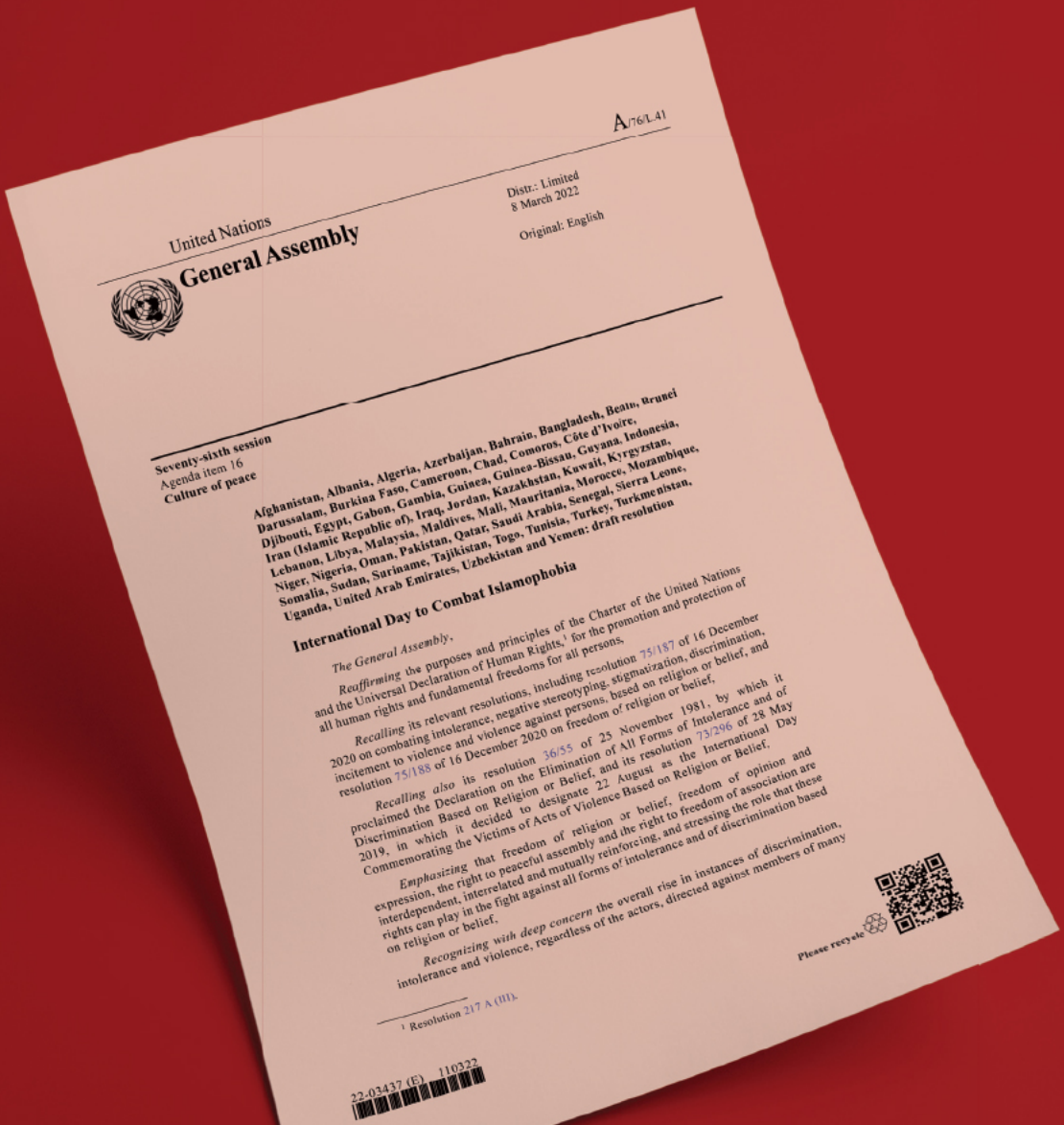


EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2022

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)



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2022

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ABOUT EDITORS

Enes Bayraklı

Enes Bayraklı earned his BA, MA and PhD from the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, and conducted research for his PhD thesis at the University of Nottingham in Britain between 2009 and 2010. He took office as a deputy director at Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center in London in 2011-2013. Mr. Bayraklı also served as the founding director of Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers in Constanta and Bucharest. Currently Mr. Bayraklı is the head of Department of Political Science and International Relations at the Turkish-German University in Istanbul. He has been the co-editor of the annual European Islamophobia Report since 2016. Bayraklı frequently contributes as an expert commentator for different national and international media outlets on Turkish Foreign Policy and Islamophobia.

Email: bayrakli@tau.edu.tr

Farid Hafez

Farid Hafez is Distinguished Class of 1955 Visiting Professor of International Studies at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and non-resident senior researcher at Georgetown University's The Bridge Initiative at the School of Foreign Service. He defended his habilitation thesis titled "Islam-Politics in the Second Republic of Austria" at the University of Salzburg in 2019. In 2017, he was a Fulbright visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley and in 2014, a visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York. Since 2010 he has been the editor of *Islamophobia Studies Yearbook*, and since 2016 the co-editor of *European Islamophobia Report*. Hafez has received the Bruno Kreisky Award for the "Political Book of the Year" for his anthology *Islamophobia in Austria* (co-edited with John Bunzl). He has more than 140 publications in leading journals such as *Politics and Religion*, *Patterns of Prejudice*, and *German Politics and Society*. Hafez's latest publication is the edited international volume *The Rise of Global Islamophobia in the War on Terror: Coloniality, Race, and Islam*, co-edited with Naved Bakali (Manchester University Press, 2022).

Email: fh6@williams.edu

For more information about the EIR:

www.islamophobiareport.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The unanimous adoption of the United Nations resolution that declared March 15 the “International Day to Combat Islamophobia” is a major success in the global recognition of Islamophobia as an existing and pervasive problem. This resolution holds the potential to be used by civil society and politicians who have been fighting Islamophobia in the past to put pressure on nation-states that have, on the one hand, promoted Islamophobia and make them accountable for their actions, and, on the other, pressure such states to take concrete action against Islamophobia. The beginning of the war in Ukraine seems to have overshadowed other domestic issues including Islamophobia to varying degrees, while in Russia, civil society activists and journalists expressing dissent have been subjected to criminal prosecution with the help of the Law on Non-commercial Organisations, the Fake News Law, and the Law on Military Censorship. The persecution of members of various Islamic groups and the further inclusion of Islamic books such as an abridged version of Sahih al-Bukhari on the list of extremist materials has continued. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has uncovered the stereotypical perspective of many Europeans vis-à-vis different kinds of refugees, welcoming white, Christian (female) Ukrainians as opposed to the often violent resistance and rejection of Muslim refugees.

In regards to institutionalised Islamophobia, the Austrian Integration Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP) organised the second iteration of the “Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration” to export her battle against so-called “political Islam” to other European countries. A total of eleven countries are said to have participated in the forum. On a national level, Raab has increased the annual budget of the Documentation Center Political Islam to 1,700,000 Euro (from the original 500,000 Euro). As the strongest ally in this politics, France continued its path of a crackdown on its Muslim population. Emmanuel Macron’s “systematic obstruction” policy has led to the control of 1,727 Muslim institutions,

118 closures, and 10 million euros seized between January and August 2022. In the field of education, the so-called Laïcité Plan to control and police Muslim women's bodies has been implemented. A national education directive forces teachers and administrative staff under threat of penalties to detect "too long" skirts, to report female pupils, and to file a disciplinary complaint. Similarly, in Belgium, the minister of justice pressured the leading imam of the Great Mosque of Brussels to resign or risk losing government funding for the mosque. In Denmark, a hijab ban in elementary schools was suggested. The government set aside funds for teachers to recognise and prevent so-called negative social control and honour related conflicts for the next two years. British prime minister, Rishi Sunak, has largely ignored the fight against Islamophobia, while defending the infamous government's PREVENT counter-terrorism strategy and vowed to refocus it on the threat of so-called "Islamist extremism". The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) definition of Islamophobia was officially rejected only days after the new government took office. Criticism by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) does not seem to echo with many of these member states. At the same time, other European institutions reproduce one-sided analyses that conflate radicalisation and violence with Islam, portraying Muslims in the Balkans as a security threat, as is the case with the European Commission's "Kosovo Report 2022".

Four specific recommendations emanate from the eighth volume of our *European Islamophobia Report*:

- The new United Nations resolution declaring March 15 as "International Day to Combat Islamophobia" should be used by policymakers and civil society actors to press for more change in the fight against anti-Muslim racism.
- We reiterate the urgency as declared by European institutions, especially with regard to the member states of the Council of Europe, to take the ECRI'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 of European Union member states.
- We reiterate that 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 in Europe.
- Austria's attempt to export its infamous witch hunt against Muslim civil society via the newly established "Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration" must be fought back by EU member states.

THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE IN 2022

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

Introduction

The year 2022 witnessed a major success in the global recognition of Islamophobia as an existing and pervasive problem. As our cover demonstrates, the United Nations, on March 15 last year, adopted a resolution and declared March 15 as the “International Day to Combat Islamophobia”, which can be considered an important step in the legal and political recognition of this phenomenon. The UN press release on the resolution states, “Islamophobia has emerged as a new form of racism, with an added gender aspect, as girls and women are targeted due to their dress and the notion that they are oppressed. Islamophobia is also finding purchase in the political sphere, including discriminatory travel bans and visa restrictions, and discourse among far-right groups for electoral gains. The situation remains poorly understood with numerous United Nations officials and world leaders underscoring the need to address it. By the text, the General Assembly, among other things, decided to proclaim 15 March the International Day to Combat Islamophobia and called for strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and the diversity of religions and beliefs.”¹ The resolution was accepted unanimously, and holds the potential to be used by civil society and politicians who have been fighting Islamophobia in the past to put pressure on nation-states that have, on the one hand, promoted Islamophobia and make them accountable for their actions, and, on the other, pressure such states to take concrete action against Islamophobia.

1. “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: 17.01.2023).

The year 2022 was overshadowed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In some countries, the focus on Ukraine seems to have overshadowed other domestic issues including Islamophobia to varying degrees. The invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops on February 24, 2022, marked the beginning of a war not only with global effects, but an armed conflict that hit many European countries which were dependent on Russian gas and oil supply especially hard. Within Russia, while the official Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims has wholeheartedly embraced the regime's war efforts, it also became apparent that Muslims living in the Russian Federation have been mobilised disproportionately,² and used as cheap cannon fodder, giving the political economy of the war a clear racial mark. On a domestic level, this made life even more difficult for Muslims in Russia. Against the backdrop of the war, civil society activists and journalists expressing dissent have been subjected to criminal prosecution with the help of the Law on Non-Commercial Organisations assigning "foreign agent" status to individuals who receive foreign support or are under "foreign influence", the Fake News Law or Law on Military Censorship. In 2022, the persecution of followers of various Muslim movements in Russia continued and several Muslim activists were persecuted. Forty-four followers of the political but peaceful group Hizb al-Tahrir were sentenced, and six convictions of members of the apolitical Tablighi Jamaat and seven criminal cases against members of the mystic Nurcular movement were initiated. A foundational book of Muslim theology, one of the publications of the collection of narrations of Prophet Muhammad as compiled in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, was included in the list of extremist materials in a decision by the Laishevsky court of Tatarstan on August 29, 2022. At the same time, a separate edition of the book, a summary of the original, was banned.³

More broadly speaking, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has uncovered the stereotypical perspective of Europeans vis-à-vis different kinds of refugees. Compared to the problematisation of the immigration of Muslims,⁴ the debate about white, Christian Ukrainians being naturally welcomed in the rest of Europe revealed the deep-seated prejudice of many Europeans. In an op-ed, a famous anti-Muslim Greek author described Ukrainians and Muslims as follows:

...real refugees – old men, women, children – fleeing a real war. The younger ones stay behind to fight for their homeland. Muslims are primarily young, fanatics of

2. "Slova Melikova o skorom zavershenii mobilizatsii vyzvali nedoverie v sotsseti", Kavkazskii Uzel, 18 October 2022, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/382180/>

3. Sakhikh al'-Bukhari (Kratkoe izlozhenie) "Dostovernye predaniia iz zhizni Proroka Mukhammada, da blagoslovit ego Allah i da privetstvuet: IAsnoe izlozhenie khadisov "Dostovernogo sbornika", sostavil Imam Abu al'-Abbas Akhmad bin Abd al'-Latyf az-Zubaidi, perevod s arabskogo Abdulla Nirsha, 5-e izdanie, ispravlenoe, M.: Umma, 2007.

4. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, eds. *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul: Setra, 2016.

Allah, looking for better living conditions and, according to the Koran, to colonize Christian societies. And they carry different beliefs, habits, and life values.⁵

Moustafa Bayoumi summarised European media coverage of Ukrainians feeling the war as “[t]hey are ‘civilised’ and ‘look like us’.”⁶ Thus, Ukrainians were rhetorically welcomed into the larger Euro-Christian community of Europe. And while even the Islamophobic Finns Party (PS) does not object to the arrival of tens of thousands of white Ukrainian refugees⁷ to Finland, the treatment of Muslims is different. The Finnish Border Guard Act was given the green light by parliament in the summer to build a fence at eight border crossing points with Russia.⁸

State Islamophobia Continues

State Islamophobia institutionalised in legislation and political measures taken by governments continues to haunt Muslims in certain countries. Nadine Maenza, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), mentioned during the hearing titled “Anti-Muslim Policies and Bias in Europe” on February 9, 2022, these problematic tendencies in Europe.

Some governments across Europe have also adopted legislation that discriminates against Muslims. Claims of countering extremism have been used to justify the closure of mosques in France and Austria, and to ban the construction of new minarets in Switzerland. [...] In Denmark, children born into immigrant often Muslim neighborhoods, labeled ghettos by the Danish government, must be separated 35 hours each week from their families to learn Danish values. The governments of Austria and France have identified Islamist Separatism and political Islam as national security concerns without clearly defining those terms or requiring a relation to the use or advocacy of violence.⁹

While in Austria Sebastian Kurz and most of his inner circle in government positions are gone, France continues its path of a crackdown on its Muslim population. As Kawtar Najib shows in her report on France, not only has the Islamophobic discourse been exacerbated during the presidential election campaign, but Macron was

5. Andreas Andrianopoulos, “Who squint towards the Islamists?”, in.gr, 18 May 2022, <https://cutt.ly/AM7o5d9> (Accessed date: 23 November 2022).
6. Bayoumi, Moustafa (2022), “They are ‘civilised’ and ‘look like us’: the racist coverage of Ukraine,” *The Guardian*, 3 Mar 2022.
7. Finnish Immigration Service, “Decisions 8/2021 - 10/2022,” 15 November 2022, <https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#decisions?l=en>, (Access date: 20 November 2022).
8. Ministry of the Interior press release, “Amendments to Border Guard Act Help Prepare for Incidents,” 8 July 2022, <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/amendments-to-border-guard-act-help-prepare-for-incidents>, (Access date: 19 November 2022).
9. USCIRF Hearing: Anti-Muslim Policies and Bias in Europe”, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 09.02.022, retrieved November 1, 2022 from: <https://www.uscirf.gov/events/uscirf-hearing-anti-muslim-policies-and-bias-europe>

challenged by the even more aggressive anti-Muslim candidate Eric Zemmour. Najib writes, “Many other candidates from far-right to centrist parties have also made Islamophobic comments during their own campaigns and even promised the enactment of new laws against Islam and Muslims that would go further than the anti-separatism law. [...] The re-election of President Emmanuel Macron has allowed the continuation of his policy against what he calls ‘political Islam’ and ‘radical Islam’ which, in fact, directly affects ordinary Muslims in France.” Najib tells us that Macron’s “systematic obstruction” policy has led to the control of 1,727 Muslim institutions, 118 closures, and 10 million euros seized between January and August 2022.¹⁰ As a consequence, she argues, “Today, French Muslims know very well that political measures directly target them as well as their religious practices. They can witness it when they see their local mosque being closed, their imam expelled or their Islamic school raided.” In such an atmosphere, a police attack on Muslim women¹¹ and an arson attack on a mosque¹² have become possible. In the field of education, the so-called Laïcité Plan to control and police Muslim women’s bodies has been implemented. A national education directive forces teachers and administrative staff under threat of penalties to detect “too long” skirts, to report female pupils, and to file a disciplinary complaint.¹³

The author of the Belgian report, Amina Smits, discusses that far from upholding the principle of secularism, the Belgian state “increasingly intervenes with how the Muslim community chooses to arrange and organise its religious affairs.” She offers the example of Minister of Justice Vincent Van Quickenborne (Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats) who pressured the leading imam of the Great Mosque of Brussels to resign or risk losing government funding for the mosque. The same minister also said that he wanted to withdraw the recognition of the Moslimexecutive (EMB - Muslim Executive) as an interlocutor in order to appoint a renewed leadership in the long run and completely cut government funding for the EMB. The reasons given for withdrawing the status were dysfunctionality, conservatism, and the interference of foreign powers.

In Denmark, “The Commission for the Forgotten Women’s Struggle” recommended a hijab ban in elementary schools, including public, private, and free schools.

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10. Gouvernement Liberté Egalité Fraternité, “Dossier de presse sur la Loi confortant le respect des principes de la République: premier bilan et perspectives, un an après sa promulgation”, *Ministère de l’Intérieur et des Outre-Mer*, October 2022, 12 p. https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sites/minint/files/medias/documents/2022-10/06-10-2022-Dossier-de-presse-Loi-confortant-le-respect-des-principes-de-la-Republique-2022_0.pdf
 11. Action Contre l’Islamophobie and @islamotion, “Les 2 jeunes femmes agressées par la Police, racisme? Islamophobie?”, *YouTube*, April 23, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueCjzqaVt3M>. Sihame Assbague, “Ca s’est passé le 14 avril 2022 vers 17h30 sur le pont de Clichy”, *Twitter*, April 17, 2022. https://twitter.com/s_assbague/status/1515716040495443969.
 12. AMR, “Suite à l’incendie de la mosquée”, <http://mosqueederambouillet.fr/>
 13. Verges F., “On se cache derriere cette question de droits des femmes une islamophobie”, *TRT Francais*, November 16, 2022. <https://www.trtfrancais.com/debats/francoise-verges-on-cache-derriere-cette-question-de-droits-des-femmes-une-islamophobie-10897858>

Lamies Nassri discusses in her report how the commission allegedly aimed at investigating how to avoid “negative social control” (NSC) of women and girls with an immigrant background.¹⁴ In 2022, the government set aside funds in the Finance Act for teachers to recognise and prevent negative social control and honour related conflicts (HRC) in 2022-2024.¹⁵

Farid Hafez, in his report on Austria, discusses how conservative Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP) organized the second iteration of the “Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration”¹⁶ to export her battle against so-called “political Islam” to other European countries. She invited several politicians on December 5, 2022 including Sofia Voultepsi, deputy minister of migration and asylum in Greece; Jean Mafart, director of European and international affairs at the French Ministry of the Interior; and Ilkka Salmi, EU counter-terrorism coordinator.¹⁷ A total of eleven countries are said to have participated in the forum.¹⁸

In June, a new report from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), criticised Denmark for the increasing discrimination and hate speech directed at Muslims, and for not doing enough to combat this discrimination.¹⁹

Countries that are home to more critical debates about Islamophobia, such as UK, have not really improved either. Aristotle Kallis argues in his report on the UK that the latest British prime minister, Rishi Sunak, has largely ignored the fight against Islamophobia. Sunak has defended the infamous government’s PREVENT counter-terrorism strategy and vowed to refocus it on the threat of so-called “Islamist extremism”.²⁰ The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) definition of Islamophobia was officially rejected only days after the new government took office.

Regarding the views from within the Italian Muslim community, according to a survey carried out by the newspaper *La Luce* ahead of the 2022 election, a fifth of the

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14. Kommissionen for den glemte kvindekamp, ”Delanbefalinger om børneliv”, *denglemtekvindekamp.dk*, retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://denglemtekvindekamp.dk/kommissionens-anbefalinger/delanbefalinger-om-boerneliv/>
 15. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet, ”Nyt diplommodul ruster lærere og pædagoger til at forhindre negativ social kontrol og æresrelaterede konflikter”, *uim.dk*, (April 30, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.uim.dk/nyhedsarkiv/2022/april/nyt-diplommodul-ruster-laerere-og-paedagoger-til-at-forhindre-negativ-social-kontrol-og-aeresrelaterede-konflikter/>
 16. Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration,” 22 Feb 2023, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-vienna-forum-on-countering-segregation-and-extremism-in-the-context-of-integration/>
 17. Joana Deus Pereira, Tweet, 5 Dec 2022, <https://twitter.com/JoanaDeusPereir/status/1599713702428561408/photo/2>
 18. APA, “Raab veranstaltet in Wien Konferenz gegen Extremismus,” Vienna online, 4 Dec 2022, <https://www.vienna.at/raab-veranstaltet-in-wien-konferenz-gegen-extremismus/7780819>
 19. Steen A. Jørgensen & Ida Sejersdal Dreier, ”Ny racisme-rapport: Danmark får kritik for stigende had mod muslimer”, *jyllands-posten*, (June 9, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE14119045/ny-racismereport-danmark-faar-kritik-for-stigende-had-mod-muslimer/>
 20. Lizzie Dearden. “Sunak Ignores Islamophobia Appeal from MP amid Extremism Row.” *Independent*, August 4, 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/uk-news/sunak-truss-conservative-islamophobia-muslims-b2138373.html>

Muslim respondents see the need for a law against Islamophobia as a priority, while a quarter consider the right to build places of worship, which they do not consider is sufficiently guaranteed, as a priority.²¹

On August 3, 2022, the UN published a report which shows the increase of terrorist attacks with “far-right” or “extreme right-wing” ideological background. The report was published by the Secretary-General at the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED).²²

Adem Ferizaj remarks on the problematic discourse coming from the European Commission towards Kosovo. In its *Kosovo Report 2022*, the Commission refers to a “[m]ilitant Salafist ideology” that threatens the country, which for Ferizaj is a “one-sided analysis (that) conflates radicalisation and violence with Islam.”²³

Negative Attitudes, Discrimination, and Hate Crimes

While some countries still lack the monitoring mechanisms for anti-Muslim hate crimes (e.g., Romania, as the ECRI has criticised), other countries are also tentative in implementing policies. Sara Ezabe Malliue reminds us in her report on Malta that the “Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill”, last time discussed in 2019, has not yet been decided.²⁴ Adem Ferizaj argues that for the case of Kosovo, 2022 was the year with the highest number of incidents related to Islamophobia in the recent past, even though public statistics do not show this.

Enrique Tessieri tells us in his Finland report that the imam of the Eastern Helsinki Mellunmäki mosque has been a target of anti-Koran groups harassing even worshippers by taking pictures of their license plates and posting their personal information on the internet.

The latest edition of the German study on authoritarian attitudes (*Autoritarismus-Studie*) from 2022 has shown that 70.2% of Germans agreed that Muslims should be banned from immigrating to Germany and 79.3% of Germans feel estranged due to a Muslim presence.²⁵ Anti-democratic attitudes have not been declin-

21. Davide Piccardo, “Voto e priorità politiche dei musulmani italiani,” *La Luce* (September 24, 2022), <https://www.laluce.news/2022/09/24/voto-e-priorita-politiche-dei-musulmani-italiani/>

22. “Secretary-General’s new report highlights new, emerging form of ‘far-right’ terrorism”, United Nations - Security Council - Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) - Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/news/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-new-report-highlights-new-emerging-form-%E2%80%9Cfar-right%E2%80%9D-terrorism>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

23. See report by Adem Ferizaj in this volume.

24. The Parliament of Malta, <https://www.parliament.mt/en/13th-leg/bills/bill-no-097-human-rights/> (Access date: 4 August 2021)

25. Decker, O./Brähler, E. (Ed.) (2022): “Autoritäre Dynamiken in unsicheren Zeiten - Neue Herausforderungen - alte Reaktionen?”, p. 72, https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2022-11/decker-kiess-heller-brachler-2022-leipzig-autoritarismus-studie-autoritaere-dynamiken-in-unsicheren-zeiten_0.pdf (Access date: February 20).

ing, but rather shifting while keeping hatred against Muslims, Sinti, and Roma on a consistent high in Germany.²⁶

Media

Media can play an important role by investigating and uncovering problematic structures. Khaled al-Hroub argued in an opinion piece on the European coverage of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 that “there is a huge gulf between criticising a country for specific wrongdoings and using disparaging cultural statements and stereotypes that tap into embedded racism.”²⁷ The theme of the Qatar FIFA World Cup was prevalent in all European media. An example of the extent of racist coverage comes from a German media outlet which portrayed the support of the Moroccan football team for Palestine, symbolised by displaying the Palestinian flag at their games, as an anti-semitic offense,²⁸ indicating that three Moroccan players displayed signs that are used by the so-called Islamic State after victories.²⁹ Lamies Nassri in her report on Denmark shows that a Danish host compared the Moroccan national team celebrating their victories with their mothers with a wildlife photo of a monkey family on national TV. When this was followed by a national and international outcry, an apology was issued.

In France, Kawter Najib details in her report, following the game between the French and Moroccan national teams, armed and hooded far-right groups violently attacked Moroccan supporters in the streets of several French cities such as Lyon, Montpellier, and Nice. One young teenager of Moroccan origin was even killed by a car driver waving the French flag.³⁰ Members of Eric Zemmour’s political party celebrated the French team’s victory by trampling the Moroccan flag – a former French colony of a Muslim majority country – along with Nazi salutes.³¹

Karima Moual, an Italian-Moroccan journalist who has been living in Italy for three decades, received death threats and racist attacks targeting her Moroccan roots following her open criticism of the stance on migration and Islam of Giorgia Meloni’s

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26. Decker, O./Brähler, E. (Ed.) (2022): “Autoritäre Dynamiken in unsicheren Zeiten - Neue Herausforderungen - alte Reaktionen?”, p. 12, https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2022-11/decker-kiess-heller-braehler-2022-leipzig-er-autoritarismus-studie-autoritaere-dynamiken-in-unsicheren-zeiten_0.pdf (Access date: February 20).
27. al-Hroub, Khaled (2022): “Qatar World Cup 2022: The beautiful game meets ugly western bigotry”, Middle East Eye, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/qatar-world-cup-beautiful-game-ugly-western-bigotry> (Access date: February 2023).
28. Krauss, Martin (2022): “Marokko liegt nicht in Palästina”, <https://taz.de/Orchestrierte-Israel-Feindschaft/!5897026/> (Access date: February 20).
29. <https://twitter.com/goldi/status/1602378289653358592?ctx=HHwWgICx6ZGk5bwsAAAA> (Access date: February 20).
30. De Fremerville S., “Après France-Maroc, la mort d’Aymen endeuille un quartier Populaire de Montpellier”, *Liberation*, December 15, 2022. https://www.liberation.fr/societe/police-justice/apres-france-maroc-la-mort-daymen-endeuille-un-quartier-populaire-de-montpellier-20221215_QHNQNW7XDBAOFCLIBRQTTGFE4/
31. Massol N., “Salut neonazi et drapeau marocain pietine: la soiree foot de militants de Reconquete”, *Liberation*, December 16, 2022. https://www.liberation.fr/politique/elections/salut-neonazi-et-drapeau-marocain-pietine-la-soiree-foot-de-militants-de-reconquete-20221216_3NR3GXVKOBFTJPZUINW5TPEC6M/?utm_medium=Social&xtor=CS7-51-8&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1671191432

far-right party.³² Ada Mullol i Marin argues in her report on Italy that many Italian media outlets have reproduced Islamophobic narratives. *La Verità* published an article titled “Islamised London. The Subway Is Hell”,³³ which referred to the “dirty, ideological and ‘reverse racist’ city of Mayor Sadiq Khan.” *Saturno Notizie* initially published an article (that was later taken down) by the Italian-born businessman Maurizio Bragagni, who is a donor to the UK Conservative Party, in which he criticised the Labour Party for allowing “Islamic groups to feel at home, where they can find free space for their true political ideology.”³⁴

On a positive note, Farid Hafez in his report on Austria shows that the infamous racist Operation Luxor has come under heavy criticism from various media outlets, thus allowing for a more critical engagement with institutionalised forms of Islamophobia.

Justice system

The judicial system remains an important cornerstone for both, the implementation of as well as the fight against Islamophobia. On October 13, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) decided that companies in the EU can ban religious symbols, which also includes headscarves. However, if the ban effectively discriminates against one religion, companies may need to prove to a court that the restriction is necessary. The case in question was a Muslim woman who applied for a six-week work internship at a Belgian company and was told that she would not be permitted to wear a headscarf. The company claimed that because of its neutrality policy, no headwear, including caps, hats, and scarves, are permitted on its property. The woman brought her complaint before a Belgian court, which then requested guidance from the CJEU. The statement of CJEU was as follows: “The internal rule of an undertaking prohibiting the visible wearing of religious, philosophical or spiritual signs does not constitute direct discrimination if it is applied to all workers in a general and undifferentiated way.”³⁵ The neutrality criterion of an employer, according to the court, could be considered indirectly discriminatory if it disadvantages someone who adheres to a specific religion or belief. It stated that a work tribunal in Brussels would decide whether that was the case in this specific dispute. According to the court, if a difference in how employees are treated is objectively justified by a legiti-

32. Olivia Hopper, “‘Go back’: Karima Moual Navigates Racism In A Country She Calls Home,” Morocco World News (September 26, 2022), <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2022/09/351529/go-back-karima-moual-navigates-racism-in-a-country-she-calls-home>

33. Ignazio Mangrano, “Londra islamizzata-metropolitana è un girone infernale,” *La Verità* (June 23, 2022), <https://www.laverita.info/londra-islamizzata-metropolitana-girone-infernale-2657546133.html>

34. Phil Kemp, “Tory donor Maurizio Bragagni’s ‘foreign Muslim’ comments condemned,” BBC (June 10, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-61745024>

35. Foo Yun Chee, “Employers may need to justify bans on wearing religious signs, EU court says,” Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/general-headscarf-ban-work-is-ok-europes-top-court-says-2022-10-13/>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

mate goal on the part of the company, which the employer would have to prove, then it does not constitute indirect discrimination.³⁶

In Austria, Farid Hafez reports how the Interior Ministry's Operation Luxor, targeting Muslim civil society, experienced several serious setbacks: beyond the acquittal of more than 20 cases, after two years, there was no single indictment and two infamous Islamophobic writers, Heiko Heinisch and Nina Scholz,³⁷ were removed from their position as experts for the operation. The state prosecutor had attempted to expand the investigation, including an investigation for coercion of a witness, who was sued for his false statements in the media. According to a lawyer of the defendant, the state prosecutor did not accept the appellate court's decision and called the Higher Court of Graz a "secularist sect" during a phone call with him. Currently, Operation Luxor still targets 70 defendants and the minister of interior regularly shifts the responsibility onto the justice system, while the investigation reports are written by the intelligence service of the ministry of interior.

In France, there seems to be a complicity between the judicial system and the Ministry of Interior. The case of imam Hassan Iquioussen gained wide coverage. A foreign national, the imam was expelled from France for comments made decades ago that were declared sexist and antisemitic. The French Council of State (Conseil d'Etat) supported the Ministry of Interior's expelling of Iquioussen to Morocco, despite evidence that he had changed attitudes. Even then, the "scandalous and disproportionate nature of this case highlights a violation of his freedom of expression, religion and private family life," Najib argues in her report on France. Also, other imams such as the Comorian national, Mmadi Ahamada, was deported to his country of origin because of a conservative sermon he delivered, which the authorities deemed contrary to the principles of the French Republic.³⁸

A Finnish district court ruled to drop charges against seven police and security guards for forcibly removing the hijabs of two Muslim refugee women in 2017.³⁹

In his report on Bulgaria, Aziz Nazmi Şakir discusses the ongoing challenge of the Muslim representatives of the Muftiate to claim back their stolen properties. As the judiciary system keeps on prolonging a final decision whether the Chief Muftiate is the successor to all pre-1949 Muslim religious communities prior to the na-

36. Ibid.

37. Bridge Initiative Team, "Factsheet: Heiko Heinisch," 3 Mar 2021, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-heiko-heinisch/>

38. Gouvernement Liberté Egalité Fraternité, "Communiqué de presse: M. Mmadi Ahamada a été éloigné ce 2 mai 2022 vers les Comores, son pays d'origine", *Prefete de la Loire*, Saint-Etienne, May 3, 2022. https://www.loire.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/20220503_cp_mmadi_ahamada_et_mme_assiati_epouse_ahamada_ont_ete_eloignes_ce_2_mai_2022_vers_les_comores_leur_pays_d_origine.pdf

39. Enrique Tessieri, "Police and Security Guards Acquitted Over Hijab Removal Case in Finland," *Migrant Tales*, 1 October 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/police-and-security-guards-acquitted-over-hijab-removal-case-in-finland/>, (Access date: 29 October 2022).

tionalisation of mosques, schools, bathhouses, and cemeteries seized by the former communist regime, Muslims are left waiting for their historical rights. In December 2022, the Plovdiv Court of Appeal cancelled a former decision from 2013 by the Plovdiv District Court that handed ownership of the Kurshun Mosque in the city of Karlovo to the Chief Muftiate. Following a complaint by Kosovo's Ministry of Interior, the Court of Appeals decided in favour of a female police officer's right to wear the hijab.⁴⁰

Lamies Nassri reports that Danish residents in Mjølnerparken referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) seeking a ruling on the correct interpretation of the EU's Race Equality Directive challenging the government's "parallel society" legislation (formerly known as the "ghetto policy") that was based on the introduction of the racist terminology "non-Western".⁴¹

Sergio Gracia and Inés Bolaños Somoano reveal in their report on Spain that trials with important implications for Islamophobia in Spain have taken place in 2022. There was a trial about the defence of the right for Islamic religious education in a public school; trials on severe anti-Muslim hate crimes against Islamic institutions and Muslim individuals and death threats; and a trial on the dissemination of anti-Muslim messages.

Politics

Politics remains the essential driver of Islamophobia, as several examples regarding state Islamophobia have shown. In Italy, a centre-right coalition led by the far-right Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy),⁴² won 44% of the vote with Giorgia Meloni becoming the first female prime minister of Italy on October 22. During a speech in June at Spain's far-right Vox party, Meloni stated, "Yes to the natural family; No to the LGBT lobbies; Yes to sexual identity, No to gender ideology; [...] Yes to the universality of the Cross; No to Islamist violence; Yes to secure borders; No to mass immigration [...] Yes to our civilisation; and No to those who want to destroy it!"⁴³

At the frontier of the EU, political parties are aggressively weaponising their discourse. The authors of the report on Greece, Alexandros Sakellariou and Ali Huseyinoglu, using the example of a political program presented by the neo-liberal party Dimiourgia Xana (Creation Again!) and the extreme-right party of Nea Dexia (New

40. Cihad Fusha, "Indira Mujaj Do Kthehet Vendin e Punës Në Policinë e Kosovës, Ishte Përfshuar Për Shkak Të Shamisë", *RTV Besa*, April 1, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2023, from <https://rtvbesa.com/indira-mujaj-dokthehet-vendin-e-punes-ne-policine-e-kosoves-ishte-perfshuar-per-shkak-te-shamise/>.

41. Open Society Justice Initiative, "Discrimination Case Challenging Danish "Ghetto Package" Eviction Plan Referred to Court of Justice of the European Union", *justiceinitiative.org*, (November 7, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/newsroom/discrimination-case-challenging-danish-ghetto-package-eviction-plan-referred-to-court-of-justice-of-the-european-union>

42. Counter Extremism Project, "Italy: Extremism and Terrorism", retrieved December 09, 2022, from <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/italy-extremism-and-terrorism>

43. AJ+ Français, Twitter (25 September 2022), <https://twitter.com/ajplusfrancais/status/1574055676506161153>

Right), reveal the intersection of anti-Muslim racism, militarism, and authoritarianism. The program states,

Protect our national identity from Islamic invasion. For the first time in world history, a state, which is invaded, finances the invader and places the Armed Forces at its service. Illegal migrants must face the consequences of the law in one way: arrest, trial, conviction, deportation [...] This is not migration, but an invasion. [...] Most of them, who enter the country illegally, are [...] carriers of Islamic imperialism, through migration, which, under the guise of religion, attempts to conquer Europe from within.⁴⁴

Adriana Cupcea reveals that the Romanian government has issued an immigration strategy for 2021-2024 that addresses the issue from the securitization perspective. The document argues that “in terms of security, migration may become one of the main threats Romania will face, when carried out illegally, and when the migration flow includes operatives, former members or followers of terrorist organisations.”⁴⁵

In his report on Hungary, Dániel Vékony shows that even though Islam was not a salient issue in Hungary in 2022, long-time governing prime minister Orbán spoke about Muslims during several important speeches, including his first speech after being re-elected as prime minister. During his speech, he embraced the far-right conspiracy theory of the great replacement.⁴⁶ In a roundtable discussion during a visit to Germany, Orbán praised the situation in Hungary “with no Muslim immigrants”, reaffirming that his country does not want to become a multicultural society,⁴⁷ which he considers a civilisational threat.⁴⁸ In fact, Hungary’s government even extended the “state of emergency” due to alleged mass immigration until 7 March 2027.⁴⁹

Beyond political parties in power, it is mainly the far-right and nominally the centrist-right that are exacerbating Islamophobia. In October 2022, the Dutch far-right leader Filip Dewinter presented his new book *Omvolking* drawing on Nazi terminology currently popularised by the concept of the “great replacement”.

A former judge and MP of the Greek right-wing ruling party Nea Dimocratia insinuated that phone tapping of Muslim MP’s should be allowed. He stated,

44. For the above see <https://cutt.ly/W1eKBGK> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

45. Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 839 bis/2.IX.2021, “National Strategy on Immigration 2021- 2024”, retrieved 21 November, from <https://igi.mai.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/National-Strategy-on-Immigration-2021—2024.pdf>.

46. <https://kormany.hu/beszedek-interjuk/miniszterelnok/orban-viktor-beszede-a-miniszterelnoki-eskutetelet-ko-vetoen>

47. <https://kormany.hu/beszedek-interjuk/miniszterelnok/orban-viktor-panelbeszelgetese-a-cicero-cimu-nemetorszagi-havilap-vezetoivel>

48. <https://kormany.hu/beszedek-interjuk/miniszterelnok/orban-viktor-beszede-a-hatarvadaszok-eskutetelen>

49. <https://kormany.hu/hirek/a-kormany-meghosszabbitja-a-tomeges-bevandorlas-okozta-valsaghelyzetet20220906>

Let's say a Muslim Member of Parliament from Northern Greece – I am not saying that there is any insinuation, for God's sake. Let's assume he gives some information to our neighbouring country Tuükiye, from where the immigrants will arrive, etc. Why shouldn't he be checked? This is where national security comes first.⁵⁰

In Slovenia, a prominent member of the centrist-right SDS (part of the European People's Party), Žan Mahnič, accused the governing social democratic party of "Islamisation and Shariatisation and massive import of the Arabs"⁵¹ into Slovenia.

The more far-right parties are, the more radical their claims. In her report on the Czech Republic, Zora Hesová discusses how the far-right party Freedom and Direct Democracy with 20 seats in parliament has called to amend the Criminal Code to include banning Islam as a form of promotion and dissemination of hateful ideologies. While Islam ceased to be a salient, divisive issue and this motion was not accepted, it exposes how anti-Muslim, far-right parties are willing to ban Islam altogether.

In Denmark, former minister Inger Støjberg, who is infamous for her Islamophobic statements, established a new right-wing party, the Denmark Democrats, which was able to win 14 mandates in its first election in November 2022 and to become the fifth-largest party in parliament.

Education and Knowledge Production

Sergio Gracia and Inés Bolaños Somoano reveal that five pupils from a high school in Madrid were forced to leave their classroom for wearing the hijab. As of 2010, almost half of all Madrid schools and high schools had a de facto "veil ban" in place,⁵² and in 2019, the same schools were allowed to outright ban hijab-wearing on the grounds that "it would help avoid problems with identification [of the pupils]."⁵³

In his report on the Netherlands, Jeroen Vlug reveals that Dutch Minister of Education Dennis Wiersma (conservative-liberal VVD) reiterated his intention to increase the monitoring of informal mosque education although his own government officials, as well as the State Attorney, regarded this as unconstitutional.⁵⁴ Also, the Netherlands witnessed public debates about the establishment of Islamic high schools in four major Dutch cities, a topic that has met strong societal and polit-

50. "Athanasiou: Says 'yes' to monitoring MPs if there is a reason for national security - He set an example with Muslim MPs", *ethnos.gr*, 11 August 2022, <https://cutt.ly/w1eYeH2> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

51. Svet24, Žan Mahnič v sovražnem napadu Slovenko "ponižal, razvrednotil in razčlovečil", April 2022, <https://novice.svet24.si/clanek/novice/slovenija/625441b6c295f/zan-mahnic-v-sovraznem-napadu-slovenko-ponizal-razvrednotil-in-razclovecil> (Access date: 18 December 2022).

52. "Casi la mitad de colegios e institutos de Madrid prohíben el velo", *20 Minutos*, 21 April, 2010.

53. "Los colegios madrileños podrán prohibir el velo islámico para "evitar que se dificulte la identificación"", *La Sexta*, 5 July, 2019.

54. See <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2454729-minister-wiersma-negeerde-adviezen-ambtenaren-over-weekendscholen> and <https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-e7a032b6e87336ec0d2b7dd0fd597841a42312e9/pdf> (accessed March 8, 2023).

ical resistance.⁵⁵ In 2021, while several Islamic secondary education projects were rejected, one school was established in 2022 following an extensive legal objection procedure.⁵⁶

Similarly, in the report on Slovenia, Maja Pucelj discusses how Muslims have relentlessly and unsuccessfully tried to establish a private school since 2014, while the dominance of Catholic private schools in a majoritarian Catholic country is as stable as ever. The systematic negligence of Muslim religious needs is also demonstrated by the fact that Muslim children in Slovenia must obtain a medical excuse form to abstain from eating pork, while refusal on religious grounds is not accepted.

In Kosovo, Adem Ferizaj reveals that internalised Islamophobia in a Muslim-majority setting is being reproduced in the leading academic institutions such as the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo.

A report from the Institute of Human Rights in Denmark shows that there is a problem with discrimination and ethnic profiling within the police force.⁵⁷ The report exposes that people from Africa or the Middle East have a significantly greater risk than white Danes of being arrested or charged without being convicted. According to the analysis, the risk of being charged without a conviction is 27% higher for immigrants and 45% higher for descendants compared to people of Danish origin.⁵⁸

Again in Denmark, Lamies Nassri reveals the ongoing discussion about the re-elected government's attempt to close Muslim schools. There seem to be internal debates within the bureaucracy and the government as to how best close them without transgressing human rights conventions.

Internet

In February 2022, then Italian minister of justice Marta Cartabia stated that online hate speech had increased during the pandemic, and acknowledged that penal sanctions have not played a great deterrent function so far.⁵⁹ In its “Fundamental Rights

55. For a historical overview of Dutch Islamic primary education and Dutch law regarding religious education, see Zehra Vlug-Unver, *Islamic Primary Education in the Netherlands: Negotiating Religious and National Values in an Era of Societal Tensions* (thesis, Ibn Haldun University, published online: <https://openaccess.i.hu.edu.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12154/1005/Zehra%20Vlug%20Tez.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, accessed March 8, 2023).

56. <https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/plannen-nieuwe-islamitische-middelbare-school-in-utrecht-toch-goedgekeurd-iederen-is-er-welkom-a1a5749a/> (accessed March 8, 2023).

57. Institut for Menneskerettigheder, “Etnisk Profilerings – Hovedresultater fra tre undersøgelser”, *menneskeret.dk*, (Marts 19, 2022), retrieved February 2, 2023, from https://menneskeret.dk/files/media/document/Politi_Hovedrapport_06.pdf

58. “Institut ser problemer med diskrimination i politiet”, *kristeligt-dagblad.dk*, (Marts 19, 2022), retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/institut-ser-problemer-med-diskrimination-i-politiet>

59. Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (UNAR), “Hate speech, Cartabia: ‘Lesi la dignità della persona umana’” (February 9, 2022), <https://www.unar.it/portale/web/guest/-/hate-speech-cartabia-lesi-la-dignità-della-persona-umana->

Report 2022”, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights⁶⁰ provided data from Amnesty International Italy’s online monitoring, showing that the most frequent targets of hate through online posts and in user comments are Muslims (46% and 21%, respectively). According to the most recent data by the Italian Observatory on Rights (Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti, 2021), most of the tweets on Islam are negative (107,708 out of 165,297),⁶¹ and Islamophobic tweets are located particularly in Northern Italy in a widespread manner.⁶²

Combating Islamophobia at European and International Institutions

The European Anti-Racism Summit 2022 took place on March 21, 2022 for the second time. It was organised by the European Commission with the aid of the European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI Intergroup) of the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and with the participation of civil society, equality organisations, and grassroots groups. This year, the European Year of Youth 2022 served as a backdrop for highlighting the important role that young people play in the battle against racism.⁶³ The Council of Europe published a press release for the summit, highlighting the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In the press release, the council emphasises the importance of the adaptation of the EU anti-racism action plan. According to the council, the EU’s anti-racism action plan calls for more robust national measures outlined in national action plans, fair policing, greater enforcement of EU law, and protection for minority groups. This would be an opportunity to assess practices from the perspectives of non-discrimination and equal opportunity. Additionally, introducing new initiatives in areas like social inclusion, health, and education would be possible.⁶⁴

On October 19, 2022, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs in the European Parliament published a report on the resolution on racial justice, non-discrimination, and anti-racism in the EU that was adopted on October 10. The resolution is mainly about promoting the fight against discrimination and racism. Regarding combating anti-Muslim racism, the resolution refers several times to statistics from a report published by the European Union’s Agency For Fundamental

60. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), “Fundamental Rights Report 2022: Italy” (June 8, 2022), <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/fundamental-rights-report-2022#country-related>

61. Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti (VOX), “Mappa dell’Intolleranza 6: Islamofobia” (2021): <http://www.voxdiritti.it/mappa-dellintolleranza-6-islamofobia/>

62. Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti (VOX), “La nuova Mappa dell’Intolleranza 6” (2021): <http://www.voxdiritti.it/la-nuova-mappa-dellintolleranza-6/>

63. European Anti-Racism Summit 2022, <https://www.antiracism-eusummit2022.eu/>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

64. “International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March 2022: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU”, European Council, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-racial-discrimination-21-march-2022-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu/>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

Rights (FRA) in 2017. This report highlights that one in four Muslims in Europe has experienced a racist attack because of their origin or religious orientation.⁶⁵ In addition, the resolution also incorporates the general policy recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). The general policy recommendation papers include strategies on how to combat anti-Muslim racism and radicalisation. While 48 votes were in favour for the resolution, six votes were against it and three votes abstained.⁶⁶

On November 10, 2022, the European Parliament adopted the resolution “On racial justice, non-discrimination and anti-racism in the EU”. In the resolution, the findings by the FRA were considered. The resolution accepts that “racial discrimination and harassment remain commonplace in the EU.” Furthermore, the resolution sees “racist, xenophobic and homo/transphobic movements and extremist ideologies, in particular extreme right-wing sentiments” on the uprise. These are seen as “serious threats to democratic societies in the EU and to the safety of racialised groups”.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the resolution “welcomes the Commission’s appointment of the first anti-racism coordinator in 2021 and the continuous re-appointment since 2015 of the coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life; [and] calls on the Commission to swiftly appoint the coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred.” The report goes on to state that “these positions should be permanent and therefore ... coordinators should be sustained and supported financially; [and] underlines the central role of the anti-racism coordinator and EU High-Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in mainstreaming racial equality across all EU policies.”⁶⁸

Daniel Holtgen, the Council of Europe’s special representative on antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and other forms of religious intolerance and hate crimes, underlined deepening the cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. “We both stressed the importance of civil society and engaging young people in combating all forms of intolerance,” he stated. The cooperation should include specific actions such as establishing best practices in “combatting anti-Muslim racism.”⁶⁹

To assist in preventing and combating the rising number of public manifestations of anti-Muslim racism and discrimination across Europe, the Council of Europe’s expert body on racism and intolerance (ECRI) on March 1 2022 published a revised General Policy Recommendation on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism

65. “REPORT on racial justice, non-discrimination and anti-racism in the EU”, European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2022-0254_EN.html#_ftn16, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

66. Ibid.

67. “European Parliament resolution of 10 November 2022 on racial justice, non-discrimination and anti-racism in the EU (2022/2005(INI))”, European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0389_EN.html#def_1_16, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

and discrimination. In its new recommendation, the ECRI emphasised that Muslims are integral to Europe's diversity and have been making a significant contribution to this diversity for a long time. The recommendation recalled the need for collective action to create inclusive societies that bring people from different backgrounds together, and uphold equality and respect through a common set of democratic values.⁷⁰ The ECRI observed with concern that in recent times, anti-Muslim discrimination and hostility have been pervasive in society, permeating institutional, political, social, and economic life. In order to address anti-Muslim racism and discrimination, the ECRI chose to offer complete advice to governments in the following four areas: policies and institutional coordination, prevention, protection and prosecution, and law enforcement. Governments should prioritise the fight against anti-Muslim racism, according to the ECRI, in the area of policies and institutional coordination, through appropriate action plans, any necessary legislative changes, and, when appropriate, by designating coordinators and establishing specialised independent monitoring groups or committees.⁷¹ According to the ECRI, governments should also place particular emphasis on prevention. Political actors, opinion leaders, and other public figures must take a strong public stance against anti-Muslim prejudice. Governments should take the necessary steps to end discrimination against Muslims in job and educational opportunities, notably by giving Muslim women's rights more consideration. Additionally, there is a need to promote knowledge of Muslim history, its variety, and the beneficial contributions made by Muslim people, communities, and cultures to European societies. According to the ECRI, governments should collaborate with social media networks on projects that could aid in spreading accurate information about Muslims and Islam on these platforms.⁷² In terms of protection, government should encourage cooperation between Muslims and law enforcement officials to maintain the security of Muslims, Muslim communities, and their institutions. Additionally, it is strongly advised to increase cooperation and communication with Muslim communities in order to choose and put into action security measures that address their worries and requirements. Regarding criminal justice and law enforcement, the ECRI advises that anti-Muslim offenses perpetrated online be dealt with appropriately by effective prosecution and other measures. Internet service providers must also swiftly and consistently remove unlawful anti-Muslim hate speech in compliance with the pertinent legal and extra-legal framework.⁷³ In this regard, the ECRI issued its first general policy recommendation in 2000. The ECRI consulted a wide

70. "News of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)", Council of Europe, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/-/the-european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance-ecri-issues-a-new-general-policy-recommendation-to-the-47-council-of-europe-member-stat-1>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

range of partners in drafting the current revised General Policy Recommendation, including civil society organisations, academics, equality organisations, government officials, local authorities, and representatives of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Union, along with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe's Special Representative on antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and other forms of religious hatred.⁷⁴ Far-right leaders criticised these recommendations. On March 10, 2022, the French politician of the Front National (FN) party Jean-Paul Garraud criticised a document by the Council of Europe that aims to promote the fight against anti-Muslim racism and discrimination, drawing special attention to the sixty “recommendations, which include teaching the history of Islam in Europe, strengthening the political participation of Muslim communities and removing discriminatory legal or administrative obstacles to the building of Muslim places of worship in order to satisfy religious demands.”⁷⁵

Amnesty International presented a regional overview of Islamophobia in Europe to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination on June 1, 2022. The report details how some states have “racialised” Muslims and people who are perceived to be Muslims, and have subjected them to various discriminatory and racist laws, policies, and practices.⁷⁶ According to the latest report by the Council of Europe, this “racialisation” process makes Muslims appear to be a distinct ethnic group “based on various markers that include ethnic or national origin, appearance, and cultural characteristics, and may overlap with anti-immigrant sentiments, xenophobia, and social class bias.”⁷⁷ The PACE report and resolution emphasise the need for national anti-Islamophobia action plans to be implemented after any acknowledgment of the problems encountered by Muslims. It contains specific advice for Council of Europe member nations.⁷⁸ Regarding the resolution “Raising awareness of and countering Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, in Europe”,⁷⁹ which was voted on October 11, 2022, Amnesty International defined it as a “call for action against Islamophobia in Europe”. According to Amnesty International, the resolution intends to accuse “authorities in several European states of normalising discrimination against Muslims.”⁸⁰ Before the reso-

74. Ibid.

75. “Stopping the promotion of Islam in Europe with EU support”, European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000952_EN.html, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

76. “Council of Europe resolution is a call for action against Islamophobia in Europe”, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/council-of-europe-resolution-is-a-call-for-action-against-islamophobia-in-europe/>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. “Raising awareness of and countering Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, in Europe”, Council of Europe – Parliamentary Assembly, <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/30259/compendium>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

80. “Council of Europe resolution is a call for action against Islamophobia in Europe”, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/council-of-europe-resolution-is-a-call-for-action-against-islamophobia-in-europe/>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

lution's vote, Nils Muiznieks, Amnesty International's regional director for Europe, stated that the resolution "should be a wake-up call". He said,

Racist laws, policies, and practices have no place in Europe. Hate crimes against Muslims and those perceived as being of Muslim faith are too often not officially recorded or effectively investigated. The surveillance of Muslim men, women and even children is readily accepted as normal practice, and a range of counter terrorism measures are operating outside criminal justice systems, without adequate safeguards.⁸¹

Muiznieks highlighted the resolution's importance for Muslims' participation in public places which is restricted by certain policies.

The everyday intolerance, bias and discrimination that many Muslims experience is a form of racism. Muslim women are disproportionately affected, as they face discrimination on multiple grounds. Very often their access to public places is restricted through policies and practices that are based on harmful gender stereotypes. Various laws across Europe prohibit Muslim women to wear religious symbols and dress at the workplace, in schools and in public generally. Policymakers must stop using racist and discriminatory rhetoric against Muslims and immediately take action to ensure that they can enjoy their fundamental rights to equality and dignity, and live their lives without discrimination.⁸²

On October 22, 2022, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) adopted the Istanbul declaration to fight against Islamophobia. The decision was made during the 12th Conference of the Ministers of Information of the OIC hosted by the Republic of Türkiye in Istanbul.⁸³ Ministers and high-ranking officials from 57 nations discussed a wide range of subjects during the two-day Istanbul conference to increase collaboration in the Islamic world's media, communications, and information sectors. The conference's goal was to advance and consolidate collaboration between Islamic nations in the sphere of media and communications. Its theme, "Combating Disinformation and Islamophobia in the Post-truth Era", served as the centrepiece.⁸⁴

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

With respect to the many recommendations we have mentioned for policymakers and political institutions in the last seven reports, we want to emphasise four specific recommendations based on the latest events in 2022:

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Diyar Güldoğan, "OIC adopts Istanbul declaration to fight against disinformation, Islamophobia", Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/oic-adopts-istanbul-declaration-to-fight-against-disinformation-islamophobia/2718440>, (Access date: 17.01.2023).

84. Ibid.

- We reiterate the potential made possible by the United Nations resolution declaring March 15 as “International Day to Combat Islamophobia” for all policymakers and civil society actors to press for more change in the fight against anti-Muslim racism.
- We reiterate the urgency as declared by European institutions, especially the member states of the Council of Europe, to take the ECRI’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 of European Union member states.
- We reiterate that 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 in Europe.
- Austria’s attempt to export its infamous witch hunt against Muslim civil society via the newly established “Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration” must be fought back by EU member states.

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

- Unia published its yearly report on statistics for 2021. This report divides all files opened by Unia throughout the year according to respective fields. On the matter of discrimination based on religion or philosophical beliefs, 243 files were opened, making up 8.8% of all files. These files were mostly related to work (35%), followed by media (19.8%), education (14%), and society (9.9%) - 76.5% of all these files related to discrimination against Islam.

AUSTRIA

- An NGO focusing on anti-Muslim racism, the Documentation Center (Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus), has collected more than 1,000 cases of anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2022. Its official report will be released in May 2023.

BOSNIA

- The Riyasat Commission for the Freedom of Religion documented nine Islamophobic acts between 1 January and 31 December 2022.

NETHERLANDS

- According to combined statistics of the Dutch police and anti-discrimination bureaus (ADVs), most religion-based discrimination targets Muslims (67%). Religion-based discrimination mostly takes place in the labour market (63 incidents, of which 39 against Muslims). This is followed by education (30 incidents, 26 against Muslims), the public sector (26 incidents, 11 against Muslims), public and political opinion (15 incidents, 12 against Muslims), and media (15 incidents, 10 against Muslims). The location where discrimination based on migration background takes place is dominated by the labour market (466 incidents) followed by the public sector (312 incidents), neighbourhoods (283 incidents), and commercial services (228 incidents).

ITALY

- The most recent official data by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is for 2021, when two violent attacks against Muslims were recorded in Italy. According to the “Fundamental Rights Report 2022” by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, regarding Islamophobia online, the most frequent targets of hate through online posts and in user comments are Muslims, with 46% and 21%, respectively.

SPAIN

- The Ministry of Interior released its 2021 annual hate crime report in October 2022. The results show that there was an increase in 401 crimes with respect to the total of hate crimes in 2020 and an increase in 96 crimes with respect to 2019. Nevertheless, a report from OBERAXE, the Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia), on hate speech in social media shows that Islamophobic incidents increased to 20% of the total hate speech in the months of July and August.

UNITED KINGDOM

- The annually published official government data on hate crime for 2021-22 confirmed a significant increase in the number of recorded offences. The overall number jumped by 26% (from 124,104 in 2020-21 to 155,841 in the latest census period).
- Religious hate offences recorded an even bigger increase of 37%, totalling 8,730 cases. Of these 42% involved Muslim victims (3,459 cases).
- More than one-third (35%) of the c. 1,800 mosques across the UK experience at least one religiously motivated attack every year; the figure goes up to 42% for attacks carried out in the last three years. Acts of vandalism (destruction and defacement of property, racist graffiti) represent the lion's share of these attacks (51%), followed by burglary (34%), but about one-third of the mosques also experienced online abuse and intimidation and in 17% of cases Muslims were subjected to physical abuse in the premises.

GERMANY

- The final numbers are yet to be published at the time of writing. In 2022, 364 Islamophobic crimes were registered across Germany by the Federal Criminal Police Office; 26 of these targeted mosques. In addition to these official yet provisional statistics, the initiative brandeilig counted 10 mosque attacks in 2022. In the same year, at least two rallies of PEGIDA Förderverein in Dresden took place. However, the final data of the German political bodies is yet to be made public.

FRANCE

- No official 2022 data from the Central Territorial Intelligence Service (Service Central du Renseignement Territorial, SCTR) has yet been published. The Collective against Islamophobia in Europe (Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Europe, CCIE) has published a total of 501 reports in 2022 only regarding France.

FINLAND

- In 2021, suspected hate crimes rose for the first time since 2017, totalling 1,026 versus 852 suspected cases in 2020, according to the latest figures from the Police University College of Finland. Most of the hate crimes (81.8%) were due to national-ethnic origin (68.8%), followed by religion (13%), which rose by 23.1% from the previous year, with Muslims being the most targeted group. Of national-ethnic origin suspected hate crimes, Somalis were the most targeted.

DENMARK

- According to the Danish national police's most recent report on hate crimes for 2021, 38% of 164 religiously motivated hate crime cases targeted Muslims. Throughout the period 2017-2021, Muslims have accounted for the largest portion (49%) of religiously motivated registered hate crimes, with 389 registered cases out of 792.
- A report by the Institute of Human Rights shows that people from Africa or the Middle East have a significantly greater risk than people of Danish origin of being arrested or charged without being convicted. According to their analysis, the risk of being charged without a conviction is 27% higher for immigrants and 45% higher for descendants compared to people of Danish descent.

HUNGARY

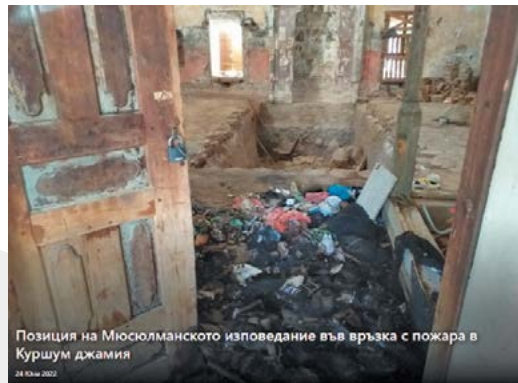
- Leaders of the main Muslim communities and Balázs Bakó, the head of the Hungarian Islam Law Society, did not receive any reports of anti-Muslim attacks.

KOSOVO

- The European Commission's "Kosovo Report 2022" stated that "overall, data collection on hate crimes remains insufficient". In 2022, the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council dealt with 20 cases of hate crime. In Article 147, the country's criminal code defines hate crime as the incitement of "national, racial, religious or ethnic hatred, discord or intolerance." The consequence of this broad definition is that no precise data on Islamophobic crimes can currently be derived.

BULGARIA

- According to the Chief Mufti's Office, a couple of Islamophobic acts targeting historical mosque buildings were documented in 2022 (against 2 in 2021): on 8 April 2022, the facade of Eski Mosque in the city of Kazanlak was desecrated with graffiti; and on 24 June 2022, a fire broke out at Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo. The persons involved in these acts were not found.
- On 21 December 2022, the National Statistical Institute announced the ethnocultural characteristics of the population in Bulgaria as of 7 September 2021. From a total population of 6,519,789 638,708 persons or 10.8% (compared to 7.8% or 577,139 in 2011) indicated belonging to the Muslim denomination, i.e., over the past decade the number of Muslims in the country has grown with 3%. This growth is not factual, only official, and the disproportions in the cited figures are due to the unprecise counting methods applied. In the summer of 2022, the Chief Muftiate organised a parallel census realised by its regional structures, and according to the results announced on 1 November 2022, the number of Muslims in Bulgaria is 1,204,326.



CZECH REPUBLIC

- According to the In Iustitia human rights organisation, there were 85 recorded cases of incitement to hate or prejudiced acts in the first three quarters of 2022. Most were directed against LGBTQI persons and against Roma and Jews, while only one had an explicitly anti-Muslim content. There were no Islam-related hate crimes recorded by the police in the first half of 2022.

ROMANIA

- 68% of Romanians have a lack of trust in relation to Muslims, while the scale of social distance indicates a high intolerance towards people of 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.

SLOVENIA

- Slovenia does not officially record Islamophobic acts, so there is no official data. According to the last available "Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality" for 2021, the most frequently alleged personal grounds for discrimination in cases completed in 2021 was disability (10.8%). This is followed by the total number of cases with personal grounds of nationality, race and ethnic origin (8.3%). The alleged personal grounds of gender occurred in 6.3% of cases, followed by age (6.1%), citizenship of another member state or a third country (3.5%), property status (3.3%), sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (3.3%), religion or belief (2.4%), and education (1.5%). The advocate also considered five cases of alleged personal grounds of language and four cases of alleged personal grounds of social situation, which is approximately one percent of all the closed cases.

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.

AUSTRIA

- On 2 February, two masked men smashed several window panels of the ATIB Union (Türkisch-Islamische Union für kulturelle und soziale Zusammenarbeit in Österreich) headquarters in Vienna in the morning hours.



BELGIUM

- Several hate letters were sent to different mosques all across Flanders and Brussels containing a cartoon drawing of the prophet Muhammad holding a cleaver and verses from the Qur'an taken out of context which were said to incite hatred, war, and the extermination of non-Muslims.

BOSNIA

- In May 2022, Alija, a young Bosniak student from Nova Kasaba (located in Republic Srpska, the Bosnian Serb entity), was beaten by Serb students, suffering injuries which required surgery.

DENMARK

- There were two significant convictions of hate speech and racism towards Muslims in 2022. A 35-year-old man was sentenced to 60 days in prison for urging the execution of Muslims, and a man was charged for inciting the killing of Muslims in a video published on YouTube. In the second case, the perpetrator was a former member of Rasmus Paludan's far-right Stram Kurs party and was sentenced to four months in jail.

FINLAND

- In October, a white Finn attacked Abdirisak Ahmed in a restaurant. The Somali, a medical doctor said it was the first time he was attacked in Finland. He expects the police to conclude their investigation in the spring.
- Ahmed's tweet reads, "This is what it looks like when you're assaulted in a restaurant because of your skin colour. Thank you, #apololiveclub bouncers, for your quick response. I never thought I'd be over 30 years old in this situation. It will cost me a month of work."



FRANCE

- In a video shared on social media, police officers can be seen violently attacking two young women in hijab on the Clichy Bridge, in the region of Paris. More specifically, one of the two women was slapped and beaten by an officer who tried several times to remove her headscarf, while the other was thrown to the ground and left unconscious for a few seconds. The attack became so violent that many witnesses (passersby, bikers, and cyclists) felt the need to intervene and try to stop the police.

GERMANY

- At around 5:15am a man asked a 52-year-old woman on the M29, a double-decker bus in Berlin, her nationality and then attempted to wrap a safety wire around her neck. Fellow passengers stopped the man who then went to the upper part of the bus. He continued his journey and attempted to follow the woman once she exited at her station. A witness was able to stop him. The woman was unharmed but suffered from what she had experienced.

GREECE

- On 20 May, an attack took place in Peraia, Thessaloniki, against a guesthouse for unaccompanied refugee children belonging to the NGO Arsis. According to the press release by the NGO, it all started when eight young men cursed and chased a group of six unaccompanied children who were sitting in a square near the 3rd Primary School of Peraia, next to the guesthouse. A 16-year-old boy from Pakistan was caught and clubbed over the head, then punched in the face and robbed of his mobile phone. The child was saved thanks to the intervention of two passing men, who defended the refugee child, and the attackers fled. Later, about 30 to 40 young people gathered and arrived outside the hostel in an aggressive mood, throwing stones and bricks.

ITALY

- There was a decrease in the number of discriminatory acts related to religion in the period 2021-2022, with a total of 83 events compared to 141 in 2020-2021. These are the second most common type of discriminatory acts committed in the country.
- Ahead of Italy's general elections (September 2022), Karima Moual, an Italian-Moroccan journalist who has been living in Italy for three decades, received death threats and racist attacks targeting her Moroccan roots following her open criticism of Giorgia Meloni's far-right party's stance on migration and Islam.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

- On 13 April 2022, in a prison in Dimitrovgrad (Ulyanovsk region), prisoners, mostly natives of Chechnya and Ingushetia, who were observing Ramadan were beaten. During the conflict, the inmates' Korans and prayer rugs were destroyed. According to eyewitnesses, during the search, the colony staff shouted, "You went to Ukraine and think you've become defenders of Russia?" After this incident, 37 inmates proceeded to self-harm themselves in protest of the humiliation of their fellow Muslim inmates, and about a hundred went on hunger strike.

SPAIN

- A man with Nazi-style tattoos was arrested for stabbing a young man of Moroccan origin in San Juan de Aznalfarache (Seville).
- Attacks were carried out against the deputy Najat Driouech (Republican Left of Catalonia), of Moroccan origin by supporters of president of the political party Junts per Catalunya (JxCat, Together for Catalonia) Laura Borràs, at the gates of the Catalan Parliament.
- A man was sentenced to six months imprisonment for insulting and belittling a neighbour with racist slurs "Go away. This is not the jungle." The defendant, between January and August 2019, reprimanded his neighbour who lived in the same building every time he saw him, telling her, "Shit Moor, my father is going to kill you."

UNITED KINGDOM

- In East Ham/Newham, East London, a group of men armed with sticks and bottles targeted the Masjid Bilal and Muslim Community Centre, attacking people who were celebrating Ramadan outside the building and causing physical damage to the property. Two people were injured as a result of the incident.

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.

AUSTRIA

- On 7 November, Minister for Women, Family and Youth Susanne Raab (Austrian People's Party, ÖVP) announced the increase of the annual budget of the Documentation Center Political Islam to 1,700,000 Euro.

BELGIUM

- Alleged ties with Milli Görüs drove Minister of Education Ben Weyts (N-VA, New Flemish Alliance) to reject the application for recognition of the Islamic Plura C school as according to him Milli Görüs is a religious Islamic order, and he does "not wish to expose young people to a project that is not in line with our democratic values. ...[as] CUTA (Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis) indicates that the most conservative wing within Milli Görüs is anti-European, anti-West and antisemitic."

BOSNIA

- Milan Tegeltija, advisor to Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik, mocked Bosnia's ambitions to join the European Union, telling Bosniaks that "no one in Europe will forget that Bosniaks are Muslims, even if Bosniaks forget it."

CZECH REPUBLIC

- While the 2022 election campaign was centred on war and inflation, Tomio Okamura, leader of the far-right party SPD (Liberty and Direct Democracy), continued to treat Islam as a political issue by stating: "The European Union openly supports mass immigration and the Islamisation of Europe."

DENMARK

- On 4 October 2022, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, in her opening address in the Danish Parliament, stated, "There is social control. Girls, who are born and raised in Denmark have to cover up. They are not allowed to decide, who they marry. [They] cannot experience young love because of a hopelessly outdated view on family and honour. Almost half of the women who live in crisis centres have a minority background. In Iran, women are burning their hijab. Showing their hair. And are met with violence and power. Several tortured and dead. While we, at home, are reluctant to respond to whether it really is young girls' own choice to wear a headscarf."

FINLAND

- In August, Finns Party (PS) chairperson Riikka Purra stated that "social welfare is just intended for Finns." For this to occur, the constitution would have to be amended, but it is a taste of what Muslims and other minorities can expect if the PS forms part of the next government with Kokoomus (National Coalition Party, NCP) and the Christian Democrats.

FRANCE

- During her presidential campaign, Marine Le Pen described the hijab as an "Islamist uniform" in April 2022 on French radio and explained that she wants to ban it in all public spaces (under penalty of a fine), while at his most important rally at Trocadéro Square in Paris, in March 2022, Eric Zemmour said that assimilation was the only possibility of acceptance of Muslims on French territory.

GREECE

- In 2022, a former MP of the ruling party Nea Dimocratia, founded his own party called "PATRIDA" (Fatherland - Patriotic Force for Change). In several sections of the party's theses, Islam and Muslim migrants are targeted as a threat to the Greek culture, to the Orthodox religion, and to national identity. What is more, illegal migration is related to the demographic problem and the shrinking of the population, and it is argued that "illegal migrants who commit crimes should be automatically arrested and transferred to remote, closed detention centres" for deportation. PATRIDA also aspires to ban the burqa "in Greek territory and all illegal Islamic mosques must be sealed immediately, without exception."

HUNGARY

- In his first speech in parliament after winning the election, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán seemed to embrace the great replacement conspiracy theory by speaking about “Europe’s great program of population replacement” in regards to migration. In October, Orbán took part in a roundtable discussion in Germany, where he said that in Hungary there are no Muslim migrants, that Hungary does not want to become a multicultural society, and that Hungarians are happy the way they are. In line with this logic, in a speech in September, he branded migration “a civilisational threat”.

ITALY

- In a speech to Spain’s far-right Vox party in Marbella, Spain, Giorgia Meloni outlined her political positioning by stating: “Yes to the natural family; No to the LGBT lobbies; Yes to sexual identity, No to gender ideology; [...] Yes to the universality of the Cross; No to Islamist violence; Yes to secure borders; No to mass immigration [...] Yes to our civilisation; and No to those who want to destroy it!”

KOSOVO

- In December 2022, the article “Serbia’s Destabilising Aspirations in Kosovo and the Western Balkans” by Kosovo’s Academy of Sciences and Arts (ASHAK, Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës) stirred a debate. The article argued that Islam, as the major religion of Albanians in Kosovo, is, on the one hand, the result of the “systematic violence of the Ottoman Empire” and, on the other, “a legacy of the dark times of history [referring to the Ottoman period].”

NETHERLANDS

- The election program of the Party for Freedom (PVV) was full of anti-Islamic and Islamophobic statements. Dutch citizens with a Moroccan background, which comprise the largest Muslim ethnic group in the Netherlands, were depicted as “street terrorists” and Islam was described as a “violent political ideology”.
- In addition, the PVV proposed a restrictive immigration policy and a total ban on migrants from Islamic countries; a ban on what they call the “spread of Islamic ideology” (including a ban on Islamic schools, mosques, and the Quran); a ban on headscarves in government buildings; no right to vote or political positions for people with a double nationality; and the establishment of a “Ministry for Immigration, Remigration and De-Islamisation”.

NORTH MACEDONIA

- The newly formed political party LEVICA (The Left), which has the central position in the last few reports on Islamophobia, continues to spread anti-Muslim hatred. After the local elections, in almost all municipalities, the party has its own elected councilors. In the Municipality of Centar, Skopje, the independent advisory group “Chance for Centar” proposed the author of this year’s country report, Mersiha Smailović, as a council representative in a primary school in Skopje. At the council session, Marija Srebrova, the councilor of LEVICA, said, “I want to comment on your proposal... a series of criminal charges and through her organisation she [Smailović] has organised the recruitment of people for radical Islamism. She and her husband have been banned from several European countries for the same thing, and you want to get her into a school board where decisions are made regarding elementary schoolchildren. You could not have a more controversial proposal. You want to bring Al Qaeda into their school!”

RUSSIA

- On 16 March 2022, the all-Russian scientific-practical conference “Spiritual Service and Social Mission of Religious Organisations in the Context of the Formation of All-Russian Civil Identity” took place in Vladikavkaz. Russian muftis made a joint statement on the situation in Ukraine, in which they expressed full support for Russia’s “special military operation”. The statement said,

The Russian military operation in Ukraine to force the aggressor to peace is a forced defensive-preventive measure to secure Russia and all its citizens from the real threat of nuclear and biological weapons used by NATO and the collective West. ... From the Ulema’s agreement on the position of shahids [martyrs], we proclaim that all Muslims who with faith in Allah have been killed while performing their duty to protect their homeland - the Russian Federation, their fellow citizens - are shahids.

SLOVENIA

- State secretary for national security and prominent member of the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) party, Žan Mahnič, published a post on Twitter where he called Faila Pašič, a colleague of the ruling Gibanje Svoboda (Freedom Movement) party, a “radical Islamist” and accused the party of bringing “Islamisation and shariatisation and massive import of Arabs” into Slovenia. In specific, he wrote, “An electrical tycoon, Mr. 15% Robert Golob [prime minister of Slovenia, leader of Gibanje Svoboda], is inviting the company of radical Islamist Faila Pašič in the elections. @Gibanje Svoboda is bringing us Islamisation and shariatisation and massive import of Arabs.”



- The shift from Islamophobic rhetoric directed towards Muslims to hateful rhetoric directed towards migrants and refugees in general, was evident in Slovenian politics in 2022. On 25 February 2022, the official page of the government of Republic of Slovenia published a tweet stating, "Ukrainian refugees are coming from the environment, which is in cultural, religious and historical sense something completely different as the environment, from which the refugees from Afghanistan are coming."



UNITED KINGDOM

- In a parliamentary debate held on 31 October 2022, the Home Secretary Suella Braverman stated, "The British people deserve to know which party is serious about stopping the invasion on our southern coast, and which party is not. Some 40,000 people have arrived on the south coast this year alone. For many of them, that was facilitated by criminal gangs; some of them are actual members of criminal gangs, so let us stop pretending that they are all refugees in distress. ... We need to be straight with the public. The system is broken. [Interruption.] Illegal migration is out of control, and too many people are more interested in playing political parlour games and covering up the truth than solving the problem. I am utterly serious about ending the scourge of illegal migration, and I am determined to do whatever it takes to break the criminal gangs and fix our hopelessly lax asylum system." This debate took place in the shadow of a far-right violent attack on a migrant reception centre in Dover.

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

- In 2022, Osama Abu El Hosna was included as a terrorist suspect in Operation Luxor. El Hosna had become famous as a hero for saving the life of a police officer on the night of 2 November 2020, when an ISIS sympathiser killed four people and wounded more than twenty. The Palestine-born El Hosna was included in Operation Luxor for participating in an aid organisation. Later in 2022, his case was closed, as was the case with nearly 30 others. Still, he was denied citizenship due to the intelligence service's assessment of being close to terrorists.

BELGIUM

- Ritual slaughter (without prior stunning) continues to be prohibited in the Belgian federal regions of Wallonia and Flanders.

BULGARIA

- On 21 December 2022, the Plovdiv Court of Appeal cancelled the 2013 Plovdiv District Court decision, in which the ownership of the Kurshun Mosque in the city of Karlovo was given to the Chief Muftiate. The court agreed that until 9 September 1944 (the beginning of the socialist system), the property belonged to the Muslim community administration in Karlovo and that its legal successor was the Muslim Denomination. However, the judges noted that the settlement was a cult building of historical importance that was declared an immovable cultural heritage in 1976, and for these reasons, the ownership claim by the Chief Muftiate was rejected. The mosque and its vicinity will be managed by the municipality, which has already launched a project to convert the shrine into a museum for exposing excavated artefacts, which are in no way related to Islam.
- On 17 January 2022, the Special Criminal Court freed 23-year-old Mohammed Abdulqader arrested in July 2020 on charges for terrorism in Syria, after a case full of inconsistencies took a year and a half of his youth and convinced the public that he posed a threat to the country's national security.

DENMARK

- The closing of Muslim schools was criticised as transgressing human rights conventions and as unconstitutional by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Justice; the latter, however, later reversed its position on the matter. The former minister of children and education Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil insists that it is possible to close Muslim schools, claiming, “It depends on how you put it together. We will present a model that will not be rejected.”

FINLAND

- Finland’s Muslim and Jewish communities are closely watching the possible likely passage of the animal welfare act, which will not, if passed by parliament, prohibit halal and shechita slaughter. In early 2023, the Finnish parliament’s constitutional law committee and the agriculture and forestry committee approved the draft animal welfare act. Atik Ali of the Tatar community admitted in October that if halal slaughter is would have been prohibited, polarisation between Muslims and the rest of society will would have increased. “If they ban halal slaughter, Finland will become like Sweden,” he said. Likewise, Yaron Nadbornik, head of the Jewish community of Helsinki, stated that the original draft law is was discriminatory and unconstitutional. “The rights of minorities are not considered at all,” he said. “We are lower than animals.”

FRANCE

- In November 2022, the new French minister of national education and youth Pap Ndiaye launched a Laïcité Plan which aims to regulate the wearing of abayas and qamis (thobes) in French high schools. This plan makes it possible to ban the long skirts (and long sleeves) of young girls who wear the hijab outside school, and clearly explains to teaching and administrative staff how to detect the “problematic” skirts, how to report the wearers, and how to file a disciplinary complaint if necessary.

KOSOVO

- The debates about the wearing of the hijab in high schools were ongoing in 2022. The status quo regarding the administrative instruction “MASHT 06/2014” was addressed in the country report on Kosovo in *EIR 2021* and has not changed since then. This document de facto prohibits the wearing of the hijab for high school students, although de jure no such prohibition exists.

NETHERLANDS

- In November of 2022, Minister of Education Dennis Wiersma decided he wants to put informal mosque education and Muslim weekend schools under inspection and monitoring by the Inspection of Education, despite being advised against doing so due to the measure being unconstitutional and against the basic human right of religious freedom. These informal Muslim educational activities, the minister argued, are “antidemocratic and anti-integrative”, and create the “danger of parallel societies”.

NORTH MACEDONIA

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

ROMANIA

- The Romanian government issued the strategy regarding immigration for the period 2021-2014 which provides for the need to verify the possible terrorist connections of persons entering the country via illegal migration flows, including operatives sent with tasks to Europe and former members of terrorist organisations who have infiltrated the migration flows.
- According to the normative definition of a national minority contained in the Romanian electoral legislation, a national minority is an ethnic group represented in the Council of National Minorities (CMN). The strict reference to ethnicities represented in the CMN limits national minorities to historical minorities such as Hungarians, Roma, Turks, Tatars, Slovaks, etc., and does not extend this right to recently established communities in Romania, such as Romanian citizens who are also Iranian, Iraqi, Chinese, etc.

SPAIN

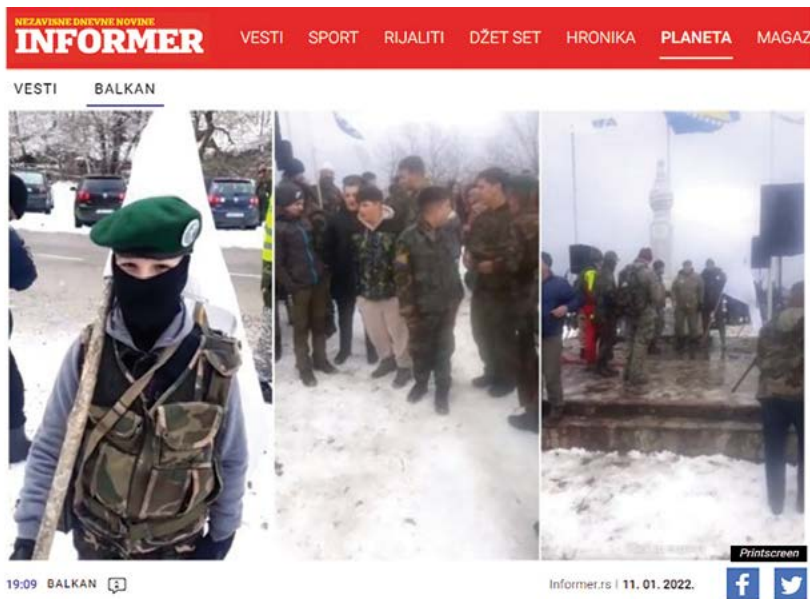
- There is no regulation regarding the use of the Islamic veil (hijab) in Spanish classrooms. More than 3,000 students study Islamic religion in Spain in public schools, and there have been problems with the adoption of internal regulations and dress codes.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE MEDIA

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

BOSNIA

Informer stated, "CHILDREN IN UNIFORM ARE SHOUTING 'ALLAH AKBAR,' AND ARE BOTHERED WITH REPUBLIKA SRPSKA! Creepy scenes of masked Bosniaks with WAR FLAGS in Bužim!"



DECA U UNIFORMI KLIČU "ALAHU AKBAR", A SMETA IM REPUBLIKA SRPSKA! Jezive scene maskiranih Bošnjaka sa RATNIM ZASTAVAMA u Bužimu! (VIDEO)

Već par dana, sarajevskoj javnosti glavna okupacija je Republika Srpska i proslava 9. januara, dok istovremeno čute na uznemirujući defile u Bužimu

BULGARIA

On 24 November 2022, the presenter of the TV programme with the provocative title “Unveiling”, Nikolay Pankov, prepared a show titled “Diplomatic Pressure upon Media by Turkish Diplomats”. Therein he claimed that Turkish ambassador Aylin Sekizkök in cooperation with the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) is in full control of the Chief Muftiate, which in “the iron embrace of the Turkish diplomats” functions as a conduit of the “Turkish state Islamism”. Pankov claimed, “There are 12 Muslim embassies in Bulgaria, all of them can and should have a claim on the religion called Islam, but why exactly the Turkish diplomat.. enters so deeply into the life of the Bulgarian Muslims?” He went on to share his great concern that “one year is left until the 100th anniversary of the revolution in the Turkish Republic, but actually it is a final countdown before the counter-revolution aimed at the restoration of Islamic Türkiye.” On a later programme (23 December 2022), discussing Islamism in 2022 and 2023, the theme of the transformation from a secular to an Islamic state was further developed with the information that it will be realised by “Sultan Erdogan”, who intends to restore the Islamic empire by building a new “High Porte”. According to another edition of “Unveiling”, via the organisation of the 9th Meeting of the Presidents of Religious Affairs of Balkan Countries in Varna on 26 November 2022 - otherwise dedicated to peace in the region - “Türkiye puts the Balkan puzzle in order in Bulgaria” and as a result, “the muftis from the Balkan countries are on a short leash.. [t]he ambassadors of Turkey are competing to court the Muslim leaders directly in front of the eyes of the local state authorities, [and] even the latter are complicit in pushing the pro-Turkish extreme state policy, and instilling the ‘poison of Turkish state Islam’”.



CZECH REPUBLIC

The name of a new website run by a key figure of the anti-Islam scene in the Czech Republic is “Islamization” (Islamizace.cz).

Úterý 21. března 2023, Svátek má Radek, 11:11:32

ISLAMIZACE.CZ

Kdo jsme | Odkazy | Podpořte nás | Vydevatel | Napište nám

"Multikulturalismus je zdevotilé ustupování roztažovanému hostu, který vás postupně vytěšuje z vašeho příbytku." (zavražoňný)

Kdo jsme

Web Islamizace.cz je projektem Nakladatelství Lukáš Lhotan, který svou myšlenkou navazuje na více než 17 let trvající projekt Českého portálu o.p.s. Eurabia.cz ve snaze poskytnout českému čtenáři informace o islámu, multikulturalismu a masové migraci. Protože původní projekt Eurabia.cz se kvůli dalším webům původního provozovatele stal cílem cenzury a mediálních útoků neziskových organizací a státních orgánů, rozhodli jsme se v Nakladatelství Lukáš Lhotan začít realizovat úplně nový web a projekt s čistě jasným zaměřením na problém islamizace, multikulturalismu apod.

25. února 2022 zavedla česká vláda (tvořená stranami ODS+KDU-ČSL+TOP09+STAN+PIRÁTI) cenzuru internetu a rušení nepohodlných webů pod záminkou boje se zahraniční propagandou. Stalo se tak na výročí komunistického převratu z roku 1948, kdy komunisté taktéž začali prosazovat plnou cenzuru zabavením papíru pro tisk komunisty nekontrolovaných novin.

Abychom mohli efektivněji čelit jak mediálním lživým kampaním neziskových organizací a zásahům multikulturálně smýšlejících úředníků státní správy České republiky, která po vzoru totalitních zemí bez soudního rozhodnutí jen na základě dohody mezi neziskovými organizacemi a státními úřady zavádí cenzuru a blokování nepohodlných internetových zdrojů, začínáme úplně znovu s čistým štětem bez témat, jež zbytečně rozdělují Českou společnost a odvádějí pozornost od tématu islamizace.

I toto rozdělení české společnosti kvůli koronavirové krizi, krizi kolem ruského útoku na Ukrajinu apod. nahrává problému islamizace, protože lidé se o tento problém jednak přestávají zajímat a jednak se rozdělují a navzájem znepřátelují, což silně znesnadňuje možnost společenského konsenzu, jak čelit islamizaci a masové migraci z kulturně odlišných civilizačních okruhů.

Lidé jsou v naší společnosti stále více rozdělováni do názorových sociálních „bublin“, a tím pádem se i znepřátelují a nejsou schopni vzájemné spolupráce – a to považujeme za velkou chybu. Byť se v naší společnosti silným hlasem proklamuje, že „patříme na Západ“, tak se chování mnoha lidí, včetně hlasatelů hesla „patříme na Západ“, podobá chování orientálních despotů, kde je potlačována svoboda názorů a jejich různost. Tomu se právě chceme na našem webovém projektu vyhnout.

Náš web je v současnosti jediný web na českém internetu, který se do hloubky a trvale věnuje tématu islamizace; proto je jeho udržení a provoz naší prioritou a budeme vděční za jakoukoliv vaši pomoc.

Přihlášení uživatele

Jméno:

Heslo:

Trvalé přihlášení

Novinky e-mailem
Klikněte zde pro nastavení

Čtěte také

Výklad Koránu
CAST ORNIA

ZÁKLADY ISLAMU a jejich výklad

DENMARK

In 2022, *Ansvarlig Presse* (Responsible Press) launched their newest report on media representation. The report shows that while immigrants and their descendants constituted 14% of Denmark’s population in 2021, they only made up 3.5% of news sources, and even then, they are primarily used as sources of experience and not as sources of expertise.

FRANCE

In November 2022, during an interview with the French magazine *Front Populaire* on the great replacement and the French reconquest, the famous French writer Michel Houellebecq stated, “When entire territories will be under Islamist control, I think that acts of resistance will take place. There will be attacks and shootings in mosques, in cafés frequented by Muslims,

in short, a reversed Bataclan.” For journalist Edwy Plenel, the publisher of the independent newspaper *Mediapart*, such a statement is clearly an apology for terrorism.

FINLAND



Yle talk show host Marja Sannikka has helped spread fear in Finland about minority youth gang violence. In her A-studio talk show she introduced the topic like a crime thriller: “Knives, violence, revenge. Youth gang violence increases at a worrying pace.”

GERMANY

In 2022, the media coverage of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar included several Islamophobic and orientalist stereotypes. “Old habits die hard, and so does old and renewed orientalism,” said renowned scientist Khaled al-Hroub. Among others, German media portrayed the support of the Moroccan football team for Palestine, symbolised by displaying the Palestinian flag at their games, as an antisemitic offense, and indicated that three Moroccan players after victories displayed signs that are used by the so-called Islamic State.

GREECE

The newspaper *Makeleio* (Massacre) published a front page arguing that armed Pakistanis are organising night patrols and that there is a secret plan called “Islamabad” whereby Turkey attacks Greece with Pakistanis becoming active to help Turkey take over the country.

HUNGARY



Origo.hu, a government-backed online news outlet, published the article “A True French Patriot among the Football Players Who Spit on the Ground during the National Anthem or Who Send Money to Muslim Terrorists”. The article refers to Olivier Giroud as a devote Catholic French national football player who is contrasted to Muslim football players of the national team. Giroud is portrayed as a humble good person, while the players with Muslim background are portrayed as unpatriotic, disrespectful, criminal, and radicalised.

ITALY

Il Giornale published an article titled “New Mosque in via Padova in Milan: ‘Like an Islamic Ghetto’”. It stressed that “the Islamisation in that part of the city continues” and that its municipality continues to provide “concessions to foreigners” and is working “to create an almost Islamic ghetto in the heart of Milan” which is “detrimental to the social fabric of the city, in which the foreign community continues to be favoured, giving a perception of inequality.”

KOSOVO

On 8 October 2022, an article titled “Italy’s New Prime Minister, New Problem for Kosovo” was published addressing Giorgia Meloni’s position on Kosovo. Referring to the far-right politician’s statements in 2016, the article claimed that Meloni, first, was sceptical about Kosovo’s independence from Serbia and used Islamophobic language to support her claim, describing Kosovo as “a grey area in the heart of Europe where fundamentalism thrives and integralists and jihadists are being trained in ISIS camps.”

ROMANIA

In 2022, there were two major events that shaped the image of Muslims in the Romanian media: Salman Rushdie's attack in New York and the protests for women's rights in Iran. The articles about the human rights violations in Iran talked about the autocratic nature and religious conservatism of the Tehran regime leading to generalisations and stereotyping by a segment of the public. On the Facebook page "We don't want a mega-mosque in Bucharest", the administrators shared the article "The Writer Salman Rushdie Was Stabbed on the Stage of a Conference in New York" accompanied by the anti-Muslim message: "Radical Islam kills its critics! That's why people suspected of links with fundamentalist Islam should not enter Europe."

RUSSIA

The official position of the DUM of the Russian Federation on the inclusion of one of the editions of the collection Sahih al-Bukhari to the list of extremist material is as follows:

It is impossible to ignore the fact that such bans sometimes cause image damage, not so much to religion itself, but to the country as a whole. Foreign media often start provocations after regular bans, accusing Russia of Islamophobia. ... This situation has once again brought the existing problems into focus. Namely: the unqualified approach to the examination of religious books, the lack of a unified theological body, which could regulate the system of publishing books by conducting preprint examinations.

SLOVENIA

The shift from Islamophobic rhetoric directed towards Muslims to hateful rhetoric directed towards migrants and refugees, in general, was evident in Slovenian media in 2022. Several groups of immigrants were indirectly addressed as Muslims, while media such as the Slovenian online news portal N1 published an article titled "On One Side Refugees, On the Other Side Refugees with Blue Eyes". The article stated, "The war in Ukraine exposed double standards and racism in the treatment of refugees. It showed that the European Union in particular has more compassion for those fleeing Ukraine, and more political will to ensure their protection, than it does for refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and other crisis hotspots around the world. The attitude of European countries towards refugees from Ukraine is

commendable, but unfortunately, refugees from elsewhere do not receive such an attitude. Open racism is also evident in the reporting of some journalists.” The latter was also confirmed by the journal *Primorski dnevnik* and RTV SLO, a public, non-profit broadcasting organisation in Slovenia. Meanwhile, ironically, the choice of visual material for the article is an example of racism and indirect Islamophobia: refugees from the Middle East behind a fence, on the one hand, and Ukrainian refugees walking freely past the police, on the other.



UNITED KINGDOM

The Daily Mail openly criticised the candidate for the leadership of the Conservative Party (and the position of the prime minister) Penny Mordaunt for “dodgy judgement” because of meeting with representatives of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in the context of gathering support for her leadership bid and using Twitter to talk about the meeting. *The Daily Mail* described the MCB as a “boycotted group” and reported that the government had asked Mordaunt to “take the tweet down”.



Penny Mordaunt flouted No. 10 ban to meet boycotted group: Tory leadership hopeful is condemned for 'dodgy judgment' ahead of MPs' vote tonight - after rivals clash in feisty TV debate

By Claire Ellicott Political Correspondent For The Daily Mail
22:00 17 Jul 2022, updated 03:45 18 Jul 2022



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
AUSTRIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

FARID HAFEZ

The Author

Farid Hafez is Distinguished Class of 1955 Visiting Professor of International Studies at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and non-resident senior researcher at Georgetown University's The Bridge Initiative at the School of Foreign Service. He defended his habilitation thesis titled "Islam-Politics in the Second Republic of Austria" at the University of Salzburg in 2019. In 2017, he was a Fulbright visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley and in 2014, a visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York. Since 2010 he has been the editor of *Islamophobia Studies Yearbook*, and since 2016 the co-editor of *European Islamophobia Report*. Hafez has received the Bruno Kreisky Award for the "Political Book of the Year" for his anthology *Islamophobia in Austria* (co-edited with John Bunzl). He has more than 140 publications in leading journals such as *Politics and Religion*, *Patterns of Prejudice*, and *German Politics and Society*. Hafez's latest publication is the edited international volume *The Rise of Global Islamophobia in the War on Terror: Coloniality, Race, and Islam*, co-edited with Naved Bakali (Manchester University Press, 2022).
Email: fh6@williams.edu

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Executive Summary

Since several courts have rescinded legislation that discriminated against Muslims (hijab bans, the closing of mosques, the unlawful police raid Operation Luxor), there has been no new legislation against Muslims in Austria in 2022. The war in Ukraine has partly shifted attention from the obsessed problematization of Muslims. Following the end of Sebastian Kurz's reign, one can observe an increasingly critical assessment of his infamous battle against so-called political Islam in the media. Also, critical reviews of Operation Luxor have increased, primarily by quality daily newspapers. The state prosecutor had several setbacks in his Operation Luxor investigation and two infamous Islamophobic writers, Heiko Heinisch and Nina Scholz, had to be removed as experts for Operation Luxor following several appeals. Several defendants were acquitted of allegations of terrorism, and no single person has been detained or even brought to court. However, top positions in the newly structured Austrian domestic intelligence service DSN seem to remain largely in the sphere of influence of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). The DSN seems to continue drawing on anti-Muslim conspiracy theories of Islamization by "political Islam." Also, the Documentation Center Political Islam is still used to monitor organized Muslims and single them out as a problem. Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP) announced the increase of the center's budget to 1,700,000 Euro annually. In addition, Raab tries to export the center's fight against "political Islam" to other European countries via its new annual conference "Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration," where eleven countries participated in 2022.

Zusammenfassung

Seitdem mehrere Gerichte Gesetze, die MuslimInnen diskriminierten, aufgehoben haben (Hijab-Verbot, Schließung von Moscheen, rechtswidrige Polizeirazzia im Falle der Operation Luxor), hat es 2022 keine neuen Gesetze gegen MuslimInnen gegeben. Der Krieg in der Ukraine hat die Aufmerksamkeit teilweise vom Islamthema abgelenkt. Nach dem Ende der Regierungszeit von Sebastian Kurz kann man in den Medien eine zunehmend kritische Bewertung seines berüchtigten Kampfes gegen den sogenannten “politischen Islam” beobachten. Auch die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Operation Luxor hat zugenommen, vor allem in den Qualitätszeitungen. Der Grazer Staatsanwalt musste bei seiner Operation Luxor mehrere Rückschläge hinnehmen, und zwei berüchtigte islamfeindliche Schriftsteller, Heiko Heinisch und Nina Scholz, mussten nach mehreren Einsprüchen abgesetzt werden. Mehrere Angeklagte wurden vom Vorwurf des Terrorismus freigesprochen. Bisher wurde keine einzige Person in U-Haft gebracht, noch ein Verfahren eröffnet. Spitzenpositionen im neu strukturierten österreichischen Nachrichtendienst DSN scheinen jedoch weitgehend im Einflussbereich der Österreichischen Volkspartei (ÖVP) zu bleiben. Der DSN scheint weiterhin auf antimuslimische Verschwörungstheorien der Islamisierung durch den “politischen Islam” zurückzugreifen. Auch die Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam wird nach wie vor dazu benutzt, organisierte MuslimInnen zu problematisieren. Ministerin Susanne Raab (ÖVP) kündigte an, den Etat des Zentrums auf 1.700.000 Euro jährlich zu erhöhen. Darüber hinaus versucht Ministerin Susanne Raab, ihren Kampf gegen den “politischen Islam” in andere europäische Länder zu exportieren. An der jährlichen Konferenz “Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration” haben 2022 elf Länder teilgenommen.

Country Profile EIR 2022

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 (January 7, 2020 -ongoing)

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

Last Elections: Parliamentary Elections (October 2019): 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%)

Total Population: 8.956 million

Major Language: German

Official Religion: No official religion. The 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 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), Koalition gegen antimuslimischen Rassismus

Far-Right Parties: FPÖ

Far-Right Movements: DO5 (previously the Identitarian Movement), Info Direkt

Far-Right Violent Organizations: Miliz der Anständigen

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** Implemented in kindergartens in 2018, but not continued in 2022. Constitutional Court repealed the ban of the hijab in primary school in December 2020.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** Partly banned
- **Minaret Ban:** In the counties of Carinthia and Vorarlberg
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** In place since 2017

Introduction

In 2022, Austria, which for a long time was seen as a liberal democracy, was degraded to an electoral democracy by V-Dem, a research project of the Swedish University of Gothenburg, which annually evaluates the quality of democracy in countries around the world.¹ As part of its annual “Democracy Monitor,” SORA surveyed for the fifth time how much the Austrian population trusts democracy and the political system. According to the study, just over one-third of people think the political system is working well, which is the lowest level since the survey began in 2018. Only trust in the judiciary, police, and authorities has remained constant over the five survey years. “The loss of trust affects practically exclusively the democratically elected representative bodies - which is why we really have to speak of a crisis of representation,” SORA speaker Martina Zandonella stated.² Only about 46 percent disagree at all with the statement “There should be a strong leader who doesn’t have to worry about parliament and elections,” meaning that for the first time since 2018 there is no longer an absolute majority, compared with 56 percent a year ago.³ Amongst the main reasons for this decline in trust in democratic institutions is the bad performance of the young leadership of the ÖVP during the days of Sebastian Kurz (2017-2021).

In a methodological critique of what has become infamously known as the “Beinschab-tool” (research commissioned by the Ministry of Finance in 2017 and made public due to a request by the parliamentary investigative committee) named after Susanne Beinschab, who has allegedly provided faked data polls to help Sebastian Kurz become chancellor, Andrea Schaffar said, “As with the studies on Islamic kindergartens, science is instrumentalized to give tendentious statements a serious veneer. And as with the studies on Islamic kindergartens, there is a connection to Sebastian Kurz. The Austrian taxpayers will hopefully receive an explanation for this and clarification of the background in the next committee of inquiry. This would be urgently necessary.”⁴ The most relevant politically was that the polls by Beinschab that presented Kurz in a most benevolent form were mainly disseminated by media group *Österreich* to help in the rise of Sebastian Kurz to become, first, the leader of his own party, the ÖVP, and, later, chancellor.⁵

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1. John, Gerald (2022), “Forscher stufen Österreich auf Status einer ‘Wahldemokratie’ zurück”, *Der Standard*, 07.04.2022, retrieved November 20, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000134745068/forscher-stufen-oesterreich-auf-status-einer-wahldemokratie-zurueck?ref=article>
 2. Moha (2022), “Fataler Einfluss auf Vertrauen in Politik”, *ORF*, 28.11.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: <https://orf.at/stories/3295578/>
 3. Ibid.
 4. Schaffar, Andrea (2022), “Österreich hat mal wieder eine Wissenschaftsaffäre: Die Beinschab-Studien”, *Science Blogs*, 26.01.2022, retrieved October 28, 2022 from: <https://scienceblogs.de/sociokommunikativ/2022/01/26/oesterreich-hat-mal-wieder-eine-wissenschaftsaffaere-die-beinschab-studien/?all=1>
 5. Nikbaksh, Michael; Melichar, Stefan (2022), “ÖVP-Inseratenaffäre: Die Beinschab-Protokolle”, *Profil*, 25.02.2022, retrieved October 24, 2022 from: <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/oevp-inseratenaffaere-die-beinschab-protokolle/401917921>

Amongst the many critiques of the ÖVP's performance was its attempt to get full control over the state apparatus, including the intelligence service that had been under the ÖVP's control, as the opposition claimed, for a long time. An MP from the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) has rightly criticized the attachment of the new director of the Austrian intelligence service DSN to the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), given that the reform of the intelligence service was of great necessity following internal frictions. He more generally argued that "the Ministry of Interior has to be protected from the ÖVP."⁶ In the state of Carinthia, a former ÖVP leader, Stephan Tauschitz, became the head of the regional intelligence service, the Carinthian LVT (Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung). He finally had to step down due to criticism of his participation in Neo-Nazi meetings at the infamous Ulrichsberg in Upper Austria back in 2008.⁷

After the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the ÖVP started again to focus on issues such as asylum and migration to push back the rise of the right-wing populist FPÖ as was the case under the reign of Sebastian Kurz. August Wöginger (ÖVP) even argued that the European Convention of Human Rights would create obstacles to properly manage migration,⁸ thus following in the steps of today's far-right FPÖ leader Herbert Kickl. Though rhetorically Austria embraced the support of Ukrainians, the country's leadership resisted a European-wide distribution of refugees within the EU.⁹

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

An NGO focusing on anti-Muslim racism, the Documentation Center (Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus), has collected more than 1,000 cases of anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2022. Its official report will be released in May 2022.¹⁰

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6. SPÖ-Parlamentsklub (2022): "SPÖ-Einwallner: ÖVP ist ein massives Sicherheitsproblem für Österreich", OTS, 11.01.2022, retrieved October 20, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220111_OTS0060/spoe-einwallner-oevp-ist-ein-massives-sicherheitsproblem-fuer-oesterreich
 7. Red. (2022), "Weiter Schlagabtausch um Kärntner LVT-Chef", ORF, 05.02.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: <https://orf.at/#/stories/3246433/>
 8. Votzi, Josef (2022), "Nehammers holpriger Retro-Trip ins Türkise [Politik Backstage]", Trend, 18.11.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: <https://www.trend.at/politik/nehammers-retro-trip-tuerkise-politik-backstage>
 9. Red. (2022), "Grenzkontrollen in Österreich laut EuGH-Urteil offenbar nicht rechtmäßig", Der Standard, 26.04.2022, retrieved November 1, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000135197685/grenzkontrollen-in-oesterreich-laut-eugh-urteil-offenbar-nicht-rechtskraeftig>
 10. Reports are available on their website: <https://dokustelle.at/>

On February 2, two masked men smashed several window panels of the ATIB headquarters in the federal capital in the morning hours.¹¹ Integration Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP) condemned the attack¹² that made headlines in the tabloid press.



Figure 1: An attack on a mosque in the district of Favoriten in Vienna Source: Red. (2022), “Maskierte beschädigen ATIB-Zentrale”, ORF, 02.02.2022, retrieved October 25, 2022 from: <https://orf.at/stories/3246043/>

In June, Islamophobic texts were sprayed on the walls of the Yesil Camii mosque of the Islamic Federation in Sollenau in the district of Wiener Neustadt (Lower Austria).¹³

In Mistelbach, a town in Lower Austria, the Bosnian-Islamic association Zem-Zem intended to expand its prayer room that had already existed since 2010, when a group called Patriotic Wine Quarter (Patriotisches Weinviertel, a place in Lower Austria), hung a protest banner on the construction fence that wrote “Every mosque is one too many.” They also disseminated flyers warning of a replacement (*Überfremdung*): “How long will it be before the muezzin calls to prayer over Mistelbach?”¹⁴

11. Red. (2022), “Maskierte verüben Anschlag auf ATIB-Moschee in Wien”, Heute, 02.02.2022, retrieved October 21, 2022 from: <https://www.heute.at/s/maskierte-verueben-anschlag-auf-atib-moschee-in-wien-100187911>
12. Red. (2022), “Maskierte beschädigen ATIB-Zentrale”, ORF, 02.02.2022, retrieved October 25, 2022 from: <https://orf.at/stories/3246043/>
13. Weichhart, Johannes (2022), “Islamfeindliche Texte auf Moschee gesprüht: Polizei in NÖ ermittelt”, Kurier, 06.06.2022, retrieved October 29, 2022 from: <https://kurier.at/chronik/niederosterreich/islamfeindliche-texte-auf-moschee-gesprueht-polizei-in-noe-ermittelt/402032894?fbclid=IwAR3Ck6r4aMaTB2WmQGdR4aiNkE5DWHCnMkiq-v-PWv7nIfwSkLkK-HdbVc>
14. Pfabigan, Michael (2022), “Anti-islamische Aktion vor Gebetshaus”, NÖN, 24.08.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: <https://www.noen.at/mistelbach/mistelbach-anti-islamische-aktion-vor-gebetshaus-mistelbach-islam-moschee-manfred-platschka-kenan-corbic-erich-stubenvoll-print-333512717>



Figure 2: Banner and leaflet against the construction of a mosque in Liechtensteinstraße, Mistelbach by the right-wing group “Patriotisches Weinviertel.” Source: Pfabigan, Michael (2022), “Anti-islamische Aktion vor Gebetshaus”, NÖN, 24.08.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: <https://www.noen.at/mistelbach/mistelbach-anti-islamische-aktion-vor-gebetshaus-mistelbach-islam-moschee-manfred-platschka-kenan-corbic-erich-stubenvoll-print-333512717>

A local leader of the right-wing populist FPÖ, Manfred Platschka, used this incident for his own party and commented, “Thanks to mass illegal immigration, the existing prayer room has become too small and it is being expanded big time!”¹⁵ The town mayor, Erich Stubenvoll, backed the local Muslim community.

During the first half of 2022, there were 270 acts monitored by right-wing extremist groups, most of them in the state of Upper Austria, followed by Vienna; 15 were antisemitic and one was Islamophobic.¹⁶

Education

In January 2022, Integration Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP) and Chancellery Minister Karoline Edtstadler (ÖVP) announced an increase in course hours on antisemitism for asylum seekers provided by the Austrian Integration Fund. Raab argued, “The module on antisemitism has now been brought to the fore. The reason for this is that studies show that the phenomenon is comparatively widespread among Muslim youth. In addition, it is clear from day-to-day work that there is a need for information and awareness-raising about antisemitism among immigrants and refugees.”¹⁷ The new regulation was presented one year after the federal government’s National Strategy against Antisemitism (Nationale Strategie gegen Antisemitismus, NAS) was

15. Ibid.

16. Vienna Online, Fast 270 rechtsextreme Taten im ersten Halbjahr in Österreich, 2 Sep 2022, <https://www.vienna.at/fast-270-rechtsextreme-taten-im-ersten-halbjahr-in-oesterreich/7611664>

17. Red. (2022), “Integrationskurse künftig mit Antisemitismus-Modul”, ORF, 24.01.2022, retrieved October 10, 2022 from: <https://orf.at/stories/3244857/>

presented. The report on antisemitism revealed that 40 percent of antisemitic acts had a right-wing background, 14 percent a leftist, and 12 an Islamist.¹⁸

In the city of Graz, a congress discussed “ways of countering parallel societies and the resulting violence caused by radicalization and polarization.”¹⁹ Participants included Werner Miedl, former police officer and head of the newly established specialist unit for the prevention of parallel societies (Fachstelle zu Verhinderung von Parallelgesellschaften), and the lawyer and former director of the provincial police of Styria, Josef Klamminger, who claimed that Islam should not be considered only a religion but a “form of life and state” (*Lebens- und Staatsform*) and argued that influences from Türkiye, Iran, and Saudi Arabia would support non-violent legalistic Islamism (political Islam) that threatens democratic European societies. Elham Manea and Ednan Aslan were also invited, and the latter pleaded for a European-style Islam that recognizes and promotes plurality. Emina Saric, who is a member of the Expert Council for Integration, Researcher on Gender Relations in Patriarchal Living Environments (Expertenrates für Integration, Forscherin zu Geschlechterverhältnissen in patriarchalen Lebenswelten), discussed forced marriages, control by self-appointed guardians of morality, genital mutilation, and honor killings. The director of the Documentation Center Political Islam, Lisa Fellhofer, was also invited. Discussing anti-Muslim racism, according to the website’s report, “the state has to be sensitive in order not to create a counterproductive societal counterpressure.”²⁰

In 2022, Susanne Raab announced the increase of the funding for the Documentation Center Political Islam,²¹ from an already increased 800,000 Euro to 1,700,000 Euro.²² Following a report by the Documentation Center Political Islam on the Islamische Föderationen (Islamic Federation), the latter published a reply defending the allegations included in the report.²³ The Islamic Federation also organized an event in early 2022,²⁴ where they invited Heiko Heinisch,²⁵ a leading Islamophobe, mem-

18. Schmidt, Colette M. (2022), “Edtstadler über Kampf gegen Antisemitismus: ‘Ein Marathon, kein Sprint’”, *Der Standard*, 31.01.2022, retrieved October 21, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000132983852/edtstadler-ueber-kampf-gegen-antisemitismus-ein-marathon-kein-sprint>

19. Auer, Stefan; Stöhs, Jeremy (2022): “Fachkongress - Parallelgesellschaften verhindern”, *Magazin des BMI*, Ausgabe 11-12/2021, retrieved October 25, 2022 from: https://bmi.gv.at/magazin/2021_11_12/Fachkongress.aspx

20. *Ibid.*

21. Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Documentation Center Political Islam,” 12 Dec 2021, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-documentation-center-political-islam-dokumentationsstelle-politischer-islam/>

22. Parlamentskorrespondenz Nr. 1241, Zusätzliche Planstellen für Bundeskanzleramt, mehr Mittel für Statistik Austria, 07 Nov. 2022, www.parlament.gv.at/aktuelles/pk/jahr_2022/pk1241

23. Islamische Föderationen in Österreich, “Stellungnahme zum Grundlagenbericht der ‘Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam’ über ‘Die Milli Görüş,’” November 2021, https://islamischefoederation.at/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Stellungnahme_1121.pdf

24. Islamische Föderation (2022), “Miteinander reden statt übereinander – Fachtagung der Islamischen Föderationen in Österreich 26.02.2022”, OTS, 01.03.2022, retrieved October 25, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220301_OTS0023/miteinander-reden-statt-uebereinander-fachtagung-der-islamischen-foederationen-in-oesterreich-26022022

25. Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Heiko Heinisch,” 3 Mar 2021, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-heiko-heinisch/>

ber of the advisory board of the Documentation Center Political Islam, to discuss the legacy of the Turkish political leader of the Millî Görüş movement, Necmettin Erbakan. For Manfred Maurer, who is known for his many anti-Muslim opinion pieces in the ÖVP-owned *OÖ Volksblatt*, it was debatable whether the change in the Millî Görüş was “honest or merely tactical.”²⁶ During this event, Bekir Altas said to Heiko Heinisch during a panel: “We want to have dialogue [...] I have tried not to use the word Islamophobia once. This is not what it is about. I don’t regard your reports as Islamophobic per se.”²⁷ In June, the Documentation Center for Political Islam presented its first annual report. According to its director, Fellhofer, the Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ) had reacted to the work of the Documentation Center by replacing one of its imams, although the relations were still reserved.²⁸

In April, the Documentation Center Political Islam announced the release of a study on Salafism.²⁹ In December 2022, the Documentation Center published a report on “Theocracy and Twelver Shi’a Islamism.”³⁰ Based on a report by the Documentation Center, Minister Raab (ÖVP) announced the start of an investigation by the Cultus Office (*Kultusamt*).³¹ As Jan Marchart from the daily *Standard* has argued, there were “plenty of one-sided members in the advisory board” of the Documentation Center.³²

The first in-person congress under the auspices of the newly structured intelligence service, the Directorate of State Protection and Intelligence (DSN), was organized in June and focused on “extremist propaganda and hybrid threat scenarios.”³³ The new DSN director Omar Haijawi-Pirchner stated, “Strengthening prevention work and cooperation with academia are key factors that will support the DSN in its mission. For the DSN, prevention means generating, sharing, and communicating knowledge in order to make a decisive contribution in dealing with rad-

26. Maurer, Manfred (2022), “Ein lobenswerter Antisemit”, *Volksblatt*, 27.02.2022, retrieved October 24, 2022 from: <https://volksblatt.at/ein-lobenswerter-antisemit/>

27. Fachtagung – Muslime und die Islamischen Föderationen in Österreich im politischen Fokus, 1 Mar 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnC8ZRZyp4>

28. Kleine Zeitung (2022), “Dokustelle Politischer Islam legte ersten Jahresbericht vor”, *Kleine Zeitung*, 24.06.2022, retrieved October 29, 2022 from: <https://www.kleinezeitung.at/service/newsticker/innenpolitik/6156732/Dokustelle-Politischer-Islam-lege-ersten-Jahresbericht-vor>

29. Dokumentationsstelle (2022), “Salafismus: Fundamentalistische Lesart des Islam”, *OTS*, 26.04.2022, retrieved October 28, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220426_OTS0208/salafismus-fundamentalistische-lesart-des-islam

30. Dokumentationsstelle (2022), “Dokumentationsstelle: Theokratie und zwölferschitischer Islamismus”, *OTS*, 23.11.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20221123_OTS0041/dokumentationsstelle-theokratie-und-zwoelferschitischer-islamismus

31. Red. (2022), “Ermittlungen: Antisemitismus in Moschee”, *ORE*, 08.12.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3185528/>

32. Marchart, Jan Michael (2022), “Was von Altkanzler Kurz’ Wahlschlager ‘politischer Islam’ übriggeblieben ist”, *Der Standard*, 13.05.2022, retrieved October 28, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000135421244/was-von-altkanzler-kurz-wahlschlager-politischer-islam-uebrig-bleibt>

33. Red. (2022), “Prävention – DSN-Präventionsgipfel: Krisen befeuern Radikalisierung”, *Dsn.gv.at*, Artikel Nr: 19693, 08.06.2022, retrieved October 29, 2022 from: <https://dsn.gv.at/news.aspx?id=3177365A554379546977383D>

icalization and extremism in a holistic manner. Therefore, the focus on prevention is reflected in all areas of the agency structure and the areas have been massively expanded and professionalized.”³⁴ Keynote speaker Peter Neumann from King’s College, London spoke on Jihadism. The head of the intelligence section within the DSN, David Blum, participated in a panel on “academia as an essential pillar of intelligence activities.” The director of the Documentation Center for Political Islam, Lisa Fellhofer, participated in a panel titled “Challenges in the Context of the Increasing Polarization of Society.” The DSN further stated, “A key factor in prevention and deradicalization work is the ‘Bundesweites Netzwerk Extremismusprävention und Deradikalisierung’ (BNED - Federal Network for the Prevention of Extremism and Deradicalization). The BNED is an all-society body consisting of members from ministries, civil society, and the federal states, cities, and the association of municipalities. It was legitimized as an expert body by the Council of Ministers in July 2020.”³⁵

Eleven countries participated in the “Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration,” which took place for the second time after its inception in 2021. Nearly 150 persons participated in the conference, including the Greek Deputy Minister for Migration and Asylum Sofia Voultepsi. The keynote was given by “terrorism expert” Peter Neumann, former advisor to Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP).³⁶

In a secondary school, all Catholics were put in one class, while another class was full of Muslim, Protestant, and non-affiliated pupils. According to the education councilor, this was an exception rather than the rule, but every school has autonomy over how to manage its school life.³⁷

Politics

In January 2022, the existence of a five-page-long previously secret supplementary paper to the 2017 coalition agreement between the ÖVP and the FPÖ was revealed. It included key political agreements and the allocation of posts including the implementation of a headscarf ban that was seemingly to be used deliberately as an issue for the Viennese elections.³⁸ The agreement literally writes, “A hijab ban for children in preschool institutions (after-school care, preschool, nursery, etc.) and primary

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Red. (2022), “Wiener Extremismus-Konferenz: Somers will integrierte Muslime stärken”, Vienna, 05.12.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: <https://www.vienna.at/wiener-extremismus-konferenz-somers-will-integrierte-muslime-staerken/7783486/amp>

37. Brickner, Irene (2022), “Wiener Mittelschule trennt Kinder nach Religion in Klassen”, Der Standard, 07.12.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000141568319/aufregung-ueber-religionstrennung-an-wiener-mittelschule>

38. Kramer-Schmid, Ulla; Thür, Martin (2022), “Die Geheimpapiere der Koalitionen”, ORF, 28.01.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: <https://orf.at/stories/3245406/>

schools will be implemented in agreement between the ruling parties until 2020 latest or in coordination with the Viennese State and Municipal elections.”³⁹ When the ÖVP formed a coalition with the Greens, they included a headscarf ban in a similar side letter agreement rather than in the coalition agreement, because it was hotly disputed within the ranks of the Greens. The side letter writes, “In the sphere of action of the Ministry of Education, a headscarf ban for female teachers will be introduced by way of decree in the course of the legislative period.”⁴⁰ Former Viennese chairwoman of the Greens Birgit Hebein was flabbergasted, as she had “negotiated away” the hijab ban during official coalition negotiations.⁴¹ As the Constitutional Court has rescinded the hijab ban, Integration Minister Raab has not pursued the ban in secondary school, as originally envisaged in the side letter. She confirmed that she had not intended to ban the hijab because of the agreement, but “from my very own impetus.”⁴² Parts of the Greens as well as Muslims protested against these side letters.⁴³

General secretary of the ÖVP, Laura Sachslehner, and integration spokesperson of the Viennese ÖVP, Caroline Hungerländer, questioned the Viennese government’s financial support of an exhibition by Asma Aiad and Anahita Neghabat called “Muslim*Contemporary” at the Academy of Fine Arts.⁴⁴ “Muslim* Contemporary” was a multidisciplinary, anti-racist, and feminist exhibition that took place on November 8-12, 2022, during the first anniversary of Operation Luxor.⁴⁵ Thus, it also critically reflected on Operation Luxor, which for the ÖVP was reason to see it in a “proximity to political Islam” and “leftist extremist propensity to violence.” They argued, “According to a Konrad Adenauer Stiftung report on left-wing extremist symbolism, the clenched fist stands for ‘readiness to fight and violence’.”⁴⁶ An open letter that was signed by more than 50 cultural institutions and scholars, defended the

39. Nikbakhsh, Michael; Melichar, Stefan (2022), “Postenschacher und ORF-Umbau: Das Geheimpapier von Türkis-Blau”, *Profil*, 28.01.2022, retrieved November 1, 2022 from: <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/postenschacher-und-orf-umbau-das-geheimpapier-von-tuerkis-blau/401887412>

40. APA (2022), “Grüne und ÖVP vereinbarten Kopftuchverbot für Lehrerinnen in Sideletter”, *Der Standard*, 30.01.2022, retrieved November 1, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000132956222/gruenes-timmten-in-sideletter-kopftuchverbot-fuer-lehrerinnen-zu>

41. Ibid.

42. Red. (2022), “Kopftuchverbot für Raab ‘kein Thema mehr’”, *ORF*, 05.02.2022, retrieved October 26, 2022 from: <https://orf.at/stories/3246370/>

43. Vogl, Erich (2022), “Muslime gegen Kogler – ‘Gegen das Bedienen von gezüchteten Ressentiments’”, *Krone*, 05.02.2022, retrieved October 27, 2022 from: <https://www.krone.at/2620474>

44. Sverak, Peter (2022), “Sachslehner/Hungerländer: Offener Brief ist Angriff auf das demokratische Auskunftsrecht der Abgeordneten”, *OTS*, 08.02.2022, retrieved October 26, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaus-sendung/OTS_20220208_OTSO0099/sachslehnerhungerlaender-offener-brief-ist-angriff-auf-das-demokratische-auskunftsrecht-der-abgeordneten

45. MuslimContemporary (2022), “OFFENER BRIEF: ÖVP-Angriff auf die Freiheit der Kunst in den Räumen einer Universität”, *Muslimcontemporary.at*, 08.02.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: <https://muslim-contemporary.at/offener-brief>

46. Red. (2022), “‘Muslim Contemporary’: Kontroverse nach Ausstellung an der Bildenden in Wien”, *Vienna*, 08.02.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: <https://www.vienna.at/muslim-contemporary-kontroverse-nach-ausstellung-an-der-bildenden-in-wien/7284904>

curator's work, asking, "Is the ÖVP using the newly established 'Documentation Center for Political Islam' to intimidate civil society actors who criticize ÖVP policies, to strengthen anti-Muslim racism in society, and to deny artists eligibility for funding and to discredit citizens? Since this is our impression, we understand the ÖVP questions not only as an attack on artists, Muslim civil society and politicians of color, but also as a serious attack on artistic freedom and critical voices in general."⁴⁷ The neoconservative politicians reacted with the words that one has to be able to raise "the legitimate question of whether possible funding by the City of Vienna will counteract efforts to curb political Islam, which is necessary."⁴⁸ The Viennese government (SPO and NEOS) backed the financial support of the project. In September of the same year, Sachslehner left her position and remained in the Viennese Council with her ÖVP mandate. According to her, the ÖVP was betraying its values and was pandering to the Greens.⁴⁹

On March 21, MP Faika El-Nagashi (Greens) reiterated that "our priority now, together with civil society, is to implement the National Action Plan against Racism, which we have set out in the Government Agreement."⁵⁰ The Action Plan to be implemented by Minister Raab (ÖVP) has not been implemented yet. Also, the Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus called for the implementation of a National Action Plan against Racism, more support for NGOs, and the establishment of independent control bodies for the executive and security services.⁵¹

According to Viennese ÖVP chairman and former Viennese provincial police vice president Karl Mahrer, Vienna, which is governed by Social Democrats, has a problem in schools, especially language problems (six out of ten elementary school students in Vienna have a colloquial language other than German) as well as problems with integration and violence.⁵²

During the 18th meeting of the Viennese parliament, Omar al-Rawi (SPÖ) criticized the lack of empathy for the children who were traumatized by Operation

47. MuslimContemporary (2022), "OFFENER BRIEF: ÖVP-Angriff auf die Freiheit der Kunst in den Räumen einer Universität", [Muslimcontemporary.at](https://muslimcontemporary.at), 08.02.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: <https://muslimcontemporary.at/offener-brief>

48. Red. (2022), "Wirbel nach Muslim-Austeelung in Akademie", ORF, 08.02.2022, retrieved October 29, 2022 from: <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3142202/>

49. Völker, Michael (2022), "Sachslehner-Rücktritt: Der bloßgestellte Parteichef", *Der Standard*, 11.09.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000138999839/sachslehner-ruecktritt-der-blossgestellte-parteeichef>

50. Grüne (2022), "El-Nagashi/Grüne zum Internationalen Tag gegen Rassismus: Politik besonders gefordert", OTS, 21.03.2022, retrieved October 25, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220321_OTS0148/el-nagashigrueene-zum-internationalen-tag-gegen-rassismus-politik-besonders-gefordert

51. APA (2022), "1061 gemeldete Fälle von antimuslimischen Rassismus im Jahr 2021", *Die Presse*, 02.06.2022, retrieved October 28, 2022 from: <https://www.diepresse.com/6147886/1061-gemeldete-faelle-von-antimuslimischen-rassismus-im-jahr-2021>

52. Red. (2022), "ÖVP will Parkpickerl-Ausnahme für Lehrer", ORF, 20.01.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3139546/>

Luxor unlike the empathy shown for climate activists.⁵³ As a response to Rawi's critique of the Greens, the Green member of the Viennese parliament, Martin Margulies, harshly criticized the other parties' position or lack thereof regarding Operation Luxor.

I can't remember anyone from the Social Democratic Party criticizing Operation Luxor. Not even from the ÖVP, not from the NEOS, not from the Freedom Party. If it is, and even here it is only slight criticism, I say that quite deliberately, then it came only from the Greens from a human rights perspective. All the others have been silent. And we should all take this to heart about the handling of Operation Luxor, that something like this does not happen. That when, as a result of a terrorist attack, there is a sudden need for scapegoats, everyone looks on in awe as scapegoats are sought out and arrested, so to speak. I noticed, just like you, that apparently all charges were dropped on a large scale. There was a mass psychosis in Austria that welcomed something where we should all take each other by the nose, but no one should stand and point the finger at the other, especially not when even from within the Social Democratic Party there was no criticism of this action but, in fact, they applauded it.⁵⁴

The hijab ban in preschool institutions and kindergarten that had been in place since 2019, after Sebastian Kurz came to power, and was legally implemented based on an agreement between the federal government and the state governments, was not extended. While the states of Salzburg (Education Councilor from NEOS) and Tyrol (Education Councilor from ÖVP) had already ended the regulation, the federal government ministries led by the ÖVP originally intended to continue with the agreement. The Greens spoke out for an end given the Constitutional Court's suspension of the hijab ban in elementary school. According to research, no single ban of the hijab in preschool institutions had ever been enacted.⁵⁵

In July, the opposition parties declared the inclusion of the infamous, racist Operation Luxor in their parliamentary investigation committee, after it became obvious that previous reports commissioned by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) and which were later used as a basis for the police raid had been part of Sebastian Kurz's plan to take over, first, his own political party and, then, the government, as revealed in the leaked secret papers of the "Project Ballhausplatz."⁵⁶ In October of the same

53. PID-Rathauskorrespondenz (2022), "18. Wiener Gemeinderat (4)", OTS, 13.01.2022, retrieved November 1, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220113_OTS0122/18-wiener-gemeinderat-4

54. Stadt Wien (2022), "Gemeinderats- und Landtagssitzungen", Wien.gv., 13.01.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: https://www.wien.gv.at/video/live/grlt/player.html?d=13_01_2022&ti=0&r=gr&n=18 (5:19:00 Bis 5:20:37)

55. Red. (2022), "Kindergarten: Länder wollen Kopftuchverbot streichen", ORF, 28.04.2022, retrieved October 26, 2022 from: <https://orf.at/stories/3262440/>

56. Marchart, Jan Michael (2022), "Umstrittene Razzien gegen angebliche Muslimbrüder werden Thema im ÖVP-U-Ausschuss", Der Standard, 18 July 2022, <https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000137532615/die-umstrittenen-razzien-gegen-angebliche-muslimbrueder-werden-thema-im-oevp>

year, the opposition party NEOS declared its intention not to continue with the investigation regarding potential corruption by the ruling ÖVP;⁵⁷ but finally agreed to proceed due to new revelations that were not related to Operation Luxor.

Following a racist posting by the youth chapter of the Viennese FPÖ saying “Population replacement through hedonism,” Social Democrats condemned the act.⁵⁸

In November, the FPÖ met the French right-wing populist leader Marine Le Pen. The FPÖ published a press release with the subheadline “Migration Crisis and Islamization – Europe needs a patriotic bastion against social migration.”⁵⁹ The head of the Viennese FPÖ, Dominik Nepp, is quoted with the following words:

Vienna, just like Paris, is affected by a massive onslaught of social migrants from Africa and the Arab region. Thanks to the generous cash gifts of the Viennese SPÖ under Mayor Ludwig, more and more uneducated young men from Islamic countries, who abuse our social system and in many cases become criminals, are coming to the Austrian capital. After the riots in Paris, there are also more and more riots, rapes, and serious bodily injuries up to murder in Vienna. In addition, Islamism has become socially acceptable, which culminated not least in the Islamist-motivated attack on November 2, 2020.⁶⁰

The general secretary of the FPÖ criticized the fact that a journalist reporting from Iran covered her head during a report, framing this as an appeasement to Islam by the Austrian Broadcast TV ORF.⁶¹

Presidential elections were held on November 9 and the former leader of the Greens and president Alexander Van der Bellen was reelected for a second term. He was backed by the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the NEOS, while the ÖVP decided not to run a candidate at all. Hence, Van der Bellen was only challenged by several independent candidates and the far-right FPÖ, and won in the first round with 56.7 percent. The far-right candidate Walter Rosenkranz received 17.7 percent of the votes. While Islam was not a salient issue during these elections unlike in 2016, Rosenkranz still made the usual far-right anti-Muslim policy claims, calling, for instance, for “tougher laws against extremist Islam and left-wing extremism.”⁶²

57. Redaktion, “SPÖ und FPÖ über NEOS verwundert,” ORF, 8 Oct 2022, <https://orf.at/stories/3288696/>

58. SPÖ Wien Rathausklub, “Al-Rawi/Florianschütz/ Ngosso (SPÖ): Solche Hass-Botschaften dürfen wir nicht zulassen”, OTS, 18 Oct 2022, https://www.ots.at/amp/pr/OTS_20221018_OTS0195/

59. FPÖ Wien (2022), “FPÖ – Nepp/Krauss: Treffen mit Marine Le Pen in Paris”, OTS, 15.11.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20221115_OTS0120/fpoe-neppkrauss-treffen-mit-marine-le-pen-in-paris-bild

60. Ibid.

61. Freiheitlicher Parlamentsklub (2022), “FPÖ – Hafenecker: ORF betreibt einmal mehr Islam-Appasement”, OTS, 03.10.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20221003_OTS0092/fpoe-hafenecker-orf-betreibt-einmal-mehr-islam-appasement

62. Redaktion (2022), “Rosenkranz fordert schärfere Gesetze gegen Linksextremismus,” Kurier, 17 July 2022, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/rosenkranz-fordert-schaerfere-gesetze-gegen-linksextremismus/402078244>

In November, the Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ) organized a conference discussing the Islam Act of 2015 under the title “Islam Act of 2015. A Best Practice Model?”⁶³ Reiterating many of the already existing critiques of the Islam Act,⁶⁴ the IGGÖ announced it would present the federal government with the findings of an expert commission within the next year. According to its president Ümit Vural, the “constant task” of the IGGÖ was “to ensure that Muslims in Austria can practice their religion in accordance with the freedom of religion guaranteed by the constitution.”⁶⁵

Various politicians from the opposition and the coalition partner, the Greens, criticized the annual intelligence service’s report. The Greens called for greater focus on actual threats and more objectivity. According to national security spokesperson Georg Bürstmayr, “Neither the mistakes made by the BVT [Office for the Protection of the Constitution] in the run-up to the terrorist attack were mentioned, nor the fact that Operation Luxor has meanwhile come under heavy criticism by the courts.”⁶⁶ Green MP Faika El-Nagashi argued that the report was highly problematic: “It places social movements in an extremist context and denigrates civil society engagement [...] The description of an anti-racist movement [Black Lives Matter] in the report on the protection of the constitution inevitably places it close to extremism.”⁶⁷ SPÖ MP Sabine Schatz criticized the fact that no annual report on right-wing extremism had been published by the intelligence service.⁶⁸ Also, MP Reinhold Einwallner, national security speaker of the SPÖ, called Operation Luxor “a flop” (*Robrkrepierer*).⁶⁹

63. Presse ORF (2022), “‘Orientierung’: Islamgesetz auf dem Prüfstand – ‘Diskriminierender Eingriff’ oder ‘Best-Practice-Modell?’”, OTS, 27.11.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20221125_OTS0076/orientierung-islamgesetz-auf-dem-pruefstand-diskriminierender-eingriff-oder-best-practice-modell

64. Dautovic, Rijad and Farid Hafez “Institutionalising Islam in Contemporary Austria: A Comparative Analysis of the Austrian Islam Act of 2015 and Austrian Religion Acts with Special Emphasis on the Israelite Act of 2012”, *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, Volume 8, Issue 1, February 2019, 28–50 <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojlr/rwy013>

65. IGGÖ (2022), “IGGÖ nach Fachtagung: Ausgestaltung des Zusammenlebens nur im partnerschaftlichen Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Religionen möglich”, OTS, 22.11.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20221122_OTS0140/iggoe-nach-fachtagung-ausgestaltung-des-zusammenlebens-nur-im-partnerschaftlichen-verhaeltnis-zwischen-staat-und-religionen-moeglich

66. Grüne (2022), “Bürstmayr/El-Nagashi zu Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020: Fragwürdiger Fokus und lückenhafte Informationen”, OTS, 16.02.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220216_OTS0160/buerstmayrel-nagashi-zu-verfassungsschutzbericht-2020-fragwuerdiger-fokus-und-lueckenhafte-informationen

67. Ibid.

68. SPÖ (2022), “SPÖ-Schatz: Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020 zu spät und qualitativ unzureichend”, OTS, 16.02.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220216_OTS0164/spoe-schatz-verfassungsschutzbericht-2020-zu-spaet-und-qualitativ-unzureichend

69. SPÖ-Parlamentsklub (2022): “SPÖ-Einwallner: ÖVP ist ein massives Sicherheitsproblem für Österreich”, OTS, 11.01.2022, retrieved October 20, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220111_OTS0060/spoe-einwallner-oevp-ist-ein-massives-sicherheitsproblem-fuer-oesterreich

Media

In an opinion piece published in the far-right tabloid *Exxpress*, Bernhard Heinzlmaier argued that there was a “leftist cult regarding Islam.”⁷⁰ He defended the policies of Emmanuel Macron, and criticized the *European Islamophobia Report* for criticizing authors like Susanne Schröter, Heiko Heinisch, and Nina Scholz, alleging that this would “turn the aggression of reactionary parts of Islam European-wide against them.”⁷¹ This is a discourse strategy of victim-rehearsal, defending authors like Heinisch and Scholz, whose “expertise” has been an important foundation of the unlawful Operation Luxor raids and criticizing those who have been the victims of state violence.

Alternative media outlets such as Mosaik gave space to Black and People of Color (BPoC) perspectives on issues such as the hijab ban.⁷²

The leftist Sama Maani argued in an op-ed in the daily *Standard* for more discussion on the uprisal in Iran, saying at the same time that “anti-Muslim racism” and “Islamophobia” were “false terms.”⁷³

The presentation of ZARA’s annual report on racism in Austria was well covered by various media outlets.⁷⁴ The Austrian public television channel ORF covered only three of the four panelists, while excluding all content related to Operation Luxor. The private media outlet *Österreich* solely videotaped the first part of the panel presentation.⁷⁵

In a fact-check of numbers presented by the ÖVP about the persecution of religion according to which 80 percent of all adherents of religion in the world were Christians, the daily *Standard* revealed that this was a myth. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and MPs of his conservative party reproduced this number that goes back to a source of the religious studies scholar Thomas Schirrmacher, president of the International Society for Human Rights, which seems to be related to the German political party Christian Social Union (CSU) and was criticized in the past for its close-

70. Redaktion (2022), “Bernhard Heinzlmaier: Der linke Kult um den Islam”, *Exxpress*, 19.01.2022, retrieved October 20, 2022 from: <https://exxpress.at/bernhard-heinzlmaier-der-linke-kult-um-den-islam/>

71. Ibid.

72. K., Amina (2022), “Sideletter: Wiener Lehrerin über die Folgen eines Kopftuchverbots”, *Mosaik*, 10.02.2022, retrieved October 23, 2022 from: <https://mosaik-blog.at/kopftuchverbot-lehrerinnen-sideletter/>

73. Maani, Sama (2022), “Warum uns der Iran nicht wurscht sein sollte”, *Der Standard*, 07.10.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000139747375/warum-uns-der-iran-nicht-wurscht-sein-sollte>

74. APA (2022), “1.977 Rassismus-Meldungen: ‘Wir sehen immer nur die Spitze des Eisbergs’”, *Kurier*, 21.03.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/1977-rassismus-meldungen-wir-sehen-immer-nur-die-spitze-des-eisbergs/401945815>; Standard.at (2022), “Zara präsentierte neuen Rassismus-Report: 1.977 Meldungen”, *Der Standard*, 21.03.2022, retrieved October 25, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000134269437/zara-praesentier-te-neuen-rassismus-report-1-977-meldungen>

75. Oe24.at (2022), “Verein Zara: Rassismus-Report 2021”, *Oe24.at*, Video, 21.03.2022, retrieved October 25, 2022 from: <https://www.oe24.at/video/oesterreich/verein-zara-rassismus-report-2021/514290736>

ness to the far right. Today, Schirmmacher distances himself from this number that was originally invented in the mid-2000s, and which he himself cannot trace back to the original source and calls it “not serious.”⁷⁶

In an interview with *Profil*, Integration Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP) was asked, if she could “imagine an ORF [Austrian Broadcast TV] presenter wearing a headscarf.” Her response was the following:

Basically, I believe that the ORF should represent a broad diversity of society. And every woman has the right to live her religion freely - even with a headscarf. At the same time, where people have a role model effect, I would like to see a special sensitivity by setting an example for women that they don't have to veil themselves in Austria.⁷⁷

Manfred Maurer published a piece in the Swiss newspaper *Tageblatt* titled “How Political Islam Tries to Intimidate Its Critics: ‘It Can Already Be Life-Threatening.’”⁷⁸ Covering a panel organized by the German Association of European Journalists (Vereinigung Europäischer Journalisten) in the European Parliament with himself, MEP Lukas Mandl, Ralf Schneider, and Saida Keller-Messahli,⁷⁹ Maurer used the combat term “political Islam,” usually used by the French and Austrian governments in cracking down on Muslim civil society, banning Muslim visibility from the public sphere, and silencing critique of authoritarianism.⁸⁰ Maurer argued, “Political Islam is not squeamish in dealing with critics. The repertoire, which ranges from lawsuits to outright death threats, is now also being addressed in the European Parliament. If they criticize Political Islam, because they risk an avalanche of charges and lawsuits, so they are intimidated and think very carefully next time. [...] Legal Jihad: [...] One must feel sorry for those Muslims who, as informants, often make reports possible in the first place and, because of very concrete threats, for example from relatives in their countries of origin, can usually only throw light into the Islamist darkness under the protection of anonymity.” According to MEP Mandl, “The dangerous and sick ideology of Political Islam threatens our civilization and does not deserve the

76. Schimpf, Lara (2022), “ÖVP verbreitet un belegte Zahlen zur Christenverfolgung”, *Profil*, 20.04.2022, retrieved October 26, 2022 from: <https://www.profil.at/faktiv/oevp-abgeordnete-kugler-verbietet-unbelegte-zahlen-zur-christenverfolgung/401978015>

77. Neuhold, Clemens (2022), “Können Sie sich eine ORF-Moderatorin mit Kopftuch vorstellen, Frau Raab?”, *Profil*, 08.02.2022, retrieved October 22, 2022 from: <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/koennen-sie-sich-eine-orf-moderatorin-mit-kopftuch-vorstellen-frau-raab/401895692>

78. Maurer, Manfred (2022), “Islamismus/Wie der Politische Islam versucht, seine Kritiker einzuschüchtern: ‘Es kann schon lebensbedrohend sein’”, *Tageblatt*, 26.03.2022, retrieved October 25, 2022 from: <https://www.tageblatt.lu/headlines/wie-der-politische-islam-versucht-seine-kritiker-einzuschuechtern-es-kann-schon-lebensbedrohend-sein/>

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

80. Criminalizing Muslim Agency in Europe. The case of “Political Islam” in Austria, Germany, and France, *French Cultural Studies* (2022): 1-16.

rights and freedoms that religions have, because it is not a religion.” The Tunisian-born Swiss advises politicians to intensify their contacts with “Muslims who are secular.”⁸¹

The *OÖ Volksblatt* published another article with the title “Political Islam Has No Place in Upper Austria.”⁸² It problematized the construction of a mosque that was financially supported with 200,000 Euro, allegedly by the Millî Görüs in Bavaria, which is under the surveillance of the intelligence service (while the related Islamic Federations in Austria are part of the Islamic Religious Community, a public corporation). It, then, quoted the Upper Austrian ÖVP Executive Director Florian Hiegelsberger with the words “Political Islam has no place in Upper Austria” and wrongly claimed that the Islam Act of 2015 would forbid such a financial support.

In a critical review article on the legacy of Sebastian Kurz’s continuous efforts to combat what he had called “political Islam,” *Standard* journalist Jan Michael Marchart argued,

The former chancellor won two elections, partly by copying the Freedom Party’s hard right-wing line against Muslims and migrants and taking it to the center of society. The populist fight against Islamism became his brand. Kurz’s former spin doctors are still in the ÖVP, but probably not as close to the chancellor as they used to be.⁸³

In another article on the infamous racist Operation Luxor, which was the harshest crackdown on Muslims in Austria so far, Marchart argued,

In any case, Operation Luxor must be comprehensively scrutinized in the aftermath: massive resources were deployed that have so far yielded only mixed results. Liberals and non-organized Muslims were exposed to further alienation. And all this to the political applause of the turquoise ÖVP [ÖVP under the leadership of Sebastian Kurz]. In any case, an investigation into how this could have happened is inevitable.⁸⁴

Marchart also revealed that until April 2022, the tapping only cost half a million Euro.⁸⁵

In an opinion piece titled “State Prosecutor out of Control,” the editor of the weekly investigative *Falter*, Florian Klenk, criticized that the leading state prosecu-

81. Maurer, *Islamismus*.

82. Volksblatt (2022), “Politischer Islam hat in Oberösterreich nichts verloren”, Volksblatt, 04.05.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: <https://volksblatt.at/politischer-islam-hat-in-oberoesterreich-nichts-verloren/>

83. Marchart, Jan Michael (2022), “Was von Altkanzler Kurz’ Wahlschlager “politischer Islam” übriggeblieben ist”, Der Standard, 13.05.2022, retrieved October 28, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000135421244/was-von-altkanzler-kurz-wahlschlager-politischer-islam-uebrig-bleibt>

84. Marchart, Jan Michael (2022), “Operation Luxor: Die Ermittlungen gegen angebliche Muslimbrüder werden zur Farce”, Der Standard, 11 July 2022, retrieved October 28, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000137335911/operation-luxor-die-ermittlungen-gegen-angebliche-muslimbrueder-werden-zur-farce>

85. Marchart, Jan Michael (2022), Abhöraktion der Operation Luxor kostete Steuerzahler bisher halbe Million Euro, Der Standard, 21. April 2022, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000134981594/abhoeraktion-der-operation-luxor-kostete-steuerzahler-bisher-halbe-million-euro>

tor of Operation Luxor prosecuted “three respected Muslims [...] for coercion because they are defending themselves against terror allegations, in some cases successfully with lawsuits.”⁸⁶ Ednan Aslan saw in the coverage of this incident by the weekly *Falter* and the daily *Standard* an attempt to “put the state prosecutor under pressure” and further argued, “Journalists would be better advised to question the legal jihad of the financially strong, professional plaintiffs, why they carry every public criticism with high court costs into the courtroom and put the critics of the so-called Islam defenders under financial pressure and defame them publicly.”⁸⁷

According to an interview, which has meanwhile been taken down from the internet, the former minister of education Heinz Faßmann (ÖVP), who had supported the hijab ban during his time under the leadership of Sebastian Kurz, said, “I also consider the headscarf for young girls before they reach puberty to be superfluous. Why should girls be forced into a certain role? I am in favor of the free development of all girls.”⁸⁸ When asked by journalist Clemens Neuhold for the weekly *Profil*, “You must have suspected that a mere ban on the Islamic headscarf would be contrary to equality. Why didn’t you push for a more legally sound ban on all religious garments in schools?” Faßmann said, “That would have been difficult to enforce. And that has to do with our past. Neuhold then asked, “You are alluding to the kippa, the Jewish head covering for boys and men, which would then also have had to be banned in schools?” To this, Faßmann answered, “Of course. That’s what I meant by referring to the past.”⁸⁹

One of the most known editorial writers of the daily *Standard*, Hans Rauscher, published a piece in September following the acquittal of the board of a foundation named after the former president of the Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ), Anas Schakfeh, in the infamous Operation Luxor. He wrote in regard to current Chancellor Karl Nehammer’s announcement that Operation Luxor was about “cutting the roots of political Islam”: “What’s left of it, two years later? So far, virtually nothing. Zero. Nada. Niente. No talk of a “decisive blow.”⁹⁰ He further argued, “The statements of another expert, the Italian-American ‘expert’ Lorenzo Vidino, who is still cited in the expert staff of Integration Minister Susanne Raab, have turned out to be completely fictitious in Schakfeh’s case.”

86. Klenk, Florian (2022), “Ein Staatsanwalt außer Kontrolle,” *Der Falter*, 2 May 2022, <https://www.falter.at/zeitung/20220502/ein-staatsanwalt-ausser-kontrolle?ref=homepage>

87. Ednan Aslan, Facebook Post, 8 May 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/ednan.aslan.10/posts/pfbid0WnuVSqM-13dvqqCriym6yucdAPxEnV19RBqR9hnLwABsPoMFtYvuxLqd4Ym32VksAl>

88. Neuhold, Clemens, “Heinz Faßmann: ‘Über Kurz nicht zu früh den Stab brechen,’” *Profil*, 16 July 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220726150502/https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/heinz-fassmann-ueber-kurz-nicht-zu-frueh-den-stab-brechen/402084898>

89. Ibid.

90. Rauscher, Hans (2022), “‘Operation Luxor’: Entscheidender (Fehl-)Schlag”, *Der Standard*, 20.09.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000139261364/operation-luxor-entscheidender-fehlschlag>

The *Wiener Zeitung* published an interview with Lorenzo Vidino, a central figure in the Islamophobia network,⁹¹ where he was able to freely express his conspiracies such as speaking about an “alliance between Islamist actors and the left-wing political spectrum.”⁹² Vidino, who alleged in his report *The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria* that Anas Schakfeh, the former president of the Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ), was a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood – an accusation that was completely invented and for which no source was offered – said in the interview that he would base his claims on “interviews, archival work, company data, books, articles, [and] social media.” He went on to say, “For Schakfeh, as for any other person or organization, if my work is flawed and has caused them harm: Then why don’t they sue me?”⁹³ The interview was given the headline “Muslim Brothers Disseminate Victim Narrative,” while Schakfeh was included as a defendant in Operation Luxor claiming he was a terrorist until his case was closed in December 2021.

As journalist Hans Rauscher said in his column: “The material and non-material damage is enormous, Schakfeh said in the press conference. Their lawyer, Richard Soyer pointed out that the Director General for Public Security had ‘unprofessionally’ violated the presumption of innocence during the press conference at the time. And so on. The background is another chapter in the great staging show of the coalition of the ÖVP and FPÖ. As Soyer indicated, there had already been ‘intelligence operations’ in the matter under the FPÖ Interior Minister Herbert Kickl. Then, Nehammer took over, and with great fanfare the largest raid of the Second Republic was carried out, with beautiful pictures of Nehammer on the scene, surrounded by heavily armed special forces. But there was obviously insufficient substance. It is true that questionable Islamist content was found, which is not surprising in parts of the milieu, but not the suspected terrorist financing or other threats to the state. The operation was carried out about a week after the terrorist attack in downtown Vienna. It was suspected on various occasions that the concentration of so many resources on Operation Luxor prevented close surveillance of the assassin from the center of Vienna. According to all information so far, it was a classic turquoise show operation with zero criminal results so far. With the now chancellor (Karl Nehammer, FH) as the main actor.”⁹⁴

The daily *Presse* reported from a press conference of the Anas Schakfeh foundation saying: “When asked whether he [Anas Schakfeh] had ties to the Muslim Broth-

91. Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Lorenzo Vidino,” 22 Apr 2020, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-lorenzo-vidino/>

92. Bischof, Daniel (2022), “Muslimbrüder verbreiten ein Opfernarrativ,” *Wiener Zeitung*, 29 Sep 2022, <https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/politik/oesterreich/2163292-Muslimbrueder-verbreiten-ein-Opfernarrativ.html>

93. *Ibid.*

94. Rauscher, Hans (2022), “Operation Luxor: Entscheidender (Fehl-)Schlag”, *Der Standard*, 20.09.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000139261364/operation-luxor-entscheidender-fehlschlag>

erhood [which would not be illegal per se, since the Muslim Brotherhood is not classified as a terrorist organization], Schakfeh firmly denied it. He had been incriminated by an extremism researcher at George Washington University (Washington, D.C.) [Lorenzo Vidino]. He was said to have set up a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood with a second man in Graz in the 1960s. However, this was a fabrication. Rather, it was reported that he, Schakfeh, had clearly criticized the Muslim Brotherhood.”⁹⁵

In an interview with the weekly *Profil*, the former presidential candidate of the right-wing populist FPÖ, Norbert Hofer, said,

I am not afraid of anything. Immigration is like salt in the soup. It's always good for a country when new ideas and cultures come in. But if you had a massive influx from Islamic cultures, it could overwhelm a country. You can't ignore that completely. But if someone really needs asylum, then we also have an obligation to protect that person.⁹⁶

Justice system

The Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ) experienced a major setback in court further minimizing its representative status as the religious association of all Muslims, as was the case with the Islam Act of 1912 that was effective until the new Islam Act of 2015 was implemented. Pupils who take religious classes in public schools are graded not in the course “Islam” as it used to be, but in the course “IGGÖ.” The Ministry of Education introduced this change two years ago. Following a complaint by the IGGÖ, the Constitutional Court rejected the appeal as inadmissible.⁹⁷

The data protection authority ruled that the publication of locations and information about Islamic associations and mosques on the “Islam Map” of the Documentation Center Political Islam in 2021 did not violate the right to secrecy or the right to information, as the Muslim Youth of Austria (MJÖ) had argued. According to the authority, academic freedom and freedom of opinion weigh more heavily in this case than the secrecy of personal data. The so-called Islam Map had stirred controversy after publishing the locations of more than 600 Islamic associations and mosques in Austria. The chairman of the MJÖ announced the intention to appeal against the decision.⁹⁸

95. Seeh, Manfred (2022), “Muslimbrüder-Konnex? – ‘Erfunden!’”, Die Presse, 20.09.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: <https://www.diepresse.com/6192409/muslimbrueder-konnex-erfunden>

96. Bonavida, Iris (2022), “Norbert Hofer: ‘Zuwanderung ist wie das Salz in der Suppe’”, Profil, 22.11.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: <https://www.profil.at/norbert-hofer-zuwanderung-ist-wie-das-salz-in-der-suppe/402230742>

97. Budin, Christoph (2022), “Religionsnote: IGGÖ statt Islam im Zeugnis bleibt”, Krone, 01.01.2022, retrieved October 20, 2022 from: <https://www.krone.at/2594107>

98. APA (2022), “Datenschutzbehörde weist Beschwerde der Muslimischen Jugend wegen ‘Islamlandkarte’ zurück”, Der Standard, 11.02.2022, retrieved October 23, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000133267451/datenschutzbehoerde-weist-beschwerde-der-muslimischen-jugend-wegen-islamlandkarte-zurueck?ref=article>

In 2022, Osama Abu El Hosna was included as a suspect in terrorism as part of Operation Luxor. He had become famous as a brave hero for saving the life of a police officer on the night of November 2, 2020, when an ISIS-sympathizer killed four people and wounded more than 20. The Palestine-born El Hosna was included in Operation Luxor for participating in an aid organization.⁹⁹ Later in 2022, his case was closed, as was the case with nearly 30 others.

Two “experts,” Heiko Heinisch and Nina Scholz,¹⁰⁰ whose “expert” assessment served the legitimization of the infamous Operation Luxor, were dismissed following a wave of appeals.¹⁰¹ Given the centrality of this “expertise,” this was a huge setback for the state prosecutor, as the media reported.¹⁰² Following this, the state prosecutor appointed the German scholar Guido Steinberg, who had been an advisor on international terrorism to the German Federal Chancellery (2002-2005) and now serves the think tank German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). Many victims of Operation Luxor appealed against his nomination due to his personal judgements regarding Operation Luxor.¹⁰³

In 2021, the daily *Presse* revealed that there were internal frictions regarding Operation Luxor within the intelligence service, then still operating under the name “Office for the Protection of the Constitution” (BVT). Some BVT officials considered the operation to be politically motivated and hesitated to “even investigate because the suspicion was so weak. Later, even superiors were reported for this reason, and the Federal Office for Combating Corruption took up the accusations.”¹⁰⁴ The outcome of this investigation is kept secret. Also, the defendants of Operation Luxor were denied any access to these files.

In 2022, the Regional Court of Graz (Landesgericht Graz) argued in a decision to uphold the investigation against the author of this report. According to the court, my “activities in the preparation of the so-called Islamophobia Report and activity with the Bridge Initiative at Georgetown University are intended to disseminate the fighting term ‘Islamophobia’ with the goal of preventing any critical engagement with Islam as a religion [...] in order to establish an Islamic state [...]”¹⁰⁵ By Jan-

99. Krammer, Miriam (2022), “‘Held der Terrornacht’ steht selbst unter Verdacht”, *Krone*, 18.02.2022, retrieved October 27, 2022 from: <https://www.krone.at/2630727>

100. Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Heiko Heinisch,” 3 Mar 2021, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-heiko-heinisch/>

101. Marchart, Michael Jan (2022), “Gutachter in umstrittener Operation Luxor wegen Anscheins der Befangenheit enthoben”, *Der Standard*, 27.06.2022, retrieved October 29, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000136929321/gutachter-in-umstrittener-operation-luxor-wegen-befangenheit-enthoben>

102. Seeh, Manfred (2022), “Nach Anti-Terror-Razzia nun fix: Neues Gutachten wird erstellt”, *Die Presse*, 27.06.2022, retrieved October 29, 2022 from: <https://www.diepresse.com/6158002/nach-anti-terror-razzia-nun-fix-neues-gutachten-wird-erstellt>

103. 16 St 52/2.9t, ON 2388

104. Thalhammer, Anna (2022), “Operation Luxor: Ermittlungen zerbröseln”, *Die Presse*, 29 June 2022, <https://www.diepresse.com/6158636/operation-luxor-ermittlungen-zerbroeseln>

105. Landesgericht Graz, 22 HR 44/20x, 6 Apr 2022, 2.

uary 2023, I was acquitted of all allegations of terrorism and the case was closed, following a final decision of the Appellate Court (Oberlandesgericht Graz), which argued that “participation in social discourse - even when using terms such as ‘anti-Muslim racism’ [...] the court of appeal cannot recognize any indication of a terrorist or anti-state tendency, membership of a terrorist or anti-state association or propaganda for such associations and their terrorist activities.”¹⁰⁶ This ended the criminalization of critical Islamophobia studies as part of Operation Luxor targeting me as a critic of the Austrian government’s discriminatory politics towards Muslims.

According to the Constitutional Court, an ad published by the far-right populist FPÖ featuring “Ali” and “Mustafa” from 2018 was discriminatory. The court ruled that the video was “primarily aimed at making sweeping accusations of socially harmful behavior against a group of ‘foreign people’.”¹⁰⁷

A landmark decision was made by the Viennese Administration Court regarding the closing of a mosque that is not related to the Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ). The mosque was allegedly radicalizing the perpetrator of November 2, 2020.¹⁰⁸ The decision is relevant regarding the highly criticized Islam Act of 2015,¹⁰⁹ as it rules that a common prayer room can be used by a congregation of Muslims, especially since it is only open to members of the respective association. The decision stated that “the authorities should have considered less severe means to put an end to the presumed ‘grievances.’ Another evaluation would have to lead then also to the dissolution of the color-carrying, Catholic student fraternities of Austria, as these gather around the catholic religion.”¹¹⁰

A court ruled that Ahmed Morad, an Arab immigrant who recently arrived in Austria and works as a freelance journalist, had to publicly announce that his as-

106. Oberlandesgericht Graz, 8 Bs 141/22d, 4 Jan 2023, 8. On a discussion of how this conspiracy theory could become so dominant, see: Hafez, Farid (2023), “How Austria made the study of Islamophobia a crime,” MEE, 17 Jan 2023, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/austria-islamophobia-study-crime-made-how> For a more detailed analysis, see (forthcoming): Hafez, Farid (2023), *Criminalising Critical Scholarship: Austria’s Intelligence Service and Islamophobia Studies*, in: *Disentangling Jihad, Political Violence, and Media*, edited by Simone Pfeifer, Robert Dörre and Christoph Günther (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 135-159.

107. Der Standard (2022), “Verfassungsgerichtshof: ‘Ali-Video’ von FPÖ TV war diskriminierend und gesetzwidrig”, Der Standard, 22.07.2022, retrieved October 27, 2022 from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000137677647/verfassungsgerichtshof-ali-video-von-fpoe-tv-war-diskriminierend-und-gesetzwidrig>

108. Landesverwaltungsgerichte (LVwG) (2022), “Entscheidungstext VGW-103/048/6496/2021”, Ris.gv.at, Dokument 30.08.2022, retrieved October 29, 2022 from: https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/JudikaturEntscheidung.wxe?Abfrage=Lvwg&Dokumentnummer=LVWGT_WI_20220304_VGW_103_048_6496_2021_00

109. Dautovic, Rijad and Farid Hafez “Institutionalising Islam in Contemporary Austria: A Comparative Analysis of the Austrian Islam Act of 2015 and Austrian Religion Acts with Special Emphasis on the Israelite Act of 2012”, *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, Volume 8, Issue 1, February 2019, 28–50 <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojlr/rwy013>; Hafez, Farid “Muslim Protest against Austria’s Islam law. An Analysis of Austrian Muslim’s Protest against the 2015 Islam Law”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 2017, Vol. 37, Iss. 3, 2017, 267-283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2017.1379693>

110. Ibid.

sertion that a Muslim youth organization is controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood was false.¹¹¹

Internet

The internet was primarily used by far-right politicians to spread their anti-Muslim claims.



Figure 2: Instagram post by far-right FPÖ leader of Vienna, Dominik Nepp. **Source:** Dominik Nepp, Instagram Post, 15 Nov 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck_efczsEnA/

Following a meeting with the French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, far-right leader of the Viennese FPÖ, Dominik Nepp, shared a photo with another party member and Le Pen, that read, “Vienna, just like Paris, is affected by a massive onslaught

111. Ahmed Morad, Facebook, 23 Oct 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/amdhr/posts/pfbid02dPxWs67oZG7wqq-jGeco2fiDBKB7JLJux1cKCscZAMUTSQMTv3Nw4KgKfqwJZpvfl>

of social migrants from Africa and the Arab region. Considering the dramatic situation in which Europe currently finds itself, a strong bulwark against social migration forced by left-wing parties is needed!”¹¹²

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

A central figure in the institutionalization of Islamophobia in Austria, Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP), organized the second iteration of the Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration. She invited several politicians on December 5, 2022 including Sofia Voultepsi, deputy minister of migration and asylum in Greece; Jean Mafart, director of European and international affairs at the French Ministry of the Interior; and Ilkka Salmi, EU counter-terrorism coordinator.¹¹³ A total of eleven countries participated including, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Norway, and Greece,¹¹⁴ and approximately 150 people.¹¹⁵ The Documentation Center also participated in a discussion titled “A New Era in International Relations and Security Cooperation” at the International Security Forum Bonn 2022 organized by the Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies (CASSIS) at the University of Bonn, Germany on September 29 - October 2. Representatives of the center traveled to Paris, London, and Copenhagen and organized a conference on June 29 and 30 on “Islamism after the Arab Spring.” The center’s director is quoted as saying, “With our activities and publications, we are doing fundamental pioneering work in the scientific investigation of religiously motivated political extremism within Europe. The focus is on political Islam, where the work of the Documentation Center can also be groundbreaking for other states.”¹¹⁶

In early 2022, former chancellor and champion of institutionalized Islamophobia Sebastian Kurz, who was forced to resign after being named as a suspect in a corruption probe, started working as a global strategist for Thiel Capital named after the billionaire venture capitalist Peter Thiel,¹¹⁷ who besides establishing SK Management GmbH is also a strong supporter of Donald Trump. In January 2022, in a dis-

112. Dominik Nepp, Instagram Post, 15 Nov 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck_efczEnA/

113. Joana Deus Pereira, Tweet, 5 Dec 2022, <https://twitter.com/JoanaDeusPereir/status/1599713702428561408/photo/2>

114. Redaktion, “Raab veranstaltet europäische Konferenz gegen Extremismus,” *Der Standard*, 3 Dec 2022, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000141476327/raab-veranstaltet-europaeische-konferenz-gegen-extremismus>

115. APA, “Raab veranstaltet in Wien Konferenz gegen Extremismus,” Vienna online, 4 Dec 2022, <https://www.vienna.at/raab-veranstaltet-in-wien-konferenz-gegen-extremismus/7780819>

116. Dokumentationsstelle (2022), “Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam setzt auf europäische Zusammenarbeit”, OTS, 05.10.2022, retrieved October 30, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20221005_OTS0109/dokumentationsstelle-politischer-islam-setzt-auf-europaeische-zusammenarbeit

117. Reuters, Austria’s ex-chancellor Kurz to work for Thiel Capital – reports, 30 Dec 2021, www.reuters.com/markets/europe/austrias-ex-chancellor-kurz-work-thiel-capital-reports-2021-12-30/

graceful move, Kurz was appointed co-chairman of the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR),¹¹⁸ a non-governmental organization that is not related to the European Council.

Several people who have supported Sebastian Kurz's anti-Muslim policies in the past have served as witnesses in the infamous Operation Luxor and supported the second "anonymous tipster" in his defense following litigations by defendants of Operation Luxor. Amongst them were Ednan Aslan,¹¹⁹ Mouhanad Khorchide,¹²⁰ and former president of the Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ) Ibrahim Olgun,¹²¹ who had originally commanded the closing of several mosques in 2018,¹²² a move that was presented by the far-right government as a huge success, but was rescinded by the Viennese Court of Administration.¹²³

A known Islamophobe author published a book on antisemitism in Muslim and Arab countries, warning that antisemites would march through the streets of Europe.¹²⁴

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In February, the Austrian musician IZRAA, whose family was affected by Operation Luxor,¹²⁵ won the price for the best FM4 protest song for her song "November 9," which is about Operation Luxor.¹²⁶

The Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus presented its annual report on 2021, revealing 1,061 documented cases, 725 on the internet. Based on the republication of the "Islam Map" by the Documentation Center Political Islam, several places that were mentioned in the map had become the focus of hate speech. Following 31 cases of femi-

118. Reuters, Ex-Austria Chancellor Kurz made co-chairman of anti-racism group, 9 Jan 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ex-austria-chancellor-kurz-made-co-chairman-anti-racism-group-2022-01-09/>

119. 16 St 52/2.9t, ON 2067; On Aslan, see: Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Ednan Aslan, 28 Nov 2022, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-ednan-aslan/>

120. Bridge Initiative Team, Factsheet: Mouhanad Khorchide, 15 Mar 2021, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-mouhanad-khorchide/>

121. 16 St 52/2.9t, ON 2201.

122. Verwaltungsgericht Wien, GZ: VGW-101/V/014/11867/2018-5, 11 Feb 2019, 4-5.

123. Hafez, Farid (2019), Islamophobia in Austria. National Report 2018, in: Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.) *European Islamophobia Report 2018* (Istanbul: SETA), pp. 87-126, 110.

124. ILMÖ (2022), "Dr. Amer Albayati - Neues Buch: "Antisemitismus in den islamischen und arabischen Ländern bis Europa", OTS, 19.09.2022, retrieved December 22, 2022 from: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220919_OTS0099/dr-amer-albayati-neues-buch-antisemitismus-in-den-islamischen-und-arabischen-laendern-bis-europa

125. Redaktion, "IZRAA gewinnt den FM4 Protestsongcontest 2022," FM4, 12 Feb 2022, <https://fm4.orf.at/stories/3021927/>

126. Hasenbichler, Lisa (2022), Interview mit Rapperin IZRAA: Operation Luxor sollte Muslime kriminalisieren, 14 Aug 2022, www.linkswende.org/interview-mit-rapperin-izraa-operation-luxor-sollte-muslime-kriminalisieren/

cide of which seven were committed by men that were said to be Muslims, the cases of anti-Muslim commentaries regarding Muslim men also increased.¹²⁷ Since nearly 70 percent of all online hate speech cases were committed by politicians, Ümmü Selime Türe from the NGO Dokustelle called to hold politicians accountable by lifting their immunity for “racist statements made in their professional capacity.”¹²⁸

ZARA included in its annual racism report a coverage of Operation Luxor as a manifestation of anti-Muslim racism.¹²⁹ In November 2022, ZARA organized a panel discussion with SOS Mitmensch featuring as panelists criminal sociologist Reinhard Kreissl, political scientist Benjamin Opratko, lawyer Leonhard Kregcjk, ACT-P representative Meysara Majdoub, and myself.¹³⁰

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Since the resignation of Sebastian Kurz as chancellor and his withdrawal from politics, various policies such as the hijab ban have not been continued. Meanwhile, the most brutal expression of institutionalized anti-Muslim policies, Operation Luxor, has suffered serious setbacks. While it declared unlawful in mid-2021 by the Appellate Court, the Higher Court of Graz, by early 2023, the cases against more than 30 defendants were dropped. This has led to more critical coverage of this infamous police operation, while most yellow press outlets have been quite silent on the state’s disproportionate violence against Muslim civil society and critics of Sebastian Kurz’s policies, especially when compared with the initial reproduction of the state’s propaganda on November 9, 2020. Still, several important institutions reproducing knowledge supporting suspicion against organized Muslims remain. Hence, I can only reiterate last year’s recommendations:

- The Documentation Center for Political Islam must be abolished.
- The Documentation Center Political Islam’s project “Islam Map” must be abolished.
- The Islam Act must be legally contested.
- The organized anti-Muslim network must be uncovered, especially those involved in the Documentation Center for Political Islam and the raid of November 9, 2020.

127. Naz Küçüktekin, Rassismus gegen Muslime: Höhepunkt nach der “Islamlandkarte”, Kurier, 2 June 2022, <https://kurier.at/mehr-platz/rassismus-gegen-muslime-hoehpunkt-nach-der-islamlandkarte/402029696>

128. APA (2022), “1061 gemeldete Fälle von antimuslimischen Rassismus im Jahr 2021”, Die Presse, 02.06.2022, retrieved October 28, 2022 from: <https://www.diepresse.com/6147886/1061-gemeldete-faelle-von-antimuslimischen-rassismus-im-jahr-2021>

129. ZARA, “Racism report 2021. Analysis of racist attacks and structures in Austria,” March 2022 edition, https://assets.zara.or.at/media/rassismusreport/ZARA_Rassismus_Report_2021_engl.pdf

130. Podiumsdiskussion Operation Luxor SOS Mitmensch ZARA, 29 Nov 2022, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsQ-JeeiBSnA

- 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.
- Muslim civil society must be empowered with tools to combat Islamophobia, especially in the creation of a consciousness towards the illegality of hate crimes.
- Educational institutions and stakeholders must work towards creating an alternative narrative of Muslims in Austria which will work to dispel the widely accepted negative image of Islam.

Chronology

- **28 January:** A secret five-page-long supplementary paper to the 2017 coalition agreement between the ÖVP and the FPÖ that included a headscarf ban was leaked.
- **30 January:** A secret supplementary paper to the 2020 coalition agreement between the ÖVP and the Greens that included a headscarf ban for female teachers to be introduced by way of decree was leaked.
- **12 February:** Rap artist IZRAA won the prize for the best FM4 protest song for her song “November 9,” which is about Operation Luxor.
- **6 April:** The Regional Court of Graz upheld the investigation for terrorism charges in the Operation Luxor against the author of this report arguing that working on Islamophobia serves the establishment of an Islamic state; the decision was rescinded by the Higher Court of Graz in January 2023.
- **27 June:** Heiko Heinisch and Nina Scholz were removed as “experts” drafting opinions for the infamous racist Operation Luxor.
- **7 November:** Minister Susanne Raab (ÖVP) announced the increase of the annual budget of the Documentation Center Political Islam to 1,700,000 Euro.
- **5 December:** Minister Susanne Raab invited participants from ten countries including Ilkka Salmi, EU counter-terrorism coordinator, to the Documentation Center for Political Islam’s “Vienna Forum on Countering Segregation and Extremism in the Context of Integration.”

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
BELGIUM
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

AMINA SMITS

The Author

Amina Smits is a PhD candidate at the Department of History at Istanbul Medeniyet University. She graduated from the Institute of Alliance of Civilizations at Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation, University in Istanbul. Her thesis was a critique of Edward Said's Orientalism in light of Ottoman-European relations. Born and raised in Belgium, she graduated from the Department of Islamic and Arabic Studies, Faculty of Arts at KU Leuven. Smits's research focuses on Orientalism, Occidentalism, Islamophobia, postcolonial studies, Ottoman-European relations, Islamic religious education in non-Islamic countries, and the sociology of religion. Besides her native Dutch, she speaks Turkish and English at a native level, and reads French and Arabic. Email: aminasmits@gmail.com

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Executive Summary

This current report on Islamophobia in Belgium in 2022 shows a clear continuation of increasing polarization within the country on the matter of Islam. As is constitutive of Islamophobia, legislation regarding anything that has even the slightest Islamic coloring is pulled under a microscope, analyzed, and often labeled as being anti-democratic, not belonging to Western democracy, or at best not “neutral” enough. While this tendency can be seen in several different intrapersonal fields, it is particularly present in the field of education and in the job market. Unfortunately, as the most sensitive topic regarding Islam is the hijab, it is mostly Muslim women with a hijab who are excluded from several areas of society or are demotivated to pursue a certain career or education. Even those who are not yet wearing a headscarf but are considering doing so, are forced to choose between their religious values and a career. While the Belgian government declares to adhere to the strict separation of church and state, it seems that especially during the last couple of years, the *mosque* is becoming less and less considered as a part of this separation in that the state increasingly intervenes in how the Muslim community chooses to arrange and organize its religious affairs. A clear example of this is Minister of Justice Vincent Van Quickenborne’s pressure on the head imam of the Great Mosque of Brussels to resign if he did not wish to risk losing government funding.

While the current government is mainly socialist and liberal, the rightist and extreme rightist parties NV&A and Vlaams Belang have managed to increase their influence and supporters, with NV&A even holding important positions such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Justice. Especially in these two ministries Islamophobic battles are raging, with Education Minister Weyts pushing back any possible Islamic presence and/or influence within educational spheres and Van Quickenborne wishing to completely rebuild the Muslim Executive, which used to be the official Muslim interlocutor of the Belgian government up until this year. In a live interview, Van Quickenborne stated that he does not consider the Muslim Executive to be the government’s interlocutors anymore and while still in existence, he wishes to completely cut government funding to it, building a new one instead.

Samenvatting

Dit huidige rapport over Islamofobie in België in 2022 indiceert een duidelijke continuatie van de steeds toenemende polarisatie in het land wat betreft de Islam. Zoals typerend is voor Islamofobie, wordt wetgeving omtrent alles wat ook maar een Islamitisch tintje heeft onder een microscoop getrokken, geanalyseerd en vaak gelabeld als zijnde anti-democratisch, niet thuishorende in een Westerse democratie of op zijn best als niet “neutraal” genoeg. Hoewel deze tendens kan teruggevonden worden in zowat alle interpersoonlijke domeinen, is deze vooral aanwezig in de onderwijssector en op de arbeidsmarkt. Jammer genoeg, daar het meest gevoelige onderwerp omtrent Islam de hoofddoek is, zijn het vooral Moslim vrouwen met een hoofddoek die uitgesloten worden op verscheidene niveaus van de samenleving of gedemotiveerd worden op een bepaalde opleiding of carrière achterna te gaan. Zelfs diegenen die nog niet een hoofddoek dragen maar dit overwegen te doen, worden gedwongen een moeilijke keuze te maken tussen hun religieuze waardes of een carrière. Hoewel de Belgische overheid beweert zich strikt aan de scheiding tussen kerk en staat te houden, lijkt het er echter op dat vooral gedurende de voorbije paar jaar, de *moskee* steeds minder en minder beschouwd wordt als een deel van deze scheiding in de hoedanigheid dat de overheid zich mengt in hoe de Moslimgemeenschap haar religieuze affaires kiest te regelen en organiseren. Een duidelijk voorbeeld hiervan is de druk die Minister van Justitie Van Quickenborne uitoefende op de hoofdimam van de Grote Moskee in Brussel om zijn ontslag in te dienen indien hij niet wou dat de overheid de geldkraan toedraaide voor de moskee. Hoewel de huidige overheid voornamelijk socialist en liberaal is, hebben rechtste en extreem rechtste partijen NV&A en Vlaams Belang hun invloed en aantal volgelingen opvallend weten te vergroten, waarbij NV&A zelfs belangrijke ministersposities krijgt te bekleden zoals o.a. Minister van Onderwijs (Weyts) en Minister van Justitie (Van Quickenborne). Het is net vooral in deze twee ministeries dat het islamofob gevecht raast waarbij Minister Weyts elke potentiële Islamitische invloed en/of aanwezigheid binnen de educatieve sfeer wenst te onderdrukken en Van Quickenborne die wenst de Moslimexecutieve volledig van nul af te herbouwen. Deze laatste deelde mee de Moslimexecutieven niet langer als de spreekbuis voor de overheid beschouwde en dat hij, hoewel ze nog bestaat, de subsidies van Moslimexecutieve volledig wilde schrappen en een nieuwe in de plaats wilde opbouwen.

Country Profile EIR 2022

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: De Croo government, a coalition formed in 2020 led by Alexander de Croo (Open VLD) after several other failed coalitions. The member parties are Open VLD (Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats), MR (Reformative Movement, francophone), Vooruit (Forward, Flemish), PS (Socialist Party, francophone), CD&V (Christian Democratic and Flemish), Ecolo (Green party, francophone) and Groen (Ecolo's Flemish counterpart)

Opposition Parties: NV-A (New Flemish Alliance), Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest), cdH (Human Democratic Center), DeFI (Democratic Federalist and Independent, francophone) and PVDA-PTB (Workers' Party of Belgium)

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 (losing 8 seats), PS 20 seats, VB 18 seats (gaining 15), MR 14 seats, and Ecolo 13 seats

Total Population: 11,584,008 (January 2022)¹

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 Liege (Wallonia).

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism). Christianity (Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodox and Anglican Churches), Islam and Judaism are officially recognized religions.

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Collective for Countering Islamophobia in Belgium (Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique, CCIB/Collectief Tegen Islamofobie in Belgie, 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 color, nationality, ancestry, and ethnic origin), disability-based discrimination, philosophical/religious discrimination, sexual orientation, age, wealth,

1. Number released by Belgium's statistics office Statbel on June 16, 2022: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/structure-population>

civil status, political beliefs, trade union membership, health, physical/genetic characteristics, birth, and social background.

Major Religions (% of Population): Approx. 60% Christianity, 31% no religion, 6% Islam, 2% other

Muslim Population (% of Population): Approx. 870,000 (6% of Belgian population)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: The Muslim Executive of Belgium (Executif des Musulmans de Belgique/Executief van de Moslims van België, EMB), BOEH! (Baas Over Eigen Hoofd! - Boss of My Own Head!), Mahara, Collective for Countering Islamophobia in Belgium (Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique, CCIB/Collectief Tegen Islamofobie in België, CTIB)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Collective for Countering Islamophobia in Belgium (Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique, CCIB/Collectief Tegen Islamofobie in België, CTIB), Unia, European Network against Racism (ENAR), Actiris

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

Far-Right Movements: Katholiek Vlaams Hoogstudentenverbond (Catholic Flemish Students' Union), Nationalistische Studentenvereniging (Nationalistic Studentorganisation), Schild en Vrienden (Shield and Friends), Voorpost (Outpost, Picket)

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No national ban; there is a regional ban in the Wallonian town of Verviers and individual school bans which include almost all of the Flemish schools.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** Slaughter without sedation is completely banned by law in Flanders since January 2019 and in Wallonia since September 2019.
- **Minaret Ban:** No, but the building of (new) mosques is often delayed, prohibited, or cancelled.
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** In place since 1 June 2011. Those found wearing the burka in public spaces are fined 15 to 25 euros and risk imprisonment of up to seven days.
- **Prayer Ban:** No, it depends on a 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

Discussions on Islam and its place in Belgium have been going on for decades now. Especially in the northern part, Flanders, Islam's nature and whether it is compatible or can be adjusted to Western, and in particular, Flemish culture is much debated and divides the country in two. This polarization along with the debates that come with it is ever growing with the gap between the two different poles widening every day. In this aspect, 2022 was no different. Many of the topics that have been discussed many times, were debated once more, yet rendering no definite, clear solutions or policy on Islam and Muslims' place in Belgian society. While one may argue that these debates are hardly Islamophobic as they do not (directly) wish to remove Islam from Belgian lands, it is important to realize that Islam has been present in Belgium for more than 50 years, and the Muslims whose fate and lives are defined by these discussions and legislation regarding Islam, especially the younger ones who are about to take an active role in society, are not "new" migrants – Muslims have been in the country for three generations now.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In March 2022, several hate letters were sent to different mosques across Flanders and Brussels. The letters featured a cartoon drawing of the Prophet Muhammad holding a cleaver. According to the newspaper *La Dernière Heure* the letters had citations from the Qur'an that were taken out of context purposefully and were said to incite hatred, war, and the extermination of non-Muslims. The newspaper also reported that similar letters had been circulating for the past week, containing insults towards the Prophet and Islam, the latter being called a religion of terror and hypocrisy. The letters are said to have been posted in Ghent and the addresses written in Flemish. President of the Muslim Executive Mehmet Üstün urged the affected parties to file a complaint. At least two Brussels mosques (Attadamoune Mosque in Molenbeek and Merkez Camii in Anderlecht) filed a complaint with the public prosecutor's office. Mayor of Molenbeek Catherine Moureaux (PS, Socialist Party) was informed and immediately contacted the federal police.²

Unia, an independent public institution fighting discrimination and promoting equal rights, published its yearly report on statistics regarding all the cases of discrimination that have been filed to the organisation. for the year 2021. The report divides all of these files according to their respective fields. On the matter of discrimination based

2. "Haatbrieven gestuurd naar verschillende moskeeën in Vlaanderen en Brussel", *De Standaard*, March 24, 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20220324_94164597, (Access date 29/12/2022).

on religion or philosophical beliefs 243 files were opened, making up 8.8% of all files. When subcategorizing these religion-based discrimination cases according to “outlawed behavior” such as discrimination (exclusion, not being given equal chanced, etc.), hate speech, and hate crimes (almost all of them being related to Islam), we see that more than half of the cases are about discrimination (52.8%) followed by hate speech forming about one-third of the cases (32.4%) and hate crimes about a seventh (14.9%).

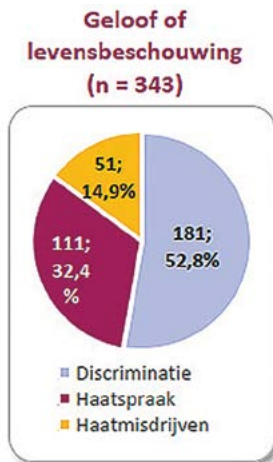


Figure 1: Statistics on files on discrimination opened by Unia regarding religion make up about 8,8% of all complaints filed to the organisations, these files on religion-based discrimination can subdivided into three subcategories (top to bottom): discrimination (exclusion etc.), hate speech, hate crimes. **Source:** https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/Cijfersverslag_2021_Unia_NL_def.pdf

These three categories are again subdivided into other groups based on the type of “attack” victims faced with the subcategory “incitement to hate, discrimination or violence” (87.78%) making up the vast majority of hate speech, and other subcategories being verbal and non-verbal insults, threats, etc. When it comes to hate crimes, “intimidation/bullying” is the biggest issue reported by victims as it is involved in a whopping 76.47% of all hate crimes cases. Other files are about physical attacks, graffiti and damaging of property, misuse of authority, etc.³

At the end of December 2022, the Collective for Countering Islamophobia in Belgium (Collectif Contre l’Islamophobie en Belgique, CCIB/Collectief Tegen Islamofobie in Belgie, CTIB), Belgium’s main organization tracking and fighting Islamophobia, released its annual report on data collection regarding Islamophobic events. The CCIB works with the support of specialists to produce figures that objectify the reality of Islamophobia in Belgium, in partnership with civil society actors and public institutions. While the organization itself states that these figures do not represent the full reality of Islamophobia in Belgium, but rather the tip of the iceberg, however partial, it a useful tool in mapping reports made to the CCIB during 2021. Between 1 January and 31 December 2021, out of the total of 118 requests (REQ), 72 files were reported as Islamophobic incidents. After analysis, they were distributed as fol-

3. “Cijfersverslag 2021”, UNIA, August 23, 2022, https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/Cijfersverslag_2021_Unia_NL_def.pdf, (Access date 28/12/2022).

lows: 96 alerts (SIGN - actual complaints on discrimination), 72 files (DOS - complaints that were filed as legit complaints), and 22 requests for information (DDI - asking if it counts as discrimination/islamophobia/etc.) on potentially Islamophobic situations where a request for an opinion from the CCIB was sought (for a specific situation or an abstract question).

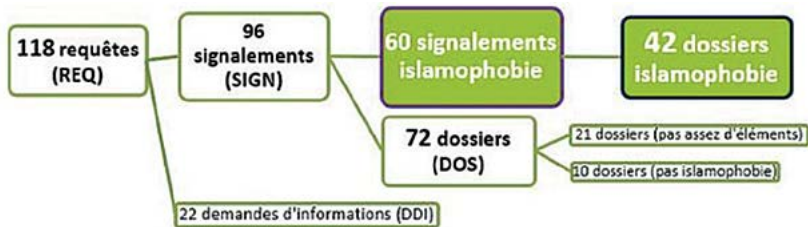


Figure 2: Breakdown of the 118 requests received by the CCIB in 2021 into 96 alerts, 72 cases and 42 Islamophobic cases. **Source:** <https://ccib-ctib.be/index.php/2022/12/24/rapports-chiffres-2021-un-retour-a-la-normale-apres-le-deconfinement/>

In 2021, based on the analysis of victims reported in the 42 Islamophobia cases, 9 out of 10 victims are women, which is recurrent and confirms the particularly gendered nature of Islamophobic acts reported to the CIIB (note: there may be several victims in the same case). The 42 Islamophobia cases are detailed as follows: 35 Islamophobic cases (83%) are in breach of anti-discrimination legislation, including 24 cases for discrimination (57%); 6 cases are hate crimes (14%); 3 cases of incitement to hatred (7%); 2 cases of harassment (5%); 5 cases (12%) are related to hate speech, which, although negative, denigrating and/or stigmatizing, remain within the scope of freedom of expression; 2 cases (5%) are not in violation of anti-discrimination legislation. Some examples of these Islamophobic cases listed in the report are as following:

“All foreigners must be eliminated one by one,” “All Moroccans, Turks are less than nothing ...[they are] human beings with zoophilic practices.” - a letter with death threats and racist remarks sent to a mosque

“Islam is a religion of hatred, resentment, source of death, the religion curses human beings, Muslims are unproductive and retarded.” - Islamophobic hate speech in a high school history class

Physical assault by a security guard preventing a man with his young daughter from entering a supermarket on the pretext of non-compliance with health regulations in force.

When ranking the top five fields where Islamophobia occurred in 2021, we find the “Work-Employment” and “Education/Training” at the top of the list. These two topics will be dealt with in-depth throughout the next two sections.⁴

4. “Rapport Chiffres 2021”, *Le Collectif pour l’Inclusion et contre l’Islamophobie en Belgique*, 24 December 2022, <https://ccib-ctib.be/index.php/2022/12/24/rapports-chiffres-2021-un-retour-a-la-normale-apres-le-deconfinement/>, access date: 30/12/2022.

Employment

According to the joint report “Job Market and Origin - 2022 Socio-economic Monitoring” by Unia and Federale Overheidsdienst Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg (Federal Public Service Employment, Labor and Social Dialogue), the employment rate of people with a non-EU nationality in Belgium is the lowest in all of the European Union, with the difference between them and the employment rate of Belgian nationals being the highest in all EU countries. While these numbers only apply to official nationality and do not consider origins or migration background, the report stresses that these monitoring reports have shown before that later generations also suffer from the same problem. It also adds that there is a large discrepancy not only in quantity, but in *quality* as well. People of foreign/migrant origins often end up in worse jobs with lower status, lower wages, and less suited to their qualifications, to the point that they are overrepresented in the “secondary segment” of the job market and underrepresented in the primary segment. While there are exceptions, this primary segment, generally speaking, is much less accessible to people of foreign origins, even with equal diplomas. According to the report, the increasingly detailed image of the ethnostratification of the job market outlined in successive editions indicates the existence of structural and institutional discrimination as an explanatory factor of the inequality between Belgian natives and people of foreign backgrounds.

Furthermore, discrimination based on “taste” often takes place: employers, colleagues, or clients who do not wish to have employees of specific color or national origins. Past scientific research has indicated these forms of direct discrimination during recruitment into the labor market: when two CVs are the same, preference is given to people whose name suggests they are of Belgian origin, and people of foreign origin are invited less frequently to interviews. The organization Mycadis has also established evidence that in some sectors customers ask to exclude people of a specific background.⁵ The aforementioned report by Unia also seems to confirm the tendency of exclusion based on (suspected) religion and/or background. Most of Unia’s files opened in 2021 on religion are usually related to work (35%). These files are mostly on access to jobs and selection procedures (43.5%), while other topics include dress code and layoffs.⁶

In the report released by the CIIB mentioned in the previous chapter, further analysis of the Islamophobic cases shows that of the 73 cases, 29% regard employment.

5. “Arbeidsmarkt en Origine - 2022 Socio-Economische Monitoring”, Unia & Federale Overheidsdienst Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg, October 11, 2022, https://werk.belgie.be/sites/default/files/content/publications/NL/Socio-economische_monitoring_2022.pdf, (Access date 28/12/2022).

For more the report and factsheet, see the following: <http://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1470605> and <https://www.minderhedenforum.be/wat-zeggen-wij/tewerkstelling>

6. “Cijfersverslag 2021”, UNIA, August 23, 2022, https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/Cijfersverslag_2021_Unia_NL_def.pdf, (Access date 28/12/2022).

The cases processed by CIIB regarding Islamophobia within the job market vary from exclusion from this market to insults based on religion, and especially occur when the person affected wears a hijab. Some of the cases listed by the CIIB are found below.

Refusal to allow a public service employee to wear a headscarf in the municipality, despite the fact that she is not in contact with the public.

Denunciation of racist and Islamophobic comments in reaction to the appointment of a woman wearing a headscarf as Government Commissioner for Equality between Women and Men.

Discrimination in the hiring of a woman wearing a headscarf by a federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers.⁷

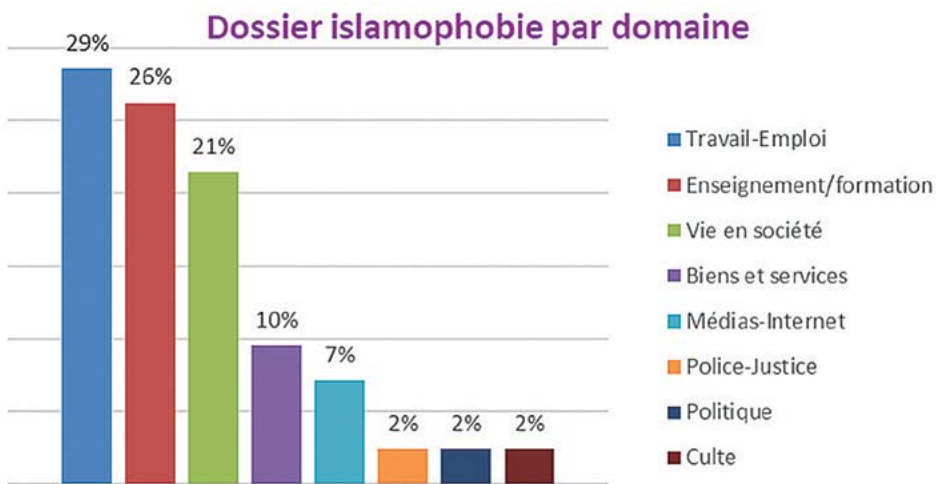


Figure 3: 73 cases on Islamophobia subdivided according to field (left to right): Work (29%), Education (26%), Life in society (21%), Products and services (10%), Media-internet (7%), Police-Justice (2%), Politics (2%), Worship (2%). **Source:** <https://ccib-ctib.be/index.php/2022/12/24/rapports-chiffres-2021-un-retour-a-la-normale-apres-le-deconfinement/>

Education

As can be seen in Figure 3, 26% of cases regarded as having an Islamophobic nature took place in the educational sphere. These Islamophobic events vary from students not being allowed to wear their hijab during classes or their internship to insults targeting their persons or Islam in general. Some examples of cases on Islamophobia in the educational field can be found below.

Ban on headgear for adult women wearing a headscarf at a high school in Brussels.

Prohibition of wearing a headscarf targeting a woman of legal age during her neuro-psychological training in a primary school.

Ban on head coverings for adult students wearing headscarves by a university in Brussels in the nursing and midwifery section.

7. "Rappor Chiffres 2021"

Beginning in June, a debate regarding Islamic schools lighted up once more within the Flemish Parliament. The trigger for this lively discussion was the file of Plura C, an Islamic faith-inspired school, wanting to open its doors in Genk in September of that year. “Plura C” is the new name of the previous Selam College, which in the past had applied for permission but was refused for allegedly having ties with Millî Görüs (National Vision), one of the leading Turkish diaspora organizations in Europe, responsible for the founding of many mosques, Islamic schools and other organisations. According to reports, there would be insufficient respect in the school for international children’s rights and the school could grow to become an “extremist vector” in Limburg education. After these negative reports, the school implemented some changes to its infrastructure and provided clearer documentation regarding the school’s funding to remove any unclarity. Despite this, the changes were still found insufficient by the Education Inspectorate, driving Minister of Education Ben Weyts (N-VA, New Flemish Alliance) to reject the school’s application for recognition in 2020. However, in 2022, the Council of State judged that the changes were not considered sufficiently enough, triggering a new investigation by the Inspectorate. Weyts stated that he was against separate Islamic schools, as he “cannot see how such a school can add to integration and a harmonious society.”⁸ Coalition parties CD&V and Open VLD, however, argued that this attitude opposes freedom of education. Opposition party Groen accused Weyts of treating different religious and philosophies in an unequal way.⁹ On 1 September, Weyts shared that Plura C would not be recognized by the Flemish government. According to the minister, who stated that he based his opinion on the Inspectorate’s report, the State Security Service, and CUTA (Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis), there is a risk that, what he labels the “conservative Islamic movement” Millî Görüs is behind the school’s funding. According to Weyts, Millî Görüs stands for a religious Islamic order and he does “not wish to expose young people to a project that is not in line with our democratic values. ... CUTA indicates that the most conservative wing within Millî Görüs is anti-European, anti-Western, and antisemitic.”¹⁰ Yet neither the minister nor CUTA shared the source of this information, which is even more striking when one takes into consideration that there are several schools in Flanders that are connected to the Gülenist a cult that is held accountable by many different countries for the failed coup attempt in Turkey July 15, 2016 along with many other crimes globally.

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8. “Partijen botsen stevig over islamscholen in Vlaanderen”, Knack, June 02, 2022, Knack, <https://www.knack.be/nieuws/belgie/onderwijs/partijen-botsen-stevig-over-islamscholen-in-vlaanderen/>, (Access date 28/12/2022).
 9. “Partijen botsen stevig over islamscholen in Vlaanderen”, Knack, June 02, 2022, Knack, <https://www.knack.be/nieuws/belgie/onderwijs/partijen-botsen-stevig-over-islamscholen-in-vlaanderen/>, (Access date 28/12/2022).
 10. “Minister Weyts weigert opnieuw erkenning islamitische school in Genk om banden met Milli Görüs”, Knack, September 01, 2022, VRT, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/09/01/minister-weyts-weigert-erkenning-islamitische-school-in-genk-om//>, (Access date 28/12/2022).

Conversely, according to the Inspectorate, the school meets all the basic conditions for recognition such as a decent building, cooperation with CLB (Centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding - Center for student guidance), etc.

Politics

In mid-September 2022, Federal Minister of Justice Vincent van Quickenborne (Open VLD, Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats) stated during an interview on the show “De Ochtend” on Radio 1 that he still plans on withdrawing the recognition of the Moslimexecutieve (EMB, Muslim Executive) in order to appoint a renewed leadership in the long run. According to Van Quickenborne, the board of the Muslim Executive, which has been receiving about 600.00 euros in subsidies yearly, has been dysfunctional for years now, adding that the official organ for the Muslim community shows no will to write a new story. He added that the Muslim Executive has turned into a conservative club of five men, and suffers from administrative mismanagement with no transparency and from foreign interference. He stated that the EMB currently is no longer an official interlocutor of the government. According to Van Quickenborne, there is now a “transition phase” during which the government still engages with local religious communities and will still appoint teachers and consultants for the Muslim community.¹¹ Van Quickenborne’s vendetta with the EMB goes back to 2020. In August 2022, the Brussels Court of First Instance ruled against the Belgian government as the latter had interfered with the activities of the Muslim Executive in an illegal manner by forcing Salah Echallaoui’s (then head of the Great Mosque of Brussels) resignation in December 2020. In September 2020, the minister of justice called to have all organs of the Muslim Executive replaced based on advice released by the State Security Service which allegedly saw signs of interference by Morocco and infiltration of three agents of the Moroccan intelligence service. Echallaoui caved in and handed in his resignation, but firmly denied any ties with foreign intelligence. He later decided to take matters to court, which ruled in his favor. According to the court, the State Security Service did not provide clear answers about where the allegations made against Echallaoui came from, hence they could only be considered anonymous tips and have no value as evidence. Furthermore, the court ruled that the statements made by Van Quickenborne about Echallaoui and his decision to make the concession of the Great Mosque dependent on his resignation were a disproportional infringement of the freedom of religion. Van Quickenborne reacted to this by saying that the freedom of religion is not absolute in Belgium, and that the government needs to interfere when there is maladministration and aims to take matters to appeal.¹²

11. Glen Van Muylem, “Van Quickenborne trekt erkenning Moslimexecutieve in”, De Standaard, September 15, 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20220915_92108051, (Access date 28/12/2022).

12. “Belgische staat veroordeeld voor inmenging Moslimexecutieve, Van Quickenborne gaat in beroep”, De Standaard, September 07, 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20220907_95724732, (Access date 28/12/2022).

By the end of 2021, Van Quickenborne had a new decree instated regarding the recognition of the Executive. This initiative was first taken by his predecessor Liesbeth Homans (NV-A) in 2017. The decree consisted of strict conditions for the Executive in order to be allowed to keep its recognition (and thus the subsidies). Some of these conditions included the registration of all donations above 1,000 euros and the exclusion of any foreign influence. Diyanet objected to these new measurements, seeing as almost all their mosques have imams from Turkey and are paid by the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, which would be made impossible by the new decree. Diyanet thus decided to take matters to the constitutional court. Minister of Internal Affairs Bart Somers (Open VLD) stated that this objection showed how important this decree was, adding, “Diyanet tries to keep the Flemish people in its grip by misusing religion. We expected opposition, but this is unheard of.”¹³

In October 2022, Filip Dewinter introduced his new book *Omvolking*, a word that derives from the German word “Umvolkung,” a term in Nazi ideology used to describe a process of replacing one group of people with another. The term implies the destruction of the culture and ideas of this very group and is similar to the idea of the “Great Replacement.” The Dutch translation of *omvolking* is still currently used by right-wing groups and political parties to refer to a general fear of “replacement” of a perceived “indigenous” people by a perceived “other” population. In order to promote his book, Dewinter organized several lectures at different universities and other venues. Yet, he was often met with hostility and accused of being fascist, his lectures being constantly interrupted and stopped because of the negative reactions he received. During one of his lectures, he was confronted with UGent philosopher Maarten Boudry, who stated, “If you truly were a representative of our civilization, you would know that it is universal. That everyone, whatever skin color, was welcome.” Boudry referred to Dewinter’s theory as a “blood-and-soil-ideology,” i.e., Nazism.¹⁴

Media

Another debate that is regularly ignited and enjoying vast coverage for months on end in both traditional media and social media is the debate on teaching with a headscarf, with 2022 being no exception. Despite the constant teacher shortage and the availability of young talent, public schools (GO! - Gemeenschapsonderwijs, the common abbreviation for Public Education) are not willing to make any changes in their policies regarding headscarves, nor are most political parties willing to make

13. “Diyanet naar Grondwettelijk Hof voor vernietiging van Vlaams decreet”, De Standaard, May 19, 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20220907_95724732, (Access date 28/12/2022).

14. Kelly van Droogenbroeck, “‘Geen fascistten in onze stad’: lezing Filip Dewinter aan UGent overstemd door betogers”, De Morgen, December 02, 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20220513_93953028, (Access date 28/12/2022).

a statement on this matter either, leaving it entirely to the schools' own initiative whether to allow teachers to wear a hijab when on school property or not. Socialist party Vooruit Chair Conner Rousseau states that he has no issues with teachers wearing headscarves in class, and that what matters is having a sufficient number of teachers rather than having students be without class for up to six hours per week. He added that the lack of teachers is what causes the decline of the quality of education, not the teacher wearing a headscarf, joining Groen (Green) in their desire to get rid of the headscarf ban. Luc Sels, rector of KU Leuven, a Catholic research university in Leuven, also requested the ban to be lifted due to the loss of talent caused by it. Flemish Minister of Education Weyts, however, immediately shared that he finds it perfectly defensible for a school not to want its teachers to wear any "ostentatious signs of religious beliefs." He stated, "Candidate-teachers who don't want to respect the school's decision seem to have a higher calling than teaching."¹⁵ Weyts is joined in his views by Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest). Other parties like CD&V (Christian Democratic and Flemish) and Open VLD (Flemish Liberal Democrats) perceive the headscarf matter as something to be decided by the schools rather than politics.

Around mid-October, a controversy developed on social media regarding a mosque in Lommel that arranged special swimming times for Muslim men and children only. The Alfurqan Mosque offered its members a yearly membership to a local public swimming pool, which they rent out twice a month so the male members and children can swim privately. The announcement, made on their social media accounts, however, caused anger amongst some people, driving the city council to ask the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men to see whether this activity is lawful or not.¹⁶ Later, the city of Lommel declared that they were not authorized to intervene as the sale of these memberships is for a private organization, thus the mosque was allowed to organize activities for its male members and children only.¹⁷

Justice System

At the beginning of February, the Antwerp court of appeal declared itself unauthorized to rule on a case against four members of the Flemish-nationalist movement Voorpost (Outpost) for protesting with a banner that stated "Stop Islamization" along with images of women in burka on 30 May 2020. According to the Ant-

15. Wim Winckelmans, "Hoofddoek voor de klas is zaak van de scholen", De Standaard, November 11, 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20221116_95168463, (Access date 28/12/2022).

16. Martijn Donné, "Moskee in Lommel huurt zwembad af voor leden, maar enkel mannen en kinderen mogen zwemmen", VRT, October 12, 2022, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/10/12/moskee-in-lommel-huurt-zwembad-af-voor-leden-maar-enkel-mannen/>, (Access date 28/12/2022).

17. Hilde Lieten, "Islamitische vzw mag zwembad in Lommel blijven afhuren voor activiteiten enkel voor mannen en kinderen", VRT, October 26, 2022, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/10/26/islamitische-vzw-mag-zwembad-in-lommel-blijven-afhuren-voor-acti/>, (Access date 28/12/2022).

werp court, this is a press crime directed against a religious conviction, which can only be ruled by the Superior Court. The prosecutor's office judged that the four were guilty of incitement to hatred or violence against the Muslim community. The Court of Mechelen joined the prosecutor in its opinion and sentenced them to six months in prison. Both parties were, however, not satisfied with the result and took matters to appeal. The Court of Appeal referred to the Superior Court, which is a rare occasion due to it being such an expensive, cumbersome, and time-consuming procedure.¹⁸

In October 2022, the European Court of Justice ruled over a case that had been brought before the francophone labour court in Brussels regarding a Muslim woman applying for a position as an intern who was rejected for having made clear during her initial interview that she was not willing to take off her hijab. The woman took matters to court as she was convinced, she was solely rejected because of her religious views and therefore that infringement of the anti-discrimination law had taken place. The Belgian court turned to the European Court on whether a ban on religious signs or apparel leads to direct discrimination based on religion. The European Court confirmed that an employer could ban the hijab when the neutrality policy is included in the work regulations and is being applied to all employees. The court, however, also added that there may be an indirect difference in treatment if the seemingly neutral obligation in fact causes people who adhere to a specific religion or conviction to be disadvantaged, which is something that needs to be investigated by the national judge. While the neutrality policy on its own can be a legitimate goal, it is not sufficient to justify different treatments, and the employer needs to prove that there is truly a need for it.¹⁹

In 2021, Moeders voor Moeders (Mothers for Mothers), a charity organization that provides mothers with small children aid, was sued by equal opportunities center Unia for not allowing women with headscarves in their communal areas. Unia found this rule to be discriminating to women who wear hijab, as they do not receive full access to the assistance offered in the day room (*dagzaal*). At first, the court agreed with Unia and ruled that this measure was discriminating. Moeders voor Moeders, however, appealed in 2022 and the judge ruled the opposite in November of that year. The court stated that as Moeders voor Moeders is a private organization not accessible to everyone, it is not at liberty to rule the organization as discriminating. Furthermore, it was ruled that Unia was not authorized to act against the organization as the social activities held by the latter do not fall under the scope of the an-

18. "Hof verklaart zich onbevoegd in zaal over voorpost spandoek stop islamisering", Knack, February 09, 2022, <https://www.knack.be/nieuws/hof-verklaart-zich-onbevoegd-in-zaak-over-voorpost-spandoek-stop-islamisering/>, (Access date 28/12/2022).

19. "Werkgever mag hoofddoek verbieden van Europees Hof van Justitie", De Standaard, 13 October 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20221013_93382406, (Access date 28/12/2022).

ti-discrimination law and the equal opportunities decree as the organization is considered a private one and these rules do not apply. Moeders voor Moeders' lawyers told the newspaper *De Standaard* that the ban is not only for headscarves but for all visible religious and political symbols "so that mothers in that communal area can meet each other in a neutral environment and in a safe way."²⁰ Els Keytsman, head of Unia, worries that this will leave the gates wide open for exclusion of random minority groups. She stated, "Here it's about women who find themselves in a vulnerable position and are being excluded from help and assistance because of their Islamic headscarves."²¹ Unia has yet to decide whether they will take matters to the Court of Cassation, Belgium's supreme court.²²

Internet

According to the yearly report on 2021 by CUTA (Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis), an independent Belgian centre of knowledge and expertise in charge of assessing the terrorist and extremist threat in Belgium and against Belgian citizens and interests abroad, right-wing extremism is on the rise. Inside and outside Europe, there have already been several attacks with a right-wing extremist signature. The increased activity and readiness for action of right-wing extremists, both online and offline, increased the potential danger in Belgium coming from right-wing extremism (as illustrated by the house raids in the summer of 2022), giving reasons to be cautious. According to the report, right-extremist perpetrators have a couple of common traits: they usually act alone, find themselves on the margins of organizations and parties, radicalize mostly online, and act without imposed instructions from others. Often, they carry personal grievances or have psychological problems. The report continues explaining how hate speech has increased significantly during the pandemic, especially online and on social media. The reason is that people often end up in an echo chamber where their vision is confirmed and reinforced, leading to increasing polarization. The report further illustrates how the virtual world plays an important role in the spreading of extremist right ideology, as social media allows right-wing extremists from all over the world to find one another. Rabid racism is linked to all kinds of conspiracy theories around *umvolkung* or an imminent race war, and is spread in a cunning way (often via memes). Especially youth seem to be exposed to such content and, thus, become more susceptible to this kind of discourse. The report concludes with saying that several attacks by lone actors abroad indicate the extent of receptiveness of specific vulnerable people.²³

20. "Moeders voor Moeders krijgt gelijk in zaak rond hoofddoekenverbod", *De Standaard*, 14 November 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20221114_96137654, (Access date 28/12/2022).

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. "Activiteitenverslag 2021", OCAD, 2022, https://ocad.belgium.be/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021_jaarverslag_WEB.pdf, (Access date 02/01/2023).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In May, extreme-right politicians Filip Dewinter (Vlaams Belang, Flemish Interest) and Geert Wilders (PVV, Party for Freedom, Netherlands) organized what they called an “islamsafari.” The “trip” was inspired by Vooruit Chairman Conner Rousseau who had stated in Flemish magazine *Humo* that he “didn’t feel like he was in Belgium when he drives through Molenbeek,” which is an area in Brussels with a higher percentage of citizens with a migrant background. Dewinter shared on his Twitter account that he would be visiting Molenbeek with his Dutch counterpart Geert Wilders. He also invited Rousseau, but the latter declined the invitation. The stroll started from the Flemish Parliament and moved to the public square of Madouplein, where they were stopped by an officer holding a police order preventing them from advancing. This caused Dewinter to say, “This has apparently become a no-go zone for those who are critical of Islam. ... I’m ashamed that as a politician I’m not able to determine for myself what needs to be determined: that the municipalities are completely Islamised. This is what the mayors don’t wish to show.”²⁴ He referred to the police order as a “fatwa,” which according to him shows that it is “Islam” that is really in command of the area. Dewinter and Wilders applied for permission for a “work visit” to Molenbeek, which was denied by the mayor of Molenbeek, Catherian Moureaux, (PS, Socialist Party) due to respective risks. Upon this, the mayor of the neighbouring municipality Anderlecht, Fabrice Cumps, also decided to impose a preventive ban. This is the second time that Dewinter and Wilders are refused access to a municipality in Brussels, the first time being in 2017. Dewinter has stated that he intends to take the issue to appeal again; in 2021, the politicians were proved right in that the police order from 2017 was illegal.²⁵

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Unia, an independent public institution fighting discrimination and promoting equal rights, published its yearly report on statistics regarding all the cases of discrimination that have been filed to the organisation. for the year 2021. On the matter of discrimination based on religion or philosophical beliefs, 243 files were opened, making up 8.8% of all files, a decrease of 6.9% compared to the previous year. The files on religion are usually related to work (35%), followed by media (19.8%), education (14%), and society (9.9%), with 76.5% of these files being on Islam. The files

24. Glen Van Muylen, “Na verbod in Molenbeek en Anderlecht: Dewinter en Wilders meteen tegengehouden aan grens Sint-Joost”, *De Standaard*, May 13, 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20220513_93953028, (Access date 28/12/2022).

25. Glen Van Muylen, “Na verbod in Molenbeek en Anderlecht: Dewinter en Wilders meteen tegengehouden aan grens Sint-Joost”, *De Standaard*, May 13, 2022, https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20220513_93953028, (Access date 28/12/2022).

related to work are mostly on access to jobs and selection procedures (43.5%), while other topics are dress code and layoffs. The files on media are made up mostly of complaints about Facebook, whereas the files on education are mainly about higher and secondary education and dress code (mainly headscarves). The files on society are about harassment in the public sphere, usually because of external religious symbols or practices (prayers, etc.).²⁶

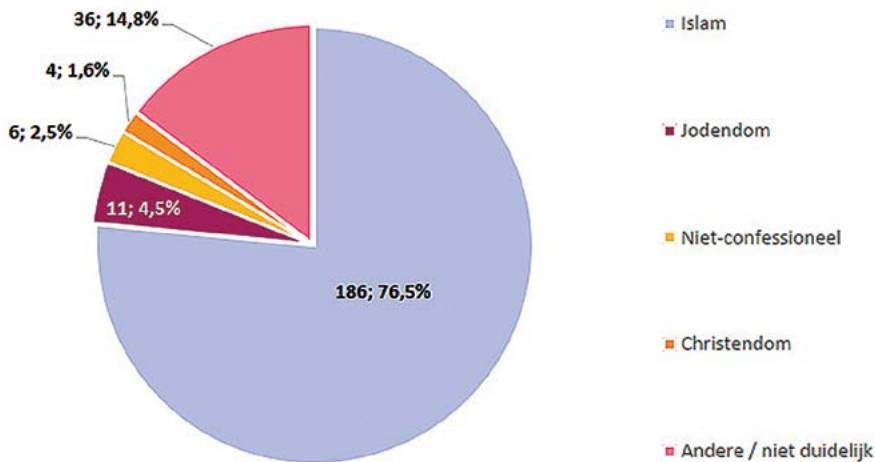


Figure 4: All complaints filed in 2021 on discrimination based on religion or philosophical views - per religion published by Unia. Religions from top to bottom: Islam, Jodendom, Non-confessional, Christendom, Others/not clear. N = 243. Source: https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/Cijfersverslag_2021_Unia_NL_def.pdf

As illustrated in the respective chapters of this report, discrimination based on religion or ethnic background (because of the assumption of these persons being Muslims) is still very common on the work floor, the job market, and society in general. The Commissie Diversiteit (Diversity Commission, an organisation that advises on the proportional representation of disadvantaged groups, diversity and equal treatment in socio-economic life) has therefore released a road map to develop a more inclusive job market by 2024. The road map recognizes the vulnerable position that especially people born outside the EU experience, unemployment being almost three times higher than for people born in Belgium, and even higher for women from non-European countries.²⁷

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

While 2022 did not bring much change in legislation nor was it marked by Islamophobic physical attacks (or at least as far as we can deduce from the official num-

26. "Cijfersverslag 2021", UNIA, August 23, 2022, https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/Cijfersverslag_2021_Unia_NL_def.pdf, (Access date 28/12/2022).

27. "Naar een duurzame, inclusieve Vlaamse arbeidsmarkt", Commissie Diversiteit August 23, 2022, <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/52344>, (Access date 28/12/2022).

bers), it was a year marked by debates on Islam and its status in Belgium along with the rights - or rather, lack of - those adhering to this religion: Muslims. This year, the debate on the hijab, or rather, of it being worn by teachers in the classroom (and not outside school territory) was ignited again by the chronic lack of teaching staff in Flemish governmental schools. While some parties now tend to show some leniency, their main concern is not the basic human rights of these teachers and respecting the freedom of religion, but being pragmatic and not willing to have the quality of the Flemish education reduced due to a lack of qualified staff. Politicians who are against the idea of a teacher wearing a hijab in class, accuse those who choose to wear a headscarf of not being sufficiently motivated to teach and of having “other goals.” The same views can be seen in the education sector and even on the job market. The message being sent to Muslim women and girls is: “If you’re willing enough, you’ll be able to put your religion aside and pursue your career/education.” This tendency to discriminate based on religion and against the hijab, in particular, is also supported by the different research listed throughout this report, with hijabi women often being excluded from education or the job market solely because of wearing a hijab, despite otherwise being perfectly qualified. It is, therefore, necessary that the policy concerning Islam and the headscarf needs to be redefined. In order to do so, the government needs to be made aware of the following:

- Neutrality, while on its own a beautiful concept, is defined and perceived by everyone differently. Therefore, the concept of neutrality in a pluralistic, multicultural, and multireligious country such as Belgium needs to be defined based on the demography of the country as a whole rather than on the “native” Belgian. If one truly wishes to accomplish a society where everyone is fully accepting of others’ ideas and cultures, one needs to expose them more to this diversity rather than reduce it into a false non-existing bland form of “neutrality.”
- Freedom of religion means that one is free to adhere to religion along with all that comes with it. While some of these religious beliefs might be different from, or even at odds with, the secular mindset, this does not automatically mean that these religious views seek to outvote or overthrow the secular established order. The government needs to recognize that Muslims are capable of making the distinction between their own beliefs and the secular order. While often viewed as a means of further polarization and estrangement between the government and Muslim(s) (youth), Islamic schools actually could prove very useful to help increase the sense of belonging of Muslims to Belgian society if they are allowed to be themselves and live as Belgian citizens without having to compromise.
- On the same note of freedom of religion, the government needs also to respect the fact that for many Muslims, the headscarf is seen as a religious ob-

ligation for women. While some Muslims differ on this view or some choose not to cover (for a variety of personal reasons), it is not up to the government to make a judgment call on this. The decision falls under religious practice, and as the separation of church and state is applied in Belgium, this is beyond the jurisdiction of the state. What is more, seeing as this concerns the religious sphere, the government is not in a position to demand the removal of a headscarf, forcing women to choose between their religion and the state, something the aforementioned separation envisions protecting. The government should also acknowledge and respect the fact that wearing a headscarf is not a direct attack or a rebellion against the established secular order, but for those adhering to it, a religious obligation seeking eternal redemption as per the Islamic creed.

Chronology

- **03.2022:** Several hate letters were sent to different mosques across Flanders and Brussels containing a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad holding a cleaver and verses from the Qur'an taken out of context purposefully and which were said to incite to hatred, war, and the extermination of non-Muslims.
- **05.2022:** Extreme-right politicians Filip Dewinter (Vlaams Belang, Flemish Interest) and Geert Wilders (PVV, Party for Freedom, Netherlands) organized what they called an "islamsafari": a visit to areas more densely populated by people of "Islamic" background (mostly Turkish and Moroccan) to prove how these are taking over the Western "native" society.
- **08.2022:** The Brussels Court of First Instance ruled against the Belgian government as the latter has interfered with the activities of the Muslim Executive in an illegal manner by forcing the resignation of Salah Echallaoui, then head of the Great Mosque of Brussels, in December 2020.
- **01.09.2022:** Flemish Minister of Education Ben Weyts (NV-A) rejected another application for recognition by Plura C school (formerly Selam College) in Genk as he believes the school is funded by Millî Görüs, which he considers as a religious Islamic order and does "not wish to expose young people to a project that is not in line with our democratic values."
- **15.09.2022:** Federal Minister of Justice Vincent van Quickenborne (Open VLD, Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats) stated during an interview on "De Ochtend" on Radio 1 that he still plans on withdrawing the recognition of the Moslimexecutieve (Muslim Executive) even though the court ruled that the minister and state intelligence did not sufficiently support their accusation against it.

- **11.2021:** Flemish Minister of Education Ben Weyts (NV-A) stated that he finds it perfectly defensible for a school not to want its teachers to wear any “ostentatious signs of religious beliefs.” He added, “Candidate-teachers who don’t want to respect the school’s decision seem to have a higher calling than teaching.”
- **11.2021:** Filip Dewinter (Vlaams Belang) introduced his new book *Omvolk-
ing*, a word that derives from the German “Umvolkung,” regarding a theory/
general fear of “replacement” of a perceived “indigenous” people by a perceived
“other” population.
- **11.2022:** The court ruled that Moeders voor Moeders (Mothers for Mothers), as a private charity organization, is at liberty not to allow women to wear headscarves in specific areas of its premises.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
**BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA**
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

HIKMET KARČIĆ

The Author

Hikmet Karčić is a Research Associate at the Institute for Research of Crimes Against Humanity and International Law, University of Sarajevo. He has a BA and LL.M. from the Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo, and a PhD in Political Science and Sociology from the International University of Sarajevo. Karčić is the author of the acclaimed book *Torture, Humiliate, Kill: Inside the Bosnian Serb Camp System* (University of Michigan Press, 2022). He was the 2017 Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) and Keene State College (KSC) global fellow. His writing on genocide denial and atrocity prevention has appeared in *Haaretz*, *Newsweek*, and *Arab News*.

Email: hikmet.karcic@institut-genocid.unsa.ba

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Executive Summary

During 2022, incidents of Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina were visible primarily within the political and media sectors. One key development was the increasing prominence of high-ranking political officials from Serbia and Croatia intervening and commenting on affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, often in a manner that reflected negatively on Bosnian Muslims. The focal point of much of the anti-Muslim rhetoric revolved around the reform of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which served as an opportunity for local elites to increase their share of power. To do this end, they turned to ethnic nationalist tropes to stir up their voter bases.

In 2022, Bosnia and Herzegovina saw a continuing increase in prominent Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat politicians, media, and academic circles making negative public remarks about Bosnian Muslims and their political representatives. This increase follows the pattern from previous years.

Whilst we witnessed an increase in Islamophobic rhetoric in comparison to 2021, on a broadly positive note, 2022 saw a decrease in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attacks. Having said this, there were sadly, it should be pointed out, still several incidences of physical and verbal violence directed at Bosniaks. Symbolic non-violent attacks, such as the spraying of Islamophobic graffiti on Bosniak buildings or monuments remain very common. Reasons for the overall downward trend are hard to pin down, especially as the political rhetoric continues to escalate in intensity.

This year marked the 27th 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, however, 2022 saw a decrease in the physical and verbal attacks on mosques and imams, mostly in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity, Republika Srpska (RS), but also in Croat-majority areas.

Sažetak

Tokom 2022. godine, incidenti islamofobije u Bosni i Hercegovini bili su vidljivi prvenstveno u političkom i medijskom sektoru. Jedan od ključnih događaja bio je sve veći značaj visokih političkih zvaničnika iz Srbije i Hrvatske koji su intervenirali i komentarisali stvari u zemlji, često na način koji se negativno odražavao na bosanske muslimane. Žarište većeg dijela antimuslimanske retorike bilo je oko reforme Izbornog zakona Bosne i Hercegovine, koja je poslužila kao prilika za lokalne elite da povećaju svoj udio u vlasti. Da bi to učinili, okrenuli su se etničkim nacionalističkim tropima da podignu svoju biračku bazu.

U 2022. godini Bosna i Hercegovina je bilježila kontinuirani porast broja istaknutih političara bosanskih Srba i bosanskih Hrvata, medija i akademskih krugova koji javno iznose negativne komentare o bosanskim Muslimanima i njihovim političkim predstavnicima. Ovo povećanje prati obrazac iz prethodnih godina.

Dok smo bili svjedoci porasta islamofobične retorike u odnosu na 2021. godinu, međutim, u 2022. godini došlo je do smanjenja islamofobije i antimuslimanskih napada. S tim u vezi, nažalost, treba istaći, još uvijek je bilo nekoliko slučajeva fizičkog i verbalnog nasilja nad Bošnjacima. Simbolični nenasilni napadi, poput pisanja islamofobičnih grafiti po zgradama ili spomenicima i dalje su česti.

Ove godine je obilježena 27. godišnjica genocida u Srebrenici, koji je naglasio kontinuirano poricanje genocida i ratnih zločina od strane srpskih vlasti. Lokalni i regionalni mediji doprinijeli su antimuslimanskoj netrpeljivosti izvještavanjem o terorističkim prijetnjama i radikalnoj ideologiji, povezujući je sa bošnjačkim političkim i vjerskim establišmentom. Međutim, u odnosu na prethodnu godinu, 2022. godine za-bilježen je pad fizičkih i verbalnih napada na džamije i imame, najviše u bosansko-hercegovačkom entitetu, Republici Srpskoj, ali i na područjima sa hrvatskom većinom.

Country Profile EIR 2022

Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Type of Regime: Parliamentary representative democracy

Form of Government: Three-member presidential system

Ruling Parties: Social Democratic Party (SDP), People and Justice (NiP), Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)

Opposition Parties: Party for Democratic Action (SDA), Serb Democratic Party (SDS), Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ 1990)

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

Total Population: 3,511,372 (2013)

Major Languages: Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2022, there were nine 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 Nationalists Chetnik Movement, Croat Neo-Ustasha Movement

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
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) is a specific example of Islamophobia as the phenomenon has been present in the country for a long time. It reached its considerable peak during the mass atrocities (including genocide) committed during the Bosnian War (1992-1995). Although Islamophobia has deep roots, back in the region's history, the first 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 (FB&H), 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 which meant dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina and getting rid of its Muslim population) caused the deaths of at least 100,000 people, 30,000 enforced disappearances, and the rape of 30,000 women and girls. The vast majority of the victims were Bosniaks, whose remains were buried in hundreds of hidden mass graves throughout the country. In addition to this, an estimated 600 mosques and a variety of Islamic religious objects were deliberately destroyed by the Bosnian Serb Army and the Croatian Defence Council. A decade of communism, followed by genocidal massacres of the Bosniak population resulted in today's situation where interreligious understanding and tolerance are fragile and complex. The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement brought

an end to the war, entrenching the results of genocide, and cementing the divide in the country.

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 population 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 shall 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 of 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).

This year 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 rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina is usually portrayed by Croatia as a failed state which is a safe haven for terrorists, in which Croats are at risk. This was further accelerated with the issue of the Election Law reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This reform, which has been a topic of discussion for several years, was imposed by the international High Representative in 2022. This election reform cements ethnic divide in the country and prevents the

prospering of a true democratic society in the future. These events further radicalized the political situation.

Following on from 2021, the Islamophobic rhetoric used by political figures and media is on the rise. The year 2022 was marked with slightly fewer physical attacks than 2021 however.

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 also published a report on the monitoring and the responses to attacks on religious buildings and other holy sites in B&H. When this report was being written, the data for 2022 had not yet been published.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On January 6, following the morning prayers, believers coming out of the mosque in Janja (RS) were threatened by a column of vehicles participating in an Orthodox Christmas event. Members of the column fired several rounds into the air from two pistols and cursed those exiting the mosque.

Omer ef. Camić, the chief imam in Janja, said that local Muslims feel threatened like never before. “Every year at this time [Christmas] we expect some provocations. This year it happened in the morning instead of the evening. The returnees [Bosniaks who had returned to the region after the war] are worried about the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Ramiz Salkić, then vice president of the B&H entity of the RS, said.

This morning’s armed attack and verbal abuse of Bosniak believers in Janja is a consequence of the radical separatist policy implemented by RS authorities, led by Milorad Dodik... This is not the first armed attack on the mosque in Janja, which was destroyed by the Serbian authorities in 1993. Due to the fact that earlier attacks were not brought to light, as well as the fact that the mosque destroyers were not punished, we have new attacks. This is a serious warning for everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community, where the unpunished radical separatist politics of Milorad Dodik and his followers can lead us. The Bosniaks of Janja, as well as the Bosniaks in the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina and the RS entity, are concerned about this event and the absence of a stronger reaction to prevent threats to peace and stability by separatist-oriented extremists.¹

1. “Janja: Pucali iz pištolja i vrijeđali vjernike koji su se vraćali iz džamije”, Blijesak.info (January 6, 2022), retrieved November 11, 2022, <https://blijesak.info/vijesti/svijet/janja-pucali-iz-pistolja-i-vrijeđali-vjernike-koji-su-se-vracali-iz-dzamije/370609>

On March 4, in Vlasenica (RS), two minors, one born in 2009 and the other in 2010, who were subsequently arrested, sprayed nationalist graffiti and the word “Serb” on a Bosniak monument to martyrs from the region, killed by Serb nationalists in the war.

In May 2022, a young Bosniak student from Nova Kasaba (RS), Alija, was beaten, suffering injuries to the jaw for which he had to undergo surgery. Local news outlet N1 interviewed another Bosniak high school student, Midheta Hadžić, on the conditions faced by young Muslims in the Serb-dominated high schools. “Every day when I got on the bus, there were jokes like: ‘There is no room for balija on this bus.’” The term “balija” refers to is a Serb-nationalist hate term for Bosniaks.²

Hadžić also recalled that a female Serb student came to school in a Ratko Mladić t-shirt and showing it off to her told her: “Look Midheta, he killed and will kill.” Like other Bosniaks living in the area, Hadžić has learned that going to the police is of little help. She says, “When my father returned to Milići, in Nova Kasaba in 2002, a bomb was thrown at our house and the person who threw the bomb for the attempted murder of a family of nine was in prison for only three months.”³

On June 1, in Bratunac (RS), just north of Srebrenica, diners at a Bosniak-owned restaurant were verbally assaulted and threatened by local Serb, M. Lukić. The restaurant’s owners called the police but complained that nothing ever happened to Lukić, who was often threatening. The diner’s owner managed to calm the situation a little, but later he returned with death threats, telling the restaurant’s owner and his two brothers that “they will not see the morning.”⁴

On July 6, a mosque near Brčko was vandalized by a drunk local who damaged the building’s doors. The Brčko District Police conducted an on-site investigation and arrested the vandal later on.⁵

On August 8, near Prozor, a Bosnian-Croat dominated town in southern Bosnia, Croatian fascist graffiti was sprayed on the newly opened memorial to Bosniaks from the area who were killed in the war. Alongside these graffiti, which comprised symbols used by the Nazi-allied Croatian fascists in WWII, the slur “balije” was written.⁶

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2. Adisa Imamović, “Bošnjaci Podrinja ponovo izloženi prijetnjama i uvredama”, N1 (June 1, 2022), retrieved November 11, 2022, <https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/bosnjaci-podrinja-ponovo-izlozeni-prijetnjama-i-uvredama/>
 3. Adisa Imamović, Rasim Pavica, “Za balije u ovom autobusu nema mjesta”, N1 (June 1, 2022), retrieved November 11, 2022, <https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/za-balije-u-ovom-autobusu-nema-mjesta/>
 4. Vedran Drljević, “N1 u Bratuncu: Lukić često pravi probleme, braći poručio ‘Nećete dočekati jutro’”, N1 (June 1, 2022) retrieved November 11, 2022, <https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/n1-u-bratuncu-lukic-cesto-pravi-probleme-braci-porucio-necete-docekati-jutro/>
 5. “Napad na džamiju Prutače. Dvadesetogodišnjak pijan pokušao oštetiti objekat džamije”, Otisak.ba (July 8, 2022) retrieved November 11, 2022, <https://www.otisak.ba/napad-na-dzamiju-prutace-dvadesetogodisnjak-pijan-pokusao-ostetiti-objekat-dzamije/>
 6. “Prozor: Ustaški simboli osvanuli na spomen obilježju šehidima samo dan nakon njegovog otvaranja”, Saff.ba (August 8, 2022), retrieved November 11, 2022, <https://saff.ba/prozor-ustaski-simboli-osvanuli-na-spomen-obiljezju-schidima-samo-dan-nakon-njegovog-otvaranja/>

On August 10, in Doboj (RS), the Serb nationalist symbol “4 S” (Serbian cross) was graffitied in an underpass, along with the message “Butcher Balije.” Rather than a hate crime, the local police chose to file it merely as “damage to property.”⁷

On December 12, following the Croatian national team’s win in Qatar, the message “Kill Balije” was graffitied in a public space, again in Prozor. As noted by a report on the incident by Bosnian news outlet Stav, “Bosniaks who live in cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a Croat majority really feel that fascism every day, and after the matches of the Croatian national team, the spirits of fascism are freed from their shackles and fly freely.” The report also notes how, following the Croatian team’s victory, the Croatian daily newspaper *Hrvatski Tjednik*, which is also sold in Bosnia, ran the following phrase on their front page: *Živjela Nogometna Država Hrvatska* (Long live the Football State of Croatia). The headline’s last three words were arranged so that each word stands as shown below, with the first letters highlighted.

Nogometna

Država

Hrvatska

Taken together, these letters – NDH – form the acronym of the WWII Croatian-Nazi state, responsible for genocide against Serbs, Jews, and Roma in the western Balkans.⁸

Justice System

For the above crimes, there are legal frameworks available for the victims to recourse to. 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. Yet, use of these provisions is inconsistent and relatively rare. For example, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District⁹ 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,

7. “Jezive poruke na podvoznjaku: Kolji balije i četiri S”, Stav (August 10, 2022), retrieved November 11, 2022, <https://stav.ba/vijest/jezive-poruke-na-podvoznjaku-kolji-balije-i-cetiri-s/11204>

8. R.I., “Nogometni fašizam Hrvatskog tjednika”, Stav (Decembar 12, 2022), retrieved on December 20, 2022, <https://stav.ba/vijest/nogometni-fasizam-hrvatskog-tjednika/13835>

9. Brčko District is Bosnia and Herzegovina’s third entity.

discord, or hostility. According to the statistics for hate crimes of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), hate crimes in B&H often target returnee communities (who are often isolated and vulnerable) and religious and sacred objects (mosques, churches, and graveyards), as well as private property belonging to returnees or members of minority communities. The OSCE B&H also records hate crimes through the Hate Monitor. More than 85% of all hate crimes registered through the Hate Monitor are committed based on ethnicity/religion bias. Unfortunately, the statistics are not segregated by religion. When it comes to hate speech regulations, the FB&H and Republika Srpska laws do not specifically proscribe hate speech, but prohibit acts that cause ethnic, racial, or religious hatred. Nevertheless, usage of incendiary language, among others in the media and by politicians, usually goes unpunished.

Despite their relative frequency and seriousness (as can be seen above), hate crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina are overall underreported and rarely prosecuted. In 2022, there were no known cases brought before the courts related to anti-Muslim hate crimes.

Employment

In 2022, there were no registered cases of work-related discrimination against Muslims. As in previous years, there remains a worrying trend indicating a decrease in the number of Bosniaks living and working in Republika Srpska. For example, in Republika Srpska institutions, out of a total of 5,066 employees, only 43 are Bosniaks.¹⁰ This trend of Bosniaks leaving Republika Srpska is the result of the perpetually uncomfortable and discriminatory atmosphere against Bosniaks, not only in social and educational contexts, but in professional contexts as well.

Education

Whilst physical/verbal attacks on Bosniaks in an educational context have been highlighted above, it is important to mention that the discrimination is not merely physical, but institutional as well. The year 2022 saw continuity in denying Bosniak returnees the right to learn the Bosnian language in RS, as we have previously reported in 2021 and 2020. This continues to be a serious violation of Bosniak children's constitutional right to be taught as a "national group" in schools in the Serb-majority entity. In 2016, several Bosniak returnee communities refused to enroll their children in schools in the RS as a result of this discrimination. The Islamic Community has 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.

10. "Diskriminacija Bošnjaka I Srba u RS I FBiH", *TVI* (11 August 2017), retrieved on November 11, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItmaBY48-hU>

Midheta Hadžić, mentioned above, shared the difficulties she and others faced in school when dealing with an institutional framework that denies their educational rights.

On the notebook where I had written the Bosnian language, the professor angrily crossed out everything, and wrote, “You are in a Serbian school, you learn the Serbian language.” When I complained to the director, he told me, “Midheta, you are aware that you are in a school where you are a minority and you do not have the right to vote.”

The 2022 school year began as the previous years: Bosniak students across the RS were denied the right to complete their studies in the language of their choosing. Husein Sačević, a parent of a student at the elementary school “Sveti Sava” near Zvornik, complained by saying,

We still have discrimination this school year, nothing has changed, only the pressure is greater. The rights of our children are not respected... As a representative of parents, I fight for the rights of all children. No one cares, we call on leaders and journalists to help us, because we have come to the point where we are leading the fight, it is devastating. This is one of the main problems in the country, it concerns children, how will they grow up if they face discrimination now, what can they expect later?¹¹

Politics

In 2022, there were no major changes in the standard rhetoric from local and regional political actors who used Islamophobic rhetoric to undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina's statehood.

One particular incident on November 4, 2022, saw Milan Tegeltija, advisor to Milorad Dodik, mock Bosnia's ambitions to join the European Union, telling Bosniaks that “no one in Europe will forget that Bosniaks are Muslims, even if Bosniaks forget it.” This marks just the latest in a long series of provocative comments from Tegeltija towards Bosniaks. The 27th 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 Bosnia and Herzegovina being a safe haven for terrorism and extremists and the demographic “threat” posed by Bosniak Muslims.

11. “NOVA ŠKOLSKA GODINA, STARI PROBLEMI: Roditelji iz Liplja nastavljaju borbu za bosanski jezik”, *Slobodna Bosna*, 1 September 2022, https://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/265417/nova_skolska_godina_stari_problemi_roditelji_iz_liplja_nastavljaju_borbu_za_bosanski_jezik.html

Media

Anti-Bosnian sentiment expressed by politicians is usually followed by Islamophobic rhetoric in the media. This rhetoric often seeks to portray B&H as a radicalized and radicalizing entity, with Bosniak politicians, academics, and former army officers as radical extremists. These statements are normally made by a group of already well-known, self-proclaimed experts who are often called upon by Serb/Bosnian-Serb media outlets to provide “analysis” and comment on Bosniak issues. These interviews and commentaries normally result in a range of (fairly typical) Islamophobic statements.

As in previous years, media in Serbia has regular Islamophobic articles about Bosniaks. Serbian tabloid *Informer* in January 2022 published: “CHILDREN IN UNIFORM ARE SHOUTING “ALLAH AKBAR”, AND ARE BOTHERED WITH REPUBLIKA SRPSKA Creepy scenes of masked Bosniaks with WAR FLAGS in Bužim!”¹²

Internet

Social media remains the main platform for spreading anti-Muslim bigotry and Islamophobic rhetoric. Facebook pages and Instagram accounts have been created by both Serb and Croat nationalist groups alike, which have continually published articles which spread fear and hatred of Bosniaks and include genocide denial.

For example, the Facebook page “Army of the Republic of Srpska” (*Војска Републике Српске*) is continuously active with around 54,000 followers. The page celebrates the Republika Srpska Army (VRS) and its “merits” in 1992-1995. The description of this Facebook page states, “This is a historical-documentary page that preserves the memory of the VRS and its participation in the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992-95.” It is not surprising that the activities of this Facebook page include the regular celebration of the Chetnik ideology. Also, several posts support the political activities of Milorad Dodik.

We can find a similar account on Instagram, namely “republic.of.srpska30.” Again, in the posts on this Instagram profile, we find the same matrices that generate hatred: they celebrate the “feats” of the RS Army, glorify criminals, and support deniers of crimes and genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

These two accounts on social networks are a classic example of the intensification of a paradigm that is based on a significant anti-Muslim sentiment, which we have repeatedly discussed in our reports.

Many of these groups, like the People’s Patrol, are actually run from neighboring Serbia, and are focussed on a number of issues, primarily Kosovo, but often post Is-

12. DECA U UNIFORMI KLIČU “ALAHU AKBAR”, A SMETA IM REPUBLIKA SRPSKA! Jezive scene maskiranih Bošnjaka sa RATNIM ZASTAVAMA u Bužimu!, *Informer*, 11 January 2022, <https://informer.rs/planeta/balkan/667165/buzim-bosnjaci-mars-ratne-zastave-alahu-akbar>

lamophobic content on social media aimed at Muslims in Bosnia and the wider *ummah*. These social media pages continue to function as they have as in previous years, and their activities have been covered in previous reports. 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 are the academic and semi-academic circles in Serbia and Republika Srpska, most notably Serbian “experts” on security, terrorism, and Islam such as Predrag Ceranić, professor at the University of Banja Luka; Miroljub Jevtić, politologist of religion and professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade; Dževad Galijašević, an unaffiliated self-professed terrorism expert; and Darko Trifunović, professor at the University of Belgrade. Second are several high-ranking officials from the Serb Orthodox Church such as Patriarch Porfirije. The third category is politicians and includes local Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats such as Milorad Dodik, president of the Bosnian Serb entity, Republika Srpska; Milan Tegeltija, advisor to Dodik; Mario Karamatić, Bosnian Croat politician in the Bosnian parliament; and politicians from Croatia and Serbia. 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.

Professor Predrag Čeranić of the University of Banja Luka has been talking about the stated theoretical threats in B&H for many years, including in 2022, making blanket conclusions in the context of “paradzemats” or returnees from the Syrian battlefield. In addition, he did not fail to add that, allegedly, the largest Bosniak political party, the SDA, has certain war goals, and the international power centers want to restore the Islamic State in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹³

Professor Miroljub Jevtić of the University of Belgrade gained publicity for certain comments about Islam and Muslims, which attribute violence against others to the Islamic tradition. However, in 2022, we do not record his significant activities in this direction.

Dževad Galijašević, a self-proclaimed expert on terrorism, also continued in 2022 to speak about the alleged danger of Islamic terrorism, stressing that this type of extremism and radicalism has connections with the largest Bosniak political party, the SDA.¹⁴

13. See: www.sveosrpskoj.com, January 17, 2022)

14. See: rtrs.tv, April 6, 2022)

Although in earlier years Professor Darko Trifunović of the University of Belgrade became well-known for his blanket claims about the danger of Islamic terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we do not note the continuity of those claims in the public space in 2022.

Despite the fact that in 2022 Trifunović condemned certain insults directed at Muslims in the region, in his speech in Bijeljina, the city of brutal crimes against Bosniak Muslims during the Aggression, he also spoke about the “changeability of borders.” This was stated in the context of the Day of Serbian Unity, of freedom, and the national flag, at a ceremony attended by leading political leaders from Serbia and the RS.¹⁵

We have already talked about Milorad Dodik, but also about his advisor in the Presidency, Milan Tegeltija.

Comments that contain or imply the intensification of hatred towards Bosniak Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not foreign to some Croatian politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina either. Thus, in April, Marko Karamatić, a member of the Presidency of the Croatian National Assembly, spoke about the “Turkish oppression” that united Croats and Serbs. Then, commenting on the right-wing politics of the President of the Republic of Croatia, Zoran Milanović, he said that, in fact, in the case of Bosnia, Milanović “understood what is happening here, that there is no possibility of establishing a civil state here because it is a ‘unitarian-Islamist’ story and he does not want the establishment of a caliphate in the heart of Europe.”¹⁶

It is important to underline that a significant amount of anti-Muslim and anti-Bosnian rhetoric was produced by Boris Malagurski, a Canadian-Serb film director, close to Russian state media, who produced several documentaries propagating conspiracy theories, denying mass atrocities and supporting Serb and Russian nationalists. The screening of his latest film about Republika Srpska was banned in several European cities.¹⁷

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is active in helping secure religious freedoms and battling Islamophobia, has established the Commission on Freedom of Religion (*Komisija za slobodu vjere*). Members of the commission took an active role in monitoring cases of violation of religious freedoms and have provided

15. See: faktor.ba, September 15, 2022

16. See: <https://www.atvbl.rs/>, April 10, 2022, and n1info.ba, April 11, 2022)

17. Azem Kurtić, “Petition Targets Bosnian Serb History Film for ‘Genocide Denial’”, *Balkan Insight*, 13 October 2022, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/10/13/petition-targets-bosnian-serb-history-film-for-genocide-denial/>

legal advice to several appellants. The Association NAHLA produced a manual titled “Islamofobija – kako joj se suprotstaviti” (Islamophobia – how to oppose and react) as an attempt to provide a solution in the fight against Islamophobia.¹⁸

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2022, the number of Islamophobic attacks on people and property was slightly lower than in 2021. This is positive, but it remains to be seen to what extent it is either a permanent reduction or merely a blip. Considering the continued presence of Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the following policy recommendations to combat it effectively are proposed:

- Continued cooperation between governments (state level, entity level, and district Brčko level), the Islamic Community, and NGOs in fighting discrimination against Muslims should be fostered.
- Public awareness of human rights and freedom of religion and belief should be raised by NGOs, media, etc. The methods of 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.
- 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 HJPC (High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council).
- Awareness among citizens and NGOs about reporting offensive media language to the Press Council in B&H and the Communications Regulatory Agency should be raised.
- Awareness among citizens and NGOs about filing complaints related to human rights violations to the B&H Ombudsman’s office, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, and in regular courts should also be raised.

18. Izdavanje priručnika o islamofobiji – fundraising kampanja, NAHLA, 28 September 2022, <https://nahla.ba/izdavanje-prirucnika-o-islamofobiji-fundraising-kampanja/>

- Commitment to countering violent extremism, focusing on far-right and extreme nationalist ideology and movements should be fostered.
- Commitment to prosecuting the denial of the Bosnian genocide, now possible as a result of the OHR's legal intervention, should be made a priority.

Chronology

- On **January 6**, in Janja, following the morning prayers, believers coming out of the mosque were threatened by a column of vehicles participating in an Orthodox Christmas event.
- On **March 4**, in Vlasenica, two minors sprayed nationalist graffiti and the word "Serb" on a Bosniak monument to martyrs from the region killed by Serb nationalists in the war.
- In **May**, a young Bosniak student from Nova Kasaba, Alija, was beaten, in his high school, suffering injuries to the jaw for which he had to undergo surgery.
- On **June 1**, in Bratunac, diners at a Bosniak-owned restaurant were verbally assaulted and threatened by local Serb, M. Lukić.
- On **July 6**, a mosque near Brčko was vandalized by a drunk local, who damaged the building's doors.
- On **November 4**, Milan Tegeltija, advisor to Milorad Dodik, mocked Bosnia's ambitions to join the European Union, telling Bosniaks that "no one in Europe will forget that Bosniaks are Muslims, even if Bosniaks forget it."
- On **August 8**, near Prozor, fascist graffiti was sprayed on the newly opened memorial to Bosniaks from the area who were killed in the war.
- On **August 10**, in Doboј, the Serb nationalist symbol "4 S" was graffitied in an underpass, along with the message "Butcher Balije."
- On **December 12**, following the Croatian national team's win in Qatar, the message "Kill Balije" was graffitied in a public space, again in Prozor.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
BULGARIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

AZIZ NAZMI ŞAKIR

The Author

Aziz Nazmi Şakir (PhD, History of Sciences, Istanbul University) earned his BA and MA from the Arabic Philology and Turkic Studies Departments, respectively, at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. Since 2001 he has been a faculty member at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and School of Languages at Sabanci University, Istanbul. Şakir is currently lecturing at New Bulgarian University, Sofia and Sabanci University, Istanbul. Besides his academic research dedicated to the Ottoman heritage in the Balkans and Bulgaria’s Muslims, he is an accomplished writer and translator with more than thirty translations of poetry and prose to his credit.

Email: ashakir@yahoo.com & ashakir@sabanciuniv.edu

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Executive Summary

In the period October-December 2022, the National Statistical Institute announced the results of the population census conducted in September 2021. Data concerning its religious composition indicate that over the past ten years the number of Muslims in the country has grown from 7.8% (577,139) to 10.8% (638,708).

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

In April 2022, the mosque in the city of Kazanlak became the object of vandalism. Two months later, in the city of Karlovo, a fire broke out in Kurshun Mosque, which is a historical site protected by the Cultural Heritage Act. The perpetrator was not found, but at the end of December, after a 9-year-long legal battle, the Plovdiv Court of Appeal cancelled a 2013 decision of the Plovdiv District Court, which had returned the ownership of the building to the Chief Muftiate, thus giving carte blanche to the municipality's project to transform the temple into a museum. This is already an established practice: historical mosques and tekkes across the country are declared 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 of such religious shrines are left unanswered by the official authorities, both, on national and local level.

In January 2022, the Special Criminal Court freed 23-year-old Mohammed Abdulqader, arrested in July 2020 of terrorism charges, after a case based on fabricated proofs took a year and a half of his youth and presented him to the public as a hardened thug who posed a threat to the country's national security.

Резюме

В периода октомври-декември 2022 г. Националният статистически институт оповести резултатите от проведеното през месец септември 2021 г. преброяване на населението. Данните, касаещи религиозния му състав сочат, че за последните десет години броят на мюсюлманите в страната е нараснал от 7.8% (=577,139 души) на 10.8% (=638,708).

Подобно на предишни години и през 2022 г. в България няма регистрирани нападения върху физически лица, продиктувани от ислямфобия. 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 и социалните мрежи, за да артикулират мюсюлманската заплаха за европейските цивилизационни ценности и сигурност, в лицето на Турция, местните мюсюлмански общности, водещи юридически битки за отнетите им през комунистическия период вакъфски имоти и не на последно място – емигрантския поток от Близкия изток.

През месец април 2022 г. джамията в град Казанлък стана обект на вандалска проява, а два месеца по-късно в закриляната от Закона за културното наследство „Куршум джамия“ в град Карлово, възникна пожар. Извършител не бе открит, но към края на месец декември, след 9-годишна юридическа битка, Пловдивският апелативен съд отмени решение от 2013 г. на Окръжен съд Пловдив, с което собствеността върху сградата беше върната на Главно мюфтийство, като по този начин даде картбланш на проекта на общината да превърне храма в музей.

Това е вече утвърдила се практика – историческите джамии и текета на територията на страната да бъдат обявявани от Министерство на културата за музеи или да функционират като туристически информационни бюра; други, които не са стопанисвани от Главно мюфтийство, са оставени постепенно да се разрушават, а призивите на мюсюлманите за реставрирането им, остават нечути от официалните институции както на национално така и на местно ниво.

През месец януари 2022 г. Специализираният наказателен съд освободи 23-годишният Мохамед Абдулкадер, арестуван (през юли 2020 г.) по обвинение за участие в терористични акции, след като съшито с бели конци обвинение отне година и половина от младостта му и го представи пред обществото като закоравял главорез, който представлява заплаха за националната сигурност на страната.

Country Profile

EIR 2022

Country: Republic of Bulgaria

Type of Regime: Democracy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary republic

Ruling Parties: On 2 August 2022, President Rumen Radev appointed a caretaker government headed by Galab Donev, which is still ruling. In June 2022, a four-party coalition cabinet ruled that was composed of We Continue the Change (newly founded centrist, pro-European), There Is Such a People (populist, nationalistic, pulled out of the government on 6 June), 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”, right-centrist, populist party); Movement for Rights and Freedoms – MRF (centrist, liberal party); Revival (populist, far-right party)

Last Elections: Early Parliamentary Elections (2 October 2022, previous elections were held on 14 November 2021): no party able to form a government after elections on 7 April and 11 July. GERB: won 24.48% of the vote with 67 of 240 seats; We Continue the Change 19.52% and 53 seats; Movement for Rights and Freedoms: 13.29% and 36 seats; Vazrazhdane (Revival): 9.83% and 27 seats; Bulgarian Socialist Party: 8.98% and 25 seats; Democratic Bulgaria: 7.19% and 20 seats; Bulgarian Rise (newly founded national conservative party): 4.47% and 12 seats.

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

Local elections (27 October/3 November 2019): On the provincial level (from a total of 25), GERB won 16 mayoral positions; BSP: 4; The Movement for Rights and Freedoms: 1; Union of Democratic Forces: 1; Direct Democracy: 1; Bulgaria for Citizens Movement: 1; Independent candidates: 2

European Parliament Elections (26 May 2019): The list of parties, seats and percentage of votes won is as follows: GERB (member of EPP): 6 (31.07%); Bulgarian Socialist Party (member of 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: 6,519,789 (September 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 country’s “traditional religion”.

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2022, the Grand Mufti’s Office reported two graffiti attacks against places of worship.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There is no special statistics and database on racism and discrimination.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity 71.5% (4,219,270) (Eastern Orthodox 4,091,780; Protestant 69,852; Catholic 38,709; Armenian Apostolic 5,002; Other Christian 13,927); Islam 10.8% (638,708); No religion 5.2% (305,102); People who cannot identify their religion 4.4% (259,235); No answer 8% (472,606); Judaism 0.026% (1,736); Other: 0.099% (6,451).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 10.8% or 638,708 (<https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/766/statistical-data>) (compared to 7.8% or 577,139 in 2011).

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria (Grand Mufti’s Office)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: N/A

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

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

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local municipality decisions)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** (30 September 2016) The Parliament adopted the so-called anti-burqa law or “Law for Prohibiting the Wearing of Clothing Concealing One’s Face in Public Spaces”

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,¹ did not face major conflicts with Bulgaria's non-Muslim majority. Nevertheless, in 2022, 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, generating unease and loss of confidence in public institutions among the representatives of the community, and, to a lesser degree, vandalised places of worship.

An early parliamentary election was held on 2 October 2022. 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, who 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 the newly established 48th parliament. The United Patriots had 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, one relatively new political actor claiming to represent the interests of the patriot voters managed to double its seats in the parliament from 13 to 27: the far-right party Vazrazhdane (Revival). The leader of the latter, Kostadin Kostadinov, and its MPs, who consider themselves a future ruling alternative, have not been involved in Islamophobic activities so far.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

While physical attacks against representatives of the Muslim community and Muslim shrines have decreased in the last years, anti-Muslim verbal assaults undertaken even by high-level officials have become a routine. The main law in Bulgaria banning discrimination based on religion, race, and ethnicity is the Protection against Discrimination Act (PADA).² The Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPAD) is

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1. This group consists of immigrants in transit to Western Europe, and former university students who came to the country during the communist period.
 2. https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7046/file/Bulgaria_anti-discrimination_act_2003_2006_am.pdf, (Access date: 4 December 2022).

the organ established under PADA as an independent collegiate semi-judicial authority with adjudicating powers exercising control over its implementation. It is worth mentioning that two of its nine current members, Baki Hyuseinov and Sabrie Sapundzhieva, are Muslims.³ 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. In the list of scheduled, open monthly meetings of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination for 2022, we find the names of at least eight Muslim complainants claiming that they were subjected to multiple discriminations (presumably on ethnic and religious bases). Since the CPAD did not release its yearly decisions report, it is hard to determine which of the cases were related to Islamophobic acts undertaken by the defendants; however, most of their names and the titles of their organisations speak for themselves: (among others) Ataka leader Volen Siderov from Alfa 2018 Foundation (twice); IMRO – Bulgarian National Movement, Krasimir Karakachanov; IMRO leader Angel Djambazki; leader of National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB) Valeri Simeonov; and Dancho Hadjiev and Petyo Georgiev from Skat Ltd.⁴



Figure 1: A photograph showing the interior of Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo taken after the fire.⁵

3. <http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/index.php/za-nas/chlenowe>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).
4. <https://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/index.php/otkriti-zasedaniq/archive-zasedaniq>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).
5. Ibid.

On 8 April 2022, the facade of the historical Eski Mosque in Kazanlak, which was built in the 14th century, was smeared with black spray paint. The Regional Muftiate in Stara Zagora filed a report with the police, and Kazanlak Municipality removed the inscription. The facade was desecrated with graffiti a year earlier too, and the perpetrator was never identified.⁶

On 24 June 2022, fire individuals broke into the historical Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo, which is a cultural monument of national importance.⁷ In a statement, the Chief Muftiate expressed its deep concern over what happened: “Court cases, inaction by institutions and the lack of a good steward of the mosque have become the cause of the poor condition and desecration of this holy place for Muslims.”

A year earlier, the Chief Muftiate had expressed concern that municipal authorities had excavated the area around the historic monument and had piled up a large amount of dirt in the yard, calling it a “desecration”.⁸



Figure 2: Archeological excavations by the municipality have occurred at Kurshun Mosque and its immediate surroundings in Karlovo, which the Chief Muftiate has called a “desecration”⁹

6. Вандали оскверниха джамията в Казанлък (Vandals Desecrated the Mosque in Kazanlak), 11 April 2022, in: <https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/11125-2022-04-11-10-49-00.html>, (Access date: 31 December 2022).
7. Позиция на Мюсюлманското изповедание във връзка с пожара в Куршум джамия (Statement of the Muslim Denomination in Relation to the Fire in Kurshun Mosque), 24 June 2022, in: <https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/11263-2022-06-24-09-50-22.html>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).
8. <https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/10839-2021-10-14-11-52-51.html>, (Access date: 20 April 2022).
9. Mahkeme, Karlovo'daki Kurşun Camii'nin Başmüftülüğe İade Edildiği Kararı Bozdu (The Court Canceled the Decision According to Which Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo Was Returned to the Chief Muftiate), in: <https://kircaalihaber.com/kircaali/-mahkeme-karlovodaki-kursun-camiinin-basmuftuluge-iade-edildigi-karari-bozdu-?fb>

Employment

For 2022, 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

Education

In 2022, the Bulgarian education system continued to reproduce the image of the country's "historical enemy": Muslim Ottomans enslaving Christian Bulgarians and forcibly converting large groups of the population 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 elementary and high schools. Despite the total revision of all school curricula after the end of the communist era, history textbooks 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-century period. This fact results in establishing the mindset in students of a trivial collective image of Muslims as uncivilised conquerors and bloodthirsty oppressors.

Politics

As a result of the November 2021 parliamentary election held on 13 December 2021 the National Assembly approved a government, known as the four-party coalition cabinet comprising We Continue the Change (PP) with the left-wing Socialist Party (BSP), the populist There Is Such a People party (ITN), and the liberal Democratic Bulgaria (DB) alliance. The alliance is chaired by Prime Minister Kiril Petkov.¹¹ Six months later it became a minority government, when ITN pulled out of the coalition, and its mandate ended in late June 2022, after it lost a vote of confidence. On 2 October 2022, early parliamentary elections were held, the fourth in less than two years. Following the elections, Bulgaria was rocked by political instability, and faced lengthy and difficult talks to form a government. This period coincided with the gradual release of data related to the census held a year earlier. On 21 December 2022, the National Statistical Institute finally announced the ethno-cultural characteristics of the population in Bulgaria as of 7 September 2021. From the total

clid=IwAR0SR9i0cfkv7Jx5w9gickDGXf9B4RqQItgTUx2UwzBF7yAyMB7QwRl5MM, (Access date: 25 December 2022).

10. <https://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/index.php/component/content/article/2014>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).

11. Kotkamp, Lukas. "Bulgarian parliament backs Kiril Petkov as PM". Politico, 13 December 2021, in: <https://www.politico.eu/article/bulgaria-parliament-kiril-petkov-prime-minister/>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).

of 6,519,789 people (indicating that for the last decade the populace has decreased by almost 845,000 people),¹² 638,708 or 10.8% (compared to 7.8% or 577,139 in 2011) indicated their belonging to the Muslim religious denomination.¹³ In other words, over the past decade the number of Muslims in the country has grown by 3%. However, this growth is not factual, only official, and the disproportions in the cited figures are due to unprecise counting methods applied by the National Statistical Institute. Among the persons who identified themselves as belonging to the Bulgarian ethnic group, 107,777 (2.2%) indicated their affiliation to the Muslim religious denomination. One can presume almost all of them are Pomaks. Since the questionnaire did not include the latter as an option, they were forced to choose between “Bulgarian” and “Turk”. Only 15,000 of those interviewed used the term “Pomak” in the “Other” ethnic group section.¹⁴ Particularly impressive in the regions with a more compact Pomak population is the share of those who refused to answer the question about their religion and did not identify themselves. For example, in the municipality of Banite the total percentage is 55.5; in the municipality of Zlatograd 51.8%; in the municipality of Devin 36.7%; and in the municipality of Smolyan 24.8%.¹⁵ Of the Turkish ethnic group, 13,195 people (2.6%) indicated that they had no religion, and 15,622 (3.1%) were unable to self-determine. Among those self-identified as belonging to the Roma ethnic group, those who identified as Muslim were 45,817 (17.6%); those who chose the option “I do not have a religion” amounted to 37,232 (14.3%) and those you chose “Cannot determine” were 41,517 (15.9%). As a matter of fact, the highest share of persons who declared that they did not wish to indicate their religion was among the Roma ethnic group (9.1%) and the lowest was among persons who self-identified as belonging to the Turkish ethnic group (4.0%). As of 7 September 2021, a total of 305,102 (5.2%) individuals responded that they did not have a religion, 259,235 (4.4%) had difficulty identifying their religion, and 472,606 (8%) indicated that they did not want to answer, which apparently means that for the last ten years the overall share of those who restrain from “confessing” their religious background increased drastically. Since Christians are the least discriminated religious group by the state, logically the greatest share of the “non-Christians” hiding their affiliation is represented by Muslim Roma, Bulgarians, and Turks.¹⁶

12. <https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/19807/nsi-announces-final-results-population-number-bulgaria>, (Access date: 30 December 2022).

13. <https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/766/statistical-data>, (Access date: 30 December 2022).

14. 85% от населението на страната се самоопределя като българско, отчита НСИ (85% of the Country's Population Self-identifies as Bulgarian, NSI reports), 24 November 2022, in: <https://www.investor.bg/a/515-ikononika-i-makrodanni/364675-85-ot-naselenieto-na-stranata-se-samooopredelya-kato-balgarsko-otchita-nsi>, (Access date: 30 December 2022).

15. Михаил Иванов: Има проблеми в преброяване 2022 (Mihail Ivanov: There Are Problems Related to the Census), 06.12.2022, in: <https://www.marginalia.bg/aktsent/mihail-ivanov-zashto-sa-nedovolni-romite-ot-prebroyavane-2022/>

16. https://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/Census2021-ethnos_en.pdf, (Access date: 30 December 2022).

Throughout the years, the Chief Muftiate has been highly suspicious of the official censuses regarding the numbers related to Muslims. In the summer of 2022, it organised a parallel census via its structures participated by the 20 regional muftiates, all local mosque boards (there are 1,710 active mosques in Bulgaria), and waqf experts and imams. According to the results announced on 1 November 2022, more than 1,204,326 individuals identify as Muslims in Bulgaria.¹⁷ This figure, compared to the abovementioned official statistics, shows twice as many Muslims in the country. Given the fact that the state subsidy that is distributed to denominations whose followers exceed 1% of the total population is calculated based on the formula of 10 BGN (around €5) per person, the issue of statistical precision gains financial significance.

Despite the fact that Muslims form the second largest religious group in the country not a single minister neither from Petkov's regular government nor from the caretaker government appointed by President Rumen Radev on 1 August 2022 was Muslim.¹⁸

Media

Unlike politicians, who are centers of attention for journalists and NGOs, the media is rarely subjected to public censure and it is never sanctioned by the law for “innocent” offenses such as the use of Islamophobic speech. In Bulgaria, in 2022, the most active “provider” of anti-Muslim hate speech was the television channel Skat TV. This comes as no surprise since the latter is owned by the far-right party National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB). The list of cases in which anti-Muslim discourse was used in different programmes through the year is too long, and we will confine ourselves to mentioning only a few striking examples. On 24 November 2022, the presenter of the TV programme with the provocative title “Unveiling” Nikolay Pankov, made a programme titled “Diplomatic Pressure upon Media by Turkish Diplomats”, claiming that the Turkish Ambassador Aylin Sekizkök in cooperation with the the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) is in full control of the Chief Muftiate, which in the “iron embrace of the Turkish diplomats” functions as a conduit of the “Turkish state Islamism”.¹⁹ Pankov asked, “There are 12 Muslim embassies in Bulgaria, all of them can and should have a claim on the religion called Islam, but why exactly the Turkish diplomat.. enters so deeply into the life of the Bulgarian Muslims?”. He then shared his great concern about the fact that “one year is left until

17. “Мюсюлманското изповедание обслужва 1.204.326 мюсюлмани” (“The Muslim Denomination Serves More than 1,204,326 Muslims in Bulgaria”), 1 November 2022, in: <https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/11517-1-204-326.html>, (Access date: 1 December 2022).

18. Nadezhda Filipova, “Caretaker Government Takes Over”, in <https://www.bta.bg/en/news/bulgaria/305955-caretaker-government-takes-over>, (Access date: 16 November 2022).

19. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0AAq-NtX3g&ab_channel=%D0%A2%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%8F%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%90%D0%A2, (Access date: 31 December 2022).

the 100th anniversary of the revolution in the Turkish Republic, but actually it is a final countdown before the counter-revolution aimed at the restoration of Islamic Türkiye”.²⁰ In a subsequent programme aired on 23 December 2022, which discussed Islamism in 2022 and 2023, the theme about the transformation from a secular to an Islamic state was further developed with the information that this will be realised by “Sultan Erdogan”, who intends to restore the Islamic empire by building a new “High Porte”.²¹ So it comes as no surprise that according to another edition of “Unveiling” by organising the “9th Presidents of Religious Affairs of Balkan Countries Meeting” in Varna on 26 November 2022, which in fact was dedicated to peace in the region, “Türkiye puts the Balkan puzzle in order in Bulgaria”. As a result, the programme claims, “The muftis from the Balkan countries are on a short leash.” “The ambassadors of Turkey are competing to court the Muslim leaders directly in front of the eyes of the local state authorities; the latter are even complicit in pushing a pro-Turkish extreme state policy, and instilling the ‘poison of Turkish state Islam.’”²² All these claims present Islam as a civilisational threat undermining the well-being of the Bulgarian society, and Türkiye as a major conduit for its aggressive ideology. Given the fact that both Islam and the Ottoman state, whose successor is Türkiye, have historically been perceived as symbols of evil, playing on people’s stereotyped fears, escalates and causes hate speech and Islamophobic sentiments among the viewers of such shows.



Figure 3: Miroslav Popov discusses Islamism in 2022 and 2023 with Nikolay Pankov on Skat TV’s programme “Unveiling”²³

20. Ibid.

21. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVugne66zr0&list=PLRbaqkW1r4vJoo9Xgn5GiSon9bDo1cooY&index=6&ab_channel=%D0%A2%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%8F%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%90%D0%A2,

22. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKCh5nmcux8&list=PLRbaqkW1r4vJoo9Xgn5GiSon9bDo1cooY&index=11&ab_channel=%D0%A2%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%8F%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%90%D0%A2, 9 December 2022,

23. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVugne66zr0&ab_channel=%D0%A2%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%8F%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%90%D0%A2, 23 December 2022,.

On 21 October 2022, the media department of the Chief Muftiate started a new project aimed at presenting the activities carried out by the regional muftiates and showing the everyday life of the Muslims in Bulgaria. Under the heading “We, From the Danube through Arda to Mesta”, two short videos will be shared daily online.²⁴

Justice System

On 17 January 2022, the Special Criminal Court freed 23-year-old Mohammed Abdulqader arrested in July 2020 on charges of terrorism in Syria,²⁵ after a case based on fabricated proofs took a year and a half of his youth, and convinced the public that he posed a threat to the country’s national security.

In 2022, 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 properties, including eight mosques, two schools, two bathhouses, and a cemetery seized by the former communist government. Pending a decision on who is the rightful successor to the Muslim religious communities, some courts continued to suspend action on all restitution claims by the Chief Muftiate.



Figure 4: The fourteenth-century Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo and its immediate surroundings.²⁶

On 21 December 2022, the Plovdiv Court of Appeal canceled the 2013 Plovdiv District Court decision in which the ownership of the Kurshun Mosque in the city of Karlovo was given to the Chief Muftiate. The Court of Appeal judges agreed

24. <https://grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/11470-2022-10-19-12-09-58.html>, 19 October 2022, (Access date: 22 October 2022).

25. Лъчезар Лисицов, “На първа инстанция: Мохамед от Бургас се оказа невинен след обвиненията в тероризъм” (At First Instance: Mohammed from Burgas Was Found Innocent after the Charges of Terrorism), in <https://www.flagman.bg/article/258216> 17 Януари 2022, (Access date: 29 December 2022).

26. Ibid.

that until 9 September 1944 (the beginning of the socialist system), the property belonged to the Muslim community administration in Karlovo and its legal successor was the Muslim Denomination. In the decision, it was stated that the seizure of the property after that date without a legal basis and giving it the status of public property owned by the municipality constituted an obstacle to its return to the Chief Muftiate. According to a plan adopted in 1998, the land reserved for green space gained the status of municipal public property as per the law, due to impending improvement work to be achieved by the construction of streets and green areas with benches for recreation. The judges noted that the settlement was a cult building of historical importance declared an immovable cultural heritage in 1976, and for these reasons, the ownership claim made by the Chief Muftiate was rejected.²⁷

After the Plovdiv District Court's decision in 2013 to return the Kurshun Mosque to the Chief Muftiate, there were protests in Karlovo and across the country. Subsequently, cases filed by the Chief Muftiate regarding the return of waqf properties have been frozen until it is decided who is the legal successor of the former Muslim community administrations.

Internet



Figure 5: Prof. Assen Kolev presents his book *Islam in Bulgaria: History, Religion, Law* in Kardzhali (photographer: Natasha Meneva).²⁸

27. Mahkeme, Karlovo'daki Kurşun Camii'nin Başmüftülüğe İade Edildiği Kararı Bozdu (The Court Canceled the Decision According to Which Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo Was Returned to the Chief Muftiate), in: <https://kircaalihaber.com/kircaali/-mahkeme-karlovodaki-kursun-camiinin-basmuftuluge-iade-edildigi-karari-bozdu-?fbclid=IwAR0SR9i0cfkv7Jx5w9gickDGXf9B4RqQItgTUx2UwzBF7yAyMB7QwRI5MM>, (Access date: 25 December 2022).
28. Д-р Асен Колев повдигна завесата към проявите на радикален ислям и ислямophobia в България (Dr. Assen Kolev Lifted the Curtain on the Manifestations of Radical Islam and Islamophobia in Bulgaria), 22 May 2022,

Due to widespread anti-Muslim stereotypes in Bulgarian society, in the last years, the internet has become an important space for those who want to express their Islamophobic attitudes. The comfort of remaining anonymous in the comments section following news related to the Chief Muftiate's initiatives, Muslim immigrants, or Türkiye, encourages the production of hate speech. Basically, thousands of such comments can be found, which is proof not only of the high levels of "viral" Islamophobia, but also of the lack of will among site moderators to control its unpunished fluctuation throughout the year. Last but not least, only few instances of Islamophobic hate speech are reported as unacceptable.

In the following figure (Fig. 6), there is an example of an average comment of the above-described type. It is found under a news titled "Dr. Assen Kolev Lifted the Curtain on the Manifestations of Radical Islam and Islamophobia in Bulgaria", i.e., information about an event aimed at combatting Islamophobia. The text states,

What a verbal slop??? The word Islam means submission. Those who profess this aggressive doctrine have no right to their own, independent, and critical thought. Can Comrade Kolev explain why it says in the Koran that the prophet married a 6-year-old girl, and when she turned 9, he slept with her? This is pure p*dophilia! In the surahs it is ordered to take over the Christian lands and whoever does not want Islam, to be killed. For reference, 500 years of massacres, blood tax (Janissaries) and the violent Islamisation in Bulgaria. A religion of "peace"! Fucking jokes and nonsense! A baptism is needed. Immediately, wherever there are Mohammedans in Bulgaria. If they are not ok with this, they should leave for Türkiye.²⁹

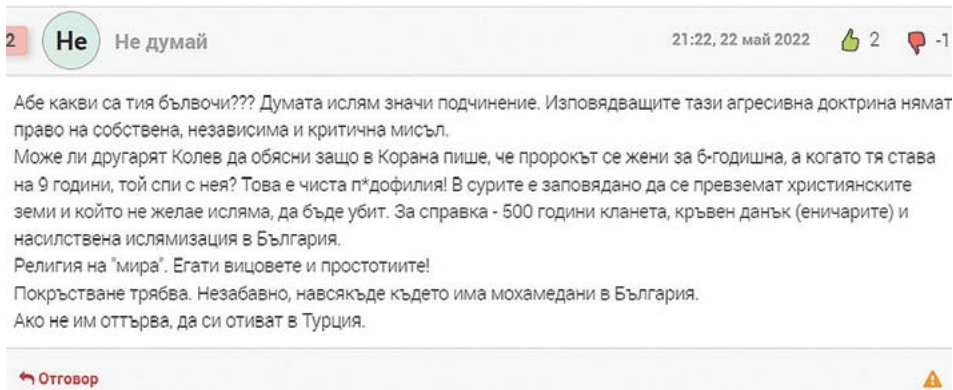


Figure 6: Islamophobic comment under a news piece about the public presentation of a book dedicated to radical Islam and Islamophobia in Bulgaria.³⁰

in: <https://www.haskovo.net/news/541730/d-r-asen-kolev-povdigna-zavesata-kam-proyavite-na-radikalen-islam-i-islamofobiya-v-balgariya>, (Access date: 4 December 2022).

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Major figures triggering Islamophobia in Bulgaria are the leaders, including EPMs, of the far-right nationalist parties and movements: National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB), Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), Ataka, 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.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

At the beginning of December 2022, an international conference on combatting hate speech was held in the capital Sofia. The forum brought together nearly 130 participants, including magistrates, representatives of religious communities, including the Chief Mufti Dr. Mustafa Hadji, academics, and non-governmental organisations from Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Serbia, and Ukraine. The event was hosted by the Chief Prosecutor of the Republic of Bulgaria Ivan Geshev and the European Jewish Association. Among the official guests were Bulgarian Vice President Iliana Iotova, Minister of Justice Krum Zarkov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Velislava Petrova, Representative of the Supreme Judicial Council Boyan Magdalinchev, and Chairman of the European Jewish Association Rabbi Menachem Margolin.



Figure 7: Chief Prosecutor Ivan Geshev accompanied by religious leaders during the international conference on combatting hate speech held in Sofia on 6 December 2022.³¹

31. Главният мюфтия участва в Международна конференция за борба с езика на омразата (The Chief Mufti Participated in an International Conference on Combating Hate Speech), 6 December 2022, in: <https://grand-mufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/11599-2022-12-06-13-48-09.html>, (Access date: 27 December 2022).

The Chief Mufti expressed his satisfaction over the fact that the conference was attended not only by religious leaders, but also by decision-makers involved in the problems of the general public. The questions related to hate speech were also examined through the prism of the rule of law. In the panel titled “Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens. The Rule of Law – A Path to Guaranteeing Fundamental Human Rights”, prosecutors from Europe presented the good practices in their countries and the challenges related to countering hate speech in the online environment.³²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In Islamophobic terms, the year 2022 in Bulgaria was dominated by anti-Muslim hate speech rather than physical attacks on Muslim citizens. There is a need for both state-sponsored and non-governmental organisations to monitor politicians’ and public figures’ verbal behavior in the public space; to enable the judiciary to take adequate action in cases dictated by Islamophobia; and to restrain from arresting and charging Muslims for the sake of displaying anti-terror activity. This kind of “observative pressure” is expected to generate a preventative effect and to reduce the use of hate speech publicly. Educational institutions have to work towards creating an alternative narrative regarding Muslims. Lastly, media organs should exert more sufficient efforts to change the negative image of Islam by broadcasting programmes and articles discussing up-to-date Islamic issues, since lack of adequate knowledge about Islam enables the spread of biased stereotypes in the public domain.

Chronology

- **17.01.2022:** The Special Criminal Court freed 23-year-old Mohammed Abdulqader arrested in July 2020 on charges of terrorism in Syria.
- **08.04.2022:** The facade of the historical Eski Mosque in the city of Kazanlak was desecrated with graffiti.
- **24.06.2022:** Fire in the historical Kurshun Mosque in Karlovo
- **24.11.2022:** Magdalena Kostova, director of the Demographic and Social Statistics Directorate of the National Statistical Institute, announced the religious composition of the population derived from the census conducted in September 2021, indicating that over the last decade the number of Muslims in the country has grown from 7.8% (577,139 people) to 10.8% (638,708).
- **06.12.2022:** International conference on combatting hate speech held in Sofia
- **21.12.2022:** The Plovdiv Court of Appeal ruled that the Kurshun Mosque in the city of Karlovo will be managed not by the Chief Muftiate, but by the municipality.

32. Ibid.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
CROATIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

NEJRA KADIĆ MEŠKIĆ

The Author

Nejra Kadić Meškić is CEO at the Centre for Cultural Dialogue, which builds intercultural societies and fights growing mistrust and polarization by strengthening intercultural and interreligious dialogue. She graduated from the School of Business and Economics at University of Sarajevo. Meškić has twelve years of experience as an executive director and program leader in the fields of human rights, minority rights, migration and integration, culture of dialogue, gender equality, and youth policies. She is a trainer on teamwork and leadership, and has worked in the civil society sector in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and abroad. In 2013, Meškić received an award for her contribution to the achievement of gender equality from the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

E-mail: nejra.kadic.sa@gmail.com

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Sažetak

Islamofobija u svom sistematskom, organiziranom smislu u Republici Hrvatskoj je u 2022. godini izostala. Zabilježen je govor mržnje na pojedinačnoj, individualnoj razini kojoj se ne pridaje tolika pažnja niti značaj. I ove godine u Hrvatskoj nije zabilježen trend rasta islamofobije a koji je prisutan u drugim zemljama Europe. Svakako da treba nastaviti s dosadašnjom pozitivnom praksom te djelovanjem u smjeru očuvanja manjinskih religijskih prava koji predstavljaju unikatan primjer u Europi.

2022. godinu obilježio je pojedinačni narativ spominjanja islamskih religijskih vrednota i simbola na neprimjeren i uvredljiv način uz stavljanje istih u neprimjerene kontekste. Od problematičnih stavki, važno je spomenuti relativiziranje počinjenog genocida nad muslimanskim/bošnjačkim stanovništvom Srebrenice od strane pojedinih visokih državnih dužnosnika Republike Hrvatske. Iako relativiziranje genocida u Srebrenici nije učinjeno sistematski već pojedinačno te predstavlja izoliran slučaj, ovakvi narativi, ukoliko se ne zaustave, potencijalno mogu doprinijeti diskriminaciji na temelju vjere i nacije te narušavanju dobrih odnosa unutar hrvatskog društva između manjinskih zajednica i većine. Takav narativ potiče međusobno nerazumijevanje, udaljavanje jednih od drugih i usmjerava društvene procese u suprotnom smjeru od njegovanja kulture dijaloga, upoznavanja i prihvaćanja različitosti te jačanja zajedničkog života u hrvatskom interkulturalnom društvu.

Također, a sve u cilju smanjenja negativnih tendencija i jačanju društvene kohezije, potrebno je jačati sudjelovanje manjinskih zajednica u procesima odlučivanja na različitim razinama državne vlasti.

Executive Summary

In the Republic of Croatia there was no systematic, organized Islamophobia in 2022. Hate speech has been documented on a personal, one-on-one basis that does not receive as much focus or importance. In contrast to other European countries, Croatia did not experience a rise in Islamophobia this past year. It is undoubtedly vital to carry on with the prior constructive practice and activities in support of maintaining minority religious rights, which stand out as an exceptional example in Europe.

An individual narrative of using Islamic religious principles and symbols in an unacceptable and improper manner stands out in 2022. One of the troublesome issues is Croatia's high-ranking authorities' relativization of the genocide committed against the Muslim/Bosniak inhabitants of Srebrenica. Although the relativization of the Srebrenica genocide was not conducted in a systematic manner, but rather on an individual basis and represents an isolated case, such narratives, if not stopped, could potentially contribute to religious and national discrimination and to the disruption of harmonious relationships between minority communities and the majority in Croatian society. In contrast to developing a culture of dialogue, mutual understanding, acceptance of diversity, and enhancement of common life in the intercultural Croatian society, such a story increases mutual misunderstanding, alienation, and directs social processes in the opposite way.

Additionally, it is vital to increase minority community participation in decision-making processes at various levels of government to reduce negative inclinations and enhance social cohesion.

Country Profile EIR 2022

Country: Republic of Croatia

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic

Ruling Parties: Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)

Opposition Parties: Social Democratic Party (SDP), Homeland Movement (Domovinski pokret), The Bridge (Most), We Can! – Political Platform (Možemo! – politička platforma), Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS), and others.

Last Elections:

2020 Presidential Elections: Zoran Milanović won 52.66% of the vote against 47.34% that went to Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović in the second round.

2020 Legislative Elections: HDZ–HSLŠ–HDS–HDSSB: 66 seats; SDP–HSS–GLAS–IDS–HSU–SNAGA–PGS: 41 seats; DPMŠ–HKS–HRAST–BzH–ZL–SU: 16 seats; Bridge of Independent Lists (Most): 8 seats; Green–Left (Možemo!–RF–NL–ORaH): 7 seats; SIP–Smart–Focus: 3 seats; Croatian People’s Party – Liberal Democrats: 1 seat; People’s Party – Reformists: 1 seat; National Minorities: 8 seats

Total Population: 3,871,833 (2021)

Major Languages: Croatian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Statistics are made available in the Croatian Ombudsperson’s annual survey: Research on attitudes and levels of awareness about discrimination and its forms of in 2022¹

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholics (78.79%), No religion (4.71%), Orthodox (3.32%), Muslims (1.32%), 1.72% No answer. When comparing the 2011 and 2021 censuses, the number of Muslims fell from 1.47% to 1.32%, the number of Catholics fell from 86.28% to 78.97%, and that of Orthodox from 4.44% to 3.32%. The share of non-believers/atheists in Croatia increased from 3.81% to 4.71%.

Muslim Population (% of Population): 50,981 (1.32%) (2021)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Community in Croatia (Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj)

1. Ombudsman of Republic of Croatia: Research on attitudes and levels of awareness about discrimination and its forms of in 2022 (Istraživanje o stavovima i razini svijesti o diskriminaciji i pojavnim oblicima diskriminacije u 2022.), <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/download/istrazivanje-o-stavovima-i-razini-svijesti-o-diskriminaciji-i-pojavnim-oblicima-diskriminacije-2022/?wpdmdl=15351&refresh=63e0c6603768c1675675232>

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Center for Cultural Dialogue (CCD), Human Rights House Zagreb, Are you Syrious?, D-team, Centre for Peace Studies (CMS, CPS)

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

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

Introduction

The Republic of Croatia is one of only four European countries that have institutionalized the recognition of Islam as an equal faith to all other religions. In addition to the freedom of conscience and religion and the freedom of the public expression of religion or other beliefs guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the “Agreement on Issues of Common Interest between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Islamic Community in Croatia” also protects the rights of Muslims. The collaborative relationships amongst the agreement’s members guarantees an effective and long-lasting resolution to any pending concerns. Croatia is unique because it has a structured system in which the Islamic Community in Croatia, which is recognized by the government, unites and represents all Muslims in Croatia regardless of differences in their other identities, such as ethnicity, nationality, skin colour, culture, etc. Maintaining such a well-run organization in the future is essential, as is avoiding any involvement in its division.

The openness of the state, authorities, and local communities that supported the ceremonial opening of the mosque in Sisak, the laying of the foundation stone for the construction of the mosque in Osijek, and the acquisition of the land on which the mosque is intended to be built in Pula is evidence for the authorities’ interest in maintaining good relations with Muslims in Croatia.

According to the 2021 population census, there were fewer Muslims in Croatia, which resulted in a decrease in their percentage from 1.47% to 1.32%. The same holds true for other faiths and, more broadly, for Croatia’s entire population.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

The appointed person showed me some sort of green certificate and instructed me to bring a “certificate of Islamic community that I am a Muslim,” which really surprised and annoyed me. I, then, explained to her that, after several years of working for this employer, I only learned today that I have the right to a non-working day for Eid.²

The Ombudsman received a complaint from a worker in a private company whose employer demanded a written certificate from the Islamic Community in Croatia as evidence that the worker is a Muslim when the worker attempted to exercise his entitlement to a day off due to a religious holiday. The worker objected to deliv-

2. Ombudsman of Republic of Croatia: The annual report of the Ombudsman for 2021 (April 1, 2022), retrieved November 23, 2022 from: <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2021-analiza-i-ocjena-stanja-ljudskih-prava-i-jednakosti-u-hrvatskoj/>

ering it. The “Act on Holidays, Memorial Days, and Non-Working Days” does not address the question of demonstrating one’s affiliation with a specific religious group, meaning it does not outline how one would go about doing so to exercise their rights under Article 3 of the law. Therefore, the employer lacked a legitimate reason to demand a proof of religious affiliation of the worker to apply his right to a paid day off. The Ombudsman, therefore, suggested that the employer change the contentious practice of needing the aforementioned certificates. The right of an individual to “individually or in community with others, publicly or privately, express his religion or belief through worship, teaching, practical practice, and rituals” is one of the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion protected by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Religious freedom is primarily a matter of individual opinion and conscience, in accordance with ECtHR precedent (ECtHR Decision *Eweida and others v. UK*, 48420/10, 59842/10, 51671/10 and 36516/10, 15.1.2013), which states that the concept of religion should be interpreted to include the fact of having a belief as well as the public expression of religion.³

Education

New Islamic education books were introduced in the primary education system throughout 2022. The Islamic Community in Croatia is the publisher of the publications, and the authors are religious instructors who teach Islamic religious education in schools. The Ministry of Education and Science funded the publication of the books, and the ministry’s system is used by the schools which use them. Books for the Islamic religious education in secondary schools were published in 2022, and teaching materials for children in the preschool education system were in its preparation phase.

Despite Croatia being a secular nation, the books used in official education cover religious subjects rather than remaining neutral on the matter. As an illustration, stories about Christian saints are found in the first-grade Croatian language textbook, which is used to teach schoolchildren how to read.

The International Day of Tolerance was celebrated by certain schools by supporting various traditions and cultures, which was a constructive practice in promoting diversity, including religious diversity.

The publishing house Ljevak published the book *Islam and Human Rights* by Dr. Ajla Čustović, who defended her doctoral dissertation with the same title at the University of Zagreb’s Political Sciences Department. The publication of the book was co-financed by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education. In the book, the author presents the multiplicity of Islamic thought, which cannot be understood sim-

3. Ombudsman of Republic of Croatia: The annual report of the Ombudsman for 2021 (April 1, 2022), retrieved November 23, 2022 from: <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2021-analiza-i-ocjena-stanja-ljudskih-prava-i-jednakosti-u-hrvatskoj/>

ply, in black and white, on any topic, including the sensitive topic of human rights. The book opens an insight into the existence of lively polemics within Islam itself, illuminates some differences in the interpretations of Islamic holy texts, and presents Islamic thought on the topic of human rights to the reader - perhaps for the first time in the Croatian language - with an emphasis on its richness and internal tensions. *Islam and Human Rights* is not written from the point of view of criticism of Islam or that of shallow apologetics; it is a serious study where sensitive issues are handled in a sensitive manner.

For people seeking a fundamental understanding of Islam, Imam Mirza Mešić endorsed the book *Handbook of Islam for Adults*. The Quran and hadith, as well as the author's own religious instruction and intellectual experience, serve as the book's basis.

The "Annual Report of the Ombudsman" and the "Annual Report of the Security Intelligence Agency (SOA)" presented research that mentioned Islam or Muslims. The SOA report states,

As in previous years, jihadist ideology-inspired radicalized individuals that continue to pose the biggest terrorist threat in Europe. For example, all 2020 Islamist attacks in Europe were carried out by lone attackers, primarily EU citizens and ISIL supporters, who had no genuine established ties to terrorist groups. In addition to violent Islamist ideology, as in the rest of Europe, the security risk for the Republic of Croatia is represented by self-radicalized individuals of extreme right-wing violent ideology. These individuals are typically extremely young, come from broken households, and have access to dangerous environments. There are still para-Jamaats in the neighborhood that advocate a radical interpretation of Islam, including refusing to acknowledge the legitimate Islamic communities in their nations and defending violence in the name of defending Islam. Followers of radical Islam from the countries of the Western Balkans with residence in Western European countries transit through the territory of the Republic of Croatia. A continuous security risk is the possibility of using the Balkan migration route by terrorist groups. Croatia is still a society in which extremism, on any basis, religious, ideological or national, has no significant foothold, as well as public support, and thus no strength or potential for destabilizing national security.⁴

Politics

There is a tendency for narratives to reference Islamic religious values and symbols inappropriately and offensively, along with placing them in unnecessary links and inappropriate contexts by some high-ranking government officials, and also questioning international court judgment about the genocide of the Muslim/Bosniak popula-

4. Security and Intelligence Agency: Public report 2020/2021, retrieved November 22, 2022 from: <https://www.soa.hr/files/file/Javno-izvjesce-2020.pdf>

tion in Srebrenica. Such trends encourage belittlement and thus genocide denial, and distance and direct social processes in the opposite direction from fostering a culture of dialogue, familiarity and acceptance, and strengthening common life in the Croatian intercultural society.

“The court ruled that it was genocide. Yes, you must be very delicate with that. But that is only a decision of a court. There are much greater crimes in history in terms of duration and magnitude. By insisting that everything is genocide, we are doing injustice to, say, the Holocaust. Care should be taken with these types of labeling. That’s how Bosniak Muslims try to kill the God in the Serbs. It is a step towards calling Serbs a genocidal nation. I take note of the fact that a group of judges at one point in certain circumstances assessed that an event occurred in July 1995 and characterized it as genocide. But it is not the Qur’an and we cannot treat it as religious dogma. With due respect to the victims. And at the end of the day, what do I and Dodik have to do with Srebrenica?”, said the President of the Republic of Croatia Zoran Milanović.⁵ Dodik served as the Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2018 to 2022. He denies the Srebrenica genocide. For the record, Milorad Dodik openly supported Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, claiming that it was necessary to defend Ukrainian Russians. At the same time, he made a comparison the Bosnian Serbs, claiming that they can’t live with Muslims and that their desire to join Serbia is “normal.”⁶

The Association of Srebrenica Mothers⁷, and the Association of Genocide Victims and Witnesses reacted on this statement.



Figure 1: Twitter post of “Srebrenica Mothers” stating, “Yes, we are old women, mothers who lost their children, but Zoran Milanović is a fascist pretending to be a democrat.”⁸

5. Dnevnik.hr (October 28, 2022), retrieved November 2, 2022 from: <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/zoran-milanovic-u-lici---749144.html>
6. Večernji.hr (September 19, 2022), retrieved November 2, 2022 from: <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/svijet/milorad-dodik-otvoreno-podupro-agesiju-rusije-na-ukrajinu---742960.html>
7. Jutarnji.hr (November 10, 2022), retrieved December 2, 2022 from: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/majke-srebrenice-odgovorile-milanovicu-u-njegov-ured-poslale-pismo-sa-samo-jednom-recenicom-15273250>
8. Ibid.

The President of Republic of Croatia Milanović also denied the genocide in Srebrenica earlier, at the working lunch of the presidents of the Western Balkan countries, which was held in Slovenia in September 2022.⁹ This statement was followed by reactions from neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, which accused Milanović of historical revisionism because he did not recognize the judgment of the Hague Tribunal. Among the reactions was the one from the Bosniak member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Šefik Džaferović¹⁰.

Milanović commented that he does not deny the “bloody crimes” in Srebrenica, but the question remains for him how to qualify this and that a criminal complaint has been filed against him at the BiH Prosecutor’s Office for allegedly denying the crime of genocide in Srebrenica.¹¹

Earlier, Croatian online media reported the reaction of Croatian member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Željko Komšić to Croatian President Milanović: “Milanović advocates vulgar fascism. European Muslims today have become the equivalent of Jews from the time of persecution.”¹²

At the same time, President Milanović,¹³ Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković,¹⁴ and Speaker of Croatian Parliament Gordan Jandroković¹⁵ offered their wishes on the occasions of Islamic religious holidays.

On November 23, 2022, Marijana Petir, a member of the Croatian Parliament, hosted a round table discussion titled “Respect to Religious Freedom” in honor of “Red Wednesday” and in remembrance of all those who have faced persecution because of their religion. As there were no notable examples in the round table discussion of Croatian Catholics’ rights being violated but rather examples of religious freedom violations in Islamic countries, Petir accused present public bodies of recording only the violation of the rights of religious minorities stating,

I have the impression that the attacks on the majority Catholic and generally Christian communities in Croatia do exist but they do not receive the reactions by the

9. Telegram.hr (September 14, 2022), retrieved December 2, 2022 from: <https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/bosanski-portali-milanovic-opet-negirao-genocid-pa-proveo-tri-sata-s-dodikom-na-privatnom-imanju/>

10. Preporod. info (September 14, 2022), retrieved December 2, 2022 from: <https://www.preporod.info/bs/article/34470/kabinet-sefika-dzaferovica-istina-je-da-je-milanovic-u-sloveniji-dovodio-u-pitanje-presudu-za-genocid>

11. Jutarnji.hr (November 10, 2022), retrieved December 2, 2022 from: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/majke-srebrenice-odgovorile-milanovicu-u-njegov-ured-poslale-pismo-sa-samo-jednom-recenicom-15273250>

12. Jutarnji list (July 23, 2022), retrieved December 2, 2022 from: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/svijet/milanovic-zagovara-vulgarni-fasizam-europski-muslimani-danas-su-postali-ekvivalent-zidova-iz-vremena-progona-15226353>

13. Index.hr (July 9, 2022), retrieved December 1, 2022 from: <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/milanovic-muslimanima-cestitao-kurbanbajram-islamska-zajednica-u-rh-je-primjet/2378556.aspx>

14. Tportal.hr (May 2, 2022), retrieved November 28, 2022 from: <https://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/clanak/premier-cestitao-ramazanski-bajram-hrvatska-je-primjer-integracije-islamske-zajednice-20220502>

15. Tportal.hr (May 2, 2022), retrieved November 27, 2022 from: <https://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/clanak/jandrokovic-cestitao-ramazanski-bajram-mir-i-zajednistvo-u-vremenu-punom-izazova-i-nemira-20220502>

competent institutions. According to the reports that reach the Parliament and what we have heard today from you (addressing Dijana Kesonja, Deputy Ombudsman), and Mr. Tahiri (Director of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia), attention is only paid to attacks at minority groups and only these are being recorded and monitored.¹⁶

Dijana Kesonja concluded that the reports were not based on guesswork, but on official claims made by citizens and other stakeholders who worked on strengthening and promoting human rights. She explained that all religious communities and associations that promote the protection of freedom of belief are sent an inquiry every year about recorded cases of abuse of this right, which then they report to the Croatian Parliament through the annual report of the Ombudsman.

The fact that only representatives of Catholic religious communities and a few persons in their official capacity, such as the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, and the Ombudsman attended and participated in the round table on religious freedom in Croatia does not leave the impression of conducting a dialogue on the necessity of respecting religious freedom, freedom of belief and human dignity for members of all religions in Croatia. The absence of the participation of the Mufti and the President of the Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia, which is the only institutionally recognized community of Muslims in Croatia, was also noticed during the meetings of Parliamentarian Petir with representatives of the association of Muslims in Croatia (Ahmadija muslimanski džamat), which is not the official representative of Muslims.

Media

In the media, the rights of Muslim women have received considerable attention due to the protests and events in the Islamic Republic of Iran, information on the position of women in Afghanistan, and the holding of the World Football Championship in Qatar. There was a stereotypical depiction of Muslim women and their treatment according to the customs of certain nations and societies, which were then attributed to Islam as a religion.

On this occasion, the state-owned television channel HRT during the program “Together in the spirit” (*Zajedno u duhu*) addressed the topic of the position of women in Islam with representatives of the Islamic Community in Croatia to get a true picture of the treatment of women in Islam. Also, a significant number of media reports about Qatar were shown, which usually confronted female interlocutors with

16. YouTube channel of Croatian Parliament: Round table of Croatian Parliamentarian Marijana Petir about topic Respect to religious freedom (November 23, 2022), retrieved December 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chW5OcMuvH0>

the question of their alleged difficult position because they are women. Such reports contributed to breaking down the prejudices that journalists apparently had as well.

The media also shared news such as that in Germany the number of Christians is dropping, while the number of Muslims is constantly increasing and that many see calls to prayer in the mosque as a threat.¹⁷ At the same time, media also shared news about people of different faiths living together and helping each other such as building a mosque together in BiH¹⁸ or recognizing halal as an economic advantage used by Croatia to reach a larger market share.¹⁹

Internet

People on the internet posted comments displaying bias against Islam or a lack of understanding of it. An illustration of this is a remark made on a post on the Croatian Football Association's involvement in the integration of refugees through sports on the association's official Instagram profile. Given that a considerably higher number of people supported the initiative and liked the post, the comment is regarded as an isolated outburst.



dannyinggss 1w
 @zvonko_levacic_sevica zele napraviti od nas Njemačku , državu gdje si u vlastitoj zemlji stranac , gdje vlada kriminal i Islam
 3 likes Reply See Translation

Figure 2: Comment on the Croatian Football Federation's Instagram post about integration of asylum-seekers through sports. The comment states, "They want to make a Germany from us, a state where you are foreigner in your own country, where the criminal and Islam rule"²⁰

17. Večernji list (October 14, 2022), retrieved December 7, 2022 from: <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/u-njemackoj-broj-krcsana-pada-a-muslimana-stalno-raste-mnogi-pozive-na-molitvu-u-dzamiju-vide-kao-prijetnju-1625459>
18. Jutarnji list (August 10, 2022), retrieved December 6, 2022 from: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/svijet/katolici-i-muslimani-zajednicki-izgradili-dzamiju-kod-tomislavgrada-u-bih-15233695>
19. Večernji list (November 6, 2022), retrieved December 5, 2022 from: <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/hrvatski-halal-proizvodi-hit-medu-muslimanima-druga-smo-zemlja-u-svijetu-koja-je-registrirala-certificiranje-halal-kvalitete-1631311>
20. Instagram profile of Croatian Football Federation, retrieved on January 28 from: https://www.instagram.com/hns_cff/

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Positive responses to anti-Muslim racism include a variety of integration initiatives carried out by civil society groups, like the New Neighbours project, which integrates people with approved international protection into Croatian society and is also supported by the Croatian Ministry of Interior Affairs. Muslims coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Türkiye, and African countries make up a portion of the immigrants in Croatia, hence it is crucial that they receive proper support for social integration and inclusion. A joint Eid celebration was held as part of the project, and participants included the new neighbours, community, and stakeholders in Croatian society, as well as the UNHCR, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, various state offices, and representatives of local self-government.

The highest state officials of the Republic of Croatia attended a joint *iftar* hosted by the Islamic Community in Croatia as a sign of appreciation, respect, and dedication to dialogue and community life.

Promoting publications that discuss Islam and its contributions to society is certainly a positive practice, especially if the publisher is a reputable Croatian publishing firm.

State officers, in significant public and media appearances, highlighted the Islamic community in Croatia as a good example of the successful integration of a religious minority into society and its contribution to the positive branding of the Republic of Croatia on a worldwide scale.

The Mufti and the President of Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia Aziz Hasanović officially opened a mosque in Sisak in 2022 in front of the highest state officials, laid the cornerstone for another mosque's construction in Osijek, and chose the mosque's conceptual layout and bought land for a mosque construction in Pula.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The Republic of Croatia did not experience any systemic Islamophobic practices, narratives, or hate crimes in 2022, according to the information presented above. Individuals on a personal basis were responsible for Islamophobic hate speech directed at Muslims and Islam. Regardless of whether they were left- or right-wing, the majority of Croatian society and Croatian political structures did not approve of such verbal transgressions. The aforementioned hate speech demonstrates a lack of understanding of Islam and its principles.

Hate speech and other occurrences involving Islamophobia must be consistently avoided by:

- fostering communication between Muslims and non-Muslims in order to impact the eradication of prejudice, learning about Islam, supporting authentic Islamic principles, and recognizing the differences between religion and culture and customs;
- fostering the interculturality of Croatian society by enhancing interreligious and multicultural dialogue;
- condemning all hate speech, especially that based on religious differences,
- ensuring that all religions are represented at gatherings about interreligious dialogue, religious freedom, the right to freedom of belief, and similar topics;
- informing and educating people of their rights and means of protection from discrimination, as well as how to report and effectively handle such violations;
- assisting and educating the media in providing impartial reporting that supports social and cultural mediation;
- and, supporting Muslims' participation and involvement in decision-making processes.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
**THE CZECH
REPUBLIC**
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

ZORA HESOVÁ

The Author

Zora Hesová is a research fellow at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences and an assistant professor at the Institute for Political Science, Charles University, Prague. She works on the Islamic intellectual tradition, modern Islam in Europe, and, more generally, on religion in contemporary politics with a particular focus on Central Europe and the Balkans. Hesová has published a book on the philosophy of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and articles on Islam in Europe, religion and populism, the Arab Spring, and Islamophobia.

Email: Zora.Hesova@ff.cuni.cz

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Executive Summary

The year 2022 saw no major Islamophobic incidents in the Czech Republic and confirmed a lasting ongoing trend: Islam as an issue has vanished from major public debates and is being maintained as a side issue by a radical right parliamentarian party. Throughout the year, the Czech Republic was focused on the Russian aggression in Ukraine and its consequences, inflation and energy security, on the consequences of the much-criticised government handling of Covid-19, and on two major elections and election campaigns. There were no notable Islamophobic elements in all those debates and Islam as an issue has not mattered. Even in the coverage of Islam and migration-related events in European and foreign policy, there was no notable issue that could be framed as Islamophobic. Most media and public figures who used to comment on current issues from a perspective that was sceptical or inimical to Islam have either gone silent – such as the outgoing president Zeman – or have concentrated on other major crises. In fact, if anti-Islam and anti-migration utterances were used as elements of public opposition to the liberal mainstream, by 2022, they were largely replaced by various conspiracy theories. Anti-Islam prejudice nevertheless continues to figure as a connecting element in the nascent anti-liberal and declinist version of the Czech alt-right. The so-called replacement theory is popular in the ever more organised Czech “patriotic” alt-right scene. So far, this trend remains marginal, burdened by more or less overt pro-Russian positions and by a lack of prominent supporters. It can be expected that with growing public dissatisfaction with the consequences of the Russian aggression in Ukraine or with the government’s handling of inflation and with a return of migration this alt-right scene and its anti-migration stance will grow in importance.

Shrnutí

V roce 2022 nedošlo k žádným závažným islamofobním incidentům. Rok 2022 také potvrdil trvajícím pokračujícím trend: Islám jako téma zmizel z hlavních veřejných debat a je udržován jako vedlejší téma parlamentní radikálně pravicovou stranou. Po celý rok se Česká republika soustředila na ruskou agresi na Ukrajině a její důsledky, na inflaci a energetickou bezpečnost, na dozvuky tolik kritizovaného postupu vlády v kauze Covid a na dvoje velké volby a volební kampaně. Ve všech těchto debatách se neobjevily žádné výrazné islamofobní prvky a islám jako téma nebyl důležitý. Dokonce ani v pokrytí událostí souvisejících s islámem a migrací v evropské a zahraniční politice se neobjevil žádný výrazný problém, který by bylo možné zarámovat jako islamofobní. Většina médií a veřejně činných osobností, které dříve komentovaly aktuální témata z pohledu skeptického nebo nepřátelského vůči islámu, se buď odmlčela - jako například odcházející prezident Zeman - nebo se soustředila na jiné velké krize. Pokud totiž protiislámské a protiimigrační výroky bývaly prvky veřejné opozice vůči liberálnímu mainstreamu, do roku 2022 je z velké části nahradily proruské dezinformace obecně různé konspirační teorie. Protiislámské předsudky nicméně nadále figurují jako spojovací prvek rodící se antiliberální a deklinistické verze české alt-right. Takzvaná teorie nahrazení je populární ve stále organizovanější české "vlastenecké" alt-right scéně. Tento proud zatím zůstává marginální, poznamenaný zatížením více či méně otevřenými proruskými postoji a nedostatkem výrazných příznivců. Lze očekávat, že s rostoucí nespokojeností veřejnosti s důsledky ruské agrese na Ukrajině či s postupem vlády při řešení inflace a s návratem migrace bude tato alt-right scéna nabývat na významu, stejně jako její protimigrační postoje.

Country Profile EIR 2022

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: ANO 2011 (centrist, populist), Freedom and Direct Democracy (far-right)

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: According to available statistics by the Ministry of Interior,¹ there were 72 recorded cases of incitement to hate or prejudiced acts in the first half of 2022, none of which had an explicitly anti-Muslim content. According to the In Iustitia watchdog, there were 85 prejudiced incidents in 2022 and among them, one involved prejudice against Islam. Most prejudiced incidents in 2022 were directed against LGBTIQ people and against Ukrainian refugees or Russians. Both refer to prejudiced acts or to hate crimes generally (defamation of an ethnic, §355, or other group and incitement to national and racial hate, §356) and not to Islamophobic acts specifically. These statistics may be incomplete as the fourth quarter of 2022 has yet to be included in the data, but there is tendency towards minimal Islam-related prejudiced acts.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The Ombudsman's Office has received one complaint by a Muslim refugee from Iran for discrimination (refusal to open a bank account).² These statistics may be incomplete because the report for 2022 has not yet been published, but there is tendency towards diminishing Islam-related discrimination.

1. Projevy extremismu a p̄edsudečné nenávisi. Souhrnná situační zpráva 1. pololetí roku 2022, <https://www.mvcr.cz/soubor/extremismus-souhrnna-situačni-zprava-za-1-pololetí-roku-2022.aspx>

2. https://www.ochrance.cz/dokument/zpravy_pro_poslaneckou_snemovnu_2022/2022-ii-q.pdf

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 Organisations: Centre of Muslim Communities, General Union of Muslim Students in the Czech Republic, Muslim Union

Main NGOs Combating 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 (Tricolour Citizens' Movement), *Česká suverenita* (Czech Sovereignty), PRO 2022 (Right Respect Expertise)

Far-Right Movements: National Democracy, National and Social Front, Workers' Party of Social Justice, Workers Youth

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No. The court decision of exclusion of a high-school student wearing a hijab from a medical secondary school in 2016 was annulled by the Supreme Court.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

In 2022, the Czech Republic did not registered almost any hate crimes or prejudiced incidents against Muslims. The whole year was consumed with two major crises: the war in Ukraine, on the one hand, and, on the other, its aftermath, inflation, soaring energy prices, and energy security concerns. Since the beginning of 2022 when a new right-wing coalition government took over from the earlier populist-led government and tackled mostly war-related issues and the Czech presidency of the EU council, there was little space for extremist voices. Besides the notably more civil tone of political debates, the radical right itself has continued to concentrate largely on “Covid totality” and on Russia, although the parliamentary radical right continued to raise the threat of “Islamisation” from time to time. Still, the Ukraine war and its effects have overshadowed all other issues. Islam has not figured as a salient issue in the Czech Republic for several years now. There were also no notable Islamophobic elements in the commentaries on events in the Muslim world such as the Iran protests, the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, or the attentat on Salman Rusdie. This tendency is confirmed by the media treatment of migration: the Czech Republic has registered 400,000 refugees from Ukraine and almost 30.000 “illegal migrants” in 2022, but neither migration nor Muslim migrants were raised as a major security or society problem.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Physical and verbal attacks against Muslims were very few in 2022 while none were discussed in the media. Although the overall number of prejudiced incidents has grown, mainly against Ukrainian refugees and members of the LBGTQI community, prejudiced acts against Muslims or Islam are few or so far undetected.

According to the In Iustitia human rights organisation, there were 85 recorded cases of incitement to hate or prejudiced acts in the first three quarters of 2022. Most were directed against LBGTQI persons and against Roma and Jews, while only one had an explicitly anti-Muslim content.³ There were no Islam-related hate crimes recorded by the police in the first half of 2022.⁴

Statistics available refer to prejudiced acts by watchdogs and to hate crimes by the Ministry of Interior. Both refer to prejudiced acts or to hate crimes generally (defamation of an ethnic, §355, or other group and incitement to national and racial hate, §356) and not to Islamophobic acts specifically, and details are given only when a

3. See “Kvartální zprávy o předsudečném násilí v roce 2021” on In Iustitia’s website: <https://in-ius.cz/zpravy-o-predsudecnem-nasili/>

4. The statistics for the second half of 2022 have not been released yet.

particularly serious threat or a case of physical abuse is recorded. Because there are no details, we assume that those seven incidents were cases of verbal abuse.

Unlike in 2020, when a mosque was graffitied, there was no recorded major Islamophobic incident in 2022. Incidents of anti-Muslim hate crime remain a marginal phenomenon.

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. Muslims who have lived in Czechia 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 educational needs of their children.

Education

There have been no publicly discussed events involving Islam in schools. On the other hand, various NGOs continue to bring debates about human rights and diversity to schools, such as One World in Schools (OWIS), a project by the People in Need humanitarian organisation that brings human right films to secondary schools.

Politics

The year 2022 was an election year and elections have confirmed the calming of the political climate. The Senate election in October was followed by presidential election campaigns for the rest of 2022. There was no major reference to migration or Islam in political campaigns for both the local and presidential elections. The incumbent president, Miloš Zeman, a major source of anti-Islam discourse, has already completed two terms and has been largely silent for health reasons and because of his failed pro-Russian policies. The radical right leader Tomio Okamura did not run against populist ex-PM Andrej Babiš. Part of the radical right scene gathered behind the marginal figure of Jaroslav Bašta, and another part behind the populist ex-prime minister Andrej Babiš. The latter has previously used the migration issue largely copying Viktor Orbán. However, the populist issue of 2022 was the end of Western support for Ukraine in Hungary and in the Czech Republic.⁵ Even though presidential

5. Andrej Babiš lost to the liberal Atlanticist Petr Pavel in January 2023 with 41.7% against 58.3%.

campaigns were heated at times, they concentrated on the personal integrity of the candidates and the war in Ukraine.

Anti-Islam utterances seem to be salient when used by populist and right-wing actors in a moment of moral panic. The opportunity for manipulation came with the presidential election campaign, but it remained rather civil for the most part of 2022. Neither migration nor Islam have mattered, as most public interest was consumed by the Czech role in the Ukraine war, inflation and energy prices, and the integrity of the election frontrunners.

The populist far right - since other radical right parties have not entered parliament in 2021, currently represented by Tomio Okamura's SPD (Liberty and Direct Democracy) party - and a growing, but still marginal "patriotic movement", remain the main sources of anti-Islam and anti-migration discourse. But both have weakened in 2022. The SPD continues to brandish the threat of migration and Islam, but these issues have not been a priority in 2022. Yet, the current list of demands as stated on the SPD's main page figures issues such as sovereignty, state and private indebtedness, the social system, jobs, tax rise, corruption, and referenda - not Islam and migration.⁶

Despite Islam being overshadowed by the war in Ukraine, Tomio Okamura did not fail to comment on the newly instated muezzin call in Cologne: "The Islamisation of Europe continues. In Cologne, a muezzin has begun to summon Muslims to a giant mosque. The SPD does not want us to end up like the Islamised Western Europe and we do not want hateful Islamic ideology and illegal immigrants here!"⁷ The so-called Islamisation of Europe continues to be among the mainstay issues for Okamura⁸ and his slogan "NO to migration and Islam in the Czech Republic! NO to the dictate from Brussels. Czech Republic in 1st place:-)"⁹

On August 26, 2022, MP Jiří Kobza (SPD) again called to amend Act No. 40/2009 Coll. of the Criminal Code banning the promotion and dissemination of hateful ideologies by adding Islam. He stated,

Islam is not just a religion. It is a very complex ideology that deals down to the smallest detail with the personal lives of Muslims, their relationship with non-believers, and includes a methodology for expansion into non-Muslim countries through their Islamisation. This doctrine of conquest of the West has recently been characterised as political Islam according to the doctrine of Imam Khomeini.¹⁰

6. www.spd.cz

7. <https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/profily/Tomio-Okamura-13074/clanek/-Muslimove-vitezove-demograficke-zmeny-hlasa-titulek-nemeckeho-deniku-125321>

8. <https://tomio.cz/islamizace-zapadni-evropy-neuprosne-postupuje-2/>

9. <https://tomio.cz/videla/tomio-okamura-ne-migraci-a-islam-u-cr-ne-diktatu-z-bruselu-ceska-republika-na-1-miste/>

10. <https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/profily/Mgr-Jiri-Kobza-105275/clanek/Islam-neni-pouze-nabozenstvi-Je-to-velmi-komplexni-ideologie-123905>

Needless to say, Kobza's speech was among many speeches by the parliamentary radical right posturing on account of Islam that has not had - and will not have - any immediate consequences, like their opposition to any support to war-torn Ukraine. But, it indicates that the SPD does not relent from its systematic signalling of Islamophobia.

The SPD has also made efforts to introduce covering or concealing the face or part of the face in a manner which makes it difficult or impossible to identify the natural person, except when related to the pursuit of a profession, health reasons or others, as an administrative law. According to In Iustitia, "The proposed amendment, which at first sight may appear neutral, in fact seeks to restrict the rights of Muslim women who cover their faces, as is evident from the explanatory memorandum." The proposal has not yet been discussed in parliament.¹¹

The newer "patriotic scene" remains marginal, divided on account of Covid-19 vaccination, Russia, and elections. The patriotic discourse was largely started by the former "anti-Islamic movement"¹² (Martin Konvička, Petr Hampl, Benjamin Kuras). The anti-Islam movement lost out in the political field to the SPD in 2015. It made a comeback in 2019 with a new discourse that was reminiscent of the U.S. alt-right. It focused on the larger narrative of a decline of the West, liberal-dominated globalisation that destroys nations, and conspiracy theories involving the so-called Great Replacement, and hostility to globalised elites, "neo-Marxism," and feminism. Hostility towards Islam helps integrate anti-liberal and anti-globalisation narratives, but it is not the most prominent issue. Since 2019, neo-patriots meet every summer in Příčovy in Central Bohemia, and they met again in 2022. The eclectic mixture encompasses former anti-Islamists, Catholic fundamentalists, Homeguard activists, alternative media figures, and right-wing extremists.

In a political space dominated by a right-wing coalition that is itself rather sceptical of migration and that is firm on defence and security, there is less space for the radical right. At the end of 2022, the radical right faced two other problems when Andrej Babiš, the populist presidential candidate, took over major elements of radical right rhetoric. The year 2022 was also a year when public discontent with government policies related to Covid-19, inflation, energy, etc. was channelled by hitherto unknown figures into a series of mass protests in September and October.¹³ The protesters considered the parliamentary radical right part of the system. It appears that in the new context of war and economic crises, radical-right formulas based on opposition to Islam and migration no longer work. In 2023, a competition over the

11. https://in-ius.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/i-kvartalni-zprava_1.3.-31.3.2022.pdf

12. This is Petr Hampl's term from a blog post from 23.9.2021: <https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/nazory-a-pe-tice/Petr-Hampl-Jak-dal-s-obranou-Zapadu-677936>

13. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/tens-thousands-protest-prague-against-czech-government-eu-nato-2022-09-03/>

leadership of popular discontent will be reopened and it is expected that the radical right will experience a restructuring and will be looking for new formulas around social needs, a strong state, or anti-system positions. Anti-Islam will most probably not figure prominently.

Public treatment of migration in 2022 is a case in point. The year 2022 saw the largest migration event in the history of the Czech Republic with almost half a million Ukrainian refugees, mostly women and children as men are drafted in Ukraine, being registered for temporary protection in the country.¹⁴ Between 200,000 and 300,000 refugees have stayed and about 100,000 have found work in the country.¹⁵ Unlike during the 2015 migration scare, there is comparatively very little popular backlash against these refugees. The government has tackled the reception of refugees reasonably well and benefited from a solid social solidarity with Ukrainians fleeing war. When backlash occurs, the cost of hosting refugees and generally the distribution of social expenditures are at stake, not the refugees themselves. Ukrainians are largely seen as victims of an aggressor with whom Czechs have a long and negative experience and who deserve help. Czechs have engaged both in extensive refugee support at home and in humanitarian aid in Ukraine itself. That being said, Czechs were much less welcoming to Ukrainian Roma refugees.¹⁶

Hence, experience with a very massive migration has taken some edge away from the issue of migration. As a case in point, massive Ukrainian migration has mostly overshadowed one of the largest detections of undocumented migrants and refugees coming through the Balkan route who are often from the Middle East. In a move reminiscent of 2015, the Czech Republic has introduced border controls on the Slovak border, and uncovered almost 30,000 undocumented migrants and hundreds of human traffickers.¹⁷ This is a twofold increase from 2021 and a sixfold increase compared to 2018.¹⁸ Despite this rather unprecedented increase in “illegal migration”, there was no major public uproar.

When it comes to the other source of anti-Islam rhetoric, the world of “alternative media”, there was a notable weakening of the issue of Islam and migration. The war in Ukraine has largely redirected the disinformation scene to the war and to the presidential campaign, and most active disinformation projects have faced a backlash. Due to security concerns in relation to the war in Ukraine, Czech internet pro-

14. <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/docasnou-ochranu-v-cr-loni-ziskalo-473-216-ukrajinskych-uprchliku-pred-vaalkou/2305214>

15. https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/ukrajina-rusko-valka-cesko-uprchlici-prace_2211231841_afo

16. <https://migraceonline.cz/cz/e-knihovna/zalezi-na-romskych-zivotech-ukrajinsti-uprchlici-a-nase-rasova-smlouva>

17. While the traffickers are prosecuted, the migrants are either barred from entering or continue their way westwards.

18. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-zivot-v-cesku-temer-30-tisic-nelegalnich-migrantu-odhalila-loni-policie-224095>

viders muted two dozen disinformation websites that were echoing Russian propaganda. Some have come back after a moment of confusion.

In conclusion, Islam has not figured as an issue in Czechia for the last several years and 2022 has confirmed this trend. Anti-Islamic discourse continues as one element among many in the rather marginal Czech alt-right scene. A possible change is to be expected in the 2024 elections if Babiš's ANO reproduces the strategy of alliance with the radical right that it tested in its 2022 presidential campaign.

Media

Mainstream media have been reporting in a largely correct way about Islam-related issues or the Muslim world. There was no notable issue with reporting on the Qatar World Cup, Iran protests, the attack on Salman Rushdie, etc.

The Czech public media continues tackling divisive social issues reasonably well. Czech Radio, the public radio broadcaster of the Czech Republic, has programmes focused on religion and invites informed experts in case of controversies. Privately owned press and tabloids tend toward more sensational and divisive reporting, especially in times of major foreign events. The daily newspaper *Mladá Fronta Dnes* and its website *Idnes.cz*, and the daily newspaper *Lidové Noviny* and its website *lidovky.cz* are owned by former prime minister Andrej Babiš. The smaller TV station TV Barandov draws controversial personalities, including far-right figures. At the same time, there is a vivid liberal online and print media scene such as *Deník N*, *Hlídací Pes*, *Voxpot* and *Alarm* that develop investigative journalism and reporting, and balance the commercial sphere, especially when it comes to foreign policy and social issues.

Internet

Various conspiracy theories involving “Muslim migration” continue to exist in the so-called alternative media scene, both on specialised portals and on social media. The “disinformation” scene has been under scrutiny for several years for suspicions of “hybrid war” conducted on behalf of Russia. Like the radical right, this scene has also registered major changes as a consequence of the Ukraine war. In February 2022, the Czech government and the National Cyber Operations Centre called on the Association of Mobile Network Operators to prevent the spread of Russian propaganda in order to protect the security of the Czech Republic. Around 20 pro-Russian disinformation websites were blocked for three months.

Among them was the oldest website specialised on Islam-sceptical republishing, *Eurabia.cz* used to be run by a convicted anti-Semite before migrating to parliamentnilisty.cz (parliament letters), a large portal that is outside the mainstream. *Eurabia* has not come back after the ban expired. To continue the 17-year-long “service”, an ex-convert to Islam and current alt-right figure, Lukáš Lhoťan has set up the new

website islamizace.cz (Islamisation).¹⁹ There, he combines his usual Islam-sceptical narratives and pro-Russian views, and propagates a soft version of the Great Replacement conspiracy theory. His new website is also considered part of the disinformation scene. Lhořan continues to operate a Facebook account under the name “euRABIA - Islam conquers Europe, Eurabia.cz defends it” but with limited reach (8,000 followers). Other websites such as pravdaoislamu.cz specialising in portraying Islam as a threat have disappeared.

Justice System

The Czech justice continues to prosecute hate speech on the internet. Two more men have been sentenced for approving of the Christchurch terrorist act in New Zealand bringing the overall number of sanctions for “support and propagation of terrorism” to three dozen since 2021.²⁰

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The anti-Islam scene continues to be led by the far-right SPD and catered by the still marginal neo-patriotic movement, although anti-Islam rhetoric continues to lose prominence to other issues.

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. Since the outbreak of the war, the radical right has split on account of the interpretation of the war.

As explained above, the SPD has adjusted its positions. It relented from focusing on Islam and migration and started instead to raise social issues. While the current right-wing coalition has adopted firmly Atlanticist and pro-Ukrainian positions that reflect the orientation of the country, and has failed to focus on inflation and the rising energy prices, prominent SPD members Jaroslav Foldyna and Jaroslav Bašta with pro-Russian sympathies attempt to remain ambiguous on the Russian war, reject the support for Ukraine, and oppose the government for failed social policies. Anti-Islam rhetoric has not figured prominently.

The SPD nevertheless continues to comment on Islam-related events in Europe.

There is no single leading figure in the nascent alt-right scene, but former anti-Islamist Peter Hampl shows the greatest personal activity and integrates the whole neo-patriotic scene with earlier anti-Islam activists. He does so in his publication

19. <https://www.sosp.cz/eurabia/>

20. <https://chomutovsky.denik.cz/zlociny-a-soudy/soud-podpora-terorismus-usti-20220714.html>, <https://plzenska.drba.cz/zpravy/11150-soud-s-dezinformatorem-obzalovanym-z-podpory-terorismu-a-nasilim-proti-politikum-nezacak-neprišli-obhajci.html>

activities, notably his website²¹ and his “patriotic bookshop”.²² Hampl publishes a book almost every year. His newest book reiterated the threat of “Islamisation” and was titled *Breaking the Walls II: Why and How Western Elites Are Destroying Their Own Civilisation and Facilitating Its Islamisation*.²³ Hampl continues to warn against the “colonisation by Islam”,²⁴ and even Ukraine is supposedly getting “Islamised” in Hampl’s view by Chechen Kadyrovtsy.²⁵ The threat of “Islamisation” continues also to be nourished by an ex-convert to Islam, Lukáš Lhořan, in the abovementioned website and in his new book *Third Wave: Islamisation, Mass Migration and Russia*.²⁶

With the disappearance of major anti-Islam legitimisation actor Miloš Zeman from public space, and with the multiplication of divisive issues (Covid-19 vaccination, war in Ukraine,²⁷ Andrej Babiš’s move towards the far right, new radical protest movements) and in the absence of any growth, this neo-patriotic movement appears to be a club of spent politicians. Yet, there is a more sophisticated “conservative left” project led by former leftists and liberals turned conservatives (Petr Drulák, Jan Kellner) who borrow from the French New Right and their ethnopluralist theory. Unlike intellectually blunt neo-patriots, the Czech “new right” makes sure not to adopt openly anti-Islam or Islamophobic positions.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There is a series of Czech- and foreign-sponsored projects and grassroots initiatives by organisations like People in Need, Nesehnutí, Hate Free Culture, etc. that increased knowledge about Islam, fought stereotypes, and generally helped foster social communication. At the same time, academic study of Islam has become mainstream in Czech universities. Besides a permanent Center for the Study of European Islam at the University of České Budějovice,²⁸ there are scores of research projects studying cultural diversity. For example, between 2016 and 2022, the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague led a large EU-funded project called “KREAS”

21. Petrhampl.cz

22. Pi-shop. Cz sells books by Benjamin Kuras, Petr Hampl, and the anti-Islamist Center for the Study of Political Islam.

23. <https://www.megaknihy.cz/literatura-faktu/308735-prolomeni-hradeb.html>

24. <https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/monitor/Nejhorsi-vlada-od-protektoratu-rozebira-Petr-Hampl-Ale-lide-aspon-vedi-na-cem-jsou-724517?fbclid=IwAR3wxzFO0fkJyZuptEtpbndfZONrsVNTMMLtQB-vcRKDthUptmv1n5q24d7E>

25. <https://www.petrhampl.com/ukrajina-na-prahu-islamizace/>

26. Třetí vlna - Islamizace, masová migrace a Rusko (Lhořan 2022),

27. The Czech alt-right has subscribed to Russian propaganda, for example, on the issue of the Bucha massacre: <https://www.forum24.cz/hampl-konvicka-a-spol-popiraji-ruska-zverstva-na-ukrajine-pravniky-a-psychiatry-by-to-melo-zaujmut/>

28. <https://www.facebook.com/studiumevropskehoislam/>

with a large chapter devoted to the “encounters with foreign cultures” that “should not be understood as threats but, rather, as incentives to shape the future of Europe and its values.”²⁹

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2022 saw a further decline in Islamophobic activity and the sidelining of the anti-Islam agenda of far-right parties as public space was occupied by the war in Ukraine and political space by a security-minded, right-wing coalition government. Both Islam and migration ceased to be salient divisive issues. Courts and police state that they have continued to tackle anti-Islam prejudice, especially in internet hate speech.

On the other hand, former anti-Islam and anti-migration positions may transform into a more publicly acceptable sovereigntist and declinist discourse as they are taken up by more sophisticated actors who avoid outright racism and Islamophobia. While social discontent grows, and the Czech Republic faces unprecedented crises every year, it is to be expected that nativism and identitarian politics will find an outlet and will be taken up before the next parliamentary elections in 2024.

Recommendations:

- Tackle further internet-based hate speech with youth education and justice reforms.
- Continue to embed Islamophobia within the larger problem of racist activities and not to single it out.
- Continue to develop civic initiatives that foster communication across class, ethnic, regional, and age divides.
- Monitor and understand identitarian and neo-nationalist agendas.
- Involve Muslim communities in public activities.
- Work within EU-wide structures (such as Amnesty International, ENAR, ODIHR).
- Support female activism of all sorts and include Muslimas.
- Support general knowledge and acquaintance with Islam and its place in Europe.

Chronology

- **13.08.2022:** Annual “patriotic meeting” of the far-right scene in Příčovy

29. <https://kreas.ff.cuni.cz/>

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
DENMARK
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

LAMIES NASSRI

The Author

Lamies Nassri has a MA in language psychology from the University of Copenhagen, where she specialized in language use, identity, and power relations. She has worked in the field of anti-racism for several years, focusing on Islamophobia in Denmark. Nassri is the project manager at the Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark (CEDA), a Danish NGO that seeks to raise awareness and address Islamophobia in Denmark. She has written and contributed to several international reports on issues of racism and discrimination in Denmark. Nassri also regularly writes op-eds in mainstream and alternative media, and campaigns on issues pertaining to Muslims' rights in Denmark.

Email: Lamies@ceda.nu

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Executive summary

The year 2022 was an eventful year both in relation to Islamophobic incidences and new anti-racist initiatives in Denmark.

The public debate has been consumed with two legal cases that question the effectiveness of the Danish judicial system and its ability to ensure that there is no miscarriage of justice in court cases. One case was about a young man, who was convicted of terrorism for allegedly having travelled to Syria. However, he claims he was working for the Danish Security Services. Another case concerns two Muslim Danish-Somali sisters whose parents were convicted for allegedly circumcising their daughters. Despite the family's legal appeal, the Court of Appeal has refused to reopen the case.

One of the big topics in the field of education was the question of fundamental Danish values in primary school and high school. This included a public discussion about whether the Danish cartoon controversy should be a mandatory part of the history curriculum in primary schools.

Another important topic in the field of education was related to a government-elected commission which recommended a hijab ban in elementary schools. The recommendation sparked a lot of criticism by Muslim women, the Danish Union of Teachers, researchers, and the general public for its superficial conclusions.

National elections took place in November 2022, and a new right-wing party, the Denmark Democrats, managed to win 14 mandates. The Social Democrats remain in power and have formed a majority cross-party with Denmark's Liberal Party and the Moderates.

A survey on ethnic profiling showed that the risk of being charged by the police without a conviction is 27% higher for immigrants and 45% higher for descendants compared to people of Danish origin. Several surveys on employment and media show that there is still a lack of representation and equality, regarding pay gaps, leadership positions and media representation. In media, ethnic minorities make up only 3.5% of the news sources, even though they constitute 14% of Denmark's population.

Sammenfatning

Året 2022 har været et begivenhedsrigt år både hvad angår islamofobiske hændelser, men også i forhold til nye antiracistiske initiativer.

Den offentlige debat har været opslugt af to juridiske sager som stillede spørgsmål ved det juridiske systems evne til at sikre borgere fra justitsmord. Den ene af sagerne handler om en terrorismedømt mand, der påstår, at han arbejdede for Politiets Efterretningstjeneste og Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste under sine rejser til Syrien. Den anden sag handler om et dansk-somalisk forældrepar, der er blevet dømt for at have omskåret deres to døtre. På trods af forældrenes appel, har den særlige Klageret afvist at genoptage sagen.

Et af de store emner inden for uddannelse, har drejet sig om såkaldte "danske værdier" i folkeskolen og gymnasiet. Debatten har bl.a. fokuseret på om hvorvidt karrikaturkrisen skal være en obligatorisk del af historiefagets pensum i folkeskolen.

Et andet stort emne inden for uddannelse, drejer sig om en regeringsnedsat kommission, der anbefalede et tørklædeforbud i grundskolen. Anbefalingen affødte en del kritik af bl.a. muslimske kvinder, Danmarks Lærerforening og den generelle befolkning, for at drage overfladiske konklusioner.

Folketingsvalget fandt sted i november 2022, og det lykkedes et nyt højreorienteret parti, Danmarksdemokraterne, at få 14 mandater. Den nye brede regering består af Socialdemokratiet, Venstre og Moderaterne.

En undersøgelse angående etnisk profilering blandt politiet viser, at sandsynligheden for at blive sigtet uden fældende afgørelse er 27% højere for indvandrere end for personer med dansk oprindelse. Tallet for efterkommere er 45%. Adskillige undersøgelser vedrørende beskæftigelse og medier, viser, at der stadig er mangel på repræsentation og lighed. Både hvad angår lønniveauet mellem en "ikke-vestlig" og en person med dansk oprindelse og hvad angår direktionslokalerne og bestyrelsesposterne. I mediesammenhæng, udgør etniske minoriteter kun 3,5% af nyhedskilderne, selvom de udgør 14% af Danmarks befolkning.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Denmark

Type of Regime: Constitutional monarchy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentarism

Ruling Parties: Socialdemokratiet (Social Democratic Party), Venstre (Denmark's Liberal Party), and Moderaterne (Moderates) - a majority cross-party government that consists of parties across the political spectrum. There has not been a majority government in Denmark since 1993/94.

Opposition Parties: Green Left, Social Liberal Party, Denmark Democrats, Liberal Alliance, Conservative Party, Red-Green Alliance, New Right, Danish People's Party, Alternative

Last Elections: 2023 National Elections: The Social Democratic Party won 27.5% of the votes, Denmark's Liberal Party won 13.3%, and the Moderates won 9.3% of the votes.

Total Population: 5.9 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*) shows that the police have registered fewer hate crimes in 2021 than in 2020.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Statistics on racism and discrimination are lacking.

Major Religions (% of Population): Protestant Christians (74.7%), Muslims (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 (MFR), IslamAkademiet, Udforsk Islam

Main NGOs combating 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, Muslimernes Fællesråd (MFR), iChange, Psykologfagligt Netværk mod Diskrimination (PND)

Far-Right Parties: Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti), The New Right (Nye Borgerlige), Denmark Democrats (Danmarksdemokraterne)

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, since 2018 it has been illegal to cover one's face without a valid reason in public places; religion is not considered a valid reason.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The year 2022 was marked by allegations of miscarriage of justice, as two major stories unfolded in public. One about a young Danish-Syrian man, who was charged with terrorism for the work he claimed he did as a secret agent for the Danish Security and Intelligence Service and later the Danish Defence Intelligence Service. Another, regarded a Danish-Somali family, where the parents served time for a crime they claim that they did not commit.¹

Considering the limited space in this report, it has not been possible to elaborate on all Islamophobic incidents that unfolded in Denmark in 2022. These incidents include the severe legislation that continues to affect Syrian female refugees by revoking their residence permits on the premise that Damascus is considered safe to return by the Danish government.² However, without an agreement between the two governments, the women are placed in dehumanizing centers, and separated from their families and friends. This also includes non-citizens who are born and raised in Denmark, but who, because of strict citizenship rules, continue their struggles for obtaining Danish citizenship.³

The year 2022 was marked by national elections that took place in November. The newly formed government is a majority cross-party government that consists of parties across the political spectrum, including the Social Democrats, the Liberal Party of Denmark, and the Moderates. Mette Frederiksen from the Social Democrats was re-elected as prime minister of Denmark.

In June, a new report from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), criticized Denmark for the increasing discrimination and hate speech directed at Muslims, and for not doing enough to combat this discrimination.⁴ The Danish government has agreed to create a National Action Plan against Racism; however, the initial work indicates a lack of focus on Islamophobia and racism targeting Muslims disproportionately. The plan's main focus has been on hate crime, hate speech, and racism on an individual level, while neglecting racism on a structural level.⁵ This is worrying, as it could indicate a lack of understanding or willingness to al-

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1. Frederik Hugo Ledegaard et al, "Forældre blev dømt for omskæringer: Da der opstod tvivl, blev de samme læger sat til at genvurdere sagen", *politiken.dk*, (June 20, 2022), retrieved February 22, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/foraeldre-blev-doemt-omskaringer-da-der-opstod-tvivl-blev-de-samme-laeger-sat-til>
 2. Cecilie Lund Kristiansen et al, "Skør udlændingepolitik? Her er otte, der er blevet ramt. Se, hvordan det går dem i dag", *politiken.dk*, (October 17, 2022), retrieved January 26, 2023, from https://politiken.dk/indland/art9030774/Sk%C3%B8r-udl%C3%A6ndingepolitik-Her-er-otte-der-er-blevet-ramt.-Se-hvordan-det-g%C3%A5r-dem-i-dag?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1666011600
 3. *ibid.*
 4. Steen A. Jørgensen & Ida Sejersdal Dreier, "Ny racisme-rapport: Danmark får kritik for stigende had mod muslimer", *jyllands-posten*, (June 9, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE14119045/ny-racismerapport-danmark-faar-kritik-for-stigende-had-mod-muslimer/>
 5. Justitsministeriet, "Regeringen er enig med SF, Radikale Venstre, Enhedslisten, Alternativet og Kristen-demokraterne om at lave en handlingsplan mod racisme", *justitsministeriet.dk*, (January 24, 2022, retrieved February 22, 2023)

ter the structural challenges for Muslims in Denmark that are legitimized through political discourse.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

According to the Danish National Police's newly published report on hate crimes for 2021 - the reports are published retrospectively - a total of 164 cases were registered by the police as religiously motivated hate crimes out of a total of 521 registered cases. Out of the 164 religiously motivated hate crimes, 38% targeted Muslims. In comparison, the number was 45% in 2020. Throughout the period 2017-2021, Muslims have accounted for the largest portion (49%) of religiously motivated registered hate crimes, with 389 registered cases out of 792.⁶ According to the National Police this is due to Muslims constituting the largest religious minority group in Denmark, and as such, they claim, it is to be expected that the police should receive more reports from Muslims than other people who belong to smaller religious communities.⁷ According to the police there has been a fall in registered hate crimes. However, it should be noted that it is the police who assess what constitutes a hate crime. This means that the number of reported hate crimes by Muslims could be much higher than the number registered by the police. According to the Institute for Human Rights, the unreported numbers, could be caused by a lack of reporting by victims, who lack trust that their report will be registered properly by the police, or because many of the reported hate crimes are processed as regular criminal cases by the police.⁸

There have been at least two well-known public verdicts on hate speech towards Muslims. In one, a 35-year-old man was sentenced to 60 days in prison for urging the execution of Muslims.⁹ In another case, a man was charged for inciting the killing of Muslims in a video published on YouTube. The man, who is a former member of Rasmus Paludan's party, Hard Line (*Stram Kurs*), was sentenced to four months in jail for the video.¹⁰

ruary 22, 2023, from <https://www.justitsministeriet.dk/pressemeddelelse/regeringen-er-enig-med-sf-radikale-venstre-enhedslisten-alternativet-og-kristendemokraterne-om-at-lave-en-handlingsplan-mod-racisme/>

6. Rigspolitiet, "Hadforbrydelser i 2021 – Rigspolitiet's årsrapport vedrørende hadforbrydelser", January, 2023. retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://politi.dk/-/media/mediefiler/landsdaekkende-dokumenter/statistikker/hadforbrydelser/hadforbrydelser-2021.pdf>
7. Ibid.
8. Institut for Menneskerettigheder, "Hadforbrydelser", retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://menneskeret.dk/hadforbrydelser>
9. Marianne Nielsen, "Mand dømt for hadforbrydelse," *sn.dk*, (June 17, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.sn.dk/odshered-kommune/mand-doemt-for-hadforbrydelse/>
10. "Koranafrbrænder dømt for opfordring til drab på muslimer og trusler mod Zenia Stampe," *redox.dk*, (September 23, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://redox.dk/nyheder/koranafrbraender-doemt-for-opfordring-til-drab-paa-muslimer-og-trusler-mod-zenia-stampe/>

In late April 2022, a 15-year-old was arrested and later charged with terrorism for being part of, and inciting others to join, the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). The FKD originates from another far-right group called Atomwaffen Division and is considered to be a terrorist group by the prosecution in Denmark¹¹ and in other countries.¹² According to an article, the 15-year-old, among others, in a Telegram chat incited the decapitation of all Muslims and other minorities, and the destruction of a nuclear power plant.¹³

Another case that went viral on social media was an incident in 2021, where Sikandar Siddique, head of the Independent Greens party, and his parents, were verbally attacked with racial slurs in front of the Parliament. The incident prompted a reaction from the prime minister who called it a racist attack.¹⁴ However, in 2022, the Copenhagen Police assessed that the man who attacked Siddique should be prosecuted for harassment of a person in public service or office, but not for a hate crime.¹⁵



Figure 1: Screenshot from a video on MP Sikandar Siddiques's Twitter account showing the perpetrator of a verbal attack with racial slurs against him and his parents in front of the Parliament.¹⁶

11. Frederik Hagemann-Nielsen and Louise Dalsgaard, "15-årig chattede på nynazistisk forum om at halshugge muslimer og bombe atomkraftværk," *dr.dk*, (April 26, 2022), retrieved February 23, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/15-aarig-chattede-paa-nynazistisk-forum-om-halshugge-muslimer-og-bombe>
12. Ben Makuch, "British Government Bans Atomwaffen Division As Criminal Terrorist Organization", *vice.com*, (April 21, 2021), retrieved February 23, 2023, from <https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7ejna/british-government-bans-atomwaffen-division-as-criminal-terrorist-organization>
13. Frederik Hagemann-Nielsen, "16-årig mistænkt for at have tilsluttet sig nynazistisk gruppe: Nu vil anklager have ham tiltalt for terror," *dr.dk*, (November 8, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/16-aarig-mistaenkt-have-tilsluttet-sig-nynazistisk-gruppe-nu-vil-anklager-have-ham>
14. "Mette Frederiksen: Folketingsmedlem blev udsat for racisme," *jyllands-posten.dk*, (October 7, 2021), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE13347654/mette-frederiksen-folketingsmedlem-blev-udsat-for-racisme/>
15. "Mand undgår racismesag for tilråb mod Siddique og forældre," *tv2.dk*, (January 22, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2022-01-22-mand-undgar-racismesag-for-tilrab-mod-siddique-og-foraeldre>
16. Tweet from Sikandar Siddique, @SikandaSIDDIQUE, retrieved January 25, 2023 from <https://twitter.com/SikandaSIDDIQUE/status/1445365758318596102?s=20&t=LphnLZzfkVbuswkioG0vqA>

A report from the Institute of Human Rights shows that there is a problem with discrimination and ethnic profiling within the police force.¹⁷ The report shows that people from Africa or the Middle East have a significantly greater risk than people of Danish origin of being arrested or charged without being convicted. According to the analysis, the risk of being charged without a conviction is 27% higher for immigrants and 45% higher for their descendants compared to people of Danish origin.¹⁸ Faced with the results of the report, the Danish police responded that they carry out their work based on factual criteria and that they are very aware of preventing discrimination. As such they currently have no further reason to examine why people from Africa or the Middle East are being arrested or charged without being convicted more often than people of Danish origin.¹⁹

Employment

In Denmark, 4.9 % of the population has a family background in the Middle East, North Africa, or Turkey. However, according to a study by the analysis company Denominator, the same group only occupies 0.15% of the seats in boardrooms and 1.66 % of the seats on the board of directors in the 100 largest Danish companies.²⁰ Another survey by Statistics Denmark shows that “non-Westerners” with the same education as their Danish peers earn as much as 8.4% less than their Danish colleagues.²¹

In 2022, two female students won a case in the Equal Treatment Board after having their internships suspended because they greeted their male supervisor by placing their hand on their heart instead of shaking his hand. The board ruled it as indirect discrimination on the grounds of religion and said that a compensation of 25,000 DKR should be paid to each student.²² The former minister of immigration and integration, Mattias Tesfaye, commented on the case saying it is a Danish value to shake another person’s hand and that it was not a token of good integration to re-

17. Institut for Menneskerettigheder, “Etnisk Profilerings – Hovedresultater fra tre undersøgelser”, *menneskeret.dk*, (Marts 19, 2022), retrieved February 2, 2023, from https://menneskeret.dk/files/media/document/Politi_Hovedrapport_06.pdf

18. “Institut ser problemer med diskrimination i politiet”, *kristeligt-dagblad.dk*, (Marts 19, 2022), retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/institut-ser-problemer-med-diskrimination-i-politiet>

19. Frauke Giebner, “Ny rapport: Politiet har et problem med diskrimination”, *pol.dk*, (March 19, 2022), retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8667696/Politiet-har-et-problem-med-diskrimination>

20. Henrik Nordskilde, “Vi har mål for, hvor mange kvinder vi vil have i ledelse, men hvor er målene for etniske minoriteter?”, *lederstod.dk*, (October 20, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from https://www.lederstod.dk/vi-har-maal-for-hvor-mange-kvinder-vi-vil-have-i-ledelse?utm_source=linkedin&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=inkluderence_ledelse&utm_content=interview&cid=sm18001

21. Henriksen, L.F., L. Holck og S.L. Muhr (2022), “Organizing against inequality: Wage gaps and workplace unionisation among high-skilled migrants”, Working Paper, København: Copenhagen Business School. Økonomi & Politik: “Den nye magtudredning”, Djøf Forlag, #3-4, (December, 2022), https://www.djoef-forlag.dk/openaccess/oep/full/OEP_3_4_2022.pdf

22. “Muslimske kvinder nægtede at give hånd. Nu får de hver 25.000 kroner i godtgørelse”, *kristeligt-dagblad.dk*, (January 13, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/muslimske-kvinder-naegtete-give-haand-nu-faar-de-hver-25000-kroner-i-godtgoerelse>

ject a handshake.²³ According to the media outlet Nordiske Medier, the municipality has refused to pay the two students the compensation.²⁴

Education

One of the major topics in the field of education was the question of what essential Danish values are and how to teach these in primary school and high school. One of the ongoing discussions involved whether to make it obligatory to teach about the Danish cartoon controversy²⁵ as part of the history curriculum. The Parliament could not reach an agreement and the subject has been dropped for now.²⁶ As part of this wider debate on national values, the controversy around a newly published history textbook written by high school teacher and historian Iman Hassani is worth mentioning. The book is about Denmark's cultural encounters with the Middle East from a postcolonial perspective.²⁷ The textbook quickly became part of the wider national discussion on cultural relativism and national values, and was even mentioned in a social media post by the Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, who wrote,

If there is anything that can destroy a society, it is value relativism. A notion that all values are equally good. If we, as a society, do not dare to define common values, norms and the rules of the game, then it will slowly but surely fall apart (...) If we start to bend the facts according to attitude and religion, then democracy will erode.²⁸

As such, Hassani's professional credentials were dismissed, and her ethnic and religious background was emphasized and used to undermine her work.²⁹

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23. Steen A. Jørgensen, "Tesfaye om håndtryk-sag: "Det er en dansk værdi, at man kan hilse på hinanden uanset køn".", *jyllands-posten.dk*, (January 19, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE13656108/tesfaye-om-haandtryksag-det-er-en-dansk-vaerdi-at-man-kan-hilse-paa-hinanden-uaanset-koen/>
 24. "Albertslund nægter at betale erstatning til kvinder i håndtrykssag", *nordiskemedier.dk*, (January 28, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.nordiskemedier.dk/article/view/831953/albertslund-naegter-at-betale-erstatning-til-kvinder-i-handtrykssag>
 25. Peter Hervik, "The Danish Muhammad Cartoon Conflict", *Researchgate.net*, (January, 2012), retrieved February 24, 2023, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233988104_The_Danish_Muhammad_Cartoon_Conflict
 26. Andreas Wind, "Efter et halvt års stilstand: Regeringen indkalder til forhandlinger om undervisning i Muhammedkrisen", *Altinget.dk*, (August 22, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/efter-et-halvt-aars-stilstand-regeringen-indkalder-til-forhandlinger-om-undervisning-i-muhammedkrisen>
 27. Iman Hassani, "Danmarks kulturmoder med Mellemøsten – fra vikingetiden til krigen mod terror", *frydenlund.dk*, retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://frydenlund.dk/ungdomsuddannelserne/historie-og-religion/danmarks-kulturmoder-med-mellemosten-7000>
 28. Mette Frederiksen, *instagram.com*, (August 14, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/ChP8xIINxe5/> (own translation)
 29. Nima Zamani, "Omstridt lærebog om mellemøstlig kultur forvrænger virkeligheden: 'Bør for alt i verden ikke indgå i skolerne undervisning'", *altinget.dk*, (August 16, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/omstridt-laerebog-om-mellemoestlig-kultur-forvraenger-virkeligheden-boer-for-alt-i-verden-ikke-indgaa-i-skolernes-undervisning/> Bent Blüdnikow, "Kulturkampen i skolerne er i fuld gang - ny undervisningsbog viser, hvordan eleverne indoktrineres", *berlingske.dk*, (August 6, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.berlingske.dk/litteratur/kulturkampen-i-skolerne-er-i-fuld-gang-ny-undervisningsbog-viser/> Thomas Hoffmann in *Deadline*, (August 20, 2022), *facebook.com*, (August 21, 2022),

One of the prevalent debates in 2022 revolved around a commission whose members were selected by the government to bring forth recommendations on “how we in Denmark can ensure minority women the same rights and freedom as other Danish women.”³⁰ In late August, the “Commission for the Forgotten Women’s Struggle” recommended a hijab ban in elementary schools, including Muslim schools.³¹ According to Christina Krzyrosiak Hansen, chairman of the commission and social democratic mayor of Holbæk Municipality, the hijab divides children and shows that Muslim girls are different from Danish girls. With the ban the commission wanted to “ensure that the girls, who do not have the same freedoms as the rest of us, obtain them.”³²

The hijab ban was one of the commission’s nine recommendations. The other recommendations included, among others, a contingency plan against “honor-related social control,” including an increased awareness on the matter in daycare centers and primary schools; better use of health visitors’ access to ethnic minority families; courses on modern Danish child rearing; increasing sex education in primary school; and strengthening the control of Muslim private schools.³³ Even though all recommendations were problematic, the ban on the hijab was the one recommendation that sparked the most criticism from young Muslim girls who wear the hijab,³⁴ the Danish Union of Teachers,³⁵ researchers,³⁶ and the public in general.³⁷ A survey by the analysis institute Voxmeter, carried out for the media bureau Ritzau, showed that 56.1 % of the public voted against a hijab ban, 28.2 % voted for a ban, and 15.7 % was undecided.³⁸

retrieved January 25, 2023, from, <https://www.facebook.com/DR2Deadline/videos/776715023472369>

30. Kommissionen for den glemte kvindekamp, ”Om Kommissionen”, *denglemtekvindekamp.dk*, retrieved February 23, 2023, from <https://denglemtekvindekamp.dk/om-kommissionen/>
31. Kommissionen for den glemte kvindekamp, ”Delanbefalinger om børneliv”, *denglemtekvindekamp.dk*, retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://denglemtekvindekamp.dk/kommissionens-anbefalinger/delanbefalinger-om-boerneliv/>
32. Mette Viktoria Pabst Andersen, ”Kommission anbefaler at forbyde tørklæder i skolen”, *dr.dk*, (August 24, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/kommission-anbefaler-forbyde-toerklader-i-skolen> (own translation)
33. Kommissionen for den glemte kvindekamp, ”Kommissionen for den glemte kvindekamp offentliggør deres første anbefalinger”, *denglemtekvindekamp.dk*, (August 24, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://denglemtekvindekamp.dk/nyheder/2022/august/kommissionen-for-den-glemte-kvindekamp-offentliggør-deres-foerste-anbefalinger/>
34. Berfin Erdem, ”14-årig skoleelev: Uden tørklædet vil »mit selvværd være helt nede»”, *politiken.dk*, (October 25, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from https://politiken.dk/indland/politik/folketingsvalg_2022/art8985785/Uden-r%C3%B8rk1%C3%A6det-vil-%C2%BBmit-selvv%C3%A6rd-v%C3%A6re-helt-nede%C2%AB?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1666861597
35. Jesper Knudsen, ”Danmark Lærereforening: Stort ’nej tak’ til tørklædeforbud”, *folkeskolen.dk*, (August 25, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.folkeskolen.dk/indskoling-mellemtrin-tosprogede/danmark-laerereforening-stort-nej-tak-til-toerklædeforbud/4671615>
36. Peter Sinbeck, ”Ekspert dumper regeringens kvindekampskommission – anbefalinger er ”dovne” og ”uden belæg””, *tv2.dk*, (August 26, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2022-08-26-ekspert-dumper-regeringens-kvindekampskommission-anbefalinger-er-dovne-og-uden>
37. ”Måling: Flertal siger nej til tørklædeforbud i skoler”, *kristeligt-dagblad.dk*, (September 1, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/maaling-flertal-siger-nej-til-toerklædeforbud-i-skoler>
38. Ibid.

The commission was criticized for not having spoken to any schools, any political party besides the Social Democrats, and for releasing their recommendations only eight months after the commission was established and before their final report was written.³⁹ It was later revealed through text messages and hidden documents that the head of the commission had both shared and discussed the recommendations with prime minister Frederiksen prior to their release, thus putting into question whether the whole effort was a political endeavor by the former government.⁴⁰

Another ongoing topic is the closing of Muslim schools. The Social Democrats continue to state that they want to close the schools, despite being criticized for transgressing human rights conventions. Closing Muslim schools was also deemed unconstitutional by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice;⁴¹ however the Ministry of Justice has since reversed its verdict on the matter.⁴² As to its legal aspect, the former minister of children and education, Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil, insists that it is possible to close the schools, claiming, “It depends on how you put it together. We will present a model that will not be rejected.”⁴³ In 2022, the prime minister entered an agreement with the Local Government Denmark (Kommunernes Landsforening) that the municipalities must handle the distribution of students from the Muslim schools, when they are closed. According to news outlet BT, this indicates that the government might in fact be preparing to close the schools.⁴⁴ According to Rosenkrantz-Theil, “It will be incredibly unsatisfying if we get to June 2023 without anything having happened.”⁴⁵

39. ”Sekretariat bekræfter: Kommission talte ikke med skoleledere før anbefaling om tørklædeforbud”, *politiken.dk*, (September 14, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://politiken.dk/indland/uddannelse/art8976761/Kommission-talte-ikke-med-skoleledere-f%C3%B8r-anbefaling-om-t%C3%B8rkl%C3%A6deforbud>

40. Mie Louise Raatz & Christian Birk, “Statsministerens sms’er blotlægger tætte bånd mellem S og omstridt kommission. »Jeg har aldrig hørt om det før«”, *berlingske.dk*, (October 1, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.berlingske.dk/danmark/statsministerens-sms-er-blotlaegger-taette-baand-mellem-s-og-omstridt?referrer=RSS>

Mie Louise Raatz & Christian Birk, “Tørklædekommission taget i at skjule central passage fra kontroversiel debat: »Det er helt forrykt«”, *berlingske.dk*, (October 1, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/toerklaedekommission-taget-i-at-skjule-central-passage-fra-kontroversiel>

41. Jacob Mchangama, ”Kan man både forsvare muslimske friskoler og mene, at flere af dem bør lukkes? Ja da”, *zetland.dk*, (September 6, 2017), retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/s81EK-5pP-aevmJ36a-ed96f>

42. Naja Dandanel “Friskoler og privatskoler: Uforståeligt, at Justitsministeriet pludselig ændrer holdning til muslimske friskoler”, *skolemonitor.dk*, (October 2, 2020), retrieved February 23, 2023, from <https://skolemonitor.dk/nyheder/art7948307/Uforst%C3%A5eligt-at-Justitsministeriet-pludselig-%C3%A6ndrer-holdning-til-muslimske-friskoler>

43. Jacob Fribjerg, “Mette F. vil lukke muslimske friskoler: Eleverne skal fordeles på folkeskoler”, *bt.dk*, (September 17, 2022), retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.bt.dk/politik/mette-f-vil-lukke-muslimske-friskoler-eleverne-skal-fordeles-paa-folkeskoler>

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid. (own translation)

Politics

In March 2022, Rashed Bin Saad Alolaimi was the first and only person to be put on the new prohibition list (*forbudsliste*).⁴⁶ The list is intended to prevent people or organizations that “oppose democracy and freedoms from donating to recipients in Denmark.”⁴⁷ Alolaimi also appears on the list of religious preachers banned from entering Denmark and any other Schengen country. The list of religious preachers only includes Muslim preachers, including Kamal El Mekki, Ismail Menk, Haitham al-Haddad, and Abu Eesa Niamatullah.⁴⁸ Colloquially, the list is known as the “hate-preacher list” (*hadprædikanlisten*). Only one non-Muslim, pastor Terry Jones, who has made hostile remarks about homosexuality, has ever been on the list.

In November 2022, Denmark held its national elections. Mette Frederiksen from the Social Democrats was re-elected as prime minister, and formed a new majority cross-party government with the Moderates and the Liberal Party of Denmark.⁴⁹ Among the far-right parties, a new party, the Denmark Democrats, won 14 mandates, the New Right gained two new mandates, making it a total of six mandates, while the Danish People’s Party had a historically poor election where it lost 11 mandates, retaining only five. In the opposite wing, the relatively new party Independent Greens, which describes itself as an anti-racist party, did not make it into parliament. The Red-Green Alliance, a left-wing party which has also spoken up against racism, lost four mandates, leaving them with nine.⁵⁰

Compared to previous elections, there was less focus on Muslims and immigrants in the political discourse during the 2022 elections. On the contrary, more parties expressed their willingness to re-evaluate and ease some of the immigration laws that have gone too far especially for immigrants in employment.⁵¹ The main argument is that they now have control over the “influx” of immigrants, and that they all agree

46. “Mand fra Kuwait må ikke give stor donation til danske moskéer”, *kristeligt-dagblad.dk*, (March 23, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/mand-fra-kuwait-maa-ikke-give-stor-donation-til-danske-moskeer>

47. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet, “Første person optaget på forbudsliste for antidemokratiske donatorer”, *uim.dk*, (March 23, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://uim.dk/nyhedsarkiv/2022/marts/foerste-person-optaget-paa-forbudsliste-for-antidemokratiske-donatorer/> (own translation)

48. Ny i Danmark, “Religiøse forkyndere med indrejseforbud”, *nyidanmark.dk*, (December 21, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/da/Ord-og-begreber/US/Religi%C3%B8se-forkyndere/Religi%C3%B8se-forkyndere-med-indrejseforbud/?anchor=7C5D2D143D284E4EB-2829BA5F0F04837&callbackItem=C0848E0180C34017BFB14DC9BC116572&callbackAnchor=608D-F21DB20C40B68646A6B6804E595D7C5D2D143D284E4EB2829BA5F0F04837>

49. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, “Denmark has received a new Government”, (December 12, 2022), retrieved March 7, 2023, from <https://estland.um.dk/en/news/denmark-has-received-a-new-government>

50. DR, “Valgresultater”, *dr.dk* (November 4, 2022), retrieved March 7, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/folketingsvalg/resultater>

51. Anders Bæksgaard, “Er vi vidne til et nyt paradigmeskifte i dansk udlændingepolitik?”, *politiken.dk*, (October 16, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from https://politiken.dk/indland/politik/folketingsvalg_2022/art9031055/Er-vi-vidne-til-et-nyt-paradigmeskifte-i-dansk-udl%C3%A6ndingepolitik

on the importance of a hard line, which gives them space to now look at how the legislation is also affecting a group of people who were not the main target, e.g., those who work in fields that are in dire need of labor force.⁵²

Media

In 2022, the Responsible Press (*Ansvarlig Presse*) launched their newest report titled “Those we (still) talk about” (*Dem vi (stadig) taler om*) on media representation.⁵³ Among their main conclusions was that while immigrants and their descendants, according to Statistics Denmark, make up 14% of Denmark’s population in 2021, they only make up 3.5% of news sources. This is a decline from their previous survey in 2017, when minority citizens made up 12.3% of the population but 4% of the news sources. The report also reveals that minority women are twice as underrepresented, and that minority sources appear in news reserves on topics that have to do with integration, foreigners, and crime. However, although they appear in these discussions, they only make up about 20% of the sources, the rest are mainly white Danish politicians, making the topics highly politicized. When minority sources are used, they are predominantly used as sources of experience and not sources of expertise. Last, but not least, the survey reveals that less than 1% of the 1,244 news items that were part of the survey was penned by a journalist with a minority background.⁵⁴

In January 2022, Denmark’s first Muslim-led radio program broadcasted on a mainstream, national radio station, was launched. *Det Muslimer Taler Om* (What Muslims Talk About) is hosted by journalists Elias Ramadan and Zainab Nasrati, and edited by Omar Alkhatib, all of whom identify as practicing Muslims and is part of the radio station 24syv. The radio program describes itself as tackling issues that are important to Muslims,⁵⁵ and quickly became popular. By the end of the year, it had approximately 1,500 podcast listeners a week, making it one of the most listened to among the radio stations’ programs according to Alkhatib.⁵⁶ The Muslim-led program did not go unnoticed, and during 2022, there were accusations that a known Danish mosque was running the show.⁵⁷ Alkhatib, Nasrati, and Ramadan denied the allegations, problematizing the guilt-by-association approach and the general suspi-

52. Ibid.

53. Hanne Jørndrup 2022, *Dem vi (stadig) taler om: Etniske minoriteter i danske nyhedsmedier*, Roskilde Universitet, Roskilde, retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://ansvarligpresse.dk/onewebmedia/Dem%20Vi%20Stadig%20Taler%20Om%202022.pdf>

54. Ibid.

55. 24syv, “Det, Muslimer Taler Om”, *24syv.dk*, retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://24syv.dk/podcast/det-muslimer-taler-om>

56. Omar Alkhatib, *facebook.com*, (January 4, 2023), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10226634663465730&set=a.2958769681255>

57. Eva Gregersen, “Islamisk Trossamfund har fået sit eget statsstøttede radioprogram på 24syv”, *berlingske.dk*, (August 26, 2022), retrieved January 25, from <https://www.berlingske.dk/kommentatorer/islamisk-trossamfund-har-faet-sit-eget-statsstottede-radioprogram-pa>

cion towards Muslims.⁵⁸ In another op-ed, Ramadan described how he, as a Muslim journalist, has been subject to negative questioning throughout his career.⁵⁹

In December 2022, the Danish host Christian Høgh Andersen (not the man portrayed in Fig. 2, but a journalist off-screen) compared the Moroccan national team, who celebrated their victories with their mothers, with a wildlife photo of a monkey family on national TV. The comment was made as they jumped from one subject to another, which prompted another host to ask Andersen, “I am curious as to how you will land that one with Qatar and those monkeys,” to which Andersen answered, “Because they kind of stick together, and that is also what you do in family reunification in Qatar, [and] in Morocco of course.”⁶⁰ The incident went viral both nationally⁶¹ and internationally.⁶²



Figure 2: Screenshot from “Deltidsaraber” Instagram profile where a comparison is being drawn on Danish national TV between the Moroccan national team, who celebrated their victories with their mothers, and a family of monkeys.⁶³

58. Zainab Nasrati, Elias Ramadan, Omar Alkhatib, ” Klummeskribent manipulerer groft: Det Islamiske Trossamfund har ikke et radioprogram hos 24syv”, *berlingske.dk*, (August 26, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.berlingske.dk/kommentarer/klummeskribent-manipulerer-groft-det-islamiske-trossamfund-har-ikke-et>
59. Elias Ramadan, ”Journalist: Der gælder særlige regler for muslimske journalister”, *politiken.dk*, (September 10, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://politiken.dk/debat/debatindlaeg/art8959279/Journalist-Der-g%C3%A6lder-s%C3%A6rlige-regler-for-muslimske-journalister>
60. (own translation)
61. Charlotte Branner, ”TV 2-vært beskyldes for racisme i bedste sendetid. Nu undskylder tv-stationen”, *politiken.dk*, (December 22, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://politiken.dk/kultur/medier/art9130322/TV-2-v%C3%A6rt-beskyldes-for-racisme-i-bedste-sendetid.-Nu-undskylder-tv-stationen>
62. Al Jazeera English, ”Danish TV compares monkeys to Moroccan footballers and their mothers | AJ #shorts”, *youtube.com*, (December 17, 2022), retrieved February 23, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZH-hJS9khdI&ab_channel=AlJazeeraEnglish
63. Deltidsaraber, *instagram.com*, (December 16, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CmPALcMMvj-/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>

The TV host later said that it was a “poor attempt to be humorous” and “unintentional.” In a Facebook post he offered an “unreserved apology” as what he said “could be perceived” as a racist comment, which in no way was his intention.⁶⁴ The TV station, TV2, also gave a “profound apology” for what “could be perceived as a racist comment.”⁶⁵

Justice system

Justitia, a legal think tank, stated in their annual report that even though Denmark has a high ranking in international measures on the protection of civil rights and the rule of law, there are more and more examples of citizens whose legal certainty and rights are deteriorating.⁶⁶

One of the most talked about cases in 2022, was the case of Ahmad Samsam. Samsam is a young man, who, during a vacation in Spain in 2017, was arrested and given a terrorism sentence of eight years in prison for joining the “Islamic State” on three trips to Syria. He claims that he joined rebel forces (not ISIS) in Syria as an undercover agent for the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) and later for the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (FE).⁶⁷ According to the news outlet Berlingske, leaked documents revealed that Samsam was an agent; that the efforts to assist Samsam were “inadequate”; and that the two Danish services were reluctant and slow to seek the assistance of the Spanish intelligence service.⁶⁸ After three and a half years in several Spanish prisons, Samsam was transferred to serve his remaining time in Denmark, where he remains incarcerated.⁶⁹

During the national election in November 2022, several political parties, including the Moderates and the Liberal Party of Denmark who are now part of the government, were vocal about Samsam’s case, saying they wanted his case investigated by a commission.⁷⁰ After the elections, however, the new minister of justice stated that

64. Christian Høgh Andersen, *facebook.com*, (December 17, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/christianoitaliano/posts/10225084265707168> (own translation)

65. TV2 Communications, “TV 2 apologizes for inappropriate and offensive comment from a host of TV 2 NEWS”, *omtv2.tv2.dk*, (December 17, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://omtv2.tv2.dk/nyheder/2022/12/tv-2-apologizes-for-inappropriate-and-offensive-comment-from-a-host-of-tv-2-news/>

66. Justitia, “Statusrapport: Retssikkerhed 2022”, *report*, *justitia-int.org*, retrieved February 1, 2023, from https://justitia-int.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Statusrapport_retssikkerhed-2022.pdf

67. Frederik Hagemann-Nielsen & Louise Dalsgaard, “Fra sin fængselscelle forsøger Ahmed Samsam at få renset sit navn: ‘Det er et mareridt, der ikke vil ende’”, *dr.dk*, (May 8, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/fra-sin-faengselscelle-forsoger-ahmed-samsam-faa-renset-sit-navn-det-er-et-mareridt>

68. Simon Andersen & Jens Anton Bjørnager, “Nyt læk: PET erkender alvorligt svigt i sag om fængslet spion”, *berlingske.dk*, (June 27, 2021), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/nyt-laek-pet-erkender-alvorligt-svigt-i-sag-om-faengslet-spion>

69. (Ibid.)

70. Louise Dalsgaard & Emil Eller, “Flertal vil have Ahmed Samsam-sag undersøgt i kommission”, *dr.dk*, (October 19, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/flertal-vil-have-ahmed-samsam-sag-undersoegt-i-kommission>

Samsam's case will not be subject to an investigation by a commission regarding the FE, claiming that the government had found no reason to set up a commission to investigate the case.⁷¹ Samsam is suing the PET and FE to have them acknowledge that he cooperated with them and to clear his name.⁷² In December 2022, Samsam announced that he has gone on a hunger strike.⁷³

Another case of possible miscarriage of justice was brought forward in June 2022 in the award-winning podcast "The Living Proof" by journalist Frederik Hugo Ledegaard from the DR.⁷⁴ The podcast tells the story of a Muslim Danish-Somali family, who after a summer vacation in Kenya in 2015 were accused of female genital mutilation (FGM) of their daughters. The suspicion was brought forward by the youngest daughter's schoolteacher, who thought the child appeared gloomy and sad after the summer vacation. The District Court, the High Court, and the Supreme Court with a testimonial from the Council of Forensic Medicine, established that the two sisters had been circumcised. The parents were found guilty and they have since served their sentenced of 1.5 years in prison. Nevertheless, the family have insisted on their innocence from the beginning of the case and the daughters are still fighting to clear their parents' name. The daughters have been examined by several gynecologists, including some of the leading experts on FGM in and outside of Denmark, who have all stipulated that the girls had *not* been victims of FGM, despite what the forensic investigators claimed.⁷⁵ When the family requested the Court of Appeal to reopen their criminal proceedings, the court asked the Council of Forensic Medicine to reassess the new evidence brought to the case. The council then asked the same forensic investigators if they, considering the new expert assessment, would change their conclusion, which they refused to do. Consequently, the Court of Appeal refused to reopen the case.⁷⁶ Several experts have raised concerns regarding the case's lack of due process.⁷⁷

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71. Carsten Thomsen, "Ny justitsminister afviser at undersøge Ahmed Samsam-sagen", *dr.dk*, (December 15, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/seneste/ny-justitsminister-afviser-under-soege-ahmed-samsam-sagen>
72. Louise Dalsgaard et al, "Dokumenter bekræfter hemmelige forhandlinger med efterretningstjenester i Samsam-sag", *dr.dk*, (December 22, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/dokumenter-bekraefter-hemmelige-forhandlinger-med-efterretningstjenester-i-samsam>
73. Louise Dalsgaard & Frederik Hagemann-Nielsen, "Fængsel bekræfter: Terrordømte Ahmed Samsam er gået i sultestrejke", *dr.dk*, (December 9, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/faengsel-bekraefter-terrordømte-ahmed-samsam-er-gaaet-i-sultestrejke>
74. DR, "Det Levende Bevis", (June 17 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/lyd/p1/det-levende-bevis>
75. Frederik Hugo Ledegaard & Anne Skjerning, "Forældre fængslet for at omskære døtre: De er ikke omskåret, siger førende ekspert", *dr.dk*, (December 13, 2018), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/foraeldre-faengslet-omskare-døtre-de-er-ikke-omskaret-siger-foerende-ekspert>
76. Frederik Hugo Ledegaard et al, "Forældre blev dømt for omskæring: Da der opstod tvivl, blev de samme læger sat til at genvurdere sagen", *dr.dk*, (June 20, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/foraeldre-blev-dømt-omskæring-da-der-opstod-tvivl-blev-de-samme-læger-sat-til>
77. Frederik Hugo Ledegaard et al, "Nye oplysninger i sag om omskæring: 'Meget stor sandsynlighed for, at der er sket et justitsmord'", *dr.dk*, (June 19, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/nye-oplysninger-i-sag-om-omskæring-meget-stor-sandsynlighed-der-er-sket-et>

What is important to note is that this case cannot be viewed apart from the prejudice that has been directed at Muslim families during the last two decades; namely, the political climate and the political campaigning that have been focused on, what the government has named, “negative social control” (NSC) and “honor-related conflicts” (HRC). With these sorts of campaigns, teachers and other professionals are being instructed to associate NSC and HRC with Muslim families and Muslim culture, and to pay close attention to Muslim children in regards to different risk factors. Some of the instructions include being particularly attentive to girls with an African background, who have recently been on trips to an African country, because of the fear of FGM.⁷⁸ Other risk factors include being a child of refugee parents and being a child from “closed, religious environments.”⁷⁹ As such, we are concerned, that these political campaigns can lead to Muslim children and families being discriminated against in schools based on prejudice against their culture and religious beliefs and values. In 2022, the government set aside funds in the Finance Act to further educate teachers in recognizing and preventing “negative social control” and “honor-related conflicts” for the period 2022-2024.⁸⁰

In November 2022, the residents of Mjølnerparken, Nørrebro, had their case referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The residents are seeking a ruling from the CJEU on the correct interpretation of the EU’s Race Equality Directive, and in regards to the use of the term “non-Western.” The group of residents are being evicted from their homes in Mjølnerparken because their housing area was categorized by the government as a “regeneration area” (formerly known as a “tough ghetto”) under the “parallel society” legislation (formerly known as the “ghetto-policy.”) The determining factor for a common housing area to be labelled as a “regeneration area” is that more than half of the residents are of “non-Western” background, a term that is politically constructed and often used synonymously with Muslims.⁸¹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Just before the 2022 national election, a new party, the Denmark Democrats, was formed. The party leader is Inger Støjberg, the former minister of immigration and

78. Etnisk Konsulentteam, “Kvindelig kønslemlæstelse”, retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://etniskkonsulentteam.kk.dk/om-etnisk-konsulentteam/aeresrelaterede-problemfelter/kvindelig-koenslemlaestelse> - this is an example from the Municipality of Copenhagen, but the same discourse applies nationwide.

79. Region Syddanmark, “Underretning ved mistanke om børn og unges forhold”, retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://regionsyddanmark.dk/fagfolk/det-naere-sundhedsvaes/en/samarbejdsaftaler/born-og-unge/underretning-ved-mistanke-om-born-og-unges-forhold#ndr4uw>

80. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet, “Nyt diplommodul ruster lærere og pædagoger til at forhindre negativ social kontrol og aeresrelaterede konflikter”, *uim.dk*, (April 30, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.uim.dk/nyhedsarkiv/2022/april/nyt-diplommodul-ruster-laerere-og-paedagoger-til-at-forhindre-negativ-social-kontrol-og-aeresrelaterede-konflikter/>

81. Open Society Justice Initiative, “Discrimination Case Challenging Danish “Ghetto Package” Eviction Plan Referred to Court of Justice of the European Union”, *justiceinitiative.org*, (November 7, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/newsroom/discrimination-case-challenging-danish-ghetto-package-eviction-plan-referred-to-court-of-justice-of-the-european-union>

integration from the Liberal Party of Denmark.⁸² Støjberg is known for her Islamophobic statements and politics, which include being the main person behind a law that led to seizing assets that exceed a certain amount from asylum seekers,⁸³ and for celebrating tougher immigration laws with cake.⁸⁴ She is also known for being convicted of breaching the Ministerial Accountability Act, for which she was sentenced to 60 days in prison, after illegally separating young Syrian married asylum-seekers.⁸⁵ As a consequence, Støjberg was kicked out of parliament. Ten months after, she was back with her just 4-month-old party. The Denmark Democrats won 14 mandates in the election, and is now the fifth-largest party in the Danish Parliament.⁸⁶

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In 2022, two action plans were in the making: a Local Action Plan against racism, ethnic discrimination, and hate crimes by the municipality of Copenhagen, and a National Action Plan against racism. Several Muslim CSOs were invited to contribute, including the Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark (CEDA).

The debate on the hijab ban prompted a lot of new contributors to the public scene. One of them was midwife Lamia Ibnhsain who with a one-day notice managed to summon thousands to the demonstration “Hands off women’s hijab.”⁸⁷ Ibnhsain was vocal both on social media and in several media outlets, advocating for Muslim women’s rights, encouraging young Muslim women to be proud of their identity, and to speak up against Islamophobia. The Instagram profile “Deltidsaraber”⁸⁸ (Part-time Arab), which has a following of approximately 29,000, has also had great success in spreading awareness about Islamophobia and racism on social media. In 2022, “Deltidsaraber” was nominated as “Role Model of the Year” by the radio station The Voice.⁸⁹

82. For more information: Amani Hassani: *Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2021*, in: Enes Bayrakli & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2021*, Vienna: Leopold Weiss institute, 2022.

83. Folketinget, “L 87 Forslag til lov om ændring af udlændingeloven.”, *www.ft.dk*, retrieved on February 24, 2023, from <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20151/lovforslag/L87/44/afstemninger.htm>

84. Lucy Pasha-Robinson, “Danish minister sparks furious backlash after celebrating tougher immigration laws with cake”, *independent.co.uk*, (March 16, 2017), retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/danish-integration-minister-inger-stojberg-furious-backlash-celebrating-tougher-immigration-laws-cake-facebook-a7632161.html>

85. Rigsretten, “Rigsretten har afsagt dom i sagen mod fhv. minister Inger Støjberg”, *rigsretten.dk*, (December 13, 2021), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://rigsretten.dk/aktuelt/2021/12/rigsretten-har-afsagt-dom-i-sagen-mod-fhv-minister-inger-stoejberg/>

86. Frank Hvilsom et al, “Danmarksdemokraterne bliver næststørst i Nordjylland”, (November 1, 2022), retrieved February 1, 2023, from https://politiken.dk/indland/politik/folketingsvalg_2022/art9060233/Danmarksdemokraterne-bliver-n%C3%A6stst%C3%B8rst-i-Nordjylland

87. Kærlighedsmarch, for kvinders ret til hijab, “Nallerne væk fra kvinders HIJAB”, *facebook.com*, (August 26, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/events/den-r%C3%B8de-plads-2200-k%C3%B8benhavn-n-danmark/nallerne-v%C3%A6k-fra-kvinders-hijab/1331015760638881/>

88. Deltidsaraber, *Instagram.com*, retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/deltidsaraber/?hl=da>

89. The Voice, “Årets Forbillede”, *radioplay.dk*, (October 10, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://radioplay.dk/the-voice/the-voice/awards/arets-forbillede-2/>

In general, 2022 was also marked by new and strengthened coalitions amongst anti-racist, anti-Islamophobia, and climate activist groups. Together they hosted a joint demonstration against the “ghetto law,”⁹⁰ arguing that besides being racist and Islamophobic, it is bad for our environment.⁹¹

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2022, the juridical system was under scrutiny, especially regarding the case of Ahmad Samsam. Samsam’s case received a lot of media attention and was also used during the elections in several parties’ electoral campaigns. This was partly because there are other ongoing public controversies around the Danish Defence Intelligence Service.

The case of the two Danish-Somali girls did not receive as much attention before the journalist, who did the investigative podcast, won Denmark’s most prestigious journalist award, the Cavling Prize, half a year later. After the ceremony, the public and politicians began taking notice of the case. However, while the discussion mainly revolved around the juridical system, not much was said about the political structures that allowed for such an incident to unfold. Nor is there much talk about how the political discourse and former governments for years have laid the groundwork for such racialized views on Muslim families, and, in this case, Somali families, by pushing “negative social control” campaigns. Moreover, with the threatening of teachers and other professionals with legal consequences for lack of referrals when suspecting “negative social control,” we are concerned about the possibility of more unnecessary, biased referrals of Muslim families. As such we recommend that the government should implement the following suggestions:

- Recognize Islamophobia as a type of racism that targets, affects, and discriminates against Muslims, and those perceived to be Muslim, and in effect limits their social, economic, and cultural rights.
- Recognize that there is structural racism in Denmark, and identify both conscious and unconscious biases, norms, legislation, routines, attitudes, and behaviors that discriminate against Muslims.
- Withdraw the “parallel society” policy (formerly known as the “ghetto policy”) and secure equal access for all citizens to affordable rental housing, including for non-EU/EEA citizens.

90. ”Klimaaktivister gik på gaden mod ghettolovens nedrivninger af boliger,” *Arbejderen.dk*, (December 6, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://arbejderen.dk/indland/klimaaktivister-gik-paa-gaden-mod-ghettolovens-nedrivninger-af-boliger/>

91. ”Demo: klimakrisen raser – Stop ghettoloven og nedrivninger,” *facebook.com*, (December 1, 2022), retrieved January 25, 2023, from https://m.facebook.com/events/650021143331148/?ref_source=newsfeed&ref_mechanism=feed_attachment&action_context=%257B%2522action_history%2522%253A%2522null%2522%257D”

- Ease the requirements for permanent residence permit and Danish citizenship, and reintroduce naturalization for all foreign nationals born and raised in Denmark.
- Reintroduce exemption from the citizenship test for people with physical and mental disorders.

Chronology

- **13.01.2022:** The Equal Treatment Board ruled it as indirect discrimination on the grounds of religion that two Muslim female students had their internship suspended.
- **27.01.2022:** The government formed a commission titled “The Commission for the Forgotten Women’s Struggle” that aimed at investigating how to avoid “negative social control of women and girls with an immigrant background.”
- **23.03.2022:** Rashed Bin Saad Alolaimi was put on the newly established prohibition list (*forbudsliste*).
- **24.08.2022:** The “Commission for the Forgotten Women’s Struggle” recommended a hijab ban in elementary schools.
- **30.04.2022:** The government announced a new diploma module to retrain teachers and on “negative social control” and “honor-related conflicts.”
- **01.11.2022:** Denmark held its national election, where Mette Frederiksen from the Social Democrats was re-elected as prime minister.
- **07.11.2022:** The residents of Mjølnerparken, Nørrebro, got their case referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) seeking a ruling on the correct interpretation of the EU’s Race Equality Directive, and in regards to the use of the term “non-Western.”
- **08.11.2022:** A 15-year-old boy was charged with far-right terrorism.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
FINLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

ENRIQUE TESSIERI

The Author

Enrique Tessieri is a sociologist and former journalist who has written and researched immigration topics. As a journalist, Tessieri worked in countries like Finland, Spain, Italy, Argentina, and Colombia, writing on human rights, business, and foreign investment. Tessieri is the editor of *Migrant Tales*, a community blog he founded in 2007. He is the chairperson and founder of the Anti-Hate Crime Organisation Finland and vice president of Rom-Mikkeli, an association founded in 2015 to further the rights of the Roma community in the city of Mikkeli in Eastern Finland. He was formerly a board member of the European Network Against Racism (2016-2019) and in 2022 became a member of the European Network on Religion & Belief.

Email: editor@migranttales.net

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Tiivistelmä

Huhtikuun parlamenttivaalien varjo hävisi syvälle, kun vuosi 2022 lähestyi loppuaan. Oppositiopuolueet, kuten islamofobinen Perussuomalaiset (PS) yhdessä Kansallisen Kokoomuksen ja muita, ovat löytäneet yhteisen kampanjateeman: vähemmistöt, kuten muslimit ja katurikolliset. Sen lisäksi, että vaalit lietsovat muslimien vastaista rasismia, ne uhkaavat myös pääministeri Sanna Marinin hallituksen yhtenäisyyttä. Marraskuussa keskustapuolue äänesti opposition kanssa luonnonsuojelulakia vastaan, vaikka oli jopa sopinut sanamuodoista hallituskumppaneidensa kanssa. Toinen suuri koetinkivi on ollut saamelaiskäräjälaki, jota Keskusta on vastustanut hellittämättä. Kauan odotettu laki antaisi Euroopan ainoalle alkuperäisväestölle ILO 169 -sopimuksen mukaisen itsemääräämisoikeuden. Lain vastustaminen on tyyli muistutus muille vähemmistöille, kuten muslimeille, siitä, miten Suomi suhtautuu erilaisiin vähemmistöihin ja niiden oikeuksiin.

Suomen eduskunnan perustuslakivaliokunta ja maa- ja metsätalousvaliokunta hyväksyivät eläinsuojelulakiluonnoksen vuoden 2023 alussa. Jos eduskunta hyväksyy sen, uskonnollista teurastusta ei kielletä Suomessa. Vaikka eläin on tarkoitusta tainnutta samanaikaisesti leikkaamisen kanssa, se ei voi tapahtua samanaikaisesti samaan aikaan, eli se tarjoaa mahdollisuuden tainnutta eläin heti leikkaamisen aloittamisen yhteydessä.¹ Atik Ali tataariyhteisöstä ja ulkominiesteriön kansainvälisten ihmisoikeusasian neuvottelukunnan jäsen, varoitti lokakuussa,² että jos halal-teurastus kielletään, seuraava askel voi olla miesten ympärileikkauksen kieltäminen.

Jälkimmäisten tekijöiden valossa on selvää, että tarvitaan lisää kulttuurista ymmärrystä. Kun tähän uhkaan lisätään vielä mahdollisuus, että maan seuraavaa hallitusta johtavat yksi avoimesti muslimeja kohtaan vihamielinen ja toinen hiljaisesti sen hyväksyvä puolue, ja jotka haluavat leikata kovalla kädellä sosiaaliturvaa, on selvää, että muslimiyhteisölle voisi koittaa vaikeat ajat.

1. Enriquet Tessieri, Parliament's constitutional law committee leaves door open for halal and shechita slaughter in Finland, Migrant Tales, 20 February 2023, <https://www.migranttales.net/parliaments-constitutional-law-committee-votes-to-ban-halal-and-shechita-slaughter-in-finland/>, (Access date: 22 February 2023).
2. Telephone interview (26.10.2022).

Executive Summary

The April parliamentary elections have cast a long shadow on 2022 as it came to a close. Opposition parties like the Islamophobic Finns Party (PS), the National Coalition Party, and others have found a familiar campaign theme: Muslims and youth gangs. Apart from fuelling anti-Muslim racism, the election also threatens the unity of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government. In November, the Centre Party voted with the opposition on the Nature Conservation Act despite agreeing with the government partners on the wording of the draft law. Another big test for Prime Minister Marin is was the Sámi Parliament Act, which the Centre Party had relentlessly opposed. The long-overdue act was voted down 9-7 by the parliament's constitutional committee. The law, if passed in the future, will give Europe's only indigenous group the right to self-determination as envisaged in the ILO Convention 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989). Opposition to the act reminds other minorities, like Muslims, how Finland views different minorities and their rights.

In early 2023, the Finnish parliament's constitutional law committee and the agriculture and forestry committee approved the draft animal welfare act. After passage by parliament, religious slaughter will not be prohibited in Finland. Even if the animal is supposed to be stunned simultaneously with the cutting, it cannot happen simultaneously at the same time, which means it offers an opportunity to stun the animal immediately when initiating the cut. Atik Ali of the Tatar community and a member of the Foreign Ministry's International Advisory Board on Human Rights, warned in October that if halal slaughter is banned, the next step could be a ban on male circumcision.

In light of the latter, it becomes clear that there is a need for greater cultural understanding. Add to this the threat of an openly hostile party to Muslims could lead the country's next government, another party giving its tacit approval to such a narrative, coupled with welfare spending cuts, and hard times could lie ahead for the Muslim community.

Country Profile EIR 2022

Country: Republic of Finland

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Form of Government: Republic

Ruling Parties: Social Democratic Party, Centre Party, Green League, Left Alliance, Swedish People's Party

Opposition Parties: Finns Party, National Coalition Party, Christian Democrats, Liike Nyt (Movement Now), Valta kuuluu kansalle (Power Belongs to the People, VKK)

Last Elections: 2022 County Elections: National Coalition Party 21.6%/289 seats, Social Democrats 19.3%/277 seats, Centre Party 19.2%/297 seats, Finns Party 11.1%/155 seats, Left Alliance 8.0%/100 seats, Green League 7.4%/90 seats, Swedish People's Party 4.9%/76 seats, Christian Democrats 4.2%/57 seats, Liike Nyt 1.8%/20 seats, and Valta kuuluu kansalle 1.3%/10 seats. **2021 Municipal Elections:** National Coalition Party 21.4%/1,552 councilpersons, Social Democrats 17.7%/1,451 councilpersons, Centre Party 14.9%/2,445 councilpersons, Finns Party 14.5%/1,351 councilpersons, Green League 10.6%/433 councilpersons, Left Alliance 7.7%/508 councilpersons, Swedish People's Party 5%/463 councilpersons, Christian Democrats 3.6%/311 councilpersons, Liike Nyt 1.6%/49 councilpersons, and Others 2.1%/292 councilpersons. **2019 Parliamentary Elections:** Social Democrats: 40 seats, Finns Party: 39 seats, National Coalition Party: 38 seats, Centre Party: 31 seats, Green League: 20 seats, Left Alliance: 16 seats, Swedish People's Party: 9 seats, Christian Democrats: 5 seats, Liike Nyt: 1 seat, and Åland Coalition: 1 seat. **2019 European Parliament Elections:** National Coalition Party: 3 seats, Green League: 2 seats, Social Democratic Party: 2 seats, Finns Party: 2 seats, Centre Party: 2 seats, and Left Alliance: 1 seat.

Total Population: 5,548,241 (31 December 2021)

Major Languages: Finnish and Swedish

Official Religion: N/A

Statistics on Islamophobia: Suspected hate crimes in 2021 rose for the first time since 2017 by 20.4% to 1,026 versus 852 in 2020, according to the latest figures of the Police University College of Finland.³ Most of the hate crimes (81.8%) were due to national-ethnic origin (68.8%) and religion (13%), which rose by 23.1% from the previous year, with Muslims being the most targeted group. Of nation-

3. Jenita Rauta, "Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2021," Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 27, 13 October 2022, https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/780352/Polamk_Katsauksia_27.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, (Access date: 4 November 2022).

al-ethnic origin suspected hate crimes, Somalis were the most targeted group. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) reported 1,390 hate crimes in 2021, up 18.1% from 1,177 cases in the previous year; a total of 44 cases (48 in 2020) faced prosecution and 30 (42) received sentences, according to the latest OSCE ODIHR data.⁴ Contrary to the Police University College, the OSCE ODIHR figures use a broader methodology where offences suspected of being hate crimes are also tabulated.

Major Religions (% of Population): Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church 3,689,998 (66.5%),⁵ Islam (est.) 120,000-130,000 (2.17% and 2.34%),⁶ Finnish Orthodox Church 59,508 (1.07%),⁷ Jehovah's Witnesses 16,495 (0.29%), Finnish Free Church 14,881 (0.27%), Roman Catholic Church 14,795 (0.26%), Pentecostals 12,944 (0.23%), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 3,187 (0.5%), Baptist Church 2,455 (0.04%), Buddhism 1,834 (0.03%), United Methodist Church 1,319 (0.02%), and Judaism 1,079 (0.02%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): Estimated at 120,000-130,000 (2.17% and 2.34%)⁸

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Federation of Islamic Organisations of Finland (Islamilaisten järjestöjen liitto), Turun Islamilainen Yhdyskunta, Islamic Council of Finland (Suomen Islamilainen Neuvosto), Resalat Islamilainen Yhdyskunta (Resalat Islamic Society), Suomen Islam-Seurakunta, Helsinki Islam Keskus, Suomen Muslimiliitto, Suomen Muslimien Foorumi (Muslim Forum of Finland), Nuoret Muslimit, and 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 and Radical Right Parties: The Finns Party, Suomen Kansa Ensin (Finnish People First), Valta kuuluu kansalle, and Sinimusta Liike (Blue-and-Black Movement)

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4. OSCE ODIHR, "Hate Crime Reporting Finland," November 2022, <https://hatecrime.osce.org/finland#incidents-reported>, (Access date: 20 November 2022).
 5. Email (7.12.2022) from Jussi Sohlberg, research coordinator of the Church Institute for Research and Advanced Training, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church figure to 31 December 2021.
 6. Email (26.10.2022) 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 imams claim that the number of Muslims in Finland could be as high as 150,000.
 7. Statistics Finland, "Population 31.12 (2021) by Religious Community, Sex, Age, Year and Information," https://statfin.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11rx.px/table/tableViewLayout1/, (Access date: 6 December 2022).
 8. Ibid. Statistics Finland estimates Islam followers at the end of 2021 to be 20,876 people.

Far-Right Movements: Kansallismielisten liittouma, Kohti vapautta! (formerly outlawed neo-Nazi Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike [PVL]), Soldiers of Odin, Finnish Defence League, Suomen Sisu, and Suomi Ensi (Finland First)

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** New Animal Welfare Act, which could be passed by parliament before the April parliamentary election. If passed, the new law will not ban halal and shechita slaughter. Under the new draft law, animals can only be slaughtered if they are first stunned.⁹
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

9. Phone conversation (26.10.2022) with Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland spokesperson Tiina Pullola concerning the new Animal Welfare Act.

Introduction

External events like Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and NATO membership have contributed to anti-Muslim and xenophobic sentiment in Finland. Instead of making the country more receptive to people fleeing war in regions like the Middle East, outside factors have had the opposite effect. In the summer, this led to changes in the Emergency Powers Act and Border Guard Act which would, in extraordinary circumstances, make the human right to seek asylum a challenge. Martin Scheinin, a European Union Institute professor of international law and human rights, said that the new amendments to the Border Guard Act sent Finland back thirty years. EU Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović similarly expressed concern for the right of refugees to seek asylum.¹⁰

While even the Islamophobic Finns Party (PS) does not object to the arrival of tens of thousands of white Ukrainian refugees to Finland,¹¹ the treatment of Muslims is different. Politicians and other public officials continue to see Muslims as a threat to national security. The Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) has been the target of criticism for its arbitrary and slow pace of decisions.¹² Finland has asylum seekers from regions like the Middle East who arrived in the country in 2015 and are still waiting for their residence permits. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman warns that asylum seekers in legal limbo for years are vulnerable to human trafficking.¹³ Research on the Ulysses syndrome has established that asylum seekers' exposure to extreme levels of stress can cause an array of psychological disorders.¹⁴

Fearing that Russia may weaponise asylum seekers as was the case with Belarus, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia in the fall,¹⁵ in the summer, the Finnish Border Guard Act was given the green light by parliament to build a fence at eight border crossing points with Russia.¹⁶ The fence, which will cost hundreds of millions of euros and take

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10. Enrique Tessieri, "The Tightening of the Border Guard Act Is an Example of Finland's Disdain for Human Rights." *Migrant Tales*, 5 August 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/the-tightening-of-the-border-guard-act-is-an-example-of-finlands-disdain-for-human-rights/>, (Access date: 30 October 2022).
 11. Finnish Immigration Service, "Decisions 8/2021 - 10/2022," 15 November 2022, <https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#decisions?l=en>, (Access date: 20 November 2022).
 12. Johanna Vanto, Elsa Saarikkomäki, Anne Alvesalo-Kuusi, Nea Lepinkäinen, Elina Pirjatanniemi Juha Lavapuro, "Collectivized Discretion: Seeking Explanations for Decreased Asylum Recognition Rates in Finland After Europe's 2015 'Refugee Crisis,'" *International Migration Review*, 4 November 2021, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01979183211044096>, (Access date: 16 December 2022).
 13. Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, "A Residence Permit Safeguards Victims of Human Trafficking in a Vulnerable Position – the Threshold for Granting the Permit Must be Lowered," 18 October 2022, <https://syrjinta.fi/en/-/a-residence-permit-safeguards-victims-of-human-trafficking-in-vulnerable-position-the-threshold-for-granting-the-permit-must-be-lowered>, (Access date: 20 November 2022).
 14. Ulysses Syndrome Institute - Migration and Mental Health, <https://ulysses-syndrome-institute.org.uk/>, (Access date: 20 November 2022).
 15. Enrique Tessieri: *Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2021*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2021*, Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022.
 16. Ministry of the Interior press release, "Amendments to Border Guard Act Help Prepare for Incidents," 8 July 2022, <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/amendments-to-border-guard-act-help-prepare-for-incidents>, (Access date: 19 November 2022).

three to four years to build, will account for only 10%-20% of Finland's 1,344-kilometre border, which is the longest border with Russia in the EU.¹⁷



Figure 1: The length of the border fence to be built along Finland's eight land border checkpoints with Russia is estimated to be 260 kilometres and cost over 300 million euros. **Source:** Yle¹⁸

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Shi'a imam Abbas Bahmanpour reported at the end of the year that his mosque in eastern Helsinki was vandalised. In the Facebook post below (Fig. 2),¹⁹ he complains about the little help his congregation receives from the police to tighten security. The

17. Enrique Tessieri, "Migrant Tales Media Monitoring: Yle Spikes It Up with Parties that Promote Fear and Uses Their Xenophobic Labels," *Migrant Tales*, 18 October 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/migrant-tales-media-monitoring-yle-spikes-it-up-with-parties-that-promote-fear-and-uses-their-xenophobic-labels/>, (Access date: 30 October 2022).

18. Yle, "Viro päätti jo seitsemän vuotta sitten rakentaa itärajalleen aidan, eikä se ole vielääkään valmis – selvitimme, milloin Suomen aita valmistuisi," 7 October 2022, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/74-20000943>, (Access date: 30 October 2022).

19. Abbas Bahmanpour, Facebook post 19 November and 16 November, <https://www.facebook.com/abbas.bahmanpour>, (Access date: 20 November 2022).

Mellunmäki Mosque has been a target of anti-Koran groups who harass worshippers by taking pictures of their cars' license plates and posting their personal information on the internet, according to Bahmanpour. The imam called for a peaceful demonstration against Iranian and Finnish “anti-religious” and “far-right” forces on 26 November 2022. The perpetrator, who vandalised the mosque recently, was caught after a member of the congregation spotted and identified the person by chance. The person received a 60 euro fine!²⁰



Figure 2: Anti-Koran and anti-Iranian graffiti on the Mellunmäki Mosque’s wall that reveal Iranian and far-right Finnish cooperation. Imam Abbas Bahmanpour wrote on Facebook: “I spent another morning filling police reports. I’m getting fed up with the fact that every time someone is upset about something happening in the world, they take it out on our community and me. I am also very disappointed with the authorities (or rather the lack of their presence). They fined the last perpetrator 60 euros [for vandalism] (that too only because our member found and identified him by chance and took a picture of the person’s car). Such a situation encourages [vandalism against our mosque by] perpetrators. At the same time, all our calls for help for security have fallen on deaf ears. Now, anti-Iranians have damaged the walls of our mosque. Their Facebook groups have openly incited people to act against our community. One of them even demanded that the door of our mosque be locked and everyone inside be burnt. We will see if the authorities do anything. Everyone in our community knows that [the group inciting violence against us] is a Finnish organisation that is not taking orders from any state and is responsible for its actions.”

During the year under review, there were also miscarriages of justice that were a blow to the credibility of the Finnish justice system in the eyes of the Muslim community. One such case was that of Fares Al-Abaidi whom a group of white Finns attacked in June 2020. After a 26-month-long wait for the case to go before the Southern Ostrobothnia district court, only one person was convicted of assault²¹ despite

20. Ibid.

21. Juhani Pajunen, “Parran pahoinpitelystä sakkoja tamperelaismiehelle,” *Tejuka*, 7 September 2022, <https://www.tejuka-lehti.fi/artikkeli-6.107.574153.82c61dfac>, (Access date: 29 October 2022).

the fact that in 2020 the police had not ruled out a hate crime and that there were numerous suspects.²² “It was a very, very bad decision,” said Al-Abaidi,²³ adding that he has appealed the ruling.

Perussuomalaiset vaatii!

1. Kiristetään maahanmuuttopolitiikkaa voimakkaasti. Tavoitteena lopettaa maallemme haitallinen maahanmuutto. Oleskeluluvat, perheen yhdistäminen, toimeentulo vaatimukset, valitusoikeudet, etuudet ja palvelut.
2. Kiristetään kansalaisuuden saamista.
3. Ei anneta kansalaisuutta törkeästä rikoksesta tuomitulle. Koskaan.
4. Poistetaan kansainvälisen suojelun asema henkilöiltä, joka tekee törkeän rikoksen.
5. Tehdään kotoutumisesta velvoittavaa.
6. Tehostetaan palauttamista. Kaikki laittomasti maassa olevat ulos maasta.
7. Tehostetaan karkottamista. Vakaviin rikoksiin syyllystyneet ulos maasta.
8. Otetaan käyttöön laajennetut valtuudet karkottaa jengien jäseniä.
9. Luovutaan tuomioiden paljousalennuksista.
10. Tiukennetaan ehdonalaisten vapauttamisen edellytyksiä.
11. Poistetaan automaattiset alennukset vankilassa-oloajasta.
12. Lasketaan rikosoikeudellisen vastuun ikäraja 14 vuoteen.
13. Pidetään vaaralliset vangit lukkojen takana.
14. Kovennetaan rangaistuksia kauttaaltaan, varsinkin väkivalta- ja seksuaalirikoksissa *** jengi- ja katurikoksista kovennettu (ampuminen tai vakava väkivallanteko); vähitellen kohti tuplarangaistusta, kuten Tanskassa *** väkivallanteon ja uhrin kuvaamisesta ja videon jakamisesta kovennettu *** pelastustoimeen kohdistuvasta väkivallanteosta kovennettu *** aserikoksien minimirangaistustason kiristäminen, laittomien aseiden kuljettaminen julkisella paikalla törkeä *** kovennus rikoksiin, joissa aseita tai räjähteitä on käytetty julkisella paikalla.
15. Annetaan poliisille laajennetut pakkokeino-oikeudet, esimerkiksi oikeus rajatun ajan puitteissa etsiä laittomia aseita ja räjähteitä ihmisten asunnoista.
16. Lisätään poliisien määrää.
17. Parannetaan poliisien toimivaltuuksia.
18. Parannetaan viranomaisten ja muiden toimijoiden välistä tiedonvaihtoa, esim. koulu, lastensuojelu, poliisi, kela, maahanmuuttoviranomaiset.
19. Luodaan viranomaisille velvollisuus raportoida vaaratilanteissa eteenpäin ja tarkistetaan salassapitovelvollisuuksia.
20. Puututaan ripeämmin myös pienimuotoiseen huumerikollisuuteen kuten pillerikauppaan.
21. Kielletään kerjääminen kadulla.



PERUSSUOMALAISET

Figure 3: The Finns Party demands! (1) Tighten substantially immigration policy; put an end to harmful (sic) immigration, residence permits, family reunification rights, income support assistance, the right to appeal, benefits and services; (2) Make naturalisation stricter; (3) Convicts of aggravated crime lose for life the right to citizenship; (4) Deport all those who came on humanitarian grounds if convicted of an aggravated crime; (5) Make integration a duty; (6) Deport all illegal (sic) immigrants; (7) Deport people who were convicted for violence; (8) Greater powers to deport gang leaders; (9-21) Among other demands, tougher sentences, more police and police power, lower the criminal law age from 15 to 14 years, prohibit begging.²⁴

22. Enrique Tessieri, “The Assault that Happened in Teuva Against a Muslim Should Be Treated as a Hate Crime,” Migrant Tales, 7 July 2020, <https://www.migranttales.net/the-assault-that-happened-in-teuva-against-a-muslim-should-be-treated-as-a-hate-crime/>, (Access date: 29 October 2022).

23. Enrique Tessieri, “Fares Al-Abaidi: “I Was Very Disappointed [with the Sentence, and] It Was a Very, Very Bad Decision.” Migrant Tales, 12 September 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/fares-al-abaidi-i-was-very-disappointed-with-the-sentence-and-it-was-a-very-very-bad-decision/>, (Access date: 29 October 2022).

24. Posted on PS Chairperson Riikka Purra’s Facebook page on 2 December 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=661545032289981&set=pb.100053034697034.-2207520000>. (Access date: 10 December 2022).

In another case, a Kanta-Häme district court unanimously ruled (3-0) to drop charges against seven police and security guards for forcibly removing the hijabs of two Muslim women in 2017.²⁵ The case will be appealed and handled by the court of appeal no earlier than 2023, according to prosecutor Heidi Suvirinne.²⁶ “As a prosecutor,” she wrote in an email, “I look at the case from a legal point of view, and the important thing is that the Court of Appeal will decide whether the police had the right to use force and whether the use of force was in accordance with the law; if not, it [the court] will have to determine whether there was a breach of duty and possibly assault [committed by the acquitted suspects].”²⁷ The case of the two women raises the following question: why is it that a Muslim woman can use the hijab in a passport picture if she has a residence permit but not if she is an asylum seeker?²⁸

In light of the April parliamentary election and the success of the Sweden Democrats in the neighbouring country’s election, one of the topics copied and spread by Islamophobic parties like the PS is Finland’s “growing” youth gang violence “problem” that even President Sauli Niinistö has noted.²⁹ According to a *Yle* news reporter citing the National Bureau of Investigation (KRP), Finland did not have any youth street gangs four years ago. Today, there are about ten gangs, mainly in Turku and Helsinki, with about 200 members, according to the police.³⁰ One of the most important questions about youth gangs that reporters don’t ask is why the issue is topical now and why there is so much finger-pointing and labelling. Omar Abdi Nuh, an actor who used to be a youth worker for 20 years, gave up his work and moved back to Somalia as a result of the anxiety he suffered from Finland’s structural racism.³¹ “If such a matter [the gang violence problem which occurs in Sweden] happens in Finland, it means that we have failed to help young people and attend to their problems at a grassroots level,” he was quoted as saying in *Yle*.³² Mahad Sheikh Musse, who has

25. Enrique Tessieri, “Police and Security Guards Acquitted Over Hijab Removal Case in Finland,” *Migrant Tales*, 1 October 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/police-and-security-guards-acquitted-over-hijab-removal-case-in-finland/>, (Access date: 29 October 2022).

26. Email from Heidi Suvirinne (17 October 2022).

27. *Ibid.*

28. Susanna Reinboth, Jukka Vuori, “Oikeusasiamies ihmettelee: Miksi poliisi pakottaa musliminaiset riisumaan huivin valokuvassa?” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 21 June 2017, <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000005263408.html>, (Access date: 29 October 2022).

29. Enrique Tessieri, “President Sauli Niinistö Throws Weight Behind Opposition’s Election Campaign By Citing Youth Gang ‘Problem,’” *Migrant Tales*, 12 December 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/president-sauli-niinisto-throws-weight-behind-oppositions-election-campaign-by-citing-youth-gang-problem/>, (Access date: 16 December 2022).

30. Enrique Tessieri, “Migrant Tales Media Monitoring: Yle Continues to Shamefully Label Racialized Youths as Dangers to Society,” *Migrant Tales*, 9 November 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/migrant-tales-media-monitoring-yle-continues-to-shamefully-label-racialized-youths-as-dangers-to-society/>, (Access date: 19 November 2022).

31. Enrique Tessieri: *Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2021*, in: Enes Bayraktı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2021*, Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022.

32. Hannes Nissinen, “Jussi-ehdokas Omar Abdi on palkittu näyttelijä ja nuorisotyöntekijä – rakkaus työhön nuorten parissa johti syvään ahdistukseen,” *Yle*, 12 November 2022, <https://yle.fi/aihe/a/20-10003615?fb->

worked with youths for 15 years in Helsinki, said, “I think that since young people from a migrant background are seen as a threat or vulnerable because of their background, the encounter cannot be on equal terms if some are seen as a threat and others are worried.”³³ In a question-and-answer session of parliament, Prime Minister Marin rebuffed PS claims that the government had failed with youth gangs due to “loose” immigration policy. “[I] just wanted to state that immigration is much more than what the Finns Party pictures it being street violence, gangs, and crime,” she said. “We have many people of migrant origin that aren’t in crime, attend school, have hobbies, support their families, work, and live a respectful life. But when you hear the Finns Party, you get the impression that these people are all potential criminals. Yet, most of them are respectful people.”³⁴

In August, the police announced that it would conclude its investigation and possibly bring charges in October against five suspects in Finland’s first far-right terrorist case;³⁵ however, at the end of November, detective inspector Toni Sjöblom confirmed that charges would be brought against the five suspects “within a few weeks.”³⁶ The suspects, who are from Western Finland and aged between 23 and 26 years, were allegedly preparing a terrorist attack. The police seized firearms and material to build explosives. The group is influenced by a neo-Nazi ideology that aims to speed up the collapse of Western societies.³⁷ In its National Security Overview 2022, the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service said that the threat of a terrorist attack in Finland mainly came from “supporters of right-wing extremist or radical Islamist ideology, and from small covert cells [comprising] of such individuals.”³⁸ By mid-March, no charges were yet brought against the suspects.

Employment

As in previous years, Muslims face the same obstacles in Finland’s racialised and segregated labour markets. High unemployment, especially among Muslim women, is an ongoing unresolved challenge, as is discrimination due to ethnic-national origin. Other challenges include lower wages than those of white Finns and the lack of effective scrutiny by regulating bodies of companies that break labour laws. One source

clid=IwAR2cdCDY8D3EuvNtabQJ4kFmzb9r8jD14Wbuy_Zg2-CUthXLGlh-4fHD4Ok, (Access date: 12 November 2022).

33. Mahad Sheikh Musse, Facebook, 29 November 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/Moshm007>, (Access date: 30 November 2022).

34. Yle, “Eduskunnan kyselytunti,” 24 November 2022, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50950960>, (Access date: 16 December 2022).

35. Enrique Tessieri: Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2021, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2021, Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022.

36. Email (30.11.2022) from police detective inspector Toni Sjöblom.

37. Europol, “European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2022,” https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Tesat_Report_2022_0.pdf, (Access date: 29 October 2022).

38. Supo, “National Security Overview 2022,” 29 September 2022, <https://supo.fi/en/terrorism-overview>, (Access date: 30 October 2022).

of the problem is the Finnish Immigration Service's rigid and slow asylum process: in some cases, asylum seekers are in legal limbo and still waiting up to seven years for residence permits after their arrival to Finland. One way for an asylum seeker to obtain a residence permit is if s/he finds employment and their gross monthly salary in 2022 is at least 1,283 euros.³⁹ Some labour discrimination cases do reach the courts,⁴⁰ but they are few and far between.

While 1,283 euros a month is not enough to survive in the capital Helsinki, employees are susceptible to exploitation, as in the case of two Iraqi employees.⁴¹ Both employees were underpaid, and worked long hours without overtime compensation or vacation time and pay. "Even if I asked for outside help," said one of the employees, "they [regulating bodies and Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK)] would point out that what my boss did is illegal, but legally, they could not help me." One Iraqi employee alleges paying his employer 10,000 euros to get hired in order to get a residence permit. The payment was made through low wages and working extra-long hours.

In December 2021, the unemployment rate in Finland of people aged 18-64 years who don't speak Finnish, Swedish, or Sámi as their mother tongue was 18.92% versus the national average of 10.37%, according to the latest Statistics Finland figures.⁴² The Muslim-dominant language groups that reported high unemployment were Arabic speakers 39.37%, Kurdish speakers (34.36%), Somali speakers (34.04%), Persian-Farsi speakers (26.16%), and Turkish speakers (24.11%). 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 52.04% and for Somali-speaking women 36.76%. The corresponding figure for men was 34.76% and 31.93%, respectively.⁴³ Contrarily, the employment rate of all women who did not speak Finnish, Swedish, or Sámi as their mother tongue was 52.8%, and for men 62.1% compared with 75.4% and 72.8% for Finnish, Swedish, and Sámi speakers, respectively.⁴⁴

39. The Finnish Immigration Service, "Income Requirement for Persons Who Apply For a Residence Permit On the Basis Of Work," No Date, <https://migri.fi/en/working-in-finland/income-requirement#:~:text=Your%20gross%20salary%20must%20be,and%20it%20is%20reviewed%20annually>, (Access date: 3 December 2022).

40. Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, "Company Discriminated Against a Job Applicant On the Basis of Nationality – Paid EUR 6,500 in Compensation," 16 June 2022, <https://syrjinta.fi/en/-/company-discriminated-against-a-job-applicant-on-the-basis-of-nationality-paid-eur-6-500-in-compensation>, (Access date: 3 December 2022).

41. Enrique Tessieri, "What You Are Never Told and Should Know About Working Life in Finland," Migrant Tales, 27 November 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/what-you-are-never-told-and-should-know-about-working-life-in-finland/>, (Access date: 3 December 2022).

42. Statistics Finland, "115g -- Population by Main Type of Activity, Language, Occupational Status, Sex, Age and Year, 2000-2021," https://pxweb2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__tyokay/statfin_tyokay_pxt_115g.px, (Access date: 13 December 2022).

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

Education



Figure 4: Ndéla Faye is a Senegalese Finnish writer and journalist. Discriminatory treatment of minorities occurs not only at elementary school, but at preschool as well.⁴⁵

Finland's education system has received praise in many countries. Even so, bullying and disrespect for other cultures still occur. A study by Isik Ulubas, an Åbo Akademi researcher, about middle school and high school children whose parents were born abroad revealed that they have a three times greater chance of being bullied by fellow students and teachers compared with students whose mothers and fathers were born in Finland.⁴⁶ The research, carried out in the western Finnish region of Ostrobothnia,

45. Ndéla Faye, "Twitter: Systematic racism in Finnish early childhood education," *Migrant Tales*, 18 March 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/twitter-ndele-faye-systematic-racism-in-finnish-early-childhood-education/>, (Access date: 28 October 2022).

46. Johanna Lehtola, "Tutkimus: Maahanmuuttajataustaisilla nuorilla kolminkertainen riski joutua kiusatuksi kouluun," *Yle*, 27 October 2022, https://yle.fi/uutiset/74-20002550?fbclid=IwAR3QdxmAU1SarOKBz5L8ucs-jixXztUKGKLIsvJfA6_sFFcbohIEBU6P_OoI, (Access date: 27 October 2022).

reinforces other studies highlighting the bullying of visible minorities at schools. Bilingual and polyglot children are sometimes discouraged from speaking their home language at school, according to language and cultural interpreter Nadeza Kämeniemi.⁴⁷ She said that students from multilingual backgrounds are often confronted with comments like “in school, we speak Finnish.” Some teachers consider pupils’ speaking in a foreign language as “provocative.” Katri Kuukka of the National Agency for Education states that forcing multilingual students to speak only Finnish at school is wrong. “Cultural diversity and language awareness are one of the guiding principles for developing schools’ ways of working,” she said. “Multilingualism is also defined so that the simultaneous use of different languages in everyday school life is seen as a natural thing.”

While Kuukka’s assurances are encouraging, they expose double standards. A recent feature by Finland’s largest daily *Helsingin Sanomat* reported on how in some cases over half of the students at several schools in the Helsinki suburb of Espoo don’t speak Finnish as their mother tongue.⁴⁸ The story claims that what is happening in Espoo is part of a “worrisome” European trend. Apart from language, another challenging issue is the fact that some parents are in the dark about their children’s rights to be treated equally and fairly at schools.

As in previous years, the same complaints are shared by Muslim parents concerning Islam classes at school. One of these issues is that the overwhelming majority of the teachers of Islam are unqualified and that there are still too few minorities in teaching positions at Finnish schools. However, the *Salam* series which the Finnish National Agency for Education published for comprehensive and middle school pupils is considered a good textbook.⁴⁹

Politics

Recent opinion polls published monthly by *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Yle* show the National Coalition Party (Kokoomus) in the lead, followed by the Social Democrats, and the Finns Party (PS) in third place.^{50 51} In Finland, the party that wins the parliamentary election forms the new government. If present opinion polls hold true, Finland’s next prime minister will be from Kokoomus. A future government coalition comprising as well of the PS and Christian Democrats would be bad news for the Muslim community. PS chairperson, Riikka Purra, has repeated her party’s calls to scale back foreigners’ civil rights. “The Finns Party’s long-term aim is to make so-

47. Yle News, “Specialist calls for change in schools’ attitude towards multilingual students,” 17 February 2022, <https://yle.fi/news/3-12322324>, (Access date: 28 October 2022).

48. Enrique Tessieri, “How the Finnish Media Others Racialized Pupils,” Migrant Tales, 2 June 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/how-the-finnish-media-others-racialized-pupils/>, (Access date: 28 October 2022).

49. Telephone conversation (2.4.2022) with imam Abbas Bahmanpour.

50. Teemu Luukka, “Keskustan kannatus romahti historiallisen matalaksi,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 19 October 2022, <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000009124299.html>, (Access date: 30 October 2022).

51. Eelis Rytönen, “Ylen kannatusmittaus: Keskusta on mittaushistorian pohjalukemissa, perussuomalaisten kannatus nousut,” *Yle*, 6 October 2022, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-12649834>, (Access date: 30 October 2022).

cial welfare rights based on nationality, but this will, unfortunately, happen in the next [parliamentary] term but is a long-term aim,” she was quoted as saying during the talk show *Ykkösaamu*.⁵² Kokoomus parliamentary group leader Kai Mykkänen said that at the end of the year the party aims to slash four billion euros of public spending from the next legislative period. Social welfare is one of the areas that would face severe cuts - to the tune of hundreds of millions of euros.⁵³ Apart from taking a tougher stance on migrants and asylum seekers, cuts in welfare spending would directly impact groups like Muslims since they require twice as much housing, unemployment, and basic income support than white Finns, according to the Social Insurance Institution (Kela).⁵⁴ Together with Kokoomus and the PS, Centre Party Prime Minister Juho Sipilä’s government (2015-2019) tightened immigration policy considerably.^{55 56}

Media

One of the biggest challenges to Muslims in the media continues to be fair reporting and having an equal voice. There are many ways to determine if a story is biased towards Muslims. Some of these may include the language and what is left out of the story: Does the story quote any Muslims if it is about discrimination? Is the headline sensationalist and does it reflect the main body of the story? Does the picture in the story reinforce bias? Another factor that contributes to bias is little to no Muslim or minority representation in the newsroom.

Due to the proximity of parliamentary elections in April, it is clear that radical-right parties like the PS and conservative ones like Kokoomus are hyping up “the immigrant problem” to lure voters. The youth gang violence topic took off after Sweden’s parliamentary election in September. In the neighbouring country, youth gang violence is a more serious problem than in Finland claiming over 50 deaths in 2022⁵⁷ and was one of the main campaign issues brought up by the far-right Sweden Democrats and right-wing Moderates. In Finland, there have been no deaths reported due to gang violence.

52. Yllösaamu, “Riikka Purra,” 10 December 2022, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50971031?autoplay=true>, (Access date: 10 December 2022).

53. Anni Keski-Heikkilä, “Kai Mykkänen: Kokoomus leikkaisi sosiaaliturvasta sadoilla miljoonilla euroilla,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 25 November 2022, <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000009222061.html>, (Access date: 27 November 2022).

54. Yle News, “Kela: Immigrants Require Twice as Much Income, Housing Support as Native Population,” 4 December 2020, <https://yle.fi/a/3-11681472>, (Access date: 27 November 2022).

55. Yle News, “Interior Minister: Gov’t Drafting Law to Allow for Deporting Asylum Seekers Convicted of Serious Crimes,” 8 December 2015, <https://yle.fi/a/3-8513284>, (Access date: 27 November 2022).

56. Enrique Tessieri, “A Finnish Government that Bolsters Anti-Immigration Populism and Nationalism,” *Migrant Tales*, 13 December 2015, <https://www.migranttales.net/a-finnish-government-that-bolsters-anti-immigration-populism-and-nationalism/>, (Access date: 27 November 2022).

57. Pekka Vantinen, “Gun Violence Becoming ‘New Normal’ in Sweden,” *EURACTIV*, 3 September 2022, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/gun-violence-becoming-new-normal-in-sweden/, (Access date: 9 November 2022).

Oikeusasiamies ihmettelee: Miksi poliisi pakottaa musliminaiset riisumaan huivin valokuvassa?

Passikuvissa saa olla huivi, mutta turvapaikanhakijoilta huivi otetaan pois.



Apulaisoikeusasiamies Jussi Pajuojan mukaan osa musliminaisista on kokenut vaatimuksen huivin poistamisesta nöyryyttävänä ja uskonnonvapauttaan loukkaavana. KUVA: MILLA TAKALA / LEHTIKUVA

Figure 5: In a *Helsingin Sanomat* story headlined, “Deputy-Ombudsman wonders why police force Muslim women to take off headscarves in a photo? You can wear a headscarf in a passport photo, but if you are an asylum seeker you cannot wear a headscarf,”⁵⁸ the caption above reads: “According to Deputy-Ombudsman Jussi Pajuoja, some Muslim women find the demand to remove the headscarf humiliating and a violation of their religious freedom.” Moreover, Muslim women are often misrepresented in the media like the one above that often shows Muslim women pushing prams. She appears not to be wearing a hijab but a chador.

Anti-racism activist and television personality Maryam Abdulkarim stepped down from the *Jälkiviisat* television talk show in May after nearly six years when former PS leader Timo Soini was named the new permanent guest on the show. “This [election victory of the PS in 2011] directly impacted the social debate. What was considered acceptable political discourse [has now] changed. It was evident in my daily life and those close to me – racist views surfaced increasingly in words and actions. [H]e [former PS leader Timo Soini] has never apologised for his actions, his populism, which

58. Susanna Reinboth, Jukka Vuori, “Oikeusasiamies ihmettelee: Miksi poliisi pakottaa musliminaiset riisumaan huivin valokuvassa?” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 21 June 2017, <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000005263408.html>, (Access date: 29 October 2022).

normalised racism. Timo Soini is, to quote a friend of mine, a self-proclaimed apostle of good, the prince of darkness.”⁵⁹



Figure 6: Finnish state-owned broadcaster *Yle* has turned youth gang violence into a topic of concern. On the 8:30 pm news,⁶⁰ the news programme shows a white youth giving the finger and warning viewers that youth gang violence is rising. Another talk show hosted by Marja Sannikka⁶¹ on *Yle* introduced the topic in a similar sensationalist manner: “Knives, violence, revenge. Finnish youth gang crime grows at a worrying pace.” In both cases, the programmes did not back up their claims with any statistics.



Figure 7: Anti-racism activist and television personality Maryan Abdulkarim. Photo by Jorge Gonzalez/*Yle*

59. Maryan Abdulkarim, “Kiitos ja hyvästi,” *Halima*, 12 May 2022, <https://www.halimamedia.com/post/kiitos-ja-hyv%C3%A4sti>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).

60. *Yle uutiset 8.30*, 8 November 2022, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50931728?autoplay=true&m>, (Access date: 19 November 2022).

61. *A-studio Marja Sannikka*, “Katujengien väkivalta kusääntyy,” 24 October 2022, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50949233?autoplay=true>, (Access date: 19 November 2022).

Justice System

Atik Ali of the Tatar community warned that banning religious slaughter in the new Animal Welfare Act, would increase polarisation between Muslims and the rest of society.⁶² It now appears that parliament will not ban halal and shechita slaughter after the new act got the green light from the Finnish parliament's constitutional law committee and the agriculture and forestry committee.⁶³ Ali warned in October that Finland would become like Sweden and that the new law has been a dent to the country's international image. Yaron Nadbornik, the head of the Jewish community of Helsinki, also stated that the draft law is discriminatory and unconstitutional.⁶⁴

Another source of concern and a blot to credibility in the eyes of the Muslim community is slow due process. Apart from Fares Al-Abaidi's 26-month-long wait to reach the district court only to see what he believes to have been a miscarriage of justice,⁶⁵ another case involving the forceful removal of the hijab of two asylum seekers reached the court five years after the incident. There are exceptions, however. Four white Finnish youths who brutally assaulted and stabbed a Pakistani about 30 times were tried and convicted five months after the crime.⁶⁶ On other occasions, a long bittersweet wait can pay off. In July 2016, the mother and sister of famous rap singer Musta Barbaari, received the news of the supreme administrative court overruling an ethnic profiling case involving them being mistaken for prostitutes in the city centre of Helsinki.⁶⁷ According to the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, the supreme administrative court ruling was a watershed and a call for the need for stricter guidelines on police accountability for ethnic profiling.⁶⁸

The slow pace of justice has consequences for Finland's international image. After two and a half years of failed attempts to repatriate all Finnish children and their mothers from Syria's Al-Hol refugee camp, the UN Child Rights Committee announced that Finland violated the children's right to life, and the right to be free from

62. Telephone interview (29.10.2022).

63. Enrique Tessieri, Parliament's constitutional law committee leaves door open for halal and shechita slaughter in Finland, *Migrant Tales*, 20 February 2023, <https://www.migranttales.net/parliaments-constitutional-law-committee-votes-to-ban-halal-and-shechita-slaughter-in-finland/>, (Access date: 22 February 2023).

64. Telephone interview (26.10.2022).

65. Enrique Tessieri, Fares Al-Abaidi: "I Was Very Disappointed [With the Sentence, and] It Was a Very, Very Bad Decision," *Migrant Tales*, 12 September 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/fares-al-abaidi-i-was-very-disappointed-with-the-sentence-and-it-was-a-very-very-bad-decision/>, (Access date: 6 December 2022).

66. 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: 31 October 2022). It should be noted that the victim survived the brutal attack.

67. Enrique Tessieri, "The Musta Barbaari and Fares Al-Abaidi Cases Deal a Further Blow to Police Credibility in Finland," *Migrant Tales*,

68. Statement: Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu: KHO:n päätöksen syrjivästä etnisestä profiloinnista tulee ohjata poliisia muuttamaan toimintaansa, 18 October 2022, <https://syrjinta.fi/-/yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu-kho-n-paatoksen-syrjivasta-etnisesta-profiloinnista-tulee-ohjata-poliisia-muuttamaan-toimintaansa>, (Access date: 31 October 2022).

inhumane and degrading treatment.⁶⁹ Presently, there are about 10 Finnish nationals at the refugee camp from the original 45.⁷⁰ PS MP Mauri Peltokangas' ethnic agitation charges were overturned by a Vaasa court of appeal.⁷¹ The MP, who is a member of the far-right Suomen Sisu association, posted on Facebook that minorities like Somalis were “parasitic welfare shoppers” and “goat herders.”



Figure 8: The cartoon from cartoonist Ville Ranta of *Iltalehti* reads: “The people fear! How do you determine an Isis child?!”⁷²

Internet

A study published by the University of Jyväskylä in December showed how the followers of the Finns Party target government ministers on Twitter.⁷³ The four-month

69. Press release by the UN Child Rights Committee, “Finland violated rights of Finnish children detained in northern Syria by failing to repatriate them, UN committee finds,” 12 October 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/finland-violated-rights-finnish-children-detained-northern-syria-failing>, (Access date: 28 October 2022).
70. Maria Manner and Elli Piirainen, “Vankileirin pattitilanne,” 22 October 2022, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-12663224>, (Access date: 28 October 2022).
71. Demokraatti, Kansanedustaja kirjoitti ”loisivista elintasosurffareista” – hovioikeus hylkäsi syyteen, 20 December 2022, <https://demokraatti.fi/kansanedustaja-kirjoitti-loisivista-elintasosurffareista-hovioikeus-hylkasi-syyteen/>, (Access date: 28 December 2022).
72. Ville Ranta, “Kansa pelkää - mistä tunnistaa ISIS-lapsen?!” *Iltalehti*, 10 December 2019, <https://www.iltalehti.fi/villeranta/a/524e71e2-563a-43fc-a101-51ebdee29a0>, (Access date: 27.10.2022).
73. Greta Virranniemi, Vihapuhujat haukkuvat ministerien ulkonäköä ja kehottavat jopa itsemurhaan Twitterissä – eniten kauheuksia saa niskaansa Tytti Tuppurainen,” *Yle*, 14 December 2022, <https://yle.fi/a/74-20008452>, (Access date: 16 December 2022).

study revealed that one out of 20 tweets targeted mostly women government ministers belonging to the PS and followers of PS chairperson Riikka Purra, Jussi Halla-aho, and other anti-immigration politicians. NGOs like Reporters Without Borders have also expressed concern over the rise of hate speech, and about how journalists and the Finnish media are under threat by online hate speech.⁷⁴ Another study, published in June, by the Finnish government on internet hate speech showed that the problem continues to grow.⁷⁵ The study revealed that hate speech happens both in an organised manner and spontaneously, and proposed the following measures to tackle it: more research, offering help to those who produce and disseminate hate speech, raising awareness, online monitoring discussions and preventing hate speech, creating social media platforms, increasing police resources, and promoting dialogue.⁷⁶ However, the latter recommendations may be easier said than done given that parties like the PS want to do away with hate speech laws.⁷⁷ A study published earlier this year, detected close to 300,000 examples of hate speech after combing through 12 million comments and articles appearing on online message boards and Finnish-language websites.⁷⁸ According to the study, 96% of online hate speech was spread by Ylilauta.org, a popular imageboard where one can publish anonymously.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In order to understand Finland's Islamophobic network, one must discern how such a network operates. Islamophobic politicians spread anti-Muslim racism usually through third parties and use code words: to denote a Muslim or a person of colour, the terms "asylum seeker", "person of foreign or migrant background", and "person who does not speak Finnish, Swedish or Sámi as his/her mother tongue (*vieraskielinen*)" are routinely used. Another way to shed light is to understand that the PS is a radical right party with ties to violent extremist groups, according to academic researcher Oula Silvenoinen.⁷⁹ The PS is one of the most important platforms of Finland's Islamophobic network with ties to openly hostile and violent groups like Suomen Sisu, Soldiers of Odin, Hommaforum, Kansallismielisten liitouma (National

74. Yle News, "Finland Ranks Second in Press Freedom, but Online Hate Speech a Growing Threat," 20 April 2022, <https://yle.fi/a/3-11892787>, (Access date: 29 November 2022).

75. Tuija Saresma, Reeta Pöyhtäri, Alekski Knuutila, Heidi Kosonen, Marko Juutinen, Paula Haara, Urho Tulonen, Kaarina Nikunen, Jenita Rauta, "Verkkoviha - Vihapuheen Tuottajien ja Levittäjien Verkostot, Toimintamuodot ja Motiivit, Valtionuesto, 20 June 2022, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164244/VNTEAS_2022_48.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, (Access date: 29 November 2022).

76. Ibid.

77. Alekski Teivainen, "Finland's Hate Speech Legislation Is too Ambiguous, Views Halla-aho," Helsinki Times, 23 September 2019, <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/politics/16769-finland-s-hate-speech-legislation-is-too-ambiguous-views-halla-aho.html>, (Access date: 29 November 2022).

78. Enrique Tessieri, Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2021, in: Enes Bayraktı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2021, Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022.

79. Oula Silvenoinen, "Mapping the Radical Right in Europe: Finland," FES Global, 5 November 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYhJL1CC0L4>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).

Alliance), Sinimusta Liike (Black-and-Blue Movement), the banned neo-Nazi Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike, and others.

It should not be surprising that the vast majority, if not all of the 38 Finns Party's MPs, based their election campaigns on an anti-immigration theme. The party's chairperson, Riikka Purra, has said directly that her party wants to exclude foreigners from getting social welfare, make citizenship requirements stricter, and further tighten immigration law. Matias Turkkila, the editor of the PS's newspaper, *Suomen uutiset*, commonly publishes stories that spread fake news about asylum seekers. Jussi Halla-aho, who was convicted for ethnic agitation and breaching the sanctity of religion in 2012,⁸⁰ is one of the main figures of the Islamophobic network. On *Yle's Ykkösaamu* talk show, he stated, "The Finns Party's view [of human rights] is that the right to move to Finland and remain here is not a human right, but a privilege."⁸¹ In a recent tweet, PS parliamentary group leader Ville Tavio claimed, without mentioning the word "Muslim", that "there is a growing number of foreigners in our country who want to see Finland under foreign rule. Those who advocate an open immigration policy are the naïve accomplices of this group."⁸² National Coalition Party MPs like MPs Atte Kaleva and Heikki Vestman use adjectives and arguments familiar to the PS. Vestman said, among other matters, that Finland's "rising" gang violence is due to a failed immigration policy. Seida Sohrabi, who is a Kurdish-born Kokoomus MP candidate, favours one-way integration and is the "foreign" face of anti-Muslim talking points. In a column, she claimed that migrants should accept Finnish values, get Finnish friends and adapt without giving up the best part of their culture.⁸³

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There is positive news for the Muslim community in terms of the harsh and sometimes hostile environment it often faces. For one, the size of the Muslim community continues to grow, and there is more recognition, according to Guleed Ahmed, chairperson of Nuoret Muslimit Helsinki ry (NUMU), a Muslim youth association.⁸⁴ "Young Muslims are finding a voice and place in society through education and in the business sector," he claims. "I'm not saying that everything is fine, but we are heading in the right direction." As examples of leadership in the Muslim community, the

80. David Dunne, "Halla-aho Refuses to Stand Down," Helsinki Times, 14 June 2012, <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/politics/2576-halla-aho-refuses-to-stand-down.html>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).

81. Yle Ykkösaamu, "Jussi Halla-aho," 19 February 2022, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50971050#autoplay=true>, (Access date: 8 December 2022).

82. Ville Tavio, Twitter, 30 November 2022, <https://twitter.com/VilleTavio/status/1597942185261137920>, (Access date: 1 December 2022).

83. Seida Sohrabi, "Seida Sohrabin kolumni: Suomi ei kaippaa lähiömellakoita," *Ilta-Sanomat*, 2 May 2022, <https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000008787797.html>

84. Telephone interview (7.12.2022) with Guleet Adhmed, chairperson of Nuoret Muslimit Helsinki ry.

NUMU chairperson mentioned businesswoman Fadumo Ali, journalists like Marwan Abdulkarim, podcaster Muttaqi Khan, two Muslim MPs, Suldan Ahmed, Hussein al-Tae, and others. The rise of the openly hostile Islamophobic Finns Party in Finnish politics. The fact that anti-Muslim hatred has risen its head in Finland politically, is a constant reminder of how much hard work still lies ahead to make Finland a more inclusive country for everyone.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The recommendations below, which have featured in the previous *European Islamophobia Reports*,⁸⁵ are still topical and important to promote the inclusion of Muslims and raise public awareness of Islamophobia.

- Recognition Islamophobia as a form of racism.
- More studies are needed on racism and Islamophobia in particular.
- Mainstream media should diversify its newsrooms to include other minorities like Muslims.
- Promote cultural and ethnic diversity in civil servant jobs like the police.
- Muslims are also Finns and 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”.
- Dismantle institutional structures that maintain racism and practices of discrimination.
- Guarantee the rights of racism and discrimination victims by making due justice swifter.
- More police anti-racism training on social ills like hate crimes.
- Anti-racism education should be mandatory, starting from comprehensive school to other sectors like businesses and the public sector.
- Each culture has its own public space in Finland, which should be promoted, protected, and respected.
- Stronger adherence to enforcing anti-discrimination laws.
- More funding and resources for effectively training and monitoring hate speech, hate crime, discrimination, and racism cases in general.
- Apart from advocating gender equality, which is essential, the same enthusiasm needs to be shown for promoting equity for all minorities and vulnerable groups.
- Finland should simplify and streamline the roles of its anti-discrimination bodies and follow the Danish and Swedish examples where all discrimination cases are handled by one body.

85. Enrique Tessieri, Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2020, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2020, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

- Prohibit politicians with convictions for ethnic agitation, hate crime, and other serious crimes from ever holding office.
- Encourage and make room for Muslims and other minorities through exemplary leadership by ministers, politicians, the media, and public officials.
- Integration is in theory a two-way process, not a one-way process as now.

Chronology

- **9.12.2022:** President Sauli Niinistö, who used to be a member of the National Coalition Party, added fuel to the debate on youth gang violence: “It is a very, very unfortunate and dangerous phenomenon. We seem to be following a little bit behind Sweden.”⁸⁶
- **7.12.2022:** Imam Anas Hajjar, a well-known Muslim figure in Finland and head of the Islamic Council of Finland, passed away at the age of 53.⁸⁷ Imam Hajjar, who moved to Finland from Syria in 1980, was active in numerous debates about Islam, its importance in society, and how all religions should coexist in peace.
- **4.11.2022:** Atik Ali, a leader of Finland’s Tatar community and a member of the foreign ministry’s advisory board for international human rights, was quoted as saying in *Suomen Uutiset*,⁸⁸ the Finns Party newspaper: “There is no mention of the scarf in the Koran. Its use is based on interpretation. It is a clear statement against integration. It also sends a message to [the rest of] society that the majority should adapt to the minority.”
- **21.8.2022:** In an interview in *Helsingin Sanomat*, PS Chairperson Riikka Purra said, “I would love to talk about immigration a lot more, but it’s not a political issue at the moment that works by itself,” denying that immigration was the main topic spread by her party.⁸⁹ If voters aren’t moved by immigration, does it mean disappointing results in the April election for the party?

86. Johannes Kotkavirta, ”Presidentti Niinistö kyselytunnilla jengiväkivallasta: ”Näköjään kuljemme Ruotsin perässä,” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 11 December 2022, <https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000009259127.html?fbclid=IwAR1PAkLp3JWozkb-QpFVmMwtIstlcXmKD3k0BX8FVrd4wnz7FMh6hil825U>, (Access date: 16 December 2022).

87. Emilia Karhu, Imaami Anas Hajjar on kuollut – ”Hän teki urauurtavaa työtä uskontodialogin edistäjänä,” *Kotimaa*, 7 December 2022, <https://www.kotimaa.fi/artikkeli/imaami-anas-hajjar-on-kuollut-han-teki-urauurtavaa-tyota-uskontodialogin-edistajana/>, (Access date: 10 December 2022).

88. Heli-Mari Wiik, ”Suomen Islam-seurakunnan entinen johtaja Suomen Uutisille: Päähuivin käyttö on selkeä kannanotto integroitumista vastaan – miksi enemmistön pitäisi sopeutua vähemmistöön?” *Suomen Uutiset*, 4 November 2022, https://www.suomenuutiset.fi/suomen-islam-seurakunnan-entinen-johtaja-suomen-uutisille-paahuivin-kaytto-on-selkea-kannanotto-integroituista-vastaan-miksi-enemmiston-pitaisi-sopeutua-vahemmistoon/?fbclid=IwAR1jGnq9su-Nx93ykHldl7nxI2ALDvxydLrOSytSLA405xOI65u43habp_E, (Access date: 20 December 2022).

89. Marko Junkkari, ”Aina vain samasta aiheesta,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 21 August 2022, <https://www.hs.fi/sunnuntai/art-2000008938660.html>, (Access date: 8 December 2022).

- **15.7.2022:** The police opened a preliminary investigation into Kokoomus MP Wille Rydman for a sexual-related crime. In June, the MP was indefinitely barred from the party's parliamentary group due to his inappropriate treatment of minors.⁹⁰ Rydman, who is considered by some to be an anti-immigration hardliner, has floated the great replacement theory and called for closer cooperation with the PS. In December, the police announced that no suspected rape charges would be brought against Rydman.⁹¹ The MP announced that he was going to defect to the PS.⁹²
- **4.7.2022:** "Today, parliament will finalise the changes of the amendments to the Emergency Powers Act and the Border Guard Act. The idea is to introduce a constitutional derogation from Article 23 of the constitution, which deals with exceptional power [granted] during times of crisis. [Such a step is synonymous to] turning back the clocks at least 30 years," tweeted European Union Institute professor of international law and human rights Martin Scheinin.⁹³
- **23.4.2022:** A citizens' initiative, the Right to Live (*Lupaa elää*),⁹⁴ passes the 50,000-signature threshold to be treated by parliament. The initiative aimed to grant undocumented migrants who came to Finland between 2015 and 2017 a residence permit. The initiative was turned down due to opposition by the Social Democrats and Centre Party.

90. Yle News, "HS: Police Open New Probe Into MP Rydman's Behaviour," 15 July 2022, <https://yle.fi/a/3-12539224>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).

91. Yle News, "No Charges Against Rydman for Suspected Rape," 16 December 2022, <https://yle.fi/a/74-20009074>, (Access date: 16 December 2022).

92. Yle News, "MP Wille Rydman to Join Finns Party," 3 January 2023, <https://yle.fi/a/74-20011307>, (Access date: 3 January 2023)

93. Martin Scheinin, Twitter, 4 July 2022, <https://twitter.com/MartinScheininF/status/1543804712386019330>, (Access date: 8 December 2022).

94. Enrique Tessieri, "The Right to Live Citizen's Initiative Has Over 50,000 Signatures – Parliament Has a Moral Obligation To Grant Residence Permits To Undocumented Migrants," Migrant Tales, 23 April 2022, <https://www.migranttales.net/the-right-to-live-citizens-initiative-has-over-50000-signatures-parliament-has-a-moral-obligation-to-grant-residence-permits-to-undocumented-migrants/>, (Access date: 15 December 2022).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
FRANCE
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

KAWTAR NAJIB

The Author

Kawtar Najib is a lecturer in human geography at the University of Liverpool, United Kingdom. Her research interests center on social and urban geographies of inequality and discrimination using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Najib explores issues of social and spatial justice, and was the principal researcher of the SAMA (Spaces of Anti-Muslim Acts) project in Paris and London, funded by the European Commission, which highlights the impact of Islamophobic discrimination on space and people. In 2021, she published her first book *Spatialized Islamophobia* (London and New York: Routledge) which focuses on the omnipresence of Islamophobia across spatial scales.

Email: Kawtar.Najib@liverpool.ac.uk

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Executive Summary

The year 2022 was marked by the most Islamophobic presidential campaign in French history with the participation of new candidate Eric Zemmour who shared a very worrying anti-Muslim program. Many other candidates from far-right to centrist parties also made Islamophobic comments during their campaigns and even promised the enactment of new laws against Islam and Muslims that would go further than the anti-separatism law. French Muslims therefore found themselves during the first third of 2022 facing a political machine that oppressed and intimidated them daily. The re-election of President Emmanuel Macron has allowed the continuation of his policy against what he calls “political Islam” and “radical Islam” which, in fact, directly affects ordinary Muslims in France. His anti-Muslim political agenda leads many observers to regard him as the world leader of Islamophobia because he bears great responsibility for the development of such a racist policy, but also for the rise of far-right political groups (sometimes very dangerous). Islamophobic laws have existed in France for several decades, but recent years have witnessed a political turn that is much more repressive and authoritarian against Muslimness and its expression in the public space, and much less severe and intransigent with racist thought and its expression in the public, media, and political space. With its “systematic obstruction” approach, the French state pursues an openly Islamophobic policy that criminalizes and destroys any initiative defending an “Islam in France” by French Muslims on their own terms. Instead, French Muslims must submit to an “Islam of France” under the control of the French authorities, thus challenging respect for freedoms of religion, conscience, and expression. In the end, the secondary place that the French state grants to its own Muslims is overtly obvious. French-style Islamophobia seeks to eradicate the increasingly visible and well-integrated Muslimness in French society.

Note de synthèse

L'année 2022 a été marquée par la campagne présidentielle la plus islamophobe de l'histoire de France, avec notamment la participation du nouveau candidat Eric Zemmour qui a livré un programme antimusulman très inquiétant. De nombreux autres candidats allant des partis d'extrême droite aux partis centristes ont également tenu des propos islamophobes pendant leurs propres campagnes et ont même promis la promulgation de nouvelles lois contre l'islam et les Musulmans qui iraient encore plus loin que la loi anti-séparatisme. Les Musulmans français se sont donc retrouvés durant le premier tiers de l'année 2022 face à une machine politique qui les a opprimé et intimidé quotidiennement. La réélection du président Emmanuel Macron a permis la poursuite de sa politique contre ce qu'il appelle 'l'islam politique' et 'l'islam radical' qui, en fait, affecte directement les Musulmans ordinaires vivant en France. Son programme politique antimusulman conduit de nombreux observateurs à le considérer comme le leader mondial de l'islamophobie car il porte une grande responsabilité non seulement dans le développement d'une telle politique raciste, mais aussi dans la montée de groupes politiques d'extrême droite (parfois très dangereux). Les lois islamophobes existent en France depuis plusieurs décennies maintenant, mais on assiste ces dernières années à un virage politique beaucoup plus répressif et autoritaire à l'égard de la Musulmanité et de son expression dans l'espace public, et à la fois beaucoup moins sévère et intransigeant à l'égard de la pensée raciste et de son expression dans l'espace public, médiatique et politique. Avec son approche 'd'entrave systématique', l'État mène une politique ouvertement islamophobe qui criminalise et détruit toute initiative défendant un 'islam en France' par les Musulmans français, eux-mêmes, selon leurs propres termes. A l'inverse, ils doivent plutôt se soumettre à un 'islam de France' sous le contrôle des autorités françaises, méprisant ainsi le respect de la liberté de religion, de conscience et d'expression. Désormais, la place secondaire qu'accorde l'État français à ses propres Musulmans est évidente. L'islamophobie à la française cherche clairement à éradiquer une Musulmanité de plus en plus visible et bien intégrée dans la société française.

Country Profile EIR 2022

Country: French Republic

Type of Regime: Unitary constitutional republic

Form of Government: Semi-presidential system

Ruling Parties: Renaissance! (center)

Opposition Parties: Le Rassemblement National, La France Insoumise

Last Elections: Parliamentary Elections (June 19, 2022): The abstention rate (54%) is still significant despite the importance of the elections. The Ensemble party, a union of right and center parties to foster La République En Marche! (Macron's party) won 38.6% (245 seats), followed by the Nouvelle Union Populaire Ecologique et Sociale, an union of left parties (Melenchon's party) which won 31.6% (131 seats). The Rassemblement National (Le Pen's party) (far right) won 17.3% (89 seats; against 8 seats in 2017). Les Républicains (right) won 6.9% (61 seats). **Presidential Elections** (24 April 2022): President Macron was re-elected with a total of 58.5% against Marine Le Pen (41.5%).

Total Population: 67.8 million (2022, Institut Nationale de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques, INSEE/National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies)

Major Languages: French

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: No data from the Ministry of Interior have been released at the time of writing this report, but the Collective Against Islamophobia in Europe (CCIE, Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Europe) has published a total of 501 reports in 2022 only regarding France. 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 Service Central du Renseignement Territorial (SCRT), the total number of racist acts decreased from 1,983 (2019) to 1,461 (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% adhere to another religion. However, according to a survey commissioned by the Observatoire de la laïcité at the Vivavoix 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), FORIF (Forum de l’Islam de France)

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), ACI (Action Contre l’Islamophobie), Plateforme Islamophobia

Far-Right Parties: National Rally (Rassemblement national, RN), France Arise (Debout la France), The Patriots (Les Patriotes), Reconquest (Reconquête)

Far-Right Movements: Riposte Laïque, Bloc identitaire, Égalité et Réconciliation, 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, the purpose of which is to prohibit the wearing of “clothing intended to conceal one’s face,” came into force on April 11, 2011.
- **Abaya and Qamis (Thobe) Ban:** The Laïcité Plan put in place in November 2022 is in line with the previous actions and, in particular, the “Vademecum of Laïcité.” It sanctions any student violating the principles of laïcité via their outfit in primary and secondary schools. Any outfit that is intended to signify or claim religious affiliation or proselytism is prohibited.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

In 2022, Islamophobia in France was marked by a particularly violent presidential campaign against French Muslims. The anti-Islam and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the French elections was day after day ever more alarming to the point of wondering which candidate would go further in their remarks. Indeed, Eric Zemmour (Reconquête) appeared to be the most worrying candidate, but the others were also trying to align themselves with this Islamophobic competition, whether it was Marine Le Pen (Rassemblement National), Valérie Pécresse (Les Républicains), or Emmanuel Macron (Renaissance). President Macron was re-elected, as was his anti-Muslim program under the guise of fighting what he calls “political Islam” and “radical Islam.” His anti-Muslim “systematic obstruction” policy has not stopped and has even continued at the same pace as last year with the closure of Muslim or perceived Muslim organizations and bodies. More precisely, between January and August 2022, 1,727 controls and 118 closures took place, and 10 million euros were seized, as specified in a press release from the Ministry of Interior and Overseas published in October 2022.¹ Although less spectacular, the closure of mosques and Muslim institutions and schools continued in 2022, but this time the spotlight was directed toward Muslim leaders and the expulsion blackmail they suffer, specifically with the highly publicized case of imam Hassan Iquioussen expelled from France for very unconvincing reasons. These inequalities of treatment continue to threaten and make the life of French Muslims very difficult and conditional.

Muslims’ freedom and recognition seem to be denied to them especially if they are proud, religious, visible, vocal, and organized Muslims. Any attempt to create an independent institution denouncing state Islamophobia is thwarted, and as a result, today, there is no independent NGO monitoring and recording anti-Muslim acts in France, just as there are very few associations defending the rights of French Muslims, promoting the Muslim faith, or simply managing the development of Muslim amenities (such as more Muslim schools, shops, institutions, and mosques commensurate with proportional needs). It was, therefore, challenging to find independent data or even government data for this investigation. The data from the Ministry of Interior come from the Central Territorial Intelligence Service (Service Central du Renseignement Territorial, SCRT) which has not yet published any reports for 2022. As a reminder and as specified in the previous report on France for the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR), the SCRT recorded 213 anti-Muslim acts in 2021. Similarly, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (Commission Nationale

1. Gouvernement Liberté Égalité Fraternité, “Dossier de presse sur la Loi confortant le respect des principes de la République: premier bilan et perspectives, un an après sa promulgation”, *Ministère de l’Intérieur et des Outre-Mer*, October 2022, 12 p. https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sites/minint/files/medias/documents/2022-10/06-10-2022-Dossier-de-presse-Loi-confortant-le-respect-des-principes-de-la-Republique-2022_0.pdf

Consultative des Droits de l'Homme, CNCDH) also used the 2021 SCRT data concerning the census of racist acts (distinguishing anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and other racist acts) for its 2021 report published in July 2022. As for the National Observatory for the Fight against Islamophobia (Observatoire National de Lutte contre l'Islamophobie), it has not published an annual report for several years now. Only the Collective Against Islamophobia in Europe (Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Europe, CCIE) published a 2022 report on January 2023. The heir of the Collective against Islamophobia in France (Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en France, CCIF) was forced to move its headquarters to another country (Belgium) to continue its independent work of collecting and recording anti-Muslim acts which still mainly concern France. Thus, in 2022, the CCIE reported a total of 501 anti-Muslim cases² in France compared to 384 in 2021, i.e., an increase of 30.5%. These cases correspond to reports that include in great majority discrimination, followed by provocation and incitement to hatred, insults and offenses, moral harassment, defamation, physical aggression, and incidents linked to the fight against radicalization and separatism.

In the end, the SCRT remains the sole guarantor of official anti-Muslim statistics inside France. With the dissolution of independent NGOs, no data resulting, for example, from the “systematic obstruction” policy can be reported inside France. Therefore, any detailed description of anti-Muslim racism in France using only the SCRT data cannot engage the direct responsibility of the French government. Clearly, studying state Islamophobia in France is a priority, as Islamophobic acts per se are no longer analyzed in detail. Indeed, very few (if any) testimonials can be found on governmental reports or media news or even on social media. The victims seem to hesitate before giving their testimonies in public and those who agree to do so very often testify anonymously. Today, French Muslims know very well that political measures directly target them and their religious practices. They can witness it when they see their local mosque being closed, their imam expelled, or their Islamic school raided. This is what all the laws recently put in place allow now. In theory, they are supposed to combat so-called political Islam, radical Islam, separatism, terrorism, and the violation of *laïcité*, but in practice they have not reduced deadly attacks or sectarian excesses. They have directly impacted French Muslims' everyday life as their Muslimness is systematically oppressed and harassed, and their organization systematically criminalized and destroyed. Despite being the first religious minority in France, today, Muslims cannot express their religious identity nor organize their worship on their own terms without seeing the development of a new anti-Muslim law which prevents them from doing so. The 2004 law banning all religious symbols in public schools was the starting point of this French political desolation, and since then the

2. CCIE, “Annual Report on Islamophobia in Europe in 2022”, *CCIE*, 87 pages, <https://ccieurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/CCIE-REPORT-2022.pdf>

laws have become increasingly Islamophobic, restrictive, and repressive. This is not what is expected of a country that presents itself as the champion of liberty and freedom of expression. Today, French Muslims are taken hostage by a government that does not allow them to express themselves freely in their own country.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

At the time of writing this report, no data detailing Islamophobic physical and verbal attacks was available for France. The CCIE nevertheless reports a total of 27 physical aggressions and 71 insults and offenses on the European level, knowing that their work essentially concerns France. But here again, there are no details on the facts themselves (their extent, their location, etc.). It is, therefore, difficult to document such attacks in depth, and the dismantling of the human rights NGOs collecting and monitoring such facts further reduces the possibilities of awareness and prevention. Thus, although alarming, the description of such acts appears secondary to the importance of understanding why French policy has allowed difficult access to data. The policy of scapegoating the Muslim populations goes as far as to criminalize them, and this criminalization can sometimes take the form of police violence. This is the case with the very disturbing physical assault captured on a video found and shared on social media in April 2022. In the video, police officers can be seen violently attacking two young women in hijab on the Clichy Bridge, in the region of Paris. More specifically, one of the two women was slapped and beaten by an officer who tried several times to remove her headscarf, while the other was thrown to the ground and left unconscious for a few seconds. The attack became so violent that many witnesses (passersby, bikers, and cyclists) felt the need to intervene and try to stop the police.

The association Action against Islamophobia (Action Contre l'Islamophobie, ACI) and the media outlet Islamotion collected the testimony of the two victims. One of them explained, "You could see his hatred in his eyes (...) he was fierce (...) he slapped her [her friend] and picked her up, slapped her and picked her up and so on trying to tear off her hijab." The young women had the opportunity to detail their side of the story by explaining that it all started on a pedestrian crossing that they crossed while the pedestrian signal was green. At the same time, a police car was speeding along with its emergency strobe light on. Because the two hijabi women had already started crossing the road, they decided to continue walking across by pointing to the green light. The police officers then stopped their car and violently attacked them.



Figure 1: Screenshots of the physical aggression against two hijabi women by the police and Sihame Assbague's tweet explaining it in details.³

Such testimonies are obviously very disturbing and controversial because they involve the French police which is supposed to defend all citizens and residents of France. This violence occurred in a very sensitive period precisely between the two rounds of the presidential election when Islamophobic comments were very frequent and even given as a directive to the police by the far-right French political leader Eric Zemmour (as described later in this report). For their part, the police officers justified their action to counter the rebellion (or civil disobedience) of the two women. Despite a very explicit video and the many witnesses and complaints launched by the victims' lawyer, the case is now closed, and the women even face legal prosecution for rebellion.



Figure 2: Screenshot of whistleblower Lies Breaker's tweet showing several videos of racist attacks on the night of the semifinal between France and Morocco for the Qatar FIFA World Cup.⁴

3. Action Contre l'Islamophobie and @islamotion, "Les 2 jeunes femmes agressées par la Police, racisme? Islamophobie?", *YouTube*, April 23, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueCjzqaVt3M>. Sihame Assbague, "Ça s'est passé le 14 avril 2022 vers 17h30 sur le pont de Clichy", *Twitter*, April 17, 2022. https://twitter.com/s_assbague/status/1515716040495443969.
4. Lies Breaker, "À l'issue de la demi-finale du Mondial remporté par la France contre le Maroc, des groupes d'extrême droite armés et cagoulés s'en sont pris violemment aux supporters du Maroc présents dans les rues", *Twitter*, December 15, 2022. https://twitter.com/Lies_Breaker/status/1603187807924768768

More alarming physical aggressions occurred at the end of 2022 during the FIFA World Cup in Qatar. After the semifinal between the French and Moroccan national teams, armed and hooded far-right groups violently attacked Moroccan supporters in the streets of several French cities such as Lyon, Montpellier, and Nice.

That night, a young teenager of Moroccan origin was killed by a car driver waving the French flag.⁵ Thus, the night of the victory of the French national team, which was supposed to be a moment of joy and celebration, turned into a show of force on the part of extremist groups who seemed unbothered by the illegal nature of their actions. The rise in power of these dangerous groups is becoming increasingly visible and their actions more and more violent (armed acts of aggression, murders, destruction of institutions, etc.). So far, few groups have been dissolved, and few actions publicly condemned and severely sanctioned.⁶ It is extremely difficult not to connect these terrible attacks with the particularly intense Islamophobic media and political discourse in France during the last World Cup. The 2022 FIFA World Cup, which took place in a Muslim country and witnessed the rise of a strong Muslim team, namely Morocco, engendered a “fascization” of anti-Muslim discourses and behaviors. For example, in social media, followers of Zemmour’s party uploaded images and videos of themselves celebrating the French victory by trampling on the Moroccan flag and making with Nazi salutes.⁷

Serious vandalism of religious buildings and mosques has also been reported in the press. In 2022, many have been affected in different French cities such as Albertville, Aix-en-Provence, Rennes, Angers, etc.⁸ Islamophobic graffiti, damage, and arson were observed throughout the country. One of the most serious arson attacks on mosques took place in Rambouillet (Yvelines) on a night of September 2022. The mosque consisted of a temporary fragile structure that caught fire. The police confirmed the criminal aspect of this attack since two men were seen running away a few minutes before the fire broke out. The President of the Muslim Association of Rambouillet (Association des Musulmans de Rambouillet, AMR) stated, “Witnesses saw these famous men flee just before the fire. Under our tents, there was no gas, no electricity... Nothing that could cause such a fire.” According to an AMR press release, the community was unable to find decent replacement premises until February 2023.⁹

5. De Freminville S., “Après France-Maroc, la mort d’Aymen endeuille un quartier Populaire de Montpellier”, *Libération*, December 15, 2022. https://www.liberation.fr/societe/police-justice/apres-france-maroc-la-mort-daymen-endeuille-un-quartier-populaire-de-montpellier-20221215_QHNQNW7XDBAOFCLIBRQTTGFE4/CCIE
6. CCIE, “Match France-Maroc, la montée en puissance des groupuscules d’extrême-droite”, *Twitter*, December 21, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9qddFOhWVM>
7. Massol N., “Salut néonazi et drapeau marocain piétiné: la soirée foot de militants de Reconquête”, *Libération*, December 16, 2022. https://www.liberation.fr/politique/elections/salut-neonazi-et-drapeau-marocain-pietine-la-soiree-foot-de-militants-de-reconquete-20221216_3NR3GXVKOBFTJJPZUINW5TPEC6M/?utm_medium=Social&xtor=CS7-51-8&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1671191432
8. CCIE, 2022, une année marquée par l’augmentation des attaques islamophobes, *You Tube*, December 30, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1qVt7XGZGA>
9. AMR, “Suite à l’incendie de la mosquée”, <http://mosqueederambouillet.fr/>

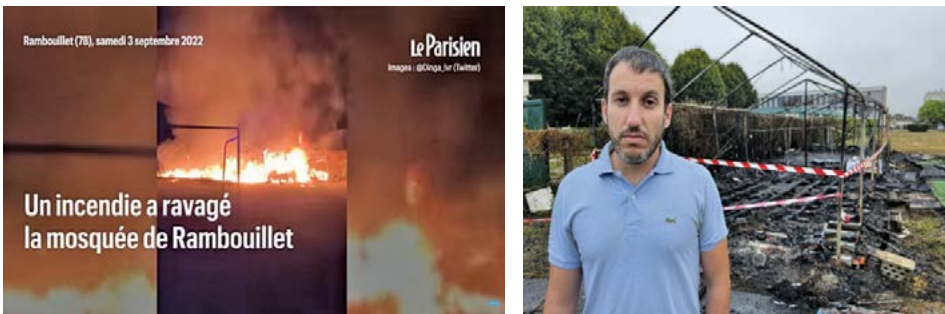


Figure 3: Screenshots of the arson attacks on the Rambouillet mosque.¹⁰

Very often, such acts, including arson, are attributed to far-right groups, and few solutions and preventions are offered by the police forces to stop them. Indeed, given the pervasive anti-Muslim climate in France, patrols could be carried out more regularly, especially during important prayers and celebrations.

Employment

Islamophobia in the workplace is quite common especially for visibly Muslim women. But with the implementation of new anti-Muslim laws such as the anti-separatism law which targets private companies performing a public service mission (public transport drivers, social housing concierges, etc.), more Muslim men should be directly affected, especially men with beards. Indeed, the lack of data and especially reliable and detailed data is sorely felt here, making any analysis of new anti-Muslim phenomena very weak. In addition, very few stories are made public because the victims, in general, do not want to disseminate information to the press or on social media for fear of damaging consequences and repercussions for their job. They also might be under restrictions to disseminate or mention any information if steps and legal procedures are still in progress. All this obviously does not help to find many testimonies on Islamophobic discrimination in the workplace.

Here, we can also discuss the expulsion or deportation from French territory of imams in the exercise of their function. An imam is a religious person whose profession is to lead the Muslim worshippers in prayer and guide them according to the teachings of Islam. The Comorian imam Mmadi Ahamada was deported to the Comoros in May 2022 because he delivered a sermon deemed contrary to the principles of the French Republic by the Prefect of La Loire.¹¹ The sermon was about women

10. Le Parisien, "Incendie de la mosquée de Rambouillet : Un acte criminel selon la police", *Le Parisien*, September 5, 2022. <https://www.topfm.mu/2022/09/05/incendie-de-la-mosquee-de-rambouillet-un-acte-criminel-selon-la-police/>. Desserre F., "Vidéo. Rambouillet : la mosquée victime d'un incendie criminel ?", *INFO 78ACTU*, September 3, 2022. https://actu.fr/ile-de-france/rambouillet_78517/video-rambouillet-la-mosquee-victime-d-un-incendie-criminel_53553746.html

11. Gouvernement Liberté Égalité Fraternité, "Communiqué de presse: M. Mmadi Ahamada a été éloigné ce 2 mai 2022 vers les Comores, son pays d'origine", *Prefete de la Loire*, Saint-Etienne, May 3, 2022. <https://www.loire.fr>

being obedient to their husbands, staying at home, and practicing piety and modesty. The French government has the right to judge such preaching as sexist and contrary to gender equality, like any individual and any Muslim living in France and even beyond. But this expulsion reveals that Muslims who wish to follow an Orthodox reading of the Muslim faith cannot live in France. Orthodox religious communities in France, whatever they may be, should be able to live in their country and follow the teachings they want providing they do not impose them on others. Ahamada's expulsion was possible because he is of foreign nationality; however, it gives rise and fuels new discussions on French Muslims who are often binational. Such a sermon could have started interesting debates among Muslim populations to discuss the various Islamic interpretations on subjects such as women's work, equality between spouses, the material realities of Muslim men and women in France, etc. By so doing, the French government is depriving French Muslims of the right to discuss and debate their own issues and concerns.

Education

Education is probably the most famous field where Islamophobia manifests itself on a daily basis in France, especially since the implementation of the 2004 law banning the hijab in primary and secondary schools. This law has allowed all kinds of discrimination mainly against female Muslim students in high schools, as reported by the CCIE with a total of 59% of Islamophobic acts in education occurring in high schools (junior and senior high schools). More precisely, these hijabi students agree to follow this law by removing their headscarf at the entrance of their high schools, but still undergo major discrimination related to the rest of their outfit (essentially their long skirts, long sleeves, or hair bands). Thus, without the 2004 law, a large majority of anti-Muslim acts would not even take place in French schools.

A new trend that is currently emerging in high schools and has been described as an attack on secularism by the French government and denounced by school principals and teaching and administration staff is the wearing of abayas and qamis.¹² These are long “garment” that cover the whole body, worn respectively by women and men mainly in the Middle East and Muslim countries. An increase in incidents linked to this type of “religious” (although more cultural) outfits has been observed by the SCRT, which recorded 144 reports in the second quarter of 2022.¹³ To rem-

gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/20220503_cp_mmadi_ahamada_et_mme_assiati_epouse_ahamada_ont_ete_eloignes_ce_2_mai_2022_vers_les_comores_leur_pays_d_origine.pdf

12. A qamis is a long garment worn by Muslim men, usually for praying at the mosque. This term is used in the French context but can refer to the term thobe in other contexts. Both terms correspond to the exact same garment.
13. Midi Libre, “Atteinte à la laïcité: voile, djellabas, abaya... à l'école les incidents se multiplient selon le renseignement”, *Midi Libre*, June 15, 2022. <https://www.midilibre.fr/2022/06/15/atteinte-a-la-laicite-voile-djellabas-abaya-a-lecole-les-incidents-se-multiplient-selon-le-renseignement-10367061.php>

edy such a trend, in November 2022, the new French Minister of National Education and Youth Pap Ndiaye launched a Laïcité Plan which aims to regulate the wearing of such clothing in French high schools.¹⁴ This plan follows a set of previous anti-Muslim laws and tools such as the “Vademecum on Laïcité” published in December 2021. This manual already allowed a school director to ban religious dress, especially if an outfit is permanent and if the student refuses to remove it under any circumstances. The document did not explicitly mention abayas and qamis, but long dark skirts were already mentioned and described as an ostensible manifestation of religious affiliation.¹⁵ The “Vademecum on Laïcité” has, therefore, clearly prepared the development of the Laïcité Plan proving that one after the other the anti-Muslim laws and tools of today will prepare those of tomorrow.



Figure 4: Screenshots of the CCIE video exposing the story of Maïssa discriminated against because of her long skirt at school.¹⁶

14. Gouvernement Liberté Egalité Fraternité, “Le bulletin officiel de l’Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports”, *Ministère de l’Education Nationale et de la Jeunesse*, November 10, 2022. <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/22/Hebdo42/MENG2232014C.htm>
15. Gouvernement Liberté Egalité Fraternité, “La laïcité à l’école, Vademecum”, *Ministère de l’Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*, December, 2022. <https://eduscol.education.fr/document/1609/download>
16. CCIE, “Jupes et robes longues au lycée – témoignage d’une lycéenne harcelée par l’administration”, *YouTube*, June 3, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYeWv4ARgP0>

More exactly, the Laïcité Plan revolves around four axes: (1) Systematically sanctioning students' behavior that undermines secularism; (2) Strengthening the protection and support for teaching staff; (3) Supporting heads of institutions in the event of an attack on secularism; and (4) Reinforcing the training of teachers and headteachers. The plan will necessarily fuel additional anti-Muslim hostility at school, as it is difficult to imagine its concrete application without harassing and oppressing high school students. Indeed, how will this plan be put into practice? The judgment and appreciation of the headteachers and teaching staff seem so personal that this plan already raises significant concerns in view of the first testimonies of high school students collected. For example, in June 2022, the CCIE published the testimony of Maïssa who was harassed by one of her teachers because of her skirt being considered too long. In the video, she explains that she was asked to take off her skirt and stay in leggings all day at her high school. She was even associated with terrorism and, in particular, with the terrible beheading of Samuel Paty. Such an association immediately made her cry and traumatized her to the point that she is now afraid to go to school. For her, school is no longer a safe place, and even the school psychologists have acknowledged her trauma.

In the end, this Laïcité Plan is the response of the French state to control and police the clothes of students in the name of the defense of secularism. But, in fact, it is a clothing police which can be seen as an attack on the principles of laïcité because it makes it possible to prohibit the long skirts and sleeves of young girls who wear the hijab outside of school. This new extension of the 2004 law clearly explains how to detect the “problematic” skirts, how to report the wearers, and how to file a disciplinary complaint if necessary. These are National Education directives that teachers and administrative staff must follow under threat of penalties. Their jurisdiction and role, therefore, change from an administrative status to a correctional one. In this regard, political scientist Françoise Vergès in an interview with TRT in May 2022 clearly explained that the “school is not the police.”¹⁷ Vergès equates this policy with an obsession with the body of young Muslim women and denounces a colonial habit of wanting to civilize them, a habit referring to an obvious structural anti-Muslim racism. In particular, Vergès criticizes White feminism for having brought an Islamophobic vocabulary to the French political class at the end of the 1990s to target Muslim women better. Indeed, these laws are always motivated by the outfits of Muslim women (hijab, niqab, burkini, abayas) and could affect other educational spaces of higher education, as is already the case, for example, in business schools and nursing schools.

17. Vergès F., “On cache derrière cette question de droits des femmes une islamophobie”, *TRT Français*, November 16, 2022. <https://www.trtfrancais.com/debats/francoise-verges-on-cache-derriere-cette-question-de-droits-des-femmes-une-islamophobie-10897858>

Politics

In 2022, Islamophobia in France was overtly political with the most Islamophobic presidential election campaign in French history. Many explicit comments from leaders of far-right, right, and center political parties were delivered in a despicable daily anti-Muslim race until April 2022. From Emmanuel Macron (Renaissance),¹⁸ to Valérie Pécresse (Les Républicains), to Marine Le Pen (Rassemblement National) and Eric Zemmour (Reconquête), all these influential candidates engaged in an anti-Muslim escalation that revolved around political Islam, radical Islam, separatism, terrorism, the Islamist threat, and the Islamization of France. More specifically, during this election campaign, Macron explained above all that he would maintain his current anti-separatism policy¹⁹ to “relentlessly defend [the] values of liberty, equality, fraternity, secularism”²⁰ as specified in his 2022 presidential program. Even if the word “secularism” (*laïcité*) is mentioned very little, we can nevertheless note that it was added to the famous French motto “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.” Knowing that today this word has become synonymous with Islamophobia since the laws put in place to protect secularism are, in fact, laws that attack Muslims and their practices, the President’s message remains quite clear. The candidate Pécresse explained that she wanted to complement Macronian measures by prohibiting the wearing of the veil for young girls, school trips’ chaperones, members of sports associations, members of polling stations, and court officers as well as ban the burkini in French swimming pools. These proposals do not seem to be a great novelty because they are already regularly debated within the Renaissance party.

The biggest news came from the candidate Le Pen who wanted to ban the wearing of the hijab (which she considers an Islamist uniform) in all public spaces,²¹ that is to say in the street and for everyone (young girls, adult women, elderly, employed, unemployed, etc.) under penalty of a fine. This law would bring France closer to fascist ideology just like the program of Zemmour who remains the most violent and scandalous candidate in his narratives. During one of his most important rallies at Trocadéro Square in Paris, in March 2022, Zemmour reminded his audience that assimilation was the only possibility of acceptance of Muslims on French territory.²² Prior

18. The political party of President Macron is now called ‘Renaissance’ (RE) since September 2022, previously known as ‘La République En Marche’ (LREM).

19. Robles S., “Présidentielle: ce que proposent Emmanuelle Macron et Marine Le Pen sur la laïcité”, *BFMTV*, April 15, 2022. https://www.bfmtv.com/politique/elections/presidentielle/presidentielle-ce-que-proposent-emmanuel-macron-et-marine-le-pen-sur-la-laicite_AN-202204150511.html

20. Macron E., “Nous tous”, *Presidential program*. April 2022. <https://www.cnccepf.fr/pdfs/Candidat-07-Emmanuel-Macron-Declaration.pdf>

21. Franceinfo Radio France, “Présidentielle: le voile ‘est un uniforme islamiste’, pour Marine Le Pen, qui veut l’interdire dans l’espace public”, *Franceinfo*, April 8, 2022. https://www.francetvinfo.fr/elections/presidentielle/video-presidentielle-le-voile-est-un-uniforme-islamiste-pour-marine-le-pen-qui-veut-l-interdire-dans-l-espace-public_5069812.html

22. Zemmour E., “Le choix que je vous propose c’est d’embrasser la culture française”, *Twitter*, March 28, 2022. <https://twitter.com/ZemmourEric/status/1508345017441701892>

to this, in February 2022, he gave a more discreet speech in front of police officers who are members of the Alliance Union, known to support right-wing and far-right political parties. He told them, “You are at the forefront of a fight for civilization. In front of you, it is not just delinquents, it is another civilization with which we cannot co-exist peacefully (...) Everyday offenders and jihadists are the same. Same origins, same backgrounds, same neighborhoods.” Zemmour’s speech clearly tells the armed French police that they are at war with part of the French population. Zemmour denies the French identity of Muslims who practice their religion in a non-discreet way and harasses them about their sense of identity, belonging, and security. Indeed, such narratives can cause significant anxiety among French Muslims, and more broadly racialized and foreign populations, who do not have the tools to defend themselves either politically or physically.



Figure 5: Screenshot of a tweet showing Eric Zemmour giving an anti-Muslim speech to police officers of the pro-right and far-right Alliance Union.²³

This feeling of physical danger leaves no doubt as to the secondary place granted to French Muslims in their own country. This secondary place is also observed with Macron’s policy, although less outrageous. The current policy of re-elected Macron

23. Ramdani I., “Eric Zemmour: ‘vous êtes aux premières loges d’un combat de civilisation’”, *Twitter*, February 2, 2022. <https://twitter.com/Ilyesramdani1/status/1488850723039326208>

seeks to restructure the Muslim faith by supporting a “French Islamology.”²⁴ In yet another attempt to reform Islam without consulting French Muslims directly, the government launched the Forum for Islam of France (Forum de l’Islam de France, FORIF) in February 2022. For the opening speech, the Minister of Interior Gérald Darmanin recognized the limitations of the French Council for Muslim Faith (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, CFCM) deploring “an Islam that is too consular (...) which has nothing to do with the aspirations of Muslims of France.”²⁵ Here, we can salute the withdrawal of the management of the Muslim faith from foreign leaders (mainly from North Africa) who do not know the reality of French Muslims. But, later in this same speech, the Minister also explained that French Muslims belong exclusively to the national community. French Muslims certainly do not belong to foreign authorities, but neither do they belong to the French national community if this national order still seeks to control them in a colonial and infantilizing way. Above all, Islam does not belong to France, and therefore French Muslims should be able to self-control their own worship with the support and respect of the government. Without this, any attempt to create new Islamic bodies and to reform Islam without them will necessarily end in failure.

Media

There is a clear link between how Islamophobia is handled in politics and how the media prepares public opinion for the implementation of future anti-Muslim regulations. The French media follow an unfortunate path of relaying anti-Muslim controversies that usually result in official anti-Muslim laws. Indeed, all these discriminatory laws always emerged from populist discussions seen, read, and heard on French television, radio, social media, or in the press, leading us to believe that these are national priorities that must be regulated and repressed. The French media are indeed seeking to increase their audience, but we must see beyond this capitalistic vision and denounce their great responsibility in the rise of far-right opinions and anti-Muslim racism. By encouraging Islamophobic escalation, French Muslims are subject to significant discrimination and hostility. Most disturbing is when this Islamophobic escalation goes so far as to “promote” the killing of Muslims by white supremacist groups and label it an act of resistance. Such an extremist speech was held by the famous and very influential politically French writer Michel Houellebecq. During an interview

24. Gouvernement Liberté Egalité Fraternité, “Dossier de presse sur la Loi confortant le respect des principes de la République: premier bilan et perspectives, un an après sa promulgation”, *Ministère de l’Intérieur et des Outre-Mer*, October 2022, 12 p. https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sites/minint/files/medias/documents/2022-10/06-10-2022-Dossier-de-presse-Loi-confortant-le-respect-des-principes-de-la-Republique-2022_0.pdf

25. Gouvernement Liberté Egalité Fraternité, “Forum de l’islam de France: une étape nouvelle dans le dialogue entre les pouvoirs publics et le culte musulman”, *Ministère de l’Intérieur et des Outre-Mer*, February 5, 2022. <file:///C:/Users/knajib/Downloads/discours-gerald-darmanin-forum-de-l-islam-de-france-5-fevrier-2022-2.pdf>

to the French magazine *Front Populaire* in November 2022 on the great replacement and the French reconquest,²⁶ he specified, “When entire territories will be under Islamist control, I think that acts of resistance will take place. There will be attacks and shootings in mosques, in cafés frequented by Muslims, in short, a reversed Bataclan²⁷.” Houellebecq does not seem to fear or deplore such a situation,²⁸ but rather to call for it as journalist Edwy Plenel, the publisher of the independent newspaper *Mediapart*, noted in December 2022. For Plenel, this is clearly an apology for terrorism and therefore a criminal offence.



Figure 6: Screenshot of Edwy Plenel's tweet qualifying Houellebecq's comments as an apology for terrorism in December 2022.²⁹

26. 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.

27. On November 2015, a series of coordinated suicide attacks took place on several places in Paris including in the Bataclan theatre killing 90 innocent people.

28. Freschi R, “French Islamophobia and racism are by-products of its exclusionary national identity”, *The New Arab*, February 7, 2023. <https://www.newarab.com/features/french-islamophobia-product-its-national-identity>

29. Edwy Plenel, “L'apologie du terrorisme consiste à présenter ou commenter favorablement des actes terroristes”, *Twitter*, December 16, 2022. <https://twitter.com/edwyplenel/status/1603805933003370496>

Indeed, only a few days later, a white supremacist repeat offender in his sixties attacked and killed three prominent figures of the Kurdish community in a cultural center located in Paris. This terrible deadly attack was not severely condemned in the media and on occasion was even excused by some openly Islamophobic TV channels. After such media coverage, another man shot a North African teenage girl in the hip, claiming racist motives by saying “what happened two days ago gave me strength.”³⁰

Such terrible attacks can occur in France these days because of the way the French media broadcasts the “Muslim problem” daily and more intensely during peaks periods. For example, during the presidential campaign and just after Eric Zemmour made his candidacy official, in January 2022, the national channel M6 broadcast a documentary containing a large part of his racist and Islamophobic ideas. In the “Zone Interdite” (Forbidden Zone) documentary titled “Facing the danger of radical Islam,” the French city of Roubaix (Nord) was depicted as a dangerous Islamist city where radical Islam and even terrorism thrive. But simple Islamic practices such as the learning of Quranic verses in Muslim schools were described as dangerous and anti-republican. Journalists, among others, targeted halal butcheries, Turkish baths, and Islamic shops, explaining that they will take over the streets of Roubaix. The documentary was not only called manipulative by many abused participants,³¹ but also an insult to the Muslim community and the Islamic faith by important political figures. In particular, David Guiraud, an elected member of the National Assembly in the northern constituency from the New Ecological and Social Popular Union (Nouvelle Union Populaire Ecologique et Sociale, NUPES) explained that this is propaganda journalism seeking to show that in the city of Roubaix “terrorism begins with a local halal butchery.”³² In conclusion, from microaggressions to Islamophobic oppression to calls for murder, today, the French media must account for the pain caused to French Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Justice system

The judicial system in France is also strained by numerous cases involving Muslims, their practices and their defense. This is particularly the case of imam Hassan Iquioussen who was expelled from France for comments made decades ago that were deemed sexist and anti-Semitic. In line with the previous questionable decisions (e.g., the closure of many human rights NGOs, mosques, etc.), the Council of State (Conseil d’Etat) continues in 2022 to follow an Islamophobic trend under the influence

30. Tajmaat, “Flash: ce qui s’est passé il y a deux jours m’a donné de la force”, *Twitter*, December 29, 2022. https://twitter.com/Tajmaat_Service/status/1608393478702268419

31. Islam et Info, “Lilia Bouziane revient sur la manipulation dont elle a été victime sur Zone Interdite”, *YouTube*, January 26, 2022. <https://twitter.com/Islametininfo/status/1486376373426008066>

32. Le Média, “Zone Interdite / Roubaix en colère contre M6”, *YouTube*, January 26, 2022. <https://youtu.be/Qj9R-5SoRU20>

of the government by expelling Iquioussen to Morocco, despite the transcript of several apologetic speeches deconstructing his previous thoughts. The scandalous and disproportionate nature of this case highlights a violation of his freedom of expression, religion, and private family life. Indeed, Minister of Interior Gérald Darmanin went so far as to use the most important tools of the state to manage this case himself, in particular, issuing a European arrest warrant when Iquioussen decided to leave France for Belgium as requested. As if he was one of the most dangerous bandits and terrorist, this personal manhunt was so relentless that the imam's lawyer speaks of a situation where "the legal becomes political, the political becomes legal and the political becomes the people's court."³³

What is more, Iquioussen is known to be a moderate imam and in favor of respecting the principles of the French Republic. By publicizing such a case, Minister Darmanin clearly wanted to send a message of fear to all Islamic leaders and representatives of Muslim associations, by reminding them that "someone who has children, who is married in France, who was born in France, can still - 58 years later - be expelled (...) This will make it possible to discuss other cases." In fact, a list of 734 "radicalized" foreigners³⁴ is ready and the re-election of President Macron will allow their expulsion although they have lived in France for decades and have not created any danger or disturbance to public order. Some are already facing problems renewing their residence permit in France.³⁵

The Iquioussen case has shown that the impartiality of the justice system is seriously threatened in France. In this sense, political scientist François Burgat explained that France is gradually moving away from the rule of law,³⁶ and the Union of Lawyers of France (Syndicat des avocats de France) even believes that "the last pillar" of the Council of State has been broken in the face of the deleterious political objectives of the Minister of Interior.³⁷ Finally, anti-Muslim discrimination is also visible in judicial decisions, thus strongly tainting French democracy. The presence of Muslims in France and particularly the visibility of their practices have strongly challenged the values of France as they are clearly not being applied to them.

33. Meunier Q., "Selon son avocate l'imam Hassan Iquioussen a quitté le territoire français", *BFMTV*, September 2, 2022. https://www.bfmtv.com/police-justice/je-ne-sais-pas-ou-est-mon-client-affirme-l-avocate-de-l-imam-hassan-iquioussen_AN-202209020669.html

34. Middle East Eye, "France: le Ministère de l'Intérieur prépare une 'liste des imams à expulser", *MEE*, September 5, 2022. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/030922/apres-iquioussen-darmanin-pret-degainer-une-longue-liste-d-imams-expulser>

35. Syrah L., "Après Iquioussen, Darmanin prêt à dégainer une longue 'liste' d'imams à expulser", *Mediapart*, September 3, 2022. <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/030922/apres-iquioussen-darmanin-pret-degainer-une-longue-liste-d-imams-expulser>

36. Burgat F., "Hassan Iquioussen: 'lentement, la France, est en train de sortir de l'Etat de droit", *Mizane Info*, August 30, 2022. <https://www.mizane.info/hassan-iquioussen-lentement-la-france-est-en-train-de-sortir-de-letat-de-droit/>

37. Mizane Info, "Qui pour arrêter le Ministre de l'Intérieur?", *Mizane Info*, September 2, 2022. <https://www.mizane.info/qui-pour-arreter-le-ministre-de-linterieur/>



Figure 7: Screenshot of a Mizane Info's tweet showing the concern of the Union of Lawyers of France over a fragile rule of law in the Iquioussen case.³⁸

Internet

Islamophobia on the internet primarily targets Muslim public figures who express their concern about the Islamophobic path taken by the French government, the media, or the police as well as the rise of dangerous far-right groups. Those who are publicly vocal and have important followers are the most targeted by Islamophobic cyberbullying. Threatening comments and private messages on Twitter or other social media are quite common and can even affect non-Muslim activists and politicians who dare to criticize and denounce anti-Muslim racism (a racism that occurs every day and everywhere³⁹). They usually come from anonymous harassers or far-right activists; however, what is the most alarming is that they can also come from organizations directly connected to the government. This was the case of the journalist Feïza Ben Mohamed who explained in a tweet posted in July 2022 that the General Secretariat of the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalisation (Secrétariat Général du Comité Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance et de la Radicalisation, SG-CIPDR) harassed her on Twitter because of

38. Mizane Info, "Le Syndicat des avocats de France et le GISTI estiment que 'la dernière digue' du Conseil d'état 'a cédé' face aux 'objectifs politiques délétères poursuivis par le ministre de l'intérieur' dans l'affaire Iquioussen », *Twitter*, September 2, 2022. <https://twitter.com/MizaneInfo/status/1565742034048122880>

39. Najib K., *Spatialized Islamophobia* (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), 178 p. <https://www.routledge.com/Spatialized-Islamophobia/Najib/p/book/9780367894788>

her work as a journalist against state Islamophobia. She specified, “For several hours, I suffered Islamophobic cyberbullying generated by tweets from CIPDR, a French government body. State means have been used to target me, intimidate me, and discredit my work as a journalist for Anadolu Agency.”



Figure 8: Screenshot of Feïza Ben Mohamed's tweet exposing her cyberbullying from a French government body (SG-CIPDR) in July 2022.⁴⁰

Similar treatment has also been observed against foreign NGOs such as the CCIE, based in Brussels, and CAGE, based in London, especially after the release of a report denouncing state-sponsored persecution of Muslims in France.⁴¹ These advocacy organizations have been the subject of propaganda attacks by the SG-CIPDR which reduced them to “Islamist” and “Salafist” activists through the same authoritarian methods of cyberbullying, cyber-harassment, and cyber-intimidation.⁴²

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In France, Islamophobia is so normalized and legalized that it is nowadays part of the mainstream. Many central Islamophobic figures among journalists, politicians, and representatives of important institutions have contributed to developing such a trivialization of anti-Muslim racism. The most obvious figures are President Emmanuel Macron and his Minister of Interior Gérald Darmanin. They are the ones in power and in charge of the execution of this power, a power that continues to multiply Is-

40. Ben Mohamed F., “Depuis plusieurs heures, je subis un cyberharcèlement islamophobe généré par les tweets du CIPDR, organe gouvernemental français”, *Twitter*, July 30, 2022. <https://twitter.com/FeïzaBM/status/1553447823357747201>

41. CAGE, ““We are beginning to spread terror”: the state-sponsored persecution 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

42. SG-CIPDR, “Depuis plusieurs mois, le réseau d’activistes islamistes UK CAGE mène une campagne de dénigrement contre la France”, *Twitter*, April 27, 2022. https://twitter.com/SG_CIPDR/status/1519347116447051777; SG-CIPDR, “Réincarnation du CCIF, collectif islamiste dissous par le gouvernement français en décembre 2020, le CCIE, basé à l’ étranger, cible la France dans de nouvelles accusations mensongères et grossières”, *Twitter*, January 26, 2023. https://twitter.com/SG_CIPDR/status/1618669745452244993

lamophobic narratives, laws, and regulations in the name of republican values. This race towards a more institutionalized Islamophobia does not date from President Macron's tenure, but rather from a political system and power structures that have been in place for decades. That said, it is definitely during his presidential term that there was an overt acceleration of state-run Islamophobia in France and a global guidance for other countries. Macron recognized this in January 2023 by stating to the French newspaper *Le Point*, "No country in the world bans the veil in public space. We are the country that goes the furthest in this direction."⁴³

This worldwide recognition of the French anti-Muslim machine even prompted President Macron to "reassure" the rector of the Great Mosque of Paris during the centenary ceremony in October 2022. Before awarding him with the insignia of Officer of the Legion of Honor (France's highest honor), he said to him, "Mr. Rector, there are, without a doubt, early mornings when you doubt. There are, without a doubt, evenings when you find it unfair to be so attacked, including by those you defend and sincerely like. You have also chosen it (...). But we ask all citizens to absolutely respect the Republic."⁴⁴ Here, Macron makes it clear that he is aware of the violence of his policy against Islam and Muslims, but he does not plan to change it by choosing to keep the same Minister of Interior who allowed the closure of the CCIF, the expulsion of imam Iquioussen, the closure of many mosques, Islamic schools, etc. President Macron's policy has highlighted an uninhibited, normalized, and legalized racism and Islamophobia with the concrete multiplication by eleven of the number of far-right deputies in the French National Assembly between his first and second elections (8 seats in 2017 and 89 seats in 2022).

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Since French-style Islamophobia is mainly state-run, any attempt to combat it is therefore necessarily incriminated or even destroyed. Therefore, a legitimate question can be asked: what spaces are still left countering Islamophobia in France? Clearly, initiatives are limited, although some can still be observed. Some examples follow below.

- The association Muslim Prospect (Perspectives Musulmanes), formerly the Coordination against the Separatism Law (Coordination contre la Loi Séparatisme), is one of the most active in France. This association took part in a demonstration in March 2022 against the closure of the Pessac Mosque in

43. Daoud K., "Emmanuel Macron: 'je ne demande pas pardon à l'Algérie et j'explique pourquoi'", *Le Point*, January 11, 2023. https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/exclusif-emmanuel-macron-je-ne-demande-pas-pardon-a-l-algerie-et-j-explique-pourquoi-11-01-2023-2504494_20.php

44. Elysée, "Discours du Président de la République à l'occasion des commémorations du centenaire de la Grande Mosquée de Paris, *Elysée*, October 19, 2022. <https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-20379-fr.pdf>

Bordeaux (Gironde)⁴⁵ and organized a protest against the deportation of imam Iquioussen and the non-respect of the rule of law in Paris in September 2022.⁴⁶ In collaboration with the NGO CAGE, it hosted political scientist Enes Bayraklı in Paris in November 2022 to present the results of the 2021 *European Islamophobia Report*.⁴⁷ On a European scale, in September 2022, Perspectives Musulmanes presented its political analysis of French-style Islamophobia at the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)⁴⁸ and in October 2022 at the UN (United Nation) in Geneva.⁴⁹

- The NGO CAGE, although a British association based in London, also acts against Islamophobia in France, and challenged French representatives during the same conference held at the OSCE in September 2022.⁵⁰
- The Collective Against Islamophobia in Europe (CCIE, Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Europe) published its first report in January 2023 mainly based on the French case. It continues its legal battle against the central figures of French Islamophobia (mainly from the political and media sphere).
- The Human Rights League (La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, LDH) denounced the incorrect definition of *laïcité* of French Minister of Interior on swimsuits.⁵¹ The Municipal Council of Grenoble (Isère) authorized the wearing of the burkini in May 2022 thanks to important local work by the Union of Muslim Women of the Citizen Alliance (Syndicat des femmes musulmanes de l'Alliance citoyenne), but a few days later the Prefect of Isère rejected this recent authorization at the request of Minister Darmanin. For the LDH, swimming pool attire is more of a moral order than a public order.
- The Great Mosque of Paris and the Union of Mosques in France have tried to file a complaint against the dangerous and criminal comments made by

45. Perspectives Musulmanes, "Non la Mosquée de Pessac ne fermera pas!", *Twitter*, March 23, 2022. <https://twitter.com/CoordinationCLS/status/1506692786489376770>

46. Perspectives Musulmanes, "Rassemblement ce Samedi 3 septembre à 15h00, Place de la République pour dire NON à l'expulsion de Hassan Iquioussen", *Twitter*, August 31, 2022. <https://twitter.com/CoordinationCLS/status/1565049352522956801>

47. Perspectives Musulmanes, "Perspectives Musulmanes a eu le Plaisir de recevoir Enes Bayrakli fondateur et co-auteur du rapport sur l'islamophobie en Europe et UK CAGE", *Twitter*, November 14, 2022. <https://twitter.com/CoordinationCLS/status/1592201624914915328>

48. Perspectives Musulmanes, "A l'OSCE Perspectives Musulmanes a interpellé la communauté internationale sur l'islamophobie en France", *Twitter*, September 30, 2022. <https://twitter.com/CoordinationCLS/status/1575919773002526722>

49. Perspectives Musulmanes, "Perspectives Musulmane était aujourd'hui à l'ONU pour expliquer les conséquences de la loi Séparatisme sur les droits et libertés des musulmans!", *Twitter*, October 3, 2022. <https://twitter.com/CoordinationCLS/status/1577061764575158272>

50. CAGE, "WATCH: CAGE Managing Director challenges the French Government at the OSCE Human Dimension Conference on its Islamophobic persecution of Muslims", *Twitter*, September 28, 2022. https://twitter.com/UK_CAGE/status/1575077483497463810

51. LDH France, "Grenoble: un ordre du ministre pour imposer une vision erronée de la laïcité, la LDH sera intervenant volontaire pour dénoncer ces confusions sur les tenues en piscine", *Twitter*, May 17, 2022. https://twitter.com/LDH_Fr/status/1526607730189869056

writer Michel Houellebecq on the “reversed Bataclan,” but they have not renewed their appeals.⁵²

- The leader of the left-wing party NUPES, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, acknowledged that the anti-separatism law is not a republican law. In May 2022, he explained on the TV show ‘We are live’ (*On est en direct*): “If I am prime minister, I will repeal the anti-separatism law because it is an unfair and offensive law which does not fight Islamists, but which humiliates people.”⁵³ He added that France must not fight against Islam and must respect Muslims who have never betrayed the French nation at all important times in French history.

Fighting Islamophobia inside France is not an easy task. Many international human rights NGOs and defenders that want to protect the rights of French Muslims are targeted by the French government. For example, even the European Commission is under pressure - particularly from the Secretary of State for European Affairs Laurence Boone - to stop collaborating with associations such as FEMYSO (Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations).



Figure 9: Screenshots of Secretary of State for European Affairs Laurence Boone’s tweet attacking FEMYSO (Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations).⁵⁴

52. Le Monde, “La Grande Mosquée de Paris annonce porter plainte contre Michel Houellebecq après des ‘propos très graves qu’il a tenus au sujet des musulmans de France’”, *Le Monde*, December 28, 2022. La Grande Mosquée de Paris annonce porter plainte contre Michel Houellebecq après des « propos très graves qu’il a tenus au sujet des musulmans de France » (lemonde.fr)
53. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, “Si je suis Premier Ministre, j’abrogerais la loi séparatisme qui est une loi injuste et offensante”, *Twitter*, May 1st, 2022. <https://twitter.com/JLMelenchon/status/1520547644862603264>
54. Boone L. “L’association FEMYSO ne correspond pas à nos valeurs de laïcité”, *Twitter*, August 29, 2022. <https://twitter.com/LaurenceBoone/status/1564259022827655172>

The attack on the pan-European network in charge of spreading the voice of Muslim youth is in line with the SG-CIPDR attacks on international NGOs such as CAGE and the CCIE. But the current French government body goes even further: it organized meetings with internal security agents from around thirty foreign embassies to present the methods of the French “Prevent Policy” against radicalization and separatism.⁵⁵ Thus, it is important to understand that Islamophobia in France is not only a French problem, it is a global problem as the desire to influence other countries to follow the same Islamophobic path is already beginning to be observed, particularly in Sweden, Germany, Canada, and India.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The criminalization of any space of anti-Islamophobic resistance and struggle in France leads us to wonder if it is possible to denounce the state-run Islamophobia of this country. Normally, in France, whether we are right or wrong, we should be able to say that there is an anti-Muslim policy that can be observed in the media, in politics, in academia, etc. If French Muslims fear to speak out against such a policy, if Muslim representatives self-censor, if activists multiply legal procedures, if academics organize closed seminars, if journalists receive death threats, and if dissident politicians are more and more intimidated, this is not a sign of a healthy democracy. France is a beautiful country, just like its people, but the French government has betrayed its values as well as the most beautiful promises embedded in its constitution. Many national and international voices are trying to speak up to save French democracy and all the essential foundations for its proper functioning (legal equality, political freedom, rule of law, civil liberties, etc.).

The policy recommendations given in last year’s report are still valid today. First, anti-Muslim laws must be reviewed and repealed. Second, better recognition in France of official racial and religious data is essential to combat the inequalities and discrimination suffered by the minority groups in question. Third, the idea of assimilating French Muslims by de-Islamizing them must be completely abandoned. On the contrary, France needs to respect its Muslims by renouncing its civilizing mission which dates to colonial times and by developing anti-discrimination laws protecting religious minorities. Without such a policy respecting and protecting religious pluralism, the French government continues in the 2020s to want to “civilize” and “enlighten” Muslims, even through violence. This violent anti-Muslim policy that seeks to push French Muslims to practice their religion discreetly or to practice an “Islam of France” defined by the French authorities without their participation will not work. Indeed, the government for decades has been developing the creation of new Islamic structures that do not resemble

55. SG-CIPDR, “Accueil au SG-CIPDR des attachés de sécurité intérieure d’une trentaine d’ambassades étrangères”, *Twitter*, March 15, 2022. https://twitter.com/SG_CIPDR/status/1503700377220390914

and represent French Muslims. This vision which rejects the integration of “Muslims with Islam” and only accepts “Muslims without Islam” will therefore remain a failure.

Despite an Islamophobic political enterprise that has existed for decades now, French Muslims do not seem to renounce their Muslimness which is increasingly visible and well-integrated into French society. This anti-Muslim oppression will necessarily generate the awakening of a Muslim pride, as has already been observed in other oppressed communities such as the Black community and the LGBT community. The more their Muslimness is oppressed, the more French Muslims will want to express their religious identity and belonging. This is a natural phenomenon that tends to reverse the stigma by re-asserting even more strongly the oppressed identity, in this case the Muslim identity. Even if Islam is seen by Islamophobes as a contradiction to the future of Europe, as political scientist Farid Hafez reminds us,⁵⁶ French Muslimness will necessarily be part of the future of France. Consequently, France will develop with all the existing identities on its territory, and all together they will create a common, unique, and diversified French society.

Chronology

- **25.01.2022:** The French M6 channel broadcast an Islamophobic documentary for its “Zone Interdite” program depicting the French city of Roubaix (Nord) as a dangerous Islamist city.
- **02.02.2022:** During his presidential campaign, Eric Zemmour explained to police officers (members of the pro-right and far-right Alliance Union) that they are at war with French Muslims and more broadly with racialized and foreign populations from deprived areas.
- **05.02.2022:** The Forum for the Islam of France (FORIF) was officially launched in the presence of Minister of Interior Gérald Darmanin.
- **14.03.2022:** The prefect of Gironde announced the closure of Al Farouk Mosque in Pessac. Later, this closure was rejected by the Council of State.
- **15.03.2022:** The General Secretariat of the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalisation (Secrétariat Général du Comité Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance et de la Radicalisation, SG-CIPDR) presented its Islamophobic French “Prevent Policy” to internal security agents from around thirty foreign embassies.
- **28.03.2022:** Eric Zemmour explained in a presidential campaign speech in Trocadéro Square in Paris that assimilation is the only possible acceptance of Muslims on French territory.

56. Al Jazeera English, “Austrian academic Farid Hafez spent two years facing prosecution for terrorism offences after special forces raided his home”, *Twitter*, January 18, 2023. <https://twitter.com/AJEnglish/status/1615773593555582976>

- **06.04.2022:** Marine Le Pen explained before the second-round vote for the presidency that she would ban the wearing of the hijab in all public spaces.
- **14.04.2022:** Two women in hijab were publicly attacked by police officers on Clichy Bridge in the region of Paris.
- **20.04.2022:** The Great Mosque of Paris organized a republican *iftar* to celebrate the end of Ramadan by inviting Islamophobic politicians, showbusiness celebrities, and no hijabi women.
- **02.05.2022:** The Comorian imam Mmadi Ahamada was deported to the Comoros because of a sermon deemed contrary to the principles of the French Republic by the Prefect of La Loire.
- **28.07.2022:** The Minister of Interior announced the expulsion from French territory of imam Hassan Iquioussen because of religious sermons deemed contrary to republican and secular values.
- **03.09.2022:** Arson attack on a mosque located in Rambouillet (Yvelines)
- **19.10.2022:** Speech of President Macron for the centenary ceremony of the Great Mosque of Paris where he “reassured” the rector of his anti-Muslim policy.
- **10.11.2022:** The Laïcité Plan was implemented to regulate the wearing of “religious” clothing in French high schools.
- **28.11.2022:** In the French magazine *Front Populaire*, French writer Michel Houellebecq explained that “a reversed Bataclan” will happen in the future and that it will be an act of resistance.
- **15.12.2022:** On the evening of the FIFA World Cup semifinal in Qatar between the French and Moroccan national teams, violent far-right groups attacked Moroccan fans in the French cities of Lyon, Montpellier, and Nice.
- **23.12.2022:** A white supremacist attacked and killed three prominent figures of the Kurdish community in a cultural center in Paris.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
GERMANY
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

ZUBAIR AHMAD

The Author

Zubair Ahmad studied political science, religious studies, and psychoanalysis at the Goethe University Frankfurt and the Institut d'études politiques in Lyon. After research stays at the University of Johannesburg, Columbia University, and the Cluster of Excellence "Normative Orders", he joined the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies (Freie Universität Berlin) as a doctoral fellow in 2015. His postgraduate studies trace the imperial and colonial histories of the present vis-à-vis Germany's government of Islam. In addition, Ahmad is engaged in the Young Islam Conference, an anti-racist and empowerment platform in Berlin.

Email: zubair@zedat.fu-berlin.de

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Executive summary

Studies have repeatedly shown that Islamophobia is a widespread phenomenon that permeates and manifests itself in various socio-political contexts. In recent years, there has been an increased awareness at the societal level that Islamophobia also threatens societal diversity and coexistence.

While various measures are being introduced at the political level, there remains a lack of political will and commitment to combat Islamophobia in institutions consistently. Thus, discourses around “political Islam” are maintained, among other things, through decidedly political discourses.

Furthermore, no studies have been commissioned to date that addresses the issue of racial profiling in the context of the police. There is also a fundamental lack of concrete knowledge about how and how often Muslims are affected by racism in the workplace, in the education system, or even when looking for a place to live.

Preliminary figures on anti-Muslim racism in Germany show that in 2022 there were at least 364 anti-Muslim incidents in which at least 26 mosques were attacked.

Zusammenfassung

Studien halten wiederkehrend fest, dass rassistische Ressentiments gegenüber Muslim*innen ein weit verbreitetes Phänomen sind, welches sich durch unterschiedliche gesellschaftspolitische Zusammenhänge zieht und manifestiert. In den letzten Jahren lässt sich auf gesellschaftlicher Ebene ein gesteigertes Problembewusstsein darüber erkennen, dass antimuslimischer Rassismus die gesellschaftliche Vielfalt und das Zusammenleben in Deutschland gefährden.

Während auf politischer Ebene verschiedene Maßnahmen eingeleitet werden, fehlt an anderen wichtigen Stellen dennoch der politische Wille, (antimuslimischen) Rassismus konsequent zu bekämpfen. So werden Diskurse um den politischen Islam u.a. auch durch dezidiert politische Diskurse aufrechterhalten.

Zum anderen wurden bis dato keinerlei Studien beauftragt, die das Thema *racial profiling* im Rahmen der Polizei adressieren. Grundsätzlich fehlt es an konkretem Wissen darüber, wie und wie häufig Musliminnen z.B. auf dem Arbeitsplatz, im Bildungssystem oder auch bei der Wohnungssuche von Rassismus betroffen sind.

Die vorläufigen Zahlen zum antimuslimischen Rassismus in Deutschland zeigen, dass es im Jahr 2022 mindestens 364 antimuslimische Vorfälle gab, bei denen mindestens 26 Moscheen angegriffen wurden.

Country Profile

EIR 2022

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), without any party affiliation (4 seats)

Total Population: 83.2 million (December 2021, Federal Statistical Office)

Major Languages: German

Official Religion: Christianity

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2022, 364 Islamophobic crimes were registered across Germany by the Federal Criminal Police Office; 26 of these targeted mosques. In addition to these official yet provisional statistics, the initiative brandeilig counted 10 mosque attacks for the year 2022. In the same year, at least two rallies of PEGIDA Förderverein in Dresden took place. However, the final data of the German political bodies is yet to be made public.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (51%), Undenominational (41%), Islam (6.4-6.7%), Judaism (0.1%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 5.3-5.6 million (estimated, Federal Ministry of Interior)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB); Islamic Community Milli Görüş (IGMG); Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD); Koordinationsrat der Muslime (KRM); Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Germany (AMJ); Union of Islamic Cultural Centres (VIKZ); Islamic Community of Shia Communities in Germany (IGS); Islamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken in Deutschland e.V. (IGBD); Union der Islamisch Albanischen Zentren in Deutschland (UIAZD)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Netzwerk gegen Diskriminierung und Islamfeindlichkeit (Alliance against Islamophobia and anti-Muslim) (CLAIM) lists 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 Europäische und Orientalische Kultur e.V.; Verband binationaler Familien und Partnerschaften; Mosaik e.V.; Anlaufstelle für Diskriminierungsschutz an Schulen (ADAS); Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen; Abrahamisches Forum; Stiftung gegen Rassismus; Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland e.V.; and Kompetenznetzwerk Islam- und Muslimfeindlichkeit

Far-Right Parties: Alternative for Germany (AfD), National Democratic Party Germany (NDP), Arminius – Bund des deutschen Volkes, Aufbruch deutscher Patrioten – Mitteldeutschland, Deutsche Liga für Volk und Heimat, Die Rechte, Die Republikaner (REP), Die Rechte

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 Organisations: 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 to wear a hijab for people working in public service. In the first case, it was decided in 2015 that a blanket prohibition for teachers to wear a headscarf was unconstitutional as it infringed upon the freedom of belief (Article 4 Para. 2 of the Basic Law). How-

ever, concrete prohibitions are allowed if the headscarf constitutes a danger to peace at schools (Case Nos. 1 BvR 471/10, 1 BvR 1181/10). In the second case, which a legal trainee brought to the Federal Constitutional Court in 2020, a different ruling was passed. Because of her “tasks of public authority” during her legal traineeship, she was prohibited to wear a headscarf as it had an impact on 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 true 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 with their appearance. The bill explicitly mentions the prohibition of wearing religiously connoted symbols as a civil servant if a neutral administration is 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.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Racist attitudes remain high in German society and among the population. According to a representative study conducted by the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) in early 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 per cent 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 they had already experienced racism themselves while 58% of those identifying as racialized minorities reported having experienced racism at one point in their lives. The survey also reported that almost half of the population (45%) has already observed a racist incident.¹

Accordingly, criminal offenses motivated by far-right and racist hatred have been constantly rising within the last few years.²

The final numbers are yet to be published as this report is written. In 2022, 364 Islamophobic crimes were registered across Germany by the Federal Criminal Police Office; 26 of these targeted mosques. In addition to these official yet provisional statistics, the initiative brandeilig counted 10 mosque attacks in 2022. In the same year, at least two rallies of PEGIDA Förderverein in Dresden took place. However, the final data of the German political bodies is yet to be made public.

Several key events throughout the year illustrate the alarming normality, effective dissemination, and depth of anti-immigrant, racist, and Islamophobic sentiments and practice in Germany.

February 19 marked the second commemoration of the nine victims of the racist shooting in Hanau in 2020. Migrant communities, anti-racist initiatives, particularly 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 Gultekin, demanding justice for the dead and effective inquiries into the institutionalised structures of racism. However, the commemoration ceremony excluded close family relatives and friends as high-ranking politicians visited the cemetery in Hanau.³

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1. Rassistische Realitäten, DeZIM, https://www.rassismusmonitor.de/fileadmin/user_upload/NaDiRa/CATI_Studie_Rassistische_Realit%C3%A4ten/Zusammenfassung_DeZIM-Studie_Rassistische-Realit%C3%A4ten.pdf (Access date: 30 April 2022).
 2. “Politisch motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2021”, BMI & Bundeskriminalamt, https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/nachrichten/2022/pmk2021-factsheets.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&t=2, pp.3.
 3. <https://taz.de/Kritik-an-Gedenken-zum-Hanau-Anschlag/!5836268/#:~:text=HANAU%2FBERLIN%20taz%20%7C%20Es%20wird,Stadt%20vor%20zwei%20Jahren%20gedenken..>

In March, with the start of the war in Ukraine and the heightened flight of people fleeing the war, racial profiling heightened as well. Numerous incidents have indicated the racialised operations of Europe's violent border regimes. Particularly, the mechanism of racial profiling treated white people and refugees of color fleeing the war differently on an ongoing basis while effectively regulating their entrance across German borders.⁴

In July 2022, Franco A. was sentenced to five and half years.⁵ Franco A. was put on trial in 2021 for planning to murder at least one politician in 2017, using a fake identity of a Syrian asylum seeker to provoke anti-migrant sentiments.⁶

For years now, racism and antisemitism within German security forces, special units, and the police are a heightening issue.⁷ On the other hand, no studies have been conducted to evaluate these forces and the prevalence of racism.⁸ In 2022, a number of escalating events by German police forces heightened the debate about police brutality, racial profiling, and racism. In August, for example, five policemen were suspended for their participation in right-wing chats;⁹ the 16-year-old Mouhamed Lamine Dramé was killed in Dortmund by the police;¹⁰ and police action in Berlin escalated against a Black man, indicating again the relationship between racism and violence. The initiative Wrangelkiez United criticised that “police operations repeatedly lead to life-threatening situations, especially for people of color and black people!”¹¹

All of this clearly indicates the discursive, structural, and political context within which Islamophobic incidents gained their force, reach, and depth within the German society in 2022.

4. “Rassismusvorwurf gegen die Polizei”, taz, <https://taz.de/Nach-Kontrollen-von-Ukraine-Fluechtlingen/!5839283/> (Access date: 01.01.2023)

5. “Fünfeinhalb Jahre für Franco A.”, tagesschau, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/urteil-francoa-101.html> (Access date: 01.01.2023).

6. “German army officer on trial for planning attack posing as Syrian refugee”, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-officer-trial-planning-attack-posing-syrian-refugee-2021-05-20/> (Access date: 30 April 2022).

7. “KSK soll durchleuchtet werden”, tageesschau, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/ksk-pruefung-rechtsextremismus-101.html>, “Germany: Frankfurt police unit to be disbanded over far-right chats”, DW, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-frankfurt-police-unit-to-be-disbanded-over-far-right-chats/a-57840014>, “Germany to repatriate army platoon accused of right-wing extremism”, ExBulletin, <https://exbulletin.com/world/994911/> (Access date: 30 April 2022).

8. “Rassismus und Antisemitismus bei der Polizei”, <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/rassismus-und-antisemitismus-bei-der-polizei.html> (Access date: 01.01.2023).

9. “Fünf Beamte suspendiert”, taz, <https://taz.de/Rechte-Umtriebe-bei-Frankfurter-Polizei/!5871328/> (Access date: 01.01.2023).

10. “Hausdurchsuchungen bei Polizisten”, taz, <https://taz.de/Erschossener-16-Jaehriger-in-Dortmund/!5883376/> (Access date: 01.01.2023).

11. “Mit gezückter Schusswaffe”, taz, <https://taz.de/Eskalierter-Polizeieinsatz-in-Berlin/!5874825/> (Access date: 01.01.2023).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Several representative surveys have indicated the high number of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiments as well as violence in Germany. According to the findings of the Leipzig *Authoritarismus-Studie*, 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%) also believe that Muslims should be banned from immigrating to Germany. If looking at East Germany alone, the figures are much higher. Due to a Muslim presence, 55.1% of East Germans feel like “strangers in their own country” and 40.2% believe that Muslims should not be immigrating to Germany.¹² According to the latest *Authoritarismus-Studie*, published in 2022, 70.2% of Germans agreed with the statement that Muslims should be banned from immigrating to Germany while 79.3% of Germans feel estranged due to a Muslim presence. Overall, numbers in East Germany are higher than in West Germany.¹³ 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. Every other respondent even 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 as a whole since 2021. Accordingly, half of the German population (52%) considered Islam as threatening. Only 29% of East Germans and 38% of West Germans experienced Islam as 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 for this are primarily media reports that depict Islam and Muslims in almost exclusively negative contexts.¹⁴ More recently, the *Lagebericht Rassismus in Deutschland* stated that after “Sinti and Roma Muslims are among the most rejected minorities in Germany.”¹⁵ Given this, Islamophobia is an everyday reality to many Muslims throughout society in general.

12. Decker, O./Brähler, E. (Ed.) (2020): “Autoritäre Dynamiken. Neue Radikalität - alte Ressentiments”, Leipziger Autoritarismus-Studie, 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 (Access date: 30 April 2022).
13. Decker, O./Brähler, E. (Ed.) (2022): “Autoritäre Dynamiken in unsicheren Zeiten – Neue Herausforderungen – alte Reaktionen?”, p. 72, https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2022-11/decker-kiess-heller-braehler-2022-leipziger-autoritarismus-studie-autoritaere-dynamiken-in-unsicheren-zeiten_0.pdf (Access date: February 20).
14. Pickel, Gert (2019): “Weltanschauliche Vielfalt und Demokratie”, Bertelsmann Stiftung, https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Religionsmonitor_Vielfalt_und_Demokratie_7_2019.pdf, p. 12 (Access date: 30 April 2022).
15. “Antimuslimischer Rassismus”, Lagebericht Rassismus in Deutschland, <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/deine-taegliche-dosis-politik/517159/lagebericht-rassismus-in-deutschland/>, p. 33 (Access date 20.01.2023).

In terms of Islamophobic incidences, the previous years have seen an enormous increase of attacks on Muslims in Germany. Since 2017, Islamophobic crimes have been registered separately by the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI). The sub-category “Islamophobic” was added to the category “politically motivated crime”. In 2017, 1,075 attacks were carried out against Muslims and their institutions. Over 100 attacks were on mosques and 56 on people. In 2018, the number of Islamophobic crimes had somewhat decreased with 910 registered cases, including 48 crimes against mosques. In contrast, significantly more people (at least 74 people) were injured. In 2019, the number of Islamophobic crimes again increased to 950 with 90.1% of criminal offenses committed by right-wing extremists. In 2020, 901 Islamophobic crimes were committed across Germany, 146 of which targeted mosques and 48 of which targeted people.¹⁶ Since 2021, the data suggest a decrease of Islamophobic incidents. In 2021, incidents related to Islamophobia decreased by 26%.

For 2022, tentative numbers available suggest that 364 Islamophobic incidents have been recorded. Regardless of decreasing numbers, physical and verbal attacks against Muslims remain intense, if not having gained a new intensity. According to the latest *Authoritarismus-Studie*, anti-democratic attitudes have not been declining but rather shifting while keeping hatred against Muslims, Sinti, and Roma on a consistent high.¹⁷

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 foreign-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.¹⁸ 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

16. Tauscher, Soner (2020): Islamophobia in Germany. National Report 2020, <https://islamophobiareport.com/islamophobiareport.pdf>, p. 362-363 (Access date: April 30).

17. Decker, O./Brähler, E. (Ed.) (2022): “Autoritäre Dynamiken in unsicheren Zeiten – Neue Herausforderungen – alte Reaktionen?”, p. 12, https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2022-11/decker-kiess-heller-brae-hler-2022-leipziger-autoritarismus-studie-autoritaere-dynamiken-in-unsicheren-zeiten_0.pdf (Access date: February 20).

18. 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.

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.¹⁹

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.”²⁰ 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.²¹ In 2020, the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) 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 nor addressing discrimination and bullying have been made an obligatory part of initial teacher training at university, the trainee program or the continuous training by the Länder.”²² In fact, teachers can and have been a contributing factor in discriminating against Muslim pupils. For example, in 2021, 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 her mother to talk to the school management were rejected. The family ended up complaining to the supervisory school authority.²³

19. 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.

20. 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/germany_growth-2015-21-en#page1.

21. 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>.

22. The termin ‘Länder’ or ‘Bundesländer’ signals federal states in Germany. ECRI Report on Germany (2020), retrieved April 30, 2022 from <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-germany-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4be>, p.11.

23. No author, “Chronik 2021”, ReachOut, retrieved April 30, 2022 from <https://www.reachoutberlin.de/de/Unsere%20Arbeit/Angriffe%20in%20Berlin/2021>.

In February 2022, allegations of racism were made against a high school in Siegburg, North Rhine-Westphalia. High school students had been given a task from a textbook in philosophy. According to media reports, they had to discuss the following case: a girl of Turkish origin living in Germany is forced by her father to marry a cousin so that he can come to Germany from Turkey. The Federation of Turkish Parents' Associations in North Rhine-Westphalia complained to the Ministry of Education about this "prejudiced task". The ministry proceeded to check the textbook and ask the publisher to revise it. "Schools are places of togetherness where there is no room for exclusion and prejudice of any kind," explained North Rhine-Westphalia's minister Yvonne Gebauer (FDP).²⁴

Another topic, one already relevant in 2021, was "confrontative practice of religion" (*konfrontative Religionsausübung*). 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."²⁵ The initiative was heavily criticized already in 2021,²⁶ but another attempt was made to promote it in 2022. The Anti-Discrimination Association Germany criticized the attempt again, stating that it had been rejected by experts, received a critical assessment by the educational administration, and fuels populism and stigma without offering any solutions.²⁷

Politics

In early 2022, a report by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* claimed that former German interior minister Horst Seehofer watered down an expert report by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution on the AfD. The report suggested that Seehofer had several passages of the report toned down after a secret meeting with his state secretary Hans-Georg Engelke and Thomas Haldenwang, the head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), because they contained statements by AfD members that he himself or his party colleagues had made almost word for word

24. (2022): "Ministerium überprüft Schulbuch nach Rassismusrwürfen", <https://islamische-zeitung.de/ministerium-ueberprueft-schulbuch-nach-rassismusrwurfen/> (Access date: February 20).

25. 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>.

26. Ahmad, Zubair (2022): Islamophobia in Germany. National Report Germany, <https://islamophobiareport.com/islamophobiareport-2021.pdf> (Access date: February 20, 2023).

27. (2022): "Stellungnahme zum erneuten Vorstoß zur Einrichtung einer "Anlauf- und Dokumentationsstelle für konfrontative Religionsbekundung", <https://www.antidiskriminierung.org/neuigkeiten-1/2022/11/21/stellungnahme-zum-erneuten-vorsto-zur-einrichtung-einer-anlauf-und-dokumentationsstelle-fr-konfrontative-religionsbekundung>.

on different political occasions; among them, “Islam does not belong to Germany.” Horst Seehofer had said this to *Bild* in March 2018.²⁸

Already in 2021, the debate about “political Islam” illustrated the hostile and Islamophobic portrayal of Muslims and Islam. In particular, the discussion about the politicality of Muslims continued to draw suspicion towards Muslims and present them as deviant and inimical. In 2022, a group of experts working under the Federal Ministry of the Interior on “political Islamism” published its final report. Indicative of the report is the sheer difficulty to define the term in a distinct way and distinguish it from Islam more generally. Albeit the report aims to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate ways to be Muslim and political, it remains unable to deliver this in a consensual way. Furthermore, the entire debate remains theoretical and ahistorical, turning “political Islam(ism)” into a somewhat abstract phenomenon. More importantly, the lack of sociological and political precision in identifying and naming concrete actors as well as issues to be addressed, contributes heavily to racialising Muslim subjects, Islamic practices, and the entirety of the Muslim community as dangerous to the democratic state, its institutions, and civil society in large.²⁹

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 emphasise 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 emphasised its supposedly negative consequences for the security of the population (57%). However, there were differences here: reports in *BILD* or *FAZ* (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) emphasised negative aspects more than the *SZ* (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*).

Equally, studies 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.³⁰ However,

28. Kesselgruber, Kerstin (2022): “Gutachten des Verfassungsschutzes abschwächen”, <https://www.fr.de/politik/afd-horst-seehofer-verfassungsschutz-gutachten-aussagen-islam-migration-91251829.html> (Access date: February 20, 2023).

29. (2022): “Tätigkeitsbericht 2021/2022. Expertenkreis Politischer Islamismus des Bundesministeriums des Innern und für Heimat”, retrieved February 20, 2023, from https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/themen/sicherheit/taetigkeitsbericht-epi.pdf;jsessionid=7F008DE55624FF38FC059E5325B18867.2_cid287?__blob=publicationFile&cv=1.

30. 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>.

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.³¹

In 2022, the media coverage of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar included several Islamophobic and orientalist stereotypes. “Old habits die hard, and so does old and renewed orientalism,” said renowned scientist Khaled al-Hroub. He added,

[There] are many things about Qatar that deserve to be criticised and put under the spotlight. But there is a huge gulf between criticising a country for specific wrongdoings and using disparaging cultural statements and stereotypes that tap into embedded racism.³²

Among other things, German media portrayed the support of the Moroccan football team for Palestine, symbolised by displaying the Palestinian flag at their games, as an antisemitic offense,³³ and indicated that three Moroccan players displayed signs that are used by the so-called Islamic State after victories.³⁴ The German media was criticised for the lack of intercultural competence more generally. Rameza Monir said that the “football World Cup leaves a stale aftertaste due to the week-long fueling of orientalist, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism in the reporting.”³⁵

Justice system

The question of the headscarf and question of state neutrality have been central to the discourse on Islam and Muslims in Germany. In recent years, Berlin’s neutrality law remained controversial and debated frequently in the senate. The law prohibits the wearing of religious symbols in parts of public service, especially in the police and judiciary, and in the education sector. In doing so, it is the most extensive regulation in this area in Germany while the Federal Labor Court declared a blanket ban to be unconstitutional in 2020. More recently, Lena Kreck, Senator for Justice, Diversity, and Anti-Discrimination in Berlin, declared that she wanted to take sustained action against Islamophobia and “structural discrimination” against Muslims. An important step in this direction, she argued, “is the abolition of the neutrality law.”³⁶

31. Mediendienst Integration (Ed.), “Handbuch Islam und Muslime”, retrieved April 30, 2022 from https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/Dateien/MDI_HBI_Neuaufgabe.pdf, p.109-115.

32. al-Hroub, Khaled (2022): Qatar World Cup 2022: The beautiful game meets ugly western bigotry”, Middle East Eye, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/qatar-world-cup-beautiful-game-ugly-western-bigotry> (Access date: February 2023).

33. Krauss, Martin (2022): Marokko liegt nicht in Palästina, <https://taz.de/Orchestrierte-Israel-Feindschaft/!5897026/> (Access date: February 20).

34. <https://twitter.com/goldi/status/1602378289653358592?cxt=HHwWgICx6ZGk5bwsAAAA> (Access date: February 20).

35. Monir, Rameza (2022): “Zu wenig interkulturelle Kompetenz”, <https://taz.de/Berichterstattung-aus-Katar/!5900902/> (Access date: February 20).

36. (2022): “Berlins Justizsenatorin sieht im umstrittenen Neutralitätsgesetz Diskriminierung von Muslimen”,

Internet

In 2021, 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 neither 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 “Islamisation of the West/Europe”, “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 “paedophiles”, “woman abusers”, or practicing “taqiya” to cover their lies. Due to the Covid pandemic, Muslims were accused of spreading the pandemic as “super-spreaders”.³⁷ 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 Central Council of Muslims in Germany, Aiman Mazyek, criticised the fact that Islamophobia remained under-researched and less recorded, emphasising that Islamophobia, as antisemitism and antigypsyism, are dangerous to the entire society.³⁸

For example, on July 1, 2022, on the day commemorating the death of Marwa El-Sherbini who was stabbed during a racist attack in 2009, a Twitter user repeatedly posted Islamophobic comments. Despite the racist and Islamophobic nature of the posts, it took Twitter about a month to block the user’s account.³⁹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The most Islamophobic and far-right figures in 2022 remained the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland), particularly Björn Höcke. In October, Höcke posted on social media that Muslims were waging a “war of displacement” and that, among Muslims, Germans were regarded as living an unworthy life (*lebensunwertes Leben*). Ad-

<https://islamische-zeitung.de/berlins-justizsenatorin-sieht-im-umstrittenen-neutralitaetsgesetz-diskriminierung-von-muslimen/> (Access date February 20).

37. 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>.

38. No author, “Gefährlicher Trend”, Domradion.de (July 6, 2021), retrieved April 30, 2022 from <https://www.domradio.de/artikel/gefahrlicher-trend-muslimische-verbaende-werten-hetze-im-netz-als-sehr-bedrohlich>.

39. (2022): “Antimuslimischer Rassismus auf Twitter”, <https://keine-randnotiz.de/>, retrieved February 20, 2023.

olf Hitler had used this term to justify his program of “racial hygiene”, after which the Nazis killed hundreds of thousands of mentally ill and disabled people.⁴⁰ 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, particularly Mouhanad Khorchide and Ahmad Mansour contributed to the increase of such sentiments by continuously framing political tendencies as threatening, dangerous, and deviant to democratic structures.⁴¹

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

More generally, the year 2022 has seen a broader awareness of Islamophobia and a discussion about how to combat it. Various organisations and initiatives from civil society intensified discussions, debating Islamophobia directly or indirectly. More specifically, the inaugural study of the National Discrimination and Racism Monitor (NaDiRa) “Racist Realities - How Does Germany Deal with Racism?” by the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) was published in May. It showed that racist ideas are still widespread in Germany. However, there is also a broad awareness that racism exists, and many people are willing to actively engage against racism. For this particular study, researchers from the DeZIM Institute examined how Germany deals with racism. From April to August 2021, they conducted a comprehensive, representative survey of the German population, for which around 5,000 people were interviewed by telephone.⁴²

In early 2021, the state of Berlin established a commission of experts whose main aim was to tackle Islamophobia in the state’s political and administrative institutions. The commission publish its findings and recommendation in September 2022, suggesting, among other things, that contact persons for the topic of Islamophobia be established at the State Criminal Police Office and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution.⁴³ In 2023, a new commission is supposed to implement the recommendations for action.

40. Amsler, José-Luis (2022): “Björn Höcke: Thüringer AfD-Chef wegen Volksverhetzung angezeigt”, <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/bjoern-hoecke-thueringer-afd-chef-nach-post-wegen-volksverhetzung-islamfeindlichkeit-angezeigt-li.288400> (Access date: February 20, 2023).

41. (2022): “Sachverständigenstellungnahme“, <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/910314/6865a8c625034b3e-010b9174035a3f76/20-4-103-G-data.pdf> (Access date: February 20, 2023); Rüssmann, Ursula; Scheuermann, Fabian (2022): “Politischer Islam: ‘Die Strategie ist, mit harmlosen Narrativen Einfluss zu nehmen’”, <https://www.fr.de/politik/die-strategie-ist-mit-harmlosen-narrativen-einfluss-zu-nehmen-91928400.html> (Access date: February 20, 2023).

42. (2022): “Viele Menschen in Deutschland sind bereit zu Engagement gegen Rassismus”, <https://www.dezim-institut.de/presse/presse-detail/viele-menschen-in-deutschland-sind-bereit-zu-engagement-gegen-rassismus/> (Access date: February 20, 2023).

43. (2022): “Kommission fordert Maßnahmen gegen antimuslimischen Rassismus in Berlin”, <https://www.berlin.de/sen/justva/presse/pressemitteilung/2022/pressemitteilung.1240813.php> (Access date: February 20, 2023).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The German government has taken crucial steps toward combatting racism, far-right extremism, antisemitism, 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 already in 2021. Furthermore, while German society and politics have begun to address racism and right-wing extremism more seriously, structural racism remained an issue less addressed and tackled. For example, studies on racism among the security forces and police still need to be conducted while racial profiling is still a practice. Among other things, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated in September 2022 that while it welcomes the conduct of two studies on German police forces, it nevertheless notes "that there are no explicit references to racial profiling in either study and the most relevant component of the second one only concerns two cities, rather than the federal or *Länder* level. As a consequence, ECRI concludes that, in the present state of affairs, its recommendation has not yet been implemented."⁴⁴

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.
- 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 labour market, and anonymous application procedures should be implemented.

44. (2022): "ECRI Conclusions on the implementation of the recommendations in respect of Germany", <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-conclusions-on-the-implementation-of-the-recommendations-in-respe/1680a807d2> (Access date: February 20, 2023).

- In the last four years, the weapon caches and attack plans of right-wing extremist groups and individuals are being discovered more frequently. With the increase in gun ownership and illegal importation by right-wing extremists, we 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

- **January 2022:** On New Year's Eve, unknown persons desecrated around 30 graves in the Muslim part of the main cemetery in Iserlohn. Tombstones were knocked over, decorative elements and plants were damaged and torn out. State security is investigating the desecration of Muslim graves in North Rhine-Westphalia due to disturbance of the peace of the dead and damage to property. Members of Muslim communities and the police suspect right-wing extremists behind the crime.⁴⁵

On January 23, a man shot at two people with an air gun in front of a mosque in the city of Halle. According to the police, those affected noticed how three projectiles hit a windowsill but they were not hurt. Witnesses saw the shots come from a window of an apartment building across the street. The police arrested a 55-year-old resident and secured a long gun for firing diabolos and a gas pressure pistol.⁴⁶ This, however, was not the first incident of such kind. Already in early 2018, the mosque was attacked twice within a week without anyone being arrested.⁴⁷

- **February 2022:** On February 5, a 17-year-old girl was racially insulted and beaten up by three men and three women, first on the tram and then at a tram stop in Berlin. The teenager was threatened, hit, kicked, and admitted to the hospital with several bruises and a concussion. However, the incident gained publicity due to the misinterpretation by the police. The latter stated that the incident was categorised as a conflict over mask wearing and not as a racist attack while several newspapers and bulletins reproduced such framing

45. "Staatsschutz ermittelt Grabschändigung in Iserlohn", <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2022-01/nordrhein-westfalen-grabschaendungen-silvester-duesseldorf-iserlohn> (Access date: February 20).

46. Litschko, Konrad (2022): "Das war ein Anschlag", <https://taz.de/Schuesse-auf-Moschee-in-Halle/!5830052/> (Access date: Februar 20).

47. "Moschee in Halle von Unbekannten beschossen", <https://islamische-zeitung.de/moschee-in-halle-von-unbekannten-beschossen/> (Access date: February 20).

and analysis.⁴⁸ The 17-year-old Dilan S. intervened from the hospital to correct such misinterpretation, forcing the police and newspapers to revise their initial report.⁴⁹

In February, the first mosque under construction in Husum was assaulted a second time. Already earlier, the Ahmadi Muslim community had been harassed. For example, in 2014, some Ahmadis planted a ginkgo tree in the neighboring Mildstedt as a symbol of friendship and rootedness. The crown was sawn off. The mayor planted a new tree twice while the trunk of the tree was divided both times. In 2015, someone smashed the front window of the community center with a wooden rod. The new windowpane was smeared with paint in 2017 with swastikas and Nazi slogans running across the glass.⁵⁰

- **March 2022:** In March, an unknown woman wearing a headscarf was beaten at a bus stop in Berlin by a 32-year-old man for anti-Muslim reasons. The man threw a glass bottle at the woman's head and injured her. A passing 30-year-old man intervened and was injured as well. Passersby called the police.⁵¹
- **April 2022:** At around 5:15am a man asked a 52-year-old woman on the M29, a double-decker bus in Berlin, her nationality and then attempted to wrap a safety wire around her neck. Fellow passengers stopped the man who then went to the upper part of the bus. He continued his journey and attempted to follow the woman once she exited at her station. A witness was able to stop him. The woman was unharmed but suffered from what she had experienced.⁵²
- **June 2022:** A café owner forbade a guest from saying a prayer verbally during his visit. Furthermore, the owner expelled both the guest and his company from the restaurant. He later threatened the guest for character assassination because he had written a negative review on the internet.⁵³
- **July 2022:** A person was rudely spoken to by several strangers in a parking lot about not having parked their car properly. Furthermore, she was mocked and racist and Islamophobic statements were made. When she

48. Jürgens, Johanna (2022): "Brisanz nicht erkannt", <https://taz.de/Rassistischer-Angriff-auf-17-Jaehrige/!5834606/> (Access date: February 20).

49. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQyOgZzJTEU&ab_channel=TV100.

50. Kaluza, Anaïs (2022): "Immer wieder Scherben", <https://taz.de/Angriffe-auf-Moschee-Neubau/!5830323/> (Access date: February 20).

51. "Muslimin mit Kopftuch an Bushaltestelle geschlagen und verletzt", <https://www.islamiq.de/2022/03/31/muslimin-mit-kopftuch-an-bushaltestelle-geschlagen-und-verletzt/> (Access date: February 20).

52. "Muslimfeindlicher Angriff im Bus M29 in Höhe U-Bhf. Moritzplatz", https://www.berliner-register.de/vorfalles-chronik/?page=2&from_date=01.01.2022&to_date=31.12.2022®ion=0&search_string=muslim (Access date: February 20).

53. Rüsselsheim am Main (Groß-Gerau): Antimuslimischer motivierter Verweis aus Café", <https://hessenschautin.de/chronik/> (Access date: February 20).

pointed out the racist content, she was threatened with a charge of illegal parking.⁵⁴

- **August 2022:** In Barnstorf, the Mevalana Mosque of the Islamic community of Millî Görüş (IGMG) was again the target of an Islamophobic act. The community received, within a few months' time, its second threatening letter with the sender "NSU 2.0". Among others things, the letter reads "We will kill all of you Turks." The mosque had previously been the target of attacks. Several windows were smashed and it had received several threatening letters. The local police authorities had downplayed the previous incident. Regarding the recent attacks, Recep Bilgen, chairman of the Schura in Lower Saxony,⁵⁵ stated, "We want the security authorities to take attacks on mosques seriously and to react sensitively to them."⁵⁶
- **September 2022:** In a speech, CDU politician Marc Böhm made racist remarks and reproduced Islamophobic prejudices. In the aftermath, his speech was heavily criticised by various actors. After apologising publicly, Böhm resigned from his city council mandate.⁵⁷
- **October 2022:** A 34-year-old man smeared paint on a mosque in Berlin-Tempelhof. On a Wednesday afternoon, the man sprayed the words "Death to Khamenei" in Arabic on the outer façade of the mosque. The state security agency responsible for politically motivated crimes is investigating the case.⁵⁸
- **November 2022:** The DITIB mosque in Göttingen, which had been the target of an Islamophobic attack in September, received a threatening letter in November. The sender, again, is "NSU 2.0". Among other things, the letter reads, "Keep it up and we'll be back, then worse things will happen."⁵⁹ The AfD called for a headscarf ban in schools and daycare centers in Saxony. The parliamentary group presented a draft law stating that children are rightly told not to wear baseball caps and other headgear in class. "It's just part of the unwritten rules of our culture and it's part of being polite." However, when Muslim parents put a headscarf on their daughters, it amounts to a "refusal to

54. "Idstein (Rheingau-Taunus-Kreis): Antimuslimische Anfeindungen auf Parkplatz", <https://hessenschauthin.de/chronik/> (Access date: February 20).

55. Schura Niedersachsen is a merger of several mosque associations and other Muslim institutions in Lower Saxony that took place in 2001.

56. "NSU 2.0 – Mevalana Moschee erhält erneut Drohbrief", <https://www.islamiq.de/2022/08/28/nsu-2-0-mevalana-moschee-erhaelt-erneut-drohbrief/> (Access date: February 20).

57. Erlenbach, Hans Dieter (2022): "Der CDU-Politiker und das Kopftuchgeschwader", <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/rhein-main/rassistische-kerbrede-cdu-politiker-spricht-von-kopftuchgeschwader-18326136.html> (Access date: February 20).

58. "Moschee mit Parole beschmiert", <https://www.islamiq.de/2022/10/06/moschee-mit-parole-beschmiert/> (Access date: February 20).

59. "Wir kommen wieder – Zuvor beschmierte Moschee enthält Drohbrief", <https://www.islamiq.de/2022/11/10/wir-kommen-wieder-zuvor-beschmierte-moschee-erhaelt-drohbrief/> (Access date: February 20).

integrate”. Furthermore, a headscarf, the AfD argued, supposedly risked the development of personality.⁶⁰

- **December 2022:** In mid-December, an Islamophobic incident occurred at the St.-Joseph-Stift Hospital in Bremen. A doctor at the hospital refused to treat a woman in an emergency service because she was wearing a niqab. The woman left the examination room upset. Witnesses reported that such racist behavior towards patients has been noticed before as well. An investigation is underway without any results so far.⁶¹

60. “AfD will Kopftuchverbot in Sächsischen Kitas und Schulen”, <https://www.islamiq.de/2022/11/15/afd-will-kopftuchverbot-in-saechsischen-kitas-und-schulen/> (Access date: February 20).

61. Betz, Franziska (2023): “Rassismus in Bremer Notfallpraxis?”, <https://taz.de/Arzt-verweigert-Behandlung/15904116/> (Access date: February 20).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
GREECE
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

ALI HUSEYINOGLU, ALEXANDROS SAKELLARIOU

The Authors

Ali Huseyinoglu was born in Komotini, Greece. After completing primary education at the bilingual (Turkish and Greek) school in his hometown, he continued secondary and higher education in Istanbul and Ankara. Huseyinoglu received his BA and MSc from the Department of International Relations, Middle East Technical University (METU), and his PhD from the University of Sussex. Since 2020, he has been teaching as an associate professor of international relations in the Balkan Research Institute at Trakya University, Edirne, Turkey. Currently, Huseyinoglu is the editor of the Journal of Balkan Research Institute (JBRI). Among others, Huseyinoglu's main research interests include human rights of minorities, migration studies, Turkish-Greek relations, the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace, Islam in Europe, and Islamophobia.

Email: alihuseyinoglu@trakya.edu.tr

Alexandros Sakellariou teaches sociology at the Hellenic Open University since 2016 and is a senior researcher at Panteion University of Athens. He earned his PhD on sociology of religion from the Department of Sociology of Panteion University. He has extensive research experience in large-scale EU projects. Since 2011 he has been working on young people's socio-political engagement, young people's well-being, the evaluation of innovative social policies, and radicalisation. His scientific interests include, among others, sociology of religion, sociology of youth, politics and religion, religious communities in Greek society, youth activism and civic participation, right-wing extremism, radicalisation, and qualitative research methods. He is a board member of the Hellenic League for Human Rights.

Email: sakellariou.alexandros@ac.eap.gr

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Περίληψη

Με βάση όλα τα υπάρχοντα ευρήματα, η κατάσταση σχετικά με την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα δεν άλλαξε σημαντικά το 2022 σε σύγκριση με τα προηγούμενα χρόνια. Η Ισλαμοφοβία εντοπίζεται κυρίως σε λεκτικό επίπεδο. Φυσικές επιθέσεις με θρησκευτικό κίνητρο, όπως επιθέσεις εναντίον ισλαμικών ιερών χώρων, π.χ. τζαμιά και νεκροταφεία ή εναντίον Μουσουλμάνων μεταναστών και προσφύγων, παραμένουν λιγότερες σε σύγκριση με άλλες ευρωπαϊκές χώρες. Οι περιορισμοί που οφείλονταν στον Covid-19 συνέβαλαν στη μείωση του αριθμού βίαιων επιθέσεων με κίνητρα μίσους. Ωστόσο, βίαιες επιθέσεις με στόχο Μουσουλμάνους ή Ισλαμικούς ιερούς χώρους συνέβησαν και το 2022. Μερικοί Μουσουλμάνοι στην Αθήνα και την Ξάνθη ξυλοκοπήθηκαν όχι μόνο με βάση την Ισλαμική τους πίστη, αλλά και την εθνική τους ταυτότητα, ενώ ένα εγκαταλελειμμένο και παλιό Ισλαμικό νεκροταφείο ενός χωριού βρίσκεται κοντά στην Ξάνθη κατεδαφίστηκε ολοσχερώς με αποτέλεσμα να χαθούν ιστορικές επιτύμβιες στήλες. Επιπλέον, είναι ενδιαφέρον να σημειωθεί ότι μετά από πολύ καιρό δεν καταγράφηκε κανένα Ισλαμοφοβικό επεισόδιο σε σχολεία στα οποία φοιτούν παιδιά Μουσουλμάνων, ειδικά σε αυτά των αστικών περιοχών.

Η πολιτική, η θρησκεία, τα μέσα ενημέρωσης (τόσο έντυπα όσο και διαδικτυακά) και το Διαδίκτυο συνέχισαν να είναι οι τέσσερις βασικοί τομείς που διαδραματίζουν κρίσιμο ρόλο στην αναπαραγωγή της Ισλαμοφοβίας στον ελληνικό δημόσιο χώρο το 2022. Όπως συνέβαινε τα προηγούμενα χρόνια, η Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα εκφράστηκε κυρίως από ορισμένα πολιτικά κόμματα και πολιτικούς της δεξιάς και ακροδεξιάς, (αυτοαποκαλούμενους) νεοφιλελεύθερους, ορισμένες προσωπικότητες της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος, έντυπα και ηλεκτρονικά μέσα ενημέρωσης και δημοσιογράφους συμπεριλαμβανομένων των αναρτήσεων και των σχολίων τους στα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης. Τα κύρια θέματα που συνέβαλαν στην αναπαραγωγή της Ισλαμοφοβίας το 2022 ήταν η δημόσια δήλωση βουλευτή του δεξιού κυβερνώντος κόμματος της Νέας Δημοκρατίας που στιγματίζε τους μουσουλμάνους Τούρκους που ζουν στην περιοχή της Δυτικής Θράκης της χώρας, η κατεδάφιση του παλιού και ερειπωμένου Ισλαμικού νεκροταφείου του Πετεινού που βρίσκεται κοντά στην Ξάνθη, λεκτικές επιθέσεις τόσο online όσο και εκτός διαδικτύου για τη λεγόμενη «Ισλαμοποίηση» της Ελλάδας και η για τη κυβερνητική απόφαση να απαγορεύσει τις διαδικασίες σφαγής ζώων χωρίς αναισθησία.

Executive Summary

Based on all the existing findings the situation regarding Islamophobia in Greece did not change significantly in 2022 compared to the previous years. Islamophobia is primarily found on the discursive level. Physical attacks with religious motivation such as targeting Islamic sacred places, e.g., mosques and cemeteries, or Muslim people, particularly immigrants or refugees, remain fewer compared to other European countries. Restrictions based on Covid-19 contributed to the lower number of hate-motivated physical attacks. However, violent attacks targeting Muslim individuals or Islamic sacred places were recorded in 2022. Some Muslims in Athens and Xanthi were physically beaten based on their religious and racial identity while the old, abandoned Islamic cemetery of a village located near Xanthi was completely demolished resulting in the loss of historical tombstones. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that after a long time, no anti-Muslim incident was recorded at schools attended by Muslim children, especially schools in urban areas.

Politics, religion, media (both printed and online), and the internet continued to be the main four realms playing a crucial role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the Greek public domain throughout 2022. As was the case for previous years, Islamophobia in Greece was expressed primarily by certain political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, (self-proclaimed) neoliberals, some figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece, printed and electronic media, and journalists including their posts and comments on social media. The main issues that contributed to the reproduction of Islamophobia in 2022 were the public statement of an MP of the right-wing ruling party of Nea Dimocratia stigmatising Muslim Turks living in the Western Thrace region of the country; the demolition of the old and dilapidated Islamic cemetery of Petinos located near Xanthi; expressions both online and offline for the so-called Islamisation of Greece; and the debate over the state regulation prohibiting halal and kosher procedures of slaughtering animals without anaesthesia.

Country Profile EIR 2022

Country: Hellenic Republic

Type of Regime: Unitary parliamentary republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary democracy

Ruling Parties: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy)

Opposition Parties: SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), KINAL (Movement of Change), KKE (Greek Communist Party), Elliniki Lissi (Hellenic Solution), MeRA25 (European Realistic Disobedience Front)

Last Elections: 2019 Parliamentary Elections: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy) 39.85% (158 seats), SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) 31.53% (86 seats), KINAL (Movement of Change) 8.1% (22 seats), KKE (Greek Communist Party) 5.13% (15 seats), Elliniki Lissi (Hellenic Solution) 3.7% (10 seats), MeRA25 3.44% (9 seats)

Total Population: 10,432,481 in 2021 (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 are made available only later during the following year. In 2021, the Racist Violence Recording Network reported 72 racist incidents. In 39 of these incidents more than one victim was reported. In 2020, the network recorded 107 incidents. In 28 incidents the victims were migrants or refugees, and the attacks were on the grounds of ethnic origin, religion, colour, associations of third country nationals, or the victims were human rights defenders who were attacked due to their connection with refugees and migrants. The Police Department against Racist Violence recorded 44 incidents with probable racist motive for 2021, while in 2020 the department had recorded 222 incidents. In 18 of the 44 incidents, the alleged motive was religion, but without any further details from the part of the authorities.

Major Religions (% of Population): No official data available, since religious affiliation is not included in the national census. According to the World Values Survey (WVS) (2018), Orthodox Christians comprise 91% of the population, people with no religion 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 Organisations: Muslim Association of Greece, Xanthi Turkish Union, Association of Religious Staff of Western Thrace Mosques, Association of Western Thracian Graduates of Imam Hatip High Schools, Shia Muslim Community of Greece

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Greek Helsinki Monitor, Racist Violence Recording Network¹

Far-Right Parties: Elliniki Lissi (Hellenic Solution), Xryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn), Dynamis Ellinismou (Power of Hellenism), Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness), Ethniko Komma-Ellines (National Party-Greeks), Ellines gia tin Patrida (Greeks for the Fatherland), Ethniki Dimiourgia (National Creation), PATRIDA (Fatherland - Patriotic Force for Change)

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: Crypteia, Combat 18 Hellas, Anentahtoi Meandrioi Ethnikistes (Independent Meandrioi 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 (Hellenic Solution), Ellines gia tin Patrida (Greeks for the Fatherland), Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness), Ethniki Dimiourgia (National Creation), PATRIDA (Fatherland - Patriotic Force for Change) and Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn)

Limitations to Islamic Practices

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

1. 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 2022 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 2022 without significant alterations. Islamophobia was expressed by political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, (self-proclaimed) neoliberals, printed and electronic media, and journalists including their posts on social media.

A regular topic of public debates repeatedly discussed on an annual basis that contributed to the reproduction of Islamophobia in 2022 is the “migration/refugee problem”, although due to the government’s anti-migrant policy and the Covid-19 pandemic, migration and refugee flows were smaller compared to the previous years and as a consequence not many reactions were reported. A second issue was the discussion about halal slaughter. In 2021, the Council of State decided that slaughtering animals without anaesthetising them is unconstitutional and should be forbidden. In 2022, the government tried to overcome this decision, but due to huge reactions from pro animal associations and political parties the relevant article was withdrawn. Finally, a third issue that caused heated debates was the argument of a conservative MP that he would understand and accept the phone tapping by the Secret Service of Greek Muslims living in Thrace, for reasons of national security.

This report is based on data collected during 2022 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

2. It is important to stress that Greece has 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.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2022, there were no significant developments recorded with regard to the statistical documentation of Islamophobic incidents in Greece. As a consequence, despite the 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 migrants 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, 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) or elsewhere in Greece. 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 2021,³ 28 incidents targeted 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 were also targeted.

3. The report of the network is always published in spring/summer of the next year. That is why in our report we include data from the last year available, in this case 2021. According to the network, the reduction of the total number of recorded incidents compared to the previous years concerns the number of recorded incidents against refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers. Based on the network's recordings for 2021, it is the first time since its establishment that there were no recordings of incidents of organised violence against refugees and migrants by far-right groups. The recording and analysis of racist violence incidents by organised groups, or their members, was one of the network's core activities. The decision of civil society organisations and the communities of victims affected by the organised action of Golden Dawn was a significant factor in the establishment of the network in 2011. The aim was to respond immediately and in a coordinated manner, in order to verify the increase in racist attacks and organised violence, while pursuing changes that would put an end to the continuing climate of impunity. At the end of 2020, the democratic and anti-racist movement welcomed the court ruling convicting Golden Dawn as a criminal organisation. This landmark ruling served as a reminder that the fight against violent, racist groups and their modus operandi through legal means is a matter of strengthening human rights and respect for the rule of law. The ruling had a definite impact on the reduction of organised racist violence. Another factor that is considered to have contributed significantly to the under-reporting of the phenomenon in 2021, as in the previous year, is the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent movement restrictions in public spaces (lock-downs) (Annual Report 2021: 7-8).

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions there were not many physical attacks against Islamic places and Muslims. This does not imply a total lack of cases as will be shown. According to certain anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations a number of incidents took place in 2022. In January, an immigrant was severely hit inside the Athens metro, because according to the eyewitnesses the young perpetrator didn't like the way the migrant looked at him. (Fig. 1) Later, the Metro System Company informed the media that the police arrested the perpetrator.⁴



Figure 1: The blood-covered immigrant after a racist attack inside the Athens metro.⁵

In May, a series of attacks were recorded in different locations in Athens. In the first one, a group attacked a Pakistani worker who was beaten and stabbed in the back. During the attack the perpetrators shouted, “F*****g Pakistanis, Muslims get out, we will f*** you.”⁶ Another attack was recorded against a Pakistani migrant in Athens city centre during Eid-al-Fitr by a taxi driver who shot at him and shouted “f**** Muslims”. The migrant was injured in the head.⁷ On May 20, an attack took place in Peraia, Thessaloniki, against a guesthouse for unaccompanied refugee children belonging to the NGO Arsis. According to the press release by the NGO, it all started when eight young men cursed and chased a group of six unaccompanied children who were sitting in a square near the 3rd Primary School of Peraia, next to the guesthouse. A 16-year-old boy from Pakistan was caught and clubbed over the head, then punched in the face and robbed of his mobile phone. The child was saved thanks to the intervention of two passing men, who defended the refugee child, and the attack-

4. “A blood-covered migrant after a racist attack in the metro system”, news247.gr, 23 January 2022, <https://cutt.ly/hMXH4eF> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

5. Photo from news247, <https://cutt.ly/hMXH4eF> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

6. “Death squads of Golden Dawn members attack migrants”, artinews.gr, 9 May 2022, <https://cutt.ly/rMXAtdt> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

7. “A fascist shot migrant Muslim workers in Patissia after the Eid celebration”, antiracismfascism.org, 3 May 2022, <https://cutt.ly/VMXSsmNC> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

ers fled. Later, about 30 to 40 young people gathered and arrived outside the hostel in an aggressive mood, throwing stones and bricks. (Fig. 2)⁸



Figure 2: A photo of pieces of wood used in the attack on a center for unaccompanied minors in Peraia, Thessaloniki⁹

A similar attack was recorded in the city of Xanthi in northeastern Greece. On August 26, 2022, a Turkish boy was targeted by a group of approximately 20 Greek boys. Based on eyewitnesses, he was beaten by 5-7 of the group members while the rest did not get involved. He was hit on the head and stomach when he fell on the ground. Eyewitnesses also reported that the attackers shouted: “We will f*** you ass Turk! Next time, we will kill you!”¹⁰ This can be interpreted as another manifestation of anti-Muslim racism with anti-Turkish sentiments in the context of Western Thrace where Muslims of ethnic Turkish identity have been living since the Ottoman times.

Furthermore, in January, an explosion took place in Patissia, a neighbourhood in Athens city centre, targeting an informal mosque causing serious damages. (Fig. 3) The explosive mechanism contained screws and nails meaning that the perpetrators actually wanted to injure or even kill people inside, despite the fact that the attack took place at 4 a.m.¹¹ Another incident occurred on January 30, 2022, in Didymoteicho, a historical city of the Evros region, where a sticker was placed opposite

8. “Attack against a guest house for unaccompanied refugee minors”, arsis.gr, 20 May 2022, <https://cutt.ly/oMX-FWvX> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

9. Photo from arsis.gr, <https://cutt.ly/oMXFWvX> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

10. “Violent attack in Old Town of Xanthi”, 26 August 2022, <https://cutt.ly/D2Ygb7m>, (Access date: 1 September 2022).

11. “Explosion against an informal mosque in Patissia”, efsyn.gr, 23 January 2022, <https://cutt.ly/ZMXL4XX> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

the Çelebi Sultan Mehmet Mosque, one of the oldest Ottoman cultural sites in the Balkans dating back to the 15th century, stating, “The Islamisation of Evros should stop now”! (Fig. 4)



Figure 3: Photo from an explosion targeting an informal mosque in Athens.¹²



Figure 4: The Çelebi Sultan Mehmet Mosque under restoration and the sticker reacting against the alleged “Islamisation” of Evros.¹³

12. Photo from efsyn.gr <https://cutt.ly/ZMXL4XX> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

13. “Anti-Islam poster opposite to the historical mosque in Didymoteicho”, 1 February 2022, <https://gundemgazetesi.com/detayh.php?id=12636>, (Access date: 21 December 2022). One of the probable reasons for this attack was the ongoing restoration works at this mosque after the great fire back in 2017. Based on the latest official information released from the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports, a budget of 10,531,772 Euros has already been allocated for restoration work that is assumed to finish as of 2025. “Restoration works are to start at the Çelebi Sultan Mehmet Mosque in Didymoticho”, 30 December 2022, <https://www.milletgazetesi.gr/bati-trakya/dimetokadaki-celebi-sultan-mehmet-camiinin-restorasyonu-basliyor> (Access date: 31 December 2022).

Finally, another incident of religious hatred and disrespect towards holy places of Muslims in Greece occurred at an Islamic cemetery located near the city of Xanthi. Historical tombstones located inside the Muslim cemetery of Petinos village were demolished by the excavation machines of the municipality on March 16, 2022 for the purpose of converting the holy site into a recreation area. (Fig. 5) The complete destruction of this abandoned Islamic cemetery received major reaction from the local Muslim Turkish minority, some Greek media organs, and Türkiye. As criticism gained impetus inside and outside of the country, the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports intervened in the case: it immediately halted the municipality's action and transferred some of the smashed tombstones to a safer place. As of late 2022, it is confirmed that no step has been taken for application of this action since March 2022. Nevertheless, the damage caused to the Islamic tombstones of the old, abandoned Petinos cemetery as a result of the excavation works is irreversible and beyond monetary compensation - another holy place of Muslims in Greece has been destroyed and wiped away.



Figure 5: Smashed and scattered Muslim tombstones on the ground after excavation works at the old Muslim Cemetery at the village of Petinos near Xanthi.¹⁴

Employment

The lack of any official data on religious discrimination in the job market, makes it impossible to provide an overview of this field. Based on all the sources available, media, and personal communication, no Islamophobic incidents in the job market were recorded at any official level (NGOs and/or state authorities). However, the difficulties Muslims face in their workplace in relation to their religion, are often mentioned in Muslim groups.¹⁵

14. "The Petinos Turkish cemetery demolished by the Avdira Municipality, 16 March 2022, <https://www.millet-gazetesi.gr/video/video-iskece-horozlu-koyu-musulman-turk-mezarligi-avdira-belediyesi-tarafindan-talan-edildi> (Access date: 22 November 2022).

15. Ahmed Eldin, "Employment conditions for a Muslim living in Greece", [islamforgreeks.org](https://cutt.ly/PMXVWBi), 16 July 2022, <https://cutt.ly/PMXVWBi> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

Education

In education, there are no Islamophobic incidents registered on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. 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 migrant flows have been limited during 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 Muslim children's presence in schools and the necessity to be educated. It is interesting that during 2022 no major reactions in the field of education were recorded for the first time in many years. However, according to certain Muslim groups Muslim students are often faced with an Islamophobic school environment. It is argued that Muslim students frequently experience alienation and isolation from their teachers, especially in religious and history lessons. Also, according to Muslims, strong misinformation about Islam and Muslims can be found in these lessons.¹⁶

Politics

In politics, most Islamophobic discourse comes either from political parties of the right, e.g., Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy), or the extreme right, e.g., Elliniki Lyssi (Hellenic Solution).¹⁷ In 2022, a scandal of phone tapings of politicians and journalists erupted, causing huge debates in the public sphere. Within this context, an MP of the right-wing ruling party of Nea Dimocratia, and a former judge, publicly stated,

Let's say that a Member of Parliament has a religious orientation completely different from the Orthodox. Let's say a Muslim Member of Parliament from Northern Greece – I am not saying that there is any insinuation – for God's sake. Let's assume he gives some information to our neighboring country [Türkiye], from where the immigrants will arrive, etc. Why shouldn't he be checked? This is where National Security comes first.¹⁸

This statement caused the reactions of the Muslim minority of Thrace and other political parties and organisations which talked about the stigmatisation of Muslims in Greece as an internal enemy.¹⁹

16. Ahmed Eldin, "The religious freedoms of Muslims in Greece and the main sources of Islamophobia in Greek society", ahmadeldin.blog, 25 June 2022, <https://cutt.ly/HMXNUR2> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

17. "For the hatred demonstration of Pakistani Islamists outside of the Indian embassy", press release, elliniki-lisi.gr, 6 February 2022, <https://cutt.ly/m1eItVU> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

18. "Athanasίου: Says 'yes' to monitoring MPs if there is a reason for national security - He set an example with Muslim MPs", ethnos.gr, 11 August 2022, <https://cutt.ly/w1eYeH2> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

19. "Athanasίου: Uproar with the statement about surveillance of Greek Muslim MPs - SYRIZA calls for his ouster", thetoc.gr, 11 August 2022, <https://cutt.ly/k1eY45x> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

In the extreme-right political spectrum there are a number of political parties which continuously reproduce Islamophobic discourse like the parties *Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi* (National Popular Consciousness) and *Ellines gia tin Patrida* (Greeks for the Fatherland). The latter prepared a governmental programme which includes a section dedicated to religious issues and one to immigration. The first part is called “Orthodoxy”, having as a main goal the protection of the Orthodox Church and religion.²⁰ The second is entitled “Illegal Immigration” and its main goals are the following:

Ellines gia tin Patrida have a comprehensive plan to help Greece get rid of the major risk of illegal immigration. In this section, we will refer to the measures that we will take immediately as a national government, to combat the most dangerous wound our Motherland faces. Suffice it to emphasise that if immediate measures are not taken and the current unacceptable situation continues, then in a few decades:

- The Greeks will be a minority in our homeland
- Entire districts, villages, and even cities will become ghettos of foreigners
- The social fabric will be completely torn apart and imported crime will surpass all precedent
- Islamisation will destroy our religious and cultural identity.

In simple words, the images we see today in European megacities, in a few years will have been fully imposed on Greek society as well. London with the Pakistani mayor; Paris with the fires that destroyed the imposing cathedral of Notre Dame; and Berlin, where more Turks live than those one meets in the big Turkish cities.²¹

Furthermore, an interesting coalition took place between the so-called neoliberal party of *Dimiourgia Xana* (Creation Again!) and the extreme-right party of *Nea Dexia* (New Right), called *Ethniki Dimiourgia* (National Creation). In the following months the party presented some of its major goals. Among the most important ones were those related to Islam and migrants:

Protect our national identity from Islamic invasion. For the first time in world history, a state, which is invaded, finances the invader and places the Armed Forces at its service. Illegal migrants must face the consequences of the law in one-way: arrest, trial, conviction, deportation.

In another section entitled “Society”, it writes:

Every society has the right to decide for itself. Athens has the right to remain a Greek city and Islamabad a Pakistani one. In our home, we will decide if, how many [migrants] and for how long we will host. No one can impose anything else on us.

20. See <https://cutt.ly/u1eDrn5> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

21. See <https://cutt.ly/h1eFvW7> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

While in the section on migration it is added:

This is not migration, but an invasion. Few come from war zones. They, the real refugees, are asking for temporary shelter until peace is restored in their area, so they can return to their homes. Most of them, who enter the country illegally, are economic adventurers or conscious carriers of Islamic imperialism, through migration, which, under the guise of religion, attempts to conquer Europe from within. The European Union, instead of repelling the invasion, facilitates it. This attitude increases flows. [...] The problem becomes nightmarish as 99% of the invaders believe in Islam. Islam is not only a religion. It is a regulatory framework: a legal, political and military system, completely incompatible with European values. It is not only social peace that is at risk, but our very existence as a nation. [...] The only way to halt this is to stop the motivation. We have no obligation to abolish our borders. The illegal entry law is still in place and must be implemented immediately. Anyone sentenced to prison for illegal entry should, of course, have the status of a prisoner, in closed facilities, with no right to leave, or on uninhabited islands, until legal deportation proceedings are completed, however long that may take, unless he decides to leave voluntarily. [...] Neither our country, nor Europe, will become an Islamic caliphate, because that is what the financiers of the invasion decided, whether they are Islamic centers or Western' advocates of a multicultural dystopia.²²

Finally, in 2022, a former MP of the ruling party Nea Dimocratia, founded his own party called PATRIDA (Fatherland - Patriotic Force for Change). In several sections of the party's theses, Islam and Muslim migrants are targeted as a threat to the Greek culture, to the Orthodox religion, and to national identity. Illegal migration is related to the demographic problem and the shrinking of the population, and it is argued that "illegal migrants who commit crimes should be automatically arrested and transferred to remote, closed detention centers" for deportation. It is also mentioned that "the burqa must be banned in Greek territory and all illegal Islamic mosques must be sealed immediately, without exception".²³

Media

Islamophobic views and articles are very regularly published in extreme-right newspapers, e.g., *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 cases, the main issues are the so-called illegal migration and the perceived threat of the biological and cultural alienation of the Greek nation and society. In one such case, the newspaper *Makeleio* (Massacre) published a front page arguing that armed Pakistanis are organizing night patrols and that there is a secret plan called "Islama-

22. For the above see <https://cutt.ly/W1eKBGK> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

23. See the party's principles at <https://patrida.net/arches/> and program theses at <https://patrida.net/programma/> (Access date: 24 November 2022).

bad” whereby Turkey attacks Greece with Pakistanis becoming active to help Turkey take over the country. (Fig. 6)



Figure 6: Front page of *Makeleio*, October 1 & 2, 2022. The title reads, “Armed Pakistani Night Patrols”²⁴

However, even mainstream media have been reproducing Islamophobic opinion pieces and articles. In spring, the right-wing newspaper *Dimocratia* (Democracy) offered its readers Douglas Murray’s book *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*, translated into Greek, in two volumes. (Fig. 7)

The advertisement was the following: “A shocking book by Douglas Murray about the disappointing failures of multiculturalism, migration, lack of identity, and the wound at the heart of European culture.”²⁵

The right-wing newspaper *Kathimerini* (The Daily) also publishes anti-Islamic articles. After the attack against Salman Rushdie in the summer, the columnist Sakis Moutziz wrote:

24. Photo by A. Sakellariou.

25. For the advertisement see <https://cutt.ly/gM1CuUW> (Access date: 21 November 2022).



Figure 7: The advertisement of the newspaper *Dimocratia* offering readers a Greek translation of Douglas Murray's book *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*.²⁶

There are not a few who, in the name of ‘political correctness’, either remain silent or round off their speech, in order not to be accused of Islamophobia. They are self-censored. As is well known, the politically correct discourse does not discriminate between religions, does not look for motives for heinous acts within their teaching, and has little interest in knowing what armed the hand of the perpetrators. In this case, the driving factor lies in the total identity relationship that the believer has with Islam. His religious beliefs are not a part of his identity, they are his whole identity. And automatically, anyone who does not agree, by reason or deed, with him is not a non-believer, he is an enemy. This worldview in its cultural dimension carries the complete worthlessness of human life [...].²⁷

On the other end of the spectrum, liberal media have also been reproducing Islamophobic views, though to a lesser extent. *Athens Voice* is such an example, hosting opinion pieces and articles arguing about the assumed danger coming from Islam, talking about the morbidity of Islam, using the term Islamophobia in quotation marks, and reproducing terms like “Islamism-leftism”.²⁸

26. Photo by A. Sakellariou.

27. Sakis, Moutzias, “A life death penalty”, *Kathimerini*, 17 August 2022, <https://cutt.ly/zM1N1MR> (Access date: 22 November 2022).

28. See for example the following articles: Soti Triantafyllou, “Islamic revolution and the left”, *athensvoice.gr*, 12 October 2022, <https://cutt.ly/1M0rCZV>, Manos Voularinos, “Does anyone still insists that wearing the scarf is still a choice?”, *athensvoice.gr*, 23 September 2022, <https://cutt.ly/GM0tZXf>, Soti Triantafyllou, “Deportations of Imams in France”, *athensvoice.gr*, 2 August 2022, <https://cutt.ly/FM0t5Rp>, Soti Triantafyllou, “What is and what is not a fatwa”, *athensvoice.gr*, <https://cutt.ly/eM0ykME> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

Justice System

In October 2021, the Council of State published a decision (1751/2021)²⁹ with which the ministerial decision 951/44337/21.4.2017 with regard to kosher and halal procedures was decided not to be compliant with the existing legal framework regarding animal protection and respect. This decision caused reactions from both Muslim and Jewish organisations, and it is believed that it will create serious problems in the everyday lives and in the religious duties of both communities.

In March 2022, the government put under public consultation the revision of the law on animal protection (1198/1981) in order to overcome the problems created by the decision of the Council of State. However, there were huge reactions from ecological and animal organisations. One of them managed to mobilise people and add around 2,800 comments in the online public consultation process against this revision within three days.³⁰ Kriton Arsenis, an MP of the left-wing party MeRA25, submitted a question to the Minister of Rural Development and Food asking whether the government will respect the decision of the Council of State that prohibits the slaughter of animals without anaesthesia, noting that, according to a recent decision of the European Court of Justice, animal slaughtering without anaesthesia cannot obtain organic certification.³¹ The Panhellenic Veterinary Association also expressed its clear opposition to the possibility of changing the current legislative framework and overthrowing the ban on slaughtering animals without anaesthesia. The association argued that while they respect the right of Muslims and Jews, they contend that they can continue to eat as they have until 2022 when the ban was in force.³²

Finally, in November 2022 a self-proclaimed priest and his associates were convicted after a lawsuit from the Greek Helsinki Monitor, for damages caused to the location where the mosque of Athens in Votanikos was to be constructed. They were sentenced to 15 months in prison with a three-year suspension (3 months for the offense and an additional 12 months for the racial motive).³³

Internet

The internet and social media, in particular, have been fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and hate speech against Islam and Muslims, especially

29. For the abstract of the decision: <https://cutt.ly/BH3Dh0b> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

30. "The article about animal slaughtering without anesthesia is withdrawn", www.zoosos.gr, 10 March 2022, <https://cutt.ly/PMCsIp0> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

31. Petros Katsakos, "The government moves towards the legalization of animal slaughtering without anesthesia", avg.gr, <https://cutt.ly/iMCs5LN> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

32. "Animal slaughtering without anesthesia is abuse and should not be legalized again in Greece", hva.gr, 10 March 2022, <https://cutt.ly/TMCpF4S> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

33. "Conviction of 'father' Kleomenis for desecration of a mosque after a lawsuit by EPSE", racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.gr, 7 November 2022, <https://cutt.ly/P1iEI2d> (Access date: 25 November 2022).

when it comes to migrants and refugees.³⁴ While it is difficult to monitor the whole field in a systematic manner, similarly to the previous years' reports, many extreme right-wing websites continue to disseminate news about Muslim countries in relation to violence (e.g. killings, rapes, murders, etc.), which in most cases are not reliable, and argue about 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 GD (*xrisiavgi.com*) and *ethnikismos.net*, which is related to GD, since many articles appear on both websites; the websites of other extreme right-wing 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*, *makeleio.gr*, *elora.gr/portall*, *elkosmos.gr*). Additionally, there are other websites, such as the website of the Network of Greek Conservatives, that reproduce anti-immigrant and Islamophobic discourses. One of the website's articles argues:

In Greece we have close to one million migrants, including the unofficial ones, most of whom are illegal. Several of them are Sunni Muslims of Pakistani origin. All Greek Governments lavishly grant residence permits. If a Sunni child excels one day, will he parade with the Greek Flag with the Orthodox Christian Cross on it, or will we ask for the cross to be removed by conducting a constitutional revision? If one day a Sunni MP of Pakistani origin is elected party leader and later Prime Minister, will he go to negotiate with a Sunni President in Türkiye which has strategic cooperation with Pakistan? If one day a Sunni of Pakistani origin will rise to the hierarchy as Chief of the Army, do we have such confidence in the possibilities of integrating our culture that we will entrust him with the Defence of our country?³⁵

Another extreme right-wing website is *pronews.gr* which also reproduces anti-Islamic discourse and presents Islam as a major threat to the West, in general, and Greece, in particular. In one of the tens of articles it has published on the matter, the following is written:

However, the Pakistani community, the largest community of Greek Muslims, is taking advantage of the momentum to request permits for more and more mosques. In fact, their demand is that there should be a mosque in every neighbourhood where there are Muslims. [...]. And certainly, one can understand what is happening in

34. For the role of the social media in the extreme-right milieu one could see the output report of the EU project, Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality, A. Sakellariou and N. Pathon (2020), *Country level reports on drivers of self-radicalisation and digital sociability: Greece*, DARE project, http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/5.1_greece.pdf (Access date: 21 November 2022).

35. Rafail Kalyviotis, "Saidou and the Hittites", *diesy.gr*, 6 April 2022, <https://cutt.ly/bMCcUZi> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

Athens with the hundreds of thousands of Muslim migrants gathering around their luxury homes, turning entire neighbourhoods into Islamic ghettos.³⁶

In another article it is argued that the establishment of a Muslim cemetery will lead to the full Islamisation of Athens, Attica, and Greece.³⁷

Finally, there are many Facebook and Twitter accounts, both personal pages and groups, which reproduce messages, videos, and texts against migrants and refugees and, of course, against multiculturalism, Islam, and Muslims and the construction of the mosque in Athens. A couple of examples are a Facebook page about “illegal” migrants and the danger they consist for Greece under the name “Lathro” which means “smuggled” or “illegal”, and is the first part of the word *lathrometanastis*, i.e., illegal, smuggled migrant. Another such Facebook group is under the name “Islam in front of our doors” in reference to the alleged danger of Islam for Greece and the Greek culture.³⁸

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., Kyr-iakos 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 neoliberalism, e.g., Thanos Tzimeros, the leader of Dimiourgia Xana (Creation Again), or the authors and newspaper columnists Takis Theodoropoulos and Soti Triantafyllou. Another central figure is Andreas Andrianopoulos, a neoliberal and former minister with the right-wing party Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy). During the last few years, he has been writing articles and books, and making lots of comments on Facebook and mainly 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*. In one of his opinion pieces published in May 2022, he argued,

Ukrainians are real refugees fleeing – old men, women, children – a real war. The younger ones stay behind to fight for their homeland. Muslims are primarily young, fanatics of Allah, looking for better living conditions and, according to the Koran, to colonize Christian societies. And they carry different beliefs, habits and life values. Away from the fanatics who carry specific subversive agendas. Racism here works backwards. For those of course who want to understand...³⁹

36. “Ready to receive an official permit tens of mosque – Athens will become a ghetto”, *pronews.gr*, 28 January 2022, <https://cutt.ly/oMCR8F5> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

37. Ioanna Karadima, “After the mosque, an Islamic cemetery in Athens”, *pronews.gr*, <https://cutt.ly/vMCYhXI> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

38. See for example <https://www.facebook.com/LathroGR/>, <https://www.facebook.com/oxi.tzami>, <https://cutt.ly/1MCjVia> (Access date: 21 November 2022).

39. Andreas Andrianopoulos, “Who are turning towards the Islamists?”, *in.gr*, 18 May 2022, <https://cutt.ly/AM7o5d9> (Accessed date: 23 November 2022).

Moreover, in 2022, his new book was published under the title *Islam, Turkey and Immigration: Factors for Concern*. (Fig. 8)

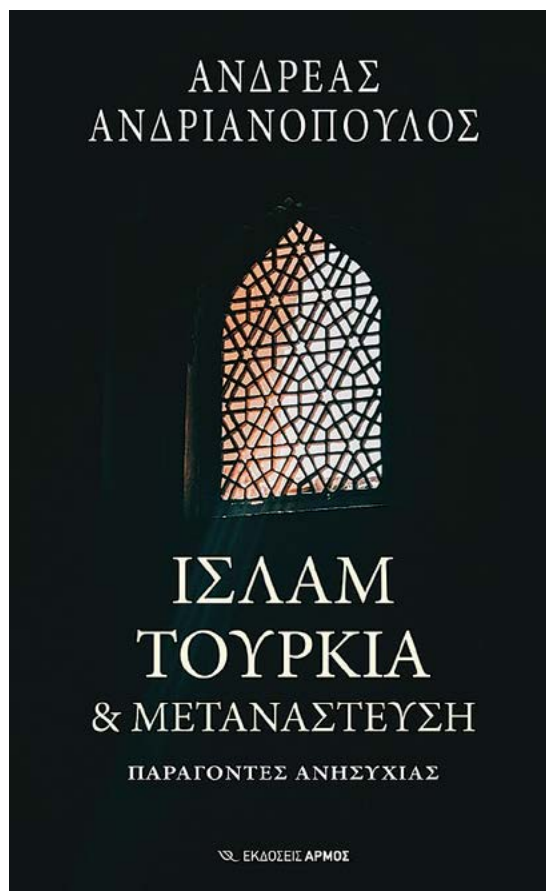


Figure 8: The front page of the new book of A. Andrianopoulos entitled *Islam, Turkey and Immigration: Factors for Concern*.⁴⁰

The three main chapters of the book have the following titles: “Islam: Ideology and Aggressiveness”, “Modern Turkey: The Problematic Neighbour”, and “Migration: Multicultural Trouble and Realistic Confrontation”.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

As far as initiatives by civil society are concerned, there were not many to mention in 2022. In one case, on February 10, 2022, the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), an independent, non-governmental, non-profit think tank, established in Athens, organized an online seminar with the title “Faith and Re-

40. Photo by A. Sakellariou.

ligion in the European Union: Challenges and Solutions”.⁴¹ Some members of the Muslim communities were invited to discuss discrimination, Islamophobia, and the necessary measures by an inclusive society in order to prevent them.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Based on the above descriptive analysis it can be argued that Islamophobia in Greece in 2022 is at almost the same level compared to the previous year, although the lack of statistical data makes comparisons a difficult task. Islamophobia is primarily manifested in the public discourse, with some groups of Greek citizens demonstrating against the “Islamisation” of the country, and Islamophobic content in the programmes of political parties and politicians mainly of the extreme-right and in different platforms of the Greek media, and particularly the internet and social media. However, it is important to underline that Islamophobia in Greece is found also among self-proclaimed political and/or economic liberals and not only in the extremes. There are, of course, political parties, politicians, and anti-racist groups mainly from the left opposing racist and Islamophobic discourses and discriminatory practices, but their impact on the reproduction of Islamophobia in Greece remains quite limited. 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 the fight against Islamophobia is the establishment of an official observatory mechanism that will monitor and record Islamophobic incidents on both 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.
- 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, 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 particularly in the realm of public education, civil service, and media, which provides enough space for Islamophobia to flourish and grow inside the Greek society. For the same purpose,

41. For details see <https://europedirect.eliamep.gr/pisti-kai-thriskaia-stin-eyropaiki-enosi-prokliseis-kai-lyseis/> (Accessed date: 6 February 2023).

training seminars provided particularly for those journalists, teachers, police officers, coastguards, and other civil servants who have contact with Muslims should be implemented.

- Fourth, 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.

Chronology

- **22.01.2022:** A bomb attack against an unofficial mosque in Athens city center.
- **23.01.2022:** Attack against an immigrant in the metro system of Athens.
- **30.01.2022:** A sticker was placed opposite the Çelebi Sultan Mehmet Mosque in the city of Didymoteicho, Thrace which stated "The Islamisation of Evros should stop now"!
- **16.03.2022:** A historical Muslim cemetery near Xanthi was demolished by the excavation machines of the Avdira Municipality for the purpose of converting the holy site into a recreation area.
- **03.05.2022:** Shooting attack against a Muslim by a taxi driver in Athens.
- **09.05.2022:** Attack against a Pakistani immigrant by a group in Athens who swore against Islam.
- **20.05.2022:** Attack against a guesthouse for refugee children and adolescents in Peraia, Thessaloniki.
- **11.08.2022:** Public statement of an MP justifying the potential phone tapping of Muslims of the Muslim minority of Thrace for national security purposes.
- **7.11.2022:** Conviction by a Greek court of a self-proclaimed Orthodox priest for desecrating the location the mosque of Athens was to be constructed.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
HUNGARY
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

DÁNIEL VÉKONY

The Author

Dániel Vékony, PhD, is an assistant professor at the Institute for Global Studies at the Corvinus University of Budapest. He received his PhD in International Relations in 2017 from Corvinus University. His main research focus is Muslims and Islam in Europe. Vékony was part of the European Union's Horizon 2020 GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together Diverse Perspectives research consortium. He is the author of numerous journal articles and book chapters; his latest paper, co-authored by Edgunas Raciun and Marat Ilyasov, is titled "Dynamics in State-Religion Relations in Postcommunist Central Eastern Europe and Russia" and was published in *Religion, State and Society* in 2022. Email: daniel.vekony@uni-corvinus.hu

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Executive summary

Hungary has a long history of Muslim presence on its territory, but this presence was never continuous. Small Muslim communities living in Hungary settled down with the first Hungarian tribes in the 9th century, but disappeared by the 14th century. There was also a Muslim presence in the country during the Ottoman invasion, but it again disappeared after the eviction of the Ottomans at the end of the 17th century. Bosnia's annexation and eventual occupation at the end of the 19th century meant the continuous presence of Muslims during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which led to the official recognition of Islam in 1916. Still, the number of Muslims living in Hungary at this time and during the interwar period was minuscule. This is the reason why in the collective memory of Hungarian society Islam is not considered part of Hungarian heritage, and Muslims and Islam are still considered alien to Hungarian culture.

There are approximately 30,000 Muslims living in Hungary today. Most of them are related to the people who had settled down in Hungary during the 1970s and 1980s when Hungary had strong connections with “friendly” and “progressive” socialist-leaning countries of the Middle East. There are also a small number of converts in Hungary.

As a result of the above, Islam is not a very visible religion in Hungary. When Islamophobic acts happen, in many cases, they are acts of communication directed against a far-away and abstract significant “other”. Indeed, Islamophobia in Hungary is present even without Muslims.

Life in the capital Budapest is relatively easy and safe for Muslims. This year, activists and the authorities recorded no cases of Islamophobic abuse in the country. Still, because of the latency of such events, we cannot be certain that Islamophobic abuse did not occur at all.

Összefoglaló

Magyarország területén a muzulmán jelenlét hosszú múltra tekint vissza. Ez a jelenlét azonban soha nem volt folyamatos. A IX. században az első magyar törzsekkel együtt telepedtek le Magyarországon kisebb muszlim közösségek, de a XIV. Századra ezek eltűntek. A török hódítás idején is volt muszlim jelenlét az országban, de a XVII. század végén, az oszmánok kiűzése után ismét megszűnt. Bosznia annektálása és végül a XIX. század végi megszállása a muszlimok folyamatos jelenlétét jelentette az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchiában, ami 1916-ban az iszlám hivatalos elismeréséhez vezetett. A Magyarországon ekkor, és a két világháború közötti időszakban élő muszlimok száma mégis elenyésző volt. Ez is az oka annak, hogy a magyar társadalom kollektív emlékezetében az iszlám nem szerepel a magyar örökség részeként. A muszlimok és az iszlám még mindig idegennek számítanak a magyar kultúrához képest.

Magyarországon körülbelül 30 ezer muszlim él. Többségük azokhoz az emberekhez kötődik, akik az 1970-es és 1980-as években telepedtek le Magyarországon, amikor Magyarországnak szoros kapcsolatai voltak a "baráti" és "haladó" szocialista irányultságú közel-keleti országokkal. Emellett van egy kicsi, de növekvő számú átért is.

A kis létszámnak következtében az iszlám nem egy túlságosan látható vallás Magyarországon. Ha iszlamofób cselekmények történnek, azok sok esetben egy távoli és elvont szignifikáns másik ellen irányuló kommunikációs cselekmények. Valójában az iszlamofóbia Magyarországon muszlimok nélkül is jelen van.

A fővárosban, Budapesten viszonylag könnyű és biztonságos az élet a muszlimok számára. Idén az aktivisták és a hatóságok 0 iszlamofób háttérű bűncselekményt regisztráltak. Mégis az ilyen események látenciája miatt nem mondhatjuk biztosan, hogy ilyen események egyáltalán nem történtek. Mindazonáltal 2022-ben 0 esetet jelentettek.

Country Profile EIR 2022

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: Democratic Coalition (DK), Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), Momentum Movement (Momentum Mozgalom), Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt), Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom), Dialogue for Hungary (PM), Politics Can Be Different (LMP)

Last Elections: 3 April 2022

Total Population: 9,689,010 (2022)

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): Catholic Church (39%), Other Christian denominations (15%), Judaism (0.1%), Islam (0.5%), Unaffiliated (18.2%) (Central Statistical Office 2011 census)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 5,579 or 0.1% of the population (Central Statistical Office 2011 census); Sulok (2010) estimates the figure around 32,000

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Hungarian Islam Law Society (Magyar Iszlám Jogegylet), 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 Magyarorszagert Mozgalom), Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazank Mozgalom)

Far-Right Movements: Army of Outlaws (Betyársereg), Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hatvannégyszéki Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom), Hungarian Legion (Legio Hungaria), Hungarian Self-Defense Movement (Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom), Force and Determination (Erő és Elszántság), Hungarian Principled Movement (Magyarelvű Mozgalom)

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 year 2022 was a calm year for Muslims in Hungary. There were no major attacks against Muslims and Islamic buildings. For the majority of time, the government-supported securitized narrative on migration and Muslims was not at the forefront. This may be down to the fact that the war between Ukraine and Russia took the limelight away from this issue.

Still, the securitized discourse linked to Islam and Muslims did not completely disappear from public discourse. Taking a look at some of the speeches of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, it becomes clear, that this topic is still present in the mind of governing political actors. Even if it received less attention, there is nothing to stop political actors from bringing back this Islamophobic discourse to the forefront if the political realities are opportune.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There is no recorded data on verbal and physical attacks on Muslims. However, we need to keep in mind that there is a latency in this regard. Still, leaders of the main Muslim communities and Balázs Bakó, the head of the Hungarian Islam Law Society, did not receive any reports of attacks.

Employment

The employment of Muslims is not problematic in the capital city of Budapest. From online conversations on social media, it becomes clear that even though there may be cases of religious discrimination against Muslims in Budapest there are a number of employees, who do not discriminate against Muslims. As a result, Muslims living in Budapest are able to find jobs where they are not discriminated against. For Muslims in Hungary, living in the countryside may be more challenging. This is particularly true for Muslim women, who choose to wear the veil. They report on recurring active and passive discrimination against them.¹

Education

There are a number of elementary and secondary schools that are linked to transnational Muslim organizations in Budapest. The Al Wahda Arab School² is linked to

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1. See the conversation and comments under the post of Tímea Csányi: Muszlim Mesék - Csányi Tímea "MI-LYEN MUSZLIMKÉNT ÉLNI MAGYARORSZÁGON?", Facebook post and conversation, retrieved March 5 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/muszlimmesek.hu/posts/481182530812934>
 2. Office of Education, "Al Wahda Arab Iskola", retrieved February 15 2023, from https://www.oktatas.hu/hivatali_ugyek/kir_intezmenykereso/!KIR_Intezmenykereso/Intezmeny/Index/201154

the Libyan government. The recently opened Maarif School³ was opened with the support of the Turkish government.

No denominational schools belong to the Hungarian Muslim denominations. The government chose not to sign Comprehensive Cooperation Agreements with Muslim denominations thus far which means they are not entitled to state funding to create and run their own denominational schools.

However, by law, the Hungarian Islamic Community provides religious education to Muslim pupils upon the request of parents. For this service, the government gives financial support to Muslim denominations. From interviews made with the representatives of Muslim denominations, Muslim parents are not always made aware of the availability of such services in schools. The Organization of Muslims in Hungary provides weekend schooling for children belonging to their community.

In Hungarian textbooks, Islam is not framed as a religion that belongs to Hungary.

Through the Stipendium Hungaricum⁴ program, many international students, including Muslims study at Hungarian universities with government funding.

Politics

According to Balázs Bakó, head of the Hungarian Islam Law Society,⁵ 2022 was a rather peaceful year for Muslims in Hungary as far as Islamophobia is concerned. The Muslim communities did not feel pressure from governmental and other societal actors. This is evidenced by the fact that there were no cases reported by the Hungarian Islam Law Society for the survey conducted by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) investigating hate crimes in member countries every year.

According to Szultán Sulok, the head of the Organisation of Muslims in Hungary,⁶ Muslims fleeing the Ukrainian conflict did not receive the same level of treatment as non-Muslim Ukrainians during the first weeks of the war in Ukraine.

The issue of the Islamic cemetery plot in Budapest was solved only partially in 2021. The current plot, which currently has space, will become full in a number of years. According to Kovács Miklós Ahmed, the representative of the Hungarian Islamic Community (HIC),⁷ the HIC tried to consult with the local Budapest munic-

3. Office of Education, "Maarif Iskola", retrieved February 15 2023, from https://www.oktatas.hu/hivatali_ugyek/kir_intezmenykereso/KIR_Intezmenykereso/Intezmeny/Index/203397

4. Stipendium Hungaricum, "4 must known facts about Stipendium Hungaricum from 2022/2023" retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://stipendiumhungaricum.hu/news/4-must-known-facts-about-stipendium-hungaricum-from-2022-2023/>

5. Interview with Balázs Bakó, February 13 2023

6. Interview with Szultán Sulok, head of the Organization of Muslims in Hungary, March 2 2023

7. Interview with Kovács Miklós Ahmed, representative of the Hungarian Islamic Community, March 2 2023

ipal authorities to allocate a new, bigger plot for Islamic burials. The local authorities do not respond to HIC's attempts to solve this issue, which puts the long-term question of Islamic burials in Budapest in question.

In his first speech in Parliament after winning the election, Prime Minister Orbán seemed to embrace the great replacement conspiracy theory by speaking about "Europe's great program of population replacement"⁸ in regards to migration. In October, Orbán took part in a roundtable discussion in Germany, where he said that in Hungary there are no Muslim migrants, that Hungary does not want to become a multicultural society, and that Hungarians want to remain the way they are.⁹ In line with this logic, he branded migration as a civilizational threat in a speech in September.¹⁰ From such speeches, it is clear that the governing elite's attitude towards Muslims did not change. Those in power consider Muslims and Islam as a civilizational challenge. Earlier in the year, in January, Orbán's planned official visit to Sarajevo, Bosnia Hercegovina was cancelled because he had voiced his doubts about solving the security challenges of Bosnia where "two million Muslims live."¹¹ This speech paired up with the Hungarian government's increasing cooperation with Bosnian Serbian leader Milorad Dodik resulted in the Bosnian government's cancellation of Orbán's visit.

Orbán's close ties with Russia also translate into closer ties with Serbia and Republika Srpska. This also falls in line with his idea of granting EU membership to European countries that have close links to Russia and share the illiberal values of the FIDESZ government, even if this means sacrificing good relations with the rest of the Bosnian government.

The government, yet again, extended the "state of crisis due to mass immigration"¹² two times in 2022, in March and in September.¹³ As the "state of crisis" can

8. Orbán, Viktor: "ORBÁN VIKTOR BESZÉDE A MINISZTERELNÖKI ESKÜTÉTELÉT KÖVETŐEN", Kormany.hu, retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://kormany.hu/beszedekek-interjuk/miniszterelnok/orban-viktor-beszede-a-miniszterelnoki-eskutetelet-kovetoen>

9. Kormany.hu "ORBÁN VIKTOR PANELBESZÉLGETÉSE A 'CICERO' CÍMŰ NÉMETORSZÁGI HAVILAP VEZETŐIVEL", retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://kormany.hu/beszedekek-interjuk/miniszterelnok/orban-viktor-panelbeszelgetese-a-cicero-cimu-nemetorszagi-havilap-vezetoivel>

10. Orbán, Viktor, "ORBÁN VIKTOR BESZÉDE A HATÁRVADÁSZOK ESKÜTÉTELÉN", retrieved February 15 2023, Kormany.hu from <https://kormany.hu/beszedekek-interjuk/miniszterelnok/orban-viktor-beszede-a-hatarvadaszok-eskutetelelen>

11. Szegő, Iván Miklós, "Eddig fasisztázták, most már le is nácizták Orbánt – nem is utazott Boszniába", 24.hu retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://24.hu/kulfold/2022/01/29/orban-bosznia-szerbek-dodik-elemzes/>

12. The main act regulating the "state of crisis due to mass immigration" is Act No. LXXX of 2007, which was amended in 2015. See: Act No. LXXX of 2007, retrieved February 16 2023, from <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogsabaly?docid=A0700080.TV&searchUrl=/gyorskereso?keyword%3D2007.%2520%25C3%25A9vi%2520LXXX.%2520t%25C3%25B6rv%25C3%25A9ny> Accessed: 26 February 2023

13. Hvg.hu, "Meghosszabbítja a kormány a tömeges bevándorlás miatti válsághelyzetet", retrieved February 15 2023, from https://hvg.hu/itthon/20220303_meghosszabbitas_kormany_tomeges_bevandorlas_miatt_valsghelyzet, Kormany.hu, "A KORMÁNY MEGHOSSZABBÍJTJA A TÖMEGES BEVÁNDORLÁS OKOZTA VÁLSÁGHELYZETET", retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://kormany.hu/hirek/a-kormany-meghosszabbitja-a-tomeges-bevandorlas-okozta-valsaghelyzetet20220906>

only be declared for 6 months, the government needs to extend it every time it would expire. The “state of crisis due to mass immigration” has been in force and has been extended continuously since 2016. This extraordinary legal situation gives certain rights to the central and local governments, regarding the usage of private property. It also gives the police and armed forces extended authority, and restricts the possibility to apply for political asylum to the so-called transit zones, which are closed and guarded camps for migrants near the southern borders of Hungary. The “state of crisis due to mass immigration” is also a very useful political tool to create a sense of external insecurity among members of Hungarian society.

Media

The Hungarian media can be divided into two different sections: the first, the large and dominant one, is controlled by forces close to the government and the governing FIDESZ party.¹⁴ Media products that are linked to the Central European Press and Media Foundation (KESMA) are closely linked to the governing elite. This press is likely to push anti-migrant and anti-Muslim discourse, when the governing elite requires them to do so. There are also media outlets that are operated by far-right individuals which are also hostile to the idea of migration and migrants who were predominantly Muslim before the beginning of the war between Ukraine and Russia.



Figure 1: “A True French Patriot among the Football Players Who Spit on the Ground during the National Anthem or Who Send Money to Muslim Terrorists.” The article refers to Olivier Giroud as a devote Catholic French national football player. He is contrasted to the Muslim football players of the French national team. In the article, Giroud is portrayed as a humble, good person, whereas players with a Muslim background are portrayed as unpatriotic, disrespectful, criminal, and radical. **Source:** retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://www.origo.hu/sport/focivb/20221204-francia-valogatott-olivier-giroud-portre.html>

14. Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely, “Mindent beborít a Fidesz-közeli média”, retrieved March 5 2023, <https://mertek.eu/2019/04/25/mindent-beborit-a-fidesz-kozeli-media/>

This press coverage of Muslims and Islam does not focus on Hungary, but on the outside world. Filtering the articles on Origo.hu, one of the biggest online KESMA news portals, for the keywords “Islam” and “Muslim,” one finds articles that portray Muslims in a mostly negative manner. In fact, there was no article that presented Muslims as positive actors. A good example of this is related to the FIFA World Cup in Qatar and the French football team. There were a number of articles that portrayed the French national striker Olivier Giroud in very positive light, emphasising his Catholic faith and his patriotism. Giroud was compared and contrasted with Karim Benzema and other Muslim players, who did not respect their country and had trouble with the law.¹⁵

The KESMA-produced content has such a great reach within the media that even independent far-right portals adopt and cite their articles when dealing with topics related to Muslims. For instance, the far-right portal Kuruc.info took material from the KESMA-related Mandiner.hu, when writing about an alleged extremist Muslim preacher in Germany.¹⁶ The article titled “Muslim Preaching in ‘Germany,’” refers to Germany in quotation marks as a country that lost its national identity because of mass Muslim immigration.

The screenshot shows the Kuruc.info website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with categories like 'Címlap', 'Antimagyarizmus', 'Cigánybűnözés', 'Holokamu', 'Humor', 'LMBTQP+', and 'Pol'. The main article is titled 'Muslim hittérítés "Német"országban: a fickó megnézett néhány hitleres videót, és ez lett belőle'. Below the title, there is a sub-header 'Meglehetősen érdekes videó látott napvilágot: egy iszlám hittérítő vélhetőleg egy könyvbemutatón őrjöngve-üvöltve csapkodja az asztalt, és magyarázza, hogy nekik kell elvinni az iszlámot az emberekhez, nem várhatják meg, amíg az emberek jönnek hozzájuk, írja a Mandiner.' The main text of the article includes a quote from a preacher: 'Ki kell vinnünk a dawát az utcára! El kell vinnünk a dawát az emberekhez! Minden házba el kell vinnünk a dawát! Mindenhová el kell vinnünk a dawát! Nem építhetünk egy faházat az erdőben, ahol dawát írunk a bejáratra, és várunk, amíg valaki véletlenül ránk talál. Ezt kell felfogniuk az embereknek! A lányaitok nem fognak véletlenül találni egy titkos mecsetet! Vegyétek észre a kaszinókat! Vegyétek észre a drogdílereket! Mi folyik itt testvéreim?! [...] Testvéreim és nővéreim, legyetek Allah harcosai ebben az országban!'

Figure 2: “Muslim Preaching in ‘Germany’: The Guy Watched Some Videos of Hitler and This Is the Result.” This article presents an extremist Muslim preacher, and is described in such a way as to create the impression that all Muslims believe and follow this radical interpretation of Islam.

15. Origo.hu, “A HIMNUSZ ALATT A FÖLDRE KÖPŐ VAGY MUSZLIM TERRORISTÁKNAK PÉNZT KÜLDŐ FOCISTÁK KÖZÖTT EGY IGAZI FRANCIA HAZAFI”, retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://www.origo.hu/sport/focivb/20221204-francia-valogatott-olivier-giroud-portre.html>
16. Kuruc.info, “Muszlim hittérítés “Német” országban: a fickó megnézett néhány hitleres videót, és ez lett belőle”, retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://kuruc.info/r/22/245374/>

Muslims living in Hungary are not part of the media discourse. This may also be attributed to the stagnating and small population of Muslims in the country. At the same time, Muslim communities tend to keep a low profile and seldom create media attention. It is safe to say that Muslim communities tend to try to stay under the radar of the mainstream media and not to expose themselves in any way.

Justice system

The current version of Hungary's Basic Law¹⁷ (constitution) has an ambiguous relation to religion. The Basic Law declares Hungary as a secular country, where churches and state function separately. This separation means that the state and churches should not interfere in each other's affairs. The text also emphasizes freedom of religion and freedom to change one's religion.¹⁸

However, as mentioned above, the state may partner with churches to provide public services. In this case, the state may sign a Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement (CCA) with a church or denomination. This requires the political intention from the government and the support of the legislation. To this day, no Muslim denomination has been able to sign such an agreement with the state.

The preamble of the Basic Law also emphasizes Christianity and its role in preserving the Hungarian nation. It praises the first King of Hungary, St. Stephen, for "making Hungary part of Christian Europe."¹⁹

The Hungarian legal system is rather neutral towards religions, but it is clear that certain church organizations enjoy preferential treatment. On the one hand, the multi-tiered recognition system of churches in the Law on Churches itself creates different categories of church recognition.²⁰ This is paired with the government's ability to sign a CCA with churches, on the other hand. Those churches that have the ability to have a CCA with the government receive substantial additional funding for their social activities. Churches without a CCA seldom have the financial resources to fund extensive infrastructure, which puts them, Muslim denominations included, in a disadvantaged position.

Internet

The KESMA- and other government-related media outlets and far-right pages regularly depict Muslims as threats to the security and stability of Western European societies. However, Hungarian Muslims do not receive much media and online attention.

17. "The Basic Law of Hungary", retrieved February 20 2023, from <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1100425.atv>

18. Ibid. (art. VII.)

19. Ibid.

20. For more details see: Vékony, Dániel, "Hungary: Religion as the government's political tool", Triandafyllidou, Anna; Magazzini, Tina (eds.) Routledge Handbook on the Governance of Religious Diversity, London, New York: Routledge, 2020) 101-110.

When taking a look at social media, it is worth mentioning that the FIDESZ-sponsored MEGAFON Center is responsible for training and funding political influencers that amplify the governing elite's discourse.²¹ Having investigated the online content created by these political influencers, only very little content was created that is directly or indirectly related to Muslims in 2022. This may be due to the fact that Islam and Muslims received little political attention amid the ongoing Ukrainian crisis. One expectation is the question of refugees from Ukraine. In line with the FIDESZ-led discourse on migration, people coming from Ukraine should be treated differently to people trying to enter Hungary from Serbia and other countries, who are depicted as illegal refugees.²²

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There were no new significant developments in this field. As Farid Hafez points out,²³ in Hungary, Islamophobic attitudes are mainly perpetrated by far-right parties including the governing FIDESZ-led alliance. This leaves little room and opportunity for bottom-up organization of Islamophobic groups. As Islamophobic ideas are not taboo, but are often spread by mainstream government-related media channels when the political agent of the governing elite needs it, and grassroots movements are rare and hard to observe. As the government discourse emphasizes, since the government is in control of the borders and as a result of the Muslim question not being a burning issue in Hungary, individuals are not involved in grassroots movements.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association (Magyar Iszlám Jogvédő Egyesület, MIJE) was the only organization dedicated to the protection of the rights of Muslims in Hungary. Due to a lack of funding and lack of personnel, MIJE in its association form ceased to exist and was renamed and restructured into the "Hungarian Islam Law Society," which is a more informal legal framework for those who are still active in this organization. Balázs Bakó, the head of the MIJE, indicated that the MIJE did not record any Islamophobic issues and legal problems with Muslims in Hungary, as the focus of society and politics was on other issues in 2022. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Amnesty International are also active in the field of human rights protection. Still, Islamophobic issues were not at the forefront in 2022.

21. Szolga, Bálint, "A fideszes Megafon csapdája: annyira szélsőséges, hogy már csak a B-középnek szól", retrieved March 5 2023, from <https://jelen.media/publicisztika/a-megafon-csapdaja-3070/>

22. Janka Sebestyén's video on TikTok, retrieved February 16 2023, from <https://www.tiktok.com/@jankasebestyen/video/7074641567755078917>

23. Hafez, F. (2022) Street-level and government-level Islamophobia in the Visegrád Four countries. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 52:5, 436-447, DOI:10.1080/0031322X.2018.1498440

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2022 was a rather peaceful year as far as Islamophobic incidents are concerned. It seems the attention of the relevant political and societal actors was focused on the war in Ukraine, and thus less attention was given to the question of Islam and Muslims in Hungary.

Still, Islam appeared as a non-present threat in public discourse. Even if it was not in primary focus, it still appeared in the discourse of PM Viktor Orbán and government-related media and online channels.

As the root causes of international irregular migration are still present in Asian and African countries, we can expect the anti-migration Islamophobic rhetoric to gain strength again, once the Ukrainian conflict and the recession in Europe out of the limelight and new push factors from Muslim-majority countries to reappear.

Islam, despite its long history in Hungary, is perceived as an alien culture and religion. If Hungarians are to rediscover Hungary's Islamic heritage, it may also shape the image of Islam and Muslims in society. However, the gargantuan and long-term task of shaping the collective memory and the resulting image of Muslim and Islam cannot be undertaken without the active help of the government. In the current political climate, there is little chance of this happening.

Chronology

- **21.01.2022:** PM Orbán cancels his planned official visit to Bosnia after being criticized for his anti-Muslim remarks by Bosniak politicians.²⁴
- **03.03.2022:** Hungary's government once again extends the so-called state of crisis due to mass immigration, which has been in force since 2016.²⁵
- **06.09.2022:** Hungary's government further extends the so-called state of crisis due to mass immigration until March 7, 2023.²⁶
- **11.10.2022:** PM Viktor Orbán takes part in a roundtable discussion in Berlin, where he boasts about Hungary having no Muslim migrants.²⁷

24. Pathy Loránd Imre, "Öt nappal előtte lemondták Orbán Viktor boszniai útját" retrieved March 5 2023, from <https://index.hu/kulfold/2022/01/21/orban-viktor-bosznia-hercegovina-ut-lemondas-szerbek-zoran-tegelti-ja-milorad-dodik/>

25. Hvg.hu, "Meghosszabbítja a kormány a tömeges bevándorlás miatti válsághelyzetet", retrieved February 15 2023, from https://hvg.hu/itthon/20220303_meghosszabbitas_kormany_tomeges_bevandorlas_miatt_val-saghelyzet

26. Kormany.hu, "A KORMÁNY MEGHOSSZABBÍTJA A TÖMEGES BEVÁNDORLÁS OKOZTA VÁLSÁGHELYZETET", retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://kormany.hu/hirek/a-kormany-meghossz-abbija-a-tomeges-bevandorlas-okozta-valsaghelyzetet20220906>

27. Kormany.hu "ORBÁN VIKTOR PANELBESZÉLGETÉSE A 'CICERO' CÍMŰ NÉMETORSZÁGI HAVILAP VEZETŐIVEL", retrieved February 15 2023, from <https://kormany.hu/beszedekek-interjuk/miniszterelnok/orban-viktor-panelbeszelgetese-a-cicero-cimu-nemetorszagi-havilap-vezetoivel>

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
IRELAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

LOUISE RYAN, JAMES CARR

The Authors

Louise Ryan is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, University of Limerick, Ireland. Her research focuses on the intersection of algorithmic cultures, surveillance, and embodiment in Europe and North America. Her recent work is concerned with disinformation as the animating force behind community formation on social media platforms.

Email: louise.ryan@ul.ie

James Carr is a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology, University of Limerick, Ireland. He researches anti-Muslim racism in Ireland and his work is currently focused on experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination, the role of local authorities, and grassroots-led community engagement.

Email: james.carr@ul.ie

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Executive Summary

Drawing from data provided by the Irish Network Against Racism among others, instances of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination by the Muslim community are reported with unsettling clarity. Eid al-Adha celebrations in Croke Park, the country's largest sports stadium, again demonstrated the recognition of the importance of these celebrations for the Muslim community. However, as reported in previous years, far-right groups continue to grow in Ireland (online and offline) with international connections. As in previous years' Islamophobia reports on Ireland, problematic reporting practices continue in mainstream Irish media with evidence of problematic co-location of terms such as 'Islamic' and 'terrorist'. These exhibit the potential to stigmatise Muslim communities. Muslim communities are often viewed as a monolithic group with a culture incompatible with human rights and democracy. According to the ODIHR, anti-Muslim attacks of all kinds often take place on the heels of terrorist attacks. This is in line with the authors reporting on media coverage in 2022. Notably, the under-reporting of data is a point of concern. Publication of official data for the year 2021 included only 18 instances of anti-Muslim incidents, yet this is considered an underestimation. The publication of a bill to strengthen responses to hate speech and hate crime occurs simultaneously with Muslims in Irish prisons experiencing discrimination and intimidation in relation to Ramadan. The report concludes highlighting that much remains to be done to purposefully address Islamophobia within Irish society and politics. This includes 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. While efforts have been made in connection to the improvement of reporting hate crimes in Ireland, the acknowledgement of specific bias motivations and the review of legislative framework may be beneficial to tackle Islamophobia at a societal level in Ireland.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Ireland

Type of Regime: Republic

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary republic

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 and at the time of publication have not released official figures for 2022. In 2021, their report 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 Organisations: In no specific order: Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, Islamic Centre of Ireland, Muslim Association of Ireland, Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre, Irish Sufi Foundation

Main NGOs 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 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 “Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2022” 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 2022 report. Following this is a presentation of insights on the Irish media landscape. Following from previous years, 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 reflect on the key figures propagating Islamophobia in Ireland. The report concludes with recommendations for identifying and challenging Islamophobia in Ireland going forward.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2022, the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) provided members of the public with reports on the incidences of Islamophobia in Ireland. In 2021, it was noted that “61% of crimes, 54% of discrimination and 74% of other racist incidents were not reported to anyone except iReport.ie.”¹ These data include reports from Muslims of xenophobic and Islamophobic attacks which revealed instances of discrimination, verbal abuse, physical assault, harassment, and online bullying.² Unfortunately the data for 2022 denotes no meaningful positive change from previous years reports (2020, 2021). Data provided from INAR’s third-party reporting mechanism (iReport.ie) for 2022 provide qualitative insights on experiences of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland.³ The ODIHR in 2022 published official data for the previous year which included 18 reported anti-Muslim incidents.⁴ It was also noted with the reporting of this data that Ireland would benefit from “reviewing its existing legal framework to ensure that bias motivations can be effectively acknowledged and appropriate penalties can be imposed on the perpetrators.”⁵

Notably, data from iReport 2022 highlight incidences of Islamophobia occurring on public transport and social media. There were also several instances of individuals reporting Islamophobic attacks on their homes.

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1. Lucy Micheal, Reports of Racism in Ireland: Data from iReport.ie – Annual Report 2022. Dublin: Irish Network Against Racism, 2022.
 2. Ibid.
 3. The authors thank Shane O’Curry, director of the Irish Network Against Racism, for providing access to the iReport data for 2022.
 4. ODIHR, “Hate Crime Reporting Ireland 2021”, *OSCE ODIHR Hate Crime Reporting* (December 2022) retrieved on 4 January 2023 from <https://hatecrime.osce.org/ireland?year=2021>
 5. Ibid.

We have had an attempt at arson at the back of the house. We have had our car interfered with, which resulted in me being involved in an RTA.⁶ We have had our window smashed with a stone.

In one instance a family member reported multiple instances wherein their home was the target of vandalism and members of the family experiencing verbal and physical abuse for wearing hijab and being identified as Muslim.

My daughter has been followed home from the shop, had rubbish thrown at her, and asked what she thinks of the Taliban.

In several instances, iReport data present incidences occurring with regards to children and young teenagers. These are included in the proceeding Education section of the report.

Again, as in 2021, wearing hijab was allegedly the catalyst for a number of instances of physical or verbal altercations. This was also denoted by those reporting incidents occurring on social media and frequently cited as an objectifying or degrading term heard by children and young teenagers.

A woman who racially profiled and verbally abused the bus driver and a fellow commuter on the bus and her child who were Muslim and wearing a hijab.

There were derogatory comments made to the woman about her hijab and comments such as “go back to your own country” and “black bastard” used [...] It was really distressing and upsetting to witness and I should have done more but I was quite intimidated as there were three of them and they didn’t seem to hesitate if aggravated.

Racial slurs like “Paki Bastards”, “Suicide Bombing Bastards”, and many other derogatory things yelled at us. Saying vile things about me and my mother because we wear hijab. Continuously making fun of our native language when we speak it.

A specific report of an attack taking place en route to Taraweeh prayer sparked a notice for worshippers published by the Islamic Foundation of Ireland urging community members to exert caution travelling to and from places of worship (Fig. 1)⁷. The targeting of places of worship prompts concern as previous reports have noted acts of vandalism and intimidation occurring at places of community significance. When these locations, or indeed private home locations, are made public the data shows that there is apprehension on behalf of the Muslim community as previously this has resulted in intimidation, threats, and vandalism.

6. RTA stands for “road traffic accident”.

7. Islamic Foundation of Ireland, “Assalamu-alaykum we rahmatullahi we barakatahu,” *Facebook*, 2022. (April 3, 2022), retrieved 1 December 2022, from <https://www.facebook.com/islaminireland/posts/pfbid02kYKrTeg-aV4LGfkCZ9vgTiSTryU7HFkt3wnHWAHfqwy75RTCTk9JN6VDXTRxx7vPZL>.



Figure 1: The Islamic Foundation of Ireland urging community members to exert caution travelling to and from places of worship following an attack on a Muslim en route to Taraweeh prayer. **Source:** <https://www.facebook.com/islaminireland/posts/pfbid02kYKrTegaV4LGfkCZ9vgTiSTryU7HFkt3wnHWAHfqwy75RTCTk9JN6VDXTRxx7vPZl.>

Finally, in the process of a physical assault, Gardai, Ireland's national police service, intervened.

Suddenly someone [...] punched the back of my head several times. I didn't expect that, so I tried to run but he holds my jacket and punched me, and he keep saying that 'you muslim [...] you are [a] f***ing Paki'. I try to escape from him, but he keeps punching my back of the head [sic].

This specific complainant, who has experienced much physical and emotional distress as a result of the attack, sought to follow up on the attack with the intervening Gardai. The report also included that this individual, while targeted, does not practice Islam. Nonetheless, verbal insults and abuse levelled at members of the Muslim community were used.



Figure 2: Tweet from Dr. Umar Al-Qadri commenting on assault of a 'visibly' Muslim man in Dublin. **Source:** <https://twitter.com/DrUmarAlQadri/status/1510764592779124745>.

On social media, individuals continued to highlight the discrimination faced by members of the Muslim community (Figs. 2 and 3).



Figure 3: Screenshot of tweet from Irish GAA player publicising experiences at Dublin International Airport. **Source:** <https://twitter.com/aboodaljumaili/status/1539560271236169733>.

Each of these reports share a commonality in that they were unprovoked and largely took place in public settings, for instance on public transport. This could signal that Islamophobia is perceived as tolerable by some members of the public who were reluctant to intervene. Notably, iReport data persistently show that members of the public who would go on to report an incident felt too intimidated to speak out at the time. In addition, these reports also highlight the intersectionality of the discrimination experienced by Muslims in Ireland.

Employment

As noted in previous reports there is difficulty amongst the Muslim community in responding to and/or reporting incidences of Islamophobia when seeking or in active employment. In the case of individuals who do experience discrimination in a professional setting it is noted that discrimination is ambiguous, meaning an individual's ethnic or religious beliefs are often assumed. Thus, this presents the potential for more detailed examination of those effective policies and practices in Ireland to combat any such discriminatory behaviours in the workplace.

Education

Again, 2021 saw media reportage from schools around the country for the celebration of World Hijab Day. Most of the commentary from the students interviewed conveyed positive messages of understanding and tolerance amongst their peers.

Representatives from the Yellow Flag Programme,⁸ founded in 2008 to promote diversity and inclusion in schools across Ireland, noted that further state investment is required to allow schools to take part in the programme.⁹

8. Yellow Flag Ireland. *Yellow Flag Schools Handbook: Yellow Flag Schools Programme – A Guide to the 8-steps*. Dublin. Yellow Flag Ireland. (2022), retrieved 28 November 2022, from <https://yellowflag.ie/handbook-publications/#>

9. Ibid.

Simultaneously, the members of the Muslim community continue to face harassment and prejudice both at home and in the classroom. This was noted in data provided to iReport.

A video of kids ringing our doorbell and running away has been posted on TikTok, our house was identifiable in the video and our daughter has been teased in school about it.¹⁰

Politics

In September 2022, the Immigrant Council of Ireland published *Political Manifesto: An Equal Ireland for All*. Here, the organisation outlined initiatives implemented across the country. In direct relation to politics, the initiation of Migrant-Council Internships saw an increase of 54.5% participation in 2022.¹¹

Speaking at one of the Migrant Electoral Empowerment Programmes, Cllr Abul Kalam Azad Talukdar said,

Migrant participation in politics is a vital element of integration. It is really important for people of migrant backgrounds to know that they can be involved in Irish politics – whether that is through exercising their right to vote, or becoming actively involved with a party or campaigns they care about. It is also important for wider Irish society to have diverse political representatives – reflective of the society we live in today.¹²

Cllr. Talukdar is the first ever elected Muslim County Councillor and encourages interaction between different communities.

Several workshops and webinars took place to encourage “Diversity in Politics” with an expected launch (November 2022) of a toolkit for candidates from a migrant background who wish to run in local elections.¹³ Amongst the policy recommendations noted in this report is not only a call for the reformation of Direct Provision,¹⁴ but attention is drawn to the Irish government’s halting of the White Paper to end Direct Provision.¹⁵

10. Lucy Micheal, Reports of Racism in Ireland: Data from iReport.ie – Annual Report 2022. Dublin: Irish Network Against Racism, 2022.

11. Immigrant Council of Ireland. *Political Manifesto. An Equal Ireland for All*. (Dublin: ICCI: 2022) retrieved 23 November 2022, from https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/202209/ICI%20Political%20Manifesto_September2022.pdf

12. Immigrant Council of Ireland, “Deputy Mayor of Limerick shares insights with potential candidates from migrant backgrounds on running in local elections.” *Immigrantcouncil.ie*, (May 6, 2021), retrieved November 27 2022, from <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/news/deputy-mayor-limerick-shares-insights-potential-candidates-migrant-backgrounds-running-local>.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. The White Paper is intended to provide an outline of the Government’s policy on a topic, and what they propose to do. In this instance, the paper outlines the Irish government’s position on the termination of Direct Provision.

November also saw the government begin debates on Minister for Justice Helen McEntee's Hate Speech Bill (discussed further under Justice System). Groups such as Free Speech Ireland¹⁶ notably campaigned for rejection of the bill. The group in the past has been connected to the proliferation of anti-Muslim sentiment online (see Internet section below).

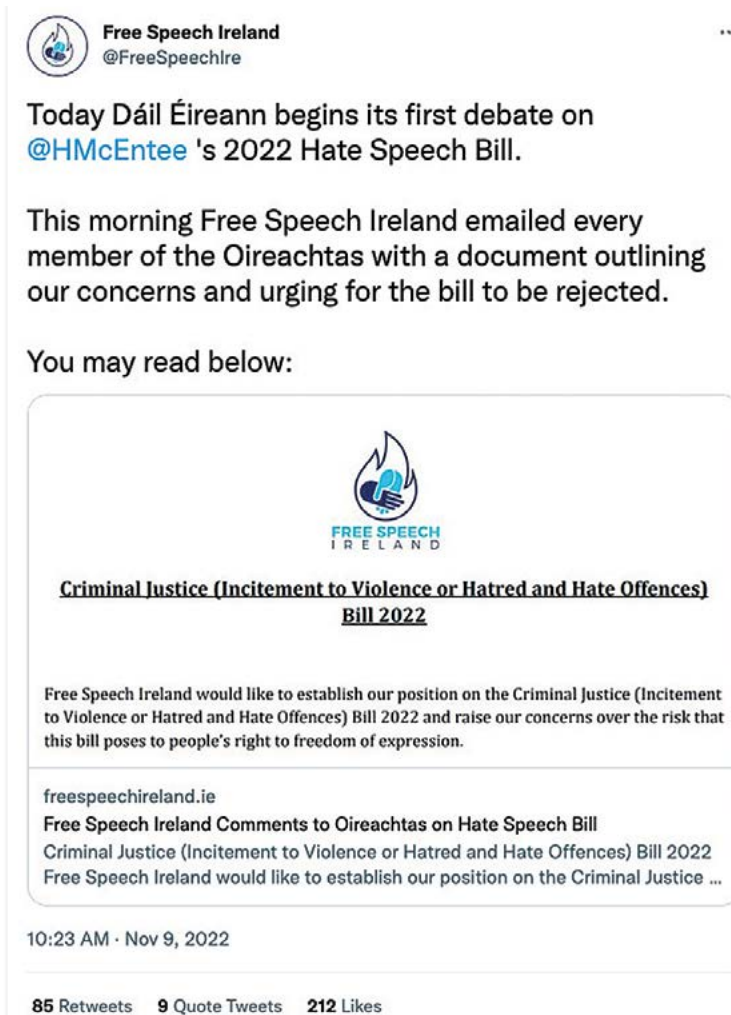


Figure 4: Screenshot of tweet from Free Speech Ireland publicising the group's rejection of the proposed Hate Crime Bill 2022. **Source:** Free Speech Ireland (@FreeSpeechIrl), "Today Dail Eireann begins its first debate on @HMEntee's 2022 Hate Speech Bill. Twitter, 9 November 2022, retrieved 28 November 2022, from <https://twitter.com/FreeSpeechIre/status/1590289027714158597>.

As noted in last year's report, Direct Provision centres have recorded incidents of Islamophobic hate speech and discrimination between residents and facilities workers (see Louise Ryan, James Carr: *Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2021*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2021*, Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022).

16. Free Speech Ireland (@FreeSpeechIrl), "Today ail Eireann begins its first debate on @HMEntee's 2022 Hate Speech Bill. Twitter, 9 November 2022, retrieved 28 November 2022, from <https://twitter.com/FreeSpeechIre/status/1590289027714158597>.

Media¹⁷

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.

Irish media reporting again highlighted the case of Lisa Smith as exemplifying a potential cause-effect illustrated by the co-location of terms ‘terrorism’, ‘attack’ ‘radicalisation’, and ‘jihad’ with ‘Islam/Muslim’.¹⁸ Meanwhile, media reporting of Eid al-Adha was again largely positive.¹⁹ The narrative presented amongst the media was one of support of a diverse Ireland with commentary from GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) President Larry McCarthy: “The GAA has always been about people and the communities that our clubs serve in communities around the world... An occasion such as this, strengthen those links undoubtedly.”²⁰

The reportage on the criminal case of Lisa Smith, as was noted last year,²¹ presents potential cause-effect frameworks in reference to radicalisation. Such moments in Irish media could be viewed as ‘trigger-events’ that could then be associated with hate speech and violence on and offline.²² When coverage made note of the judges noting that “religion was ‘irrelevant to membership of Isis’ as criminal activity cannot

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17. In line with previous reports for Ireland in the *European Islamophobia Report*, an analysis of media in Ireland was undertaken for 2022 using the Nexis online database (<https://advance.lexis.com/bisnexishome/?pdmfid=1519360&crd=86790095-5897-4a20-aafc-f74a84db668e>) (Access date: 19 November 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 2022; for experiences of Muslim communities in light of Covid-19 restrictions and outbreaks, the search terms used were Islam* OR Muslim* from 1 January 2022 to 1 December 2022; lastly, for the Eid celebrations, the search terms used were Islam* OR Muslim* AND Croke for a four week period from 1 July to 1 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*.
 18. 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>.
 19. R. McGreevy, “Eid at Croke Park: ‘We can celebrate our Irish Muslim identity in the most iconic Irish venue’”, *The Irish Times*, (9 July 2022), retrieved on 3 December 2022 from <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2022/07/09/eid-celebrations-at-croke-park-we-can-celebrate-our-irish-muslim-identity-in-the-most-iconic-irish-venue/>.
 20. P. Hyland, “Croke Park hosts its largest ever Eid celebration”, *Irish Independent*, (9 July 2022), retrieved 1 December 2022, from <https://www.independent.ie/news/croke-park-hosts-its-largest-ever-eid-celebration-41827378.html>.
 21. Louise Ryan, James Carr: *Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2021*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2021*, Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022.
 22. Matthew L Williams, Pete Burnap, Amir Javed, Han Liu, Sefa Ozalp, “Hate in the Machine: Anti-Black and Anti-Muslim Social Media Posts as Predictors of Offline Racially and Religiously Aggravated Crime”, *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 60, Issue 1, (January 2020), p. 93–117.

be justified by religious obligation”.²³ Nonetheless, much reporting on the story applied a cynical lens to the Muslim faith more broadly²⁴ with articles often using vocabulary such as ‘jihad’, ‘terrorist’, and references to comments made in court about ‘answering the call’. While there is no substantiated connection to coverage of Ms. Smith’s trial, a pattern emerges of events publicising Islam and subsequent anti-Muslim discourses emerging amongst (small) sections of the Irish public.²⁵ The far-right groups expressing anti-immigration stances both online and off appear drawn to media coverage wherein an opportunity to express these views (often Islamophobic) and as such exploit it.²⁶ Previous reports highlighted the increased use of internet platforms as presenting possibilities for cause-effect frameworks with reference to engagement with potentially radicalising content. However, while there is yet to be official data relating to this specifically in Ireland, it is worth noting the increasing presence of Islamophobic content on social media. The publication of Islamophobic speech and online content is outlined in further detail below.

Justice System

The Minister for Justice Helen McEntee (TD) published the “General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill 2021”. The “General Scheme” creates specific hate-aggravated offences for crimes motivated by prejudice against protected characteristics, which include race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, gender, or disability.²⁷ The Department of Justice proceeded to publish the bill in October with a statement from the Minister for Justice noting: “There is a clear desire from the public that these individuals need to be dealt with in the appropriate way.”²⁸ The new offences are to carry tougher sentences than ordi-

23. E. Reynolds, “Lisa Smith found guilty of Isis membership” *Irish Times* (30 May 2022) retrieved on 27 November from <https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/courts/2022/05/30/lisa-smith-found-guilty-of-isis-membership>.

24. A. O’Riordan, “Lucinda Creighton’s statement on Lisa Smith trial a ‘blatant contempt of court’, defence lawyers say”. *Irish Independent*, (17 January 2022) retrieved 2 December 2022 from <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/courts/lucinda-creightons-statement-on-lisa-smith-trial-a-blatant-contempt-of-court-defence-lawyers-say-41248965.html>.

25. C. Gallagher, “Extremists rush to exploit murder of Ashling Murphy”, *Irish Times*, (18 January 2022), retrieved 28 November 2022, from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/extremists-rush-to-exploit-murder-of-ashling-murphy-1.4778922>.

26. F. Gunning, “FREE SPEECH IRELAND SENDS LIST OF CONCERNS OVER ‘HATE SPEECH’ BILL TO OIREACTHAS MEMBERS”, (9 November 2002), *Gript.ie*, retrieved on 2 December 2022 from <https://gript.ie/free-speech-ireland-sends-list-of-concerns-over-hate-speech-bill-to-oireachtas-members/>.

B. Scallan, “WOULD SF TOLERATE A MUSLIM CLERIC’S VIEWS IF HELD BY A PRIEST?” (19 April 2022), *Gript.ie*, retrieved 2 December 2022 from <https://gript.ie/would-sf-tolerate-a-muslim-clerics-views-if-held-by-a-priest>.

M. McDonagh, “Catholic prelate deplores ‘acts of vandalism’ after Sligo killings”, (17 April 2022), *Irish Times*, retrieved 2 December 2022, from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/catholic-prelate-deplores-acts-of-vandalism-after-sligo-killings-1.4855128>.

27. Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill, 2022. *Gov.ie*, retrieved December 6 2022, from <https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/bill/2022/105/eng/initiated/b10522d-p-c-sent.pdf>.

28. Department of Justice. “New Bill to tackle hate crime and hate speech includes clear provision to protect freedom of expression”, *Gov.ie*, (27 October 2022), retrieved on 1 December 2022 from <https://www.gov.ie/en/>

nary forms of crime if convicted. The record of criminal convictions will reflect the crime committed was a hate crime.

In April 2022, the Joint Committee on Justice²⁹ published pre-legislative scrutiny of the bill. Their recommendations noted the “weighted and problematic” inclusion under the ‘Bias Indicator’ heading of ‘ethnic, religious or cultural differences between the perpetrator and the victim’.³⁰ With the committee concluding that one’s views, motivations of beliefs should not be deduced from their ethnic, religious or cultural background.

The experiences of Muslims in Irish prisons were highlighted in 2022. It was reported that particularly in the context of Ramadan, Muslim prisoners face jealousy and often bullying from other prisoners.³¹ The provision of prayer rooms is highlighted as a potential recommendation in line with existing research that highlights “faith-based activities play an integral role within society... therefore, it is critical that faith-based interventions are a key component within the prison regime.”³² As such, it is recommended that civil society groups that represent the diversity of prison populations, i.e., Muslims, are liaised with as part of the Public Sector Duty Action Plan going forward.

Internet

In contrast to 2021, this year saw a marked removal of most, but not all, Covid-19 related restrictions. This included members of the public being able to socialise, attend cultural events, music festivals, and social gatherings. Despite this, the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE) report highlighted that there was continued interest in and affiliation with far-right groups online.³³

Similar to the U.S. and other parts of the world, there’s a disturbing trend in Ireland where white nationalist, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-immigrant, and anti-lockdown groups seem to be coming together and echoing each other’s hateful rhetoric.³⁴

press-release/74ed9-new-bill-to-tackle-hate-crime-and-hate-speech-includes-clear-provision-to-protect-freedom-of-expression/.

29. Joint Committee on Justice. “Report on Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill 2021,” *Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice* (2021) retrieved 28 November 2022, from https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_justice/reports/2022/2022-04-08_report-on-pre-legislative-scrutiny-of-the-general-scheme-of-the-criminal-justice-hate-crime-bill-2021_en.pdf.
30. *Ibid.* p. 10
31. Irish Penal Reform Trust, “SOMETIMES I’M MISSING THE WORDS’ The rights, needs and experiences of foreign national and minority ethnic groups in the Irish penal system”, (Dublin, Ireland: *Irish Penal Reform Trust* 2022), Retrieved 29 November 2022 from https://iprt.ie/site/assets/files/7076/iprt_the_rights-_needs_and_experiences_of_foreign_national_and_minority_ethnic_groups.pdf.
32. Shona Robinson-Edwards and Stephanie Kewley, ‘Faith-Based Intervention: Prison, Prayer, and Perseverance’, Vol 9, Issue 4, *Religions* (2018), p.130.
33. Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, “Far-Right Hate and Extremist Groups – Ireland Report”, *GlobalExtremism.org*, (21 August 2022) retrieved 2 December 2022, from <https://globalextrremism.org/post/release-ireland-report>.
34. *Ibid.*



Figure 5: Official Twitter account of An Taoiseach Micheál Martin, the head of the Irish government, marking Eid al-Fitr. **Source:** <https://twitter.com/michealmartind/status/1521063319578333185>



Figure 6: Tweets posted in response to the tweet wishing Irish Muslims "Eid Mubarak" by Taoiseach Micheál Martin, An Taoiseach. **Source:** <https://twitter.com/michealmartind/status/1521063319578333185>.

Social media platforms specifically continue to prove difficult to moderate for hate speech and anti-Muslim rhetoric with offline events providing a 'trigger' for on-line Islamophobia to be proliferated.³⁵ A tweet posted by the official Twitter account

35. Wiedlitzka, S., Prati, G., Brown, R. *et al.*, "Hate in Word and Deed: The Temporal Association Between On-line and Offline Islamophobia", *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* (2021).

of An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, provides an example (Figs. 5, 6). The tweet, marking the celebration of Eid, sparked anti-Muslim commentary online. Meanwhile a YouTube video marking World Hijab Day was also subject to similar anti-Muslim comments amongst users of the platform. Despite far-right groups and communities defecting from mainstream social media platforms following increased moderation and policy alterations in 2020³⁶, anti-Muslim discourse remains.

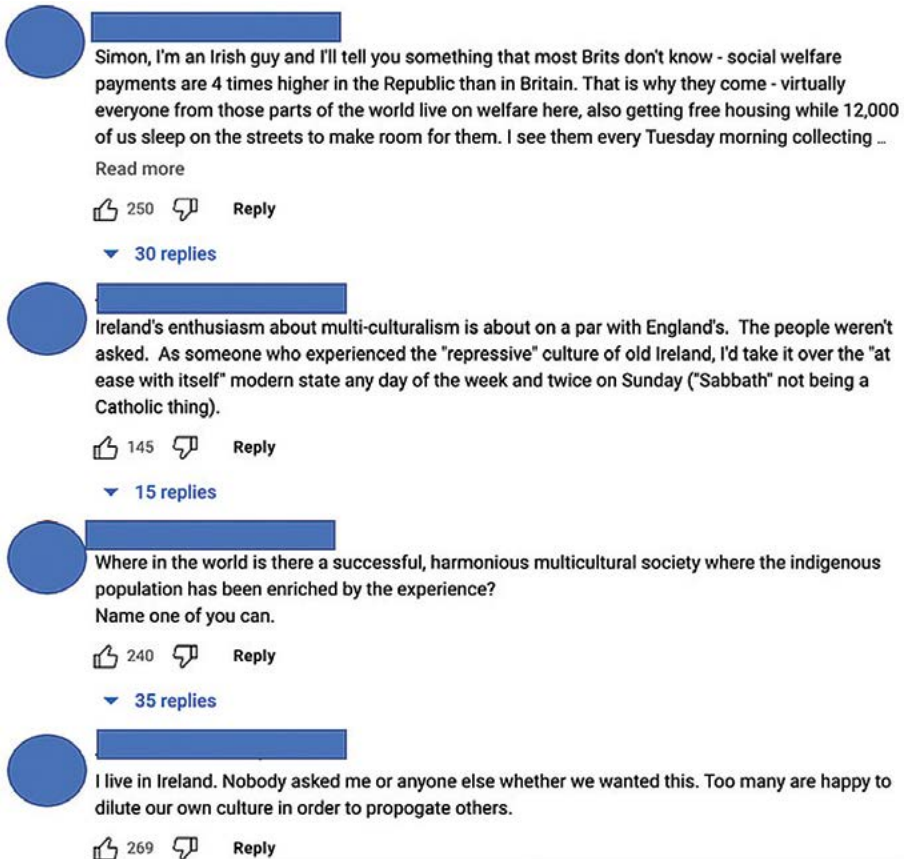


Figure 7: Public comments made on a YouTube video discussing World Hijab Day and the Muslim community in Ireland. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6eSomIORWg>.

Further to the Irish context evidence of such instances is seen in iReport data provided by INAR.³⁷ Again, online messaging and image-based platforms (TikTok) were cited as locations where Islamophobic harassment and speech take place.

36. JC Wong, "Facebook to Ban QAnon-Themed Groups, Pages and Accounts in Crackdown", *The Guardian* (6 October 2020) retrieved 2 December, 2022, from www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/oct/06/qanon-facebook-ban-conspiracy-theory-groups. Mark O'Brien, "The coming of the storm: moral panics, social media and regulation in the QAnon era", *Information & Communications Technology Law*, pre-print, (June 2022) retrieved from DOI: 10.1080/13600834.2022.2088064.

37. Lucy Micheal, Reports of Racism in Ireland: Data from iReport.ie – Annual Report 2022. Dublin: Irish Network Against Racism, 2022.



Figure 8: Screenshot of tweet displaying Islamophobic comments sent to Muslim twitter user. **Source:** <https://twitter.com/desondy/status/1518125524685660160?s=21&t=U5PWH35xAg8kamY4KYSi0Q>.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Previous Islamophobia reports established what could be described as an Islamophobia network in Ireland. Again, in 2022, this network included groups like 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 Siol na hÉireann led by Niall McConnell. Identity Ireland continue to convene as a group although are not active within formal Irish politics.

The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism released the country report for Ireland in August 2022. Similar to previous Islamophobia reports there is a noted growth in Ireland's far right in the past several years. This growth is reported to be, in part, in response to the fabricated threat of the Great Replacement. Also noted were the Proud Boys Ireland group, who as of April 2022 had almost 1,400 subscribers to

their Telegram channel. Telegram, Signal, and other online platforms that offer users heightened data privacy are often the networking platforms of choice for groups engaging in anti-immigrant and Islamophobic discussion.³⁸

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In 2020, at an institutional European level, the European Union adopted the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025. In 2021, they appointed its first ever Coordinator for Anti-Racism, Michaela Moua. The Sustainable Alliances Against Anti-Muslim Hatred (SALAAM project) is led by Dr James Carr, co-author of the current report, in University of Limerick (UL), Ireland, and is a collaborative project between UL, Irish-based civil society organisations (Doras, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, and the Irish Network Against Racism), and importantly, members of Muslim communities in Ireland. Funded by the European Commission's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, SALAAM builds on previous work undertaken by Dr Carr aiming to ascertain what the key issues are vis-à-vis anti-Muslim hatred in Ireland, as perceived by Muslim communities. Putting Muslim communities to the fore, SALAAM aims to maximise forthcoming legislative and policy developments in Ireland as a springboard to combating anti-Muslim hatred in the country. Speaking on the project, Dr Carr noted, "There is a pressing need for action in this area. The fact that we are in a changing legislative and policy context in terms of challenging racism makes this the ideal time to act and for the SALAAM project to do its work."³⁹

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 points are representative of recommendations that could be prioritised to recognise the prevalence of Islamophobia in Ireland and combat its negative 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.

38. Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, "Far-Right Hate and Extremist Groups – Ireland Report", *GlobalExtremism.org*. (21 August 2022) retrieved on 2 December 2022 from <https://globalextrremism.org/ireland/>

39. "The lived realities of anti-Muslim hatred in Ireland - a UL study", *UL Links*, (September 2022), retrieved 5 December 2022, from <https://edition.pagesuiteprofessional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=8cedid=49c6b064-34da-45df-94fa-56b9b6a54876>.

- State institutions must take immediate action to address the growth of far-right groups in Ireland.

To conclude, greater action must be taken to address online propagation of anti-Muslim messaging by individuals and groups based in Ireland.

Chronology

- **17.01.2022:** Judges for the case of Lisa Smith, who denies Isis membership, were told statements made by a former Dublin South East TD referring to Ms Smith's attempt to dismiss charges against her of being a member of Islamic State and funding a terrorist organisation, were in contempt of court.
- **18.01.2022:** Far-right groups target minority groups following the murder of Irish schoolteacher.
- **26.01.2022:** Media reporting on the case of Lisa Smith notes her conversion to Islam in 2011.
- **1.02.2022:** Irish schools mark the event of World Hijab Day, promoting diversity, inclusion, and anti-prejudice initiatives amongst school pupils in primary and secondary education.
- **03.03.2022:** The European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance publishes its conclusions on the implementation of their recommendations to the Irish government.
- **03.04.22:** Islamic Council of Ireland publishes message to community following attack on individual en route to Taraweeh prayers.
- **21.08.2022:** The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism publish report on extremist groups in Ireland.
- **21.09.2022:** Reports following assault by young man on individual wearing hijab in busy city.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ITALY
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

ADA MULLOL MARIN

The Author

Ada Mullol Marin is a journalist and researcher specialised in the Arab world and international relations. She holds a master's degree in Arab studies from Georgetown University and in international relations from the Barcelona Institute of International Studies (IBEI). Mullol is currently a research assistant at IBEI, and previously was a visiting researcher at the University of Birmingham, where she published extensively on Muslim communities in Europe and Islamophobia (Euro-Islam). She has been a political affairs intern at the United Nations (UN) and a Schuman trainee in the European Parliament, where she focused on Middle Eastern and North African countries. Previously, she was a junior research fellow at the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) and a research assistant at Georgetown University. Mullol has published in several newspapers, magazines, and online media, and was the coordinator of the book *Islamism/s: Islam and Politics in a Global World* (in Catalan). She has been awarded with reporting and research fellowships by the University of California-Davis (Muslim Women and the Media Training Institute), the College of Europe, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), and the United Nations Foundation. Her areas of interests include Islam in the West, Islamophobia, human rights and gender equality, socio-political developments in the Middle East, foreign policies, security, conflict resolution, and the role of media.

Email: adamullol@gmail.com

Twitter: [@AdaMullol](https://twitter.com/AdaMullol)

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Sintesi

Protagonista degli eventi del 2022 sono state le elezioni politiche in Italia (25 settembre) e la vittoria della coalizione di centrodestra, guidata da Fratelli d'Italia (Fratelli d'Italia, FdI). Giorgia Meloni, leader di FdI, è diventata la prima donna presidente del Consiglio in Italia, e alcuni media l'hanno descritta come "la leader più di estrema destra dai tempi di Benito Mussolini".

Rappresentanti dei partiti politici di destra FdI e Lega, tra cui la Meloni, hanno rilasciato diverse dichiarazioni contro la comunità musulmana, sia prima che dopo la vittoria delle elezioni di settembre, sfruttando rimostranze sociali. Durante la campagna elettorale, la Meloni ha tenuto discorsi e postato tweet che potevano incitare all'odio contro i musulmani, in occasioni usando l'attualità mondiale per giustificare la sua retorica. Altri esponenti di FdI e Lega hanno rilasciato dichiarazioni contro l'esistenza e la nuova costruzione di moschee nel paese, sostenendo che innescano conflitti sociali. Inoltre, i media legati a partiti e movimenti di destra e alcuni siti web sono stati tra i principali attori che hanno alimentato le narrazioni islamofobe in Italia nel 2022, comprese le minacce di morte a un giornalista italo-marocchino che era stato apertamente critico nei confronti dell'anti-immigrazione e attitudine anti-islamica. Tuttavia, e come già evidenziato nel *Rapporto europeo sull'islamofobia 2021*, sono ancora presenti carenze nel sistema di raccolta dei dati relativi agli episodi discriminatori avvenuti in Italia, che ostacolano i tentativi di quantificazione degli episodi islamofobici in atto.

Parallelamente, sono state intraprese numerose iniziative a livello sociale per contrastare l'islamofobia, sensibilizzando, chiamando le istituzioni ad attuare politiche basate sul rispetto reciproco, proponendo azioni concrete, organizzando eventi per promuovere la visibilità delle comunità musulmane e fomentando attività di formazione corsi. Inoltre, i leader religiosi hanno continuato a organizzare eventi e attività congiunti volti a favorire il dialogo interreligioso e la convivenza.

Executive Summary

The key protagonist of the events of 2022 in Italy was the general election on 25 September, and the victory of the centre-right coalition led by Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia, FdI). Giorgia Meloni, leader of the FdI, became the first female prime minister of Italy, and has been described by certain media as “the most far-right leader since Benito Mussolini”.

Representatives of the right-wing political parties FdI and Lega, including Meloni, made several statements against the Muslim community, both before and after winning the September election, exploiting social grievances. During the electoral campaign, Meloni made speeches and posted tweets that could incite hatred against Muslims, in occasions using current events worldwide to justify her rhetoric. Other members of the FdI and Lega made declarations against the existence and construction of new mosques in the country, arguing that they trigger social conflicts. In addition, media linked to right-wing parties and movements and some websites were among the main actors fuelling Islamophobic narratives in Italy in 2022 – including death threats to an Italian-Moroccan journalist who had been openly critical of right-wing parties’ anti-immigration and anti-Islam stance. However, and as it was already outlined in the *European Islamophobia Report 2021*, failures in the data collection system regarding discriminatory incidents happening in Italy are still present, hindering the attempts to quantify the Islamophobic incidents taking place.

Simultaneously, a number of initiatives have been taken at the societal level in order to counter Islamophobia, by raising awareness, calling institutions to implement policies based on mutual respect, proposing concrete actions, holding events to promote the visibility of Muslim communities, and implementing training courses. Moreover, religious leaders have continued to organise joint events and activities aimed at fostering interreligious dialogue and coexistence.

Country Profile EIR 2022

Country: Italian Republic

Type of Regime: Democracy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary republic

Ruling Parties: Fratelli d'Italia (FdI), Lega, Forza Italia (FI), and Noi moderati (NM), forming a centre-right coalition (2022-ongoing).

Opposition Parties: Partito Democratico - Italia Democratica e Progressista (PD-IDP), Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S), Action - Italia Viva (A-IV, or Terzo Polo), Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra (AVS)

Last Elections: 25 September 2022 (Italian general election). (a) Chamber of Deputies: Right alliance (237 seats, 59.25% of the total), Left alliance (85, 21.25%), Five Star movement (52, 13%), Action - Italia Viva (21, 5.25%), Others (5, 1.25%); (b) Senate of the Republic: Right alliance (115, 57.5%), Left alliance (44, 22%), Five Star movement (28, 14%), Action - Italia Viva (9, 4.5%), Others (4, 2%).¹

Total Population: 59,066,225 (2021)²

Major Languages: Italian (official language)

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: Last official data from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is from 2021, when two violent attacks against Muslims were recorded in Italy.³ Regarding Islamophobia online, according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the most frequent targets of hate through online posts and user comments are Muslims (46% and 21%, respectively).⁴

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the ODIHR Report 2021, Italian police authorities recorded 1,445 hate crimes based on racism and discrimination. According to data provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior, in the period 2021-2022, there were 83 discriminatory acts related to religion.⁵

Major Religions (% of Population): According to the 2021 Eurobarometer, 84% of the population in Italy identifies as Christian, 8% as non-believers or ag-

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1. Politico, "Italy's parliamentary election 2022," retrieved December 09, 2022, from: <https://www.politico.eu/italy-parliamentary-election-2022/>
 2. World Bank, "Population, total – Italy," retrieved December 09, 2022, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=IT>
 3. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), "Hate Crime Reporting" (2021), retrieved December 09, 2022, from <https://hatecrime.osce.org/index.php/anti-muslim-hate-crime?country=IT>
 4. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), "Fundamental Rights Report 2022: Italy" (June 8, 2022), <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/fundamental-rights-report-2022#country-related>
 5. Ministero dell'Interno, "Dossier Viminale" (August-July 2022), https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-08/dossier_ferragosto_2022.pdf

nostic, 4% as atheist, 1% Muslim, 1% Buddhist, and 1% as other.⁶ However, other sources consider that the actual number of Muslims in Italy is higher: 4.2%, 4.8%, or even 4.9%.⁷

Muslim Population (% of Population): 2.7 million (4.9% of the total population)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia (UCOII), Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana (COREIS), COREIS Italian Muslim Youth, Centro Islamico Culturale d'Italia, Confederazione Islamica Italiana (CII)

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Amnesty International Italia, UCOII, Lunaria, COREIS, Un Ponte Per, Centro Studi Sulla Libertà di Religione Credo, Coscienza (LIREC)

Far-Right Parties: Forza Nuova (FN), Fiamma Tricolore

Far-Right Movements: Casa Pound

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No, depends on local decisions (e.g. bans from entering public institutions with face coverings in the region of Lombardy). While it is forbidden to access public places with a covered face “without justified reason” (Law No. 152 of 1975), this does not translate into a hijab ban.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No, depends on local decision (see above). There have been attempts to ban the burqa in the country: in 2011, the Italian Parliament’s Constitutional Affairs Committee approved a draft law banning women from wearing full-face veils in public, including the burqa and niqab.⁸
- **Prayer Ban:** No

6. European Commission, “Special Eurobarometer 516”, Vol. C (2021), retrieved December 09, 2022, from https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/s2237_95_2_516_eng?locale=en

7. Retrieved December 09, 2022, from: Joshua Project, “Italy”, <https://joshuaproject.net/countries/IT>; Pew Research Center, “Europe’s Growing Muslim Population,” November 19, 2017: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>; Osservatorio Italiano Sui Diritti, “Mappa dell’Intolleranza 6: islamophobia” (2021), <http://www.voxdiritti.it/mappa-dellintolleranza-6-islamofobia/>

8. Library of Congress, “Italy: Burqa Ban Provision Approved by Parliamentary Committee” (August 11, 2011), retrieved December 09, 2022, from <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2011-08-11/italy-burqa-ban-provision-approved-by-parliamentary-committee/>

Introduction

Islamophobic narratives have continued to be used by some policymakers, media outlets, and websites in Italy, and in some instances, direct threats have taken place. However, the lack of official data regarding anti-Muslim discrimination incidents and even concerning the actual number of Muslim people living in Italy, an issue that was already mentioned in the last *European Islamophobia Report*, continues to be noteworthy.

At the political level, the 2022 elections marked a shift to the political right, with the rise of the centre-right coalition led by the Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia, FdI), and the appointment of Giorgia Meloni as prime minister. Given Meloni's anti-immigration and anti-Islam stance, her appointment has created concerns about the consequences this may have for the Muslim community in Italy.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Following the trend of 2021, the number of crimes committed in Italy continued to increase in 2022, getting closer to pre-COVID levels.⁹ In the Italian investigation crime database, however, hate crimes are not marked according to their motivation. Moreover, Italian legislation does not provide a definition of hate crime, and there are no instructions or policy documents to guide police in identifying and recording such crimes.¹⁰ Regarding the number of discriminatory acts related to religion, according to data provided by the Observatory for Security Against Discriminatory Acts (OSCAD) there was a decrease in the period 2021-2022, with a total of 83 events (compared to 141 in 2020-2021).¹¹ These are the second most common type of discriminatory acts committed in the country – only preceded by discrimination against race/ethnics. Data was not provided, however, regarding different religious communities. Therefore, it is not possible to investigate the category of anti-Muslim hate crimes.

As a result, the media continue to represent the main source of information regarding physical and verbal attacks against Muslims in Italy. International media echoed the fact that ahead of Italy's general elections, Karima Moual, an Italian-Moroccan journalist who has been living in Italy for three decades, received death threats and racist attacks targeting her Moroccan roots following her open criticism of the

9. Ministero dell'Interno, "Dossier Viminale" (August-July, 2022), https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-08/dossier_ferragosto_2022.pdf

10. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), "National frameworks to address hate crime in Italy," retrieved December 09, 2022, from <https://hatecrime.osce.org/national-frameworks-italy#dataCollection>

11. Ministero dell'Interno, "Dossier Viminale" (August-July 2022), https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-08/dossier_ferragosto_2022.pdf

stance of Meloni's far-right party on migration and Islam.¹² She explained, "A man messaged me on Facebook telling me my time was limited and that I should go back to my country". The man's message was accompanied by an image of a dead pig with its head covered in blood. Other right-wing sympathisers claimed that, as a Moroccan national, Moual has no right to comment on Italian politics, and sent her messages such as "If you were in your country, you would not have the right to talk about these topics and you would be wearing a niqab". In early September, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) expressed concern with a Facebook post about the lack of political reaction following the racist insults and death threats that the journalist received, stating that "social media have become an outlet for hatred against journalists. Freedom of the press must enter the election campaign!".¹³

Employment

On 13 October, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) released a judgement in reference to a previous judgement of 2021 specifying that if a religion is effectively discriminated against by the ban on wearing religious symbols at work, companies may need to demonstrate to a court that there is a legitimate need for it.¹⁴ It remains to be seen whether and how this judgment will affect Muslim women in the Italian labour force.

Education

In April, a literature professor in a high school in the province of Forlì Cesena cancelled a lesson in which background music was being played after two Muslim students who were observing Ramadan requested to stop listening to the music. When the case was made public, it created some controversy.¹⁵ Several social media users claimed that all religions should be "kept out of schools" in order for them to be "neutral", and representatives of the FdI and the Lega stated that there had been a "reverse discrimination" for students. The president of UCOII stated that the school should not have made the case public without seeking a solution first, as it created polemic, and added that the teacher should have not suspended the lesson but rather could have excused the two students.

12. Olivia Hopper, "Go back': Karima Moual Navigates Racism In A Country She Calls Home," Morocco World News (September 26, 2022), <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2022/09/351529/go-back-karima-moual-navigates-racism-in-a-country-she-calls-home>

13. Reporters Without Borders, Facebook (September 7, 2022), https://www.facebook.com/Reporterssansfrontieres/posts/pfbid0UwN5HECuR5A4GWvoyu8nEiH8kssBcAuAAxvKg2tC6GQzSit7Em4w2oz3n-M9jQV6vl?_rdc=1&_rdr

14. Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), "Press Release N° 167/22: Judgement of the Court of Justice in Case C-344/20 SCRL (Religious clothing)" (October 13, 2022), <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2022-10/cp220167en.pdf>

15. *Il Resto del Carlino*, "Ramadan, lezione con musica annullata a scuola" (April 21, 2022), <https://www.il-restodelcarlino.it/cesena/cronaca/ramadan-musica-lezione-annullata-1.7589659>

In September, the city of Lecce allowed halal meat in schools, following the protests of the Muslim community. The local health authority gave the green light for the inclusion of halal meat, provided that it is certified, for the Muslim pupils who request it.¹⁶

Politics

Following the collapse of Mario Draghi's coalition majority in July, new parliamentary elections were held on 25 September. The centre-right coalition led by Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy, FdI), a right-wing political party with neo-fascist roots,¹⁷ won 44% of the vote. The founder and leader of the FdI, Giorgia Meloni, was appointed prime minister of Italy on 22 October, becoming the first woman in the country to hold this position.

Meloni promotes an "Italians first" mantra, and has regularly used anti-immigrant and anti-Islam rhetoric.¹⁸ Some international media have defined her as "anti-Islam" and "ultranationalist".¹⁹ Following her victory in the elections, she was described as "the most far-right leader since Benito Mussolini"²⁰ and her appointment as a sign of "the rise of a global anti-Muslim alliance".²¹ Human Rights Watch also stressed that the new Italian government "poses a human rights challenge".²²

During the electoral campaign, Meloni referred negatively to changes in Italian culture on several key issues such as immigration and Islam.²³ On 14 June, in a speech to Spain's far-right Vox party in Marbella, Spain, Meloni outlined her positioning by stating, "Yes to the natural family; No to the LGBT lobbies; Yes to sexual identity, No to gender ideology; [...] Yes to the universality of the cross; No to Islamist violence; Yes to secure borders; No to mass immigration [...] Yes to our civilisation, and No to those who want to destroy it!"²⁴ Meloni has also continued to make posts on social media that could incite hatred against Muslims, using current events worldwide to

16. *La Repubblica*, "Scuola, sì alla carne halal nelle mense per i bimbi musulmani: a Lecce il via libera dopo le proteste della comunità islamica" (September 19, 2022), https://bari.repubblica.it/cronaca/2022/09/19/news/scuola_si_alla_carne_halal_nelle_mense_per_i_bimbi_musulmani_a_lecce_il_via_libera_dopo_le_proteste_della_comunita_islamica-366372365/

17. Counter Extremism Project, "Italy: Extremism and Terrorism", retrieved December 09, 2022, from <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/italy-extremism-and-terrorism>

18. *Ibid.*

19. AJ+ Français, Twitter (September 25, 2022), <https://twitter.com/ajplusfrancais/status/1574055676506161153>

20. Rob Picheta, Valentina Di Donato, Sharon Braithwaite and Niamh Kennedy, "Far-right leader Giorgia Meloni named as Italy's first female prime minister," CNN (October 21, 2022), <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/21/europe/giorgia-meloni-italy-first-female-prime-minister-intl/index.html>

21. Alain Gabon, "Meloni's victory in Italy signals the rise of a global anti-Muslim alliance", Middle East Eye (November 7, 2022), <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/italy-meloni-victory-islamophobia-global-rise-how>

22. Giulia Tranchina, "The New Italian Government Poses A Human Rights Challenge," Human Rights Watch (September 28, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/28/new-italian-government-poses-human-rights-challenge>

23. Corrado Macchiarelli and Mara Monti, "The challenge facing Italy's new coalition," LSE Blogs (October 24, 2022), <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2022/10/24/the-challenge-facing-italys-new-coalition/>

24. AJ+ Français, Twitter (25 September 2022), <https://twitter.com/ajplusfrancais/status/1574055676506161153>

justify her anti-Islam rhetoric. In one of her tweets from May, making reference to a murder of a Christian woman in Nigeria, she wrote, “Stoned and burned alive with the cry of ‘Allah Akbar’ for a comment deemed blasphemous. The condemnation and the request for justice by Nigerian religious leaders are good: nothing can justify this atrocity, nor the persecution of millions of innocent Christians around the world”.²⁵



Figure 1: Tweet by Giorgia Meloni (15 May 2022): “Stoned and burned alive with the cry of ‘Allah Akbar’ for a comment deemed blasphemous. The condemnation and the request for justice by Nigerian religious leaders are good: nothing can justify this atrocity, nor the persecution of millions of innocent Christians around the world”. **Source:** Giorgia Meloni, Twitter (15 May 2022), <https://twitter.com/giorgiameloni/status/1525752221404737536>

Other figures within the Fdl have continued to make declarations against Muslim communities in Italy following their victory in the election. Francesco Torselli and Alessandro Draghi, FdI group leaders in the Regional Council and Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, respectively, made declarations in November against the Islamic Centre in Piazza dei Ciompi, Florence. “It is useless for the Democratic Party to continue to champion hospitality and interculturalism, no Florentine would be happy

25. Giorgia Meloni, Twitter (May 15, 2022), <https://twitter.com/giorgiameloni/status/1525752221404737536>

to have an Islamic centre or a mosque on their doorstep,” they stated.²⁶ They added that the situation in that area is “unsustainable”: “That square is not liveable during prayer hours. Far from being welcoming and intercultural, here the exact opposite has been happening for over twenty years, forcing Florentines and Muslims to live indecently together.” Similarly, a representative of Lega and member of the European Parliament, Silvia Sardone, made reference in October to the construction of a new mosque in Via Padova in Milan, calling it a “slap in the face to all honest and respectable citizens” who “did not deserve a new mosque in the area”. She also stated that a terrorist linked to ISIS who was arrested a few years ago used to frequent the area.²⁷

Media

Several Italian media echoed the judgement by the CJEU in October regarding the wearing of religious symbols at the workplace. Many of them clarified that, according to the judgement, “the veil can be banned at work if all religious symbols (including the crucifix) are banned” (*Il Gazzettino*)²⁸ – “in essence, ‘either all, or none’” (*EU News*).²⁹ However, certain media used more sensationalist headlines focused on Muslim communities, such as “Banning the Islamic Veil at Work Is Not Discrimination” (*Il Primato Nazionale*)³⁰ or “‘Banning the Veil at Work Is Not Discrimination’. The Sentence of the EU Judges Angers Islam” (*Il Giornale*).³¹ The latter added that “the EU ruling speaks above all to the more militant Islam, which often uses these situations to impose itself in European societies by denouncing managers who do not like niqabs or chadors”. *Il Giornale* published other articles with similar narratives, such as one titled “New Mosque in Via Padova in Milan: ‘Like an Islamic Ghetto’” on 28 October,³² which stressed that “the Islamisation in that part of the city contin-

26. *Secolo d'Italia*, “Firenze, FdI attacca Nardella: ‘I fiorentini possono essere sfrattati, i musulmani no’” (November 10, 2022), <https://www.secoloditalia.it/2022/11/firenze-fdi-attacca-nardella-i-fiorentini-possono-essere-sfrattati-i-musulmani-no/>

27. Francesca Galici, “Nuova moschea in via Padova a Milano: ‘Come un ghetto islamico’,” *Il Giornale* (October 28, 2022), <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/milano/milano-nuova-moschea-padova-trasformata-ghetto-islamico-2080153.html>

28. *Il Gazzettino*, “Velo si può vietare al lavoro se si vietano tutti i simboli religiosi (crocifisso compreso), la sentenza della Corte Ue” (October 13, 2022), https://www.leggazzettino.it/esteri/velo_vietato_lavoro_simboli_religiosi_crocifisso_corte_ue-6987441.html

29. Ezio Baldari, “Corte Ue: ‘Si può vietare il velo islamico a lavoro se si vietano tutti i simboli delle altre religioni’” *EU News* (October 13, 2022), <https://www.eunews.it/2022/10/13/corte-ue-velo-islam-vietare-tutti-simboli/>

30. *Il Primato Nazionale*, “Vietare il velo islamico al lavoro non è discriminazione”: la sentenza della Corte Ue” (October 13, 2022), <https://www.ilprimatonazionale.it/approfondimenti/vietare-il-velo-islamico-al-lavoro-non-e-discriminazione-la-sentenza-della-corte-ue-246447/>

31. Francesco De Remigis, “‘Vietare il velo sul lavoro non è discriminazione’. La sentenza dei giudici Ue fa arrabbiare l’Islam,” *Il Giornale* (October 14, 2022), <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/vietare-velo-sul-lavoro-non-discriminazione-sentenza-dei-2075530.html>

32. Francesca Galici, “Nuova moschea in via Padova a Milano: ‘Come un ghetto islamico’,” *Il Giornale* (October 28, 2022), <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/milano/milano-nuova-moschea-padova-trasformata-ghetto-islamico-2080153.html>

ues” and that its municipality continues to provide “concessions to foreigners” and is working “to create an almost Islamic ghetto in the heart of Milan”, which is “detrimental to the social fabric of the city, in which the foreign community continues to be favoured, giving a perception of inequality”.

Other Italian media have also published articles, which, albeit referring to events outside Italy, reproduced Islamophobic narratives. *La Verità* published an article on 23 June, titled “Islamised London. The Subway Is Hell”,³³ which referred to “the dirty, ideological and ‘reverse racist’ city of Mayor Sadiq Khan”. Similarly, the Italian news site *Saturno Notizie* published an article by the Italian-born businessman Maurizio Bragagni, a donor of the UK Conservative Party, in which he criticised the Labour Party for allowing “Islamic groups to feel at home, where they can find free space for their true political ideology”,³⁴ and added that “the line between the Christian English majority rural areas and the foreign Muslim-run urban areas is becoming more marked” – the article was later taken down from the website. On 10 October, the online newspaper *Tempi* published an article titled “Even the French Left Realizes That Islam Is a Problem in Schools”,³⁵ which stressed the signs of “Islamist radicalisation among Muslim kids”.

There are journalists who have been actively fighting Islamophobia in Italy. The Italian-Moroccan journalist Karima Moual was among the most outspoken critics of the FdI rhetoric and the normalisation of anti-immigrant and anti-Islam narratives in the country during 2022.³⁶ Her open criticism led to death threats and racist attacks. In addition, the *Confronti Magazine*, an interreligious printed and online magazine that includes people of different faiths and denominations in its team, has also published analyses aimed at raising awareness of the situation of Islamophobia in Italy.³⁷

Justice System

Making reference to its judgment of 15 July, 2021, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) clarified in a press release on 13 October, 2022, that “the internal rule of an undertaking prohibiting the visible wearing of religious, philosophical or spiritual signs does not constitute direct discrimination if it is applied to all work-

33. Ignazio Mangrano, “Londra islamizzata. La metropolitana è un girone infernale,” *La Verità* (June 23, 2022), <https://www.laverita.info/londra-islamizzata-metropolitana-girone-infernale-2657546133.html>

34. Phil Kemp, “Tory donor Maurizio Bragagni’s ‘foreign Muslim’ comments condemned,” BBC (June 10, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-61745024>

35. Mauro Zanon, “Anche la sinistra francese si accorge che l’islam è un problema nelle scuole,” *Tempi* (October 10, 2022), <https://www.tempi.it/islam-francia-problema-scuola/>

36. Olivia Hopper, “‘Go back’: Karima Moual Navigates Racism In A Country She Calls Home,” Morocco World News (September 26, 2022), <https://www.morocccoworldnews.com/2022/09/351529/go-back-karima-moual-navigates-racism-in-a-country-she-calls-home>

37. Michele Lipori, “Islamophobi in Europe and Italy,” *Confronti* (July 7, 2022), <https://confrontiworld.net/2022/07/islamophobia-in-europe-and-italy/>

ers in a general and undifferentiated way”.³⁸ It also specified that if a religion is effectively discriminated against by the ban – if persons adhering to a particular religion or belief, such as Muslims, are put at a particular disadvantage –, then companies may need to demonstrate to a court that there is a legitimate need for it.

Regarding the views from within the Muslim community, according to a survey carried out by the newspaper *La Luce* ahead of the 2022 election, a fifth of the Muslim respondents see the need for a law against Islamophobia as a priority, while a quarter of them consider the right to build places of worship, which they do not consider is sufficiently guaranteed, as a priority.³⁹

Internet

In February 2022, then Italian minister of justice Marta Cartabia stated that online hate speech had increased during the pandemic and acknowledged that penal sanctions have so far not played a great deterrent function.⁴⁰ In its “Fundamental Rights Report 2022”, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights provided data from Amnesty International Italy’s online monitoring, showing that the most frequent targets of online hate in posts and user comments are Muslims (46% and 21%, respectively).⁴¹ According to the most recent data by the Italian Observatory on Rights (*Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti*, 2021), most of the tweets on Islam are negative (107,708 out of 165,297).⁴² Moreover, while Islamophobic tweets are widespread throughout the country, they are published particularly in Northern Italy.⁴³

The website Vox News has been regularly publishing posts in 2022 against Muslim communities in Italy. One of them, published on 13 August under the hashtag “Immigrant Crimes” and titled “Islamic Migrants: Italian Women Are Whores”, criticised the approach by the newspaper *La Repubblica* of the murder of Hina Saleem by a member of her family (Lombardy, 2006) in a so-called honour killing:⁴⁴ “A thousand words without ever using the word Islam, without mentioning the ghettos, the

38. Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), “Press Release N° 167/22: Judgement of the Court of Justice in Case C-344/20 SCRL (Religious clothing)” (October 13, 2022), <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2022-10/cp220167en.pdf>

39. Davide Piccardo, “Voto e priorità politiche dei musulmani italiani,” *La Luce* (September 24, 2022), <https://www.laluce.news/2022/09/24/voto-e-priorita-politiche-dei-musulmani-italiani/>

40. Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (UNAR), “Hate speech, Cartabia: ‘Lesà la dignità della persona umana’” (February 9, 2022), <https://www.unar.it/portale/web/guest/-/hate-speech-cartabia-lesa-la-dignita-della-persona-umana->

41. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), “Fundamental Rights Report 2022: Italy” (June 8, 2022), <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/fundamental-rights-report-2022#country-related>

42. Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti (VOX), “Mappa dell’Intolleranza 6: Islamofobia” (2021): <http://www.voxdiritti.it/mappa-dellintolleranza-6-islamofobia/>

43. Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti (VOX), “La nuova Mappa dell’Intolleranza 6” (2021): <http://www.voxdiritti.it/la-nuova-mappa-dellintolleranza-6/>

44. Vox News, “Migranti Islamici: ‘Le donne italiane sono puttane’” (August 13, 2022), <https://voxnews.info/2022/08/13/migranti-islamici-le-donne-italiane-sono-puttane/>

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Right-wing political representatives, particularly those belonging to the parties FdI and Lega, continued to use news stories – within or outside Italy – to invoke the so-called threat posed by the presence of Muslims in Italy. In addition, several Italian media, such as the right-wing newspapers *Il Primato Nazionale*, founded by the far-right movement Casa Pound, and *Il Giornale*, owned by the Berlusconi family and with links to Forza Italia, and websites regularly reproduced Islamophobic narratives in their articles and online posts.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Throughout 2022, there were a number of positive actors in the fight against Islamophobia. Italian organisations and administrations held events and published manifestos to raise awareness and prevent Islamophobia in the country. In January, the project Youth Empowerment Support for Muslim Communities (YES), led by the Fondazione L'Albero della Vita, Le Reseau, and Progetto Aisha, published the “Youth Manifesto against Islamophobia”.⁴⁷ It called on institutions to implement policies that promote a society based on mutual respect in order to guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens,⁴⁸ and proposed concrete actions, including promoting training on rights and tools to be used in cases of discrimination, raising awareness of Islamophobia in school and at work, and facilitating spaces for interreligious dialogue and with institutions. On 4 February, the Interreligious Observatory on Violence against Women (Osservatorio Interreligioso sulle Violenze contro le Donne, OIVD) held an event in Trento entitled “Women of Islam, Italian Society and Public Commitment, Beyond Prejudice” aimed at promoting Muslim women’s visibility within Italian society and highlighting the heterogeneity of their experiences by listening to the voices that do not correspond to the stereotyped image of a “veiled and submissive Muslim woman”.⁴⁹ On 28 June, in Rome, there was the closing event of the project “Local Administrations against Stereotypes and Islamophobia (Ladis)”,⁵⁰ which aimed at com-

47. Fundación de Cultura Islámica, “Publication of a Youth Manifesto against Islamophobia,” *Twist Islamophobia* (January 19, 2022), <http://twistislamophobia.org/en/2022/01/19/publication-of-a-youth-manifesto-against-islamophobia/>

48. Youth Empowerment Support Project, “Youth Manifesto Against Islamophobia: Principles and actions for a plural, inclusive and cohesive society” (January 2022): <http://twistislamophobia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Youth-Manifesto-against-Islamophobia.pdf>

49. *Vita Trentina*, “Donne dell’Islam, società italiana e impegno pubblico, oltre il pregiudizio. Una serata con l’Osservatorio Interreligioso” (January 31, 2022), <https://www.vitatrentina.it/2022/01/31/donne-dellislam-societa-italiana-e-impegno-pubblico-serata-a-favore-della-donna-musulmana/>

50. Alessandro Giuliani, “Scuole vive, a Roma il Comune apre 60 istituti di sera e nei weekend, corsi per rispettare i musulmani e Napoli ‘salva’ la lingua,” *La Tecnica della Scuola* (June 29, 2022), <https://www.tecnicadellascuola.it/scuole-vive-a-roma-il-comune-apre-60-istituti-di-sera-e-nei-weekend-corsi-per-rispettare-i-musulmani-e-napoli-salva-la-sua-lingua>

batting discrimination against Muslims, especially women, through training courses and tool kits for local administrations and professionals of public services, with the direct involvement of Muslim women's associations.

Moreover, religious leaders have continued to organise joint events and activities to promote a peaceful coexistence and dialogue between different faiths. In April, as Muslims in Italy celebrated the first post-pandemic Ramadan, Caritas, a Roman Catholic relief organisation, donated food and aid to Muslims in Catania, Sicily.⁵¹ The distribution of food was organised at the city's mosque, and was handled by both Catholic and Muslim volunteers. In the same region, in April, the newly appointed archbishop of Catania visited the Mosque of Mercy, one of the biggest Islamic places of worship in southern Italy, for a moment of common prayer for Ramadan and Lent.⁵² Both the archbishop and the mosque's imam stressed the brotherhood between the two religious communities and the "common journey of constructive and continuous dialogue". In June, the ceremony for the opening of the first mosque in Venice was attended by representatives of the Catholic archdiocese and local politicians.⁵³ On 23 July, more than 50 volunteers, including followers of Islam and Scientology, cleaned up the area around the Great Mosque of Rome, which is also the seat of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy, and helped collect over 12 cubic meters of trash. The imam of the Grand Mosque, Dr. Nader Akkad, highlighted the importance of the initiative by saying, "It is a collaboration that carries forward a common project, both of fraternity and friendship and with a common goal, that of caring for the environment"⁵⁴.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

On the one hand, the analysis of the Islamophobic incidents in Italy in 2022 shows that right-wing policymakers continue to manipulate issues related to Muslim communities, occurring both within Italy, such as the opening of new mosques, and outside the country, in order to exploit social grievances and obtain political gains. The use of Islamophobic narratives is noticeable in certain media and online. On the other hand, the lack of an accurate data collection system in official statistics that distinguishes incidents by their motivation (i.e., Islamophobic), which was already mentioned in previous reports, hinders the attempts to quantify the real numbers (and

51. Francesco Bongarrà, "Muslims in Italy celebrate first post-pandemic Ramadan," Arab News (April 2, 2022), <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2055561/world>

52. Francesco Bongarrà, "Italian archbishop visits Sicilian mosque," Arab News (April 8, 2022), <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2059331/world>

53. International Quran News Agency, "First Mosque in Italy's Venice Launched" (June 12, 2022), <https://iqna.it/en/news/3479264/first-mosque-in-italy-s-venice-launched>

54. The European Times, "Italy: 50 Muslim and Scientologists joined to clean up the main Street of the Great Mosque of Rome" (August 9, 2022), <https://www.europeantimes.news/2022/08/italy-50-muslim-and-scientologists-joined-to-clean-up-the-main-street-of-the-great-mosque-of-rome/>

types) of discriminatory incidents and crimes taking place against the Muslim population in Italy. This, in turn, makes it hard – if not impossible – to prosecute such discriminatory incidents and to implement efficient policies to prevent them.

In order to counter Islamophobia in Italy, the following measures are recommended:

- On the basis of social responsibility, policymakers and journalists alike should actively avoid the use and reproduction of anti-Muslim stereotypes.
- In order to empower alternative narratives of Muslims, training on Islamophobia and anti-discrimination measures should be offered to journalists and local policymakers by qualified personnel.
- A stronger surveillance of hate speech and Islamophobic rhetoric online should be implemented in order to tackle the spread of such narratives.
- Ultimately, the data collection system on hate crimes and cases of discrimination should be improved by identifying the motivation of such incidents in order to implement efficient prosecution and prevention measures.

In addition, several ongoing measures should be reinforced, as they are positively contributing to countering Islamophobic narratives in Italy. These include:

- Ongoing initiatives aimed at raising awareness of Islamophobia at school and at work, as well as training courses for policymakers with the direct involvement of Muslim associations should be continued and expanded.
- Joint events and activities that promote interreligious dialogue and coexistence, as well as dialogue between Muslim communities, NGOs, and local authorities should continue to be promoted.
- Muslim communities, and particularly women, should continue to be involved in training programmes and public activities.
- Joint activities between different faiths should continue to be carried out – and actively supported – and efforts to engage the broader public should be renewed.

Chronology

- **14.06.2022:** Ahead of the 2022 Italian election, Giorgia Meloni makes a speech to Spain's far-right Vox party in Spain, making statements juxtaposing the "universality of the cross" and "Islamist violence", as well as "our civilisation" versus "those who want to destroy it".
- **01.09.2022:** During the general election campaign, Karima Moual, an Italian-Moroccan journalist, received death threats and racist attacks. She had openly criticised the anti-immigration and anti-Islam stance of Meloni's right-wing party Fratelli d'Italia (FdI).

- **25.09.2022:** The centre-right coalition, including the FdI, Lega, Forza Italia, and Noi moderati, wins the Italian general election.
- **01.10.2022:** A representative of Lega and member of the European Parliament, Silvia Sardone, makes a statement regarding the construction of a new mosque in Milan, calling it a “slap in the face to all honest and respectable citizens” who “did not deserve a new mosque in the area”.
- **22.10.2022:** The founder and leader of the right-wing FdI, Giorgia Meloni, who has an anti-immigration and anti-Islam stance, is appointed prime minister of Italy.
- **01.11.2022:** Two representatives of the FdI, Francesco Torselli and Alessandro Draghi, make declarations against the Islamic Centre in Florence, stating that “no Florentine would be happy to have an Islamic centre or a mosque on their doorstep”.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
KOSOVO
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

ADEM FERIZAJ

The Author

Adem Ferizaj is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Gender Studies at SOAS University of London. His dissertation is an epistemological study of the roles of Muslim-majority populations from the Balkans in the global hierarchies of whiteness. He has previously worked as a graduate teaching assistant at SOAS and is the author of the 2019 academic paper “Othering Albanian Muslim Masculinities: A Case Study of Albanian Football Players”, published in *Occhiali – Rivista sul Mediterraneo islamico*. Email: 687617@soas.ac.uk

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Executive Summary

The year 2022 was the year with the highest number of incidents related to Islamophobia in Kosovo in the recent past, even though public statistics do not show this. According to the country's Prosecutorial Council, 20 cases of hate crime were recorded in 2022. However, as the current legal definition of hate crimes is very broad, these data do not allow any conclusions to be drawn about anti-Muslim crimes.

The density of events allows this report to draw three main trends. First, the most common form of Islamophobia in Kosovo is internalised Islamophobia. That is a variant of Islamophobia that goes often unnoticed in public debates because of the normalisation of an anti-Muslim mindset. This specific form of Islamophobia ranges from indirect to blatant anti-Muslim racist statements. The most glaring example this year was an article published by Kosovo's Academy of Sciences and Arts, which presented Islam, the main religion of the country's population, as "a legacy of the dark times of history [referring to the Ottoman period]".

Second, there is a growing tendency in Kosovo to call out Islamophobia. Compared to the last years, this year was marked by the highest number of initiatives against Islamophobia. At least six such events are documented in this report. The following two are particularly noteworthy: On the one hand, a political talk show was aired in February in which six hijab-wearing women talked about their professional lives – a historic moment for Kosovo's television. On the other hand, the campaign "Change the administrative directive regarding the headscarf" was launched in August, calling for the legalisation of the hijab in schools. As the current government gives the impression of not seeing the need to fight Islamophobia with political means, it would be very important to keep up this social pressure in the coming years.

Third, the more far-right political discourse permeates the political mainstream in Europe, the more frequent and international Islamophobic attacks on Kosovo are becoming. The year 2022 is the fourth consecutive year in which this report lists this type of incidents. In the Western European political sphere, the following names were associated with the projection of white supremacist, anti-Muslim racist anxieties onto Kosovo: the three French far-right members of European Parliament Dominique Bilde, Aymeric Chauprade, and Nicolas Bay; and the current extreme-right prime minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni. In this sense, these attacks by politicians demonstrate the need to finally do something about Islamophobia in Kosovo.

Përmbledhje ekzekutive

Viti 2022 ka qenë njëri prej viteve me numrin më të madh të rasteve që lidhen me islamofobinë në Kosovë, edhe pse, kjo nuk vërehet në statistikat zyrtare. Këshilli Prokurorial i Kosovës ka numëruar 20 krime të kryera të motivuara nga urrejtja. Por, për shkak se definicioni juridik i këtyre krimeve është shumë i gjerë, këto të dhëna nuk lejojnë të interpretohen si krime me motive fetare.

Dendësia e ndodhive të këtij viti e bën të mundur teorizimin e tri trendeve kryesore lidhur me islamofobinë. Së pari, forma më e përhapur e islamofobisë në Kosovë është islamofobia e përbrendësuar. Kjo variantë e islamofobisë rrallë bie në sy në debate publike për shkak të normalizimit të një mendësie anti-myslimane. Kjo formë e veçantë e islamofonisë përfshinë jo vetëm shprehje të zhdrejta, por edhe drejtpërdrejtë anti-myslimane. Shembulli më ekstrem në vitin 2022 ka qenë artikulli i botuar nga *Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës*, në të cilin islami si feja kryesore e kombit paraqitet si “një trashëgimi e kohëve të errëta të historisë.”

Së dyti, tendenca për të mos toleruar islamofobinë në Kosovë është në rritje. Në krahasim me vitet e kaluara, ky vit ka qenë i karakterizuar nga numri më i madh i iniciativave kundër islamofobisë. Të paktën gjashtë ngjarje të tilla janë të dokumentuara në këtë raport. Sidomos këto iniciativa meritojnë të përmendën: debati televiziv i transmetuar në muajin shkurt në televizionin ATV, në të cilin gjashtë gra me shami kanë folur për jetërat e tyre profesionale – një moment historik në televizionin kosovar. Në anën tjetër, në muajin gusht ka filluar kampanja “Ndryshojeni Udhëzimin Administrativ për shaminë” me kërkesën që të lejohet bartja e shamisë në shkolla. Qeveria aktuale nuk tregon gatishmëri për luftimin e islamofobisë me mjete politike, për këtë arsye, vazhdimi i këtyre aktiviteteve në vitet e ardhshme do të ishte shumë i rëndësishëm.

Së treti, sa më në rritje ligjërimi i së djathtës ekstreme në qendrën politike të Evropës, aq më të shpeshta dhe më ndërkombtare bëhen sulmet anti-myslimane ndaj Kosovës. Viti 2022 është viti i katërt me radhë që ky raport shënon ndodhi të tilla. Në sferën politike perëndimore evropiane, katër figura të njohura kanë projektuar në Kosovë ankthet e tyre raciste, anti-myslimane, si dhe të superioritetit të racës së bardhë: tre deputetë francez të së djathtës ekstreme në Parlamentin Evropian Dominique Bilde, Aymeric Chauprade, Nicolas Bay dhe kryeministrja aktuale e Italisë, Giorgia Meloni me qendrimet politike të ekstremit të djathtë. Nga ky këndvështrim, sulmet e këtyre politikanëve tregojnë për nevojën që të ndërmerren veprime kundër islamofobisë.

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 2022 Kosovo report by the European Commission highlights that “[t]he Roma, Ashkali and other communities in vulnerable situations, like the Kosovo Egyptians, face difficult living conditions further compounded by the pandemic.” This suggests that there is structural racism that discriminates against these populations.

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), 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

“For Albanian nationalist elites who understood their geographic position in Europe as incompatible with the religion of the majority of its population, disavowing Islam became imperative to their racial and national alignment with Europe.”¹ This is how Piro Rexhepi relates the causes of Islamophobia as the investment in whiteness of Kosovo as a Muslim-majority country in his book *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route*.²

The year 2022 probably is the year with the highest density of events related to Islamophobia in Kosovo. Therefore, several trends can be identified this year in relation to this phenomenon. First, the most common form of Islamophobia in Kosovo is internalised Islamophobia. That is a variant of Islamophobia that goes often unnoticed in public debates because an anti-Muslim mindset has been normalised. Second, there is a growing tendency in Kosovo to call out Islamophobia. Third, the more far-right political thought becomes mainstreamed in Europe, the more frequent and international Islamophobic attacks on Kosovo are becoming.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The European Commission’s *Kosovo Report 2022* stated that “overall, data collection on hate crimes remains insufficient”.³ In 2022, the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council dealt with 20 cases of hate crime.⁴ In Article 147, the country’s criminal code defines hate crime as the incitement of “national, racial, religious or ethnic hatred, discord or intolerance.”⁵ The consequence of this broad definition is that no precise data on Islamophobic crimes can currently be derived.

As part of a comprehensive reform of Kosovo’s civil code, the country’s parliament rejected a law on the legalisation of same-sex civil unions on March 17, 2022.⁶ The controversial debates on this issue were one of the most important political dis-

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1. Piro Rexhepi, *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route* (Duke University Press, 2023), p. 106.
 2. 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). However, this distinction is not meant to feed the Orientalist Sufi/Sunni binary, as in most Muslim majority societies the difference between the two is not so clear.
 3. European Commission, *Kosovo Report 2022*, (2022), p. 36.
 4. The Kosovo Prosecutorial Council emailed these figures to the author of this report on December 14, 2022.
 5. Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosova, *Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo*, (2012), p. 43.
 6. “Kosovo’s parliament rejects new law recognising same-sex civil unions”, *Euronews*, March 17, 2022, retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.euronews.com/2022/03/17/kosovo-s-parliament-rejects-new-law-recognising-same-sex-civil-unions>.

cussions in this year. Particularly conspicuous was the fact that queerphobia and Islamophobia were played off against each other in the public discussions.

On the one hand, there were anti-LGBTQI+ arguments that sometimes contained blatant homophobia. Statements such as that of the hijab-wearing MP Labinotë Demi-Murtezi, according to which same-sex marriage leads to “depravity and moral degeneration” and brings with it “serious diseases such as AIDS”, were illustrative of this.⁷ Although the politician Duda Balje is the chair of Kosovo’s Human Rights Committee, she made homophobic remarks on her personal social media accounts on this occasion: “I think that no Kosovar or Bosniak can accept this [same-sex civil unions] – neither traditionally, nor culturally, nor religiously.”⁸

On the other hand, the debate was dominated by pro-gay marriage arguments including sometimes blatant Islamophobia. One such example was the following: discussing same-sex civil unions on a widely watched political TV talk show, MP Dimal Basha said, in substance, that he would rather have his children educated by a homosexual like Apple CEO Tim Cook than by a heterosexual like the hate-mongering imam Shefqet Krasniqi [arguably the most famous imam in Kosovo].⁹ Even though this is the first time this phenomenon is addressed in the European Islamophobia Reports (EIR) on Kosovo, Piro Rexhepi’s work has already elaborated on how Islamophobia and queerphobia can occur as interlocking forms of oppression in Albanian societies.¹⁰

Employment

On February 7, 2022, the Kosovar TV channel ATV broadcasted the talk show “Liberò”, hosted by Resul Sinani, addressing the challenges of being a headscarf-wearing woman.¹¹ This programme was historic in that it was most likely the first time that a political debate involving six hijab-wearing women was aired in Kosovo. (Fig. 1) The professions of the six participants ranged from political activists to lawyers, psycholo-

7. The entire speech of the MP, which she delivered in the Kosovo Parliament on 16 May 2022, can be found on YouTube: “Labinotë Demi - Murtezi: Fjalimi Në Kuvend Kundër Martesave Mes Gjinisë Së Njëjtë”, March 16, 2022, retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VToiSYOlcDA>.

8. “Duda Balje vazhdon me sulmet anti-LGBTQ+, deklaroi se ‘Asnjë kosovar e boshnjak s’mund t’i pranojë martesat e tyre’”, *Dylberizim*, March 4, 2022, retrieved January 2, 2022, from <https://www.dylberizim.com/2022/03/04/db-2/>.

9. “Martesat e Seksit Të Njëjtë Në Kosovë, Dimal Basha e Bind Skeja - Java Sonte Me Rronin, 18.03.2022”, *KTV-Kohavision*, May 18, 2022, retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOV9odx-6urE>.

10. For example, see the following two articles: Piro Rexhepi, “From Orientalism to Homonationalism: Queer Politics, Islamophobia and Europeanization in Kosovo”, *Southeastern Europe* 40, no. 1 (13 March 2016): 32–53, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18763332-03903014>; Piro Rexhepi, “EUorientation Anxieties: Islamic Sexualities and the Construction of Europeaness”, Zlatan Krajina and Nebojša Blanuša (ed.), *EU, Europe Unfinished: Mediating Europe and the Balkans in a Time of Crisis*, (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), 145–61, <http://www.rowmaninternational.com/books/eu-europe-unfinished>.

11. “Liberò Me Resul Sinanin - 07.02.2022 ATV” *ATV*, February 7, 2022, retrieved January 4, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmNH6W459FU>.

gists, and teachers. Two things were achieved with this line-up: On the one hand, it helped normalise the fact that women who cover their heads for religious reasons are an integral part of working life in the country. On the other hand, it also provided space to highlight the structural discriminations they face in obtaining their jobs.



Figure 1: A screenshot from the ATV talk show “Libero” entitled “The Challenges of Being a Headscarf-wearing Woman” featuring the host Resul Sinani in the middle. On the left, from back to front: Azemine Kukaj (deputy director of the private school “Maarif”), Jehona Hakaj (teacher), and Adlie Morina (psychologist). On the right, from back to front: Valbone Bytyqi (Kosovo ambassador of the organisation “World Hijab Day”), Rovena Tujani (lawyer), and Kosovare Ramadani (MA student in Albanian literature).¹²

One of the main reasons why this TV debate was aired were the ongoing debates about the wearing of the hijab in high schools. The status quo regarding the administrative instruction “MASHT 06/2014” was addressed in last year’s EIR on Kosovo and has not changed since then.¹³ This document de facto prohibits the wearing of hijab for high school students, although de jure no such prohibition exists. On the TV programme, lawyer Rovena Tujani presented a legal argument why wearing the hijab in school is still allowed despite the current administrative order. (Fig. 2) She first set the context by explaining that discrimination against women wearing headscarves is more common in professional life than in education. However, she pointed out that the current interpretation of the administrative instruction risks violating girls’ right to education, which is a universal human right. She then referred to Article 4 of “MASHT 06/2014” which states that “religious uniforms” are not allowed for high school stu-

12. “Libero Me Resul Sinanin - 07.02.2022 ATV” *ATV*, February 7, 2022, retrieved January 4, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmNH6W459FU>.

13. See education section of the Kosovo report 2021: Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2021”, Enes Bayrakli and Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2021* (Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022), pp. 380–382.

dents.¹⁴ After clarifying that the hijab is “not a religious uniform but a religious obligation like the performing of namaz [prayer]”, she referred to the principle of religious freedom, guaranteed in Kosovo’s constitution, to argue that the state protects the individual expression of religious identity, in this case the hijab at high school.



Figure 2: Lawyer Rovena Tujani argued on the political TV talk show “Libero” why banning the wearing of the hijab in school would be a serious violation of girls’ right to education, which is a basic human right.¹⁵

Education

In December 2022, the article “Serbia’s Destabilising Aspirations in Kosovo and the Western Balkans” by Kosovo’s Academy of Sciences and Arts (ASHAK, Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës) stirred a debate. The public discussion focused on the lack of professionalism of this paper and the disputes within the academy triggered by this publication, while the internalised Islamophobia of the text was widely ignored. (Fig. 3) One of the board members, Muhamedin Kullashi, accused another member, Mehmet Kraja, of abuse of office, saying he was the author of the “pamphlet” and published “the weak, unscientific article” without the institution’s permission.¹⁶ The document in question has since been deleted from the academy’s official webpage.¹⁷

14. 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 January 05, 2023.

15. Ibid.

16. Endrit Berisha, “‘Termet’ në Akademi”, *Koha.net*, 23 December 2022, retrieved January 10, 2023, from <https://www.koha.net/arberi/358411/termet-ne-akademi/>.

17. The publication was uploaded here but has been deleted in the meantime: https://ashak.org/synimet-destabilizuese-te-serbise-ne-kosove-dhe-ne-ballkanin-perendimor/?fbclid=IwAR2pcnhVYjSNhc6fq9SRLOG_hAw3y-hWf2XFVF_J2ofD8r8FDHLMbclMVCVU, retrieved January 10, 2023.

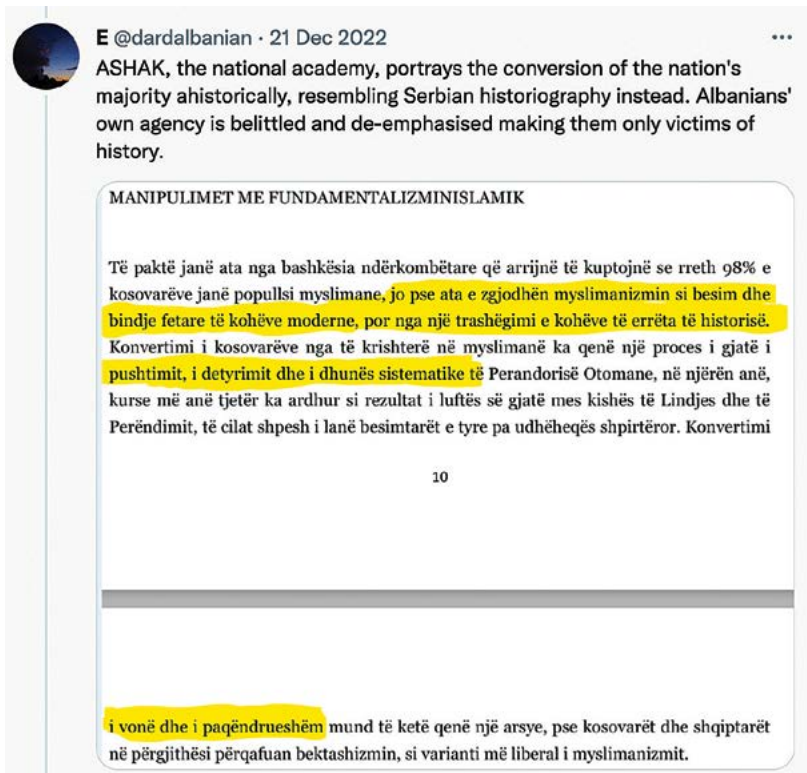


Figure 3: A screenshot posted on Twitter by an influential Kosovo-Albanian Twitter account from the German diaspora showing an Islamophobic passage from the ASHAK article, which has since been deleted. The passage reads as follows: “Manipulations with Islamic fundamentalism [subtitle] Few in the international community can understand the real reason why about 98% of the Kosovar population are Muslims. They have chosen Islam not as a religion in the context of modern times, but as a legacy of the dark times of history. On the one hand, the conversion of Kosovars from Christians to Muslims was a long process of occupation, coercion, and systematic violence by the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, it was a consequence of the long war between the Orthodox Church and the West, which often left their believers without a spiritual leader. The late and unstable conversion could be one reason why Kosovars and Albanians tended to adopt the Bektashi Tarikat as a liberal variant of Islam.”¹⁸

This publication by one of the leading academic institutions of the country was a case in point in the reproduction of internalised Islamophobia that often goes unnamed in mainstream Albanian political debates.¹⁹ For instance, the article argues that Islam, as the major religion of Albanians in Kosovo, is, on the one hand, the result of “systematic violence of the Ottoman Empire” and, on the other, “a legacy of the dark times of history [referring to the Ottoman period].”²⁰ (Fig. 3) In Albanian

18. E [@dardalbanian], “🇹🇼 The Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo (ASHAK) Published a Politico-Historical Analysis on ‘Serbia’s Destabilizing Aspirations in Kosovo & the Western Balkans’. In Parts, It’s Unscientific, Parrots Serbian Propaganda It Aims to Deconstruct & Offends the Muslim Community.”, *Twitter*, 21 December 2022, retrieved January 10, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/dardalbanian/status/1605642595421458432>.
19. One of the few articles addressing Islamophobia on this occasion was the following: Imer Topanica, “Edhe një skandal i radhës i ASHAK-ut, asgjë e re në horizont”, *Nacionale*, retrieved January 10, 2023, from <https://nacionale.com/opinion/edhe-nje-skandal-i-radhes-i-ashak-ut-asgje-e-re-ne-horizont>.
20. Although the article has been removed from the academy’s official webpage, an influential Kosovo-Albanian Twitter account from the German diaspora took a screenshot of the Islamophobic passages of the text: E [@dardalbanian], “🇹🇼 The Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo (ASHAK) Published a Politico-Histori-

discourse, this internalised Islamophobia is commonly explained with “Enverist [referring to Enver Hoxha, Albania’s former dictator] communist historiography”, as the Prishtina-based imam Husamedin Abazi for instance did on this occasion.²¹ Recent scholarship even points to more structural reasons such as the constitutive role of internalised Islamophobia in Albanian investments in whiteness.²²

Politics

The European Commission’s *Kosovo Report 2022* referred to a “[m]ilitant Salafist ideology” that threatens the country.²³ This one-sided analysis, which conflates radicalisation and violence with Islam, is compounded by the fact that the only religious incident discussed is the legal dispute over the Serbian Orthodox monastery in Deçan, West Kosovo.²⁴ In this way, not only Islamophobia in and about Kosovo is rendered invisible, but it also raises the question of whether the European Union really is neutral towards the Muslim-majority identity formations in the region.

Islamophobic statements of European politicians towards Kosovo as a Muslim-majority state in the Balkans were again noticeable this year. This is the fourth year in a row that such incidents have occurred.²⁵ With regards to Kosovo’s visa liberalisation and possible EU accession, the far-right Member of European Parliament (MEP) Dominique Bilde said on July 8, 2022: “It is time to stop this madness.”²⁶ One year earlier, she had commented on the same topic, describing Kosovo as “plagued by crime and radical Islam.”²⁷ (Fig. 4) A few days before the start of the war in Ukraine, the former far-right MEP Aymeric Chauprade compared Kosovo to Ukraine, pro-

cal Analysis on ‘Serbia’s Destabilizing Aspirations in Kosovo & the Western Balkans’. In Parts, It’s Unscientific, Parrots Serbian Propaganda It Aims to Deconstruct & Offends the Muslim Community.”, *Twitter*, 21 December 2022, retrieved January 10, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/dardalbanian/status/1605642595421458432>.

21. Husamedin Abazi, “ASHAK prapë ofendon shumicën e kombit shqiptar!”, *Facebook*, 21 December 2022, retrieved January 10, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/HusamedinAbazi/posts/pfbid034tAKotcxCApX-R7BKR52iHup5w1ZeEd7mjvGVhXLtWy1siUDtd5rYeB32LcF5MSxVI>.
22. Rexhepi, *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route*. See especially chapter 3, pp. 90–106.
23. *Kosovo Report 2022*, p. 51.
24. *Kosovo Report 2022*, p. 31 and p. 33.
25. For an overview of these cases, please see the previous three EIR reports on Kosovo: Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019”, Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2019* (SETA, 2020), pp. 455–479; Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020”, Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2020* (Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021), pp. 489–515; Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2021”, Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2021* (Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022), pp. 367–389.
26. Dominique Bilde [@DominiqueBilde], “Le #Kosovo était au programme cette semaine au @Europarl_FR Nous refusons l’élargissement de l’UE à ce pays. Nous nous opposons aussi à la libération des visas pour de nombreux de leurs ressortissants ! Il est temps de stopper cette folie Le @GroupeID_FR dit NON! <https://t.co/my-65hm5IK1>”, *Twitter*, 8 July 2022, retrieved January 11, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/DominiqueBilde/status/1545283370892107777>.
27. Dominique Bilde [@DominiqueBilde], “Non reconnu par cinq Etats membres, miné par la criminalité et l’#islam radical, le #Kosovo serait néanmoins le bienvenu dans l’UE. 🇪🇺 On se demandait à quoi ressemblerait l’UE post-#Brexit. On a désormais la réponse. #Macron <https://t.co/mpLvKplVW4>”, *Twitter*, 25 June 2021, retrieved January 11, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/DominiqueBilde/status/1408325585710034946>.

jecting his white supremacist, anti-Muslim racist world view onto the Balkan country.²⁸ Unlike most EU politicians, he considered the Russian invasion of Ukraine legitimate. He compared it to the West's support for Kosovo, pointing out that Kosovo was a 'successful' example of how 'Muslims' have demographically replaced 'Christians' in Europe.(see the entire tweet in Fig. 5)

In 2022, however, the worst Islamophobic rants on Kosovo came from Nicolas Bay, another far-right EU politician from France. At the end of October, he travelled through Kosovo to illustrate the far-right great replacement conspiracy theory, according to which white and Christian Europe is about to be demographically replaced by Muslims. (Figs. 6 and 7)



Figure 4: A sarcastic and anti-Muslim racist tweet about Kosovo by Dominique Bilde, member of the European Parliament: "Not recognised by five member states, plagued by crime and radical Islam, Kosovo would nevertheless be welcome in the EU. We wondered what the post-Brexit EU would look like. We now have the answer."²⁹

28. Aymeric Chauprade [@a_chauprade], "Les Occidentaux ont soutenu l'indépendance du #Kosovo où le peuple serbe a été "grand"-remplacé par la démographie albanaise et ils refuseraient aux Russes de réunifier leurs terres historiques de peuplement ? De qui se moquent tous ces experts auto-proclamés des chaînes d'info ?", *Twitter*, 21 February 2022, retrieved January 11, 2023, from https://twitter.com/a_chauprade/status/1495863683850948609.

29. Dominique Bilde [@DominiqueBilde], "Non reconnu par cinq Etats membres, miné par la criminalité et l'islam radical, le #Kosovo serait néanmoins le bienvenu dans l'UE. 🤡 On se demandait à quoi ressemblerait l'UE post-Brexit. On a desormais la réponse. #Macron <https://t.co/mpLvKplVW4>", *Twitter*, 25 June 2021, retrieved January 11, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/DominiqueBilde/status/1408325585710034946>.



Figure 5: Former MEP Aymeric Chauprade’s tweet reads as follows: “The West supported the independence of Kosovo where the Serbian people were demographically replaced by Albanians [in the French original, a pun is used referring to the far-right great replacement conspiracy theory] and they would refuse to allow the Russians to reunite their historic lands? Who are all these self-proclaimed experts on the news channels kidding?”³⁰



Figure 6: Nicola Bay’s tweet includes a video of him on the Mitrovica Bridge and reads as follows: “Here, on the Mitrovica bridge, Christian Serbs have defended their territory against attacks by the Albanian terrorists from the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army]. They have been the bulwark of our European civilisation.”³¹

30. Aymeric Chauprade [@a_chauprade], “Les Occidentaux ont soutenu l’indépendance du #Kosovo où le peuple serbe a été “grand”-remplacé par la démographie albanaise et ils refuseraient aux Russes de réunifier leurs terres historiques de peuplement ? De qui se moquent tous ces experts auto-proclamés des chaînes d’info ?”, *Twitter*, 21 February 2022, retrieved January 11, 2023, from https://twitter.com/a_chauprade/status/1495863683850948609.
31. Nicolas Bay [@NicolasBay_], “Ici, sur le pont de Mitrovica, les serbes chrétiens ont défendu leur territoire face aux attaques des terroristes Albanais de l’UCK. Ils ont été le rempart de notre civilisation européenne.”, <https://t.co/IW9z200m9I>, *Twitter*, 28 October 2022, retrieved January 11, 2023, from https://twitter.com/Nicolas-Bay_/status/1585962884781076481.



Figure 7: Nicola Bay's tweet includes a photo of him in front of the Sinan Pasha Mosque in Prizren and reads as follows: "While 150 churches have been destroyed in Kosovo, 400 mosques have been built in the last 20 years. The future of our civilisation is also at stake here in Prizren."³²

Media

By emphasising the anti-gay marriage stance of the Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK, *Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës*), media coverage gave the impression that the main cause of homophobia in Kosovo is Islam, the country's majority religion.³³ Although there were also transphobic voices from Muslims in Kosovo in these debates (see the section "Physical and verbal attacks" in this report), this is no reason to assume that

32. Nicolas Bay [@NicolasBay_], "Pendant que 150 églises ont été détruites au Kosovo, 400 mosquées ont été construites ces 20 dernières années. L'avenir de notre civilisation se joue aussi ici, à Prizren." <https://t.co/bh-b1iN2DcD>, *Twitter*, 29 October 2022, retrieved January 11, 2023, from https://twitter.com/NicolasBay_/status/1586411531012800513.

33. See, for example, the following two articles in widely circulated newspapers: Bekim Bislimi, "Komuniteti LGBTI me sy kah Kuvendi", *Radio Evropa e Livë*, March 16, 2022, retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/projektodi-martesat-e-gjinise-se-njejte-/31754878.html>; Albioneta Ademi, "Kosova afër martesave të së njëjtës gjini, a do të votojnë deputetët pro ligjit që shumë prej tyre i vë në siklet?", *Gazeta Express*, February 22, 2022, retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/kosova-afere-martesave-te-se-njejtës-gjini-a-do-te-votojnë-deputetët-pro-ligjit-qe-shume-prej-tyre-i-ve-ne-siklet/>.

all Muslims in the country share this opinion. Other reasons, such as patriarchy performed by more secular gender identities, also reinforce homophobia.

On October 8, 2022, an article entitled “Italy’s New Prime Minister, New Problem for Kosovo” was published addressing Giorgia Meloni’s position on Kosovo.³⁴ Referring to the far-right politician’s statements in 2016, the piece shows that, Meloni, first, was sceptical about Kosovo’s independence from Serbia.³⁵ Second, she used Islamophobic language to support her claim, describing Kosovo as “a grey area in the heart of Europe where fundamentalism thrives and integralists and jihadists are being trained in ISIS camps.”³⁶ While it cannot be argued that Meloni, after six years and in a new political position, holds exactly the same views on Kosovo as she did then, her statements, combined with the evidence provided in the policy section, are crucial to the findings of this year’s EIR report on Kosovo. They highlight the following tendency: The mainstreaming of far-right political thinking in European discourses will result in an increase in Islamophobic attacks by Western politicians on Muslim-majority countries in the Balkans like Kosovo, Albania, or Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Justice system

In April 2022, it was reported that the Court of Appeals decided in favour of Indira Mujaj, a hijab-wearing police officer in Kosovo.³⁷ According to the article, the trial took place after the Ministry of Interior had filed a complaint with the next higher judicial body.³⁸ Her lawyer Muhamet Mujaj interpreted this court decision as a victory for the rule of law and declared that “the headscarf is a value of the Albanian people.”³⁹ The starting point of Mujaj’s case is that she was suspended by the police in 2015 for wearing a hijab.⁴⁰ Given the fact that the issue of wearing a headscarf at high school has not yet been definitely decided, this ruling could play an important role in legalising the wearing of the hijab in school.

The same lawyer, Muhamet Mujaj, was in the media again as the defence lawyer of Remzie Lezi, a maths teacher who was denied access to the primary school in Suharekë where she is employed after she started wearing a headscarf.⁴¹ According

34. Dreni Himbeqa, “Kryeministrja e re e Italisë, problemi i ri i Kosovës”, *Albanian Post*, 8 October 2022, retrieved January 13, 2023, from <https://albanianpost.com/kryeministrja-e-re-e-italise-problemi-i-ri-i-kosoves/>.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Cihad Fusha, “Indira Mujaj Do Kthehet Vendin e Punës Në Policinë e Kosovës, Ishte Përjashtuar Për Shkak Të Shamisë”, *RTV Besa*, April 1, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2023, from <https://rtvbesa.com/indira-mujaj-dokthehet-vendin-e-punes-ne-policine-e-kosoves-ishte-perjashtuar-per-shkak-te-shamise/>.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. This case was covered in the EIR 2020 Kosovo report: Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2020”, Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2020* (Leopold Weiss Institut, 2021), pp. 508–509.

41. “Mësuesja nga Suhareka kërkon që të kthehet në punë”, *KosovaPress*, September 2, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2023, from <https://kosovapress.com/mesuesja-nga-suhareka-kerkon-qe-te-kthehet-ne-pune/>.

to different media reports, Lezi was allowed to return to her profession with a headscarf a few days later.⁴²

Internet

On December 9, 2022, journalist Vehbi Kajtazi posted on Twitter a picture of Halil Kastrati, a prominent representative of a Muslim charity organisation in Kosovo, and Bekim Jashari, a politician and the nephew of Kosovo Liberation Army co-founder Adem Jashari, both wearing Islamic dress: “I never thought that one day I would see an heir of the Jashari family in this dress and in this condition. It hurts.”⁴³ (Fig. 8) The tweet was emblematic of internalised Islamophobia in mainstream Albanian discourses and was widely debated on social media.



Figure 8: Journalist Vehbi Kajtazi’s tweet comments on a picture of Halil Kastrati, a prominent representative of a Muslim charity organisation in Kosovo, and Bekim Jashari, a politician and the nephew of Kosovo Liberation Army co-founder Adem Jashari, in Islamic dress: “I never thought that one day I would see an heir of the Jashari family in this dress and in this condition. It hurts.”⁴⁴

42. See the following two articles: Verona Smajli, “Kryetari i Suharekës Konfirmon Për Insajderin Se Mësuesja Remzie Është Kthyer Në Punë”, *Insajderi*, September 8, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2023, from <https://insajderi.org/kryetari-i-suharekes-konfirmon-per-insajderin-se-mesuesja-remzie-eshte-kthyer-ne-pune/>; “S’merrret parasysh vendimi i shkollës, Muharremaj: Mësuesja me shami i kthehet punës”, *Gazeta Express*, September 8, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2023, from <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/smerret-parasysh-vendimi-i-shkolles-muharremaj-mesuesja-me-shami-i-kthehet-punes/>.
43. Vehbi Kajtazi [@vehbikajtazi], “Kurre nuk kisha mendu se vjen dita dhe e shoh nje trashegimtar te Familjes Jashari ne kete veshje dhe ne kete gjendje. E dhimbshme! <https://t.co/jNnYWP4q6y>”, *Twitter*, December 9, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/vehbikajtazi/status/1601189252372566016>.
44. Vehbi Kajtazi [@vehbikajtazi], “Kurre nuk kisha mendu se vjen dita dhe e shoh nje trashegimtar te Familjes Jashari ne kete veshje dhe ne kete gjendje. E dhimbshme! <https://t.co/jNnYWP4q6y>”, *Twitter*, December 9, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/vehbikajtazi/status/1601189252372566016>.

One contribution deserves to be highlighted because it succeeded in humorously illustrating the absurdity of internalised Islamophobia in Albanian political discussions. Here, the Twitter user took Kajtazi’s caption for describing football player Lionel Messi holding the World Cup trophy in Arab dress: “I never thought that one day I would see an heir of the Messi family in this dress and in this condition. It hurts.”⁴⁵ (Fig. 9) While Kajtazi’s Islamophobia is based on the claim that ‘true’ Albanian identity is pre-Ottoman, this Twitter user employed a widespread Albanian joke to ridicule this essentialist line of argument. According to this joke, Messi is a descendant of an Albanian family that emigrated to Argentina.



Figure 9: This meme-like tweet by an anonymous Twitter user pokes fun at Vehbi Kajtazi’s Islamophobic argument by taking his caption and combining it with a widely used Albanian joke. According to this joke, Messi is a descendant of an Albanian family that emigrated to Argentina: “I never thought that one day I would see an heir of the Messi family in this dress and in this condition. It hurts.”⁴⁶

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The specificities of Islamophobia in Kosovo, a Muslim-majority Balkan country, make it difficult to speak of a consolidated Islamophobia network. In mainstream Albanian political debates, the most widespread form of anti-Muslim racism is internalised Is-

45. Rina [@rinademiriii], “Kurre nuk kisha mendu se vjen dita dhe e shoh nje trashegimtar te Familjes Messi ne kete veshje dhe ne kete gjendje. E dhimbshme! <https://t.co/asknli0osX>”, *Twitter*, December 18, 2022, retrieved from January 14, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/rinademiriii/status/1604551234760884224>.

46. Rina [@rinademiriii], “Kurre nuk kisha mendu se vjen dita dhe e shoh nje trashegimtar te Familjes Messi ne kete veshje dhe ne kete gjendje. E dhimbshme! <https://t.co/asknli0osX>”, *Twitter*, December 18, 2022, retrieved from January 14, 2023, from <https://twitter.com/rinademiriii/status/1604551234760884224>.

lamophobia. The internalisation of Islamophobia has been normalised to such an extent that it frequently goes unchallenged. Two such incidents have been analysed in this year's report: the example of MP Dimal Basha and that of journalist Vehbi Kajtazi's tweet. However, the case of Mehmet Kraja, who abused the authority of Kosovo's Academy of Sciences and Arts to publish an Islamophobic pamphlet, shows that there also is open Islamophobia in the country.

Another 'branch' of Islamophobia in the Kosovo context can be found in foreign European countries. As in 2021, France was again the EU country where the most Islamophobic statements against Kosovo were made.⁴⁷ These statements came from far-right politicians like Dominique Bilde⁴⁸ (Fig. 4), Aymeric Chauperade (Fig. 5), and Nicolas Bay (Figs. 6 and 7), who project white supremacist demographic anxieties onto Kosovo that bear similarities to Serbian nationalism. At the same time, it should be emphasised that the focus on France is partly due to the regional expertise of the author of this report. This does not mean that it is a purely France-specific phenomenon. As the "Media" section has shown, these extreme-right visions of Kosovo can also be found in Italy in the example of the current prime minister, Giorgia Meloni. In other words, there is reason to assume that Islamophobia in relation to Kosovo can be found in different parts of Europe ranging from Serbia to Norway.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In recent years, there have probably never been more initiatives to combat Islamophobia in Kosovo as in 2022. Two more events should be added here. On April 23, 2022, the Union of Kosovo Tarikats (BTK, *Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës*) issued a joint statement against "racism, ethnic hatred, homophobia, misogyny, Islamophobia, anti-Sufism and other forms of discrimination."⁴⁹ This incident is important because it contradicts the common Eurocentric belief that practising Islam is tied to queerphobia. The second action to counter Islamophobia was the campaign "Change the administrative directive regarding the headscarf" (*Ndryshojeni Udhëzimin Administrativ për shaminë*) launched in August 2022 to legalise the wearing of the hijab in high schools.⁵⁰ The initiative aiming to change the administrative instruction "MASHT

47. Adem Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2021", Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2021* (Leopold Weiss Institute, 2022), p. 387.

48. Dominique Bilde's Islamophobic remarks on Kosovo are also documented here: Adem Ferizaj, "Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2019", Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2019* (SETA, 2020), pp. 462–463 and pp. 472.

49. "Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës me deklaratë të përbashkët kundër homofobisë", *Dylberizm*, April 25, 2022, retrieved January 15, 2023, from <https://www.dylberizm.com/2022/04/25/btk/>.

50. "Nis kampanja në rrjetet sociale për lejimin e vajzave të vijoje shkollimin me mbulesë në Kosovë", *Telegrafi*, August 3, 2022, retrieved January 15, 2023, from <https://telegrafi.com/iniciative-per-shfuqizimin-e-nenit-ne-udhezimit-administrativ-qe-ua-ndalon-vajzave-te-vijoje-shkollimin-mbules/>.

06/2014” received considerable support by the population, but the government has not yet taken a position on the matter.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

There have been numerous Islamophobic and anti-Islamophobic incidents this year in Kosovo. At present, the Kosovo government sees no need to combat Islamophobia by political means. For this to change, it would be recommendable for various initiatives by the population to continue working to raise awareness of the extent to which internalised Islamophobia has become normalised in the country’s political debates. Maintaining this social pressure could then lead, for example, to the wearing of the headscarf at high schools finally being legalised.

Chronology

- **07.02.2022:** The Kosovar TV channel ATV broadcasted the talk show “Libero”, hosted by Resul Sinani, addressing the challenges of being a headscarf-wearing woman. It was historic in that it was most likely the first time that a political debate involving six hijab-wearing women was aired in Kosovo.
- **21.02.2022:** A few days before the start of the war in Ukraine, the former far-right member of European Parliament Aymeric Chauprade compared Kosovo to Ukraine, projecting his white supremacist, anti-Muslim racist world view onto the Balkan country.
- **17.03.2022:** Kosovo’s parliament rejected a law on the legalisation of same-sex civil unions on March 17, 2022. Particularly conspicuous was the fact that queerphobia and Islamophobia were played off against each other in the public discussions on this issue.
- **01.04.2022:** It was reported that the Court of Appeals decided in favour of Indira Mujaj, a hijab-wearing police officer in Kosovo. Given the fact that the issue of wearing a headscarf at high school has not yet been decided, this ruling could play an important role in legalising the wearing of the hijab in school.
- **23.04.2022:** The Union of Kosovo Tarikats (BTK) issued a joint statement against “racism, ethnic hatred, homophobia, misogyny, Islamophobia, anti-Sufism and other forms of discrimination.”
- **08.07.2022:** With regards to Kosovo’s visa liberalisation and possible EU accession, the far-right MEP Dominique Bilde said, “It is time to stop this madness.” One year earlier, she had commented on the same topic, describing Kosovo as “plagued by crime and radical Islam.”
- **03.08.2022:** The campaign “Change the administrative directive regarding the headscarf” (*Ndryshojeni Udhëzimin Administrativ për shaminë*) is launched to legalise the wearing of the hijab in high schools.

- **02.09.2022:** Maths teacher Remzie Lezi was denied access to the primary school in Suharekë where she is employed after she started wearing a headscarf. According to different media reports, she was allowed to return to her profession with a headscarf a few days later.
- **08.10.2022:** A newspaper article entitled “Italy’s New Prime Minister, New Problem for Kosovo” was published addressing Giorgia Meloni’s position on Kosovo. The article highlighted that in 2016 she used Islamophobic language, describing Kosovo as “a grey area in the heart of Europe where fundamentalism thrives and integralists and jihadists are being trained in ISIS camps.”
- **12.10.2022:** The European Commission’s *Kosovo Report 2022* is published and referred to a “[m]ilitant Salafist ideology” that threatens the country. This one-sided analysis conflates radicalisation and violence with Islam.
- **28.10.2022:** Another far-right EU politician from France, Nicolas Bay, visits Mitrovica and tweets the following: “Here, on the Mitrovica bridge, Christian Serbs have defended their territory against attacks by the Albanian terrorists from the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army]. They have been the bulwark of our European civilisation.”
- **29.10.2022:** Nicola Bay visits Prizren and illustrates his extreme-right, anti-Muslim world view as follows: “While 150 churches have been destroyed in Kosovo, 400 mosques have been built in the last 20 years. The future of our civilisation is also at stake here in Prizren.”
- **09.12.2022:** On Twitter, journalist Vehbi Kajtazi posted a picture of Halil Kastri, a prominent representative of a Muslim charity organisation in Kosovo, and Bekim Jashari, a politician and the nephew of Kosovo Liberation Army co-founder Adem Jashari, both wearing Islamic dress: “I never thought that one day I would see an heir of the Jashari family in this dress and in this condition. It hurts.”
- **23.12.2022:** The article “Serbia’s Destabilising Aspirations in Kosovo and the Western Balkans” by Kosovo’s Academy of Sciences and Arts (ASHAK) stirred a debate. This publication by a one of the leading academic institutions was a case in point in the reproduction of internalised Islamophobia that often goes unnamed in mainstream Albanian political debates.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
MALTA
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

SARA EZABE MALLIUE

The Author

Sara Ezabe Malliue is a lawyer. She holds a Master of Advocacy degree and a Master in Human Rights Law & Practice, and is currently reading for a Master in Public Policy Leadership at the University of Malta. She completed a leadership course at the University of Cambridge, UK as a recipient of an award by Queen Elizabeth II. Ezabe Malliue has been researching hate speech online and conducted a research project titled “Negotiating Peace in the Ambit of Freedom of Speech” (ELSA, Malta 2016) to highlight the importance of creating policies to tackle hate speech. She is the co-founder of the campaign “Redefining Us” which was created with the aim of combating discrimination and hate speech, and to raise awareness about religious and ethnic minorities in Malta. For this, she was awarded the Young Impactful Politician Award by the Junior Chamber International (JCI) Malta.

Email: Saraev96@gmail.com

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Executive Summary

In 2022, Malta had an overall quiet year in terms of Islamophobic incidents and circulation of anti-Muslim online material. The compilation of this report is based on information primarily from the internet, which includes websites of Islamophobic groups, the media, and social media. Together with this, studies and reports conducted by European organisations and agencies were 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, 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 2022*.

Sommarju Eżekuttiv

Fl-2022, Malta kellha sena kwieta ingenerali f'termini ta' incidenti Izlamofobiċi kif ukoll ċirkolazzjoni ta' materjal onlajn. Il-kumpilazzjoni ta' 'dan ir-rapport hija bbażata fuq informazzjoni primarjament mill-Internet, li tinkludi websajts ta' gruppi Izlamofobiċi, il-midja, u wkoll midja soċjali. Flimkien ma 'dan, ġew ikkunsidrati wkoll studji u rapporti mmexxija minn organizzazzjonijiet u aġenziji Ewropej. Uħud mill-pubblikazzjonijiet ikkwotati fir-rapport huma mill-2021 u oħrajn huma qabel din is-sena.

L-awtur qieset 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-Razzizmu u l-Ksenofobija, il-qtil tal-migrant Ivorjan Lassana Cisse,, kif ukoll preparazzjoni għal-elezzjonijiet nazzjonali 2022. Publikazzjonijiet u portijiet mill-ġdid f'Malta li juru dejta statistika huma skarsi ħafna. Hemm ftit riċerka mill-istituzzjonijiet Maltin dwar l-Islamofobija. Hemm htieġa evidenti għal riċerka u politika addizzjonali f'Malta, speċjalment minn entitajiet governattivi. Fi gruppi magħluqa, il-komunità Musulmana tilmenta dwar il-qgħad bħala riżultat ta' diskriminazzjoni fejn jidhol impjeg. Fuq livell nazzjonali, minbarra l-pubblikazzjonijiet u l-inizjattivi mwettqa mill-NGOs, l-aktar dokumentati jinsabu fir-*Rapport 2022 tad-Drittijiet Fundamentali tal-FRA*.

Country Profile EIR 2022

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 (Alliance for Change), Democratic Alternative, Moviment Patrijotti Maltin (Maltese Patriots Movement)

Last Elections: Labour Party won by a majority of 55.11% (38 seats), Nationalist Party holds 41.47% (29 seats)

Total Population: 460,297 (2017) (Eurostat)

Major Languages: Maltese and English

Official Religion: Catholicism

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: 71% of Maltese respondents thought that discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin was widespread. (ENAR Shadow Report 2013-2017)

Major Religions (% of Population): Roman Catholicism 93.9% (*Malta Today* survey)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 0.3% of the overall Maltese population (*Malta Today* Survey)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: World Islamic Call Society and Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Malta

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: aditus, Integra, People for Change Foundation

Far-Right Parties: Imperium Europa, Partit Popolari (People's Party), ABBA

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 Eurobarometer on integration in the EU, published in September 2019, shows that many citizens in Malta still have a perception that there are high levels of discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin, and religion or belief.¹ Specifically on the integration of migrants, more than half of the participants in the survey responded that immigration from outside the EU is a problem in Malta.² As a result, this has an effect on the 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 2022 or recent years in relation to physical attacks specifically related to Islamophobia which reflect the domestic situation. In fact, in 2021, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), published statistics, but Malta was not among the states included in the report nor where there any incidents to report.³ Other than the protests organised in Malta in 2020 as part of the global protests with respect to the murder of George Floyd in the United States, 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 declared all cases of racism, discrimination, and intolerance an affront to a democratic society and, as such, emphasized that 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 national recognition of the high

1. Special Eurobarometer 493, Discrimination in the European Union, fieldwork of May 2019, published in September 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/special/surveyKy/2251>, (Access date: 15 December 2020).
2. "Lassana Cisse Murder: One Year on Racism Still Looms", *Times of Malta*, 6 April 2020, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/lassana-cisse-murder-one-year-on-racism-still-looms.783719>, (Access date: 20 December 2020).
3. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), <https://hatecrime.osce.org/anti-muslim-hate-crime?country=MT> (Access date: 20 December 2022).
4. "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 February 2020).
5. 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).

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.⁶

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.⁷

A more recent study, compiled with the help of Jobsplus (Malta's Public Employment Service), the Malta Employers Association (MEA), the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), and African Media Association Malta (AMAM),⁸ 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 being welcoming or customers submitting complaints. This is not only limited to refugees, but, of course, extends to all migrants. In this regard, the UNHCR Malta,

6. 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. Daphne Cassar, "The Existence of Discriminatory Attitudes on Refugees Who Live and Work in Malta", <https://www.tvn.com.mt/mt/news/jezisti-agir-diskriminatorju-kontra-xi-refugjati-li-jghixu-u-jahdmu-malta-il-unhcr/>, (Access date: 30 October 2020).

8. "Employers Struggle with Paperwork for Employing Refugees in Malta – UN", *The Times of Malta*, 3 December 2019, <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/employers-struggle-with-paperwork-for-employing-refugees-in-malta-un.754570>, (Access date: 3 January 2020).

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.⁹

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.¹⁰ Presently, a voluntary programme is being designed to introduce religion teachings on Islam in government schools; however, it is still in its infancy.

To date no curriculum material has been reported to include Islamophobic content. In the last few years, inclusion has been encouraged by educators. 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.¹¹ 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.¹² Together with the anti-immigrant Movement Patrijotti Maltin (Maltese Patriots Movement), far-right voters in Malta stand

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9. "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).
 10. Sara Ezabe Malliue, "Islamophobia in Malta: National Report 2018" in *European Islamophobia Report 2018*, ed. Enes Bayrakli, Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul 2019), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Malta.pdf>, (Access date: 22 January 2021).
 11. "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)
 12. 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).

at 3.5%.¹³ Last 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.¹⁴

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."¹⁵ The latest census of December 2021, places Malta's current Muslim population at "somewhere between 6 and 7% of the population".¹⁶

In the last general elections (2022), two far-right parties contested the general elections; however none targeted Muslims as their discourse was more xenophobic in nature. This notes a decrease, especially when compared with the 2016 general elections, when Moviment Patrijotti Maltin contested the elections with a very Islamophobic political campaign.

Media

Lovin Malta, *Malta Today*, and *Times of Malta* are amongst the media outlets which encourage inclusion and integration of Muslims in Malta. The 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" (Maltese, like you), 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.¹⁷ Media outlets in the past years have been sensitive to the language used on their platforms. This has led to headlines and articles that are not Islamophobic.

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 con-

13. Ibid.

14. "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).

15. "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)

16. Raphael Vassallo, A Mosque too far?, 25th October 2022, https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/comment/blogs/119390/a_mosque_too_far#.Y9rkIS1Q1QI, (Data of Access: 26 January 2023)

17. "Maltin Bhalek | An insight into the reality of black Maltese youths", 18 June 2021, https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/110285/maltin_balek_an_insight_into_the_reality_of_black_maltese_youths#.Yt8QMS0RpQI (Access date: 20 December 2020).

cerns that the criminal code in Malta¹⁸ does not contain provisions that criminalise «the creation or leadership of a group which promotes racism or support for such a group» and «participation in its activities».¹⁹ Maltese authorities were urged to add «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.²⁰ However, to date, the criminal code has not been amended to include these recommendations, and under Article 82A of the criminal code only incitement to racial hatred is included.²¹

According to research by the EU-funded project PRESERVERE (*Preventing racism and discrimination: enabling the effective implementation of the EU anti-racism legal framework*), the anti-racism legal framework in Malta is complex: the relevant provisions are scattered across 15 acts, and victims have different legal rights depending on the context in which discrimination occurs. Moreover, some protections guaranteed by EU directives are not fully implemented, and many provisions have been transcribed word by word into national law, resulting in flaws in the supporting framework which hamper the correct application of the provisions in practice.²²

Focus groups and interviews conducted as part of PRESERVERE's research also showed that legal professionals, frontline workers, and victims have little to no knowledge of the anti-racism legal framework. Interviewees stated that, in the few cases where victims are informed of their rights, discrimination is likely to go unreported. This is due to socio-economic pressures, a mistrust of authorities, and the cost and length of court proceedings. There are also concerns with translation and the quality of legal aid, and study participants highlighted a lack of available information for victims on making complaints.²³

Internet

Whilst in the previous years, the internet, especially social media, served the circulation of online hate speech, for the year 2022, there were nearly no posts targeting Muslims specifically. Most of the posts were racist and xenophobic but not necessarily Islamophobic. However, the internet remains very difficult to monitor, and it is very hard to hold people responsible for their online comments and the fake news which is spread. Hate speech is codified under Maltese Criminal Law Article 82A (1) which

18. Council of Europe, ECRI (2018), ECRI Report on Malta (fifth monitoring cycle), Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 15 May 2018. <<https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-malta/16808b592b>, (Access date: 20 December 2019).

19. Fundamental Rights Report 2019, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-fundamental-rights-report-2019_en.pdf, (Access date: 3 January 2019).

20. The Laws of Malta, Chapter 8 of the Laws of Malta, Criminal code, Article 82A.

21. Ibid.

22. European Commission, 04 December 2022, Malta: Implementation of the EU anti-racism legal framework https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/malta-implementation-eu-anti-racism-legal-framework_en (Access date: 20 December 2022)

23. Ibid

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.²⁴

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As outlined in the section on politics, Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin which was later formed into Moviment Patrijotti Maltin movement has decreased in their Islamophobic narrative, shifting however to a more xenophobic one. Another group is Imperium Europa, which shares the same far-right ideology, and supports fascism and nationalism. However, in the last three to five years, Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin has taken the lead with its Facebook page and presence on social media. Although, this might not seem like an extensive network, the geographical size of Malta should also be taken into consideration, together with its population.

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. The Human Rights Directorate, another government entity, has a section dealing with religions and integration. NGOs in Malta focus primarily on racism and discrimination faced by foreigners, both immigrants and refugees, rather than by Maltese Muslims.

As part of the EU-funded project PRESERVERE, a group of researchers studied the progress of the EU anti-racism legal framework towards its intended outcomes, and the results have been published as a report in an e-book. PRESERVERE will use the research to develop tool kits and training for legal professionals and frontline workers, and aims to educate key stakeholders on how to heighten the effectiveness of national discrimination laws.²⁵

The report analyses the implementation of anti-racism legislation in six European states that include Malta. It begins with an overview and critique of the EU Ra-

24. Hate speech in Malta - <https://antihatespeech.tumblr.com/> (Access date: 20 December 2021).

25. European Commission, 04 December 2022, Malta: Implementation of the EU anti-racism legal framework https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/malta-implementation-eu-anti-racism-legal-framework_en (Access date: 20 December 2022)

cial Equality Directive and the Victims' Rights Directive and moves on to national case studies, outlining several common themes.

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 Islamophobia 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 Islamophobia. 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 2022

JEROEN VLUG

The Author

Jeroen Vlug, PhD, is a researcher at Movisie, a Dutch research institute on social issues, where he specializes in discrimination, racism, and Islamophobia. He is also a researcher for Platform Inclusion & Community (KIS), a program jointly hosted by Movisie and Verwey-Jonker Institute, where he conducts research on new migration, social stability, inclusion and access, and participation. In that capacity, he advises policymakers in municipalities and other government institutions, politicians, professionals in civil society organizations, migrant organizations, and entrepreneurs. Vlug is executive editor at the *Cross-cultural Human Rights Review*, a peer-reviewed academic journal affiliated to VU University Amsterdam. He holds degrees in religious studies and Islamic intellectual history from VU University Amsterdam and Freie Universität Berlin. Vlug obtained his PhD in civilization studies from Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul with a comparative study on the philosophical grounds of human rights in Islam and the West. He regularly publishes and lectures on human rights, Islam, religion in modern society, and Muslims in Europe.
Email: jeroenvlug@gmail.com

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Executive Summary

Dutch society remains highly polarized and divided on the issue of Muslim presence in the Netherlands. Several events throughout 2022 seem to have intensified the public and political debate on Islam, such as the securitization and monitoring of informal mosque education, incidents of ethnic profiling and institutional racism, and talks of a ban on the headscarf in certain public offices. Statistics show that discrimination based on religion mostly targets Muslims and/or people with a migration background. Discriminatory incidents happen in all social domains, but mostly in the labor market, education, and in the public sector (hospitals, municipal services, tax authorities, etc.). The form Muslim discrimination most often takes involves verbal abuse, vandalism, and violence in combination with verbal abuse and threats. Research shows that the registration of acts of Muslim discrimination is at an all-time low. Hence, we know some of the given statistics only show the tip of the iceberg.

In 2022, anti-Muslim activists organized anti-Islam BBQs during Ramadan and various mosques received threat letters. There were several cases of arson and vandalism at mosques and Islamic institutions. Issues revolving around the headscarf were frequent, mostly involving either job discrimination or holding public offices. A lot of controversy surrounded government efforts to extensively monitor informal mosque education, against which Muslim organizations took a stance in various manners. This is especially relevant in the aftermath of the secret government-supported probes into mosques during 2021, which brought Muslim trust in the Dutch government to an all-time low.

Anti-Islamic politics was dominated by the usual suspects, such as the PVV of Geert Wilders, but also the rise of new rightist fringe parties in the course of 2022, such as the FvD, JA21, and Van Haga Group. While these parties vary somewhat in their political agendas, they hold very similar stances regarding immigration, integration, and the presence of Muslims in Dutch society, such as a complete stop of immigration from Muslim-majority countries and very stringent assimilation policies. Only the PVV wants to ban the Quran and close mosques and Islamic institutions. The public and political debate is further fueled with anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim rhetoric through several rightist media outlets, such as *GeenStijl* and *Ongehoord Nederland*, and anti-Islamic intellectuals and academics, such as Paul Cliteur and Afshin Ellian.

The Dutch government seems to have an ambiguous stance towards Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands. On the one hand, it has made great strides in anti-discrimination and anti-racist policies: in 2022, for the first time in history, a historical official apology for the Netherlands' role in transatlantic slavery was issued; the institutional racism in the childcare benefits scandal (*toeslagaffaire*) was acknowledged; and the role of National Coordinator against Discrimination and Racism (NCDR) was established. At the same time, we see the rise of anti-Islamic rightist fringe par-

ties and two Dutch ministers calling for headscarf bans and mosque securitization and monitoring.

Civil society and political initiatives remain active in countering Islamophobic rhetoric in public and political discourse. Other minority parties, such as DENK and BIJ1, have strongly opposed anti-Muslim racist policies in the Dutch parliament during debates. Left-leaning academics, such as Leo Lucassen and Martijn de Koning, have regularly published and made media appearances to call out anti-Muslim racism, sometimes through blogs such as CLOSER and Republiek Allochtonië. Several NGOs and research centers have published materials countering Islamophobia, such as the Anne Frank Stichting, Movisie/KIS, and Artikel 1.

Some of the most important policy recommendations include the recognition of institutional racism in Dutch governmental institutions; a better corporation between national and local governments, anti-discrimination bureaus (ADV's), and other stakeholders in terms of prevention and countering anti-Muslim racism; improving registration processes by making them more transparent and accessible; investing in social interventions that battle anti-Muslim racism (especially at a local level); working with Muslim communities at a grassroots level and involving them in countering Muslim hate and Islamophobia; and monitoring, evaluating, and sustainably embedding local policies targeting anti-Muslim racism.

Samenvatting

De Nederlandse samenleving is nog steeds gepolariseerd en verdeeld als het gaat om de aanwezigheid van moslims in Nederland. Verschillende gebeurtenissen in 2022 hebben het publieke en politieke debat over de islam geïntensiveerd, zoals het monitoren van informeel moskeeonderwijs, incidenten over etnisch profileren en institutioneel racisme en debatten over een hoofddoekverbod voor mensen in publieke functies. Statistieken laten zien dat discriminatie gebaseerd op religie meestal gericht is op moslims en/ of mensen met een migratieachtergrond. Moslimdiscriminatie gebeurt op allerlei sociale terreinen. Het gebeurt echter het meest op de arbeidsmarkt, in het onderwijs en in de collectieve sector (bijv. in ziekenhuizen, gemeentelijke diensten, belastingdienst, etc.). De vorm moslimdiscriminatie die het vaakst voorkomt gaat over discriminatoire uitlatingen (zoals schelden en beledigen), vandalisme, geweld in combinatie met uitlatingen en bedreigingen. Onderzoek laat zien dat de meldingsbereidheid onder moslims erg laag is. De cijfers die bekend zijn geven dus maar een deel van het werkelijke beeld en laten slechts het puntje van de ijsberg zien.

In 2022 organiseerde anti-moslimactivisten anti-islam BBQ's tijdens de Ramadan en ontvingen verschillende moskeeën dreigbrieven. Verder waren er verschillende incidenten met brandstichting and vandalisme bij moskeeën en islamitische organisaties. Er waren veel issues over de hoofddoek, met name als het gaat om arbeidsmarktdiscriminatie en het dragen van hoofddoeken in publieke functies. Er was veel controverse over de inzet van de overheid om informeel moskeeonderwijs te monitoren, waartegen moslimorganisaties zich op verschillende manieren verzette in 2022. Dit is bijzonder relevant in het licht van de heimelijke overheidsgesteunde onderzoeken die plaatsvonden bij moskeeën in 2021, en welke het vertrouwen van de Nederlandse moslimgemeenschap in de overheid grote schade toebrengt.

De anti-islam politiek werd als vanouds gedomineerd door de PVV van Geert Wilders, maar ook door nieuwe rechts splinterpartijen, zoals FvD, JA21 en Groep van Haga. Hoewel deze partijen verschillen in sommige politieke standpunten, zijn ze opvallend eensgezind als het gaat om politieke vraagstukken als migratie, integratie en de aanwezigheid van moslims in Nederland, zoals het beogen van een complete migratiestop uit landen met een moslimmeerderheid en streng assimilatiebeleid. Alleen de PVV wil de Koran verbannen en moskeeën en islamitische organisaties sluiten. Het publieke en politieke debat wordt verder gevoerd door de anti-islam en anti-moslim retoriek van verschillende rechtse media outlets, zoals GeenStijl en Ongehoord Nederland, and anti-islam intellectuelen, zoals Paul Cliteur en Afshin Ellian.

De Nederlandse overheid lijkt een ambigue houding te hebben ten opzichte van moslims en de islam in Nederland. Aan de ene kant maakte ze grote vooruitgang op het gebied van antiracismebeleid. Zo maakte de overheid in 2022 voor het eerst in de geschiedenis officieel excuses voor het Nederlandse aandeel in de trans-Atlantische

slavenhandel, erkende ze het bestaan van institutioneel racisme met betrekking tot de Toeslagenaffaire en riepen ze de rol van Nationaal Coördinator Discriminatie en Racisme (NCDR) in het leven. Tegelijkertijd zien we de opkomst van rechtse anti-islampartijen en twee Nederlandse ministers die oproepen tot een hoofddoekverbod en de monitoring van moskeeën.

Maatschappelijke organisaties en politieke initiatieven zetten zich op hetzelfde moment in voor de bestrijding van islamofobe retoriek in het publieke en politieke discours. Andere minderheidspartijen, zoals DENK en BIJ1, verzette zich sterk tegen anti-moslim racistisch beleid in het parlement tijdens debatten. Links-leunende academici, zoals Leo Lucassen en Martijn de Koning, publiceerde en verschenen regelmatig in de media om anti-moslim racisme aan de kaak te stellen, soms via blogs zoals CLOSER en Republiek Allochtonië. Verschillende NGOs en kennisinstituten publiceerde materiaal om moslimdiscriminatie tegen te gaan, zoals de Anne Frank Stichting, Movisie/ KIS en Artikel 1.

Een aantal van de belangrijkste beleidsadviezen zijn: het erkennen van institutioneel racisme bij overheidsinstellingen, een betere ketensamenwerking tussen nationale en lokale overheden, antidiscriminatievoorzieningen (ADV's) en andere stakeholders met betrekking tot de preventie en bestrijding van anti-moslimracisme, het verbeteren van het meldingsproces door deze transparanter en toegankelijker te maken, investering in sociale interventies die anti-moslimracisme tegen gaan (in het bijzonder op lokaal niveau), meer samenwerken met moslimgemeenschappen op lokaal niveau en hen betrekken bij het zoeken naar oplossingen voor moslimhaat en islamofobie en het monitoren, evalueren en borgen van lokaal beleid tegen anti-moslimracisme.

Country Profile EIR 2022

Country: Netherlands

Type of Regime: Parliamentary representative democracy, constitutional monarchy, and a decentralized unitary state

Form of Government: Constitutionally consists of the king and the cabinet ministers. The king's role is limited to the formation of government.

Ruling Parties: A continuation of the fourth Rutte cabinet (since January 2022) – People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Democrats 66 or D66, and the faith-based Christian Union (*ChristenUnie*)

Opposition Parties: Party for Freedom (PVV), Labour Party (PvdA), Socialist Party (SP), GreenLeft (*GroenLinks*), Party for the Animals (PvD), Forum for Democracy (FvD), DENK, Van Haga Group, JA21, Reformed Political Party (SGP), Volt¹

Last Elections: 2021 General Elections: House of Representatives. On January 15, 2021, two months before the 2021 general elections the third Rutte cabinet resigned over the Dutch childcare benefits scandal (*toeslagenaffaire*). However, Rutte and his party got reelected, gaining 21.87% of the votes and 34 seats, resulting in the fourth Rutte cabinet. The runner-up was D66 with 24 seats and 15.02% of the votes, followed by PVV with 17 seats and 10.79% of the votes, and CDA with 15 seats and 9.5% of the votes.²

Total Population: 17,837,500 (February 2023)

Major Languages: Dutch

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to combined statistics of the Dutch police and anti-discrimination bureaus (ADVs), most religion-based discrimination targets Muslims (67%). Religion-based discrimination mostly takes place in the labor market (63 incidents, of which 39 against Muslims). This is followed by education (30 incidents, 26 against Muslims), the public sector (26 incidents, 11 against Muslims), public and political opinion (15 incidents, 12 against Muslims), and media (15 incidents, 10 against Muslims). The location where discrimination based on migration background takes place is dominated by the labor market (466 incidents) followed by the public sector (312 incidents), neighborhoods (283 incidents), and commercial services (228 incidents).

1. Several smaller single-member parties or independents are not included in this list.

2. All other parties received significantly less than 10% of the votes.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The annual report “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” provides statistics on the types of incidents. The police did not differentiate Muslim discrimination in this instance but mention that most incidents related to discrimination on the grounds of both religion and migration take on the form of verbal abuse (108 and 1,884 incidents, respectively). Following these, the most frequent incidents related to religion-based discrimination were vandalism, and violence in combination with cursing, and with threats (22, 14, and 13 incidents, respectively). For incidents of migration-based discrimination, violence combined with cursing and threats stand out (351 and 292 incidents, respectively). Research shows that the registration of acts of Muslim discrimination is at an all-time low. Hence, we know some of the given statistics only show the tip of the iceberg.

Major Religions (% of Population): No religion (55.4%), Roman Catholicism (19.8%), Protestantism (14.4%), Islam (5.2%), Other (5.1%) (Source: Central Agency for Statistics)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 927,550 (5.2% of Dutch population)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid (CMO); Unie van Marokkaanse Moskeeorganisaties in Nederland (UMMON); Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond (SPIOR); Samenwerkingsverband Islamitische Organisaties Regio Haaglanden (SIORH); Islamitische Stichting Nederland / Hollanda Diyanet Vakfi (ISN/HDV); Raad van Marokkaanse Moskeeën Nederland (RMMN); Stichting Milli Gorus Netherlands; Stichting Islamitische Centrum Nederland (Suleymanci Movement); Al Nisa; Fahm Instituut; Islamic University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam (IUASR)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Meld Islamofobie, Collectief tegen Islamofobie, SPIOR, Republiek Allochtonië, Geloven In Samenleven, Religion Research, Mind Nederland, College voor de Rechten van de Mens, Overlegorgaan Joden, Christenen en Moslims (OJCM), S.P.E.A.K., IZI Solutions, EMCEMO, Movisie, KIS

Far-Right Parties: PVV, FvD, Group Van Haga, JA21

Far-Right Movements: Voorpost, Identitair Verzet, PEGIDA Nederland (PEGIDA Netherlands), Erkenbrand

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No, but in 2021 it was decided by parliament that Community Service Officers (CSOs) could no longer wear a hijab as part of their uniform, stating it conflicted with the neutrality CSOs are supposed to reflect.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** In 2018, the Party for the Animals (PvdD) submitted a new bill proposal to have slaughter without sedation completely banned by law. It was, however, rejected by the Council of State on the grounds of in-

fringing upon the freedom of religion of Jewish and Muslim minorities. In 2018, a covenant was signed between the government and religious associations that if an animal does not lose consciousness within 40 seconds, it must be sedated without delay.

- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** On June 26, 2018, the Dutch Senate approved the bill “Partial Prohibition of Face-Covering Clothing.” The ban went into effect in August 2019 and is effective in public transport, education, healthcare, and governmental buildings.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The year 2022 was a turbulent year for the Muslim community in the Netherlands. Statistics show that Muslim discrimination is rampant in the labor market, education, and the public sector. Several issues regarding institutional racism were central in public and political debates, such as ethnic profiling by the Dutch national police and the increasing securitization and monitoring of informal mosque education. We have also seen a growth of anti-Islamic rightist parties during 2022 (now four in total) and an intensification of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic rhetoric through various Islamophobic media outlets. At the same time, local Muslim communities, anti-racist activists and NGOs, and intellectuals and academics have worked together to counter Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in various ways.

This report presents the state of Islamophobia in the Netherlands in 2022, based on the most recent available statistics and research as well as media reports published throughout the year. Statistics are either from published academic work or research institutes such as the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), Statistics Netherlands (CBS), Movisie, and the Verwey-Jonker Institute (and their collaborative project Platform Inclusion & Community, otherwise known as KIS). Information was also gathered from yearly reports of anti-discrimination agencies and other official institutions such as the national police. The latest yearly report of the combined registrations of discriminatory incidents of the police, anti-discrimination agencies, and other Dutch organizations published in May 2022 covers the year 2021. Statistics on the year 2022 will become available in the course of 2023.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Two major reports published data on Muslim discrimination in Dutch society during 2022. The first was the Movisie report “No Room for Discrimination” (Geen ruimte voor discriminatie) published in March 2022.³ This report was catered towards anti-discrimination policymakers in municipalities and covered both statistics and effective strategies to combat anti-Muslim racism as well as other discriminatory grounds, such as anti-Black racism, antisemitism, anti-Romani, and LGBTI+ discrimination.⁴ The second was the annual report “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” (Discriminatiecijfers in 2021) published by Art. 1 in May 2022, which collects data

3. Accessible online through: <https://www.movisie.nl/publicatie/geen-ruimte-discriminatie> (accessed March 6, 2023).

4. Some of the strategies developed conjointly with Muslim grassroots organizations, are summarized in the Policy Recommendations section of this report.

on registered incidents of discrimination from the national police, anti-discrimination centers, and other organizations in the Netherlands.⁵

The 2022 Movisie report states that the debate surrounding Muslims in Dutch society remains intensely polarized, both in politics and in the public domain. Some of the major contentious topics that are debated include the ban on face coverings (including the burqa) in public spaces such as public transport and government buildings, the charge of alleged “anti-democratic tendencies” in Islamic schools, alleged foreign influencing and financing of Muslim organizations (including mosques), the refugee debate, and imam-training programs. Research shows that many Dutch citizens view Muslims negatively, and Muslims have had to increasingly deal with hate crimes and discrimination in various domains, such as the labor and housing market (Movisie, 2022).

The same report mentions that even though the Netherlands has several hotlines and registration offices for discrimination, the number of victims that report incidents is very low. Hence the available statistics only show the tip of the iceberg. According to 2020 statistics, anti-discriminations bureaus (ADVs) registered 391 incidents based on religion. About 79% of those related to Muslim discrimination (approximately 308 cases). The national police registered 180 incidents of discrimination based on religion. At the time of the publishing of the Movisie report, the police did not segregate incidents based on Muslim discrimination, but an analysis of case studies shows that most of these cases did indeed relate to Muslim discrimination (Movisie, 2022).⁶ MiND mentions 39 incidents of online discrimination based on religion, most of which similarly related to Muslim discrimination. The Movisie report also cites research conducted in 2020 by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) on the experience of discrimination among different groups in Dutch society. The research showed that Muslims experience discrimination more than other groups: 55% of Muslim stated they experienced discrimination in some form compared to 21% of Christians and 25% of non-believers. Muslim discrimination most often takes the form of negative behavior (49%) and/or unequal treatment (66%) (Movisie, 2022).

In addition, the Movisie report cited a 2018 survey of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) which shows that the Netherlands is one of the countries in Europe in which discrimination based on religion is most prevalent. No less than 42% of Dutch Muslims experience discrimination based on their migration background and 30% based on their religion. The discrimination experienced by Dutch Muslims was in

5. Accessible online through: <https://discriminatie.nl/publicaties/discriminatiecijfers-in-2021/> (accessed March 6, 2023).

6. In the report “Discrimination Statistics in 2021,” published a few months later, the police indicate Muslim discrimination as a separate category.

multiple domains: employment, the housing market, health care, and public or private services such as cultural facilities or the food services industry (Movisie, 2022).

The annual report “Discrimination Statistics in 2021,” published by Art. 1 in 2022, provided the collected registration of discriminatory incidents – including Muslim discrimination – of the Dutch national police, anti-discrimination bureaus (ADVs), and similar organizations.⁷ It also included legal appeals to the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (College voor de Rechten van de Mens) and registrations of the bureau for online discrimination (MiND), the National Ombudsman, and the Netherlands’ Ombudsman for Children. The report stated that the number of notices and incidents in 2021 has significantly risen compared to 2020. ADVs registered 6,922 notices (a growth of 26%), the national police registered 6,580 incidents (a growth of 7%), the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights received 739 appeals (a growth of 16%), and the National Ombudsman received 5,286 notices and questions on equal treatment (almost double the amount of 2020). Only MiND and the Netherlands’ Ombudsman for Children registered a slightly decreased number of discrimination incidents (339 and 10 notices respectively). This increase is partly explained due to Corona measures.⁸ Registrations by the national police increased in 2021, but the general picture stayed the same as in previous years. Most registered discriminatory incidents were based on migration background (42%) and sexual preference (32%); 4,069 of police registrations (62%) pertain to incidents of verbal assault, such as discriminatory cursing and insulting. In 726 cases (11%) there was also violence. ADVs mostly registered incidents involving unequal treatment, namely 4,959 instances (72%). While the total number of registrations has increased in 2021, there has been a slight decrease in registrations at ADVs involving discrimination based on migration, gender, and religion. Discrimination based on migration background went from 2,842 incidents in 2020 to 2,352 incidents in 2021. Discrimination based on gender went from 453 to 395, and based on religion from 391 to 253 in 2021. Statistics by the national police, however, showed a slight increase of registrations on these three discriminatory grounds. This, once again, shows the relative unreliability of these statistics, since we know from research that many Muslims hesitate to register incidents of Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination. In general, the number of notices and registrations of discrimination is much smaller than the actual incidents.⁹

7. This research report was published after the Movisie report and represents the most up-to-date statistics on discrimination for 2021. The statistics on discrimination in 2022 will become available mid-2023.

8. A part of the notices was based on discriminatory grounds not protected by the Dutch law, for example people who did not vaccinate themselves against Covid-19 for religious, social, and philosophical reasons (personal belief, conscience objection).

9. See Andriessen (2017), accessible online: <https://repository.scp.nl/bitstream/handle/publications/428/Essay%20Discriminatie%20-%20herkennen%2c%20benoemen%20en%20melden.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed March 6, 2023).

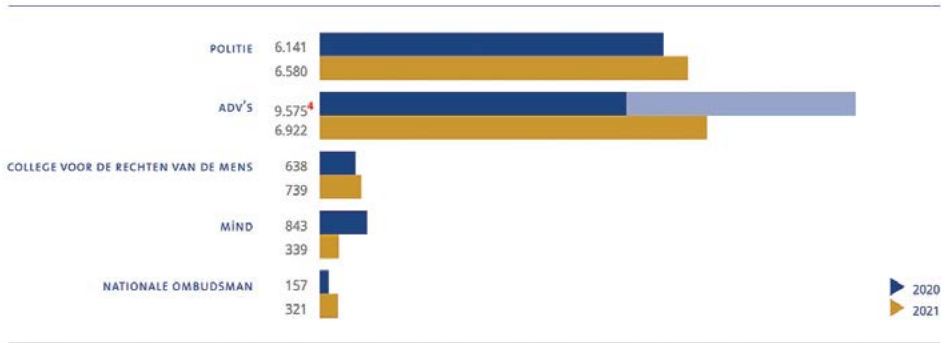


Figure 1: Overview of registration of discrimination incidents in 2020 and 2021 **Source:** “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” (Art. 1, 2022). These statistics show the registrations by the police (*politie*) grew from 6.141 in 2020 to 6.580 in 2021. The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (*College voor de Rechten van de Mens*) and the National Ombudsman (*nationale ombudsman*) similarly show increases from 638 to 739 and from 157 to 321, respectively. Only online discrimination bureau MiND shows a decrease of registrations. The incidents registered by anti-discrimination bureaus (ADV's) in 2020 take into consideration the broadcasting of an anti-Asian racist song during a broadcast (4.098). These were not included in other registrations.



Figure 2: Police registration of incidents of discrimination divided by discriminatory grounds **Source:** “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” (Art. 1, 2022). These statistics show that religion-based discrimination (*godsdienst*) remained approximately the same, 67% of which targeted Muslims. Discrimination based on migration background (*herkomst*) slightly decreased in 2021 from 43% to 42%. However, it is still by far the largest category. Research shows that Muslims experience discrimination based both on religion and migration background. Other statistics show antisemitism (*antisemitisme*), gender (*geslacht*), disability (*handicap*), worldview (*levensovertuiging*), sexual orientation (*seksuele gerichtheid*), and unknown/other (*onbekend/overig*).

In previous years, the national police and ADVs would not differentiate religions in discrimination incidents based on religious affiliation. This year, however, the report differentiates incidents specifically based on Muslim discrimination. These statistics give at least an indication of the registration of Muslim discrimination in the Netherlands, although the picture is far from complete.¹⁰ The large percentage of Mus-

10. The report “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” explicitly mentions that the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the national police, ADVs, and other discrimination registration agencies will work together in the coming years to improve the analyses of statistics related to Muslim discrimination (2022, 17).

lim discrimination over the total of incidents based on discrimination on the grounds of religion is striking. According to national police registration, 67% of the incidents based on religious discrimination targeted Muslims. As for the registrations of ADVs, 65% of religious-based discrimination related to incidents of Muslim discrimination. These statistics do not consider discrimination based on migration background, and we know from research on anti-Muslim racism that discrimination on these two discrimination grounds is often intertwined. So much so, that even people who are not Muslim (but have a “Muslim-sounding” name, for example) can also be victims of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim discrimination.¹¹

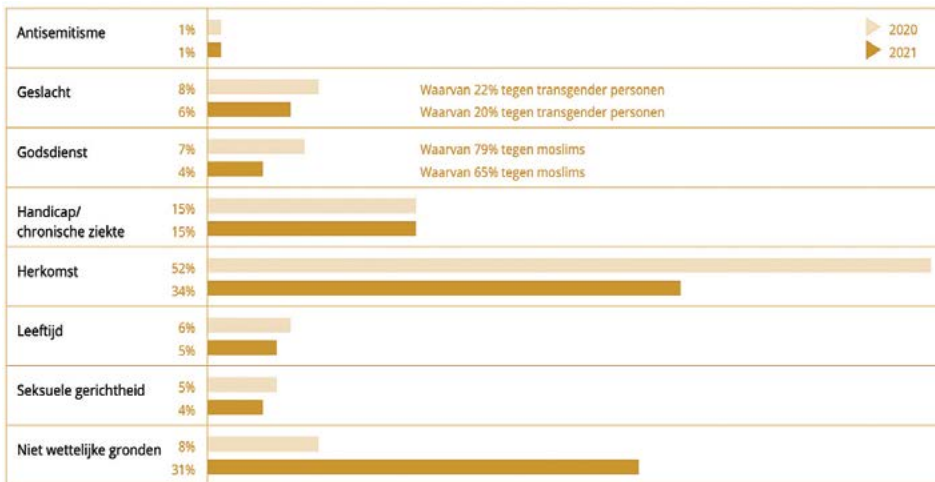


Figure 3: ADV registrations divided by discriminatory grounds Source: “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” (Art. 1, 2022). These statistics show a slight decrease of religion-based discrimination (*godsdienst*) from 7% in 2020 to 4% in 2021. Most of these incidents targeted Muslims (79% in 2020 and 65% in 2021). Discrimination based on migration background (*herkomst*) decreased according to the ADV registrations, from 52% in 2020 to 34% in 2021. See the remarks of migration-based discrimination under figure 2. Other categories are antisemitism (*antisemitisme*), gender (*geslacht*), disability/chronical disease (*handicap/chronische ziekte*), age (*leeftijd*), sexual orientation (*seksuele gerichtheid*), and non-legal grounds (*niet wettelijke gronden*).

The annual report “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” also provides statistics on the types of incidents. The police did not differentiate Muslim discrimination in this instance but mentions that most incidents relating to discrimination on the grounds of both religion and migration are verbal abuse (108 and 1,884 incidents, respectively). After that, the most frequent incidents of religion-based discrimination related to vandalism, violence in combination with cursing, and with threats (22, 14, and 13 incidents, respectively). For incidents on migration-based discrimination, violence combined with cursing and with threats stood out (351 and 292 incidents, respectively).

11. See the forthcoming KIS publication *Religious Critique or Discrimination of Muslims? An Exploration of the Scientific Literature on the Differences* (Religiekritiek of discriminatie van moslims? Inzichten uit de wetenschap over het verschil) (Vlug, Felten & Does, forthcoming in 2023 and downloadable from www.kis.nl).

DISCRIMINATIEGROND- EN WIJZE	BEDREIGING	BEKLADDING	BESPUGEN	GEWELD	GEWELD ICM UITLATING	PESTERIJ	UITLETING	VERNIELING	WEIGERING	ONBEKEND/OVERIG
Antisemitisme	63	22	2	1	40	4	463	26	0	6
Geslacht	6	2	0	1	7	3	28	0	3	3
Godsdienst	13	9	2	2	14	3	108	22	8	2
Handicap	16	0	1	0	12	4	78	2	33	7
Herkomst	292	29	22	13	351	55	1.884	52	24	67
Levensovertuiging	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	2
Seksuele gerichtheid	321	11	22	9	298	23	1.375	48	2	5
Onbekend/overig	7	277	0	1	4	2	129	193	9	33

Figure 4: Police statistics of discriminatory incidents based on the type of incident **Source:** "Discrimination Statistics in 2021" (Art. 1, 2022). These statistics show the forms of discrimination based on religion (*godsdien*s) and migration background (*herkomst*). These are threats (*bedreiging*), racist graffiti (*bekladding*), being spit at (*bespugen*), violence (*geweld*), violence in combination with verbal abuse (*geweld icm uitlating*), harassment (*pesterij*), verbal abuse (*uitlating*), vandalism (*vernieling*), rejection (*weigering*), and unknown/other (*onbekend/overig*). Other categories of discrimination include antisemitism (*antisemitisme*), gender (*geslacht*), disability (*handicap*), worldview (*levensovertuiging*), sexual orientation (*seksuele gerichtheid*), and unknown/other (*onbekend/overig*).

DISCRIMINATIEGROND- EN WIJZE	BEDREIGING	GEWELD	OMSTREDEN BEHANDELING	VIJANDIGE BEJEGENING	ONBEKEND/OVERIG
Antisemitisme	7	5	10	57	2
Geslacht	20	13	250	124	4
Waarvan tegen transgender personen	8	7	23	50	0
Godsdienst	26	3	118	120	1
Waarvan tegen moslims	24	3	59	102	0
Handicap/chronische ziekte	13	1	846	121	5
Herkomst	186	74	1.068	1.233	20
Leeftijd	1	1	319	19	2
Nationaliteit	1	0	113	11	0
Niet-wettelijke gronden	10	8	1.851	124	11
Seksuele gerichtheid	51	26	45	201	2

Figure 5: ADV statistics of discriminatory incidents based on the type of incident **Source:** "Discrimination Statistics in 2021" (Art. 1, 2022). These statistics show the forms of discrimination for the discriminatory grounds "religion" (*godsdienst*), of which specifically targeting Muslims (*waarvan tegen moslims*) and "migration background" (*herkomst*). These are threats (*bedreiging*), violence (*geweld*), unequal treatment (*omstreden behandeling*), hostile verbal treatment (*vijandige bejegening*), and unknown/other (*onbekend/overig*). Other grounds mentioned here are antisemitism (*antisemitisme*), gender (*geslacht*) of which specifically targeting transgender persons (*waarvan tegen transgender personen*), disability/chronical disease (*handicap/chronische ziekte*), age (*leeftijd*), nationality (*nationaliteit*), non-legal grounds (*niet-wettelijke gronden*), sexual orientation (*seksuele gerichtheid*).

The ADV statistics give specific numbers for Muslim discrimination. In terms of religion-based discrimination, hostile verbal treatment seems to stand out with 120 incidents, 102 of which were against Muslims. Following this, unfair or unequal treatment (118 incidents, 59 of which against Muslims) and threats (26 incidents, 24 of which against Muslims) stand out in terms of numbers. Incidents based on migration background were not linked to Muslimness, even though they may very well have in-

volved Muslims with a migration background. Here hostile verbal treatment (1,233 incidents) and unfair or unequal treatment (1,068) stand out as the most common forms of discrimination.

The report furthermore explicitly mentions that while registration of religious-based discrimination has slightly decreased, it is striking that many of the incidents targeted Muslims. It also stresses that oftentimes religious-based discrimination goes together with discrimination based on migration background. Based on a qualitative analysis of police registrations, incidents of Muslim discrimination are most often about people who are verbally assaulted and harassed based on their (alleged) Islamic faith. The (assumed) Islamic faith is oftentimes the direct reason for the conflict, although not always. Sometimes, other immediate causes of conflict indirectly result in Muslim discrimination, such as conflicts in traffic or between neighbors. An analysis of ADV registration of incidents of discrimination shows that religion-based Muslim discrimination is often about Muslim women that are rejected for job interviews because they are wearing a headscarf or colleagues at work who utter insulting remarks about the Islamic faith of their Muslim colleagues. With regards to the domain of education, an analysis of ADV-registered incidents shows complaints about educational material that is experienced as discriminatory against Muslims.

What follows are some examples and visuals of Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination that occurred in 2022. These are based mainly on reporting and coverage in some of the major Dutch newspapers and other media outlets.



Figure 6: PEDIGA announced anti-Islam BBQs during Ramadan (March 25) **Source:** https://pegidanederland.com/blog/index.php/?amp;frame=&path=&focus=STRATP_com_cm4all_wdn_Flatpress_31562962&path=?x=entry:entry220325-124453#C_STRATP_com_cm4all_wdn_Flatpress_31562962__anchor

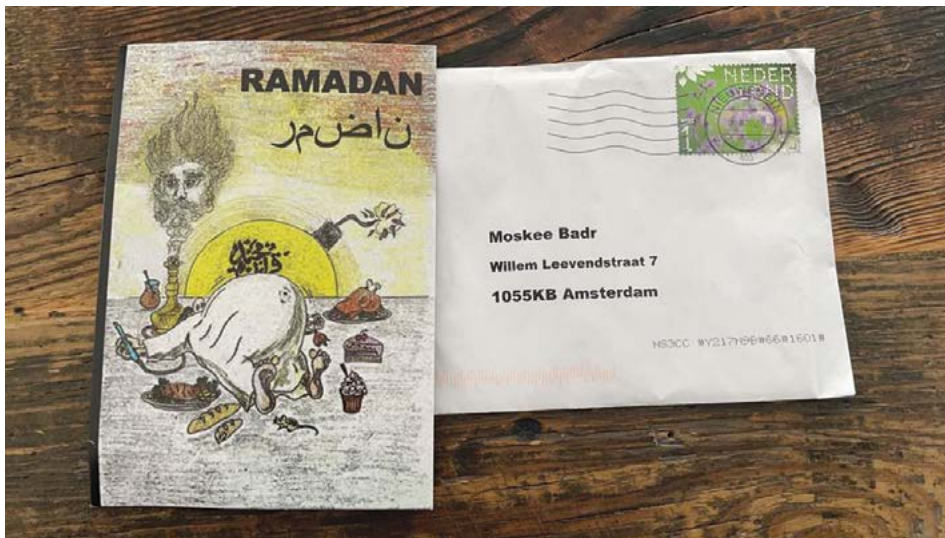
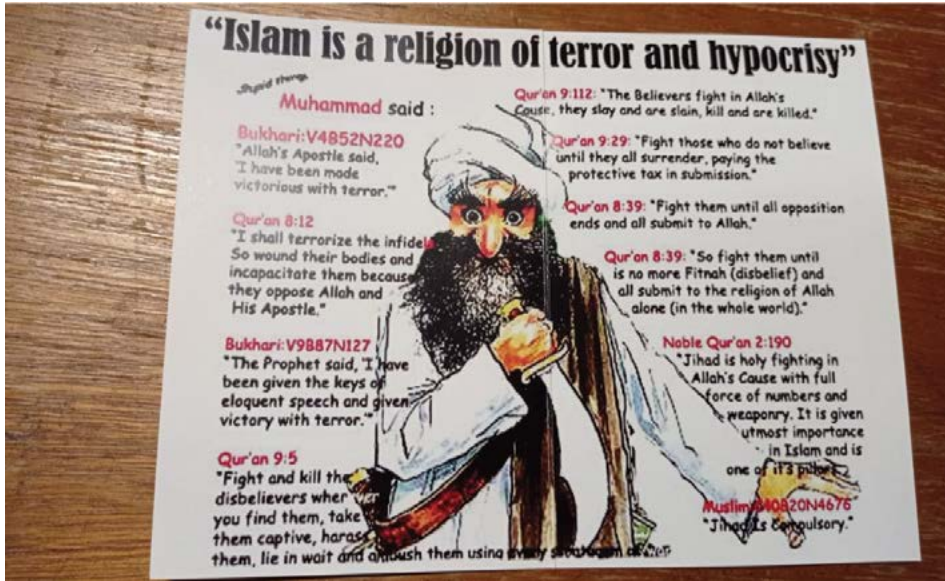


Figure 7: Hate mail sent to mosques in Amsterdam at the start of Ramadan (April 4) Source: <https://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/ramadan-start-met-haatpost-en-provocerende-pegida-barbecues>

De omstreden tweet:

'You know what hurts Prime Minister @CMShehbaz, is the violence of the intolerant ideology called Islam, the fatwa's and death threats by people from #Pakistan, who are inspired by the fake prophet #Mohammad. We always choose freedom ver Mohammedanism. And you'll never win.'

Figure 8: Tweet by PVV leader Geert Wilders, a Dutch anti-Islam politician, causing him to get banned from Twitter temporarily (April 24) Source: <https://www.trouw.nl/binnenland/twitter-schorst-tijdelijk-account-van-geert-wilders-na-tweet-over-moslims~ba5e8d42/>



Figure 9: Muslima in the Hague shopping mall molested, and headscarf pulled off: "Go back to your own country!"
Source: <https://dekanttekening.nl/nieuws/den-haag-vrouw-slaat-moslima-trekt-hijab-af-rot-op-naar-je-eigen-land/>



Figure 10: Muslima with headscarf rejected for job interview (July 22) Source: <https://www.trouw.nl/binnenland/sollicitant-met-hoofddoek-wordt-twee-keer-zo-vaak-afgewezen~b7298f04/>



Figure 11: Arson at Islamic Center in Veldhoven (August 20) Source: <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/brand-gesticht-bij-islamitisch-centrum-in-velhoven~a272f164/>



Figure 12: Controversy due to Islamophobic Facebook messages by local politician in Lelystad; "I do understand those burkas. If I want to silence my parrot, I also throw a black cloth over it." (August 24) Source: <https://www.omroepflevoland.nl/nieuws/298764/ophef-over-berichten-raadslid-dreesman-op-facebook-kwetsend-en-zeer-zorgelijk>



Figure 13: Muslima discriminated for wearing a headscarf during job interview for position at Dutch court. (September 26) **Source:** <https://www.omroepwest.nl/nieuws/4626357/mervet-voelt-zich-gediscrimineerd-bij-sollicitatie-ben-je-bereid-wat-aan-je-hoofddoek-te-doen>



Figure 14: Swimming pools in The Hague refuse entry to a Muslim woman in "burkini" (October 11) **Source:** <https://www.ad.nl/den-haag/zwembaden-mogen-dochter-van-mahwish-niet-meer-weigeren-in-boerkini-iedereen-moet-kunnen-zwemmen-br~a876d6f6/>



Figure 15: Muslim organizations in Dordrecht are angered by local authorities for accusing them as the main cause for the rat problem in the municipality (October 21) **Source:** <https://www.ad.nl/dordrecht/moslim-organisaties-verbolgen-over-uitspraken-wethouder-dit-is-gewoon-discriminerend~a101cf85/>



Figure 16: PEGIDA leader arrested for threatening to burn the Quran (October 23) **Source:** <https://www.omroepwest.nl/nieuws/4643720/voorman-pegida-aangehouden-bij-protest-in-den-haag>



Figure 17: PEGIDA announces Quran burning in Groningen (November 11) **Source:** <https://www.ad.nl/groningen/pegida-kondigt-koranverbranding-aan-in-groningen~ab901be7/>



Figure 18: Muslim organizations sue Dutch minister of education for infringing their fundamental rights and inciting Muslim hatred (December 5) **Source:** <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/moslimorganisaties-doen-aangifte-tegen-minister-wiersma-om-schenden-grondwet~a6f36e8a/>

Employment

The 2022 Movisie report mentions several studies on discrimination in recruitment and selection in the job market. One important study by Di Stasio et al. (2021) showed that Muslims are discriminated against during job applications. If a CV shows a place of birth from an (assumed) Muslim country, that person has a smaller chance of being invited for an interview than someone with the exact same CV but who was born in the Netherlands. In addition, mentioning being active on the board of an Islamic organization in a CV significantly reduces the chances of getting invited to a job interview. The report additionally makes mention of a vast array of corroborating studies from 2014 to 2019 that show Muslims are discriminated against in the Dutch job market.

DISCRIMINATIEGROND- EN TERREIN	ANTISEMITISME		GESLACHT		Waarvan tegen transgender personen		GODSDIENST		Waarvan tegen moslims		HANDICAP/CHRONISCHE ZIEKTE		LEEFTIJD		NATIONALITEIT		NIET-WETTELIJKE GRONDEN		SEKSUELE GERICHTHEID	
	2	140	6	63	38	100	466	114	32	102	28									
Arbeidsmarkt	2	140	6	63	38	100	466	114	32	102	28									
Buurt/wijk	9	16	9	18	16	21	283	3	1	18	55									
Collectieve voorzieningen	9	52	12	26	11	296	312	112	39	940	13									
Commerciële dienstverlening	3	37	10	15	12	298	228	65	16	152	8									
Horeca/amusement	1	7	0	4	2	31	39	1	6	336	8									
Huisvesting	1	14	4	2	2	42	105	17	10	38	10									
Media/reclame	7	19	6	15	10	7	114	3	2	35	10									
Onderwijs	2	12	3	30	26	47	136	5	4	57	5									
Openbare ruimte/publiek domein	23	16	12	14	11	17	182	1	0	22	82									
Politie/OM	2	6	1	4	2	14	124	0	4	14	4									
Privésfeer	1	11	4	7	2	4	32	0	1	12	6									
Publieke/politieke opinie	7	10	5	15	12	6	55	1	1	40	19									
Sport/recreatie	3	13	2	8	4	29	69	11	2	177	9									

Figure 19: ADV statistics based on location of discrimination **Source:** “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” (Art. 1, 2022). These statistics show the social domains in which discriminatory incidents took place for the category religion (*godsdiens*) of which targeting Muslims (*waarvan tegen moslims*) and migration background (*herkomst*). The domains mentioned are labor market (*arbeidsmarkt*), neighborhood (*buurt/wijk*), collective services (*collectieve voorzieningen*), commercial services (*commerciële voorzieningen*), food service industry/entertainment (*horeca/amusement*), housing market (*huisvesting*), media/advertisement (*media/reclame*), education (*onderwijs*), publicly owned land/public domain (*openbare ruimte/publieke domein*), police/public prosecutor (*politie/OM*), private sphere (*privésfeer*), public/political opinion (*publieke/politieke opinie*), and sports/recreation (*sport/recreatie*). Other discriminatory grounds include antisemitism (*antisemitisme*), gender (*geslacht*) of which targeting transgender persons (*waarvan tegen transgender personen*), disability/chronical disease (*handicap/chronische ziekte*), age (*leeftijd*), nationality (*nationaliteit*), non-legal grounds (*niet-wettelijke gronden*), and sexual orientation (*seksuele gerichtheid*).

The 2022 annual report “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” provides statistics on the various domains and locations of discriminatory incidents, categorized according to the various grounds of discrimination. Discrimination in the labor market tops the list, followed by education, the public sector (hospitals, municipal services, tax authorities, etc.), public and political opinion, and the media. Religion-based discrimination mostly takes place in the labor market (63 incidents, of which 39 against Muslims). After the labor market, religion-based discrimination occurs in education (30 incidents, 26 against Muslims), the public sector (26 incidents, 11 against Muslims),

public and political opinion (15 incidents, 12 against Muslims), and media (15 incidents, 10 against Muslims). The location of discrimination based on migrant background is also dominated by the labor market (466 incidents). This is followed by the public sector (312 incidents), neighborhoods (283 incidents), and commercial services (228 incidents).

Education

We do not have statistics or in-depth analysis available regarding Islamophobia and anti-Muslim prejudice in educational materials and textbooks in Dutch schools. The 2022 annual report “Discrimination Statistics in 2021” explicitly mentions complaints about educational materials that are experienced as discriminatory against Muslims, based on the analysis of ADV registration, but no further details are provided. However, several major public and political debates developed around Muslims and education throughout 2022. There was the ongoing debate surrounding overt government-backed probes – carried out by research institute NTA – that were conducted without consent in mosques in several Dutch municipalities.¹² These secret probes drastically damaged the – already low – trust of the Dutch Muslim community in the Dutch national and local governments.¹³ Towards the end of 2022, Minister of Education Dennis Wiersma reiterated his intention to increase the monitoring of informal mosque education. This happened despite strong advice against mosque monitoring by his own government officials and the state attorney’s judgment of the move as unconstitutional and infringing upon basic human rights, such as the freedom of religion.¹⁴ In addition, much debate in 2022 revolved around the establishment of Islamic high schools in four major Dutch cities. While the Dutch Muslim community has – rather successfully – been opening Islamic primary schools in the Netherlands since 1988, Islamic secondary has been met with strong societal and political resistance.¹⁵ Various Islamic secondary education projects were initiated and rejected throughout 2021. In 2022, only the initiative in the city of Utrecht received permission (after first being rejected) after an extensive legal objection procedure.¹⁶

12. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2401867-nrc-moskeeen-heimelijk-onderzocht-door-particulier-bedrijf> (accessed March 8, 2023)

13. The NTA probes were covered in detail in the 2021 edition of the EIR (see the relevant report on <https://islamophobiareport.com/en/>).

14. See <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2454729-minister-wiersma-negeerde-adviezen-ambtenaren-over-weekendscholen> and <https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-e7a032b6e87336ec0d2b7dd0fd597841a42312e9/pdf> (accessed March 8, 2023).

15. For a historical overview of Dutch Islamic primary education and Dutch law regarding religious education, see Zehra Vlug-Unver, *Islamic Primary Education in the Netherlands: Negotiating Religious and National Values in an Era of Societal Tensions* (thesis, Ibn Haldun University, published online: <https://openaccess.ihu.edu.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12154/1005/Zehra%20Vlug%20Tez.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, accessed March 8, 2023).

16. <https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/plannen-nieuwe-islamitische-middelbare-school-in-utrecht-toch-goedgekeurd-iedereen-is-er-welkom-a1a5749a/> (accessed March 8, 2023).

Another major point of contention was the debate surrounding discrimination regarding internships, especially in the case of secondary vocational education (MBO). Every year, the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (Onderwijsinspectie) produces an annual report on the state of education in the Netherlands. In 2022, discrimination during internships – an obligatory part of many Dutch educational programs – was highlighted.¹⁷ Earlier research by Platform Inclusion & Community (KIS) in October 2021 had shown that especially students with migrant backgrounds fell victim to this kind of discrimination. The research shows that prejudices and stereotypes play a major role during interviews for internships. The 2022 report of the Inspectorate of Education states that discrimination during educational internships remains a major problem. Students with a migration background are required to send out more application letters and must search longer for a suitable internship than students with no migration background. A separate study in the municipality of Utrecht, one of the four largest cities of the Netherlands, corroborates these findings. The inspectorate report also mentions that 75% of the students who experience discrimination do not discuss their experiences with their respective educational institutions. The main reason seems to be that students think their institutions will not adequately address their problems, if at all. This is also reflected in the small number of complaints filed at the Internship Discrimination Hotline (Meldpunt stagediscriminatie). In 2020, only 39 complaints were filed, compared to 47 the year before. The inspectorate report expresses its concern over the discrepancy between the relative increase in incidents and the simultaneous decrease in the number of complaints. According to the directorate, school boards and educational institutions should take responsibility to create safe environments in which students are encouraged to file complaints, for example through specially dedicated student counters at schools.

Politics

The year 2022 was marked by several key events regarding Muslim discrimination in the Dutch political domain. The Dutch political sphere is increasingly polarized as illustrated by the growth of new minor fringe parties on both sides of the political spectrum (albeit predominantly on the right). The so-called Islam debate in Dutch society, which started in the 1990s with conservative-liberal intellectuals such as the VVD politician Bolkenstein and intensified after 9/11 and the murder of Islam critics Pim Fortuyn (2002) and Theo van Gogh (2004), continues unabatedly, and recently intensified by the state-funded NTA undercover probe into mosque education and other controversies.¹⁸

17. <https://www.kis.nl/artikel/de-staat-van-het-onderwijs-stagediscriminatie-blijft-een-probleem> (accessed February 28, 2023).

18. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2401867-nrc-moskeeen-heimelijk-onderzocht-door-particulier-bedrijf> (accessed March 6, 2023).

The Dutch government seems to adopt an ambiguous stance regarding Muslim communities in the Netherlands. On the one hand, we can observe a growth of anti-Muslim rhetoric in oppositional political parties (PVV, FvD, JA21, Van Haga Group) and even center-right liberal parties (VVD). Questions surrounding immigration, integration, refugees, and Muslims in Dutch society remain high on the political agenda. The PVV-election program is full of statements that can be seen as anti-Islamic and Islamophobic. Dutch citizens with a Moroccan background, which comprise the largest Muslim ethnic group in the Netherlands, are depicted as “street terrorists” and Islam is described as a “violent political ideology.” In addition, the PVV proposed a restrictive immigration policy and a total ban on migrants from Islamic countries, a ban on what they call the “spread of Islamic ideology” (including a ban on Islamic schools, mosques, and the Quran); a ban on headscarves in government buildings; no right to vote or political positions for people with a double nationality; and the establishment of a “Ministry for Immigration, Remigration and De-Islamization.”¹⁹



Figure 20: Anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders in the PVV election program for 2021-2025 **Source:** <https://www.pvv.nl/images/09012020/verkiezingen2020/0acxyuew34z/VerkiezingsProgramma2021-Final.pdf>

19. <https://www.pvv.nl/images/09012020/verkiezingen2020/0acxyuew34z/VerkiezingsProgramma2021-Final.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2023).

At the same time, the Dutch government has made great strides in anti-discrimination and racism policies, including some aspects of anti-Muslim racism. A National Coordinator against Discrimination and Racism (NCDR) was appointed for the first time with the explicit assignment to address Muslim and other forms of discrimination. In December 2022, the Dutch government for the first time officially apologized for its role in transatlantic slavery.²⁰ In May 2022, it also acknowledged the existence of institutional racism, especially regarding the childcare benefits scandal (*toeslagaffaire*), which involved the targeting of Dutch citizens with migrant backgrounds by the tax authorities.²¹

In October 2021, the Dutch government appointed its first National Coordinator against Discrimination and Racism (NCDR), Rabin S. Baldewigh.²² The NCDR operates under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, and is tasked with developing and executing a multiyear national action plan against discrimination and racism, in conjunction with policymakers, civil society initiatives, and interest groups. In September 2022, the NCDR presented its first national program.²³ Muslim discrimination figures quite prominently in the NCDR program. It focuses on the improvement of the recognition, prevention, and registration of acts of discrimination and racism, and on the betterment of the support and protection of its victims. A major point was the recommendation to allow the headscarf in public offices, such as the police and community service officers (CSOs). This was an important message in the context of ongoing public debates regarding the presence of religious (and especially Islamic) symbols in the Dutch public domain. On this, the NCDR publicly stated that expressions of religiosity do not diminish the “neutrality and professionalism” of the government. The suggestion that Muslim women wearing headscarves would be unable to do their work in a neutral way is a form of stigmatization, the NCDR argued.²⁴ In addition, the NCDR announced a large-scale study to be conducted on Muslim discrimination and extra investments in combating discrimination in the workforce.

Media

In October 2022, a study was published about the use of visual materials regarding Muslimas wearing the headscarf in the Dutch press.²⁵ The study focused on three of

20. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/12/19/excuses-regering-voor-slavernijverleden-nederland> (accessed March 8, 2023).

21. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2430805-kabinet-erkent-institutioneel-racisme-bij-deel-fiscus-heeft-velen-pijn-gedaan> (accessed March 8, 2023).

22. In addition to the NCDR, the Dutch government appointed a separate National Coordinator against Antisemitism (NCAB), which operates under the Ministry of Justice and Security. The current NCAB is Eddo Verdoner.

23. <https://np2022.bureauncdr.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2022/12/NCDR-Nationaal-Programma-2022-online-v2.pdf> (accessed February 27, 2023).

24. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2445196-advies-maak-excuses-voor-slavernij-en-sta-hoofddoek-bij-politie-toe> (accessed February 27, 2023).

25. <https://ewoudbutter.nl/2022/10/31/moslimas-in-kranten-een-verkennend-onderzoek-naar-fotos-van-geslurde-moslimas-in-nederlandse-kranten/> (accessed March 9, 2023).

the Netherlands' largest newspapers: *De Telegraaf*, *NRC*, and *Volkscrant*. The researchers responsible for the study analyzed the visual material published in these newspapers for the past two decades amounting to a total of 2,561 visuals (43% from *NRC*, 38% from *Volkscrant*, and 19% from *De Telegraaf*). Some of the most striking conclusions from the report are that most pictures were of hijab-wearing women from abroad (as opposed to those living as Dutch citizens in the Netherlands). The women were situated in war zones, depicted as refugees, as victims of a disaster, or as victims of oppressions. These Muslim women were also depicted as (victims of) terrorists. Most pictures were used in articles that in some way or another addressed the perceived problems of "multicultural society." The dominant way Muslim women are depicted in Dutch media, to cite the report, is as "needy, screaming, crying, despairing, and oppressed." The depiction of Muslim women in Dutch media is predominantly stereotypical, one-sided, and negative. These negative stereotypes can play a role, the researchers argue, in Muslim women's societal role and various forms of discrimination, racism and sexism.²⁶

The 2022 Movisie report mentioned earlier makes mention of research that indicates that negative media coverage could be a possible trigger for anti-Muslim racism. For example, media can play an important role in framing and validating certain stereotypes about Muslims. Research also shows that the media can influence public opinion and political discourse on criminality. For example, news stories about problems with safety that are caused by ethnic minorities are often printed on the front page. Furthermore, newspapers are more often inclined to name the migration background of a perpetrator if they are a Dutch Muslim minority, such as people with a Dutch Moroccan lineage.

Justice System

There has been an ongoing discussion in Dutch society and politics about the wearing of headscarves by Muslimas who work in public roles, such as the police or courts. In March 2022, Minister of Justice and Safety Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius called for a ban on headscarves for community service officers (BOAs). Yeşilgöz-Zegerius argued that BOAs should be held to the same requirements of neutrality as police officers. Various local municipalities have expressed objections to the minister's call.²⁷ In April 2022, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights called a ban on headscarves for BOAs stigmatizing and ineffective. The human rights body disagrees that people in public functions who are visibly religious would not be able to uphold neutrality and impartially execute their job. It also mentioned that especially women and girls would be targeted by the measure, and that it would damage their independence and social

26. Ibid.

27. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2420790-yesilgoz-geen-hoofddoek-of-keppel-voor-boa-s-tijdens-hun-werk> (accessed March 9, 2023).

participation.²⁸ The political opposition party DENK also critically addressed and questioned the minister in parliament during political debates.²⁹

In October 2022, the European Court of Justice judged that under certain conditions employers can ban the headscarf and other expressions of religiosity at work.³⁰ Dutch lawyers, such as Elsa van de Loo, criticized the practical applicability of this judgment. Especially the condition that employers need to be able to explain and substantiate the necessity of such a ban for their company would be extremely difficult, she argued. A company, for example, should hypothetically be able to prove that its finances would be affected negatively if someone with a headscarf worked there, which is nearly impossible.³¹

In November of 2022, Minister of Education Wiersma decided he wants to put informal mosque education and Muslim weekend schools under inspection and monitoring by the Inspection of Education, despite being advised against doing so due to the measure being unconstitutional and against the basic human right of religious freedom. These informal Muslim educational activities, the minister argued, are “antidemocratic and anti-integrative” and create the “danger of parallel societies.”³² In December 2022, hundreds of Muslim organizations filled charges against the minister for trying to implement a draconic measure that is unconstitutional and infringing upon the rights of Dutch Muslims.³³

Internet

The registration bureau for online discrimination (MiND) registered 339 incidents in 2021. Most acts of discrimination took place on individual websites (48%), followed by discriminatory expressions on social media (34%). The most important type of discrimination is on the grounds of migration background (35%). Religion-based discrimination was relatively less frequent (6%). It must, however, be kept in mind that in the case of Muslims, discrimination based on migration background and religion is often intertwined.

Several Dutch websites, blogs, and television programs regularly produce content that could be considered Islamophobic and anti-Muslim racist. In November

28. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2424090-mensenrechtencollege-noemt-hoofddoekverbod-boa-s-stigmatiserend-en-ineffectief> (accessed March 2009).

29. https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/kamer_in_het_kort/denk-stelt-vragen-over-het-verbod-op-hoofddoek-en (accessed March 9, 2023).

30. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/general-headscarf-ban-work-is-ok-europes-top-court-says-2022-10-13/> (accessed March 9, 2023).

31. <https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/nederland/artikel/5340058/europees-hof-hoofddeksel-neutraliteitsbeleid> (accessed March 9, 2023).

32. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2452893-kabinet-wil-toezicht-op-weekendscholen-gevaar-voor-parallele-samenlevingen> (accessed March 9, 2023).

33. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2455217-muslimorganisaties-doen-aangifte-tegen-wiersma-om-schenden-grondwet> (accessed March 9, 2023).

2022, for example, the website *GeenStijl* (lit. “Tasteless”) ridiculed the conversion to Islam of two Dutch celebrities and depicted Islam as being fine with “killing disbelievers, throwing gay people from tall buildings, and stoning women.”³⁴ The website also promotes books with Islamophobic content, such as the anti-Muslim racist conspiracy theory that Muslims secretly conspire to take over Europe to establish a Sharia state (the so-called Eurabia conspiracy theory).³⁵ The television production company *Ongehoord Nederland* (lit. “Unheard Netherlands”) also regularly produces racist and Islamophobic content. The television station regularly invites known Islamophobes, mostly from the Netherlands and Belgium, to speak about issues related to Islam and Muslims in Europe. In May 2022, for example, *Ongehoord Nederland* invited the Belgian extreme-right politician Filip DeWinter on the show, in which he argued in favor of the facticity of the *Umvolkung* conspiracy theory (Dutch: *omvolkingstheorie*). This anti-Muslim and anti-migrant racist conspiracy theory claims that the “original” peoples of Europe are secretly being supplanted through mass immigration with the goal of destroying “Western civilization.”³⁶

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As in previous years, Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom (PVV) have a prominent and influential role in anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim discourse as one of the major Dutch oppositional parties. These are now joined in 2022 by new voices on the right or extreme-right political spectrum. A major new player in Thierry Baudet and his Forum for Democracy (FvD). However, his stance is less specifically anti-Islam, and he has even admitted appreciating some aspects of the Islamic faith and Muslim culture.³⁷ It is clear, however, that his political agenda is anti-immigrant and against what he perceives as “mass migration.” The FvD has also been severely criticized for adhering to various kinds of racist and antisemitic conspiracy theories.³⁸ Two new parties in the Dutch parliament, JA21 and Group van Haga, are both minor splinter parties that separated from the FvD after an internal power struggle. They tend to present themselves as more moderate than the FvD; however, in terms of the political themes of immigration, integration, and Muslim presence in the Netherlands, they hold very similar views to the PVV and FvD.

There are also several intellectual and academics who are regularly involved in anti-Islam and anti-Muslim campaigning through publications, interviews, blogs,

34. <https://www.geenstijl.nl/5167882/rot-op-naar-glamorama/> (accessed March 9, 2023).

35. <https://www.geenstijl.nl/5166427/safari-eurabia-er-waart-een-spook-door-europa/> (accessed March 9, 2023).

36. <https://dekkanttekening.nl/nieuws/ophef-om-omvolkingstheorie-bij-on-moslimhaat-op-kosten-belasting-betaler2/> (accessed March 9, 2023).

37. <https://dekkanttekening.nl/nieuws/baudet-ik-heb-heel-veel-prachtige-elementen-in-de-islam-leren-kennen2/> (accessed March 9, 2023).

38. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2448865-grote-zorgen-in-de-tweede-kamer-over-complottheorieen-baudet> (accessed March 9, 2023).

newspapers, podcasts, and other outlets. Many of these are centered around the Faculty of Law of Leiden University, such as law professors Paul Cliteur and the Iranian-born Afshin Ellian. Cliteur is a known Islam-critic and has been politically involved with the FvD from its inception. In fact, Cliteur was a doctoral advisor to party leader Thierry Baudet at Leiden University. Law students at Leiden University have complained about his alleged Islamophobic and antisemitic remarks in classes.³⁹ Afshin Ellian is known for his anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim rhetoric through publications and media interviews, such as his book *Allah weet het niet beter* (lit. “Allah Does Not Know Best.”)

As in previous years, the main anti-Islamic activist organization in the Netherlands in the Dutch version of PEGIDA, along with the right-extremist organizations Identitair Verzet, the Dutch branch of the Identitarian movement. Both anti-Islam movements have roots in other European countries. PEGIDA in the Netherlands has frequently called for the tearing and burning of the Quran.⁴⁰ In October 2022, PEGIDA leader Edwin Wagenveld was arrested by the police in Rotterdam on the grounds that his actions could cause riots.⁴¹

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Several Dutch political parties actively engage in anti-racist rhetoric, such as DENK and BIJ1. These efforts are supported by several left-leaning, anti-racist academics, such as the Leiden University professor of migration history Leo Lucassen and Radboud University anthropologist Martijn de Koning. The latter is well known for his blog CLOSER, where he provides political and social commentary on issues related to Muslims in the Netherlands, the “Dutch Islam” debate, and Islamophobia.⁴² The blog Republiek Allochtonie, maintained by researcher Ewoud Butter, also regularly publishes both news items and research on Islamophobia in the Netherlands.⁴³ Furthermore, there are several research institutes and NGOs that either directly try to counter Islamophobia or racism in a more general sense, such as Anne Frank Stichting (Anne Frank Foundation), Movisie/KIS, Artikel 1, and IZI Solutions. This has resulted in several publications over the years, including in 2022 a report on how to deal with anti-Muslim racism and other forms of racism at a local level, and a report

39. <https://www.groene.nl/artikel/een-leids-onderzoek> (accessed March 9, 2023).

40. <https://www.ad.nl/den-haag/pegida-demonstratie-in-den-haag-ontbonden-deelnemers-weigerden-betoging-zonder-korans-ab1f64c0/> (accessed March 9, 2023).

41. <https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/pegidavoorman-boos-over-arrestatie-politie-staat-achter-actie-om-rellen-te-voorkomen-a42cdc7d/> (accessed March, 2023).

42. <https://religionresearch.org/closer/2022/08/15/rushdie-opnieuw-een-paar-notities-over-kraanvogels-politiseren-en-islamofobie/> (accessed March 9, 2023).

43. <https://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/ramadan-start-met-haatpost-en-provocerende-pegida-barbecues> (accessed March 9, 2023).

on how to battle anti-Muslim and antisemitic conspiracy theories, especially in classroom situations.⁴⁴

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Based on previous editions of the EIR and relevant research published in 2022, below we have summarized some of the main policy recommendations for battling Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination in the Netherlands, both at the local and national levels. For the national level, we make use of the recent multiyear action plan developed by the office of the NCDR, which gathered many useful good practices and policy insights based on townhall meetings with Muslim community leaders, researchers, and policymakers from various ministries as well as other official institutions, such as the national police and the Public Prosecution Service. For local policy recommendations we rely on the recently published Movisie report (2022), which was developed conjointly with grassroots Muslim organizations, specifically catered towards engaging anti-Muslim racism (both institutionally and in everyday situations) at the municipal level.

Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism cannot be effectively countered without corporation at the national level. The problematics are simply too widespread, as they cover many social domains such as the labor market, education, the housing market, institutional racism in the government and police, etc. Awareness and recognition are key. Both national and local governments should recognize the existence of anti-Muslim racism in its various forms and work towards developing policies that are aimed at prevention and countering. Several points should be taken into consideration:

- Policymakers should use existing knowledge and instruments to counter anti-Muslim racism preventatively by supporting local governments and social professionals. In doing so, they can actively spread and implement anti-discrimination interventions.
- Municipalities often have a blind spot for anti-Muslim racism or do not have the funds, people, or expertise to engage with it actively. The national government should support local governments in these matters.
- Research shows that Muslims have a very low tendency to register acts of discrimination for various reasons. The process of registration should become much more transparent and accessible, so that the resulting statistics are more realistic. This can help to get a realistic idea of the problem and the need to counter it.

44. See <https://www.movisie.nl/publicatie/geen-ruimte-discriminatie> and <https://www.movisie.nl/publicatie/antisemitische-antimoslimracistische-complottheorieen-hoe-voorkom-je-ze> (both accessed March 9, 2023).

- National and local government and ADVs should work together better. Also, when it comes to people working on different grounds of discrimination such as religion, race, gender, etc., an intersectional approach could be helpful.
- The government should be increasingly aware of institutional racism in some of its own institutions and actively counter it. The establishment of the new NCDR could play an important role in this and act as an interdepartmental motor for discussions about institutionalized anti-Muslim racism.
- Hate speech should be better monitored and countered to decrease the stigmatization and stereotyping of Muslims, which results in exclusion and discrimination of Muslims in various domains.

The Movisie researchers on discrimination and racism developed a step-by-step road map with local strategies and policy recommendations to combat Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination at the municipal level. The full report (Movisie, 2022) has separate road maps for different grounds of discrimination (religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, etc.). The road map for anti-Muslim racism was developed in close cooperation with local Muslim communities and civil society organizations. It consists of seven steps:

Step 1: Municipalities and local governments should work together with Islamic civil society organizations and local anti-discrimination bureaus (ADV's)

These can, for example, be local Muslim neighborhood initiatives, mosques, and/or Muslim youth organizations. They are best equipped to point out what is happening locally in terms of anti-Muslim racism. In building these relations it is very important to build durable and lasting relationships that warrant equality. Muslims and Muslim communities should be co-owners of actions and processes. Doing so ensures a grassroots approach to battling Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination that also enjoys the support of the local Muslim community. It is also important to include ADVs early in the process of policymaking.⁴⁵

Step 2: Create a unified vision for discrimination policy and enable local support

Local governments should formulate explicit principles for policies against anti-Muslim racism. These policies should be in harmony and reinforce broader discrimination policies and related policy domains, such as diversity, participation, inclusion, and social cohesion. Discrimination and racism should be prioritized in policymaking. In doing so, it should be considered that even if a location has a small

45. ADVs have a legal responsibility according to Dutch law to execute two main tasks: (1) impartial legal and social support to persons experiencing discrimination and (2) the registration of discriminatory incidents. Due to the expertise invested in ADVs, they can also be a good source of advice to policymakers in terms of prevention or developing policies regarding discrimination.

Muslim community, anti-Muslim racism is damaging and wholly undesirable. Also, battling anti-Muslim racism should not be framed as a political statement. Discrimination is forbidden by Dutch law and should be the concern of all political parties.

Step 3: Explore local problematics

In order to prioritize and formulate points of attention regarding anti-discrimination policies, it is important to know the main local problems concerning Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination. In doing so, it might help to study cases of anti-Muslim incidents registered by municipalities, ADVs, and by the police. In addition, further research either qualitative or quantitative must be promoted since we know from previous research that people experiencing anti-Muslim racism tend not to report incidents - and hence we know that registered incidents are only the tip of the iceberg. It can also help to be in close contact with local police, schools, employers, sporting clubs, leisure and music associations, and the like regarding Muslim discrimination.

Step 4: Create and embed specially dedicated policies for anti-Muslim racism

It is important to formulate specially dedicated policies to battle anti-Muslim racism and embed those policies in more generic anti-discrimination policies. Research has shown that if specially dedicated policies against Muslim discrimination are not embedded in broader policies for engaging other discriminatory grounds, public support is less. Hence, these policies should be mutually supportive and well-defined in an action plan by local government policymakers.

Step 5: Create clear goals and formulate a plan

In this step, municipalities and local governments translate their principles and vision against Muslim discrimination into concrete goals. This should happen in cooperation with local Muslim communities. These goals can focus on (1) the prevention of Muslim discrimination, (2) battling all forms of Muslim discrimination and punishing perpetrators, and (3) supporting and helping Muslim citizens who fall victims to anti-Muslim racism.

Step 6: Executing determined activities and actions

Many Dutch municipalities outsource the execution of the action plan to ADVs. They can, however, also support local (Muslim) organizations, projects, and interventions either financially or professionally (optionally in cooperation with ADVs). These can be social interventions focused on the preventing or decreasing of Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination. Not all social interventions are as effective as advocated. Hence, evidence-based interventions that have preferably undergone some kind of scientific evaluation would be preferred. Social interventions that are (partly) based on the experience and expertise of Muslims and Muslim communities are also preferred.

Step 7: Monitor, evaluate, and sustainably embed

It is crucial to monitor and evaluate policies targeting anti-Muslim racism. This gives an indication of the effectiveness of given policies and provides input for necessary improvements. In addition, it is part of the process of financial and political accountability in the use of public funds. Municipalities and local governments can make use of existing evaluation tools and instruments, but also periodically utilize citizen panels, making sure Muslim citizens are involved in those panels. They can also regularly organize sessions with partners and stakeholders on the progress of policy measures.

If all previous steps are executed correctly, anti-Muslim discrimination policies should be firmly embedded in a manner that is sustainable and durable.

Chronology

- **March 25:** PEDIGA announced anti-Islam BBQs during Ramadan
- **April 4:** Hate mail sent to mosques in Amsterdam at the start of Ramadan
- **April 24:** Twitter account of Dutch anti-Islam politician suspended due to Islamophobic tweets
- **June 17:** Muslima in a the Hague shopping mall molested, and headscarf pulled off. She was told, “Go back to your own country!”
- **July 22:** Muslima with headscarf rejected in job interview
- **August 20:** Arson at Islamic Center in Veldhoven
- **August 24:** Controversy due to Islamophobic Facebook messages by local Lelystad politician
- **September 26:** Muslima discriminated for wearing a headscarf during job interview for position at Dutch court.
- **October 11:** Swimming pools in The Hague refuse entry to Muslim woman wearing a “burkini”
- **October 21:** Muslim organizations in Dordrecht are angered by local authorities for accusing them as the main cause for the rat problem in the municipality
- **October 23:** PEGIDA leader arrested for threatening to burn the Quran
- **November 11:** PEGIDA announces Quran burning in Groningen
- **December 5:** Muslim organizations sue Dutch minister of education for infringing their fundamental rights and inciting Muslim hatred

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
NORTH MACEDONIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

MERSIHA SMAILOVIKJ

The Author

Mersiha Smailovikj is a human rights activist, lawyer, and humanitarian. She earned her Master's degree in international law at "Iustinianus Primus" Law Faculty in Skopje. Her research and activism interests focus on discrimination against Muslims and Islamophobia, gender equality, the rights of ethnic groups, and advocating for the rights of refugees and migrants.

Email: mersiha.s@legis.mk

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Executive Summary

North Macedonia as an independent country is a young democracy that aims to become a member of the European Union. Although that road has been thawed since 2017, the country has still faced great trials. In 2019, Macedonia changed its constitutional name, at the request of Greece, in order to become a member of NATO, and since then it has the new name “North Macedonia”. In 2022, when North Macedonia thought that all open issues with neighbouring countries were closed, Bulgaria vetoed the process of opening the negotiation talks with the EU. The veto is related to the identity issues of the Macedonian nation, in which Bulgaria conditions the further path to the EU, for Macedonia, demanding the signing of new agreements and imposing new changes in the country’s Constitution. All those changes arise due to the denial of the language of the Macedonian people by the political scene of Bulgaria. The opposition used these conditions to organize protests in the capital, Skopje, which caused interethnic tensions and violence, and hate speech by politicians and on social media. Although the Albanians, as the most numerous Muslim community, were not responsible for the veto, hate speech and incidents targeting them were daily occurrences during the protests.

The small number of reported cases of Islamophobia gives the impression that it is not present in the country, but the reality is that citizens do not trust the judicial and law enforcement authorities. In the last few years, citizens reported cases of Islamophobia and hate speech against Muslims, but not a single case has had a judicial resolution. Extensive research in Macedonia shows that the citizens do not trust the courts at all; the report by the European Commission for North Macedonia also criticizes the national judiciary system.

Извршно резиме

Македонија како независна земја е млада демократија која има јасна насока, членство кон Европската Унија. Иако тој пат е одмрзнат од 2017 година, сепак се соочува со големи искушенија. Во 2019 година, Македонија го промени уставното име, по притисок од Грција, за да стане членка на НАТО и оттогаш го носи новото име Северна Македонија. Во 2022 година, кога Македонија мислеше дека се затворени сите отворени прашања со соседните земји, Бугарија стави вето на процесот за отворање на преговарачката рамка со ЕУ. Ветото е поврзано со идентитетските прашања на македонската нација во кое Бугарија го условува понатамошниот пат кон ЕУ, за Македонија, барајќи потпишување нови договори и наметнувајќи нови измени во Уставот на државата. Сите тие измени се произлегуваат поради негирањето на јазикот на македонскиот народ од страна на политичката сцена на Бугарија. Опозицијата ги искористи овие условувања за да организира протести во главниот град Скопје, кои предизвикаа меѓуетнички тензии и насилство, говор на омраза од страна на политичарите и низ социјалните мрежи. Иако Албанците, како најбројни муслимански заедници, немаа вина за ветото, говорот на омраза и инцидентите кон нив, беа секојдневни на протестите.

Малиот број на пријавени случаи на исламофобија, дава слика дека истата не е присутна, но реалноста е дека граѓаните немаат доверба во судските и органите на прогонот. Во последните неколку години, граѓаните пријавувале случаи на исламофобија и говор на омраза кон муслиманите, но, ниту еден случај немал судска разврска. Бројните истражувања во Македонија, покажуваат дека граѓаните немаат воопшто доверба во судовите, но, и извештајот од Европската комисија, постојано упатуваат критика до Судството.

Country Profile EIR 2021

Country: Republic of North Macedonia

Type of Regime: Representative democracy

Form of Government: Parliamentary republic

Ruling Parties: Coalition lead by SDSM “Možeme” (Social Democratic Party of Macedonia) and DUI (Democratic Union for Integration - central left), Alternativa (Alternative) and DPA (Democratic Party of Albanians)

Opposition Parties: VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) and Coalition “For better Macedonia ‘Za podobra Makedonija” (central-right wing), AA (Alliance for Albanians), BESA, and Levica (Left).

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 Church 46.14 %, Islam 32.17%, Catholic Church 0.37%, and others (2021 est.)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 590,878 (32.17 %) according to 2021 Census

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: NGO Legis, Liberal Alternative Institute, Fettah Efendi Vakfi, CIVIL

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Violent Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** In place in state-owned swimming pools
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No

Introduction

The new calendar year brought a new prime minister for North Macedonia. After the resignation of Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, the new prime minister of North Macedonia is Dimitar Kovačevski.¹ One of the key strategies of the previous prime minister's cabinet was the concept of "One society for all",² a concept that was promoted as an end to discrimination and a path to equal opportunities for everyone in the country. But the bad result of the local elections forced Prime Minister Zaev to resign. The new government, occupied with internal problems of high corruption, the energy crisis, and identity problems, no longer has this concept in its strategic goals, although it still exists as a special advisory position in the government.

The war in Ukraine also affected everyday life in North Macedonia. Although the state has fully sided with Ukraine, not only declaratively, but also by sending military aid, the population is divided in terms of support. On social media, a debate towards choosing sides is taking place. Muslims who openly stand on the side of Ukraine are condemned by reminding them of the role of Ukraine in the war in Kosovo and Bosnia, but also of the support that the Chechens give to Russia. The online space is occupied by new internet portals which publish daily news in favor of Russia. The government warns of Russian influence in the media.³

The killing of Iranian Mahsa Amini by the morality police in Iran has sparked a debate about Islam and the hijab around the world. Support for women in Iran who protested against the regime also came from North Macedonia, and was mostly present on social media. The lack of a clear picture of the regime in Iran has led to the discourse of Islamophobia, with the aim of denigrating Islam as a religion that does not give rights to women, etc.

The world football championship in Qatar showed us how ignorant and prejudiced the world and the local population are towards Islam. Sensationalist news circulating on social media and by local sports commentators were full of Islamophobia.

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1. "Сообранието ја избра новата Влада на Премиерот Ковачевски" – "The assembly elected the new Government of Prime Minister Kovacevski" web page: The Voice of America, January 17 2022, <https://mk.voanews.com/a/6399289.html> (Access date: December 3, 2022)
 2. "Македонија - едно општество и едно семејство за сите, сите се граѓани од прв ред" (Macedonia - One society and one family for all, Everyone is a first class citizen). With coming in power in 2017, Prime Minister Zaev, highlighted a new direction in politics in all his speeches. This direction aimed to include all ethnic and religious communities in high political positions, and a complete reform of the educational system in order to eliminate hate speech and discrimination. A special governmental body was formed in the government, and experts, professors, and activists were invited to contribute to the formation of the strategy and its implementation. The author of this report was part of the team that worked on this concept. Today, five years later, I believe that we are far from the idea that guided us in the beginning. The official webpage of the government, <https://vlada.mk/1godinapromeni/EdnoOpshtestvo>, (Access date: December 4, 2022).
 3. "Руското влијание во македонските медиуми" - "The Russian influence in the Macedonian media" TV Chanel 24, published at: November 2, 2022, <https://24.mk/details/25-minuti-ruskoto-vlijanie-vo-makedonските-mediumi>, (Access date: December 15 2022).

For a society to be able to eradicate Islamophobia and all other forms of discrimination, it must first eliminate this phenomenon from its educational system. However, the books used in primary and secondary education in North Macedonia are permeated with prejudice and stereotypes of Muslims. The long-announced reforms in education and the new concept that should eliminate hate speech and prejudice are moving too slowly.

The current report is based on extensive research on reported cases and incidents related to Islamophobia, and particularly relies on 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

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The Islamic religious community, which owns land in the Skopje municipality of Karposh, gave approval for the construction of a mosque to the local Muslim population. However, the construction of the mosque caused a negative reaction by the local non-Muslim population, which was joined by the mayor of the municipality who stopped the construction.⁵ The building inspectorate gave a deadline of 15 days to remove the mosque, because it did not have approval of the local self-government.

The start of negotiations with the EU and the veto by Bulgaria caused protests in the capital, organised by the Macedonian opposition and right-wing parties. In order to resolve this dispute, the proposal came from the French presidency to resolve the dispute between North Macedonia and Bulgaria, in order to remove the veto.⁶ Although the dispute was between North Macedonia and Bulgaria, which was supported by France, insulting content towards Albanians was chanted at the protests.

4. In the current report, all translations from local languages (Albanian, Macedonian, Turkish, and Bosnian) to English are by the author.

5. “Се гради НА ДИВО ЦАМИЈА ВО ЗЛОКУЌАНИ, Стефчо Јакимовски ја запре градбата.” - A disapproved MOSQUE IS BEING BUILT IN ZLOKUĆANI, Stefco Jakimovski stopped the construction.” Web portal VECER, https://vecer.mk/makedonija/se-gradi-na-divo-dhamija-vo-zlokukjani-stefcho-jakimovski-ja-zapre-gradbata/?fbclid=IwAR2jLA8Tb4IyaINv-eg34moeHNaBML1NNeY1neIknrjw9oNvV_bprWLP9mI, published at January 8 2022, (Access date: December 15 2022).

6. “Објавен францускиот предлог со цел решавање на спорот помеѓу Бугарија и С.Македонија” – “The French proposal to resolve the dispute between Bulgaria and H. Macedonia has been published”, web portal Radio Mof, published at July 1, 2022, <https://www.radiomof.mk/objaven-francuskiot-predlog-za-reshavanje-na-sporot-pomegu-s-makedonija-i-bugarija/> (Access date: December 15 2022).

The chants “Gas chamber for Shiptari”⁷ and “Clean, clean, clean Macedonia”⁸ were heard at the protests. This type of chanting continued for several days, escalating into a physical confrontation. Although the movement of the protesters was in front of the government buildings and the Assembly, on the sixth day of the protests, they decided to change their location and pass by the Old Bazaar in Skopje, i.e., the part of the city that is predominantly Muslim. Claiming that they had been provoked, the protesters began throwing stones at the bazaar, destroying cars and local Albanian businesses. A physical confrontation took place between the protesters and the locals, in which weapons were used by the latter. The television crews broadcasted this clash live.⁹ Again, the same provocations could be heard by the protesters.

Employment

Although no complaint has been officially filed for discrimination on the basis of the headscarf, women with headscarves cannot be seen in the stores of the telecommunications networks in North Macedonia, A1 and T-Mobile. The author of the report received information that when applying for a job, a picture is required in the CV, so women with headscarves have never been called for an interview. The situation is the same in the banking sector: there is no woman wearing a headscarf in any branch of a Macedonian bank.

The former employees of the municipality company “Communal Hygiene Skopje” protested against the director Kosana Mazneva who terminated the contracts of 112 employees. Former employees allege that they were fired on ethnic and religious grounds. Among those fired, over 90% are Albanians and the only woman who was wearing a headscarf in the company.¹⁰

Education

The former minister of education, Mila Carovska, announced a complete reform of the educational system. New concepts have been introduced, starting from the first and fourth grades.¹¹ The new concept also establishes a special commission in edu-

7. This term used to describe Albanians by the Macedonian population is an insult.

8. “Разгледница на омразата” – “A postcard of hate” web portal CIVIL MEDIA, published at, July 18 2022, <https://civilmedia.mk/razglednitsa-na-omrazata/>, (Access date: December 15 2022).

9. “Momentet e eskalimit të protestës në sheshin Skënderbeu” – “Moments of escalation of the protest in Skënderbeu square” Facebook page Klan Macedonia Television, published at: July 6 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=359213313013271>, (Access date: December 15 2022).

10. “Протест пред Комунална хигиена, отказ добија 112 вработени” - “Protest in front of Communal Hygiene, 112 employees were fired”, TV AL SAT, https://alsat.mk/mk/protest-pred-komunalna-higiena-otkaz-dobija-112-vraboteni/?fbclid=IwAR20bP_narmOofUvfyypv0aKxinp-eAvxh-wy8SLkPCmzYT10AhFolu4gc8o, published at November 14, 2022, (Access date: December 10 2022)

11. “Мила Царовска: Со новиот концепт учениците ќе научат да учат и да размислуваат критички” – “Mila Carovska: With the new concept, students will learn to study and think critically”, web portal META, published at December 20, 2022, <https://meta.mk/mila-czarovska-so-noviot-koncept-uchenicite-ke-nauchat-da-uchat-i-da-razmisluvaa-kritichki/>, (Access date: December 10 2022).

cation, through which all textbooks will pass, with the aim of eliminating any kind of hate speech, and all forms of prejudice and stereotypes. With the change of the minister, the reforms stopped, and education is now one of the weakest points in the North Macedonian system. The material that contains hate speech against Muslims, which was part of previous reports, despite being reported, has not yet been removed from the teaching material. Every day, we come across new content that is offensive to Muslims.

For example, in the reading books for the fifth grade, *Beautiful Words*, one finds an old Macedonian song titled “Black Arab”. “Black Arab” is a mythological animal that is described in the poem as something terrible, and the hero Krali Marko, who fought exclusively against the Ottomans in his time, in the poem, fights the mythological “Black Arab”.¹²

Politics

The impunity of politicians through their parliamentary immunity gives them the power to use hate speech in order to garner votes. The newly formed political party Levica (The Left), which has the central position in the last few reports on Islamophobia, continues to spread this kind of hatred. After the local elections, in almost all municipalities, Levica has its own elected councilors. In the Municipality of Centar, Skopje, the independent advisory group “Chance for Centar” proposed Mersiha Smailović, the author of the current report, as a council representative in a primary school in Skopje. At the council session, which is publicly available on the YouTube channel of the Municipality,¹³ the Levica councillor Marija Srebrova said,

I want to comment on your proposal... a series of criminal charges and through her organisation she [Smailović] has organised the recruitment of people for radical Islamism. She and her husband have been banned from several European countries for the same thing, and you want to get her into a school board where elementary school kids are decided. You couldn't have a more controversial proposal. You want to bring Al Qaeda into their school.

The French proposal for finding a solution to the veto by Bulgaria had its own debate in the North Macedonian Assembly. Member of Parliament Velika Stojkova Serafimovska from the opposition party VMRO-DPMNE addressed the insult against Bosniak community, on the preliminary session on the Assembly podium, that had been directed against Bosniak MP Sanela Shkrijelj. She said,

12. Milutin Bebekovski, “Ubavi Zborovi”, published in Skopje, 2015, page 38.

13. 14th Session of the Council of the Municipality of Centar, YouTube channel of Municipality of Centar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QL5c2rMXDpA>, published at: September 28, 2022. (Access date: December 05 2022).

You will have children and youth and a future with a confused identity, such as your identity colleague, obviously you want to have heirs like you are now, and our generations not to know what they are, not to know who are like you who does not know what you are.¹⁴

Media

Social media does not have clear legal regulations and represents the strongest incubator of hate speech and fake news. A large number of web portals do not have an imprint, so they do not have a legal obligation to take care of the veracity of their published material.¹⁵ The World Football Championship in Qatar, broadcast on the Macedonian media, was almost always followed by sentences like: “THE SPECTACLE BEGINS: The 22nd World Football Championship in Qatar – first in autumn and without beer”.¹⁶ Even the official commentators of the first match between Qatar and Ecuador stated, “There is tension before the first match, because there are speculations that the first match could be fixed in favour of the host.” On several occasions, when the camera would show the audience, the commentators commented, “Well, this looks like civilisation.”¹⁷

The protests in Iran, and what happened with the so-called morality police were regularly reported in the Macedonian media.¹⁸ Such news was taken over by the world media and no experts from North Macedonia were involved in clarifying the terms and the fact that what the “morality police” was doing had nothing to do with the teachings of Islam.

Justice System

In 2020, a criminal complaint was filed against the president of the political party Levica, Dimitar Apasiev, by the Ministry of Internal Affairs¹⁹ due to his hate speech

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14. Facebook page of Zecir Ramciolovic, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1671443706570219>, published at: published at: July 16, 2022. (Access date: December 05 2022).
 15. “Владата претстави план против лажни вести, на новинарите не им се допаѓа” - “Government presents plan against fake news, journalists don’t like it.” Web portal IT. <https://it.mk/vladata-pretstavi-plan-protiv-lazhni-vesti-na-novinarite-ne-im-se-dopaga/> published at: July 28, 2022. (Access date: December 05 2022)
 16. “СПЕКТАКЛОТ ЗАПОЧНУВА: 22-ро Светско фудбалско првенство во Катар – прво на есен и без пиво”, “THE SHOW BEGINS: 22nd FIFA World Cup in Qatar – first in autumn and without beer.”, web page of the news paper KURIR, <https://kurir.mk/sport/fudbal/spektaklot-zapochnuva-22-to-svetско-fudbalsko-prevenstvo-vo-katar-prvo-na-esen-i-bez-pivo/> published at: November, 28, 2022. (Access date: December 05 2022)
 17. This entire commentary was not documented by the media, because the matches were live and were not available on the Macedonian national television channel. However, they were heard by the thousands of citizens who followed the matches and the author of the report. Particular racist and Islamophobic rhetoric was uttered in matches when Morocco was winning.
 18. Протести во Иран: Жените ги палат хиџабите поради убиството на младата девојка (ВИДЕО), - “Protests in Iran: Women burn hijabs because of the murder of the young girl (VIDEO)TV Chanel 5”, <https://kanal5.com.mk/video-tea-tairovikj-gi-zavrte-kolkovite/a564335> published at: September 19, 2022. (Access date: December 05 2022)
 19. “Апасиев час и половина на распит во ОЈО за заканата „Сите ќе ве стреламе” - “Apasiev’s hour and a half interrogation at the Public Prosecutor Office about the threat ‘We will shoot you all’.” <https://www.faktor.mk/>

during public appearances. One of the reports which concerned hate speech towards Islam and Muslims was made by the author of this report. In his public appearance on Channel 5's TV show "Just a Truth", on July 2, 2020, Apasiev said, "Well, what is the problem with us? See the whole country Islamised. See Bit Pazar Market...Islamisation....Radical Islam....Wahhabism..." He also accused students studying in Arab countries of studying "radical Islam".²⁰

At the end of December 2022, as a complainant, I was notified that the file against MP Apasiev was rejected because the MP's speech did not cause any violent action: no attack or violence was committed against the groups and individuals he named in his speech. According to the criminal code, hate speech is defined as,

(1) He who, by coercion, harassment, endangering security, mockery of national, ethnic or religious symbols, by damaging other people's objects, by desecrating monuments, graves or in any other way, will cause or incite national, racial or religious hatred, discord or intolerance, shall be punished with imprisonment from one to five years. (2) He who commits the offense from paragraph 1 by abusing his position or authority, or if due to those offenses there is disorder and violence against people or large-scale property damage, will be punished with imprisonment from one to ten years.²¹

Internet

The internet is becoming a major incubator of misinformation, hate speech, and fake news. Twitter stands out in particular, where through fake profiles various users incite hatred and hostility towards Muslims.



Figure 1: "So naturally we are like Saudi Arabia where bags of money are poured here for the spread of Islam. They give thousands of euros for all the Muslim women who will dress up as Batman here."²²

foto-apasiev-chas-i-polovina-na-raspit-vo-ojo-za-zakanata-site-kje-ve-strelame?fbclid=IwAR3XGhbIpNv0kh-kAp1AQlvJOh4_HzGCmz-z8_v3pRTj8HgQI8YwpU7Ta7eQ

20. The video of this interview is available of the Facebook profile of the author of the report: <https://www.facebook.com/mersiha.smailovic/videos/3466860720004578>, (Access date: December 05 2022)
21. Criminal Code of Republic North Macedonia, article: 319. Available on: <https://jorm.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%D1%82.pdf> (Access date: December 05 2022)
22. Twitter account with nick name: Jose O, which resembles a fake profile.



Figure 2: "Iran is a country that, after becoming a slave to Islam, with the one with the turban since 1979, is in the 6th century of our era. Bravo."²³

The Pastor of the Evangelical Protestant Scientific Institute of the Evangelical Church in Kumanovo, Saso Georgievski, on his personal Facebook profile, wrote,

I have had several opportunities to meet Iranian newly converted Christians (even according to some statistics it is considered that among Iranians there is the most dramatic acceptance of the Christian faith in the world and this happens among Iranians who defected to the West, but also in Iran itself). Among those people there are quite educated and intelligent people. Iran is an old Persian culture, recently, only a few decades, so blunted by Islamic fundamentalism. Among those people, one can see a huge openness to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and at the same time a great saturation from the strict shackles of Islam.²⁴

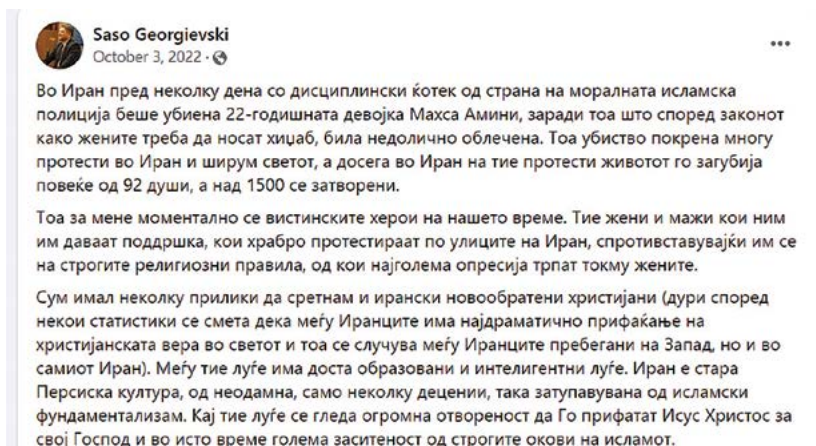


Figure 3: Islamophobic post on Facebook by the pastor of the Evangelical Protestant Scientific Institute of the Evangelical Church in Kumanovo, Saso Georgievski.

23. Twitter account with nick name: Safaraf, which resembles a fake profile.

24. Facebook profile of : Saso Georgievski, the post is available od the link: <https://www.facebook.com/saso.georgievski.1/posts/pfbid02aJWm82bXYU6QzcydevG2QoGZnrTtYt2g5xbTjYQT5JhTjzhCKWYqMYL89vT-7YeUl>, published on October 3 2022, (Access date: December 05 2022)

The construction of the mosque in the municipality of Karposh also caused the spread of hate speech on the internet. For example,

The disputed information on Web portal Infomax is about a Wahhabist mosque that practices radical Islam with its worshipers, which is not approved by the Islamic Religious Community, and the state closely monitors the actions of these radical believers. The residents of Zlokujani are worried about their safety because of the radical Islam that is being propagated in their neighborhood and they have turned to the authorities several times to solve their problem, but for now the state authorities are deaf.²⁵

On his Facebook profile, before the start of the world championship in Qatar, journalist Igor Filevski wrote,

Only the rented fans are happy, because they are paid from day to day for 'making noise'. Overall, none of the chants by Infantino [president of FIFA] and the gang that is there will be exceptions. There is none. And there won't be any. Qatar is not interested in Europe, nor pressures, nor democracy, nor human rights, nor anything to do with anything from the civilised world.²⁶

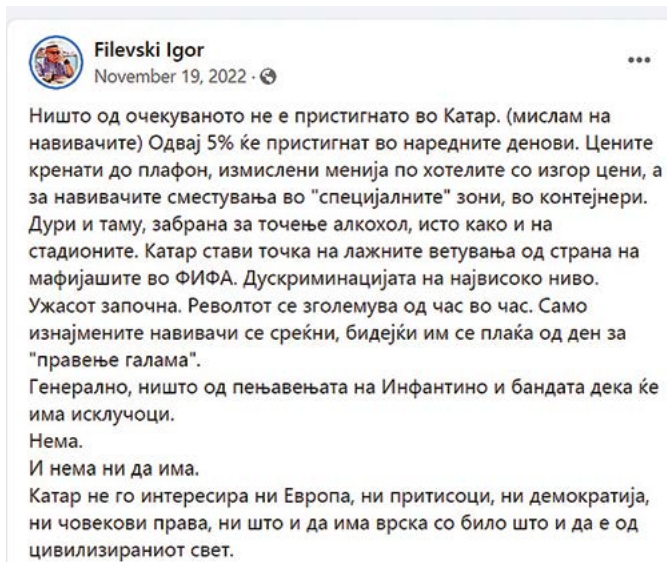


Figure 4: Journalist Igor Filevski's Islamophobic post on Facebook before the start of the world championship in Qatar.

25. "Вахабистичка цамија се гради во Злокујани без никаква дозвола" – "A Wahhabist mosque is being built in Zlokujani without any permission", web portal, Infomax, <https://infomax.mk/%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%85%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D1%9F%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%B5-%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B7/>, published on January 7 2022, (Access date: December 05 2022)
26. Facebook profile of the journalist Filevski Igor, available on his profile: <https://www.facebook.com/FileXFile/posts/pfbid02Est2Y8Zr4ZwB9h9BFofcFPGL5P1VXboSefotnvCXEu3R5ciBabbNZmEW8gy5t6S8l>, Published on November, 19, 2022 (Access date: December 22, 2022).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The central figure in the spread of Islamophobia this year, too, is the politicians, because of the power they generate. That same power is manifested through imposing laws and practices both at the local and central level. The political party Levica, since 2018, with President Dimitar Apasiev at the head, has only intensified the rhetoric of hate. In the last survey,²⁷ the party recorded an increase in its rating, and at a high speed: in 2021, 5% of the voters would vote for Levica, and in 2022, 6% of the respondents said they would vote for them. The non-judgment of hate speech by the institutions gives these politicians even more strength and conviction that this kind of speech pays off. The rise of right-wing parties in Europe should be a clear signal to all progressive forces in North Macedonia that the danger that these politicians bring with them may soon become a reality in the country and Macedonians will see the same people present in the central government. The well-being that North Macedonians enjoy at the moment, without official religious prohibitions, can be easily changed, if North Macedonia's course were to change in the next parliamentary elections of 2025.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The identity problems that North Macedonia faces overshadow all other forms of discrimination that occur in society. There have not been many cases of Islamophobia documented or prosecuted in 2022 in North Macedonia, similar to the previous years. 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 goal is to create trust in the system among the Muslim community so that members feel confident to report instances when they have become victims of Islamophobia.

Meanwhile, several initiatives and processes started in 2022 and performed outstandingly well in combating fake news, prejudice, and Islamophobia.

NGO Legis and Liberal Alternative Institute are organising 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 young people to fight against all forms of discrimination through various online campaigns as well as encouraging the community to report it.

27. “Анкета на ИРИ: Груевски најпосакуван политичар, Левица ѝ се доближи на ДУИ” – “IRI poll: Gruevski is the most desired politician, the Left came close to DUI” Web portal: MKD.mk <https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/iri-gruevski-najposakuvana-politichka-lichnost-a-levica-i-se-doblizhi-na-dui>, published at, December 19, 2022 (Access date: December 22, 2022)

The book *The Woman in the Qur'an* by Imam of the mosque in Germany, hfz. Benjamin Idriz has been translated into Macedonian, and published by one of the most renowned publishing houses in the country.

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.

TRT Balkan has started consistently broadcasting educational content about historical places in Macedonia, like mosques and old bazars, through its web platform, in the Macedonian and Albanian languages.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia is a phenomenon that must be constantly monitored and documented. It is necessary to develop an overall strategy for its eradication in countries that are multireligious. Failure to report Islamophobia and impunity for instigators of Islamophobia has been a long-standing problem. Of particular concern are the growing emergence of Islamophobia, on the one hand, and the silence of the relevant Muslim institutions and Muslim organisations, on the other hand. In order to fight Islamophobia in the country, the following policies are recommended:

- Muslims should do more to promote Islamic values and introduce others to Islam.
- 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 organised, 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.
- The Islamic Community of North Macedonia should take more initiatives for the rights of Muslims and create channels and platforms for detecting Islamophobia.

Chronology

- **10-01-2022:** Construction of the mosque in the municipality of Karposh was stopped.
- **1-07-2022:** Protests began against the French proposal The French proposal, with the aim of finding a solution due to the Bulgarian veto towards Macedonia, towards its integration into the EU.
- **28-09-2022:** Council of Municipality of Centar held a session where Islamophobic comments were expressed by councillors of Levica .

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ROMANIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

ADRIANA CUPCEA

The Author

Adriana Cupcea is a researcher at the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She has a PhD in history from Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Her research interests focus on Muslim communities in the Balkans, particularly in Romania, the construction of modern identities, the image of the Other, and the relationship between self-image and Otherness. Cupcea is co-author of the book *The Image of the Ottoman in the Romanian History Textbooks from Romania and Bosnia Herzegovina in the Post-communist Period* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2015).

Email: adriana.tamasan@gmail.com

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Executive Summary

There were no major Islamophobic incidents registered in Romania in 2022. This can be attributed to the facts that statistics are not relevant, qualitative research is missing, and the victims avoid reporting because of a lack of trust in the authorities. In turn, the authorities lack a coherent national system to collect data and produce statistics regarding racist and hate speech and hate crimes. Another reason is that during the last few years, the digital space became the main field of manifestation of hate speech. Meanwhile the authorities have not yet developed a methodology and the necessary tools for monitoring the phenomenon, and academics in Romania are not investing in this field of research. The most significant development in this direction was the adoption of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization, and Hate Speech (2021-2023). In mainstream politics, Islam remains a non-salient issue in 2022. While the official public discourse in Romania is focused on the local (native) Muslims, the recent Muslim immigrant minorities are absent in the discourse on Islam in Romania. A significant legal development affecting the rights of recent Muslim immigrants was the Romanian government's issuance of the strategy regarding immigration for the period 2021-2014.

Sumar

În 2022 nu au fost înregistrate incidente islamofobe majore. Acest lucru se datorează faptului că statisticile nu sunt relevante, cercetarea calitativă lipsește, iar victimele evită raportarea din cauza lipsei de încredere în autorități. La rândul lor autoritățile nu au pus la punct un sistem național coerent de colectare a datelor și de a produce statistici referitoare la discursul și crimele rasiste și ale urii. Un alt motiv este că în ultimii ani spațiul digital a devenit principalul câmp de manifestare a discursului urii, iar autoritățile și mediul academic nu au reușit încă să dezvolte o metodologie și instrumentele necesare pentru monitorizarea fenomenului. Cea mai semnificativă evoluție în acest sens a fost adoptarea “Strategiei naționale pentru prevenirea și combaterea anti-semitismului, xenofobiei, radicalizării și discursului instigator la ură aferentă perioadei 2021 – 2023”. Islamul rămâne un subiect nepolitizat în România în 2022. În timp ce singurul focus al discursului oficial în acest sens rămân musulmanii locali, autohtoni, absența și ignorarea minorităților recente, de musulmani imigranți, în discursul despre Islam în România, poate să ridice problema unei forme de islamofobie prin excludere. O evoluție legală semnificativă în acest sens, referitoare la drepturile imigranților musulmani, a fost emiterea de către Guvernul României a strategiei privind imigrația pentru perioada 2021-2014.

Country Profile

EIR 2022

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 with 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 by the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) in 2019, 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 were on the grounds of belonging to a social category (258), the smallest number on the grounds of HIV/AIDS status (7), and there was one case on the grounds of race. There were 138 pe-

titions 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 (Fundăția Centrul Cultural “Semiluna”); Cultural Humanitarian Association D.U.A. (Asociația Cultural Umanitară D.U.A.); Foundation for Islamic Services (Fundăția de Servicii Islamice); Romanian National Council for Refugees (Consiliul Național Român pentru Refugiați- CNRR); Romanian Forum for Refugees (Forumul Român pentru Refugiați-ARCA), Young Generation (Generație Tânără), Save the Children (Salvați Copiii)

Far-Right Parties: Alliance for the Union of Romanians (Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor, AUR), New Right (Noua Dreaptă, ND), United Romania Party (Partidul România Unită, PRU)

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 had 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 election, the People’s Movement Party (PMP), which initiated this legislative project, did not obtain the 5% electoral threshold to enter Parliament.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

There were no major Islamophobic incidents in Romania in 2022. There are several reasons for this situation. First, most Islamophobic incidents were linked to the so-called refugee crisis which triggered a fear of migration and overlapped with the Romanian government's decision in 2015 to build a mosque in Bucharest. In 2022, with the exception of the attack on Salman Rushdie in August and the protests for women's rights in Iran which started in September, there were no other significant foreign events used to prompt anti-Islam debates. Second, in Romania statistics are not available and qualitative research is missing. 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. A related problem is the lack of a system at the national level 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.¹ Third, while in the last years the digital space (social networks) became the main field of manifestation of hate speech, the Romanian authorities and academic environment have not yet developed a methodology and the necessary tools for monitoring the phenomenon.

On May 13, 2021, the government of Romania adopted the first National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech (2021-2023). The aim of this strategy is to prevent the replication in Romania of the negative developments recorded on this level in other countries, and to ensure the necessary tools for sanctioning any type of manifestations associated with anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalization, and hate speech.² The target group consists of pupils, students, teachers, employees of public institutions, and civil society.³

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1. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), ECRI Conclusions on the Implementation of the Recommendations in respect of Romania, 7 December 2021, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-conclusions-on-the-implementation-of-the-recommendations-in-respe/1680a59af0>, (Access date: 28 November 2022), p. 4.
 2. Romanian Government, "Strategia națională pentru prevenirea și combaterea antisemitismului, xenofobiei, radicalizării și discursului instigator la ură aferentă perioadei 2021 – 2023" (National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech 2021-2023), p. 4, retrieved 21 November, from <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ANEXA-1-4.pdf>.
 3. Romanian Government, "Annual Progress Report on the Implementation and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech (2021-2023)", retrieved 21 November, from https://gov.ro/fisiere/programe_fisiere/Raport_final_strategie_mai_2022.pdf

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Racially motivated violence and incidents directed at Muslims were not reported in 2022. The major problem in this respect remains the fact that the statistics do not provide 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 authorities, and a lack of willingness or capability by the authorities to investigate these cases effectively.

In the fifth monitoring cycle, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recommended that the Romanian 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.⁴ In 2022, as part of the fifth round of monitoring work, the ECRI noted that there have been no significant changes in the collection of hate crime data and underlined that such data has continued to be generated separately by the police, the General Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Justice. The latter offers an overview of cases under Article 369 (Incitement to hatred) of the Criminal Code through its electronic tool for court statistics, namely ECRIS, which according to the information provided by the authorities will be subject to a comprehensive modernization that should be completed in 2023. The report notes that despite the authorities' plans to improve data collection on hate crime, the recommendation in this direction has not yet been implemented.⁵

The ECRI emphasizes that in 2022, the authorities did not develop improved procedures for recognizing bias motivations and recalls that the proper qualification of hate crimes is imperative for ensuring the effective functioning of the criminal justice system against such acts. In this respect, the ECRI notes that the common methodology for investigations into hate crimes, which was expected to be adopted by the Working Group that was set up in 2017, was not finalized and notices that regrettably, the Working Group in question no longer holds meetings.⁶

4. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Council of Europe, "ECRI Report on Romania. Fifth Monitoring Cycle", (5 June, 2019), p. 10, retrieved 28 November, 2022, from <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-romania/168094c9e5>

5. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Council of Europe, "ECRI Conclusions on the Implementation of the Recommendations in respect of Romania", (3 March 2022), p. 4, retrieved 28 November, 2022, from <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-conclusions-on-the-implementation-of-the-recommendations-in-respe/1680a59af0>

6. Ibid., p. 5.

The ECRI recommended in previous years that to tackle the issue of underreporting the Romanian authorities should develop specific measures on enhancing cooperation between the police and vulnerable groups. Reports communicated by civil society actors to the ECRI suggest that victims remain particularly reluctant to report hate incidents, which is indicative of a lack of progress on the level of cooperation between impacted communities and law enforcement officials.⁷

Overall, the conclusion of the ECRI report points to the fact that little action has been taken to address underreporting and to enhance cooperation between law enforcement officials and the communities concerned, including Muslims.

Employment

From the very few available sources, namely the reports of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), no significant developments regarding the employment of Muslims were reported in the period under investigation. In the last data available (2021), the NCCD registered 397 petitions about access to employment.

Discrimination in employment was based on the following criteria: gender, disability, and HIV/AIDS. Also, there were cases of discrimination of Roma and migrant workers. The NCCD investigated cases of employment-based discrimination both in the public and private sector.

In 33 of these cases, fines were issued, while 31 received a warning and 13 a recommendation. However, the data is not disaggregated by criteria such as ethnic origin or religion,⁸ a situation which prevents an obstacle for obtaining accurate statistics regarding the employment access of Muslim migrants. Individuals entering Romania on an asylum application 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

7. Ibid.

8. National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), "Activity Report 2021", retrieved 28 November, 2022, from <https://www.cncd.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Activity-report-CNCD-2021-EN-.pdf>

long-stay visa in these situations or the possibility to apply for a visa in Romania, given the difficulty of traveling.⁹

Education

The emphasis in current Romanian textbooks on contemporary Islam reflects the effort and desire to understand Islam and contemporary Islamic societies. However, the efforts to interpret concepts relating to Islam as a religion and culture, and the tendency to associate Islam with religious fundamentalism and terrorism indicate a presentation of Islam from a Western perspective.

The lack of contact with Islam due to the demographic concentration of most Muslims in a compact region of the country (Dobruja), the lack of information on local Islam and local Muslim communities, and the predominance of the journalistic information flow in creating public perceptions are realities reflected in history textbooks.

The analysis of history textbooks indicates that mass media and public opinion inform the representation of Islam in the former, and further in the textbooks. For example, in the textbooks published after 2001, the Islamic religion is associated with religious fundamentalism and terrorism, thus creating an image of Islam as an eminently violent religion. Even if some of the textbooks contribute to the understanding of Islam by presenting detailed aspects of the Islamic religion and culture, such analysis overlaps with a conflicting, ultra-religious, and threatening perspective on the Muslim world. The media dissemination of these stereotypes to younger generations and to society as a whole over time leads to the internalization of narrative structures in which the threat of Muslims as an external enemy dominates.¹⁰

In the educational field the situation is also problematic in terms of access to education for Muslim immigrants. Although the National Education Law stipulates that Muslims have a right to education without any discrimination, the reality is much more complex. Currently, no institution in Romania can say how many foreign children are enrolled in the public education system, as there are no statistics in this regard.¹¹ The statistical data available refers to the total number of children and young foreigners with the right to stay in Romania, which we know has

9. Raluca Bontas and Mihaela Vechiu, "Residence conditions and work opportunities for Ukrainians in Romania", (2 March, 2022), retrieved 28 November, 2022, from <https://www2.deloitte.com/ro/en/pages/tax/articles/conditii-de-sedere-si-opportunitati-de-munca-pentru-ucraineni-romania.html>

10. See Adriana Cupcea, "Representations of Islam in the Romanian History Textbooks in the Post-1990 Period", Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska and Urszula Markowska-Manista (eds.), *Non-Inclusive Education in Central and Eastern Europe Comparative Studies of Teaching Ethnicity, Religion and Gender*, (Bloomsbury, London, 2022) (under print).

11. Iulia Stancu, "România. Copiii care vin în România și devin invizibili", (Romania. The children who come to Romania and become invisible), (5 June 2022), retrieved 29 November, from <https://childhub.org/ro/stiri-protectia-copilului/romania-copiii-care-vin-romania-si-devin-invizibili>

increased from 9,430 in 2015 to 15,794 in 2019.¹² It is also known that most asylum seekers considered unaccompanied minors come from Muslim countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Algeria, and Syria.¹³ In 2022, in addition to the regular obstacles migrant and refugee children face in exercising the right to education like 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,¹⁴ the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their access to education were added. The member organizations of the Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees (CDMiR), raised an alarm in this regard, underlining the fact that migrant and refugee children encountered numerous difficulties in the transition to online education. These difficulties were related to the pre-existing barriers, like the understanding of the Romanian language, in addition to difficult access to technological means and internet.¹⁵ In many cases this resulted in not being able to participate in distance education.

Politics

Islam is not an issue that is encountered in mainstream politics in Romania. In the last elections of December 2020, none of the winning parties' programs included policy claims regarding the integration of migrants or refugees. As the topic is not on the political agenda, Islamophobia is hardly part of Romanian political discourse.

After the Dobruja region became part of the Romanian state in 1878, most followers of Islam in Romania were Turks and Tatars; their status as an officially recognized religion dates to 1928.¹⁶ However, there is a problem with the normative definition of a national minority contained in the Romanian electoral legislation. According to the latter, a national minority is the ethnic group represented in the Council of National Minorities (CMN). The strict reference to ethnicities represented in the CMN to define a national minority is thus restricted to historical minorities, such as Hungarians, Turks, Tatars, Roma, Slovaks, etc., but does not include the minorities

12. Terre de Hommes, "Accesul la educație al copiilor și tinerilor migranți din România", 2021, p.3, retrieved 28 November, 2022, from <https://www.tdh.ro/sites/default/files/2020-09/Accesul%20la%20educatie%20al%20copiilor%20si%20tinerilor%20migranti%20in%20Romania.PDF>
13. Save the Children, "Raport Analitic privind Situația Copiilor Neînsoțiți, Solicitanți de Azil și Refugiați în România" (Analytical Report on the Situation of Unaccompanied Children, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Romania), 2020, p. 19, retrieved 29 November, from <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2021-07/RaportanaliticprivindsituatiacopiilorneinsotitidesolicitantideazilsirefugiatiiinRomania1.pdf>
14. Iulia Stancu, "Cum ajunge un tânăr din Irak elev în România", Childhub, (24 February, 2022), retrieved 29 November, 2022, from <https://childhub.org/ro/stiri-protectia-copilului/cum-ajunge-un-tanar-din-irak-elev-romania>
15. Terre de Hommes, "Dreptul la educație al copiilor migranți & refugiați trebuie respectat" (The right to education of migrant & refugee children must be respected), (20 June 2020), retrieved 29 November, from <https://www.tdh.ro/dreptul-la-educatie-al-copiilor-migranti-refugiat-trebuie-respectat>
16. State Secretary for Religious Denominations, State and Religion in Romania, (București: 2nd edn., 2019) p. 156, retrieved 14 November, 2022, from <http://culte.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/BookEN2.pdf>

most recently established in Romania, such as Romanian citizens of other nationalities such as Iranian, Iraqi, Chinese, etc.

The definition is reflected in the current Romanian political discourse, which considers Turks and Tatars as historical national minorities, loyal to the Romanian state, practicing a local form of Islam adapted to the Romanian social and political context. An example in this sense is the congratulatory message addressed to the Muslims in the Dobruja region in April 2022, by Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă on the occasion of Ramadan, emphasizing that Muslims in Romania represent a model of moderate, European Islam, a community fully integrated into society as a whole.¹⁷

Local Muslims and traditional Islam are the “good Muslims” and the “right Islam,” and the nucleus of the current official political discourse on Islam. Although Islamophobia is not present in a direct, evident form at the official level, the absence of the recent immigrant minorities as part of the discourse on Islam in Romania can be considered a form of exclusion of non-native Muslims.

Media

In 2022, there were two major events in regard to Muslims in the Romanian press. The first was the attack on Salman Rushdie with articles on the subject explaining the background of the attack as follows: the publication of the novel *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 resulted in some Muslims being offended by the content of the book. In this context, the leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, decreed a fatwa calling for the killing of Rushdie and all those who contributed to the spread of the book.¹⁸ The second major event about Muslims presented in the Romanian media was the protests for women’s rights in Iran, initially focusing on the case of young Mahsa Amini who died in suspicious circumstances after being arrested for wearing the Islamic veil incorrectly.¹⁹ These types of articles talked about human rights violations in Iran, and about the autocratic nature and religious conservatism of the Tehran regime. Although the accounts were given in a relatively objective manner, they

17. “Musulmanii din România laudați de premierul țării: reprezintă un autentic model, de Islam European, moderat, european” (Muslims in Romania represent a model of moderate, European Islam, a community fully integrated into society as a whole), *Mediafax*, (1 April 2022), retrieved 14 November, 2022, from <https://www.mediafax.ro/social/musulmanii-din-romania-laudati-de-premierul-tarii-reprezinta-un-autentic-model-de-islam-moderat-european-20700879>.

18. “Scriitorul Salman Rushdie a fost atacat la o manifestare din New York” (The writer Salman Rushdie was attacked at a demonstration in New York), *Deutsche Welle*, (12 August 2022), retrieved 29 November, 2022, from <https://www.dw.com/ro/scriitorul-salman-rushdie-a-fost-atacat-la-o-manifestare-din-new-york/a-62794488>

19. “Femeile din Iran își ard hijaburile. Proteste uriașe după ce Masha Amini a murit pentru ca nu își legase corect vălul” (Women in Iran burn their hijabs. Huge protests after Masha Amini died because she didn’t tie her veil properly), *Digi24.ro*, (22 September 2022), retrieved 29 November, 2022, from <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/femeile-din-iran-isi-ard-hijaburile-proteste-uriasi-dupa-ce-masha-amini-a-murit-pentru-ca-nu-isi-legase-corect-valul-2090179>

led to generalizations and stereotyping by a segment of the public. On the Facebook page “We don’t want a mega-mosque in Bucharest,” the administrators added the anti-Muslim statement: “Radical Islam kills its critics! That’s why people suspected of links with fundamentalist Islam should not enter Europe.”²⁰

In 2022, the conservative Christian Orthodox website *infocrestin.ro* published articles portraying Islam as a radical religion, giving examples of violent incidents from African Muslim countries: “Converted Christian killed by Radical Muslims”²¹ and “Religious dispute with tragic end: A man was set on fire after arguing with a Muslim cleric.”²²

Justice system

The National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech (2021-2023), which was adopted in May 2021, includes a specific objective on the improvement of data collection on hate crime by developing a uniform methodology.²³ To this end, the police set up a working group, consisting of experts from the Ministry of Justice, the General Prosecutor’s Office, the Superior Council of Magistracy, and the National Institute of Statistics. The work on this matter started in 2022. Between September 3, 2021 and January 21, 2022, the working group had five meetings, with the methodology to be approved at the Ministry of Internal Affairs level within 18 months at most from the approval of the National Strategy.²⁴ In 2022, the strategy regarding immigration for the period 2021-2024 was also issued by the Romanian government. In this sense, the Interministerial Council for Internal Affairs and Justice, which coordinates the Commission for Immigration Management, was constituted at the level of the government. One of the commission’s main tasks is the elaboration of the national strategy regarding immigration for the mentioned period, the related action plans, and monitoring of their implementation.²⁵

20. See <https://www.facebook.com/NuVremMegaMoscheeInBucuresti>.

21. “Creștin convertit ucis de musulmani radicali” (Christian convert killed by radical Muslims), (14 July 2022), retrieved 29 November, 2022, from <https://infocrestin.com/crestin-convertit-ucis-de-musulmanii-radicali/>.

22. “Dispută religioasă cu final tragic: Un bărbat a fost incendiat după ce s-a certat cu un cleric musulman”, (Religious dispute with tragic end: A man was set on fire after arguing with a Muslim cleric), (6 June, 2022), retrieved 29 November, 2022, from <https://infocrestin.com/disputa-religioasa-cu-final-tragic-un-barbat-a-fost-incendiat-dupa-ce-s-a-certat-cu-un-cleric-musulman/>

23. Romanian Government, “Strategia națională pentru prevenirea și combaterea antisemitismului, xenofobiei, radicalizării și discursului instigator la ură aferentă perioadei 2021 – 2023” (National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech 2021-2023), retrieved 21 November, from <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ANEXA-1-4.pdf>.

24. Romanian Government, “Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech (2021-2023)”, retrieved 21 November, from https://gov.ro/fisiere/programe_fisiere/Raport_final_strategie_mai_2022.pdf

25. Romanian Government, “Strategia Națională din 19 august 2021, privind imigrația pentru perioada 2021-2024” (National Strategy of 19 August 2021, regarding immigration for the period 2021-2024), retrieved 28 December 2022, https://igi.mai.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/strategia_nationala_din_19_august_2021.pdf

The document addresses the issue from the securitization perspective considering that “in terms of security, migration may become one of the main threats Romania will face, when carried out illegally, and when the migration flow includes operatives, former members or followers of terrorist organizations.” The document associates immigration with terrorism suggesting that terrorism and radicalization are phenomena implicitly related to Muslims and Islam. When defining the problem, it is stated that in the field of migration and asylum,

in terms of security, the presence in migration flows of such individuals, in transit or wishing to settle in Romania, generates direct risks against the security climate by (1) establishing points of support for terrorist/jihadist organizations within the national territory; (2) testing routes of travel for the operatives and recruits of such organizations in/from the Syria-Iraq area; (3) radicalization of Muslim communities in Romania/Europe; (4) direct involvement in acts of violence or terrorism in Romania/Europe, considering the combatant experience/past.²⁶

At the end of 2022, Austria used its veto to oppose admitting Romania and Bulgaria into the EU’s border-free Schengen Area. The pretext invoked was that Romania has serious problems in dealing with asylum requests, stating that Romania must take measures in three basic aspects: the protection of external borders, refusals of entry in the country, and the distribution of migrants.²⁷ In the future, Austria’s position will most likely determine a deepening of Romania’s securitization approach to the migration issue.

Internet

The last available evaluation of the Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online dates back to 2021. It is an initiative by the European Commission that 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 removal in 2021 was 100%, an increase compared to 2019 when the rate removal was 92.2%.²⁸

26. Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 839 bis/2.IX.2021, “National Strategy on Immigration 2021- 2024”, retrieved 21 November, from <https://igi.mai.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/National-Strategy-on-Immigration-2021—2024.pdf>

27. “Ministrul austriac de Interne: <Are sens să includem Croația și să nu includem acum Bulgaria și România> în Schengen” (Austrian Minister of the Interior: “It makes sense to include Croatia and not to include Bulgaria and Romania now” in Schengen), *Digi24.ro*, retrieved 3 December 2022, from <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/ue/ministrul-austriac-de-interne-are-sens-sa-includem-croatia-si-sa-nu-includem-acum-bulgaria-si-romania-in-schengen-2172203>

28. Didier Reynders, Commissioner of Justice (European Commission), “Countering illegal hate speech online 6th evaluation of the Code of Conduct”, (7 October, 2021), retrieved 29 November, 2022, from https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/factsheet-6th-monitoring-round-of-the-code-of-conduct_october2021_en_1.pdf

Qualitative research shows that any post/article on Muslim immigration to the West causes anti-Muslim reactions/comments in the online environment with hatred being rare in actual social media posts and more common in the comment sections. 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, was limited in 2022 to two posts. The texts criticized multiculturalism and progressive liberalism as the ideologies responsible for promoting Muslim immigration in Europe. In one of the posts, the idea that Muslims are incompatible with the local East European culture (Romania, Moldova, Poland) is advanced, in contrast with Ukrainian refugees who, according to the post, are accommodated in the Romanian society because of a certain compatibility between Romanians and Ukrainians – no concrete explanation is offered for this claim (race? religion?).²⁹

Within the National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech (2021-2023) actions for assessing the level of threat posed by anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalization, and hate speech for certain vulnerable groups were included. In 2022, officers of the General Directorate of Internal Protection (DGPI) participated in several international cooperation activities at this level. According to the Annual Progress Report for 2022, these activities have the role of contributing to preventing and combating the use of the internet for the purpose of inciting the public to actions of an extremist nature or determined by hatred, circumscribed by terrorism; and providing the necessary framework for in-depth cooperation between the ministries of the interior of the member states, EUROPOL, the European Parliament, companies in the field of internet service provision, and other interested organizations, in order to formulate appropriate responses to the challenges generated by this phenomenon, in order to protect the rights of European citizens. The report shows that other elements of interest were also highlighted, namely the importance of a strategic communication at the level of the member states, in partnership with the relevant information services in the field, as well as with social media companies, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, for understanding the online dimension of extremist propaganda and formulating the best responses in crisis situations that also involve the use of social platforms.³⁰

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 Roma-

29. See <https://www.facebook.com/NuVremMegaMoscheeInBucuresti>.

30. “Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech (2021-2023)”, retrieved 21 November, from https://gov.ro/fisiere/programe_fisiere/Raport_final_strategie_mai_2022.pdf

nian 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.

The most prominent actor promoting racism at this moment in Romania 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 election of December 2020 with a 9% percentage, and was massively supported by the Romanian diaspora (23%).³¹ 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 speeches of the People's Movement Party (PMP), which lost parliamentary representation in the 2020 parliamentary election. 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 Neamțu, a conservative intellectual and a far-right politician who is a member of the PMP, is a central figure in the critique of multiculturalism and Muslim immigration in Romania.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

On May 13, 2021, the government of Romania adopted by government decision the first National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech (2021-2023). On February 28, 2022, an Inter-ministerial Committee for monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy was established by the Prime Minister's Decision no. 173/28.02.2022. According to the document, being the first strategy adopted in this field, it aims to achieve a correlation of sectoral efforts aimed at preventing and combating anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalization, and hate speech, by (a) improving the collection of data on these phenomena in Romania; (b) the evaluation of current legislation to identify potential gaps and the preparation of proposals in order to cover them; (c) the evaluation of professional training programs for actors involved in the process of preventing and combating anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalization and hate speech (police officers, prosecutors, judges) and updating these programs; (d) the evaluation of current school programs and their revision; (e) the development of pilot cultural

31. "Alegeri parlamentare 2020, rezultate finale: PSD - 28,9%; PNL - 25%; USR PLUS - 15%, AUR 9%. PMP și 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>

programs aimed at preventing the proliferation of these phenomena in Romanian society; and (f) intensifying Romania's involvement in international efforts aimed at combating anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalization, and hate speech.³²

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.³³ 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.³⁴

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 leading civil society initiative aimed at improving the perception of migrants and refugees in the public space, and improving their access to basic rights and services.³⁵ LOGS - Social Initiatives Group (LOGS - Grup de Inițiative Sociale) is an organization from western Romania which since 2019 promotes the integration of vulnerable groups of migrants and fights human trafficking.

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 Muslims 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. Accord-

32. Romanian Government, "Strategia națională pentru prevenirea și combaterea antisemitismului, xenofobiei, radicalizării și discursului instigator la ură aferentă perioadei 2021 – 2023" National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech 2021-2023), p. 5., retrieved 21 November, from <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ANEXA-1-4.pdf>.

33. 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 29 November, 2022, from <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/369/14/PDF/G1736914.pdf?OpenElement>

34. National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), "10 ani de Implementare a Deciziei Cadru UE privind rasismul și xenofobia în România: provocări și 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 29 November, 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-infracțiunile-motivate-de-ura-nointohate2018/>

35. See <https://cdmir.ro/wp/despre-noi/>.

ing to the same study, the scale of social distance indicates an increased intolerance towards Muslims, placed in third place, following homosexuals and immigrants. In the case of immigrants, 39% of Romanians do not accept them as relatives and 30% do not accept them as friends, while in the case of Muslims, again 39% of Romanians do not want to be related with them and 28% do not want to be their friends.³⁶ The studies that have been published so far on Islamophobia in Romania identify the following causes: the current intolerant discourse of Romanian media and politicians, and a nostalgia in the Romanian collective mentality for the interwar far-right, ultraorthodox, nationalistic, and xenophobic Legionary Movement.³⁷

Based on all the above, a series of recommendations are made below for the authorities and civil society.

- 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 the areas of hate crime and racism, recognizing anti-Muslim bias as a category, alongside a methodology and the necessary tools for monitoring the phenomenon.
- Both the Romanian authorities and academia should address the online hate speech and develop a methodology and the necessary tools for monitoring the phenomenon of hate speech in the online environment.
- 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 national 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

- **31.03.2022:** The Facebook page “We don’t want a mega-mosque in Bucharest,” published a post claiming that Muslims are incompatible with the local East European culture (Romania, Moldova, Poland) in contrast with Ukrain-

36. 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 29 November, 2022, from <https://ires.ro/articol/367/discriminare-si-discurs-al-urii-in-romania--2019>.

37. Corneliu C. Simuț, “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.

ian refugees. The post advanced the idea that Ukrainian refugees are accommodated in Romanian society because of a certain compatibility between Romanians and Ukrainians, but failed to explain this in any concrete terms (race? religion?). The post attracted hate speech and anti-Muslim comments.

- **13.05.2022:** The Romanian government adopted the first National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech (2021-2023).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
RUSSIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

ALEXANDRA SOPA

The Author

Alexandra Sopa¹

Research fellow, Russia

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1. The name is a pseudonym.

Executive Summary

The central event in Russian political life in 2022 was the so-called special military operation launched by the Russian leadership on February 24, 2022, in Ukraine. In this context, conservative tendencies intensified and the human rights situation in Russia seriously deteriorated. For example, many civil activists and journalists who expressed their disagreement with the actions of the authorities were subjected to criminal prosecution. The “Law on Non-commercial Organizations” has been actively applied to give the status of a “foreign agent” to individuals who receive foreign support or are under “foreign influence.” Facebook and Instagram were also blocked on the 4th March, 2022. All this affected the situation of the persecution of Muslims and access to information about this persecution. Most Russian muftis supported the Russian “special military operation.” Taking into account the ambiguous attitude of Russians to the events in Ukraine, as well as the growth of distrust of the official Islamic structures observed in recent years on the part of the Muslim community, the polarization within the Muslim increased Islamophobia. The narrative of the participation of natives of the North Caucasus in the “special military operation” stimulates the growth of distrust of the non-Muslim population towards them, rearticulating the trauma of the Chechen Wars of the late 1990s to early 2000s. In addition to the conflict in Ukraine, there is an ongoing discussion about the space around the Main Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces and the possibility of building a mosque there. The inclusion of one of the editions of the collection *Sahih al-Bukhari* to the list of extremist material by decision of the Laishevsky court of Tatarstan on August 29, 2022 was the most discussed event relating to Islamophobia in 2022. The complex institutional problem of expert examination of Muslim texts triggers Islamophobia, manifesting itself both in individual court decisions and in media campaigns and discussions on social networks, unfolding in connection with such occasions.

Резюме

Центральным событием в политической жизни России в 2022 году стала специальная военная операция, начатая российским руководством 24 февраля 2022 года на Украине. В связи с этим усилились консервативные тенденции и серьезно ухудшилась ситуация с правами человека в России. Так, множество гражданских активистов и журналистов, выразивших свое несогласие с действиями властей, подверглись уголовному преследованию. Активно применялся Закон «О некоммерческих организациях» в части присвоения статуса «иностранный агент» лицам, которые получают иностранную поддержку или находятся под «иностранным влиянием». Также были заблокированы социальные сети Facebook и Instagram. Все это отразилось и на ситуации с преследованиями мусульман и доступе к информации о данных преследованиях. Большинство российских муфтиев выступили с поддержкой военной спецоперации России. Учитывая неоднозначное отношение россиян к событиям на Украине, а также наблюдающийся последние годы рост недоверия официальным исламским структурам со стороны мусульманского сообщества, можно констатировать усиление раскола в среде российских мусульман». Кроме того, нарратив участия выходцев с Северного Кавказа в специальной военной операции стимулирует рост недоверия к ним со стороны немусульманского населения, ре-артикулируя травмы чеченских войн конца 1990-х – начала 2000-х гг. Помимо конфликта на Украине, продолжается дискуссия по поводу пространства вокруг Главного храма Вооруженных сил и возможности возведения там мечети. Наиболее резонансное обсуждение в СМИ в 2022 года вызвало внесение одного из изданий сборника «Сахих аль-Бухари» в список экстремистских материалов – такое решение вынес Лаишевский суд Татарстана 29 августа 2022 года. Комплексная институциональная проблема экспертизы мусульманских текстов активизирует исламофобию, проявляющуюся как в отдельных судебных решениях, так и в медийных кампаниях и обсуждениях в соцсетях, разворачивающихся в связи с подобными информационными поводами.

Country Profile EIR 2022

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 - Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, A Just Russia, Civic Platform

Last Elections: 2016 Presidential Elections (Vladimir Putin won 76.69% of the vote, other candidates: Pavel Grudinin – 11.77%, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy – 5.65%, Kseniya Sobchak – 1.68%, Grigory Yavlinsky – 1.05%, Boris Titov – 0.76%, Maksim Suraikin – 0.68%, Sergey Baburin – 0.65%); **2016 Legislative Elections** (United Russia: 343 seats, Communist Party: 42 seats, LDPR: 39 seats, A Just Russia: 23 seats, Rodina: 1 seat, Civic Platform – 1 seat)

Total Population: 146.7 million (2019)

Major Language: Russian

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: No special statistics on Islamophobia

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: No special statistics on racism and discrimination. There is data from the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis that monitors human rights violations including ethnic discrimination.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (71%), No religion (15%), Islam (10%), Other (4%) (Pew Research Center, 2017)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 13 million (9%) in 2010 (population census)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Central Spiritual Board of Muslims, Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russian Federation, Coordination Center of Muslims of North Caucasus

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: SOVA Center for Information and Analysis; MEMORIAL: An International Historical, Educational, Human Rights and Charitable Society

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** N/A
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** N/A
- **Minaret Ban:** N/A
- **Circumcision Ban:** N/A
- **Burka Ban:** N/A
- **Prayer Ban:** N/A

Introduction

The central event in Russian political life in 2022 was the “special military operation” launched by the Russian leadership on February 24, 2022 in Ukraine. In this context, conservative tendencies intensified and the human rights situation in Russia seriously deteriorated. For example, many civil activists and journalists who expressed their disagreement with the actions of the authorities were subjected to criminal prosecution. The “Law on Non-commercial Organizations” has been actively applied in terms of assigning “foreign agent” status to individuals who receive foreign support or are under “foreign influence.” On March 4, 2022, the “Fake News Law” or “Law on Military Censorship” (Federal Law #32-FZ of March 4, 2022 On the Amendment of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, and Articles 31 and 151 of the Criminal Procedural Code of the Russian Federation) was adopted, establishing criminal responsibility for intentionally spreading false information about the Russian military, as well as for public actions aimed at discrediting the Russian military and state agencies abroad. On the basis of this law, the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media (Roskomnadzor) blocked many opposition media outlets distributed in Russia for “inaccurate information of public significance disseminated under the guise of reliable reports.” The social networks Facebook and Instagram were also blocked according to the “Fake News Law”. All these developments affected the situation regarding the persecution of Muslims and access to information about this persecution.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There were several physical and verbal attacks on Muslims in 2022 in Russia that we have divided below into several groups.

– Discrimination of Muslims in Prison

Human rights activists often pay attention to the violation of rights and violent actions against Muslims in correctional institutions. Most often the victims are from the North Caucasus: in such cases the ethnic factor comes to the fore, and we are talking about xenophobia against Caucasian peoples (Caucasophobia) and only then about Islamophobia. As was mentioned in the reports of previous years, among the factors stimulating such xenophobia 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 security services and fellow inmates alike. The food in correctional institutions usually

does not include a special diet for Muslims, and colony regulations prevent them being able to fast during Ramadan or from fasting. In 2022, the situation worsened. According to certain human rights activists, “The system began to feel completely beyond the punishment after the start of the war in Ukraine.”² In 2022, several cases of illegal actions on the part of employees of correctional institutions against Muslims became known.

In August 2022, an incident took place again in Penal Colony № 2 of the Republic of Kalmykia. Last year’s report described the harassment of Muslims at this institution. Prisoners Magomed Atimagomedov and Daud Kuramagomedov attacked prison staff, resulting in the death of one person and the injury of seven. Afterwards, the prisoners talked about torture by the prison staff. According to the lawyer and relatives of one of the participants in the clash, the conflict was preceded by provocation by prison staff. The former have claimed that there were attempts to suppress the performance of religious rituals; for example, they did not allow the performance of a collective namaz, during solitary prayer they stood behind and provoked aggression from prisoners, and several times guards took away prayer rugs and threw them away. In September 2022, the human rights information project Gulagu.net interviewed lawyers Aza Alieva and Snezhana Muntyan about torture and violation of Muslim rights in the Kalmyk colony.³

On April 13, 2022, in a prison in Dimitrovgrad (Ulyanovsk region), prisoners, mostly natives of Chechnya and Ingushetia, observing Ramadan were beaten. During the conflict, the inmates’ Korans and prayer rugs were destroyed.⁴ According to eyewitnesses, during the search, the colony staff shouted, “You went to Ukraine and think you’ve become defenders of Russia?”⁵ This was a reference to the special media role of Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Chechen Republic, in promoting the participation of Chechens in the “special military operation” in Ukraine. Human rights activists appealed to Kadyrov, who positions himself as the chief defender of Muslims in the post-Soviet era, with a proposal to visit Dimitrovgrad prison and evaluate the situation. After this incident, 37 inmates proceeded to self-harm themselves in protest against the humiliation of their fellow Muslim inmates, and about a hundred went on hunger strike. In connection with this incident, Vladimir Osechkin, founder of the human rights information project Gulagu.net, gave a long interview

2. Abdullaeva, Z. ““Namaznye kovriki prosto vykidyal’”. Chto privedo k napadeniiu na sotrudnikov IK-2 v Kalmykii?”, Kavkaz.Realii, 14 August 2022, <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/namaznye-kovriki-prosto-vykidyvali-chto-privedo-k-ubiystvu-sotrudnikov-ik-2-v-kalmykii-/31985083.html> (Access date 18.12.2022).
3. “Beseda s advokatami Azoi Alievoi i Snezhanoi Muntian o pytkakh i narushenii prav musul’man v IK-2 UF-SIN”, Gulagu-net Ofitsial’nyi kanal, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uB6fkZp_nNc
4. ““Namaznye kovriki prosto vykidyal’”. Chto privedo k napadeniiu na sotrudnikov IK-2 v Kalmykii?”.
5. “V tiur’me v Uli’ianovskoi oblasti ob”iavili golodovku iz-za pytok osuzhdennykh-musul’man – Gulagu.net”, nastoiashchee vremia, 15 April 2022, <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/v-tyurme-v-ulyanovskoy-oblasti-obyavili-golodovku/31804782.html>

to the portal Kavkaz.Realii.⁶ It should be noted that in February of the same year this colony already attracted the attention of human rights defenders in connection with a statement by prisoners about the use of violence against them by prison employees after which a criminal case was opened.⁷

On June 6, 2022, entrepreneur Artur Rusaev, who built a prayer house for Muslims in Chernyakhovsky District of the Kaliningrad region, died in Correctional Colony № 8 of Kaliningrad region. On May 22, 2019, the structure was demolished as illegal (this was mentioned in the 2019 report), and on September 30, 2020, Rusaev was detained on drug possession charges when about three grams of amphetamine were seized from him. According to the official version, Rusaev died of a heart attack, but one of his lawyers had previously claimed there had been threats against Rusaev by the Investigative Committee. Rusaev also claimed that the drugs had been planted on him, but due to insufficient evidence, the criminal case was denied.⁸

– *Police Raids in Mosques*

Police raids in mosques carried out for security purposes often turn into a form of pressure on Muslims. In the North Caucasus republics such raids result on Muslims being categorized as extremists and added to preventive registers, which in turn forces them to visit mosques less often. It's worth mentioning that scaring Muslims from going to mosques in this way encourages radicalization and the creation of underground communities, contrary to the goals declared by the law enforcement agencies.

On October 22, 2022, information on the police raid on the Astrakhan Fair near the Red Mosque surfaced. Fines totaling 157,000 rubles were issued and 73 people were detained.⁹ Such actions stimulate the development of migrantophobia, of which Islamophobia becomes a part.

Since 2020, regular raids on the Tangim Mosque in Makhachkala (Dagestan) continue, as a result of which some worshippers have been placed on the preventive extremist list. Ramazan Nadzhuev, who previously served in the border service of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of the Russian Federation, filed a lawsuit to have his registration recognized as illegal. Representatives of the power structures themselves deny his registration on the list. According to Nadzhuev, he was registered due to his

6. Krasno, A. "Izbivali, nasilovali, priatali pod shkonkoi. Pytki musul'man v tiur'makh Rossii", Kavkaz.Realii, 19 April 2022, <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/izbivali-nasilovali-pryatali-pod-shkonkoy-pytki-musuljman-v-tyurjmah-rossii/31810704.html>

7. "Vozbuzhdeno ugovnoe delo o prevyshenii polnomochii v ul'ianovskoi kolonii, gde proshla massovaya golodovka osuzhdennykh", Interfax, 14 February 2022, <https://www.interfax-russia.ru/volga/news/vozbuzhdeno-ugovnoe-delo-o-prevyshenii-polnomochiy-v-ulyanovskoy-kolonii-gde-proshla-massovaya-golodovka-osuzhdennykh>

8. "Predprinimatel' iz Kaliningrada Artur Rusaev umer v kolonii. On postroil mechet', a pozdnee ego prigovorili k sroku", 7 June 2022, <https://www.idelreal.org/a/31886694.html>

9. "Siloviki vozobnovili reidy u astrakhanskoi mecheti", 22 October 2022, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/382314/>

visit to Tangim Mosque, which he attended to resolve a property dispute with another resident of Dagestan.¹⁰ On May 24, 2022, it became known that the court refused to satisfy Nadzhuev's request.¹¹

– *Mosque Building Restrictions/Debates*

In Tatarstan, in 2022, there was a broad discussion about the construction of a cathedral mosque in Kazan. Despite the fact that Kazan is one of the oldest centers of Islamic culture in Russia, the city lacks a cathedral mosque that could accommodate all believers. Opponents of the construction argued that it would cause traffic congestion, disrupt the environment (one project proposed artificially widening the banks of the Volga), and inconvenience nearby homes.¹² Despite this, the ceremony of laying the first stone of the mosque construction took place on May 20, 2022.¹³

On June 14, 2022, the Green Mosque in Astrakhan opened after 10 years of reconstruction. At the same time, a dispute continues between Astrakhan's Muslim community and the city authorities over Mosque № 3, located at the entrance to the city. In August 2006, the Soviet District Court of Astrakhan issued an order to demolish the mosque under construction. The decision was based on the fact that the mosque was located in an unacceptable vicinity to high-voltage power lines and did not conform to fire safety regulations. After going through all the national courts, Astrakhan Muslims appealed to the European Court of Human Rights.¹⁴

On February 16, 2022, the Gribovsky District Court of Voronezh Oblast granted a lawsuit by local residents to demolish the prayer house of the Muslim community in the village of Nizhniy Karachan (this episode was described in the 2021 report).¹⁵ “The defendant [Sardorbek Saliev] committed the construction of an object of capital construction on a land plot, the permitted use of which does not allow the construction of this object on it without obtaining the permits required by law,” reads the court decision. Members of the community are ready to make concessions and even change the outer appearance of the building, but ask to retain their place of prayer.

10. “Dagestanskogo eks-sotrudnika FSB vnesli v spiski ekstremistov”, Kavkaz.Realii, 1 December 2021, <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/dagestanskogo-eks-sotrudnika-fsb-vnesli-v-spiski-ekstremistov/31588886.html>

11. “V Dagestane byvshego sotrudnika FSB otkazalis' sniat' s profucheta kak ekstremista”, Kavkaz.Realii, 24 May 2022, <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/v-dagestane-byvshego-sotrudnika-fsb-otkazalisj-snyatj-s-profucheta-kak-ekstremista-/31864918.html>

12. “«Petitsiia stala vyrazheniem nashei podderzhki stroitel'stva Sobornoj mecheti v Kazani»”, Tatar.Inform, 25 January 2022, <https://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/sobornaya-mecet-posluzit-indikatorom-blagopoluciya-i-skazet-sya-na-kacestve-zizni-kazancev-5851835>

13. “Nachalsia snos «Kyr-laia». Na ego meste postroiat Sobornuiu mechet”, E-Kazan.ru, 1 April 2022, <https://e-kazan.ru/news/show/48545>

14. “V Astrakhani posle desiatiletnei rekonstruktsii otkryli Zelenuiu mechet”, Kavkazskii Uzel, 11 June 2022, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/378049/>

15. “Sud postanovil snesti mole'nyi dom musul'man v Voronezhskoi oblasti”, IslamNews, 16 February 2022, <https://islamnews.ru/2022/2/16/sud-postanovil-snesti-molelnyy-dom-musulman-v-voronezhskoy-oblasti>

In early October 2022, an unfinished mosque in Yuzhny Park in Kaliningrad (Kaliningrad region) was demolished. In 2014, a court banned the construction of a mosque in Yuzhny Park, finding all permits illegal. After several attempts to challenge this decision, the religious organization of Muslims of Kaliningrad submitted an application to the European Court of Human Rights.¹⁶ Meetings of Muslims near the construction site in 2020 were declared illegal. According to some reports, the Muslim community received monetary compensation for the funds it had invested in the construction.¹⁷

On December 13, 2022, the author of the Telegram channel “Mullah from around the corner,” Muslim activist Rasul Tavdiryakov, reported on problems with access to the prayer room at Moscow Domodedovo Airport. (Fig. 1) According to Muslims wishing to pray at the airport, the room is always closed, forcing them to do so in a public space, which is inconvenient for Muslims and stimulates tension among non-Muslim passengers.¹⁸

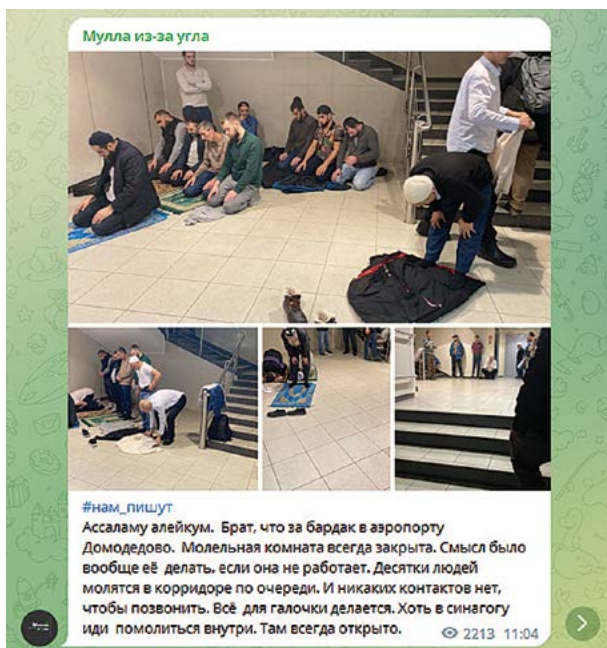


Figure 1: “Assalamu alaikum. Brother, what a mess at Domodedovo airport. The prayer room is always closed. What was the point of making it at all if it doesn’t work? Dozens of people take turns praying in the corridor. And there’s no contact to call. It’s all just for show. You might as well go to the synagogue and pray inside. It’s always open,” the author of the Telegram channel “Mullah from around the corner,” Muslim activist Rasul Tavdiryakov, reported on December 13, 2022.

16. “V Kaliningrade v Uzhnom parke nachali snosit’ nedostroennuiu mechet’ (foto)”, Novyi Kaliningrad, 26 September 2022, <https://www.newkaliningrad.ru/realty/news/24013401-v-kaliningrade-v-yuzhnom-parke-nachali-snosit-nedostroennuyu-mechet-foto.html>

17. “V Uzhnom parke Kaliningrade zavershaetsia snos mecheti (video)”, «Russkii Zapad» – novosti Kaliningrada, 2 October 2022, <https://ruwest.ru/people/125896/>

18. Mulla iz-za ugla, 12 December 2022, t.me/mullaiz

– *Hijab Ban*

In September 2022, it was reported that Muslim women studying at Astrakhan State Medical University were forbidden to come to the educational institution wearing a headscarf. The ban on wearing “clothing and accessories indicating belonging to a particular nationality or religion” is enshrined in the regulation on the appearance of students.¹⁹

Employment

As noted in previous reports, the labor market is more likely to be ethnically discriminatory; there is no confirmed data on the marginalization of Muslims.

Education

We are not aware of any systematic practices of promoting a negative image of Muslims. However, individual cases, which were met with a certain public resonance, can be interpreted as a manifestation of Islamophobia, among other things.

Politics

In the first weeks after the start of the “special military operation” in Ukraine, the representatives of so-called official Islam, the heads of various Spiritual Offices of Muslims, outlined their position on the events. Most supported the actions of the Russian authorities. On March 16, 2022, the all-Russian scientific-practical conference “Spiritual Service and Social Mission of Religious Organizations in the Context of the Formation of All-Russian Civil Identity”²⁰ took place in Vladikavkaz. Russian muftis made a joint statement on the situation in Ukraine, in which they expressed full support for Russia’s “special military operation.”

The Russian military operation in Ukraine to force the aggressor to peace is a forced defensive-preventive measure to secure Russia and all its citizens from the real threat of nuclear and biological weapons used by NATO and the collective West. ...From the Ulema’s agreement on the position of shahids [martyrs], we proclaim that all Muslims who with faith in Allah have been killed while performing their duty to protect their homeland - the Russian Federation, their fellow citizens - are shahids.²¹

Among the signatories were leaders of almost all the largest Spiritual Administrations of Muslims, except for the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Rus-

19. “Rossiiskaia islamofobiia na Kavkaze. V Astrakhanskom meduniversitete oftsial’no diskriminiruiut musul’mank”, Kavkazskii Uzel, 5 September 2022, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/blogs/84796/posts/56153>

20. “Ne vse rossiiskie muftii podderzhali voennuiu spetsoperatsiiu na Ukraine”, EA Daily, 31 March 2022, <https://easily.com/ru/news/2022/03/31/ne-vse-rossiiskie-muftii-podderzhali-voennuyu-specoperatsiyu-na-ukraine>

21. “Zaiavlenie liderov musul’manskikh religioznykh organizatsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii Podrobnee”, Koordinatsionnyi Tsentr musul’man Severnogo Kavkaza 16 March 2022, <https://kcmk.ru/novosti/zajavlenie-liderov-musul-manskikh-religioznykh-organizacij-rossijskoj-federatsii/>

sian Federation, which claims leadership of the entire Russian Muslim community. Its leader, Ravil Gainutdin, made an appeal for peace on February 24, 2022, and then avoided making any public statements in March and April. It was only at the end of May that he stated, “The whole Islamic world is sympathetic to our President’s decision. They [Muslims] are waiting for the victory of the Russian policy and are absolutely not interested in the hegemony of one state alone and the creation of a unipolar world.”²²

On March 25, 2022, Talgat Tadzhuiddin, head of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia, issued a fatwa declaring those killed in the “special military operation” as shahids.²³

Among the most active supporters of the military operation was Salah Mezhiyev, Mufti of Chechnya. As early as February 27, 2022, he stated that the Chechen military present in Ukraine “are on the path of Allah.”²⁴ On March 16, 2022, at the abovementioned conference, he pointed out that “fascists, Nazis, Satanists, LGBT people, Wahhabis and other black shaitans”²⁵ are fighting against Russia, and, therefore, the Muslims who fall in this “special operation” will be recognized as shahids. The active position of the head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, in promoting the “special military operation” also cannot be ignored.

Thus, taking into account the ambiguous attitude of Russians to the events in Ukraine, as well as the growing distrust of official Islamic structures on the part of the Muslim community observed in recent years, we can proclaim the strengthening of the split in the environment of Russian Muslims. The lack of space for an open political discussion marginalizes the groups that disagree with the abovementioned positions and contributes to their radicalization.

A new round of tension was observed after the announcement of partial mobilization on September 21, 2022. Since only the total number of those planned to be mobilized (300,000) was named, in some national republics, including those of the North Caucasus, doubts were expressed about the mobilization of a comparable number of people in non-Muslim regions.²⁶ Numerous mobilization violations provoked protests in a number of regions: for example, on September 25-26, 2022, there were large-scale rallies in Makhachkala. On the one hand, this situation indicates the growth of distrust and increasing distance between the Muslim community and the

22. “Muftii Gainutdin: Islamskii mir s ponimaniem otositsia k spetsoperatsii RF na Ukraine”, Islamnews, 21 May 2022, <https://islamnews.ru/2022/5/21/muftiy-gaynutdin-islamskiy-mir-s-ponimaniem-otositsya-k-spetsoperatsii-rf-na-ukraine>

23. “Fatva”, Tsentral’noe Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul’man, 25 March 2022, <https://www.cdum.ru/news/44/11265/>

24. “Muftii CHR ob”iasnil deistviia v Ukraine s tochki zreniia religii”, Chechnia Segodnia, 27 February 2022, <https://chechnyatoday.com/news/353369>

25. “Ne vse rossiiskie muftii podderzhali voennuiu spetsoperatsiiu na Ukraine”.

26. “Slova Melikova o skorom zavershenii mobilizatsii vyzvali nedoverie v sotsseti”, Kavkazskii Uzel, 18 October 2022, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/382180/>

authorities, and on the other, it stimulates the distrust of the non-Muslim population toward the natives of the North Caucasus. Photos of Dagestanis and Chechens in uniform with weapons bring back narratives of the Chechen Wars of the late 1990s and early 2000s, rearticulating the trauma and mistrust that have survived those conflicts.

In addition to the conflict in Ukraine, there is an ongoing discussion about the space around the Main Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces. Last year we noted that in connection with this religious building, Damir Mukhetdinov, deputy head of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims (DUM) of the Russian Federation, drew attention to the problem of many religious traditions being squeezed out of the common Russian sociocultural space. On July 19, 2022, Ravil Gainutdin sent an appeal to the Ministry of Defense “concerning the possibility of building a mosque under the aegis of the military ministry as a tribute to the fallen soldiers-Muslims of the USSR.”²⁷ The response from the ministry contained the following suggestion, leading to an absence of an agreement being reached with the following wording: “When considering the possibility of erecting a single mosque for all Muslims under the auspices of the Russian Ministry of Defense, it seems appropriate to consider the opinion of other branches of the Muslim ummah in Russia.”²⁸ What was not explained in the response was who should take into account the opinion of other DUMs.

Media

The inclusion of one of the editions of the collection *Sahih al-Bukhari*²⁹ to the list of extremist material by decision of the Laishevsky court of Tatarstan on August 29, 2022 was the most discussed event relating to Islamophobia in 2022.

Many media outlets disseminated this information under the title “Sahih al-Bukhari Is Included in the List of Extremist Books.” Against this background, a large-scale campaign to review the court decision unfolded. Thus, the Mufti of the Chechen Republic Salah Mezhiyev stated, “We officially declare that this contradicts Islam and violates the rights of Muslims. It offends all Muslims, it insults the feelings of believers, it contradicts the law of the Russian Federation, because Islam is a respected religion in Russia.”³⁰

However, the situation turned out to be more ambiguous. The literature was seized back in 2017. Tatar-Inform reports the words of Ramzan Kadyrov, who claims that the material was first sent for examination to the Moscow Islamic Institute, where

27. “V Minoborony usomnilis’, chto vse DUMy podderzhivaiut stroitel’stvo mecheti v pamiat’ o zashchitnikakh Otechestva”, IslamNews, 31 August 2022, <https://islamnews.ru/2022/8/31/v-minoborony-usomnilis-chto-vse-dumy-podderzhivayut-stroitelstvo-mecheti-v-pamyat-o-zashchitnikakh-otechestva>

28. Ibid.

29. Sahih al-Bukhari is a hadith collection, one of the six major Sunni collections of hadith.

30. “Skandal vokrug «Sakhikh al’-Bukhari»: v Tatarstane zapreta na proizvodenie net”, Tatar-Inform, 1 September 2022, <https://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/ramzan-kadyrov-zastupilsya-za-buxari-kritika-obrusilas-na-moskovskii-islamskii-institut-5878274>

the examination was not prepared. Mezhiyev stated, “Where it is necessary to show up, to make some kind of appearance, they are all in the front line [referring to Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation, headed by Ravil Gainutdin, who is in charge of the Moscow Islamic Institute]. And where we need to say a decision, where we need to defend the right of Muslims, to defend the holy books, to defend the correct word in Islam, then we don’t see them.”³¹ The material was sent by the court to the Interregional Kazan Center for Expertise, which decided to include the publication in the list of extremist materials, based on the presence of “certain theses related to the non-recognition of the secular system of the modern state,” signs of inciting hatred toward non-Muslims, Jews, and Christians, propaganda of superiority of Islam and its followers over non-Muslims, and “psychological signs of information intended to incite Muslims to commit violent and armed acts” against non-Muslims. The Moscow Islamic Institute, in turn, “refuted the slanderous fabrications about the expert examination of Sahih Al-Bukhari,” stating that it gave neither oral nor written consent to conduct an expert examination of it, since it was not legally authorized to conduct such an examination, but did everything in its power to help the group of lawyers find experts who were so authorized.³² Separately, we note that a separate edition of the book, which is a summary of the original, was banned.³³ In addition, we recall that the investigation into the case of Aslambek Yezhaev, head of the Umma Publishing House, who is accused of organizing the financing of a terrorist group, is continuing (for more details see Justice System section in “Islamophobia in Russia: National Report 2021”).

Despite all the difficulties of this case, this situation has once again highlighted the problem of legal proceedings related to the ban on Muslim literature. Kamil Samigullin, Mufti of Tatarstan, noted that the root of the problem “lies not in the bias of the courts, but in the fact that judgments about the extremist orientation of a particular text are made on the basis of psychological and linguistic rather than theological and theological analysis.”³⁴ The problem of the quality of expertise was also pointed out in the official position of the DUM of the Russian Federation.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that such bans sometimes cause image damage, not so much to religion itself, but to the country as a whole. Foreign media often start provocations after regular bans, accusing Russia of Islamophobia. ... This sit-

31. Ibid.

32. “Moskovskii islamskii institut oprovergaet klevetnicheskie izmyshleniia ob ekspertize «Sakhikha» Bukhari”, Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 4 September 2022, <https://dumrf.ru/upravlenie/documents/21135>

33. Sakhikh al'-Bukhari (Kratkoe izlozhenie) «Dostovernye predaniia iz zhizni Proroka Mukhammada, da blagoslovit ego Allah i da privetstvuet: IAsnoe izlozhenie khadisov «Dostovernogo sbornika», sostavil Imam Abu al'-Abbas Akhmad bin Abd al'-Latyf az-Zubaidi, perevod s arabskogo Abdulla Nirsha, 5-e izdanie, ispravlennoe, M.: Umma, 2007.

34. “Muftii Tatarstana vyskazalsia protiv zapreta knig o proroke Mukhammede”, Idel.Realii, 2 September 2022, <https://www.idelreal.org/a/32015229.html>

uation has once again brought the existing problems into focus. Namely: the unqualified approach to the examination of religious books, the lack of a unified theological body, which could regulate the system of publishing books by conducting preprint examinations.³⁵

Thus, the complex institutional problem of the expertise on Muslim texts triggers Islamophobia, manifesting itself both in individual court decisions and in media campaigns and discussions on social networks, unfolding in connection with such information.

Justice system

Thanks to the activities of a number of human rights organizations, mass media, and research centers monitoring abuses in the fight against terrorism and extremism and related human rights violations, it is possible to provide an accurate overview of the law enforcement practice of Russian legislation that in some manner criminalizes the activities of Muslims and Muslim organizations. We have identified several groups of measures that, to some extent, affect the interests of Muslims.

– *The Criminalization of Certain Muslim Organizations*³⁶

1) **Hizb ut-Tahrir.** The persecution of Hizb ut-Tahrir representatives or those accused of having links to the organization continues; they are accused of organizing the activities of a terrorist organization. The status of the organization and the evidence of its involvement in terrorist activities have been discussed in previous reports. In 2022, approximately 44 sentences against people accused of links to Hizb ut-Tahrir became known. The defendants were sentenced to long terms in strict regime penal colonies under various articles: Part 1 Article 205.5 (Organization of activities of a terrorist organization); Part 2 Article 205.5 (Participation in activities of a terrorist organization); Article 278 with implementation of Article 30, Part 1 (Preparation for violent takeover of power). Most of the sentences were handed down by the Southern and Central District Military Courts. At least 21 people in Crimea and Rostov-on-Don were detained on suspicion of involvement in the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir and criminal cases were opened against them.

2) **Tablighi Jamaat.** In 2022, at least six people were convicted under Article 282 of the Criminal Code for continuing the activities of the recognized extremist

35. “Pozitsiia Soveta ulemov DUM RF po zapretu sbornika khadisov «Sakhikh Al-Bukhari»”, Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul’man Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 4 September 2022, <https://dumrf.ru/upravlenie/documents/21134>

36. The source of the data on the persecution of members of these organizations is the project “Illegal Extremism” of the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis.

religious movement Tablighi Jamaat. In addition, the toughening of the sentences already passed against the prementioned six people became known.

3) **Nurjular.** The Nurjular organization as such does not exist on the territory of Russia, yet it was banned in 2008. Muslims are prosecuted for distributing Said Nursi's books under Part 2, Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code (Participation in the activities of an extremist organization). In 2022, at least seven criminal cases were initiated (all in Dagestan) on charges of ties with Nurjular.

– *Muslim Literature Ban/Persecution for religious literature distribution*

Regardless of whether Muslim literature is included on the list of banned material, in most cases human rights activists and experts have questions about the legality of the prohibition or the prosecution for distribution of religious literature, since most of the material discussed does not contain inflammatory appeals or signs of incitement of hatred on religious grounds.

In May 2022, a court in Ufa fined Shamsiddin Sizhaev, the imam of the religious group “Mahalla Soglasie-Rizo,” 2,000 rubles under Article 20.29 of the Code of administrative offenses (Possession of extremist materials with the purpose of mass distribution) in connection with the fact that officers of the FSB for Bashkortostan found two copies of the book *40 Hadiths of Imam al-Navavi* with comments by Mustafa Abug and Muhyi-din Mistu in a prayer house. This publication was declared extremist in May 2012 by the Sol-Iletsy District Court of the Orenburg region.³⁷

In the second half of June 2022, Naberezhnye Chelny city court decided to drop without consideration the case of the republican prosecutor's office regarding the extremist nature of 47 books by Turkish theologian Said Nursi, a series of his works represented by several volumes, and books about his doctrine. In September, the Supreme Court of Tatarstan reversed the decision to ban the publications, stating, among other things, that the lower court had considered the issue of banning books in Ottoman (old Turkish) language in the absence of their translation, i.e. without having the opportunity to become familiar with their content. According to a lawyer who participated in the trial, the decision to dismiss the case was made precisely because the court did not know the language in which most of the books were published.

In August 2022, the Malokaracha District Court of Karachay-Cherkessia fined Asiyat Baichorova 1,000 rubles for keeping extremist materials for the purpose of mass distribution. Three copies of the book *Fortress of a Muslim*, several different editions of which are included in the Federal List of Extremist Materials, were seized from her home.

37. “Neppravomernyi antiextremizm v mae 2022 goda”, Sova, 3 June 2022, <https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/publications/2022/06/d46381/>

In mid-November of 2022, Dzerzhinsky District Court of Volgograd fined Kamal Kurbanov, a father of many children, who, according to the FSB, had a religious school in his house, a fine of 3,000 rubles under clause 20.29 of the Administrative Offences Code. Three prohibited books were taken from the house: two copies of *Mukhtasar Ilimi-Hal. Introduction to Islam* and one copy of Ahmed Saim Kylavuz's work *Islamic Doctrine*.

– *Persecution of Muslim Activists*

1) Bakhrom Khamroev

On February 24, 2022 the Uzbek human rights activist Bakhrom Khamroev was detained on charges of organizing the activities of Hizbat ut-Tahrir. According to investigators, earlier, he had posted material promoting the organization on social networks, and later, became involved in the organization of activities. Over the past 25 years, Khamroev provided legal advice to migrants, refugees, and Muslims; prepared complaints to the International Court of Human Rights;³⁸ and did not associate himself with Hizbat ut-Tahrir activities.

2) Abdulmumin Gadzhiev

Throughout 2022, solitary pickets continued in support of Abdulmumin Gadzhiev, editor of the religion section of the Dagestan newspaper *Chernovik*, who was detained in June 2019.³⁹ He was charged under Article 205 of the Russian Criminal Code “Participation in the activities of terrorist organizations” (the case was described in more detail in the 2021 report). At the end of November 2022, the publishing house was forced to stop publishing *Chernovik* due to pressure from the authorities and threats of a criminal case.⁴⁰

3) Aslambek Ezhaev

The case of Aslambek Ezhaev, head of the Umma publishing house, is still under investigation.

Internet

There are no projects on the Russian internet that systematically utilize the rhetoric of Islamophobia. Single statements can be found on social networks by individual users, but they have no significant political influence.

38. “Kritik Karimova i zashchitnik migrantov. FSB obviniaet v terrorizme pravozashchitnika Bakhroma KHAMroeva”, Radio Ozodlik, 24 October 2022, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/32095786.html>

39. “V Makhachkale proshel piket s trebovaniem osvobodit’ zhurnalista Abdulmumina Gadzhieva”, Kavkaz.Realii, 12 December 2022, <https://www.kavkazr.com/amp/v-mahachkale-proshel-piket-s-trebovaniem-osvoboditj-zhurnalista-abdulmumina-gadzhieva-/32172948.html>

40. “Dagestanskaia gazeta “Chernovik” ostanovila vypusk pechatnoi versii iz-za davleniia vlastei”, Kavkaz.Realii, 28 November 2022, <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/dagestanskaya-gazeta-chernovik-ostanovila-vypusk-pechatnoy-versii-iz-za-davleniya-vlastey/32151981.html>

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The figures mentioned in the 2021 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 February 7, 2022, it became known that the Arbitration Court of the Samara region refused to satisfy the claim of the administration of the Syzran urban district to demolish the Faizullah Mosque.⁴¹

On June 22, 2022, the State Duma unanimously passed a law that introduces special liability for torture for law enforcement officers and cooperating prisoners. The new clause, Article 286 of the Criminal Code, provides for imprisonment for a term of four to twelve years for exceeding authority with the use of torture.⁴²

In August 2022, in Volgograd, a court refused to recognize as extremist material a rap track called “Pro Islam,” the performance of which is falsely attributed to the singer Kasta. In the song the performers state that Islam is the only true religion, and recite the shahada⁴³ in Arabic and Russian. The court studied the material, listened to the musical work, appointed a comprehensive psychological and linguistic expert, and, as a result, concluded that there were no signs of extremism in the song.⁴⁴

The head of the Spiritual Assembly of Muslims, Albir Krganov, at the 8th International Peace Forum (within the G-20 summit) drew attention to the problem of growing Islamophobia in the world. He stated the following: “... I would like to propose to the World Islamic League, Al-Azhar and other religious structures to monitor and respond more carefully to the general growth of Islamophobia and religious phobia in the world. Imposing of so-called ‘Orwellian policy’ on Muslims in the West - renewed absurd interpretation of Islam, dictated by secular experts is unacceptable from the point of view of classical Islamic theology.”⁴⁵

The year 2022 marked the 1,100th anniversary of the adoption of Islam by the Volga Bulgaria Turks, and a number of scientific conferences were dedicated to it, where, among others, the problem of an objective study of Islam and Muslim societies was discussed. For example, the XVIII Fayiskhanovskie readings, which took

41. “V Samare sud otkazal v udovletvorenii iska o snose syzranskoi mecheti ‘Faizulla’”, Idel.Realii, 7 February 2022, <https://www.idelreal.org/a/31691209.html>

42. “Gosduma priniala zakon protiv pytok”, Pravo.ru, 22 June 2022, <https://pravo.ru/story/241470/>

43. Shahada is a Islamic statement of faith.

44. “Neppravomernyi antiextremizm v avguste 2022 goda”, Sova, 4 September 2022, <https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/publications/2022/09/d46890/>

45. “Krganov zaiavil o roste islamofobii v mire”, Islam Today, 17 November 2022, <https://islam-today.ru/novosti/2022/11/17/krgranov-zaavil-o-roste-islamofobii-v-mire/>

place in Moscow in November, discussed a whole range of issues, which provided a positive image of Islam.⁴⁶

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The events of 2022 accelerated the negative trends that were recorded in 2021. The implementation of ambiguous political decisions and their support by official representatives of the Muslim community contributed to the growth of distrust between Muslims and the authorities. The strengthening of conservative tendencies promoted the preservation of a cautious attitude towards the Muslim community on the part of the political establishment; the discourse of securitization is still in demand, various manifestations of migrant- and Caucasophobia are fixed, an element of which is Islamophobia. The criminalization of certain Islamic organizations and prohibition of Islamic literature stimulates the polarization within Muslim community which ultimately leads to the consolidation of certain Islamophobic practices at the institutional level. Among the recommendations are the following:

- The encouragement of the creation of a space for competitive political debate
- The prevention of the polarization in the Muslim community that further provokes Islamophobia
- The improvement of the quality of expertise in matters related to the recognition of Islamic texts as extremist; for example, the inclusion of professional academics from the field of Islamic and Muslim Studies in the process of evaluating texts
- The improvement of the system of human rights in correctional institutions, including religious rights and freedoms
- The creation of a safe space for the activities of Islamic non-profit organizations and individual Muslim activists who advocate inter-religious dialogue and can contribute to a positive image of Islam.

Chronology

- 16.02.2022: Gribovsky District Court in the Voronezh region satisfied the claim of local residents to demolish the prayer house of the Muslim community in the village of Nizhniy Karachan.
- 24.02.2022: Uzbek human rights activist Bakhrom Khamroev was detained on charges of organizing Hizb ut-Tahrir activities.
- 03.2022: The Southern District Military Court sentenced 12 Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters to terms of imprisonment ranging from 14 to 19 years.

46. "XVIII Faizkhanovskie chteniia – krupneishii mezhdunarodnyi nauchnyi kongress v ramkakh 1100-letia ofitsial'nogo priniatiia Islama narodami Volzhskoi Bulgarii", Sovet Muftiev Rossii, 31 October 2022, <https://www.muslim.ru/articles/279/35172/>

- 16.03.2022: Joint statement by Russian muftis supporting Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine.
- 04.03.2022: Discussions around the construction of a cathedral mosque in Kazan.
- 13.04.2022: Prisoners keeping fast during the month of Ramadan were beaten in Dimitrovgrad (Ulyanovsk region). After the incident, 37 inmates proceeded to self-harm themselves in protest against the humiliation of their fellow Muslim inmates, and about a hundred went on hunger strike.
- 15.05.2022: Southern district military court sentenced five Hizb ut-Tahrir party supporters to 12 to 14 years in prison.
- 1.06.2022: In Rostov-on-Don (Krasnodar region), 13 citizens of Central Asian countries suspected of involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir were detained; a criminal case was opened against one of them.
- 6.06.2022: Entrepreneur Artur Rusyaev, who built a house of worship for Muslims in Chernyakhovsky District of the Kaliningrad region, died in Penal Colony № 8. The house of worship was later demolished because it was considered illegal.
- 5.08.2022: Muslim prisoners had a conflict with the staff of Penal Colony № 2 in the Republic of Kalmykia, after which, according to the prisoners, they were tortured by the colony staff.
- 29.08.2022: The Laishevsky Court of Tatarstan added an edition of the Sahih al-Bukhari hadith collection on the list of extremist material.
- 1.09.2022: Muslim women studying at Astrakhan State Medical University were forbidden to enter the educational institution wearing headscarves.
- 1.10.2022: The unfinished mosque in Yuzhny Park in Kaliningrad region was demolished.
- 22.10.2022: Police raid on Astrakhan Fair near Red Mosque.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SLOVENIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

MAJA PUCELJ

The Author

Dr. Maja Pucelj is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Organisational Studies in Slovenia. She studied at the Faculty of Public Administration and Faculty of Management, and completed her master's degree at the Faculty of Government and European Studies and Faculty of European Law. Pucelj earned her first doctorate from Alma Mater Europaea - ISH in the field of humanities and is currently completing her second doctorate at the Faculty of Government and European Studies in the field of international studies. Before joining Faculty of Organisational Studies she worked as a consultant for the Minister of Education, Science and Sports in Slovenia. Pucelj is the author of numerous works in the field of integration of Muslims in Western countries. Email: maja.pucelj@fos-unm.si

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Executive Summary

The year 2022 was an important election year in Slovenia, as parliamentary, presidential, and local elections were held, as well as elections to the State Council. Right-wing political parties began to use anti-immigrant rhetoric with the aim of mobilizing voters for the elections, which resulted in a noticeable shift from Islamophobic rhetoric in the direction of hostile and anti-immigrant rhetoric, also containing more or less covertly elements of Islamophobic rhetoric. An obvious increase in hostile rhetoric, and physical and verbal attacks on representatives of non-governmental organizations and politicians prompted the government to address this area as a priority.

Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric in Slovenia in 2022 was directed mainly against migrants and refugees coming to Slovenia from Africa and the Middle East. Both the rhetoric and systemic solutions for the integration of Ukrainian refugees were more appropriate than those addressing refugees and migrants from Africa and the Middle East. Manifestations of Islamophobia continued to remain underreported in Slovenia. Meanwhile, the lack of official data presents a challenge in analyzing the level of Islamophobia in Slovenia and in taking appropriate measures to combat it. The main actors of Islamophobic rhetoric have remained unchanged and belong to right-wing conservative/nationalist parties and movements.

Povzetek

Leto 2022 je bilo za Slovenijo super volilno leto, saj so bile izvedene parlamentarne, predsedniške in lokalne volitve, kot tudi volitve v državni svet. Omenjeno dejstvo je rezultiralo v tem, da so predstavniki desničarskih političnih strank pričeli uporabljati protimigrantsko retoriko z namenom mobilizacije volivcev na volitve, kar je povzročilo opazen premik od islamofobne retorike v smeri sovražne in protimigrantske retorike, ki je bolj ali manj prikrito vsebovala tudi elemente islamofobne retorike. Izrazil porast sovražne retorike, hkrati pa tudi fizični in verbalni napadi na predstavnike nevladnih organizacij in politike, so vlado spodbudili k prioritetenemu naslavljanju tega področja.

Leta 2022 se je islamofobna in ksenofobna retorika v Sloveniji v negativnem kontekstu usmerila predvsem proti migrantom in beguncem, ki so prihajali v Slovenijo, predvsem iz Afrike in Bližnjega vzhoda. Tako retorika kot sistemske rešitve za integracijo ukrajinskih beguncev so bile neprimerno ustrežnejše naslovljene kot retorika in sistemske rešitve, ki so bile namenjene beguncem in migrantom iz Afrike in Bližnjega vzhoda. Manifestacije islamofobije so tudi v letu 2022 v Sloveniji 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.

Country Profile EIR 2022

Country: Republic of Slovenia

Type of Regime: Democracy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary republic

Ruling Parties: Freedom Movement (Gibanje Svoboda, GS) – main ideology: green liberalism, social liberalism, and pro-Europeanism; Social Democrats (Socialni demokrati, SD) – main ideology: social democracy and pro-Europeanism; and The Left (Levica) – main ideology: democratic socialism, social democracy, eco-socialism, antimilitarism, progressivism, soft Euroscepticism

Opposition Parties: Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) – main ideology: conservatism, Slovenian nationalism, right-wing populism, anti-immigration; New Slovenia (NSi) – main ideology: Christian democracy, social conservatism, conservatism, pro-Europeanism

Last Elections: The 15th government of the Republic of Slovenia led by Dr. Robert Golob (Freedom Movement) was appointed by the National Assembly on June 1, 2022. The coalition was formed by the Freedom Movement, Social Democrats, and the Left. The government will have the largest number of ministries after the first government of Slovenia, as new ministries are scheduled to be formed such as the Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Energy, the Ministry of Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Solidary Future, and the Ministry of Regional Development and Cohesion.

Total Population: 2,108,732 (July 2022)

Major Languages: The official and majority language is Slovenian; official minority languages are Italian and Hungarian while Serbo-Croatian is spoken by ex-Yugoslav immigrants, but it is not an official language.

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

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 2021, the most frequently alleged discrimination on personal grounds in reported cases that took place in 2021 was disability (10.8%). This was followed by the number of cases of discrimination based on the grounds of nationality, race and ethnic origin (8.3%) and gender (6.3%), followed by age (6.1%), citizenship of another member state or a third country (3.5%), property status (3.3%), sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (3.3%), religion or belief (2.4%), and education (1.5%). The advocate also considered five cases of alleged discrimination on the grounds of language

and four cases on the grounds of social situation, which is approximately 1% of all the closed cases.¹

Major Religions (% of Population): According to the 2002 census: Christian Catholic 57.8%, Christian Protestant 0.8%, Christian Orthodox 2.3%, Muslim 2.4%, Other 0.2%, No religion 3.5%, Atheist 10.2%, No answer 15.7%, Unknown 7.1%.

Muslim Population (% of Population): Around 47,000 people (2.4%) according to the 2002 census (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia)

Main Muslim Community 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 Information 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); and Rumeni jopiči (Yellow jackets), which were organized by the Slovenian neo-Nazi groups Blood & Honor Slovenia and the National Bloc.

Far-Right Militant Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** Mandatory stunning of animals before slaughter
- **Minaret Ban:** No, providing the minaret is not taller than 40 m
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

1. Annual Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2021, April 2022, <https://zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Annual-Report-2021-%E2%80%93-SYSTEMIC-OVERVIEW.pdf> (Access date: 18 December 2022).

Introduction

In the year 2022, parliamentary, presidential, and local elections as well as elections to the State Council took place in Slovenia. In connection to these, the rise of hate speech and xenophobia was noted, with undertones of Islamophobia. An Islamophobic connotation could be found in political programs of right-wing politicians in Slovenia, in media, and on the internet. It could also be found in different (more negative) rhetoric and systematic solutions for integration when comparing the debate about refugees and migrants from Africa and the Middle East with those from Ukraine.

Islamophobia in Slovenia is marked by continuation: in 2022, Muslims in Slovenia faced the same challenges as in 2021, namely the limitation of employment opportunities for veiled Muslim women, which also highlighted the limitation of the possibility of practicing one's faith as part of the educational process. Challenges were also indicated in providing adequate time and space for worship in the workplace, providing adequate spiritual care, the possibility of consuming halal food and the possibility of taking leave to celebrate Islamic holidays, and the opening of a private Muslim elementary school. Challenges were also related to ensuring access to pork-free meals in public institutions and implementing religious circumcision of male offspring.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

According to the information obtained from the Advocate of the Principle of Equality and Human Rights Ombudsman for Slovenia, there were no recorded or reported physical or verbal attacks or cases of hate crimes on Muslims in the year 2021. However, according to informal discussions with Muslims living in Slovenia, direct and indirect verbal attacks do occur, which is obvious on various right-wing media outlets, social media such as Twitter and Facebook, and on the street.

After the prepared report on Islamophobia in Slovenia in 2021, an unknown perpetrator poured red liquid on three Muslim graves in the Domžale Cemetery and placed pieces of pork on them, committing the crime of public incitement to hatred, violence, or intolerance. The act was condemned by the Muslim Jewish Leadership Council - Europe (MJLC), which stated that it was appalled and horrified by the Islamophobic vandalism as it was offensive towards those who were buried there and represented an Islamophobic attack on the Slovenian Muslim community. The Islamic Community in Slovenia (Islamska skupnost v Sloveniji) condemned the desecration and assessed it as an act of public incitement to hatred, violence, and intoler-

ance. The community expects the police to find the perpetrators and prosecute them in accordance with the law.²³



Figure 1: Desecration of Muslim graves in the Domžale Cemetery in May 2021⁴

Employment

The Advocate of the Principle of Equality stated that they have received a request for consideration of an alleged discrimination against an employee due to prayers in the workplace. However, since the case is ongoing, no further information could be provided.

In 2022, the advocate also provided telephone counselling to an individual who wanted to work in one of the general hospitals, but was refused due to wearing a hijab. The Advocate of the Principle of Equality explained to her that he had already encountered similar cases in the same hospital last year and in that case had succeeded in changing the hospital's practice. He thus advised the specific individual to contact the hospital again and submit a new application.⁵

The Human Rights Ombudsman of Slovenia was approached by a petitioner who wanted to conduct an internship as a secondary nurse in one of the general hos-

2. Preporod, MJLC osudio vandalizam na mezarju u gradu Domžale u Sloveniji, May 2021, <https://www.preporod.info/bs/article/23331/mjlc-osudio-vandalizam-na-mezarju-u-gradu-domzale-u-sloveniji> (Access date: 18 December 2022).
3. Policija preiskuje skrunitev muslimanskih grobov na domžalskem pokopališču, May 2021, <https://novice.svet24.si/clanek/novice/slovenija/608e7394094be/policija-preiskuje-skrunitev-muslimanskih-grobov-na-domzalskem-pokopalisцу> (Access date: 18 December 2022).
4. Preporod, MJLC osudio vandalizam na mezarju u gradu Domžale u Sloveniji, May 2021, <https://www.preporod.info/bs/article/23331/mjlc-osudio-vandalizam-na-mezarju-u-gradu-domzale-u-sloveniji> (Access date: 18 December 2022).
5. Answer of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality to author's inquiry, Nr. 0705-11/2022/2, dated 16 November 2022.

pitals. She stated that she was Muslim and wore a religious headscarf (hijab), and that she had been informed by the hospital that she would not be allowed to wear a headscarf during her internship “because the headscarf collects viruses and bacteria and thus does not prevent the spread of infections.” She stated that this is an “absurd excuse, because we all know that in the operating rooms they wear hair coverings precisely to prevent the spread of infections” and that wearing a headscarf can help to reduce the spread of infections, as he washes the scarf and uniform with which she works every day, and many nurses “don’t wash their hair every day, so viruses and they carry bacteria from the hair everywhere.” The Human Rights Ombudsman found that The Chamber of Nurses’ and Midwives’ Associations of Slovenia - Association of professional nurses, midwives and nursing technicians of Slovenia and the competent ministry cited in particular the provision of hygiene, on the one hand, and wider social aspects, on the other (e.g. establishing trust with the patient, communicating visibility and professional affiliation, cultural-aesthetic rules). The ombudsman assessed that the ban on wearing a headscarf for ensuring hygiene standards is not indispensable, but there are broader social aspects that surround the ban, which are insufficiently regulated by law. As a result, the ombudsman proposed the adoption of a system regulation to the Ministry of Health. The ministry did not follow the ombudsman’s assessment as a whole - the ombudsman insists on the justification of reasons of hygiene for the ban, affirms the deficient legal regulation of the area, but at the same time rejects the ombudsman’s appeal to take action, saying that it does not only refer to healthcare, but to the whole public administration. The ministry did not provide more detailed arguments in support of its positions, so the ombudsman noted that the broader social reasons in Slovenia are insufficiently legally regulated, even though they interfere with a person’s right to freedom of conscience. Namely, they are derived from an extensive interpretation of the general provisions in the legally undefined document by the Chamber of Nurses’ and Midwives’ Associations of Slovenia - Association of professional nurses, midwives and nursing technicians of Slovenia, named “Image of Nurses” or “Professional Image of Providers of Medical and Midwifery”. That is why the ombudsman insisted that adequate hygiene could be ensured without interfering with religious freedom, namely the wearing of a headscarf, which would be included in the regime of daily changing of clothes and washing.

The case of a young healthcare professional from a hospital in Celje, who works with a Muslim headscarf, exposed in the media, testifies to the above. According to the Guardian, the currently valid regulations prohibiting the wearing of headscarves appear to be inconsistent with the religious freedom of healthcare professionals.⁶

6. Answer of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Slovenia to author’s inquiry, Nr. 0704-30/2022-2-TUR, dated 17 November 2022.

When talking to Muslims in Slovenia through conducting interviews for research on a doctoral thesis, we noticed that the level of discrimination or limiting access to employment is the highest for covered Muslim women, which intensifies with the form of the covering: Muslim women who do not use any form of covering for their hair or face confront the lowest level of discrimination, higher levels of discrimination are felt by Muslim women who wear a hijab, and the highest level of discrimination or limitations in accessing the employment field is felt by Muslim women who wear a niqab or burqa.⁷ When talking informally with covered Muslim women in Slovenia, they expressed their frustration that the multicultural debate for covered Muslim women in Slovenia ends at cultural/culinary events, while they cannot be full members of any power centres as they are prohibited from having any visible role of power regardless of their level of knowledge or social activity.

Education

Schools in Slovenia are secular. Religious symbols are not allowed in public school classrooms in Slovenia; they are only allowed exceptionally as demonstration material in the pedagogical process, for example in the subject “Religion and Ethics.”

Despite the fact that Slovenia has twenty Catholic kindergartens, which represent almost a quarter of all private kindergartens, two Catholic primary schools attended by 0.3% of all children in primary schools, four Catholic high schools, and four Catholic boarding schools,⁸ we can note that Muslims have been unsuccessfully seeking to open a private Muslim elementary school as of 2014. This is attributed to the strict regulations governing the opening of a private elementary school.

According to research conducted by the author, migrant (Muslim) children in Slovenia face systematic inconsistencies while integrating into Slovenian primary educational space. Suggestions by principals to address such deficits include the necessity of implementing introductory classes for migrant children in the form of intensive teaching of the Slovenian language and socialization, and the suggestion to enrol the child in a lower class in order to facilitate integration. The interviewees also stated that the systematic solutions for integrating Ukrainian migrant children were significantly improved compared to those intended for migrant children from Africa or the Middle East.⁹

Muslim parents whose children attend Slovenian kindergartens and primary educational spaces face a challenge connected to the possibility of refusing pork in school

7. Pucelj, Maja, *Vpliv morebitne prepovedi zakrivanja na kakovost življenja zakritih muslimanskih žensk* (Kranj: Unpublished PhD Thesis) – the interviews are part of the author’s unpublished PhD thesis, which will be defended in March 2023.

8. Katoliško šolstvo, <https://solstvo.rkc.si/ustanove/> (Access date: 19 December 2022).

9. Pucelj, Maja and Gorenc Zoran, Annmarie, “How do principals perceive the challenges of integration of immigrant students into Slovenian primary school educational space?”, (unpublished scientific article under review, which should be published in 2023).

meals, as they need a doctor's certificate about the existence of an allergy to pork. Due to the fact that no adaptation of meals based on religious dietary restrictions is foreseen in Slovenian educational spaces, the Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Nutrition in Educational Institutions stated that if such wishes of children and parents are noted, the schools should take such considerations into account to the best of their abilities.

Politics

In April 2022, an Islamophobic act occurred in Slovenian politics, inciting religious intolerance and the spread of lies and hatred: State Secretary for National Security and prominent member of the right-wing SDS party Žan Mahnič published a post on Twitter where he called Faila Pašić, a colleague of the ruling Gibanje Svoboda party, a “radical Islamist” and accused the party of bringing “Islamization and Shariatization and massive import of Arabs” into Slovenia. (Fig. 2) The response by Terezija Novak, a candidate of Gibanje Svoboda for the parliamentary elections, was that such claims display all the elements of the discourse of extreme political groups, which have no place in Slovenian and European society. In response, Mahnič said that we must understand his statement exclusively in the context of ensuring national security, for which he is responsible by virtue of his official position, and of informing the public, that already in the previous mandate, 2014-2018, the Parliamentary Commission for the Control of Intelligence and Security Services, which he was a part of, dealt with Mrs. Faila Pašić “in connection with radical Islam and connections with foreign countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran.”¹⁰



Figure 2: An Islamophobic tweet by Žan Mahnič, State Secretary for National Security and prominent member of the right-wing SDS party, directed towards Faila Pašić, a covered Muslim woman in Slovenia.¹¹

10. Svet24, Žan Mahnič v sovražnem napadu Slovenko “ponižal, razvrednotil in razčlovečil”, April 2022, <https://novice.svet24.si/clanek/novice/slovenija/625441b6c295f/zan-mahnic-v-sovraznem-napadu-slovenko-ponizal-razvrednotil-in-razclovecil> (Access date: 18 December 2022).

11. Ibid.

Media

The main Slovenian media that published discriminatory content in 2022 were right-wing news television channel and online news portal Nova24TV¹² and the weekly news and political magazine *Demokracija*¹³. The website Nova24tv.si published an article entitled “How to Prevent Holocaust 2?” on February 10, 2022 sharing its Islamophobic stand: “With a higher birth rate and a constant influx of millions of mostly uneducated Muslims into Europe, will there be a dominance of (radical) Islam in Europe and the banning of other religions, genocide of atheists, gays, dissenters, as predicted by the Koran and Hadith, and is regularly happening throughout the Muslim world like the Yazidi genocide or Afghanistan today with the Taliban?”¹⁴ Nova24tv.si published an article on October 2, 2022, entitled “Mass Migration as a Weapon of the Islamization of Europe,” where the author showed his Islamophobic tendency by stating: “Although under the guise of mass migration and humanitarian aid, it seems that we are once again witnessing the attempts of the Mohammedans [sic] to occupy Europe. If once European rulers and military leaders, such as Karel Martel, János Hunyadi or Jan III Sobieski, who defended European countries from them, today’s Brussels elites help them in this in the name of multiculturalism and support the demographic war against Europeans.”¹⁵

The shift from Islamophobic rhetoric directed towards Muslims to hateful rhetoric directed towards migrants and refugees in general, was evident in 2022 in Slovenia, while several groups of immigrants were indirectly addressed as Muslims. Furthermore, the war in Ukraine exposed double standards and racism in the treatment of refugees. The Russia-Ukraine war showed that Slovenia and the European Union have more sympathy and more political will to ensure the protection of those fleeing from Ukraine than for refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and other crisis hotspots around the world.¹⁶ Such rhetoric was also noted by different media representatives in Slovenia, like the news channel N1 Slovenia¹⁷, which stated, “The at-

12. Nova24TV is a Slovenian right-wing media house that manages the eponymous informative television station and news web portal. Its mission is being an alternative media voice that will reflect the values of the European right. Its website can be found here: <https://nova24tv.si/>.

13. Democracy is a Slovenian political and news magazine with a right-wing and conservative orientation, considered as the “newsletter” of the Slovenian Democratic Party. The physical version of the magazine is published every week on Thursdays. Its website can be found here: <https://demokracija.si/>.

14. Nova24tv, Kako preprečiti holokavst 2? February 2022, <https://nova24tv.si/kolumna/lkako-prepreciti-holokavst-2/> (Access date: 20 December 2022).

15. Nova24tv, Množične migracije kot orožje islamizacije Evrope, October 2022, <https://nova24tv.si/svet/mnozicne-migracije-kot-orožje-islamizacije-evrope/> (Access date: 20 December 2022).

16. N1, Na eni strani begunci, na drugi strani begunci z modrimi očmi, March 2022, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/na-eni-strani-begunci-na-drugi-strani-begunci-z-modrimi-ocmi/> (Access date: 20 December 2022).

17. N1 Slovenia is a Slovenian informative online portal, which started operating in June 2021. The publisher of N1 Slovenia is Adria News, which is part of United Media. N1 represents a part of the media network of United Group, which also publishes media under the N1 brand in other countries. Its website can be found here: <https://n1info.si/>.

titude of European countries towards refugees from Ukraine is commendable, but unfortunately, refugees from elsewhere do not receive such an attitude. Open racism is also evident in the reporting of some journalists.”¹⁸ Primorski dnevnik¹⁹ and RTV SLO²⁰ stated,

Following the Russian attack on Ukraine, the Slovenian government expressed its willingness to accept refugees from this country, which seems to represent a reversal of its anti-refugee policy. But the decision reveals not so much humanitarianism as the racist thinking of the rulers. /.../ All the “arguments” against refugees, which the current ruling option has been repeating in order to justify its xenophobic, racist policy, are now turned upside down when it comes to European whites. Fleeing from war has become justified, the government is not scared by 44 million Ukrainians who would like to come to the EU for social assistance, as it was by hundreds of millions of Africans or Arabs; there are no longer concerns that Slovenia simply cannot afford to accept refugees, there are no posters with lies about how much money we give to “migrants,” we do not hear about the need to help these people “close to the country of origin,” there are no fabrications that a refugee can only apply for protection “in the first safe country,” as we have heard countless times from representatives of the currently ruling party and its supporters. This radical and illegal mercilessness is thus shared only with blacks and Muslims, who, as we can understand, should freeze in the woods along the border or drown in the river because of their self-interest, regardless of gender or age.²¹

Justice system

Islamophobic cases mentioned either by Muslims themselves or reported in the media are not recorded in the Slovenian justice system, which was also confirmed by the Advocate of the Principle of Equality and Human Rights Ombudsman in Slovenia.

Recent incidents of physical and verbal attacks on representatives of non-governmental organizations and politicians have prompted the government to form a

18. N1, Na eni strani begunci, na drugi strani begunci z modrimi očmi, March 2022, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/na-eni-strani-begunci-na-drugi-strani-begunci-z-modrimi-ocmi/> (Access date: 20 December 2022).

19. Primorski dnevnik is a newspaper, which began to be published in Trieste in year 1945 and up to today remains to be only daily newspaper of the Slovenian national community in Italy. Its website can be found here: <https://www.primorski.eu/>. Primorski dnevnik, <https://www.primorski.eu/se/odnos-do-beguncev-se-je-spremenil-FG1109788> (Access date: 20 December 2022).

20. Radiotelevizija Slovenija (abbreviated as RTV SLO) is the only public, non-profit broadcasting organization in Slovenia, which operates as a public institution of special cultural and national importance. Its website can be found here: <https://www.rtvlo.si/>.

21. RTV SLO, Pripravljenost vlade sprejeti ukrajinske begunce ni izraz njene človečnosti, prav nasprotno, February 2022, <https://www.rtvlo.si/kolumne/boris-vasev/pripravljenost-vlade-sprejeti-ukrajinske-begunce-ni-izraz-njene-clovecnosti-prav-nasprotno/613837> (Access date: 20 December 2022).

special action group to combat hate speech, coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office. The aforementioned area will be one of the government's priorities in the coming year.²² The Ministry of Justice prepared an amendment to the Slovenian Criminal Code, which provides that the general aggravating circumstance refers to all crimes committed with a hostile or discriminatory inclination, and which will be submitted to the legislature for consideration.²³

Internet

In recent years, the internet and social media, in specific, where people can share their opinion anonymously, have gained a significant role in spreading negative opinions and fake news. The right wing-oriented webpage Kavarna Hayek spread Islamophobic rhetoric in 2022. The webpage referring to the fact that MEPs banned the European Commission from financing the promotion of the hijab, rejected Islam as a part of Europe and described the relation between Muslims and the Western world as a "war."

But let's be clear: Islam was never a European value, Muslims on the old continent were more or less exotic, the hijab was not worn, Arabic was not spoken, the Koran was just a dusty book in the library. The amendments adopted by the European Parliament represent a step forward in preserving the European tradition of which Islam has never been a part. But the **war**²⁴ will be long. As François-Xavier Bellamy²⁵ points out on his social media, there is still a lot of work to be done to convince many elected officials, especially on the left, of the need to fight radical Islam.²⁶

Islamophobic content was also present on Facebook, where Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti, the president of the Slovenian National Party, referred to Muslim migrants and refugees as "truffle hunters," which was meant as a euphemism for dogs and at the same time also as a thought that the mentioned persons will never be actively employed, but will only be looking for the possibility of quick and easy earnings. (Fig. 3)

22. Dnevnik, Nad sovražni govor medresorsko in s koordinatorjem, November 2022, <https://www.dnevnik.si/1043000528/slovenija/nad-sovrazni-govor-medresorsko-in-s-koordinirjem> (Access date: 19 December 2022).

23. N1, V boj s sovražnim govorom s koordinatorjem in novostjo v kazenskem zakoniku, October 2022, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/sovrazni-govor-kaj-pomeni-golobova-napoved-da-ga-bodo-izkoreninili/> (Access date: 20 December 2022).

24. Emphasis added.

25. François-Xavier Bellamy is a French author, high-school teacher and politician, which was a deputy mayor of Versailles and is currently Member of the European Parliament.

26. Friedrich August von Hayek, Dobljena majhna bitka proti islamu, vojna bo še dolga: evroposlanci Evropski komisiji prepovedali financiranje promocije hidžaba, October 2022, <https://kavarnahayek.wordpress.com/2022/10/21/dobljena-majhna-bitka-proti-islam-u-vojna-bo-se-dolga-evroposlanci-evropski-komisiji-prepovedali-financiranje-promocije-hidzaba/> (Access date: 20 December 2022).



Figure 3: Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti, the president of the Slovenian National Party, referring to Muslim migrants and refugees as “truffle hunters.”²⁷



Figure 4: Evident case of Islamophobia/homophobia on the real estate market in Slovenia in 2022

27. FB Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti, November 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/JelincicZmagoPlemeniti/posts/pf-bid02M5U2bg5s2NrS1ViWL8vxxrjJroQ4mYnRFUBthAkCoj7g3pYWpZZjqRPDs7gmq2qal> (Access date: 11 November 2022).

Islamophobia and homophobia were also evident in a case made public via a Facebook post on November 16, 2022. The post read,

A few weeks back my friend from Pakistan experienced a terrifying experience in Slovenia, when his landlord shot him. My friend has just moved in near Slovenska Bistrica with his Slovenian partner and one-year-old son. They had paid a deposit for 2 months and also the rent for 1 month. Despite the fact that everything was paid, the landlord started to threaten him, that he should leave the apartment right away and after 3 weeks the landlord suddenly took his gun and shot at him. We always ask ourselves, why are foreigners/Muslims always radicalized, but now we should ask ourselves, how, where and why the landlord radicalized himself. Why are some people impatient with foreigners?²⁸

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In 2022, as in the year 2021, the central figures in the Islamophobia network remained the same. The main political parties that openly express (and also trigger) Islamophobic ideas in Slovenia belong to the right-wing conservative/nationalist parties and movements: the Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska demokratska stranka) of the European People's Party, the Slovenian National Party (Slovenska nacionalna stranka), and the new Homeland League (Domovinska liga). These are supported by various, mainly right-wing, channels, such as the following online and printed media: *Demokracija*, Nova24TV, *Reporter*, and occasionally by the conservative Christian newspaper *Domovina*, and by social media. All the formers are used by various individuals and groups which spread hateful rhetoric, directed towards migrants and Muslims.

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In December 2022, the government of the Republic of Slovenia put the spotlight on the fight against online hate speech by preparing a campaign named "Bite your tongue!" The campaign alerts the public on the inadmissibility of hateful and offensive speech, which has seen an increase in social networks in recent years, with the help of short videos of Slovenian athletes who often encounter hate speech for a variety of reasons.²⁹ As Islamophobia and Homophobia are one of the most visible expressions of the hate speech in Slovenia, this campaign is also intended to conquer

28. When talking to the author of the post, he stated that the incident was in no way instigated by his Pakistani friend and that it was purely a result of Islamophobia and homophobia.

29. Gov.si, »Ugrizni se v sovražni jezik!«, kampanja proti sovražnemu govoru na spletu, December 2022, <https://www.gov.si/novice/2022-12-07-ugrizni-se-v-sovrazni-jezik-kampanja-proti-sovraznemu-govoru-na-spletu/> (Access date: 20. 12. 2022).

this type of hate speech. No other Civil Society and Political assessment and Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia were noted in Slovenia in year 2022.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The challenges, deriving from addressing Islamophobia in 2022 in Slovenia, present a continuation from preceding years. Addressing hate speech should be, as already stated by the Slovenian government, a national priority. Also, Slovenia needs to strengthen the collaboration between communities, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies to ensure effective support for victims in combating hate speech and crimes.

As we could see, the particular manifestation of Islamophobia in Slovenia focuses on Slovenian Muslim women, who are visibly Muslim due to their head covering. Muslim religious freedom is threatened in different ways in Slovenia, apparent in different situations: limiting the employment opportunities for veiled Muslim women, a situation that also highlighted the limitation of the possibility of practicing one's faith as part of the educational process; limitations in providing adequate time and space for worship in the workplace; inadequate spiritual care; limitation to the possibility of consuming halal food and taking leave to celebrate Islamic holidays; the difficulties in opening a private Muslim elementary school; challenges in ensuring access to pork-free meals in public institutions; and implementing religious circumcision of male offspring. In order to address such challenges, it is crucial to 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.

Due to the fact that we have seen an increase of hateful, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic rhetoric during the political campaign in Slovenia in 2022, it is of vast importance that we 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.

Slovenian society needs to reduce the level of hate speech, condemn all forms of discrimination and other expressions of hostilities against different types of vulnerable groups, and crucially increase the efforts for peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding, where different opinions, views, and perceptions add value to a pluralistic, democratic society.

Chronology

- **10.2.2022:** The website Nova24tv.si published an article entitled "How to Prevent Holocaust 2" The Islamophobic article addressed the high birth rate

and alleged constant influx of millions of Muslims into Europe, who, according to the author, are mostly uneducated. He expressed his concern about the dominance of radical Islam, which he believes will lead to the extinction of all other religions.

- **11.4.2022:** State Secretary for National Security and prominent member of the centrist-right SDS party Žan Mahnič described his colleague from the Gibanje Svoboda party, Faila Pašič, as a “radical Islamist,” and accused her of bringing “Islamization and Shariatization and massive import of Arabs” into Slovenia.
- **2.10.2022:** The news portal Nova24tv.si published an article entitled “Mass Migration as a Weapon of the Islamization of Europe,” where the author addressed Muslims as “Mohammedans” who want to occupy Europe and conduct a “demographic war against Europeans.”
- **21.10.2022:** On the webpage “Kavarna Hayek,” Friedrich August von Hayek rejected Islam as a part of Europe and described the relation between Muslims and the Western world as a “war.”
- **16.11.2022:** Islamophobia and homophobia were present in the shooting of a Pakistani tenant which was made public via a post on Facebook

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SPAIN
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

SERGIO GRACIA, INÉS BOLAÑOS SOMOANO

The Authors

Sergio Gracia studied law at the University of Córdoba. He holds a Master's degree in "Terrorist Phenomenology: Bioterrorism, Epidemiological Prevention, Cyberterrorism, and Chemical Threats" from the Faculty of Sciences of Granada. He is the president of CINVED (Asociación Centro Investigación de Extrema Derecha), a research centre on the extreme right in Spain. Gracia practised law in Casa Árabe Córdoba and studied at the Department of Constitutional Law. He has extensive complementary education and practical experience in the faith and plurality fields, for example in the renewal of religious thought, political Islam in Europe, social changes in the Arab world, Islamic feminism, fundamental rights, and the extreme right. Gracia is an academic collaborator with various public and private institutions in Spain, and he frequently acts as an invited expert commentator for different national and international media outlets on international relations, right-wing violence, and hate speech issues. Email: consultas@cinved.com

Inés Bolaños Somoano is a PhD candidate at the Political and Social Sciences Department of the European University Institute (Italy), and a visiting researcher at the Institute for Security and Global Affairs, Leiden University (Netherlands). Her thesis looks at the emergence and consolidation of prevention of radicalization and violent extremism (P/CVE) as a distinct policy field in the European Union. Her secondary focus is on European right-wing extremism and online radicalisation. Bolaños-Somoano is a qualitative researcher and has been involved in several researcher groups such as the Muslim World Working Group, the International Relations Working Group, and Thoughts For Europe. She also has ethnographic and professional experience within institutions, having completed a traineeship at the European Commission, DG Home, where she worked on procurement and evaluation of internal security projects. Previously, Bolaños-Somoano pursued a Bachelor's degree in English Studies in Oviedo (Spain) and an Erasmus Mundus Master of Arts in European Studies at the universities in Göttingen (Germany), Olomouc (Czech Republic), and Osaka (Japan). Email: ines.bolanos@eui.eu

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Executive summary

In 2022, attacks against Spanish Muslims have continued taking place in different spheres. Some have been physical and verbal aggressions, as is the case of MP Najat Driouech (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya) who was attacked by followers of the JxCAT (Together for Catalonia) political leader, Laura Borrás, just outside the Spanish parliament. There was also a prominent attack from a neo-Nazi in San Juan de Aznalfarache (Sevilla), and several anti-Muslim graffiti appeared in Valdepeñas and Málaga. Finally, there have been social media harassment campaigns.

Information from the Interior Ministry regarding 2021 trends shows an increase in hate crimes. Meanwhile, between July and August 2022, there was a 20% increment in online Islamophobia-related hate speech, according to OBERAXE data, with respect to the year prior. Furthermore, a report on teenagerhood and youth, conducted by the Centro Reina Sofía and FAD Foundation, shows that 25% of Spanish youth openly identify as xenophobic and/or racist, with Roma, Moroccans, and Muslims being the most targeted groups.

The tendency towards prohibiting the wearing of the Islamic veil due to “internal regulations” on attire repeated itself. In 2022, high schools in Spain saw a repeated violation of fundamental rights and freedoms recognised by law, further obstructing equality of right and opportunity between genders. There have been instances displaying racist and xenophobic attitudes by real estate agencies, highlighting the difficulty of access to dignified housing by Muslim and African people in Spain.

Resumen ejecutivo

Durante el año 2022 los ataques hacia los musulmanes en España se han seguido llevando a cabo desde diferentes ámbitos, ya sean estos de forma física o verbal como fue el caso de la diputada Najat Driouech por parte de seguidores de la presidenta de JxCat, Laura Borràs, a las puertas del Parlament o el del neonazi de San Juan de Aznalfarache (Sevilla), a través de pintadas como las aparecidas en Valdepeñas o Málaga, o mediante redes sociales.

Los datos aportados por el Ministerio del Interior en su informe anual referente al año 2021, muestran el incremento de los delitos de odio, algo que confirma el OBERAXE a través la monitorización de dicho discurso en las redes sociales, donde refleja un incremento de hasta el 20% en lo que respecta a las expresiones de odio relacionadas con la islamofobia en los meses de julio-agosto de 2022.

A esto debemos añadir el estudio realizado por el Centro Reina Sofía y la Fundación FAD sobre adolescencia y juventud, que indica que el 25% de los jóvenes españoles se declaran abiertamente xenófobo y/o racista. Siendo gitanos, marroquíes y musulmanes, lamentablemente, los grupos que mayor animadversión sufren.

La prohibición del velo islámico en virtud de “códigos internos” dentro de los Institutos volvió a tener lugar a lo largo del presente curso, teniendo lugar nuevamente la violación de los derechos y libertades fundamentales reconocidos por la Ley, impidiendo así la igualdad de derechos y oportunidades entre hombres y mujeres. Además de poner de manifiesto el racismo y la xenofobia que existe en el mercado inmobiliario a la hora de alquilar viviendas a personas musulmanas y/o africanas.

Country Profile

EIR 2022

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):13/350, 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 outlines that the state will cooperate with religious authorities from several confessions, among which chiefly Catholicism.¹

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Ministry of Interior released its 2021 annual hate crime report in October 2022. The results show that there ...an increase of 401 with respect to 2020 and of 96 with respect to 2019?²Nevertheless, a report from OBERAXE, the Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia- OBERAXE)³ on hate speech in social media shows that Islamophobic incidents increased to 20% of the total hate speech in the months of July and August. This establishes a new record, given that last year, Islamophobic content constituted 14.7% of the total crimes.⁴

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The latest statistics come from the 2022 report by OBERAXE, the Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia.

Major Religions (% of Population): Practising Catholics 19.9%; Non-practising Catholics 39%; Agnostic 11.7%; Indifferent 10.8%; Atheists 14.6%; Other reli-

1. Article 16.3 of the Spanish Constitution, “Official State’s Bulletin” (*Boletín 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. “Informe sobre evolución de los delitos de odio en España 2021”, Ministerio del Interior, 11 April 2022, <https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/pdf/servicios-al-ciudadano/delitos-de-odio/estadisticas/INFORME-EVOLUCION-DELITOS-DE-ODIO-VDEF.pdf> (Access date: 7 October 2022).

3. From here onwards referred to by its acronym, OBERAXE.

4. Information from 2022 is only available from 2023 onwards, thus it is not included here.

gions 2.6%. (Report by the Sociological Research Centre [Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, CIS] n° 3344/2021, December 2021)

Muslim Population (% of Population): Muslims represent around 4% of the total population, counting both Spanish citizens and other residents. Forty-two per cent of Muslims are Spanish citizens, while 58% are third-country nationals (38% from Morocco and 20% from other countries). This percentage amounts to a total of 2,250,486 Muslim inhabitants.⁵

Main Muslim Community Organisations: 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),⁶ 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

National: Vox, Hacer Nación, España 2000, Alianza Nacional, La Falange, Falange Española de las JONS, Alternativa Española, Democracia Nacional, Orden y Ley (POLE), ADÑ, Identitarios, Partido Social Patriota, Partido Nacionalsocialista Obrero Español (FNI-PNSOE), Partido Solucionista, Partido Nacional Bolchevique, Movimiento Católico Español

Local-Regional: Front Nacional de Catalunya (FNC), Movimiento Aragonés Social, Renaixença Nacional Catalana (RNC), Som Identitaris, Som Catalans

Far-Right Movements

National: Hazte Oír, Plataforma 711, Españoles en Acción, In Memoriam Juan Ignacio, Ohka, Facta, Cedade

Local-Regional: Getafe Nacional Revolucionario, El Empecinado, Resistencia Social Alcalá de Henares, Asociación Cultural Fernando III, Distrito Sur, Revolutio

5. Observatorio Andalusi, *Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana*, (Madrid: UCIDE, 2022) <https://comisionislamica.org/2022/03/14/estudio-demografico-de-la-poblacion-musulmana/> (Access date: 19 November 2022).

6. 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).

España, 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, , Valentia Forum, Somatemp, Asociación Cultural Tradicionalista Fernando III El Santo, Defensa Catalunya, Patriotes Catalans, Moviment Identitari Català (MIC). A map covering movements and parties can be found at Cinved.⁷

Far-Right Militant Organisations: Some of the above organisations, namely Bastión Frontal and Hogar Social Madrid, together with splinter groups operating under the umbrella name “Hacer Nación”, have been targeted by the Spanish courts for attacks against immigrants, Muslims, and unaccompanied minors (MENAS).

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No

7. The map of the Spanish extreme right can be accessed here: CINVED, *Mapa virtual sobre la ultraderecha española*, December 2021 /<https://www.cinved.com/2022/02/22/mapa-virtual-sobre-la-ultraderecha-espanola/>, (Access date: 5 January 2023).

Introduction

There is widespread concern about the increase in hate crimes in Spanish society. This coincided with a parallel increase in social polarisation, as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns. The Public Prosecutor Office in Madrid has confirmed this trend, adding that social media networks have been and continue to be the ideal vehicle to disseminate hate speech.

The initial fraying of social relations, a consequence of the great social and economic crises brought by the COVID-19 mandatory lockdowns, has been purposefully appropriated and fed by extreme right political parties and groups, which have established themselves as the only trustworthy “truth sayers”, ironically manipulating existing social fears and inequalities by means of fake news and disinformation. The extreme right has fomented a climate of “witch hunts” against people who do not physically appear “Western” (immigrants and non-Christians). The political support given to such discourses by extreme right public figures has contributed to mainstreaming in the public eye a type of bigoted speech which legitimises the rejection of “Others”. As a matter of fact, 80% of the population has at some point listened to a fake news piece about migration.⁸ News channels and other media outlets have also contributed to the creation of a negative discourse, which binarily distinguishes between Spanish and “Others”, and stigmatises low level income migrants who are striving to improve their conditions.

By means of, first, the creation of extremist and apocalyptic messages about the present circumstances in the country, and second, the diffusion of said messages via like-minded media channels and social media, the Spanish right wing has contributed to mainstreaming a view of Islam as a monolithic, static, and reactionary religion, which furthermore is violent and hostile to other (non-Muslim) cultures. Social imaginaries continue to attribute Muslims an “Otherised” identity, linked intrinsically to stereotypes about extreme religiosity and intrinsic tendencies towards violence and (lack of) social justice. These characteristics render Muslim citizens not readily assimilated into Spanish society. Furthermore, Muslim communities are penalised for their existing cultural and social lies, and their refusal to abandon those in order to adopt certain features of Spanish mainstream society, such as Catholicism or a secular dress code in public education spaces. Integration is thus only achieved once distinctive cultural, religious, or ethnic features have been abandoned.⁹

8. “8 de cada 10 personas han escuchado bulos sobre las personas migrantes”, Oxfam Intermón, 19 July, 2022.

9. Eugenia Relaño Pastor, “¿Existen respuestas jurídicas para combatir la islamofobia?”, *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos*, Vol. 24 (2018), p. 31-48.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Spanish Muslims have continued to suffer attacks, mostly by radical and bigoted individuals and groups, during 2022. This situation highlights the increasing reactionary wave surrounding any public or private matter related to Islam.

Among the 2022 events, we should start with MP Najat Driouech, representative of the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC), who was verbally attacked by supporters of the president of the political party Junts per Catalunya (JxCat, Together for Catalonia), Laura Borràs, at the doors of the Catalan Parliament; the assault of a Moroccan youth by a neo-Nazi in San Juan de Aznalfarache (Sevilla); and the hate speech graffiti painted at high schools in Valdepeñas¹⁰ and Málaga,¹¹ attacking Muslims among other targets.

These events are accompanied by direct instances of racism in other social spheres, such as the discrimination that Muslims face in the housing market. This is the case of Pape, a Spanish citizen in search of a flat, who was told by the housing agency he approached that they “did not rent [apartments] to Moors or Africans.”¹²

SE2

Gente DELITO DE ODIO

Aparecen pintadas racistas y contra el feminismo en varios institutos de Valdepeñas

Unas pintadas en las que se puede leer "moros fuera" o la representación del símbolo nazi y alusiones al colectivo feminista



Figure 1¹³: Graffiti in several high schools in Valdepeñas: “Moors out” (*moros fuera*).

The article reads, “Racist and anti-feminist graffiti appear in various institutes in Valdepeña. The IES Bernardo Balbuena has been the target of various graffiti against the feminist collective and of a racist nature”.

Source: Cadena Ser¹⁴

10. “Aparecen pintadas racistas y contra el feminismo en varios institutos de Valdepeñas”, Cadena Ser, 3 November, 2022.
11. “Denuncian una pintada racista en pleno Centro de Málaga”, La Opinión de Málaga, 16 November, 2022.
12. “No alquilamos este piso ni a moros ni a africanos”, Levante-emv, 5 September, 2022.
13. All screenshots belong to the authors unless stated otherwise.
14. “Aparecen pintadas racistas y contra el feminismo en varios institutos de Valdepeñas”, Cadena Ser, 3 November 2022.

Employment

In 2003, the Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination (CEDRE) was created as a government tool for increasing equality and reducing ethnic or racial discrimination¹⁵. According to its latest report from 2020, 26% of the total perceived discrimination in the Spanish workforce is on account of racial/ethnic origin. Meanwhile, in municipalities with over 200,000 inhabitants that number rises to 30% of the total instances of perceived work-place discrimination.¹⁶

Meanwhile, according to a different report by the Spanish Observatory for Religious Pluralism (Observatorio del Pluralismo Religioso), workplace discrimination on account of religious beliefs disproportionately affects believers of minority denominations. This report surveyed 1,986 people, of which 96% identified as non-Catholics (the majority religion in Spain). Among the study participants, 80.5% has witnessed some kind of discrimination in the workplace.¹⁷

From a legal point of view, the Spanish constitution enshrines freedom of one's personal outward appearance in several articles, which refer to the individual's right to dignity and to the development of their personality, whilst also recognising the right to equality and to non-discrimination due to class, race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, opinion, or any other condition.

Previous laws, such as the *Ley Orgánica de Libertad Religiosa 7/1980*, from July 5, 1980, and posterior, such as the *Estatuto de los Trabajadores a través del Real Decreto Legislativo 2/2015*, dated October 23, 2015, and the *Real Decreto Legislativo 5/2015*, dated October 30, 2015, further recognise the right of workers not to be discriminated against, directly or indirectly, due to their faith or personal beliefs, either during the selection process or once employed. Religious freedom can thus be publicly expressed through clothing or other personal belongings.

Education

The beginning of the 2022-2023 school year saw the resurfacing of fake news on the subject of "Islamic religion", which is imparted in several Spanish schools. Doctored screenshots of the supposed curriculum for the subject were distributed repeatedly on social media platforms. Thousands of users added to the controversy by falsely claiming that the socialist government was trying, via Islamic religious education, to purge Catholicism from the classrooms.¹⁸

15. Consejo para la Eliminación de la Discriminación Racial o Étnica (CEDRE), <https://igualdadynodiscriminacion.igualdad.gob.es/elConsejo/>. (Access Date: 20 February 2023).

16. Consejo para la Eliminación de la Discriminación Racial o Étnica, *Estudio sobre la percepción de la discriminación por origen racial o étnico por parte de sus potenciales víctimas en 2020*, (Madrid: CEDRE, 2020).

17. Observatorio del Pluralismo Religioso en España, *Estudio sobre la percepción de discriminación por motivos religiosos en el ámbito laboral* (Madrid: Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia, 2022).

18. "El Gobierno no ha suprimido la asignatura de religión católica para sustituirla por la islámica mediante una resolución de Educación", *Newtral*, 28 September 2022.

Several extreme right parties have echoed these false claims, and even campaigned on their opposition to the availability of Islamic religion classes in schools. Among them, the party Democracia Nacional took to Twitter on October 10 to publicly oppose this initiative.¹⁹

As in 2021, there have continued to be incidents of school pupils being expelled from school premises for wearing the hijab. These expulsions continue to be justified under the so-called internal regulations on attire. Such an incident occurred at the beginning of the year in Málaga, when some parents reported that their daughters were not allowed to go to class “after they started wearing the veil.”²⁰ The affected girls were finally withdrawn from the school by their parents, who transferred them to another one. For its part, the Junta de Andalucía, the responsible body on this case, offered the family of the two students a change to another educational centre that did not have such internal regulations.²¹

Likewise, on September 14, 2022, five pupils from the Madrid high school IES Rosa Chacel were forced to leave their classroom for wearing the hijab. The case of Madrid is particularly striking; as of 2010, almost half of all Madrid schools and high schools had a de facto veil ban in place,²² and in 2019, the same schools were allowed to outright ban hijab-wearing on the grounds that “it would help avoid problems with identification [of the pupils]”.²³

At the level of intellectual and public discussions, certain think tanks in their publications have favoured doctrines based on a presumed clash of civilisations, or a clash between Christianity and Islam. This is the case of the Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura (Institute of Security and Culture), an independent think tank created by academics who often collaborate with other conservative think tanks. Although in principle they do not have a direct link with any political party, its members have participated in conferences with politicians. Together with the former president of the government of Spain, José María Aznar, the former minister of foreign affairs, Josep Piqué, and Jose Maria Bellido, mayor of Córdoba (PP), members of Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura carried out the round table “From Istanbul to Córdoba: The Symbols of Islamism”.²⁴ Their ideological tendencies can be seen in a 2022 publication, where the editors once again turn to Samuel P. Huntington’s thesis on the contem-

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19. Democracia Nacional, Twitter, 10 October, 2022, https://twitter.com/D_Nacional/status/1579509786659299328?s=20&t=kfg8dRQA-Iq7iTM_nLrCfA (Access Date: 12 December 2022).
20. “Unos padres denuncian que un colegio de Málaga no deja ir a clase a su hija ‘tras ponerse el velo’”, Málaga Hoy, 7 March, 2022.
21. “La Junta ofrecerá un cambio de colegio a la niña que lleva hiyab en Málaga”, Málaga Hoy, 8 March, 2022.
22. “Casi la mitad de colegios e institutos de Madrid prohíben el velo”, 20 Minutos, 21 April, 2010.
23. “Los colegios madrileños podrán prohibir el velo islámico para ‘evitar que se dificulte la identificación’”, La Sexta, 5 July, 2019.
24. Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura, Twitter, 24 October 2020 <https://twitter.com/InstitutoSyC/status/1320007488205430785> (Access Date: 23 December 2022).

porary reconfiguration of the world order and the unavoidable fracture line between Western and Islamic civilisations in the Mediterranean. Point 6 of the document further makes this allusion clear, stating that “Ceuta and Melilla are Western cities bordering on land with an Islamic civilisation state, Morocco”.²⁵ This type of discourse coming from this particular think tank is not a new phenomenon. At the local level, members of the Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura have repeatedly “warned”, in March 2022²⁶ and previously in 2020,²⁷ about the pressure that Arab countries are exerting in order to change the status of the Mezquita-Catedral (Mosque/Cathedral) of Córdoba. Such a change would imply the official state acceptance of the Islamic nature of this historic monument.

At the university level, there are also active extreme right groups and youth platforms which orchestrate attacks against politicians and social actors. These groups are often named with references to the “Islamisation” of Europe, the Arab conquest of the Spanish peninsula, referred to in Spanish simply as the *Toma* or *Toma de Granada*, and the *Reconquista* by Christian forces which followed.

One such group is Plataforma 711 (Platform 711), named so according to its members “in remembrance of the fateful day in which Islam invaded the Spanish Peninsula”.²⁸ In the interview referenced before, the representative of Platform 711 acknowledges their political links to the Vox political party. “*We held talks with the PP, but they did not go further and for the moment the only party that has opted to give voice to this project has been Vox, coming Ortega Smith to the act and defending the rights of students who wanted to hear a speech [on the Toma de Granada] that has been excluded from that university for more than 20 years. At the moment Vox clearly supports us and we are not closed to being supported by any political party, quite the contrary.*” In terms of attacks, members of the group Platform 711 carried out and were arrested for attacks at the Complutense University of Madrid and the University of Valencia. Similar acts were carried out by groups such as Bastion Frontal and Hogar Social against different politicians and party headquarters.

Politics

In a similar vein, these pseudo-historical allusions to the Arab presence in Spain are also used by political actors as rallying points. Every year on January 2, extreme right groups congregate in Granada for the celebration of the *Toma de Granada* (Conquest

25. Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura, *Ceuta y Melilla, frontera terrestre de España y de la Unión Europea en África* (Madrid: Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura, 2020), p. 76.

26. “Experto denuncia que países árabes presionan para cambiar el estatuto de la Catedral de Córdoba para incluir el islam”, Europa Press, 17 March, 2022.

27. “Un experto avisa que el islamismo usa la conversión de Santa Sofía para reivindicar la Mezquita de Córdoba”, El Día de Córdoba, 29 October, 2020.

28. “Plataforma 711: ‘Volveremos a la Complutense para hacer frente al sectarismo de la izquierda’”, La Gaceta de la Iberosfera, 30 April, 2022.

of Granada), and use this occasion to attack Islam and Muslims, both in Spain and abroad. Like-minded social media accounts echo these messages and propose plans to defeat Islam in the country.²⁹

Muslim MPs have also suffered political harassment at the hands of mainstream (non-extreme right) parties, who have incorporated anti-Muslim talking points in their political repertoires. This is the case of MP Najat Driouech, who was insulted by followers of the president of the centre-right party Junts per Catalunya (JxCat, Together for Catalonia), Laura Borràs, at the entrance of the Catalanian Parliament.³⁰

At the same time, the majority of Islamophobic attacks continue coming from right-wing and extreme right-wing parties, such as Vox, España 2000, or Democracia Nacional. In the last year, above all, Vox targeted the Ceuta Muslim community,³¹ making purposefully incendiary comparisons, equating the importance of Eid al-Adha and bullfighting.³² Meanwhile, Democracia Nacional has campaigned to impede or problematise the start of “Islamic religion” classes in school in Murcia. Finally, España 2000 is continuing to push a traditional talking point for the Islamophobic extreme right in Spain, bashing MENAS, or foreign unaccompanied underage nationals. Most of their activism takes place on social media.



Figure 2: Screenshot of a Democracia Nacional Islamophobic tweet³³. The tweet reads, “Didn’t we agree to keep religion out of public education? Islamic religion classes commence in 9 primary schools”.

29. España2000, Twitter, 2 January 2022 https://twitter.com/Espana_2000/status/1477644389040242692?s=20&t=w-gkMHKR5zgRsb8MNPZV4Qw (Access Date: 17 October 2022).

30. “La diputada de ERC Najat Driouech denuncia los “inadmisibles” insultos racistas de seguidores de Borràs”, NiusDiario, 29 July, 2022.

31. Ceuta and Melilla are two Spanish cities which are located on the north coast of Africa, bordering Morocco.

32. “La ultraderecha ataca a la comunidad musulmana y compara la tauromaquia con la Fiesta del Sacrificio”, El faro de Ceuta, 21 August, 2022.

33. Democracia Nacional, Twitter, 10 October 2022, https://twitter.com/D_Nacional/status/1579509786659299328 (Access Date: 12 October 2022).

Spanish Muslim women have also been specifically targeted. Catalanian Vox MP Sergio Macián openly bashed Muslim citizens who were renewing their national ID cards, taking a picture and posting it on Twitter, last May 31.



Figure 3: Screenshot of tweet by Vox MP Sergio Macián attacking Muslim women³⁴. The tweet reads, “Yesterday I was renewing my ID card, together with my daughters, at the Documentation Office. In the time I was there six Maghrebi families, with three or four children, entered the office, all speaking Arabic and seeking to obtain or renew the ID cards of their children, who are of course Spanish. Population replacement is real”.

Another Vox MP Sonia Lalanda, from Palencia, also took to Twitter to attack Muslim women and once again celebrate the expulsion of Muslims from Spain in the High Middle Ages.

Indeed, most Spanish extreme right parties routinely resort to (pseudo-) historical narratives about the Arab invasion and the following expulsion of Muslims from Spain. These narratives are popular, easy to sell to the local populations as positive, innocuous, objective facts, and further serve to politically whitewash and legitimise xenophobia and Islamophobic attitudes. On an identitarian basis, extreme right actors also continue to push such narratives in the pursuit of establishing a binary national identity, a (supposedly) historical “us vs them”, “Christian vs Moors”. In this context, several Vox MPs have pushed to change local holiday dates to the supposed expulsion date of Muslims in those particular territories.

34. Sergio Macián, Twitter, 31 May, 2022, https://twitter.com/sergio_macian/status/1531529159008309248?s=20&t=mCFINMzOZfoOLw-qauDVDQ (Access Date: 17 October 2022).



Figure 4: Screenshot of Islamophobic tweet by Vox MP Sonia Lalanda³⁵. The Tweet reads, “Women in the Islamic faith better follow a “handbook of the good wife” if they know what’s good for them. Europe fought against Islam since the 8thVIII century, and in 1492 it was a woman who finally expelled Muslims from Spain. No more foolery. And bullfighting is an art form!”.

Murcia’s Vox MP, for example, has repeatedly requested for the regional holiday to be switched to February 2, the date of the *Reconquista de la Taifa de Murcia*.³⁶ In Granada, another Vox MP, Macarena Olona, claimed that January 2, the date of the *Toma de Granada*, “should be instituted as the bank holiday of the region and of the whole nation”.³⁷

The theme of the “Islamisation” of Spain is another of the central tenets of the Spanish extreme right. The Barcelona Vox party coordinator, Gonzalo de Oro, took to Twitter to claim that “some people are not aware of how dangerous this ‘goody-good’ attitude towards radical Islamists is. We must face challenges without biases or prejudice. Burying our heads in the sand only makes them grow bigger. Stop Islamisation!”.³⁸

The Islamisation discourse is seemingly prevalent among Catalanian politicians. The Catalanian Vox MP Antonio Gallego Burgos even wrote an opinion piece on this topic, in a national newspaper of great reach, the *ABC*. The headline read, “The Islamisation of Catalunya”.³⁹ The national party coordinator from Vox and regional leader of Vox Cataluña, Ignacio Garriga, has also “warned” about the Islamisation of

35. Sonia Lalanda, Twitter, 20 August, 2022, <https://twitter.com/slalanda/status/1561070196110118912> (Access Date: 17 October 2022).

36. “Vox reivindica el 2 de febrero como el auténtico Día de la Región de Murcia”, Web Vox, 2 February, 2021.

37. Macarena Olona, “La Toma de Granada, el 2 de enero, debe ser ‘Día de Andalucía’ y fiesta nacional”. *Web Vox* (January 2, 2022) retrieved 17 October 2022, <https://www.voxespana.es/noticias/macarena-olona-toma-granada-2-enero-debe-ser-dia-de-andalucia-fieta-nacional-20220102?provincia=granada>.

38. Gonzalo de Oro, Twitter, 25 October 2022, <https://twitter.com/gonzalodeoro/status/1584836343690952704> (Access Date: 31 October 2022).

39. “La islamización de Cataluña. Tribuna abierta de Antonio Gallego Burgos”, *ABC*, 30 August, 2022.

Catalonia.⁴⁰ This is not his first time denouncing the nefarious “Islamic” influence in Catalonia, having repeated this message in several interviews throughout 2022.

This discursive strategy, a result of the combined efforts of Vox members, shows an intentional approach that seeks to dominate public sphere discussions with securitised and threat-framed views of Islam. Muslim identities are “otherised”, presented as a source of historical trauma, through images of the Arab conquest and later, the Christian takeover. Contact with Muslims must be seen as a dangerous, undesirable experience to be rejected and overcome. Furthermore, Muslims are always presented as migrants and external to the country, a threat to economic progress and social justice. Thus, logically the linkage between “immigration-Islam” and “Muslim-Islamisation-invasion” is created by political actors, and spread to the population and voters via the media.

Media

Spanish media, on its part, continues to convey a partial portrait of Spanish Muslims. The situations of vulnerability experienced by Muslim women tend to be explained, in news’ coverage, through culture-oriented explanations. In other words, their grievances are framed as an inevitable result of their Islamic culture, and its assumed intrinsic inequality towards women.

Overall, news pieces speaking about Muslims focus on issues of cultural and religious practice, such as the veil or slaughter practices. Most outlets avoid treating more important issues such as fundamental rights, access to Islamic education in the public system, or discrimination in the workplace. Such bias in coverage frames Muslim citizens and their grievances in exclusive reference to their religion, without any regard to other socio-economic or political factors.⁴¹ Thus, media outlets create highly polarised debates that focus on visible symbols of “Muslimness”, such as the hijab, halal sacrifices, or men with beards, instead of material challenges.

Another important development in 2022 is the increased diffusion of fake news or openly Islamophobic news pieces, which aim to pit mainstream Spanish society against Muslim communities in Spain. These are mostly reproduced in yellow press publications, especially those affiliated or ideological akin to Vox or other extreme right political parties, such *El Manifiesto* and *Caso Aislado*.

Fake news about Muslims also occasionally appears in mainstream media as well, such as *Gaceta de la Iberosfera* and *La Razón*, which published an article titled “If Not for Our Victory in Navas de Tolosa, We Would Be Praying Today Facing Mecca”, where the term “*Reconquista*” strongly featured.⁴²

40. “Garriga advierte de la islamización de Cataluña”, *La Gaceta de la Iberosfera*, 26 January, 2022.

41. Laura Navarro García, *La Islamofobia a debate. La genealogía del miedo al islam y la construcción de los discursos antiislámicos* (Madrid: Casa Árabe-IEAM, 2012), p.145-146.

42. “Si no fuese por la victoria en las Navas de Tolosa, ‘hoy rezaríamos mirando hacia La Meca’”, *La Razón*, 16 July, 2022.

There are also newspapers which tend to copy news, changing some data, as is the case with *Mediterráneo Digital*, which this year replicated 2,017 news pieces from a different newspaper, *Infobae*, as if they were happening in 2022. Concretely, *Mediterráneo Digital* used pictures of demonstrations in third countries for a fake news article warning about Stockholm's "Islamisation".⁴³

Meanwhile, extreme right-affiliated yellow press channels continue to push fear-mongering propaganda against Muslims in Europe. *El Manifiesto* publishes a satirical "handguide" to the Islamisation of Europe. There, it claims that there are efforts "to turn Europe into a collective of stateless [people] without identity." It goes on, "Thus, while we are governed by the current elites, Europe will be increasing Muslim and African, until the inconvenient natives become a minority in their own lands."⁴⁴

In sum, media debates around Muslims citizens are simplified and surface-level. The veil is featured most prominently than any other issue, essentialising and securitising the Muslim woman, who can easily be singled out and expelled from public spaces. This can even mean preventing visibly Muslim women from studying or working, in effect condemning them to stay at home whether they want to or not. Moreover, fake news and disinformation around gender and Islam are present and accessible through different media with the radio, press, TV, and social media pushing emotional, rather than fact-based arguments about the problematics of Muslim women in Spain.⁴⁵

Justice system

Early in February 2022, the Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Murcia (High Court of Justice of Murcia) passed a judgement pointing out that the Consejería de Educación de Murcia (Murcia Education Board), headed by Vox politician Mabel Campuzano, was violating the right to religious and ideological freedom. In particular, the right of parents' to choose religious and moral education for their children fitting their personal beliefs. This judgement openly recognises the right of a family to have its children educated in Islamic religion in a public school of their community.⁴⁶

Trials with important implications for Islamophobia in Spain have taken place in 2022. First, on October 18, a trial took place against the neo-Nazi organisation Hogar Social, charged with an attack against a mosque on the M-30 highway, in Madrid, on March 22, 2016. During the attack, messages appeared that generated a cli-

43. "¿Qué sabemos sobre el contenido que afirma que en Estocolmo (Suecia) se impone la 'sharía'?", Maldita Marea, 28 July, 2022.

44. "Una guía necesaria", *El Manifiesto*, 15 September, 2021.

45. Asociación Marroquí para la Integración de Inmigrantes, *La situación de las mujeres musulmanas en España. Debates actuales, experiencias diversas y mediatización del uso del velo*, (Asociación Marroquí para la Integración de Inmigrantes, Málaga: 2022).

46. "La justicia da la razón a una familia de Murcia que reivindica el derecho de sus hijos a estudiar religión islámica en el colegio", *El País*, 14 February, 2022.

mate “of clear hostility and violence against the Muslim world”.⁴⁷ Finally, on December 14, 2022 it became known that the Provincial Court of Madrid acquitted the leader of the neo-Nazi group Melisa Domínguez of the crime of incitement to hatred related to the attack she had led against the mosque near the M-30.⁴⁸ Days later, on October 22, a woman in Artesa de Segre (Lleida) was sentenced to one year in prison on counts of verbal and physical aggression against another woman with a racist intent. This aggression took place in September 2020, when the victim was thrown to the ground, kicked, and punched, and was seized by her veil while being shouted at with anti-Muslim slurs (*mora de mierda*, “shitty moor”) and told to “go back to her country”.⁴⁹

Similarly, a man declared himself guilty and accepted a sentence of six months of prison for shouting anti-Moroccan slurs and threatening one of his neighbours that “my father will kill you”.⁵⁰ The events happened in January and August 2019.

Finally, the Spanish justice system passed its first sentence regarding the diffusion of fake news on the issue of migrants. A member of the Guardia Civil (Police Forces) was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment for disseminating fake news, for misappropriating a video of a protest in China and claiming it featured young migrants in Spain.⁵¹

Future judicial developments include a trial, set to begin in June 2023,⁵² against an individual charged with leading an Islamophobic violent group in Antas (Almería).

Internet

Disinformation and fake news continue to function as a source of suspicions and hostility towards Muslim communities, with community leaders and political representatives sheltering most of the burden. In order to target this situation, the Spanish government has proposed the creation of an independent organism tasked with overseeing and managing racism and hate speech online and in the media.⁵³

Among the fake news items of 2022, we find the case of Fátima Hamed, leader of the social movement *Movimiento por la Dignidad y la Ciudadanía* (Movement for

47. “La Fiscalía pide tres años de prisión para una dirigente de Hogar Social por islamofobia”, *El Salto*, 14 October, 2022.

48. Absuelta la líder de Hogar Social Madrid de islamofobia en el ataque a la mezquita de la M-30, *Europa Press*, 14 December, 2022.

49. “Acepta un año de prisión por agredir e insultar a una mujer por motivos racistas en Artesa de Segre”, *Segre.com*, 13 October, 2022.

50. “Un hombre acepta seis meses de prisión por insultar y menospreciar a un vecino: “Iros. Esto no es la selva””, *EuropaPress*, 8 November, 2022.

51. “Primera condena en España por difundir ‘fake news’ sobre los menores migrantes”, *El País*, 8 November, 2022.

52. “El juicio contra acusado de liderar un grupo islamófobo en Antas (Almería) se celebrará en junio de 2023”, *EuropaPress*, 24 September, 2022.

53. “El Gobierno propone crear un organismo independiente que supervise los mensajes racistas en redes sociales y medios”, *Europapress*, 26 September, 2022.

Dignity and Citizenship). In late July, she reported that a hoax attacking her was circulating in social media.⁵⁴ Throughout 2022, a political representative from the political party CUP Aisata Gumaneh, was also targeted online, via the use of the hash-tags #stopinvasion and #stopimmigration.



Figure 5: Screenshot of a Twitter account echoing the hoax against Aisata Gumaneh, political representative of CUP.⁵⁵ Tweet reads, “Everyday I am more disgusted by them [Muslims]. STOP INVASION, STOP IMMIGRATION”. The retweeted image shows a Muslim politician with the caption “The new catalans”.



Figure 6: Screenshot showing Islamophobic attacks targeting Prof. Natalia Andújar (published with her consent)⁵⁶. The Tweet reads, “This is not the worst message I have received. Impunity makes these people bolder”. The picture accompanying the tweet reads, “You are a traitor to your ethnicity. There are so many native European spiritualities you could have chosen, instead of imitating semitic desert dwellers or copying Blacks... Take note of how they treat animals, part of [God’s] creation, halal sacrifice is cruelty... Your religion is for those with 0 intellectual coefficient... Or maybe you like black semitic cocks. You are endophobic. Poor lost sheep, oh well.”

54. Fatima H. Hossain, Twitter, 24 June, 2022 <https://twitter.com/FatimaHHossain/status/1540108909301710848?s=20&t=y4Ws3qtvAmI02wsulJipyA> (Access Date: 13 October 2022)
 55. Cup Olot, Twitter, 3 May, 2019 <https://twitter.com/CUPOlot/status/1124401758808223744?s=20&t=mC-FINMzOZfoOLw-qauDVDQ> (Access Date: 25 October 2022).
 56. Natalia Andujar, Twitter, 31 October, 2022, <https://twitter.com/Natandujar/status/1587019101461008384> (Access Date: 31 October 2022).

Another hoax was distributed on Twitter by Silvia Orriols from the extreme right and xenophobic party Front Nacional de Catalunya. Orriols published a picture with five veiled women, with hijabs and burkas, with the caption “Islamic Veil Exposition in Sant Antoni. European feminists organise to promote and normalise a misogynistic and discriminatory practice. No girls, you aren’t feminists... you are Islamic.”⁵⁷

Social media sites have also served as platforms to attack prominent figures of Islam in Spain, like Professor Natalia Andújar who has suffered several attacks.

During 2022, the OBERAXE continued its mandate to monitor hate speech on the most important social media platforms. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, combined, reported 388 instances of confirmed hate speech. This means a 41.2% decrease with respect to the last observed period (November 1 - December 31, 2021). Islamophobic content in specific increased by 3.6 points to 17.7% compared to 4.1% in the same period in 2021.⁵⁸

Figura 1. Porcentaje de comunicaciones realizadas a cada plataforma

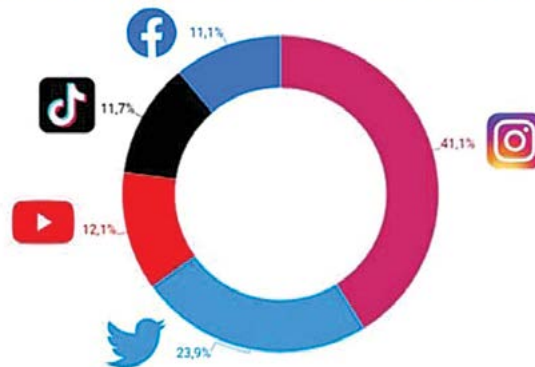


Figure 7: Graph showing the distribution of hate speech content across social media platforms between March and April 2022. Source: OBERAXE

Rates of Islamophobic content among all hate speech content fluctuated throughout the year. The lowest rates in 2022 were in May-June, amounting to 9% of all hate speech, and the highest in July-August, rising to 20% of the total.

A report on teenagehood and youth conducted by the Centro Reina Sofia and FAD Foundation shows that 25% of Spanish youth openly identifies as xenophobic and/or racist.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the poll results show that Africans, whether from

57. “El bulo sobre el burka que envenenó un acto vecinal en Barcelona”, El País, 20 September, 2022.

58. “Protocolo para combatir el discurso de odio en línea”, Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE)-Secretary of State for Migration, https://www.inclusion.gob.es/oberaxe/ficheros/ejes/discursoodio/Boletin_enero-febrero_2022.pdf (Access Date: 20 October 2022).

59. A. Andújar; N. Sánchez; S. Pradillo & F. Sabin, *Jóvenes y racismo. Estudio sobre las percepciones y actitudes racistas y xenófobas entre la población joven de España*, (Madrid: Centro Reina Sofia sobre Adolescencia y Juventud-Fundación Fad Juventud, 2022).

Sub-Saharan Africa (48.8%) or Morocco (47.3%), are seen as having the most difficulties in integrating in Spanish society, followed closely by Roma (32.4%) and Muslims (32.3%).



Figure 8: Graph showing the distribution of hate speech content by target, between March and April 2022. Immigrants, North Africans, and Muslims constitute the main targets, followed by those with North African ethnic backgrounds and young migrants. **Source:** OBERAXE

Tabla 1. Opinión sobre la ocupación de diferentes posiciones sociales por personas de diferentes colectivos. (Datos en %).

	Vecino		Tu profesor/a o jefe/a		Policía		Alcalde/sa	
	No me parecería bien	Si me parecería bien	No me parecería bien	Si me parecería bien	No me parecería bien	Si me parecería bien	No me parecería bien	Si me parecería bien
Europa occidental o América del Norte (Francia, Alemania, EEUU...)	5,7	94,3	9,5	90,5	12,8	87,2	19,3	80,8
Europa del Este (Rumania, Polonia...)	12,8	87,3	15,7	84,3	19,0	81,0	26,0	74,0
África Subsahariana	14,3	85,7	16,0	84,0	20,4	79,6	26,1	73,9
Marruecos	20,0	80,0	20,9	79,1	22,8	77,3	29,8	70,3
Asia del Sur (India, Pakistán,...)	16,3	83,7	17,5	82,5	22,8	77,3	27,7	72,3
China	14,3	85,7	17,8	82,3	21,3	78,7	27,9	72,1
América Latina	12,6	87,4	14,0	86,0	19,3	80,8	23,7	76,3
Etnia gitana	24,0	76,0	23,6	76,4	25,4	74,6	30,3	69,8
Religión musulmana	18,3	81,7	19,2	80,8	22,7	77,3	28,6	71,4
Rasgos racializados (pelo afro, ojos rasgados,...)	12,0	88,0	14,6	85,4	16,9	83,1	22,8	77,3

Fuente: elaboración propia [Ver figura 46]

Figure 9: Table showing a poll of attitudes towards members of various ethnic and religious backgrounds occupying various social positions: neighbour, boss, police, and mayor. **Source:** Centro Reina Sofía⁶⁰

60. The study illustrates some ways in which the youth has adopted discriminatory attitudes. For example, the poll shows widespread hostility towards the idea of immigrants, Roma, Muslims, and racialised individuals becoming mayors of their city/town. The biggest target of mistrust for the youth are Roma, Moroccan nationals, and those with Moroccan ancestry.

Figura 24. Percepción de los perfiles que se consideran con más dificultades en su integración. (Datos en %).

P26. ¿Podrías decirnos cuáles de los siguientes perfiles consideras que tiene más dificultades a la hora de integrarse en España? [Elige un máximo de 3]

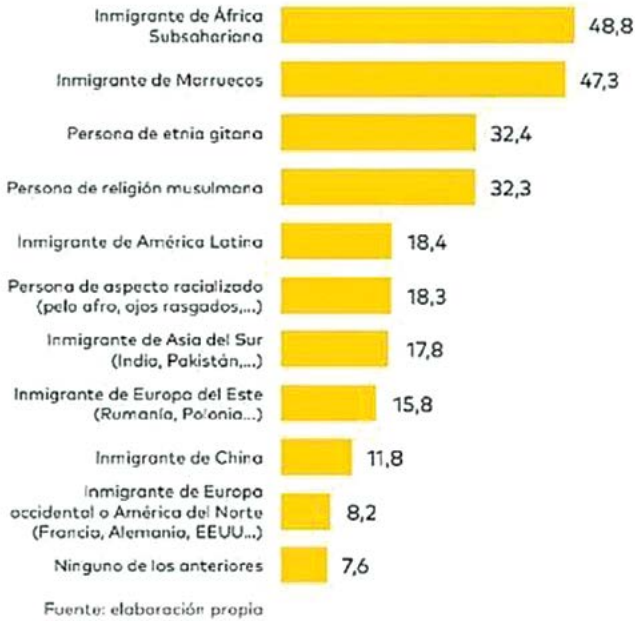


Figure 10: Table showing a list of social groups from “most difficult” to “easiest” to integrate into Spanish society. Africans are at the top of the list and Westerners at the bottom. **Source:** Centro Reina Sofia⁶¹

At the end of the year, during the days before and after the soccer match between Spain and Morocco in the World Cup 2022, many hoaxes and misinformation about Moroccan fans were found and reported by Maldita, such as false robberies, streets set on fire by the celebration, or supposed jumping over the Melilla border fence, which separates Spain and Morocco⁶². Maldita is a media channel dedicated to fact-checking, especially around social media and disinformation regarding migration and Moroccan nationals in Spain..⁶³

To the above, we should add the dissemination of thousands of tweets and posts on social media attacking Islam, in general, and Moroccans, in particular. Users made reference to battles such as Covadonga, the *Reconquista*, or the so-called Kalergi Plan⁶⁴.

61. A. Andújar.; N. Sánchez; S. Pradillo & F. Sabin, *Jóvenes y racismo. Estudio sobre las percepciones y actitudes racistas y xenófobas entre la población joven de España*, (Madrid: Centro Reina Sofia sobre Adolescencia y Juventud-Fundación Fad Juventud, 2022).

62. “10 bulos y desinformaciones sobre el partido entre la selección de Marruecos y la de España del Mundial de Catar”, Maldita, 6 December, 2022.

63. “10 bulos y desinformaciones sobre el partido entre la selección de Marruecos y la de España del Mundial de Catar”, Maldita, 6 December, 2022.

64. The Kalergi plan is a conspirational belief that there is an international plot orchestrated by political and economic elites to import millions of workers from Asia and Africa and mix them with the “European races”.

Users also frequently added the phrase “*Leña al moro*” (Sticks to the Moor) in their messages.

Among these posts, it should be noted how different militant groups took to the streets to, according to them, “prevent acts of vandalism by Moroccan fans and protect the streets”.

FORO MDM
@elforomdm

● #informacionMDM ● ULTRAS
SUR Y FRENTE ATLETICO y grupos
similares UNIRAN FUERZAS PARA
IMPEDIR ACTOS VANDALICOS
DE LOS AFICIONADOS DE
MARRUECOS Y PROTEGER LAS
CALLES por ello convocan a los
aficionados de España para salir a
las calles a defender Madrid.
Martes 16:00h



Figure 11: Screenshot of the extremist group Foro MDM’s Twitter account calling Madrilians to the street “to prevent acts of vandalism by Moroccan fans and protect the streets”⁶⁵

Nacho TM @shadow_tvvv · 3h

Hoy puede significar la primera derrota de esos que quieren imponernos el Plan Kalergi. Hoy puede significar la primera victoria de la Reconquista. Hoy somos hijos de los guerreros de la batalla de Covadonga. Hoy todos somos Don Pelayo.

LEÑA AL MORO



Figure 12: Screenshot of the extremist Nacho TM’s Twitter account, referencing the conspiracy theory “Kalergi Plan” and reminiscing over the medieval battle of Covadonga during the Reconquista.⁶⁶

65. Foro MDM, Twitter, 4 December, 2022, <https://twitter.com/elforomdm/status/1599495665822093313> (Access Date: 23 December 2022).

66. Nacho TM, Twitter, 6 December, 2022, https://twitter.com/shadow_tvvv/status/1600084323213910017 (Access Date: 23 December 2022).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There are several media channels that have strong links to the extreme right political sphere and willingly engage in Islamophobic reporting, seeking to foment fear and distrust, and mainstreaming xenophobic arguments around the *Reconquista*, merging narratives about the Spanish Christian identity and a renewed Arab invasion which threatens said identity, thus making a new wave of *Reconquista* necessary. These channels often voice fake news and use videos or photographs from other countries to portray instances of “Islamisation” or “Islamist (illiberal) behaviour”.

Among these outlets the most prominent are *La Razón*, *Caso Aislado*, and *Mediterráneo Digital*. But we can add other less overtly Islamophobic or less important in terms of reach, such as *Libertad Digital*, *Diario Patriota*, *Radio Decisión*, *EsRadio*, *Aquí la Voz de Europa*, *Toro Tv*, *Alerta Digital*, *Estado de Alarma*, *Euskalnews*, *Periodista Digital*, and *OKDiario*.

Among the main public figures who promote these discourses we find known faces, like the journalists Javier Esparza, Isabel San Sebastián, Javier Negre, Federico Jiménez Losantos, Noelia de Trastámara, Yolanda Couceiro, and Javier García Isac. We must add other columnists, like Herman Tertsch, and the co-founder of *Vox*, Cristina Seguí, writing for the *Vox* affiliated newspaper, *Estado de Alarma*.

Another relevant Islamophobic actor of 2022 is Jordi Garriga, who intervenes in several extreme right outlets, like *Mediterráneo Digital* and *La Emboscadura*, as well as being an insidious frequenter of round tables and social initiatives of the extreme right.



Figure 13: Screenshots of Jordi Garriga’s Twitter account⁶⁷. The tweet reads, “Progressiveness [meaning “wokeness”] is what makes threats possible. Islam is behaving naturally in the face of a decadent society that refuses to exist for itself, thanks to progressiveness. Therefore, progressiveness is the threat and there is no such alliance [between Islam and progressive sectors of society].”

67. Jordi Garriga, Twitter, 24 August, 2022, <https://twitter.com/Jordigave/status/1562218163089162240> (Access Date: 31 October 2022).

Besides journalists and politicians, there are also active ideologues from the extreme right in Spain, who contribute to the “intellectual” efforts of the movement. One such person is Juan Antonio Llopart, current editor-in-chief of Ediciones Fides, a publishing house which also owns the extreme right magazine *Revista La Emboscadura*. This publication was investigated and reprimanded by Spanish courts in the past, for disseminating hate speech, and promoting genocidal violence and other crimes.⁶⁸

Other new faces in the Spanish anti-Muslim intelligentsia include Rubén Pulido, another journalist currently working for newspaper *La Gaceta*. Pulido has openly shared his anti-Muslim stances: on social media, he shares Islamophobic videos on Twitter,⁶⁹ and he participates as an invited guest on the extreme right, Vox-affiliated media channel Estado de Alarma.



Figure 14: Screenshot of Rubén Pulido’s Islamophobic article in the Vox-affiliated news channel Estado de Alarma⁷⁰. The screenshotted headline reads, “Ruben Pulido. Islamisation threatens our customs; interview with Vito Quiles”. **Source:** Estado de Alarma.

Finally, to conclude this list of anti-Muslim actors in Spain, we must mention two journalists. First, Alfonso Rojo, who was mentioned in last year’s EIR report and who continues his tirade against Islam, declaring it “incompatible with democracy”, and attacking the availability of Islamic religion classes in Spanish schools.⁷¹ Second, the journalist who most often attacks Islam in national newspapers is Pilar Rahola.

68. “Condenan en Barcelona a tres neonazis por la difusión de ideas genocidas”, *Público*, 8 October, 2009.

69. Rubén Pulido, Twitter, 8 May, 2022, <https://twitter.com/rubnpulido/status/1523067495627722753?s=20&ct=Qc-jl49ep-lKwfm4oXWnEQ> (Access Date: 31 October 2022).

70. Rubén Pulido, “La islamización que amenaza nuestras tradiciones; con Vito Quiles”, *Estado de Alarma* (September 6, 2021), retrieved October 17 2022, <https://www.edatv.news/noticias/21688/ruben-pulido-la-islamizacion-que-amenaza-nuestras-tradiciones-con-vito-quiles>.

71. Alfonso Rojo, Twitter, 2 January, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AlfonsoRojoPD/status/1477548360177434624> (Access Date: 31 October 2022).



Figure 15: Screenshot of Alfonso Rojo's Islamophobic tweets in 2022⁷². The first tweet reads, "Alfonso Rojo. Islam is incompatible with democracy" and links to his YouTube video. The second tweet reads, "The Catalanian Government insists on eradicating the Spanish language, whilst paying Islamic education for 337 Muslims" and links to his article in a newspaper.



Figure 16: Screenshot of Pilar Rahola's Islamophobic tweets in 2022⁷³. The tweet reads, "The silence of the progressive [left] is full of meaning. They are quick to demonstrate when the bad guys are Israelis or "Yankees", but remarkably silent when the atrocities are committed by Islam. Then there are no moral values, only the shameful noise of silence"; this is followed by a link to an article on the Iranian protests at the time.

72. Alfonso Rojo, Twitter, 7 February, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AlfonsoRojoPD/status/1490729756639256583> (Access Date: 31 October 2022).

73. Pilar Rahola, Twitter, 3 October, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RaholaOficial/status/1576951742822232065> (Access Date: 3 November 2022).

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Anti-Islamophobia actions in 2022 have focused on awareness-raising campaigns. Local, regional, and national entities, as well as governmental agencies, migrant associations, and civil society organisations have contributed to this effort.

La Fundación Cepaim, launched the project #YoDesactivo (I de-activate), meant to combat a range of negative stereotypes (racism, sexism, etc.), among which was Islamophobia.⁷⁴

Two state projects are worth mentioning. First, “Casa Árabe” (dependent on the Dirección General de Asuntos Exteriores, External Relations Office) hosted a project on everyday instances of hate violence, “COCO: Contra el odio cotidiano”. This project was the result of cooperation among the civil society actors Cazalla Intercultural, Jovesólides, and Al Fanar.⁷⁵ Second, the project “MAGIC” will aim to establish a comparative perspective on gendered Islamophobia in journalism in Spain and Belgium. The project is a collaboration between Al Fanar and IEMed, a consortium comprising the Catalan and Spanish governments, Barcelona’s town-hall, and the EU.

There have also been two events specifically targeting the academic community: the “I Congreso contra la Islamofobia en la Comunidad Valenciana” (Conference against Islamophobia in Valencia), organised by Jovesólides;⁷⁶ and the “IV Congreso Nacional ‘Desmontando la Islamofobia’” (Dismantling Islamophobia), in Málaga, organised once again by the Asociación Marroquí⁷⁷

Meanwhile, Lucena Acoge, in Córdoba, celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2022. It marked the occasion with several activities, among which a roundtable on *Delitos de odio e islamofobia* (Hate crimes and Islamophobia), where the co-author of this report, Sergio Gracia, participated.⁷⁸ Gracia also attended, the “XXIV Congreso Islámico del Sur”⁷⁹ organised by UCIDAN (Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de Andalucía, Union of Islamic Communities of Andalusia) on December 11, 2022. The focus of the event was “Youth and Muslim Family in Andalusia: Chal-

74. Fundación Cepaim, Twitter, 5 July 2022, <https://twitter.com/desactivaoff/status/1544203674632740864> (Access Date: 5 November 2022).

75. Casa Árabe, Twitter, 19 September, 2022, https://twitter.com/Casaarabe/status/1571820223770025984?s=20&ct=kfg8dRQA-Iq7iTM_nLrCfA (Access Date: 8 November 2022).

76. Jovesólides, Twitter, 30 September, 2022, <https://twitter.com/JOVESOLIDES/status/1575828116186214400> (Access Date: 9 November 2022).

77. Asociación Marroquí, Twitter, 7 November, 2022, <https://twitter.com/JOVESOLIDES/status/1575828116186214400> (Access Date: 9 November 2022).

78. Lucena Acoge, Instagram, 18 October, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cj2HpkhopHK/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> (Access Date: 18 November 2022).

79. Lahsen El Himer, Facebook, 2 December, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=5642971459072658&set=a.542455422457646>

lenges and opportunities”, where Gracia discussed the multi-faceted problem of Islamophobia with young Muslims.



Figure 17: Photo of the “Youth and Muslim family in Andalusia: Challenges and Opportunities” event, organised by Union of Islamic Communities of Andalusia, UCIDAN (Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de Andalucía) on December 11, 2022, in Mollida, Malaga (Spain). **Source:** author’s own picture.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Spanish society is diverse both socially and culturally, and this fact should be the foremost consideration when legislating, in order to foster coexistence, tolerance and respect for one another. To fail to do so necessarily implies a dangerous road, which only intensifies cleavages between mainstream Christian society and Muslims, and other religious and ethnic minorities in the country.

In order to prevent instances of discrimination on racial, ethnic, or religious grounds, the Spanish public sphere must develop a more positive, balanced, and inclusive discourse around immigration. The existing prejudice and fear attached to im-

migration via the “different Other” discourse constitutes an important obstacle to this goal. As for the workplace, this fundamental space must reflect the diversity of Spanish society, seeking to re-conciliate and encourage co-existence and tolerance among its different segments. Difference, in any case, should not be punished, and existing legislation should be mobilised and applied to resist discriminatory attitudes on the part of companies and businesspeople, but also in media, advertisement, and, above all, social media platforms.

This work can only be achieved through the cooperation and strategic interaction of different civil society and state actors, as well as research institutions and local community centres. Their efforts must coalesce on raising awareness of this growing problem in the country. These efforts are still a work in progress at the moment, with state institutions having only adopted an openly anti-Islamophobia route plan last year. Relevant actors, from Muslim individuals to unions and associations must also be reminded of the current existence of legal provisions to be applied in the protection of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Spanish society today is suffering from clear signs of social polarisation and political disaffection. In this context, we must strive to create bridges across society, promote civic participation, and ensure commitment to positive social change.

Chronology

- **7.3.2022:** Parents denounce that a school in Málaga does not let their daughters go to class “after putting on the veil”.
- **28.07.2022:** Verbal attacks are carried out against MP Najat Driouech (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya), of Moroccan origin, by supporters of the president of the political party Junts per Catalunya (JxCat, Together for Catalonia) Laura Borràs, at the gates of Catalanian Parliament.
- **5.09.2022:** A real estate agency refuses to rent an apartment because “we do not rent this apartment to Moors or Africans”.
- **14.09.2022:** Five students from the Madrid institute IES Rosa Chacel are forced to leave their classroom for wearing the hijab.
- **25.10.2022:** A man with Nazi-style tattoos is arrested for stabbing another young man of Moroccan origin in San Juan de Aznalfarache (Seville).
- **3.11.2022:** Racist and anti-feminist graffiti appears in various institutes in Valdepeñas. Some graffiti read “Moors out”, other bears the representation of the Nazi symbol, and other yet alludes to the feminist collective.
- **8.11.2022:** A man accepts six months in prison for insulting and belittling a neighbour with racist slurs “Go away. This is not the jungle”. The defendant, between January and August 2019, rebuked his neighbour, who lived in

the same building, every time he saw her, telling her ,“Shit Moor, my father is going to kill you”.

- **16.11.2022:** A racist graffiti, “Moors no”, discovered in the centre of Málaga.
- **6.12.2022:** A dead boar is found at the gate of the Gasteiz mosque in the Basque Country. The events took place a few hours after the World Cup match between Spain and Morocco, where Spain lost.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE
UNITED KINGDOM
NATIONAL REPORT 2022

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. Kallis has published extensively on the history of fascism and the radical right; the rise of far-right extremism in Greece and Germany; 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 Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Email: aristotlekallis@gmail.com

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Executive Summary

Islamophobia in the UK remains a tale of multiple causes, agencies, and victims. On the one hand, there is the anti-Muslim hatred perpetrated by extremists off- and on-line: targeting Islamic religious and symbolic spaces for local Muslim communities but also flooding social media platforms and internet news with misinformation, stereotypes, and campaigns of abuse. Far-right organisations continued to subvert community cohesion, targeting Muslim communities through on- and off-line local campaigns. Government hate crime statistics for England and Wales recorded a 42% rise in religiously motivated offences against Muslims in 2021-22. Half of the UK's places of worship for Muslims have experienced some form of vandalism in recent years, while more than a third have been facing this reality every year. Community tensions also erupted into prolonged scenes of street violence in Leicester during September 2022, where Islamophobic tropes, campaigns of online misinformation, and the shadow of international politics combined to terrorise the city's Muslim communities.

On the other hand, there is the Islamophobia of mainstream culture, geared to the normalisation of anti-Muslim tropes and to ever-deepening social engineering. New research has confirmed that anti-Muslim prejudice - religious and racial/ethnic - has become normalised and that this trend is even more evident among people of higher socioeconomic status - a 'dinner table prejudice' indeed. Mainstream political parties continue to demonstrate their unwillingness to take decisive action to stamp out Islamophobia from their membership ranks and public discourse. The current UK government in particular is ignoring (and even consciously playing down for ideological reasons) the threat of the former and actively promoting agendas associated with the latter. What has happened since Sunak took office in October 2022 does not bode well for the future: with the APPG definition officially rejected only days after the new government took office; and with hopes of a meaningful reform of the PREVENT counter-terrorism strategy rapidly evaporating as the long-awaited review is finally heading for publication, the UK ended 2022 with meaningful debates on Islamophobia receding from the political and social mainstream just as the government is working behind the scenes to 'refocus' the discussion on counter-terrorism and right-wing media agonise about a supposed loss of 'Britishness' and launch bitter attacks on multiculturalism and immigration.

Faced with this multiplicity of drivers, forms, and expressions of Islamophobia, the importance of combining robust campaigns of rebuttal and mitigation of Islamophobia, on the one hand, with measures that promote the immunisation of society to anti-Muslim stereotyping and hate-mongering, on the other, is more urgently needed than ever. Although it is more of a long-term strategy, inoculation remains the most important, fail-safe paradigm-shifting strategy and insurance policy for a sustainable future of diversity, inclusiveness, and community cohesion.

Country Profile

EIR 2022

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 (since October Rishi Sunak, Conservative Party; before Liz Truss (September-October) and Boris Johnson (December 2019-September 2022) 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).

Total Population: 66,182,000 (2011 census)/66,775,286 (2019 estimate)

Major Languages: English (98%), Scots (2.5%), Welsh (1%); Scottish Gaelic, Cornish, and Irish (all <0.1%)

Official Religion: Church of England (Christian Anglican) in England only; no established religion in other parts of the United Kingdom

Statistics on Islamophobia: The most recent official figures of hate crime in the UK (covering the annual census period from March 2021 to March 2022) show a continuing increase in the overall number of reported cases (26% increase compared to the previous year, which represents the biggest annual rise since 2017). There were 8,730 cases of religiously aggravated hate crimes (37% increase), of which 3,459 (42% of all incidents under the category of religiously aggravated hate crimes) involved people of Muslim faith and background. Research has found that Muslims are the second least-liked group in the UK (after Roma and Irish Travellers) with c.26% of the population negatively disposed to them and more than 18% supporting a total ban on Muslim immigration to the UK.

Major Religions (% of UK 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)

For England and Wales only the figures from the 2021 census are: Christianity (46.2%), No Religion (37%), Muslims (6.5%) of a population of 59.6 million (an increase of 6.3% compared to 2011), Hinduism (1.7%)

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

For England and Wales only (2021 census): 3,868,133 (6.5%, a 33% increase from 2011)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), Muslim Association of Britain

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Muslim Council of Britain, Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), Tell MAMA UK, Islamophobia Watch, Islamic Human Rights Commission, Islamophobia Response Unit (ISU), Cage, HOPE Not Hate

Far-Right Parties: British National Party (BNP), UK Independence Party (UKIP), For Britain, National Front, English Democrats, British Democrats, British Freedom Party

Far-Right Movements: English Defence League (EDL), Britain First (deregistered in 2017), Generation Identity, New British Union (NBU), Football Lads Alliance, Veterans Against Terrorism, Patriotic Alternative, Blood and Honour, British Movement, British Hand, White Stag Athletic Club

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: Combat 18, National Action (proscribed in 2016)

Limitations to Islamic Practices

Hijab Ban: No, but schools have the right to determine their own dress code, which has led to some cases of hijab ban for particular student age groups. –

- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Three prime ministers and two government collapses in a single year constitutes highly unusual political drama in a country priding itself on its record of political stability. Yet the UK has long ceased to be a country of predictable, reassuring continuities and smooth transitions. Rishi Sunak, who succeeded Liz Truss in October (who had replaced Boris Johnson only 45 days earlier) was the first prime minister with a British Asian background, whose first priority upon election was to restore economic and political stability after months of turmoil and to revive the declining fortunes of his party.¹ The trope of ‘steadying the ship’ widely used to describe his immediate agenda² may sound like a very low bar for an incoming government - but with the country entering a spiral of crises and descending into confusion, the promise of “stability and unity”³ was understandably appealing.

But where is the proverbial ship heading towards? Different cabinets but from the same political party should not have entailed big changes in terms of policy - and yet every one of the three teams that took office during 2022 held rather different views on key matters such as immigration, human rights, social cohesion or community support. Johnson’s approach to Islamophobia was already familiar: watering down his earlier commitment to investigate his party’s anti-Muslim prejudice, procrastinating on the matter of adopting the 2019 definition of Islamophobia adopted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims, aligning with those who invoke freedom of speech as a way of shutting down any discussion of Islamophobia in the UK. Liz Truss campaigned to become PM in the summer and autumn of 2022 with the promise of “zero tolerance” approach to Islamophobia⁴ while Rishi Sunak largely ignored the matter opting instead for a defence of the government’s PREVENT counter-terrorism strategy and vowing to refocus it on the threat of “Islamist extremism”.⁵ What has happened since he became prime minister does not bode well for the future: with the APPG definition officially rejected only days after the new government took office, with hopes of a meaningful reform of the PREVENT strategy rapidly evaporating as the long-

1. “Rishi Sunak’s Promise of Stability Is a Low Bar for Britain.” *The Economist*, October 26, 2022. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2022/10/26/rishi-sunaks-promise-of-stability-is-a-low-bar-for-britain>.
2. Lara Spirit. “Sunak’s First Test: How to Steady the Ship.” *The Times*, January 28, 2023, sec. news. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sunaks-first-test-how-to-steady-the-ship-5z5md0pvh>.
3. David Bol. “Sunak Pledges to Be PM with ‘integrity’ as He Calls for ‘Unity and Stability,’” *The Herald*, October 24, 2022. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/23074616.rishi-sunak-pledges-pm-integrity-calls-unity-stability/>.
4. “MCB Responds to Imminent Appointment of Rt Hon Liz Truss as Prime Minister - Muslim Council of Britain,” *Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)*, September 5, 2022. <https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-responds-to-appointment-of-rt-hon-liz-truss-as-prime-minister/>.
5. Lizzie Dearden. “Sunak Ignores Islamophobia Appeal from MP amid Extremism Row.” *Independent*, August 4, 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/uk-news/sunak-truss-conservative-islamophobia-muslims-b2138373.html>

awaited review is finally heading for publication, and the elevation of figures like Suella Braverman (now Home Secretary) and Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations), known for their ideologically inflexible, heavily biased, divisive views on Muslims and Islam, the UK ended 2022 with the debates on Islamophobia receding from the political and social mainstream just as the government is working behind the scenes to ‘refocus’ the discussion on counter-terrorism. Meanwhile the conditions in which Muslims and their communities live across the country get more precarious.

In some (undesirable) respects 2022 was business as usual: British far-right organisations continued to subvert community cohesion, targeting Muslim communities through on- and off-line local campaigns; official hate crime statistics for England and Wales recorded a 42% rise in religiously motivated offences against Muslims; the geographical distribution of these offences retains its typical concentration in areas of the north of England and Midlands; half of the UK’s places of worship for Muslims have experienced some form of vandalism, while a third have been burgled and targeted by online hate campaigns;⁶ and new research has confirmed that anti-Muslim prejudice - religious and racial/ethnic - has become normalised and that this trend is even more evident among people of higher socioeconomic status - a ‘dinner table prejudice’ indeed.⁷ In this context of a structurally embedded anti-Muslim canon in contemporary British society, a significant part of traditional mainstream media remain as eager as ever to engage in and reproduce Islamophobic tropes. The spiralling diffusion of hate through social media platforms has made a mockery of promises of action by the likes of Facebook and Twitter - action that continues to fall grotesquely short of what is needed to protect victims of abuse. Mainstream political parties too have repeatedly proved unwilling to take decisive action to stamp out Islamophobia from their membership ranks. The current government and its friendly press are determined to exaggerate the ‘Islamist’ danger while playing down the threat from the far right.⁸ That they also demand government strategy to ‘refocus’ on the former while continuing to concede space to the latter to carry on their divisive local and online activities highlights the enormity of the challenge that lies ahead.

6. Muslim Census / MEND, “Attacks upon Mosques and Islamic Institutions in the UK: A National Survey”, June 14, 2022. <https://muslimcensus.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/MuslimCensus-x-MEND.pdf>

7. Stephen H Jones, Amy Unsworth, “The Dinner Table Prejudice Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain”, University of Birmingham / British Academy / YouGov, 2022.

8. E.g., Forsyth, James. “Islamism Is a Greater Threat than the Far Right,” *The Times*, June 16, 2022. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamism-is-a-greater-threat-than-the-far-right-kqdb9nvq2>.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

After nearly two years of living with COVID and the shift of social interactions from the physical to the digital spheres, the annually published official government data on hate crime for 2021-22 confirmed a significant increase in the number of recorded offences. The overall number jumped by 26% (from 124,104 in 2020-21 to 155,841 in the latest census period). Religious hate offences recorded an even bigger increase of 37%, totalling 8,730 cases. Of these 42% involved Muslim victims (3,459 cases). In addition, racially aggravated hate crime figures increased by 19% - representing seven out of every ten recorded hate crimes. Taken together these two figures point to a more complex picture of intersectionality that renders individual numbers of relative value but draws attention to the unmistakable upward trend in recent years. In fact, decade-long figures show a more than fivefold increase in religiously motivated hate crimes, with the race category recording a threefold equivalent rise.⁹

What is particularly interesting about the profile of religiously aggravated hate crimes in the UK is the disproportionately high percentage of incidents classified as 'criminal damage' (about 11% in 2021-22, when the average recorded figure across all cases is 5%). This high percentage includes acts of arson and vandalism committed against private, commercial but also public and symbolic targets. This last category includes places of worship and cultural/educational institutions that have been repeatedly singled out for physical attacks over the years. A recent, much-needed survey on the safety of mosques and Islamic institutions in the UK carried out by Muslim Census and by Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) has exposed the extent of the vulnerability of these institutions to physical attacks and intimidation. More than one-third (35%) of the c. 1,800 mosques across the UK experience at least one religiously motivated attack every year; the figure goes up to 42% for attacks carried out in the last three years. Acts of vandalism (destruction and defacement of property, racist graffiti) represent the lion's share of these attacks (51%), followed by burglary (34%), but about one-third of the mosques also experienced online abuse and intimidation and in 17% of cases Muslims were subjected to physical abuse in the premises.¹⁰

9. Home Office. "Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022." October 6, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022>.

10. Muslim Census and MEND, "Attacks upon Mosques and Islamic Institutions in the UK", June 4, 2022. <https://muslimcensus.co.uk/attacks-upon-mosques/>

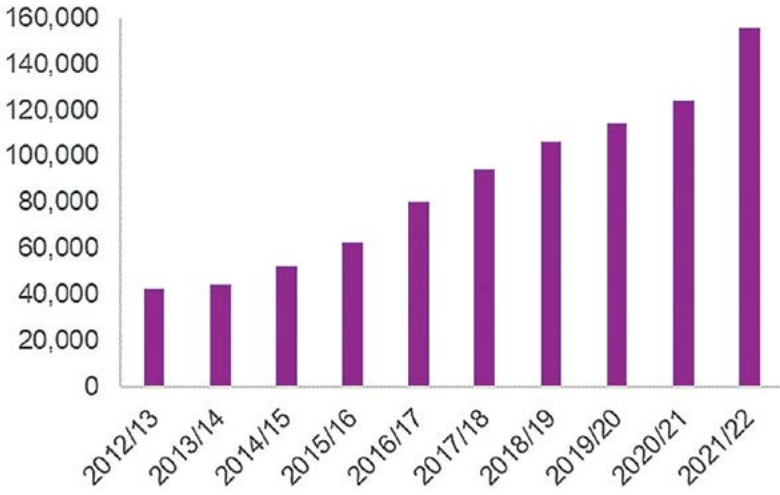


Figure 1: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022, **Source:** Police recorded crime, Home Office.

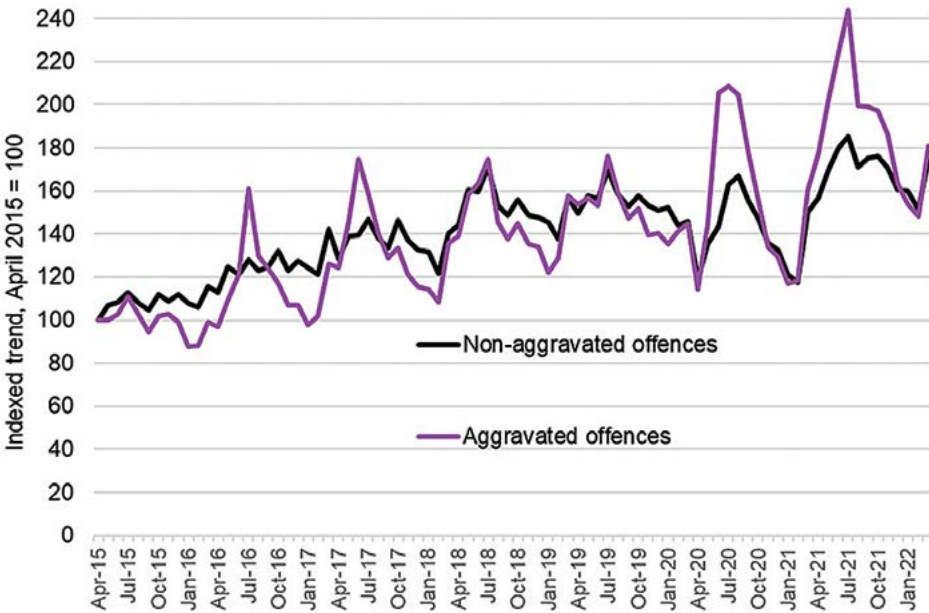


Figure 2: Indexed number of racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police by month, April 2015 to March 2022, **Source:** Police recorded crime, Home Office.

The report also highlights a growing lack of trust in the government and the police. According to its findings, the much-hyped “Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme” introduced in 2022 to provide financial support to boost security at the premises¹¹ has been used only by a small number (c. 1 in 8) of mosques

11. Harley, Nicky. “UK Launches £24m Fund to Provide Mosques with Protection against Hate Crime,” *The National*, May 20, 2022. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2022/05/20/uk-launches-24m-fund-for-mosques-to-apply-for-support-to-protect-them-from-hate-crime/>. For the scheme see Home Office. “Places

and Muslim cultural/community/educational institutions. This desperately low figure has been attributed both to the cumbersome three-stage application approval process and to the low success rate of the applicants (about one in three). But lack of trust in state institutions and initiatives is also an important factor, especially since the report has found that barely half of all reported crimes to the police received a response that satisfied those affected. This trust deficit - aggravated by years of failing to acknowledge the extent of Islamophobia in British society and by the scarring experience of health inequalities during the years of the COVID pandemic¹² - underlines the growing gap between government rhetoric of ‘inclusion’¹³ and Muslim perceptions of a manifest lack of state commitment to protect them.¹⁴

In 2022, a number of physical attacks on mosques and other Muslim community spaces were recorded. Among them:

- Stockport, Greater Manchester: a pig’s head was left at the rooftop of the local mosque (December)¹⁵
- East Ham/Newham, East London: a group of men armed with sticks and bottles targeted the Masjid Bilal and Muslim Community Centre, attacking people who were celebrating Ramadan outside the building and causing physical damage to the property. Two people were injured as a result of the incident (April)¹⁶
- Newport, Wales: an arson attempt against the Hussaini Mission mosque caused damage to the premises (March)¹⁷ Figure 3
- Shoreditch, East London: a man threw bottles against the premises of the Shoreditch Masjid Trust (May)¹⁸

of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme”, May 23, 2022. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1080439/2021-22_Places_of_Worship_privacy_information_notice.pdf

12. Armstrong, Megan, Narin Aker, Pushpa Nair, Kate Walters, Yolanda Barrado-Martin, Nuriye Kupeli, Elizabeth L. Sampson, Jill Manthorpe, Emily West, and Nathan Davies. “Trust and Inclusion during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Perspectives from Black and South Asian People Living with Dementia and Their Carers in the UK.” *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 37, no. 3 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.5689>.
13. “Inclusive Britain: Government Response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.” March 17, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-britain-action-plan-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/inclusive-britain-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities>.
14. For example, “Mosques Were Promised Protection Against Islamophobia – Where Is It?,” *HuffPost*, July 3, 2022. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/mosques-were-promised-protection-against-islamophobia-where-is-it_uk_62bb079be4b080fb670a8a77.
15. BBC News. “Pig’s Head Left on Stockport Mosque Roof Is Hate Crime - Police,” December 12, 2022, sec. Manchester. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-manchester-63916317>.
16. Davis, Barney. “Two Injured after ‘Racially Aggravated’ Attack Outside East Ham Mosque,” *Evening Standard*, April 20, 2022. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/east-ham-mosque-attack-police-london-masjid-bilal-islamic-centre-b995214.html>.
17. Tell MAMA. “Arrest Made Following Arson Attack at a Newport Mosque,” March 31, 2022. <https://tellmamauk.org/arrest-made-following-arson-attack-at-a-newport-mosque/>.
18. Tell MAMA. “CCTV Appeal after Criminal Damage to the Windows of Shoreditch Mosque,” May 23, 2022. <https://tellmamauk.org/cctv-appeal-after-criminal-damage-to-the-windows-of-shoreditch-mosque/>.

- Sparkhill, Birmingham: an attack with stones and bricks against the premises of the local mosque during prayer left worshippers terrorised and resulted in considerable damage to the property (November)¹⁹
- Manchester: a number of offensive graffiti were sprayed on the walls of the Community Centre on Sidney Street (September).²⁰



Figure 3: damage to the mosque in Sparkhill, Birmingham caused by the attack²¹

The vulnerability of Muslims - and especially women - in public spaces has long been identified as one of the drivers of hate crime, with public transport providing a large number of such incidents in 2022. The examples of a Muslim woman who was physically assaulted (the perpetrator attempted to tear off her hijab and remove her backpack while directing racist abuse at her) inside the London tube system near Poplar, East London²²; or the young girl who was assaulted while waiting for a bus in Plymouth²³ are only indicative of a trend repeated in various settings across the country, most of which remain unreported and undocumented.²⁴

19. "Sparkhill Mosque Vandalised with Bricks during Prayer," BBC, November 4, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-63515184>.

20. Jenny Simpson, "Police Increase Patrols around Mosques and Islamic Centres after 'Disturbances,'" *Manchester World*, September 26, 2022. <https://www.manchesterworld.uk/news/police-increase-patrols-around-mosques-and-islamic-centres-in-greater-manchester-after-disturbances-3856021>.

21. <https://www.iambirmingham.co.uk/2022/11/08/public-raise-1000-repair-birmingham-mosque-windows-horror-attack/>

22. Tell MAMA. "Muslim Woman Assaulted, Hijab Pulled, Bag Torn on DLR Train," February 21, 2022. <https://tellmamauk.org/muslim-woman-assaulted-hijab-pulled-bag-torn-on-dlr-train/>.

23. Tell MAMA. "Muslim Teen Has Hijab Torn off in Racist Attack at Bus Stop," May 30, 2022. <https://tellmamauk.org/muslim-teen-has-hijab-torn-off-in-racist-attack-at-bus-stop/>.

24. Balazard, H el ene, and Timothy Peace. 2022. "Confronting Islamophobia and Its Consequences in East London in a Context of Increased Surveillance and Stigmatisation." *Ethnicities* 23 (1): 88–109. doi:10.1177/14687968221088016.

Yet the most serious, extensive, and worrying in the long term incidents of the past year occurred in the city of Leicester. Leicester, an urban centre in the Midlands where large - and similar in size - communities of Muslims and Hindu (about 13% of the local population for each group) live side-by-side, witnessed an eruption of violent tension throughout September 2022. Since the city has been hailed as a successful example of inter-community integration in the UK, the ugly scenes of provocative marching, verbal and physical attacks, as well as desecration of religious/ethnic spaces and symbols are particularly devastating and alarming. Tensions had been building up for months before the incident, fuelled by long-standing sport rivalry and online campaigns of misinformation²⁵, but it took a hot-headed march by Hindu youth through areas with a high concentration of Muslim communities to trigger off a spiral of further intimidation and violence that affected people on either side.²⁶ Things appear to have calmed down since but the sense of unease, of fear for an enduring damage to community cohesion in the area, of deepening estrangement between Muslim and Hindi communities, and of a possible resurgence of conflict have cast a shadow on Leicester's everyday life. It has been rightly noted that in many ways local tensions in Leicester also reflect a much bigger legacy of Hindu-Muslim violence in India, fuelled by the divisive policies of Narendra Modi against the country's Muslim minorities.²⁷ In this respect, Leicester is but one local flashpoint, and the potential for a catastrophic diffusion of tension and violence in other parts of the UK remains a deeply worrying prospect.²⁸

Employment

The workplace remains one of the key domains in which Islamophobic practices and experiences affect the lives of most people with Muslim background in the UK. Research by Hyphen and ComRes has found that seven out of ten Muslims experienced prejudice and discrimination in a variety of settings, from management of workload to social interaction to contact with clients.²⁹ Islamophobia Response Unit has reported a wide range of Islamophobic practices that were brought to their attention by those who experienced them in their workplace: prayer mats disappearing, verbal

25. Abdul, Geneva. "Mayor Blames Leicester Unrest on Social Media Disinformation." *The Guardian*, September 19, 2022, sec. UK news. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/19/mayor-blames-leicester-hindu-muslim-unrest-on-social-media-disinformation>.

26. Murray, Jessica, Aina J. Khan, and Rajeev Syal. "'It Feels like People Want to Fight': How Communal Unrest Flared in Leicester." *The Guardian*, September 23, 2022, sec. UK news. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/23/how-communal-unrest-flared-leicester-muslim-hindu-tensions>.

27. Specia, Megan. "Tensions That Roiled English City Have Roots in India." *The New York Times*, October 2, 2022, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/02/world/europe/leicester-violence-uk.html>.

28. Swerling, Gabriella, and Patrick Sawyer. "Ongoing Clashes between Muslims and Hindus 'Could Spread All over Britain,'" *The Telegraph*, September 21, 2022. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/09/21/leicester-muslim-hindu-clashes-spread-smethwick/>.

29. Wazir, Burhan. "More than Two-Thirds of UK Muslims Have Experienced Islamophobia in the Workplace," *Hyphen*, June 6, 2022. <https://hyphenonline.com/2022/06/07/exclusive-more-than-two-thirds-of-uk-muslims-have-experienced-islamophobia-in-the-workplace/>.

abuse, trampling with food and fasting routines, reproducing ‘terrorist’ clichés etc.³⁰ Particular work environments were singled out as particularly vulnerable to Islamophobia – not only well-documented ones (such as healthcare³¹, police³², or sport³³) but also less familiar ones (such as fire services, where an independent review of the London Fire Service commissioned after firefighter Jaden Francois-Esprit committed suicide in August 2020 found examples of racial abuse and bullying against Muslims and other minority-background workers³⁴).

The idea that the relatively higher numbers of unemployment among people with a Muslim background (2021 figures show the figure at 11% for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups in comparison to 4% for all white groups and between 4% and 9% for all other minority groups³⁵) and the ‘ethnicity pay gap’ that affects them adversely³⁶ are somehow rooted in particular trends within an alleged ‘Muslim culture’ recently came under expert scrutiny. Academic research has come to the conclusion that there remains a considerable ‘Muslim penalty’ in the UK labour market but cultural explanations are not appropriate tools to explain it.³⁷ The research points instead to persistence of racial stereotypes that have shaped this narrative; and that failure to address systemic inequalities rooted in anti-Muslim discrimination and having effects across all spheres of life will only serve to reinforce existing workplace inequalities.³⁸

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30. “Islamophobia: Muslims Describe Abuse Suffered at Work,” *BBC News*, July 5, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-61974430>.
 31. “Report Highlights Racism, Discrimination towards Muslim NHS Staff,” *Tell MAMA*, December 21, 2021. <https://tellmamauk.org/report-highlights-racism-discrimination-towards-muslim-nhs-staff/>; “Racist Mental Health Nurse Struck off for Discriminatory Views of Muslim, Migrant, and Polish Communities,” *Tell MAMA*, August 4, 2022. <https://tellmamauk.org/racist-mental-health-nurse-struck-off-for-discriminatory-views-of-muslim-migrant-and-polish-communities/>.
 32. “Officers Bring Allegations of Islamophobia against the Metropolitan Police,” *MEND*, February 22, 2022. <https://www.mend.org.uk/officers-bring-allegations-of-islamophobia-against-the-metropolitan-police/>.
 33. “Cricket Scotland Engulfed in Racism Allegations Following Damning Report,” *MEND*, August 8, 2022. <https://www.mend.org.uk/scotland-cricket-engulfed-in-racism-allegations-following-damning-report/>; “Institutional Racism in Cricket Scotland,” *MEND*, July 25, 2022. <https://www.mend.org.uk/institutional-racism-in-cricket-scotland/>.
 34. “British Muslim Firefighters Face ‘institutional Racism’ at London Fire Brigade.” *Middle East Eye*, Accessed January 30, 2023. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/british-muslim-firefighters-institutional-racism-london-fire-brigade/>; “Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade,” Hansard - UK Parliament, November 28, 2022. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-11-29/debates/0A50C09E-3125-43D6-A42E-B18685F4F217/IndependentCulturalReviewOfLondonFireBrigade>; Taylor, Diane. “Mother of London Firefighter Who Killed Himself Welcomes Damning Report.” *The Guardian*, November 26, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/26/mother-of-london-firefighter-who-killed-himself-welcomes-damning-report>.
 35. Office for National Statistics, “Annual Population Survey, 2021 Figures for Unemployment”, November 3, 2022. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/unemployment-and-economic-inactivity/unemployment/latest#by-ethnicity>
 36. Simonetta Longhi and Malcolm Brynin, “The ethnicity pay gap,” *Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)*, “Research Report 108, August 2017. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-108-the-ethnicity-pay-gap.pdf>
 37. Sweida-Metwally, Samir. “Does the Muslim Penalty in the British Labour Market Dissipate after Accounting for So-Called ‘Sociocultural Attitudes?’” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, no. 16 (December 10, 2022): 359–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2097887>.
 38. Sweida-Metwally, Samir. “‘Muslim Culture’ Is Routinely Blamed for Lower Levels of Employment – but My Research Shows This Is Not What Is behind the Problem,” August 22, 2022. <http://theconversation.com/mus>

Education

The ghost of the 2014 ‘Trojan Horse’ affair refuses to go away. Originally framed by the UK government as a conspiracy to ‘Islamise’ schools in Birmingham, it has shattered community relations and wrecked careers without subsequent legal cases or investigations corroborating the supposed evidence that underpinned the allegations. In 2022, a *New York Times* podcast series by Brian Reed and Hamza Syed that claimed the whole affair to be nothing more than an Islamophobic hoax with a bitter long-lasting legacy of official cover-up revived a debate within the UK that never truly finished.³⁹ The podcast series has been criticised by the British right-wing press as being wrong-footed and biased⁴⁰ while receiving praise from many others for its rigorous but also refreshing approach to investigative journalism.⁴¹ The then education secretary Michael Gove described it as the work of ‘useful idiots’ and the podcast a ‘travesty’, reiterating his original claims that he was acting to uncover ‘a well-organised campaign that seeks to undermine our counterextremism work and the Government’s counter-radicalisation strategy, Prevent’. He made these claims in a foreword to an extensive report published by the Policy Exchange that predictably came to the defence of the official government narrative about the 2014 events.⁴² It is not surprising that this line of defence is most convenient for the government, at a time when the PREVENT legislation is being officially reviewed in the direction of strengthening its powers to target ‘Islamist’ activities {see Justice section} and critics of the counter-terrorism strategy are branded as ‘enabling terrorism’ and supporting ‘passive tolerance’ by no other than former Conservative prime minister David Cameron⁴³. What is significantly more surprising was some criticisms of the work coming from progressive newspapers like *The Observer*, who chose a different line of attack (the alleged one-sidedness of the podcast’s research

lim-culture-is-routinely-blamed-for-lower-levels-of-employment-but-my-research-shows-this-is-not-what-is-behind-the-problem-187647.

39. Khan, Coco. “People Have Not Moved on. Far from It: The Controversial Podcast Unpicking the Trojan Horse Affair.” *The Guardian*, March 2, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/mar/02/people-have-not-moved-on-far-from-it-the-controversial-podcast-unpicking-the-trojan-horse-affair>.
40. Mahmood, Khalid. “What the New York Times Gets Wrong about the ‘Trojan Horse Affair,’” *Spectator*, February 24, 2022. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/what-the-new-york-times-gets-wrong-about-the-trojan-horse-affair/>; Hymas, Charles. “Gove Accuses New York Times of ‘Trying to Rewrite History’ over Trojan Horse Affair,” *The Telegraph*, December 11, 2022. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/12/11/gove-accuses-new-york-times-trying-rewrite-history-trojan-horse/>.
41. Larson, Sarah. “‘The Trojan Horse Affair’ Works Best When Studying Itself.” *The New Yorker*, March 20, 2022. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/podcast-dept/the-trojan-horse-affair-works-best-when-studying-itself>; Ismail, Aymann. “The Trojan Horse Affair’s Hamza Syed Has Some Regrets.” *Slate*, March 9, 2022. <https://slate.com/culture/2022/03/trojan-horse-affair-podcast-hamza-syed-interview-serial.html>.
42. Perry, Damon and Paul Scott. “The Trojan Horse Affair: A Documentary Record. A report from Policy Exchange’s Understanding Islamism project.” *Policy Exchange*, December 2022, pp. 6-7. <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Trojan-Horse-Affair.pdf>
43. “David Cameron Accuses Prevent Critics Of ‘Enabling Terrorism,’” *Politics Home*, April 26, 2022. <https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/david-cameron-accuses-critics-of-prevent-programme-of-enabling-terrorism>.

and the danger of reviving old tensions in the wake of the podcast's allegations⁴⁴) to justify the veil of awkward silence over the affair, drawn not only by politicians but also by journalists themselves.⁴⁵

The ongoing negative impact of PREVENT and its underpinning anti-Muslim tropes on educational practices cannot be exaggerated. Recently published research has drawn attention to the persistence of Islamophobia as racist trope and in complex intersectional constellations in higher education. University students overwhelmingly experienced pervasive attitudes steeped in suspicion that led them to self-censor their identity, freedom of expression, and activism in order to avoid potential accusations of 'extremism' levelled at them.⁴⁶ Meanwhile the impact of Islamophobia on academic staff with a Muslim background come to the focus of another academic publication that once again illustrates how a framework of intersectional oppression - with sexism, classism, racism, and ableism as its tributaries - results in the victimisation of Muslims in higher education.⁴⁷ A global study on the impact of Islamophobia on students across all stages of education has shed more light on how a series of practices - the result of design or bias - have often transformed educational environments into conduits of discrimination.⁴⁸

Such practices came recently to the fore once again in relation to a six-form college, the London Academy of Excellence (LAE) in Stratford. Serious allegations about the school's violation of the equality legislation came to the fore when former students described how they were deprived of access to places of prayer and felt constantly discriminated against.⁴⁹ But the problem is not institution-specific; it runs deep into the structures of the educational system in the UK. Acknowledging this challenge, the Teachers' Union NASUWT in Scotland asked the Scottish government to redouble its efforts towards greater diversity in the education sector and better awareness of anti-Muslim discrimination.⁵⁰

44. Sodha, Sonia. "The Trojan Horse Affair: How Serial Podcast Got It So Wrong," *The Observer*, February 20, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/20/the-trojan-horse-affair-how-serial-podcast-got-it-so-wrong>.

45. "MCB Letter to The Observer on the 'Trojan Horse Affair' Podcast," *MCB*, February 27, 2022. <https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-letter-to-the-observer-on-the-trojan-horse-affair-podcast/>.

46. Zempi, Irene, and Athina Tripli. "Listening to Muslim Students' Voices on the Prevent Duty in British Universities: A Qualitative Study." *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, February 16, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17461979221077990>.

47. Mahmud, Arif, and Maisha Islam. "Intersectional Oppression: A Reflexive Dialogue between Muslim Academics and Their Experiences of Islamophobia and Exclusion in UK Higher Education." *Sociology Compass*, Online early view. Accessed January 30, 2023. <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/soc4.13041>

48. Abu Khalaf, Nadin, Ashley B. Woolweaver, Roslyn Reynoso Marmolejos, Grace A. Little, Katheryn Burnett, and Dorothy L. Espelage. "The Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Students: A Systematic Review of the Literature." *School Psychology Review*, June 1, 2022: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2022.2075710>.

49. "MEND Statement: Standing in Solidarity with Muslim Students and Alumni of The London Academy of Excellence," *MEND*, March 10, 2022. <https://www.mend.org.uk/lae-statement/>;

50. "Action Needed to Tackle Intensification of Islamophobia in Scottish Schools." *NASUWT*, May 21, 2022. <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/intensification-islamophobia-scottish-schools.html>.

Politics

Same governing party yet three governments and three prime ministers ... Rishi Sunak became UK prime minister in late October 2022 after winning unopposed the internal Conservative Party leadership election. This represented the final major episode in a year of political turmoil that saw Boris Johnson and then Liz Truss (Johnson's successor as PM, after an earlier internal leadership election in which she had defeated Sunak) resign from the post.⁵¹ Normally the election of the first Asian prime minister of the UK would have to be celebrated as a victory for a diverse and multicultural Britain,⁵² but in this instance there are serious doubts that Sunak's election represents a victory of sorts for the country's minorities. Not only did he show little interest in championing the cause of a battle against Islamophobia during his leadership face-off with Truss last summer {see Introduction}, but his views on sensitive matters such as counter-terrorism or immigration are well known by now.⁵³

Nobody of course seriously expected fundamental changes in the political direction as a result of all these changes in the leadership of the Conservative Party. The direction of travel was already familiar: following from the lacklustre Singh investigation into allegations of Islamophobia inside the party in May 2021, it was clear that the government lacked the willingness not only to address anti-Muslim racism in the UK but to acknowledge the scale of the problem inside its own ranks. The fate of the 2019 APPG legal definition of Islamophobia already hung in the balance under Boris Johnson after years of government resistance and only incremental progress, with a constant stream of stakeholders formally adopting it⁵⁴ or, in the case of Buckinghamshire New University, endorsing a revised, practice-based definition of its own⁵⁵ but others rejecting it. In a recent deliberation the Aberdeenshire Council voted marginally to 'note' but not to adopt the definition. The original motion to adopt the APPG definition had been proposed by councillors of the Scottish National Party (SNP) but was deferred in order to allow further consideration of any shown potential adverse implications from adopting the definition.⁵⁶ When the matter came to a final

51. Morales, Alex. "Johnson to Sunak via Truss: Britain's Chaotic Year in Numbers," *Bloomberg*, December 28, 2022. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-12-28/johnson-to-sunak-via-truss-britain-s-chaotic-2022-in-numbers>.

52. Collins, Philip. "If the Tory Leadership Race Produces an Asian Prime Minister, We Might Have Something to Celebrate," *New Statesman*, July 27, 2022. <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/conservatives/2022/07/leadership-race-rishi-sunak-asian-prime-minister>.

53. Mohamed, Hashi. "Rishi Sunak Is Britain's First Asian Prime Minister – but It's No Progressive Victory," *The Guardian*, October 25, 2022, sec. Opinion. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/oct/25/rishi-sunak-britain-first-asian-prime-minister>.

54. E.g., "University Adopts Definition of Islamophobia," *Edinburgh University News*, August 17, 2022. <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/students/2022/university-adopts-definition-of-islamophobia>.

55. "BNU Creates and Adopts New Definition of Islamophobia," *BNU News*, December 21, 2022. <https://www.bucks.ac.uk/news/bnu-creates-and-adopts-new-definition-islamophobia>.

56. Wilson, Ninian. "Tory-LibDem Led Council Sparks Controversy by Not Agreeing Definition of Islamophobia," *The National*, June 23, 2022. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/20231859.aberdeenshire-council-sparks-controversy-not-agreeing-definition-islamophobia/>.

vote in November a coalition of mainly Conservative and Liberal Democrat councillors voted against it, echoing by now familiar tropes about supposed threats to ‘free speech’. The role of the National Secular Society (NSS) in advising against the adoption of the definition as allegedly ‘counterproductive’ in the fight against anti-Muslim bigotry must be noted. The organisation’s chief executive Stephen Evans greeted the council’s eventual decision for “strik[ing] a balance between protecting people from harm and protecting the fundamental right to free speech”.⁵⁷

But the most serious threat to the APPG definition has come from the very top. The UK government had never really shown any interest in endorsing the definition, with former prime ministers Theresa May and Boris Johnson ignoring calls to act decisively against Islamophobia.⁵⁸ A specially appointed (May 2019) government advisor on the matters of the definition, Muhammad Asim, complained in February that no minister had even approached him to begin the consultation.⁵⁹ The former communities secretary Kemi Badenoch had also shown little intention to go beyond abstract declarations about “stamping out anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of religious prejudice”, resisting a focus on Islamophobia.⁶⁰ The new Sunak cabinet has not as yet clarified officially its stance on the matter but the prime minister’s prior record on the subject leaves little space for optimism. Even more alarmingly, the new communities secretary, Michael Gove, was reported to have decided to drop altogether government efforts to determine and adopt a definition of Islamophobia.⁶¹

While the opposition Labour Party has shown itself to be significantly more supportive of the definition⁶² and has maintained constant pressure on the government over its deplorable record on fighting Islamophobia,⁶³ it continues to face its own sig-

57. “Scottish Councillors Vote Not to Adopt ‘Islamophobia’ Definition,” *National Secular Society*, November 21, 2022. <https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2022/11/scottish-councillors-vote-not-to-adopt-islamophobia-definition>.

58. Dearden, Lizzie. “Boris Johnson Ignores MP’s Islamophobia Concerns for a Year,” *Independent*, October 31, 2021. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-islamophobia-conservatives-ignores-b1947982.html>.

59. “Government Fails to Engage Adviser Appointed to Help Define Islamophobia,” *MEND*, February 18, 2022. <https://www.mend.org.uk/government-fails-to-engage-adviser-appointed-to-help-define-islamophobia/>.

60. UK House of Commons, Islamophobia, Volume 710: debated on Monday 7 March 2022, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-03-07/debates/61686F01-0F8B-4D98-BBC0-761078F481BF/Islamophobia>

61. Dearden, Lizzie. “Government Drops Plan to Combat Anti-Muslim Hatred with Definition of Islamophobia,” *Independent*, October 30, 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/islamophobia-definition-conservative-government-michael-gove-b2213075.html>; “UK Conservative Party Quietly Halts Efforts to Establish Definition of Islamophobia,” *Middle East Monitor*, November 2, 2022. <https://www.middleeast-monitor.com/20221102-uk-conservative-party-quietly-halts-efforts-to-establish-definition-of-islamophobia/>.

62. Perraudin, Frances. “Labour Formally Adopts Definition of Islamophobia.” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2019, sec. Politics. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/20/labour-formally-adopts-definition-islamophobia>.

63. The work of Labour MPs like Afzal Khan and Naz Shah has been consistent on this front - see for example “Labour Conference Fringe: Confronting Islamophobia Across Europe.” September 26, 2022. <https://www.anothereurope.org/labour-conference-fringe-confronting-islamophobia-across-europe/>; and “Bradford MP on Islamophobia Awareness Month,” *Telegraph and Argus*, November 4, 2022. <https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/23101716.bradfords-naz-shah-mp-islamophobia-awareness-month/>.

nificant challenges with regard to Islamophobic attitudes and practices within its own party ranks. The publication of the findings of an investigation into allegations of racism, discrimination, and bullying (the so-called Forde report) contained damning assessments of the party's attitude to anti-Muslim racism. In particular, the report found that many members believed that there appeared to be a de facto hierarchy of 'racisms', with "Islamophobia ... not treated with the same seriousness within the Labour Party as other forms of racism".⁶⁴ A growing estrangement between Muslim communities and the party has been evident for some time, but fresh evidence from the more recent local election results highlights how BAME voters - who have traditionally supported the Labour movement in very large numbers - appear to be abandoning the party. Labour lost control of a number of key constituencies (e.g., Croydon, Harrow, and Tower Hamlets in London) with high numbers of BAME voters and the situation with similar areas in the north of England has not changed since the electoral shock of 2019 that saw Labour's support collapsing among its traditional voter base.⁶⁵

Meanwhile allegations that the party continues to play down the problem of Islamophobia inside its ranks brought to the surface cases of Labour candidates who were selected for the 2022 local elections in spite of previous racist and Islamophobic comments.⁶⁶ The case of Joyce McCarty, former deputy leader of the Newcastle Council, is reflective of a deeper structural problem. McCarty was deselected following allegations of Islamophobic comments (she spoke of a 'Muslim {and} BAME plot' against one of her key political allies) but her name was allowed to stay on the ballot, with Labour websites urging voters to back her in the 2022 elections.⁶⁷ McCarty was in the end re-elected last May but was subsequently received a 12-month ban from the Labour Party as she was belatedly found guilty of Islamophobia.⁶⁸ When she attempted to attend the council meeting last September, key members of the Labour Party walked out of the room in protest.⁶⁹ This symbolic display of sensitivity is, of course, welcome, but the key question remains as to the party's standards of vetting candidates and determination to act decisively against every form of racist behaviour by its members.

64. The full document of the Forde report is available at <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/The-Forde-Report.pdf>. The quoted excerpt appears on p. 90.

65. Shabi, Rachel. "There Are Muslim Bricks in Labour's Crumbling Red Wall," *Hyphen*, June 20, 2022. <https://hyphenonline.com/2022/06/21/there-are-muslim-bricks-in-labours-crumbling-red-wall/>.

66. Sudan, Richard. "Labour Crisis Intensifies as 'racist' Candidate Picked," *Voice*, October 31, 2022. <https://www.voice-online.co.uk/news/uk-news/2022/10/31/labour-crisis-intensifies-as-racist-candidate-picked/>.

67. Holland, Daniel. "Labour Website Kept Endorsing Councillor Suspended over 'Muslim Plot' Claim," *Chronicle*, April 29, 2022. <https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/labour-accused-trying-trick-voters-23826479>.

68. Holland, Daniel. "Councillor Banned from Labour Party for 12 Months over 'Islamophobic' Comments," xi, July 29, 2022. <https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/joyce-mccarty-labour-suspended-islamophobia-24622193>.

69. "Councillors Stage Walkout after Labour Councillor Suspended over Islamophobia Spotted at Meeting," *Asian Standard*, September 9, 2022. <https://www.asianstandard.co.uk/councillors-stage-walkout-after-labour-councillor-suspended-over-islamophobia-spotted-at-meeting/>.

Media

The publication of the 2021 population census figures for England and Wales (the equivalent figures for Scotland are due in March 2023) offered fascinating insights into the profile of the people and communities living across the country. They should also have been an opportunity to celebrate the UK's growing diversity, with London topping the list and other urban centres showing significant increases coupled with evidence of less segregation according to ethnic or religious lines.⁷⁰ The number of people identifying as Christian fell by 5.5 million over the last decade, for the first time coming at less than 50% (the figure was 46% from 59% in 2011). At the same time the numbers of those following Islam grew by 44% (now 6.5 million people)⁷¹ and of people declaring no faith association jumped from 25% to 37% of the population. Regrettably, however, a significant section of the right-wing media exploited the issue to pursue alarmist agendas of insecurity and identity loss. We know from recently published research by the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) that the UK media misrepresent Muslims and Islam.⁷² Yet the framing of the data by mainstream right-wing publications as a supposedly radical, unstoppable change betrays not only their primary assumption that Britain should remain white, British, and Christian but a strong nostalgia-filled pessimism.⁷³ The by now familiar trope 'I am not x but ...' has been used extensively to lend a thin veneer of political correctness to what is essentially a grand rehearsal of normalised 'great replacement' theories.⁷⁴ The right-wing commentator Douglas Murray used the columns of the widely-read *Daily Mail* to lament the loss of a country inhabited by "born and bred British", where immigration is uncontrollable and allegedly 'replacing' the 'British way of life', where the 'national historic religion' is in decline, and where 'the people' were never consulted by the political 'elites' about this supposedly irreversible and catastrophic change.⁷⁵ GB News, a newcomer in the landscape of British right-wing/ultra-conservative media, has also given

70. Catney, Gemma, and Richard Wright. "Census Data Shows England and Wales Are More Ethnically Diverse – and Less Segregated – than Ever Before," *Conversation*, January 17, 2023. <http://theconversation.com/census-data-shows-england-and-wales-are-more-ethnically-diverse-and-less-segregated-than-ever-before-197156>.

71. "UK Sees Rapid Growth in Muslim Population: Census," *TRT World*, November 29, 2022. <https://www.trt-world.com/europe/uk-sees-rapid-growth-in-muslim-population-census-63027/amp>.

72. "The British Media Has an Islamophobia Problem," *Tribune*, November 30, 2021. <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2021/11/islamophobia-muslims-media-press-prejudice-bbc-spectator-sky-daily-mail>. The report is available at "CfMM Report 'British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)' Launched," November 30, 2021. <https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-report-british-medias-coverage-of-muslims-and-islam-2018-2020-launched/>.

73. Hamdache, Benali. "2021 Census: Distorted Reporting Echoes Racist Conspiracy." *OpenDemocracy*, November 30, 2022. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/2021-census-great-replacement-theory-racist-data-media-white-christians-england-wales/>.

74. Bodi, Faisal. "Census Findings Are a Mixed Bag for Muslims," *Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)*, December 5, 2022. <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/census-findings-are-a-mixed-bag-for-muslims/>.

75. Murray, Douglas. "Yes, Immigration Can Bring Huge Benefits. But on This Scale and at This Speed, It's Too Much to Cope With," *Daily Mail*, December 11, 2012. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2246663/2011-census-immigration-bring-huge-benefits-scale-cope-with.html>.

ample space to the likes of Nigel Farage or Calvin Robinson to demonise multiculturalism and diversity, to paint key cities in England (London, Birmingham, Manchester) as having been taken over by ‘non-white’ people, and to attack successive governments for ‘opening the gates’ to mass immigration on an even greater scale than before leaving the EU.⁷⁶ But the trope of ethnic, cultural, demographic, and indeed racial ‘replacement’ is being laundered by a much wider range of mainstream media.⁷⁷

Islamophobic framing was glaringly evident in another instance of media reporting. The showing of the film *The Lady of Heaven* across cinemas in June generated protests by Muslim organisations and local communities (including mostly silent gatherings in Birmingham, Bradford, Bolton, and Sheffield), labelling it divisive, sectarian, and blasphemous.⁷⁸ The events - and the eventual decision of the cinema chain to pull it from its screens - turned this discussion into another symbolic flashpoint of the UK’s culture wars. Right-wing media painted a picture of ‘religious/Muslim mobs’ roaming streets with impunity and enforcing censorship on a ‘woke’ liberal establishment.⁷⁹ The think tank Policy Exchange felt the need to weigh in, with a report that manages to host attacks on the APPG definition, accusations of international conspiracies (predictably Iran comes top), and support for strengthening PREVENT.⁸⁰ The government’s own counter-terrorism commissioner Sara Khan used similar extreme terminology to attack the protests, going as far as declaring them a threat to democracy.⁸¹

Such techniques of deliberately divisive storyboarding of news to foster a broader campaign of mainstreaming Islamophobia serve as a reminder of how a significant part

76. Elledge, Jonn. “Nigel Farage and the Hysterical Right Know They’ve Lost,” *New Statesman*, December 3, 2022. <https://www.newstatesman.com/comment/2022/12/nigel-farage-hysterical-right-know-lost-census>.

77. Lubbock, John. “The Right’s Demographic Anxiety,” *Left Foot Forward*, February 18, 2022. <https://leftfootforward.org/2022/02/the-rights-demographic-anxiety/>.

78. Esposti, Emanuelle Degli. “Why the Lady of Heaven Film Is Dividing Muslim Opinion,” *Conversation*, June 21, 2022. <http://theconversation.com/why-the-lady-of-heaven-film-is-dividing-muslim-opinion-185071>.

79. See for example: Fox, Anna. “Government Warned over Appeasing ‘religious Mobs’ Who Forced Cineworld to Cancel Prophet Muhammad Film,” *GB News*, June 9, 2022. <https://www.gbnews.uk/news/government-warned-over-appeasing-religious-mobs-who-forced-cineworld-to-cancel-prophet-muhammad-film/313788>; Montgomery, Jack. “Muslims Mob Cinema Showing ‘Blasphemous’ Film in Khan’s London,” *Breitbart*, June 10, 2022. <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2022/06/10/take-it-down-muslim-protesters-mob-cinema-showing-blasphemous-film-khans-london/>; Fox, Anna. “Nigel Farage Clashes with Imam as Cineworld Pulls Film on Prophet Muhammad’s Daughter after Muslim Protests,” *GB News*, June 8, 2022. <https://www.gbnews.uk/news/nigel-farage-clashes-with-imam-as-cineworld-pulls-film-on-prophet-muhammads-daughter-after-muslim-protests/312881>; Pyman, Tom. “The Lady of Heaven Producer Blasts Muslim Protesters,” *Daily Mail*, June 9, 2022. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10899449/The-Lady-Heaven-producer-blasts-Muslim-protesters-accuses-mob-poisonous-rhetoric.html>; Fox, Anna. “Nigel Farage Clashes with Imam as Cineworld Pulls Film on Prophet Muhammad’s Daughter after Muslim Protests,” June 8, 2022. <https://www.gbnews.uk/news/nigel-farage-clashes-with-imam-as-cineworld-pulls-film-on-prophet-muhammads-daughter-after-muslim-protests/312881>.

80. ‘Research Note: “The Lady in Heaven: Latest Target of Islamist Blasphemy Activists”, *Policy Exchange*, 2022. <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/19/E2%80%98The-Lady-of-Heaven.pdf>

81. Khan, Sara. “Religious Mobs Are a Threat to British Democracy,” *The Telegraph*, June 9, 2022. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/06/09/religious-mobs-threat-british-democracy/>.

of UK media remains invested in anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant coverage. When a ‘migrant processing’ centre in the southern port of Dover was attacked with a firebomb by a far-right terrorist in late October, government and media excelled in understatement, caution, and diversion. As Miqdaad Versi noted, the news barely made it to a few front pages and was rarely framed as a ‘terrorist’ attack, let alone anti-immigrant and indeed anti-Muslim violence - most likely because the perpetrator was not a foreigner but ‘British’, albeit one with extreme anti-Muslim and -immigrant views widely publicised on social media.⁸² Even the Home Secretary Stella Braverman showed - uncharacteristic by her standards - parsimony in branding the attack as terrorism.⁸³ The otherwise loquacious right-wing media remained largely nonplussed, without delving into any analysis of the kind of the growing threat that the far right represents for UK’s social cohesion.⁸⁴

Justice system

In May, the long-debated new Nationalities and Borders Act finally became law in spite of three attempts to revise the bill pioneered by the House of Lords⁸⁵ amidst accusations that the proposed bill breached international conventions on human rights (including the UK Equality Act).⁸⁶ Clause 9, in particular, gives disproportionate powers to the UK government to remove citizenship rights from anyone in ‘exceptional circumstances’. What does ‘exceptional’ mean in this context? The act remains elusive in its determinations but includes typical arguments about security threats and ‘unacceptable behaviour’.⁸⁷ This law builds on prior restrictive legislation (e.g., the 2014 Immigration Act) that has shown a clear anti-immigration and Islamophobic bias. As recent research has shown, people from Asia with a Muslim background have

82. Versi, Miqdaad. “Britain Had a Far-Right Terrorist Attack a Week Ago. Why the Failure to Call It by Its True Name?” *The Guardian*, November 6, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/06/britain-far-right-terrorist-attack-dover-migrant-centre>; “Dover Migrant Centre Attack Driven by Right-Wing Ideology - Police,” *BBC News*, November 5, 2022, sec. England. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-63526659>; Weaver, Matthew. “Dover Petrol Bomb Attacker Said He Planned to ‘Obliterate Muslim Children.’” *The Guardian*, November 2, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/02/migrant-centre-attacker-planned-to-obliterate-muslim-children-in-final-tweet>.

83. “Incident at Dover Border Force Immigration Centre Not Being Treated as Terrorism,” *The Herald*, October 31, 2022. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/national/uk-today/23091369.dover-attack-not-treated-terrorism-suella-braverman-says/>.

84. Asbali, Nadeine. “Why Did It Take so Long to Call the Dover Bombings Terrorism?,” *Metro*, November 10, 2022. <https://metro.co.uk/2022/11/10/why-did-it-take-so-long-to-call-the-dover-bombings-terrorism-17734712/>.

85. “House of Lords Defeats the Nationality and Borders Bill yet Again, Lord Pannick Says Government Is Defying Credulity to Assert the Bill Does Not Breach the Refugee Convention | Electronic Immigration Network.” *Electronic Immigration Network (EIN)*, April 26, 2022. <https://www.ein.org.uk/news/house-lords-defeats-nationality-and-borders-bill-yet-again-lord-pannick-says-government>.

86. “How the U.K.’s Immigration Bill Could Erode Citizenship Rights Further.” *Time*, February 10, 2022. <https://time.com/6146655/uk-citizenship-nationality-immigration-bill/>.

87. “Why the Government’s New ‘Nationality and Border’s Bill’ Infringes on Equality.” *Equality Review*, February 3, 2023. <https://www.equalityactreview.co.uk/post/why-the-uk-united-kingdom-government-s-new-nationality-and-border-s-bill-infringes-on-equality>.

been disproportionately affected by such power since 2010.⁸⁸ This view has been reiterated by five UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights who drafted a damning report on the plans of the UK government in this direction.⁸⁹

However significant in its ramifications and symbolism, the Nationalities and Borders Act is only one of a number of similar projects to ‘overhaul human rights’ in the UK pursued by the government. It has been a long-cherished dream of key figures in the Conservative Party to ‘update’ the UK’s Human Rights Act (HRA), aligning it with the mantra of ‘taking back control’ from international institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).⁹⁰ Again words matter - ‘update’ here means restricting the rights of people to challenge alleged violations of human rights by the British state or limit their access to justice as a way of challenging the state’s sovereign privileges.⁹¹ The proposed Rights Removal Bill was initially introduced by the Johnson government as part of its plans to replace the HRA by a UK Bill of Rights in May 2022, and temporarily shelved during Truss’s short spell at the head of government, but has been revived by the new Sunak cabinet. At the time of writing, the current government’s intentions in this area remain unclear, with the prime minister reportedly considering a more cautious approach (and even another U-turn that would see the proposed bill shelved once again⁹²) and sidestepping calls from members of his own party to ignore the ECHR’s rulings against plans to deport asylum-seekers to Rwanda.⁹³ The threat, however, of a renewed campaign to ‘overhaul’ the HRA remains real given the levels of support that such a plan enjoys among key figures of the Conservative Party.

In May, the then home secretary Priti Patel moved to remove restrictions to the notorious police stop-and-search powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.⁹⁴ That such a measure would disproportionately affect BAME communi-

88. Institute of Race Relations. “Citizenship: from right to privilege”, September 2022. <https://irr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Deprivation-of-citizenship-Final-LR.pdf>

89. ‘Mandates of Special Rapporteurs’, Ref.: OL GBR 3/2022, *OHCHR*, February, 11, 2020. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=27073>

90. Diver, Tony. “Rishi Sunak Bringing Back Bill of Rights to Resolve Migrant Clash with European Court,” *The Telegraph*, November 5, 2022. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/11/05/rishi-sunak-bringing-back-bill-rights-resolve-migrant-clash/>.

91. “Rights At Risk: The Government’s Plan to Overhaul Human Rights,” *MEND*, August 30, 2022. <https://www.mend.org.uk/rights-at-risk-the-governments-plan-to-overhaul-human-rights/>.

92. Allegretti, Aubrey. “Sunak’s next U-Turn May Be to Ditch Raab’s Bill of Rights.” *The Guardian*, December 8, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2022/dec/08/rishi-sunak-next-u-turn-may-be-to-ditch-dominic-raab-bill-of-rights>.

93. Crerar, Pippa. “Sunak Rejects Tory Calls to Ignore Human Rights Court Rulings over Rwanda Deportations.” *The Guardian*, December 14, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/dec/14/sunak-rejects-tory-calls-to-ignore-human-rights-court-rulings-over-rwanda-deportations>.

94. Dodd, Vikram. “Police Watchdog: Ethnic Minorities Need Protection from Unfair Stop and Search.” *The Guardian*, April 20, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/apr/20/police-watchdog-ethnic-minorities-need-protection-from-unfair-stop-and-search>; Badshah, Nadeem. “Priti Patel Lifts Restrictions on Police Stop and Search Powers.” *The Guardian*, May 15, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2022/may/16/restrictions-on-police-stop-and-search-powers-permanently-lifted>.

ties (up to seven times more likely to be targeted, according to recent research) and fan the flames of Islamophobia did not appear to have concerned the home secretary, even in the light of advice from the Independent Office for Police Conduct and her own officials that such a measure would risk damaging social cohesion.⁹⁵

As for PREVENT, the government's counter-terrorism strategy, 2022 passed without the findings of its official review being published.⁹⁶ The review, carried out by the fellow of the right-wing thinktank Policy Exchange William Shawcross, has already given enough indications as to the intended direction of travel, since the current legislation is considered 'too weak' on 'Islamist' extremist groups and placing too much emphasis on far-right terrorism.⁹⁷ It is clear that such an agenda cannot produce anything positive⁹⁸ in the direction of addressing the serious concerns about PREVENT's racist foundations or allay fears that it is used to erode human rights.⁹⁹ It is also dangerously misjudged in the face of growing evidence that the threat from far-right groups is constantly rising, with the number of referrals relating to far-right terrorism surpassing any other category in 2021.¹⁰⁰

Internet

When the warning about the growing threat represented by far-right organisations, cells, and individuals both off- and online comes from no other than the UN Secretary General António Guterres¹⁰¹, the attempts of the UK government to play down the threat in favour of its dubious narratives of 'Islamist terrorism' {see Justice and Media sections} is even more distressing. This is a multiple threat - to social inclusion, to democratic stability¹⁰², and to peace. Guterres singled out the failure of social me-

95. Syal, Rajeev. "Priti Patel's Own Officials Warned Her about Easing Stop and Search Conditions." *The Guardian*, May 31, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/31/priti-patels-own-officials-warned-her-about-easing-stop-and-search-conditions>.

96. "Prevent Review: Delays Highlight a Process in Shambles." *Middle East Eye*, December, 29, 2022. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/uk-prevent-review-delays-highlight-process-shambles>.

97. "UK Counter-Terror Prevent Scheme to Downplay Far-Right Threat and Strengthen Anti-Muslim Scapegoating," *WSWS*, December 29, 2022. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/12/29/nidw-d29.html>.; Dodd, Vikram. "Terrorism in the UK: The Rising Threat of Far-Right Extremists." *The Guardian*, May 16, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/16/terrorism-in-the-uk-the-rising-threat-of-far-right-extremists>.

98. "Good Muslim Bad Muslim: A Response to the Revised PREVENT Strategy Report." *MEND*. <https://www.cage.ngo/product/good-muslim-bad-muslim-a-response-to-the-revised-prevent-strategy-report>.

99. "Is the Prevent Program Racist?" *Amnesty International*, October 10, 2022. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/campaigns-blog/prevent-program-racist>.

100. Elgot, Jessica, and Vikram Dodd. "Leaked Prevent Review Attacks 'Double Standards' on Far Right and Islamists." *The Guardian*, May 16, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/16/leaked-prevent-review-attacks-double-standards-on-rightwingers-and-islamists>.

101. "Secretary-General's New Report Highlights New, Emerging Form of 'Far-Right' Terrorism | Security Council - Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC)." August 3, 2022. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/news/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-new-report-highlights-new-emerging-form-%E2%80%9Cfar-right%E2%80%9D-terrorism>.

102. Freedland, Jonathan. "Coup Attempts in Germany and the US Confirm It: The Key Terror Threat Is the Far Right." *The Guardian*, December 9, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/09/global-terrorism-racist-white-jihadism-far-right>.

dia platforms to target effectively the publication and diffusion of malicious misinformation posts that often have devastating effects on community relations. The role of social media in instigating the violent tension in Leicester in the summer of 2022 {see Physical and Verbal Attacks section} is the most recent reminder of how little is still done for something that causes so much damage to people's and communities' lives.¹⁰³ In the wake of the Dover immigration processing centre attack in October it became also clear that the perpetrator had been radicalised through the internet, reading and reposting Islamophobic/anti-immigration material derived from international far-right and local sources.¹⁰⁴

It is by now clear that online information and social media platforms largely shape - through particular curation practices and facilitating peer-to-peer contact¹⁰⁵ - cannot be trusted to prevent or filter out inflammatory content, due to a combination of reluctance to work against their own business model, insufficiency of resources allocated to the task, and lack of robust regulation.¹⁰⁶ Rather alarmingly, the change of Twitter's ownership in October 2022 caused a return of previously banned far-right figures to the platform.¹⁰⁷ Two reports published in 2022 (by HopeNotHate [HNH] and Tell MAMA) highlight the threat posed by far-right organisations and media outlets in spreading and normalising anti-Muslim hatred.¹⁰⁸ They draw attention to the largely invisible growth of this far-right web and its entangled areas of focus (targeting Muslims as part of conspiracy theorising that involves other minorities as well as 'globalist' elites). But they also highlight how the far right is not just a problem of the violent fringes. The GB presenter Calvin Robinson proudly quoted Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech on his Twitter feed.¹⁰⁹ Nigel Farage regularly posts vile anti-immigrant videos on the same plat-

103. "Social Media Accounts Helped Stoke British Violence, Rutgers Finds," *Bloomberg*, November 16, 2022. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-11-16/social-media-accounts-helped-stoke-british-violence-rutgers-finds>.

104. "Dover Firebomb Suspect Andy Leak Posted Anti-Muslim Hate on Social Media," *5Pillars*, November 2, 2022. <https://5pillarsuk.com/2022/11/02/dover-firebomb-suspect-andy-leak-posted-anti-muslim-hate-on-social-media/>.

105. Lajevardi, Nazita, Kassra A. R. Oskooii, and Hannah Walker. "Hate, Amplified? Social Media News Consumption and Support for Anti-Muslim Policies." *Journal of Public Policy* 42, no. 4 (December 2022): 656–83. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X22000083>.

106. Gilbert, David. "There Are Dozens of Facebook Groups Intentionally Spreading Islamophobia. Meta Refuses to Act." *Vice* (blog), April 28, 2022. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wxd3k5/meta-facebook-islamophobia-groups-spread>.

107. Das, Shanti, and Dan Milmo. "Banned British Far-Right Figures Return to Twitter within Hours of Takeover." *The Observer*, October 29, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/oct/29/banned-british-far-right-figures-return-to-twitter-within-hours-of-takeover>.

108. "State of HATE 2022: On The March Again," *HopeNotHate*, March 9, 2022. <https://hopenothate.org.uk/2022/03/09/state-of-hate-2022-on-the-march-again/>; "The Tangled Web of Far Right Anti-Muslim Hate," *Tell MAMA*, November 3, 2022. <https://tellmamauk.org/the-tangled-web-of-far-right-anti-muslim-hate/>.

109. "The GB News Agenda is Unravelling Fast - despite the Backing of Senior Tories," *The National*, December 11, 2022. <https://www.thenational.scot/politics/23183289.gb-newss-bid-redraw-uk-media-landscape-unravelling-fast/>.

form, very often reposting approvingly content produced by other GB News employees.¹¹⁰ ‘Mainstream poison’ the HNH report describes these and other examples of how far-from-extreme personalities resort to both social and traditional media to normalise and popularise hate.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There are multiple types of Islamophobia in circulation in the UK (some emerging clearly as forms of overlapping and very often intersectional anti-Muslim racism; others rooted in a profound cultural hostility to Islam; and in practice a mixture of both¹¹¹) and therefore it is not surprising to expect that there are multiple figures with different ideological profiles who deserve featuring in this section of the report. The far right continues to present the biggest challenge to both Muslims living in the UK and to policy-makers. While organisationally it remains fragmented, ineffective, and thus relatively weak, with currently declining party membership and insignificant electoral performance even in the - usually more forgiving to fringe parties - local elections¹¹², far-right Islamophobic entrepreneurs are always actively pursuing new avenues to reach audiences, both on- and offline. Shunning traditional party politics in favour of lower-level, more localised (like in Leicester or similar potential hotspots mainly in the north of England and close to the Channel) and/or single-issue or context-specific stimuli, they have proven capable of turning to alternative domains such as fitness clubs, underground music scenes, and video games (the latter with a particular potential for influencing younger audiences¹¹³). They have also excelled in using performative excess in local protests and alternative social media platforms for organisation, dissemination of information, and radicalisation.¹¹⁴ The benchmark of their success is not electoral gain, even if there have been a few unlikely ones: the election of the candidate for the British Democrats Lawrence Rustem in the repeated council elections in Maidstone, Kent, was a single victory in a year of otherwise crushingly disappointing results.¹¹⁵ Their real power is agenda-setting, exploiting local raw nerves, mining banal but still powerful tropes about Islam and immigration while wrapping themselves in British flags and posing as last-ditch defenders of the realm in the face of brutal invaders.

110. For example, Nigel Farage [@Nigel_Farage]. “This Was Last Night in London. God Help Us.” *Twitter*, November 29, 2022. https://twitter.com/Nigel_Farage/status/1597533438692642816.

111. Jones and Unsworth, “The Dinner Table Prejudice”, 9-10.

112. “2022 Elections: Far Right Rejected at the Polls... Again,” *HopeNotHate*, May 6, 2022. <https://hopenothate.org.uk/2022/05/06/2022-elections-far-right-rejected-at-the-polls-again/>.

113. Dodd, Vikram. “Far Right ‘Mimicking Video Games to Lure Middle Class Children to Terrorism.” *The Guardian*, March 17, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/mar/17/far-right-mimicking-video-games-to-lure-middle-class-children-to-terrorism>.

114. HopeNotHate, “State of Hate 2022”, 62-125.

115. “Right-Wing Party Scores Its First Ever Election Victory,” *Kent Online*, September 11, 2022. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/right-wing-party-scores-its-first-ever-election-victory-273304/>.

These days the UK far right lacks truly credible figures. The days when Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson, commanded headlines and populated front pages in right-wing tabloids seem too far away at this moment. But he is always reinventing himself (recently joining the For Britain far-right party¹¹⁶), well-connected with local groups and campaigns while also supported by capable crews for each of his anti-Muslim campaigns. New figures have also stepped into the fore, arguably less sensational but no less divisive. A certain ‘Mosque buster’ that goes by the name of Gavin Bobby, originally an activist of the English Defence League, has continued his work of fighting planning applications for Islamic places of worship across the country.¹¹⁷ This year he was spotted in Harrogate, where he unsuccessfully led the campaign against the construction of a local mosque¹¹⁸, after numerous similar campaigns in 2021 in Leicester, Basildon, Hillingdon, and Haverling (the latter two actually resulting in the cancellation or withdrawal of plans for a place of worship).

Nevertheless, Islamophobia in the UK remains deeply embedded in mainstream political and cultural structures. The relatively newcomer in the landscape of British media GB News has emerged as a U.S.-style news outlet leading the conservative fight against supposed woke and cancel cultures.¹¹⁹ It has become the new hub of a firebrand right that has welcomed and given a generous publicity stepping stone to both old and new stars of the British populist right: from Nigel Farage of the UKIP and Brexit referendum to Calvin Robinson and Dan Wootton. The list of GB News affiliates is long and rather diverse, but what binds all these figures together is a deep suspicion of and hostility to the caricatured left-liberal metropolitan elites and mainstream media pursuing their supposed agenda of ‘social justice’ (used pejoratively), multiculturalism, and censorship of alternative views.¹²⁰ GB News’s counter-narratives also rely on frequent collaborations with right-wing intellectuals such as Douglas Murray who, in alliance with populist right-wing politicians, has sought to redefine the political and cultural horizons of British conservatism in the past years.¹²¹ Through the GB News media platforms such figures advance a constant stream of Islamophobic tropes in conjunction with anti-immigrant, conspiracist, and other declining narratives. Nevertheless, like in last year’s report, the role of the Policy Ex-

116. “Tommy Robinson Joins The Far-Right For Britain Party,” *HopeNotHate*, March 7, 2022. <https://hopenothate.org.uk/2022/03/07/tommy-robinson-joins-the-far-right-for-britain-party/>.

117. Manji, Fatima. *Hidden Heritage: Rediscovering Britain’s Lost Love of the Orient*. London: Random House, 2021, pp. 70-1.

118. “Highly Controversial Plans for Harrogate’s First Mosque Have Been Approved,” *Yorkshire Post*, March 4, 2022. <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/politics/controversial-plans-for-harrogates-first-mosque-are-approved-3595744>.

119. John, Tara. “The ‘anti-Woke’ Crusade Has Come to Europe. Its Effects Could Be Chilling,” *CNN*, January 7, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/07/europe/war-on-woke-europe-cmd-intl/index.html>.

120. See for example Calvin Robinson’s profile on the GB News website: <https://www.gbnews.uk/calvin-robinson>

121. Ellis, Charlie. “A Narrowing of the British Conservative Mind?” *Society* 59, no. 6 (2022): 682–90. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-022-00687-y>.

change (PEx) think tank and its ideological-political network cannot be ignored. In a book recently published by Peter Osborne on how Muslims have been meticulously cast as the internal enemy number-one in western societies¹²², a chapter is dedicated to the role that the Policy Exchange think tank has played in redefining British Muslims as threatening insiders-outsiders in Britain that deserve to be treated with as second-class citizens. The think tank has always enjoyed the closest relationship with the political establishment, with former prime ministers and current and past high-profile cabinet ministers frequently turning up at events and publications by PEx. The list of reports on everything that could potentially be linked to the think tank's underpinning 'anti-Islamist' crusade is always impressive: PEx has managed to intervene in every cultural debate (from immigration and Channel crossings to the Trojan Horse podcast, *The Lady of Heaven* film, the gender debates, the future of PREVENT, the planned Bill of Rights, etc.).¹²³ How much purchase these reports have on an everyday basis remains debatable. However, the think tank's constant presence and adherence to its core Islamophobic message, its sustained output, its capacity for intervention in current debates, and its reliance on 'big names' have ensured that it has performed, over the years, a spurious normalising role when it comes to high-level Islamophobia in the UK.¹²⁴

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Once again civil society organisations have led the campaigns against Islamophobic practices, hostile government initiatives, and media narratives in the UK. Evidence-based research (such as the Muslim Census's report on violence against Islamic religious spaces; HopeNotHate's comprehensive annual State of Hate reports; and the MCB's study of black Muslim contributions to British society¹²⁵), public interventions on topical matters, and year-long advocacy and positive visibility are essential parts of a comprehensive strategy to both fight Islamophobia in the present tense and target its structural and cultural drivers at the very mainstream of British society. Organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain, the Centre for Media Monitoring, Tell MAMA, Muslim Census, Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), HopeNotHate, and many others have continued to be at the very forefront of the everyday battle against Islamophobia. Maintaining a vigilant eye on everyday and official

122. Osborne, Peter. *The Fate of Abraham: Why the West Is Wrong about Islam*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2023.

123. The impressive list can be found on the PEx's website: <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publications/>

124. "How a Neo-Conservative Think Tank Defined British Muslims." *Middle East Eye*, May 9, 2022. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/neo-conservative-think-tank-defined-british-muslims-fate-abraham-extract>.

125. "Bringing Black British Muslim Voices to the Fore: New Landmark Report - Muslim Council of Britain," MCB, September 22, 2022. <https://mcb.org.uk/bringing-black-british-muslim-voices-to-the-fore-new-landmark-report/>.

practices that normalise anti-Muslim hatred and reproduce racism require this kind of alertness and willingness to intervene in the public debate when misinformation and stereotyping rear their ugly head, when community tensions occur, and when Islamophobia creeps into public discourse.

At the same time the annual (started in 2012) Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM, November) continues to be a unique opportunity to bring organisations together and offer spaces for visibility for local groups and other initiatives in the battle against Islamophobia. This year, as in the past, IAM served as a national scene for the celebration of Muslim contribution to British life but also brought to the fore a number of positive initiatives to combat prejudice against, and lift the veil of silence from, the lives of British citizens with a Muslim background, such as: the work of the One Voice charity in Blackburn that has brought together young members of the local Muslim community to discuss their experiences and support others who are experiencing discrimination and abuse in their everyday lives¹²⁶; the showcasing of contributions to UK life made by Muslims in an exhibition organised by the Three Rivers Districts Council (one of those local authorities that has formally adopted the APPG definition and has redoubled a commitment to fight hate crime)¹²⁷; the work carried out by Hackney Council in London (another local authority that adopted the APPG definition) to support victims of Islamophobia and other forms of hate crime in the community, geared towards sharing advice and bringing together diverse communities to exchange views and work together with the council to strengthen local support mechanisms¹²⁸.

Beyond these invaluable campaigns and interventions on the national level, a number of noteworthy initiatives were undertaken in 2022. Among them are,

- the continuing support to the APPG definition of Islamophobia through declarations of its formal adoption by educational institutions, local councils, and labour organisations (with the GMB union becoming the first labour organisation to formally adopt the definition in March¹²⁹)
- the creative use of social media by Sabah Ahmedi, known as ‘Young Imam’, member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Manchester. This work

126. Newton, Susan. “What It’s like to Be a Muslim in Blackburn According to Girls Who Live There,” *LancsLive*, November 27, 2022. <https://www.lancs.live/news/lancashire-news/what-its-like-muslim-blackburn-25586103>.

127. “Positive Muslim Contributions in the UK Showcased at Local Exhibition,” *Three Rivers Council News*, November 11, 2022. <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/news/positive-muslim-contributions-in-the-uk-showcased-at-local-exhibition>.

128. “Hackney Is No Place for Islamophobia - Islamophobia Awareness Month 2022.” *Hackney Council News*, November 25, 2022. <https://news.hackney.gov.uk/hackney-is-no-place-for-islamophobia—islamophobia-awareness-month-2022/>

129. “GMB Stamping out Anti-Muslim Hate,” *GMB*, July 13, 2022. <https://www.gmb.org.uk/long-read/stamping-out-anti-muslim-hate>.

was given an official recognition when Ahmedî won the BAFTA award for Community Person of the Year 2022¹³⁰;

- the inclusive marketing campaigns undertaken by the supermarket chain Tesco under the banner ‘Together this Ramadan’, with a billboard rotating between showing empty plates during the day hours to gradually switching to food-filled illustrations to coincide with *iftar*¹³¹;



Figure 4: The phases of the ‘Together this Ramadan’ Tesco advertisement.¹³²

- the creation of a research-based, action-oriented Index of Islamophobia, the work of Dr Suriyah Bi of Oxford University, that is intended to “help police, prosecutors, victims and analysts work out when to take legal action and how to map out the routes towards such action”¹³³;
- the initiative of Blackburn Rovers Football Club to host Eid prayers in their Elwood Park stadium in May. The initiative is only the most recent positive step taken by the club, which in the recent past showed the provision of a prayer room and catering for halal food at the premises¹³⁴.

130. “Young Imam Wins Visionary Award | Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK | Love For All Hatred For None.” *Ahmadiyya Muslim Community News*, March 24, 2022. <https://loveforallhatredfornone.org/young-imam-wins-visionary-award/>.

131. “Tesco Marks Ramadan with Billboard Campaign,” *Creative Review*, April 5, 2022. <https://www.creativereview.co.uk/tesco-ramadan-advertising-campaign/>. The animation can be found at <https://twitter.com/bbhllondon/status/1511002185802334213>.

132. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2023/02/13/how-choose-the-best-oooh-locations-your-ads>

133. Bi, Suriyah. “Islamophobia from the Likes of Boris Johnson Must Be Punished – and This Is How to Do It.” *The Guardian*, December 8, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/commentisfree/2022/dec/08/islamophobia-hate-crime-index-attacks-muslims>. The report on the index can be found at <https://www.equalityactreview.co.uk/index-of-islamophobia>

134. “Blackburn Rovers Host Historic Eid Prayers inside Ewood Park Stadium,” *Tell MAMA*, May 3, 2022. <https://tellmamauk.org/blackburn-rovers-host-historic-eid-prayers-inside-ewood-park-stadium/>.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia in the UK remains a tale of multiple causes, agencies, and victims. On the one hand, there is the anti-Muslim hatred perpetrated by extremists off- and on-line: targeting Islamic religious and symbolic spaces for local Muslim communities, but also flooding social media platforms and internet news with misinformation, stereotypes, and campaigns of abuse. On the other hand, there is the Islamophobia of mainstream culture, geared to the normalisation of anti-Muslim tropes and to ever-deepening social engineering. The current UK government is failing British Muslims on both these fronts, ignoring (and even consciously playing down for ideological reasons) the threat of the former and actively promoting agendas associated with the latter. As always, Islamophobia remains encoded in cultural attitudes to key popular themes such as national identity and sovereignty, state security, and immigration. As a form of racism, it pervades all aspects of public and private life, all domains of activity, and all spheres, physical and virtual. Normalised in official discourse when refracted through other narratives such as counter-terrorism or freedom of speech, it remains a predominantly mainstream problem that affects a significant - and growing - segment of British society.

Without the adoption of an official definition of Islamophobia the shape of the public debate cannot change dramatically; and 2022 was a difficult year on this front as the government has indicated its willingness to abandon attempts to come up with such a definition, let alone accept the 2019 APPG one. But work carried out on the local level means that the definition - and the importance of having one in order to anchor public debate - is steadily gaining ground. At the same time the need for a powerful counter-narrative to either counter-terrorism or freedom of speech is more urgent than ever. The much more active and consistent support of opposition political parties (Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP etc) in this direction is needed now more than ever.

In addition to focusing on targeting and countering Islamophobia as in where and when it occurs (and this year's IAM theme of 'tackling denial' provided a powerful platform for this in addition to the work carried out by Muslim organisations and local groups), as well as protecting and supporting Muslim communities in their everyday lives, we need to invest more in strategies of inoculating society against false narratives, misinformation campaigns, and divisive tropes. Last year's report stressed the importance of combining these two strategies - active rebuttal and mitigation with measures that promote the immunisation of society to anti-Muslim stereotyping and hate-mongering - and the need to restate the importance of such a dual approach is even more pronounced after what happened in 2022.¹³⁵ Inoculation does not deliver

135. 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)

fast-track dividends, but it is the most important, fail-safe insurance policy for a sustainable future of diversity, inclusiveness, and community cohesion.

Policy recommendations:

- Pursuing a dual approach to countering Islamophobia that recognises its multiple forms, drivers, and expressions (some ‘extreme’ while others ‘normalised’ and mainstream).
- Building on current educational initiatives (e.g., decolonising school and university curricula) in order to push for a more comprehensive curriculum reform that is fit for a diverse society and capable of better preparing students from a wide range of backgrounds for the future.
- Demanding significant improvements in the official data reporting mechanisms and instruments for Islamophobia (government and police) in order to provide a more granular overview of anti-Muslim hatred and racism in the UK, while also drawing attention to the complex intersectional dimensions of Islamophobic experiences.
- Extending the efforts to give voice and space to alternative role models and perspectives with the goal of bringing previously marginalised, almost invisible communities to the fore and of inspiring young Muslims.
- Expanding current Islamophobia-awareness events (such as Islamophobia Awareness Month), but at the same time building new frameworks and practices that ensure constant visibility in media and the public sphere.
- Enhancing the visibility of the full diversity of communities with a Muslim background in the UK, highlighting their historic and contemporary contributions to British society and culture while also increasing awareness of the challenges facing them in their efforts to combat institutional Islamophobia and marginalisation.
- Maintaining the pressure on government and authorities to accept a legally binding definition of Islamophobia, especially by forging partnerships with local and regional institutions eager to formally adopt it.
- Facilitating more research on hate crime (its drivers, facilitating mechanisms, and pernicious effects) that takes into account the complex intersectionality of racial, religious, ethnic, and gender discrimination.
- Sustaining and expanding the independent monitoring work on media and social media platforms, and updating the reporting mechanism for failures and abuses as part of a regular cycle.
- Balancing more robust legal instruments with content monitoring and supply of inspiring counter-narratives in order to challenge the diffusion of Islamophobic hate messaging on the internet.

- Applying pressure for a more effective, transparent, and accountable system of content filtering in social media, embracing the power of algorithms alongside active human curation of content for the benefit of social cohesion.
- Campaigning for a root-and-branch review of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, with critical feedback from civil society/grassroots organisations and academic/professional expertise.
- Establishing closer partnerships with local and regional stakeholders, including local governments and regional parliaments, in order to extend work carried out mostly at local level in terms of monitoring, lobbying, and outreach.
- Demanding a significantly more robust regulation of traditional media, accompanied with revised official guidelines and more effective intervention powers by regulators and watchdogs.
- Maintaining the pressure for measures to encourage a culturally sensitive workplace that promotes gender, race, and religious equality.
- Campaigning for adequately resourced campaigns to enhance the safety and well-being of Muslim communities and their important spaces (especially mosques and cultural centres), helped by less cumbersome and more transparent instruments of state support.
- Pursuing international co-operation in the fight against hate crime, disinformation, and extremism, especially with regard to online hate messaging and abuse.

Chronology

- 21 February: A Muslim woman is physically assaulted when a man attempts to tear off her hijab and remove her backpack while directing racist abuse at her inside the London tube system near Poplar, East London.
- 28 March: Arson attack against the Hussaini Mission mosque in Newport, Wales, causing damage to the premises.
- 20 April: Two worshippers are injured and considerable damage is caused to the Masjid Bilal and Muslim Community Centre in Newham, East London following an attack with sticks and bottles.
- 28 April: The new Nationality and Borders Act becomes law in spite of vocal opposition by human rights groups and repeated attempts to revise it at the House of Lords. The bill's Clause 9 gives disproportionate powers to the UK government to remove citizenship rights from anyone in 'exceptional circumstances'. Over the years, people with a Muslim background have been disproportionately affected by similar provisions in UK law.
- 18 May: A man attacks the premises of the Shoreditch Masjid Trust in Shoreditch, East London, throwing bottles against the building.

- 30 May: A Muslim woman is physically and verbally attacked while waiting for the bus in Plymouth, with her hijab being torn off in the process.
- September: Ugly scenes of provocative marching, verbal and physical attacks, as well as desecration of religious/ethnic spaces and symbols occur over a series of days in Leicester, England.
- 26 September: Offensive graffiti are sprayed on the walls of the Community Centre on Sidney Street, Manchester.
- 30 October: Serious firebomb attack on a 'migrant processing' centre in Dover, England by a far-right terrorist who killed himself immediately after the attack. Two people were injured. It took two days for the police to start investigating the incident as a terrorism offence; and for media to report it as a far-right terrorist attack.
- 4 November: An attack with stones and bricks against the premises of the local mosque in Sparkhill, Birmingham during prayer leaves worshippers terrorised and results in considerable damage to the property.
- 29 November: Publication of detailed results from the 2021 population census in England and Wales. The results show that the number of people identifying as Muslims in the UK grew by 44% over the last decade. At the same time, the number of people identifying as Christians fell below 50% for the first time.
- 12 December: A pig's head is left at the rooftop of the local mosque at Stockport, Greater Manchester.

By gathering 26 local scholars and experts specialised in racism and human rights, the eighth edition of the *European Islamophobia Report* addresses the state and development of Islamophobia across Europe in 2022. All 23 national reports included in this year's annual edition invite policymakers, civil society, scholars, and all people interested in Islamophobia to gain insight and knowledge on the most important incidents and data regarding Islamophobia in Europe in 2022. Since the first publication of this report covering the year 2015, the *European Islamophobia Report* has become a cutting-edge source for information on Islamophobia in the fields of politics, media, employment, education, and justice. The annual report also exposes European Islamophobia networks and highlights initiatives to counter anti-Muslim racism.

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 society as a whole. As a result, the *European Islamophobia Report 2022* 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 eighth edition of our report reviews the effects of the ongoing war in Ukraine, the coverage of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar in European media, and how anti-Muslim legislation and measures in states like Austria and France have developed and have been fought by civil society. The 23 country reports demonstrate how governments, political parties, and media participate and counteract in reproducing discourses that put the fundamental rights of European citizens in jeopardy.

This compendium of useful insights and data aims to provide European policymakers, institutions, and NGOs with recommendations on how to tackle anti-Muslim racism in Europe both effectively and systematically.

