SETA

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 Milos Zeman claimed the influx of refugees into Europe was masterminded by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood as "an organised invasion" to "gradually control Europe". [3]

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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
MACEDONIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

As defined by the Constitution, Macedonia is a secular state. However, religion plays an important place in social and political life. In 2015, a year that was marked by a political crisis, discrimination on the ground of religion, including Islamophobia, was present in Macedonia, a country that is also divided along ethnic and political lines. However, Islamophobia is often not recognized as an issue as it is concealed by other more dominant actors of discrimination.

Nevertheless, the refugee crisis in 2015 demonstrated that Islamophobia in the Macedonian context is not linked exclusively to ethnic minorities, but also to xenophobia. In addition to the intersectionality, a scarcity of relevant information, including under-reporting, is another factor that adds to the complexity of the issue of reporting Islamophobia in Macedonia. This report is written upon an analysis of media reports, desktop research on the relevant media, reports and social networks, as well as interviews with prominent scholars, experts, activists and representatives of civil society.

The incidents and developments that are relevant to the existence of Islamophobia in Macedonia in 2015 can be linked to several events on the global level. Global events have had a great impact on the discourse and emanation of Islamophobia in Macedonia; these include the Charlie Hebdo attacks, the presence of and debate about foreign fighters, the refugee crisis (which has affected Macedonia, as part of the Balkan Route, in a very particular way, with large number of refugees passing through to countries in the EU) and the Paris attacks in November.

It is highly likely that Islamophobia is present in all segments of society, yet it is more difficult to discern in the area of employment, education or in the justice system. Monitoring Islamophobia in the area of politics, media and social networks brings more open Islamophobic statements to the surface, statements which need to be condemned. The recommendation about discursive events which contain Islamophobic elements includes recognition, deconstruction and discussion in public, as well as moderate and informed debate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN MACEDONIAN

Македонија во Уставот е дефинирана како секуларна држава. Сепак, религијата заземa важно место во општествениот и политички живот. Дискриминација на основа на религијата, вклучувајќи и Исламофобија постои во Македонија заедно со поделбата на Македонското општество по етнички и политички линии во годината што беше одбележана со политичка криза. Сепак, исламофобијата често не е препознаена кога се прекрива со други подоминантни форми на дискриминација.

Сепак, „бегалската криза" во 2015 покажа дека исламофобијата не е поврзана само со етничките малцинства, туку и со ксенофобијата. Освен интерсекцискиот карактер, во сложеноста на анализата на исламофобијата во Македонија влијае и недостигот на информации, како и недоволното пријавување. Во пишувањето на извештајот се користеа анализи на медиумско известување, истражување на достапните медиуми, извештаи и социјални мрежи, како и разговори со еминентни научници, експерти, активисти и претставници на граѓанските организации.

Случувањата што беа релевантни на присуството на исламофобија во Македонија во 2015 може да се поврзат и со неколку настани на глобално ниво. Глобални настани кои имаа важно влијание на дискурсот и еманацијата на исламофобија во Македонија беа нападите на Шарли Ебдо во Париз, присуството и дебатата за „странски борци", „бегалската криза" (која влијаеше на Македонија и на национално ниво со оглед на тоа дека како дел од Балканската рута голем дел од бегалците на патот кон земјите на ЕУ поминуваа низ Македонија) и нападите во Париз на 13 ноември.

Исламофобијата може да биде дел од сите сегменти на општеството, но потешко е да се забележи во областа на вработувањето, образованите и правото. Повеќе простор за мониторинг на исламофобијата постои во областа на политиката, медиумите и социјалните мрежи каде секое отворено исламофобно тврдење требада се осуди. Дискурзивните настани што содржат исламофобни елементи треба да се препознаат, деконструираат и дискутираат во јавна, умерена и информирана дебата.

INTRODUCTION[1]

Macedonia is a country which is divided on ethnic lines that correspond for the most part with the religious structure; this is highly relevant to the presence of Islamophobia in the country. 'The other' in Macedonian society is determined according to the dominant ethnic Macedonian, Orthodox Christian, white, hetero and is Albanian, Muslim, different skinned or homosexual. Ethno-nationalistic tendencies resonate with Islamophobia in a way that intensifies this reaction, or, sometimes, with the opposite effect, the ethnic component prevails over the religious one. However, other factors that influence Islamophobia should be considered in order to get better overview of Islamophobia in Macedonia.

When analysing Islamophobia, not only should the ethnic and religious structure be considered, but also the political situation in Macedonia and events at the global level. The refugee crisis in 2015 showed that Islamophobia is not exclusively linked to ethnic minorities, but also to xenophobia as well.

A survey on religion and religious hate speech in the Republic of Macedonia was conducted for the Macedonian Institute for the Media; this was carried out on 14 and 15 October, 2014 and demonstrated that members of the Muslim community are mostly self-identified as victims of hate speech. [2]Although most of the respondents in the survey stated that they "do not approve of the use of public statements involving disagreement with, hatred or aggression towards members of various religious groups," that in their opinion hate speech exists in the public space and to a great deal on television (76.1%), in personal contacts (61.5%), on various websites and social networks (53% and 51.7%), in graffiti (47.8%) and in newspapers and magazines (47.4%). 26.9% of the respondents mentioned hate speech in public places (schools, concerts, football matches, etc.) and 10% of respondents mentioned hate speech on the radio. (Rating Agency 2014)

Demographic Structure

In order to understand Islamophobia in Macedonia, the demographic structure and political situation should be considered. Discrimination on the ground of religion, more concretely, discrimination towards Muslims, in the Macedonian

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1. This report is written upon an analysis of media reports, desktop research of the relevant media, reports and social networks, as well as interviews with prominent scholars, experts, activists and representatives of civil society organisations that deal with discrimination and human rights issues. For this purpose, the author would like to thank to Voislav Stojanovski from the Macedonian Helsinki Committee of Human Rights, Biljana Kotevska from the European Policy Institute, Mirjana Najčevska from the Institute for Sociological, Political and Legal Research at the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Nazif Avdi from the Young Macedonian Lawyers Association, Skopje, Ramadan Ramadani from NISMA – Institute for Free Thinking, Skopje and Žaneta Poposka from the OSCE office in Skopje, Macedonia.

2. Rating Agency. October 2014."http://bezomrazno.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ Report-of-the-survey-on-religion-and-religious-hate-speech-in-the-republic-of-Macedonia.pdf." bezomrazno.mk. (accessed December 20, 2015).

context is intersectional with other drivers of discrimination, such as ethnicity, citizenship, political opinion, language or class. Nevertheless, Islamophobia in this report is defined as broader than discrimination towards Muslims, thus including any representation of fear or prejudice towards Muslims, regardless of whether they are only perceived as such.

In addition to intersectionality, the scarcity of relevant information, including under-reporting, is another factor that adds to the complexity of the issue of reporting Islamophobia in Macedonia. While under-reporting is a more universal issue, the lack of information in the Macedonian context is related to the serious dysfunction of state institutions; this is a matter that needs to be taken into consideration. Most relevant numbers about the demographic structure in Macedonia are outdated since they relate to the 2002 census. Normally, the census is undertaken every decade, but the census that should have taken place in 2011 was cancelled before being completed due to controversial circumstances. Although never formally clarified, there was a collective resignation of the members of the State Census Commission following a disagreement between government partners.

Data from the 2002 census reveal that 64.7% of the population is Orthodox Christian, while 33.3% identify themselves as Muslim. The total population in the 2002 census was 2,022,547, while the State Statistical Office estimates that the total population in the Republic of Macedonia in 2015 was actually 2,069,172. [3]Other religions include Catholics and Protestants. The ethnic structure is important for understanding Islamophobia in Macedonia. Again, the only relevant data is from the 2002 census, in which 64% of the country identified themselves as Macedonians, 25% as Albanians, 3.8% as Turks, 2.6% as Roma, 1.8% as Serbian, 0.8% as Bosniaks, and 0.1 Muslims[4].[5] The intersectional character of discrimination is determined by the factor that religious division correlates with ethnic division. Most of the ethnic Macedonians are Orthodox Christians, while most of the Albanians are Muslims; Islam is also the religion for the majority of Turks, Roma, Bosnians and Macedonian Muslims.

The relationship between the ethnic majority, Macedonians, and the largest minority group, Albanians, is marked by ethnic intolerance, conflict and political tensions; these will be examined below.

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3. State Statistical Office. Македонија во бројки (Macedonia in Numbers). Skopje: State Statistical Office, 2015.

4. Muslims or Macedonian Muslims (Македонци Муслимани, Македонци со исламска вероисповед) are a separate Macedonian speaking ethnic group, sometimes referred to as Torbeshi, Pomaci or Gorani (although these names are considered either pejorative, for example, Torbeshi, or incorrect). In the Macedonian public discourse this group is often referred to as loyal and the keepers of the Macedonian language, therefore such an argument could be used by the dominant political elite that the Islam is not per se problematic (whitewashing). cf. Stojanovski, Strasko. "Етно-лингвистичката и религиска основа на идентитетот кај Македонците муслимани: видени преку теориите за етничките групи и нивните граници на Фредрик Барт." Philological studies, 2009.

5. State Statistical Office . *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia*. Skopje: State Statistical Office , 2015.

Political Background

There is a correlation between religious affiliation, ethnicity and ethnic division; for the most part this coincides with the line that divides the population on religious belief. However, this correlation becomes more complicated once political affiliation is added.

The government of the Republic of Macedonia is run by a coalition government: VMRO – DPMNE rightist, Conservative, Demo-Christian ethnic Macedonian Party, and the DUI party, which represents the ethnic Albanians. Ever since the independence of Macedonia in 1991, parties representing ethnic Macedonians and the Albanian minority have been included in the government. VMRO-DMPNE has ruled over the nationalistic/nation building platform since the elections in 2006, and has won several premature elections since then.

In this context, it is important to note the armed ethnic conflict of 2001 and the Ohrid Framework Agreement which ended the conflict. One agreement derived from the Ohrid Agreement was just representation of minorities in public administration bodies; this will be further discussed in the section that focuses on employment.

However, the event that marked 2015 in Macedonia from a political perspective was the political crisis connected with the eavesdropping tapes that the main opposition party, SDSM, published regularly from 9 February until 16 May. The recordings revealed corruption, election fraud and malfunctioning of the state apparatus, thus making the division among political lines more relevant. The recordings also resulted in massive protests and counter-protests. Along these lines, some research from 2013 has already claimed that the party/political divide is increasing along with the ethnic discrimination. [6]

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The incidents and developments that are relevant to the existence of Islamophobia in Macedonia in 2015 can be linked to several events on a global and a national level. Global events had a great impact on the discourse and the emanation of Islamophobia in Macedonia. These events include the Charlie Hebdo attack, the presence of and debate on foreign fighters, the refugee crisis (which affected Macedonia in particular, on a national level, as it is part of the Balkan Route, along which a large majority of the refugees have passed on their way to EU countries) and the November Paris attacks.

The terrorist attacks in Paris stirred Islamophobia in Macedonia mostly on social networks, but also in the media. Moreover, the Islamophobic sentiment was further expressed, mostly to the refugees who were passing through Macedonia, and the issue of the foreign fighters was raised, although no significant incident that could directly be linked to Islamophobia has been recorded.

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6. Михаиловска, Јасмина, and Миша Поповиќ. Барометар за еднакви можности (*Equal opportunities barrometer*). Public Opinion Poll Report, Skopje: Македонски центар за меѓународна соработка, 2013.

The Criminal Code was amended in 2014 to criminalize participation in foreign armies. The legislative change corresponded to repeated news about the participation of Macedonian citizens in the armed conflict in Syria. Previously, criminalization had been limited to international terrorism. The new criminal offense proscribed at least 4-years imprisonment for Macedonian citizen who participate in a foreign army or paramilitary organization, while the punishment for recruitment, transportation or training soldiers for a foreign army or paramilitary organization is imprisonment of 5 years at least. [7]The representative of the Islamic Religious Community has welcomed the law, but in the media, the law was mentioned only in connection with radical Islam. [8] In Macedonia there was no information for "foreign fighters" in other regions than Syria and Iraq (where it was estimated that there were 130 persons, according to the information referring to the Ministry of Internal Affairs[9]), unlike some other countries in the region; there were "foreign fighters" who joined the army and paramilitary formations in Ukraine. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the different public discourse.

It is estimated that returning foreign fighters might be a real security threat, but it is possible that this has been exaggerated by the sensationalistic media. [10]There was a large antiterrorist action in August when 9 persons were arrested on the grounds of the foreign-fighters provisions.[11][12]

The refugee crisis is a significant development in how members of Macedonian society have come face to face with people whom the general public assume are Muslims, but who are also identified as foreigners. This phenomenon separated the ethnic component from religion in regards to the perception of Muslims in Macedonia. Refugees taking the Balkan route pass through Macedonia and the legislative framework and the treatments of the authorities have changed over time. At the present time, Macedonia is considered to be the most dangerous part of the Balkan Route. [13]As it is a criminal act to assist refugees who have not claimed asylum, refugees are in a very vulnerable situation when passing through Macedonia on their way to Western European countries. On 18 June, the parliament amended the Law

7. Criminal Code of Republic of Macedonia. Закон за изменување на Кривичниот законик. no. 132. Skopje: Sluzben vesnik na Republika Makedonija, September 5, 2004.

8. *Telegraf.mk*. September 9, 2014. http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/191190-ivz-go-poddrzuvame-zakonot-protiv-borci-na-stranski-frontovi (accessed December 20, 2015).

9. Blazevska, Katerina. *Deutche Welle na Makedonski*. August 6, 2015. http://dw.com/p/1GB9n (accessed December 22, 2015).

10. Stojkovski, Filip. *No Widespread Support for Religious Extremists in Macedonia and the Balkanks.* Commentary, Zagreb: Analytica Thinking Labaratory, 2015.

11. *vecer.mk*. August 7, 2015. http://vecer.mk/makedonija/dzhihadistot-doktor-stefan-lechel-mudzhahedini-vo-sirija (accessed December 22, 2015).

12. Šegavić, Igor. *Dnevnik*. August 8, 2015. http://www.dnevnik.mk/default.asp?ItemID=F34DFAF3CD6E-6A49BB0EA0B1BE9FB9B9 (accessed December 22, 2015).

13. *Deutche Welle* на Македонски. 08 19, 2015. http://dw.com/p/1GHpH (accessed 12 10, 2015).

on Asylum and Temporary Protection, giving an opportunity to refugees to express their intention to ask for asylum. This gives asylum seekers a period of 72 hours during which they can submit an application for asylum, meaning that in these 72 hours the refugees are not in an illegal situation. On 19 August a crisis situation was announced by the Macedonia government, meaning that because of the influx of refugees, the army could be used.

Ever since the beginning of the crisis, many citizens have been engaged in helping the refugees, as civil society organizations, independent activists or non-formal initiatives. However, refugees were also attacked and mistreated, mostly by private persons who took advantage of a vulnerable situation. The media helped to drum up fear by addressing the issue of the refugees passing through Macedonia as a security issue and failing to consider the human-rights aspect when dealing with the complex issue.

The political situation in Macedonia in 2015 was marked by several events which had a direct or indirect influence on Islamophobia. One of the most significant cases was the political crisis that started with the publication of eavesdropping records of high state officials, carried out by the largest opposition party, SDSM. The records contained material that was not meant to become public and revealed a great deal of sensitive information regarding corruption, election fraud and other criminal activities. The political crisis reached its peak in May with the police action in Kumanovo on 9 May and the protests of the opposition and the governing parties on 17 and 18 May. The political crisis has not yet ended, although there has been an agreement among the main political parties. The police action in Kumanovo was marked by serious casualties and public unrest during the two days that the action lasted in May. 8 police officers were killed and 37 wounded when the police attacked a house in which a terrorist group was located.

If we were to choose one event that marks Islamophobia, it would be the protests and the burning down of the masjid in Kriva Palanka. Since the events were initiated after the statement of the mayor of Kriva Palanka, the event will be analysed further in the section on politics.

Another incident was in Bitola, which had a great potential for increasing Islamophobia, as well as reaffirming and strengthening prejudices. Namely, a church decided to put speakers in front of the church broadcasting the prayers from inside; the citizens living nearby complained due to the noise, and because this was not part of Macedonian Orthodox tradition. The Mitropolit Petar justified the act by referring to the call for prayer from the mosques, saying that as long as the Muslim priest is being heard, the liturgy will be as well. [14]

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14. Libertas.mk. 30. 11. 2015 http://www.libertas.mk/bitolchani-se-zhalat-na-buchava-vladikat/. (Acessed 12. 12 2015.)

Employment

It is difficult to speak about discrimination in the labour market based on the assumed Muslim identity of an individual person mainly because of intersectionality with other factors and also due to the fact that there is under-reporting. The research of OSCE from 2013 about discrimination in job advertisements does not even use religion as a ground; this can be explained by the simple fact that it is easy to hide discrimination on religious grounds in written advertisements. [15]

However, according to the obligations of the Ohrid Framework agreement, the Public Ombudsman of the Republic of Macedonia monitors the equal representation of different ethnic minorities in public bodies. In the report of the Public Ombudsman for 2014 it is noted that quantitative data show that there has been a rise both in the absolute number employed in public bodies and institutions, as well as in the percentage of the Albanian minority. However, there is no progress for the number of Albanians employed in managerial position, and the representation of other ethnic minorities in public institutions is still neither equal nor adequate. [16]

Another issue that could be associated with employment is bank holidays. There is different treatment for different religions in the matter of bank holidays, which are regulated by the Law on Bank Holidays.[17] The law defines state holidays and holidays of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as other non-working days, which are specific for different religions or ethnic minorities. There are 5 non-working days for believers in the Orthodox religion in addition to the state holidays and holidays of Republic of Macedonia, and one non-working day for Muslims. None of the state holidays are related to Islam, while there are two related to Orthodox saints, St. Cyril and Methodius and St. Clement of Ohrid. Holidays of the Republic of Macedonia include New Year, Christmas, Easter, May 1 and Ramadan Bayram.

Although it is possible to say that this different treatment is equally discriminatory to all other religions, it must be remembered that Islam is the religion of at least one-third of the population.

Education

In the correspondence made for this report, the Ombudsman mentioned that they had received no complaints on the grounds of religion about education. The issue that was relevant for 2015 is the recognition of religious high schools, or to be more precise, their inclusion in the national educational system. The solution was to allow all religious high schools graduates to enrol in state universities. The head of the

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15. Ананиев, Јован. Дискриминација во огласите за вработување. research report, Skopje: Комисија за заштита од дискриминацијата/OSCE, 2013.

16. Народен Правобранител. Извештај за следењето на примената на начелото на соодветна и правична застапеност за *2014* година. Скопје: Народен Правобранител, 2015.

17. Law on Bank Holidays (Закон за државните празници на Република Македонија), Official Journal of Macedonia No. 54/97 and 21/2007).

Islamic Religious Community welcomed the move and stated that it would make it possible to keep radical Islam out of the schools. [18]

In the 6th grade of primary school, students may choose one optional subject: Ethics in Religion, Introduction to Religions or Classical Culture in European Civilization. In the textbook for Ethics in Religion in the Macedonian language the Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelistic Christian, Jewish and Islamic religions are covered. However, the largest part of the textbook refers to Orthodox Christianity. On the other hand, Islam forms the main part of the textbook written in Albanian. The Islamic Religious Community advocated to have an influence over the selection of teachers, allegedly to prevent engagement of teachers connected with radical Islamic structures. [19]

Politics

There were no elections in 2015, and this largely influenced the public discourse as far as Islamophobic hate speech in political discourse is concerned. Nevertheless, 2015 was not lacking with significant events or relevant rhetoric.

The event that was most visible for its Islamophobic nature was the protest that followed the improvised masjids used by Muslims being vandalised; primarily Roma in Kriva Palanka, which occurred on 6 November, 2015. The mayor of Kriva Palanka told the media that: "the mosque will not be rebuilt because the majority of the population is Orthodox". The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoI) stated that the protest ended peacefully, although some media reported that Islamophobic chants were uttered at the protest. The perpetrators of the vandalism have not been identified. The Commission for the Relation between Religious Communities and the Platform against Religious Hatred condemned the attack. [20]

In the Report on Religious Freedoms in Macedonia for 2014, prepared by the State Department[21], the protests that occurred against constructing religious buildings to mark certain ethnic or political territory were emphasised. The argument 'not in my back yard' was often used during these and other similar incidents that occurred against building mosques, but this was also used in the refugee crisis to express anti-Muslim sentiment. The perpetrators claimed that they had nothing against Islam, but were afraid of the building, and the sights and sound that would emanate from it. The refugee crisis and the general anti-Muslim climate throughout Europe was easily manipulated by the Macedonian politicians to create a shift from Albanophobia to Islamophobia for electoral purposes. [22]

18. Дамјановска, Сања Јовановиќ. *Telma.mk*. 3 15, 2015. http://telma.com.mk/vesti/verskite-uchilishta-da-stanat-del-od-obrazovniot-sistem (accessed 12 21, 2015).

19. Ѓорѓевски, Бранко. *Dnevnik.mk*. 12 20, 2015. http://www.dnevnik.mk/?ItemID=4437E16D4023304A9D715DBBD43CDFFC (accessed 12 28, 2015).

20. Слободен печат. *Окно.мк*. 11 10, 2015. http://okno.mk/node/51249 (accessed 12 11, 2015).

21. US State Department. "MACEDONIA 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT." 2015.

22. Стојадиновиќ, Соња. *Plusinfo.mk*. 11 9, 2015. http://plusinfo.mk/mislenje/925/se-mrazime-sproti-izbori (accessed 12 12, 2015).

Although consisting of discussions that should have remained in the private sphere, the eavesdropping records that were published by the opposition revealed some of the values and criteria for cooperation of people in the highest positions in the government. According to the transcripts, in one of the conversation, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the then minister for transport and communication were discussing the nationality of a certain collaborator, an Albanian, and they emphasised his religious affiliation, stressing that he was not Muslim, but Catholic.[23]

Indeed, politics is one area where Islamophobia is present, but well-hidden and often abused when necessary. Politicians and officials should take a more active role in condemning any form of discrimination or incitement to fear, including Islamophobia.

The Media

The media have a very powerful role as an agent of either promoting or suppressing Islamophobia. In Macedonia, the state and politicians have a great influence on the media; this, together with other factors, leads to a deterioration of professional and media standards.[24] Hate speech by political officials and by media bosses is not often critically reported in the media.[25]

In the case of reporting the refugee crisis in the Macedonian media Islamophobia was suppressed more as an exception than as the rule. There was regularly incitement to fear, xenophobia and Islamophobia when reporting on refugees.[26] Najchevska also mentions non-critical reporting of officials, namely the prime minister, who stated that "the migration wave is about to increase and migrants from different Asian and African countries will start to remain in the country".[27] There was also reporting on issues that were not central or relevant, having the ultimate effect of creating fear. [28] Prejudices towards refugees represent a new form of Islamophobia in Macedonia. Major media outlets referred to less relevant issues; there are also very serious issues about journalistic standards. An article entitled "Ahmed from Syria has reached Serbia: Instead of churches in Europe you will see minarets. It will be our revenge!" in the daily newspaper Večer, available on the news portal vecer.mk, is a report from Serbia that is full of prejudice, Islamophobic remarks and misrepresentations.[29] In the article it is suggested that the refugees who

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23. Прес конференција на Саша Богдановиќ, 19.04.2015 год http://prizma.birn.eu.com (accessed 12.12.2015)

24. SEEMO South East Europe Media Organisation. *Bad Practices, Bad Faith*: Soft Censorship in Macedonia. Paris: WAN-IFRA, 2015.

25. Ibid.

26. Најчевска, Мирјана. proverkanafakti.mk. 09 04, 2015. http://proverkanafakti.mk/begalci-migranti-i-ksenofo-bija-vo-makedonskite-mediumi/ (accessed 12 22, 2015).

27. Telegraf.mk, 2.8.2015, http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/makedonija/ns-newsarticle-294770-gruevski-mi-grantskiot-bran-doprva-ke-zema-zamav.nspx (accessed 12 12 2015)

28. Најчевска, Мирјана. proverkanafakti.mk. 09 04, 2015. http://proverkanafakti.mk/begalci-migranti-i-ksenofo-bija-vo-makedonskite-mediumi/ (accessed 12 22, 2015).

29. vecer.mk, August, 29, 2015 http://vecer.mk/balkan/ahmed-od-libija-stigna-do-srbija-namesto-crkvi-vo-evropa-kje-se-gledaat-minarinja-toa-kje (acessed 24 02, 2015)

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were passing through Serbia were not really refugees, as they had financial assets and they did not want to merely reach safety. By clearly alluding to the Muslim culture, there is a suggestion that they would try to impose their rules wherever they went. [30]

The fact-checking service Proverka na Fakti, part of a project for empowering media, reports the case of an article that was published on a news portal where a Youtube video showed riots on Paris streets; the video was titled "Migrants are destroying Paris – this is one of the most dangerous incidents (video)". However the video was taken from a German source and was accompanied with anti-immigrant, anti-Islamic and xenophobic text. In fact, the events shown on the video happened in July, 2014 and the media here is misleading and misreporting the public by publishing the article in August 2015, putting it in context of the refugee crisis [31]

In August 2015 there was a large antiterrorist operation in which 9 persons were arrested under suspicion of participation in and recruitment for foreign paramilitary groups. The media reported on the ethnicity of the arrested persons and mentioned one case of a Macedonian who had converted to Islam. The debate about the motivation for participation in foreign armies – whether this was due to religious convictions or money – was raised. [32] [33] [34]

Picture 1. Screenshot from Facebook page made in support after the Kumanovo police operation with the text: Difference between terrorist and a Macedonian defender

The article "Intolerance with Macedonian students threatens to turn into radicalism", which appeared on the webpage of the weekly Republika refers to what is called a "scientific publication" entitled "Crisis of the modern world – regional and global challenges for liberal democracy against religious fundamentalism". The article on the webpage is illustrated exclusively with photos of what the reader could assume to be Muslims (apart from the one photo of the authors of the publication). [35]

30. Ibid.

31. Dukovska, Jugoslava. proverkanafakti.mk. 09 12, 2015. http://proverkanafakti.mk/recenzija-lazhni-obvinuvanja-i-promocija-na-ksenofobija/ (acessed 24 02, 2015).

32. Serafinović, Miomir. Telma. August 7, 2015. http://telma.com.mk/vesti/koj-e-stefan-borecot-na-isis (accessed December 22, 2015).

33. vecer.mk. August 7, 2015. http://vecer.mk/makedonija/dzhihadistot-doktor-stefan-lechel-mudzhahedini-vo-sirija (accessed December 22, 2015).

34. vecer.mk. August 7, 2015. http://vecer.mk/makedonija/dzhihadistot-doktor-stefan-lechel-mudzhahedini-vo-sirija. (accessed December 22, 2015).

35. Зафирова, Билјана Неделник Република. 14. 02.2015. http://republika.mk/?p=386288. (Accessed 12. 12 2015.)

The Kumanovo incident in May was also mentioned in connection with radical Islam by some of the media and on social networks. Often the idea that the terrorists had had connections with Syria and Iraq was mentioned.

Justice System

The Macedonian constitution stipulates that Macedonia is a secular state and guarantees freedom of religion. The Law on the Legal Status of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups regulates the establishment of religious communities, and Article 4, paragraph 2 states that "religious belief shall not exempt a citizen of the obligation… unless otherwise regulated by law or other regulations".

The Law on State Administration is another law that regulates the relation between the state and religious communities. The Committee for the Relation between the State and Religious Communities and Religious Groups (Комисија за односи со верски заедници и религиозни групи) was established under this law.

The Office of the Public Ombudsman continuously monitors the adoption of new legislation; it has not identified provisions that limit the right of Muslims to live in and practice their religion. [36]

Cyber-Space

The cyber-space in the Macedonian language is a place where hate speech and prejudices often appear and where there is abuse of the freedom of speech. Among the wide range of discriminative speech, different Islamophobic comments and statements can be found. On the internet forums, there are often discussions about Islam; there are some good practices in which moderators take care that the discussion does not move into open insults and incitement to violence and hatred.

Islamophobia and Albanophobia are intermingled with one another. Often, specific labels are used against Muslims such as 'sečen' (circumcised) or 'zabulena' (wearing hijab or burka), being used to refer to Albanians/Muslims.

Because of their availability and outreach it is important to note Facebook pages which have openly Islamophobic content. Pegida Macedonia, a branch of the German organization, appeared as a group on Facebook. This is a far right, anti-Islamic, neo-Nazi group with openly anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant posts. There is a clear intention on the Facebook page to spread prejudice and hate speech on religious, ethnic and other grounds. Later Nemrazi.mk reported that the Facebook group was removed because of hate speech, and that it is the first such case.[37] This page was removed because of the hate speech it contained, or 'breach of the Community Standards' to use the formulation used by Facebook, however, only after being repeatedly reporting by users. However it is not

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36. Correspondence with the Public Ombudsman

37. *NeMrazi.mk*. NeMrazi.mk. 01 25, 2016. http://nemrazi.mk/za-prv-pat-fejsbuk-otstranuva-strana-koja-shi-ri-govor-na-omraza/ (accessed 01 29, 2016).

known who is behind the Facebook page of Pegida Macedonia.

Another Facebook page that should be noted is Да ја спречиме исламизацијата во Македонија (Let's stop the Islamization in Macedonia), although there have been no posts on this page since 2012.

In the political arena it was noticed that Islamophobia was used as a means to make political opponents appear negatively in the eyes of the public.

Picture 2 : Opposition leaders and journalists are depicted wearing Arab clothing, thus appearing as Muslims; there is the suggestion that all Muslims are terrorists; under the photos is written: These people want blood and war.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society organisations are active in the field of combating hate speech, as well as monitoring hate crime, discrimination and hate speech, including incidents directed against Muslims.

Some of the initiatives that are worth mentioning are the Platform against Hate Speech, created by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, the Metamorfosis Foundation, the Macedonian Institute for the Media, Paktis, and Civil MK.

It is extremely important to support positive initiatives like the one noted on the nemrazi.mk website. The parent of a student reported offensive graffiti which appeared on a school building. The graffiti was soon deleted.[38] It is worth noting that on the website www.nemrazi.mk the guidelines for reporting hate speech on different platforms was given, ranging from social networks to institutions. The Metamorfosis Foundation, which runs the nemrazi.mk project, holds workshop with media about hate speech. Another resource in the area of hate speech is www.bezomrazno.mk, created by the Macedonian Institute for Media.

The Macedonia Helsinki Committee runs two websites for monitoring and reporting hate speech and hate crime (www.govornaomraza.mk and www.zlostorstvaodomraza.mk).

CONCLUSION

Policy Recommendations for Politics and NGO's

Islamophobia often appears in Macedonia correlated or even mixed with other forms of discrimination and prejudices. Although this leads Islamophobia to be neglected or lets it often go unnoticed, it is important that Islamophobia be addressed as part of the strong ethnic and political tensions to prevent further escalation.

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38. A.J. *Nemrazi.mk*. 12 16, 2015. http://nemrazi.mk/izbrishan-grafit-koj-shiri-govor-na-omraza-vo-dvorot-na-ou-johan-hajnrih-pestalotsi/ (accessed 12 18, 2015).

It is very important that politicians restrain from Islamophobic hate speech and not use it during election campaigns; but it is equally or even more important to condemn every such public discourse. Also it is important that events and issues which may affect Islamophobia, such as refugees, terrorism or security, be discussed. It is vital that such discussion is informed and moderate.

Similarly, as with the provisions adopted to ensure equal representation in the Ohrid Framework Agreement and other similar legislative solutions, adopting laws is not enough to address tensions and discrimination. It is also recommended that possible Islamophobic sentiments or concerns should be addressed, otherwise they are "open to exploitation at the whim of opportunistic politicians".[39]

Sensationalistic media reporting should be discouraged and opposed by condemnation, information and discussion.

NGO's that are concerned with antidiscrimination and human rights should take into consideration the possible increase of Islamophobia and address it.

Finally, increasing democratic capacities and building trust among all the different actors, starting from the institutions, politicians, civil society and representatives of different religions could be a key tool in fighting Islamophobia.

CHRONOLOGY

January 7
• Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris

April 23
• Accident on the railway Veles Skopje: 14 refugees died

May 9-10
• Police Action in Kumanovo

June 18
• Parliament adopted changes and amendments of Law on Asylum and Temporary protection

August 6
• Police action "Cell", 9 persons arrested for recruiting foreign fighters

August 19
• The Government of the Republic of Macedonia announced a state of crisis due to the situation with the refugees at the borders

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39. Waldman, Lorne Allan, and Warda Shazadi Meighen. "The wrong end of the wedge: migrants and Islamaphobia in the 2015 Canadian federal elections." *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration* 5, no. 2 (2015): 33-36.

November 6
- Protests against Islamisation in Kriva Palanka

November 13
- Terrorist attacks in Paris

November 20
- MoI restricts access to Macedonian territory only to refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq.

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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.