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THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Recognition of Islamophobia

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

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

We think that with this definition, we clearly address many of the suspicions, which are put against the term as such. As a matter of fact, while supranational institutions such as the OSCE embrace the terminology Anti-Semitism, the OSCE still refuses to use Islamophobia, which we see as part of the problem. Again, we recommend that Islamophobia/anti-Muslim Racism or anti-Muslim hate crime should be included in the collection of “equality data” in all European states. Institutions such as the OSCE need to establish solid monitoring and recording mechanisms for discrimination, hate crime and hate speech towards Muslims. In order to have reliable data, it has to be segregated by bias/category and also segregated by gender. This is even more problematic in countries that do not allow collection of data on religion or race. This seemingly egalitarian approach in reality hides the discrimination of Muslims. Also, response mechanisms seem to be unclear and not adequately used. When there is an incident of discrimination/hate crime/hate speech, there are different response mechanisms available, yet, none of these are familiar to the vast majority of Muslim citizens of European countries. Thus, we recommend that response mechanisms should be made more available, accessible and clear. Last but not least, an empowerment of the Muslim community is needed to strengthen critical citizenship and help European states deepen their democracies.

Policy Recommendations for European Countries

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. The following list of recommendations serves to underscore some of these recommendations and to add some additional suggestions on the supranational level.

We think it is important for civil society to understand that Islamophobia is a problem of institutional racism. The illusion that Europe is a post-racial society prevents large parts of European societies from recognising the severe challenge of Islamophobia to local societies. The focus has to shift from Muslims’ actions to those of European societies. Racism, including Islamophobia, tells us more about the racists than about their imagined scapegoat or their victims. Hence, Islamophobia reveals aspects of Europe and the internal problems European societies continue to face. A recognition and a critical consciousness of this societal disease is of utmost importance to be able to create more just societies in Europe. At the same time, Muslims must be allowed to enjoy their spaces of freedom like other dominant religious and political groups in European societies without being securitised or criminalised. The securitisation of Islam, especially policies countering violent extremism and their impact on the freedom of religion of belief for Muslims, and even freedom of movement or free assembly have to be challenged by all democratic forces in Europe. Communities must be consulted and human rights frameworks must be respected. National security is not among the criteria that should permit the limitation of freedom of religion or belief.

We especially urge politicians to speak out against Islamophobia as one of the most pressing forms of racism in our days. Europe needs more courageous politicians who do not only challenge the politics of right-wing populist parties, but also challenge institutionalised forms of racism targeting Muslims in the fields of employment, education, state bureaucracy, and media. We also call for journalists and editors to challenge Islamophobic reporting in their news media and give space to more balanced views. Generally, the issue of religious literacy is a huge problem that does not only concern media but also the police, prosecutors and civil servants. We see that people simply lack basic knowledge on Islam and Muslims’ practices. We see a need for the introduction of more comparative religion courses, or religious teaching, in a formal and informal educational setting.

We see that Muslim women are among the most vulnerable direct victims of Islamophobia. ENAR has conducted a report on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women and presented 37 recommendations, which we can only underscore given the findings of our report. Women who are visibly Muslim are socially ostracised in many places. The combination of internal community prob-

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

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Executive Summary

Islamophobia is present in Slovenian society. Its consequences can be detected in the stereotyping of Muslims based on the ignorance of the heterogeneity of Islamic tradition and the rejection of Islam as a European (and consequently Slovenian) religion. Muslims in Slovenia have become targets of increased hostility especially with the so-called refugee crisis and with the emergence and publicity of acts of terrorism in Europe and the Middle East. The acts of vandalism and graffiti that have occurred in Slovenia equate refugees and asylum seekers with Islamists and “Islamic terrorists”.

The year 2016 witnessed one of the first known Islamophobic acts to be given media publicity in the country: heads of pigs and jars of blood were dumped on the building site of an Islamic religious and cultural centre. Islamophobia is felt most by those Muslims, who outwardly show their religious affiliation (either visually by way of dress and/or participation in the media). The report presents the list of public Facebook pages that are spreading hate speech of the most extreme form directed against Muslims, as well as, among others, Islamophobic reactions in certain media outlets, based on the so-called refugee crisis, the fear of ‘Islamization’, and the rejection of the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) in Ljubljana.

Islamophobia in Slovenia is also a political problem, since it is stimulated by certain political parties and actors, who are exploiting the Islamophobic sentiment among the population in order to gain political points. Special attention is given to the representation of Islam and Muslims in Slovenian school textbooks, with a special recommendation to update school textbooks that cover the issue of Islam and Muslims, and to educate and inform the general public about the heterogeneity and diversity of Islamic traditions.
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SLOVENIA

Povzetek

Islamofobija je prisotna tudi v slovenski družbi. Njene posledice lahko med drugim prepoznamo v stereotipizaciji muslimanov na podlagi nepoznavanja heterogenosti islamske tradicije, ter zavračanje islama kot slovenske in evropske religije. Muslimani so tudi v Sloveniji postali tarče povečane sovražnosti predvsem z begunsko krizo, ter z medijsko odmevnostjo terorističnih dejanj v Evropi in na Bližnjem vzhodu. Pojavili so se vandalizem in grafiti, ki enačijo begunce in prosilce za azil z islamisti in "islamskimi teroristi".

V letu 2016 smo priča tudi enemu prvih medijsko znаниh islamofobnih dejanj v Sloveniji, ko so neznanci na gradbišču islamskega verskega in kulturnega centra odvrgli svinjske glave in kozarce s krvjo. Islamofobijo najbolj občutijo tisti muslimani, ki navzven kažejo svojo versko pripadnost (bodisi vizualno z načinom oblačenja in/ali s participacijo v medijih). Poročilo navede seznam Facebook strani, ki širijo sovražni govor proti muslimanom, kakor tudi islamofobne reakcije nekaterih medijev kot odziv na tako imenovano ‘begunsko krizo’, strah pred ‘islamizacijo’ in zavračanje islamskega verskega in kulturnega centra v Ljubljani.

Islamofobija v Sloveniji je tudi politični problem, saj jo podpihujejo določene politične stranke in posamezniki, ki za nabiranje političnih točk izkoriščajo islamofobne sentimente, nastale predvsem na podlagi strahu in nepoznavanja islama. Posebej je omenjena prezentacija islama in muslimanov v slovenskih šolskih učbenikih s priporočilom poposodobitve tistih tematskih sklopov, ki obravnavajo vprašanje islama in muslimanov, kakor tudi javno informiranje o heterogenosti in raznolikosti islamske tradicije.
Introduction

In 1991, the census registered 29,361 Muslims, representing 1.5% of the population. In the 1991 Population Census the question of national affiliation was answered by 87.5% of the 29,361 Muslims polled. As many as 20,435 (69.6%) declared themselves to be Muslims mainly from Bosnia-Herzegovina; 2,481 (8.1%) as Albanian Muslims from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia; 1,196 (4.1%) stated regional affiliations; 1,121 (3.8%) declared themselves as Yugoslavs; and 818 (2.7%) as Slovenes.¹

According to the population data of the 2002 census, there were 47,488 members of the Islamic religious community living in Slovenia (2.4% of the entire population), which means that the Islamic community is the second largest religious community in the country, following Catholics. The difference in the number of Muslims is considered to be a result of the fact that many believers had not declared themselves to be followers of the Muslim faith in the 1991 census. According to estimates by the Islamic community, there are Muslims who in the 2002 census did not declare themselves to be Muslims as well; therefore, one can expect that the actual number is a bit higher.

One of the first great influxes of Muslims into Slovenian territory occurred during the First World War, when Bosniaks fought on the Soča Front on the side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Later, migrations of larger Muslim populations to Slovene territory took place in the time of the former Yugoslavia, in the 1960s, mostly due to the expansion of industry. It was on 12 September, 1967, that the Islamic Community in Slovenia was founded. Since 1981, a masjid, a house of prayer, has been operative in Slovenia’s capital Ljubljana, and there are similar places of worship in other cities, but the mosque or so-called Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) in Ljubljana, which is still under construction, has become a central symbol of their efforts for recognition in Slovenian society, as well as a source of Islamophobia among the Slovene population.

As early as 1969, the Muslims living in Slovenia appealed for a mosque to be built in Ljubljana. Discussions on the mosque were, all these years, extraordinarily burdened with contradictory views and principles as well as material and symbolic interests, prejudice and ignorance. In the discussions, we can recognize Islamophobic reactions and resistance, which is much older than the reaction to the terrorist attacks; rather it should be seen as a reaction to the “failure of compulsive assimilation. Muslims living in Slovenia did not become a disturbing element when they moved to the country, but only when they publicly re-

jected assimilation.\textsuperscript{2} Delays in the mosque’s construction are the result of misinterpretations of Islam in Slovenia.\textsuperscript{3} From the very beginning the mosque has been treated as a “foreign body” and (although not yet built) believed to represent a potential security threat.

On 14 September, 2013, the cornerstone for the mosque was finally laid, and on 6 May, 2015, the mayor of Ljubljana and the mufti of the Islamic Community poured concrete for the foundation stone, which symbolized the beginning of construction.

Yet Islamophobic discourses, mainly related to the construction of the mosque as the central symbol of Muslim presence in the country, are continuing, in particular on Internet networks and public forums, but also in certain media outlets (which will be discussed in the next chapters). These kinds of discourses are not (only) a result of the fear of terrorist attacks, but are fueled by the fear of medieval Turkish incursions, embedded in the Slovenian collective memory. These incursions are seen as being one of the darkest periods in Slovenian history. Through folk poetry and prose the Slovenian collective memory preserves the recollection of the horror of the incursions of Ottoman mounted units that plundered, killed and hunted men and boys for slavery.\textsuperscript{4} Though these invasions are not necessarily representative of the Islamic faith, they still bear an impact on public opinion and attitude towards Islam in Slovenia. The Turks and their religion have survived throughout Slovenian history as something completely “different”, alien and dangerous. The Slovene word for a Turk (“Turek”) became an expletive. This is the reason why many Slovenes associate the word Islam first and foremost, in a very stereotypical way, with this stigma of the past and do not allow themselves to broaden their knowledge towards the positive aspects of Islam.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{Figure_1.png}
\caption{Graffiti equate refugees and asylum seekers with Islamists in Ljubljana, Šiška.\textsuperscript{5}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{4} Ignacij Voje, Slovenci pod pritiskom turskega nasilja (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1996).
\textsuperscript{5} Photo taken by Anja Zalta on 1 December, 2016 in Ljubljana, Šiška.
Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment
There is no official report regarding discrimination in the labour market due to Islamophobia in Slovenia. There is only unofficial evidence pointing to discrimination in the field of employment, especially of Muslims whose appearance bears visible traces of their religious affiliation. In particular, Muslim women can be doubly discriminated on the basis of gender and on the basis of religion. Muslim women who wear headscarves are, according to unofficial data, discriminated and it is very difficult for them to get a job in the public sector. Most of these women are unemployed, or are employed in the private sector as self-employed or as workers in private enterprises.

In Slovenia, there is no law that relates to the religiously prescribed dress of Muslim women, but in accordance with the religious freedom guaranteed by Article 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, the wearing of headscarves can be interpreted as an expression of religious freedom. Covered women in Slovenia are permitted to wear their headscarves in photographs for passports, driving licenses, or any other official document, as the headscarf is an integral part of religious clothing (Rules on the Implementation of the Law of Identity Cards, 2013).

The lack of information about Muslim discrimination in the labour market prevents the authorities from being properly informed about the situation. On the other hand, Muslims do not usually report discriminatory acts. Therefore, the monitoring and collection of information is essential.

Although Slovenia insists on the principle of a secular state, public holidays include religious holidays of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church, but no Islamic holidays that would require non-working day(s). Problems can also occur regarding diet in the workplace, if the company does not offer diversity in its menu.

Education
The issues of Islam and Muslims in Slovenia in textbooks for primary schools are dealt with by focusing on the teaching of the Turkish invasions. Islam as a religion is presented in the 6th-grade history textbooks of elementary schools, in combination with Islamic expansionism. The limited data offered to students about Islam is extremely one-sided and stereotypical. Islam in Slovenian textbooks is given some space, but the role of the Muslim community is completely absent. As Tanja Uršič stated “Islam is most often discussed in relation to something, either the Byzantine state or Slovenian lands, rather than as a separate unit.”

6. The information is based on the interview with Faila Pašić Bišić, an activist, the director of non-governmental organization UP Jesenice, and one of the most visible Muslim public figures in Slovenia. Interview was made in Ljubljana, 9. 11. 2016.
7. Tanja Uršič, Prezentacija islama v slovenskih šolskih učbenikih, Igra prisotnosti in odsotnosti (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, , 2010) p. 43
textbooks in regard to Islam and Muslims is not considered up-to-date and does not expose the heterogeneity and diversity of Islamic traditions, identity and groups. New generations, thus, are deprived of a higher quality of knowledge about world religions, including Islam. Negative stereotypes, which prevail in the interpretation of Islam in Slovenian primary schools, should be removed from the subject of Religions and Ethics, which students can choose from the 7th grade onward. The subject curriculum provides a significantly broader and deeper understanding of Islam, but is problematic in so far as the subject is optional and not compulsory for all students. In addition, in recent years, Religion and Ethics is not available in all elementary schools. The latter might be related to the fact that there is a lack of subject-trained teachers. Finally, at state level there is no additional training for teachers on this subject – this was also the case in the past.

Politics
On 31 August, 2016, the online media Svet 24 published an article about a written parliamentary question sent by the deputy parliamentary opposition party SDS (Slovenian Democratic Party) to the Minister of the Interior in relation to security issues regarding face-covering in public places.8

The article was a reminder that the SDS in late November 2015 filed a bill in the National Assembly that would ban the wearing of the burqa and the niqab in public places and tighten the conditions for obtaining asylum in Slovenia. The motive for introducing the ban is security reasons (on account of face-covering in public places), and cultural reasons, since, according to the SDS - as presented in the article - face-covering is not in compliance with Slovenian customs and traditions. The SDS calls for a penalty of 100 euros for the violation of the ban. This is comparable with penalties for begging or sleeping overnight in a public place.

Re-opened discourse on the ban has sparked further Islamophobic reaction on the Internet. The political proposal to ban the wearing of the burqa and niqab in the existing Slovenian context signifies fear mongering. In Slovenia, women who conceal their face with a burqa or niqab are extremely rare. Muslims in Slovenia and refugees and asylum seekers normally use headscarves, but not the burqa. The proposed ban on face-covering is problematic also in the context that the entire Islamic religion is reduced to just one symbol, which is the easiest to use and manipulate.

Media
The so-called refugee crisis, the fear of “Islamization”, the rejection of the Islamic religious and cultural centre, etc., raise Islamophobic reactions in some media. One

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of the most Islamophobic records can be found in the journal Reporter. The instance was dealt with by the Council in response to its hostile and discriminatory language. The article, which contains hate speech, is signed by J.B. (probably Jože Biščak), and bears the quotation that “Islam is a criminal ideology that deserves to be included in the same category as Nazism, fascism and communism – It is contrary to the principles of European law, and it should be, like its predecessors, overcome - the West must crush Islam if it wants to survive.” The article was published on the website of the Reporter on 23 May, 2016.

The same author develops similar claims in an article entitled “Ljubljana on the way to Islamization: a crescent moon is fixed on the minaret.” The article was published in the Reporter on 30 May, 2016. In the article, Biščak writes that the Ljubljana Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre will become “a hotbed of radicalization and terrorism.”

The Council also examined a third article by Biščak, published in the same magazine on 20 September, 2016 for its hostile and discriminatory language. The article bears the title “Meet Ljubljana’s First Sharia Ghetto?” and is subtitled “A new residential neighbourhood will grow near the mosque. Experience from Europe shows that such neighbourhoods are populated mostly by Muslims, and are where terrorists find shelter.” The article explains that Ljubljana will get the first real Muslim ghetto, which could be transformed into an area controlled by Sharia militia who will terrorize neighbouring residents and force them to embrace the Muslim way of life. The Council made it clear that with his allegations Biščak is spreading fear of Islam and Muslims, and inciting hatred and Islamophobia on the basis of stereotypes.

Internet
Public Facebook pages that are spreading hate speech of the most extreme form that are directed against Muslims originated at the time of last year’s arrival of refugees in Europe and their mass transition across Slovenia. Some of these pages are: Radical Ljubljana (Radikalna Ljubljana); Stop islamizaciji Slovenije (Stop Islamisation of Slovenia); Generation Identity Slovenia (Generacija identitete Slovenija); Slovenia Secure Borders (Slovenija Zavaruj Meje); Slovenian Militia (Slovenska milica); and We do not want refugees and migrants in Slovenia, We do not want a mosque in Ljubljana (Nočemo beguncev in migrantov v Sloveniji, Nočemo džamije v Ljubljani). These groups maintain a mass audience on social networks and are gaining new followers, even though the period of mass transition of refugees across Slovenia has already passed. Their Facebook pages

regularly publish Islamophobic material, e.g. photos of pigs with users then leaving comments like ‘(This is) Your food, Muslims;-) You must eat;) Allah eats, too’ (12.02.2016). Islamophobic rhetoric on the Internet shows signs of religious illiteracy that reduces Islam to stereotypical images; the posts in which Muslims are fully dehumanized are especially worrying. These are the posts that carry mobilization potential. (See Figure 2)

**Physical and Verbal Attacks**

Reluctance towards the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) has been ongoing for years. The so-called refugee crisis in the past year has only deepened this reluctance, which is additionally fueled by certain politicians and media.

In the night of 12 January, 2016, an Islamophobic attack took place on the construction site of a mosque, where unknown persons threw the heads of pigs and jars filled with blood. The attack was repeated on the night of 31 January, 2016. (Figure 4)\(^\text{11}\)

The Islamic community tagged the two events as hostile attacks on the minority community. The attacks were strongly condemned by leading politicians and representatives of other religious communities.

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\(^\text{11}\) Courtesy of the Islamic community’s archives.
Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The report has demonstrated that the main Islamophobic attacks in Slovenia in 2016, as in the previous year, revolved around the so-called refugee crisis and around the central symbol of Muslims and Islamic presence in Slovenia, namely the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre in Ljubljana. The targets of Islamophobic attacks in the media and in cyberspace are the public figures who visibly show their religious affiliation, such as Mrs. Faila Pašić. Knowledge of Islam in Slovenia is largely restricted to sensationalist generalizations and stereotyping, which stem from a lack of religious literacy.

Policy recommendations include the following:

• Updating school textbooks that cover the issue of Islam and Muslims, and increasing the debates on racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia.

• Monitoring and collecting information on Islamophobia in the labour market.

• Enabling effective integration of Slovenian Muslims in political, cultural, social and economic institutions.

• Facilitating the visibility of Muslims in the media – creating a radio station and television shows, for and by Muslims.

• Educating and informing the general public about the heterogeneity and diversity of Islamic traditions.

• Examining and implementing options for suitable nourishment of Muslims in kindergartens, schools, hospitals, workplaces, prisons, etc.

• Examining the possibilities of spiritual care in hospitals and in the military. The Ministry of Defence does not employ a military imam. The Islamic community in Slovenia has repeatedly expressed its desire to be integrated into the system of spiritual care of the Slovenian Armed Forces.

• Muslim communities and societies should be active in offering more activities and public events and discussions, and there should be intercultural and interreligious platforms to address urgent and current issues.

• Political parties and civil society should be included in campaigns against Islamophobia and should promote research in the field of Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims.
Chronology

- **12 January**: At night, heads of pigs and jars filled with blood were thrown on the construction site of a mosque.
- **15 January**: Protest against refugees takes place at the asylum centre of Kidričevo.
- **31 January**: An attack on the construction site of a mosque occurs during the night.
- **February**: Protests against accommodation centres for refugees in Lenart, Vrhnik, Ljubljana, Šenčur, and Kranj take place.
- **April**: The rise of the minaret in the construction site of the mosque in Ljubljana.
- **May**: The top is added to Ljubljana’s minaret. The event sparked additional Islamophobic reactions, especially on the Internet (forums and Facebook pages), but also in certain media.
- **31 August**: Discussion on face-covering was once again reopened in the media.
- **12-13 October**: Protests against asylum centers in Črnomelj and Maribor.
- **29 November**: A protest against refugees and against the asylum center in Velenje.
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.