EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2016

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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

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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 \(\text{EIR}\), 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 \(\text{EIR}\) 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 \(\text{EIR}\)’s primary contribution is to reveal the tendencies of Islamophobia and to give representative examples of its overall unfolding in the investigated states.

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Recognition of Islamophobia

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

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

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

Policy Recommendations for European Countries

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

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

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

We see that Muslim women are among the most vulnerable direct victims of Islamophobia. ENAR has conducted a report on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women and presented 37 recommendations, which we can only underscore given the findings of our report.6 Women who are visibly Muslim are socially ostracised in many places. The combination of internal community prob-

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

⁷ https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/europe/france-head-scarf-court.html?_r=0
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Executive Summary

The year began with policy announcements from the erstwhile Prime Minister David Cameron regarding funding for English language classes for Muslim women he deemed were ‘traditionally submissive’ and therefore unable in some cases to combat the radicalisation of their sons.

The event signalled another shift in discourse that targeted perceived cultural and social lack amongst Muslims and tied them to social ills, often but not exclusively linked with terrorism. Other forms of discursive Islamophobia emerged or escalated around the issues of radicalisation of children; disloyalty to Britain and British values; and immigration, migration and refugees.

Policies and laws reflected this shift, with further laws mooted to combat extremism, which were criticised by some police figures as creating thought policing. Policies in education further reflected this shift and the year saw the official schools inspectorate announced it would downgrade schools that allowed girls and young women to wear nikab.

The focus on women continued with more attacks against women reported as victims of reported Islamophobic hate crimes, in particular the assault of a pregnant woman who miscarried as a result. Nevertheless the Casey review into integration lay the blame for Muslim marginalisation on Muslim failure to integrate into society.

Media representation of Muslims continued to be problematic, however a number of campaigns and initiatives, sought to tackle individual infractions of existing press regulation codes, as well as more strategic campaigns focusing on effecting more structural change.

The statutory Prevent duty continued to cause alarm, with more cases of Muslim profiling of children as young as 4 years of age being reported.

The two highly significant electoral events of the year – the mayoral contest for London and the EU Referendum – both had highly charge campaigns that instrumentalised Islamophobic and racist discourse.

Civil society mobilisation, particularly amongst Muslim groups, was further curtailed by the shifting narrative which continued to delegitimise mobilisation around issues of racism.
Introduction

The year saw a consolidation of the Prevent strategy by the government, with numerous cases of outrageous and prejudiced referrals of children being reported. The prevalence of a ‘British values’ narrative continued within political and media circles, and became part of the educational inspectorate’s criteria for grading schools.

Whilst there were few ‘dramatic’ events e.g. new laws or high profile, UK security related incidents (e.g. attacks or plots), there continued to be a steady discourse in institutional, political and media circles that either directly or indirectly securitised the idea of Muslims, in many cases dovetailing the narrative with that of ‘British values’ thus marking out Muslims as an existential threat by virtue of cultural non-compliance. This blurring and mixing of subalternising narratives and tropes became a feature of the first half of the year, starting with the erstwhile Prime Minister’s conflation of Muslim women’s alleged inability to speak English properly and the ‘radicalisation’ of their sons.

In the aftermath of the referendum to leave the EU in June, a spike in hate attacks across minority communities, highlighted the impact of demonised rhetoric across the campaign with a spike in hate attacks across communities. This legitimisation of not just Islamophobic discourse (already a key facet of the environment) but other forms of racist discourse continued with the media focus on the U.S. presidential election campaign. Thus ideas e.g. of banning Muslims became widely discussed on social media platforms by right-wing activists. However the lauding of Trump amongst parts of the right leaning commentariat provided wider legitimisation of such ideas, leaving the year’s end with a discernible deterioration in discursive practice vis-à-vis, Islam and Muslims.

Significant Incidents and Developments

The first half of the year continued to be shaped by ongoing discursive practice from the Conservative government, sections of the media, including parts of the commentariat regarding Muslims through the lens of the following tropes: the subjugation of Muslim women; terrorism and security related issues; radicalisation of children; disloyalty to Britain and British values; and immigration, migration and refugees.

The election campaign for the Mayoral Election in May, and the campaign for the EU referendum were both characterised by accusations of racism. The murder of MP Jo Cox by a man shouting ‘Britain First’ brought an eventual spotlight onto the rise of far-right extremism, however it had little impact on the outcome of the referendum or in bringing an understanding amongst the electorate at large of the prevalence of racism. The end of the year saw the leader of Ukip (the main proponent of the UK leaving the EU) accusing the widower of the deceased MP and his wife of supporting ‘extremists’.
The impact of the shock Leave victory in the EU referendum (Brexit) on 23 June saw a huge spike in anti-Muslim and other racist attacks, and the second half of the year saw a rise in a particular enmeshing of Islamophobic tropes and other forms of racism in political discourse around immigration. The connection between Brexit and the rise in hate crime was acknowledged by police forces and figures.1

Whilst there were examples of mobilisation against racism, the post-Brexit environment has proven to be an extended heightened period of disarray and instability that has made effective political intervention at every level difficult and unchartered.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

In April, a report by Nabil Khattab and Shereen Hussein presented a report involving the data analysis of survey data from 245,000 women in the UK that found inter alia, that the unemployment rate for Muslim women was between 5.9% and 27%, depending on their ethnic background, and that for white non-Muslim women was 3.5%.

The proportion of Muslim women working in professional and managerial jobs varied from 8.5% to 23%, depending on their ethnicity, compared to 32% for white non-Muslim women.

The researchers then adjusted the data to compare Muslim and non-Muslim women who had the same level of education, family situation and age, and found that Muslim women were less likely to be employed. Significant results were obtained for:

• First-generation Muslim women of Bangladeshi origin, who were over six times more likely to be unemployed than white non-Muslim women with the same background. First generation Muslim Pakistani and Muslim Black women were four times more likely to be unemployed.

• The proportion of Muslim women who had managerial or professional jobs varied from around 20% to 40% of that of white British women, depending on their ethnicity.2

The Employment Lawyers Association3 reported at the end of 2015 in the case of Naeem v Secretary of State for Justice that in a case brought regarding the lower pay afforded to Muslim chaplains in prison than to Christians was non-discriminatory.


Regardless of the prevalence of such data and cases, public narrative regarding the factors contributing to Muslims’ lower employment rates failed to highlight the role of discrimination based on religion. According to Nabeel Khattab, Muslims face the worse job discrimination than any other group in the UK, with Muslim men 76% less likely to have a job of any kind compared to white male British Christians. Saied Ameli and Arzu Merali’s analysis of survey data found over 45% of Muslim respondents had experienced discrimination at work.

Yet the end of the year saw the situation described in a government commissioned review on integration, as a sign that Muslims had failed to integrate rather than the result of systemic and systematic discrimination and structural disadvantage.

**Education**

Systematic research into issues surrounding curricula at schools is unavailable, however anecdotal complaints about the contents of some textbooks abound. This includes complaints being reported regarding inclusion of content on ISIL/DAESH in geography books, as well as poor or extremely biased material on Israel/Palestine.

The school and university continued to be undermined as safe spaces for Muslim students with a number of incidents of attacks, graffiti, vandalism of Muslim spaces reported e.g. a pig’s head was left outside Markazul Aloom School in Blackburn. Various incidents of students being attacked while near school or campus were reported including cases targeting women and girls who wear headscarves or nikabs e.g. the students attacked at King’s College, London, whilst security guards watched in March. In another incident, an 11-year-old boy had bleach poured into his eyes by other schoolchildren in Great Barr, on his way home in September.

The impact of Brexit on Muslims’ (and others’) experience of racism in school spaces was dramatic with reports of children being abused by other children and told to “Go home”, as well as by strangers approaching the school to shout at Muslim,

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black and Eastern European children, specifically referring to the Brexit vote which was seen by perpetrators of such acts as legitimization of their prejudices and their acts.

The mutual constitution of a hate environment within education as an institution and within educational spaces continued with a number of policies, the dovetailing of the continued implementation of Prevent and the focus on the provision of teaching of fundamental British values (itself a term coined in the development of Prevent), as well as the continuing fall-out from the so-called Trojan Horse affair. As the situation stands, all schools are expected to teach fundamental British values across the curriculum [as well as in specific lessons of citizenship in state school curriculum where teaching of ‘spiritual, moral, social and cultural’ (SMSC) values is traditionally located] according to slightly different requirements according to school type. HM Schools Inspectorate Ofsted stated to assess schools inter alia on the basis of promotion of British values in SMSC, the curriculum and in leadership.13

In January, a website was launched by the Department for Education claiming to provide parents, teachers and school leaders on protecting children from radicalisation. It was launched by Education Secretary Nicky Morgan in January 2016, at Bethnal Green Academy in East London – the secondary school where 4 students left for Syria to join DAESH. However the DfE failed to consult a single Muslim organisation during the website’s development. A Freedom of Information (FOI) response showed that the government consulted 29 organisations including government departments, faith-based groups, various teaching associations, and charities over the content of the Educate Against Hate website — but none representing Britain’s Muslim community.14

In January, the issue of niqab came to the fore again, as the Schools Inspectorate Ofsted stated they would downgrade the rating of any school that allowed girls to cover their faces with a niqab.15 In May, it was reported a school in Leeds with a majority Muslim intake prevented a student from wearing a jilbab. The reasons cited involved ‘safeguarding’ a term initially associated with discourse surrounding child welfare, in particular with regard to vulnerability to abuse, but which has been co-opted into PREVENT language vis-à-vis supposed radicalisation. In either event it is another marker of how Muslim identity, rather than being accommodated is increasingly demonised and criminalised.

The repercussions of the Trojan Horse/Hoax affair of 2014 continued. Numerous banning orders were issued against people allegedly involved in the affair, however some legal challenges had impact on the pronouncements of the Department of Education. Waseem Yaqub O.B.E. was chair of the board of governors at Al-Hijrah Islamic School, the entirety of which was dismissed by the DfE after a two-year campaign by Birmingham City Council to destabilise one of the best schools in the city. The dismissals came after an inspection following the so-called Trojan Horse affair in which six other schools with majority Muslim board of governors were subjected to an Islamophobic witch-hunt after the circulation of a hoax letter suggesting a sinister plot by radical Muslims to take over some Birmingham schools.

Al-Hijrah School, which caters for pupils aged 4-16, was one of the most sought after schools in Birmingham until it was placed in special measures in 2014. All official inquiries cleared Al-Hijrah School governors of any involvement in the ‘Trojan Horse Conspiracy’.

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan wrote to Mr Yaqub on 29 June, 2015 informing him of her intention to issue a direction preventing him from assuming the post of governor again. The letter invited him to send in representations as to why that would not be appropriate, which Mr Yaqub did by instructing solicitors to challenge the DfE’s conduct. As soon as the DfE received the legal letter, it ran for cover and tried to retract its original letter. In fresh correspondence sent on 29 February, 2016 the DfE says that while it rejects the criticisms made by Mr Yaqub’s solicitors it wishes to withdraw the earlier letter.

Later in the year a judge found that the Schools Inspectorate Ofsted’s claim that the schools targeted by its actions were discriminating against women by imposing gender segregation in school was incorrect and that no legal breach had taken place. The judge stated that there is no evidence that gender segregation disadvantages women, and that further as both sexes were denied interaction there was no disadvantage to one over the other.16 This did not however translate into a major revision of the narrative against either the Trojan Horse teachers and schools, or the trope in general that Muslims push gender segregation as a way to disadvantage Muslim women. Indeed the stigma of being a student from a Trojan Horse school has surfaced in 2016 in an employment discrimination case. A Muslim teaching assistant sacked after objecting to children being shown a graphic video of the 9/11 horrors found that that staff had raised concerns about her background, mentioning her position of Head Girl at Saltley School - one of the schools implicated in the ‘Trojan Horse’ scandal.

Two teachers, who had been banned from teaching as a result of their association with the affair, had their bans quashed by the High Court in October.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite the foregoing, no apologies, redress or restitution have been made regarding the affair. The school space as an arena for Muslim parents, teachers and governors to express their agency as individuals or groups, in a manner similar to other citizens and other citizens’ groups, remains curtailed. As the militarization of British public space continues apace,\textsuperscript{18} it was highly significant that one of the so-called Trojan Horse schools, Park View, now rebranded as Rockwood School opened a military cadet unit that was widely reported across national television as being the first to do so in a predominantly Muslim school.\textsuperscript{19} The symbolism of the move and the reporting dovetails with the Fundamental British Values agenda, used against the schools involved, replacing perceived Muslim deviance (Muslim identities) with Muslim loyalty (inculcation in the British Armed Forces).

The impact of the Counter-Terrorism Act and the Trojan Horse affair combined is impactful not just in arenas where prejudice and anti-Muslim sentiment already exists, but has been instrumental in creating division and undermining educational institutions that have taken principled stances against racism. According to Rob Ferguson, the two are instrumental and creating suspicion within institutions, as well as panic that these institutions could be targets.\textsuperscript{20}

Numerous referrals of children to the police and/or the Channel (government mandate deradicalisation) programme were reported across the year. According to figures obtained by the Press Association, a total of 4,611 people, including more than 2,000 children and teenagers, were earmarked for possible intervention by the Channel scheme from the start of July 2015 to the end of June 2016 - equivalent to 12 a day. The tally was a 75% rise on the previous year, when there were 2,632 referrals.\textsuperscript{21}

Many of the cases that came to light were roundly criticised by civil society and highlight the level of prejudice operating in the consideration of Muslim children’s behaviour. Referrals included, a 4-year-old child who drew a picture of a cucumber at nursery which he mispronounced ‘cucum bum’,\textsuperscript{22} and a 10-year-old boy who


\textsuperscript{18}Ameli/Merali, Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK.

\textsuperscript{19}BBC Midlands Today, “A Birmingham school which was once at the heart of the so-called Trojan Horse affair has now opened up a military cadet unit,” facebook.com/midlandstoday/, (uploaded on October 4, 2016), retrieved December 6, 2016, from https://www.facebook.com/midlandstoday/videos/10154549900864761/?pnref=story.


wrote responses in a creative writing task that a character lived in a ‘terrorist’ house (meaning a ‘terraced’ house).  

**Politics**

The two major electoral events of the year featured Islamophobia heavily. The election campaign run by Conservative Mayoral candidate for London, Zac Goldsmith, was accused of using Islamophobia to target his Labour opponent and eventual winner Sadiq Khan. This included accusing Khan of supporting extremism and sharing a platform with an extremist. The accusation was then repeated in Parliament by the Prime Minister and subsequently out of Parliament by the Defense Minister Michael Fallon. The campaign was roundly criticised, including by Goldsmith’s sister Jemima herself a convert to Islam.

Additionally, the campaign survey results for potential voters in London found that 1 in 3 did not want to see a Muslim become mayor of London.

The campaign for the Leave group in the EU Referendum held on 23 June was also accused of instrumentalising Islamophobia both as a trope against Muslims already in the UK, as well as raising the specter of increased Muslim immigration by remaining within the EU. Two pieces of advertising for the Leave campaign came in for particular criticism. A poster unveiled by Ukip leader Nigel Farage two weeks before the referendum featured a line of what appeared to be Syrian migrants in Europe. The picture, an actual piece of reportage from the so-called migrant crisis, was captioned: “Breaking point: the EU has failed us all.”

This came less than four weeks after the poster for the Leave campaign entitled “Turkey (a country of 76 million) is joining the EU: Vote Leave.” The poster was accompanied by comments from the campaign stating:

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“Since the birthrate in Turkey is so high, we can expect to see an additional million people added to the UK population from Turkey alone within eight years. This will not only increase the strain on Britain’s public services, but it will also create a number of threats to UK security. Crime is far higher in Turkey than the UK. Gun ownership is also more widespread. Because of the EU’s free movement laws, the government will not be able to exclude Turkish criminals from entering the UK.”

The resignation of a leading member of the Leave campaign days before the EU referendum over an anti-Muslim tweet was a frightening reminder of the hate-filled political climate that prevailed.

Arabella Arkwright, a businesswoman who sat on the board and finance committee of Vote Leave, was forced to resign after details of her Twitter activities were exposed in the media.

They included an image of a white girl in the middle of a group of people wearing burqas saying: “Britain 2050: why didn’t you stop them Grandad?” and a link from Tommy Robinson, the founder of the far right English Defence League, suggesting UK Muslims were trying to build an Islamic state in Britain. The fact that such a high-ranking member of the Leave campaign has chosen to engage publicly in such repugnant Islamophobic chatter is illustrative of what Ameli and Merali described as the environment of hate that governs the perception and treatment of minorities.

The year was punctuated with various interventions from political figures, including erstwhile Prime Minister David Cameron beginning the year with a speech claiming that Muslim women were ‘traditionally submissive’ and lacked English skills, making them unable to tackle the radicalisation of their sons. The announcement deeply offended many Muslim women who started the hashtag trend on Twitter #traditionallysubmissive with pictures of themselves listing their achievements. (Figure 3) Despite the outcry from civil society figures over these comments, Cameron did not retract them.

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28. Ameli/Merali, Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK.
The year ended with the launch of the Casey Review into Integration and Opportunity. The report supposedly looked at the challenges faced by communities. It was widely lauded by UKIP, some government ministers and politicians, and various parts of the commentariat. However it was also deeply criticised for methodological failings, and an obsession with Islam and Muslims, with the word Muslim used 249 times in a 200 page report (with the Polish community mentioned only 12 times), and Islam mentioned over 100 times. Many critics charged it with likely to worsen community relations.

The report summarised a shift in political discourse regarding social mores generally, which has instrumentalised Islamophobic rhetoric and tropes to legitimise a move away from the idea of government responsibility vis-à-vis social issues like poverty, disadvantage and racism. Thus the rhetoric of the Casey Review echoed tropes about Muslims and minorities who suffer disadvantage in employment as bearing the responsibility for this by not integrating (enough). The effect of racism on such disadvantage or social and economic factors relating to class or regional disadvantages is entirely overlooked, and even portrayed as fictitious.32

The coming to power of Theresa May after the resignation of David Cameron as Prime Minister was seen as concerning given May’s history of anti-Muslim policy and rhetoric. Various commentators and civil society organisations pointed to her history as Home Secretary in enacting laws and pursuing policies, particularly counterterrorism policies that targeted Muslims. These included the expansion of the Prevent duty and making it a legal duty, as well as the revocation of nationality of dual nationals which led to the stripping of citizenship of dozens of British nationals on the pretext of the national interest.33

It is significant that there has been a consistent feeling that political discourse has worsened with regard to Islamophobia and racism, particularly after the murder of MP Jo Cox. This is alarming not least because the survey of Muslims in 2014 by the IHRC found that between the 2010 and 2014 results for the question, “How often have you heard Islamophobic comments by politicians?” had significantly worsened. (Figure 4) Significantly the ‘sometimes’ experience had trebled and the ‘never hearing such comments’ had reduced by over half. The qualitative responses for that survey laid blame across party lines, with leaders in particular being blamed regardless of party.34

34. Ameli/Merali, The Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK.
35. Ibid
Media

The media came under intense scrutiny from campaigners who highlighted the focus of certain newspapers, in particular the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, for an inappropriate focus on migrants, immigration and Muslims. By the end of the year a campaign entitled Stop Funding Hate had targeted advertisers in some of these publications to stop their contracts as a protest against the continued demonisation of migrants.36

Sections of the commentariat continued to promote Islamophobic narratives including raising the specter of Muslims: as a terror threat and inimical to British values; sexual abusers; misogynists; downtrodden women; potential terrorists. A case study in point is the work of former reality TV star Katie Hopkins turned commentator and broadcaster. In December 2016, she issued an apology as did the paper that hosts her column *The Daily Mail*, as well as paying out £150,000 in damages to a family they accused of having terrorist connections.37 During the year she had taken aim at migrants38 and the Mayor of London.39

The TV show *Citizen Khan* was criticised by a group of Labour MPs in Parliament as Islamophobic. The MPs raised for the first time in Parliament a complaint that media culture has an unrestrained Islamophobic temper at the current time.40

In July, the UK Parliament was shut down and MPs were evacuated after a package containing white powder. On the same day suspicious letters containing a white powder and racist abuse had also been sent to several Islamic centres in London. The letters also featured drawings of a mosque that was crossed out. The same message was sent to Labour Party peer for Rotherham Lord Ahmed.41 This type of hate attack is familiar to many Islamic centres and personalities, and has been a feature over the years. However the scale of this and the fact that the UK Parliament was also targeted suggests an escalation in bravado as well as ambition and organisation on the part of perpetrators. The far-right narrative of British institutional betrayal of the ‘white’ nation ‘for

38. See e.g. Katie Hopkins, “It’s a Jungle in Calais all right but the desperate migrants menacing our truckers aren’t the real problem - it’s the ones we never see that you need to worry about,” dailymail.co.uk, (August 26, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/mostread/article-3760011/Its-Jungle-Calais-right-desperate-migrants-menacing-truckers-arent-real-problem-ones-never-see-worry-KATIE-HOPKINS-runs-gauntlet-lorry-drivers-Britain-border.html#ixzz4XoorEhGv.
41. op. cit. (1)
the sake’ of Muslims, can be seen to undergird this, and its post-Brexit timing must raise the question as to how much the Leave campaign’s iconography and discourse contributed to the worsening environment within which such attacks and such narratives escalate.

Justice System
The Extremism Bill mooted by the Tory government came under fire from its own police lead Simon Cole, as so flawed that it risked creating a “thought police”.

The Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill envisages introducing a new civil order regime such as ASBO’s to restrict so-called extremist activity. Currently the government defines extremism as “the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”. It is so wide that it is capable of ensnaring so-called terrorist sympathisers but also those who oppose the government or hold conservative views such as disapproval of abortion or same-sex marriage.

The difficulty experienced by the government in drawing up a watertight definition highlights the obvious dangers of criminalising what people think and say, particularly in relation to what it calls non-violent extremism. All kinds of views could be deemed extremist. To prosecute those holding them is clearly interfering with their right to freedom of belief and speech.

The bill also proposes introducing new powers of intervention to tackle the so-called radicalisation of children in “unregulated education settings”. This effectively means government oversight of the Muslim religious education sector dominated by after-school madrasas. Quite how the madrasa sector is breeding extremists has never been shown but the government seems intent on reining in their independence regardless.

Critics argued that the anti-terrorism policy is part of a wider social engineering exercise designed to control and shape Islam and Muslims in Britain. The bill once enacted will add to an ever-growing body of laws that while presented as colour-blind are clearly directed at Britain’s Muslim communities.

Last April, on a visit to the UK, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Assembly said that Britain’s anti-terrorism policies were counter-productive, undermining democracy and victimising the Muslim community. Maina Kiai criticised the ever-widening PREVENT strategy for its Orwellian impact on free speech and its adverse effect on Britain’s Muslim minority.


The judiciary came under scrutiny when a group of judges from ethnic minority communities brought claims against the Ministry of Justice for racial discrimination. Whilst not specific to the experiences of Muslims, it highlights the concern that despite the UK's evolving demography, diversity in its institution is failing even when it nominally exists.

The issue of racial and religious profiling continued, with disproportionality reported in police stops and searches of ethnic minorities. Additionally, the ruling in March by the European Court of Human Rights effectively clearing of criminal responsibility security officials responsible for the killing of Charles De Menezes in 2005, effectively legitimized extrajudicial killings based on prejudice. Mr De Menezes was trailed and then shot dead at London's Stockwell tube station by jumpy security officers who mistook him for a suicide bomber a fortnight after multiple bombings on the capital's transport network in 2005. Subsequent investigations confirmed that the police apprehended and pinned down their victim before firing seven shots into his head and one into his shoulder.

The incident highlighted the racialised bias under which police were operating, apparently selecting their victim on the basis of his darker than white skin colour. It also brought to the fore a controversial ‘shoot to kill’ policy targeting British Muslims who were presumed to be suicide bombers. The ruling was a body blow not only to the De Menezes’ family's campaign for justice but also for due process. It effectively upheld the right of the authorities to kill innocent people on the basis of mere supposition and racial/religious prejudice.

Later in the year, the College of Policing released guidelines on Stop and Search asking for all police officers to be trained to recognise their own biases in an effort to counteract racial profiling.

**Internet**

Far right group Britain First became more high profile this year. Despite having no electoral representation or demonstrable electoral support, it has more followers on Facebook than any political party in the UK, with over one and half million likes. The group’s aims while averring to issues like moral decline (conservative agenda) and politicians’ expenses scandals, its focus is identitarian and claims to be: “…not just a normal political group, we are a patriotic resistance and ‘frontline’ for our long suffering people.” After raising themselves in pseudo militaristic terms

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(resistance/frontline), they continue by conflating immigration, Islam, attacks on liberal values and the breakdown of service provision in the following terms:

“Immigration is spiralling out of control placing unsustainable demands upon this country’s resources, with health care, housing and the environment all being seriously damaged by these unbearable and unfair burdens.”

“Britain is a small, overcrowded, densely populated island with barely enough space and resources for our own people.”

“We have millions of British citizens born here who are unemployed and desperately need employment, so for these reasons we will slam shut the door to any further immigration.”

“The rapid growth of militant Islam is leading to the suppression of women, freedom of speech and racist attacks.”

“Britain First has a proven track record of opposing Islamic militants and hate preachers and this fightback will continue.”

“Britain First seeks to lobby, cajole, expose, demonstrate and organise on behalf of our beleaguered people.”

“We will make Britain a beautiful country once again where you can leave your door unlocked and your children can play in the streets.”

In its crudest terms, the manifesto outlined above reimagines the discursive practice of political and media actors, and resamples it for a marginalised white working class audience. This rise in the far right is considered by Ameli and Merali not to be a cause of Islamophobia so much as an outcome of Islamophobia praxis in the form of hate policy (laws and institutional policies) and hate representation (media and political discourse) which culminate in a hate environment within which individual acts of hatred, neo-fascism and other forms of racist street mobilization take place.47 It is notable that post-Brexit the analysis was borne out that as a result of the legitimisation of Islamophobia, other racisms would be legitimised. The upsurge in hate attacks post-Brexit saw even the police services claiming a link between the campaign, the victory for Leave and the rise in xenophobic acts of hatred. Figures from July alone released by the Home Office stated that in the month after the vote there was a 41% increase in hate crime reported,48 with the police reporting that there were 289 reported incidents on the day of the referendum result alone, and almost five and half thousand reported in July. (Figure 5)

47 Ameli/ Merali, The Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK.
Whilst almost all ethnic and religious minorities (as well as LGBTQI groups) suffered from this upsurge, Muslims continued to be targeted in increasingly violent ways. The year saw notable cases of violence, in particular against Muslim women, with a woman miscarrying twins after she was kicked in the stomach by an attacker in Milton Keynes, whilst her husband was also brutally assaulted. There were also more reports of women having their hijabs ripped off. This relentless focus on Muslim women’s attire at street level arguably mirrored the ever increasing media and political obsession around Muslim women’s dress. A Yougov poll in September (in the wake of the burkini bans in France), found the majority of respondents were in favour of both burkini and burqa bans in the UK. Whilst ostensibly this can be argued as a response to events in France, a review of ten years worth of such polls by Merali showed an incremental climb in negative responses towards this form of attire in the UK indicating a shift in mores once the dress had been brought into the political spotlight in 2006 by a former minister, and in which it stayed for a decade. The role of the cycle of media-commissioned repeated polling over years exemplifies how demonisation reproduces itself. A social experiment conducted on a British beach in September showed that beachgoers confronted with the spectacle of a police officer asking a Muslim woman to disrobe from her burkini (as had happened in France)

were split on ethnic lines, with black and Asian women coming to help the Muslim woman while white beachgoers said nothing or applauded.

This process is mirrored on social media. One particularly jarring piece of research was the Demos\textsuperscript{52} report on the digital aftermath of Brexit. In a random sample of 100 tweets on the subject, 78 were found to be hateful. According to the report’s authors some 16,500 tweets in the period 19 June – 1 July that they could sample contained terms such as:

- RefugeesNotWelcome
- DefendEurope
- WhiteGenocide
- WhitePower
- SendThemHome
- MakeBritainWhiteAgain
- Get Out We Voted Leave
- Londonistan
- Rapefugee
- StopImmigration
- f..kIslam

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{xenophobia.png}
\caption{Xenophobia in the wake of the Referendum measured through tweets. Source: Demos.\textsuperscript{53}}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.
The level of derogatory and xenophobic content peaked on the results day but in its wake was contested by roughly twice as many supportive messages. However the Demos report showed that whilst the level of supportive tweets dwindled over time, the level of xenophobic and derogatory tweets maintained, showing cyberspace as being a prime incubator of Islamophobia and xenophobia. (Figure 6)

Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

A number of initiatives to tackle Islamophobia have been highlighted above, but it is worth noting that such initiatives themselves, as well as those that undertake them have been subjected to attacks by the media and politicians. The election of Malia Bouattia as President of the National Union Students polarised attention on her pro-Palestinian views and advocacy. She was routinely attacked as an anti-Semite despite overseeing various activities to challenge anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other forms of racism.54

Regardless, the NUS has put tackling Islamophobia and all forms of racism at the forefront of its agenda, initiating the Students not Suspects campaign with the NUS Black Students’ Campaign, Federation of Student Islamic Students (FOSIS), the University and College Union (UCU) and Defend the Right to Protest (DtRtP).55

The annual Islamophobia conference organised by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (as part of the Decolonial International Network) and supported by various civil society organisations56 was attacked in parts of the right-wing media for its ‘provocative’ poster. The conference brought together senior academics and activists to discuss ‘The Environment of Hate and the Police State’. On two occasions, it was reported that posters placed by IHRC in Luton to advertise a pro-Palestinian march in July, and the aforementioned Islamophobia conference, were labelled ‘anti-Semitic’ and posted to Getty Images as such.57 (Figures 7 and 8) On both occasions, it has been claimed that Bedfordshire Police took out ads to cover the posters. (Figure 9)

55. NUS “Students not Suspects” (undated) retrieved February 21, 2017 from https://studentsnotsuspects.com
56. The supporting organisations were Lewisham Islamic Centre, Intifada Street, CAMPACC, SACC, Bandung2 Movement, Malcolm X Movement, NUS Black Students, Islamic Centre of England, Cambridge Stop the War see http://www.ihrc.org.uk/events/11774-islamophobia-conference-2016-the-environment-of-hate-and-the-police-state
Likewise MEND-initiated Islamophobia Awareness Month was undermined by the actions of Bedfordshire police, after they removed tweets promoting the event. According to reports, they removed the tweets after thousands of far right activists complained that the logo depicted a gesture used by DAESH. The gesture was in fact an allusion to the Islamic declaration of the oneness of God, however this did not stop the police force from removing all social media posts supporting the event, as well as their press release in support of the event from their site, and issuing an apology for the original posts.

This level of capitulation to far right activism is an alarming development and its nexus with pro-Zionist activism vis-à-vis the labelling of pro-Palestinian and anti-Islamophobia posters as anti-Semitic severely curtail the space for anti-racist advocacy within civil society, as well as mark this police force as complicit in the production of Islamophobia.

Actions to curtail media excesses were less formal, and the activities of individuals in challenging racist representation characterised the year. Whilst enterprises

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like that of Miqdaad Versi\(^59\) brought successful challenges to media misrepresentation using existing complaints mechanisms, they undergirded the fact that structural racism as a point of mobilisation for oppressed communities has not registered as a need for social transformation. The Stop Funding Hate campaign took a more strategic view, recognising both the role and responsibility of media as institution(s) and arguing that advocacy related to their corporate interests would be the best way to bring about change. Thus, acknowledging that the campaign to get large companies to remove advertising would effect change due to damage to business interests rather than a cultural shift or acknowledgement of moral culpability.

In tackling Prevent a number of initiatives continued throughout the year, as well as new research and programmes. This included the report by Cageprisoners\(^60\) ‘The Science of Pre-Crime’; the mobilisation against PREVENT resource pages by Together Against Prevent\(^61\) and IHRC\(^62\); the Prevent Resource Pack for Parents\(^63\) (IHRC); as well as the Safeguarding our Children from Prevent workshops (IHRC). Prevent Watch continued to take on cases of children and adults referred to Channel or affected by Prevent in other ways. As part of the Students Not Suspects Campaign, the NUS launched a confidential helpline to help students affected in confidence.\(^64\)

Again, it is worth noting that a number of civil society events organised to critique or campaign against Prevent have been cancelled by police authorities in 2016.\(^65\) Additionally it appears the specter of anti-terrorism laws has become part of a fear culture that impacts on civil society mobilisation. A conference on Islamophobia, racism and xenophobia organised by the British Institute of Turkish Affairs (BITAF) and the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) with the collaboration of the SOAS Turkish society was cancelled in December 2016, one hour before it was due to go ahead, due to complaints from PKK sympathisers. However, one of the panellists, Dr. Salman Sayyid stated that “about five-sixths of the panel recently cancelled with the excuse of the ‘laws against terrorism.’”\(^66\)


\(^65\). Islamic Human Rights Commission (b), unpublished data 2016

Social media saw various mobilisations against Islamophobia, including the #traditionallysubmissive Twitter storm, the response to the racist play on the film title #LondonHasFallen after the victory of Sadiq Khan in the London Mayoral Election,67 and the responses to American author Janie Jones’ tweet that London was ‘all Islamic’.68 The use of humour in responding to UK Islamophobes was a predominant feature. The satirical annual Islamophobia Awards early in the year also used comedy as its method to subvert Islamophobia.69

**Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

**Civil Society**

As averred above, the space for critique and dissent, let alone advocacy against Islamophobia is becoming smaller, with legitimate civil society action targeted by media and state, particularly when undertaken by Muslim organisations.

Whilst responding to increased Islamophobia in particular and racism in general is difficult in such circumstances, it is imperative for civil society organisation to take concerted, united, educated and brave actions.

**As such the following recommendations are offered:**

- To be mindful of the need to understand and promote an understanding of institutional racism and the racist state. The idea of the UK as a post-racial society has been debunked effectively in many quarters.70 This is not only an urgent task but requires effective and strong leadership from Muslim and anti-racist organisations. Current advocacy narratives that focus on the rise of far right mobilisation as a cause of Islamophobia rather than an outcome of rising Islamophobia at a structural level effectively promulgate the government narrative of (a) the UK as a post-racial society that had no responsibility for racism; and (b) that part of the solution if not the entire blame for the rise in Islamophobia can be placed at the door of the Muslim community.

- To adopt a better understanding of the emotional needs and the right to have expectations and grievances that citizenship inheres. Current advocacy narratives that simply regurgitate ideas of more political engagement via political parties,

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or challenging the media through existing regulatory powers can have the effect (often deliberately so) of placing the blame for Islamophobia on Muslims’ lack of activism. Such arguments also fail to understand that structural racism exists against which using established structures can only give individual victories and small succour when a large scale mobilisation against inequality and discrimination is required.

- Neither (i) nor (ii) mean that established activism through political parties or established complaints systems etc, should be disregarded, however without an understanding of the sources of Islamophobia as structural such activism can be self-defeating and give succour to Islamophobic narratives.
- Creating alliances within and without the Muslim community is imperative. Intra-Muslim sectarianism as well as sectarian politics in progressive movements have ultimately fuelled the disintegration of progressive alliances that existed hitherto on civil liberties’ issues.

**Policy Makers and Institutions, the ‘Great and the Good’**

The rise of Islamophobic discourse in media, politics, legislative culture and educational settings mutually constitute each other. For there to be peaceful transformation institutions must initiate change within their own cultures. Transformations on issues of sexuality, anti-Semitism have taken place over the last some forty years.  

- An acknowledgment of institutional Islamophobia (and racism per se) is not impossible and there have been precedents in the past when e.g. Greg Dyke, then Director General called the BBC institutionally racist. In the past year, there has been a number of what are known as the ‘great and good’ who have made stands against rabid racism, including celebrities like Lily Allen and Gary Lineker. Pockets of critique within the mainstream also have come to light in the last year. The requirement for sustained critique is needed by those within institutions and within mainstream culture.
- Mainstream political culture has been capitulating to right-wing narrative for several decades. Issues of immigration, Muslim expectations and grievances, inequality and racism have been slowly subsumed by terminology more associated with right-wing rhetoric. Concurrently policies have been enacted that are emboldened but the shift in terminology. Just as multiculturalism has been demeaned as a positive norm in society, the idea of community cohesion has been introduced

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which places inevitably blame for societal ills on groups within society. As politicians and media focus on Muslims as the outliers causing problems, so too do other groups within society. Various government initiatives in the past have called out institutional racism, including the Scarman Report (1981) which critiqued in particular racist policing, and the McPherson Report (1999) and Mubarek Inquiry (2004) which recommended institutions must acknowledge and understand the phenomenon before any serious transformation can take place. This is the imperative facing the political culture in particular currently.

- Additionally, the mobilisation of the far right is, unlike in the 1970s and 1980s, not just at street level. As the removal of Islamophobia Awareness material from a police force’s website and social media referred to above highlights how organised activism, in this case sending complaint emails and messages can push institutions towards Islamophobic practice that further strengthens Islamophobic narratives. There should be no capitulation to far right narratives or activism.

The Media

As with previous reports, this report concludes with recommendations for the media adapted from the Kerner Report (1967). The racialisation of Muslims makes these recommendations pertinent to communities like Muslims in the UK.73 The media needs to:

- Expand coverage of Muslim community affairs and of race and Islamophobia problems through permanent assignment of reporters familiar with the issues around these affairs, and through establishment of more and better links with the Muslim community. The Muslim community is a diverse one, and the media needs to engage with that diversity and not promote or rely on sensationalist or apologetic voices that simply help propagate deeply held negative ideas.

- Integrate Muslims and Muslim activities into all aspects of coverage and content, including newspaper articles and television programming. The news media must publish newspapers and produce programmes that recognise the existence and activities of Muslims as a group within the community and as a part of the larger community (adapted from Kerner, 1967). Ameli et. al.74 emphasise the idea that a dual space for minorities is essential for any society to foster a sense of citizenship among minorities. To do this, a space for minorities to call their own is essential and a media that is supported in the conceptual sense by dominant society

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ISLAMOPHOBIA IN UNITED KINGDOM

is essentially a part of that. Likewise, the mainstream media must also show as a norm that Muslims are an integral part of society.

- Recruit more Muslims into journalism and broadcasting and promote those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. Recruitment should begin in high schools and continue through college; where necessary, aid for training should be provided.

- Accelerate efforts to ensure accurate and responsible reporting of news concerning Muslims and all minorities through adoption by all news gathering organisations of stringent internal staff guidelines.

- Cooperate in the establishment of and promotion of any existing privately organised and funded independent institute(s) to train and educate journalists in Muslim affairs, recruit and train more Muslim journalists, develop methods for improving police-press relations, review coverage of Muslim related issues, and support continuing research in these fields.

- In conclusion, there has yet again been a considerable shift in Islamophobic discourse over the year. As argued before, the fact that Islamophobia was not legitimised through law and discourse, would see a rise in hitherto taboo racisms being aired in narratives and ultimately in hate attacks. The configuration of Islamophobic and other racist narratives in the run-up to the EU referendum, the murder of MP Jo Cox, days before the event itself and the subsequent spike in hate crimes in the weeks after, support this contention. The year was topped and tailed by ideological announcements from the government which again sought to place social ills on Muslims, and delegitimised grievances that they had. The United Kingdom sits on a precipice where the environment of hate is so extreme it may no longer be possible to change it without radical mobilisation and transformation by progressive movements.
Chronology

- **17 January**: Prime Minister David Cameron reported to have stated he wants more Muslim women to learn English in order to prevent their sons turning to terrorism. The ‘traditionally submissive’ affair caused a backlash amongst Muslim women who objected this characterisation through social media.

- **30 March**: Security officials responsible for the killing of Charles De Menezes in 2005 cleared of responsibility by the European Court of Human Rights.

- **13 April**: MPs criticise Islamophobic media culture, targeting entertainment as well as news.

- **5 May**: London Mayoral Elections sees Muslim Sadiq Khan win after a campaign by his main opponent characterised as ‘dog-whistle’ politics.

- **18 May**: Extremism Bill mentioned for the second time in the Queen’s Speech.

- **23 May**: The Leave campaign’s ‘Turkey’ poster unveiled.

- **24 May**: Simon Cole, the police lead for the government’s own Prevent anti-radicalisation programme, criticises the mooted Extremism Bill as risking creating “thought police”.

- **9 June**: Ukip’s ‘Breaking Point’ poster unveiled.

- **16 June**: MP Jo Cox is murdered by a far right activist shouting “Britain First”.

- **23 June**: EU Referendum resulting in a surprise win for the Leave campaign. A large spike in hate crimes was reported after the result.

- **7 July**: Receipt of racist letter and white powder by Muslim peer Lord Ahmed results in Parliament security lockdown.

- **13 July**: Theresa May, the former Home Secretary routinely accused of Islamophobia, becomes Prime Minister.

- **6 August**: Pregnant woman is kicked in stomach and husband severely beaten. Unborn twins are miscarried.

- **13 October**: Home Office confirms that the month after Brexit saw a 41% spike in reported hate crime.

- **5 December**: Casey Review into Integration and Opportunity published.
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, brainstorming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.