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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 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, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.
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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
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-

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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,” 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. 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.

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” 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.
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.\footnote{12} 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.”\footnote{13} The ECRI concludes that the “negative experiences of Muslims in Europe can fuel feelings of isolation within a larger community and hinder inclusive societies.”\footnote{14} 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,\footnote{15} 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 combating Islamophobia as it did on combatting anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsiesm.\footnote{16}
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.” 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.”

In Latvia, numerous pre-election programs of various parties for the 2017 municipal elections demonstrated unambiguous Islamophobic positions. In Riga, the Action Party of Eurosceptics (Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija) published the following slogan in their program, “We are not against Muslims, we are against the Islamization of Latvia and Europe.” The National Alliance (Nacionālā apvienīb) 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!”

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
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.


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.kielikone.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?U1=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.

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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.” 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. 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, 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.

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. 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.

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

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

In Russia, between 2012 and 2016, five imams were killed in the Stavropol region. The cases remain unresolved to this day. 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 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 van-

dalism towards Muslims.\textsuperscript{55} 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 \textit{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.

• 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 combatting 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 duly 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)
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Executive Summary

The most important development in 2017 is the firm establishment of parties espousing Islamophobic and xenophobic views in the Czech parliament following the October general elections. Out of the first six parties that gained most votes only one could be considered neutral to favourable when it comes to issues such as refugee quotas and generally a more tolerant approach to diversity in society. The winning party ANO, led by a tycoon turned politician, which is difficult to classify as either left or right, is known for supporting and promoting the views of Czech President Miloš Zeman, who is notorious for his Islamophobic views, which have been documented in the previous reports. The fourth ranked party, Freedom and Direct Democracy, led by Tomio Okamura, a Japanese - Czech politician, has an exclusive agenda of xenophobia and Islamophobia illustrated by the party election slogan, “No to Islam, No to Terrorism,” and campaigns continuously for the legal ban of Islam. The party recycles the Islamophobic view that Islam is not a religion and therefore doesn’t deserve constitutional protection under the freedom of denomination. Okamura’s party wasn’t only successful in the elections but he became vice-chair of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. His approach continues the process of endangering freedoms currently guaranteed by the Czech Constitution. A citizen filed a complaint with the Highest Administrative Court alleging, among others, that slogans such as “No to Islam” and “Stop Islam” are “unrealistic and breach constitutional principles.” Her complaint was rejected with the explanation that the logic of political marketing allows for a hyperbolic approach during the election campaign. The Constitutional Court is yet to decide on her complaint. Thus, we might conclude that Islamophobia has gone mainstream and is a part of the official policy of the Czech political establishment. Particularly extreme forms of Islamophobia are still found online and there’s an ongoing discussion on how to deal with hate speech. It is necessary to engage with civil society, which seems to be the only line of defence against all forms of racism including Islamophobia, and insist on more diversity in the media, plus support those relatively rare politicians and public figures who speak against Islamophobia.

Schváleno

Nejdůležitější aspekt vývoje pokud jde o islamofobii v roce 2017 představuje upevnění politických stran s xenofobními a islamofobními názory v Poslanecké sněmovně České republiky, které je důsledkem všeobecných voleb z října 2017. Z prvních šesti stran, které získaly nejvíce hlasů lze pouze jednu považovat za neutrální až příznivou v otázkách jako jsou uprchlické kvóty a všeobecně více tolerantní postoj k různorodosti ve společnosti. Vítěz voleb, strana ANO, vedena magnátem, ze kterého se stal politik, a kterou je obtížné klasifikovat jako levicovou či pravicovou, je známa svoji podporou prezidenta Milose Zemana, který je zase proslulý svými islamofobními názory, doloženými v předchozích zprávách o islamofobii v ČR. Strana, která se umístila jako čtvrtá, Svoboda a přímá demokracie, vedená Tomiem Okamourou, který je japonsko-českého původu, má ve své agendě výlučně xenofobii a islamofobii, což lze doložit volebním heslem strany: Ne islámu, ne terorizmu. Strana se dlouhodobě zasazuje o právní zákaz islámu a též recykluje islamofobní názor, že islám není náboženství a tudíž si nezaslouží ústavní ochranu vyplývající z práva na svobodu svědomí. Nejenže se strana vedená Okamourou stala úspěšnou ve volbách, ale Okamura se stal místopředsedou Poslanecké sněmovny. Jeho přístup v politice i nadále ohrozuje svobody v současně době zaručené Ústavou ČR. Občanka podala stížnost Nejvyššímu správnímu soudu s, mimo jiné, námitkou, že slogan typu Ne islámu nebo Stop islámu jsou „nerealistické, a navíc v rozporu s ústavními principy.” Její stížnost byla odmítnuta s odůvodněním, že v politickém marketingu je přípustné používat hyperbolizaci a to zejména v období volební kampaně. Ústavní soud se nyní bude zabývá stížností. Z výše uvedeného vyplývá, že se islamofobie stala součástí běžného politického diskurzu a tak i oficiální politiky českého politického establishmentu. Obzvlášť extrémní formy islamofobie pořád najdeme online, zároveň pokračuje diskuze o tom, jak zacházet s hovorem z nenávisti. Je nutné zapojit občanskou společnost, která se jeví jako poslední obrany proti všem formám rasizmu včetně islamofobie a trvat na větší různorodosti v mediích. Je nutné též podpořit relativně vzácné politiky a političky a veřejné osobnosti, kteří se staví proti islamofobii.

Introduction

There are three important developments that influenced relation to Muslims in 2017. First, the October national elections brought into parliament the whole range of Islamophobic parties, most notably the party of Freedom and Direct Democracy, which campaigns almost exclusively on portraying Islam as a threat, a non-religion and a violent group. It should be stressed that these are the first elections during which attitudes towards Muslims became a central issue. Islamophobia in the Czech Republic should be seen in a complex interplay with other forms of intolerance, most notably with anti-Gypsism, which has always been strong, but also xenophobia in general, the rejection of refugees, and threats and hate towards anyone who dares to protest against forms of intolerance. The interplay is complex because sometimes all forms of intolerance come together and other times they “compete” with each other, tolerating some migrants (e.g. migrant workers necessary for economic growth but not other migrants, not refugees, or not migrants from “culturally distant” countries). Anti-Semitism and misogyny are also never too far from other forms of hate and calls for violence, although they are rarely the sole focus of intolerance. Second, the presidential elections held in January 2018 saw the newly elected president campaigning in the second round under the slogan “Stop Immigration Stop Drahoš, This Country Belongs to us” (his opponent). Third, the ongoing issue of refugee quotas and the role of the European Union attract a lot of attention and also affect how Islam is perceived. Frequently, in public discourse, persons who seek international protection are described as Muslims even though many asylum applications come from citizens of Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova and other non-Muslim countries. The issue of relocation quotas, e.g. the EU rules on how to distribute refugees throughout the EU, is connected to resentment towards the imposition of “foreigners” by the EU. The Czech Republic has accepted 12 such persons from slightly over 2,000 it was supposed to accept. Currently, the Czech Republic has been sued by the European Commission in the European Court of Justice but new Prime minister Andrej Babiš has been adamant that the Czech Republic would rather pay a multimillion fine than accept any refugees.

Significant Incidents and Developments

In addition to the mainstreaming of Islamophobia, the political scene has also seen the internationalization of Czech Islamophobic parties. The rabidly Islamophobic party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), thus, organized a meeting of repre-
sentatives of other EU Islamophobic parties on December 2017 in Prague, such as Geert Wilders (Dutch Freedom Party) and Marine Le Pen (Front National). The meeting focused on anti-EU discourse and anti-Islam scaremongering. The Agence France-Presse (AFP), the Associated Press (AP), the Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA) and the French daily Le Monde have all reported that the choice of Prague as the location for the conference of parties with seats in the European Parliament that are anti-immigration, hateful and xenophobic was no accident. According to these media, the ultra-right parties want to draw new energy from the recent electoral success of their Czech host, the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) movement of Czech MP Tomio Okamura. The phenomenon has been described by the Czech expert on extremism Jan Charvát at Charles University as “solidarity through hate.” He has stated, “Racism in the Czech Republic is apparently not any more frequent now than it has been, but the perspective on what one is allowed to say in public has been altered…Czech society, according to him, is undergoing a “reformatting” of what we consider normal and what not, and this flows from disappointment over developments post-1989.” The biggest danger of mainstreaming and legitimizing Islamophobic and other hateful speech is the threat to the democratic values of Czech society.

The limits of hate speech, particularly online, have been constantly shifting to more and more extreme positions. Thus, in an especially extreme incident, children from primary school in the city of Teplice were threatened with death in gas chambers. The class was comprised predominantly of children who are of Arab or Romani origin and users of online social networks commented as follows: “Equal (image of a pistol)”; “classroom full of terrorists”; “Plynářská [Gasworks] Primary School. The solution offers itself immediately.”; or “A grenade would fit there like a little bottom on the bench!”

Another important specific feature of Czech Islamophobia is that, due to lack of actual Muslims in the country, hate is directed towards whoever protests the blanket rejection of refugees and migrants or spreads any good or positive news about Muslims. Such people, who are often left wing, are targeted with death threats, verbal attacks and harassment – in the same manner as Muslims or migrants. They stand between an increasingly intolerant society, fully supported in its hatred by

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established parties and politicians, and the actual targets such as Muslims, Roma, Africans, etc. At the start of 2017, historian Matěj Spurný came under a great deal of online abuse – and even death threats – after an interview to a magazine headlined “This Country Is Not Just for Czechs.”

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Politics
In addition to Islamophobia becoming mainstream through elections and constant fear-mongering promoted by the Czech president, we see further polarization of Czech society on this matter. The Catholic Church in this deeply secular country with the majority declaring no denomination has been sending mixed signals. The head of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic Cardinal Dominik Duka congratulated the chair of the Freedom and Direct Democracy movement (SPD), Tomio Okamura, on his party’s electoral results. “ Permit me to congratulate you on the outcome of the elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic,” Duka wrote in a letter. “I am convinced that we are connected by the care for and safety of people in this country and by many other subjects,” he wrote. “I hope that you and your MPs in the newly established lower house manage to thoroughly advocate for justice and the law.” On the other hand, one of the world’s most-renowned Catholic intellectuals Tomáš Halík criticized the cardinal for lining up with regressive tabloids and public personalities, reminding him of their common dissident past during the era of the rule of the Communist Party. To illustrate what kind of people Cardinal Duka is supporting, we can point at an example of SPD Secretary Jaroslav Staník’s words that “Jews, homosexuals and Gypsies should be gassed” for which he has been reported to the criminal justice authorities.

Considering the firm establishment of Islamophobic discourse both among the parliamentary parties and personalities within individual parties, the non-parliamentary extreme right parties and movements are gaining more confidence in shifting the limits of what is allowed even further. The originally banned but then resurrected extreme right-wing party Workers Social Justice Party organized a public assembly to mark the Velvet Revolution anniversary in Prague attended by some 100 people and with the guest presence of the American neo-Nazi Matthew-John Heimbach. They attacked a Roma reporter and shouted “Fuck Allah, burn down

the mosques” and the obligatory “Bohemia for the Czechs.” One woman shouted “You black Arab swine!” at a photographer.10

Justice System
In the justice system two important court proceedings are continuing. One is against the former chair of the Muslim Community of Prague, Vladimír Sáňka, whose case has been described in the previous report. The District Court for Prague 1 acquitted him of charges for the publication in a Czech translation of a book by Bilal Philips entitled The Fundamentals of TAWHEED (Islamic Monotheism). However, the Prague Municipal Court, meeting in a closed session, overturned the verdict and returned the case to the District Court for Prague 1 to be reopened.11

The second case is the proceedings of a former student from Somalia. She accused the High School for Nurses of discrimination based on religion for denying her the right to wear a hijab during lectures (she agreed not to wear it during practical exercise). Her complaint was dismissed and on appeal reached the Prague Municipal Court where it was rejected again. In its verdict the court noted that a public school has the right to determine its dress code and that denying exception to that code does not constitute discrimination based on religion. It stated that the opposite of discrimination is the equal treatment of everyone and that the student demanded protection of her positive discrimination. Further the court explained that because of the low number of Muslims in the Czech Republic there is a lack of judicial decisions concerning the limits of religious tolerance. According to the verdict, nobody has the right to practice their religion everywhere: the lectures could be otherwise interrupted by the Lord’s Prayer (Christian prayer). Covering one’s hair is, according to the court, also uncivil. The Somali student’s lawyer, Radka Korbelová, together with Czech Ombudswoman Anna Šabatová questioned whether a minor school act, such as the particular school’s dress code, can override constitutional freedom to wear religious symbols as an expression of religious freedom. Korbelová has decided to appeal this second negative decision to the Highest Court.12

Media
Most media currently are followed online so it’s impossible to separate what is printed and what is published in digital space. Mainstream media mostly - but not

always - continues to present stereotypes about Muslims and particularly worrisome are online comment sections despite the fact that most online media demand prior identification. The fact that people post hateful and sometimes criminal threats under their own names points to a lack of concern for the responsibility of such verbal attacks. It is, thus, up to civil society to continue monitoring and complaining about such acts. Sometimes, however, the official Czech Council on Radio and Television Broadcasting does react such as in the case of Muslim women at the Prague swimming pool who were wearing burkinis. The Czech Council on Radio and Television Broadcasting (RRTV) has launched an administrative proceeding with the commercial TV Prima station over its reportage entitled “Clothed Muslim Women Swim in Pool.” The station broadcast the report during its evening news program on July 10 and informed the public that Muslim women at Prague’s Aquapalace Čestlice had gone swimming while dressed, i.e. in clothing that broke hygiene regulations, allegedly endangering other swimmers’ health. “The reportage at issue failed to meet its duty to report on the news in a balanced, objective way when it gave viewers a specifically predefined opinion of the event by telling them that the women involved had gone swimming in everyday clothing, not in the so-called ‘burkinis’,” the RRTV said.13

One of the worst offenders is the Czech online tabloid Parlametní listy (Parliamentary Journal). To test if they have any editorial policy, two journalists submitted commentaries heavily relying on absurd conspiracy theories such as the one explaining why terrorists are now committing murders with the aid of automobiles in big European cities but avoiding Prague so far. The reason, according to the commentary, is allegedly somewhat complicated and involves a conspiracy by American secret services and Islamist terrorists which is actually being directed by bicycle enthusiasts from Prague. The cyclists were said to be seeking a ban on all automobiles in Europe in order to force people to ride bicycles. Both commentaries were published.14

**Physical and Verbal Attacks**

Most verbal attacks happen online. An example of such an attack can be seen in a video that has gone viral on the Facebook social networking site and shows a man who is the father of a young girl whom he is encouraging to bash a pillow with a baseball bat and imagine it is a “Gypsy or a Muslim.” The man is not seen in the


video but his voice can be heard encouraging the child to use other vulgar terms such as “fuckers.”\textsuperscript{15} The man has received a suspended sentence.

The Ministry of Education has allocated financial means for courses on Czech for foreigners within its integration program to an agency led by a man who thinks that Islam is a tyrannical ideology.\textsuperscript{16}

An aggressive woman assaulted two Muslim women accompanying 13 children to the Divoka Šárka aqua park in Prague on Wednesday, July 19. The aggressor began the conflict by photographing the Muslim women and the children. One of the Muslim women asked her to stop taking photographs of them. The photographer then attacked her both physically and verbally. The case is being investigated by police and reported in detail through the Facebook page of the platform “Against Hate Speech” (Proti projevům nenávisti). The Muslim women were wearing hijabs at the time. “Some woman began photographing us. After she was politely asked in Czech to stop doing that because we did not want her to photograph either us or the children, she began to abuse us vulgarly,” one of the Muslim women was quoted as saying by the Against Hate Speech report. “She said we were wogs and that we should f**k off and that we shouldn’t dare go swimming. After that she kicked and punched my friend,” the Muslim woman said. Czech Police classified the incident as a misdemeanour.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Internet}

The Czech Internet space is a paradise for all kinds of hate speech including Islamophobia. The hate speech consists either of direct attacks, insults or calls to violence or of spreading hoaxes, fake news and lies, which is equally dangerous. Considering the vast amount of both types of hate speech we can, in the scope of this report, select just a few.

First, it is necessary to say that the ROMEA organization filed more than 10 reports of suspected crimes at the beginning of this year against persons who used online social networks to post racist verbal attacks against Roma people and members of other minorities, including threatening them with physical destruction. State Prosecutor Zdeňka Galková has notified ROMEA that such comments are a form of such people “relieving themselves in public without the writers actually meaning what they say seriously or intending to take such action, and they are not capable of committing such behaviour anywhere outside of the ‘protective bubble’ of an Inter-

\begin{itemize}
  \item Adéla Gálová, “Czech Video Goes Viral of Man Telling Girl to Beat Pillow with Baseball Bat and Imagine It’s a
\end{itemize}
The reported online comments included: “Those whores, I’d shoot it, first that cunt Merkel who brought it here, and then the rest of those fuckers, they just get to cross our borders whenever, I will be glad to shoot those fuckers”; “The shitty optimists led by Merkel are protecting them, those repulsive Muslim monkeys. I would shoot them just like Mladič. He partially exterminated them but it didn’t help. UNFORTUNATELY.”

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

It is not possible to talk about a fully developed Islamophobia network in the Czech Republic. It is rather that Islamophobia has become mainstream and that it is scattered throughout public space, including political parties. In addition to Czech President Miloš Zeman and MP Tomio Okamura, current winner of the elections and most probable candidate for Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš from Action of Dissatisfied Citizens Party (ANO) is among the most influential figures with Islamophobic views. In the case of Babiš, unlike Okamura who is obsessively focused on the “threat from Islam,” the central issue in his rhetoric is the refugee quota demanded by the European Union. Thus, he stated, “We have to fight for what our ancestors built here. If there will be more Muslims than Belgians in Brussels, that’s their problem. I don’t want that here. They won’t be telling us who should live here.”

On the other hand, some of the figures who initiated and publicized Islamophobia have become largely irrelevant or less visible, most notably Martin Konvička who initiated the online movement We Don’t Want Islam in the Czech Republic and Petr Hampl, who established Alternative for the Czech Republic (following the German example). It seems, however, that their ideas and values, in somewhat diluted form, became mainstream now while their own importance decreased.

Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society organizations have been largely isolated in their combat against Islamophobia, which is to be expected in a country where 84% of the respondents in a recent survey said they were “strongly against or rather against” accepting any refugees from the Middle East or North Africa. Perhaps this is reason to appreciate even more the initiatives by civil society and certain politicians.

The ROMEA organization and others, as well as many public figures, have decided to respond to the current wave of hate and racism that is spreading through the Czech

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Republic. The initiative is called “They Want to Gas Them, We Want to Send Them to School,” referring to the children from the elementary school mentioned above.\(^\text{21}\)

On September 1, in Liberec, Czech Republic, the signatories of a statement against disseminating fear of difference and against xenophobia held a press conference to publicize their call to action. The statement criticizes Czech President Zeman and political parties traditionally considered democratic. The text was signed by 15 figures from various professions and walks of life, according to the Deputy Mayor of Liberec Ivan Langr, who is responsible for social affairs. The signatories warn that the dissemination of hostility, especially against members of minorities who are visually different, is gradually becoming one of the important topics of the political competition for votes in the run-up to the October elections.\(^\text{22}\)

An iconic photograph of a young Girl Scout who decided to protest on May 1, 2017 against a neo-Nazi assembly in Brno, Czech Republic has circulated the Internet, and not just the “Czech” one. The photo has received more than 60,000 “likes” and almost 6,000 comments on the Reddit social networking site. The Girls Scout in question, Lucie Myslíková, said, “Because I believe it is worth to fight with what you disagree. I feel obligated to protest fascist ideologies and opinions, which are here in this society and are an actual threat. I think my friends feel the same way. I do not identify with this dissemination of hatred. I have attended similar actions before.”\(^\text{23}\)

**Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

This report documented some of the Islamophobia-related policies, processes and incidents. The overall conclusion is that through the October general elections Islamophobia has entered the Czech Parliament and forces working to present all Muslims as a threat received a boost. Islamophobia is not only entrenched in certain Islam-obsessed parties, such as the SPD or individual politicians such as the Czech president or prime minister, but runs through various parties that have never before campaigned on the issue. Furthermore, the issue of the relocation quota of refugees in the European Union has strengthened negative attitudes towards refugees in general and Muslim refugees in particular. There have also been successful attempts to internationalize the Czech Islamophobia scene. On the other hand, those opposing hatred and advocating reasonable and compassionate immigration polices under-
stand they need to create their own networks and remind the Czech society of its history and constitution.

The policy recommendations remain largely the same as in previous years with the following being particularly important:

- A monitoring system of hate online should be established. Currently only a few non-governmental organizations monitor hate speech. Only by establishing a system is it possible to push for measures to tackle online hate speech.
- Online hate speech should be sanctioned according to relevant laws. Legal professionals need more knowledge about the impact in real life of advocating violence online.
- There should be more focus on working with young people to prevent support for extremist ideologies.
- Politicians who oppose collective guilt and punishment of Muslims should be better promoted and more visible in media.
- The media should diversify the image of Muslims, be held accountable for spreading dangerous fake news, and more Czech Muslims’ voices should be heard in public space.
- More resources should be allocated to non-governmental organizations to create umbrella organizations to tackle both Islamophobic hate speech and ideology.

Chronology

- **10.08.2017**: A local councillor in Hodonín, Roman Sedlačík, a member of the conservative nationalist movement “Order of the Nation” (Řád národa), harassed and called the police when he encountered a black couple he assumed were Muslims. The man was a U.S. Army soldier who was on a personal visit with his wife.
- **21.10.2017**: Several dozen people protested in front of the Prague campaign office of the “Freedom and Direct Democracy” party (SPD), led by Tomio Okamura, against the fact that the hate group was elected to the Chamber of Deputies. “Welcome refugees, Nazis go home!” demonstrators chanted beneath the windows of Hotel Čechie.
- **15.12.2017**: Several hundred demonstrators whistled loudly and shouted “Shame!” and “Down with Fascists!” at Prague’s TOP Hotel, where a meeting of representatives of anti-immigration parties from around Europe was being held.
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 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.

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.