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

Anti-migration narratives have continued to define the Hungarian political discourse which is dominated by the nationalist aims of the current Hungarian governing party, FIDESZ. The government-friendly media depicts refugees and migrants as a threat to the national identity and security of the country and its people, underscoring the historical Christian identity of the nation. The Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, positions himself as the savior of Christianity and the Hungarian nation, by adopting and promoting a xenophobic stance against those viewed as the “invaders” of Europe. Despite registering 177,135 asylum seekers in 2015, less than a few thousand of these remained in the country, lending further suspicion to the state’s manipulation of “migrants” and “Muslims” as the focus of their efforts to protect the nation.

The anti-migration campaign and securitization has been gradually extended from the constructed image of the “migrant other” to other enemies of the Hungarian illiberal state. The focus of the state’s campaign has been towards internal actors such as civil society, the independent media, the independent judiciary system, academic and cultural institutions, and the Hungarian political opposition parties. Vulnerable groups have increasingly become targets of the hate-mongering and dehumanizing attitude of the government party. Examples include attacks in the state-dominated media against the homeless, members of LGBTQI groups, and, most recently, Hungary’s Roma population. Such attacks create further tension and are eroding solidarity amongst the opposition in Hungarian society.

Although figures on hate crime in Hungary are reported and collected, the Hungarian Working Group Against Hate Crimes (GYEM), a team of advocacy group experts, is raising awareness of the fact that the Hungarian police is still not taking hate crimes seriously, even though a new protocol has been established to identify and register such acts.
Összefoglaló

Az elmúlt évek politikai diskurzusát, a 2015-ös “menekültválság” óta, a kormányzó párt, a FIDESZ folyamatos bevándorlásellenes kampánya, idegenellenes, gyűlöletkeltő narratívája határozza meg. A kormánypárti média a menekületeket és bevándorlókat a nemzeti identitást, Magyarország biztonságát, keresztény kultúráját fenyegető veszélyként jeleníti meg. A magyar miniszterelnök, Orbán Viktor, magát a kereszténység és a magyar nemzet megmentőjeként pozícionálja, idegengyűlő álláspontot képvisel és népszerűsíti az Európa „betolakodóinak” bélyegzett menekülőkkel és bevándorlókkal szemben. Annak ellenére, hogy 2015-ben 177.135 menedékkérőt regisztráltak, csupán néhány ezen maradtak az országban, alacsony számuk nem indokolja a nemzet védelmére irányuló hatalmas és költséges kormányzati erőfeszítéseket, a „bevándorlók” és „muszlimok” elleni folyamatos harcot.

A FIDESZ kommunikációs kampánya megteremtette a „bevándorló idegen” fenyegető képét és kijelölte a magyar illiberális állam belső ellenségeit is. A kormányzati harc fokozatosan terjedt ki a civil társadalomra, a független mediára, a független igazságszolgáltatási rendszerre, az akadémiai és kulturális intézményekre, valamint az ellenzéki pártokra is. A dehumanizáló, gyűlöletkeltő narratíva más sérülékeny csoporokat is ellenségnek tekint. A kormánybarát média a hajléktalanokat, az LGBTQI csoportok tagjait és legutóbb, a magyar roma lakosságot vette célba.

Az effajta hadviselés fokozza a társadalmi feszültségeket és tovább rombolja a szolidaritást.

A kampány eredményeként megnövekedett számú gyűlölet-bűncselekményekről alig vannak hivatalos statisztikai adatok. A Gyűlölet-bűncselekmények Elleni Munkácsoporthoz (GYEM) tagjai, magyarországi civil szervezetek szakértői, felhívják a figyelmet arra, hogy a rendőrség továbbra sem veszi komolyan a gyűlölet-bűncselekményeket, holott a nemrég elfogadott új protokoll lehetőséget adna ezen cselekmények azonosítására és az ellenük való hatékonyabb fellépésére.

Jelen riport a bevándorlásellenes, iszlamofób magyar politikai diskurzust, az arra épülő választási kampányok fő motivumait, illetve a mediában továbbra is jelen lévő, gyűlöletkeltő propagandát és annak következményeit foglalja össze. A beszámolóban civil szervezetek képviselőivel és a magyarországi muszlim közösségek tagjaival készült interjúkat is felhasználtunk.
Country Profile
EIR 2019

Country: Hungary
Type of Regime: Democratic Republic
Form of Government: Parliamentary representative democracy
Ruling Parties: FIDESZ (FIDESZ – Hungarian Civic Alliance) (governs in coalition with the micro-party KDNP [Christian Democratic People’s Party])
Opposition Parties: Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Democratic Coalition (DK), Politics Can Be Different (LMP), Dialogue for Hungary (PM)
Last Elections (2018): 8 April 2018: FIDESZ-KDNP (49.27%); Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (19.06%); Socialists Party (MSZP-PÁRBESZÉD) (11.91%); Politics Can Be Different (LMP) (7.06%); Democratic Coalition (DK) (5.38%).
Total Population: 9,778,371
Major Languages: Hungarian
Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)
Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A
Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A
Major Religions (% of Population): Catholics (39%), Other Christianity (15%), Judaism (0.1%), Islam (0.1%), Unaffiliated (18.2%) (Central Statistical Office 2011 census)
Muslim Population (% of Population): 5,579 or 0.4% of the population (Central Statistical Office 2011 census)
Main Muslim Community Organizations: Organization of Muslims in Hungary (Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza), Hungarian Islamic Community (Magyar Iszlám Közösség)
Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: The Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, Menedék Association for Migrants, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Amnesty International Hungary
Far-Right Parties: FIDESZ (FIDESZ – Hungarian Civic Alliance), Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom), Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom)
Far-Right Movements: The Army of Outlaws (Betyárserég), Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom), Hungarian Self-Defense Movement (Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom), Generation Identity (Identitás Generáció), Force and Determination (Erő és Elszántság), Hungarian Legion (Légió Hungária)
Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A
Limitations to Islamic Practices:
- Hijab Ban: None
- Halal Slaughter Ban: None
- Minaret Ban: None
- Circumcision Ban: None
- Burka Ban: None
- Prayer Ban: None
Introduction

The community of Muslims in Hungary is both small and illusive, and the prevailing Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric is at odds with the number of migrants and Muslims who reside in the country. The 2011 census data indicates that there were 5,579 persons who identified as Muslim, and of these the majority followed Sunni Islam. Muslim comprise approximately 0.4% of Hungary’s population as of 2017. Institutions that support Muslims are small in number with a few mosques in the capital of Budapest. Before their status was officially revoked by the government in 2012, the Islamic Church (IE – Iszlámi Egyház) was the largest Muslim organization in Hungary. Now the two prominent organizations that cater to the Muslim population in Hungary are the Hungarian Islamic Community (MIK – Magyar Iszlám Közösség) and the Organization of Muslims in Hungary (MME – Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza). Of these, the latter largely represents foreign-born Muslims, while the former is mainly dominated by Hungarian-born converts and is better represented in the media. At the federal level, the leading representative organization is the Islamic Council of Hungary (MIT – Magyarországi Iszlám Tanács), which is an umbrella organization jointly created by the MIK and the MME in 2011, and recognized as one of the country’s thirty-two churches by parliament in 2012.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Islamophobia is part of a broader and growing xenophobic attitude towards non-Hungarians fueled by the state media channels. General knowledge of the religion of Islam is largely superficial. Islamophobia as a discursive element in Hungarian political discourse draws upon an embedded anti-Semitic and anti-Roma attitude in the population, with a growing focus on the figure of the migrant. The illegaliza-

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tion of providing information or resources to migrants has driven organizations such as Migszol Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary underground.  

Islamophobia is linked to the anti-migration narrative of the government, and is generally framed within the context of the securitization of migration and the protection of Hungarian citizens. A place of Muslim worship in the city of Pécs, was announced to be closed without notification, supposedly due to renovation. The motivations behind and the conditions of the closure were not made clear by the institution operating the location. The Muslim community of approximately 60-120 members who visited the place of worship weekly were not contacted. Community members revealed that the shutdown may have targeted the Muslim community, since they also received an on-site visit by the Hungarian Counter Terrorism Centre (TEK).

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In interviews we were able to conduct with Muslims living in Budapest, it was evident that community members continue to suffer from verbal attacks in the case of women and girls (especially those who are veiled). Participant responses demonstrate that there are a number of different kinds of assaults that regularly take place, including physical incidents and the more common acts of spitting, slapping, and shoving of individuals in public spaces. It remains unclear the extent to which these are being recorded and taken seriously by the police forces.

In a report generated by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, officials noted that official statistics were lacking in a wide number of areas, and concluded “The Committee regrets the lack of information on the work of the Office of the Commissioner to prevent racial discrimination and xenophobia against vulnerable ethnic minorities including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The Committee also takes note of the establishment of the Deputy Commissioner responsible for the work for future generations.”

A Muslim community member claims that Islamophobia appears to be slightly less intense compared to the heights of the previous year (2018) with the parliamen-

tary elections. “Although, there is a dormant fear that an attack will happen. After the Christchurch attack, we have more security on our premises.”

Although some NGOs provide platforms where one can report being the victim of a hate crime, such incidents are rarely registered anywhere.

“Muslim people experience discrimination at their workplaces, verbal and sometimes physical attacks. But they lost trust in authorities, either because they had bad experiences earlier or simply, they don’t think they would be taken seriously. Latency of hate crimes remains high.”

The following example illustrates how criminal acts may lack the bias motivation when registered. News articles reported of a violent incident at a summer music festival, where four young men were severely beaten up for being considered “migrants.” Although the victims pressed charges for a hate crime, the police registered the case as an assault.

**Employment**

Our interviews with members of Muslim communities revealed that discrimination in the workplace is not common, mainly as a consequence of the fact that employees are not openly practicing or declaring their religion; they seek employment within safer environments; or become self-employed.

A member of one of the Muslim communities reported of a case of discrimination in which an employer requested that the employee change his foreign-sounding name and replace it with an “authentic” Hungarian one. The case was not reported to authorities; the employee rejected the request and quit.

**Education**

The new Hungarian National Curriculum was completed and accepted by the government in December 2019, and was published in early 2020. It generated harsh criticism by education experts and professional organizations for being too detailed for a basic education plan. The Association of Teachers of Hungarian Literature and the Association of Teachers of History expressed concerns not only regarding the ideological bias implicit in the teaching material, but also for neglecting the needs and capabilities of children. The curriculum overloads students with data and strongly concentrates on nationalist narratives. Mandatory readings include a long list of far-right writers and

revisionist ideologies, clearly assuring that indoctrination starts at a very early stage. Changes demonstrate that the curriculum will be even more inward looking than the previous versions, and although mandatory religious studies are part of the primary school education, comprehensive insight on the religion of Islam is absent.

**Politics**

Since its landslide victory in the 2018 Parliamentary elections, FIDESZ has sustained a political focus on migration issues, and has continued to frame Brussels as the site of corrupt EU elites, in addition to the ongoing campaign targeting Hungarian-born philanthropist George Soros. Conspiracy theories, including the so-called Soros Plan, continue to be popular in the national and local media. By mid-February 2019, a new series of anti-migration campaign posters featuring George Soros and Jean-Claude Juncker, then President of the European Commission, appeared. These posters emphasize the narrative of “forced immigration from Brussels.” (Figure 1)

In an unprecedented meeting, PM Victor Orbán was visited by Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss the issue of migration and the general situation of Muslims within their borders. Aung San Suu Kyi’s trip to Central Europe aimed to strengthen economic ties with the region. Since 2017, Myanmar (formerly Burma) has combated what they consider to be the problem of “Muslim migration” through violent military massacres and abuses of the Rohingya Muslim population. Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch, was quoted as pointing out that “after shamefully helping the Myanmar military cover up their genocide against Rohingya Muslims, now she’s glad-handing and making friends with Europe’s most xenophobic, anti-democratic leader.”

In September, Norbert Hofer, leader of the far-right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), also visited Hungary. In relation to the event, in his statement, PM Orban encouraged Austria to continue rejecting political Islam and to help Hungary in its fight to defend Europe from migrants.

The European media continues to report about PM Orbán’s openly hostile and critical stance towards members of the European People’s Party (EPP). He has gone so far as to call members “useful idiots” openly in an interview with German newspaper

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In reaction, EPP Party President Joseph Daul commented in an interview with the newspaper *Die Welt* that “the European People’s Party is a big family, which can have its differences. But there is a limit and Viktor Orbán overstepped the red line.” Several parties, including Nordic-Benelux, subsequently called for FIDESZ to be expelled and in an interview with *Der Spiegel*, Manfred Weber (then lead candidate of the EPP) demanded an apology from Hungary’s prime minister. Zoltán Kovács, spokesman for the Hungarian government, reiterated on Twitter the importance that Hungary remain a sovereign Christian nation, as well as the fact that “[t]he Hungarian people have decided…we must halt migration. Hungarians have a right to know what kind of pro-migration plans are under preparation by the Brussels bureaucracy.”

Despite Orbán’s rejection of criticism towards his anti-Juncker campaign, on 20 March 2019, FIDESZ was suspended from EPP membership, which according to FIDESZ members happened by their own request. The action by the EPP was on account of Hungary’s infringement on academic freedom, the rule of law, and general norms of democracy within the country. This move by the EPP means that FIDESZ is excluded from the decision-making processes and no longer can vote as part of the party, though FIDESZ MEPs continue to participate as usual in the European Parliament.

The Hungarian government party continues to move towards the right and its political rhetoric is increasingly in line with extremist views both within the European and broader Western context. For a number of years, there has been an alliance developing between right-wing nationalist groups, which after the 2019 European parliamentary elections rebranded under the umbrella of Identity and Democracy (ID). This group includes the French National Rally (RN), Alternative for Germany, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria), and *Lega per Salvini Premier* (LSP), who initially invited FIDESZ to join their ranks after the European parliamentary elections in 2019. FIDESZ declined the invitation, and while for now it remains a part of the EPP, it continues to maintain relations with the parties of ID as well as those of the ECR (Jaroslaw Kaczyński’s group).

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ISLAMOPHOBIA IN HUNGARY

The Hungarian government party continues to move towards the right and its political rhetoric is increasingly in line with extremist views both within the European and broader Western context. For a number of years, there has been an alliance developing between right-wing nationalist groups, which after the 2019 European parliamentary elections rebranded under the umbrella of Identity and Democracy (ID). This group includes the French National Rally (RN), Alternative for Germany, Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria), and Lega per Salvini Premier (LSP), who initially invited FIDESZ to join their ranks after the European parliamentary elections in 2019. FIDESZ declined the invitation, and while for now it remains a part of the EPP, it continues to maintain relations with the parties of ID as well as those of the ECR (Jaroslaw Kaczyński’s group).

Municipal elections were held in Hungary in October 2019. FIDESZ’s campaign was dominated by the well-established war narrative, largely building upon the governing party’s usual accusations of opposition members that they support mass migration into Hungary and of general incompetence. The campaign featured posters and social media ads referring to the constant threat of migration, depicting the governing party as the national savior. The opposition won a decisive victory over FIDESZ in key municipalities, including in Budapest.

The Hungarian political landscape offers alternatives on the right, although FIDESZ has repeatedly managed to highjack parts of their agenda. Topics and narratives of the Hungarian far-right political parties’ narrative are similar to those of the governing party: building largely on nationalism, the securitization of migration,

the war of civilizations, and anti-liberalism and anti-establishment sentiments. Their support is low, as FIDESZ has been quite successful in formulating radical narratives and including them in its policies. Additionally, opportunities for opposition parties to get their messages to a wider audience are quite limited due to their lack of access to the state-owned or -influenced media outlets. After the far-right party Jobbik lost popularity significantly in the 2018 elections, a new party, Our Homeland Movement was formed by the party’s previously more radical members.33

Media
There is a tendency in the state-dominated media to portray Islam and Muslims as part of a growing “terrorism” linked to migrants and/or immigration. The depiction by FIDESZ of Muslim refugees and migrants in particular as part of the “invasion of Europe” has been continual from 2015 to the present day. Prime Minister Victor Orbán continues to draw upon the fictive notion of “Hungary for the Hungarians,” going so far as to outline truly Hungarian, namely “someone whose grandchildren will be Hungarian as well.”34 Excluding the possibility of Muslims – especially those who are also designated as migrants – to belong to the nation of “Hungarians,” PM Orbán explained, “We love our culture, which maintains and protects our freedom, we believe in strong families, consider our traditions and history unique, celebrate our heroes and love our homeland above all.”35 Dominating the state-run media are conglomerates that spread anti-migrant and Islamophobic sentiment: Origo, the rebranded Magyar Nemzet (formerly known as Magyar Idők)36, Hír Tv, Echo Tv, and 888.hu. These media outlets typically depict Muslims as having a hand in terror-related incidents, using their scope and authority to fuel a fake news campaign that draws attention to the securitization of the country.

There are cases reported by the Hungarian Islamic Community where Hungarian-language content in films and interviews abuses the image of the Prophet and “contains lies about Islam and some Islamic countries.”37 Indeed, Sándor Németh, who is quoted in the HIC’s newsletter, has proved to be a staunch supporter of the state’s policies that limit Muslim migrants and protect the “native” people of

35. Ibid.
As leader of the far-right Evangelical Christian network, Hit Gyükelezete, Németh takes as his mission the protection of Christian Europe and, in particular, the preservation of Hungarian values.

In another case, the headline of Magyar Nemzet quotes Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén saying, “Hungary will not let churches turn into shopping malls and mosques.” The statement was one of many expressed at the 2nd International Conference on Christian Persecution, held in November, implying that Islam poses a clear and present danger to Christianity in Hungary and, furthermore, globally. There are a number of other examples of media outlets that have orchestrated the government’s Islamophobic stance, such as when Pesti srácok interviewed Miklós Maróth, the new president of the Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH) that was formed after the Hungarian Academy of Sciences lost its battle over its network of research institutions to the government. In the interview, Maróth states that Islam is violent and amoral.


Among others, earlier he had suggested that “Muslim refugees and migrants ‘should be wrapped in pork skin’ if they do not accept European norms.”

**Justice System**

Official data and figures on crime in Hungary are reported and collected in the Unified System of Criminal Statistics of the Investigative Authorities and of Public Prosecution. The majority of Islamophobic, xenophobic, racially-motivated attacks either remain unreported or uninvestigated as hate crimes. The Hungarian Working Group Against Hate Crimes (GYEM), a team of advocacy group experts, raises awareness of the fact that the Hungarian police is still not taking hate crimes seriously, although the National Chief of Police adopted a new protocol mandatory to all police forces that came into effect in July 2019 to identify and tackle such incidents by using bias indicators when a criminal act is registered. András László Pap, expert member of GYEM adds that amidst the dramatically shrinking space for cooperation between NGOs, expert organizations and public authorities, the collaboration between GYEM and the police is a constructive example, and an important stage towards the recognition and adequate state response to hate crime.

The Fundamental Law of Hungary (formerly the Hungarian Constitution) was amended in 2018 to include provisions that support the government’s anti-Muslim narrative and restrict “foreign populations” from attempting to settle in Hungary. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted that Hungary’s progress in strengthening its legal framework against racial discrimination since 2002 - such as through the Fundamental Law of Hungary, the Equal Treatment Act, and specific provisions of the Labor Code that promote equal treatment - provide inadequate legal provisions for prohibiting discrimination, as specified in Article 1 of the Geneva Convention. In its Final Report, the committee consistently highlighted the lack of full and consistent implementation of legal provisions for prohibiting racial discrimination in courts and relevant complaint mechanisms. Following the series of laws that FIDESZ passed to establish its security framework and prevent
any migrants seeking asylum at the border from entering, refugees in Hungary remain a very small number and continue to be difficult to calculate on account of the government’s refusal to release official statistics to the UN and EU reporting bodies. In addition, a tax law remains in place that limits so-called propaganda activity that relates in any positive way to immigration through network building, grassroots support, or educational activities. Organizations or groups deemed to be assisting migrants suffer an additional 25% income tax penalty. The law is designed to target in particular NGOs, educational institutions, journalists, individuals, and potentially anyone who dares to disagree with the government on migration.47

Internet
Following the widespread and mainstream Islamophobic, anti-migrant, racist, and xenophobic narratives of the government itself and related media outlets, similar narratives are strongly present online. Groups such as Generation Identity (GI) have been closely aligned with Hungarian political rhetoric through transnational networks online that spread Islamophobic ideas. GI is a European far-right activist network with the professed intention of preventing Muslim migration. In the European case, GI openly promotes the belief that Muslims are being brought into Europe illegally by liberal politicians to “replace” Europeans in Western countries (referred to within the group as the “Great Replacement”). The Hungarian branch of GI is called “Generation Identity” and it is active on social media and more recently in the popular media. Generation Identity’s leader, Martin Sellner (a self-professed neo-Nazi) received funds directly from Brenton Harrison Tarrant, the terrorist behind the New Zealand Christchurch attack. When interviewed, Sellner attempted to justify Tarrant’s donation with the following: “He gave me a generous donation and I thanked him, that’s all.”48 The sinister ties between their ideologies reveals a further frightening connection, since GI’s “Great Replacement” doctrine was also the title of the manifesto that Tarrant released via social media on the morning of the Christchurch massacre.49 Claiming they are “brothers in arms” with Martin Sellner and the GI network, the Hungarian chapter’s president and leader Ábel Bódi has openly criticized FIDESZ’s migration policy, claiming the state should be harsher and more consistent: “If they say Hungary is a migrant-free zone, then it should be one. But in the meantime, 4-5 mosques or houses of worship have been established, including

Central Europe’s largest mosque in Budapest’s 11th district.”50 After the ban on the use of their logo and the name “Generation Identity” following the Christchurch massacre, Bódi claims that their movements are now mainly concentrated within Budapest and Szeged where they have 15-20 dedicated activists whose targeted actions promote the group on university campuses.51

Even though social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter are trying to shut down accounts which orchestrate fear- and hate-mongering, it is apparent that they are quickly able to rename and rebrand themselves and thus continue their online activities.53

Examples of this kind of virulent hate that is being circulated online can be found on the following social media sites, including Facebook: Dzsíhádfigyelő, Patrióta, Vadhajtások, Breitportal, and Migrációkutató Intézet. Other websites include dzsihadfigyelo.com, vadhajtasok.hu (commonly known as the “wildest right por-

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There are a number of actors spreading Islamophobic views in Hungary including many small networks that cannot be fully documented here. Incze Nikoletta, director of the Center for the Study of Political Islam (Politikai Islám Tanulmányok Központja) is a re-occurring well-known figure spreading Islamophobic discourse. Incze appeared again on public television in December 2019. She was presented as an expert, and claimed that Islam is a strong, violent political ideology. In 2018, renowned researchers publicly distanced themselves from the center.56

The pro-government media, including Origo, the rebranded Magyar Nemzet (formerly known as Magyar Idők), Hír Tv, Echo Tv, and 888.hu, often feature security experts whose task is to underline the governing party’s propaganda on security threats related to migration and Islam. These “experts” lack relevant professional background. Far-right organizations, such as the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom), the Army of Outlaws, Generation Identity, or the Hungarian Self-Defense Movement all share similar views on how Islam is culturally (and in other ways) incompatible with Hungarian national identity.57

There are a range of sources online that openly promote a targeted hatred of Muslims. Dzsihádfigyelő has developed what it claims to be a “jihad watcher,” and frequently cites Geert Wilders and other right-wing politicians who speak out about Muslim migration to Europe. Taking concepts from Islamic history, the site manufactures false claims that migration is part of jihad in Islamic doctrine through a process of forced migration (incorrectly referenced to historic migrations known as

55. Anonymous interview conducted by Göbl Gabi, 6 February 2020.
the *hijra*). 58 Kuruc.info is another site that incites hatred on the basis of religious and/or perceived racial difference. Targeting in particular Jews and Roma, the site is a hotbed of misinformation and even calls for a “Jewish confrontation.”

**Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

As the government has a two-third majority in parliament, opposition parties can do little to object to government policies or legislative processes. Although the majority of opposition parties generally criticize the government’s political narratives related to migration and fear-mongering, opinions diverge from one another when it comes to details. The shrinking media landscape does not allow opinions to reach wider audiences, and in most cases national coverage is not translated widely outside of Hungary.

**Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia**

There is a very narrow space left to publicly confront Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racist views and stereotypes. Still, there are a number of NGOs and grassroots initiatives continuing their mission to educate the public about the propaganda spread by the government. Activities of such organizations vary from advocacy to reaching out to schools, and public events where these organizations present their cases. 60

The Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association (*Magyar Iszlám Jogvédő Egyesület*) is the only Muslim rights advocacy organization in Hungary. The group has been active for the past years, since its foundation on 2016, monitoring Islamophobic media appearances, informing the general public on Islamophobia-related incidents, offering legal aid for victims of hate crimes and discrimination, and counteracting anti-Muslims government propaganda. They have recently launched their website, offering a platform to register hate crimes.

The Subjective Values Foundation focuses on promoting inclusion and social cohesion by implementing projects emphasizing cultural diversity. They focus on informal education and address conflicts arising from social inequalities. Their mission includes creating a sustainable society.

The Menedék Association for Migrants continues to hold workshops in local schools that attempt to educate people about strong prejudices towards “Muslim-majority” countries fueled massively by government propaganda.


The Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) is a human rights NGO protecting human dignity through legal and public activities. The organization supports refugees, detainees, and victims of law enforcement violence. Besides holding a series of talks to present information based on cases they are working on, in 2018-19, the HHC launched the project “Right to Faith: Protecting the Right to Freedom of Religion in Hungary” with the support of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Budapest.61

Amnesty International Hungary is part of the Amnesty International movement. Its activities include participation in joint international campaigns of the movement’s members and local campaigns focusing on specifically Hungarian human rights violations and matters.

Szabad Egyetem, the Open University movement, continues to contribute to bringing together civil society and students who resist the increasingly authoritarian focus of the state towards academic freedom. Since 2017, this grassroots movement has continued to support local human rights organizations working with refugees and Roma populations who are currently under attack by the government.62

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Since the last report in 2018, disappointingly little has changed in terms of the recommendations by the authors. There continues to be a serious need for independent and open channels of media communication in Hungary that counter the rising anti-migrant and xenophobic attitudes that enable the anti-Roma and Islamophobic discourses to proliferate. There is a desperate need for funding and the protection of NGOs, independent journalists, and newspapers who are helping to try to change the conversation and assist the vulnerable. Oversight and direct action by the European Parliament is sorely lacking; the former could potentially help to curtail the rampant misinformation in the Hungarian media. The departure of the Open Society Foundation to its new location in Berlin, which will soon be followed by the transition of the Central European University (Közép-európai Egyetem) to Vienna and the Hungarian government oversight over the entire research network of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences further limits the capacity of democratic public discourse in Hungary.63

There is an urgent need to establish stronger pressure from the European Parliament for the protection of non-government affiliated media in order to prevent the development of a one-party system propaganda machine. This is particularly

important in light of the growing xenophobia and intolerance against minorities and people of colour, as well as the small community of Muslims and migrant individuals. Without significant change in the current developments towards intolerant approaches within the national curriculum, children will fail to learn basic knowledge about other religions and cultures. This is another essential problem that needs to be addressed since education plays a crucial part in tackling misinformation and bias towards vulnerable groups, such as the Hungarian Roma. Furthermore, it is essential that combatting fake news should become and integral part of the education and training of teachers moving forward. And lastly, it is imperative that there be a strengthened cooperation between human rights advocates, NGOs, and expert groups who will work with public offices and authorities to help defend democracy in Hungary.

Chronology

- **27.02.2019**: The closure of a place of Muslim worship in the city of Pécs was announced without advance notification, allegedly due to renovation.64
- **20.03.2019**: The European People’s Party suspends the membership of FIDESZ.
- **26.05.2019**: European Parliament elections in Hungary.
- **05.06.2019**: PM Victor Orbán meets Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss the threat of Islam and migration.
- **05.09.2019**: The government again extends the so-called state of emergency due to mass migration despite the lack of legal grounds.65
- **10.09.2019**: PM Orbán’s statement that Austria should continue to reject political Islam and help Hungary to defend Europe from migrants after Norbert Hofer’s visit.
- **13.10.2019**: Local elections in Hungary.
- **30.12.2019**: Miklós Maróth, a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) and president of the Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH), makes Islamophobic statements in an interview.66

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