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

Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić, who were among the most prominent advocates of the nationalist politics which resulted in the crimes during the nineties, came to power in 2012 when they seized power from the pro-democratic political parties that had ousted the nationalist regime of Slobodan Milošević back in 2000. From 2012 to the present day, there is a process of systematic political rehabilitation of people who played the most sinister role in the events during the 1990s, together with the process of the reaffirmation of the nationalist ideology of Great Serbia.

In such an atmosphere, anti-Muslim sentiment and narrative are on the rise, which is most evident in pro-government media and the rise of right-wing organizations. Needless to say, in addition to the hate speech present in the media on a daily basis, we are witnessing a resurgence of the most vicious Serbian Islamophobes in various fields of the public sphere, championed by the same extremists from the 1990s.

Serbia’s cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and the prosecution of war crimes suspects from the 1990s before local courts of law was on a very low level. Likewise, in July 2018, the Court of Appeals in Belgrade upheld the acquittal of the members of paramilitary unit “Sima’s Chetniks” for the demolition of the mosque and the murder of 27 Roma Muslims in the village of Skočić, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1992. Furthermore, those responsible for crimes committed in the 1990s in the Serbian territory, i.e. in Sandžak, have not been prosecuted.

Ultimately, one of the crucial problems that Serbia is facing regarding Islamophobia and tackling it is the lack of any available data on hate crimes. The report from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination stressed their concern resulting from the fact that Serbia has no available statistical data or any other information regarding claims and appeals, investigations or outcomes in cases of offences committed from religious, racial, national, or ethnic hatred. The conclusions from this report refer to the lack of statistical information not only in cases of particular physical assaults, but also in instances of hate speech in the public sphere, the media, and the Internet. For the reasons mentioned in the committee’s conclusion it is actually impossible to provide accurate information regarding physical assaults and verbal attacks against Muslims, or members of predominantly Islamic ethnic groups, such as Bosniaks, Albanians, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians.
IZVRŠNI REZIME


Takođe, jedan od krucijalnih problema s kojim se Srbija suočava kada je reč o islamofobiji i borbi protiv nje, jeste nepostojanje dostupnih podataka koji se tiču zločina počinjenih iz mržnje. U svojim zaključnim zapažanjima iz decembra 2017. godine Komitet za eliminaciju rasne diskriminacije pri Ujedinjenim nacijama izrazil je zabrinutost jer Srbija ne raspolaže statističkim, niti bilo kakvim drugim podacima, o pritužbama, istragama i ishodima za slučajeve koji su počinjeni iz verske, rasne ili nacionalno-etičke mržnje. Zaključci se odnose na nepostojanje statističkih podataka ne samo u slučajevima konkretnih fizičkih napada, već i na govor mržnje u javnom, medijskom i virtuelnom prostoru. Posledicom toga nemoguće je dati tačne podatke koji se odnose na fizičke i verbalne napade na muslimane, kao i na pripadničke etničkih zajednica koje su predominantno islamske veroispovesti poput Bošnjaka, Albanaca, Roma, Aškalija i Egipćana.
Country Profile

**Country:** Serbia

**Type of Regime:** Democratic Republic

**Form of Government:** Parliamentary Republic

**Ruling Parties:** Serbian Progressive Party (populist conservative party)

**Opposition Parties:** See Below.

**Last Elections:** 2017 Presidential Election (Leader of Serbian Progressive Party Aleksandar Vučić won 55.08% of the vote against 16.36% of independent candidate Aleksandar Saša Janković); 2016 Parliamentary Election (Populist Conservative Coalition around Serbian Progressive Party 131 seats, Socialist Party of Serbia [the party which was led during the nineties by Slobodan Milošević] 29 seats, Far-Right Serbian Radical Party 22 seats, Center-Left Coalition around Democratic Party 16 seats, Neoliberal Movement “Enough is enough. Restart” 16 seats, Far-Right Movement “Dveri” and Democratic Party of Serbia 13 seats, etc.)

**Total Population:** 7.03 million (in 2017)

**Major Languages:** Serbian

**Official Religion:** No state religion. The dominant Serbian Orthodox Church and other “traditional” religious communities receive preferential status based on the “Law on Churches and Religious Communities” adopted in 2006.

**Statistics on Islamophobia:** No official/unofficial statistics available.

**Statistics on Racism and Discrimination:** No official/unofficial statistics available.

**Major Religions (% of Population):** Orthodox Christianity (84.59%), Catholicism (4.97%), Islam (3.10%), Protestantism (0.99%), No religion (1.11%), Others (5.24%).

**Muslim Population (% of Population):** 222,829 people (3.1%) in 2011 (official census). This number is without Albanians who boycotted the census as well as significant number of Bosniaks. The reason why they boycotted the census is that they didn’t have questionnaires in their mother tongue. Also, the number of Roma and Ashkali Muslims is much higher, because of extremely poor conditions they don’t posses any documents so they remain “unrecognized citizens”. The number of Muslims living in Serbia is approximately around 400.000-500.000.

**Main Muslim Community Organizations:** Islamic Community in Serbia; Islamic Community of Serbia.

**Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia:** There is no particular NGO that deals with Islamophobia. Data and work is done only by certain individuals.

**Far-Right Parties:** Serbian Radical Party, Movement “Dveri”, Democratic Party of Serbia.

**Far-Right Movements:** Otadžbinski pokret Obraz, Srpski sabor Zavetnici, Srpski narodni pokret “Naši”, Srpski narodni pokret “1389”, Nacionalni srpski front, Organizacija “Alternativa.”
Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices
- Hijab Ban: No
- Halal Slaughter Ban: No
- Minaret Ban: No (depends on local decision)
- Circumcision Ban: No
- Burka Ban: No
- Prayer Ban: No
Introduction

It is not possible to understand the current status of Muslims in Serbia without referring to the nationalist ideology of Great Serbia, which was formed back in the 19th century, in the times of liberation from the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The perception of Muslims as the archetypical enemy, that is, the epitome of the Other, is probably one of the key factors that constitute the Serbian nationalist identity. It is precisely on that basis that on several occasions in the 20th century, the Serbs perpetrated ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Muslim population living in the territories of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The last in a series of crimes against the Muslim population was carried out in the wake of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, and it took place in the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republic of Kosovo. During that period, the Serbian forces held Sarajevo under siege for three years, and were responsible for mass killings in the locality of Prijedor Municipality, the genocide against Muslims in Srebrenica, as well as ethnic cleansing committed against the Albanian population in Kosovo. Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić, who were among the most prominent advocates of the nationalist politics which resulted in those crimes, came to power in 2012 once again, when they seized power from the pro-democratic political parties that had ousted the nationalist regime of Slobodan Milošević back in 2000. From 2012 to the present day, there is a process of systematic political rehabilitation of people who played the most sinister role in the events during the 1990s, alongside the process of reaffirmation of the nationalist ideology of Great Serbia. In such an atmosphere, anti-Muslim sentiment and narrative are on the rise, which is most evident in pro-government media and the rise of right-wing organizations. Needless to say, in addition to the hate speech present in the media on a daily basis, we are witnessing a resurgence of Islamophobia in various fields of the public sphere, championed by the same extremists from the 1990s - an issue that will be addressed in more detail later in this report.

The main features of the Serbian national identity are best described in a recent Pew Research Center study published in 2018 entitled *Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views on Minorities, and Key Social Issues*. As much as 78% of the Serbian citizens believe that religion (in this case, Orthodox Christianity) is the key aspect of their national identity. Likewise, 78% of Serbs believe that “their culture is superior to other cultures,” a fact that positions them among the

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1. Tomislav Nikolić was vice-president and Aleksandar Vučić secretary general of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party, which sent volunteers to war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From its foundation to the present day, the leader of this right-wing party has been Vojislav Šešelj who was found guilty at The Hague Tribunal and sentenced to 10 years in prison for instigating crimes with his nationalist speeches, given in Vojvodina back in 1992, during the war. Moreover, one of the most notorious statements given by Aleksandar Vučić, currently the Serbian president, dating from that period came barely a few days after the genocide in Srebrenica, when at the National Parliament he publicly said, “For every Serb killed, we will kill 100 Muslims.”
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Top-rated nations in that respect. Within the context of their views on Islam, namely when asked if they would accept a Muslim as a member of their family, only 43% answered positively. This statistical data undoubtedly testifies to the exclusivist and racist nature of Serbian national identity.

However, it is important to point out that the current opposition parties, which led to the toppling of the regime of Slobodan Milošević back in 2000, are largely pro-nationalist as well. It is precisely this fact that best explains why there has basically been no fundamental political change after the fall of Milošević, and consequently no coming to terms with the past and the crimes committed. In other words, one of the greatest problems in Serbian politics is the current lack of any significant alternative force which could result in the affirmation of a civic identity open to the inclusion of members of other ethnicities and different religious denominations and confessions.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In the conclusion of their report from December 2017, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination stressed their concern resulting from the fact that Serbia has no available statistical data or any other information regarding claims and appeals, investigations or outcomes in cases of offences committed from religious, racial, national, or ethnic hatred. The conclusions from this report refer to the lack of statistical information not only on cases of particular physical assaults, but also on instances of hate speech in the public sphere, the media, and the Internet. For the reasons mentioned in the committee’s conclusion it is actually impossible to provide accurate information regarding physical assaults and verbal attacks against Muslims, or members of predominantly Islamic ethnic groups, such as Bosniaks, Albanians, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians. Therefore, for the requirements of this report, it was necessary to conduct a series of interviews with representatives of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights, Roma Center for Women and Children “Daje”, Sandžak Committee for Human Rights, the NGO Lighthouse (Svetionik) from Novi Pazar, as well as official representatives from the Bosniac National Council, Roma National Council, Egyp-
tian National Council, and Ashkali National Council. I also talked with representatives of two Islamic communities active in Serbia, that is, the Islamic Community of Serbia and the Islamic Community in Serbia. The most brutal physical assault took place on 7 October, in Novi Sad, when two young men of Albanian ethnicity were beaten up by four men of Serbian ethnicity. As a consequence of this attack, the life of one of the Albanians was in danger, but he was given adequate medical assistance and eventually his condition became stable. One of the young men who were attacked said that they were assaulted when a group of young men standing nearby heard him speak to his friend in Albanian. This incident also provoked an official reaction by the Albanian National Council in Serbia.4

There was another case which should be mentioned. It was a series of incidents related to the festival “Mirdita, Hello” organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights. The festival was focused on the Kosovar cultural scene and the works of Albanian artists, with the aim of normalizing the relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Two days before the festival was to take place, ultranationalist right-wing parliamentary party Dveri and the Democratic Party of Serbia organized a street protest under the slogan “Mirdita, Goodbye.” This protest was held without any major incidents. However, on the day the festival was inaugurated there was another protest which was organized by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) led by convicted war criminal Vojislav Šešelj, which prompted police forces to intervene in order to protect the participants at the festival from the protesters. During the incident numerous cases of hate speech occurred based on racial and religious discrimination. This led to legal charges against the offenders being pressed, which will be commented in more detail further on in this report.

In addition to the assault mentioned above, there were also other incidents that took place at sports events. One of the major incidents was when during the basketball game played by their club against Olympiakos from Greece, the Red Star fans displayed a banner which read, “Shqiptars, Croats, Balija ain’t no brothers of mine.” This was a protest because the club had just signed Alen Omić, a player of Bosniak

ethnicity. During the game, the Red Star fans also displayed another banner which read, “We thank the management for all the joy and trophies, but don’t count on us while there are unwanted players,” which was a clear message that they would boycott the games as long as Muslim player Omić played for their club.

Furthermore, it has become quite common that derogatory graffiti is sprayed across houses in which Muslim families live. Following the football match played between Switzerland and Serbia at the World Cup in Russia, when the Swiss player Xherdan Shaqiri celebrated scoring the goal which sealed the victory against Serbia by making the sign of two-headed eagle, the emblem from the Albanian flag, the wall of the Alomerović family house in Belgrade was sprayed with the graffiti “Kosovo and Metohija are Serbian lands.” Around the same time, eggs were thrown at the house of another family living in the same Belgrade vicinity.

Employment
As in the case of physical and verbal assaults, there are no official statistics or information regarding cases of discrimination in employment on a religious, racial, na-
tional, or ethnic basis in Serbia. However, there is no doubt that it is the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians who definitely face discrimination the most. Representatives of their respective national councils said that they actually face “double discrimination”: firstly based on their skin color, and secondly based on their religion. Moreover, the situation described in the previous annual report regarding unemployment in areas with predominantly Muslim population, such as Sandžak (Bosniak population) and the Preshevo Valley (Albanian population) has remained the same. It is important to point out that the average salary in Sandžak, in particular in the town of Novi Pazar, is the lowest in entire Serbia. In January 2018, the average salary in Serbia amounted to RSD 50,048 (approximately EUR 425), whereas in Novi Pazar it only amounted to RSD 38,423 (approximately EUR 325). In addition to this imbalance in income, another problem stressed by all the representatives of councils of Islamic ethnic minorities is the fact that there is inequality with regard to the percentage of employees at state institutions with national structure. This is indirectly related to the number of employees in the police and judiciary.

Education
With regard to the issue of education, members of Islamic ethnic minorities face significant problems. In the first place, there is a problem with the textbooks for primary and secondary schools in the languages of the respective ethnic minorities, as well as the formation of classes for Bosniak and Albanian children. Talking to the representative of the Bosniac National Council, we were informed that they are under constant pressure by school principals and teachers for their children not to enrol in Bosniak classes. Moreover, there are no textbooks in minority languages for vocational secondary schools such as ones for medicine, economics, and art design.

Likewise, since its introduction back in 2001, classes of religious education at schools are a huge problem for Muslims. Representatives of the Islamic community stated that Muslims face systematic discrimination and a whole range of practices aimed at hindering the implementation of the law on religious education for Muslim children.

Nevertheless, as is the case with other issues, it is the children from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian ethnic minorities who are least favored and find themselves in the worst situation. Only 6% of Roma children enroll in preschool institutions, and 46% of them complete obligatory primary school education, while barely 13% finish high school, with the number of girls being half that of boys. These figures are

7. In conversation with representatives of the Ashkali community, we were informed that in the case of this ethnic group unemployment rate hovers around 90%.
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actually even lower in the case of Ashkali and Egyptian children who are not guaranteed affirmative actions as their Roma counterparts.

Meanwhile, the problem with history textbooks that was highlighted in the previous year’s report on Serbia remains unchanged. The main problems are the completely “distorted representations of the Ottoman period and the depiction of the basics of Islamic faith and culture.” These textbooks are widely in use not only among Serbian Orthodox children but among Albanian, Bosniak, and Roma children as well.

As regarding halal food in Serbian schools, preschool institutions and primary schools do not provide such meals for Muslim children.

Politics

As we already pointed out in the introduction, the biggest problem in the political arena is the revival of the political actors who held the power in the 1990s. At the moment, the ruling party in Serbia is the Serbian Progressive Party, which emerged from the extremist right-wing Serbian Radical Party, which was the most aggressive advocate of the nationalist ideology of Great Serbia. Moreover, the Serbian Progressive Party holds power in the coalition with the Socialist Party of Serbia, which ruled the country during the 1990s, and whose president was Slobodan Milošević. The ruling Serbian Progressive Party and the media under its influence use many occasions to spread narratives that are not necessarily openly anti-Muslim, but in general refer positively to events from the past when Muslims in the territory of the former Yugoslavia were expelled or murdered for their religion or ethnicity. Serbian Muslims, who are also mostly members of ethnic minorities such as Bosniak, Albanian, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian, feel insecure and threatened due to the re-emergence of such a political climate.

The most blatant instance of hate speech in the political arena in 2018 was when Vjerica Radeta, MP from the Serbian Radical Party, referring to the death of Hatidža Mehmedović, president of the civic association Mothers of Srebrenica, whose husband and two sons were murdered in the Srebrenica Genocide, posted on her Twitter profile: “I heard that the head of the Srebrenica businesswomen’s association Hatidža Mehmedović died. Who is going to bury her? Her husband or her sons?”


11. The reasons that most often serve as motive for hate speech include Serbia-Kosovo negotiations, as well as secessionist acts and the constant efforts to undermine the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina carried out by Milorad Dodik, currently chairman and Bosniak Serbs’ representative at the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

What is more, The Hague Tribunal is currently conducting a legal procedure against Vjerica Radeta because during the trial against Vojislav Šešelj she influenced court witnesses by threatening or bribing them in order to change their statements or to drop their charges. In this year’s report, the European Committee criticized the Serbian government because of their unwillingness to arrest Vjerica Radeta and to send her to The Hague Tribunal, and their failure to dismiss her from the National Parliament. In addition to this, Vjerica Radeta was also the most vocal in the call to prevent the festival “Mirdita, Hello” from taking place, which is why the Belgrade Center for Human Rights pressed criminal charges against her based on a number of her statements.

The speech by Aleksandar Vučić on 9 September at Lake Gazivode, located on the territory of Kosovo, is exceptionally important. During his speech, among other things, President Vučić said to the gathered Serbs that “Milošević was a great Serbian leader, his intentions were certainly best, but the results were bad.” Such a statement by President Vučić clearly shows his stance on the ultra-nationalist politics of Slobodan Milošević, as well as his view that the sufferings of the Muslim population during the 1990s can be understood as “best intentions.” Likewise, this statement makes it evident that he is only sorry that things turned out bad for “us” (Orthodox Serbs).

In addition to President Vučić’s controversial speech on that occasion, in which he actually rehabilitated Milošević’s politics and relativized its effects, in an interview for Deutsche Welle, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić explicitly denied that there was a

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14. When considering this speech by President Vučić we must bear in mind that in 1989 Slobodan Milošević gave his famous speech at Gazimestan, which, as many historians believe, augured the forthcoming bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia.
genocide in Srebrenica. Moreover, this instance of genocide denial by the prime minister was only one in a series of statements aiming to minimize the crimes committed during the 1990s, made by high-ranking officials from the ruling Serbian Radical Party, which bore no consequences for such claims.

The situation is no better among the so-called democratic opposition, which united in 2018 in the newly formed Alliance for Serbia. Political parties and movements united in this alliance also include the far-right clero-fascist movement Dveri, as well as the right-wing People’s Party. In their public statements, representatives of the Serbian Movement Dveri usually deny the genocide in Srebrenica, while openly claiming that Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić are in a class with the greatest “heroes” in the entire Serbian history.

Furthermore, the Serbian Movement Dveri staunchly advocates anti-immigrant policies. The most radical example of such a stance was the statement made by Srđan Nogo, MP from the ranks of the Dveri Movement, who said, referring to Prime Ministers’ signature on the Dublin Regulation, that “she (Prime Minister Ana Brnabić) should be immediately hanged on Terazije Square. With (President) Aleksandar Vučić by her side.”

The attitude of the state authorities toward the legal status of the Islamic community still remains a moot point. Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, there has been a number of Islamic communities active in Serbia. Since the Law on Churches and Religious Communities was passed back in 2006, the question of recognizing the legitimacy of a single Islamic community remains open. As a result of this situation, the restitution of property of the Islamic community is simply not possible, nor the exercise of rights guaranteed under the law. Regarding this issue, the European Commission in its aforementioned annual report stated that “the lack of transparency and consistency in the registration process of religious communities remains one of the main obstacles preventing some religious groups from exercising their rights.”


17. Xenophobic views advocated by Boško Obradović are most evident on the debate television show which featured Obradović and Vojislav Šešelj and aired on the TV channel Studio B during the campaign for the election of Belgrade mayor. Војвода Шешељ, ТВ ДУЕЛ: Проф. др Војислав Шешељ - Бошко Обрадовић - Студио Б - 24.02.2018, Youtube, 24 February 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDFdk9tKzo0, (Access date: 2 September 2019).


19. No property confiscated after World War II claimed by the Islamic community has been returned. So far, the Islamic community has filed 56 requests for the restitution of property. In the cases of other religious communities and churches, the situation is far better. For instance, the Jewish community was given back 91% of its land and 67% of its buildings, whereas the Serbian Orthodox Church was given back 77% of its land and 28% of its buildings, and so on. For more information about the property returned until the end of 2018, see Jelena Calija, “Crkvama vraćeno 90 odsto oduzete imovine”, Politika, 28 October 2018, http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/414387/Crkvama-vrace-no-90-odsto-oduze-ta-imovine, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Media
Since the Serbian Progressive Party came to power, traditional media such as television and the press became significantly less independent. The vast majority of TV channels with national frequencies (like TV Pink, Radio-Television of Serbia, Happy TV, TV Prva, etc.) are under direct or indirect control of the ruling power structures.21 As regarding the contents of its program, the most disreputable TV channel is undoubtedly the privately owned Happy TV. Its director is Milomir Marić, a journalist who also hosts the talk show “Cyrillic,” in which he often interviews Vojislav Šešelj, as well as other war criminals such as Veselin Šljivančanin, Vladimir Lazarević, and others. What is more, in November 2018, the morning show on Happy TV had a live broadcast of Ratko Mladić, who is responsible for the genocide in Srebrenica, while Vojislav Šešelj was in the TV studio. Mladić finished his appearance on this talk show by saying, “Kisses to all of you from Grandpa Ratko.”

![Figure 5: Ratko Mladić live from The Hague on the air in the morning show hosted by Milomir Marić.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILHfcl_YtuI)

Just like in the previous year, tabloid newspapers, most flagrantly the daily Informer, regularly publish stories and articles with the most vulgar examples of hate speech. On a daily basis, its front pages feature headlines full of derogatory terms for the members of Albanian ethnicity, while openly sabre rattling and warmongering,


constantly scaring the readers that Serbia is threatened by the Jihadists. To illustrate this, I enclose several photos of its front pages below.

Figure 6: Left: “ISIS is Preparing a Massacre of Serbs in Kosovo.” (11.10.2018) Middle: “Serbia under Al Qaeda’s Siege.” (27.09.2018) Right: “ISIS Has 46 Cells in Bosnia and Kosovo. They Are Preparing to Launch an Attack on Republic Srpska and Serbia.” (07.08.2018)


Justice System
In its 2018 report, the European Commission assessed that Serbia’s cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and the prosecution of war crimes suspects from the 1990s before local courts of law was at a very low level. Likewise, in July 2018, the Court of Appeals in Belgrade upheld the acquittal of the members of paramilitary unit “Simić’s Chetniks” for the demolition of the mosque and the murder of 27 Roma civilians in the village of Skočić, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1992. Furthermore,

those responsible for crimes committed in the 1990s in the Serbian territory, i.e. in Sandžak, have not been prosecuted. In view of this fact, in June 2018, the Sandžak Committee for Human Rights in Novi Pazar held a conference under the title “Attitude of the State toward Crimes Committed in Sandžak in the 1990s.”

Moreover, historical revisionism of World War II is still in progress. On the other hand, the court ruling which rehabilitated the notorious Chetnik commander Nikola Kalabić, responsible for crimes against Roma Muslims, among other things, was referred back for retrial, while the motion to rehabilitate Milan Nedić, quisling prime minister of the Serbian government during World War II, was rejected.

In addition, a court sentence to five members of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights for interrupting a panel discussion held by the Serbian Progressive Party, on which the audience was addressed by Veselin Šljivančanin, convicted war criminal already mentioned above, also testifies to the current rehabilitation of those responsible for war crimes and the readiness of the state and the ruling party to allow them to freely take part in social and political life.

Internet
On the Internet, there is huge number of Facebook pages that spread xenophobic, nationalist, and extremist right-wing views and values. In addition to Facebook, YouTube is the main channel for promoting such ideas and contents. There are many YouTube channels where conversations with exponents of the far-right are posted and promoted. In the first place, such views are championed by the news channel Balkan Info, which in 2018 hosted many politicians, intellectuals, and public figures who advocate extreme anti-Islamic opinions. The most prominent of them are certainly Prof. Dr. Darko Tanasković, Prof. Dr. Miroljub Jevtić, Dr. Srdja Trifković, Dragan Vanja Bokan, Dževad Galijašević, and many others. People such as Darko Tanasković, Miroljub Jevtić, and Srdja Trifković have already been extensively written about by Norman Cigar in his book *The Role of Serbian Orientalists in Justifying the Genocide against the Muslims in the Balkans* (Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, Sarajevo, 2000). For the purposes of this report, I will mention only some of the titles of the shows which have hosted some of the aforementioned individuals: “Europe Is Swallowed by Islam, Is There Salvation?”; “Muslims Are Ready to Do Anything to Conquer the World”; “The Concept of Green Transversal Is Worse than Great Albania”; “Jews Are Massively Leaving France Because of Muslims”; “American-Islamic Anti-Serb Jihad”; “Turkey Is Pursuing the Politics of Neo-Ottomanism and Expansion in the Balkans”; and so on.

However, it is very important to call attention to the deeply Islamophobic contents on the Radio Free Europe (RFE) Facebook page “Not in My Name.” This page is a project carried out by the RFE through social media with the aim of
“fighting various forms of extremism.” However, although its aim is declaratively to fight all forms of extremism, the attention that this Facebook page pays to other forms of extremism is in significant disproportion to the emphatic condemnation of “Islamic” extremism. This is especially worrisome in light of the fact that “Islamic” extremism is just an incidental phenomenon compared to the abundance of right-wing clero-fascist groups in the region. Furthermore, this Facebook page often has negative comments on the role Turkey has in this region, using language identical to the extremist, far-right groups. For instance, RFE warns about the process of re-Islamization of the Balkans and the imminent threat of “neo-Ottomanism.” In addition, contents posted on this Facebook page usually promote a highly Orientalist perspective of the Middle East by selectively presenting the most negative examples so its readers get the picture of Islamic societies as retrograde, patriarchal, aggressive, and militant.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The greatest responsibility for the negative attitude toward Muslims surely lies with the Serbian policymakers and officials who pursue the Serbian ultra-nationalist agenda, which portray “Muslims” as the archetypical enemy. Of course, there are several factors which make up this network. The first of these consists of a number of factions within the Serbian Orthodox Church which have been doing their best for many decades to impose the mythical notion of Muslims as “converts who betrayed their forefathers’ faith.” Apart from the Church, an important role is played by the nationalist intellectual elite which provides academic validation to such mythical notions and phantasms, as well as political organizations aiming to implement this exclusivist nationalist agenda in reality. Needless to say, racist and xenophobic ideas and values are also massively spread and popularized by right-wing groups and movements which mostly target younger generations, as well as the ultras of various football clubs.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

There were no significant initiatives in 2018 that targeted Islamophobia as such.

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25. Previously, those intellectuals used to flock around the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, but that is not solely the case anymore. Now, they hold functions and positions within various institutes and faculties (mostly in the humanities). As regarding the political parties, this is primarily the case of the parliamentary Serbian Radical Party and the Serbian Movement Dveri, as well as non-parliamentary Democratic Party of Serbia.

26. Apart from the political parties mentioned above, there is a number of right-wing groups and organizations such as the Zaveznički (Oath-Takers), Srpska čast (Serbian Honor), Nationalna avanturistička (National Vanguard), Obraz (Face), and Pokret Nasi (Our Movement), as well as many others that are very active in that respect. Some of these groups also have (in) direct contacts with the Serbian Orthodox Church and with some right-wing political parties.
Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In the fight against Islamophobia, the most important form of engagement cannot be framed solely in terms of the situation of Muslims, but instead must aim at raising the awareness about the benefits of a civil society which would be inclusive of everyone. Only then it can be possible to stand up against the Serbian nationalist political ideology and confront it in the political arena. In this respect, it is necessary to work with the Muslims themselves in order to improve their capacities and enable them to take a much more active part in social, political, and public life, and to work actively on achieving cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslim organizations and individuals who are active in the development of a pluralist, multicultural, multi-confessional civil society.

Furthermore, it is crucial that Muslim organizations start to collect unofficial data of hate crimes and reach out to those who have suffered discrimination on the basis of belonging to the Muslim community, and to offer them legal, moral, and any other help that they need.

Also it is of utmost importance that civil society as a whole and international organizations pay close attention to the rise of far-right movements in Serbia and start to address more openly and directly the problems of anti-Muslim hatred. They also must reach out to the Muslim organizations and help them build their capacities.

Chronology

- **26.01.2018**: Red Star fans displayed a banner which read “Shqiptars, Croats, Ballija ain’t no brothers of mine” in protest to the club which had just signed Alen Omić, a player of Bosniak ethnicity.
- **30.05.2018**: A series of incidents related to the festival “Miridita, Hello” organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights.
- **05.07.2018**: Court of Appeals in Belgrade upheld the acquittal of the members of the paramilitary unit “Sima’s Chetniks” for the demolition of the mosque and the murder of 27 Roma civilians in the village of Skočić, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1992.
- **25.07.2018**: Instance of most blatant hate speech by Vjerica Radeta MP from the Serbian Radical Party regarding the death of Hatidža Mehmetović.
- **04.09.2018**: The morning show on Happy TV broadcasted Ratko Mladić live from The Hague; Mladić is convicted for the genocide in Srebrenica.
- **09.09.2018**: Speech given by President Aleksandar Vučić at Lake Gazivode, Republic of Kosovo.
- **07.10.2018**: Brutal physical assault in Novi Sad on two young men of Albanian ethnicity who were beaten up by four men of Serbian ethnicity.