

---

# EUROPEAN **ISLAMOPHOBIA** REPORT --- 2017

---

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

---



---

EUROPEAN  
**ISLAMOPHOBIA**  
REPORT

---

2017

---

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

---



COPYRIGHT © 2018 by SETA

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, without permission in writing from the publishers.

ISBN: 978-975-2459-61-8

Cover and Layout: Erkan Söğüt

Printed in Turkey, İstanbul by Turkuvaz Haberleşme ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2018

**SETA | FOUNDATION FOR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL RESEARCH**

Nenehatun Caddesi No: 66 GOP Çankaya 06700 Ankara TÜRKİYE

Phone:+90 312.551 21 00 | Fax :+90 312.551 21 90

[www.setav.org](http://www.setav.org) | [info@setav.org](mailto:info@setav.org) | [@setavakfi](https://twitter.com/setavakfi)

**SETA | İstanbul**

Defterdar Mh. Savaklar Cd. Ayvansaray Kavşağı No: 41-43

Eyüpsultan İstanbul TÜRKİYE

Phone: +90 212 315 11 00 | Fax: +90 212 315 11 11

**SETA | Washington D.C.**

1025 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 1106

Washington, D.C., 20036 USA

Phone: 202-223-9885 | Fax: 202-223-6099

[www.setadc.org](http://www.setadc.org) | [info@setadc.org](mailto:info@setadc.org) | [@setadc](https://twitter.com/setadc)

**SETA | Cairo**

21 Fahmi Street Bab al Luq Abdeen Flat No 19 Cairo EGYPT

Phone: 00202 279 56866 | 00202 279 56985 | [@setakahire](https://twitter.com/setakahire)

## ABOUT EDITORS

### **Enes Bayraklı**

Enes Bayraklı earned his BA, MA and PhD from the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, and conducted research for his PhD thesis at the University of Nottingham in Britain between 2009 and 2010. He was a deputy director at the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center in London in 2011-2013. Bayraklı also served as the founding director of the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers in Constanta and Bucharest, Romania in August-December 2012. He has been a faculty member at the Department of Political Science and International Relations and the head of the European and International Affairs MA Program at the Turkish-German University since 2013. Currently he is also the director of European Studies at SETA Foundation. His fields of research include Islamophobia in Europe, far-right movements in Europe, the transformation of Turkish foreign policy, foreign policy analysis, and German foreign policy. Email: bayrakli@tau.edu.tr

### **Farid Hafez**

Farid Hafez PhD (Political Science, University of Vienna) is lecturer and researcher at the University of Salzburg, Department of Political Science and Sociology. He is also Senior Researcher at Georgetown University's 'The Bridge Initiative'. Currently, he also lectures at Istanbul Zaim University in Istanbul. In 2017, he was Fulbright visiting professor at University of California, Berkeley and in 2014, he was visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York. Since 2010, Hafez has been editor of the Islamophobia Studies Yearbook, and since 2015 co-editor of the annual European Islamophobia Report. He has received the Bruno Kreisky Award for the political book of the year, for his anthology Islamophobia in Austria (co-ed. with John Bunzl) and published more than 70 books and articles, including in high-ranking academic journals. Moreover, Hafez regularly publishes op-ed's and is frequently interviewed by media outlets. Email: farid.hafez@sbg.ac.at

*For more information about the EIR:*

[www.islamophobiaeurope.com](http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com)

[islamophobia@setav.org](mailto:islamophobia@setav.org)

# FOREWORD

SETA is pleased to present the third edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) succeeding the reports of 2015 and 2016. This year, 40 prominent scholars and civil society actors from various European countries who specialize in different fields such as racism, gender, and discrimination studies, present 33 country reports. In addition to highlighting the developments of Islamophobia in key fields such as employment, education and politics, they provide precious country-specific policy recommendations to counter this phenomenon and a detailed chronology of events. Since every year it applies the same methodological framework on a large number of European countries, the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) provides a unique collection of European-wide analyses in regard to anti-Muslim racism in Europe to policy makers, social scientists, and ordinary readers.

Monitoring Islamophobia in Europe became an urgent need in the last few years, since the phenomenon has sensibly increased, following economic recession and the rise of far-right politics. Today, Islamophobia constitutes a serious challenge for European democracies for at least four reasons:

- First of all, Islamophobia is severely impacting the life of millions of European Muslims facing racism at university, in the workplace, the public sphere, etc. In addition to representing a threat to their physical life, this racism undermines their place in society and their sense of belonging in European nation states.

- Secondly, the rise of Islamophobia both reflects and strengthens the normalization of far-right discourse in the political spectrum across Europe. Within a few months, neofascist parties entered the German Bundestag, accessed strategic ministries in Austria, and registered historical results in the French, Dutch and Italian elections.
- Thirdly, Islamophobia poses a problem of internal security as it intensifies tensions between communities, legitimizes hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the European Union ideals of peace and coexistence.
- Finally, Islamophobia represents an obstacle for European international relations, since it mars the EU image of tolerance worldwide and increases tension between EU member states and certain strategic partners, including Muslim countries.

Yet, even if Islamophobia objectively constitutes a threat for European democracies, many European intellectuals and politicians, both left- and right-wing, are still refuting the existence and the validity of the concept. Their worries about terrorist attacks and immigration are preventing them from acknowledging the daily racism that Muslims face in Europe. However, by denying Islamophobia, there is a risk – intended or not – to ignore the unacceptable reality experienced by millions of European citizens.

Based on this observation, as SETA, we decided to annually publish the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) in order to provide serious – yet accessible – analyses on a phenomenon that remains widely ignored and misunderstood. We hope this will be a vital contribution in the fight against Islamophobia in Europe.

Burhanettin Duran  
*General Coordinator of SETA*

# THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This is the third issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year's *EIR* represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

In a presentation of the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey's selected findings on Muslims, the director of the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Michael O'Flaherty, stressed that their survey clearly contradicts the claim that Muslims are not integrated into European societies. On the contrary, the survey found that the trust of Muslims in the democratic institutions of Europe is higher than much of the general population. Furthermore, O'Flaherty pointed out that "every incident of discrimination and hate crime, however, hinders their [Muslims'] inclusion and reduces their chances of finding work. We risk that we alienate individuals and their community from us, with all possible consequences."<sup>1</sup>

---

1. FRA, "Press Release: Muslims in the EU: High Levels of Trust Despite Pervasive Discrimination", Vienna, September 21, 2017.

As the report based on a survey of 10,527 people who identified themselves as Muslims published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe. In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the *European Islamophobia Report* project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in almost all states in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

However, NGOs and projects like the *EIR* cannot provide a European-wide daily monitoring mechanism given the colossal size of the problem and the funds required. Therefore, we think it is the duty of the nation states to put in place monitoring mechanisms and publish yearly data on anti-Muslim hate crimes in their respective countries. Yet, it is clear that we are far from that goal since there is no official documentation of anti-Muslim hate crime in the overwhelming majority of European nation states. Recently, Germany made an important step by including Islamophobia as a subcategory of “hate crimes” in the official police statistics of “politically motivated criminal acts.” We welcome this decision and urge other European nation states to follow suit, since Islamophobia is not only a fundamental threat to the coexistence of different religions and cultures but also a threat to the democratic foundations of Europe. Furthermore, tackling Islamophobia has also become an acute problem given the rise of racist, especially Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Roma far-right parties and the adaptation of their discourse by mainstream parties in many European nation states.

The first statistics, which were revealed for 2017 by the German State reveal around 71 attacks on mosques and 908 crimes against German Muslims (ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts). Germany also registered 1,413 attacks on refugees and 93 attacks on aid workers in Germany in the first 273 days of 2017. However, although the German state registered 71 attacks on mosques, the DITIB, which is an NGO, listed 101 attacks on mosques in Germany all throughout 2017. Therefore, bearing in mind also what the FRA revealed about the reluctance of Muslims to report incidents, one can claim that the estimated number of unknown cases might be more than eight times higher. There are various reasons for these phenomena; some of these include:



- Victims may not be aware of the reporting mechanisms.
- The victims' possible social isolation or proximity to the perpetrator.
- The victims' lack of trust in the authorities, due to fears that their claim will not be taken seriously.
- The victims' fear of being victimized again by police officers.

In this regard, the OSCE ODIHR points out to the fact that “governments have a central role to play in ensuring access to justice; from the initial assessment of victims' needs by police officers, to support mechanisms for victims through governmental or nongovernmental institutions.”<sup>2</sup>

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states. Intelligence services, such as the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, have realized the important role Islamophobia plays for right-wing extremist parties.<sup>3</sup> Still, it is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are no longer immune to this form of racism.

The recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance in Europe. Therefore, we welcome the Swedish government's decision to launch a National Plan to Combat Racism, which also acknowledges Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed. However, despite this positive step the Equality Ombudsman in Sweden followed the EU Court of Justice in ruling that company policies banning the Islamic headscarf are not discriminatory.

That is also why initiatives such as the report *The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All* by Conservative MP Dominic Grieve, in which the government was urged to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice along the lines of that adopted in 2016 for anti-Semitism, are so important. Successfully combating Islamophobia requires outspoken and brave initiatives and persons (politicians and activists) who challenge this widespread normalized form of racism.

With the help of the new president of the USA, who defends his “Muslim Ban” by referring to invented terrorist attacks such as the one in Sweden, the imagined figure of the all-time lurking Muslim enemy is kept alive. When Trump tweet-

2. OSCE, “Hate Crime against Muslims”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.osce.org/odihr/373441?download=true>.

3. BfV, “What is Right-Wing Extremism?”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/right-wing-extremism/what-is-right-wing-extremism>.

ed “You look at what's happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible,”<sup>4</sup> Swedish officials and reporters were bewildered since there were no major incidents that night. The climate of the age of fake news, which has always been central to the spread of conspiracy theories, is now exaggerated and expanded by leading politicians in the world, while the structural dimension of Islamophobia still exists at the heart of European societies and institutions. This situation requires a need for a clear stance by governing politicians, elites and intellectuals since they are bound by their constitutions and laws, and international and national human rights standards.

In this manner, British Prime Minister Theresa May criticized Trump for reposting material from the far-right Britain First, while the U.S. president answered her with the advice that it would be better if she dealt with the “destructive radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom” rather than focusing on him.<sup>5</sup> It is quite clear that Europe needs more courageous leaders such as Alexander Van der Bellen, the president of the Austrian Republic, who defended the rights of women to wear a headscarf in a country where the far right has become the leading political power.<sup>6</sup>

## Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels

Combatting Islamophobia on national and regional levels is important but not enough. Therefore, there is a need for a concerted effort to combat Islamophobia first on the European level and second on the supranational level. In this regard both the coordination among different NGOs and the involvement of institutions such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UN are essential. In 2017, there were some initial positive steps on the EU level, however, given the size of the problem there is still a long way to go.

As an NGO coalition statement following the 4th Roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred, which was organized by the European Commission (EC) and chaired by the EU coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, David Friggieri, made clear, a “stronger and more concrete commitment and actions”<sup>7</sup> are needed to combat

---

4. Chan Sewell, “Last Night in Sweden? Trump’s Remark Baffles a Nation”, retrieved December 12, 2017, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/europe/last-night-in-sweden-trumps-remark-baffles-a-nation.html>.

5. David Smith, “Donald Trump Attacks Theresa May over Her Criticism of His Far-right Retweets”, retrieved February 9, 2018, from [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/29/donald-trump-theresa-may-tweet-uk-us](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/29/donald-trump-theresa-may-tweet-uk-us).

6. Farid Hafez, “Austria’s President and the Islamophobia Debate: The Courage of One Man”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://en.qantara.de/content/austrias-president-and-the-islamophobia-debate-the-courage-of-one-man>.

7. NGO Coalition Statement following 4th European Commission Roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred, retrieved December 18, 2017, from <http://www.enar-eu.org/NGO-coalition-statement-following-4th-European-Commission-Round-Table-on-anti>.

Islamophobia. These civil society organizations argue that “there are still some misconceptions by the European institutions with regards to the issue of Islamophobia. With the generalised suspicion against Muslims, it is of utmost importance for EU policy makers not to fall into the trap of treating Muslims as potential problems but rather as human beings whose fundamental rights can be violated. Combatting Islamophobia is not about preventing radicalism or terrorism [...] it is about politically addressing structural forms of discrimination and racism affecting Muslims or those perceived as such.”<sup>8</sup>

Although the statements of high-ranking politicians such as Frans Timmerman, vice-president of the European Commission, in which he recognized the problem of Islamophobia are positive steps, the European Coalition against Islamophobia still sees a large potential for improvement regarding the fight against Islamophobia on the EU level. According to the European Coalition against Islamophobia, the EU and national legislations provide legal remedies for racist crime and discrimination, yet Muslims still suffer from violence, prejudice and exclusion in Europe.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the FRA recommends better implementation of the relevant EU and national legislation to combat widespread harassment and hate crime against Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

On March 14, 2017, the European Court of Justice (EJC) for the first time made two judgments to rule on non-discrimination at work on religious grounds.<sup>11</sup> The EJC ruled that employers would be able to prohibit the wearing of religious garments by their employees. This was despite the content of Article 9, which secures the freedom of thought, conscience and religion of the European Convention on Human Rights. The EJC ruled that banning visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs is “appropriate” to ensure a “policy of neutrality” if systematically applied as a company policy. Obviously, also observant Jews and other religious minorities will be affected by this as much as Muslim women and men. But the verdict has evolved in the context of the complaints of two Muslim women, one from France and one from Belgium. It will be Muslim women who will suffer from this regulation disproportionately. Amnesty International protested against this decision as potentially propelling increased discrimination on the basis of religious identity, especially against Muslim women. Also, many faith communities and vocal Muslim organizations in Brussels and beyond have objected to what they perceive a step towards further institutionalization of Islamopho-

8. Ibid.

9. European Coalition against Islamophobia, “Strengthening Actions against Islamophobia: Next Steps for the European Commission”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from [http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017\\_one-pager\\_ec\\_islamophobia.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017_one-pager_ec_islamophobia.pdf).

10. OSCE, “Bias against Muslims”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <http://hatecrime.osce.org/taxonomy/term/230>.

11. Court of Justice of the European Union PRESS RELEASE No 30 /17 Luxembourg, March 14, 2017, <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-03/cp170030en.pdf>

bia. While this verdict made clear that visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs can be banned in private companies, it left many questions open regarding the decisions to be taken in the future.

As Bülent Senay, personal representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, argued during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017, on a supranational level, institutions still lack means to fight Islamophobia. Amongst other important recommendations, he called the OSCE states to commit to recording hate crimes against Muslims as a separate disaggregated category. The OSCE ODIHR is also considering the preparation of a guide on hate crimes against Muslims and on the security needs of Muslim communities in the OSCE region. A similar guide has been prepared and published for Jewish communities.<sup>12</sup> We think this would be a positive step to combatting Islamophobia in the OSCE region and, therefore, welcome the preparation of such a guide.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe publishes an annual report on the ECRI's activities, in which Islamophobia is also analyzed under a separate heading. In the last report, which covered the year 2016, the ECRI points to the fact that "Muslims continue to experience discrimination in various areas of social life, including education, employment and housing."<sup>13</sup> The ECRI concludes that the "negative experiences of Muslims in Europe can fuel feelings of isolation within a larger community and hinder inclusive societies."<sup>14</sup> However, we think that the Council of Europe, which consists of 47 states, can play a wider role in the combat against Islamophobia in Europe.

The European Coalition against Islamophobia, which consists of 13 NGOs,<sup>15</sup> has published its suggestion for an action plan for 2018-2019 to fight Islamophobia in the European Union. This plan puts the recognition of Islamophobia at its center and among other important recommendations calls the European Parliament to adopt a resolution on combatting Islamophobia as it did on combatting anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsism.<sup>16</sup>

---

12. OSCE, "Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities", retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://www.osce.org/odihr/317166?download=true>.

13. Council of Europe, "Annual Report on ECRI's Activities", retrieved March 25, 2018, from [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/Annual\\_Reports/Annual%20report%202016.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/Annual_Reports/Annual%20report%202016.pdf).

14. Ibid.

15. The members of this coalition are the following: European Forum of Muslim Women; Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations; Karamah EU; European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion; European Network against Racism; and the Collective against Islamophobia in France.

16. ENAR, "Strengthening Actions against Islamophobia", retrieved March 25, 2018, from [http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017\\_one-pager\\_ec\\_islamophobia.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017_one-pager_ec_islamophobia.pdf).

A resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on March 23, 2016 (Resolution 31/16) expressed “concern over violent attacks motivated by anti-religious bias, targeting individuals belonging to religious minorities, as well as religious places, and recommended that states prevent, investigate and punish such acts.”<sup>17</sup> Although this is more a general resolution on freedom of religion it is still relevant to EU states which are witnessing an unprecedented rise of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the last decade. More concretely, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reported that “the fear of terrorism and racist and xenophobic speech often translate into increases in hate crimes targeting Muslims, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.” Like many others, the special rapporteur reiterated the importance of collecting disaggregated data on hate crimes targeting Muslims and others.<sup>18</sup>

## The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

Beyond the supranational level, there are observable trends in different European nation states. Firstly, the far-right political camp has moved from the periphery to the center and become integral to the political landscape in Europe. While most far-right parties are still in opposition, some have gained major influence by becoming governing parties such as in the cases of Austria, Bulgaria, and Finland. While others may still be in opposition, their Islamophobic discourse, which is so central to most of them, has become mainstream since their issues have been co-opted by former centrist political parties. In Sweden, for instance, the once marginal anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats became the third or second largest party in opinion polls, pushing most other parties to adjust their policies accordingly. Secondly, we also observe a stronger cooperation of various Islamophobic parties in Europe. For instance, the Czech Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD) organized a meeting of representatives of its partners from the European Parliament in December 2017 in Prague. Politicians such as Geert Wilders (Dutch Freedom Party) and Marine Le Pen (Front National) were amongst some of the participants.

From Sweden to Greece, from Poland to the Netherlands, the rise of far-right parties is a vital threat to democratic order in Europe. What is more dangerous is the mainstreaming and normalization of the far-right policies within mainstream politics. Austria is a wake-up call and the prime example of this horror story which might repeat itself in many European countries if European societies do not seriously tackle this disturbing trend.

17. OSCE, “Bias against Muslims”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <http://hatecrime.osce.org/taxonomy/term/230>.

18. Ibid.

## The Right Wing in Opposition

As mentioned above in the majority of EU countries far-right parties are still in opposition. However, when in opposition, right-wing political parties are even more explicit about their racist utopia and hence speak out in a harsher and more direct way against Muslims. By doing so, they are playing a crucial role in the normalization of anti-Muslim discourse in Europe.

There are many examples of this blatant anti-Muslim racism, some of which will be presented here. In this context, the Northern League's candidate for president of the Lombardy region of Italy warned that there is a "risk that the white race disappears and is replaced by migrants."<sup>19</sup> In Slovenia, right-wing populist and extremist parties are not strong enough to win elections, however they are very active on social media and in the organization of public events and protests. For instance, Nova 24TV in Slovenia broadcasted the following Islamophobic opinion: "Obviously, we do not have enough terrorists, rapists and other criminals in Europe. It seems that leading politicians want to bring even more. Only this can explain their desire for the ever-increasing inclusion of migrants and Muslims in European countries."<sup>20</sup>

In Latvia, numerous pre-election programs of various parties for the 2017 municipal elections demonstrated unambiguous Islamophobic positions. In Riga, the Action Party of Eurosceptics (Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija) published the following slogan in their program, "We are not against Muslims, we are against the Islamization of Latvia and Europe."<sup>21</sup> The National Alliance (Nacionālā apvienība) was even more radical in its program in which it stated that it was "in support of not letting into Liepāja illegal immigrants called 'refugees' – potential criminals, terrorists and idlers! There will be no mosques here!"<sup>22</sup>

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, anti-Muslim bigotry and negative trends towards Muslims were evident mainly in the educational, political and media sectors. The main generators of Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim bigotry are the Bosnian Serb political, media and academic policymakers.

For the first time since 1989 a right-wing extremist party managed to enter parliament in Slovakia. The opposition party 'We Are a Family – Boris Kolar' submitted

19. Milano, "Fontana: 'Razza bianca da difendere'. Poi precisa: 'È stato un lapsus'. Salvini: siamo sotto attacco", retrieved March 25, 2018, from [http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18\\_gennaio\\_15/atilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml](http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18_gennaio_15/atilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml).

20. Nova 24TV, "Levičarske dobre vile muslimanom odpirajo vrata, Evropa pa hudičeva semena še kar zaliva" (The Left Good Fairies Open the Doors of Europe to Muslims, and Europe Still Waters the Devil Seeds), retrieved November 22, 2017, from <http://nova24tv.si/svet/levicarske-dobre-vile-muslimanom-odpirajo-vrata-evropa-pa-hudiceva-semena-se-kar-zaliva/>.

21. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija", retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=8k1v7yBEuCMERyWBkqtFTQ%3D%3D>.

22. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Nacionālā savienīga Taisnīgums," retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=0zFqpAsLIE456csFZERqxQ%3D%3D>.

a bill to amend the laws to enable a ban on building mosques. Eleven members voted for the proposal, 48 against it, while more than a half of the MPs, 77 in total, abstained from the vote.

In Southern Cyprus, a newly established party, the far-right ELAM (Ethniko Laiko Metopo), which is a sister party to Greece's Golden Dawn, has significantly contributed to spreading Islamophobia in the southern part of the island. Although ELAM is a very small party and only managed to enter parliament in 2016 with 3.71% (allowing them 2 MPs), their views are widespread; the archbishop of southern Cyprus often expresses his agreement with ELAM'S positions.

The successful Swiss right-wing party SVP tried to introduce a full-face veil ban in Sweden. Another parliamentary initiative by National Councillor Yannick Buttet (CVP) demanded a "mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sales as well as an increase in the price of imported halal meat."<sup>23</sup> Although the National Council accepted the initiative, the Council of States rejected it.

In Switzerland, the parliamentary motion by Lorenzo Quadri from the regional right-wing party Lega, which was adopted in the National Council, instructed the Federal Council to draw up a bill, which, following the rules that apply in Austria, provides a guarantee for the following: "(1) The prohibition of Islamic places of worship and imams who accept funds from abroad; (2) The obligation for Islamic centers to disclose the origin and use of their finances; (3) The duty to conduct sermons in the language of residence."<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile in the UK, UKIP's election manifesto promised a public ban on "face coverings" and proscribed sharia courts in the UK. In the Netherlands, radical parties such as the Dutch SGP (a radical Christian party) published a manifesto,<sup>25</sup> which argued that "the love offer of Jesus Christ and Muhammad's use of violence are as different as day and night."<sup>26</sup>

Beyond political parties, on the more extreme non-parliamentarian level or the grassroots level, far-right groups, such as the Identitarian movement or ones that function underground, pose a threat to Muslims in Europe, especially in their most violent form. Nationalist groups such as, among others, the Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement and the "Finland First" movement were active in spreading their ideology of hate.

23. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, "Motion 15.499: Import of Halal Meat from Animals Slaughtered without Stunning," retrieved January 18, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20150499>.

24. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, "Motion 16.3330: Islamische Gebetsstätten. Verbot der Finanzierung durch das Ausland und Offenlegungspflicht," retrieved January 9, 2017, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=41116>.

25. SGP, "Manifest islam in Nederland", retrieved January 26, 2018, from <https://www.sgp.nl/actueel/manifest-islam-in-nederland/6125>.

26. Ibid., p. 2.



## The Right Wing in Power

Currently, there are a few governments in Europe, which include right-wing parties that have focused heavily on using Islamophobia as a means of gaining public support and political power. After the general elections in Norway, the Progress Party, which is often regarded as a right-wing populist party and which had an openly Islamophobic election campaign, governs together with the conservatives in a coalition. Consequently, for the first time in Norwegian history, there are government representatives who do not shy away from using Islamophobic discourse. The Progress Party's minister for immigration and integration, Sylvi Listhaug, suggested a prohibition against hijabs at elementary schools, which was not supported by the coalition partner. The party also proposed to ban the circumcision of baby boys, which also found no support in parliament. A third proposal, a national ban of the face veil in schools and institutions of higher education, won broad parliamentary support and is currently being circulated for consultation.

In the Czech Republic, a new party called ANO won the elections. Its leader supported the notorious Islamophobic politician, Czech President Miloš Zeman. The leader of the right-wing populist party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), which campaigns continuously for a legal ban of Islam, became vice-chair of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Although there is a tiny Muslim community in the country, the 2017 national elections were the first in the history of the Czech Republic, during which attitudes towards Muslims were a central issue.

In Bulgaria, a hostile language towards Muslims is winning ground. Especially, during election campaigns, anti-Muslim rhetoric was at its peak. Many extreme right-wing political parties such as ATAKA, NFSB (National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria), and IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) are part of the current government and form a coalition with the leading party.

In Serbia, there are ministers such as Aleksandar Vulin, minister of defense, and Nebojša Stefanovic, minister of the interior, who attract attention by stirring ethnic and religious hostilities. Today, we can witness a revival of political parties and forces from the 1990s in the political arena. Currently, the strongest parties are those that were the most important players in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. A rise in nationalism and hate speech targeting Muslims can be seen in the public sphere. Crimes committed against Muslims are glorified.

## Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

We observe a general trend within centrist political parties to co-opt the Islamophobic discourse of right-wing political parties. The former president of Romania, Traian Basescu, proclaimed in the midst of a debate on a mosque in Bucharest that this was



“a risk to national security,” and argued that “part of the Islamization of Europe is building mosques everywhere.”<sup>27</sup> During a local council election in Bucharest in June 2016, several leading Bucharest mayoral candidates argued for a referendum on the mosque, amongst them the current mayor Gabriela Firea of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat – PSD).<sup>28</sup>

In Poland, there is no nominal right-wing political party, but a conservative party in power, which nevertheless allows an unambiguous negative image of Islam to be spread in state institutions. State-funded media outlets seem to carefully select their guests, who spread a stereotypical portrayal of Muslims as “violent,” “terrorists,” “Jihadists,” “sexists,” “rapists,” “uncivilized,” “double-faced,” and in general “a threat” to European and Christian values. While a research commissioned by the Commissioner of Human Rights on the attitudes among Polish secondary school students was published in 2017, showing that the majority of the 396 respondents reveal strong anti-refugee, Islamophobic and homophobic prejudice,<sup>29</sup> the Ministry of Education shut down anti-discrimination programs in Polish schools and instead promoted programs supporting patriotism and a national and cultural Polish identity.<sup>30</sup>

In Spain, former president of Madrid and of the senate, and former minister of culture, Esperanza Aguirre, tweeted that January 2 was a glorious day for Spanish women who otherwise would not enjoy any freedom under the rule of Islam.<sup>31</sup> In Slovakia, former president Robert Fico argued that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia.”<sup>32</sup>

In Hungary, the ruling conservative Fidesz competed in Islamophobic rhetoric with the far right. It finally managed to make anti-Muslim narratives become un-

27. Gandul, “Băsescu nu vrea moschee la București și-l trimite pe Iohannis să se facă muftiu la Sibiu. România trebuie să rămână creștină” (Basescu Doesn’t Want a Mosque in Bucharest and Sends Iohannis to Become a Mufti at Sibiu. Romania Must Remain Christian), retrieved December 26, 2017, from <http://www.gandul.info/politica/basescu-nu-vrea-moschee-la-bucuresti-si-l-trimite-pe-iohannis-sa-se-faca-muftiu-la-sibiu-romania-trebuie-sa-ramana-crestina-15154001>.

28. Euractiv, “Firea: Moschee în București doar după un referendum local/Orban: Nu voi autoriza moscheea lui Ponta” (Mosque in Bucharest Only After Local Referendum / Orban: I Won’t Authorize Ponta’s Mosque), March 25, 2016, retrieved December 23, 2017, from <http://www.euractiv.ro/politic-intern/firea-despre-construirea-unei-moschei-la-bucuresti-doar-dupa-un-referendum-local-3920>.

29. Gajos-Kaniewska, Dorota, “RPO: młodzież nie chce uchodźców – wyniki badania wśród uczniów szkół średnich”, retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://www.rp.pl/Edukacja-i-wychowanie/309069922-RPO-mlodziemnie-chce-uchodzcow---wyniki-badania-wsrod-uczniow-szkol-srednich.html>.

30. Newsweek, “Patryotyzm – tak, tolerancja – nie. Prawicowa ideologia od września wchodzi do polskich szkół” retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/koniec-zajeciami-antydiskryminacyjnymi-w-szkolach-edukacja-narodowa-wedlug-pis,artykuly,412809,1.html>.

31. El Diario, “Esperanza Aguirre, sobre la Toma de Granada: “Es un día de gloria para las españolas. Con el Islam no tendríamos libertad,” retrieved October 24, 2017, from [http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Esperanza-Aguirre-Toma-Granada-Islam\\_0\\_597390772.html](http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Esperanza-Aguirre-Toma-Granada-Islam_0_597390772.html).

32. Juraj Koník, “Premiér Fico je opäť svetový, prerazil výrokmi o moslimoch, ktorých k nám nepusti”, *denník N*, (January 8, 2016) retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://dennikn.sk/338314/premier-fico-opat-svetovy-prerazil-vyrokmimoslomoch-ktorych-nam-nepusti/>.

contested and thus realized a support of an overwhelming portion of the population. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán became famous for the alleged conspiracy of George Soros to Islamize Europe with the help of “hordes of migrants raping Europe.”<sup>33</sup>

During the national presidential elections in France in 2017, Islamophobia was omnipresent not only in the campaign of the Front National but also in an array of other candidates’ campaigns. Also during the national elections in the Netherlands in 2017, there was a race between the right-wing populist party of Geert Wilders (PVV) and the center-right party of Mark Rutte (VVD). Some intellectuals, before the elections, discussed whether the number of Muslims could be reduced by deportation. Prominent Law Professor Paul Cliteur was present during the debate and discussed how this could be made possible legally.

In Denmark, the leader of the Social Democrats, Mette Frederiksen, argued that there is no need for Muslim private schools and that they would be strengthening the isolation of Muslims. Frederiksen argued that “a school with a foundation in Islam is not part of the majority culture in Denmark.”<sup>34</sup> Bias against Muslims within the oppositional social democratic party intensified. This is also true for the conservatives in Austria. There, the then-leader of the conservatives and now chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, argued that there should not be any private Muslim kindergartens in the country.

## Denying the Suffering

In many European countries, the very existence of Islamophobia itself is denied. In countries like Austria and Norway, leading journalists of editorial boards shift the focus from Islamophobia as a problem to Islamophobia as a “combat term,” arguing that the term itself is used by Islamists to delegitimize any debate on Islam and Muslims. Hence, there is a reluctance to use the term “Islamophobia” in the public sphere. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a denial of the anti-Muslim genocide. Nationalist movements and even parts of the Croatian political establishment argue that the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be territorially divided in order to secure peace and security. Convictions such as in the case of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague fueled Islamophobia within these separatist and nationalist movements. Republika Srpska, continued its separatist policy in 2017 and was supported by visits from abroad, especially members of the right-wing Austrian FPÖ, which now forms a government with the conservative ÖVP.

---

33. Farid Hafez, “When Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia Join Hands”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/anti-semitism-islamophobia-join-hands-170809084731114.html>.

34. Andreas Karker and Jacob Friberg, “Mette Frederiksen i brutalt opgør: Luk alle muslimske friskoler”, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/politiko/mette-frederiksen-i-brutalt-opgoer-luk-alle-muslimske-friskoler>.

## The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

An unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish an Islamic State in Sweden was published by a Swedish state agency. The Administrative Court of Appeal later dismissed the report as of “highly limited” value. The author is a senior fellow at the Brussels-based think tank European Foundation for Democracy, which plays a central role in disseminating this conspiracy theory, which helps in defaming Muslim civil society actors. Also in Austria, a report was published on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy by another senior policy advisor of the same think tank in cooperation with a state agency. The report had no serious impact, since it was presented a few days before the elections and did not receive major coverage due to other political scandals. The current chancellor of Austria Sebastian Kurz has been central in sponsoring ‘studies’ on Muslims in Austria (one on Muslim kindergartens, the other on mosques), which would serve his increasingly Islamophobic agenda. Also, Islamophobia is a threat, when good initiatives are legitimized for the wrong ends. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama defended the need for religious instruction in public schools with the prevention of the radicalization of young Muslims.

## Online Islamophobia

Islamophobic groups are especially active on the Internet. Often, the Internet is where right-wing groups emerge before materializing in “real life.” Therefore, better regulations are needed in this sphere to combat the spread of Islamophobic content which is the main source in the radicalization of far-right terrorist groups or lone wolves.

Groups such as the explicitly Islamophobic Identitarian Movement that represents the postmodern face of the New Right, is active in countries like Slovenia, Hungary. Malta witnessed the emergence of its first far-right party, the Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin (Maltese Patriots). While doing poorly in elections, their media campaign and social media advertisements presented many Islamophobic statements. In countries with a negligible Muslim population like Latvia, Islamophobic attitudes are still mostly voiced on the Internet. In Italy, a significant research on intolerance based on an analysis of Twitter realized by Voxdiritti in 2016 ranked Muslims as the fourth most targeted group (6% of all tweets).<sup>35</sup>

## Legalizing Islamophobia

Early in 2017, the Austrian government, made up of social democrats and conservatives, passed a law that outlawed the veiling of the face. Romania followed

35. See VOX, “Ecco la nuova Mappa dell’Intolleranza”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.voxdiritti.it/ecco-la-nuova-edizione-della-mappa-dellintolleranza>.

with a legislative proposal for the ban of face veiling in educational institutions initiated by the ruling People's Movement Party (PMP). The asserted aim was the prevention of violence and terrorism. The law was launched by 26 MPs from three parliamentary parties. Also, in Latvia, where – similar to Romania – there are nearly no Muslims, a draft law on the restriction of wearing a face veil was prepared by the Ministry of Justice in 2015 and is still under consideration. In Belgium, the parliament voted for limitations on ritual slaughter including the prohibition of Muslim halal slaughter. Also, a debate on a state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium began. In a small village in Hungary, a mayor passed a law to ban the construction of mosques and minarets, the Muslim call for prayer, the chador, niqab, burqa, and burkini. The mayor argued that he wished to set a positive example for other Hungarian municipalities in order to guarantee the 'centuries-old traditions' of local communities in the face of mass migration to the country.<sup>36</sup> After massive protests in the entire country, the mayor had to withdraw the legislation for contradicting a number of basic rights guaranteed by the Hungarian Constitution.<sup>37</sup> In November 2017, however, the local council voted in favor of the same legislation that was amended after merely removing any words referring to Islam from the text. Also, the Dutch Christian-Democrats (CDA) included a ban on the financing of mosques from abroad and were wary of "radical Islam" in their campaign program.

In Finland, a citizens' initiative<sup>38</sup> was launched to amend a law in favor of a "Burka Ban." Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki,<sup>39</sup> a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims.<sup>40</sup> A spokesperson of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, current chairman of the Finnish Defense League (FDL), who proclaims to be fighting against "Islamic extremism"<sup>41</sup> and is known for other smaller initiatives such as demonstrations against "Islamization" before a school. In Denmark, a ban on full-face veils, a so-called "mask ban" (popularly referred to as the "niqab ban") was proposed by the Danish

---

36. HVG, "Toroczkai odacsap a bevándorlóknak: megtiltják a mecsetépítést Ásotthalmon", retrieved February 5, 2017, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124\\_toroczkai\\_asonthalom\\_muszlim\\_tiltas](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124_toroczkai_asonthalom_muszlim_tiltas).

37. HVG, "Elmeszelte Toroczkai rendeletét az Alkotmánybíróság", retrieved January 9, 2018, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412\\_alkotmanybirosag\\_toroczkai\\_asonthalom](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412_alkotmanybirosag_toroczkai_asonthalom).

38. "Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing the proposal that an act be enacted" as defined in "MOT Eduskuntasanasto," a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister's Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?UI=fied&height=147>.

39. Cf. "Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016" in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017.

40. For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki's court case, see *Ibid.*

41. Homepage of the Finnish Defense League, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <http://www.fdl.fi/about/>.

People's Party following the verdict by the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>42</sup> This initiative was not only supported by the right wing, but also the Social Democrats and the Danish Social Liberal Party, arguing that they would, thus, empower Muslim women. There is also a law prohibiting male circumcision under way in Denmark.

## Terrorist Attacks against Muslims

In Europe, the largest number of attacks which could conclusively be affiliated to terrorist organizations were carried out by racists, nationalists and separatist extremists (99), followed by left-wing extremist attacks (27). Nevertheless, Jihadist terrorist attacks (13) and the general Muslim population in Europe associated with it are largely seen as the greatest threat to European societies.<sup>43</sup> Irresponsible politicians and media play their part in supporting this trend.

There are worrying signs of far-right terrorist groups and lone wolf far-right terrorists increasing their activities and targeting Muslims in Europe. Attacks against mosques and Muslim institutions have become a daily routine. For instance, according to the DITIB in Germany there were 101 attacks on mosques throughout 2017. However, the attacks against Muslims, persons who are perceived as Muslims, and persons who are vocal in their support for Muslim or refugee rights are becoming more and more frequent and violent. In Germany, the government registered around 908 hate crimes in 2017 against German Muslims, ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts. As a result of these Islamophobic attacks in Europe, there are already victims of Islamophobic terrorist attacks who have either been killed or severely injured. Below we have summarized the most important attacks in 2017.

On the night of April 15, 2017, the 22-year-old Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed al-Gohary was killed in a hit-and-run incident in Cottbus, Germany. The most shocking part is that while she lay injured on the street, people started insulting her in racist ways, believing she was a refugee. The attackers eventually came back on foot and said things like "Well, they gotta check the street first, since they don't have streets at home. They should fuck off to their damn country."

In Germany, the conservative mayor of Altena, Andreas Hollstein, known for his welcoming stance towards refugees was stabbed in the neck and seriously injured in a knife attack at a kebab restaurant.<sup>44</sup>

42. Lizzie Dearden, "European Court of Human Rights Upholds Belgium's Ban on Burqas and Full-Face Islamic Veils," retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/belgium-burqa-ban-upheld-european-court-of-human-rights-dakir-v-full-face-islamic-veils-headscarf-a7835156.html>.

43. EUROPOL, "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation 2017", retrieved March 24, 2018, from [www.europol.europa.eu](http://www.europol.europa.eu).

44. Samuel Osborne, "German Pro-refugee Mayor Stabbed in Politically-Motivated Knife Attack", retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-pro-refugee-mayor-andreas-hollstein-altena-knife-attack-politically-motivated-angela-merkel-a8079806.html>.

In Sweden, three members of the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement were sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison. The trio was found guilty of bombings of two refugee housings and a libertarian socialist trade union office in Gothenburg, which severely wounded one person. They were trained in urban guerrilla warfare by a Russian radical nationalist and anti-Muslim paramilitary organization. The perpetrators were influenced by Islamophobic and anti-Semitic discourse, which was clear in a recorded video prayer to All-Father Odin in which they vowed to “retake our land” and “take the fight against you who have defiled our country.” “Oh Jew, oh Muslim / We Norsemen have awakened / You should fear us / We are coming after you / The rage of the Norsemen thunder / Be assured / Oh, Jew and Muslim / The Norsemen are coming after you.”<sup>45</sup> The fact that Islamophobia goes hand in hand with other forms of racism, such as anti-Semitism in this case, should be a symbolic reminder for those, who are aware of European history.<sup>46</sup> Beyond this example of a right-wing extremist movement, the case of Hungary, where the ruling Fidesz party mobilizes against George Soros while portraying him as a conspirator alongside Muslims to change the European population,<sup>47</sup> reveals again that racism will eventually target every minority.

On September 27, 2017, four members of the banned neo-Nazi group National Action in the UK were arrested on suspicion of preparing and instigating acts of terrorism. According to the UK's Defense Ministry some of them were soldiers serving in the British army.<sup>48</sup>

In Germany, two supporters of a neo-Nazi terrorist group were arrested on January 14 after 155 kg of explosives were discovered in their home.<sup>49</sup> On April 27, a German soldier posing as a Syrian refugee was arrested for allegedly planning a “false flag” shooting attack against politicians that would be blamed on asylum seekers.<sup>50</sup>

On October 17, 2017, 10 far-right militants were arrested by French anti-terrorist police in France. According to the TV station M6, they were suspected of

---

45. Nationella åklagarmyndigheten, Ansökan om stämning, Ärende AM-8443-17, Inkom 2017-06-09MÅLN: B 618-17, AKTBIL: 206; Säkerhetspolisen, Huvudprotokoll, dnr 0105-K98-16 0105-K8-17 0105-K9-17, Inkom 2017-06-09.

46. Farid Hafez, “Comparing Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: The State of the Field”, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Volume 3, Issue 2, Spring 2016, pp. 16-34.

47. Farid Hafez, “When Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia Join Hands”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/anti-semitism-islamophobia-join-hands-170809084731114.html>.

48. DW, “Serving British Soldiers among Neo-Nazi Terror Suspects Arrested in UK”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.dw.com/en/serving-british-soldiers-among-neo-nazi-terror-suspects-arrested-in-uk/a-40370114>.

49. Lizzie Dearden, “German Police Investigating Neo-Nazi Terror Plot after Bomb Branded with Swastika Discovered”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-neo-nazi-right-wing-extremism-terror-plot-attack-refugees-oldschool-society-explosives-a7527116.html>.

50. Lizzie Dearden, “German Soldier Posing as a Syrian Refugee Arrested for Planning False Flag Terror Attack”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/german-soldier-syria-refugee-false-flag-terror-attack-posing-arrested-frankfurt-france-bavaria-a7705231.html>.

planning attacks on French politicians and on Muslim places of worship.<sup>51</sup>

In Russia, between 2012 and 2016, five imams were killed in the Stavropol region. The cases remain unresolved to this day. All the assassinated imams were involved in civic activism and they openly resisted the prohibition of the hijab in the Stavropol region.

On June 19, 2017, a man drove his van deliberately into a crowd of Muslim worshippers leaving the north London Finsbury Park Mosque. As a result of this attack, one person was killed and eleven were injured.

In Poland, a Pakistani Muslim man was severely beaten by a group of men in Ozorków on January 3, 2017. On April 8, 2017, three Pakistani Muslim men were severely beaten in Swidwin Polan.

## Threatening the Religious Infrastructure

More than two decades after the Agreements of 1992 between the Islamic communities and the Spanish state, basic rights such as access to religious education or the possibility of burying the Muslim dead in an Islamic cemetery have not been put into practice in most of the Spanish regions; small steps, however, are being taken in this sense. In Malta, there were debates about the legitimacy of teaching Islam to Muslim pupils.

In Slovakia, there has been a parliamentary debate on a draft law that toughened the registration of churches and religious communities and a draft has been submitted by members of the government of the Slovak National Party (SNS). This trend of discrimination against Muslims, who are a small minority in Slovakia and thus directly affected by these amendments, has been noticed by the U.S. Department of State, which in its report on religious freedom in the world noted the disparity in the approach to religious rights in the country. Today, it is impossible for the Muslim community to become an officially registered religious community in Slovakia.

In Greece, three mosques located inside non-governmental organizations belonging to members of the Muslim Turkish minority were closed by the Greek police - one of them had existed for 12 years. Officially, the closures were due to the lack of the necessary permissions to function a house of prayer inside the premises.

In Bulgaria, an indifference from the part of governments to the religious needs of Muslims can be observed. There is a lack of funding by the state be it in the area of religious education, Muslims' attempts to develop a cultural-religious center, or the blocking of Muslims' attempts to regain property ownership of *waqf* properties. Also, many Muslim religious employees, which were formerly and legally paid by the Turkish government, had to leave their jobs because the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria unilaterally cancelled the treaty between Bulgaria and Turkey and did not

51. The Strait Times, "French Police Arrest 10 Far-Right Militants", retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/10-arrested-in-france-over-suspected-plot-to-kill-politicians-probe-source>.



inform the representatives of the Office of the Grand Mufti, which faced a structural crisis after being informed three months later.

On a European level, the European Citizens' Initiative against Extremism (Stop Extremism) was founded and recognized on June 7, 2017 by the European Commission. Among its initiators are Seyran Ates and Efgani Dönmez, who are known for their notorious Islamophobic positions. Supporters include well-known Islamophobes such as Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, Ralph Ghadban, Saida Keller-Messahli, and Necla Kelek. The initiative, which came under criticism when leaks by the weekly *Falter* revealed that more than 20,000 Euros, the budget specified by the EU Commission, could potentially be used to restrict Muslims' religious activities. Stop Extremism calls for "the introduction of a joint, EU-wide watch list to which individuals and organizations with an extremist background could be added" as well as for the introduction of an "Extremism-free" certification for organizations and businesses.<sup>52</sup> Initiatives like this seem to target specifically Muslims, not extremists, and to restrain their scope of activities, which ultimately reflects already existing restrictions as discussed above.

## Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations

The picture presented here shows us that there is an urgent need to counter these developments. And there is room for hope. Critical assessment of the current situation regarding Muslims in Europe is growing within parts of civil society. Not only are there more and more institutions that are working to bring attention to the rise in hate crime towards Muslims such as the Spain-based Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios<sup>53</sup> but there are also favorable developments such as in the Norwegian justice system which has developed positive steps regarding monitoring and convicting cases involving hate speech or discrimination against Muslims. Also, the German Federal Police has made a first important institutional step to combatting Islamophobia by documenting it: for the first time, Islamophobia has been included as a category of hate crime.

There are more and more politicians, who dare to openly speak out against the threat of Islamophobia. President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska stood up for Muslims in his New Year's speech. Also, Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen took a stance of solidarity with Muslim women wearing the hijab. Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä called people not to respond to "hate with hate"<sup>54</sup> in the aftermath of the stabbings by a Muslim citizen, which led to increased harassment, violent physical attacks as well as acts of vandalism against Muslim properties van-

---

52. Stop Extremism, "Six Actions That We Demand to Secure a Safer Europe", retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.en.stopextremism.eu/about>.

53. Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los medios, <http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/>.

54. Tuulia Thynell, "Pääministeri Sipilä: Teko oli raukkamainen ja tuomittava, mutta vihaan ei pidä vastata vihalla", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9786182>.



dalism towards Muslims.<sup>55</sup> These examples of political courage give hope that there still exist reasonable politicians, who look beyond their ephemeral political careers, keeping the good of the whole of society in mind. With an increase of alternative right-wing media and social media bubbles as well as a general swing to the right, hate speech is becoming more and more normalised. In an especially extreme incident in the Czech Republic, children in a primary school in the city of Teplice were threatened with death in gas chambers; the class was comprised predominantly of children of Arab or Romani origin. Such incidents call for an unambiguous reaction on behalf of politicians and opinion leaders.

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. This will support all those forces within European societies, who work towards a more equal society and fight every form of racism. The editors of the *EIR* support the following recommendations which were made by the OSCE ODIHR office, the FRA, the ENAR, the European Coalition against Islamophobia, and other NGOs:

- In the face of the increased and generalized suspicion and marginalization of Muslims in the post-terrorist attacks and migration contexts and the deep impact the former have had on Muslims' lives, including newly arrived migrants, the recognition of the specific form of racism targeting Muslims (or those perceived as such) is crucial.
- The misconceptions and demonization surrounding the fight against Islamophobia and visible Muslims, in general, need to be challenged; data, facts and concrete solutions need to be visible in order to improve the recognition of Islamophobia and influence policy changes.
- This should lead to informed anti-racism/anti-discrimination policies and support the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation on the national and European levels. EU institutions need to recognize and address Islamophobia politically as a form of racism that can lead to human rights violations.
- While the issue of Islamophobia has gained more visibility in recent years at the EU level, there is a clear need for stronger actions that will materialize recognition into concrete political actions.
- Considering their competence on the issue of anti-racism and non-discrimination, EU institutions have the possibility to support progress and change in this area. The appointment of the European Commission's coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred following the European Commission's 2015 colloquium on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred has created a momentum for the EU to act.

55. Marjaana Varmavuori/Maija Aalto, "16-vuotias somalialainen pahoitettiin kotirapussa, parturi uhattiin tappaa – maahanmuuttajat kertovat, että täysin sivullisia uhkailaan nyt väkivallalla Turun tapahtumien vuoksi", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005336689.html>.

- The legal and political recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance. Therefore, a European-level conference on Islamophobia should be organized with the support of at least one EU Member State or the European Parliament.
- In this context, the European Parliament should adopt a resolution on combating Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward - as it did to combat anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsism.
- The adoption of EU standards for National Action Plans against Racism that take into account specific forms of racism, and include specific measures on Islamophobia with objectives and targets is necessary.
- EU member states should adopt national action plans against racism addressing Islamophobia as a specific form of racism.
- The European Commission should develop a roadmap detailing main policy instruments, issues and examples of good practice by Member States. This would function as a standard document that would be the basis for concrete operational objectives and action plans for the EU coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred.
- The European Commission's coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred should develop a clear action plan for combatting Islamophobia.
- A high-level roundtable should be organized with the European Commission's coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred and NGOs on the issue of Islamophobia.
- Europe needs courageous leaders and activists who can confront the Islamophobic discourses and narratives in the age of rising far-right parties.
- A Guidance handbook should be developed on the collection methodology of hate crime data for EU Member States in order to ensure that Islamophobia is duly recorded according to the victims' and witnesses' perceptions and lived experiences; other bias indicators should be included in the data collection as well.
- The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes as a separate category of hate crime by the police is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.
- Muslim women's access to employment should be improved since they are the most discriminated group among Muslims. Gender equality departments and the corresponding committees of EU institutions should give specific attention to situations of discrimination affecting Muslim women by documenting the issue and pushing for specific programs and measures to combat it.
- While protecting free speech, developing good guidelines to tackle online hate speech and considering primary legislation to deal with social media offences and online hate speech are also vital since the Internet plays an important role in the spread of Islamophobic discourses and also in the radicalization of far-right terrorists.

- Discrimination in the workplace should be tackled to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at the stages of recruitment, job retention, and promotion.
- Preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights including religious slaughter, circumcision and the wearing of religious attire or symbols are imperative for a multicultural Europe.
- Counter-terrorism policies should work with Muslim communities, not against them, in the so-called “de-radicalization” programs. These programs should also incorporate the fight against far-right and far-left terrorist groups and should not only target Muslims.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NUMBERS

- The overwhelming majority of European states do not record Islamophobic incidents as a separate category of hate crime. The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes by the police as a separate category of hate crime is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.
- In the EU, only 12% of Muslims who have been discriminated against report their cases to the authorities. (Source: FRA) The non-exhaustive list that follows hints at the extent of underreporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe by states and NGOs, which has serious implications regarding the awareness of Muslims and the bureaucracy to tackle these issues.



## DENMARK

In 2016, **56** Islamophobic incidents were reported. 20% of the all hate crime committed in 2016 targeted Muslims, while the group make up 5% of the general population, making Muslims the most targeted minority.

(Source: National Police)



## BELGIUM

In the month following the terror attacks in Brussels, **36** Islamophobic incidents were recorded. (Source: CCIB).



## AUSTRIA

**256** Islamophobic incidents were documented.

(Source: EIR Report, Antidiscrimination Office Styria, ZARA, and Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education [IDB]).

## FRANCE

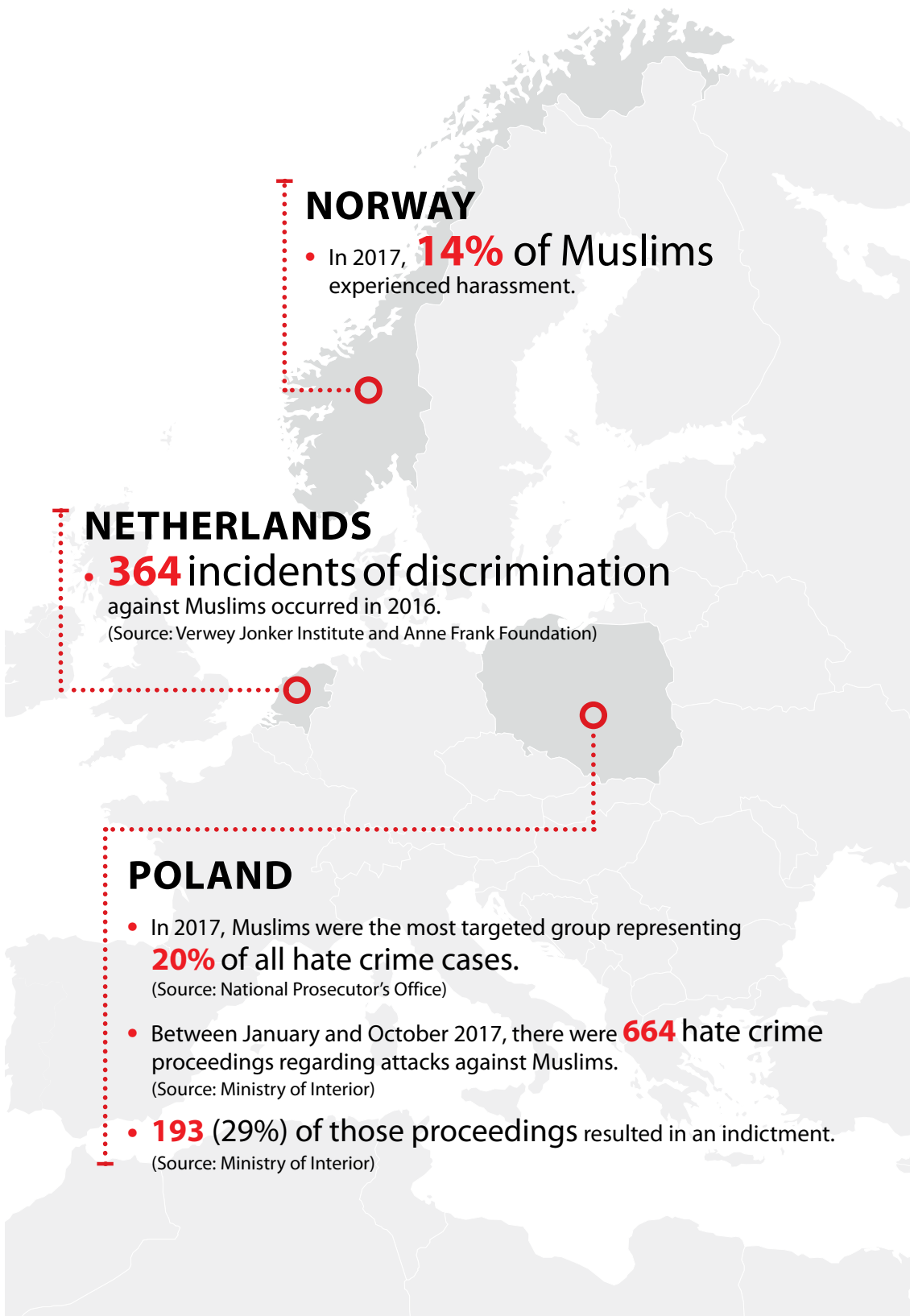
- **121** Islamophobic incidents were reported.  
(Source: Observatory of Islamophobia)
- **19** Muslim places of worship were closed by the government; **749** individuals were placed under house arrest; over **4,500** police raids were conducted; and the list of individuals under government surveillance has reached **25,000**.
- **17,393** individuals were enrolled in the Terrorism Prevention Database (FSPRT).

## GERMANY

- **100** attacks occurred on mosques.  
(Source: DITIB and German State)
- **908** attacks took place targeting German Muslims.
- **60%** of all Muslim teaching staff felt discriminated.  
(Source: Karim Fereidooni)
- There were **1,906** criminal attacks on refugees  
(5.2 attacks per day).
- There were **286** attacks against refugee shelters  
(0.8 attacks per day).
- **132** criminal acts and physical attacks against  
(refugee) aid workers occurred (0.4 attacks per day).  
(Source: German state)

## MALTA

- **7%** of Muslims have experienced physical violence.
- **25%** of Muslims have experienced harassment.



## NORWAY

- In 2017, **14%** of Muslims experienced harassment.

## NETHERLANDS

- **364** incidents of discrimination against Muslims occurred in 2016.  
(Source: Verwey Jonker Institute and Anne Frank Foundation)

## POLAND

- In 2017, Muslims were the most targeted group representing **20%** of all hate crime cases.  
(Source: National Prosecutor's Office)
- Between January and October 2017, there were **664** hate crime proceedings regarding attacks against Muslims.  
(Source: Ministry of Interior)
- **193** (29%) of those proceedings resulted in an indictment.  
(Source: Ministry of Interior)

## SWEDEN

- In 2016, **439** hate crimes with Islamophobic motives were recorded. (Source: Swedish Crime Survey-NTU)

## UNITED KINGDOM

- The terrorist attack in Manchester in May resulted in a **fivefold increase** in Islamophobic hate crime in the Greater Manchester region. (Source: Greater Manchester Police)
- Hate crime cases targeting Muslims in Greater London for the entire year of 2017 increased to **1,204** from **1,678** in the previous year, which is equal to a 40% rise. (Source: Scotland Yard)
- Between March and July 2017, the number of **attacks on mosques** climbed to **110** from **47** in the previous year. (Source: Tell MAMA UK)
- In 2016, **1,223** cases of Islamophobic attacks were reported to Tell MAMA. Twenty percent of these incidents involve physical attacks; **56%** of the victims were women, while two-thirds of the perpetrators were men.

## SPAIN

- In 2017, **546** attacks took place against Muslims. (Source: Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia)

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**ITALY**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

---

ALFREDO ALIETTI, DARIO PADOVAN





## Authors

**Alfredo Alietti**, PhD in Sociology, is professor of Urban Sociology at the University of Ferrara. He is a member of the Research Network 31 of the European Sociological Association “Racism, Anti-Semitism and Ethnic Relations.” He is co-coordinator of Laboratorio di Studi Urbani (Laboratory of Urban Studies) in the Department of Humanistic Studies that promotes research and training in urban and territorial issues. He is a member of the international editorial committees of *Theomai Journal*, *Society, Nature and Development Studies*. Alietti is a member of the research group “Housing and Migration” of the ISMU Foundation (Interventions and Studies on Multi-Ethnicity). He has conducted extensive research at the national and European level on topics such as racism, discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, interethnic relations in the urban setting, socio-spatial segregation, urban and housing policies, and urban requalification of deprived areas. He has published numerous articles and books on racism and ethnic discrimination focusing on Italian society. His latest book is entitled *Razzismi, discriminazioni e disuguaglianze. Analisi e ricerche sulla società italiana (Racisms, Discriminations and Inequalities. Analyses and Researches in Italian Societies)* (Milano, 2017).

**Dario Padovan** holds a PhD in Sociology and is associate professor of Sociology at the Department of Culture, Politics and Society, University of Turin. He has worked extensively on the history of social sciences, ethnic relations, racism and prejudice, fear of crime and insecurity, environmental sociology, social metabolism, and sustainable consumption. Padovan is a member of the editorial committee of *Theomai Journal* (Buenos Aires, Argentina), *Democracy & Nature* (London, U.K.), and *Chosmos & History* (Melbourne, Australia). He is a member of European Sociological Association Research Network 31 which focuses on “Race Relations, anti-Semitism and racism” and of the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control. He is currently conducting research on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

**Disclaimer:** Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions. No representation, either expressed or implied, is made of the accuracy of the material in the national reports. The editors of the *European Islamophobia Report* cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The reader must make his or her own evaluation of the accuracy and appropriateness of the material.

**To cite this report:** Alfredo Alietti and Dario Padovan: *Islamophobia in Italy: National Report 2017*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, Istanbul, SETA, 2018.

## Executive Summary

The Italian context is hit by a deep “social malaise” that has found an echo in a dynamic of xenophobia and aversion against a multi-ethnic society and religious pluralism. Over the years, the impact on public opinion of a political discourse characterized by anti-Islamic rhetoric has been significant and decisive. In 2017, the question of the *Ius soli* Bill (draft law) for second-generation migrants was a classic example of this trend and a progressive legitimization of clearly xenophobic statements.

In addition, the flow of refugees provoked a virulent populist rhetoric and numerous public events organized by extreme right-wing movements and parties (*Lega Nord*, *Forza Nuova* and *Casa Pound*). In the course of 2017, attacks against migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and, in particular, against Muslim communities intensified and were motivated by the defence of Western and Christian values. Newspapers close to right-wing parties were the main vehicles of prejudices against Islam and Muslims. During 2017, a specific research on Italian newspapers identified 146 titles that could be defined as discriminatory, of which 20% were associated with Islam.

These articles claimed that Muslims were incompatible with Italian civilization and, above all, equated them all to terrorists. An important increase of instances of hate speech against Islam by Internet-based neofascist and Catholic fundamentalist groups was also recorded.

Recently the Italian government signed the “National Pact for an Italian Islam” with the main Islamic organizations in order to open a structural dialogue and to guarantee religious freedom by the establishment of legal mosques. This is a fundamental step toward the recognition of Italian Islam and the presence of Muslim communities as privileged interlocutors in the promotion of peaceful coexistence. However, the agreement must be followed by an effective policy of religious integration, which appears very difficult, given the widespread anti-Islamic feelings and the growing consensus in support of xenophobic and populist rhetoric.

## Sintesi

Il contesto italiano è investito da un profondo malessere sociale che ha trova eco in una dinamica di xenofobia e avversione alla società multietnica e al pluralismo religioso. Nel corso degli anni l'impatto sull'opinione pubblica di un discorso politico caratterizzato dalla retorica anti-immigrazione e anti-islamica è stato significativo e determinante. Nel 2017 la questione della proposta di legge sullo *Ius soli* per le seconde generazioni è stato un esempio paradigmatico di questo trend e della progressiva legittimazione di affermazioni chiaramente xenofobiche. Lo stesso si può riflettere sull'emergenza degli sbarchi dei flussi di rifugiati che ha promosso una virulenta retorica populista e numerose manifestazioni pubbliche organizzate dai partiti e dai movimenti di estrema destra (*Lega Nord, Forza Nuova e Casa Pound*). Nel corso del 2017 si sono intensificati gli attacchi contro i cittadini migranti, rifugiati, richiedenti asilo e, in particolare, contro le comunità musulmane fondate sulla difesa dei valori occidentali e cattolici. I mass-media, in particolare le testate giornalistiche vicine alla destra, sono stati il principale veicolo dei pregiudizi contro l'Islam e i musulmani. La religione e la cultura musulmana è spesso descritta negli editoriali come incompatibile con i valori italiani e, soprattutto, si alimenta paura e odio con la reiterata equazione "Musulmano uguale terrorista". Si registra un aumento importante dei discorsi di odio contro l'Islam in Internet di gruppi neofascisti e di gruppi di fondamentalisti cattolici. Recentemente il governo ha siglato il "Patto Nazionale per un Islam italiano" con le principali organizzazione islamiche italiane con l'obiettivo di aprire un dialogo strutturato e garantire la libertà religiosa attraverso la costruzione di moschee legali. Un passo fondamentale nell'ottica del riconoscimento dell'Islam italiano e della presenza delle comunità musulmane come interlocutore privilegiato nella promozione della convivenza pacifica. Tuttavia, l'accordo raggiunto dovrà essere seguito da un'effettiva politica di integrazione religiosa che appare assai complicata e difficile, considerato il diffuso clima anti-Islamico e il crescente consenso alle retoriche xenofobe e populiste.

## Introduction

Right-wing parties, extreme right-wing political movements, and Catholic fundamentalist groups have promoted in recent years a virulent campaign against Muslim communities and migrants pursuing the discourse of the “clash of civilizations” between Islam and Christianity. The previous Italian report on Islamophobia contained an important analysis for understanding the present, as there is a clear and strong continuity between the past years and 2017.<sup>1</sup> The main right-wing political leaders, opinion makers and intellectuals have contributed to a climate of hatred towards Muslim immigrants and towards a multicultural society in the name of security and freedom. The effects of the enduring economic crisis, the recent terrorist attacks in European cities and the so called refugee crisis have provided fertile ground for the pervasive xenophobic attitudes in Italian society. In 2017, there were a significant number of physical attacks on immigrants, asylum seekers and refugee centers and numerous demonstrations directed at reaffirming “national supremacy.” Undoubtedly, the Italian case appears in certain ways anomalous if compared to the rest of Western Europe. The specificity of Muslims in Italy comes from the great number of their countries of origin, their scarce or sporadic visibility in public space, and the weakness of their representativeness before public institutions. Moreover, data from 2016 estimated that among the foreigners present in Italy, 32.6% (equal to 1,642,000 people) are Muslim compared to 53% (equal to 2,671,000 people) who are Christian, a number that far from prefigures an Islamist cultural and religious hegemony in our territory.<sup>2</sup> Despite this reality, Islamophobia is at the core of many political debates and mobilizations encouraging a widespread moral panic. The role of mass media and social networks is fundamental in strengthening the “entrepreneurs of Islamophobia.”

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The political debate about Italian citizenship for second-generation migrants (“Ius soli” Bill) shows an evident racist trend in the representations of migrants and, especially, of Muslims communities. The whole Islamophobic rhetoric aimed “to defend Catholic values,” joined a growing neo-nationalism, and is the basis of the violent campaign orchestrated by the conservative and extreme right wing against the law which secures Italian youngsters with migrant background and born in Italy the right of citizenship. The Northern League (*Lega Nord*) is the traditional key in-

---

1. Giacalone C, “Islamophobia in Italy: National Report 2015”, E. Bayrakli, F. Hafez (eds), *Islamophobia in Europe Report 2015*, SETA, Istanbul, 2016.

2. Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, IDOS, Roma 2017, p. 191.

terpreter and bearer of these explicitly anti-immigrants and anti-Islamic positions, promoting both xenophobic public discourses and discriminating local policies in the north of the country.

In his discussion of the Italian variant of populism, Laclau notes that the Northern League has moved increasingly into a “theory of the enemy” endorsing the idea that if a radical change were to happen, the social field would have to be split in two.<sup>3</sup> Over time, the anti-Islamism of the Northern League took on radical forms of mobilization against the construction of mosques and Islamic centers in some major cities of the northern regions in which the majority of immigrants is concentrated. The mobilizations against the mosques in the last decade and during 2017 promoted by the Northern League and extreme-right movements aim undoubtedly at strengthening a logic of the “internal enemy” and endorsing a logic of social antagonism. The partial, but significant support of local citizens to this strategy, is the outcome of this emphasis on “dangerous foreignness.” The Northern League’s leader Matteo Salvini declared in various interviews that the *Ius Soli* Bill represents a potential risk regarding national security, placing the equation between terrorists, foreigners and Muslims, at the core of his hatred speeches. Other famous right-wing politicians Maurizio Gasparri, senator of *Forza Italia*, and Giorgia Meloni, leader of *Fratelli d’Italia*, have been “spokespeople” of this battle; the latter collected 100,000 signatures against the *Ius soli* Bill in 2017.

*Forza Nuova* and *Casa Pound* call themselves “fascists of the third millennium” and organized many demonstrations against Islam and Muslims in 2017, in continuity with the recent past. The slogan “Italy Christian, Never Muslim” expresses the “clash civilization” rhetoric, obsessively repeated in the name of ultra-nationalism. (Fig. 1) It is important to highlight that the Islamophobic demonstrations are accompanied by the public complaints of local associations and priests who are in favor of dialogue and inclusion. However, these counter-initiatives are not as numerically strong as the Islamophobic events at local level. Furthermore, the antiracist events are, in general, focused on the support of migrants.

Between June and October 2017, *Forza Nuova* organized a protest against local Catholic priests, called “heretics” or “Judases,” and considered guilty of being open to Islamic communities and sympathetic to their right to obtain a legal place of worship. But, not all the Catholic milieu expresses the same openness. For example, in a village in Lombardy, the local priest organized a prayer “asking Mary the strength to defend Christianity from every relativist and materialistic attack and Islamism,” as written in the flyer distributed to the population.

In July, the *Partito Anti-Islamizzazione* (Anti-Islamization Party) was founded by a little-known journalist of the right-wing newspaper *Il Giorno* with the political

3. Laclau E., *On Populist Reason*, Verso, London, 2002.



Figure 1: In Savona (Liguria) Forza Nuova put up the Islamophobic banner “Italy Christian, Never Muslim” and a banner against the National Association of Partisans.

program “to fight the Islamization of society and to defend the Italian rules and culture.” The Facebook page of this ethereal party was visited and shared by thousands of people in a short time and, recently, the page reached almost 18,000 followers.

Meanwhile, the local popularity of *Forza Nuova* and *Casa Pound* is growing as evidenced in their presence in administrative elections, for example in Ostia close to Rome, and the opening of various local branches in all part of Italy, especially in metropolitan areas. Moreover, in local administrative elections, *Casa Pound*

presented an electoral list called “Sovranità” (Sovereignty) together with the Northern League. The next electoral campaign, forecasted for March 2018 in the national elections, will probably be one of the most important “discursive fields” to renovate anti-migrant and Islamophobic rhetoric for the populist parties seeking political consensus.

## Justice System

The lack of a new law on religious freedom, able to replace the old legislation on cults launched during the Fascist period (1929-30), brings forth an important issue. Due to this legal lack, different local governments have introduced discriminatory regulations that act against the religious freedom - principally of the Islamic communities. For example, the “Anti-Mosque Law” introduced in 2015 by the government of Lombardy imposes a series of restrictive criteria for building new mosques. In 2017, other regions, like Liguria and Veneto, both governed by right-wing parties, following Lombardy, established stringent criteria for the construction of new religious buildings. Conveniently, these rules are regularly rejected by the Italian Constitutional Court and other courts thus prohibiting their implementation at the local level. In the recent past and in the year under question, several town councils in Northern Italy governed by the *Lega Nord*, have unlawfully implemented ordinances to prohibit the wearing of the veil and hijab – the latest case being the Major of Rovigo (Veneto).<sup>4</sup> These measures have always been invalidated by local courts in accordance to national anti-discrimination laws. However, in some cases, it is very important to highlight the ambivalent, schizophrenic attitude of the Italian courts

4. See “Rovigo, il sindaco Bergamin vieta il burqa. Voglio donne col volto scoperto”, *Il Resto del Carlino*, 6/29/2017, retrieved October 01, 2018, from <http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/rovigo/politica/burqa-vietato-1.3233892>

toward the issue of the veil and public spaces. The Court of Milan has issued two different judgements: in 2016, the court ruled that the exclusion of a candidate from a job selection due to her refusal to remove the hijab constitutes a direct religious discrimination. In 2017, the same court dismissed the appeal lodged by certain associations against a resolution of the Lombardy government banning the so-called Islamic veil in offices and hospitals in the name of public security and due to the concrete threat constituted by the inability to identify people entering public places.<sup>5</sup> The interaction between gender, religious affiliation and ethnicity is a serious and critical issue concerning Muslim women and their discrimination in everyday life.

## Education

In the Italian school system the student population of foreign-origin pupils is equal to 9.5% (814,851 units) and concentrated in kindergartens and primary schools.<sup>6</sup> The significant presence of students with a Muslim background poses a serious challenge to the pedagogical and educational practices of Italian schools and the need to disseminate a culture of openness of religious and cultural differences. In the analyses carried out on this issue, it is important to point out that there is still a kind of cultural-historical prejudice against Islam in the educational program.<sup>7</sup> The effects are important on the schooling integration of Muslim pupils and their relationship with the image of “enemy” inside Italian society. To this general perspective, we must add the problem, increasingly important, of spatial and educational segregation on the basis of ethnicity in the main Italian metropolitan areas. A recent research, realized in Milan, highlights the “white flight” process, mainly in the multicultural and popular neighborhoods, laying the groundwork for the potential dynamics of ethnic/religious closure and discriminating factors linked to the quality of the educational paths of pupils.

## Media

The traditional right-wing and anti-Islamic newspapers continue to comply with the *refrain* of the incompatibility of Italian culture and the presence of Muslim communities. A report of *Carta di Roma* on the three main right-wing newspapers (*Libero*, *Il Giornale* and *La Verità*) in 2017 found that there were 146 titles that could be defined as discriminatory, of which 20% were associated with Islam.<sup>8</sup> Many examples of false and negative images of Muslims, often based on fake news, circulated in the Italian printed media (see figure 2).

5. Dossier Immigrazione, IDOS; Roma, 2017.

6. MIUR, Gli alunni stranieri nel sistema scolastico italiano a.s. 2015/2016, 2017 ([www.istruzione.it/allegati/2017/Notiziario\\_alunni\\_Stranieri\\_nel%20sistema\\_scolastico\\_italiano\\_15\\_16.pdf](http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2017/Notiziario_alunni_Stranieri_nel%20sistema_scolastico_italiano_15_16.pdf)).

7. Pacchi C., Ranci C., *White flight a Milano. La segregazione sociale ed etnica nelle scuole dell'obbligo*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2017.

8. See Barretta Paola, Milazzo Giuseppe, “Notizie da paura. Quinto Rapporto Carta di Roma. 2017”, retrieved January 21, 2018, from <http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Rapporto-2017-Notizie-da-paura-1.pdf>





Figure 2: “Islam Also Rules on Snacks at Schools, Mortadella Banned for Italian Children.”<sup>9</sup>

Recently, a fake news about the refusal to host a Christmas party at a primary school with the presence of Muslim students was recalled by a famous “democratic columnist” in *Corriere della Sera*, the most important Italian newspaper.

A lot of discussions and instances of hate speech have been fuelled by another fake news about the Muslim wedding between a young girl (9 years old) and a 35-year-old man. All newspapers reported this fake news and, in some cases, the hard opinions of right-wing columnists were

published condemning the “barbaric Islamic cultural practices.”<sup>10</sup> The largest parts of the articles against Islam and Muslims concentrated on gender relations and Muslim women’s bodies with many examples of aggressive discourse. Among the Islamophobic articles linking religion to terrorism, the following example is illustrative.

After the terroristic attack in Sweden, the editor of *Libero* Vittorio Feltri published a virulent article against Islam and Muslims entitled “React with Violence.” Some passages of the article are paradigmatic of the logic of “Islamophobic entrepreneurship”:

For years the West suffers violence by bearded fanatics, who hate even their women, and we, stupidly, instead of sending them with a kick in the ass back to their deserts, we strive to appease and placate them. We court them, we give up our traditions in the hope that they accept them. We are intimidated by Muslims and we are enslaved by their medieval traditions, to the point of being funny. Vain efforts, given that these gentlemen, rather than being grateful, kill us with bombs, with suicide bombers and now – a new fashion – with trucks driven into crowds (*Libero* 4/9/2017).<sup>11</sup>

The paranoia of an Islamic supremacy in Italy is well represented by the latest book (published in December 2017) of Mario Belpietro, director for many years of the most important right-wing newspaper *Libero* and director of *La Verità* (ironically

9. *Libero* (June 16, 2017)

10. See Ali Darwish, “La storia della bambina di 9 anni data in sposa è falsa. L'Islamofobia no”, 11/22/2017, retrieved October 25, 2017, from <https://thevision.com/attualita/fake-news-padova>

11. Vittorio Feltri, “Noi li accogliamo e loro ci ammazzano. Feltri: “Basta, reagiamo con violenza”, *Libero*, 4/9/2017, retrieved December 18, 2017, from [www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/opinioni/12353750/feltri-li-accogliamo-e-loro-ci-ammazzano-reagiamo-con-violenza.html](http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/opinioni/12353750/feltri-li-accogliamo-e-loro-ci-ammazzano-reagiamo-con-violenza.html)

The Truth), entitled *Islamofollia* (Crazy-Islam). In this book all the negative stereotypes against Islam as an oppressive religion and culture are presented and, more significantly, the book condemns certain leftist politicians, associations, and parts of the Catholic Church as responsible of misunderstanding the real threat represented by Islamic communities and their efforts to impose their vision of the world. The same journalist, in December 2017, was acquitted by the Court of Milan for the accusation of Islamophobia in relation to the title “MUSLIMS BASTARDS” published after the attacks in Paris in 2015 in *Il Giornale*; the court ruled that Islamophobia was not present.

Finally, in September, the newspaper *Quotidiano Nazionale* in a series of articles published an opinion poll based on the 500 interviews with Muslims who reside in Italy. The narrative of the main results presented a stereotypical picture of a Muslim as not integrated, close to Jihadism, opposing Italian values of freedom and in favor of the Islamization of society despite the fact that a small number of the sample declared an affiliation to traditional Muslim values.<sup>12</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Specific data on physical and verbal attacks based on religious hatred is not available, so it is very difficult to offer significant and systematic information on Islamophobic acts. Moreover, the collected data on hate crimes has strong limitations because the Italian law forbids the processing of personal information, which is deemed sensitive, and it is difficult to disaggregate anti-Muslim behavior from attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

From different sources and reports, however, we can highlight certain events in 2017 in which Muslim migrants were involved and attacks against immigrants in general. In January, residents organized by *Forza Nuova* stopped an Egyptian family from entering their public housing provided to them by the Municipality of Rome; and Again Always in Rome, a neo-fascist group injured a couple of workers from Bangladesh and Egypt. The last significant event was the arson of Marrakesh Lounge Bar in a small town close to Milan during the night May 24 as a result of a fake report, picked up by politicians and the media, of the alleged celebrations by Moroccan immigrants after the jihadist attacks in London.<sup>14</sup>

A series of physical attacks were reported in different contexts in the north and south of Italy especially against centers for asylum seekers and stand as evidence of the climate of violence and racism in Italy.

12. For data and questionnaire, retrieved January 24, 2018, [www.quotidiano.net/cronaca/musulmani-in-italia-1.3411763](http://www.quotidiano.net/cronaca/musulmani-in-italia-1.3411763)

13. Dessi G., *Forgotten Women: The Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Women in Italy*, European Network Against Racism, Brussels, 2016, p. 4 (<http://www.enar-eu.org/Forgotten-Women-the-impact-of-Islamophobia-on-Muslim-women>)

14. See “Milano, danno fuoco al bar dopo la falsa notizia girata tra social, tv e politici: “Festeggiamenti dopo Manchester”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 5/25/2017, retrieved January 17, 2018, from <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/05/25/milano-danno-fuoco-al-bar-dopo-la-falsa-notizia-girata-tra-social-tv-e-politici-festeggiamenti-dopo-manchester/3614105>

## Internet

In the last decade, many surveys have pointed out an increase of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitudes in the Italian public opinion.<sup>15</sup> In line with this, a survey on “Immigration and Insecurity” realized in September 2017 by the Research Institute Demos shows the 46% of interviewees “strongly agree and/or agree” with the statement that “Immigrants are a threat for public order and security.”<sup>16</sup> Here, it is important to highlight the fact that for a large part of the public the image of the “dangerous migrant” (or dangerous asylum seeker) is usually represented by the Muslim. As written in the Jo Cox Ministerial Commission on Racism in 2017, “compared to the pre-2001 period, when the social stigma would target mainly the status of foreigner-immigrant, today direct target is becoming the religious identity: in fact, immigrants end up crushed on their (presumed) Muslim religious identity which is strictly linked to terroristic membership.”<sup>17</sup>

This anti-Islamic feeling is reflected in social networks. A significant research on intolerance based on an analysis of Twitter realized by Voxdiritti in 2016 ranked Muslims as the fourth most targeted group (6% of tweets).<sup>18</sup> Epithets collected reflect the classic negative image of Muslim: “Terrorists,” “Bedouin,” “Abdullah”, “Moroccan” and “Vu cumprà.”<sup>19</sup>

In regards to websites there are various examples of hate speech and the diffusion of fake news about Islam and Muslims such as *voxnews.info*, which has been reported to Google administrators and the postal police many times. It is important to notice the presence in the Internet of different fundamentalist websites and Facebook pages (for example the websites *www.radiospada.org*, *www.lanuovabq.it/it* and *www.lalucedimaria.it*) dedicated to spreading negative images of Islam, defending Catholic traditions and, in some cases, to opposing Pope Francesco because of his attention to interreligious dialogue and migrants.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In comparison with previous reports on Islamophobia in Italy the central figures of the Islamophobia network have not changed: Matteo Salvini, leader of Northern

15. Alietti A., Padovan D., “Religious Racism. Islamophobia and Antisemitism in Italian Society”, *Religions* 2013, 4, 584–602; Pew Research Center, “Faith in European Project Reviving”, June, 2015 ([www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/06/Pew-Research-Center-European-Union-Report-FINAL-June-2-20151.pdf](http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/06/Pew-Research-Center-European-Union-Report-FINAL-June-2-20151.pdf)).

16. Osservatorio Europeo sulla Sicurezza, *Immigrazione e sicurezza*, 9/13/2017, retrieved January 15, 2018, from <http://www.demos.it/a01427.php>

17. Commissione “JO COX sulla Xenofobia, il razzismo e i fenomeni di odio”, Camera dei deputati, XVII LEGISLATURA, (Relazione finale 2017, ([http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/shadow\\_primapagina/file\\_pdfs/000/007/099/Jo\\_Cox\\_Piramide\\_odio.pdf](http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/shadow_primapagina/file_pdfs/000/007/099/Jo_Cox_Piramide_odio.pdf)).

18. Retrieved February 12, 2017, from <http://www.voxdiritti.it/ecco-la-nuova-edizione-della-mappa-dellintolleranza>

19. The terms *Bedouin*, *Moroccans* are used as insults in popular discourse; the term “*vu cumprà*” refers to street sellers from the Maghreb.

League; Giorgia Meloni, leader of *Fratelli di Italia*; Riccardo Fiore, national secretary of *Forza Nuova*; and representatives of *Casa Pound* such as Gianluca Iannone (the founder of the neofascist movement) and Davide di Stefano, the main actors of the sociopolitical mobilization against migrants, asylum seekers and Muslims.

During 2017, in the north and center of Italy, the discriminatory politics of exclusion directed towards migrants and Muslim citizens promoted by several right-wing mayors, counsellors and politicians of different municipalities continued. Public security ordinances and rules for limiting access to social benefits were used by local administrations as tools to achieve such goals.<sup>20</sup>

It is very important to highlight that around these figures revolves a “black galaxy” composed of various neo-Nazi and neofascist groups, often linked to each other, sharing a virulent Islamophobia and anti-multiculturalism rhetoric such as *Gioventù Identitaria*, the Italian division of the *Génération Identitaire* movement founded in 2013 in France and present in various European countries; *Lealtà Azione*, founded in Milan in 2010; *Casaggi*, founded in Florence in 2005. These groups are expanding, beyond their respective geographic context.<sup>21</sup>

This extremist right-wing network has been joined by specific groups of Catholic fundamentalists who, as written previously, promote a vision of the clash of civilization between Islam and Christianity and the defence of “Catholic order” in the face of the invasion of Muslim migrants. A bright example of this configuration is the editor-in-chief of online Catholic fundamentalist newspaper *La Croce*, Mario Adinolfi, ex parliamentarian of the left-wing party *Democratic Party*. His latest book, *O capiamo, o moriamo* (We Understand or We Die), published in September 2017, presents a classical panoply of Islam paranoia and reproduces the image of an Islamic conquest of Italian society as a result of Muslim birth rate.

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

Across Italy there are many anti-racism civil society organizations and Catholic associations that are directly involved in fighting xenophobia and discrimination, offering help and legal support to victims or promoting integration through public events and initiatives. At national level, the Anti-Discrimination National Office is an important tool for reporting and fighting Islamophobia in Italian society, aimed mainly at enlarging the anti-discrimination network involving local administrations and local civil society. In this case there are different levels of criticality, for example the latter’s direct control by government and the ensuing lack of autonomy.<sup>22</sup>

20. As in the past, most of these administrative acts have been rejected by the courts on the basis of anti-discrimination legislation.

21. For a map of this Italian “black galaxy” built on the analysis of Facebook pages see <http://patriaindipendente.it/progetto-facebook/>

22. European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), *Report on Italy*, Council of Europe, 2016 ([www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/italy/ita-cbc-v-2016-019-eng.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/italy/ita-cbc-v-2016-019-eng.pdf)).

The most important political development was the “National Pact for an Italian Islam” signed in February 2017 by the Minister of Interior, the main Islamic organizations in Italy, and the Coordinator of the Council for relations with Islam. The document was based on the preliminary work carried out by the specific council of experts, politicians and the legal representatives of the Islamic associations. The document outlines some pivotal aspects of the promotion of the relationship between the state and the Islamic communities based on a decalogue of commitments of Italian Islam’s representatives directed to support religious pluralism and to foster relations with public institutions.<sup>23</sup> Among these commitments are the training of imams, the transparency in the administrative management of the Islamic centers, and sermons in Italian. Finally, the document proclaims the commitment of the minister to promote regular dialogue meetings, to provide specific pathways for legal recognition of future agreements and, overall, to promote a conference with the National Association of Italian Municipalities on the theme of mosques in which to reaffirm the right to religious freedom.

However, this agreement is not an “official agreement” between the Italian state and Islam. It is not based on Article 8 of the Constitution, which regards the relations of non-Catholic confessions and the Minister of Interior. The problem is that an Islamic confession that meets the constitutional parameters indicated does not yet exist, because Islam is still a complex world, where the representativeness of single organizations is uncertain.<sup>24</sup> In this manner, the state recognition of Islam is certainly important in the future dialogue with the next national government.

In 2017, there were different initiatives aimed at promoting inter-religious dialogue on a sociocultural level. For example, the initiative to counter the prejudicial image of Islam as a religion of “closure” and intolerant was promoted by the administration of Turin joined by the Muslim communities: Islamic centers were open for all citizens and public events such as seminars and exhibitions were organized during Ramadan in 2017.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

From available data and information on Islamophobia, 2017 was a year with a significant increase of Islamophobic discourses on different levels: social, political, in the mass media and social networks. The next election year will be a battleground against immigrants and, in particular, against Islamic communities. The public opinion, especially from the popular strata, appears more and more likely to lean towards politics of “national preference” and the rhetoric of Islam’s threat and

---

23. Retrieved December 05, 2017, from [http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/patto\\_nazionale\\_per\\_un\\_islam\\_italiano\\_1.2.2017.pdf](http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/patto_nazionale_per_un_islam_italiano_1.2.2017.pdf)

24. Cardia Carlo, “Integrazione. Islam italiano, via lunga e necessaria”, 2/3/2017, *Avvenire*, retrieved December 18, 2017, from <http://www.avvenire.it/opinioni/pagine/via-lunga-e-necessaria>

risk of massive immigration – the main claims of the extreme right-wing parties and movements. The legitimacy in the public spaces and, sometimes, in the mass media of xenophobic and anti-Muslim political leaders and columnists was the decisive change in the past year.

While we are writing this report, the Northern League's candidate for the presidency of the Lombardy region, the Italian region which is economically stronger and with the highest numbers of immigrants, declared his conviction of "the risk that the white race disappears and is replaced by migrants."<sup>25</sup>

There is a strong necessity to build a strong relationship among anti-racist organizations, Islamic associations and left-wing parties to oppose this very dangerous dynamic, which is contrary to civil coexistence and religious pluralism. In this sense, as mentioned, the role of democratic institutions and the judiciary system is crucial in establishing a framework of legality on the basis of anti-discrimination law. The aforementioned agreement by the government represents, undoubtedly, a significant step forward towards a different pattern of relationship between Islamic communities and public institutions, especially as the right to pray is recognized and legally framed. But, this is not enough because widespread hate speech and social hostility against Muslims requires greater attention and serious work in necessary at all levels of social life. The role of Islamic associations in this sense is determinant for a long-term inclusion strategy of religious pluralism. In any case, it reaffirms social and religious rights of Muslims, and to support contrasting actions against Islamophobia. But also, there is a principle of "loyalty" to Italian constitutional principles and the legal tools to pursue integration and social cohesion.<sup>26</sup> The responsibility of local and national governments is to realize better conditions for a more stringent social and political participation of Muslim communities and associations in the public sphere, removing obstacles to this objective, and strengthening anti-discrimination action. In this sense, it is important to remember the General Policy Recommendation n. 5 formulated by the ECRI to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, inviting particular attention to the removal of unnecessary legal or administrative obstacles to the construction of sufficient numbers of appropriate places of worship for the practice of Islam and its funeral rites.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the different Islamic associations and groups need to strengthen their positive collaboration for sustaining the pathways toward inclusion and democratic spaces of dialogue. Another fundamental tool for combating Islamophobia is

25. See "Fontana: «Razza bianca da difendere». Poi precisa: «È stato un lapsus». Salvini: siamo sotto attacco". Il Corriere della Sera, Milano, 1/18/2018, retrieved January 30, 2018, from [http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18\\_gennaio\\_15/attilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml](http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18_gennaio_15/attilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml).

26. Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, IDOS, Roma, 2017.

27. European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Report on Italy, Council of Europe, 2016 ([www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/italy/ita-cbc-v-2016-019-eng.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/italy/ita-cbc-v-2016-019-eng.pdf)).

the improvement of data collection on hate speech in social networks and regarding the victims of religious hatred. The role of the UNAR and civil society appears decisive in this regard. The public institutions at national and local level are responsible for implementing and sustaining a strategy for an inclusive religious program, and effective social and cultural integration.

But, the probable political change in the upcoming elections can have a negative impact on these efforts and potential inclusive actions.

In light of this critical situation, it is necessary to sustain the following main policies:

- To implement the “National Pact for an Italian Islam” at local level in order to open a real dialogue with Muslim communities and to guarantee their religious freedom.
- To create a different national system of data collection on religious hatred, hate speech and attacks against Muslims in order to have a reliable and annual picture of the situation.
- To strengthen the role of the (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali, National Office Racial Antidiscriminations) in its anti-discrimination program directly to local municipalities and its capabilities to fight acts of discrimination toward Muslims on all levels of everyday life.
- To organize a project with NGOs and Islamic associations for training courses dedicated to administrators, official, social and health operators in order to increase the knowledge of Islam and anti-discrimination practices.

## Chronology

- **24.01.2017:** Rome - Neofascist activists of *Casa Pound* and *Forza Nuova* prevented access to public housing to an Egyptian family, assigned by the Municipality of Rome.
- **06.02.2017:** Pistoia - Demonstration of *Forza Nuova* against the building of a mosque and local priest favourable to it.
- **24.05.2017:** Milan – The Marrakesh Lounge Bar, a socialization bar for local North African migrants, was set on fire.
- **28.06.2017:** Perignano (Pisa) – *Forza Nuova* placed a banner against a local priest of a small village, proclaimed guilty of supporting migrants and nurturing relationships with Muslim families.
- **04.07.2017:** Milan – Foundation of the Anti-Islamization Party “for fighting the radicalization of Islam and any efforts to subjugate the social and cultural freedom of the West.”
- **04.07.2017:** Vobarno (Lombardy) – At night, a Molotov bomb is thrown at a hotel that was preparing to host migrants.
- **09.07.2017:** Ostia (Rome) – *Casa Pound* organized an attack on the beach against migrant street vendors.



- **27.07.2017:** Nuoro (Sardinia) - Two Nigerians boys are injured by a bomb thrown at the Refugee Centre.
- **20.08.2017:** The Newspaper *Liberio* publishes a front-page headline against the *Ius Soli* Bill and the Italian prime minister stating “Gentiloni Awards the Terrorists: Citizenship to All!”
- **15.08.2017:** Rimini - A couple was arrested in a bus after they robbed, insulted (“I’ll make you miscarry, nigger of shit”) and pushed a Senegalese woman (39), who was six months pregnant.
- **07.09.2017:** Cantù (Lombardy) - *Forza Nuova* placed a banner on the gate of a local Catholic church against the parish priest, accused of being guilty of supporting dialogue with the Muslim community.
- **13.09.2017:** Publication of the book *O capiamo, o moriamo* (We Understand or We Die) by Catholic extremist Mario Adinolfi with specific content against Islam and Muslim migrants.
- **03.10.2017:** Publication of the book *Maometto e il suo Allah, ovvero l’invenzione del Corano* (Mohamed and his Allah, or the invention of the Qur’an) by famous editor-in-chief and politician Magdi Cristiano Allam, who converted to Catholicism years ago.
- **13.10.2017:** Cremona (Lombardy) – The local parish priest of a small village organized a rosary against Islam.
- **28.10.2017:** Rome - A Bengali man and an Egyptian man were brutally beaten by far-right youths while they waited for the bus after work.
- **09.11.2017:** Legnano (Lombardy) – Militants of *Forza Nuova* placed a banner stating “Learn to defend us and to fight invasion” and circulated flyers with phrases from the Qur’an.
- **11.11.2017:** Savona – *Forza Nuova* placed two banners, one against the “Islamization of Italy” and the other against the National Association of Partisans.
- **21.11.2017:** The publication of the book *Islamofollia* by Maurizio Belpietro.
- **29.11.2017:** Como – An attack by a neo-Nazi skinhead group against a Migration Centre.



**T**his is the third issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year's *EIR* represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states.

This denial is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are not immune to this form of racism.

As a survey published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe.

In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the *European Islamophobia Report* project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

#### **About SETA**

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

