardian, 25 January 2022. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/25/middle-class-britons-more-likely-to-be-biased-about-islam-finds-survey.

UK House of Commons, 'Definition of Islamophobia - Hansard - UK Parliament', 9 September 2021. https:// hansard.parliament.uk//Commons/2021-09-09/debates/B2667B41-FDA9-4BFD-BCD3-AFD4AF5165FD/ DefinitionOfIslamophobia.

and background [Figure 4].⁷ Given that hate crimes flagged as racially aggravated continued their steep increase (12% during the latest census period), it is inevitable that intersectionalities could not be accurately recorded and therefore this skewed the report's published figure of Islamophobic incidents. Since the Greater Manchester area - a region of the UK with one of the highest pro capita rates of recorded hate crime and which tops the list for religiously motivated cases - was not represented in the data, it is safe to assume that the published figures represent only the tip of an iceberg.⁸ Moreover the available data record a significant spike in racially and religious motivated hate crime in the early months of 2021 [Figure 2]. Similar trends for overall and religion-specific figures can be observed in the equivalent report for Scotland.⁹

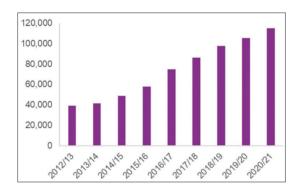
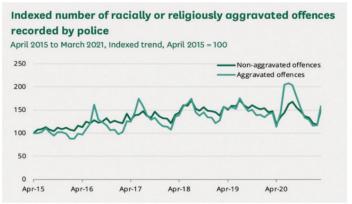


Figure 1: Overall figures for recorded hate crime in the UK (2012-21). Source: Cases of police-recorded hate crime in the UK, excluding Greater Manchester, 2020-21, in UK Home Office. 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2020 to 2021'. GOV.UK, 12 October 2021



Source: Home Office, <u>Hate crime</u>, <u>England and Wales</u>, <u>2020 to 2021</u>: <u>data tables</u>, Table 5, 12 October 2021

Figure 2: Racially or religiously aggravated versus non-aggravated offences in the UK (2015-21). Source: Cases of police-recorded hate crime in the UK, excluding Greater Manchester, 2020-21, in UK Home Office. 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2020 to 2021'. GOV.UK, 12 October 2021.

UK Home Office. 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2020 to 2021'. GOV.UK, 12 October 2021. https:// www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021.

^{8.} MEND. 'Latest Hate Crime Data Released: What Does It Say about Islamophobia?', 17 October 2021. https://www.mend.org.uk/latest-hate-crime-data-released-what-does-it-say-about-islamophobia/.

Crown Office, Scotland. 'Hate Crime in Scotland, 2020-21', 11 June 2021. https://www.gov.scot/policies/crime-prevention-and-reduction/hate-crime/.

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 ^c | 2018 ^c | 2019 ^d | 2020 ^e | 2021 | % Change 2020 to 2021 | % Change 2012 to 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Race | 32,969 | 33,116 | 34,874 | 39,666 | 45,440 | 58,294 | 64,829 | 72,051 | 76,158 | 85,268 | +12% | +159% |
| Religion | 1,438 | 1,421 | 2,067 | 3,006 | 3,962 | 5,184 | 7,103 | 7,202 | 6,856 | 5,627 | -18% | +291% |
| Sexual orientation | 4,044 | 3,960 | 4,278 | 5,168 | 6,700 | 8,569 | 10,670 | 13,311 | 15,972 | 17,135 | +7% | +324% |
| Disability | 1,676 | 1,844 | 1,953 | 2,354 | 3,393 | 5,254 | 6,787 | 7,786 | 8,465 | 9,208 | +9% | +449% |
| Transgender | 296 | 352 | 538 | 572 | 820 | 1,195 | 1,615 | 2,185 | 2,542 | 2,630 | +3% | +789% |
| Total number of | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| motivating factors ^a | 40,423 | 40,693 | 43,710 | 50,766 | 60,315 | 78,496 | 91,004 | 102,535 | 109,993 | 119,868 | +9% | +197% |
| Total number of | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| offences | N/A | 39,130 | 41,406 | 48,567 | 57,676 | 74,967 | 86,254 | 97,474 | 105,362 | 114,958 | +9% | +194% |
| Total number of | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| offences (incl GMP) | N/A | 42,255 | 44,577 | 52,465 | 62,518 | 80,463 | 94,115 | 106,458 | N/A | 124,091 | N/A | N/A |
| Notes: a) It is possible for a crim of the 5 motivating facto b) The percentage chang c) Figures for the Metrop d) Figures for Bedfordshi e) Data for Greater Mano force IT systems. | rs exceeds e for the to olitan Polic re, Cambric | the number tal number e have beer dgeshire and | offences. of offences revised for Metropolit | are calculat 2016/17 an an police h | ed from 201 od 2017/18 ave been re | 2/13 as figure | ures for 20 | 11/12 are no | ot available | | | |

Figure 3: Hate offences in England by category of motive (2012-21). Source: Cases of police-recorded hate crime in the UK, excluding Greater Manchester, 2020-21, in UK Home Office. Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2020 to 2021. GOV.UK, 12 October 2021

Table 2.2: Number and proportion of religious hate crimes recorded by the police 1 , by the perceived targeted religion, year ending March 2020

| Numbers and percentages | | England and Wales |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Perceived religion of the victim | Number of offences 2020/21 | % 2020/21 |
| Buddhist | 23 | 0 |
| Christian | 521 | 9 |
| Hindu | 166 | 3 |
| Jewish | 1,288 | 22 |
| Muslim | 2,703 | 45 |
| Sikh | 112 | 2 |
| Other | 351 | 6 |
| No religion | 174 | 3 |
| Unknown | 926 | 16 |
| Total number of targeted religions | 6,264 | |
| Total number of offences | 5,948 | |

Figure 4: Breakdown of religiously aggravated hate crime in England by religion (2020-21). Source: Cases of police-recorded hate crime in the UK, excluding Greater Manchester, 2020-21, in UK Home Office. 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2020 to 2021'.

A lot that occurred in 2021 disabused those who believed that Islamophobia in the UK has a definitive ideological or party tag. ¹⁰ If the investigation into discrimination within the Conservative Party, headed by Swaran Singh, found that two-thirds of all investigated complains involved discrimination against people of Muslim background, ¹¹ the opposition Labour Party was also accused of having a troubled relationship with Islamophobia. ¹² Even in Scotland, which is typically seen as comparatively more inclusive and tolerant, Islamophobia remains a growing concern. A landmark report on the topic published by the Scottish Parliament in 2021 found that three-quarters of Muslims living in Scotland have been experiencing hatred on a regular or even daily basis. The same percentage believe that the problem has been getting worse over recent years. ¹³

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The publication of the official Home Office figures on hate crime for the latest census period that includes part of 2021 confirm the growing threat posed by Islamophobic physical and verbal attacks on members of the Muslim communities across the UK [Figure 5]. The number of violent incidents has been steadily on the rise for a decade, even as it represents only a very small percentage of reported and recorded religiously motivated hate crime (c. 14% of the total figure for hate crimes). Nearly half of them (45%) were 'public order' offences but about a third of all cases under the category of religion (of which, as previously noted, nearly half relate to Muslims) involved techniques of fear and intimidation (e.g., harassment or stalking) and a further 10% resulted in a physical assault and injury to the targeted person. Considering that (i) the figures relate to reported offences only, and that (ii) the census period for the latest hate crime data included long spells of reduced public mobility (COV-ID-induced lockdowns), they should be regarded as representing a very small portion of actual Islamophobic offline attacks. ¹⁴

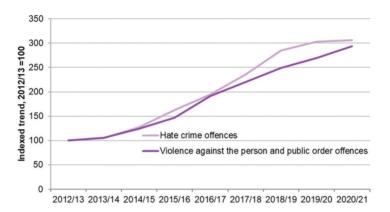
^{10. &#}x27;The Runnymede Trust | Islamophobia: A Problem Rife across the Political Spectrum', 16 April 2021. https://www.runnymedetrust.org//blog/islamophobia-a-problem-rife-across-the-political-spectrum.

 ^{&#}x27;PRESS RELEASE: Independent Investigation into Alleged Discrimination within the Conservative and Unionist Party Releases Final Report', 25 May 2021. https://singhinvestigation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ Singh-Investigation-Report-Release-FINAL.pdf.

^{12.} MEND. 'The Persistence of Labour Party Islamophobia', 25 March 2022. https://www.mend.org.uk/the-persistence-of-labour-party-islamophobia /.

Hopkins, Peter. 'Scotland's Islamophobia: Report of the Inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland by the Cross-Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia'. University of Newcastle, 2021. https://secureservercdn.net/ 160.153.137.40/13n.f55.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Islamophobia-public-inquiry-report-1.pdf.

^{14.} MEND. 'Latest Hate Crime Data Released: What Does It Say about Islamophobia?', 17 October 2021. https://www.mend.org.uk/latest-hate-crime-data-released-what-does-it-say-about-islamophobia/.



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office. Figures exclude GMP.

Figure 5: Upward trend of recorded hate crime and violent hate offences recorded in England (2012-2021). Source:

Recorded hate crimes took place in a wide range of social settings, from the street and the transport network to recreation and employment. Recently published empirical research focusing on Islamophobic hate crime in the north of England showed that violent incidents tend to involve primarily men [Figure 6]. The research has also shown that the number of violent incidents rises during the weekend and increases exponentially during the late evening hours, largely due to the influence of alcohol consumption.¹⁵

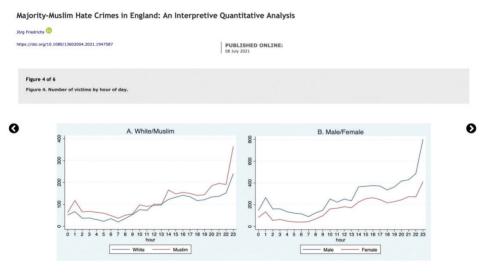


Figure 6: Hate offences in England according to sex, showing a markedly higher figure for males. Source: Friedrichs, Jörg. 'Majority-Muslim Hate Crimes in England: An Interpretive Quantitative Analysis'. Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs 41, no. 2 (3 April 2021): 215–32. Source: Joerg Friedrichs, 'Majority-Muslim Hate Crimes in England: An Interpretive Quantitative Analysis'

Friedrichs, Jörg. 'Majority-Muslim Hate Crimes in England: An Interpretive Quantitative Analysis'. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 41, no. 2 (3 April 2021): 215–32.

This said, the intersection of gender, race, and religious practice underline the extreme vulnerability of Muslim women as typical targets of public intimidation and harassment. ¹⁶ Public visibility in busy social settings make women particularly exposed to verbal harassment. London transport recorded a nearly three-fold rise in Islamophobia during the period of the pandemic. ¹⁷ The case of a Muslim woman verbally assaulted while travelling on an evening train towards Clapham in November 2021 underlines this vulnerability. In this particular instance the bus driver refused to intervene even when urged to do so by other fellow passengers. ¹⁸ In another instance recorded on the London public transport network a Muslim family was exposed to a prolonged racist rant about terrorism while riding a bus. ¹⁹ Verbal attacks were also recorded in other public settings, such as the case of alcohol-fuelled racist abuse against a Muslim woman in a west London park; ²⁰ and another attack on two female joggers in Hounslow, West London, where a man went from verbal abuse to using his dog to intimidate his targets. ²¹

Places of religious and cultural significance for the Muslim communities have always received their high share of hate crime incidents - and 2021 was no exception. Mosques and cultural centres have attracted the wrath of Islamophobes because they epitomise Islam and hold a central position in the religious, social, and cultural practices of Muslim communities. As such places also tend to function as social magnets for these communities, they also become vulnerable to attacks, both verbal and physical, on large numbers of people, especially during periods of religious significance such as Ramadan and Eid. In early May, worshippers outside the Ilford Islamic Centre in London were attacked with eggs and stones [Figure 7]. In October, worshippers were subjected to verbal threats by a passer-by who made hand gestures in-

Bibi, Rashida. "Embodied Intersectionality and British South Asian Muslim Women." Accessed May 16, 2022. https://www.open.edu/openlearn/society-politics-law/society-politics-law/embodied-intersectionality-and-british-south-asian-muslim-women.

 [&]quot;Shocking Rise of Hate Crimes on London Public Transport Following First Lockdown," January 15, 2021. https://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/19015713.hate-crimes-london-buses-tripled-first-lockdown/.

Tell MAMA. "Woman Called a 'Muslim B**** and Told She Had 'Dirty Hair' on London Bus." TELL MAMA (blog), November 8, 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/woman-called-a-muslim-b-and-told-she-had-dirty-hair-on-london-bus/.

^{19.} Tell MAMA. "Racist Rants about Taliban and Terrorism after Sitting behind Muslim Family." *TELL MAMA* (blog), August 26, 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/racist-rants-about-taliban-and-terrorism-after-sitting-behind-muslim-family/.

Tell MAMA. "Racist Spat at Muslim Woman and Shouted 'You F***** Arabs' in Park." TELL MAMA (blog), March 26, 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/racist-spat-at-muslim-woman-and-shouted-you-f-arabs-in-park/.

^{21.} Tell MAMA. "Racist Dog Walker Targeted Muslim Joggers in Hounslow." *TELL MAMA* (blog), August 5, 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/racist-dog-walker-targeted-muslim-joggers-in-hounslow/.

Chris Allen (2017) Islamophobia and the Problematization of Mosques: A Critical Exploration of Hate Crimes and the Symbolic Function of "Old" and "New" Mosques in the United Kingdom, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 37:3, 294-308.

^{23.} Chacko, Roy. "Ramadan Worshippers Egged Outside Ilford Islamic Centre | Ilford Recorder." Ilford mosque attendees attacked with eggs and stones, May 5, 2021. https://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/crime/people-attacked-outside-ilford-islamic-centre-7947386.

dicating a gun and shouted racist abuse; he also used his bike chain to physically assault a worshipper.²⁴



Figure 7: Photographic evidence of the attack on the Islamic Centre in Ilford. Source: https://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/crime/people-attacked-outside-ilford-islamic-centre-7947386. Credit: Samir Sultan/Google

Higher-level attacks against mosques were also recorded. In fact, hate crimes recorded under the category of "arson and criminal damage" in the official Home Office statistics are disproportionately high in cases of religiously motivated incidents (c. 11% as opposed to an average of c. 4%). Arsonists targeted the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association in January, causing significant damage to the building. ²⁵ The Didsbury Mosque in Manchester was attacked in September, in the typical pattern of a late-night weekend attack. ²⁶

The timeline of hate crime incidents is always sensitive to contextual factors, such as political or security events (whether local, national, or global). Significant spikes in Islamophobic attacks were observed after mainly three such events in 2021. The first was in May-June in response to the growing tension in Palestine, with Tell MAMA observing a rise of up to 430% in reported incidents.²⁷ The second event that produced a spike in anti-Muslim hate crime was the murder of MP David Amess on 15 October 2021.²⁸ Soon after the identity of the killer was revealed, reports started

 [&]quot;Man Battered Worshipper Outside Mosque Using Bike Lock - Liverpool Echo," July 10, 2021. https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/man-battered-worshipper-outside-mosque-21796579.

 ^{&#}x27;Multicultural Centre Fire Being Treated as Hate Crime in Belfast'. TELL MAMA (blog), 15 January 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/multicultural-centre-fire-being-treated-as-hate-crime.

^{26. &#}x27;Arson at Manchester Mosque Investigated as Hate Crime', Independent, 11 September 2021. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/mosque-manchester-arson-didsbury-b1918358.html.

^{27. &#}x27;Israel-Palestine Conflict Fuels Islamophobia in UK: NGO', 24 May 2021. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/israel-palestine-conflict-fuels-islamophobia-in-uk-ngo/2252976.

^{28.} MEND. 'David Amess Murder Generates Fears of Rise in Islamophobic Hate Crime', 1 November 2021. https://www.mend.org.uk/david-amess-murder-generates-fears-of-rise-in-islamophobic-hate-crime/.

coming in of increased death threats and abuse (on- and offline) targeting Muslim, and in particular Somali individuals.²⁹ The identity of the bomber made both Muslim communities and asylum-seeking individuals feel particularly vulnerable. Finally in November a foiled suicide bomb plot in Liverpool, timed to coincide with the yearly WW1 Remembrance events, also resulted in a significant increase in Islamophobic incidents, especially but not only locally.³⁰ In the wake of the incident, and in spite of calls by local politicians and police for calm,³¹ parts of the tabloid press and online platforms used the event to rehearse stereotypes about Muslims and immigrants, calling in the process for more draconian controls on immigration [See below, 'Press' and 'Internet']. Although the full impact of the Liverpool incidents on hate crime will not be known for some time, only a week afterwards the local Labour MP Kim Johnson reported an immediate rise in attacks on Muslims - and particularly women wearing hijab.³²

More sustained increases in Islamophobic attacks were also recorded in a number of local areas across the UK. Sheffield in northern England recorded a 43% rise in anti-Muslim hate crime during 2021, including assaults around religious sites. ³³ In November, four girls returning from a place of worship became targets of a physical assault and suffered minor injuries as passers-by tried to tear their hijabs. ³⁴ Norwich in south England was another Islamophobic hotspot in 2021, with a rise in religiously motivated hate crime against both Muslim and Jewish sites. Spraying offensive messages on or near places of significance for Muslim communities is another technique of intimidation and symbolic assault - low-level in terms of its physical impact but also low-risk for the offenders and therefore widespread as an Islamophobic practice. In May, anti-Islamic graffiti was sprayed onto the pavement in close proximity to Norwich Central Mosque and Islamic Community Centre on Aylsham Road

^{29.} HuffPost UK. 'British Muslims Encouraged Not To "Remain Silent" On Hate Crimes', 20 October 2021. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/islamophobic-hate-crime-after-terrorism_uk_616fdf45e4b01f-6f7e5047c8; 'UK Muslim Groups Brace for Rise in Hate Crime after Killing of David Amess | UK News | The Guardian'. Accessed 16 May 2022. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/17/muslim-group-to-is-sue-hate-support-after-killing-of-david-amess.

^{30. &#}x27;Liverpool's Leaders Urge Unity amid Reports of Islamophobic Attacks | UK News | The Guardian', 16 November 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/16/liverpool-leaders-urge-solidarity-amid-reports-islamophobic-attacks; Muslim Engagement and Development. 'MEND Statement: Muslims Facing Abuse Following Bombing in Liverpool', 16 November 2021. https://www.mend.org.uk/mend-statement-muslims-facing-abuse-following-bombing-in-liverpool/.

 ^{&#}x27;Liverpool's Leaders Urge Unity amid Reports of Islamophobic Attacks | UK News | The Guardian', 16 November 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/16/liverpool-leaders-urge-solidarity-amid-reports-islamophobic-attacks.

^{32. &#}x27;Muslims Targets of Abuse Following Liverpool Attack'. https://english.alaraby.co.uk/. The New Arab, 17 November 2021. https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/muslims-targets-abuse-following-liverpool-attack.

^{33. &}quot;Rise in Islamophobic Hate Crime Recorded in Sheffield," NowThenMagazine, June 1, 2022. https://nowthenmagazine.com/articles/rise-in-islamophobic-hate-crime-in-sheffield.

 [&]quot;Muslim Schoolgirls Attacked after Mosque Prayers by 4 Women Trying to Rip off Hijabs - Mirror Online," November 20, 2021. https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/muslim-schoolgirls-attacked-after-mosque-25505785.

- the same place that last year was the target of an arson attack.³⁵ Graffiti with offensive messages were also reported in other parts of the country, such as Scarborough and Newcastle [Figure 8].³⁶



Figure 8: photo of anti-Muslim graffiti in Newcastle. Source: Tell MAMA. 'Northumbria Police Investigating "Islam Is Evil" and "Funds Terror" Graffiti'. TELL MAMA (blog), 30 July 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/northumbria-police-investigating-islam-is-evil-and-funds-terror-graffiti/.

Employment

For years the effect of discrimination against Muslims in the workplace has been highlighted in a series of reports across different employment sectors in the UK. Once again, the intersectionalities of religion, race, ethnicity, and gender reinforce patterns of discrimination.³⁷ The period of the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the focus the experiences of BAME nurses and doctors on the National Health System (NHS) frontline. A recent report by the Muslim Doctors Association aptly titled 'Excluded on the Frontline' makes for depressing reading: nearly half health care professionals with a Muslim background have experienced verbal abuse, twice as many have felt anxious about their treatment at work, and a similar number felt uncomforta-

 ^{&#}x27;Norwich Mosque Members Feel "supported" despite Attacks', Norwich Evening News', 21 May 2021. https:// www.eveningnews24.co.uk/news/norwich-muslim-community-very-supported-despite-attacks-8029850.

^{36.} Gayne, Daniel. "This Hatred Shouldn't Exist in Scarborough": Muslim Couple Speak Out'. YorkshireLive, 19 March 2021. https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/this-hatred-shouldnt-exist-scarborough-20212809; Tell MAMA. 'Northumbria Police Investigating "Islam Is Evil" and "Funds Terror" Graffiti'. TELL MAMA (blog), 30 July 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/northumbria-police-investigating-islam-is-evil-and-funds-terror-graffiti/.

^{37.} Tariq, Memoona, and Jawad Syed. An Intersectional Perspective on Muslim Women's Issues and Experiences in Employment'. *Gender, Work & Organization* 25, no. 5 (2018): 495–513; Shahid, Dr Hina J, and Dr Batool Abdulkareem. 'The Triple Penalty: Muslim Doctors in the NHS', MDA: 2018.

ble about raising issues of discrimination with the management, choosing instead to compromise their practices [Figure 9].³⁸ For an organisation where BAME professionals make up 40% of its workforce and where this category of staff in particular disproportionately bore the brunt of the COVID pandemic, these and other similar figures underline how both conscious and unconscious bias affect the lives and prospects of Muslims in the workplace.

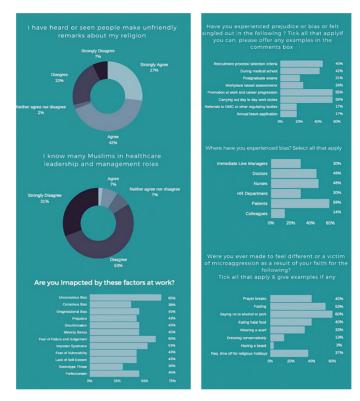


Figure 9: Evidence of pervasive Islamophobia in the NSH. Source: Shahid, Hina J and Ali, Hira, Excluded on the Frontline: Discrimination. Racism and Islamophobia in the NHS. MDA: 2021

How pervasive and often routinised Islamophobic practices in the workplace can be is underlined by a number of legal cases that were decided in the course of 2021. The big supermarket chain Morrison's dismissed a team leader for twice forcefully removing the hijab of a Muslim female employee and for making other comments that made her uncomfortable in her work environment. The timely action of the employing organisation to suspend and eventually dismiss the offender was widely praised.³⁹ In another case that reached a conclusion during 2021, a Somali female employee of

^{38.} Shahid, Hina J and Ali, Hira, Excluded on the Frontline: Discrimination, Racism and Islamophobia in the NHS. MDA: 2021.

Tell MAMA. 'Morrisons Sacked Team Leader Who Twice Yanked off Colleague's Hijab'. TELL MAMA (blog),
 November 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/morrisons-sacked-team-leader-who-twice-yanked-off-colleagues-hijab/.

a large distribution company was awarded c. £25,000 for being confronted with a barrage of discrimination practices and events in her workplace. These included conversations about her race, religion, and ethnicity; off-the-cuff remarks about immigrants; online harassment in employee chat rooms; repeated instances of personal intimidation; and attempts by the management to deflect attention to the discriminatory practices. In both cases the employees reported how wearing the hijab made them more exposed to discriminatory practices. As for the disruptive effect of PRE-VENT legislation in the workplace, the case of a Muslim engineer working in a company in Preston is telling. The employee was already facing discrimination in terms of not being able to enjoy flexible working patterns that allowed him to attend Friday prayer. At the same time, however, a rumour went around the workplace and resulted in him being referred to the government's counter-terrorism programme. As the case judge noted, if the person involved were not a Muslim, then the rumour would not have persisted to the extent that it did. 42

Yet it was another, somewhat unlikely area of employment that offered some of the most chilling and impactful evidence of Islamophobia in the UK workplace during 2021 - sport. Football had already been flagged up as an area where Islamophobic abuse is rife long before the European Cup brought to the fore the ugliest face of racist and Islamophobic abuse directed at the players who either took the knee or missed penalties in the final. The case of the cricketer Azeem Rafiq, who had been a player of Yorkshire County Cricket Club (YCCC), also received due media attention in 2021. His first public references to institutional racist and Islamophobic attitudes within his club and in the world of cricket more generally came in a series of interviews he gave in 2020. Given the public interest in these allegations, the case soon gained traction and in 2021 resulted in an investigation by the club, in a legal case brought by Rafiq against his former club, and in a government parliamentary hearing on discrimination in sport [Figure 10]. As Rafiq himself mentioned, it was not only the extent of racism that he experienced, costing him eventually his own career, but also the shocking lack of interest to address it that underlined how his dev-

 ^{&#}x27;Black Woman Who Was Called "terrorist" in WhatsApp Group Is Awarded Nearly £25,000 | Daily Mail Online', 8 July 2021. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9770001/Black-woman-called-terrorist-WhatsAppgroup-awarded-nearly-25-000.html. The legal case is available at https://www.gov.uk/employment-tribunal-decisions/miss-m-abdi-v-deltec-international-courier-ltd-3332521-2018.

^{41.} Ahmed, Sofia, and Kevin M. Gorey. 'Employment Discrimination Faced by Muslim Women Wearing the Hijab: Exploratory Meta-Analysis'. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 31 January 2021, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2020.1870601.

^{42.} Tell MAMA. 'Muslim Engineer Wins Religious Discrimination Claim after Bogus Extremism Referral'. *TELL MAMA* (blog), 8 April 2021. https://tellmamauk.org/muslim-engineer-wmuslim-engineer-wins-religious-discrimination-claim-after-bogus-extremism-referralins-religious-discrimination-claim-after-bogus-extremism-referral/.

 [&]quot;English Football Urged to Tackle Islamophobia as Muslims Reveal Widespread Abuse," February 16, 2021. https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/english-football-urged-to-tackle-islamophobia-as-muslims-reveal-widespread-abuse-1.1167323.

astating personal experience was symptomatic of "institutional racism" and Islamophobia. 44 YCCC has accepted only a part of the allegations and has denied any institutionalisation of racism within the club. 45 Given the popularity of sport, however, Rafiq's case has gripped the imagination of the British public and has made a positive contribution in terms of enhancing broader public awareness of Islamophobic practices in the UK and of the impact they have on professional and personal welfare.



Figure 10: Azeem Rafiq gives evidence to the UK parliament. Source: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/16/azeem-rafiq-says-english-cricket-rife-with-racism [originally AFP]

Education

The ghost of the 'Trojan Horse' operation continues to cast its shadow on the Muslim communities in the UK. Since it first flared up in late 2013, claims of an alleged 'Islamist'/'Salafist' plot to take over educational provision in Birmingham and other cities across the UK have been serially rehearsed by a wide section of right-wing politicians, journalists, and media, but also the Department for Education and local authorities. A study published by the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) about Islamophobic tropes in British media during the period from 2018 to 2021 underlines how the framing of the discussion ever

^{44.} Ingle, Sean, and Sean Ingle. 'Azeem Rafiq Tells MPs That "Inhuman" Racist Abuse Cost Him Cricket Career'. The Guardian, 16 November 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/nov/16/azeem-rafiq-cricket-racism-yorkshire-dcms-select-committee; Aldred, Tanya. 'Yorkshire Accept Azeem Rafiq Was Victim of Racial Harassment and Bullying'. The Guardian, 10 September 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/sep/10/yorkshire-accept-azeem-rafiq-was-victim-of-racial-harassment-and-bullying-cricket.

^{45.} Middle East Eye. 'Azeem Rafiq: Institutional Racism and the Culture of Denial', 1 December 2021. http://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/uk-azeem-rafiq-institutional-racism-lessons.

since has left an enduring legacy of binaries: 'western' versus 'Islamic/-ist', secular versus religious, moderate versus extremist, tolerant versus bigoted, inclusive versus siloed, integrated versus 'state-within-the-state', transparent versus conspiratorial. Even as local communities and the affected schools in Birmingham have been working hard to put this story behind them and move forward, ⁴⁶ interest in this shady story is far from over, as the recent publication of an explosive and controversial podcast series by the *New York Times* has shown. ⁴⁷

It is hardly surprising therefore that education has remained one of the symbolic and fiercely contested battlefields in the UK's culture wars on Islam. It is the canvas on which all kinds of anti-Muslim stereotypes and anxieties are projected. The health secretary of the Scottish government Humza Yousaf launched legal proceedings against his local nursery in Dundee over allegations of grossly discriminatory practices that involved a potential refusal to accept children with Muslim-sounding names. Amenabel Meanwhile the flaring-up of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2021 resulted in a number of cases where students who expressed opinions or took actions in support of the affected Palestinian communities were reprimanded by some teachers and school authorities. For some years now the Solutions Not Sides (SNS) initiative, delivering educational sessions in all educational and community settings to fight against "Antisemitic and Anti-Muslim tropes and speech" when discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been criticised for targeting almost exclusively Muslim students.

Debates about the suitability or not of educational material are also deeply symbolic terrains of contestation. In March 2021, one of the notorious caricatures of the prophet Mohammed originally published in the *Charlie Hebdo* journal was shown in one of the classrooms of the Batley Grammar School in Yorkshire, sparking protests and leading to rising tensions in the local community.⁵² The school sub-

^{46.} Lightfoot, Liz. 'Headteacher Who Healed a Birmingham "Trojan Horse" School: "We Did It with Love". *The Guardian*, 24 October 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/oct/24/headteacher-who-healed-a-birmingham-trojan-horse-school-we-did-it-with-love.

^{47.} Allen, Chris. 'The Trojan Horse Affair: Islamophobia Scholar on the Long Shadow Cast by the Scandal'. The Conversation, 11 February 2022. http://theconversation.com/the-trojan-horse-affair-islamophobia-scholar-on-the-long-shadow-cast-by-the-scandal-176281; compare this to Sodha, Sonia. 'The Trojan Horse Affair: How Serial Podcast Got It so Wrong'. The Observer, 20 February 2022. https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2022/feb/20/the-trojan-horse-affair-how-serial-podcast-got-it-so-wrong.

^{48.} MEND, "Scottish Minister Humza Yousaf Accuses Nursery of Racial Discrimination," August 25, 2021. https://www.mend.org.uk/scottish-minister-humza-yousaf-accuses-nursery-of-racial-discrimination/.

MEND. 'Schools Excluding Students and Calling Police for Supporting Palestine', 25 June 2021. https://www.mend.org.uk/schools-excluding-students-and-calling-police-for-supporting-palestine-2/.

^{50. &#}x27;Israel-Palestine: Avoiding Antisemitic and Islamophobic Hate Speech'. SNS. Accessed 17 May 2022. https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/blog/2021/avoiding-antisemitic-islamophobic-hate-speech.

 ⁵⁹illars. 'Solutions Not Sides: Promoting the "Two Sides" Narrative on Palestine in Schools'. 5Pillars, 2 June 2021. https://5pillarsuk.com/2021/06/02/solutions-not-sides-promoting-the-two-sides-narrative-on-palestine-in-schools/.

^{52. &#}x27;A teacher who showed pupils an "inappropriate" cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad - sparking protests outside a school', *BBC News*, 25 March 2021, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-56524850; Adams,

sequently issued an apology to the parents who raised the complaint and has been widely praised for its immediate and measured response. The teacher who displayed the image did so claiming that it was part of their duty to 'freedom of speech'. They were suspended but soon afterwards reinstated as an internal investigation showed that in using the images they had no intention to offend. More alarmingly, however, the protests were increasingly presented as a battle between 'extremists' on either side of the culture wars. This was a point originally made by Baroness Warsi shortly after the incident broke out, the use subsequently refracted through the lens of 'freedom' (of speech and education) and became highly politicised. That this incident took place in the constituency where MP Jo Cox was murdered in 2016, where about 40% of the population are of Muslim background, and where far-right extremism is still very active should serve as a cautionary tale about the fragility of social cohesion and the need for constructive dialogue in lieu of dismissive statements about the supposed overriding primacy of 'freedom' over mutual respect and sensitivity.

Universities continue to be central to this broader discussion of Islamophobia in education, both as critical sources and drivers of positive narratives and as places where anti-Muslim prejudice or even hatred is far from absent. A study by the London Metropolitan University highlighted how many problems persist in the higher education sector and how much can and needs to be done in order to target the "multifaceted and insidious nature" of Islamophobia and racism in universities. ⁵⁶ Although a lot of positive work towards decolonising the curricula and opening up the discussion on the history of the west have been recorded in recent years [see below, 'Initiatives'], many institutions continue to resist calls for a serious engagement with this debate. It also runs the risk of becoming confined to a kind of well-intentioned but grossly insufficient tokenism. At a time when only 2% of university staff are of a BAME background and where Islamophobic attitudes remain institutionalised, affecting a signifi-

Richard, and Maya Wolfe-Robinson. 'Batley Teacher Suspended after Showing Charlie Hebdo Image Can Return', *The Guardian*, 26 May 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/may/26/batley-teacher-suspended-after-showing-charlie-hebdo-image-can-return.

^{53.} Adams, Richard, and Maya Wolfe-Robinson. 'Batley Teacher Suspended after Showing Charlie Hebdo Image Can Return'. *The Guardian*, 26 May 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/may/26/batley-teacher-suspended-after-showing-charlie-hebdo-image-can-return.

^{54.} Hill, Amelia. Batley Cartoon Row "Hijacked by Extremists on Both Sides", Says Warsi'. *The Guardian*, 26 March 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/26/robert-jenrick-condemns-batley-school-protest-intimidation.

^{55. &#}x27;Extremists on Both Sides Are Exploiting the Batley School Row', Financial Times, 2 April 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/8b068374-cd1f-424c-a3b0-2327c8cc99e4.

^{56. &#}x27;Universities Are Failing to Recognise and Tackle Islamophobia, London Met Study Finds', London Metropolitan University', 13 January 2021. https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/news/articles/universities-are-failing-to-recognise-and-tackle-islamophobia-london-met-study-finds/. The report by Akel, Sofia. 'Institutionalised The Rise of Islamophobia in Higher Education', London Metropolitan University, January 2021, can be found at https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/media/london-metropolitan-university/london-met-documents/profession-al-service-departments/centre-for-equity-and-inclusion/research-reports/Institutionalised--Â The-Rise-of-Islamophobia-in-Higher-Education.pdf.

cant number of both students and staff of Muslim background,⁵⁷ the enormity of the task has barely diminished and poses new challenges for the years ahead.

Politics

With the delayed (and in the process diluted - see 'Introduction') Singh enquiry into Islamophobic attitudes within the ruling Conservative Party finally coming to an end and delivering its long-awaited report in May 2021, the political debate on Islamophobia in the UK received enough of a political momentum to rise above the ongoing deafening effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the extension of its focus to include all forms of 'discrimination' and all the allegations about selective evidence sought⁵⁸ and political bias,⁵⁹ the report's findings were cautiously welcomed by the Muslim communities even as they were not expected to be as critical of the attitudes within the party as they ought to and could have been. 60 There was a recognition that Islamophobia remains a problem within the party, but is still falling far short of being granted equal status with other forms of discrimination such as anti-Semitism.⁶¹ The report claimed that the evidence pointed to a problem mostly confined to lower-level political organisation (e.g. the local party associations) and that there was no proof of "institutional racism" that reached all the way to the top of the party's hierarchy. A formal apology by the party's co-chair Amanda Milling was offered in the end, but the PM continued to refuse to disown the original comments he made in a column published back in 2018 likening Muslim women in burqa to "letterboxes", offering instead an apology for "causing [any] offence". 62 Accusations of 'whitewashing' came from all directions - not just the opposition Labour Party⁶³ but also Conservative figures. 64 What is more, allegations by former Tory minister Nusrat Ghani that it was her supposed 'Muslimness' that contributed to her dismissal from the gov-

^{57. &#}x27;Islamophobia and Me', The University of Edinburgh (blog), 12 January 2021. https://www.ed.ac.uk/chaplaincy/abundant-academy/compassion-for-our-times/islamophobia-and-me.

^{58.} Allegretti, Aubrey, and Aubrey Allegretti Political correspondent. "Islamophobia Inquiry Deliberately Excluded Muslim Tories, Claims Ex-MEP." *The Guardian*, June 3, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/03/islamophobia-inquiry-deliberately-excluded-muslim-tories-claims-ex-mep.

 [&]quot;Adviser in UK Inquiry of Conservative Party Dismisses Islamophobia." Daily Sabah, April 1, 2021. https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/adviser-in-uk-inquiry-of-conservative-party-dismisses-islamo-phobia.

^{60. &}quot;Singh Investigation Confirms Scale of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party but Fails to Address Root Causes," MCB, May 25, 2021. https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/singh-investigation-confirms-scale-of-islamophobia-in-the-conservative-party-but-fails-to-address-root-causes/.

Allen, Chris. "Islamophobia in the Conservative Party: Key Points from the Inquiry on Discrimination." The Conversation, May 26, 2021. http://theconversation.com/islamophobia-in-the-conservative-party-key-points-from-the-inquiry-on-discrimination-161532.

^{62. &}quot;Report Branded a 'Whitewash' as Conservatives Apologise to Victims 'Hurt by' Islamophobia and Racism in Party," Independent, May 26, 2021. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tory-racism-report-boris-johnson-b1853539.html.

^{63.} https://twitter.com/AnnelieseDodds/status/1397159723078664194.

Syal, Rajeev. "Tory Islamophobia Report a "Whitewash', Say Muslims in Party." The Guardian, May 25, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/may/25/tory-islamophobia-report-criticises-boris-johnson-over-bur-qa-remarks.

ernment for making her colleagues "feel uncomfortable" highlighted how the issues that the Singh enquiry was supposed to have settled run much deeper and above all are ongoing. 66

As mentioned earlier ['Introduction'], the opposition Labour Party has also been implicated in a number of allegations for Islamophobic practices. Although in late 2020 the Labour leadership accepted the findings of the Labour Muslim Network report on Islamophobia within the party (among other findings, highlighting how a third of its members had witnessed such practices and a quarter had first-hand experience of it), 67 a 2021 poll found that the party was losing support and trust among its loyal base of Muslim voters (a reported 72-77% of those polled identified as Labour supporters). Support dropped by eight percentage points between 2020 and 2021, largely fuelled by distrust of the new party leadership (with the leader Keir Starmer received a -4% negative score, a massive 36 percentage points lower than the equivalent figure for 2019).⁶⁸ The party's decision in July to readmit the previously (2020) suspended Trevor Philips, former chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and key figure of the controversial Policy Exchange thinktank, caused a serious backlash that cast a grave shadow on the party's commitment to leading the fight against Islamophobia.⁶⁹ The party was also accused of a cynical electioneering strategy that was alienating Muslim voters and became evident during the 2021 Batley and Spen by-election. An unnamed senior party figure reportedly said that the party had prioritised winning over former Tory voters and appealing to a more liberal-minded electorate and to Jewish voters at the expense of support from its traditional Muslim base in the constituency. A challenge by the maverick ex-Labour politician George Galloway (who campaigned on a pro-Palestinian, anti-Brexit platform) resulted in a significantly smaller Labour majority at the Batley and Spen poll.⁷⁰

With the debate on the definition of Islamophobia sadly ongoing and inconclusive, in spite of fresh forensic research underlining the significance of such a development on both practical and symbolic levels,⁷¹ a very important parliamentary debate took place

^{65. &}quot;Nusrat Ghani Case: How Islamophobia in Britain Crosses Party Lines," January 27, 2022. http://www.mid-dleeasteye.net/opinion/uk-nusrat-ghani-islamophobia-crosses-party-lines.

^{66.} https://twitter.com/ShippersUnbound/status/1484971565657776128.

^{67.} Network, Labour Muslim. "Labour Muslim Network Islamophobia Survey - Results 2022," March 14, 2022. https://www.labourmuslims.org/post/labour-muslim-network-islamophobia-poll-results-2022.

^{68. &}quot;Survation | British Muslims Retain Strong Link to Labour, but Leadership Ratings Lag Those of the Party. | Survation. "British Muslims Retain Strong Link to Labour, but Leadership Ratings Lag Those of the Party.," June 14, 2021. https://www.survation.com/british-muslims-retain-strong-link-to-labour-but-leadership-ratings-lag-those-of-the-party/.

^{69. &}quot;MEND Press Release: Labour Reinstating Trevor Phillips Panders to Islamophobia - Muslim Organisations Demand Answers from Keir Starmer," July 6, 2021. https://www.mend.org.uk/mend-press-release-labour-reinstating-trevor-phillips-panders-to-islamophobia-muslim-organisations-demand-answers-from-keir-starmer/.

^{70. &}quot;Opinion: The Stench of Islamophobia in the Labour Party Is Getting Stronger," The Independent, July 9, 2021. https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/islamophobia-labour-party-batley-b1881024.html.

CBS, Defining Islamophobia, March 2021, https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FULL-SPREAD-IslamophobiaReport_020321_compressed.pdf.

in September 2021.⁷² This was an opportunity for MPs from all political parties to express their views on the proposed APPG 2018 definition and, for Muslim-background MPs in particular, to share their personal experiences. The Labour MP for Coventry broke down in tears as she recounted years of abuse and discrimination on the grounds of her religion, gender, and ethnicity, leading to her questioning whether she were an "enemy of the country I was born in, as if I don't belong".⁷³ Many of those who spoke deplored the ongoing lack of a legally binding definition (adopted by most other political parties including all Scottish ones, by the Mayor of London, and by a growing number of political and social stakeholders) and many accused the Conservative government.⁷⁴ Calls for a formal definition to be adopted as soon as possible came loud and clear from all sides, including MPs of the ruling Conservative Party such as Paul Bristow, underlining the detrimental effect of its absence for the Muslim communities but also the fact that such a situation "holds us back as a country".⁷⁵

Media

The role of traditional media in producing, embedding, enforcing, and diffusing anti-Muslim stereotypes and tropes has been widely recognised across the world since 9/11, and the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a further depressing boost to this trend. A large part of the problem is rooted in the chronic grotesque under-representation of Muslims in British journalism. But the problem runs much deeper than insufficient representation of Muslim voices; and while right-wing media outlets are far more likely to promote Islamophobic tropes than liberal and left-wing equivalents, the problem is systemic. And yet, in March 2021, the chief of the UK Society of Editors Ian Murray had to resign following the backlash caused by his claim that British media "is most certainly not racist". The claim was instantly dismissed by a number of media organisations, such as the *Financial Times, The Guardian*, and

^{72. &}quot;Definition of Islamophobia - Hansard - UK Parliament," September 9, 2021. https://hansard.parliament.uk//Commons/2021-09-09/debates/B2667B41-FDA9-4BFD-BCD3-AFD4AF5165FD/DefinitionOfIslamophobia.

Souza, Naomi de. "Coventry MP in Tears as She Talks of Sick Abuse She Gets from Trolls," Coventry Telegraph, September 13, 2021. https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-mp-tears-says-been-21554063.

^{74. &}quot;Government Fails to Create Islamophobia Definition 2 Years after Pledge," The Independent, September 8, 2021. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/islamophobia-uk-definition-government-appg-b1914012.html.

^{75.} The New Arab. "British MP Recounts 'barrage of Hate' Experienced as Muslim," September 10, 2021. https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/british-mp-recounts-barrage-hate-experienced-muslim.

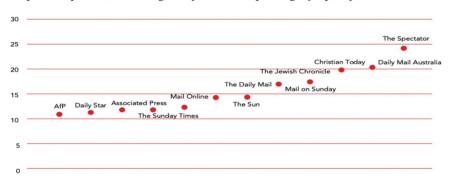
^{76.} Poole, Elizabeth and Williamson, Milly. 'How Racist Narratives about Muslims in the British Press Were Reconfigured during the Initial Peak of COVID-19', LSE British Politics and Policy (blog), 7 September 2021. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/press-reporting-muslims-covid19/; Poole, Elizabeth, and Milly Williamson. 'Disrupting or Reconfiguring Racist Narratives about Muslims? The Representation of British Muslims during the Covid Crisis'. *Journalism*, 2 July 2021.

^{77.} Media Diversity Institute. 'Muslim Journalists in the UK Struggle to Make Their Voices Heard', 7 September 2021. https://www.media-diversity.org/muslim-journalists-in-the-uk-struggle-to-make-their-voices-heard/.

Al-Azami, Salman. 'Language of Islamophobia in Right-Wing British Newspapers'. Journal of Media and Religion 20, no. 4 (2021): 159–72.

HuffPost.⁷⁹ The Society of Editors has subsequently withdrawn Murray's claim, accepting its responsibility to work towards enhancing diversity and fighting discrimination among its ranks, but the damage is already significant, painting the picture of a key sector in the fight against discrimination and Islamophobia as being "in denial" of the problem.⁸⁰

November saw the publication of a landmark report by the CfMM on the way in which Muslims have been depicted in the British press. The report's findings are sobering in tone and conclusions: an alarmingly high number of articles relating to Muslims and Islam promote a negative image, with right-wing media outlets producing the lion's share of this 'biased' or openly 'antagonistic' output [Figure 11].⁸¹ Although the research covers the period 2018-20, its forensic methodology and superb presentation of the findings allow us to extrapolate key trends that both predate and continue after the study's focus period: the equation of Islam with terrorism; the persistence of colonial-era tropes about Muslim-majority countries that are projected onto Muslims as a whole; an anti-religious bias that pits Islam as an outdated conservative code and religious observance as repressive or un-modern. Above all, however, the report reminds us that editorial responsibility in selecting, curating, and framing the information is arguably the most critical facet of the misrepresentation industry.⁸²



Graphic 3 All publictions exceeding 10% of articles misrepreseting any aspect of Muslim behavour or belief

Figure 11: UK newspapers according to the number of their publications misrepresenting Muslims and Islam. Source: Centre For Media Monitoring. 'CfMM Report "British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)", 30 November 2021, 42. https://cfmm.

Bland, Archie. 'Society of Editors in Turmoil over Its Statement on Meghan'. The Guardian, 10 March 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/mar/09/society-of-editors-claim-uk-media-not-racist-laughable.

Siddique, Haroon. 'Letter to Society of Editors'. Medium (blog), 23 March 2021. https://haroon-siddique.medium.com/letter-to-society-of-editors-9aae5ad0cb0d.

^{81. &#}x27;The British Media Has an Islamophobia Problem', 30 November 2021. https://tribunemag.co.uk/2021/11/islamophobia-muslims-media-press-prejudice-bbc-spectator-sky-daily-mail. See how The Sunday Times editor accepted that the criticisms were fair - Waterson, Jim. "Sunday Times Editor Admits Report on Media Coverage of Islam Has 'Valid Criticisms." The Guardian, November 30, 2021, sec. Media. https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/nov/30/sunday-times-editor-report-media-treatment-islam-valid.

^{82.} Centre For Media Monitoring. 'CfMM Report "British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)", 30 November 2021. https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-report-british-medias-coverage-of-muslims-and-islam-2018-2020-launched/.

The year 2021 provided its own fair share of media-related Islamophobic instances that will no doubt be reflected in subsequent CfMM reports. Once again, COVID provided the excuse for rehearsing all sorts of anti-Muslim stereotypes and misrepresentations. *The Sun* and *The Telegraph* were found by the press watchdog (often described as a "toothless tiger" with limited 'guidance' about sourcing the information and the usual deference to the cherished 'freedom' of expression)⁸³ to have published misleading and false headlines about the alleged role of Pakistani Muslim travellers in importing numerous COVID cases to the UK and contributing to a spike.⁸⁴ The BBC has also been implicated in allegations of bias in its coverage of the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁸⁵ The process of reporting press coverage as prejudicial to and misrepresentative of Muslims is long and the corrections, when they are stipulated, take place in a typically low-key manner long after the original offending item has been published or broadcast. This is clearly shown in the correction published by *The Telegraph* to the story about imported COVID cases from Pakistan - five months after the original story was launched [Figure 12].⁸⁶



Figure 12: Correction to an originally published misleading story by The Telegraph and other right-wing newspapers. Source: Twitter

^{83.} Munnik, Michael. "IPSO: Press Regulator's 'guidance' for Reporting on Muslims Is Not Fit for Purpose." Conversation, 26 November 2020. http://theconversation.com/ipso-press-regulators-guidance-for-reporting-on-muslims-is-not-fit-for-purpose-150809

 [&]quot;Watchdog Finds Newspapers Falsely Said Pakistan Imported COVID Cases to UK," The News, December 24, 2020. https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/763634-watchdog-finds-newspapers.

MEND. "Action Alert - BBC Failure to Address Biased Reporting on Palestine: How to Escalate Your Complaint to Ofcom," June 4, 2021. https://www.mend.org.uk/action-alert-bbc-failure-to-address-biased-reporting-on-palestine-how-to-escalate-your-complaint-to-ofcom/.

^{86. 5}Pillars. "Telegraph Wrongly Claimed 50% of UK's Imported COVID-19 Infections from Pakistan." 25 December 2020. https://5pillarsuk.com/2020/12/25/telegraph-wrongly-claimed-50-of-uks-imported-covid-19-infections-from-pakistan/. See the ruling at '10911-20 The Centre for Media Monitoring v The Daily Telegraph', https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=10911-20.

Justice System

Discrimination-fed disparities in the ways that ethnic minorities in general, and Muslims in particular, are treated by the criminal justice system persist. Research carried out in previous years has exposed the enormity of the problem: for example, prisoners with a Muslim background are massively over-represented among the prison population and the numbers nearly quadrupled in the last decade. When it comes to terrorism, in spite of a recent recognition that far-right extremism is widespread, growing, and represents arguably the most significant challenge to national security (with far-right referrals made via the UK government's counter-extremism programme PRE-VENT exceeding by 15% those involving allegations of 'Islamist' radicalisation)⁸⁷ [Figure 13] the number of those detained or sentenced under terrorism offences remained overwhelmingly skewed towards the latter by a factor higher than 1-to-3.⁸⁸ A similar alarming over-representation of BAME and Muslim-background cases relate to police stop-and-search powers.⁸⁹ A series of failings to support BAME individuals under probation have been recorded in a government report published in March 2021.⁹⁰

PREVENT remains a key focus of criticism as Islamophobic and discriminatory. It is therefore not surprising that it is also a key target of ongoing calls for radical reform and anti-discrimination action. The original review process promised by the Conservative government began in 2019 but has been subsequently delayed. The appointment of Willian Shawcross (formerly the Chair of the Charity Commission for England and Wales) as the review's lead in January 2021 was criticised and in the end boycotted by Muslim community organisations⁹¹ and human rights NGOs⁹² largely because of his earlier controversial comments on Islam that resulted in him being accused on 'institutional bias' against Muslims.⁹³ Further delays in bringing to an end

^{87.} Siddique, Haroon, and Haroon Siddique Legal affairs correspondent. "More Prevent Referrals Linked to Far-Right Extremism than Islamist." *The Guardian*, November 18, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/uknews/2021/nov/18/more-prevent-referrals-linked-to-far-right-extremism-than-islamist.

^{88.} Allen, Grahame, and Harding, Megan. Terrorism in Great Britain, House of Commons, 14.10.2021, available at https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7613/CBP-7613.pdf.

^{89. &}quot;'Ineffective' and Racially Disproportionate Blanket Stop and Search Powers to Be Expanded," Independent, July 26, 2021. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/beating-crime-plan-stop-search-s60-b1890867.html.

^{90.} HM Inspectorate of Probation, Race equality in probation: the experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic probation service users and staff. A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation, March 2021, available at https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/03/Race-Equality-in-Probation-thematic-inspection-report-v1.0.pdf#page45.

^{91.} E.g. Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). 'New "Independent" Reviewer on Prevent Confirms Government Whitewash', 28 January 2021. https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/independent-review-prevent/.

E.g. 'Rights Groups Boycott Prevent Review', Liberty (blog), 16 February 2021. https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/rights-groups-boycott-prevent-review/; Amnesty International. 'UK: NGOs Condemn Appointment of William Shawcross and Announce Civil Society-Led Review of Prevent', 16 February 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/uk-ngos-condemn-appointment-of-william-shawcross-andannounce-civil-society-led-review-of-prevent/.

^{93.} Grierson, Jamie, and Vikram Dodd. 'William Shawcross's Selection for Prevent Role Strongly Criticised'. *The Guardian*, 26 January 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/26/william-shawcrosss-selection-for-prevent-role-strongly-criticised.

the review and reporting the findings continue to erode trust in the programme, even if the expectation bar from the government review remains very low.

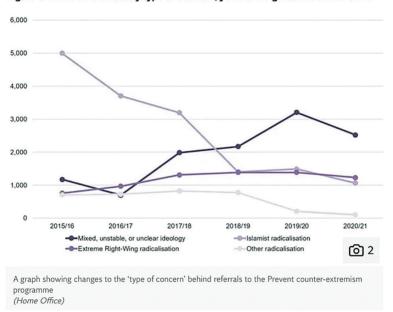


Figure 6: Prevent referrals by type of concern, years ending March 2016 to 2021

Figure 13: Data relating to PREVENT referrals by type of concern, showing the steady rise of right-wing extremist referrals since 2015. Source: Home Office, Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2020 to March 2021.

Internet

The role of internet and social media in amplifying and diffusing Islamophobic noise has been underlined by research in the previous years. During the years of the COVID pandemic, the role of the web as a source of information and medium of communication increased significantly - and so did its negative contribution to the dissemination of Islamophobic tropes or fake news. ⁹⁴ Apart from limited regulatory oversight, egalitarian access, and massive diffusion potential, online information and communication is an essentially global phenomenon, challenging the framing of the discussion in national terms. A media research project that studied the role of Twitter in hate propaganda found that, while the provocations themselves may be rooted in national space, their ability to influence online opinion is dwarfed by the effect of shady bot 'amplifiers'. ⁹⁵ The need for easier reporting systems, 'soft' verification of

^{94.} Castaño-Pulgarín, Sergio Andrés, Natalia Suárez-Betancur, Luz Magnolia Tilano Vega, and Harvey Mauricio Herrera López. "Internet, Social Media and Online Hate Speech. Systematic Review." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 58 (May 1, 2021).

Shahin, Saif. "How Social Media – Aided by Bots – Amplifies Islamophobia Online." The Conversation. 9 September 2021. http://theconversation.com/how-social-media-aided-by-bots-amplifies-islamophobia-on-line-166080.

the identity of anonymous users, a more developed 'early warning' system, and better digital education are highlighted in another research published in 2021. 6 Social media providers have made some progress towards targeting hate messaging on their platforms (more recently Instagram introduced a new system for limited 'unwanted interactions' 97), but the enormity of the task that they are faced with, and the grave limits of their actions, are highlighted by the fact that about 89% of the Islamophobic posts are still going undetected. 98

The internet played a role in spreading racist and Islamophobic abuse in the aftermath of the 2021 European Cup finals, where players of the England team who missed penalties were abused on the grounds of their race and religion. Typically the provocations fall under four main categories: flamers' (using derogatory and insulting language), 'accusers' (presenting Muslims and Islam as the source of all problems), 'patriots' (targeting Muslims in alleged defence of 'their' country), and apocalyptic 'premonitors' (warning about impending gloom). According to Twitter, the overwhelming majority of racist and Islamophobic trolls who targeted the England players who took the knee or missed the penalties were identifiable. Given that, according to the social media provider, their systems removed more than 1,600 offensive tweets in the course of the first twenty-four hours since the final, the enormity of the Islamophobic volume is not hard to appreciate. On the Islamophobic volume is not hard to appreciate.

Social media are both used by politicians to reproduce anti-Muslim stereotypes and serve as sources of abuse. In May 2021, the Conservative MP Michael Fabricant used Twitter to call those taking part in pro-Palestine protests in London as "primitives [who] are trying to bring to London what they do in the Middle East" [Figure 14]. Ahead of the 2021 local elections the Conservative Party had to suspend two of its candidates in Durham for posting offensive material on their social me-

 [&]quot;New Research Uncovers Covid-19 Islamophobic Misinformation Theories, and Suggests Four Types of Islamophobic Social Media Posters," December 15, 2021. https://www.bcu.ac.uk/news-events/news/new-research-uncovers-covid-19-islamophobic-misinformation-theories-and-suggests-four-types-of-islamophobic-social-media-posters.

^{97. &}quot;Instagram Launches Limits Tool to Restrict Unwanted Interactions," *The National*, November 8, 2021. https://www.thenational.scot/news/national/19505140.instagram-launches-limits-tool-restrict-unwanted-interactions/

^{98. &}quot;Facebook and Twitter 'Failed to Remove' Nearly 90 per Cent of Islamophobic Posts," April 28, 2022. https://www.independent.co.uk/tech/facebook-twitter-islamophobia-muslim-posts-b2066833.html.

Sommerlad, Nick. "Racists Who Abused England Stars Allowed to Keep Accounts despite Vile History." Mirror, July 13, 2021. https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/racists-who-attacked-england-stars-24528804.

^{100. &}quot;COVID-19 Sparks Online Islamophobia as Fake News and Racist Memes Are Shared Online, New Research Finds." December 2021. 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.

Davies, Ethan. "Almost Every Troll Directing Abuse at England Players Was 'Identifiable," August 10, 2021. https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/almost-every-troll-directing-abuse-21274551.

^{102.} HOPE not Hate. "Michael Fabricant's Racist Tweet: My Letter to the Tory Chief Whip," May 17, 2021. https://hopenothate.org.uk/2021/05/17/michael-fabricants-racist-tweet-my-letter-to-the-tory-chief-whip/.

dia accounts.¹⁰³ Meanwhile Manchester MP Afzal Khan spoke in parliament about his crushing experience of a wave of online Islamophobic abuse following his decision to take the parliamentary oath in Urdu.¹⁰⁴ In her moving contribution to the same parliamentary debate on Islamophobia in September, the MP Zarah Sultana underlined how internet trolls had been contributing to the abuse that she has faced as a Muslim MP.



Figure 14: Conservative MP Michael Fabricant's racist tweet. Source: Twitter

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There is no single Islamophobic network, in the UK or elsewhere, not least because, as mentioned earlier in this report quoting recently published research, there is no single Islamophobia but rather at least two intersecting currents with very different ideological, social, and cultural profiles. It is not hard to isolate figures from politics, journalism, or social media. But the focus ought to be on the intersections of these different Islamophobic agencies and their dominant role in shaping official public discourse or policy.

Trevor Phillips has now been readmitted in the Labour Party from which he was suspended last year. His return, organised quietly and ahead of the party investiga-

^{103.} Christie, Niall. "County Durham Tory Candidates Suspended over Racist and Islamophobic Social Media Posts." Morning Star, April 2, 2021. https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/b/county-durham-tory-candidates-suspended-over-racist-and-islamophobic-social-media-posts.

^{104.} O'Donoghue, Dan. "Manchester MP Bombarded with Islamophobic Abuse on Social Media," November 26, 2021. https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/afzal-khan-mp-bom-barded-islamophobic-22277617.

tion into allegations of his Islamophobic record concluding, ¹⁰⁵ came with no apology - whether offered by Phillips himself or demanded by the party as part of the readmittance process. Labour MPs such as Zarah Sultana called for nothing short than a "full retraction" of his numerous comments as part of this process. ¹⁰⁶ Phillips has featured repeatedly as part of this report in preceding years. His record of controversial statements is long and disturbing. He was rewarded with a knighthood in January 2022 for his services to equality and human rights. ¹⁰⁷ And yet, as the congratulatory note from the Policy Exchange thinktank (through whose work he has made some of his most controversial recent contributions to public debate) noted, his views on Islamophobia have "transformed the debate". ¹⁰⁸

The same article calls Phillips a "canary in the mine on key debates on race". Respectable Islamophobia 'scepticism' in the UK has many faces and, yes, it is most certainly active in reshaping the public debate on anti-Muslim prejudice, discrimination, and racism. The ruling Conservative government has gone out of its way to reward some of its key representatives with positions of real influence: Swaran Singh, who led the investigation into allegations of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party has been known for his anti-Muslim views; another advisor appointed to the same enquiry, Wasiq Wasiq, has been undermining efforts to accept a legally binding definition of Islamophobia as a "new blasphemy law";109 William Shawcross, who heads the review of PREVENT, has repeatedly referred to Islam as a "terrifying problem"; Robin Simcox, who was appointed as Interim Lead of the Commission for Countering Extremism, has publicly and repeatedly expressed his belief that there needs to be a "push back" on the debate on Islamophobia as an attack on free speech and an attempt to "narrow the parameters of legitimate debate";110 the recently appointed Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries has a well-known record of Islamophobic views, including advocacy of a ban on burqa.¹¹¹ These and other figures have expressed intersecting and overlapping views that result in the normalisation of a slippery Islam-

^{105.} Rodgers, Sienna. "Labour Criticised over Quiet Lifting of Trevor Phillips Member Suspension." July, 6, 2022. https://labourlist.org/2021/07/labour-criticised-over-quiet-lifting-of-trevor-phillips-member-suspension/.

Siddique, Haroon. "Labour Lifts Trevor Phillips' Suspension for Alleged Islamophobia." *The Guardian*, July 6, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jul/06/labour-lifts-trevor-phillips-suspension-for-alleged-islamophobia.

^{107.} Novak, Kim. "Trevor Phillips Knighted in New Year Honours for Services to Human Rights," December 31, 2021. https://metro.co.uk/2021/12/31/trevor-phillips-knighted-in-new-year-honours-for-services-to-human-rights-15846140/.

^{108. &}quot;Sir Trevor Phillips: A Well Deserved Knighthood for a Journalist Willing to Challenge Old & New Establishments," January 7, 2022. https://policyexchange.org.uk/sir-trevor-phillips-a-well-deserved-knighthood-for-a-journalist-willing-to-challenge-old-new-establishments/.

^{109. &}quot;Adviser in UK Inquiry of Conservative Party Dismisses Islamophobia." Daily Sabah, April 1, 2021. https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/adviser-in-uk-inquiry-of-conservative-party-dismisses-islamophobia.

^{110.} MEND. "Appointment of Goodhart Undermines EHRC's Credibility," November 30, 2020. https://www.mend.org.uk/appointment-of-goodhart-undermines-ehrcs-credibility/.

^{111.} Safdar, Anealla. "UK Culture Secretary's 'Medieval Burqa' Comments Decried." September, 17, 2022. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/17/uk-culture-secretarys-medieval-burqa-comments-decried.

ophobia-scepticism; they are now in key positions of power to shape policy in this direction against all the copious efforts to promote a definition of Islamophobia and take effective action to counter anti-Muslim racism in the UK.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society organisations have continued their invaluable research, public interventions, and initiatives - an even more remarkable feat given all the restrictions and disruptions caused by the pandemic in 2021. Organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain (and its Centre for Media Monitoring), 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. In yet another year dominated by COVID the work of the Muslim Doctors Association in highlighting the challenges faced by medical professionals in the NHS during the pandemic is both critically important and timely.

Scotland stands out among the regions of the UK for its continuing commitment to fight Islamophobia. The fact that all parties of the Scottish parliament - including the Scottish conservatives - have adopted the APPG definition since 2019 has sent out a clear message about a cross-party consensus on the issue. In 2021, the Cross-Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia published a landmark comprehensive report, led by the now Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar that is as depressing in its findings as it is uplifting in its endorsement by the Scottish government and the opposition. 112

The list of positive civil society initiatives in the fight against Islamophobia is long and deserves effusive praise given the limitations imposed by COVID and the reluctance of the UK government to take positive action to fight Islamophobia. Among them:

 The publication of the report on Islamophobia in Scotland, the fruit of a lengthy and detailed inquiry into Islamophobic practices led by the Cross-Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia [Figure 15].¹¹³

Hutcheon, Paul. "Scotland's Islamophobic Shame Exposed with Most Muslims Facing Race Hate." Daily Record, February 26, 2020. https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/race-hate-reality-modern-scotland-21574705.

^{113.} Nicolson, Marcus. "Islamophobia Report Reveals Scotland Not Quite as Tolerant as It Would like to Think." The Conversation. July 21, 2022. http://theconversation.com/islamophobia-report-reveals-scotland-not-quite-as-tolerant-as-it-would-like-to-think-164828

- The decision of London mayor Sadie Khan to boost funding (£400,000) for community groups to fight against hate, extremism, and radicalisation in the city.¹¹⁴
- The efforts of UK Muslim Film to fight against the misrepresentation of Muslims on screen and to promote a positive integration of Muslim life into the heart of British culture [Figure 17].¹¹⁵
- The Muslim Athlete Charter, an initiative aimed at creating a national crosssport framework to provide support for Muslim athletes. The charter has been signed by a number of organisations across different sports [Figure 16].¹¹⁶
- The work carried out by the Centre for Equity and Inclusion London Metropolitan University, for the study "Institutionalised" that brings together scholarship on Islamophobia with the real-life experiences of Muslim students at London Met. This research has drawn attention to the challenges faced by Muslim students in the UK's higher education and served as a broader call for action across the sector.¹¹⁷
- The initiative by CAGE and Media Diversified to bring together more 100 experts, civil society and community organisations, and leading actors and campaigners in a challenge to the government's planned new Nationality and Borders Bill. The campaign was launched with an open letter to the magazine *New Statesman*, castigating the new law for "cement[ing] a racist and Islamophobic two-tier citizenship regime in the UK" [Figure 18].¹¹⁸
- The continuing success of the Visit My Mosque initiative in June even during the challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative grew from about 80 in 2015 to more than 250 participating mosques opening their doors to all visitors in 2019. In 2021, the visits were once again virtual but they made a significant contribution to "breaking down barriers and building bridges, trust and understanding".¹¹⁹

www.islamophobiareport.com

^{114. &}quot;Mayor Boosts Action to Counter Violent Extremism and Hate Crime," September 9, 2021. https://www.london.gov.uk//press-releases/mayoral/new-40000-funding-for-communities-to-fight-hate.

^{115.} Child, David. "Tired of Muslim 'Terrorists', Charity Tackles Cinema Stereotypes," April 14, 2021. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/13/uk-charity-tackles-muslim-stereotypes-on-screen.

^{116. &}quot;The First-Ever Muslim Athletes' Charter Launched in the UK." August 6, 2022. https://www.eumuslims.org/en/media-centre/news/first-ever-muslim-athletes-charter-launched-uk.

^{117. &}quot;Universities Are Failing to Recognise and Tackle Islamophobia, London Met Study Finds - London Metropolitan University," January 13, 2021. https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/news/articles/universities-are-failing-to-recognise-and-tackle-islamophobia-london-met-study-finds/.

^{118.} Diversified, AuthorMedia. "Joint Letter from 100 Civil Society Figures Opposing the Nationality and Borders Bill," January 4, 2022. https://mediadiversified.org/2022/01/04/joint-statement-from-100-signatories-the-nationality-and-borders-bill/.

^{119. &}quot;The Journey | Visit My Mosque". https://visitmymosque.org/the-journey/.

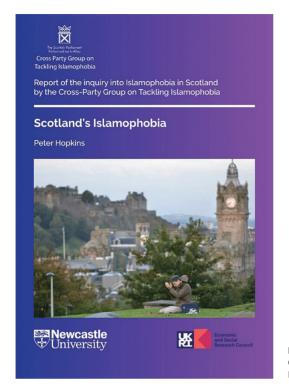


Figure 15: Published report of the Cross-Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia of the Scottish Parliament



Figure 16: Logo of the Muslim Athlete Charter initiative.



Figure 17: The campaign of the UK Muslim Film to fight against the misrepresentation of Muslims on screen Source: TRT World



Figure 18: Photo from a protest against the Nationality and Borders Bill of the UK government, spearheaded by CAGE and Media Diversified. Source: Middle East Eye

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Contrary to what respectable apologists of the 'British values' tell us, Islamophobia has deep roots in UK politics, society, and culture that go well beyond any particular party. They also extend across extreme, radical, populist, and mainstream political spaces. This in no way means that the UK is unique or worse than other countries; the problem knows no national boundaries or 'ways of life' across Europe. In the UK, as well as elsewhere, 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. The less we want to talk about it and the more we evade it, the more we give it space to fester, to the detriment of not just Muslim communities but of society as a whole. Only if it is confronted as a challenge with many facets will the long-term upward trend be effectively and sustainably reversed.

A definition is no panacea; it can never be perfect or unanimously accepted. But a thoughtful and measured definition like the one proposed by the APPG in 2018 is a crucial step towards acknowledging the severity of the situation facing Muslim communities and a tool that opens up further possibilities for effective action. Procrastination in the name of defending freedom or fighting terrorism will not make the structural factors that feed Islamophobia disappear - quite the opposite. Accepting the definition will become a deeply symbolic as well as productive milestone along the path of turning the page on Islamophobia practices. It ought not to become a culture war because it is not a zero-sum game.

Previous reports on Islamophobia in the UK published in this volume have also highlighted the urgent need to 'shift the balance towards inoculating society vis-àvis disinformation and hate narratives'. Much of the material featured in this report - and arguable some of the most significant contributions to the fight against Islamophobia - concerned strategies of rebuttal and reactive counter-messaging. Exposing misinformation and holding those involved in Islamophobic practices accountable is of critical significance of course. Yet, as we saw, setting the record straight once the damage has been done is a slow, copious mitigation strategy. Meanwhile regulation is a double-edged sword - effective and necessary in some respects but also slippery along a route that may lead to censorship of anything deemed 'abnormal'. If we consider that there is a public marketplace for both extremist and mainstream anti-Muslim racism in the UK society - in other words, that Islamophobic messaging strikes a chord with biased institutions and social constituencies -, we need to invest far more energy into strategies of building individual and community resilience that will make people less receptive to stereotyping, more critical of hate-mongering, and, in the end, less likely to engage and reproduce the message itself. 120 The two strategies - rebuttal/mitigation and inoculation - will work best when pursued concurrently, symmetrically, and in complementary ways.

In response to what happened in 2021, 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 as on its exceptional and 'extreme' manifestations, typically associated with the far right;
- More accurate, agile, and nuanced research of hate crime that accounts for the complex intersectionality of racial, religious, ethnic, and gender discrimination;
- Monitoring social media platforms more effectively by harnessing the power of algorithms for public interest;
- Effective review and revision of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, with critical feedback from civil society/grassroots organisations and academic/ professional expertise;
- Robust scrutiny and meaningful regulation of traditional media, accompanied with 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;

^{120.} Lewandowsky, Stephan, and Muhsin Yesilada. "Inoculating against the Spread of Islamophobic and Radical-Islamist Disinformation." *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications* 6, no. 1 (August 19, 2021).

- Greater emphasis on inoculating strategies focusing on younger generations at school level, alongside programmes to make students digitally proficient;
- 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
- Deeper international co-operation in the fight against hate crime, disinformation, and extremism, especially in relation to online hate messaging and abuse that knows no conventional national boundaries.

Chronology

- **15 January:** Arsonists target the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association premises, causing significant damage to the property.
- 26 January: The appointment of William Shawcross, who made controversial comments on Islam in the past, as the new Independent Reviewer of PRE-VENT generates strong backlash by Muslim organisations and human rights groups.
- March: Major protests erupt outside a school in Betley following an incident
 where a teacher showed images of the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoon of the Prophet
 Muhammad to the students. The teacher was initially suspended, but was reinstated two months later.
- 4 May: Mosque attendees are attacked with eggs and stones outside the Ilford Islamic Centre, London.
- 15 May: Islamophobic graffiti is sprayed in yellow paint on the pavement close to Norwich Central Mosque and Islamic Community Centre on Aylsham Road, Norwich. The mosque was a victim of an arson attack in 2020.
- 16 May: Conservative MP Michael Fabricant faces wide criticism for offensive comments made on Twitter in response to pro-Palestine protests in London.
- 25 May: The long-delayed Singh report on allegations of Islamophobia within
 the Conservative Party is finally released, identifying problems at mostly local party associations but rejecting claims of 'institutional racism'. PM Johnson and Party co-chair Amanda Milling offered their apologies in response to
 the report's findings, but the PM refused to disown his 2018 comments about
 Muslim women in burqa resembling "letterboxes".

- June: Azeem Rafiq, a former player of Yorkshire County Cricket Club (YCCC), begins an employment tribunal claim against his former club for institutional racism. In August, the results of the investigation are released in heavily redacted form. In September, Rafiq appeared in the House of Commons and gave a two-hour powerful testimony.
- 29 June: A landmark report by the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group (CPG) on tackling Islamophobia finds that four-fifths of Muslims living in Scotland have experienced Islamophobic abuse.
- **6 July:** It is reported that the Labour Party has readmitted Trevor Phillips to the party, following his suspension in 2020 on charges of Islamophobia.
- 10 September: Attack on the Didsbury Mosque in south Manchester.
- 14 October: Muslim schoolgirls are attacked after mosque prayers. The attackers tried to rip off the victims' hijabs and caused them minor injuries.
- **15 October:** In the wake of the murder of MP David Amess, a sharp spike in anti-Muslim hate crime is recorded.
- **30 November:** A comprehensive report published by the Centre for Media Monitoring on the ways in which Muslims have been depicted in the British press in 2018-20 finds that *c.* 60% of all articles relating to Muslims and Islam offer a negative depiction.

y gathering 35 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialised in racism and human rights, the seventh edition of the European Islamophobia Report addresses a globally important issue. All 27 country reports included in this year's annual report follow a unique structure that invites comparison between countries and across the years since this report series was first established in 2015. It allows 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 ultimately threaten the whole of society. As a result, the European Islamophobia Report 2021 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 seventh edition of our report continues to show the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Islamophobia, and how anti-Muslim legislation and measures in states like Austria and France have developed and been opposed by civil society. The 27 country reports demonstrate the ways in which governments, political parties, and media participate and counteract the reproduction of discourses that put the fundamental rights of European citizens in jeopardy.

This compendium of fact-based and insights and practical data aims to provide European policymakers, institutions, and NGOs with recommendations on how to tackle anti-Muslim racism in Europe systematically and with success.



