
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
SERBIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past, Islamophobic incidents in Serbia, a post-conflict society, were not at all rare. To some extent, Islamophobic incidents are still present in Serbia, especially in areas of paramount importance, such as education and media. Although the wars in the former Yugoslavia ended twenty years ago, consequences of these wars are still visible in the Western Balkans. The areas analysed include employment, education, media, politics, the justice system, hate speech and hate graffiti. This report seeks to analyse the most critical points of Islamophobia through personal contacts with NGOs, critical analyses of media content as well as official documents from government bodies, while aiming to provide policy recommendations for politics and NGOs.

IZVRŠNI REZIME

Islamofobični incidenti u Srbiji, kao postkonfliktnom društvu, u prošlosti nisu bili nikakva retkost. Islamofobični incidenti, u određenoj meri, još uvek su prisutni u oblastima od izuzetnog značaja kao što su obrazovanje i mediji. Iako su ratovi u bivšoj Jugoslaviji završeni pre dvadeset godina posledice ovih ratova su još uvek vidljive na Zapadnom Balkanu. Oblasti koje su analizirane uključuju zaposlenje, obrazovanje, medije, politiku, pravni sistem, govor mržnje i grafiti mržnje. Ovaj izveštaj, kroz lične kontakte sa nevladinim organizacijama, kritičkim analizama medijskih sadržaja kao i kroz zvaničnu dokumentaciju nastoji da analizira najkritičnije tačke Islamofobije dok sa druge strane nastoji da ponudi preporuke kako za buduću politiku tako i za nevladine organizacije.

INTRODUCTION

As a post-conflict and transitional society which in recent decades has passed through wars, economic crises and strong political turmoil, the Republic of Serbia still bears the heavy burden of the past. Although the wars in the former Yugoslavia ended twenty years ago, the consequences of these wars are still visible in the Western Balkans. However, it is important to note at the beginning that the process of enlargement of the European Union and the declared commitment to European integration has led to some progress in relation to Islamophobic incidents in Serbia, even though in the past these were more common occurrences. On the other hand, the situation is far from ideal and requires analyses on many different levels. As a growing phenomenon, Islamophobia, although not present at an unbearable level, certainly represents a major challenge for Serbia, which aspires to join the European Union. The challenge lies in respecting the rule of law and respecting human and minority rights.

According to the 2011 census, Islam is the third most widespread religion in Serbia (after Christian Orthodoxy and Catholicism) with 228,658 Muslims in Serbia (3.1% of the total population). The largest concentration of Muslims in Serbia can be found in the municipalities of Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica in the Sandžak region, and in the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac in the Preševo Valley. Muslims in Serbia are mainly organized in two communities: the Islamic community of Serbia, based in Belgrade and the Islamic community in Serbia, based in Novi Pazar.¹

Several leading NGOs have observed that the Islamic communities in Serbia in these regions² face a number of internal problems; however, the focus of this report will not deal with these issues.

DISCUSSION OF ISLAMOPHOBIC INCIDENTS AND DISCURSIVE EVENTS IN VARIOUS FIELDS

Employment

According to the Labour Force Survey, the unemployment rate in Serbia in the first quarter of 2015 was 19.2%.³ Novi Pazar is the cultural centre of the Bosniaks in Serbia (83%) and the historical region of Sandzak. As of the 2011 census, the population of the municipal area of Novi Pazar was 125,000. Novi Pazar is one of the cities with the highest unemployment rate in Serbia - as high as 53%; that is, one in two able-bodied citizens are unemployed. As reported by the president of the

1. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, *2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia, Religion, Mother Tongue and Ethnicity*, (Belgrade: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2013)

2. For example: URBAN-In and Sandzak Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms

3. The data on the number of unemployed are taken over from the National Employment Service and include only the unemployed persons registered with this service. This research is performed by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Accessed November 10, 2015. http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/01/89/83/RS10_283_I_kvartal_srb-2015.pdf

Sandzak Committee for Human Rights, Semiha Kacar, the national structure is not balanced in Novi Pazar in state institutions, such as the police, judiciary or the army. These institutions were cleansed of Bosniak Muslims in the 1990s. This has been confirmed in the European Commission Report in Serbia for 2015, which states that “the Bosniak community continues to be underrepresented in the local administration, judiciary or police.”⁴ There has been progress, but staffing is still not adequately balanced in relation to the composition of the city’s population. In Novi Pazar there were no recorded cases of discrimination based on being Muslim, but Ms. Kacar pointed out that this is an environment in which Muslims are in the majority. In cities where Muslims are a minority such cases also might not be rare,⁵ although in 2015 there are no records of any type of discrimination in the job market; this has been confirmed by the Commissioner for Protection of Equality (section-opinions and recommendations on complaints on the basis of religious beliefs).

Education

Education can be treated as the most critical issue in this report. History textbooks, especially during times of transition and particularly in countries where there are no alternative textbooks, serve to adapt history to the present, to create an instant version of history that justifies the present and they place education in the necessary historical context. History textbooks in Serbia have changed twice since the beginning of the war in the former Yugoslavia. The first change was during the era of Slobodan Milosevic in 1993, at the height of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The second change was after the fall of Milosevic in 2000, after the beginning of the ‘democratic transition’. In both cases, the motives for changing the textbooks were political. The fact that Serbia is now one of the last countries in the region which still has a state monopoly over the publication of history textbooks, that no equal competition has been introduced, nor is there a choice among alternative textbooks, indicates that both the previous and the new government see history as something that has a state-forming character. It is for this reason that history textbooks remain one of the most reliable historical sources by which we can analyse the ruling political concepts in Serbia.

The way in which history is taught, particularly concerning the wars of the 90s, is subject to constant change and revisionism. As analysed by Stojanovic, who performed a comparative analysis of history textbooks, education in Serbia and the region has always been an important power lever. In the midst of the war in Bosnia in 1993-1994, new history textbooks were published; the objectives of these was to misuse history, a school subject, to create a new and politically useful model of the historical memory, thus creating a great framework with which the ongoing wars could be justified. These

4. European Commission, Serbia 2015 Report, (Brussels: November, 10, 2015): 58.

5. Semiha Kacar, e-mail message to author, December 23, 2015.

textbooks, from which students have been taught for more than 20 years, fabricated the national and historical consciousness. Historical facts were adjusted to the needs; some facts were changed or deleted, while others were reinforced in order to obtain a new mythical narrative. However, after the change of government in 2000, history books have remained the same. In 2002 they were changed, but their essence remains the same and reflects a continuity with Milosevic's system of values.⁶

Greater attention is paid to the war in Bosnia in history textbooks; this is described as a war that has a religious dimension, unlike the one in Croatia. The responsibility is depicted as totally equal, and thus: "The consequences of these conflicts were a disaster for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity or religion. Pogroms of civilians, Serbs, Croats and Muslims, left behind mass graves (Pakrac, Medacki Džep, Ovčara near Vukovar, Gospić, Kazani near Sarajevo, Kozarac, Foča, Sipovo, Bratunac, Srebrenica)." Stojanovic further argues that by mixing and distributing these atrocities throughout the nation there is an intention to demonstrate that the Serbian people were sacrificed in more places than the other peoples. In addition, it is important to realize that the crime in Srebrenica is in the same bracket with all the other crimes, and that this is part of carrying the message of the Serbian authorities that after 2000 all crimes were equal. Stojanovic concludes that the new history textbooks in Serbia retained the interpretation which was found in textbooks dating from the Milosevic era.⁷ Stojanovic stresses that in the history textbooks, the war in Bosnia was placed in the ideological context of the 'eternal conflict' between Christianity and Islam, with the historical framework being set in the late Middle Ages; this is done by using the term 'Turks' for the Bosniak population. In this way, bloody war, accompanied by ethnic cleansing and genocide, is given historical justification and almost a defensive position.⁸ In the comparative analysis of history textbooks, the authors list many examples of misinterpretation, but highlight a flagrant one that can be found in the official 'Eighth Grade History Textbook for Primary Schools'. Here, before mentioning the Srebrenica Massacre against the Bosniak Muslims, the textbook authors refer to the crimes in Srebrenica where the victims were Serbs, citing the results of the Director of the Research Institute of Serbia about suffering, and the statements of one of the members of Radovan Karadžić's defence team. It must be remembered that Radovan Karadžić is currently on trial, indicted for war crimes which include

6. Dubravka Stojanović, "Nastava istorije kao predvojnička obuka," *Reč- Časopis za književnost i kulturu, i društvena pitanja* 83.29 (2013.): 248.

7. See more:

1. Sulejman Bosto, Tihomir Cipek, Olivera Milosavljević, eds., *Kultura sjećanja: 1941. Povijesni lomovi i svladavanje prošlosti*, (Disput Zagreb, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2008.)

2. Sulejman Bosto, Tihomir Cipek, eds., *Kultura sjećanja: 1945. Povijesni lomovi i svladavanje prošlosti*, (Disput Zagreb, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2009.)

3. Tihomir Cipek, ed., *Kultura sjećanja: 1991. Povijesni lomovi i svladavanje prošlosti*, (Disput Zagreb, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2011.)

8. Dubravka Stojanović, Tumačenja istorije, sistem vrednosti i kulturni obrazac, *Republika* (2009): 466-77.

the genocide against Bosniak Muslims, by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The authors argue that this in some way justifies the crimes in Srebrenica and present them as less unacceptable. What is also unacceptable is that the textbook allows the manipulation of the number of victims in Srebrenica, although in a number of judgments by the Hague Tribunal the number of victims has been clearly determined at more than 7,000, while the Commission of the Government of the Republic of Srpska estimated the number of victims in Srebrenica between 7000 and 8000. This manipulation of the number of victims to some extent reduces the sheer enormity of the crime. Another detail that can be observed, one that is certainly remarkable, is that the words ‘massacre in Srebrenica’ are written in bold print. Although the following paragraph states that the International Court of Justice qualified this crime as genocide, there is a suspicion that the bold text is trying to challenge the qualification of genocide against Bosniak Muslims. Also, another problem arises from the incorrect assertion that the International Court of Justice did not blame Serbia for the genocide in Srebrenica; the ICJ judgment of 2007 ruled that Serbia had committed a breach of the Genocide Convention by failing to prevent the genocide from occurring and for not cooperating with the ICTY in punishing the perpetrators of the genocide, in particular General Ratko Mladić, and for violating its obligation to comply with the provisional measures ordered by the Court.⁹

Higher education is another problematic issue in Serbian education. A more critical and important area for analysis is the content of official university textbooks. Textbooks for law students in the field of international humanitarian law and international criminal law offer an outdated and obsolete image of international law. For example, today, more than 20 years after the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, all relevant textbooks still question the legal basis for the establishment of ad hoc tribunals. This question certainly deserves some attention, but is controversial when the official textbook of international criminal law offers nothing more than questions or disputes about whether the Security Council has the competence to establish an ad hoc tribunal, as well as criticisms of the law that the ICTY and the ICTR applied, while failing to examine the already very rich case law of the two courts. More paradoxical is the international humanitarian law textbook, which analyses the International Criminal Court, while tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, in the context of international laws of war, do not seem to be sufficiently important to find place in the official teaching textbook for law students.¹⁰

In one of the official university textbooks on international criminal law the author deals with the ‘case of Srebrenica’. He elaborates as follows: “the case of Srebrenica is presented as an obvious genocide, while only factual notes are given that the Army of the

9. Marijana Toma, ed., *Comparative analysis of history textbooks*, *Regional School for transitional justice Journal*, (Belgrade: Humanitarian Law Center, 2014): 29.

10. Bojan Perovic, *The Collapse of Transitional Justice in Serbia*, *Balkan Social Science Review*, Vol. 6 (2015): 54-55.

Republic of Srpska on 11 July 1995 captured the town of Srebrenica, which was a UN protected area and that on this occasion around 25,000 'Bosnian' women and children were expelled, and in the coming days 7-8,000 men of different ages were systematically murdered or executed. Here the author uses data from The Hague indictment, as well as data from the indictment and the verdict for the general of the Army of the Republic of Srpska, Radislav Krstic. However, the author fails to report data relating to the pre-history of the conflict in Srebrenica and crimes committed by members of the Muslim forces in relation to the Serb population in the area, which was practically destroyed, and which certainly had an impact on the existence of retaliatory motives at large for some members of the RS Army." (page 225-226) Continuing on the Srebrenica case, the author wants to acknowledge the crime, but he provides a wider picture, because: "the crimes are indefensible... but it still has to be concluded that the numbers of people killed cannot be so easily stated; it is not possible to ignore that, this case, apparently, was predominantly about revenge by Serbian soldiers for previous crimes committed by members of the Muslim formations; thus, there is a great question about whether such a 'retaliatory intent' can easily be identified with genocidal intent." (Page 227.) This interpretation of the Srebrenica Genocide is a textbook example of the interpretative denial in which the essence is not to deny the actual facts, but to give them a different meaning and context. The author also analyses the problematic issues in the Krstic judgment (On 2 August 2001, Krstić became the first man convicted of genocide by the ICTY, and was sentenced to 46 years in prison. He was the third person to have ever been convicted under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide), stressing that there was no evidence for the number of 8,000 killed (page 228-233) and then calls into question the concept of responsibility of General Krstic, concluding that in the Krstic case the genocidal intent of the convicted general was established in a vague and uncertain way (page 232).¹¹

An additional problem in the field of education is school textbooks for national minorities (especially Albanians and Bosniaks), people who tend to be adherents of Islam. Although in previous years the Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia also found that the rights of Bosniak students were being violated as they were not receiving education in their mother tongue and found that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development had failed to take measures in order to correct all the problems and obstacles standing in the way of organizing classes in the Bosnian language, this bad practice had not been rectified by 2015, but was even worse.¹² (Example: the Ombudsman, based on the complaint of the National

11. Milan Škulić, *Međunarodni krivični sud-nadležnost i postupak*, (Beograd: Centar za publikacije Pravnog fakulteta u Beogradu, 2005.)

12. Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia, *Povredena prava učenika bošnjačke nacionalnost da se obrazuju na maternjem jeziku*, (2014). Accessed November 19, 2015. <http://www.pravamanjina.rs/index.php/sr/podaci/dokumenta/-/611-povredena-prava-učenika-bonjake-nacionalnost-da-se-obrazuju-na-maternjem-jeziku>

Council of Bosniak National Minority, carried out an inspection for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; they confirmed that the situation had not changed, despite the fact that the constitutional and legal authorities had sent recommendations that these omissions be rectified.)¹³

In addition to the Ombudsman, the State Commissioner for Protection of Equality also found that the provisions of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination had been violated at the expense of Bosniak students on several occasions.¹⁴ In 2015, the Ombudsman issued an opinion with a recommendation that the decision taken by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development to organize bilingual teaching in Serbian and Bosnian languages in the 2014/15 academic year was not a good decision, as it had been made against the will of the students and parents who had asked for education in the Bosnian language alone.¹⁵ (The complaint was submitted by the Bosniak National Council.)¹⁶ In particular, during 2015 problems with textbooks for the Albanian minority intensified. Primary school pupils in southern Serbia who attended schools where the language of instruction was Albanian were being forced to learn only from notes, as they had not been given any schoolbooks. The reason for this problem was, once again, the history textbook, which, among other things, showed the leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Adem Jashari, as a hero who had fought the Serbian security services.¹⁷ While the Albanian leaders in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja urged Belgrade to allow Albanian students the same rights, the Ministry of Education, which was in charge of solving this problem, remained silent. Instead of being on the school desks, more than 100,000 books which the Ministry of Education of Kosovo had sent to Serbia have been locked up in Serbian customs since

13. Ombudsman- Recommendations: It is necessary that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development make a decision without delay on the request for granting consent to change the current name of the primary school 'Selakovac' in Novi Pazar; this request was submitted in June 2015. During a review of the application and during the decision-making process, it is necessary that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development keep in mind the powers and reasons why the school has accepted the proposal of the Bosniak National Council for changing the current name of the school; the fact that the proposed change is to the name of a poet held in high regard by this national minority is significant...(2015). Accessed January 1, 2015. <http://www.bnv.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/RB-1208-25-2015-Misljenje-Zastitnik-gradjana-OS-Selakovac-ENG.pdf>

14. Commissioner for the Protection of Equality - Opinion and Recommendation (complaints of the Bosniak National Council against the Ministry of Education about discrimination in education), (2014). Accessed November 22, 2015. <http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs/sr/nacionalna-pripadnost>

15. Ombudsman recommendation, Neophodno precizno urediti način, uslove i kriterijume za izvođenje dvojezične nastave, (2015). Accessed 24 December 2015. <http://www.ombudsman.rs/index.php/lang-sr/2011-12-11-11-34-45/4248-2015-07-16-11-23-54>

16. The Bosniak National Council is the highest representative body of the Sandzak Bosniaks in Serbia. (this body was founded on May 11, 1991 as the Muslim National Council of Sandzak)

17. Adem Jashari was one of the founders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a Kosovo Albanian separatist organization which fought for the secession of Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Jashari was killed by Serbian forces in 1998, along with his supporters and 18 women and 10 children. For Albanians he is a hero. (The National Theatre in Pristina and Pristina International Airport have been named after him.) However, for the Serbians he is considered to be the leader of the terrorist organisation KLA and his death is described as a the liquidation of the terrorist group Jashari.

September. Nagip Arifi, the mayor of Bujanovac, stresses that the Albanian National Council had first asked the Ministry of Education in Serbia to provide them with schoolbooks. Having received no response, they turned to the Kosovo ministry, which donated the books. Arifi explains that it is unclear why all the books are still locked up, if it is only the history textbook that is controversial.¹⁸ The problem is even more complicated; in 2015 for the first time since the agreement in 1999 that Prishtina was to provide textbooks for the Albanian community in Serbia, it was agreed that Belgrade would do the same for Serbs in Kosovo.¹⁹

The findings of the 2015 Expert Mission concluded that, notwithstanding recent and sometimes considerable improvements, there is still a need to increase the availability of good quality textbooks in minority languages and there is a persistent lack of qualified teachers for instruction in minority languages.²⁰

Politics and the Justice System

In 2015 the largest political parties in Serbia did not use Islamophobia as a political tool; the same can be said for previous years. The process of European integration certainly had an impact in that those political parties which won enough votes to enter the National Assembly in the last elections, as well as in previous years, did not use Islamophobic speeches; all the parties currently in the Serbian parliament advocate, at least in words, Serbia's entry into the European Union. The same can be said for laws and regulations that have been adopted over the last decade. There are no laws in Serbia that violate the rights of religious communities, including the rights of Muslims, to follow their preferred lifestyle. On the other hand, certain small far-right political parties have had outbursts, but the significance is not great enough to be analysed in this section. For this reason, these initiatives will be analysed in the section on cyberspace.

Media

The President of the Sandzak Committee for Human Rights stresses that Islamophobia has mostly been spread by the media. The newspapers that dominate in this regard are Kurir, Alo, Telegraf and Pravda (daily newspapers known for giving considerable space to right-wing extremists). According to the same source, the region of Sandzak, predominantly inhabited by Muslims since the time of the so-called Bureaucratic Revolution and the rise of Slobodan Milosevic, has been marked by the

18. Dušan Komarčević, "Kosovski udžbenici zbog Jašarija nepoželjni u Srbiji", *Free Europe*, 17 December, 2015, accessed January 2, 2015. <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/kosovski-udzbenici-zbog-jasarija-nepozeljni-u-srbiji/27433885.html>

19. Besa Malici, "Kosovo i Srbija dogovorili razmenu udžbenika", *Balkan Insight*, September 10, 2015., accessed November 3, 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/rs/article/kosovo-i-srbija-dogovorili-razmenu-ud%C5%BEbenika-09-10-2015>

20. Expert Report on the situation of minority rights in the Republic of Serbia (Anastasia Crickley and Rainer Hofmann 24 September 2015). This involved two independent experts from EU Member States, EU staff from the Commission (DG NEAR) and from the EU Delegation in Belgrade.p. 12, (2015). accessed November 13, 2015, http://www.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/images/pdf/nacionalne_manjine/expert_mission_report_on_minorities.pdf

media as a dangerous place, the centre of radical Islam. The stereotypes that were imposed on the local Muslims at that time have lasted until today. Some are even more pronounced. The media still produces these images, especially in the tabloid press. A greater importance is given to the stereotypes that have been created rather than producing facts that refute them. But the president of the Sandzak Human Rights Committee emphasizes that the blame to some extent must also be put on the local media, especially the Sandzak press. The image that is sent to the world is very problematic, and it is through this portal that the Islamophobic attitude has grown even greater. If you write that a Sandzak Embassy has been opened somewhere in the world, even though this is in fact only a club at an Islamic centre, then this is a purposeful manipulation. When the news relates that pensions in Serbia will be reduced, the media will indicate this as pensions being reduced in Sandzak alone. Anyone who reads this will understand the information as being limited to Sandzak, not that it is actually happening throughout Serbia. Such misinformation and rumours, if constantly repeated, become dangerous. This creates a growth in dissatisfaction and strengthens the antagonism against the government and of extremism; this is something that has to be fought on both sides.

One of the events that has caused the greatest media hysteria is the visit of the Serbian prime minister, Aleksandar Vucic, on the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. There was an incident on this occasion in which the Serbian prime minister, Aleksandar Vucic, was attacked as he was leaving the Potocari Memorial Centre. Some of those present shouted “Vucic out!” but there was also a placard reading “For every Serb we will kill 100 Muslims”; it is still unknown who these demonstrators were. Mr. Vucic himself stated after the incident that he received information that football hooligans might have come from Serbia.²¹ This incident in Srebrenica completely shifted the focus from the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, in which more than 8,000 Muslims were killed, to a number of conspiracy theories in the media; these filled the front pages. The prime minister, on the other hand, was praised for his professional demeanour and his ability to lower tensions (this appreciation was expressed by politicians from all over the world, the OSCE and several local NGOs). This entire event was preceded by media hysteria about the adoption of the Resolution on Srebrenica in the United Nations; the failure to adopt this resolution was equated with the prime minister’s going to Srebrenica. Regarding the 20th anniversary of Srebrenica Genocide, the Bosniac National Council issued a statement that it is unacceptable for various Serbian groups to carry out organized intimidation of, threats against or arrests of the Bosniaks who attended the event.²²

21. “For every Serb, we will kill 100 Muslims” is a sentence by Prime Minister Vucic from 1995, when he was a member of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS).

22. Bosniac National Council, BNV obilježio “dan sjećanja” na žrtve genocida u Srebrenici, *Bilten no.3*, (September 2015): 14. accessed October 14, 2015, http://www.bnv.org.rs/bilteni/bilten_septembar_2015.pdf

Another event that marked the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide in 2015 was an initiative by NGOs in Serbia calling for an end of denial of the genocide carried out on Muslims in Srebrenica; the action was announced as #sedamhiljada in Belgrade.²³ The Ministry of the Interior banned all public gatherings in Belgrade on the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, citing security risks as a reason. (The right-wing organizations Dveri and Zavetnici, as well as members of the Serbian Radical Party, also announced counter-demonstrations.²⁴) This decision shows that the political elites failed to understand that the freedom of peaceful demonstration is a fundamental human right to be enjoyed and exercised by individuals and groups, unregistered associations, legal entities and corporate bodies. Demonstrations may serve many purposes, including the expression of diverse, unpopular or minority opinions. Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assemblies state that only peaceful demonstrations are protected. A demonstration is deemed peaceful if its organizers have professed peaceful intentions and the conduct of the demonstration is non-violent. The term ‘peaceful’ should be interpreted to include conduct that may annoy or give offence, and even conduct that temporarily hinders, impedes or obstructs the activities of third parties. Counter-demonstrations are a particular form of simultaneous demonstration in which the participants wish to express their disagreement with the views expressed at the main demonstration. The right to counter-demonstrate does not extend to inhibiting the right of others to demonstrate.²⁵ The fact that third parties use peaceful demonstrations as a pretext for violence does not give the state the right to prohibit the peaceful demonstration. It is never right to prohibit peaceful demonstration when the participants are totally non-violent just because there is threat of violence from others. This is true according to international standards; even under the constitution, a ban on peaceful demonstrations in which the participants are completely non-violent cannot be justified because there is a threat of violence by third parties. There is no doubt that there are extremists in society, that there will be violent groups who oppose any particular event. This, however, does not give the state right to deny the conditions to hold a demonstration for participants who, it is believed, will be non-violent.²⁶ The state could and should ban demonstrations where violence is threatened. Even if the state, in principle, is permitted to prohibit a non-violent demonstration just because third parties are threatening

23. Ivana Nikolic, “Nevladine organizacije traže da se prestane sa negiranjem genocida”, *Balkan Insight*, 2 July 2015, accessed October 13, 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/rs/article/nevladine-organizacije-tra%C5%BEe-da-se-p-restane-sa-negiranjem-genocida>

24. Sasa Dragojlo, “Zabranjeni svi skupovi u Beogradu”, *Balkan Insight*, 10 July 2015, accessed October, 12 2015 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/rs/article/zabranjeni-svi-skupovi-u-beogradu>

25. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)/Council of Europe’s European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), *Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, Second edition*, (Warsaw/Strasbourg, 2010): 14-19.

26. Beogradski centar za ljudska prava, *Ljudska prava u Srbiji 2012. Pravo, praksa i međunarodni standardi ljudskih prava*, (Beograd, 2013): 214.

the participants with violence, the state cannot apply such a measure if it itself is responsible for the failure to take all appropriate preventive measures to prevent or stop violent counter-demonstrations.²⁷

Some of the headlines in this period read: “Muslim soldiers burned villages and killed their own people, not Ratko Mladic and the Serbs: Canadian general reveals the truth about Srebrenica!”²⁸ “Vucic shot in the head: See attack of enraged Muslims on Vucic!”²⁹ “This is a genocide? Mladic in Srebrenica frees Muslim women and children!”³⁰ “Kidnapped because of the truth on Srebrenica: In the book he proved that there was no genocide!”³¹ “Definitely on the Bosniak side: Read who will come on July 11 in Potocari!”³² “A secret agreement between the US, Britain and France on Srebrenica!”³³ “Scam of the West: Britain-Serbs, teach your children that you are genocidal!”³⁴ “Organized Lynch: Sarajevo allowed assassination of Vucic!”³⁵ “VIDEO lynching in Potocari: See how the enraged masses attacked Vucic shouting Allah Akbar!”³⁶

Certainly, these are not the only incidents that marked 2015. The term ‘Šip-tar’ is used in the Serbian language as a derogatory term for Albanians when used by South Slavic peoples; this is due to the negative connotations associated with the word. This term is used for Albanians living in Kosovo (95.6% of the Kosovo population is Muslim). In 2015 alone, the State Commissioner for Protection of Equality decided in two cases, submitted by NGOs against media, that the use of

27. Beogradski centar za ljudska prava, *Ljudska prava u Srbiji 2011. Pravo, praksa i međunarodni standardi ljudskih prava*, (Beograd, 2012): 218.

28. Pravda, MUSLIMANSKI VOJNICI SU PALILI SELA I UBIJALI SVOJE, A NE RATKO MLADIĆ I SRBI: Kanadski general otkriva istinu o Srebrenici!, 18 July 2015, accessed October 9, 2015, <http://www.pravda.rs/2015/07/18/muslimanski-vojnici-su-palili-sela-i-ubijali-svoje-a-ne-ratko-mladic-i-srbi-kanadski-general-otkriva-istinu-o-srebrenici/>

29. Pravda, VUČIĆ POGOĐEN U GLAVU: Pogledajte napad razjarenih muslimana na Vučića!, 11 July 2015, accessed October 14, 2015, <http://www.pravda.rs/2015/07/11/vucic-pogodjen-u-glavu-pogledajte-napad-razjarenih-muslimana-na-vucica-video/>

30. Informer, AKO JE OVO GENOCID Mladić u Srebrenici oslobadja muslimanske žene i decu!, 14 July 2015, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.informer.rs/vesti/balkan/22898/AKO-JE-OVO-GENOCID-Mladic-u-Srebrenici-pusta-muslimanske-zene-i-decu-VIDEO>

31. Informer, KIDNAPOVAN ZBOG ISTINE O SREBRENICI U knjizi dokazao da nije bilo genocida!, 2 July 2015, accessed October July 15, 2015, <http://www.informer.rs/vesti/politika/21146/KIDNAPOVAN-ZBOG-ISTINE-O-SREBRENICI-U-knjizi-dokazao-da-nije-bilo-genocida>

32. Pravda, NEDVOSMISLENO NA STRANI BOŠNJAKA: Pročitajte ko će sve doći 11. jula u Potočare, 5 July 2015, accessed October 16, 2015, <http://www.pravda.rs/2015/07/05/nedvosmisleno-na-strani-bosnjaka-procitajte-ko-ce-sve-doci-11-jula-u-potocare/>

33. Pravda, Tajni dogovor SAD, Britanije i Francuske o Srebrenici?, 1 July 2015, accessed October 17, 2015, <http://www.pravda.rs/2015/07/01/tajni-dogovor-sad-britanije-i-francuske-o-srebrenici/>

34. Informer, BRUKA ZAPADA Britanci: Srbi, učite decu da ste genocidni!, 10 June 2015, accessed October 17, 2015, <http://www.informer.rs/vesti/politika/17658/BRUKA-ZAPADA-Britanci-Srbi-ucite-decu-da-ste-genocidni>

35. Kurir, LINČ ORGANIZOVAN: Sarajevo dozvolilo atentat na Vučića!, 12 July 2015, accessed October 18, 2015, <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/linc-organizovan-sarajevo-dozvolilo-atentat-na-vucica-clanak-1855793>

36. Kurir, VIDEO LINČ U POTOČARIMA: Pogledajte kako je razularena masa napala Vučića uz povike Alahu ekber!, 11 July 2015, accessed October 18, 2015, <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/video-haos-u-potocarima-pogledajte-kako-je-razularena-masa-napala-premijera-vucica-clanak-1854873>

the term 'Šiptar' represents a violation of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination.³⁷ In addition to the Commissioner, the Press Council³⁸ found that usage of the term 'Šiptar' in the case "Youth Initiative for Human Rights against daily newspaper "Informer"³⁹ had violated Section 1 of Chapter IV (responsibility of journalists); here the journalist should oppose all those who violate human rights or promote any kind of discrimination, hate speech or incitement. In addition, it was decided that Section 4 of Chapter V, in which it is stated that the journalist must be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media and do everything to avoid discrimination based on race, religion, etc., had been violated. It was also confirmed that the usage of this term is offensive and that as such it should not be used in the Serbian media.⁴⁰ However, although such decisions have been made, this has not prevented the media from abusing the term.

At this point, we will turn to cyberspace, which also spreads intolerable images of 'others'. Some of these initiatives are political ones, including actions by political parties (such as Dveri), while others include webpages, forums and initiatives (Srbin.info, Srpski nacionalisti, Stormfront, SNP Nasi, Nova srpska politicka misao); the latter are mostly ultranationalist and spread Islamophobic content. We will mention only some of the headlines: "Who and when was Vucic allowed to share Serbian land with Muslims"⁴¹, "Patriotic block of Kosovo and Metohija: Belgrade allows Šiptars to have an army"⁴², "Novi Pazar Serbs outraged: They want to build a mosque in the Serbian neighbourhood"⁴³, "Brussels: Vucic agreed that Šiptars in Kosovo receive its

37. Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Opinion and recommendation, 2015, accessed November 19 2015, <http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs/rs/%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82>

38. The Press Council is an independent, self-regulatory body that brings together publishers, owners of print and online media, news agencies and media professionals. It was established for monitoring the observance of the Journalist's Code of Ethics and solving complaints made by individuals and institutions related to media content. The Press Council is also authorized to mediate between aggrieved individuals, institutions and editorial staff, and to issue public warnings in cases when it is determined that ethical standards have been violated, as defined by the Journalist's Code of Ethics. The Press Council is engaged in the education of media professional to act in accordance with the Journalist's Code of Ethics and works to strengthen the role of the media in Serbia.

39. The text on which the Press Council decided is "Four Šiptars beat Serb to death in Austria" (p. 11), which was announced on the front page with: "Crime in Austria: Šiptars lynched Serb."

40. Press Council, Youth Initiative for Human Rights against daily newspaper "Informer", 25 March 2015, accessed November 16, 2015, <http://www.savetzastampu.rs/cirilica/zalbeni-postupci/2377>

41. Dveri, Ko je i kada ovlastio Vučića da deli srpsku zemlju Muslimanima, 14 May 2015, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://dverisrpske.com/sr/nas-stav/6747-ko-je-i-kada-ovlastio-vucica-da-deli-srpsku-zemlju-muslimanima.html>

42. Dveri, Patriotski blok Kim: Beograd dozvoljava Šiptarima da imaju vojsku", 9 March 2015, accessed November 20, 2015, <http://dverisrpske.com/sr/prenosimo/6513-patriotski-blok-kim-beograd-dozvoljava-siptarima-da-ima-ju-i-vojsku-.html>

43. Dveri, Srbi Novog Pazara ogorčeni: „Hoće da grade džamiju u srpskom kvartu“, 7 November 2015, accessed November 21, 2015, <http://dverisrpske.com/sr/prenosimo/7357-srbi-novog-pazara-ogorceni-hoce-da-grade-dzamiju-u-srpskom-kvartu.html>

own country code”⁴⁴, “The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality does not allow the Albanians to be called Šiptars!”⁴⁵, “Russians in Vidovdan came to Gazimestan: Šiptars surrounded them with Kalashnikovs”⁴⁶, “Šiptars threatened to slaughter Serbs”⁴⁷, “Turks conquers Germany like Šiptars did Kosovo”.⁴⁸

The migrant crisis has also hit Serbia. Although political officials acted in accordance with democratic principles and Serbia has received acclaim from the international community, it is nearly impossible for a tragedy of this magnitude to pass without incident. Quite a few media outlets did not report professionally or critically (examples: “Albanians and Wahhabis in Presevo: They take asylum seekers to the mosque and recruit them for radical Islam!”⁴⁹ “Hungarian Prime Minister: Islam has never been a part of Europe, these are the rules of another world”⁵⁰ “MORE REFUGEES: Migrants will soon Islamize Serbia!”⁵¹) The Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia, Sasa Jankovic, appealed to the media and public figures to refrain from outbursts of distrust towards refugees from Syria and other Islamic countries; he stated these people are in no way to blame for the terrorist attacks, but rather are themselves the victims of religious extremism, fleeing and seeking refuge. Terrorists are just trying to provoke fear and hatred among people of Muslim faith; this is their basis for recruiting new terrorists. Mr. Jankovic in particular appealed to the media. The Ombudsman stated that excessively harsh images of violence on the front pages and television screens can only cause additional suffering to families, disturb the public, in particular children, and does not honour the victims.⁵² In response to announcements from some ultra-right organizations who planned to protest against the immi-

44. Srbin info, BRISEL: Vučić pristao da Šiptari na Kosmetu dobiju svoj telefonski pozivni broj, 25 August, 2015, accessed October 2015, <http://srbin.info/2015/08/25/brisel-vucic-pristao-da-siptari-na-kosmetu-dobiju-svoj-telefonski/>

45. Srbin info, POVERENICA ZA ZAŠTITU RAVNOPRAVNOSTI ne dozvoljava da se Albanci nazivaju Šiptarima!, 28 July 2015, accessed October 22, 2015, <http://srbin.info/2015/07/28/poverenica-za-zastitu-ravnopravnosti-ne-dozvoljava-da-se-albanci-nazivaju-siptarima/>

46. Srbin info, RUSI NA VIDOVDAN DOŠLI NA GAZIMESTAN: Šiptari ih okružili kalašnjikovima i pretresali!, 2 July 2015, accessed October 23, 2015, <http://srbin.info/2015/07/02/rusi-na-vidovdan-dosli-na-gazimestan-siptari-ih-okruzili-kalasnjkovima-i-pretresali/>

47. Srbin info, Siptari pretili da ce zakolju Srbe, 21 May 2015, accessed October 24, 2015, <http://srbin.info/2015/05/21/siptari-pretili-da-ce-da-zakolju-srbe/>

48. Pravda, Turci osvajaju Nemačku ko Siptari Kosovo, 18 January 2015, accessed October 25, 2015, <http://www.pravda.rs/2015/01/18/turci-osvajaju-nemacku-ko-siptari-kosovo/>

49. Kurir, ALBANSKI I VEHABIJE U PREŠEVU: Azilante odvođe u džamiju i vrbuju ih za radikalni islam!, 17 September 2015, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/ekstremni-albanci-i-vehabije-koriste-azilante-za-svoju-propagandu-vode-ih-u-dzamiyu-vrbuju-ih-za-radikalni-islam-clanak-1936147>

50. Kurir, MAĐARSKI PREMIJER: Islam nikada nije bio deo Evrope, to su pravila drugog sveta, 16 October 2015, accessed November 3, 2015, <http://www.kurir.rs/planeta/madarski-premijer-islam-nikada-nije-bio-deo-evrope-to-su-pravila-drugog-sveta-clanak-1979283>

51. Kurir, SVE VIŠE IZBEGLICA: Migranti će uskoro islamizirati Srbiju, 2 August 2015, accessed November 16, 2015, <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/drustvo/sve-vise-izbeglica-migranti-ce-uskoro-islamizirati-srbiju-clanak-1880879>

52. Ombudsman’s Statement, Janković: Mediji i javne ličnosti da se uzdrže od izliva nepoverenja prema izbeglicama, 16 November 2015, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://www.ombudsman.rs/index.php/lang-sr/2011-12-25-10-17-15/4413-2015-11-16-11-59-25>

grants, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality warned the public that the constitution and the laws prohibit the spread of any religious, ethnic or racial hatred or discrimination and that the state would not tolerate this kind of behaviour. The commissioner also called on the media to respect journalistic ethics when publishing news stories, reports or headlines. The commissioner strongly condemned the discriminatory recommendation of the Association of Serbian Taxi Drivers to their members not to take immigrants as passengers; he stated that this was another indication of how much xenophobia is still present in Serbia. (27 March 2015)

On the complaint of the organization 'Praxis' from Belgrade against the Association of Serbian Taxi Drivers regarding the statement of Aleksandar Bijelic, president of the association, which was published in the electronic edition of the daily newspaper Blic, dated 24 March, 2015, the commissioner found that the Association of Serbian Taxi Drivers had violated the provisions that prohibit discrimination (24 July 2015).

One of the last incidents happened in late 2015,⁵³ during the trial before the ICTY of Ratko Mladic,⁵⁴ in whose defence Milorad Dodik, president of Republika of Srpska,⁵⁵ testified. In brief, Dodik said that what are we seeing around the globe - the blood and suffering of innocent Western man and the establishment of Daesh/ISIL based on Sharia law – had its beginnings in a political movement of the Bosnian Muslims. Just as the Serbs had to, the whole world today needs to defend itself; they should not accuse anyone of any crimes when dealing with such evil. Testifying in defence of Ratko Mladic, Dodik said that Alija Izetbegovic and his Party of Democratic Action, "in a sense were the forerunner of the current ideology of radical Islam that we see in the world."⁵⁶

Hate Speech and Hate Graffiti

The laws prohibit and sanction acts and hate speech as a public expression of hatred and discrimination. In the last decade Serbia faced major problems in this regard, and in 2015 there were several incidents that are worth mentioning. Hate speech in the media was reduced in 2015, but in Serbia a number of Islamophobic incidents happened. TV Pink is the leading commercial station (with national coverage) in the Serbian television broadcast market, and has gained a strong reputation for its

53. Balkan Aljazera, ICTY: Dodik svjedok Mladićeve odbrane, 7 December 2015, accessed December 22, 2015, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/icty-dodik-svjedok-mladiceve-odbrane>

Kurir, BRANI MLADIĆA U HAGU Dodik: Izetbegović je krivac za rat, 7 December 2015, accessed December 22, 2015, <http://www.kurir.rs/crna-hronika/uzivo-video-dodik-brani-mladica-predsednik-rs-svedoci-pred-haskim-sudom-clanak-2048559>

Alo, SVEDOČI U HAGU Dodik na suđenju - Mladić mu salutirao, 7 December, 2015, accessed December 22, 2015, <http://www.alo.rs/dodik-otisao-u-hag-da-svedoci-mladicu/22517>

54. Top military general accused of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. (including Siege of Sarajevo and Srebrenica massacre)

55. The Republic of Srpska is an administrative entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is one of two administrative entities; the other administrative entity is the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

56. Nemanja Stjepanović, Islamofobija stigla i do Haga, *Pescanik*, December 26, 2015.

entertainment programming, including the reality show program *Farm*. The discrimination against Muslims on this programme was not the first time Muslims have been discriminated against, but the latest incident happened when one of the participants, Tamara Djuric, started screaming and yelling “I will fuck all the Muslims and criminals”. She was disqualified from the reality show on the ground of hate speech (which was attributed to the Muslim singer from Novi Pazar, Semir Dzankovic, another participant in the show, who was also disqualified due to violent behaviour). However, after several days had passed, Tamara Djuric was invited to come back to the show and continuing competing; she ended up as runner-up.⁵⁷

Feelings of the local Muslims were also affected by Miroslav Lazanski, a well-known Serbian military analyst who, according to the leading Bosniak/Muslim media,⁵⁸ has played a role in recent months in an active propaganda campaign against Bosniaks and Islam.⁵⁹ The media state that under the guise of some experts, Lazanski is spreading scandalous hate speech against Bosniaks and Muslims, and inciting hatred. On a talk-show Lazanski stated that he was shocked when he saw Muslim girls in hijab at a religious school in Travnik; he said that the school reminded him of a prison. He added that “If this is the 21st century, then this is terrible.”⁶⁰

The connection between football and some forms of extreme violence is widespread in Serbia; Novi Pazar is no exception. The football team of Novi Pazar plays a key role in the region, attracting thousands of spectators at every football match. There are a number of football matches and violence linked to the football club is prominent in Novi Pazar. According to the respondents, there could be numerous reasons for these conflicts. Sympathies for the club, minority/majority relations in Serbia and political affiliation have been mentioned as the main reasons behind altercations. In the most severe cases, these altercations grow into a violent conflict. This violence can be manifested as symbolic violence (insults on ethnic or religious basis) or as direct physical altercations. Several instances of fights, stabbings and, in the worst case scenario, murders have been recorded.⁶¹

In 2015 alone there have been several incidents, including one against football

57. Kurir, FARMA KO ŠOVINISTIČKA FARSA: E pa, Tamara, i ti si prevršila meru! 2 December 2015, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://www.kurir.rs/stars/video-farma-ko-sovinisticka-farsa-e-pa-tamara-i-ti-si-prevrsila-meru-clanak-2042561>

58. Sandzak Press, Skandalozni govor mržnje Miroslava Lazanskog o Bošnjakinjama sa hidžabom iz Travnika, 7 December 2015, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://sandzakpress.net/skandalozni-govor-mrznje-miroslava-lazanskog-o-bosnjakinjama-sa-hidzabom-iz-travnika-video>

59. Sandzak Live, Skandalozni govor mržnje Miroslava Lazanskog o Bošnjakinjama sa hidžabom iz Travnika, 7 Decembar 2015, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://www.sandzaklive.rs/index.php/srbija-politika/11511-skandalozni-govor-mrznje-miroslava-lazanskog-o-bosnjakinjama-sa-hidzabom-iz-travnika-video>

60. Vijesti.ba, Skandalozni govor mržnje o Bošnjakinjama sa hidžabom, 8 December 2015, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://vijesti.ba/clanak/288521/skandalozni-govor-mrznje-o-bosnjakinjama-sa-hidzabom>

61. Cultural Centre DamaD, Integrated Response of the Community to Human Security challenges in Novi Pazar, (Novi Pazar: Cultural Centre DamaD 2015): 15.

club Rad, the supporters held up a placard reading: ‘There will be war’. However, the flags of Albania, Kosovo and Turkey were also burned.⁶² The other significant incident happened during the game in Cacak against the football club Borac when Borac fans chanted nationalist slogans and insulted the visiting players.⁶³

One of the incidents happened with hate flyers which had scandalous hate speech. These were found on November 15, 2015 in the centre of Belgrade, in front of the primary school. These flyers had messages such as “Muslims are aggressive and bloodthirsty” or “Muslims become bloodthirsty murders who hate all other religions”.⁶⁴

Another problem is graffiti, which represents a form of hate speech. Graffiti is generally seen to be speech directed against a person or persons according to their race, religion, ethnicity, etc. The impact of such should not be underestimated; such graffiti intimidates the population that is being threatened, while also encouraging like-minded creators of hate graffiti. Hate graffiti in Serbia was not rare in the past and in 2015, the Islamic Community of Serbia expressed concern and strongly condemned hate graffiti in Novi Sad (‘Death to Muslims’), adding that this is a way of calling for the members of this religious community to be lynched.^{65 66}



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CONCLUSION

Policy Recommendation for Politics and NGOs

Based on the annual reports for independent authorities (the Ombudsman and Commissioner for Protection of Equality), reports of civil society organisations, the European Commission and the monitoring of media coverage of discrimination

62. B92, Radovci: Biće rata, Pazar: Reakcija, 21 February 2015, accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.b92.net/sport/fudbal/vesti.php?yyyy=2015&mm=02&dd=21&nav_id=960635

63. B92, Novi Pazar uputio žalbu zbog navijača Borca, 14 September 2015, accessed December 23, 2015, http://www.b92.net/sport/fudbal/vesti.php?yyyy=2015&mm=09&dd=14&nav_id=1039367

64. Telegraf, “MUSLIMANI SU AGRESIVNI I KRVOLOČNI”: Jeziv govor mržnje ispred škole U CENTRU BEOGRADA!, 15 November 2015, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/beograd/1837277-muslimani-su-agresivni-i-krvolocni-jeziv-govor-mrznje-ispred-skole-u-centru-beograda>

65. Slobodna Bosna, GOVOR MRŽNJE: U Novom Sadu ispisan grafit “Smrt muslimanima”, 4 February 2015, accessed December 24, 2015, http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/18904/govor_mrznje_u_novom_sadu_ispisan_grafit_smrt_muslimanima.html

66. Photos taken from Slobodna Bosna website, accessed December 29, 2015, http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/18904/govor_mrznje_u_novom_sadu_ispisan_grafit_smrt_muslimanima.html

cases, it is possible to state that discrimination does exist in Serbia, and that it is apparent in various areas. The reasons for the existence of discrimination may be sought in the fact that a certain level of intolerance exists in any society, as well as in the long-term consequences of the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia and armed conflicts that have led to grave economic and social problems in Serbia; these constitute an interruption in the development of democracy and human rights in the country. In addition, there has been a difficult post-socialist transformation, which has resulted in the emergence of a culture of intolerance, with specific vulnerable social groups and their individual members being targeted (ethnic minorities, religious communities and others).⁶⁷

The Islamic community used to be the only institution for Bosniaks in Serbia and therefore had a very important role in preserving the identity of Bosniaks. It also served as the means to articulate the problems that Muslims faced, primarily due to the mass repression of the 90s and later discrimination, which is still present. The position of Muslims in Serbia is burdened with the organizational division of the Islamic community (the Islamic community of Serbia, based in Belgrade and the Islamic community in Serbia, based in Novi Pazar) and the absence of dialogue between the conflicting sides. The Bosniak National Council is the highest representative body of Sandzak Bosniaks in Serbia, but research carried out by the NGO Urban-IN demonstrates that the greatest problems which young people face is that the BNC currently has no specific programs for the integration of minorities, and that their programs actually contribute more to the segregation of minorities.⁶⁸

As the region where Muslims are the majority is one of the poorest in Serbia, to achieve advances in this region, one of the major priorities should be improving the economic situation and attaining prosperity for this region. In this sense, the region needs investments, both domestic and foreign, in order to create new job opportunities. Therefore, the state should pay more attention to this region. A positive signal is the fact that Serbia today is one of the countries in Europe with no far-right political party in parliament; this is the first time since the break-up of former Yugoslavia. Interfaith partnerships are particularly important in spreading awareness about Islam and in standing up to Islamophobia. In addition to the economic dimension, it is necessary to open public debate on important social and political processes. As demonstrated by the latest survey of public perception of the Bosniaks, there is a certain degree of distance, which is growing

67. The Government of the Republic of Serbia, Office for Human and Minority Rights, *Anti-Discrimination Strategy for 2013-2018*, (Belgrade, 2013): 2., accessed December 27, 2015, http://www.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/images/pdf/AD_STRATEGY_ENG_UT.pdf

68. Urban-In, Istraživanje o radu Nacionalnog saveta Bošnjaka i stavovima mladih o sopstvenom učešću i uticaju na rad i programe NSB, Novi Pazar, 2014.

rapidly, about how the level of interaction increases.⁶⁹ On this plan, a significant contribution could be made by NGOs, which could promote a culture of human rights, as well as intercultural and interfaith dialogue. It is important to note that during the writing of this report the author was in contact with the majority of NGOs in Serbia, but none of them had a comprehensive, complete program or project to deal with these issues. Even organizations in Sandzak (for example Urban-IN, Cultural Centre DamaD, Sandzak Committee for Human Rights) deal with projects that are not directly focused on the issues covered in this report. The same is applicable to other NGOs in Serbia. Therefore, NGOs need to take a strong and proactive role in developing and promoting, among other things, youth policy at the state level and at the local level. This can be done through the youth offices; while this method is of great importance, it is also necessary to explore the views and opinions of young people and to create research on the development of educational programs and workshops.

On the other hand, the state should in turn address the issues of education and the teaching materials that are necessary to foster an awareness of diversity, the promotion of a non-violent culture of equality and non-discriminatory practice. The first step would be to remove any content that encourages prejudice or stereotypes in school textbooks and other teaching materials.

As media is identified as one of the weakest links, improving media reporting should be one of the major goals. Measures that might be helpful in preventing tabloid and scandalous reporting, as well as in preventing the spread of hate speech in the media, could be achieved by preparing and organizing training sessions and seminars for journalists and editors. All the above measures should be taken in synergy by the state and non-governmental organizations and a monitoring system should be implemented.

CHRONOLOGY

February

- Hate graffiti in Novi Sad (“Death to Muslims”)
- Football Club Rad (placard: ‘There will be war’ but they also Albanian, Kosovar and Turkish flags were burned)
- Press Council, Youth Initiative for Human Rights against the daily newspaper Informer, (Usage of the term Siptar)

March

- Discriminatory recommendation by the Association of Serbian Taxi Drivers to their members not to drive immigrants

69. Ombudsman, *Percepcija javnosti u vezi sa pravima ranjivih grupa u Republici Srbiji i poznavanje nadležnosti i percepcija Zastitnika gradjana*, Drugo istrazivanje, (Beograd: 2015): 34.

June

- The State Commissioner for Protection of Equality decided in two cases (submitted by the organisations of civil society against media) that the use of the term Siptar represents a violation of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination
- Media hysteria about the adoption of the Resolution on Srebrenica in the United Nations.

July

- The 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide (Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic was attacked as he was leaving the Potocari Memorial Centre) – this was the greatest media hysteria.
- The Bosniac National Council issued a statement that it is unacceptable for various groups of Serbians to conduct organized intimidation of, threats against or arrests of Bosniaks services who attended the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide.
- Banned initiative of NGOs in Serbia that called for an end of genocide denial against Muslims in Srebrenica and announced action #sedamhiljada in Belgrade. (The Ministry of Interior banned all public gatherings in Belgrade)

August/September

- Islamophobic media headlines (immigrant crisis)

November

- The Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia found that the rights of Bosniak students to be educated in their mother tongue had been violated and found that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development had failed to take measures in order to correct all the problems and obstacles standing in the way of organizing classes in the Bosnian language.
- The Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia appeals to the media and public figures to refrain from outbursts of distrust towards refugees from Syria and other Islamic countries.
- Hate flyers with scandalous hate speech were found on November 15, 2015 in the centre of Belgrade, in front of the primary school. These flyers had messages such as “Muslims are aggressive and bloodthirsty” or “Muslims become bloodthirsty murderers who hate all other religions”.

December

- The trial before the ICTY of Ratko Mladic- the testimony of Milorad Dodik, president of Republika of Srpska.
- TV Pink, national television - one of the reality show participants was disqualified from the reality show on the grounds of hate speech (which was attributed to the Muslim singer from Novi Pazar, Semir Dzankovic).
- Problems with textbooks for the Albanian minority. Primary school pupils in southern Serbia who are taught in Albanian did not receive schoolbooks.

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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