ABOUT EDITORS

Enes Bayraklı
Mr. Bayraklı earned his BA, MA and PhD from the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, and conducted research for his PhD thesis at the University of Nottingham in Britain between 2009 and 2010. He took office as a deputy director at Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center in London in 2011-2013. Mr. Bayraklı also served as the founding director of Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers in Constanta and Bucharest during the period of August-December 2012. Mr. Bayraklı has been a faculty member in the Department of Political Science at the Turkish-German University since 2013. His fields of research include the Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy, Cultural Diplomacy, Foreign Policy Analysis, German Politics and Foreign Policy. bayrakli@tau.edu.tr

Farid Hafez
Farid Hafez is currently Fulbright–Botstiber Visiting Professor of Austrian-American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He is a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Sociology and Political Science at the University of Salzburg. Hafez earned his PhD in Political Science from the University of Vienna and has been teaching at numerous universities across the world. He has been a visiting scholar at Columbia University. Hafez is the founding editor of the German-English Islamophobia Studies Yearbook (www.jahrbuch-islamophobie.de). He was awarded the Bruno Kreisky Award for the political book of 2009 for his German anthology Islamophobia in Austria, which he co-edited with Prof. John Bunzl. He has published more than 10 books and 40 articles. His articles have appeared in high-ranking journals such as Patterns of Prejudice, Austrian Journal of Political Science, Discourse and Society, German Politics and Society, Islamophobia Studies Journal, Journal of Black Studies, and many others. E-mail: farid.hafez@sbg.ac.at

For more information about the EIR:
www.islamophobiaeurope.com
islamophobia@setav.org
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recognition of Islamophobia

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

“When talking about Islamophobia, we mean anti-Muslim racism. As Anti-Semitism Studies has shown, the etymological components of a word do not necessarily point to its complete meaning, nor how it is used. Such is also the case with Islamophobia Studies. Islamophobia has become a well-known term used in academia as much as in the public sphere. Criticism of Muslims or of the Islamic religion is not necessarily Islamophobic. Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilising and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of a constructed ‘we’. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static ‘Muslim’ identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalised for all Muslims. At the same time, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary in different contexts, because Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about the Muslims/Islam”.

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

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

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN GREECE

The Author

Alexandros Sakellariou is currently teaching sociology at the Hellenic Open University and is a postdoctoral researcher at Panteion University of Athens. He earned his PhD in Sociology from the Department of Sociology of Panteion University. Since 2011 he has worked as a researcher at Panteion University on EU projects on young people's sociopolitical engagement (MYPLACE 2011-15), young people's well-being (MYWEB 2014-16), and the evaluation of innovative social policies (IN-NOSI 2015-17). His scientific interests include, among others, politics and religion, religious communities in Greek society, religious freedom, religion and globalisation, youth activism and civic participation, and right-wing extremism. He is a member of the Network Against the Rar-right of the Athens Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Since 2015 he is a co-author of the national report on Islam in Greece in the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe (Brill) and the author of the Greek report on Islamophobia for the European Islamophobia Report (EIR) project. His recent publications include “Anti-Islamic public discourse in contemporary Greek society: The re-production of religious panic”, (Palgrave, 2015); “Singing for Race and Nation: Fascism and Racism in Greek Youth Music” (with A. Koronaiou and E. Lagos) (Lexington Books, 2015); “Golden Dawn, Austerity and Young People: The Rise of Fascist Extremism among Young People in Contemporary Greek Society” (with A. Koronaiou, E. Lagos, I. Chiotaki-Poulou & S.Kymionis) (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015). Email: sociology.panteion@gmail.com

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Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Greece in 2016 taking into consideration all the important developments on national, European and global levels. The material presented was collected primarily from the media (electronic and printed), the Internet (e.g. websites of political parties and other groups), and social media. In addition, reports conducted by NGOs and international organisations were taken into consideration; these reports, it must be noted, referred to 2015, since the ones for 2016 are not yet published. Finally, the author corresponded and was involved in discussions with Muslim groups and communities.

The main outcome of the report is that Islamophobia in Greece is at the same level as described in last year’s report. Islamophobia manifests itself primarily on the discursive level (hate speech) and to a lesser extent on the level of exercising violence. However, attacks against hot spots for immigrants and refugees took place in 2016, as well as, demonstrations and public discussion on the danger of Greece’s Islamization, which were organised by various groups. The most important issues that caused Islamophobic reactions were the refugee issue and the inclusion of refugee children in the Greek schools; the establishment of a Department for Muslim Studies at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki; the construction of a mosque in Athens; and international developments (e.g. terrorism, DAESH).

Islamophobia is found in certain political groups of the extreme-right (e.g. Golden Dawn, New Right) as well as in the Greek Orthodox Church as evidenced by the public discourse of some of its metropolitans. With the available data Islamophobia is marginal or non-existent in the fields of employment and justice. On the other hand, it seems that it is strong and on the rise in certain media but mainly on the Internet and social media which are still fertile places for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and ideas. As far as efforts to combat Islamophobia are concerned, a central state policy is lacking and only secondary and fragmented actions by private or public agents are taking place. The latter occur only on the level of analysis and do not involve any type of prevention or intervention.
Περίληψη
Η παρούσα έκθεση εξετάζει την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα για το 2016 λαμβάνοντας υπόψη όλα τα σημαντικά γεγονότα σε εθνικό, ευρωπαϊκό και παγκόσμιο επίπεδο. Το υλικό που παρουσιάζεται στην έκθεση συγκεντρώθηκε ως επί το πλείστον από τα ΜΜΕ (ηλεκτρονικά και έντυπα), το διαδίκτυο (π.χ. ιστοσελίδες ομάδων και πολιτικών κομμάτων) και τα κοινωνικά δίκτυα. Επίσης, ελήφθησαν υπόψη εκθέσεις ΜΚΟ και διεθνών οργανισμών, οι οποίες, όμως, αφορούσαν, κυρίως το 2015 καθώς για το 2016 ακόμα δεν έχουν δημοσιευθεί. Επιπλέον, έλαβαν χώρα επαφές και συζητήσεις με Μουσουλμανικές ομάδες και κοινότητες.

Το κύριο συμπέρασμα της έκθεσης είναι ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα κινείται στα ίδια με το 2015 επίπεδα. Διαπιστώνεται κυρίως σε επίπεδο λόγου και ηττορικής (hate speech) και λιγότερο σε επίπεδο άσκησης φυσικής βίας. Παρατηρήθηκαν, βέβαια, επιθέσεις σε κέντρα φιλοξενίας μεταναστών και προσφύγων, καθώς και συγκεντρώσεις και δημόσιες συζητήσεις από διάφορους φορείς σχετικά με τον κίνδυνο Ισλαμοποίησης της Ελλάδας. Τα κυριότερα θέματα που προκάλεσαν Ισλαμοφοβικές αντιδράσεις ήταν το προσφυγικό και η ένταξη των παιδιών των προσφύγων στα ελληνικά σχολεία, η ίδρυση κατεύθυνσης Μουσουλμανικών Σπουδών στο Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο, η κατασκευή του Ισλαμικού τεμένους στην Αθήνα και βεβαίως οι διεθνείς εξελίξεις (τρομοκρατία και Ισλαμικό Κράτος).

Η Ισλαμοφοβία εντοπίζεται κυρίως, σε συγκεκριμένους πολιτικούς κύκλους, όπως για παράδειγμα στους χώρους της ακροδεξιάς (π.χ. Χρυσή Αυγή, Νέα Δεξιά), καθώς και σε χώρους, όπως η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία, όπου καταγράφεται στον δημόσιο λόγο ορισμένων Μητροπολιτών. Με τα υπάρχοντα δεδομένα, η Ισλαμοφοβία φαίνεται να είναι περιθωριακή έως ανύπαρκτη στους χώρους της εργασίας και της δικαιοσύνης. Από την άλλη μεριά, η Ισλαμοφοβία φαίνεται να είναι περιθωριακή έως ανύπαρκτη στους χώρους της εργασίας και της δικαιοσύνης. Από την άλλη μεριά, η Ισλαμοφοβία φαίνεται να είναι περιθωριακή έως ανύπαρκτη στους χώρους της εργασίας και της δικαιοσύνης. Από την άλλη μεριά, η Ισλαμοφοβία φαίνεται να είναι περιθωριακή έως ανύπαρκτη στους χώρους της εργασίας και της δικαιοσύνης. Από την άλλη μεριά, η Ισλαμοφοβία φαίνεται να είναι περιθωριακή έως ανύπαρκτη στους χώρους της εργασίας και της δικαιοσύνης. Από την άλλη μεριά, η Ισλαμοφοβία φαίνεται να είναι περιθωριακή έως ανύπαρκτη στους χώρους της εργασίας και της δικαιοσύνης.
Introduction

Greece constitutes a specific case among European countries where memories of the past reverberate with experiences of the present, due to the country’s common borders with Turkey and other Muslim-majority countries in the Mediterranean Sea. Being at the frontline of massive waves of immigration from the wider Muslim world has left the country particularly vulnerable to fears of the Muslim “Other”. As a consequence, when talking about Islamophobia in Greece, it is crucial to keep in mind that debates on Islam are deeply rooted and strongly intertwined with the experience of the Ottoman occupation and its collective interpretations, on the one hand, and the current immigration and refugee flows, on the other. Despite the historical past with Turkey, Greece was never characterised as openly Islamophobic, but rather as Turkophobic. However, the international developments after 9/11 and the immigration and refugee waves have created a fertile ground for the emergence of Islamophobia in the last years.

If we divide Islamophobia in two main genres, one including physical attacks against Muslims and another including hate speech, then we could argue that the primary type of Islamophobia we find in Greece is the second. Systematic documentation of Islamophobic attacks is missing, but according to existing evidence Islamophobia in Greece is mainly reproduced through discursive practices. This, however, in no way implies that there is no danger of someone who embraces the Islamophobic ideology and discourse to proceed to the next level of Islamophobic actions. Similarly to last year’s report, the three main fields that have played a crucial role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public sphere in 2016 are the following: politics, i.e. political parties and organisations mainly of the right and the extreme-right; religion, i.e. certain figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece; and finally the media and the Internet.

Compared to the previous year no significant changes have been documented regarding Islamophobia in Greece. In some areas (e.g. workplace, justice) there is a lack of data, either because a mechanism that would monitor Islamophobic incidents is absent or because there is actually no such data to mention. This report is based on data that was collected in 2016 and takes into consideration international events that might have influenced the appearance or the rise of Islamophobia. The main goal of this report is to map Islamophobia in Greece covering the main fields (education, media, the Internet and politics) where such evidence exists; to examine the gaps in policies towards countering anti-Islamic discourse and attitudes; and to make relevant suggestions. The material was mainly collected from printed and electronic media, websites and blogs, reports of NGOs, international organisations.

and state authorities, and formal or informal communication with members of the Muslim communities.

**Significant Incidents and Developments**

There were four important incidents and developments that impacted Islamophobia in 2016. For a second year the so-called “refugee crisis” played a crucial role in the advance of Islamophobia. While thousands of immigrants and refugees crossed the Greek border and went to Germany and other EU countries, more than 60,000 have stayed in Greece after the closing of the Balkan road in 2015. A side effect of the so-called “refugee crisis” was the need to incorporate refugees’ children into the Greek school system. This caused public debates varying from complete acceptance to total rejection, and created a climate of Islamophobia in some parts of Greece since late August when the first discussions started. Another issue that is pending in the last years is the construction of an official mosque in Athens. In 2016, the government made the final decision on the issue and Parliament voted for the necessary amendments. In autumn, the contract with the construction companies’ consortium was signed and the first construction work commenced. Of course, extreme right-wing and right-wing parties disagreed with this development and reacted against the mosque’s construction. The third important issue was the establishment of a Department for Muslim Studies at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, at the School of Theology. The fourth, similarly to previous years, was the international developments, i.e. the terrorist attacks around the world (in Nice, in Orlando, in Berlin and elsewhere) that have been used by certain circles to boost Islamophobia.

**Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events**

**Education**

There is no presence of Islamophobia in the Greek educational system in terms of curricula and/or school textbooks. On the contrary, this year the Ministry of Education proceeded with a change in the curriculum of the school subject of religion in order to transform it into a more open and inclusive topic with more references to other religions such as Islam. However, there were two other issues that created Islamophobic reactions and these were the incorporation of refugee children in the Greek educational system and the establishment of the Department for Muslim Studies in Thessaloniki.

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While the majority of the population accepted the decision to incorporate refugee children in the educational system, in some cases groups of people manipulated by the right and the extreme-right, reacted and opposed it. In Oraiokastro (Thessaloniki) a demonstration of approximately 100 people was organised against the Islamization of Greece in front of the town hall. (Figure 1) In another case (Volvi, Profitis), parents refused to send their children to school if refugee children were going to also be present.\(^3\) Despite these reactions, refugee children are attending Greek schools throughout the country.

The second issue that created Islamophobic reactions was the law on the establishment of a Department for Muslim Studies at the School of Theology of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki. The reactions came mainly from the Orthodox Church and, to a smaller extent, from certain Muslim groups. In this spirit, the Metropolis of Thessaloniki, Orthodox Christian groups and the Panhellenic Union of Theologians organised an event in Thessaloniki against the Islamization of Greece and Europe, against the new university department and against the transformation of religious education in schools. (Figure 2)

Anthimos, the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki argued that “it is not acceptable to have such a department in the heart of Thessaloniki nowadays with all the information we have about this religion [Islam] that has disturbed the whole world”.\(^4\) Finally, the last issue related to Islamophobic reactions was the decision to accept Muslims of the Mus-

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The minority of Thrace in Firefighter Training Schools. This was a secondary incident that was primarily used by extreme-right circles who argued that it was unacceptable to have Muslims in these schools. This decision is related to the general policy of the Greek state to incorporate the Muslims of Thrace by using positive discrimination decisions especially regarding education.

Politics
The extreme-right party Golden Dawn is the most important player in politics regarding Islamophobia. In every occasion that implicitly or explicitly is related to Islam or immigrants and refugees the party expresses an openly Islamophobic discourse which is reproduced in Parliament, through the party’s websites and through its official newspaper. This discourse propagates the fear of Islam for Greece and Europe (Islamization and Eurabia arguments) and builds on the Ottoman past in order to cultivate the fear of Turkey as well. Among others, Golden Dawn opposed the law on the mosque of Athens and its amendments, reacted against the incorporation of refugee children at schools, and opposed the establishment of the Department for Muslim Studies in Thessaloniki.

Furthermore, the party has organised rallies and demonstrations against immigrants and refugees and against the construction of the mosque in Athens. In April, as a reaction to the refugee issue, Golden Dawn organised a rally in Piraeus, the port of Athens, against the Islamization of Greece. In the party’s promotional call it was mentioned that Greece’s Islamization is progressing very quickly and that Greeks are becoming a minority in their country. According to the party’s officials this is why “we [Greeks] need to resist this de-Hellinisation of our country.” In October, they organised a rally against the construction of the Athens mosque at the location where it is going to be built.

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However, it is not only Golden Dawn that reproduces Islamophobic discourses in the political field. Local officials of New Democracy, the main opposition right-wing party, have argued that Islamization is a danger for Greece. For example in Lesvos, a local official made a call through his Facebook page for the establishment of a citizen’s movement against the policies promoting the Islamization of Greece and his island, Lesvos, in particular, due to the high numbers of refugees and immigrants. In the same direction, another local official of New Democracy in Lesvos through her personal blog argued that “Lesvos is under attack; Lesvos is being Islamised; Lesvos is dying.” Even some of New Democracy’s MPs have expressed their agony about the Islamization of Europe in general. It should be noted that the party supported the construction of a mosque in Athens and voted in favour of the construction in Parliament.

It should be mentioned that in August the small populist right-wing party that participates in the government coalition (Independent Greeks) voted against the construction of the mosque in Athens and expressed its skepticism regarding the dangers that might come from such a development based on what is taking place in Europe after the recent terrorist attacks. In addition, in 2016, a new political party was founded by Failos Kranidiotis, a former member of the opposition right-wing party of New Democracy, called the “New Right”. In the party’s statutes it is clearly stated that the New Right will pursue among other things to “become a wall against the Islamic danger for Europe”.

**Media**

There are not many media outlets in Greece that reproduce Islamophobic discourse. There are certain newspapers, particularly of the right and the extreme-right, that target Islam and Muslims as a threat to Greece. The official newspaper of Golden Dawn is clearly one of them by reproducing the party’s public discourse and activities regarding Islam. (Figure 5)


9. Moli Machaira, “Lesvos is under attack; Lesvos is being Islamized; Lesvos is dying,” malamamaxaira.blogspot.gr, (February 20, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://malamamaxaira.blogspot.gr/2016/02/blog-post.html.


Other newspapers of the extreme-right like Stohos, Eleftheri Ona and Makeleio use similar rhetoric. (Figures 6, 7 and 8)

Finally, it should be mentioned that apart from these extremist newspapers, Dimokratia, which belongs to the right and is not considered to be extremist, also reproduces Islamophobic discourse. For example, when the Prime Minister promised that the mosque in Athens will be finally constructed and that a cemetery for Muslims will soon be available, the newspaper ran the following title on its front page: “Shock! Tsipras promises a mosque and a Muslim cemetery”. (Figure 9)
Furthermore, the newspaper hosts editorials arguing that Greece is in danger by Muslim immigrants, that Islam and the West are incompatible concepts, and that “the colonisation of Greece from Muslims should end before control is completely lost!” because “Islam is Islam and it can’t be placated. It wants to be imposed in any suitable way.” In addition, *Dimokratia* hosts articles by Failos Kranidiotis, founder of the political party the New Right. His articles are openly Islamophobic and target Muslim populations as a direct threat, opposing anything Islamic (mosques, cemeteries, etc.). It is very interesting that even a left-wing news website has hosted articles of Islamophobic content, of a particular author, arguing that Islam is a warlike religion that wants to expand and conquer the world.

**Internet**

The Internet is a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia not only in Greece but worldwide. As in politics and the media, Golden Dawn is active on the Internet through the party’s official website and the website of its youth division. Both of them, as well as various other websites and blogs of the party’s local organisations, are full of Islamophobic discourse and present the party’s anti-Islamic demonstrations and rallies. There are some pages in social media that are openly Islamophobic, as well. For example, on Facebook there are pages under the following titles: “Stop

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Islam in Greece”\textsuperscript{16}, “I do not want a mosque in my country” \textsuperscript{17} (Figure 11), “Multiculturalism? No thank you!” \textsuperscript{18} (Figure 12), “No to the Islamization of Greece- Illegal immigrants-jihadists out of Greece”.\textsuperscript{19} (Figure 13)

It is difficult to describe in detail and extensively analyze existing Islamophobia on the Internet due to the limited space available. However, it is evident that the issues of the mosque in Athens, of multiculturalism, and immigration and terrorism appear most frequently. Of course, there are also the websites of the aforementioned newspapers, Eleftheri Ora, Stohos, Makeleio,\textsuperscript{20} together with extreme-right websites like Ethnikismos.net\textsuperscript{21} that continuously reproduce Islamophobic discourses and create a climate of fear and panic about anything related to Islam and Muslims, e.g. that all Muslims are barbarians, they rape women, they marry young children, they are violent, terrorists, etc.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As mentioned in the section on politics, Golden Dawn is one of the key political groups in the Islamophobia network as well as Failos Kranidiotis and his new political party, New Right. Another extreme-right group, Holy Company, which mainly consists of members of the reserve armed forces and friends of the special forces of the Greek army, has been openly against Islam, Muslims and immigrants and has organised rallies against the Islamization of Greece.\textsuperscript{22} (Figure 14)

Another key figure is Nikos Heiladakis, a self-declared journalist, writer and

\textsuperscript{17} See https://www.facebook.com/oxi.tzami/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).
\textsuperscript{18} See https://www.facebook.com/oximulticult2/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).
\textsuperscript{21} See https://ethnikismos.net/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).
\textsuperscript{22} See their blog for more information http://ierosloxos2012.blogspot.gr/2016/03/2732016.html (retrieved November 16, 2016).
Turkologist (sic!), who through his website reproduces Islamophobic discourses and also participates in rallies against the Islamization of Greece, like the aforementioned ones, where he was a keynote speaker. (Figure 15)

The Union of Free Greeks is a political movement founded in 2012 by Dimitris Michakis, which also reproduces Islamophobic discourses and organises rallies against Islamization, against immigrants and refugees, and more particularly against the participation of refugee children in the educational system, like the protest held in Oraiokastro, Thessaloniki. In Samos, an island close to Turkey that receives large waves of immigrants and refugees, another organisation was founded called SAMOS SOS with a goal to “clean” the island from all foreigners. According to their call they don’t want to have a mosque and a Muslim cemetery in Samos and they want a “free and clean” Samos like the one their ancestors bequeathed them - at the same time they argue that they are not racists or nationalists.

Finally, we should make clear that central figures of the Greek Orthodox Church, like the metropolitans of Thessaloniki, of Kalavryta and of Piraeus, and others as well, have made Islamophobic comments regarding the mosque in Athens, the Department for Muslim Studies in Thessaloniki, immigrants and refugees, etc. More specifically, Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim continued this year, like in 2015, to publicly argue that Islam is a completely violent religion, incompatible with Christianity and the West, and that there is a clear threat of Islamization for Greece. In the same spirit, Metropolitan of Kalavryta Amvrosios has written extensively about the danger of Islam arguing that Islam’s expansion

in Greece has already started. 27 Even Archbishop Ieronymos, considered by the media as a moderate, has argued that there is a danger of Islamization from the immigrants and refugees and that if these people finally stay in Greece, “the country will lose the Greek neighbourhood, this beauty of life, what we used to say, that we are a clean country…” 28

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Due to the lack of a central agency that would monitor Islamophobic assaults and violations there are not many incidents to mention. Unofficially, through personal discussions and interviews with leading figures of Muslim groups and refugee organisations there have been some references mainly regarding Muslim women and the veil. These references include exclusively verbal assaults about the veil but not physical attacks. 29 However, during the procedure of the establishment of refugee camps around Greece certain incidents took place. In February, an arson attack took place in Giannitsa, Northern Greece by unknown perpetrators in two former military camps that were listed as hosting camps for refugees. 30 Also, in February and March, three incidents were recorded with pig heads thrown at refugee camps in Shisto (Figure 16), Veroia (Figure 17), and Pella, Northern Greece. 31

Figure 16: A cross and a pig head in Shisto hot spot (March 2016).

Figure 17: Pig heads thrown at a refugee camp site in Veroia (March 2016).


29. At the moment the data from the Racist Violence Recording Network and the special police department are not yet available.


Civil Society and Political Initiatives 
Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

The fact that the current left-wing government, despite the fact that it collaborates with a right-wing populist party in a coalition, has been willing to solve some of the problems Muslims face in Greece has been a very important development. The legislation about the construction of the mosque in Athens has been put into force, the contract between the state and the construction companies has been signed, and the work has started. Of course, as we have seen, this has caused the reaction by certain political groups, but it is a positive step that could help in making Muslims visible in the public space and and help people overcome their prejudices and unwarranted fears. Furthermore, the curriculum change that was decided by the Ministry of Education regarding religious education is of great importance as it will help children at school learn more about Islam. In the same direction, the incorporation of refugee children in schools is another development that might prove of importance. Through such actions, people will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Muslims, to get to know them and perhaps understand them. This is certainly not a panacea, but it could be a useful tool in the area of breaking stereotypes and prejudices. Finally, the Ministry of Justice founded a National Board Against Racism and Intolerance with the goals of monitoring existing anti-racism legislation and ensuring it is implemented; of planning anti-racism policies in various fields (religion included); and of conducting studies on the relevant issues. The law on the foundation of the board was voted in December 2015 (Law 4356) but it started to function in the spring of 2016.

Public discussions on Islamophobia also took place in 2016. The author of this report participated in all three of them. The first one was a workshop on the island of Syros against religious discrimination, where the issue of Islamophobia was extensively discussed; the second was a radio programme on public radio (ERA) about Islamophobia; and the third was a public discussion about Islamophobia organised by the Bodosakis Foundation, which runs a project about hate speech. Groups of people, mainly of the Left, have been supportive of Muslim immigrants and refugees and have also participated together with Muslims in a demonstration in Athens against racism, the ban of the burkini in France, and against Islamophobia. (Figure 18)

Figure 18: Demonstration in Athens against Islamophobia. “Our dress code is our choice. No to racism.”
Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

According to the existing data it could be argued that Islamophobia in Greece is at the same level as in 2015. Islamophobia is mainly found in the public discourse of particular groups of the right and the extreme-right and of the Orthodox Church, in the media and on the Internet. An important development is the fact that the current government targets the elimination of religious prejudices and makes efforts in that direction. However, it should be noted that there are still many steps to be taken to combat Islamophobia. Based on previous opinion polls, the lack of knowledge about Islam seems to play a fundamental role in the emergence of Islamophobia; the absence of accurate information makes people turn to mass media or the Internet in order to be informed and this may have serious implications for their understanding of Islam. In a recent survey 40.8% of the interviewees said that they would be disturbed by the establishment of a mosque in Greece as opposed to 58.6% who said no and probably no. Furthermore, when people were asked if they would be disturbed by the construction of a mosque in the area they live 45.1% replied yes and probably yes, while 54.4% answered no and probably no. Finally, according to another survey regarding the current so-called “refugee crisis” it appears that the words ‘Islam, Muslim, Jihad’ have negative connotations and that a terrorist attack in Greece is possible. The above findings prove that Greek society is not fully aware of what Islam is and this has serious implications on how Muslims are viewed and treated, as well as providing the ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia.

Regarding policy recommendations those of last year’s report are still relevant today. The main problem is the lack of a central policy on Islamophobia. The need for an observatory authority that will monitor and record every Islamophobic incident either of violent character or on the discourse level is of primary importance. Especially for schools and for the media this vacuum is crucial. This is a first step in order to officially map Islamophobia and then take policy action. Seminars should be offered to groups of civil servants who have contact with Muslims like school teachers, police officers, coastguards and migration officers - and, of course, journalists. These seminars should include information on Islam but also on how one should deal with Islamophobia. Furthermore, initiatives that would bring together Christians and Muslims, especially in schools could be useful. For example, discussions, visits to churches/mosques, and cultural events could help cultivate a climate of mutual understanding. Though this is not necessarily the solution to the problem,

it could help towards the breaking down of prejudices and stereotypes that exist among a large part of the population and could particularly help children and young people better understand the concept of ‘religious difference’. The state should continue the implementation of the programme on the inclusion of refugee children in Greek schools and secure its proper function. In addition, the construction of the official mosque should be accompanied by the legitimisation of other prayer houses in Greece, which are now considered illegal by the state. Finally, the Orthodox Church of Greece could also play a crucial role through ceasing to reproduce and accept Islamophobic discourses by some of its clergy members, metropolitans and priests.

Chronology

• 14 February: Event in Thessaloniki “We Remain Greeks and Orthodox” against immigration and the Islamization of Greece.
• 23 February: A pig head thrown at a hot spot for immigrants and refugees in Shisto.
• 27 February: Event in Tyrnavos, Thessalia, against Islamization.
• 27-28 February: Arson attack at hot spot for immigrants and refugees in Giannitsa, Northern Greece.
• 5 March: A pig head thrown at a hot spot for immigrants and refugees in Pella, Northern Greece.
• 25 March: A pig head thrown at a hot spot for immigrants and refugees in Veroia, Northern Greece.
• 27 March: Demonstration in Thessaloniki against immigrants and Islamization.
• 8 April: Demonstration in Piraeus against immigrants and Islamization.
• 16 June: Demonstration in Kalamata, Southern Greece, against Islamization.
• 30 August: Demonstration in Athens against racism, the ban of the burkini and against Islamophobia.
• 4-5 September: Workshop in Syros discussing the issues of religious intolerance and Islamophobia.
• 19 September: Discussion about the problem of Islamophobia in Greece for the first time on a radio programme on the public radio station ERA.
• 21 September: Discussion about Islamophobia in Athens (Bodosaki Foundation).
• 7 October: Demonstration against immigrants, refugees and Islamization in Oraiokastro, Thessaloniki.
• 22 October: Demonstration against the construction of a mosque in Athens and Islamization in Votanikos, Athens.
This is the second issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* which was presented for the first time in 2015. New countries are included in this year's *EIR*; while 25 countries were covered in 2015, the report for 2016 includes 27 country reports. *EIR 2016* is the result of 31 prominent scholars who specialise in different fields such as racism, gender and Islamophobia Studies.

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

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**About SETA**

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.