
EUROPEAN
ISLAMOPHOBIA
REPORT

2015

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

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INTRODUCTION

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

In June 2014, the website for reporting hate crimes to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) went public. In 2014, only five states officially reported on hate crimes against Muslims, whereas civil society reported in 21 countries. Still, for the majority of the 57 member countries of the OSCE, there is no official information available. Furthermore, if one were to assess the quality of these state reports, it becomes apparent that the collected data does not always rely on a comprehensive systematic collection.

Since Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism has become a growing threat in European societies, we – the editors – felt an urgent need to address this problem. In fact, there are still people denying the very existence of racism against Muslims. Many state and civil society institutions have done priceless work to prove and establish the opposite: from the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) to the countless civil society organisations throughout Europe. Yet, institutions like the FRA publish only irregular reports on a restricted number of countries while most civil society organisations tackle racism in general and only few focus on Islamophobia in specific - this is the urgent gap our report wishes to fill.

The *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) is an annual report, which is presented for the first time this year. It currently comprises 25 national reports regarding each state and the tendencies of Islamophobia in each respective country. The current report features the work of 37 extraordinary scholars. In the years to come we will attempt to cover even more countries. This report aims to enable policymakers as well as the public to discuss the issue of Islamophobia with the help of qualitative data. At the same time, several of its unique characteristic features make a difference to the current state of the debate on Islamophobia.

Contribution of this report

The national reports in the EIR look at significant incidents and developments in each country during the period under review. The authors look at the employment sector: has there been any discrimination in the job market based on the (assumed) Muslimness of a person? They look at education: has Islamophobic content become part of any curricula, textbooks, or any other education material? The political field in a narrow sense is also a central aspect of the EIR: has Islamophobia played any role in politics, from election campaigns to political programmes to personal statements, etc., be it on a regional or national level? Authors also take a close look at a central force where Islamophobia has spread: the media. Which media events have focused on Islam/Muslims in an Islamophobic way? The justice system is also featured in the national reports: are there any laws and regulations that are based on Islamophobic arguments or any laws restricting the rights of Muslims in their religious lifestyle? Cyberspace as a central space for spreading hate crime is also examined: which web pages and initiatives have spread Islamophobic stereotypes? In addition, central figures in the Islamophobia network are discussed: which institutions and persons have, among others, fostered Islamophobic campaigns, stirred up debates or lobbied for laws?

Since the EIR is not content with pointing a finger at the problem, the reports also look at observed civil society and political assessment and initiatives undertaken to counter Islamophobia in the aforementioned fields. This will empower politicians and NGO activists, who want to tackle the issue. Since the EIR is not a purely scholarly work, at the end of every report, authors offer policy recommendations for politics and NGOs. An executive summary at the beginning and a chronology at the end of every report give the reader an overview on the state and the development of Islamophobia in the respective countries.

Since the single reports share broadly the same structure, the EIR offers the possibility to compare Islamophobia in these countries. Despite the fact that the data in specific fields is not available in an identical way for all countries, the report still facilitates an impulse for identifying research gaps.

Studies on Islamophobia have in the past predominantly concentrated on Western Europe. This is especially the case with reports focusing on Islamophobia. The EIR is the first to cover a wide range of Eastern European countries like Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, or Latvia. This will enrich the debate on racism in general and Islamophobia in Europe in specific.

What is Islamophobia?

Although the term 'Islamophobia' has become widely recognised in the Anglo-Saxon world and has become established in academia as can be seen by the numerous conferences, journals, and research projects dedicated to it, in many European countries, there is still a great amount of opposition to the term. One can understand the opposition expressed by the public not merely as an academic debate, but, in fact, as a sign of the hegemonic power of Islamophobic prejudices. Acknowledging this situation,

at the heart of this project lies the following working definition of Islamophobia:

“When talking about Islamophobia, we mean anti-Muslim racism. As Anti-Semitism studies have shown, the etymological components of a word do not necessarily point to its complete meaning, nor to how it is used. Such is also the case with Islamophobia studies. Islamophobia has become a well-known term used in academia as much as in the public sphere. Criticism of Muslims or of the Islamic religion is not necessarily Islamophobic. Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilising and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of a constructed ‘we’. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static ‘Muslim’ identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalised for all Muslims. At the same time, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary in different contexts as Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about the Muslims/Islam”.

Central findings

That Islamophobia works without Muslims and tells us more about the anti-Muslim racists than it tells us about Islam and Muslims, can best be seen in the eastern region of Europe. In countries like Hungary, Finland, Lithuania, or Latvia, where only a small number of Muslims live, Islamophobia functions as a successful means to mobilise people. People not only greatly overestimate the country's Muslim population but, although Muslims have not committed any violent acts in most countries in the name of Islam, they are still often deemed violent and are considered to be terrorists.

It could be observed that both attacks in Paris, which happened in 2015, became a discursive event that shaped the debates on Islam and Muslims throughout Europe. Above that, the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ was a central topic, which many actors linked to the issue of Muslims invading Europe. For example, the leader of the Hungarian Fidesz’ parliamentary club Antal Rogán warned of a future ‘United European Caliphate’,¹ while former Secretary of State László L. Simon urged Hungarians to return to their Christian spirituality and make more babies in order to counter the negative cultural effects of mass migration such as the envisioned ‘impending victory of Islamic parties imposing polygamy and destroying the remainder of European culture’.² This strong Islamophobic rhetoric is not restricted to the extreme right. In fact, the *refugee-migration-Islam-terrorism nexus* became the standard argument justifying a number of domestic and international measures. The social democrat Czech President Miloš Zeman claimed the influx of refugees into Europe was masterminded by Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood as “an organised invasion” to “gradually control Europe”.³

1. Károly Villányi, “Azt akarjuk, hogy unokáink egy európai kalifátusban éljenek?”, *Magyar Idők*, 14.11.2015, accessed 03.01.2016, <http://magyaridok.hu/belfold/azt-akarjuk-hogy-az-unokaink-egy-europai-kalifatusban-eljenek-5035/>.

2. “L. Simon: Szaporodjunk!”, *Népszabadság Online*, 05.09.2015, accessed 03.01.2016, http://nol.hu/video/lSimon-a-szaporodasban-latja-a-jovot-1573295?utm_source=mandiner&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=mandiner_201601.

3. Agence France-Presse, “Integrating Muslims into Europe is ‘impossible’, says Czech president”, 18 January, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/18/integrating-muslims-into-europe-is-impossible-says-czech-president> (accessed 8 March, 2016)

Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia poses a great risk to the democratic foundations of European constitutions and social peace as well as the coexistence of different cultures throughout Europe. Both civil society actors and states should acknowledge the seriousness of this issue and develop concrete policies to counter Islamophobia. Here we have summarised some of the important policy recommendations from the national reports.

- Islamophobia should be acknowledged as a crime and should be included in all national statistics throughout Europe.
- Hate crime legislations should be adopted in all European countries that acknowledge one's religious identity as being a basis upon which one may be targeted.
- In order to collect data about Islamophobic incidents, victims registers must be introduced in all European states.
- In order to help the victims of Islamophobic attacks, counseling services for victims must be established in all European states.
- Journalists, lawyers, Police (security officials) and legal authorities in all European countries should be educated by qualified personnel in regards to Islamophobia.
- Muslim civil society has to be empowered with information to combat Islamophobia, especially in the direction of the creation of a consciousness of the illegality of hate crimes.
- Educational institutions and stakeholders have to work towards creating an alternative narrative of Muslims in the respective countries which will work to dispel the widely accepted negative image of Islam.
- Civil society actors must also push for legislative change in the context of school enrolment policies so that all members of the respective societies are treated fairly when accessing education.
- Governments must draft a policy that ensures that the rights of religious minorities to manifest their faith are respected in education and the workplace; this must not be left to the preferences of individual boards of management or principals.
- Discrimination on the job market towards Muslims and especially Muslims who wear veils is a widespread phenomenon. This should be recognised and seriously addressed by better legal regulations and the creation of a relevant consciousness.
- Civil society actors must engage with media actors/outlets in terms of the publication and broadcasting of standards in order to reduce/minimise the use of racialising discourses vis-à-vis Muslims and other minority communities.
- The civil rights violations experienced by women wearing headscarves should be addressed by lawmakers and politicians.
- An independent media watchdog should be established in order to monitor media reports in real time in all respective countries.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ITALY
NATIONAL REPORT 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Islamophobia in Italy is a significant phenomenon that has attracted increasing attention in the current climate of insecurity and threat which characterise Italian society.

To begin with, this report studies significant incidents and developments which occurred in the country throughout 2015. In this context, the hostile language used in the political debate, the bitter controversy on the building of appropriate places of worship, the link between the migrant crisis and the Muslim presence, as well as the discrimination suffered by Muslim women have been investigated.

Secondly, the authors of the report analyse the main shortcomings of the legislative framework, such as the absence of a general law on freedom of religion and the lack of an ad hoc agreement between the Muslim community and the Italian State; these shortcomings jeopardise the full enjoyment of Muslim rights and the effective fight against Islamophobia. Recently adopted laws and draft bills concerning the field of interest of this report have also been scrutinised.

Thirdly, the present report explains how, during 2015, Islamophobia manifested itself through several discriminatory events and incidents that occurred in various areas.

Despite a general legislative framework forbidding any form of discrimination, Islamophobic incidents have been observed in employment and education. In these fields, Islamophobia has had an impact in the every-day life of Muslims, and is evident through geographical disparities.

In the aftermath of the 2015 terrorist attacks, Islamophobia in politics has become more visible. In this regard, the implementation of existing laws has proven to be insufficient, while the penalties provided are not always a proportionate or dissuasive response to Islamophobic discourse.

Several cases of hate speech in the media and cyber-space have also been noticed. Not only journalists and bloggers but also web moderators and ordinary people have used the media and cyber-space as a vehicle to spread fear and hatred towards Muslims.

Fourthly, the report focuses on central figures who have adopted negative attitudes against Muslims and scrutinises the governmental and non-governmental initiatives undertaken to counter Islamophobia in all the fields considered above.

Lastly, based on the results of this research, the report includes a set of recommendations to be considered when discussing ways to counter the phenomenon of Islamophobia in Italy.

SINTESI

L'Islamofobia in Italia è un fenomeno significativo che ha attirato attenzione crescente nell'attuale clima di insicurezza e minaccia che caratterizza la società italiana.

In primo luogo, questo rapporto studia i principali incidenti e avvenimenti verificatisi nel Paese nel corso del 2015. In tale contesto, sono stati analizzati il linguaggio ostile utilizzato nel dibattito politico, l'aspra polemica relativa alla costruzione di idonei luoghi di culto, il legame esistente tra la crisi migratoria e la presenza musulmana così come la discriminazione subita dalle donne musulmane.

In secondo luogo, gli autori del rapporto analizzano i principali limiti del quadro legislativo, quali l'assenza di una legge generale sulla libertà di religione e la mancanza di un accordo ad hoc tra la comunità musulmana e lo Stato Italiano, che mettono a rischio il pieno godimento dei diritti da parte dei Musulmani e l'effettivo contrasto dell'Islamofobia. Leggi e progetti di legge di recente adozione relativi ai settori di interesse di tale rapporto sono anch'essi stati esaminati.

In terzo luogo, il presente rapporto spiega come, durante il 2015, l'Islamofobia si è manifestata attraverso numerosi eventi discriminatori ed incidenti verificatisi in vari settori.

Nonostante il divieto generale di ogni forma di discriminazione, incidenti discriminatori sono stati rilevati nel settore del lavoro e dell'educazione. In tali aree, l'Islamofobia ha avuto un impatto sulla vita quotidiana dei Musulmani e si è manifestata sotto forma di disuguaglianze geografiche.

In seguito agli attacchi terroristici del 2015, l'Islamofobia in ambito politico è diventata sempre più visibile. In proposito, l'attuazione delle leggi esistenti si è dimostrata insufficiente mentre le sanzioni previste non sono sempre state una risposta proporzionata ed effettiva al discorso islamofobo.

Diversi casi di "hate speech" sono stati registrati nei mezzi di comunicazione e nel cyberspazio. Non solo giornalisti ed autori di blog ma anche moderatori di siti e gente comune hanno utilizzato mezzi di comunicazione e siti internet come uno strumento per seminare paura e odio nei confronti dei Musulmani.

In quarto luogo, il presente rapporto focalizza l'attenzione sulle principali figure che hanno adottato atteggiamenti negativi nei riguardi dei Musulmani e sulle iniziative governative e non governative adottate per contrastare l'Islamofobia nei settori sopra considerati.

In conclusione, sulla base degli esiti della suddetta ricerca, il rapporto include una serie di raccomandazioni da prendere in considerazione quando si discutono le modalità per contrastare il fenomeno dell'Islamofobia in Italia.

INTRODUCTION

Of the 5 million foreign residents in Italy, 1.6 million are Muslim. Unlike other European countries, Muslim resident in Italy come from a variety of countries and their immigration is quite recent.¹

Islamophobia is a phenomenon that has barely been studied in Italy. Although there is currently no legally agreed definition on Islamophobia,² nor has social science developed a common definition, policy or action to combat it, Islamophobia is undertaken within the broad concepts of racism and racial discrimination that are universally accepted by governments and international organisations. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the General Policy Recommendation No. 5 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (hereinafter ECRI) which recognises that Muslim communities are subject to prejudice that “may manifest itself in different guises, in particular through negative general attitudes but also, to varying degrees, through discriminatory acts and through violence and harassment.”³

In Italy, there is a manifest lack of data on Islamophobic incidents. In 2015, the Contact Centre set up at the National Office against Racial Discrimination (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazione Razziali – UNAR, hereinafter) received 28 reports on discrimination on the grounds of religion, 3 of these concerned discrimination in cyber-space.⁴ The Observatory for the Security against Discriminatory Acts (OSCAD), which also receives reports from institutions, associations or private citizens concerning acts of discrimination, received 4 complaints concerning Islamophobic incidents.⁵

Nevertheless, some surveys give a glimpse into the extent of the phenomenon. According to a recent study,⁶ in Italy negative opinions about Muslims outweigh favourable views by almost two-to-one.

Also, the Eurobarometer on discrimination 2015⁷ addresses this topic. Results show that 39% of Italian respondents say they would be uncomfortable working with a Muslim person. This is higher than for any other religious group. Moreover, less than half of the Italian respondents (41%) would feel at ease if one of their children was in a love relationship with a Muslim person.

1. IDOS in partnership with CONFRONTI e UNAR, *Dossier Immigrazione 2015*.

2. See, for instance, the definition of Islamophobia included in the report “Islamophobia: a challenge for us all” by the UK-based NGO Runnymede Trust.

3. See ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims (CRI(2000) 21) but also ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination (CRI (2003)8).

4. UNAR, data sent to authors in regard to the period January-September 2015.

5. OSCAD, data sent to authors in regard to the period January-December 2015.

6. Bruce Stoakes, “Chapter 3. Anti-minority sentiment not rising”, in *Faith in European project reviving*, PEW Research Center, 2015, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/02/chapter-3-anti-minority-sentiment-not-rising/>

7. Special Eurobarometer 437, *Discrimination in the EU in 2015*, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2077>.

Nowadays, Muslims in Italy, as in the rest of Europe, are becoming targets of hate amid the growing refugee crisis and the frequent terrorist attacks. Under the current economic crisis, immigrants, whose presence is massively overestimated in Italy,⁸ are increasingly portrayed as a cause of higher competition in the labour market and as a menace for traditional Italian values.⁹ Despite statistics indicating that less than 30% of migrants are Muslim,¹⁰ it has also been discovered that the presence of Muslims is overestimated in Italy by 16%¹¹ and that Muslims resident in Italy also suffer from the stereotypes that have penetrated the public debate about the integration of migrants.¹²

Moreover, both European and Italian statistics clearly show that these attitudes towards Muslims are shaped by an increasing sense of insecurity. In the aftermath of the attacks which occurred in Paris, the media played a crucial role in fuelling the sentiment of threat by extensively referring to the terrorism of Muslim extremists as a persistent menace for European citizens.¹³ The proportion of people identifying terrorism and religious extremism as an important challenge has increased substantially¹⁴ while in a survey carried out in November 2015, 16% of respondents blamed Islam as a whole for the attacks that took place in Paris.¹⁵

Methodology of the Study

This study was implemented in several phases. Initially, desk and internet research was carried out in order to analyse national legislation and policies regarding the different aspects of the Islamophobia phenomenon. During this phase, a list of key interlocutors to be interviewed was drafted, including representatives of the Italian Muslim community, experts from national institutions (UNAR, OSCAD, etc), academics, lawyers, journalists and NGO activists. Subsequently, a questionnaire based on the information collected during the initial desk research phase was drafted and

8. Ipsos Mori, *Perceptions are not reality: things the world gets wrong*, 2014, <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/research-publications/researcharchive/3466/Perceptions-are-not-reality-10-things-the-world-gets-wrong.aspx>.

9. Demos & Pi, *Rapporto sulla sicurezza e insicurezza sociale in Italia e in Europa*, 2015, http://www.demos.it/2015/pdf/3346fondazione_unipolis_rapporto_sulla_sicurezza_febbraio_2015.pdf.

10. IDOS in partnership with CONFRONTI e UNAR, *Dossier Immigrazione 2015*.

11. Ipsos Mori, *Perceptions are not reality: things the world gets wrong*, 2014, <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/research-publications/researcharchive/3466/Perceptions-are-not-reality-10-things-the-world-gets-wrong.aspx>

12. In the context of the current refugee crisis, Pope Francis Bergoglio called on the Catholic community to welcome refugees. Yet, Muslim immigrants have been denied accommodation on grounds of their religion in some parts of the country. “‘Sono islamici, via dalla canonica’: i fedeli fermano il prete pro-rifugiati”, *La Repubblica*, 8 September 2015, http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/09/08/news/_sono_islamici_via_dalla_canonica_i_fedeli_fermano_il_prete_pro-rifugiati-122423061/

13. Demos & Pi, *Rapporto sulla sicurezza e insicurezza sociale in Italia e in Europa*, 2015 http://www.demos.it/2015/pdf/3346fondazione_unipolis_rapporto_sulla_sicurezza_febbraio_2015.pdf.

14. Special Eurobarometer 432, *Europeans' attitudes towards security*, 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_432_en.pdf.

15. Demos & Pi, *Gli attentati di Parigi*, 20 November 2015, http://www.demos.it/2015/pdf/364620151120_at-tenatiparigi.pdf.

submitted to the previously identified partners. Whenever possible, individual telephone or face-to-face interviews with leading experts from throughout the country were organised. Then, more desk research activity was conducted to gather additional information. In this phase, international and national statistical data, reports by international organisations (such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance –ECRI, and the Fundamental Rights Agency - FRA) as well as research and information by national stakeholders (such as the media association “Carta di Roma”¹⁶ and the “MAI+” initiative¹⁷) were considered.

In addition, one of the authors of this report participated in several relevant conferences held in Palermo and focused on topics related to the research, such as hate speech and migration.

The interlocutors have shown a genuine willingness to engage in dialogue, while highlighting the existence of a scientific vacuum in investigating Islamophobia in Italy.

However, dialogue with the Italian Muslim community has proven difficult and a certain reluctance on the part of the Muslim community to denounce Islamophobic incidents has been noticed. In addition, the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that some Muslims underestimate the phenomenon, whereas others use silence as a defence mechanism.

Significant Islamophobic Incidents and Developments in the Country during the Period under Review

Safety concerns among the Muslim community were heightened in the wake of the Paris attacks in January and November 2015;¹⁸ during this time anti-Muslim sentiment made its way to the forefront of the political debate in Italy. Many politicians rode the wave of fear and hatred, bitterly attacking the Muslim community and refuting the existence of moderate Islam,¹⁹ while others criticised the community for not adequately dissociating itself from the terrorist attacks. Muslims have been publicly called to condemn the attacks, implying that they support terrorists. As a consequence, some Muslims have feared retaliation. “Bastardi Islamici” (Islamic bastards), the opening headline of the newspaper *Libero* on 14 November, drew crit-

16. “Carta di Roma” is an association set up in 2011 to implement the Code of Ethics for journalists on immigration (the so-called “Roma Charter”), signed by the National Council of the Journalists’ association (CNOG) and the National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI) in June, 2008. Despite the limited scope of the Charter (which covers only certain specific minority groups), this association has valuably monitored the Italian media’s attitude towards all vulnerable groups, including Muslims. See paragraph 4 d) of this report.

17. “MAI+” (*Monitoraggio Anti-Islamofobia*), which in Italian means “never again”, is civil-society initiative. See paragraph 6 of this report.

18. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Reaction to the Paris attacks in the EU: fundamental rights considerations*, 2015, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2015-paper-01-2015-post-paris-attacks-fundamental-rights-considerations-0_en.pdf.

19. Mauro Munafò, “Parigi sotto attacco, i politici sciacalli all’opera con i corpi ancora caldi”, *L’Espresso*, 14 November 2015, <http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2015/11/14/news/parigi-sotto-attacco-i-politici-sciacalli-all-opera-con-i-colpi-ancora-caldi-1.238917>.

icism from a broad range of the public, although being praised by some right-wing politicians.²⁰ An action was brought against Maurizio Belpietro,²¹ author of the article; other journalists, in particular, the President of “Carta di Roma” Association, demanded that he be expelled from the national journalists association. No decision has been taken so far in this regard.

Other than verbal attacks, intolerance towards the Muslim community has also been expressed through threats and violence. Several mosques have been the target of violent attacks, such as those in Padova,²² Rimini²³ and Battipaglia²⁴ (Salerno). In Giugliano, close to Napoli, a pig’s head was found impaled on the gate of the local mosque.²⁵

In 2015, apart from the direct consequences of the terrorist attacks, the debate in Italy has focused on the long-lasting request of the Muslim community to be given permission to build appropriate places of worship for the practice of Islam and its funeral rites. In fact, Muslims in some locations continue to encounter difficulties in acquiring permission from local authorities to construct mosques. While this is a question that has more visibly concerned the north of the country,²⁶ it does not appear to be particularly linked to the position of a particular political party. Permission to build mosques has been denied by bi-partisan mayors, the decision being left to the willingness of the local representatives.²⁷ The issue came to the fore in the Lombardy Region, where a regional law, aimed at regulating the building of places

20. “Fury over Italy paper’s ‘Islamic bastards’ splash”, *The Local*, 16 November 2015, <http://www.thelocal.it/20151116/italy-journalists-reports-paper-over-islamic-bastards-headline>; see also a letter written by Giorgia Meloni, “Perché difendo il titolo di Libero: dagli altri giornali l’Islam è sparito”, *Libero Quotidiano*, 17 November 2015, <http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/politica/11849496/Giorgia-Meloni--perche-difendo-il.html>.

21. “Attentati a Parigi, la prima di Libero: “Bastardi islamici”. Belpietro denunciato”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 14 November 2015, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/11/14/attentati-a-parigi-la-prima-di-libero-bastardi-islamici-belpietro-denunciato/2219542/>.

22. “Padova, bomba carta esplode davanti alla moschea all’Arcella”, *PadovaOggi*, 11 December 2015, <http://www.padovaoggi.it/cronaca/bomba-carta-moschea-padova-via-jacopo-da-montagnana-11-dicembre-2015.html>

23. “Rimini, fiamme in una macelleria islamica a causa di una molotov”, *La Repubblica*, 24 March 2015, http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/03/24/news/rimini_fiamme_in_una_macelleria_islamica_a_causa_di_una_molotov-110372126/

24. “Battipaglia: vandali fano esplodere petardo nella moschea”, *La città di Salerno*, 22 March 2015, http://la-cittadisalerno.gelocal.it/salerno/cronaca/2015/03/22/news/battipaglia-vandali-fanno-esplodere-petardo-nella-moschea-1.11094731?refresh_ce

25. “Giugliano, una testa di maiale infilzata sul cancello della moschea”, *La Repubblica*, 25 November 2015, http://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/11/25/news/una_testa_maiale_davanti_a_un_luogo_culto_musulmano_nel_napoletano-128117104/

26. As for Florence, “Moschea a Firenze. Cronistoria di un edificio che (non) esiste”, *Firenze fuori*, 20 November 2015, <http://www.firenzefuori.it/2015/11/20/moschea-a-firenze-cronistoria-di-un-edificio-che-non-esiste/>

As for Padova, “Bitonci: “Mai più moschee a Padova”. Blitz nei locali islamici, sequestrati manifesti”, *Il mattino di Padova*, 8 January 2015, <http://mattinopadova.gelocal.it/padova/cronaca/2015/01/08/news/bitonci-mai-piu-moschee-a-padova-blitz-nei-locali-islamici-sequestrati-manifesti-1.10629385>

As for Pisa, “Moschea a Porta a Lucca, Forza Italia vuole il referendum”, in *Il Tirreno*, 13 January 2015, <http://iltirreno.gelocal.it/pisa/cronaca/2015/01/13/news/moschea-a-porta-a-lucca-forza-italia-vuole-il-referendum-1.10659993>.

27. For instance, see the opposition against building a mosque in Pavia as pronounced by a left-wing mayor. “Pavia, il sindaco del Partito democratico Massimo Depaoli bocchia la moschea. Il vescovo era favorevole”, *Huffington Post*, 17 January 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/01/17/pavia-sindaco-pd-moschea_n_6491748.html.

of worship, was adopted and subsequently challenged by the Italian government for being in breach of the Italian constitution.²⁸

Throughout the summer of 2015, the link between immigration and Islam came under discussion when Giorgia Meloni, leader of the right-wing party Fratelli D'Italia and member of the Italian lower parliament, declared her opposition to immigration from Muslim countries, thus stigmatising the entire Muslim community. The response of UNAR, the anti-discrimination body that is under the authority of the Italian Government, was not long in coming. In a letter addressed to the above-mentioned MP,²⁹ UNAR pointed out that generalization and stereotypes hamper the smooth integration process and the full achievement of social cohesion. Due to the lack of independence of UNAR, the letter was seen as a form of governmental censorship; after this Marco De Giorgi, director of UNAR, did not have his mandate renewed.³⁰

Multiple discrimination suffered by Muslim women is a worrying phenomenon. Women wearing religious symbol, such as the hijab/headscarf, are still subjected to verbal abuse and harassment in public, while the use of veil itself is criticized as a form of gender inequality. However, a part of the Muslim community has declared its willingness not to report these incidents.³¹ While the use of veil is not banned in Italy,³² there is a revival in adopting regional and local decrees that ban the use of the burqa in public places.³³ Although the adoption of these decrees is not an Islamophobic measure per se, and may be justified for the sake of security and gender equality, the state “which enters into a legislative process of this kind takes the risk of contributing to the consolidation of the stereotypes which affect certain categories of the population and of encouraging the expression of intolerance, when it has a duty, on the contrary, to promote tolerance.”³⁴

28. For more details, see paragraph 3 of this report.

29. Alessandro D'Amato, “La lettera di censura di palazzo Chigi a Giorgia Meloni”, *Next quotidiano*, 2 September 2015, <http://www.nextquotidiano.it/la-lettera-di-censura-di-palazzo-chigi-a-giorgia-meloni/>.

30. “Meloni, “stop immigrati Islam”. Ufficio governo: “No stereotipi”. Lei: “Censura”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2 September 2015, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/09/02/meloni-stop-immigrati-islam-ufficio-governo-no-stereotipi-lei-censura/2002406/>.

31. Annalisa Dall'Oca, “Attentati Parigi, ragazze musulmane aggredite a Bologna: “Insulti, sputi e velo strappato. È come il post 11 settembre”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 19 November 2015, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/11/19/attentati-parigi-ragazze-musulmane-aggredite-a-bologna-insulti-sputi-e-velo-strappato-e-come-il-post-11-settembre/2234206/>.

32. No specific law in the Italian system prohibits Muslim women from wearing the veil in a public or private place. See the Consiglio di Stato's judgment issued on 23 June 2008, http://www.anolf.it/archivio/download/sentenza_%20cons._di_%20stato_4_07_08.pdf.

33. “Torna un déjà vu: gli amministratori riesumano le ordinanze anti-burqua”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, 2 December 2015, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/torna-un-deja-vu-gli-amministratori-riesumano-le-ordinanze-anti-burqua/>; “Niqab e burqa vietati negli ospedali, Orlando: «Pura propaganda»”, *Il Corriere della Sera*, 15 December 2015, http://brescia.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/15_dicembre_10/niqab-burqa-velo-integrale-ospedale-lombardia-vietato-simona-bordonali-brescia-4a9b3afa-9f22-11e5-a5b0-fde61a79d58b.shtml.

34. European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber, *S.A.S. v. France*, Judgement of 1 July 2014.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE ITALIAN LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

While freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Italian Constitution (Articles 3, 8 and 19), no ordinary law on this matter has ever been passed.³⁵ Although merely introducing a new law would not guarantee the effective protection of freedom of religion, its adoption would serve to better accommodate the expectations of minority religions by enhancing the existing legislative framework. With regard to religions other than Catholicism, the Constitution (Article 8) establishes that they can “organise themselves according to their own charters, provided that these are not in conflict with the Italian legal system” and that their “relations with the State shall be regulated by the law on the basis of agreements with their representative bodies.” So far, no agreement between the Italian state and the Muslim community has been signed. As can be noticed below, the lack of an ad hoc agreement at the national level³⁶ entails geographical inequalities by leaving the faithful at the mercy of local government administrators, who are often afraid of losing voters’ support.

In 2015, one of the most controversial legislative issues was the adoption by the Lombardy Region of a regional law (L.R. 2/2015 passed on 3 February, 2015) regulating the construction of new places of worship.³⁷ Although the law applies to any kind of place of worship, it makes the construction of mosques much harder within the territory of Lombardy.³⁸ The Italian government has lodged an appeal with the Constitutional Court against this law.³⁹ In particular, it is possible that the regional law breaches several constitutional rules, such as Articles 3, 8 and 19 of the Constitution on freedom of religion and freedom of worship, and could have over-stepped the state’s exclusive power to rule in state-religion matters (Article 117 c)). Currently, the procedure before the Constitutional Court is still pending; a hearing is expected to take place on 31 May 2016.

At the national level, two draft bills proposed by a coalition of right-wing political leaders are currently under discussion at the Italian lower Chamber Commis-

35. Several draft laws intended to regulate the principle of freedom of expression as laid out in the Italian constitution have been presented. See: Carlo Cardia – Giuseppe Della Torre, *Comunità Islamiche in Italia, identità e forme giuridiche*, Giappichelli Editore, 2015, 70.

36. The failure to sign an agreement with Muslims is commonly explained by a mix of political reasons and difficulties linked to the absence of a unified body representing Islamic communities.

37. A similar draft law was also presented by the Northern League to the Veneto Regional Council (progetto di legge No. 504, IX legislatura Veneto Regional Council).

38. The regional law imposes a number of restrictions to those professing a religion other than Catholicism who desire to enjoy their right to freedom of worship by making the administrative formalities more complicated and foreseeing close security control over the new places of worship. For more details, see “Legge “anti-moschee” – ASGI, APN e comunità religiose chiedono che il Governo ricorra alla Corte Costituzionale”, *ASGI*, 9 March 2015, <http://www.asgi.it/notizia/legge-anti-moschee-asgi-apn-e-comunita-religiose-chiedono-che-il-governo-ricorra-alla-corte-costituzionale/>

39. Application No. 47 of the President of the Council of Ministers, 9 April 2015.

sion on Constitutional affairs⁴⁰. While the Palmizio proposal (from the name of the MP who proposed it) aims to introduce a public register for imams, the Santanché proposal concerns both a public register for mosques and another one for imams.⁴¹ While these proposals risk being discriminatory for imposing a register only for Muslim ministers of religion, they may also entail positive effects if their aim is to support and not oversee the Italian Muslim community. In addition, the far-right party, Lega Nord, has proposed the adoption of a law according to which the state could grant the rights to build worship places or to refurbish them only for legally recognised religious associations.⁴²

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE FIELD OF:

Employment

As required by European Union Law, Italian legislation forbids any form of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief.⁴³ This has established a general framework for equal access to the labour market and equal treatment in employment and occupation.⁴⁴

During this research, it was difficult to find cases of employment discrimination that had occurred in 2015 due to the lack of complaints and reports to the Italian authorities.⁴⁵ However, inferences can be drawn from the existing surveys and the information received from the “MAI+” initiative.

When it comes to access to employment, 16% of the Italian respondents to the Eurobarometer on discrimination 2015⁴⁶ believe that an expression of a religious belief (for example wearing a visible religious symbol) is a disadvantage in a recruitment procedure

40. “Sicurezza, un registro delle moschee e degli imam: parte l’iter alla Camera della proposta di legge del centrodestra”, *Dire Agenzia di Stampa Nazionale*, 9 December 2015, <http://www.dire.it/09-12-2015/28386-sicurezza-un-registro-delle-moschee-e-degli-imam-parte-liter-alla-camera-della-proposta-di-legge-del-centrodestra/>; “Proposta Santanché su moschee e imam”, *Public Policy*, 9 December 2015, <http://www.publicpolicy.it/proposta-santanche-moschee-imam-54493.html>.

41. In the past, the COREIS association supported the idea of a register for imams. See: http://www.coreis.it/documenti_13/38.pdf. Also, UCOII expressed in favour of this kind of initiative. Daniela Sala, “L’Islam in Italia. Associazioni, leggi e rappresentanza, *Fai notizia. Radio radicale*, 27 March 2015, <http://www.fainotizia.it/contributo/27-03-2015/testo/islam-italia-associazioni-leggi-e-rappresentanza-moschee>.

42. Report Lunaria Watchdog, 2015, 18, <http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/DossierWatchdog.pdf>.

43. See article 19 of the Italian Constitution which establishes the right of freedom to religion: “Everyone has the right to profess freely their own religious faith in any form, individually or in association, to worship it in private or in public places, provided that the rites are not contrary to morality”; see also article 21 of the Italian Constitution which states that: “Everyone has the right to freely express their thoughts in speech, writing or any other means of communication”.

44. See articles 3 and 4 of the Italian Constitution, article 15 of the 1970 Workers’ Act, article 43 of the Legislative Decree No. 286/98, Legislative Decree No. 216/2003 that adopted the European Directive No. 216/2003.

45. See above, Introduction.

46. Special Eurobarometer 437, *Discrimination in the EU IN 2015*, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2077>

(10 points higher than in 2012⁴⁷). In particular, a name of Islamic origin in the curriculum vitae and/or a job candidate wearing the Islamic veil can be viewed unfavourably. In some cases, sensitive questions about the religious orientation of the candidate have been asked. Furthermore, uncomfortable reactions of employers when the candidate accidentally informs them about his/her religious affiliation have been noted.⁴⁸

With reference to equal treatment in employment, risks of direct and indirect discrimination linked to the traditional and religious practices of Muslim workers have been noticed. In the absence of a general law on the right to freedom of religion, which includes the workplace, and lacking an ad hoc agreement between the Muslim community and the Italian state at the national level,⁴⁹ the employer enjoys wider discretion to refuse to take into consideration specific needs, particularly when the employee is a member of a “religion without an agreement”.⁵⁰

Muslim communities and workers, supported by the Trade Unions (CGIL – CISL – UIL), have pulled together to improve the situation⁵¹ and have signed agreements with local enterprises with regard to Islamic holidays and festivals, prayer spaces, fasting during Ramadan and consuming halal food at canteens.⁵²

These agreements have enabled Muslim workers to observe Ramadan (thanks to the reduction on working time during this period), to attend Friday prayers, to pray at the correct prayer times and to have halal meal options in canteens. However, these agreements can work only within large enterprises in which the collective bargaining power of Muslim workers is very strong.

As a consequence, the protection of Muslim workers’ rights has proven to be very fragmented depending on the geographical area. In practice, the larger the enterprise, the higher the presence of Muslim employees and therefore the stronger the protection that is granted to their rights.⁵³

In August, 2015, an action plan against racism, xenophobia and intolerance was adopted by the Italian government. Among other actions, this plan foresees

47. Special Eurobarometer 393, *Discrimination in the EU in 2012*, 129, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf.

48. Cases reported to or gathered by the “MAI+” initiative in 2015.

49. Pursuant to article 8 of the Italian Constitution, the Italian state has concluded an agreement with the representative bodies of some religious groups (for instance, the Adventists, the Jewish Communities, the Lutheran Church), but not with the Muslim community. Since 1990, the most representative Muslim associations settled in Italy, such as UCOII (*Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia*), A.M.I (*Associazione Musulmani d'Italia*) and COREIS (*Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana*), have proposed draft agreements to the Government.

50. See Chiara Favilli, *Report on measures to combat discrimination, Country report, Italy*, European network of legal experts in the non-discrimination field, 2013.

51. Carlo Cardia – Giuseppe Della Torre, *Comunità Islamiche in Italia, identità e forme giuridiche*, Giappichelli Editore, 2015, 418, 492-505.

52. Carlo Cardia – Giuseppe Della Torre, *Comunità Islamiche in Italia, identità e forme giuridiche*, Giappichelli Editore, 2015, 417-418.

53. Carlo Cardia – Giuseppe Della Torre, *Comunità Islamiche in Italia, identità e forme giuridiche*, Giappichelli Editore, 2015, 418.

the adoption of measures aimed at promoting awareness and respect for religious holidays and traditions, as well as historical linguistic and cultural rights of people subject to discrimination in the field of employment. The action plan has to be implemented and its effectiveness to be assessed. Nevertheless, the impact of the plan risks being weak as there is no a law on religious freedom or agreement with the Muslim community.

Education

In Italy, all children have equal access to education, regardless of their citizenship or religion. From a general point of view, the Italian law meets international standards by prohibiting any form of discrimination at school.⁵⁴

According to these general principles, Muslim students have the same rights to education as Italians or anyone else in Italy. In November 2015, official data published by the Italian Minister of Education, University and Research on the presence of foreign students⁵⁵ in Italy show that approximately 300,000 students attending Italian schools come from countries where Islam is the predominant religion.⁵⁶

The majority of Muslim students attend public schools where Catholic religious instruction is a specific optional course called “Hour of religion”; this is provided by teachers selected by the Catholic Church, whose salaries are paid by the Italian state. Parents may decide to opt out of this. In this case, students may attend a non-religious alternative class or, in certain cases, may decide to leave school early with parental consent.⁵⁷

In practice, in some areas of the country, only a minority of families choose to opt out. However, where the Muslim population is higher, several foreign students (often a whole class) can choose not to attend the so-called hour of religion. In this case, the Muslim community has to cover the cost of Islamic instruction. Therefore, this educational system increases de facto discrimination based on religion within the Italian society and especially at school.

Equally, different diets may be cause of discrimination against Muslims at school. At the beginning of the year, parents are asked to fill in a form and provide information on possible allergies or specific needs of the child. On these grounds, school canteens may decide to provide halal food for students. In practice, the needs of Muslim students are not satisfied everywhere in Italy, since reasonable accommodation is made only in areas where the Muslim community is more numerous and visible.

54. See article 34 of the Italian Constitution, according to which “Schools shall be open to everyone”.

55. Statistical data on foreign students in Italy available at: http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2015/Notiziario_Alunni_Stranieri_1415.pdf.

56. “L'Islam in classe: che fare?”, *Tutto Scuola*, 15 November 2015, <http://www.tuttoscuola.com/cgi-local/disp.cgi?ID=37338>.

57. United States Department of State, *2014 Report on International Religious Freedom - Italy*, 14 October 2015, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5621058e4.html> [accessed 5 December 2015].

Recently, it has been noticed that while the representation of Islam in textbooks is often confused and not accurate,⁵⁸ the Italian curricula are not able to respond to the changing features of Italian society. This, together with other factors, may increase the already existing horizontal discrimination which manifests itself through peer-to-peer bullying behaviour.⁵⁹

In 2015, Islamophobia in the field of education has also manifested itself through the stigmatisation of girl students wearing the Islamic veil. In February, in the northeast of Italy, a school administrator decided to ban the hijab under the pretext of avoiding incidents motivated by religious reasons.⁶⁰ Immediately, both the Italian minister of education (MIUR) and the guarantor against discrimination of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region intervened. In particular, the latter delivered a negative opinion condemning the decision of the school administrator as it was in breach of the principle of religious freedom as laid out in the Italian Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights.⁶¹

Moreover, in the aftermath of the January 2015 Paris attacks, the Veneto Region Councillor for Education issued a circular calling on Muslim students and their families to condemn the terrorist attacks. Under the pretext that “All terrorists are Muslim”, she deemed necessary that Muslims settled in Italy took a stand against terrorists. This initiative was condemned by ENAR (The European Network against Racism) and CILD (The Italian Coalition for Rights and Civil Liberties), as it manifestly aimed at increasing feelings of Islamophobia among young students and their families.⁶² Instead of fostering social cohesion, this kind of initiative could boost bullying behaviour that targets Muslim students.

In 2015, two significant measures were adopted in the field of education. Among these, the above-mentioned action plan against racism, xenophobia and intolerance also stresses the need to revise the existing textbooks in order to identify and remove any racist or discriminatory elements and to foster the adoption of a multicultural approach. In addition, Act No. 107/15 on good schooling gives top priority to fighting discrimination and bullying.

58. Carlo Cardia – Giuseppe Della Torre, “*Comunità Islamiche in Italia, identità e forme giuridiche*”, Giappichelli Editore, 2015, 439 and 464.

59. See, for instance, ““Sei un terrorista”, piccolo straniero insultato e malmenato in classe”, *Il Gazzettino*, 14 January 2015, <http://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/belluno/belluno-insulti-scuola-amp-8203-terrorista/notizie/1120449.shtml>

60. Greta Schlaunich, “No al velo in classe. Il preside: «Può generare razzismo»”, *Il Corriere della Sera*, 16 February 2015, http://www.corriere.it/scuola/15_febbraio_16/friuli-divieto-velo-islamico-in-classe-634123ac-b5e5-11e4-bb5e-b90de9daadbe.shtml.

61. “Divieto del velo a scuola in FVG: revocata la circolare dopo intervento del MIUR e del garante contro le discriminazioni”, *ASGI (Associazione di Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione)*, 22 February 2015, <http://www.asgi.it/notizia/velo-islamico-scuola-fvg-revocata-la-circolare-dopo-lintervento-del-garante-contro-la-discriminazione/>.

62. “ENAR e CILD condannano la circolare alle scuole dell’assessore Donazzan”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, 17 February 2015, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/enar-cild-condannano-circolare-alle-scuole-dell-assessore-donazzan/>.

Politics

Several cases of Islamophobia in politics were registered in 2015. These are mainly linked to the climate of intolerance that has increased in the aftermath of the Paris attacks.⁶³

Hate speech in politics has been observed in the run up to the elections, but no major political consultations having taken place in Italy throughout 2015. For instance, in the phase of designation of the candidates to the Sicilian Regional Presidency, the leader of the national right-wing party Fratelli d'Italia, Giorgia Meloni, opposed the candidature of a Muslim intellectual to the Sicilian presidency.⁶⁴ Moreover, in February, 2015 representatives of the right-wing political party Forza Nuova organised a rally to demand the closure of a Muslim centre in Bondeno, where local elections took place in May/June. The trade unions and civil society associations immediately condemned the initiative.⁶⁵

In early 2015, the left-party local council member for culture and youth policies of Bonorva, a commune in the Province of Sassari, posted an Islamophobic message on Facebook wishing that Muslim people would be the victims of a Holocaust. She was forced to resign from office due to the turmoil that ensued after she had posted this message.⁶⁶ In Pontoglio, a community in the Province of Brescia, several road signs were displayed at the entrance of the town under the initiative of the local right-wing mayor. These stated that Pontoglio is “a town of Western culture and deep Christian tradition. Please stay away those who do not intend to respect the local culture or traditions.” Unknown people blacked out the writing on the road signs with a spray paint.⁶⁷

According to a recent survey, “Anti-Muslim sentiment is disproportionately a right-wing phenomenon in Europe. (...) Seven out of ten Italians who consider themselves to be on the right have unfavourable views of Muslims, as do nearly half (49%) of self-avowed Italians on the left.”⁶⁸ However, left-wing politicians are also opposed to the Muslim community.⁶⁹

63. See above, paragraph 2.

64. “Buttafuoco candidato in Sicilia con Salvini, Giorgia Meloni: “No, è islamico””, *Libero Quotidiano*, 27 July 2015, <http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/politica/11814644/Buttafuoco-candidato-in-Sicilia-con-Salvini.html>.

65. “Manifestazione anti-islam: Anpi, Cgil e Udi contro Forza Nuova”, *Estense.com*, 17 February 2015, <http://www.estense.com/?p=440146>.

66. “Giovanna Tedde, Assessore di Bonorva posta messaggio choc su Fb: “I musulmani dovevano subire l’Olocausto”. Si è dimessa”, *Huffington Post*, 9 January 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/01/09/assessore-musulmani-morire_n_6445646.html

67. “Pontoglio, cancellati i cartelli anti-Islam: via il riferimento alla “tradizione cristiana”, *La Repubblica*, 27 December 2015 http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/12/27/news/islam_pontoglio_cartelli-130242835/?refresh_ce#gallery-slider=129652510

68. Bruce Stokes, “Chapter 3. Anti-minority sentiment not rising”, in *Faith in European project reviving*, PEW Research Center, 2015, 21, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/02/chapter-3-anti-minority-sentiment-not-rising/>

69. See paragraph 2 of this report.

In Italy, politicians spreading hate messages can be prosecuted: a) in application of general legal provisions covering racially motivated slander, defamation or insults or b) in application of Act No. 654 of 13 October 1975 (known as the “Reale Act”), as amended by Act No. 205 of 25 June 1993 (known as “Mancino Act”) and Act No. 85 of 24 February 2006.⁷⁰

While having an appropriate criminal legislation is essential in this field, it needs to be enforced. Furthermore, the penalties have to be effective, proportionate and dissuasive. The majority of interlocutors interviewed for this research pointed out that the current legislation is inadequately implemented and claims that the sanctions applied pursuant to the current legislation are mild and insufficient. Unfortunately, data on the number of convictions issued in application of the above-mentioned legislation are not disaggregated by types of racist motivation or criminal offence. This, together with the complicated legislative framework makes it impossible to know how many people, including politicians, have been convicted for incitement to hatred towards Muslims in 2015.

Nonetheless, some specific judgments are worth mentioning. In 2015, a controversial judgment was pronounced by the Italian Court of Cassation,⁷¹ which acquitted a politician of the charge of incitement of hatred through dissemination of hateful materials against migrants and Muslims while campaigning for the European elections in 2013. Despite leaflets that stated: “No more money lenders – no more foreigners”, depicting a Muslim wearing a suicide belt, the Court of Cassation judges ruled that the defendant’s intention was not to stigmatise “all non-Italians, just those who commit crimes” in Italy.

Whenever a conviction was issued, cases of non-compliance have also been registered. For instance, a politician from the right-wing party Forza Italia was ordered to pay 30,000 Euros to a Muslim Association (UCOII) for associating it with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Afterwards, the politician announced her unwillingness to pay the fine.⁷²

70. The “Mancino Act” amended the “Reale Act” to criminalise, among others, incitement to hate on grounds of religion. According to it, those who “spread ideas based on racial superiority or racial or ethnic hatred, or to instigate to commit or commit acts of discrimination for racial, ethnic, national or religious reasons” shall be punished. The Mancino Law was modified by the Law No. 85/2006 that replaced the term “dissemination” by the term “promotion” (propaganda) and “instigate” by “incite”, thus limiting the punishable. Moreover, in 2016, the maximum penalty provided was reduced from three years’ to eighteen months’ imprisonment or a fine up to 6,000 Euros. The scope of this law risks being further narrowed by the possible adoption of a draft currently discussed in the Italian Parliament and aimed at enhancing the protection of freedom of expression, much to the detriment of the right to be free from discrimination. See Report Lunaria Watchdog, 2015, 16, <http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/DossierWatchdog.pdf>.

71. Cassation Court, Judgement No. 36906/2015.

72. “Santanchè condannata a risarcire gli islamici: “Pignoratemi lo stipendio, perché io non pagherò mai””, *Libero Quotidiano*, 23 April 2015, <http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/personaggi/11781909/Santanche-condannata-a-risarcire-gli-islamici.html>.

Media

During the period under review, Italian media outlets have regularly scrutinised the Muslim community in Italy. After the attacks in Paris in January and November, some journalists, editors and reporters have used an inflammatory and sometimes offensive discourse in an attempt to influence public opinion against the Muslim community as a whole. The Italian media have failed to report news in an ethical manner and have adopted a monolithic approach to the Muslim population, thus fostering hate speech⁷³ and spreading fear and hatred through generalization and anti-Muslim rhetoric.⁷⁴

Throughout 2015, some newspapers, such as *Il Giornale*, *Libero* and *Il Primato nazionale* have been critical of Muslims. In particular, *Il Giornale* has been one of the most damning, often associating terrorism with the practice of Islam and/or migration.⁷⁵ In the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack against French journalists in January, the newspaper *Il Giornale* issued the headline: “Macellai Islamici” (Islamic Butchers),⁷⁶ referring to these events in terms of a clash of civilizations and stating that Muslims living in Italy had “justified” the massacre.⁷⁷ Also, *Il Giornale* spoke of Islam as “a faith full of violence” and defined it as “the root of evil”.⁷⁸ Equally, after the events in Paris on 13 November, the magazine *Libero* cruelly attacked Muslims and was even sued over its front-page headline: “Bastardi Islamici” (Muslim Bastards).⁷⁹ Moreover, in November 2015, the magazine *Il Primato Nazionale* denied the existence of moderate Islam.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the anti-Islamophobia movement has also been a target for Italian newspapers. For instance, the newspaper *Il Foglio* criticized some left-wing Italian politicians and intellectuals for being on the side of Muslims, calling them “Professionals of Islamophobia”.⁸¹

73. See Recommendation No. (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States of the Council of Europe on “Hate speech”, according to which hate speech shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.

74. “Paris Attacks: What the Media Could Have Done Differently”, *Media Diversity Institute*, 25 November 2015, http://www.media-diversity.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3012:paris-attacks-what-should-the-media-have-done-differently&catid=35:media-news-a-content&Itemid=34.

75. Associazione La Carta di Roma, *Notizie di Confine*, Terzo Rapporto La Carta di Roma, 2015, 14 and 18.

76. Alessandro Sallusti, “Macellai Islamici”, *Il Giornale*, 8 January 2015, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/dichiarazione-guerra-alleuropa-e-libert-1080888.html>.

77. Associazione La Carta di Roma, *Notizie di Confine*, Terzo Rapporto La Carta di Roma, 2015, 14.

78. Magdi Cristiano Allam, “Islam contro islam. Ecco la prova che è una fede piena di violenza”, *Il Giornale*, 6 February 2015, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/islam-contro-islam-ecco-prova-che-fede-piena-violenza-1090364.html>.

79. See introduction. Maurizio Belpietro, “Bastardi islamici”, *Libero Quotidiano*, 14 November 2015, <http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/editoriali/11848405/Belpietro--Bastardi-islamici.html>; see also “Attentati a Parigi, la prima di *Libero*: “Bastardi islamici”. Belpietro denunciato”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 14 November 2015, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/11/14/attentati-a-parigi-la-prima-di-libero-bastardi-islamici-belpietro-denunciato/2219542/>.

80. Adriano Scianca, “La storia dell’Islam moderato è una gagata pazzesca”, *Il Primato Nazionale*, 25 November 2015, <http://www.ilprimatonazionale.it/politica/islam-moderato-34763/>.

81. Claudio Cerasa, “I professionisti dell’anti Islamofobia”, *Il Foglio*, 24 November 2015, http://www.ilfoglio.it/cultura/2015/11/24/parigi-terrorismo-professionisti-dell-anti-islamofobia___1-v-135316-rubriche_c883.htm.

Inaccuracy and misrepresentation have also been features of the way in which certain media have been reporting the news. Recently, a significant event occurred in a school in Rozzano, near Milan.⁸² The newspaper *Il Giorno*⁸³ was highly critical of an alleged initiative taken by the school's headmaster to cancel the Christmas concert as a form of respect towards Muslim students. A few days later, the school's headmaster was forced to resign amid a flurry of controversy from the media, politicians and parents. However, in a letter that was published later,⁸⁴ he stated that the news that had been reported around the world⁸⁵ was untrue. He had never cancelled the Christmas concert; he had only refused to allow the teaching of Christmas carols to the Catholic children during lunch breaks and had authorized a multicultural concert of secular songs for the following January.

Furthermore, it has been noticed that hostility towards Muslims has appeared on some news programmes. In particular, the TG4 Italian TV channel broadcast footage in the wake of the some terrorist attacks in which Italian Muslims were interviewed. This footage implied that behind the firm condemnation of these attacks by the Italian Muslim community there was an undercurrent of sympathy towards the terrorists.⁸⁶

The approach of the above-mentioned newspapers and TV channels has been severely criticised by the Carta di Roma Association, which has repeatedly called on journalists to respect the Code of Ethics on immigration.⁸⁷ After the Charlie Hebdo attack in January, 2015, the Carta di Roma association stepped up efforts to raise awareness among journalists by drawing attention to the need for accurate reporting and respect for the dignity of vulnerable groups.

The lack of pluralism in the Italian media⁸⁸ and the negative reporting of the Muslim community at large has not only heightened discrimination towards Muslims in Italy, but it has also affected integration and the essential dialogue between

82. "Rozzano, festa di Natale cancellata per rispetto dei bimbi musulmani? Falso!", *Associazione "La Carta di Roma"*, 30 November 2015, <http://www.cartadiroma.org/news/rozzano-festa-di-natale-cancellata-per-rispetto-dei-bimbi-musulmani-falso/>.

83. Massimiliano Mingoia, "Rozzano, il preside cancella la festa di Natale. E la scuola rimuove anche i crocifissi", *Il Giorno*, 27 November 2015, <http://www.ilgiorno.it/sud-milano/rozzano-polemica-scuola-crocifissi-festa-natale-1.1522604>.

84. http://www.icsgarofani.gov.it/attachments/article/173/circ_7_natale-signed.pdf.

85. For more details see: Alex Wellman, "Head teacher cancels Christmas concert over 'fears it would upset Muslim pupils'", *The Mirror*, 30 November 2015, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/head-teacher-cancels-christmas-concert-6927577>; "Christmas is cancelled: Italians outraged over school decision to ban festivities", *The Guardian*, 30 November 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/30/christmas-is-cancelled-italians-outraged-over-school-decision-to-ban-festivities>; Meg Wagner, "War on Christmas reaches Italy: Parents, Prime Minister furious after principal cancels holiday concert", *Daily News*, 4 December 2015, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/italian-parents-furious-school-cancels-christmas-concert-article-1.2455472>.

86. Associazione La Carta di Roma, *Notizie di Confine*, Terzo Rapporto La Carta di Roma, 2015, 48.

87. Statistics show that in 2015, 47% of Italian headlines concerning immigration were alarmist. See: Associazione La Carta di Roma, *Notizie di Confine*, Terzo Rapporto La Carta di Roma, 2015.

88. IDOS in partnership with CONFRONTI e UNAR, *Dossier Immigrazione 2015*, 249.

the Muslim community and the rest of society. In this regard, it is worth noting that 95% of TV programming concerning religion is occupied by the Catholic faith, leaving little room for other religions in the Italian Television schedule.⁸⁹ Equally, the Muslim community have highlighted the lack of media interest in positive activities involving Muslims.⁹⁰ In response to this situation, the UCOII (Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia) asked the Italian Public Television Broadcaster R.A.I (Radiotelevisione Italiana) to hire Muslim journalists,⁹¹ including those who wear the veil, in order to ensure diversity and multiculturalism. There has been a critical reaction to this proposal from right-wing politicians.⁹²

Cyber-Space

During the period under review, the Anti-Muslim sentiment spread through new media and technologies, such as social networking platforms and webpages, and found fertile ground for its development.

In 2015, the controversial case of the Italian version of the “Stormfront” website was still a topical issue. Although the Italian server of the website was blocked in 2012,⁹³ the website is still accessible by users resident in Italy who are able to bypass the existing restrictions, since the server is hosted in foreign countries. Several people are currently being prosecuted for publishing messages inciting violence and racial hatred.⁹⁴ Even if Jews and immigrants are the main target for this website, messages inciting to hatred towards Muslims are also frequently posted. The “Stormfront” case shows that effectiveness in combating racism on the internet is mainly dependent on the authorities’ ability to undertake a trans-national action involving countries where freedom of expression receives a quasi-absolute protection⁹⁵ (above all the United States).

89. Eleonora Bianchini, “La religione cattolica occupa il 95% dello spazio in tv. Anche grazie a Bergoglio”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 25 May 2015, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/05/25/la-religione-cattolica-occupa-il-95-dello-spazio-in-tv-anche-grazie-a-bergoglio/1698717/>.

90. For more details see “La voce dei musulmani e il mutismo dei media”, *Partecipazione & spiritualità musulmana*, 14 April 2015, <http://www.psm-italia.it/la-voce-dei-musulmani-e-il-mutismo-dei-media/>.

91. Andrea Indini, “Le mani degli islamici sulla Rai: “Assumere subito giornalisti musulmani”, *Il Giornale*, 14 March 2015, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/mani-degli-islamici-sulla-rai-assumere-subito-giornalisti-1105096.html>.

92. “Rai, Ucoii propone cronista con velo islamico. Insorge il centrodestra. Daniela Santanché: “Idea fuori dal mondo”, *Huffington Post*, 15 March 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/03/15/rai-cronista-velo-islamico-polemica_n_6872576.html.

93. “Oscurato il sito neonazista Stormfront, 4 arresti. Scovata una lista con i nomi di Fini e Riccardi”, *Il Sole 24 ore*, 16 November 2012, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2012-11-16/oscurato-sito-neonazista-stormfront-132505.shtml?uuiid=AbkVeT3G>.

94. For more information, see “Stormfront: rinviate a giudizio 25 persone”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, 20 July 2015, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/stormfront-rinviate-a-giudizio-25-persone/>.

95. Stephanos Stavros, “Combating religious hate speech: lessons learned from five years of country-monitoring by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)”, in *Religion and Human Rights*, 9, 2014, 145; ECRI, *4th Report on Italy*, 2012, 44, <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Italy/ITA-CbC-IV-2012-002-ENG.pdf>.

Apart from “Stormfront”, several other websites and blogs have been brought to the attention of the competent authorities. The “Senzacensura” blog was blocked for incitement to racism.⁹⁶ Other webpages, such as “Tutti i crimini degli immigrati”, “Informare per Resistere”, “Catena Umana”, “Vox News”, “Imola Oggi”, “Il primato nazionale” and “Losai” continue to spread false news and use inflammatory language when reporting about Muslim people.⁹⁷ This is even more dangerous if we think that the content of these pages often goes viral, being republished millions of times through the use of social networks. Even though it has been recognised that violence in the real world is often nourished by virtual misrepresentation and false information,⁹⁸ no effective action has been taken to stem the publication of the above-mentioned websites.⁹⁹

The most common social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, have also been host to Islamophobic messages.¹⁰⁰ In a recent study published in 2015, it was noted that around 100 Islamophobic groups have been detected on Facebook.¹⁰¹ UNAR, in co-operation with the Italian Internet industry, is currently undertaking an initiative aimed at detecting and removing hate posts targeting, among others, Muslim people (Osservatorio di monitoraggio del Web). Moreover, some social media moderators responsible for the Facebook version of some newspapers, such as “L’Unione Sarda”, “Il Tirreno”, “La Nuova Sardegna”¹⁰² and “La Stampa”, have taken a firm stance against the spread of racist hatred through social networks and have banned the racist comments of users on their Facebook pages.¹⁰³ The above-mentioned newspapers understand that not only journalists, but also site publishers, web moderators

96. In this regard, see: “Chiuso Senzacensura.eu il sito che istigava al razzismo”, *La Stampa*, 1 September 2015, <http://www.lastampa.it/2015/09/01/tecnologia/chiuso-senzacensuraeu-il-sito-che-istigava-al-razzismo-6mQ-QmJAExD2vFzlyDjxOJ/pagina.html>.

97. For instance, see: “Non tutti i musulmani sono terroristi, ma tutti i musulmani sono jihadisti”, *ImolaOggi*, 20 December 2015, <http://www.imolaoggi.it/2015/12/20/non-tutti-i-musulmani-sono-terroristi-ma-tutti-i-musulmani-sono-jihadisti/>.

98. Paola Andrisani, “Il perverso intreccio tra odio virtuale e odio “virale””, in *Terzo libro bianco sul razzismo*, Lunnaria, 2014, 115.

99. IDOS in partnership with CONFRONTI e UNAR, *Dossier Immigrazione 2015*, 252.

100. IDOS in partnership with CONFRONTI e UNAR, *Dossier Immigrazione 2015*, 251-252; for further information see Andrea Ballone and Michele Sasso, “La galassia della bufala sui social network. Il grande business di chi spaccia balle e odio”, *L’Espresso*, 31 March 2015, <http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2015/03/31/news/la-bufala-e-l-odio-corre-via-social-network-1.206543>.

101. “La mappa dell’intolleranza”, *Vox Diritti*, http://www.voxdiritti.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/mappa_razzismo.jpg.

102. In particular, Islamophobic posts followed the publication of the news concerning the arrest of Al Qaeda terrorists in Sardinia in April 2015. See Guido Piga, “Commenti sui social, la Sardegna si divide e il mondo ne parla”, *La Nuova Sardegna*, <http://lanuovasardegna.gelocal.it/regione/2015/04/25/news/commenti-sui-social-la-sardegna-si-divide-e-il-mondo-ne-parla-1.11306501>.

103. IDOS in partnership with CONFRONTI e UNAR, *Dossier Immigrazione 2015*, 251; see also: <http://www.cartadiroma.org/news/hate-speech-la-stampa-decide-di-cancellare-i-commenti-razzisti-e-bannare-gli-autori/>; <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/sempr-piu-social-sempr-meno-societa-limportanza-di-dire-basta/>.

and bloggers have a crucial role to play in countering hate speech on line.¹⁰⁴

Although Italy is rich in laws¹⁰⁵ and mechanisms¹⁰⁶ to protect against discrimination, there is no specific law devoted to combating on-line hate speech. The Reale-Mancino Act¹⁰⁷ could theoretically apply to the Internet but it might prove being inadequate, having been enacted before the spread of the Internet and social networks. In addition, Italy has not yet ratified¹⁰⁸ the Additional Protocol¹⁰⁹ to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems. The ratification of the Protocol (Draft Law No. 3084) has already been approved by the Italian senate and is currently being discussed by the Italian lower chamber.¹¹⁰ The adoption of this protocol might prove to be a major step forward to counter Islamophobic discourse on line.

CENTRAL FIGURES IN THE ISLAMOPHOBIA NETWORK

During the period under review, Italian politicians and institutions have taken negative and discriminatory attitudes against the Muslim community in Italy, fuelling anti-Muslim sentiment.

In particular, at the end of 2014, Matteo Salvini, the leader of the Northern League, announced the creation of a new manifesto called the People's League; the

104. In this regard, see: European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber, *Delfi AS v. Estonia*, Judgement of 16 June 2015 in which the court concluded that there was no breach of the freedom of expression principle (article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights) and reaffirmed the Estonian courts' decision to hold an Internet news portal liable for the offensive comments posted by its readers. In this case, the Court deemed that the extreme character of the comments in question had justified a restriction to the freedom of expression.

105. See above, paragraph 4 c).

106. Italy established the Observatory for Safety against Acts of Discrimination (OSCAD) in order to protect the victims of hate crimes. OSCAD, located in the Department of Public Security - Central Directorate of Criminal Police, receives reports of discriminatory acts and puts forward appropriate measures to prevent and fight discrimination (for more details: <http://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/22017/>). In 2015, OSCAD stated that they had received two complaints concerning Islamophobic incidents. In July 2015, an *ad hoc* commission, the creation of which was encouraged by the Speaker of the Italian lower chamber, adopted the Declaration of Rights on the Internet (http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/commissione_internet/dichiarazione_dei_diritti_internet_publicata.pdf).

107. See paragraph 3 of this report.

108. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe encouraged Italy to ratify the additional protocol as soon as possible. For more information, see: the 4th ECRI report on Italy published in 2012, 12, <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Italy/ITA-CbC-IV-2012-002-ENG.pdf>.

109. The Additional Protocol is an important juridical tool that requires the participation of states to criminalize the dissemination of racist and xenophobic material, as well as of racist and xenophobic-motivated threats and insults through computer systems.

110. Draft law No. 3084 of 29 April 2015, <http://www.camera.it/leg17/126?tab=1&leg=17&cidDocumento=3084&sede=&tipo>.

values-based platform of this league includes the banning of mosques in Italy¹¹¹ under the pretext that Muslims are “trying to impose a way of life incompatible with ours.”¹¹²

Also, Giorgia Meloni, the head of the right-wing party Fratelli d'Italia, called on supporters to block the arrival of Muslim migrants and was involved in a significant institutional clash.¹¹³

Furthermore, the regional government of Lombardia, led by a political alliance of right-wing parties, has promoted various campaigns that affect Muslims, banning the building of mosques and, lastly, the wearing of burqa-style Islamic dress in hospitals and public offices as from 1 January, 2016.¹¹⁴ Also, a similar initiative was announced in the Veneto region.¹¹⁵

Some far-right Italian movements, such as Casa Pound and Forza Nuova, spread anti-Muslim propaganda. For instance, after the Paris attacks in January, members of Forza Nuova expressed religious intolerance towards Islam, unfurling the banner “Islam out of Italy”¹¹⁶ in front of mosques and Islamic centres in the Veneto region. Again, in November 2015, other banners reading “War zone, occupied Islamic area” were put up in front of some mosques around Italy.¹¹⁷ In addition, Casa Pound’s political programme uses generalised anti-immigration rhetoric and defines migration as a “source of social, cultural and existential impoverishment” and as an “invasion” from which the Italians are suffering.¹¹⁸ Casa Pound and Forza Nuova have also been on the side of the Northern League in several initiatives and demonstrations against Islam and immigration from Muslim countries.¹¹⁹

In addition, the Northern League filed several motions with municipal and regional councils in order to restrict the rights of or to oppose the claims of the Ital-

111. Francesco Borgonovo, “Cinquantamila giorni”, *Il Corriere della Sera*, 4 November 2014, <http://cinquantamila.corriere.it/storyTellerArticolo.php?storyId=54587adc302ca>.

112. “Rightwing Northern League makes gains in Italian elections”, *The Guardian*, 29 July 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/01/northern-league-gains-italian-elections-matteo-salvini>.

113. See paragraph 2 of this report.

114. “In Lombardia dal 2016 è vietato entrare negli ospedali con burqa e niqab”, *La Stampa*, 10 December 2015, <http://www.lastampa.it/2015/12/10/italia/cronache/in-lombardia-da-oggi-vietato-entrare-in-ospedali-e-uffici-regionali-con-burqa-e-niqab-Y5hu3bSzM1rn3WX3T8BXC0/pagina.html>.

115. “Veneto, polemica su idea divieto burqa”, *Ansa*, 12 December 2015, http://www.ansa.it/veneto/notizie/2015/12/12/veneto-polemica-su-idea-divieto-burqa_efef724b-4c8e-4de8-adfc-8c7f6e1ca780.html.

116. “Charlie Hebdo, Forza Nuova: “Fuori Islam dall’Italia”. Salvini: “Ci sgozzeranno”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 10 January 2015, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/01/10/charlie-hebdo-forza-nuova-fuori-islam-dallitalia-salvini-ci-sgozzeranno/1329474/>.

117. “Islam, blitz di Forza Nuova contro l’Isis: “Questa è zona di guerra”, *Il Resto del Carlino*, 20 November 2015, <http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/pesaro/forza-nuova-islam-cartelli-isis-1.1502956>.

118. For further details, see the website: <http://www.casapounditalia.org/>.

119. Monica Rubino and Michela Scacchioli, “Lega-CasaPound in piazza, antirazzisti contro. Salvini: “Renzi servo sciocco”. Vaffa a Fornero”, *La Repubblica*, 28 February 2015, http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2015/02/28/news/lega_-108382515/.

ian Islamic community¹²⁰ on the pretext of ensuring the country's security. Despite these attempts, the above-mentioned motions were often blocked by other political coalitions inside the municipal or regional councils because they were considered in breach of the Italian Constitution.

OBSERVED GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN TO COUNTER ISLAMOPHOBIA

Throughout 2015, several initiatives were undertaken by national institutions, professional bodies, civil society and the Muslim community itself. However, the majority of them have not specifically focused on Islamophobia as such, but rather adopted a broader approach.

At the governmental level, an important initiative was undertaken by the UNAR Office; the office launched the *Spegni le discriminazioni, accendi i diritti* (Stop discriminations, turn on rights) campaign in February 2015. The purpose of this campaign was to raise awareness about the need to fight discrimination. To this end, UNAR set up a contact centre, the task of which is to receive complaints through a national helpline and a website for victims and witnesses of discrimination.¹²¹ Also, in March 2015, on the occasion of the week against racism, UNAR launched the campaign *Accendi la mente, spegna i pregiudizi*¹²² (Turn on your mind, turn off the prejudices), as a follow-up action to the previous initiative against discrimination. Other relevant initiatives which are targeted at countering, among other phenomena, Islamophobia, will be undertaken by UNAR in 2016.

Furthermore, in the field of media and cyber-space, the Carta di Roma association promoted the #NoHateSpeech initiative, thereby asking all publishers and journalists to ban hateful comments that target, among other, members of religious minorities.¹²³ The “No hate speech campaign” initiated by the Council of Europe has also focused on the need for countering on-line hate speech in all its forms.

As for specific initiatives that are aimed at countering Islamophobia, it is worth mentioning the MAI+ (never again) initiative, the goal of which is to monitor Islam-

120. See the Northern League's initiative which was aimed at taking a census of Islamic associations in the Lombardy region, <http://artventuno.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Mozione-Lega-Nord-Islam.pdf>; see also the proposal of the Northern League asking to organise a public consultation on the opportunity to build a mosque in Castelfranco, in the Emilia-Romagna Region. For further details, see “Castelfranco Emilia (MO), Lega Nord: “Moschea – Centro culturale religioso islamico: il sindaco consulti i cittadini”, 23 October 2015, <https://infosannio.wordpress.com/2015/10/23/castelfranco-emilia-mo-lega-nord-moschea-centro-culturale-religioso-islamico-il-sindaco-consulti-i-cittadini/>.

121. For further details, see the UNAR's website, <http://www.unar.it/unar/portal/?p=4700>.

122. For further details, see the UNAR's website, http://www.unar.it/unar/portal/?page_id=1976.

123. “#NoHateSpeech, appello contro tutti gli istigatori d'odio”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 7 September 2015, http://issuu.com/ufficiunazionaleantidiscriminazioni/docs/unar_-_rassegna_stamp_a_8_settembre_1

ophobic incidents in Italy, to collect data and to issue periodic reports on Islamophobia in the country. The ultimate aim of this promising initiative is to support victims, both Muslim and otherwise,¹²⁴ and to raise awareness among the general public, private and public institutions, political parties, trade unions and media outlets about discrimination on religious grounds, with the purpose of eradicating Islamophobia. In 2015, MAI+ started receiving official reports from victims; the official launch of the initiative will take place in 2016.

In 2015, the Italian Muslim community also joined the “Not in my name” global initiative organized by the British organisation ActiveChange. In the context of this initiative, many Muslims peacefully took to the streets in Italy in order to take a firm stance against terrorism, while breaking away from every form of violence or radicalisation.¹²⁵

Also, in February 2015, the Council for Italian Islam (Consulta Islamica),¹²⁶ a consultative body for the Ministry of the Interior, resumed meeting after some years of inactivity.¹²⁷

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLITICS AND NGOS

This report shows that throughout 2015 Islamophobia in Italy was linked to international terrorist attacks and migrant crisis. The increasing willingness of Italian Muslims to claim their rights, such as the right to build appropriate places of worship, has also exacerbated existing tensions.

Hate speech has been widely spread not only throughout the media and cyber-space, but also in politics. In this regard, the debate in Italy has mainly been concerned with the politically fraught and legally complex relationship between freedom of expression, freedom of religion and the protection of human dignity. Institutional and non-institutional stakeholders are therefore confronted with the need to strike the right balance between the necessity to combat hate speech and the importance of preserving freedom of expression.

In the absence of large-scale physical attacks, Islamophobia has manifested itself not only through major incidents, such as the institutional clash between UNAR

124. Islamophobia can affect not only Muslims, but also those who choose not to practice Islam but who are perceived as Muslims.

125. Francesco Vidé, “Not in my name: essere uniti per sconfiere la paura”, *News 24*, 10 January 2015, <http://www.vnews24.it/2015/01/10/not-in-my-name-uniti-contro-paura/>; Laura Mari, “Not in my name’, musulmani in piazza gridano forte: “Sconfiiamo il cancro del terrorismo”, *La Repubblica*, 21 November 2015, http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/11/21/news/manifestazione_musulmani_terrorismo_notinmyname-127809267/.

126. The Council for Italian Islam was set up in 2005 with the aim of promoting the institutional dialogue with the Italian Muslim community. The Council is composed of representatives of the Islamic community that has settled in Italy. It gives advice and expresses opinions on the matters referred to it by the Minister of Interior.

127. “Alfano convoca i leader islamici “Rinascere la consulta””, *La Repubblica*, 24 February 2015, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2015/02/24/alfano-convoca-i-leader-islamici-rinascere-la-consulta18.html>

and Giorgia Meloni, but above all through shameful minor gestures perpetrated by ordinary citizens, such as constant insults towards the members of the Muslim community. In particular, Muslim women have become the primary target for Islamophobic attacks; verbal abuse and harassment in public targeting women in the hijab are a regular occurrence.

Apart from the concrete measures recommended below, it is worth noting that eradicating Islamophobia is only possible with a joint effort from all the actors involved. Although it is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the legislative framework, the fostering of tolerance and mutual respect through education, with a special focus on younger generations, is crucial. Every single citizen must feel affected by Islamophobic incidents and will have to be able and willing to react, because Islamophobia, as every form of intolerance concerns not only Muslims, but every common citizen of a democratic society.

Equally, the Italian Muslim community should step up efforts and speak out against Islamophobic incidents. Reluctance to report will not strengthen the Muslim community. On the contrary, it will make the phenomenon even more invisible and difficult to eradicate.

On the basis of this report, the following set of key measures should be considered when discussing ways to counter the Islamophobic phenomenon in Italy:

Legislative Framework

- the relation between the Italian Muslim community and the Italian state should be regulated by an agreement (intesa) at national level;
- a law on freedom of religion should be adopted in order to set a clear legislative framework and to reduce geographical inequalities;
- a law on combating on-line racism should be adopted;
- the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime should be ratified as soon as possible;
- any future amendments to the Reale Act – Mancino Act should not further reduce the scope of the law;

Employment and Education

- under-reporting of Islamophobic incidents in the field of employment and education should be countered by further raising awareness among the general public and encouraging victims to report incidents;
- widespread research should be conducted to analyse carefully the subtle forms of systematic discrimination suffered by Muslim people in the field of employment;
- pluralism in schools should be ensured by overseeing a real secular education over and above the procedure that allows an exemption from the Catholic “hour of religion”;
- bullying behaviours should be prevented and countered, in particular when con-

cerning the wearing of the veil, by fully implementing the measures foreseen in the 2015 Action Plan against racism, xenophobia and intolerance;

Politics

- peer pressure should be put on politicians by their party colleagues to counter the spread hatred, for instance by overseeing disciplinary action (i.e. suspension of duties);
- public disavowal and counter speech by politicians should be encouraged;
- the pervading sense of impunity displayed by certain politicians should be combated by imposing effective sanctions;

Media and Cyber-space

- more pluralism in the media should be ensured in order to give a proper representation of Italian society. To this aim, more journalists, TV presenters and guests with different religious backgrounds should be more visible in the media, thus representing the different aspects of Italian society and breaking down stereotypes;
- further efforts should be devoted to raising awareness among journalists, web moderators and bloggers about Islamophobia;
- the Internet industry should be encouraged to adopt self-regulatory measures while national authorities should further engage in a dialogue with it;
- Counter speech in media and cyber-space should also be fostered.

CHRONOLOGY

8 January 2015,

- the newspaper Il Giornale carries the headline “Muslim Butchers”.

9 January 2015,

- a local councillor posts a message on Facebook wishing Muslim people be the victim of a Holocaust.

14 January 2015,

- Belluno, a student is insulted and beaten at school because of his Muslim origins.

16 February 2015,

- Friuli Venezia Giulia, a school administrator, bans the hijab under the pretext of avoiding incidents motivated by religious reasons.

22 March 2015,

- Battipaglia (Salerno), vandals explode firecrackers inside the mosque.

24 March 2015,

- Rimini, a Molotov bomb is thrown through the windows of an halal butcher.

2 September 2015,

- Rome, Giorgia Meloni, the leader of the right-wing party Fratelli D'Italia, declares her opposition to immigration from Muslim countries.

14 November 2015,

- the newspaper Libero publishes a front-page headline reading “Islamic Bastards”.

19 November 2015,

- Bologna, some girls are attacked because of their Islamic veil.

25 November 2015,

- Giugliano (Naples), a pig's head is found outside the mosque.

11 December 2015,

- Padua, a paper bomb explodes in front of the mosque.

Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism poses a growing threat to the democratic foundations of European constitutions and social peace as well as the coexistence of different cultures throughout Europe. Both civil society actors and states should acknowledge the seriousness of this issue and develop concrete policies to counter Islamophobia.

As the leading think tank in Turkey, SETA felt an urgent need to address this problem. In fact, there are still people denying the very existence of racism against Muslims. Many state and civil society institutions, from the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) to the countless civil society organisations throughout Europe, have done priceless work to prove and establish the opposite. Yet, institutions like the FRA publish only irregular reports on a restricted number of countries while most civil society organisations tackle racism in general and only few focus on Islamophobia in particular -this is the urgent gap our report wishes to fill.

The European Islamophobia Report (EIR) is an annual report, which is presented for the first time this year. It currently comprises 25 national reports regarding each state and the tendencies of Islamophobia in each respective country. The current report features the work of 37 extraordinary scholars. In the years to come we will attempt to cover even more countries. This report aims to enable policymakers as well as the public to discuss the issue of Islamophobia with the help of qualitative data. At the same time, several of its unique characteristic features make a difference to the current state of the debate on Islamophobia. Studies on Islamophobia have in the past predominantly concentrated on Western Europe. This is especially the case with reports focusing on Islamophobia. The EIR is the first to cover a wide range of Eastern European countries like Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia. This will enrich the debate on racism in general and Islamophobia in Europe in particular.

About SETA

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.



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