By gathering 39 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized in racism and human rights, the fourth edition of the European Islamophobia Report addresses a still timely and politically important issue. All 34 country reports included in this book follow a unique structure that is convenient, first, for comparing country reports and, second, for selected readings on a particular topic such as politics, employment, or education with regards to Islamophobia across Europe.

The present report investigates in detail the underlying dynamics that directly or indirectly support the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Europe. This extends from Islamophobic statements spread in national media to laws and policies that restrain the fundamental rights of European Muslim citizens. As a result, the European Islamophobia Report 2018 discusses the impact of anti-Muslim discourse on human rights, multiculturalism, and the state of law in Europe.

This fourth edition of our report highlights how European societies are challenged by the rise of violent far-right groups that do not only preach hatred of Muslims but also participate in the organization of bloody terror attacks. The rise of far-right terrorist groups such as AFO (Action of Operational Forces) in France or the network Hannibal in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland confirms EUROPOL’s alarming surveys on the growing danger of right-wing terrorism.

This year, SETA worked in cooperation with the Leopold Weiss Institute, an Austrian NGO based in Vienna dedicated to the research of Muslims in Europe. In addition, the European Union has funded the European Islamophobia Report 2018 through the program “Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey (CSD-V)”. 

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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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 and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directororate for EU Affairs.

Executive Summary

A number of studies, surveys, and news in 2018 tell us that Islamophobia continues to be widespread in Finland. One of these surveys published in May by the Pew Research Centre, revealed that almost two-thirds (62%) of those surveyed felt that Islam is incompatible with the culture and values of Finland. The knife attack in August 2017 by a Moroccan asylum seeker, continued to impact the Muslim community negatively. Last year’s hate crime report, published by the Finnish Police University College, confirms that Muslims and Afghans were the most frequent victims. Other factors that have fuelled anti-Muslim sentiment is the entry of 32,476 mostly Iraqi and Afghan asylum seekers to the country. The Muslim community was also impacted by sexual assault cases in Oulu by suspected people of Muslim origin. A case in point is the city of Kemi, located about 100 kilometres north of Oulu, where the small Iraqi community, numbering between 50 and 70, alleges that they are too scared to leave their homes alone in the evening. Kemi is also the founding home of the far right vigilante group, the Soldiers of Odin. A Red Cross official told asylum seekers two years ago not to leave their homes on Saturdays after 8 p.m. After the Christchurch attack on March 15, the Islamic Society of Northern Finland of Oulu, decided to place guards from their congregation outside the mosque during Friday prayers since the police would not grant such projection.

Despite these matters, there have been some positive developments. In October, the former editor of Islamophobic news portal MV-lehti Ilja Janitskin was sentenced to a 22-month prison term and forced to pay compensation for fake news, copyright infringement, racist harassment, and defamations. Another important matter that will impact anti-racism positively is a decision by the Turku appeal court to uphold an earlier court decision to ban the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL) and Pohjoinen Perinne, the fund-raising arm of the neo-Nazi group. Moreover, the National Board of Education has taken steps to combat hate speech by tackling social exclusion at schools. Even so, the jury is still out on how effective these measures are in tackling the ever-rising Islamophobia.
Tiivistelmä

Country Profile

Country: Finland
Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic
Form of Government: Republic
Ruling Parties: Centre Party, National Coalition Party, and Blue Reform
Opposition Parties: The centre-right coalition government resigned on March 8 after it failed to push healthcare reforms through parliament. Formerly, the Social Democrats, Finns Party, Green League, Left Alliance, Swedish People's Party, Christian Democrats and Åland Coalition were in the opposition.


Total Population: 5,513,130 million (in 2017)
Major Languages: Finnish and Swedish
Official Religion: N/A

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to the latest Police University College hate crime report of 2017, the most affected groups were Muslims. Afghans were the group that reported the most hate crimes according to nationality and ethnic background; 69.8% of all hate crimes were due to national and ethnic background. The second group, who were targeted on religious basis, accounted for 20.2% of all hate crime. The most affected group were Muslims. The rise in hate crimes due to religion surged by 58% when compared with 2016.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There were 1,165 hate crime cases reported to the police in 2017, up 7.97% compared to 1,079 cases in the previous year. The majority of hate crime cases (69.8%) were due to ethnic-national background and 20.2% were motivated by the person's religion. Other reasons included disability (4.9%), sexual orientation (4.1%), and transgender cases (1%).

Major Religions (% of Population): Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church 4,004,369 (72.6%); Islam est. 100,000 (1.8%); Finnish Orthodox Church 61,690 (1.12%); Finnish Free Church 15,409 (0.3%); Catholic Church 13,069 (0.24%); Pentecostals 8,762 (0.13%); Seventh Day Advent Church 3,458 (0.06%); Baptist Church 2,657 (0.05%); United Methodist Church 1,415 (0.03%); and Judaism 1,133 (0.02%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): Estimated at 100,000 (1.8%).
Main Muslim Community Organizations: Federation of Islamic Organisations of Finland (Suomen Islamilainen Yhdyskunta), which comprises 25 organisations; Is-
Islamic Council of Finland (Suomen Islamilainen Neuvosto) with 22 organisations; and Helsinki Islam Keskus.

**Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia:** Finland does not have a specific NGO that combats Islamophobia. Some that address the issue are: Islamic Council of Finland, The National Forum for Cooperation of Religions in Finland, Nuoret Muslinit, Anti-Racist Forum, and Migrant Tales.

**Far Right Parties:** The Finns Party, Suomen Kansa Ensinn, Reformi puolue (not a registered party yet).

**Far Right Movements:** Kansallinen Vastarinta, Soldiers of Odin, Finnish Defence League, Suomen Sisu.

**Far Right Terrorist Organisations:** N/A

**Limitations to Islamic practices**
- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No, but if approved, a draft of the Animal Welfare Act that was given to parliament at the end of September aims to ban halal slaughter from 1 January, 2021.
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Former Finns Party (PS) member and parliamentary aide Terhi Kiemuki, who was convicted of ethnic agitation in 2018, unsuccessfully launched a citizen’s initiative in 2017 to ban the burka and niqab. An unsuccessful draft bill was introduced to parliament in 2016 by PS MP Vesa-Matti Saarakkala to ban the burka and niqab in public places. No new draft bills prohibiting the use of the burka and niqab have been introduced to parliament. There is concern, however, that the April 2019 parliamentary elections will bring up calls for the “burka ban” in Finland. The Diakonia College of Finland of Helsinki banned the use of the niqab and burka on campus.
- **Prayer Ban:** No
Introduction
One of the aims of the Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä is to make Finland a welcoming and international country by 2025. He envisions Finland as a country that is “rich with different languages and cultures” and portrays a positive attitude towards its inhabitants and the rest of the world.1 However, the Council of State’s 2025 objectives don’t mention Islamophobia and only mention the term racism once. This is no surprise considering that the Islamophobic Finns Party (PS) were members of the government with the Centre Party and National Coalition Party in the period 2015-2017, and later Blue Reform (2017-2019). The PS split into two parties in June 2017.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks
A new study by the European Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA), Being black in the EU,2 concluded that out of the 12 EU countries surveyed, Finland was the most hostile to blacks. The Somalis are Finland’s largest African group and are Muslims, accounting for about a third of all Africans living in Finland.

The Islamic Society of Northern Finland (Pohjois-Suomen Islamilainen Yhdistyskunta), which is located in Oulu, was vandalized four times in 2018 and up to eight times since September 2017.3 The most recent attacks against the mosque occurred on Christmas Eve4 and on 6-7 December. (Fig. 1 and 2) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Oulu condemned the latest attack and expressed their solidarity with the Islamic Society of Northern Finland.5 As a positive sign, Prime Minister Juha Sipilä said in his New Year’s speech that hate speech was a crime and those suspected of sexual assault against minors in Oulu are individuals and do not represent a religious group.6 The sexual assault cases involve about 20 Muslims suspected of abusing minors.

3. Telephone interview with Abdul Mannan of the Islamic Society of Northern Finland on 13 December 2018.
5. “Statement by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Oulu”, 26 December 2018, http://www.oulunseurakunnat.fi/uutiset/-/news/45998179?fbclid=IwARl0r0wrwF-Xls2XdybAFmEYl2e1FFDyvULUeV_4rVCMlErE206WiQV_E_0bN, (Access date: 1 September 2019).
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Figure 1: The mosque in Oulu was vandalized for the fourth time in 2018 on 24-25 December.\(^7\)

Figure 2: The mosque in Oulu was vandalized for the ninth time since September 2017 on 26 February.\(^8\)

8. Dr. Abdul Mannan and Migrant Tales. (Access date: 1 September 2019)
Last year’s hate crime report published by the Finnish Police University College, showed that hate crimes had risen in 2017 by 7.97% to 1,165 suspected cases compared with 1,079 the previous year. Two suspected hate crimes cases involving Muslims became public in 2018: (1) A Pakistani migrant was brutally attacked on 23 February by three Finnish youths in Vantaa, a suburb of Helsinki; (2) A ten-year-old Muslim girl was attacked by four of her classmates after they insulted and bullied her for wearing a hijab. The girl started to get bullied about half a year before the incident, when she started to wear a hijab to school. The picture was taken by her brother on the same day she was attacked physically by one of her classmates. The Pakistani migrant’s attackers were given 9.5-year sentences in May for attempted murder, while the case of the girl is still inconclusive. The police and school, however, claim that racism did not play a role in what happened but it’s believed that the girl’s Muslim background did play a role.


In April, the findings of the country’s first study on ethnic profiling were published.\textsuperscript{14} Prior to its release, the police had repeatedly denied that they engage in ethnic profiling even if the Council of Europe’s anti-racism body had warned of such a problem as early as 2013.\textsuperscript{15} The new study on ethnic profiling sheds light on a long-overdue problem that visible migrants and minorities, such as Muslims, face in Finland. The sample, which were interviewed between 2015 and 2017, comprised mostly of “Middle Eastern, Turkish and African” individuals and Somali speakers (88 individuals/24.4% and 21 individuals/10.8%, respectively), followed by Finnish (107/29.9%), Swedish (41/11.4%), Former Soviet Union (71/19.7%), and others (15/4.2%). Apart from stopping “Arab-looking” men without beards, women wearing hijabs can be stopped at airports. The study pointed out that even babies might face “intense scrutiny and bodily investigation.”\textsuperscript{16}

The Puhos Shopping Mall in Eastern Helsinki is a popular destination for Muslim shoppers. In early February, the police, National Border Guard, Regional Adminis-

\textsuperscript{14} Suvi Keskinen, Aminkeng Atabong Alemanji, Markus Himanen, Antti Kivijärvi, Uyi Osazee, Nirosa Pöyhölä and Venla Rousku, \textit{The Stopped – Ethnic Profiling in Finland}, Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki, (Access date: 1 September 2019).


\textsuperscript{16} Keskinen, Atabong Alemanji, Himanen, Kivijärvi, Osazee, Pöyhölä and Rousku, \textit{The Stopped – Ethnic Profiling in Finland}. 

Figure 3: A Pakistani migrant recovering in hospital after he was stabbed up to 30 times, and suffered a fractured skull among other injuries after he was attacked in February by three white Finnish youths. Photo: Enrique Tessieri.
trative Agencies (AVI), Customs, Rescue Department, and health inspectors of the City of Helsinki carried out spot checks at the shopping mall.\textsuperscript{17} According to some bystanders, the police entered restaurants and asked people for their IDs. One person mentioned that the police had attempted to enter the mosque with shoes and a dog.\textsuperscript{18} Helsinki-based migrant youth associations like Badbaado\textsuperscript{19} and others accused the authorities of ethnic profiling, which the authorities denied.\textsuperscript{20} At the end of November, some 30 members of the far right vigilante group Soldiers of Odin were seen at the Puhos Mall provoking shoppers with their presence.\textsuperscript{21} The vigilante group has close ties with neo-Nazi groups like the Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL).

Figure 4: Some 30 members of the far right vigilante group Soldiers of Odin appeared in November at the Puhos Mall of Eastern Helsinki where Muslims shop. The picture is a still from a video taken by Finnish Somalimedia Warsan.


\textsuperscript{18} Xassan–Kaafi Mohamed Halane and Enrique Tessieri, “UPDATE: Police Were Told That They Cannot Enter the Mosque at the Puhos Shopping Center with a Dog and Shoes”, Migrant Tales, 4 February 2018, http://www.migrantenews.net/update-police-were-told-that-they-cannot-enter-the-mosque-at-the-puhos-shopping-center-with-a-dog-and-shoes/, (Access date: 1 September 2019).


According to a source, far right groups like Suomi Ensi (Finland First) and the Reformi puolue have visited the Puhos Mall 6-7 times in 2018.

**Employment**

If unemployment and employment statistics are anything to go by, Finland’s employment markets are highly racialized and segregated. If we look at the unemployment rates of people on the basis of their mother tongue, there is a much higher rate of unemployment for Muslim women than for men. At the end of 2017, the unemployment rate for Arabic speakers was 50.9%, for Somali speakers 43.5%, and for Persian-Farsi speakers 36.5%. The unemployment rate for male Arabic speakers was 45.5% and 65.4% for women; the corresponding figures for Somalis were 39.7% and 49.5%; and for Persian-Farsi speakers 31.97% and 43.9%. That compares with a national unemployment rate of 11.33% for the period under review.

The general perception in Finland among Muslims is that the chances of getting employment are worse if you have a Muslim name. One of the most popular jobs sought by migrants in Finland is in the cleaning business, where 60% of all migrants are foreigners. Other professions where migrants are overrepresented include domestic helpers, kitchen helpers, and in the service sector. Other factors like gender, age, length of residence in Finland, Finnish language skills, and motive for moving to the country play a role in the person’s employment prospects. Considering the high unemployment rates and segmented jobs, it should not come as a surprise that there are significant wage gaps between migrants and white Finns. In Helsinki and the Greater Helsinki area, migrants make on average 35.8% (22,286 euros/year versus 36,239 euros/year by Finnish nationals) less, and nationally 27.3% (21,479 versus 29,550 euros) less than Finns. Lower wages also mean lower social welfare payments and retirement pensions.

Four employment cases involving Muslims:

**Case 1:** An Iranian engineer with a Master’s degree who has lived in Finland for about 20 years claimed that he has applied for 4,000 jobs. From all those applications, only one prospective employer asked him for an interview, which was done online. He wasn’t hired. The person believes that his Muslim name worsens his


prospects of finding work. He became an entrepreneur and established a translation company and claims to have a lot of work these days.26

Case 2: An Iraqi asylum seeker who came to Finland in 2015 and converted to Christianity stated that after over two-and-a-half years and sending hundreds of job applications, he was finally hired by Posti, the post company, to deliver newspapers to homes between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. His hourly salary was 9 euros and he claimed to make about 900 euros a month. The asylum seeker, after over three months, quit his job and in July voluntarily returned to Iraq. 27

Case 3: An Afghan asylum seeker who lives in a small town in Eastern Finland, worked for a year as a full-time apprentice at a local garage. Since apprentices don’t get paid in Finland and their time at work may last for a few weeks, the asylum seeker said he was never hired as a staffer despite his year-long internship. He was paid daily 5-20 euros and was sometimes offered free lunches.

Case 4: A Syrian who wanted to establish a car wash with a countryman in November 2017 has faced an uphill battle. He started to look for a garage to begin his business but discovered that this was easier said than done. Most of the 20 places he wanted to rent in Mikkeli, and later in Tampere, Oulu, Nokia, Järvenpää, Kerava, Vantaa, and Tuusula turned him down. He believes that nobody would rent him a garage because he is from the Middle East. Some landlords even asked him personal questions about his wife, what she did for a living, and if he had a Finnish business partner. Getting a bank loan was just as difficult.

Education
There are programs to counter hate speech and radicalization28 but their effectiveness is put into question by studies that show that children and adolescents with migrant origin face greater discrimination at schools. One study showed that discrimination is widespread at schools due to ethnic background and language, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and disability. 29 The Diakonia College of Finland, located in Helsinki, bans students from wearing niqabs and burkas but allows hijabs on campus.

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Politics

The Finns Party (PS) is the first modern party in Finland that aims to directly capitalize politically on anti-immigration and especially anti-Muslim sentiment. Somalis aren’t the only target of the PS, visible minorities such as people of African descent and black Europeans rank high on their list of undesirable individuals. The PS has proposed radical changes to immigration policy when in government; they did not see the light of day, however, because they were unconstitutional.30 One of the principles of Finnish law is that everyone is equal before the law. Even so, people like Finnish economist Bengt Holmström, who received the Nobel Prize in economics in 2016, said that migrants should be paid less and should have lower social welfare benefits “since it would not irritate Finns so much.”31

Blaming only the PS for fuelling Finland’s Islamophobic and xenophobic environment would be too simplistic, even if the populist party has exploited voters’ fears of migrants and of the country’s ever-growing cultural diversity and Muslim community.

Finland held presidential elections in January with incumbent Sauli Niinistö easily winning the first round of voting with 62.6% of the votes. While the other candidates were no match for Niinistö, PS hopeful Laura Huhtasaari used her campaign to spread anti-Islam soundbites. She secured third place in the election with 6.9% of the votes. At a Lutheran Church gathering in November, Huhtasaari said, “I honestly hope that the church defends Christian values, Christians, Christian traditions, otherwise Muslims will wipe out [our Christian way of life].” President Niinistö has said that asylum seekers pose a challenge to Western values. Even if Finland’s official policy towards migrants is two-way adaptation (integration), some experts see it as assimilation (one-way adaptation).

Another worrying development has been the PS and its alignment with far right Islamophobic groups like the Soldiers of Odin, and the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL). In August, on the first anniversary of the Turku stabbings by an asylum seeker, a PS MP and two party members participated in a march organized by the Soldiers of Odin, the PVL, and other neo-Nazi groups like the Nationalist Alliance (Kansallismielisten liittouma).

Media
When topics about Muslims and migrants appear in the Finnish media, the reporting is often unbalanced. The media in Finland continue to play an important role in giving Islamophobic parties like the PS a platform.

There are various reasons why news coverage of Muslims is unbalanced:
- Muslim sources and experts are rarely used as authorities in a balanced news story.
- The media too often paint Muslims with a single brush and underline a narrative of “Us” versus “Them.”
- There are no Muslim editors and there is an underwhelming number of visible minorities working in newsrooms as staffers.
- Some media continue to give inflated respectability, importance, and space to Islamophobes and xenophobes.

When it comes to fighting Islamophobia and racism, the media in Finland are part of the problem.

Stories published in the national media about Muslims and migrants may range from claims there was “no rape wave [in the summer caused by Muslim asylum seekers]” to sensationalist headlines that claim that sexual assault cases have risen during the first quarter of 2017 in Turku by over 400%, or from a mere 4 to 21 cases reported to the police. On contacting the editor of Turkulainen, a community paper of Turku that made the above claim, he said that such headlines had to be published.

Figure 6: Reporting about Muslims by the Finnish media is often one-sided. The above story appeared on the state-run Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle). The story was a poll about different parties’ views on migration and migrants. In the picture that went with the story, all the leaders of the political parties in parliament appear along with a woman wearing a niqab - she does not represent any party except her religion. The headline stated that two parties in Finland would ban the burka.

since they attracted readers and advertisers.\textsuperscript{37} Helsingin Sanomat, Finland’s largest daily, is also responsible for spreading stereotypes about migrants and Muslims.\textsuperscript{38}

An ongoing story that received wide media attention at the end of last year is the sexual abuse cases of minors by about 20 Muslim suspects of Oulu. Finland does not group people by race or ethnic backgrounds but by place of birth, nationality, and mother tongue. In the Oulu sexual abuse cases, however, coverage by the media and statements by the police have been racialized. With the suspects in police custody, one may ask why we need to know their ethnic or national background? In Yle’s “A-talk” show,\textsuperscript{39} the program went as far as to make public the suspects’ nationality, which were Iraqi, Syrian, Afghani, and Eritrean. When I asked Yle why this was important to know, the state broadcaster responded in an email\textsuperscript{40} stating that since men “came from countries where women are oppressed” and “from warzones,” where the risk of sexual abuse is higher, reporting their nationality was justified. The police have also gone as far as to warn girls to take special care on social media sites when they contact people of foreign origin. The police have warned white local residents not to take the law in their hands and admitted that some migrants have already been harassed in Oulu.

A positive piece of news this year was when Ilja Janitskin, the founder and editor of MV-lehti, an online publication that spreads fake news, and hate speech especially about Muslims, was sentenced in October by the Helsinki District Court to a twenty-two-month prison term and ordered, together with two others, to pay 136,000 euros in damages.\textsuperscript{41} The 16 crimes that the former MV-lehti editor was convicted of included three counts of aggravated defamation; two counts of aggravated incitement against an ethnic group; three counts of copyright infringement; and three other convictions, which included, among other things, illicit fundraising charges.

\textbf{Justice System}

The knife attack in Turku in 2017 by a Muslim and the call to beef up counterterrorism measures are paving the way for greater intelligence and surveillance powers for the police and Finnish Security Intelligence Service (SUPO).\textsuperscript{42} Such new powers

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\item Email December 20, 2018, from YLE producer Tuomas Kerkkänen.
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may even include access to a person’s medical records. Former Interior Minister Kai Mykkänen\(^43\) said that in light of the Oulu sexual abuse cases, the state should have the right to take away a person’s citizenship if one is convicted of terrorism or a serious crime like sex offenses.

**Internet**

In March 2017, the police founded a task force that monitors hate speech on the Internet. While these types of announcements are welcome and long overdue, some questions remain about how seriously the police service wants to challenge structural racism and racism among its ranks. A survey published in 2016, revealed that 25.1% of 2,489 policemen surveyed voted for the conservative National Coalition Party and 24.4% for the Islamophobic PS.\(^44\) Long Play, an investigative online website, revealed in June 2017\(^45\) a secret Facebook group comprised of mostly police officers who made racist comments\(^46\) about Muslims, minorities, and migrants. A police officer wrote that Islam is an expansive religion and that Europe is its victim. The group was believed to have over 2,800 police officers, or one third of the total of the police service. No charges were brought against any of the participants of the group except for one police officer.\(^47\) National Police Commissioner Seppo Kolehmainen said that in light of the secret Facebook group, the police will take steps to curtail racism among its ranks. Some of these measures include: a new equality and diversity plan approved in June 2017; an “ethical channel” where police can anonymously report racism; and mandatory social media training for the police to reinforce rules of good conduct.

Despite such assurances, a seminar titled “Lost in Helsinki,”\(^48\) and organized by the police department in charge of immigration matters, showed that the police service’s plans to challenge its prejudices and racism fell on deaf ears. Helsinki Police Inspector Heli Aaltonen gave a PowerPoint presentation depicting their “most
typical customers,” which included Russians and Estonians being pictured as alcoholics; Africans as drug dealers; and Timo from Somalia, who has three wives, drinks alcohol constantly, and got to live in Finland because his wife is a Finnish citizen. “Timo’s” third wife got to live in Finland because she used his Somali wife’s identity. Another person in the presentation was an Iraqi called “Eero,” who lied about his real age, got his asylum application rejected, and was classified by SUPO as a threat to national security. Police inspector Aaltonen said that the media had taken her PowerPoint slides out of context and that they had nothing to do with ethnic profiling. Her presentation received a lot of criticism on social media and in the media.

Figure 7: A seminar organized in October by the police was criticized for reinforcing stereotypical views of migrant and reinforcing ethnic profiling.

Tighter rules by Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media platforms against hate speech may have encouraged Islamophobic sites like Hommaforum, Junnes Lokka, and Tiina Wiik to clean up their language. Even so, Marco de Wit, the head of Finland First, now heads the far right Suomen Kansa Ensin party that publishes Islamophobic material similar to that published when MV-lehti was run by Janitskin.

Other social media sites aggressively spreading Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of racial hatred are the neo-Nazi Phjoismainen Kansallinen Vastarinta50 and Magneettimedia.51

49. Stop Deportations, Twitter 10 October, 2018.
Greater scrutiny of anti-Muslim rhetoric has forced Islamophobes to change their tactics. Instead of using online platforms, more and more Islamophobic politicians are turning to publishing individually on social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, and others. They hope that their posts will be picked up by the media.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As in previous years, Laura Huhtasaari, PS vice president and MP, ranks high on the Islamophobic network together with the president of the party, Jussi Halla-aho, who was convicted in 2012 of ethnic agitation and breaching the sanctity of religion. Others include: Teuvo Hakkarainen, Sebastian Tynkkynen, Atte Kaleva, Matias Turkkila, Marco de Wit, Marko Mäki, Junes Lokka, and Tiina Wiik. Even if Muslims account for an estimated 1.8% of the total population and non-EU migrants from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Africa amount to 16.9% (63,362 in 2017) of Finland’s foreign-born residents, Halla-aho, Huhtasaari, and other Islamophobes like the neo-Nazi PVL make a big deal about Muslims being a threat to society. Huhtasaari, who supports U.S. President Donald Trump and Hungary’s strongman Viktor Orbán, is worried about the “Islamization” of Europe. In a recent post on social media, she expressed her three greatest concerns: “no substitution for Finland’s population and culture; we don’t want Finland taken over by Islam; and we don’t want people in our streets to be substituted for women and girls wearing veils.”

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

A concrete step to counter Islamophobia in Finland was the creation in 2017 of a police group that monitors hate crime on the Internet. Another important blow to Islamophobia was the conviction of Ilja Janitskin, former editor of MV-lehti, to a 22-month prison term. Together with two other people, Janitskin was forced to pay 132,000 euros in compensation for harassment and defamation charges. Another important milestone that should impact anti-racism positively is a decision by the Turku appeal court to uphold an earlier decision to ban the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement and Pohjoinen Perinne. The National Board of Education has taken steps to combat hate speech by tackling social exclusion.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Many Muslims believe that open dialogue is crucial to confronting Islamophobia. While this suggestion is a proactive way to move forward, initiating dialogue is easier said than done under the present negative political environment. How and where do we begin this dialogue? Who starts it and under whose terms? The lack of clear answers to these questions show that political will and leadership are still lacking in building a well-functioning, culturally diverse society. Apart from the need for dialogue, we also need leadership and voices from our culturally diverse/immigrant/minority community and from Finns. More representation by Muslims and other minorities is essential as well, ranging from the police service to public servants. Thus, the big question is not Finland’s good laws that guarantee human rights and religious freedom, but assurances that everyone is entitled to such rights and that they will be rigorously enforced. Finland has the social policy resources and know-how to challenge a social ill like Islamophobia because it is a Nordic welfare state. Not doing so is not only squandering an important opportunity, but confining ourselves to live in eternal conflict where we demand one thing for ourselves and deny others the same rights.

Chronology

- **23.02.2018**: A Pakistani migrant was brutally attacked with a knife, axe, and pointed object by three white Finnish youths in the evening in Vantaa, located next door to Helsinki. The man was stabbed up to thirty times and had a fractured skull, among other wounds. Narrowly escaping death, the Pakistani survived the attack but will be on sick leave until the end of 2019. His wife and he both believe that what happened was a hate crime because of the ferocity of the attack. The police disagreed but raised the charges against the three youths from attempted manslaughter to attempted murder. They concluded that what happened wasn’t a hate crime because “the attack wasn’t planned,” and because the mixture of alcohol and drugs had made the three youths very aggressive. The three youths that attacked the Pakistani migrant were sentenced on 25 May to 9.5 years in prison.

- **28.03.2018**: Parliament approved a new law (24/2018 vp) that speeds up deportations in the case that the perpetrator has committed a serious crime that carries a minimum six-year prison term. Just like the tightening of Finland’s immigration law in 2016, speeding up deportation could be seen as part of the hostile atmosphere towards migrants, especially Muslims. Finland carried out 900 deportations in 2017. Eleven percent of them (99) were due to criminal sentences.
• **23.04.2018:** Jussi Halla-aho renewed calls to lock up asylum seekers that get their residence permits rejected in Finland. The PS president wants Finland to copy Denmark, where the government plans to confine asylum seekers who get their residence rejected, potential criminals, and those that pose a threat to national security to a small island. The government and other parties have rejected Halla-aho’s proposal.

• **25.05.2018:** National Coalition Party Minister of Justice Antti Häkkänen said at a meeting of the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETMU) that there is no room in Finland for Sharia law. Some, like Abdirahim Husu Hussein, a Helsinki city councilperson, considered Häkkänen’s comment Islamophobic because nobody is demanding Sharia law in Finland.

• **27.09.2018:** The government presented a draft to parliament, the Animal Welfare Act that if passed, will prohibit halal slaughter in Finland. If the law is approved by parliament, it will come into force on 1 January, 2021.

• **07.11.2018:** PS Vice President MP Laura Huhtasaari continued to reiterate her fearmongering of Muslims by claiming that Europe and Finland are in danger of being taken over by Islam. She said that she does not want “white Finnish culture” substituted for foreign ones like Islam or to see women and girls wearing veils in public.

• **19.12.2018:** A ten-year-old girl was physically attacked by one of her classmates at a school in Espoo, a suburb of Helsinki. The girl was allegedly bullied for about half a year after she decided to wear a hijab to school. A picture of the girl, stained in her own blood, was taken by her brother and posted on social media. The story went viral forcing the police and principal of the school to deny that Islamophobia played a role in what happened to the girl.

• **24-25.12.2018:** The mosque in the northern city of Oulu run by the Islamic Society of Northern Finland was vandalized for a fourth time this year and the seventh time since September 2017. The last time a bike rack was thrown through the window. Criminal charges have been filed to the police.