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THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This is the second edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* which was presented for the first time in 2015. New countries are included in this year’s *EIR*; while 25 countries were covered in 2015, the report for 2016 includes 27 country reports. *EIR 2016* is the result of 31 prominent scholars who specialise in different fields such as racism, gender and Islamophobia Studies. In the years to come we will attempt to include more countries in our report. Our final aim is to cover and monitor the developments of Islamophobia in all European countries.

Islamophobia has become a real danger to the foundations of democratic order and the values of the European Union. It has also become the main challenge to the social peace and coexistence of different cultures, religions and ethnicities in Europe. The country reports of *EIR 2016*, which cover almost all the European continent from Russia to Portugal and from Greece to Latvia, clearly show that the level of Islamophobia in fields such as education, employment, media, politics, the justice system and the Internet is on the rise. Since the publication of the last report there is little improvement. On the contrary, one can see from the country reports that the state of democracy and human rights in Europe is deteriorating. Islamophobia has become more real especially in the everyday lives of Muslims in Europe. It has surpassed the stage of being a rhetorical animosity and has become a physical animosity that Muslims feel in everyday life be it at school, the workplace, the mosque, transportation or simply on the street.

The refugee movement and the turmoil it has created in Europe, the unprecedented rise of far right parties all across the continent and the UK’s Brexit decision, which took many by surprise, have revealed the importance and relevance of this report, which covers incidents and developments in 2016. The short-term political significance of Islamophobia is as much relevant as Islamophobia’s structural dimension. As mentioned before, small successes can be witnessed in some European countries yet great challenges lie ahead for deepening the values of human rights and freedom of religion in Europe.
The Rise of Islamophobia

As a survey conducted by the Chatham House Europe Programme shows, public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states is by no means confined to Trump’s administration (implementation of the ‘Muslim-Ban’). Respondents in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK were presented with the statement ‘All further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped’. As the report reveals, the majorities in all but two of the ten states agreed to this statement, ranging from 71% in Poland, 65% in Austria, 53% in Germany and 51% in Italy to 47% in the United Kingdom and 41% in Spain. In no country did the percentage that disagreed surpass 32%.

The findings of this report go hand in hand with similar surveys on this topic. The Ipsos Perils of Perception Survey 2016 found that the current and the future Muslim population in Europe are enormously overestimated in most countries. Out of the list of all 20 countries where respondents overestimated the Muslim population by more than 10%, 12 are European, while the USA and Canada are among the remaining 8 countries. When asked “Now thinking about 2020, out of every 100 people, about how many do you think will be Muslim?”, the top 20 countries where proponents overestimated the Muslim population again were in majority European (11). The average guess in France is that 40% of

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the population will be Muslim in 2020 when the actual projection is 8.3%. Italy comes third with 26% overestimation, and Belgium and Germany fourth with 24% overestimation.³

Connecting this to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, we can suggest that this overestimation is connected to unfavourable views regarding Muslims. The report states,

“Opinions of Muslims vary considerably across Europe. Half or more in Hungary, Italy, Poland, Greece and Spain have a very or somewhat unfavorable view of Muslims. And in Italy (36%), Hungary (35%) and Greece (32%), roughly a third hold very unfavorable opinions. Majorities in the other nations surveyed express positive attitudes about Muslims. Nonetheless, at least a quarter in each country have negative views of Muslims.”⁴

These numbers are not shocking if we look at the incidents of Islamophobia and its pervasiveness in power structure across Europe. Muslims are seen as the enemy ‘within’. There is wide consent in Western societies to Muslims not being seen as equal citizens. Othering and differential treatment may also overlap with the dehumanization of Muslims. Thus, physical attacks and political restrictions can often be carried out and even defended in an atmosphere of wide distrust and enmity. Islamophobia is by no means confined to the working poor or the middle class, who have been misinformed about Islam and Muslims. It is especially true for the so-called educated elite. Discriminating policies like the ban of the hijab for certain professions, the ban of the niqab in public, bans of minarets and other laws restricting Muslim's freedom of religion speak volumes. If politicians can take such decisions and the media, along with large parts of society, accept them, why should we wonder about the strong opposition to immigration of Muslim people in Europe?

Hence, these numbers reveal the necessity of the EIR, which looks at the challenge of Islamophobia from a qualitative and not a quantitative research perspective. Its aim is to document and analyse trends in the spread of Islamophobia in various European nation states. There cannot be a claim of full comprehensiveness, since European nation states by majority still lack data collection. Hence, a central recommendation of the EIR is that Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hate crime should be included as a category in European nation states’ statistics – a development that has not occurred as of yet. The EIR’s primary contribution is to reveal the tendencies of Islamophobia and to give representative examples of its overall unfolding in the investigated states.

Recognition of Islamophobia

There are various definitions of Islamophobia. However, the definition of Islamophobia used by the EIR, as defined by its editors, is as follows,

“When talking about Islamophobia, we mean anti-Muslim racism. As Anti-Semitism Studies has shown, the etymological components of a word do not necessarily point to its complete meaning, nor 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, because Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about the Muslims/Islam”.5

We think that with this definition, we clearly address many of the suspicions, which are put against the term as such. As a matter of fact, while supranational institutions such as the OSCE embrace the terminology Anti-Semitism, the OSCE still refuses to use Islamophobia, which we see as part of the problem. Again, we recommend that Islamophobia/anti-Muslim Racism or anti-Muslim hate crime should be included in the collection of “equality data” in all European states. Institutions such as the OSCE need to establish solid monitoring and recording mechanisms for discrimination, hate crime and hate speech towards Muslims. In order to have reliable data, it has to be segregated by bias/category and also segregated by gender. This is even more problematic in countries that do not allow collection of data on religion or race. This seemingly egalitarian approach in reality hides the discrimination of Muslims. Also, response mechanisms seem to be unclear and not adequately used. When there is an incident of discrimination/hate crime/hate speech, there are different response mechanisms available, yet, none of these are familiar to the vast majority of Muslim citizens of European countries. Thus, we recommend that response mechanisms should be made more available, accessible and clear. Last but not least, an empowerment of the Muslim community is needed to strengthen critical citizenship and help European states deepen their democracies.

Policy Recommendations for European Countries

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. The following list of recommendations serves to underscore some of these recommendations and to add some additional suggestions on the supranational level.

We think it is important for civil society to understand that Islamophobia is a problem of institutional racism. The illusion that Europe is a post-racial society prevents large parts of European societies from recognising the severe challenge of Islamophobia to local societies. The focus has to shift from Muslims’ actions to those of European societies. Racism, including Islamophobia, tells us more about the racists than about their imagined scapegoat or their victims. Hence, Islamophobia reveals aspects of Europe and the internal problems European societies continue to face. A recognition and a critical consciousness of this societal disease is of utmost importance to be able to create more just societies in Europe. At the same time, Muslims must be allowed to enjoy their spaces of freedom like other dominant religious and political groups in European societies without being securitised or criminalised. The securitisation of Islam, especially policies countering violent extremism and their impact on the freedom of religion of belief for Muslims, and even freedom of movement or free assembly have to be challenged by all democratic forces in Europe. Communities must be consulted and human rights frameworks must be respected. National security is not among the criteria that should permit the limitation of freedom of religion or belief.

We especially urge politicians to speak out against Islamophobia as one of the most pressing forms of racism in our days. Europe needs more courageous politicians who do not only challenge the politics of right-wing populist parties, but also challenge institutionalised forms of racism targeting Muslims in the fields of employment, education, state bureaucracy, and media. We also call for journalists and editors to challenge Islamophobic reporting in their news media and give space to more balanced views. Generally, the issue of religious literacy is a huge problem that does not only concern media but also the police, prosecutors and civil servants. We see that people simply lack basic knowledge on Islam and Muslims’ practices. We see a need for the introduction of more comparative religion courses, or religious teaching, in a formal and informal educational setting.

We see that Muslim women are among the most vulnerable direct victims of Islamophobia. ENAR has conducted a report on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women and presented 37 recommendations, which we can only underscore given the findings of our report. Women who are visibly Muslim are socially ostracised in many places. The combination of internal community prob-

lems, discrimination (education and employment) and hate crimes against Muslim women (data shows that it is 70% more likely for a Muslim woman to be attacked in the street) are leaving their horrible mark on Muslim women. Hence, the protection and the empowerment of Muslim women have to be on the central agenda of states and NGOs. The ruling of the European Court of Justice regarding Esma Bougnaoui’s dismissal by a French company for wearing a hijab when dealing with clients as unlawful discrimination is an important step towards equality and an anti-discriminatory society. At the same time, the case of Belgian Samira Achbita vs. Belgium, where it was argued that a dismissal due to the headscarf would be permissible against the backdrop of a general prohibition of all outward signs of political, philosophical and religious beliefs exhibited by employees in the workplace, is worrying and challenges the reality of a diverse Europe.

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Executive Summary

The aftermath of the events of 2015 determined the role of Islamophobia in 2016. The debate on refugees was reinforced by the events of New Year’s Eve in Cologne. The sexual assaults led to a generalised debate on male Muslim hyper-sexuality. This debate impacted policy demands on the part of politicians and was broadcast in news media. During summer, restrictions were imposed in some public swimming pools for refugees and a burkini ban was enacted in certain public swimming pools.

The long-lasting presidential election campaign, which began in January and ended with the electoral victory of Alexander Van der Bellen on 4 December, allowed a right-wing candidate to openly present his anti-Muslim positions to a wide audience. These two events manifested themselves in the proposals for a new integration law. The conservative ÖVP announced a ban on the face veil, which was even welcomed by some social democrats like the SPÖ party whip. The political and media debates had an impact on society, as we can see by the reported verbal and physical attacks where perpetrators referred to the far right presidential candidate.

The media landscape, in particular, is characterised by the spread of Islamophobic positions. It is especially worrying that Islamophobic positions are expressed by high-ranking editorial board members. The editor-in-chief of daily Österreich even called for a ban of Islam, meaning the practice of the Islamic religion. The FPÖ watched its policy demands being introduced from afar, while organising events to foster anti-Muslim narratives, framing them as ahistorical battles between the Judeo-Christian West and the Muslim East, and allying with far right Zionists.
Zusammenfassung


Diese beiden Faktoren führten zum Vorschlag über ein Integrationsgesetz. Die ÖVP schlug ein Verbot des Gesichtsschleiers vor, was auch vom Klubchef der SPÖ goutiert wurde. Die aggressiven Debatten und die Normalisierung der Ausgrenzung islamischer Praxis hatte ihren Einfluss auf die Gesellschaft, wie die erhöhte Zahl an Meldungen dokumentiert, in denen auf die mögliche Wahl der rechtspopulistischen Präsidentschaftskandidaten Bezug genommen wurde.

Introduction

The aftermath of the events of 2015 determined the role of Islamophobia in 2016. The debate on refugees was reinforced by the events of New Year’s Eve in Cologne and generally influenced public debates on the role of Islam. This was true for policy demands on the part of politicians as well as for the formation of opinions in the so-called quality press. The long-lasting presidential election campaign, which began in January and ended with the electoral victory of Alexander Van der Bellen on 4 December, allowed a right-wing candidate to openly present his anti-Muslim positions to a wide audience. These two events manifested themselves in the proposals for a new integration law, which has not been adopted yet. The conservative ÖVP announced a ban of the face veil. The political and media debates had an impact on the country’s population, as we can see with the reported verbal and physical attacks where perpetrators referred to the far right presidential candidate. The media landscape, in particular, is characterised by the spread of Islamophobic positions. This applies to Islamophobic positions, which are expressed by in-house journalists as well as those that are uncritically disseminated as a result of the hegemonic power of Islamophobic views.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

Discrimination in the labour market is a common problem among Muslims, especially Muslim women. Elmar Podgorschek, a far right Upper Austrian member of the government, argues in an interview when asked about the frequent discrimination against Muslims:

“This may be. Different cultures that collide are not compatible. Islam is very difficult to integrate in Europe. It is a very archaic religion in which the Koran has to be understood literally. I rely on the expertise of my friend (former Green MP) Efgani Dönmez, who sees this the same way.”¹

Podgorschek supports discrimination and even defends existing discrimination with additional arguments. He relies on the former Green Federal Council MP Efgani Dönmez, who regularly makes Islamophobic statements. The job application by a veiled Muslim woman for the position of a doctor’s assistant in Bregenz was rejected on the grounds that the candidate was “wearing radical Islamic symbols”.² A native-born Austrian is told at the job centre in Graz that she should take off her

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headscarf, so that she can find a job more easily. A student applied at a McDonald’s restaurant for a weekend job. The store manager asked if “everything is ok with the headscarf” and the student replied, “Yes, I’d tie it up very easily”. Thereupon the store manager commented, “No, unfortunately you cannot work with the hijab. The girl here - the manager pointed to a nearby girl - usually wears a headscarf and takes it off at work”. The applicant answered, “I cannot do this, that is part of my personality and the headscarf belongs to me. I have a girlfriend who has worked in another branch with a headscarf and she wore it very simply. Compromises were reached”. The manager then answered, “Unfortunately, the decision is not with me”. After a telephone call, she said that she can do nothing and although the applicant speaks perfect German, she is “not able to hire her with a headscarf”.

Education

Again and again young Muslim schoolgirls report that they face discrimination because of wearing a hijab. A female student, who was attending a gym class with boys and girls and a male sports instructor, reported that her instructor asked her to take off her hijab. The teacher insulted her. He asked her if she was an asylum seeker and why she was not living in Turkey. He shouted at her and embarrassed her by asking whether he should bring her to a psychologist the following day. During gym class, he sent her to a corner where she had to stand for two (!) hours.

In Vorarlberg, a religious instructor of Islamic religious instruction, Ömer Kutluçan, was suspended by the education authority because he refused to shake a colleague’s hand. The reasoning for the suspension is based on the assumption that the refusal to shake a hand is an act of discrimination and a derogatory attitude towards the female gender. It is not considered that the refusal of contact with the other sex is based on a different conceptualisation of sexuality, the body, and the private and public sphere. In Styria, a teacher even announced that she wanted to sue a man for discrimination, after he refused to shake her hand.

A mother reveals that her 16-year-old daughter has started to cover her hair. At school, she was confronted with remarks such as “This is not really serious, is it?” The class teacher expressed his suspicions about the girl and told her classmates that she seems to have slipped into radical circles and had saved money for a ticket to Syria.

3. Email to the Author.
4. Email to the Author.
5. Email to the Author.
After talking to the mother, who does not cover her hair, he said that her classmates had misunderstood him. Afterwards, however, the class teacher called the student time and again from the class and asked her about ISIL/Daesh, Boko Haram and the driving ban for women in Saudi Arabia. After that, the Federal Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution was brought in. Two meetings followed and the agent of the Federal Bureau called the school authority’s response an overreaction.

Public schools provide denominational religious education to which pupils of most recognised churches and religious communities are automatically registered if they do not actively log out within the first 10 days. Each year, different school authorities distribute forms only to Muslim pupils in which the logoff from Islamic education can be made. Since this means a direct and indirect influence, this is not permitted, but in practice it is still customary.

**Politics**

In the interim report on Ednan Aslan’s “research” on Islamic kindergartens, which had led to a sprawling public debate in 2015, a final report was announced for the end of January 2016. This was not delivered. Journalists of *Kurier* accompanied an inspector of kindergartens and reviewed the debate in a different light and offered contrasting reviews of the debate. One of the inspectors said “With no single control, I have the fear that children can be forced into a certain direction or even forced into a parallel society.” The *Kurier* also demanded a final report from the Ministry of Integration, which had commissioned the study. The question remained unanswered. The social scientist Andrea Schaffar published a critical analysis of the interim report.

This so-called “Kindergarten Study” also showed its long-term effect in that the political opposition and media representatives regularly referred to it in the course of discourse relating to Islam. The daily newspaper *Österreich*, for instance, claimed it had a “list of schools, which, according to Gudenus, are under suspicion of jihad”. The FPÖ demanded that Ednan Aslan, the author of the study, be commissioned to carry out a similar study for Viennese kindergartens.

The debate about refugees did not disappear. The ÖVP was the first to support a European fortress in the wake of the refugees who fled the war in Iraq and Syria.

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10. Ibid.
A local FPÖ politician (Graz) picked up the sexual assaults on New Year’s Eve in Cologne. In a video, he stood next to a blond puppet doll. Standing next to her, he explains how “to deal with our women”. He explained that “what one does not do at our place is to hassle women in a discotheque, to grab her ass, or even her breasts.” In the end, he states “Hands off our women”. In the summer of 2016, restrictions were also made in public swimming pools, and rules on how to behave were published in Arabic, Urdu, etc. While, in some cases, asylum seekers were found guilty of sexual assault, there were cases that had been reported in the media that turned out to be fabricated. Foreign Minister Kurz said that the anti-Semitism of refugees should also be addressed in the so-called “value courses”, which he introduced. The FPÖ, as well as the official Jewish Community, have both separately organised events in which the so-called “Islamic anti-Semitism” was discussed. The attempt of an alliance between right-wing actors and Jews and the projection of anti-Semitism on Muslims was accompanied by strong criticism by secular Jews as well as the Greens and the SPÖ. Strache said in his speech at an FPÖ event that anti-Semitism on the Muslim side would be tolerated in the hidden form of anti-Zionism. He spoke of the attacks of Muslim pupils at Austrian schools against Jewish pupils, without providing any evidence. Strache claimed that left-wing parties would allow “limitless immigration of Islamic anti-Semitism in Europe”.

The Islam Act of 2015 showed its first effects. The first imams of the Muslim association ATIB (Avrupa Türk-Islam Birliği, Union of Turkish Islamic Cultural Associations) associated with Turkey had to leave the country. NEOS Vienna presented a “NEOS 9-Point Plan for Integration and Deradicalisation”, which emphasised that fearmongering and embellishment (of the truth, FH) were not helpful. It


also contained reasonable suggestions. On the other hand, it reproduced a general suspicion of Muslim institutions when demanding “full transparency regarding the financing of religious institutions”\(^\text{22}\) as such a measure is not in place for other religious institutions.

The refugee topic was also exploited by right-wing populist actors. Media outlets such as \textit{Österreich} took the opportunity to draw comparisons between the FPÖ and the AfD. Thus, Strache was criticised for saying “Smoke out the Islamist nests!”\(^\text{23}\)

When asked “How do you intend to deal with foreign perpetrators under the age of 18?”, Interior Minister Wolfgang Sobotka replied “There must also be covert investigations in the milieu of the jihadists. I want to know what is happening in mosques and Islamic clubs. We need an intensive cooperation with the Islamic Council.”\(^\text{24}\) In the following reply, he underlined the good cooperation with the Islamic Council. With regard to the Islamic Council, he said

“We now need more support, just before the summer, as far as the position of women is concerned. If we take the presence of Muslim men in public swimming pools, then the question is: how do they react to this new situation? We need a new commitment that the Islamic Council clearly gives signals to their people who are arriving now: we have cultural rules that must be adhered to.”\(^\text{25}\)

The Minister of the Interior felt in necessary to school Muslim men in how to deal with women: “Islam has not gone through enlightenment. Europe here has been too compliant and soft for decades”.\(^\text{26}\) Here, the minister refers to common prejudices against the Muslim religion, and blends questions of security, religion (general suspicion of the danger posed by mosques and Islamic societies), migration, Islam and asylum. Peter Pilz, the security spokesman for the Greens, said that the Islamic Council was to be screened by the Federal Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution, since the ATIB has taken over power.\(^\text{27}\) In fact, the ATIB is already represented in the Islamic Council since 2011.


\(^{25}\) Ibid.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.

Heinz Christian Strache, the president of the FPÖ, claimed that State Secretary Muna Duzdar (SPÖ) has something to do with the “invitation of Islamist terrorists”. Duzdar complained and won the case in the second court.

During a session of the national parliament on 16 March, 2016, MP Robert Lugar (Team Stronach) said

“For most of them who are coming (refugees, FH) are uneducated, religiously blinded, fanatical, not able to integrate and they have a worldview like the Neanderthals, where women’s rights are trampled. And that the Greens are working for such a species is really a disaster for me, because the Greens have always kept women’s rights high in their agenda, and now they are bringing in exactly those Neanderthals who we have wiped out from among us, thank God.”

The Greens demanded that Lugar step down. The few active politicians of the Team Stronach continuously made racist and sexist statements.

The 333th anniversary of the end of the so-called “Second Turkish Seize” by the Ottomans was used by the FPÖ to spread its ideology of the eternal struggle against an imagined evil Islam and a supposed Islamization. The event was entitled “September 12, 1683 – protect the West, then as now”. Historian Thomas Just compared this event with the 250th anniversary, which the Austro-Fascist regime had organised. NEOS Vienna criticised the fact that this event was financed by means of party promotion by the city of Vienna. She wrote in a letter to the MA5 that the title and the occasion of the event would “introduce a parallel between the second Viennese Turkish siege, an act of warfare, on the one hand, and current migration movements on the other.” She went on to say. “It is therefore necessary to examine the extent to which [...] an event with poisoned, offensive or racist content can be supported by the City of Vienna.”

Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz demanded a ban on the face veil after thirty French municipalities had forbidden the burkini, a swimsuit covering the whole body. For him this was a “symbol of counter-society” and not a “religious symbol”. In the integration law envisaged by the government, according to him, there are two prohibitive variants: a ban on face veiling either only in public institutions or in the public sphere as a whole.35 He was supported by the Professor of Islamic Religious Education Ednan Aslan.36 The response of Federal Chancellor Christian Kern (SPÖ) was divided: “A burka ban is at the end of my priority list [...] This may concern about 100 to 150 women. What is obvious, however, is that we will in no way accept oppression of women.”37

Responding this way, he did not stand clearly against the attempt to restrict religious freedom, but rather had an eye on the right-wing electorate, which sees the restriction of religious practices of Muslims as a legitimate demand. Julia Herr, the chairman of the Socialist Youth, criticized the SPÖ party whip Andreas Schieder for his support of Kurz’s demand: “I do not want to defend the burka and nikab under the cover of liberal, free society.” For her, this proposal was a debate that diverted from more urgent women’s problems.38

The Muslim feminist Dudu Küçükgöl, who is against wearing a facial veil, opposed a ban.39 According to the integration minister’s announcement the ban should be part of a so-called integration law. The general manager of the SPÖ, Georg Niedermühlbichler, expressed his reservations and reticence (ORF 2016b).40 Simultaneously, Burkini-bans were introduced by local authorities in many areas such as Melk, Korneuburg and Hainfeld (Lower Austria).41 According to the ÖVP, the integration law should also include “measures against the distribution of Korans by Salafists”.

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although it is not clear how far a Quran distribution should be allowed by non-extremist associations.

The four elections for the federal presidential election in 2016 were a central issue on the political stage. After the first election, a runoff election was held, which was contested, and a third election date was postponed. In sum, elections were held from 24 April to 4 December. Societal polarisation was the result of diametrically opposed candidates. The theme of Islam played a significant role during the election. The FPÖ attacked the non-partisan presidential candidate, Irmgard Griss, for trivialising the headscarf, which for the FPÖ was a “clear sign of the lack of integration”.

After the first runoff election and the victory of Van der Bellen, the anti-racist NGO SOS Mitmensch published an open letter to politicians entitled “No to division based on origin and religion!” In this letter, the authors criticised the FPÖ presidential candidate Norbert Hofer, for “not recognising people as part of Austria solely because of their religious affiliation.” The letter continues, “In the election campaign, he even called for unconstitutional laws against Muslims.”

Both civil society and politics intervened. The then Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann as well as Erich Fenninger, Federal Commissioner of the humanitarian institution Volkshilfe, criticised the misanthropic politics and positions. Repeatedly they drew comparisons to the 1930s. Scholar of communication Fritz Hausjell clearly said “What is new is the channels, but in terms of contents, the agitation and propaganda happens in the same way as we have seen it with the rise of National Socialism.”

The presidential candidate of the FPÖ, Norbert Hofer, used his candidacy to spread the Islamophobic positions of his party. He announced that he would not organise the break of fasting during Ramadan in the Hofburg, the residence of the president, as introduced by Heinz Fischer. On various occasions, Hofer repeated that for him Islam was not part of Austria. In addition, in regard to the refugee movements, he spoke of an “invasion of Muslims”. He warned against Muslims living in Austria and said it was “dramatic” that the percentage of population would rise in the coming years. He demanded a ban of the hijab in the public sphere. During an


47. Offener Brief an Politik: Nein zu Spaltung nach Herkunft und Religion!
election campaign, he said “Do we know a Muslim who works in the field of care? Who is perhaps ready to change the diapers of our elder persons?” When Christian humanitarian organisations replied arguing that hundreds of Muslims work in this field, Hofer replied that only “liberal Muslims” would do this work. During a live TV appearance, Hofer said to a Muslim student, “If you think that the FPÖ is a party that stirs up hate against Islam, I am not convinced that you should select it.” At another instance, in a speech, he stated “I was asked if I would embrace a minister with a headscarf. And I said: No, I would not.”

**Media**

The sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year’s Eve led to a sprawling debate about the male, sexual, North African and Arab threat. While there were only 15 suspects, 581 complaints were filed. This debate led to generalisations.

The Austrian Press Council reprimanded the weekly magazine *Falter* for a cover published at the beginning of January. It shows five weeping women who are sexually harassed by a large number of men, as well as a policeman who is being pushed away. (Figure 1) A reader criticised the cover by stating that in her opinion, the men were portrayed as “specifically North African”, which led to a degradation of a particular group, and that sexism was constructed as a purely Muslim and alien problem. According to the Press Council, the *Falter* cover violates the code of honour in Point 7 (Protection Against Libel and Discrimination), to which *Falter* abides.

The local newspaper *meinbezirk.at* reported on an alleged mass strike in front of the inn *Gasthaus zu Linde*. However, the free newspaper *Heute* changed the news value by use of the title “Mass strike in front of mosque in Bad Vöslau” on 1 February, 2016; an association of religion

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and violence was thus established. In fact, there is an ATIB mosque in Bad Vöslau but whereas the inn is atWolfstrasse, the prayer house is on a street called Castelligasse. The distance between the two buildings is more than 100 metres. Furthermore, the visitors of the mosque were not involved in the fight that took place in front of the inn.

A further problem arises when spokespeople defending Islamophobic positions are uncritically featured in media. Without critical comment daily Die Presse gives a large place to the Islamophobic conspiracy theories of Czech President Milos Zeman. In the article “Zeman: Refugee Wave of Muslim Brotherhoods”, Zelman is quoted with the following words: “Based on [...] sources of information, I believe that the invasion (meaning the refugee movements of 2015, FH) is organised by the Muslim Brotherhood and is financially supported by a number of states.” 52 In a long interview with Die Presse German philosopher Rüdiger Safranski talks of his fear that an “Arab-North-African anti-Semitism” could be imported to Germany. He warns of “parallel societies of the greatest extent [...], Arab-African ghettos”. The “dramatic overhang of frustrated men” is a “ticking time bomb”. 53 For Safranski, the inability of Turks, Arabs and Africans to integrate has to do with religion:

“There are almost only problems with people from the Islamic culture (Kulturkreis). Unfortunately, it is like that and there is no politically correct language (to explain this). This is linked to religion that strongly influences the everyday life of people. Religious people are actually an enrichment to secular societies, but unfortunately not so with Islam that has not been through the Age of Enlightenment, that is undemocratic, does not know freedom of religion, legitimates women’s oppression, and deforms the sex life of young men.” 54

Furthermore, the philosopher explains that economic refugees should not be accepted any longer, since they take away the place of the many war refugees. Probably unconsciously paraphrasing a FPÖ slogan, he said: “If you are no longer master of your own house, you can not be a host.” 55

This also applies to Kronen Zeitung, in which left-wing Prime Minister Robert Fico shortly before the EU presidency was uncritically quoted as saying “Islam has no place in Slovakia”. 56


54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

Columns and comments by editorial staff of the “quality press” are also problematic. Martina Salomon, the vice chief editor of Kurier, stated in the aforementioned daily “It is not even certain anymore that we are a Christian-influenced country where German is spoken. During some subway rides in Vienna you will be taught something different.” Salomon believes that Austria has to get rid of these illusions.

The identitarian discourse points out to an idealised homogenisation of a constructed pure Austrian identity. In an article titled “Murderous Islam” published in the weekly Profil, Peter Michael does not only quote out of context verses of the Quran, which deal with acts of war, but admits that in his opinion accusations against Islam are legitimate until “not individual imams, but all the heads of the Islamic religion hold a world conference in which they unanimously and unambiguously declare that there is no justification for killing unbelievers; that these attacks are crimes and offend the spirit of Islam.” Hellmuth Butterweck, an author born in 1927, similarly argued

“Unfortunately, we are far from the point where the enlightened Muslim, who has arrived in pluralistic Europe, has convinced the less enlightened Muslim, who has not yet arrived here, that in this world a woman has the same worth as a man; that his daughter can marry whom she wants; that respect for the Prophet cannot be demanded, yet there isn’t left any for Jesus; and that in Europe one can make fun of whatever he wants. And that if the Muslim woman wears her head-scarf, she shouldn’t be surprised that it is not understood as a confession to an open society, but rather to a closed world of belief with a pronounced claim to power. No, we are not that far. Rather, much suggests that the opposite is the case.”

In a hysterical and less subtle commentary entitled “Molenbeek also likely to happen in Austria”, Andreas Koller from Salzburger Nachrichten states “What happened yesterday in Anderlecht and Molenbeek, where terror suspects lived like fish in water, is also likely to happen in Simmering and Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus. Or in Graz. Or in Wels.” The author goes on to state “Do we have a chance to defuse the time bomb?” Koller then makes a list of generalisations coupled with accusations against politicians that - in his opinion- deny these problems.

60. Simmering and Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus are two districts of Vienna.
In another commentary in Die Presse, Gudula Walterskirchen presents her thesis that “the charge of Islamophobia (Islamophobie-Keule) undermines freedom of expression”. According to Walterskirchen, the “charge of Islamophobia” is used by fundamentalists. Thus she cites people and organisations that support the use of the term such as Thomas Tartsch, Hamed Abdel-Samad and ILM, the Initiative for Liberal Muslims. The myth that the concept of Islamophobia was first used by the mullahs in Iran in 1979 is misrepresented once again. It is argued that “with this term [...] every criticism on Islam, Islamic associations or individual representatives is being choked off.”

In Der Standard, Hans Rauscher addresses an open letter to the Muslims of Europe. He includes generalisations and declares religion as the most prominent distinction between Western and Muslim people: “Simply said: To you, religion is still very important, to us it is no more. To you, Islam demands to encompass and regulate your whole life. We have shaken off this demand [...] a long time ago.”

Arnulf Häfele from Vorarlberger Nachrichten degradingly dubbed his factual comment about the face veil with “Ein Fetzen Stoff” (A rag of cloth). Furthermore, Standard journalist Lisa Nimmervoll offered central stage to key players who voice generalising and racist discourse on Islam; namely Hamed Abdel-Samad, Ahmad Mansour and Heiko Heinisch.

This also applies to tabloid journalism. The chief editor of Österreich, in a comment, states

“The third point in fighting terrorism is the most sensitive: Meanwhile the discussion, whether Islam should be banned from Europe must be allowed. With all due respect for freedom of religions and the many peaceful, sympathetic supporters of Islam - also in Austria- , the borders between peaceful Islam and terror in the name of Islam are becoming increasingly blurred. In our municipal kindergartens. Terror is promoted, preached, prepared there. It cannot and must not move on like this.”


63. Ibid.


Fellner’s call for a ban on Islam led to a corresponding protest of human rights activists such as Alexander Pollak and the IGGIÖ, the Islamic religious community, which saw this as a “monstrosity”. On the request of the Austrian Press Agency, Fellner qualified his statement. He claimed that it is not about prohibiting religion, but of a possible prohibition of practice. He said he had “never received so much positive approval for a comment.” Later, Fellner withdrew his statement, but stated in relation to Muslims “[T]he practice of religions must be in accordance to our Constitution and our laws. If the radical scene of the Islamic religious community advocates and promotes terror, then they must be stopped immediately. And forbidden. From the kindergartens to the mosques.” Fellner explicitly uses the name of the state-recognised religious society IGGIÖ. He doesn’t speak of an extremist group within the community of Austrian Muslims. This is a clear indication that, in fact, he is talking about the abolishment of institutions of Muslims in Austria. The editor-in-chief of Kurier also repeatedly refers to Ednan Aslan’s so-called “Kingergarten study” and generalises the results of this interim report, which is based on an “analysis” of four kindergartens. Editor-in-chief Helmut Brandstätter says

“A few months ago an investigation of kindergartens in Vienna showed that children were compelled to memorise chapters of the Qur’an. From this alone it can be seen that the Qur’an is above state law. Here supervisors are obliged to act. Anyone who doesn’t stand 100% by the Republic of Austria is not allowed to teach children. This is not a general suspicion, but a call for help. This is not a prohibition of freedom of expression, but an appeal/plea: resist the beginnings.”

Referring to the forced memorising of the Quran, Brandstätter makes claims that cannot be found in the interim report. In addition, one has to ask oneself: where is the difference between a child memorising a song and one learning chapters from the Quran by heart? Why is one being criminalised, while the other one is considered an unproblematic norm?

Notorious Islamophobes are given a stage in op-eds of many daily newspapers. The well-known Islamophobic author Hans-Peter Raddatz is presented as a scholar. In his op-ed in Die Presse, he spreads his wild conspiracy theories about a domination of the world by Islam:


69. Ibid.


“For a long time, public debates, which use a unified language of fluff, are limited and become aggressive as soon as criticism of their project for the Islamization of Europe is stimulated. This is especially true since the EU declared Islam to be the “co-ordinator of Europe” (Bat Ye’or, “Europe and the coming caliphate”) with the Mekka manifesto of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) […] The paper regulates the spread of Islam, which follows strictly the Koran with the creation of a net of mosques, assassinations in Europe, Christian persecution in the Orient, use of European leaders and actions against Israel.”

At the end of his text he blames the elites for the submission of Europe to Islam. Christian Ortner frequently writes in a very generalised way about “Islam” in the *Wiener Zeitung*. In an article, quoting writer Boualem Sansal, Ortner says “There is no foundation in any country – may it be Arab or European– that one day an enlightened Islam will emerge.”

Again published in *Wiener Zeitung*, Ortner reviewed the work of Michael Ley, a notorious Islamophobe. Accepting Ley’s claims without criticism, Ortner states that for Muslims the

> “Quran […] is above secular law, the superiority claim of Islam towards other religions and atheism, to the Islam immanent urge to spread; the wide spread anti-Semitism within the Muslim immigrant milieu and of course the degradation of women in the Islamic world ‘are all reasons for the end of Europe’”.

With Robert Lugar, the *Wiener Zeitung* offered a platform to the world conspiracy theories of a national MP. In a commentary Lugar states “A goal of political Islam is to achieve world supremacy - and we must protect ourselves from that”, and goes on to state that “in some Turkish families not the Austrian constitutional state is the first priority, but the Shariah”. Finally he concludes that since no one wants “a war in Europe”, one has to “resist the beginnings.”

With the help of anti-Muslim world conspiracy theories Islam is posthumously declared a new fascism. In *Die Presse*, Christian Ultsch explains why a burqa ban

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76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.
is necessary; he then clarifies that such a ban has only a symbolic character, since in fact only a few women are affected.\textsuperscript{78}

In an op-ed published in \textit{Die Presse}, Hans Winkler addresses tensions within the Catholic Church on the question of how to deal with refugee movements. The last section of his article is one-sided and portrays Islam and Muslims as violent. Winkler writes that ‘Islam has no problem with terror’ - at least from what can be seen in public.\textsuperscript{79} An unbiased analysis of the headscarf ban such as that of Isolde Charim is rare.\textsuperscript{80}

In the tabloid press, Islamophobic arguments can be found again and again. In \textit{Kronen Zeitung}, Austria’s most popular yellow press, titles such as ‘Muslims cause bloodbath on Styrian pasture’ are found alongside stories about Jewish ‘brutal’ kosher butchers. The text further states “In East Styria, 79 sheep were massacred with five knives. […] Fortunately, the animal tragedy was noticed by an individual who got help. 52 sheep could be saved, but 79 are dead.”\textsuperscript{81} The person committing these acts appears in Muslim garments.

A positive example of an in-house column is the critical analysis by Gerfried Sperl. In “Why Kurz attacks Erdoğan, but not Putin”, he points out why, despite the annexation of the Crimea, Putin is not seen as an “enemy” of the Austrian Republic, while Erdoğan is considered a “dangerous enemy” because of his proximity to political Islamism. According to Sperl, anti-Turkish populism seems like a useful tool for Austria’s foreign minister.\textsuperscript{82} Another critical article from Sybille Hamann was published in \textit{Die Presse}. In her text, she partially reflects the position of journalists towards the coverage of the ‘Muslim Other’.\textsuperscript{83} Another critical commentary from Ayad Al-Ani was published in \textit{Der Standard}.\textsuperscript{84} There was also strong criticism towards the invitation policy of the private broadcaster Servus TV: Martin Sellner, speaker of the radical

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New Right movement ‘Identitäre Bewegung Österreich’ that is under observation for possible constitutional violations, was invited by the broadcaster to a discussion. 85

**Public Sphere**

In an interview with *Kurier* a woman tells how she doesn’t cover her hair with a headscarf that reveals her Muslim identity any longer. She uses caps instead to protect herself from hostility. She reports that people awkwardly starred at her, whispered secretly about her, and that strangers spoke to her on the street. A stranger pointing at her and said “Look, again one of these, another head with a diaper on it. She is from the Islamic State. That’s a terrorist, they should go home.” The woman commented “It was all very degrading and hurtful. Sometimes I fought back and said something, but that makes little sense.” 86 In the interview, she spoke of many acquaintances who have had similar experiences.

The political debate, following the failed coup attempt in Turkey, primarily served domestic political controversies. In an open letter the conservative major of Wiener Neustadt, Klaus Schneeberger, asked that the Turkish flag is not hung from balconies and houses: “Those who do not confess to Wiener Neustadt have no place in our city.” 87 Loyalty to Austria is denied to Turks, who are mainly identified as Muslims. Also, while rules are set up for Turks, members of other nationalities do not face similar restrictions.

In 2016, a Tyrolese member of the Landtag (Green Party) of Muslim confession received two postal threats and two digital ones. He calculates that during the year he received between 40 and 50 racist insults. One stated that “GOD wil[] Punish [] you!” 88

During a carnival parade in the city of Maissau (Lower Austria) a carnival car was named “Shariah Police” and had various Islamophobic slogans on it. National Socialist codes (88 for “Heil Hitler”) adorned the number plate. Posters with the inscription “We f*** your moms” or “We f*** your shaved virgins” were read. Pictures of the carnival showed people hanging from nooses with placats stating “Islam gives you wings”. 89 The mayor of Maissau dissociated himself from the event. The Office for Constitutional Protection announced an investigation.


88. Email to the Author.

For the weekly magazine *Profil*, the opinion research institute Unique Research conducted a survey of the attitudes of Austrians (n=500) towards religious symbols such as the Muslim headscarf, the kippa and the cross in public space. When asked whether judges should be allowed to wear religious symbols, 42% responded negatively, while 23% argued in favour of it. Only 17% are more likely to say ‘yes’, another 14% of respondents declared that they are okay with judges wearing religious symbols. A similar opinion is expressed when it comes to teachers with headscarves: 62% of the respondents are against it while only 35% answered that they are in favour of a teacher with a headscarf: 3% abstained from answering. A total of 60% said that they would not allow Muslims to observe their prayers several times a day or to fast in Ramadan during working hours; 37% appeared tolerant to this question, while 3% did not provide any information.90 However, the rejection of Muslim religious practice is not only advocated by the majority of respondents. Even a chair of Islamic Religious Education at the University of Vienna, Ednan Aslan, is quoted during a training session for teachers in Graz as saying “For children to observe Ramadan is unacceptable in Europe.”91

The following photograph was taken in Goethestraße, Salzburg on 1 May, 2016. (Figure 3) It shows the word ‘Muslim’ written on a stone beside a hanged person.

The following photo was taken at the main train station in Vienna on 1 September, 2016: “F *** Muslim” and “Kill the Muslim”. (Figure 4) The word “Muslim” was later crossed out.


The New Right *Idenitäre Bewegung* used posters and stickers to warn against an alleged “Islamization”. Figure 5 shows the election poster for Van der Bellen.

Stickers with the slogan “We have to stay outside” showing a man and woman dressed in traditional religious attire were placed outside stores. (Figure 6)

A club named *Die Aufklärer* (The Enlighteners) (aufklaerer.at) distributes flyers with the title “Why should I deal with Islam?” The leaflets seem to call for incitement against Islam more than for peaceful dialogue. The club’s seat also hosts the headquarters of the student fraternity *Gothia*.

On 6 December, writing found in a tram in Graz states “Muslim pigs out”. (Figure 7)

Another inscription ‘Castrate all Muslims sl.ts’ was sighted in a tram in Graz in October 2016. (Figure 8)

Again in a tram in Graz an inscription “Piss on Islam” was sighted. (Figure 9)

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On 11 December, 2016 at the same public location in Graz an inscription stating “Muslim pigs” was photographed.93 (Figure 10)

On the night of 10 December, the car of a Muslim family was smeared with a swastika.94

**Justice System**

In August, a man from Burgenland was sentenced to conditional imprisonment for three months.95 Prior to the imprisonment, he had posted a hate message against Muslims on the website of Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz. In September, a 36-year-old man from Burgenland was sentenced with a 2,160 Euro fine. He had replied to a hate post that stated “Islam is killing everyone ...” with “It’s time to operate Dachau, Mauthausen and Ausschwitz (sic) again. So our friendly immigrants will get an accommodation they deserve.”96

In 2013 and 2014, police press releases were analysed. The authors of the report noted that while Viennese police frequently reported the snatching of bags and drug crimes, rape and racial violence were almost never mentioned. Racism in the form of National Socialist reactivation was actually the only kind of racial violence that was reported by the police in its press releases.97 Accordingly, anti-Muslim hate crimes have not been the subject of any press releases by the Viennese police.

**Internet**

The homepage ekiw.com is operated by the “Interest group for quiet residential area citizens’ Initiative ‘Objection! ekiw.com’ ‘Objection! No Mosque in residential areas’”. The content of ekiw.com is related to Austria and primarily contains Islamophobic reports and reports on mosque construction projects to be prevented. However, the imprint page gives an Uruguayan publisher.

Facebook offers well-known personalities the opportunity to bring their message to a large audience. The extreme sports athlete Felix Baumgarten, who seems to have a certain sympathy for the FPÖ, writes in a post on 26 January, 2016,

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“The PEOPLE are annoyed, because in our country nothing will be the same again in the future. We will have to wonder, How far are we willing to give up our identity and our culture and to mix them up with a completely different religion and ideology? What will become of our WOMEN’S RIGHTS when we are about to share this country, with a culture where women have no rights? The history has shown more than once that every attempt to do so anyway has NO future!”

The post was shared more than 49,000 times and was liked 143,000 times.

The online medium katholisches.info provided news claiming that the imam of the Holy Mosque in Mecca allegedly offered a prayer for the jihadists against Jews, Christians and hypocrites. This assertion was republished by the tabloid newspaper Kronen Zeitung, without checking its sources. Their article suggested that the imam of the mosque in Saudi Arabia had conducted a prayer in favour of DAESH/IS.

In an interview with Richard Schmitt, chief editor of the online Kronen Zeitung, explained that his newspaper is in competition with right-wing online magazines such as unzensuriert.at. Schmitt explained that the reason his newspaper gives space to many right-wing positions is the active presence of FPÖ in social media.

Right-wing actors often use the Internet to spread their positions in plain, easily understandable language. The youth wing of the FPÖ, RFJ, used their Facebook account to spread posters. These in turn were shared by prominent personalities such as the FPÖ party leader, who has more than 460,000 likes, a high rating for a fan page of an Austrian politician. The RFJ poster below (We demand: Headscarf ban in schools!) was shared by H.C. Strache and received 7,890 responses and was shared 836 times. (Figure 12)

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Another poster shared by the RFJ on Facebook addresses the rising problems with the German language among pupils and shows a female figure with a hijab.

The Austrian Identitarians also use the Internet to make their activities popular. The Niqab-veiled woman has a placard saying “Integration is a Lie” (Figure 14). Campaigns against Muslim institutions and projects, such as the introduction of Islamic banking, are regularly launched online and use harsh and radical language. The picture below shows a half-buried woman, who is alive, with the title “Free financing of your first stoning: with Islamic banking at BAWAG PSK.” (Figure 15) Journalist Kenny Lang published an article in which he defended the allegation that the introduction of Islamic banking “leads to the formation of ‘parallel societies’.”

Facebook makes it possible for people to engage in unrestrained hate speech. Although the comment below was reported, Facebook didn’t delete it and stated that it doesn’t violate their community standards. (Figure 16) The user - a fake account - comments “Only a dead Moslems [sic] is a peaceful, good Moslems [sic].”


Political movement also use the Internet to mobilise their positions. In Upper Austria, employees of FPÖ called for the Christmas bonus that is regulated in the collective agreement to be only paid to Christians.\textsuperscript{104}

**Physical and Verbal Attacks\textsuperscript{105}**

On 11 January, 2016, at the city library of Vienna (Burggasse) an inscription written by strangers reads “Defend yourselves against the criminal, backward IS-headscarf Islamists”. A woman in hijab crosses the street when a person shouts from a standing car “You rag!”\textsuperscript{106} (June, Graz). A woman with a headscarf is waiting for sushi in an Asian restaurant when people sitting behind her start talking loudly and disrespectfully about scarves, the Quran and bombs. They say to her “Now everything is going to get blown up!” (September, Graz). Two middle-aged men are waiting at a tramway station. One says to another “The son of so-and-so has shot himself.” The other replies pointing to a veiled woman “Such a veil also has to be shot!” (October, Graz). A woman with a headscarf goes past a young man, who calls her “pu..y” (July, Graz).

At the beginning of November, a student wearing a hijab was in an Asian restaurant. A male customer said “Muslim crap!” to which the student asked “What?” The customer went on to say “Muslims crap (sic). Leave all of you. Go back to Turkey.” The student replied that she was at home. Then the customer called her “Headscarf pu..y” and “Headscarf sl.t”. She threatened him with the police, whereupon he quieted down. The student sat down and after three minutes, the man came across from her, spat at her, showed her the middle finger and screamed “Kill all Muslims” several times, repeating his verbal abuse and running out of the store.

A Syrian refugee reveals people shouted at her from a parked car. Sometimes she was called “Arab b..ch” and “Musel sl.t”. A neighbour regularly looks out of the window and calls her Muslim neighbour “Muslim sod”. A passer-by screamed to a Muslim woman with a headscarf calling her a “whore”. He said to her “In February, there comes a law, then you will see you Muslim whores.” A passer-by told a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf “There is need for a new holocaust.”

In spring 2016, a woman with her hair covered in the city of Wiener Neustadt reported that an elderly gentleman passed by her and called her a “junior jihadist”. In


\textsuperscript{105} Unless stated otherwise, these incidents were reported to the author directly, usually by email.

\textsuperscript{106} A tattered piece of cloth; pejorative term for Muslim hair covering.
the summer of 2016, a Muslim woman from Salzburg reported that two half-drunk men about 30 years old passed a bus stop and shouted “Muslim pu..y, Turkish pu..y”. In summer 2016, a pass-by in Salzburg said to a Muslim woman wearing a veil “Are you not hot? You can do that at your place. If you then smell, then you can blame yourself.”

In October 2016, a veiled woman left the bus in Tyrol. A boy between 10 and 14 years of age entered and referred to her as a “Taliban”. In October 2016, a student of a polytechnic school in Vorarlberg reported that classmates told him “You are not an Austrian. You Muslims have no place here in our country. Hofer (far right presidential candidate) will come and our jobs will be free again.”

In September 2016, a passer-by went to a Muslim woman at the Viennese subway station Schottentor and said: “Crap Islam!” In November 2016, a woman stepped on a veiled Muslim woman at a metro station and then said “This is how you do it where you come from.” At the day of the federal presidential election, 4 December, 2016, three veiled Muslim women (one with a stroller) came across a group of men and women with children and strollers. One of the group’s members said to one of the children “stand aside”. Thereupon someone else replied “Don’t make way for the headscarves. Run them down. F..k it.” On the same day, a lady with three small children entered the underground in Vienna. A veiled Muslim woman offered her a seat. The mother of the three children told them “We don’t sit here now!” All three children looked at each other and one said “True, we learned that when a lady wears a headscarf, we run away or don’t talk to her.”

In November 2016, a student in a Teacher Training course learnt from her practice teacher that there is a ban of headscarves at her school. The director told her “We want a scarf-free school. For you as a grown woman there is no prohibition” and explained that the prohibition of the headscarf is not public, but would be clarified by talking to the parents. One of the pupils at this school was told by the director “If you do not take off the headscarf, then there are also other schools!” A schoolgirl left school after she was told that a headscarf was not allowed. Another student – a Syrian refugee – takes off her headscarf before she enters school and puts it on again after she leaves.

A veiled Muslim woman offered the seat next to her to an older woman. She refused by saying “I won’t sit down next to such a headscarf-woman.” When another Muslim woman intervened, the older lady commented “Actually, you should be forbidden to drive with public transport.” A woman revealed that a neighbour insulted her on the balcony by saying “F..king foreigners! Damn Muslims!”

The Graz police had received information in April according to which “right-wing groups want to carry out actions of disturbance in front of the mosque” and were accordingly prepared.107 On May 5, 2016, a mosque in Graz was desecrated. At around 11 p.m., three people illegally trespassed the terrain of the mosque. Two pig

head halves were hanged around the minaret at the building fence, and the minaret was sprinkled with pig's blood. During Ramadan, the mosque in Linz was also desecrated. Unknown people brought half a pig's head to the main entrance.108

**Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia**

Daily newspapers such as *Kurier* have repeatedly printed Islamophobic prejudices; such commentary was deliberately spread by Norbert Hofer during the Austrian election campaign.109

Under the motto ‘We swim as we want’ Anahita Tasharofi organised an action against the call for the ban on burkinis.110

The intervention of (Christian) aid institutions, which showed that many Muslim carers work for their institutions, was important in countering the allegations of the Federal President candidate Norbert Hofer.

Together with the IGGIÖ, the *Initiative Muslimischer ÖsterreichischerInnen* (Initiative of Austrian Muslims) set up a documentation centre for Muslims. At the end of 2014, they presented the first report on attacks on Muslims.111

Wiener Linien, the Viennese public transport, started a campaign against loud telephone calls and included a woman with a hijab in their posters. Such campaigns can contribute to the normalisation of Muslims in public space. (Figure 17)

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Conclusion and Recommendations

• Austria should fulfill its promise from Durban 2001 and adopt a National Action Plan against racism (NAP) in order to meet the challenges regarding discrimination and racism which are prevalent in all areas of society.

• Financial and human resources should be raised for the Equal Treatment Commission and for an increase of the capacities of the Ombud for Equal Treatment to fulfill its task of raising awareness of the Equal Treatment Act.

• Discrimination on the job market must be fought with better legal standards and the creation of a relevant consciousness. Penalties for the violation of discrimination on the six grounds mentioned in the EU Directives on this issue should be increased.

• The amended Equal Treatment Act (August 2013) has to fulfill the long-demanded extension of protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, age, belief and religion to areas outside employment.

• The Islam Law has to be amended in order not to be in conflict with the Austrian Constitution. This is of utmost importance, since the new law has sent a message of inequality to the Muslim masses.

• Training on racism, especially Islamophobia, should be offered to journalists, lawyers, and police (security officials) by qualified personnel.

• Muslim civil society has to be empowered with information to combat Islamophobia, especially in the creation of a consciousness towards the illegality of hate crimes.

• Educational institutions and stakeholders have to work towards creating an alternative narrative of Muslims in Austria which will work to dispel the widely accepted negative image of Islam.
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN AUSTRIA

Chronology

• 11 January: Weekly Falter published a cover connecting North-African men in a
generalised way with sexual assaults. The Austrian Press Council reprimanded the
magazine on 25 April.
• January: It is announced that there is no final report as had been promised on Islam-
ic kindergartens by Ednan Aslan.
• 20 February: First imam has to leave Austria due to new Islam Law of 2015.
• 22 March: Editor-in-chief of daily Österreich called for a ban of Islam.
• 24 April: First of four rounds of presidential election campaigns that occur on 22
May, 2 October (abrogated) and 4 December with right wing populist Norbert
Hofer campaigning against Muslim minorities and the alleged Islamization of
Austria.
• June-August: Restrictions in some public swimming pools for refugees from Muslim
countries and a ban of the burkini in the public swimming pools of Melk, Korneu-
burg and Hainfeld.
• 18 August: Foreign Minister Kurz demanded a ban of the face veil in the pub-
lic sphere.
• 20 August: SPÖ party whip Schieder supports the foreign minister’s claim.
• 7 November: FPÖ’s event “Have we learned from history?” with Israeli right-wing
politicians who warn of the dangers of Muslim anti-Semitism.
• 12 September: FPÖ’s event for the commemoration of the second Turkish siege of
Vienna under the title “September 12, 1683 – Protect the West, Then as Now”.

islamophobiaeurope.com • @islamophobiaEIR
This is the second issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* which was presented for the first time in 2015. New countries are included in this year's *EIR*; while 25 countries were covered in 2015, the report for 2016 includes 27 country reports. *EIR 2016* is the result of 31 prominent scholars who specialise in different fields such as racism, gender and Islamophobia Studies.

Islamophobia has become a real danger to the foundations of democratic order and the values of the European Union. It has also become the main challenge to the social peace and coexistence of different cultures, religions and ethnicities in Europe. The country reports of *EIR 2016*, which cover almost all the European continent from Russia to Portugal and from Greece to Latvia, clearly show that the level of Islamophobia in fields such as education, employment, media, politics, the justice system and the Internet is on the rise. Since the publication of the last report there is little improvement. On the contrary, one can see from the country reports that the state of democracy and human rights in Europe is deteriorating. Islamophobia has become more real especially in the everyday lives of Muslims in Europe. It has surpassed the stage of being a rhetorical animosity and has become a physical animosity that Muslims feel in everyday life be it at school, the workplace, the mosque, transportation or simply on the street.

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**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.