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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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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, legitimates hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the European Union ideals of peace and coexistence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the help of the new president of the USA, who defends his “Muslim Ban” by referring to invented terrorist attacks such as the one in Sweden, the imagined figure of the all-time lurking Muslim enemy is kept alive. When Trump tweet-

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

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

Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels

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

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

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

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

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

8. Ibid.


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

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

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

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

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

The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

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

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

18. Ibid.
The Right Wing in Opposition

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

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

In Latvia, numerous pre-election programs of various parties for the 2017 municipal elections demonstrated unambiguous Islamophobic positions. In Riga, the Action Party of 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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

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


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

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

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

Denying the Suffering

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

The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

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

Online Islamophobia

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

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

Legalizing Islamophobia

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

with a legislative proposal for the ban of face veiling in educational institutions initiated by the ruling People’s Movement Party (PMP). The asserted aim was the prevention of violence and terrorism. The law was launched by 26 MPs from three parliamentary parties. Also, in Latvia, where – similar to Romania – there are nearly no Muslims, a draft law on the restriction of wearing a face veil was prepared by the Ministry of Justice in 2015 and is still under consideration. In Belgium, the parliament voted for limitations on ritual slaughter including the prohibition of Muslim halal slaughter. Also, a debate on a state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium began. In a small village in Hungary, a mayor passed a law to ban the construction of mosques and minarets, the Muslim call for prayer, the chador, niqab, burqa, and burkini. The mayor argued that he wished to set a positive example for other Hungarian municipalities in order to guarantee the ‘centuries-old traditions’ of local communities in the face of mass migration to the country.\(^\text{36}\) 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.\(^\text{37}\) 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’ initiative\(^\text{38}\) was launched to amend a law in favor of a “Burka Ban.” Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki,\(^\text{39}\) a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims.\(^\text{40}\) A spokesperson of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, current chairman of the Finnish Defense League (FDL), who proclaims to be fighting against “Islamic extremism”\(^\text{41}\) 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

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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 Eduskuntasanoasto,” 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/eduskuntasanoasto/netmot?U1=flied&height=147.
40. For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki’s court case, see Ibid.
People’s Party following the verdict by the European Court of Human Rights. This initiative was not only supported by the right wing, but also the Social Democrats and the Danish Social Liberal Party, arguing that they would, thus, empower Muslim women. There is also a law prohibiting male circumcision under way in Denmark.

Terrorist Attacks against Muslims

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Threatening the Religious Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• The European Commission’s coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred should develop a clear action plan for combatting Islamophobia.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DENMARK

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

(Source: National Police)

BELGIUM

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

AUSTRIA

256 Islamophobic incidents were documented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The State of Islamophobia in Europe

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)
The Author

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Executive Summary

Muslims would become the only obligation-burdened minority in Switzerland without almost any rights if judged by the demands of the Swiss political right in 2017. Longstanding requests such as the abolition of funding mosques with money from abroad, sermons in the local language, controlling the education of imams (Motion by Lorenzo Quadri, adopted in the National Council) are no surprise as they have become a trend across Europe. However, these requirements, if adopted, will only be applied to Muslims (whose religious community is not even recognized) and not to other religious communities in Switzerland. On the other hand, restrictions on imports of halal meat (the Swiss Parliament accepted “Mandatory Labelling of Imported Halal Meat and Its Price Increase,” a parliamentary initiative by Yannick Buttet); the demand to ban Islamic religious care (Jean-Luc Addor’s Parliamentary Initiative “No Muslim Chaplains in the Swiss Army”); the prevention of the possibility for the education of imams at public universities in Switzerland; and the non-recognition of Islamic religious communities (“A recognition of the public right of Islam or a state training of imams is out of the question,” according to the SVP’s set of requirements) leave Muslims practically on the margins of the law. However, it is most concerning that the population does not see clearly the real impact of the aforementioned restrictive requirements, because there is not enough statistical information. The attacks on the mosque in Grenchen and a Muslim cemetery in Lausanne do not support the assumption that Islamophobia is not really a problem. Media interpretations, particularly of statements by so-called experts of Islam are also worrying. Fear and prejudice increase exponentially over time while Muslims find no legal authority (Counselling Centre) to complain to and where they can seek protection. Fortunately, there are also those who voiced general support for Muslims and encouraged greater Muslim affirmative action.
Zusammenfassung
Résumé

Les musulmans deviendraient la seule minorité à avoir le plus d’obligations que de droits si on en juge les demandes de la partie politique droite de Suisse en 2017. Les demandes habituelles comme d’arrêter de bâtir des mosquées avec de l’argent provenant de l’étranger, de faire des sermons en langue locale, de contrôler l’éducation des imams (motion par Lorenzo Quadri, adopté au Conseil National) ne sont plus surprenantes, car cela devient une tendance à travers l’Europe. Cependant, ces exigences, si elles sont adoptées, ne seront appliquées qu’aux musulmans (dont la communauté religieuse n’est même pas reconnue), mais pas à d’autres communautés religieuses en Suisse. D’autre part, cela concerne les restrictions d’importation de la viande halal (le Parlement Suisse a accepté l’étiquetage obligatoire de la viande halal importée et l’augmentation de son coût, initiative parlementaire de Yannick Buttet), la demande d’interdire les soins religieux islamiques” (initiative parlementaire de Jean-Luc Addor « Non à l’aumônier musulman dans l’armée suisse »), la prévention de la formation possible des imams dans les universités publiques en Suisse et de la non reconnaissance de la communauté islamique, etc. (“La reconnaissance de la communauté musulmane ou une formation des Imams par l’Etat sont hors de question”, selon l’ensemble des exigences de l’UDC), d’une manière générale, les musulmans sont négligés par la protection judiciaire. Cependant, le plus inquiétant est le fait que la population ne voit pas clairement l’impact réel des exigences restrictives précédemment énoncées, car il n’y a pas assez d’information sur les statistiques. Les attaques contre la mosquée à Granges et le cimetière musulman à Lausanne ne suggèrent pas le fait que l’islamophobie soit réellement un problème. Les interprétations médiatiques, en particulier les déclarations de soi-disant experts en Islam, sont également inquiétantes. La peur et les préjugés augmentent de façon exponentielle au fil du temps tandis que les musulmans ne trouvent aucune autorité légale (Centre de Conseil) pour se plaindre et se procurer une protection. Heureusement, il y a ceux qui ont exprimé leur soutien général aux musulmans ce qui devrait encourager une meilleure reconnaissance des musulmans.
Introduction

The waves of Islamophobia in Switzerland throughout 2017 breached the rule of law uncounted times. This becomes even more astonishing when the alarming multiple media interpretations, as political manoeuvres directed against Muslims, are taken into account.

In addition to the unavoidable issues of the constitutional stipulations of “the ban on facial covering” and “the ban of the hijab,” there was a demand for greater control over mosques and the interdiction of certain Muslim groups. The regular occurrence of two politically motivated demands, namely to place Islam and Muslims under greater control, is of particular concern and great worry.

Interestingly and appraisingly, the year 2017 marked affirmative actions of non-Muslim politicians to resolve emerging issues, i.e. the (possible) recognition of Islam and Islamic communities in Switzerland, greater involvement of Swiss Muslims in resolving specific issues, and problems concerning the smaller Muslim and wider Swiss community.

The SZIG (Schweizer Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft) of the University of Freiburg has implemented a special project to interact with and train several Muslim organizations, conduct workshops, round table discussions, public talks, and seminars. The events were organized in collaboration with several Muslim associations and imams. It is also noteworthy that new offers to train imams for the context of Switzerland’s society and a degree in pastoral care in the context of migration commenced officially in autumn 2017 in the Universities of Bern and Geneva.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

There is not enough information on the statistics of people subject to discrimination and the NGO hotlines are not sufficiently known, which is a concern. We realize that something is wrong only when comparing the massive amounts of hate speech in comments on the Internet, the debates in the parliament and the political requirements for restricting the freedom of Muslims with the reality of the underreported cases of discrimination against Muslims. The OSCE/ODIHR hate crime data on Switzerland for 2016, i.e. The 2016 Report of Racist Incidents Identified by Counseling Centers, records only 2 cases, whereas the Network of Counselling Centres for Victims of Racism records 31 cases of bias against Muslims. The Association of Islamic


Organizations in Zurich (VIOZ) has several hundred individual case descriptions from 2016/2017 that are not public. The gap between the actual number of cases and the recorded number of cases is obvious. The FIOS hired a legal counsellor to advise victims and better track the rising number of cases of discrimination.3

Politics
The non-affirmative actions of the politics of exclusion and the limitation of rights convey messages of intolerance of thought and views of the Other. Adherents of such spectrums habitually attack Islam in general and Muslims in particular, considering them as a threat to Swiss society. Hence, emotional politics might slowly become part of the constitution if no adequate and timely responses are provided against such parties’ actions.

The parliamentary “No”4 to the SVP Initiative “Yes to a Ban on Full Facial Coverings” did not stop the SVP in its intentions. They managed to gather 105,553 valid signatures for the popular initiative, so that there could be a referendum on whether the burqa should be forbidden in the constitution.5 On December 20, 2017, the Federal Council announced its position on the federal popular initiative which officially commenced on October 11, 2017. The Federal Council rejected the initiative on the grounds that the cantons should alone decide whether to ban facial coverings. As for the cases where a covered face is problematized, targeted action at the legislative level was proposed.6 The FIOS supported the government’s position, considering that dress codes should not be regulated in the Swiss constitution.7

The political debate to ban or restrict the import of meat slaughtered without stunning (which would constitute a serious restriction on religious freedom, for both Muslims and Jews) has taken several directions and even united two opposing political sides: left-wing circles cite animal welfare as their main concern and right-wing politicians view the custom as foreign to Swiss culture. Both sides, each in its own way, limits Muslims (halal methods of slaughter) and Jews (shechita method of slaughter) in particular. This type of ritual slaughter (without stunning) is prohibited in Switzerland,8 but import of this type of meat is still allowed. The Swiss Parliament

accepted a parliamentary initiative of CVP National Councillor Yannick Buttet, with the following demands: (1) mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sale, (2) and the increase in the price of imported halal meat. Following adoption by the Council of States, the National Council Commission will draw up a legislative amendment. Although the mandatory declaration of halal meat is in itself a major burden for a restricted halal market, the demand by Matthias Aebischer, a socialist member from the canton of Bern, for the banning of meat imports of inhumanely slaughtered animals was a far more challenging one, because such a ban would mostly apply to kosher and halal meat. Although the National Council accepted the initiative, the Council of States rejected it. It remains to be seen whether a popular initiative will take place.

The issues of greater control over Islamic communities and the ban of independent Islamic organizations were discussed several times in the parliament; the latter issue was also discussed in a few cantons. The Motion of the National Councillor Quadri Lorenzo from the Ticino League (Lega dei Ticinesi) with which he initiated the legal procedures to ban dangerous associations, such as the Salafist organization “Lies!” - a Swiss offshoot of the group The true religion - was eventually rejected. Consequently, the SVP initiated two new additional motions. The first motion was (again) about banning the Salafist organization “Lies!” and stopping the spread of “jihadist doctrine,” while the second motion aimed at stopping the spread of “radical Islam” in Switzerland. Furthermore, the Federal Council was asked, among other things, to undertake the task of establishing the necessary legal foundations for implementing the anticipated laws. Moreover, it was expected that the Federal Council undertakes all measures to ensure that authorities at cantonal and federal levels are effectively provided with sufficiently trained specialists who have both language skills and knowledge about Islam. These are considered tools which make monitoring of mosques and imams easier and possible. The first SVP motion was accepted by the National Council. It is for the Council of States to announce the final decision. As for the second motion, the National Council is still in the process of arriving at a decision.

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The fact that Islamophobia is dangerous, especially when it effects lawmakers is exposed by Austria's controversial laws, such as the face-covering ban, the prohibition of the distribution of the Qur’an, or the ban on the financing of Muslim organizations and mosques from abroad. The Austrian law enforcements\(^\text{14}\) impacted the Swiss right-wing political spectrum. The parliamentary motion by Lorenzo Quadri, 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:

- The prohibition of Islamic places of worship and Imams that accept funds from abroad;
- The obligation for Islamic centres to disclose the origin and use of their finances.
- The duty to conduct sermons in the language of residence.\(^\text{15}\)

The FIOS and VIOZ united in their position that Austria and Switzerland cannot be compared in terms of the regulated status of Islam, because Islam has been recognized in Austria for more than 100 years. For this reason, it is not fair to prescribe additional obligations without simultaneously granting rights. Muslim communities and imams should not be treated as suspects. If someone wants to simply replicate or project the situational context of Islam in Austria to Switzerland by demanding from Muslims to abide to the aforementioned three prescriptions, additional rights should be granted, including the official recognition of Islamic religious communities in Switzerland.\(^\text{16}\) The Swiss Council of States has not yet taken a position.

After the Chief of the Army Corps Commander Philippe Rebord spoke on the occasion of his hundred-days in office about the possibility of hiring army imams to serve as Muslim army chaplains in the future, SVP politicians were outraged.\(^\text{17}\) Firstly, it was Beat Arnold, who raised the question in the parliament: “Does the Federal Council really intend to allow the army to recruit imams?”,\(^\text{18}\) followed soon by Jean-Luc Addor with his Parliamentary Initiative “No Muslim Chaplains in the Swiss Army” in September.\(^\text{19}\)

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\(^{18}\) Ibid.

Such an initiative does not only discriminate against Muslims but also other religious communities, as it defends the position that the spiritual assistance available to the military is exclusively entrusted to Protestant chaplains, Roman Catholics and Christian Catholics. It remains to be seen how the National Council will react on this initiative.

On October 28, 2017, the SVP delegates adopted a set of requirements (some for cantons, municipalities and cities and others at the confederation level) under the banner “Zero Tolerance to Islamist Radicalization!” It demands from Muslims to respect “our” legal regime, culture, habits, and customs. Due to some of the demands being in contradiction to the rule of law, but also the customs and culture of Switzerland, it is not clear to whom “our” refers. Some of their demands read as follows,

- A recognition of the public right of Islam or a state training of imams is out of the question.
- The pastoral activity of imams in prisons and the army must stop. Imams can be replaced by army psychologists.
- We refuse the introduction of official Muslim holidays especially Ramadan.
- Until further notice, the activities of imams must be supervised throughout Switzerland.
- Any financial support for Islam in Switzerland by Muslim states, other governments, foreign organizations or foreign individuals must be strictly stopped.
- Halal meat, facial concealment, etc. should not be tolerated in public places like schools, prisons, hospitals or in the army. We must live according to our Christian values.

The terminology of “radical Islam” in these demands is not clear, because the SVP carelessly blends the terms “radical Islam,” “Islam,” “Islamists,” and “Muslims.” Their requirements, actually, restrict Islam and Muslims in general, because out of 20 requests only 7 are directed against radical Islam i.e. radical Muslims. Weeks later, the president of the CVP, Gerhard Pfister (known for the statement that Muslims could belong to Switzerland but not Islam) additionally demanded the implementation of a “value paper,” announced over a long period, to fight against political Islam, but in reality, containing additional restrictions on Muslims. The NZZ summed up the requirements, which the VIOZ characterized as superficial and unconstructive. The CVP requested among other things, that a headscarf ban for pupils (Muslim

20. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
girls and Jewish boys) should also apply to schools and kindergartens. They also called for a massive increase of control over Muslim communities.²⁵ Gerhard Pfister said that the issue of the face covering ban is not enough to handle Islam. This is, according to him, too tight a corset to wear, a greater focus on the issue of intensified control over the Muslim community is better suited and seems to be “an appropriate measure” to deal efficiently with the religion of Islam.²⁶ In fact, there are already discussions in the CVP on a so-called “article on religion,” which would regulate the relationship between “freedom of worship” and the rule of law.²⁷

Justice System

A Sion district court found Jean-Luc Addor (SVP), a national councilor, guilty of racial discrimination for comments made on his Twitter and Facebook accounts on August 22, 2014. After a man was shot to death in a St Gallen mosque, he wrote “On en redemande!” (“Let’s have more!”). The court said, that through his message, he gave the impression, that members of the Muslim community were people whose life was worthless, which could support a hostile attitude towards the Muslim community. The court charged him a suspended fine of CHF18,000 for his remarks that contravened the Swiss racial discrimination law.²⁸

The new Federal Law on Intelligence (NDG) came into force on September 1, 2017.²⁹ The new NDG envisages that the Federal Intelligence Service will be able to listen to telephone conversations, secretly bug private spaces, hack or manipulate computers (Article 26) and intercept data (Article 39) in the case that internal and external security or essential national interests are threatened, for example by terrorism.³⁰ Some groups perceived this as a threat to the privacy of all Muslims and mosques, labelled “radical” by the government. Hence, Muslims worry more about potential legislations rather than intelligence surveillance.

²⁸. Kanton Walis, District court, Medienmitteilung, August 17, 2018: https://www.vs.ch/de/web/tribunaux/communique-de-pressel/-asset_publisher/Ovyq5QFPtCN/content/affaire-du-tweet-de-jean-luc-addor?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vs.ch%3A443%2Ffr%2Ftribunaux%2FCommunique-de-prise%3Fp_id%3D101_INSTANCE_Ovyq5QFPtCN%26p Lifecycle%3D0%26p_state%3Dnormal%26p_module%3D4view%26p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_col_count%3D1.
Education

Schools and workplaces are crucial areas of life where discrimination is very dangerous and has detrimental psychological effects. *TagesWoche* put together an interesting collection of articles about the headscarf in the workplace. “Job-killer headscarf” refers to the reality that women wearing headscarves experience greater difficulties securing positions in the job market. The articles are about two Turkish women who grew up in Switzerland and because of their headscarves could not get a job for years. Watson wrote about the story of a Muslim woman of Bosnian origin who had a similar experience. Her applications for a job were rejected due to her headscarf.

A concrete example of how far the discrimination of Muslims wearing headscarves can reach is the following leaflet where an association for training in the footwear industry was bothered by the increasing number of women with headscarves. (Fig. 1) Consequently, women who attend the inter-company courses (üK) will have to procure an authorization by their training companies for wearing a headscarf.


33. The Swiss shoe industry association “Schuhschweiz” demands from Muslim shoe professionals, who take part in their inter-company courses (üK), to bring a license (of the training company) for their headscarves, because, according to their leaflet, “more headscarves are being worn at the campus” and “Integration means that young people adapt to Swiss customs.” Moritz Kaufmann, “Schuhhändler verbieten ihren Lehrtöchtern die Kopfbedeckung,” (December 30, 2017), blick.ch, retrieved January 9, 2018, from https://www.blick.ch/news/wirtschaft/schuhhaendler-verbieten-ihreren-lehrtoechtern-die-kopfbedeckung-kopftuch-nur-mit-bewilligung-id7787459.html#community_article_comments_default_7787459.

In January, regarding the domain of education, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in support of the practice of the Federal Supreme Court that schools are allowed to compel young Muslim girls to attend mixed swimming classes. The interest of children’s complete school education, which enables successful social integration, outweighs the parents’ interest in dispensing religious education in the case of swimming lessons at school.\(^{35}\) The VIOZ believes that requests made by laypeople are often confused with the “theologically founded means for attaining dignity” of a religious community. This confusion causes harm to entire religious communities.\(^{36}\)

Although attempts to prohibit wearing headscarves in school do not stop, the mainstream responses reject the ban. The Canton of Aargau created a school guide for the easier handling of religious challenges in schools. For example, the headscarf must be tolerated because there is no law in Aargau prohibiting the headscarf.\(^{37}\) The cantonal parliament of Valais declared as invalid the popular SVP initiative stipulating that children cannot wear headscarves in schools. However, the SVP and CVP are still persistent in their intentions of banning Muslim girls from wearing headscarves in schools.\(^{38}\)

**Media**

Negative representations of Muslims in the media cause not only negative attitudes towards Muslims, but could also support policies that harm Muslims. The media’s and its interlocutors’ continuous negative portrayal of Muslims confirms the empirical study on the quality of reporting on Muslims in Switzerland. The report entitled “Muslims in the Media Increasingly Problematized” by the fög - Research Institute Public Sphere & Society of the University of Zurich examined the frequency and intensity of the media coverage of Muslims in 18 Swiss media (Newspapers, TV stations) in the period from 2009 to 2017.\(^{39}\) The coverage of Muslims is thematically diverse. In the first half of 2017, according to the study, multiple contributions

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35. OSMANOĞLU und KOCABAŞ v. Schweiz, retrieved January 9, 2018 from https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{"itemid":['001-170346']}).
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regarding Muslims in Switzerland addressed the two issues of radicalization and terror. A serious matter is also the critical and doubtful contributions on integrating Muslims in Switzerland which tend to over-proportionally (21%) associate generalizations with distance-generating statements and are exaggeratedly emotionalized. The intensive reporting on violent events as well as political campaigns in the context of popular initiatives are two factors, which primarily characterize the reporting on Muslims in Switzerland. On the other hand, topics such as the successful integration or everyday life are marginal and almost completely absent in the media. So, it is not surprising that the proportion of contributions whose tonality creates distance from Muslims in Switzerland has grown relatively steadily between 2009 and 2017 from 22% to 69%. A comparison of media headlines showed that the distance-generating articles occur with above average frequency in the reporting of Weltwoche (84%), Sonntags Blick (63 %), Sonntags Zeitung (61%) and Blick (59%). This type of reporting was slightly lower in NZZ and Le Temps (31%). Media coverage achieve mainly Muslim actors representing polarizing positions (It tends to be always the same people).40 Muslims with knowledge and experience in the community are rarely taken into account.

A study of discrimination experienced by Muslims in Switzerland titled “Notes on Experienced, But Barely Registered Hate Crime” was conducted by the Swiss research institute gfs.bern.41 This study showed that 85% of Muslim respondents experienced the representation of Islam in the Swiss media as rather or very negative. They are particularly clear in the responsibility of the media for the deteriorated attitude of non-Muslims towards Muslims (88%).42

The Zeitungshaus AG,43 publisher of the Basler Zeitung - whose board member and SVP’s chief strategist Christoph Blocher owns one-third of the company’s shares -, expanded its media empire in 2017 by buying Zehnder Media AG. Zehnder Media encompasses 25 free local newspapers and serves around 800,000 readers a week across Switzerland.44 Many received this news with concern, fearing that with this purchase, the SVP’s political views may be reinforced.

40. Ibid.
41. This study was pursued by the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD) in 2016 and was run by different Muslim communities. It included more than 500 interviews, evaluating discrimination against Muslims in Switzerland in the period between December 2016 and March 2017: http://www.gfsbern.ch/de-ch/Detail/hinweise-auf-erlebte-aber-kaum-registrierte-hasskriminalitaet.
Physical and Verbal Attacks

Vandal acts on the Muslim burial ground of a cemetery Bois-de-Vaux in Lausanne in October shocked many. This was not the first attack on the cemetery. The hate graffiti messages called on Muslims to leave Switzerland. As a reaction to this, more than 500 people belonging to the left political spectrum and a number of organizations, demonstrated against Islamophobia in Lausanne but also in solidarity with the Muslims.

Two attacks on the same mosque might have never been discovered by the media if it were not for an inspection control on an “illegal employee,” who had escaped in the mosque construction site. The construction site of the prayer house of the Albanian Islamic religious community AIG in Grenchen (SO) is known for having fallen victim to a racist attack six years ago. Strangers buried a dead pig and four pig heads and spilled over 100 liters of pig blood across the grounds. This was done with the intention of desecrating the building area and preventing the construction of the new mosque. In November, the mosque structure was again the target of racist attacks, and, again, none of the media reported it. Only when an inspection control discovered an “illegal employee” working on the construction, did several media stations mention that there had been two hate attacks perpetuated on the construction sites. Consequently, the under construction Grenchen Mosque was again stained with pig blood and racist graffiti was written by unidentified individuals. (Fig. 2)

The mosques in Switzerland are placed under general suspicion and have to cope with mistrust because of the mistakes of few. The controversies related to the Imam of the An’Nur Mosque in Winterthur and the Libyan “preacher” of the Ar’Rahman

49. Source: http://www.20min.ch/schweiz/bern/story/Schweineblut-Attacke-auf-Rohbau-von-Moschee-14599356; Photo belongs to Isa Ismaili/AIG.
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Mosque in Biel gave rise to political and media pressure on the mosques in Switzerland. Namely, the imam of the An’Nur Mosque was arrested in late 2016 because of accusations of instigating worshipers to kill Muslims who do not take part in communal prayer. The VIOZ suspended the mosque after the incident. It was reported that the members of the An’Nur Mosque committee attacked two people inside the mosque for sharing information about the imam’s sermons with journalists. This led to their arrest in early 2017. Thus, the Winterthur An’Nur Mosque was put under great pressure due to suspicion of links with radical Islamic movements and was consequently closed. Similarly, a second scenario emerged concerning the Ar’Rahman Mosque in Biel in August 2017. It attracted media attention when Abu Ramadan, an occasional volunteer preacher at the Ar’Rahman Mosque, was refused asylum. Abu Ramadan was also criticized for his statements, which he claimed to be incorrectly translated and interpreted. For several months, DerBund.ch and the Rundschau of the SRF (Swiss Radio and Television) researched his case. A television report showed that he preached messages of hatred against other religions from the Ar’Rahman Mosque in Biel while having received to that point in time about CHF 600,000 in Swiss social welfare. Saïda Keller-Mesahli, president of the Forum for Progressive Islam, accused him of being a member of DAESH; he consequently sued her for defamation of character. Trials concerning this controversy are in progress.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

What in another context could and usually is easily qualified as hate speech or a call for wholesome discrimination against a whole group of people, if spoken by a

Muslim (at least by name), is presented as allowed and necessary criticism of religion. Such reports get space in the media. However, if in another context a Muslim voices some type of intolerance, then it may and most probably will receive a massive scale repudiation of not just the said Muslim but of Islam as a religion, as well. One of these persons is the self-proclaimed Islamic expert (without any theological educational background), Saida Keller-Mesahli, who holds strong individual opinions and shows intolerance towards other Muslim views, without participating in any of the local Muslim communities.58 Her criticism of Islam is characterised by many as a mere articulation of what is supported by the right-wing populist political circle, which as mentioned in her book, she looks forward to cooperating with – namely, the SVP in Switzerland or the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany.59 Whether some kind of cooperation between them already exists and what the extent or nature of that collaboration is, remains unclear. However, it is interesting, that she does not see any basis for cooperation nor collaboration, whatsoever, with Islamic organizations in Switzerland.60

Many of her statements in the media in recent years have been meager paraphrasing without serious investigation. Saida Keller-Mesahli summarized her viewpoints in the book *Islamistische Drehscheibe Schweiz* (Islamist hub Switzerland), in which she characterized most imams as radical and labeled the Islamic organizations in Switzerland, mainly through negative associations, as Saudi mercenaries, Islamists or the wrong interlocutors of naïve Swiss authorities. Her book was massively supported via interviews prior to publication.61 There is no doubt that the book deserves adequate, evidence-substantiated responses by qualified non-biased scholars, and well-researched reporting by journalists. As the award winner of the Human Rights Award 2016 by

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58. Lic. phil. Saida Keller-Mesahli was born in Tunisia in July 1957 into a Muslim extended family. She has spent the largest part of her life in Switzerland, where she studied Romance Studies, English Literature and Film Studies in Zurich. She is a founder of the Forum for Progressive Islam.


the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR). Keller-Messahli wants to abolish women's right to wear any kind of religious coverage: "Nowadays, any form of women's veiling is the banner of political Islam, whether it's the headscarf, the niqab, or the burqa. [...] Any form of veiling of Muslim women must be prevented because it represents not a religious but a political imperative of Islamists." The established fact that her statements are harmful and have a negative reverberation on Muslims, just supports another disappointing fact, which is that the book was sold through church portals and presented in churches.

Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In contemporary times, to be brave is not profitable and becoming a bystander is easier and more plausible. It's easier to say what everyone expects to hear than to tell the truth. It is easier to be silent on injustice than risk being attacked while standing up for others. It is easier to criticize than offer solutions. It is easier to pull back into one's comfort zone than face the challenges of others' unwillingness to accept diversity. Therefore, courageous, hardworking and noble people need to be mentioned and rewarded in order to feel appreciated. This mutual appreciation is needed because of today's unpopularity to side with Muslims and help them overcome the raising challenges.

Canton Zurich is a bright example in Switzerland in the way it combats Islamophobia and should serve as a good example to others. They have a beautiful, symbolic tradition of organizing a football game of “FC Religions vs. FC Cantonal Council” What better way to battle prejudices? The reception organized for imams and Islamic communities by the city of Zurich on Ramadan is also an example of how to promote living together.


Government Councilor Jacqueline Fehr, head of the Department of Justice and Home Affairs of the Canton of Zurich, put together a working group to define the conditions for Islamic pastoral care. The working group is comprised of representatives of the Reformed Church, Catholic Church, the VIOZ, and Department of Justice and Home Affairs of the Canton of Zurich. Various groups for years have tried to uphold the rights of Muslims to Islamic pastoral care. Besides the VIOZ, Fehr is most responsible for the continued development of the training program in Islamic pastoral care. Great financial support has been invested, some of which comes from the half million francs of the lottery fund withdrawn by the Zurich government. Fehr also proposed guidelines intended to lead the relationship between the state and religious communities. Actually, she saw in the legal recognition of Muslims the possibility to undergo more scrutiny that could lead to higher pressure on them. That is why she proposed a balanced path which means “no recognition” but the canton must have a say in questions concerning Muslims. She intends to define a distinct relationship between state and religious communities which can accept or reject the guidelines on a voluntary basis.

The young politician, representative of the Green Party of Switzerland in the National Council, Irène Kälin and President of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland (SP) Christian Levrat declared their public support of the recognition of Muslim communities. Andrea Caroni, a state councilor from the FDP (Liberals) and its vice president, gathered representatives of all factions to set up a counter-movement against the burqa ban.

It is not easy for universities to attain the power to influence the fight against Islamophobia because of the tension between knowledge (science) and power.
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Undoubtedly, ignorance is, in fact, one of the main causes of intolerance. Symbolically, a conference titled “Islam - Knowledge - Power. Interactions from a Theological and Historical Perspective” was the first conference within the framework of the doctoral program “Islam and Society: Islamic-Theological Studies” at the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society (SZIG). The scientific circle and Muslims have high expectations in combating numerous prejudices created by politics and various incidents in society. That is why even a small step towards understanding and impacting the fight against Islamophobia is important. At the SZIG, in the autumn semester of 2017, the Master’s program “Islam and Society” was offered. In addition, in the period between September 2016 and May 2017, 25 workshops were organized under the project “Muslim Organizations and Social Actors” in collaboration with multiple communities of Muslim partners. Since summer of 2017, two universities have offered courses for the further education of Muslims i.e. Imam Training Courses (but not in collaboration with the Islamic community). Firstly, the University of Bern offers the course “CAS Religious Care in Migration Contexts,” which is open to members of all religious denominations. It provides the authorities a better assessment of the need for an Islamic pastoral training program. Secondly, the University of Geneva offered courses in French on political philosophy, human rights and ethics, which served towards the greater integration of imams in Switzerland.

The University of Fribourg hosted a symposium with the title “Muslim Hostility: Society, Media and Politics” organized by the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism (FCR), the Swiss Centre for Islam, the Society of the University of Freiburg (SZIG), and the Centre for Religious Research of the University of Lucerne (ZRF). The conclusion of this symposium was that Islamophobic attacks and hate crimes against Muslims are undeniably a fact. The narratives in which Islamophobia expresses itself in Swiss society reflect more about the religious illiteracy of the majority of Swiss society than about the real situation of Muslims in Switzerland.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This feeling of unnatural imposition of social forms, which are devastating in their prejudices, is detrimental, not only for Muslims, but for the society as a whole. Putting one part of society on the legal margins by denying its fundamental rights and not giving its members the opportunity to express themselves freely lacks legal fairness. To be regularly addressed through the lens of accusation is very limiting. These “less valuable people,” Muslims, certainly contribute to the country they live in - although this contribution is not of interest to the media as it does not make the headlines.

- The current statistics structure on discrimination against Muslims should be thought through anew. The reporting of incidents should be easier for the victims. The new FIOS contact structure for reporting and counselling should act as a mediator between the Muslim organizations, the existing Swiss NGOs, and the official structures.
- Courses, seminars and conferences for inter-religious dialogue and the fight against Islamophobia must be reinforced. Islamic centres should serve as hosts for such events, in order to break the climate of mistrust and prejudice.
- Muslim organizations must engage more and take greater responsibility in local communities. To counter Islamophobic groups, they have to bring people together at the local community level and promote more dialogue and exchange.
- Empowerment of women within Muslim organizations needs to be reinforced, and their inclusion in the public debate needs to be eased. Muslim women need to engage more to defend both their religious and gender rights.
- The social engagement of Muslims in local communities and their participation in existing political parties is needed to contribute to the social debates and the decision-making process.
- Special awareness and educational actions to ease the inclusion and social integration of people with a migration background should be developed through joint work with Muslim organizations.

Chronology

- **10.01.2017**: The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that schools are allowed to oblige young Muslim girls to participate in mixed swimming lessons.
- **17.01.2017**: Government Councillor Jacqueline Fehr put together a working group to define the conditions for Islamic pastors; the Reformed Church, the Catholic Church, the VIOZ and the Department of Justice and Home Affairs of the Canton of Zurich are represented.
• 20.03.2017: Two umbrella organizations of Albanian Muslims filed a charter, committing to the rule of law. ⁷⁹
• 23.03.2017: The Canton of Aargau created a school guide for easier handling of the religious challenges in schools.
• 17.05.2017: The Bosnian Grossmufti Husein Kavazović signed a joint charter with the president of the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches. In it, the Bosnian Muslims committed to the rule of law and equality based on the Swiss model. ⁸⁰
• 15.06.2017: Switzerland’s parliament adopted a motion that proposes halting the import of meat from animals that have been slaughtered in alleged inhumane ways.
• 23.08.2017: The Federal Council welcomes pastoral activities for Muslim army members.
• 11.09.2017: The symposium “Muslim Hostility: Society, Media and Politics” of the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism (ECR), the Swiss Center for Islam and Society of the University of Freiburg (SZIG), and the Centre for Religious Research of the University of Lucerne (ZRF) is held.
• 19.09.2017: SVP Motion 17.3681 “Stop the Expansion of Radical Islam in Switzerland!” is submitted.
• 29.09.2017: Addor Jean-Luc Parliamentary Initiative 17.485: “No Muslim Chaplains in the Swiss Army”.
• 14.10.2017: Vandal acts on the Muslim burial ground of a Lausanne cemetery.
• 18.10.2017: More than 500 people demonstrate against Islamophobia in Lausanne.
• 28.10.2017: Catalogue of demands in relation to “radical Islam” presented at the delegates’ meeting of the SVP.
• November 2017: Two hate attacks perpetuated on the construction grounds of a mosque in Grenchen (SO).
• 08.12.2017: Jacqueline Fehr presented guidelines intended to define the relationship between state and religious communities.
• 15.12.2017: The Valais cantonal parliament declared invalid a popular SVP initiative, stipulating that children cannot wear the headscarf in schools.

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

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

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

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

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

About SETA
Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brainstorming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.