



DIALOGUE & OUTREACH Department

OIC Islamophobia Observatory

Monthly Bulletin – March 2017

MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA:

A. In the United States and Canada:

US: Four Mosques Have Burned In Seven Weeks — Leaving Many Muslims and Advocates Stunned—

On 7 January, the Islamic Center of Lake Travis in Austin caught on fire. A week later, on 14 January, the Islamic Center of Eastside in Bellevue, Washington, burned. Two weeks after that, on 27 January, several hours after President Donald Trump signed an executive order banning immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries, a fire destroyed the Islamic Center of Victoria in Texas. Then, on 24 February, a blaze broke out at the front entrance of the Daarus Salaam Mosque near Tampa. US Authorities had ruled that three of the four fires were caused by arson. The mosque fires came amid increased fear about hate crimes against minority religious groups. In recent weeks, scores of bomb threats were called into Jewish community centers and schools around the country and graveyards in Jewish cemeteries in three states were vandalized.



On 25 February, somebody threw a rock through a window of the Masjid Abu Bakr mosque in Denver. In Redmond, Washington, vandals destroyed the Muslim Association of Puget Sound mosque's entrance sign on two occasions within two months of the election. Two days after the inauguration, a woman shattered the windows of the Davis Islamic Center in California, and left strips of raw bacon on a door handle. In January, a white nationalist fatally shot six people at a mosque in Québec City. In the last week of February, a white man shot two Indian men at a Kansas bar after making racial slurs, questioning their immigration status, and shouting, "Get out of my country." In Bellevue, Washington, six days before Mr Trump's inauguration, surveillance cameras caught a man walking toward the Islamic Center of Eastside while carrying a backpack and a gallon jug, and less than a minute later, the mosque was on fire. Hours after President Donald Trump signed the controversial executive order banning immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries, someone intentionally set fire to the Islamic Center of Victoria in Texas. The blaze caused more than \$500,000 in damage, and completely destroyed the 16-year-old mosque, shaking the Muslim American community in south Texas. The fire at the Daarus Salaam Mosque in Thonotosassa, Florida was at least the third time in seven months that a mosque in the Tampa

area had been set on fire, following incidents at the Islamic Education Center in July and the Masjid Omar mosque in August.

BuzzFeed News' entry, in: https://www.buzzfeed.com/albertsamaha/four-mosques-burn-as-2017-begins?utm_term=.dfzWdaKVd#.cIK4Xq1KX, retrieved on 2.3.2017

US: Lexington mosque receives bomb threat — mailed from England— A Lexington mosque was stepping up security following a bomb threat it received in February from overseas. The bomb threat against Lexington's Masjid Bilal was received through the mail from Sheffield, England, contained a green index card wrapped in a blank sheet of paper with the words, "*An explosive device will be placed at your mosque very soon!*" written on it. The letter was opened by Mosque's President Salah Elbakoush who immediately called the Lexington police who then investigated. Following the advice from the officers, the mosque staff would start a daily walk-through of its facility at 1545 Russell Cave Road. Threats against mosques had been made almost every month in other American cities since the presidential election. In late November 2016, 10 Islamic centers received letters calling Muslims 'children of Satan' and championing President Donald Trump as the 'new sheriff in town'. Similar threats were made to mosques in Maryland and Georgia in February 2017. The letter sent to the Greenview Madani Center in Lawrenceville, was from a Muslim slayer threatening "*death for you and your kind.*"

Lexington Herald Leader News' entry, in: <http://www.kentucky.com/news/local/crime/article136828668.html>, retrieved on 7.3.2017

US: Man breaks into Arizona mosque, desecrates copies of Quran— A man broke into an Arizona mosque in march 2017 and desecrated copies of the Quran. The suspect entered the mosque and ripped



copies of the Quran before throwing them on the floor. The center wrote: "*He ripped copies of the Qur'an and threw them around the prayer room before leaving the building. Thankfully no one was hurt. The Tucson Police Department are looking for him.*" Surveillance footage circulated by the center showed the suspect wearing a red University of Arizona T-shirt and a baseball cap. The vandalism came on the heels of a spate of threats directed at Jewish Community Centers across the country. A month before, a group of Muslim activists

started a crowdfunding campaign to help repair a vandalized Jewish cemetery near St. Louis, Missouri, raised more than \$161,000.

WJBDRadio.com News' entry, in: <http://www.wjbdradio.com/national-news/2017/03/15/man-breaks-into-arizona-mosque-desecrates-copies-of-quran>, retrieved on 16.3.2017

B. In Europe:

Netherlands: Dutch populist Wilders: Ban Turkish Cabinet visits— Dutch right-wing populist Geert Wilders said he would ban Turkey's entire Cabinet from visiting the Netherlands to prevent ministers campaigning in Netherlands for a referendum on changing Turkey's constitution. Wilders told foreign journalists saying that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was an 'Islamofascist leader'. Wilders also accused the Dutch government of weakness in not banning Turkey's Foreign Minister from holding a rally in Rotterdam in support of the constitutional change. Dutch media reported that Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was planning a campaign rally in Rotterdam, which had a large migrant Turkish community. Prime Minister Mark Rutte had called such a rally "*undesirable*" and said his government would not cooperate. The Dutch comments followed a diplomatic spat the week before between Germany and Turkey over referendum rallies.

BayNews9.com News' entry, in: http://www.baynews9.com/content/news/baynews9/news/article.html/content/news/articles/ap/2017/03/05/Dutch_populist_Wilders_Ban_Turkish_Cabinet_visits.html, retrieved on 7.3.2017

Netherlands: Wilders Wants to Ban Quran in the Netherlands— After calling the Moroccan community ‘scum’ in February and expressing his wish to close all of Netherland’s mosques if he ever became Prime Minister, Wilders now wanted to ban the Quran in the Netherlands. He said as quoted: *“I would prefer not to have the Koran in the Netherlands insofar as we have banned ‘Mein Kampf’. This may seem highly symbolic but it would have an important effect. If our country had a tougher immigration policy than other countries, then immigrants would go to other countries.”*

Morocco World News’ entry, in: <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2017/03/210321/wilders-wants-ban-quran-netherlands/>, retrieved on 8.3.2017

Germany: Massive increase in attacks on refugees in Germany— Figures derived from a response by the Germany’s Interior Ministry to a parliamentary question in February 2017 revealed 3,533 attacks on refugee shelters and individual refugees since 2016 in Germany, indicating a massive increase in right-wing violence directed against a vulnerable group of people who had experienced war, persecution and poverty. In 2015, when many refugees from Syria and other war zones came to Germany, there was an outpouring of solidarity in the population. Since then, the right-wing sections of society have been mobilized against them with various threatening scenarios. Of the 3,533 registered attacks, those on refugee shelters account for 988. These included attacks (66 arson attacks and four involving explosives), propaganda offences (211 cases), property damage (371 cases) and other assaults. While compared to the previous year—the highpoint of the refugee influx, when 1,031 attacks on refugee homes took place—this number had decreased, violence in every other category was on a sharp rise. There were 2,545 registered cases of violence involving direct attacks on refugees outside their accommodations. In total, 560 people were injured, including 43 children. Added to this are 217 attacks on aid organizations and their volunteers.

WSWS.org News’ entry, in: <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/03/07/refu-m07.html>, retrieved on 8.3.2017

France: Majority of French see Le Pen's far-right party threat to democracy: poll— A majority of French



voters saw presidential candidate Marine Le Pen's National Front party as a threat to democracy, a Kantar Sofres-Onepoint poll released showed. According to the survey, 58 percent of respondents believed the anti-immigrant and eurosceptic party represented a danger to democracy, up from 47 percent recorded in 2013. Only 19 percent of them said they were in favor of Le Pen presidency for the next five years, with a minority endorsing her proposals to abandon euro and give employment priority to French citizens over legal migrants. However, a third of people

approved its idea mainly in relation with security, the poll figures showed. With the conservative contender Francois Fillon's bid in turmoil due to a scandal over his wife's job, and centrist Emmanuel Macron's policy untested, most polls saw Le Pen was very likely to top the first round on April 23, but consistently predicted her losing in the run-off. Le Pen who campaigned for nationalism and anti-establishment platform, pledged to slash migration, sent homes all illegal migrants and imposed taxes on job contacts of foreigners. She also vowed to renegotiate the European Union treaty, restored internal borders and local currency upon her election. In 2012, Le Pen came third in the presidential race, but enjoyed an unexpected high vote in the first round. About 17.9 percent of 44.6 million French casted their ballots for an anti-immigration policy and abandon of euro.

Famagusta Gazette News’ entry, in: <http://famagusta-gazette.com/majority-of-french-see-le-pens-farright-party-threat-to-democracy-poll-p38906-69.htm>, retrieved on 9.3.2017

Netherlands: As far right reaps votes, immigrants face tougher times in Netherlands— Dozens of migrants were sheltering on a former hospital ship in a Dutch canal, beneficiaries of a 'Bed, Bath, Bread' program for asylum seekers, but their hopes of settlement were dimming with the anti-immigrant right poised for a surge at the ballot box. Polls were suggesting the far-right ticket would double its vote in the March 15 election, riding perceptions that many years of Muslim immigration threaten to erode Dutch national identity. Despite statistics showing there were fewer foreigners in the Netherlands than commonly believed, many voters feel Muslim immigrants were failing to integrate and running down a once-generous health and welfare system. Even if firebrand nationalist leader Geert Wilders did not enter the next ruling coalition given the refusal of establishment parties to work with him, he had managed to push the mainstream political agenda to the anti-immigrant right. In the northern coastal town of Groningen, dozens of mainly Muslim men and women - Africans, Arabs and some Iranians - were awaiting decisions on appeals of government rejections of their asylum applications, a process that had dragged on for years during which the Netherlands began to crack down hard on economic migrants.

Reuters News' entry, in: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-4296230/As-far-right-reaps-votes-immigrants-face-tougher-times-Netherlands.html>, retrieved on 10.3.2017

Netherlands: Far Right seize on Turkey's confrontation with Europe— Geert Wilders threatened to strip the country's 400,000 ethnic Turks of their dual citizenship, describing them as a "fifth column". His call came amid an escalating confrontation between Western Europe and Turkey, which already inflamed March's Dutch elections and could overshadow the coming French presidential poll. At the weekend, the Dutch government prevented two Turkish ministers from campaigning in the country. President Erdogan hit back by accusing the Dutch government of acting like Nazis and warning that the Netherlands could face harsh sanctions.

The Times News' entry, in: <https://www.thelocal.it/20170308/italian-region-bans-veiled-women-from-entering-hospitals>, retrieved on 13.3.2017

Netherlands: Rise of racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia worries in Netherlands— Ahead of March 15 election in the Netherlands, the rise of xenophobia, racism, anti-Muslim propaganda in the Western European countries, and particularly the Netherlands, had reached worrisome levels. Geert Wilders and his far-right, anti-Islam, xenophobic Party for Freedom (PVV) had been riding high on a wave of populism and looked on course to win. Wilders' party the PVV, which vowed to bar Muslim immigrants, close mosques and ban sales of the Koran, referring to Dutch citizens of Moroccan led the polls. Wilders himself raised public's ire when he referred to Dutch citizens of Moroccan origins as "Scum" in February. The latest weekly poll, released by the Dutch Polling Indicator, predicted that the PVV would win 25 seats, just one seat more than Prime Minister Mark Rutte's ruling People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). Over the last months and years, the Netherlands had experienced a surge in racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Islam hate attacks which caused serious concerns among its population.

Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/03/11/rise-of-racism-xenophobia-islamophobia-worries-in-netherlands>, retrieved on 12.3.2017

Netherlands: Geert Wilders, Dutch right-wing politician, pledges to 'de-Islamise' the Netherlands ahead of election— Dutch polls in March 2017 was the first of three big elections in 2017 involving founding European Union (EU) members. The French presidential election would take place in April and May. In September, German Chancellor Angela Merkel would be seeking a fourth term. All three elections were critical for the future of the EU, as the rise of right-wing populism and nationalism might threaten some of the key bedrocks of the European project. All eyes were on the Freedom Party's Geert Wilders as he got a chance to test his electoral popularity in an era of massive political upsets. Mr Wilders was anti-Islam, anti-immigration and anti-EU, and for long stages of the campaign had been ahead in the polls. The international media liked to portray him as the Dutch Donald Trump, despite a number of key differences between the two. Unlike Mr Trump, who until 2016 had never stood for public office, Mr Wilders had been in the Dutch Parliament for nearly 20 years. Before that he was a local councilor and a parliamentary staffer. He started the Freedom Party in 2004 after leaving the Centre-right VVD party. In 2010, he won 24 seats in the Dutch Parliament after securing 15 per cent of the vote. While Mr Trump had his contentious travel ban on those from six predominantly Muslim countries, Mr Wilders wanted to go a lot further than that. He was vowing to de-Islamize the Netherlands by shutting mosques and Islamic schools, banning the

Koran and having zero asylum seekers and no immigrants anymore from Islamic countries. Mr Trump had made jobs and the economy a centerpiece of his agenda. However, Mr Wilders tended to focus on issues of national identity. Much of his one-page election manifesto was about his anti-Islam and anti-EU policies. In that platform he did not even mention jobs. The first paragraph of his manifesto states: "*Millions of Dutch citizens have simply had enough of the Islamisation of our country. Enough of mass immigration and asylum, terror, violence and insecurity.*"

ABC.net.au News' entry, in: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-13/geert-wilders-pledges-to-de-islamise-the-netherlands/8348206>, retrieved on 14.3.2017

Netherlands: 'I want the fascist Koran banned' — Geert Wilders' most controversial quotes— Geertz Wilders was a deeply divisive figure, Dutch politician was originally a member of the ruling People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, before founding the Party for Freedom in 2006 – a party defined by its opposition to Islam and immigration. In December, Wilders was convicted of inciting discrimination against Dutch Moroccans. As the Dutch cast their votes in march 2017, here were some of the most controversial quotes by Wilders:

"I rather would have not Koran at all as we in Holland at least have outlawed Mein Kampf as well." during Interview with Euronews, 2017.

"Islam is something we can't afford any more in the Netherlands. I want the fascist Koran banned. We need to stop the Islamisation of the Netherlands. That means no more mosques, no more Islamic schools, no more imams... Not all Muslims are terrorists, but almost all terrorists are Muslims." Interview with the Guardian, 2008.

"My allies are not Le Pen or Jorg Haider ... We'll never join up with the fascists and Mussolinis of Italy. I'm very afraid of being linked with the wrong rightist fascist groups." Interview with the Guardian, 2008.

"I have a panic room in my house, where I am supposed to take refuge if one of the adherents of the "religion of peace" makes it past my permanent security detail and into my home. In fact, it's not really my home at all—I live in a government safe house, heavily protected and bulletproof." Marked for Death: Islam's War Against the West and Me, 2012.

"There are many moderate Muslims, but that does not change the fact that the political ideology of Islam is not moderate—it is a totalitarian cult with global ambitions." Marked for Death: Islam's War Against the West and Me, 2012.

"The Koran on the table before you, is a handbook for terrorists. Blood drips from its pages. It calls for perpetual war against non-believers. That Koran before you is the hunting permit for millions of Muslims. A license to kill." Speech by Wilders during parliamentary debate in the Netherlands, 2014.

"We have imported a monster and this monster is called Islam." Times, 2016.

"The Moroccan scum in Holland ... once again not all are scum ... but there is a lot of Moroccan scum in Holland who make the streets unsafe, mostly young people ... and that should change." Addressing supporters in Spijkenisse, near Rotterdam, 2017.

"The instability we're seeing in England at the moment is only temporary. In the long run, the British will profit, just like we'd profit from leaving the EU." Interview with Spiegel Online on Brexit and a potential "Nexit", 2016.

"There is a reason for hope. There is light at the end of the tunnel. Better times will come. The wind started to shift last year. It brought us the victory of – and from here, congratulations to – Donald Trump, the president of the United States." Speech by Geert Wilders at the 'Europe of Nations and Freedom' Conference, 2017.

"Almost the entire Establishment, the elite universities, the churches, the media, politicians, put our hard-earned liberties at risk. Day after day, for years, we are experiencing the decay of our cherished values. The equality of men and women, freedom of opinion and speech, tolerance of homosexuality—all this is in retreat." Speech by Geert Wilders at the "Europe of Nations and Freed Conference, 2017.

International Business Times News' entry, in: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/geert-wilders-most-controversial-quotes-banning-islam-comparing-koran-mein-kampf-1611708>, retrieved on 16.3.2017

Germany: Turkish mosque in Germany vandalized— In another instance of Turkophobia and anti-Islam attitudes running rampant in Europe, a mosque run by the local Turkish community in Bremen, Germany, was vandalized by unknown assailants in March. The suspects threw pig's ears and feet in the courtyard of the Yeni Fatih Mosque in Bremen's Bremerhaven town. The Turkish foundation that run the mosque called German police to find the perpetrator or perpetrators as soon as possible. Mosques in Germany, where anti-Muslim sentiment that had accompanied the influx of Muslim refugees had been rising, were occasionally subject to attacks, which range from Molotov cocktails to the tossing of pig's heads. A Turkish parliamentary committee investigating the targeting of mosques found some 297 attacks against mosques between 2001 and 2014, mostly targeting Turkish mosques. German police had been criticized for their failure to identify the suspects responsible for the attacks. Turks, who comprised one of the largest minorities in the country with more than 3 million people, had been frequent targets of racist attacks in the formerly Nazi-ruled Germany, especially in the 1990s. The trend of attacks targeting mosques reemerged in recent years with the rise of the far right in the country. In December, German police detained a man linked to the anti-Islamic, xenophobic group Patriotic Europeans against the Islamification of the West (PEGIDA) on suspicion of involvement in an attack targeting a Turkish mosque and an event venue in Germany's Dresden in September. The suspect was accused of throwing homemade explosives at Fatih Mosque, owned by the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs on 26 September 2016.

Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2017/03/20/turkish-mosque-in-germany-vandalized>, retrieved on 20.3.2017



Austria: Far-right group hangs banner on Turkish embassy in Vienna reading 'Erdogan, pull your Turks back'— Members of a far-right group hung a banner reading "Erdogan, pull your Turks back" over the roof of Turkish embassy in Vienna in March. Two suspects jumped over the roof from a neighbouring building, and after realizing that they were detected, the two suspects immediately fled the scene. Turkish embassy was in close touch with Austrian officials for capturing the two suspects.

Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/03/22/far-right-group-hangs-banner-on-turkish-embassy-in-vienna-reading-erdogan-pull-your-turks-back>, retrieved on 23.3.2017

France: Muslims protest closure of a Paris mosque— The closure of a prayer hall in the northern Paris suburb of Clichy had outraged local Muslims, who began protesting by taking to the streets for their prayers. The hall had been rented by the Union of Muslim Worship and Cultural Associations of Clichy-la-Garenne (UAMC) since May 2013, but its lease expired in 2016. Mayor Remi Muzeau now intended to



turn it into a multimedia library for Clichy's 60,000 residents. The UAMC had been negotiating to stay in the facility, but a court of appeals ruled against the group. The hall had also been used as a school to teach approximately 300 children Arabic and Islamic history classes. The loss of this educational center outraged parents. For the past ten days, protesters had been staging prayer sessions in front of the town hall, saying they would not leave until they get their prayer hall back. Reports claimed that approximately five million Muslims now lived in France and that a shortage of mosques was causing them to pray in the streets.

Dennismichaelynch.com News' entry, in: <http://dennismichaelynch.com/muslims-protest-closure-paris-mosque/>, retrieved on 2.4.2017

UK: PressTV-Islamophobic event draws no more than 300— Fewer than 300 people took part in a rally in favor of Islamophobia in the British capital. Organized by anti-Islam groups Britain First and the English Defense League, the separate rallies, dubbed as a "*march against terrorism*," were castigated by the supporters as lame attempts to boost Islamophobia. Out of 1.6 million Facebook followers of Britain First, more than 2,700 had voiced interest in partaking in the demo. Around the same number of people also took part in a counter-rally, organized by Unite Against Fascism (UAF). The Metropolitan police arrested 14 people after clashes broke out between the rival mobs.

PressTV News' entry, in: <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2017/04/02/516407/Islamophobic-event-draws-no-more-than-300>, retrieved on 2.4.2017

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS:

A. In the United States and Canada:

US: North Carolinians Join Prayers at Triad Mosques to Oppose Islamophobia— Hundreds of residents from Winston-Salem joined prayer services at three mosques in the Triad area in February 2017. The outpouring of support for the Muslim community was a reaction to violent, anti-Islamic speech that emerged from a meeting between far-right conservative activists held in Kernersville, North Carolina.

Blue Ridge Public Radio News' entry, in: <http://bpr.org/post/north-carolinians-join-prayers-triad-mosques-oppose-islamophobia>, retrieved on 1.3.2017

US: New York City reaches new deal over police surveillance of Muslims— New York City's police department agreed to a new settlement in a lawsuit accusing it of illegally targeting Muslims for surveillance, after a federal judge rejected an earlier deal. The new settlement gave additional powers to a civilian representative charged with reviewing the department's counter-terrorism efforts. Arthur Eisenberg, legal director for New York Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement that the settlement was "*even more protective of religious and political freedoms*" than the version announced in January 2016. The civil liberties organization represents Muslim individuals and organizations who sued New York City in 2013 in Brooklyn federal court claiming they were targeted by police surveillance. In an order made public last October, US District Judge Charles Haight in Manhattan rejected the original settlement, which also called for a civilian representative. Haight said that deal did not go far enough in ensuring that the

police department adhere to court-approved regulations, called the Handschu guidelines, that limited how it could monitor political and religious activity. The new deal gave the civilian representative the power to report on violations of the guidelines to the court at any time, and required the mayor to get court approval before removing the representative. The earlier version allowed the mayor to eliminate the position after five years. In addition, the civilian representative could now also review how investigations were conducted, not just how they were started or extended.

Reuters News' entry, in: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-new-york-police-muslims-settlement-idUSKBN16D2FC>, retrieved on 6.3.2017

US: The beauty of art can counter Islamophobia – but it won't be easy— A new Institute of Arab and Islamic Art, set up by Qatar's Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Al-Thani, would open in downtown Manhattan. The timing was not accidental, as Al-Thani was trying to humanise Islam and broaden perceptions of it in the US. He hoped the institute would not only showcase the breadth of art and culture from the Arab and Islamic worlds, but also challenge certain stereotypes and misconceptions that hinder cross-cultural understanding. There was another expectation that looking at Islamic art would allow non-Muslim Americans to feel the inner beauty of beliefs and traditions.

The Guardian News' entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2017/mar/08/new-york-institute-arab-islamic-art-islamophobia>, retrieved on 9.3.2017

Canada: Trudeau: We have a problem with Islamophobia in Canada— Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Canadians had a right to know if a Parliamentary motion to condemn Islamophobia made politicians and fellow citizens uncomfortable, so that “we can deal with it as a society.” Speaking in the House of Commons in March 2017 during the ‘Daughters of the Vote’ event in support of International Women’s Day, he was responding to a Muslim delegate who encouraged Canadian leaders to condemn Islamophobia. In relation to M-103, Trudeau said that sometimes, it was useful for some people to disagree, something in Trudeau’s words: “To point out to the rest of us that there’s still a lot of work to do.”

National NewsWatch News' entry, in: <http://www.nationalnewswatch.com/2017/03/08/trudeau-we-have-a-problem-with-islamophobia-in-canada/#.WNzRIG-GOM8>, retrieved on 9.3.2017

US: Man who threatened to blow up Minneapolis mosque gets year in prison— A Minnesota man who mailed a bomb threat to a mosque under construction in his Minneapolis neighborhood in 2015 had been sentenced to one year in federal prison. US District Judge Wilhelmina Wright sentenced Daniel George Fisher based on his guilty plea in 2016 to obstructing the Tawfiq Islamic Center’s free exercise of religion by threat of force. Fisher confessed to sending the letter after the FBI traced fingerprints he left on the note last year. Fisher told agents he wanted the staff at the Islamic center, which primarily serves the Twin Cities’ large Oromo population, to think that anyone could have sent the note, which threatened to “blow up your building with all you immigrants in it.” US Attorney Andrew Luger, whose staff prosecuted the case, said, “My office takes very seriously any threat of violence against an individual or their place of worship based on race, religion or cultural practices. We will continue to work closely with the FBI to prosecute these types of crimes, which threaten religious freedoms and violate fundamental civil rights.” The FBI’s Minneapolis division investigated the case, and the Justice Department’s civil rights division joined the prosecution.

Star Tribune News' entry, in: <http://www.startribune.com/one-year-federal-prison-sentence-for-man-who-threatened-to-blow-up-minneapolis-mosque-in-2015/415708014/>, retrieved on 11.3.2017

US: 'Open Mosque Day' Aims to Give Public Chance to Meet Muslims— Eighteen mosques across Massachusetts held an Open Mosque Day to give the public a chance to meet their Muslim neighbors, where attendees had the chance to tour a mosque, hear a brief introduction to Islam and witness a Muslim prayer service. Wafaa Wahabi of the American Islamic Center in Everett said that during a time of misunderstanding about Islam, Muslims hoped to show the communities they lived in that they “live, pray and dream just like anyone else.” Participating mosques included the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center in Boston, the Islamic Society of Greater Lowell in Chelmsford, Masjid Al-Ehsan in Dartmouth and the Islamic Society of Greater Haverhill. Mosques in Worcester and Chelsea planned to hold separate open days in May 2017.

USNews.com News' entry, in: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/massachusetts/articles/2017-04-01/open-mosque-day-aims-to-give-public-chance-to-meet-muslims>, retrieved on 2.4.2017

US: Former Army medic charged in Colorado mosque vandalism case— A former Army medic accused of breaking glass doors and throwing a Bible into a Colorado mosque had been charged with felony criminal mischief. It was reported that 35-year-old Joseph Scott Giaquinto was also charged with a misdemeanor hate crime. Giaquinto was free on bond and was due in Larimer County court in March. He could face up to 18 months in prison if convicted of the felony charge. Giaquinto was arrested hours after police released surveillance video of a man kicking a door at the Islamic Center in Fort Collins.

SFGate News' entry, in: <http://www.sfgate.com/news/crime/article/Former-Army-medic-charged-in-Colorado-mosque-11043651.php>, retrieved on 2.4.2017

B. In Europe:

Netherlands: 'We are also winners' Wilders admits DEFEAT to Rutte but hopes for coalition government— Despite being declared the winner by Wilders, Mr Rutte's VVD was expected to lose 10 seats – a fall from 41 to 31 seats, exit polls had suggested. The biggest losers of the night appeared to be social-democratic Labour party (PvdA), who were expected to slump from 38 to 9 seats in the 150 seat parliament. Wilders did slam his rival Rutte, who said that the wrong kind of populists had been defeated in the general election. The Freedom party leader responded: *"I don't know what he means. He is implying there are good and bad populists. I don't see myself as a populist but he is suggesting I am a bad populist and some kind of Nazi."*

Sunday Express News' entry, in: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/779788/geert-wilders-admit-defeat-mark-rutte-hopes-coalition-government-invite-pvv-vvd-netherlan>, retrieved on 17.3.2017

UK: London anti-racism march draws tens of thousands of protesters— As many as 30,000 people had joined a march against racism in London during which campaigners voiced their opposition to the wave of



populism they said elected Donald Trump, saw Britain vote to leave the EU and fueled the rise of far-right politics around Europe. The former Guantánamo Bay prisoner Moazzam Begg, one of the speakers at the Saturday protest, said Trump was one of the bad dudes who should be sent to the internment camp in Cuba. Speaking from a stage in Parliament Square, Begg referenced a speech by the US president in which he said he would be sending more inmates to the controversial facility. Begg joined the Labour MP for Tottenham, David Lammy, in slamming a small group of counter-protesters. Suspected to be from the far-right political group the English Defence League (EDL), the

group were spotted near crowds of anti-racism marchers on their way from Regent Street to Parliament Square. Anti-racism supporters carrying signs with colorful slogans including "Migrants make our NHS" and "Black Lives Matter" led a peaceful but spirited march through the fashionable thoroughfares of Regent Street and Haymarket, banging drums and singing songs.

The Guardian News' entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/18/london-anti-racism-march-draws-tens-of-thousands-of-protesters>, retrieved on 19.3.2017

France: French mayor faces €1,800 fine after bringing up 'problem' of Muslim schoolchildren— A far-right French mayor appeared in court on charges of inciting hatred for his remarks in 2016, in which he said that there were too many Muslim children at the schools in his city, and implied that the ethnic French population was being replaced. His statement in an interview on the French news channel LCI in September

was quoted saying: “In a class in the city center of in my town, 91 percent of the children are Muslims. Obviously, this is a problem.” In the same month on the first day of school, Menard also wrote a tweet, saying: “These classes represent the most striking proof of the #GreatReplacement in progress. Just look at old class photos.” Robert Menard, mayor of the southern town of Béziers and an ally of Marine Le Pen’s anti-immigration and Eurosceptic National Front party, appeared before Paris Criminal Court in March for the launch of his trial for incitement of hatred, in relation to two statements he made in 2016. If found guilty, Menard faced a €1,800 fine and a prison term if he refused to pay up.

The News Minutes News’ entry, in: <http://www.thenewsminute.com/article/hyd-school-allegedly-forces-muslim-students-remove-burqa-during-exam-despite-govt-rules>, retrieved on 19.3.2017

Netherlands: Dutch elections: PM Rutte’s party wins, Wilder’s far-right party second – official results—

The Dutch Electoral Council had announced the official results of the parliamentary elections, which turned out to be very close to the preliminary polling predictions and confirmed the victory of the Netherlands’ ruling People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). The VVD, the party of Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, secured an electoral victory by gaining 33 seats in the Dutch parliament’s lower house out of 150 and becoming the largest parliamentary faction, according to the data presented by the Dutch Electoral Council. Its closest rival, Geert Wilders’ far-right populist Party for Freedom (PVV) came second by securing 20 seats in the House of Representatives. The Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), a center-right Christian Democratic party, shared third place with the social-liberal Democrats 66 party, with both parties gaining 19 seats each. Meanwhile, the Green Left and the Dutch Socialist Party each won 14 seats. The Dutch Labor Party, which had been the second biggest faction in the House of Representatives before the elections, with 35 seats, suffered a decisive defeat and received only nine seats this time. Rutte’s VVD was also allocated two out of eight seats that remained vacant after the vote counting, while one seat was allocated to each of the PVV, the CDA, Democrats 66, Socialists, Green Lefts and the Labor Party. According to the Dutch Electoral Council, the turnout in these parliamentary elections, which were held on 15 March was 81.9 percent – the highest since 1986. A total of 13 parties are represented in the parliament – the highest number since 1972. Wilders conceded defeat to Rutte late on March 15, soon after the preliminary voting results were announced, and said he would like to be invited to coalition negotiations. The formal negotiations about a government coalition were expected to start after the new parliament convenes on 23 March 2017.

RT.com News’ entry, in: <https://www.rt.com/news/381689-netherlands-elections-official-results/>, retrieved on 22.3.2017

France: France’s Le Pen under fire in first presidential TV debate— Marine Le Pen’s proposal to pull France out of the euro and her hardline stance on Islam came under attack from her fellow presidential

hopefuls in March, in a combative TV debate a month before the country went to the polls. France’s election was shaping up as the most unpredictable in decades, with far-right National Front (FN) leader Le Pen and centrist Emmanuel Macron tied in polls for the April 23 first round, while the mainstream left and right languish in third and fourth place. With polls showing Macron would easily beat the anti-immigration Le Pen, 48, in a decisive run-off vote



on 7 May, he had been expected to take the most heat in TV battle. However it was Le Pen who was repeatedly thrust onto the defensive as Macron, conservative nominee Francois Fillon, the Socialist Party’s Benoit Hamon and fifth-placed leftist radical Jean-Luc Melenchon all tore into her programme. Macron

traded barbs with Le Pen on the Islamic full-body swimsuit. The so-called burkini was at the centre of a furore in France after several coastal towns banned the garment. Le Pen said the burkini was a sign of the "rise of radical Islam in our country" and accused Macron of supporting it. Former economy minister Macron retorted: "The burkini is a public order problem. Do not use it to divide the French," accused her of transforming "the over four million French people, whose religion is Islam...into enemies of the Republic".

Luremburger Wort News' entry, in: <http://www.wort.lu/en/politics/france-s-le-pen-under-fire-in-first-presidential-tv-debate-58d0c8c5a5e74263e13ac4bc>, retrieved on 22.3.2017

ON BURQAH AND VEIL RELATED ISSUES:

Italia: Italian region bans women in face veils from entering hospitals— Giovanni Toti, regional president of the Forza Italia party, described the burqa as "the worst symbol of the oppression of women". He defended the ban against accusations that he mentioned as discriminatory and possibly anti-constitutional. "Those who live in Italy need to grasp and respect at least the minimum rules of equality between men and women," said Toti, who proposed the measure together with Liguria's health councillor, Sonia Viale of the far-right Northern League party. The party's national leader, Matteo Salvini, was quick to praise the region for a concrete initiative to protect women's freedom in the midst of what he called a "flood of useless chatter that accompanies Women's Day". Face coverings have been banned in public institutions in the neighboring region of Lombardy since January 2016. However, in order to abide by the Italian Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of religion, neither region made specific reference to Islamic veils in the text of their law. In the past, both Liguria and Lombardy had attempted to pass planning regulations dubbed 'anti-mosque' laws, which restricted the construction of new places of worship, however these were thrown out for being anti-constitutional.

The Local News' entry, in: <https://www.thelocal.it/20170308/italian-region-bans-veiled-women-from-entering-hospitals>, retrieved on 9.3.2017

Switzerland: Swiss parliament rejects bill proposing country-wide burqa ban— Swiss parliament's upper house rejected a bill which called upon the country to outlaw the Muslim face veil. The draft bill was



passed by the lower house in September 2016, and after debate the senate opposed it. The bill was proposed by the hardline Swiss People's Party (SVP), represented by MP Walter Wobmann who called for a federal ban on veils and other face coverings in public places across Switzerland's 26 cantons. The Senate, however, decided that it was the responsibility of individual cantons and not the federal government to decide if a

ban on face veil was necessary. The senate also went on to say such a ban was not necessary as very few people in Switzerland did not use the face veil while such a policy might also hurt the country's tourism. Speaking during the debate, Socialist Anita Fetz agreed with the commission, saying it was not a widespread issue in Switzerland. She said: "Even among tourists, cases are rare. I've seen perhaps two to three tourists entirely veiled in Basel in my whole life." Wobmann had launched a petition to take the issue of the burqa ban to a referendum where the decision would be left up to the people. It needed 100,000 signatures by September.

Pakistan Today News' entry, in: <http://www.pakistanoday.com.pk/2017/03/10/swiss-parliament-rejects-bill-proposing-country-wide-burqa-ban/>, retrieved on 11.3.2017

Germany: Germany's AfD Promises Tighter Borders, Ban on Islamic Veil— Germany's populist anti-establishment Alternative for Germany (AfD) party had called for tighter borders, a ban on the Islamic headscarf, and promised to examine whether the country could ditch the euro currency. The party, which was polling around 10 per cent and looked set to pick up its first ever seats in the German parliament this year, had been highly critical of Chancellor Angela Merkel's handling of the migrant crisis, and had attacked the country's elite. The party's election campaign programme, released in March, also stressed that Islam was "*not part of Germany*" and demands the "*immediate closure of borders to end the chaotic mass immigration*". It called for an official inquiry into Mrs Merkel's decision to open the country's borders at the height of the migrant crisis in 2015, a decision that brought well over a million migrants into the country. Germany was expected to go to the polls in September 2017, with Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union party currently neck-and-neck in the polls with the left wing Social Democrats. The Social Democrats had seen a revival in their fortunes after selecting former European Parliament President Martin Schulz as their candidate for Chancellor.

Breitbart News' entry, in: <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/03/11/germanys-afd-promises-tighter-borders-ban-islamic-veil/>, retrieved on 12.3.2017

Europe: Headscarves and Muslim veil ban debate: a timeline— A look at attempts to outlaw Muslim headwear as EU's highest court ruled employers can ban staff from wearing visible religious symbols. The movement to limit women wearing headscarves and Muslim veils such as the burqa and the niqab had been growing in Europe for more than a decade. Now the European court of justice, the EU's highest court, had ruled employers could ban staff from wearing headscarves, its first decision on the issue of employees wearing visible religious symbols at work.

Here was a timeline of the legislation passed:

14 March 2017—In its first decision on the headscarf issue the European court of justice rules that employers can bar staff from wearing visible religious symbols. But the court also rules that customers cannot simply demand that workers remove headscarves if the company has no policy barring religious symbols.

30 January 2017—Austria's ruling coalition agrees to prohibit full-face veils such as the burqa and the niqab in courts and schools. It also pledges to investigate banning headscarves for women employed in public services, in a move designed to hold the ruling coalition together by placating the anti-immigration Freedom party.

6 December 2016—The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, endorses a partial ban on the burqa and the niqab. "The full facial veil is inappropriate and should be banned wherever it is legally possible," she says.

18 August 2016—France's prime minister, Manuel Valls, defends municipal bans on body covering burkini swimwear designed for Muslim women after mayors imposed burkini bans in several seaside towns including Cannes, Villeneuve-Loubet and Sisc on the island of Corsica.

18 January 2016—The former UK prime minister David Cameron says he will back institutions with "sensible rules" over Muslims wearing full-face veils, but rules out a full public ban. "In our country people should be free to wear what they like," Cameron says, but adds: When you are coming into contact either with different institutions or, for instance, you are in court, or you need to see someone's face at the border, then I would always back the authorities or the institutions that have put in place proper and sensible rules.

22 May 2015—The Dutch cabinet approves a partial ban on face-covering Islamic veils on public transport and in public areas. The ban does not apply to wearing the burqa or the niqab on the street, except when there are specific security reasons.

1 July 2014—The European court of human rights upholds France's burqa ban. The judges say preservation of a certain idea of "living together" is the "legitimate aim" of the French authorities.

11 April 2011--Under a decree by the then French prime minister François Fillon, women are banned from wearing the niqab in any public place. Under the first ban of its kind in Europe, face veils are outlawed virtually anywhere outside women's homes, except when worshipping in a religious place or travelling as a passenger in a car.

31 March 2010—A key committee in Belgium votes to implement the first European ban against wearing the burqa and niqab in public. "I am proud that Belgium would be the first country in Europe which dares to legislate on this sensitive matter," says the centre-right MP Denis Ducarme. But it is the French government that imposes the first ban. A law banning the full-face veil does not come into effect in Belgium until July 2011, three months after the French ban.

3 February 2004--France's national assembly begins debating a bill to ban religious symbols, including Muslim headscarves, Jewish skullcaps and large Christian crosses, from schools.

24 September 2003—Germany's federal constitutional court rules in favour of an Afghan-born teacher who wants to wear an Islamic scarf to school. But it says states can change their laws locally if they want to. Half of Germany's regions go on to ban teachers from wearing headscarves.

The Guardian News' entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/14/headscarves-and-muslim-veil-ban-debate-timeline>, retrieved on 15.3.2017

Europe: Amid rise of anti-veil legislation, European high court says employers can now ban headscarf at work— Europe's highest court ruled in March 2017 that companies could ban employees from wearing religious garb, including hijabs, in the workplace. The European Court of Justice said that employers banning the visible display of any political, philosophical or religious sign did not constitute direct discrimination. The court said such rules do not amount to discrimination if the employer's motivation was legitimate, such as the desire to project an image of neutrality towards both its public and private sector customers. The judicial ruling came amid a rise of anti-veil legislation in Europe. In January, Austria moved to ban full-face veils, such as the burqa, in public. In February, the German state of Bavaria announced its intention to implement a ban on full-face veils from schools, government workplaces and voting areas. Various other European countries, including France and Belgium, already ban the burqa in public spaces.

PBS Newshour News' entry, in: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/amid-rise-anti-veil-legislation-european-high-court-says-employers-can-now-ban-headscarf-work/>, retrieved on 16.3.2017

Germany: Turkish woman in Germany targeted in racist attack for wearing headscarf— A Turkish woman was physically and verbally attacked by a racist man for wearing a headscarf in the German city of Mannheim in March. The 33-year-old woman was walking on the road along with her three-year-old child when Wolfgang, a German neighbor who lived in the same building, approached her holding a mobile phone to her face. When the woman reacted and asked why the man was taking her picture, Wolfgang landed a punch on the woman's face. As she staggered and fell, the man kept kicking her. The woman told that the man had been harassing women wearing headscarves for the past six months, taking photos of women he came across and making weird sounds as well as spitting on the ground. While a police officer on patrol duty detained the assailant, he was reportedly set free shortly after. The victim said she lived in fear as the assailant, who she recorded shouting "*Just wait and see what else will happen to you.*"

Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/islamophobia/2017/04/01/turkish-woman-in-germany-targeted-in-racist-attack-for-wearing-headscarf>, retrieved on 2.4.2017

ON DIALOGUE:

UK: The Archbishop of York visits York Mosque— The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, had visited the city's mosque and Islamic centre to hear more about its work within the community. He visited the

mosque in Bull Lane to meet with the Imam and members of the mosque as part of work to foster good community relations. Speaking before the visit, he said: *“In the Old Testament the Prophet Micah challenges his listeners to ‘live justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God’ and so I am very much looking forward to visiting York Mosque today and to find out more of the social action projects that York Mosque is doing. We each have a responsibility to foster better community relations and improve our sense of what it means to be a good neighbour”*. Imam Abid Salik said: *“We recently held an Open Day and on behalf of the whole congregation of York Mosque we would like to express deep and sincere gratitude to each and every person who made it possible and to our neighbours and friends from York and beyond who came along to support the day – it was so humbling.”* ‘Visit My Mosque’ in the UK had been now in its third year and the annual open day was held in February 2017 with over 150 mosques opening their doors for peoples of all faiths and none to discover more about how British mosques were helping local communities.

The Press News’ entry, in: http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/15153092.The_Archbishop_of_York_visits_York_Mosque/, retrieved on 15.3.2017

US: Muslim speaker tells how religion builds ‘bridge of cooperation’— With recent vandalism at a Jewish cemetery in Philadelphia and threats made against Jewish organizations across the country as well



as President Trump’s ban on travel from several Muslim countries, interfaith dialogue was held. More than 200 students, faculty and staff from St. Joseph’s and area colleges attended presentation in the Cardinal Foley Campus Center. St. Joseph’s University hosted the gathering with the goal to inspire college students and campus communities in Philadelphia to embrace diversity of faith, as well as to offer specific strategies that attendees could take back to their own schools. Eboo Patel, director of

Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) delivered a keynote address on interfaith leadership on 7 March. Patel founded IFYC based on *“the idea that religion should be a bridge of cooperation rather than a barrier of division.”* Beth Ford-McNamee, assistant director of campus ministry and organizer of the event, said: *“As a Jesuit university, St. Joseph’s is committed to providing educational and experiential learning opportunities for students regarding interfaith study, dialogue and encounter.”* She added that learning about different religions was part of the General Education Program at St. Joseph’s, and students were required to take a religious difference course as an elective. Jesuit Father Daniel Joyce, executive director of mission programs at the university, noted that Patel’s message had the potential to inspire students to action that was aligned with SJU’s mission.

Catholicphilly.com News’ entry, in: <http://catholicphilly.com/2017/03/news/local-news/muslim-speaker-tells-how-religion-builds-bridge-of-cooperation/>, retrieved on 16.3.2017

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