
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
SWITZERLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015 unprecedented events which focused attention on Islamophobic and xenophobic incidents occurred in Europe. Chief among these was the Charlie Hebdo massacre in Paris in January, 2015, the Copenhagen attacks in February, 2015 and the Paris terror attacks in November, 2015. The subsequent reaction against Muslims after these attacks opened up recurring debates on the place of religion in the public space in Europe. Islamophobia in Switzerland has also emerged as a distinct factor in the social and political space of the country. Events depicting the institutionalization of Islamophobia and structural racism in Switzerland have deepened this phenomenon. The banning of minarets, headscarf, niqab (face veil) and growing fear of Islam in response to violent extremism and terrorism resulted in stigmatising the religion through anti-jihadi strategies; this has resulted in multi-level discrimination against Muslims and their exclusion from Swiss society. Anti-immigration sentiments, anti-Muslim right-wing politics and an anti-Muslim attitude in the tabloid media are also some alarming factors that have emerged. Since July/August 2015, the question of asylum seekers and migration of Muslims to Europe, as a result of recent civil wars in the Middle East, has generally increased the denigration and dehumanization of Muslims. Challenges have been posed at both the regional and international level, generating stereotyping and often leading to violence and the economic marginalization of Muslims. In presenting this annual report on Islamophobia in Switzerland for 2015, the call is for an analysis and policy recommendation that are constructive and result-oriented. The data collection for this study were taken from recent surveys, newspaper reports, journals, Swiss government documents and religion and racism monitors.

INTRODUCTION

The major events and topics which dominated Swiss political debates and media coverage in 2015 are related to questions of global Jihadism and Muslim migration. The first trend that frames Islamophobia debates in Switzerland is terrorism; this has been influenced by the 7 January 2015 massacre at the office of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, allegedly by two Algerians; this was followed by another terrorist attack in Copenhagen in February 2015. At the end of the year, on 13 November, 2015, also witnessed terrorism-inspired global Jihadism and violent extremism in Paris; this attack set a negative tone and led to debates on xenophobia and Islamophobia in which fear caused Islam to be depicted as an intolerant and violent-prone religion. These events had an impact in general on Muslims living in Europe, the United States of America and more particularly in Switzerland. The second important trend, which directed the debates on Islamophobia, was the question of asylum seekers and immigrants leaving Syria and Iraq and coming to Europe due to civil wars.

By the end of 2015, these two trends were embedded in the larger prism through which Muslims in Switzerland and Europe were viewed; this prism colours other socio-political issues with prejudice and aversion. The present report examines the impact of these negative tendencies on the Muslim presence in Switzerland and the emerging trends of Swiss Islam in the coming years. Here, constitutional acts, acts of violence and changes in the attitude and perception of the Swiss population towards religious minorities are discussed; at the same time, anti-Islamic actions in the media in 2015 will be focused on. The report also examines reactions by politicians, the targeting of religious symbols and architecture, academic institutions and other organisations that have had an impact on Islamophobia.

Since the London and Madrid terror attacks in 2005, and the Danish cartoon controversy in 2006, the critical discourse on Islam has been shaped on the question of immigration, creating fear as Islam is perceived as a threat to European values and peace. These Islamophobic reactions have taken shape as social, political and constitutional acts in Switzerland. The impact has been most visible in social and economic exclusion, and in matters concerned with Muslim attire and architecture. Through the media attention that is given to international conflicts surrounding Muslims and the involvement of Swiss Muslims in the global jihad launched by Daesh/ISIL in Iraq and the Levant, these reactions have made inroads into public debates. These dynamics were also employed for electoral political leverage to curb migrations. Moreover, the launching of controversy which focused on the divergence of Islamic values from Swiss values and the alleged failure of Muslims to be part of Swiss society also aggravated negative feelings. This became evident in 2009 with the shaping of a new amendment (Article 72 clause 3) to the Swiss constitution which bans the construction of minarets on Swiss mosques.

In 2012, as he retired from office after serving 16 years, the chairman of the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism, George Kreis, commented on Swiss attitudes towards foreigners; he admitted that the attitude towards foreigners had worsened over the years, in particular anti-black racism and, to an extent, Islamophobia. On the request of the Swiss Federal Council, the Swiss Ministry of Federal Justice and Police prepared a controversial report in 2013 entitled 'The Situation of Muslims in Switzerland'. The report found that Muslims are diverse on an ethnic, demographic and sectarian basis and pose no threat to Swiss society. However, their integration is hampered not by religious barriers, but rather due to linguistic and socio-cultural barriers. The report completely downplayed Islamophobia in Swiss society. The Islamic Central Council Switzerland (ICCS) welcomed the report, as it helped reduce fear among the Swiss population about Islam and promote a positive image of Islam in Swiss society.¹

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN SWITZERLAND

Demographics and statistics: Switzerland held its last national census in 2012; according to statistical data published in 2015 the population numbers 8.1 million and consists predominantly of French, Italian, German and Roma populations. The country is divided into 26 cantons which control social and economic matters. Muslims make up about 4.9% of the total Swiss population. Almost three-quarters of the Swiss population is Christians: 38.2% is Catholic, 26.9% Protestant, 5.7% of other Christian faiths, 0.3% Jewish and 21.4% has no religious affiliation.²

There are between 350,000 and 400,000 Muslims living in Switzerland; 12% of these are Swiss citizens.³ Most of the Muslim immigrants have an ethnic background from Turkey (16%), the Balkans (43%), North Africa (5%), Sub-Saharan Africa (1%), the Middle East (4%), while 12% are Swiss (naturalized or converts); as a result of an increase in migration and asylum seekers, the Muslim population originates from 30 different countries. The question of religious affiliation is recorded in communal registries in the cantons, but this data are not reliable as only Swiss citizens over the age of 15 can participate. Moreover, as the systematic national census was abandoned in 2000, how religious affiliations are recorded by different communities has been affected.⁴

1. 'Soeren Kern, Switzerland: Multicultural Paradise', 21 March 2013. <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3721/switzerland-multicultural>

2. Statistical Data on Switzerland 2015, Federal Department of Home Affairs, 8. (FDHA).<http://issuu.com/sfso/docs/025-1500?e=2969314/11623591>

3. 2014 Report on International Religious Freedom Switzerland. www.refworld.org/docid/5621054515.html

4. Mallory Schneuwly Purdie and Andreas Tunger-Zaneti, Switzerland (reporting on the year 2014), 562- 578, in Samim Akagonul, Ahmet Alibasic, Jorgen S. Nielsen, Egdunas Racius. 'Yearbook of Muslims in Europe Volume 7', editor in chief Oliver Scharbrodht (Leiden & Boston: BRILL, 2015).

The public debate about Islam in Switzerland is structured around issues that are not the product of Swiss society, but rather are influenced by the larger European debate on Islam. Islam became an important part of the national discourse in Swiss media and politics due to issues like the ban on minarets, headscarf issues, veil (face cover), Muslim girls being exempted from swimming lessons, the question of Muslim cemeteries and halal food; all of these raised the crucial question of integration in Swiss society. These issues are some of the consequences of the immigration that has taken place since the 1960s, mainly from Muslim countries.

The new wave of immigration in Europe, the result of civil wars in the Middle East, particularly after the crises in Iraq and Syria, and poverty in Africa, has created the greatest influx of refugees in 2015 since the end of World War II. According to the United Nations and International Organisation of Migration (IOM), almost 102,000 immigrants arrived in Europe in 2015. Among these immigrants, half were Syrians, 20% were Afghanis and 7% Iraqis.⁵ In July-August 2015, images of the women and children coming from Syria to Europe via the Mediterranean resulted in the acceptance of immigrants on a humanitarian basis; however, after the Paris terror attacks of 13 November, 2015, this influx was halted, due to fear of further terrorists attacks and as part of a strict policy towards migration. Switzerland was no exception to the fear of terror attacks and extremist Islam.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND IMMIGRATION

A referendum in Switzerland was held on 9 February, 2014; this referendum called for the limitation of migration from other European countries; 50.3% of Swiss voters voted in favour of the proposal, exemplifying a rise in xenophobic tendencies and anti-EU sentiments.⁶ The anti-immigration Swiss People's Party (SVP) backed this proposal; the same party also won the election on 15 October, 2015 with 29.4% of vote, giving them total of 65 seats in the lower house of the parliament.⁷ Similarly, in 2014 Swiss voters also approved a plan for the automatic deportation of foreigners who had committed serious crimes or benefitted from fraud. In the referendum, 52.9% voters backed the SVP proposal, while 47.1% voters opposed it.

The Swiss parliament approved these laws in March 2015 and called for enacting a measure that gave discretion to judges and allowed for exceptions to those who had been born and who had grown up in Switzerland. The SVP opposed the

5. Number of Migrants Landing in Europe in 2015 passes 100,000, Europe and Central Asia/Itlay, International Organisation of Migration, 6 September 2015. www.iom.int/news/numer-migrants-landing-europe-2015-passes-100000

6. The Vote against Immigration: An Error for Switzerland ?, The Project for Democratic Union, www.democraticunion.eu/2014/04/the-vote-against-immigration/

7. Anti-Immigration party wins Swiss elections in 'slide to the Right', The Telegraph, 19 October 2015. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/switzerland/11939953/Anti-immigration-party-wins-Swiss-election-in-slide-to-the-Right.html

discretion given to judges and suggested a more rigid text; this will be put to the vote on 28 February, 2016.⁸ The right wing Swiss People's Party is focusing on a ban on asylum seekers from the Middle East, especially from Iraq and Syria as, according to them, such people not only increase the fear of a terror attack, but also create numerous social problems. The representation of foreigners as Muslims in public debates is one of the critical issues that has led to the Islamization of public debates, and there has been a shift of representing foreign workers as Muslims. This shift has been from 'italiophobia' in the 1960s and 1970s to 'islamophobia' in the 1990s and focuses on immigrant workers in the changing discourses on immigration in Switzerland.⁹

Although Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, such policies have a far-reaching impact on its relations with other European countries. Since August 2015, Switzerland has provided refuge to 29,000 asylum seekers, less than the number that has arrived in the rest of Europe. In July 2015 the representative Point de Suisse survey was conducted by the artists' collective, com& com, in collaboration with the University of Basel. 1,000 respondents from every region of the country responded; 61% percent of the 1,000 people surveyed wanted their country to lead in the humanitarian response to the refugee crisis. Nevertheless, 83.1% responded that they did not want to provide refuge in the country for these people, but would agree to give aid in crisis zones; 44.6 wanted the borders to be temporally closed, as they feared an influx of immigrants would damage the prosperity of the country.¹⁰ In a study conducted by Anaid Lindemann and Jorg Stolz it was observed that from 1970 to 2004 religion had become a new tool for defining otherness in Swiss newspapers; this trend supports the theory of the Islamization of immigrants in discussions and the changing discourse about Muslim immigrants, while the coverage of Muslims remained, on average, moderately negative.¹¹

The Swiss arm of PEGIDA (Patriotische Europaer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes or Patriotic Europeans against Islamization of the West) and Stop Islamization of Europe (SIOE) also stand against asylum seekers and immigrants.¹² PEGIDA is an anti-Islam political organization that was established in Germany in 2014; it calls for more restrictive immigration policies against for Muslims. It planned an anti-Islam protest on 15 January, 2015, a date that was soon after the Charlie Hebdo attacks; this

8. Swiss Vote to automatically expel foreign criminals. Sensible or perverse. Le News, 11 February 2016. lenews.ch/2016/02/11/swiss-vote-to-automatically-expel-foreign-criminals-sensible-or-perverse

9. Marc Helbling. 'Islamophobia in Switzerland: A New Phenomenon or a New Name for Xenophobia?', report prepared for the Annual Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association, 3-6, April 2008.

10. Online Survey Point de Suisse II: Results of Representative Survey, 29 July 2015. www.pointdesuisse.ch/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Ergebnisse_repBefragung_PointdeSuisse-II_ENG.pdf

11. Anaid Lindemann and Jorg Stolz, "Use of Islam in the Definition of Foreign Otherness in Switzerland: A Comparative Analysis of Media Discourses between 1970-2004", 45- 58, in *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Volume 2, Issue 1, Spring 2014.

12. 'Swiss police ban protest by German anti-Islam group PEGIDA', The Jerusalem Post, 1 January 2016. www.jpost.com/breaking-News/Swiss-police-ban-protest-by-German-anti-Islam-group-PEGIDA-442478

protest was banned by the Swiss police.¹³ At the same time, the head of the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism, Martin Brunschwig Graf, termed such proposed immigration policies as discriminatory as they would lead to an increased atmosphere of hate.¹⁴

The Human Rights Watch World Report published in 2016 states that the fear of an influx of asylum seekers to Europe, particularly after the crisis in Syria, has led Europe to close its gates. The fear of the politicians and the governments is related to terror attacks; Muslim refugees have become the scapegoats. The polarizing us-versus-them narrative, Islamophobia and the demonizing of refugees has now entered mainstream politics and has led many governments to curtail rights based solely on xenophobic attitudes. The current influx of refugees is the greatest since World War II; almost 1 million asylum seekers have now fled to Europe, with 60 million others being displaced. The result is a public discourse filled with hatred against Muslims; due to the nexus of refugees and terrorism in the media, Muslims now face discrimination.¹⁵

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

The 46th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Davos-Klosters from 20 to 23 January, 2016 had the theme ‘Mastering the Fourth Industrial Revolution’; here the subject of terrorism and the migration crisis in Europe was adopted as a subtheme. The talks focused on tackling violent extremism and the question of Daesh/ISIL.¹⁶ The question of armed violence and the impact of globalization has today reframed the foreign policy agenda in Switzerland. The nexus between peace and development has been depicted by Agenda 2030; here one of the seventeen Sustainable Development goals, that is ‘peaceful and inclusive societies’, was adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September, 2015.¹⁷ As part of Agenda 2030, Switzerland has had to develop strategies, introducing means that reduce poverty and exclusion in society through parliamentary acts.

In October 2015, the Swiss Federal Council approved a strategy to counter violent extremism and terrorism; this is based on four pillars of prevention, law enforcement, protection and crisis management. This strategy has led to the creation of a new Intelligence Service Act, the *Nachrichtendienstgesetz*, to counter terrorism activities. Peace

13. Police Ban first PEGIDA demonstration in Switzerland, Mail Online, 22 January 2015, www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/articles-3412399/Police-ban-PEGIDA-demonstration-Switzerland.html

14. Swiss People’s party leader calls for ban on more Muslim refugees to Switzerland, Refugee Resettlement Watch, 12 January 2015, <http://refugeeresettlementwatch.wordpress.com/2015/01/12/swiss-peoples-party-leader-calls-for-ban-on-more-muslim-refugee-to-switzerland/>

15. Human Right Watch World Report 2016, ‘Twin Threats: How the Politics of Fear and the Crushing of Civil Society Imperil Global Rights’, 1-20, www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2016_web.pdf

16. What is the Theme of Davos 2016, www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/11/what-is-the-theme-of-devos-2016

17. Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

promoting measures are to be developed to help counter violent extremism and to support counter-terrorism efforts. Such measures include vocational training to ensure that unemployed Muslims have better employment opportunities, as well as youth training through Global Community Engagement in order to promote a sense of community, and bringing Muslims out of the ghettos; the resilience fund in Geneva will also contribute to community-lead initiatives for countering violent extremism.¹⁸

Earlier in Switzerland, Islamophobia affected more societal-level interactions, being confined to the exclusion of immigrants and issues surrounding their life styles. However, with an increase in Muslim terrorist acts and Muslim extremism in Europe, there has been a shift in Islamophobia; as a result more political issues have emerged and these have had an impact on other aspects of society. The fear of terrorist attacks by Muslims in Switzerland has increased with the emergence of the Daesh/ISIL involvement in the Paris attacks in November 2015; according to the Swiss Federal Intelligence Services (FIS), in 2012 the danger associated with al Qaeda was termed as medium. On 1 January, 2015 al Qaeda was banned with an emergency statute.¹⁹ With the rise of Daesh/ISIL, the risk of extremist terror attack and supporters of jihad has become the top worry; but this is not an abstract concern. The Swiss Federal Department of Defence has noted a higher risk of attack in Switzerland after the attacks on the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris.²⁰

Since October 2015, almost 40 jihad-motivated trips have been recorded, in addition to 70 cases of suspected terrorist activities and twenty cases of criminal investigation. The Swiss response to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is mostly concerned with security and surveillance; this is due to the consideration that prevention is an important factor. The aim of this policy is to detect radicalization, to prevent the ghettoization of immigrants, as has happened in France, and to ensure the integration of immigrants in society. Jihad-motivated travel to Syria or Iraq is one of the most serious security issues facing Switzerland; in particular, the return of such people after having been indoctrinated and training by the jihadis, as well as being influenced by the ideologies existing in these conflict zones all pose a serious threat to Swiss security.²¹ This has had a serious impact on right-wing politics, leading to the creation of Islamophobic political agendas. According to the report, until now the influence of electronic media on communicative behaviour has had the greatest impact on male individuals who have unsatisfactory future prospects and who are using social networks in Switzerland.²²

18. Counterterrorism Strategy for Switzerland³, 2015, www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/41397.pdf

19. Switzerland's Security, 26. www.vbs.admin.ch/internet/vbs/en/home/aktuell/150505f.parsys.10960.downloadlist.82638.DownloadFile.tr

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid, 17.

22. Ibid, 22.

The shifting trends of Islamophobia from the imagined fear of Islam and Muslims in European societies to their actual presence and attacks have affected not only international politics, but also the national political landscape of Switzerland. In 2015, the Swiss adopted a so-called ‘anti-jihadi strategy’ to counter extremism in the wake of the Paris attacks; this strategy included monitoring social media and networks to combat jihadism by preventing propaganda or incitement to violence. In addition, preventive interviews have been conducted, bans have been introduced, inquiry alerts concerned with deportation or revocation of residency and integration measures to prevent the marginalization of Muslims have also been included to counteract radicalization and to prevent jihad-motivated travel, particularly for lone perpetrators or small groups. It was stated that from 2015 until the present time jihad-monitoring has identified 200 users involved in distributing jihadist ideas.²³ Similarly, on December 2015, Geneva, which has a border with France, was put on high terror alert for suspected jihadists who were about to carry out an alleged terrorist attack on Swiss soil.²⁴

The head of the Federal Office of Police, Niccoleta Della Vella, while commenting on the Swiss anti-jihadi strategy, stated that radical Muslims and Muslim organizations should be considered separately; the second group represents Muslims, not terrorists. Activities such as suddenly abstaining from alcohol, rejecting values of Swiss society or acting withdrawn from it should be identified as part of the anti-jihadi strategy. For example, in December 2015, police in the city of Zurich arrested two suspects travelling from Turkey for an alleged connection with the banned Islamic militant groups. The head of the Swiss Federal Police Office proposed a travel ban on radicalized youth to prevent jihadi radicalization.²⁵

In Switzerland, along with anti-jihadi strategies, counter-radicalisation measures have also been introduced for Muslims. This is particularly important, as such strategies exclusively target Muslim communities. Different cantons have adopted strategies to counter radicalisation. In Geneva, there is work on integration through collaboration; this is a city that has a higher level of Muslim unemployment. In Zurich, a bridge-building role with the Muslim communities has been adopted, while in St-Gallen round-table talks with imams and Muslims groups and different religious groups/representatives have been introduced to counter radical ideas. When the president of An’Nur mosque, Atef Shanoun, was interviewed on Swiss public television (SRF) about the controversy of the

23. Switzerland’s Security, www.vbs.admin.ch/internet/vbs/en/home/aktuell/150505f.parsys.10960.downloadlist.82638.DownloadFile.tr

24. Bern Officials launch Geneva terror probe, *The Local*, 10 December 2015. www.thelocal.ch/2015210/bern-prosecutor-launches-geneva-terror-probe

25. Police chief weighs in on anti-jihadi measures, 12 November 2015, SWI, www.swissinfo.ch/eng/travel-ban-police-chief-weighs-in-on-anti-jihadi-measures/41773548

presence of three radicalized youth, the mosque leader clearly stated that he had no information on this matter this and also argued against the idea that prayers should be termed as hate speech.²⁶

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND POLITICS IN SWITZERLAND

Since 9/11, right-wing populism in Europe has focused on a hostile attitude towards Islam; this has gained more popularity and has influenced the political culture. In Switzerland, the constitution stipulates that there is a 46-member Council of States and that there are 200 members in the National Council. The Federal Council or cabinet is a seven-member executive council. The Swiss political system is stable, as since 1959 there have been four parties that have governed; however, in 2008, the Federal Council has been comprised of two members from each of the Scheweizerische Volkspartei (SVP), the Free Democratic Party of Switzerland (FDP), the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland (SPS) and the Christian Democrat People's party of Switzerland (Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei der Schweiz - CVP).

The Swiss People's Party (SVP) is a right-wing anti-immigration party; this party won a large share of the vote in the Swiss parliamentary elections held in October 2015. In 2010, Ulrich Schlur of the SVP launched an anti-Islamization manifesto for Switzerland. In 2014, SVP poled over 26% of the votes. Since 1999, SVP has support from 22% of electorate. In 2009 SVP played an important role in the banning of minarets and they base their politics on the themes of Islam and the dangers it poses to Swiss society. The linking of anti-immigration politics with anti-Islamic rhetoric has played an important role in the party's success since 2001.

On 29 November, 2009, Switzerland became the first country in Europe to vote to curb the religious practices of Muslims; 57.5% of people voted in a referendum that favoured a ban on the construction of minarets. Article 72 of the Swiss federal constitution, which is concerned with relations between the state and religion, was amended to include Paragraph 3, which states 'the construction of minarets will be forbidden'. Foreign Architects Switzerland (FAS) challenged the ban on the construction of minarets. The call for the ban was supported by politicians from the Democratic Union of the Centre (SVP/UDC) and the Federal Democratic Union (EDU/UDF), an evangelical conservative party. However, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, a majority of the politicians and members of parliament opposed this move.²⁷

26. Simon Bradley, 'Steering Swiss Youngsters Away from Radicalization', 17 November 2015 http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/anti-jihadi-strategy_steering-swiss-youngsters-away-from-radicalisation/41783644

27. Patrick Haenni and Stephane Lathion. Eds. 'The Swiss Minaret Ban: Islam in Question. Religioscope Institute, Switzerland', 2011. www.minaret.li/resources/ReligioscopeSwissMinareteBan.pdf

Michael Hermann from the Zurich Sotomo research institute observes an increase in anti-Muslim sentiments being expressed through the Swiss political system.²⁸ According to a report published by the Vox series of the research institute led by Hans Hirter and Adrian Vatter, it has been revealed that although left-wing/right-wing politics have shaped the vote, the curb on the expansion of Islam and the symbolic issues related to the presence of Islam are an important motive for the voters. This issue became prominent in wake of terror attacks and the rise of Islamist militants in Europe; in Switzerland there are only four mosques that have minarets and these are not used for the call to prayers and pose no real danger to the Swiss architectural landscape.²⁹ An Amnesty International Report in 2012, 'Choice and Prejudice', termed the constitutional clause that prohibited the building of minarets in Switzerland as discriminatory.³⁰

In May 2015, 13 Muslim graves were vandalized in Lausanne, Switzerland at the Bois de Vaux cemetery.³¹ In contrast, in 2012, a nationwide ban on burqas (Muslim religious dress for women) was rejected by the Swiss parliament. France was the first country to ban full face veil in public places in 2010, followed by Belgium in 2011. A people's initiative that was supported by the Swiss People's Party supported the ban on the face veil in public places, as they believed that Switzerland is threatened by Islamisation. The left-wing Green party opposed this initiative, as it would discriminate against an entire religious community and only help to spread Islamophobia.

The SVP considers question of minarets, the burqa and niqab as symbols of radical Islam and as representatives of Islamic power. On 25 November, 2015, the parliament in Ticino, the Italian-speaking southern canton, approved the law banning women from wearing dress that covers their faces in public and a fine of 10,000 francs was introduced. In 2013 a referendum was held in the canton of Ticino and the ban on face-covering in the public sphere was approved. Two-thirds of the voters supported the initiative in this referendum. Amnesty International termed this a black day for human rights in the canton. However, Ticino's parliament imposed the ban to deal with extremism while Giorgio Ghiringhelli, who drew up the proposal for the ban, said that this ban gives a clear message to Islamic fundamentalists. In July 2014 the European Court for Human Rights

28. John Revill and Andrew Morse, 'Calls to Curb Muslim Immigration Rise in Switzerland', *The Wall Street Journal* 12 January 2015, www.perrylawgroup.com/?p=871.

29. Hirter, Hans; Vatter, Adrian (2009): Analyse der eidgenössischen Abstimmungen vom 29. November 2009. Bern. Online verfügbar unter: http://www.polittrends.ch/abstimmungen/abstimmungsanalysen/vox-analyse/2009-11-29_VoxD.pdf, zuletzt geprüft am 01.05.2010.

30. 'Choice and Prejudice: Discrimination against Muslims in Europe', Amnesty International, 2012, www.amnesty.si/media/uploads/files/eur010012012.pdf

31. 13 Muslim graves were vandalised in Switzerland, *Muslim Mirror*, 5 May 2015, <http://muslimmirror.com/eng/13-muslim-graves-vandalised-in-switzerland/>

declared that French ban on full face-covering in public spaces was consistent with the human rights conventions.³²

ISLAMOPHOBIA: EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND INITIATIVES

Since the 1970s, public debates on immigration have become one of the central issues in the social and political landscape of Europe. According to Salman Sayyid, Islamophobia is understood as the regulating and disciplining of Muslims along the Western horizon.³³ In the 1990s, the debate on immigration included the integration of Muslim immigrants into European society and the adoption of European values. In the post 9/11 period, the debates on immigration were linked to global events; this changed to a fear of Islamisation in Europe and the emergence of right-wing politics, thus increasing xenophobia towards Muslims and their life style in Europe. This had an impact on job-market discrimination against Muslims, particularly due to a fear of Islam and Muslims in societies and had an adverse effect on their employment prospects.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe observed that compared to other European countries, Swiss Muslims are better off in education and financial status.³⁴ Swiss society witnessed changes with the rise of immigration from the 1970s; the new immigrants brought their own ways of educating their children, that is, according to Islamic principles. This had impact on the emerging life-style of the immigrants and their children, creating an alternative from that prevalent in Swiss society. In July 2015, Swiss authorities in Zurich refused to give permission to the Al Huda Association for the establishment of an Islamic kindergarten; here they proposed to teach Islamic principles, Arabic and Qur'an to students. The proposal was rejected due to a fear of a radical interpretation of Islam, which was thought to be in opposition to the secular nature of the Swiss education system. In November 2015, Switzerland requested that the Egyptian Ministry of Endowment translate copies of the Qur'an, Muslim rituals and religion for the Muslim youth in Switzerland, in an attempt to prevent young people from following youth extremist or radical ideologies.³⁵

A study published by Jacqueline Grigo at the University of Zurich was aimed at studying people who wore religious clothing; it found that such people have difficul-

32. Burka Banned in Ticino, Switzerland, As Muslim women face fine upto £ 6,500, 26 November 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/11/25/burkas-banned-switzerland-muslim-women_n_8649340.html

33. Salman Sayyid, 'Thinking through Islamophobia,' In Thinking through Islamophobia, ed. S. Sayyid, S. and Abdoolkarim Vakil, 1-4, New York: Columbia University Press, 15-17.

34. OSCE expert concerned by Swiss Islamophobia, 15 November 2007, www.swissfo.ch/eng/osce-expert-concerned-by-swiss-islamophobia/6251966

35. Switzerland requests translated Islamic books from Egypt, NSNBC International, 29 November 2015. <http://nsnbc.me/2015/11/29/switzerland-requests-translated-islamic-books-from-egypt/>

ty in finding employment or getting accommodation.³⁶ Similarly, in January 2016, thirty male baggage handlers at the Geneva international airport were refused airport passes. These employees were Muslims from France, and had no criminal record. Such incidents of discrimination against Muslims became rampant after the January 2015 attacks in Paris due to heightened security concerns in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, certain initiatives and organisations are either promoting or countering Islamophobia. The ‘Citizen’s Initiative’, which was launched during the controversy surrounding minaret construction, has played an important role in forming opinion in Swiss society on the matter of revising the constitution. This group drew an analogy between Islamic law and Swiss law, as well as focusing on the question of Islam invading the nation via minarets. Certain Muslims organisations played an important role in Switzerland in countering Islamophobia and attempting to better integrate Muslims in Swiss society. Chief among these were the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (FIDS/FOIS), the Coordination of Islamic Organisations in Switzerland (KIOS), the League of Muslims in Switzerland (LMS), Geneva Islamic Centre and the Turkish Islamic Foundation for Switzerland. However, the Bern-based Islamic organisation, the Islamic Central Council of Switzerland (ICCS), was alleged to have connections with terrorists organizations. Some of its members were arrested on charges of terrorism. Swiss police also opened criminal cases against Islamic council members in December 2015; these have been contested by ICCS members.³⁷

MEDIA, CYBERSPACE AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

The Swiss political system has a particular feature of participation by citizens through direct democratic means. The media plays an important role in changing public perceptions in this regard. The Swiss constitution guarantees the freedom of press in Article 17, while Article 93 states the independence of broadcast media; the penal code prohibits racial hatred, discrimination, spreading racist ideology and denying crimes against humanity. The state-owned Swiss Broadcasting Corporation dominates the media market. Since the 1980s, controversial questions relating to Islamism, jihadism and Muslim immigrants have dominated the Swiss media debates and news headlines. There has been an increase in Islamophobic tweets and attacks against foreigners on Facebook, blogs, TV and in posters.³⁸ There are also Islamophobic

36. When did showing your faith become so controversial, SWI, 26 February 2015. www.swissinfo.ch/eng/signs-of-religion_when-did-showing-your-faith-become-so-controversial-/41292538

37. Swiss investigate top member of largest Islamic organization for jihadist propaganda, DW Made for minds, 19 December 2015. <http://www.dw.com/en/swiss-investigate-top-member-of-largest-islamic-organization-for-jihadist-propaganda/a-18929810?maca=en-rss-en-all-1573-rdf>

38. Ramon Grosfoguel, The Multiple Faces of Islamophobia, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Vol-1, Issue 1 fall 2012, 9-33. ETTINGER, Patrik, IMHOF, Kurt (2006). “Ethisierung des Politischen und Problematisierung religiöser Differenz. Schlussbericht”, research carried out in the context of NFP 58 Religionsgemeinschaften, Staat und Gesellschaft.

statements highlighted by politicians in Switzerland, mainly those from the right-wing Swiss People's party. The Berne regional tribunal found the secretary general of the Swiss People's Party (UDC), Martin Baltisser and his substitute Silvia Bar guilty of racism on 30 April, 2015 for using slogan "Kosovars Stab Swiss".³⁹

According to the eighth OIC observatory report on Islamophobia in 2015, the focus of media on the heinous acts of Daesh/ISIL and other extremist groups worldwide has been associated with Islamic values and jurisprudence; the acts of such groups against Western civilians have been used to manipulate the perception of Islam. Such portrayal by the media, due to a 'fear' of Islam, resulted in impression that all religious Muslims were radicals and extremists.⁴⁰ Swiss media reported the alleged radicalization of Muslims in the city of Winterthur and Geneva, where mosques are alleged to have been responsible for radicalising the youth, thus increasing the fear of Islam in the region.⁴¹ This fear has increased studies in Muslim radicalisation and extremism, as shown by the study conducted by Miryam Eser Davolio, who headed the study of the radicalisation of young Swiss people for Zurich University of Applied Sciences. She points out that certain areas within the cantons of Geneva and Ticino were more likely to develop radicalization tendencies due to the presence of unemployed Muslim youth in these areas. The university looked at 66 cases recorded between 2001 and July 2015 and found that out of the 66 people, 16 were below the age of 25, while 3 women were found to be involved in radicalization, below the European average of 10%.⁴²

In the Freedom of the Press 2015 Report-Switzerland, it was reported that Christopher Blocher, the right-wing politician of SVP planned to invest in Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ), the country's leading newspaper, which plays an important role in influencing the public opinion to right wing policies. In December 2014, another report published by the government expressed concern over the growing concentration of media ownership and lack of independent print media in 26 cantons.⁴³

One of the problems with the Swiss anti-jihadi strategy and the media's role is that it does not address Islamophobia. Miryam Eser Dacolio of Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) said in her study into radicalization of Swiss young people that it is very important to address Islamophobia; the presence of people who are afraid of Muslims and do not approve of them enhances the theory that Muslims are being

39. Swiss People's Party (UDC) found guilty of racism, *Le News*, 30 April, 2015. <http://lenews.ch/2015/04/30/two-swiss-peoples-party-udc-leaders-found-guilty-of-racism/>

40. Eight OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia, May 2014-April 2015, 42nd Council of Foreign Ministers, Kuwait 27-28 May, 2015. www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/uploads/islamophobia/2015/en/reports/8th_Ob_Rep_Islamophobia_Final.pdf

41. Winterthur at centre of Swiss jihadi fighter claims, SWI, 19 November 2015, www.swissinfo.ch/eng/islamic-radicalisation_winterthur-at-centre-of-swiss-jihadi-fighter-claims/41789612

42. Simon Bradley, 'Steering Swiss Youngsters Away from Radicalization', 17 November 2015 http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/anti-jihadi-strategy_steering-swiss-youngsters-away-from-radicalisation/41783644

43. Freedom of the Press-2015-Switzerland, 12 November 2015, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5653134f11.html>

stigmatized and humiliated while also facing exclusion in different sections of society. This increases the chances of radicalization by causing polarization within society. Dacolio believes that the internet and social circles are playing a more crucial role in radicalization than the mosques, which act as more preventive organizations where incorrect beliefs are corrected. Rather than closing the door on persons who have been radicalised out of fear, the mosque can be central in counselling such persons.⁴⁴

ISLAMOPHOBIC ACTORS IN SWITZERLAND

In a study conducted by University of Zurich on the problematization of Muslims in public communications, it was discovered that the framework used by the Swiss media has mostly been defined by international wars and conflicts. The London and Madrid bombings in 2005 created a perception of threat by Muslims in Swiss society, creating not only a clash of civilisations, but also a clash of values in public debates; this resulted in the creation of stereotypes. Another important reason for the rise of Islamophobia was its use by SVP leaders as a central tool for politics; this also affected the commercialisation of media and was used by right-wing politicians.⁴⁵

Islamophobic actors in Switzerland emanate from the right-wing Swiss People's Party, as well as from right-wing think-tanks, print and social media. In the counter-jihadist networks there are intellectuals who actively participate in networks and others who validate the discourse through online actors. SVP/UDC's MP Dominique Baetig framed the citizen's initiative for Islam as one that provided identity for the poor population to avenge the humiliation of those who are at war with the values of modernity. Ulrich Schluer, president of the Egerkingen committee of the citizen's initiative, considered the minaret issues; in wake of the terror related events in Europe this sparked strong emotions in the Swiss public. Other Islamophobes include Daniel Zingg, a member of Reformed Church in Bern who politically belongs to Federal Democratic Union (EDU/UDF) and is active within a free evangelical community, the national councillor Walter Wobmann (SVP/UDC), the national councillor Jasmin Hutter (SVP/UDC), the national councillor Oscar Freysinger (UDC) and the journalist Mireille Vallette; the latter launched an association to fight the Islamization of Switzerland called the Association Suisse Vigilance Islam (ASVI). The aim of this association was to defend Swiss democracy from the expansion of Islam.⁴⁶ In 2011 Daniel Streich, a former Islamophobe who was behind the minaret

44. Simon Bradley, 'Steering Swiss Youngsters Away from Radicalization', 17 November 2015 http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/anti-jihadi-strategy_steering-swiss-youngsters-away-from-radicalisation/41783644

45. Ettinger, Patrik. The problematisation of Muslims in public communication in Switzerland. fög discussion paper 2008-0004. fög – Forschungsbereich Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft, Zürich. 2008. http://www.foeg.uzh.ch/analyse/publikationen/Problematisierung_Muslime.pdf

46. Switzerland gets a powerful new anti-Islam voice: Mireille Vallette, Diversity Macht Frei, diversitymatch.blogspot.com/2015/06/Switzerland-gets-powerful-new-anti.html

issue in Switzerland, converted to Islam. In April 2015, SVP leader Martin Baltisser was fined by the regional court for racial discrimination against Kosovar immigrants. Walter Wobmann, a parliamentarian from the SVP led the initiative for the burqa ban in Switzerland and started the new country-wide initiative in September 2015.

1.9 Islamophobia and the Justice System in Switzerland

In the Swiss justice system, judicial decisions are made for the most part at the cantonal level. The Swiss Federal Supreme Court is empowered to review the decisions made at the cantonal level. In Switzerland, the Federal Commission on Racism was created in 1995 to implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial discrimination (CERD).

The President of the Swiss Federal Supreme Court contested the legal status of the citizen's initiative as a violation of religious freedom in accordance with Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). In the constitution dated 18 April, 1999 (Article 15) the Swiss Confederation committed to respecting religious freedom; a similar commitment has been made in international treaties concerning human rights that have been ratified by the constitution, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 9, paragraph 1) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18, paragraphs 1, 2 and 4, Article 27).

In 2014 the Federal Commission against Racism in Switzerland reported incidents of racial and Islamophobic tendencies. These included SVP posters titled 'Aarau or Ankara' and 'Baden or Baghdad' with a tagline saying 'have a safe future'. Posters showing Muslims praying in front of the Swiss parliament building, with the Muslim depicted from behind, were found to be offensive. During the minaret issue, posters were issued depicting minarets as rockets penetrating the Swiss flag and a female wearing a black niqab. The report also stated that the bilateral treaties with the EU were under threat due to attacks on the free movement of people by right-wing politicians. It also discussed incidents of hate speech against different racial groups within Switzerland. However, the report considered the use of internet and social media as public space, as ruled by the Zurich higher court in 2013, although social media has a huge impact on the behaviour of the people. The report mentioned Muslims in Switzerland as being one of the main victim groups subject to xenophobic stereotyping by a section of the media and right-wing politicians.⁴⁷ Before the October 18, 2015 federal elections, the FCR warned about a dangerous trend of hate speech, stigmatizing words and xenophobic tendencies over immigration, asylum policies and people who were already under threat.⁴⁸

47. Report of the federal Commission Against Racism (FCR) to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination CERD, Berne 21 January 2014. www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/140121_REPORT_FCR_to_CERD_2014.pdf

48. Switzerland: Racism Commission Sees Risks Ahead of Federal Elections, Euroasia Review, www.euroasiareview.com/31082015-switzerland-racism-commission-sees-risks-ahead-of-federal-elections/

On 19 December 2015, the office of the Swiss attorney general started criminal proceedings against the directors of the Islamic Central Council of Switzerland on suspicion that they had violated Article 2 of the federal law which prohibits groups like Al-Qaeda or Daesh/ISIL. The office of the Swiss attorney general has 46 criminal proceeding cases related to jihad-motivated terrorism. On 16 October, 2015, the office of the attorney general also filed charges against four Iraqi nationals for supporting criminal organisations.⁴⁹ However, ICCS members defended the director accused of these charges.

CONCLUSION

Policy Recommendations

According to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, Islamophobia depicts the disintegration of human values and most Islamophobic incidents remain under-reported due to the non-availability of relevant data.⁵⁰ The president of the Swiss Council of Religions, Gottfried Locher, considers good relations between Islam and Christianity to be important and that followers curb extremism and Islamophobia. To this end, it is important that people talk with one another rather than talk about one another.⁵¹ An in-depth study conducted between 2010 and 2014 to study racist and xenophobic attitudes in Switzerland and was published in 2015; here it was found that there was a stable base of 20% of Swiss residents having negative attitudes towards Muslims while 20 to 30% held hostile attitude towards Muslims.⁵²

In this study, important policy recommendations for addressing the worsening condition of Islamophobic attitudes in Switzerland included:

- A new approach is needed to deal with Islamophobia; this should address pluralism within society instead of adopting policies that limit religious freedom of immigrants or deals harshly with asylum seekers through laws that curb immigration.
- There is a need to develop an alternative narrative in order to deal with the proliferating Islamophobic industry in the country.
- Treating Muslims as the 'other' in society will lead to the worsening of extremist attitudes within the Muslim community. Real inclusion involves removing the

49. Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland opens a criminal proceeding, The Federal Council Bern 19 December 2015. www.news.admin.ch/message/index.html?lang=en&msg-id=60101

50. Islamophobia in Europe, Open Society Foundation, April 2015. www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/islamophobia-europe

51. 'The relationship between Islam and Christianity is key', 13 September 2015, SWI, www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss-council-of-religions_-u20cthe-relationship-between-islam-and-christianity-is-key

52. Clare O'Dea, 'One in four Swiss residents has xenophobic attitudes', 13 February 2015, www.swissinfo.ch/eng/racism_one-in-four-swiss-residents-has-xenophobic-attitudes/41271694

indicators of marginality for Muslims, while also improving their socio-economic conditions in society. Integration is also dependent on the national tradition of integration in Switzerland. As the threat of Islam within Swiss political culture has roots in international conflicts, the question of integration should also take these incidents into account in order to deal with the root causes.

- The manufacturing of Islamophobia by right-wing political parties should be dealt with by societal leaders by integrating the values of Islam with modern European values and thus making living conditions safe for Muslims in Switzerland.
- In Islamophobia's discourse, the talk of rich and poor, civilized and uncivilized and superior and inferior dichotomies are used. It is important to change the discourse of inequality to treat the 'others' as equal.
- Religion, which has become a new tool of otherness in secular European societies, should not lead to the Islamization of all socio-economic-political discourses, nor should immigration, employment or educational opportunities be affected by these policies and discourses.
- Civil society, NGOs, Muslim organization and other involved parties should act as mediators in crisis situations, developing programs and training that will increase plural attitudes in society.
- Media discourses are critical to form attitudes in society, therefore inter-religious dialogue is critical. This should not be to the exclusion of other religious groups and the focus should not be limited on Islam or Muslims alone.
- The policies should be directed at improving educational opportunities, bridging social capital, improving the labour market position and addressing the needs of religious freedom without compromising Swiss values; modern Western culture emphasises the differences rather than common grounds.
- Anti-Jihadi strategies, counter-terrorism and radicalization strategies through terror alerts which exclusively target Muslims have increased Islamophobia within Swiss society and have had a negative impact on socio-political issues. It is, therefore, important to have strategies that clearly distinguish religion and the religious community from isolated events and groups which are responsible for such attacks.

CHRONOLOGY

1 January 2015

- An Emergency Statute banning al Qaeda, the 'Islamic State' group and related organizations.

7 January 2015

- Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris and Swiss border control and higher terror alert.

15 February 2015

- Copenhagen attacks increasing terror threat in Switzerland.

30 April 2015

- Berne regional tribunal found the leaders of the Swiss People's Party guilty of racism

July 2015

- Refusal by the Swiss government to the Al Huda Association to build a kindergarten in Zurich

July-August 2015

- Refugees and asylum seekers from Syria and Afghanistan enter Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

September 2015

- High school girl in Berne forced to take off hijab

October 2015

- Swiss Federal Council approves strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (CVE).

18 October 2015

- Right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) wins large share of the vote in federal elections.

November 2015

- Swiss federal council approves the Anti-Jihadi strategy

13 November 2015

- Paris terror attacks and strict policies towards asylum seekers from the Middle East

25 November 2015

- Ticino's parliament approved the law banning women face cover with a fine of 10,000 francs

December 2015

- Swiss police open criminal cases against members of ICCS and its connection to terrorist organisations.

December 2015

- Police in Zurich arrested two suspects travelling from Syria through Turkey who had connections with banned terrorist organizations and coming.

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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