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

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

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

About SETA
Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.
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SETA is pleased to present the third edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) succeeding the reports of 2015 and 2016. This year, 40 prominent scholars and civil society actors from various European countries who specialize in different fields such as racism, gender, and discrimination studies, present 33 country reports. In addition to highlighting the developments of Islamophobia in key fields such as employment, education and politics, they provide precious country-specific policy recommendations to counter this phenomenon and a detailed chronology of events. Since every year it applies the same methodological framework on a large number of European countries, the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) provides a unique collection of European-wide analyses in regard to anti-Muslim racism in Europe to policy makers, social scientists, and ordinary readers.

Monitoring Islamophobia in Europe became an urgent need in the last few years, since the phenomenon has sensibly increased, following economic recession and the rise of far-right politics. Today, Islamophobia constitutes a serious challenge for European democracies for at least four reasons:

- First of all, Islamophobia is severely impacting the life of millions of European Muslims facing racism at university, in the workplace, the public sphere, etc. In addition to representing a threat to their physical life, this racism undermines their place in society and their sense of belonging in European nation states.
• Secondly, the rise of Islamophobia both reflects and strengthens the normalization of far-right discourse in the political spectrum across Europe. Within a few months, neofascist parties entered the German Bundestag, accessed strategic ministries in Austria, and registered historical results in the French, Dutch and Italian elections.

• Thirdly, Islamophobia poses a problem of internal security as it intensifies tensions between communities, legitimizes hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the European Union ideals of peace and coexistence.

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

Yet, even if Islamophobia objectively constitutes a threat for European democracies, many European intellectuals and politicians, both left- and right-wing, are still refuting the existence and the validity of the concept. Their worries about terrorist attacks and immigration are preventing them from acknowledging the daily racism that Muslims face in Europe. However, by denying Islamophobia, there is a risk – intended or not – to ignore the 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:
• Victims may not be aware of the reporting mechanisms.
• The victims’ possible social isolation or proximity to the perpetrator.
• The victims’ lack of trust in the authorities, due to fears that their claim will not be taken seriously.
• The victims’ fear of being victimized again by police officers.

In this regard, the OSCE ODIHR points out to the fact that “governments have a central role to play in ensuring access to justice; from the initial assessment of victims’ needs by police officers, to support mechanisms for victims through governmental or nongovernmental institutions.”2

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states. Intelligence services, such as the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, have realized the important role Islamophobia plays for right-wing extremist parties.3 Still, it is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are no longer immune to this form of racism.

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

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

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

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

In this manner, British Prime Minister Theresa May criticized Trump for re-posting material from the far-right Britain First, while the U.S. president answered her with the advice that it would be better if she dealt with the “destructive radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom” rather than fo-cusing 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

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 ODIHR is also considering the preparation of a guide on hate crimes against Muslims and on the security needs of Muslim communities in the OSCE region. A similar guide has been prepared and published for Jewish communities. We think this would be a positive step to combatting Islamophobia in the OSCE region and, therefore, welcome the preparation of such a guide.

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

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

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.” 17 Although this is more a general resolution on freedom of religion it is still relevant to EU states which are witnessing an unprecedented rise of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the last decade. More concretely, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reported that “the fear of terrorism and racist and xenophobic speech often translate into increases in hate crimes targeting Muslims, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.” Like many others, the special rapporteur reiterated the importance of collecting disaggregated data on hate crimes targeting Muslims and others. 18

The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

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

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

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 Islamophobich 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.

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

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

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

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

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

Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

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

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

In Spain, former president of Madrid and of the senate, and former minister of culture, Esperanza Aguirre, tweeted that January 2 was a glorious day for Spanish women who otherwise would not enjoy any freedom under the rule of Islam.

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

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

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

During the national presidential elections in France in 2017, Islamophobia was
omnipresent not only in the campaign of the Front National but also in an array of
other candidates’ campaigns. Also during the national elections in the Netherlands
in 2017, there was a race between the right-wing populist party of Geert Wilders
(PVV) and the center-right party of Mark Rutte (VVD). Some intellectuals, before
the elections, discussed whether the number of Muslims could be reduced by de-
portation. 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,” argu-
ing 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 Inter-
national 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.

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34. Andreas Karker and Jacob Friberg, “Mette Frederiksen i brutalt opgør: Luk alle muslimske friskoler”, retrieved
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.\footnote{HVG, “Töröczkai odacsap a bevándorlóknak: megtiltják a mecsetépítést Ásotthalmon”, retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124_toroczkai_asotthalom_musulim_tilzas.} 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.\footnote{HVG, “Elmeszelte Töröczkai rendeletét az Alkotmánybíróság”, retrieved January 9, 2018, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412_alkotmanybiosag_toroczkai_asotthalom.} 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\footnote{“Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing the proposal that an act be enacted” as defined in “MOT Eduskuntasanasto,” a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister’s Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?Ui=field&height=147.} was launched to amend a law in favor of a “Burka Ban.” Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki,\footnote{Cf. “Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016” in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2016, Istanbul, SETA, 2017.} a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims.\footnote{For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki’s court case, see Ibid.} A spokesperson of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, current chairman of the Finnish Defense League (FDL), who proclaims to be fighting against “Islamic extremism”\footnote{Homepage of the Finnish Defense League, retrieved January 31, 2018, from http://www.fdl.fi/about/.} and is known for other smaller initiatives such as demonstrations against “Islamization” before a school. In Denmark, a ban on full-face veils, a so-called “mask ban” (popularly referred to as the “niqab ban”) was proposed by the Danish
People’s Party following the verdict by the European Court of Human Rights. This initiative was not only supported by the right wing, but also the Social Democrats and the Danish Social Liberal Party, arguing that they would, thus, empower Muslim women. There is also a law prohibiting male circumcision under way in Denmark.

Terrorist Attacks against Muslims

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

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

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

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

In Sweden, three members of the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement were sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison. The trio was found guilty of bombings of two refugee housings and a libertarian socialist trade union office in Gothenburg, which severely wounded one person. They were trained in urban guerrilla warfare by a Russian radical nationalist and anti-Muslim paramilitary organization. The perpetrators were influenced by Islamophobic and anti-Semitic discourse, which was clear in a recorded video prayer to All-Father Odin in which they vowed to “retake our land” and “take the fight against you who have defiled our country.” “Oh Jew, oh Muslim / We Norsemen have awakened / You should fear us / We are coming after you / The rage of the Norsemen thunder / Be assured / Oh, Jew and Muslim / The Norsemen are coming after you.”

Beyond this example of a right-wing extremist movement, the case of Hungary, where the ruling Fidesz party mobilizes against George Soros while portraying him as a conspirator alongside Muslims to change the European population, reveals again that racism will eventually target every minority.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Threatening the Religious Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations

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

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

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

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

- In the face of the increased and generalized suspicion and marginalization of Muslims in the post-terrorist attacks and migration contexts and the deep impact the former have had on Muslims’ lives, including newly arrived migrants, the recognition of the specific form of racism targeting Muslims (or those perceived as such) is crucial.

- The misconceptions and demonization surrounding the fight against Islamophobia and visible Muslims, in general, need to be challenged; data, facts and concrete solutions need to be visible in order to improve the recognition of Islamophobia and influence policy changes.

- This should lead to informed anti-racism/anti-discrimination policies and support the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation on the national and European levels. EU institutions need to recognize and address Islamophobia politically as a form of racism that can lead to human rights violations.

- While the issue of Islamophobia has gained more visibility in recent years at the EU level, there is a clear need for stronger actions that will materialize recognition into concrete political actions.

- Considering their competence on the issue of anti-racism and non-discrimination, EU institutions have the possibility to support progress and change in this area. The appointment of the European Commission’s coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred following the European Commission’s 2015 colloquium on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred has created a momentum for the EU to act.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**DENMARK**

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

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**BELGIUM**

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

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**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)
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**Disclaimer:** Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the European Islamophobia Report are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions. No representation, either expressed or implied, is made of the accuracy of the material in the national reports. The editors of the European Islamophobia Report cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The reader must make his or her own evaluation of the accuracy and appropriateness of the material.

Executive Summary

Fake news produced by the transatlantic Islamophobic networks portraying Sweden as a multicultural dystopia with Sharia controlled no-go zones and Muslim rape jihad against white Swedish women reached new heights as it was picked up by U.S. President Donald Trump in an effort to defend his Muslim Ban. Alternative facts played a role in Swedish politics, too. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) published an unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish a totalitarian Islamic State in Sweden, naming a series of organizations and Muslim leaders as agents of the evil cabal. The Administrative Court of Appeal later dismissed the report as of “highly limited” value.

Migration and integration remained the main issues concerning in public opinion, propelling the rise of the once marginal anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats to become the third or second largest party in opinion polls, pushing most other parties to adjust their policies towards a more exclusionary and culturalist position. Hate crimes remain at relatively high levels. According to a study on self-reported victims of hate crime, published in 2017, some 145,000 individuals had been exposed to 225,000 hate crimes with racist or xenophobic motives, and 47,000 individuals had been exposed to 81,000 hate crimes with “anti-religious,” including Islamophobic, motives. In 2017, three mosques were set aflame, and scores of Islamic association facilities were vandalized. Constantly under threat, Islamic congregations are targeted by insurance companies specializing in offering high-risk enterprises insurance at high premium/high deductible terms.

In January 2017, the government launched the *National Plan to Combat Racism*, which acknowledges Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed, and the Discrimination Act was amended to require enterprises and schools to adopt “active measures” to prevent discrimination and secure equal rights and opportunities within their organizations. However, this did not prevent the Equality Ombudsman from following the EU Court of Justice in ruling that company policies banning the Islamic headscarf are not discriminatory. The decision sparked protests in the emerging Muslim civil rights movement, which for the first time participated in May 1 rallies to defend Muslim women’s labour rights.
Svensk Sammanfattning

Falska nyheter producerade i de antimuslimska nätverken där Sverige framställs som en multikulturell dystopi med shariakontrollerade no-go zoner och jihad i form av muslimska gruppvåldtäkter av vita svenska kvinnor, slog igenom på hög nivå när de plockades upp av president Donald Trump i ett försök att försvara sitt muslimska inreseförbud. Alternativa fakta influerade också svensk politik. Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap (MSB) publicerade en osaklig och icke underbyggd rapport som påstått att det Muslimska brödraskapet konspirerar för att omvandla Sverige till en totalitär islamisk stat och pekade ut namngivna organisationer och personer som den illasinnade sammansvärjningens agenter. Författningsdomstolen avfärdade senare rapportens bevisvärde som “högst begränsat”.


Introduction
On February 18, 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump defended his call for a Muslim Ban by referring to a series of terror attacks in Europe, including Sweden. “You look at what was happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible.” Swedish officials and reporters were bewildered. What happened in Sweden the night before? The Foreign Ministry declared that the Swedish government was not aware of any “terror-linked major incidents” that occurred on the night of February 17. The Swedish daily Aftonbladet listed the major news to occur in Sweden that day: famous singer Owe Thörnqvist had technical problems during rehearsal for a singing competition; a man died in hospital after an accident in the workplace; due to harsh weather the road E10 was partially closed. Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said he was “surprised” by Trump’s allegations, adding, “We must verify information that we spread.” While the general conclusion in Sweden was that “nothing happened” the night before, a group of Swedish photographers sought to set the record straight by documenting all the small moments that rarely make the news but make up everyday life in Sweden in all its diversity. The project resulted in the exhibition Last Night in Sweden at Fotografiska, Stockholm, and a photobook that eventually was sent to President Trump.

As Trump’s claim was rated “false,” the president tweeted that he had not referred to anything that had happened in Sweden but to a story on Fox News concerning Muslim immigrants and Sweden that he had seen that night. That Fox story was an interview with alt-right filmmaker Ami Horowitz about his documentary Stockholm Syndrome, which seeks to assert that Sweden has become

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3. “This happened in Sweden Friday Night, Mr President”, Aftonbladet (February 18, 2017), retrieved December 12, https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/Vn17J/in-english-this-happened-in-sweden-friday-night-mr-president
the rape capital of the world, because it has “taken more refugees from the Islamic world than any Western nation.” “This immigration has led to cultural clashes, enclaves of self-contained societies,” “shootings,” “sexual attacks across Sweden” and Muslim-controlled “no-go areas.”” Fact-finding journalists found the claims bogus, and the two police officers used to substantiate the story were “shocked” when realizing that Horowitz had edited the answers. “We were answering completely different questions in the interview,” they stated.  

In *Stockholm Syndrome*, Horowitz repeated a stunt popular with populist journalists: he went to a stigmatized underclass area, where many inhabitants have non-European migrant background, to pick a fight. Many people in these areas are fed up with journalists touring their neighbourhoods as if they were on a safari, and often object to being filmed. If the journalist is provocative enough, there might be a brawl which makes good television. Used to “prove” the uncivilized nature of Muslims, the trick has been enacted by radical nationalists, e.g. Roger Sahlström and Jan Sjunnesson (who also acted as ‘tour guides’ to Australian *60 minutes*), and the Norwegian Minister of Immigration Sylvi Listhaug of the Progress Party, as part of the 2017 Norwegian election campaign. Obviously, the stunt depends on the fact that there really are no “no-go zones” in Sweden. It may impress an anti-Muslim audience but not anyone with personal experience of these areas. While Horowitz’s dramaturgy came across as silly to a Swedish audience - the film sequence turns black and we only hear, in Swedish, a man saying that he does not like to be filmed and Horowitz yelling “help”- it made Horowitz a hero at *Info Wars* (“Filmmaker Ami Horowitz Attacked by Muslim Gang

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in Swedish No-Go Zone”), and *Breitbart* (“Filmmaker Ami Horowitz Beaten in Swedish No-Go Zone: ‘I Can Tell You for a Fact They Exist’.”)\(^\text{10}\)

Obviously, stories like this work better outside Sweden. Not least in the transnational anti-Muslim networks, where Malmö and Sweden are construed as multicultural dystopias. In Sweden, they work best in rural or small-town areas with no or few Muslim residents. This is congruent with the fact that the anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats, a radical nationalist party with national socialist origins, has the most sympathizers in voting districts with no or few Muslim residents.\(^\text{11}\) Islamophobia works better without Muslims.

This is not to say that Sweden is without its problems. During the past quarter of a century, we have seen growing income inequality, and Sweden has transformed into one of the most segregated societies in the OECD region. The basis of segregation is class, but as class distinction covaries with structural discrimination on the basis of racialized ethnicity, religion, and culture, this development constitutes an important context for the report on Islamophobia in Sweden in 2017. What follows is a summary of what has taken place, based on a selection of incidents and should not be understood as exhaustive.

### Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

#### Politics

Islamophobia played contradictory roles in mainstream Swedish politics in 2017. In January, the Social Democrat/Green Party government launched the *National Plan to Combat Racism*, which acknowledges Islamophobia as a form of racism. While the plan tends to favour an understanding of racism in terms of attitudes at the expense of racism as practice, it nonetheless represents a breakthrough as Islamophobia is recognized as a problem that needs to be addressed.\(^\text{12}\) However, another government authority, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), which is responsible for public safety, risk management and civil defence, was carried away by Islamophobic...

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conspiracy theory. Somehow convinced that Islamist and jihadi organizations were infiltrating Sweden to further their aim of “(re)establishing a utopian caliphate,” the MSB commissioned a study to “expose the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood” in Sweden and “assess its consequences” to “public safety, primarily life, health, and fundamental societal values.”

Published in February, the report *Muslimska brödraskapet i Sverige* (The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden) claims that the Muslim Brotherhood was clandestinely infiltrating Sweden, aiming to establish a totalitarian Islamic state. Allegedly capitalizing on the romance with “diversity” and “tolerance” supposedly cultivated by Sweden’s “political elite,” the Muslim Brotherhood is said to hide the extent to which Islam is incompatible with Swedish values, and uses the phony concept of “Islamophobia” to silence its critics. While casting the Muslim Brotherhood as masters of deception, the report claims to have uncovered its secret leadership structure, and identifies a number of named organizations and individuals as Muslim Brotherhood agents. As none of these accusations was substantiated, twenty-two scholars of Islam in Sweden denounced the report as scientifically unsound. The critique got wide media coverage, and the MSB quietly distanced itself by stating that “it does not back the report,” that did not qualify as “research.”

16. MSBs Anneli Bergholm Söder, quoted in Kasurinen, Anton, “Vi vet väldigt lite om Muslimska brödraskapet”, SVT, (March 3, 2017). https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/msb-vi-faktagranskar-inte-rapporter. In a television interview, Bergholm Söder admitted that “we know were little about the Muslim Brotherhood” after reading the report, which should not be mistaken for research. “When it comes to research, one needs greater clarity and references, and to show where one gets one’s sources from, but you need to talk with Magnus Norell about that.” Kasurinen, Anton, “Vi vet väldigt lite om Muslimska brödraskapet”, SVT, (March 3, 2017). https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/msb-vi-faktagranskar-inte-rapporter.
Despite its lack of credibility, the report was used as a reference by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) when it rejected the Swedish Young Muslim’s (SUM) application for government grants. The MUCF is a government agency that works to ensure young people’s access to influence and welfare by supporting self-organized youth associations. As grants are only administered to organizations that respect the ideas of democracy, the MUCF declined the SUM’s proposal for 2017, due to its alleged “links with the Muslim Brotherhood” and certain individuals whose ideals were incompatible with democracy. Documenting its long-standing engagement with democracy, equality, and human rights, the SUM took the MUCF to court. In its defence, the MUCF referred to the press and the MSB report to show the “SUM’s problematic links to the Muslim Brotherhood,” a known “hotbed of extremism” that promotes “violence to further [its] political and religious aims.” In November 2017, the Administrative Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the SUM. The articles that the MUCF had referred to were not news but opinions delivered by people with a negative attitude towards the SUM, and the MSB study “lacked references” for the relevant sections; consequently, “its value as evidence is highly limited.”

In terms of issues that rose in political opinion, the main one was “immigration and integration.” Insisting that refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan were part of a mass invasion that would lead to the “collapse” of Sweden, the Sweden Democrats (SD) rose in opinion polls to become the third, second and, according to polling firms YouGov and Sentio that use online panels, even the first party in Sweden. Long a pariah to mainstream politics, the SD felt its time had come. In 2017, the conservative Christian Democrats were open to form a government with the support of the SD. In January, Anna Kinberg Batra, leader of the liberal/conservative Moderates opted for “dialogue” with the SD. As voters fled the party for the SD or the liberal Center Party, Kinberg Batra was replaced with Ulf Kristersson in October 2017. While officially excluding dialogue with the SD – except locally where the Moderates already govern with the SD in five municipalities – Kristersson took the party closer to the SD. At its 2017 congress, the Moderates adopted a “strict” migration program with reversible citizenship, enforced repatriation programs, and

18. MUCF, Yttrande i mål nr 193-17, Sveriges unga muslimer, ställt till Förvaltningsrätten 2017-03-10, dnr 0001/17; Sveriges unga muslimer, Inlaga. Myndigheter för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor, ombud Sigrid Aliki Quezada, mål nr 192-17; MUCF, Beslut om bidrag för barn- och ungdomsorganisationer, dnr 1439-16; Mail correspondence between Rashid Musa, SUM, and MUCF, re: Beslutsunderlag kring ärende 1439-16; Förvaltningsrätten i Stockholm, Avdelning 31. Dom. Mål nr 192-17, 2017-11-14

19. Of course, this alarmist rhetoric is not new to the Sweden Democrats. It has declared that Sweden is “dead by immigration” and lambasted Muslims as a threat to everything Swedish since the early 1990s (cf., Johansson, Tomas, “I väntan på kollapsen”, SD-Bulletinen, (August 1993); Gardell, Mattias, Islamofobi, (Stockholm: Leopard, 1993).

the abolition of the right to seek asylum. While not as unpolished as Moderate MP Hanif Bali who slams the Prophet Mohammad as a “pedophile” and “warlord,” Kristersson airs SD-like rhetoric. “In Sweden, we talk Swedish,” Kristersson stated in his Christmas address of 2017, thereby erasing the language reform of 1999 that recognized Sweden’s five national minority languages (Saami, Meänkieli, Finnish, Romani chib, Jiddish) and the rights of all students in the Swedish school system to receive mother tongue tuition.22

The Liberal party too adopted populist rhetoric, e.g. suggesting a “zero tolerance against terrorism” – yet, no party says a little terrorism is okay. However, the Liberal party with a small margin turned down a motion to ban the veil and prohibit schools with a religious profile at the 2017 party congress. Like the Centre Party it wants to keep the right to asylum, and suggests lower wages for newcomers.23

The Social Democrats also adjusted their politics. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, who in September 2015 had stated “My Europe builds no walls,” turned 180 degrees from his position and in November 2015, sealed Sweden’s borders. In 2017, Löfven let the “Swedish Model” be officially associated with border protection and exclusionary cultural politics. The Green party quietly went along, as it had not recovered from the unsubstantiated allegations of being “infiltrated” by the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been trumped up in 2016, McCarthy style. The Green party panicked, and ousted several members, including Mehmet Kaplan, who had been a trusted member of parliament for eight years and in 2014 had become the first Muslim minister in Sweden.24

Nor was the Left party immune to the winds of Islamophobia. In 2017, the party suffered from a controversy around Amineh Kakabaveh, founder of Varken hora eller kuvad (Ni Putes Ni Soumises, Sweden) and a member of parliament. In 2016, Kakabaveh posted a fake video produced by the identitarian fascist Nordic Youth. Feature-


In a bogus translation of a film originally shot at a Somalian Telekom event, it plays on Afrophobic and Islamophobic stereotypes about Somali Muslims seeking their way to Sweden to rob, peddle drugs, and rape Swedish women. Kakabaveh added an introduction of her own: “Gratulations Sweden for the establishment of an Islamic state and a Caliphate soon to be inaugurated in more suburbs, thanks to the Swedish ‘integration’ policies - a political idiocy.” Following an uproar in the Afro-Swedish and Muslim communities, Kakabaveh removed the fascist video, saying she “had not realized that it was fake,” but insisted its meaning was “true.” While many party members called for her expulsion, she was backed by others in a heated conflict that culminated in December 2017, when Kakabaveh was removed from the list of candidates for the 2018 national elections, and then reinstated by members’ vote.25

Of course, when it comes to Islamophobic opinions, the SD tops the list. Three examples will suffice. In January 2017, Monika Wollmer (SD, Ludvika), said “Muslims have no business here. They want to destroy and take over the country. I hate all Muslims to the extent that I get sick when I see them.” In September 2017, Arnold Boström (SD, Huddinge) suggested to solve the Muslim problem by converting them all to Christianity: “Muslims should be integrated and become members of the Swedish Church.” At the SD Congress in November 2017, Martin Strid (SD, Borlänge) declared Muslims the antithesis of being human. There is a scale between the two poles “Human” and “Muhammedan,” Strid explained. “At one end of the scale, one is 100 percent human … at the other end, one is 100 percent Muhammedan…All Muslims are somewhere on that scale.” An “IS-member is close to 100 percent Muhammedan,” whereas “an ex-Muslim has come a long way towards becoming fully human.” At the SD congress, no one objected. The party leadership took exception only when Strid’s theory reached national news.26

The tilt towards Islamophobic politics was reflected in a series of motions on the national, regional, and municipal level put forward by the SD, Liberals, Moderates,

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and Christian Democrats. On the national level, the SD filed motions to ban the veil in public schools, and religious attributes within the police. Regionally, the SD motioned to ban the veil or religious symbols for all public employees in Blekinge, Sörmland, Skåne, and Västmanland. The Liberals motioned to ban veils in public schools in Trollhättan and Helsingborg. The Moderates motioned to ban the veil in public schools in Västmanland, and the niqab and burqa for all public employees in Norrköping, while the Christian Democratic Youth wanted a niqab and burqa ban for all public employees in Sweden.

While Islamophobia has made an inroad into mainstream politics, it is far from certain that this reflects popular opinion. A sign that it does not reflect widespread beliefs came on April 7, when in the name of the so-called Islamic State, Rakhmat Akilov hijacked a truck and killed five people in downtown Stockholm. In the radical nationalist milieu, the terror attack was met by excitement, predicting that the Swedish people would oust all Muslims and the traitors that had let them in. The Nordic Youth called for an *Enough is Enough!* rally outside the national parliament on April 9. It gathered 14 people, plus the cameraman. On the same day, a *Love Manifestation* attracted 45,000 people to demonstrate that Stockholm stood united in all its diversity. “There’s something seriously wrong with the Swedish people,” Ingrid Carlqvist, a radical anti-Muslim nationalist lamented.

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Justice System

According to the Second EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-Midis II), which analyses the responses of 10,527 self-identified Muslim respondents in 15 EU member states, the majority (76%) feel strongly attached to their country of residence and have higher levels of trust in public institutions than the general population. Generally, the most trusted institutions were the police and the legal system. In Sweden, EU-Midis II targeted Muslims with backgrounds in Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Swedish Muslims’ level of attachment to their country of residence was second highest among the member states. They had high levels of trust in the police (61%), the legal system (63%), and elevated awareness of laws prohibiting discrimination (ca 80%). Yet, 41% of Afro-Swedish and 19% of Turk-Swedish Muslims had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months. Three out of four did not report the incident. Thirty-four percent of Afro-Swedish and 18% of Turk-Swedish Muslims had experienced harassment, and 7% of the respondents had been physically attacked. Again, the majority did not report the incident. Of those who did, 61% were dissatisfied with how the case was handled. Personal experience of the police and the justice system had a negative effect on the levels of trust in these institutions.34

Personal experience with the police includes being stopped, searched or questioned. Of the Swedish respondents who had such an experience, 51% of the Afro-Swedish and 31% of the Turk-Swedish Muslims thought they were stopped because of their ethnic or immigrant background.35 In a 2017 study on ethnic/racial profiling for Civil Rights Defenders, criminologist Leandro Schclarek Mulinari found that being singled out by the police is a common experience for people in the Afro-Swedish, Roma, and Muslim communities. They might be stopped while driving, walking, crossing borders or interacting in public space. Many have an accumulated experience of frequently being stopped and treated as a potential perpetrator for no reason other than being Afro-Swedish, Roma, or Muslim. To Swedish Muslims, border crossing is a particular hotspot. For instance, one veiled Muslim woman had flown to Brussels five times in the past year and been searched in a separate room every single time. In the case of Swedish Muslims, profiling is also conducted by the Security Police. Of course, living under potential surveillance for no reason other than being Muslim may be a demanding experience.36

On January 1, 2017, amendments were made to the Swedish Discrimination Act of 2008. All employers with more than 25 employees and all educational institu-

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tions now have a duty to take “active measures” to prevent and counteract discrimination due to sex, gender identity, ethnic identity, and religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age, within the organization. Accordingly, schools and employers have a duty to investigate risks for discrimination and harassment within their organization, and implement preventive measures to secure equal rights and opportunities. The active measures should be documented, and will be evaluated on a yearly basis. Employers with 10 – 25 employees are only required to document the work done in relation to salary surveys, and enterprises with less than 10 employees have no such obligation.\textsuperscript{37}

**Employment**

Significant events took place in the wake of the EU Court of Justice (EJC) decision on March 14 that banning the Islamic headscarf in the workplace can be justified. In Sweden, vocal Muslims objected to further institutionalization of Islamophobia.\textsuperscript{38} According to Iman Aldebe, a Swedish Muslim designer who has designed official hijabs for the Swedish police, military, pharmacies and hospitals, the decision will lead to the exclusion of Muslim women from the labour market.\textsuperscript{39}

A particular case that received a lot of media attention in the aftermath of the EJC ruling is that of 23-year-old Aye Valdés. She was denied employment at the Scandinavian airline company SAS with the argument that her headscarf goes against the company’s clothing policy.\textsuperscript{40} The case was reported to the Equality Ombudsman that decided that SAS’s uniform policy doesn’t violate the Swedish discrimination act provided that the policy only applies to employees with direct customer contact.\textsuperscript{41}

When it comes to discrimination in the labour market, prior research has shown that applicants with ‘Muslim’ names have fewer chances of being called for a job interview compared to applicants with ‘Swedish’ names.\textsuperscript{42}

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wear the headscarf often experience discrimination in the labour market.43 Prejudice against Muslims has also been highlighted within specific sectors such as the civil services,44 and we know that name changing is a strategy sometimes used by persons with Muslim-sounding names in order to be viewed as less Muslim and avoid discrimination.45

In 2016, the Equality Ombudsman released a report on the experiences of Islamophobia among Muslims and presumed Muslims. The report is based on an analysis of 217 cases of discrimination received by the Equality Ombudsman during 2014. Out of these, 64 cases revolved around discrimination in the labour market. Two-thirds of these cases were filed by men and one-third by women. Almost 50% of these cases contain experiences of discrimination during the recruitment process. Other experiences revolve around harassment by colleagues.46 Another study, based on field experiments where 566 similar CVs were sent by applicants with Swedish and Arabic names, shows that male applicants with Arabic names are more frequently targeted with negative stereotypes than female applicants with Arabic names.47

Prior research has shown that Muslim women who wear headscarves feel that they need to work much harder than others to secure employment. Their experiences sometimes lead them to develop strategies such as hiding their religious identity by removing their headscarves.48 Similar results were found in a 2016 report on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women, which showed that the majority of the women interviewed, 26 out of 45, had experienced negative treatment from their colleagues. The women said that their headscarf is a constant workplace issue of contention and that they often feel obliged to explain their

47. Arai, Mahmood. Nekby, Lena. Bursell, Moa. “The Reverse Gender Gap in Ethnic Discrimination: Employer Stereotypes of Men and Women with Arabic Names”. International Migration Review. Vol. 50, Nr. 2 (Summer, 2016) pp. 385-412. The procedure took place in two stages. In the first stage, equivalent CVs were sent to job openings. The results show a call-back gap between Arabic and Swedish names for both men and women. In the second stage of the study, the CVs with Arabic names were enhanced with more relevant work experience than the CVs with Swedish names. The result shows that whereas the differences for women regarding the number of call-backs disappear, the difference remains strong for the male applicants, suggesting that Arabic-named men face stronger discrimination in the labour market than Arabic-named women.
decision to wear it. Experiences of being discriminated during the recruitment process also emerged.\textsuperscript{49}

Cases that have gained media attention have mostly revolved around instances where Muslim women have been denied employment or been subject to discrimination at work. Such examples include Muslim women who have either been fired or denied work for not wanting to shake hands with male colleagues or clients.\textsuperscript{50} In September 2017, the Equality Ombudsman ruled that an assistant nurse who was told by her employer not to wear long sleeves at work in a hospital in Stockholm had been subjected to discrimination.\textsuperscript{51}

**Physical and Verbal Attacks**

Based on the Swedish Crime Survey (NTU) on self-reported victims of crime and an analysis of police reports with identifiable hate crime motives, the *2016 Hate Crime Report* by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) was published in 2017. According to the NTU, some 145,000 individuals (1.9% of the population) were exposed to 225,000 hate crimes with racist or xenophobic motives; while 47,000 individuals (0.6% of the population) were exposed to 81,000 hate crimes with “anti-religious,” including Islamophobic, motives. Only 17% of hate crimes with racist/xenophobic motives were reported to the police.\textsuperscript{52}

The study of police reports with identified hate crime motives is based on a computerized search of a random sample of fifty percent of police reports relating to specific crime categories, which are then studied manually.\textsuperscript{53} In 2016, there was an estimated 6,415 reported hate crimes. Most incidents (4,609) were classified as hate crimes with xenophobic/racist motives (72%); 439 hate crimes (7%) had identified Islamophobic motives, which represent a decrease from 558 (8%) in 2015. However, with the exception of 2015, the number remains high compared to previous years. (Fig. 1)


\textsuperscript{52} Brå, *Hatbrott 2016* (Rapport 2017:11), Stockholm: Brå. The NTU includes hate crime with Islamophobic motives in the category of anti-religious hate crime. However, as respondents may identify an Islamophobic assault as racist or xenophobic, hate crimes with such motives may also be included in the first category.

\textsuperscript{53} Violent crime, threat and intimidation, defamation, criminal damage/graffiti, hate speech, and unlawful discrimination; robbery, theft, and sexual crime are not included. As only a minority of hate crimes are reported, and identification is dependent on the specific terms used by the police officer and individual who files the report. Hence, there is a substantial dark figure of crime.
Threat of violence and intimidation is by far the most common category of Islamophobic hate crime, followed by hate speech, vandalism and graffiti, defamation and violence. (Fig 2) Less common is unlawful discrimination, which possibly may be explained by the fact that institutions other than the police (e.g. the Equality Ombudsman, local discrimination bureaus, trade unions) also handle discrimination cases.  

For Islamophobic hate crime incidents in 2017, we reviewed a series of media-reported incidents, supplemented by interview data. Classified in the categories verbal assaults, threats and intimidation, arson and bombing campaigns, the list should not be understood as exhaustive.

Verbal assaults. A series of conversations and interviews with individual Muslims and focus groups conducted in the context of ongoing research in Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Klippan, Malmö, Stockholm, and Uppsala indicate high levels of experienced everyday racism, micro-aggression, and harassment. The data corroborates the findings of a 2015 study on anti-Muslim hate crime by Gardell, and shows that visible Muslims to a certain extent live with the possibility of experiencing unfriendly passing encounters with unknown others when using public transportation or doing their business in public space, at least in certain sections of the city. Typically, there was no prior history to each incident - an unfriendly look, comment, whisper, and attitude – nor anything that the targeted person had done or said, beyond looking Muslim while talking, walking, laughing, reading, being.55

Threats and intimidation may be hurled in everyday instances of harassment, but can also assume other forms. In the Minerva upper secondary school in Umeå, Muslim students felt intimidated when the Facebook group hundred ways to kill Muslims was started by schoolmates and became the talk of the school. For a year, Muslim students in vain tried to get the school management to take their concerns seriously. Instead, the management invited an external lecturer that further intimidated Muslim students by reiterating Islamophobic opinions, including demands that the “veil must be banned.” Eventually, in 2017, the Muslim students filed a complaint with the Equality Ombudsman.56 In Södertälje, a preschool with a Muslim profile was vandalized, and threatening graffiti stating “Fuck Islam” and “Move” was sprayed on its walls.57 In Stockholm, the Soldiers of Odin targeted the Al-Azhar Elementary School, a private school with a Muslim profile, which scored high in student achievement tests, but became the centre of controversy following a stigmatizing documentary. April 5, a group of uniformed Soldiers of Odin men showed up at the school, putting up stickers with “Support your local Soldiers of Odin,” filming the young students, and appearing aggressive. The school management found it necessary to employ se-


curity guards at the school, while the Soldiers of Odin bragged about the incident on their Facebook page in a posting that featured a call to “catch and kill Muslims.” In Flen, the Islamic Cultural Centre had to fence in their facilities with barbered wire. That did not stop threats from pouring in: “Nail a pig head to the door, and decorate with bacon,” “Firebomb it,” “Perhaps a little gas during Friday prayers.” Someone sprayed swastikas on the walls, and carved “White Power” on the metal door. Assaults on mosques include the April 10 stone attack against the Islamic Cultural Centre in Falkenberg, the damage caused to a mosque in Malmö on April 11, and the vandalism of the mosque in Säffle on Christmas Eve.

Another category of threats is directed against outspoken Swedish Muslims. On May 23, Rashid Musa, chairperson of Sweden’s Young Muslims received a death threat including two photos of himself pierced with bullets, and details about the alleged distance from which the shooter had practiced shooting him. (Fig. 3)

**Arson and bombing campaigns.** Attacks against mosques and Islamic association facilities increased during the 2000s. According to a survey by a network of Islamic associations in 2014, 66 percent had received threats and/or been vandalized. By 2015, mosques had been subjected to arson in Avesta, Eslöv, Göteborg, Hultsfred, Malmö, Norrköping, Strömsund, Trollhättan, and Up-
psala - in some cases repeatedly. In 2016, mosques were set ablaze in Borås and Malmö. That year, the Zayed Mosque in Stockholm was attacked by fascist mobs of more than fifty masked men.

During the night of January 31, 2017, a truck belonging to the Uppsala Islamic Association was set on fire. The police suspected arson. On February 21, 2017, the facilities of the Islamic association in Kungälv was ravaged by fire. The police found a broken window and investigated the incident as arson. On Walpurgis Night, April 30, 2017, the Imam Ali Islamic Centre in Järfalla – Sweden’s largest Shia mosque – was set aflame by a single perpetrator who was caught on security cameras as he climbed the mosque roof, poured flammable liquid, and set it on fire. (Fig. 4) The mosque was severely damaged and will take a year to restore. As images of the burning mosque circulated in the Swedish news, anti-Muslim commentators celebrated: “Let it burn” and “Happy Walpurgis Night”. On the night of September 26, a mosque in Örebro was set ablaze. The fire totally devastated parts of the mosque, and the police investigating the incident as arson.

Finding insurance for a mosque is difficult, as Islamic associations are frequently redlined or exposed to reversed redlining, i.e. targeted by companies such as the German *Hübener Versicherung* and *Insurify*, that specialize in offering Swedish high-risk enterprises, e.g. mosques and homes for refugees, insurance at high premium/high deductible terms. The Imam Ali Islamic Centre was insured by the German company and had to pay one million Swedish crowns in deductibles before they would receive insurance coverage, and could restore the mosque.  

In 2017, there were ongoing campaigns against mosque constructions in Borlänge, Halmstad, Hässleholm, Karlstad, Norrköping, and Skövde. In Karlstad, the Stop the Mosque movement turned aggressive. (Fig. 5) Its Facebook group published pictures, home addresses, and phone numbers of the local politicians who were in favour of the mosque construction, encouraging its readers to talk some sense into them, which resulted in threats and intimidations. On June 19, some 50 activists from the Nordic Resistance Movement and Nordic Youth forced their way into a municipality council meeting shouting “Resign, PC Scum.” Despite the pressure, the majority voted in favour of allowing the Islamic congregation to build its mosque. The Sweden Democrats, Christian Democrats and the Moderates voted against the construction. Gathering the required signatures, the Sweden Democrats demanded a local referendum. At the council meeting in November, the request was turned down with the argument that freedom of religion is protected by the constitution, and not an issue for local opinions to decide.  

In July 2017, an autonomous cell of three men with links to the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement were

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sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison for bomb attacks against two refugee housings and a libertarian socialist trade union office in Gothenburg. Nobody was killed, but one man was severely wounded. The police investigation revealed that two of the men had received urban guerrilla warfare training with Partisan, a Russian radical nationalist and anti-Muslim paramilitary organization that trains volunteers for Russian separatists in Ukraine. (Fig. 6) The perpetrators were influenced by Islamophobic and anti-Semitic discourse, and convinced that only violence against the Muslim “invaders” would suffice. Inspired by racist heathen philosophy, the men recorded a standing 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 awaken / 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.”69

Internet

Actors in the anti-Muslim landscape have a strong online presence, with their own digital news media, blogs, podcasts, Facebook groups, YouTube channels, and keyboard warriors. Among social media users, the Sweden Democrats dominate among all parties in parliament, engaging 29% of Facebook users and 42% of tweeters, with the Social Democrats as a distant second with 18% social media impact.70 Scrutinizing the discursive strategies of the “counter-jihadist” network by combining social network analysis and crit-


70. Hagberg, Sebastian, Mätning: SD dominerar stort i sociala medier, (Sifo) March 26, 2017.
ical discourse analysis, Mattias Ekman found that it constitutes a dynamic milieu with ties to different political actors in different geographical settings. By constantly recycling certain themes (e.g. that Muslims are inherently violent, constitute a demographic threat, infiltrate society by strategies of stealth jihad and creeping sharia) they have pushed the limits of what is considered acceptable public speech about Muslims in an effort to facilitate more space for anti-Muslim political actors, decision- and policymaking.\footnote{Mattias Ekman (2015), “Online Islamophobia and the Politics of Fear: Manufacturing the Green Scare”, \textit{Ethnic and Racial Studies}, 38:11, 1986-2002, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2015.1021264.}

In a 2017 study, Karina Horsti analysed the digital culture of Islamophobic misinformation experts by focusing on how a forensic photograph of a Swedish woman taken after she was subjected to a violent attack was transformed into an Islamophobic meme allowing bloggers to “imagine a shared white community in danger, symbolized by the injured, blond, Swedish woman,” who needs protection from the “Muslim rape epidemic.” The story began in New Year’s Eve 2004 when two Swedish women, Jenny and Lina, were attacked in Gothenburg. Jenny was raped, Lina beaten. Hoping to empower women to report gendered violence, Lina decided to publish her forensic photo in a defiant pose. To the women, the fact that the man who raped Jenny had Somali background was irrelevant - not so to the Islamophobic bloggers. Via the Norwegian blogger Fjordman, who writes in English for “counter-jihadist” blogs, and Pamela Geller’s \textit{Atlas Shrugs}, the picture, and subsequent alterations of it, circulated the radical nationalist blogosphere in hundreds of postings inserted into an Islamophobic frame, thereby transforming its message from female empowerment to a narrative of “Western Muslims’ Racist Rape Spree,” “rape jihad,” and “Muslim gang rape in Sweden.” (Fig. 7) In radical nationalist narratives, Horsti notes, women are often represented as the embodiment of the nation, and family, and therefore of what belongs to men.

Figure 7: Message of female empowerment transformed into an Islamophobic meme.
“Furthermore, the ‘openness’ and softness of the female body is represented as a weakness, a boundary for which violation and infection from the outside are constant threats.” 72 To the Islamophobic bloggers, female Swedishness simultaneously signifies pure whiteness (that needs to be protected) and feminism (that has destroyed white masculinity), and hence the dystopia ahead if white men do not get their act together, and defend their borders, nation, and women – in other words, the worldview that informed Trump’s *Last night in Sweden* speech. 73

Analysing the discursive connections between Islamophobia and anti-feminism on Flashback, a Swedish online discussion forum with one million users, Anton and Petter Törnberg used custom web crawlers to download the entire forum, comprising over 50 million posts and 968,289 users. Törnberg & Törnberg combined critical discourse analysis with topic modelling, which inductively identifies any number of topics describing a text corpus without using present keywords. By analysing these topics, Törnberg & Törnberg found a discourse declaring “a claimed immanent oppression of women within Islam and an alleged contradiction among feminists and the political left to be both in favour of gender equality and at the same time pro-Islam and positive toward Muslim immigration.” This is claimed to constitute reverse discrimination whereby Swedish men are criticized by feminists while Muslim men are not. 74

In the 2017 study *Det vita hatet* (The White Hate), Lisa Kaati et al analyse the prominent Swedish “hate sites” Nordfront, Avpixlat, Motgift, Nordisk ungdom, Nytider, and Nyheter idag with a special focus on the two largest forums, Avpixlat (today Samhällsnytt) with links to the Sweden Democrats, and Nordfront of the Nordic Resistance Movement. A recurring theme was the narrative about Swedish female victimization to alien (Muslim) male offenders. Meanwhile, 99% of all articles and 94% of all comments in Avpixlat were written by men. Nordfront was even more male dominated. 75

Beginning in October 2017, the hashtag #metoo derailed the Islamophobic discourse on Muslim rape jihad. More than 70,000 Swedish women of more than 50 different professions - artists, singers, lawyers, teachers, politicians, academics, sportswomen, journalists, medical doctors, nurses, chefs, construction workers, waitresses - contributed with stories of experienced sexual harassment in their workplace. The fact that thousands of non-Muslim Swedish men suddenly were exposed as sex-

73. Hirsti, Karina, “Digital Islamophobia: The Swedish Woman as a Figure of Pure and Dangerous Whiteness”, *New Media & Society*, 2017, Vol. 19(9) 1440–1457.
ual offenders made the Islamophobic keyboard warriors upset. Gone was their concern for the endangered white Swedish woman. Instead, #metoo was lambasted as an “evil strategy” to “blame white Swedish men” to remove focus from Muslim rapists.76

Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The EU court decision regarding the ban on wearing religious signs spurred opposition and demonstrations in Sweden, not least from Muslim civil society. Muslim women highlighted their concerns over further discrimination and difficulties in being employed if wearing a hijab. A particular form of resistance took shape through Rätten till våra kroppar (The right to our bodies), a network of Muslim female activists, academics, and organizations working with human rights to deal with issues of racism and discrimination against Muslim women.77 (Fig. 8) The network arranged and participated in May 1 demonstrations in Stockholm, Malmö, and Gothenburg to defend Muslim women’s labour rights.78 (Fig. 9)

On August 6, a group of unaccompanied Afghani refugee minors initiated a demonstration against the Swedish Migration Agency’s program of forced deportations.79 According to Amnesty International, no part of Afghanistan is safe and all deportation of asylum-seekers should be suspended.80 The protest turned into a two-month sit-in in downtown Stockholm, which gained massive support from other parts of civil society and evolved into the network Ung i Sverige (Young in Sweden). On August 8,
the sit-in was attacked by the Nordic Youth, and on August 19, the nationalist Facebook group Stå upp för Sverige (Stand Up for Sweden) with 170,000 members, made a call to action. A few hundred aggressive anti-Muslims showed up, shouting slogans such as “Send home the trash; Shall we exterminate them – Yes!; No Muslims on our streets.” However, the anti-racist counter-demonstration outnumbered the anti-Muslim crowd, and the call to violence turned null.

Young in Sweden is led by 17-year-old Fate-meh Khavari. (Fig. 10) She received a lot of media attention and has been subject to threats as well as conspiracy theories questioning her gender. Rumors flourished on the Internet of her being a man with the argument that a woman from Afghanistan could not be as bold and confident.

Other forums highlighting the issue of Islamophobia include the

theatre. On October 14, 2016, a community theatre project called *Svenska hijabis* (Swedish hijabis) premiered and toured theatre scenes in Sweden. The project was based on five young Muslim hijabis, namely Benin Al-Najjar, Ruhani Islam, Maryam Dinar, Sarah Ameziane and Shama Vafaipour. The play revolved around their stories, everyday lives and interests and showed how Islamophobia and discrimination effects their daily lives. This was the first play of its kind in Sweden, dealing with experiences of Islamophobia with hijabis in lead roles.84 The director of the play, America Vera-Zavalla, followed up with a performance lecture called “The Muslim Ban in 2017” that took on the effects of Islamophobia from a male perspective.

In 2016, a program called *Jag är muslim* (I am a Muslim) aired on the Swedish state television. For six Wednesday evenings, at prime time, a broad spectrum of Muslims shared their everyday experiences of being Muslim in Sweden. According to the anchor of the program, Anna Lindman, the aim was to bring forth the voices of a group that the majority of society has opinions about but that is actually very little known.85

In March 2017, famed Swedish Muslim author Johannes Anyuru’s dystopian novel *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar* (They will drown in their mothers’ tears) was released. The story revolves around a future scenario where Islamophobia and racism have become systematically institutionalized in Sweden. The novel received massive acclaim and Anyuru was awarded with the prestigious literary August Prize in the category of Best Swedish Fiction of the Year.

The aforementioned initiatives, projects, and happenings are only a few examples of events that in different ways, have played a role in countering Islamophobia and polarization in Swedish society.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia had a discernible impact on Swedish society in 2017. Politically, the rise of the Sweden Democrats pushed most other parties to adopt populist rhetoric and exclusionary culturalist policies that may further normalize Islamophobic discourse and practice. On the other hand, the government launched the *National Plan to Combat Racism* which recognized Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed. The report found that Swedish Muslims frequently experience negative discrimination, not least in the labour market. While the Discrimination Act requires that employers and schools take active measures to prevent discrimination and secure equal rights and opportunities, it lacks sanctions. Documented hate crimes with Islamophobic motives remain at high levels. Yet, most hate crimes are not reported.

The majority of those who report incidents are dissatisfied with how the case was handled. Among the initiatives to counter Islamophobia, the emerging Muslim civil rights movement plays a significant role. To continue the effort to combat Islamophobia, we recommend the following measures:

- Impose sanctions on companies and public institutions that violate the Discrimination Act.
- Review the principle of “neutrality” in companies’ clothing policies to ensure that it does not infringe on Muslim women’s labour rights.
- Offer all government agencies training in source criticism to prevent the impact of fake news and conspiracy theories.
- Offer all mosques and Islamic associations state insurance of their facilities on reasonable terms.
- Allocate resources to further train the police in how to handle cases of hate crime and unlawful discrimination.
- Impose active measures to counter ethnic profiling as police practice.
- Allocate funding for research programs to produce critical knowledge on racism, including Islamophobia.
- Strengthen the possibilities for civil society associations to counter racism by providing means for long-term engagement rather than short-lived projects.

Chronology

- **01.01.2017**: Amendments in the Swedish Discrimination Act of 2008 require employers and educational institutions to take “active measures” to prevent discrimination and secure equal rights and opportunities within their organizations.
- **04.01.2017**: The government launches its *National Plan to Combat Racism*, which includes Islamophobia.
- **31.01.2017**: A truck belonging to the Uppsala Islamic Association and parked at the mosque was set on fire. Police suspects arson.
- **21.02.2017**: Arson attack against the Islamic association in Kungälv.
- **26.02.2017**: The MSB (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) releases a report with unsubstantiated claims of a clandestine Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish a totalitarian Islamic State in Sweden.
- **14.03.2017**: The EU Court of Justice states that banning the Islamic headscarf may be “appropriate” to ensure “neutrality,” in a ruling with direct implications for Swedish Muslim women’s labour rights.
- **07.04.2017**: Rakhmat Akilov hijacks truck and downs five pedestrians in downtown Stockholm in the name of the so-called Islamic State.
• **09.04.2017**: Two public manifestations following the terrorist attack in downtown Stockholm. Rally to oust all Muslims gathers 14 people, rally to defend diversity gathers 45,000.

• **10.04.2017**: Mosque in Falkenberg attacked with stones.

• **11.04.2017**: Mosque in Malmö vandalized.

• **27.04.2017**: Mosque in Bredäng, Stockholm, denied security despite attacks.

• **30.04.2017**: Arson attack by single perpetrator devastates the Imam Ali Islamic Centre, in Järfalla, Stockholm.

• **01.05.2017**: Rallies for Muslim women’s labour rights organized in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö.

• **19.06.2017**: Fifty activists from the Nordic Resistance Movement and Nordic Youth forced their way into a municipality council meeting to stop the decision to allow the construction of a mosque in Karlstad.

• **06.07.2017**: Three national socialist sentenced for bombing campaign with Islamophobic and anti-Semitic motives in Gothenburg.

• **05.08.2017**: Mosque in Eskilstuna tightens security after series of threats and vandalism.

• **08.08.2017**: Nordic Youth attacks sit-in organized by Afghani minors protesting deportation in downtown Stockholm.

• **19.08.2017**: A few hundred aggressive anti-Muslims seek to attack Afghani refugee minors in Stockholm but are outnumbered by antiracists.

• **09.08.2017**: Mosque in Flen vandalized. Stones are thrown through the windows, national socialist graffiti is sprayed on its walls.

• **11.09.2017**: Arnold Boström, (SD, Huddinge) suggests solving the Muslim problem by converting them all to Christianity in a move to profile the party in the Church elections.

• **26.09.2017**: Mosque in Örebro set ablaze in arson attack.

• **02.10.2017**: Muslim preschool vandalized in Södertälje. Smashed windows and threatening Islamophobic graffiti sprayed on the walls.


• **02.11.2017**: Mosque in Trollhättan attacked for the second time in 2017.

• **11.11.2017**: Sweden's Young Muslims redressed in court after unfunded allegations by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, based in part on the MSB report.

• **26.11.2017**: Sweden Democrat (SD) Martin Strid explains his theory that Muslims are not human at SD’s party congress.

• **02.12.2017**: Mosque in Flen is vandalized, a swastika is painted on the door. This is the third occasion in 2017.

• **19.12.2017**: The Equality Ombudsman rules that banning religious symbols, the Islamic headscarf included, is not unlawful discrimination.

• **23.12.2017**: Mosque in Säffle vandalized.
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.