
EUROPEAN
ISLAMOPHOBIA
REPORT

2015

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

EUROPEAN
ISLAMOPHOBIA
REPORT

2015

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)



COPYRIGHT © 2016 by SETA

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, without permission in writing from the publishers.

ISBN : 978-605-4023-68-4

Layout : Erkan Söğüt

Printed in Turkey, İstanbul by Turkuvaz Haberleşme ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2016

SETA | FOUNDATION FOR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

Nenehatun Caddesi No: 66 GOP Çankaya 06700 Ankara TÜRKİYE

Phone:+90 312.551 21 00 | Fax :+90 312.551 21 90

www.setav.org | info@setav.org | @setavakfi

SETA | İstanbul

Defterdar Mh. Savaklar Cd. Ayvansaray Kavşağı No: 41-43

Eyüp İstanbul TÜRKİYE

Phone: +90 212 315 11 00 | Fax: +90 212 315 11 11

SETA | Washington D.C.

1025 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 1106

Washington, D.C., 20036 USA

Phone: 202-223-9885 | Fax: 202-223-6099

www.setadc.org | info@setadc.org | @setadc

SETA | Cairo

21 Fahmi Street Bab al Luq Abdeen Flat No 19 Cairo EGYPT

Phone: 00202 279 56866 | 00202 279 56985 | @setakahire

ABOUT EDITORS

Enes Bayraklı

Mr. Bayraklı earned his BA, MA and PhD from the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, and conducted research for his PhD thesis at the University of Nottingham in Britain between 2009 and 2010. He took office as a deputy director at Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center in London in 2011-2013. Mr. Bayraklı also served as the founding director of Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers in Constanta and Bucharest during the period of August-December 2012. Mr. Bayraklı has been a faculty member in the Department of Political Science at the Turkish-German University since 2013. His fields of research include the Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy, Cultural Diplomacy, Foreign Policy Analysis, German Politics and Foreign Policy. bayrakli@tau.edu.tr

Farid Hafez

Farid Hafez is a researcher at the Department of Sociology and Political Science at the University of Salzburg. He earned his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Vienna. Hafez has been teaching at a number of universities in the world. He has been a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University. Hafez is the editor of the German-English Islamophobia Studies Yearbook, (www.jahrbuch-islamophobie.de). He was awarded with the Bruno-Kreisky-Award for the political book of the Year 2009 for his German anthology "Islamophobia in Austria" (co-edited with Prof. John Bunzl). He has published more than 10 books and 20 articles. His last publications include 'From the Far Right to the Mainstream: Islamophobia, Party Politics and the Media' (Campus Verlag, 2012, together with Humayun Ansari), an introduction to the history of Islamic Political Thought and 'Shifting borders: Islamophobia as the cornerstone for building pan-European right-wing unity' (in: Patterns of Prejudice, vol. 48, no. 5, October 2014). farid.hafez@sbg.ac.at

For more information about the EIR:

www.islamophobiaeurope.com

islamophobia@setav.org

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
KOSOVO
NATIONAL REPORT 2015

ARBER FETIU

THE AUTHOR

Arber Fetiu is a PhD student at Université de Montreal, Canada. His project explores the images of the future after 9/11 in dystopian fiction and political discourse. More specifically, he is interested in the images of the future that predict, foresee and anticipate the 'takeover of Europe' by immigrants; how the portrayal of Europe's futures in dystopian literature and anticipatory political discourses creates or constructs the present; the inclusion of these images of the future in official texts; how the future is talked about in the service of governance and control of subjects and their bodies. His work examines the terrains of convergence between dystopian literature and non-fiction discourse on immigration in the West. He is concerned with the role and dilution of fiction and non-fiction narratives of the future(s) in the production of new knowledge and the making of new or enhancing of old forms of control, stigmatisation and othering. Fetiu has worked with International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) in Washington DC as well as for the International Center for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) where he was a research assistant for the production of a report on literature review for radicalisation, published in January 2016, "International comparative study on prevention of radicalisation". He has written on secularism, radicalisation, counter-radicalisation politics and related issues. arber.fetiu.1@ulaval.ca

Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the European Islamophobia Report are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions. No representation, either expressed or implied, is made of the accuracy of the material in the national reports. The editors of the European Islamophobia Report cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that have been made. The reader must make his or her own evaluation of the accuracy and appropriateness of the material.

To cite this report: Arber Fetiu (2016): *Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2015*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issue of Islamophobia in a Muslim majority country is theoretically a touchy one. Yet, when aggressions against Muslims occur there are practices, discourses and events that take place that go beyond the disputed terminology. Here I will try to tackle this problem and its expression in Kosovo first by problematizing the denial and affirmation of Islamophobia in Kosovo and then studying the attitude of neglect that is adopted towards aggression against Muslims. I will go on to explain the attitude of the media towards religion and Islam in particular, as well as describing certain cases in which expressions of hatred, fear, prejudice and distrust vis-à-vis Muslims have been manifested in the public discourse. From the many examples I have chosen only a few point out the nature of what falls into the rubric of Islamophobia as it is generally assumed and as the operational definition of the report describes it to be. Not many cases of precedent expressions of Islamophobia have occurred in 2015 (those that have were mostly focused on the veil and other religious markers), yet considering that the theme of radicalisation has become actual in public discourse, the manifestation of Islamophobic attitudes occurs in the form of a conflation between Muslimness and violence, the dilution of religious markers as markers of 'threat' and 'radicalism', excluding certain citizens because of their presupposed natural connection with violence, danger, etc. These expressions indicate a temptation to excommunicate certain members of society because of their religious subjectivity, one that remains highly illegible for the perpetrators of the Islamophobic discourse. I connect these discourses with past events to demonstrate their continuity and persistence.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN ALBANIAN

Çështja e Islamofobisë në vende me shumicë myslimane është teorikisht e ndjeshme. Por përtej pikëpyetjeve terminologjike agresioni kundër myslimaneve në praktika e diskurse publike është i dukshëm. Në këtë tekst, përpiqem të cek këtë problem dhe manifestimet e tij në Kosovë fillimisht duke problematizuar mohimin e fenomenit dhe më pas neglizhimin që i bëhet atij dhe për pasojë indiferencës ndaj agresioneve që u drejtohen myslimanëve. Duke u marrë me qasjet e mediave ndaj fesë dhe Islamit në veçanti, përmes disa rasteve të përzgjedhura nga një mori tjerash, mëtoj të dëshmoj manifestimet e urrejtjes, frikës dhe mosbesimit ndaj myslimanëve ashtu siç shfaqen në diskursin publik. Këto shprehje të cilat ky diskurs ua drejton myslimaneve, renditen në rubrikën e Islamofobisë ashtu siç kjo kuptohet në zhvillimet akademike bashkëkohore dhe ashtu siç është përkufizuar në këtë raport. Duke analizuar këto manifestime, do të shënojmë faktin e ekzistencës së fenomenit. Ndryshe nga vitet paraprake, viti 2015 karakterizohet me një ligjërim i cili ngatërron dhe njëson shënjesit fetarë me 'radikalizimin' duke trajtuar një kategori qytetarësh si

‘të rrezikshëm’, ‘jo-luajalë’, ‘kërcënues’ mbi baza të përkatësisë së tyre fetare dhe duke iu referuar portretit të tyre fizik apo manifestimit të besimit si manifestim i një lidhjeje inherente me dhunën. Këto shprehje përjashtojnë disa qytetarë nga pjesëmarrja e tyre në qytetarinë e përbashkët duke i lexuar ata dhe subjektivitetin e tyre në atë mënyrë që bëjnë të vështirë përfshirjen e tyre në shoqëri.

INTRODUCTION

The state of Islamophobia in Kosovo has been largely ignored by scholars (Blumi, Krasniqi 2014) and the media. Rarely has Islamophobia in Kosovo appeared in sections of international reports on human rights or in forms of discrimination. The term as such has been controversial and often disputed, resulting in a denial of the very notion of Islamophobia, or the possibility of the existence of Islamophobia in a nominally Muslim majority country like Kosovo. Research and academic works on Islamophobia in Muslim majority countries, however, have documented and theoretically analysed Islamophobia in majority Muslim societies (Gressier, 2003). In September 2015, Sibel Halimi, a professor of anthropology at the University of Prishtina, wrote an article denying the existence of Islamophobia in Kosovo. “There is no Islamophobia in Kosovo,” she wrote, elaborating that Islamophobia is an instrumental term in the hands of extremists, the unique function of which is to make extremism more acceptable. The only source she quotes is the controversial Australian journalist, Brendan O’Neil, who denies the phenomena of Islamophobic and anti-Muslim prejudice as such. While one can admit that there are misuses of ‘Islamophobia’ as a way to shun critique, it is undeniably problematic to reject the growing manifestation of anti-Muslim bigotry, hostility and aggression. Denying Islamophobia amounts to giving the green light to all anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic discourses, while denying their racist and discriminatory nature. Islamophobia denial becomes a tool with which to shun critics of anti-Muslim extremism.

The unwillingness to employ the term ‘Islamophobia’ is justified by some pundits in the media, who define it as “an invention to cover up problems” (Arbana Xharra, editor in chief of Zeri, Twitter 26.01.2016), or claiming that “Islamophobia in Kosovo is a myth” (Artan Haracija, Twitter 26.01.2016). Despite the denial and indisposition to use the term by some, the term has come to be more accepted throughout 2015 by others in the main daily newspapers and in public discourses. In an interview published by Zeri in April 2015, the leader of the opposition party Vetvendosje (self-determination), Albin Kurti, said “There are Islamophobes in Kosovo too”.¹ The reluctance is probably best reflected in the fact that local reports on human rights do not include sections or paragraphs about anti-Muslim attitudes or acts of aggression. In January 2014, Youth for Human Rights in Kosovo produced a rather poignant report documenting the hate speech in the comments section of diverse digital information web-spaces. Monitoring the comments section of nine Albanophone web-pages in Kosovo (between 2012-2013), it found that the targeted groups of hate speech were ethnic minority groups and the LGBT community; there was no single reference to anti-religious, or more particularly, anti-Muslim comments, which were obviously present in

1. Zeri, 18.04.2015

the comments section of the web-pages taken into account. Yet, a policy brief on relations between media and religion in Kosovo, prepared for Konard-Adenauer Stiftung by Jeta Abazi-Gashi and published in April 2015, assesses that in the digital news media, in pieces “reporting on religious topics, comments start from offense or insult towards a religion up to calls for killings.”² Similar comments, sometimes with genocidal overtones, addressed to Muslims and Islam are accessible even today in Kosovar news portals, even in some of those researched by YIHR in the time frame of their research and afterwards.

Despite the fact that Islamophobia is a disputed concept in countries with majority Muslim populations and beyond, it has been argued that the phenomenon of the anti-Muslim attitude, aggressions and prejudice might well exist in countries largely populated by people who identify themselves as Muslims. Kosovo is no exception. Hostile, fearful, hateful and stereotypical discourse against Muslims and Islam, or particular forms of public display of religiosity are present in Kosovo; these are manifested in various ways and mediums, and with different forms. These discourses can take the shape securitisation, essentialisation, prejudice and the discrimination of Muslims who adopt modes of life that are prescribed with identity markers. In such discourses, connotations between conservative ways of life and extremism are recurrent, as are the connotations of Islam with intolerance or terror, and articulations of the ordinary legitimate demands of citizens with ‘radical Islam’, or ‘political Islam’. Often, this rhetoric and action flows as a *mise à l’oeuvre* of the politics of secularism, affecting particular categories of the population and being addressed for the most part to issues concerning Muslims in Kosovo.

The discourse around Islam in Kosovo in 2015 followed the marks of the fever that had surrounded the spectacular arrest of 47 citizens in cities across Kosovo in August-September 2014; these individuals were accused of acting in violation of the constitution, and of having ties to terrorism (incitement) and hate speech. The arrests were quite controversially welcomed by diverse actors in the public debate, some being in favour, while others pointed to risks of a state of security and inconsistencies in the process. Some of the documents prepared by the prosecutor’s office, which were published in the following days by the local media, showed that some of the people accused of using dictums and statements such as “we will not remain with our hands crossed”, which was read as a threat, indicate that according to all the evidence these expressions had been placed out of context. In a climate where more than 200 foreign fighters in Syria came from Kosovo, the arrest of 47 citizens (in 2014) suspected of complicity in aiding and facilitating the journey and contacts with radical groups in Syria, led to a wave of Islamophobic discourse; this is by no means new in Kosovo and it influenced the public discourse. As the

2. Abazi-Gashi, Jeta, *Understanding relations between media and religion in Kosovo*, Policy Briefs Kosovo, Konard-Adenauer Stiftung, 04.2015

Freedom House Report for Kosovo 2015 recognizes, the event of the 2014 arrests “produced an Islamophobic discourse in the media as well as anti-Islamic political statements.”³ As for January 2015, the number of individuals arrested under suspicion of terrorist activity was 80; more than 60% of these have now been released, some being either placed under house arrest or freed in the following weeks and months “due to lack of evidence”.⁴ The spectacular arrest, the publication of the names of the suspects by local media and the lack of presumption of innocence has given place to an active rhetoric of hate and prejudice towards the suspects, often resulting in negative consequences for the families. In a TV chronicle, the son of one of the arrested suspects said that he has been called ‘a terrorist’ or ‘son of the terrorist’ in the street by people who know that he is the son of one of the suspects whose names were made public in the media.⁵

Several aggressions have been reported against Muslims or Muslim symbolism in the past years. On August 7, 2007, a mosque in Kosovo, in the town of Shkabaj, was damaged in an apparent arson attack.⁶ In 2012, anti-Muslim graffiti appeared in the city of Ferizaj; one referred to the prime minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, as “Hashim you Turk, Avni Rustemi has bullets for you too”, “Down with the new mosque” and “Prosecutor, war to Wahhabism”. While this report was being written, explosives were found in a mosque in Drenas on a Friday, the congregation day for Muslims. The actors and their motivations remain unknown.⁷

The yearly report of the OSCE-ODIHR on hate crime reporting consistently produces data concerning an ‘anti-Muslim bias’. In 2011, the report states that “The OSCE Mission in Kosovo reported 20 anti-Muslim incidents, including six cases of cemetery desecration, two arson incidents, one case of damage to a monument and one case of harassment or intimidation.” In 2012, the report states that “[t]he Kosovo Police and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo each reported 18 cases affecting Muslim heritage sites.” For 2013, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo reported “31 incidents of the desecration of Muslim sites,” while for the 2014 OSCE Mission in Kosovo reported that “the Kosovo Police recorded 40 cases affecting Muslim sites, including thefts and the desecration of cemeteries.”⁸ There are no details about the actors or motivations for these cases.

3. Freedom House, *Freedom in The World: Kosovo*, 2015 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/kosovo>

4. Kursani, Shpend, Report inquiring into the causes and consequences of Kosovo citizens’ involvement as foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, QKSS, Prishtina, Kosovo, pg.29

5. KTV, Rubikon, *Ballafaqimi me ekstremizmin e dhunshem ne Kosove*, 09.10.2015, between 1:30 to 6:30 minutes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpbGLPbHxMI>

6. Human Rights First, *Violence against Muslims: 2008 hate crime survey*,

7. “Parulla kundër Thaçit dhe Xhamisë në Ferizaj”, Gazeta Express, 09.10.2012 <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/arkiva/parulla-kund-235-r-tha-231-it-dhe-xhamis-235-n-235-ferizaj-93826/>

8. The data can be found on the OSCE web-site in the section on hate crime reporting, <http://hatecrime.osce.org/country/none?year=2014>

MEDIA, MUSLIMNESS AND ISLAM

According to the aforementioned policy brief, “Understanding relations between media and religion in Kosovo,” what is written in newspapers, their digital versions and other digital media broadcasts all show lack of responsibility when it comes to reporting religion.⁹ The recommendations of the brief suggest that there is a lack of accountability about reporting religion; a lack of balance and inclusiveness exists, and there is an allowance of offensive language to be used against religion and gender.

On July 6, 2015 the most widely read digital newspaper in Kosovo, *Gazeta Express*, published a headline ‘Sulmohen katolikët në Llapushnik – u digjet prona’ (Catholics under attack in Llapushnik – their property burned); this followed upon reports by KTV about a fire in the village of Llapushnik. The insinuation is that Muslims burned the property in question. The news was shared by thousands of readers in a short time, and replicated by other digital news portals, including the top rated *zeri.info*, *koha.net*, *botasot.com* and many others. The report by these news outlets stated that there someone had “set fire” to the house of a citizen belonging to the Catholic faith, and it was depicted as act of religious intolerance. The headline was followed by a flood of Islamophobic comments on social networks and in the comments under the news on the web-portals. On the same day, the Kosovo police released a statement that denied the allegations made in the media; they stated that the cause of the fire was a problem with electricity installations and that there had been no human involvement. They called upon the “information mechanisms” to show more prudence when reporting the news without evidence and not to report inaccurately.¹⁰ The headlines are still available today and no apology was issued by any of the websites or newspapers that had published them. Anticipatory thinking and a news-producing securitization discourse has been a wide currency in the Kosovar media. A similar mediated discourse occurred in the case of a statue of Mother Teresa in Mitrovica¹¹ in January 2014; this was followed by anticipatory accusations of Muslims. Only later was it discovered that the statue had been knocked down by the wind. Equally, a day after the Jewish cemetery had been vandalised in the capital Prishtina in December 2011 by unknown actors, Blerim Latifi, a professor of philosophy at the University of Prishtina, wrote in a headline editorial stating that the actors had been Islamic fundamentalists (Islamic fascism against the Canon of Lek Dukagjini).¹² Florian Qehaja from KCSS has drawn attention to another case of securitization by the media in 2015, referring to the arrest of terrorist suspects near Lake Badovc; according to the media they were arrested when they attempted to poison the lake; this created a

9. Abazi-Gashi, Jeta, *Understanding relations between media and religion in Kosovo*, Policy Briefs Kosovo, Konard-Ade-nauer Stiftung, 04.2015

10. Kosovo Police, News Release, 6th of July 2015, <http://www.kosovopolice.com/sq/informacione/incident-zjarri-ne-fshatin-llapushnik-komuna-e-drenasit>

11. <http://old.zeri.info/artikulli/25109/rrezohet-busti-i-nene-terezes-ne-mitrovic>

12. *Koha Ditore*, 3.12.2011

panic.¹³ Qehaja pointed out the risks of securitization and how this discourse has become prevalent. The media has constantly played a role in the securitization of Muslim subjects, using diverse cases as referent objects of securitization.

OPTICS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA: READINGS AND TRANSLATIONS OF RELIGIOUS MARKERS

On December 1, 2015, the expulsion of a young boy from middle school was reported in the media. The youth, Nderim Mushica, was prevented from attending school because of his beard. According to the school director, Nderim was expelled since, according to the school director, this had become a trend among the students and because students should not come to school with religious symbols such as beards or headscarves.¹⁴ This phenomena is not new in Kosovo. The conflation between beard and radicalisation and headscarf and radicalisation has been an exchange value for some time. Writing in praise of one of his colleagues, the chronicler Halil Matoshi praised her courage to affront “an obscure Oriental world, the world of bearded men that kill in the name of Islam”.¹⁵ In 2014, a leading Albanian intellectual, Adem Demaci, while on a TV show, called for a crusade against “the bearded ones”. Similarly, in 2013 the opposition leader and ex-prime minister Ramush Hajradinaj, while claiming that he is in favour of “autochthonous Islam”, said that he is against those “with nasty beards” and went on to say that such people want to change the culture and force Kosovars to be something else. Hajradinaj went on to refer to the Islam of post-war Kosovo as antagonistic and ‘dirty’ compared to pre-war Islam.¹⁶ The speech of political authorities in defining and deciding what is the best or the ‘true’ Islam is not only a breach of the secular principle, but also manifests the politics of ‘good Muslim versus bad Muslim’ in the discourse of political authorities and state functionaries. Hajradinaj continued in the same vein in 2015, when he talked about the “dirty” ones with beards, and went on to criticise those who “pray in Arabic”, and those Vns who cover their dead ones with the “Islamic flag”,¹⁷ calling meanwhile for an Islam that sends us to EU, and not one that brings “questionable” Arab values and endangers the national identity and the Western-oriented path.¹⁸ The beard as a religious marker in the Kosovo discourse

13. Qehaja, Florian, *Sekuritizimi, pasojë e (pa)menduar*, Sbunker, 17.08.2015 <http://sbunker.net/op-ed/33935/sekuritizimi-pasoje-e-pa-menduar/>

14. Koha Ditore, 01.12.2015

15. Matoshi, Halil, *Vehbi Kajtazi & Arbana Xharra*, 20.02.2015

16. RTK, Debat, 25.12.2013

17. The reference to ‘Islamic flag’ is made regarding a long time tradition that Albanian Muslims have in covering their dead ones with (usually) a green cloth before burial on which sometimes verses of the Qur’an are written.

18. RTK, Debat, 31.07.2015

about radicalism has become a synonym of danger or threat. In a certain way, the beard has become the equivalent of the ‘Jewish nose’, translated as the symbol of a national security threat, a menacing identity and is manifestly read as a feature that insinuates danger and calls for vigilance

Kosovo has no law that bans headscarves in public schools. In 2009,¹⁹ however, the then minister of education, Enver Hoxhaj, issued an “administrative order” making the banning of the headscarf in public schools possible. The administrative order delegates some powers to the municipalities, who may or may not allow girls with headscarves to attend school. Several protests followed to no avail. The issue was sent to the Constitutional Court to verify the constitutionality of the administrative order, but the court declined to take the case, citing procedural considerations.²⁰ Since the end of the war, several cases of young girls being banned from attending high schools and colleges due to the headscarf have been registered.²¹ In addition, there have been cases where a woman has been refused a job because of the headscarf or she has been dismissed after she decided to wear the headscarf. In 2015, a year rife with issues of radicalisation and terrorism, there has been at least one case of a student being expelled in the capital city of Pristina; this was solved by the municipal authorities of the city and the girl was able to return to school. The media recorded the case of a woman who lost her job as a policewoman after she decided to wear the headscarf. Cases of discrimination in the job market because of the headscarf have previously been circulated in the media, yet considering that there is no observational body of Islamophobia, and that human rights organisations in Kosovo do not take the phenomena into account, it is difficult to assess the real occurrence of such cases. For the first time an authority such as the Ombudsman publicly stated that the issue of the headscarf should be treated more seriously.²² The new Ombudsman of Kosovo, Hilmi Jashari, in one of his first public addresses stated that two things are of priority for him in his mandate - discrimination against members of the LGBT community and the issue of headscarves.²³ There were voices reacting the placing of discrimination against the LGBT com-

19. Administrative Order, MASHT (Minister of Education Science and Technology), Nr. 7/2009 as well as 06/2010.

20. Constitutional Court of Kosovo, Nr. ref.: RKt37/11

21. In 2013, a report by YIHR recalls five cases of complaint regarding the headscarf in the period between 2008 and 2012. Four of these cases on the issue of headscarf were individual cases, while one was a complaint referring to 38 girls. YIHR, *Raster e diskriminimit në Kosovë – a ekzistojnë?*, 2013.

22. As early as 2004, a special report by the Ombudsman in Kosovo reads; “*On the legality of actions of public authorities aimed at banning the wearing of religious symbols by pupils in public schools throughout Kosovo*” (2004); this made a distinction between public educational institutions and the pupils attending them, and considered that prohibiting pupils from manifesting their beliefs constitutes a violation of the European Convention of Human Rights, article 9. Later on, a report from the Ombudsman n 2013, addressed to the Kosovo Assembly, pointed out the discriminatory nature of the ban on headscarf, stating that “The diversity in treatment of these girls, forbidding their participation in lectures, depending from municipality and specific school, constitutes impermissible and unjustifiable discrimination in a lawful state.” http://www.ombudspersonkosovo.org/repository/docs/82549_Raporti_2012-_anglisht_-_final_784343.pdf

23. KTV, *Interaktiv*, 02.07.2015 and *Kallxo LIVE*, 09.07.2015

munity and the headscarf together. Some subjects from civil society reacted, saying that the two issues are not of the same order and that the cases of headscarf ban in the schools do not consist discrimination in the same way as discrimination against members of LGBT community.²⁴

Often the language towards young girls with headscarves is derogatory and denigrating. In 2013, after two girls were banned from attending school, the director of the Education Directorship in the municipality of Gjilan Bujar Nevzati addressed a letter to the directors of all schools in the municipality, rationalizing his decision saying that girls will not be allowed to attend school as long as they wear headscarves of non-traditional colours; they would be able to return to school with headscarves that are more in keeping with local tradition.²⁵ In the same year, in an article published in Tribuna, Baton Haxhiu, a public intellectual writing about the headscarf, stated, in a rather paranoid fashion that is reminiscent of the discourse of the Red Scare, said that the headscarf is the first sign that will lead to a “civil war and the takeover of the government” in Kosovo.²⁶

The securitization of headscarf occurs periodically in the discourse about Islam and Muslims. In 2014, following reports that approximately 230 Kosovo Albanians were fighting in Syria, the then minister of foreign affairs (former minister of education) wrote that he has been fighting radicalisation in Kosovo since the time when he was minister of education, by “issuing an administrative order to ban headscarves in public schools and (he had) voted against the inclusion of classes on religion in public education,” thus correlating the ban of headscarves in public schools with radicalisation and his fight against the same. The headscarf is thus presented as a sign of radicalisation and its ban, usually articulated in terms of secularism, is seen as a matter of fighting radicalisation. Some public functionaries and MPs have chronically referred to the headscarf as a threatening factor. In 2013, prognosticating a dystopian future, during a debate on public television about allowing the headscarf in public schools, Teuta Sahatqija, a Kosovar MP, stated that the headscarf was politicization that was intended to motivate an electorate that will in the future bring the Sharia into the country.²⁷

The headscarf is seen as a threat to national identity and culture, and its re-appearance in the Kosovo public sphere after independence from Serbia is seen

24. Reported by KTV, 02.07.2015, found as well in Koha.net, *Shoqëria civile do që Avokati të merret me LGBT, por jo me shamitë* <http://koha.net/?id=27&cl=64966>

25. Document from the director of education, Mr.Bujar Nevzati, addressed to the “*directors of schools where there are girls with headscarves*” as a “Decision”. The order asks to ban “*The religious uniform that has been worn until now (of Iranian sort, will not be allowed anymore)*”, yet it states that “*the girls can follow their education for the current year with other girls, and cover their head with modified veil (head covers in the type of veil with bright colours that are more traditional for Albanians and the Balkans.)*” The decision is dated: 13.04.2012.

26. Gazeta Tribuna, 20.08.2013

27. RTK, Jeta ne Kosove, Debat mbi edukaten fetare, 08.09.2011

as a threatening factor. Some newspaper articles show a paranoid mentality vis-à-vis the deprivatisation of religion after the war; they claim that the emergence of the headscarf is “financed by Serbia”, or that Muslim women keep headscarves because “they are paid” (Flaka Surroi),²⁸ yet there is no proof provided in any of these rather conspiratorial readings of the new post-communist reality. The generalizing statements about veiling as a ‘paid’ activity reduces all women who see veiling as part of the religion to being employees of ‘foreign forces’ and denies them any agency. The re-Islamization of society after the fall of Communism is seen as radicalisation and this inference is often present when talking about Islam in Kosovo after the war. Religious markers such as the headscarf or the beard, and the changing of attitudes for example vis-à-vis music, halal meat and halal fast-food etc. are regarded and treated as the rise of radical Islam. The conflation between political Islam, radical Islam, extremism and demands on freedom to practice religion articulated vis-à-vis the state (regarding the headscarves in public schools, religion in the public school curricula, etc.), has created binary and dichotomist visions. This amalgam or conflation is common in the Muslim ex-republics of the USSR and it is a currency in Kosovo as well. In an article in June 2015, in one of Kosovo’s largest newspapers, Koha Ditore, the author reiterates the amalgam between the religious markers (headscarf) and extremism, considering the headscarf as a marker bankrolled by Arab humanitarian NGOs that operated in Kosovo after the war; the author considers the reappearance of the headscarf as a sign of radical Islam and insinuates that the (unknown) NGOs have financially motivated women to wear the veil; however, no solid proof in support of such claims is given.²⁹ The issue of women being paid to wear headscarves is quite recurrent in the media and amongst the makers of public opinion.

The conflation between terrorism, beards and headscarves was similarly communicated in December 2014 by the then deputy speaker of the Kosovo parliament, Xhavit Haliti, in the “Balkan Magazine” program on TV Ora News. He said that organizations provide for poor people, and if one provides something to someone, the people will be willing to put on “veils, shorten their pants and grow beards.”³⁰ The figure of the bearded Muslim and the girls with the headscarf in this discourse is that of disloyal subjects who have betrayed their culture and identity for money, becoming players in the hands of diverse foreign organizations and of Serbia. In addition to painting a portrait of traitors and disloyal citizens, this dis-

28. Surroi’s words in a piece published by NPR in 2010 were “*What I saw during the past 10 years was a strong infiltration of Saudi money,*” says Flaka Surroi, owner of the independent Koha Media. “*They brought in the mosques, they brought in their dogma and ideology at the same time. They identified the poorest people in the communities, they offered them a steady salary every month just to take over the ideology and have them start wearing the veil.*” However, no proof of this was provided. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130801242#commentBlock>

29. Koha Ditore, 28.06.2015

30. Ora News, Balkan Magazine, Interview with Xhavit Haliti, 13.12.2014

course denies any agency to the men and women who have decided on their own religious markers, negating their subjectivity, while transforming their religious enterprise into an anti-national enterprise, financially motivated by foreign forces. When questioning the very loyalty of some Muslims, these politicians and media pundits question the rights of these people as citizens of the Republic of Kosovo. These people are portrayed as traitors or collaborators, as conspiracy figures who threaten the national cohesion, or as fifth-columnists; that is, they are the ‘others’, excluded from the common ‘we’.

Several headlines and journal texts insinuate that so-called radical Islamism – something into which the most ordinary demands articulated by the Muslim community in Kosovo are included - is financed or supported by Serbia. There have been headlines such as “Kërcënimet e radikalëve islamik, me porosinë e Serbisë” (The threats of radical Islamists, sponsored by Serbia).³¹ Haliti made similar insinuations in his interview in December, 2014. In 2014, Adem Demaci mentioned that radical Islam, and the so-called bearded ones, as well as those who demand the construction of mosques, or articulate other demands, are “financed by Serbia”. In a similar vein, the idea of a Serbian agenda comes up in a letter that Alma Lama, an MP of the Kosovo parliament, addressed to the then prime minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, in January 2015.³² Not only has nothing yet been proven about a Serbian connection with so-called radical Islam, but what is prevalent in this discourse is that the term ‘radical Islam’, against which the government has declared war, is abused to include simple citizens who grow beards or wear headscarves, as well as those who non-violently articulate legitimate demands towards the State about the construction of mosques, about allowing girls to keep their headscarves on in public schools, about introducing religion onto the curricula of the public schools. And there is a clear connection trying to be made with Serbia as the main financier. This conflation of religious markers and legitimate demands articulated by Muslim and non-Muslim actors³³ with expressions of threats of violence or radicalization stigmatises Kosovar citizens of the Muslim faith who are subjected to attacks on their persons, their families and their symbols of faith; furthermore they are subjected to policies of exclusion and discrimination which are directly linked to the discourse of Islamophobia in contemporary Kosovo.

31. Bota Sot, 05.06.2015 <http://botasot.info/lajme/413129/kercenimet-e-radikalëve-islamik-me-porosinë-e-serbisë/>

32. Zeri.info, reports in the digital version, 06.01.2015 <http://zeri.info/aktuale/14010/alma-lama-quot-kryqezon-quot-ministrin-thaci-rreth-ekstremizmit-islam-tani-te-doli-gjumi-ty/>

33. In an article that won the prize for investigative journalism in 2012, the editor-in-chief of Zeri, Arbana Xharra, in a similar vein said that those who “ask for more rights” for the Muslim community, are “radicals” or “fanatics”, thus it is considered that claiming greater rights (such as the right of girls to keep their headscarves on in public schools etc.) amounts to expressions of radicalism, despite the fact that these demands have also been supported by non-Muslim actors in society and that polls have shown that ordinary people support the right of girls to attend school with headscarves. “Çarjet në fëmijë alarminojnë kosovarët”, December 2012, Zeri.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As we have seen through the examples provided in the body of this short text, Islamophobia in Kosovo exists and its manifestations correspond to the manifestations elsewhere. Despite the temptation to deny the existence of Islamophobia and the fact that it is flourishing, Islamophobia is a phenomenon to which almost no society is immune. Claiming that Islamophobia in Kosovo does not exist is a claim to a highly improbable societal perfection. Considering this, it is recommended that NGOs and diverse groups which deal with human rights, hate speech and discrimination take into account the phenomenon and engage with it more seriously. There is an urgent need for the Press Council of Kosovo to address the issue of hate speech towards Muslims in the media and to push for the respect of the ethical principles of journalism with regards to reporting the issues of religion in general, and Islam in particular. Media should make more space for the narratives of religious Muslims in their own voices, through which the subjectivity and the very agency of the religious subjects of the public space can be heard and re-considered. This would help to construct more realistic approaches, which in turn would contribute to an improvement of the situation for certain citizens who have suffered partial and unjust treatment. NGOs which work on issues of discrimination should work on creating more space for those who have been excluded because of their religious beliefs. The fact that there is indifference from justice authorities, NGOs and the main public media regarding the issues of Islamophobia has created a feeling of distrust vis-à-vis the legal authorities, making it difficult for citizens who have been subjected to aggressions to address their complaints to the responsible authorities. Therefore, it is important that the responsible authorities of justice and civil society are more aware about the phenomenon and raise concerns about it in order to provide the necessary tools for citizens to address these issues and to help create a more inclusive society.

CHRONOLOGY

February 2008

- Kosovo declares independence

November 2009

- The student Arjeta Halimi wins her case in the district court of Gjilan, which obliged the municipality of Viti to allow her to attend school. The order was not carried out.

May 2010

- Massive protests against the ban on headscarves in Prishtina.

May 2010

- Administrative order 06/2010 is issued.

June 2010

- Protests against the ban on headscarves

September 2011

- Arjeta Halimi sends her case to the Constitutional Court of Kosovo. The court considers the case inadmissible because of the legal procedures have not yet been exhausted.

August-September 2014

- Spectacular arrests of more than 40 citizens of Kosovo, accused of acting in violation of the constitution, being affiliated with terrorism (incitement) and hate speech. Most of them have been liberated, or conditionally liberated in 2015.

January 2016

- Explosives found in a mosque in Drenas. Case still unsolved.

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.



ANKARA • ISTANBUL • WASHINGTON D.C. • CAIRO

