



I. MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA:

I.I. In the United States and Canada:

1. US: Maher, Salman Rushdie on Islam: ‘When There’s This Many Bad Apples,’ Orchard’s Rotten— After telling the Paris terrorists “go f**k yourself,” Bill Maher talked radical Islam with Salman Rushdie and observed, “*When there’s this many bad apples, there’s something wrong with the orchard.*”

Maher went down a line of terrorist attacks since 9/11, and both he and Rushdie agreed this was more than a mutation in the Muslim religion. Maher brought up his infamous debate with Ben Affleck, wherein Sam Harris called Islam ‘the mother-lode of bad ideas’, and Maher claimed, “*The terrorists and the mainstream share a lot of these bad ideas.*”

Rushdie told Maher the West must not ‘give a f****g inch’ when it comes to free expression and standing against such radicalism. Besides, he asked, “*what would a respectful political cartoon look like?*”

In: <http://www.mediaite.com/tv/maher-salman-rushdie-on-islam-when-theres-this-many-bad-apples-orchards-rotten/>, retrieved on 10.01.2015



2. US: US judges review broad surveillance of Muslims by NYC police—A federal appeals court appeared concerned 13 January that the New York Police Department might have spied on Muslim groups following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks solely because of their religion.

The three-judge panel questioned whether police had any specific leads to justify the surveillance of Muslim businesses, mosques and student groups in New Jersey following 9/11. The practice went on from 2002 to at least 2012, according to a lawsuit filed by several Muslim groups.

U.S. District Judge William Martini of Newark had thrown out the lawsuit, concluding that police could not keep watch on Muslim terrorist activities without monitoring the Muslim community itself. However, the judges on the Philadelphia-based 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals questioned



why the surveillance wasn't more targeted. U.S. Circuit Judge Thomas L. Ambro compared the tactic to a decision to pursue all Catholics or Baptists while investigating abortion clinic violence, instead of focusing on specific suspects. His colleagues seemed to agree, grilling a lawyer for New York City about the surveillance program's intent.

The city's lawyer, Peter Farrell of the New York City Law Department, called any injuries suffered by Muslims are self-imposed, based on subjective fears that might have led them to avoid gathering with other Muslims after the attacks, and he said the plaintiffs cannot simply infer the intent of the program was discriminatory. However, the 3rd Circuit judges said the harm was concrete if attendance at mosques fell or businesses lost money because they feared those locations were being watched.

The case drew an overflow crowd that included several Rutgers University students on winter break.
In: <http://news.yahoo.com/muslims-seek-reverse-ruling-allowed-ny-police-spying-070120509.html>, retrieved on 14.01.2015

3. US: Duke cancels Muslim call to prayer—Duke University found itself at the center of a controversy when it announced plans to allow a Muslim call to prayer from the university chapel's famed bell tower – and then reversed its decision after outcry from Christian evangelist Franklin Graham. The North Carolina university had announced it would allow the school's Muslim Students Association to broadcast a Muslim call-to-prayer, known as adzan, on Fridays from the bell tower of the school's chapel. Muslim prayers had taken place at Duke previously in the chapel basement, but the call to prayer had not previously been broadcast from the chapel bell tower.

On 14 January, Christy Lohr Sapp, an associate dean for religious life at Duke, wrote in an opinion piece in the Raleigh News Observer: *“With the recent attacks in Paris and Pakistan and renewed conflict in Nigeria, there is much negative press focused on parts of the Muslim world. From ISIS to Boko Haram to al-Qaida, Muslims in the media are portrayed as angry aggressors driven by values that are anti-education and anti-Western. Yet, at Duke University, the Muslim community represents a strikingly different face of Islam than is seen on the nightly news: one that is peaceful and prayerful. This face of the faith will be given more of a voice as the Duke Muslim community begins chanting the adhan, the call to prayer, from the Duke Chapel bell tower on Fridays beginning this week. It will be chanted by Muslim students prior to the jummah prayer service that takes place in the chapel basement each Friday afternoon.”* Sapp added: *“This opportunity represents a larger commitment to religious pluralism that is at the heart of Duke's mission and connects the university to national trends in religious accommodation.”*

The decision received swift backlash from some Christian leaders, notably from evangelist leader Franklin Graham, who posted on his Facebook page: *“Duke University announced today that they will have a Muslim call to prayer from their chapel bell tower every Friday. As Christianity is being excluded from the public square and followers of Islam are raping, butchering, and beheading Christians, Jews, and anyone who doesn't submit to their Sharia Islamic law, Duke is promoting this in the name of religious pluralism. I call on the donors and alumni to withhold their support from Duke until this policy is reversed.”* Graham's Facebook post was re-shared over 62,000 times and received over 10,000 comments, many of whom expressed agreement with Graham and called on Duke alumni to pressure the university to change its decision.

In: <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/duke-cancels-muslim-call-prayer>, retrieved on 17.01.2015

4. US: Texas Muslim Capitol Day marred by anti-Islam protesters—On 29 January, hundreds protesters from Dallas, San Antonio and Houston, mostly women and children, yelling "We don't want you here!", "Go home!", "ISIS will gladly take you", "remember 9/11", "You don't have to dress that way! Take it off", and "Islam is the war on women!"

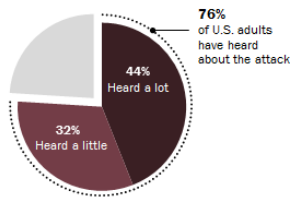
Christine Weick, originally from Michigan stormed the succession of speakers, grabbing the microphone and yelling, "Islam will not dominate the United States, and by the grace of God, it will not dominate Texas."



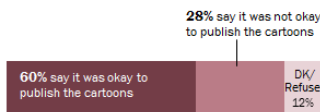
29 January marked the seventh annual Texas Muslim Capitol Day in Austin, when hundreds of adherents of Islam visited the Capitol to meet with lawmakers and learn about the democratic process. This year, however, was the first that's been marked by virulent anti-Islam protests. In: http://www.mrt.com/news/article_ab07f71e-a7fe-11e4-8fbd-4b6cd4bcb9ae.html, retrieved on 30.01.2015

5. US: The impact of Charlie Hebdo: Americans now back Muhammad cartoons—A new poll from the Pew Research Center showed those who had been following the matter said strongly that publishing cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad was okay, 60 percent to 28 percent.

Majority Has Heard of Hebdo Attack, Says Publishing Cartoons Depicting Prophet Muhammad Was Okay



Of the 76% of U.S. adults who have heard about the attack...



Survey conducted Jan. 22-25, 2015. PEW RESEARCH CENTER

There was no direct comparison to previous polling asking the same question, but the 32-point edge in favor of publishing the cartoon appeared markedly different from a similar poll conducted the last time such cartoons were in the news, in 2005 and 2006.

A USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll in February 2006 showed those numbers reversed. About twice as many Americans thought the European newspapers who published such images were acting irresponsibly (61 percent) than those who thought it was responsible to publish them (29 percent).

The same poll asked another question getting at the issue from a broader perspective, asking whether newspapers had an obligation to publish such images that some religions find objectionable. Fifty-seven percent said they did,

while 33 percent disagreed.

In: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2015/01/29/americans-support-publishing-muhammad-cartoons-nine-years-after-saying-they-were-irresponsible/>, retrieved on 30.01.2015

I.II. In Europe:

A. Aftermath of Charlie Hebdo Incident

I.II.I IN FRANCE:

1. Paris shootings: The backlash begins against French Muslims—Fears of an anti-Islamic backlash in France were growing in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo massacre as a spate of attacks on mosques were reported across the country.

Since the deadly attack on the satirical magazine, there has been a spike in the number of attacks. On 9 January, shots were fired at a Muslim prayer centre in Digne-les-Bains in Provence, and at a mosque in Soissons, about 20 miles away from the town where the Charlie Hebdo suspects were shot dead by police. On 8 January, a homemade bomb went off outside a mosque in the central city of Villefranche-sur-Saone,

while a day after a head of a wild pig was placed outside a prayer room in Corte in Corsica. A letter laid beside the head warned "*the next time it will be the head of one of yours.*"

Anti-Islam slogans were daubed on the walls of mosques in the towns of Poitiers, Lieven and Béthune, while in Bayonne on the Atlantic coast the words "*Dirty Arabs*" and "*Murderers*" were sprayed on the facade of a mosque. In L'Oiselet, a secondary school student of north African origin was beaten up by youths shouting racist insults. In Paris, terrorism expert Thomas Hegghammer tweeted that his taxi driver had told him customers were refusing to ride with him because he was of Arab appearance.

In: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11337938/Paris-shootings-The-backlash-begins-against-French-Muslims.html>, retrieved on 11.01.2015

2. Front National and Marine Le Pen are on the Rise— In the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attack, there was no obvious limit to how high Marine Le Pen and National Front could rise.

Mainstream French parties had tried to fend off the National Front's advance ever since it unexpectedly made it to the final round of presidential elections in 2002. Last May 2014, its nationalist, xenophobic message helped the party capture 25 percent of the vote in the European Union parliament elections. After Charlie Hebdo attack, the party's relevance could no longer be doubted.

On the day of the incident, the leader of the increasingly popular party with the slogan "The French Come First," appeared in front of three French flags and hammered out her demands. She said: "*It is time for frank and clear responses against inaction and denial*". In other words, she was trying to say that the country's two main political parties had failed to stem the Islamist tide, and the voters now had all evidence that France requires new leadership. She continued, "*I intend to assume this vital responsibility so France can defend itself in the war that has been declared*".

In: http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2015/01/marine_le_pen_and_the_national_front_on_the_rise_france_s_far_right_party.html, retrieved on 11.01.2015

3. Reports of Grenade Attack on French Mosque—A mosque in the French city of Le Mans had been attacked with grenades, according to reports on 8 January. Four training grenades were lobbed into the mosque. One of the grenades exploded during the night before, while three others were found undetonated on the mosque property in the morning of that day. A bullet hole was also reportedly found in one of the mosque's windows.

In: <http://www.telesurtnet/english/news/Reports-of-Grenade-Attack-on-French-Mosque-20150108-0005.html>, retrieved on 11.01.2015

4. Explosion rocks kebab shop near Mosque in east France - An explosion rocked a kebab shop next to a mosque in Villefrance-sur-Saone in eastern France early on 8 January. The window was blow out by an explosion in the night before.

In: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/01/08/uk-france-shooting-explosion-idUKKBN0KH0RO20150108>, retrieved on 11.01.2015

5. French rush to buy new Charlie Hebdo edition after attacks—The first edition of Charlie Hebdo published after the deadly attacks sold out within minutes at newspaper kiosks around France on 14 January, with people queuing up to buy copies to support the satirical weekly. A buyer in central Paris said: "*I've never bought it before, it's not quite my political stripes, but it's important for me to buy it today and support freedom of expression*". Another buyer said: "*It's important for me to buy it and show solidarity by doing so, and not only by marching*". A print run of up to three million copies had been set for what has been called 'the survivors' edition, dwarfing the usual 60,000 run. But still, many outlets were selling out fast.

The front page of Charlie Hebdo's January 14 edition shows a cartoon of a tearful Mohammad with a sign 'Je suis Charlie' (I am Charlie) below the headline: '*Tout est pardonné*' (All is forgiven). Inside the edition, the weekly's usual irreverent humor was on display. One cartoon showed jihadists saying: "*We shouldn't touch Charlie people ... otherwise they will look like martyrs and, once in heaven, these bastards will steal our virgins.*"

In: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/french-rush-buy-new-charlie-hebdo-edition-after-attacks-578568.html>, retrieved on 15.01.2015

6. French far right leader wants mosque surveillance—Marie Le Pen wanted a tough response to Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks, including surveillance of mosques and military service for children to stop youth radicalization. After attacks by radical French gunmen, she told journalists 16 January that France was facing an enemy from within. She urged a global response, including immediate suspension of Europe's border-free travel accords, monitoring of mosques and sermons, as well as school uniforms and military service for boys and girls.

In: <http://www.myfoxaal.com/story/27869302/french-far-right-leader-wants-mosque-surveillance>, retrieved on 17.01.2015

7. Moroccan Man Murdered in 'Islamophobic' Attack in France—A Moroccan man was stabbed to death in his own home in southern France in what a Muslim group called a 'horrible Islamophobic' attack the week after France was rocked by the Charlie Hebdo killings.

The French *National Observatory Against Islamophobia* said that the 28-year-old attacker forced the front door of his neighbours' house in the picturesque village of Beaucet near Avignon just after midnight on 14 January shouting "I am your god, I am your Islam" before repeatedly stabbing Mohamed El Makouli. The 47-year-old perpetrator was disarmed but later returned with another knife and attacked the father-of-one again, this time killing him. An autopsy showed El Makouli had been stabbed 17 times.

Justice Minister Christiane said on the 16 January that the government was going to stiffen laws against racism and anti-Semitism, and wants to give the authorities powers to block Internet hate sites.

Within one week since Charlie Hebdo incident, more than 50 anti-Muslim incidents including attacks on mosques had been recorded by the Central Council of Muslims in France.

In: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/world/2015/01/17/Moroccan-man-murdered-in-Islamophobic-attack-in-France.html>, retrieved on 18.01.2015

II.II. IN OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES:

1. Bulgaria: Bulgarian Mosque attacked, fire extinguished—A fire at the entrance of the Hudavendigar Mosque entrance in the capital of Plovdiv had been extinguished. The mosque, known as the Friday mosque, was targeted by attackers and attempted by arson. Eyewitnesses at the mosque entrance said that the attacker spilt fuel, and fled the scene after starting a fire. The fire was extinguished and the attacker was caught by police when trying to take fuel at a nearby petrol station.

Plovdiv District Prosecutor Office spokesman Galina Andreeva did not name the attacker, and said that he would be charged with damaging historical and cultural property as well as fuel theft.

In: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news/152416/bulgarian-mosque-attacked-fire-extinguished>, retrieved on 08.01.2015

2. Netherlands: Paris Attacks Boost Support for Dutch Anti-Islam Wilders—Support for the anti-Islamic Freedom Party of Dutch populist Geert Wilders had jumped to its highest level in more than a year after the Islamist militant attacks in Paris.

Wilders, known for his inflammatory rhetoric, said after the Paris bloodshed that the West was 'at war' with Islam, drawing a rebuke from Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on 11 January. According to a poll, if elections were held now, his party would be the single largest in the Netherlands, with 31 seats in the 150-member parliament, more than twice as many as it won in the last elections. The governing Liberal and Labour parties, damaged by persistent sluggish growth, would have just 28 seats between them, compared to the 79 they held after the 2012 elections. The Freedom Party was polling 30 seats just prior to the Paris attacks.

Geertz is currently facing prosecution over remarks he made at an election rally last year, when he appeared to call for "fewer Moroccans" in the city of The Hague, and later referred in a television interview to 'Moroccan scum'.

In: <http://www.newsweek.com/paris-attacks-boost-support-dutch-anti-islam-populist-wilders-298446>, retrieved on 12.01.2015

3. Germany: Anti-Islam protesters march in Dresden, Germany—Anti-Islam protesters gathered on 12 January in the German city of Dresden, with some carrying banners with the names of those killed in the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris.

It was the 12th march in Dresden called by the protest group Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA) since October. Dresden police said the number of people attending these rallies had increased from an estimated 350 protesters on 20 October to 18,000 on 5 January and 25,000 people on 12 January.

In: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/12/europe/germany-anti-islam-marches/>, retrieved on 14.01.2015

4. UK: Nigel Farage urges the West to admit some 'culpability' in the Charlie Hebdo attacks—Nigel Farage had urged the West to admit some 'culpability' in the Charlie Hebdo attacks as he claimed mass immigration, foreign policy and political decisions had contributed to recent events in Paris. During a debate in the European Parliament on the massacre, the far-Right party leader called for Judeo-Christian culture to be defended throughout the West.

Mr Farage said the West needs an honest admission that actually its political decisions have led to much of what has happened, and claimed foreign policy in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria have created very deep resentments within the Muslim community, doing the opposite of its stated purpose of keeping streets safer.

In: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nigel-farage-urges-the-west-to-admit-some-culpability-in-the-charlie-hebdo-attacks-9974176.html>, retrieved on 14.01.2015

5. UK: Death Threats Received at London Mosque—A north London mosque had received death threats and Islamophobic hate mail following Paris attacks. Some 15 emails and letters had been sent which include hand drawn images depicting the Prophet Mohammed as a devil worshipper.

Mohammed Kozar, the general secretary at Finsbury Park Mosque, told *Sky News* that despite many messages of support, there had been a spike in abuse. He said: "*Most of them are nasty drawings about our prophet and our books...Some of them make death threats against our community, so it's quite frightening for our community and our mosque.*"

During the period of 10 years the new management had reformed the mosque from a hub for extremist ideology to a focal point in the community for interfaith and peaceful worship. Despite the huge changes, the mosque's work was often overshadowed by its old links with extremist preacher Abu Hamza, who was sentenced to life in prison at the beginning of January for supporting terrorist organisations. Two of the three gunmen involved with the Paris attacks had also been linked with a former member of the mosque. It was alleged that Djamel Beghal, who attended the mosque in the late 1990s went on to mentor Amedy Coulibaly and Cherif Kouachi.

In: <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/death-threats-received-london-mosque-110416906.html#cheWb7q>, retrieved on 18.01.2015

6. UK: Government tells mosques: force out the preachers of hate—The British Government had taken the unprecedented step of writing to every mosque in the country to tell Muslim leaders that they must do more to root out the "men of hate" who are preaching extremism.

Eric Pickles, the Communities Secretary, had written to 1,100 imams and Islamic leaders urging them to publicly condemn the Al Qaeda terrorists behind the Paris massacres. Mr Pickles said in the letter that Whitehall is unable to defeat jihadist ideology alone and Muslim leaders have a responsibility to prevent young men and women from becoming radicalised. The letter also said that Imams must explain to young people what it means to be British, and that mosques who identify hate preachers within their midst could receive free legal advice to force them out. Mr Pickles' letter came at a time when tension between communities in Britain is running high.

In: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11354089/Government-tells-Mosques-force-out-the-preachers-of-hate.html>, retrieved on 19.01.2015

Related: David Cameron: Muslim Council of Britain ‘has a problem’ over extremism - not Eric Pickles— Prime Minister David Cameron said that one of the country’s main Muslim groups ‘has a problem’ after it accused ministers of behaving like the Far Rights.

The Muslim Council of Britain - an umbrella body for 500 mosques, schools and associations in Britain - spoke out after Eric Pickles, the Communities Secretary, wrote to 1,100 Imams and Muslim leaders saying they must do more to root out men of hate who preach extremism in the wake of the Paris terror attacks. However the Prime Minister intervened, saying that the council’s response showed that it – not Mr Pickles – had ‘a problem’. Prime Minister Cameron said: *“It’s absolutely right to write this letter, to say we all have a responsibility to fight extremism. Anyone who reads this letter will see that what he is saying is that British Muslims make a great contribution to our country....What is happening in terms of extremist terror has nothing to do with true Islam. Anyone frankly reading this letter who has a problem with it I think really has a problem.”*

In: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11355923/David-Cameron-Muslim-Council-has-a-problem-over-extremism-not-Eric-Pickles.html>, retrieved on 20.01.2015

7. Denmark: Anti-Islam movement holds protest in Copenhagen—PegidaDK, a Danish sister movement to the German anti-Islam movement PEGIDA, held a demonstration against Islamic fundamentalism in Copenhagen. Around two hundred people took part in a PEGIDA-inspired demonstration against Islamic fundamentalism in central Copenhagen. Protesters marched along the dark streets of Denmark’s capital while waving Danish flags and lighting torches.

Police officers closely monitored the demonstration, which started outside the city’s National Gallery, and then moved to Copenhagen’s landmark monument the Little Mermaid. Organizer, Nicolai Sennels, said that the demonstration was an opportunity for Danes to stand up against what he called an aggressive religious movement.

In: <http://uatoday.tv/society/anti-islam-movement-holds-protest-in-copenhagen-403828.html>, retrieved on 21.01.2015

II. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS:

II.I. In the United States and Canada:

1. US: Police, FBI Investigate Threat against Bridgeview Mosque— Bridgeview police had questioned two men to investigate threats made in January on Facebook against the Mosque Foundation in Bridgeview.

The two men were interviewed on 30 January at the Bridgeview police station regarding an exchange of comments on Facebook that involved possible threats made against the Bridgeview mosque. The exchange included calls for possible attacks on the Bridgeview mosque in retaliation for events by extremists at Charlie Hebdo in Paris.

In: <http://desplainesvalleynews.com/police-fbi-investigate-threat-against-bridgeview-mosque-p1818-90.htm>, retrieved on 01.02.2015

I.II. In Europe:

1. Sweden: Sweden Mulls National Strategy to Counter ‘Islamophobia’ after Arson Attacks on Mosques—Sweden’s government was planning to develop a new national strategy to counter the growing prejudice against Islam in the country, according to Alice Bah Kuhnke, Swedish minister of culture and democracy.

Kuhnke mentioned at a Stockholm protest rally against the spate of attacks on mosques that the government would coordinate with local Muslim communities to find ways to fight Islamophobia by spreading awareness about Islam among people. He said: *“The big problem is that some people have these sets of values which make them prepared to carry out these horrendous deeds. We won’t change that with more window bars, cameras or guards.”*

On 2 January, thousands of people took to the streets in three of Sweden's largest cities, including Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmo, to demand an end to the attacks on mosques. At a protest rally, outside the parliament in Stockholm, demonstrators held leaflets saying, "Don't touch my mosque," to show their solidarity with the Muslim community in the country.

In: <http://www.ibtimes.com/sweden-mulls-national-strategy-counter-islamophobia-after-arson-attacks-mosques-1772600>, retrieved on 04.01.2015

Related: Protests in Stockholm after mosque attacks—Anti-racism campaigners in the Swedish capital Stockholm had staged a demonstration after three arson attacks were carried out on mosques around the country.

A mosque in the eastern town of Eskilstuna was attacked in December 2014, injuring five people, while later that month a mosque in the southern town of Esloev was set on fire. Then, on New Year's Day, yet another mosque, this time in the eastern city of Uppsala, survived any serious damage after a petrol bomb was thrown at it.

Now angry Swedes had taken to the streets to show their disgust at the attacks, with protesters in Stockholm holding up signs saying "Don't touch my mosque" as they stood outside the parliament building. Anti-racism demonstrations also took place in Gothenburg and Malmo on 16 January.

Swedish Culture Minister Alice Bah Kuhnke announced the government would be staging an initiative aimed at combating the rising level of Islamophobia in this Scandinavian country. She explained that they wanted to curb prejudice and educate people about Islam.

Following the 1 January incident, many Uppsala residents stuck red love hearts on the entrance to the mosque in Uppsala but those responsible for the attack had not been tracked down.

In: <http://www.icenews.is/2015/01/17/protests-in-stockholm-after-mosque-attacks/>, retrieved on 18.01.2015

2. France: French imams, Vatican condemn Paris attack—Four Muslim spiritual leaders from France, who were visiting the Vatican, joined Pope Francis in condemning the attack and urging all believers to show friendship and solidarity to the victims. A joint declaration was also issued on the second week of January denouncing the Paris newspaper massacre and warning that the world is a dangerous place without freedom of expression, but urged the media to be respectful of religions. The declaration stressed that dialogue among faiths was the only way to eliminate prejudice. In: http://www.news-journal.com/features/religion/french-imams-vatican-condemn-paris-attack/article_0abebb72-b2ba-5e01-b3cf-7c8ccb4330a6.html, retrieved on 10.01.2015



3. Germany: Germany leadership unite with Muslims against PEGIDA—Amid the growing strength of an anti-Islamic and anti-refugee movement in Germany, German Chancellor Angela Merkel participated in a rally in Berlin on 13 January to show support for religious tolerance and openness among Germans. The rally was organized by the Central Council of Muslims in Germany and the Turkish Community, under the banner of "Let's be there for each other. Terror: not in our name!," in Berlin. Thousands of participants in that day's counter-demonstrations showed up to oppose far-right extremism. The German chancellor condemned



Islamophobic populism, which had been strengthened by the right-wing *Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West* (PEGIDA). Merkel also stressed that "Islam belongs to Germany."

Meanwhile, PEGIDA drew a record 25,000 marchers to the weekly rally in Dresden on 12 January. Anti-Islam protests, organized by far-right groups, took place across German cities, including Hanover and Kassel. The anti-Islamic movements held in several German cities, primarily in the eastern city of Dresden, had perpetuated the view that Islam was a major threat to society. The Dresden-based far-right PEGIDA had recently gained attention, drawing support from other far-right groups and ordinary citizens. Far-right anti-Muslim groups had become more prominent in Germany, such as the PEGIDA-inspired KOEGIDA in Cologne and HAGIDA in Hamburg. Since October 2014, Germany had witnessed several anti-Islamic demonstrations and racially motivated attacks organized by far-right extremist groups. Since then, there had been weekly anti-Islamic rallies organized by the far-right populist group in Dresden.

In: <http://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2015/01/13/merkel-speaks-out-against-rising-islamophobia>, retrieved on 14.01.2015

Related: Counter-protests planned across Germany— Counter-protests against anti-Islam demonstrators were planned in Hanover, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Munich, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin.

On its Facebook page, the leftist group Dresden Nazifrei (Dresden free of Nazis) called upon its supporters to protest against the anti-Muslim demonstrators. Police tried to keep anti-Muslim protesters and their opponents from clashing, with a heavier presence because of the Paris attacks.

In: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/12/europe/germany-anti-islam-marches/>, retrieved on 14.01.2015

Also related: Anti-Islam PEGIDA Rally In Germany Canceled Over Threat—A weekly rally by a German group protesting what it calls 'the Islamization of the West' was called off on 18 January because of a terrorist threat against one of its organizers.

In: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/18/pegida-rally-canceled_n_6495902.html, retrieved on 19.01.2015

4. France: Hollande's important speech on Islamophobia: "Muslims are the first victims of fanaticism"— French President Francois Hollande said in a 15 January speech at the Arab World Institute in Paris: "*It is Muslims who are the first victims of fanaticism, fundamentalism and intolerance... French Muslims have the same rights as all other French people... We have the obligation to protect them. The law must be firmly enforced in places of worship such as churches, mosques, and synagogues.*"

This important message was given the spate of anti-Muslim attacks in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo murders, and the broader problem of Muslim marginalization in French society.

In: <http://www.vox.com/2015/1/15/7551755/hollande-islamophobia>, retrieved on 16.01.2015

5. Vatican: Mock Islam and expect a punch, says Pope—The Pope denounced provocateurs who mocked religion on 15 January and said that they could expect to receive a punch, as he weighed into the aftermath of the Paris terror attacks. As quoted: "*There are so many people who speak badly about religions or other religions, who make fun of them, who make a game out of the religions of others*".

Pope Francis criticized the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo for insulting Islam and said that he understood why Muslims reacted with violent anger. He even threw a mock punch to illustrate a justifiable response from people who felt that their faith had been offended.

In: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article4324953.ece>, retrieved on 16.01.2015

Related: Pope: When religion insulted, freedom of expression not boundless— Pope made a statement saying that freedom of expression was a fundamental human right, like freedom of religion, but it should be exercised without giving offense.

In reference to the cartoons in the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo Pope Francis spoke to reporters on a flight from Sri Lanka to the Philippines, underlining that there were limits to freedom of expression when religion is insulted. He said: "*One cannot provoke, one cannot insult other people's faith, one cannot make fun*

of faith”, adding that every religion has its dignity, so that that one can react violently when being offended. He offered an example, saying that if his “great friend says a swear word against my mother, then he is going to get a punch. But it’s normal, it’s normal.”

However, he also pointed out that killing in God’s name is an absurdity. He said: “one cannot offend, make war, kill in the name of one’s own religion, that is, in the name of God.”

In: <http://rt.com/news/222935-pope-religion-freedom-insulted/>, retrieved on 16.01.2015

6. Netherlands: Another PVV official resigns over Moroccan hate speech—For the third time in since December 2014, a PVV party official resigned from the party.

Jan Kerkhoff, a provincial parliamentarian in North-Brabant, dropped out of the regional section of PVV because of his dissatisfaction with the party line and his dissatisfaction with party leader Anti-Islamist Geert Wilders. Kerkhoff said: “He teamed up with the largest Nazi, Mr. Le Pen, in France and when a colleague in The Hague says we have to close all the mosques, I just think, what we are doing?”

This was not the first time politicians left the party after Wilders’ speeches. His Moroccan hate speeches had recently boosted the isolation of the party. Before Kerkhoff’s departure, Marc Van Kampen (Gerlderland) left the group in late December 2014 and on early January 2015, Matthijs Jansen (Groningen), hopped off as well.

In: <http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/01/16/another-pvv-official-resigns-moroccan-hate-speech/>, retrieved on 17.01.2015

7. Russia: Rally in Russia condemns Prophet Muhammad's caricature—Over 20,000 people staged a rally in the Russian republic of Ingushetia on 17 January, to protest against the unfavourable portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad in the media.

The theme of the gathering was ‘Islam against Terrorism and Extremism’, sending a message that Islam was a religion of peace and kindness and claimed to be outraged by the actions of those who continued to ignore the feelings of the Muslims and publish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.

Addressing the rally, Ingushetia's head, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, said the publication of the humiliating cartoons of Prophet Muhammad “is nothing but a demonstration of extremism from certain Western countries”. He expressed hope that the destructive policies to heat up contradictions between nations would not develop further in the West and would be buried by the reasonable members of the society.

In: <http://www.newkerala.com/news/2015/fullnews-7505.html>, retrieved on 18.01.2015

8. Belgium: EU considering a ban on Islamophobia after Paris attacks—After the Charlie Hebdo and related attacks, the European Union was being presented with proposals to ban Islamophobia, so as to stem a perceived backlash against Muslims. Eurocrats were sympathetic but did not believe they were practicable.

Diplomatic and NGO sources in Brussels said that the European Union was now considering proposals from Muslim groups to strengthen laws against ‘hate speech’ following the fatal attacks in Paris at the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine and a Jewish Supermarket.

The proposals were based on fears that the attacks by Islamists could provoke a backlash against Europe’s growing Muslim community, leaders of which uniformly condemned the killings, while simultaneously protesting against denigration of Prophet Mohammed.

The sources said that senior EU officials were sympathetic to calls for libel and hate-speech laws to be strengthened, but were skeptical of getting support from member governments or from the European Parliament where Right-leaning parties increased their presence at last year’s European elections.

In: <http://www.thecommentator.com/article/5544/eu-considering-a-ban-on-islamophobia-after-paris-attacks>, retrieved on 18.01.2015

9. France: French President Hollande: Anti-Muslimism is as bad as Antisemitism: Muslims Must be Protected—French President Francois Hollande addressed the Institute of the Arab World on 16 January, in a bid to reassure French Muslims, who fear being the victims of a collective guilt campaign or reprisals after the attack of radicals on Charlie Hebdo. Hollande said: *“It is the Muslims who are the first victims of fanaticism, fundamentalism and intolerance... We must remember that . . . Islam is compatible with democracy, and that we must reject lumping everyone together or mixing them up with one another, and must have in France French of Muslim faith who have the same rights and the same duties as all citizens. They must be protected. Secularism helps in this regard since it respects all religions... Anti-Muslim actions, like Antisemitism, must be denounced and severely punished... France was formed by movements of population and the flux of immigration. It is constituted by the diversity of what is in France. A number of my compatriots have attachments in the Arab world, coming from North Africa or the Near East. They might be Jews, Muslims, Christians, they might be believers or no. But they have a link to the Arab world and they have contributed, generation after generation, to the history of France.”* In: <http://www.juancole.com/2015/01/muslimism-antisemitism-protected.html>, retrieved on 18.01.2015

10. France: French Premier Says ‘Apartheid’ Is Leaving Minorities on the Fringe—Prime Minister Manuel Valls of France cited a deep divide in the country, likening it to a state of “territorial, social, ethnic apartheid” that had left part of the population on the cultural fringe.

Mr. Valls, often regarded as the most popular politician in the leftist government of President François Hollande, had been known for his outspokenness and tough stance on radical Islam. A day after the end of the Charlie Hebdo attacks, Mr. Valls spoke of waging a war against terrorism, jihadism, radical Islam, everything aimed at breaking fraternity, freedom, solidarity. But during a traditional New Year’s speech 20 January, Mr. Valls acknowledged that France had a deeply rooted problem that, he implied, had resulted in a divided society.

In: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/21/world/europe/paris-attacks-suspects.html? r=0>, retrieved on 21.01.2015

11. Germany: German anti-Islam group PEGIDA loses second leader in a week: Kathrin Oertel—Following the resignation of Lutz Bachmann, the former leader of the anti-Islam movement PEGIDA, the new leader of the movement had announced her resignation.

Kathrin Oertel had taken over the far-right movement’s leadership after the founder quit after posing as Adolf Hitler in a photograph. The unexpected divorce of the current leader from the movement indicated that PEGIDA was now suffering from a loss in credibility and popularity among Germans.

Apart from Oertel’s resignation, the anti-Islam group was apparently in disarray as more members of the central core of the movement had reportedly stepped down despite no official statement being released by the movement.

Despite the blatant attitude against Muslim immigrants promoted by PEGIDA, the ex-spokeswoman and co-founder of the organization, Kathrin Oertel, had taken a more lenient stance toward anti-Islam discourses while saying that the movement supports government policies of taking in refugees who were in dire need of help and supports those Muslims in Germany to integrate into German society.

She also underscored that the Dresden branch was dissociated from the Leipzig rallies, as they had ideological differences. She opposed Bachmann’s Hitler selfie taken in a barber’s shop with a toothbrush moustache and Hitler-style hair, and his use of words and offensive comments that promoted hate speech toward German Muslims. She said: *“The Facebook postings that are just now known to us by Lutz Bachmann are something that we as a society strongly oppose. They do not help us reach our goals”*.

In: <http://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2015/01/29/german-antiislam-group-pegida-loses-second-leader-in-a-week>, retrieved on 30.01.2015

12. Germany: Angela Merkel: Islam is Part of Germany—In an interview with German newspaper *Hamburger Abendblatt* published on 31 January, Merkel said that there were about four million Muslims living in Germany, adding that Islamic religion courses were being taught in German schools.

Angela Merkel also said that there were university professors specializing in the field of Islamic religion, along with an annual conference on Islam organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior that aims to improve the integration of Muslims living in Germany. She pointed out that all these factors proved that Islam was part of Germany.

In: <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/01/150715/angela-merkel-islam-part-germany-islam-is-part-of-germany/>, retrieved on 01.02.2015

II.III. Rest of the World:

Russia: 800,000 Muslims march in Russia's Chechnya against Charlie Hebdo cartoons of Prophet Mohammed—Hundreds of thousands of people protested in Russia's Chechnya region on 16 January against what its Kremlin-backed leader called the “vulgar and immoral” cartoons of the prophet Muhammad published by French newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

Mixing pro-Islamic chants and anti-western rhetoric, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov criticised Europe to chants of “Allahu Akbar” as the protesters stood along the main thoroughfare of Chechnya's capital, Grozny. Some carried signs declaring “I love my prophet Muhammad” in English and others waved flags, as security service helicopters flew overhead and police stood by. Russia's Interior Ministry said 800,000 people had attended the rally, or about 60 percent of Chechnya's population.

In: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/19/chechens-protest-cartoons-prophet-muhammad-charlie-hebdo>, retrieved on 20.01.2015

III. SITUATION OF MUSLIMS

III.I. In the United States and Canada:

1. US: Twin Falls Muslims work to educate locals, expand mosque—On 16 January, men took off their shoes and placed them in a shoe organizer near the entrance of the Islamic Center of Twin Falls. They walked across green carpet into an area no bigger than a living room and paused, facing northeast toward Islam's holiest city, Mecca. Several knelt, heads bowed, while others sat in front of their imam, Bakhriddin Yusupov. The room quickly filled until four lines formed before Yusupov. As many as 60 men gathered to pray in this room on Fridays.

On 9 December 2014, members of the Islamic Center of Twin Falls applied for a special use permit to expand and erect a new building on their site at 455 Addison Ave. The permit was approved at the same day. The next step was to get a building permit. Despite the nonprofit might need two or three years to raise \$200,000 to build its 2,500-square-foot structure, the process towards the mosque construction had been started. That was how Muslims in Twin Fall of Idaho struggle to have a proper place for praying.

In: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jan/18/twin-falls-muslims-work-to-educate-locals-expand-m/#ixzz3PNGP7qs8>, retrieved on 19.01.2015

2. US: This Is How A Marvel Superhero Battles Islamophobia In San Francisco—Anti-Muslim ads had once again made their way to San Francisco buses, but this time, a Marvel superhero had taken it upon herself to give them a little bit of a make-over. A street artist was cleverly using Marvel's first ever Muslim Superhero Kamala Khan ‘Ms. Marvel’ to battle Islamophobic advertisements that had adorned the city buses.



The Islamophobic ads compared Islam and Nazism, featuring a picture of Adolf Hitler with Muslim leader Haj Amin-al-Husseini that reads: "Islam-Jew hatred: It's in the Quran." The controversial ad campaign was sponsored by Pamela Gellar, the infamous U.S. anti-Islam blogger who launched a number of similar campaigns over 2014. Her organization, American Freedom Defense Initiative, purchased 50 bus ads for their campaign against Muslims and Islam.

In: <http://www.carbonated.tv/news/us-street-artist-using-ms-marvel-san-francisco-pamela-gellar-islamophobic-ads-photos>, retrieved on 26.01.2015

3. US: At this mosque, Muslims challenge terror message, focus on youth education—Before and after the weekly prayer service late January at the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh, volunteers sat at booths in the downstairs social hall, asking people to sign up to lead children's activities, volunteer for a food pantry, participate in adult education or take part in a Quranic recitation. The recruitment effort had been planned before the Charlie Hebdo terrorist massacres earlier in January, carried out by militants claiming to act in the name of Islam.

They said getting children, teens and young adults more involved in the mosque would help them learn true Islam and counter what they said were murderous distortions purveyed by the terrorists in France as well as by Boko Haram in Nigeria, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and various al-Qaida groups carrying out their own reigns of terror.

A volunteer, Esra Daghestani, said: "Everything that's going on around the world is sad...I feel like you can't really do anything about it. The best thing you can do is try to help with the generation that's coming now.....It is important to tell the youth that ISIS and al-Qaida and all these aren't really related to Islam....They're just people who use the name of Islam to get attention."

In: http://www.postbulletin.com/life/lifestyles/at-this-mosque-muslims-challenge-terror-message-focus-on-youth/article_53367fff-375f-5614-8a6b-9aa14e40f7cc.html, retrieved on 29.01.2015

III.II. In Europe:

1. UK: Derby parade: March to celebrate Prophet Muhammad's birthday is one of the biggest in UK—



Thousands of people marched through the streets of Derby on 4 December to mark the birthday of the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

The event, which was one of the largest in the country, had been held since 1980 and was a celebration open to all, not just Muslims. Around 5,000 people joined the march through Normanton and Pear Tree. Men and children took part in the parade, which began in Dairyhouse Road and finished at the Jamia Mosque in Rosehill Street for a service about the life of the prophet. Organiser Dr Allah Detta said this event was important for the community to continue to

publicly celebrate the occasion as it set an example to the younger generation.

In: <http://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/Derby-parade-March-celebrate-Prophet-Muhammad-s/story-25806099-detail/story.html#ixzz3O3jhQp2n>, retrieved on 06.01.2015

2. Germany: Charlie Hebdo attack: German lawmakers warn against xenophobia—After the Paris attack, German politicians have warned against anti-Islam sentiment. An anti-Islamization movement in Germany sees itself justified after the attack.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, a conservative Christian Democrat (CDU), warned against stereotyping Muslims living in Germany after the attack on Charlie Hebdo, which was known for poking fun religion, including Islam. Merkel said there were good relations in German society to the vast majority of the country's Muslims, but that in a few, isolated cases, some had turned to extremist ideology.

In reaction to the attack, Merkel's CDU along with police unions on 7 January pushed for stronger prevention against terrorist attacks on European soil. They brought up the contentious issue of data storage facilities, saying Germany should introduce laws to allow data to be collected on its citizens and saved for lengths of time, similar to practices in the US. Now more than ever, German leaders fear the attack in Paris would add to the growing anti-Islamic sentiment.

In: <http://www.dw.de/charlie-hebdo-attack-german-lawmakers-warn-against-xenophobia/a-18180826>, retrieved on 08.01.2015

3. Netherlands: Muslims in Holland start campaign after Paris attack—A group of Muslims in Holland started an online campaign titled “Not my Islam” (Niet mijn Islam) which received 11 thousands people's support on its first day. Group members who identify themselves as the silent majority who respects Holland's democratic system said that murder and barbarism cannot be linked to Islam. The group also supported protests took place in different parts of Holland censuring the Paris attack.

In: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/world/152632/muslims-in-holland-start-campaign-after-paris-attack>, retrieved on 11.01.2015

4. Europe's Muslims feel heat of backlash after Paris terror—Firebombs and pig heads thrown into mosques; Veiled women subjected to insults in the street; The Internet filled up with threats against Muslims; Europe's Muslims were feeling the heat of a fierce backlash following terror attack against French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

An official who keeps track of Islamophobic attacks in France said there were 60 incidents in the six days since that attack. A climate of fear was taking hold in Europe, stoked by rightist rhetoric equating the millions of peaceful Muslims with the few plotting murder and mayhem. Abdallah Zekri, head of the National Observatory against Islamophobia, said that since last Wednesday's massacre at Charlie Hebdo, 26 places of worship around France were attacked by firebombs, gunshots or pig heads, with a mosque in Le Mans hit with four grenades. There were 34 insults and threats. TellMAMA, a British group that tracks anti-Muslim attacks, reported 50-60 cases of specific online threats to individuals during the second week of January.

In: <http://news.yahoo.com/europes-muslims-feel-heat-backlash-paris-terror-123511491.html>, retrieved on 14.01.2015

5. France: French Muslims feel deeply torn by viral 'I am Charlie' slogan—Within France's Muslim community of some 5 million, many were viewing the tragedy in different terms from their non-Muslim compatriots. They felt deeply torn by the now-viral slogan "I am Charlie", arguing that they were not Charlie at all.

Many of France's Muslims abhorred the violence that struck the country on the second week of January. But they were also revolted by the notion that they should defend the paper. By putting the publication on a pedestal, they felt, the France was once again sidelining the Muslim community, feeding into a general sense of discrimination that helped create the conditions for radicalization in the first place.

Others were less impressed. A Muslim city councilor and youth group leader in Gennevilliers said: "*I want to make clear that I completely condemn the attack on Charlie Hebdo. But I think freedom of speech needs to stop when it harms the dignity of someone else. The prophet for us is sacred.*"

Some insisted there was a double standard in freedom of speech and expression that was bias against Islam. They cited the 2010 so-called burqa ban in France that forbade 'concealment of the face' in public, which was clearly aimed at devout Islamic women. They also pointed to the 2008 firing of a Charlie Hebdo cartoonist, Maurice Sinet, after he declined to apologize for a column that some viewed as anti-Semitic. Such action was not taken after their protests over the paper's cartoon. In: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/they-are-not-charlie/2015/01/13/7c9d6998-9aae-11e4-86a3-1b56f64925f6_story.html, retrieved on 14.01.2015

6. France: 42% of French Opposed to Charlie Hebdo's Cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, Poll Finds—57% believed that similar cartoons should continue to be printed. More than 4 in 10 French people believed Charlie Hebdo shouldn't publish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad, given that many Muslims found the images offensive, according to a recent poll by a French publication, published 18 January.

A survey conducted by Le Journal du Dimanche, a French weekly newspaper, presented participants with this information: "*Some Muslims feel attacked or injured by the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.*"

In the final tally of responses, 42% checked a box to indicate that the country should "*consider these reactions and avoid publishing these cartoons,*" while 57% of respondents checked "*we should ignore these reactions and continue to publish such cartoons.*" The remaining 1% checked "*no opinion.*"

The survey, which used a sample of over 1,000 French adults, also found that women and people under 35 were most sensitive to Muslim concerns.

Charlie Hebdo's 14 January edition cover image controversially depicted the Prophet Muhammad in tears, holding a sign that reads "Je Suis Charlie," in defiance of the attacks on the magazine's office that left 12 dead. Despite the anti-Charlie rallies that the cover sparked from Muslim groups across the world, the issue sold out its five million copies. In: <http://time.com/3672921/charlie-hebdo-prophet-muhammad-muslim-cartoon-poll/>, retrieved on 19.01.2015

7. UK: UK Plea to Imams to Fight Extremism Prompts Islamophobia Charge—Muslim groups accused the British government of copying the language of the far right and of stoking Islamophobia after ministers wrote to imams asking them to explain to Muslims how Islam is compatible with being British.

In a letter sent on 16 January, Eric Pickles, the minister for local government and communities, asked them to explain to Muslims how Islam can be "part of British identity" -- arguing they had a duty to do more to fight extremism and root out anyone preaching hatred. Muslim groups said the letter unfairly singled them out. Tahla Ahmad of the Muslim Council of Britain said: "*The letter has all the hallmarks of very poor judgment, which feeds into an Islamophobic narrative, which feeds into a narrative of us and them.*"

In: <http://www.voanews.com/content/rev-uk-plea-ti-imams-to-fight-extremism-prompts-islamophobia-charge/2604775.html>, retrieved on 20.01.2015

III.III. Rest of the World:

1. **Australia: \$25,000 reward to solve mosque arson attack** – A \$25,000 REWARD had been offered in the search for the person who tried to set Toowoomba's mosque alight. Darling Downs district officer Detective Acting Inspector Paul Hart said police were appreciative of information received from the community since the attack.

It came after a 35-year-old man was charged for trespassing at the rear of the Harristown building on 27 January night. He was alleged to be one of four men seen in CCTV images which were released to the public earlier that week.

In: <http://www.thechronicle.com.au/news/250000-reward-solve-mosque-arson-attack/2528256/>, retrieved on 31.01.2015

Related: Toowoomba mosque damaged in arson attack—Toowoomba's first Islamic mosque had been attacked by unknown offender, in an attack which was suspected to have taken place between late 23 January night or Early morning on 24 January. A man suspected of the attack could be seen on a security footage although the police said that they were trying to enhance the image in order to identify the criminal.

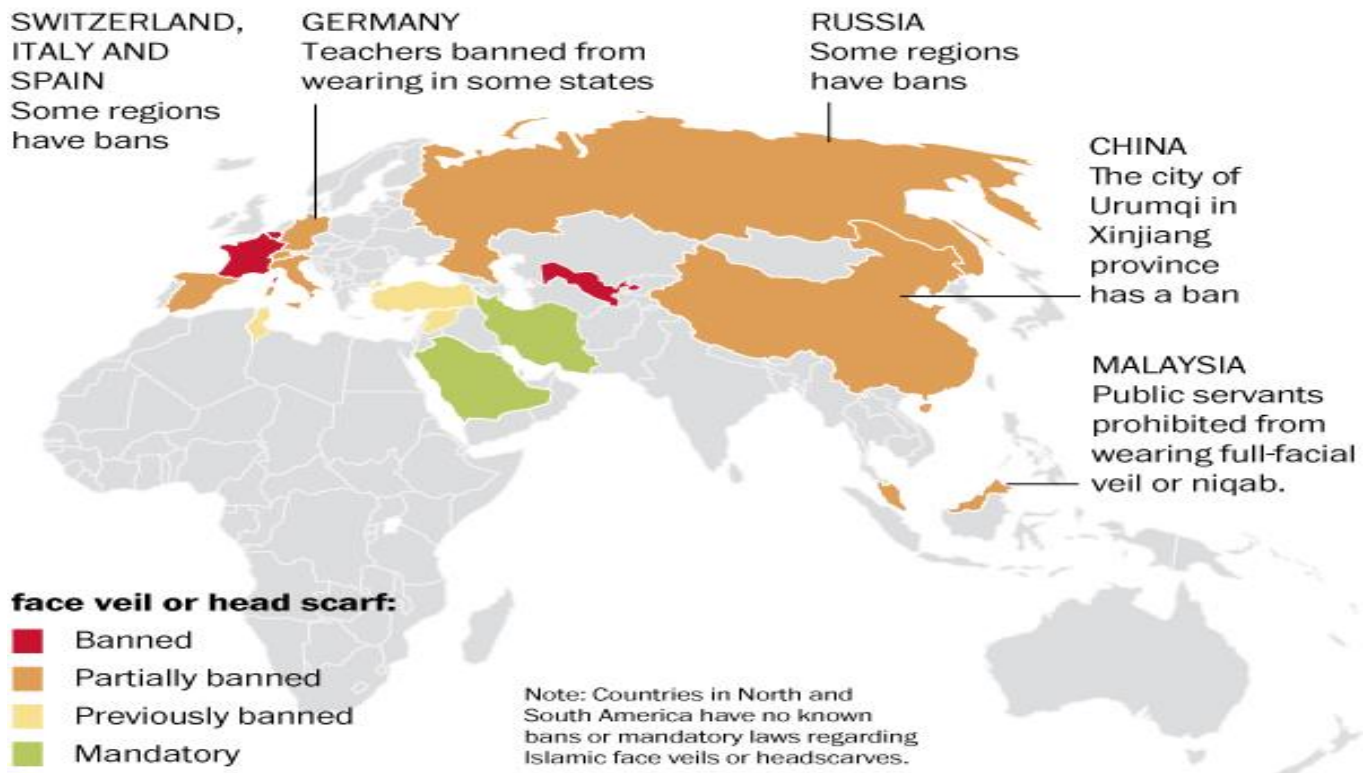
The arsonist attempted to burn the mosque with flammable objects and initially tried to burn the meeting hall. According to the police, the gas stove was left open, but it failed to ignite saving the mosque from major damage.

In: <http://australianmuslimtimes.com/2015/01/26/toowoomba-mosque-damaged-in-arson-attack-4777.html>, retrieved on 27.01.2015

IV. ON BURQAH AND VEIL RELATED ISSUES:

1. The map of countries which applies Burqa-Ban Policies

Where Islamic face veils or headscarves are banned and where they are mandatory



In: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/01/16/map-the-places-where-islamic-face-veils-are-banned/>, retrieved on 31.12.2014

2. Australia: Ipswich Independent Candidate Patrica Petersen says the burqa should be banned for security reasons—Independent candidate for Ipswich Dr Patricia Petersen had called on the government to ban the wearing of a burqa or balaclava in public.

Dr Petersen said her views had changed regarding women and burqas after she travelled overseas and listened first hand to what Muslim women wanted. *“I had always adopted the politically correct view that women should be able to wear whatever they wanted and if they chose to cover their faces in public that was their business, not mine and not the government’s...When I travelled to Dubai, I was gobsmacked. Young Muslim women told me that they wanted my support, that they didn’t want to be culturally intimidated into covering their faces...It’s also safer for communities if faces are exposed. We don’t feel comfortable with people wearing balaclavas. We should ban any piece of clothing, balaclavas, burqas, any other face covering, from being worn in public”*. Dr Petersen claimed she was told wearing the burqa and niqaab were not prescribed by Islamic law.

In: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/ipswich-independent-candidate-patrica-petersen-says-the-burqa-should-be-banned-for-security-reasons/story-e6frq6n6-1227186342864>, retrieved on 17.01.2015

3. New Zealand: Outrage at calls for Waitangi burqa ban—A call by a *Ngapuhi hapu* leader to ban the burqa at 2015 Waitangi Day celebrations had outraged Maori and Muslim.

Te Matarahurahu hapu elder, David Rankin, said the traditional Muslim dress should be banned at the 175th anniversary at Waitangi because it symbolises Islam’s direct threat to Maori’s sovereignty and their culture. Mr Rankin said his comments were intended to spur debate about droves of Maori converting to Islam, a religion which he said “condemns cultures that do not comply with its rules”.

A number of Maori saw Muslims as new coloniser, coming to their country and refusing to accept the indigenous values of New Zealand. The Northland Muslim Community had spoken out against Mr Rankin’s comments.

In: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/religion-and-beliefs/news/article.cfm?c_id=301&objectid=11392913, retrieved on 29.01.2015

4. Australia: Referendum on banning the Burqa?: No thanks—Pauline Hanson on the end of January was once again fuelling the flames of racism and xenophobia in Australia by suggesting that the country should hold a referendum on banning the burqa.

Hanson had joined a number of politicians who had a similar preoccupation with what Muslim women should wear. Following the high profile anti-terrorism raids in Sydney in September 2014, Senator Cory Bernardi tweeted *“Note burqa wearers in some of the houses raided this morning? This shroud of oppression and flag of fundamentalism is not right in Australia.”* Senator Jacqui Lambie quickly jumped in with a call to ban the burqa.

In: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=17054>, retrieved on 02.02.2015

V. ON DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS:

1. France: Bishop says interfaith dialogue can be a model for French society—Four French Imams expressed their shock and condemnation of the attack on the satirical magazine ‘Charlie Hebdo’. In a statement, the delegation which included Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, urged all believers to combat hatred and all forms of violence which destroy life, violate the dignity of the human person and undermine peaceful coexistence between peoples.

Bishop Michel Dubost, Heads of the French bishops’ council for interfaith relations said that it was terrible for Muslim leaders as it was an attack on democracy which requires freedom of information, but he felt very glad to be with the imams at that moment to show affection and understanding of the difficulties they face. The Catholic leader said he was impressed with Pope Francis who spoke a little French to each of the imams, speaking to their hearts and asking them to pray for him. Asked whether he was surprised by the attack, Bishop Dubost said people were aware this kind of crime could happen, but what strikes him most was how difficult the national dialogue has become, saying: *“We planned our meeting here to show that dialogue is a*

necessity....and I think interreligious dialogue is a kind of model for society....if we want to build peace, we have to go and meet people.....who are not of our culture”

Bishop Dubost said it was vital to have a common project, to help in the education of teenagers and to bring hope, working together for the good of all society. The Catholic-Muslim delegation included Tareq Oubrou, rector of the Bordeaux mosque, Mohammed Moussaoui, President of the Union of French Mosques, Azzedine Gaci, rector of the mosque in Villeurbanne, and Djelloul Seddiki, director of the Institute of Théologie of Paris' Grand Mosque.

In: http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/01/08/bishop_interfaith_dialogue_can_be_model_for_french_society/1117465, retrieved on 09.01.2015

2. Sri Lanka: Pope: 'We must be forthright in interfaith dialogue'— The Pope made the comments during a meeting at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall during his papal visit to South Asia. Francis was greeted at the hall by members of Sri Lanka's Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and and Christian communities.

Pope Francis said: *"As experience has shown for inter-religious dialogue and encounter to be effective, it must be grounded in a full and forthright presentation of our respective convictions. Certainly, such dialogue will accentuate how varied our beliefs, traditions and practices are. But if we are honest in presenting our convictions, we will be able to see more clearly what we hold in common. New avenues will be opened for mutual esteem, cooperation and indeed friendship”*.

In: http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=Pope_We_must_be_forthright_in_interfaith_dialogue_20150114_02, retrieved on 15.01.2015

3. US: Effort intended to expand interfaith dialogue across state—The Wisconsin Council of Churches which represented 2,000 congregations in 18 denominations across Wisconsin issued a statement on the second week of January, saying that over this year, Wisconsin's largest coalition of Christian churches hopes to encourage interfaith dialogue and cooperation in communities across the state.

At the Greater Milwaukee, leaders gather regularly to discuss many issues to find common ground and to host initiatives, from feeding the hungry to environmental preservation.

In: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/religion/effort-intended-to-expand-interfaith-dialogue-across-state-b99427442z1-289391781.html>, retrieved on 22.01.2015

4. US: Muslim, Jewish faiths join forces for central Arkansas disaster relief—Students of different faiths came together for one unifying mission 22 January at Hendrix College to find ways to bridge gaps in interfaith dialogue.

The Project Pericles forum in Hendrix's Student Life and Technology Center, led by New York University students Zohaib Anwar and Avi Rothfeld, touched on misconceptions about religion and current events around the world. The two were part of NYU Bridges, a student-led organization that was born out of a desire to put aside the “us vs. them” notions that society can place on people of different faiths. Since its inception, the organization had traveled to disaster-stricken communities, helping local residents rebuild.

As part of those efforts, the two students, along with the leadership of the Jewish Disaster Response Corp were helping homeowners in Mayflower and Vilonia recover from the 2014 deadly EF4 tornado. As part of the experience, the groups met with residents affected by the tornado and also reached out to the local community after a day's work.

Anwar said: *“Interfaith dialogue is somewhat separate from discussing political issues and solving a crisis that we may not have the tools to solve, and we may not even have the knowledge to solve,”* while Rothfeld added that creating a new narrative for Muslim-Jewish relations was essential to removing stereotypes and negativity. In: <http://thecabin.net/news/local/2015-01-22/muslim-jewish-faiths-join-forces-central-arkansas-disaster-relief#.VNZIEGiUeJA>, retrieved on 23.01.2015

5. Saudi Arabia: King Abdullah's Plea for Interfaith Dialogue—Saudi King Abdullah, who passed away on 22 January, had the aim to modernize the kingdom to face the future. He was also a committed supporter of dialogue to solve conflicts.

In 2008, the late King Abdullah made a plea for dialogue among Muslims, Christians and Jews. The message from King Abdullah, which was welcomed by Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders, came at a time of stalled peace initiatives and escalating tensions in the region.



Following his plea, the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) was opened in 2012 in Vienna with great pomp by U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon and senior figures from the world's main religions. In: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/164417-king-abdullah-s-plea-for-interfaith-dialogue>, retrieved on 24.01.2015

VI. GENERAL ISSUES:

Anti-Semitism Vs. Islamophobia [A media opinion excerpted from Osman Mirghani]

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks Muslims have gotten used to being subject to suspicion and accusation. This is only worsened by the invalid generalizations that link terrorism with the Islamic faith and those who blame all Muslims for the crimes committed by a renegade minority, a minority that has killed more Muslims than members of any other faith. Even before 2001, terrorism was often associated with Arabs, something that became so damaging to their reputation that the word “Arab” itself became something of a slur in the minds of many people in the West and beyond.

After the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, sensitive issues surrounding Islam and terrorism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism have returned to dominate debates and discussions, raising questions as to where this current tense situation is leading. The world has shown true solidarity with France in the face of the attacks and representatives of several Muslim countries participated in the unity march in Paris. Many voices emerged from the Muslim world, not only to express strong support for the war on terror, but to reiterate that Islam cannot be blamed for the actions of these terrorists. At the end of the day, the terrorists are nothing more than a tiny group that is roundly rejected and denounced by the vast majority of Muslims. But this did not stop Muslims from finding themselves, once again, at the center of suspicion and feelings of growing hatred. This is either the result of the constant and deliberate distortion of Islam, or out of general ignorance, or simply because Muslims today are an easy target.

In what can only be described as biased remarks to say the least, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said that he rejects the term “Islamophobia” in describing anti-Muslim prejudice because this is often used as a weapon by Islamist apologists to silence their critics. Strangely enough, while Valls did not deny the existence of animosity and hatred towards Muslims and Islam, he insisted on not using the specific term to describe the phenomenon.

Ironically, in the same interview, Valls spoke about the risks of a new wave of anti-Semitism coming from France’s immigrant community, particularly those from the Middle East and North Africa. He also said that any criticism of Israel or its policies is, in and of itself, anti-Semitic and that the public anger towards the war on Gaza was nothing but a cover for anti-Semitism.

Valls previously said that anti-Zionism is a form of anti-Semitism, a position that was also earlier expressed by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In a speech to the Israeli Knesset last year, Harper described anti-Zionism as the new face of anti-Semitism. Such discourse has a number of flaws, not least the fact that

anti-Semitism existed in Europe long before the arrival of Arab and Muslim immigrants to the continent. Nazism, one of the main features of which was anti-Semitism, was a distinctly European phenomenon—this is not something that originated in North Africa or the Middle East.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also did not miss out on the chance to exploit Valls's remarks. Netanyahu warned that a new wave of Islamization is sweeping across Europe, not forgetting to link this to creeping anti-Semitism.

This general focus on anti-Semitism and the fears of France's Jewish community raises questions among Europe's Muslims regarding the lack of attention being paid to the growing animosity and hatred of Islam. This is something that we can see in the constant association of Islam and Muslims with terrorism and the repeated use of epitaphs and expressions like "Islamist terrorists," to the point that the true picture has been distorted in the minds of many people. Many today are unable to differentiate between terrorism and Islam—a religion embraced by nearly one and a half billion people, the vast majority of whom reject extremism and terrorism and strongly denounce the practices of a tiny minority of terrorists.

It is true that many voices emerged in France and Britain to emphasize that Islam as a religion has nothing to do with terrorism. Those include French President François Hollande, who in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attacks said that Muslims are among the first victims of extremism, emphasizing that Islamophobia and anti-Semitism should be equally intolerable. The problem is that these positions get lost amid the clamor and consternation about terrorism and Islam and the continuous demand for Muslims to proclaim their innocence after every terrorist attack.

Extremists, whether in the Muslim world or the West, are the ones who benefit the most from this atmosphere of tension and hatred. Hate preachers employ these issues, as well as general tensions and wars, in their speeches to recruit youth who feel marginalized, lost and targeted.

The war on terror is complex and has multiple fronts and is definitely in need of international cooperation. But victory will not be achieved through security measures or airstrikes alone; it also requires tackling this atmosphere of hatred toward Islam and Muslims.

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