
EUROPEAN
ISLAMOPHOBIA
REPORT

2015

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

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INTRODUCTION

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

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

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

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

Contribution of this report

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

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

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

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

What is Islamophobia?

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

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

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

Central findings

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

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

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

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

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

Policy Recommendations

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

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

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
POLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although Poland has a very small Muslim community it is not immune to Islamophobia. The cross-European research from 2011 has actually showed that among the eight nations involved in the study, Poles were the most critical towards Islam. This report argues that 2015 was a crucial year in the public expression of Islamophobia in Poland since it transformed from being a discourse mainly in the margins of society and politics to become part of the mainstream. This was caused above all by the coupling of a number of internal factors such as presidential and parliamentary elections and numerous external ones and in particular, the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, the terrorist attacks in Tunisia and France and the other atrocities of ISIS.

The report begins with the assessment of key developments and Islamophobic incidents in 2015 and then analyses Islamophobia in various spheres of social life. It points out key institutions that used Islamophobic speech last year as well as some counter-Islamophobia initiatives. It argues that the process of Muslim ‘Othering’ has been closely linked to wider socio-political transformations in Polish society and national as well as pan-European identity construction processes. Thus, Islamophobia is partially an import and partially a “home-made” phenomenon. The report argues that anxiety and fear in relation to Islam and Muslims exists in Poland, not because large numbers of Muslims live in the country or have recently arrived to it, but rather because their number is so small and because they lack human and financial means to effectively resist the processes of stereotyping and stigmatisation.

The mass media play a very important role in the social construction of the fear of Islam and Muslim in the country. The report claims that high anti-Muslim sentiments in Poland can be also partially understood within the postcolonial framework of uncritical import of Western fears and processes of globalization/Europeanization in the context of losing the traditional Polish “Others” and searching for new ones. One of the ways of restraining the rise of anti-Muslim sentiments in the country is a more dynamic involvement of the state apparatus in the fight against all forms of racism and xenophobia in the country, as well as, closer cooperation between academia, civil society and the state towards building a more inclusive and tolerant society.

STRESZCZENIE

Choć Polskę zamieszkuje jedynie niewielka społeczność muzułmańska to kraj nie jest wolny od islamofobii. Przekrojowe badania europejskie z 2011 pokazują, że wśród ośmiu narodów ujętych w analizie Polacy cechowali się najbardziej krytycznym stosunkiem do islamu. Niniejszy raport dowodzi, że rok 2015 był kluczowy jeśli chodzi o publiczne wyrażanie niechęci wobec islamu i muzułmanów, które przestało być jedynie cechą narracji marginalnych grup społecznych i politycznych i weszło do głównego nurtu dyskursywnego. Stało się to nade wszystko poprzez zbiegnięcie się w czasie takich wydarzeń wewnętrznych jak krajowe wybory prezydenckie i parlamentarne, ze zjawiskami zewnętrznymi – nade wszystko kryzysem migracyjnym, zamachami terrorystycznymi w Tunezji i Francji oraz innymi bestialstwami ISIS.

Raport rozpoczyna się od omówienia głównych przemian i incydentów islamo-fobicznych w minionym roku, a następnie analizuje islamofobię w różnych sferach życia społecznego. Wskazuje również na główne instytucje które używają islamo-fobicznej narracji oraz wybrane inicjatywy mające na celu walkę z islamofobią. Raport argumentuje, że kreowanie muzułmańskiego „innego” jest bardzo ściśle związane z szerszymi transformacjami społeczno-politycznymi społeczeństwa polskiego jak również procesem konstruowania tożsamości narodowej i pan-europejskiej. Tym samym jest to częściowo zjawisko „importowane”, a częściowo „produkt krajowy”. Raport dowodzi, że obawy i strach przed muzułmanami i islamem są obecne w Polsce nie dlatego, że w kraju mamy do czynienia ze znaczącą demograficznie populacją muzułmańską, tylko raczej dlatego że muzułmanów w kraju jest tak niewiele i społeczność ta ma deficyt kapitału ludzkiego i finansowego potrzebnego do tego by skutecznie przeciwstawiać się procesom stereotypizacji i stygmatyzacji.

W społecznej konstrukcji strachu przed islamem i muzułmanami w Polsce bardzo ważną rolę odgrywają krajowe mass media. Raport twierdzi, że wysoki wskaźnik postaw anty-muzułmańskich może być częściowo rozumiany jako post-kolonialne bezkrytyczne zapożyczenia zachodnich lęków, a częściowo jako utrata dotychczasowych „innych” i szukanie nowych w kontekście procesów globalizacji i europeizacji. Jednym ze sposobów na powstrzymanie wzrostu postaw anty-muzułmańskich w kraju jest dynamiczniejsze włączenie się aparatu państwa w walkę ze wszelkimi formami rasizmu i ksenofobii, a także bliższa współpraca ze światem akademii i społeczeństwem obywatelskim w celu budowy społeczeństwa bardziej inkluzywnego i tolerancyjnego.

INTRODUCTION

In spite of the small size of the Muslim community in Poland (around 35,000 believers according to expert estimations¹ which makes it less than 0.1 per cent of the total population of the country and 5,108 according to the Central Statistical Office of Poland),² or partially as a result of it,³ the fear of Islam and Muslims is quite widespread among Polish citizens. As national research shows, Arabs, most commonly identified with Muslims by Poles, and categorised as a ‘national group’ in the studies carried out by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) between 2002 and 2012, consistently emerged as the least liked and the most disliked group, alongside the Roma.⁴ This unenthusiastic approach towards Muslims is also confirmed by the latest CBOS survey that shows that 44 per cent of Poles have a negative attitude towards Muslims, 33 per cent have a neutral attitude and only 23 per cent have a positive attitude towards them.⁵ The research shows also that only 12 per cent of Poles personally knows a Muslim so the negative attitude towards followers of Islam is by and large developed in the absence of any contact with Muslims or the Muslim world.⁶ Similar results were also revealed in research carried out last year by the Centre for Research on Prejudice at the University of Warsaw and the foundation Common Space. According to the latter 80 per cent of Poles do not know any Muslim and 73 per cent holds a negative attitude towards them.⁷

The aforementioned data needs to be put in context: as a result of increased contact with foreigners residing in Poland over the last decades, ‘the alien’ is increasingly transformed into ‘the other’. Hence, there has been a growing domestication and concretisation of the category of immigrant in Poland.⁸ At the same time, it seems that especially new Muslim groups in Poland are usually excluded from this process of domestication.

1. K. Pędziwiatr, *Muslims in Contemporary Poland*, [in:] *Muslims in Visegrad Countries*, ed by J. Bureš, Anna. Lindh Foundation and Visegrad Fund, Prague 2011, pp. 10–24; A. Nalborczyk, *Mosques in Poland. Past and Present*, [in:] *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam*, ed by K. Górac-Sosnowska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2011.

2. GUS, *Struktura narodowo-etniczna, językowa i wyznaniowa ludności Polski*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 2015.

3. Pędziwiatr, K. (2015) Islamophobia as a New Manifestation of Polish Fears and Anxieties. In: Kusek, R., Purchla, J., Santera-Szeliga, J. (ed.) “Nations and Stereotypes Twenty Five Years After: New Borders, New Horizons”, International Cultural Centre, Kraków, 132-150.

4. CBOS, *Stosunek Polaków do innych narodów* (The Poles’ attitudes towards other nations), Warszawa 2012.

5. By comparison 4 per cent of Poles have negative attitude toward Catholics, 7 per cent towards Christian Orthodox followers and 11 per cent towards Protestants. CBOS, *Postawy wobec islamu i muzułmanów* (Attitudes towards Islam and Muslims), Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa 2015.

6. Ibid.

7. Klimowicz, J., *Polacy boją się muzułmanów. Najbardziej najmłodszy*. Gazeta Wyborcza, 22.09.2015

8. A. Grzymała-Kazłowska, *Konstruowanie „innego”*. Wizerunki imigrantów w Polsce (Constructing “the Other.” Depictions of immigrants in Poland), Warszawa 2007.

The information from the national studies is also corroborated by pan-European research. Some of this research shows that the fear of Islam and Muslims in Poland is actually greater than in other European countries with much more significant Muslim populations. One such research is a study on intolerance, prejudice and discrimination commissioned by the German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. According to this study, 47 % of the Polish respondents believe that “too many Muslims live in Poland,” and 62 % believe that “Muslim demands and expectations are too high.” In comparison, in France, which is the country with the largest Muslim population in the European Union, 36 % of those questioned agreed with the former opinion, with the latter view supported by 52 %. Among the eight nations involved in the research the Poles were the most critical towards Islam in terms of religion and culture. Nearly 62 % of the Polish respondents agreed with the thesis that “Islam is an intolerant religion” and only one in five believed that the Muslim culture could adapt to life in European/Polish society. In comparison, in Germany, which has the second largest Muslim population in the EU, 52 % of those questioned considered Islam to be intolerant, while in Great Britain – with the third largest Muslim community – 39 % of the respondents concurred with the statement that Muslim culture is attuned to their country/Europe.⁹ Even if the aforementioned statistics - pointing to differences between European countries - need to be understood in light of different contexts of public expressions of prejudice,¹⁰ the findings of national analyses (including ones by the author)¹¹ confirm an unprecedented level of anti-Muslim prejudice expressed in the public sphere especially in 2015.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND INCIDENTS IN 2015

The increase in anti-Muslim prejudice in the public sphere in 2015 began in January after the terrorist attack on the Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris. Although these attacks were strongly condemned by all Muslim organisations in the country numerous Muslim leaders expressed fear of the backlash and complained about the increasingly Islamophobic public mood.¹²

The significant rise of anti-Muslim feelings expressed in the public domain took place though only in the second half of the year and it was linked above all with the coupling of the so-called European ‘refugee crisis’ and the Polish

9. A. Zick et al. *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination: A European Report*, Berlin 2011.

10. A. Piekut, U. Vieten and V. Gill. 2014. “Seeking the New Normal? Troubled Spaces of Encountering Visible Differences in Warsaw.” *Polish Sociological Review* 188 (4): 541–58.

11. Pędziwiatr, K. (2015) Islamophobia as a New Manifestation of Polish Fears and Anxieties, op. cit., and D. Maciejasz: *Jak zatrzymać tych, którzy chcą iść „z maczetami na meczety”*. “Gazeta Wyborcza. Kraków”, 19-20.09.2015.

12. M. Giec, *Muzułmanie w Polsce o ataku na Charlie Hebdo* | *VICE | Polska*, 2015, <http://www.vice.com/pl/read/muzulmanie-w-polsce-o-ataku-na-charlie-hebdo>, accessed 9.02.2016; Wirtualna Polska, *Poznaliśmy mułulmanie boją się odwetu za zamach we Francji*, 2015, <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1019407,title,Poznanscy-muzulmanie-boja-sie-odwetu-za-zamach-we-Francji,wid,17164740,wiadomosc.html>, accessed 9.02.2016.

parliamentary elections held at the end of October 2015. For the first time in the modern history of Poland the issues of supposedly increased migratory influx have been greatly politicised especially by the populist national-conservative Law and Justice Party, KORWiN, and far right groups that formed part of Kukiz'15¹³ and played an important role during the parliamentary campaign. As part of this politicisation numerous candidates (especially but not exclusively from the aforementioned parties – e.g. Katarzyna Bielańska from Civic Platform in Kraków)¹⁴ expressed openly xenophobic, racist or Islamophobic views in the media; produced anti-immigration posters;¹⁵ and participated in the demonstrations “against the Islamisation of Poland and Europe” organised not only in the biggest Polish cities, but also in small ones like Bielsko-Biała. The poster of one of such demonstrations in Bielsko Biała can be seen below.



Figure 1. Poster of the anti-Islamisation demonstration organised in Bielsko Biała on 2 October, 2015. The poster reads “No!!! to the Islamisation of Bielsko Biała”.

The victorious Law and Justice Party and some members of Kukiz'15 kept using the ongoing so-called ‘refugee crisis’ to stoke fear within Polish society of the supposed Muslim influx to the country after the elections. The terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November, 2015 provided them with new arguments in these

efforts. The incoming Law and Justice’s Minister of European Affairs famously said that “In the face of the tragic events in Paris, Poland sees no political possibilities for implementing the decision on the relocation of refugees”,¹⁶ while the incoming Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski suggested that Syrian refugees should not be given shelter and protection in Europe but instead should be militarily trained and form an army to liberate their country.¹⁷ Members of Kukiz’15 an-

13. The electoral block and parliamentary club led by punk musician Paweł Kukiz who achieved very good results (21% of votes) in the first round of the presidential elections in May 2015. The block that is not formally registered as a political party, as one of its key postulates is to “destroy partocracy”, is made up of right-wing and far right elements.

14. Information about the controversial electoral campaign of the Civic Platform candidate can be found on <http://www.tvn24.pl/kandydatka-po-promuje-sie-czarnymi-burgerami-kolor-skory-uchodzcow,587553,s.html> (accessed 2.01.2016).

15. For example, Kamil Kupiec running on the KORWIN list in Kraków, put on his electoral poster the slogan “Instead of immigrants we want repatriates”, while Ewa Damaszek in the Silesia region running on the same list claimed on her electoral poster that “Silesia is our home. Islam has its own.”

16. Former Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz (Civic Platform) agreed before the elections to welcome 7,000 refugees in Poland. Until the end of June the statistics of the Office for Foreigners (*Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców*) show less than 800 Syrians legally residing in Poland, 211 have gained refugee status and a further 45 were given supplementary protection. (UdSC – Dane liczbowe dotyczące postępowań wobec cudzoziemców – available on <http://udsc.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Dane-liczbowe-dotycz%C4%85ce-post%C4%99powa%C5%84-prowadzonych-wobec-cudzoziemc%C3%B3w-w-pierwszej-po%C5%82owie-2015-roku2.xlsx>

17. Both incoming ministers quoted on the website of the Polish Radio - <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/229025,Incoming-Foreign-Minister-Syrian-refugees-can-fight-for-homeland#sthash.7SAvtZAT.dpuf> (accessed 02.01.2016).

nounced their intention to organise a national referendum in the hope of reversing the decision of former Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz to welcome 7,000 refugees in Poland in the coming two years.

In the presidential elections held in May 2015 the issue of the arrival of Syrian refugees to Poland was also present (especially in the last TV debate before the second round of elections), however, it was only minor issue.¹⁸ The humanitarian tragedy of Syrian people of all faiths in the presidential debate was approached from the confessional point of view: the main concern of Bronisław Komorowski and Andrzej Duda was chiefly the fate of Christian refugees. This was symptomatic of numerous other discussions and public debates in the second half of the year that often evolved around the proposal to offer assistance not to all Syrian refugees but only to Christian ones. This was partially linked to the very successful campaign of the Estera Foundation and its president Miriam Shaded to portray the Christians in Syria as the main victims of the ongoing war and diabolise its Muslim victims.¹⁹

There were also numerous Islamophobic incidents in 2015. One of them that received particularly large media coverage was the desecration of the newly opened first purpose-built mosque in the Polish capital. The Ochota Mosque was shot at before its official inauguration in June 2015 with a pneumatic weapon and was a scene of numerous anti-mosque protests; soon after its official opening it was desecrated by a woman who threw pig heads inside the building.²⁰ The Muslim League in Poland that looks after the mosque decided to drop charges against



Figure 2. The woman who threw pig heads inside the mosque and in its outdoor parking is caught on CCTV cameras.

the perpetrator in order to not give additional publicity to such individuals or lend support to such groups.

Earlier the same year a mosque in Poznań was plastered with Islamophobic graffiti and stickers.²¹ The same had

18. During the presidential campaign much more attention was paid to emigration of Poles to the UK, Germany and other countries of the EU in the last decades. The transcript of the last television debate before the second tour of 2015 presidential elections can be found at <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/wybory-prezydenckie/artykuly/490964,bronislaw-komorowski-kontra-andrzej-duda-ostatnia-przedwyborcza-debata.html> (accessed 2.01.2016).

19. The foundation forced the state authorities to assist it in its effort to bring up to 1,500 Christians from Syria. The cost of the stay of Syrian Christians in Poland is to be covered by churches, local communities, individual donations and the English Barnabas Fund. The first 150 Syrians arrived to Poland in July 2015 but some complained about the conditions of their stay and left the country. <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/213366,50-Syrian-Christian-families-arrive-in-Warsaw> <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/217824,Foundation-rejects-criticisms-by-Syrian-given-asylum-in-Poland>

20. TVP, *Rozrzuciła świńskie lby w warszawskim meczecie. Policja poszukuje kobiety w ciemnych okularach*, 12.07.2015, <http://www.tvp.info/20810154/rozrzucila-swinskie-lby-w-warszawskim-meczecie-policja-poszukuje-kobiety-w-ciemnych-okularach>, accessed 8.01.2016.

21. K. Koziol, *Atak na meczet w Poznaniu: To efekt Charlie Hebdo*, 2015, <http://www.gloswielpolski.pl/artykul/3720878,atak-na-meczet-w-poznaniu-to-efekt-charlie-hebdo,id,t.html>, accessed 10.02.2016.

also happened to the Muslim community centre in Kraków (see photo below).²²

The Polish Defence League claimed responsibility for the targeting of the Poznań Mosque; the former is a radical Islamophobic group (a relatively new offshoot of the English Defence League) that also organised a small-scale demonstration outside the



Figure 3. Islamophobic graffiti by the entrance to the Islamic Centre in Krakow which includes a date of the Second Siege of Vienna and the vulgar sentence "Didn't you have enough? Get lost!"

Old Mosque in Warsaw and has repeatedly threatened Polish Muslims.²³ Among the individuals who were targets of Islamophobic attacks were, inter alia, the former imam of the mosque in Gdańsk and his businesses,²⁴ and a young Syrian Christian in Poznań who was mistakenly taken for a Muslim and severely beaten.²⁵

ISLAMOPHOBIC INCIDENTS AND DISCURSIVE EVENTS IN VARIOUS SPHERES

As far as the legal situation of Muslims in Poland is concerned they have the same religious freedoms and rights as other citizens of the country. The Polish Constitution of 1997 in Article 53 guarantees freedom of conscience and religion to every citizen. In the eyes of members of the Muslim community and its key organisations (Muslim Religious Union and Muslim League) one of the laws that restricts the right of Muslims in their religious lifestyle was the ban on ritual slaughter introduced in 2013. This ban, however, was lifted at the end of 2014 by the decision of the Constitutional Tribunal that deemed it unconstitutional. In 2015, not only Polish Muslims but also Jews, thus, practised this element of their faith without legal obstacles.²⁶

The small number of Muslims in the country and lack of well-developed channels of registering Islamophobic incidents in the labour market makes it difficult to assess the level of discriminatory practices towards Muslims in this sphere of social life. Numerous research on the discrimination against foreigners in Poland shows, however, that such exclusionary practices towards people considered as 'Others' do

22. In 2015, prosecutors also announced that they had not managed to find the culprits behind the devastation of the traditional Tatar Mosque in Kruszyniany that took place in 2014. http://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/1,35241,17878928,Zniszczyli_meczety_i_mizary_w_Kruszynianach__Unikna.html?disableRedirects=true#TR-relSST accessed 02.01.2016.

23. A. Elbanowska. Antyislamiści polscy: Chcemy deportować wszystkich muzułmanów. *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 18.02.2015

24. J. Hlebowicz, *Bar prowadzony przez Palestynczyka został ostrzelany*, 12.01.2015, <http://gdansk.gosc.pl/doc/2854410.Bar-prowadzony-przez-Palestynczyka-zostal-ostrelany>, accessed 8.01.2016.

25. A. Lehmann, *Syryjczyk pobity w Poznaniu: człowiek w garniturze krzyczał "Dobijcie go"*, 11.06.2015, <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/1,36037,19151856,syryjczyk-pobity-w-poznaniu-meczczynna-w-garniturze-krzyczal.html>, accessed 8.01.2016.

26. Polskie Radio, *Wyrok TK: ubój rytualny i eksport uzyskanego z niego mięsa będzie dopuszczalny w polskim prawie*, 12.10.2014, <http://www.polskieradio.pl/42/3166/Artykul/1314979>, accessed 8.01.2016.

occur also in the labour market and might be quite frequent depending on the social status/class of the persons concerned and the sector of the economy.²⁷

Interviewed leaders of the key Muslim organisations (Muslim Religious Union and Muslim League) did not recall any serious Islamophobic incidents in the educational sphere. The media reported, however, a few cases that had such character (e.g. Teacher of Physics in one of the schools in Białystok asked pupils to calculate how many Syrian refugees need to be pushed out of the raft so as it could reach the destination²⁸ or pupil of one of the vocational schools in Świętokrzyskie voivodship was calling for setting fire to the Tatar mosque in Kruszyniany²⁹) Muslim pupils and students who want to follow Islamic classes have a right to such state-paid education provided either within the school premises or outside of them. Major Muslim organisations in Poland provide such education either on their premises or in schools across Poland. At the same time, an almost decade-old analysis of the portrayal of Islam in Polish school textbooks shows that their depiction of Islam and Muslims is frequently very essentialist.³⁰

As mentioned above the sphere of politics was one of the major arenas where anti-Muslim prejudice and fear were played out in 2015. What was particularly surprising was the scale of this new trend. If Islamophobic arguments had been used in political life at the national³¹ as well as local³² level before 2015, there were never part of the key tools of mainstream political mobilisation. The emergence of Daesh/ISIS in 2014 and its atrocities as well as the terrorist attacks in France in January and November coupled with the difficulties of managing the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ provided the right-wing and far right political forces in Poland with ample arsenal of discursive arms for their key political battles. The campaigns before Polish presidential (in May) and especially parliamentary elections (in October) were the major battlefield where these arguments were used.

27. W. Klaus, ed., *Sąsiedzi czy intruzi? O dyskryminacja cudzoziemców w Polsce*, Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej i Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa 2011; J. Brzozowski and K. Pędzwiatr, *Analiza procesu integracji imigrantów w Małopolsce*, [in:] *Imigranci w Małopolsce: między integracją, asymilacją, separacją i marginalizacją*, Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, Kraków 2014, pp. 117–290.

28. Polska Times, *Zadanie o uchodźcach z Syrii. Ilu trzeba zepchnąć z tratwy, żeby dopłynąć do celu? To nie fejk*, 11.11.2015, <http://www.poranny.pl/artykul/9075475,zadanie-o-uchodzcach-z-syrii-ilu-trzeba-zepchnac-z-tratwy-zeby-doplynac-do-celu-to-nie-fejk,id,t.html>, accessed 23.02.2016.

29. J. Klimowicz, *19-letni uczeń nawoływał do podpalenia meczetu w Kruszynianach*, n.d., <http://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/1,35241,18317737,19-letni-uczen-nawolywal-do-podpalenia-meczetu-w-kruszynianach.html>, accessed 23.02.2016.

30. K. Górak-Sosnowska, “Wizerunek islamu w Polsce na przykładzie podręczników szkolnych” ([in:] *Islam i obywatelskość w Europie*, eds. K. Górak-Sosnowska, P. Kubicki, K. Pędzwiatr, Warszawa 2006).

31. For example, in 2011, Jarosław Gowin argued in a radio interview that “We will end up like Rome, barbarians will come, Muslims will come, and Europe will become Islamic, whereas I would very much like Europe to remain attached to such values as freedom of the individual”, <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/skonczymy-jak-rzym-przyjda-barbarzyncy-przyjda-muzulmanie/d05yt>, (accessed 15.10.2015).

32. Pędzwiatr, *Warszawskie spory meczetowe*, “Biuletyn Migracyjny”, 2012, no 39.

Stoking fear with the visions of an imminent Muslim invasion, sharia courts in Poland and refugees bringing ‘cholera’ and ‘parasites’ to Europe became not only part of the discursive repertoire of the far right and right-wing political backbenchers but also of the leader of the Law and Justice Party Jarosław Kaczyński³³ whose party won the presidential and parliamentary elections. As the Islamophobic arguments became mainstream they were increasingly used by various political actors taking part (especially) in the parliamentary elections. One of the most visible signs of this new trend was the popularisation of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim slogans on the posters and campaign leaflets in particular of numerous candidates of KORWiN and Kukiz’15.

The essentialist images and narratives of Islam and Muslims have been greatly popularised in the mass media and on the Internet. In this sense contemporary Polish Islamophobia has a very strong media and cyberspace dimension, and the social fear of Islam and Muslims can be viewed as largely a media-made and cyberspace-amplified fear. This is linked to the fact that it is the media and the Internet where Poles mainly draw information about Islam and its believers.³⁴ While the majority of elements used in the simplified depiction of Islam have an exogenic character (in 2015, these were mainly the atrocities committed by ISIS and terrorist attacks abroad) over the last year (inter alia as a result of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’) these elements have been increasingly endogenic. Hence Muslims ceased to be portrayed as mainly the ‘external enemy’ and began to be depicted as (if not yet then soon to become) the Polish ‘internal enemy’. Muslims were traditionally portrayed in the media as those who cannot or will not integrate with European societies while their religion was presented as incompatible with the Western values of freedom and equality, and with national values (history/customs/language). This kind of depiction had clear social results confirmed by a CBOS survey from February 2015 that showed that 63 % of Poles agreed with the statement that Muslims living in Western Europe by and large do not integrate with the majority of citizens of their countries.³⁵

In today’s Poland the groups promoting stereotypical visions of Islam and its adherents are greatly empowered by the Internet. It provides them with powerful tools for amplification of their voices and hence for mobilisation and recruitment. With over 70 % of Poles having access to the Internet³⁶ their target audience consists of almost three quarters of Polish society. These groups significantly amplify the dominant frames through which stories on Islam and Muslims are being reported. Such stories consist of “newsworthy” elements like extremism, terrorism, violence,

33. Elements of speeches by Jarosław Kaczyński during the parliamentary elections campaign are available at <https://euobserver.com/political/130672> accessed 12.02.2016.

34. K. Pędziwiatr, *Muslims in the Polish Media - the New Folk Devil?*, “Arches Quarterly”, 2010, t.4, no 7, pp. 89–95; K. Pędziwiatr, *Islamofobia jako nowy wymiar lęków i obaw Polaków*, [in:] *Stereotypy ...*, ed by R. Kusek, 2015.

35. CBOS, *Postawy wobec islamu i muzułmanów (Attitudes towards Islam and Muslims)*, Warszawa 2015

36. J. Czapiński and T. Panek, *Diagnoza społeczna 2015*, Rada Monitoringu Społecznego, Warszawa 2015, 2015

radicalisation, oppression, threat, jihad, crime, fanatical, oppression, sexism and the burqa - to mention only the most frequent ones. Some of the websites that concentrate on spreading this type of information on Islam and Muslims include Euroislam.pl; Fronda.pl; PCh24.pl; Ndie.pl; Wpolarityce.pl; Wsiecei.pl; Polskaligaobrony.org.pl; Ruchnarodowy.net and Onr.com.pl.³⁷

Social media and in particular Facebook plays a very important role in promoting stereotypical visions of Muslims and their religion. One of the Facebook groups that gathered a particularly significant following is called “No to the Islamisation of Europe” and is linked to the website Ndie.pl. Its Polish Facebook page has almost 270,000 followers³⁸ and regular posts are variations of the slogan popular in anti-Muslim groups “By buying a kebab, you welcome an Arab.” Here it is worth noting that at the same time the PEGIDA German Facebook page has less than 190,000 followers.³⁹ Other Facebook groups that have large followings include ‘Stop the Islamisation of Europe’⁴⁰ (40,000 followers) and ‘Euroislam’⁴¹ (which is linked to the website Euroislam.pl and has almost 11,000 followers). In comparison, the Polish anti-racist group ‘YES for refugees – No to racism and xenophobia’ has at present (February 2016) only 5,500 followers on Facebook.⁴²

KEY INSTITUTIONS USING ISLAMOPHOBIC SPEECH AND SOME COUNTER-ISLAMOPHOBIA INITIATIVES

As far as the key groups promoting Islamophobic views are concerned one may divide them into three major types. The first cluster is made up of various individuals and associations that legitimise their stereotypical visions of Islam and Muslims with particularly frequent references to notions of enlightenment, secularism, pluralism, human rights and democracy. One of the groups that have been using these type of narratives in order to hide its overtly Islamophobic agenda is the association Europe of the Future, which aims “to thwart the development of Islamism in Poland and Europe” and associates all forms of Muslim public religiosity as a “totalitarian movement hostile to democracy”.⁴³ One of the leading figures behind this initiative is sociologist Grzegorz Lindenberg who is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the weekly *Wprost*. In 2015, these type of narratives

37. More information on these groups is provided below.

38. See <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nie-dla-Islamizacji-Europy/182944451832138?fref=ts>

39. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/PEGIDA/790669100971515?fref=ts> (accessed 09.01.2016).

40. <https://www.facebook.com/Stop-islamizacji-Europy-191777667634248/> (accessed 08.01.2016).

41. <https://www.facebook.com/euroislampl> (accessed 08.01.2016).

42. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tak.dla.uchodzcow?fref=ts> (accessed 10.02.2016).

43. More information about the association that started its anti-Muslim activities at an anti-Turkish demonstration in 2004 can be found on its website: <http://www.euroislam.pl/index.php/stowarzyszenie/o-nas/>, (accessed 15.12.2015).

have been also very frequently invoked by right-wing politicians (especially those from the Law and Justice Party), who also used Christian and religious terms to legitimise their criticism of Islam and Muslims. This type of narrative is characteristic of the second cluster of groups and individuals directly or indirectly linked with the Catholic Church that distinguish themselves in their essentialist view of Islam. Above all, they consist of the web portal *Fronda.pl* (which was linked until the end of 2014 with the journal *Fronda Lux*) and the web portal *PCh24.pl* which is linked to the bimonthly glossy magazine *Polonia Christiana* (published since 2008 by Father Piotr Skarga of the Association of Christian Culture founded in 1999 under the guidance of the traditionalist Catholic international movement 'Tradition, Family and Property'). In 2015, this narrative was strongly strengthened by the Estera Foundation lobbying for the acceptance in Poland of only Christian Syrian refugees. The last type of cluster consists of a wide variety of groups that oppose 'Muslimness' in all forms mainly with reference to ultra-nationalist terms. Here we find such far right groups as the Polish Defence League (*Polskaligaobrony.org.pl*), the Polish National Movement (*Ruchnarodowy.net*), the National Radical Camp (*Onr.com.pl*) and a Facebook group linked to them known as "No to the Islamisation of Europe".

There were several initiatives in 2015 that tried to counter Islamophobic narratives. As mentioned earlier the Polish Muslim community is small and has very limited human and financial resources to play an important role in such initiatives. In spite of this one of the Muslim organisations (Muslim League) has run a website called 'Observatory of Islamophobia' (from 2013 to March 2015) that aimed at "registering cases of Islamophobia and constructing counter-narratives without trying to get into debate with Islamophobes".⁴⁴ Other interesting initiative that also challenged Islamophobic voices in 2015 - not entirely but partially- were the projects 'Hate Speech Alert' and 'Brown Book'. The first project was implemented by the association *Interkulturalni.pl* (set up in 2010 in Kraków) and aimed at preventing hate speech by public persons and in particular by politicians and journalists. It monitored media and reacted to instances of hate speech (in 2015 a substantial part of hate speech had Islamophobic character) and provided training for journalists and members of political parties in dealing with issues of communication.⁴⁵ The second project has been running for many years now by the leading anti-racist organisation in the country - the association 'Never Again' (*Stowarzyszenie Nigdy Więcej*) – and was first registered in 1996. Similarly to the initiative of *Interkulturalni* it monitors media content, collects material on any instances of racism and xenophobia and takes action against them.⁴⁶

44. More information on the initiative can be found at <http://islamofobia.info.pl/> (accessed 08.01.2016).

45. More information on the project and its actions can be found at <http://hatespeechalert.org.pl/> (accessed 08.01.2016).

46. More information about the association and its projects including 'Brown Book' can be found at <http://www.nigdywiecej.org/brunatna-ksiega> (accessed 08.01.2016).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As shown above the levels of Polish fear of Islam and Muslims often exceed those in European countries with much more significant Muslim populations, which only proves that strong anti-Muslim sentiments can function perfectly fine in the absence of a significant Muslim minority. As argued elsewhere anxiety and fear in relation to Islam and Muslims exist in Poland, not because a large number Muslims live in the country or recently arrived to it, but rather because their number is so small and because they lack elites powerful enough to resist the processes of stereotyping and stigmatisation.⁴⁷ High anti-Muslim sentiments in Poland can be also understood within the postcolonial framework of the uncritical import of Western fears and processes of globalization/Europeanization in the context of losing the traditional Polish “Others” and searching for new ones. The year 2015 was critical in the public expression of Islamophobia in Poland since it transformed from being mainly a discourse on the margins of society and politics to becoming part of the mainstream. This was caused above all by the coupling of a number of internal (e.g. presidential and parliamentary elections, EU request to accept refugees) and external factors (e.g. the terrorist attacks in Tunisia and France, and the atrocities of ISIS). The foundations, however, for this kind of mainstreaming had been laid much earlier.

So far there have been only minor efforts to challenge Islamophobia initiated mainly by Polish Muslims, academia⁴⁸ and wider civil society. If the raising wave of fear of Islam and Muslims is to be at least minimally limited in the future the engagement of the state apparatus in some manner is badly needed. The visit of the Polish President Andrzej Duda to the Tatar Mosque in Bohoniki in September 2015 was an important step in a direction of building good community relations between diverse religious and ethnic groups that live in Poland and one of the rare occasions last year when the mass media talked about Islam not in relation to terrorism and radicalism. The actions of the key institutions of the state however need to go beyond such symbolic gestures and try to tackle hate speech, racism and xenophobia in all forms (including political) on a daily basis. There should be a close cooperation between the state administration, academia and non-governmental actors with the common goal of fighting essentialist views of groups perceived as “Others” and in building a tolerant and inclusive society. The success of the Day of Temples initiative in Warsaw in September 2015 which saw more than 1,000 non-Muslims visit the Mosque in Ochota gives some hope for the future.

47. K. Pędziwiatr, K. Islamophobia as a New Manifestation of Polish Fears and Anxieties ... op. cit.

48. Here I mean initiatives such as for example producing a special guidebook on Islam and Muslims for journalists (see A. Nalborczyk and A. Marek, *Nie bój się islamu. Leksykon dla dziennikarzy*, Więź, Warszawa 2005;) and a set of recommendations on the integration of immigrants (see e.g. J. Brzozowski and K. Pędziwiatr, „Analiza procesu integracji imigrantów w Małopolsce”, op. cit.) and Polish migration policy. R. Matyja, A. Siewierska-Chmaj, and K. Pędziwiatr, *Polska polityka migracyjna*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa: Rzeszów 2015.

CHRONOLOGY

January

- In the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack Muslims in Poland express growing fear of the backlash and complain about the increasingly Islamophobic public mood. Targeting of the Mosque in Poznań.

February

- One of the columnists of the mainstream quality daily Rzeczpospolita speculates in his text regarding where Poland should expel its Muslims.⁴⁹

March

- In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the Bardo Complex in Tunis, where three Polish tourists died, the portrayal of Islam and Muslims is increasingly linked with terrorism and the atrocities of Daesh.

April

- The beginning of the presidential elections campaign during which numerous far right and right-wing candidates (e.g. Marian Kowalski, Grzegorz Braun, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Paweł Kukiz) expressed xenophobic views.

May

- The end of the presidential elections campaign during which two main contenders to the post, Bronisław Komorowski (incumbent president) and Andrzej Duda (victorious candidate), discussed the humanitarian tragedy of Syrian people from the confessional point of view as their main concern was the fate of Christians in Syria.

June

- The opening of the first purpose-built mosque in Warsaw that was a scene of the first large anti-Muslim protests in Poland in 2010.

July

- The desecration of the newly opened first purpose-built mosque in Warsaw by a woman who threw pig heads inside the building and in its outdoor parking.

August

- Some of the Syrian Christian families who arrived in Poland a month earlier on the invitation of the Estera Foundation decided to leave the country. Its president Miriam Shaded continues to use various media outlets to portray the Christians in Syria as the main victims of the ongoing war and diabolises all its Muslim victims.

49. D. Zdort, *Dokład deportować Tatarów*, "Rzeczpospolita", 06.02. 2015.

September

- Numerous anti-immigrant and anti-Islamisation demonstrations are organised across the country. One of the largest is organised in Kraków (12.09.2015) to mark the 332nd anniversary of the Vienna victory of 1683.

October

- The end of the parliamentary elections campaign during which Islamophobic arguments became tools of political mobilisation used not only by far right elements but also by mainstream right-wing political parties.

November

- Attack on young Syrian Christian George Mamlook in Poznań who was mistakenly taken for a Muslim and severely beaten.

December

- Attack on the businesses of the former imam of the mosque in Gdańsk.

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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.



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