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.
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FOREWORD

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 re-posting 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

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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. Combatting 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. 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-Gypsiesim.

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 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!” 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

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-


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

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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
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

planning attacks on French politicians and on Muslim places of worship.\textsuperscript{51}

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 \textit{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

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.\textsuperscript{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\textsuperscript{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”\textsuperscript{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-

\textsuperscript{52} Stop Extremism, “Six Actions That We Demand to Secure a Safer Europe”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from https://www.en.stopextremism.eu/about.

\textsuperscript{53} Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los medios, http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/.

dalism towards Muslims. 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.

• 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-Gypsysism.

• 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 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

The report includes the major events that have structured and expressed Islamophobia in France. As the country is still not over with two major identity and security crises, the successive governments have failed to address both issues without worsening the situation and further ripping apart national cohesion. Organisations dealing with anti-Muslim racism agree on the decrease of Islamophobic attacks. For instance, the Observatory of Islamophobia has reported 121 anti-Muslim attacks which represent a decrease of 34.6%. The observatory has further reported a decrease in attacks against places of worship (-12.8%) but has highlighted the increase in threats and traumatic experiences (+7.5%). But such numbers are limited by their non-inclusion of Islamophobic attacks committed by the French state and its agencies which, therefore, excludes the repression that has been targeting Muslim individuals and institutions.

The year 2017 saw two major elections and irrational and public debates led by normalised far-right ideology. Anti-Muslim racism was a central component of the debates that preceded the presidential and legislative elections. Candidates, although seeking election from citizens that have been expressing growing defiance towards the country’s political elite, have failed to truly address their socio-economic expectations or to give reasons for hope. Far from it. Identity politics and security have further polarised French society and Muslims continue to be scapegoated for the successive governments’ failures.

Security-wise, the permanent terrorist threat continues to be dealt with through the lens of repression alone. Despite a two-decade-long anti-terror legislative struggle, there is an incapacity or a lack of willingness to assess the long-term weakening of the French justice system, widespread violations of civil liberties and whatever is left of the rule of law. The state of emergency which lasted for two years has become permanent through the passing of the October 2017 anti-terrorism bill, despite its well-documented ineffectiveness and extensive use against Muslim citizens specifically.

Security one-upmanship and lack of political courage have allowed the emergence of a police state in France. The state has evolved to become out of control: laws are being passed in complete violation of the founding principles of the republic; citizens are under permanent surveillance; the justice system is subservient to the executive branch of power; state representatives can arbitrarily decide whose property is to be raided or who is to be put under house arrest; advocates of new ideas and ideas opposed to the ruling elites are censored; reactionary pressure groups routinely intimidate state agents; freedom of speech, of conscience or of religion have been severely curtailed; and the media in its overwhelming majority no longer keep the powerful in check but rather act as propaganda outlets for the ruling elite. Only a handful of independent media
outlets remain but they have to deal with constant demonisation and administra-
tive pressure (the FISC among others).

That represents challenges for the immediate future of the French population as a whole and French Muslims more specifically. The latter have been reduced to playing the role of the “enemy within” in order to justify authoritarianism and the return of fascist ideas from the early twentieth century. Left- and right-wing governments have for three decades adopted the far-right lexicon and its logic in order to pass racist measures such as the 2004 ban on headscarves in public schools, the 2009 ban on the full face veil, the Chatel Ministerial Circular of 2010 banning Muslim mothers from attending school trips should they wear a headscarf, or the latest Cassation Court on religious signs in the public space, which all enjoy a general consensus among policymakers. This report also highlights the challenges faced by those fighting anti-Muslim bigotry whether they are public servants or members of civil society.
Résumé

Ce rapport couvre l’année 2017 et comprend les principaux événements qui ont structuré et exprimé l’islamophobie en France. Alors que le pays n’en a toujours pas fini avec deux crises identitaire et sécuritaire, les gouvernements successifs n’ont eux pas voulu s’attaquer aux deux problèmes sans aggraver la situation et démolir davantage la cohésion nationale.

Deux ans après les sanglants attentats de Janvier et Novembre 2015, 2017 a été l’année de deux élections majeures, de débats publics irrationnels menés par une idéologie d’extrême droite normalisée et des institutions fébriles. Le racisme anti-musulman a encore une fois été un élément central des débats qui ont précédé les élections présidentielles et législatives. Les candidats, bien que recherchant les voix de citoyens en pleine défi

cance envers les élites politique du pays, n’ont pas vraiment répondu à leurs attentes socio-économiques ni donné des raisons d’espérer. Loin de là. La politique identitaire et la surenchère sécuritaire ont polarisé davantage la société française et les musulmans continuent d’être les boucs émissaires des échecs des gouvernements successifs.

Du point de vue de la sécurité, la menace terroriste permanente continue d’être traitée uniquement sous l’angle de la répression sans jamais s’adresser aux racines du problème ni en tentant de répondre à la question du “pourquoi?”. Malgré deux décennies de législation antiterroriste, il y a une incapacité flagrante ou un manque de volonté d’évaluer l’incapacité d’agir en amont de la menace terroriste, l’affaiblissement à long terme de la justice française, les violations généralisées des libertés publiques et une atteinte à ce qui reste de “l’état de droit”. L’état d’urgence qui a duré deux ans est devenu permanent à la suite de l’adoption du projet de loi antiterroriste d’octobre 2017 malgré son inefficacité déjà documentée et son utilisation discriminatoire contre les citoyens de confession musulmane en particulier.

La surenchère sécuritaire et le manque de courage politique ont permis l’émergence d’un état policier en France. L’État est devenu incontrôlable, des lois sont passées en violation des principes fondateurs de la république, les citoyens sont sous surveillance permanente, la justice est inféodée au pouvoir, les représentants de l’État peuvent arbitrairement décider qui peut être perquisitionné ou assigné à résidence, les porteurs d’idées nouvelles ou opposées aux élites dirigeantes sont censurés, les groupes de pression réactionnaires ont durablement intimidé les agents de l’État, les libertés d’expression, de conscience de culte et d’opinion ont été sévèrement restreintes et la presse dans sa quasi totalité ne joue plus son rôle de contre-pouvoir mais celui d’organe de propagande des élites. Seuls quelques médias indépendants subsistent mais doivent faire à la diabolisation permanente et la pression de l’administration (fiscale entre autres).

Tout cela représente une source de défis pour l’avenir immédiat de la population française et des musulmans français en particulier qui sont réduits au rôle d’ “ennemi intérieur” afin de justifier l’autoritarisme et le retour des idées fascisantes du début du

Ce rapport met en lumière l’évolution annuelle de l’islamophobie en tant que problème structurel. Des débats publics à la rétractation du droit en passant par le matraquage médiatique, la France de 2017 n’a envoyé aucun signal d’apaisement malgré l’élection d’un jeune président promettant un renouveau. Ce rapport souligne également les défis auxquels sont confrontés ceux qui sont impliqués dans la lutte contre la haine anti-musulmans qu’ils soient fonctionnaires ou acteurs de la société civile. Les recommandations ont été choisies en fonction des échanges de l’auteur avec les organisations terrain, des fonctionnaires et des universitaires.
Introduction

Censorship and political repression are two of the axes through which Islamophobia has best expressed itself in 2017 France. The year has been marked by the toxicity of public debates and the violence with which opponents to the dominant discourse have been targeted. The damages to French society in the aftermath of the 2015 and 2016 attacks and the subsequent backlash against local Muslims by the state (the state of emergency, house raids, house arrests, shutting down of Muslim places of worship, surveillance, criminalisation of activists, attacks against civil liberties…) have only contributed to further polarise French society. The election of Emanuel Macron did not bring with it a wind of change or appeasement to say the least. Rather, and despite having decried anti-Muslim hatred during his campaign, his coming into office was marked by an obvious lack of political courage against racism. Furthermore, his passing of the state of emergency into the common law - hence rendering permanent its exceptional powers - has been called out by many like the head of the Judicial Union1 or leading human rights lawyers like Emmanuel Daoud2 as a contribution to turning France into a police state.

Although physical assaults against Muslim individuals and property have significantly decreased, French laws are becoming ever more repressive and tackling basic civil liberties. The pretext of fighting “radical Islam” - with no definition of it in sight - is driving many policymakers to find new ways to neutralise public visibility of the Muslim faith. An unofficial two-tiered citizenship has been developed and violations of laïcité at the expense of Muslims are not perceived as grave violations of constitutional principles or of human rights but justifiable. All forms of religious or political affiliation are to be tolerated but those emanating from individuals perceived as Muslims.

The temptation to turn repression up another notch is palpable and given the very low level of public debates and lack of credible experts on Islam and representatives of Muslim communities, 2018 will not be any easier for Muslims as Islamophobia is not being taken seriously by policymakers, the media and even many public self-appointed Muslim representatives.

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Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Politics

Islam will be a central theme in the 2017 presidential election. Manuel Vall at the “The Republic and Islam, let’s face the challenge” forum

The 2017 presidential election marks the enshrinement of far-right ideology and the Lepenisation of the minds. Having begun with the violent burkini controversy in 2016, the presidential election centred around identity and security. In contrast with the ongoing defiance between voters and the country’s elites for better socio-economic policies, institutional reform and transparency, Muslims and terrorism by far outweighed central issues for the French population. The year 2017 began with candidates engaged in a constant escalation in regards to protecting French identity from Islam and the French population from Muslims.

On January 25, pressure was added on candidates in regards to counter-terrorism. The daily newspaper Le Parisien published an article titled “Terrorism: The Secret Map of Radicalised Individuals in the Grand Paris Area (Ile de France)”. Using government data, the article alleged that the secret document had “between 15,000 to 16,000 radicalised individuals including 4,000 in the Grand Paris Area” and that three business sectors were “particularly at risk”: transportation, security and administration.

‘Interestingly’ enough, the government failed to disclose the criteria it used to put a person’s name on such a list while recognising that a sizeable portion of those names landed there because of anonymous denunciation by phone.

The very same day, the National Front immediately reacted by publishing a press release titled “In the Grand

Figure 1: François Fillon’s Overcoming Islamic Totalitarianism is the book he wrote to present his presidential programme centred on the “identity and security threat” posed by what he vaguely calls “political Islam”.

Paris Area Islamists Drive Our Buses and Maintain Our Security” which further added to the escalation between the party’s candidate Marine Le Pen and her conservative “rival” François Fillon.

From the far-left to the far-right, Islam and Muslims were indeed central issues. Marine Le Pen found staunch competitors in terms of Islamophobia. Before throwing in the towel for misusing public funds, Les Republicain’s candidate François Fillon, who launched his campaign with a book title Overcoming Islamic Totalitarianism, went from one promise to another against what he called the “only problematic community in France”, shattered the separation between far-right and “republican” right-wing politics and dragged the campaign down to pure identity politics. (Fig. 1) Among his promises were the “strict control of the Muslim faith” which he made during the opening speech of his campaign:

Radical islam has infiltrated our fellow Muslim countrymen and holds them hostages. Fanatics hate what we are, I shall fight them tirelessly and ruthlessly. I want a strict administrative control over the Muslim faith as long as its rooting in the Republic is not achieved. I want the dissolution of all organisations that adhere to Salafism or to the Muslim Brotherhood. I want clarification of our relationships with countries that harbour ideologues of radical Islam and burkini merchants. I do designate the problems that we have to radical Islam. Catholicism, Protestantism, or Judaism do not reject the Republic’s values despite a number of (past) clashes. All these religions live in peace with the Republic and with laïcité which is our common protection. But I hear some calling for a more restrictive laïcité. Why then affect people’s religious freedoms when only the onset of fundamentalism that is setting the Muslim world in flames is a threat to our society ? (…) My vision of things is that the Muslim religion must accept, unconditionally what other religions have accepted in the past. 6

But François Fillon’s adherence to laïcité changes according to whom he is targeting. Despite a long French tradition of excluding religious affiliation while running for office, precisely out of adherence to laïcité, the candidate did not hesitate to refer to himself as a “follower of Charles De Gaulle… and a Christian”, a declaration that raised eyebrows even across the Atlantic and challenged up front the secular

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consensus7 in French politics. The all-out return to Christian identity politics that is called for and adhered to in opposition to Muslims was a deliberate choice. But the positions of the likes of Francois Fillon and, before him, Nicolas Sarkozy and now Laurent Waquier6 point to a blatant contradiction. While they constantly pose as staunch advocates of a repressive laïcité when speaking of the religious rights of Muslims, they nevertheless invoke religious freedoms or the “Judeo-Christian roots” of France to justify special arrangements for their political base. This is nothing short of preaching adherence to the law while blowing the dog whistle to his supporters, assuring them that white supremacy remains in place.

The omnipresence of Islamophobia during the campaign was such that candidates who did not engage in some form of promise to “hold Muslims to account” more than others, were immediately discredited. It was the case for Socialist Party candidate Benoit Hamon who not only was sabotaged by his own party but was also bitterly attacked the Manuel Valls’ camp for being too lenient with the so-called “Islamo-gauchisme” (Islamo-leftism), a term that is constantly used against non-Muslim opponents of Islamophobia and which shares the same logic as the term “Judeo-bolchevism”.

With a few notable exceptions, the convergence of the whole French political spectrum around Islamophobia was best illustrated by far-left political parties like Lutte Ouvrière (Trotskystis) which published a violent attack on the struggle against Islamophobia calling it the “Islamist Trojan horse” and “a trap”,9 and France Insoumise (Unsubmitting France) whose president Jean Luc Mélenchon has on multiple occasions declared his opposition to Muslims expressing their beliefs in public space and even supported the bill against Muslim nannies working with a headscarf.

After his election, Emmanuel Macron has so far failed to address the burning issue of Islamophobia and through his authority as a president to implement policies and nominate state agents who will be in charge of protecting laïcité as it is enshrined in the constitution. To the contrary, his Minister of Education, who openly declared his opposition to the presence of Muslim mothers wearing a headscarf during school trips, has launched “laïcité units”10 that will tour the country’s schools in order to tackle - among other things - “attacks against laïcité”, be it in the form of questioning

8. The new president of the main conservative party, Les Républicains.
schools’ curricula or adopting a dress code that does not “fit” - just like when in 2015 and 2016, Muslim school girls were expelled for wearing long skirts.

But despite direct attacks on Muslims, the so-called “Muslim vote” still represents a mirage worth running after. Even the most violent Islamophobes have not shied away from attempting to lure Muslim voters. The National Front’s Marine Le Pen and others from her campaign team have openly sought to seduce Muslim voters in a rather incoherent if not awkward manner. Invoking the love of the country and promising them protection from radical Islam, the far right just like conservatives urged “patriotic Muslims” or “France-loving Muslims” to vote for them.

To his credit, Emmanuel Macron let public opinion know about his support for the original laïcité law of 1905 and his opposition to it being hijacked to promote Islamophobia. But members of his own government have made a series of declarations in favour of a more repressive vision of laïcité and gave reasons for observers to worry about further restrictions on Muslims. Only he can decide to reaffirm his authority on the topic and put some form of order within the ranks of his government.

Fundamental rights for Muslims are considerably shrinking. Secular fundamentalism, i.e the adherence to an ideological form of “laïcité” that is based on the direct attacks against religious visibility in public space which in turn is a non-avowed targeting of Muslims, has significantly expanded and the forces resisting it do not seem to cope, while political leaders instead of fighting it for the sake of protecting social cohesion, have found it to be a low-risk, high-return political tactic.

Justice System

Through the evolution of legislation, the visibility of Muslims in the public is yet again targeted by policymakers. In direct continuation with the European Court Of Justice’s March 2017 ruling, the French Cassation Court has given employers the legal tools to discriminate against Muslim women wearing a headscarf. Indeed, as the ECJ ruling considers that “An internal rule of an undertaking which prohibits the visible wearing of any political, philosophical or religious sign does not constitute direct discrimination”, the cassation court of France ruled that employers need to first write the prohibition of the headscarf along with other religious signs in the company’s internal ruling before considering terminating an employee for wearing it.

There are reasons to fear further legal discrimination. The French state has not changed its course on rulings targeting Muslim visibility. The newly nominated Laïcité Council of the Wise has among its members three of the most violent proponents of Islamophobia, namely Laurent Bouvet, Patrick Kessel and Alain Seksig. Furthermore, the current Minister of Education is a proponent of the new laïcité that restricts religious symbols in the public space. In an interview that went viral

in November 2017, he declared that according to his “personal view on laïcité”, mothers wearing a headscarf must be excluded from attending school activities even as volunteers. His “personal views” are actually a recurring problem for Muslim mothers in France.

The Justice & Liberties For All Committee has been approached by a number of Muslim mothers in Paris who were first accepted to accompany their kids during a school trip but were then asked to leave unless they took off their headscarves. One school principal went as far as calling the police who notified a mother that she had no choice but to uncover her head while a busload of students and parents were watching. Such a case is far from being isolated as poor understanding of laïcité and ignorance of the law among public servants are a fertile soil for daily harassment of Muslim mothers. Such ignorance was further supported and exemplified by the State Secretary Christophe Castaner who declared on a major radio station that religious signs are prohibited in public space, an idea that is directly defended by the National Front’s Florian Philippot.

Failed Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the End of Rule of Law in France

The lone wolf theory has been completely discredited. It is not enough to say Allah Akbar to turn a criminal act into a terrorist attack.

Dr Francesco Ragazzi

The minority repression-based strategy has been chosen as French public opinion is calling for more “state authority” and more repression in the face of terrorism. It is hence no coincidence that 60% of French public opinion was in favour of a permanent state of emergency despite its proven ineffectiveness in the face of terrorism. This can be explained by the political communication that has been chosen by the majority of political parties and the media who have successfully normalised the idea that terrorism is inherently a Muslim problem and that by extension, Muslims themselves, their places of worship and businesses are a threat to national security.

The current government of Edouard Philippe (PM) and its predecessors have constantly used the term “radicalisation” and applied it in various ways: “radicalised individuals”, “radical preachers”, “radical mosques”, “radical Islam”, and the list goes on. But before addressing the problematic use of such vague terms, the term “radicalisation” it-

self has not been defined by the French state - but we do know against whom it is applied. When the “radicalisation” figures were published in March 2017, the rapporteurs were cautious enough to begin by acknowledging that “radicalisation” is “an ambiguous concept that is being used under the pressure of events”. Furthermore, the figures given by the government point to the absence of clear criteria to report people and to the dangers of state-encouraged delation.

The Anti-Terrorist Coordination Unit figures (UCLAT) published the following figures:

1. Individuals on the Terrorism Prevention Database (FSPRT)
   A total of 17,393 individuals were enrolled in the FSPRT, including:
   - 7,400 individuals reported by the prefectures via the Security Staff Majors (EMS);
   - 5,346 individuals reported by the public via CNAPR;
   - 5,799 objectives registered by police or gendarmerie services.

2. Origin of reports validated by National Centre of Assistance and Prevention of Radicalisation (CNAPR)
   - Of the 5,651 reports validated by the CNAPR:
     - 3,939 came from calls to the toll-free number;
     - 770 came from the Ministry of the Interior’s online form;
     - 941 came from emails from the police and gendarmerie.

In addition, Emmanuel Macron’s Minister of Interior Gerard Collomb gave the figure of “18,500 reported individuals and counting”. Contradictions with the previous figures aside, the French government must be held accountable for the thousands of people that have been reported without knowing it and without the people reporting them knowing what they are reporting. The CNAPR is an open call for delation and ill-intentioned denunciation as it was extensively reported by human rights organisations during the state of emergency.

Furthermore, the government released its four-page assessment of the state of emergency ahead of its decision to lift it. According to the document, 19 places of worship were shut down by the government. But just like the opaque if not arbi-
trary criteria used to report people, the French government must clarify the basis on which its agents make their decisions to punish whole communities by shutting down their places of worship.

However, when it comes to members of Zionist organisations who join the Israeli army and commit war crimes against Palestinians or members of the far-right nebula who join pro-Russian forces in the Ukraine\textsuperscript{20} to receive military training and take part in the conflict, the government and the media do not use the term “radicalisation”. As a matter of fact, such information does not make it to mainstream media and is not taken into consideration by the government.

In an interview for this report, Dr Francesco Ragazzi, a lecturer of International Relations at the University of Leiden who specialises on global security, gave the following assessment of the current and previous governments’ approach to “radicalisation”:

There is great opacity when it comes to the criteria used by governments to label individuals as “radicals”. The problem is that many untrained professionals are asked to all of a sudden become counter-terrorism experts and report cases of “radicalisation”, something that has not been defined. The short training sessions they are offered are not enough and reporting the wrong people becomes inevitable. As the multiple terrorist attacks have shown, we do know which individuals are dangerous. After each attack, authorities find out that the culprit was already on a watch list. The problem is not to know who’s going to be the next radical on the list, but which dangerous individual that is being watched - because they are always members of a network - is going to take action. The lone wolf theory has been completely discredited. In addition, it is not enough for someone to say “Allah Akbar” to turn a criminal act into a terrorist attack. What must be done by governments that intend to seriously tackle terrorism in a much more efficient and effective manner, is to adopt a strict division of roles. Education professionals cannot play the role of the police but both need to be able to communicate without political pressure from outside.\textsuperscript{21}

The direct consequences of opacity and arbitrariness are challenges to the very notion of France being a democracy where the rule of law prevails. The anti-terrorism law\textsuperscript{22} of 2017 that was passed soon after the election of Emmanuel Macron is a direct attack against it. Staunch criticism came from historic NGOs such as the French Human Rights League which raised four “priority preliminary rulings on

\begin{itemize}
\item Francesco Ragazzi, Interview with Yasser Louati, January 23, 2018.
\end{itemize}
constitutionality" on the basis that the law represented “serious risks of abuse and misuse of powers”. The endangering of civil liberties under Emmanuel Macron’s tenure cannot be underestimated. The country’s renowned legal experts such as Mireille Delmas Marty called the transition from the state of emergency to its lifting through the passing of the anti-terrorism law, a passage to “soft despotism” which is no understatement coming from one of the most respected academics.

The Defender of Rights (Ombudsman) Jacques Toubon, declared on his side that “if the implementation of the law leads to targeting in 99% of the cases people who share the same religion, we instil a kind of dissolvent of national cohesion, a poisonous pill.” Furthermore, the bill raised concerns at the UN level. UN rapporteur Michel Forst blasted the bill for relying on a “vague definition of terrorism” and wrote, “What France is doing is not trivial. We want France to do better so it doesn’t inspire bad practices in other countries”. It is only a question of time before France’s example is used by other countries. But in turn, this means that France can no longer lecture other countries on the rule of law.

On top of the law on mass surveillance that was passed in 2015 and which has put the whole country’s radio and online communication under surveillance and the widespread use of notes blanches to put individuals under house arrest, wiretap their phones or raid their homes, the 2017 counter-terrorism law includes the extreme measures of the state of emergency. Places of worship and organisations can now be shut at the discretion of the prefect which is highly problematic given the multiple cases of innocent Muslim citizens whose homes were raided, who were put under house arrest and lost their jobs because of arbitrary decisions taken by their area’s prefect. In total, 19 Muslim places of worship have been 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.

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23. “Question Prioritaire de Constitutionnalité” could be translated as an application for a preliminary ruling on the conformity of a legislative provision with the French Constitution.
27. “White notes” are documents used by intelligence agencies which are not signed, dated or have a header but contain written accusations against someone by an intelligence officer with no need to prove the accusation.
Employment
In a ruling on December 19, the administrative court of appeal of Versailles (Yvelines), sided with the decision of the Hospital of Saint-Denis (North of Paris) to cancel an internship agreement with a man because of his beard. The latter was deemed in violation of the secular law and neutrality of the public service.29

The Coordination Against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI) has reported similar cases of discrimination at work. For instance in La Rochelle (Atlantic Coast of France), a man’s employment was terminated by his employer after weeks of harassment for having a beard that was deemed a “sign of religious extremism”. The CRI has further reported 15 cases of anti-Muslim hate speech at work which, of course, went unreported.30

Anti-Muslim discrimination is already massive in France. Previous studies that were published a few years ago are still relevant. In 2015 already, a study31 by Marie Anne Valfort (Paris School of Economics) concluded that Muslim job applicants were four times more likely of being discriminated against than candidates with a Catholic name. In the case of Muslim women, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) concluded that wearing a headscarf reduces a job applicant’s chances of securing a job to 1%.32 France Stratégie, a think tank that is under the Prime Minister’s authority, concluded that discrimination in general cost over 150 billion euros to the French economy.33

Media
In October, when Harvey Weinstein’s multiple sexual assaults made international news, feminist activists in France launched the #balancetonporc online campaign in order to encourage women to call out those who had targeted them. A few weeks later, Tariq Ramadan, a prominent Swiss Muslim figure found himself in the midst of a national hysteria that was launched by his long-time political rivals and carried throughout the media in order to portray him as the “symptomatic case of a Muslim who has problem with women”. Several women came forward and accused him of sexual misconduct. The public trial of Tariq Ramadan became the trial of all Muslim communities which were accused of being too silent.

The violence of the controversy reached its peak when satiric newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* accused Edwy Plenel, the co-founder of investigative newspaper *Mediapart* of having known all along about Tariq Ramadan’s rape allegations and not speaking up about it. (Fig. 2) To Edwy Plenel, *Charlie Hebdo’s* headlines were “a declaration of war against Muslims by a misguided left”.

*Le Bondy Blog*, an online media that is referred to as the voice of the banlieues, was not spared. Using the Tariq Ramadan affair as a platform, former Prime Minister Manuel Valls renewed the attacks against *Mediapart* and Edwy Plenel and targeted *Le Bondy Blog* for being “too lenient with political Islam”.

What is relatively surprising but nonetheless disturbing, is the silence from traditional Islamic institutions such as the UOIF (Union of Islamic Organisations of France), the Grand Mosque of Paris, the FNMF (National Federation of Muslims) and umbrella organisations such as the CFCM, in the face of repeated assaults against Muslims by the country’s political elites, the media, secular fundamentalist organisations and more worryingly, in the aftermath of the Tariq Ramadan affair.

Individuals who in normal times are in fierce battles to be recognised as “representatives” of French Muslims were nowhere to be found as violent rhetoric from columnists, political and media figures and militant organisations were targeting Muslims for being Muslims. It is to be feared that fear has been internalised by traditional Islamic organisations and that respectability politics, although having been a blatant failure, still seem to be the chosen strategy.

In its weekly supplement, conservative and heavily subsidised *Le Figaro* (6,456,112 euros in state subsidies in 2016) dedicated the front cover of its weekly supplement *Le Figaro Magazine* to “The Islamosphere, An Investigation into Islam’s Agents of Influence”. (Fig. 3) The 11-page-long “investigation” by Judith Weintraub, who does not hide her anti-Muslim views either on social media or on television,
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contained a list of all public figures who either took a stance against Islamophobia or called out the hijacking of laïcité to turn it against Muslims. Even those who have no direct connections with Islamic institutions or anti-Islamophobia organisations were not spared. Among the targets were leading laïcité scholar Jean Baubérot; socio-anthropologist Edgar Morin; author of *The myth of Islamisation* Raphael Lliogier; author Rokhaya Diallo; Jean Louis Bianco, head of the state-sanctioned Observatory of Laïcité; Houria Boucheldja, head of the Republic’s Indigenous Party; or anthropologist Emmanuel Todd who authored *Who is Charlie*.35

The allegations that an Islamist network of agents had infiltrated the French Republic were further supported by interviews of two other prominent anti-Muslim activists. The first one with former Socialist Prime Minister Manuel Valls whose flirtatious relationship with far-right ideas is no longer a secret, and the second with Pascal Bruckner who had just released a new essay titled “Islamophobia, The Imaginary Racism”.36 Blasting those who oppose Islamophobia, Bruckner declared in the interview, “[F]ormer Communists, Trotskyists, Maoists compete in their allegiance to bigotry provided it is carried by the followers of the Quran. They hate France not because it oppresses Muslims, but because it frees them. From then on, the enemy in their eyes becomes secularism and especially the dissidents of Islam…”37

While proponents of Islamophobia claim freedom of speech to normalise anti-Muslim rhetoric, they are nonetheless first in line to call for censorship of their opponents. The following event best illustrates how French institutions have been infiltrated by strong proponents of Islamophobia and have been weakened by the lack of political courage.

36. Pascal Bruckner “Islamophobie, le racisme imaginaire”, Grasset
On October 3, the University of Lyon II decided to cancel a long-scheduled event titled “Fighting Islamophobia, A Question of Equality” after a violent campaign was launched by far-right activists, staunch advocates for an Islam-hostile version of *laïcité* like the LICRA (League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism), Comité Laïcité République and Le Printemps Républicain. Among the attendees, were the European Commission’s Coordinator Against Anti-Muslim Hatred David Figgieri, the head of the state sanctioned Observatory of Laïcité Jean Louis Bianco, several academics, advocates and legal experts. The University of Lyon, following the demands made by opponents of the event, decided to cancel the event by claiming that “the conditions to guarantee the serenity of the exchanges and the good progress of debates around the question of Islamophobia and its political stakes have not been met”. To many observers, this was a case of censorship and of violation of freedom of speech. In response, three hundred academics and researchers jointly signed a letter titled “To Counter Censorship, Defend Academic Freedoms” in which they expressed their “worries” of seeing
heads of higher education institutions trying to control what can and what cannot be debated.42

State-owned media represent a major part of the problem. State-owned France 2, for instance, has turned one of its most viewed weekly shows into a platform for Islamophobes to spread their ideas without serious challenges. Notorious activists like Michel Onfray, Alain Finkielkraut, or Manuel Valls have been given a platform to further spread their ideas with no real contradiction on behalf of the hosts. With or without Islamophobes on the set, Islam and Muslims are the permanent topic, always treated in the absence of Muslims themselves. Their absence is no coincidence. The unavoidable result is that Islam is constitutively perceived as a foreign entity that is not compatible with French values as shown in figure 4.

The same applies to the radio. The example of France Culture (part of state-owned Radio France) where Alain Finkielkraut has a weekly show speaks volumes on the silence on behalf of state regulators when it comes to violent anti-Muslim rhetoric. Finkielkraut, a strong advocate for white supremacy through assimilation, the “clash of civilisations”, repression against visible Islam, Muslims and activists, is given a platform on taxpayers’ money. It is during his show that one of his guests and director of the Shoah Memorial George Bensoussan declared that “Arabs are breastfed anti-Semitism” which prompted anti-racist organisations to press charges - in vain, however. Despite repeated racist attacks against Muslims and other minorities and his historic contribution to the rise of Islamophobia since the mid-80s (he was among the first to call for banning Muslim visibility in public schools and is a co-founder of the militant secular fundamentalist organisation Comité Laïcité République), Alain Finkielkraut has so far never been disciplined by his superiors or by the Ministry of Culture.

The convergence from the far-right to left-wing organisations has been made possible around the targeting of Muslim activists and any other opponents of Islamophobia. That organisations push for their ideological agenda is not new and is part of the democratic debate, but for institutions such as universities which are supposed to be places of free debate and intellectual development to choose censorship at the request of such organisations is a deeply worrying situation.

Such censorship is not reserved for Muslim activists.

Broader grassroots anti-racist organisations are under heavy pressure from the French state whose agents fear the well-coordinated work of white supremacists and secular fundamentalists (in the form of formal or informal networks). For instance, the Afro-Feminist event “Nyansapo” was violently attacked for hosting an event exclusively for radicalised people and then was targeted by the socialist mayor of Paris.

Anne Hidalgo, who declared the seizing of the Prefect of Paris in order to prevent the event from taking place despite it being held in a private hall. When the SUD union of teachers organised a non-mixed event on “state racism”, fury came not only from conservatives, the far right and their allies from the left but also from the Minister of Education himself who sued the union for using the term “state racism”. As stated by African thinker Achille Mbembe in a November 2017 interview, “we are witnessing a dramatic decline of the idea of equality… the “Other” seems to arouse only disgust, the very figure of what one can not bear anymore.” France is no exception in Europe, as a matter of fact, the 2016 report proved its role as the laboratory of Islamophobia and its leading role in the West to legalise anti-Muslim discrimination and marginalisation.

Censorship and political repression have become ever more acceptable under the disguise of fighting “political Islam”, “communautarism” or “attacks against laïcité”. Such convergence between the far right, neo-Nazis, Zionist and sel -proclaimed left-wing organisations is not new but has only solidified with time. The Lyon II event stated above was only one example of many.

Even state institutions such as the National Digital Council (Conseil National du Numérique) was pressed by the Secretary of State in charge of digital affairs Mounir Mahjoubi in order to revoke the nomination of Rokhaya Diallo. The latter was singled out for her stance against Islamophobia and for calling out “state racism” which gave grounds for the same informal pro-white supremacy network to target her. As the government bowed (again) to their demands, the head of the council, Marie Ekeland, along with the majority of the board decided to resign in protest of the government’s interference to expel Rokhaya Diallo from it.

In an interview to Le Monde, Zekri, head of the Observatory of Islamophobia, declared that the decline of anti-Muslim acts are to be linked in part to “the nomination of a prefect responsible for securing places of worship”. According to Zekri “1,098 Muslim sites, mosques or prayer rooms have benefited of protection of the security forces in 2016”. He also noted and praised the efforts of the French state for “the installation of video surveillance devices around certain mosques” and for

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having “made a major financial effort: 341,000 euros in 2016 and 756,000 euros in 2015” to supply CCTV equipment.47

On its side, the state-sanctioned CNCDH (National Consultative Commission on Human Rights) noted no decrease of its “tolerance index”48 (figure 5) in its March 2017 report. Such dramatic difference between the country’s human rights body and the state of public debate, legislative projects and normalised hate speech in the media, could either point to self-censorship from participants or to a wider silent and tolerant majority in the country.

Discrimination in housing

In the report, the Defender of Right makes it clear that “People who think they are perceived as Arab or black also face difficulties, with 39% of unsuccessful searches and 15% of searches lasting more than one year, and for the second 38% of unsuccessful searches and 22% of searches of which the duration exceeds one year.”49


Being an immigrant or “perceived as not white” exposes individuals to unquestionable difficulties in looking for a place to rent. The access times and the rate of unsuccessful searches reported by persons belonging to these two social groups have the same gaps as those declared by the entire surveyed population.50

Massive discrimination in housing was further proved by another survey conducted by the department of the TEPP (Labour, Employment and Public Policy) of the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research). Their team applied to 5,000 rental offers in 50 major cities around France, using the following fake names: Kevin Durand, Mohamed Chettouh, Sébastien Petit and Désiré Sambou. The results revealed that candidates with a North African-sounding name are 27% less likely to receive a response from the renting agency. In the case of rental ads posted by individuals, such candidates are 45% less likely to have an answer.51

Physical and Verbal attacks

Normalising a Muslim perspective and a Muslim presence in the media and civil society is already seen as a threat.

Samia Hathroubi

In August, the Muslim feminist organisation Lallab made headlines after it denounced the French Civic Service Agency for removing one of their ads. The state agency had indeed acted after pressure came from Le Printemps Républicain and

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the National Front which accused the organisation of “Islamism”. The left-wing and far-right organisations’ allegations were followed by an op-ed written by Celine Pina and published in Le Figaro. Celine Pina, author of “Guilty Silence, Islamists, They Are Tall Only Because We Are on Our Knees”,\(^\text{52}\) who had previously compared the Muslim headscarf to “a Nazi armband”,\(^\text{53}\) wrote, “The state must clearly denounce Lallab as a laboratory of Islamism”\(^\text{54}\) thus feeding a national controversy around the organisation.

In an interview for this report, Samia Hathroubi, a prominent French Muslim voice, stated that she has also been under fierce attacks for questioning “white supremacy” or anytime she uses the word “white”.

The attacks I face are both misogynistic and racist but there is a second phenomenon that is more complicated to tackle: attacks from an elite which cannot accept your criticism against structural racism and which will label you as ‘anti-Semitic’ or ‘close to the Muslim Brotherhood’ in order to prevent you from being published, from having a scholarship or from securing funding.\(^\text{55}\)

Similar cases of public demonisation were experienced by stand up comedian Yassine Belattar who was also accused of being an Islamist by another prominent platform of Islamophobia promotion, the weekly Marianne.\(^\text{56}\) The artist, who made several public appearances on TV platforms to call out racism and who stood against the ideological use of grief expressed after terrorism attacks to score political points, had several of his shows canceled after municipalities prohibited him from performing. Attacks were again orchestrated by Le Printemps Républicain and its allies from the left and the far right. Such attacks were also aimed at Muslim candidates during the legislative elections of June 2017. For instance, new faces running for office like Feiza Ben Mohammed,\(^\text{57}\) Hanan Zahouani\(^\text{58}\) or Nadia Omani were targets of well-coordinated smear campaigns attempted at discrediting them as candidates.

\(^{55}\) Samia Hathroubi, Interview with Yasser Louati 4 January 2018
Internet

Facebook and Twitter remain the two biggest platforms where Islamophobia finds safe space to spread. The two have been accused for years of letting racism express itself in the most violent ways. But the purveyors of Islamophobia also publish on their own websites before sharing their content on social media. The most active websites in 2017 were the following:

- **F De Souche (fdesouche.com):** This website was initially a blog and has become widely popular in the ranks of the far right. Rated as highly influential by *Le Monde, Arrêt Sur Image* and *Le Figaro*, it has indeed become a news aggregator with a capacity to influence public debate, and launch demonisation campaigns against political opponents be it individuals or organisations. Despite by its far-right editorial line, it has been working with left-wing organisations such as Le Printemps Républicain or the “anti-racist” organisation LICRA. When in October a conference against Islamophobia was organised at the University of Lyon, they were the first to call for its canceling and were later joined by the aforementioned organisations. They were also first in line to call for the dismissal of author and journalist Rokhaya Diallo when she was nominated to join the national digital council (CNNum).

- **Riposte Laïque (ripostelaïque.com):** Although not as influential as *FDeSouche*, *Riposte Laïque* has used its highly violent rhetoric against Muslims and calls for violence against them to test the limits of French institutions and how much they can tolerate. Not shying away from propagating fake news, *Riposte Laïque* has engaged in disseminating rumours the ongoing Islamisation of France for instance with the election of Emmanuel Macron59 or going after Muslim female candidate Sandra Fourastier for daring to run for election: “Sandra Fourastier, with a beautiful French name, is a small 21-year-old convert who does not know how traitors generally end up: with a bullet in the back of the neck, usually inflicted by those whom they have betrayed, who do not trust them at all, for if you are treacherous one day, you are a traitor always, and they brutally murder them once they are done with them”.60

- **Figarovox (www.lefigaro.fr/vox) is an affiliate to France’s right-wing newspaper *Le Figaro*. The platform has been very active in promoting individuals engaged in the Islamophobia network. Although *Le Figaro* remains the major conservative newspaper, *Le Figarovox* has managed to give visibility to and promote personalities from both the left and the right when they agree on “keeping Islam in

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59. Riposte Laïque, “Emmanuel Macron, le candidat des musulmans veut islamiser la France” (Emmanuel Macron, the Muslims’ Candidate Wants to Islamise France) (May 2, 2017), retrieved January 30, 2018 from https://www.youtube.com/user/ciceropicas.

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check”, upholding an agressive interpretation of laïcité or to feed the narrative of a “Muslim problem in France”.

- *Ikhwan* (ikhwan.info)
- *Boulevard Voltaire* (voltaire.fr)
- *J Forum* (jforum.fr)
- *Europe Israel* (europe-israel.org)

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The following individuals and groups share a common belief in an ideologically biased form of laïcité. Rather than referring to laïcité as it is enshrined in the law and advocating a strict adherence to the law, their version of laïcité is a tool to be used in a permanent war against the visibility of Muslims in public space and an all out war against the normalisation of their presence. To further assert the identity-based approach to laïcité, this secular fundamentalist network claims that the terrorist threat could be thwarted by applying their more repressive version of laïcité. We see such belief in the manifesto of Le Printemps Républicain and various publications and public stances by its members as well as those from the Comité Laïcité République and the LICRA (League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism).

Le Printemps Républicain and its allies from the Comité Laïcité République and the LICRA have so far managed to spark controversy after controversy. They were behind the attacks against individuals and the censoring of opposing voices. What raises concern is not only the violence of their racist rhetoric wrapped in a love of the republican discourse but the weak resistance by state institutions and the silenced voices of those who oppose them. Furthermore, such left-wing secular fundamentalist pressure groups continuously find themselves converging white supremacist, neo-Nazi and neo-fascist organisations like Riposte Laïque, Résistance Républicaine, FDeSouche or the National Front and its affiliates as well as powerful pro-Israeli organisations like the CRIF (Representative Council of Jewish Institutions).

Le Printemps Républicain was founded in 2016 and has since been among the first to spark controversies centred around Islam and Muslims and has managed to keep them both at the centre of public debates. Their loose if not non-existent clear definitions of “radical Islam”, “political Islam”, and “Muslim Brotherhood” allow its members to attack any individual or organisation that does not agree with their narrow definition of laïcité which is no different from the one adopted by the rest of the left-wing Islamophobia network.

Le Printemps Républicain was co-founded by Laurent Bouvet, theorist of the “cultural security” concept, based on the assumption that French Muslims are taking over the French Republic’s identity rather than embracing it; Gilles Clavreul, a protégé of Manuel Valls who shot to prominence by declaring that he believed there is a “hierarchy of racisms”61 as he had just been nominated head of the antiracist state

agency DILCRAH; the mayor of the 20th arrondissement of Paris Frédérique Calandra who is in a constant war against local anti-Islamophobia activists even if she does not have the same level of visibility as the two previous individuals.

The Comité Laïcité République was co-founded in 1989 after then Minister of Education Lionel Jospin sided with the Council of the State that ruled in favour of accepting schoolgirls with their headscarves in public schools. Alain Finkielkraut was among its co-founders. It is now presided by Patrick Kessel who also signed Le Printemps Républicain’s manifesto. The organisation is best know for its yearly Prix de la laïcité (laïcité prize) in order to hijack it from the state and overshadow the official Observatory of Laïcité that grants strict adherence to the law.

At the political level, Les Républicains is no longer a traditional conservative party. Its centre-right component has lost the ideological battle and has been marginalised by the more hardcore, far-right leaning side of the party. Calling for more state authority and a return to “traditional values”, the party’s elite no longer shy away from targeting Muslims themselves without using terms like “radical Islam”. The difference between the right and the far right is more blurred than ever and Islamophobia will be part of the party’s strategy for years to come especially after Laurent Wauquiez was elected president of the party with an openly racist platform.

Manuel Valls has made a name for himself as a strong advocate of Islamophobia even though he refers to the term as an “Islamist trojan horse”. His reputation is due to his countless racist declarations which had previously prompted Marine Le Pen to feel like she is reading her own speeches when Manuel Valls speaks.62 One of his most remarked declaration on “the Muslim problem” was made during a colloquium organised by El País in Spain.63

Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society has shown capacity and potential to converge around the struggle against Islamophobia. But the lack of coherence, coordination and unity remain a long-term problem. Even within the anti-Islamophobia network, rivalries among activists and organisations are a sign that there is a lack of political maturity. In the long run, this results in wasted resources and lost opportunities.

On December 10, the fourth “Day against Islamophobia” was held in the city of Saint Denis (North of Paris) and brought together a wide range of progressive intellectuals who reaffirmed their commitment to fighting Islamophobia in the face of the permanent climate of hate. Activists, academics, authors, union leaders and researchers shared a common platform and voiced a call to

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action after the presidential and legislative elections unleashed more Islamophobic rhetoric and violence.

The Parti Égalité et Justice (Equality and Justice Party) launched 52 candidates for the legislative elections of June 2017. All of the candidates were from racialised backgrounds with experience in grassroots activism. The initiative was viciously attacked both for putting forward female candidates wearing headscarves and for its links with Turkish networks.

Presidential candidate Benoit Hamon (Socialist Party), despite having been sabotaged by his own political party and bitterly attacked by the Manuel Valls camp for not being aggressive enough against Muslims or for calling out the hijacking of laïcité, refused to lead an identity-based electoral campaign and stood firm in the face of attacks from his own camp and opposing ones. His name is still in line to build a new progressive political platform.

In support of Lallab and in a clear sign of exasperation with constant demonisation and calls for censorship, a wide collective of intellectuals, activists, artists and political figures signed a joint column titled “Stop Islamophobic Cyberbullying against Lallab”. The column was hugely successful in mobilising a wide portion of civil society and strengthened the organisation in the face of white supremacy-tainted feminism as advocated by the likes of Elizabeth Badinter or Laurence Rossignol (notorious for her comparing Muslim women wearing a headscarf to “American negroes who were in favour of slavery”).

In order to gain political and institutional momentum against racism and repression, the Justice & Liberties For All Committee was officially launched in May 2017 in Paris, France. The organisation aims at being a force of mobilisation through popular education and grassroots activism, while its research and institutional outreach branches aim at developing a counter-narrative and building coalitions at the national, European and transatlantic level. In June, it coordinated the sending of a delegation to Los Angeles, California to meet with local activists, grassroots organisations and NGOs. The initiative later led to the emergence of a transatlantic coordination against racism and repression composed of American-, British- and French-based organisations. The latter made its first public appearance during the OSCE’s 2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in September 2017 in Warsaw.

After the far-left political party Lutte Ouvrière’s “Le piège de la lutte contre l’islamophobie”, another far-left political party, this time the New Anticapitalist Party published a reply in which they condemned such blanket attacks against anti-racist activists.

The potential for civil society is there and awaits to be unleashed. A new generation of activists is indeed pushing lines and breaking traditional barriers between activists of the same camp. The anti-Islamophobia camp though lacks the means to professionalise the work of its activists and go from denunciation to offering a credible alternative.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Identity and security remain the two axes around which Islamophobia has best expressed itself. Despite the election of a new and much younger president, censorship and political repression are becoming ever more normalised and legitimised to protect identity and security. The permanent state of emergency has turned France into a country where the rule of law is under serious threat with a weakened and disorganised Muslim minority that lacks political leverage to assert its rights.

It is on the French state to reassert its authority and commitment to the founding principles of the French Republic in the face of continuous ideological assaults. The continuous hijacking of laïcité is a long-term problem for it has engrained the idea in French public opinion that it is a tool solely used as an end to tackle the visibility of Muslims and any religious visibility in public space. The following recommendations are, therefore, put forward:

• Grant autonomy of the justice system and abolish the system of nomination of prosecutors by the government.
• Abolish the use of “white notes” by intelligence services and rely on investigation and proof rather than mere suspicion to prosecute individuals.
• Involve grassroots organisations, legitimate community leaders and education personnel to elaborate more effective counter-terrorism.
• Abolish the newly adopted measure in the 2017 anti-terrorism law that allows arbitrary closing down of places of worship unless a clear definition of radicalisation is adopted and alternatives are offered to affected communities. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right even in places of worship, as long there is no disruption of public safety.
• Protect academic freedom by giving the means to places of higher education to engage in societal debate without fear of pressure from lobbies or political parties.
• Protect freedom of speech by pressing state-owned media to adhere to a charter of plurality and promote Muslim visibility to normalise their presence.

• Cancel state subsidies to media outlets that promote individuals condemned for incitement of hatred, calling for discrimination, violence against individuals or who were proven guilty of promoting racism.
• Cancel state subsidies to media outlets which have been condemned of hate speech.
• Facilitate the right of reply to individuals or organisations when attacked on media platforms.
• Train top management of state-owned media on Islamophobia, its consequences on how they protect social cohesion by combatting it.
• Reinforce state authority in applying laïcité as it is enshrined in the French Constitution.
• Launch a nationwide assessment on the effects of the 2004 ban on headscarves in public schools.
• Include discrimination cases in official statistics of anti-Muslim racism.
• In strict adherence to laïcité, government officials and public office holders must be prohibited from interfering with religious affairs. Religious communities must be left to choose their own representatives and to organise on an autonomous basis.
• Apply existing laws against discrimination at work and increase fines for companies.
• Grant freedom of religion and thought in workplaces

Chronology

• **25.01.2017:** Director of Shoah Memorial Georges Bensoussan is tried for his racist declarations on state-owned radio station France Culture on a show hosted by Alain Finkielkraut. He declared, “Today we are in the presence of another people in the French nation, which is regressing a number of democratic values that have brought us. [...] There will be no integration until we get rid of that atavistic anti-Semitism that is hidden, like a secret...anti-Semitism, is breasted to them (Muslims).”
• **29.06.2017:** One year after the international burkini controversy, the mayor of communal de Lorette bans the same outfit in and around the town’s body of water prompting anti-racist organisations to press charges for “religious discrimination”.
• **23.08.2017:** The “Stop Islamophobic Cyberbullying against Lallab” column is published in support of the organisation.
• **23.08.2017:** Celine Pina publishes her column “The state Must Clearly Denounce Lallab as a Laboratory of Islamism”.
• **03.10.2017:** The University of Lyon II cancels a conference on Islamophobia after being pressured by the far right- and left-wing organisations.
• **06.10.2017**: *Le Figaro* publishes its dossier “The Islamopshere”.
• **30.10.2017**: The law to reinforce domestic security and counter-terrorism is adopted.
• **10.12.2017**: The Minister of Education Jean Michel Blanquer declares, “Mothers should not be allowed to wear a headscarf during school trips”.  
  
• **19.12.2017**: The administrative court of appeal (CAA) of Versailles (Yvelines), in a decision of December 19, backed the decision of the Hospital of Saint-Denis (North of Paris) which canceled an internship agreement with a man because of his beard. The latter was deemed in violation of the secular law and neutrality of the public service.
• **29.12.2017**: Christophe Castaner, State Secretary to the Prime Minister, declares that “religious signs are prohibited in the public space” in regards to Muslim women who take part in school field trips. The declaration sparked uproar among specialists of *laïcité*. No law in France prohibits religious signs in the public space.

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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.