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The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states.

This denial is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are not immune to this form of racism.

As a survey published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe.

In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the *European Islamophobia Report* project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

**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.
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SETA is pleased to present the third edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) succeeding the reports of 2015 and 2016. This year, 40 prominent scholars and civil society actors from various European countries who specialize in different fields such as racism, gender, and discrimination studies, present 33 country reports. In addition to highlighting the developments of Islamophobia in key fields such as employment, education and politics, they provide precious country-specific policy recommendations to counter this phenomenon and a detailed chronology of events. Since every year it applies the same methodological framework on a large number of European countries, the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) provides a unique collection of European-wide analyses in regard to anti-Muslim racism in Europe to policy makers, social scientists, and ordinary readers.

Monitoring Islamophobia in Europe became an urgent need in the last few years, since the phenomenon has sensibly increased, following economic recession and the rise of far-right politics. Today, Islamophobia constitutes a serious challenge for European democracies for at least four reasons:

• First of all, Islamophobia is severely impacting the life of millions of European Muslims facing racism at university, in the workplace, the public sphere, etc. In addition to representing a threat to their physical life, this racism undermines their place in society and their sense of belonging in European nation states.
Secondly, the rise of Islamophobia both reflects and strengthens the normalization of far-right discourse in the political spectrum across Europe. Within a few months, neofascist parties entered the German Bundestag, accessed strategic ministries in Austria, and registered historical results in the French, Dutch and Italian elections.

Thirdly, Islamophobia poses a problem of internal security as it intensifies tensions between communities, legitimizes hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the European Union ideals of peace and coexistence.

Finally, Islamophobia represents an obstacle for European international relations, since it mars the EU image of tolerance worldwide and increases tension between EU member states and certain strategic partners, including Muslim countries.

Yet, even if Islamophobia objectively constitutes a threat for European democracies, many European intellectuals and politicians, both left- and right-wing, are still refuting the existence and the validity of the concept. Their worries about terrorist attacks and immigration are preventing them from acknowledging the daily racism that Muslims face in Europe. However, by denying Islamophobia, there is a risk – intended or not – to ignore the unacceptable reality experienced by millions of European citizens.

Based on this observation, as SETA, we decided to annually publish the European Islamophobia Report (EIR) in order to provide serious – yet accessible – analyses on a phenomenon that remains widely ignored and misunderstood. We hope this will be a vital contribution in the fight against Islamophobia in Europe.

Burhanettin Duran
General Coordinator of SETA
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This is the third issue of the annual European Islamophobia Report (EIR) consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year’s EIR represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

In a presentation of the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey’s selected findings on Muslims, the director of the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Michael O’Flaherty, stressed that their survey clearly contradicts the claim that Muslims are not integrated into European societies. On the contrary, the survey found that the trust of Muslims in the democratic institutions of Europe is higher than much of the general population. Furthermore, O’Flaherty pointed out that “every incident of discrimination and hate crime, however, hinders their [Muslims’] inclusion and reduces their chances of finding work. We risk that we alienate individuals and their community from us, with all possible consequences.”

As the report based on a survey of 10,527 people who identified themselves as Muslims published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe. In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the *European Islamophobia Report* project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in almost all states in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

However, NGOs and projects like the *EIR* cannot provide a European-wide daily monitoring mechanism given the colossal size of the problem and the funds required. Therefore, we think it is the duty of the nation states to put in place monitoring mechanisms and publish yearly data on anti-Muslim hate crimes in their respective countries. Yet, it is clear that we are far from that goal since there is no official documentation of anti-Muslim hate crime in the overwhelming majority of European nation states. Recently, Germany made an important step by including Islamophobia as a subcategory of “hate crimes” in the official police statistics of “politically motivated criminal acts.” We welcome this decision and urge other European nation states to follow suit, since Islamophobia is not only a fundamental threat to the coexistence of different religions and cultures but also a threat to the democratic foundations of Europe. Furthermore, tackling Islamophobia has also become an acute problem given the rise of racist, especially Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Roma far-right parties and the adaptation of their discourse by mainstream parties in many European nation states.

The first statistics, which were revealed for 2017 by the German State reveal around 71 attacks on mosques and 908 crimes against German Muslims (ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts). Germany also registered 1,413 attacks on refugees and 93 attacks on aid workers in Germany in the first 273 days of 2017. However, although the German state registered 71 attacks on mosques, the DITIB, which is an NGO, listed 101 attacks on mosques in Germany all throughout 2017. Therefore, bearing in mind also what the FRA revealed about the reluctance of Muslims to report incidents, one can claim that the estimated number of unknown cases might be more than eight times higher. There are various reasons for these phenomena; some of these include:
• Victims may not be aware of the reporting mechanisms.
• The victims’ possible social isolation or proximity to the perpetrator.
• The victims’ lack of trust in the authorities, due to fears that their claim will not be taken seriously.
• The victims’ fear of being victimized again by police officers.

In this regard, the OSCE ODIHR points out to the fact that “governments have a central role to play in ensuring access to justice; from the initial assessment of victims’ needs by police officers, to support mechanisms for victims through governmental or nongovernmental institutions.”

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states. Intelligence services, such as the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, have realized the important role Islamophobia plays for right-wing extremist parties. Still, it is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are no longer immune to this form of racism.

The recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance in Europe. Therefore, we welcome the Swedish government’s decision to launch a National Plan to Combat Racism, which also acknowledges Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed. However, despite this positive step the Equality Ombudsman in Sweden followed the EU Court of Justice in ruling that company policies banning the Islamic headscarf are not discriminatory.

That is also why initiatives such as the report The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All by Conservative MP Dominic Grieve, in which the government was urged to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice along the lines of that adopted in 2016 for anti-Semitism, are so important. Successfully combating Islamophobia requires outspoken and brave initiatives and persons (politicians and activists) who challenge this widespread normalized form of racism.

With the help of the new president of the USA, who defends his “Muslim Ban” by referring to invented terrorist attacks such as the one in Sweden, the imagined figure of the all-time lurking Muslim enemy is kept alive. When Trump tweet-
ed “You look at what’s happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible,”4 Swedish officials and reporters were bewildered since there were no major incidents that night. The climate of the age of fake news, which has always been central to the spread of conspiracy theories, is now exaggerated and expanded by leading politicians in the world, while the structural dimension of Islamophobia still exists at the heart of European societies and institutions. This situation requires a need for a clear stance by governing politicians, elites and intellectuals since they are bound by their constitutions and laws, and international and national human rights standards.

In this manner, British Prime Minister Theresa May criticized Trump for reposting material from the far-right Britain First, while the U.S. president answered her with the advice that it would be better if she dealt with the “destructive radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom” rather than focusing on him.5 It is quite clear that Europe needs more courageous leaders such as Alexander Van der Bellen, the president of the Austrian Republic, who defended the rights of women to wear a headscarf in a country where the far right has become the leading political power.6

Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels

Combatting Islamophobia on national and regional levels is important but not enough. Therefore, there is a need for a concerted effort to combat Islamophobia first on the European level and second on the supranational level. In this regard both the coordination among different NGOs and the involvement of institutions such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UN are essential. In 2017, there were some initial positive steps on the EU level, however, given the size of the problem there is still a long way to go.

As an NGO coalition statement following the 4th Roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred, which was organized by the European Commission (EC) and chaired by the EU coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, David Friggieri, made clear, a “stronger and more concrete commitment and actions”7 are needed to combat

Islamophobia. These civil society organizations argue that “there are still some misconceptions by the European institutions with regards to the issue of Islamophobia. With the generalised suspicion against Muslims, it is of utmost importance for EU policy makers not to fall into the trap of treating Muslims as potential problems but rather as human beings whose fundamental rights can be violated. Combating Islamophobia is not about preventing radicalism or terrorism [...] it is about politically addressing structural forms of discrimination and racism affecting Muslims or those perceived as such.”

Although the statements of high-ranking politicians such as Frans Timmerman, vice-president of the European Commission, in which he recognized the problem of Islamophobia are positive steps, the European Coalition against Islamophobia still sees a large potential for improvement regarding the fight against Islamophobia on the EU level. According to the European Coalition against Islamophobia, the EU and national legislations provide legal remedies for racist crime and discrimination, yet Muslims still suffer from violence, prejudice and exclusion in Europe. In this context, the FRA recommends better implementation of the relevant EU and national legislation to combat widespread harassment and hate crime against Muslims.

On March 14, 2017, the European Court of Justice (EJC) for the first time made two judgments to rule on non-discrimination at work on religious grounds. The EJC ruled that employers would be able to prohibit the wearing of religious garments by their employees. This was despite the content of Article 9, which secures the freedom of thought, conscience and religion of the European Convention on Human Rights. The EJC ruled that banning visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs is “appropriate” to ensure a “policy of neutrality” if systematically applied as a company policy. Obviously, also observant Jews and other religious minorities will be affected by this as much as Muslim women and men. But the verdict has evolved in the context of the complaints of two Muslim women, one from France and one from Belgium. It will be Muslim women who will suffer from this regulation disproportionately. Amnesty International protested against this decision as potentially propelling increased discrimination on the basis of religious identity, especially against Muslim women. Also, many faith communities and vocal Muslim organizations in Brussels and beyond have objected to what they perceive a step towards further institutionalization of Islamophobia.

8. Ibid.
bonesia. While this verdict made clear that visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs can be banned in private companies, it left many questions open regarding the decisions to be taken in the future.

As Bülent Senay, personal representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, argued during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017, on a supranational level, institutions still lack means to fight Islamophobia. Amongst other important recommendations, he called the OSCE states to commit to recording hate crimes against Muslims as a separate disaggregated category. The OSCE ODIHR is also considering the preparation of a guide on hate crimes against Muslims and on the security needs of Muslim communities in the OSCE region. A similar guide has been prepared and published for Jewish communities. We think this would be a positive step to combatting Islamophobia in the OSCE region and, therefore, welcome the preparation of such a guide.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe publishes an annual report on the ECRI’s activities, in which Islamophobia is also analyzed under a separate heading. In the last report, which covered the year 2016, the ECRI points to the fact that “Muslims continue to experience discrimination in various areas of social life, including education, employment and housing.” The ECRI concludes that the “negative experiences of Muslims in Europe can fuel feelings of isolation within a larger community and hinder inclusive societies.” However, we think that the Council of Europe, which consists of 47 states, can play a wider role in the combat against Islamophobia in Europe.

The European Coalition against Islamophobia, which consists of 13 NGOs, has published its suggestion for an action plan for 2018-2019 to fight Islamophobia in the European Union. This plan puts the recognition of Islamophobia at its center and among other important recommendations calls the European Parliament to adopt a resolution on combatting Islamophobia as it did on combatting anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsiness.  

14. Ibid.
15. The members of this coalition are the following: European Forum of Muslim Women; Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations; Karamah EU; European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion; European Network against Racism; and the Collective against Islamophobia in France.
A resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on March 23, 2016 (Resolution 31/16) expressed “concern over violent attacks motivated by anti-religious bias, targeting individuals belonging to religious minorities, as well as religious places, and recommended that states prevent, investigate and punish such acts.” Although this is more a general resolution on freedom of religion it is still relevant to EU states which are witnessing an unprecedented rise of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the last decade. More concretely, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reported that “the fear of terrorism and racist and xenophobic speech often translate into increases in hate crimes targeting Muslims, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.” Like many others, the special rapporteur reiterated the importance of collecting disaggregated data on hate crimes targeting Muslims and others.

The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

Beyond the supranational level, there are observable trends in different European nation states. Firstly, the far-right political camp has moved from the periphery to the center and become integral to the political landscape in Europe. While most far-right parties are still in opposition, some have gained major influence by becoming governing parties such as in the cases of Austria, Bulgaria, and Finland. While others may still be in opposition, their Islamophobic discourse, which is so central to most of them, has become mainstream since their issues have been co-opted by former centrist political parties. In Sweden, for instance, the once marginal anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats became the third or second largest party in opinion polls, pushing most other parties to adjust their policies accordingly. Secondly, we also observe a stronger cooperation of various Islamophobic parties in Europe. For instance, the Czech Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD) organized a meeting of representatives of its partners from the European Parliament in December 2017 in Prague. Politicians such as Geert Wilders (Dutch Freedom Party) and Marine Le Pen (Front National) were amongst some of the participants.

From Sweden to Greece, from Poland to the Netherlands, the rise of far-right parties is a vital threat to democratic order in Europe. What is more dangerous is the mainstreaming and normalization of the far-right policies within mainstream politics. Austria is a wake-up call and the prime example of this horror story which might repeat itself in many European countries if European societies do not seriously tackle this disturbing trend.

18. Ibid.
The Right Wing in Opposition

As mentioned above in the majority of EU countries far-right parties are still in opposition. However, when in opposition, right-wing political parties are even more explicit about their racist utopia and hence speak out in a harsher and more direct way against Muslims. By doing so, they are playing a crucial role in the normalization of anti-Muslim discourse in Europe.

There are many examples of this blatant anti-Muslim racism, some of which will be presented here. In this context, the Northern League’s candidate for president of the Lombardy region of Italy warned that there is a “risk that the white race disappears and is replaced by migrants.”\(^19\) In Slovenia, right-wing populist and extremist parties are not strong enough to win elections, however they are very active on social media and in the organization of public events and protests. For instance, Nova 24TV in Slovenia broadcasted the following Islamophobic opinion: “Obviously, we do not have enough terrorists, rapists and other criminals in Europe. It seems that leading politicians want to bring even more. Only this can explain their desire for the ever-increasing inclusion of migrants and Muslims in European countries.”\(^20\)

In Latvia, numerous pre-election programs of various parties for the 2017 municipal elections demonstrated unambiguous Islamophobic positions. In Riga, the Action Party of Euroseptics (Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija) published the following slogan in their program, “We are not against Muslims, we are against the Islamization of Latvia and Europe.”\(^21\) The National Alliance (Nacionālā apvienība) was even more radical in its program in which it stated that it was “in support of not letting into Liepāja illegal immigrants called ‘refugees’ – potential criminals, terrorists and idlers! There will be no mosques here!”\(^22\)

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, anti-Muslim bigotry and negative trends towards Muslims were evident mainly in the educational, political and media sectors. The main generators of Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim bigotry are the Bosnian Serb political, media and academic policymakers.

For the first time since 1989 a right-wing extremist party managed to enter parliament in Slovakia. The opposition party ‘We Are a Family – Boris Kolar’ submitted


\(^{21}\) Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, “Eiroskeptiķu Ricības partija”, retrieved December 27, 2017, from http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=8k1v7yBEuCMERYWBkqtTFQ%3D%3D.

\(^{22}\) Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, “Nacionālā savienīga Taisnīgums”, retrieved December 27, 2017, from http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=0zFqpAsLIE456csFZERqQ%3D%3D.
a bill to amend the laws to enable a ban on building mosques. Eleven members voted for the proposal, 48 against it, while more than a half of the MPs, 77 in total, abstained from the vote.

In Southern Cyprus, a newly established party, the far-right ELAM (Ethniko Laiko Metopo), which is a sister party to Greece’s Golden Dawn, has significantly contributed to spreading Islamophobia in the southern part of the island. Although ELAM is a very small party and only managed to enter parliament in 2016 with 3.71% (allowing them 2 MPs), their views are widespread; the archbishop of southern Cyprus often expresses his agreement with ELAM’S positions.

The successful Swiss right-wing party SVP tried to introduce a full-face veil ban in Sweden. Another parliamentary initiative by National Councillor Yannick Buttet (CVP) demanded a “mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sales as well as an increase in the price of imported halal meat.” Although the National Council accepted the initiative, the Council of States rejected it.

In Switzerland, the parliamentary motion by Lorenzo Quadri from the regional right-wing party Lega, which was adopted in the National Council, instructed the Federal Council to draw up a bill, which, following the rules that apply in Austria, provides a guarantee for the following: “(1) The prohibition of Islamic places of worship and imams who accept funds from abroad; (2) The obligation for Islamic centers to disclose the origin and use of their finances; (3) The duty to conduct sermons in the language of residence.”

Meanwhile in the UK, UKIP’s election manifesto promised a public ban on “face coverings” and proscribed sharia courts in the UK. In the Netherlands, radical parties such as the Dutch SGP (a radical Christian party) published a manifesto, which argued that “the love offer of Jesus Christ and Muhammad’s use of violence are as different as day and night.”

Beyond political parties, on the more extreme non-parliamentarian level or the grassroots level, far-right groups, such as the Identitarian movement or ones that function underground, pose a threat to Muslims in Europe, especially in their most violent form. Nationalist groups such as, among others, the Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement and the “Finland First” movement were active in spreading their ideology of hate.

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26. Ibid., p. 2.
The Right Wing in Power

Currently, there are a few governments in Europe, which include right-wing parties that have focused heavily on using Islamophobia as a means of gaining public support and political power. After the general elections in Norway, the Progress Party, which is often regarded as a right-wing populist party and which had an openly Islamophobic election campaign, governs together with the conservatives in a coalition. Consequently, for the first time in Norwegian history, there are government representatives who do not shy away from using Islamophobic discourse. The Progress Party’s minister for immigration and integration, Sylvi Listhaug, suggested a prohibition against hijabs at elementary schools, which was not supported by the coalition partner. The party also proposed to ban the circumcision of baby boys, which also found no support in parliament. A third proposal, a national ban of the face veil in schools and institutions of higher education, won broad parliamentary support and is currently being circulated for consultation.

In the Czech Republic, a new party called ANO won the elections. Its leader supported the notorious Islamophobic politician, Czech President Miloš Zeman. The leader of the right-wing populist party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), which campaigns continuously for a legal ban of Islam, became vice-chair of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Although there is a tiny Muslim community in the country, the 2017 national elections were the first in the history of the Czech Republic, during which attitudes towards Muslims were a central issue.

In Bulgaria, a hostile language towards Muslims is winning ground. Especially, during election campaigns, anti-Muslim rhetoric was at its peak. Many extreme right-wing political parties such as ATAKA, NFSB (National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria), and IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) are part of the current government and form a coalition with the leading party.

In Serbia, there are ministers such as Aleksandar Vulin, minister of defense, and Nebojša Stefanovic, minister of the interior, who attract attention by stirring ethnic and religious hostilities. Today, we can witness a revival of political parties and forces from the 1990s in the political arena. Currently, the strongest parties are those that were the most important players in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. A rise in nationalism and hate speech targeting Muslims can be seen in the public sphere. Crimes committed against Muslims are glorified.

Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

We observe a general trend within centrist political parties to co-opt the Islamophobic discourse of right-wing political parties. The former president of Romania, Traian Basescu, proclaimed in the midst of a debate on a mosque in Bucharest that this was
“a risk to national security,” and argued that “part of the Islamization of Europe is building mosques everywhere.”

During a local council election in Bucharest in June 2016, several leading Bucharest mayoral candidates argued for a referendum on the mosque, amongst them the current mayor Gabriela Firea of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat – PSD).

In Poland, there is no nominal right-wing political party, but a conservative party in power, which nevertheless allows an unambiguous negative image of Islam to be spread in state institutions. State-funded media outlets seem to carefully select their guests, who spread a stereotypical portrayal of Muslims as “violent,” “terrorists,” “Jihadists,” “sexists,” “rapists,” “uncivilized,” “double-faced,” and in general “a threat” to European and Christian values. While a research commissioned by the Commissioner of Human Rights on the attitudes among Polish secondary school students was published in 2017, showing that the majority of the 396 respondents reveal strong anti-refugee, Islamophobic and homophobic prejudice, the Ministry of Education shut down anti-discrimination programs in Polish schools and instead promoted programs supporting patriotism and a national and cultural Polish identity.

In Spain, former president of Madrid and of the senate, and former minister of culture, Esperanza Aguirre, tweeted that January 2 was a glorious day for Spanish women who otherwise would not enjoy any freedom under the rule of Islam.

In Slovakia, former president Robert Fico argued that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia.”

In Hungary, the ruling conservative Fidesz competed in Islamophobic rhetoric with the far right. It finally managed to make anti-Muslim narratives become un-

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contested and thus realized a support of an overwhelming portion of the population. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán became famous for the alleged conspiracy of George Soros to Islamize Europe with the help of “hordes of migrants raping Europe.”

During the national presidential elections in France in 2017, Islamophobia was omnipresent not only in the campaign of the Front National but also in an array of other candidates’ campaigns. Also during the national elections in the Netherlands in 2017, there was a race between the right-wing populist party of Geert Wilders (PVV) and the center-right party of Mark Rutte (VVD). Some intellectuals, before the elections, discussed whether the number of Muslims could be reduced by deportation. Prominent Law Professor Paul Cliteur was present during the debate and discussed how this could be made possible legally.

In Denmark, the leader of the Social Democrats, Mette Frederiksen, argued that there is no need for Muslim private schools and that they would be strengthening the isolation of Muslims. Frederiksen argued that “a school with a foundation in Islam is not part of the majority culture in Denmark.” Bias against Muslims within the oppositional social democratic party intensified. This is also true for the conservatives in Austria. There, the then-leader of the conservatives and now chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, argued that there should not be any private Muslim kindergartens in the country.

Denying the Suffering

In many European countries, the very existence of Islamophobia itself is denied. In countries like Austria and Norway, leading journalists of editorial boards shift the focus from Islamophobia as a problem to Islamophobia as a “combat term,” arguing that the term itself is used by Islamists to delegitimize any debate on Islam and Muslims. Hence, there is a reluctance to use the term “Islamophobia” in the public sphere. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a denial of the anti-Muslim genocide. Nationalist movements and even parts of the Croatian political establishment argue that the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be territorially divided in order to secure peace and security. Convictions such as in the case of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague fueled Islamophobia within these separatist and nationalist movements. Republika Srpska, continued its separatist policy in 2017 and was supported by visits from abroad, especially members of the right-wing Austrian FPÖ, which now forms a government with the conservative ÖVP.

The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

An unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish an Islamic State in Sweden was published by a Swedish state agency. The Administrative Court of Appeal later dismissed the report as of “highly limited” value. The author is a senior fellow at the Brussels-based think tank European Foundation for Democracy, which plays a central role in disseminating this conspiracy theory, which helps in defaming Muslim civil society actors. Also in Austria, a report was published on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy by another senior policy advisor of the same think tank in cooperation with a state agency. The report had no serious impact, since it was presented a few days before the elections and did not receive major coverage due to other political scandals. The current chancellor of Austria Sebastian Kurz has been central in sponsoring ‘studies’ on Muslims in Austria (one on Muslim kindergartens, the other on mosques), which would serve his increasingly Islamophobic agenda. Also, Islamophobia is a threat, when good initiatives are legitimized for the wrong ends. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama defended the need for religious instruction in public schools with the prevention of the radicalization of young Muslims.

Online Islamophobia

Islamophobic groups are especially active on the Internet. Often, the Internet is where right-wing groups emerge before materializing in “real life.” Therefore, better regulations are needed in this sphere to combat the spread of Islamophobic content which is the main source in the radicalization of far-right terrorist groups or lone wolves.

Groups such as the explicitly Islamophobic Identitarian Movement that represents the postmodern face of the New Right, is active in countries like Slovenia, Hungary. Malta witnessed the emergence of its first far-right party, the Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin (Maltese Patriots). While doing poorly in elections, their media campaign and social media advertisements presented many Islamophobic statements. In countries with a negligible Muslim population like Latvia, Islamophobic attitudes are still mostly voiced on the Internet. In Italy, a significant research on intolerance based on an analysis of Twitter realized by Voxdiritti in 2016 ranked Muslims as the fourth most targeted group (6% of all tweets).35

Legalizing Islamophobia

Early in 2017, the Austrian government, made up of social democrats and conservatives, passed a law that outlawed the veiling of the face. Romania followed

with a legislative proposal for the ban of face veiling in educational institutions initiated by the ruling People’s Movement Party (PMP). The asserted aim was the prevention of violence and terrorism. The law was launched by 26 MPs from three parliamentary parties. Also, in Latvia, where – similar to Romania – there are nearly no Muslims, a draft law on the restriction of wearing a face veil was prepared by the Ministry of Justice in 2015 and is still under consideration. In Belgium, the parliament voted for limitations on ritual slaughter including the prohibition of Muslim halal slaughter. Also, a debate on a state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium began. In a small village in Hungary, a mayor passed a law to ban the construction of mosques and minarets, the Muslim call for prayer, the chador, niqab, burqa, and burkini. The mayor argued that he wished to set a positive example for other Hungarian municipalities in order to guarantee the ‘centuries-old traditions’ of local communities in the face of mass migration to the country. After massive protests in the entire country, the mayor had to withdraw the legislation for contradicting a number of basic rights guaranteed by the Hungarian Constitution. In November 2017, however, the local council voted in favor of the same legislation that was amended after merely removing any words referring to Islam from the text. Also, the Dutch Christian-Democrats (CDA) included a ban on the financing of mosques from abroad and were wary of “radical Islam” in their campaign program.

In Finland, a citizens’ initiative was launched to amend a law in favor of a “Burka Ban.” Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki, a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims. A spokesperson of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, current chairman of the Finnish Defense League (FDL), who proclaims to be fighting against “Islamic extremism” and is known for other smaller initiatives such as demonstrations against “Islamization” before a school. In Denmark, a ban on full-face veils, a so-called “mask ban” (popularly referred to as the “niqab ban”) was proposed by the Danish

38. “Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing the proposal that an act be enacted” as defined in “MOT Eduskuntasanasto,” a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister’s Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from https://mot.kieliyote.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?U=fi&field&height=147.
40. For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki’s court case, see Ibid.
People's Party following the verdict by the European Court of Human Rights. This initiative was not only supported by the right wing, but also the Social Democrats and the Danish Social Liberal Party, arguing that they would, thus, empower Muslim women. There is also a law prohibiting male circumcision under way in Denmark.

Terrorist Attacks against Muslims

In Europe, the largest number of attacks which could conclusively be affiliated to terrorist organizations were carried out by racists, nationalists and separatist extremists (99), followed by left-wing extremist attacks (27). Nevertheless, Jihadist terrorist attacks (13) and the general Muslim population in Europe associated with it are largely seen as the greatest threat to European societies. Irresponsible politicians and media play their part in supporting this trend.

There are worrying signs of far-right terrorist groups and lone wolf far-right terrorists increasing their activities and targeting Muslims in Europe. Attacks against mosques and Muslim institutions have become a daily routine. For instance, according to the DITIB in Germany there were 101 attacks on mosques throughout 2017. However, the attacks against Muslims, persons who are perceived as Muslims, and persons who are vocal in their support for Muslim or refugee rights are becoming more and more frequent and violent. In Germany, the government registered around 908 hate crimes in 2017 against German Muslims, ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts. As a result of these Islamophobic attacks in Europe, there are already victims of Islamophobic terrorist attacks who have either been killed or severely injured. Below we have summarized the most important attacks in 2017.

On the night of April 15, 2017, the 22-year-old Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed al-Gohary was killed in a hit-and-run incident in Cottbus, Germany. The most shocking part is that while she lay injured on the street, people started insulting her in racist ways, believing she was a refugee. The attackers eventually came back on foot and said things like “Well, they gotta check the street first, since they don’t have streets at home. They should fuck off to their damn country.”

In Germany, the conservative mayor of Altena, Andreas Hollstein, known for his welcoming stance towards refugees was stabbed in the neck and seriously injured in a knife attack at a kebab restaurant.


In Sweden, three members of the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement were sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison. The trio was found guilty of bombings of two refugee housings and a libertarian socialist trade union office in Gothenburg, which severely wounded one person. They were trained in urban guerrilla warfare by a Russian radical nationalist and anti-Muslim paramilitary organization. The perpetrators were influenced by Islamophobic and anti-Semitic discourse, which was clear in a recorded video prayer to All-Father Odin in which they vowed to “retake our land” and “take the fight against you who have defiled our country.” “Oh Jew, oh Muslim / We Norsemen have awakened / You should fear us / We are coming after you / The rage of the Norsemen thunder / Be assured / Oh, Jew and Muslim / The Norsemen are coming after you.”\(^45\) The fact that Islamophobia goes hand in hand with other forms of racism, such as anti-Semitism in this case, should be a symbolic reminder for those, who are aware of European history.\(^46\) Beyond this example of a right-wing extremist movement, the case of Hungary, where the ruling Fidesz party mobilizes against George Soros while portraying him as a conspirator alongside Muslims to change the European population,\(^47\) reveals again that racism will eventually target every minority.

On September 27, 2017, four members of the banned neo-Nazi group National Action in the UK were arrested on suspicion of preparing and instigating acts of terrorism. According to the UK’s Defense Ministry some of them were soldiers serving in the British army.\(^48\)

In Germany, two supporters of a neo-Nazi terrorist group were arrested on January 14 after 155 kg of explosives were discovered in their home.\(^49\) On April 27, a German soldier posing as a Syrian refugee was arrested for allegedly planning a “false flag” shooting attack against politicians that would be blamed on asylum seekers.\(^50\)

On October 17, 2017, 10 far-right militants were arrested by French anti-terrorist police in France. According to the TV station M6, they were suspected of

\(^{45}\) Nationella åklagarmyndighetens, Ansökan om stämning, Ärende AM-8443-17, Inkom 2017-06-09MÅLNR: B 618-17, AKTBIL: 206; Säkerhetspolisen, Huvudprotokoll, dnr 0105-K98-16 0105-K8-17 0105-K9-17, Inkom 2017-06-09.


planning attacks on French politicians and on Muslim places of worship.51

In Russia, between 2012 and 2016, five imams were killed in the Stavropol region. The cases remain unresolved to this today. All the assassinated imams were involved in civic activism and they openly resisted the prohibition of the hijab in the Stavropol region.

On June 19, 2017, a man drove his van deliberately into a crowd of Muslim worshippers leaving the north London Finsbury Park Mosque. As a result of this attack, one person was killed and eleven were injured.

In Poland, a Pakistani Muslim man was severely beaten by a group of men in Ozorków on January 3, 2017. On April 8, 2017, three Pakistani Muslim men were severely beaten in Swidwin Polan.

**Threatening the Religious Infrastructure**

More than two decades after the Agreements of 1992 between the Islamic communities and the Spanish state, basic rights such as access to religious education or the possibility of burying the Muslim dead in an Islamic cemetery have not been put into practice in most of the Spanish regions; small steps, however, are being taken in this sense. In Malta, there were debates about the legitimacy of teaching Islam to Muslim pupils.

In Slovakia, there has been a parliamentary debate on a draft law that toughened the registration of churches and religious communities and a draft has been submitted by members of the government of the Slovak National Party (SNS). This trend of discrimination against Muslims, who are a small minority in Slovakia and thus directly affected by these amendments, has been noticed by the U.S. Department of State, which in its report on religious freedom in the world noted the disparity in the approach to religious rights in the country. Today, it is impossible for the Muslim community to become an officially registered religious community in Slovakia.

In Greece, three mosques located inside non-governmental organizations belonging to members of the Muslim Turkish minority were closed by the Greek police - one of them had existed for 12 years. Officially, the closures were due to the lack of the necessary permissions to function a house of prayer inside the premises.

In Bulgaria, an indifference from the part of governments to the religious needs of Muslims can be observed. There is a lack of funding by the state be it in the area of religious education, Muslims’ attempts to develop a cultural-religious center, or the blocking of Muslims’ attempts to regain property ownership of *waqf* properties. Also, many Muslim religious employees, which were formerly and legally paid by the Turkish government, had to leave their jobs because the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria unilaterally cancelled the treaty between Bulgaria and Turkey and did not

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inform the representatives of the Office of the Grand Mufti, which faced a structural crisis after being informed three months later.

On a European level, the European Citizens’ Initiative against Extremism (Stop Extremism) was founded and recognized on June 7, 2017 by the European Commission. Among its initiators are Seyran Ates and Efgani Dönmez, who are known for their notorious Islamophobic positions. Supporters include well-known Islamophobes such as Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, Ralph Ghadban, Saida Keller-Messahli, and Necla Kelek. The initiative, which came under criticism when leaks by the weekly Falter revealed that more than 20,000 Euros, the budget specified by the EU Commission, could potentially be used to restrict Muslims’ religious activities. Stop Extremism calls for “the introduction of a joint, EU-wide watch list to which individuals and organizations with an extremist background could be added” as well as for the introduction of an “Extremism-free” certification for organizations and businesses.\(^{52}\) Initiatives like this seem to target specifically Muslims, not extremists, and to restrain their scope of activities, which ultimately reflects already existing restrictions as discussed above.

**Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations**

The picture presented here shows us that there is an urgent need to counter these developments. And there is room for hope. Critical assessment of the current situation regarding Muslims in Europe is growing within parts of civil society. Not only are there more and more institutions that are working to bring attention to the rise in hate crime towards Muslims such as the Spain-based Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios\(^{53}\) but there are also favorable developments such as in the Norwegian justice system which has developed positive steps regarding monitoring and convicting cases involving hate speech or discrimination against Muslims. Also, the German Federal Police has made a first important institutional step to combatting Islamophobia by documenting it: for the first time, Islamophobia has been included as a category of hate crime.

There are more and more politicians, who dare to openly speak out against the threat of Islamophobia. President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska stood up for Muslims in his New Year’s speech. Also, Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen took a stance of solidarity with Muslim women wearing the hijab. Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä called people not to respond to “hate with hate”\(^{54}\) in the aftermath of the stabbings by a Muslim citizen, which led to increased harassment, violent physical attacks as well as acts of vandalism against Muslim properties.

\(^{52}\) Stop Extremism, “Six Actions That We Demand to Secure a Safer Europe”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from https://www.en.stopextremism.eu/about.
\(^{53}\) Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los medios, http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/.
These examples of political courage give hope that there still exist reasonable politicians, who look beyond their ephemeral political careers, keeping the good of the whole of society in mind. With an increase of alternative right-wing media and social media bubbles as well as a general swing to the right, hate speech is becoming more and more normalised. In an especially extreme incident in the Czech Republic, children in a primary school in the city of Teplice were threatened with death in gas chambers; the class was comprised predominantly of children of Arab or Romani origin. Such incidents call for an unambiguous reaction on behalf of politicians and opinion leaders.

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. This will support all those forces within European societies, who work towards a more equal society and fight every form of racism. The editors of the EIR support the following recommendations which were made by the OSCE ODIHR office, the FRA, the ENAR, the European Coalition against Islamophobia, and other NGOs:

- In the face of the increased and generalized suspicion and marginalization of Muslims in the post-terrorist attacks and migration contexts and the deep impact the former have had on Muslims’ lives, including newly arrived migrants, the recognition of the specific form of racism targeting Muslims (or those perceived as such) is crucial.
- The misconceptions and demonization surrounding the fight against Islamophobia and visible Muslims, in general, need to be challenged; data, facts and concrete solutions need to be visible in order to improve the recognition of Islamophobia and influence policy changes.
- This should lead to informed anti-racism/anti-discrimination policies and support the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation on the national and European levels. EU institutions need to recognize and address Islamophobia politically as a form of racism that can lead to human rights violations.
- While the issue of Islamophobia has gained more visibility in recent years at the EU level, there is a clear need for stronger actions that will materialize recognition into concrete political actions.
- Considering their competence on the issue of anti-racism and non-discrimination, EU institutions have the possibility to support progress and change in this area. The appointment of the European Commission’s coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred following the European Commission’s 2015 colloquium on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred has created a momentum for the EU to act.

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The legal and political recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance. Therefore, a European-level conference on Islamophobia should be organized with the support of at least one EU Member State or the European Parliament.

In this context, the European Parliament should adopt a resolution on combating Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward - as it did to combat anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsism.

The adoption of EU standards for National Action Plans against Racism that take into account specific forms of racism, and include specific measures on Islamophobia with objectives and targets is necessary.

EU member states should adopt national action plans against racism addressing Islamophobia as a specific form of racism.

The European Commission should develop a roadmap detailing main policy instruments, issues and examples of good practice by Member States. This would function as a standard document that would be the basis for concrete operational objectives and action plans for the EU coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred.

The European Commission's coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred should develop a clear action plan for combating Islamophobia.

A high-level roundtable should be organized with the European Commission's coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred and NGOs on the issue of Islamophobia.

Europe needs courageous leaders and activists who can confront the Islamophobic discourses and narratives in the age of rising far-right parties.

A Guidance handbook should be developed on the collection methodology of hate crime data for EU Member States in order to ensure that Islamophobia is dully recorded according to the victims' and witnesses' perceptions and lived experiences; other bias indicators should be included in the data collection as well.

The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes as a separate category of hate crime by the police is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.

Muslim women's access to employment should be improved since they are the most discriminated group among Muslims. Gender equality departments and the corresponding committees of EU institutions should give specific attention to situations of discrimination affecting Muslim women by documenting the issue and pushing for specific programs and measures to combat it.

While protecting free speech, developing good guidelines to tackle online hate speech and considering primary legislation to deal with social media offences and online hate speech are also vital since the Internet plays an important role in the spread of Islamophobic discourses and also in the radicalization of far-right terrorists.
• Discrimination in the workplace should be tackled to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at the stages of recruitment, job retention, and promotion.

• Preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights including religious slaughter, circumcision and the wearing of religious attire or symbols are imperative for a multicultural Europe.

• Counter-terrorism policies should work with Muslim communities, not against them, in the so-called “de-radicalization” programs. These programs should also incorporate the fight against far-right and far-left terrorist groups and should not only target Muslims.
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NUMBERS

- The overwhelming majority of European states do not record Islamophobic incidents as a separate category of hate crime. The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes by the police as a separate category of hate crime is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.

- In the EU, only 12% of Muslims who have been discriminated against report their cases to the authorities. (Source: FRA) The non-exhaustive list that follows hints at the extent of underreporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe by states and NGOs, which has serious implications regarding the awareness of Muslims and the bureaucracy to tackle these issues.

**DENMARK**

In 2016, **56** Islamophobic incidents were reported. 20% of the all hate crime committed in 2016 targeted Muslims, while the group make up 5% of the general population, making Muslims the most targeted minority. (Source: National Police)

**BELGIUM**

In the month following the terror attacks in Brussels, **36** Islamophobic incidents were recorded. (Source: CCIB).

**AUSTRIA**

**256** Islamophobic incidents were documented. (Source: EIR Report, Antidiscrimination Office Styria, ZARA, and Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education [IDB]).
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

GERMANY

• 100 attacks occurred on mosques. (Source: DITIB and German State)
• 908 attacks took place targeting German Muslims.
• 60% of all Muslim teaching staff felt discriminated. (Source: Karim Fereidooni)
• There were 1,906 criminal attacks on refugees (5.2 attacks per day).
• There were 286 attacks against refugee shelters (0.8 attacks per day).
• 132 criminal acts and physical attacks against (refugee) aid workers occurred (0.4 attacks per day). (Source: German state)

FRANCE

• 121 Islamophobic incidents were reported. (Source: Observatory of Islamophobia)
• 19 Muslim places of worship were closed by the government; 749 individuals were placed under house arrest; over 4,500 police raids were conducted; and the list of individuals under government surveillance has reached 25,000.
• 17,393 individuals were enrolled in the Terrorism Prevention Database (FSPRT).

MALTA

• 7% of Muslims have experienced physical violence.
• 25% of Muslims have experienced harassment.
NORWAY
• In 2017, 14% of Muslims experienced harassment.

NETHERLANDS
• 364 incidents of discrimination against Muslims occurred in 2016.
  (Source: Verwey Jonker Institute and Anne Frank Foundation)

POLAND
• In 2017, Muslims were the most targeted group representing 20% of all hate crime cases.
  (Source: National Prosecutor’s Office)
• Between January and October 2017, there were 664 hate crime proceedings regarding attacks against Muslims.
  (Source: Ministry of Interior)
• 193 (29%) of those proceedings resulted in an indictment.
  (Source: Ministry of Interior)
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

• The terrorist attack in Manchester in May resulted in a fivefold increase in Islamophobic hate crime in the Greater Manchester region. (Source: Greater Manchester Police)

• Hate crime cases targeting Muslims in Greater London for the entire year of 2017 increased to 1,204 from 1,678 in the previous year, which is equal to a 40% rise. (Source: Scotland Yard)

• Between March and July 2017, the number of attacks on mosques climbed to 110 from 47 in the previous year. (Source: Tell MAMA UK)

• In 2016, 1,223 cases of Islamophobic attacks were reported to Tell MAMA. Twenty percent of these incidents involve physical attacks; 56% of the victims were women, while two-thirds of the perpetrators were men.

SWEDEN

• In 2016, 439 hate crimes with Islamophobic motives were recorded. (Source: Swedish Crime Survey-NTU)

SPAIN

• In 2017, 546 attacks took place against Muslims. (Source: Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia)
The Author

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Executive Summary

This report lists 143 Islamophobic cases, most of them in the institutional field (30%), closely followed by classical media (23%) and education (20%). A total of 72 cases of hate crimes with an Islamophobic background were reported to the Antidiscrimination Office Styria. ZARA documented a total of 57 cases of hate crime, with 13 cases specifically targeting Muslims. The Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education (IDB) documented 28 cases of discrimination. This gives a total of 256 cases (with possibility of overlapping). However, it can be assumed that the number of unreported cases, as set out by the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) is far higher, as only 12% of Muslims who have been discriminated against report their cases. Some attacks directly targeted left-wing organizations such as the Greens or the Socialist Youth.

In 2017, a coalition consisting of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Conservative Party (ÖVP) ended. This government had introduced the full-face veil ban. It propelled a discriminatory discourse on the implementation of banning women wearing the hijab from working in certain professions. In certain professions such as police and attorney the year 2017 was also characterized by a national parliamentary election campaign in which the ÖVP co-opted the Islamophobic populism of the FPÖ. Thus, the current Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said that Islamic kindergartens should generally be closed. As a result of these developments, right-wing movements like the Identitarians felt legitimized. Hatred on the Internet has been more effectively sanctioned due to legal improvements to combat it. An equally gratifying development is the increase of critical voices challenging the Islamophobic discourse in classical media. Last but not least, the leaks of the weekly *Falter* regarding the so-called kindergarten study revealed the structural dimension of the Islamophobia to a broader public. The use of academia to legitimize Islamophobic politics has been particularly evident in 2017. However, the government program of the ÖVP and the FPÖ indicates that Austria’s Muslims can envisage an even more authoritarian form of political behaviour, as initiated by the 2015 Islamic Act.
Zusammenfassung

Dieser Bericht listet 143 islamophobe Fälle auf, von denen eine Mehrheit im institutionellen Bereich (30%) identifiziert wurden, dicht gefolgt von klassischen Medien (23%) sowie Bildungsbereich (20%). Bei der Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steiermark wurden insgesamt 72 Fälle von Hasskriminalität mit islamophoben Hintergrund gemeldet. ZARA dokumentierte insgesamt 57 Fälle von Hasskriminalität, wobei lediglich 13 Fälle darunter dezidiert gegen MuslimInnen gerichtet waren. Die Initiative für ein Diskriminierungsfreies Bildungswesen (IDB) dokumentierte 28 Fälle von Diskriminierung. Das ergibt eine Gesamtheit von 241 Fällen (bei Überschneidungsmöglichkeit). Es ist aber davon auszugehen, dass die Dunkelziffer, wie von der europäischen Menschnerechtsagentur FRA dargelegt, weitaus höher liegt, da lediglich an die 12% der diskriminierten Muslimen Fälle melden. Einige Übergriffe zielten direkt auf linke Organisationen wie die Grünen oder die Sozialistische Jugend ab.

Introduction

In Austria we see an increase in hostile attitudes towards Muslims on the part of the population. A study by the FRA shows that the Austrian population has a relatively negative attitude towards Muslims compared to other EU states. As much as 31 percent of the Austrian population say that they would not like it if they had Muslim neighbours. Thus, Austria together with Malta, scores second highest. According to the FRA study, there is only more opposition to Muslims in Cyprus. On the basis of a regular survey by the pollster Peter Hajek on behalf of the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), three quarters of respondents do not agree with the statement that Islam belongs in Austria. Eight out of ten respondents call for stricter controls on mosques to counter so-called potential radicalization tendencies. Eighty-six percent calls for stricter control of possible foreign financing of mosques, while 84 percent also wants stricter control of Islamic kindergartens. Sixty-nine percent is in favour of a headscarf ban for teachers and kindergarten staff. Regarding the subject of education, 72 percent say that kids have to take part in swimming lessons regardless of religious regulations.1

As the survey of the FRA shows, the Muslim society feels alienated. Only Italy and the Netherlands have lower scores for Muslims’ attachment to their respective country of residence. This trend has increased in Austria, especially among Turkish-born Muslims. The feeling of being at home in Austria declined by almost ten percentage points last year (from 51 to 42 percent).2

A survey by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), in which 18 television stations - including the Austrian Broadcast TV ORF - are involved, titled “Generation What?” indicates that 51 percent of respondents in Austria thinks that the sight of veiled women in the streets and in the workplace disturbs them. This is one of the highest results among the 14 participating countries.3 In a survey of the institute meinungsräum.at for the Mauthausen Committee Austria, it was found that 44 percent of respondents is bothered when a shop assistant wears a headscarf (growth of 2% compared to 2015). According to the survey, religious freedom is becoming more threatened. The construction of a mosque in a neighbourhood is no longer rejected by 64 percent (2015), but by 71 percent of respondents (44 percent in the case of a Buddhist centre). According to the survey, 41 percent totally refuse to have a mosque in the immediate vicinity (Buddhist centre: 19%).4

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Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Politics

For the federal elections in January 2017 in Graz, the FPÖ mobilized with a four-page folder titled “Community Housing for Graz People First.” The illustration equated Islam with strangeness, as can be seen in the picture below showing Muslim people entering a space wearing an assortment of ‘strange, foreign’ clothes accompanied by the words “Strange in one’s own house.” (Fig. 1)

The kick-off for a debate on a ban on the hijab was given by then-chairman of the Expert Council for Integration, who was also vice-rector of the University of Vienna. Heinz Faßmann said in an interview that “teachers in public schools should not wear a hijab unless they teach Islamic religious education, since the hijab is not just a piece of textile, but of course a message. And that is not unproblematic in a secular state.” 6

In contrast, Faßmann and Minister of Education Hammerschmid argued that the cross in public school classes “has grown historically”7 and is a “symbol of Western history.”8 The Women’s Commissioner of the IGGiÖ replied sarcastically, “A Muslim wearing a headscarf is obviously only accepted as long as she works as a cleaner.”9 The position of the minister and Faßmann was criticized also by the initiative Muslims Against anti-Semitism, Jews against Islamophobia and the NGO SOS

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9. Ibid.
Mitmensch. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Graz-Seckau opposed a hijab ban for Muslim women in public service.

After Integration Minister Sebastian Kurz publicly joined Faßmann’s proposal, he received support from several party colleagues. Minister of Justice Brandstetter made it clear that the cross was excluded because of its anchoring “in the Christian culture.” State Secretary for Integration and Diversity Muna Duzdar (SPÖ) then said that “it was obviously not about a secularism debate [...] but about picking out a particular group and creating a mood against the members of that religion.”

Chancellor Christian Kern (SPÖ) commented on the initiative of coalition partner Kurz: “A hijab ban would only be symbolic. I cannot see what should change for the better.” This position was supported by the long-time Viennese mayor, Michael Häupl, who replied to the question “Could you imagine a councillor wearing a headscarf on your team?”, “Of course, that is no taboo for me as someone, whose mother went shopping while wearing a headscarf in the village.”

As part of the FPÖ party convention in Klagenfurt, where Chairman Strache was confirmed with 98.7%, he declared, “No, Islam is not part of Austria,” which was received with a great applause by the audience. “How long do you want the voters of red and black watch as these parties exchange the population (with Muslims, FH)?” he asked.

A response from the federal president to a question by a student on March 24 about discrimination against Muslim women caused great excitement in the public: “Every woman can wear a headscarf. And if Islamophobia continues the

10. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
day will come when we must ask all women to wear a headscarf due to the rise of Islamophobia. All, as solidarity with those who do it for religious reasons.”

Criticism came from the leader of the Viennese conservatives, Manfred Juraczka, FPÖ’s Herbert Kickl, Heinz-Christian Strache as well as the former managing director of the SPÖ, Josef Kalina. As a result, the president felt obliged to explain his position in more detail: “I am not a big friend of the headscarf. But there is freedom of expression in Austria, there is freedom of expression and a kind of freedom of clothing.”

The famous former Green MP Peter Pilz ran for elections with his own new list. From the very beginning he announced the fight against political Islam as one of his three main foci. The political scientist Benjamin Opratko and Martin Konecny criticized the fact that Pilz’s “candidacy was supported primarily by the tabloid press Kronen Zeitung, that he recommends Islamophobic literature and makes the Islamization of Europe the most important issue.”

A turnaround in the debate on Islamic kindergartens was brought about by a leak by the weekly Falter. In an investigative article they showed that officials from the Department of Integration and Foreign Affairs (whose then-minister is the new chancellor Sebastian Kurz) substantially changed the content of the Word files, which were written by the academic Ednan Aslan. The weekly Falter wrote,

Just one example: In the first version, which Aslan delivered in January 2016 as a Word file, the academic praised the parents who want their children to go to Islamic kindergartens to be educated “independently, respectfully and lovingly.”
Kurz’s officials – as the correction mode of the document shows – simply distorted the sentence into its opposite: that parents want to “protect their children from the moral influence of the majority society.”

The *Falter* argued that the officials changed the content of the report substantially in order to make the situation escalate further. Furthermore, 10,000 Euros of the project money was paid to a third party, a management consultant, who carried out the fieldwork, which also led to criticism. His tasks included the “conception for carrying out the study,” the “evaluation of the political and theological affiliation of the associations and operators,” the analysis of homepages and the investigation of the “family backgrounds of the children.” Also, the management consultant argued that in his analysis of 71 kindergartens and 56 children’s groups he had “found no problems (FH), as Aslan describes them.”

The Islamic Religious Community has previously commented that the so-called kindergarten study is to be seen primarily as a commissioned study that had to be harnessed to certain political interests of the commissioning Ministry of Integration. Deputy Mayor Vassilakou (Greens) also made clear remarks: “This kind of politics - under quotes - is destroying democracy. It really is poison for Austria.” The political scientist and a former colleague of Aslan Rami Ali said that Aslan has “tried again and again to push his ideas on the employees and tried desperately to move in a certain direction, even if this direction does not correspond to reality.”

The University of Vienna announced that “an examination of the facts would take place in order to determine to what extent the rules of good scientific practice were adhered to.” This task was entrusted to the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity (OeAWI). The report, which has not been published to date but the results of which were disseminated during a press conference, noted that the “scientific goodness” of the study was partly doubted in the individual opinions (on early

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28. Ibid.


30. Ibid.


childhood education, Islamic studies or sociology of science) and that the “influence of the ministry” was present. The important point here, however, is that due to the lack of formal regulation between academia and politics, no scientific misconduct could be detected. However, both sides – the SPÖ Vienna as well as Sebastian Kurz with Ednan Aslan – presented their positions as being confirmed by the report exam. While the University of Vienna agreed to publish the report, if the author of the study agrees, Aslan refused to have the statement published “until further notice.”

In preparation for the state elections in Lower Austria, the leading candidate of the FPÖ, Udo Landbauer, mobilized with the slogan “Stop the forced Islamization of our youngest! Turkish lessons, teachers with headscarves and Islamic festivals have no place in our kindergartens. On January 28, Muslim Mummy Mikl [governess of Lower Austria] and her multicultural madness will be voted out!” Governess Mikl from the conservatives was portrayed in a black cloth. (Fig. 2)

National Parliamentary Election Campaign 2017
In the federal election campaign, the SPÖ produced a video spot. There, Chairman Kern speaks with a “concerned citizen” and listens to her concerns regarding fears that her “Christian Austria” is losing its values. Journalist Solmaz Khorsand critically comments, “Kern smiles, nods, agrees and weakens half-heartedly. Finally, he proudly proclaims that the burka ban will soon be ‘executed’,” thus supporting the anti-Muslim fearmongering that is continuously produced by the far right.

Sebastian Kurz was portrayed by the FPÖ with his slogan “Islam belongs in Austria” from 2015, while Strache is depicted in color with the slogan “Stop Islamization.” (Fig. 3)
After Johannes Hübner from the FPÖ (MP from 2008 to 2017) announced his resignation from politics on July 25, 2017 due to anti-Semitic statements, Strache stated, “Anti-Semitism is really a problem in our society. But they also have to read Ednan Aslan’s study, where more than 45% of Muslims in Austria want the destruction of Israel and desire the extermination of Jews. We really have a problem.”

Similarly, Sebastian Kurz responded to a question regarding his intentions to fight anti-Semitism in the conservative students’ union. He said there would be “no tolerance, not even for the conservative students’ union” and claimed that the “anti-Semitic danger stems from Muslims.”

The NGO Initiative of Austrian Muslims and the magazine *Kismet Online* questioned the political parties running for elections on their positions towards Islam and Muslims. While Christian Kern (SPÖ), Ulrike Lunacek (Greens) and Matthias Strolz (NEOS) affirmed that Islam belongs in Austria, Strache (FPÖ) said, “Islam as such does not belong in Austria. Neither historically nor culturally, nor is it in any way part of Europe.”

The most consistent anti-racist position was that of the Communist KPÖ-Plus.

The New Coalition’s Government Program

The government, which was sworn in on December 18, 2017, publicly announced its coalition program two days earlier. Islam appears a total number of 21 times and


39. Ibid.


“Sharia” appears once in the text. In contrast, terms such as right-wing extremism and fascism do not appear even once in the coalition program of the Conservative Party and the FPÖ. Human rights are mentioned only five times. In the government program, minority protection is discussed to the same limited extent as Austria’s increasing Islamophobia.

“Political Islam” becomes a focal point of internal security in the new program. Austrian federal authorities such as the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution normally use ‘Islamism’ to refer to extremist versions of Islam. The individual measures dealt with in this subchapter reveal who the two electoral winners subsume under “political Islam”: Muslims. The program is about “ensuring a comprehensive control of the presentation of the Islamic doctrine.” This sounds strange for the first time, as state authorities are not allowed to intervene in the interests of recognized churches and religious communities.

The coalition program also requires that essential sources of faith such as the Koran be submitted in an authorized translation. Beyond that, the program reiterates a “ban on foreign financing,” a “criminal law against political Islam” and demands “value and orientation courses for asylum seekers.”

In conclusion, it can be summarized that Muslims are not understood on the basis of human rights and religious freedom as subjects to be protected and as citizens especially affected by racism, but are explicitly treated as a potential hazard, which must be contained by means of discriminatory, repressive and security policy measures. The Islamic Law from 2015, as well as other security measures, should help in this direction.

**Justice System**

Research on the files of a mosque in Graz (see “Islamophobia in Austria: National Report 2016”) led to the discovery of connections between right-wing extremist networks consisting of Identitarians and the Party of the People (PDV) in Styria to the local FPÖ branch.43

In March, the Federal Law on the Prohibition of the Concealment of the Face in Public (Anti-Facial Disposal Act - AGesVG) was introduced. The ÖIF praised the law as enabling “the exchange between all people living in the public space,” from which “traditional events such as the Austrian Perchtenläufe”44 are excluded.45 The Algerian millionaire Rachid Nekkaz protested against the ban on face veiling and was

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44. The Perchten are traditional pagan masks worn during certain holidays and festivities across Austria.

fined 50 Euros for his protest in front of the Ministry of Integration. Kurz also reiterated that the “total veiling” was “a symbol of antagonism and political Islamism and we resolutely fight it.” He further said, “We stand by our European values, such as equality between men and women. We will continue to defend them unperturbed.”

The Supreme Court (OGH) has ruled in favour of a claim made by the national MP Harald Walser whereby the FPÖ is liable as a host provider for content that has been published by third parties on the Facebook page of Strache. Accordingly, the FPÖ should delete these hate comments, which allow anti-racist activists more room for manoeuvre.

In Carinthia, a man who had targeted a group of Muslim women with a shotgun was sentenced to ten-month imprisonment. He took a picture of himself and then put it on Facebook with the accompanying text “Why play on the computer?” He was also fined 960 Euros despite being unemployed.

The examination of Islamic associations as stipulated in the Islam Act was demanded by Efgani Dönmez in his capacity as candidate for the national parliament. State Secretary Muna Duzdar referred to the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior, which in turn returned to Duzdar. As part of his candidacy Dönmez pleaded for a Ministry of Migration. Sebastian Kurz reiterated his call for an “extension of the cultural office in the chancellery to become a genuine authority on religion.” Duzdar also demanded more competencies for her office including an increase in staff and independent auditors to control suspicions of foreign financing.

The chairman of the FPÖ Mayrhofen was sentenced to unconditional fines for degrading religious teachings because he referred to Islam as “an insane Islamic ideology.”

The Federal Chancellery examined an imam school in Vienna and one in Linz in accordance with the Islam Act of 2015, as there was a call for donations in Germany, which is forbidden according to the Islam Act due to the domestic funding

49. Ibid.
requirement. 54 According to media reports, the project was banned in Linz because there was no permit. 55 Daily Kurier even claimed that the imam school had been “possibly illegally run for three years.” 56 The operators of the school explained that the schools are not part of the framework of the private school law that they are not operated illegally, and are not financed from abroad. 57 The Islamic religious community opposed the closure by saying that it was not a school but an education centre for the training of imams. 58 The Ministry of Education had filed a complaint against the school in Liesing. 59

In November, a 24-year-old in Klagenfurt State Court was sentenced to 3,000 Euros for an online posting. She said in a posting that “the same ritual” should be performed on the people who slaughter animals in a religiously traditional way as that performed on the animals. 60

Fouda A., chairman of a large Viennese kindergarten, filed a charge against MP Efgani Dönmez. Currently, a temporary injunction has been issued, according to which Dönmez has to retract the statement that Fouda A.’s kindergarten is “in the sphere of influence of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood.” 61

Employment

The managing director of the Styrian branch of the vocational institution Berufsförderungsanstalt Wilhelm Techt attempted the introduction of a so-called “neutrality requirement,” which was propagated by the government and was harshly criticized by the public. He wanted to prohibit symbols of all religions, from the nun’s habit, the kippah to the cross. Techt explained, “We are committed to the welcome culture, but we also want to convey unmistakably to these people our Western culture, our

values.”62 Protest came from the women’s department of the Islamic Cultural Centre Graz.63 After a woman was threatened to be dismissed from her job, she intervened with the support of the workers’ chamber and the dispute was settled. In November, the instruction of the ban was withdrawn.64

After the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), which allows companies in the private sector to prohibit employees wearing religious clothing, the daily Die Presse asked private companies about their stance on the ruling. It showed that the largest trading companies reject such a ban: REWE spokesman Paul Pöttschacher, DM director Petra Mathi-Kogelnik, HOFER, SPAR spokeswoman Nicole Berkmann and ISS Facility Services Austria are all committed to “lived diversity.”65

Education
The Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education (IDB), an NGO based in Vienna, has documented a total of 28 cases of Islamophobic discrimination, of which 23 occurred at school and 5 in kindergartens.66 In February, a debate about wearing the hijab by Muslim girls in elementary school was sparked. While the School Inspectorate of the city of Vienna sees no problem in this, “as long as it is voluntarily worn,” the Salzburg SPÖ councilor Anja Hagenaumer was shocked by young Muslim girls wearing the hijab.67 The feminist Dudu Küçükgöl criticized the tendentious reporting of this issue.68

Shortly before the national parliamentary elections, the Austrian Integration Fund, the ÖIF, published a “research report on the role of the mosque in the integration process.”69 The authors were Heiko Heinisch and Imet Memedi

66. Interview with Chairwoman Sonia Zaafarni.
as well as a mysterious “et al.,” which normally refers to other authors, who in this case were never mentioned. The research results were summarized with claims of “fundamentalist tendencies in many institutions,” “clear rejection of Austrian values,” “strong separation by ethnic groups” and “German sermons as an exception, [and] usually no room for women.” The report “The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria,” co-financed by the ÖIF, was also published shortly before the elections and used by then-Minister of the Interior Sobotka as an opportunity to examine the establishment of a new domestic intelligence service. In this report, Lorenzo Vidino, who is famous for his attempt to create loose connections between the most vocal Muslim institutions and “ties to the Brotherhood,” targets nearly every vocal Austrian Muslim actor. The Brotherhood, according to Vidino, endangers social cohesion. As examples in Germany show, where very active and dedicated young Muslims have set up a number of creative projects, the more active people are, the more easily they are accused of being associated with the Muslim Brotherhood.

### Media

The media landscape gave way to critical tones in connection with Islamophobic debates. In the context of the headscarf ban debate at the beginning of 2017 there were many critical commentaries. Daily *Salzburg Nachrichten* editor Viktor Hermann warned that the ÖVP could not overtake the FPÖ with this right-wing course. Clear words like those of Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi were also heard,

But no headscarves? No visible mosques? No adequate representation in society?

If we want the religious minority of Muslims to feel at home in the country and identify with Austria, then the majority society would have to accommodate it a bit

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70. Ibid.
further than it currently does [...] And is it really justifiable in the long run that Muslim immigrants in the faculty, police, authorities and political parties are virtually unrepresented? There are enough highly qualified, democratic immaculate people.77

Columnist Isolde Charim criticized the emotional charge of the migration debate and called for a sober approach: “Real problems can be solved pragmatically. Libidinous fixations cannot.”78 I also wrote a guest commentary for daily Der Standard criticizing the ban on the face veil. Journalist Alexia Weiss asks ironically and critically whether we still want religious freedom in our society.79

Ali Cem Deniz critically stated, “The Austrian majority society has a problem with naming anti-Muslim racism. This is not only a danger for Muslims but for the whole society.”80 Irene Klissenbauer criticized the “burqa ban” as “a restriction of religious freedom – and not worthy of an open society.”81 John Bunzl wrote an op-ed on the parallels of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.82

But there were also contradictory positions. In the weekly Die Furche and the daily Kronen Zeitung83 a director was given room to argue for a headscarf ban for schoolgirls.84 In Die Presse, one-sided comments were made criticizing the Islamic religious community, while basically supporting the government’s proclaimed “Islam of European character” without one word of critique towards the government.85 A correspondent of Der Standard was criticized for asking the question of whether Muslims have a general “license to lie.”86 Like last year (see “Islamophobia in Austria: National Report 2016”), Lisa Nimmervoll invited Islamophobic persons like Saida

Keller-Messahli to propagate and disseminate their views. Keller-Messahli argued in favor of a general suspicion towards all mosques and claimed that mosques generally could not contribute to integration. She propagated a headscarf ban and supported the findings of the ÖIF report on mosques.87

The invitation policy of many media outlets can also be seen in a critical light. One example among many is a discussion on ORF regarding “Radicalized youth - what's wrong with the Islamist threat?” Laila Mirzo, a native Syrian who converted to Christianity ten years ago, said terror was not a perversion of IS but the centrepiece of Islam itself. The native Syrian has “so far been noticed only in appearances in right-wing publications.”88 On the Internet platform Wochenblick.at, whose close relationship to the FPÖ and the far-right scene has been documented by weekly Profil, she called the Koran a “manual of terror.” The right-wing blog unzensuriert.at features her as an expert on Islam.89

The debate about Islamic kindergartens took place especially in the media. The Kronen Zeitung relied on the study by Ednan Aslan and argued that 50 percent of Islamic kindergartens should be closed.90 It published titles such as “Headscarf, Radicalization. Everyday Life in Kindergartens.”91 Erich Kocina (Die Presse) researched and criticized the Kronen Zeitung for relying on so-called photographic sources for this article, which were taken from the photo gallery of the Islamic Center in Vienna rather than from kindergartens, while the online editor-in-chief insisted that the photos were real.92 At the end of November, the Press Council reprimanded the weekly for using these photos. Moreover, the girls without a hijab were digitally removed from the real photographs.93 The image of the hijab as a reality of Mus-

Islam schoolgirls was supported by journalist Clemens Neuhold in *Profil*, while Bilal Baltaci wrote in the course of a research for the daily *Kurier* that they did not see a single child with a hijab in any Islamic kindergarten. A more differentiated covering of this issue came from Petra Stuiber in the daily *Der Standard*.

The *Kronen Zeitung* titled and illustrated a study on immigration and Muslims on the front page as follows: “Close Borders for Muslims”. (Fig. 4)

Making links between politically hot topics and problematizing Muslims due to their religion is also not rare. Here are two examples, one from the tabloid *Kronen Zeitung* and the other from the state’s *ORF*. The first puts hijab-wearing women under the title “Social Service Office” and the other shows a hijab-wearing young girl and beneath the text “80 million Euros for problem schools.” (Figs. 5, 6)

TV shows such as *Talk im Hangar 7* on Servus TV had various debates, to which they invited leading Islamophobic spokespeople. Hamed Abdel-Samad, Seyran Ates and Gerald Grosz were invited to a discussion titled “Can Islam still be saved?” On the other hand, Servus TV invited those Muslims who represent extreme margins of the Muslim community from abroad and unnecessarily heat up debates that do not relate to existing problems in Austria. Frauke Petry, former AfD chairman, and the Islamophobe Michael Ley were invited to contribute to the subject of “Anti-Semitic Attacks:

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97. https://twitter.com/Helge/status/877802406796513280


Where Does the New Anti-Semitism Come from?\textsuperscript{100} FPÖ Chairman Strache and Heiko Heinisch were invited to discuss “Muslims in Austria: What Is the Problem of Living Together?”\textsuperscript{101} Sebastian Kurz and Alice Schwarzer were invited to discuss “Burka, Headscarf and Koran: What Is the Problem of Integration?”\textsuperscript{102} Egagni Dönmez and Heiko Heinisch also discussed “Islamic Kindergartens: Really Just a Scare?”\textsuperscript{103}

Physical and Verbal Attacks

As noted by the FRA, the number of unreported cases is much higher than that of the incidents actually reported. As part of a group interview with two female students (one from Styria and one from Vienna) and one student (Upper Austria), I interviewed people about Islamophobic attacks in their everyday lives. A teacher reports on a mediation talk in which the director said to a concerned student’s mother that her son “has to accept criticism of his inappropriate behaviour and change behaviour, even if it comes from a woman.” A student tells of an incident at Graz Airport. She had to drop her hijab, even though the metal detector had not beeped when she passed through. During a walk in the city centre, a student crossed the street without paying attention to whether a vehicle was coming. A cyclist passing by the student said, “Away, you dirty Muslim!” These few examples reveal the range of harassment in everyday life, ranging from state to private institutions to occurrences on the street.


On March 15, a 50-year-old woman with her hair covered in the open street was told, without context, “Wow, those scraps on the head. Go away cooky and shut up.”

In Linz, during the same month, a woman with children on the street was asked by a strange man why she wears a headscarf. After that, he went on to say, “This is Sh**.” A man showed moral courage and stood between them.

In April, a 30-year-old, who was had been repeatedly charged with punishments, was charged with an unconditional fine of 7,560 Euros after throwing a bag filled with dog feces on the façade of a mosque in Bludenz, on a night in February. The judgment, which was not final, found the accused guilty of serious damage to property.

After the introduction of the full-face veil ban passersby on the street felt justified in making Muslims with face veils aware of the ban. In total, there were 30 official acts in the first two weeks, only four of which were involved Muslim women wearing a face veil. The most notable symbolic act was directed against the parliamentary mascot that was asked by the police to take off his face coverage.

The inscription “Muslim” with an arrow that showed the dustbin was cleaned by the responsible workers the following day. (Fig. 7) Alexia Weiss asked critically in the daily *Wiener Zeitung*, “Muslims should be stuffed into dustbins? Why? Because they are crap or garbage? Worthless? Because they have to be disposed of? And disposed in stands for what? Are they unwanted? Should they be destroyed? Free association leads in different directions.”

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105. Anonymous report to the reporter via Email.
111. Ibid.
Graffiti stating “Islam out” was spotted on the walls of a Turkish cultural association in the Schlachthausgasse, Vienna in the 3rd district. (Fig. 8)

A similar inscription with the words “MOSLEMS RAUS” (Muslims leave!) was sighted on November 24; the next day “MOSLEMS” had been replaced with “NAZIS.” (Fig. 9)

At the University of Vienna on September 25, the writing “F*** Islam” as well as vulgar expressions targeting Muslim women were sighted. (Fig. 10)

Similar acts of vandalism were also seen on buildings of leftist political parties. Three graffiti (dated 1.6.2017, 8.6.2017, and 28.11.2017) were sighted at the Greens’ offices in Vienna: “Stop Islamization,” “Islam Kills” and “Muslims out.” (Figs. 11, 12, 13)

The Socialist Youth situated on Landstraße reported several hateful graffiti in the spring of 2017. At Baumgasse 12, 1030 Vienna, the office of the Socialist Youth on Landstraße, was smeared several times with slogans like “Islam kills” and “Muslims out.” (Fig. 12 and 13) For a long time afterwards, stickers of the far-right group Identitarian Movement were applied almost daily to the windows. On September 6, 2017, there was also another instance of graffiti: “Muslims out” and “Left fascists” was written. At the begin-
ning of April 2017, graffiti stating “Stop Islam” and “Islam kills” was sprayed on the wall.\footnote{112}

Benjamin Kranzl, the local chairman of the far-right FPÖ youth wing, the RFJ, presented photos of a barbecue and a suckling pig, wrapped in aluminium foil, under the title “Ramadan with the RFJ Schwaz” on Facebook. When the police reported the following day that “unknown perpetrators threw the head of a grilled suckling pig on the property of a Turkish cultural association” on May 28 on a mosque facility, attention was directed to the RFJ.\footnote{113}

The debate on kindergartens (see section Politics and Media in this report) had implications for the safety of childcare facilities run by Muslims. For example, a leader of an association for the preservation of a private school says that many people are afraid to work in Islamic kindergartens. She speaks of racist attacks and tells about a girl who was slapped in the street by a passer-by. She mentioned beer cans being thrown at her, a physical education teacher being pulled out of the subway, and other incidents.\footnote{114}

\footnote{112. Information and photos sent by the chairwoman of the Socialist Youth Vienna, Fiona Herzog.}


The Identitarian movement put banners saying “Stop Islamization. Close Islam schools!” on a school in Vienna, which was part of a media debate (see section Politics). (Fig. 15)

Stickers imitating the one with “ Refugees Not Welcome” were titled “Islamists Not Welcome” and distributed by the Identitarians. (Fig. 16)

The Identitarian movement also distributed brochures against “Islamization” and the call for “re-migration” in households. (Fig. 17)

As part of the election campaign, election posters were vandalized as shown here with a poster of the leader of the Social Democrats with a sticker with two Muslims and the words “We Must Stay Outside” placed on it. (Fig. 18)

Internet

The Internet is often used for more direct statements due to the lower inhibition threshold. For example, a former local politician from Lower Austria, who ran for the FPÖ in Leobendorf in 2015, said: “DEAR DUZDAR, GO HOME TO TURKEY, PUT ON A HIJAB AND PUSH THE KORAN IN YOUR A**!”

Figure 15: Banners saying “Stop Islamization. Close Islam schools!” by the Identitarian Movement.
Photo: Farid Hafez

Figure 16: Sticker “Islamists Not Welcome” by the Identitarian Movement.
Photo: Farid Hafez

Figure 17: Leaflet “Stop Islamization” by the Identitarian Movement.
Photo: Scan of a pamphlet of the Identitarians.


Openly Islamophobic statements were widespread such as the FPÖ-linked website unzensuriert.at that argued that governess Mikl-Leitner had opened an exhibition on Islam with Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers.117

Then ÖVP Chairman Sebastian Kurz used his Facebook account to legitimize Islamophobic politics with headlines from tabloid media. (Fig. 19)

The FPÖ Vienna party Chairman Johann Gudenus posted on his Facebook page derogatory contents about Muslims and triggered corresponding debates. While Time magazine chose a Viennese student with a hijab as one of the world’s most influential teenagers, he called this “Insanity.” What followed were other postings with anti-Muslim, racist statements such as “Send her back, this Veil!,” “Has she no brain under her headscarf?” and “Away with this filth.”

The Carinthian FPÖ Provincial Council Gernot Darmann in a Facebook post publicized the following false message: “Islam lessons for Carinthian children” and writes “Scandal. Islam classes for Christians?? THANKS, NO!!”119 (Fig. 20)
The FPÖ youth wing published another picture entitled “Immigrating to our Welfare State is Fun,” which depicts a man dressed in traditional Muslim clothes. (Fig. 21)

After the drugstore chain BIPA launched a campaign, in which a hijab-wearing woman was shown, an online avalanche of hatred was launched. Statements such as “prostration before Islam” and “creeping Islamization” were used. Postings full of hate were especially widespread on Facebook. This is also true on the Facebook sites of well-known MPs such as the one of Efgani Dönmez.

Central Figures in the Islamophobic Network
Amer Albayati, president of the Initiative for Liberal Muslims Austria (ILMÖ), who repeatedly claims to be a critic of Islam and a terrorism expert, tried on many occasions to influence public opinion with his conspiracy theories. He criticized the federal president for his symbolic solidarity with hijab-wearing women and for using the term Islamophobia, which for him is a “combat term of political Islam, which solely and exclusively (serves, FH) to stifle any critical discussion on Islam

120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
in Germany.”123 The “Islamophobia Mace” or “Islamophobia Lie” was a “vile work invented by radical Islamists.”124

Islamophobic spokespersons like Hamed Abdel-Samad supported the demand of the German conservatives, CDU politicians Jens Spahn and Julia Klöckner, to introduce an Austria-like Islam Act in Germany. This demand was also supported by Mouhanad Khorchide.125 Abdel-Samad demanded that the state grants licenses for religious communities and mosques and said, “The mosques must take the imams that the state appoints and must not be financed from abroad.”126

CDU member and former FEMEN activist Zana Ramadani was given a space in media such as Die Presse127 or Kronen Zeitung.128 Der Standard interviewed her twice in 2017. Ramadani presented with Sebastian Kurz the second part of the election program (“Order and Security”) for the national elections in 2017.129 On September 27, with the help of the ÖIF, she gave a presentation on “Muslim women between tradition and modernity.”130

The ÖIF stands out with its one-sided invitation policy. The fourteenth meeting of the Integration Advisory Council, chaired by Franz Wolf, invited Seyran Ateş, who made a plea for “promoting liberal Islam” and presented her “Liberal Mosque in Berlin.” It also warned against “leaving refugees to the influence of radical mosque associations,”131 as stated in the ÖIF report. Brochures to address the issue of face

126. Ebd.
covering in Islam were published before the introduction of the face veil ban. Some of the authors such as Sáïda Keller-Messahli and Ahmad Mansour are among the most vocal public Islamophobic speakers. The use of Muslim witnesses, ‘native informals,’ is a central aspect of the discourse of the ÖIF, the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, and the Conservative Party.

In particular, some journalists support these voices, which they promote in the sense of the white saviour complex. As the editor in chief of the Kurier argues, “Turks suffer from political Islam.” In this sense, Aslan also argues that “clubs and associations, who want to isolate the Muslims living here from everything European and want to focus theologically entirely on Islamic states, are to be pushed back. This control of Austrian or German Islam from abroad is fatal.” This does not mean primarily independence and empowerment of Muslims, but a dissolution of transnational networks. It works according to the government’s slogan of creating an “Islam of European Imprint.” Secretary General of the Jewish community Raimund Fastenbauer claimed in contrast to the “Islam of European imprint”, that Austria had a problem with “political Islam,” because an Islam of “Middle Eastern Imprint” was “through and through anti-Semitic […] and intolerant of people of other faiths, including Christianity.” Several media republished the statements published by Fastenbauer in the journal of the leading Austrian student fraternity, the Cartellverband. Amongst others, this was well received by right-wing media such as unzensuriert.at and info-direkt.eu.

The European Citizens’ Initiative against Extremism was founded on December 29, 2016 and recognized on June 7, 2017 by the European Commission. It was financed by Seyran Ates and Efgani Dönmez with 10,000 Euros each. Amongst the founders were also the Austrian lawyer Sebastian Reimer. The


organ representatives of the association, Walter Schnauder and Peter Weinzierl, are based in Linz.\textsuperscript{139} Schnauder is a former political official of the ÖVP and since 2003 the political coach of the ÖVP Oberösterreich.\textsuperscript{140} Supporters include well-known Islamophobes such as Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, Ralph Ghadban, Saidah Keller-Messahli,\textsuperscript{141} Necla Kelek,\textsuperscript{142} as well as a Mouhanad Khorchide.\textsuperscript{143} In the course of the election campaign, Dönmez came under criticism when leaks by the weekly \textit{Falter} revealed that much more money than 20,000 Euros, the budget specified by the EU Commission, could potentially be in circulation.\textsuperscript{144} For Peter Puller, previously press spokesman of the ÖVP, first in Styria and then for the Ministry of Justice and Science, a contract was signed between the Society for Policy Analysis and Puller’s PR Agency on July 17 for more than 180,000 Euros, but ultimately did not substantiate.\textsuperscript{145} The contract states that Puller should coordinate a campaign against political Islam.\textsuperscript{146} The monthly fee of about 15,000 Euros was not paid out and according to Puller eight weeks of work have not yet been rewarded.\textsuperscript{147} The daily \textit{Die Presse} then published chat minutes, according to which Dönmez supports the concerns of the Saudis. Allegedly Dönmez promised several times to make Turkey and Qatar look bad in interviews. At one point the leaked WhatsApp protocol is summarized as such: “Turkey = Bad, Qatar = Bad, Saudis = Good”. “A joke,” Dönmez argues.\textsuperscript{148} Dönmez claims that not a single cent was sent by the Saudis and the chat protocols were jokes and stressed that he was a critic of Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{149}
Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Besides an increase of hostile language and more restrictive politics towards Muslims from governing centrist parties, we can also observe a stronger reaction on behalf of individuals, who speak out against Islamophobia, especially in the media. Beyond these critical voices that are essential for keeping up the struggle against Islamophobia and creating a consciousness towards this form of racism, there are several initiatives that can be mentioned here:

- In September 2017, a counselling centre against hatred on the Internet was established. There, affected users can seek professional help. The body is run by the anti-racist institution ZARA and can be found on the website beratungsstelle.counteract.or.at
- A rally called “MuslimBanAustria – my body, my right to self-determination” against the headscarf ban was organized by the Dokustelle für Muslime, the Youth Council of the Islamic Religious Community and the Muslim Civil Society Network (NMZ).150
- Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen spoke clearly and concisely during a memorial event of Nazi atrocities in Baden: “We must make sure that this does not happen again – of course under a different name. It will have other contents; it will have different expressions. It will be more modern, in quotation marks. But we have to recognize the signs of the beginning.”151
- An exhibition on Islam has opened in Schallaburg, Lower Austria.152
- The Islamic Federation has run a campaign presenting Muslims in everyday life.153
- The NMZ created a music track that challenged Sebastian Kurz’s changing positions on Islam and his swing to the right.154
- The newly established IDB (Initiative for Discrimination-Free Education) first presented its report on Discrimination of Pupils in 2016. Forty-seven incidents have been included, with Islamophobia being the most common reason.155

• State Secretary for Integration Muna Duzdar presented a digital monitor and set up the counselling centre #GegenHassImNetz (#AgainstOnlineHate), which is operated by ZARA.

• The Initiative of Muslim Austrians and Kismet Online have sent a list of questions to the constituency for election to the National Council.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2017 was a significant year in terms of a stronger institutionalization of Islamophobia (the ban of the full-face veil as well as the indirect hijab ban for certain professions). It was also significant that the Conservative Party with its new face under the leadership of Sebastian Kurz arrived at a level of Islamophobia that can only be interpreted as a full embrace of the right-wing FPÖ’s positions. Kurz demanded the closure of Islamic kindergartens and moved way from much of his former rhetoric that signalled a more open position towards Muslims. With the new governing coalition of the conservative ÖVP and the right-wing FPÖ, the future of Islamophobia appears to be firmly secured. Many recommendations can be made to work towards a more equal society in Austria such as:

• Training on racism, especially Islamophobia, should be offered to journalists, lawyers, and police (security officials) by qualified personnel.

• Muslim civil society has to be empowered with information to combat Islamophobia, especially in the creation of a consciousness towards the illegality of hate crimes.

• Educational institutions and stakeholders have to work towards creating an alternative narrative of Muslims in Austria which will work to dispel the widely accepted negative image of Islam.

• Austria should fulfil its promise in Durban 2001 and adopt a National Action Plan against racism (NAP) in order to meet the challenges regarding discrimination and racism which are prevalent in all areas of society.

• Financial and human resources should be raised for the Equal Treatment Commission and for an increase of the capacities of the Ombud for Equal Treatment to fulfil its task of raising awareness of the Equal Treatment Act.

• Discrimination on the job market must be fought with better legal standards and the creation of a relevant consciousness. Penalties for the violation of discrimination on the six grounds mentioned in the EU Directives on this issue should be increased.

• The amended Equal Treatment Act (August 2013) has to fulfil the long-de-
demanded extension of protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual
orientation, age, belief and religion to areas outside employment.
• The Islam Act has to be amended in order not to be in conflict with the Austrian
Constitution. This is of utmost importance, since the new law has sent a mes-
sage of inequality to the Muslim masses.

Chronology
• 05.01.2017: For the federal elections in Graz, the FPÖ mobilized with a four-
page folder containing Islamophobic figures and statements.
• 05.01.2017: Kickoff debate on headscarf ban for teachers in public schools and
schoolgirls.
• 10.01.2017: One-sided discussion on secularism within the political parties: the
cross should stay in the classroom and the headscarf should be banned.
• 30.01.2017: In the daily Kronen Zeitung a school director was given room to
argue in favor of a headscarf ban for schoolgirls.
• 07.02.2017: Discussion about “radicalized youth” on state broadcaster ORF
with people supporting an Islamophobic agenda.
• 17.02.2017: Leading Islamophobic spokespeople are invited on private broad-
casting channel Servus TV.
• March 2017: Introduction of Federal Law on the Prohibition of the Conceal-
ment of the Face in Public (Anti-Facial Disposal Act – AgesVG). In Carinthia,
a man targeted a group of Muslim women with a shotgun and was given a ten-
month imprisonment sentence.
• 04.03.2017: Chairman Strache declared “No, Islam is not part of Austria” during
a FPÖ party convention in Klagenfurt.
• 15.03.2017: The managing director of the Styrian branch of the vocational insti-
tution Berufsförderungsinstitut attempted a headscarf ban for employees because
of a so-called “neutrality requirement.”
Verbal attack on 50-year-old woman with her hair covered on a street.
• 24.02.2017: Criticism of the federal president of the Republic of Austria for his
statement on Islamophobia and solidarity with Muslim women.
• April 2017: Act of vandalism to the office of the Socialist Youth with the Islam-
ophobic slogans “Stop Islam” and “Islam kills.”
• 24.04.2017: A 30-year-old man was charged after throwing a bag filled with dog
feces on the façade of a mosque in Bludenz.
• 01.06.2017: Act of vandalism to buildings housing the offices of the Greens in
Vienna – graffiti “Stop Islamization” appears on wall.
• 08.06.2017: Act of vandalism to buildings housing the offices of the Greens in
Vienna - the graffiti “Islam Kills” appears on wall.
• **12.06.2017:** Act of vandalism: the inscription “Muslim” with an arrow in the direction of a dustbin.

• **21.06.2017:** The daily *Kronen Zeitung* entitled and illustrated accordingly a study on immigration and Muslims on the front page as follows: “Close Borders for Muslims.”

• **23.06.2017:** Local chairman of the far-right FPÖ youth wing, the RFJ, presented photos of a barbecue and a suckling pig, wrapped in aluminum foil, under the title “Ramadan with the RFJ Schwaz” on Facebook.

• **24.06.2017:** The daily *Kronen Zeitung* published an article with the title “Headscarf, Radicalization. Everyday Life in Kindergartens” and used false photographic material.

• **30.06.2017:** The Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education (IDB) documented a total of 28 cases of Islamophobic discrimination, of which 23 occurred at schools and 5 in kindergartens.

• **04.07.2017:** Weekly *Falter* leaked information about the so-called ‘Islamic kindergarten study’: they revealed that officials from the Department of Integration and Foreign Affairs substantially changed the content of the Word files, which were written by Professor of Islamic Education Ednan Aslan. The former Green MP Peter Pilz ran for elections and one of his three main foci was the fight against political Islam.

• **15.07.2017:** Chairman of the FPÖ Mayrhofen referred to Islam as “an insane Islamic ideology” and was sentenced to unconditional fines for degrading religious teachings.

• **16.07.2017:** Racist attacks against a kindergarten girl who was slapped in the street by a passerby.

• **10.08.2017:** Then ÖVP Chairman Sebastian Kurz used his Facebook account to legitimize Islamophobic politics with headlines from tabloid media.

• **23.08.2017:** The Identitarian movement placed banners saying “Stop Islamization. Close Islam schools!” on the building of a Vienna school.

• **01.09.2017:** National Parliamentary Election Campaign: Islamophobic statements, slogans, videos are present throughout the country.

• **06.09.2017:** Act of vandalism to the office of the Socialist Youth with the Islamophobic slogans “Muslim out” written on the wall.

• **25.09.2017:** Vandalism occurs at the University of Vienna with vulgar expressions targeting Muslim women written on Wals.

• **26.09.2017:** The Carinthian FPÖ Provincial Council in a Facebook post publicized a false message about lessons on Islam.

• **06.10.2017:** Law enforcement of full face veil ban: passersby on the street feel the need to make Muslims with face veils aware of the ban.

• **17.10.2017:** ÖVP Chairman Sebastian Kurz claimed in an interview that the “anti-Semitic danger stems from Muslims.”
• **19.10.2017**: An online avalanche of hatred was launched following a campaign of the drugstore chain BIP, which featured a hijab-wearing woman.

• **25.10.2017**: The daily *Der Standard* published interviews of Islamophobic individuals like Saïda Keller-Messahli, propagating and disseminating her views.

• **21.11.2017**: The leading candidate of the FPÖ in Lower Austria, Udo Landbauer, called ÖVP candidate Mikl-Leitner “Muslim Mummy Mikl.”

• **22.11.2017**: A 24-year-old in Klagenfurt State Court was sentenced to 3,000 Euros for a brutal Islamophobic online posting.

• **23.11.2017**: Examination of the Islamic kindergarten study by the University of Vienna and the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity (OeAWI).

• **24.11.2017**: Vandals write Islamophobic graffiti on the walls of a cultural association.

• **28.11.2017**: Act of vandalism to buildings that house the offices of the Greens in Vienna; the graffiti states “Muslims out.”

• **16.12.2017**: New Coalition’s Government Program: “Political Islam” becomes a focal point of internal security measures, and – while not defined – potentially threatens all organized Muslims.
This is the third issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year’s EIR represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states. This denial is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are not immune to this form of racism.

As a survey published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe.

In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the *European Islamophobia Report* project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

**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.