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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

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

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

lems, discrimination (education and employment) and hate crimes against Muslim women (data shows that it is 70% more likely for a Muslim woman to be attacked in the street) are leaving their horrible mark on Muslim women. Hence, the protection and the empowerment of Muslim women have to be on the central agenda of states and NGOs. The ruling of the European Court of Justice regarding Esma Bougnaoui’s dismissal by a French company for wearing a hijab when dealing with clients as unlawful discrimination is an important step towards equality and an anti-discriminatory society.\(^7\) At the same time, the case of Belgian Samira Achbita vs. Belgium, where it was argued that a dismissal due to the headscarf would be permissible against the backdrop of a general prohibition of all outward signs of political, philosophical and religious beliefs exhibited by employees in the workplace, is worrying and challenges the reality of a diverse Europe.\(^8\)

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The Author

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Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Italy in 2016, taking under consideration all the European and global developments that might have influenced the appearance or the rise of Islamophobia, including the refugee and migrant flows, and the terrorist attacks in France, Belgium and Germany. The report is based, among others, on data collected from electronic media, the press, the Internet, and communication with NGOs.

Islamophobia in Italy is present in specific fields, for example, in the far right and particularly the Lega Nord party and Fratelli d’Italia. Italian authorities cannot be characterised as Islamophobic but due to their inability to implement the existing legislation, e.g. on the construction of new mosques, they are perceived as such. According to existing data and information, Islamophobia is present also in education and in the workplace and most of all in the media, Internet and social media, which are privileged places for such views to flourish.

On the counter-Islamophobia level specific laws on freedom of religion and against online racism are lacking and there have been only secondary and fragmented initiatives. These issues could be addressed through principal measures taken towards confronting Islamophobia. First of all, institutional decision makers should pay greater attention and get proactively involved in the fight against racism, foreseeing the aggravating factors when they make use of hate speech; and information and awareness-raising activities with youth and in schools should be promoted. Moreover, EU member states should intensify their efforts to improve the employment opportunities, particularly for young Muslims. In addition, Italian authorities should set up a method of data collection on incidents related to hate speech and, lastly, the media should examine news reporting to ensure the correctness and completeness of the services that address issues relating to Muslims.
Sintesi
Questo rapporto esamina l’islamofobia in Italia nel 2016, prendendo in considerazione tutti gli sviluppi europei e globali che potrebbero aver causato la creazione o l’incremento dell’islamofobia, inclusi i flussi di rifugiati e migranti e gli attacchi terroristici in Francia, Belgio e Germania. Il rapporto si basa su dati raccolti da mezzi di informazione elettronici, dalla stampa, da Internet, dalla comunicazione con ONG, etc.

L’islamofobia in Italia è presente in settori specifici, ad esempio nell’estrema destra ed in particolare Lega Nord e Fratelli d’Italia. Le autorità italiane non possono essere considerate islamofobiche, ma a causa della loro incapacità ad attuare la legislazione esistente, per esempio sulla costruzione di nuove moschee, sono percepite come tali. Secondo i dati e le informazioni esistenti, l’islamofobia è presente anche nel campo dell’istruzione e nei luoghi lavoro e soprattutto nei media, su Internet e nei social media, che sono luoghi privilegiati per far fiorire tali punti di vista.

A livello di contrasto dell’islamofobia mancano alcune leggi specifiche in materia di libertà di religione o contro il razzismo in linea e vi sono state solo iniziative secondarie e frammentarie. Queste mancanze potrebbero essere colmate attraverso alcune misure necessarie ad affrontare l’islamofobia. Prima di tutto, i decisori istituzionali dovrebbero prestare maggiore attenzione e essere positivamente coinvolti nella lotta al razzismo, prevedendo fattori aggravanti ad hoc quando essi stessi usano espressioni di odio; in secondo luogo, dovrebbero essere promosse attività di informazione e di sensibilizzazione con i giovani e nelle scuole. Inoltre, gli Stati membri dovrebbero intensificare i loro sforzi per migliorare le opportunità di lavoro, in particolare per i giovani musulmani. In aggiunta, le autorità italiane dovrebbero impiantarre un metodo di raccolta dati sugli incidenti relativi ai discorsi d’odio; infine i media dovrebbero esaminare le notizie al fine di garantire la correttezza e la completezza dei servizi che affrontano questioni relative ai musulmani.
Introduction

A recent report by the Pew Research Center highlights Italy as the least Islam-friendly country in Europe. In most European countries, older people and those with less education are more negative toward Muslims. The biggest divide in each country, however, tends to be political. Results show that in 2016, 69% of Italians have a very unfavorable view of Muslims and 79% of those who have a negative opinion of Muslims place themselves on the right of the ideological scale.¹ In Italy, there is an evident lack of awareness of the extraordinary diversity of Muslim communities which means that the majority of the Italian population does not distinguish the various Muslim groups.

Islam in Italy has been at the centre of the political and cultural debate for several years. Since 11 September, 2001, incidents of violence and international terrorism, where Islamist movements have been protagonists, have contributed to the focus, in a problematic way, on the relationship between Islam and Western countries. The veil, fundamentalism, “holy war” and religious freedom are issues widely debated by the public and often create widespread Islamophobia.

The Islamic presence in Italy is due to a large extent to the migration that began in the seventies, especially from North Africa. Most Muslim immigrants have permanently settled in Italy.² Today, Italy’s large Islamic community faces a double challenge: on the one hand, the cultural hostility that stems from the growing Islamophobia, and, on the other hand, the interpretation of its own religious tradition in terms of its compatibility with the new social, cultural and political context.³

Nowadays in Europe, and therefore also in Italy, the psychosis of a possible terrorist attack is widespread among the population: many are afraid of taking an airplane, a train, the underground, etc. A common feeling among Italians considers Islam the main cause of terrorism which today threatens the quiet life and security of Western countries.

The fear of Islam, which culminates in rampant Islamophobia, is not felt only by Italians. This fear and hate of Muslims is strengthened by the political and social instability in certain Muslim-majority countries, because of wars and terrorism. Terrorism has struck Europe on several occasions as well: in France, Belgium and Germany.⁴

³. Ibid.
⁴. Ibid.
Significant Incidents and Developments

Overall in Italy, there is a manifest lack of data on Islamophobic incidents which is mostly determined by the unwillingness of a part of the Muslim community to report these incidents. Moreover, according to the Observatory for security against acts of discrimination (OSCAD), the legislative framework and the configuration of the police database (SDI) do not allow the extraction of official data specifically related to the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

In 2016, and particularly after the attacks in Nice, Rouen, Reutlingen, Ansbach, Munich and Wurzburg (July) and Berlin (December), Italian media, politicians and the public have talked up “Islamic terrorism”, transforming Islam and Muslims into something dangerous, even monstrous.

For example an article in *Il Giornale*, published on the front page on 3 July, 2016, and concerning the attack that took place in Dhaka on 1 July, 2016, which caused the death of 20 people, called the terrorists “Islamic Beasts”. For this reason the Carta di Roma, which seeks to be a stable reference point for those who work on daily basis with media and minorities and the Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration (ASGI) which focuses on all legal aspects of immigration presented a complaint to Lombardia Journalists’ association requesting a retraction of the article. 5

Last October, almost all the national newspapers reported on the front page that a teacher of a Venetian school posted on Facebook insults to people of the Islamic faith. The invectives, short and not articulated, were addressed to refugees and Muslims; their arrival in Italy was called an “invasion” and the teacher wished them terrible things and death. 6

Other than verbal attacks, in 2016, intolerance towards the Muslim community was also expressed through threats and violence. For instance, on 18 March, 2016, during the night, vandals set fire to a butcher shop run by a Muslim in Mirandola (Modena) and left an inscription on the floor with the words “Go away!” and a swastika (Figure 1). According to Mayor Benatti, in Italy there are “Forces that incite violence and sow fear and hatred and the town of Mirandola does not tolerate them.” 7

In June, unknown persons launched a 12-calibre cartridge charge inside a building located on Via Matteotti 3 (Sassari), a place of worship for citizens of Moroccan nationality. 8

8. OSCAD, OSCAD, data sent to author in regard to the period January-December 2016.
In January, in Miane (Treviso), a flyer showing discriminatory epithets of a religious nature addressed to Muslims and signed with a swastika was posted on the walls of an auditorium.9

In May, a banner bearing discriminatory epithets of a religious nature addressed to Muslims and signed by Forza Nuova was found at the entrance of the mosque in Albenga (Savona).10

In January in Salerno, the phrase “We are not a land of Islam” reappeared on the external wall of a primary school. The phrase had appeared on the same wall where racist sentences with Celtic crosses had been found a few months before. They were cleaned after the intervention of the police and the administration.12

In October, in the church of the small village of Goro (Ferrara), a sign appeared inviting Muslims to leave Italy and “go to the Middle Eastern lands controlled by ISIS”. The parish priest, Don Paolo Paccagnella, was contacted several times to ask him the reason for the presence of the sign but he was unavailable for comment.13

Also in 2016, Muslims reported continued difficulties in acquiring permission from local governments to construct mosques. As a result, over the years, they have created the so-called “independent Islamic centres”, usually in private residences or buildings rented from local authorities, where they meet to pray. In some cases, people’s houses and garages have become unofficial places of faith where hundreds gather every week. The phenomenon, increasingly common in the peninsula, has been dubbed “garage Islam”.14

10. OSCAD, data sent to author in regard to the period January-December 2016.
Italian local councils can oppose new buildings for reasons ranging from the proposed parking facilities to how well they think they would fit in with the architectural aesthetic of a neighborhood. Last August, for example, some campaigners in Tuscany fought against a plan to build a mosque a few hundred yards from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. They were concerned that it is too close to the landmark, one of Italy’s best known tourist attractions, and feared that it could become a centre for the radicalisation of local Muslims, who number around 600. The building of the mosque in Via del Brennero has been provisionally approved by Pisa’s centre-left council but campaigners are gathering signatures for a petition calling for a local referendum on the issue.  

Right-wing parties have also called for a blanket ban on any mosques built with foreign money. Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfano said in August that “mini mosques in garages” should be banned as they are hard to monitor and increase the risk of “radicalisation”.

In most countries, Italy included, Muslim women are more likely to be victims of hate crime and hate speech than Muslim men, especially if they wear a headscarf. Muslim women are targeted by threats and hate speech, violence and assault and online hate. Verbal and physical violence often mix, as well as racist and sexist insults or gestures, and incidents mainly occur in public spaces. For instance, last January in Milan, a woman was insulted and denounced. People shouted at her “Bedouin, go home!” because she was wearing the niqab. Her daughter wore only a scarf covering her hair. She dared to answer and was slapped, while nobody around stopped to help.  

Last July, a 51-year-old Tunisian woman was attacked without reason in Riolo Terme (Ravenna) by a 48-year-old Italian worker, perhaps influenced by the terrorist event in Germany and France of that period. The man followed the woman with his car, got closer and insulting her said “People die because of you, you have to go back to your country!”. He then spat in her face. The man left abruptly, risking knocking her down with his car.

Moreover, despite several circulars clarifying that women can wear the veil in photos for identification documents - most recently the circular of 20 October, 2016 by the Ministry of Transport - the ASGI (Association for Juridical Studies on Immig-


received a number of reports about cases of opposition to the request and the release of documents such as ID cards, passports, driving licences and residence permits, because of photos of women wearing the Islamic veil. In a letter sent to the Ministries of Transport and Interior on 6 December, 2016, the ASGI emphasised that the right to wear headscarves in passport photos constitutes a right guaranteed by Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution of Italy, which respectively protect the freedom of religion and the freedom of thought. Therefore the association requested, in accordance with the application of these principles and to the ministerial circulars mentioned above, to put in place actions and appropriate measures to prevent further oppositions to the issuing of identity documents by the competent authorities.18

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

Due to the lack of an agreement between the Italian state and the Muslim community and of a general law on religious freedom, for the last couple of years, collective and enterprise bargaining have assumed and continue to assume importance. As part of the regulation of labour relations, practical solutions of bilateral legislation have been identified.

Concerning access to public employment, existing legislation often states that recruitment in the public sector requires the possession of Italian or EU citizenship and the Immigration Law 286/1998 authorises this type of discrimination. In the private sector, the lack of adequate education relegates Muslims to less-skilled and poorly paid jobs. Moreover, there is a high presence of irregular immigrants working without any social protection.19

To better analyse the reasons that push employers to hire natives rather than foreigners, some Italian scholars carried out a field survey which was published in 2016. Between July 2013 and October 2014, they sent 22,000 fictitious résumés to all companies that offered work through the major online search engines. They analysed the response rate that companies called each candidate to invite him/her for an interview. The CVs that were sent were equivalent in all their characteristics: the participants had the same age, they all resided in the same city (Rome), and had the same educational background. The experiment clearly showed that there is a significant difference between the treatment of Italian candidates (52% of whom were contacted) and that of foreign applicants (28%), who were heavily


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penalised. It also emerged that most of the foreign applicants were from Muslim countries.20

During this research, it was difficult to find cases of employment discrimination that had occurred in 2016 due to the lack of complaints and reports to the Italian authorities. However, inferences can be drawn from the existing surveys and the information received from the MAI + (Monitoraggio Anti Islamofobia) initiative which reports and records incidents of Islamophobia in Italy.

The information highlights that in Italy, the veil is one of the main – but not only - grounds of employment discrimination towards Muslim women. It is not only a case of racist employers, but also a wider structural inequality that affects mainly those who are socially and economically marginalised.

ISTAT data show that in Italy, in 2016, lower employment rates are reported among foreign women coming from Muslim-majority countries.21 Yet, especially when employers do not provide any feedback, it is difficult to determine if the job applications are not successful as a result of discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, gender, age or social class. In many cases the intersection of one or more prejudices causes discrimination.

In Italy, the legal protection from religious discrimination in employment exists, but employees rarely report it. Sara Mahmoud, a young Italian of Egyptian origin, is a unique case: in early May, she won the lawsuit against an agency that, for a leafletting job at a shoe fair in Milan, had excluded her from the recruitment selections because she refused to remove her hijab. The Milan Court of Appeal ruled that the agency’s behavior was discriminatory. If there is a religious component in a job’s requirements it can be added by the company as a recruitment condition only when it is essential to the service and the sacrifice demanded by the worker is proportionate to the interest pursued by the company.22

Education

The number of Muslim students in Italian schools is increasing every year although the level of immigrant students is rather low compared to the average of their Italian peers. In high schools for instance, as many of 22% of foreign children are rejected.23 The biggest problem is obviously represented by their insufficient knowledge of the

Italian language; however, poor intercultural context is also an obstacle to the integration of young people in schools.

Curricula do not offer courses on the native language or the culture of students’ countries of origin. Moreover, according to various members of the Muslim community, the representation of Islam in the textbooks is not accurate, if not distorted. The evidence suggests that the Italian educational system increases the de facto discrimination based on religion in Italian society and especially at school.

After the Brussels attacks, in the Northern Italy and especially in Western Friuli and Lombardia, kids at school have been mocked, marginalised and often insulted. For example, in Milan, a teacher discovered that a WhatsApp group was created by some students. The messages of the group were full of insults to a Muslim girl who arrived in this class at the beginning of 2016. In addition, some students were organising hurtful practical jokes targeting the girl.24

Last year, some Muslim associations reported other instances of discrimination in schools as parents prohibited their children from interacting with Muslim classmates in Venice, Messina, and Civitavecchia. In September, in Cagliari, some parents revolted against two young migrant orphans asking the teachers to drive them out of school and to oblige them to use separate toilets. The parents were afraid that their children would get infected.25

Politics
In this climate of hate and populism, Italy has been in the crossfire of Islamophobic sentiments as the Italian government passes new laws to protect Italian citizens against migrants, to ban mosques from being built and to close active ones. Several cases of Islamophobia in politics were registered in 2016. These are mainly linked to the climate of intolerance that has increased in the aftermath of the attacks in France, Belgium and Germany.

Hate speech in politics has been observed mostly in the words of right-wing exponents (Figure 2).

For example, last September the leader of *Lega Nord* Matteo Salvini attacked the Pope who, together with the Italian state, invited the Muslim community in Italy to a prayer after the brutal murder of Father Jacques Hamel, beheaded by Islamic terrorists in Normandy. Salvini declared that “Islam is not compatible with our freedoms and our rights. Those who do not understand this are ignorant or complicit.”

The deputy of *Forza Italia*, Daniela Santanchè, after the attack in Berlin said “Today some imams pretend to respect our religion, but tomorrow they will share the sermons and exhortations for the destruction of Western countries.” Furthermore, last January, after the attack in Colonia, Santanchè relaunched the proposal to ban the burqa in Italy in order to do justice to young Muslim women.

The leader of the national right-wing party *Fratelli d’Italia*, Giorgia Meloni, last July, presented to the Chamber of Deputies a bill “for the introduction of the crime of Islamic fundamentalism”. “It is a crime of opinion, it is not a rule intended to undermine religious freedom, but a standard that is exclusively used for guaranteeing the safety of those who live in Italy,” she said. Moreover, after the terrorist attack in Berlin, Giorgia Meloni strongly attacked Europe and “the parasites that govern it”, and called for the immediate suspension of Muslim immigrants’ reception. On a message posted on Facebook she asked to stop the Islamization of Europe. “The uncontrolled reception policy brings insecurity, crime, degradation and helps Islamic terrorists,” she declared.

Regarding mainstream parties and left-wing politicians there were no obvious and significant examples of Islamophobia in 2016.

Another episode of Islamophobia in politics is that of the Mayor of Brugnera (Pordenone) Ivo Moras who last December sent home a Senegalese immigrant who lacked only the oath, the last step to become an Italian citizen. On the same day, Moras sent a complaint to the prefect and the prosecutor of Pordenone “against those who promoted and endorsed such citizenship”; he sent the same
complaint to the Ministry of Interior. According to Moras an illiterate person cannot become Italian.\textsuperscript{32}

Nonetheless, there is a specific judgment worth mentioning. Since the beginning of July 2015, an order of the mayor of Alassio, Enzo Canepa, prohibits entry into the town to people from Africa, Asia and South America “devoid of a medical certificate stating the absence of infectious diseases”. For this and other reasons, last December, the magistrate of the Tribunal of Savona, issued a decree of condemnation to the mayor of Alassio and a 3,750 euros fine for racial discrimination. The mayor intends to appeal the court decision, claiming that his order is not fundamentally racist\textsuperscript{33} In terms of criminal legislation in this field the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe have already validated, on the political level, Islamophobia as a crime, supporting the strategy of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation. Last May, in Italy, the president of the Chamber of Deputies, Laura Boldrini, took another step forward aimed at codifying the crime of Islamophobia, which will result in criminal and civil penalties for anyone who criticises and condemns Islam as a religion. Boldrini will create a commission to study intolerance, xenophobia, racism and hate phenomena, in the various forms they can take such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, sexism, and homophobia.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Media}

Xenophobic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and racist speech are growing and, due to the serious humanitarian crisis affecting European and Balkan countries and to the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Nice, Berlin etc, they have become particularly significant in the course of 2016. “If these are not bastards!” and “Kick Islam out of our houses!”\textsuperscript{35} - these are two headlines on the newsstands after the Brussels attacks, emblems of the dangerous generalisations based on inaccurate and unverified information (Figure 3).

Throughout 2016, in Italy, some newspapers, such as \textit{Il Giornale} and \textit{Libero} (right-wing newspapers) have been critical of Muslims. In particular, \textit{Il Giornale} has been one of the most damning, often associating terrorism with the practice

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of Islam and/or migration. The topics that have been mostly discussed are the integration (and non-integration) of Muslims in Western countries, the prohibition on the beaches of burkinis imposed by some French municipalities and the murder of a young Nigerian in Fermo by an Italian hooligan with the aggravating circumstance of racism.  

Newspapers Corriere della Sera (centre-left), Avvenire (Catholic Church), Unità (left-wing), La Repubblica (centre-left), and La Stampa (centre-left) – with the exception of Il Giornale - tell stories of Muslims. Social inclusion is the common denominator of their titles/articles. These newspapers serve as models and promote ideals to be achieved in the management of a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon. Il Giornale, however, chooses to refuse such an approach by loading a dimension of alarmist meanings and, in particular, by establishing a connection between immigration and the risk of Western countries being “colonised” by Muslim ones with titles such as “What an illusion to think of integrating Islam!” and “We are fighting a battle against barbarism.” 

Regarding the issue of banning burkinis in some beaches of France, in Italy also there was a reflection on the tolerance of religious customs and practices pertaining to Islam. With the exception of some headlines in Il Giornale that presented a culture clash between civilisations, the Muslim on the one hand, violent and ready to prevaricate, and the Christian on the other, tolerant and peaceful, the titles of the five other newspapers broadened the debate about the burkinis and extend it to the use of the burka. Those newspapers wrote about the choices in Europe to ban the full burka in public spaces, as it was considered incompatible with the affirmation of women’s rights in the Western world: “Islam hates all freedom!”, “Violence and Islam. Under the burkinis is women’s blood”.  

The third issue relates to the murder of the young Nigerian Emmanuel Chidi Nnamdi by an Italian hooligan. After the first few days of coverage of the event with updates of the investigations, all daily newspapers expanded the content of the story, stigmatised

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
what happened and took the opportunity to reflect on the presence of racist instances in Italian society. The lead headline of Il Giornale did not address this issue and, in the only title on the first page, it wrote about anti-racists, without giving legitimacy to the murder: “The lies of Fermo and the racism of the anti-racists against the truth.”

Titles relating to anxiety caused by the so-called DAESH followers in Italy and in Europe increased by 2% compared to the previous year (9% compared with 7% in 2015). All titles/articles related to this category established a connection between immigration and terrorism. There are two categories of stories where the above link could be said to have legitimate grounds: the stories of immigrant arrests where an affiliation with Jihadi extremism was discovered, and the risks associated with the flow of asylum seekers who may include potential terrorists. Il Giornale, in addition to these aspects, gave space to the accusations against the judiciary for releasing dangerous DAESH supporters: “They were a Jihadi cell. But the judges will release two of them”; “Distracted Judges, 15 Jihadists on the run.”

In addition, following the attacks in Cologne, there was a reaction consisting of xenophobic movements and racist interpretations of the events, even outside the German border, as well as very superficial and stigmatising discussions on the identity of migrants, and in particular of “Arabs”. Expressions such as “animals”, “humiliation ritual”, “herd of Cologne”, “sexual jihad”, “atavistic Arab tribalism” appeared in the centre-right Italian newspapers.

Also following the truck attack on a busy Christmas market in Berlin, Italian media contributed to the raise of Islamophobia. For instance, some newspapers headlines included “German press uses self-censorship in order to respect the privacy of the terrorists” (Libero); “The exterminator of Berlin is a Muslim not a trucker” (Libero); “The ‘butcher’ of Berlin between hymns to Jihadism and threats to Christians” (Il Giornale); “Anis, the Berlin butcher landed in Italy and ended up in jail” (Il Giornale).

The approach of the aforementioned newspapers has been severely criticised by the Carta di Roma Association, which in January 2016 published the Consolidation Act of journalists’ duties inviting Italian journalists to take extreme care in handling information concerning asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants in Italy and elsewhere.

40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
Justice System

In 2016, one of the most controversial legislative issues was the adoption by Lombardia Region of a regional law (L.R. 2/2015 passed on 3 February, 2015) regulating the construction of new places of worship. The law clearly breaks the principle of religious freedom enshrined in the Italian Constitution. The state has rejected the law, once dubbed “Anti-Mosque law”, which imposes more stringent rules for creating new places of worship in Lombardia.45

Last June, the ‘Anti-Mosque’ regional law of Veneto was challenged by the government. The text (L.R. 12/2016) would violate several principles enshrined in the Italian Constitution. In particular, under this law new places of worship are relegated to the periphery and may be subject to a referendum among the residents; those who build them must pay a fee and stipulate an agreement with the City Council. Moreover during activities not strictly related to religion, the law stipulates that it is mandatory to use the Italian language.46

In addition, in December 2015, the regional governments of Lombardia and Veneto passed a law, which entered into force on 1 January, 2016, prohibiting the use of head coverings that could conceal the wearer’s identity in public buildings, including government offices and hospitals.47

Furthermore, last September, Lega Nord presented to the Chamber of Deputies another bill. The idea behind it is that organisations and associations that want to build new mosques will have to prove the origin of their funds and to present their financial statements, to ensure that the funds do not come from organisations with unclear ideologies. Also they can receive money only from organisations based in Italy.48 (Figure 4)

Internet

Social networks and the Internet offer everyone the opportunity to express their thoughts via comments and shared posts. Yet, it cannot be denied that they are currently the main propagators of racist and xenophobic hate messages and provide a powerful and quick megaphone for the hate speech phenomenon. In 2014, UNAR (National Office Against Racial Discrimination) recorded 347 cases of racist expressions on social networks, of which 185 on Facebook and the others on Twitter and Youtube.50

Hate speech also involves Muslim people. In the last three years, Italy has distinguished itself for the largest number of discriminatory statements (towards migrants, asylum seekers and Muslims), mainly on the Facebook pages of political candidates or in TV interviews.

For instance, some Facebook pages, such as “No all’ Islam in Italia” (No Islam in Italy), “Di sinistra e antirazzista, ma contro l’invasione straniera” (Left wing and anti-racist but against the foreign invasion) continue to spread false news and use inflammatory language when reporting about Muslim people.

Intolerance towards Muslims is widespread between the north and the centre of Italy, and less so in the south. After tweets about women, Muslims represent the group with the largest number of detected tweets. Between 2015 and 2016, there are in fact 1,014,693 tweets about Muslims with 22,435 negative tweets and 7,465 discriminatory messages.51 Negative messages skyrocketed after the Paris attacks on 13 November, 2016, an episode that increased the proportion of people who identify terrorism and extremism as a challenge. Lazio and Lombardia are on the top of the most Islamophobic regions.

To highlight gaps and responsibilities about this situation, but also the best practices, last March the first Italian research on hate speech, journalism and migrations was presented. The research was titled “Hatred is not an opinion”. The work was carried out by Cospe within the European project against racism and discrimination on the Internet entitled “Bricks - Building Respect on the Internet by Combating Hate Speech”. The research was carried out through the qualitative analysis of case studies, monitoring of articles and interviews with journalists of the main Italian newspapers and industry experts.52

At the legislative level, in July 2015, at the initiative of the President of the Chamber of Deputies Laura Boldrini, the Italian Declaration on Internet Rights was creat-

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ed, whose purpose is to indicate high-level principles and values regarding the rights and duties in the access and use of the Internet. In this regard, Article 13 states that if, on the one hand “restriction of freedom of expression” is not permitted, on the other hand “the protection of the dignity of people from abuses related to behaviours such as incitement to hatred, discrimination and violence must be guaranteed.”

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

During the period under review Italian politicians, institutions and journalists have criminalised Muslims with speeches, slogans, discriminatory and xenophobic statements.

In particular, last May, Matteo Salvini inserted the section “Sex and Trash” in his new website “The populist”. This section is full of articles on matters that have been revived by the Lega Nord: the anti-Islam and anti-migrant battle. “The Populist” devotes ample space to news that cast the Left, migrants and social centres in a bad light: irreverent cartoons of the Pope, foreigners occupying houses and beating up their employers, even foreigners who massacre an Italian after urinating in the street. (Figure 5)

Mayor of Cascina Susanna Ceccardi, the first elected mayor of the Lega Nord in Tuscany, after the attack of Rouen, published a cartoon on Facebook, where a young blonde woman holding a shield with the words “Europe” kicks a Muslim depicted with a pig’s head, a beard and the Quran. A vignette bears the title “Wake up Europe!” Her choice to publish the cartoon was severely criticised. In response to her critics, she said “As I am the mayor I think I have to fight with even more force to oppose Islamic terrorism.”

Moreover, at the end of May, the town of Cantù issued a decision by which it gave permission to Muslims to use a former tribunal as a prayer site during the period of Ramadan. Immediately Riccardo Volonterio, secretary of Cantù’s Lega Nord,

was against the decision, and expressed the fear that the place could become a real mosque. With a petition Cantù residents lined up against the use of the former tribunal as a place of worship for the Islamic community.\footnote{Canturino, “Lega Nord: Cantù non vuole la moschea. In un giorno oltre 250 firme,” canturino.com, (August 5, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.canturino.com/politica/lega-nord-cantu-non-vuole-la-moschea-un-giorno-oltre-250-firme.}

Furthermore, Francesco Minutillo, the provincial coordinator of Fratelli d’Italia in Forlì, in the wake of the attack in Nice, posted on Facebook: “While Islamic dogs kill and exterminate us … we think about making laws for gays weddings”; “Only a new manifesto of Verona against Muslims and blacks can save us. New racial laws in protection of Christianity!” and finally the “Fault of the Constitution written by partisan pigs”. Following his statements, Minutillo was suspended from his party.\footnote{La Repubblica, “Nuove leggi razziali contro Islamici e negri. Fdi sospende Minutillo, segretario Forlì,” La Repubblica, (July 17, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/07/17/news/_nuove_leggi_razziali_contro_islamici_e_negri_romagna_bufera_su_fdi-144309810/.

Physical and Verbal Assaults
In Italy, in the last two years, hate crimes have encountered increasing attention from civil society, national and international institutions, and also from the world of information and mass media.

Some relevant cases of hate crimes reported in 2016 are the following:

- On 10 May, 2016, in Basilicagoiano, a small community a few kilometres from Parma, Mohamed Habassi, a 34-year-old Tunisian citizen, was brutally murdered. The aggressors, Alessio Alberici and Luca Del Vasto, are Parma citizens.\footnote{Ibid.}
- On 13 June, 2016, in Conegliano, a municipality in Veneto, the 30-year-old Cameroon citizen Donald Fombu Mboy, who had been living in Italy for ten years, died. Before dying, he had been stopped by the police for a check and had been beaten. Police headquarters said the cause of death was a heart attack.\footnote{Ibid.}
- On 5 July, 2016, in Fermo, a little city in central Italy, Emmanuel Chidi Namdi, a young Nigerian asylum seeker, was attacked by a man while walking in the town centre with his partner.\footnote{Ibid.}
- During the night of 22 July, 2016, in a casino on Torrenova Street, in the eastern
suburbs of Rome, a 42-year-old Senegalese citizen was violently assaulted by 5 Roman youngsters.

- In Imperia, also in July, a 19-year-old from Senegal was insulted and attacked by six Italian youngsters.

- Lunaria through its daily monitoring between 1 January, 2007 and 30 June, 2016 registered 5,369 cases of discrimination, hate speech, propaganda, injuries, property damage, physical violence and racist murders. The discriminatory motives were physical characteristics, nationality, national or “ethnic origin”, religious practices, ideas and cultural practices.\(^{63}\)

- For the year 2016, the data on reported cases has not been worked out in detail. To date, for the period January to 5 July, 2016 the documented cases of racism were 212, among which are three cases of murder whose reconstruction is very complex and controversial, and a case of attempted murder of which the evident racist motive hasn’t been verified by the authorities responsible for the investigation.\(^{64}\)

Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Throughout 2016, initiatives were undertaken by the government, justice, institutions and the Muslim community itself. However much more needs to be done in order to counter Islamophobia in several fields.

For instance, last July, the leaders of the largest Italian Muslim communities along with representatives of the government, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfano, discussed and shared suggestions about a report prepared by 12 scholars to propose good practices and measures about Islam in Italy. Sermons in Italian and the status of imams were two of the main points of agreement. The imams who agree to undertake training, which will not focus on religious doctrine but will offer a civic point of view and emphasize Italian rules, will be recognised by the state and will have access to protected locations such as hospitals, cemeteries, migrants reception centres and, of course, prisons. Moreover, representatives of Muslim women’s organisations have suggested that the training of the imams should include information on the protection of women.\(^{65}\)

From a judicial point of view, Stefano Dambruoso, a magistrate in the front row of the fight against terrorism and Deputy of Civic Choice in 2013, together with Andrea Manciulli (Pd), last January presented to the Chamber of Deputies a bill aimed at creating an “Information System on Jihadist Radicalism”. This is a system where

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\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.

all information on subjects and situations related to Jihadist radicalism will merge in order to be monitored alongside terrorist phenomena. The proposed law includes a number of measures to prevent episodes of radicalisation. Among these, since the Jihadist propaganda and the terror recruitment mainly occurs on the Internet, Dambruoso and Manciulli included the construction of an information portal on the issues of radicalisation and Jihadist extremism.66

Furthermore, in the field of media and cyberspace, due to the increasing complaints relating to cases of hate speech, especially online, the UNAR’s Media and Social Network Observatory on hate speech has been recently set up. This observatory, to be financed with ordinary funds from UNAR, officially started its activities last January with a two-fold aim: the first is to find online hate speech and report it for removal; the second is to analyse, learn and understand. The observatory is supplied with software that works on the basis of a set of search keywords, selected by UNAR and based on data from scientific literature and from the practical experience of UNAR’s work against discriminations.

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in March 2016, Arci and Cittalia associations, presented to the Chamber of Deputies the communication campaign of the PRISM project - Preventing, Redressing and Inhibiting Hate Speech in New Media. The project involves partners from five countries (Italy, France, Romania, Spain, and England) and is funded by the European Commission.67

Figure 6: Osservatorio sulle discriminazioni’s manifesto after Brussels attacks68


Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report studies the major incidents and events that occurred in Italy during 2016 that have as their subject acts of discrimination and racist violence against Muslims. During the research, it became obvious that overall in Italy there is a manifest lack of data on Islamophobic incidents which is mostly determined by the unwillingness on a part of the Muslim community to report these incidents. However, especially after the attacks in France, Belgium and Germany mainstream Italian media started talking up “Islamic terrorism”, transforming Islam and Muslims into something dangerous, even monstrous. In this context, hate speech used in the sphere of political debate, the bitter controversy concerning the construction of suitable places of worship, the link between the so-called migration crisis and the presence of Muslims as well as the discrimination suffered by Muslim women have been analysed. Hate speech in politics has been observed mostly in the words of right-wing exponents such as Matteo Salvini of Lega Nord and Giorgia Meloni of Fratelli d’Italia. In addition, in 2016, Muslims reported continued difficulties in acquiring permission from local governments to construct mosques. Throughout the year, Islamophobia has manifested itself above all through shameful minor gestures perpetrated by ordinary citizens, such as constant insults towards the members of the Muslim community. In particular, Muslim women are targeted by threats and hate speech, violence, assault, employment discriminations and online hate mostly because they wear the hijab. Also, following terrorist attacks abroad, children have been discriminated in several schools of the country because of their Muslim faith. Moreover, an analysis of the main limitations of the legislative framework, such as the absence of a general law on religious freedom and the lack of a specific agreement between the Muslim community and the Italian state put Muslims’ rights in jeopardy and perpetuates discrimination and Islamophobia. To conclude several cases of “hate speech” were recorded in the media and in cyberspace. Not only journalists and blog authors but also websites’ moderators and ordinary people have used media and Internet websites as a tool to sow fear and hatred towards Muslims.

On the basis of this report, the following set of key measures should be considered when discussing ways to counter the Islamophobia phenomenon in Italy.

Legislative Framework

- Italy should complete the legislative process for the ratification of Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights as soon as possible.
- Italian authorities should ensure the full independence de jure and de facto of UNAR.
- Italian authorities should adopt the laws necessary to provide specialised support to victims of hate crimes.
- Italian authorities should introduce regulations in the Penal Code to criminalise
the insult and the defamation in public against a person or group of persons on grounds based on race, color, language, religion, nationality or ethnic origin.

• Italian authorities should set up a method of data collection on incidents related to hate speech.

**Employment and Education**

• Information and awareness-raising activities with youth and in schools should be promoted.
• Italy should intensify their efforts to improve the employment opportunities, particularly for young Muslims.
• Italy should review textbooks to ensure that the history of Muslim groups is presented in a correct manner. Moreover, discussion of racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia should be part of official school curricula.
• Teachers should be trained as cultural mediators.
• Schools should create stable and productive relationships with the Muslim associations in the territory and plan regular meetings with them.

**Politics**

• All political parties in Italy should ratify and implement the “Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society”.
• The existing criminal legislation in this field should be enforced and the penalties have to be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.
• Institutional decision makers should pay greater attention and get proactively involved in the fight against racism, foreseeing the aggravating factors when they make use of hate speech.
• Decision makers should allocate adequate public funding to carry out a multi-year strategy preventing, contrasting and safeguarding against racist and hate speech crimes.

**Media and Internet**

• Media should examine the news reporting to ensure the correctness and completeness of the services that address issues relating to Muslims.
• Training sessions with media workers and their organisations to promote unbiased reporting should be launched.
• The self-regulatory measures taken by the Internet industry to combat racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia online, such as anti-racist hotlines, codes of conduct and filtering software should be supported, and further research in this area should be encouraged.
• Existing anti-racist initiatives on the Internet as well as the development of new sites devoted to the fight against racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and intolerance should be supported.
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN ITALY

CHRONOLOGY

• 2 January, 2016: Salerno - The phrase “We are not a land of Islam” appears on the external wall of a primary school.

• 13 January, 2016: Miane (Treviso) - A flyer showing discriminatory epithets of a religious nature addressed to Muslims, signed with a swastika was posted on the walls of an auditorium.

• 18 January, 2016: Mirandola (Modena) - Vandals set fire to a butcher shop run by a Muslim and leave an inscription on the floor with the words “Go away!”.

• 27 January, 2016: Milan - A woman is insulted and denigrated. People shout at her “Bedouin, go home!” because she is wearing a niqab.

• 28 March, 2016: Pordenone - In several of the town’s schools children are discriminated against because of their Muslim faith.

• 9 May, 2016: Matteo Salvini, the leader of Lega Nord political party, inserts “Sex and Trash”, an anti-Islam and anti-migrant section in his new website “The populist”.

• 17 May, 2016: Albenga (Savona) - A banner bearing discriminatory epithets of a religious nature addressed to Muslims signed by Forza Nuova was found at the entrance of the local mosque.

• 27 June, 2016: Sassari - Unknown persons launched a 12-calibre cartridge charge inside a building located in Via Matteotti 3, a place of worship for citizens of Moroccan nationality.

• 3 July, 2016: The newspaper Il Giornale publishes a front-page headline reading “Islamic Beasts”.

• 14 July, 2016: Rome - The leader of the national right-wing party Fratelli d’Italia, Giorgia Meloni, presents the draft law “for the introduction of the crime of Islamic fundamentalism”.

• 15 July, 2016: Riolo Terme (Ravenna) - A Tunisian woman is attacked both verbally and physically by an Italian worker.

• 17 August, 2016: Pisa - Campaigners fight against the plan to build a mosque a few hundred yards from the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

• 20 August, 2016: Venice - A teacher of a local school posts a message on Facebook insulting people of the Islamic faith.

• 27 October, 2016: Goro (Ferrara) - A sign inviting Muslims to leave Italy and go to the Middle Eastern lands “controlled by ISIS” appears in a church.
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.