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

Islamophobia has continued to manifest in multifarious ways in Ireland in 2019. Interpersonal experiences of Islamophobia continue to impact Muslims in Ireland as high-profile media reports evidence. Previous reports on Ireland have elaborated on issues regarding data gathering and publication of Islamophobic incidents. In 2019, for the first time in a number of years, official data on Islamophobia were published by the state. These data are for the year 2018 and were published in a submission to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Despite this positive step, issues remain in terms of reporting of Islamophobia with reports from within the communities indicating that many cases are going unreported. In terms of politics, there has arguably been an increase in terms of visibility of anti-Muslim groups/individuals and related rhetoric across 2019. These actors remain, by-and-large on the fringes of Irish politics. However, representatives of mainstream political parties have also resorted to Islamophobic rhetoric during electoral campaigning in 2019. At the institutional level, a number of positive steps were taken in 2019, in particular around police uniform policy, and efforts to improve legislation on hate speech. Nonetheless, civil society actors have highlighted that problems remain at the level of the state when it comes to challenging Islamophobia and racism more broadly. Despite some positive and welcome journalistic reporting practices in 2019, problems also remain vis-à-vis media reports of Muslims/Islam. Sensationalist reporting, orientalist discourses, and presentations of Muslims as ‘other’ to the Western ‘us’ maintain. While a number of actions have been undertaken by civil society actors to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland, work remains to be done if Islamophobia is to be successfully challenged.
Country Profile  
EIR 2019

Country: Ireland  
Type of Regime: Republic  
Form of Government: Parliamentary democracy  
Ruling Parties: Fine Gael (Centre Right), supported by a number of Independents and in a Confidence and Supply Agreement with Fianna Fáil (Centrist)  
Last Elections: 2019 European Elections: Dublin Constituency returned: one Green Party (European Greens) representative; one Fine Gael (European People’s Party) representative; one independent candidate. Midlands – North-West Constituency: two Fine Gael (European People’s Party) representatives; one independent (European United Left); one Sinn Féin (European United Left). South Constituency: one Fine Gael (European People’s Party) representative; one Green Party (European Greens); one independent; and one Fianna Fáil (ALDE).  
2019 Local Council Elections: Fianna Fáil 26.9%; Fine Gael 25.2%; Sinn Fein 9.5%; Labour 5.7%; Green Party 5.6%; Social Democrats 2.3%; Solidarity People Before Profit 1.9%; Independents/Others 22.4%.  
2019 National Parliament By-Elections for four seats: Sinn Féin one seat; Green Party one seat; Fianna Fáil two seats.  
Total Population: 4.8 million in 2016 census  
Major Languages: Irish, English  
Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)  
Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: As above, data for 2018 as shared with the OSCE’s ODIHR are as follows:  
Racism and Xenophobia: 192 incidents; Anti-Muslim: 15 incidents; Anti-Roma and Anti-Sinti: 2 incidents; Anti-Semitism: 1 incident; Anti-Christian: 6 incidents.  
Major Religions (% of Population): Catholicism (78.3%), No religion (9.8%), Church of Ireland (2.8%)  
Muslim Population (% of Population): 63,443 (1.3%) in 2016  
Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, Islamic Centre of Ireland, Muslim Association of Ireland, Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre, Irish Sufi Foundation (in no specific order)  
Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Irish Network Against Racism Ireland, Immigrant Council of Ireland
**Far-Right Parties:** Fringe only, including: Anti-Corruption Ireland, Identity Ireland, National Party, Irish Freedom Party

**Far-Right Movements:** Generation Identity UK and Ireland

**Far-Right Terrorist Organizations:** N/A

**Limitations to Islamic Practices:**

**Hijab Ban:** Officially none. However, educational institutions are permitted to decide themselves whether students may/may not wear the hijab to school.

- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** None
- **Minaret Ban:** None (local planning decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** None
- **Burka Ban:** None
- **Prayer Ban:** None
Introduction

The following report details the various ways in which Islamophobia has manifested in Ireland across 2019. Islamophobia as lived experiences of hostility and discrimination continues to impact the lives of Muslims in Ireland as detailed below from a number of high-profile incidents from various locations in the state. For the first time in a number of years, official data on Islamophobia were published by the state, albeit in a submission to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Interestingly, reports within the Muslim communities of Ireland indicate that many cases of Islamophobia are going unreported as discussed below.

Politically, there has arguably been an uplift in the visible presence of anti-Muslim political activity and rhetoric across the year. While mainly restricted to fringe political parties and individuals, representatives of mainstream groups have also resorted to Islamophobic rhetoric during electoral campaigning. At the level of state departments, there have been a number of positive steps, in particular around police uniform policy, and also efforts to improve legislation on hate speech. Nonetheless, problems at the level of the state remain as indicated by civil society actors working in the anti-racism space. Likewise, despite some positive journalistic reporting practices, problems also remain when it comes to mainstream media of issues pertaining to Muslims/Islam. These include sensationalist headlines, orientalist discourses, and presentations of Muslims as ‘Other’ to the Western ‘Us’ as evidenced below. This report concludes with recommendations on how to move forward in Ireland vis-à-vis challenging Islamophobia. Before concluding, the positive work undertaken by civil society and associated actors in Ireland will be outlined.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2019, for the first time in four years, the Irish state submitted official data on hate crime to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. In all, the state recorded 368 hate crimes across a range of social groups as recorded by the Irish police for the period 2018. Of these, fifteen were identified as being based on ‘bias against Muslims.’ No information was provided on the crime type associated with these incidents. The publication of these data is welcome; however, a number of events are likely to have gone unreported as demonstrated in previous researches in the Irish context and as acknowledged in efforts of the Irish police to improve reporting and recording.

2. Ibid.
of hate crime, and indeed public statements of Islamic organisations in Ireland as discussed further below.3

A number of high-profile anti-Muslim incidents from various locations in Ireland also came to light via media reports throughout 2019. In the space of two days early in May, coinciding with the start of Ramadan, news emerged of two incidents involving members of the Muslim community in Limerick city. The first of these involved a seemingly premeditated attack on two Muslim men on their way home from a mosque in the city. Reports suggest that a group lay in wait before assaulting the men on the first night of Ramadan. In the second incident, a Muslim man was set upon and subjected to verbal and physical abuse not far from the location of the above attack. The latter incident was reportedly video recorded on a mobile phone.4 These attacks instilled fear in the local Muslim communities and members of police met with imams and community representatives to provide reassurance.5 Speaking to the media, local election candidate Abdul Kalam Azad Talukder also reported that a Muslim woman had her hijab torn from her head in a Limerick supermarket in the days preceding the above attacks.6

In August, distressing video footage emerged of a serious assault of two Muslim teenagers in the Dublin suburb of Dundrum on a Sunday afternoon. During the assault, both of the young women were punched, kicked, had eggs thrown at them, and at least one of them had her hijab torn from her head.7 Early reports suggest that the Irish police did not perceive the attack as being motivated by bias.8 However, one of the young women attacked stated in a press release from the Islamic Foundation of Ireland that during the attack both of the victims were called “Paki weirdos and

5. David Raleigh, “Gardaí Meet Muslim Leaders over Suspected Racial Attacks in Limerick”.
6. Ibid.
F***ing Muslims.” Responding to reports of the attack, Muslim woman Lorraine O’Connor of the organisation Muslim Sisters of Eire stated, “My own daughters were the victims 3 weeks ago on Dublin bus publicly humiliated for 15 mins spat at and aggressively told get the hell out of this country...”

Muslim woman Karimah Duffy, a friend of Muslim convert Lisa Smith who is originally from Dundalk but travelled to and lived in the so-called Islamic State, recalled to media how she herself has had bacon thrown at her house, property damaged, and been subjected to abuse on the basis of her former friendship with Smith. Furthermore, Duffy noted that Muslims in Dundalk were afraid of attacks and were being escorted to mosque by police.

In addition to reports of attacks on individuals, mosques were also targeted in Ireland during 2019. In a relatively minor incident, a mosque in Tralee had graffiti daubed on the exterior wall stating “ISIS OUT”. A much more serious incident occurred in Galway where the Maryam Mosque was broken into and suffered considerable damage. Windows, doors, and furniture were all damaged in the attack, and security equipment was stolen. This is the second time that this mosque was the target of vandalism since 2017. Speaking in the aftermath of the attack, Imam Ibrahim Noonan noted that he was warned by anonymous telephone calls that his mosque was being targeted for attack by far-right groups. Police suspect that the attack was motivated by anti-Muslim bias and noted, “The taking of the security equipment suggests an effort to hide their tracks. It indicates a level of planning and sophistication.”

Dr Amanullah De Sondy, senior lecturer on Contemporary Islam at University College Cork, was subject to personal threats in August 2019. Writing on social media, De Sondy recalled that he “received a horrible voice message on my university office phone today calling me a ‘scumbag, a terrorist’ who ‘must stop lecturing the Irish on how they should live their life’ and the most chilling ‘I hope you are exe-

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cuted.” Speaking in the aftermath, De Sondy stated his belief that a “sophisticated network” of individuals were fuelling Islamophobia in Ireland.

Two rather unusual events also occurred in Ireland during 2019, both in the Limerick area. In the first instance, in September, posters were placed on public signs in Limerick city centre with nothing but the words “Islam is RIGHT about women” on them. Media reports noted that these posters were part of a broader international far-right campaign, disseminated through social media sites, such as 4Chan, designed to elicit a public response, including that of an anti-Muslim bias. Remaining in Limerick, in April, local media reported on comments made by a local priest, Fr Mockler, during a Good Friday service that some congregants believed to be Islamophobic. The sermon drew from words of Cardinal Robert Sarah from the Vatican: “The ‘West will disappear’ and ‘Islam will invade the world’ and ‘completely change culture, anthropology, and moral vision’ unless we bend the arc of our culture back toward its Judeo-Christian roots.” Some congregants understood the above as a call for greater piety as opposed to being anti-Muslim.

Politics
The year 2019 played host to local, European, and parliamentary by-elections in Ireland. In the run-up to the local elections held in May, Cork-based independent local election candidate, Joe O’Callaghan, a former lord mayor of the city, called for a ban to be placed on Islamic face coverings in Ireland. O’Callaghan referred to such face coverings as “a joke in this day and age, particular in these dangerous times we live in… it’s a question of security and integration.” His comments were subjected to criticism in local Cork press including by academic De Sondy who referred to such statements as “…a very dangerous line to take that infringes on a liberal state.”

At national level, there is a continued increase of both the presence and rhetoric of right/far-right political actors that target Islam/Muslim communities in their...
public pronouncements. Gemma O’Doherty is arguably the leading, visible protagonist in this regard in Ireland in 2019. O’Doherty, founder of the political group Anti-Corruption Ireland, ran in the European election and in the national parliamentary by-elections in late 2019 but was unsuccessful in both cases. In April, O’Doherty posted the following comment on twitter accompanied by a map of Ireland (Fig. 1) with images of mosque-like structures covering various locations:

“The mosques of #Ireland. If this phenomenal growth rate continues, in the coming years, our country could become an #Islamic state under Sharia law. If that is what the Irish people want, so be it, but I’m standing for #Europe to represent those who don’t #EUelections2019”.

Figure 1: Twitter content shared by Gemma O’Doherty depicting Ireland as being covered with mosques.
In August, video footage emerged on social media wherein O’Doherty stated that hijabs “should be burned.” Also in August, citing data from an unnamed source (Fig. 2) on so-called foreign fighters, she posted the following on social media:

![Twitter content shared by Gemma O’Doherty calling for prohibition of halal products and the wearing of the hijab. O’Doherty also claims here that, per capita, Ireland produces the second highest number of ISIS recruits internationally.](https://twitter.com/gemmaod1/status/1163205503692038144)

In November, footage emerged of O’Doherty visiting a halal butcher shop and asking the staff member if they sold pork products. She asked him why not and told him that pork is “one of our national foods in Ireland” and “we are never stopping eating it.”

Peter O’Loughlin of Identity Ireland, (noted in previous European Islamophobia Reports for his openly anti-Islam/Muslim views and association with groups such as PEGIDA in Germany) ran as a candidate in the European elections in 2019 but was unsuccessful. While O’Loughlin the aforementioned individuals are on the margins of Irish politics, headlines were also made in the context of the parliamentary by-elections in late 2019 relating to a mainstream political party candidate. Then Fine Gael candidate for County Wexford, Verona Murphy, speak-

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ing on national television, suggested that asylum seekers arriving in Ireland would need to be “deprogrammed” on the basis that they may have been “infiltrated by ISIS” and that the group were “a big part of the migrant population”. Murphy later apologised for making the aforementioned comments. Murphy was unsuccessful in her election bid.

Media

As with previous reports on Ireland in the European Islamophobia Report, an analysis of media in Ireland was undertaken for 2019 using the Nexis database online search tool. The focus of this necessarily limited analysis centred on media reporting of the discovery, high-profile national television interview with, and return of Irish citizen Lisa Smith from territory formerly controlled by the so-called Islamic State.

Reports emerged in early March 2019 that Irish citizen Lisa Smith and her two-year-old daughter were being held by U.S. security forces in northern Syria. Smith, a convert to Islam, travelled to the region occupied by the so-called Islamic State in 2015.


33. For more information, see: ‘Home,’ Nexis UK, 2020, https://advance.lexis.com/bisnewshome/?pdmfd=1519360&ccrid=86790095-5897-4a20-aacf-f74a84db668e, (Access date: 15 January 2020). The focus of this analysis centred on media reporting in Ireland of three critical events: (1) the discovery; (2) “Prime Time” television interview with; and (3) return of Lisa Smith from territory formerly controlled by the so-called Islamic State. Media reports relating to Lisa Smith, Muslims, and Islam on the day that these events took place and in the fourteen subsequent days were sourced using the Nexis media database search platform and subjected to analysis. The media producers included in the search of Nexis media database as ‘favourites’ were: Sunday Independent (Ireland); Sunday Business Post; RTE News; Metro Herald (Ireland); The Irish Times; Irish Independent; Irish Examiner; Irish Daily Mail; Evening Herald (Ireland) including related online content and archival coverage (as noted by Nexis). Content from UK impressions of publications also available in Ireland were also returned in the Nexis database search, including: The Sun, the MailOnline, The Times.co.uk, The Mirror, and The Sunday Mirror. The content of the UK version of an article may/may not have varied to that available in the Irish context and vice versa. The search terms used on the Nexis database were: Lisa AND Smith AND Muslim! AND Islam! Only the relevant dates (date of discovery; of “Prime Time” interview, etc.) were changed in each search.
34. See previous footnote.
corporal. At one point she had served as a flight attendant on the government jet.\textsuperscript{36} Police and Defence Forces investigations into Smith and her role in the so-called Islamic State continued throughout 2019 to ascertain if she posed a security risk if she returned to Ireland. Smith refuted claims that she was involved in military activity during her time in the region.\textsuperscript{37} She publicly dissociated herself from the atrocities carried out by the so-called Islamic State and denied knowledge of any such acts.\textsuperscript{38} Her stated motivation to travel to the region in 2015 was to live in an Islamic caliphate.\textsuperscript{39} On 1 December 2019, Smith was deported to Ireland from Turkey. On return, Smith maintained her denials of partaking in criminal/terrorist offences. She was subsequently charged under Section Six (1) (i) of the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2005 with membership of a “foreign unlawful organisation.”\textsuperscript{40}

The analysis of media coverage into the Lisa Smith case defined here reveals interesting insights. Importantly, there is evidence of what could be referred to as positive media reporting practices. In such cases, media outlets can be seen to provide space for voices within the Muslim communities in Ireland to respond to the case. For example, this includes comments by a local imam dissociating Islam from violence as well as speaking against people travelling to areas such as the so-called Islamic State; that Smith be allowed to come home to face due process; and also a former associate defending Smith’s character.\textsuperscript{41} In certain somewhat positive reports, while nuance is provided by noting examples of Islamophobia, problematic terms such as “Isis bride” or “jihadi bride” are present.\textsuperscript{42}

Indeed, there is a repeated use of terms such as “Isis bride”, “jihadi bride” and variants across the period under analysis here.\textsuperscript{43} The utilisation of such terms pres- 

\textsuperscript{39. RTE Prime Time Interview 18 July 2019;}
\textsuperscript{43. Kieran Dineen, “Is Bride Didn’t Tell Her Family She Had a Baby; IRM Jihadi Bid Soldier’s Secrets: Leo: She Has Rights”, The Sun, 12 March 2019; John Patrick Kierans, “ISIS Bride Lisa Smith Says She ‘Can’t Be Blamed’ for Terror Committed by Group; She Travelled to Syria to Join Islamic State around Three Years Ago”, Irish Mirror, 18 July 2019.}
ents a stereotypical image of Muslim women as exoticised, vulnerable victims, and concomitantly threatening in terms of violence and notions of ‘Us’. As in previous report submissions for Ireland, analysis for 2019 reveals the continued practice of collocating Islam(ic) with negative terms. For example, “Islamic groomers”, “Islamic terror groups”, “Islamic extremist”, “Islamic terror organisation”.

Focussing specifically on headlines, the following examples are interesting. The first, following from above could be understood as collocating Islam with ‘devil worshipping’. The remaining headlines evidence sensationalist reporting practices while the latter two in particular present an ‘Us versus Them’ discourse.

“Pat Flanagan: ‘We Should Have No Sympathy for Devil Worshiping Jihadi Lisa Smith’; Would the Same Sympathy Be Shown to a Naïve Young Man Who Got Caught up in the Kinahan Crime Gang in Spain?’

“Irish ISIS Bride Lisa Smith ‘Could Easily Have Detonated Bomb on Government Jet’; Exclusive: The Suitcase the Former Air Corps Member Carried on Board with Her Personal Belongings Was Never Checked by Security, the Irish Mirror Has Learned”

“Lisa Hates the West… She Knows about Guns and Bombs Some Locals Are Afraid’; EXCLUSIVE: PALS TELL OF SHOCK AT RADICALISATION OF I.S. BRIDE AFTER BAD BREAK-UP WITH FELLA STOPPED BELIEVING WOMEN SHOULD DRIVE BINNED MACDONALD’S HABIT, CALLING IT EVIL”

“The above cursory analysis provides a snapshot of the manner in which Irish media actors report on issues relating to Islam and Muslim communities in Ireland.
There is evidence of some good practice. However, as in previous submissions on Ireland for the European Islamophobia Report, problematic practices maintain. These include collocating Muslims and Islam with terms such as terrorism or extremist; sensational headlines that conjure up negative images; orientalist presentations of Muslim women; and ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ discourses in a context of Muslims and the West as though they are mutually exclusive categories. There is a need for greater reflexivity and responsibility on the part of media actors when it comes to discussing Muslims and Islam in Ireland. This is not to stifle genuine criticism but to avoid fuelling incidents of anti-Muslim hostility as described above.

Justice System
There were some positive developments in 2019 that are worth noting briefly here. In April, An Garda Síochána (AGS), the Irish police service, announced changes to their uniform policy the effect of which is to allow members of the AGS of different faith backgrounds to wear items of religious clothing, such as the hijab for Muslim women, to work.\(^\text{51}\) Further good news emerged later in 2019 with the release of the AGS’ Diversity and Integration Strategy 2019-2021, with challenging hate crime forming a core part of the strategy.\(^\text{52}\) In the latter part of 2019, the Department of Justice and Equality (DoJ&E) also undertook a public consultation on hate speech legislation with the aim of improving its effectiveness.\(^\text{53}\) In June, the DoJ&E announced the creation of a new anti-racism committee which is welcome but notably Islamophobia was not mentioned in the announcement.\(^\text{54}\)

As noted in the report for Ireland for 2018, the proposed construction of a new mosque in the city of Kilkenny was met with public objections, some of which were Islamophobic.\(^\text{55}\) Despite being granted planning permission from local authorities to build the mosque, the relevant national authority ruled against the construction in May citing the proposed development as conflicting with broader infrastructural plans for the area.\(^\text{56}\) Local imam Ibrahim Ndure referred to the decision as “crushingly disappointing.”\(^\text{57}\)

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52. Ibid.
Internet
As noted above, individuals operating in the political space have been very active online vis-à-vis disseminating their views on Muslims/Islam. During the local elections, two Muslim candidates, Imran Khurshid and Ammar Ali, were subjected to abuse via social media with the latter receiving messages referring to “brainwashed illegal immigrants” intent to “stab are [sic] kids” while describing immigrants as “stupid barbarians”.58

Fringe groups such as the Irish Patriot Movement have a presence online and post content that targets immigrants and Muslims.59 As do private individuals. In December, the charitable community group Muslim Sisters of Éire shared some of the abuse that they have received on social media. With regard to Figure 3, the perceived mutual exclusivity of Irish and Muslimness held by some is clear.

Figure 3: Twitter content shared by Muslim Sisters of Éire evidencing some of the online anti-Muslim content that the group has received.60

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network
As noted above and in previous EIR submissions for Ireland, central figures engaging in anti-Muslim/Islam discourses and activities in Ireland include: Anti-Corruption Ireland’s Gemma O’Doherty (see above); Identity Ireland; Justin Barrett and the National Party; Generation Identity UK and Ireland, and their associates. The degree

to which these individuals/groups form a ‘network’ is debateable. However, video evidence demonstrates O’Doherty engaging in a walkabout in Longford town with James Reynolds, deputy leader of the National Party.61 On another occasion, Justin Barrett, National Party leader, addressed an event organised by O’Doherty wherein he stated that “European western culture and Christendom in particular is the superior culture on this planet, always has been, always will be.”62

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In the week following the terrorist attacks on mosques in New Zealand, a civil society event was held in Dublin to stand in solidarity with the victims. The event titled ‘Calling All Allies’ marked the attacks in New Zealand and other international Islamophobic attacks internationally. Speaking on national radio on the eve of the event, one of the organisers referred to experiences of Islamophobia in Ireland at interpersonal and institutional levels. One of the aims of the event was for the recognition of Islamophobia, socially and politically, as a reality in Ireland and for measures to be taken to challenge it.63

The year 2019 was a very busy year in terms of formal reviews, reports, and campaigns on racism, including Islamophobia in Ireland. In April, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance published its fifth monitoring report on Ireland.64 The ECRI Report made specific reference to Islamophobia in Ireland and to related activities of the far right. ECRI were also critical of the official Migrant Integration Strategy for collocating radicalisation and Muslim youth, noting the potential for stigmatisation. Finally, ECRI also made specific reference to the gendered element of Islamophobia.65

In August, the National Transport Authority (NTA) ran an anti-racism campaign, one of the posters for which displayed an image of a Muslim woman wearing hijab. Interestingly, the NTA received critical correspondence from the general public, including criticism of the use of the image of a Muslim woman as it “implies that

65. Ibid.
Muslims are victims of racism” and “Islam is an ideology”. Other critics claimed that the campaign was “Pure Anti-Whiteism”. 66

In advance of the UN review of Ireland’s performance vis-à-vis the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) hosted an event in March to gather insights from Irish youth aged between 16 and 24 on ending racial discrimination in Ireland. 67 A number of civil society organisations also submitted alternative reports to that of the state vis-à-vis racism. In both of the reports referred to here, Islamophobia was documented as a reality in Ireland in terms of experiences of hostility and discrimination. 68

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations
This report details the continued presence of Islamophobia in Ireland. Many of the themes presented above resonate with those submitted previously in submissions on Ireland. Lived experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination maintain, problematic media practices maintain, and political actors utilising anti-Muslim rhetoric to further presumably their own ends is increasing. Meanwhile the state has taken some positive measures to address Islamophobia. Overall, more could certainly be done. The role of civil society actors vis-à-vis holding the state to account on Islamophobia and broader forms of racism is encouraging. So too is the grassroots organisation of street activities aimed at highlighting and calling for meaningful recognition of Islamophobia in Ireland. A lot of work must be done if Islamophobia is to be challenged in Ireland. The following recommendations highlight just some of the areas that, if addressed, could go some way toward supporting this challenge.

• Efforts must be made by the Irish police service to improve the recording and reporting of Islamophobic incidents in Ireland. The AGS Diversity Strategy (mentioned above) makes reference to improving hate crime reporting levels. This is a vitally important if we are to have a deeper understanding of Islamophobia in Ireland.


• Related to the above, Irish hate speech is currently under review. This is a welcomed development. Effective hate speech and hate crime legislation are of the utmost importance. Having such will increase the confidence of the police in their working practices and have the effect of increasing trust with Muslim communities when they experience hostility that something will be done to address it.
• Efforts must continue to encourage greater reflexivity relating to reporting Muslims/Islam issues among media actors in Ireland.
• Official action must be taken against political groupings that target and incite hatred towards minority communities – on- and offline.
• The state should support grassroots Muslim and broader civil society activities that aim to challenge Islamophobia.

Chronology

• **09.03.2019:** Reports emerge of Irish citizen Lisa Smith being held by U.S./Kurdish forces in Syria.
• **18.03.2019:** A friend of Lisa Smith speaks of the abuse she has experienced in the aftermath of the reports of the discovery of Smith.
• **23.03.2019:** Calling All Allies Anti-Islamophobia event held in Dublin.
• **02.04.2019:** The Irish police service announces changes to uniform policy.
• **19.04.2019:** Co. Limerick priest delivers homily that is perceived by some as anti-Muslim/Islam.
• **30.04.2019:** Local election candidate in Cork City O’Callaghan calls for burqa ban.
• **10.05.2019:** Reports of two assaults on three Muslim men and one Muslim woman in Limerick City.
• **18.07.2019:** Lisa Smith’s interview with Irish television airs.
• **29.07.2019:** Mosque in Galway subjected to criminal damage, suspected far-right involvement.
• **01.08.2019:** The above incident follows an assault on two other young Muslim women in Dublin.
• **16.08.2019:** Footage emerges of Gemma O’Doherty where she states hijabs “should be burned”.
• **18.08.2019:** Video footage emerges of two Muslim teenagers being assaulted in Dublin.
• **21.08.2019:** Muslim lecturer at University College Cork receives voicemail threatening execution.
• **25.09.2019:** “Islam is Right about Women” posters emerge in Limerick streets.
• **18.10.2019**: Graffiti daubed at Tralee mosque.
• **15.11.2019**: Verona Murphy, then Fine Gael party by-election candidate, makes comments on asylum seekers being “infiltrated by ISIS”.
• **23.11.2019**: Footage emerges of Gemma O’Doherty visiting a halal butcher shop making statements about Irish people liking pork meat and asking questions such as does the proprietor sell pork products.
• **01.12.2019**: Lisa Smith returns to Ireland.