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THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

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

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

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

As a survey conducted by the Chatham House Europe Programme shows, public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states is by no means confined to Trump’s administration (implementation of the ‘Muslim-Ban’). Respondents in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK were presented with the statement ‘All further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped’. As the report reveals, the majorities in all but two of the ten states agreed to this statement, ranging from 71% in Poland, 65% in Austria, 53% in Germany and 51% in Italy to 47% in the United Kingdom and 41% in Spain. In no country did the percentage that disagreed surpass 32%.1

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.

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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.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 IRELAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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Executive Summary

The data presented here evidence the realities of Islamophobia in Ireland detailing experiences of hostility and discrimination; continued exclusions in the education sector; political actors and central figures in the Islamophobia network in Ireland; media; the justice system and the Internet. This submission draws on a number of sources including data provided on anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination captured by the European Network Against Racism Ireland and a synopsis of a report published by the Immigrant Council of Ireland which documents Islamophobia in Dublin. The data provided in these sources provide insights on both the online and offline experiences of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland at the interpersonal level including verbal and physical abuse and cyber-hostility.

At the level of structural and institutional exclusion the educational context remains problematic. Despite some welcome steps being made by the Irish government, the education sphere continues to be an area of concern with the continued potential for exclusion on the basis of religious identity. The lack of hate crime legislation also remains an issue.

Media reporting on Muslim communities in the Irish context continues to be problematic. Two main themes can be identified in the analysis presented here. The first refers to the continuing notion of a ‘cultural clash’ between Islam and the ‘West’; the second theme relates to the notion of Muslims as a pathological ‘enemy within’. What is disappointingly notable, despite some nuance, is the manner in which these macro themes of the Muslim as Other continue to be regurgitated by media actors.

The past twelve months have witnessed, arguably the most worrying developments on the political level when it comes to anti-Muslim/Islam groups including PEGIDA and also the National Party among others; including pronouncements by mainstream political actors. This report will conclude with some recommendations on how to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland.
Introduction

The European Islamophobia Report for Ireland for 2016 evidences the lived experiences of Islamophobia in Ireland. It is regrettable to report that in many ways nothing has changed and the areas of exclusion detailed last year persist; indeed, the main notable change is that of the increased visibility of anti-Muslim political groupings. This submission is made up of six distinct sections which detail experiences of hostility and discrimination; continued exclusions in the education sector; political actors and central figures in the Islamophobia network in Ireland; media; and Islamophobia on the Internet. This report will conclude with some recommendations on how to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland.

Significant Incidents and Developments

The report below provides detailed insights on the significant incidents and developments of 2016 vis-à-vis Islamophobia in Ireland. Space does not permit for a full additional adumbration of these issues here. Nonetheless, the events of most significance arguably centre on the emergence and increased visibility of anti-Muslim political parties over the course of 2016; including the increased relations between these groups and internationally renowned anti-Muslim protagonists. This is particularly worrying in that it indicates an emboldening of these groups in Ireland in that they are making their anti-Muslim message increasingly public; arguably, feeling legitimised in the current international context of increasingly successful far-right activity. The other point of significance is that of so little change. The problematic content of media reports around Muslim communities persists despite research recommendations to the contrary; the lack of hate crime legislation remains; and the potential for Muslim people and those of no/other religious groups to experience discrimination in education maintains. On a positive note, non-governmental groups such as the European Network Against Racism Ireland and the Immigrant Council of Ireland, among others, have come forward with research and recommendations to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland.

Anti-Muslim Hostility and Discrimination

In 2015, An Garda Síochána, the Irish police service commenced recording of ‘anti-Muslim’ as a basis for criminal hostility on their Police Using Leading Systems Effectively (PULSE) database. Drawing on available data, media reports from September 2016 indicate that, despite under-reporting, there has been an almost double proportional increase in the rate of hate crime reported to Irish police when com-

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pared to 2015. The data that were released to the Press Association were, however, not disaggregated by the religious background of the victim; instead the report noted the “number of racist incidents or those motivated because of someone’s ethnic background or religion soared to 98 in the first six months of this year.” Given this situation and that the facility to specifically record anti-Muslim hostility has been in place for a year, a request was made by the author to the agency tasked with collation and analysis of crime data, namely the Central Statistics Office (CSO), for relevant figures; however, at the time of writing such data have not been made available. Indeed, somewhat worryingly when asked by the media the CSO “declined to give data on the exact number of incidents recorded under each of the 11 categories” lest it lead to the identification of those targeted and result in negative repercussions. Thus, despite the tools being available it is not possible to detail the numbers of anti-Muslim aggravated offences/incidents if any, reported to the police.

Given this paucity of data, the author utilised two alternative sources to provide insights on lived Islamophobia in Ireland. The first of these comes in the form of data provided by the European Network Against Racism Ireland (ENAR) derived from their online third-party reporting mechanism iReport, accounting for the first six months of 2016. The second source is a synopsis of report findings on anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Dublin, Ireland. In both cases the data presented are qualitative. The first comment detailed here was reported to ENAR by a South-Asian Muslim woman using public transport in Dublin. The second comment below demonstrates the importance of signifiers of Muslimness in experiences of anti-Muslim hostility. In this instance, the Muslim woman firmly believes that it is her Muslimness that is being targeted; this perception is supported by comments, similar to those below, that commonly co-locate Islamic identities with terrorism in extant research. Furthermore, the reference to ‘foreigner’ again underpins the belief that to be Muslim in Ireland one must be foreign as demonstrated in previous studies.

“To today, for the first time since I’ve been in Ireland, I’ve had the misfortune of experiencing, not one, but two anti-Islamic slurs. 1. As I stood at the bus stop to board the 46a from O’Connell Street, a woman looked me in the eye and said the following “are you f..king crazy, you f..king stupid foreigner, there’s a f..king bus queue” to which I remained silent. When the bus arrived, I let everyone who came after me board the bus before I did, not one of them received any comment from this woman who waited to board the bus just before me (even though she was first in line) to which she told the bus driver, “these f..king foreigners, I f..king

3. Ibid.
hate them, they’re just f..king young idiots” and shockingly, he agreed. 2) Whilst on the bus that I had just boarded, a woman at the back of the bus kept chanting “I’ll f..king blow you, you f..king scum, get off the bus and take your packets and your bag with you (I had just been to the grocer),” and a whole lot of other slurs along those lines…”5

“Coming from O’Connell St. we had attended the anti-racist demo at the GPO, we decided to walk our Irish Muslim friend, who wears a hijab, to Capel St. for her safety and as there were scuffles between the Garda and anti-racist protesters … There were two men standing in the laneway, Irish one in his twenties the other probably thirtyes. As we passed them they started making abusive remarks “Ireland for the Irish” “Muslims are child rapers” “Muslims go back to where you belong” and much more. What was striking about this incident was their vehemence and their aggression. They were literally roaring abuse, we walked past them and didn’t look back. My Muslim friend told me after that her daughter, who also wears a hijab was subjected to similar abuse on another occasion.”6

Other reports to ENAR included: the verbal abuse meted out to a young woman “At X UNIVERSITY Ball, person approached girl of Arab descent shouting “Al-lahu Akbar”7, and an assault upon an imam in Cork City when he “was on his way to Blarney Street mosque with his wife for Aisha prayers (11pm to 11.15pm) when he was set upon and forced to the ground…”8

In February, the Immigrant Council of Ireland published a report documenting experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Dublin.9 Hostility manifested as verbal and physical abuse and damage to property. Participants recalled the manner in which verbal abuse directed toward them drew on racialised stereotypical constructions of Muslims and Islam. The experiences of anti-Muslim hostility recalled by the participants occurred on the street and/or using public transport with signifiers of Muslimness playing a key part in experiences of anti-Muslim hostility. The report notes that two mosques/prayer rooms were damaged with stones/bricks being thrown at them, while also being targeted with graffiti. A female participant also recalled how her home was broken into and exclusionary messages daubed on the walls. Apart from the sources referred to thus far, news reports in early May evidenced the reality of anti-Muslim racism hostility in Ireland. Two young men of Afghan origin (eighteen and twenty years of age) and their thirteen-year-old nephew were violently attacked by a group of five men in a South Dublin suburb. The three

5.Evidence derived from data kindly provided to the author by ENAR Ireland for the purposes of this report.
6.Ibid.
7.Ibid.
8.Ibid.
were subjected to verbal and physical abuse, including anti-Muslim slurs, leaving two of those attacked unconscious. The Afghan men were said to be fearful of their safety in Ireland in the aftermath.

In terms of discrimination, participants documented exclusionary practices when accessing education, using public transport, in/and accessing employment, using shops and restaurants. The issue of education is discussed further below suffice to say that experiences were noted in/accessing education. When it comes to employment, participants recalled how they were discriminated against when looking for work with the wearing of the hijab particularly problematic for some employers. Participants also noted how their ‘Muslim names’ were also perceived as a basis upon which employers made discriminatory recruitment decisions. Of course, it is difficult to discern if employers are discriminating on the basis of perceived Muslimness or ‘foreignness’ – with Arabic names for example not being associated with Irishness.10

In public transport, participants in the Immigrant Council report recalled discrimination by staff manifest in poor service provision and racial/religious profiling.11 Muslim men, but women in particular, recalled experiences of discrimination whilst shopping, manifesting in the form of being followed by security staff.12 One particularly striking incident referred to in the report highlights the manner in which two young Muslim women, upon receiving their receipt after paying for a meal as part of a larger party, noticed that the receipt had the term ‘go home Pakis’ written on it by one of the restaurant staff. It is important to note that the response by management in this case was excellent and the women in question were fully supported.13

The report noted what can be perceived as discriminatory practices by members of the Irish police, An Garda Síochána. In one incident, a Muslim woman describes how she felt she was singled out on the basis of being identified as Muslim by a police officer for questioning whilst others were ignored; the incident happened near a school while parents were waiting to collect their children.14 The second incident relating to the police is more implicit and refers to the perception held by some among Muslim communities that the Irish police service will provide a better level of service to those they deem to be ‘really’ Irish than that to those perceived as Other. The report notes the need for the development of stronger relationships between Muslim communities and rank and file members of the service.15

Members of the public who reported to ENAR’s iReport system also noted experiences of discrimination by staff, for example by refusing entry to a venue or rude

10.Ibid.
11.Ibid.
12.Ibid.
13.Ibid.
14.Ibid.
15.Ibid.
and abrupt treatment. The following report demonstrates the manner in which even those can only be perceived as Muslim can experience discriminatory practices. Here the gentleman in question is assumed erroneously to be Muslim:

“I was with my boyfriend at ‘ANY’ restaurant in Dun Laoghaire for lunch. My boyfriend is half Indian, half Irish and is an Irish Citizen who has lived here since he was 14. A man seated next to us made loud comments such as “here comes the muzzy (Muslim - although he is not)”, “did he order batteries to blow the place up?” “He is with a pale girl though, he must be a doctor or have a big house in Dun Laoghaire”, “oh he is having a burger, I thought he would just order a slab of pork”. We decided to not engage with him but my boyfriend was incredibly upset after the incident. The man seemed to be after several drinks and thought this was funny and acceptable behaviour at Sunday lunch time in a busy family filled restaurant…”16

In March of 2016, in the aftermath of the attacks in Brussels, media outlets reported about the painting of anti-Muslim graffiti near the Croke Park stadium in Dublin. The graffiti which referred to ‘all Muslims as scum’ was subsequently altered to state that ‘all Muslims are sound,’ an Irish turn of phrase that subverts the original text to instead state that Muslim people are good people. The original and amended text was shared widely on social media.17

**Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events**

**Education**

The issue of discrimination when it comes to accessing education in the Irish context for children of minority/no religion was documented in last years’ report. As noted, the vast majority of schools in Ireland fall under the patronage of the Catholic Church. Experiences of discrimination in and accessing education in the Irish context by Muslim communities and others are well documented in the Irish context.18 Despite ostensibly welcome steps at change being made by the Irish government, the education sphere continues to be an area of concern.19

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16. Evidence derived from data kindly provided to the author by ENAR Ireland for the purposes of this report.
At the time of writing there are two relevant bills in train; namely the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 and the Equal Status (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016. The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 states that all schools must include a statement in their admissions policy that they shall not discriminate in the admission of students/applicants on the basis, inter alia, of their religion. The Education (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016 must be read in conjunction with the Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 and the proposed amendment therein of section 7(3)(c) of the established Equal Status Act 2000, which details the current situation in Ireland under which the refusal of admission to a school vis-à-vis non/minority religious communities shall not be deemed discriminatory if the school in question wishes to provide:

“education to students in an environment that promotes certain religious values, it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others or refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination, and in the case of refusal, it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.”

In other words, the 2000 Act provides schools with an exemption from equality legislation with the effect being that if the applicant is not of the same religious denomination as the school in question, the refusal of admission on the basis of their religious/non-religious background cannot be deemed discriminatory. The proposed amendment to Section 7 of the 2000 Act detailed within the new Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 provides for the substitution in subsection (3)(c) with the below paragraph wherein a school will not be deemed in violation of equality law under such circumstances:

“(c) where the establishment is a school supported by public funds providing primary or post-primary education to students and the objective of the school is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values—

(i) it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others, if it is proved that such a policy is essential in order to ensure reasonable access to education for children of that denomination within its catchment area in accordance with the conscience and lawful preference of their parents, or

(ii) it refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination, if it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school,”; and

(b) by inserting the following as subsection (3A):

“(3A) In determining for the purposes of subsection (3)(c) whether an admission policy referred to in sub-paragraph (i) or a refusal referred to in sub-paragraph (ii) is essential for the purposes referred to, due regard shall be had to—

(a) the constitutional right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction at that school, and

(b) the concomitant obligation that every such school must be so organised as to enable that right effectually to be enjoyed.”

At the time of writing the two proposed bills remain to be enacted. The change of government in Ireland in 2016 may account for this delay. Nonetheless, the changes proposed in the bills, in particular the Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 remain problematic and have been subject to criticism including on the delay in bringing the proposed amendments to enactment and the effect this will have on families. The form of the amendment proposed in Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 has been subject to critique in that it permits for students to continue to be discriminated against by schools within a school ‘catchment’ area. It is also argued here that the use of language such as “reasonable access” and “essential to maintain the ethos of the school” is not only ambiguous but maintains the facility for schools to discriminate against children accessing schools of choice on the basis of a child’s religious/non-religious background. Such ambiguity needs to be removed in order to ensure discriminatory enrolment polices are not permitted de facto into the future. As discussed above, the vast majority of primary and over half of secondary schools in Ireland are under Catholic patronage; thus, the failure to adequately address discrimination accessing education is profoundly felt by members of minority/non-religious individuals/communities. Discrimination accessing school on the grounds of one’s religious/non-religious background must be eliminated without caveat or question and this should be reflected in any new legislation.

Finally, in the education context, it was noted last year that the Irish government has failed to address the potential for discrimination against young Muslim women who wish to wear the hijab whilst in school. Nothing has changed in this regard. As stated last year, the “Irish government’s ‘policy to not have a policy’ permits a context wherein young Muslim women are at the mercy of individual school policies and personalities when it comes to manifesting their faith.”

Internet

Analysis of reports made to ENAR Ireland reveal the form that online ant-Muslim abuse can take. In terms of communication, a non-governmental organisation reported the content of an email they received which stated:


24. Ibid.

“I am delighted that they are cutting down on the number of Muslims getting into this country. When are you people going to cop on. You can’t mix oil and water. There [sic] women are dressed like there [sic] from outer space and the men probably wear ladies underwear [sic] to go with there [sic] dresses on Friday. Now who wants that shit in our country. Its time people stood up, get organised and run these out of here.”

Participants reported encountering comments on news websites, particularly in the comments section under news stories; on Facebook for example: “Ladies, in Islam you don’t have rights, so shut the f..k up! Actually all Good believers are like trash and they can do…whatever they like with you you peace [sic] of meat.” (Report to ENAR).

A number of white Irish nationalist organisations were referred to specifically in the ENAR data. The following images were located on social media platforms used by the groups. The identity of the groups involved has been removed. In Figure 1 the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman is again presented. Figure 2 is worrying in the manner in which it presents local Muslim communities in Dublin as a threat, resonating with international discourses of Muslim men.

Media

In the analysis that follows it is clear that media reporting on Muslim communities in the Irish context continues to be problematic. While there was evidence of nuanced and reflective practice on the part of some in the media when it comes to reporting on Islam and Muslim communities, space remains for greater reflection in this regard. Indeed, even those articles that evidenced some nuance continue to co-locate the word ‘Islamic’ with terms such as “terror attack”, “terrorists”, “extremists.”

A detailed analysis of media reports relating to Muslim communities and Islam in Ireland is beyond the scope of this short report. The limited selection of articles

26. Evidence derived from data kindly provided to the author by ENAR Ireland for the purposes of this report.
28. Pat Flanagan, “The State knows who paid water charges but not how many Jihadis are in Ireland; In the past four years the threat from Islamic terrorism has not been high on the Government’s priorities list, unlike ensuring people paid their water charges,” Irish Mirror, March 25, 2016.
29. Conor Lally, “Garda must be ready in the event of Isis threats; Faster, armed security response would be vital if any attack took place,” The Irish Times, March 24, 2016.
chosen for this review was sourced using the Nexis media database search platform. The following analysis is based on a review of print media articles published by leading Irish newspapers in the aftermath of five selected critical international events that occurred across 2016. Articles published at other times that were particularly problematic are also discussed below. Two main themes can be identified. The first refers to the continuing notion that there is a ‘cultural clash’ between Islam and the ‘West’ with religion at the heart of the ‘problem’; the second theme relates to the notion of Muslims as an ‘enemy within’. What is disappointingly notable, despite some nuance, is the manner in which these macro themes of the Muslim as Other continue to be regurgitated by media actors.

Reports of an alleged ‘cultural clash’ emerged in the very first weeks of 2016 in the aftermath of the alleged sexual assaults that took place in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015. MacDonald starts by seemingly placing the blame for the attacks not on Islam but elsewhere: “To be clear: we can not and should not equate the attacks in Germany with Isil (regardless of its appalling treatment of women) or to Islam with its cultural subjection of women that seems alien and wrong to us in many respects.” This is accompanied by the following:

“Western democracies, with their foundations in Christian and Judeo-Christian principles, are engaged not only in a physical war of terror with Islamic extremists… They are also been drawn and deliberately so, into a culture war…”

Comments such as these present Muslim communities as the homogenous Other de jour; all diversity within Muslim communities is eschewed in the ‘clash’ context. McKinstry, writing in the Irish Times of the demographic changes he witnessed in a town in Southern France which he claims has become “Islamified”, starts with the conditional caveat “let’s be absolutely clear: most of the Muslim population were thoroughly decent people who wanted nothing more than to live their lives in harmony with other peaceful French people” before going on to note that in “modern France… there is a widening chasm between the indigenous, intensely nationalist French and the detached, often hostile, Muslim community” which has at its core

31. The publications chosen were The Irish Daily Mail; The Irish Examiner; The Irish Independent; The Irish Times; The Irish Mirror.ie; The Sunday Business Post; The Sunday Independent; and archival coverage (as noted by Nexis) from The Evening Herald; and the Metro Herald. The four events chosen for this report are (1) the alleged sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015/6; (2) the terrorist attack in Brussels in March of 2016; (3) the attack on the gay night club ‘Pulse’ in Orlando, Florida in June; (4) the terrorist attack in Nice in July of 2016; and finally, (5) the attack on the Berlin Christmas market on 19 December, 2016. The publication dates selected for analysis included the day the event happened and the seven subsequent days. The search terms used for each event were the same with only the location name changing: for example: Muslim! OR Islam! AND Nice.
32. Dearbhail MacDonald, “A strong show of Western justice is only response to sex-attack gangs in Germany,” Irish Independent, January 8, 2016.
33. Ibid.
“a clash of two different cultures.”34 Ian O’Doherty refers to “backward ‘cultures’” wherein “even the most perfect Muslim woman is still a second-class citizen.”35 In a later piece, ostensibly in defence of the burkini, O’Doherty again notes the alleged cultural incompatibility between ‘atavistic Islam’ allegedly alien to the ‘West’:

“The burka has no place in civilised society… Its defenders say that it is merely a statement of belief but the problem is that those beliefs are utterly anathema to Western values… Putting a bin liner over a woman and forcing her to walk around dressed like a character from Pacman is not something which should be encouraged… The burka is unacceptable because, in our culture, we expect to see someone’s face when we deal with them… The burka signifies a refusal to integrate and a contempt for the host country…”36

The cure to this alleged cultural clash resides in the need for Muslim communities to integrate; any perceived failure to do so is laid squarely on Muslims and Islam. “Wait a minute. Maybe it is time for the Muslims to integrate and assimilate to Western values;”37“Rather than the burqa ban alienating Muslims in Europe, is it not far more relevant that the act of wearing a burqa alienates the wearer from wider society and any hope of integration?”38

For some, the faith of Islam itself is the determining issue at the heart of this alleged ‘cultural clash’. O’Doherty is certain that “all the touchy feely nonsense about us ‘not being at war with Islam’ ignores the rather obvious fact that plenty of them are at war with us.”39 While overall nuanced, McWilliams writing in the post-Brussels attacks context use phrases such as “soldiers of Allah” while making repeated references to “strict” or extreme versions of “Islam” de facto laying the blame for the attacks on Islam.40 A headline published in the Irish Daily Mail in the aftermath of the attack on the gay nightclub in Orlando is unequivocal: “We need to admit Islam was behind the club attack;”41 a person in the letters section of the same publication notes that “After Orlando, we need to talk about the dark side of Islam.”42 Brenda Power places the root cause of terrorism in Islam, albeit starting with a conditional caveat:

34.Leo McKinstry, “How I’ve seen the France I love torn apart by hatred; LEO MCKINSTRY - who has l decade and witnessed the locals and Muslim hardliners - lived there for over a growing tensions between - desairs for the future,” The Irish Daily Mail, July 16, 2016.
41.Irish Daily Mail, “We need to admit Islam was behind club attack”, Irish Daily Mail, June 18, 2016.
42.Irish Daily Mail, “We need to admit Islam was behind club attack”, Irish Daily Mail, June 16, 2016.
“The vast majority of Muslims are peaceful, but if you take the time actually to read the Koran, you will see for yourself that many verses preach that infidels deserve death or enslavement, and that it is the duty of all Muslims to wage ‘jihad’… The fact that there are also verses with a message of peace, or that most Muslims choose to reject, does not change the wording of those verses, which are heavily relied upon by both ISIS and by anti-Islamists to make their respective arguments.”

Power’s comment, reductively depoliticises by placing the root cause of terrorism and cultural incompatibility in the faith of Islam. In doing so, all Muslims, ‘good’ or ‘bad’ are potential suspects upon which acts of hostility and discrimination can become legitimised. In this context certain areas in Europe were described in the media in Ireland as being ‘breeding grounds’ for terrorism. According to King “Belgium was a breeding ground for radical jihadism;” Irish publications referred to Prof Peter Neumann from King’s College London who, in the aftermath of the Bastille Day attack, spoke of Nice as a “jihadist breeding ground.”

Writing in the time after the Berlin Christmas Market attack, security analyst Declan Power notes that: “The terror attack in Berlin was no surprise to the security and intelligence community around Europe. For some time now an attack was expected, particularly in Germany.” These sentences are immediately followed with: “It [Germany] has a significant Islamic population, and has demonstrated fault lies in its society that have been taken note of by extremist ideologues.” Later in the same piece, Declan Power notes: “There have been a number of other violent incidents in Germany involving members of both the Islamic and refugee communities” before going on to note an associated increase of “confidence in the hard right” and fear among “the general German citizenry and the German –Islamic population.” Bringing the piece back to the Irish context, Power continues to use language problematically: “Monday’s attack will inevitably give rise yet again to questions about whether we in Ireland are fully resourced to defend against such an attack. In many respects, we are fortunate in that we are an island, and we do not have a large population of Middle-Eastern or Islamic origin.” Despite the author’s call for partnership with Muslim communities in Ireland and the States to combat ‘radicalisation’, the language used in this article clearly serves to associate all members of Islamic communities and peoples from Muslim majority regions with the threat of terrorism in Ireland and the broader EU.

Carty’s piece following the Brussels attacks also demonstrates a problematic use of language to co-locate Muslim communities in Ireland with the attackers on the basis of

43.Brenda Power, “Until our leaders are honest about the fear Islamists strike in our hearts, terror will always triumph,” Irish Daily Mail, January 5, 2016.
45.Irish Examiner, “Nice ‘jihadist breeding ground’ for a number of years,” Irish Examiner, July 16, 2016.
religion and ‘background’: “In the context that a large proportion of Muslims domiciled here come from a background similar to the suspected attackers in Paris and Brussels, a significant amount of resources are deployed in monitoring these groups.”

A number of sources refer explicitly to Ireland as being a potential harbour for ‘jihadis’. In a piece on the detention of Salah Abdelsalam in relation to the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris that makes no mention of Ireland, the headline reads: “Brussels attacks: Extremists pose threat to Irish people.” Shehan’s article on the death of Khalid Kelly in a suicide attack in Mosul, which notes that Kelly was “generally regarded as a madman” by the Muslim community, ran with the headline: “Death of a Dublin jihadi confirms worst fears of the enemy within.” Flanagan asks the question: “Could Frances Fitzgerald [Minister for Justice and Equality] please tell us how many murdering, raping, torturing Islamic terrorists have returned to Ireland after being trained in Syria.” The language used in some of these reports has the potential to stigmatise all Muslim communities in Ireland, associate them through identity with international terrorism, thus legitimising suspicion and hostility.

Apart from reports surrounding the critical events analysed here, a very problematic report emerged in Limerick City. A locally distributed newspaper, the *Limerick Post*, ran with the headline “Limerick Asylum Centre Worker Claims Extremists have Infiltrated the System” referring to the highly problematic Irish asylum system. The report stated that “A MAN working in a Limerick refugee centre claims that staff have been subjected to physical attacks and mental abuse by individuals and gangs of radical Muslim men living in the centre.” The ‘man’ claimed to “have found a worrying level of extremism, bordering on hatred, which could potentially manifest in some sort of devastating way.” Calling for the piece to be retracted, NGOs referred to the stereotyping and stigmatising portrayal of migrants and in particular, Muslim men; and requested that if any evidence of ‘extremism’ existed that it should be reported to the police. The Irish Refugee Council criticised the report as being unbalanced, lacking in evidence and “inflammatory” and will result in “fear suspicion and hostility.”

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52. Ibid. 
53. Ibid. 
55. Sheridan, “Limerick Post’s article ‘resonates worryingly with far-right discourses’.”
Justice System

Despite extant research and a previously drafted hate crime bill, the new proposed legislation, namely the Criminal Justice (Aggravation by Prejudice) Bill 2016, by leading opposition party, received governmental support. The multifarious problems with the proposed legislation go beyond the scope of this report. However, a key concern is the absence of the religious ground as a basis upon which one may be the target for hate crime. Thus, if a person of the Islamic or indeed any other religious background should experience hate on the grounds of their religious identity, it would not be possible to prosecute/have the hate motivation count in any court action.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The year started with Peter O’Loughlin, leader of Identity Ireland speaking at a PEGIDA event in Dresden, Germany. Addressing those gathered, O’Loughlin invoked “millennia of European civilisation” which he argued was under threat from “masses of migrants… [that] should not be here”; he continued that the EU and its “puppet governments” are “importing radical Islam” through migration policies before concluding. Tommy Robinson, founder of the English Defence League was in Ireland in January of 2016 as a guest of Peter O’Loughlin. Robinson was invited by O’Loughlin in his capacity as co-ordinator of PEGIDA in the UK to publicise the launch of PEGIDA Ireland. Coinciding with similar events across Europe, PEGIDA Ireland was to formally launch in Dublin on the 6 February outside the symbolic General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin City Centre. A small number of PEGIDA supporters turned up at the GPO on the day, including Polish far right activists, to find themselves hugely outnumbered by at least 1,000 grass-roots anti-racism protestors and political groups. Some violence did break out at the scene and police intervened. O’Loughlin was targeted while on a tram en route to the

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60. Ibid.
event. However, the event itself was overwhelmingly peaceful and PEGIDA Ireland was prevented from formally launching. 

Identity Ireland is part of ‘Fortress Europe’ grouping of far right political parties. They have attended conferences organised by the group in Germany and the Czech Republic during 2016; and have invited members of Fortress Europe to speak in Ireland. Identity Ireland invited Lutz Bachman, founder of PEGIDA in Germany and convicted racist, to speak in the Irish city of Limerick in June. According to reports, Bachman aimed to “highlight the mass sexual assaults on European women by Muslim men.” While the time and date of Bachman’s appearance were closely guarded, the response of politicians in Limerick was to urge him to stay away. At the time of writing, the proposed visit of Mr Bachman is yet to occur.

Mid-November witnessed another far right political group coming to the fore in Ireland in the form of the National Party. News broke of the party when the hotel due to host their official launch cancelled the event. The National Party is led by Justin Barrett, an individual whose previous political campaigns have involved advocating a “No” vote to the Nice Referendum in 2001; campaigning as a member of Youth Defence, an anti-abortion lobby group; and, running in the 2004 Barrett European elections on an anti-abortion, anti-immigration platform. In 1998, Barrett authored a book entitled *The National Way Forward!* in which he argued for the establishment of a “Catholic Republic”. Barrett has confirmed that he has in the past attended meetings by organisations such as the neo-Nazi group *Forza Nuova* in Italy. Anti-racism activist Shane O’Curry of the European Network Against Racism (Ireland) when referring to Barrett and the National Party has stated: “Without a doubt this is a fascist party.”

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65. Sheridan, “Ex-Pegida member fears violent clashes over founder’s Limerick address”; Anne Sheridan, “Pegida founder told to ‘stay away from Limerick’,” Limerick Leader, June 2, 2016.


68. Leahy, “National Party leader espouses creation of ‘Catholic republic’”.

69. MacNamee, “Who is National Party leader Justin Barrett?”. 
In a radio interview Barrett put forward some of his party’s policies and principles. These included a critical stance on the Ireland EU relationship; the restriction of “mass immigration” including those seeking asylum. When asked if he was in favour of placing a ban on Muslims from entering Ireland Barrett said he was. He referred to an alleged “rise of Islamic fundamentalism” in Ireland, and stated that “all of them [Muslims] are potentially dangerous;” when challenged he argued that “if you hold to the faith of the Qur’an… properly… you will find support for drenching the world in bloodshed in the Qur’an;” he continued after being challenged again: “I’m saying there is such thing as a moderate Muslim but there is no such thing as moderate Islam.”

The central figures engaging in Islamophobic discourses and actions in Ireland are mentioned above and in last year’s report; to these can be added the Celtic People’s Party and the ‘Soldiers of Odin.’ In July of 2016, reports emanated in the media that the ‘Soldiers of Odin’ a group that originated in Finland in 2015 were ‘patrolling’ the streets of Irish towns. Although they claim to be non-violent, public statements demonstrate otherwise. The alleged purpose of these ‘patrols’ is to protect people from immigrant communities. According to a spokesperson for the group, their aim is to “highlight the evils of Islam and to start the debate on how followers of Islam demand that we respect and conform to their ways.”

In terms of mainstream politicians, a Fianna Fáil Member of Parliament Eamon Scanlon representing the Sligo-Leitrim constituency raised a question in Parliament in June as to the number of Muslims who had applied for citizenship in Ireland. He later stated that his question was in response to a query by a constituent and was “misinterpreted” and apologised for any offence caused. In the following month, the independent Monaghan County Councillor Seamus Treanor claimed that most Muslims in Ireland, 98%, do not want to work: “why would they want to work when they’re getting handouts? They are coming in droves;” making the exception

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71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
for Muslim medical professionals who he classed as “fine.” 76 Treanor also referred to the response of the German Government in 2015 as encouraging people to come to Europe and that many of the young Muslim men coming are radicalised. 77 As noted in last year’s report for Ireland, the co-location between the three ‘great threats’ are explicit: welfare, migration and Muslims.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The evidence presented in this submission details the lived experiences of Islamophobia in Ireland for 2016; incorporating hostility, discrimination and exclusion at the structural, institutional, interpersonal and discursive levels. The following recommendations are, as per last year’s submission, by no means exhaustive but do offer opportunities for change in a context of persistent Islamophobia.

• The Irish government must take action and implement effective hate crime legislation that recognises all grounds upon which a person may be targeted for identity based hostility. As noted in last year’s submission, an evidence-based solution is already available for the government to draw from.

• Exclusion in the education sphere must be addressed in a meaningful manner. Criticisms of the suggested bills in the area of accessing education discussed above must be addressed.

• Efforts must continue to be made with media actors in Ireland to encourage greater reflexivity when reporting Muslim/Islam related issues. This is not to suggest stifling press freedom but to argue against the propagation of stereotypical representations of Muslim communities.

• It was encouraging to see NGOs and other civil society actors coming together at various points across 2016 to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland; the anti-PEGIDA rally being but one such incident. It is vital that all civil society groups continue to work together to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland.


77. Northern Sound, “Muslim academic says local Councillor’s claims about people of the Islamic religion are wrong”. 77
Chronology

January
• Problematic media reports in the aftermath of the Cologne New Year’s Eve.
• Peter O’Loughlin from Identity Ireland attends and speaks at PEGIDA rally in Dresden, Germany.
• End of January, Tommy Robinson from PEGIDA UK is invited as a guest of Identity Ireland to announce the forthcoming launch of PEGIDA Ireland.
• European Network Against Racism Ireland host an event on the topic of Islamophobia in Ireland.

February
• PEGIDA Ireland attempt to formally launch at the General Post Office in Dublin City centre.
• A large counter-demonstration against PEGIDA Ireland prevents their launch.
• Immigrant Council of Ireland launches the report “Islamophobia in Dublin: Experiences and how to respond”.

March
• Problematic media reports in the aftermath of the Brussels terrorist attacks.
• A highly publicised incident is reported in the media regarding the spraying of graffiti near Croke Park stadium in Dublin; it is notable by manner in which the racist language is later subverted to welcome Muslims.
• On 31 March, an article is published in the Limerick Post, a free of charge newspaper, warning of ‘radical’ Muslims in the asylum system.

April
• Irish NGOs publicly denounce the report in the Limerick Post regarding Muslim men in the asylum system.

May
• Event held in Limerick by ENAR Ireland and Dr James Carr to launch the Irish submission to the European Islamophobia Report for 2015.
• Reports emerge of the extension of an invitation by Identity Ireland to Lutz Bachman, founder of PEGIDA in Germany to visit Ireland. Limerick is suggested as the possible venue.

June
• Reports continue to emerge on the visit of Lutz Bachman to Ireland.
• Mainstream political and society activists tell Bachman to ‘stay away’.
• An Irish member of parliament asks a question on the numbers of Muslim people granted citizenship in Ireland; later, he apologises.
• Problematic media reporting in the aftermath of the Pulse Nightclub attack in Orlando, Florida, USA.

**July**
• Reports emerge of the ‘Soldiers of Odin’ undertaking street patrols in Irish towns and cities.
• Monaghan County Councillor makes claim that the vast majority of Muslims coming to/in Ireland are on welfare.
• Education (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016 published; Equal Status (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016 progresses.
• Problematic media reporting in the aftermath of the Bastille Day attacks in Nice, France.

**September**
• Reports in media of employment discrimination against a woman in Dublin with the name of Samia Jalal; the woman in question does not mention any possible link between Islam and her experience.
• Criticisms directed toward the Irish government for rejecting recommendations made by UN UPR members in relation to discrimination in the workplace.

**October**
• Irish political party Fianna Fáil present draft legislation on hate crime. The proposed legislation is heavily criticised, in part because it omits religious identity as a grounds upon which one may experience hate crime.
• The Immigrant Council of Ireland hosts an event on media and Islamophobia in Ireland.

**November**
• The National Party attempt to officially launch at a Dublin venue but the hotel in question removes permission for the event to go ahead.
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.