

**ELEVENTH OIC OBSERVATORY
REPORT ON**

ISLAMOPHOBIA

July 2017 – April 2018

**PRESENTED TO THE
45th Council of Foreign Ministers**

**Dhaka, People's Republic of Bangladesh
5-6 May 2018**

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Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimen
Secretary General

PREFACE BY THE OIC SECRETARY GENERAL

It is my pleasure to preface the 11th OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia, which maps incidents of prejudice against Islam and focuses on the situation of Islamophobia the world over. The report, a periodical publication of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory, is also a reflection on the points of strength and drawbacks of anti-Islamophobia policies worldwide.

Submitted to the Council of Foreign Ministers, the report aims to raise global awareness of how Islamophobia impedes Muslims' coexistence with their host communities and perils peace and harmonious togetherness in the world. No less malevolent than terrorism, Islamophobia shatters the social, religious and cultural fabric of communities. Islamophobia and violent terrorism are equally destructive, being intrinsically interrelated. More terrorism generates more Islamophobia, in a reciprocal relationship. The less intense is Islamophobia, the less terrorism do we have.

In this 11th report we shall see that Islamophobia has exhibited a downward trend over the past year, amid disintegration of racist

rhetoric that rode the wave of Trump's presidency, and following electoral failure of several populist, right-wing political factions in Europe, particularly in France, the Netherlands and Germany. These major political changes were not without benefit to Islam and to Muslim populations in western countries. This phenomenon, the report demonstrates, has been diminishing considerably.

Also significant, the anti-Islamophobia policy measures carried out by several countries like Canada are bearing fruit. Intensive awareness-raising programmes have been put in place, both by Muslim communities in the West and by local western governments, to create an inviting and inclusive environment for Muslims in these communities. This year, the fever pitch of anti-Hijab laws and restrictions on mosque-construction has died down. A mosque, one of Europe's biggest, was inaugurated in June 2017 in Cologne (Germany), amid wide official and popular acclaim. However, no similarly positive trend has been identified in the second hemisphere of the terrestrial globe. Anti-Islam sentiment

and violent, terrorist attacks against Rohingya Muslims are continuing unabated, amid international community's inability to stop the ongoing carnage of Muslims in this part of the world.

I am fully confident, in light of the positive and negative trends regarding Islamophobia, that the OIC and its Member States should urgently continue efforts to combat this phenomenon. We have to say that Europe's contribution to reducing anti-Islam sentiment and activities is by no means unnoticed. It may be more difficult, however, to preserve the progress achieved, especially amid the growing influence of populist, radical-right parties in Europe which have performed better in small European countries like Austria.

Just as we are focused on curbing and monitoring this phenomenon in western communities, we need to give more attention to Muslims in Myanmar, Australia, and China. This requires that we drive new initiatives to combat this phenomenon in Muslim minority countries in Asia, whose conditions remain a top priority for the Organization of Islamic Co-

operation.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that the OIC, mandated by the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers, is acting in earnest to advocate the values of justice and coexistence and contribute to achieving global peace, countering terrorism and combating hate speech and exclusion.

Through the submission of this report, I also wish to invite the distinguished Member States to provide greater support, both political and material, to the OIC institutions, most notably the Islamophobia Observatory and Sawt Al-Hikma (Voice of Wisdom) Centre to Combat Terrorism. Both institutions jointly address the two evil phenomena of Islamophobia and terrorism, which are two sides of the same coin. It is therefore obvious that without further support, it will be hard for the Observatory to fully discharge its mission of investigating this phenomenon, and to continue supporting the Organization's endeavours for peaceful coexistence and harmony to prevail between Muslims and their host communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 11th Annual Report of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory covers the period from July 2017 to April 2018. The Report contains 4 (four) main chapters and an Annex.

Chapter 1

This Chapter Speaks about ‘Trends Bringing Significant Impacts on the Decline of Islamophobia, Intolerance, and Discriminations against Muslims’ describes the decreasing trend of Islamophobia under the covered period, indicated by the number of incident which was much lower if being compared to those at the latest trimester of 2016, or at the first trimester of 2017, during which the US and Europe were always at the top of the Hotspot List—but were now moving towards significant improvement despite the remaining ‘worrisome’ overall situation. This positive trend was assessed by the Observatory to have been driven mostly by 4 (four) factors, namely: the failure of racist policy in the United States and the break-apart of Trump’s far-right inner circle; the consensus and unilateral settlement of ‘Immigrant Issue’ in Europe; defeat of far-rights political parties at the European elections, and; the growing trend of inter-faith Dialogue in Europe and in the US. On this Chapter, the OIC Permanent Observer Missions in New York, Brussels, and Geneva as well the OIC Liaison Office in the UNESCO, Paris, have helped the Observatory to elaborate these four factors focusing on these factors’ contribution towards the declining Islamophobia in the US and in Europe during the reviewed period.

Chapter 2

This Chapter reveals ‘Manifestations of Islamophobia’ around the world, being classified into 3 (three) different categories based on geographical consideration: a) Islamophobia in the United States and Canada; b) Islamophobia in Europe, and; c) Islamophobia in the rest of the world. In addition to these three categories, d) ‘Other Islamophobic trends’ forms a section under the same chapter since it shows a general trend of fear against Islam and its attire which is not necessary regional or geographical in term of character. For this latest category of Chapter 2, the Observatory focuses on Islamophobic gestures and policies against Veil, Hijab, and Burqa. Chapter 2 provides a review on how Islamophobia grew in the United States and Canada, and how it continued to take root through intensive far-right campaigns and public discourses showing ‘fear’ towards Islam; and also through a number of incidents occurring against Muslims, mosques, Islamic centers, as well as Islamic attire. This Chapter also reveals the fact that Europeans remain critical to Muslim population, a condition that continue feeding Islamophobia in the continent and tends to lead to intolerant attitudes against Muslim minorities. Chapter 2 also exposes the concerning trend of Islamophobia in 3 (three) locus of different regions: a) Myanmar; b) Australia, and; c) China. These locus was chosen based on the Observatory’s assessment on the level severity, or due to the potential growing of Islamophobia in the areas. They are presented here in this report in hoping to have particular attention from Member States.

Chapter 3

This Chapter highlights some ‘Positive Developments’ in term of actions, attitudes, sentiments, initiatives as well as other steps and positions taken by governments or by non-Muslim individuals against Islamophobes. All of these positive signs were classified into seven categories through which such friendly signs were reflected, comprising: public policy, court decision and trials against Islamophobes, positive views on Islam, counter-balances to the far-rights, support on mosques, positive attitude towards hijabs, and positive development on inter-faiths. In fact, through this chapter the Observatory wants to bring upon the Member States’ attention that counter-balancing power to the Islamophobia does exist in places where the issue was growing. Most of them were the long-existing products of the spirit of tolerance and harmony within the local society, and many of them flourish as reaction to the growing hate sentiments against Islam and Muslims, based on their awareness on the danger of Islamophobia within their own society. The positive gestures elaborated in this chapter were undertaken mostly by non-Muslims, whether they are representing the governments, religious groups, communities, or individuals.

Chapter 4

This Chapter presents the conclusion of the overall chapters, followed by a set of recommendation that proposes some steps and actions suggested to be taken by the OIC as well as by the relevant stakeholders including Member States, while to encourage them to consider taking concrete actions to renounce Islamophobia. The main background of this recommendation is the fact that, despite its declining pattern, the overall situation of Islamophobia remains alarming hence requires serious actions at international and national levels. Collective and worldwide endeavor to combat Islamophobia is expected to minimize its negative impacts on social life based on tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Finally,

The report also includes an Annex showing a list of Islamophobic incidents happened around the world under the reviewed period, which was classified into five categories: Incidents Related to Mosques, Political and Social Campaigns against Islam and Muslims, Intolerance against Islam and its Sacred Symbols, Discrimination against Muslim Individuals and Communities, and Incidents Related to Hijab.

Islamophobia

INTRODUCTION

For quite sometimes, Islamophobia has been growing strongly in the West and has continued to take root through intensive campaigns and public discourses disseminating fear of Islam, and through a significant number of incidents targeting Muslims, mosques, Islamic centers, Islamic attire, and Islam's sacred symbols. Reports and evidence reveal that negative sentiment toward Islam and Muslims keeps expanding in the minds of mainstream Westerners, through mistrust toward Islam and its adherents. There are clear indicators showing that more and more Westerners are in doubt that Islam is a religion of peace; they feel suspicious over religious activities conducted in mosques and Islamic centers, while associating Islam with the ongoing phenomena of extremism and terrorism.

Particularly during the last few years, Islamophobia has reached an intractable point as it continues to grow, despite up-and-down graphic from time to time. This is reflected in the wide scale of negative narratives against Islam, as

well as through incidents targeting mosques, Islamic centers, Muslim individuals and communities, and women wearing the veil or hijab. Mosques and Islamic centers are the most common target, as a significant number of incidents of vandalism and arson involving mosques and prayer facilities are occurring in the U.S., Canada, Germany, Sweden, UK and Netherlands.

The current main hotspots of Islamophobia remain the U.S. and Europe. In the U.S., the Islamophobia trend is the most concerning in terms of scale. Racist graffiti, pig carcass dumping, threatening mail, Holy Quran defacing, physical assaults, and verbal insults are among the frequent incidents. Also, quite recently in the U.S. there was an atmosphere of overwhelming chaos, as the early days of President Trump's administration had made clear that Islam is a major Public Enemy. Among the most notorious instances was the issuance of a xenophobic order that flies in the face of America's self-proclaimed values of freedom and equality.

The policy was called Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States, and it suspended entry for nationals of certain Muslim countries. Meanwhile in Europe, the bleak picture of Islamophobia was seen in intense campaigns waged by populist-right wing parties amidst ongoing elections.

Islamophobia has existed since very long ago, meaning that Muslims were targets of negative stereotyping and prejudice in all its forms and manifestations for quite some time. It is particularly since the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 that the phenomena has increased drastically at global level, since when Islam was seen as a serious threat in certain parts of the world.

The rise of ISIS in the last few years has made the situation even worse, as Islam was then portrayed as a religion of intrinsic violence whose disciples had a tendency to spread harm to the followers of other religions. In many Western countries Islam is even considered as an 'alien' religion prone to bloodshed, a stigma that triggers intolerant attitudes amongst non-Muslims.

These negative stereotyping eventually ended up into negative sentiments, dread or hatred of Islam that includes multi-form discrimination against its adherents, manifested into the exclusion of Muslims from economic,

social, and public life.

Islamophobia, therefore, is not an issue that 'stands alone', for it is very close connected with other issues which reciprocally feed the phenomena. In simpler words, 9/11 was a problem of terrorism; ISIS was problem of radicalization and violent extremism, while Islamophobia was actually something else, but it was so affected by those issues in term vice-versa.

Terrorism and violent extremism both had boosted Islamophobia elsewhere, which was the fact, and the fast-growing Islamophobia had nurtured extremism and terrorism, which was just another fact. By consequence, addressing the issue of Islamophobia must be undertaken in parallel with efforts to tackle other 'related issues' which is unfortunately not an easy matter.

The main task of the Islamophobia Observatory is to 'monitor' those events on day-to-day basis, scanning the minds, public feelings, incidents, and everything that serves as possible indicator of Islamophobia. All of the information were then gathered and presented in this report with the expectation that the Member States would have a picture on the trend of Islamophobia around the world during the reviewed period; and hopefully this report could be used as materials for making policies and decisions on relevant issues.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

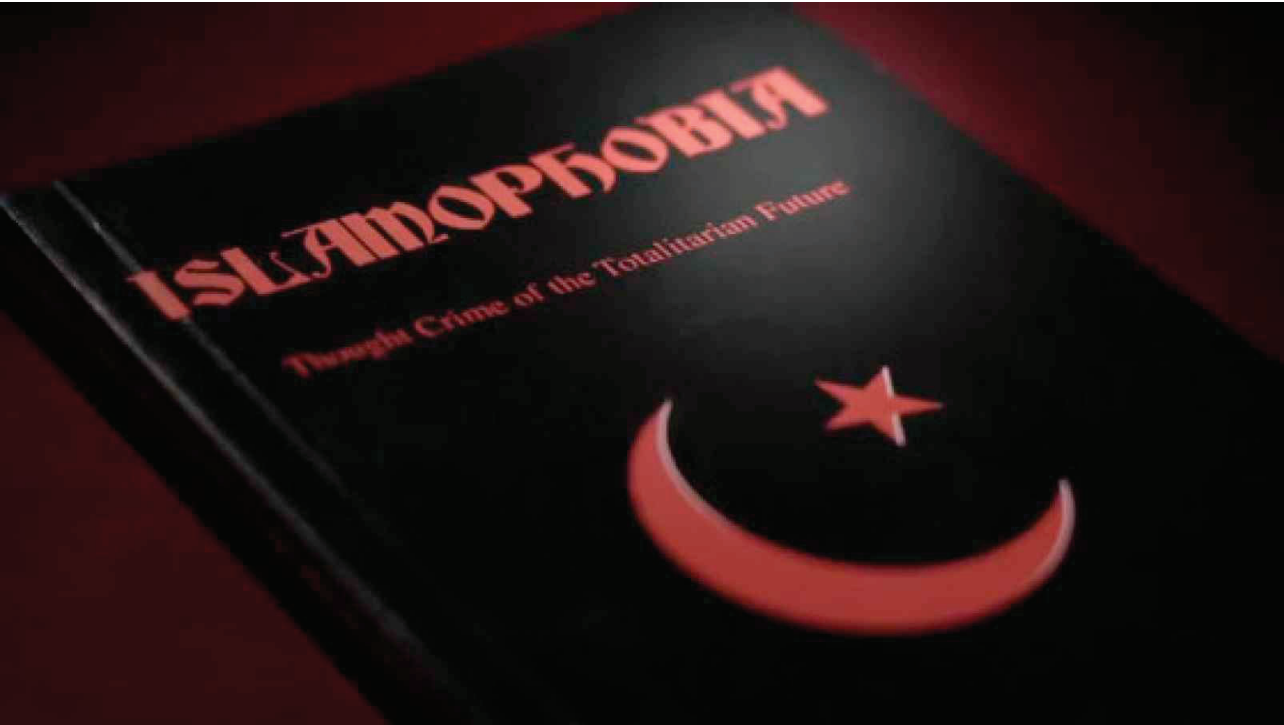


1. TRENDS BRINGING SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS ON THE DECLINE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA, INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS

Chapter
1

Chapter 1

After almost 4 (four) years of constant high-level of Islamophobia around the world, it was now to note its significant decline. Such a positive trend has been the case since May 2017 and it continued to show a declining pattern until this report is written and being submitted to the OIC Member States. The main indicator was the number of incident which was much lower if being compared to those at the latest trimester of 2016, or at the first trimester of 2017, during which the US and Europe were always at the top of the ‘Hotspot List’—but were now moving towards significant improvement. Along with this positive trend, the Observatory identified and made assessment on main factors which might have contributed significantly to the declining trend of Islamophobia since May 2017, namely: The failure of racist policy in the US and the break-apart of far-right inner circle of President Trump, Multilateral consensus and unilateral settlement of ‘Immigrant Issue’ in Europe, Defeat of far-rights political parties at the European elections, and the growing trend of inter-faith Dialogue in Europe and in the US.



1.1. The failure of racist policy in the US and the break-apart of far-right inner circle of President Trump¹

After more than two years since Donald Trump called for “a total and complete shut-down of Muslim entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on” and declared to Anderson Cooper that “Islam hates us”, Islamophobia and racism remain unabated in the United States. Muslims have come under further attack and more scrutiny in different ways. The US administration continued with its campaign of banning Muslims from some Muslim countries to enter the United States. The US President’s first and second signed orders to im-

pose such ban were challenged by the court and widely opposed and condemned by many in the public and in the media and elsewhere. Although the US President went on with his program by signing a third ban order, but the potential failure of the racist and anti-Muslim policies in the US was looming since then.

This situation was getting worse throughout the early period of Mr. Trump’s presidency due to the presence of some high profile individuals who had surrounded the US President for quite some time and who also harboured racism and anti-Muslim sentiments. Individuals





in this category included Army Lt. General Michael Flynn, whom Trump named national security adviser and who once called “Islamism” a “vicious cancer inside the body of 1.7 billion people on this planet and it has to be excised”, and former White House aide Sebastian Gorka who stated that violence is a fundamental part of Islam and that there were no moderate Muslims, only those who had already been radicalized or were on their way to being radicalized.

Then, of course, there were the chief White House strategist Steve K. Bannon, a well-known white supremacist and key architect of the Muslim Ban who publicly stated that “Islam is not a religion of peace” and the White House policy aide Stephen Miller, who played a role in

crafting the iteration of the Muslim Ban and who, in college, started a “terrorism awareness project” with the goal of making “students aware of the Islamic jihad and the terrorist threat, and to mobilize support for the defense of America and the civilization of the West.”

It became clear later on that the US administration and the white House cannot continue to work with these figures and pursue their policies and therefore, distanced themselves to an extent from their anti-Muslim and racist programs and adopted a different path. This change was also partly due to the fact that these policies and programs received negative reactions domestically and internationally. It was encouraging to note that the upward trend of Islamo-

phobia and anti-Muslim discrimination within the president's inner circle has lost momentum as these key figures were no more among the advisors and decision making team of the US president. This also reflected a change in the policy and approach of the US president as he positively improved his rhetoric towards Muslims as well as his government's relations with some Muslim countries and attended the Summit of the Muslim world leaders held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

However, beside this cautious optimism, one has to be aware of the volatility of the situation and the changing mode and behavior of the US administration towards Islam and Muslims. On 29 November 2017 the U.S. President Donald Trump's decided to retweet the three Islamophobic videos originally twitted by a far-right and virulently anti-Muslim British activist, which provoked condemnation from religious leaders worldwide. The videos purported to show Muslims committing violent and anti-Christian acts.

Interfaith organizations and institutions spoke out against Trump's role in amplifying three videos shared by Britain First's deputy leader Jayda Fransen. The critics said the president's retweets gave her a much bigger platform on which to spread anti-Muslim hate. Fransen's tweet claimed that one of the videos depicted a Muslim migrant beating up a Dutch boy on crutches. The Dutch Embassy in Washington, D.C., discredited that claim, confirming in a tweet that the attacker was born and raised in the Netherlands. The two other videos appear to be from Syria and Egypt in 2013 and

show the actions of violent political extremists.

An alarming example of racism that was severely rejected by most in the American society was the racist rally, with racist slogans, chants and salutes by white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and the Ku Klux Klan, promoting white supremacy and inciting racial discrimination and hatred in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017. An anti-racist protester was killed by a white supremacist during this time.

The failure at the highest political level in the US administration to reject racist demonstration attracted a lot of criticism within the United States. According to a poll by Quinnipiac University, most of Americans disapproved the way President Trump responded to the events in Charlottesville and rejected how he handled race issues. Following these incidents, Professor Daniel M Kammen, resigned from his post as Science Envoy of the US State Department in protest to President's response to white supremacists and neo-Nazis, which was followed by resignation of several actors and prominent arts figures from an advisory committee to the White House. The group included actor Kal Penn, photographer Chuck Close and author Jhumpa Lahiri. The president was also forced to shut down four major business advisory councils over tensions with the business community following the events in Charlottesville.

While hate-mongers and racist groups will continue to push with their agenda, it is upon the US government and other stakeholders to combat against all forms of racism and prejudice against Muslims.

1.2. Multilateral consensus and unilateral settlement of 'Immigrant Issue' in Europe²

It is well documented that Islamophobia in Europe is particularly on the rise since 2015, namely following the refugee crisis. The level of Islamophobia in fields such as education, employment, media, politics, the justice system and the internet is on the rise across Europe. Notably, however, Islamophobic incidents have been taking place even in countries where Muslim communities are almost absent, for example, in some Central European states. The rise of nationalist sentiments and Islamophobia is no doubt based on the false notion linking Muslims with terrorism. There were attempts to blame Muslim refugees for the recent terrorist attacks, despite the fact that the majority of perpetrators have been citizens of Western European states. It is interesting to note, that the European policy-makers including the EU has been consciously resisting to acknowledge the inherent difference between "refugees who are fleeing conflict situations" and "migrants" by lumping them together in their policy debates. This is obviously in a bid to bypass their international protection responsibilities under the UN Refugee Convention and thus avoid criticism for violating human rights obligations by putting up barriers against refugee inflows into Europe.

The rhetoric about immigration/refugee inflows, perceived as a danger for Christian civilization, continued throughout 2017 in the European political debate. Some European governments and right-wing politicians have been openly expressing anti-Muslim opinions. During the recent elections, notably in the Neth-

erlands, France, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and most recently in Italy, immigration has become the central theme of the campaign, fuelling feelings of fear and hatred, brandished by the extreme right as a pretext of the socio-economic malaise felt by the population. To justify the link between immigration and crime, Georgia Meloni, President of the neo-fascist party Fratelli Italia (Frères d'Italie), said during a meeting that "the migrants in Italy are responsible for 50% of the crimes, 40% of robberies, 47% of cases of violence, 25% of murders and 60% of other crimes of sexual abuse. Georgia Meloni is following the footsteps of Czech President Milos Zemman and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who make no secret of their Islamophobia. While under the Lisbon Treaty, immigration policies are to be





governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, meeting in Sofia on 27th January 2018, the four Visegrad countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic) rejected in one voice the European quota for relocation and reaffirmed their refusal to accept migrants. To date, only Luxembourg and Ireland are seemingly not affected by a strong wave of anti-immigrant populism that is sweeping Europe. While isolated incidents even there cannot be ruled out.

Facing this obsession with security, the European Union is continuously investing in the search for “appropriate solutions to the migration crisis”, working towards a common multi-lateral, as well as bilateral policy. It adopted a roadmap to reach to, by June 2018, intending to establish a balanced approach dealing with both regular and irregular migration through a comprehensive agreement on the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), consolidate partnerships with third countries



including the AU, open travel routes to Europe, ensure adequate funding to manage migration and tackle its root causes. The European Commission also plans to relocate more 50.000 vulnerable refugees by May 2019 and pledges support for IOM through the EU-AU-UN Task Force to speed up returns from Libya.

The EU-Africa mini-summit on migration in Paris took steps to strengthen the resilience of countries of origin, in order to address the root causes of migration, prevent departures, im-

prove the return capacity of illegal migrants in dignity and security, based on coordination on the fight against smuggling networks and their economic model. The summit also decided to create hotspots in Niger and Chad in order to identify those entitled to asylum, ensure the security of the Libyan border in order to stem the flow of refugees and adopt a code of conduct for rescue. At the EU-AU Summit held in Abidjan on 29-30 November 2017, in addressing the “root causes” a call was launched for the empowerment of women and youth to promote decent employment creation and sustainable development. The Summit strongly condemned the criminal acts against migrants in Libya. (It is recalled that the EU had come under serious criticism from human rights groups for their unilateral policy to engage with Libya in preventing migrants/refugees reaching European shores, who were then literally held in detention and subject to violence in Libya.) It is also noted that the United Nations has reprimanded the EU’s attitude towards the hot spots and the new forms of slavery they entail. The mini-summit on migration held in Rome focused on support for countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as on the principle of solidarity in the reception of migrants.

Bilateral actions were also carried out, in particular between France and the UK, at their 35th summit to better control illegal immigration by strengthening the management of the joint border by the “Treaty of Touquet II” and by granting better treatment to unaccompanied minor migrants. Other countries like Germany, Italy and France have signed agreements with some African countries to fight against illegal migration.

At the national level, all EU countries have

taken steps to facilitate the judicial process allowing them to immediately expel asylum seekers who have not obtained protection status, in particular by speeding up the processing of asylum applications and the reduction of appeal time. Germany created “deportation centres” for rejected asylum seekers to countries of origin because of bilateral agreements and limits the migrants number to 200.000 per year. Italy, the main entry for migrants sent back more than 24% of rejected applicants. In Sweden, which has long been a land of asylum for migrants, has also revised its line and dismissed nearly 70.000 rejected asylum seekers in 2017 and restricted its family reunification policies. France introduced a bill on immigration and asylum, based on “humanity” towards refugees and “firmness” against rejected migrants. However, out of a total of 100.000 asylum applications received in 2017 in France, 1/3 became refugees, 26.000 people were “removed” from French territory including 1.400 by forced re-terminations. In 2018, the country will open only 7.500 places for asylum seekers and 5.000 places for refugees. The EU and its individual members are also focusing on “effective return policy” and “readmission agreements” with countries of origin or provenance of third country nationals.

The EU, which prides itself on being the continent of solidarity, is paradoxically witnessing a drastic decrease in refugees due to its restricted policies of closing borders in the name of more security. Europe’s migration policies are also critically reviewed outside of Europe. In 2016, the European Union’s controversial “one in, one out” deal with Turkey to stop migrants and refugees fleeing to Europe from the Middle East and Italy’s similar adoption of an aggres-

sive approach in 2017 to halt migratory inflows from North Africa by cracking down on NGOs operating rescue operations off the country’s coast have been criticised without any results. With each new twist and turn, the number of arrivals has however, dropped. The IOM reported that slightly fewer than half as many migrants reached Europe by sea in 2017 than 2016. In 2016, only 710.395 refugees were granted asylum and 14.205 people were relocated. Looking at the numbers globally, most refugees flee to neighbouring countries. Thus, the refugees in Europe represent less than half of the number living in Jordan for decades and not to speak of the huge number hosted by Lebanon and other neighboring countries in the Middle East as well as those hosted by countries in Africa and the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh! In the context of the ground reality of global refugee situation, the anti-refugee /anti-immigration measures of Europe have been strongly criticized by the human rights groups, notably the OFPRA (French Office of protection of the refugees and stateless persons), the national court of the right of asylum (CNDA), as well as by Amnesty international and the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations, which fear that the migrants’ fundamental rights are being affected.

In the absence of a responsible common migration policy, Europe is insidiously setting up a “closed-door policy”. Many associations shared their efforts with politicians and parliamentarians to ‘move the lines’ of rejection of others and intolerance, to foster intercultural dialogue, to deconstruct, among other things, the myths of Muslim women “submissive and deprived of all their rights” and more broadly of a Muslim minority that has no place in the

West. Thus, during its survey, the FRA (EU Fundamental Rights Agency) showed the view of “others” on Muslim minorities. On 14th December 2017, a survey of the European Network against Racism (ENAR) in 5 EU countries (Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Sweden) gave the voice to people at the heart of the EU migration policies. The survey reveals that all respondents are dissatisfied with their lives in general, 1/3 do not feel close to the people around them, particularly in Greece (36,6%) and Germany (33%), at least 77% find it difficult to find housing, 54% of study permit holders who have arrived in Europe as part of family reunification are overqualified for their job, while 27,3% are likely to be treated worse than their colleagues, 37% of those questioned were victims of insults. Finally, 36% of migrants who are victims of crime believe that the offense was committed on the basis of their ethnicity, 54% on their migratory status and 63% on the basis of their Muslim religion.

In the name of so-called “Western Islam” and the fight against radicalization, 2017 has seen the closing of many mosques or a change in the custodian, including of the Grand mosque in Brussels itself. With unbridled rise of Islamophobia, the already difficult situation of Muslims in Europe would no doubt be a cause of grave alarm. There is also a growing realization within European civil society organizations that building social cohesion, stability and security requires that communities are well-equipped to receive refugees, and that refugees are well-supported to realize their potential in their new environments. The EU on its part, recognizes that factors such as climate change, insecurity and instability and the aging of Europe’s populations make migration a long-standing prior-

ity. But for the V-4 countries “the demographic problem will not be solved by immigration but with a strong family policy”. Sooner than later the EU leaders must reinvigorate their efforts to promote respect for diversities, the only way to ensure peaceful coexistence, on the basis of better integration. The first thing would be established a social contract between refugees/migrants and receiving states in order to restore public and political trust and foster a welcoming environment, and address xenophobia. 2018 announces reforms in many countries. The outcomes however, remain to be seen. French President Emmanuel Macron intends to prepare the ground of “all organizations of Islam in France” by May 2018.

As has been evident, the European leaders openly or covertly have pressed on several fronts to stem migration especially after a burst in 2015. The deals struck with Turkey and Libya and the intensive ongoing efforts in sub-Saharan Africa, tying development aid to countries’ willingness to accept returnees from Europe and offering fresh assistance in exchange for pledges to cut flows are considered piecemeal solutions in addressing the greater humanitarian concerns of refugee inflows or immigration per-se. In the ultimate, the EU must reject its policy of unilateral settlement of immigration issue and expand on a principled, pragmatic and common approach to responding to refugees and migrants and reach a multilateral consensus within the framework of effective coordination with the UN including the IOM and UNHCR. It remains to be seen how the EU will engage in multilateral consensus on Global Compact for Safe, orderly and Regular Migration to be adopted in Morocco later this year.

1.3. Defeat of far-rights political parties at the European elections³

During the last few years, right-wing populist parties have gained popularity and electoral successes throughout Europe. Several new right-wing populist actors have begun to change the European political landscape and many EU countries continue to face a number of internal destabilizing political trends. In several European countries, including Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Switzerland, right-wing parties participate in the governments. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the French Front National, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) were enjoying record popularity. The Brexit vote and Donald Trump's victory in the US election have normalized in many ways the once-disdained far-right political parties across the European conti-

nent. The slow economic growth in recent years, the terrorist attacks on the European soil and the refugee and migrant crisis have contributed significantly to the rise of populist, anti-establishment and extreme right-wing parties and consequently to the breakdown of the mainstream European political system and the strong rejection of the political class in general.

The political programs and discourse that were once unacceptable had become a well-entrenched and normalized activity and behavior. Standing up to Islam and Muslims, rejecting the European Union, demonizing immigration and encouraging national pride and authoritarianism have dominated public discussion and were the paths that led towards important electoral success. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the French Front National, the Alter-





native for Germany (AfD), the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), the Finland's Finns Party, the Danish People's Party, the Italian Lega Nord, the Czech Freedom & Direct Democracy and the Slovakia's People's Party have gained popularity and became the leading opposition forces.

Much has been written on the causes leading to the rise of these extreme parties and the consequences of their participation in the political life and the work of the European parliaments and governments. Scholars, journalists and analysts use different labels such as "extreme right", "far-right" and "populist radical right" to refer to the same organizations, political parties and movements that build their narratives on common denominators includ-

ing their exclusionist, ethno-nationalist notion of citizenship, anti-establishment rhetoric and rejection of immigration and ethnic diversity. Those parties share some additional features including populism which is reflected in simple division between "we/us" and "they/them" and authoritarianism that highlights the need for stronger leadership reflecting "the will of the people" with regard to promoting traditional values, nationalism, law and order and opposition to multiculturalism, immigration and above all Islam.

Using racist rhetoric to exploit a migration crisis and attacking Islam and Muslims has proved to be a successful instrument to gain votes in the elections. Some scholars have observed that radical party orientations have

been adapted in the recent years. In particular, Islamophobia has replaced anti-Semitism (Michelle Hale Williams, 2010). The rise of far-right parties endangers pluralism and the protection of minorities.

In some Western European countries, far-right parties have enjoyed a de facto institutionalization in party politics (e.g. Austria, Italy, Denmark, Switzerland and France). These parties were instrumental in passing policies that are more restrictive on immigration, multiculturalism and law and order.

On the other hand, in Eastern European countries, some studies have showed that the political establishment, mainstream parties and discourses are more radicalized than in Western Europe. Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland and Fidesz in Hungary adopted more radical positions than some Western European far-right parties did. Experts' surveys show that the rise of far-right parties in post-communist Europe

has been fueled by policies concerning immigration, integration, law and order, perceived loss of identity and economic deprivation.

In many cases, far-right movements and populist parties rely heavily on media and particularly on social media channels to deliver their messages to potential adherents as they often lack sufficient organizational and financial means.

The recent elections in some European countries exposed a major shift in European politics. While the mainstream political parties and media outlets welcomed the defeat of the far-right candidates in Austria, the Netherlands and France, it should be highlighted that this "major defeat" represents the fact of being placed in a second position in the presidential or national elections. There is a clear evidence that the once-unacceptable radical, xenophobic and discriminatory language of extreme far-right parties are no longer too toxic to ex-

clude their candidates from coming a breath away from leadership. Besides, another trend is still clearly visible and extremely worrying. In an attempt to regain the support of the electorate, some mainstream political parties have started to capitalise on security concerns and use some of



the radical, xenophobic and discriminatory language.

In France, despite her defeat in the second round of the presidential election in May 2017, Marine Le Pen, marked a high point and claimed a “historic, massive result” for the far-right party in the modern French history. Campaigned on fear and anger, Le Pen tried to draw herself as the defender of French values from the “invasion” of immigrants and “radical Islamic fundamentalism”. However, despite the defeat, she has profoundly changed French politics.

In Germany, during the Federal elections in September 2017 that aimed at the election of the members of the Bundestag, the populist radical-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which was previously unrepresented in the German parliament, became the third party with a stunning 13.3 per cent of the vote. Some statistics showed that the party has its strongholds in the former communist east of the country. Like most right-wing parties of Europe, anti-Islam policies replaced its Eurosceptic focus with the slogan “Islam is not a part of Germany”. The party’s “Manifesto for Germany”, states that “Islam does not belong to Germany. Its expansion and the ever-increasing number of Muslims in the country are viewed by the AfD as a danger to our state, our society, and our values.”

In October 2017, an anti-establishment party “Ano”, founded by Andrej Babis, gained nearly 30 per cent of the votes in the Czech legislative elections. Among the biggest surprises in the election was the important result obtained by the extreme right-wing anti-migrant and anti-Islam Freedom & Direct Democracy

(SPD) party of Tomio Okamura, with 10.7 per cent of the votes. The party attracted electoral support through its slogan “No to Islam, no to terrorism”. In December 2017, the SPD hosted a meeting in Prague of the right-wing Europe of Nations and Freedom Group in the European Parliament with the objective to create a new model of intercontinental cooperation. Leaders of far-right parties from France, the Netherlands, Italy, Austria, Britain and other countries participated in the meeting.

During the regional elections in Slovakia in November 2017, the far-right People’s Party – Our Slovakia, (PPOS) was the main loser bucking the trend of the rise of far-right parties across Europe. The party became known for its anti-EU and anti-immigration rhetoric and openly expressed admiration for Nazi rule during the Second World War. The party’s platform includes anti-Roma and anti-Jewish rhetoric, Christian morality and the need to increase the size of the army to be able to prevent the “hordes of Muslim immigrants” from coming to Slovakia.

On the other hand, during the recent Italian general elections in March 2018, the anti-establishment Five Star Movement of Luigi di Maio obtained 32.66 per cent of the votes and secured an important number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The right-wing Lega Nord obtained 17.37 per cent while Brothers of Italy, a radical right party, gained 4.35 per cent of the votes.

We can note that the far-right European parties are undergoing a groundbreaking transformation and steadily making their way in the European political landscape.

1.4. The growing trend of inter-faith Dialogue in Europe and in the US⁴

Political polarization in the US and Europe today, including the erosion of political parties and the rise of political and religious pluralism is calling for innovative ways to promote the culture of peace. Even in secular Western liberal democratic societies, there is an urgent need to bridge the widening gap between faiths and cultures as extremists increasingly exploit religions for their own political agenda. This explains the growing trend of initiatives on inter-

faith dialogue in Europe and the US, where the focus is on the need to promote understanding and tolerance among followers of different faiths, and on the intertwined necessity to fight terrorism and propaganda on the “clash of civilizations”. Hence, interfaith dialogue proves as an excellent tool to heal fragmentations within society and constitutes an important component for global politics in the current International political context. The aftermath of 9/11,



and the terrorist attacks in Europe and the USA fuel fear, ignorance and negative stereotyping of the religious other. This negative portrayal of 'the other' particularly impacts Muslims, who are too often depicted as inherently violent by mass media. In this context, interfaith dialogue may play a role of catalysts for national cohesion and constitutes a pivotal tool for cultural diplomacy.

In Europe, dialogue between the European institutions and European churches and religious groups has moved from informal contacts to a more organized system of regular

meetings, based on a solid legal framework. Thus, in 1994, European Commission President, Jacques Delors established the first formal links of the European institutions with religious communities within the initiative 'A Soul for Europe'. He set up a structured dialogue with religious associations with the objective of promoting civil society's participation in EU's integration process.

A Reflection Group on the Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe was established in 2003 to debate on values relevant to European unification. The Reflection Group's work inspired Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the EU which introduced, for the first time, a legal basis for regular, open and transparent dialogue between the EU institutions and churches, religious associations, and philosophical and non-confessional organizations. The Reflection Group's task was to establish contacts with churches, and religious and philosophical associations. From 2005, it established annual high-level meetings between the EU institutions and representatives of religious associations, such as COMECE (the EU Catholic bishops' conference), the Council of European Churches (CEC – including Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox and Old Catholic churches), Muslim communities, the European Jewish Congress and Hindu, Sikh and Mormon associations.

The first high-level meeting, which took place just five days after the July 2005 attacks in London, highlighted the need for Europe to combat terrorism and eliminate its causes. Since 2007, the high-level meetings have been hosted by the European Commission and co-chaired by the President or responsible Vice-





President of the European Parliament and the European Council President.

In its April 2014 resolution on EU foreign policy in a world of cultural and religious differences, the EP recognized the role of parliamentary assemblies of international organizations for the promotion of inter-religious dialogue and called upon the European External Action Service and EU Delegations to contribute to its promotion. EU's official dialogue with churches, religious, and non-confessional organizations involves organizing regular dialogue seminars between faith actors and parliamentarians or the commission, aimed at bringing a faith perspective to EU policy making on issues related to culture, education, migration, racism, and the fight against radicalization. In this respect, the 13th annual high-level meeting with religious leaders across Europe took place 7th November 2017 in the context of the ongoing debate on the val-

ues underpinning the Future of Europe.

In Europe's landscape, it is also worth highlighting efforts by OSCE institutions in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, particularly through the work of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which has developed tools to promote dialogue about religious tolerance and non-discrimination. Indeed, Inter-faith dialogue has been on the OSCE agenda for several years as an integral part of the Organization's efforts to promote tolerance and non-discrimination, and to combat violent extremism.

Meanwhile in the USA, since 9/11 intercultural dialogue has become a critical element for the maintaining of civic and international stability. Furthermore, a strong political impetus for interfaith dialogue was given by the former U.S. President Barack Obama, who spoke favor-



ably of interfaith dialogue in his landmark 2009 speech in Cairo, addressing the Muslim world.

In this context, interfaith associations regularly gather for discussion. Christians and Jews, Hindus and Muslims, and Buddhists visit one another's places of worship, gather over meals, sponsor programs on inter-religious awareness for schools, and undertake annual conferences on interfaith dialogue. Thus, in cities such as New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and other large cities in the U.S., interfaith dialogue is occurring frequently in universities, seminaries, and houses of worship. The movement is growing and the mainstream media has started to shed light on this spreading movement. Major newspapers like the New York Times and the Washington Post, frequently report on the benefits of inter-religious engagement. One striking example of

interfaith dialogue occurred when several faith groups joined forces against President Trump's ban on refugees. Hence, more than 2,000 religious leaders signed a letter to the President and Congress supporting the refugees and denouncing the so-called Muslim ban. Rallies have brought together people across the religious spectrum.

Inter-religious dialogue is crucial in the contemporary era. Interfaith dialogue can be a powerful tool for relationship-building and for nurturing cultural diversity and pluralism, which are necessary components for social solidarity, stability and security. Access to knowledge religious diversity and the development of inter-cultural skills through dialogue are one of the most effective ways to deconstruct stereotypes and prejudices that often create and deepen divisions within societies.

2

Chapter

2. MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

2.1. Islamophobia in the USA and Canada

2.1.1. Polls and Reports

Trump phenomenon had served as a double-edge sword to the Islamophobia in the U.S. On one side, Mr. Trump had bolstered anti-Islam sentiments, but at the same time Mr. Trump popularity was becoming a 'blessing in disguise', as his xenophobic narratives were then responded by a wide-scale mobilization of support towards Muslims living in the country. There was an interesting pattern showing the fact that Islamophobia in the US were so intense during the latest three months of 2016 which was in coincidence with the period of political campaigns in the US; and also during the early months of Trump's presidency, meaning that spikes in anti-Muslim sentiments and hate crimes appeared to have strong connections

with the election's cycles.

In line with the above-mentioned conclusion was the statement of the Pew Research Center, as it released the results of a new survey of Muslims nationwide that highlighted a broad sense of anxiety and unease about their place in the United States and with a president who most consider unfriendly toward Muslims. The study suggested that anti-Muslim discrimination was quite common in the United States under the reviewed period— and so, too, were expressions of support for Muslims. A nationally representative sample of 1,001 Muslim adults were surveyed by telephone between January and May 2017, and the report wrote: "Overall, Muslims in the United States perceive a lot of

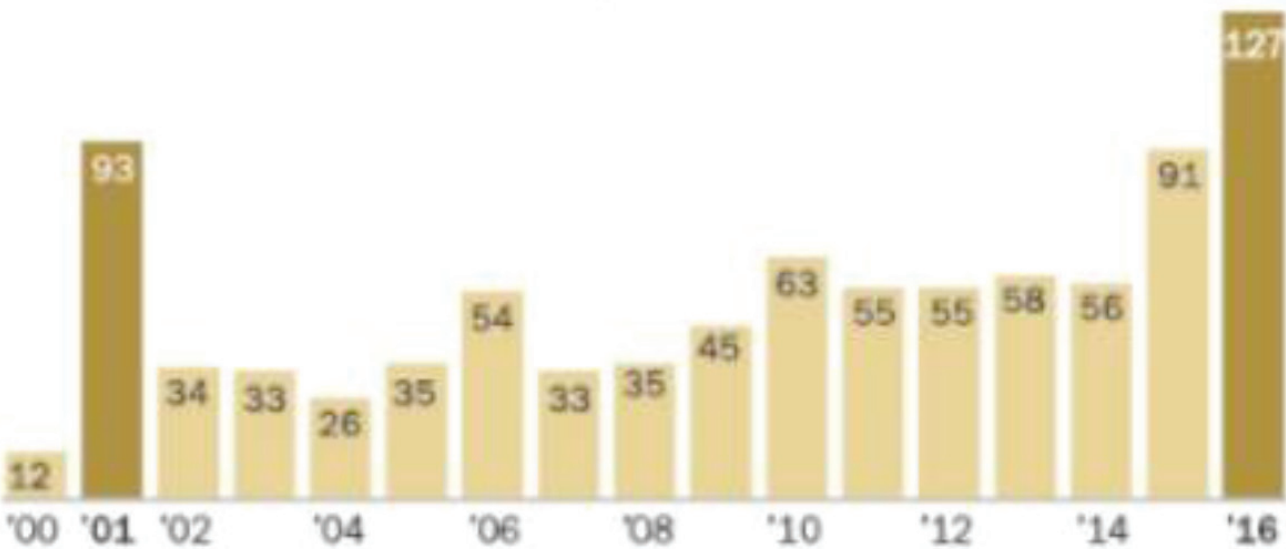


discrimination against their religious group, are leery of President Donald Trump and think their fellow Americans do not see Islam as part of mainstream US society.” The study also found that share of US Muslims who had experienced discriminatory treatment was trending upward, with 48 percent of respondents saying they were subjected to at least one discriminatory incident based on religion over the past year, compared with 40 percent a decade before. A large majority — 75 percent — said there was a lot of discrimination against Muslims in the United States. Nearly three-quarters said Trump was unfriendly toward Muslims, compared with just 4 percent who said that of President Barack Obama in 2011. About two-thirds said they don’t like where the nation is headed. Most of the estimated 3.35 million Muslims living in the United States were immigrants or the children of immigrants; and nearly two-thirds of those

surveyed said they think the American public did not consider Islam a part of mainstream society. The poll found that Trump was not the only source of mistrust. Six in 10 respondents said they think U.S. media coverage of Islam and Muslims was unfair. About a third of Muslims said they had been treated with suspicion at least once over the past year, the highest in Pew surveys since 2007. Nearly 1 in 5 said they had been called offensive names, and a similar share had seen anti-Muslim graffiti in their communities. Six percent said they were physically threatened or attacked, identical to the share saying this in 2011. Those who appeared Muslim — either because of the way they look, dress or speak — were significantly more likely to experience discrimination for being Muslim, and women overall were more likely to report discrimination than men. A significant minority — one third — said they were

Anti-Muslim assaults exceed 2001 total

Anti-Muslim assaults in U.S. reported to the FBI



Note: Includes simple and aggravated assaults.

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



at least somewhat worried that the government was tapping their phones because of their religion. The poll found that 30 percent said they were skeptical of law enforcement sting operations against suspected terrorists, thinking that authorities mostly arrested “people who were tricked and did not pose a real threat.”⁵

PEW report also said that the number of assaults against Muslims in the United States rose significantly between 2015 and 2016, easily surpassing the modern peak reached in 2001, the year of the September 11 terrorist attacks, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of new hate crimes statistics from the FBI. In 2016, there were 127 reported victims of aggravated or simple assault, compared with 91 the year before and 93 in 2001. But assaults were not the only form of hate crime carried out against Muslims and other religious groups. The most common was intimidation, which was defined as reasonable fear of bodily harm. Anti-Muslim intimidation also increased in 2016, with 144 reported victims, compared with 120 the previous year. These numbers, however, were

still dwarfed by the 296 victims of anti-Muslim intimidation in 2001. Certain types of crimes that damaged or destroyed property, including vandalism, also had risen, from 70 cases against Muslims in 2015 to 92 in 2016. Overall, there were 307 incidents of anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2016, marking a 19% increase from the previous year. This rise in hate crimes built on an even sharper increase the year before, when the total number of anti-Muslim incidents rose 67%, from 154 in 2014 to 257 in 2015. As in previous years, the largest number of all types of hate crime incidents against religious groups targeted Jews. In 2016, there were 684 anti-Jewish hate crime incidents, marking a slight increase from 664 in 2015. By comparison, in 2016, there were 62 hate crimes against Catholics and 15 against Protestants. Amid the rise in incidents of hate crimes, most Muslims in the U.S. said their community faced discrimination. In a Pew Research Center survey conducted in early 2017, three-quarters of Muslim American adults (75%) say there was a lot of discrimination against Muslims in the U.S., a view shared

by nearly seven-in-ten adults in the general public (69%). In addition, half of U.S. Muslim adults (50%) said that in recent years it had become more difficult to be a Muslim in the U.S., with 10% of this group attributing this to discrimination, racism and prejudice. In general, nearly a quarter of U.S. Muslim adults (23%) viewed discrimination, racism or prejudice as the most important problem facing American Muslims today.⁶ —Pew said 48 percent of Muslims had reported experiencing at least one incident of discrimination in the past 12 months. While the survey showed that Americans report warmer feelings toward Muslims today than they did in 2014, Muslims continued to be the most negatively rated religious group – followed closely by atheists. In fact, about half of Americans (49 percent) believed that at least some Muslim Americans were anti-American.⁷

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and other Muslim advocacy organizations found these trends were particularly intense during the 2016 campaigns and the early months of the Trump presidency. The CAIR even presented worse picture on anti-Muslim hate crimes saying there had been an astounding 91 percent increase in Islamophobic hate crimes in the first six months of 2017. The report said the anti-Muslim bias increased by 24 percent compared to the first half of 2016. The report compared the toll with the second quarter of 2016, as there were 946 reported bias incidents out of which 451 cases “contained an identifiable element of anti-Muslim bias.” The most frequent type of incidents included harassment (16 percent), violent hate crimes (15 percent), FBI targeting victims (12 percent), intimidation (12 percent) and cases involving the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (8 percent). The study also revealed the crimes were provoked by a victim’s ethnicity, the person

being a Muslim or wearing a headscarf, their place of worship or their political opinions.⁸ The Observatory would particularly underline the CAIR’s 2017 civil rights report titled ‘The Empowerment of Hate’, saying that there was a 57 percent increase in anti-Muslim bias incidents since 2015, and a 44 percent increase in hate crimes against Muslims during the same period. Harassment, which the

group defined as a non-violent or non-threatening bias incident, was the most frequent type of abuse, accounting for 18 percent of the total cases recorded in the report. The trigger for most of the incidents was the victim’s ethnicity or national origin, accounting for 35 percent of all cases, and 16 percent were the result of women wearing headscarf, and the majority of the cases took place in a residence or home.⁹

CAIR branches also released reports that reflects the situation of Islamophobia at regional levels. — i.e. CAIR California reported hate incidents in California went up almost 50 percent between 2015 and 2016. The report detailed civil rights issues that were reported to the four





offices in the state in 2016. At 182 hate-related issues, including hate incidents, hate crimes and hate calls or mail, were the second most common type of issue reported in 2016 state-wide. They received 34 hate-related issues of Islamophobia, especially bullying in schools which had been a concern for several years. More than half of American Muslim students surveyed in California said they had been bullied because of their religion. As reported by media, San Diego district was sued in May over the changes by several parents who believed the district was unfairly favoring Muslim students. The total number of issues reported to CAIR's local San Diego office in 2016 increased by 46 percent from 2015, to 175 from

120, according to CAIR director, types of complaints ranged from bullying to employment issues and housing discrimination. One employment issue described in the report involved a man named Mohammed who was studying to be a chef through a program at a restaurant in downtown San Diego. Because of his faith, Mohammed did not want to cook with alcohol, and the restaurant told him that it could not accommodate that need.¹⁰

Despite such a worrisome sentiments against Muslim living in the country — ninety-two percent of Muslims in the US were proud to be American, of whom 75 percent said there was a lot of discrimination against Muslims in the US. Nine-in-ten Muslims reported hav-

ing a positive feeling about living in the US, even though 75 percent believed it had become harder to be Muslim in the US in recent years. The survey found that Muslims felt that the main problems they faced in the US were negative media coverage about the religion (60 percent), misconceptions about Islam (9 percent) and President Trump's attitudes and/or policies towards Muslims (9 percent). The survey was conducted 23 January to 2 May, and 1,001 U.S. Muslim adults participated. Nearly 48 percent have experienced some type of discrimination. Researchers at the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) found that the number of hate groups specifically targeting Muslims in the U.S. has nearly tripled in the past year. SPLC reported that there were 34 hate groups in 2015 and the figure has risen to 101. The SPLC attributed the increase in hate groups in part to Trump's campaign rhetoric. However, despite the backlash Muslims had received from Trump's presidency, participants said they had experienced support in the past few months from non-Muslims.¹¹

Again, the Observatory would rather say that Muslims in the United States had been prejudiced or even been unfairly victimized under the pretext of extremism — A report conducted by the Anti-Defamation League showed that the white supremacist groups account for the highest number of extremist-related killings in the United States. The report said that 34 people were killed by domestic extremists in 2017, mostly by right-wing extremists who accounted for 20 of the 34 deaths. Eighteen (18) of those 20 were by white supremacists making it the fifth deadliest year for extremist violence since 1970. Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt in a statement said: "Extremism in any form is an issue...foreign born, politically minded extremism or racially focused extrem-

ism. What the data tells us in the past 10 plus years is it is far right-wing extremism, white supremacists and their ilk that are responsible for more extremist-related murders than any other group." Greenblatt also pointed to the current national climate in the wake of President Trump taking office as emboldening the actions of white supremacists, in adding: "Concretely, it confirms extremists feel emboldened in the current environment. Right-wing extremists in particular were responsible for nearly 60% of extremist-related fatalities last year. The data lays bare that this is not an exaggeration, as some would try to paint it."¹²

Meanwhile, Canada showed a relieving picture of Islamophobia. A report said the number of police-reported hate crimes specifically targeting Muslims went down since 2017 after spiking by over 250 per cent in the previous four years-period. According to Statistics Canada data released in November 2017, police across the country recorded 139 hate crimes against Muslims in 2016, down from 159 in 2015. In 2012, that number stood at just 45, and the National Council of Canadian Muslims had said they feared the numbers would only continue to go up with each passing year. Statistics Canada cautioned that there were almost always other factors at play, beyond a simple increase or decrease in hateful acts. Overall, police reported 1,409 hate crimes in Canada in 2016, 47 more than in 2015. That was an increase of three per cent, which could be attributed to more hate crimes targeting South Asians, Arabs, West Asians, the Jewish population and members of the LGBTQ community. Hate crimes against Jewish people saw the largest spike in 2016, from 178 incidents reported to police in 2015 to 221 reported in 2016. These increases were recorded mainly in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba.¹³

2.1.2. Islamophobic Discourses and Campaigns in the U.S. and Canada



- “5th of November, it is national burn a mosque night.” -

Islamophobic remarks were posted by a man who created the profile ‘Shuff Mohammad’ who also posted comments about the prophet Muhammad. One comment read: “5th of November, it is national burn a mosque night.” Images of the various mosques indicated that the sites were based in the Stoke-on-Trent area. One image was of a masked man outside the City Central mosque in Hanley, as well as photos of the Normacot mosque, an Islamic centre in Cobridge and a former school which had been converted into a community centre with prayer rooms. The offending posts were spotted by members of the public who

alerted the police.¹⁴

- “We are going to blow off the heads of Muslim people in this country” -

The Georgia Council for American Islamic Relations (CAIR) was calling for the arrest of the man who called in multiple death threats to an Augusta mosque over the earlier two months period. The caller said on the voice message: “We are going to raise arms and we are going to blow off the heads of Muslim people in this country. I don’t mean that we are going to just harass you. We are going to kill you.” The phone calls came from a Missouri area code, while local and federal law enforcement officers were searching for the caller.¹⁵



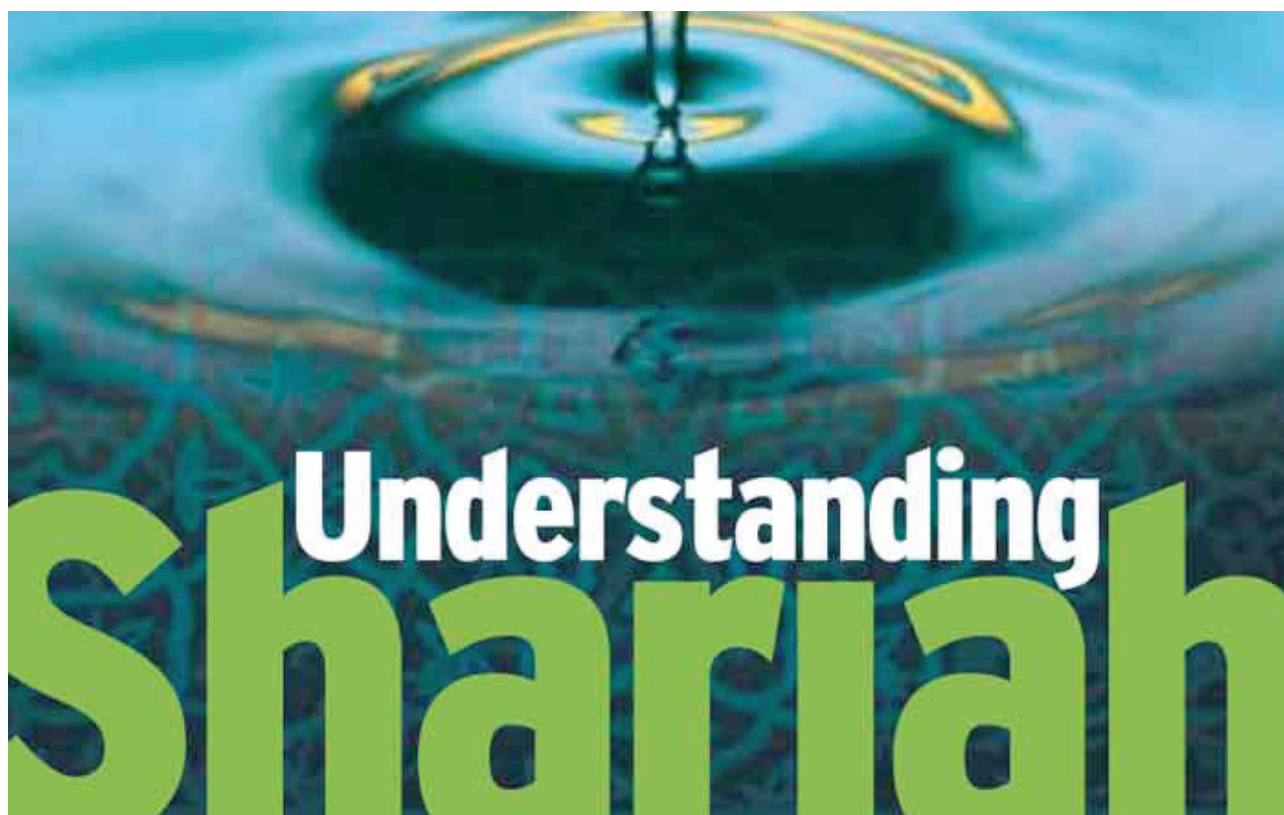
- “Islam is the scourge of Western civilization” -

A town manager of a small northern Maine community was under fire for promoting white separatist views and making comments critical of Islam. Thomas Kawczynski said he was the leader of New Albion, a racial segregationist movement that wanted to preserve the white majority of northern New England and Atlan-

tic Canada. He told Media he opposed Islam because it was “not compatible with Western culture.” The Bangor Daily News reported that Kawczynski frequently shared his political views on the far-right website GAB and his personal Facebook page. The media quoted Kawczynski as calling Islam “the scourge of Western civilization.” The man was quoted saying: “I would say unequivocally that I see Islam as fundamentally incompatible with Western civilization.”¹⁶

- “Islam, Sharia, and the Quran are the antithesis of the US Constitution” -

Phillip Parrish, a Republican candidate for governor in Minnesota told a Muslim community leader that “Islam is ultimately not a faith,” and refused to meet with her if she was a “practicing Islamist.” The story started when Regina Mustafa, founder of the Minnesota-based Community Interfaith Dialogue on Islam, reached out to Parrish after learning he attended a talk by Us-





ama Dakdok called “Revealing the Truth about ISIS.” Dakdok was one of a number of anti-Muslim speakers who had created a cottage industry touring the country to malign Islam as an inherently violent religion. In his Minnesota presentation, Dakdok said ISIS was the “true representation of Islam.” Mustafa sent Parrish an email, offering to meet with him face-to-face. “Since you have attended this talk about my faith,” she wrote, “I figured you would also like to hear from a person who actually practices Islam.” In Parrish’s reply, he condemned Islam as fundamentally incompatible with US law. First, he claimed to have, “a very unusual in-depth level of training, experience, and understanding regarding multiple faiths and the practice of Islam,” which he had suggested in public interviews was related to his time in the US Naval Reserve working in intelligence. He continued, “I separate Islam from the word faith because faith takes belief and Islam requires

only submission. I will not participate in any faith dialog because Islam is ultimately not a faith.” Parrish demanded Mustafa “publicly denounce Sharia and swear to adhere to, protect, comply with, accept,

and defend the United States Constitution.” He suggested that as a practicing Muslim — or as he put it, “practicing Islamist” — she would be unable to do so. He also wrote, “Islam, Sharia, and the Quran are the antithesis of the US Constitution.”¹⁷

- “All Muslims dead on 10/30” -

Threatening anti-Muslim graffiti found in a girls bathroom at Kent-Meridian High School. The graffiti read: “All Muslims dead on 10/30,” which also included swastikas and the hashtag “MAGA” — commonly used to refer to the Trump campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again.” Kent police were investigating and did not yet know whether the threat, found was real. District called police immediately and started its own investigation, wanted to communicate in a thoughtful way that balanced informing and alarming.¹⁸

2.1.3. Surveillance against Islam and Muslims in the U.S.



Muslims living in the United States have been under close surveillance by the US authorities since the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001; and the Observatory believes that this intelligent activity was becoming even worse under Trump's administration. When asked on the campaign trail whether he thought the United States should create a database of Muslims in the country, Mr. Trump said: "Oh, I would certainly implement that — absolutely." Following the terrorist attacks in Berlin, Mr Trump said he still planned to ban Muslims from entering the US and to build a Muslim registry. Trump renewed his calls to carry out sweeping discriminatory acts against Muslims from overseas and the American Muslim. He then changed his policy to only suspend immigration from countries that had been compromised by terrorism, rather than discriminating against the religion which was adhered by more than 1.6 billion people. Mr Trump said in a June 2016 speech.

"When I am elected, I will suspend immigration from areas of the world when there is a proven history of terrorism against the United States, Europe or our allies, until we understand how to end these threats." Mr. Trump first called to ban Muslims shortly after the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015.¹⁹ There were also solid indications that the government was planning a further crackdown on the democratic rights of Muslims, with increased surveillance of Muslim communities in the works.

Despite the wide controversies, until today such a monitoring policy continued to gain significant supports. For instance Rep. Peter King used to encourage the creation of a federal Muslim surveillance program. He said in refer to former New York City Police Department Commissioner Ray Kelly: "I suggested a program similar to what Commissioner Kelly did here in New York." For over half a decade after the 9/11

terror attacks, Kelly oversaw a surveillance program that targeted New York and New Jersey Muslims because of their faith. Officers in the since-disbanded Demographics Unit infiltrated Muslim student groups, kept track of Muslims who changed their last names, eavesdropped on conversations between Muslims, spied on Muslim-owned businesses, recorded imam's sermons, and put undercover officers and informants inside mosques.

Such an on-going racist approach had obviously suffered a lot of challenges at home. For instance, a federal appeals court overturned a ruling by a judge in San Francisco that would require the FBI to release documents describing its efforts to keep watch on Muslims in Northern California and recruit informants from the Muslim community. The writings were sought in a 2010 lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Asian Law Caucus and

the Bay Guardian newspaper. They said they wanted to know whether the FBI was using educational and "community outreach" programs to infiltrate Muslim institutions and conduct surveillance without evidence of criminal activity. The federal agency turned over more than 50,000 pages of documents, some of which showed that its agents in San Francisco had taken notes on the viewpoints and religious activities of Muslims they encountered from 2004 through 2010. However, the FBI deleted material from some of those documents and withheld more than 47,000 additional pages, saying the information was protected because it had been compiled for "law enforcement purposes."²⁰

Not only from state institutions, legal challenges were also coming from individuals among the targeted communities—Two Muslim men challenged the New York Police De-

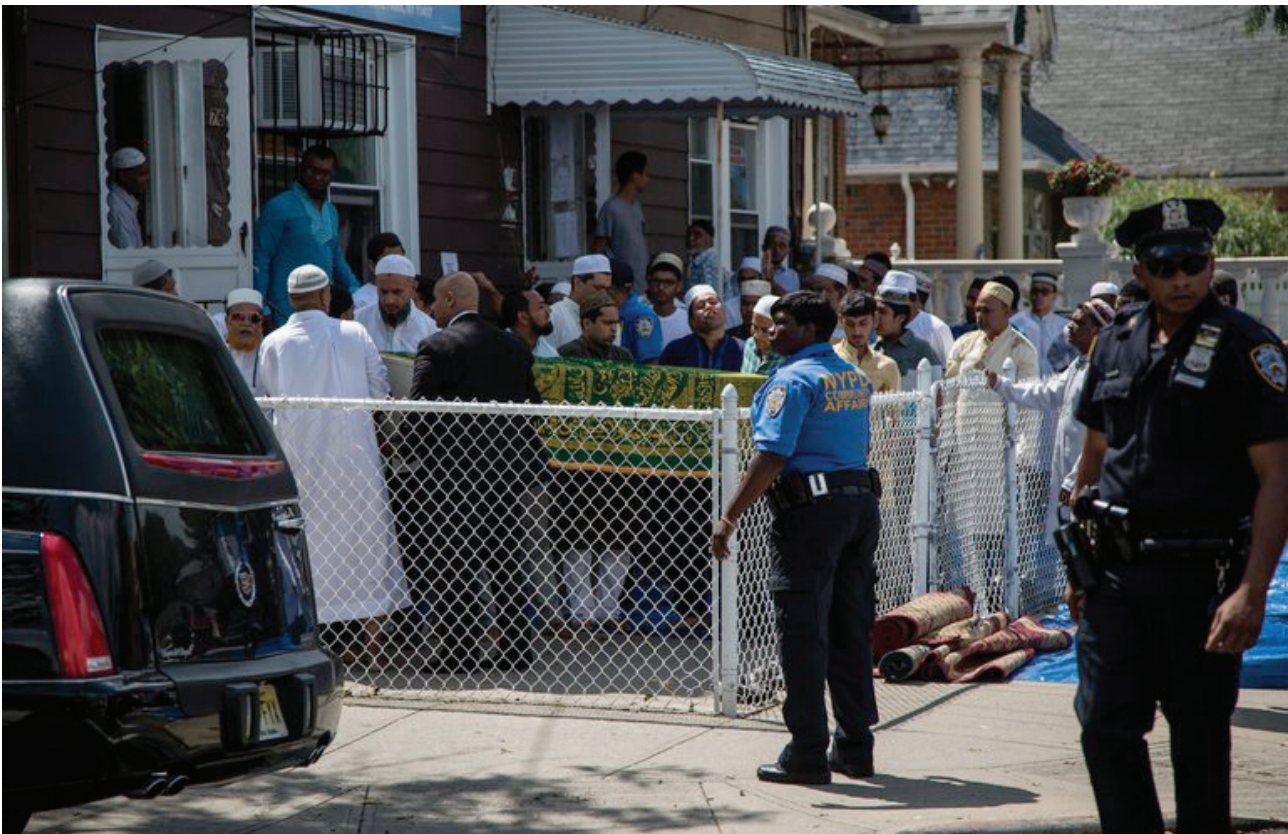




partment's cloak of secrecy over NYPD surveillance of Muslim mosques and student groups. The men's case went to the New York Court of Appeals. The men's lawyer demanded to know why New York state's Freedom of Information Law request for the spy documents was met with an evasive NYPD response that it could "neither confirm nor deny" that such documents even existed. The NYPD had a long history of spying on civil rights organizers and anti-war activists, as well as leftist organizations and members. A 1971 federal lawsuit put in place guidelines that supposedly prohibit the NYPD from collecting information on political speech unless it was related to terrorism. News reports in 2011 and 2012 exposed a combined CIA/NYPD program to spy on Muslims in the New York area. The Demographics Unit was at the heart of a police spying program, built with help from the CIA, which assembled databases on where Muslims lived, shopped, worked and prayed. Police infiltrated Muslim student

groups, put informants in mosques, monitored sermons and catalogued every Muslim in New York who adopted new, Americanized surnames.²¹

It was quite clear to the Observatory that the project was closely-linked to the U.S. policies on foreign immigrants, which somehow found evidence in January 2018 when the Trump administration said it was resuming the admission of refugees from 11 countries with additional screening that it said would increase security. In October 2017, after a pause in admissions, the administration began accepting new refugees except for those from the 11 countries, citing the need for a 90-day security review. Officials did not name the countries, but they were widely reported to be Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, North Korea, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Those countries had accounted for more than 40 percent of all refugee admissions in recent years. President Trump set a ceiling of 45,000 refugee admis-



sions for the fiscal year, compared with the 85,000 set by President Barack Obama the year before amid an unabated refugee crisis worldwide, including civil war in Syria and conflict in other countries.²²

Particular on this issue, the Observatory was pleased to note that, during the reviewed period the U.S. racist policy received another setback when the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, ruled against the latest version of Muslim ban. In its ruling, the court stated that the ban was “unconstitutionally tainted with animus towards Islam” and that its central purpose was “to exclude Muslims from the United States.” Despite the ruling, ‘Muslim Ban 3.0’ would remain in effect while the Supreme Court considered the case. The decision by the Fourth Circuit had been cautiously welcomed by Muslims, many of whom had endured prolonged separation from their loved ones as a result of the ban. The Muslim ban was aimed at whipping up anti-Muslim

hysteria in the country. It was clearly designed to reinforce the bogus notion that Muslim-Americans and Muslim immigrants constituted a unique threat to “national security.” The attempt to portray ordinary Muslims as potential security threats had a devastating impact on Muslim-Americans, contributing to an increase in hate crimes against Muslims and fostering a general climate of fear and uncertainty within the community.²² — The U.S. Supreme Court allowed in December 2017 the Trump administration’s policy to fully enforce a ban on travel to the United States by residents of six mostly Muslim countries. This was not a final ruling on the travel ban since challenges to the policy were winding through the federal courts, and the justices themselves ultimately were expected to rule on its legality. But the action indicated that the high court might eventually approve the latest version of the ban, announced by in September 2017. Lower courts had continued to find problems with the policy.²⁴

2.1.4. Far-Rights and populism in the U.S.



Donald Trump had been widely seen as an icon of the “far right” in the U.S., and his ascension to the presidency has left Muslims living in the U.S. with deep concerns. Since very early on, Mr. Trump had stood in opposition to Islam and Muslims, a position clearly shown in his political campaign. After declaring that “Islam hates Americans,” Mr. Trump proposed banning Muslims from entering the country and heightened surveillance of mosques across the nation. He embraced the hateful language of Quran-burning rallies and anti-mosque protests. As a result, within a week following the election, a huge number of Islamophobic and racist harassment and intimidation incidents were reported. Interestingly, such a growing xenophobia was not only targeting Muslims but also Jews and some other ethnic and religious minorities, such as black and Hispanic Ameri-

cans.

Nevertheless, it was a relief to note that Islamophobia in the U.S. had shown a declining trend since medium 2017. President Trump himself seemed to soften his tone on Islam. When sitting among 55 Muslim world leaders in Saudi Arabia, President Trump delivered a moderate speech on Islam designed to reset his relationship with the Muslim world. President Trump’s speech distanced him from the divisive anti-Muslim rhetoric he employed to appeal to voters during his election campaign. However, it doesn’t mean that anti-Muslim sentiments and far-right ideologies evaporated from the American lands, for it seems that hate against Islam and Muslims had been deeply implanted and rooted into the mind of their supporters in the country.

As a simple instance, the Observatory wishes to mention a case in the U.S. where a student's mother, Libby Hilsenrath, filed a complaint and request for jury trial in the U.S. District Court in Newark, according to which Chatham schools were "promoting" Islam and use materials that "call to the children" to convert. The complaint alleged her son was required to accept lessons and homework assignments in his seventh-grade World Cultures and Geography class that contained religious teachings of Islam presented, not as beliefs, but as facts. Hilsenrath particularly objected to an assignment to view what she described as a conversion video posted on YouTube that she claimed was "an explicit and direct call to the children for conversion to the religion of Islam." This conversion video, replete with biased, chastising statements encouraging the students at Chatham Middle School, including (her son), to follow the Quran and become Muslim, concluded with a direct and explicit call for the children to convert to Islam."²⁵ A similar 'phobia' should be the case when a homework assignment given to sixth-grade students in Illinois asserted that Christians, Muslims and Jews believed in the same God; and when an Elgin Area School District board member by name Jeanette Ward caught wind of it, then she harshly criticized the assignment. The issue boiled over as dozens of people attended a school board meeting to express their opinions on the subject. Jeanette Ward sparked the outcry on social media as she wrote that the assignment was "utterly incorrect and false on many levels." Ward had also taken a photo of the assignment and shared it to her Facebook page, where her followers denounced the message and the use of religion in schoolwork. She told media that the assignment presented a "godless view" of the world.²⁶

Another ridiculous instance was the legal complaint filed by Plaintiff Ross Levay alleging that the United States and various government officials had committed gross negligence, breach of contract, First Amendment violations, and breach of oath by failing to prevent incitement to imminent lawlessness by Radical Islamic Terrorists. On 11 July 2017, the Court concluded that Levay's suit was frivolous and would be dismissed. On 21 July 2017, Levay filed a Motion to Amend Judgment, asking, among other things, that the court amend the previous order to remove the holding that the suit was frivolous. In his complaint, Levay explained that "there have been a high and increasing number of Islamic motivated violent acts targeting Jews and our places of worship." Levay was a Jew and contends that the incitement to imminent violence found in the Quran and cited by ISIS, Al Qaeda and others has deprived Levay of the freedom of religious expression. Levay provided an extensive list of requested relief. He wished the Court to hold that "specific Koranic verses, presented during the trial, fail the Imminent Lawlessness Test." He also intended to prove a direct link to specific Koranic verses extolling among specific Radical Islamic Terrorists as the underlying motive, cause and essential for 74 specific Radical Islamic Terrorist attacks within the US. He desired a formal declaration of incompatibility between Koranic Sharia Law ... and US Constitutional Law. He also asked that the Court direct Congress to take action by outlawing certain passages of the Quran, issue a federally sanctioned and edited Koran, and withdraw tax-exempt status from mosques which do not adopt the new Quran, and institute a National Islamic Registry Program. The Court found that Levay's suit was frivolous and his legal theory was manifestly foreclosed by settled law. As such, no appeal



could be taken in good faith.²⁷

Along the way, far rights politicians keep exploiting narrow-minded phobia on Islam. For instance, two Minnesota Republican state lawmakers and a local GOP official were facing scrutiny after they reportedly shared a Facebook post accusing Muslims of preparing to “infiltrate” the party’s caucuses. State Reps. Kathy Lohmer and Cindy Pugh, shared the post created by Dave Sina, chairman of the Fourth Congressional District GOP. In the post, Sina said a friend of his had attended a caucus training session held at a mosque by the Muslim American Society. MAS was a nonpartisan organization that promoted civic engagement among American Muslims with local chapters across the US. Sina claimed that Muslims were trying to “infiltrate our republican caucuses on Feb. 6” and that “they didn’t talk about the general election but I am sure they are ahead of us in that as well.” The local party chair played to a sense of hysteria that American Muslims were, and would always be, foreigners who want political influence only to harm the country.²⁸

The Observatory would say Islamophobia keeps crawling in the minds of the Americans because of the continuous and intense hate campaigns demonizing Islam through social media, news, and event through ‘advertisement’ at public spaces by the far-right sup-

porters. For instance, a council member in northern Texas was rejecting calls for his resignation over a series of anti-Muslim and anti-black Facebook posts, including one saying that President Trump should ban Islam in US schools. Tom Harrison, a city council member in Plano, Texas, shared a post from a Facebook page titled “Joined Hands across America for Trump.” The meme, which showed a young girl wearing a hijab, read: “Share if you think Trump should ban Islam in American schools.” The post sparked a public outcry, with Plano Mayor Harry LaRosiliere calling for Harrison’s removal from the council and the council voting Sunday to publicly admonish Harrison. The council voted 7 to 1 to censure Harrison, which the mayor called “the only course of action available to the council.” He said that Harrison was the only dissenting vote.²⁹ — Also, a village president in northern Michigan was refusing to apologize for sharing Facebook posts denouncing Islam and calling for the killing of every last Muslim. Media reported that Kalkaska Village President, Jeff Sieting, said that he did not owe anyone an apology over his Facebook posts. The posts were discovered by area native Cindy Anderson, who along with others unsuccessfully sought an apology month before. Sieting said his comments were protected by the First Amendment and that those trying to oust him from office were only doing so because they oppose President Donald Trump.³⁰ Negative campaign on Islam was also found in the White House — Rev. Jamie Johnson, a senior official at the Department of Homeland Security, had once said that Islam had given the world only “oil and dead bodies.” He had also argued that Jews became disproportionately wealthy through hard work while African Americans turned cities into “slums because of laziness, drug use, and sexual promiscuity.” Later on



depicted a group of people battering an Italian police car with bats and sticks while others cheer on. By including the video in her newsletter, Geller, who claimed that President Obama was radical Muslim who “wants jihad to win” and had ties to white supremacists and European right-wing extremist factions, was likely attempting to capitalize off of anti-immigrant fear in Italy just weeks before the country’s general election where immigration is anticipated to be a hot button issue. The video was in actuality an amateur recording of the shooting of an Italian film called *Mediterranea*. The film focused on two friends from Burkina Faso who “experience hostility after immigrating to Italy.” The video clearly showed the film’s camera crew and production crew could be seen walking into the scene at the end of the clip, prompting the actors to stop.³⁴

The worse of far-right anti-Islam campaign

should be rallies which often brings about casualties, like one happened at Virginia, when a car rammed into a crowd of protesters and a state police helicopter crashed into the woods as tension boiled over at a white supremacist rally, leaving three dead and dozens injured. The chaos erupted was believed to be the largest group of white nationalists to come together in a decade — including neo-Nazis, skinheads, members of the Ku Klux Klan — who descended on the city to “take America back” and at this event by rallying against plans to remove a Confederate statue. The governor declared a state of emergency, police in riot gear ordered people out and helicopters circled overhead. City Mayor Jim Gray said on Twitter: “Today’s events in Virginia remind us that we must bring our country together by condemning violence, white supremacists and Nazi hate groups. We cannot let them define our future.”³⁵

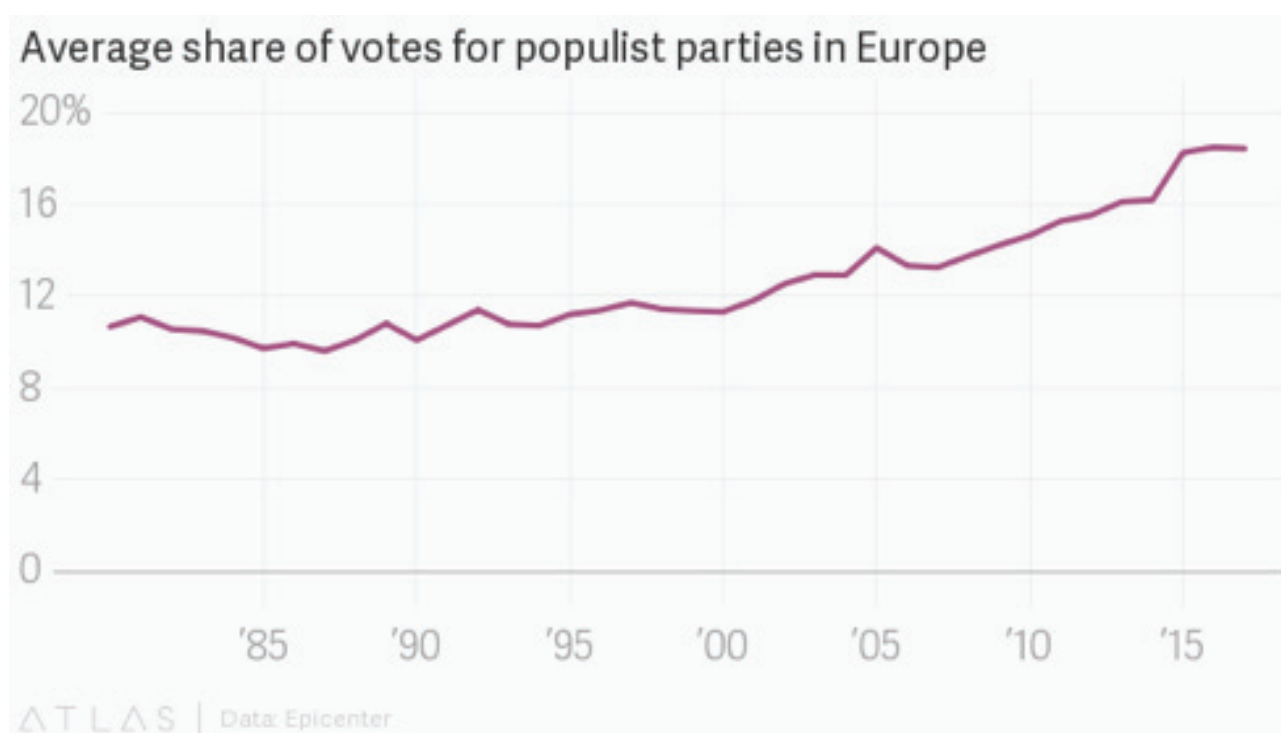
2.2. Islamophobia in Europe

2.2.1. Polls and Reports



In Europe, the statistical situation during the reviewed period was quite mix, for the Islamophobia trend remained high in the region with some positive signals here and there. Discrimination against Europe's Muslims was increasing, with two in five (40%) saying they had faced unfair treatment when job- or house-hunting or accessing public services such as education or healthcare, according to a recently released report by EU's Fundamental Rights Agency. Nearly 30% of respondents in a survey said they had been insulted or called names and 2% had been physically assaulted in the previous 12 months before the survey which was carried out in late 2015 and early 2016 and involved 10,500 Muslims in 15 countries including France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Most of those who had been treated unfairly in the five years before the survey said they felt it was because of

their name, skin color or appearance. About 17% said they felt discriminated against directly because of their religious belief. Nearly 40% of women who wore a headscarf or niqab in public felt that was why they had faced discrimination when applying for a job. More than 30% of women wearing traditional or religious clothing said they had been harassed, most often through offensive gestures or comments. Only 12% of all Muslims who experienced discrimination, and 9% of those who faced harassment, said they had bothered to report it. The survey found that 47% of men who had been stopped by the police said they felt it was because they were wearing traditional clothing. The report said Europe's Muslims, who make up about 4% of the continent's population, retained an above-average level of trust in institutions such as the police and legal system of their country. A large majority, 78%, said they



had a “strong attachment” to their country of residence and felt broadly integrated into their communities, and 92% said they felt comfortable living next to neighbours of a different religious background.³⁶ — Insider Monkey had published a report about Islamophobia in Europe enlisting the most racist Islamophobic European countries towards muslims, of which three were taken and presented here. The first country was the United Kingdom, where 47% of the people who participated in the survey agreed that they did not want Muslims to inhabit their country. There were things that provoked such a narrative, and one of them was the London Bridge attack that occurred in June 2017. The second country was Italy where 51% of the respondents would reject Muslim immigration to this country. However, Italy did not have any unpleasant situations or attacks in the past. Then Germany, where 53% of the people who responded agreed that they would not like more Muslims in their country, and that being more than a half was a little bit worrying.³⁷

Next, the initiative “Yes to a ban on face coverings” in Switzerland garnered more than the required 100,000 signatures last September 2017 to put the decision to a popular vote. A study revealed that 76 percent of Swiss people support the burqa ban; 20 percent disagreed, and three percent had ‘no view’ on the issue; The Swiss government had publicly opposed the idea; A vote was unlikely to take place before 2019, and; Three in four people in Switzerland supported an initiative to ban all face coverings in public - which would effectively ban the burqa. The survey of 1,167 people was conducted by two Swiss Sunday papers, found 76 percent of those spoken to be in favor of the initiative. This was compared with 20 percent who disagreed and three percent who said they had ‘no view’ on the issue. This put the initiative on the ballot under Switzerland’s system of direct democracy, which let voters decide major policy issues. The measure was proposed by a group including MPs from the nationalist Swiss People’s Party that was also

behind a ban on building minarets in Switzerland. The group called for it to be made illegal for anyone to cover their face in public. Some exceptions include local custom, the weather and health and safety reasons. Such a law would mean the effective ban of the niqab and burqa, although the committee says it is also targeting hooligans who cover their face for criminal intent. The Swiss government has publicly opposed the idea, saying it is up to each of the 26 cantons (areas) to legislate on the issue.³⁸

Nevertheless, Europe sighed with relief when a number of European populists, including the Netherland’s Geert Wilders and France’s Marine Le Pen, lost their elections last year. That relief might be short lived, as the long-term trends of populist support in Europe suggested that this authoritarian movement was not going away. One in five Europeans (a total of 55.8 million people) voted for a populist party in 2016 and 2017, according a new study by the European Policy Information Center. The think tank analyzed electoral data in EU member states as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Serbia, and Montenegro and found the vote shared for authoritarian populist parties jumped

from 10.6% in 1980 to 18.4% in 2017. The vote share for populist parties had overtaken support for liberalism in the last two decades. Over the same period, there had been a decline for support for mainstream ideologies, including of conservatism and Christian democracy (down 4.7 percentage points), while support for social Democracy had decreased by 4.1 percentage points. The 2009 recession and the ongoing refugee crisis gave nationalist-authoritarian-populist parties their biggest boost, with many receiving their best electoral result during the last year. Among a number of examples of right-wing populist parties in the report were Le Pen’s Front National, Wilders Party for Freedom, and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP).³⁹

In France, President Donald Trump was once a beacon for French far-right leaders, who pointed at his election victory as a taste of the coming populist uprising that would sweep them into power. But among France’s far-right voters, there had been a growing dislike of Trump ever since he took office. Supporters of France’s anti-immigrant, anti-Islam National Front “ a party whose platform can often resemble Trump’s “ had an increasingly unfa-





vorable opinion of the U.S. president. In a new poll released in November 2017, only around 20 percent of National Front voters said they had a positive outlook on Trump, while 37 percent saw him in a negative light. The remaining 43 percent of those voters said they had neither a negative nor positive view of Trump. The number of National Front supporters who did not view Trump favorably was up around 11 percent since a similar poll from February 2016, suggesting that the more familiar these voters had become with Trump, the less they cared for him. Although Trump had higher unfavorable ratings among French centrist and left-wing voters, the YouGov poll conducted for Le HuffPost between Oct. 25 and 27 showed that the country as a whole viewed him in an increasingly poor light. It was an interesting result, given that National Front leader Marine Le Pen's campaign for president seemed to mimic Trump's election run in a number of ways, and it highlights just how unpopular Trump was abroad.⁴⁰

Quite interestingly, fifty-six percent of French people believed that Islam was compatible with the values of their country, according to a survey conducted by the French-based polling firm, the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (IFOP). The survey results, which were published by the French weekly newspaper, *Le Journal Du Dimanche*, showed that the majority of French people thought that Islam was compatible with their society, while 43 percent believed the opposite. A similar survey conducted in September 2016 showed that 56 percent of French people saw Islam as incompatible with the country's values, while only 44 percent of respondents thought that Islam is compatible with their society. According to the newspaper, notwithstanding this apparent development, "Islam remains a major topic that brings a cleavage" among French people according to their political sensitivities and biases. The survey responses indicate a sharp divide based on political affiliation. 63 percent of Republicans supporters and 62 percent of Na-

tional Front (Front National) supporters believed that Islam was incompatible with the values of French society. However, 73 percent of Socialist Party supporters and 60 percent of those of la France Soumise, as well as 58 percent of la République en Marche supporters, thought the opposite, according to the survey. In 2016, former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said in an interview with the French newspaper *Libération* that the majority of French people saw Islam as incompatible with the values of the Republic.⁴¹

Hope Not Hate's annual report mentioned that the far right extremists in the U.K. were preparing for what they believed was a "war against Islam". It also forecasted further violence emanating from various factions following the Finsbury Park terror attack on Muslims and neo-Nazi murder of Labour MP Jo Cox. Nick Lowles, chief executive of the campaign group, said that with the combination of civil war rhetoric and growing online hatred, "we

must be prepared for more terrorist plots and use of extreme violence from the far-right for the foreseeable future". He said a smaller number of extremists believed a war against Muslims "needs to happen" so they could be expelled from Europe. He was speaking few days after Mark Rowley, the outgoing head of U.K. counter-terror policing, revealed that four far-right terror plots had been foiled since the Westminster attack in March 2017. The report said that while anti-Semitism was still pervasive in the far-right, recent years had seen traditionally fractured groups rally around specifically anti-Muslim ideas in the wake of 9/11 and ISIS terror attacks.⁴² — Meanwhile, Tell MAMA received 1,223 reported of street-based and online incidents in 2016 - with 953 of those verified. Its annual report showed that the majority of incidents were "offline" - rising from 437 to 642 the year before. The charity's director, Iman Atta, criticised social media platforms in the report - saying they had become "conveyor belts of hate" which potentially contributed to an in-





crease in attacks on the street. Tell MAMA used data from 18 police forces plus reports from victims and members of the public to compile a picture of Islamophobic activity in the UK.⁴³

In Germany, hate crimes against migrants had statistically reached an alarming point as more than 200 attacks on refugee shelters were recently reported across the country. According to Federal Criminal Police (BKA) statistics published by the *Neue Osnabrucker Zeitung*, 226 attacks were registered so far in the country. According to report, more attacks had been counted in 2017 than before the refugee crisis began in 2014, when there were only 199 reported cases for the entire year. The reports suggested that most offenses had a right-wing radical background. Far-right offenses in Germany spiked to their highest level since 2001, amid growing anti-refugee and migrant sentiment in the country triggered by propaganda from far-right parties. Accommodations for asylum seekers had frequently been the target of arson and hate crimes in Germany. The number of crimes against accommodation centers in Germany was almost a third higher in the first 10 months of 2016 than in the same period last year, according to data released on

5 November 2016, despite a drop in the number of refugee arrivals. The Federal Statistics Office (Destatis) said those seeking protection in Germany surged to 1.6 million by the end of 2016, a rise of 113 percent from 2014, and equivalent to 16 percent of the number of foreigners in the country. More than half of the 1.6 million arrivals had been granted permission to stay in Germany, the Destatis said, about half of those were from Syria with 455,000, 191 from Afghanistan and 156,000 from Iraq. The number of new arrivals in Germany had fallen sharply since the start of the year after European Union member states stepped up action to trim the flow of refugees and migrants into the EU. However, about 158,000 of those living in Germany were rejected asylum seekers, despite Berlin's efforts at deporting those without any legal right to be in the country.⁴⁴

Worse than those been mentioned — a report by the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) revealed rising anti-Muslim sentiments across Germany in the fields of education, the media, law, and the internet. According to a report written by Alexandra Lewicki, an expert in political sociology, anti-Muslim tendencies in Germany had been gradually increasing since 2015 and are affecting a variety of Muslims, as the number of attacks on Muslims and refugee shelters had quintupled since 2015. Stating that even though the German Federal Police announced that the number of attacks on Muslim foundations was approximately one to two per week, the report said the actual number of attacks against Muslims was higher since the exact number of attacks were reported. The report said: "While German authorities recorded 17 attacks per week, German media outlets pub-



lished approximately 37 news of attacks weekly.” The report went on to say that “Every other person in Germany - 50 percent of the German population - indicated that they feel alone in their country due to the ‘Muslim population getting crowded,’ while 40 percent of the population said “They will prohibit Muslims from taking shelter in Germany.” The report revealed that people who exhibit Islamophobia aimed to turn their thoughts into actions, stating: “Those who support Islamophobia had clearly expressed that they want to turn their opinions into physical action.” The report asserted that the negative stance toward Muslims was the product of institutions, saying that prejudices shown towards various groups had gained high acceptance in certain periods of history. The report also revealed that German public opinion widely placed false blame on Muslims regard-

ing crimes, despite lack of proof, causing further prejudice towards Muslims.⁴⁵ The overall Islamophobia situation in Germany could be even worse in the coming future as the far-right party AfD surpassed Merkel’s coalition partners, the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), for the first time in a national poll. Some 16 per cent of Germans said they would vote AfD, while the SPD fell one percentage point to just 15.5 per cent. Merkel’s CDU/CSU bloc gained 2.5 percentage points to reach 32 per cent. The election saw the AfD won seats in parliament for the first time - a political earthquake that followed Merkel’s 2015 decision to leave open German borders to more than 1 million migrants. Leaders of the party had repeatedly made headlines with insulting remarks about Germany’s immigrant community.⁴⁶

2.2.2. Islamophobic Discourses and Campaigns



- “F***ing stupid Muslim” -

A woman had been waiting with her nine-year-old son for her husband outside a jewellery shop at the Bridges shopping centre when Peter Scotter, from Roker in Sunderland, then walked towards her and pulled her niqab veil from her head really hard, before throwing it to the ground. After exposing the distraught woman’s face, he shouted racist slurs at her, such as “you’re in our country now f***ing get out” and “you f***ing stupid Muslim”. The victim’s husband then came out of the shop and pushed Mr Scotter away in order to protect his wife, while a few members of the public also came to offer her assistance. Scotter was sentenced to fifteen months in prison, while the

Judge was quoted saying: “Comments like you have made cannot be accepted in our society.”⁴⁷

- “[Mocking]...Islam, eternal religion of peace” -

French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo again published a provocative front-page cartoon about Islam and the quite recent terror attacks in Spain, leading to criticism. The latest edition of the magazine, which was targeted by terrorist gunmen in 2015, showed two people lying in a pool of blood having been run over by a van next to the words “Islam, eternal religion of peace.” As the cartoon became one of the top trending topics on Twitter in France, promi-

nent Socialist MP and former Minister Stephane Le Foll called it “extremely dangerous”.⁴⁸

- “Anyone who shouts ‘Allahu Akbar’ will be gunned down” -

Italian city’s mayor had ordered Cops in Venice to target anyone shouting “Allahu Akbar”. Luigi Brugnaro, mayor of the tourist hot spot of Venice, revealed the order at a summer think tank and was applauded by delegates. He said: “Anyone who shouts Allahu Akbar in St Mark’s Square can expect to be gunned down by snipers within four paces. They said they wanted to go and meet Allah so we will send them straight to Allah without having to throw them off the bridge, we will just shoot them.”⁴⁹

- “Islam? It doesn’t fit in with our cuisine” -

Germany’s far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party had launched a provocative ad campaign featuring a blend of Islamophobia and misogyny. The ads also revealed the AfD’s decision to double down on its anti-immigrant stance. One poster showed two women, photographed from behind, dressed in skimpy two-piece bathing suits that barely cover their asses. The tagline reads, “Burkas? We prefer bikinis.” Another read, “New Germans? We’ll make them ourselves.” The accompanying image featured a baby pig with the caption “Islam? It doesn’t fit in with our cuisine” — a reference to the fact that observant Muslims do not eat pork.⁵⁰

- “It’s not outrageous to call Islam evil”-

Anne Marie Waters, a Ukip leadership candidate, said that calling Islam evil was not an outrageous thing to say and a lot of British people agreed with her view that Islam was evil. Prompted to address her previous statement

that Islam was evil, Anne Waters told media: “Yes, and I don’t see why that’s an enormous or outrageous thing to say. We ought to be able in this country to say whatever we like about a religion and the problem we have got is that we pussyfoot around, we spend so much time agonizing over not saying the wrong thing, and this is what’s putting the public off. But this is how millions of people in this country feel and they are waiting for someone to articulate it for them.” Anne Waters, who co-founded a UK wing of German anti-Islam movement Pegida with Steve Robinson, said she would leave it up to party members to decide if the former EDL leader could join Ukip if he expressed that desire.⁵¹

- “We don’t want mosque and Muslims in our neighborhood” -

An under-construction mosque in southeastern Netherlands was targeted by a group of far-right extremists as the far-right ‘Identitair Verzet’ movement hanged anti-Islam banners at the roof of Tevhid mosque. The group, which claimed the responsibility for the incident, draped banners reading “Stay away. The Netherlands belongs to us. We don’t want mosque and Muslims in our neighborhood” both in Turkish and Dutch. They also shared the photos of banners on social media, and claimed they “occupied” the mosque.⁵²

- “Muslims are not completely human”-

Strid, a local politician from the town of Borlange, told the audience at the party’s national conference in Norrkoping that there was a “scale of 1 to 100. On one end of the scale you are 100 percent human, a person, everything that’s part of that concept. At the other end, you are 100 percent Mohammedan.” Strid continued by saying that “all Muslims are

somewhere on that scale” and that members of terror group ISIS “are close to being 100 per cent Mohammedan...If you are an ex-Muslim you have come quite far towards being fully human,” Strid continued.⁵³

- “I would rather see the mosque burn down” -

PW’s leader in Utrecht, Henk van Deún, was planning to meet the leadership of the Ulu mosque in order to apologize for his statements made earlier. On a radio interview he said he would “rather see the mosque burn down” in reply to a fellow local politician saying it should be a symbol for the city. Later on the talk radio broadcast Van Deún refused to withdraw his statement, and on Twitter he would only acknowledge his words “had been cumbersome”. Now, he was reportedly trying to apologize directly to the Ulu mosque for his word usage. The Utrecht’s PW leader was still convinced that the mosque should be shut down “But it has to be done without any violence. We want to do it through a legal procedure,” he said. According to him, Ulu management had shown a positive response to his request for dialogue.⁵⁴

- “All Muslims are jihadis”-

Anti-Islam activist Tapan Ghosh spoke at an event in Parliament which sparked outrage among Muslim groups and MPs because of the speaker’s track record of inflammatory rhetoric for he used to say that “all Muslims are jihadis”. Mr Ghosh had called on the UN to stop Muslims having children and blamed the Rohingya of Burma for their own genocide. Harrow East MP Bob Blackman refused to apologise for hosting the meeting.⁵⁵

- “Muslims are bastards and rapists” -

— Britain First’s deputy leader Jayda Fransen called Muslims “bastards” and “rapists” in an aggressive clash, a court heard in January 2018. Fransen was standing trial alongside the leader of the far-right group, Paul Golding, 36, accused of religiously-aggravated harassment. They were arrested in May 2017 as part of an investigation into the distribution of leaflets and online videos which were posted during a trial at Canterbury Crown Court.⁵⁶

- “Islam glorifies death” -

UKIP’s acting leader, Gerard Batten said that British Muslims should sign a document rejecting the Koran’s teaching because Islam “glorifies death”. He stood by a string of shocking anti-Islam comments in his first interview since he took over from Henry Bolton. The MEP suggested that new mosques should be banned - and hinted that he could seek to spread his views by seeking the Ukip top job full-time. Appearing on media, he was confronted over his previous views on Islam, which included calls for a ban on building mosques and a compulsory declaration of loyalty from Muslims. Batten said: “Islam doesn’t allow a Christian church or a Sikh temple to be built in its heartland, because it’s in the Koran”. He defended his previous claim that Islam was a death cult, saying the comments were factually and historically true.⁵⁷

- “F*ing Muslims” -**

British Transport Police (BTP) was investigating an anti-Muslim hate incident on the London Underground which took place on 31st January 2018. The Muslim woman, who wore the hijab was abused by a man who boarded the train at Clapham Common station in south London at morning on 31 January. During the journey, the man stood near the woman and

mumbled “f***ing Muslims” several times. He then moved to a seat opposite and continued to stare at her until he departed the train at Bank station. The woman then followed the perpetrator off the train where she witnessed him direct the same abuse at a group of Muslim women in headscarves around an hour later. She was then able to report the incident to a BTP officer after initially speaking with a member of TfL staff. The woman then contacted TellMAMA to raise awareness, the TfL staff member and the BTP officer for their support during the incident which made her uncomfortable.⁵⁸

- “600,000 migrants are ‘ready’ to commit crime in Italy” -

Former Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi claimed in February 2018 that 600,000 migrants who arrived illegally in Italy were “ready” to commit crimes, and he vowed they would be sent back to their homelands if the March 2018 election month propelled his centre-right party into government. In an explosive contribution to the national debate after the shooting of a number of African migrants at the previous

weekend by a far-right activist, Mr Berlusconi poured petrol on the flames by claiming that immigrants lived “hand to mouth or from crime” and that they were responsible for most bank robberies. The leaders of the main rival parties in the March 4 parliamentary election retorted that some policies from Mr Berlusconi’s three stints in office helped create the conditions that brought so many newcomers to Italy; while the country’s experience with the hundreds of thousands of people who arrived after being rescued from smugglers’ boats in the Mediterranean Sea in the last few years had dominated much of the pre-election campaigning. Quite recently, the migrant issue took on even more energy when an Italian gunman allegedly shot and wounded six Africans from his car in the central Italian town of Macerata. Police described the suspect as a far-right extremist with neo-Nazi sympathies. The drive-by attack followed the arrest of a Nigerian man in the slaying of an 18-year-old Italian woman shortly after walking away from a drug rehabilitation center in the area.⁵⁹



2.2.3. Far-Rights

Far-right and populism were characterized by strident nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment, economic resentments and a deep suspicion of international alliances and trade pacts — that had been building across Europe for years. Now this European populist movements burst into full and furious view, driven by complex factors that vary widely from one country to the other — united by a broad sense of grievance against the political establishment and all it represents. It came at the time when elections took place in Austria, Netherlands, France, and Germany—the Europe's main political and economic powers. This section will look at the situation of far-rights in Europe while seeing its connection with the similar trend in the US.

Populism has become increasingly prevalent, encouraging more and more Europeans to seek a solution from conservative options. Constituents were turning to conservative ideals in contrast to the formerly preferred liberalism, which was believed to have been provoked by issues i.e. migration crisis, Euroscepticism, terrorist attacks, economic dissatisfaction, and unemployment. Across Europe, right-wing parties became electorally successful, albeit sparing France and Netherlands. In Slovakia, People's Party, a Far-Right party campaigning against minority, immigrants, European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), won significant percentage of the vote in parliamentary elections. The neo-fascist Golden Dawn, the third largest party in Greece, was extremely anti-immigrant and anti-euro. The Alternative for Germany

(AfD), which started out as a protest movement against the euro currency, managed to attract anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, anti-liberalization, and anti-European voters, and won 25 percent of the vote in the German state elections. Austria's Freedom Party, who campaigned on limiting benefits for immigrants and strengthening the country's border control, held 40 out of 183 seats in the National Council. Europe's most hardline anti-immigrant Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, was the head of Fidesz Party, a national conservative political party in Hungary. Moreover, an anti-immigration, anti-EU, anti-LGBT, and economic protectionist party called "Jobbik" was currently the third-largest party in Hungary. In the Netherlands, leading in polls before the March 2017 Dutch parliamentary elections was Geert Wilders, frontrunner for the far-right anti-European Union, anti-Islam Party for Freedom. United Kingdom's Prime Minister Theresa May was Eurosceptic and belonged to the right-wing Conservative Party. Also, the pro-Leave UK Independence Party (UKIP) led by Nigel Farage used the refugee crisis and immigration as main points of his campaign on Brexit. Lastly, the Sweden Democrats won 49 seats in parliament, which promotes heavy restriction on immigration and a referendum on EU membership.

A new study confirmed that Populism had now surpassed liberalism in European politics. The anti-establishment ideologies had apparently succeeded in taking over the desperate hearts of European voters who placed their faith in the hands of those who promise total

change, despite the fact that authoritarian governments rarely existed in Europe since 1980s. Today, the trend showed European Union member states had a tendency to be led by anti-establishment governments, as we had recently witnessed the infamous Brexit in the UK, as well as Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen's Front National in France were coming close to victory in their respective general elections. The signs were confirmed out by a recent study published by Swedish think tank TIMRBO and the European Policy Information Center, in a document so-called Authoritarian Populism Index 2017 indicating that conservatism and social democracy continued to be the first two ideological preferences by European voters, but authoritarian-populism had now moved past liberalism and become the third choice. In addition, Populist parties feeling the support in Europe as one fifth of European voters, or 55.8 million people, casted a vote in favor of a populist party in the latest general elections. The report mentioned that while left-wing populism had emerged strongly in the last decade, right-wing populism witnessed a constant growth over the last 30 years and remained the favorite of the two.⁶⁰

In Europe, the Observatory was concerned about the electoral dominance of right-wing parties which, again, found further evidence in Germany, after the right-wing Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) scored a significant victory in September 2017's election – becoming the Germany's third largest party. The AfD is a right-wing, populist movement and it went from virtually nowhere to win almost 13% of the vote. Angela Merkel's CDU/CSU was the clear winner, but its share of vote and seats was sig-

nificantly reduced by the electorate, most notably by the AfD who was only formed in 2013. It has been an undeniable fact that the rise of far-rights goes in parallel with the growth of Islamophobia in Europe, hence this AfD's victory had added fuel into the alarming trend in 5 (five) countries in the region, where the populist right had continuously made significant progress while gaining more and more popularity, i.e. France, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark:

Back in April 2017, Front National Leader Marine Le Penn came second in the first round in France's presidential election. In another hit to the establishment, centrist Emmanuel Macron came from nowhere to come in first place. Two weeks later, the two leaders faced each other. Macron won two-thirds of the vote, a move that led to sighs of relief in the European mainstream, but Le Penn's 33.9% of the vote (and 10.6 million votes) was a big leap forward from the 17.8% won by her father fifteen years before.

Austria's 2016's presidential election left controversies as independent candidate and Green party member Alexander Van der Bellen faced the nationalist Freedom Party candidate Norbert Hofer in the second round. After electoral irregularities, the results of the second round were annulled, and in the legitimate second round, Bellen won just shy of 54% of the vote. Hofer won 46.2%. Despite losing, it was a significant move forward for nationalists in Europe. Hofer's party 'FPÖ' is currently the country's third-largest party, and was looking to make gains in the country's legislature in October 2017.

In The Netherlands, the right-wing Freedom

party led by the controversial Geert Wilders did not do as well as many commentators expected in the Dutch elections earlier this year, but they did supplant Labour as the country's second largest party, and secured 13.1% of the vote.

In Sweden, the rise of the right-wing Sweden Democrats who won 12.9% of the vote in 2014 election became a major story. Sweden is due to go back to the poll in September next year (2018), and the election could be an electoral earthquake while a massive blow to the Swedish mainstream as Akesson's anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats is currently the second-largest party in the polls, meaning that the next Swedish election could be a major advancement for the country's right-wing nationalists.

In Denmark, at the 2015 election the right-wing populist Danish People's Party emerged as the second largest. The left-of-centre coalition bloc lost seats, resulting in a right-of-centre government led by the mainstream right-of-centre Venstre, which came third in the election. The Danish People's Party currently helps out the centre-right coalition government, following their biggest parliamentary win in their history in 2015. The Danes are due to go back to the polls in two years, and are currently neck and neck with Venstre for second place.

The AfD was now set to enter the German Parliament, the Bundestag, and this was the first time when a far-right party be represented in the German Parliament in the post-war era. The AfD, which was formed in 2013, centred its campaign opposing the huge refugee influx and German Chancellor Angela Merkel's "Open Door" policy. Pollsters had predicted a fourth term for Chancellor Angela Merkel but her party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)

was expected to get lesser number of seats this time. German Chancellor came under severe criticism from the far-right for her 2015 open-door policy allowing over a million refugees from war-torn countries in West Asia and North Africa into Germany. AfD campaigned against Merkel's liberal immigration policy, and its anti-European Union and anti-immigration stand had resonated with voters who felt left out due to Merkel's policies.⁶¹ Dozens of lawmakers from the party made their debut in October 2017 at the first sitting of Germany's newly-elected Parliament, an unprecedented showing for a nationalist force since World War II. A record 709 MPs would gather for the session, with all eyes on the 92 members from AfD, which took 12.6 per cent of the vote in September's watershed elections and became the country's third biggest party. The AfD's arrival in the Bundestag unleashed a political earthquake in post-war Germany, as leading figures in the party had repeatedly smashed through their claims on German identity or by challenging Germany's culture of atonement over World War II and the Holocaust. Two days ahead of the session, thousands of people holding up "Stop AfD" signs demonstrated outside the Parliament building in Berlin.⁶²

It was very clear to the Observatory that the AfD was about to launch an extensive reach-out far beyond the Bundestag. The party had announced plans to set up a television studio in its Berlin offices and employ 20 new communications staff. According to media, the AfD was looking to bypass Germany's mainstream media landscape and build on its successes communicating directly to the public. The far-right party was reportedly looking to launch the service in April. The AfD newsroom staff members are expected to work in shifts round the

clock, with three members dedicated to research and spotting topics. The far-right party entered the Bundestag for the first time last year after it picked up almost 13 percent of the vote in September's federal election, finishing third nationwide. It is therefore set to become the main opposition party in the German parliament, given the decision taken by Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative bloc and the Social Democrats to form a grand coalition.⁶³

Apart from Germany, the far-rights in Austria deserve particular attention, as Europe's newest right-wing government took office on 18 December 2017. The two parties that form the government were the Freedom Party and the People's Party. During the fall campaign, they vilified refugees, attacked Vienna (the country's liberal big-city capital), and promised major tax cuts for the rich. This won them a combined 57.5 percent of the vote. Austria thus appeared to be the newest member in the Central European club of "illiberal democracy," as Hungary's authoritarian leader Viktor Orban proudly called it. The Freedom Party developed the hallmarks of its current style: scare tactics about refugees; attacks on bien-pensant urban intellectuals, artists, and the media; and pledges to reduce taxes.⁶⁴

Austria's new coalition government, led by the conservative People's Party and the far-right Freedom Party was sworn in, making the country the only one in Western Europe to have a far-right party in power. In the recent national election, the Freedom Party won third place on a wave of anti-migrant sentiment. The party had been allotted control of the country's security, obtaining the posts of foreign, defence and interior ministries. As such, it was likely that the new government would push stricter caps

on the number of migrants allowed to enter Austria and reduce benefits received by asylum seekers. Though the Freedom Party had traditionally been highly Eurosceptic, Sebastian Kurz, leader of the People's Party and Austria's new chancellor, sought to assuage concerns of Vienna's commitment to the EU by affirming the new government's "pro-European orientation." With nationalism and xenophobia surging through Europe, the presence of another right-wing EU government will undoubtedly give momentum to the far-right nationalist parties battling for electoral victories in 2018 in countries like Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Belgium.⁶⁵

Far right Austrian Minister Herbert Kickl told a news conference that he wanted "basic services centres, suitable infrastructure that enables us to concentrate people in the asylum process in one place". The comments quickly provoked outrage, with Alexander Pollak, head of migrants charity SOS Mitmensch, calling it a deliberate provocation and left-wing essayist Robert Misik saying "a Rubicon has been crossed". The opposition Green Party warned against the language of National Socialism creeping into way of thinking and feeling, while the NEOS party said Kickl must apologise for his deliberate provocation. Kickl, became interior minister recently when his Freedom Party (FPO) formed a coalition with the centre-right following elections in October 2017, backpeddled in saying he did not intend to provoke anyone. He said the government would implement a very strict asylum policy in response to what he said was a rise in crimes committed by foreigners last year. The head of the FPO, Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache, also caused unease earlier by appearing to sug-

gest that asylum-seekers should be kept in empty military barracks and subject to an evening curfew.⁶⁶

Few months back Mr. Trump's election bolstered right-wing forces particularly in Europe, and now Mr. Trump's influence did it for once more and this time was in England. The far-right group Britain First had boasted of gaining hundreds of new membership applications after Donald Trump shared anti-Muslim videos it had posted online, sparking a transatlantic row with Theresa May. Britain First leader Paul Golding also said the group's Facebook posts were reaching hundreds of thousands more users. UK Prime Minister has said Mr Trump was "wrong" to retweet videos posted by Britain First's deputy leader Jayda Fransen, which she condemned as a "hateful organisation" dedicated to spreading division and mistrust. The extraordinary flare-up between the two key allies came after Mr Trump responded directly to her assertion - originally made through her official spokesman - that his re-postings had been wrong.⁶⁷

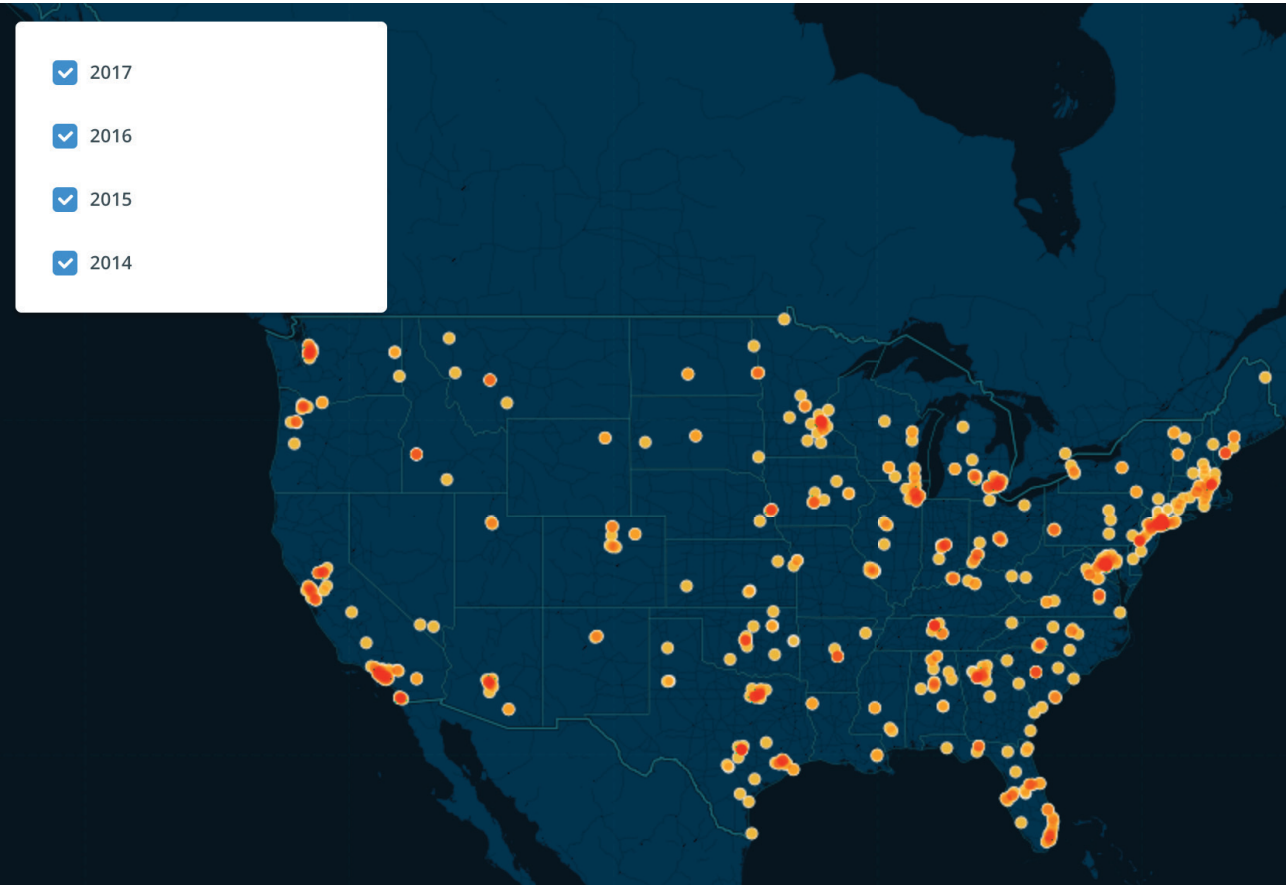
In Poland, thousands of right-wing nationalists descended upon what was supposed to be a celebration of Poland's independence day in Warsaw. Official ceremonies and patriotic songs were drowned out by demonstrators who chanted slurs such as "Pure Poland. Refugees get out." Some even paraded signs that read "White Europe" and "Clean Blood." This march represented one face of a growing nationalist movement that had swept across Europe. Emboldened by a surge in anti-immigrant sentiments following the refugee crisis, ultra-conservative rhetoric was now seeping out of the fringes and into the mainstream. Many in these movements said they were battling what

they claim was a trend of multiculturalism threatening the traditional identity and heritage of their countries.⁶⁸

In Czech, Andrej Babis and his populist ANO (Yes) movement were expected to cruise to victory - but it remained to be seen by how much, and what kind of a coalition he would put together. Like Donald Trump in the United States and Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, this owner of the sprawling Agrofert chemicals, food and media conglomerate and second-wealthiest Czech had transformed himself from an entrepreneur into a politician. Surprisingly, his staunchly anti-Islamic rhetoric had won him popularity in a country where there were hardly any Muslims. He had also called for a ban on Islam in the Czech Republic, insisting that its Sharia law was incompatible with European law.⁶⁹ Few months later, Dutch Freedom party leader told far-right gathering in Prague that European countries should adopt Donald Trump-style travel bans to counter a wave of Islamisation supposedly sweeping the continent. He also urged Europe to adopt Australia's tactics in turning back migrant boats and to build new border walls, as Trump had vowed to do along the US frontier with Mexico. Wilders was flanked during his press conference by France's Front National leader, Marine Le Pen, and Tomio Okamura, the leader of the Czech Freedom and Direct Democracy party (SPD), which finished joint third in recent parliamentary election with nearly 11% of the vote. Wilders, who was convicted in 2016 by a Dutch court for incitement against Moroccans, cited US research he claimed showed that the Czech Republic would be bordered to the north, south and west by countries that were more than 20% Muslim by the middle of the century if current demographic trends continued.⁷⁰

2.3. Islamophobia in the Rest of the World

2.3.1. Myanmar



The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar have long been the targets of persecution. They have been systematically stripped of their citizenship, discriminated against and increasingly marginalized in the economic, social and political spheres of their country. Despite their long-standing presence, the Rohingya are not even fully accepted as members of Myanmar society and are often labeled as illegal Bengali migrants.

Dislike and hatred of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar has a long lineage which predates its independence. However, during the advent of democratic elections the discrimination

against the Rohingya became institutionalized. The government legislated new discriminatory measures—the four “race and religion laws” that specifically target Rohingya Muslims. Since 2012, the Rohingya have faced increased discrimination and have been denied legal rights to challenge this discrimination. Such discrimination includes:

- Lack of freedom of movement: For over five years Rohingya in northern Rakhine state have been virtual prisoners in their homes. Security posts and checkpoints are outside each town and special permits are needed to travel between towns. Travel permits can only be se-



cure by permission from local administrators, who may extract payment or bribes to fulfill such requests.

- **Lack of access to healthcare:** Rohingya are routinely denied access to medical facilities due to travel restrictions and curfew. In the few hospitals where Rohingya are allowed to access they are in segregated wards and guarded by police.

- **Lack of access to education:** For the past five years there have been tightened restrictions on Rohingya access to education. Rohingya children are no longer allowed into previously mixed government schools. Also many government teachers refuse to come to schools in Muslim areas. Some villages have set up informal community schools staffed by local volunteers. Rohingya have virtually no access to higher education.

- **Lack of religious freedom:** Muslim Rohingya are prevented from freely practicing their faith. Since 2012 most of the mosques and Islamic schools have been closed. A ban on gatherings of more than four people prevents

Rohingya from participating in congregational prayers. Permission to repair religious buildings is virtually impossible to secure.

In addition, many right wing extremists within the government and from among the religious establishment have taken advantage of greater freedom under the democratic government to advance anti-Muslim hatred. Through the use of social media platforms like Facebook and other online media, efforts were made to fabricate and spread rumors that incited and legitimized discrimination and violent acts against Muslim Rohingya. Unfortunately, the government rarely held accountable those that perpetrated or incited acts of violence. These factors





have led to a deep-seated hatred towards the Rohingya that has become embedded within religious organizations and Buddhist nationalist sentiments. The most significant propagators of anti-Muslim sentiment are the Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu and his Buddhist nationalist 969 movement who are well known for advocating violence against Muslims. The narrative of this movement emphasizes “protecting religion, race and motherland from threats” which includes boycotting Muslim businesses and criminalizing interfaith marriage. From 25 August 2017 the Rohingya suffered one of the most brutal campaigns of violence against them in a blatant violation of international law, international human rights conventions as well as violations of international humanitarian law and in total disregard of Myanmar’s state responsibility to protect its unarmed civilian Muslim minority. Security forces and militias committed brutal acts of violence towards Rohingya Muslims including mass gang-rape, killings in thousands including of babies and children, burning people alive, brutal beatings, disappearances, eviction and forced expulsion of

inhabitants, arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, in addition to burning of Rohingya homes, places of worship, villages and fields of standing crops. UN human rights chief, Zeid Raad Al Hussein, accused the Myanmar military of conducting a “cruel military operation” against Rohingya Muslims which was “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

The Government stated that their military was responding to attacks by insurgents armed with knives and home-made bombs on more than 30 police posts in northern Rakhine. The government denied claims that its security forces had used excessive use in responding to these attacks. However, observers on the ground and satellite images confirm many razed Rohingya villages across northern Rakhine state after government security forces, backed by local Buddhist mobs, began burning Rohingya villages and attacking and killing civilians.

Under the reviewed period, the Rohingya Muslims was even becoming constant headlines of world Media due to the harsh approach



applied by the Burmese Security Forces following the incident on 9 October where 9 (nine) police officers were killed. International and human rights organizations have noted that recent atrocities are part of a systematic strategy and plan of ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims of Rakhine State which have since August 2017, affected over 655,000 Muslims who have been forcibly displaced to Bangladesh, in addition to the 87,000 Rohingya that have been displaced since violent incidents of October 2016 and more than 300,000 who have fled previous episodes of violence since 1990. As was stated by Mr Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, the Burmese military's brutal security campaign was in clear violation of international law, and cited what he called refugees' consistent accounts of widespread extrajudicial killings, rape and other atrocities. Mr. al-Hussein said the crackdown "resembles a cynical ploy to forcibly transfer large numbers of people without possibility of return," noting that Myanmar had progressively stripped its Rohingya minority of civil and political rights for decades. More than 300,000 Rohingya had fled to Bangladesh since August 2017, when armed Rohingya militants attacked police posts and a

military base in the western state of Rakhine, which bordered Bangladesh. Since then soldiers along with some local residents had set fire to numerous villages and had butchered Rohingya men, women and children.⁷¹ Satellite images of Myanmar's troubled Rakhine state, released to Media showed that dozens of empty villages and hamlets had been leveled by authorities. The villages were all set ablaze in the wake of violence last year, when a brutal clearance operation by security forces drove hundreds of thousands of Rohingya into exile in Bangladesh. While Myanmar's government claimed it's simply trying to rebuild a devastated region, the operation had raised deep concern among human rights advocates, who said the government was destroying what amounts to scores of crime scenes before any credible investigation took place. The operation had also horrified the Rohingya, who believe the government was intentionally eviscerating the dwindling remnants of their culture to make it nearly impossible for them to return.⁷²

Condemnation on brutal approach taken by Burmese authorities comes from every corner of the world, as massive refugees continued to arrive in October 2017 from across the river separating the two countries, even though Myanmar insisted military operations ceased on 5 September. Aid agencies estimate that 536,000 people had arrived in Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh, straining scarce resources of aid groups and local communities. About 200,000 Rohingya were already in Bangladesh after fleeing persecution in Myanmar, where they had long been denied citizenship and faced restrictions on their movements and access to basic services.

Thousands of people took to the streets



across Asia to denounce Myanmar's treatment of its Rohingya Muslim minority. Protests took place in Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh to urge Myanmar to 'stop committing genocide' and take back those who had sought refuge elsewhere.⁷³ The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution calling on Myanmar to end military operations that had led to the systematic violation and abuse of human rights of Rohingya Muslims in the country's Rakhine state. The resolution, which was tabled by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, was adopted by a vote of 122 to 10 with 24 abstentions. China, Russia, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam joined Myanmar in voting against the measure as did Belarus, Syria and Zimbabwe. It called for Myanmar to grant aid workers access, and to give Rohingya Muslims full citizenship rights. The resolution also called on UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to assign a special envoy to the Southeast Asian country. Over the past three months more than 655,000 Rohingya Muslims fled to Bangladesh, after

Myanmar military crackdown in late August 2017.⁷⁴

U.S. Secretary of state Rex Tillerson stated that he was deeply concerned about the continuing atrocities involving the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar's Rakhine State. His comments came during a press conference with Burmese De-Facto civilian head of state, Aung San Suu Kyi, in November in Myanmar. The ethnic group had faced oppression in the predominantly Buddhist area for years. Since the 25 August 2017 attacks by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on security forces and Muslim minorities, over 600,000 Rohingya had fled to Bangladesh. An unknown number from multiple ethnic groups remain internally displaced with limited access to food, water and shelter. As a result, Tillerson announced an additional \$47 Million in humanitarian assistance for refugees, bringing the American response to the Rakhine State crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh to more than \$87 million since August of 2016. This strong statement just came a week after



the United Nations Security Council slammed called upon the government of Myanmar to ensure no further excessive use of military force in Rakhine State, to restore civil administration and apply rule of law, and to take immediate steps in accordance with their obligations and commitments to respect human rights.⁷⁵

Even 'neutral' country like India raised loud voice saying that Myanmar must take back Rohingya Muslims to resolve one of Asia's largest refugee crises in decades. As reported by Bangladesh's government, the Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj conveyed this message during a meeting with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who ordered border guards and her administration to accommodate hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to allow them to cross the border and shelter in makeshift camps in the coastal district of Cox's Bazar. More than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Myanmar's Rakhine state

and arrived in Bangladesh to avoid persecution that the United Nations has called ethnic cleansing.⁷⁶

Myanmar's Foreign Minister and de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi was announced the 2017 International Islamophobe of the Year. Her atrocities targeting Myanmar's Muslim minority were so egregious that she shot past other nominated international Islamophobes, U.S. President Donald Trump, French far-right party National Front leader Marie Le Pen, far-right Dutch party Freedoms Party leader Geert Wilders. Between 2,000 and 3,000 Muslims were killed in Myanmar's Rakhine state in November, according to the European Rohingya Council, and more than 617,000 Rohingya Muslims were forced to take shelter in neighboring Bangladesh. The annual Islamophobia Awards by the London-based Human Rights Commission. In the "United Kingdom" category, the Islamophobe of the year was announced

as Tommy Robinson – the former leader of the fascist English Defense League (EDL) – who is infamously known by his anti-Islam views. The other candidates in this category were TV presenter and columnist Katie Hopkins, former leader of the populist UK Independence Party (UKIP) Nigel Farage, far-right For Britain Party founder Anne Marie Waters and British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson.⁷⁷

As response, Burmese State Media announced in January 2018 that the Government of Myanmar was making final preparations to take back the first batch of Rohingya Muslims who had fled conflict in troubled Rakhine state, despite growing doubts about the plan among refugees and in the United Nations. Rakhine State Chief Minister Nyi Pu insisted on completion of the finishing touches on buildings, medical clinics and sanitation infrastructures during a visit to repatriation camps in the state, as was reported by the *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper. It published a photo of his delegation standing by a long, wooden house that would be used to house returnees at the camp near the town of Maungtau. A wire-mesh fence topped by barbed wire appeared in the background of the photo. Over 655,500 Muslim Rohingya fled to Bangladesh after the Myanmar military cracked down in the northern part of Rakhine in response to militant attacks on security forces in August 2017. It was also reported that Myanmar would start receiving Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh at two reception centres and the temporary camp near Maungtau starting in January and continuing over the coming two years, under an agreement to be signed the two countries.⁷⁸ This measure must be part of Aung San Suu Kyi's promise announced in October 2017 that she

had had a plan to set up a civilian-led agency, with foreign assistance, to deliver aid and help resettle Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state. A close adviser of Aung San Suu Kyi said the proposed body had been long planned, and was part of an attempt to show the civilian government she lead, rather than the Burmese military could deliver humanitarian relief, resettlement and economic recovery.

The Nobel laureate had been criticised for failing to denounce a brutal army crackdown on the Rohingya in Rakhine state, which forced hundreds of thousands to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. In a speech carried by state TV in the month, Aung San Suu Kyi said: "There has been a lot of criticisms against our country. We need to understand international opinion. However, just as no one can fully understand the situation of our country the way we do, no one can desire peace and development for our country more than us."⁷⁹



2.3.2. Australia



Far Right groups were quite active in Australia during the reviewed period, and the heating-up issue was related to Burqa and Niqab, as certain politicians opened the discourse at public. The Australian 'One Nation' leader Pauline Hanson stated her party would move to ban the burqa nationally after indicating a ban would be put in place in Queensland if it won the state election there. She told that the party would forge ahead with a proposal to ban the burqa in public areas, including schools and government buildings in Queensland. Senator Pauline Hanson wore a burqa to parliament as part of her campaign to ban the all-enveloping garment worn by some Muslim women, drawing a quick rebuke from the government and

Muslims. Hanson sat in her seat in the assembly for about 20 minutes covered by the black burqa before removing it to call for them to be banned in public for national security reasons. Hanson, who first rose to prominence in the 1990s because of her strident opposition to immigration from Asia and to asylum seekers, had in recent years campaigned against Islamic clothing and the building of mosques.⁸⁰

Senator Jacqui Lambie had also introduced legislation banning Muslim women from wearing the burqa in public. Senator Lambie insisted full face coverings make Australians fearful and the right to feel safe must outweigh the right for expression of religious freedom. She said that a nationwide ban on all identity-con-

cealing garments was needed for national security reasons, unless the wearer had a reasonable and lawful excuse. The private senators’ bill, introduced in the Senate in February 2017, linked the ban to the national terrorism threat level, kicking in when the terror threat. The bill bans people from wearing full face coverings in commonwealth jurisdictions such as airports, as well as the ACT and Northern Territory. It also made it illegal to force another person or child to wear a full face covering, that would result in six months’ jail while forcing a child to wear one would attract 12 months jail. Under the reviewed period, Islamophobic flyers were posted around the city of Penrith read: “Say no to the Burqa”, claiming to be from the local council. It also said: “For reasons of security no person with any form of facial covering should be allowed to enter or be served in Penrith. Save our values, save our laws.” The council was aware of the flyers and strongly denied any links.⁸¹

It seems to the Observatory that the issue would be even hotter in the coming future as the campaign had reached far into the Australian publics and more likely to be politicized in times approaching elections. A study by RMIT University showed that two-thirds of Australians living in poorer suburbs were uncomfortable with women wearing burqas. The sample was taken among people in Broadmeadows and Fawkner, in Melbourne’s north, found high levels of discomfort with burqas, with two-thirds of non-Muslims surveyed expressing concerns about Muslim women wearing face coverings. The study also found that even Muslims were uneasy about burqas, with 28 per cent of them saying they were uncomfortable, as Burqas and niqabs were seen as forms of clothing that ‘precluded inter-ethnic communication’. On the individual level, respondents with lower socio-economic status and older respondents tended to be more Islamophobic, which confirms findings of other Australian and overseas studies. The study was done with help from the





Islamophobia in Australia

Islamic Council of Victoria and Moreland City Council.⁸²

There was also a tendency that the issue would be exploited far beyond 'burqa' and eventually could be directed towards the denigration of Islam. Such an assumption found evidence at for instance, former Prime Minister Tony Abbott who spoke with journalist following the attacks in Melbourne's Flinders Street, an incident which left many wondering what was to blame, whether faith or mental illness. The Australian politician stated that more accountability need to put on Islamic authorities. He said: "The perpetrator has claimed that it was in some way because of alleged discrimination of Muslims in this county. No one is discriminated against in this country. I think it's just appalling that someone who came to this country as a refugee should've done something so terrible.

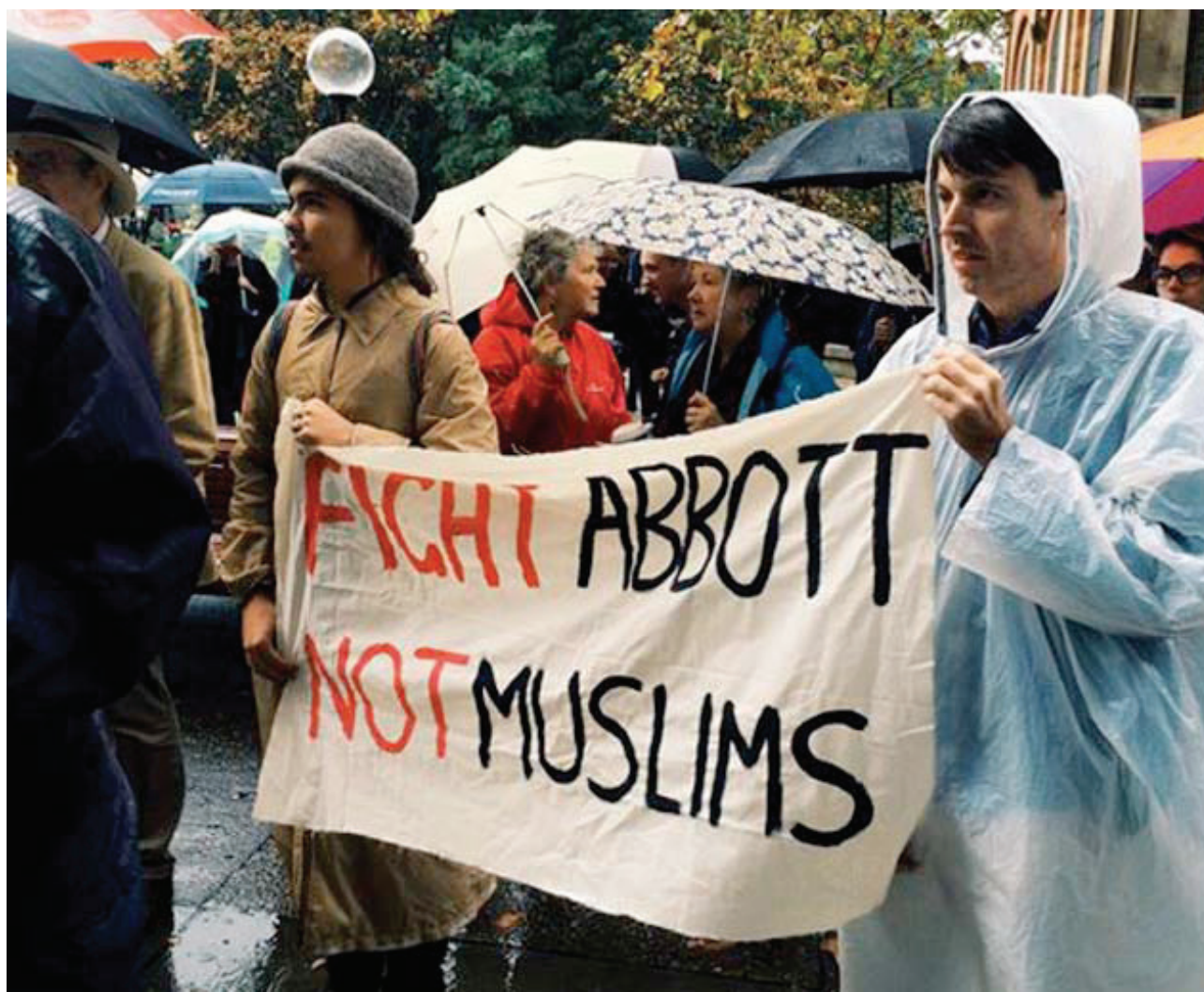
There is a problem within Islam... I think it's incumbent on all Islamic authority figures to say that it's never right to kill in the name of God."⁸³

Not only by politicians, anti-Islam campaign was also intensely done by far-right religious leaders, i.e. pastor Keith Piper, a baptist pastor who claimed Islam was 'a cancer that will destroy society'. During a recorded sermon for lessons for special religion education (SRE) - an optional 30-minute weekly class offered to students by government schools when a teacher was available. In the 40-minute video, which was recorded and uploaded to YouTube, Mr Piper repeatedly condemned Islam and the Koran. He told the crowd "Islamism is a cancer. We must destroy the cancer or the cancer will destroy out society and our freedoms and everything we hold dear. Islam and Koran-practising Muslims were culturally incompatible

with western and Christian values.” Piper went on to claim he was not anti-Muslim but was anti-Koran. He said: “The Koran is the evil rotten, rotten cause of every Islamic terrorist action in the whole world.”⁸⁴

The Observatory would suggest a continuous close attention to the trend in Australia. A report on social cohesion had shed light on the number of Australians reporting racism and how some feel about Muslims. According to which one in four Australians held a negative attitude towards Muslims and more people were reporting racism, but the number of people who wanted migrants to be rejected from coming to Australia based on their race had dropped. The Scanlon Foundation’s Mapping Social Cohesion survey polled 1,500 people between June and July 2017, asked respondents 77 questions on a range of issues including immigration, democracy, the economy and so-

ciety. The annual survey found the number of people reporting experience of discrimination because of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion, had more than doubled - from nine per cent in 2007 to 20 per cent in 2017. Asked whether they felt positive, negative or neutral towards Muslims, 25 per cent of those polled felt ‘very negative’ or ‘somewhat negative’. In comparison, six per cent of people felt negatively towards Buddhists. The report said the findings might be influenced by perceptions that some sections of the Muslim population rejected Australia’s secular democratic values. The report’s author and Monash University professor Andrew Markus said concerns about women’s rights and feelings of a lack of integration often come up in focus group discussions around Muslims. The survey found 28.3 per cent of respondents felt positive towards Muslims, while the majority were neutral.⁸⁵



2.3.3. China



Last year, authorities in China's Xinjiang region were applying policy of prohibiting parents from giving children some Islamic names to dilute the influence of religion on life in the ethnic Uighur minority heartland. According to a list distributed by overseas Uighur activists, "Muhammad," "Jihad" and "Islam" were among at least 29 names now banned in the heavily Muslim region. An official at a county-level public security office in Kashgar, a hub in southern Xinjiang with strong Islamic influences, said some names were banned because they had a "religious background." It was unclear how widespread the ban was, or whether it was

tightly enforced. The naming restrictions were part of a broader government effort to secularize Xinjiang, which was home to roughly 10 million Uighurs. Top officials had publicly said that radical Islamic thought had infiltrated the region from Central Asia, protracting a bloody, years long insurgency and claimed hundreds of lives. Government scholars and high-ranking officials, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, had urged local governments to better assimilate their Muslim minorities into the majority Han Chinese culture. Aside from the prohibition on Islamic names, local Xinjiang officials had, at the earlier times, strongly discouraged or pro-

hibited Islamic veils, while government-linked figures had called for bans of mosques with domes or other Middle Eastern architectural styles.⁸⁶ A little bit earlier, the China's province had put a ban on 'Beards' which was blamed by some human rights groups as repressive policy. These restrictions had been approved by the Xinjiang lawmakers and being posted on the official website. The rules had further demanded all the workers to dissuade those who fully cover their bodies, including veiling their faces. As the consequence, these people would be restricted from entering public places otherwise being reported to the Police.⁸⁷

Lately, provincial governments in western China had reportedly banned children from attending religious events during the winter holidays, as authorities stepped up control of religious education. School pupils in Linxia county in Gansu province, home to many members of the Muslim Hui ethnic minority, were prohibited from entering religious buildings over their break, as the district education bureau said in a notice posted online. Students must not read scriptures in classes or religious buildings, said the notice, which also ordered pupils and teachers to work to strengthen political ideology and propaganda. Chinese police ordered Muslims to give up all copies of the Koran and prayer mats, as reported by the publication *Yenicag.Ru* who cited a message from Uighur activists. According to the activists, officials in the North-Western region of Xinjiang had warned of a mosque that the Muslim families from ethnic minorities should convey the objects of worship, including the Koran and prayer rugs. In case of detection of their objects of worship, the authorities had threat-

ened to punish their owners. A week before, a similar message was received from residents of Kashgar, Khotan and other regions of China. The speaker of the world Congress of Uighurs Dilihat Raxit stated that they received a notification according to which each ethnic Uighur shall transmit to the authorities any objects associated with Islam. According to local officials, the authorities of Xinjiang confiscated all Korans published more than five years ago, because of their "extremist". Chinese officials said that they stopped illegal propaganda, religious activities, religious instruction and prohibited items which could become instruments of terrorism, including flammable objects and knives.⁸⁸ A man in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region was sentenced to two years in prison after teaching people about the Koran in a WeChat group, according to a verdict published on China Judgments Online run by China's Supreme People's Court. Huang Shike was found guilty of illegally using information and the Internet, said the verdict released by the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture branch court of Higher People's Court of Xinjiang. Huang, by preaching and teaching the Koran at non-religious venues, had been considered as disturbed the administrative order of normal religious activities, severely violated China's laws on regulating religious affairs and greatly harmed society. Huang established a WeChat group in June 2016, and taught its roughly 100 members, mostly his friends and family members, how to pray via voice messages. Huang then explained the Eid al-Adha festival in another WeChat group in August 2016. This WeChat group also had more than 100 members, according to the verdict. To regulate social media groups, including We-



Chat, QQ and Weibo groups, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) issued a new regulation which would take effect on 8 October 2017.⁸⁹

In term of positive developments, China gave a surprise amidst the on-going trend of Islamophobia in Xinjiang Province, as the Chinese national authorities had blocked Islamophobic terms used by internet users to stigmatize Muslims. As a result of the ban, searches for keywords often used by Internet users to refer to Islam showed no results on China's Weibo microblog. The Observatory found that online postings containing the anti-Islam phrases could not be posted for it signifies "violations of Weibo's complaints related rules". China had a booming internet population surpassing over 700 million, and it had used massive firewalls

to block any content the government deemed offending, or not in the country's interests. The Observatory would like to underline the fact that China is the home for over 21 million Muslims, mostly the Uyghurs people living in Xinjiang Province, and the Hui Community living in Ningxia Province, where discontent and fears of Muslims had been reported during the recent years.

In addition, new regulations on religious affairs were announced by China in October 2017 and due to take effect in February 2018, aim to increase oversight of religious education and provide for greater regulation of religious activities. Chinese law officially granted religious freedom for all but regulations on education and protection of minors also said religion could not be used to hinder state education or

to coerce children to believe.⁹⁰ It was also relieving to note on the other side that the Chinese Government undertook positive measures friendly to Islam and Muslims. For instance, the Chinese authorities had blocked Islamophobic terms used by internet users to stigmatize Muslims in order to prevent bias against Islam. As a result of the ban, searches for keywords often used by Internet users to refer to Islam showed no results on China's Weibo microblog. Posts containing the phrases could not be posted for it signifies "violations of Weibo's complaints related rules". Insults against Islam were also blocked in Weibo's search engine. China which had a booming internet population surpassing over 700 million, used massive firewalls to block any content the government deems offending, or not in the country's interests. China has over 21 million Muslims mostly the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and Hui community in Ningxia province. Discontent and fears of Muslims had been on the rise on China's Internet in recent years. Complainers target Chinese authorities' discrimination policies toward ethnic minorities, especially Muslim groups. Another positive gesture was seen as a report said that the Chinese government assisted 12,800 Mus-

lims in making the pilgrimage to Mecca this year, and closed streets for Muslims to celebrate Eid ul-Fitr.⁹¹

Also a commendable evidence of Chinese friendly gestures toward Islam was a Chinese court who had sentenced an ethnic Han to two years and six months in jail for attacking Islam and Muslims online. The Heping district People's Court in Shenyang in Liaoning Province in its verdict charged the man with inciting ethnic hatred after he set up a website and online chat groups and posted pictures and articles attacking Muslims from April 2009 to June 2016. The verdict delivered in November 2017 said that Li's behaviour violated the principle of ethnic equality and negatively impacted society. Li was detained in September 2009 for inciting ethnic hatred, but later released on bail. However, he was arrested again for the same charge in June 2016, as the verdict read. China's top legislature adopted the Cybersecurity Law in 2016, which stated that any online activity that undermines national unity was prohibited. The law also forbid activities such as inciting ethnic hatred, discrimination and spreading violent and obscene content online.⁹²



2.4. Other Islamophobic Trends

2.4.1. Islamophobic Gestures and Policies against Veil, Hijab, and Burqa



Massive public phobia against veil, hijab, and burqa started from France in 2010, when President Nicolas Sarkozy and leaders in both houses of the French Parliament overwhelmingly favored the ban, reasoning that face veils threatened France's secularism, women's rights, and public safety. Later step was when the National Assembly of France on 13 July 2010 proposed a bill which then passed by the Senate of France on 14 September 2010, resulting in the ban on the wearing of face-covering headgear, including masks, burqa, helmets, balaclava, niqabs and other veils covering the face in public places. The key argument supporting this proposal was that face-coverings prevent the clear identification of a person, which was both a security risk, and a social hindrance within a society which relies on facial recognition and expression in communication. Therefore, as of 11 April 2011, it was illegal in France to wear a face-covering veil or

other mask in public places such as the street, shops, museums, public transportation, and parks. In 2016 several French coastal towns implemented a Burkini ban, a swimming suit for Muslim women, after government officials said that it raised concerns around security.

What was happening in France in 2010 was actually part of a long story of resentment in Europe against this particular dress, which had even started since 2003:

24 September 2003—Germany's federal constitutional court rules in favor of an Afghan-born teacher who wants to wear an Islamic scarf at school, but the court also said that states can change their laws locally if they want to. The result is that half of Germany's regions go on to ban teachers from wearing headscarves.

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.

11 April 2011—under a decree by the then French Prime Minister Francois Fillon, women were banned from wearing the niqab in any public place. Under the first ban, 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 committee in Belgium

votes to implement the first European ban against wearing the burqa and niqab in public, but French government imposes first the ban, as a law banning the full-face veil does not come into effect in Belgium until July 2011—three months after the French ban.

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

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.

18 January 2016—the former UK Prime Minister David Cameron said he would back institutions with 'sensible rules' over Muslims wearing full-face veils, but ruled out a full public ban.

18 August 2016—France's Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, defended 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.

6 December 2016—The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, endorses a partial ban on the burqa and the niqab.

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 pledged to investigate banning headscarves for women employed in public services, in a move designed to hold the ruling coal-

tion together by placating the anti-immigration Freedom party.

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.

By now there are at least 12 (twelve) European countries who have banned veil, headscarf, hijab, niqab, and burqa i.e. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia, and Albania. More were on the way with intensive debates are ongoing in some countries, and the number is predicted to grow fast, especially after the decision taken on the 14th of March 2017 by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), which ruled that employers/companies could ban staff from wearing these particular clothes. A country would be followed by another, made the ban part of their national law, despite the clear manifestation of social discrimination behind such a policy.

Particular on this issue, the Observatory monitored situations during the reviewed period as the following:

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) upheld a Belgian ban on wearing the full-face niqab veil in public. The veil had been a controversial issue across Europe, with some countries banning the garment in public in the name of safety and rights groups arguing that this amounts to a violation of civil liberties. The court ruled that the ban sought to guarantee social cohesion, the protection of the rights and freedoms of others and that it was "necessary in a democratic society. Just a reminder, Belgian banned the wearing of the full-face veil in June 2011, which prohibited appearing in pub-



lic with a face masked or hidden, in whole or in part, in such a way as to be unidentifiable.⁹³

In Austria, new restrictions came into force in Austria on the 1st of October 2017 banning the wearing of the full Islamic veil and other items concealing the face in public places and buildings. The government said that Exemptions under certain conditions include items i.e. clown disguises at cultural events, work wear such as medical masks, and scarves in cold weather. Violations of burqa ban would be punished with a fine of up to €150. The measures also applied to visitors/tourists holiday in the Alpine country.⁹⁴ Austria's newly appointed Education Minister Heinz Fassmann to-the-pointly stated his position against the headscarf. Fassmann's interview published in local newspaper quoted him saying "teachers should not wear a headscarf." When asked about his opinion on the

headscarf ban, Fassmann said: "Yes, I have a sympathy for the secular state and find that teachers should not wear a headscarf, except religious and private school teachers." The coalition government formed by Austrian People's Party (OVP) and the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) earlier in the month, had an anti-Islam and anti-immigrant stance.⁹⁵

In the UK, Amanda Spielman, chief inspector for the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), publicly supported Neena Lall, the head teacher of a predominantly Muslim state school who imposed the ban earlier month, setting off an uproar from parents and community leaders in east London. Speaking at a Church of England conference, Spielman said that school leaders must have the right to set school uniform policies as they see fit, in order to "promote cohesion," and also to warn

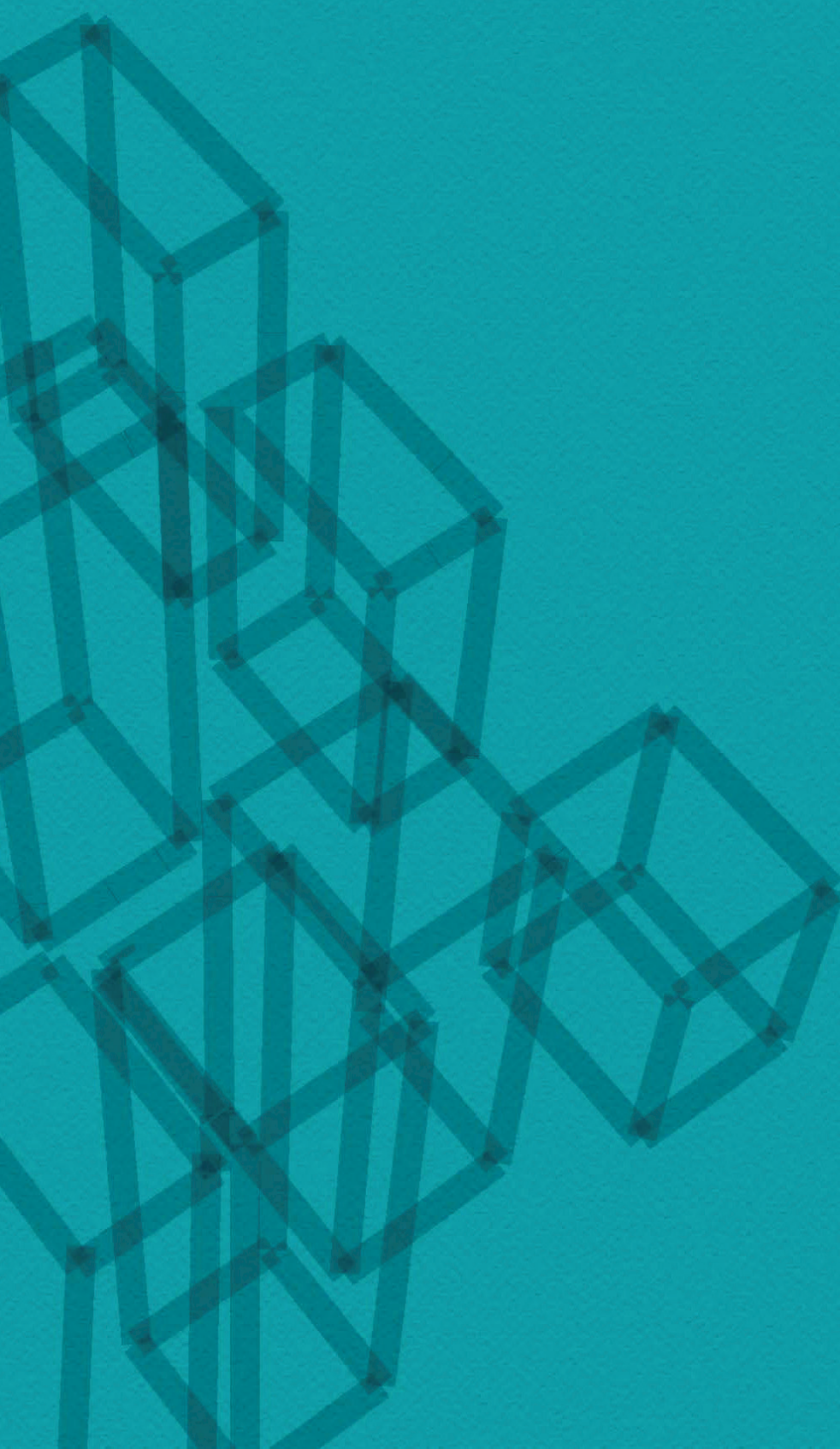
of the dangers people pose in using religion to “actively pervert” education. She claimed, “Under the pretext of religious belief, they use education institutions, legal and illegal, to narrow young people’s horizons, to isolate and segregate, and in the worst cases to indoctrinate impressionable minds with extremist ideology.”⁹⁶

In Switzerland, voters would decide whether to ban Muslim face veils including the burqa after a campaign by far-right groups to outlaw the garment which they said undermine the “dignity of women”. The public would get a chance to have its say in a referendum expected to be rolled out in 2018 in the country where less than 5 per cent were Islamic in the largely Christian nation. It was tabled after extremists gathered 100,000 signatures for the ballot, forcing officials to react under a rule in the country where voters decided the agenda in a system known as direct democracy. If the measure went through, Switzerland would follow suit with other countries in Europe including France and Austria which cracked down on full-face veils. The measure was proposed by a group including MPs from the nationalist Swiss People’s Party (SVP) that was also behind a ban on building minarets in Switzerland.⁹⁷

In Denmark, the government announced in February 2018 that it planned to fine people who covered their face in public, putting it in line to join France and others restricting the burqa and the niqab, worn by some Muslim women. The center-right government, which was backed by the nationalist Danish People’s Party, said it would bring in legislation imposing fines of up to 10,000 Danish crowns (\$1,658) for repeat offences. It did not give a date for a vote on the law. Full and partial face veils such as burqas and niqabs divide opinion across

Europe, setting advocates of religious freedom against secularists and those who argue that such garments are culturally alien or a symbol of the oppression of women. The Danish Justice Minister Soren Pape Poulsen was quoted saying: “It is incompatible with the values of the Danish society or the respect for the community to keep the face hidden when meeting each other in the public space.”⁹⁸

In Canada, the Quebec National Assembly adopted Bill 62 in October 2017, making it illegal to wear a mask or any other clothing that covered the face when providing or receiving public services managed by the province or by municipalities. The law would primarily affect Muslim women who wear niqabs or a burqas. This was the first piece of legislation to be adopted in Quebec after 10 years of debates on the definition of secularism and religious diversity. As with similar debates in France, the notion of Quebec as a secular society, encapsulated in the phrase ‘laïcité’ had increasingly been used to primarily target the rights of Muslims.⁹⁹ The new law was meeting with confusion, street protests and resistance from civic leaders, exposing the divisive impact of legislating on matters of faith and human rights in Canada. Bill 62 became law, but the largest cities and transit authorities said they would not yet put it into effect. The legislation required people receiving public services in Quebec – on buses, in a hospital, in daycares or in libraries – to show their faces, a rule that effectively singles out Muslim women who wear the face-covering niqab and burka. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took aim at Bill 62 on Friday while campaigning ahead of a federal by-election in Quebec, although he stopped short of saying Ottawa would challenge the law’s constitutionality in court.¹⁰⁰



3. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

The Observatory noted with pleasure that during the covered period, there were efforts in many countries around the world to promote harmony and tolerance, while countered anti-Islam sentiments and other Islamophobic activities, of which the Observatory would consider as positive signs towards combatting Islamophobia and incitement of hatred and violence towards Islam and Muslims. The following instances of positive trends are worth mentioning:

Chapter 3



3.1. Public Policy



In Germany, the parliament had voted in favor of a law that includes the provision to levy fines of up to €50 million from popular companies such as Facebook and YouTube if they failed to remove hateful posts in a timely manner. The law, which was due to come into effect in October 2017, would affect sites with more than 2 million users nationally. It required internet giants to find and delete posts containing “evidently unlawful” abusive material within 24 hours to avoid being hit with a penalty.¹⁰¹ The sweeping anti-hate speech law requiring websites to promptly investigate reports of posts illegal under German law and delete them. On January 1st, 2018, the grace period before that law would begin being enforced by authorities expired. Companies affected by the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) included Facebook, Twitter, Google, YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram, while professional networks like LinkedIn and Xing were expressly excluded as were messaging services like WhatsApp. Germany has strict laws prohibiting content like neo-Nazi propaganda, swastikas, and Holocaust denial,

and NetzDG would require the sites in question to investigate user reports of such postings, delete most within 24 hours, and act on more complicated cases within a week. The German parliament originally passed the law in late June 2017 and it went into force in October 2017, but legislators gave sites three months to put together internal systems to remove the banned content.¹⁰²

In the U.S., Virginia’s governor, Terry McAuliffe, urged people to stay away from a planned rally of far right and white supremacist groups in the university town of Charlottesville. The National Guard had been put on alert because of the risk of violence during the so-called “Unite the Right” rally while counter demonstrators were also expected. Thousands of white nationalists, including supporters of the Ku Klux Klan white supremacist group, and anti-fascist activists were expected to turn out in Charlottesville, a sleepy town planning to remove a statue of General Robert E. Lee, who led Confederate forces in the US Civil War.¹⁰³

In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Islamophobia and racism were to blame for the murders of six men in a Quebec mosque in 2016 and could never have a place in the country. Trudeau made the assertion just hours before he was to attend a vigil in Quebec City to mark one year since a gunman killed six and injured 19 others when he fired into the Islamic cultural centre during evening prayers. Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard, along with opposition leaders, were also there to commemorate the grim anniversary. In

speech in the House of Commons earlier that day, Trudeau called on all MPs to stand against Islamophobia. He said: “We owe it to (the victims) to speak up and stand tall and explicitly against Islamophobia and discrimination in all its forms.” His call to action received applause, conjuring up memories of the heated debate about the use of the term Islamophobia which took off after Liberal MP Iqra Khalid introduced a 2016 motion which also called on parliamentarians to condemn Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination and have a committee study how to combat it.¹⁰⁴

In the U.S., the US federal appeals court ruled in February saying that President Donald Trump’s travel ban targeting people from six Muslim-majority countries violated the US Constitution by discriminating on the basis of religion, meaning another legal setback for the policy. The Richmond-based 4th US Circuit Court of Appeals, on a 9-4 vote, became the second federal appeals court to rule against the ban, finding that the Republican president’s own words demonstrated that bias against Muslims was the basis of the policy. What happened was that the US Supreme Court had al-



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lowed the ban, put in place by Mr. Trump in September 2017, to go into effect while litigation challenging it continued. The 4th Circuit ruling went further than the earlier decision by the San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals, which found the ban violated federal immigration law but did not address the question of whether it also violated the Constitution. The Supreme Court already had said it would consider both issues in deciding the legality of the ban in the coming months. The justices were due in April 2018 to hear arguments over the ban and issue a ruling by the end of June 2018.¹⁰⁵



3.2. Court Decisions against Islamophobes:



In Canada, Kevin J. Johnston was charged with committing a hate crime, following a five-month investigation after he posted a YouTube video in March offering a \$1,000 reward for a recording of Muslim students at Friday prayers spewing hate speech. He later raised the amount to \$2,500 before his YouTube account was suspended. The video caused school officials to issue a memo to be extra vigilant about recordings and it resulted in concern among Muslim families. On his website Johnston also attacked Mississauga MP Iqra Khalid, who introduced a successful anti-

Islamophobia motion in the Canadian House of Commons. The rise of the anti-Islamic right was something that Canada was experiencing. The Canadian statistical agency, Statistics Canada, found that there was an increase of reported hate crimes against Muslims in Canada from 2014 to 2015, from 99 incidents to 159, an increase of 60 percent. The far-right groups in Canada had taken a firm stand against immigration, seizing on problems arising from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's welcoming of 40,000 Syrian refugees. The membership numbers of far-right groups in Canada were steadily

increasing. Much like Geert Wilders in The Netherlands, they were critical of Islam, saying that it did not comply with Western values, oppressed women and dictated life to an illiberal extent. While there were currently no viable political parties in Canada which threaten the establishment like the Front National or Wilders' Party for Freedom, they did have some public and online presence.¹⁰⁶

In the UK, Jamie Mullins and Mathew Sarsfield had been charged with religiously aggravated public order offences at a Nottingham mosque. Both appeared at Nottingham Magistrates' Court on 1 August 2017.¹⁰⁷ Jamie Mullins had been given 40 hours of unpaid work after he admitted smearing pork sausage meat over a lock on the front door of the mosque. He went to the Sherwood Education and Culture Centre in Nottingham on 18 June and CCTV footage presented to magistrates showed him wipe his hand on his trousers after smearing the meat on the lock. The man then draped an English flag over a flowerpot outside the building and took selfies in front of it. Mullins also admitted religiously aggravated criminal damage.¹⁰⁸ Matthew Sarsfield admitted one charge of causing racially or religiously aggravated harassment, alarm or distress.¹⁰⁹

In Australia, a pig head was left at the front gate of a mosque in Stockleigh, south of Brisbane, and a 23-year old man from Victoria Point had since been arrested. The man was arrested after photos were posted to social media showing two men outside the mosque's gate pulling shocking gestures. The incident sparked outrage among local Muslim community.¹¹⁰

Also in Australia, three far-right activists who staged a mock beheading in protest at plans to build a mosque had been found guilty, convicted and fined for a criminal offence under Victoria's racial vilification laws. United Patriots Front members Blair Cottrell, Christopher Shortis, and Neil Erikson, were all found guilty by a magistrate of inciting contempt, revulsion or ridicule of Muslims. Magistrate John Hardy found the men guilty after a two-day contested hearing in Melbourne Magistrates Court. The trio were the first people convicted under Victoria's Racial and Religious Tolerance Act. The charge carried a penalty of up to six months in jail or fines of more than \$9000. In court, Mr Hardy told the trio they had "crossed the line" in staging a mock beheading outside the City of Bendigo offices on 4 October 2015, in protest against building a mosque in Bendigo. In the video, Cottrell spoke to camera about the mosque plans and directed Shortis - wearing a Middle Eastern-style head covering, and shouting "Allahu Akbar" - and Erikson to decapitate a dummy with a toy plastic sword. When the dummy was beheaded, red liquid spilled onto the footpath.¹¹¹

In Sierra Leone, a popular Nigerian pastor, Victor Ajsafe had been arrested by the government after found to have made certain outrageous comments about Islamic religion during his Sunday sermon. Ajsafe, who was the founder and leader of the country's largest church, The Sanctuary Praise Church, while speaking to his congregants called Islam a "violent religion of lies and deceit," adding that Muslims had been responsible for "every terrorist act in the history of the world." Audio and video recordings of the sermon appeared on-



line within three days, and were met with immediate and near-universal condemnation by both Muslims and Christians in the country. Sierra Leone's population is roughly 78% Muslim.¹¹²

In the UK, Keegan Jakovlevs who posted a Facebook message calling for all British Muslims to be killed in the wake of the Manchester attack had been jailed for a year. He was sentenced at Mold Crown Court for the crime, which was made illegal by the Public Order Act 1986. Prosecutors said Jakovlevs posted his message shortly after the bombing at Manchester Arena on 22 May 2017 and that it was taken down shortly afterwards. Jakovlevs's

Facebook message expressed sympathy for the families of those caught up in the bombing but then, using racist and offensive language, he called for every Muslim in the country to be killed. The prosecution argued that Jakovlevs's single message was particularly serious because it was posted so soon after the Manchester bombing when public emotions were running high. The Government had launched enhanced efforts to tackle extremist material online amid increasing warnings over the threat posed by the far-right.¹¹³

In the Netherlands, a Dutch human rights council had ruled that hindering a Muslim female police officer from wearing a headscarf



with her uniform was discrimination, since the officer had limited contact with the public. The ban for on-duty headscarves stemmed from a Dutch law prohibiting officers from wearing visible religious symbols, stating uniforms must be “neutral.” After Rotterdam-based officer Sarah Izat lodged a complaint in May 2017, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights ruled on the case, finding it discriminatory. Izat claimed the ban hindered her career progression as Izat chose to wear the headscarf, she could only come to work in plain clothes, whereas her non-Muslim colleagues wore uniforms. In the ruling, the Institute stated that since Izat’s job as an administrative officer had limited interaction with the public and most of her work was completed over the phone, the headscarf ban was not justified. The human rights council added that as Izat was not authorized to make decisions on behalf of the police but only to

take statements, the headscarf being seen would not affect her job performance.¹¹⁴

In the UK, Paul Rimmer appeared in court charged with inciting hatred during a speech at a Britain First-linked rally. He faced two charges of using threatening, abusive, insulting words or behaviour at the Northern Ireland against Terrorism rally outside Belfast City Hall in August 2016. Rimmer was the third person charged in connection with the demonstration. The others were Paul Golding, the leader of Britain First, and Jayda Fransen, its deputy leader.¹¹⁵

In the U.S., Gerald Wallace pleaded guilty to threatening to attack a mosque and shoot its members. He admitted to one count of obstructing the free exercise of religious beliefs after leaving a hate-filled and profanity laden message against Islam, the prophet Mohammed, and the Koran, during which he threatened to



go to the mosque, and stated, “I’m gonna shoot all y’all,” the U.S. Department of Justice said in a statement.

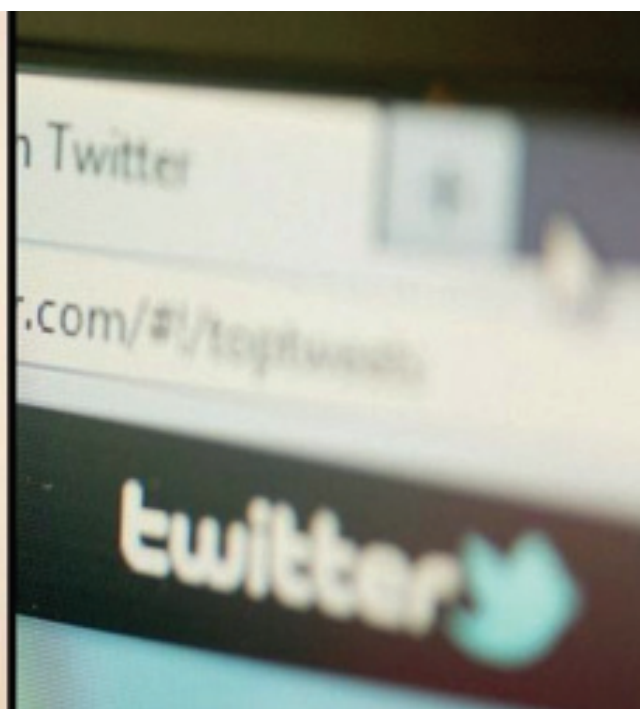
According

to the indictment, Wallace called the mosque on 19 February 2017 and left a message in which he said, “I hate you Muslims, you Muslims are terrible. I hate you people. I’m gonna go down to your center, I’m gonna shoot all y’all. I hate your Allah, I hate your Koran, I hate everything about Islam. You people are worthless. Go to hell you.”¹¹⁶

In the U.S., a Durham detective who used slurs, called Islam “the religion of violence,” and shared police information on Twitter was facing professional discipline over his online

comments. Detective Constable Richard Cain pleaded guilty to one count of professional misconduct earlier 2017 in connection with posts on his personal Twitter account. Cain scrubbed the account, but several tweets were quoted in an agreed statement of facts from an ongoing disciplinary hearing. Among his provocative online statements: “The religion of violence #islam. #Mohamedwasapedophile”; “Prophet Muhammad. Police be upon him.”; “Export islam back to where it came from. #bruxelles.” In one post, Cain referred to actor Chris Burke, who had Down syndrome, as a “gimp.” Others were the kind of statements common among the breed of right-wing Twitter user convinced of Islam’s supposedly dangerous and creeping influence. Cain tagged the Gatestone Institute and The Rebel, whose former staffer Faith Goldy was fired after appearing on a neo-Nazi podcast.¹¹⁷

In the U.S., a man had been sentenced for threatening to blow up an Islamic bookshop in London and “kill all the Muslims”. David Mof-





fatt pleaded guilty to religiously aggravated intentional harassment, alarm and distress at Willesden Magistrates' Court.¹¹⁸

In the UK, Paul Hepplestone wore a plastic grenade and brandished a sword in the footage that made Muslims in Britain and beyond fear for their safety. The man recorded the video two weeks after the Manchester Arena suicide bombing and a day after the London Bridge terror attack. In the shocking clip, he said: "This is a quick message to Muslims, p***s and terrorists, you can't call yourself terrorists, cowards is what I want to call youse. Yeah, you run in with bombs strapped to youse and blow yourself up, where there's a bunch of innocent kids. There is nothing terrorising about that. Let me tell you, I will get people to run in your mosques with pineapples [a reference to grenades], blow your mosques off this f***ing

planet. Yeah, I will cut each one of your ears off with a sword, I will cut your fingers, your toes, I will cut you a thousand times until you bleed out." The footage was quickly shared on social media and left Muslims in Merseyside, Bristol, Newcastle, and Scotland terrified.¹¹⁹

In the U.S., a federal grand jury in Savannah indicted Preston Q. Howard of Missouri for threatening members of the Islamic Society of Augusta. The indictment against the man alleged he made numerous calls to the mosque threatening to "kill", "shoot", "behead", "slaughter", "execute", "light on fire", "murder", "hunt down", "zone in" on Muslims and to "blow up the mosque". Howard might face up to five years imprisonment on each count.¹²⁰

In the U.S., a former Army medic acknowledged breaking windows and throwing



a Bible into a Colorado mosque. The media reported that Joseph Giaquinto pleaded guilty to a felony charge of criminal mischief and a misdemeanor charge of bias-motivated crime, or a hate crime. A plea deal stipulated that he be sentenced to three years of wellness court. People referred to wellness court receive therapy and psychiatric treatment while under supervised probation rather than serving time in prison. Police said Giaquinto threw two large rocks through windows of the Islamic Center of Fort Collins, as well as a New Testament Bible, on 26 March 2017. The Bible was found among the shattered glass in the mosque's prayer room.¹²¹

In the UK, James Palmer, a bigoted drunk who planted a fake bomb outside a Paisley mosque had been caged for 32 months.

He was motivated by religious prejudice after watching the London Bridge terror attacks on TV when he mounted the bomb hoax at the mosque in Wellmeadow Street. Worshippers were inside during Ramadan on 4 June 2017 when the lout left the suspicious device, a bag containing two aerosol cans labelled 'strong adhesive spray' which were taped together with a wire, giving the impression it was a bomb. Palmer also attached a badly written note, which read "Yous are next defo" on the package which was placed at the entrance to the mosque. The disciplinary proceedings reveal Cain's posts at a time of anti-Islamic fervour, both online and in public, as well as credible allegations of racial profiling by Ontario's cops.¹²²

In Germany, Deputy leader of Germany's far-right AfD Party was facing investigation

after she made anti-Muslim remarks on Twitter on new year's eve. Beatrix von Storch accused Cologne police of appeasing "barbaric, gang-raping Muslim hordes of men" after officers tweeted a new year greeting in Arabic, as reported by the media. Twitter removed the tweet and suspended von Storch's account for 12 hours for breaching the site's rules on hate speech. Von Storch's tweets came as Germany began to enforce strict new rules governing hate speech on social media, which could result in sites like Twitter and Facebook being fined up to £44m if they fail to remove "obviously illegal" material within 24 hours of being notified.¹²³

In the UK, a man who drove a van into a crowd of worshippers near a north London mosque after expressing far-right and anti-Muslim opinions was convicted of murder and attempted murder. A jury at London's Wool-

wich Crown Court deliberated for about an hour before finding 48-year-old Darren Osborne guilty of the June 2017 attack in the city's Finsbury Park neighborhood. A 51-year-old man, Makram Ali, was killed and nine people were injured when a rented van ploughed into worshippers gathering to break their fast during Ramadan. Prosecutors said Osborne was motivated by a hatred of Muslims, whom he saw as extremists or rapists in pedophile gangs. Osborne, of Cardiff, Wales, had pleaded not guilty. Prosecutors said Osborne was radicalized over a short period of time, in part through online far-right propaganda. Searches for two prominent extreme-right figures - English Defense League founder Tommy Robinson and Britain First leader Paul Golding - were found on Osborne's computer. Osborne's partner, Sarah Andrews, told prosecutors he had become "brainwashed" and was a "ticking time bomb."¹²⁴



3.3. Positive Views on Islam

In Germany, Angela Merkel, German Chancellor and leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party said she still believed that “Islam belongs to Germany”. Merkel made the remarks on a TV duel with Martin Schulz, chancellor candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), her major rival in the federal elections, as refugee and immigration issues were some of the prime focuses in the debate. Both Merkel and Schulz saw no issue with Muslim immigration to Germany, but Merkel said the 2015 refugee crisis had left Germany with a difficult task of integrating new arrivals into society, making sure they found places in educational institutions and the labor market. Merkel also called for cooperation with

Turkey, Libya, Niger and other countries in solving refugee and immigration issues, and in the meantime opening channels for legal immigration. She also urged to better screening asylum seekers on for what reasons they come to Germany. The SPD chairman Schulz criticized that Merkel had not voted with the European partners at the beginning of the refugee crisis in autumn 2015, however, Merkel defended her decision of two years ago to allow over about 1 million refugees to enter Germany, mostly from war-torn Middle East and North Africa, that she could not act otherwise.¹²⁵

At different occasion, Angela Merkel described the rise of right-wing populism in Europe as ‘a poison’. Merkel, speaking at the





economic forum in Davos, Switzerland, said the problem stemmed from unresolved issues in Europe and she was trying to get it 'under control'. In Germany's case she pointed to the bailout of Greece during the financial crisis and the influx of migrants in 2015 as the drivers of right-wing support. Both events happened while she was leader of the country. Her comments come after the far-right AfD party won its first ever parliamentary seats at the last German election, which left Merkel struggling to form a government. She now entered formal negotiations with her old partners the SPD, but no deal had been hashed out more than four months after voters went to the ballot boxes. Merkel also said there was too much 'national egoism' in politics and that leaders needed closer co-operation to face modern challenges.¹²⁶

In Canada, former ambassador for religious freedom, Andrew Bennett, said that

Myanmar's Aung Sang Suu Kyi had squandered her status by not standing up for persecuted Muslims in her country. Suu Kyi was facing calls for her Nobel Peace Prize to be taken away for not speaking out on behalf of the 125,000 ethnic minority Rohingya Muslims that had fled Myanmar's Rakhine province to neighbouring Bangladesh. Bennett said that he detected prejudice and suspicions about Muslims when he visited the predominantly Buddhist nation in 2015 in his previous job as Canada's religious freedom envoy. He said Rohingya Muslims had been the long-standing victims of systemic discrimination, and that they were herded into concentration camp-like settlements by the government.¹²⁷

In the UK, a report titled 'A Very Merry Muslim Christmas' by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims said that charitable acts by the UK's Muslim commu-



nity often went unnoticed because they were not considered “newsworthy”. In a year which saw five terror attacks and the Grenfell Tower tragedy, Muslims had been at the frontline of providing aid to those affected. In the aftermath of the Manchester bombing, Muslims rushed to help by giving blood to hospitals, offering rides home and raising money for victims and their families. However, the British media willfully ignored the contribution made by charities, instead focusing on latent fears that Islamic charities were open to being abused to finance terrorism, despite evidence to the contrary. Anna Soubry, co-chair of the APPG and Conservative Member of Parliament, said the findings showed that Britain’s three million-strong Muslim community were supporting the most deprived in their communities.¹²⁸

Meanwhile Baroness Warsi, a former Tory cabinet minister said the situation of Islamophobia in the UK was far worse now than in 2011, when she argued prejudice against Muslims had passed the dinner-table test. She described Islamophobia as the country’s “bigotry blindspot” as she gave evidence to

the Commons Home Affairs Committee. She said: “There is widespread Islamophobia across Britain and anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim discrimination. Specifically with the press, I could spend hours giving you case after case after case.” In 2011 Baroness Warsi claimed that prejudice against Muslims had become widely socially acceptable in Britain.¹²⁹

In the U.S., President Donald Trump said in a British television interview in January 2018 that he was ready to apologize for retweeting anti-Muslim videos from a far-right British group, and he reiterated his assertions that he was not a racist. In the interview with the ‘Good Morning Britain’ program, Trump was pushed by Piers Morgan, the presenter, about his November re-tweet of three videos by the group called Britain First that caused outrage in Britain and brought a rare rebuke from Prime Minister Theresa May. Trump said he was unaware of the group’s politics and that the tweets showed his concern over the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. Trump was quoted saying “If you are telling me they’re horrible people, horrible, racist people, I would certainly apologize if you’d like me to do that.”¹³⁰ Donald Trump was condemned for re-tweeting comments from far-right group Britain First’s leader Jayda Fransen in November 2017. They showed what the group claimed was a Muslim man destroying a statue of the Virgin Mary, and a teen being hurled to his death from a roof by an ‘Islamic hate mob’. Trump insisted that was a misunderstanding on his part, and insisted Muslims back his tough security policies. He said: “I had good support from Muslims during my presidential run, and I think I have good support now.”¹³¹

3.4. Counter-balances on Far Rights

In the US, the city of Boston launched a poster campaign to fight Islamophobia by encouraging bystanders to intervene, in a non-confrontational way, if they witnessed anti-Muslim harassment. The city began installing 50 posters around the city with advice on what to do if someone saw Islamophobic behavior. The posters recommended sitting by a victim of harassment and talking with them about a neutral subject while ignoring the harasser. A resource said: “The technique is called ‘non-complementary behavior,’ and is intended to disempower an aggressive person by countering their expectations.” A similar campaign was also underway in San Francisco.¹³²

In the same city, tens of thousands of people took to the streets to protest a “free speech” rally featuring far-right speakers a week after a woman was killed at a Virginia white-supremacist demonstration. Rally organ-

isers invited several far-right speakers who were confined to a small pen that police set up in the historic Boston Common park to keep the two sides separate. The city avoided a repeat of bloody street battles in Charlottesville, Virginia, where one woman was killed. Police estimated that as many as 40,000 people packed into the streets around the nation’s oldest park.¹³³

In another city in the U.S., protests against a far-right rally in Berkeley had drawn more than 3,000 people, with the atmosphere moving from festive to tense as the day wore on. Marchers and anti-fascists gathered at Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park, where a large police presence was on scene and many of them have donned riot gear and gas masks. Many parts of Berkeley were filled with people protesting the far right. At the corner of Center and Oxford streets, people chanted, “No hate, no fear, Nazis get out of here” and “When immi-





grants are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back.” The protests came a day after thousands turned out to demonstrate against a far-right rally in San Francisco.¹³⁴

The countered-rally itself had been called off, and far-right activist Milo Yiannopoulos reportedly held a press conference formally canceling the event. The event fell apart after the co-organizers — The Berkeley Patriot and Yiannopoulos — failed to confirm the guest list and book multiple indoor venues on campus. Tensions and confusion mounted on the week ahead of the event, which organizers said was planned in response to Berkeley’s efforts to shut down conservative speakers. A fierce debate about free speech on campus ignited in February when the university canceled an appearance by former Breitbart editor Yiannopoulos because of security concerns. Steve Bannon, former adviser to President Trump, and

conservative commentator Ann Coulter were reportedly scheduled to speak at this event, but their appearances were never confirmed.¹³⁵

Another setback was suffered by far rights when a coalition of neo-Nazis and white nationalists in Tennessee on October planned rallies for the day, but was abruptly canceled in the face of massive local counter-protests. The back-to-back rallies in Shelbyville and Murfreesboro were planned as the first joint event for extremist groups with racist, anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi views including the League of the South, the Traditionalist Worker’s Party, National Socialist Movement, Vanguard America and Anti-Communist Action since the August rally in Charlottesville, Virginia that resulted in a riot with dozens of injuries, one dead counter-protester and two police officers killed in a helicopter crash. At the morning rally in Shelbyville, roughly 350 counter-protesters gathered to wait in 30

degree weather for the white supremacists to arrive. Most were local, hailing from Shelbyville or as far away as Nashville. Hundreds of police officers patrolled the area and kept the counter-protesters back from the designated demonstration zone. Approximately 200 protesters finally showed up at an hour and a half late.¹³⁶

The Massive blow on far rights in the U.S. came along with significant political strikes suffered by their elites. Stephen Bannon, the former Breitbart News chairman who helped Donald Trump win the election and served as the West Wing's resident nationalist ideologue, was leaving the White House. Trump had told senior aides that he had made the decision to remove his embattled chief strategist, and was later reported that Bannon had already resigned.¹³⁷ Not only being kicked out from the White House, Stephen Bannon had also stepped down as executive chairman of Breitbart News, the company announced in an online post and a source close to Bannon con-

firmed. The former White House chief strategist faced mounting pressure to resign from Breitbart after he was quoted disparaging President Donald Trump and his family in a new book "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" by Michael Wolff. The Breitbart board started discussing his future at the company after the comments were revealed last week and continued debating it over the weekend, as media told.¹³⁸

Such a decision was taken after more than 2,500 advertisers had reportedly stopped advertising on right-wing news website Breitbart News in recent months, underscoring the swelling power of a grassroots campaign to boycott the platform, especially amid escalating political tensions in the US. According to a tweet by Sleeping Giants, a campaign group aiming to pressure companies into cutting ties with media they deem to be racist or sexist, the number of advertisers that had ceased advertising was climbing towards 2,600. Bre-





itbart gained prominence as a deeply divisive mouthpiece for many supporters of US President Donald Trump ahead of last year's election. In February, Milo Yiannopoulos, a senior editor and well known figurehead for the site, was forced to resign his position after remarks surfaced in which he seemed to condone paedophilia. Recently Steve Bannon, known for his nationalist views, returned to head up the site. He had been executive chairman until August last year before taking a leave of absence to serve as chief strategist to Mr Trump. Mr Bannon was the force behind some of Mr Trump's most contentious policies, including the travel ban on people from a number of Muslim-majority countries. Amid the advertiser exodus, Sleeping Giants had repeatedly urged e-retail giant Amazon to cut advertising ties with Breitbart, a move that many of the company's employees appear to support. In April 2017, nearly 600 people at the Seattle-based organisation reportedly signed an email sent to chief execu-

tive Jeff Bezos and senior vice president Jeff Blackburn with the heading: "Amazon Must Stop Advertising on Breitbart News".¹³⁹

In Austria, more than 20,000 people rallied in January in Vienna against Austria's new conservative-far right coalition over its hardline stances on immigration and social policy. Marchers descended on a central district housing several ministries to make known the views of a protesters' "New Year welcome committee" for the administration of Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who became the world's youngest leader. As many as 60,000 took to the streets to protest against the inclusion in the government of the anti-immigrant Freedom Party (FPÖ), which held six cabinet portfolios, including that of the vice-chancellor, party leader Heinz-Christian Strache. People of all ages, including families, answered the call of leftist and anti-racist groups, marching in a long procession through the centre of the Aus-

trian capital. The march came to an end at the former imperial Hofburg palace, where crowds gathered, illuminating the darkness with the light of thousands of smartphones.¹⁴⁰

Few months earlier, around 3,000 people formed a chain of light in Austria's capital city to protest against the formation of a government that included the far-right Freedom Party. Demonstrators held candles, torches and bicycle lamps encircled the government district. Spokesman for SOS Mitmensch, one of the human rights groups which organized the demonstration, said: "Our republic's most powerful political offices should be exclusively reserved for trustworthy people who are not in the slightest connected to right-wing extremists." It was the biggest protest in Austria since coalition talks between the conservative People's Party (ÖVP) and the Freedom Party (FPÖ) started. Organizers estimated the number of people taking part at 8,000 to 10,000, the police at around 3,000.¹⁴¹

In Greece, Twitter had suspended the account of Greece's far-right Golden Dawn party amid a push to combat white supremacist and other hateful groups operating on the microblogging site. The move came two weeks after Twitter announced it had broadened its hateful conduct policy to permanently suspend any account that displays "violent threats, multiple slurs, epithets, racist or sexist tropes, incites fear or reduces someone to less than human." In a statement, Golden Dawn slammed the decision, saying the ban was orchestrated by the entangled news media and the corrupt political power which was controlled by the new world order. The party said it had sent a tough message of complaint to the company, arguing that disabling its account constituted a brutal undemocratic act that violates political rights as well as the individual rights of half a million Greek Golden Dawn voters who were excluded from being informed about their party's positions.¹⁴²





In Belgium, Françoise Schepmans, the mayor of the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek said that far-right politicians seeking to stage an “Islam safari” in the area were not welcome. The statement referred to the visit planned by the Dutch anti-Islam Freedom Party leader Geert Wilders and the right-wing Flemish nationalist politician Filip Dewinter. Mayor Schepmans said, “In Molenbeek, more than 100,000 people live. The vast majority are democratic. Those people do nothing wrong and just want to live together peacefully.”¹⁴³

Later on, Geert Wilders, the head of the Dutch far-right Party for Freedom (PVV), canceled his visit to Molenbeek, following the ban forbidding Flemish far-right groups and the Dutch far-right leader from visiting the Brussels neighborhood, home to many of those behind the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks. An official said as quoted: “We do not want Mr. Wilders to export his message of racist hatred on the territory of Brussels.” Speaking at a press conference with Flemish nationalist Vlaams Belang party

member Filip Dewinter, Wilders said he would appeal against the ban, saying he “finds it unacceptable that parts of our cities are not accessible to parliamentarians.” Dewinter added he had wanted to bring Wilders on a tour of “Europe’s capital of jihad.”¹⁴⁴

Strikes against far right figure. In Poland, media report said Polish authorities banned Richard Spencer from entering 26 countries in Europe’s visa-free Schengen area for five years. A source close to the Polish Foreign Ministry confirmed to the media that the ban had taken effect. Spencer previously was banned from the Schengen zone for three years after his 2014 arrest in Hungary, where he had planned to host a conference. Spencer popularized the term “alt-right” to describe a fringe movement that’s a loose mix of racist, anti-Semitic and anti-immigration beliefs. In August, he was scheduled to speak at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, where a car plowed into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing a woman.¹⁴⁵

In Canada, a counter protest was organized to balance Quebec's largest far-right groups, when they staged a demonstration in November 2017 in the provincial capital, where police were working to keep them apart from a counter-demonstration by anti-racism and anti-capitalism activists. Around 300 members of far-right groups, including La Meute and Storm Alliance, marched towards a convention centre where the governing Quebec Liberals were holding a major policy meeting. Leaders of La Meute and Storm Alliance accused the Liberal government of being too tolerant of the cultural practices of minorities. Outside the convention centre, police placed themselves between the far-right groups and the counter-protesters.¹⁴⁶ In different city, around 4,000 people took part in a protest against a far-right anti-immigration demonstration in the Canadian city of Vancouver. The rival demonstrations ended without violence with police escorting several far-right protesters away from the crowd.¹⁴⁷

Also in Canada, the OC Transpo would not follow a new Quebec law that forced people receiving a public service to uncover their faces, with Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson dismissing the law as "a thinly-veiled appeal to populist sentiment." Watson wrote to Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard, telling him that the premier should not expect the City of Ottawa to follow the new Quebec law. Speaking to reporters later, Watson expressed shock that the Quebec government would pass a law that compels people to remove their face veils to receive public services.¹⁴⁸

In the UK, British government delivered a rare rebuke of President Donald Trump for retweeting inflammatory anti-Muslim and anti-

immigrant videos originally shared by a far-right political group. Trump shared three videos posted by Jayda Fransen, deputy leader of the fringe group Britain First, which opposed what it called the "Islamization" of Britain and had engaged in a series of stunts, including occupying mosques. Prime Minister Theresa May said in a statement: "It is wrong for the president to have done this." Trump responded to the British leader with a heated tweet saying "Theresa @theresamay, don't focus on me, focus on the destructive Radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom. We are doing just fine!" — but mistakenly directed that to an unrelated Twitter account. He later deleted that post and replaced it with a similarly worded tweet, but with May's correct handle. The first video Trump shared claimed to show a Muslim migrant beating up a Dutch boy on crutches. The second was captioned "Muslim destroys a statute of Virgin Mary," and the third read "Islamist mob pushes teenage boy off roof and beats him to death!"¹⁴⁹

Similar critics on far rights were also raised by the church in the country. The Archbishop of Canterbury used his Christmas Day sermon to reflect on the terrorist atrocities and deceitfulness of 'populist leaders' witnessed in 2017. The Most Rev Justin Welby told worshippers at Canterbury Cathedral that much could be





learnt from the Nativity story, where Jesus was 'power seen in humility'. Preaching at the Sung Eucharist service, he made an apparent jibe at US President Donald Trump by contrasting the son of God with 'populist leaders that deceive' their people. And in an echo of Pope Francis's address at Christmas Eve Mass in the Vatican, the Archbishop drew a parallel between the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and the refugee crisis. He told the congregation: 'The nature of those who have power is to seek to hold on to it. The Archbishop in 2017 publicly spoke out against Mr Trump when he shared videos from far-right group Britain First via Twitter. He said at the time: "It is deeply disturbing that the president of the United States has chosen to amplify the voice of far-right extremists."¹⁵⁰

In Australia, right-wing British provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos blasted those who do not agree with him as "petulant babies" after violent protests in Australia. Hundreds of protesters clashed with police and supporters of Mr Yiannopoulos outside a supposedly secret

venue in Melbourne. Television images showed officers working to keep the groups apart, but violence erupted. Police responded with pepper spray as rocks, glass bottles and sticks were thrown. Five police were injured and two protesters arrested. Mr Yiannopoulos is a conservative firebrand and staunch fan of US President Donald Trump, resigned from right-wing news site Breitbart in February 2017 amid a storm triggered by comments in which he seemed to condone

paedophilia.¹⁵¹

In Hungary, Budapest-based tour operator Setamuhely (Budapest Walkshop) run 30 different walks taking visitors around the city's architectural and cultural sites and the Jewish and Muslim communities. Anna Lenard, who runs the business, told media: "Most people have never met a Muslim in their life and this... together with what they hear every day in the media causes a lot of tension and stress in daily life. I think this is the main reason why people are coming now." Most of the people on the four-hour walk had a college degree, and two-thirds were women, she said. Hungary's Muslim community, estimated to number about 40,000, grew with the migration crisis of 2015, though most of them arrived earlier to study at Hungarian universities.¹⁵²

In the U.S., a professor at Columbia University argued that he was justified in shutting down a speech by a far-right British politician because his speech represented an act of violence. Tommy Robinson, co-founder

and former leader of the anti-immigration and anti-Islam English Defense League, previously served as a leader in Britain's far-right British Freedom Party. Columbia University College Republicans invited Robinson to give a talk on "The Fall of Europe: Mass Immigration" via Skype in October 2017. Media reported that the speech was immediately interrupted and shut down by shouting left-wing protesters. Many of the protesters carried signs reading "hate speech = violence."¹⁵³

Also in the U.S., the Southwest Airlines Co was sued by an American citizen who came to the United States as an Iraqi refugee, who said he was removed from a California flight after another passenger became unnerved upon hearing him speak in Arabic. Khairuldeen Makhzoomi said he was seeking compensatory and punitive damages for civil rights violations, discrimination and emotional distress stemming from the "Islamophobia" underlying the 6 April, 2016 incident, which began as he awaited takeoff to Oakland from Los Angeles. The complaint was filed with the US District Court in San Francisco, and Southwest had no immediate comment. Makhzoomi said he had been seated and talking with his uncle by phone, after attending a dinner featuring United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, when two police officers and Southwest employee Shoaib Ahmed removed him from the plane. Makhzoomi said he was released by local law

enforcement and the Federal Bureau of Investigation after hours of questioning and being invasively searched, but that Southwest refused to rebook him, and instead refunded his ticket. He later flew home on Delta Air Lines.¹⁵⁴

In Germany, a civil rights organisations were mobilising against the newly elected far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party and other more hardline groups, vowing to avert the even stronger rightward lurch seen in neighbouring countries. Thousands of protesters were present in the eastern city of Dresden when the anti-Islam Pegida movement celebrated its third anniversary. Pegida - Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West - had seen dwindling crowds since early 2015, with the AfD absorbing some of its supporters. The AfD railed against what it called the "Islamisation of Europe". It won almost 13 per cent of the vote in the 24 September 2017 national elections, making it the third-largest party in the Bundestag, or Lower House of Parliament, and the first far-right party to win seats in more than half a century. Police data showed a 14 per cent rise in right-wing extremist violent acts in 2016, and that anti-Semitic crimes rose 4 per cent to 681 in the first eight months in 2017.¹⁵⁵



3.5. Supports on Mosques



In the U.S., community support continued to build for an Islamic center after a bombing Governor Mark Dayton branded a terrorist attack. Members of Pax Christi Catholic Church in Eden Prairie delivered in a basket more than 200 handwritten notes of support to the Dar Al-Farooq Center. Other signs of support arrived through the day, and a crowdfunding campaign had raised nearly \$30,000 to help pay for repairs at the Islamic Center.¹⁵⁶

The governor of Minnesota, Mark Dayton, denounced the attack on a mosque as a “terrible, dastardly, cowardly” act of terrorism. He said during a visit to the targeted mosque: “It’s an act of terrorism, a criminal act of terrorism. I hope and pray that the perpetrator will be caught and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.” The explosion, which the FBI said was caused by an improvised explosive device, rocked the mosque in August 2017 as congregants began to gather for prayers. No one was injured, but the building sustained damage close to the site of the explosion.¹⁵⁷

Support on mosques was also seen in an-

other city in the U.S., as the New Jersey city of Bayonne agreed to a \$400,000 settlement with a local Muslim group that would allow a planned mosque to proceed, ending a lawsuit that accused officials of illegally rejecting the zoning application. The Bayonne Muslims filed a federal lawsuit in 2016 after their application to establish a permanent home was rejected by the city’s zoning board, claiming the decision violated a U.S. law that prohibited local governments from imposing an undue burden on religious exercise through land use regulations. The agreement called for a public hearing within 30 days to approve the mosque. The settlement did not affect a probe opened by the U.S. Department of Justice last year into the case. In recent years, the Justice Department had settled lawsuits against numerous localities for denying mosque applications, including Bernards Township, New Jersey; Bensalem, Pennsylvania; and Des Plaines, Illinois. A similar Justice Department lawsuit against Culpeper County, Virginia, was dismissed as moot by a federal judge after the county agreed to allow the mosque to be built.¹⁵⁸

In Sweden, King Carl XVI Gustaf, visited a mosque in Orebro gutted in an arson attack on 26 September 2017. He was in Orebro for a previously scheduled visit to the university, and paid a visit to the mosque afterwards on his own request. A 20 year-old man was arrested in connection with the arson attack on the mosque, the latest in a string of such incidents in recent years. The mosque was first targeted in 2014 when someone threw a bottle with flammable contents through a window.¹⁵⁹

3.6. Positive Development on Hijab

Canada became one of countries to prohibit the wearing of full-face coverings in public. A law, which was only passed in Quebec, mentioned those wearing the niqab or burqa must unveil when riding public transport or offering and receiving government services in the province. It was expected to affect school teachers, hospital workers and police officers among others, though the law change did not specifically mention the Islamic veils. However the legislation had one particular critic in Canada's own Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. He told media: "I don't think it's the government's business to tell a woman what she should or shouldn't be wearing."¹⁶⁰

Meanwhile, a Canadian judge granted a temporary stay to the law that banned face coverings on those who provided or received public services in the province of Quebec. Justice Babak Barin ruled that the province could

not order people to remove their face coverings until a provision was put into the law that allows for citizens to apply for religious accommodations. The law, called Bill 62, was seen by many as targeting Muslims because some Muslim women wear niqabs or hijabs. The province said the law was only to provide clear separation between state and religion, known as a state religious neutrality law. The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association launched a court challenge to the law, arguing that it violated the freedom of religion and equality. They asked that the law be set aside until the court could rule whether it was unconstitutional. But the justice did not go that far and granted a temporary stay, until the provincial government provided a section to allow those who object to the law on religious grounds to file for exemption. Bill 62 did not have a clause giving people





the right to file for religious accommodations, but that part of the legislation had yet to be put into force. As such, the justice ruled the law was incomplete.¹⁶¹

The similar positive gesture towards veils was also seen in the U.K., when the Saint Stephens Primary School in London's east-end reversed its ban on young children fasting and wearing Islamic veils. In response to the rule, Islamist advocacy group Muslim Engagement and Development started a public campaign accusing the school of intolerance. The campaign gained widespread support from London's Islamic community and left-wing policymakers. The ban was only enforced for one week.¹⁶² Earlier in the country, models dressed in headscarves and Islamic robes took to the catwalk for the first ever London Modest Fashion festival with the aim of empowering Muslim women. Dozens of models took part in the inaugural event at London's Grosvenor House Hotel in October 2017 to showcase the leading designers of the 'modest fashion' world. The inaugural catwalk was hosted by Dr Myriam Francois-Ferrah, a Franco-British journalist who specialized in Islam in France and the UK.¹⁶³

In Switzerland, the Swiss Federal Council signaled its clear opposition to the so-called burqa ban initiative, and presented a counter measure to compete with it at the polls. Swiss voters would eventually be called to vote on the initiative 'Yes to a ban on face coverings' devised by the Egerkingen committee led by Walter Wobmann, a member of the populist rightwing Swiss People's Party (SVP). The initiative, which in September 2017 garnered more than the required 100,000 signatures to put it to a popular vote, called

for it to be made illegal for anyone to cover their face in public, with some exceptions including for local customs, the weather and health and safety reasons. Such a law would effectively ban the burqa, though the committee said it was also targeting hooligans and others who covered their face for criminal intent.¹⁶⁴

In Sweden, the leader of the anti-immigration Sweden Democrat party appeared to have dropped his push for a burqa ban, days after Denmark's government proposed a national ban on full-face veils. In a gambit seen as part of his preparations for a post-election deal with Sweden's centre-right, Jimmie Åkesson said he did not think a ban was right. "I think that it is problematical," Åkesson told media saying he was against a "blanket ban on any item of clothing". He said: "I'm more in favour of limiting parents' ability to force children to wear religious symbols which degrade women." Åkesson in the past railed against the veil, claiming in 2010 that "terrorists and other criminal elements" used them to disguise their identities.¹⁶⁵

3.7. On Inter-Faiths

In Hungaria, Catholic Priest Father Zoltan Nemeth took risk by providing refugees shelter from the winter cold in a church building, a move that had attracted local condemnation and international attention. The church had functioned as a multipurpose social service center in the troubled neighborhood, offering language classes for refugees, free counseling for homeless people, a base for social workers, and accommodations for those who would struggle to find a stable home elsewhere. As widely reported by media, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban and his ruling Fidesz Party were scapegoating migrants and other minorities—which included cracking down on NGOs, threatening university, and exerting control over the media, etc., but some faith leaders were defying government attacks on marginalized communities.¹⁶⁶

In the UK, backlash against a planned

anti-Islam rally continued to grow and now an interfaith group was adding its voice to the mix. The Centre for Jewish-Catholic-Muslim Learning based out of King’s University College released a statement saying that “when one of us is being marginalized or threatened, we are all marginalized and threatened.” Michael Bechard, Chair of the centre said: “As a centre, we thought that we could make a very strong statement to indicate that we have no time or tolerance for any forms of bigotry in our community. We ask that other people of faith – and really all folks of good will – stand together with us to make sure that London is a safe place for all of God’s people.”¹⁶⁷

In Vatican, Pope Francis was decrying persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and praying they received full rights. The pontiff said there was “sad news about the persecution of the religious minority of our Rohingya



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brothers,” as thousands of Rohingya were trying to flee into Bangladesh after escalated deadly violence at home. Francis asked the faithful in St. Peter’s Square to pray that God “saves them” and they received help.¹⁶⁸

In his first official speech in Myanmar in November 2017, the head of the Catholic Church cautioned that every ethnic group must be respected. Conflict, he said, must be resolved through dialogue, not violence. Prior to the remarks, Pope Francis met with various religious representatives in Rangoon, where he called for the “wealth of our differences” to be acknowledged in religious and ethnic questions. Seventeen participants were present included six Christians, five Buddhists, three Muslims, two Hindus and a Jew. The pontiff was on his nineteenth foreign trip of his papacy. The common thread that brought them all together was interfaith dialogue, especially with Muslims.¹⁶⁹

Speaking in Italy, Pope Francis urged governments and people to do more to help migrants and not to see them as enemies. Francis visited a drab refugee centre on the outskirts of

Bologna known as ‘The Hub’, a home to about 1,000 asylum seekers, most of whom risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean from Africa and the Middle East. Many of the refugees and migrants were without documents and all wear a plastic yellow bracelet. The pope wore one bearing his name and the number 3900003 on his right wrist. Some 600,000 impoverished migrants and refugees arrived in Italy in less than four years, and more than 13,000 have died trying to cross the Mediterranean. Francis also condemned internet trolling against foreigners, saying they had been subjected to terrible phrases and insults. Francis called on more governments to facilitate initiatives backed by the private sector and community groups to set up humanitarian corridors for refugees in the most difficult situations.¹⁷⁰

At different occasion Pope also expressed his support on Muslims in Palestine. Pope Francis reinforced calls for a two-state solution to the decades-long conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in his traditional Christmas Day message delivered just over two weeks after the US president, Donald Trump, inflamed tensions in the region. Speaking before the faithful in St Peter’s Square in Rome, Francis said the children of the Middle East continued “to suffer because of growing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians”. Earlier in the month, President Trump fulfilled his controversial election pledge by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, enraging the Palestinians who also want the city to be the capital of their future state. As response, more than 120 countries backed a UN resolution urging the US to reverse its decision.¹⁷¹

In the U.S., after a Florida mosque

burned down in an arson attack, Jewish people had launched and supported an online fundraiser to help rebuild it. The campaign to help restore the mosque, created by Adeel Karim, raised an impressive \$78,000 - well over the \$40,000 goal set by the Islamic Society of New Tampa. "This community has held several events for outreach and the money will double down our efforts to ensure love, empathy, and compassion were instilled", Karim posted on Facebook at the time, when he realised people were donating weird amounts to the crowd-funder. He also wrote: "I couldn't understand why people were donating in what seemed like weird amounts to the cause. There are sums of 18, 36, 72.00 dollars etc. then I figured out after clicking on the names Avi, Cohen, Goldstein, Rubin, Fisher." Jews donated in multiples of 18 as a form of what was called as 'Chai'. It wished for the recipient's long life.¹⁷²

Support on Rohingya Muslims also come from Tibet leading monk. Speaking to the media, the Dalai Lama said that the suffering of Rohingya Muslims fleeing violence in Myanmar would have inspired Buddha to help. The world's most well-known Buddhist icon said the plight of the minority group made him very sad, as more than 300,000 Rohingya had fled into Bangladesh following a security clamp-down by the Burmese armed forces, prompted by Rohingya militant attacks on military posts in August. The Tibetan Buddhist spiritual lead-

er said those who were harassing Muslims "should remember Buddha", as Buddha would have helped the Rohingya Muslims who were fleeing violence in Buddhist-majority Burma. The Dalai Lama said he had also delivered this message to Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi several years before.¹⁷³

In South Africa, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu broke his "vow to remain silent on public affairs" to call on Myanmar de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi to speak out about the Rohingya crisis. In a letter addressed to Suu Kyi, Tutu said it was not fitting for a symbol of righteousness such as Suu Kyi to lead a country where this kind of atrocity occurred. Tutu said: "My dear sister, if the political price of your ascension to the highest office in Myanmar is your silence, the price is surely too steep. . . . A country that is not at peace with itself, that fails to acknowledge and protect the dignity and worth of all its people, is not a free country." Suu Kyi, who was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 1991, had been criticized for her lackluster response to the ongoing crisis.¹⁷⁴

In the U.S., a show of unity was expressed between the Catholic and Muslim communities





in January 2018 when they broke bread and prayed in the parish hall at St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church in Chino. The two faith groups joined hands in a prayer circle around the perimeter of the hall and sang the hymn version of the Prayer of St. Francis. Holding a rosary, Pastor Michael Miller opened the event by welcoming Muslims from the Baitul Hameed Mosque in Chino and asking them to conduct their evening prayers on rugs laid out in the parish hall. Fr. Miller said: “We are happy to host a dinner to honor you and your work here in building up a more just and merciful Chino and California Inland Empire,” while Imam Irshad Malhi chanted verses of the Koran while men and women prostrated themselves in prayer with their foreheads to the ground. Videos were presented by each faith group, including ‘The Sultan and the Saint’ showing a dramatic meeting between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kamil. At

the occasion, Catholics and Muslims enjoyed a hearty chicken meal and mounds of dessert while discussing faith and every day events.¹⁷⁵

In the U.S., female faith leaders in East Central Illinois came together in February 2018 to call for courage in the face of any form of violence, hatred, racism, intolerance and social injustice through a declaration, committed the 31 members to “challenge the resurgence of groups ... who are promoting dangerous, white-supremacist, far-right ideologies.” It also cited a statement by the Charlottesville Clergy Collective in Virginia that called for unity and justice in the wake of the Unite the Right rally in August 2017 that turned violent, leaving one woman dead and 38 people injured. The declaration was largely in response to recent threats and instances of harassment made to members of the University of Illinois community by far-right groups. The group leader, Cindy Shep-

herd said the past year had troubled her and the rest of the faith community, as discussions on faith and politics became more contentious and opinions more polarized. She mentioned that threats and harassment by far-right groups had abounded since President Donald Trump's election in 2016, as she remarked as "The times that reflect a spirit of intolerance."¹⁷⁶

Meanwhile, a unique movement had brought two different communities together, as Muslims and Latinos broke bread in Sacramento to promote love and unity in a time where people from both sides feel like targets. "Taco Trucks at Every Mosque" made a stop at the Salam Islamic Center in January 2018 to serve halal tacos in an effort to encourage Muslims and Latinos to embrace their identities. A participant from the crowd said: "When we're fighting justice we need to for all of our rights, especially our civil rights. We are fighting hate one halal taco at a time, tacos being the symbol of love and the symbol of service to our community."¹⁷⁷

At different place, three religious leaders in North Texas—a priest, an imam, and a rabbi—proved it was possible to come together in times of division. The Rev. Dr. Chris Girata, Imam Omar Suleiman, and Rabbi David Stern gathered at Saint Michael and All Angels Church in Dallas to discuss where their respective faiths diverge, and where they unite. The panel discussion, presented by the Women of Saint Michael and moderated by the Rev. Amy Heller, drew in people of all backgrounds. The three panelists, who talked like old pals, helped facilitate a light-hearted environment. The solidarity shown by the priest, imam, and rabbi enlightened and inspired many of the hundreds of people gathered at the church.¹⁷⁸

Also in the U.S., a few hundred people marched down Madison Avenue in September 2017 for the 32nd Annual Muslim Day Parade. For the first time in its history, a rabbi served as the honorary grand marshal at the parade. Imam Shamsi Ali, President of the Muslim Foundation of America—the group that organizes the annual event, invited Rabbi Marc Schneier in order to send a message of unity. Imam Ali said that he and Rabbi Schneier, who was the President of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, had had a long working relationship speaking against religious persecution, specifically against Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism. Rabbi Schneier's presence at the parade reflected the theme of the 32nd Annual Muslim Day Parade: Building Bridges. Imam Ali urged for communities of different faiths to connect and help fight each other's battle. At the year's parade, the Muslim community was fighting for the rights of a specific people: the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. Participants carried signs that read "We Are All Rohingya" and "Stop Genocide," some of which contained graphic images of murdered Rohingya children. As the Muslim community walked to express their solidarity with the Rohingya people in Myanmar, individuals from other religious groups walked to express their solidarity with the Muslim community. The presence of the Jewish community at the parade extended beyond Rabbi Schneier's role as a grand marshal. Different Jewish organizations marched alongside Muslim men and women. One of these groups was Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST). Its representative explained that the synagogue's participation was an outgrowth of a relationship with the mosque that developed after the November, 2016 presidential election. She said:



“We wanted them to feel like they were not alone. We feel that Muslims are an important part of our community, an important part of our country. We refuse to let the administration in Washington change those realities.”¹⁷⁹

In Indonesia, there exists an amazing instance of interfaith harmony. On a tree-lined side street in the Indonesian capital sits a colonial-era Protestant church with an antique pipe organ built into a large wall behind the altar. Across the street is a modern, 100,000sq ft mosque with towering arches at its entrances and a cavernous prayer area laid wall-to-wall with red carpet. Despite their different faiths, the two houses of worship were friendly, helpful neighbours — and an example of pluralism in the world’s most populous Muslim-majority nation at a time of heightened fears over religious intolerance. Mr Nur Alam, the imam at the Sunda Kelapa Grand Mosque, he said: “We

respect each other. If we never offend other people, then we will be respected.” Across the street, Mr Adriaan Pitoy who was a pastor at St Paul’s Church, said with similar tone: “Our relationship is just one of many steps we take. We also go to other mosques to promote dialogue. Our relationship with our friends next door is normal.” For the two houses of worship, normal means sharing parking spaces during busier services: Friday Prayer for the mosque, Sunday Mass for the church. They also hosted interfaith dialogue sessions, and even volleyball tournaments. During Ramadan, the Muslim holy fasting month, the staff at St Paul’s, some of whom were Muslim, carried boxes of food to the mosque for worshippers there to break their fast. This type of religious harmony among neighbouring houses of worship was evident not just in Jakarta, but across the Indonesian archipelago. About 90 per cent of Indonesia’s



260 million people were identified as Muslim, but the country also had Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian populations.¹⁸⁰

In the U.K., Cardinal Vincent Nichols and two leading Muslim clerics joined together to launch a new Muslim Certificate in Religious Studies at St Mary's University, Twickenham. On the site of a notable address delivered by Pope Benedict on faith relations in 2010, the religious leaders opened a new interfaith prayer room and announce the launch of the certificate as the newest product of their long-standing dialogue. The new certificate aimed to support the religious literacy of teachers and enhance the contribution that religion could make to the formation of British values as referenced in the Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status. Speaking about the launch, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Chancellor of St Mary's University, said: "I am delighted to welcome our

distinguished guests to St Mary's and pleased that they can join us in celebrating our continued commitment to promoting interfaith dialogue in the UK and ensuring that our university provides the most welcoming environment for students of all faiths."¹⁸¹

In the U.K., Britain's Prince Charles spent hour discussing interfaith issues with over 30 religious leaders, students and youth volunteers in Singapore. Together with Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Yaacob Ibrahim, he attended a dialogue at the Harmony Centre in Bishan, where he heard ideas on promoting religious harmony, ranging from ensuring there were no religious enclaves to organising school visits to different places of worship. He was also shown translations of the Quran and books on interfaith efforts while on a tour of the Harmony Centre.¹⁸²



4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Observing events, media news, discourses, public feelings, and incidents on Islamophobia occurring during the latest 10-months period, the Islamophobia Observatory draws conclusions as pointed at the following pages.

4

Chapter



1

After almost 4 (four) years of its constant worrisome-level, Islamophobia has now shown a declining pattern, indicated by the number of incident which was much lower if being compared to those in the previous years, during which the U.S. and Europe were always at the top of the Hotspot List—but were now moving towards significant improvement.

2

Trump phenomenon had served as a double-edge sword to the Islamophobia in the U.S. due to bolstered anti-Islam sentiments, but at the same time Mr. Trump’s xenophobic narratives were then responded by a wide-scale mobilization of support towards Muslims living in the country.

3

Six months after the U.S. election passed, many Americans reached out to their Muslim neighbors, and interfaith solidarity in the U.S. was then becoming stronger than ever, by virtue of which the Islamophobia trend in the country was declining despite the continued suspicion towards Islamic belief and motives.

4

Meanwhile President Trump himself seemed to soften his tone on Islam—since he delivered a moderate speech on Islam designed to reset his relationship with the Muslim world, sitting among 55 Muslim world leaders in Saudi Arabia. President Trump’s speech distanced him from the divisive anti-Muslim rhetoric he employed to appeal to voters during his election campaign.

5

There has been a growing resistance to the Far-rights movement along with a widespread awareness among the public Americans that the ‘Alt-right’ was nothing more than an ‘euphemism’ for the white nationalism—a movement whose only ‘political’ agenda is spreading hate, fake news, bigotry, racism, sexism, xenophobia, misogyny and intolerance. The Alt-right in the US today was even considered as an umbrella term that encompasses Neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nation, and other hate groups who overtly and proudly seek war among races.

6

The right-wing parties continued to gain electoral dominance in Europe following the recent victory of Germany right-wing Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)– now is the third largest party in the country. The same trend had been on-going in France, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark.

7

Hijab legal standing in Europe suffered another blow after the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Belgium’s ban on face veils was lawful under the convention rules while it was declared as “necessary in a democratic society.” This was potential to add numbers to countries that had outlawed veil, headscarf, hijab, niqab, and burqa i.e. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia, Albania, Austria, and Norway.

8

In Europe, the bleak picture of Islamophobia was seen in intense campaigns waged by populist-right wing parties amidst ongoing elections; while in the U.S. Islamophobia were mostly reflected through xenophobic government policies and incidents in the form of racist graffiti, pig carcass dumping, threatening mail, Holy Quran defacing, physical assaults, and verbal insults on Muslim individuals.

9

Positive statements by religious leaders in support to Rohingya people in Myanmar i.e. Pope Francis, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and the Dalai Lama had been proven effective for addressing Islamophobia as well as other crucial issues in the country, including to push the de facto leader of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, to take an urgent action to help the persecuting Rohingya.

10

British Prime Minister Theresa May, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Pope Francis of Vatican, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and the Dalai Lama were among World Leaders who constantly showing ‘friendly’ gestures towards Islam and Muslims.

Islamophobia is a complex issue, and there are major obstacles that may impede us from having an effective strategy to combat the phenomena. Therefore, a series of practical recommendations is offered, in hopes they might help Member States and other stakeholders inform their policies or take necessary measures:

1. Emphasize fundamental human rights and freedoms in combating Islamophobia.
2. Use existing U.N. treaties on religious freedoms, freedom of expression, prohibition of racial discrimination, etc. as tools to combat Islamophobia.
3. Ensure progress on the existing international consensus in the form of the Action Plan of U.N. Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18.
4. Encourage governments to revive the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations initiative, giving special attention to the Muslim-Western divide fueling Islamophobia.
5. Adopt integrated rather than geographical approaches in countering Islamophobia.
6. Establish strong links among groups who fight religion-based discrimination, including Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christian-phobia, while creating alliances with other groups that have been marginalized and dehumanized on the basis of racism and xenophobia.
7. Create centers for the study of Islam in Western societies—similar to the few that already exist at Georgetown and Harvard universities.
8. In Muslim societies and countries, internally address issues and factors that contribute to negative images of Islam and Muslims, and emphasize the importance of proper Islamic education for young children to avoid ignorance of religion among the new generation.
9. Create initiatives toward developing a healthy national/religious identity to increase young Muslims' contribution to the wider community without denying their religion.
10. Engage with civil society and young people in implementing government programs and actions to address religion and discrimination.
11. Engage in a constructive and meaningful dialogue (interreligious, intercultural, and inter-civilizational) toward cohesive and harmonious societies.
12. Create more space to facilitate social interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims.
13. Work toward changing the hearts and minds of non-Muslim Westerners to believe that immigrants are not necessarily a threat to their values and principles.
14. In Muslim countries and communities, work more for displaying to the world what Muslims are, rather than simply denying what the extremists have been saying or doing.

15. Challenge the ongoing myth of “Islamization” of the West as nurtured by xenophobic, populist parties who have been on the rise across Europe and elsewhere.

16. Encourage legal and civic advocacy to oppose normalization of Islamophobia in mainstream political and media discourses, particularly in Europe and the U.S.

17. Work to counter media reports that propagate stereotypes and stigmatize Muslim populations.

18. Campaign towards raising awareness on the danger of Islamophobia as well as towards promoting the positive images of Islam.

19. Give attention to the problems of the European Muslims, i.e. by taking the necessary action to operationalize the Contact Group on Muslim Minorities in Europe.

20. Initiate global Muslim diaspora projects while collecting information about Muslim communities in the West.

21. Increase the role of religious and community leaders to curb tendencies of extremism by promoting the ideals of tolerance, moderation, mutual respect and peaceful co-existence.

22. To encourage inter-faith and inter-religion dialogues within the OIC Member States to raise awareness about religious interpretations and beliefs, and open space for further discussion about Islam and faith.

23. Collaborate with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) who have been working actively

at community and grassroots levels.

24. Establish Islamophobia Centers in Member Countries while to strengthen the already-existing centers in some Member States, as well as in the OIC General Secretariat.

25. Provide supports to the Islamophobia Observatory by allocating necessary resources to allow the Observatory establishing network with other hate speech monitoring and reporting mechanisms around the world.

26. Create partnerships with non-Muslim institutions and individuals to implement concrete actions i.e. policies, development, relief, etc.

27. Appoint a special envoy to conduct OIC’s engagement with international and regional organizations and civil societies.

28. Disseminate the Islamophobia Report among Muslim population, diaspora, Member states as well as Non-Member States, widely.

29. Maximize the roles of OIC Offices abroad by giving them assignment to deal with Islamophobia-related issues as well as by giving them more space to informally working with local Muslim communities to address the issue Islamophobia at community level.

30. Provide more support, politically and financially, to initiatives/projects against Islamophobia by relevant OIC Institutions.

31. Keep the issue of Islamophobia as an international concern and thus remains on the agenda of UN’s Human Rights Council and General Assembly.

ANNEXES

Islamophobic Incidents

I. Incidents Related to Mosques:

Australia: Islamophobia In Australia: Pig's Head Outside Muslim College In Brisbane, CCTV Footage Captures 'Hate Crime

— Queensland Police Service had launched an investigation after a severed pig's head was found in front of an Islamic school in Brisbane. The pig's head was found inside a backpack with a swastika in front of the Islamic college which was owned by Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, based in Sydney. The authorities were particularly worried because the people been targeted in the apparent hate crime were young children, as the school consisted of over a thousand pupils, the youngest of 5-year-olds. Two men who were believed to be responsible for this act were captured on school cameras.



See: Inquisitr News' entry, in: <https://www.inquisitr.com/4376914/islamophobia-in-australia-pigs-head-outside-muslim-college-in-brisbane-cctv-footage-captures-hate-crime/>, retrieved on 20.7.2017

U.S.: Murfreesboro mosque defaced with graffiti, bacon— The Islamic Center of Murfreesboro was vandalized in July with green graffiti messages with expletives were spray-painted in three places on the exterior of the mosque. One of the messages was on one of the side doors, another was sprayed on the back side, and another was scrawled across the basketball court behind the main building. Messages were also spelled out with slices of bacon, and bacon was wrapped around one of the exterior doors. Islamic Center of Murfreesboro had been the center of controversy for nearly a decade. In 2010, the center experienced vandalism to two signs announcing the property as being the future home of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro. The first time a tagger spray-painted "Not Welcome" on the first sign in January 2010 before the ICM requested a site plan approval from Rutherford County Regional Planning Commission. After planners unanimously voted in favor of the mosque plans on May 2010, a vandal cut in half the second sign in June 2010. In August 2010, federal agents were called to the ICM after a coward poured flammable liquid on four pieces of construction equipment and ignited them at the site. The case was ruled an arson. Also, at least \$4,000 in cash donations were stolen from the ICM on July 2016, after the mosque's celebration of Eid al-Fitr.

See: USA Today News' entry, in: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2017/07/10/murfreesboro-mosque-defaced-graffiti-bacon/466122001/>, retrieved on 11.7.2017

U.S.: Image of Jesus Left outside Mosque to Insult Muslims

— A large painting of Jesus was left outside a mosque in Long Island in what police were investigating as a bias incident.

The Hillside Islamic Center in North New Hyde Park said an employee discovered the picture on a fence outside the mosque.



Mosque president Abdul Aziz Bhuyian told that surveillance from the building showed a man had cycled up to the mosque and hung the picture outside.

See: Newsweek News' entry, in: <http://www.newsweek.com/image-jesus-left-outside-mosque-insult-muslims-634608>, retrieved on 11.7.2017

Canada: Muslim cemetery fallout deepens as Quebec mosque reveals it received hate package

— A package expressing hate towards a Muslim cemetery project was delivered in July to the Quebec City mosque where six men were shot dead in January. Quebec City police said they had stepped up security around the Centre Culturel Islamique de Quebec and were taking the matter seriously. The package arrived two days before a referendum on the proposed cemetery was held in nearby Saint-Apollinaire, but the mosque did not immediately report it to avoid influencing the vote. Voters rejected a zoning change that would have allowed the burial ground project to move forward by 19 votes to 16. A month before, a pig's head was left at the entrance of the same mosque during Ramadan.



See: The Globe and Mail News' entry, in: <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/hateful-package-sent-to-quebec-city-mosque-before-muslim-cemetery-vote/article35729286/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>, retrieved on 20.7.2017

U.K.: Muslims targeted in pig's head incident—

Police in Newtownards were investigating two incidents targeting Muslims in the town, that a pig's head had been placed on a doorstep and graffiti painted on a wall of a building which is



a venue used by the Muslim community. Later on the same night, graffiti had been painted on a wall in the Castle Street area, and was made reference to Muslims. Both incidents were treated as hate crimes.

See: Newsletter.co.uk News' entry, in: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/muslims-targeted-in-pig-s-head-incident-1-8119740>, retrieved on 25.8.2017

U.K.: Manchester Didsbury Mosque panic after a 'threatening letter containing white powder' was delivered—

Worshippers fled Didsbury Mosque and Islamic Centre after staff received in November 2017, a threatening letter containing white powder. Dozens of young children were attending morning classes



at the Islamic school when staff discovered the hand-delivered note, which reportedly included an image of a skull and crossbones. The spokesman for Didsbury Mosque told media that the white substance was later identified as baking powder. He said it was the latest in a string of attacks aimed at the mosque, after a box of pork meat was delivered two weeks before. Officers put a cordon around the building and firefighters in protective suits were pictured at the scene as they worked to assess the powder.

See: The Sun News' entry, in: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4843056/manchester-didsbury-mosque-suspicious-white-powder-letter/>, retrieved on 7.11.2017

U.K.: Bradford Muslims receive acid attack threat— Muslim residents in a city in northwestern England received letters containing threats of acid attacks, amid the rising rate of hate crimes in the UK, particularly after terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. West Yorkshire police was taking the threats in Bradford seriously and increased surveillance in the predominantly-Muslim city. A police spokesperson said, “A thorough investigation has been launched and officers are working with the local community and partners to identify and prosecute those responsible for this despicable crime.” The British counter-terrorism police had also been conducting an investigation into a separate campaign of hate mail and suspicious packages sent to mosques in the United Kingdom and the United States. The letters contained offensive material and threats, saying the sender would be visiting the mosques.



See: PressTV News’ entry, in: <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2017/08/30/533400/Muslims-Bradford-hate-crimes-acid-attacks>, retrieved on 1.9.2017

Canada: Canada continues to be shaken by intensified anti-Muslim attacks—

Six months after a deadly shooting at a Quebec City mosque, its president’s car was deliberately set on fire.

These incidents come

as nationalist or right-wing extremists in the Canadian province had become more vocal against immigration and Muslim community. The fire was set on 6 August and police was investigating. The Canadian statistical agency found that there was a 60 percent increase of reported hate crimes against Muslims in Canada since 2014.



See: Daily Sabah News’ entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/americas/2017/09/01/canada-continues-to-be-shaken-by-intensified-anti-muslim-attacks>, retrieved on 1.9.2017



U.K.: Pig's head impaled on railings outside mosque— A pig's head was left on spiked railings outside a mosque just days before the festival of Eid, and police launched an investigation. Greater Manchester Police said they were treating the incident as a hate crime.

See: The Times News' entry, in: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pig-s-head-impaled-on-railings-outside-mosque-xg2pnq5k8>, retrieved on 1.9.2017

Australia: Anger as vandals attack Perth mosque site

—Anti-Muslim graffiti appeared at the city's Jeanfield Road on land earmarked place of worship. The development was at the centre of a political row, when the far right Scottish Defence League organized a protest in the city centre.



The far-right group claimed it was rallying against concerns about limited parking near the mosque. At the gathering, SDL members were vastly outnumbered by counter-protesters, including members of anti-fascist groups from around Scotland. Police Scotland is investigating the "No Muslims" graffiti and urged any witnesses to get in touch.

In: <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/perth-kinross/511330/anger-vandals-attack-perth-mosque-site/>, retrieved on 22.9.2017

Germany: Pig's head thrown at Turkish mosque site in Germany

Muslim community near Frankfurt found a severed pig's head at a construction site where a mosque is being built. Police spokesman said the incident was the latest in a series of provocations by residents opposed to the construction of the mosque, which is being overseen by the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB). Mosques in Germany were occasionally subject to attacks that range from Molotov cocktails to pig's heads. Turkish-Germans, who comprised one of the largest minorities in the country with more than 3 million people, had been frequent targets of bigoted attacks in the formerly Nazi-ruled Germany. The trend of attacks targeting mosques re-emerged in recent years with the rise of the far right in the country.



See: Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/10/26/pigs-head-thrown-at-turkish-mosque-site-in-germany>, retrieved on 27.10.2017

U.K.: Disgust as Swastika and anti-Islam slurs sprayed on Newcastle walls

A Newcastle councillor warned that religious hatred was on the rise as Nazi symbols were found daubed in a Newcastle street. Vile graffiti, which read "f*** Muslims", next to a Swastika symbol, was discovered on a street in Sandyford, east of the city centre. Councillor said the disgusting image was flagged



up to him by concerned residents. It was an extreme symptom of the Islamophobia and anti-Semitism which had increased over recent years. Many people had been targeted as a result of their religion, some of whom were too afraid to tell the police. Police were investigating the incident, while the obscenities were set to be cleaned away.

In: <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/disgust-swastika-anti-islam-slurs-13868859>, retrieved on 8.11.2017

Poland: A mosque attack in warsaw was the latest sign of growing Islamophobia in Poland—

On 26 November 2017, vandals attacked a Muslim cultural center and mosque in the Polish capital of Warsaw, smashing a dozen of its windows.

Far from being an isolated incident, the attack came amid growing anti-Muslim sentiment in Poland, where the government had refused to admit refugees and asylum-seekers and far-right extremism appeared to be on the rise.



See: WPR News' entry, in: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/23740/a-mosque-attack-in-warsaw-was-the-latest-sign-of-growing-islamophobia-in-poland>, retrieved on 5.12.2017

Sweden: Stockholm mosque hit with Nazi graffiti— Unknown vandals spray-painted swastikas on the facade of a central Stockholm mosque in January 2018. The Nazi graffiti was seen scrawled across the front doors of the Södermalm mosque in light blue paint in photos the mosque posted to Facebook. The mosque's imam, Mahmoud Khalfi, said that the vandalism was extensive. According to him, the mosque was targeted by vandals 22 times during 2017. The mosque had been hit with Nazi-specific vandalism twice before, with the first incident occurring in 2014. He told Media that the mosque had repeatedly requested permission to install security cameras but that the request was denied over privacy concerns. Sweden had seen a surge in neo-Nazi activity in recent years including a number of headline-grabbing demonstrations by Nazi supporters in Swedish cities including Stockholm and repeated demos in Gothenburg.



See: The Local News' entry, in: <https://www.thelocal.se/20180120/stockholm-mosque-hit-with-nazi-graffiti>, retrieved on 21.1.2018

Canada: Police probe hate posters on Bells Corners mosque—

Police said they were called in to investigate “white power” posters discovered in January at an Old Richmond Road mosque. Witnesses described the posters as containing racist slogans and portraits of Adolf Hitler. The mosque was located at Seyton Drive, near the spot where 17-year-old Nick Hickey was struck and killed two weeks before. A week later, shots were fired a block away. The incident followed a weekend of national memorials commemorating the one-year anniversary of the Quebec City mosque shooting where six men were killed, and more than a dozen wounded by a lone gunman.



See: **Ottawa Citizen News’** entry, in: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/police-probe-graffiti-at-bells-corners-mosque>, retrieved on 31.1.2018

Netherlands: Mosque vandalized in Netherlands—

A mosque in the Dutch port city of The Hague was vandalized and so far, no group had claimed responsibility for the act



of vandalism, in which a Turkish flag was crossed with red paint with slogans against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also written on it. Europe had recently experienced a growing number of radical protests and violence from PYD/PKK supporters since the group launched a campaign to protest Turkey’s operation in Syria.

See: **AA News’** entry, in: <http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/mosque-vandalized-in-netherlands/1053443>, retrieved on 4.2.2018



U.S.: Officials: ‘F* God & Allah’ written on Va. mosque; CAIR wants hate crime investigation—** The Council on American-Islamic Relations

was asking for a hate crime investigation after the words “F*** God & Allah” were found written on a Virginia mosque. The incident of vandalism happened on the wall of the Prince Edward County Islamic Center in Farmville on 28 September 2017.

See: WJLA News’ entry, in: <http://wjla.com/news/local/officials-fk-god-allah-written-on-va-mosque-cair-wants-hate-crime-investigation>, retrieved on 15.2.2018

Sweden: Police investigate Swedish mosque bomb attack as hate crime — Police were investigating an attack on a mosque with a homemade bomb as a hate crime. The attack on the Islamic Cultural Center in Saffle, left ball-bearings lodged in the walls of the center’s prayer room. Media reported that police had completed a preliminary investigation and were treating the attack as a hate crime. Sweden is a strong draw for many migrants and an estimated 100,000 ethnic Turks live in the Nordic country.



See: MuslimNews News’ entry, in: <http://muslimnews.co.uk/news/islamophobia/sweden-police-investigate-swedish-mosque-bomb-attack-hate-crime/>, retrieved on 28.12.2017

U.K.: Someone dressed their kid as a ‘Mosque’ for halloween and the rest kinda freaked out—

A 7-year-old kid attended his school Halloween party dressed as a ‘mosque’ and created a lot of trouble. The child, who attended school at St. Philip Neri’s Primary School in Rochdale had to leave soon after the party started. As the kid entered, a lot of parents felt outraged and disturbed with the costume. They then asked school teachers to intervene in the matter and handle it. De-



spite that, some of the parents began smashing the dome with toffee apples. Parent told media that she had felt compelled to act in order to defend her “British values”. She said: “I’m not a racist but I don’t see why he couldn’t have come dressed as a British building, like a pub or a MacDonald’s.”

See: India Times News’ entry, in: <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/world/someone-dressed-their-kid-as-a-mosque-for-halloween-and-the-rest-kind-freaked-out-332473.html>, retrieved on 28.10.2017

India: Video emerges of minister’s anti-Islam remarks— A video was tweeted on controversial BJP leader and minister Anantkumar Hegde’s hate speech against Islam at a party rally in 2016. The video showed Hegde saying, “As long as there is Islam in the world, there will be terrorism. Until we uproot Islam, we can’t remove terrorism.” Hegde also said, “If there is opportunity in the media – write exactly this. Telecast exactly this. Islam is a bomb for world peace. There will be no peace in the world as long as Islam is there.”



See: Kashmir Narrator News’ entry, in: <http://kashmirnarrator.com/video-emerges-ministers-anti-islam-remarks/>, retrieved on 9.12.2017

III. Intolerance against Islam and its Sacred Symbols

Canada: Police investigate stickers depicting Prophet Muhammad in Toronto apartment building

— An Islamophobic stickers were found in October 2017 around an apartment building in Flemingdon Park. The stickers depicted the Prophet Muhammad, beside the cartoon representation are the words: "Feminism is cancer" and "wage gap is a myth." Toronto police was investigating the incident.



See: CBCNews News' entry, in: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/flemingdon-park-islamaphobia-police-1.4349393>, retrieved on 13.10.2017



Germany: Mosque must stop loud-speaker call to prayer because it violates Christian's religious rights, court rules

— A mosque in northwest Germany might no longer broadcast its Friday midday call to prayer by loudspeaker after a local court upheld a challenge by a couple who live half a mile away. The local Christian couple, in the town

of Oer-Erkenschwick, had argued that the call to prayers violated their own religious rights. Anti-Muslim sentiment and support for anti-immigration policies were growing in many parts of Germany after the influx of well over a million migrants from Iraq, Syria and other mostly Muslim countries, beginning in 2015. The court ruled that the town had not assessed the local Muslim community's request properly in 2013, but a court spokesman said that this did not prevent the mosque making a new application.

See: The Sun News' entry, in: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5488926/mosque-must-stop-its-loudspeaker-call-to-prayer-broadcast-because-it-violates-christians-religious-rights-court-rules/>, retrieved on 3.2.2018



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.

In: <http://www.wjbradio.com/national-news/2017/03/15/man-breaks-into-arizona-mosque-desecrates-copies-of-quran>, retrieved on 16.3.2017

IV.Discrimination against Muslim Individuals and Communities

France: Muslim woman wearing burkini kicked out of pool in France, told to pay cleaning fees— A Muslim woman wearing a Burkini who went to a community pool in Marseille, France was told to leave the pool and paid fees to clean the facilities. The woman, identified as Fadila, reportedly went to the pool with her family on 21 July, and while she was swimming, pool officials told everyone to leave it and asked Fadila's husband to stop his wife from swimming, claiming that her swimsuit was not hygienic. The official also told the Muslim family that they would have to pay €490 for emptying and cleaning the pool, but the latter refused to do so. The Muslim woman told French non-governmental organization United Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) that she was extremely disappointed about what happened.

France and Belgium had both banned Burqa and Niqab in public, while French beach resorts sparked international controversy recently with local bans on the full-body Burkini swimsuit. In 2016, Cannes became the first city to outlaw Burkinis and other French resorts brought similar measures. However, the country's highest administrative court overturned the ban for violating fundamental freedoms.

See: Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/islamophobia/2017/08/07/muslim-woman-wearing-burkini-kicked-out-of-pool-in-france-told-to-pay-cleaning-fees>, retrieved on 8.8.2017

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U.K.: UK restaurant refuses service to actress Nadia Jamil, father due to 'his beard'—

An Italian restaurant in Cambridge, UK had refused service of Pakistani actress and philanthropist Nadia Jamil and her father. Nadia took to the micro blogging site Twitter to express her shock and outrage at the incident which she attributed to blatant racism.

She wrote that Italian restaurant in Main Market Square refused service to her father and her. Pointing out the fact that her father had a beard and she was brown, she claimed that it was a racist refusal of service.

However, the restaurant denied Jamil's claims of refusal of service on the basis of religious prejudice and racial profiling.

The Twitter handle of the restaurant denied there was any directive from management to deny people entry based on their race.

Enraged by the restaurant's lack of remorse, Jamil further clarified how she was refused service and then asked to leave.

See: Kashmir Narrator News' entry, in: <http://kashmirnarrator.com/video-emerges-ministers-anti-islam-remarks/>, retrieved on 9.12.2017

U.K.: Racist woman caught on camera leaning out of car window to scream offensive slurs at group of Muslims

A woman was caught on camera leaning out of a car window to launch an offensive tirade at a group of Muslims walking along the street. The video showed the woman in the passenger seat of a small red car, screaming foul-mouthed racist abuse at the Asian men. The woman yells: "F*** off you British, f***** P***." She then screamed: "F***** black b*****" and encourages the men to film her rant, which took place outside Dewsbury Cemetery. The woman was seen leaning out of a car window, shouted foul-mouthed abuse at the group of Muslim men.



See: Mirror.co.uk News' entry, in: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/racist-woman-caught-camera-leaning-11098904>, retrieved on 3.9.2017

France: Tensions as Paris suburb tries to stop Muslim street prayers

Tensions erupted as French officials and residents of a Paris suburb tried to block Muslims from praying in the street — a dispute that reflected nationwide problems with mosque shortages. No one was hurt in the skirmishes in Clichy-la-Garenne, but both sides appeared to be digging in their heels in the dispute over prayer space in the town. Carrying a large banner reading "Stop Illegal Street Prayers," Mayor Remi Muzeau led more than 100 demonstrators in November in a show of force to dissuade Muslims from praying on the town's market square. Worshippers had been praying there every Friday for months to protest the closure of a prayer room. A few dozen worshippers tried to pray anyway but retreated to a less visible spot, seeking to avoid confrontation with the protesters. But the demonstrators squeezed them toward a wooden wall. As worshippers chanted "Allahu akbar," Arabic for "God is great" the larger group of demonstrators loudly sang the French national anthem. Some held French flags and a crucifix aloft.

Amid pushing and shoving, a banner the worshippers were carrying reading "United for a Grand Mosque of Clichy" was torn down. Police with shields then formed a human barricade between the groups and Muslims eventually unrolled their rugs on the pavement, took off their shoes and held their prayers.

See: Los Angeles Times News' entry, in: <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-france-muslims-street-prayer-20171110-story.html>, retrieved on 11.11.2017

U.K.: Islamophobia? Muslim girl asked to remove hijab at London McDonald's

In a shocking incident, a staff at a London McDonald's asked a 19-year old Muslim student to remove her hijab or

leave the restaurant. The victim captured the incident in a video, where the guard could be heard telling her: "It's only a matter of taking it off." She was heard responding, "I wear this for religious reasons and I'm not ashamed of it."



See: NewsBytes News' entry, in: <https://www.newsbytesapp.com/timeline/World/13478/69517/mcdonald-s-under-fire-for-mistreating-muslim-customer>, retrieved on 4.12.2017

UK: Britain First follower vowed to kill Muslim in Finsbury Park attack

A supporter of the far-right group Britain First who said he was going to "kill a Muslim" before driving a van at the manager of an Indian restaurant had avoided prosecution for attempted murder. Marek Zakrocki was convicted of dangerous driving after shouting "white power" and giving a Nazi salute before narrowly missing his target. Zakrocki was carrying a knife and a Nazi coin when he was arrested in Harrow, north London, in June 2017, four days after a terrorist attack near Finsbury Park mosque left one Muslim worshipper dead. In his house police officers found leaflets and newspapers promoting Britain First.



See: The Times News' entry, in: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/britain-first-follower-vowed-to-kill-muslim-in-finsbury-park-attack-wtp8zj2sl>, retrieved on 6.12.2017

V. Incidents Related to Hijab



Austria: Muslim woman harassed for wearing burqa in Vienna

— At a Vienna metro station, two women aged 41 and 26 harassed a young Muslim girl on the grounds that she had violated the burqa ban law, effective 1 October 2017, as reported by Austrian media, and Police were called to the scene as confrontation became physical. Police spokesman said in a statement to the press that the covered woman did not resist the po-

lice and uncovered her face for identification. The police kept record of the woman as her refusal to comply with the law resulted in a public argument. According to the new law, those who do not comply with the burqa ban could be taken to police stations for identification. Those who refused to uncover their faces could be fined up to 150 euros. The ban was approved by Austrian parliament in May 2017. The outlawing of the burqa or other clothing concealing the face follows similar moves in other European Union countries, starting with France in 2011.

See: Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/10/06/muslim-woman-harassed-for-wearing-burqa-in-vienna>, retrieved on 7.10.2017

India: Muslim woman in India forced by cops to take off burqa at UP CM's rally

— In a video, three female police officers talked to the woman after which she takes off the burqa. Then, a male police officer arrived there and took away the burqa with him. In

another clipping, the woman, when approached by some journalists, said, "Koi baat nahi, chhoriye (It doesn't matter, let it go)." The video has drawn the ire of social media users.



See: Pakistan Kakhuda Hafiz News' entry, in: <https://www.pakistankakhudahafiz.com/muslim-woman-india-forced-cops-take-off-burqa-cms-rally/>, retrieved on 22.11.2017

Australia: Far-right racists movie Muslims in hijabs at Geelong park— Far-right racists stalked and secretly filmed Muslim women before posting the footage online and branding them ‘garbage bags’ because they wore hijabs.

The video was posted on their closed Infidel Brotherhood Victoria page showing groups of people enjoying a picnic on the waterfront at Geelong, Australia, while a group member had written: ‘Exterminate.’

The threatening social media posts had been referred to the National Security Hotline.

See: Kaplan Herald News’ entry, in: <https://kaplanherald.com/>, retrieved on 6.1.2018

U.K.: Muslim woman wearing headscarf ‘spat on and abused by racist thug’ in London chip shop— A woman wearing a hijab was assaulted and spat at by a racist thug in London. Nahella Ashraf from Manchester was attending a business conference in the capital city when she was allegedly approached and attacked by a stranger. She was on her lunch break at a nearby fish and chip shop with colleagues when a man grabbed her by the arm and tried to throw her out telling her she shouldn’t be there. While one of her companions and a staff member tried to push the man out of the way asking him what his problem was, the man apparently replied: “People like her, they kill.” As the man was escorted out, he allegedly spat in Nahella’s face. Police were investigating the alleged assault which happened in Hammermith.

In: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2613093/muslim-woman-wearing-headscarf-spat-on-and-abused-by-racist-thug-in-london-chip-shop/>, retrieved on 15.1.2018

Germany: Woman in burqa attacked, abused in Berlin— German police said a Muslim woman wearing a veil covering her entire face and body was attacked and verbally abused inside a Berlin store.

A woman insulted the victim and ripped the veil of the burqa from her head. The attacker then followed the victim out of the store and continued shouting anti-foreigner abuse at her before being detained by police.

Last year the German Parliament approved a government proposal to ban the wearing of all veils that fully cover the face by public employees in schools, courts and other institutions.

See: Enca.com News’ entry, in: <http://www.thedailystar.net/world/woman-burqa-attacked-abused-berlin-1537900>, retrieved on 22.2.2018

Margins

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