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

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

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

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

About SETA
Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, 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 inacceptable reality experienced by millions of European citizens.

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

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

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

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

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

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

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

The first statistics, which were revealed for 2017 by the German State reveal around 71 attacks on mosques and 908 crimes against German Muslims (ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts). Germany also registered 1,413 attacks on refugees and 93 attacks on aid workers in Germany in the first 273 days of 2017. However, although the German state registered 71 attacks on mosques, the DITIB, which is an NGO, listed 101 attacks on mosques in Germany all throughout 2017. Therefore, bearing in mind also what the FRA revealed about the reluctance of Muslims to report incidents, one can claim that the estimated number of unknown cases might be more than eight times higher. There are various reasons for these phenomena; some of these include:
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

• Victims may not be aware of the reporting mechanisms.
• The victims’ possible social isolation or proximity to the perpetrator.
• The victims’ lack of trust in the authorities, due to fears that their claim will not be taken seriously.
• The victims’ fear of being victimized again by police officers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels

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

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

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Islamophobia. These civil society organizations argue that “there are still some misconceptions by the European institutions with regards to the issue of Islamophobia. With the generalised suspicion against Muslims, it is of utmost importance for EU policy makers not to fall into the trap of treating Muslims as potential problems but rather as human beings whose fundamental rights can be violated. 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.
bobia. 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 ODHR 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.\(^\text{12}\) We think this would be a positive step to combatting Islamophobia in the OSCE region and, therefore, welcome the preparation of such a guide.

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

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


\(^{14}\) 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 apvienīb) was even more radical in its program in which it stated that it was “in support of not letting into Liepāja illegal immigrants called ‘refugees’ – potential criminals, terrorists and idlers! There will be no mosques here!” 22

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

We observe a general trend within centrist political parties to co-opt the Islamophobic discourse of right-wing political parties. The former president of Romania, Traian Basescu, proclaimed in the midst of a debate on a mosque in Bucharest that this was
“a risk to national security,” and argued that “part of the Islamization of Europe is building mosques everywhere.” During a local council election in Bucharest in June 2016, several leading Bucharest mayoral candidates argued for a referendum on the mosque, amongst them the current mayor Gabriela Firea of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat – PSD).

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

In Spain, former president of Madrid and of the senate, and former minister of culture, Esperanza Aguirre, tweeted that January 2 was a glorious day for Spanish women who otherwise would not enjoy any freedom under the rule of Islam. In Slovakia, former president Robert Fico argued that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia.”

In Hungary, the ruling conservative Fidesz competed in Islamophobic rhetoric with the far right. It finally managed to make anti-Muslim narratives become un-
contested and thus realized a support of an overwhelming portion of the population. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán became famous for the alleged conspiracy of George Soros to Islamize Europe with the help of “hordes of migrants raping Europe.”

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

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

Denying the Suffering

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

The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

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

Online Islamophobia

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

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

Legalizing Islamophobia

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

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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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\textsuperscript{38} was launched to amend a law in favor of a “Burka Ban.” Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki,\textsuperscript{39} a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims.\textsuperscript{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”\textsuperscript{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


\textsuperscript{38} “Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing the proposal that an act be enacted” as defined in “MOT Eduskuntasanasto,” a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister’s Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from https://mot.kieli.org/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?ui=fi&field&height=147.


\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{51}

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

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

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

### Threatening the Religious Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

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

On a European level, the European Citizens’ Initiative against Extremism (Stop Extremism) was founded and recognized on June 7, 2017 by the European Commission. Among its initiators are Seyran Ates and Efgani Dönmez, who are known for their notorious Islamophobic positions. Supporters include well-known Islamophobes such as Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, Ralph Ghadban, Saida Keller-Messahli, and Necla Kelek. The initiative, which came under criticism when leaks by the weekly *Falter* revealed that more than 20,000 Euros, the budget specified by the EU Commission, could potentially be used to restrict Muslims’ religious activities. Stop Extremism calls for “the introduction of a joint, EU-wide watch list to which individuals and organizations with an extremist background could be added” as well as for the introduction of an “Extremism-free” certification for organizations and businesses. 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-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DENMARK

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

(Source: National Police)

BELGIUM

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

AUSTRIA

256 Islamophobic incidents were documented.

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

- **121** Islamophobic incidents were reported.  
  (Source: Observatory of Islamophobia)

- **19** Muslim places of worship were closed by the government; **749** individuals were placed under house arrest; **over 4,500** police raids were conducted; and the list of individuals under government surveillance has reached **25,000**.

- **17,393** individuals were enrolled in the Terrorism Prevention Database (FSPRT).

GERMANY

- **100** attacks occurred on mosques.  
  (Source: DITIB and German State)

- **908** attacks took place targeting German Muslims.

- **60%** of all Muslim teaching staff felt discriminated.  
  (Source: Karim Fereidooni)

- There were **1,906** criminal attacks on refugees (5.2 attacks per day).

- There were **286** attacks against refugee shelters (0.8 attacks per day).

- **132** criminal acts and physical attacks against (refugee) aid workers occurred (0.4 attacks per day).  
  (Source: German state)

MALTA

- **7%** of Muslims have experienced physical violence.

- **25%** of Muslims have experienced harassment.
**NORWAY**
- In 2017, **14%** of Muslims experienced harassment.

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

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

UNITED KINGDOM

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

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

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

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

SWEDEN

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

SPAIN

• In 2017, 546 attacks took place against Muslims.
  (Source: Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia)
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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Executive Summary

The year 2017 was challenging for the United Kingdom. The country continued to live under the shadow of the June 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union, with a notable strengthening of nationalist-nativist narratives that feed hostility against all minority groups. This was also a year with an unusually large number of deadly terrorist incidents and a significant spike in hate crimes both off- and online. The overall figure for reported hate crime cases increased by nearly 29% nationally to just over 80,000; but the increase in religiously aggravated hate crime reached 35%, the overwhelming majority of which relates to anti-Muslim instances, with Islamophobic attacks rising by 40% in Greater London. The number of attacks on Muslim places of worship climbed to 110 from 47 in the previous year.

The publication of the new report on Islamophobia by the Runnymede Trust, twenty years after its landmark first report in 1997, offered an opportunity and space for taking stock. Calling for Islamophobia to be defined officially as “anti-Muslim racism”, as this report has also done in the past, the report also noted that increased public awareness has not reversed the intensification, institutionalisation, and normalisation of Islamophobia in contemporary British society.

Contrary to what PM Theresa May said in the wake of the attack on Finsbury Park Mosque in June, Islamophobia should not be restricted to a discussion of extremism. In employment (recent data showed significant distortions caused by discrimination from recruitment to workplace); in education (where the government watchdog has been accused of singling out Muslims by authorising inspectors to interview pupils who go to school wearing the hijab); in counter-terrorism (with two-thirds of all referrals involving ‘concerns over Islamic terrorism’); and in media (where sectors of the mainstream press continue to reproduce Islamophobia and certain tabloid titles were accused of systematically inciting anti-Muslim hatred in 2017); Islamophobia has become embedded in mainstream narratives and institutions. Meanwhile, the government’s counter-terrorism Prevent strategy continues to affect disproportionately Muslim communities, extending into places of employment, education, and public service.

In a year also dominated by snap parliamentary elections, some party and cross-party initiatives to combat Islamophobia offered a welcome respite from an otherwise challenging environment. A similar positive message has been offered by the tireless work of NGOs that continue to fight against Islamophobic narratives, lead research projects, and provide support for victims and vulnerable targets of anti-Muslim hate crime.

Nevertheless, Islamophobia continues to cast a grave shadow on Muslims and their communities in the UK. Framing the conversation on the basis of security versus extremism, ‘British values’ and ‘muscular liberalism’ versus immigration, free-
dom versus human rights, has not yielded sufficient space for Muslim counter-narratives that could also effectively challenge and then alter assumptions and stereotypes about them, their communities, and their faith. Lack of progress in terms of defining either extremism in general or Islamophobia in particular continues to undermine initiatives to tackle it effectively.

Introduction

During a TV interview in January 2018, the US president Donald J Trump was asked whether he regretted having retweeted anti-Muslim material from the Twitter account of Jayda Fransen, the deputy leader of the far-right Islamophobic group Britain First, two months earlier. (Fig. 1) While he seemed willing to offer an apology of sorts, claiming that he knew “nothing about Britain First”, he repeated his belief that ‘Islamic terror’ remains a threat to the UK and the world: “Radical Islamic terror, whether you like talking about it or not, you look at what’s going on in the U.K., you look at what’s going on all over the world. … It was done because I am a big believer in fighting radical Islamic terror.”

Since announcing his candidacy for US president back in 2015, Trump had never resisted the temptation to talk in apocalyptic terms about a ‘massive Muslim problem’ in the UK and accuse British authorities of trying to disguise the extent of the alleged threat. Following the terrorist attack in London Bridge and the Borough Market attack in early June, Trump had openly criticised the city’s first Muslim mayor, Sadiq Khan, for what he saw as his failure to recognise the severity of the threat. In October 2017, in the aftermath of the publication of the official crime statistics in England and Wales, he intervened publicly by linking the spike in crime with the “spread of radical Islamic


terror”. After he received a rare rebuke from the British PM, Theresa May, for reposting the material from Britain First, the US president hit back by advising her to deal with the “destructive radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom” rather than focusing on him.

The year had started with a promising judicial development in the fight against far-right extremism - the proscription of the neo-Nazi hate group National Action, the first ever in the UK to face such a ban. In September, the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, extended the ban to two related neo-Nazi organisations (NS131 and Scottish Dawn) as aliases of National Action. Since November 2016 at least, there have also been official calls and a number of petitions for the proscription of Britain First because of its extremist attitude to Islam and immigrants. Stifled by Britain’s first-past-the-post electoral system that makes it very hard for small parties to translate votes into parliamentary representation, the British Islamophobia far right continues to lurk in the shadowy fringes of the political system. A large influx of new members into UKIP just ahead of yet another leadership election in July prompted fears that extreme Islamophobes were preparing a takeover led by the leadership candidate Anne Marie Waters. Waters, who had publicly described Islam as “an expansionist, political, totalitarian and supremacist faith, commanded to world domination”, eventually lost to Henry Bolton; but the fight for the ideological soul of UKIP and the populist right in Britain is far from over.

Meanwhile, the Runnymede Trust published a new report of the state of Islamophobia in the country, marking the twentieth anniversary of the publication of its first landmark report back in 1997. The new report noted that, while awareness of the discrimination against Muslims has grown, the net result has been an “intensification and banalisation of Islamophobic sentiment, policy and practice in Britain” during the intervening years between the two reports. Although electoral

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support for extremist and populist anti-Islam parties in the UK has remained low - and may even have fallen recently in voting percentage terms after UKIP’s poor showing in the June elections, Islamophobia has continued to make inroads into the political and social mainstream.

**Significant Incidents and Developments**

2017 turned out to be an election year after the decision of PM Theresa May to go to the polls and seek a fresh mandate that would strengthen her government’s position in the Brexit negotiations. The election of 8 June resulted in a hung parliament and the formation of a new Conservative-led government supported by the small Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland.

But the year was largely overshadowed by a series of terrorist incidents with significant casualties. On 22 March, four civilians were killed and a further 49 were injured when a man drove his car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge, before crashing into the perimeter fence of the Palace of Westminster. He then attempted to enter the grounds of the Palace of Westminster, where he attacked a police officer who tried to stop him and was shot dead.

Two months later, on 22 May, a suicide bomb attack took place in the foyer of the Manchester Arena at the end of an Ariana Grande concert. In what was the worst terrorist attack in the UK since the London bombings of 7 July 2005, 22 people were killed and about 250 were injured, the majority teenagers attending the music concert.

Then on 3 June another terrorist incident occurred in the London Bridge area of central London, leaving behind eight people dead and at least 48 injured. Three terrorists drove a van at high speed across London Bridge, crashing into pedestrians

![Figure 2: Number of racially or religiously aggravated crimes recorded by police, 2016/17.](image)

on a busy Saturday night. They then went on a shooting rampage in the nearby Borough Market, where they attacked people with knives.13

A significant spike in recorded racially and religiously aggravated hate crime in the wake of each of the three incidents was recorded.14 (Fig. 2) This trend culminated in another terrorist incident involving a man who drove a vehicle into people who had just finished their evening prayer at a mosque in Finsbury Park, north London. The attack left one dead and 10 more injured. After the attack, the driver, who was reportedly quoted saying “I want to kill all Muslims” and “This is for London Bridge”, was protected from the anger of the public by the mosque’s imam until the police arrived on the scene and arrested him.15

On 15 September, a homemade bomb was detonated inside a train at Parsons Green Underground station, west London.16 While there were no deaths as a result of the explosion, ten passengers suffered injuries. In the aftermath of the attack, the British government raised the threat level for the country to its highest (‘red’) point for the following two days.17

Finally, on 23 June, a man drove his van at a curry house owner in Harrow, north-west London. Just before his attack he had given a Nazi salute and shouted “white power”. The driver turned out to be a Britain First supporter and told a police officer that he intended to “kill a Muslim”.18 The attack took place on the first anniversary of the Brexit vote.

Such an atmosphere of political fluidity, on the one hand, and heightened tension and perceived insecurity, on the other, has nurtured dominant narratives of securitisation in an array of fields, from integration and immigration to political/social participation and adherence to ‘British values’.19 In this particular respect, 2017 proved a particular tough year for making political interventions and reclaiming the conversation.


Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Politics

The 2017 election campaign was affected significantly by the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. Predictably it was UKIP that made the most out of the security and identity issues during the election campaign, seizing every discursive opportunity to whip up anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant feeling.

In late May, and in the shadow of the Manchester terrorist attack, the (then) party leader Paul Nuttall described “radical Islam” as “a cancer that needs to be cut out”, while the party’s deputy chairwoman, Suzanne Evans, claimed that mainstream politicians who had voted in parliament to restrict immigration controls, including the PM, bore some responsibility for the Manchester attack.20 The UKIP election platform contained an ‘Integration Agenda’, launched on 24 April, whose every single stipulation targeted explicitly or implicitly Muslims by reproducing a series of stereotypical narratives. (Fig. 3) When asked, Nuttall responded that “this isn’t an attack specifically on Muslims, it’s all about integration” and security concerns.21 The manifesto promised to push a public ban on “face coverings” and proscribe sharia courts in the UK. It also included a series of measures with a distinct anti-Muslim character, such as “moratorium on any new Islamic state schools”22 and immediate closure of those schools that “taught or imposed ... Islamism ideology on the children”; and calls for girls at risk of female genital mutilation to face medical checks on a yearly basis.23

It is encouraging that during the election campaign the UK’s three main political parties (Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats) treaded a more careful path between support for equality and diversity, on the one hand, and concerns about security and immigration, on the other. Nevertheless, the Conservative Party was singled out for criticism for three further reasons. First, the party’s decision to impose a centrally selected candidate in non-target (i.e. safe) parliamentary seats resulted in a situation where the overall figure of Conservative parliamentary candidates with a Muslim background was halved in comparison to the 2015 election, with very few of them having realistic chances of being elected. The result was that only three Conservative MPs with a Muslim background were elected in the 2017 parliament, at a time where the overall figure increased to a record 15 (with 12 Labour MPs).

Second, the Conservative Party’s decision to reselect Zac Goldsmith for the south-west London constituency of Richmond Park was widely criticised in the light of the candidate’s record of campaigning for the post of the Mayor of London in 2016. Goldsmith had been largely discredited because his mayoral campaign had attempted to associate his opponent, the current mayor Sadiq Khan, with extremists and terrorism.

The third reason that exposed the Conservative Party to criticism for its attitude to communities with a Muslim background concerned its election pledge to retain and extend the Prevent strand of the government’s counter-terrorism strategy - a strand that has been repeatedly singled out for criticism for its effect on Muslim communities in the past. According to the recently published 2015-16 figures for Prevent referrals, a person with a Muslim background was

40 times more likely to be referred than others. While both Labour and Liberal Democrats pledged in their manifestos to “review” or “scrap” the Prevent programme as ineffective and potentially damaging to minority communities, the Conservatives fought the election on a promise to extend it through a new Commission for Counter Extremism “to fight extremism in all its forms” - a plan that was announced in the wake of the Manchester attack. Launching the new Commission without a robust definition of what extremism means, however, was criticised by the former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, David Anderson QC. When the government announced in January 2018 that the new body would be headed by Sara Khan, a controversial figure known for her support for the government’s pursuit of the Prevent agenda, widespread criticism focused on the appointee’s links with the Home Office that raised serious doubts about the independence and impartiality of the new Commission.

The Labour Party was not immune to accusations of Islamophobia either. During the election campaign, a constituency candidate was forced to withdraw after a report suggested that he sent out tweets calling for the eradication of Islam from Europe. In August, Sarah Champion, the Labour MP for Rotherham, resigned from the shadow cabinet after she had used her column in The Sun newspaper to argue that “British Pakistani men ARE raping and exploiting white girls… and it’s time we faced up to it”. (Fig. 4)

More recently, the Scottish Labour Party suspended the leader of its South Lanarkshire Council group after Anas Sarwar, member of the Scottish Parliament and candidate for the leadership of the Scottish Labour Party in 2017, accused him of saying to him during the campaign that “Scotland wouldn’t vote for a brown Muslim Paki.”

Justice System

September saw the publication of the report into the criminal justice system headed by the Labour Party MP David Lammy. The report’s main conclusion was that black and minority ethnic (BAME) individuals “still face bias, including overt discrimination, in parts of the justice system.” The report found that BAME groups were far more likely to be convicted and serve prison sentences than white women and men. It also noted with alarm that the number of Muslims in prison rose by more than 50% in the last decade, with Muslim males now making 15% of the male prison population. Only a small part of this increase is attributable to convictions on the basis of the anti-terrorist legislation. Instead, Dr Zubaida Haque, researcher for the Runnymede Trust, has argued that the increase in the figure is most likely the result of racial profiling and the persistence of cultural stereotypes about Muslims in British society. Particular attention has been drawn to the also significant increase of the percentage of women with a Muslim background in custody (6.3% of total female prisoners in 2017 as opposed to 5.2% in 2014).
Government statistics about the number of stop-and-searches carried out under Section 43 and 43A of the Terrorism Act 2000 have shown that, while the overall figure has been reduced by two-thirds since 2009/10, people with BAME backgrounds continue to be over-represented in the sample, with 29% of all targets identifying as Asian and 11% as Black/Black British. Still, according to the data captured in the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, the two UK minority groups included in the sample (immigrants and descendants from Pakistan/Bangladesh and from Sub-Saharan Africa) displayed significantly higher than average trust in the legal system and in extent of stops by police over the last five years.

The year ended with a high-profile legal case against the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) for race discrimination. Although the MoJ agreed to implement the recommendations of the Lammy report, it has been criticised for the continuing under-representation of BAME backgrounds in the judiciary. What sets this legal case apart is that it has been brought on by three judges, including Peter Harbert QC who received a formal warning from the ministry after he had publicly criticised as racist the decision to bar the former mayor of the Tower Hamlets borough in east London, Lutfur Rahman, from holding public office for five years.

Employment
In the field of employment, the year was marked by a ruling from the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in relation to a case - dating back to 2006 - of two female employees from Belgium and France who had been fired for wearing a headscarf to work. The ECJ ruled that employers could enforce bans on the wearing of “any political, philosophical or religious sign” as it did not constitute direct discrimination as long as the ban applied to all workers on the grounds of religious neutrality. The court ruling was widely criticised by faith groups and human rights organisations alike across Europe. The British PM Theresa May also criticised the ruling, stating

that “it is the right of all women to choose how they dress and we don’t intend to legislate on this issue … it is not for government to tell women what they can or cannot wear and we want to continue that strong tradition of freedom of expression”. 53 Whether the ruling will have a significant effect on UK employment practices or law in relation to religious freedom is yet to be seen.

Muslims continued to experience significant levels of disadvantage in employment. Obstacles occurred at all stages, from the recruitment process to the workplace environment and from career progression to levels of pay. The 2017 UK Race Disparity Audit figures for the labour market showed great disparities between the employment rates of different ethnic groups living in the UK. The percentage of people with Muslim background in employment lagged significantly behind white groups, with the figure for Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in particular being the lowest among all individuals aged 25–49. 54 A report published by the Social Mobility Commission on the prospects of children of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origins noted that, while they performed strongly in school attainment, they were far less likely to be employed in professional or managerial jobs, largely due to the persistence of discriminatory (conscious and unconscious) attitudes at the workplace. 55 A more recent report by the same body, published in September, highlighted that only 6% of people with Muslim background hold professional jobs (the equivalent figure for the entire population is 10%). A similar gap is observed in relation to employment, with less than 20% of Muslims (as opposed to 34.9% overall) in full-time jobs. Those at the intersection of statuses were even more vulnerable to discrimination: 56 for example, it was noted that women with a Muslim background were suffering double discrimination. 57 Meanwhile, the publication of the second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey in the autumn confirmed that, while discrimination on religious ground when seeking employment and in the workplace is lower in the UK than in most of the other 15 EU member states included in the report, a still significant 6–7% of those surveyed acknowledged that they had suffered discrimination. Of those, the report found that 13% made

a report or filed a formal complaint based on their experience - a figure that is above average for the sample used in the report.\textsuperscript{58}

The report of the Social Mobility Commission also identified a number of more specific factors that affected adversely the prospects of young Muslims in particular: minority ethnic-sounding names, wearing a headscarf for women, stereotyping, as well as harassment at workplace.\textsuperscript{59} Research carried out by the Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship of the University of Bristol found that male job candidates with a Muslim background were up to 76\% less likely to get a job compared to a white male British candidate of the same age and qualifications. A similar trend was confirmed in a BBC TV programme, in which it was shown that the name ‘Adam’ was three times more likely to be preferred for the job of religious education teacher than the name ‘Mohammed’.\textsuperscript{60}

The number of people with a Muslim background in employment has consistently risen in recent years in the UK. However the unemployment rate among the group is currently more than twice as high as that of any other community.\textsuperscript{61} Meanwhile, changes to the counter-terrorism legislation introduced in 2015 under Section 26(1) of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act\textsuperscript{62} have resulted in an escalation of discriminatory practices against Muslims in the workplace. As the new legislation is based on the concept of targeting a pre-criminal space, the statutory duty of public sector workers in the National Health Service, educational institutions, and government has been accused of bringing discrimination into the workplace and introducing a culture of distrust among colleagues. Although the overwhelming majority of referrals (nine in ten) are rejected or dismissed after a short investigation,\textsuperscript{63} this culture of pre-criminal suspicion is magnifying pervasive societal stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. In July, the High Court rejected a test legal challenge brought by Dr Salman Butt against the government’s 2015 guidance for implementing the new ‘duty to prevent’ guidance in higher and further education institutions. In the ruling, the court dismissed the notion that Prevent constituted

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{60} Adesina, Zack. “Adam or Mohamed - Who Gets the Job?” BBC News, 6 Feb. 2017, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-38751307
\item \textsuperscript{62} Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/26/enacted
\item \textsuperscript{63} “Hundreds Referred to Counter Terror Scheme by NHS, In Short Radio 5 Live.” BBC News, www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04gsxhp.
an attack on both free speech in general and Islam in particular. Nevertheless the ongoing massive over-referral of people with a Muslim background via the workplace stipulations of the Prevent programme is a distressing reflection of a deeper institutionalised Islamophobic prejudice.

Education

The shadow of the 2014 ‘Trojan Horse’ investigation into an alleged organised attempt to introduce a “Salafist curriculum” into a number of schools of Birmingham continued to loom over the UK education sector in 2017. The government’s adviser on integration, Dame Louise Casey, claimed that a number of similar initiatives to ‘take over’ schools were still in operation across the country. In March, a dispute between a Catholic school in Birmingham and the city council’s Equality chief, Waseem Zaffar, escalated into a public row that eventually resulted in the councillor’s resignation. At the heart of the dispute was Zaffar’s public reprimand of a local Catholic school that had prevented a four-year-old student from wearing the hijab. The incident prompted another intervention by Dame Louise Casey, who accused the city council of not having “learnt lessons (from the) ‘Trojan Horse’ precedent.

In May, the government finally dropped the disciplinary case against the senior leaders of the Park View Trust that was at the heart of the earlier Trojan Horse investigation, reversing an earlier decision to impose lifetime bans on them.

Three years of investigation into ‘Trojan Horse’ have produced no concrete evidence for the alleged ‘conspiracy’ to take over schools. Nevertheless this did not stop Nick Timothy, the former chief of staff of the prime minister, from resurrecting the ghost of ‘Trojan Horse’ by penning an inflammatory article published in

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The Telegraph in November. Timothy focused his attack on a panel discussion organised by MEND and titled ‘Trojan Horse: The Facts’, accusing the organisation of “plotting to mislead the local community” and of helping those behind ‘Trojan Horse’ to do the same “all over again, and right under our noses”. The event was eventually cancelled by its organisers but the moral panic stirred up by mainstream media and public figures over the incident exposed once again how divisive the legacy of the ‘Trojan Horse’ investigation continues to be.

In November, Ofsted, the government’s education watchdog, was accused of “reinforcing an anti-Muslim culture” in the wake of its decision to allow inspectors to question girls who wear the hijab in the school. The Ofsted chief, Amanda Spielman, justified the measure as part of a campaign against the “sexualisation of young girls” but this explanation did not stop more than 1,000 faith leaders, teachers, and academics from signing an open letter and protesting the measure publicly, branding it “a kneejerk, discriminatory and institutionally racist response”. (Fig. 5) Ofsted has since sought to reassure its critics that the measure will be introduced sensitively and without any intention to “single out” Muslims. However, as the recent example of the row over a London primary school’s decision to ban younger pupils from wearing the hijab has illustrated, Ofsted and its chief have chosen a far more interventionist course of action that is unlikely to shake off the suspicion that its new policy targets Muslims unduly.

Figure 5: Protest against Ofsted’s recently hardening stance on wearing the hijab in schools.
The impact of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act on the education sector is significant. It is telling that schools and universities produced one-third of the referrals in 2015-16 - by far the largest single referral stream even when compared to the equivalent number referred by the police.\(^7\) The extension of the ‘duty to prevent’ to the education sector has been criticised by Conservative MP Lucy Allan as heavy-handed and “undermining the trust between teachers and pupils”.\(^7\) Meanwhile, a joint research project by Coventry, Durham, and Huddersfield Universities, has revealed that teachers have serious misgivings about using anti-radicalisation measures in the classroom, fearing that it would stigmatise Muslim students and would undermine wider social cohesion efforts.\(^8\) Similar concerns have been expressed by university lecturers who feel increasingly pressurised into a “security regime” that rests on undefined concepts and blurred distinctions.\(^8\) A report published by Just Yorkshire went further, describing the effect of the ‘duty to prevent’ in the higher education sector as “built upon a foundation of Islamophobia and racism”.\(^8\)

**Media**

The role of media in inciting Islamophobia and perpetuating stereotypes about Muslims in the UK came under intense scrutiny in 2017. Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, a former Conservative cabinet minister, has accused British newspapers of Islamophobia and hate speech and called for a parliamentary investigation into the issue.\(^8\) Tabloid newspapers have repeatedly become targets of criticism: for example, The Sun described the Finsbury Park terrorist attack in June as a “revenge terror incident” and was notably slow to discuss the incident in the same way that it treated preceding terrorist attacks in London and Manchester.\(^8\) In August, the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, also added his voice to the criticism of the right-wing tabloid press, accusing The Sun of “inciting Islamophobia”.\(^8\) Corbyn was respond-

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ing to a protest against the newspaper’s columnist Trevor Kavanagh. Kavanagh had used the phrase “Muslim problem” to conclude an article that reproduced nearly every single anti-Muslim stereotype about immigration, terrorism, gender discrimination, sexual violence, and ‘political correctness’. The newspaper and columnist have since been referred to the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) by both Tell MAMA and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. However IPSO ruled that the article, while offensive and containing inaccuracies, did not breach its code of conduct.

In the wake of this verdict, IPSO was widely criticised as unfit for purpose and in desperate need of a new, more robust code of practice. It has since been urged to investigate the broader “climate of hostility” against Muslims and not just stories with anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim content in isolation. Cases of misreporting and misrepresenting that had an adverse effect on individuals and communities with a Muslim background have increased in recent years, contributing to the trend of rising hostility to Islam and Muslims. The case of the moral panic stirred up by newspapers involving an adoption case in Tower Hamlets, an east London borough with a sizeable population of people identifying as Muslim, is telling in this respect. The press campaign accused the council of allegedly failing a Christian girl by placing her with Muslim foster carers. In a press campaign that started from an investigation carried out by The Times and then run for days in the front page of a number of British newspapers over August, it was alleged that the foster family banned the girl from eating pork, had her crucifix removed, and had made her express a hatred of Christmas and Easter. The council was ordered to carry out an investigation, which has since rejected the allegations made in the original article of The Times.

Controversy also surrounded a television programme titled My Week As a Muslim that was broadcast by Channel 4 in October. The programme featured a British white woman, who had previously expressed anti-Muslim views and had supported calls for a ban on the ‘burqa’, immersing herself in the life of a Brit-

ish-Pakistani family and adopting their dressing habits for a week. By being exposed to everyday discrimination, intimidation, and abuse experienced by many Muslim women, the woman featured on the programme revisited many of her original anti-Muslim attitudes in the light of the negative experiences she had experienced herself during the week-long period of filming, which coincided with the Manchester terrorist attack.\footnote{Source: The Times (28 Aug. 2017) and the Daily Mail (30 Aug. 2017).} While the programme was praised for its attempt to make the public aware of the extent of Islamophobia in British society,\footnote{Khan, Fozia. “I Produced My Week as a Muslim. Its Intention Was to Educate, Not Offend | Fozia Khan.” The Guardian, 24 Oct. 2017, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/23/producer-my-week-as-a-muslim-brownface-documentary.} the producers were widely criticised for their decision to use a white British woman in ‘brown face’ make-up for the programme.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

In a year like 2017, dominated by a series of terrorist attacks, it is hardly surprising that the number of reported cases of hate crime soared (although disconcertingly the number of criminal prosecutions for hate crimes recorded a fall).\footnote{Dearden, Lizzie. “Hate-Crime Prosecutions Fall Despite Spike in Reported Attacks After Brexit Referendum.” The Independent, 16 Oct. 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brexit-hate-crime-prosecutions-fall-attack-report-spike-cps-report-statistics-islamophobia-racist-a8003716.html} This spike followed another record rise in hate crime following the June 2016 referendum on membership...
of the EU. Published figures for the 2016-17 period in England and Wales point to a 29% increase in comparison to the 2015-16 period - and these figures extend only until the immediate aftermath of the first of the terrorist attacks (Westminster Bridge, 22 March 2017). According to Greater Manchester Police, the attack in Manchester in May resulted in a fivefold increase in Islamophobic hate crime in the region. Following the London Bridge attack in early June, figures collated by the Mayor of London’s office recorded a similarly exponential rate of increase in hate crime targeting Muslims in the capital. The aggregate figures for reported crime cases in Greater London for the entire year 2017 released by Scotland Yard confirmed the spike with an almost 40% rise (1,678 from 1,204 in the previous year). Overall, the correlation between reporting of terrorist incidents and spikes in recorded hate crime incidents against Muslims has been confirmed by various pieces of research and official figures from the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), released in August. (Fig. 7)

But an extensive report on identity, race, and faith in England published by Hope not Hate (HnH) in the summer has painted a more complex picture of the correlation between terrorism, Islamophobia, and hate crime. HnH researchers found that, while the ‘liberal’ section of society has grown in number and confidence, the size of the ‘hostile’ cohort at the end of the spectrum has remained constant since 2011, with their views hardened in an increasing polarising political environment and with far more opportunities to express them and have them validated.\(^{102}\) The report also included a poignant caveat - that low(er)-level hate crimes remain largely unreported. This is a somber observation that rests on prior data showing only about one in ten cases of religiously motivated hate crimes as reported to the police.\(^{103}\) Even with allowances for better reporting in recent years, it is very likely that official statistics on anti-Muslim hate crime continue to underestimate the problem by a wide margin.

According to figures released in November by Tell MAMA for 2016, the majority of anti-Muslim hate crime incidents concern offline intimidation and violence. This category of hate crime involved verbal and non-verbal intimidating behaviour (by far the highest number with 54% of all reported cases), vandalism and threatening behaviour (both at 7%), and physical attack (19%). More than half of the reported incidents took place in public areas, with a smaller number of cases reported in the workplace (9%) and in educational institutions (8%). (Fig. 8)


Women were the target of offline violence in 56% of the reported cases. It is important to note that two-thirds of the female victims were described as ‘visibly Muslim’ - a term that referred overwhelmingly to religious clothing. In June, it was revealed that various Muslim women going to the Al-Madina Mosque in Barking, London had been subjected to abuse - mostly verbal but in some instances involving spitting or aggressive physical contact. Similar forms of verbal and physical attacks were reported in Manchester and Belfast in the wake of the terrorist attack in May as well as later in the year. In June, a young Muslim woman suffered from life-changing injuries after she and her cousin Jameel Muhktar became victims of an unprovoked acid attack. It took a few days for the police investigation to treat the attack as a hate crime linked to Islamophobia.

Places of worship were associated with some of the most serious Islamophobic physical attacks of 2017. During the March-July period (which coincided with the terrorist incidents in London and Manchester), a reported 110 mosques were attacked. This figure represented a dramatic spike from the 47 cases reported during

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the same period in 2016. Unsurprisingly, it was Manchester (9 versus none) and London (17 versus 8) where the largest increases were reported. On average, since 2013 one mosque has been targeted every week, according to figures released by Tell MAMA.

Two serious physical assaults in or close to places of worship were recorded within days from each other. On 25 September, Dr Nasser Kurdy, a Manchester-based surgeon who had treated victims outside the Manchester Arena in May was stabbed in the neck on his way to a mosque in Altrinham, south Manchester, by a 28-year-old man. The other incident occurred in Birmingham on 30 September, where a 14-year-old boy suffered life-threatening injuries after being stabbed multiple times outside the Idaa Maarif-e-Islam Mosque. A further incident, treated as a racial assault by the police, took place in July outside Jamia Masjid Ghausia in Birchills, Walsall, leaving behind two people with relatively minor injuries.

One major case of arson attack against a place of worship was recorded. It concerned the Manchester Nasfat Islamic Centre, in Newton Heath, which was destroyed completely on 16 July, having been targeted eight times in the past four years. Two other

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incidents of arson attack were also recorded. The first occurred in early January, when the Al Falah Braintree Islamic Centre in Braintree, Essex, was targeted by two men who broke the door, threw bricks inside, and finally launched a burning refuse bag onto the roof. This same mosque had been attacked in 2013, in the wake of the terrorist attack that claimed the life of Lee Rigby. The second incident was reported just hours after the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in May, when a man was caught on CCTV approaching a mosque in Oldham, Greater Manchester and setting a bottle of flammable liquid alight. (Fig. 11)

Incidents of vandalism and threatening behaviour included offensive graffiti on the walls of Sutton Islamic Centre in south London; a pig’s head placed outside an Islamic centre in Newtownards, Belfast, with associated offensive content sprayed onto the walls of the building; pork posted through the door of the Belfast Islamic Centre; and a series of threatening letters sent to a number of mosques across the country, including the Finsbury Park Mosque only weeks after the attack on its members.

Finally, far-right organisations led protests against plans for the construction of expansions of mosques. The redevelopment plans for Maidstone Mosque attracted numerous visits by supporters of the controversial far-right group Britain First. Over the summer, in Perth, Scotland, the council’s decision to grant permission for

122. Source: swns.com
the construction of a mosque prompted a demonstration organised by the Scottish Defence League. In October, the announcement of plans to redevelop the Golders Green Hippodrome auditorium in Barnet, London into a Muslim community centre caused a wave of protests by local residents.

Internet

The majority of anti-Muslim hate crime has been occurring online for some years and 2017 was far from an exception in this respect. Like with offline instances of Islamophobia, the shift towards normalisation of anti-Muslim online hate has been ongoing in popular Internet platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google Plus. In addition, research has shown that the boundaries between on- and offline hate crime tend to be overstated, especially for victims of hate crimes who find it increasingly hard to isolate online threats from offline intimidation and abuse that they suffer offline.130

In a year when the number of both offline and online instances of anti-Muslim hate and violence increased exponentially in the wake of a series of terrorist attacks, the UK government and parliament took some steps to address the growing threat of online hate crime. In August, the director of public prosecutions, Alison Saunders, announced a new policy of taking online hate crime more seriously, treating it as equivalent to offences carried out face-to-face.131 Police officers will actively help victims of online hate crime to lodge their reports in order to pressure social media platforms and facilitate prosecution.132

Initiatives in the direction of countering the spread of hate speech online on the EU level have been ongoing for the past two years. In May 2016, the European Commission agreed with Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube on a “Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online” to help users notify illegal hate speech, im-

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prove the support to civil society as well as the coordination with national authorities. As a result, social media companies, Facebook, Twitter, and Google’s YouTube have greatly accelerated their removal of online hate speech, reviewing over two-thirds of complaints within 24 hours. The companies managed to meet the 24-hour removal target in 81 per cent of cases, compared with 51 per cent in May 2017 when the European Commission last monitored their compliance with the code of conduct. In December, Twitter suspended the accounts of Britain First leaders Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen, as well as the account of the far-right English Defence League.

The problem of Internet bots has also been recognised as a crucial contributing factor to the increase in the volume and reach of Islamophobic content. The image of a hijab-wearing woman walking past the victims of the Westminster Bridge attack in London became viral because it allegedly showed her walking away from the crime scene with an attitude of seeming aloofness. (Fig. 12) It has since been proven that the original image had been posted by a fake Twitter account in Russia, whose goal was to spread anti-Muslim content among UK social media users. Bots that propagate selected hate content have proliferated in recent years and are getting increasingly sophisticated when it comes to detection.

![Figure 12: The image of a woman allegedly walking past victims of Westminster Bridge terrorist attack, used as part of an orchestrated Islamophobic campaign in the wake of the incident.](image)

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In spite of progress in detection and cooperation with social media platforms, the Home Affairs Select Committee of the UK parliament has repeatedly accused social media platforms of not doing enough to protect public safety and for profiting from hate content propagated by the far right. Facebook, Google, and Twitter have been singled out for their failure to act quickly to remove pages with anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish content and to mitigate the distorting effect of manipulation of web searches by websites associated with the far right. In spite of promises to look more seriously into inflammatory content posted by Britain First and other UK anti-Muslim organisations, Facebook has been more strongly criticised for its slower and patchier response to online hate crime. More recently, the government has announced that it has been working closely with Silicon Valley firms to target online ‘safe spaces’ for radicalisation and to push forward automated solutions for the swift removal of offensive digital content.

Central Figures in the Islamophobic Network

In late November, the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) held its satirical ‘Islamophobia Awards’ event. The overall winner for 2017 was no other than President Donald J Trump. Still, in a departure from previous years, the UK award was given not to an individual but to Ofsted, the education sector watchdog, in response to its decision to send inspectors to interview students who wear the hijab in school.

Ofsted won the accolade beating a shortlist of candidates that included high-profile names - among them the ex-leader of UKIP Nigel Farage. Farage continued to command significant media attention in 2017 after a bumper year in 2016 during which he celebrated the Leave victory in the EU referendum and be--

came a high-profile advisor to Trump’s successful presidential campaign. He was quick to attribute the Westminster Bridge terrorist attack to a systemic failure of multiculturalism that had created a “fifth column” of terrorists in western countries.\textsuperscript{147} In the wake of the London Bridge attack, he alluded to possible mass detentions of all those who are on a known or suspected terrorist list.\textsuperscript{148} Although he disagreed with calls to ‘ban Islam’\textsuperscript{149} or with the prospect of turning UKIP into an openly Islamophobic party;\textsuperscript{150} he also endorsed claims that there were “wholly Muslim areas” in London and other UK cities.\textsuperscript{151} He penned the foreword to a book written by his former senior advisor Raheem Kassam, now editor in chief of Breitbart London, endorsing the book’s theme of ‘no-go’ zones created by sharia law in the UK.\textsuperscript{152} (Fig. 13) He weighed into all controversial debates, from ‘grooming gangs’\textsuperscript{153} to openly backing the far-right Islamophobic Alternative For Germany (AfD) party in September’s German federal elections\textsuperscript{154} to Trump’s retweeting of Britain First videos.\textsuperscript{155}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{148} “Fox News Distances Itself from Farage and Hopkins’ Talk of Internment.” INews, 5 June 2017, inews.co.uk/news/politics/fox-news-distances-farage-hopkins-talk-internment.
\item \textsuperscript{151} “Nigel Farage Says London Blighted by ‘Wholly Muslim Areas’ as He Defends Donald Trump’s Response to the Attack.” The Telegraph, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/04/nigel-farage-says-london-blighted-wholly-muslim-areas-defends/.
\item \textsuperscript{156} Source: Amazon.
\end{itemize}
Katie Hopkins also made it to the shortlist of this year’s Islamophobia Awards, as she had in 2016.\(^{157}\) Hopkins has used both old and new media to stir up controversy and oftentimes come very close to incitement to hatred and violence against Muslims. Her tweet in the wake of the Manchester Arena attack in May that we need a “final solution” to “the problem” attracted the most criticism,\(^{158}\) earned her a referral to the police,\(^{159}\) and forced her to terminate her radio contract with LBC.\(^{160}\) (Fig. 14) When a minicab driver struck pedestrians outside the Natural History Museum in west London in October, Hopkins tweeted her theory that the incident was terror-related and questioned the motives behind the police verdict that the crash was a road accident.\(^{161}\) By the end of the year, she had left MailOnline by mutual consent, after a series of legal cases against her that resulted in a number of retractions and financial penalties imposed on the publisher.\(^{162}\)

Hopkins’ writings have followed a pattern of inflammatory language bent on mainstreaming a message of hate against Muslims, in Britain and on a global scale. In April, she used another abusive to insinuate a causal link between Ramadan fasting and an alleged spike in terrorist incidents in Europe.\(^{163}\) Her links with the European and US Islamophobic far right are well-documented: in July, she spent time with members of a far-right, vehemently Islamophobic group called Defend Europe in

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Sicily,\textsuperscript{164} while in late November, she addressed the David Horowitz Freedom Center, repeating her allegations about the “Muslim mayor of Londonistan” and areas of Britain controlled by a ‘Muslim mafia’.\textsuperscript{165}

Hopkins’ trajectory through anti-Muslim hate speech intersected on numerous occasions with that of another figure who also made it to the 2017 shortlist of the Islamophobia Awards: Tommy Robinson (née Stephen Christopher Yaxley and also known as Stephen Christopher Lennon), the founder and ex-leader of the English Defence League. Robinson joined Hopkins in pronouncing the incident outside the National History Museum in London as a “jihadi incident”.\textsuperscript{166} In December, Hopkins joined The Rebel Media website, a Canadian far-right opinion organisation that has for some time employed Robinson. But Robinson was especially prolific on the offline front in 2017. In April, he appeared in Birmingham alongside the leader of Britain First, Paul Golding, and his deputy, Jayda Fransen.\textsuperscript{167} In November, he was seen marching along with a Polish far-right group and other far-right organisations from many European countries in Warsaw, at an event where the slogan “Pray for Islamic Holocaust” appeared alongside “Remove Jewry from power”.\textsuperscript{168} (Fig. 15) Robinson’s 2017 book Mohammed’s Koran: Why Muslims Kill for Islam has been an Amazon bestseller in the UK, currently featuring an overall review rating of 4.5/5.

169. Source: Tommy Robinson’s Twitter feed, https://twitter.com/trobinsonnewera/media
Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Positive initiatives to counter Islamophobia have been urgently needed in a year dominated by unprecedented spikes in hate crime against Muslims. November was Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM2017) - an initiative organised by the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslims in the UK. (Fig. 16) This year MEND worked closely with the Police and Crime Commissioners and a wide range of government, education, media, and civil society organisations to raise awareness of Islamophobia and facilitate a culture of better reporting of incidents to the police.170 The IAM2017 was kicked off in the House of Commons, with an event that was attended by the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, MPs, and representatives of numerous rights organisations.171 Throughout the month, the organisers planned more than 60 well-attended events across the country.

In many other respects, the Labour Party led the way in the political mainstream’s fight against Islamophobia. In May and as part of the party’s political programme for the elections, the Labour Party published a Race and Faith manifesto that promised to lead the fight against Islamophobia and anti-Semitism in Britain. The manifesto pledged to take action against violence and hate crime, review the Prevent programme, and work to eliminate institutional biases in the use of stop and search powers.172 It was also Labour MP Naz Shah who organised a campaign against The Sun and its former political editor Trevor Kavanagh for the use of the phrase “Muslim problem” in an article published by the newspaper. The campaign brought together a formidable cross-party group of more than 100 politicians.173

170. MEND. “Islamophobia Awareness Month #IAM2017”, mend.org.uk/iam2017/.
Furthermore, numerous initiatives took the fight against Islamophobia literally to the streets of Britain. In October, London Metropolitan Police and Transport for London launched a campaign against Islamophobic hate crime on the capital's London's transport system. In Edinburgh, the City Council together with Police Scotland and the Scottish Government funded 13 community projects from a fund of £40K earmarked for initiatives to reduce prejudice, foster positive relationships, and combat Islamophobia in the Scottish capital.

Communities and civil society organisations expanded and diversified their efforts in the field of combating Islamophobia. Organisations such as the MEND, IHRC, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), Hope not Hate, Stop Funding Hate, and Tell MAMA engaged in an extraordinary portfolio of activities, in the direction of both exposing anti-Muslim prejudice and fostering a culture of better understanding that has empowered Muslim communities. But it was also smaller-scale civil society groups that made an invaluable contribution to this ongoing effort to fight anti-Muslim prejudice and hate, against the backdrop of an extraordinary challenging year. The Mercy For Mankind charity challenge, organised by the Ahamadiyya Muslim Youth Association, saw hundreds of young Muslims travel to the Lake District in north-west England to raise £500K for social causes and in the process dispel misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. On Christmas Eve, the West Yorkshire charity Penny Appeal launched the first mainstream television advertisement by a Muslim charity that sought to highlight the little-known role of British Muslims in helping vulnerable people across the UK and thus challenge stereotypes that Muslims are anti-Christmas. (Fig. 17) Meanwhile, 5 February 2017 was the third annual VisitMyMosque day, during which over 150 mosques across Britain opened their doors to all members of the community.

But perhaps the most powerful channel for challenging Islamophobia is the positive effort to give as many Muslims a voice and a presence in society. In July, a report with the title The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All was published. The report, chaired by Conservative MP Dominic Grieve, was the culmination of the 18-month work of the Citizens Commission on Islam.

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Participation and Public Life. Reacting to the increasing absence of Muslims from British civil society, members of the commission gave voice to a wide range of Muslim voices from all walks of life and from all concerns of the UK. The report urged the government to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice, along the lines of that adopted in 2016 for anti-Semitism.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

2017 was a landmark year for the debate on Islamophobia in the UK. The reasons for this assessment are both welcome and cause for profound concern for the future. The publication of the twentieth-anniversary report on Islamophobia from the Runnymede Trust has illustrated a mixed picture: on the one hand, increased awareness of Islamophobia in British society and the formation of a Muslim civil society as significant actors in the debate and on the other hand, an alarming deepening and normalisation of political and social mobilisation against Islam and Muslim communities. During the twenty years since the publication of the first report, Muslims have been found in a social field populated by hostile narratives centring on security, identity, nativism, acceptance of ‘British values’, and integration.

Nevertheless, it remains deeply frustrating that Islamophobia remains a slippery term that lacks a widely accepted official definition. Without a definition that recognises Islamophobia as a particular widespread form of anti-Muslim racism, and without a frank admission by all stakeholders of the extent of the problem not just among extremists but within mainstream society, the fight against Islamophobia will continue to be an increasingly uphill and deeply uneven one.


182. Source: Penny Appeal Twitter feed, https://twitter.com/pennyappeal/status/948339508835246080


In addition, the following recommendations are offered:

- Promote a culture of transparency and accountability in efforts to address discrimination against Muslims and other minority groups, across all areas of society (employment, justice, police, media).
- Review the state’s counter-terrorism strategy, with a view to revising assumption, processes, and provisions surrounding its Prevent strand in particular.
- Ensure that significantly more resources be made available for the gathering and processing of data regarding incidents of hate crime against Muslims, both off- and online.
- Strengthen and diversify measures to combat hate speech in social media, understanding that the Internet can function as a rehearsal for taboo-breaking behaviour, which in turn can influence attitudes and behaviours in various offline environments.
- Develop a holistic approach for targeting instances of anti-Muslim hate, recognising the cumulative effect of criminal behaviour in one sphere on other spaces.
- Provide training, in the form of briefing and workshops, to raise awareness of, and effectively combat, Islamophobia in a variety of contexts, from the media to public services and from the criminal justice system to the police.
- Promote more effective government action to tackle structural causes of inequality that continue to affect disproportionately communities with a Muslim background across the UK.
- Strengthen the role and accountability of government regulators, watchdogs, and independent regulatory bodies, particularly in fields that remain central to the propagation and normalisation of Islamophobia (press, education, Internet). In particular, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) has been found seriously wanting on numerous occasions in 2017.

Chronology

- **12.01.2017**: Arson attack against Al Falah Braintree Islamic Centre in Essex.
- **24.04.2017**: UKIP launches its ‘Integration Agenda’, which calls, among other things, for the banning of ‘face coverings’ and of sharia courts.
- **23.05.2017**: Arson attack against Oldham Islamic Centre.
- **23.05.2017**: Graffiti appear on wall of Glasgow Central Mosque.
- **23.05.2017**: Responding to the Manchester Arena attack, columnist Katie Hopkins tweeted, ‘We need a final solution’.
- **04.06.2017**: Stones thrown at the Islamic Centre on Orchard Street, Lincoln.
- **04.06.2017**: In an interview on the Fox network, Nigel Farage hinted that ‘internment camps’ for 20,000 Muslims ‘linked to extremist organisations’ may be needed in the future.
- **19.06.2017**: Finsbury Park terrorist attack: a man drove his van deliberately into a crowd of Muslim worshippers leaving the mosque in north London, causing 1 death and 11 injuries.
• **22.06.2017**: Greater Manchester Police reported a fivefold rise in Islamophobic hate crime in the region in the wake of the Manchester Arena attack.

• **16.07.2017**: Arson attack against Nasfat Mosque, Greater Manchester, leaves the building entirely destroyed.

• **10.08.2017**: The Home Office published figures showing a 29% increase in hate crime incidents.

• **16.08.2017**: Labour MP Sarah Champion resigned from shadow cabinet after having published an article in The Sun tabloid newspaper accusing ‘British Pakistani men’ of ‘rape and exploiting white girls’.

• **21.08.2017**: The Sun columnist Trevor Kavanagh used the phrase ‘Muslim problem’ in his article.

• **08.09.2017**: The report on the findings of a review of the criminal justice system headed by Labour MP David Lammy was published. The report noted that the number of Muslims in prison rose by 50% in the last decade.

• **25.09.2017**: Dr Nasser Kurdy, a Manchester-based surgeon who had treated victims outside the Manchester Arena in May was stabbed in the neck on his way to the mosque in Altrincham, south Manchester.

• **28.09.2017**: Following the ban on National Action in December 2016, two further far-right hate groups were banned by the Home Secretary Amber Rudd.

• **17.10.2017**: The Home Office hate crime figures for the 2016-17 period showed a 35% rise in religiously aggravated cases in England and Wales.

• **30.11.2017**: A 14-year-old boy suffered life-threatening injuries after being stabbed multiple times outside the Idaara Maarif-e-Islam Mosque in Birmingham.

• **23.11.2017**: IPSO, the independent review body of press, ruled that Trevor Kavanagh’s article (see 21.08 above) did not breach discrimination legislation.

• **27.11.2017**: Ofsted, the government’s education watchdog, was accused of reinforcing an anti-Muslim culture after its decision to question schoolgirls who wear the hijab.

• **27.11.2017**: Baroness Warsi, ex-minister and co-chair of the Conservative Party, accused UK newspapers of Islamophobia.

• **29.11.2017**: President Trump retweets Islamophobic videos from the Twitter account of the deputy leader of Britain First, Jayda Fransen.

• **18.12.2017**: Twitter bans the accounts of Britain First’s leader and deputy leader, as well as the account of the English Defence League.
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.