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SETA
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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%.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recognition of Islamophobia

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

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

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

Policy Recommendations for European Countries

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

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

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

We see that Muslim women are among the most vulnerable direct victims of Islamophobia. ENAR has conducted a report on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women and presented 37 recommendations, which we can only underscore given the findings of our report.6 Women who are visibly Muslim are socially ostrasised 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.

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Both authors have been working on the discursive realisation of hate speech online and the spread of cyber Islamophobia since 2013. This collaboration has crystallised in eight presentations at international conferences, and the publication of articles, book chapters and reports such as ‘Islamonausea, not Islamophobia’: The many faces of cyber hate speech, Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research, 2016; ‘Shamrock Meets Sharia: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Muslims in Ireland on Twitter from 2009 to 2014’, Irish Journal of Applied Social Sciences (forthcoming); ‘The Cyberdiscourse of Inclusion and Marginalization: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Muslims in Ireland on Twitter 2010-2014’, Palgrave MacMillan (forthcoming) and ‘The construction of national identity through online discourse in post-January 2015 Sri Lanka’ (forthcoming).

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Executive Summary

The year 2016 has been extremely arduous for the Islamic community worldwide. Spain is not alien to this infectious attitude towards the Muslim community. The number of Islamophobic incidents during 2015 increased by 35% as reported by the organisation Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia and the situation in 2016, as this report illustrates, has not improved. Geographically, the greatest number of incidents has occurred in Barcelona, the community of Valencia and Madrid. Some political initiatives forwarded by city halls, regional governments, civil society institutions and private organisations confirm the problem is real, serious and one that must be combated at its roots.

In our opinion, the main problems, in terms of the speed of production as well as impact, are the offences and crimes related to hate speech and specifically those confined to the Internet (cyber Islamophobia). Cyber hate speech seems to be the easiest way to offend, insult, denigrate and threaten Muslims both in terms of effort and minimum risk of being arrested or punished by the law. The so-called gendered Islamophobia or assaults on Muslim women, and attacks and acts of vandalism targeting mosques or Islamic centres (particularly in the aftermath of any terrorist attack in a Western country) have also been frequent in this year.

Institutional Islamophobia still forms a barrier in the granting of rights to Muslims agreed upon in 1992 by the Spanish state. The problems with the provision of imams in prisons and the number of available Muslim cemeteries are important issues that remain unresolved by the public administration. Dealing with the problem of Islamophobia is a common public responsibility, from individual citizens to the powerful state apparatus through civil society, media and academic institutions. Only when these social actors join forces to work together towards a common goal will Islamophobia be effectively tackled.
Resumen Ejecutivo

El año 2016 ha sido especialmente arduo para la comunidad musulmana en todo el mundo. España no es ajena a esta actitud contagiosa con la comunidad musulmana. El número de incidentes de carácter islámófobo ocurridos durante 2015 se incrementó en un 567.35% según la organización Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia y la situación durante 2016, tal y como muestra este informe, no ha mejorado. Desde un punto de vista geográfico, el mayor número de incidentes se concentra en Barcelona, la comunidad Valenciana y Madrid. Algunas iniciativas políticas puestas en marcha por ayuntamientos, gobiernos regionales, instituciones en el ámbito de la sociedad civil y organizaciones privadas confirman que el problema es real, serio y tiene que ser atajado de raíz lo antes posible.

En nuestra opinión, el principal problema, en cuanto a la velocidad de producción así como a su impacto, son los delitos y faltas relacionadas con el discurso de odio y, específicamente, aquellos que se producen en el ámbito de Internet (ciberislamofobia). El ciberdiscurso de odio parece ser la manera más fácil de ofender, insultar, denigrar y amenazar a los musulmanes tanto en términos de esfuerzo invertido como en el riesgo mínimo de ser detenido y castigado por la ley. La llamada islamofobia de género o ataques a las mujeres musulmanas así como los actos vandálicos contra mezquitas o centros Islámicos (particularmente en los días posteriores a cualquier ataque terrorista en algún país occidental) han sido frecuentes en este año tal y como la cronología de incidentes islámófobos en este informe muestra.

La islamofobia institucional es todavía una barrera para los derechos que el estado español tiene que garantizar a los musulmanes según los acuerdos de 1992. La carencia de provisión de imanes a las cárceles así como la escasez de cementerios musulmanes disponibles son asuntos importantes que tienen que ser resueltos por la administración pública. El problema de la islamofobia es una responsabilidad pública común: desde los ciudadanos particulares al poderoso aparato estatal, pasando por la sociedad civil, los medios de comunicación y las instituciones académicas. Sólo cuando estos actores sociales unan sus fuerzas para trabajar hacia un objetivo común la islamofobia será solventada eficientemente.
Introduction

According to the 2015 annual report *Demographic Study of the Muslim Community (Estudio Demográfico de la Comunidad Musulmana)*\(^1\) carried out by the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (*Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España, UCIDE*), there are 1,887,906 Muslim citizens in Spain; 41% are Spanish Muslims whereas the remaining 59% are immigrants, mostly from Morocco. The number of Muslims has increased an 8.4% from the previous year and according to the study\(^2\) carried out by the Pew Research Centre in 2015, Islam is the religion which will increase its followers the most in the future. Still and despite this data, 95% of Muslim communities in Spain lack a cemetery.\(^3\)

Cataluña and Andalusia are the preferred Muslims settlements, followed by Madrid and Valencia. The Spanish territories of Ceuta and Melilla are the European Union’s only land borders with Africa and have therefore become a focal point for immigrants seeking to enter Europe, who either climb over the border fences or swim along the coast.\(^4\) Spain has stepped up security in 2014 and 2015 with the help of funding from the EU and made it harder for border crossers to apply for asylum.\(^5\) However, Spain’s practice of deporting illegal immigrants en masse has brought the country under criticism by human rights watchdogs.\(^6\)

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

In the area of employment, several Islamophobic events happened last year. The *Unión de Comunidades Islámicas* (Islamic Communities Union) has reported the

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4. The wire mesh fences separating the two Spanish autonomous regions stretch 8 km long in Ceuta and 12 km long in Melilla. They are gory constructions with sharp blades and other obstructions to prevent immigrants from climbing over them, causing a lot of pain and bodily harm to those who try. (Editorial board, “Morocco, Ceuta and Melilla: a failed immigration policy,” Mediterranean Affairs, (December 3, 2014), retrieved November 17, 2016, from http://mediterraneanaffairs.com/morocco-ceuta-and-melilla-a-failed-immigration-policy/.
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discrimination that Muslims suffer in their jobs since most of their employers do not respect the law that guarantees that any employer or employee has the right to ask for a day to celebrate his or her religious holidays; in some cases, Muslim workers are just given a couple of hours to commemorate the festivals of Eid ul-Adha and Eid ul-Fitr.

The Muslim community, especially Muslims who have settled down in Ceuta and Melilla, have reported the discrimination they suffer in the national calendar of bank holidays since 6 out of the 9 national bank holidays are directly related to Catholic celebrations, and therefore ignore the thousands of Muslims who have their own religious celebrations.

Ana Saudí, a Spanish Muslim woman working at the airport of Palma de Mallorca, has sued her employer, the company Acciona, demanding the company respects her right to wear the hijab at work. Since she told her boss she had decided to wear the hijab, she claims to have suffered harassment at work and to have been sanctioned with 7 disciplinary punishments, resulting mainly in unpaid days off work.

Another case of discrimination at work was suffered by the member of the Security Forces A. B. Abderrahman, who was denied a promotion with the reasoning that “his ethnic perspective was in opposition to institutional values” as if both aspects are mutually exclusive or as if either ethnicity or the said institution are limited to one particular religion.

Education

The census of Muslim students in Spain in 2016 announced their number at 281,725, 112,214 of which are Spanish and 163,110 are immigrants. According to the Cooperation Agreements of 1992 signed between the state and the Muslim community, every Muslim student is guaranteed the right of an Islamic education in a state and state-subsidised school of preschool, primary, or secondary education when a minimum of 10 students have made such a request. This demand is met in the autonomous communities of Andalusia, Aragon, Basque Country, Canary Islands and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, leaving Muslims in the greater part of the country without the possibility of taking classes in Islamic education. The number of teach-

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ers of Islamic religion in 2015 was 48, one more than in 2014 according to the data provided by the Andalusí Observatory (Observatorio Andalusí). In June 2016, the Islamic Commission of Spain denounced that there is still discrimination of Muslim students in schools compared to their Christian classmates based on the above facts.11

Since March 2016, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports passed a law on the implementation of the subject of Islamic religion in schools and high schools commencing in the academic year 2017-2018. The choice of the teachers and the contents of the subject will be controlled by the Spanish Islamic Commission [Comisión Islámica de España (CIE)].

On the subject of the existence of halal menus in schools, the Islamic Commission stated that in most of the cases its availability depends on the good will of the school. In this sense, the Muslims of Madrid (through the Spanish Islamic Commission) have talked to the community of Madrid about the topic;12 in Cataluña, the organisation ‘Muslims against Islamophobia’ (Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia) has succeeded in getting a halal menu for one school and continues to try for other schools.

In September 2016, Spanish Muslim student Takwa Rejeb was forbidden from wearing the hijab at a public high school in Valencia that was applying its rule of not allowing students to attend classes with covered heads. The Conselleria de Educació (Secretary of Education) of the Valencian community declared they would modify the law to let Muslim students attend classes while wearing the hijab in order to promote the cohabitation of religious and cultural diversity in educational centres. The case set an example for inclusive education.13

In order to avoid this kind of problems in the future, the Basque government quickly reacted and sent a letter to the schools of the region encouraging them not to prevent any public schools from accepting girls wearing the hijab. However, barely a month later in the region, the Spanish Muslim girl Meryem Echaniz was denied entrance to the high school she was studying for wearing the niqab. The characteristics of the niqab which covers the whole face except for the eyes are absolutely different from the hijab that only covers the head - and most of the times also the neck - but leaves the face uncovered. Amelia Barquín, professor of multicultural education at Mondragon University, argues that communication is essential in education and in

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the whole process of learning, and that the face plays a vital role in education. The Islamic community agreed with this line of thought.

Another interesting aspect is the way Muslims and Islam are presented in textbooks. Mayoral Arqué, Molina Luque and Samper Rasero (2012) analysed the images of Muslims and Islam in 246 textbooks from Catalonia. Although the authors claim that the material scrutinised cannot be qualified as Islamophobic, the absence of Muslims and Islam in the curriculum and their stereotypical and almost anecdotal portrayal when in fact presented (especially through images) could lead to what it has been called ‘Euroracism’ (Allen and Macey, 1990). The strategy of invisibility of Muslims and Islam could be interpreted as a subtle form of Islamophobia.

Politics

The year 2016 has been very unstable and atypical in the political scene in Spain. In December 2015, there were general elections that led to a new victory of the former conservative government, Partido Popular (People’s Party); the party, however, did not get enough votes to form an independent government and tried to form a coalition. The situation led to a series of unfruitful discussions among the leaders of the main political parties (Partido Popular, PSOE, Ciudadanos and Podemos) in an effort to form coalitions and, in the end, led to a new election process in June 2016. Finally, in November 2016, a new conservative government started a new term with the political support of Ciudadanos (Citizens).

All parties made a series of promises that potentially affected the Muslim community of Spain but, in this report, we will focus on the main parties in terms of electoral popularity. The leader of the Socialist Party (PSOE), Pedro Sánchez Castejón, held a series of interviews with several Muslim leaders from the Islamic Community of Spain where he announced his party’s firm commitment to prevent the spread of Islamophobia.

14. According to Amelia Barquín, covering the whole face with the niqab would hinder not only the mouth, through which the voice comes, but also hide facial expressions. The use of the niqab would affect not only the process of learning but also the social interrelations of the student. (Arantxa Aldaz, “Hay alumnas que van a la escuela con velo sin problemas,” Diario Vasco, (October 18, 2016), retrieved October 31, 2016, from http://www.diariovasco.com/gipuzkoa/201610/18/alumnas-velo-escuela-problemas-201610018001532-v.html.

15. Aziz Messaoudi, representative of the Islamic Federation of the Basque country, and Badar Hijra, from the Islamic University opened in San Sebastian, both claimed Meryem should not cover her face to attend high school and, like Barquín, they clearly distinguished the use of the hijab (allowed in high schools) from the exceptional case of the niqab. (See: Vozmediano, Ana, “‘Si Meryem quiere estudiar, debe destaparse el rostro’, advierte la Federación Islámica,” El Correo, (October 16, 2016), retrieved November 9, 2016, from http://www.elcorreo.com/bizkaia/sociedad/201610/16/meryem-quiere-estudiar-debe-20161015215728.html.


hate speech targeting the Muslim population.18 The Medina group (a federal Arab group within the socialist party) communicated with the representatives of the organisation Plataforma Ciudadana Contra la Islamofobia to be informed of the cases of Islamophobia in Spain.

The two parties occupy opposite ideological extremes of the political spectrum; Podemos (‘We can’) and Partido Popular are seen as having two radically different approaches to the Muslim community.

Podemos has been accused by conservative sectors of the opposition as having a very anti-Christian attitude, a firm opposition towards the Catholic Church, an inherent secularism, and a warm approach to Islam.19 The Muslim sector of the party, however, has rejected some of the measures contained in the party’s political programme such as the acceptance of homosexual marriage which they see as contravening the principles of their religion.20 Among other measures, Podemos claimed the Spanish state should apologise for the reconquest of Granada from the Muslims – an event which signified the end of the presence of Islam in Europe.21

The conservative party leading the government, Partido Popular, is the party that has always received the most accusations of being Islamophobic. Two of the party’s most controversial figures are the Mayor of Getafe Juan Soler, who was accused of promoting Islamophobia, hate speech and inciting confrontation with Muslims,22 and the former Major of the city of Badalona Xavier García Albiol, who stated his intent of erasing any trace of multiculturalism in the city in his last political campaign.23

The minority conservative party, VOX, has also been accused of promoting Islamophobia. In this sense, its leader Santiago Abascal launched a video24 explaining that the party is in favour of the defense of Christian values and against the appli-

cation of Islamic law in Spain, an approach that he calls ‘freedom’ rather than ‘Islamophobia’. The vice secretary of the youth of the organisation, Inma Sequi, posted some controversial tweets in July in which she accused the Association of Young Muslims of not condemning DAESH and thus of being accomplices by virtue of their silence.  

**Media**

Media discourse, as Van Dijk (2000) contends, is the main source from which citizens obtain their knowledge and build their attitudes and ideologies. The responsibility of the media in creating, spreading and encouraging hate speech is undeniable; more specifically, the media’s role in fostering Islamophobia is essential.

Due to space constraints, we will briefly analyse some representative samples of Islamophobia in the media and social media.

- **‘PP y Podemos se ponen de acuerdo... para permitir una mezquita ultra en Las Palmas’**  
  (PP and Podemos agreed... to allow the building of an ultra mosque in Las Palmas).

  The above headline is an example of a biased presentation of a piece of news. The headline announces the unexpected agreement between the two most antagonistic political parties, PP (the conservative party heading the government) and Podemos (a far left party), to allow the building of a new mosque in Las Palmas. The unexpected nature of the news is not caused by this strange coalition but by the subject of the agreement expressed by the journalist through the use of ellipsis. The use of the adjective ‘ultra’ introduces an alarmist nuance since it predicts the mosque could potentially be a training centre for terrorists. Furthermore, the use of the phrase ‘en suelo público’ (on public soil) highlights the fact that the mosque will be paid for by taxpayers’ money.

- **“La edil musulmana de Podemos-CUP pide a los musulmanes que se aprovechen de occidente”**  
  (The Muslim local politician of Podemos-CUP asks Muslims to take advantage of the West.)

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28. This article was on the Internet for many months until recently when it was removed from the original page. http://www.baluartedigital.com/articulo/separatismo/edil-musulmana-podemos-cup-pide-musulmanes-aprovechen-de-occidente/2016012612450001408.html. Still one can find the article on many other Internet sites (blogs, forums, etc) that reproduce it like http://elperroflauta.com/2016/01/27/la-edil-musulmana-de-podemos-cup-pide-a-los-musulmanes-que-se-aprovechen-de-occidente/; https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10154052470094728&c id=51727889727 or http://amaprojimo.blogspot.com.es/2016/01/la-edil-musulmana-de-podemos-cup-pide.html among others (retrieved December 9, 2016).
The above headline identifies the subject of the action (“to ask”) not by her proper name (Fátima Taleb Moussaqui), as it is mentioned later in the article, but by her religion (Muslim), her political affiliation (Podemos-CUP), and position (local representative in the city hall). By using this linguistic strategy, the writer chooses to shadow her individuality in order to foreground the idea that this is the typical expected behaviour of both Muslims and politicians affiliated to Podemos. From the privileged position that allows her discourse to address a larger number of people, the politician incites the Muslim community to take advantage of the social benefits that Western society offers its citizens.

The coverage by the media of all news related to terrorist attacks where Muslims are involved is also biased. On the 20 December, a terrorist attack shook the city of Berlin when a lorry driven by a terrorist killed 12 and injured 48 in a Christmas market.\(^{29}\) The DAESH claimed responsibility for the event the following day. On the very same day, an Islamic centre in Zurich was attacked by a Swiss man who killed one and injured three more before committing suicide.\(^{30}\) Though both news stories appeared in the written press, the amount of detail, time and attention devoted to both clearly differ. On national television, many channels did not even mention the Zurich attack while all channels devoted time to explain thoroughly the Berlin terrorist attack with the fear-inducing idea that Europe was threatened again by “Islamic terrorism”.

**Justice system**

After the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, the government and most of the political parties\(^{31}\) with representation in the Spanish Congress signed the antiterrorism agreement. Special emphasis was placed on the spread of terrorist discourse online, the praise of any terrorist activity and the toughening of the sentences for terrorism.\(^ {32}\)

The criminal law was substantially changed to adapt to the new terrorism of groups like DAESH and there was a strengthening of the functions of security forces, prison officers, judges and prosecutors.

There are almost 7,000 Muslim prisoners in Spanish prisons. In 2006, a decree law on religious assistance for minority religions in prisons was passed and in 2015, an agreement for religious assistance in centres with foreign in-


\(^{31}\) Most of the political parties signed the agreement except Convergencia Democrática de Cataluña (CDC), Esquerra Republicana de Cataluña (ERC), Izquierda Unida (IU), el Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) and Podemos rejected it.

mates was signed. However, the number of imams in the prisons is still insufficient and in many autonomous communities, like Baleares, there is no imam assisting Muslim inmates.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has created a plan to deradicalise the prisoners with the support of imams, psychologists and prison officers. However, the participation of imams in this project is facing many difficulties such as the lack of enough religious leaders; the mistrust of the inmates; the tight budget imposed by the administration; the number of candidates proposed by the Islamic communities who are rejected by the authorities; and the lack of knowledge of Spanish.

Muslims also lack hospital support since no imams have been hired in health facilities and there is no religious assistance despite the guarantees offered in the Co-operation Agreement signed in 1992.

Internet

With the advent of the Internet, cyber Islamophobia has seen a large increase (Awan 2012; Larsson 2007), with spaces on the Internet now becoming a platform for the spreading of such rhetoric. Cyber Islamophobia takes place primarily in blogs and social media, and also in online sites of traditional media outlets.

To check the existence and degree of cyber Islamophobia in Spain, we analysed 1,000 tweets from the social media platform Twitter in 2016 - a number large enough to draw some representative conclusions concerning trends of thought and discursive patterns. The tweets were retrieved based on a number of popular Islamophobic hashtags such as #StopIslamización (#StopIslamization). The content of the tweets follow the same patterns we have observed in our previous studies on cyber Islamophobia where the tweets were in English and the countries of origin were the U.S., England and Ireland.

34. Imran Awan, “I’m a Muslim not an Extremist: How the prevent strategy has constructed a ‘Suspect Community’,” Politics&Policy, Vol. 40, No. 6 (2012), p. 1158-1185.
36. Twitter has been a global favourite and an immensely popular social network since its beginning. In July 2014, it had more than 500 million registered users, 271 million of whom are active - that is to say, they frequently post 140-character messages called “tweets”.
37. We also retrieved tweets that contained the following hashtags: #EuropaDespierta (#WakeupEurope); #EldaYihad (#ThisistheJihad); #IslamesPaz (#IslamisPeace); #StopCristianofobia (#StopChristianphobia); #StopYihadismo (#StopJihadism); #niunomas (#Notanyonemore); #noisvosden (#Theyareinvadingus); #nosedestruyen (#Theyaredestroyingus); #Nueviperionespato (#TheSpanishEmpirecomesback); #stopcensura (#StopCensorship); #sincerodonohaymezquita (#there is no mosque with a pig); #stopmezquita (#stopmosque).
The observed general patterns in the content of the tweets, both textual and visual, follow the following clichés:

• Mention of felonies, offences or crimes committed by individual Muslims from any country (not necessarily Spain) that are generalised as the typical behaviour of the whole religious community, and are therefore extended to Spanish Muslims. Especially frequent are the tweets with content related to male adult Muslims physically and emotionally abusing children and women.

• The lexical choices used to refer to Muslims and Islam include pejorative terms such as the nouns: *chusma, basura* (rubbish) or *trapo* (cloth, to refer to the hijab); lexical phrases such as ¡quéasco de moros! (How nauseating Moors are!), *religión de la paz* (the religion of peace, used in an ironic sense usually after the report of a crime committed by a Muslim). The settlement of Muslims in Europe is described as ‘the Black Black Plague of Europe’.

• Propensity to take pro-Israel stances which are conflated with anti-Palestine stances or, in more simplistic terms, being pro-Jewish and anti-Muslim.

• Tendency to identify the leftist political parties, especially *Podemos*, as pro-Islam and anti-Christian. In this sense, voting for *Podemos* is presented in a fear-inducing context which brings in the aspects mentioned above.

(1) La secreta relación entre el islam y los progresistas... #StopIslamizacion #PodestaEmails

The secret relationship between Islam and the progressists\(^{39}\) #StopIslamization #PodestaEmails

• Most of the profile pictures and sometimes the handle names and display pictures of Islamophobic speakers contain symbols related to the Spanish nation. In most cases, it is the constitutional Spanish flag, other times an image of former warriors (mainly Templars or crusaders) as it can be seen in figure 2. By putting the flag by their handle name the speakers vindicate their position as genuine patriots and the incompatibility of the latter with the acceptance of Islamic values. An example of such a tweet is the following:

(2) El Islam es incompatible con nuestra cultura, #StopIslamización Ni una mezquita más.

Islam is incompatible with our culture #StopIslamization. Not another mosque.

\(^{39}\) By the use of the term ‘progressists’, most of the Islamophobes refer to people whose political opinions are closer to those of the leftish parties - *Podemos* is considered one of the most outstanding such parties.
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- Particularly striking (because of the frequency of tweets with this content) are the tweets encouraging a campaign against the building of any new mosque. The suggested procedures to prevent this include urging citizens to bury parts of pigs on the chosen land. Usual hashtags include #concerdonohaymezquita (#there is no mosque with a pig) and #stopmezquita (#stopmosque). (Figure 3)

Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Both civil society and political initiatives were taken in 2016 to counter Islamophobia at different levels. The annual reports on Islamophobia published, among others, by organisations such as Plataforma ciudadana contra la Islamofobia o el Observatorio Andalusi, conferences, seminars, workshops, meetings and talks stand as proof of this. The result of the work, which takes place in cooperation with public and state institutions, is essential to start tackling the problem.

In this sense, there have been other steps to stop the daily occurrence of Islamophobia, aside from the ones already mentioned in this report, such as a plan launched by the city hall of Barcelona, the bill presented by the political party

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Compromís to address hate speech directed to Muslims, women and children, or the award by the government of Valencia to people fighting hate speech.

The Andalusian government launched the ‘red anti-rumores’ (anti-gossip network) as a project involving different social agents such as social organisations, experts on migrations and people working towards more egalitarian societies. The aim of the project is to bring about positive change and favour perceptions and attitudes on cultural diversity. The culture section of the Andalusian government also gave state funding to the city of Ceuta to foster educational projects in the Islamic Community.

The academic world is not oblivious to the reality of Islamophobia and a group of students from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) designed a campaign against Islamophobia in November and December. A student organisation from the University of León, criticised the speeches by Raad Salam which were organised by the city hall for the spreading of Islamophobia and hate speech targeting Muslims.

Other important and relevant initiatives carried out by individuals include the meeting of outstanding representatives of both the Christian and Islamic faith to encourage believers of both faiths to work together for peace.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report has presented some of the realities related to Islamophobia in Spanish society in 2016 at institutional, social, discursive and interpersonal levels. Islamophobia in Spain is unfortunately an increasing reality that requires awareness of the dimension of the problem in order to eradicate it.

To reach this target, the conjoint effort and cooperation of the state, academic institutions, civil society and media are necessary. While a minority sector of the population is inherently Islamophobic, there is a majority of citizens whose rejection of Islam is due to mere ignorance of the principles of the religion and fear derived directly from lack of knowledge.

Research is needed to identify and assess the factors contributing to the rise of Islamophobia in Spain. Following this, it would be easier to convey the real consequences of both structural and social Islamophobia to public bodies such as the Security Forces and the justice system.


Education, as always, is the key. Not only the education of future generations of citizens but also that of future educators is paramount. This education must involve how to tackle discrimination and must enable citizens to face and deal with such practices with the best possible tools. In this sense, education offering direct knowledge of the Muslim community could help the majority of citizens learn about the true nature of Islam and Muslims, and could remove many of people’s prejudices, judgments and a priori opinions.

The media should also be educated since a section of the media is responsible of many of the images and stereotypes about Muslims and Islam among citizens. The media frequently offer skewed and partial information.

Civil society needs more institutional support and resources from the state since it is the best vehicle to channel individual complaints and organise them; civil society can be the push that triggers the change in institutions.

Legislation on hate speech and, above all, cyber hate speech should get tougher. There is a strong need for more control on the spread of racism online.

The state should make a serious commitment to implement the demands of the Muslim community whose basic needs are guaranteed by law but often ignored, such as the right to bury their dead.

To summarise, dialogue between state, civil society, academia and media is absolutely essential to eradicate the problem of Islamophobia in Spain.

Chronology

- **23 March:** Posters were hanged a far right group on the façade of the Al Rahman Mosque in Salamanca containing Islamophobic messages.
- Attack on the M-30 Mosque in the course of which posters with Islamophobic messages were placed on it and fireworks were thrown at it. The perpetrators belong to a neo-Nazi group.
- Attack on a mosque in Zamora.
- Attack on a mosque in Granada.
- Attack on a mosque in Soria.

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52.Ibid.
• **28 March:** Attack on Hamza Mosque in Barcelona and on the Islamic Cultural Centre with pig skin, guts and blood just 6 days after the Brussels attacks.53

• **30 March:** Islamophobic graffiti on the cultural Islamic Centre al Annor in Denia (Alicante) hours after the Brussels attacks.54

• **12 April:** 2,000 kg of items (including clothes, shoes and hygiene products) for the refugees of Calais are burnt in Mérida. Racist graffiti is found around Calais.55

• **25 April:** Youssef El Arabi, a forward of Granada Football Club from the Spanish Premier League, was insulted by Diego Mariño, the goalkeeper of the opponent team (Levante Football Club), who told him he was “a shitty Moor who was going to fail the penalty”.56

• **26 April:** A member of the Security Forces killed a Moroccan citizen after an argument on Highway A3 in Madrid.57

• **2 June:** Controversy in Moralzarzal for the opening of an Islamic centre.58

• **14 June:** Archbishop Cañizares is sued for the words he used against what he called “the gay empire” (i.e. the gay lobby) and refugees.59

• **22 June:** The movement against intolerance criticises the institutional apathy on increasing racism, xenophobia and intolerance.60

• Salamanca stands out as the region with greatest number of groups of neo-Nazi ideology.61

• **4 July:** Demonstration in Corella (Navarre) against the building of a Salafi mosque.62

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61. Ibid.

• 27 July: A report on Islamophobia commissioned by the city hall of Barcelona recommends the building of a large mosque in the city.63
• 6 August: The political party Compromís makes a proposal to the government of Valencia to deal with bullying and hate, gender crimes and offences.64
• 29 August: A young woman is threatened by a neighbour because she was wearing the hijab. She saw her own photo posted on the neighbour’s Facebook wall together with threatening and insulting messages.65
• 1 September: A young member of the Security Forces of Spain is denied promotion with the excuse that he would prioritise his ethnic perspective over his institutional duties.66
• 3 September: A Moroccan man is stabbed to death by a neighbour in Murcia.67
• 4 September: Neighbours in Abarán (Murcia) collect signatures to make a formal claim against the construction of a mosque.68
• 7 September: A pregnant woman who wears the niqab is attacked by two individuals in Barcelona.69
• 16 September: Islamophobic posters appear on the door of the Benlliure High School in Valencia after the school forbade the attendance of a student wearing a hijab.70
• 19 September: A popular event in Mataró (Barcelona) that included the cooking of paella is qualified as discriminating since it contained pork in a neighbourhood

highly populated by Muslims.71

- **27 September**: The mosque of Estrecho and Tetuán (Madrid) are vandalised with Islamophobic graffiti.72
- **28 September**: The principal of a state-subsidised school sends an Islamophobic and homophobic letter to the students’ parents.73
- **7 October**: The Andalusian government makes a call to fund educational projects related to the Islamic community in the city of Ceuta.74
- **12 October**: The University of León, joined later by the political party IU (*Izquierda Unida*) asked for the cancellation of a talk by Raad Salam on the grounds that he encourages hatred towards Muslims.75
- **21 October**: Hicham Mohamed, a young man from Ceuta, is shot by a member of the Security Forces (First Sergeant of the Legion) when he tried to defend a group of kids from two men.76
- **31 October**: Neighbours of Cartaya (Huelva) oppose the building of a mosque.77
- **1 November**: Protestants and Muslims ask the new government for more cemeteries adjusted to their religious faith and the legal regulation of the burials according to the Islamic ritual.78
- **7 November**: The director of religious affairs of the Catalan government states a sector of the public cemetery of Lérida will be devoted to Islamic burials.79

• The local police of Córdoba trains 40 officers on hate crimes and offences. 80

• 9 November: A mosque is vandalised with Islamophobic graffiti in Tenerías (Álava). 81

• 12 November: A mosque in Vitoria (Basque Country) is vandalised with graffiti and a pig’s head. 82

• 22 November: The government of Madrid discusses a bill against hate crimes and offences that could fine up to 45,000 euros to perpetrators. 83

• 26 November: Agreement among all political parties to build a Muslim cemetery in Sagunto (Valencia). 84

• 20 December: Lola Merino and Andrea Levy, members of the party in government (Partido Popular), blame both the refugees (in the first case) and the whole Islamic civilization (in the second) for the Berlin attack. 85

• 23 December: A Spanish Muslim woman sues her company in order to be able to wear the hijab to work. 86

• 27 December: Spain refuses to give Spanish nationality and residence to Muna, the baby who was born in the sea and rescued by the Spanish frigate “Navarra”, and to her mother. 87


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.