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EUROPEAN  
**ISLAMOPHOBIA**  
REPORT  

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2015

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ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

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# INTRODUCTION

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

In June 2014, the website for reporting hate crimes to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) went public. In 2014, only five states officially reported on hate crimes against Muslims, whereas civil society reported in 21 countries. Still, for the majority of the 57 member countries of the OSCE, there is no official information available. Furthermore, if one were to assess the quality of these state reports, it becomes apparent that the collected data does not always rely on a comprehensive systematic collection.

Since Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism has become a growing threat in European societies, we – the editors – felt an urgent need to address this problem. In fact, there are still people denying the very existence of racism against Muslims. Many state and civil society institutions have done priceless work to prove and establish the opposite: from the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) to the countless civil society organisations throughout Europe. Yet, institutions like the FRA publish only irregular reports on a restricted number of countries while most civil society organisations tackle racism in general and only few focus on Islamophobia in specific - this is the urgent gap our report wishes to fill.

The *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) is an annual report, which is presented for the first time this year. It currently comprises 25 national reports regarding each state and the tendencies of Islamophobia in each respective country. The current report features the work of 37 extraordinary scholars. In the years to come we will attempt to cover even more countries. This report aims to enable policymakers as well as the public to discuss the issue of Islamophobia with the help of qualitative data. At the same time, several of its unique characteristic features make a difference to the current state of the debate on Islamophobia.

## **Contribution of this report**

The national reports in the EIR look at significant incidents and developments in each country during the period under review. The authors look at the employment sector: has there been any discrimination in the job market based on the (assumed) Muslimness of a person? They look at education: has Islamophobic content become part of any curricula, textbooks, or any other education material? The political field in a narrow sense is also a central aspect of the EIR: has Islamophobia played any role in politics, from election campaigns to political programmes to personal statements, etc., be it on a regional or national level? Authors also take a close look at a central force where Islamophobia has spread: the media. Which media events have focused on Islam/Muslims in an Islamophobic way? The justice system is also featured in the national reports: are there any laws and regulations that are based on Islamophobic arguments or any laws restricting the rights of Muslims in their religious lifestyle? Cyberspace as a central space for spreading hate crime is also examined: which web pages and initiatives have spread Islamophobic stereotypes? In addition, central figures in the Islamophobia network are discussed: which institutions and persons have, among others, fostered Islamophobic campaigns, stirred up debates or lobbied for laws?

Since the EIR is not content with pointing a finger at the problem, the reports also look at observed civil society and political assessment and initiatives undertaken to counter Islamophobia in the aforementioned fields. This will empower politicians and NGO activists, who want to tackle the issue. Since the EIR is not a purely scholarly work, at the end of every report, authors offer policy recommendations for politics and NGOs. An executive summary at the beginning and a chronology at the end of every report give the reader an overview on the state and the development of Islamophobia in the respective countries.

Since the single reports share broadly the same structure, the EIR offers the possibility to compare Islamophobia in these countries. Despite the fact that the data in specific fields is not available in an identical way for all countries, the report still facilitates an impulse for identifying research gaps.

Studies on Islamophobia have in the past predominantly concentrated on Western Europe. This is especially the case with reports focusing on Islamophobia. The EIR is the first to cover a wide range of Eastern European countries like Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, or Latvia. This will enrich the debate on racism in general and Islamophobia in Europe in specific.

## **What is Islamophobia?**

Although the term 'Islamophobia' has become widely recognised in the Anglo-Saxon world and has become established in academia as can be seen by the numerous conferences, journals, and research projects dedicated to it, in many European countries, there is still a great amount of opposition to the term. One can understand the opposition expressed by the public not merely as an academic debate, but, in fact, as a sign of the hegemonic power of Islamophobic prejudices. Acknowledging this situation,

at the heart of this project lies the following working definition of Islamophobia:

“When talking about Islamophobia, we mean anti-Muslim racism. As Anti-Semitism studies have shown, the etymological components of a word do not necessarily point to its complete meaning, nor to how it is used. Such is also the case with Islamophobia studies. Islamophobia has become a well-known term used in academia as much as in the public sphere. Criticism of Muslims or of the Islamic religion is not necessarily Islamophobic. Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilising and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of a constructed ‘we’. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static ‘Muslim’ identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalised for all Muslims. At the same time, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary in different contexts as Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about the Muslims/Islam”.

### Central findings

That Islamophobia works without Muslims and tells us more about the anti-Muslim racists than it tells us about Islam and Muslims, can best be seen in the eastern region of Europe. In countries like Hungary, Finland, Lithuania, or Latvia, where only a small number of Muslims live, Islamophobia functions as a successful means to mobilise people. People not only greatly overestimate the country's Muslim population but, although Muslims have not committed any violent acts in most countries in the name of Islam, they are still often deemed violent and are considered to be terrorists.

It could be observed that both attacks in Paris, which happened in 2015, became a discursive event that shaped the debates on Islam and Muslims throughout Europe. Above that, the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ was a central topic, which many actors linked to the issue of Muslims invading Europe. For example, the leader of the Hungarian Fidesz’ parliamentary club Antal Rogán warned of a future ‘United European Caliphate’,<sup>1</sup> while former Secretary of State László L. Simon urged Hungarians to return to their Christian spirituality and make more babies in order to counter the negative cultural effects of mass migration such as the envisioned ‘impending victory of Islamic parties imposing polygamy and destroying the remainder of European culture’.<sup>2</sup> This strong Islamophobic rhetoric is not restricted to the extreme right. In fact, the *refugee-migration-Islam-terrorism nexus* became the standard argument justifying a number of domestic and international measures. The social democrat Czech President Miloš Zeman claimed the influx of refugees into Europe was masterminded by Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood as “an organised invasion” to “gradually control Europe”.<sup>3</sup>

1. Károly Villányi, “Azt akarjuk, hogy unokáink egy európai kalifátusban éljenek?”, *Magyar Idők*, 14.11.2015, accessed 03.01.2016, <http://magyaridok.hu/belfold/azt-akarjuk-hogy-az-unokaink-egy-europai-kalifatusban-eljenek-5035/>.

2. “L. Simon: Szaporodjunk!”, *Népszabadság Online*, 05.09.2015, accessed 03.01.2016, [http://nol.hu/video/lSimon-a-szaporodasban-latja-a-jovot-1573295?utm\\_source=mandiner&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_campaign=mandiner\\_201601](http://nol.hu/video/lSimon-a-szaporodasban-latja-a-jovot-1573295?utm_source=mandiner&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=mandiner_201601).

3. Agence France-Presse, “Integrating Muslims into Europe is ‘impossible’, says Czech president”, 18 January, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/18/integrating-muslims-into-europe-is-impossible-says-czech-president> (accessed 8 March, 2016)

## Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia poses a great risk to the democratic foundations of European constitutions and social peace as well as the coexistence of different cultures throughout Europe. Both civil society actors and states should acknowledge the seriousness of this issue and develop concrete policies to counter Islamophobia. Here we have summarised some of the important policy recommendations from the national reports.

- Islamophobia should be acknowledged as a crime and should be included in all national statistics throughout Europe.
- Hate crime legislations should be adopted in all European countries that acknowledge one's religious identity as being a basis upon which one may be targeted.
- In order to collect data about Islamophobic incidents, victims registers must be introduced in all European states.
- In order to help the victims of Islamophobic attacks, counseling services for victims must be established in all European states.
- Journalists, lawyers, Police (security officials) and legal authorities in all European countries should be educated by qualified personnel in regards to Islamophobia.
- Muslim civil society has to be empowered with information to combat Islamophobia, especially in the direction of the creation of a consciousness of the illegality of hate crimes.
- Educational institutions and stakeholders have to work towards creating an alternative narrative of Muslims in the respective countries which will work to dispel the widely accepted negative image of Islam.
- Civil society actors must also push for legislative change in the context of school enrolment policies so that all members of the respective societies are treated fairly when accessing education.
- Governments must draft a policy that ensures that the rights of religious minorities to manifest their faith are respected in education and the workplace; this must not be left to the preferences of individual boards of management or principals.
- Discrimination on the job market towards Muslims and especially Muslims who wear veils is a widespread phenomenon. This should be recognised and seriously addressed by better legal regulations and the creation of a relevant consciousness.
- Civil society actors must engage with media actors/outlets in terms of the publication and broadcasting of standards in order to reduce/minimise the use of racialising discourses vis-à-vis Muslims and other minority communities.
- The civil rights violations experienced by women wearing headscarves should be addressed by lawmakers and politicians.
- An independent media watchdog should be established in order to monitor media reports in real time in all respective countries.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**AUSTRIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2015

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FARID HAFEZ



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As in many other countries, the news of the terrorist attacks in Paris (Charlie Hebdo) as well as the ones later in November shaped the public debate on the place of Islam in Europe. In addition to this, the Austrian government issued a new law regarding Islam, which regulates the relation between the Austrian Republic and the legally recognised Islamic Councils. The law has been criticised as discriminatory by many scholars of religious law, NGOs, as well as churches and religious communities. The ongoing terrorist attacks of Daesh as well as the subsequent refugees fleeing from Syria and Iraq to Europe have had deep political implications on Austrian politics. The public climate is becoming more aggressive towards Muslims. The recorded number of harassments on the streets and violations against Muslims is increasing, which may have only to do with a heightened consciousness on the side of Muslims who seem to have become more active in talking about these discriminations since autumn 2014, after which the debate on Daesh has become omnipresent. While a number of NGOs and activists speak out against these developments, right-wing parties, which spread stereotypes of Muslims, are getting stronger. The FPÖ has used offensive Islamophobic campaigning in three regional elections. While media reports more and more about Islamophobic incidents, a biased coverage of Islam and Muslims can be observed, especially in a great number of fabricated tabloid press stories. Authoritative Muslim public figures, which play the role of native informants, often support and thus legitimise this discourse.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wie auch in anderen Ländern haben die terroristischen Übergriffe in Paris im Jänner und November 2015 auch die österreichische öffentliche Debatte über den Platz des Islams in Europa geprägt. Die Erneuerung des Islamgesetzes 2015 hat die Verhältnisse zwischen Staat und islamischer Religionsgesellschaften in Österreich neu geordnet. Dieses Gesetz wurde von vielen AkteurInnen, darunter Rechtswissenschaftler, Nichtregierungsorganisationen, wie auch Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften als diskriminierend beurteilt. Der anhaltende Krieg von Daesh/ISIS und die daraus resultierenden Flüchtlingsströme aus Syrien und dem Irak nach Europa haben auch in der österreichischen Politik tiefe Spuren hinterlassen. Das öffentliche Klima wird steigend aggressiver. Übergriffe auf MuslimInnen, v.a. Frauen, wie auch Vandalismus gegenüber muslimischen Einrichtungen vermehren sich an der Zahl, was auch mit einem gestiegenen Bewusstsein auf Seiten von MuslimInnen gegenüber ihnen begangene Ungerechtigkeiten zu tun haben kann. Eine omniprésente Debatte über Daesh/ISIS scheint auf Seiten der MuslimInnen zu einer stärkeren Sensibilisierung geführt zu haben. Während sich auf der einen Seite NRO's und AktivistInnen gegen diese Entwicklungen aussprechen, nehmen auch die Aktivitäten von rechten AkteurInnen in der Verbreitung anti-muslimischer Rassismen zu. Die FPÖ bediente sich in drei Wahlkämpfen offensiv islamophober Kampagnen. Während das kritische Bewusstsein von Medien, über islamophobe Übergriffe zu berichten, steigt, so ist gleichzeitig eine stereotype Darstellung von ‚Islam/MuslimInnen‘ erkennbar. Das gilt insbesondere für die Boulevard-Presse. Muslimische Figuren, die diese Vorurteile bestätigen, werden oft herangezogen, um diese Vorurteile zu bestätigen.

## INTRODUCTION

Austria is in many ways special in terms of its accommodation of Islam, its historical encounters with Muslim empires and the role of right-wing populist parties since 2005.<sup>1</sup> Historical encounters of war and cultural exchange with the Ottoman Empire are remembered to the present day, be it in folkloric songs, statues, historical monuments in churches and historical locations, with which many cities like Vienna are adorned. The colonial past of the Austro-Hungarian Empire today is often re-imagined by referring to the submissive and more 'European' white Bosnian Muslim in contrast to the Oriental Turkish Muslim enemy. At the same time, the colonisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire also created the basis for a comparably liberal and tolerant way of accommodating Islamic religion. Since 1912, Islam has been a legally recognised religion, and in the wake of labour immigration to Austria from countries like Turkey and the subsequent rise of Muslim peoples, this law was revitalised by the establishment of the Islamic Council in Austria (Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich) in 1979. Since then, this institution was able to create a number of institutions serving Muslim religion with support from state institutions like religious instructions for Muslim pupils in public schools, etc. This comparably liberal state-church framework stands in strong contrast to recent developments that started in the early 1990s, when growing support for the right-wing Populist Party FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party) under the leadership of Jörg Haider went hand in hand with racist campaigns against black people and immigrants from Yugoslavia and Turkey. Islamophobia became central with a time lag after 9/11, when the FPÖ went into opposition after it was part of the government in power from 2000 to 2005. Since then, the FPÖ has made Islamophobia one of its central strategies to mobilise the electorate. The radicalisation of FPÖ slogans ("We want home, not Islam"; "[Prophet] Muhammad is a child abuser and an epileptic") paired with policy claims of among others the surveillance of mosques and rethinking the legal status of Islam as a legally recognised religious community were slowly adopted by single politicians and party strategists. Especially the Conservative Party (ÖVP), which presided over the Ministry of Interior, started to compete with the Islamophobic stance of the FPÖ very early. The Conservative Party incorporated Islamophobic claims in their election campaigns in a more civilised and 'codified' way. Only in 2008, after the Swiss right-wing Populist Party had initiated a debate on the ban of minarets, the first legal restrictions were implemented. First in Vorarlberg, with the votes of the ruling Conservatives and their right-wing coalition partner, and then in Carinthia with the votes of the ruling far right split BZÖ and the Conservatives, a ban for the construction of mosques and minarets was imple-

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1. Hafez, Farid (2010), *Österreich und der Islam: eine Wende durch FPÖVP? Anmerkungen zur Rolle von Islamophobie im politischen Diskurs seit der Wende*, in Baker, Frederick/Herczeg, Petra (Hg.), *Die beschämte Republik: Zehn Jahre nach Schwarz-Blau in Österreich*, Wien: Czernin Verlag.

mented. On a national level, no comparable discriminations like a ban of wearing the hijab were implemented. Nevertheless, anti-racist NGOs like ZARA have been recording much discrimination in the labour market against Muslim women. Although Muslims witness a rather liberal political framework, prejudices in society are widespread and Muslims are – in a European perspective – comparably poorly organised in terms of political participation. The Eurobarometer reveals that Austria is on the top of the list of countries where people would feel uncomfortable working with a Muslim or having a son/daughter in relationship with a Muslim.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of people, there does exist some alarming data in regard to the spread of Islamophobia. According to a recent quantitative study conducted in 2015 by the anti-racist Austrian Mauthausen Committee (n=1000), 65 per cent of respondents said it was problematic, if somebody from the family would convert to Islam. Sixty-four per cent of respondents said that it was problematic if a mosque was built in their neighbourhood, while 42 per cent thought the same in the case of a Buddhist temple.<sup>3</sup>

## SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Three developments have been especially crucial in 2015. When in October 2014, a draft of the 2015 Islam law was presented a huge protest from Muslim NGOs, law scholars, as well as churches broke out. The draft received more than 160 reviews, out of which the majority were fundamentally critical towards the draft. Most of the criticism was not incorporated and the law was passed on 30 March, 2015. Debates in national parliament revealed that there is a lot of mistrust towards Muslim peoples. While the government argued that the law was treating all religious communities equally, oppositional MPs of the Greens and NEOS voiced concern that the Islam law would transport a “general suspicion” against Muslims.<sup>4</sup> According to Alev Korun and Harald Walser from the Greens, “the Islam law gives voice to a general suspicion”.<sup>5</sup> Even an MP from the ruling Conservative Party, who argued that there was no general suspicion against Muslims in the law assessed that the public debate entangled different issues and prejudices with each other and created an atmosphere of suspicion.<sup>6</sup>

This law was debated coincidentally with the rise of Daesh, the terrorist organisation in Iraq and Syria. This globally relevant phenomenon was the second development which impacted Austrian politics. The media coverage on Daesh created a media and

2. Special Eurobarometer 437, Discrimination in the EU in 2015 Report, October 2015, pp. 34-37.

3. Mauthausen Komitee Österreich, "Studie: Toleranz in Österreich groß geschrieben – bei Religion scheiden sich die Geister," April 27, 2015, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.mkoe.at/studie-toleranz-oesterreich-gross-geschrieben-religion-scheiden-geister>

4. Stenographisches Protokoll, 61. Sitzung des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich, XXV. Gesetzgebungsperiode, Mittwoch, 25 February 2015, p. 159.

5. Ibid., pp. 151, 170.

6. Ibid., p. 200.

social hysteria. The weekly quality paper *Profil* for example published an article stating that the intelligence service of the Ministry of Defense would “investigate against five strictly observing Muslim conscripts”. The article was entitled “Alarming Islamism in Army. Intelligence Service investigates because of Daesh-gesture of a conscript”.<sup>7</sup> A hint to the assumed sympathy with Daesh was established by a photo of the young men raising their forefinger, which symbolises the oneness of God and has become “the ISIS finger” for the tabloid press.<sup>8</sup> A student, who had already informed the security services about a young girl that attempted to travel to Syria to join Daesh/ISIL, gives an account in an interview of how he himself became the focus of the security services, after he was reported to the security services for speaking about Daesh/ISIL to neighbours. The student was asked whether he takes his religion seriously and why he was not wearing a *jalabiyya*, a traditional Arabic garment. Since the security services were speaking to another person in the building involved in the case, the image spread around in the tiny city of Lower Austria that he might somehow be engaged in Daesh/ISIL activities. People on the street greeted him playfully as the ‘terrorist’.<sup>9</sup> Hence, his reputation was severely damaged for a period of his life.

At the beginning of the new school year in autumn 2014, the Minister of Education published a letter that reached out to the teachers in all public schools that “conspicuous pupils shall be reported to the school administration”.<sup>10</sup> This politics of policing clearly surpassed the competence of teachers, who are first of all not trained in this field and secondly could easily misuse this power according to respective beliefs and political *Weltanschauung*. Hence, it is no wonder that teachers reported to be very confused by minor incidents. One teacher reports that she would not know, if a young Muslim girl that started wearing the hijab after summer break could now be a sympathiser of Daesh. Interestingly enough, this politics was not debated at all in the media. And it was also not restricted to the field of education.

In Viennese kindergartens, public officials are said to have made inspections at Muslim private kindergartens, asking the personnel whether the Koran was taught, if religious personnel was visiting them to teach the Koran, if the Koran was played on CD, etc. These interviews were made regularly on no legal basis. Again, this issue never reached public interest in the media. Rather, it was the other way around: regularly, certain newspapers reported the spread of extremist thought and indoctrination of Muslim kindergarteners. This happened first and foremost in the yellow press. A journalist of the daily *Kurier* reported that the story behind a Muslim kindergarten

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7. *Profil* Redaktion, “Islamismus-Alarm im Bundesheer,” *APA*, July 15, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20150718\\_OTS0006/profil-islamismus-alarm-im-bundesheer?utm\\_source=2015-07-18&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=html&utm\\_campaign=mailaboereinzel](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20150718_OTS0006/profil-islamismus-alarm-im-bundesheer?utm_source=2015-07-18&utm_medium=email&utm_content=html&utm_campaign=mailaboereinzel)

8. An inquiry at the Ministry of Defense did not answer the question whether a member of the Ministry of Defense or somebody outside of the army launched the examination. Robert Rauter, email to the author, 6 August, 2015.

9. Interview with the author, 13 November, 2014.

10. Letter by the Minister of Education.

that taught its kindergarteners about 'Jihad' was based on the report of a person that had a lawsuit brought against him because of suspicion of re-engagement in National Socialist activities. The Viennese municipal administration in charge of kindergartens devitalised the rhetoric that any 'tendencies of radicalisation' were observed in this kindergarten. Meanwhile, this kindergarten received a number of threats.<sup>11</sup> It seems that this issue had also some relevance for the tabloid press. The most widespread tabloid press, the *Kronenzeitung*, published an article reporting that an officially authorised kindergarten had a kindergartener with a niqab, a face veil. In their article, they promoted a journalist's book *No tolerance to the intolerant* and cited the author with extremist views such as that Europe was practicing a naïve "appeasement politics regarding militant Islamism". The article concludes with the words: "Indoctrinated extremist kids could create huger problems in ten to twelve years."<sup>12</sup>

Due to the rise of attacks on Muslim women on the streets, the violation of Muslim religious space like putting carcasses of pigs on the door handle of a mosque, the Islamic Council in Austria announced the foundation of a new institution – *Dokustelle für Muslime*<sup>13</sup> – to document discrimination against and threats to Muslim peoples and institutions.<sup>14</sup> A first report is planned to be presented in March 2016. According to Elif Öztürk, 78 Islamophobic acts were reported to them between 10 December, 2014 and 31 December, 2015.<sup>15</sup> The Charlie Hebdo attacks as well as the Paris attacks on 13 October, 2015 seem to have increased the number of individual attacks as well as organised activity against Muslim peoples and institutions.

Another important development was the so-called 'refugee crisis', which initiated a debate on "how many Muslims can we let in" throughout Europe and which was taken as a starting point for many Islamophobic activities, especially – but not solely – within the right-wing camp.

## ISLAMOPHOBIC INCIDENTS AND DISCURSIVE EVENTS IN VARIOUS FIELDS

Following the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, an increasing number of threats have been registered. Only a minority of victims tends to report these incidents to an anti-racist institution, go to the media or to the authorities. Some renowned human

11. Bernhard Ichner, "Kindergarten-Chef wehrt sich gegen Dschihad-Vorwurf," *Kurier*, November 25, 2015, accessed on January 28, 2016, <http://kurier.at/chronik/wien/kindergarten-chef-wehrt-sich-gegen-dschihad-vorwurf/166.191.819>.

12. Richard Schmitt, "Wien: Total verschleiert beim Kindergartenflug," *Krone*, 14 October, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://mobil.krone.at/phone/kmm\\_\\_1/story\\_id\\_476944/sendung\\_id\\_488/story.phtml](http://mobil.krone.at/phone/kmm__1/story_id_476944/sendung_id_488/story.phtml)

13. "Dokustelle für Muslime," accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.dokustelle.derislam.at/>

14. "Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich," 31 December, 2014, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.derislam.at/index.php?f=news&shownews=1939&kid=1>

15. Email from Elif Öztürk to the author, 1 February, 2016.

rights activists like Dudu Küçükgöl try to raise awareness in social media, calling Muslims to speak out against injustice and hence create spaces of communication for these victims. As stakeholders, these people create a bridge for the victims to connect to journalists and speak out or take advice from advocacy groups for equal treatment (Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft, ZARA, etc.). A Muslim girl said she got verbally attacked when somebody on the street told her “Take your hijab off. You look ugly with the hijab!” When she wanted to call the police, she was physically attacked. When the police came, the perpetrators are said to have reversed their status by telling the police “She threatened us and wanted to stab us.” Her case was not pursued because of limited evidence.<sup>16</sup> Another person reports that she was spit on and insulted by a passing person while she was standing at the street lights.<sup>17</sup> The same perpetrator<sup>18</sup> was reported to allegedly have attacked a veiled woman with spray, while screaming “Islam is shit, all terrorists!” While people on the streets and metro supervisors intervened and helped the victim, the police saw no reason to further investigate the case.<sup>19</sup> In the wake of Charlie Hebdo, a Viennese mosque was reported to have been graffitied with the slogan “Paris! Islam is shit = out”.<sup>20</sup> Parents of a reported ‘computer nerd’ were asked by teachers, if they knew what he was a sympathiser of Daesh and if he was watching IS videos on Youtube. After the Paris attacks, another pupil that regularly draws swastikas started to call him a ‘terrorist’ and the pupil hit him.<sup>21</sup> In another instance, a mother reported that her five-year-old daughter was spit on by an old man. When she shouted at the man, he gesticulated shooting a gun and went away.<sup>22</sup> In a high school, a teacher asked, how many Muslims were in the class. Two pupils put up their hands. The teacher answered “So we have two Islamists here”. The pupils did not want to react because they were afraid of possible repercussions as they are supposed to graduate the following year.<sup>23</sup> When a bomb threat was announced at a Viennese metro station, a Muslim woman has reported, she was told “One should slash her hijab”.<sup>24</sup>

### **Physical assaults, violations and harassment**

A Muslim woman reports that she was attacked on 29 April. A woman approached

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16. “Salzburgerin wurde attackiert und angeklagt!,” *Haber Journal*, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.haberjournal.at/de/osterreich/salzburgerin-wurde-attackiert-und-angeklagt-h1723.html>

17. Interview with the author, 20 February, 2015.

18. Menerva Hammad, “Spuck mir in die Augen Baby,” *Das Biber*, 11 February, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.dasbiber.at/blog/spuck-mir-die-augen-baby>

19. Interview with the author, 20 February, 2015.

20. *Haber Journal* accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.haberjournal.at/avusturya/viyana39da-camiye-irk-ci-saldiri-h6342.html>

21. Interview with the author, 20 February, 2015.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

her and snatched off her hijab when she dismounted from a public bus. She screamed at her and told her she should go back to Turkey, if she wants to wear this “skimpy dress”. On 31 May a graffiti work saying “Muslims shall be slaughtered” was seen at a Viennese public transport station. A pedestrian immediately reported it and it was removed by the responsible Viennese authority on 3 June.

On 30 August, two families with seven children – amongst them a two-year-old and a five-year-old – were attacked while walking in the streets in Linz. Some of the women were wearing a hijab. Two men approached them, telling them “What do you want here? Go home!” One man bumped into the family and the other one threw a closed can of beer towards them. He hit a twelve-year-old girl in the leg. The doctor noticed heavy bruising.<sup>25</sup> A few weeks before, another woman with a hijab was insulted and was spat on at in a supermarket in Linz, Upper Austria. Since the victims were NGO activists, their cases found their way into the press.<sup>26</sup>

On 12 June, a doctoral student from the USA was attacked in the tram in Graz. The woman who was wearing a hijab was with her husband, her three-year-old son and five-year-old daughter. Suddenly, she was attacked by an old man, who yanked her hair. He ran out at the next station. The victim reported the incident to the police, who was not willing to register the case at first, as there was no medical protocol proving an injury. Her children asked their mother whether this man would come again and refused to ride the tram after the incident.<sup>27</sup>

On 28 June a window of a mosque was vandalised and a letter was found saying “Muslims go out”.<sup>28</sup> Between 17 and 18 October, a Jewish cemetery in Hohenems and an Islamic cemetery in Altsch were desecrated. Swastika and racist slurs were smeared on the graves and buildings of the cemeteries.<sup>29</sup> On 30 December there was an arson attack on a renovated Muslim prayer room in Krems in Lower Austria.<sup>30</sup>

After the Paris attacks on 13 November, an increasing number of Muslims have reported being harassed in public. One day after the attack, a pregnant Austrian Airlines employee with a hijab was told “I am happy for your baby but not happy for Paris”. The employee answered “I have nothing to do with all that.” He replied “Yes, I know but we had the Holocaust in Austria and it is enough.”<sup>31</sup> Two days after the

25. Email of the father of the victim to the author, 31 August, 2015.

26. “Mädchen in Linz mit Bierdose beworfen, weil es Muslimin ist,” *Nachrichten*, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.nachrichten.at/oberoesterreich/Maedchen-in-Linz-mit-Bierdose-beworfen-weil-es-Muslimin-ist;art4,1957329>

27. Email from 20 August, 2015.

28. Photo taken on 27 July in Deutsch Wagram.

29. “Jüdischer und islamischer Friedhof mit Hakenkreuzen beschmiert,” *VOL*, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.vol.at/juedischer-und-islamischer-friedhof-mit-hakenkreuzen-beschmiert/4491292>

30. “Brandschlag auf Moschee in Niederösterreich,” *Kismetonline*, 30 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.kismetonline.at/brandanschlag-auf-moschee-in-niederoesterreich/>

31. Email to author, 18 December, 2015.

attack, a young man with a six-year-old boy got into the tram and shouted out loud “It would be better, if all those assholes with their cleaning rags on their heads get killed”, while watching a hijab-wearing woman. He went on to say “They all have to be exterminated! That’s why HC [FPÖ chairman, FH] is the only solution, I tell you!”<sup>32</sup> A Muslim girl received a public post on Facebook by her long-time teacher, with whom she remembers only good days, saying “To be silent on the terror in Paris means to accept it or even approve of it.”<sup>33</sup> A woman wearing a hijab talked about being harassed on the street by a woman who approached her shouting “terrorist slut”, “shit Islam” and other abusive words.<sup>34</sup> On 1 December, a hijab-wearing woman was called “shit Muslims” when she walked to the tram in Graz.<sup>35</sup> A mother with a hijab walked with her nephew through a market in Salzburg. She conceded to buy him a wooden sword, although she did not want to be seen with such a toy. Two metres away from the booth where they bought it, a man told them “Yesss super! This is the right present for a child. Just go and cut off a head.” Her nephew started crying, saying “Aunt, we can throw it away. Don’t be angry with me.”<sup>36</sup>

### Public campaigns

More and more frequently, posters in public appear which call for action against Muslims. In Deutsch Wagram, a poster with an inscription stating “Stay out”, which is normally used for dogs, was discovered at a cigarette machine, showing not a dog but a Muslim man and woman in traditional garments.<sup>37</sup> The youth branch of the Upper Austrian FPÖ, the RFJ OÖ, launched an Islamophobic and anti-refugee video on Facebook that was widely shared. It showed a bare-breasted white, blonde woman swimming in a pool saying that the water is up to our necks. The video then argued that Austrians would become “alien in their own country”, showing pictures of praying Muslims, a flag with the shahada, veiled women, etc.<sup>38</sup> A new modern right-wing civic movement, the ‘Identitarian Movement Austria’, has increased its activities in 2015. Their central topic is the perceived threat Islamisation poses to the Austrian and European homelands. The immigration waves of refugees have sparked an increasing number of activities. In a propaganda video they state “We are the heart of Europe [...] All this vanishes today. [...] The land of churches and castles becomes the land of mosques and Kebab booths. A secure and peaceful land becomes a land of criminality and a land of terror Islam. They take our homeland

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32. Email to author, 25 November, 2015.

33. Email to author, 26 November, 2015.

34. Email to author, 19 November, 2015.

35. Email to author, 1 December, 2015.

36. Email to author, 19 November, 2015.

37. Photo taken on 27 July in Deutsch Wagram.

38. "RFJ OÖ," Facebook, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/rfj.ooe/videos/vb.176999712329637/1075982942431305/?type=2&theater>



Poster 'Islamisation – Not with us' by the Identitarian Movement Austria<sup>41</sup>

[...]”<sup>39</sup> Frequently, they appear in public by disturbing open conference debates by anti-racist NGOs or by putting up posters in public spaces without permission, warning of losing the homeland or against an imagined threat of ‘Islamisation’. Recently, their leader was given a podium in a live debate in a programme of the Austrian broadcast TV ORF.<sup>40 41</sup>

When the franchise supermarket chain SPAR introduced Halal meat, they had to face a huge wave of protest by racist people on their Facebook account. Racist arguments such as “Halal stands for Islam’s brutality, [...] intolerance towards believers of other faiths” or “next time, marriage of kids will be allowed”

were posted.<sup>42</sup> This induced SPAR to openly declare it would remove Halal meat from its assortment of products.<sup>43</sup> This seemingly ‘counter-cultural fight’ of Islamophobes was also registered regarding a Christmas calendar from the Chocolate producer Lindt, who uses seemingly Oriental architectural motifs for over 10 years and was thus criticised for its attempt of Islamisation.<sup>44</sup>

Although PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident) was also launched in Austria at the beginning of 2015, it never succeeded. One reason amongst many<sup>45</sup> is the strength of an already existing right-wing party in parliament. The FPÖ Chairman declared “We are the real PEGIDA”.<sup>46</sup>

39. "Österreich-Meine Heimat," Facebook, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/vlogidentitaer/videos/1483749671933941/>

40. Peter Temel, "Forum für besonders wütende Bürger," *Kurier*, 25 November, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://kurier.at/meinung/blogs/gesprachsstoff/orf-buergerforum-zum-thema-fluechtlinge-forum-fuer-sonders-wuetende-buerger/166.123.127>

41. Photo taken by Mine Atar Yilmaz.

42. Tori Reichel, "Dürfen wir vorstellen: Die Leute, die sich über das Halal-Fleisch von Spar aufregen," *Vice*, 3 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.vice.com/alps/read/halal-fleisch-spar-kommentare-373>

43. "Spar," accessed on 28 January, 2016, [https://www.spar.at/de\\_AT/index/Information/kein\\_fleisch\\_aus\\_schaechtungen\\_bei\\_spar.html](https://www.spar.at/de_AT/index/Information/kein_fleisch_aus_schaechtungen_bei_spar.html)

44. Andre, "Islamischer' Kalender von Lindt erregt die Gemüter," *Mimikama*, 3 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.mimikama.at/allgemein/islamischer-kalender-von-lindt-erregt-die-gemuet/>

45. Irmi Wutscher, "Ordentlich in den Sand gesetzt," *FM4*, 3 February, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://fm4.orf.at/stories/1753444/>

46. Daniel Steinlechner, "FPÖ Strache: 'Wir sind die wahre Pegida'," *News*, 16 January, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.news.at/al/fpoe-strache-wahre-pegida>

## Discrimination in the employment sector

The yearly Zara Report of ZARA reveals that hijab-wearing women are frequently objects of hatred and discrimination, in daily life as well as on the job market.<sup>47</sup> In this report, a number of people – in specific Muslim women wearing a hijab – reported to have been discriminated as a result of their religious identity.

A Muslim woman applied for a job at a metalworking company. She was not taken because of her hijab and was told “If you take off your skimpy dress, then we will have a look at it.” Although the applicant suggested wearing a periwig, the company told her just to “apply again with a normal photo”. The applicant was advised by the government’s advocacy group for equal treatment to handle the issue via the Arbeiterkammer, an official representative of employees in Upper Austria. After she won the case before the labour court, she was offered compensation of 1.550 Euro.<sup>48</sup>

With the help of Klagsverband, a Litigation Association of NGOs against Discrimination, a student who was not given a job at one of Vienna’s most famous bakeries, sued and won the first case in Austrian history of discrimination against gender and religion. She received 2.500 Euro.<sup>49</sup>

A growing number of Muslim women, who were born in Austria, speak the language and have additional skills, report that when sending a photo with their hijab, they are not even called for an interview, while applications without a photo lead to interviews, which are answered in the negative.<sup>50</sup>

A young social science student with a hijab applied for a job at the education authority in Upper Austria. The last question during the interview was “Are you ideologised or do you belong to any group that spreads an ideology.” Her answer was that she belongs to no group and was not ideologised. The interviewee went on to ask “You do not even go to the Friday prayer (in a mosque, FH)?”<sup>51</sup>

One male Muslim religious teacher reports to have quit his job because of the huge amount of Islamophobic tendencies in everyday life. He was not anymore able to confront misrepresentations, defending his religion, etc.<sup>52</sup>

A young Muslim woman with a hijab entered the room for a job interview and

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47. “Racism report 2014–Case report on racist incidents and structures in Austria,” accessed on 28 January, 2016, [www.zara.or.at/\\_wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Zara\\_RR14\\_engl\\_web\\_fin.pdf](http://www.zara.or.at/_wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Zara_RR14_engl_web_fin.pdf)

48. “Wegen Kopftuch diskriminiert: 1550 Euro Schadenersatz,” *Kleine Zeitung*, 10 February, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://www.kleinezeitung.at/s/chronik/4659503/Bei-Bewerbung\\_Wegen-Kopftuch-diskriminiert\\_1550-Euro-Schadenersatz-?xtor=CS1-15](http://www.kleinezeitung.at/s/chronik/4659503/Bei-Bewerbung_Wegen-Kopftuch-diskriminiert_1550-Euro-Schadenersatz-?xtor=CS1-15)

49. David Krutzler, “Kein Job wegen Kopftuchs: Studentin erhält 2.500 Euro,” *Der Standard*, 16 March, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://derstandard.at/2000012992823/Kein-Job-wegen-Kopftuch-Studentin-erhaelt-2500-Euro>

50. Kerstin Schnitzhofer, “Kopftuch in der Arbeit? Die Nächste bitte!,” *Salzburg 24*, 25 February, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.salzburg24.at/kopftuch-in-der-arbeit-die-naechste-bitte/4246894>

51. Interview by author, 28 November, 2015.

52. Murat Hirsekorn, accessed on 28 January, 2016, comment on Murat Hirsekorn, “Warum ich nicht mehr arbeiten kann,” *Netzwerk Muslimische Zivilgesellschaft*, March, <http://dieanderen.net/warum-ich-nicht-mehr-arbeiten-kann/>

when the office assistant caught sight of her, she immediately stated “The doctor said if a headscarf comes I have to say no.”<sup>53</sup>

Another woman, who had successfully applied for a job with her hijab was asked on her first day at work, why she did not take the hijab off and told that she had to leave since she cannot work as a saleswoman with a hijab.<sup>54</sup>

## Politics

Charlie Hebdo enabled the Ministry of Interior to strengthen security policies. The government decided on a security pact to spend between 250 to 290 million Euro on the ‘terrorist threat’ until 2018.<sup>55</sup> Twelve million of this amount was planned for CVE programmes.<sup>56</sup> According to the Foreign Minister, Austrian jihadists shall be deprived of their passports.<sup>57</sup>

For the FPÖ, Islamophobia is a central part of their ideology as well as campaigning. During the Sommergespräche, the yearly political summer talks on Austrian broadcast TV ORF, the chairman of the FPÖ – with more than 1 million viewers tuned in<sup>58</sup> – was asked how he would react if his daughter converts to Islam. Strache answered with the words “I am convinced that this would never happen, because my daughter is a cosmopolitan, freedom-loving human being and will never allow to be oppressed.”<sup>59</sup> Every Ash Wednesday, the leader of the far right FPÖ speaks to some of his functionaries and followers. Journalists reported that Islam was one of the main topics of the leader’s speech. He uttered words such as “I don’t want my daughter to have to wear a veil one day” or “we say what the silent majority in Austria thinks: (sarcastically, FH) Islam has nothing to do with Islamism – and alcohol has nothing to do with alcoholism”.<sup>60</sup> In addition to that, the FPÖ leader HC Strache is the most followed Austrian politician on Facebook. On his page, users regularly publish contents containing anti-Muslim hatred. One example among more than

53. Email to author, 1 July, 2015.

54. Email to author, 16 October, 2015.

55. Polizei-Sondereinheit auf Großesinsatz in Wiener Innenstadt, *Wirtschaftsblatt*, 20 January, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://wirtschaftsblatt.at/home/nachrichten/oesterreich/wien/4642890/PolizeiSondereinheit-auf-Grosseinsatz-in-Wiener-Innenstadt>

56. Iris Bonavida, “Zwischen 260 und 290 Millionen Euro sollen in den nächsten vier Jahren zusätzlich in den Sicherheitsbereich fließen,” *Die Presse*, 20 January, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/4642703/Sicherheitspaket\\_Bis-zu-290-Mio-Euro-fur-Polizei?from=suche.intern.portal](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/4642703/Sicherheitspaket_Bis-zu-290-Mio-Euro-fur-Polizei?from=suche.intern.portal)

57. APA, Terrorgefahr: Kurz will österreichischen Jihadisten den Reisepass entziehen, *Der Standard*, 19 January, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://derstandard.at/2000010580486/Kurz-will-Jihadisten-den-Reisepass-entziehen>

58. *Kundendienst ORF* accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://kundendienst.orf.at/programm/fernsehen/orf2/sommergespraeche.html>

59. “Sommergespräch mit FPÖ-Parteichef Heinz-Christian Strache,” 17 August, 2015, 9.05 pm, accessed on 28 January, 2016.

60. Markus Rohrhofer, “Soloturner Strache in der Rieder Jahnhalle,” *Der Standard*, 18 February, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://derstandard.at/2000011878475/Strache-in-RiedSoloturner-in-der-Jahnhalle>

1.048 that have been collected is the post “Only a dead Moslem is a good Moslem”.<sup>61</sup> In a picture, which Strache shares on Facebook, Voltaire is cited with the following words: “The Koran teaches fear, hate, despite towards others, killing as a legitimate means to spread and preserve the Satanic teaching. He badmouths women, separates people into classes and again and again calls for blood.”<sup>62 63</sup>



Three elections took place in 2015. During the Upper Austrian elections, the FPÖ on its posters called against “Asylum Chaos and Islamisation”.

FPÖ's Campaign Poster<sup>63</sup>

The FPÖ eventually became part of the government coalition and since its leader became vice-governor, he re-emphasised his claim during the elections campaign that Muslims shall not be welcomed as refugees.<sup>64</sup> Also during the Styria elections, the FPÖ campaign was openly Islamophobic: their primary slogan was “New apartments instead of new mosques”.<sup>65</sup> The Styria FPÖ raised a campaign against the construction of a mosque on [www.moscheenstopp.com](http://www.moscheenstopp.com). For them the “goal is to create a consciousness of the threat of Islamisation in Styria. Mosques and minarets are the most visible signs of this development”.<sup>66</sup> Their webpage calls for

“[The] ban of additional mosques with minarets [...], stricter surveillance of

61. “Eau de Strache,” accessed on 28 January, 2016, <https://www.eaudestrache.at/>

62. “SOS Mitmensch,” Nachgefragt: Was hat es mit Straches Anti-Koran-Zitat auf sich?, 21 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.sosmitmensch.at/site/home/article/1141.html>

63. Photo by Damir A. Saračević.

64. “SOS Mitmensch,” 3 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.sosmitmensch.at/site/home/article/1140.html>

65. Colette M. Schmidt, “FPÖ-Wahlkampf gegen virtuelle Moscheen,” *Der Standard*, 25 April, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://derstandard.at/2000014938442/FPÖe-Wahlkampf-gegen-virtuelle-Moscheen>

66. “FPÖ-Steiermark,” accessed on 17 November, 2015, [www.fpoe-stmk.at/news-detail/artikel/fpoe-steiermark-stopp-dem-moscheenbau/](http://www.fpoe-stmk.at/news-detail/artikel/fpoe-steiermark-stopp-dem-moscheenbau/)

Islamist mosques, the presentation of an Islamisation Report in parliament [...] loss of citizenship for Jihad fighters, the ban of the distribution of the Koran by Salafists in the public square, no special rights for Muslim pupils (regarding exemption of swimming courses for females, class trips and sexual education) [...], the prevention of an Islamic parallel justice system.”<sup>67</sup>

During the Viennese campaign, the discourse on refugees dominated the election campaigns. Commentators of daily newspapers regularly cautioned against Daesh fighters within the waves of refugees. One author says “The failure in the management of the ‘refugee crisis’ must be corrected. Also the USA have regretted their passivity on 9/11.”<sup>68</sup> The same Austrian daily *Die Presse* also gave Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán a long interview to spread his very Islamophobic views in the midst of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, arguing that “Muslims will soon be more in numbers that we are”.<sup>69</sup> Also far right politicians like the Viennese FPÖ Chairman argued that “Daesh terrorists would be infiltrated [...] and an Islamisation would occur since the majority of refugees were Muslim.”<sup>70</sup> Within the debate on the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, FPÖ mastermind Herbert Kickl openly announced that “since the church is helping immigrant Muslims so much, it should be possible to missionise them”.<sup>71</sup> The chairman held a policy statement that was shared on Facebook more than 34.000 times and viewed nearly by 2 million people, where he argued that Daesh may send fighters to Europe.

The European Peoples Party Group in the European Parliament called for EU action to prevent the radicalisation and recruitment of terrorists. Based on the new Austrian Islam law, conservative MEPs from the Austrian ÖVP praised the new Austrian law as groundbreaking, and according to them, financing mosques with foreign money should become illegal in the whole EU. They also lobbied for the withdrawal of citizenship for fighters of terrorist organisations.<sup>72</sup>

On 9 December, a so-called ‘project interim report’<sup>73</sup> of an alleged study on radicalisation in Muslim kindergartens was presented. The presentation reveals a po-

67. “Stopp dem [sic] Moscheebau,” accessed on 28 January, 2016, [www.moscheestopp.com](http://www.moscheestopp.com)

68. Anneliese Rohrer, “Versagen des Krisenmanagements kann für EU 9/11-Moment bedeuten,” *Die Presse*, 11 September, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/quergeschrieben/anneliese-rohrer/4819479/Versagen-des-Krisenmanagements-kann-fur-EU-911-Moment-bedeuten?xtor=CS1-15>

69. Christian Ultsch, “Orbán: ‘Muslime werden bald mehr als wir sein’,” 9 September, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://diepresse.com/home/politik/4822692/Orban\\_Muslime-werden-bald-mehr-als-wir-sein](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/4822692/Orban_Muslime-werden-bald-mehr-als-wir-sein)

70. Exists on Puls4 Channel, 7 September, 2015, <http://www.puls4.com/video/pro-und-contra/play/2853802>

71. Freiheitlicher Parlamentsklub, “FPÖ-Kickl: Naivitäts-Lehrstunde mit Caritas-Präsident Landau,” *APA*, 13 September, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20150913\\_OTS0040/fpoe-kickl-naivitaets-lehrstunde-mit-caritas-praesident-landau](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20150913_OTS0040/fpoe-kickl-naivitaets-lehrstunde-mit-caritas-praesident-landau)

72. ÖVP Bundesparteileitung, “ÖVP-Becker: Keine Auslandsfinanzierung von Moscheen in der EU,” *APA*, 19 October, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20151019\\_OTS0055/oevp-becker-keine-auslandsfinanzierung-von-moscheen-in-der-eu](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20151019_OTS0055/oevp-becker-keine-auslandsfinanzierung-von-moscheen-in-der-eu)

73. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ednan Aslan, “Projektbericht: `Evaluierung islamischer Kindergärten/-gruppen in Wien`” (Universität Wien, Institut für Islamische Studien, 2015), accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://images.derstandard.at/2015/12/10/ProjektberichtIslamischeKindergaertenErgebnissefinal-2.pdf>

litical motive of oppositional politics of the Conservatives against the ruling social democratic party in Vienna.<sup>74</sup> The report received harsh and substantive critique by scholars such as Andrea Schaffar<sup>75</sup> and Susanne Heine<sup>76</sup> for being anything than scientific. Also, four out of an alleged 150 Muslim kindergartens and 450 Muslim so-called children's groups, which were mentioned in the report, asked the press to take juridical steps against the mentioned allegations.<sup>77</sup> Although on a political level, the Viennese governors denied any of the allegations of spreading extremism in Muslim kindergartens, a consequence of the debate was that officials undertook profiling of kindergartens with Muslim personnel. Kindergarten personnel said they were interrogated by officials regarding whether children would be taught to pray, whether they were taught the Koran, which language they spoke, if they would celebrate Santa Claus and Christmas and told that they had to because this would be part of Austrian tradition.<sup>78</sup> In fact and to the contrary, the educational plan (66 pages) of the Viennese government does not mention anything like 'Austrian values' or 'tradition' in any single sentence.<sup>79</sup>

Before this, CVE projects (Countering Violence and Extremism) had already been institutionalised by government agencies. CVE projects especially focus on Muslim figures. Ednan Aslan, a professor of Islamic Religious Pedagogics at the University of Vienna, is regularly cited by Islamophobic actors. He is the author of the already cited interim report on Muslim kindergartens. As a person who appears to be a scholar of Islam,<sup>80</sup> many Islamophobic actors cite him as evidence that their criticism of Islam is not racist. According to the anti-racist NMZ, these 'experts' play a significant role in spreading prejudices against Islam and Muslims, comparable to anti-Jewish racism. Aslan for example explains that "all Muslim organisations share the goals of Daesh to create an Islamic state"<sup>81</sup> and that "all Islamic theological faculties outside of Europe are teaching the theology of Daesh"<sup>82</sup>. As the long-time

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74. Emran Feroz, "Österreich: Paradoxe Diskurs über muslimische Kindergärten," *Heise*, 18 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/46/46881/1.html>

75. Andrea Schaffar, "Langfassung: Methodische Kritik zur 'Evaluierung islamischer Kindergärten/-gruppen in Wien'," *Science Blog*, 20 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://scienceblogs.de/sociokommunikativ/2015/12/20/langfassung-methodische-kritik/?all=1>

76. "'Plattform Christen und Muslime' beklagt 'Generalverdacht'," *Erzdiözese Wien*, 18 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <https://www.erzdiocese-wien.at/site/home/nachrichten/article/47472.html>

77. "Betreiber muslimischer Kindergärten wehren sich," *Der Standard*, 11 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://derstandard.at/2000027339190/Betreiber-von-islamischen-Kindergaerten-wehren-sich>

78. Interview with the author, 22 December, 2015.

79. Magistratsabteilung 10, Bildungsplan, 09/2006.

80. A critical review of his academic career suggests that his academic records in terms of Islamic theology are quite poor. See: Karim Saad, *Ednan Aslan: Auf der Suche nach den Jihadisten*, 16 November 2014, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.kismetonline.at/ednan-aslan-auf-der-suche-nach-den-jihadisten/>

81. ORF 2, Orientierung, Interview, 22 November, 2015.

82. Ibid.

anti-Semitism scholar Wolfgang Benz has said “What the Talmud hetz (baiting, FH) was in the past, today is the Koran hetz. A minority is stigmatised as threatening, because the religion supposedly commands them to do so.”<sup>83</sup> The NMZ criticises the Viennese education authority for re-inviting Aslan after he had held a training course for 180 teachers in November 2014 and was harshly criticised by them for presenting a raster scan for identifying extremist pupils in schools.<sup>84</sup> According to Aslan, frequently using Arab expressions such as Subhanallah (Praise be to God), Maschaallah (as God wants), Yaani (non-religious terminology for ‘so to say’), munafiq (hypocrite), Kafir (disbeliever), Muschrik (idolater) and Achi (brother) point to extremism.<sup>85</sup> Most of these terminologies (except kafir and muschrik) are part of everyday language, even for non-religious people.

## Media

Teilnehmende Medienbeobachtung (TMB) is a volunteer online platform consisting of scholars and students of anthropology that critically monitors racist and sexist media coverage and intervene in the public debate.<sup>86</sup> In 2015, they critically reviewed and subsequently published twenty articles. In their analyses, they identified fifteen articles that spread Islamophobic stereotypes.



The weekly liberal magazine Profil was criticised after publishing a cover with the sentence “What makes Islam dangerous”, showing the murderers of Charlie Hebdo shooting one of their victims.

The yellow press like Österreich regularly published articles with information that is fabricated or simply distorted. An example of this is an article on the law regarding Islam. While many voices criticised the government for implementing the law, which shall forbid getting regular financial support for religious activities from abroad, Österreich asserted that “the Islam law forbids

83. Netzwerk Muslimische Zivilgesellschaft, Schulen in Wien. Deradikalisierung oder Denunzierung?, *NMZ Schriftenreihe Nr.1*, 2015, p. 6.

84. "Informationsnachmittag Dschihadistische Gefährdung," *Netzwerk Muslimische Zivilgesellschaft*, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://dieanderen.net/informationsnachmittag-dschihadistische-gefaehrderung/>

85. NMZ, Deradikalisierung oder Denunzierung?, p. 9.

86. "Teilnehmende Medienbeobachtung aus Kultur- und Sozialanthropologischer Perspektive" [http://www.univie.ac.at/tmb/?page\\_id=2](http://www.univie.ac.at/tmb/?page_id=2)

financing of Jihadism. ‘It’s high time’ say secret service agents.”<sup>87</sup>

Another free daily newspaper Heute published a fabricated report about “Jihadists in council housing”. In this article, a young Muslim resident was said to have a flag of Daesh/ISIL and it was reported that the executive power found weapons and that a neighbour said that the young man started changing his behaviour by not greeting them anymore and having a beard. Although the information was afterwards reported by the Austrian Presse Agentur to be false, Heute published a second article on the same subject, supporting the false claims. As a result a young man lost his job and got kicked out of council housing. The FPÖ published a leaflet with the title “Did you know that terrorists live in your neighborhood?” and called for “no space for Islamists in Austria” and “loss of citizenship for religious warriors”; it spread the publication in and around council housing.<sup>88</sup> The Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF as well as the weekly Profil and daily Kurier covered this incident and its consequences in a critical news story.

The free tabloid daily Österreich published an article with the headline “Viennese Kindergartens Call for Jihad”. According to this article, “the instruction to ‘fight with the sword’ stems from the late Fatima Grimm – daughter of the 300.000-fold killer and KZ-butcher Treblinka Karl Wolff”<sup>89</sup> and was taught in the kindergarten. While this article was spread online and even some quality papers took up the issue, only Kurier published an alternative report which gave the head of the kindergarten company the opportunity to denounce that this brochure of F. Grimm played any role in the education of the children.<sup>90</sup> The daily Die Presse only took the relation of the author to her father as a departing point for another article titled “The Nazi daughter as a convert to Islam”.<sup>91</sup>

After the Paris attacks, a wave of leading articles appeared in daily newspapers and created a public debate, after the Foreign Minister called for an introduction of an 8-hour value course for refugee newcomers. The foreign minister said that since “people come from very different cultures they have not yet got

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87. Erwin Scheriau, “Terror-Gelder gekappt,” *Oe 24*, 25 February, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Terror-Gelder-gekappt/178319016>

88. Hans Kirchmeyr, “Dschihad im Gemeindebau? Die dramatischen Folgen einer „Heute“-Falschmeldung,” *Kobuk*, 10 March, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <https://www.kobuk.at/2015/03/dschihad-im-gemeindebau-die-dramatischen-folgen-einer-heute-falschmeldung/>

89. Josef Galley, “Wiener Kindergarten ruft zu Jihad aus,” *Österreich*, 24 November, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [www.oe24.at/chronik/Wiener-Kindergarten-ruft-zu-Jihad-auf/213397085](http://www.oe24.at/chronik/Wiener-Kindergarten-ruft-zu-Jihad-auf/213397085)

90. Bernhard Ichner, “Nichts Verdächtiges bei Kindergarten-Kontrolle,” *Kurier*, 27 November, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://kurier.at/chronik/wien/nichts-verdaechtiges-bei-kindergarten-kontrolle/166.367.401>

91. Thomas Kramar, “Die Nazi-Tochter als Konvertitin zum Islam,” *Die Presse*, 26 November, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://diepresse.com/home/zeitgeschichte/4875249/Die-Nazi-Tochter-als-Konvertitin-zum-Islam?\\_vl\\_backlink=/home/index.do](http://diepresse.com/home/zeitgeschichte/4875249/Die-Nazi-Tochter-als-Konvertitin-zum-Islam?_vl_backlink=/home/index.do)

to know European basic values”.<sup>92</sup> Journalists in a number of articles argued that “the creation of a parallel system of Shariah-judges [...] must be foreclosed”, something no single Austrian Muslim had ever suggested.<sup>93</sup> Journalists ‘reminded’ Muslim immigrants to treat their sons and daughters equally and to resolve conflicts not with weapons but with dialogue.<sup>94</sup>

Similar constructed hysterias were created in other newspapers. The daily OÖN spread feelings of suspicion in an article on refugees, who fled from the Taliban. The newspaper said that they knew about “men in a black Mercedes, who drive through the district of Vöcklabruck and invite people from asylum seekers’ hostels to pray in the mosque. The question, whether people only pray there or promote the gang of murderers IS (Daesh, FH) is to be answered by state security.”<sup>95</sup>

The Austrian daily quality newspaper Der Standard published an article with a photo portraying a young girl with a pink hijab reading a book (the Koran?) next to the title “Difficult fight against Jihadism in School”. The association of a hijab-wearing schoolgirl with Jihadism is obvious. A leading editor of Der Standard answered the criticism of a Muslim woman, who wrote the newspaper. He wrote “the picture is from Tirana [...] and the girl cannot be identified. [...] We care about not violating personal rights. [...] For us, this was not about the person, but about the symbolic image, which relates to the statements of directors in Austrian schools, who say that the spread of headscarfs in Viennese schools is an indication of the growing influence of Jihadist movements”.<sup>96</sup> In contrast to this reply to a Muslim woman, an anti-racist activist received a completely different (public) answer on twitter, saying “The picture selection was not well made. We take the feedback very seriously.”<sup>97</sup>

At the very same time, the number of newspapers reporting incidents of dis-



Photo by Damir A. Saračević.

92. “Kommen aus anderen Kulturkreisen,” *ORF Stories*, 5 November, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [orf.at/m/stories/2308387/2308194/](http://orf.at/m/stories/2308387/2308194/)

93. Viktor Hermann, “Die Zuwanderer müssen unsere Werte annehmen,” *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 7 November, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [www.salzburg.com/nachrichten/meinung/standpunkt/sn/artikel/die-zuwanderer-muessen-unsere-werte-annehmen-172418/](http://www.salzburg.com/nachrichten/meinung/standpunkt/sn/artikel/die-zuwanderer-muessen-unsere-werte-annehmen-172418/)

94. Ibid.

95. Norbert Blaichinger, “‘Wollte nicht mehr lachen’-Taliban schlugen Samia Zähne aus,” *Nachrichten*, 19 June, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.nachrichten.at/oberoesterreich/salzkammergut/Wollte-nicht-mehr-lachen-Taliban-schlugen-Samia-Zaehne-aus;art71,1861146>

96. Email sent to author, 1 December, 2015.

97. Comment on Twitter, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <https://twitter.com/derStandardat/status/671354814631190528?lang=de>

crimination against Muslims is growing.<sup>98</sup> Also, the editor in chief of the Styrian tabloid press *Kronenzeitung*, Christoph Biró, withdrew after publishing a hateful leading article. Biró said that “young, testosterone-controlled Syrians, ... make especially aggressive sexual assaults”.<sup>99</sup>

The tabloid press associated the issue of the Muslim kindergartens and the alleged radicalisation of young children with criminal acts of fraud charge for evading state subsidies. The *Kronen Zeitung* published an article called “Large-Scale Raid in Vienna’s Islam-kindergartens”. The picture showed heavily equipped policemen with a veiled Muslim woman behind them.<sup>100</sup>



Michael Ley, “Islamisierung Europas: Nein, ich habe keine Visionen,” *Die Presse*, 19 June, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://diepresse.com/home/spectrum/zeichenderzeit/4758713/Islamisierung-Europas\\_Nein-ich-habe-keine-Visionen](http://diepresse.com/home/spectrum/zeichenderzeit/4758713/Islamisierung-Europas_Nein-ich-habe-keine-Visionen)

Next to some Muslim people who support Islamophobia such as Ednan Aslan, a number of other authors spread their Islamophobic contents as freelance journalists. Michael Ley, one of the latter, is regularly given space for his writings in the right liberal daily newspaper *Die Presse*. In one of his articles titled “Islamisation of Europe: No, I have no Visions” he argues in the last sentence that “Europe is given the choice: A Reconquista – a reconquest of its civilization – or suicide”. According to him, Islam is not compatible with democracy and European civilisation and hence has to be defeated. His writings as well as his public appearance<sup>101</sup> are also shared by blogs such as the most well-known German Islamophobic PI-News.<sup>102</sup> The far right *unzensuriert.at* campaigns for his publications.<sup>103</sup> Other authors such as Theo Faulhaber are given space for spreading radical theses on Islam. In one op-ed piece, he argued that there was “no ‘normal’ and no ‘radical’ Islam. There is only one Islam” with an “intrinsic militancy”.<sup>104</sup>

98. Kerstin Schnitzhofer, “Kopftuch in der Arbeit? Die Nächste bitte!,” *Salzburg 24*, 25 February, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.salzburg24.at/kopftuch-in-der-arbeit-die-naechste-bitte/4246894>

99. Christoph Biró, “‘Testosteron-gesteuerte Syrer’: Beschwerdeflut zu „Krone“-Kommentar,” *Der Standard*, 26 October, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://derstandard.at/2000024539316/Testosteron-gesteuerte-Syrer-Beschwerdeflut-zu-Krone-Kommentar>

100. “Grossrazzia in Wien Islam-Kindergärten,” *Krone*, 22 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://www.krone.at/Oesterreich/Grossrazzia\\_in\\_Wiens\\_Islam-Kindergaerten-5\\_Mio\\_Euro\\_veruntreut-Story-488158](http://www.krone.at/Oesterreich/Grossrazzia_in_Wiens_Islam-Kindergaerten-5_Mio_Euro_veruntreut-Story-488158)

101. “PI News,” accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.pi-news.net/2015/11/p491727/>

102. “PI News,” accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.pi-news.net/2015/06/michael-ley-presse-zur-islamisierung-europas/>

103. “Der Selbstmord des Abendlandes-Die Islamisierung Europas,” *Unzensuriert*, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0018333-Der-Selbstmord-des-Abendlandes-Die-Islamisierung-Europas>

104. Theo Faulhaber, “Zehn aktuelle Thesen zum Islam und Europa,” *Kurier*, 5 January, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [kurier.at/meinung/gastkommentare/zehn-aktuelle-thesen-zum-islam-und-europa/106.366.887](http://kurier.at/meinung/gastkommentare/zehn-aktuelle-thesen-zum-islam-und-europa/106.366.887)

## Justice system

The new Islam law has been the target of a great amount of protest by various actors. The fact that Islam is the subject of a number of special regulations in contrast to other legally recognised churches and religious communities has been identified as discriminatory. One such discrimination is the fact that Muslim associations are banned from legally organising themselves outside of the legally recognised Islamic Councils. This effectively means that the law of association is no longer fully applicable to Muslim associations whose right to publicly congregate has been restricted based on religious practice. It was also criticised that Muslim chaplains must now be trained at the University of Vienna and not – as is the case with all other churches – by the respective Islamic Council. Generally, the law can be read as a strengthening of the position of the already existing Islamic Council vis-à-vis Muslims, and at the same time a strengthening of the state vis-à-vis the Islamic Council, and thus creating a system of surveillance, where the Islamic Council becomes a quasi-subordinated institution of the Austrian state.

Still, the legal system allows one to change the family name within the first two years after receiving citizenship. A given reason is that “somebody with a foreign origin may acquire a family name that simplifies integration better”.<sup>105</sup> Before the backdrop, such a regulation seems supportive of possible future victims of racism. But at the same time, such regulations reconfirm institutional racism.

A partial improvement of the legal system is the amendment of the law on sedition (*Verhetzungsparagraph*), which shall be enacted on 1 January, 2016. An inductee can now be punished up to three years (before this was two years), and up to five years, if his preaching of hatred has led to physical violence. At the same time, judges now have to prove that the perpetrators had a defamatory intention, which means creating new barriers.<sup>106</sup> In the meeting for the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations on 9 November, 2015, Austria was especially criticised for being lax in fighting equally against various kinds of discrimination based on age, religion and gender with the exception of the labour market.<sup>107</sup>

The ever-increasing coverage of Daesh/ISIL in Austrian media led to the initiation of Countering Violent Extremism programmes. On 29 December, 2014, a law banning symbols of Daesh/ISIL, al-Qaida and other terrorist (Muslim) groups was

105. "Gesetzliche Gründe für eine Änderung des Familien-/Nachnamens," *Help.GV*, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/content/233/Seite.2330300.html>

106. Maria Sterkl, "Hetze gegen 'Ausländer' wird strafbar," *Der Standard*, 7 July, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://derstandard.at/2000018722025/Neue-Regeln-fuer-Hetze-gegen-Minderheiten>

107. "ODS," accessed on 17 November, 2015, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/171/36/PDF/G1017136.pdf?OpenElement>

enacted.<sup>108</sup> The lawyer Josef Unterweger criticised the law for banning symbols that are part and parcel of the Islamic religion (e.g. the shahada) and that would not be distinguishable from other symbols by normal citizens. In addition he argued that other terrorist organisations like the leftist RAF or the Austrian ‘Südtiroler Bumser’ were fought without forbidding their symbols.<sup>109</sup> The aforementioned article published in *Heute* that falsely identified a young Muslim resident who was said to have a flag of Daesh/ISIL and who subsequently lost his job and housing, is an example that occurred before this new law had emerged. A heightened consciousness on the side of Islamophobic actors may lead to a growing number of false accusations.

## Countering Islamophobia

**Institutional level.** The Austrian Ministry of Integration and Foreign Affairs established a ‘Hotline against Discrimination and Intolerance’, which is part of the civil service of the ministry. It is there to build up consciousness that discrimination is no trivial offence, but a serious issue. While the hotline does not create new institutions, it aims to connect victims to the already existing institutions in this field,<sup>110</sup> and first and foremost to the Ombudsman for Equal Treatment, which is part of the Office of the Prime Minister and the NGO Civil Courage and Anti-Racism Work (ZARA). Substantially, no new state institutions were created to combat Islamophobia. The Islamic Council created Dokustelle für Muslime on one side to register Islamophobic acts and on the other, to create a consciousness on the behalf of Muslims that will help them to learn their rights and the necessary skills to combat hate crimes.

**Civil society.** The ATIB (Avusturya Türk İslam Kültür ve Sosyal Yardımlaşma Birliği) protested against the new Islam law at the Constitutional Court and specifically against the dissolution of Muslim associations that were formerly organised according to the law of associations (VereinsG 2002).<sup>111</sup> Civil society activism against Islamophobia has also shaped the current state of affairs regarding Islamophobia. After a speech by Geert Wilders, who was invited to Vienna by the right-wing party FPÖ,<sup>112</sup> Muslim activist Tarafa Baghajati initiated investigations against him at the public prosecution department because

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108. “Terror-Symbole-Gesetz 2014,” *Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, 29 December, 2014, accessed on 28 January, 2016, 104, [https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA\\_2014\\_I\\_103/BGBLA\\_2014\\_I\\_103.pdf](https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2014_I_103/BGBLA_2014_I_103.pdf)

109. “Bundesgesetz, mit dem die Verwendung mit Symbolen der Gruppierung islamischer Staat und anderer Gruppierungen verboten wird,” *Bundesministerium für Inneres*, 24 October, 2014, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/SNME/SNME\\_01826/imfname\\_370491.pdf](https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/SNME/SNME_01826/imfname_370491.pdf)

110. “Hotline gegen Diskriminierung und Intoleranz,” *Bundesministerium Europa Integration Äußeres*, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://www.bmeia.gv.at/integration/hotline-gegen-diskriminierung/>

111. “ATIB Türkisch Islamische Union für kulturelle und soziale Zusammenarbeit in Österreich,” *APA*, 3 December, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20151203\\_OTS0122/hundert-islamische-vereine-und-gebetsstaetten-vor-behoerdlicher-schliessung](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20151203_OTS0122/hundert-islamische-vereine-und-gebetsstaetten-vor-behoerdlicher-schliessung)

112. The panel discussion can be watched online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp3YHWhtQY>

of sedition, vilification of religious belief and violation of the Prohibition Act of 1947, which prohibits Holocaust denial and belittlement of Nazi atrocities.<sup>113</sup> According to Wilders, this was a “juridical jihad fought against him”.<sup>114</sup> Counter-demonstrations against PEGIDA in every city were successful in mobilising many more followers than the latter.

**Media.** An increasing number of reports covering Islamophobic discrimination can be observed in news media in ORF as well as in daily newspapers, which seems to be related to a heightened consciousness of Muslims and the existing communication channels to media outlets.

## CONCLUSION:

### policy recommendations for politics and NGOs

The terrorist attacks in Paris shaped the public debate and created a hysteria, which did end at politicians, but flooded political institutions, media and society. The new Islam law, which used to symbolise Austria’s tradition of legal equal treatment of Muslims and their recognition in the political system, was turned into a symbol of the opposite. In the midst of the debate on Daesh and Charlie Hebdo, it was easy to legitimise this new law. The recorded number of instances of harassment on the streets and violations against Muslim subjects – which are not systematically collected it must be noted– is increasing. The Muslim community seems to have created a heightened consciousness to stand up against these injustices. While a number of NGOs and activists speak out against these developments, right-wing parties, which spread stereotypes of Muslims, are getting stronger. The FPÖ has used offensive Islamophobic campaigning in three regional elections. While media reports more and more on Islamophobic incidents, a biased coverage of Islam and Muslims can be observed, especially in many fabricated tabloid press stories.

- Austria should fulfil its promise from Durban 2001 and adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) against Racism in order to meet the challenges regarding discrimination and racism which are prevalent in all areas of society.
- Financial and human resources should be raised for the Equal Treatment Commission and for an increase of the capacities of the Ombud for Equal Treatment to fulfil its task of raising awareness of the Equal Treatment Act.
- Discrimination on the job market must be fought with better legal standards

113. “Kurier,” “KURIER: Staatsanwalt ermittelt gegen Gert Wilders,” *APA*, 27 July, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20150727\\_OTS0095/kurier-staatsanwalt-ermittelt-gegen-gert-wilders?utm\\_source=2015-07-27&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=html&utm\\_campaign=mailaboeinzel](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20150727_OTS0095/kurier-staatsanwalt-ermittelt-gegen-gert-wilders?utm_source=2015-07-27&utm_medium=email&utm_content=html&utm_campaign=mailaboeinzel)

114. “APA,” “Wilders: Wiener Staatsanwalt führt Jihad gegen mich,” *Der Standard*, 28 July, 2015, accessed on 28 January, 2016, <http://derstandard.at/2000019884858/Wilders-Wiener-Staatsanwalt-fuehrt-Jihad-gegen-mich>

and the creation of a relevant consciousness. Penalties for the violation of discrimination on the six grounds mentioned in the EU Directives on this issue should be increased.

- The amended Equal Treatment Act (August 2013) has to fulfil the long demanded extension of protection against discrimination (levelling up) on grounds of sexual orientation, age, belief and religion to areas outside employment.
- The Islam law has to be amended in order not to be in conflict with the Austrian constitution. This is of utmost importance, since the new law has sent a message of inequality to the Muslim masses.
- Training on racism, especially Islamophobia, should be offered to journalists, lawyers, and police (security officials) by qualified personnel.
- Muslim civil society has to be empowered with information to combat Islamophobia, especially in the creation of a consciousness towards the illegality of hate crimes.
- Educational institutions and stakeholders have to work towards creating an alternative narrative of Muslims in Austria which will work to dispel the widely accepted negative image of Islam.

## **CHRONOLOGY**

### **7 January**

- Charlie Hebdo shooting.

### **February**

- PEGIDA Austria marched in different Austrian cities with little success.

### **March**

- The first case in Austrian history of discrimination due to gender and religion was won.

### **30 March, 2015**

- Islam law was adapted.

### **31 May**

- Elections in Styria.

### **27 September**

- Elections in Upper Austria.

### **11 October**

- Elections in Vienna.

### **18 October**

- A Jewish cemetery in Hohenems and an Islamic cemetery in Altsch were desecrated by Swastika and racist slurs, which were smeared on the graves and buildings of the cemeteries.

**13 November**

- Paris attacks.

**December:**

- The supermarket chain SPAR removed Halal meat from its product assortment due to Islamophobic protests.

**5 December:**

- Debate on radicalisation in kindergartens.

**30 December:**

- Arson attack on a renovated Muslim prayer room in Lower Austria.



Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism poses a growing threat to the democratic foundations of European constitutions and social peace as well as the coexistence of different cultures throughout Europe. Both civil society actors and states should acknowledge the seriousness of this issue and develop concrete policies to counter Islamophobia.

As the leading think tank in Turkey, SETA felt an urgent need to address this problem. In fact, there are still people denying the very existence of racism against Muslims. Many state and civil society institutions, from the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) to the countless civil society organisations throughout Europe, have done priceless work to prove and establish the opposite. Yet, institutions like the FRA publish only irregular reports on a restricted number of countries while most civil society organisations tackle racism in general and only few focus on Islamophobia in particular -this is the urgent gap our report wishes to fill.

The European Islamophobia Report (EIR) is an annual report, which is presented for the first time this year. It currently comprises 25 national reports regarding each state and the tendencies of Islamophobia in each respective country. The current report features the work of 37 extraordinary scholars. In the years to come we will attempt to cover even more countries. This report aims to enable policymakers as well as the public to discuss the issue of Islamophobia with the help of qualitative data. At the same time, several of its unique characteristic features make a difference to the current state of the debate on Islamophobia. Studies on Islamophobia have in the past predominantly concentrated on Western Europe. This is especially the case with reports focusing on Islamophobia. The EIR is the first to cover a wide range of Eastern European countries like Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia. This will enrich the debate on racism in general and Islamophobia in Europe in particular.

## About SETA

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.



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