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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  
**NETHERLANDS**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2015

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INEKE VAN DER VALK



## THE AUTHOR

**Ineke van der Valk** (Political Sciences, University of Amsterdam/ Anti-Discrimination Bureau region Amsterdam) specializes in the study of racism, islamophobia, extremism, (de)radicalization, ethnic relations and diversity in multicultural societies and the history of immigrants in the Netherlands. She holds degrees in Educational Studies and Ethnic Studies and a Ph-D in Discourse Studies from the University of Amsterdam. Previously she was a senior researcher at the Anne Frank House where she studied processes of (de)radicalization, rightwing extremism, jihadi extremism and islamophobia. She obtained her doctorate on the interface between social sciences and discourse analysis with a comparative study of the perception of ethnic issues in the political discourse of the Netherlands and France, paying special attention to the extreme right: *Difference, Deviance, Threat* (Aksant 2002). She participated in a joint research project with the University of Vienna/ University of Amsterdam on racism in European countries. She was a community worker and human rights activist in the 70-ies and 80-ies and worked as a policy advisor for institutions, municipalities and NGO's. Supported by the Open Society Foundations and Stichting het PALET Ineke van der Valk currently works on islamophobia in the Netherlands and manages the project Monitor Islamophobia in the Netherlands.

This report has been written in the context of the project Monitor Islamophobia (University of Amsterdam) that is supported by the Open Society Foundation and Het PALET.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the first month of 2015 the Dutch regional anti-discrimination provisions received a total of 55 reports of Muslim discrimination.

A newly created community-based hotline ‘Meld Islamofobie!’ received 136 complaints of discriminatory aggression against Muslims in 2015.

In 2015, 142 cases of internet discrimination against Muslims were reported to the internet discrimination hotline MIND. In January alone, 103 cases were reported to the hotline MDI, 46 being punishable.

Of the vast number of media releases on topics concerning multiculturalism in the Dutch press, only a minority reported on Islamophobia, whereas 47 incidents in different municipalities were reported in relation to the reception of refugees. In many of these incidents their Muslim background was explicitly referred to.

Twenty seven incidents occurred in nineteen mosques in a number of municipalities in various parts of the country. Stones, paint and stink bombs were thrown at mosques, pigs’ heads left behind and threatening letters sent. Two mosques were occupied by a right extremist group and one mosque was the target of a shooting.

In secondary education, almost two out of three of the 498 school teachers who participated in a survey, said that they witnessed incidents in their classrooms related to discrimination of Muslims. They also frequently come across stereotypes of Muslims among their students and in textbooks.

In politics, Geert Wilders and his PVV (Party for Freedom) again and again campaigned against Islam/Muslims by means of hateful rhetoric in political speeches, on websites, in parliamentary questions and motions, and on stickers and leaflets.

Democratic political parties gradually but increasingly take a stance against the PVV trying to isolate Wilders in the political domain. However, various opinion polls taken in 2013, 2014 and 2015 have pointed to the PVV as the largest party in the Netherlands, if elections should have taken place at that point in time.

Three events attracted attention in the legal field. The government submitted a law ‘partial interdiction of face-covering clothes’ to Parliament. A motion asking the government to examine the possibilities of an interdiction of Salafist organisations was accepted in parliament. The PvdD (Party for the Animals) proposed a new draft law against ritual slaughtering. Four court cases discussed cases of Muslim discrimination.

More and more stakeholders have joined efforts to counter Islamophobia. Organisations campaign against Islamophobia, carry out research and present data and information on Islamophobia in the Netherlands. The present Monitor Islamophobia project at the University of Amsterdam runs until 2018 and has so far had several practical and policy effects. The Dutch government has increasingly developed policies to counter Islamophobia in particular and ethnic discrimination in general. In its annual policy paper on discrimination the government expressed concern about

the increase of intolerance and announced concrete policies to counter discrimination on the labour market, in education and in other fields.

## NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Dit rapport gaat over islamofobie in Nederland in 2015. Discriminatoire agressie tegen moskeeën was een hot topic rond de jaarwisseling 2014-2015. Andere centrale kwesties in het publieke debat waren ‘etnisch profileren’ en moslimdiscriminatie door de politie, arbeidsmarktdiscriminatie en de komst van grote aantallen vluchtelingen in de tweede helft van het jaar.

Antidiscriminatiebureaus ontvingen alleen al in januari 55 klachten over moslimdiscriminatie.

In 2015 werden bij het internet meldpunt MIND 142 gevallen van moslimdiscriminatie gemeld. In januari 2015 werden bij het MDI al 103 gevallen van internetdiscriminatie tegen moslims gemeld, waarvan 46 strafbare. Het Facebook meldpunt ‘Meld Islamofobie!’ registreerde 136 klachten van moslimdiscriminatie.

Slechts een klein aantal van de vele artikelen in de pers over de multiculturele samenleving gaat over discriminatie van moslims. Daarnaast werd vanaf half september veel aandacht gegeven aan 47 incidenten rond de opvang van vluchtelingen in verschillende gemeenten. Vaak werd daarbij expliciet verwezen naar het feit dat het gaat om vluchtelingen met een moslimachtergrond.

In 2015 vonden 27 incidenten plaats in 19 moskeeën in verschillende gemeenten. Er werden stenen, verf en een stinkbom naar moskeeën gegooid, er werd een varkenskop gedeponereerd en moskeeën ontvingen dreigbrieven. Twee moskeeën werden bezet door een rechtsextremistische groep en één daarvan werd bij een andere gelegenheid beschoten.

In het middelbare onderwijs gaven twee van de drie docenten die aan een representatieve survey deelnamen aan dat zij incidenten in hun klassen hadden meegeemaakt gericht tegen moslims.

Steeds opnieuw laten opinieonderzoeken zien dat rond de helft van de burgers in Nederland een negatieve opinie hebben over moslims. Wilders en zijn PVV proberen deze sentimenten niet alleen verbaal politiek te organiseren maar in toenemende mate ook te mobiliseren in buitenparlementaire actie tegen moskeeën en tegen de opvang van vluchtelingen. De PVV vroeg in moties in de Tweede Kamer een algemeen verbod van moskeeën. Politieke partijen nemen geleidelijk steeds meer stelling tegen de PVV die hierdoor politiek gezien steeds meer geïsoleerd raakt. Echter opiniepeilingen in 2013-2015 lieten de PVV zien als de grootste partij als er op dat moment verkiezingen hadden plaats gevonden.

Op het gebied van wet- en regelgeving trokken drie zaken de aandacht. De regering legde een wet op gelaatsbedekkende kleding voor aan de Tweede Kamer.

De Partij voor de Dieren kwam opnieuw met een initiatief wetsvoorstel tegen ritueel slachten en de regering werd in een kamerbrede motie gevraagd om de mogelijkheden van een verbod op salafistische organisaties te onderzoeken.

Steeds meer belanghebbenden zetten zich in om islamofobie als een vorm van tegen te gaan. Maatschappelijke organisaties hebben meldpunten in het leven geroepen, voeren campagnes tegen islamofobie, doen onderzoek en verschaffen informatie en gegevens over het verschijnsel. Het project Monitor Islamofobie dat loopt tot 2018 heeft tot nu toe naast gegevens en inzicht verschillende praktische en beleidseffecten opgeleverd. De Nederlandse overheid is geleidelijk steeds actiever met het tegengaan van moslim discriminatie en discriminatie in het algemeen. De politie heeft in 2015 moslimdiscriminatie als aparte categorie opgenomen in het discriminatieregistratiesysteem. In zijn jaarlijkse discriminatiebrief (februari 2015) uitte de regering bezorgdheid over de toename van intolerantie en kondigde beleidsmaatregelen aan om discriminatie op de arbeidsmarkt, in het onderwijs en op andere terreinen tegen te gaan.

## INTRODUCTION

In the Netherlands many young people from Turkish or Moroccan backgrounds do not feel they belong to Dutch society. They feel excluded and rejected by Dutch society as a whole. Dutch citizens consider them not as individuals, not as Dutch citizens but as Turks, or Moroccans or Muslims, i.e. as a deviant group. They feel they are treated differently on the labour market, in education, in daily life, in politics and in the media. They do not trust the media, politicians or the police. They feel misrepresented in the press. Most young males have experienced ethnic profiling by the police. They mention the unfavourable climate towards ethnic minority groups as the main reason why they increasingly identify themselves with their communities of origin and their faith. These are some of the outcomes of an extended study among young people from Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds in the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> Taken together the results of this study present a clear indication of the experience of discrimination as the pivotal, central issue in the lives of young members of ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands. One of such forms of discrimination and the attitudes and ideologies behind it is Islamophobia. Islamophobia manifests itself in many spheres of life, in blatant and violent practices, in structural arrangements, in subtle interpersonal communication and in different sectors of society.

In another study undertaken among members of mainstream society it was found that in 2014/2015 most young people and adults in the Netherlands (55 %) are of the opinion that most Muslims respect others.<sup>2</sup> This percentage is measured every two years and has been steadily increasing since 2004. A smaller percentage (44 %), which is more constant over the years, is of the opinion that “the way of life of Muslims and Western Europeans is incompatible”.<sup>3</sup>

The present report is about Islamophobia and its manifestations in the Netherlands in 2015. It should be pointed out, however, that data on 2015 from anti-discrimination agencies and official institutions such as the police, the public prosecutor and the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights will not be published until mid 2016.

## SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

It is a difficult task to present an accurate report on the ‘state of the art’ knowledge about ethnic discrimination in the Netherlands. Institutions, organisations and academics depend on notifications and reports by victims or – in addition - they have to conduct empirical research themselves. There is a huge gap between the discrimination experienced, as it is reported in representative surveys, on the one hand, and

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1. W. Huijnk et al *Werelden van verschil*, Den Haag SCP, December 2015.

2. . R. Bijl et al *De Sociale staat van Nederland 2015*, SCP, December 2015, webversion, p.81.

3. Notice the assumption contained in the survey question that Muslims are not Western by definition.

on the other,<sup>4</sup> the numbers of complaints and reports to the police and anti-discrimination agencies as well as the incidents reported in the media. While surveys show high numbers, the number of reports to official institutions is generally low. It is thus important not to focus too much on numbers and statistics of reported acts of discrimination alone. In spite of these restrictions the collected data give an indication of the prevalence, scope and character of discrimination cases that target Muslims, in real life and online.

### **Notifications to the Anti-Discrimination Offices**

Since 2009, every municipality in the Netherlands has been under obligation to offer its citizens a provision against discrimination. In the first month of 2015, the Dutch regional anti-discrimination provisions together received 55 reports of discrimination against Muslims. More data on 2015 is expected in summer 2016.

### **POLDIS: police data**

Commissioned by the National Expertise Centre Diversity (LECD-police) an annual report is published with data on discrimination that are systematically registered by the national police service. This POLDIS report<sup>5</sup> gives an overview of discrimination data on grounds that are subject to criminal law i.e. race, religion, philosophy of life, gender, sexual orientation and disability. The report on 2014 that was published in November 2015, shows several important improvements compared to previous reports.<sup>6</sup> Registration was not always uniform. Regular changes in categorisation and registration have caused new and unexpected problems. This has in the recent past hampered the overview, the collection of disaggregated data and the coordination among institutions and has thus rendered further insight rather problematic. Muslim discrimination was, sometimes more or sometimes less, under-reported or made more or less invisible, using number- and category games. Fortunately recently after strong criticism,<sup>7</sup> the police services have taken a great step forward to a more uniform and qualitatively superior system of registration. Amongst other changes, Muslim discrimination is integrated in the system as a separate category of discrimination. On a total of 5,721 reports of discriminatory incidents in 2014, 279 (5 %) were on religious grounds and 206 of these targeted a Muslim. This is a clear increase compared to 2013 when 150 such incidents were registered. Data about reports and complaints to the police services in 2015 are expected by the end of 2016.

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4. See e.g. Andriessen, I., H. Fernee & K. Wittebrood, *Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland*.

5. An abbreviation of the words 'police' and 'discrimination'.

6. B. Tierolf et al. *Discriminatiecijfers politie 2014* Utrecht, Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2015; for previous reports see: B. Tierolf c.s. *POLDIS-rapportage 2013, met themanummer moslimdiscriminatie*, Utrecht, Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2014; B. Tierolf & N. Hermens, *Tweede rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland*, Rapportage incidenten, aangiftes, verdachten en afhandeling 2012. Utrecht, Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2013.

7. For details see I. van der Valk, *Dutch Islamophobia*, LIT-Verlag, p.101-108; in Dutch: I. van der Valk, *Monitor Moslim Discriminatie*, IMES, Universiteit van Amsterdam, p. 54-60.

### **Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

Citizens and CSOs have taken initiatives to create hotlines and notification sites where victims can report outside of the official system of anti-discrimination bureaus and the police. In the winter of 2015, after the Charlie Hebdo attack, a small group of academics and professionals created the Facebook and internet hotline 'Meld Islamofobie!' By 20 December, 2015, the hotline had received 136 complaints on discriminatory aggression against Muslims. A first report was issued in the summer reporting 89 experiences of discriminatory incidents. The cases of verbal abuse that were reported did not always explicitly refer to being a Muslim and/or Islam but were obviously experienced by the victims as related to their Muslim identity. The reported incidents may thus be considered as reflecting the intertwined manifestation of ethnic discrimination and Muslim discrimination. The organisation reported the following in relation to the complaints of the victims in the period January – June 2015:

20.2 % of the reported incidents took place in Rotterdam and 15.5 % in Amsterdam; 62 % of the incidents took place in January 2015; 90 % (63) of the victims were women; 98 % of these women were clearly Muslims in that they wore a headscarf. In only a few cases did they have other face covering or clothes such as a niqaab or a khimaar. Of the perpetrators 71 % were (mostly white) men. One third of the reports were about physical violence, in particular against women and 87 % of the incidents took place during the day in public places (public transport, on the street, in supermarkets). 67% of the victims were alone when targeted and 58% of them did not report the incident to the police. Eight incidents targeted mosques and three incidents consisted of rallies and other forms of protest by right extremist groups.

### **Articles in the press**

Of the vast number of media releases on topics related to multicultural society and interethnic relations, only a minority report on discrimination of Muslims. The following data are based on a daily collection of newspaper clippings from journals, local and national newspapers, digital news from radio, and television programmes on items related to multicultural society and interethnic relations. Altogether several hundreds of articles have been scrutinised. However, the many press articles on the PVV and on discriminatory aggression against mosques are not taken into consideration in this paragraph because these issues are discussed in separate sections. Discriminatory incidents related to the reception of refugees are also discussed separately. Some other articles are referred to in other sections of this report.

Altogether 22 discriminatory acts against Muslims were reported in the press. Nine incidents targeted women and three families.

These incidents consisted of the following categories, each followed by an example of such an incident:

**verbal abuse and threats (6)**

25 May, Enschede. Four women wearing headscarves and working in a pharmacy are often verbally abused with utterances such as ‘Fucking headscarf’ and ‘go back to your own country’. The owner has reported this to the police and has put up a notice against discrimination at the entrance.

**physical assault (5)**

13 March, Rotterdam. A 40-year-old woman is beaten and verbally abused in her car for no other reason other than being Muslim.

**racist graffiti (5)**

1 July, Steenberg. Racist graffiti is sprayed on the walls of a number of buildings, houses and a church. “stb AntiMuslim” is one such graffiti.

**hate messages in letters/tweets (4),**

28 January, The Hague (Schilderswijk). Several households received hate letters, in which the ‘I’ of Islam was raised as a middle finger on one side and ‘we are here in the Netherlands’ on the other side.

**Exclusion in work and public transport (2)**

June, Oosterhout. A bus driver refuses to let a woman wearing a burka on board the bus.

**Incidents related to the reception of refugees**

In the parliamentary general discussions on the annual budget on 16 September, Geert Wilders called for resistance against the reception of refugees. From then on a large number of discriminatory actions against asylum seekers took place, almost on a daily basis.<sup>8</sup> Geert Wilders distributed a daily Twitter message # join resistance. Buildings, in particular reception centres, were painted with racist graffiti or vandalised; reception centres and cars set on fire; local authorities, mayors, councillors and politicians intimidated or threatened; local meetings disturbed by people yelling and shouting. Sometimes violence was used to disturb information meetings. Right extremist groups in particular have been very active in following Wilders’ call but also local action committees were formed and Facebook pages launched. Extremist groups disturbed many information meetings at different municipalities. The legitimate worries and fears of local people were exploited and abused by extremist groups. In different regions the PVV launched calls for rallies and protests, such as in Haarlem on 25 September, or put pressure on local governments not to facilitate reception of refugees such as in Zeeland and Limburg (8/10), often with the argument of a lack of provisions for local people and housing facilities in particular. Wilders visited different municipalities that stood out in protests such as Almere (3/10) and

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8. On 16 April, the Facebook page *Nederlandmijn vaderland* (Holland my fatherland) celebrated the drowning of 400 refugees in the Mediterranean, see [www.retcool.com](http://www.retcool.com)

Steenbergen (12/10) and called for a revolt. In Almere the PVV suggested prohibiting refugees to go out after dark. The Facebook page ‘Support the PVV’ distributed a song using the melody of a popular love song: ‘(...) Long live Islam. So peaceful and patient. Because we tolerate rape and violence, people give generously, because that is what they are told’.

The reported incidents are not exhaustive but give an indication of the greater picture. They do not all explicitly target Muslims/Islam but predominantly target Syrian (Muslim) refugees and local councillors and mayors who are in favour of the reception of refugees.

Incidents against the reception of refugees (from mid-September)	
Graffiti	19
Threats (letters/tweets)	8
Banners	6
Homes and centres vandalised	5
Various incidents (pigs' heads/fake letters)	4
Total	49

## Examples

9 October, Woerden. A reception centre for refugees is attacked with heavy fire-bombs and eggs by 20 young men (18-35) from a number of villages in the neighbourhood. It was an organised action prepared by Whatsapp calls ‘death to Muslims’ and ‘On our way soldier, it is war’. Perpetrators were arrested, suspected of overt violence and condemned in court in January 2016. One of them was a candidate for the PVV in the last provincial elections. The prime minister visited the centre to express solidarity with the refugees.

17 December, Pannerden. The house of a refugee family from Somalia in the small village is hit with a firework bomb destroying the carport and the window. A leaflet with the following texts was left behind: “White is better, own people first!!! Foreigners must leave from here!!!”, “this is only the beginning”. Underneath the text was a photo of Geert Wilders raising his finger. Politicians asked Geert Wilders to distance himself from this action. From his holiday resort he tweeted: ‘(...)Take distance yourself from your cowardice and betrayal of the Netherlands to Islam.’

5 October, Utrecht. PEGIDA organised a demonstration. The speech held at the end by a spokesperson of this extremist anti-Islam movement was very hateful. On 19 December, PEGIDA organised a demonstration in Rotterdam. About a hundred people participated and listened to a speech of the Vlaams Blok Belgian politician Filip de Winter who called the Koran ‘a license to kill non-believers.’ For both cases the public prosecutor has announced the intent to examine whether the discourse is punishable or not by law.

## Discriminatory incidents against mosques

The data from 2010 onwards collected for Monitor Islamophobia shows that discriminatory aggression against mosques has increased.<sup>9</sup> At the same time the pattern is cyclical and often related to contextual events. In addition, the general hardening of the climate of opinion regarding Muslims/Islam seems to have a corresponding impact on the number of incidents. Discriminatory incidents at mosques have become the proverbial tip of the Islamophobic iceberg. Plans for new mosques replacing older buildings increasingly lead to actions of protest and resistance by both the people living in the neighbourhood and others. Boards of mosques are increasingly confronted with obstacles in getting their building projects through bureaucratic procedures. Civil servants and local authorities out of fear of local resistance become extremely critical when assessing projects of mosque organisations. Local MPs are put under pressure and sometimes even anonymously threatened to vote against plans for new mosques or their financing. Some political actors, in particular the PVV, try to use the worries of local people in order to mobilise them for their own political anti-Islam objectives. Increasingly the PVV finds other right extremist groups on its side, such as Identitair Verzet (Identitarian Resistance which is part of a larger European identitarian movement) and Voorpost. Initiatives to build a new place of prayer make mosques more vulnerable to being targeted. Although a direct causal correlation is difficult to prove, the resistance against new buildings, its encouragement by the PVV on the site MoskNee, and efforts of related initiatives may have an impact on the increase of this vulnerability. It cannot be excluded that the PVV and related initiatives encourage people to go beyond what the law allows them. As we have seen the PVV does not discourage people to do so.

In particular, the developments around new buildings for mosques in Gouda and Leiden attracted national attention from the political arena and media and are good illustrations of the rising tensions around mosques and the cycle of events described above.

In Gouda, three local mosques cooperated in a project to build one large mosque to replace the three existing ones. In 2015, the issue took on national proportions: it was discussed in the National Parliament and became front-page news in the media. Quickly the project was described as ‘megamoskee’ first by the anti-Islam movement and later by the mainstream press and politicians, initially between quotation marks but soon without. The local population expressed fear that the

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9. In 2005-2010, the number of discriminatory incidents against mosques varied between eleven and twenty-five a year. In particular in 2007 and 2008 the number of incidents was high. Afterwards the number of incidents decreased but this changed in 2013-2014. For 2013 and 2014 taken together, 55 incidents occurred at 39 mosques. These incidents mainly consisted of vandalism, (racist) graffiti, arson, threatening letters/emails, leaving a pig's head and aggression towards staff or believers. For more information on discriminatory aggression against mosques see: I. van der Valk *Islamofobie en Discriminatie*, Amsterdam University Press, p. 75-85; *Monitor Moslim Discriminatie*, 2015, p. 68-87; Dutch Islamophobia, 2015, p. 121-158.

mosque would attract radical Muslims, that the price of their houses would decrease and that the parking of too many cars would have a negative impact on them. A sequence of events followed: actions and initiatives of local action groups, exploitation of social tensions by right extremist groups and individuals, hate speech on social media and the like. The group Identitair Verzet put a banner on the building (a former military barracks). Local politicians received a total of more than a hundred intimidating email threats such as ‘if you vote for the mega mosque we will find you.’ Stickers were put on their mailboxes of certain politicians. A local politician with a Muslim background was targeted on social media: ‘Typhus pig. F\*ck Muslim, Salafist dog. Betrayer of the nation.’ In a debate about the new mosque in Gouda in the National Parliament on 12 June, 2015, the PVV in cooperation with the Group Bontes & van Klaveren proposed a ban on new mosques (no.92-34000-VI). A second PVV-only motion (no. 93-34000-VI) proposed the closure of all existing mosques.<sup>10</sup> No other parties supported the proposals.

Finally the local council of Gouda with a very small majority of votes decided not to buy the site of the military barracks and thus not to sell part of it to the mosques.

In February, Identitair Verzet hit the headlines in a campaign against the establishment of a new mosque in Leiden. The mosque under construction was occupied for some time by this right extremist group who raised flags with the slogan ‘Stop Islam.’ In addition to a local initiative of worried citizens and a populist party trying to exploit this, the group played a key role in the opposition against the mosque. Right extremist and populist actors operated together in online and offline initiatives which exploited people’s front stage fear of radicalisation and extremism in order to mobilise them against Muslims backstage.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the occupation in February, the mosque was targeted in a shooting and vandalised twice in the autumn. Local people complained of being excluded. Their moderate voices were not heard. Many of them welcome the mosque and do not have any objections to its presence.

In addition to the events in Gouda and Leiden the following incidents took place:<sup>12</sup>

In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, mosques were attacked, not only in France but in the Netherlands as well. In the first five weeks following the Charlie Hebdo attacks, incidents were reported in Vlaardingen and Schiedam where paint bombs were thrown at mosques; in Enschede, a mosque was defiled by paint and graffiti; and in Almelo, two of the mosque’s windows were smashed. In Rotterdam, a hate letter with death threats was sent to a mosque, while two others were pelted with glass and paint. In The Hague, a mosque received several hate letters and was assaulted with a paint bomb, another was hit with a stink bomb. On the 19 January, in Rotterdam a mosque was threatened with

10. <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2015D22503&cid=2015D22503> (accessed 15 February 2016)

11. For details about this campaign, see in I. van der Valk ‘Monitor Moslim Discriminatie’ Amsterdam IMES 2015.

12. Sources of the reports of aggression against mosques are media reports and information from mosques.

a handwritten letter that contained a death threat to Muslims if they did not leave the country in time. It stated ‘it is payday!!’ Muslims were called cockroaches.

### **February 26**

- Hilversum a letter on the mosque with the text: ‘murders by jihadists are an insult to Allah.’

### **April 26**

- Breda, swastikas are painted on the entrance of a mosque.

### **June 23**

- Roermond, a mosque receives a threatening letter.

### **June 27**

- Purmerend, anti-Islam slogans written on the windows.

### **September 23**

- Zwolle, a mosque is vandalized.

### **September 25**

- Rotterdam, a mosque is vandalized.

### **November 11**

- Assen, stones are thrown through windows of a mosque.
- After the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015:

### **November 14**

- Roosendaal, a mosque is set on fire.

### **November 13**

- Bergen op Zoom, a stone is thrown through the window of a mosque.

### **November 25**

- Leerdam, a bottle with a alcoholic drink is thrown to the mosque.

### **December 19**

- demonstration on the roof of a mosque in Dordrecht by the group Identitair Verzet. Thirteen people are arrested. Banners can be seen with ‘stop Islam’ and ‘Less, less.’ Altogether 19 mosques witnessed 27 cases of discriminatory aggression in 2015.

## **Cyberspace**

Social media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube all regularly feature Islamophobic messages.

In the aftermath of the three Swedish mosques that were set on fire just before New Year’s Eve 2014, a message with the heading ‘A Swedish Mosque Set on Fire Again’ was posted on a Facebook page and received 282 likes and reactions that called for burning down mosques in the Netherlands as well. The Facebook page

Steun de PVV (Support the PVV) made similar incitements. The page had received 6,500 likes by the beginning of 2015. Again, similar calls were made to follow the Swedish example and set fire to mosques in the Netherlands such as, for example, “Well done, away with those buildings, they are less than inferior to pigsties!!!” Although such calls have surfaced on Facebook before, this time they drew much more attention from the national media and politicians.

Data about online discrimination is registered on a daily basis by the internet hotlines MDI and MIND. MIND was launched by the government in 2013 and has not received many complaints so far. In 2015, they received 142 complaints of Muslim discrimination.

The annual MDI reports give an overview of discrimination data on grounds that are subject to criminal law i.e. race, religion, philosophy of life, gender, sexual orientation and disability.<sup>13</sup> Most reports on discrimination in recent years regarded social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, more than weblogs, websites and discussion forums. The four most important categories of discrimination in 2014 were anti-Semitism, anti-black racism, Muslim discrimination, and discrimination of Moroccans. The following is an example of Muslim discrimination from an internet discussion in 2015 on the project to build a new mosque in Gouda: “Great, let it be built. Easy target to burn down when it is full with those stinking people”, “directly throw a bomb on it”, “burn down when it is full”.<sup>14</sup> The MDI considers the legality of the expressions and accordingly requests from the owner of the website to remove the statement if it is illegal. In most cases the owner is willing to do so and the statement is removed. If not, they are reported to the police. The data on 2015 is expected to be published in the spring of 2015. After the terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo on 6 January, 2015, 103 complaints about discriminatory expressions against Muslims on the internet were reported to MDI of which 46 were considered punishable.

Anti-discrimination bodies	55 ( January only)
CSO Meld Islamofobie!	136
POLDIS	(expected in summer 2016)
Internet hotlines MDI	103 ( January only)
MIND	142
Aggression against 19 mosques	27
Total	463

13. Stichting Magenta, afdeling MDI, Jaarverslag 2014, Amsterdam 2015.

14. Ibid.

## ISLAMOPHOBIA IN VARIOUS FIELDS

### Education

Anti-Islam/anti-Muslim attitudes of students and their teachers' reactions were investigated in detail in a study commissioned by the Anne Frank House and FORUM in cooperation with the University of Amsterdam, Department of Political Sciences for the Monitor Islamophobia Project.<sup>15</sup> The study resulted in the following outcomes. Almost two out of three of the 498 school teachers who participated in the survey said that they witnessed incidents in their classes related to discrimination of Muslims. These teachers more often teach in institutes with a lower level of education (70–78 %) than in the more academic ones (51–55 %). Teachers working in rural areas witness such incidents more often (61 %) than teachers working in cities (45 %). Perpetrators are more often boys of native Dutch origin and their victims boys of Moroccan and Turkish origin. Media reports of objectionable and criminal behaviour by Muslims (80 %), followed by comments by politicians and other well-known Dutch people (75 %) are reported as the main reasons for the incidents. Teachers also mention terrorism and terrorist organisations in the Netherlands and abroad (71 %) as contributing to such incidents. Offensive language and abuse obtained high scores among the incidents that were reported, but more serious incidents such as vandalism and physical assault were reported too. The teachers report that discussions in the media, at home and in the classroom give rise to the generalising statements about Islam and Muslims that underpin prejudices. Almost all teachers (94 %) report that they intervene when they are confronted with discrimination in their classes. They verbally correct perpetrators or engage in discussions with the students. Specifically for this monitoring project the teachers were in addition questioned about stereotypes that they confront in textbooks, and in texts and utterances by students.<sup>16</sup>

### Stereotypes in texts and verbal utterances by students

Some examples of stereotypes were presented to the teachers in order to obtain information about the extent to which they come across such stereotypes among their students. The stereotypes were selected from an overview of frequently occurring stereotypes about Muslims from a publication of the OSCE/ODIHR, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO.<sup>17</sup> Almost half or sometimes more of the 498 teachers

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15. S. Bouma & L. de Ruig, *Moslimdiscriminatie in het voortgezet onderwijs, een onderzoek onder docenten*, Panteia, 2015.

16. In September 2014, stereotypes about Muslims and Dutch people of Moroccan and Turkish origin in textbooks hit the headlines when some sections from a textbook were brought to the public attention in traditional and digital media. <http://www.malmberg.nl/Voortgezet-onderwijs/Methodes/Mens-Maatschappij/maatschappijleer/Blikopener-vmbo-bovenbouw/Bladerboeken-en-pdfdownloads-Blikopener.htm> (accessed 15 February 2016)

17. Pädagogische Leitfaden zu Bekämpfung von Diskriminierung und Intoleranz gegenüber Muslimen, mit Bildungsarbeit gegen Islamophobie, Warschau, Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, UNESCO, 2012, p. 27–28.

who participated in the survey report that they sometimes or often come across the following stereotypes among their students: 'they are all the same' (65 %); 'their behaviour is exclusively determined by their religion' (51 %); and 'they represent a threat' (50 %). The stereotype 'they are culturally and morally inferior' is reported less frequently however (28 %).

### **Stereotypes in textbooks**

The teachers were also asked if and to what extent they come across such stereotypes in their textbooks: a limited number of them replied affirmatively. Such stereotypes included 'they are all the same' (12 %); 'they are totally different from non-Muslims' (10 %); 'their behaviour is exclusively determined by their religion' (15 %); 'they represent a threat' (10 %). Again, the stereotype 'they are culturally and morally inferior' is reported less frequently (6 %).

### **Politics**

This section discusses in particular the anti-Muslim/anti-Islam stance of the PVV. While the PVV was confronted with hardly any opposition from mainstream parties during the previous government that it supported, this has changed since its collapse. On the other side, right extremist groups increasingly manifest themselves in support of the PVV and its social actions against Muslims/Islam.

Over a period of several years, the PVV has stood out on account of its clear Islamophobic statements. Remarks of PVV MP Geert Wilders about Islam were the subject of criminal proceedings in 2010-2011, when he faced investigations into whether he had made deliberately insulting statements towards Muslims as a group because of their religion or whether he had incited discrimination and hatred, or both, against Muslims on account of their religion. Although the court took the view that some of his comments were discriminatory in themselves, or offensive and insulting, Wilders was acquitted in light of the overall context of his arguments, the wider social context and the freedom of expression granted to politicians.<sup>18</sup> The opposing parties have lodged an appeal to the Supreme Court and to European bodies which is still under consideration.

In mid March 2014, at a meeting concerning the municipal elections in The Hague, Wilders asked his followers if they wanted more or fewer Moroccans in the city. The followers shouted 'fewer, fewer, fewer' and Wilders answered 'We will arrange that'. The result was, among others, that the government and political parties at all levels of politics officially declared their refusal to cooperate with the PVV in general or as long as Wilders did not withdraw his statements. In mid December 2015, the public prosecutor announced that the second trial of Geert Wilders will start in March 2016. Wilders is prosecuted for insulting people on the grounds of their race

18. Amsterdam Criminal Court, 23 June 2011, LJN BQ9001.

and for inciting hatred and discrimination against a group of people when calling for 'fewer Moroccans'. The chances that he will be convicted this time are higher than in the previous trial due to the changing character of his discriminatory statements. Although a new trial certainly has some social disadvantages, it is at the same time of great interest because of the major negative consequences of the previous verdict for the constitutional state in general, as was pointed out by Prakken, one of the lawyers in the previous trial.<sup>19</sup> In addition, a recent verdict from the supreme court plays an important role in this prognosis. On November 16, 2014, it ruled that clear limits should be put to statements that politicians put forward in a public debate.<sup>20</sup>

Again and again surveys indicate that almost half of native-born Dutch people have negative attitudes towards Muslims (see Introduction). Wilders and his PVV continue to politically organise these sentiments not only on a discursive level but increasingly to transform them into, thus far, legal extra-parliamentary social actions such as those against mosques. After a call for a ban on headscarves, a ban on the Quran, a ban on the Azaan, a ban on foreign funding of mosques, a ban on building new mosques, the PVV called for an overall ban on mosques in the Dutch House of Representatives. On a local and provincial level PVV politicians or sympathisers campaign against mosques sometimes asking for closure, such as in Geleen (July) and Almere, or the interdiction of the Azaan (Oldenzaal, May; Enschede, November, Groningen, May).

In addition to the anti-Muslim rhetoric that is frequently repeated, the PVV has a website named MoskNee, which opposes the presence of both newly planned and existing mosques. From this website protest actions against mosques are organised and coordinated. People are invited to seek advice how to undertake protest actions against mosques. In addition to the website MoskNee, there is also a Facebook page Mosknee (with a lower-case 'n'), where certain legal principles are less adhered to.

### **A chronology of the relevant most important moments in relation to the PVV follows:**

#### **April.**

1. The PVV proposed to the government not to employ people from an Islamic background in the army.
2. Geert Wilders spread his hateful discourse abroad as well. He held a speech at a PEGIDA rally in Germany and was invited in Garland, Texas (April) on the occasion of an exhibition of anti-Islam cartoons.

#### **17 June**

The right-wing extremist European parties PVV, FN, FPO, VB and Lega Nord

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19. T. Prakken, , *Grondrechten op de helling, de rol van het Wildersproces in de afbraak van de rechtsstaat*, Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2012.

20. <http://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/inziendocument?id=ECLI:NL:HR:2014:3583> (accessed 15 February 2016)

together hold 37 seats in the European Parliament. They succeed in founding another two parties (the Polish Congress New Right and the British UKIP) and are thus able to found a party in June 2015 under the name Europe of Nations and Freedom Group. This means more financial support, more speaking time and thus more influence.

December The PVV looks for new candidates in parliament using the criterion 'with an aversion to Islam.'

## 17 December

PvdA MP Khadija Arib informed parliament that she wanted to be a candidate for the presidency of the parliament. PVV MP de Graaf reacted with a tweet: 'Someone who is a subject of the king of Morocco should not become president of the Dutch Parliament, No way!'

Democratic political parties gradually but increasingly take a stance against (the racism of) the PVV, against racism in general and Islamophobia in particular.<sup>21</sup> Wilders and the PVV are becoming more and more isolated at the political level and anti-discrimination has become an issue on the political agenda. Political leadership, mainstream political parties and civil society actors have not only distanced themselves from and protested against the discourse on Moroccans by Wilders and his party as such, but have also gradually taken concrete action against discrimination and racism. However, various opinion polls taken in 2013, 2014 and 2015, have pointed to the PVV as the largest party in the Netherlands, if elections should take place at that point in time.

## Justice system, laws, and regulations

### On 4 April

G. Bouwman, head of the national police force writes on an internal blog that Muslim police officers are verbally abused by colleagues. "A poison sneaks into our organisation, the poison of exclusion," he wrote. He condemned the arbitrariness that reigns on the streets where Muslims are disproportionately stopped and searched and treated as terrorists. Research shows that debureaucratisation and an emphasis on individual autonomy have made the police force more vulnerable to different forms of discrimination that cannot be countered by the usual psychological awareness training.<sup>22</sup> The police service of the city of Tilburg has started a pilot project. Registration forms will be used where police officers must write down the ethnicity of the person they stop and the reason why this is done. In Amsterdam, political parties insist on a national policy of diversity to counter police discrimination. The mayor of the city of The Hague, Van Aartsen, in a debate in the local council (9 July) confirmed that ethnic profiling does

21. Examples and details are elaborated in the report, written in Dutch, I. van der Valk *Monitor Moslim Discriminatie*.

22. P. Mutsaers. "Ethnic profiling as a Societal Institution in the Netherlands" in: *Anthropoliteia*, April 2015.

occur in the police force. He proposed a long list of measures to be taken to counter discrimination by the police force. In addition to reinforcing contact and cooperation with anti-discrimination provisions, social organisation initiatives also aim at improving community relations, in particular in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

### **In September 2015**

the Partij voor de Dieren (PvD – Party for the Animals) proposed a new draft law against ritual slaughtering.<sup>23</sup> A previous draft law was rejected by the senate in 2012. The draft law will be discussed in parliament in 2016.

### **On 27 November**

the government submitted a law regarding the ‘partial interdiction of face-covering clothing’ to parliament. Although the law aims at non-religious face-covering clothing as well it is common sense that in the first place the burqa and niqaab are targeted. Earlier governmental and parliamentary proposals to ban these Islamic veils were raised in 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2011/12, in various ways. The actual proposal aims to ban face covering in limited public domains, the fields of education and care, public (state) institutions and public transport. Trespassing the law will be punished with a fine of 405 euros. The Council of State disapproved of the law in its advice.<sup>24</sup> The council emphasised that institutions do not need a legal interdiction because they have the freedom to impose their own rules. Moreover and more importantly the council is of the opinion that this interdiction is an infringement of the freedom of religion that is guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). At the initiative of the working group ‘Hands off my Niqaab’ fifty Islamic organisations sent a letter to parliament and the House of Commons to protest against this draft law asking them to reject it.

In November 2015, a motion of MP Marcouch (PvdA) and MP Tellegen (VVD) asking the government to examine the possibilities of an interdiction of Salafist organisations was accepted in parliament.

### **Court cases**

This overview of cases that were brought to court in 2015 is based on data from the media and the official website [www.rechtsspraak.nl](http://www.rechtsspraak.nl). It does not exclude the possibility of more cases having been brought to court. They might not have attracted the attention of the media or may not have been interesting enough to be mentioned on the aforementioned website.

The Criminal Court of Utrecht condemned a 42-year-old man to 240 hours of community service for insulting and threatening the Muslim community because of

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23. <https://www.partijvoordedieren.nl/kamerinitiatieven/initiatiefwet-onverdoofd-ritueel-slachten> (accessed 15 February 2016)

24. WO4.15.0170/I, 15 July.

their faith and race. He will also receive obligatory treatment at a psychiatric hospital. Shortly after the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in Paris, he had sent letters to five mosques in Utrecht with insults, death threats and threats of arson. He also included pieces of pork in the letters.

### **8 October**

Eight people were given fines between 350 and 450 Euros because of their calls to set fire to Dutch mosques after similar events in Sweden on New Years' Eve.

### **14 October**

Six people (one underage) from Zaandam are prosecuted by the police judge for posting the following text on Facebook: 'every person engaged in the building of a mosque and Islamic centre in the neighbourhood Saendelft in Assendelft should be gassed'.

## **Countering Islamophobia**

CSOs have taken initiatives to counter Islamophobia by creating hotlines and notification sites where victims can report such incidents outside the official system of anti-discrimination bureaus and the police. Organisations that collect complaints are the Facebook initiative 'Meld Islamofobie!'; the Collective against Islamophobia based in Amsterdam; SPIOR, a platform organisation of Islamic organisations and mosques in Rotterdam; the Muslim women organisation Al Nisa; and the Turkish Forum. Other organisations that campaign against Islamophobia are Contact Oragan Moslims en Overheid (Contact Body Muslims and Government) and EMCE-MO. The weblog Republiek Allochtonie has become an important source of information on Islamophobia in the Netherlands.

The present Monitor Islamophobia project that runs until 2018 in addition to presenting data and analysis has so far had several practical publicity and policy effects.

Islamophobia is on the agenda in the media, politics and civil society. The latest report on police data (POLDIS November 2015) shows that several of the recommendations made after a critical discussion of the system of categorisation and registration by the police have been implemented. Muslim discrimination is now integrated as a separate category of discrimination in the police registration system.

Several MPs have raised questions in parliament. At the request of the liberal political parties D66 and VVD the proposal to integrate Muslim discrimination as a separate ground of discrimination in municipal and police categorisation systems has been accepted by the Municipality of Amsterdam. The municipality has decided to participate in contributing to the costs (50 %) of the protection of mosques under threat.

For the first time the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights explicitly discusses Islamophobia and the increase of Muslim discrimination in its annual reports.

## Government

The present government, formed by the liberal party VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) and the social democratic PvdA (Labour Party) after the 2012 collapse of the government supported by the PVV of Geert Wilders, has clearly decided to tackle verbal discrimination issues. The government has repeatedly recognised publicly the existence and the rise of racism in the Netherlands in general and discrimination in the labour market in particular. After the release of a report on labour discrimination,<sup>25</sup> the authorities announced policies aimed at reducing discrimination, among others, by refusing to cooperate with businesses that allow discriminatory policies and practices. Measures to counter discrimination in education have also been launched. Various expert meetings on Islamophobia were organised by the Ministry of Social Affairs in close collaboration with civil society stakeholders. Most importantly the government after initial hesitation has officially protested against discriminatory declarations by Wilders about Moroccan citizens in the most recent election campaigns in the spring of 2014. It is clear that the background to these more positive political developments is to a certain extent the fact that the mainstream parties, the liberal VVD in particular, have rid themselves of the restrictive collaboration with the PVV since the collapse of the last government in 2012. In addition, the Netherlands has been one of the main countries attracting the attention of international organisations such as ECRI of the Council of Europe which produced a critical report on the situation relating to racism and anti-racism in the Netherlands.<sup>26</sup> In addition, The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations visited the Netherlands in order to report on discrimination.<sup>27</sup> This international spotlight has obviously been a stimulus to take a stance against racism, discrimination and Islamophobia and to develop policies to counter these social problems. A first step was the announcement in the spring of 2015 of the revision of the Action Programme against Discrimination in order to incorporate more concrete policies.

In its annual policy paper on discrimination (February 2015) the Dutch government expressed concern about the increase of intolerance. It is shocking, the government said, to see how people express themselves on social media and incite hatred, discrimination and violence. It is unacceptable that synagogues and mosques in the Netherlands are confronted with incidents such as graffiti, arson and vandalism. The government aims at substantially reducing discrimination and increasing tolerance.

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25. Andriessen, I., H. Fernee & K. Wittebrood, *Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland*, Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2014.

26. [www.coe.int/t/dgbl/monitoring/ecri/.../NLD-CbC-IV-2013-039-NLD.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dgbl/monitoring/ecri/.../NLD-CbC-IV-2013-039-NLD.pdf). For the reaction of the government see <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2008/08/19/kabinetsreactie-ecri-rapport-kabinetsreactie.html> (accessed 15 February 2016)

27. <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14840&LangID=E> (accessed 15 February 2016)

The government also increasingly discusses and takes initiatives concerning the issue of Islamophobia such as the improvement of police registration procedures, expert meetings, policy papers, (support for) safety measures for mosques and other Islamic institutions, follow-up research on discriminatory practices against mosques and research into factors that trigger anti-Semitic and Islamophobic reactions among young people. An important focus of attention on anti-discrimination policies is labour market discrimination. Measures to counter labour market discrimination consist of publication of outcomes of inspection of companies ('naming and shaming') and ending or not engaging in cooperation with companies that discriminate. In education, programmes for civic education will be developed. Referring to Article 1 of the Constitution, the Minister of the Interior launched a web campaign against discrimination on 2 September, 2015. VIPs have crossed out the word discrimination. The general public is also encouraged to do so on the website [discriminatie.nl](http://discriminatie.nl).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report discussed Islamophobia in the Netherlands. Discriminatory aggression and violence against Muslims, in particular mosques, was a hot topic during the winter of 2014-5. Other issues that were at the heart of public debate in 2015 were discrimination by police forces, labour market discrimination and the arrival of large numbers of refugees. Since the beginning of 2015, Islamophobia has definitely been on the political and public debate agenda.

In 2015, the police services took a great step forward towards a more uniform and qualitatively superior system of registration.

Of the vast number of media releases on topics related to multicultural society and interethnic relations, only a minor few report on discrimination of Muslims. Many reports discussed incidents at reception centres for asylum seekers.

Alongside the continuity of Islamophobic discourse and practices, some important changes are taking place in relation to Wilders' PVV, the party that politically organises Islamophobia. The PVV has increased its mobilisation outside parliament for social action in municipalities and local neighbourhoods not only against mosques but also against reception centres for refugees. The PVV increasingly de facto cooperates with more radical extra/parliamentary right extremist groups in the Netherlands. In alliance with traditional right-wing extremist political parties at the level of European Union politics, the PVV has formed a parliamentary group entitled 'Europe of Nations and Freedom Group'. The PVV however is becoming more and more isolated at the level of mainstream Dutch politics. In the spring of 2015, the government announced a revision of its anti-discrimination policies and measures to increase tolerance and counter discrimination based on skin colour, origin and religion.

Islamophobia occurs in various fields in the social and political domains. More qualitative research is necessary to shed light on the manifestation of Islamophobia in different social domains. More and more stakeholders have joined efforts to counter Islamophobia. CSOs have taken initiatives to counter Islamophobia by creating hotlines and notification sites, campaigning against Islamophobia, carrying out research, and presenting data and information on Islamophobia. This newly created infrastructure needs to be reinforced to become more sustainable.

National and local authorities and civil society need to conceive discriminatory aggression and violence against Muslims for what they are: cases of abuse of the right to freedom of religion and the principles of equality and anti-discrimination.

Authorities need to react adequately in the case of discriminatory aggression against the Muslim community by

- Supporting initiatives by Muslim communities to create reporting systems in coordination with the existing general notification agencies.
- Serious and respectful treatment of people who complain and report discrimination to the police.
- Improvement of prosecution procedures and practices.
- Improvement of communication with the Muslim community to support them in preventing discriminatory and aggressive acts against them and in developing long-term and preventative policies aimed at education and dialogue.

Political parties should raise their voice against populist and discriminatory slogans of racist parties such as the PVV. Relevant authorities should take a stance when hate crime and discrimination are fuelled by propaganda in the media and politics. Politicians need to function as role models and emphasise norms and values related to democratic principles.

The Muslim community as a targeted group has an important role to play. They may participate in dialogue and encounter and inform people about the significance of religion as an expression of fundamental human norms and values. Muslim organisations should reinforce their cooperation to better cope with the problems of discrimination and to convince the faithful that reporting acts of discrimination is necessary to get access to political agendas and to influence anti-discrimination policies.

## **CHRONOLOGY**

### **January**

- Calls for burning down mosques occur on Facebook after similar events in Sweden on New Years' Eve.

### **February**

- The government announces the revision of the Action Programme against Discrimination.

**4 April**

- The head of the national police force writes on an internal blog that Muslim police officers are verbally abused by colleagues.

**12 June**

- In a debate in the national parliament the PVV and the Group Bontes & van Klaveren propose a ban on new mosques. A second PVV-only motion proposed the closure of all existing mosques. No other parties support the proposals.

**17 June**

- In alliance with traditional right-wing extremist political parties at the level of European Union politics, the PVV has formed a parliamentary group under the name 'Europe of Nations and Freedom Group'.

**September**

- The Party for the Animals proposes a new draft law against ritual slaughtering.

**8 October**

- Eight people are given fines between 350 and 450 Euros because of their calls to set fire to Dutch mosques.

**27 November**

- The government submits a law in favour of the 'partial interdiction of face-covering clothing' to parliament.

**November**

- The parliament asks the government to examine the possibilities of an interdiction of Salafist organisations.
- The national police services integrate 'Muslim discrimination' as a separate category of discrimination in its registration system and reports.
- Mid December.
- The public prosecutor announced that a second trial of Geert Wilders will start in March 2016. Wilders is prosecuted for insulting people on the grounds of their race and for inciting hatred and discrimination against a group of people when calling for 'fewer Moroccans'.



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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