
EUROPEAN

ISLAMOPHOBIA

REPORT

2016



ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

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ISBN: 978-975-2459-00-7

Cover and Layout: Erkan Söğüt

Printed in Turkey, İstanbul by Turkuvaz Haberleşme ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2017

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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%.¹

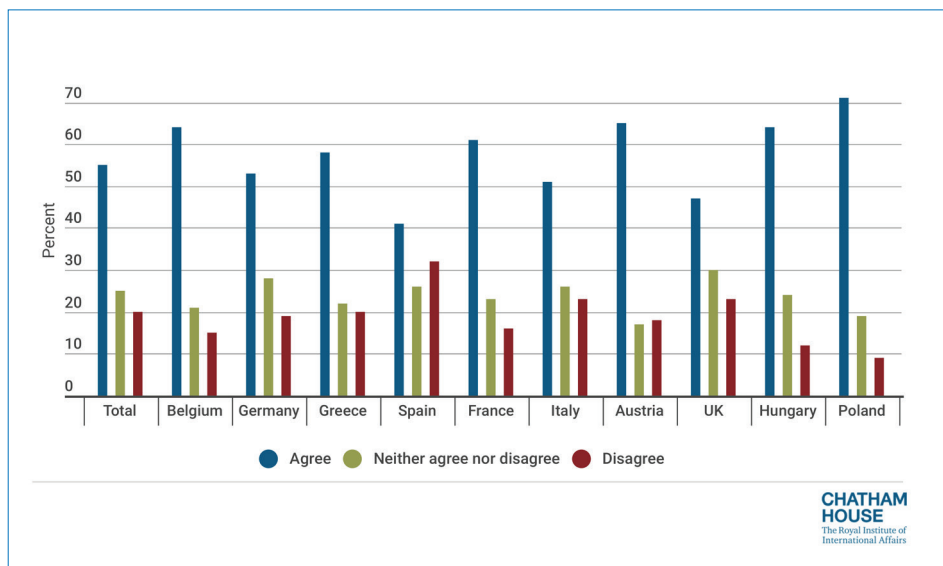


Figure 1: Public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states in Europe.²

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

1. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration#sthash.O6J7kQrj.dpuf>

2. Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration>

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.

3. <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/ipsos-mori-perils-of-perception-charts-2016.pdf>

4. <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/07/Pew-Research-Center-EU-Refugees-and-National-Identity-Report-FINAL-July-11-2016.pdf>

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.

5. Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016, p.7.

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.⁶ Women who are visibly Muslim are socially ostracised in many places. The combination of internal community prob-

6. http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/forgottenwomenpublication_lr_final_with_latest_corrections.pdf

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 Esmâ 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.⁷ 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.⁸

7. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/europe/france-head-scarf-court.html?_r=0

8. <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=179082&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=678370>

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
**BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA**
NATIONAL REPORT 2016

HIKMET KARČIĆ

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Hikmet Karčić is a researcher at the Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks. Since 2014, he is a PhD candidate at the International University of Sarajevo; his thesis is entitled “Detention Camps as a Tool for Ethno-religious Cleansing of Non-Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995”. He graduated from the Law Faculty in Sarajevo in 2010. In 2012, he successfully defended his MA thesis entitled “The Importance and Role of Appeals in Front of the Human Rights Chamber in the Search for Missing Persons in B&H 1996-2003” at the same faculty. In the past, he worked at the Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Center for Advanced Studies and was the project coordinator for “Mapping of Detention Camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995” at the Association TPOS. He is the author of “An Appeal for Truth” (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2013) and editor of “Remembering the Bosnian Genocide: Justice, Memory and Denial” (Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks, 2016). He also compiled and translated *Muslim World: Population and Religiosity* (“Muslimanski svijet: populacija i religioznost”, Centar za napredne studije, 2013) and *Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Death and Forced Exile of Ottoman Muslims* (*Balkanski ratovi 1912-1913: Smrt i prisilno prognonstvo osmanskih muslimana*, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, 2012). He is the author of several research articles related to war crimes and memorialization, and has produced two documentaries related to the former.

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To cite this report: Hikmet Karcic (2017): *Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina: National Report 2016*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017.

Executive Summary

The overall negative and discriminatory trends towards Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are evident mostly in the educational, political and media sectors. The main generators of Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim bigotry are the Bosnian Serb political, media and academic policymakers. The Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity *Republika Srpska* intensified its secessionist rhetoric and raised tensions in the country by holding a referendum regarding its Statehood Day while undermining the B&H Constitutional Court. *Republika Srpska's* political establishment often used anti-Muslim and Islamophobic rhetoric to rally support; this was especially evident during the general elections in October 2016.

This year also saw the continuation of the denial of genocide and war crimes by the Serb authorities. The local and regional media contributed to anti-Muslim bigotry with reports about terrorist threats and radical ideology, connecting it with the Bosniak political and religious establishment. The wars in Syria and Iraq gave way to sensationalist media reports trying to connect Bosniaks with “Islamic extremism”. The two main occasions for these reports were the return of several dozen Bosniaks from the Syria and Iraq war zones and local court cases where ex-fighters and local instigators were tried.

A relatively new development in the country is the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab bigotry as a result of the rise of Arab tourists in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Certain media outlets suggested that Arabs in fact were not tourists but migrants who will change the demographic image of B&H. This assumption is further fueled by claims that these Arabs will impose their laws and their culture on Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

Lastly, this year saw a continuation of physical and verbal attacks on mosques and imams, mostly in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity *Republika Srpska*. Almost all of these cases remain unresolved by the police. Additional anti-Muslim hatred was visible at football matches and in graffiti in Serb-dominated towns.

Sažetak

Cjelokupni negativni i diskriminatornih trendovi prema muslimanima u Bosni i Hercegovini se uglavnom očituje u obrazovnom, političkom i medijskom sistemu. Glavni generatori islamofobije i anti-muslimanske netrpeljivosti su čelnici bosanskih Srba - politički, medijski i akademski nosioci politike. Bosansko-hercegovački entitet Republika Srpska intenzivirala je secesionističku retoriku održavanjem referenduma u vezi s danom državnosti RS, i time podrivala odluku Ustavnog suda BiH. Političke strukture Republike Srpske često su koristili anti-muslimansku i islamofobičnu retoriku za mobilizaciju podrške što se vidjelo tokom opšti izbora u oktobru 2016. godine. Ove godine se nastavilo negiranje genocida i ratnih zločina od strane srpskih zvaničnika. Domaći i regionalni mediji doprinijeli su anti-muslimanskim netrpeljivostima kroz izvještavanje o terorističkim prijetnjama i radikalnoj ideologiji, povezivajući ih s bošnjačkim političkim i vjerskim zvaničnicima. Ratovi u Siriji i Iraku dali su povoda senzacionalističkim medijima da povezuju Bošnjake sa "islamskim ekstremizmom". Dva glavna događaja za ova izvještavanja su: povratak nekoliko desetina Bošnjaka s ratišta Sirije i Iraka te domaći sudski slučajevi gdje su bivši borci i domaći podstrekači. Relativno nova pojava je porast anti-muslimanske i anti-arapske netrpeljivosti koja je uzrokovana porastom broja arapskih turista u zemlji. Pojedine medijske kuće sugerirale su da Arapi ustvari nisu turisti već migrant koji će promijeniti demografsku sliku BiH. Ova pretpostavka je dalje potpaljena tvrdnjama da će ovi Arapi nametnuti svoje zakone i njihovu kulturu on bosanskohercegovačko društvo. Konačno, ove godine je vidljiv nastavak fizičkih i usmenih napada na džamije i imame, većinom u bosanskohercegovačkom entitetu Republika Srpska. Skoro svi ovi napadi nisu procesuirani od strane policije. Dodatna anti-muslimanska mržnja bila je vidljiva na fudbalskim utakmicama i na grafitima u srpsko-dominantnim gradovima.

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a post-conflict and transitional country which has a very complex political structure. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attacks have been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a long time. The first public Islamophobic statements appeared in the late 1980s and were made by Orientalists and self-proclaimed Islam experts at the University of Belgrade. After the aggression and genocide of 1992-95, and especially after the terror attacks of 11 September, 2001, Islamophobia has been on the rise. Most of the attacks are aimed at Bosniak returnees in *Republika Srpska* and in Croat-majority areas. The largest concentration of Bosniaks is in the Federation where there are almost no attacks other than occasional Islamophobic statements or writings. Research for this report was based on available reports, media analysis and interviews with important stakeholders; people and institutions were contacted in order to gain relevant information on different topics that included the media, justice, education, etc.

It is generally accepted that Islam arrived in Bosnia with the Ottoman armies in the fifteenth century. Today, Bosnian Muslims are overwhelmingly Sunnis. Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) are an indigenous Slavic ethnic group. More than 55 years of communism (1945-1990) in Yugoslavia kept religion in the dark. However, after Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito's death in 1980, a rise of Serb nationalism first incited anti-Albanian and later anti-Muslim rhetoric. Centuries old ideas of establishing a homogenous greater Serbian state was revived by the Yugoslav regime under Slobodan Milošević. During 1992-95, an international armed conflict and genocide (the aim of establishing a Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia meant dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina and getting rid of its Muslim population) caused the deaths of at least 100,000 people, 30,000 enforced disappearances and the rape of 30,000 women and girls.¹ The vast majority of the victims were Bosniaks whose remains were buried in hundreds of hidden mass graves throughout the country. In addition to this, an estimated 600 mosques and a variety of Islamic religious objects were deliberately destroyed by the Bosnian Serb Army and the Croat Defence Council. A decade of communism followed by genocidal massacres of the Bosniak population resulted in today's situation where interreligious understanding and tolerance is fragile and complex.

The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the war entrenching the results of genocide, and cementing the divide in the country. Annex 4 of the Dayton Agreement is the Constitution of B&H in which two separate entities (territorial units) are established: the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the *Republika Srpska*, each with its own president, government, parliament, police and other bodies. Overarching these entities is the state of Bosnia government

1. For a better understanding of the war see: Edina Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2014).

and rotating (three-member) presidency. In addition, there is the district of Brčko, a self-governing administrative unit established as a neutral area that is placed under joint Serb, Croat and Bosniak authority. This elaborate multi-tiered system of government, with cabinets and parliaments on state, entity and cantonal levels, means that Bosnia is now overburdened with politicians and civil servants, many of whom continue to receive salaries not in keeping with the country's impoverished condition.²

When it comes to the population of Muslims in B&H, according to the census conducted in 2013, 50.11% (1,769,592) of inhabitants declared themselves to be Bosniaks (out of a total 3,531,159).³ A slightly larger percentage (50.70%) stated that their religion is Islam. Since, in the case of all three constituent ethnic communities in Bosnia, the ethnic and religious identities overlap to large extent, this figure is usually taken as indicative of the number of adherents to Islam. Due to war-related death, expulsion and internal and external migration in the 1992-1995 aggression against B&H, the numbers and demographic distribution of ethnic groups have significantly changed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a secular state with no state religion. In today's post-war B&H, the increased presence of religion in the public arena is evident. Some welcome the religious revival as a healthy assertion of identity after the decades-long de-Islamization process that occurred during the communist period, while others see it as a rising threat to the secular and politically fragile state.⁴

Annex 1 of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina includes 15 main documents on human rights. The constitution states that the rights and freedoms set forth in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols shall apply directly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These shall have priority over all other law (Article 2.2). All persons within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall enjoy the human rights and fundamental freedoms referred to in Paragraph 2 above; these include: (...) (g) Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 2.3). A special law providing for the freedom of religion and religious non-discrimination, as well as the legal status of churches and religious communities was adopted in 2004. This is the Law on Freedom of Religion and the Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to this law everyone has the right to freedom of religion or belief, including the freedom to publicly profess, or not, a religion. Also, everyone has a right to adopt or change his or her religion, and has the freedom - individually

2. For more information, see: CIA Fact book, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html>.

3. *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina - 2013 final results*, <http://www.popis2013.ba/popis2013/doc/Popis2013prvoIzdanie.pdf>

4. Also see: State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for B&H at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

or in community with others, in public or private - to manifest his or her religion or belief in any manner, in worship, practice and observance, or in maintenance of customs or other religious activities. Everyone has the right to religious education, which shall be provided solely by persons appointed to do so by an official representative of the individual's church or religious community, whether in religious institutions or in public and private preschool institutions, primary schools and higher education, and this shall be regulated according to the specific regulations (Article 4.1). Along with this, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination was also adopted in 2009; according to this law discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief consists of any differential treatment, including any type of exclusion, limitation or preference based on real or assumed features towards any person or group of persons on grounds of religion or belief, and every other circumstance with a purpose or a consequence that inhibits or endangers recognition, enjoyment or realisation of rights and freedoms in all areas of public life (Article 2.1). Prohibition of such discrimination shall be applied to all public bodies, all natural and legal persons, in the public and private sector, in all spheres; in particular, in employment, membership in professional organisations, education, training, housing, health, social protection, goods and services designated for public and public places together with performing economic activities and public services (Article 2).

Hate crime as a specific crime is motivated by intolerance towards certain groups in society. Some of the several criminal codes in B&H contain limited provisions that allow more severe punishment to be imposed for crimes committed with a motivation of bias. Use of these provisions is inconsistent and relatively rare. For example, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) and the Brčko District Criminal Codes include aggravated forms of some criminal acts, such as murder, rape or causing grievous bodily injury when committed with a motivation of bias. The FB&H Criminal Code also includes an aggravated form of malicious mischief. Many laws on peace and public order at the cantonal level also include minor offences, punishable with a fine, which encompass insulting behaviour based on national, racial or religious grounds. The FB&H, *Republika Srpska* and Brčko District Criminal Codes also include provisions on incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, discord or hostility. According to OSCE B&H statistics hate crimes in B&H often target returnee communities (who are often isolated and vulnerable) and religious and sacred objects (mosques, churches and graveyards), as well as private property belonging to returnees or members of minority communities. OSCE B&H also records hate crimes through the Hate Monitor.⁵ More than 85% of all hate crimes registered through the Hate Monitor are due to ethnicity/religion. Unfortunately, the statistics are not segregated by religion. When it comes to hate speech regulations, the FB&H

5. For more information, see: <http://hatemonitor.oscebih.org/Default.aspx?pageid=10&lang=EN>

and RS laws do not specifically proscribe hate speech, but prohibit acts that cause ethnic, racial or religious hatred.⁶ Nevertheless, usage of incendiary language (in the media, by politicians and others) usually goes unpunished.⁷

Islamophobic hate speech is particularly common online. To this date, no procedures have been initiated that would limit or sanction such activities. More information on hate speech in media will be given in the report's media section.

Significant Incidents and Developments

Three events marked the rise of Islamophobia in 2016. Firstly, the secessionist rhetoric of *Republika Srpska's* political establishment reached a new high when a referendum on the *Republika Srpska* Statehood Day was held in September. *Republika Srpska's* President Milorad Dodik is on the record for making anti-Muslim statements and for denying the Bosnian genocide in the past. This year his actions continued and were echoed by other politicians from *Republika Srpska*.

The ongoing war in Syria and Iraq opened way for sensationalist media reports and the association of Bosniaks with extremists. This is an especially interesting topic for media outlets in Croatia and Serbia which often portrayed Sarajevo and B&H as centres of "Islamic extremism".

Finally, the rise in visits by Arab tourists provided a new and virtually unknown form of bigotry in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a phobia of Middle-Eastern tourists.

The following incidents were collected through media report, direct reporting to the Commission and personal contacts.⁸ The Interreligious Council of B&H also published a report on the monitoring and the responses to attacks on religious buildings and other holy sites in B&H.⁹ When this report was being written, the data for 2016 had not yet been published.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

The High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council's decision to ban headscarves and other religious symbols on October 2015, reached its peak with highly publicised public debates in the start of 2016. The Islamic Community petitioned to the council to

6. For more information, see: <http://zalbe.vzs.ba/index.php/zakonska-rjesenja>

7. United States Department of State, Country Report for B&H on Human Rights Practices for 2015, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

8. I would like to thank Mr. Mensur Karadža, head of legal department in Riyasat of Islamic community; Nihad Mehmedović, legal adviser in Riyasat of Islamic community; and Elvedin Subašić, journalist from *Preporod* newspaper for their valuable information and insight.

9. I would like to thank Mr. Igor Kožemjakin from the Interreligious Council for providing information of IRC registered attacks from January to October 2016. The IRC only registers attacks which are reported to it.

reconsider its decision, but in February 2016, the council reaffirmed its position on the ban of religious symbols in courts and other legal institutions.¹⁰

The proposed text of the agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would improve the status and guarantee rights of Muslim employees, was passed on to the B&H Presidency in March and has not progressed since that date.¹¹

The most publicised case regarding employment was that of Edvin Omerović, an employee of the Tuzla International Airport. Omerović was fired from his job after a TV report in which he was portrayed as a suspected terrorist after asking for a prayer room at the airport and for attending certain public lectures by Muslim preachers.¹²

In 2016, the Commission for Freedom of Religion received three complaints out of which only one can be considered an obvious violation of a Muslim person's freedom of religion and a breach of human rights.

Mirza Drežnjak is an employee of the Federal Penal and Correctional Facility in Mostar. Drežnjak was asked by the Facility Director Romeo Zelenika to write a statement for being late to work after using his daily break. Zelenika stated that Drežnjak was late on six occasions by between 9 and 20 minutes. Drežnjak replied in a written statement that he used his daily break (30 minutes) for *jummah* prayers. The *jummah* prayers were conducted within the facility. Zelenika brought a Decision on Preventive Suspension of Drežnjak due to existing evidence of committing the criminal offence of "provoking general danger" according to Article 323 of the Federation B&H Criminal Code. Since 20 May, 2016, Drežnjak has been suspended pending the decision of the prosecution. The Commission for Freedom of Religion has written to the Federal Ministry of Justice regarding this case but has not received any reply as of yet.¹³

Education

The year 2016 marked a continuation of a blunt and serious violation of Bosniak children's constitutional right to be taught as a "national group" in schools in *Republika Srpska*. Several Bosniak returnee communities refused to enroll their children in schools in the Bosnian entity *Republika Srpska* because they were not entitled to learn the Bosnian language. One such community in Vrbanjci near Kotor Varoš sued the Sveti Savo Primary School. On 25 November, 2016, the Regional Court in Banja

10. "Bosnia Judicial Authorities Uphold Hijab Ban, Despite Protests", *RFE*, February 11, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-judiciary-upholds-ban-on-hijab-despite-protests/27545654.html>

11. E. Mušinić, "Sporazum Islamske zajednice i BiH dostavljen Predsjedništvu BiH na usvajanje" /Klix.ba, 28.3.2016, <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/sporazum-islamske-zajednice-i-bih-dostavljen-predsjednistvu-bih-na-usvajanje/160328049>

12. Mersiha Gadzo, "In Bosnia, Syrian Abu Hamza jailed without trial", *Al Jazeera*, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/bosnia-syrian-abu-hamza-jailed-trial-160323093808061.html>

13. I would like to thank Nihad Mehmedović for providing the documentation for this case.

Luka delivered a decision that there was no discrimination against Bosniak children in the school. Bosniak parents announced that they will appeal to higher judicial levels in order to secure their children's right to be taught Bosnian in school.¹⁴

In January 2016, a similar case was turned down by the Primary Court in Banja Luka in the case of Bosniak returnee children and the teaching of Bosnian in Petar Dokić School in Konjević Polje near Srebrenica.¹⁵

As a result, the Islamic Community provided temporary makeshift schools where children are taught according to national B&H curriculum and teachers are brought in from the Federation B&H.

On 28 December, the University of Sarajevo Senate adopted an initiative that suggested to its faculties to provide a break in courses for jummah prayers and other religious ceremonies.¹⁶ This caused an outbreak of reactions in the media and in academia. One of the most visible reactions came from *Republika Srpska* Radio and Television whose evening news was titled “*Pauza petkom u vrijeme džume – da li je Sarajevski univerzitet uveo šerijat?*” (Break on Fridays during jummah – did the Sarajevo University adopt Shariah?). The event was reported in an extremely sensationalist manner.¹⁷

Politics

The political atmosphere was marked by a continuation of secessionist rhetoric and a culmination of Serb nationalism with a referendum regarding the *Republika Srpska* Statehood Day (9 January) which was ruled by the B&H Constitutional Court as unconstitutional since it is a Orthodox Christian religious holiday and “marks the day in 1992 when a renegade Bosnian Serb assembly declared an independent Serbian state in Bosnia”.¹⁸

As in the past years, *Republika Srpska's* President Milorad Dodik spearheaded the Islamophobic campaign. After the 2013 population census was published in July 2016 (which showed that Bosniaks constitute more than 50% of the population), Dodik gave an interview to Belgrade-based *Politika* in which he stated:

“Bakir Izetbegović said that he is continuing the politics of his father Alija. Alija Izetbegović said that Muslims have to endure in a minority until they are a

14. Jakub Salkić, “Sud legalizirao diskriminaciju bošnjačke djece”, *STAV*, 16.12.2016, <http://stav.ba/sud-legalizirao-diskriminaciju-bosnjacke-djece/>

15. “Presuda u slučaju diskriminacije djece u Konjević Polju”, *BHTV*, 23.01.2016, <http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/banja-luka-osnovni-sud-odbio-tuzbu-roditelja-i-ucenika-iz-konjevic-polja/>

16. “Senat UNSA odlučio: Studenti će imati slobodno vrijeme za džumu, misu i druge vjerske obrede”, *Klix.ba*, 28.12.2016, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/senat-uns-a-odlucio-studenti-ce-imati-slobodno-vrijeme-za-dzumu-misu-i-druge-vjerske-obrede/161228050>

17. “Pauza petkom u vrijeme džume – da li je Sarajevski univerzitet uveo šerijat?”, *RTRS*, 29.12.2016, <http://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=236578>

18. Gordana Knezevic, “The Politics Of Fear: Referendum In Republika Srpska”, *Radio Free Europe*, 23 September 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/a/politics-of-fear-referendum-in-republika-srpska-statehood-day-dodik/28009309.html>

majority. When they become a majority then they have to form an Islamic state. We see this Islamic State in the Middle East. Here, now they have reached 50% and now is probably the time to create an Islamic state in Bosnia.”¹⁹

After the B&H Council of Ministers accepted the draft agreement between the state and the Islamic Community, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), the leading political party from *Republika Srpska* headed by Milorad Dodik, stated that the agreement is discriminatory and that it “dictates shariah law”.²⁰

Media

In 2016, the leading print and electronic media in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina dealt with Islam and Muslims mostly in two ways: firstly, on the occasion of holidays and secondly, on the occasion of topics related to terrorism or the war in Syria and Iraq. Islamophobic articles and reports related to Bosniaks and Bosnia and Herzegovina were also strongly present in neighbouring countries Serbia and Croatia which were then picked up by media outlets in B&H.

Certain media in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region opt for sensationalist approaches, unprofessional attitudes, and inconsiderate and inflammatory rhetoric. A majority of these reports suggested that B&H is a safe haven for terrorists. For example, in March, Zagreb-based newspaper *Večernji List* published a report written by Zoran Krešić titled “*U Sarajevu zapovjedni centar Islamske države*” (The Command Centre of Islamic State is in Sarajevo) which stated that six former Guantanamo Bay prisoners are walking freely in Sarajevo.²¹ This report came quickly after Imand al-Huseini, better known as Abu Hamza, was released from the Immigration Centre in Sarajevo after six years of detention without trial.

Another example is the Banja Luka-based, *SRNA*, the official *Republika Srpska* News Agency, which published a report in December titled “*Teroristi se već okupljaju u BiH, na Kosovu i u Sandžaku*” (Terrorists are already gathering in B&H, Kosovo and Sanjak). This report quoted a certain Milan Pašanski, a professor at the Faculty of Applied Ecology at Singidunum University in Belgrade and a self-proclaimed expert on terrorism.²² The report suggested that there is an exodus of terrorists from the so-called Islamic State towards Europe and that they are

19. Biljana Baković, “Od popisa do islamske države u BiH”, *Politika*, 2 July 2016, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/358416/%D0%9E%D0%B4>

20. “SNSD: Ugovor između Islamske zajednice i BiH diktat šerijata”, *ATV*, 1 October 2016, <http://www.atvbl.com/snsd-ugovor-između-islamske-zajednice-bih-diktat-serijata/>

21. Zoran Krešić, ‘U Sarajevu zapovjedni centar Islamske države’, *Večernji list*, 10 March 2016, <http://www.vecernji.hr/svijet/u-sarajevu-zapovjedni-centar-islamske-drzave-1066950>

22. He teaches subjects such as “The Politics of Ecology” and “EU Ecology Politics”. Singidunum University is a private institution.

gathering in B&H, Sanjak and Kosovo from where they will “carry out terrorist attacks in the EU”.²³

In recent years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a tourist destination for tourists from the Gulf countries. Some media outlets in the country and in the region reacted in two ways: connecting Arab tourists to extremism and claiming that B&H is losing its land and becoming an Arab colony. Zagreb-based *Večernji list* published a report by their correspondent Hassan Haidar Diab titled “*Naučite arapski. Uskoro bi to mogao postati drugi službeni jezik u BiH*” (Learn Arabic. Soon It Will Be the Second Official Language in B&H) which cited anonymous sources who claimed that they were afraid of the number of Arabs visiting B&H. Diab also stated that 30% of these Arabs were followers of Wahabbi-Salafi ideology, such as the ideologies of Al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State.²⁴ This report was picked up by Bosnian Croat and Serb portals.

Media outlets are partly responsible for anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiment due to their insufficiently balanced and sensationalist approaches, unprofessional attitudes and inconsiderate and inflammatory rhetoric.

Justice System

In February 2016, Imad Al-Husin, also known as Abu Hamza, a Bosnian citizen of Syrian descent was released after being kept in detention at the Immigration Centre near Sarajevo without trial for seven years on the grounds that he was a “threat to national security”. The Ministry of Security released a statement regarding his release:

“[Imad Al-Husin] [s]till represents a menace for the national security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and our Service will continue activities to find a safe third country willing to accept this foreign citizen with the objective of his removal from Bosnia and Herzegovina.”²⁵

Due to the fact that a significant number of former fighters return from conflict zones to B&H, the state brought a new law criminalising taking part in foreign conflicts. As a result, several former fighters were arrested. In March, Emin Hodžić was the first person to be sentenced by the Court of B&H for fighting with the so-called Islamic State.²⁶ Since then more than a dozen former fighters were sentenced for supporting, funding and fighting with IS.

23. This report was published by several media outlets including Banja Luka-based *Nezavisne Novine*: Teroristi se već okupljaju u BiH, na Kosovu i u Sandžak, 12 December 2016, <http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/ex-yu/Terroristi-se-vec-okupljaju-u-BiH-na-Kosovu-i-u-Sandzaku/402481>

24. Hassan Haider Diab, “Naučite arapski. Uskoro bi to mogao postati drugi službeni jezik u BiH”, 5 September 2016, *Večernji list*, <http://www.vecernji.hr/svijet/naucite-arapski-uskoro-bi-to-mogao-postati-drugi-sluzbeni-jezik-u-bih-1111301>.

25. See more at: “Bosnia Ends Abu Hamza’s Seven-Year Ordeal”, *Balkan Insight*, 18 February 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-releases-abu-hamza-02-18-2016#sthash.K5dFKLgD.dpuf>

26. “Prva presuda za borbu na strani ISIL-a: Sud BiH osudio Emina Hodžića na godinu dana zatvora”, *Slobodna Bosna*, 21 March 2016, <http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/29136/prva-presuda-za-borbu-na-strani-isil-a-sud-bih-osudio-emina-hodzica-na-godinu-dana-zatvora.html>

The Islamic Community (IC) spearheaded several important CVE projects, two of which stand out. The Association Ilmija organised a series of lectures throughout the country in cooperation with OSCE titled “*Imamski poziv, vjerski radikalizam i nasilni ekstremizam*” (The Imam’s Profession, Religious Radicalism and Violent Extremism).²⁷ The lectures were given by Islamic scholars and experts.

The second project was led by the IC’s Directorate of Foreign Affairs and titled “*Rad sa mladima na njihovom pravilnom usmjeravanju i prevenciji bolesti ovisnosti, nasilja i ekstremizma*” (“Working with young people for their proper guidance and prevention of addiction, violence and extremism”). This project was supported by the Norwegian Embassy in B&H. Its aim was to train professionals by offering them skills and knowledge for their work with young people.

The OSCE was also active with projects such as the Youth Summit held in Bihać in December 2016. The event was organised as part of the OSCE mission regarding the prevention of violent extremism in B&H. It contributes to the OSCE’s wider campaign under the title “United in Countering Violent Extremism”.

Finally, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) implemented a project titled “Community-based approach to support youth in targeted Municipalities of B&H” which also dealt with CVE.

An important initiative which should also be mentioned is the case of illegal Jamaats in B&H. These are newly established *jamaats* which are not recognised and are not part of the Islamic Community – a total of 38 such *jamaats* were identified. From December 2015 to March 2016, the Islamic Community worked on an inclusive mechanism to make these *jamaats* a part of the institutionalised Islamic Community. The majority of them accepted to become part of the Islamic Community while a smaller number refused.²⁸

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Most of the Islamophobic incidents that occurred in 2016 are related to the Bosniak returnee communities in *Republika Srpska* and in Croat-majority areas.²⁹ In January, an armed attack occurred on the Atik Mosque in Janja, Bijeljina.³⁰ Several unidentified persons shot firearms and damaged a window and the facade of the mosque.

In late March, online threats were made to the Main Imam of Vlasenica Nurudin – ef. Grahić by a local Serb.³¹ In Bijeljina, Enesa Okanović, an employee of the Islamic

27. “Ilmija“ is an association of imams and teachers of religious studies classes in public schools.

28. “Rijaset predstavio izvještaj o razgovorima sa nelegalnim džematima”, *Islamska Zajednica*, 23 April 2016, <http://www.islamskazajednica.ba/vijesti/mina-vijesti/23739-rijaset-predstavio-izvjestaj-o-razgovorima-sa-paradzematima>

29. I would like to thank Elvedin Subašić, journalist at *Preporod* newspaper, for providing information for this section.

30. Agencija Anadoluja, “Novi napad na Atik džamiju u Janji, pucano iz vatrenog oružja”, *Klix.ba*, 7.1.2016, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/novi-napad-na-atik-dzamiju-u-janji-pucano-iz-vatrenog-oruzja/160107052>

31. Elvedin Subašić, “Pregled: Napadi na muslimane u BiH u 2016. godini”, *Preporod*, 15.01.2017, <http://www.preporod.com/index.php/sve-vijesti/drustvo/akuelno/item/6136-pregled-napadi-na-muslimane-u-bih-u-2016-godini>

Community was verbally attacked by local Serbs. A few days later, the building of the *Majlis* of the Islamic Community in Bijeljina was desecrated with Serb nationalist graffiti stating “Only Unity Saves The Serbs” (*Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava*) and “Serbia to Tokyo” (*Srbija do Tokija*). Both of these slogans refer to the Greater Serbia nationalist ideology – whereby all Serbs will gather into a homogenous Serb state.³²

On 8 May, a day after the reconstructed Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka was opened, during morning prayers, a group of Serbs chanted the nationalist slogan “The Knife, The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica” (*Noz, zica, Srebrenica*) in front of the mosque.

In June, Bosniak returnees in Pljevi, Šipovo, were verbally attacked. A few days later, a bomb exploded in front of Bosniak returnee Nijaz Glavaš's house in Majevac near Šipovo.³³ On 21 June, an antiterrorism exercise was organised in Luke village near Srebrenica, as a show of force in order to intimidate Bosniak returnees.³⁴ The next day, pyrotechnics were thrown on a mosque in Čajnice during the *Laylat-Al Badr* night of Ramadan. The day after, an explosive device was thrown during *Taraw-ih* prayers near Mir Muhamed Mosque in Čajnice.³⁵ On 24 June, the Orthodox priest Bojan Pačavra and Ljubiša Božić, under the influence of alcohol, insulted and threatened worshippers in front of the mosque in Vrbanja, Banja Luka.³⁶ One of the men held a knife. Both were arrested by the police.

In late August, Bosniak returnees in Kotor-Kukavice, Kotor Varoš were insulted and intimidated by a group of Serbs.³⁷ The police intervened. On 24 August, Imam Mirsad Husejnović was verbally attacked by local Serbs in Bratunac.

On 9 September, a Bosniak returnee, Mensur Saračević, was verbally and physically attacked by a group of Serbs in Vlasenica. On 16 September, a group of 20 Serb men severely beat a young man when they heard that he was a Muslim in a café in Eastern Sarajevo.³⁸ On 17 September, a group of Croat men attacked a group of Arab

32. Ibid. The idea of Greater Serbia and the explanation of Serb nationalist symbolism is well explained by Michael A. Sells in his book *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

33. “Napad bombom na povratnika kod Šipova”, *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 28.06.2016, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/video/napad-bombom-na-povratnika-kod-sipova>

34. “Vježba specijalaca RS-a uznemirila Srebreničane”, *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 21.06.2016, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/vjezba-specijalaca-rs-uznemirila-srebrenicane>

35. E.A., “Čajniče: Eksplozija u blizini džamije uznemirila vjernike dok su klanjali teraviju”, *Klix.ba*, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/cajnice-eksplozija-u-blizini-dzamije-uznemirila-vjernike-dok-su-klanjali-teraviju/160623011>

36. “Pravoslavni sveštenik pred džamijom vrijeđao vjernike”, *NI Website*, 24.06.2016, <http://ba.n1info.com/a101966/Vijesti/Vijesti/Pravoslavni-svestenik-pred-dzamijom-vrijedjao-vjernike.html>

37. E.S., “Kotor-Varoš: Dva dana uznemiravali Bošnjake, policija spriječila nastavak divljanja”, *Preporod*, 11.09.2016, <http://www.preporod.com/index.php/duhovnost/tradicija/item/4777-kotor-varos-dva-dana-uznemiravali-bosnjake-policija-sprijecila-nastavak-divljanja>

38. “Istočno Sarajevo: Došao iz Engleske, otišao u kafić pa ga 30 osoba udaralo jer se zove Meho”, *Avaz.ba*, 19.09.2016, <http://www.avaz.ba/clanak/255222/istocno-sarajevo-dosao-iz-engleske-otisao-u-kafic-pa-ga-30-osoba-udaralo-je-se-zove-meho?url=clanak/255222/istocno-sarajevo-dosao-iz-engleske-otisao-u-kafic-pa-ga-30-osoba-udaralo-je-se-zove-meho#sthash.Ya0nuH04.dpuf>

tourists and their Bosniak guide in Kravice Waterfall, Ljubuski.³⁹ On 26 September, a mosque in Karakaj, Zvornik was desecrated with Serb nationalist graffiti.⁴⁰

On 1 October, the Selemija Mosque in Bosanska Gradiška was attacked when a group of local Serbs tried to destroy the mosque's fence.⁴¹ They also verbally attacked the imam and his congregation. On the 26 October, football fans of FC Kozara from Bosanska Gradiška chanted "The Knife, The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica" (*Nož, žica, Srebrenica*) during a football game with FC Sarajevo.⁴²

Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

The first European Islamophobia Summit was organised in Sarajevo on 24-26 June, 2016, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey. This event contributed to bringing the issue of Islamophobia closer to the Bosnian public. It was evident that personal accounts of cases of Islamophobia are crucial in combating hate. A Final Declaration was signed by the participating NGOs which stated: "We are particularly concerned that the current period of political and economic uncertainty within Europe, especially given Britain's referendum decision to leave the EU and the rise of far-right extremism across Europe, will only further exacerbate a climate of divisiveness, fear and bigotry." The event and its content were well publicised and presented in the media.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- Cooperation between governments (state level, entity level, and district Brčko level), the Islamic Community and NGOs in fighting discrimination against Muslims should be fostered.
- Public awareness on human rights and freedom of religion and belief should be raised by NGOs, media, etc.
- The methods of documentation of cases of violation of the rights of Muslims should be enhanced by the Islamic Community, NGOs, the police and judiciary.
- Awareness of hate crimes against Muslims, their proper registration and prosecution should be raised by the Islamic Community, NGOs, the police and judiciary.

39. "Fizički napadi na arapske turiste u BiH", *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 18.09.2016, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/fizicki-napadi-na-arapske-turiste-u-bih>

40. "Karakaj: Na džamiji osvanuli uvredljivi graffiti", *Bir.ba*, 27.09.2016, <http://www.bir.ba/index.php/vijesti/bih/item/3828-karakaj-na-dzamiiji-osvanuli-uvredljivi-grafiti>

41. "Bosanska Gradiška: Vandali izvršili napad na džamiju", *Avaz.ba*, 2.10.2016, <http://www.avaz.ba/clanak/256839/bosanska-gradiska-vandali-izvrsili-napad-na-dzamiiju?url=clanak/256839/bosanska-gradiska-vandali-izvrsili-napad-na-dzamiiju#sthash.yRgpIr6H.dpuf>

42. "Gradiška: Navijači Kozare skandirali 'Nož, žica, Srebrenica'", *NI Website*, 26.10.2016, <http://ba.n1info.com/a119399/Vijesti/Vijesti/Gradiska-Navijaci-Kozare-skandirali-Noz-zica-Srebrenica.html>

- Awareness of hate speech (online and offline) by media, politicians, etc. should be raised.
- Awareness about Islamic practice (prayer, jumaah, and headscarf) and available ways to accommodate this in education and employment should be raised. Regulations should be adjusted accordingly.
- Laws that stipulate that public officers or officials “shall refrain from public manifestation of their religious beliefs”, which discriminate against Muslim employees in fasting, taking a break for daily prayers or wearing the headscarf should be amended. The most flagrant cases should be referred to the HJPC (High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council).
- Awareness of citizens and NGOs about reporting offensive media language to the Press Council in B&H and Communications Regulatory Agency should be raised.
- Awareness of citizens and NGOs about filing complaints related to human rights violations to the B&H Ombudsman’s office, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees and in regular courts should be raised.
- Commitment to countering violent extremism, but not at the expense of freedom of religion and not solely focusing on Islam or Muslims should be developed.

Chronology

January

- **1.1.** Glass thrown on the outbuilding of the Emperor’s (*Careva*) Mosque in Foča.
- **6.1.-7.1.** Armed attack on Atik Mosque in Janja, Bijeljina. Several unidentified persons shot a firearm and damaged a window and the facade of the mosque.
- **15.1.** Two Molotov cocktails were thrown at a mosque in Pale.

March

- **12.3.** A mural of World War Two Serb nationalist leader General Draža Mihailovića in the centre of Gacko was installed next to a mural of Serb war criminal Ratko Mladić.
- **27.3.** Online threats made to the Main Imam of Vlasenica Nurudin – ef. Grahić.
- **28.3.** Verbal threats to an employee of the Islamic Community in Bijeljina Enesa Okanović.

April

- **2.4.** An imam in Kupres was insulted in front of his mosque.
- **5.4.** Serb nationalist graffiti “Only Unity Saves The Serbs” (*Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava*) and “Serbia to Tokyo” (*Srbija do Tokija*) was written on the Islamic Community Majlis building in Bijeljina.

May

- **8.5.** During morning prayers and evening prayers, a group of Serbs chanted nationalist slogans “The Knife, The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica” (*Nož, žica, Srebrenica*) in front of Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka.
- **20.5** Mirza Drežnjak, an employee of the Federal Penal and Correctional Facility in Mostar, was suspended from work after he attended jummah prayers several times in the facility’s building.

June

- **12.6.-13.6.** Verbal attacks on Muslims in Pljevi, Šipovo.
- **15.6.** A bomb exploded in front of Bosniak returnee Nijaz Glavaš’s house in Majevac near Šipovo.
- **21.6.** An antiterrorism exercise was organised in Luke village near Srebrenica, as a show of force to intimidate Bosniak returnees.
- **22.6.** Pyrotechnics thrown at a mosque in Čajnice during *Laylat-Al Badr* night of Ramadan.
- **23.6.** An explosive device was thrown during *Tarawih* prayers near Mir Muhamed Mosque in Čajniče.
- **24.6.** The Orthodox priest Bojan Pačavra and Ljubiša Božić, under the influence of alcohol, insulted and threatened worshippers in front of the mosque in Vrbanja, Banja Luka. One of the men held a knife. Both were arrested by the police.

August

- **9.8.** The mosque in Zapodi (Gradište) in Zenica was broken into and ransacked.
- **19.8.** Bosniaks in Kotor-Kukavice, Kotor Varoš were insulted and intimidated by a group of Serbs. The police intervened.
- **24.8.** Verbal attack on Imam Mirsad Husejnović in Bratunac.

September

- **8.9.** The mosque in Klopce, Zenica was broken into and ransacked.
- **9.9.** The Bosniak returnee Mensur Saračević in Vlasenica was verbally and physically attacked by a group of Serbs.
- **16.9.** A group of 20 men severely beat a young man when they heard that he was a Muslim in a café in Eastern Sarajevo.
- **17.9.** A group of Croat men attacked a group of Arab tourists and their Bosniak guide in Kravice Waterfall, Ljubuski.
- **26.9.** Serb nationalist graffiti written on a mosque in Karaka, Zvornik.
- October
- **1.10.** Attack on Selemija Mosque in Bosanska Gradiška. A group of Serbs tried to destroy the mosque’s fence and verbally attacked the imam and his congregation.
- **26.10.** Football fans of FC Kozara from Bosanska Gradiška chanted “The Knife,

The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica” (*Noz, zica, Srebrenica*) during a football game with FC Sarajevo.

November

- **29.11.** Croatian President Kolinda Grabac-Kitarović stated that Islam in B&H is “becoming more radicalised, especially in rural areas, changing the way of life, even the appearance of people, in terms of clothing and behaviour and a lot more rigid interpretation of the values of Islam.”

December

- **28.12.** The University of Sarajevo Senate adopted an initiative that suggested to its faculties to provide a break in courses for jummah prayers and other religious ceremonies. This caused an outbreak of reactions in the media and academia.



Figure 1: A screenshot of a report published in *Nezavisne Novine* “Terrorists are already gathering in B&H, Kosovo and Sanjak”.



Figure 2: Graffiti on the mosque gate in Bijeljina stating “Serbia to Tokyo”, a Greater Serbia nationalist slogan from the nineties.



Figure 3: A report published in Croatian newspaper *Večernji List* titled “Learn Arabic. Soon It Will Be the Second Official Language in B&H”.

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.

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.

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.

