
EUROPEAN
ISLAMOPHOBIA
REPORT
2016



ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

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THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

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

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

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

The Rise of Islamophobia

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

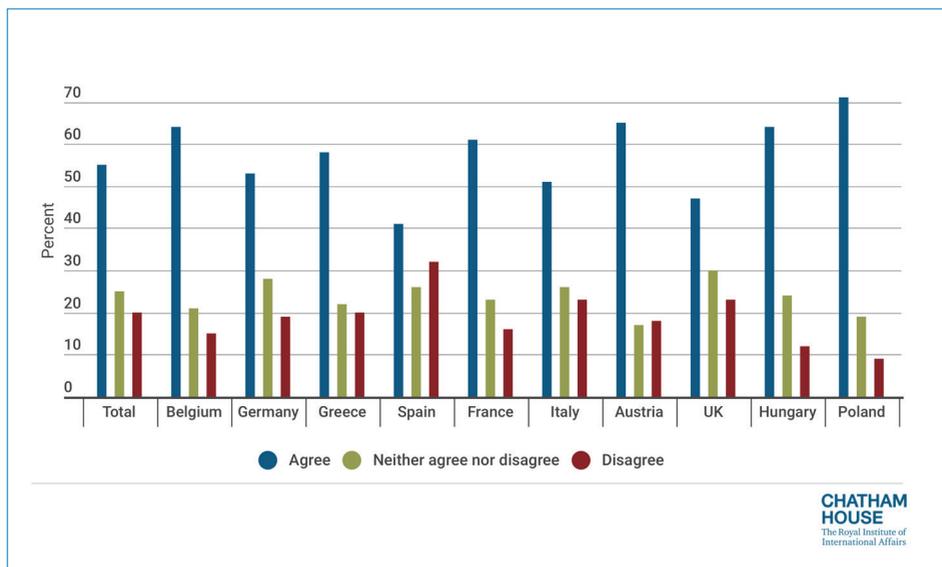


Figure 1: Public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states in Europe.²

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

1. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration#sthash.O6J7kQrj.dpuf>

2. Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration>

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.

3. <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/ipsos-mori-perils-of-perception-charts-2016.pdf>

4. <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/07/Pew-Research-Center-EU-Refugees-and-National-Identity-Report-FINAL-July-11-2016.pdf>

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”.⁵

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.

5. Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016, p.7.

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-

6. http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/forgottenwomenpublication_lr_final_with_latest_corrections.pdf

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 Esmâ 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

8. <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=179082&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=678370>

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
FINLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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Executive Summary

In 2016, the political atmosphere in Finland has been greatly influenced by far-right movements and ideologies. The strong presence of populist and nationalist movements that are well connected in the Europe-wide Islamophobia network has grown stronger by numerous public demonstrations and hate speeches. The government party “Finns” maintains a *laissez-faire* attitude towards its members and representatives who have made public comments that have led to persecutions and convictions based on incitement to hatred.

The grassroots-level hatred and bigotry expressed by elected representatives of the nation from the perceived safety of their positions further fuels the Islamophobic discourse in online environments where members of the public engage in discussions on platforms such as Facebook. It appears that the public has become almost immune to Islamophobic hate speech. Moreover, several studies and research reports have provided findings that show an alarming increase of hate crime targeting Muslims and people who can easily be identified as Muslim. The authorities have promised measures to fight far-right extremism and hate speech, partly due to international pressure from high-level institutions.

Biased news reporting on certain social phenomena in Islam can be said to exacerbate negative images of Islam and is in line with the discourse used by the Islamophobia network. Muslims are legally protected to freely exercise their religion, while in the fields of education and employment, international laws on counterterrorism measures have been accepted for implementation in Finland - their social consequences will be seen in the future.

Tiivistelmä

Vuonna 2016 äärioikeistolaiset järjestöt ja ideologia ovat vaikuttaneet Suomen poliittiseen ilmapiiiriin näkyvästi. Euroopan laajuisessa islaminvastaisessa verkostossa hyvin kytköksissä olevat populistiset ja nationalistiset liikkeet ovat vahvistaneet läsnäoloaan julkisuudessa mielenosoitusten ja julkisen vihapuheen kautta. Hallituspuolueen *Perussuomalaiset* laissez-faire-asenne omien poliitikkojensa ja edustajiensa kommenttien ja kirjoitusten osallisuuteen kiihottamisessa kansanryhmää vastaan on huomattava. Ruohonjuuritasolla sekä kansakunnan edustajien taholta ilmaistu viha sekä kiihkoilu on huomattavasti lietsonut myös islaminvastaista keskustelukulttuuria verkkoympäristössä peruskansalaisten taholta siten, että suomalaisten voisi melkein sanoa tulleen immuuniksi islaminvastaiselle vihanlietsonnalle. Lisäksi useiden tutkimusten ja raporttien tulokset ovat näyttäneet, että muslimeihin ja henkilöihin, joiden ulkonäkönsä perusteella oletetaan olevan muslimeja, kohdistuneet viharikokset ovat lisääntynyt hälyttävissä määrin. Viranomaiset ovat kuitenkin luvanneet ja suunnitelleet toimenpiteitä oikeistolaisia ääriliikkeitä ja vihapuhetta vastaan, mikä johtuu osittain korkean tason instituutioiden kansainvälisestä painostuksesta Suomessa tapahtuvan syrjinnän ja vihapuheeseen kitkemiseksi. Islamin sosiaalisia ilmiöitä ja Suomen muslimeja koskevan puolueellisen uutisraportoinnin voidaan sanoa edesauttavan sellaisten vääristyneiden mielikuvien muodostamista islamista, joka on islamofobisen verkoston diskurssiin sopivaa. Vaikka muslimien vapaa uskonnon harjoittaminen esimerkiksi työpaikoilla ja kouluissa on laissa suojattu, kansainvälisesti muslimeja koskevia lakeja terrorismin vastaisiin toimiin liittyen on hyväksytty pantavaksi täytäntöön myös Suomessa ja niiden sosiaaliset seuraukset tullaan näkemään tulevaisuudessa.

Introduction

Following developments in 2015,¹ in terms of manifestations of Islamophobic behaviour and incidents both online and in public spaces of everyday life, in 2016, the spread of hate speech and anti-Muslim bigotry has been further fueled by the rising far-right politics and popular movements, often connected to negative sentiments about immigration and refugees. A survey by the nationwide tabloid magazine *Iltalehti* asked 1,008 participants whether they believed that immigrants coming from countries with an Islamic cultural background could integrate into Finnish society. Results show that 57% answered negatively, whereas only 11% answered positively.² The connection of such prejudices with populist politics can be regarded as strong, since 95% of the negative answers stemmed from voters of the right-wing party *Perussuomalaiset* (Finns Party) whose involvement in spreading and contributing to Islamophobic discourse continues to be dominant in 2016, as will be shown in this report.

Further numbers concerning the manifestation of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim resentment in Finnish society can be retrieved from the analysis of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman (*Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu*) as well as the yearly report on hate crimes in Finland published by the Police University College.³ Whereas in 2015, the police handled in total 1,250 suspected hate crimes, the amount has increased by 52% from 2014. The report emphasises a significant increase in suspected hate crimes based on religion and especially Islam with 71 cases in 2015 in comparison to 14 cases in 2014. Most frequent examples of suspected hate crimes are incitement to hatred and slander while this also indicates the influence of social media and the normalization of hate speech that has been pushed forward by some politicians. Furthermore, as the report also includes statistics on “racist motivated” hate crimes for which the most frequent complainants were either born in or are citizens of countries such as Somalia, Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan, it is safe to argue, that people of Muslim background – or people who are easily identified as Muslims – fall victim to hate crime more often than people from other cultural backgrounds. Moreover, a report by the Ministry of Justice from March 2016 (Korhonen et al.) observes that Muslims are targets of hate speech and crimes.⁴ The Non-Discrimination Om-

1. For a detailed description see Linda Hyökki, “Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2015”, Enes Bayraklı/Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2015* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016).

2. Juha Ristimäki, ”IL-kysely: Suomalaiset epäilevät islamilaisten sopeutumista”, *Iltalehti*, (October 10, 2016), retrieved November 26, 2016, from http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/2016100922439779_uu.shtml.

3. The report (“*Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2015*”) can be considered for this study retrospectively; at the end of each calendar year a report regarding suspected hate crimes for the previous year is published. Thus, the target year of the report relevant to our current study was 2015. See: Tero Tihveräinen, ”Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2015,” *Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 10*, Tampere, (October 2016), retrieved November 26, 2016, from <http://polamk.fi/julkaisut>.

4. Nita Korhonen/Laura Jauhola/Olli Oosi/Olli-Pekka Huttunen, *Usein joutuu miettimään, miten pitäisi olla ja minne olla menemättä* (Helsinki: Oikeusministeriö, 2016).

budsman reported⁵ that in 2016 the office had been contacted in total for 26 cases pertaining to some sort of criticism, or bigotry against certain Islamic practices and phenomena. Out of the 26 cases, 11 were registered as suspected discrimination cases (1.5% of all suspected discrimination cases) and were connected among other things, to the use of the burkini in swimming halls; the refusal to rent spaces to Muslim communities; discriminative behaviour in a job interview towards a female Muslim wearing the headscarf; discriminative behaviour of security personnel in restaurants; and discrimination of Muslim individuals during flights. Nevertheless, attacks with racist or Islamophobic motives against Muslims, such as a physical assault against a female librarian at a Helsinki library,⁶ are rarely reported in press venues. Therefore, without raising awareness about the amount and nature of Islamophobic hate crimes the gravity of the situation in terms of everyday racism and Islamophobia easily goes unnoticed by the general public.

Significant Incidents and Developments

Starting their activities at the end of 2015 with a strong spread of subchapters in diverse cities throughout 2016, the vigilante group “Soldiers of Odin” blamed refugees for the increase of crime and harassment. They claimed their presence was in order to “protect the streets and Finnish women” and have been active with marches and street patrols; their activities have been supported by Finns Party politicians such as MP Laura Huhtasaari.⁷

Despite the increasing public presence of Islamophobic organisations, positive developments in combating anti-Muslim hostility can be observed. In September 2016, diverse members of Parliament addressed the government in a question hour⁸ regarding the (national socialist) extremist groups and their violent behaviour.⁹ MP Antti Rinne (SDP), for instance, emphasised the importance of political parties refraining from any support and protection of such groups. Apart from MP Huhtasaari’s endorsement of Soldiers of Odin’s activities, other connections between

5. Customised report by Senior Officer Aija Salo and researcher Toni Tuomi, received by the author through e-mail 25.11.2016. Numbers based on statistics retrieved from the database until 23.11.2016.

6. Karin Filén, “Bibliotekarie misshandlades vid lånedisken – ‘hon hotade döda mig om jag inte far tillbaka dit jag kom ifrån,’” *Svenska.yle.fi* (December 29, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from <https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2016/12/29/bibliotekarie-misshandlades-vid-lanedisken-hon-hotade-doda-mig-om-jag-inte-far>.

7. Antti Laakso, “Perussuomalaisten kansanedustaja katupartioista: ”Onhan poliitikoillakin rikostaustaa,” *Yle.fi*, (January 8, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8579622>.

8. See the verbatim transcription of the question and subsequent comments in Finnish (archives of the Parliament) <https://www.eduskunta.fi/pdf/PTK+88/2016+2.2.pdf> (retrieved December 1, 2016).

9. The discussion was motivated by the death of a civilian by a member of the nationalist movement *Suomen Vastarintaliike* during a demonstration organised by the movement in front of the central railway station in Helsinki (Ossi Mansikka, “Poliisi: Helsingin asema-aukion pahoinpitelyn uhri kuoli todennäköisesti saamaansa kallovammaan,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, (November 10, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from <http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000002929591.html>).

members of the Finns Party and extreme-nationalist movements like *Suomen Vastarintaliike* (Nordic Resistance Movement in Finland), *Rajat Kiinni* (Close the Borders) and *Suomi Ensin* (Finland First) have been affirmed.¹⁰ The *Suomi Ensin* movement has gained publicity, for example, by their demonstration against an Eid event prepared by the popular shopping mall Itis in Helsinki.¹¹ The Minister of Interior Paula Risikko, however emphasised in the Parliament's discussion that hate speech and violent extremism should be dealt with zero tolerance and promised that the government will re-evaluate the current legislation and its possible faults in relation to banning and restricting the activities of extremist groups and movements.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

Discrimination in the labour market in Finland is monitored by the Regional State Administrative Agencies (*Aluehallintovirasto*), which has established that prohibiting clothing that is in accordance with one's religion is against the Non-Discrimination Act (*Yhdenvertaisuuslaki 1325/2014*).¹² In January 2016, there was some debate about employees in the education sector in Helsinki using the niqab, motivated by similar discussions in Sweden. The only restriction pertaining to work uniforms in the Finnish context are related to hygiene and work safety; otherwise employees are free to choose their clothing in the workplace.¹³

Education

A PhD dissertation entitled *Westerners and others in Finnish school textbooks* by Pia Mikander from the University of Helsinki, which was defended in October 2016, demonstrates discursive ethnocentrism in history, social studies and geography textbooks in Finland.¹⁴ According to Mikander, the textbooks present the West as being threatened by the Muslim "Other". People in Afghanistan and Iraq, are referred to in dehumanizing terms such as "fanatical Muslims", and the 9/11 attacks in one text-

10.Laura Halminen/Tommi Nimeninen, "Perussuomalaisten kovalla siivellä yhteyksiä ainakin viiteen ääriationalistiseen liikkeeseen," *Helsingin Sanomat* (September 20, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from <http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1474345942668>. See also the EIR country report Finland 2015 on the role of the Finns Party member Olli Immonen in spreading Islamophobic hate speech.

11.YouTube, *Suomi Ensin* demonstration, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4B5IpEVw2Jk&feature=youtu.be> (retrieved November 27, 2016).

12.For the Finnish version of the Act, see <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2014/20141325> (retrieved December 4, 2016); for the unofficial English translation of the same act (PDF), see www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/kaannokset/2014/en20141325.pdf (retrieved December 4, 2016).

13.Arja-Riikka Nikkilä, "Helsinki sallii työntekijöiden kasvohunnut – Göteborgissa niqabista syntyi riita," *Helsingin Uutiset*, (January 6, 2016), retrieved December 4, 2016, from <http://www.helsinginutiset.fi/artikkeli/352455-helsinki-sallii-tyontekijoiden-kasvohunnut-goteborgissa-niqabista-syntyi-riita>.

14.For a comprehensive summary of the thesis in English see <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/167465> (retrieved December 4, 2016).

book are referred to as being part of a campaign whose final goal is the destruction of Western culture. According to the author, the latter statement “can be seen as an expression of Islamophobia, since it suggests a Muslim conspiracy that has an intention to crush Western society, [which is] remarkably different from the core values of the curriculum”¹⁵. Islam as a subject in elementary education at the comprehensive school level has undergone certain changes and although the right to receive teaching in one’s religion is still protected, the renewal of the national curriculum has introduced, for instance, joint education in the subject of religion for all students.

Politics

In 2016, several politicians from the Finns Party have been charged for their bigoted online comments on Muslims and Islam, which as such is a positive development in terms of public and state attitudes towards hate speech.¹⁶

Terhi Kiemunki, an assistant to the True Finns MP Lea Mäkipää, has been in the headlines twice for her racist comments. First, during the Easter holidays in March, Kiemunki wrote on her Facebook page how she had seen hijab-wearing Muslim children participating in a Finnish Easter tradition dressed as witches reciting a traditional poem outside doors and receiving sweets in return. Kiemunki wondered “whether it was a sign of integration or whether Allah had some kind of an anniversary day”. She also wondered whether the children would recite “Allahu Akbar” at her door. As a consequence, the party district office fired Kiemunki from her position as a vice-spokesman for the district. However, a week later, Kiemunki wrote in her personal blog on the blogging platform “*Uusi Suomi*”¹⁷ stating “A culture, a religion and a law for which cruelty against disbelievers is self-evident, has landed in Finland and in Europe. (...) Our old Europe cannot get rid of terrorism as long as we continue accepting the teachings of Islam. All Muslims are not terrorists but these days all terrorists in Europe are Muslims.” In December, the second incident led to Kiemunki’s conviction for incitement to hatred with a financial penalty of 450 Euros.¹⁸

15. Pia Mikander, “Westerners and Others in Finnish School Textbooks”, *University of Helsinki, Institute of Behavioural Sciences, Studies in Education 273*, (Helsinki: Unigrafia, 2016), p.62. Retrieved December 4, 2016, from <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/167465>.

16. It should be noted, that although the Finnish Criminal Code does not include hate speech as an offence, it includes articles for instance on acts of incitement to hatred and slander, which are parts of hate speech when it is understood as “expressing, advocating, encouraging, promoting or inciting hatred of a group of individuals distinguished by a particular feature or set of features. It implies hostility, rejection, a wish to harm or destroy, a desire to get the target group out of one’s way, a silent or vocal and a passive or active declaration of war against it.” (Parekh Bikhu, “Hate Speech. Is There a Case for Banning?”, *Public Policy Research*, Vol. 12, (2006), p. 214.)

17. The text has since been deleted from the website: www.uusisuomi.fi

18. Jouni Tanninen, “Terhi Kiemunki sai tuomion kiihottamisesta kansanryhmää vastaan,” *yle.fi*, (December 1, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9327902>; Tuomas Rimpiläinen, “Tämä kohta Kiemunginblogissa ylitti syytekynnyksen – Kyseessä ei ole ”muslimipensakirjoitus”,” *Aamulehti*, (October 6, 2016), retrieved December 4, 2016, from <http://www.aamulehti.fi/kotimaa/tama-kohta-kiemungin-blogissa-ylitti-syytekynnyksen-kyseessa-ei-ole-muslimipensakirjoitus-23981886/>.

The Finns Party MP Teuvo Hakkarainen, who has appeared on national news in various other contexts for his anti-Muslim, bigoted comments,¹⁹ was charged for incitement to hatred in November.²⁰ After the violent attack in Nizza in July, MP Hakkarainen posted on his Facebook page a statement very similar to that of Kie-munki, which led to her conviction. Hakkarainen wrote “Get Muslims out of this country! Not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims.”²¹

A third political figure from the True Finns party with current charges for incitement to hatred²² is Sebastian Tynkkynen,²³ long-time chairman of the party’s youth division. In July, on his Facebook page Tynkkynen criticised Finland’s asylum politics and stated that “Islam should be stamped out of Finland”. He also argued that “[o]f course not all Muslims comply to the teachings of their prophet. But civil peace can be disturbed nonetheless by a few attacks against disbelievers inspired by Muhammad.”²⁴ Shortly after Tynkkynen’s post, the youth division of the Finns Party published a position statement²⁵ suggesting that the articles on incitement to hatred and freedom of worship should be removed from the Finnish Criminal Law. Tynkkynen argues that unlike Hitler who can be criticised, Muhammad cannot be criticised due to the article on freedom of worship.

Media

The Finnish mainstream media follow quite laudably the ethical guidelines for journalists established by the Council for Mass Media.²⁶ In general, reports do not focus on Islam/Muslims in an explicitly Islamophobic way. However, every now and then biased reports about Islam, which emphasise specific events and phenomena, in a negative way, appear and create a distorted image of the religion fitting in with Islamophobic discourse. Such reports mostly lack counter narratives that would offer a more balanced view on the issue at hand. Some examples follow below.

First to mention are news and reports about Muslims in Finland who have left their faith and who describe the social antagonism and seclusion from their religious

19. The verbatim transcription of the discussion at the plenary session can be retrieved at <https://www.eduskunta.fi/pdf/PTK+80/2016+17> (retrieved December 1, 2016).

20. Sanna Savela, “Kansanedustaja Teuvo Hakkarainen saa syytteen – epäillään vihapuheen levittämisestä,” *yle.fi*, (November 1, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9264566>.

21. <https://www.facebook.com/teuvo.hakkarainen.3/posts/1173401296016171> (retrieved December 1, 2016).

22. Mikael Mikkonen, “Sebastian Tynkkynen syytteeeseen kiihottamisesta kansanryhmää vastaan ja uskonrauhan rikkomisesta,” *yle.fi* (November 11, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9286543>.

23. Tynkkynen’s previous Islamophobic attitudes have also been analysed in the EIR 2015 country report for Finland.

24. <https://www.facebook.com/sebastian.tynkkynen/posts/1073979526020252> (retrieved December 1, 2016).

25. ps-nuoret.fi, “Kannanotto: Laista poistettava pykälät kiihottamisesta kansanryhmää vastaan sekä uskonrauhan rikkomisesta,” *ps-nuoret.fi*, (July 21, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from <https://www.ps-nuoret.fi/uutiset/kannanotto-laista-poistettava-pykalat-kiihottamisesta-kansanryhmaa-vastaaan-seka-uskonrauhan-rikkomisesta/>.

26. <http://www.journalistiliitto.fi/in-english/ground-rules/guidelines/> (retrieved November 27, 2016)

communities which they have experienced as a result.²⁷ Articles and reports have also been written specifically about Muslim refugees converting to Christianity. These articles are mainly built on narratives emphasising the threatening situation these Muslim individuals experience when they change their religion. The interviews²⁸ highlight the presupposed violent nature of Islam (against disbelievers); the lack of mercy and love for other people among Muslims; and the Shia-Sunni clashes and killings as opposed to the peacefulness of Christians (“Christians do not kill anyone”). Hence, the reader is left with a generalised impression that Islamic communities shun “Ex-Muslims” or that even death threats are the general way to deal with such situations, fitting the Islamophobic discourse about definite death for apostates. One such article focuses especially on the work of the Christian organization “One Way Mission” - the distorted discourse on Islam in the organization’s publications is worth mentioning.²⁹

A second example is an article³⁰ on foreign fighters in Syria which takes findings from a report published by the Ministry of Interior (September 2016) on violent extremism³¹ and argues that a significant number of foreign fighters in Syria are ethnic Finns. However, the article mainly expands its headline “Muslims worry about Ethnic Finnish Muslims who do whatever they are told” based on interviews from a book on jihadism to argue that convert Muslims are fanatics of whom born-Muslims are afraid of, and that of those women who “most strictly” cover themselves most are ethnic Finns. When such accounts on convert Muslims are singled out for the sake of “hot topics”, the Islamophobic rhetoric of (convert) Muslims as brainwashed, fanatical and traitors of their country contributes to a perception of Islam as an oppressive, fundamentalist and threatening religion – a narrative used by anti-Muslim groups.

27. Panu Vatanen, “Fatima luopui islamista, mutta ei voi riisua huivia – islamista eroaminen on Suomessa tabu,” *yle.fi*, (May 28, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8903751>.

28. Juha Veli Jokinen, “Yli 1000 muslimia kääntynyt kristityiksi Suomessa - kokeneet uhkailua ja kirstystä: ”7-vuotias tytär kidnapattiin Irakissa,” *iltalehti*, (November 27, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/201611252200032390_uu.shtml; Kati Siponmaa, “Turvapaikanhakijoita kääntyy kristinuskoon – halveksunnasta ja vaarasta piittaamatta,” *yle.fi*, (January 7, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8576329>; Eero Mäntymaa, “Kolme muslimia, joiden usko loppui,” *yle.fi*, (November 19, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9285266>.

29. Statements by members such as “According to their beliefs a woman goes to hell for even a smallest disobedience of her husband, forgiveness is not known neither between people nor in the man-God relationship” perpetuate images of Islam as a cruel religion lacking women’s rights. See *Raportti 4/2016*, p.34, retrieved from https://issuu.com/onewaymission/docs/raportti_4-2016 (retrieved November 28, 2016)

30. Mattinen Johanna, “Kantasuomalaiset käännynnäiset huolestuttavat muita muslimeja - ”Tekevät täsmälleen niin kuin heille sanotaan,” *iltalehti*, (October 14, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.iltalehti.fi/uu_tiset/2016101322418828_uu.shtml

31. Report in the Finnish language retrieved from www.intermin.fi/julkaisu/232016 (retrieved November 28, 2016). Another study “Suomesta Syyrian ja Irakin konfliktikentälle suuntautuva liikkuvuus” (Marko Juntunen/Karin Creutz-Sundblom/Juha Saarinen) relevant to foreign fighters was published by the Prime Minister’s Office in October 2016. This study includes an extensive ethnographical part and interviews with relatives of foreign fighters and offers an in-depth understanding of the sociological causes and consequences of the decisions of individuals to become foreign fighters. The study (PDF) in the Finnish language is available online from <http://tietokaytoon.fi/julkaisu?pubid=14202> (retrieved November 28, 2016).

Justice System

In terms of law proposals, the year 2016 has witnessed a discussion on the domestic prohibition of the Islamic face veil, the niqab/burkha, and a proposal on ethnic profiling on European level; both were promoted by politicians from circles of the Finns party.

In October, the MP Vesa-Matti Saarakkala (Finns Party) submitted a proposal for a law amendment to the government suggesting the addition of an article on the prohibition of face veils in public spaces on pain of a fine in accordance to Finnish criminal law. The arguments by MP Saarakkala as well as other MPs of the Finns Party drew on the violation of gender equality in the instances where usage of the face veil is allowed. Especially the statement “[...] there are reasonable grounds to believe that Muslim women in Finland or elsewhere in Europe in principle do not wear the face veil out of their own will and thus the law amendment would not violate the article on the right to liberty and integrity of the person in the Finnish Constitution” is a classic case of Islamophobic rhetoric where Muslim women are stripped of their agency and presented as subjects of their male relatives.³²

In October, the national news reported on the written question by Member of the European Parliament Jussi Halla-aho (also a member of the Finns Party),³³ who proposed that police officers in EU member states should be able to apply ethnic profiling “aimed particularly at people whose ethnic roots are in the Middle East, North Africa, or Central Asia”, as an instrument to prevent Islamic terrorism in Europe. Alarming, Halla-aho’s proposal openly undermines the basic human rights of certain population groups as he states that “combating Islamic terrorism efficiently in Europe requires open-minded attitudes among authorities. To apply ethnic profiling in the prevention of Islamic fundamentalism should be seriously considered regardless of the basic and human rights problems connected to profiling.” The chairwoman of the Finnish League for Human Rights, Reetta Toivanen, commented in a newspaper interview that the nature of Halla-aho’s proposal is populist and against Islam because it includes the idea that those individuals who potentially could be taken to be Muslims are more likely to be terrorists.³⁴

32. The PDF of the law amendment proposal can be retrieved at <https://www.eduskunta.fi/pdf/LA+41/2016> (retrieved December 1, 2016). Also of relevance are the subsequent comments during the presentation of the amendment by other MPs of the Finns party. Comments such as “How can an immigrant woman wearing a face veil make friends with members of the ethnic Finns if the latter does not know whether the person behind the veil is the same person with whom she/he was talking with before?” indicate the degree of ignorance regarding the everyday life of Muslim women in Finnish society. For the verbatim transcription of the discussion see <https://www.eduskunta.fi/pdf/PTK+99/2016+5> (retrieved December 1, 2016)

33. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+P-2016-007682+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en> (retrieved December 1, 2016)

34. Henripekka Kallio, “Halla-aho esittää EU:lle salakuuntelun ja kotietsintöjen kohdistamista etnisiin perustein,” *Aamulehti* (October 11, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from <http://www.aamulehti.fi/kotimaa/halla-aho-esittaa-culle-salakuuntelun-ja-kotietsintojen-kohdistamista-etnisiin-perustein-23993556/>.

Moreover, suggested changes in the national criminal law, based on the UN Security Council's Resolution 2178(2014) and the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (2015), have been criticised in the Finnish context by Amnesty International³⁵ and Professor of International Law and Human Rights Martin Scheinin.³⁶ Concerns regarding racial and religious profiling have been raised, but regardless of these, the law was passed in October 2016 without the additions required by human rights actors.

Internet

A report by the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, published on 6 October 2016, commented in length on the problem of online hate speech in Finland. The recommendations for immediate action made by the EC addressing the Finnish authorities included the requirement to intensify the efforts and mechanisms connected to combating hate speech especially in social media; raising public awareness through public campaigns and school education programmes; and the strengthening of the role of law officials and the judiciary to detect and sanction hate speech.³⁷ Although the report was written in regard to national minorities, the measures to be taken, which are of a general nature and examine hate speech within the greater context, would without a doubt affect Islamophobic hate speech that takes place in online environments as well.

The well-known platforms that spread hate speech and Islamophobic discourse continue to be the fake news website *MV-Lehti* (MV-Magazine) and its sister-site *Überuutiset*; both have been under investigation with the police succeeding in temporarily closing down the websites in July 2016 and with a current European arrest warrant on the website editor Ilja Janitskin. He has so far refused to appear in court hearings regarding his indictments.³⁸ Other websites that promote hate speech and Islamophobia are the blogs *Paavo Tajukangas* and *Islamin aikapommi*.³⁹ A further initiative by international networks promoting anti-Muslim bigotry and nationalist politics is the Finnish Defence League with an active Facebook page⁴⁰ and over 11,000 followers. The blogger James Gonzo's posts count among the most verbally and visually expressive forms of Islamophobic texts found online. In his hate post-

35. www.hare.vn.fi/upload/asiakirjat/21401/Amnesty.pdf (retrieved December 1, 2016)

36. <http://www.hare.vn.fi/upload/asiakirjat/21401/Martin%20Scheinin.docx> (retrieved December 4, 2016)

37. Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, "Fourth Opinion on Finland - adopted on 24 February 2016 Published on 6 October 2016," *Council of Europe*, (February 24, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, from <http://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/finland>.

38. Paavo Teittinen, "MV-lehden perustaja on ilmeisesti paennut pidätysmääräystä Andorraan – Professori uskoo, että Janitskin luovutettaisiin Suomeen," *Helsingin Sanomat*, (November 7, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, from <http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1478494663274>.

39. For an analysis see the Country Report on Finland in the EIR 2015.

40. <https://www.facebook.com/finnishdl/> (retrieved November 28, 2016).

ings James Gonzo deploys a strategy also known to the *MV-Lehti*, which is to create a new narrative on an event regarding Muslims using news from mainstream media as a source. Hence, for example, he took a piece by Reuters⁴¹ about Muslims in Italy protesting the closure of mosques by praying by the Colosseum, and reframed it with the heading “Italy says: Islam is not a religion!”. His Islamophobic text then argues, for instance, that Muslims are telling the Italian authorities that it is their right to call for hate and death to all Jews and others whom they define as “disbelieving dogs of citizens”.⁴²

So far, online hate speech in Finland has been monitored by the “Virtual Police” (*Nettipoliisi*)⁴³ of the Finnish Police Forces, but the resources of this unit have been very limited and its efficiency is disputable given the vast quantities of Islamophobic discourse spread by diverse initiatives, blogs and websites. The pressure by the EC on the Finnish authorities to intensify the combat against hate speech seems to have been effective.⁴⁴ The Finnish Police was prompted by the publication of the aforementioned report to publicly announce that based on a memorandum of understanding with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights signed by the National Police Board a training programme on hate crime prevention with a capacity of 50 police officers as trainees will start by the end of 2016.⁴⁵

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In 2016, several anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim demonstrations were held mostly by two popular movements: *Rajat Kiinni* (Close the Borders) and *Suomi Ensin* (Finland First). Whereas *Rajat Kiinni* slowly fell apart, one of its leading figures, Marco de Wit founded *Suomi Ensin*. De Wit, a former mortician with a dual Finnish-Dutch citizenship leads the nationalist movement together with Panu Huuhtanen, who left *Rajat Kiinni* as well after its downfall. *Suomi Ensin*

41. Isla Binnie/Gabriele Pileri, “Muslims pray at Colosseum, protesting against Rome mosque closures,” *Reuters*, October 22, 2016, retrieved November 27, 2016, from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-mosques-idUSKCN12L2AU>.

42. James Gonzo, “Italian kanta islamiin on selkeä: Islam ei ole uskonto!”, *jamesgonzo.wordpress.com*, (October 24, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from <https://jamesgonzo.wordpress.com/2016/10/24/italian-kanta-islamiin-on-selkea-islam-ei-ole-uskonto/>.

43. https://www.poliisi.fi/virtual_police (retrieved November 23, 2016)

44. See: Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, “Comments of the Government of Finland on the Fourth Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Finland,” Council of Europe, (October 6, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, from <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806ae117>.

45. STT, “Vihapuhe kuriin: 50 poliisia koulutetaan uusiin tehtäviin,” *Keskisuomalainen*, (October 14, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, from <http://www.ksml.fi/kotimaa/Vihapuhe-kuriin-50-poliisia-koulutetaan-uusiin-teht%C3%A4viin/855181>.

requires⁴⁶, among other things, Finland's exit (Fixit) from the EU; military and cultural independence; enforced border controls; and targets not only immigrants (in the form of demonstrations against refugee centres) and Muslims (by demonstrating against particular mosques) but also ethnic Finns who are supportive of immigration and refugees.⁴⁷ With the current efforts of the Ministry of Interior to establish juridical means for banning violent extremist movements it remains to be seen, whether *Suomi Ensin* will reach their goal of 5,000 signatures for registering as an official party. In any case, the movement aims to have candidates in the upcoming municipal elections in April 2017.⁴⁸

The frequent demonstrations held all over the country by the movement include vocal Islamophobic expressions. For instance, during the demonstration organised by Marco de Witt where the *Suomi Ensin* movement demonstrated against Ramadan festivities in July 2016, Panu Huuhtanen spoke of an Islamization of Finland and criticised the shopping mall for facilitating the Ramadan event and contributing to the spread of Islamic culture in the country. The movement is internationally connected to like-minded groups such as its British counterpart "Britain First" and their demonstrations host international speakers such as Mona Walter, an ex-Muslim from Sweden who frequently speaks against Islam.⁴⁹ Moreover, in August 2016, the former French diplomat Michel Paulath held an expressive hate speech in one of the demonstrations organised by *Suomi Ensin* in Helsinki. The video was also shared by the far-right politician Ignaz Bearth (Austria, FPÖ Party member) with the words "Strong words but true. Islam is not tolerant". In his speech, Paulath explicitly addressed the Muslims in the audience and called them, among many things, stupid and "out of this world", and denied their right to existence.⁵⁰ The Professor of Criminal Law Matti Tolvanen has analysed the speech as a clear case of incitement to hatred, which thus means that at least some of the activities by *Suomi Ensin* can be regarded as violating Finnish law.⁵¹

46. The ideological programme of the movement is available online from the public Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1694153787526571/files/> (retrieved November 28, 2016).

47. Jussi Korhonen, "Johtohahmo paljasti: Suomi ensin -liikkeen taktiikkana pelottelu ja painostus," *Seura*, (July 8, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from <http://seura.fi/isanpikajuna/2016/07/08/johtohahmo-paljasti-suomi-ensin-liikkeen-taktiikkana-pelottelu-painostus/?shared=6671-4320590d-1>.

48. Jari Pietiläinen, "Suomi ensin -ryhmän puoluehanke takkuu – Koossa vasta viidennes korteista," *TampereLainen*, (September 23, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from <http://www.tampereLainen.fi/artikkeli/436850-suomi-ensin-ryhman-puoluehanke-takkuu-koossa-vasta-viidennes-korteista>.

49. *Suomi Ensin* demonstration on 10.9.2016 in Helsinki with Mona Walter <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAwj-D0Eiy8> (retrieved December 4, 2016)

50. <https://www.facebook.com/I.Bearth/videos/740450916092824/#> (retrieved December 4, 2016)

51. Eero Mäntymaa, "Rikkooko Suomi Ensin -liike rikoslakia? Asiantuntija vastaa", *yle.fi*, (September 13, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9162661>.

Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

The association for Muslim youth in Finland *Nuoret Muslimit ry* (NUMU) organised in Helsinki workshops on Islamophobia at the Anti-Racism Forum in October 2016 as well as at the *Ei Vihapuheelle* (“No to Hate Speech”) seminar in December 2016. Furthermore, NUMU conducted a survey to monitor experiences of Islamophobic incidents in autumn 2016.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The survey conducted by NUMU, the report by the Ministry of Justice and the statistics from the police indicate that Islamophobic incidents have increased, but there is still a lack of knowledge regarding the extent to which Finnish Muslims experience hate crimes. Hence, there is a need for systematic investigation. Furthermore, the authorities should outline a definition of the concept of Islamophobia, and its relation to hate crime and discrimination, as several Finnish politicians from one of the government parties (Finns Party) have been sentenced for incitement to hatred due to Islamophobic statements. An officially outlined definition would ease the work of other authorities (police, etc.) to detect and monitor Islamophobic incidents. We recommend that a working committee is appointed by the Ministry of Interior for these purposes.

There is also need for a systematic overview of the level of knowledge of Islam within different societal sectors (education, police, etc.). If authorities are found to be lacking knowledge, there should be efforts through training to combat prejudice and misunderstandings. Furthermore, Islamophobia, hate speech and crimes should be combated through campaigns and continuing training. We recommend this measure is taken in cooperation with NGOs, Islamic communities and civil society actors. Also, efforts to increase media literacy need to be encouraged, as Islamophobic propaganda is widely circulated in websites that produce fake news. Islamic associations should be supported in their work to emancipate young Muslims, and initiatives to provide information on rights and channels of reporting incidents should be encouraged. These associations could also provide support to victims of Islamophobia, and systematically register Islamophobic incidents.

Chronology

January

- Debates in the press about the usage of the face veil by employees in the education sector; however, no restrictions were imposed.

March

- MP Lea Mäkipää's (Finns Party) assistant Terhi Kiemunki writes an insulting text on Facebook about Muslim children. She also publishes another text including incitement to hatred against Muslims in her personal blog on the blogging platform "*Uusi Suomi*".

July

- MP Teuvo Hakkarainen (Finns Party) comments on the attacks in Nizza on his Facebook page and states "Get Muslims out of this country! Not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims."
- Sebastian Tynkkynen, the chairman of the Finns Party youth division, writes on his Facebook page, among others, that "Islam should be stamped out of Finland".
- Police temporarily succeed in closing the Islamophobic platforms *MV-Lehti* and *Überuutiset* run by Ilja Janitskin.
- An Eid event is organised by a shopping mall in Helsinki. The *Suomi Ensin* movement organises a demonstration against the festivities.

August

- The French ex-diplomat Michel Paulath speaks at one of the demonstrations organised by *Suomi Ensin*. A video of his speech gains global publicity and is shared amongst others by the Austrian far-right politician Ignaz Bearth.

October

- MP Vesa-Matti Saarakkala (Finns Party) submits a proposal for a law amendment suggesting a prohibition on the usage of the face veil.
- MEP Jussi Halla-aho suggests ethnic profiling in EU member states.

November

- MP Teuvo Hakkarainen is charged for incitement to hatred due to his comments on Facebook in July.

December

- Terhi Kiemunki is convicted for incitement to hatred with financial penalties due to her text on "*Uusi Suomi*" in March.

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.

