
EUROPEAN **ISLAMOPHOBIA** REPORT 2017

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)



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ISBN: 978-975-2459-61-8

Cover and Layout: Erkan Söğüt

Printed in Turkey, İstanbul by Turkuvaz Haberleşme ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2018

**SETA | FOUNDATION FOR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL RESEARCH**

Nenehatun Caddesi No: 66 GOP Çankaya 06700 Ankara TÜRKİYE

Phone: +90 312.551 21 00 | Fax : +90 312.551 21 90

www.setav.org | info@setav.org | @setavakfi

SETA | İstanbul

Defterdar Mh. Savaklar Cd. Ayvansaray Kavşağı No: 41-43

Eyüpsultan İstanbul TÜRKİYE

Phone: +90 212 315 11 00 | Fax: +90 212 315 11 11

SETA | Washington D.C.

1025 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 1106

Washington, D.C., 20036 USA

Phone: 202-223-9885 | Fax: 202-223-6099

www.setadc.org | info@setadc.org | @setadc

SETA | Cairo

21 Fahmi Street Bab al Luq Abdeen Flat No 19 Cairo EGYPT

Phone: 00202 279 56866 | 00202 279 56985 | @setakahire

ABOUT EDITORS

Enes Bayraklı

Enes Bayraklı earned his BA, MA and PhD from the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, and conducted research for his PhD thesis at the University of Nottingham in Britain between 2009 and 2010. He was a deputy director at the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center in London in 2011-2013. Bayraklı also served as the founding director of the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers in Constanta and Bucharest, Romania in August-December 2012. He has been a faculty member at the Department of Political Science and International Relations and the head of the European and International Affairs MA Program at the Turkish-German University since 2013. Currently he is also the director of European Studies at SETA Foundation. His fields of research include Islamophobia in Europe, far-right movements in Europe, the transformation of Turkish foreign policy, foreign policy analysis, and German foreign policy. Email: bayrakli@tau.edu.tr

Farid Hafez

Farid Hafez PhD (Political Science, University of Vienna) is lecturer and researcher at the University of Salzburg, Department of Political Science and Sociology. He is also Senior Researcher at Georgetown University's 'The Bridge Initiative'. Currently, he also lectures at Istanbul Zaim University in Istanbul. In 2017, he was Fulbright visiting professor at University of California, Berkeley and in 2014, he was visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York. Since 2010, Hafez has been editor of the Islamophobia Studies Yearbook, and since 2015 co-editor of the annual European Islamophobia Report. He has received the Bruno Kreisky Award for the political book of the year, for his anthology Islamophobia in Austria (co-ed. with John Bunzl) and published more than 70 books and articles, including in high-ranking academic journals. Moreover, Hafez regularly publishes op-ed's and is frequently interviewed by media outlets. Email: farid.hafez@sbg.ac.at

For more information about the EIR:

www.islamophobiaeurope.com

islamophobia@setav.org

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."¹

1. FRA, "Press Release: Muslims in the EU: High Levels of Trust Despite Pervasive Discrimination", Vienna, September 21, 2017.

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.”²

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.³ 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-

2. OSCE, “Hate Crime against Muslims”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.osce.org/odihr/373441?download=true>.

3. BfV, “What is Right-Wing Extremism?”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/right-wing-extremism/what-is-right-wing-extremism>.

ed “You look at what's happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible,”⁴ Swedish officials and reporters were bewildered since there were no major incidents that night. The climate of the age of fake news, which has always been central to the spread of conspiracy theories, is now exaggerated and expanded by leading politicians in the world, while the structural dimension of Islamophobia still exists at the heart of European societies and institutions. This situation requires a need for a clear stance by governing politicians, elites and intellectuals since they are bound by their constitutions and laws, and international and national human rights standards.

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

Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels

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

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

4. Chan Sewell, “Last Night in Sweden? Trump’s Remark Baffles a Nation”, retrieved December 12, 2017, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/europe/last-night-in-sweden-trumps-remark-baffles-a-nation.html>.

5. David Smith, “Donald Trump Attacks Theresa May over Her Criticism of His Far-right Retweets”, retrieved February 9, 2018, from www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/29/donald-trump-theresa-may-tweet-uk-us.

6. Farid Hafez, “Austria’s President and the Islamophobia Debate: The Courage of One Man”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://en.qantara.de/content/austrias-president-and-the-islamophobia-debate-the-courage-of-one-man>.

7. NGO Coalition Statement following 4th European Commission Roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred, retrieved December 18, 2017, from <http://www.enar-eu.org/NGO-coalition-statement-following-4th-European-Commission-Round-Table-on-anti>.

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.”⁸

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.⁹ In this context, the FRA recommends better implementation of the relevant EU and national legislation to combat widespread harassment and hate crime against Muslims.¹⁰

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.¹¹ 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 Islamopho-

8. Ibid.

9. European Coalition against Islamophobia, “Strengthening Actions against Islamophobia: Next Steps for the European Commission”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017_one-pager_ec_islamophobia.pdf.

10. OSCE, “Bias against Muslims”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <http://hatecrime.osce.org/taxonomy/term/230>.

11. Court of Justice of the European Union PRESS RELEASE No 30 /17 Luxembourg, March 14, 2017, <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-03/cp170030en.pdf>

bia. 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 und published for Jewish communities.¹² We think this would be a positive step to combatting Islamophobia in the OSCE region and, therefore, welcome the preparation of such a guide.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe publishes an annual report on the ECRI's activities, in which Islamophobia is also analyzed under a separate heading. In the last report, which covered the year 2016, the ECRI points to the fact that "Muslims continue to experience discrimination in various areas of social life, including education, employment and housing."¹³ The ECRI concludes that the "negative experiences of Muslims in Europe can fuel feelings of isolation within a larger community and hinder inclusive societies."¹⁴ However, we think that the Council of Europe, which consists of 47 states, can play a wider role in the combat against Islamophobia in Europe.

The European Coalition against Islamophobia, which consists of 13 NGOs,¹⁵ has published its suggestion for an action plan for 2018-2019 to fight Islamophobia in the European Union. This plan puts the recognition of Islamophobia at its center and among other important recommendations calls the European Parliament to adopt a resolution on combatting Islamophobia as it did on combatting anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsism.¹⁶

12. OSCE, "Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities", retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://www.osce.org/odihr/317166?download=true>.

13. Council of Europe, "Annual Report on ECRI's Activities", retrieved March 25, 2018, from https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/Annual_Reports/Annual%20report%202016.pdf.

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.

16. ENAR, "Strengthening Actions against Islamophobia", retrieved March 25, 2018, from http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017_one-pager_ec_islamophobia.pdf.

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.”¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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.

17. OSCE, “Bias against Muslims”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <http://hatecrime.osce.org/taxonomy/term/230>.

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 Eurosceptics (Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija) published the following slogan in their program, "We are not against Muslims, we are against the Islamization of Latvia and Europe."²¹ The National Alliance (Nacionālā apvienība) was even more radical in its program in which it stated that it was "in support of not letting into Liepāja illegal immigrants called 'refugees' – potential criminals, terrorists and idlers! There will be no mosques here!"²²

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

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

19. Milano, "Fontana: 'Razza bianca da difendere'. Poi precisa: 'È stato un lapsus'. Salvini: siamo sotto attacco", retrieved March 25, 2018, from http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18_gennaio_15/attilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml.

20. Nova 24TV, "Levičarske dobre vile muslimanom odpirajo vrata, Evropa pa hudičeva semena še kar zaliva" (The Left Good Fairies Open the Doors of Europe to Muslims, and Europe Still Waters the Devil Seeds), retrieved November 22, 2017, from <http://nova24tv.si/svet/levicarske-dobre-vile-muslimanom-odpirajo-vrata-evropa-pa-hudiceva-semena-se-kar-zaliva/>.

21. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija", retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=8k1v7yBEuCMERyWBkqtFTQ%3D%3D>.

22. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Nacionālā savienība Taisnīgums," retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=0zFqpAsLIE456csFZERqxQ%3D%3D>.

a bill to amend the laws to enable a ban on building mosques. Eleven members voted for the proposal, 48 against it, while more than a half of the MPs, 77 in total, abstained from the vote.

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

The successful Swiss right-wing party SVP tried to introduce a full-face veil ban in Sweden. Another parliamentary initiative by National Councillor Yannick Buttet (CVP) demanded a "mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sales as well as an increase in the price of imported halal meat."²³ 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."²⁴

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,²⁵ which argued that "the love offer of Jesus Christ and Muhammad's use of violence are as different as day and night."²⁶

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.

23. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, "Motion 15.499: Import of Halal Meat from Animals Slaughtered without Stunning," retrieved January 18, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20150499>.

24. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, "Motion 16.3330: Islamische Gebetsstätten. Verbot der Finanzierung durch das Ausland und Offenlegungspflicht," retrieved January 9, 2017, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=41116>.

25. SGP, "Manifest islam in Nederland", retrieved January 26, 2018, from <https://www.sgp.nl/actueel/manifest-islam-in-nederland/6125>.

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.”²⁷ 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).²⁸

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,²⁹ 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.³⁰

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.³¹ In Slovakia, former president Robert Fico argued that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia.”³²

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

27. Gandul, “Băsescu nu vrea moschee la București și-l trimite pe Iohannis să se facă muftiu la Sibiu. România trebuie să rămână creștină” (Basescu Doesn’t Want a Mosque in Bucharest and Sends Iohannis to Become a Mufti at Sibiu. Romania Must Remain Christian), retrieved December 26, 2017, from <http://www.gandul.info/politica/basescu-nu-vrea-moschee-la-bucuresti-si-l-trimite-pe-iohannis-sa-se-faca-muftiu-la-sibiu-romania-trebuie-sa-ramana-crestina-15154001>.

28. Euractiv, “Firea: Moschee în București doar după un referendum local/Orban: Nu voi autoriza moscheea lui Ponta” (Mosque in Bucharest Only After Local Referendum / Orban: I Won’t Authorize Ponta’s Mosque), March 25, 2016, retrieved December 23, 2017, from <http://www.euractiv.ro/politic-intern/firea-despre-construirea-unei-moschei-la-bucuresti-doa-dupa-un-referendum-local-3920>.

29. Gajos-Kaniewska, Dorota, “RPO: młodzież nie chce uchodźców – wyniki badania wśród uczniów szkół średnich”, retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://www.rp.pl/Edukacja-i-wychowanie/309069922-RPO-mlodziez-nie-chce-uchodzcow---wyniki-badania-wsrod-uczniow-szkol-srednich.html>.

30. Newsweek, “Patrotyzm – tak, tolerancja – nie. Prawicowa ideologia od września wchodzi do polskich szkół” retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/koniec-zajeciami-antydystryminacyjnymi-w-szkolach-edukacja-narodowa-wedlug-pis,artykuly,412809,1.html>.

31. El Diario, “Esperanza Aguirre, sobre la Toma de Granada: “Es un día de gloria para las españolas. Con el Islam no tendríamos libertad,” retrieved October 24, 2017, from http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Esperanza-Aguirre-Toma-Granada-Islam_0_597390772.html.

32. Juraj Koník, “Premiér Fico je opäť svetový, prerazil výrokmi o moslimoch, ktorých k nám nepusti”, *denník N*, (January 8, 2016) retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://dennikn.sk/338314/premier-fico-opat-svetovy-prerazil-vyrokmim-moslimoch-ktorych-nam-nepusti/>.

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.”³³

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.”³⁴ 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.

33. Farid Hafez, “When Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia Join Hands”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/anti-semitism-islamophobia-join-hands-170809084731114.html>.

34. Andreas Karker and Jacob Friberg, “Mette Frederiksen i brutalt opgør: Luk alle muslimske friskoler”, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/politiko/mette-frederiksen-i-brutalt-opgoer-luk-alle-muslimske-friskoler>.

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 Għaqda 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

35. See VOX, “Ecco la nuova Mappa dell’Intolleranza”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.voxdiritti.it/ecco-la-nuova-edizione-della-mappa-dellintolleranza>.

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.³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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' initiative³⁸ was launched to amend a law in favor of a "Burka Ban." Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki,³⁹ a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims.⁴⁰ A spokesperson of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, current chairman of the Finnish Defense League (FDL), who proclaims to be fighting against "Islamic extremism"⁴¹ 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

36. HVG, "Toroczkai odacsap a bevándorlóknak: megtiltják a mecsetépítést Ásotthalmon", retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124_toroczkai_asotthalom_muszlim_tiltas.

37. HVG, "Elmeszelte Toroczkai rendeletét az Alkotmánybíróság", retrieved January 9, 2018, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412_alkotmanybirosag_toroczkai_asotthalom.

38. "Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing the proposal that an act be enacted" as defined in "MOT Eduskuntasanasto," a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister's Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?UI=fied&height=147>.

39. Cf. "Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016" in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017.

40. For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki's court case, see Ibid.

41. Homepage of the Finnish Defense League, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <http://www.fdl.fi/about/>.

People's Party following the verdict by the European Court of Human Rights.⁴² 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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴

42. Lizzie Dearden, "European Court of Human Rights Upholds Belgium's Ban on Burqas and Full-Face Islamic Veils," retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/belgium-burqa-ban-upheld-european-court-of-human-rights-dakir-v-full-face-islamic-veils-headscarf-a7835156.html>.

43. EUROPOL, "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation 2017", retrieved March 24, 2018, from www.europol.europa.eu.

44. Samuel Osborne, "German Pro-refugee Mayor Stabbed in Politically-Motivated Knife Attack", retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-pro-refugee-mayor-andreas-hollstein-altena-knife-attack-politically-motivated-angela-merkel-a8079806.html>.

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

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

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

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

45. Nationella åklagarmyndigheten, Ansökan om stämning, Ärende AM-8443-17, Inkom 2017-06-09MÅLNr: B 618-17, AKTBIL: 206; Säkerhetspolisen, Huvudprotokoll, dnr 0105-K98-16 0105-K8-17 0105-K9-17, Inkom 2017-06-09.

46. Farid Hafez, “Comparing Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: The State of the Field”, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Volume 3, Issue 2, Spring 2016, pp. 16-34.

47. Farid Hafez, “When Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia Join Hands”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/anti-semitism-islamophobia-join-hands-170809084731114.html>.

48. DW, “Serving British Soldiers among Neo-Nazi Terror Suspects Arrested in UK”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.dw.com/en/serving-british-soldiers-among-neo-nazi-terror-suspects-arrested-in-uk/a-40370114>.

49. Lizzie Dearden, “German Police Investigating Neo-Nazi Terror Plot after Bomb Branded with Swastika Discovered”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-neo-nazi-right-wing-extremism-terror-plot-attack-refugees-oldschool-society-explosives-a7527116.html>.

50. Lizzie Dearden, “German Soldier Posing as a Syrian Refugee Arrested for Planning False Flag Terror Attack”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/german-soldier-syria-refugee-false-flag-terror-attack-posing-arrested-frankfurt-france-bavaria-a7705231.html>.

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

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

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

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

Threatening the Religious Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

51. The Strait Times, "French Police Arrest 10 Far-Right Militants", retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/10-arrested-in-france-over-suspected-plot-to-kill-politicians-probe-source>.

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

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

Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations

The picture presented here shows us that there is an urgent need to counter these developments. And there is room for hope. Critical assessment of the current situation regarding Muslims in Europe is growing within parts of civil society. Not only are there more and more institutions that are working to bring attention to the rise in hate crime towards Muslims such as the Spain-based Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios⁵³ but there are also favorable developments such as in the Norwegian justice system which has developed positive steps regarding monitoring and convicting cases involving hate speech or discrimination against Muslims. Also, the German Federal Police has made a first important institutional step to combatting Islamophobia by documenting it: for the first time, Islamophobia has been included as a category of hate crime.

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

52. Stop Extremism, "Six Actions That We Demand to Secure a Safer Europe", retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.en.stopextremism.eu/about>.

53. Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los medios, <http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/>.

54. Tuulia Thynell, "Pääministeri Sipilä: Teko oli raukkamainen ja tuomittava, mutta vihaan ei pidä vastata vihalla", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9786182>.

dalism towards Muslims.⁵⁵ These examples of political courage give hope that there still exist reasonable politicians, who look beyond their ephemeral political careers, keeping the good of the whole of society in mind. With an increase of alternative right-wing media and social media bubbles as well as a general swing to the right, hate speech is becoming more and more normalised. In an especially extreme incident in the Czech Republic, children in a primary school in the city of Teplice were threatened with death in gas chambers; the class was comprised predominantly of children of Arab or Romani origin. Such incidents call for an unambiguous reaction on behalf of politicians and opinion leaders.

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. This will support all those forces within European societies, who work towards a more equal society and fight every form of racism. The editors of the *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.

55. Marjaana Varmavuori/Maija Aalto, "16-vuotias somalittttö pahoinpideltiin kotirapussa, parturi uhattiin tappaa – maahanmuuttajat kertovat, että täysin sivullisia uhkaillaan nyt väkivallalla Turun tapahtumien vuoksi", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005336689.html>.

- 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 combatting Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward - as it did to combat anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsyism.
- The adoption of EU standards for National Action Plans against Racism that take into account specific forms of racism, and include specific measures on Islamophobia with objectives and targets is necessary.
- EU member states should adopt national action plans against racism addressing Islamophobia as a specific form of racism.
- The European Commission should develop a roadmap detailing main policy instruments, issues and examples of good practice by Member States. This would function as a standard document that would be the basis for concrete operational objectives and action plans for the EU coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred.
- The European Commission's coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred should develop a clear action plan for combatting Islamophobia.
- A high-level roundtable should be organized with the European Commission's coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred and NGOs on the issue of Islamophobia.
- Europe needs courageous leaders and activists who can confront the Islamophobic discourses and narratives in the age of rising far-right parties.
- A Guidance handbook should be developed on the collection methodology of hate crime data for EU Member States in order to ensure that Islamophobia is duly recorded according to the victims' and witnesses' perceptions and lived experiences; other bias indicators should be included in the data collection as well.
- The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes as a separate category of hate crime by the police is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.
- Muslim women's access to employment should be improved since they are the most discriminated group among Muslims. Gender equality departments and the corresponding committees of EU institutions should give specific attention to situations of discrimination affecting Muslim women by documenting the issue and pushing for specific programs and measures to combat it.
- While protecting free speech, developing good guidelines to tackle online hate speech and considering primary legislation to deal with social media offences and online hate speech are also vital since the Internet plays an important role in the spread of Islamophobic discourses and also in the radicalization of far-right terrorists.

- Discrimination in the workplace should be tackled to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at the stages of recruitment, job retention, and promotion.
- Preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights including religious slaughter, circumcision and the wearing of religious attire or symbols are imperative for a multicultural Europe.
- Counter-terrorism policies should work with Muslim communities, not against them, in the so-called “de-radicalization” programs. These programs should also incorporate the fight against far-right and far-left terrorist groups and should not only target Muslims.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NUMBERS

- The overwhelming majority of European states do not record Islamophobic incidents as a separate category of hate crime. The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes by the police as a separate category of hate crime is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.
- In the EU, only 12% of Muslims who have been discriminated against report their cases to the authorities. (Source: FRA) The non-exhaustive list that follows hints at the extent of underreporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe by states and NGOs, which has serious implications regarding the awareness of Muslims and the bureaucracy to tackle these issues.

DENMARK

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

(Source: National Police)

BELGIUM

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

AUSTRIA

256 Islamophobic incidents were documented.

(Source: EIR Report, Antidiscrimination Office Styria, ZARA, and Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education [IDB]).

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).

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)

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)

SWEDEN

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

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.

SPAIN

- In 2017, **546** attacks took place against Muslims.
(Source: Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia)

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
HUNGARY
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

ZSOLT SEREGHY

The Author

Zsolt Sereghy is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Political Science, Vienna University, Austria. His current research focuses on the nexus between Europe's Muslim communities, migration, and political and medial securitisation. He holds a Master's degree in Oriental Studies from Vienna University and an M.Litt. degree in Middle Eastern and Central Asian Security Studies from the University of St Andrews, Scotland. His research interests include the securitisation of Islam and Muslim migrant communities in Europe, as well as Middle East politics in general and Lebanese politics, educational policies and pop culture in particular. Currently, he is a researcher at a Beirut-based Human Rights NGO. Email: zsolt.sereghy@gmail.com

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To cite this report: Zsolt Sereghy: *Islamophobia in Hungary: National Report 2017*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, Istanbul, SETA, 2018.

Executive Summary

Today, Hungary is one of the prime examples of a country hosting only a minuscule Muslim community but exhibiting severely negative public attitudes towards and fear of Islam. Since the ‘refugee crisis’ of the summer of 2015, the debate on Islam became one of the most prominent and omnipresent topics in Hungarian media and politics.

Competing with the far right, the ruling conservative Fidesz and its media orbit managed to portray Islam and Muslims as an existential threat to both the country and Western culture. Framed by a flagrant anti-Islamic rhetoric by now omnipresent in right-wing political and media circles, anti-Muslim narratives became uncontested in the country’s current political atmosphere and enjoy the unconditional support by an overwhelming portion of the population. Through the lack of popular knowledge about Islam and without any effective counter-narrative or defence strategy, this no-stakes situation has led to an openly anti-Islam rhetoric dominating the mainstreams of politics and the media.

In 2017, the hijacking of popular fears of Islamisation, terrorism, and mass migration from the Middle East and Africa culminated in two ‘national consultations’: one on the EU’s refugee resettlement policy, the other on an alleged plan of the U.S.-Hungarian entrepreneur George Soros seeking to flood Europe with migrants and Islamise the continent.

Despite the popular and political hysteria surrounding Islam and Muslims, institutionalised Islamophobia remains a political tool employed by the government and its orbit on the level of political rhetoric. Its goal is to manipulate domestic audiences by mongering and amplifying irrational fears for political purposes. Using anti-Muslim tropes and Islam and foreign terrorism as a scapegoat usually does not translate into concrete, explicitly Islamophobic measures or physical attacks. Islamophobia remains a comfortable political tool, not an ideological end in itself.

Összefoglaló

A mai Magyarország tökéletes mintapéldája egy olyan országnak, ahol a helyi muszlim közösség rendkívüli kis létszáma ellenére a közvélemény muszlimokról alkotott nézetei igen negatívak és félelemmel teli. A 2015-ös év eseményei óta az iszlámról folytatott társadalmi viták a magyar média és politikai élet legfontosabb és leggyakoribb témáivá váltak. A magyar szélsőjobbal licitálva, a kormányzó konzervatív Fidesznek és a Fidesz-közel médianak sikerült egy olyan narratívát szalonképesé tennie, mely az iszlámot és a muszlim bevándorlást mind a magyar, mind nyugati kultúrára való egzisztenciális veszélyként jeleníti meg. Ezek a jobboldali politikai körök és média által gyártott narratívák valamint a mára már a magyar közéletben mindenütt jelenlévő iszlámmellenes retorika mostanra már a magyar lakosság túlnyomó többségének megingathatatlan támogatását élvezik. Egy olyan társadalmi és politikai légkör, amelyben a lakosság nem rendelkezik semmiféle tényleges ismerettel az iszlámról egy olyan helyzethez vezet melyben iszlámmellenes kirohanásokat mindenmű tét és következmény nélkül lehet intézni a politikai élet bármely színpadán és a tömegsajtóban. Mindezek ellenére, az intézményesített iszlámmellenesség eddig még továbbra is csupán politikai eszközként szolgál a kormány és az azt támogató körök számára és nem lépte át a politikai retorika verbális határait. A szóbeli iszlámmellenesség célja továbbra is a hazai közvélemény manipulálása és a politikai érdekeket szolgáló félelemkeltés. 2017-ben az iszlamizációtól, a terrorizmustól és az Afrikából és a Közel-Keletről érkező tömeges bevándorlástól való általános félelem politikai célokra történő kiaknázása két „nemzeti konzultáció” megtartásában csúcsonódott ki: egy az EU a menekülteket elosztó kvótarendszeréről, egy másik pedig Soros György amerikai-magyar milliomos állítólagos tervéről, mely a nemzetállamok felszámolása érdekében Európát nagy számú bevándorlóval árasztaná el és iszlamizálná.

Az iszlám és muszlimok körüli közéleti és politikai hisztéria ellenére az iszlámmellenes szóbeli kirohanások gyakorisága, valamint a terrorizmussal közvetlen párhuzamba állított iszlám bűnbaknak való kikiáltása Magyarországon eddig még nem került sor konkrét fizikai atrocitásokra. Az iszlámmellenesség továbbra is csupán egy kényelmes politikai eszköz, nem pedig egy ideológiai célkitűzés.

Introduction

Often styled as ‘Islamophobia without Muslims,’¹ in recent years Hungary has developed into a primary example of a country characterised by widespread intolerance, negative attitudes, essentialisation and fear towards Islam while lacking both a significant Muslim community living in the country or a large number of Muslim refugees in its territory.² According to a recent Pew Research study, Hungarians are one of nations worldwide that fear an influx of large number of refugees from the Middle East to the greatest extent (65%). This result is in par with percentages observed in Greece, Italy, Turkey, and Lebanon. However, while these countries are either the recipients of or hosts to large numbers of Middle Eastern refugees often reaching millions, there are less than 600 refugees currently in Hungary.³ Therefore, fears of and negative sentiments towards Middle Eastern migrants are most likely the result of deliberate government narratives. The government has been leading a concentrated campaign targeting immigration, Islam, EU and civil society policies, and specifically the U.S.-Hungarian billionaire George Soros in direct or indirect ways.

Significant Incidents and Developments

After the unprecedented events of 2015 that saw the unfolding of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in the country and along its borders, the right-wing government has been continuously employing an increasingly anti-Islam and anti-migration narrative combined with more recent attacks on liberal civil society members and the EU itself culminating in the aforementioned campaigns framing two national consultations in 2017. Anti-Islam incidents are almost exclusively taking place in discursive forms in the arenas of EU, national, and regional politics, societal discourses and the media. This non-physical form of incidents is hardly surprising given the almost complete lack of (visually identifiable) Muslims or mosques or other physical Islamic institutions in the country. In general, the increasingly hostile, essentialising and fearmongering tone of discourses surrounding the immigration and integration of Muslims, EU resettlement quotas and global events linked to Islamic terrorism have been dominating domestic discourses and brought about the consolidation of highly negative if not openly hostile general attitudes towards Islam, Muslims, refugees, and migrants. Narratives of the right wing in general and the government in particular

1. Michał Buchowski/Katarzyna Chlewińska, *Tolerance and Cultural Discourses Diversity in Poland* (Florence: European University Institute, 2010), pp. 32-33.

2. Islam in Hungary today has a very low number of followers and no historically indigenous community. According to the latest official census of 2011, only 0.056 per cent of the country’s residents indicated their affiliation to Islam. While various estimates put the number of the country’s Islamic community between 25,000 and 50,000, their share still remains well under 1 per cent (0.1 or 0.3 % respectively).

3. Jacob Pushter, Dorothy Manevich, “Globally, People Point to ISIS and Climate Change as Leading Security Threats,” Pew Research Center, (August 1, 2017), retrieved December 21, 2017, from <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/08/01/globally-people-point-to-isis-and-climate-change-as-leading-security-threats/>.

were characterised by the effort to use Islam as one of the main arguments in the country's stand-off both with Brussels and with large segments of its domestic civil society on handling the 'refugee crisis', the government's refusal to accept the proposed EU-wide refugee resettlement quota system and to drive away domestic attention from the country's deep-running economic, societal, and political problems. In this process, the government managed to find suitable scapegoats to manipulate the focus of debates and public sentiments: since 2015, it's been the masses of 'invading' refugees who for the current time in the country's history represented a physical factor to be dealt with.

On the verbal level, targeting both the domestic and foreign audiences, the ruling Fidesz government and its allies have been employing an narrative construct, frequently repeated, referring to Islam in contrast to Europe's Christian culture and displaying both religion, immigration and Western European liberalism as existential threats to the fundamentals of Europe. Prime Minister Orbán and his party keep referring to themselves (and to other V4 countries) as the sole defenders of Christian Europe, unwilling to submit to the EU's anti-nation state refugee policy seeking to allegedly alter the ethno-religious composition of the Christian continent. According to the logic of this mantra, the 'self-defence' of the Hungarian people is juxtaposed to the overt effort of a number of international actors, such as the EU, international civil society, or George Soros himself, to Islamise Europe by 'masses disloyal to autochthonous nations' and to 'eradicate European nation states and their identities'.⁴

Furthermore, this openly hostile attitude from the government has not just created an uncontested (and incontestable) majority consensus depicting the Islam-immigration-terrorism nexus as an existential threat, it has also served as a dog whistle to the most hateful of right-wing groups and individuals opposing Islam, immigration, civil society, or EU trafficking in dark conspiracy theories drawn from the pages of tabloids, like-bait sites and the far reaches of radical right-wing circles across Europe.

Thus, the trends set in the aftermath of the 2015 'refugee crisis' continue to be utilised with increasing vehemence and kept alive by additional actors and elements building upon a *Migration-Islamisation-Terrorism* nexus supported by an anti-Christian, liberal elite aided by domestic civil society actors seeking to undermine European nation states and the continent's Christian identity through mass illegal immigration and consequent Islamisation. Both within international and domestic discursive contexts selecting the small, voiceless domestic Muslim community as well as a negatively framed religion completely unknown to domestic audiences as the government's 'scapegoat' continues to be a political success.

It is important to note that from a rhetorical, or linguistic point of view, since the beginning of the 'refugee crisis' in 2015, the conservative media and the gov-

4. "Semjén Zsolt: Égni fognak a külvárosok", Magyar Nemzet, (October 9, 2017), retrieved December 21, <https://mno.hu/belfold/semjen-zsolt-egni-fognak-a-kulvarosok-2420500>

ernment have been exclusively referring to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants as '*illegális bevándorlók*' (illegal immigrants) or '*migránsok*' (migrants) thereby playing down the root causes and humanitarian nature of the crisis and adding an additional layer to the level of fearmongering.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Politics

As mentioned before, most Islamophobic incidents and discursive events related to Hungarian political discourses of this year were largely dominated by the topics of mass immigration into the EU, Islamic terrorism as well as the country's civil society alleged to be aiding 'foreign interests' and supporting mass immigration and resettlement culminating in two *national consultations* (referenda) on whether to accept mandatory EU quotas for relocating migrants. The first one, titled *Állítsuk meg Brüsszelt* (Let's Stop Brussels), in March 2017, was a repeated attempt to gain popular legitimization to act against European Union policies and domestic civil society supporting refugees. While the questions themselves did not mention Islam or Muslims directly, within the context of the campaign and international events, 3 of the 6 questions were capable of implying animosity towards Muslims. These questions, according to the sequence of the referendum, were the following:

- In recent times, terror attack after terror attack has taken place in Europe. Despite this fact, Brussels wants to force Hungary to allow illegal immigrants into the country. What do you think Hungary should do? (a) For the sake of the safety of Hungarians these people should be placed under supervision while the authorities decide their fate. (b) Allow the illegal immigrants to move freely in Hungary.
- By now it has become clear that, in addition to the smugglers, certain international organisations encourage the illegal immigrants to commit illegal acts. What do you think Hungary should do? (a) Activities assisting illegal immigration such as human trafficking and the popularisation of illegal immigration must be punished. (b) Let us accept that there are international organisations which, without any consequences, urge the circumvention of Hungarian laws.
- More and more foreign-supported organisations operate in Hungary with the aim of interfering in the internal affairs of our country in an opaque manner. These organisations could jeopardise our independence. What do you think Hungary should do? (a) Require them to register, revealing the objectives of their activities and the sources of their finances. (b) Allow them to continue their risky activities without any supervision.

The so-called foreign agents mentioned in Q3 and 4 are to be understood as those organisations that have been successfully combatting the Fidesz government's

growing autocratic style and anti-refugee stance since the 2015 crisis. These are the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, Transparency International, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, and Amnesty International.⁵

The second consultation was launched directly against the American-Hungarian millionaire and philanthropist George Soros and his alleged plan to Islamise Europe. In October, the government sent out questionnaires to all four million of the country's households asking for people's views on seven statements describing the philanthropist's alleged plan to flood Europe, and Hungary in particular, with millions of Muslim migrants and refugees.⁶ The government made the seven following assertions about what it calls the 'Soros Plan':

- George Soros wants Brussels to resettle at least one million immigrants per year onto European Union territory, including in Hungary.
- Together with officials in Brussels, George Soros is planning to dismantle border fences in EU Member States, including in Hungary, to open the borders for immigrants.
- One part of the Soros Plan is to use Brussels to force the EU-wide distribution of immigrants that have accumulated in Western Europe, with special focus on Eastern European countries. Hungary must also take part in this.
- Based on the Soros Plan, Brussels should force all EU Member States, including Hungary, to pay immigrants HUF 9 million in welfare.
- Another goal of George Soros is to make sure that migrants receive milder criminal sentences for the crimes they commit.
- The goal of the Soros Plan is to push the languages and cultures of



Figure 1: Cover Figyelő entinel, a magazine closely affiliated with the government with the headline Combatants re oming to Europe depicting two NGOs, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Migration Aid in a frame imitating the flag of the Islamic State. For unknown reasons, the shahāda, the Islamic creed testifying the one God is featured in a giberish Arabic instead of the original لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ilāha illā Ilāh.⁷

5. 'National Cosultation 2017: Let's Stop Brussels!', Hungarian Spectrum, (April 2, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/national-consultation/>

6. 'On George Soros and from George Soros', Hungarian Spectrum, (December 8, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/soros-plan/>

7. Source: <http://nepszava.hu/cikk/1145131-halandzsazva-uszit-a-figyelo>, retrieved, 16. November, 2017

Europe into the background so that integration of illegal immigrants happens much more quickly.

- It is also part of the Soros Plan to initiate political attacks against those countries which oppose immigration, and to severely punish them.⁸

In the run-up to the ‘national consultation of the Soros Plan’, the government employed an openly fearmongering strategy accusing the EU and Europe’s left-leaning parties and civil society actors of supporting and implementing the ‘Soros Plan’. As an example, in a speech held during a parliamentary session, PM Orbán envisions ‘hordes of migrants raping Europe’ and Hungary’s unwillingness to submit to the ‘Soros Plan’ leading to the enforced opening of borders and the mass resettlement of ‘up to 60 million migrants’ from the Middle East and Africa.⁹ Also, in a radio programme, Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén claimed that the ‘Soros Plan’, a branch of the ‘Jacobine, Bolshevik version of Freemasonry’ [sic], that ‘hates Christian values’ and ‘wishes nothing more than to eradicate nation states’, is in fact responsible for ‘creating the migrant crisis’ by ‘importing millions of Muslims’. He also spoke of the rise of parallel societies, infight within migrant communities, rising crime levels and ‘burning suburbs from Malmö to Marseille’.¹⁰ This is a clear reference to last year’s debates claiming that major European cities, such as London, Brussels, Marseille, Berlin, Stockholm and Malmö had become “no-go” areas due to high levels of immigration.¹¹

Another element of the propaganda campaigns leading up to both national consultations has been to twist the meaning of the term ‘open society’ that serves as the name of Soros’ foundation, which has been aiding Hungary with over \$400 million since its foundation in the country back in 1984. In the government’s interpretation, open borders and mass migration aim at destroying the supposedly Christian identity of Hungary, as the government contends.¹² In accordance with this logic, the government has been waging an overt campaign against NGOs that have been helping refugees since 2015. Many of these NGOs, such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee or Migration Aid, have been partially financed by Soros’ Open Society Foundation, a fact that gives the government the occasion to persecute liberal, pro-refugee civil society organisations in the country. A prime

8. ‘Soros: A hatalom hazugságokat terjeszt’, HVG, (November 20, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171120_Soros_A_hatalom_hazugsagokat_terjeszt

9. “Orbán inváziós népcsoportokat lát, és bezárkózik”, HVG, (September 18, 2017), retrieved December 20, 2017, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170918_A_forro_osz_parlament_orban_soros_gulyas_percrol_percrer/2/pp/66777

10. ‘Semjén Zsolt: Égni fognak a külvárosok’, Magyar Nemzet, (October 9, 2017), retrieved December 21, <https://mno.hu/belfold/semjen-zsolt-egni-fognak-a-kulvarosok-2420500>

11. Henry Mance, “Hungary Says London Is a ‘No-Go’ Zone Due to Immigration,” Financial Times, (September 21, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <https://www.ft.com/content/a29fbf40-8000-11e6-8e50-8ec15fb462f4>.

12. ‘On George Soros and from George Soros’, Hungarian Spectrum, (December 8, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/soros-plan/>

example of this relentless campaign is the ban of Bernadett Szél, co-chair of LMP (Legyen Más a Politika, 'Politics Can Be Different', a liberal green party) from attending the Parliamentary Committee on National Security (PCNS), of which she is a bona fide member. By tradition, the chairman of PCNS has been a member of the opposition until the position was filled by Szilárd Németh (Fidesz) in 2014. He announced that "those politicians who lie about the national consultation campaign and have been supporting the Soros Plan all along, as LMP politicians do, cannot take part in the discussions of the National Security Committee, whose task is the prevention of the implementation of the Soros Plan."¹³ Németh accused Szél, a 'Soros agent', to have worked in a Soros-financed organisation that was supportive of migrants. Additionally, the government news service accused Szél to have nominated an expert to testify before the committee who failed the obligatory security clearance. The expert was born in Kabul, and before he began working for the LMP, had worked for MigSzol (Migration Solidarity, a pro-refugee NGO active during the 2015 'refugee crisis'), described by Németh to be 'the most pro-migrant organisation of Soros.' The expert, who was also Szél's assistant, was deemed to be a risk to national security.¹⁴

Due to the lack of domestic events, world events with reference to Islam, Muslims or Muslim-majority or Middle Eastern countries are systematically used both by political and media actors to justify the government's mainstream anti-Islam narratives. These often reinterpreted, decontextualized or reframed news segments usually include reports on terrorist attacks, militant organisations of Muslims – most prominently the so-called Islamic State –, Western European migrant and refugee communities, the Middle East conflict, but also on non-violent political or societal events from Middle East/Muslim countries. Certain, unverified news items are sometimes picked up uncritically by politicians and the media. A particularly embarrassing example of this was a Facebook post in which Fidesz MP Szilárd Németh believed an unverified DAESH statement claiming the Las Vegas attacker Stephen Paddock was 'a soldier of the Islamic State'.¹⁵

In the middle of the anti-Soros Plan campaign, an LMP member managed to acquire information on the naturalisation of Arab Christians. Accordingly, in the period from 2012 to 2017, the Hungarian government granted Hungarian citizenship to a total of 822 mostly Egyptian Copts. While there are only a handful of cases

13. MTI, 'Németh Szilárd kitiltotta Szél Bernadettet a nemzetbiztonsági bizottságból', Magyar Nemzet, (January 15, 2018), retrieved January 18, 2018, from <https://mno.hu/belfold/szel-bernadett-nem-vehet-reszt-a-nemzetbiztonsagi-bizottsagi-ulesen-2440314>

14. 'On George Soros and from George Soros', Hungarian Spectrum, (December 8, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/soros-plan/>

15. "Las Vegas: Németh Szilárd készpénznek vette az Iszlám Állam szavait", HVG, (October 3, 2017), retrieved December 21, 2017 from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171003_Las_Vegas_Nemeth_Szilard_keszenznek_vette_az_Iszlam_Allam_szavait

where non-Christian refugees from Arab or Muslim countries have been granted even asylum, Vice Prime Minister Zsolt Semlyén justified the move with ‘interests of national policy’ and claimed it to be the proof of the country’s ‘hospitality towards real refugees’.¹⁶

Justice System

Islam is one of the religions recognised by the state since 1916. According to the president of the Church of Muslims in Hungary, Zoltan Sulok, Islam being one of the country’s long-recognised religions, faces no legal obstacles: Muslims are guaranteed freedom of religion and there are no Hungarian laws contradicting Islamic practices.¹⁷ However, in a television interview given to right-wing commentator Zsolt Bayer on EchoTV in November, the Fidesz Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Gergely Gulyás revealed the government’s plan to ban the building of mosques in Hungary. In unison with the commentator, he equalled mosques with ‘problems’, which ‘forces the government to treat the presence of Islam in a country as a matter of national security, not of freedom of religion’.¹⁸ It is neither clear nor known how this announcement is about to effect existing mosques, community centres, or prayer rooms in the country nor if there will be any legal follow-up of this announcement that resembles a rhetorical move within the government’s anti-migration propaganda rather than a result of a well-devised sociopolitical strategy. Also, the government seems to have no problem co-financing – together with the Turkish government – the restauration works of Gül Baba’s *türbe* (mausoleum), a Muslim pilgrimage site dating back to the 16th century in Budapest. In his response to Gergely Gulyás, the chairman of the MIK (Magyar Iszlám Közösség, Hungarian Islamic Community), Zoltán Bolek warned of the ‘spread of uncontrolled garage mosques’ that the country’s two Islamic organisations are unlikely to have control over and ‘reminded the Centre for Counterterrorism of having information on the existence of a Wahhabi mosque’.¹⁹

Back in November 2016, László Toroczkai, the infamous mayor of Ásotthalom, a village of less than 4,000 souls lying on the southern borders, issued an order banning the construction of Islamic mosques or minarets, the Muslim call for prayer,

16. “Kiderült, hogy több száz menekültet fogadott be a magyar kormány”, HVG, (October 4, 2017), retrieved December 21, 2017 from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171004_Kiderult_hogy_tobb_szaz_menekultet_fogadott_be_a_magyar_kormany

17. Gergely Szilvay, “A szeretet vagy háború vallása az iszlám?”, Mandíner, (April 22, 2015), retrieved January 3, 2015, from http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20150421_a_szeretet_vagy_a_haboru_vallasa_az_iszlam.

18. “Magyarországon nem lesz mecset: tiltakoznak az iszlám jogvédők”, index, (November 5, 2017), retrieved December 27, 2017, from https://index.hu/belfold/2017/11/05/magyarorszagon_nem_lesznek_mecsetek_tiltakoznak_az_iszlam_jogvedok/

19. Dávid Dercsényi, ‘A Fidesz mecsetépítési tiltása lenne az igazi biztonsági kockázat’ HVG, (November 9, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171109_mecset_epites_tiltas_fidesz_biztonsagi_kockazat

the wearing of Muslim religious attire such as the chador, the niqab, the burqa and the burkini. Toroczkai argued that he wished to set a positive example to other Hungarian municipalities in order to guarantee the ‘centuries-old traditions’ of local communities in the face of mass migration to the country.²⁰ This piece of local legislation encountered massive protests from the side of the civil society. As a result, in April 2017, the Constitutional Court ordered the municipality to withdraw the legislation for contradicting a number of basic rights guaranteed by the Hungarian Constitution.²¹ In November 2017, however, the Ásotthalom council voted in favour of the same legislation that has been amended by merely removing any words referring to Islam from the text.

Employment

There have not been any reported events of discrimination against Muslims in the field of work or employment. Hungary has had a fundamentally different experience with Muslims entering the workforce than Western Europe. Firstly, Hungary’s Muslims are numerically and proportionately very small, the boldest estimate not reaching the 0.3% margin. Secondly, the bigger portion of Hungarian Muslims is made up of ethnically Hungarian, domestic-born converts – (73,4 %) in 2013 –,²² usually not displaying any visual or linguistic differences to non-Muslim Hungarians. The wearing of any Islamic garment remains extremely rare in Hungary. Thirdly, ethnically non-Hungarian Muslims who have mostly arrived as students from ‘brotherly socialist’ secular Arab republics, such as Algeria, Syria, Palestine and Iraq to pursue engineering or medical studies at Hungarian universities are usually highly educated and integrated. Whether or not the practice of Islam plays any role in the personal lives of foreign-born Hungarian Muslims and their descendants, the external identification of these individuals by the host society is more likely to be based on their ethnic origin, not religious affiliation. Thus, good relations with one’s ‘Iraqi GP’ or ‘Syrian grocer’ won’t necessarily be translated into or seen as representative of the perceptions of Islam and Muslims in general neither on personal, nor on professional levels.

Education

There have been no major changes in the field of education since 2015. Hungary’s rich Islamic history and ties to Muslim-majority regions are still ignored and omitted from general history curricula. The overwhelming majority of history

20. “Toroczkai odacsap a bevándorlóknak: megtiltják a mecsetépítést Ásotthalmon,” hvg.hur, (November 24., 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124_toroczkai_asotthalom_muszlim_tiltas.

21. ‘Elmeszelte Toroczkai rendeletét az Alkotmánybíróság’, HVG, (April 12, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412_alkotmanybirosag_toroczkai_asotthalom

22. “A népesség nemzetiségi, anyanyelv, családi, baráti közösségben használt nyelv és kulturális kötődés szerint”, Hungarian Central Bureau of Statistics, (April 17, 2013), retrieved December 29, 2017, from http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_teruleti_00

textbooks tend to be Eurocentric and are inadequate in terms of providing students with a balanced knowledge of Islam and Islamic societies. Even if reference is made to, e.g. the rise of Islam, the Ottoman Empire, or de-/colonisation, the portrayal of non-European regions remains marginal, schematic and lacking critical analysis.²³

Since the beginning of the ‘refugee crisis’, conservative and government-affiliated media outlets have been frequently featuring Hungarian Orientalist scholars styled as ‘security policy analysts’ and ‘Middle East experts’. More often than not, their analyses quote from Islam’s foundational texts, interpreting them as calls to use violence in order to conquer the land of unbelievers. Contemporary Muslims interpretations, or a deeper sociological analyses of the migrants’ realities is rarely the subject of such ‘expert opinions’.

Another set of scholars are employed by the Migration Research Institute, established in 2015 by organisations close to the ruling government. The institute’s aim is to publish reports on the security risks posed by Muslims in Europe, and to provide ‘academic’ justification for the government’s anti-migrant policies.²⁴

Media

Similarly to the country’s political landscape, Hungarian media is also characterised by a stark left-right divide where political and ideological allegiances are more or less the norm. Hungary’s media environment, a privately owned sector that has suffered from increased state regulation since the Fidesz government’s coming to power, continues to be under government pressure to influence coverage.²⁵ The narrative that’s been given prominence since the intensification of the ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015 allowed for the securitisation of Islam and Muslim immigration to a level that is it largely incontestable in today’s political and media environment. In this environment, all balanced opinions are either ignored by popular media, or sidelined by nationalist clamor. Given the dominance of state-owned or government-friendly media belonging to the Fidesz orbit, the government’s ongoing anti-Islam mantra enjoys an uncontested predominance. Besides the obvious negative portrayal of Islam in general, state media outlets also bombard their audiences with subtler, yet severely unnuanced reporting on a number of issues linked to Islam pointing towards an alleged Islamisation of Europe and the envisioned deterioration of the continent’s security through the influx of ‘invading hordes’ of migrants. This strongly fearmongering style of reporting enjoys a priority status in

23. Zsuzsanna Mikáné-Szolnoki, “Az arab világ és az iszlám - A magyar középiskolai történelem tankönyvek összehasonlító elemzése,” *Elektronikus Könyv és Nevelés, Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár*, (2003) 5:1.

24. HVG, “Migrációkutató intézetet alapít a Századvég,” *hvg.hu*, (September 1, 2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150911_Migraciokutato_intezet_alapit_a_Szazadv.

25. Freedom House, “Hungary: 5-Year Decline in Press Freedom,” *freedomhouse.org*, (2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/hungary>.

state media outlets and is repeated in a very propaganda-like frequency, especially during the run-up to ‘national consultation’ campaigns.²⁶

While the uncontested government rhetoric that has been defining narratives in the political arena is omnipresent in the state-controlled segment of the media, certain other segments sport an even more radical, blatantly anti-Muslim narrative. One of the most notorious examples of this segment is the privately owned television channel EchoTV, strongly promoting government and more radical right-wing stances. In September, one of EchoTV’s programmes, *Informátor*, specialised in investigative journalism, aired an episode portraying the Islamic community living in the country. Besides images of DAESH mixed together with Muslims praying in a Budapest mosque, the programme was busy shedding as negative a light as possible on the community and offering a strongly suggestive narrative of the country’s ongoing Islamisation, the spread of Sharia law and NGOs having secret networks to import Islamist terrorist into the country in order to invade it. Also, a pro-government security expert László Földi described the ‘refugee crisis’ as a ‘state of war’ and organisations and individuals helping refugees as ‘war criminals and collaborators’ who should be ‘liquidated without trial’. The statement caused massive public protest and the court ordered the removal of the programme from the television’s website.²⁷

Földi is one of those, often self-declared, ‘experts’ that are frequent guests in both state and government-friendly media outlets providing simplistic and often highly populist and Islamophobic answers about current events and Islam itself.

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The only notable physical anti-Islam incident taking place in 2017 was a protest of a handful of activists of the Hungarian branch of the Génération Identitaire spanning an 8-meter-long banner on top of the Buda Tunnel reading ‘Islamisation kills’. The action was seeking to derive attention to the perceived Islamisation of the continent and the lack of fences along the external borders of other EU member states. According to the chairman of the movement, ‘Islamisation starts with a single mosque’.²⁸

There are only a handful of mosques and prayer rooms in the entire country and they have not reported any incidents yet; attacks on Muslim individuals are also not known.

26. Interview with Omar Sayfo, independent media commentator specialised on Islam and Middle East affairs (Budapest, January 6, 2018).

27. “Megbírságotlák az Echo TV Informátor című műsorát Földi László miatt”, HVG, (December 21, 2017), retrieved January 04, 2018, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171221_megbirsagoltak_echo_tv_informator_cimu_mu_sorat_foldi_miatt

28. Balázs Dezse, “Hatalmas molinóval tiltakozott az iszlamizáció ellen a budapesti Identitás Generáció”, Pesti Srácok, (October 5, 2017), retrieved, January 5, 2018, from <http://pestisracok.hu/hatalmas-molinoval-tiltakozott-az-islamizacio-ellen-budapesti-identitas-generacio/>

Internet

While there is no sign of organised anti-Islamic networks of media outlets or public figures, the ‘refugee crisis’ and the quota referendum campaign have increased the vehemence of right-wing, xenophobic Internet portals and popular so-called ‘like-hunting’ or ‘like bait’ news sites publishing fake news on Muslim refugees, Western Europe’s Muslim communities, Islamic countries and Islam itself. Sites such as *kurucinfo.hu*; *meteon.hu*; *legfrissebb.info*; faith- and Church-affiliated *vigyazo.hu*;; explicitly anti-migrant sites such as *napimigrans.hu* (lit. ‘daily migrant’); or anti-Islam sites such as *dzsihadfigyelo.com* (lit. ‘Jihad watch’) flood social media with content often bordering on hate speech.²⁹

It is important to note that the language of the current anti-Islam discourse largely uses the tropes traditionally applied in anti-Gypsy (e.g. non-European origin, linked to crime, impossible to integrate, etc.), as well as those applied to the Jewry (e.g. self-perceived superiority, anti-Christian/European conspiracies, etc.). However, while by now, anti-Gypsy and anti-Jewish utterances are more or less considered to be taboo in mainstream discourses, anti-Muslim and anti-refugee rhetoric – both in a seemingly elevated, intellectual way, as well as in a highly derogatory, racist and vulgar style – have become acceptable throughout the larger parts of mainstream media. As a result, anti-Islam and indeed anti-Muslim viewpoints are ‘no longer subject to condemnation - sometimes they are all but duties’.³⁰

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

By now, there is a widespread consensus regarding Islam as an existential threat to both the country and Europe, and utterances and discourses referring to Islam and Muslims in negative terms are commonplace in the arenas of politics, the media and the Internet. It is the result of a well-devised fearmongering strategy pursued by the government and the right wing that makes use and amplifies the population’s sentiments, fears, lack of information and experience regarding Islam. While originally a trope employed by the far right, the strategy of framing Islam as a scapegoat has been adopted as the main element of government propaganda tapping on popular fears of an unknown, obscure religion with full steam since 2015. Concentrated government and right-wing propaganda discourses employing verbal Muslim-bashing has proven to be a conduit through which Hungarian society’s frustrations can be channelled in politically and socially safe ways.³¹ Consequently,

29. Interview with Omar Adam Sayfo (December 29, 2017).

30. Omar Sayfo, “On Islamophobia and on Its Beneficial Effects,” Hungarian Free Press, (March 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/03/20/omar-sayfo-on-islamophobia-and-on-its-beneficial-effects/>.

31. Omar Sayfo, “On Islamophobia and on Its Beneficial Effects,” Hungarian Free Press, (March 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/03/20/omar-sayfo-on-islamophobia-and-on-its-beneficial-effects/>.

this strategy of verbal anti-Islamism serves as one of the main cornerstones of the ideological construct employed by the government and its orbit.

In that sense, the entire government, including its media and economic orbit, ideological loyalists and supporting public figures could be regarded as one big ‘Islamophobia network’. Notorious government politicians frequently employing anti-Muslim utterances such as Vice Prime Minister Zsolt Semlyén, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, Speaker of the National Assembly László Kövér, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Gergely Gulyás, and, of course, Prime Minister Orbán himself as well as a large number of other politicians and public figures such as Ásotthalom’s Jobbik Mayor László Toroczka, far-right commentator Zsolt Bayer, or government loyalist security expert László Földi could all be identified as this network’s central figures.

However, Islamophobia is a means, not an end in itself. It is part of a government’s propaganda seeking to achieve goals other than countering Islam or discriminating against Muslims. Apart from a few cases, verbal Islam-bashing is not translated into physical violence or actual political consequences in legislation. The erection of the southern border fence or tight immigration laws have the primary purpose of securing popular votes and keeping the opposition at bay in order to further strengthen the government’s domestic power basis and remain in power, and to a lesser degree aim to genuinely counter any real or imagined threat emanating from Islam. While there are certainly many public figures and ordinary citizens who are genuinely afraid of and thus hostile towards Islam and Muslims, in Hungarian domestic contexts these fears are completely irrational and unjustified. Therefore, trying to identify a well-connected ‘Islamophobia network’ would be missing the point.

Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

As far as this research is concerned, there are no significant civil society initiatives that explicitly counter Islamophobia in Hungary. There are a number of NGOs working to protect refugees and their rights – such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Migration Aid, or MigSzol – but none of these organisations deal explicitly with Muslims, Islam, or Islamophobia. While there are condemning reactions to the strongest Islamophobic utterances in the media and in politics from the country’s Islamic communities, there seems to be no trace of any plans or strategies to counter Islamophobia in a systematic way on any levels. Oppositional parties are unwilling to lose even more votes by standing up for a hopeless cause not promising the slightest of political benefits and only blowing even more wind into the sails of government propaganda.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Given the absence of a sizable Muslim population, verbal Muslim-bashing has proven to be a conduit through which Hungarian society's frustrations can be channelled in politically and socially safe ways.³² Without any effective counter-narrative or defence strategy, this no-stakes situation has led to an uncontested monopoly of an openly anti-Islam rhetoric dominating the mainstreams of politics and the media and enjoying the unconditional support of an overwhelming portion of the population. However, Islamophobia in Hungary, a small Central European country, ethnically highly homogenous, isolated in cultural-linguistic terms and lacking any recent direct experience of peaceful interaction with Islam or Muslim populations, should be viewed through a domestic political lens. With high unemployment rates, widespread poverty and corruption, bleak economic prospects and an increasingly weakening middle class, one would be hard-pressed to consider large parts of Hungarian society as winners of the country's transition from communism to democracy. By tapping into the population's irrational fear of what is an unknown religion and culture, the Fidesz government has been using Islamophobia as a political tool to drive away attention from the country's mismanagement and deep-running socioeconomic problems.

To counter this, the following recommendations are formulated:

- The political elite needs to stop framing Islam and Muslim refugees as an existential threat to the future of the country and Europe and using Islamophobic narratives as its primary political tool.
- There is an urgent need to fight the uncontested Islamophobic narratives of the political Right. Studying the root causes accounting for the almost universal acceptance of these anti-Muslim narratives by the overwhelming portion of the population is essential in developing strategies on numerous levels – the political, media, educational, academic, or cultural – to combat these narratives and to replace them.
- There is a genuine need to address the very existence of Islamophobia, define it as a form of racism and criminalise Islamophobic utterances as is the case with anti-Semitic utterances.
- Islam needs to be explained and made familiar both by its community and by qualified, non-partisan, politically neutral commentators. Also, Islamophobic utterances need to be countered in meaningful, professional ways both by the community and engaged NGOs or lobby groups.
- The Muslim community and NGOs cooperating with Muslims in the country

32. Omar Sayfo, "On Islamophobia and on Its Beneficial Effects," Hungarian Free Press, (March 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/03/20/omar-sayfo-on-islamophobia-and-on-its-beneficial-effects/>.

should both strive for increased interreligious and intercultural exchanges and dialogues between Muslim and non-Muslim Hungarians on the grassroots level in order to enable more personal and institutional contact.

Chronology

- **18.09.2017:** In a speech held during a parliamentary session, PM Orbán envisions ‘hordes of migrants raping Europe’ and Hungary’s unwillingness to submit to the ‘Soros Plan’ leading to the enforced opening of borders and mass resettlement of ‘up to 60 million migrants’ from the Middle East and Africa.
- **04.10.2017:** Protesting the lack of border fences along the external borders of other EU members, a handful of activists of the Hungarian branch of the Génération Identitaire displays an anti-Islam banner on the Buda Tunnel, a Budapest landmark.
- **05.10.2017:** In a television programme on migration, pro-government security expert László Földi described the ‘refugee crisis’ as a ‘state of war’ and organisations and individuals helping refugees as ‘war criminals and collaborators’ who should be ‘liquidated without trial’. The court ordered the removal of the programme from the television’s website.
- **07.10.2017:** The government begins the mailing of the questionnaire for ‘the national consultation about the Soros-Plan’ accusing the philanthropist’s alleged plan to flood Europe, including Hungary, with masses of Muslim immigrants.
- **05.11.2017:** In a television interview given to right-wing commentator Zsolt Bayer, Gergely Gulyás, the Fidesz deputy speaker of the National Assembly, announces the ban of mosques in Hungary describing the presence of Islam in a country as a matter of national security, not of freedom of religion.

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



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