By gathering 35 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized in racism and human rights, the fifth edition of the European Islamophobia Report addresses a still timely and politically important issue. All 32 country reports included in this book follow a unique structure that is convenient, first, for comparing countries and, second, for selected readings on a particular topic such as politics, employment, or education with regard to Islamophobia across Europe.

The present report investigates in detail the underlying dynamics that directly or indirectly support the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Europe. This extends from Islamophobic statements spread in national media to laws and policies that restrain the fundamental rights of European Muslim citizens and threaten the whole of society. As a result, the European Islamophobia Report 2019 discusses the impact of anti-Muslim racism on human rights, multiculturalism, and the state of law in Europe.

This fifth edition of our report highlights how European societies are progressively overwhelmed by the Islamophobic discourse of the “Great Replacement” and other far-right conspiracy theories. The 32 country reports demonstrate how governments and mainstream media participate in reproducing such discourses that put the fundamental rights of millions of European citizens in jeopardy and how one can counteract these developments. This compendium of useful insights and data aims to provide European policy-makers, institutions, and NGOs with recommendations on how to tackle anti-Muslim racism in Europe seriously.

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., Berlin, and Brussels. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brainstorming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.
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Executive Summary

This report explores Islamophobia in Greece in 2019 taking into consideration all local, national, and international developments. The main outcome is that Islamophobia continues to exist in different realms across the country. Even if Islamophobia remains manifested primarily on the discursive level as anti-Muslim hate speech, physical violence towards Muslims and sacred places of Islam continued at a lesser extent. In this respect, attacks targeting members of immigrant and refugee groups took place in 2019. Further to that, demonstrations against “Islamisation” were organised in certain cities of mainland Greece while tension between the local islanders and Muslim irregular migrants and refugees continued on specific islands of the North Aegean Sea. Golden Dawn continued protesting against the mosque of Athens especially during the campaign for general elections in Greece, while the exterior of a mosque located in Western Thrace was defamed with anti-Turkish slogans indicating the interrelatedness of Islamophobia with anti-Turkishness in this region of the country. Based on the report’s findings Islamophobia continues to be manifested mainly in Greek politics, printed and electronic media, and among some figures in the Orthodox Church, while it is relatively limited in the education and justice system. The Greek law keeps failing to be powerful enough in fighting anti-Muslim hatred inside Greek society in a way that the vast majority of perpetrators of Islamophobic attacks remain unidentified in general. That is to say, even politicians and clerics of the Greek Church who keep repeating their Islamophobic discourses overtly in their written or oral statements are never penalised for their hate-motivated behaviour. With the exception of a few state and NGO initiatives almost no significant progress has been achieved in effectively confronting Islamophobia across Greece. For the purpose of addressing this vacuum, an official observatory mechanism, which needs to cooperate with Muslims in full terms, should be formed as soon as possible and start monitoring any type of Islamophobic behaviour and incidents occurring in different parts of the country. Moreover, urgent amendments of the Greek criminal law are needed in order to effectively penalise and eventually discourage the usage of any kind of anti-Muslim hatred in all segments of Greek society. Finally, a series of training seminars particularly for civil servants and journalists could be organised to develop their knowledge on Muslims in Greece and Islam in general.
Περίληψη
Η παρούσα έκθεση εξετάζει την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα για το 2019 λαμβάνοντας υπόψη όλες τις τοπικές, εθνικές και διεθνείς εξελίξεις. Το κύριο συμπέρασμα της έκθεσης είναι ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα εξακολουθεί να υφίσταται σε διάφορους χώρους σε όλη τη χώρα. Παρά το γεγονός ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία εξακολουθεί να εκδηλώνεται ως επί το πλείστον σε επίπεδο δημόσιου λόγου ως ρητορική μίσους εναντίον των Μουσουλμάνων, βίαιες επιθέσεις εναντίον Μουσουλμάνων και ιερών χώρων του Ισλάμ καταγράφηκαν και φέτος, αλλά σε μικρότερο βαθμό. Στη διάρκεια του 2019 καταγράφηκαν ορισμένες επιθέσεις εναντίον προσφύγων και μεταναστών. Διαμαρτυρίες ‘κατά της Ισλαμοποίησης’ οργάνωθηκαν σε ορισμένες πόλεις της κεντρικής Ελλάδας, ενώ συγκρούσεις καταγράφηκαν μεταξύ κατοίκων και Μουσουλμάνων στη χώρα. Η Χρυσή Αυγή συνέχισε να διαμαρτύρεται για την κατασκευή του τζαμιού της Αθήνας, κυρίως κατά τη διάρκεια της προεκλογικής περιόδου των εθνικών εκλογών, ενώ γράφτηκαν αντι-Τουρκικά συνθήματα στους τοίχους τζαμιού στη Θράκη, που αποδεικνύει τη σύνδεση Ισλαμοφοβίας και αντι-Τουρκικών αντιλήψεων στην περιοχή της χώρας. Σύμφωνα με τα κυριότερα ευρήματα της έκθεσης η Ισλαμοφοβία διαπιστώνεται κυρίως στον χώρο της πολιτικής, του έντυπου και ηλεκτρονικού τύπου, και μεταξύ ορισμένων κληρικών της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας, ενώ έχει ελάχιστη συμμετοχή των Μουσουλμάνων στο επίπεδο της παιδείας και της δικαιοσύνης. Επιπλέον, η ελληνική νομοθεσία δεν φαίνεται να είναι επαρκής για την αντιμετώπιση του μίσους εναντίον των Μουσουλμάνων, με αποτέλεσμα η πλειονότητα των δραστών να παραμένουν άγνωστοι και ατιμώρητοι. Κατά συνέπεια ορισμένοι πολιτικοί και κληρικοί της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας οι οποίοι εξακολουθούν να αναπαράγουν αυτήν την ισλαμοφοβική ιδέα, στις γραπτές ή προφορικές δηλώσεις και τα κείμενά τους, παραμένουν ατιμώρητοι. Με την εξαίρεση ορισμένων πρωτοβουλιών από την πλευρά του κράτους και ορισμένων ΜΚΟ δεν έχει υπάρξει αποτελεσματική πρόοδος στην αντιμετώπιση της Ισλαμοφοβίας στην Ελλάδα. Προκειμένου να καλυφθεί το εν λόγω κενό κρίνεται απαραίτητη η δημιουργία ενός επίσημου παρατηρητηρίου το οποίο να συνεργάζεται με τους Μουσουλμάνους, έτσι ώστε να καταγράφονται τα Ισλαμοφοβικά περιστατικά σε όλη την Ελλάδα. Τέλος, θα μπορούσε να διοργανωθεί μια σειρά σεμιναρίων ίδιως σε δημοσίους υπάλληλους και δημοσιογράφους με σκοπό την ενημέρωση τους για το Ισλάμ και τους Μουσουλμάνους στην Ελλάδα.
Country Profile
EIR 2019

Country: Greece
Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic
Form of Government: The prime minister is the head of government. The president, elected by the parliament every five years, is the head of state. The president of the republic has limited political power, as most power lies with the government.
Ruling Parties: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy)
Opposition Parties: SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), KINAL (Movement of Change), KKE (Greek Communist Party), Elliniki Lyssi (National Solution), MERA25

Last Elections: 2019 Parliamentary Elections: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy) 39.85% (158 seats); SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) 31.53% (86 seats); KINAL (Movement of Change) 8.1% (22 seats); KKE (Greek Communist Party) 5.13% (15 seats); Elliniki Lyssi (National Solution) 3.7% (10 seats); MERA25 3.44% (9 seats)
Total Population: 10,816,286 in 2011 (national census)
Major Languages: Greek
Official Religion: Eastern Orthodoxy
Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A
Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Data available on each year is made available only later during the following year. The Racist Violence Recording Network in 2018 reported 117 racist incidents with more than 130 victims, while in 2017, it recorded 102 incidents with more than 120 victims. The victims of those 74 incidents were migrants or refugees on the grounds of ethnic origin, religion, and colour; associations of third country nationals; human rights defenders due to their connection with refugees and migrants, and on the occasion of a memorial held for the refugee victims who died at sea. The Police Department against Racist Violence recorded 226 incidents with probable racist motive in 2018, while in 2017 the department recorded 184 incidents.

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

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

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

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Greek Helsinki Monitor, Racist Violence Recording Network

Far-Right Parties: Elliniki Lyssi (Hellenic Solution), Chryssii Avgi (Golden Dawn), Nea Dexia (New Right), Dynami Ellinismou (Power of Hellenism), Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness)

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: Crypteia, Combat 18 Hellas, Aneksartitioi Meadrios Ethnikistes (Independent Meanders Nationalists), Group Epsilon-EY (Order of Greek Fighters), Blood and Honour

Limitations to Islamic Practices:
- Hijab Ban: None
- Halal Slaughter Ban: None
- Minaret Ban: None
- Circumcision Ban: None
- Burka Ban: None
- Prayer Ban: None
Introduction

Islamophobia in Greece is primarily found on the discursive level while physical attacks with religious motivation targeting mosques, cemeteries, Muslim migrants, or refugees, which are actually difficult to record, remain fewer compared to other European countries. Politics, religion, media, and the Internet are four primary realms that continued to play a significant role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public domain throughout 2019 without significant changes compared to the previous years. Islamophobia was primarily expressed by specific political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, certain self-proclaimed liberals, some figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece, and certain media organs and journalists including their posts on social media. The main issues that contributed to the reproduction of Islamophobia in 2019 were the so-called immigration/refugee problem, primarily refugees who reside in Athens and some of the Aegean islands, as well as discussions on the transfer of migrants and refugees from the islands to the mainland; the construction of the mosque of Athens; and issues related to the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace, where Islamophobia is mainly reflected through the lens of Turcophobia.1 The report is based on data collected during 2019 and takes into account local, national, and international events that might have influenced the (re)appearance or the rise of Islamophobia. The material was mainly collected from printed and electronic media, websites, and blogs, reports of NGOs, international organisations and state authorities, and formal or informal contacts with members of the Muslim communities settled in different parts of the country.2

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

As was mentioned in all previous reports, Greece lacks an observatory in order to document regularly and systematically Islamophobic attacks in Greek society. Furthermore, a broader but crucial issue with regard to Islamophobia is that it is not easy to establish Islamophobic motives behind racist attacks against migrants and refugees, although in many cases such motives directly or indirectly underlie the attacks.

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2. It is worth noting that Greece has also been included in the OSCE Hate Crimes reporting mechanism since 2012. Apart from official statistical data from the Greek state, some minority and majority NGOs dealing with human and minority rights in Greece also contribute by reporting Islamophobic actions to this mechanism. The Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association and the Western Thrace Turks Federation in Europe primarily report about biases against Muslims in Western Thrace, Rhodes and Kos, while the Greek Helsinki Monitor and Racist Violence Recording Network offer reports on Muslims in the rest of Greece.
According to the latest data, during 2019, 74,613 migrants and refugees crossed the sea borders with Turkey in the Aegean Sea as well as the land borders in the Evros region in Northern Greece, the vast majority being Muslims. During the year, a series of violent attacks against them was recorded in major Greek cities (e.g. Athens) and especially in the islands that host refugee camps. However, the religious motive usually is not recorded when reporting these attacks. According to the Racist Violence Recording Network and its latest report that recorded a total of 74 incidents, the victims of these incidents were migrants or refugees on grounds of ethnic origin, religion, and colour; associations of third country nationals; and human rights defenders due to their connection with refugees and migrants, and on the occasion of a memorial held for the refugee victims who died at sea. From those only ten were related directly to religion and more specifically Judaism, with no available data on open Islamophobic attacks. In another report of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs only two incidents against Islamic places were mentioned in 2018.

One of the most important attacks in 2019 took place in Thessaloniki where it was reported that two males aged 25-30 dressed in black clothing and wearing hoods attacked a 12-year-old boy from Iran who lives in a city apartment with his family. They threatened him, told him that he should not go to school anymore and leave the country, and with the use of a knife injured his hand. Another Islamophobic incident took place in December 2019 when in the area of Omonia Square in central Athens, where many Muslims operate their stores, a man of Greek nationality started imprecating Allah. The man was arrested for racist hate speech by the police. After this incident, Muslims gathered outside the local police department to demonstrate and organised another rally a few days later.

Apart from the above, two serious incidents of hatred and vandalism targeting sacred places of Muslims in Western Thrace occurred in the same month. On 19
May, the Sünne Mahalle Mosque located in central Xanthi was targeted with eggs and the slogans “Pontos: Don’t Forget 1919” and “Kemal Was Gay.” Both indicate another example of how Islamophobia is intertwined with anti-Turkish sentiments in this part of the country where the historical Muslim Turkish minority survives for centuries.8 (Fig. 1)

Figure 1: Anti-Turkish defamation of a mosque wall in Xanthi.9

More than a week later, in late May 2019, another hate-motivated attack occurred on the Muslim cemetery of the city of Alexandroupolis. Nazi symbols were written on tombs and leaflets with the slogan ‘Greece belongs to the Greeks’ were thrown throughout the cemetery - an act perpetrated by Golden Dawn supporters as was clear from the leaflets.10 (Fig. 2)

Figure 2: Leaflets thrown in the Muslim cemetery of Alexandroupolis. Among others it is written, “Greece belongs to the Greeks. Golden Dawn”.11

9. Ibid.
With regard to reactions against migrants and refugees, demonstrations were organised in different parts of Greece using typical slogans like ‘No to the Islamisation of Greece’. In one such case in Katerini, a city in northern Greece, in November, school students participated. (Fig. 3) Later, in November, another similar protest took place in Alexandroupolis under the name ‘Demonstration against Islamisation and Illegal Immigration’.12

In Thessaloniki, a group named ‘Macedonians United’ organised a provocative demonstration against the relocation of migrants and refugees in their region. In order to make their message clear the demonstration included a pork barbecue and consumption of alcohol. (Fig. 4) This was decided in order to argue that the presence of Muslim migrants will have a direct impact on the Greek way of life and that this should not be accepted.14

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Figure 4: The announcement about the barbecue and alcohol demonstration in Thessaloniki. “Barbecue party-demonstration against illegal immigration! With plenty of pork and alcohol.”15

Although this section of the report is not the place to refer to all the violent attacks, but just offer an overview of the most important ones and of their variety, one final case should be mentioned because it is quite important. In January, a committee of Greek soldiers serving their military service in the island of Samos, where a refugee camp is situated, made a public complaint about the circumstances in the military camp. They argued that, among other issues and problems they face, was the fact that propaganda was taking place that included the defamation of the Islamic religion, the argument that the “Turkish race is inferior to the Greek ‘clean’ one” was repeatedly mentioned, and hatred towards migrants and refugees living on the island was reproduced through their categorisation as “dirty thieves who steal the social benefits of the Greek people”.16

One important parameter regarding the exercise of violence in its different forms and types is the violence which is practised by state authorities. Although generally speaking there are no official or unofficial reports on this issue, one incident was recorded in 2019. At the end of the year, an official public complaint was made from migrant and refugee women being held in the Foreigners’ Administration of Attica on Petrou Ralli Avenue and was publicised by an NGO in the first days of 2020 after its visit there in December. Since many of these women are Muslims these complaints were also focused on religious issues. One woman mentioned that “they forbade us to wear our headscarves and they told us ‘outside of this place you can be Muslims, but not in here! Here you are Christians…’”. In another case it was

mentioned that police officers took off the headscarf of a woman from Syria.\textsuperscript{17} Despite these complaints there is no feedback regarding any measures taken towards the direction of confronting the situation and improving the living conditions.

**Employment**

With regard to employment, due to the lack of any official data on religious discrimination in the job market it is not possible to provide an overview in this field as in the other ones. From all the sources available, media, and personal communication it did not emerge that incidents in the job market have been recorded at any official level (NGOs and/or the state authorities). However, the first findings of a European research project indicate that such incidents do take place, although they are limited and not very severe.\textsuperscript{18} What was mentioned by one of the participants in this project was related to the Friday prayer, while another participant mentioned facing a problem of wearing a headscarf. In the first case, obstacles in the exercise of religious duties during working hours were mentioned, and, in the other case, a woman was not employed because of her headscarf. Such incidents are limited in number as Muslims themselves mention; however, from the moment an official reporting of such cases is lacking further and generalised conclusions can’t be reached.

**Education**

Similarly to the previous year, regarding education and in relation to the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education there are no direct Islamophobic incidents from the part of the ministry to mention. However, there are some issues related to education that should be underlined. The most important was related again to the reactions against the integration of refugee and migrant children in the Greek educational system. In some regions of Greece, in the islands and the mainland, reactions were recorded although not to the same level as in the initial years when the programme on the incorporation of the children in schools started. For example, on the island of Samos in the Aegean Sea, the parents’ association made a public announcement and asked for abstention from school classes because of the presence of refugee children in the local schools. Among their arguments were reasons of health security, implying of course that a danger for the Greek children exists.\textsuperscript{19} Similar reactions have been recorded in other parts of Greece, such as in

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\textsuperscript{18} The Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality (DARE) project is a Horizon 2020 project. Alexandros Sakellariou, one of the authors of the report, is involved as a senior researcher and all the references included in this report are at the first level of elaboration after the completion of ethnographic fieldwork. For more information on the project, please see: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality, http://www.dare-h2020.org/.

Grevena, Macedonia, where the parents’ association also reacted and urged school students to abstain from classes.20

Politics
During the last years, Golden Dawn (GD) has been the most important agent of reproducing Islamophobia in Greek society. Despite the fact that GD failed to enter parliament in the 2019 national elections for only a small number of votes, it still plays a central role in the Islamophobia field. Through ideological or news texts uploaded mainly on their website or published in the party’s newspaper, the fear of Islam is present and very strong. The main issues are related to ‘illegal immigration’ as they call it, the negative impact of multiculturalism, and, of course, the construction of the official mosque in Athens. One of the party’s publications before the local elections of May 2019, reads,

“The way the violent Islamisation of our country is attempted against the will of the vast majority of the Greek people is indeed sad and outrageous. […] We will fight with all legal means possible against the construction of the mosque and we call all our fellow citizens to join us in this fight.”21

Figure 5: Poster of the candidate mayor stating, “They are bringing a mosque to our city. We will not allow this.”22

21. “Hellenic Dawn for Attica: No to an Islamic Mosque in Athens!” Ethnikismos, 2 March 2019, https://ethnikismos.net/2019/03/02/%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%B7%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B7-%CE%B1%CF%85%CE%B3%CE%B7-%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B4%CE%BB%CE%B7-%CE%BF%CF%87%CE%BA%CE%B7-%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%BF-%CE%BF%CE%B7-%CE%BD%CE%B9/, (Access date: 30 January 2020).
Local elections offered the opportunity to other candidates to raise the issue of Muslims, Islam, and the mosque in public debates in the pre-electoral period. In one such case, the candidate for mayor of the Municipality of Keratsini, a municipality near Piraeus, Fillipos Kambouris, argued that the current mayor and candidate planned to establish a mosque in their city. Stimulated by this prospect, he initiated a public campaign in the media and through posters in the city streets presenting the mosque as a threat. (Fig. 5)

Other extreme right parties have also been playing with people’s fears of Islam and Muslims, and in this way reproducing a moral panic about Islam through the reproduction of the supposed threats it poses to the alteration of the synthesis of the population (exchange population theory), cultural and religious alienation, etc. Nea DEXia party (The New Right) through public announcements and articles in the press authored by its president Failos Kranidiotis has been reproducing such fears. In one case, in an article entitled “Europe as a Fortress, Greece as a Castle” he argued,

“The New Right [when in power] will close the doors to the subsidised Islamic colonization; will forbid the functioning of NGOs; will control them financially within a time frame of ten years in the past; will ask for an international warrant on George Soros and his collaborators; will dissolve and lead to prison all the pseudo-anti-racist organisations, which contribute to the abolition of the Law and target the abolition of national borders and of the national and social cohesion.”

In addition, the party’s president argued,

“And, of course, headscarves [i.e. are everywhere], a lot of headscarves, sometimes chadors, women of all ages near their puberty or older ones, wrapped as dolma in the unbearable [summer] heat holding baby carriages, while having another one in their belly and one or two older ones to follow and in front of all of them the father-master. They came, they stay, more are coming and others will follow. That way a de facto minority that grows constantly is created. The New Order stores misery in Athens’s neighborhoods. The face of Athens and of other cities in the islands of Eastern Aegean Sea changed and it will become worse. These different populations from Asia and Africa, mainly Arabs, from the deep (sic) East, unable to integrate and usually very angry, full of demands and disappointed since the people smugglers and their propaganda promised them otherwise. The vast majority of them are unable to be integrated because they belong to a religion with dogmas and a value system incompatible with our way of life, our values and usually our laws.”


Although GD failed to enter parliament, another, extreme right party managed to take its place - Elliniki Lyssi (Hellenic Solution). Its leader Kyriakos Velopoulos is a prominent figure in the Islamophobia field constantly reproducing, either in parliament or in media, his views of Islam, Muslims, ‘illegal immigration’, multiculturalism, etc. In one such case, he gave a speech in parliament arguing the following:

“… [Islam] is not a religion; it is a politico-religious ideology. It is a judicial system since the mufti is also a judge. As a consequence, it is a political-judicial system. Islam is incompatible with the legal culture and the morals of western societies. If you [i.e. the government] from the love you have for Ibrahim and Hassan [i.e. Muslim migrants] and not for Giorgos, Nikos, Stavros [i.e. Greeks] think that you can close your eyes, you are wrong. Don’t you know, gentlemen, what Islam says about homosexuals?25 You close your eyes? Don’t you know? They murder them. Don’t you know that? Don’t you know what Islam says about women? That they have to wear a burqa and that they have to accept clitoridectomy. You didn’t know that either?”26

In 2019, a new extreme right party emerged in the Greek political sphere established by a former GD MP Giannis Lagos, who is now an MEP, under the name Ethniki Laiki Syneidisi (National Popular Consciousness). The party follows the steps of GD on the issues of ‘illegal immigration’, multiculturalism, Islam, and Muslims as witnessed by its publications, i.e. internet posts and press releases. In the party’s founding declaration there are statements against ‘illegal immigration’, the sending back of all ‘illegal migrants’, and in favor of the strengthening of the Orthodox Christian character of the Greek state.27 In one of the party’s public statements, it mentions that the European way of life is directly threatened.

“By whom will all those be in danger? By the foreign hordes of different religion, of course, who have invaded and continue to invade our continent in large numbers. In their vast majority they are NOT refugees, they DO NOT deserve to receive political asylum and, of course, they declare their faith to Allah and his prophet, as hard (sic) Islamists that they are. The packs of young men that arrive mainly from Arab and African countries, they don’t come to our fatherland for tourism. In many instances without blushing they admit, both imams and everyday people, that their purpose is the enforcement of Sh-

25. This reference is quite hypocritical because Velopoulos and his party are openly homophobic.
ria in Europe. Admittedly and unfortunately, if we don't react, soon they will be very close in achieving their goal.”

However, apart from extreme right figures, individuals from the conservative right-wing ruling party and even self-declared liberals have been expressing themselves strongly against Islam and the dangers deriving from the presence of Muslims in Greek society. In one such case an MP from Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy), the ruling party, Konstantinos Bogdanos, has argued in the parliament,

“We [i.e. in New Democracy] will never characterise as racists, extreme rightists, or fascists those Greeks who are reasonably worried about the immigration flows that are without any limit, planning, and logic, especially of Asian and African Muslim populations, which will sharpen existing problems and will create new ones. […] Greece is a country of Orthodox Christian tradition and a liberal law system. It is neither a country for spongers hunting social benefits, nor for followers of the Islamic law.”

Another member of the New Democracy party, the chairperson of the Youth Branch of Penteli, a municipality near Athens, sent a letter to the Minister of Citizen Protection arguing against the transfer of young Muslims to the regional hospital. (Fig. 6) Among others, she wrote,

“Most of these minors are Muslims. Are we ready to offer them halal special food? […] And what will happen with their need to pray to Allah? And who will undertake their religious indoctrination? And how are we going to deal with the sexual teasing of young Muslims towards Greek female school students who consider them, based on their prototypes, of loose morals, because of their different dressing? Should we in order to protect our children make them wear headscarves? We are not going to accept the alienation of our ancestral civilisation.”

Charalambos Athanasiou, New Democracy’s MP for Lesvos and vice-president of parliament, was the third example from the ruling party to use anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish rhetoric. In an interview to a Greek radio station in November 2019, he raised his concern about the growing numbers of irregular migrants and the impact of immigration on his constituency by stating,

“The average birth rate for the last three years has doubled for Muslims vis-à-vis Greeks. If it continues so, then, in twenty years’ time, 30 per cent [of the

population] will be Muslim. Then, demands from Turkey about construction of mosques and their recognition as a minority may construct a ‘new Rhodopi.’”31

In another case, the leader of the neo-liberal party Dimiourgia Xana (Creation, Again!), Thanos Tzimeros, who is a central political figure in the Islamophobia field, continued through his party website or social media accounts to reproduce Islamophobic messages. In one of those, he argued,

31. “Ch Athanasious: I Am Afraid that Lesvos Will Be a New Rhodopi”, Lesvosnews.gr, 4 November 2019, https://www.lesvosnews.net/articles/news-categories/political/3-ch-athanasiy-fobamai-oti-i-lesbos-tha-ginei-mia-nea-rodopi, (Access date: 10 December 2019). It is useful to underline that Rhodopi is one of the three sub-prefectures of the region of Western Thrace and more than half of its population are members of the Muslim Turkish minority. In the demographical superiority metaphor, Athanasiou used the analogy of Lesvos with Rhodopi.


Figure 6: The letter of Fay Nikitopoulou.32
“All those who have come in order to escape from the fascism of Islamic theocracy and want their women to move around unattended, their girls to go to school, and live adopting our values, they are welcomed. But they have to prove that. Without wearing a headscarf, with no ‘Allah Akbar’, with no small prayer carpets, with no Koran in their hands, with no halal, no sharia, but with western mini-skirts and bathing suits when the weather is hot, and the first plate in the camp [when they arrive] being pork or soya burgers if they are vegan. This is my home and I set the rules. If you don’t like it, you are not obliged to stay.”

It is also very interesting that because of his views his contacts with the extreme right has evolved in a series of occasions. He gave an interview to the newspaper *Eleftheros Kosmos*, an extreme-right publication, presenting his thoughts on Islam and immigration by arguing that Islam can’t cope with Greece (sic). Furthermore, in his party conference and internal elections for presidency, among other discussions, he organised a round table on the concept of the nation and globalisation, and he invited the president of the extreme-right party Nea Dorgia, Failos Kraniotis, who has been mentioned above. There they discussed and agreed that Greece and Europe are threatened by the invasion of Islam, which while self-presented as a religion is, in reality, a political, legal, and military mechanism with the primary goal of causing the fall of Europe from the inside.

**Media**

It is not rare to find Islamophobic views and articles published in extreme-right newspapers like *Golden Dawn*, *Makeleio*, *Stohos*, *Eleftheros Kosmos*, and *Eleftheri Ora*, as has been mentioned in previous reports. In most of the cases the main issues are the so-called illegal immigration, the expected threat to the Greek nation in terms of biological and cultural alteration, and, of course, the construction of the mosque of Athens.

35. Press release, Thanos Tzimeros Re-Elected as President, 24 November 2019, https://www.dimiourgiaxanagri%BF%CF%85%CE%B5%CE%BB%CF%84%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%B4%CE%B5%CE%BB%CF%84%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B5%BF%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%B6%CE%BD%CE%B1, (Access date: 30 January 2020).
When it comes to the mainstream media it has to be mentioned that open Islamophobic views and opinions are not very common. There are some exceptions, though, to this rule, as certain newspapers and news websites include Islamophobic articles. One of those is the conservative newspaper Dimokratia (Democracy) which hosts articles by politicians like Fairos Kranidiotis, the leader of Nea Dextia. In one such article, the newspaper writes,

“Greece is being Islamised with the speed of light and people are barely reacting. We have selected a way of life, that at the bottom line, in order to achieve it we paid for it with a lot of blood. We don't want to change it. The wounds from the co-existence with Islam are very recent and it is justified that we don't want Islam at our feet. I don't understand why and to whom we have to give account for this very natural denial to accept illegal migrants that the colonisers of our country capriciously want to impose.”

One of the many newspaper editorials dealing with migrants, refugees, and Islam, mentions the following,

“Islam does not exist with a purpose to enrich other cultures and establish open dialogue with other religions […]. Islam exists in order to be spread and dominate. […] The fact that Muslims come to Greece in order to dominate is not a secret. Most of them, furthermore, don't hide that. In various meetings, events
and demonstrations where they participate -both in our country and abroad- we have heard slogans and seen placards and banners in which it is clear that they want no democracy, but they fight for the Sharia, the Islamic law. Islamists’ will is to dominate -and in the countries they colonise- their way of life and this is expressed through their public prayers. We watch this happening with greater frequency in Greece. In Athens, Thessaloniki, but also in the islands that receive the continuous waves of colonisation, Greek citizens watch groups of people occupy public places (squares, streets, sports installations), lay their carpets and start praying to Allah. […] Islam is not just a religion, it is a way of expressing metaphysical beliefs but at the same time it is an absolute guide of social organisation, interpersonal relations and legal-constitutional regulative framework. […] For us, Greeks, though, our belief in Christ is everything, as well as our love for the concept and the tangible reality of the nation and the defense of our culture by all means.”

Justice System

With regard to the justice system there are no incidents related to Islamophobia mentioned either by Muslims or reported in the media. What could be mentioned though is that the Greek Helsinki Monitor has proceeded to a series of lawsuits against individuals (e.g. politicians, journalists) who reproduce Islamophobic rhetoric and hate speech in their public discourse (e.g. texts, articles, the Internet). Until the end of year, no trial has taken place based on lawsuits on the grounds of Islamophobia.

Internet

The Internet and social media, in particular, have been a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and the expression of hatred of Islam and Muslims. While it is difficult to monitor the whole field in a systematic manner, similarly to the previous years’ reports, many extreme right-wing websites continue to disseminate news about Muslim countries in relation to violence (e.g. killings, rapes, murders, etc.) which in most cases are not reliable. These kinds of views, ideological texts, messages, and comments are primarily used to cultivate and impose the fear of Islam and create a repulsive image of Islam and Muslims. Such websites include, of course, the official website of GD (xrisiavgi.com); ethnikismos.net that is related to GD since many articles appear on both websites; the websites of other extreme-right


39. The Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), founded in 1993, monitors, publishes, lobbies, and litigates on human and minority rights and anti-discrimination issues in Greece and, from time to time, in the Balkans. It also monitors Greek and, when opportunity arises, Balkan media for stereotypes and hate speech. For more information, see: Greek Helsinki Monitor, https://greekhelsinki.wordpress.com/about/, (Access date: 31 January 2020).

40. For all these legal cases one can see the Racist Crimes Watch, https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/tag/%ce%b9%ce%f3%ce%bb%ce%b1%ce%bc%ce%bf%cf%86%ce%bf%ce%8b%ce%ad%ce%b1-islamophobia/, (Access date: 31 January 2020).
parties (*elasyn.com* and *elliniki-lisi.gr*); *nikosxeiladakis.gr*, the website of a journalist, writer, and Turcologist (sic), i.e. a specialist in the study of Turkish history, society, and Greek-Turkish relations, in which a special section dedicated to Islam can be found; and, of course, all the websites of the newspapers mentioned in the media section of the report which belong to the extreme right (*stoxos.gr*, *makeleio.gr*, *elora.gr*/*portal*, *elkosmos.gr*). Finally, there are many Facebook and Twitter accounts, both personal pages and groups, which reproduce messages, videos, and texts against migrants and refugees and, of course, against multiculturalism, Islam, Muslims, and the construction of the mosque in Athens.

In order to create a climate against Islam and Muslims, and reproduce panic about the latter, some websites have also been presenting and disseminating fake news. For example, in one case, it was mentioned that a large demonstration of Muslims took place in the centre of a city in Macedonia, in northern Greece, but it turned out that this had never occurred. In another case, websites reproduced another fake story about a hypothetical attack by Muslims against a Greek couple for making the symbol of the Christian cross outside of a church in Thessaloniki. It turned out that this also never happened.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Some of the central figures in the Islamophobia network have already been mentioned in previous sections, e.g. Thanos Tzimeros in the Politics section and Nikos Heiladakis in the Internet section. Another central figure, however, is Andreas Andrianopoulos, a self-proclaimed liberal and former minister with the right-wing party Nea Dimocratia. In the last years, he has been writing articles, books, and making a lot of comments on Facebook and mainly on Twitter openly expressing his anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim views and suggestions. (Fig. 8)

Among the many articles he writes annually in daily newspapers and websites, he has argued the following with regard to immigration,

> “The developments in the immigration issue have gone beyond the borders of simple anxiety. They are now a real danger to our society’s cohesion, to our values and our culture. This is not just a flow of people who illegally violate our borders. It has taken the form of a real invasion, which can’t stay unanswered.”


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Another field where one can find Islamophobic views is that of the Orthodox Church of Greece. Clarifying from the very beginning that the Church as a whole and the Holy Synod have never taken any official Islamophobic or anti-Muslim decision, it goes without saying that several Church figures have overtly expressed such views in the last years. A figure that usually reproduces such discourses is the Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim. Among his usual arguments is that Prophet Muhammad is not a real prophet and his real personality is not known to the people, implying that he has conducted crimes and exercised violence about which people are not aware of. To those who accuse him of being an Islamophobe, he says,

“Preempting all kinds of ‘human rightists’ and the so-called human rights defenders who, as it is published without refutation, are being funded with a lot of money by the Open Society Foundation in collaboration with the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), by the dark and shadowy world economic player [i.e. George Soros] as well as from the Sunni governments of Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar, which spend billions of dollars in order to consolidate and prevail among the ‘useful idiots’ the term ‘Islamophobia’ as a supposedly manifestation of racism and xenophobia. […] What I do is just mention what the Koran says revealing the personality of the alleged prophet, without adding any judgments of my own. Further to that, the Greek state violates the principle of equality through the establishment and construction with public money of a place of worship of a religious admission that throughout four centuries, raped, slaughtered and murdered our people.”

44. Screenshot by Alexandros Sakellariou, 16 December 2019. The tweet was deleted from his account after other users’ reactions were posted arguing that he was lying.

Furthermore and with regard to the Koran he argues,

“The Koran, also, can’t be considered as a book of culture, because it is a book of hatred, fanaticism, racism, bigotry, female disdain, etc. in which Christ is blasphemed through his downgrade to a simple human of mud and the Holy Triadic God is being disrespected as non-existent.”46

The Orthodox Church, as an organization, and the Holy Synod have never expressed such Islamophobic views and opinions especially regarding the Koran and Prophet Muhammad. On the other hand, such discourse has not been condemned by the Church authorities either.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessments and Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The two state policies that could be considered important in confronting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in 2019 are the following: First, the programme of the Ministry of Education about the incorporation of refugee children continued to be implemented in 2019 in various regions of Greece despite continued local reactions and obstacles, which were fewer compared to the previous years. Second, in 2019, the preparations (construction work amendments, legislation on the mosque’s board and internal regulation, call for applications for the mosque’s imam, selection of an imam) for the functioning of the official mosque proceeded, although, in truth, the whole process moves very slowly. On this last issue, while everything was ready and according to the media the mosque was going to officially open either after Easter of 2019 or during the summer, since then, no developments have taken place, probably because of the government change after the elections of July 2019. Apart from the above, it has to be noted that other initiatives targeting the confrontation of Islamophobia have not been recorded. There are, however, civil society organisations like the Helsinki Monitor mentioned previously trying to put pressure on state authorities with regard to Islamophobia through legal activism. At the same time, demonstrations against Islamophobia - although not so regular - have taken place in 2019. (Fig. 9)

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

All the available data with regard to Islamophobia in Greece for 2019 indicate that significant changes have not taken place compared to the previous year. Islamophobia is primarily manifested in the public discourse, certain groups of Greek citizens demonstrating against the “Islamisation” of the country, programmes of political parties and politicians mainly of the extreme right, among higher clergy members of the Orthodox Church of Greece, and in different platforms of the Greek media. The Internet and social media are a particularly fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia. However, it is significant to underline that Islamophobia in Greece is found also among self-proclaimed political and/or economic liberals and not only in the extremes. There are, of course, political parties, politicians, and anti-racist groups mainly from the left opposing racist and Islamophobic discourses and discriminatory practices but their impact on the reproduction of Islamophobia in Greece remains very limited. Also, reactions from parents of schoolchildren against the incorpora-


Figure 9: Demonstration against Islamophobia in Athens. “Demonstration and walk to the Parliament, 14 December 2019, Kotzia Sq., Omonia. Islam means peace, friendship and solidarity among the people. No to Islamophobia, no to racism.”47
tion of immigrant children in Greek schools continued. However, these were smaller in number when compared to those in former years.

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

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

• Second, the legal mechanism in Greece is not effectively tackling Islamophobia and the Greek law is not robust enough to discourage Islamophobic actions and more specifically hate speech.

• Third, the Orthodox Church of Greece should not only publicly disapprove of its metropolitans who insist on using Islamophobic discourse, but also effectively discourage any attempt of reproduction of anti-Muslim hatred by its clerics.

• Fourth, even though Islam is an old religion in Greece dating back to the Ottoman times and the 14th century, knowledge about the fundamentals of Islam and Muslims remains highly limited, which provides another space for Islamophobia to flourish and grow inside the Greek society. In this respect, the new school textbooks that the new government has announced should also include information about Islam, which is likely to assist the overall understanding of Islam in Greece in the near future. For the same purpose, training seminars provided particularly for the journalists, teachers, police officers, coastguards, and other civil servants who have contact with Muslims should be implemented.

• Finally, it is significant to remember that Muslims should not be excluded from decision-making mechanisms combating anti-Muslim hatred in Greece. An effective mechanism of dialogue and cooperation should immediately be established. A platform is necessary where views of Muslims will be taken fully into consideration by Greek decision-makers in Greece’s fight against Islamophobia.

Overall, after the political change that took place with the July 2019 national elections it seems that the new government although not exactly hostile, seems to be at least indifferent towards Islam and Muslims. This is supported by developments and observations that took place in the first months of the new administration. Firstly, there are no progress and information about the opening of the mosque of Athens. Secondly, the school textbooks that the previous government initiated will be changed after the decision of the Council of State that found
them unconstitutional. Finally, there are many MPs and party members expressing openly anti-migrant and anti-Muslim views and opinions. As a consequence, the initiatives of civil society, academia, and media organisations in terms of the implementation of relevant projects could actually play a more crucial role in the study and confrontation of Islamophobia, while the government does not appear to be fully determined to act towards this direction.

Chronology

- **05.03.2019**: Xenophobic parents’ announcement about refugee children in Samos.
- **08.03.2019**: Parents in Grevena react against refugee children in school.
- **19.05.2019**: Attack against the Sünne Mahalle Mosque in central Xanthi with anti-Turkish slogans.
- **28.05.2019**: Vandalism against the Muslim cemetery in the city of Alexandroupolis.
- **12.10.2019**: Letter of the president of the Youth Branch of New Democracy party in Panteli, a municipality near Athens, to the minister of citizen protection against the transfer of young Muslims to the regional hospital.
- **06.11.2019**: Attack against refugee school student in Thessaloniki.
- **10.11.2019**: Barbecue and alcohol demonstration against migrants in Thessaloniki.
- **11.11.2019**: School student demonstration against the Islamisation of Greece in Katerini.
- **24.11.2019**: Demonstration “Against Islamisation and Illegal Immigration” in central Alexandroupolis.