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, brainstorming 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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Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Greece in 2018 taking all local, national and international developments into account. The main outcome of this year’s report is that Islamophobia continues to exist in different realms across Greece. Even if Islamophobia remains manifested mainly on the discursive level as anti-Muslim hate speech, physical violence towards Muslims and sacred places of Islam continued at a lesser extent. In this respect, attacks targeting some immigrants and refugees as well as their NGOs based in central Athens took place in 2018. Moreover, the exterior of a mosque located in Western Thrace was defamed with anti-Turkish slogans while Golden Dawn continued protesting against the mosque of Athens. Furthermore, a demonstration was organised by theologians, Orthodox Church figures and some religious groups in Syntagma Square against the new religious school textbooks which included more information about religions other than Orthodox Christianity, including Islam. Meanwhile, a few national and international initiatives were also launched in Athens seeking to fight racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia at different levels of Greek society.

Based on the report’s existing findings, Islamophobia is primarily manifested in Greek politics, printed and electronic media, and among some Orthodox Church figures, while it is relatively limited in the education and justice system. Also, the Greek law does not seem to be powerful enough in fighting anti-Muslim hatred inside Greek society in a way that the vast majority of perpetrator(s) of Islamophobic attacks remain unidentified in general. That is to say, even some politicians and clerics of the Greek Church who keep repeating their Islamophobic discourses overtly in their written or oral statements are never penalised for their hate-motivated behaviour. With the exception of a few state and NGO initiatives, almost no progress has been achieved in effectively fighting Islamophobia across Greece. For the purpose of addressing this vacuum, an official observatory mechanism, which needs to fully cooperate with Muslims, should be formed urgently and start monitoring any type of Islamophobic behaviour and incidents occurring in different parts of the country. Also, a series of training seminars particularly for civil servants and journalists could be organised so as to develop their knowledge about Muslims and Islam in Greece.
Περίληψη
Η παρούσα έκθεση εξετάζει την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα για το 2018 λαμβάνοντας υπόψη όλες τις τοπικές, εθνικές και διεθνείς εξελίξεις. Το κύριο συμπέρασμα της φετινής έκθεσης είναι ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα εξακολουθεί να υφίσταται σε διάφορους χώρους. Παρά το γεγονός ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία εξακολουθεί να εκδηλώνεται ως επί το πλείον δημόσιο λόγο ως ρητορική μίσης εναντίον των Μουσουλμάνων, βίαιες επιθέσεις εναντίον Μουσουλμάνων και ιερών χώρων του Ισλάμ καταγράφηκαν και φέτος, αλλά σε μικρότερο βαθμό. Στη διάρκεια του 2018 καταγράφηκαν επιθέσεις εναντίον προσφύγων και μεταναστών, αλλά και οργανώσεων τους στην Αθήνα, γράφθηκαν αντι-Τουρκικά συνθήματα στους τοίχους τζαμιού στη Θράκη, ενώ η Χρυσή Αυγή συνέχισε να διαμαρτύρεται για την κατασκευή του τζαμιού της Αθήνας. Επιπλέον, θεολόγοι, εκκλησιαστικοί παράγοντες και θρησκευτικές ομάδες, διοργάνωσαν στο Σύνταγμα διαδήλωση κατά των νέων βιβλίων θρησκευτικών τα οποία περιλαμβάνουν περισσότερες πληροφορίες για τις άλλες θρησκείες και μεταξύ αυτών και για τον Ισλάμ. Παρόλα αυτά το 2018 έλαβαν χώρα και ορισμένες εθνικές και διεθνείς πρωτοβουλίες, κυρίως στην Αθήνα, για την καταπολέμηση του ρατσισμού, των διακρίσεων και της Ισλαμοφοβίας.

Σύμφωνα με τα κυριότερα ευρήματα της έκθεσης η Ισλαμοφοβία διαπιστώνεται κυρίως στον χώρο της πολιτικής, του έντυπου και ηλεκτρονικού τύπου, και μεταξύ ορισμένων κληρικών της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας, ενώ είναι ελάχιστη στους χώρους της παιδείας και της δικαιοσύνης. Επιπλέον, η ελληνική νομοθεσία δεν φαίνεται να είναι επαρκής για την αντιμετώπιση του μίσους εναντίον των Μουσουλμάνων, με αποτέλεσμα η πλειονότητα των δραστών να παραμένουν άγνωστοι και ατιμώρητοι. Κατά συνέπεια ορισμένοι πολιτικοί και κληρικοί της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας οι οποίοι εξακολουθούν να αναπαράγουν ανοιχτά τον Ισλαμοφοβικό λόγο, στις γραπτές ή προφορικές δηλώσεις και τα κείμενά τους, παραμένουν ατιμώρητοι. Με την εξαίρεση ορισμένων πρωτοβουλιών από την πλευρά του κράτους και ορισμένων ΜΚΟ δεν έχει υπάρξει αποτελεσματική πρόοδος στην αντιμετώπιση της Ισλαμοφοβίας στην Ελλάδα. Προκειμένου να καλυφθεί το εν λόγω κενό κρίνεται απαραίτητη η δημιουργία ενός επίσημου παρατηρητηρίου το οποίο να συνεργάζεται με τους Μουσουλμάνους, έτσι ώστε να καταγράφονται τα Ισλαμοφοβικά περιστατικά σε όλη την Ελλάδα. Τέλος, θα μπορούσε να διοργανωθεί μια σειρά σεμιναρίων για να ενημερώσει τους αιτιμένους τους για τον Ισλάμ και τους Μουσουλμάνους στην Ελλάδα.
Country Profile

Country: Greece

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Form of Government: The prime minister is the head of government. The president, elected by parliament every five years, is the head of state. The president of the Republic has limited political power, as most power lies with the government.

Ruling Parties: SYRIZA (The Coalition of the Radical Left) with Aneksartitoe Ellines (Independent Greeks).

Opposition Parties: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy), Xryss Avgi (Golden Dawn); PASOK (The socialists), KKE (Greek Communist Party), To Potami (The River), Enosi Kentroon (Centre Union).

Last Elections: 2015 Parliamentary Elections: SYRIZA 35.46% (145 seats); Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy) 28.09% (75 seats); Xryss Avgi (Golden Dawn) 6.99% (18 seats); PASOK (socialists) 6.29% (17 seats); KKE (Greek Communist Party) 5.55% (15 seats); To Potami (The River) 4.09% (11 seats); Aneksartitoe Ellines (Independent Greeks) 3.69% (10 seats); Enosi Kentroon (Centre Union) 3.44% (9 seats).

Total Population: 10,816,286 in 2011 (National Census)

Major Languages: Greek

Official Religion: Eastern Orthodox Church

Statistics on Islamophobia: No statistics on Islamophobia available

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The Racist Violence Recording Network in 2018 reported 117 racist incidents with more than 130 victims, while in 2017 it recorded 102 incidents with more than 120 victims. The Police Department against Racist Violence and other Police Authorities recorded 226 incidents with probable racist motive for 2018. Religion was recorded as motive in 28 cases, but with no further details.

Major Religions (% of Population): No official data available, since religious affiliation is not included in the national census. A Pew Research Institute poll (2015) estimates 90% of the population is Christian Orthodox, the unaffiliated are 4%, other Christian <4%, Muslims 2%, and other religions <1%.

Muslim Population (% of Population): No official data available, since religious affiliation is not included in the national census. A Pew Research Institute poll (2016) estimates Muslims at 5.7% of the population.

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Muslim Association of Greece, Xanthi Turkish Union, Association of Religious Staff of Western Thrace Mosques, Association of Western Thracian Graduates of Imam Hatip High Schools, Shia Muslim Community of Greece.

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Greek Helsinki Monitor, Racist Violence Recording Network. There is no single NGO in Greece founded for the purpose of
fighting Islamophobia. All the NGOs stated here tackle physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks under the main principles of human rights such as equality and non-discrimination.

**Far-Right Parties:** Xryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn), Elliniki Lyssi (National Solution), Nea Dexia (New Right), Dynami Ellinismou (Power of Hellenism).

**Far-Right Movements:** N/A

**Far-Right Terrorist Organisations:** Crypteia, Combat 18 Hellas, Aneksartitoi Meandrioi Ethnikistes (Independent Maandrioi Nationalists), Group Epsilon-EY (Order of Greek Fighters), Blood and Honour.

**Limitations to Islamic Practices**
- Hijab Ban: No
- Halal Slaughter Ban: No
- Minaret Ban: No
- Circumcision Ban: No
- Burka Ban: No
- Prayer Ban: No
Introduction

Islamophobia in Greece is primarily found on the discursive level while physical attacks with religious motivation targeting mosques, cemeteries, Muslim immigrants or refugees, which are actually difficult to record, remain fewer compared to other European countries. Politics, religion, and media are three primary realms that continued to play a significant role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public domain throughout 2018; namely Islamophobia was expressed by certain political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, some self-proclaimed liberals, certain figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece, some media organs and journalists including their posts on social media. The main issues that contributed to the reproduction of Islamophobia in 2018 were terrorist attacks in Western societies; the so-called refugee problem, primarily refugees who reside in Athens and some of the Aegean islands; the construction of the mosque of Athens; and issues related to the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace where Islamophobia is sometimes reflected through the lens of Turcophobia. The report is based on data collected during 2018 and takes into account local, national, and international events that might have influenced the (re)appearance or the rise of Islamophobia. The material was mainly collected from printed and electronic media, websites and blogs, reports of NGOs, international organisations and state authorities, and formal or informal contacts with members of the Muslim communities settled in different parts of the country.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

As was mentioned in previous reports, Greece lacks an observatory in order to document regularly and systematically Islamophobic attacks in Greek society. Furthermore, a crucial issue with Islamophobia is that it is not easy to document motives targeting Muslims particularly behind racist attacks against immigrants and refugees, although in many cases such motives do directly or indirectly underlie the attacks. According to the latest data during 2018, 50,511 immigrants and refugees crossed

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1. For examples of physical attacks targeting sacred places of Muslims with anti-Turkish slogans see Ali Huseyinoglu, “Questioning Islamophobia in the Context of Greece”, IRCICA Journal: A Journal on Islamic History and Civilization, Volume III, Issue 6, Fall 2015, pp.73-74.

2. It is worth noting that Greece has also been included in the OSCE Hate Crimes reporting mechanism since 2012. Apart from official statistical data from the Greek state, some minority and majority NGOs dealing with human and minority rights in Greece also contribute by reporting Islamophobic actions to this mechanism. The Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association and the Western Thrace Turks Federation in Europe primarily report about biases against Muslims in Western Thrace, Rhodes and Kos, while the Greek Helsinki Monitor and Racist Violence Recording Network offer reports on Muslims in the rest of Greece.

the sea borders with Turkey in the Aegean Sea. During the year, a series of violent attacks against them was recorded in major Greek cities (e.g. Athens) or especially in those islands which host refugee camps. In September, in Lesvos a 9-year-old girl was attacked because she was wearing a headscarf, but she was Greek and non-Muslim, and apparently wore the headscarf for medical reasons. This event offers a critical aspect of the rising Islamophobia which targets all those who appear to be a Muslim based on their appearance. Lesvos has seen a rise of the extreme right, mainly Golden Dawn supporters, with anti-immigrant and Islamophobic attitudes during at least the last couple of years. In April, Afghan refugees, including women and children, gathered and protested in the central square of Lesvos about the delay in getting their asylum cards. During the night extreme-right groups attacked them. During the attack racist slogans like “burn them all” were heard and the result was that 28 people were injured and hospitalised. From the beginning of this year the climate on the islands of Chios, Lesvos, and Samos is rather conflictive and many attacks have been recorded not only against refugees but also against NGO activists and journalists covering the issue. It is important to mention also the verbal vulgar and offensive attack of a police officer in the refugee camp in Moria, Lesvos, against an elderly refugee woman from Syria which was recorded and shown in the media. Another attack with bats against unattended refugee children in Oraiokastro, in Macedonia, was documented in September. The attack resulted in the serious injury of one of the children who had to be hospitalised. Similar attacks have also been reported in Athens. In Peristeri, for example, in May an attack resulted in the injury of an immigrant. This series of violent attacks led a number of MPs from the ruling party of SYRIZA to ask a parliamentary question requesting that the government take all the necessary measures in order to confront this kind of violence, and find and bring to justice all the perpetrators. Finally, on 22 March, an arson attack took place against

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the offices of the Afghan Migrant and Refugee Community of Greece, in central Athens (Figure 1). The extreme-right group Crypteia claimed responsibility for the attack.11

![Figure 1: The attack against the Afghan Migrant and Refugee Community of Greece on 22 March. The photo is from the community's Facebook page.](image)

According to the Muslim Association of Greece (MAG), Crypteia made them a threatening phone call in January. In this call, they said that they are a group that burns, hits, and kills immigrants, mainly Muslims, and that MAG is among their targets.12

The only physical attack against a mosque throughout 2018 occurred in the Municipality of Iasmos in Western Thrace (Rhodopi Prefecture). On 1 July, a person(s) that remains unknown defamed the outer wall of the Iasmos Mosque with the slogan “Fuck Turkey” (Figure 2), a display of hatred towards Turkey via targeting Islamic sacred places. In fact, this manifestation of Islamophobia intertwined with anti-Turkish sentiments is an old phenomenon for Western Thrace where Muslims of ethnic Turkish identity have been living since the Ottoman times.

On the whole, it could be argued that Islamophobic attacks against prayer houses, Ottoman mosques, or individual Muslims have not been officially recorded or mentioned by the media or by Muslims communities. On the other hand, the recorded racist attacks against immigrants and refugees do not always have a clear religious background. Nevertheless, these attacks as the statement by Crypteia to MAG suggests should not be underestimated.

**Employment**

Due to the lack of any data (official or not) with regard to religious discrimination in the job market, this part has been kept empty. From all the sources available, media, and personal communication it did not came out that such incidents in the job market have been recorded.

**Education**

Similarly, to the previous year, regarding education and in relation to the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education there are no direct Islamophobic incidents from the part of the ministry to mention. However, there are some issues related to education that should be underlined. The first one is the continuation of reactions from parents with the support of extreme-right groups, GD among others, and the Church and theological circles against the new religious textbooks which started to change in 2016 by including more information about other religions and, of course, about Islam. The instances where Islam was mentioned were actually considered one of the reasons that sparked the fire of reactions especially in combination with the presence of immigrant and refugee children in the Greek education system.

The Panhellenic Union of Theologians was among those who reacted the most against these new textbooks through public announcements and the organisation of conferences on the issue. Furthermore, together with other Greek Orthodox

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groups and associations they organised a rally in Athens city centre against the books on 4 March (Figure 3). One of the main slogans used was “WE SAY NO TO THE NEW RELIGIOUS TEXTBOOKS, in order to save our Faith, our families, our Homeland. We, Greeks should escalate our Resistance, our Vigilance, our Confession and Testimony; For us and our children”. It is interesting that the extreme-right party Golden Dawn also took part in this rally in order to support the initiative and express the party’s resistance against what they believe is an effort towards the de-Christianisation of the Greek society. As one of the party’s MPs, Ilias Kassidiaris, tweeted, “Today in Propylaia [i.e. the old building of the University of Athens]: Against the new religious textbooks which promote de-Hellenisation and Islamisation”.  

Figure 3: The rally against the religious textbooks on 4 March, 2018 in Syntagma Square. The photo is from the official website of the Panhellenic Union of Theologians.

Another issue that is also related to education is the incorporation of immigrant and especially refugee children in Greek schools. In some cases throughout Greece, such as in the regions of Serres and Chalkidiki, in Macedonia and in the island of Chios, there have been reactions from the part of parent associations, although not so strong as during the first year. The Aegean Sea Parent Associations reacted through public announcements arguing among other things that “in the islands of the North Aegean for security reasons no refugees and immigrant should stay permanently”, implying that refugee children should not stay and study in the regional schools. In

one of these cases a parent association in Chios reacted against the acceptance of a refugee child in school arguing,

The time of registration [i.e. of the child] and the inclusion of a Muslim child during the days of the Holy Easter, the greatest of the Christian holidays, when children work on this subject, they watch videos and discuss with the kindergarten teachers, worried us a lot.16

**Politics**

During the last three years, Golden Dawn (GD) has been the most important agent of reproducing Islamophobia in Greek society. Through ideological or news texts uploaded mainly on their website or published in the party’s newspaper the fear of Islam is present and very strong. According to GD, Islam is incompatible with the West, Muslims cannot be integrated in western societies, and it is necessary to change the multicultural approach otherwise wars will erupt in western cities.17 This fear reproduced by GD is directly related to immigration since as the party argues,

At least 80 per cent of the asylum seekers are men under the age of 30, almost all are Sunni Muslims and in their vast majority they support every kind of extremist-terrorist organisations within Islam.18

In this respect, immigrants and refugees are considered as invaders, as the Trojan horse, that have come to occupy Europe. Golden Dawn also argues that this is a plan of Zionists, composing this way a conspiracy theory. In order to support its arguments on the threat of Islam, GD reproduces all the news from abroad related to violent acts of Muslims (e.g. the terrorist attack in Russia in February or in France in March and elsewhere).19 On the other hand, the party praises initiatives taken by other European countries, for example Austria’s and Denmark’s initiative to close down mosques and deport imams or ban the wearing of the burqa in public places, and leaders like Matteo Salvini in Italy and Victor Orban in Hungary, among oth-

ers, for their courage to stand against the “Islamisation of Europe”. Finally, as one might suppose, the rhetoric of GD includes phrases like Islamist cannibals, Islamist decapitators, Islamic fanaticism, and many others in order to underline what they believe is the violent, barbaric, and medieval nature of Islam. Golden Dawn also organised a rally (Figure 4) at the site of the new mosque that will be built in Athens, protesting for the demolition of a pre-existing small Orthodox temple.

As usual with many statements of the GD and its MPs, on 6 March, Islamophobia was once again manifested inside the Greek Parliament through the lenses of Turcophobia. Ilias Kassidiaris, one of the most vocal MPs of GD, strongly rejected the involvement of Mustafa Mustafa, a member of the Muslim Turkish minority and an MP of SYRIZA in Rhodopi, in the Commission of Foreign Policy and Defence by shouting, “The traitor (of Greece) must go out. The Turk must leave here!” Later in

Figure 4: From the rally at Votanikos, Athens. The banner with the writing ‘Golden Dawn’ and next to that another with the phrase ‘Stop Islam’ are visible in the background. The photo is from the official website of GD.


his statements to journalists, he clarified that the existence of one of the four Muslim MPs, who are referred to by the President of Turkey as coethnic with Turks and to which statement no Greek political party reacted except GD, in such a strategic and significant commission where state secrets can also be shared was unacceptable and dangerous.\(^{23}\) Kassidiaris’s reaction was another indication of the continuity of lack of trust among some Greeks even towards minority members elected to the Greek Parliament based on their religious and/or ethnic differences.

Apart from GD, there are other marginal right-wing parties like the Nea Dexia (New Right), founded and lead by Failos Kranidiotis, that are openly against Islam, immigrants, and refugees in general. Kranidiotis speaks repeatedly not about immigration and immigrants and refugees, but about the ‘Islamic colonisation’ of Greece and Europe that should be confronted.\(^{24}\) The party also praises and supports leaders like Salvini, Orban, and Trump as well as their views and policies on immigration flows and Islam.\(^{25}\) In its published theses regarding the so-called demographic and immigration problems, which are the most important topics in the party’s discourse, the New Right argues,

> The evidence so far leads to a situation in which the Greek population and the Greek society as we know them until now are being altered. We do not have the right to passively accept these developments. We have to take our responsibilities, especially towards our own children. […]

> The so-called integration is actually a colonisation. The mass reception and settlement of people especially Muslims, with all the consequences of that, will create in a short time a new community that will replace the previous one [i.e. the Greek one].

The party makes a series of suggestions in order to confront immigration - including some very strict and non-humanitarian ones - and includes a special section regarding Islam with the following measures:

- **Ban of funding coming from Islamic organisations from abroad.**
- **Exclusive use of the Greek translation of the Koran.**
- **Legislation about Islam based on the example of Austria. Ban of symbols used in public places.**


• Ban of use of any kind of head covering [meaning especially the headscarf and all its variations] deriving from a religious obligation in public and private places and of all clothing that conceals the face. High fines in case of violation of this legislation.
• Investigation of the legality of purposes and activities of every organised Islamic structure, e.g. unions, clubs, associations, etc.
• Ban of Sharia law in every part of the country. In the case of the implementation of Sharia, the consequence will be the removal of citizenship, if this is the case, and immediate deportation.
• The start of a political debate on the topic of whether Islam is actually a religion given that its holy book is considered as law by Muslim communities.
• Closure of every illegal mosque.
• Annulment of the first [official] mosque of Athens.27

It is very interesting that on 18 October, certain members of Nea Dexia resigned and on 27 October formed another political movement called “Ethnos kai Eleftheria” (Nation and Freedom). What is even more interesting is that among this movement’s first texts is one on immigration and the so-called demographic problem which is actually identical with the one of Nea Dexia mentioned above - especially the measures that are necessary against Islam.28

Another extreme-right party is Elliniki Lyssi (Greek Solution), founded by Kyriakos Velopoulos, a former MP of Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos (Greek Orthodox Rally) of Georgios Karatzaferis. In the party’s political programme dedicated to the “immigration issue” the party argues,

Integration programmes for the illegal immigrants have already been prepared and this means that unfortunately they came to stay! European countries will not open their borders and this means that in Greece hundreds of thousands of Muslim illegal immigrants will settle.

The alteration of our Language, our Religion, our Traditions, our Values and in general of Hellenism is a matter of time. For as long as this dangerous coalition government stays in power, this time is getting closer!29

Through a detailed description of the implementation of a series of security measures that are necessary in order to confront immigration waves, the party argues that “we, the Greeks, need to take back our country and preserve our language, civilization and religion!”30

27. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
From the above references, it is obvious that in Greek politics Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments and attitudes are mainly found within the spectrum of the extreme-right. However, one can still find examples of self-proclaimed liberals who have been expressing Islamophobic views on a systematic basis during the last years. One such example is the leader of a small neo-liberal political party, Thanos Tzimeros, mentioned also in previous reports, who continues his Islamophobic discourse, especially through Facebook and Twitter or in his public speeches and appearances. Among many comments, texts, and tweets one that actually summarises his views is the following:

[…] Islam is BY ITS NATURE bigoted, aggressive, INTOLERANT to diversity and [the Europeans] should proceed to the next step which is its FULL BAN within the EU. As I have written in tens of articles, it is [Islam] not only a religion but a regulative, legislative framework which CONTRADICTS ALL the basic values of the Western Civilisation. In the same way that we wouldn’t accept an association of paedophiles, of men beating up their wives, children oppressors and aspiring murderers of other faith followers, it is not possible to accept within the EU the presence of a ‘religion’ with the exact same values, something that we realised after they managed to gain power through the rise of their population and after they started to show their real face. Europe IS NOT going to avoid the clash with Islam. The sooner the better. It is already too late. 31

The main conclusion regarding politics is that open Islamophobia is evident in the extreme-right and other small political parties, although it could be also present in concealed forms in other parties and politicians as well. An interesting finding emerged from interviews with Muslims in which they argued that covert Islamophobia could be found in the state apparatuses as well, a form that could be described as “institutional Islamophobia”. One example mentioned was the control by the police and the secret services of prayer houses, especially in Athens, and another one was the delay of the construction of the first official mosque in the Greek capital. It was argued that the continuous delays and obstacles raised with regard to the mosque might imply a covered Islamophobia by the state, which actually does not want a mosque to be built. 32

An interesting parameter related to politics is the two-week-long public deliberation on the law with regard to the administrative council of the new mosque in Athens that opened in May 2018. Despite the fact that the law passed from the Greek Parliament it is quite illuminating for one to pay attention to the comments


32. Such views are not in any way representative of all Muslims in Greece, but should be at least recorded and perhaps taken into consideration. For security reasons the names of the interviewees cannot be revealed.
uploaded in this public deliberation. The vast majority of the 148 comments from individuals or organised groups were against the construction of the mosque, while at the same time they expressed openly Islamophobic views. Although in such cases it is usual that people of the same ideological background enter the discussion massively in order to make their voice heard, the fact is that among all the comments written during this process not even one positive view and in support of the mosque and Muslims was expressed. The main arguments, among others, were that the construction of the mosque will create many dangers, Muslims will be radicalised, the mosque is unconstitutional, Muslims are invading Greece, Greece is an Orthodox country, and Islam is incompatible with the Greek history and civilization, and that it will lead to the Islamisation of the country.

Media
It is not rare to find Islamophobic views and articles published in extreme-right newspapers like *Golden Dawn, Makeleio, Stobos, Eleftheros Kosmos,* and *Eleftheri Ora* (Figure 5), as was mentioned in previous reports.

![Figure 5: Front page of Eleftheri Ora, 16 October, 2018. In the upper part it is written, “Hardcore Headscarves of Islam Are Shocking Piraeus”](image)

However, other newspapers like *Dimocratia,* which belongs to the right-wing spectrum, have hosted views and articles which are openly Islamophobic. Among the authors of such articles is Failos Kranidiotis, whose party *Nea Dexia* was mentioned in the above section on politics. Throughout the year, *Dimocratia* published news and articles echoing views against Islam, immigration, multiculturalism, and

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33. For more details and comments visit the link of the deliberation at: [http://www.opengov.gr/ypepth/?p=4141#comments](http://www.opengov.gr/ypepth/?p=4141#comments), (Access date: 3 September 2019).
arguing that politicians in Greece should learn from the lessons in other countries, implying the terrorist attacks that have taken place during the last years. In addition, the articles argue that the integration of Muslims in Greece and Europe is impossible and that the mosque the government decided to build in Athens is an endeavour that should not take place for cultural and for security reasons.  

Apart from the media that belong to the right and the extreme-right ideological and political spectrum, one can also find Islamophobic opinion pieces and articles in other newspapers of liberal and/or centre-right background like the news site liberal.gr and the newspapers Athens Voice and Ta Nea. The fact is that these media include articles of specific authors who could be considered as important figures in the Islamophobia network; for example, the former politician and minister Andreas Andrianopoulos, and the author Soti Triandafyllou.

Book publications with Islamophobic content are another issue. An example that could be mentioned is a book published by an extreme-right publishing house Longhi (Spear), written by Christos Bisdas, a columnist of the extreme-right newspaper Eleftheros Kosmos mentioned above. The book (Figure 6) included articles published in the newspaper under the title “The Attack of Islam in Europe: Terrorism, Illegal Immigration, Colonisation. Is There a Solution?” and was published in the publisher’s new series titled “Modern Nationalist Thinking.”

Figure 6: The front cover of the book by C. Bisdas.

Justice System

When it comes to the justice system there are a few decisions that are directly or indirectly related to the issue of Islamophobia. As was mentioned in the section on education, a series of reactions erupted from the part of theologians and clergy members, because of the new religious textbooks, which included information on other religions apart from the Orthodox Christianity that until now held the monopoly. A number of parents, bishops, and religious associations appealed to the Council of State against the Ministry of Education and the new textbooks. In 2018, the court published its decisions (926/2018 and 660/2018) which considered the new textbooks as unconstitutional. Among other excuses, Article 3 of the Greek Constitution which states that the dominant religion in Greece is the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ was cited. However, the court’s decision was accepted with criticism and was described as extremely conservative bringing back the necessity for the amendment of the Greek Constitution. On its part, the Ministry of Education replied that the content of the school textbooks is the state’s responsibility and that it will proceed with the reformation of the educational system, including the religious textbooks, as planned.

In May 2018, the trial of a well-known author who wrote an Islamophobic text after the attacks of November 2015 in Paris took place in Athens after a lawsuit of the Greek Helsinki Monitor. The trial was to take place initially during 2017 but it was postponed. According to the charges she went on trial for violating the anti-racist law (4285/2014) and some articles of the penal code and more particularly for public incitement of violence and hatred. It should be noted that the author was supported by other authors and journalists arguing either that she has the right of freedom of speech or that she said nothing wrong because Islam is indeed a problem and not a moderate religion. The court acquitted her on all charges, a decision that, on the one hand, was considered as a victory of freedom of speech and opinion, and, on the other, as a victory of racist and Islamophobic discourse. What was also interesting and publicly commented on was the oration of the public prosecutor in which she argued that “the opinions the accused expressed are similar to the views that passed through our minds after the attack in Bataclan [Paris, 2015]. Her text is just an expression of opinion and it is impossible to satisfy the burden of proof that...
a crime was committed”. As some argued, such an oration coming from a judge proves that Islamophobia runs deep in Greek society on many different levels - something that needs to be addressed.

Finally, in September 2018, the Greek Helsinki Monitor sued Thanos Tzimeros, who was mentioned above for his Islamophobic views, based on the anti-racist legislation, because of a public comment he made on his Facebook page arguing that just being Muslim is a crime because of the violent character and the brutality of Islam. In addition, in the same comment he uploaded an older article (2016) he had written supporting his argumentation against Islam and Muslims and asking for the penal persecution of Muslims just because they are Muslims and because, in his view, actually ‘Muslims act like a gang with the Koran functioning as its statutes’. Based on that, he argued that Muslims should be arrested and persecuted because they believe and follow the Koran which includes orders for the suppression of women, robbery of infidels, etc. Authorities, he argued, should arrest Muslims even if they have never actually committed a crime.

**Internet**
The Internet and social media, in particular, have been a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and the expression of hatred of Islam and Muslims. While it is difficult to monitor the whole field in a systematic manner, similarly to the previous years’ reports many extreme-right wing websites continue to disseminate news about Muslim countries in relation to violence (e.g. killings, rapes, murders, etc.) which in most cases are not reliable. These kinds of views, ideological texts, messages, and comments are primarily used in order to cultivate and impose the fear of Islam and create a repulsive image of Islam and Muslims. Such websites include, of course, the official website of GD and of its youth division (http://www.xryshaygh.com/ and http://www.antepithesi.gr/); https://ethnikismos.net/ which is related to GD since many articles appear on both websites; the website of a journalist, writer, and Turcologist (sic), i.e. a specialist in the study of Turkish history society and Greek-Turkish relations, http://nikosxeiladakis.gr/ in which a special section dedicated to Islam can be found; and, of course, all the websites of the newspapers mentioned in the media section of the report which belong to the extreme-right (http://www.stoxos.gr/, http://www.makeleio.gr/, https://www.elora.gr/portal/, http://www.elkosmos.gr/). Apart from

the above, one can find blogs with Islamophobic content and images, arguing that Greece and especially Athens face an invasion by illegal immigrants who are mainly Muslims, deteriorating its population’s synthesis, and that the Koran is a source of hatred and Greeks need to fight Islam before it is too late for the Greek society and the Greek civilization. Finally, there are many Facebook and Twitter accounts, both personal pages and groups, which reproduce messages, videos, and texts against immigrants and refugees and, of course, against multiculturalism, Islam, and Muslims and the construction of the mosque in Athens (Figure 6).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Some of the central figures in the Islamophobia network have already been mentioned in previous sections, e.g. Thanos Tzimeros in politics or Nikos Heiladakis in the Internet section. Another central figure, however, is Andreas Andrianopoulos, a self-proclaimed liberal and former minister with the right-wing party Nea Dimokratia (New Democracy). During the last years, he has been writing articles, books, and making lots of comments on Facebook and mainly on Twitter openly expressing his

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42. Oxi Tzami, Facebook, 31 July 2018.
anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim views and suggestions. His main arguments are that Islam is monolithic and violent by its nature and concepts such as ‘moderate Muslims’ do not exist, adding that western values are not the Sharia law, halal, and the burqa. Commenting on the withdrawal of Angela Merkel from her party leadership and criticising her for her immigration policy, he wrote,

Hold back the Muslim invasion, which openly now undermines social cohesion and smooth economic growth - contrary to the unrealistic opinions of the Open Society Foundation mechanisms, claiming that supposedly the security systems are being saved from collapse and the gaps in manpower are being filled.

In addition, in 2018, he published his second book on Islam, under the title Islam of Our Future (Figure 7) reproducing most of his argumentation regarding immigration, violence in Islam, and multiculturalism. From the front cover alone one can understand its Islamophobic approach.

Figure 7: The front cover of Andrianopoulos’s book from Epikentro publishing house.


45. His first book was published in 2015 by the same publishing house under the title Islam’s Rage and the Fanatics of Jihad.
Another field where one can find Islamophobic views is that of the Orthodox Church of Greece. Clarifying from the very beginning that the Church on the whole and the Holy Synod have never taken an official Islamophobic or anti-Muslim decision, it goes without saying that several Church figures have overtly expressed such views during the last years. One of them - and the main figure - is Amvrosios, the metropolitan of Kalavryta, who in his public addresses to his flock or through his own blog reproduces such discourses. In one such text, after arguing that Greece is losing its Orthodox Christian character because of the left-wing government and that it is under attack and has actually been conquered, he adds,

In Votanikos Tsipras’s government demolishes an Orthodox temple in order to build using state money a mosque for the Islamists! (sic) […] As far as Muslim immigrants are concerned in our country, apart from the desecration of the holy symbols of our holy Orthodoxy we have also other sad phenomena like robberies, muggings, murders, immorality, etc.46

A second metropolitan that usually reproduces such discourses is the Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim. In his texts and rhetoric, he continuously argues that the Koran and Islam, in general, reproduce and propagate raw violence and that Greece had such an experience during the Ottoman rule.47 While such views are not representative of the Orthodox Church they prove that Islamophobia exists within its circles. This is also supported by the reactions of larger parts of the clergy to the new religious textbooks mentioned in the education section. Furthermore, there are other religious groups like the True Orthodox Christians, who follow the old calendar,48 that have been also expressing anti-immigrant and openly Islamophobic views, are against the construction of the mosque in Athens, and participate in demonstrations on the issue together with members of Golden Dawn (Figure 8).

47. “Is It Possible to Have Misunderstood the Koran Regarding Jihad?”, Metropolis of Piraeus, 28 December 2017.
48. True Orthodox Christians (TOC) are recognised as orthodox but are considered as ultra conservative and even exhibiting fundamentalist attitudes. They are organised in a separate Orthodox Church hierarchy with their own Bishops and clergy who are not public employees as the hierarchy and clergy of the Greek Orthodox Church (GOC). Theirs is a second, parallel and independent, Orthodox Church that neither receives official state support nor is represented within the Greek state. Their relationship with the official GOC is antagonistic at the level of the religious institution and hierarchy, but their temples and rituals are identical to those of the GOC with the exception of the religious calendar they use. The TOC use the “old” Julian calendar instead of the “new” Gregorian calendar which has been adopted in 1923. From 1924 onward a part of the orthodox clergy hierarchy and population in Greece refused to follow the new calendar and gradually formed the Church of the TOC of Greece.
Observed Civil Society and Political Assessments and Initiatives

The three state policies/decisions that could be considered as important in confronting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in 2018 were the following: First, the new curriculum and religious textbooks introduced in 2016 on a pilot level in selected schools continued. Despite the Council of State’s decision and the reactions from fundamentalist groups and the Orthodox Church, the ministry seems determined to proceed. Second, the programme of the Ministry of Education about the incorporation of refugee children continued to be implemented in 2018 in various regions of Greece despite again local reactions and obstacles, which were fewer compared to the previous years. Third, during 2018, the preparations (construction work amendments, legislation on the mosque’s board and internal regulation, call for applications for the mosque’s imam) for the functioning of the official mosque proceeded, although, in truth, the whole process moves very slowly. It is expected that it will be ready by the end of April 2019 at the latest, according to government officials.

With regard to the media, the European project Respect Words that was launched in 2017 about the way journalists should cover issues related to immigrants and ethnic or religious minorities throughout Europe ended in 2018. In this project, the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) was a partner and one of the project’s main outcomes was a booklet of guidelines including, among other topics, a special section on ethical reporting on Muslim communities, which was created in 2017, but printed and published in 2018. Adding to the above, in 2018, the European

50. The project was run by the Andalusian Association of Municipal and Community Broadcasters for Radio and Television (EMA-RTV) as its leader. For more information see: https://www.respectwords.org/en/project/, (Access date: 3 September 2019).
project Counter Islamophobia Kit (CIK), including a partner from Greece, continued its research. The project produced a transferable toolkit of counter-narratives to Islamophobia, building on an assessment of the range and content of counter-narratives to Muslim hatred and hostility in eight national case study contexts and their application, operation, and impact on prevailing narratives of hate and hostility. In September, the project organised a half-day conference in Athens discussing its results and the issue of Islamophobia in Greece and abroad.

Finally, in 2018, a new European project started under the name “Mutual Understanding Respect Learning (MURAL)”. The main goals of the project are increasing tolerance and respect on issues of faith, religious convictions, and national origin; promoting the values of pluralism and democratic societies; fostering inter-state collaboration, exchange of knowledge and good practices. This project targets all the above towards the confrontation of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and the lack of tolerance that parts of Europe face nowadays. As part of the project a workshop was organised in November in Athens with the participation of representatives and members of the Muslim and Jewish communities of Athens, as well as teachers, journalists, and civil society actors.51

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

All the available data with regard to Islamophobia in Greece for 2018 shows that significant changes have not taken place compared to the previous year. Islamophobia is primarily manifested in the public discourse and the political programmes of parties and politicians mainly of the extreme-right, among some higher clergy members of the Orthodox Church of Greece, and in different platforms of the Greek media, with the Internet and social media being a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia. However, it is important to mention that Islamophobia is found also among self-proclaimed political and/or economic liberals and not only in the extremes. There are, of course, political parties, politicians and anti-racist groups mainly from the Left opposing racist and Islamophobic discourses and discriminatory practices.

Among the main issues that need to be addressed with regard to monitoring and confronting Islamophobia are the following:

- First of all, a need that still hasn’t been met in order to confront Islamophobia is the establishment of an official observatory mechanism that will monitor and record Islamophobic incidents on both the levels of discourse and physical attacks. Towards this direction a first step would be the collaboration of existing state mechanisms and civil society networks in order to achieve a better level of Islamophobia monitoring.

51. For more information see: http://hellenicplatform.org/mutual-understanding-respect-learning-mural/#, (Access date: 3 September 2019).
• Second, the legal mechanism in Greece is not effectively tackling Islamophobia and the Greek law is not robust enough to discourage Islamophobic actions and more specifically hate speech.
• Third, the Orthodox Church of Greece should not only publicly disapprove of its metropolitans who insist on using Islamophobic discourse, but also effectively discourage any attempt of reproduction of anti-Muslim hatred by its clerics.
• Fourth, even though Islam is an old religion in Greece dating back to the Ottoman times and the 14th century, knowledge about the fundamentals of Islam is highly limited, which provides another space for Islamophobia to flourish inside the Greek society. In this respect, the new religious textbooks’ broader distribution during 2018, which include more information about Islam, is likely to assist the overall understanding of Islam in Greece.
• For the same purpose, training seminars should also be provided particularly for those journalists, teachers, police officers, coastguards, and other civil servants who have contact with Muslims.
• Finally, it is significant to remember that Muslims should not be excluded from decision-making mechanisms combating anti-Muslim hatred in Greece. An effective mechanism of dialogue and cooperation should immediately be formed; a platform is necessary where views of Muslims will be taken fully into consideration by Greek decision makers in Greece’s fight against Islamophobia.

Overall, two positive parameters are that the government, despite the existing gaps, could not be considered as hostile to Islam and Muslims, and that the initiatives of civil society, academia, and media organisations through the implementation of relevant projects could play a crucial role in the study and confrontation of Islamophobia.

Chronology
• 18.01.2018: The Muslim Association of Greece received a threatening phone call from Crypteia stating that they are a group that burns, hits, and kills immigrants, mainly Muslims, and that they are a target.
• 04.03.2018: A demonstration in Syntagma Square against the new religious school textbooks organised by theologians, Orthodox Church figures, and other associations.
• 22.03.2018: Arson attack by Crypteia against the offices of the Afghan Migrant and Refugee Community of Greece, in central Athens.
• 22.04.2018: Attack against Afghan immigrants and refugees gathered in the main square of Lesvos resulting in 28 injuries.
• **02.05.2018:** The author Soti Triandafyllou was declared innocent by a court in Athens for his racist and Islamophobic text.

• **01.07.2018:** Defamation of outer wall of the Iasmos Mosque with an anti-Turkish slogan in Western Thrace (Rhodopi Prefecture).

• **05.09.2018:** A demonstration organised by Golden Dawn against the mosque of Athens in Votanikos.

• **05.09.2018:** A lawsuit by the Racist Crime Watch against Thanos Tzimeros for uploading an Islamophobic text on his Facebook page.

• **06.09.2018:** A girl was attacked in Lesvos because she was wearing a headscarf although she was not a Muslim.

• **22.09.2018:** A half-day conference in Athens organised by the Counter Islamophobia Kit project discussing the results of its research and the issue of Islamophobia in Greece and abroad.

• **10.10.2018:** A racist verbal attack by a police officer in Lesvos against an elderly woman from Syria.

• **22-26.11.2018:** A workshop in Athens with the participation of representatives and members of the Muslim and Jewish communities of Athens, as well as teachers, journalists, and civil society actors organised by the Mutual Understanding Respect Learning project.