ABOUT EDITORS

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

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

For more information about the EIR:
www.islamophobiaeurope.com
islamophobia@setav.org
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

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

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

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

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

The findings of this report go hand in hand with similar surveys on this topic. The Ipsos Perils of Perception Survey 2016 found that the current and the future Muslim population in Europe are enormously overestimated in most countries. Out of the list of all 20 countries where respondents overestimated the Muslim population by more than 10%, 12 are European, while the USA and Canada are among the remaining 8 countries. When asked “Now thinking about 2020, out of every 100 people, about how many do you think will be Muslim?”, the top 20 countries where proponents overestimated the Muslim population again were in majority European (11). The average guess in France is that 40% of

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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.

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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-

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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.

The Author

Renat Bekkin holds a PhD in Economics. He received his doctoral degree in Economics from the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. His thesis analyses the Islamic economic model and financial institutions and their place in the world economy. Bekkin is the author of twelve monographs and more than sixty articles published in Russian and foreign peer-reviewed journals (including the monographs Insurance in Islamic Law: Theory and Practice (three editions: 2001, 2012, 2015); Islamic Economic Model Nowadays (three editions: 2008, 2009, 2010); Muslim Petersburg (2016). He was the founder and chief of the Islamic Studies Department at Kazan Federal University (2010-2015). In 2015, he founded and became editor-in-chief of the academic journal, the Kazan Islamic Review. In 2015, Bekkin was awarded the title “Professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences” by the Russian Academy of Sciences. Now Professor Bekkin is a PhD candidate at Södertörn University (Sweden). His thesis investigates the Christian-Muslim relationships in Russia with a particular focus on the interaction between Christian and Muslim religious organisations. Email: bekkin@mail.ru

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Executive Summary

In contrast to many European countries, Muslims are indigenous to Russia. However, as a result of growing nationalist and isolationist sentiments and the narrow-minded consciousness of Russian society coupled with ill-conceived state confessional politics, Russian Muslims tend to be associated with “aliens” and even enemies by the average Russian.

According to the Constitution, Russia is a secular state. However, de facto Orthodoxy has historically enjoyed more privileges. The issue is so critical for the Russian Orthodox Church that when Muslim figures and organisations stand up for the principle of the secular nature of the state and equidistance of all religious denominations from the authorities and public institutions, it often leads to Islamophobic statements on the part of individuals and institutions that sympathize with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Islamophobic incidents in Russia, unlike in the rest of Europe, are not comprehensively monitored by NGOs, Islamic religious organisations or Muslim mass media. Human rights organisations here tend to have little interest in the violation of Muslims’ rights. Muslim mass media prefer to write about Islamophobia in the West, leaving the problem in Russia almost unreported. The two exceptions are the online resources “Golos Islama” (“Voice of Islam”), which is based outside of Russia, and Ansar.ru. In the public space we hardly hear the voice of Islamic leaders on cases of discrimination and oppression of Muslims, although the problem exists. In such circumstances, local Muslim communities in Russian regions are often forced to confront the challenges that constantly emerge before them on their own without seeking support from the leaders of the two all-Russian Muftiates and human rights defenders.

The general attitude of the Russian authorities to Islam and Muslims can be described as cautious. In the eyes of the officials Muslims fall into two categories: extremists and non-extremists. To indicate the latter the term “traditional Islam” is often used; its main feature is loyalty to the governing regime. The significant number of cases of Muslims falling victims of the repressive measures of the law enforcement authorities come under the banner of the fight against extremism: religious organisations are categorized as extremist, Islamic literature is included in the list of extremist materials. Among the positive trends of recent years, we should note the state’s continuing fight against xenophobia and racism in the public space.
Краткая Аннотация Для Руководства

Отличительной особенностью России является то, что мусульмане здесь, в отличие от многих стран Европы, являются коренным населением. Тем не менее, в результате роста националистических и изоляционистских настроений в российском обществе в сочетании с непродуманной государственной конфессиональной политикой, российские мусульмане, как правило, ассоциируются в обывательском сознании с «чужими» и даже врагами.

Согласно Конституции, Россия является светским государством. Однако де-факто православие в стране обладает большими правами и пользуется большими привилегиями, чем другие религии. Одним из поводов для исламофобии со стороны отдельных лиц и институтов, симпатизирующих РПЦ, являются попытки мусульманских деятелей и организаций отстаивать принцип светского характера государства и равноудаленности всех конфессий от власти и государственных институтов.

Случаи исламофобии в мире отслеживаются различными правозащитными организациями и исламскими религиозными структурами и мусульманскими СМИ. В России наблюдается иная картина. Правозащитные организации, как правило, мало интересуются темой нарушения прав мусульман. Что касается мусульманских СМИ, то они предпочитают писать об исламофобии на Западе, мало затрагивая данную проблему в самой России. Исключение составляет электронные ресурсы «Голос Ислама», находящийся за рубежом, и Ansar.ru. Исламские лидеры редко публично комментируют случаи дискриминации и угнетения мусульман, хотя такие случаи существуют. В таких условиях местные мусульманские общины в регионах России часто вынуждены противостоять вызовам, которые постоянно возникают перед ними сами по себе, не рассчитывая на поддержку со стороны лидеров двух всероссийских муфтиятов и правозащитников.

Отношение российских властей к ислamu и мусульманам в целом можно охарактеризовать как настороженное. В глазах чиновников мусульмане делятся на экстремистов и неэкстремистов. Для обозначения последних часто используется термин «традиционный ислам», одним из главнейших признаков которого считается лояльность по отношению к правящему режиму. Значительное число случаев, когда мусульмане становятся жертвами репрессий со стороны правоохранительных органов, как раз происходят под лозунгами борьбы с экстремизмом. При этом, как отмечают правозащитные организации, имеется немало примеров неправомерного применения анти-экстремистского законодательства, как в отношении отдельных лиц, так и в отношении религиозных организаций. Среди позитивных тенденций последних лет, следует отметить сохраняющуюся борьбу государства против ксенофобии и расизма в публичном пространстве.
Introduction

A distinctive feature of Russia is that Muslims here, in contrast to many European countries, are considered as autochthonous people. The first Muslims appeared in the territory of contemporary Russia (in southern Dagestan) when Prophet Muhammad was still alive.¹ In 922, Islam was declared the state religion of Volga Bulgaria, a state located in the territory of contemporary Tatarstan, Chuvashia, the Samara region and some other Russian regions. In 1313, Khan Uzbek declared Islam the state religion of the Golden Horde. At that time most of the territory of modern contemporary Russia was part of the Golden Horde. Thus, Islam became the de facto official religion of the state which was a legal predecessor of Muscovite Russia that united the former territories of the Golden Horde in Eurasia.

In modern Russia, Islam is the second largest religion after Orthodoxy. Reliable data on the exact number of Muslims living in Russia, however, is absent and the subject of speculation by religious and political leaders.

The largest ethnic Muslim group in Russia is Tatars. They make up 5.31 million people. A substantial part of Tatars (approx. 60%) live outside of the Republic of Tatarstan. For example, in the two largest Russian cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, the Tatar population amounts to 166,000 people and 35,600 people respectively. Among other major ethnic groups which traditionally follow Islam are Bashkirs (1.58 million people) and Chechens (1.43 million people).² Separate mention should be made of migrants from Muslim republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan, both legal and illegal. According to various estimations their number in Russia is between 4.5³ and 7 million people.⁴

According to the Constitution, Russia is a secular state (Article 14). However, de facto Orthodoxy has historically enjoyed more rights and privileges in comparison with other religions. Individuals and institutions display Islamophobic attitudes when Muslim figures and organisations stand up for the principle of the secular nature of the state and the equidistance of all religious denominations from the authorities and public institutions. For instance, the chairman of one of the major Muslim religious organisations, Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation (DUM RF), Ravil Gainutdin, who is known to uphold equal rights for Muslims, representatives of other faiths and atheists, has been declared a Wahhabi

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(which in the Russian context equates to an extremist) and a protector of Islamic radicalism by nationalist publicists.5

Islamophobic incidents worldwide are monitored by various human rights organisations, Islamic religious organisations and Muslim mass media. One can observe a different picture in Russia. Human rights organisations here tend to have little interest in the violation of the rights of Muslims. The exception is the situation of Crimean Tatars.6

As for the Muslim mass media, they prefer to write about Islamophobia in the West, leaving the problem in Russia almost unreported.7 An exception is the online resource “Golos Islama” (“Voice of Islam”), which is run from outside of Russia by the Muslim political exile of Russian origin Dmitry Chernomorchenko.8 This resource highlights acute problems of the Muslim community in Russia, including the problem of Islamophobia. Another Muslim mass media outlet that covers the problem of Islamophobia in Russia on a nationwide scale is the online resource Ansar.ru.

A significant role in the protection of the rights of Muslims can be played by religious leaders. However, in Russia, as the human rights protection center Sova rightly pointed out in one of its reports: “In the public space we hardly hear the voice of Islamic leaders on cases of discrimination and harassment of Muslims in Russia, although the problem exists.”9 If Muslim religious figures sometimes approach this topic, they tend to do this in a very careful way accompanying their words with a lot of reservations and complimentary words to the authorities.

This position is the result of a consciously chosen strategy. At present there is no single Islamic authority in Russia. Instead, there are two major Muslim religious associations (spiritual administrations) which claim to represent all Muslims of Russia: the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims (TsDUM) with headquarters in Ufa and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation (DUM

6. Sova (“Owl”) is perhaps the only all-Russian human rights organisation which focuses on the monitoring of Islamophobia. However, there is no special section dedicated to Islamophobia on the centre’s website. Crimes against Islam tend to fall into the section on xenophobic acts of vandalism. Actions against Muslims are classified as both xenophobic and racist. On 30 December, 2016, the Ministry of Justice included Sova on the list of NGOs which are considered as foreign agents leading to excessive administrative and reporting obligations for the centre and more thorough control of its activities.
7. For example websites (http://islamreview.ru/ and http://islam-today.ru/) have sections on Islamophobia, but almost all of the materials mentioned are instances of Islamophobia in the West.
8. In 2012, Dmitry Chernomorchenko was forced to leave Russia for fear of persecution by the Russian secret service.
RF)\textsuperscript{10} with headquarters in Moscow. Each of the two all-Russian Muftiates has its own strategy as far as relations with the authorities are concerned. TsDUM headed by Talgat Tadzhuddin has traditionally been loyal not only to the state administrations, but also to the Russian Orthodox Church. By recognizing Russia as an Orthodox state, the head of TsDUM balances his words and actions with the interests of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Another strategy was chosen by a competing Muftiate, the DUM RF. One of the cornerstones of the ideology of the DUM RF is criticism of TsDUM’s loyal position in relation to the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time, the DUM RF demonstrates complete loyalty to the secular authorities of Russia. Therefore, the Muftiate opposes manifestations of Islamophobia mainly in cases which have to do with the actions of the Russian Orthodox Church that violate, in the opinion of the head of the DUM RF Ravil Gaynutdin and his colleagues, the secular character of the state. Thus, it has less to do with protecting the interests of ordinary Muslims and more to do with the corporate interests of the DUM RF since the Russian Orthodox Church is its competitor in the struggle for influence over the secular power. The above may be the reason behind the silence of Islamic religious leaders in connection with the violation of the rights of Muslims in Crimea.\textsuperscript{11}

In my opinion, understanding how Muslim affairs are administered in modern Russia is necessary to adequately assess the problem of Islamophobia and the spiritual associations’ potential to protect the rights of Muslims.

As can be seen from the above, not only individuals, but also public authorities can be victims of Islamophobia. The general attitude of the Russian authorities towards Islam and Muslims can be described as cautious. In the eyes of the officials, Muslims fall into two categories: extremists and non-extremists. To indicate the latter the term “traditional Islam” is often used and its main feature is loyalty to the governing regime.\textsuperscript{12} Those who do not fall into the category of followers of “traditional Islam” are labeled by some conservative commentators as Wahhabi and extremists.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Later in this report I will also use another name for this organisation, namely the Council of Muftis of Russia.


\textsuperscript{12} Thus, according to one of the most prominent Russian Islamophobes Roman Silantyev, “in Russia traditional Islam is that Islam which teaches Muslims to be law-abiding citizens of Russia and at the same time, respect the Christian majority” (Andrey Mel’nikov, Anton Kurilovych, “Forced peaceful inter-confessional coexistence (Prinuzhdienie k mezhdouobshchestvenomu miru),” NG-Religii, (February 2, 2011), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.ng.ru/ng_religii/2011-02-02/1_islam.html.

\textsuperscript{13} Propaganda of this idea is a central thread of almost all publications of R. Silantyev mentioned above, including the recently published monograph: Roman A. Silantyev, Soviet muftis: istorija doby filza (Council of muftis: history of our fitna), (Moscow: RISI, 2015).
A significant number of cases when Muslims fall victims of repressive measures by the state come under the banner of the fight against extremism. At the same time, as noted by human rights organisations, there are significant instances of misuse of anti-extremism legislation, both with regard to individuals and religious organisations.\(^{14}\)

This report only considers cases where Muslims became victims of persecution because of their religious beliefs, including those cases when such views may have violated the current legislation of Russia.

The geographical scope of this report covers the territory of Russia, as well as the Crimean Peninsula, which is home to a significant Muslim minority, namely the Crimean Tatars. As of 2014, the territory has been under the jurisdiction of the Russian authorities; in other words, it is the Russian authorities who are responsible for Islamophobic incidents on this territory.

It is important to note that both in Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as in the Russian regions, there have been many cases which can be characterised as acts of Islamophobia. Therefore, for the purposes of this report I paid attention only to the most high-profile cases which have attracted much public attention in the country. It is also important to note that it is difficult to keep records of such cases for the following reasons. Firstly, law enforcement authorities have intensified the repression of crimes which are based on racism and xenophobia, and those who commit them are no longer inclined to declare them publicly for fear of prosecution. Secondly, the mass media now, unlike in the 2000s, pay little attention to such crimes. They follow the recommendations of the authorities to refrain from covering these incidents.\(^{15}\)

Thirdly, the victims themselves do not always go to the police.

### Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

#### Education

In June 2016, a young Muslim woman Sofia and her mother applied for admission to the College of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Both women were wearing hijabs. The chairman of the selection committee looked at Sofia’s mother and advised her and her daughter to find another place to study. When the girl’s mother demanded clarification, the chairman told her the following: “Yes, we’re bi-


\(^{15}\) Natalia Yudina & Vera Alperovich, “Xenophobia i radikal’ny nacionalizm i protivodeistvie im vRossii v pervoi polovine 2016 goda (Xenophobia and radical nationalism and opposition to them in Russia in the first half of 2016),” Sova Center, (July 13, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017 from http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/publications/2016/07/d35018/. There is a rationale to such a strategy, since the perpetrators of crimes motivated by racial or religious hatred often commit these actions while striving for publicity.
ased, but we don’t need Muslims here! You can, of course, submit your documents, but I can guarantee that your daughter won’t be enrolled!”

A week later, on 1 July, one more incident took place on the territory of MGIMO-University. This time Alfia, an enrollee who wears the hijab, was not allowed to enter the university building. The deputy security chief told her: “If you want to study, take off the hijab”. After much coverage in the media, the university administration tried to silence the issue, and the girl was allowed to enter university grounds. Since then, the story has not been covered in the press.

The topic of the resistance of authorities to Muslim women’s traditional headscarf (hijab) has repeatedly appeared in the media in the course of 2016. One of the regions where this problem has received a great response was the Republic of Mordovia. Thus, in September 2016 the administration of the secondary school in the village of Altar stated that schoolgirls could no longer wear hijabs at school. If they didn’t obey the ban, the school administration threatened to register them with the juvenile commission or expel them. In December, the prohibition to wear hijabs was introduced for teachers of the secondary school in Belozerye in the Republic of Mordovia.

A meeting of the antiterrorist commission was held at the school during which the school teachers were accused as being responsible for the radicalization of the pupils. The former headmistress who was a Muslim was removed from office, and the new headmistress, a secular woman, issued an order which amended the school’s internal regulations to prohibit teachers from wearing hijabs at work. Failure to do so will result in a fine.

In the end, as a result of the pressure, some teachers had to resign, and others agreed to uncover and to continue working. A few days later, on 26 December, the women who refused to disregard their moral principles and take off their hijabs were requested to write explanatory letters. When attorney Marat Ashimov came to help the women, this angered members of the antiterrorist commission and, as a precautionary measure, they called the FSB and the police. “As the law and public order were not disturbed by anyone, law enforcement and security service officers remained as outside observers,” said the attorney.


17. Ibid.


Soon the officials left the school, and the next day, on 28 December, the teachers were again asked to write explanatory letters, but this time in the presence of the attorney. In the document the teachers noted that “they could not take off the hijabs, as it is contrary to their moral and ethical principles, as well as the requirements of their religion.” Now, the attorney intends to file a complaint with the labour inspectorate and the prosecutor’s office.

Media

In Russia, there are many federal and regional media that publish Islamophobic materials. The newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda and the radio station Komsomolskaya Pravda, which are owned by the same holding company, are the first that should be mentioned. In these media outlets there often appear materials containing openly Islamophobic statements. Almost every piece produced by journalist Darya Aslamova is devoted to the issues of Islam, where it is presented as an absolute evil opposed to the Christian civilization.21

One of the typical activities of xenophobes and Islamophobes is to search for information about crimes in which the suspect or accused is an immigrant and use this information for injecting anti-immigrant and Islamophobic sentiments into the public space. Two news pieces have caused great public response and a wave of Islamophobia and xenophobia in the year under review: the 2016 New Year’s Eve events in Cologne, where local women were attacked allegedly by immigrants, and the killing of a child by an immigrant nanny in Moscow. The line of conduct of the majority of Russian media, first of all the state-controlled media, in these two instances deserves special attention. The latter paid much attention to what happened in Cologne; however, the case of the nanny-murderer was almost passed over.

The federal media that actively covered the incidents in Cologne have greatly contributed to the rise of Islamophobia in Russian society at the beginning of 2016. The task of Russian semi-official media was to expose, for propaganda purposes, the many threats and challenges faced by Europe today, and to contribute to the idea of the apparent split of Western society. Numerous materials appeared that pointed

out how dangerous it has become to live in Europe because of the influx of refugees and the avalanche of Islamization.\textsuperscript{22} Some journalists represented the incidents in Cologne as the integral part of the Arab-Muslim culture.\textsuperscript{23}

At the same time, the Russian media did not hesitate to engage in fabricating false news. So, on 16 January, in the story shown on the Russian “First Channel”, it was told that three people (allegedly immigrants from the Middle East) had raped 13-year-old girl Lisa from a Russian-speaking family in Berlin.\textsuperscript{24} The news was repeated by many Russian media. Later, it turned out that this story was made up by Russian journalists.\textsuperscript{25} As expected, these stories predictably caused a wave of xenophobia and Islamophobia in Russia.

The federal Russian media reacted in a different way to a crime that took place in Moscow. On 29 February, Gyulchehra Bobokulova, a citizen of Uzbekistan, was arrested in Moscow near the October Field metro station. She held the severed head of a child in her hands. The woman was dressed in black and shouting “Allah Akbar”.\textsuperscript{26} Forty minutes passed before the police, who were nearby, arrested her.\textsuperscript{27}

The investigation revealed that the woman had worked as the nanny of the murdered girl. When the victim’s parents were gone, Bobokulova killed the child, severed the head and set the apartment on fire.

During a psychiatric examination it was established that the accused woman suffered from a mental disorder.\textsuperscript{28} The woman said she had committed the crime in retaliation for the bombing in Syria.\textsuperscript{29} Most of the federal TV channels did

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Darya Aslamova, “Akcija protesta v Munchene: borotsa s islamizaciei vyshlo v 10 raz menshe lyudei chem borcov s protestuyushchimi (The protest in Munich: Ten times fewer people went on the streets to protest against Islamization than to protest against this very action),” Komsomolskaya Pravda, (January 11, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.kp.by/daily/26478.5/3348892/.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Yulia Latynina, “Taharrush po-rossiyski (Taharrush in the Russian way),” Novaya Gazeta, (January 13, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from
\item \textsuperscript{24} Chanel One Russia, “Germania: interview s rodstvennikami iznasilovannoy 13-letney devochki bezhencami v Berlin (Germany: interview with relatives of the 13-year old girl raped by asylum seekers in Berlin),” video uploaded by You-Tube user Achtung Partisanen, (January 17, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9CwHbdglA.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Deutsche Welle, “Policiya oprovergla soobsheniya SMI ob iznasilovanii Russkoi devochki v Berline (The Police refuted the information that had been previously published by the media about a Russian girl having been raped in Berlin),” dw.com, (January 17, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.dw.com/ru/полиция-опровергла-сообщения-сми-об-изнасиловании-русской-девочки-в-берлине/a-18985480.
\item \textsuperscript{26} RBC.ru, “KPRF izobrazila zhenschinu s golovoy rebenka v rukah v materialah o migrantah (KPRF depicted a woman with a head of a child in her hands in the story about migrants),” rbcs.ru, (March 2, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.rbc.ru/politics/02/03/2016/56d732f9a79474d07f9bae5.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Radio Svoboda, “Sud v Moskve snova prodlil arest nyane po delu ob ubiystve rebenka (The court in Moscow extended the term of detention of the nanny-murderer who is suspected of killing a child),” svoboda.org, (October 24, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.svoboda.org/a/28072135.html.
\end{itemize}
not broadcast news of the incident.\textsuperscript{30} Social network users were split in their assessment of the role of the media in reporting the incident. Some supported the decision of the management of federal channels to refrain from covering the story so as not to provoke ethnic conflict, while others blamed television for unnecessary tolerance.\textsuperscript{31}

In the first hours after Bobokulova’s arrest, hundreds of messages appeared in social networks that incited ethnic and religious hatred in connection with the murder of the girl. Charges were also heard against the “corrupt media and police”.\textsuperscript{32} It is noteworthy that of all Russian political parties the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) behaved in the most aggressive manner. The Moscow City Committee of the CPRF created a dedicated website, where they called to urgently tighten migration legislation in Russia and introduce a visa regime for the countries of Central Asia.\textsuperscript{33} The site also published a picture where a silhouette of a Muslim woman in hijab was depicted with a bloody head in her hands. The image was placed in a red circle which was crossed out in red. The image provoked the criticism of politicians from the same party.\textsuperscript{34} Leaders of the Communist Party were forced to make excuses and argue that the placement of the picture was the initiative of the Moscow City Communist Party.\textsuperscript{35} The image was later removed from the website.

\textsuperscript{30} Newsru.com, “Federal’noe TV proignorirovalo ubiystvo devochki v Moskve, a Kreml’ podderzhal reshenie telekanalov (Federal television ignored the murder of the girl in Moscow and the Kremlin supported this decision),” newsru.com, (March 1, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.newsru.com/russia/01mar2016/channels.html.

\textsuperscript{31} About the reaction of social networks to this crime see: Ivan Belyaev, “Begushie polisieiskie i molchaschie telekanaly (The running policemen and silent television),” Radio Svoboda, (March 1, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.svoboda.org/a/27582268.html.

\textsuperscript{32} Press.lv, “Nado bylo ee pristrelit’! V Rossii kritikuyut deistviya politsii pri zaderzhanii nyani-ubiycy (They should have shot her! Policemen in Russia are being criticized for their conduct in the course of nanny-murderer’s arrest),” press.lv, (March 2, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://press.lv/post/nado-bylo-eyo-pristrelit-v-rossii-kritikuyut-dejstviya-politsii-pri-zaderzhanii-nyani-ubijcy/.

\textsuperscript{33} KPFR, “Ostanovim nelegalnuyu migratsiyu (Let’s put an end to illegal migration),” http://stopmigration.kprf.ru/, (not dated), retrieved January, 1 2017.

\textsuperscript{34} For example, the State Duma deputy from the faction of “A Just Russia” Oleg Pakholkov asked the Russian Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika to check if the publication of this picture constituted a crime under Article 282 of the Criminal Code (“Inciting hatred or enmity”) and accused the communists of inciting ethnic hatred.

Politics
It should be noted that racist remarks against Muslims made by representatives of both systemic and non-systemic (i.e. not represented in the parliament) opposition have already become commonplace in Russia. The only political party which until recently had stayed away from Islamophobic rhetoric was the Yabloko Party. This social-democratic party of the European type defends political and economic rights of citizens regardless of their religion and nationality. However, in August, shortly before the elections in the State Duma the statements made by one of the party leaders, Sergei Mitrokhin, caused a scandal. In the published record of an informal conversation with a journalist of the Islamnews website, Mitrokhin expressed insulting words against Islam. After the scandal was uncovered, Mitrokhin apologized, noting that “the conversation was conducted in a specific way, with a tinge of irony, when statements cannot reflect what one actually thinks. I have always argued in favour of inter-ethnic and inter-religious peace in Russia.” According to some experts, Mitrokhin became the victim of a successful provocation aimed at discrediting the Yabloko Party in the eyes of Muslim voters.

Among other important events that led to the appearance of Islamophobic materials in the media and social networks, we should note the Russian-Turkish conflict over Turkey’s downing of a Russian warplane in the autumn of 2015. However, the orientation of most of the material was anti-Turkish rather than anti-Islamic.

As far as the tragic events in Berlin in December are concerned, where a terrorist attacked people at a Christmas market, the reaction of Russian mass media was moderate, representing a mere statement of fact without speculations about the identity of the terrorist or the so-called European migrant crisis.

Internet
A large number of Islamophobic materials can be found on the social networking site VKontakte. In fact, a list of extremist literature that is compiled by the Russian Ministry of Justice in accordance with Federal Law “On counteracting extremist activity” No. 114-FZ dated 25 July, 2002 (discussed in more detail below), is to a large extent made up by the materials found on this social networking site. Among Islamophobic materials that are worth noting here is a video entitled “The true face of Islam. Incest

as a weapon of genocide of white people” which was posted on the personal page of Edward Rudnev on the social networking site VKontakte.40

One of the manifestations of Islamophobia is the creation of visual images, so-called demotivators. For instance, on the personal page of the Rodnoverie Party on the same social networking site (VKontakte) there is a demotivator containing an image of women in black robes (bijabs) holding firearms in their hands and a comment: “If you don’t fight against Islam, Islam will fight against you”.41 Another prohibited material that was found on the same personal page is a demotivator depicting sexual contact between men, accompanied by the text describing the concept of “limited homosexuality” and a comment: “ISLAM is so moral and uncorrupted”.42

Justice System

One of the tools used to enforce the anti-extremist legislation is a list of banned literature. Since 2007, Russia has been compiling a list of extremist literature (“Federal List of Extremist Literature”) in accordance with the Federal Law “On Countering Extremist Activity” mentioned above. The list includes books, articles, pamphlets and brochures, issues of newspapers and magazines, movies, videos, musical works and artistic works. The list is updated and published on the website of the Russian Ministry of Justice each year. Circulation of the literature included on this list in Russia is prohibited and is subject to criminal prosecution. Pursuant to the decisions of Russian courts of different levels, various Islamic books and other materials have been included on the Federal List of Extremist Literature. It should be noted that along with literature with obviously extremist content, certain classical theological literature has also been included on the list. This may stem from the fact that investigative and judicial authorities often involve experts who have no special training in matters of Islam and in some cases are clearly opposed to Islam and Muslims. Inclusion on the list of banned literature of Islamic books that are, in the opinion of Muslims, not extremist (books by Said Nursi, Shamil Alyautdinov and others43), has in turn, led to an increase in bitterness on the part of Muslims and misunderstanding.
between them and the authorities. Furthermore, in the opinion of human rights organisations, the wording of the Federal Law “On Counteracting Extremist Activity” itself allows for wide interpretations of the concept of “extremist material.”

In 2016, only one Islamic organisation was included on the “list of organisations recognized as extremist by Russian courts”, namely the religious group Mirmamed Mosque. Also, during 2016, arrests of the followers of the previously banned Hizb ut-Tahrir Party continued. According to some human rights activists, supporters of Hizb ut-Tahrir are not extremists and charging them with the “propaganda of terrorism” solely on the basis of party activities (meetings, reading literature, etc.) is unlawful.

On 11 July, 2016, the imam of Yardem Mosque in Moscow, Mahmoud Velitov, was arrested. Velitov was charged with violation of Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code (“Public incitement to terrorism”). In fact, Velitov suffered because of his statements made nearly three years before on 23 September, 2013 at the Yardem Mosque. According to the investigating authorities, in his speech Velitov justified the actions of A. Gappaev, a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir - a terrorist organisation that is banned in Russia, who was murdered by an unknown perpetrator near his home in 2013.


49. According to another version, he said this in an interview given to Islamic channel “al-Islami”.

It is noteworthy that representatives of other Muslim religious organisations were quick to distance themselves from their arrested coreligionist. The Chief Imam of the Moscow mosque Ildar Alyautdinov said in an interview that the Yardem Mosque “functions in isolation, as if it were a separate state: with its own rules, with its own laws. Unfortunately, sometimes these rules do not correspond to certain norms of Islam, and Muslims often hear a lot of complaints about it.”\(^{51}\) Apparently, the Muslim clergy serving in the Council of Muftis of Russia (which is part of DUM RF) is afraid to share Velitov’s fate who said a good word about the deceased man. On 26 October, the Buryksky district court of Moscow extended the term of M. Velitov’s house arrest until 27 December, 2016.

In April, Imam Magomednabi Magomedov was arrested. On 24 October, the North Caucasus District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don sentenced the imam of Vostochnaya Mosque of Hasavyurt (Republic of Dagestan, Russia) to five years imprisonment for incitement to terrorism. Magomedov was arrested when he went to the police station and demanded the release of several detainees who were visitors of the mosque and had been arrested without presenting any explanations.\(^{52}\) The imam was charged under Part 1 Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code (“Public incitement to terrorism or its justification”), and Part 1 Article 282 of the Criminal Code (“Incitement of hatred or enmity”). According to investigators, in February 2016, Magomedov “gave a speech at a mosque containing public justification of terrorism”.\(^{53}\) According to parishioners of the mosque where Magomedov served as imam, his sermon that day was focused on how to peacefully defend the rights of the Salafis.\(^{54}\)

One more Muslim religious figure who has suffered for his words is Ali Yakupov, who served as imam in the mosque of Kurgan city in September 2015. The basis for the prosecution of this Muslim religious figure in January 2016 was a comment he allegedly left on the social networking site VKontakte on the article about the ban on wearing hijab in China.\(^{55}\) In this comment Yakupov wrote about God’s punishment which will inevitably befall on the Chinese communists. The imam denied that he had written the comment.\(^{56}\)

\(^{51}\) Ibid.


\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.


\(^{56}\) “May Allah destroy these Communists of the injustice and wickedness, which they are doing on the ground!” (Ansar, “V otnoshenii haftza Ali Yakupova prekrussheno ugolovnoe delo (Criminal case against hafiz Ali Yakupov is closed),” ansar.ru, (October 14, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.ansar.ru/sobcor/v-otnoshenii-haftza-ali-yakupova-prekrussheno-ugolovnoe-delo.)
Earlier, in 2013, the prosecutor’s office of the Penza region instituted a case against Yakupov for inciting ethnic hatred and calling for extremist activity (Articles 280 and 282 of the Criminal Code). However, after an investigation on 31 October, 2016 Yakupov’s case was dismissed for lack of evidence and the prosecutor’s office of the Penza region officially apologized to Yakupov “for unfounded criminal charges”.57

Similar to the previous years, in 2016, there were situations when groups of citizens in various regions of Russia opposed the construction of mosques. These actions took place in the form of rallies and pickets, followed by the collection of signatures. The petition website Change.org was often used to collect signatures.

As a rule, opponents of the construction of mosques put forward the following arguments: (a) the mosque will cause noise and disturbance to residents of neighboring houses, (b) it will deprive the inhabitants of the right to enjoy a recreation area (if the mosque is to be constructed on park or green territory), (c) the mosque is an insult to orthodox feelings, (d) the mosque will create problems with transportation in the surrounding area, and finally, (e) it would serve as a cause of ethnic conflicts. In most cases, the opponents of the construction opted in favour of the transfer of the construction to another part of the city. Experience shows that such a transfer often leads to the construction projects being put on hold (including those that have already started, such as the mosque in Kaliningrad).

Below I describe some of the actions that aimed at disrupting the construction of mosques where the location of the future mosque had been already agreed with the city administration. I only present cases which occurred in large settlements (regional centres) and had considerable public outcry. I also took into account only those cases in which the opponents of the construction made Islamophobic statements or carried out actions which can be described as Islamophobic. It is noteworthy that in most of the regions referred to below Muslims (mainly Tatars and Bashkirs) are native people and have historically resided there before the arrival of Christianity.

It is also noteworthy that the implementation programme of the Russian Orthodox Church for the construction of Orthodox churches in Moscow, the so-called “200 temples” programme continued throughout 2016.58 The programme envisages the construction of an Orthodox church or chapel in every district of Moscow. However, the construction of churches does not always go smoothly either. Churches are often erected on park grounds or in areas where the construction of


a kindergarten or other socially important facilities had been proposed. However, in the case of a protest against the construction of a church, the authorities tend to take the side of the Russian Orthodox Church leading to the arrest of the participants of such rallies and pickets. The authorities have reacted quite differently to the actions against the construction of mosques. Participants of protests against the construction of mosques were not subject to any sanctions, and were free to hold their rallies and pickets.

In July, a petition against the construction of a mosque in the city of Omsk appeared on the petition website Change.org. The petition is characterised by the fact that its authors do not mince their words and point to the very existence of the mosque as the main cause of their dissatisfaction: “A huge mosque is planned to be built in Omsk on the Architects Boulevard opposite the trade and entertainment centre Mega. The location of the mosque in the area of the city with significant flow of people throughout the day does not promote a sense of belonging to the city, which is far from being Muslim, and of a feeling that this land is ours. The appearance of the building in a place where it will be constantly seen by citizens, the majority of whom are not Muslims, is unacceptable and offensive. We demand the cancellation of the decisions allowing the construction of a mosque in that place and the prevention of their occurrence in other similar places of attraction for people who are non-Muslims.” This petition has collected 2,033 signatures. As a result, the administration of Omsk refused to give permission for the construction of the mosque on the Architects Boulevard, as demanded by the authors of the petition.

On 6 July, the chairman of the State Corporation for Enterprise Development of the Ulyanovsk region Ruslan Gaynetdinov posted on his Twitter account about the construction of a mosque in Molodezhny Park in the Zasviyazhsky district of Ulyanovsk. He wrote that the construction of a mosque would be a gift to the Muslims of the city on the occasion of the feast of Eid al-Fitr. Shortly afterwards, a public group against the construction of the mosque was created on the social networking site VKontakte.

59. One of the last cases occurred in Torfyanka, where a group of residents protested against the construction of the Orthodox Church in Torfyanka Park. On 14 November, the police arrested several activists (Sova Center, “Zaschitnikov parka “Torfyanka” podозревают в оскорблении чувств верующих (The defenders of Torfyanka Park are suspected of insulting feelings of believers),” Sova Center, (November 14, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harassment/intervention/2016/11/d35815/.


61. Link to the petition: https://www.change.org/p/мэр-г-омска-не-допустить-строительство-мечети-в-г-омске-по-ул-бульвар-архитекторов-напротив-меги/17394785%20(retrieved January 6, 2017). See also petitions in other cities, where the authorities have already granted the permission to build a mosque in a certain place (f.e. Bratsk).

- the group was called “No mosque construction in Molodezhny Park”\(^\text{63}\). The main slogan of the group was “A park is not a place for a mosque”.\(^\text{64}\) Public hearings on the construction of the mosque were scheduled to take place on 9 August but were subsequently postponed. As of the end of December, the issue regarding the construction site for the mosque in Ulyanovsk has not been resolved.

At the end of January, the Regional Spiritual Board of Muslims (RDUM) of the Perm Territory agreed with the mayor’s office on the land plot for the construction of a mosque to be located on Krylov Street, Building 36b. The deputies of the Legislative Assembly supported the decision of the city administration.\(^\text{65}\) However, on 7 September, a picket against the construction of a mosque at the above address took place in Perm. During the picket several dozen signatures were collected. The residents were afraid that a “migrant enclave” would be formed around the mosque located next to the market.\(^\text{66}\) The protesters held posters stating the following: “Today a mosque near the market – tomorrow an enclave in the heart of the city”\(^\text{67}\) and “Why a mosque for guests and not the park for our children?”\(^\text{68}\) In interviews with reporters, the picketers stressed that they did not oppose the construction of the mosque per se, but were against the construction of a


\(^{64}\) Ibid.

\(^{65}\) Nakanune.ru, “Protivnikam stroitelstva mecheti v Permi otkazano v kollektivnom pikete u mesta provedenia Vserossiyskogo foruma natsionalnogo edinstva (The opponents of the construction of the mosque in Perm are refused permission to hold a collective picket near the place where All-Russian National Unity Forum is to be held),” nakanune.ru, (October 18, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.nakanune.ru/news/2016/10/18/22450432.

\(^{66}\) “The emergence of a Muslim spiritual and cultural centre and attendant infrastructure (halal shops, etc.) on the Krylov Street will create a long-term basis for the compact settlement of migrants. As experience shows, including the experience of the European countries, such enclaves often become a source of threat to the public and prevent immigrants from assimilation.” (“Mestnye zhiteli vozrazhayut protiv stroitelstva mecheti ryadom s permskim tsentralnym rynkom (Local residents oppose the construction of the mosque near the Perm central market),” Periskop information agency, (June 1, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://periscop.prp.ru/news/2158-160601.)


\(^{68}\) Nakanune.ru, “Vlasti gotovy k dialogu i nachali ego v Permi prostila vsstrecha, posvyaschennaya protestu povyazhena v gorode “migrantskoy mecheti (The authorities are ready for the dialogue and have started it: a meeting was held to discuss the protests against the construction of the “migrants' mosque” in the city),” nakanune.ru, (October 26, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017 from http://www.nakanune.ru/news/2016/10/26/22451295/.
mosque in that particular place near the central market. In September, the Regional Spiritual Board of Muslims received a letter from the governor of the Administration of the Perm Region with the recommendation to suspend the construction of the mosque. As of November, the construction of the mosque was put on hold.

A separate mention should be made of the situation regarding the construction of a mosque in the city of Kaliningrad, a western Russian regional centre. The issue of the construction of a mosque in the city has been raised by Muslims since 1993. Finally, in 2009, Kaliningrad City Hall granted the permission to build a mosque on Dzerzhinsky Street, Building 32, in the grounds of Yuzhny Park. The construction began in 2010. However, in December 2013, the construction was suspended as an interim measure ordered by the court in connection with an action brought by the Friedland Gate Museum, located in the neighborhood of the building under construction. It was stated in the action that the land allocated for the construction of the mosque was part of the area designed for a recreation area.

On 1 April, 2014, the court of the Moscow district of Kaliningrad ruled that the construction of the mosque, which had been previously authorized by the city administration, was illegal. In 2016, after a series of trials, the Supreme Court of Russia ruled that the construction of the mosque in the grounds of Yuzhny Park was illegal. As a result, the mosque, which was almost completed, is now under threat of closure.

69. RifeyTV, “Permyaki vyshli na piket protiv stroitelstva mecheti (Residents of Perm took part in the picket against the construction of the mosque),” uploaded on YouTube.com, (September 8, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQicmsjKJM.


71. Before 1945 the present territory of the Kaliningrad region belonged to Germany. Therefore, it is quite problematic to talk about the indigenous population in the region.


74. It is noteworthy that the plaintiff was represented in court by D. Karpovich who was also an attorney of A.D. Demushkin, one of the organizers of the “Russian Marches”.

Figure 5: Meeting against the construction of the mosque in Perm (Perm.ru)
demolition. The building site is fenced in and worshippers cannot access it.\textsuperscript{75} A local Muslim religious organisation has brought a claim against the ruling of the Supreme Court of Russia to the European Court of Human Rights; the claim is currently under consideration. According to D. Hasavov, who acts as attorney of the Muslim community of Kaliningrad, the actions aimed at preventing the construction of the mosque in the city were initiated by the prosecutor’s office of the Kaliningrad region as well as by the Russian Orthodox Church.\textsuperscript{76} The collection of signatures against the construction of mosques was also organised in other Russian cities such as Khabarovsk\textsuperscript{77} and Volzhsky (Volgograd Region).\textsuperscript{78}

**Physical and Verbal Attacks**

One of the annual events during which Islamophobic incidents often take place is the so-called “Russian March”. During the Russian March on 4 November in Moscow, which is held on the Day of National Unity, demonstrators carried posters with the following slogans: “No Islamism, no terrorism!”\textsuperscript{79}, “I am a Russian Orthodox person against Islamization”\textsuperscript{80} and “Moscow is not part of the Caucasus, Allah is a fag!”.\textsuperscript{81} As seen, a significant number of materials contained offensive statements about the Islamic religion and its followers.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{75} The construction of the mosque was financed through donations (about 90 million rubles) without involvement of the budget funds: https://www.change.org/p/президент-российской-федерации-спасем-первую-единственную-мечеть-в-г-калывнинграде


\textsuperscript{77} KhabTime, “V Khabarovske nachinaetsa “bitva protiv mecheti (A “battle around the mosque” is beginning in Khabarovsk),” khabtime.com, (January 20, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://khabtime.info/print?id_blog=29640. A petition against the construction of a mosque in Khabarovsk on the Change. org website begins with the words: “We are against the construction due to the fact that it will increase the crime situation in the city and region!” Link to the petition: https://www.change.org/p/шпорр-хватит-строить-мечети?recruiter=285004256&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=vk&utm_campaign=vk_share_responsive.


\textsuperscript{82} See, for example, a prohibited image, which depicts a crowd of Muslim men, one of them yells and points to the Quran page. Next to the picture there is another picture with white text on a black background Quran to… Monkeys!!! (See here: Federal’ny spisok extremistskih materialov (“Federal list of extremist materials”), retrieved January 1, 2017, available from: http://minjust.ru/nko/fedspisok/%C2%BB).
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN RUSSIA

Against the background of tragic deaths and disappearances of Muslims in Russia, the instances where followers of Islam become victims of aggression in other regions of Russia are not so noticeable.

For example, on 8 April, 2016 a migrant from Tajikistan, Sulaymon Saidov, was attacked in the Moscow metro. A 59-year-old resident of Moscow in the course of a quarrel shot Saidov. According to the victim, the reason for the attack was his origin: “My nephew and I were on our way home. I noticed the assailant when he began to push my nephew Muhammadjon Khakimov. He behaved very aggressively. He was very drunk. He became infuriated when he found out where we come from. There was no verbal skirmish between us. He shouted, insulted us, we were silent. And then he came up and started shooting.” As a result of the attack, Saidov lost his right eye and has undergone serious surgery. The attacker was arrested.

On 14 October, 2016, Iqbal Igbalhossinin, a citizen of Bangladesh, was beaten in Moscow. When he parked his car, he was approached by three men who started to beat him. Iqbal managed to escape and run into the entrance of his apartment building. Later, he was taken to hospital. One of the attackers was soon arrested and told the police that he had taken Iqbal for a terrorist and decided together with his neighbours to apprehend him.

An act of vandalism was committed on the night of 10 January, 2016 in the mosque undergoing restoration in the village of Ai-Ceres (Mezhdurechye) in the Sudak region of Crimea. An obscene drawing and crossed image of the tamga of the Giray dynasty (the national symbol of the Crimean Tatars) were drawn on the wall of the mosque. According to human rights activists, this action was not only anti-Muslim but also of anti-Tatar character. In May, two teenagers in Chapaevsk, the Samara region, painted a swastika on the wall of a local mosque. They were arrested, and their case was sent to the court.


swastika and wrote xenophobic slogans on the wall of a mosque in the city of Ivanovo. According to the data from the surveillance cameras, two men were involved in the act of vandalism: one painted and the other recorded it on camera.87

On 8 September, the Novo-Tatar cemetery in Kazan was attacked by vandals. About 100 gravestones and monuments in this oldest Muslim cemetery of the city were destroyed or damaged by vandals.88 President of Tatarstan Minnikhanov took the investigation of the case under his personal control; however, the perpetrators of this crime have not been found yet.

On 26 September, 2016, Ravil Kaybaliev, imam of the Nogai village of the Kara-Tube Neftekumsk district of the Stavropol region, was shot dead by an unidentified perpetrator in the Stavropol region. Kaybaliev was known as an advocate of the rights of Muslims. In particular, he had repeatedly appeared in court for the right of Muslim girls to wear hijab at school.89 In April 2016, Deputy Imam of Nizhnevartovsk Vagif Nurbayev, an Islamic preacher who adhered to Salafi views, was killed by an unknown perpetrator in Nizhnevartovsk.90 After Nurbayev’s death, arrests of Muslims close to the deceased imam followed.91 The disappearances of Muslims who are connected with the banned Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People and banned religious organisations like Hizb ut-Tahrir were also recorded in the Republic of Crimea.92

The main problem faced by Muslims in Crimea after the peninsula came under the jurisdiction of Russia were the legal restrictions related to the activities of a number of Muslim movements. Thus, for example, members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a religious organisation which is banned in Russia but is allowed in Ukraine, were arrested. The same applies to the Muslim literature which can be legally distributed

in Ukraine, but is included on the list of banned extremist materials in Russia. In addition, another reason for the persecution of the Crimean Tatars is the reluctance of many to recognise the results of the 16 March, 2014 referendum on the annexation of Crimea by Russia. According to the Head of Sova Human Rights Protection Centre A. Verkhovskiy, combating extremist activity on the Crimean Peninsula takes place using the following measures: (1) the search for and seizure of “extremist materials”; (2) the blocking of websites; (3) the prosecution for extremist posts and comments on social networking sites; (4) the prosecution for “incitement to separatism” and excitement of discord which are treated as aggravating circumstances in criminal cases of alleged ideological opponents; (5) the prosecution of members of Muslim radical organisations - primarily Hizb ut-Tahrir”).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Muslims are indigenous to Russia. However, as a result of growing nationalist and isolationist sentiments and the narrow-minded consciousness in Russian society coupled with ill-conceived state confessional politics, Russian Muslims tend to be associated with “aliens” and regarded as enemies by the average Russian. Furthermore, there are no public figures among Russian Muslims who could represent and protect their interests at the federal and regional levels. There is no Muslim leader to whose opinion state officials and the general public in Russia would listen. Fragmentation of the Muslim community is partly the result of personal conflicts and power struggles between Muslim religious and community leaders.

When researchers discuss the relationship between the Russian Orthodox and Muslim religious organisations, they often neglect one important fact. The Russian reality is such that Orthodox and Muslim religious organisations do not interact as relatively independent entities, equidistant from the state, but in fact as different divisions of the state bureaucracy. The Russian Orthodox Church has for a long period of time been a part of the state apparatus. Therefore, when Muslim religious organisations interact with the Russian Orthodox Church, in actual fact, they deal with a manifestation of the state.

On the other hand, the Muftiates are not independent entities either. Again, the Russian reality is such that any appointment to the post of a mufti (both at the federal and regional levels) is tightly controlled by the authorities, namely the Russian security service FSB. Therefore, the top and middle management of Muslim religious leaders is actually appointed by the government and public officials. Consequently, they are accountable not only and even less so to Muslims, which do not choose

them, and, more so, to the state, which de facto appoints them. From this perspective, it is no surprise that Muslim organisations seem to care more about how to win the battle for the influence over the country’s leadership (hence, access to resources), rather than the one for the rights of individual believers.

In such circumstances, local Muslim communities in Russian regions are often forced to confront the challenges that constantly emerge before them on their own, without the support of the leaders of the two all-Russian Muftiates and human rights defenders. An example of such practical issues is the construction of mosques.

One of the most active opponents of the construction of mosques in Russian cities (including the areas with dense Muslim populations) seems to be the Russian Orthodox Church. Remarkably, state officials tend to take into account the point of view of the Russian Orthodox Church in deciding on the construction of mosques.

Among the positive trends of recent years, we should note the state’s continuing fight against xenophobia and racism in the public space. However, the flip side of this policy is that the Federal Law “On Counteracting Extremist Activity” has become a tool of political pressure on Muslims, including Muslim religious leaders, who are disloyal to the authorities. Only in a small number of cases initiated on the basis of this law, the court took the side of the accused and dismissed the case.

In order to carry out a more effective state policy towards Islam and Muslims, the following actions are advisable:

- Introduce the post of a Minister of Muslim Affairs. A candidate for this post must be a Muslim yet a person of the world. The minister’s task will be to interact with Muslim religious leaders and act as a representative of the government in dealing with Muslims.
- When deciding on the inclusion of literature on the list of banned literature, the examination of the literature in question should be conducted exclusively by professional Islamologists. To qualify as an Islamologist a person must hold a degree in Oriental Studies, Regional Studies, or Religious Studies with specialization in the countries of the Muslim East; and be fluent in Arabic and one of the languages of the Muslim peoples of Russia.
- As far as the construction of mosques in Russian cities is concerned, the procedure of discussion of projects and decision-making at various stages of the project should be made as transparent as possible and involve the Minister of Muslim Affairs in the process. Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church should not have a say in this decision-making process. The opinion of the clergy can only be taken into consideration as the opinion of ordinary citizens provided that they live near the site of the proposed mosque construction.
- In the application of anti-extremist legislation when it comes to public statements formally containing signs of extremism but actually not posing a danger to society, penalties rather than imprisonment should be sought to a greater extent.
It is also recommended that imprisonment be applied only in case of the recurrence of unlawful acts.

- The creation of a Muslim TV show on one of the federal channels. The programme must not only cover historical and ethnographic subjects, but also the most topical problems and practical issues faced by the Muslim community in Russia.

Chronology

January
- An act of vandalism is committed against a mosque undergoing restoration in Ai-Ceres (Mezhdurechye) village in the Sudak region of Crimea. An obscene drawing was depicted on the wall of the mosque.
- Ali Yakupov, imam of Kurgan mosque, is arrested for leaving a comment on the social networking site VKontakte on the article discussing the ban of wearing hijab in China. The imam denies writing the comment.

February
- Gyulchehra Bobokulova, a citizen of Uzbekistan, is arrested for murdering the young girl she was hired to look after. When the police arrested her she was holding the severed head of the child in her hands. The woman was dressed in black and shouting “Allah Akbar”. In the first hours after the arrest, hundreds of messages inciting ethnic and religious hatred in connection with the murder of the girl appeared on social networking sites.

March
- An unknown person painted a swastika and wrote xenophobic slogans on the wall of a mosque in Ivanovo. According to the data obtained from the surveillance cameras, two men were involved in the act of vandalism: one painted and the other recorded the actions on camera.

April
- Vagif Nurbayev, deputy imam of Nizhnevartovsk and an Islamic preacher who adhered to Salafi views, is killed in Nizhnevartovsk by an unknown perpetrator. After his death, the arrests of Muslims close to the imam followed.
- A migrant from Tajikistan, Sulaymon Saidov, is attacked in the Moscow metro. A 59-year-old resident of Moscow in the course of a quarrel shot Saidov. According to the victim, the reason for the attack was his origin. As a result of the attack, Saidov lost his right eye and underwent serious surgery. The attacker was arrested.

May
- Two teenagers paint a swastika on the wall of a mosque in Chapaevsk (Samara region). Both were arrested, and their case was sent to the court.
June

- A Muslim girl, Sofia, accompanied by her mother, and both dressed in hijab, applies for admission to the College of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. The chairman of the selection committee told the mother the following: “We do not want Muslims here! You can, of course, submit your documents, but your daughter won’t be admitted, I can guarantee that”

July

- An enrollee Alfia wearing hijab is not allowed to enter the building of MGIMO-University. The deputy security chief tells her: “If you want to study, take off the hijab”. After coverage in the media, the university administration tries to silence the affair. The girl is allowed to enter the university grounds.
- Mahmoud Velitov, imam of Yardem Mosque in Moscow, is arrested. Checks are carried out in the mosque and the imam’s apartment during which literature banned in Russia is discovered. Velitov is charged with violation of Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code (“Public incitement to terrorism”). The reason for the institution of proceedings against Velitov was one of the opinions he expressed on 23 September, 2013 in the Yardem Mosque.
- A petition against the construction of a mosque in Omsk appears on Change.org, a petition website. The petition collected 2,034 signatures. As a result, the city administration refused to give permission for the construction of a mosque, as demanded by the authors of the petition.
- A public group against the construction of a mosque in Molodezhny Park in Ulyanovsk is created on the social networking site VKontakte. The main slogan of the group is “A park is not a place for a mosque”. Public hearings on the construction of a mosque were scheduled for 9 August, 2016 but were subsequently postponed. As of the end of December 2016, the issue regarding the construction of the mosque in Ulyanovsk has not been resolved.

August

- A record of an informal conversation between deputy chairman of Yabloko Party Sergei Mitrokhin and a journalist for the Islamnews.ru website appears on the Internet. In the conversation, Mitrokhin expressed insulting words against Islam. Shortly after the scandal was uncovered, Mitrokhin publicly apologized to Muslims.

September

- The Novo-Tatar cemetery in Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan) is vandalised. This is the oldest existing Muslim necropolis in the city. Vandals destroyed or damaged approximately 100 gravestones and monuments. The perpetrators of the crime have not been found as yet.
• A picket against the construction of a mosque on Krylov Street is held in Perm. During the picket several dozen signatures were collected. The residents were afraid that a “migrant enclave” might be formed around the mosque which was planned to be built next to the market. The protesters held up posters with the following slogans: “Today a mosque near the market, tomorrow an enclave in the heart of the city” and “Why a mosque for the guests, not a park for our children?”
• Ravil Kaybaliev, imam of Nogai village of Kara-Tube in the Neftekumsk district of the Stavropol region, is shot dead by an unknown person. Kaybaliev was a vocal defender of the rights of Muslims. In particular, he had repeatedly appeared in court for the right of Muslim girls to wear hijabs at school.

October
• A citizen of Bangladesh, Iqbal Igbalhossin, is beaten by a group of people in Moscow and taken to hospital. One of the attackers was later arrested and told the police that he had taken Iqbal for a terrorist and together with his neighbours they decided to apprehend him.
• M. Magomedov, imam of Vostochnaya Mosque of Khasavyurt (Dagestan), is sentenced to five years imprisonment for incitement to terrorism. Magomedov was arrested when he went to the police station and demanded the release of several detainees who were visitors of the mosque and had been arrested without any explanations. According to investigators, in February 2016, Magomedov “gave a speech at the mosque in which he publicly justified terrorism.” According to parishioners of the mosque where Magomedov served, his sermon that day focused on how to peacefully defend the rights of the Salafis.

November
• During the nationalist “Russian March” held in several Russian cities on 4 November, the Day of National Unity, certain demonstrators carried posters with the following slogans, among others: “No Islamism, no terrorism!”, “I am a Russian Orthodox person against Islamization” and “Moscow is not the Caucasus, Allah is a fag!”.

December
• Muslim teachers in Belozereye village in the Republic of Mordovia are forced to take off their hijabs at work. The teachers’ attorney intends to file a complaint with the labour inspectorate and the prosecutor’s office.
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.