



DIALOGUE & OUTREACH Department

OIC Islamophobia Observatory

Monthly Bulletin – April 2017

MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA:

A. In the United States and Canada:

US: Police investigation underway after Korans found ditched in male urinal—Two edition of the Islamic religious text were found in a men’s loo in the student union. A student found the books and immediately called the cops. Police were reviewing security footage to pinpoint the culprits, but about half dozen students went into the bathroom during the time the books were ditched. UT Dallas Police Chief Larry Zacharias said the incident was very rare and strange. The Police suspected the books were taken from the reflection room, which was also in the student union.

See: The Sun News’ entry, in: <http://www.lohud.com/story/news/crime/2016/10/06/anti-islam-graffiti/91656588/>, retrieved on 18.4.2017



US: Sixth-Grade Teacher Assigns Reading That Refers To Islam As 'Immoral'—The Catholic Diocese of Orlando, Florida, had taken disciplinary action against a teacher at a Catholic school who gave his six-grade students an anti-Muslim reading assignment, The Huffington Post reports. Religion and social studies teacher Mark Smythe handed out a 19th century reading that denounced Islam by referring to it as a “monstrous mixture” of faiths and calling the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad “ridiculous, immoral, and corrupting.” Although it is unclear what consequences Smythe faced for distributing this inappropriate material, the associate superintendent, Jacquelyn Flanigan, released a statement announcing he had been reprimanded. Flanigan said: “We have spoken to the principal of Blessed Trinity Catholic School, Ocala and to the teacher in question and have reprimanded the teacher for this unfortunate exhibit of disrespect.” According to media, a mother of one of the students sent the text to a friend who then submitted it to the publication’s Documenting Hate project. The material was believed to be an excerpt from text written in 1853 by priest Giovanni Bosco. The controversial document described Muhammad as a “charlatan,” “villain,” “ignoramus,” “imposter,” and “false prophet,” among other insulting and cruel remarks. Flanigan noted in her statement that the information provided in the sixth grade class was not consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church. In addition to the fact that the text promoted unfavorable views of Islam, the content was incredibly outdated and did not reflect the warmer attitude that Catholic leaders had expressed toward Muslims in the centuries since Bosco’s words were written.

See: The Carbonated TV News’ entry, in: <http://www.carbonated.tv/news/teacher-under-fire-for-assigning-islamophobic-reading-to-sixth-graders>, retrieved on 20.4.2017

Canada: Anti-Muslim sentiment growing in Canadian cities—An imam in Canada received a death threat and another that called for the burning down of a mosque near Toronto, while in Ottawa a hateful note was



found inserted into the door of the Islamic Care Centre on, the same day a fire broke out at the side of the building. Imam Ibrahim Hindy said an email threatening his life was accompanied by a picture of men being hanged. Hindy was a member of a school board's multi-faith group in Mississauga, a city just outside of Toronto. A month before, a board meeting was the focus of a violent demonstration against a school allowing Muslim students to pray on Fridays. Pages of the Quran were torn and strewn on the floor

by one man during the meeting. Hindy had spoken out to defend the school board but he said he never expected he would be the target of such hate. He said: *"I never imagined that it would take off and that people would attack me with such vitriol. People started attacking me online and from there I received a death threat in my email address. They were also on social media, people talking explicitly about burning down the mosque where I work at."* Following the incident, Police stepped up patrols around the mosque area, while rules were enacted to safeguard staff and students.

See: World Bulletin News' entry, in: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/todays-news/188226/anti-muslim-sentiment-growing-in-canadian-cities>, retrieved on 21.4.2017

B. In Europe:

Austria: Attacks on Muslims jump 62 percent in Austria— A report from Austria's Documentation and Consultancy Center for Muslims said that attacks on Muslims in the country were increasing dramatically. There was a 62 percent jump in 2016 compared to the previous year. In total numbers, there were 253 attacks against Muslims 2016, compared to 156 in 2015. Around 31 percent of attacks were written or verbal; 30 percent were defined as "hate speech", while 12 percent targeted Muslim institutions and 5 percent were physical assaults. The report added that some of the attacks happened in government institutions. Researchers also said a majority of attacks involved Muslim women, and more than half occurred on public transport or other public places. Out of Austria's total population of approximately 9 million people, there were about 600,000 Muslims, most of whom are of Turkish origin.

See: NTM News' entry, in: <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/attacks-on-muslims-jump-62-percent-in-austria/>, retrieved on 4.4.2017

Germany: Germany moves to stop public funding for far-right party— Germany's top security official was proposing a law change to stop a far-right party from receiving public funds. Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere made the statement after consultations with the Justice Ministry and Finance Ministry he had submitted a proposal for legal amendments to the heads of parties in Parliament, where the changes would have to be made. Germany supreme court in January rejected a government bid to ban the National Democratic Party, known as NPD, on accusations it pursued a racist and anti-Semitic agenda. That would have ended public funding. The party had no seats in Parliament, but was represented at the local level and receives money like other parties based upon electoral performance. Justice Minister Heiko Maas backed de Maiziere's idea, in saying "*the state must not finance enemies of democracy.*"

See: Startribune.com News' entry, in: <http://www.startribune.com/germany-moves-to-stop-public-funding-for-far-right-party/418600953/>, retrieved on 8.4.2017

UK: Image of Saffiyah Khan Facing Down Far-Right Demonstrator Goes Viral—

A photo of a woman facing down a protester from a Far-Right, anti-Islam group in England had been shared thousands of times on social media. A photographer with the U.K.'s Press Association captured the image of 25-year-old Saffiyah Khan face-to-face with the demonstrator from the English Defence League (EDL) during a demonstration in April in Birmingham, a central England city with an ethnically diverse population. Khan told media that she stepped forward to protect another woman wearing a Muslim headscarf who had shouted "Islamophobe" at the group. Khan said more than two dozen EDL supporters surrounded the other woman. The demonstration attracted around 100 people, was a response to the recent attacks in London and Stockholm.

See: NBC News' entry, in: <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/image-saffiyah-khan-facing-down-far-right-demonstrator-goes-viral-n744601>, retrieved on 11.4.2017



France: French presidential hopeful slams Pope Francis for welcoming migrants—With just a week to national elections, the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen said on 14 April that she was 'extremely religious' but 'angry' with the church for getting involved in matters over which it had no concern. Le Pen, whose campaign is based on a forthright anti-immigrant and protectionist platform, openly attacked the pope's views on migrants. She said: "*The fact that he appeals for charity, for welcoming others, foreigners, does not shock me, but charity should only be personal. If states go against the interests of their own people by welcoming migrants it raises questions of interference.*" In the La Croix interview, Le Pen also accused France's bishops of trying to influence voters' political opinions. The pope had appealed for greater compassion for migrants and refugees throughout his pontificate and in February spoke of the moral imperative to protect asylum seekers and undocumented workers and their inalienable rights.

See: The Gazette News' entry, in: <http://gazette.com/french-presidential-hopeful-slams-pope-francis-for-welcoming-migrants/article/1601084>, retrieved on 15.4.2017

Germany: Germany mosque spray-painted with anti-Turkish slogans—Unknown assailants vandalized a mosque in Germany's eastern city of Leipzig, spray-painting the walls with anti-Turkish slogans. A large sign at the entrance of the building was covered in black paint by the assailants, who also scrawled insulting slogans against Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party. It was the third attack in Germany within a week that targeted Turkish mosques and organizations, amid a heated debate in the country about Turkish migrants and Turkey's April 16 referendum on transition to a presidential system. Bekir Altas, secretary general of the Islamic Community of Milli Gorus, one of the largest organizations of the Turkish Muslim community in Germany, he said: "The ongoing discussions on the electoral behavior of Turkish migrants at the referendum are creating a hostile climate. Since the announcement of the referendum result, there has been a dramatic increase in attacks targeting Turkish and Muslim organizations." The country had witnessed growing Islamophobia and anti-immigrant hate in recent years, triggered by the propaganda of far-right

and populist parties, which had exploited fears regarding the refugee crisis. In 2016, 91 mosques were attacked across Germany, which showed a significant increase in anti-Muslim violence. In 2015, 75 such attacks were reported, and in 2014 there were nearly 60 attacks that targeted mosques.

See: Ottawa Citizen News' entry, in: <http://muslimnews.co.uk/news/islamophobia/germany-mosque-spray-painted-anti-turkish-slogans/>, retrieved on 22.4.2017

UK: Far right Britain First leader shares fake video of 'London Muslims celebrating Paris terror attack'—

The leader of far-right group Britain First had been slammed for posting a video that falsely claimed Muslims were celebrating the terror attack on Paris. Paul Golding tweeted a video with the caption: "Oh look, a crowd of 'moderate' Muslims celebrating the Paris Terror attack in London." However, the footage was in fact shot seven years ago and actually shows Pakistani cricket fans celebrating a victory over Sri Lanka. The tweet was met by scores of angry social media users who said the far-right leader was trying to stir up Islamophobia.

See: MSN News' entry, in: <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/other/far-right-britain-first-leader-shares-fake-video-of-london-muslims-celebrating-paris-terror-attack/ar-BBA8nej>, retrieved on 23.4.2017

Switzerland: Right-wing extremism French election boosts Swiss far-right—

Far-right and militant groups in French-speaking Switzerland had been gaining in strength due to the populist resurgence ahead of the presidential election in neighbouring France, as the extremist adherents of racist and nationalist ideologies were becoming more organized, outspoken and active in western Switzerland largely because of the popularity of far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen, according to media. As French voters took to the polls, the extremists in Switzerland reportedly had organised demonstrations, football tournaments and secret combat training. One group, Résistance Helvétique (Swiss Resistance), had grown from its founding in canton Valais to now included branches in cantons of Fribourg, Geneva and Vaud. It espoused banning political parties and asylum for foreigners, and reintroducing the death penalty, illegal in Switzerland since 1942.

See: SwissinfoChannel News' entry, in: https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/right-wing-extremism_french-election-boosts-likeminded-swiss/43128448, retrieved on 24.4.2017

Germany: Germany sees spike in violent far-right offenses, hate crimes—

German authorities stated that violent crimes with far-right motives rose 14.3 percent last year after a bigger increase in 2015. They also registered another increase in hate crimes. The Interior Ministry said Monday that 1,698 violent right-wing crimes were recorded in 2016, up from 1,485 the previous year. In 2015, the figure soared as Germany saw a large influx of migrants. There was a 3.6 percent increase last year in the broader category of "hate crimes" – offenses of a racist or anti-Semitic nature or targeting people because of their religion, often in online posts. They increased to 10,751 from 10,373 after surging in 2015. The ministry said politically motivated offenses by foreigners rose by two-thirds last year, largely because of the conflict between Turkey and the outlawed PKK.

See: New York Post News' entry, in: <http://nypost.com/2017/04/24/germany-sees-spike-in-violent-far-right-offenses-hate-crimes/>, retrieved on 25.4.2017

C. In the Rest of the World

China: China comes down harder on Muslims, outlawing 'abnormal beards' and veils in public—

China announced a series of bans on a range of physical attributes, including "abnormal beards" and the wearing of veils in public places. While China claimed that the measures were in place to fight extremists, many of them appeared to cover traditional Muslim custom, and would be enforced in Xinjiang, home to the country's largest Muslim population. Under the 15 new rules, workers in public places would be asked to dissuade those who fully cover their bodies, including the wearing of veils and the growing of 'abnormal beards'. The legislation also said that people could not reject radio, television and other public facilities. It went on to mention that people would also be prosecuted for intervening in others' secular lives. Xinjiang had a population of eight million Uighurs, a Turkic ethnic group that had been facing a growing tension with the majority Han Chinese population. Despite measures over the years appeared to discriminate against the Uighurs, China insisted that the legal, cultural and religious rights of the minority group were fully protected. In 2014, a city in Xinjiang banned people with beards and those wearing veils from boarding buses. President

Xi had earlier in April called for a "great wall of iron" to safeguard the western region of Xinjiang, following an Islamic State video that was posted, showing what appeared to be Uighur fighters undergoing training.

See: Mashable.com News' entry, in: <http://mashable.com/2017/03/31/uighurs-muslim-china/#O7a3FiVg8iq8>, retrieved on 1.4.2017

China: China's Islamophobia: Uighur Muslims, Authoritarianism and Worldwide Fear— Uighur Muslims

in China faced an increased discrimination from the Chinese government. The ethnic and religious group had repeatedly been confronted by persecution from the Communist Party, which suggested the relationship between the ethnic Han dominated government and the Uighur people was a driving factor for ISIS tactics of radicalization and recruitment of Uighur Muslims. The so-called Islamic State recently released a video threatening China with attacks at home, apparently as a retaliation for Beijing's treatment on Uighurs. The thirty minute propaganda piece said that the terrorists would "shed blood like rivers" in China, while ISIS also killed a captive Chinese native in 2015. The video proclaiming war on China came on the same day the Chinese police held an armed rally in support of putting an end to national security threats in the province where Uighur Chinese live. The Turkic speaking Uighurs were more akin to Central Asian cultures than Han Chinese—came from the western-most autonomous province of Xinjiang, and was rich in



natural resources for which it was a key stop along the Silk Road. Xinjiang shared their border with eight different countries including a small border with Afghanistan as well as a border on much of the porous and contested region of the Pakistani Kashmir. As the dominant Han ethnic group migrated into Xinjiang in response to the promise of prosperity, the ability for increased Uighur extremists to cross into the Middle East and join ISIS, as well as the possibility of terrorists entering China to attack domestically, were prevalent concerns as the threat of terrorism loomed. The government seemed to be heading towards a collision with Islamic militants by exacerbating the situation with their harsh rhetoric around keeping a single Chinese identity and eliminating the dangers of separatism, militant extremism, and terrorist activities. Amidst consistent calls by President Xi Jinping for forging a single Chinese identity out of those who identify with a different cultural or ethnic nationality, the government in Beijing had issued warnings about extremism, calling for a "people's war" against terrorism. There was a growing sentiment that Islam was becoming a larger problem for China, much like the rest of the world in its expanding Islamophobia. A top Party official, Sharhat Ahan, warned other political leaders in the Xinjiang province that the "international terror situation" was "destabilizing" China. The Communist Party had also increased surveillance and patrols in Xinjiang province while armed demonstrations had been consistently conducted to declare war against terrorists. However, the crackdown went much further than rhetoric and political theatre, as the government had banned fasting during Ramadan, prohibited long beards and Islamic headwear, restricted use of the Turkic language, forbid the call to prayer at government sanctioned and supervised mosques, and banned children under the age of 18 from entering their places of worship at all. Government security forces in Xinjiang killed 28 people in 2015, calling the people "terrorists." Human rights groups contested the use of the nomenclature, saying Beijing had failed to provide suitable evidence that there was a foreign-directed terrorist organization working against the Chinese state. The Party also seized the Uighur population's passports and were refusing to issue new ones, which therefore placed travel restrictions on Uighurs in Xinjiang. With many residents saying that the Communist Party was warring on Islam, these laws were at the very least an addition to the lack of acknowledgement for the Uighur plight, culture and language. The attacks that had been carried out against China had met with increased discrimination and persecution, aggravating the cyclical conflict between the minority group and the Han government. Though the Communist Party denied the allegations of religious discrimination, the apparent persecution of the Uighurs had set off an increase in the wave of violence in both Xinjiang and abroad that has been happening on and off for years. There were race riots between the Han

and Uighur cultures that killed around 200 people of both ethnicities in 2009. Then in 2011, there was a series of violent incidents in Xinjiang known as the Kashgar Attacks that left dozens dead and hundreds more injured. Furthermore, an ignited car was driven into Tiananmen Square in 2013 that killed five people. Historically, the violence was attributed to an influential separatist group within the Uighur culture called the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, who were considered a terrorist group by the United States and Britain. The separatist movement had repeatedly advocated for a sovereign country distinct from China since 1949 when they briefly established an East Turkestan state before being taken under Chinese rule. The problems between them had only increased since then. Uighur citizens had been fighting with the Taliban in Afghanistan for decades, and now they were waging jihad with ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and other terrorist militants in Syria and Iraq.

See: Paste Magazine News' entry, in: <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/04/chinas-islamophobia-uighur-muslims-authoritarianism.html>, retrieved on 4.4.2017

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS:

A. In the United States and Canada:

US: Steve Bannon booted from the US National Security Council— The White House chief political strategist and far-right pundit, Steve Bannon, had been no longer a member of the US National Security Council (NSC), as the White House released a new memorandum on the composition of the NSC in April. President Donald Trump's decision to give the strategic post to Steve Bannon was evaluated by Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders as "dangerous and unprecedented" and Republican Senator John McCain said it was a 'radical departure' from established norms and was. There were reasons behind such a complaint. First, apart from being the 'political strategist' of the White House, Steve Bannon was the publisher of Breitbart, a platform that gives voice to far-right ideologues like David Horowitz, Geert Wielders, while being a fervent supporter of Nigel Farage and Marine Le Pen. Steve Bannon was not a crude far-right thinker, but actually a well-read intellectual theorist of the Far Right that quoted fascist philosophers. His flirtation with fascism made his membership of the administration somewhat controversial. Secondly, having Steve Bannon on the NSC's Principals Committee was especially controversial given the fact that the director of national intelligence and the Joint Chiefs were invited, but not permanent members. At this point the undercurrent standoff of the Trump administration with the intelligence services appeared to be endangering national security. A senior White House official told media that Bannon was meant to keep an eye on Michael Flynn, which was difficult to understand since both were appointees of the same President. Michael Flynn was forced to resign in February as he allegedly lied to the Vice President about his contacts with Russian officials. See: New Europe News' entry, in: <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/steve-bannon-booted-us-national-security-council/>, retrieved on 7.4.2017

Canada: Man charged after windows broken at main Ottawa mosque, Islam centre—Shawn Le Guerrier was charged after Ottawa's central mosque on Northwestern Avenue and the Islam Care Centre were hit by vandalism. Investigators confirmed that windows were broken at both the mosque and care centre and then arrested the man. Naeem Malik, president of the Ottawa Muslim Association, said in a Facebook message: "We know that such acts do not represent the sentiments of our fellow Ottawa neighbours and community members. It's always distressing to see our places of worship targeted in this hateful way. The OMA mosque and several other Muslim institutions have been targeted before. Ottawa police announced earlier this week that it had added hate crime reports to its online reporting system.

See: Ottawa Citizen News' entry, in: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/man-charged-after-windows-broken-at-main-ottawa-mosque-islam-centre>, retrieved on 15.4.2017

B. In Europe:

Germany: German bus driver faces € 10K fine for refusing to transport niqab-wearing Muslim woman—A bus driver in Germany was facing a fine of up to € 10,000 for preventing a Muslim woman who was wearing a face veil from getting on his bus. The woman's husband later reported the incident to the

local police. The driver was then being investigated for an administrative offense, and according to a police spokesperson, he could be fined as much as € 10,000 (\$10,623). The private bus company contracted by the city of Emden to run the local service admitted that its driver violated local regulations, explaining that the driver had acted out of ignorance. Burkas and niqabs had become a hot topic of debate in Germany, particularly since some 900,000 refugees arrived in 2015. Conservatives across Germany had called for niqabs and burkas to be banned from certain public areas. The state of Bavaria put forth such a proposal in February, which was then approved. In December, German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed support for banning Islamic garb in public, in saying “the full-face veil must be banned wherever it is legally possible.”

See: RT.com News’ entry, in: <https://www.rt.com/news/384745-bus-driver-niqab-germany/>, retrieved on 15.4.2017

C. In the Rest of the World

India: Indian Politicians To Stand Trial Over 1992 Mosque Destruction—It was one of the most incendiary episodes in India’s modern history as the country’s Supreme Court had now decided to revive criminal conspiracy charges against four veteran ruling party politicians over the destruction of a mosque 25 years before. Julie McCarthy of NPR reported that the destruction of the Babri Masjid by a Hindu mob in 1992 ignited the worst communal rioting across India in decades, where more than 2,000 people were killed. The four politicians hailed from the Hindu nationalist party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, including former party chief L.K. Advani. They had been ordered to stand trial for allegedly inciting Hindus to tear down the 16th century mosque in the town of Ayodhya. The charges against the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders, brought by the Central Bureau of Investigation, dated back more than a decade and were previously blocked by another court.



See: NPR News’ entry, in: <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/04/19/524717369/4-indian-politicians-to-stand-trial-over-1992-mosque-destruction>, retrieved on 20.4.2017

Myanmar: Mob forces closure of 2 Muslim schools— Fearing violence, two Muslim religious schools in Myanmar’s largest city were closed after an anti-Muslim mob claimed they were being operated as mosques. More than 100 people led by ultra-nationalist Buddhist monks gathered in Yangon’s Tharkayta Township, forcing authorities to shut down two Muslim madrasahs in the area immediately. A senior officer at Yangon Police Force said that two schools were sealed off temporarily, and the decision was made following negotiations between local authorities and local Muslim leaders. The area was home to a mosque and three madrasahs, which had been operated with official permission for decades. Anti-Muslim movements had been on the rise in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar since an outbreak in communal violence in the western Rakhine state in 2012.



See: World Bulletin News’ entry, in: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/todays-news/188738/myanmar-mob-forces-closure-of-2-muslim-schools>, retrieved on 30.4.2017

Myanmar: Rakhine Extremists Torch Mosque in Rathedaung— Rakhine extremists torched an ancient mosque in Rathedaung Township a few hours ago tonight, destroying the mosque from within. Dozens of Rakhine youths, apparently locals, barged into the premise of the mosque at the village of ‘Zaydi Pyin’ in Rathedaung and set it on fire on April 25. As the fire started, some local Rohingya Muslims rushed to the scene and extinguished the fire before it could entirely destroy the mosque. Soon after, hundreds of Rakhines started amassing at the place and have besieged the mosque with the people who put out the fire still remaining inside. A witness said that few policemen arrived but taking no actions.

See: RVisionTV News’ entry, in: <http://www.rvisiontv.com/breaking-rakhine-extremists-torch-mosque-rathedaung/>, retrieved on 27.4.2017

Myanmar: Rights Groups Call for Pressure on Myanmar to Cooperate with UN Mission in Rakhine— An open letter sent by rights groups and other international organizations was calling on world governments to urge Myanmar’s cooperation with a forthcoming UN fact-finding mission sent to investigate abuses in Rakhine state and other conflict zones in the country. Signed by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other organizations, the letter said that reports of sexual violence, extrajudicial killings, torture, and the destruction of homes by security forces in northern Myanmar’s Rakhine state must be openly and honestly addressed. In March, the United Nations Human Rights Council issued a resolution calling for the dispatch of an independent, international fact-finding mission to investigate allegations of human rights violations by security forces in Rohingya Muslim communities in the northern part of Rakhine. On April 11, a top-level Myanmar government official briefing foreign diplomats, UN agency personnel, and reporters called the UN resolution less than helpful, in saying that Myanmar had made progress in dealing with the situation in Rakhine. He noted that the government was complying with most of the 30 recommendations made by a Rakhine advisory committee headed by former UN chief Kofi Annan by opening restricted areas to news media, allowing increased humanitarian access, and agreeing to close down three internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the Rakhine towns of Kyaukphyu, Sittwe, and Ramree.

See: Radio Free Asia News’ entry, in: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/cooperate-04272017165045.html>, retrieved on 27.4.2017

ON BURQAH AND VEIL RELATED ISSUES:

UK: Tried and True Orientalism: Far-Right UKIP Proposes Niqab Ban Amid Fury— The leader of the U.K. Independence Party, Paul Nuttall, had come under fire for his party’s proposal to call for a ban of the niqab in the country. Nuttall was quoted saying that the full-face veil was a “barrier to integration” and presented “a security risk.” When challenged by a media presenter, Nuttall responded: *"But you can see my face, I am not a security threat, I'm beyond that. It's about integration. And I said earlier, 58 percent of Muslim women in this country are economically inactive — if you're not showing your face, it precludes you from a lot of jobs."* Sahar al-Faifi, an activist, told in response to Nuttall’s comments, *"It's not a new narrative to be pulled out of the hat. It goes with the far-right narrative that Muslims are a threat — and the niqab is a symbol of that threat."* Shelina Zahra Janmohamed, author of the acclaimed *Love in a Headscarf*, said in a Facebook post, *"If UKIP is preoccupied with what a handful of women are wearing and feel that is a priority to put into their manifesto then they are clearly a party that has nothing to say of any use."*

See: TelesurTV News’ entry, in: <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Far-Right-UKIP-Proposes-Niqab-Ban-Amid-Fury-20170423-0008.html>, retrieved on 24.4.2017

Austria: President Of Austria, ‘There Will Come A Day Where We Must Ask All Women To Wear A Headscarf’— The president of Austria, Alexander Van der Bellen, had called for all women to wear headscarves in solidarity with Muslims in an effort to fight against “rampant Islamophobia,” which is said to

be occurring in Austria. The president had received some backlash as he seemed to be at odds with Austria,



who was the latest European country to ban niqabs and burqas in public spaces and institutions. He said: “If this very real and rampant Islamophobia continues, there will come a day where we must ask all women to wear a headscarf – all – out of solidarity to those who do it for religious reasons.” The president of Austria added that it was every woman’s right to dress in a manner in which she felt fit. Van der Bellen was responding to a question from a student who argued a ban on Islamic headscarves or veils would reduce women to their appearance, rather than accomplishments. The Austrian president added all women could wear a headscarf. Van der Bellen would like to see Muslim representatives in Austria make

“clearer statements” emphasizing that the atrocities could not be justified in the name of Islam.

See: The Inquisitr News’ entry, in: <http://www.inquisitr.com/4183086/muslim-hijab-president-of-austria-there-will-come-a-day-where-we-must-ask-all-women-to-wear-a-headscarf/>, retrieved on 1.5.2017

Germany: Partial ban on Islamic burqa gaining more steam— Following the example of France, Switzerland and the Netherlands, German officials approved a new law which would make it illegal for public servants — including elected officials, judges, and soldiers — to wear the full-face Islamic burqa while performing their duties. German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere made a statement: “The state has a duty to present itself in an ideologically and religiously neutral manner. Integration also means that we should make clear, and impart our values, and where the boundaries lie of our tolerance toward other cultures. Chancellor Angela Merkel at a party conference in December, adding that the practice “should be banned wherever it is legally possible.” German lawmakers also wanted to put ankle tags on people who had been deemed a security threat.

See: MSN News’ entry, in: <http://dennismichaellynch.com/partial-ban-islamic-burqa-gaining-steam/>, retrieved on 1.5.2017

Germany: German lawmakers approve partial ban on full-face burqa veil— German lawmakers approved a partial ban on the full-face burqa Islamic veil and a package of security measures aimed at preventing extremist attacks. The new laws follow several attacks, including a truck rampage through a Berlin Christmas market that claimed 12 lives, and come ahead of September elections. The new law on facial coverings fell short of a total ban in public places demanded by right-wing parties, like that in effect in neighbouring France since 2011. The prohibition would apply to public servants — including election officials, military and judicial staff — performing their duties. The ban on full facial coverings allows exceptions — for example, for health workers protecting themselves against infections or police officers concealing their identity. People could also be required to remove facial coverings in order to match them with their identity papers.

See: Pakistan Today News’ entry, in: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/04/28/german-lawmakers-approve-partial-ban-on-full-face-burqa-veil/>, retrieved on 29.4.2017

Europe: Full-face veil: A look at the laws in Europe— European nations had been wrestling with the issue of the Muslim veil. Here was how countries across Europe dealt with the issue:

In FRANCE, the Senate of France on September 14, 2010, ordered ban on the wearing of face-covering headgear, including masks, helmets, balaclavas, niqabs and other veils covering the face in public places, except under specified circumstances. The ban also applies to the burqa, a full-body covering, if it covers the face. Consequently, full body costumes and Zentais (skin-tight garments covering entire body) were banned.

In Germany, Germany’s Bundestag lower house of parliament has approved a government proposal that would ban the wearing of full-face veils for public servants while they are at work. Chancellor Angela Merkel in December 2016 said: “the full veil must be banned wherever it is legally possible.” According to the legislation, civil servants and officials, including judges and soldiers, must have their faces uncovered.

In AUSTRIA, the President of Austria had called for all women to wear headscarves in solidarity with Muslims to fight "rampant Islamophobia". Alexander Van der Bellen, the left-wing former Green Party leader who narrowly beat a far-right candidate to take office in January, said freedom of expression was a fundamental right.

In BELGIUM, things changed fast. In 2010, Belgium became the first European nation to ban wearing of the Islamic burka in public. "We are the first country to break through the chain that has kept countless women enslaved," said Denis Ducarme, a Belgian Liberal party MP, had said.

In the UNITED KINGDOM, In February, the British PM Theresa May insisted that "what a woman wears is a woman's choice" when quizzed about the issue. May described bans on veils as "divisive" when asked about the moves at PM's Questions in the Commons.

In BULGARIA, The Bulgarian parliament on October, last year, approved the law, backed by the nationalist Patriotic Front coalition. The party's co-leader Krasimir Karakachanov said the law would improve security, saying: "*the burqa is more a uniform than a religious symbol*". Women who break the law will face fines of up to 770 or £665, as well as a suspension of social security benefits.

In ITALY, On December 13, 2015, Italy banned women from wearing burqas and niqabs in hospitals or government buildings. The new law has been brought in the wake of 'serious terror attacks' in Europe in recent months, according to local officials in Lombardy. Announcing the new rules prohibiting the Islamic veils, Simona Bordonali, head of security in the region, told Il Fatto Quotidiano: "*Whoever wants to enter a hospital in Lombardy must be recognisable and present themselves uncovered... The burqa (and the) niqab are therefore banned.*"

In the NETHERLANDS, Last year in November, lawmakers in the Netherlands voted in favour of a ban on wearing face-covering Islamic veils in some public places, including schools, hospitals, government buildings and on public transport. The rule - which will outlaw all face coverings including ski-masks and helmets - was approved by 132 members of the 150-seat house. It will now go before the Senate, where it must be approved before becoming law.

In NORWAY, The burqa veil is to be banned in schools and universities across Norway following similar measures in other European countries, a Norwegian education minister said in October, 2016. The country's right-wing government confirmed it was considering "national regulations prohibiting the full-face veil in schools and universities", a move supported by the opposition Labour Party.

In SWITZERLAND, In March, the upper house of Swiss parliament has rejected the idea of a nationwide ban on the Islamic face veil and other face coverings. The draft bill, which was narrowly passed by the lower house last September, was opposed by the senate after a debate. The proposal by hardline Swiss People's Party (SVP) MP Walter Wobmann called for a federal ban on the burqa, niqab and other full face coverings in public, along the same lines as a cantonal ban that came into effect in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino in July, last year.

See: The Times of India News' entry, in: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/full-face-veil-a-look-at-the-laws-in-europe/articleshow/58432363.cms>, retrieved on 30.4.2017

ON DIALOGUE:

Vatican: Pope to meet with UK imams in bid to promote moderate Islam— Pope Francis held a meeting with four British imams two weeks after the London extremist attack, part of his effort to give prominence and a platform to Muslim leaders who renounce using religion to justify violence. The audience was actually scheduled before the March 22 attack, in which a man mowed down pedestrians on Westminster Bridge, killing three, before fatally stabbing a policeman on the grounds of Parliament. The head of the British Muslim

Forum, Muhammad Shahid Raza, said in an interview that the pope's invitation and message of solidarity after the attack "strengthened our position that we, like other communities, condemn all terrorist activities."

See: The Washington Post News' entry, in https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/pope-to-meet-with-uk-imams-in-bid-to-promote-moderate-islam/2017/04/04/0f9bfe4a-1964-11e7-8598-9a99da559f9e_story.html, retrieved on 5.4.2017

Egypt: Pope seeks to mend ties with Islam— Pope Francis arrived in Cairo hoping to mend ties with Islamic religious leaders. In an address to the Egyptian people, Francis spoke of his hope that his visit would help bring peace and encourage dialogue and reconciliation with the Islamic world. Francis met with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, and Pope Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church who narrowly escaped a church bombing in Alexandria. Francis gave his key address to a conference on religious dialogue at Al-Azhar, part of efforts to improve relations with the 1 000-year-old centre after Egyptian Muslim leaders cut ties in 2011 over what they said were repeated insults against Islam by Pope Benedict. Ties were restored last year after Tayeb visited the Vatican. Tayeb, widely considered among the most moderate clerics in Egypt, had condemned Islamic State and its practice of declaring others as apostates and infidels as a pretext for waging violent jihad. Francis denounced violence in God's name. Papal aides said a moderate like Tayeb would be an important ally in condemning radical Islam.

See: The Herald News' entry, in: <http://www.herald.co.zw/pope-seeks-to-mend-ties-with-islam/>, retrieved on 30.4.2017

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