EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT
2016

ENES BAYRAKLı • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)
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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

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

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,

“One 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.

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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”.

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.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

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Executive Summary

This report presents an overview of major Islamophobic events and negative attitudes against Muslims in Bulgaria in 2016. The report was drafted on research based on a survey of available reports, media analyses and interviews with a number of experts from different NGOs and the country’s Islamic community, conducted in November 2016.

The terrorist attacks in Europe and the so-called refugee crisis and immigration due to the war in the Middle East shaped the public debate on Islam in Bulgaria in 2016. These crises were the base of anti-Muslim manifestations and the Islamophobic rhetoric of the extreme nationalist political parties like VMRO-BND (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Bulgarian National Movement), NFSB (National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria) and ATAKA. Far-right organizations like BNU (Bulgarian National Union) were the driving force of anti-Islamic discourse and sentiment in the country, as they have organized a series of anti-immigrant protest meetings across the country.

The PF (Patriotic Front) 1 and the political party ATAKA brought legislative initiatives to adopt new legislations and amendments to the existing laws at the National Assembly of Bulgaria and gave support to all anti-immigrant protests in the country throughout the year. In September, the law prohibiting the wearing of clothing that covers the face, the so-called “Burqa Law” was adopted in the National Assembly. Some municipal councils have also adopted such regulations. Along with this law, extreme nationalists proposed amendments to the Law on Religions and the Penal Code, which according to human rights experts pose a restriction of the freedom of religion, especially the rights of Muslims in the country. The adopted law and proposals for amendments to the laws have been criticised as discriminatory by many scholars, human rights experts, activists, NGOs, including the Office of the Grand Mufti and religious communities.

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1. Patriotic Front is a nationalist electoral alliance around the political parties VMRO and NFSB.
Резюме

Този доклад представлява преглед на основните събития, свързани с ислямофобията и негативното отношение към мюсюлманите в България през 2016 г. Методологията, използvana при изготвянето на този доклад се състои от вторична информация и се основава на налични доклади, медийен анализ и интервюта с експерти в неправителствени организации и ислямската общност в страната, проведени през ноември 2016 г.

През 2016 г., терористичните атаки в Европа, бежанската криза и миграцията поради войната в Близкия изток, оформиха обществения дебат, свързан с ислама и мюсюлманите в България през 2016 г. Тази криза беше в основата на анти-мюсюлманските прояви и ислямофобската реторика на крайните националистически партии като коалиция „Патриотичен фронт“ (ВМРО и НФСБ), Атака и БНС-НД, както и крайно десните организации като БНС (Български национален съюз) бяха движежата сила за антимюсюлманската реторика и настроения в страната. Те организираха и редица анти-мигрантни протестни шествия и митинги в цялата страна.

Коалиция „Патриотичен фронт“ и партия АТАКА повдигнаха въпроси за нови законодателни инициативи, които включват приемане на нови закони и промени в съществуващите закони в Народното събрание и дадоха подкрепа за всички антиимигрантски протести в страната през годината. През септември беше приет Закона за забрана на облекло, прикриващо лицето, което покрива лицето. Някои общински съвети също приеха разпоредби, които забраняват носенето на облекло, което покрива лицето. Впоследствие беше приет закон в Народното събрание. Заедно с този закон, крайните националисти предложиха изменения в Закона за вероизповеданията и в Наказателния кодекс, които според експерти по правата на човека е ограничение на свободата на религията, особено правата на мюсюлманите в страната. Приетият закон и предложенията за промяна и допълнение в законите са критикувани като дискриминационен от много учени, експерти по човешки права, активисти, неправителствени организации, включително и Главно мюфтийство и религиозни общности.
Introduction

The Republic of Bulgaria is a parliamentary democracy and the constitution vests legislative authority in the unicameral National Assembly. According to the 2011 Census, the population of Bulgaria is 7,364,570. The people who responded and identified themselves as Eastern Orthodox are 4,374,135 or 76%. The Catholic religion was chosen by 48,945 persons and the Protestant faith by 64,476 persons - or 0.8% and 1.1% of the respondents respectively. There are 577,139 Muslims or 10% of the population, of which 546,004 identified as Muslim Sunni and 27,407 as Muslim Alevi - 3,727 people identified simply as “Muslim”. The question of religious denomination was the one with the largest percentage of people who did not respond (21.8%). Amongst those who declared themselves as belonging to the Bulgarian ethnic group 67,350 are Muslims; while from those who declared themselves as Roma, 42,201 are Muslims.² Bulgarian Muslims are native-born and consist of different ethnicities such as Turks, Pomaks, Roma, Tatars, Cherkess, and Bulgarians. A small percentage of Muslims are immigrants (about 15,000 people) from other Muslim countries (Middle-East and Asia diasporas) and are mainly based in the capital Sofia and Plovdiv.

The Muslim community in Bulgaria is the largest religious minority group in the country; it remained within the boundaries of the Bulgarian state after the country’s liberation in the second half of 19th century. The Muslim community in Bulgaria can be characterized as honest, loyal, peace-loving citizens; they have never been involved in collective crimes or public provocations. Despite their loyalty and propriety to the statutory order of the country, the problems are not few. The problems that underlie Islamophobia in the country are mainly political. These problems have sometimes taken on a legal form in order to impose restrictions on the country’s Muslim community.

Anti-Muslim hate, vandalism against mosques and discrimination have persisted in 2016; many religious sites and symbols were subjected to various forms of violations including damage to property. Anti-Muslim rhetoric is very common in the nationalistic parties’ public discourse and is used to intimidate society and present Islam and Muslims as a threat to Bulgaria. According to the Office of the Grand Mufti, notwithstanding the progress made since the advent of democracy in Bulgaria in 1990, discrimination, ethnically and religiously motivated offensive acts and prejudice against the Turkish-Muslim minority and its institutions persist.

The politicians and decision-makers usually ignore, or flatly deny, the problem of Islamophobia. The problems of anti-Muslim hate speech and negative attitudes as a result of religious affiliation are underestimated by the public, the media and at an institutional level. This report seeks to provide information about the main issues relating to Islamophobia in 2016, anti-Muslim hate crime and religious discrimination against Muslims in Bulgaria.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN BULGARIA

In the years after the democratic changes, several laws have been adopted and improvements have been made to existing legislature, mainly to fulfill the conditions for membership of the EU (January 2007). The Constitution³ (adopted in 1991) and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government has generally shown the required respect for religious freedom. The Constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the “traditional” religion,⁴ exempting it from having court registration, a requirement for all other religious groups. To receive national legal recognition, the law requires groups other than the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to apply for official registration at the Sofia City Court. The Law of Religions establishes the right to religion and its protection, guarantees the legal status of religious communities and institutions, and outlines their relations with the state.⁵ By law, public schools are required to offer optional religious education courses that cover Christianity and Islam as part of the elective curriculum⁶ with explicit permission from the students’ parents. The law also allows religious groups to open religious schools and universities.⁷ With the permission of the Minister of Education and Science, religious institutions in the country may open religious schools for the ritual needs of children who have completed primary education.⁸

The state pays particular subsidies each year for traditional religious communities in the country on the basis of population percentage. In 2016, the subsidy intended for the Muslim religion was 360,000 levs⁹ (approx. 180,000 Euros). The Muslim community received 150,000 levs of this subsidy (approx. 75,000 Euros) for reconstruction purposes. The sum is intended for the construction, repairing and maintenance of Muslim religious sites and mosques. The subsidy allocated to the Orthodox Church was over 3 million levs (1.5 million Euros); for the Catholic Church 50,000 levs; and for the Jewish community 50,000 levs. Bulgaria ratified an international convention for the abolition of all kinds of discrimination. It passed a special Act on Protection from Discrimination. The Law on Protection from Discrimination regulates the protection against all forms of discrimination and aims to contribute to its prevention. The Commission for Protection from

⁵ See article 1, The Law of the Religions (2002).
Discrimination\(^{10}\) is an independent specialized state body for the prevention of discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities.\(^{11}\)

Bulgaria’s laws that apply to hate crimes are a combination of specific penalty enhancements and substantive offences. Over the years, changes and improvements have been made to the Penal Code in the parts referring to hate crimes, including hate crimes on religious grounds, crimes against religious denominations, and on racial grounds.\(^{12}\)

The Council for Electronic Media is an independent specialised body that regulates broadcasting activities in Bulgaria, the registering and issuing of licenses, and the supervising of activities of all broadcasters transmitting programmes in the country.\(^{13}\) The Radio and Television Act regulates the media services of all radio and television stations in the jurisdiction of the Republic of Bulgaria.\(^{14}\) A large number of Bulgarian media have signed a national Code of Ethics.\(^{15}\)

The institution of the independent Ombudsman established by law in 2003 serves as an advocate for citizens who believe their rights and freedoms have been violated by the actions or inaction of public and municipal administrations, as well as by public service providers.\(^{16}\)

Despite the existence of good institutional and legal framework, the practice shows that there is no tangibility on the effective functioning of the institutions and law enforcement practice.

**Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events**

**Employment**

In everyday life, cases of intolerance and discrimination are still visible at all levels of Bulgarian society. Among employers there is a tendency to reject job applications of Muslims, ethnic Turks and Roma people. In recent years more and more young people have changed their Muslim names to Bulgarian ones in order to find appropriate jobs easily. Some of them are demotivated and reluctant to return to their original Muslim name, which was forcibly changed into Bulgarian during the so-called “revival process” in 1983-1989. With a Bulgarian surname, they have a fair chance of success in finding a better job

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in Bulgaria or in Western Europe.\textsuperscript{17} Two of the interviewees S. M. and E. R., whose ID cards do not carry Muslim names, confirmed this trend with their personal experiences.\textsuperscript{18}

**Education**

Sixteen-year-old Emine Shamatareva, a student at Hristo Botev High School in Valkosel village, in the Blagoevgrad region, filed a complaint with the Administrative Court of Blagoevgrad against the school. Although the law does not prohibit the headscarf, the school director Mitko Dzhurkov removed the student from the school as she was wearing a headscarf under the pretext that it contradicts the school’s internal rules. On 7 March, the Administrative Court rejected Emine’s appeal.\textsuperscript{19} After the categorical refusal of the student to remove her headscarf in school (with her parents’ full support), in early March, the director issued an order for the transfer of Emine to a religious secondary school. Emine and her father Rasim Shamatarev appealed against the decision of the Administrative Court of Blagoevgrad. Emine’s father filed a suit in court challenging the order of exclusion and the subsequent transfer of his daughter to another school. The next trial is set for 22 October 2017, at the Supreme Administrative Court.

According to the civil association of Turkish and Bulgarian Culture (TURKDER), besides the problems in education, Muslim women with headscarves face problems in the workplace. When it comes to the headscarf, discrimination exerts immense pressure on Muslim women. They find it impossible to begin education or to find well-paid skilled jobs, which are serious indications of discrimination.\textsuperscript{20}

Another very serious problem in terms of Muslims in Bulgaria is the representation of Muslims and Turks in the school curriculum, particularly in history and literature textbooks which are studied at school from an early age. Bulgarian public opinion is led to believe that during the Ottoman rule Bulgarian people were subjected to “yoke” or “slavery” by Turks and/or Muslims. According to Harun Bekir, the president of the Association of the Turkish Language Teachers in Southern Bulgaria, the school experience instills in students a portrayal of Turks and Muslims as evil oppressors and dangerous enemies. This approach helps forge a negative image of Muslims and/or Turks in society.\textsuperscript{21}

Earlier this year the Ministry of Education suggested the word “yoke” be replaced with another more suitable word, as well as some other changes in the curricula. This provoked a sharp reaction from nationalistic and “patriotic” organizations and political stakeholders.

\textsuperscript{17} Interview with Ismail Kysoyyumer (November 30, 2016).

\textsuperscript{18} The respondents did not give their consent for their names to be offered in this report. Interviews held on December 20, 2016.


\textsuperscript{20} Interview with Fahriye Murad, the representative of Civil Association of Turkish and Bulgarian Culture (TURKDER), (November 12, 2016).

\textsuperscript{21} Interview with Harun Bekir, president of the Association of Turkish Language Teachers in Southern Bulgaria (November 10, 2016).
parties in the country.22 A civil petition was initiated for the resignation of the Education Minister.23 According to the media, this planned change was one of the reasons the Prime Minister asked for the resignation of Education Minister Todor Tanev.24

Politics
The political parties represented in the National Assembly in 2016 were the following: GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria); BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party); MRF (Movement for Freedom and Rights); RB (Reformist Block) that consists of several small centre-right parties; ABV (Alternative for Bulgarian Renaissance), a small left-wing party; ATAKA, an ultra-nationalistic party in opposition, which is known for its public appearances instigating hatred and discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities, and its Islamophobic manifestations; a number of independent politicians; PF (Patriotic Front), a coalition of several parties with an ultranationalist identity and the BDC-NU (Bulgarian Democratic Centre – People’s Union).

Media
The television channel of the political party ATAKA, Alpha TV, and the television channel of the party NFSB (National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria), SKAT TV, continued to systematically initiate hate and intolerance on Islamophobic and racist grounds. In particular, the programme Unveiling of SKAT TV every Thursday at 18:30 produces and disseminates Islamophobic discourse.25 Mustafa Izbishtali, regional mufti of Sofia, shared his opinion that it is a visible example of cooperation between media and political parties, alluding to the programme’s coverage of the protest against the masjid in Lyulin, Sofia on 13 and 18 March, 2016. In his opinion the protests were organised by politicians, as members of the VMRO (a nationalistic political party in the National Assembly) were seen among the protesters on 13 March, the date of the first gathering. The media’s distorted reporting on the “illegal masjid” and on Muslims in the country creates tension between Muslims and non-Muslims. In this manner, the media and politicians provoked the reaction and protest of a group of people against the prayer room in Lyulin.26

The Office of the Grand Mufti published a book under the title Pork Meat in the Light of Religion and Medicine as part of its publishing activities. The media described this book

26. Interview with Mustafa Izbishtali (December 2, 2016).
as a provocation, while members of the nationalistic parties described it as a dangerous phenomenon. News about the book is included with news on radical Islam and amendments in legislation, proposed by the nationalists in parliament. Although there are a number of legislative acts and a Code of Ethics, certain media and journalists disrespect both.

Justice System

One of the most controversial legislative issues in 2016 was the adoption by the National Assembly of Bulgaria of the “Law Prohibiting the Wearing of Clothing Concealing One’s Face in Public Spaces”, the so-called “Burqa Law”.

Public debate on the burqa ban started in April with the case of Ahmed Musa in Pazardzhik who was accused of preaching radical Islam and whose female followers wear the nikab and burqa. The ultra-nationalistic political parties talked about banning the burqa, and the mayor of Pazardzhik took the initiative for legislative measures in this direction. On 27 April, 2016, Pazardzhik municipality council became the first to ban the burqa in Bulgaria, followed by other towns such as Stara Zagora on 28 April, Sliven on 25 May, and Burgas on 1 June. In May 2016, the first fine was given to a woman in Pazardzhik. In the following months the number of fined women increased.

On 20 April, 2016, the Patriotic Front made a bill proposal for banning the burqa. The proposal was outrageous and caused heated debate. Human rights organisations, experts and the Office of the Grand Mufti spoke strongly against this project and expressed the opinion that it is unconstitutional and violates the religious freedom of Muslims. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee referred a letter to the office of the Ombudsman. In the course of the public debates on the burqa ban, the members of the Patriotic Front stated that there should not be any religious symbols

like burqa in the public space, and that all religious symbols and material related to religion should be removed and banned, including the burqa.36 Earlier, this view was shared by the Prosecutor General and the Education Minister Meglena Kuneva.37

The adopted law underwent changes before being passed on the second reading – this followed the acute response of human rights defenders38 including the Office of the Grand Mufti and some political parties such as the MRF (Movement for Freedom and Rights) and independent members of Parliament such as Lutvi Mestan, Huseyin Hafizov and Korman Ismailov, a member of the Reformist Block (RB).39 The Office of the Grand Mufti expressed the worry that the law would pave the way for other bans, as we already see with the subsequent draft laws and amendments to other laws.40

The law prohibits the wearing of clothing, concealing the face partially or fully in public places and provides fines for violators, as well as for instigators and those who allow it, reaching up to 2,000 levs (1,000 euros).41

The political party GERB, which also supported the submitted amendments by the Patriots (members of the Patriotic Front), stated that the ban is not directed against religious groups. But the nationalists, however, consistently made it clear that their primary objective is the famous burqa as a symbol of Islamization.

In 2016, different political parties in the Parliament of Bulgaria made several proposals for amendments to the Law of Religions, including the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The proposals were sent to the relevant committees of the Parliament. According to the members of the Bulgarian Socialist Party the amendments provide for strict state control over religious institutions,42 and guarantee national security.43 A declaration against the restriction of freedom of religion was published on 22 March

40. Interview with Dzhe Ual Faik (December 1, 2016).
41. The Law Prohibits the Wearing of Clothing, Concealing the Face, National Assembly of Bulgaria, 30 September 2016 - http://www.parliament.bg/bg/laws/ID/42106
by a group of religious figures and human rights activists, following the proposal for amendments of the Bulgarian Socialist Party on 144 and 145 March. According to the authors of the declaration, the proposal was unconstitutional and restricts the freedoms of speech and assembly, as well as other human rights. The declaration was addressed to the National Assembly, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the media and human rights organisations in Bulgaria and abroad.46

The most severe reactions were the proposals of extreme nationalists in Parliament. On 20 July, the extreme nationalistic political party ATAKA introduced amendments to the Law of Religions in which religious organizations and communities are obliged to use only the Bulgarian language during worship and religious rituals.47 On 21 July, 2016, the coalition “Patriotic Front” (VMRO and NFSB) submitted another proposal for amendments to the Law of Religions, according to which, among other restrictions on freedom of religion, religious communities and institutions will be restricted in the use of their mother tongues or other languages during worship and religious rituals, in the acceptance of donations, and their involvement in joint activities with other organisations. Furthermore, the proposal aims to introduce a prohibition on foreign citizens from reading sermons.48

Representatives of the Patriots told the media that religious communities will have services only in the Bulgarian language and that the aim is to restrict the religious communities that have political goals.49 Another aspect worth mentioning is that the mother tongue of a large portion of the Muslims in Bulgaria is not Bulgarian. In this case the prohibition breaks a number of international conventions, constitutional rights, and the Act on Discrimination. The Chief Secretary of the Office of the Grand Mufti Dzhelal Faik shared the opinion that these changes also target other religions apart from Islam, and the prohibition of receiving donations and financial aid deprives the Muslim community of its resources and will isolate it and lead to its annihilation. The prohibition to carry out joint activities with other organisations from foreign countries also breaks major rights of freedom of religion.50

50. Interview with Dzhelal Faik (December 1, 2016).
Another proposal for amendments to the Law of Religions is the prohibition of loud speakers, submitted by the Patriotic Front. The motives behind the draft act claim that the loud speakers on mosques threaten national security. All these proposals are currently in the relevant committees and have not been discussed in the plenary yet.

On 23 June, the Parliament adopted by a large majority at the first reading the amendments to the Penal Code submitted by the coalition Patriotic Front, despite the reservations of the Muslim community and human rights activists. The expression “radical Islam” was added to Article 108 of the Penal Code. The article names “radical Islam” as the driving force behind terrorism. Generally Bulgarian Muslims are not hostile and have never participated in provocative rallies or riots. That is no reason for such an amendment to the law.

According to the Grand Mufti Dr. Mustafa Hadji, religion must be separated, on the whole, from ideologies. In the proposed bill the expression “radical Islam” is equated with ideologies such as fascism and anti-democratic thought. But at the same time it offends the feelings of Muslims. It is Islamophobic and discriminatory. These amendments allow the abuse of human rights and religious freedoms and open doors for arbitrariness and the violation of human rights; they also open the doors to interpretations regarding the nature of “radical Islam”.

Members of the Nationalists in the Parliament argued that such an amendment is necessary, because most countries enacted similar laws after being attacked by terrorism. Members of some political parties (RB and MRF), scholars (Simeon Evstatiev) and the Office of the Grand Mufti criticised these amendments.

Another issue of serious concern is the construction of a second mosque in Sofia. Around 70,000 Muslims currently live in Sofia and they have only one mosque built several centuries ago. It has a seating capacity of 500-600 people. However, on Fridays more than 700 worshippers enter the mosque and around 250-300 people remain outside. The situation is most striking during both Feasts when about 2,500-

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53. Interview with the Grand Mufti of Bulgaria Dr. Mustafa Hadji (November 23, 2016).
3,000 Muslim men congregate and unsuccessfully try to hear the sermons, to pray and perform the prayer together with those who are inside for nearly 2 hours. Construction of a second mosque is not permitted by the municipality, although the Muslim community has had a ground plot for years. According to the Grand Mufti, the Office of the Grand Mufti has not received clear and adequate answers that justify the prevention of the construction of a second mosque. According to the chief architect of the municipality Zdavko Zdravkov it is necessary that this decision be taken by the Sofia Municipal Council.

Moreover, in 2016 and in previous years, the Sofia municipality periodically imposed restrictions and fines for the washrooms next to the mosque with the pretext that the structure is illegal and must be demolished; the water is also often cut off on Fridays. Currently a significant part of Muslims pray in temporary shelters in the capital.

In 2016, the issue of halal food for Muslim children in kindergartens and primary schools remained unresolved. In June 2015, the Initiative Committee of Civil Association Altay sent a letter to the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the Prosecutor’s Office, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Grand Mufti, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, the European Commission in Brussels, and foreign diplomatic missions in Bulgaria insisting that in Bulgarian municipal schools, kindergartens and hospitals, Muslims have the right to receive alternative halal food that is acceptable to them. The Office of the Ombudsman supported the initiative in its written answer to the Altay Association, and stated

59. Interview with Dr. Mustafa Hadji (November 23, 2016).
that the constitutional rights of Bulgarian citizens are being violated. The Office of the Grand Mufti regularly receives complaints from the Muslim community, particularly in Kardzhali region, where the majority of the population is Muslim, about food with pork being offered to Muslims, without the knowledge of the parents in kindergartens, municipal schools and hospitals. According to Ismail Kyoseyumer, this even happens in schools where more than 80% of children are Muslims.

Physical and Verbal Attacks
Hate rhetoric against Muslims continued to be widely manifested in media, social media and by politicians and public figures. According to a survey of the Open Society Institute on public attitudes toward hate speech in Bulgaria, there is a significant increase of hate speech in 2016.

The parliamentary-represented coalition Patriotic Front announced during the presidential election campaign in the media in November that one of the main points of their election programme is to prevent ethnic-based parties from assuming power.

On 7 and 21 October, extreme nationalistic groups and football fans in Sofia, Varna, Yambol and other towns in Bulgaria protested against the refugees and the insufficient measures taken by the authorities to deal with illegal migration. During the protest in Sofia organized by Natsionalna Saprotiva (National Resistance), an extreme nationalistic movement, the nationalists chanted slogans against the Turks and Muslims such as “Send Allah to the Gallows”, “Death to Turks” and other offensive Islamophobic and racist insults; posters reading “Our ancestors did their duty! Now it is our turn!” were held, together with depictions describing epic battles between Turks and Bulgarians in the past. The same slogan was used during the protest against the refugees on 19 November in Sofia. The protests were covered by all national media.

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62. Interview with Ismail Kyoseyumer, the deputy president of the Civil Association for Turkish Culture, Art and Interaction (November 30, 2016).


During the protest against the refugees on 21 October in Varna one of the protesting citizens stated on the television channel “BTV” that weapons had been stored in Bulgarian mosques, that there was proof of this, and that, as a result, the official request of the protesters was to search all mosques in Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{67} This is one of the requests of the movement Natsionalna Saproeva that organised the protests in Sofia and other towns across the country on 7 and 21 October. Petar Nizamov, who is known as a “refugee hunter”, sent an open letter to the Prime Minister where he requested that the mosques in Bulgaria be searched because they functioned as illegal storages for weaponry.\textsuperscript{68}

On 13 and 18 March, a civil protest was held against the masjid in the Lyulin residential area in Sofia. According to media coverage, the protesters were voicing their concerns on the illegal masjid and the preaching of radical Islam in it.\textsuperscript{69} The Grand Mufti’s Office made it clear that the prayer house was registered with the Department of Religions at the Council of Ministers and in the registries of Sofia Municipalities in conformity with the valid legislation three years ago; the Grand Mufti’s Office had appointed an imam there and had been monitoring the sermons and


\textsuperscript{69} Kalina Petrova, “Жители на „Люлин“ ще протестират срещу незаконен исламски молитвен дом,” Faktor.bg, (March 15, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from https://faktor.bg/bulgaria/177700-jitel-i-lulin-shte-protestirat-sreshtu-nezakonen-islamski-molitven-dom-.
preaching in the prayer house.\textsuperscript{70} According to regional mufti of Sofia Mustafa Izbishtali, the protest was organised by extreme nationalists as permission for the first protest held on 13 March, was received after the intervention of the nationalistic political party VMRO.\textsuperscript{71} Protesters were carrying posters with slogans such as “Stop the Islamization, Save Bulgaria” and were chanting patriotic songs.\textsuperscript{72} With a published declaration the Grand Mufti’s Office appealed to the worshippers visiting the prayer house not to succumb to the provocative behavior of the protesters.\textsuperscript{73}

The Chair of the Regional Association of the Thracian Unions in the Stara Zagora Region Odrinska Epopeya (Odrin Epos) Mrs Petra Filipova Mecheva and Mrs Desislava Kostova from the association of the Thracian Unions in Dimitrovgrad, in their open letter published on 26 February, 2016, in the fourth edition of Thracia newspaper (a periodical of the Association of Thracian Unions in Bulgaria), stated that “jihad” was being studied in Bulgaria with textbooks written in Bulgarian and a crusade was being carried out against Christianity. The authors appealed to the authorities to exert efforts to orient Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) towards their Bulgarian self-consciousness.\textsuperscript{74} The regional prosecutor’s office was informed by the Muslim community about the case.\textsuperscript{75}

In an interview for Trud newspaper on 1 November, 2016, Mr Mohd Abbuasi, the director of the Centre for Middle East Research in Sofia, claimed that 15 imams of the Grand Mufti’s Office who studied abroad were preaching ideologies new to Bulgaria and that there was a big concentration of Wahhabis in many towns, namely Velingrad, Kardzhali, Gotse Delchev and Smolyan. Mr. Abbuasi stated that the preaching of radical Islam (Wahhabi, Salafi, and Muslim Brothers) was the policy of the Grand Mufti’s Office.\textsuperscript{76} According to Dzhelal Faik from the Office of the Grand

\textsuperscript{70} Interview with Mustafa Izbishtali, regional mufti of Sofia (December 2, 2016).

\textsuperscript{71} Interview with M. Izbishtali (December 2, 2016).

\textsuperscript{72} Vera K. Aleksandrova, “Мюсюлмани, протест... Ипризив: 3 джамии София,” dnes.bg, (March 18, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from: http://www.dnes.bg/obshchestvo/2016/03/18/miusulmani-protest-i-priziv-3-djamii-v-sofia.296524.


\textsuperscript{74} Open letter by Petra Filipova Mecheva and Desislava Kostova (In: Tراكия Newspaper, “We Ask for the Truth (translated)”, February 26, 2016.

\textsuperscript{75} Interview with Dzhelal Faik (December 1, 2016).

Mufti, this is a provocation and such allegations stained the good name of the Office of the Grand Mufti and the Muslim community in Bulgaria.77

- In June the facade of the mosque in Yambol was painted with threatening words.
- On 8 August, 2016, unknown people desecrated the hearse of the Regional Mufti’s Office in Pleven with offensive inscriptions. The following inscriptions were visible on the car: “You Carried out Genocide in Bulgaria”, “Murderers”, “Islam Destroys Europe”.78
- During the Muslim holiday from 12 to 15 September, 2016, the wall of the Office of the Grand Mufti, on 27 Bryatya Miladinovi Street, was painted with nationalistic symbols and threats (see picture below).79

- At the beginning of October 2016, unknown people wrote profanities on Kurshum Mosque in Kralovo. The inscription was written above the entrance. The mosque is a cultural monument of Bulgaria.80

- The mosque in Medovets village, Dalgopol Municipality, in the Varna region, was the target of an Islamophobic attack. On the morning of 4 November, 2016, the local Muslims spotted the inscription “Death to Turks” on the wall and a pig’s head hanging from a tree near the entrance.81

77. Interview with Dzelal Faik (December 1, 2016).
78. Elina Kyurkchieva, “Вандали оскверниха катафалката на Районното мюфтийство в Плевен,” PlevenZaPleven, (August 8, 2016), retrieved November 25, 2016, from http://plevenzapeven.bg/blog/2016/08/%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%85%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%84%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%BA%124117/.
• On the day of the presidential election in Bulgaria on 6 November, offensive inscriptions were found on the mosque in Pleven. On one of the walls of the mosque the unknown perpetrators had written “Allah is a...”.

Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society organizations, such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC),83 have continued their long-standing work of countering Islamophobic, racist, xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes and ideas. In its annual report on human rights in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee allocates space for the Muslim community, violations of religious freedom, hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims. The committee also provides expert opinions on individual cases of violation of the rights and freedoms of Muslims. The President of the Committee Mr. Krasimir Kanev became a target of physical assault by unknown persons in Sofia in October as a result of his activities.

The only Islamic organization, dealing with religious issues is the Institution for Religious Affairs of the Muslim Community in Bulgaria (Muslimansko izpovedanie or Muslim denomination in Bulgaria) lead by the head office, the Office of the Grand Mufti.84 It is a religious institution and represents the Muslim religious minority in Bulgaria. The Office of the Grand Mufti is one of the organizations that has been collecting and preparing an annual report of anti-Muslim hate incidents and manifestations since 2010. Since 2010, 100 incidents have been documented, a two-fold increase since 1990.85

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Despite the high degree of integration and relatively good legislation, the Muslim community in Bulgaria faces problems and challenges. According to the people interviewed, the main sources of these problems are the ethnic and religious confronta-

85. Interview with Dzhelal Faik, chief secretary of the Office of the Grand Mufti (December 1, 2016).
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tions; the attempts of the extreme nationalist political parties and movements for the political isolation of the representatives of the ethnic Turks; and the Muslim community being considered a foreign element in Bulgarian society and being viewed with distrust. The Office of the Grand Mufti (Muslumansko izpovedanie) is often criticized by the nationalists for disloyalty to the state and is accused of trying to Islamize society and minorities. While most of the Muslims are Bulgarian citizens and therefore formally have equal rights, the most harmed group in Bulgaria are the undocumented immigrants.

Although the Criminal Code contains elements against hate crimes, these are rarely applied in practice. Public understanding of issues such as social marginalization of minority groups and the difficulties faced by refugees and victims of hate speech and crime remains very limited. Many Muslim individuals are unaware that Islamophobia and discrimination against them is illegal. Moreover, even more people are not aware of any organisation in the country that could help them if they become victims of a biased act and discrimination. The proof is the rising voice of representatives of extreme nationalists and neo-Nazi groups on cyberspace, and the organisation of protests and other demonstrations. Combating Islamophobia and intolerance of Muslims in Bulgaria is a slow and difficult process.

As a general observation, the lack of adequate knowledge about Islam, the tendency to spread false and distorted information about Islam and Muslims in the public domain by pseudo-experts on Islam, and malevolent public figures seem to have created the space for an increasing number of Islamophobic utterances that remain uncontested in the country’s current political atmosphere.

On a positive note, civil society is conducting relatively numerous efforts to combat racism and related discrimination. There is also relatively good interfaith dialogue in Bulgaria. Representatives of the major religious organisations, including the Muslim leaders of the country, maintain a good dialogue and try to set a good example to society.

Recommendations

• The Members of Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria must respect human rights and religious freedoms when adopting laws and amendments, which are guaranteed by international treaties and the Constitution, including the adoption, in conformity with the constitution and the international obligations of Bulgaria, of such laws which can be necessary in order to provide protection against any acts that constitute incitement to hatred and violation of fundamental rights.
• To observe the constitutional rights of citizens and to defend democracy and fundamental freedoms in Bulgaria.
• To ensure that public officials at all levels, including ministers and politicians, refrain from making statements that incite violence and discrimination.

• To train the municipalities so as to increase their awareness of the problems of integration of individuals seeking and receiving asylum.

• To develop codes of conduct for political representatives to condemn unequivocally all manifestations of hate in public discourse and acts of violence based on bias and refrain from making discriminatory statements.

• To launch public awareness activities disassociating terrorism and violent extremism with Muslims and Islam.

• To develop comprehensive education policies and awareness-raising strategies to combat discrimination and promote tolerance and mutual understanding. Education must be the essential platform of every strategy. Overcoming prejudices requires education, community engagement and dialogue.

• To design guidelines and compile examples of good practices to combat manifestations of Islamophobia in political discourse, including the media and political speech.

• To undertake measures to ensure that the Council for Electronic Media combats the explicit forms of racism and discrimination committed through media and the Internet.

• To guarantee that public broadcasting services avoid the stereotyping of religious and ethnic groups and report fairly on such groups in conformity with the highest professional and ethical standards including during election periods and public gatherings.

• To engage in partnerships with private media, including Internet providers, in order to prevent dissemination of information which includes prejudice, stereotypes and hatred.

• To continue providing the training programme for law enforcement officers and prosecutors to combat hate crime and intolerance against Muslims and other groups and enhance its scope so as to be comprehensive and practically applicable.

• In the current climate of fear and insecurity, community leaders and civil society have a vital role to play in speaking out against discrimination, non-tolerance and promoting the principles of multiculturalism and social inclusion.

• Positive public statements can be extraordinarily powerful and send a vital symbolic message to the community that non-tolerance and discrimination is never acceptable.

• Overcoming prejudice requires education, civil society and community engagement and dialogue.

• To develop analytical studies on possible relations between hate crimes and manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in public discourse, as well as cooperate with the government and vulnerable groups and minorities.

• To support the government in monitoring, reporting and countering discrimina-
tory speech in the media including on the Internet, in particular through monitoring and reporting of Islamophobic speech.

- To play a more active role in the monitoring of hate speech and crimes, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, including in the media; as well as in monitoring the irregularities in government and legislative policies.
- To observe closely the process of combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, as well as the freedom of religion of the Muslim minority.
- To engage with mediation and educational programmes for the integration of migrants, such as accessing public services, employment, education and health services.
- To organise media discussions, debates and sustainable campaigns to overcome the negative attitudes against ethnic, migrant and religious communities.

**Chronology**

- **26 February**: The Regional Association of the Thracian Unions in the Stara Zagora Region stated that “jihad” was being studied in Bulgaria and a crusade was being carried out against Christianity.
- **1 March**: Members of Bulgarian Socialist Party made proposals for amendments to the Law of Religions in Parliament.
- **7 March**: The director of a high school ordered student Emine Shamatareva to be transferred to a religious school because of her headscarf.
- **13 March**: A civil protest was held against the masjid in Lyulin, Sofia, organised by extreme nationalists.
- **14 March**: Other members of the Bulgarian Socialist Party made different proposals for amendments to the Law of Religions in Parliament.
- **18 March**: A civil protest was held against the masjid in Lyulin, Sofia, organised by extreme nationalists.
- **22 March**: A group of religious figures and human rights activists published a declaration against the proposed amendments of the Bulgarian Socialist Party to the Law of Religions.
- **7 April**: The coalition Patriotic Front made proposals for amendments to the Penal Code, according to which the expression “radical Islam” will be included in the law.
- **20 April**: The coalition Patriotic Front brought a bill proposal to Parliament for banning the burqa.
- **27 April**: The municipal council of Pazardjik banned the burqa and the nikab.
- **28 April**: The municipal council of Stara Zagora banned the burqa and the nikab.
- **25 May**: The municipal council of Sliven banned the burqa and the nikab.
- **30 September**: Adoption of the “Law Prohibiting the Wearing of Clothing Concealing One’s Face in Public Spaces”, the so-called “Burqa Law”.
- **1 June**: The municipal council of Burgas banned the burqa and the nikab.
• **16 May**: The first fine for wearing a burqa was given to a woman in Pazardzik.
• **June**: The facade of the mosque in Yambol was painted with threatening words.
• **23 June**: The Parliament adopted at first reading the amendments to the Penal Code submitted by the coalition Patriotic Front.
• **20 July**: The extreme nationalist political party ATAKA introduced amendments in Parliament to the Law of Religions.
• **21 July**: The coalition Patriotic Front submitted to Parliament proposals for amendments to the Law of Religions.
• **28 July**: The coalition Patriotic Front submitted to Parliament another proposal for amendments to the Law of Religions.
• **8 August**: Unknown people desecrated the hearse of the Regional Mufti’s Office in Pleven with offensive inscriptions.
• **September**: The wall of the Office of the Grand Mufti was painted with nationalistic symbols and threats.
• **October**: Unknown people wrote profanities on the Kurshum Mosque in Kralovo.
• **7 October**: Extreme nationalistic groups and football fans in Sofia, Varna, Yambol and other towns in Bulgaria protested against the refugees, during which they chanted Islamophobic slogans.
• **21 October**: Extreme nationalistic groups and football fans in Sofia, Varna, Yambol and other towns in Bulgaria protested against the refugees, during which Islamophobic slogans were chanted.
• **1 November**: The director of the Centre for Middle East Research in Sofia claimed that imams in Bulgaria were preaching radicalism, Wahhabism and Salafizm.
• **4 November**: Unknown people wrote “Death for Turks” on the wall of the mosque in Medovets village and hanged a pig’s head at the entrance.
• **6 November**: On the day of the presidential election offensive inscriptions were found on the mosque in Pleven.
• **19 November**: Extreme nationalistic formations in Sofia protested against the refugees, during which they chanted Islamophobic slogans.
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.

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.