



# **ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION**

**Political Affairs Department**

**Islamophobia Observatory**

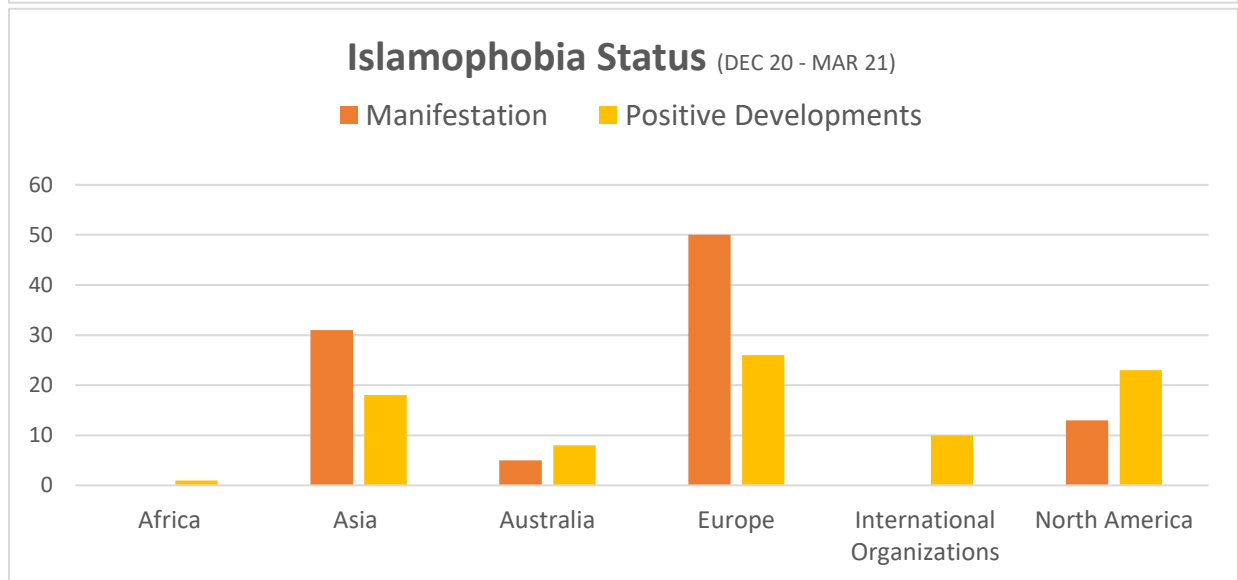
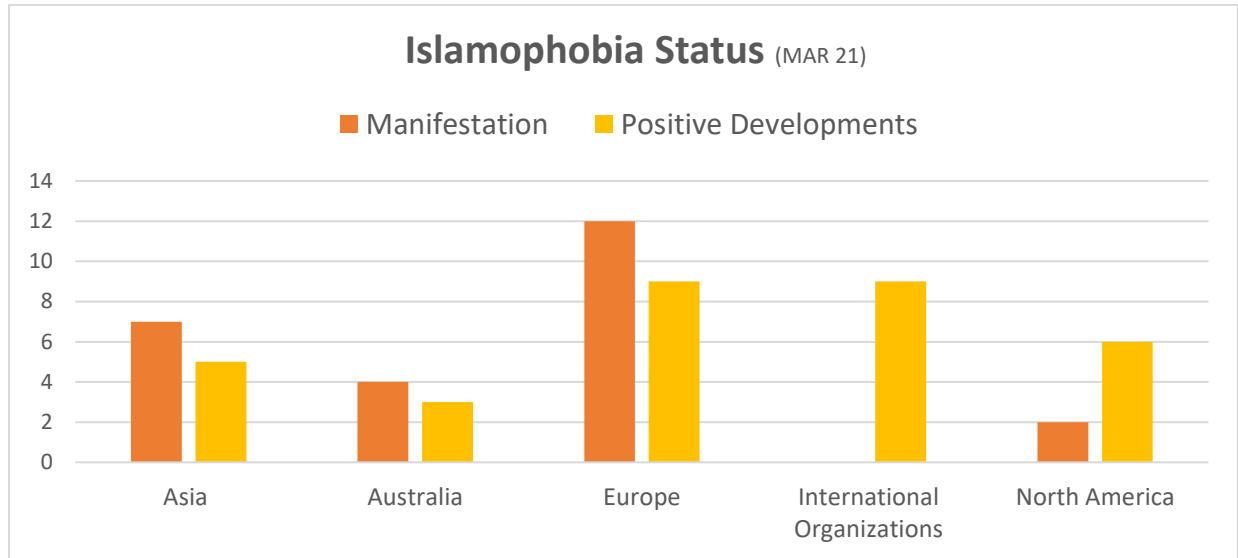
**Islamophobia Monitoring**

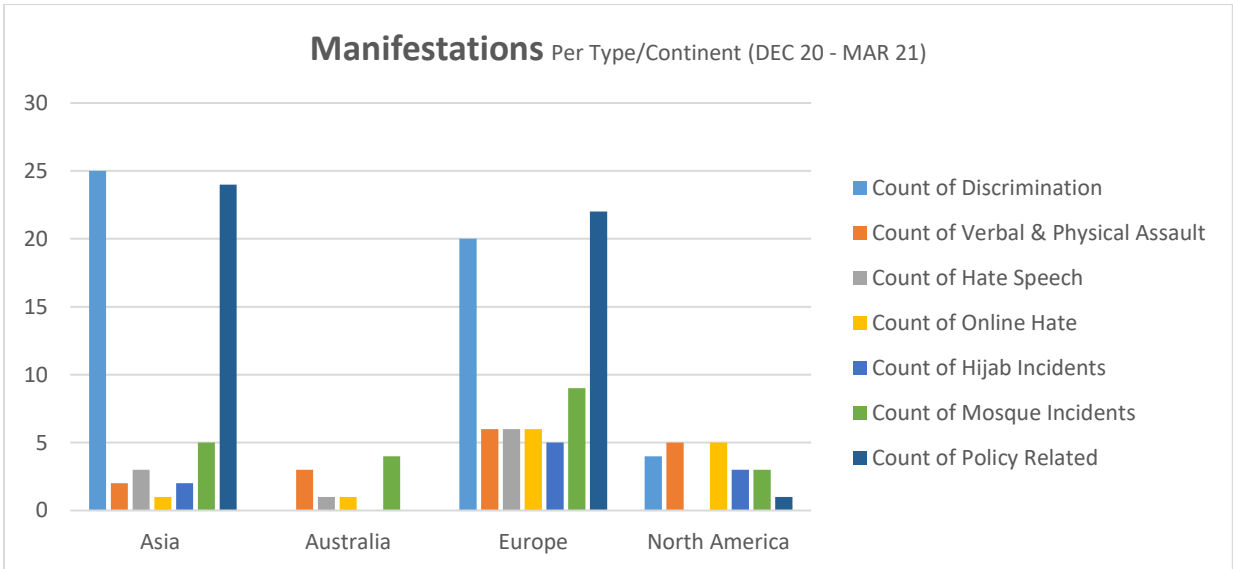
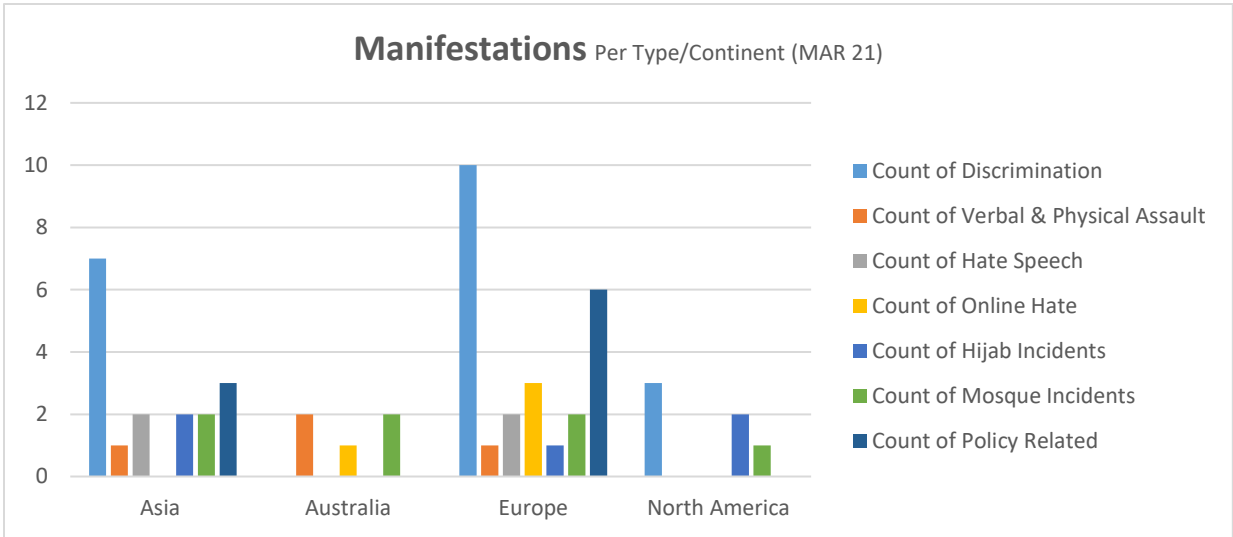
Month: March 2021



## OIC Islamophobia Observatory

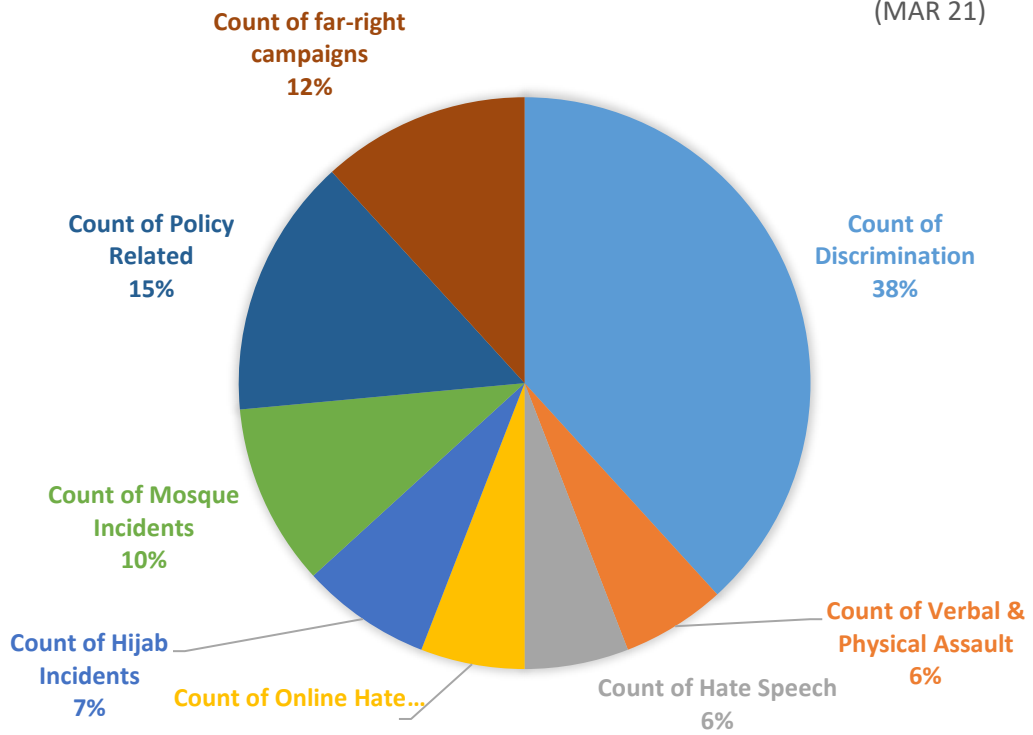
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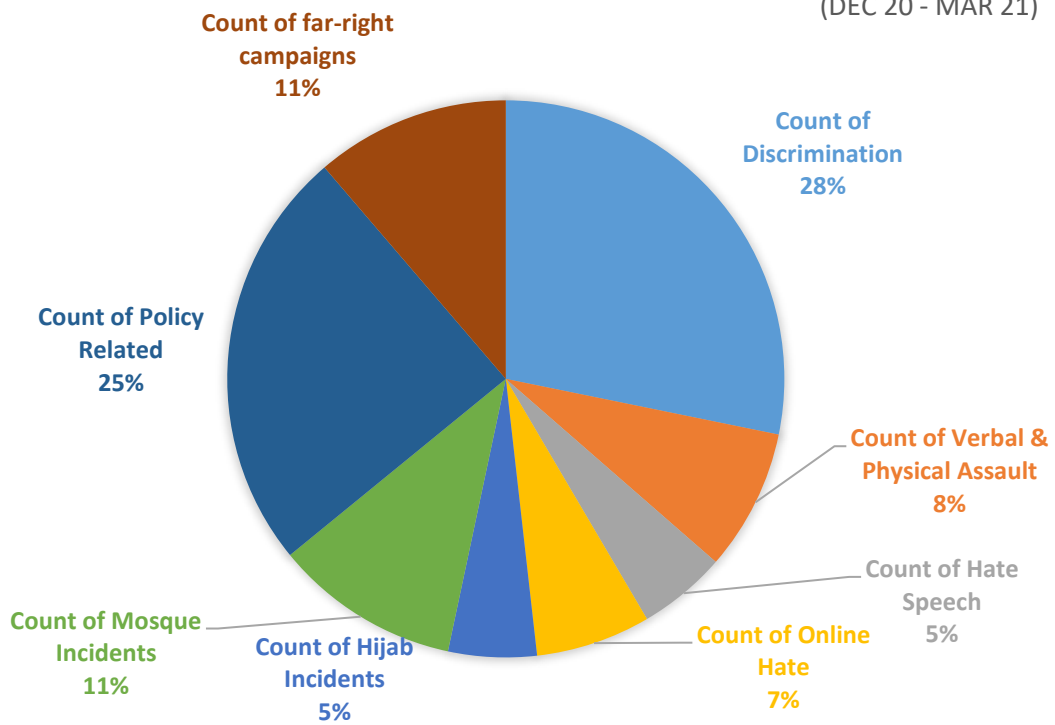
## MANIFESTATION

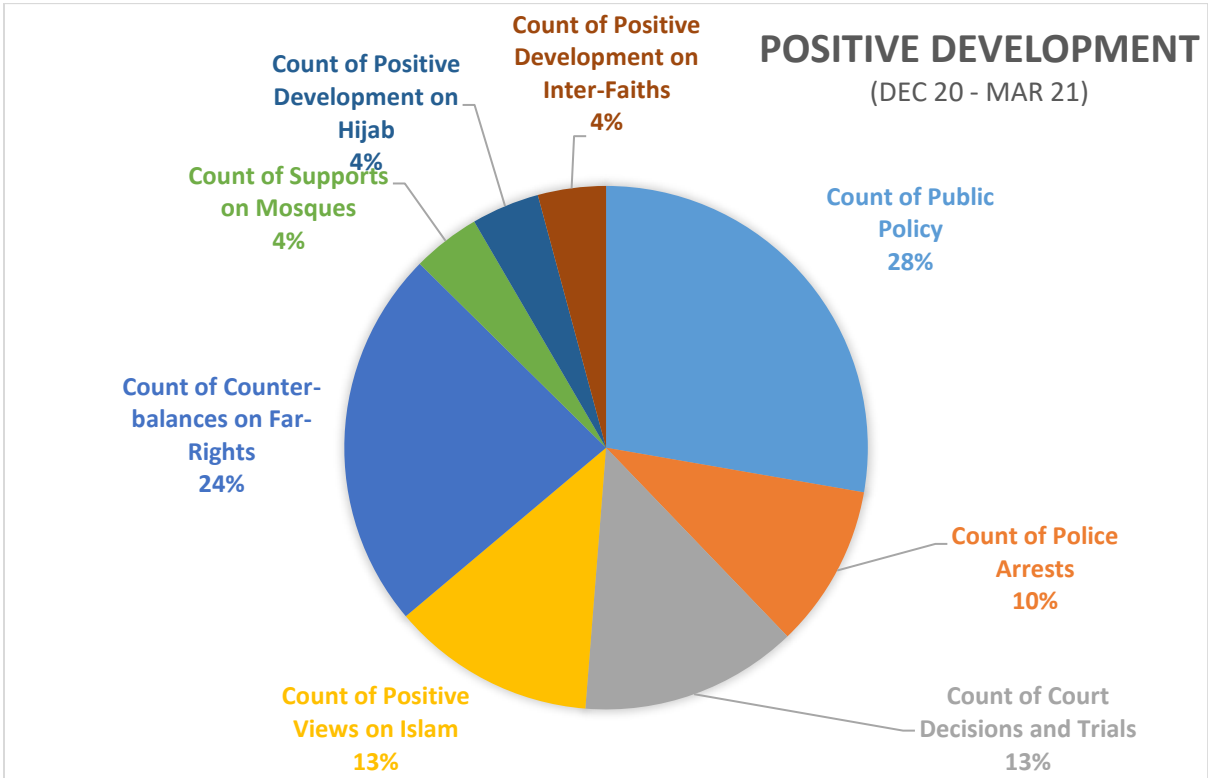
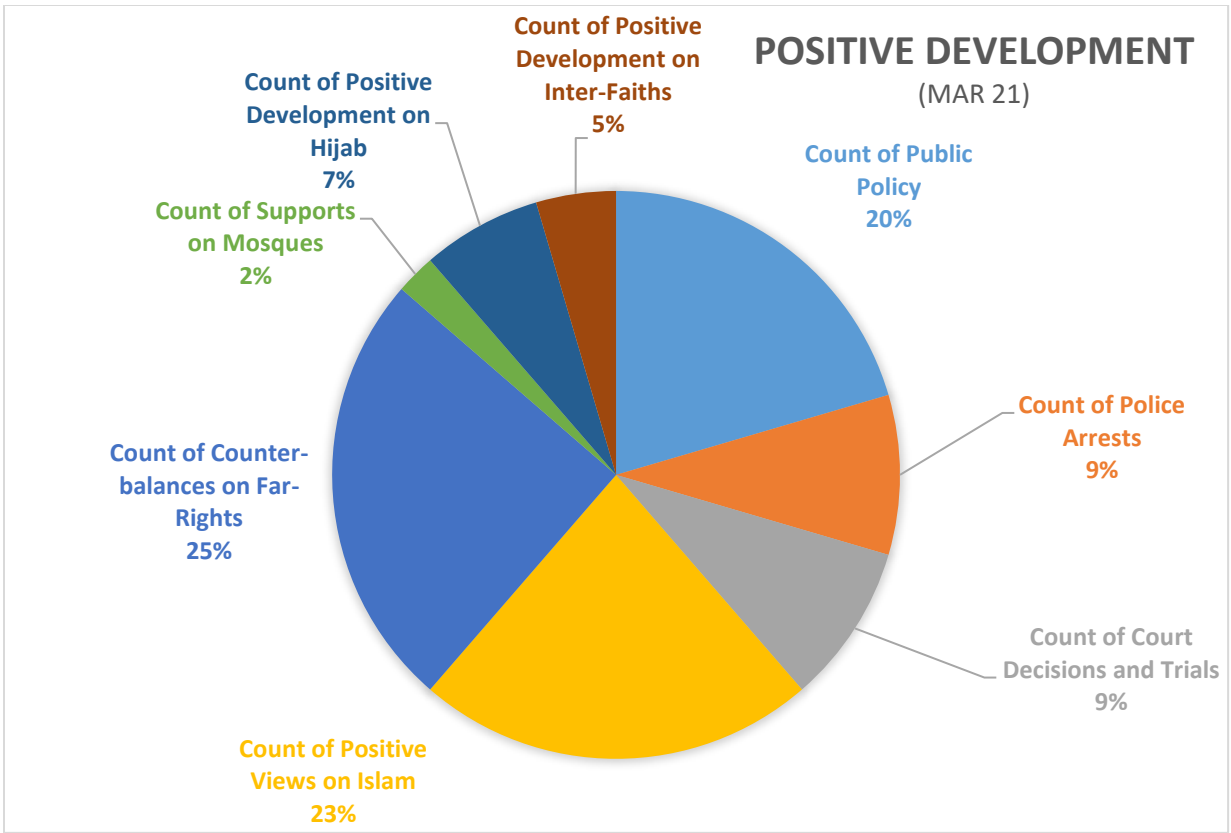
(MAR 21)



## MANIFESTATION

(DEC 20 - MAR 21)





# MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

## NORTH AMERICA

**IsP140129-US: Wall Street Giant BlackRock Faces Anti-Muslim Accusations**— Essma Bengasbia, one of the first hijab-wearing women to work on the trading floors of the world’s largest asset manager company, BlackRock, had faced several anti-muslim discriminatory incidents. Bengasbia, who was hired at BlackRock in 2018, explained that her workplace quickly turned into a hostile environment as she experienced frequent discrimination for her gender, race, and religion. In a first-person essay she wrote for Medium.com on February 2021, she detailed her allegations and titled it “#MeToo at BlackRock”. In one case, Bengasbia was called out for opting to not wear a Christmas-themed sweater at a work party. She was considered to be not wanting to be a part of the team and asked by a senior investor, “Why don’t you just be American for once?” In another case, Bengasbia had been mocked by a managing director at the firm for addressing calls with her parents with the common Muslim greeting “Assalamu Alaikum”. The discrimination mounted in her workplace and Bengasbia proceeded to file a report with human resources where she provided a detailed spreadsheet of each incident with information regarding the dates, times, and witnesses. Following her departure from BlackRock, she joined another financial firm as a senior associate, and launched a petition calling upon BlackRock to take matters at hand and hire an independent firm to address the harassment reports in the workplace and tackle racism. In response to Bengasbia letter, BlackRock released a statement subsequently denying any findings related to Bengasbia being the subject of harassment or discrimination.

See: Morocco World News entry, in: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/03/337246/wall-street-giant-blackrock-faces-anti-muslim-accusations/>, retrieved on 16.03.2021

### **IsP140130-US: far-right leaflets and posters surged last year, Anti-Defamation League said**

— U.S. far-right and white supremacist groups sharply stepped up their distribution of racist or anti-Semitic fliers, posters banners and other forms of physical propaganda in 2020, according to a study released on March 17. The Anti-Defamation League said it logged a total of 5,125 cases in 2020, compared with 2,724 in 2019. Its study focused on paper propaganda and signs, not online messages. The tally was the highest since the ADL, which monitors the activities of domestic and international hate groups,



began tracking such materials in 2016. While the materials surveyed came from 30 different organizations, the most prolific was the Texas-based Patriot Front, which ADL said was behind 80% of all the incidents. Formed in 2017, the group sought to build its "brand" last year by avoiding white supremacist language and symbols, instead favoring phrases such as "America First," "United we stand," and "Two Parties. One Tyranny", ADL said.

See: News’ entry, in: <https://whbl.com/2021/03/17/u-s-far-right-leaflets-and-posters-surged-last-year-anti-defamation-league-says/>, retrieved on 21.03.2021

**IsP140131-Greece: Greece rejects legal demands of Muslims for place of worship**— Greece's Education and Religion Ministry had rejected the Muslim community's demand to open a place of worship in Thessaloniki. Located in the second-largest city of Greece, Macedonia-Thrace Muslims Education Culture Foundation made a formal application for the opening of a place of worship after they completed the necessary preliminary preparations in line with legal regulations. The rejection came after a process that took two years, the ministry rejected the application on the basis of a lack of additional documents and technical details. Members of the foundation slammed the decision, they said: "Greece, which does not open the existing mosques, also does not show Muslims another place for their worship. Our applications to conduct our worship in our foundation have been also rejected with excuses outside the legal regulations."

See: Daily Sabah News'entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/greece-rejects-legal-demands-of-muslims-for-place-of-worship>, retrieved on 03.03.2021

**IsP140132-UK: Muslim boy, 4, referred to UK anti-extremism program over video game comment**— On January 31, The Observer, a British newspaper, had reported that a Muslim boy aged 4 was referred to the British government's anti-extremism program (Prevent Program) in September 2019 by his after-school club for talking about the video game "Fortnite." It was stated that the boy said his father had "guns and bombs in his shed." Following the child's referral to Prevent, it was quickly established that he was with his father the night before he made the comments; and his cousin was playing the video game. The boy's mother told The Observer about her distress after the police visited the family home at 10:30 p.m. to discuss her son's case. She said: "The office sent me all the information, including the transcript of that conversation. It's quite clear he mentioned Fortnite ... He's just a little boy with an imagination. The teachers should know ... I do think that if it was a white boy, they wouldn't have actually gone to that extreme of referring him to the Prevent scheme." The mother added that the police officer who visited the family home appeared uneasy, as though he did not think the visit was necessary, but explained he had to "follow the Prevent flowchart."

See: Arab News entry, in: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1801411/world>, retrieved on 03.03.2021

**IsP140133-UK: Petition in support of Batley Grammar School teacher reaches 50,000 signatures**— The Grammar School in Batley, near Bradford West Yorkshire in England, had been facing calls to reinstate the teacher after a petition in support of him reached more than 50,000 signatures on March 28. The petition came after the school had apologized, on March 25, to parents who protested after a teacher used cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad as teaching material. The school headteacher apologised for the inappropriate use of the cartoons, which was taken from the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, during a religious studies lesson, which sparked a protest outside the school on Thursday March 25.

See: The Standard Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/robert-jenrick-batley-west-yorkshire-bradford-french-b926659.html>, retrieved on 30.03.2021

**IsP140134-Austria: Anti-Islam sentiment doubled in Austria on 2020: NGO report**— The racist sentiment against Muslims in Austria doubled in 2020 compared to 2019, the Austrian human rights group SOS Mitmensch reported. Alexander Pollak, the spokesperson for SOS Mitmensch, said in a video conference that anti-Muslim rhetoric and campaigns by political parties and individuals reached an unprecedented level in 2020. Pollak added that a recent survey showed that 35% of the public had a negative opinion about Muslims, while 40% supported the idea that

Muslims should not enjoy equal rights with Austrians. The Austrian Government adopted a bill which prevented girls younger than 10 from wearing the headscarf in 2019, the law was later challenged by two children and their parents. However, Austria's constitutional court in December 2020 struck down the law which banned the headscarf in primary schools, and described the measure unconstitutional and discriminatory.

See: Daily Sabah Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/anti-islam-sentiment-doubled-in-austria-last-year-ngo-report>, retrieved on 07.03.2021

**IsP140135-Austria: Austrian state intimidates Muslim academic for Islamophobia research**— On February 20, Farid Hafez, an Austrian academic and anti-Islamophobia scholar, spoke out against the raid on his family home for the first time since it happened on November 9, 2020. In a video released on YouTube, Hafez, an internationally published academic, recalled how guns with infrared dots were aimed at his chest as police sporting balaclavas stormed his house. A scholar on racism and anti-Muslim bigotry, Hafez had been a strong critic of Austria's increasingly draconian policies towards its Muslim minority. Hafez, recalled the growing confidence of the far-right in the country, which had focused in particular on Muslims. "This is the reason I became interested in Islamophobia because I felt like nobody was talking about it," said Hafez. The political scientist lecturer at the University of Salzburg had not been charged with any crimes by the Austrian government, which led some to believe that the government is deliberately harassing the academic in a bid to muzzle his research. One academic called Hafez's treatment by the Austrian state "a gross miscarriage of justice." The Austrian government had also blocked Hafez's bank accounts, which had put his family's livelihood in jeopardy. The Austrian authorities had a right to keep the investigation open for up to three years without providing any evidence and without pressing charges while maintaining restrictions on Hafez's bank accounts. Supporters of Hafez had set up a fundraising page to help the academic pay for his legal costs.

See: TRT World News' entry, in: <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/austrian-state-intimidates-muslim-academic-for-islamophobia-research-44658>, retrieved on 11.03.2021

**IsP140136-Germany: German court temporarily blocks observation of AfD party**— On March 5, A German court had temporarily blocked the country's domestic intelligence agency from putting a far right party - Alternative for Germany Party - under observation due to suspicions of extreme-right sympathies. The Cologne state court said the party, known as AfD, could not be classified or treated as a "suspected case" of extremism until a decision was made on an emergency brief submitted by the party, after it alleged the intelligence agency broke a court order not to make such a classification public. In an ongoing legal battle, the AfD had been fighting against being classified as "suspected" by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, known by the initials BfV, in which they argued that the publicity surrounding such a move so close to the September 26 national election would damage the party's electoral chances.

See: Daily Journal News' entry, in: <http://www.dailyjournal.net/2021/03/05/eu-germany-far-right-2/>, retrieved on 08.03.2021



### **IsP140137-Switzerland: Referendum Result: Voters support ban on face coverings in public**

—On March 7, Switzerland had narrowly voted in favour of banning face coverings in public, including the burka or niqab worn by Muslim women. The official referendum results showed the measure had passed by 51.2% to 48.8%. The proposal was put forward by the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) which campaigned with slogans such as "Stop extremism". The Central Council of Muslims said in a



statement, that it would challenge the decision in court. The Swiss government had argued against the ban, in which they said it was not up to the state to dictate what women wear. According to research by the University of Lucerne (in German), almost no-one in Switzerland wears a burka and only around 30 women wear the niqab. Ahead of the vote, Walter Wobmann, chairman of the referendum committee and an SVP lawmaker, described Muslim face coverings as "a symbol for this extreme, political Islam which has become increasingly prominent in Europe and which has no place in Switzerland ... In Switzerland our tradition is that you show your face. That is a sign of our basic freedoms," he said.

See: BBC News' entry, in: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56314173>, retrieved on 08.03.2021

### **IsP140138-France: French mosque vandalized with Islamophobic graffiti**

—On February 23, Milli Gorus Islamic Confederation (CIMG), a French Muslim organization, had strongly condemned vandalism of an under-construction mosque in Strasbourg with Islamophobic graffiti. The words, "No to Islam, go back to your village" were sprayed across the fence on the site of the Eyyub Sultan Mosque, which once completed will be Europe's largest Muslim place of worship. In a video statement, CIMG, the group overseeing construction



of the mosque, expressed disappointment at the Islamophobic and racist message. "There is no material damage but the symbolism is strong ... this incident reflects the deleterious climate that France is going through today. Indeed, the trivialization of remarks targeting Muslims in media discourse demeans the enemies of living together," said a tweet from the official handle of the mosque. According to French daily Derniers Nouvelles d'Alsace (DNA), Strasbourg prosecutor's office said, A man had been detained by police, and later released before his next appearance on prior admission of guilt. The motive behind the vandalism was unknown.

See: The Muslim News entry, in: <http://muslimnews.co.uk/news/islamophobia/french-mosque-vandalized-islamophobic-graffiti/>, retrieved on 09.03.2021

**IsP140139-France: France's Muslims outraged by decision to ban halal chicken slaughter—**

On March 18, Muslim leaders in France had criticised a French authority's decision to ban the slaughter of poultry animals in line with Islamic principles. A joint statement issued by Paris Mosque director Chemseddine Hafez, Lyon Mosque director Kamel Kaptane and Evry Mosque director Khalil Maroun, said that the French Agriculture and Food Ministry's circular sent a negative message to the large Muslim community in the country. Under the new rule, the Islamic slaughter of poultry animals will be banned in France from July 2021. The three administrators had conveyed their concerns to the relevant ministry but did not receive any concrete results, the joint statement said. "These precautions are a serious obstacle preventing people from freely practising their religion," the statement read. The Muslim leaders, added that they were planning to take necessary legal action to restore the "fundamental right."



# Communiqué

## des Mosquées de Paris, de Lyon et d'Évry

Paris, jeudi 18 mars 2021

Les responsables de la Grande Mosquée de Paris, de la Grande Mosquée de Lyon et de la Grande Mosquée d'Évry, titulaires de l'agrément interministériel les habilitant à délivrer les autorisations de pratique du sacrifice rituel, et assurant la certification halal des viandes et produits destinés à la consommation de la communauté musulmane, se sont réunis le lundi 15 mars 2021 à la Grande Mosquée de Paris pour examiner les voies et moyens de sensibilisation des pouvoirs publics sur la situation dramatique que risquent de vivre les musulmans de France suite à la parution de l'instruction technique DGAL/SDSSA/2020-722 du ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation datée du 23/11/2020.

Cette instruction ayant pour objet les « *Contrôles officiels relatifs à la protection animale en établissement d'abattage de volailles au moment de leur mise à mort* », impose désormais des conditions d'abattage ne permettant pas de répondre aux principes dogmatiques et fondamentaux de l'abattage rituel Halal.

C'est aussi un mauvais message que l'on envoie à la communauté musulmane en cette veille de Ramadhan.

Dans ce cadre, à compter du mois de juillet 2021, l'abattage rituel Halal de volaille en France ne sera plus autorisé.

Les responsables des Grandes Mosquées ont déjà fait part de leurs préoccupations auprès du ministère de l'Intérieur et du ministère de l'Agriculture, sans pour autant parvenir à un résultat satisfaisant, permettant d'assurer le respect des principes de l'abattage rituel Halal tel qu'il était pratiqué jusqu'à présent.

Considérant que ces dispositions sont une grave entrave au libre exercice du culte, ils entendent mener toutes les actions légales pour rétablir ce droit fondamental.

Les responsables soussignés se sont rapprochés des autres responsables religieux, notamment du culte Israélite de France, afin d'échanger avec eux sur cette grave problématique.

**Si cette disposition était mise en œuvre, les conditions requises pour permettre aux musulmans de consommer des viandes conformes à leur rite, en vertu du principe fondamental de la liberté du culte, ne seraient plus garanties.**

**En conséquence, les responsables des Grandes Mosquées demandent au ministre de l'Agriculture de les recevoir en urgence pour les entendre sur cette question.**

### Signataires :

Grande Mosquée de Paris, M. Chems-eddine HAFIZ, Recteur

Grande Mosquée de Lyon, M. Kamel KABTANE, Recteur

Grande Mosquée d'Évry, M. Khalil MEROUN, Recteur

See: sputnik news entry, in: <https://www.trtworld.com/europe/france-s-muslims-outraged-by-decision-to-ban-halal-chicken-slaughter-45176>, Also: See: EURO News' entry, in: <https://arabic.euronews.com/2021/03/20/france-bans-the-halal-slaughter-of-poultry-from-next-july>, retrieved on 24.03.2021

**IsP140140-Netherlands: Dutch election: Geert Wilders jumps to second place in warning to EU – latest poll**— According to Politico's latest poll of polls of the Netherlands General election, the far-right candidate Geert Wilders was set to come second in a huge climb from just five seats in Parliament to a whopping 20. The poll predicted that the PVV leader would gain 13 percent of the votes, which had seen as a warning to the incumbent Prime Minister Mark Rutte. Mr Rutte, who had been the caretaker Prime Minister of the Netherlands since the Government quit in January, was still heading the polls with 25 percent of the vote. This would allow him to get up to 40 seats in Parliament but he would still be left in need of a coalition partner. Mr Wilders said in his campaign manifesto that the three largest parties should automatically enter into talks for a post-election coalition. But Mr Rutte had already ruled out inviting Mr Wilders to team up with him. In his manifesto, Mr Wilders wrote that he wants the Netherlands to return to “a country without headscarves, but with traditional Dutch cosiness”.

See: Express News' entry, in: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1408909/dutch-election-geert-wilders-polls-pvv-mark-rutte-eu-news>, retrieved on 15.03.2021

**IsP140141-Hungary: Hungary's PM aims to create new right-wing political force**— On March 19, The Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said he would meet with other right-wing politicians from Poland and Italy to discuss setting up a new nationalist political force in Europe. In an interview with state radio, the populist leader said he was in touch with Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Italian former interior minister Matteo Salvini, whose parties were ideological allies of Orbán's Fidesz Party. "Poland, Italy and Hungary will try to reorganize the European right wing, and we will soon see each other and plan for the future," Orbán said. Orbán's interview came only a day after Fidesz pulled out of the European People's Party (EPP), its center-right European political family, following years of conflict over Hungary's respect for democratic norms and the rule of law. The EPP had accused Orbán of abandoning Christian Democratic principles in favor of his own self-styled "illiberal democracy," while Orbán said the EPP had become an "annex of the left" on issues like migration and national sovereignty. In a video interview posted to his Facebook page on March 2021, Salvini, confirmed that he was in discussions with politicians from Poland and Hungary on creating a new faction within the EU legislature. "We are working to create something new, because a certain type of Europe with an outdated mindset is unable to respond to emergencies and the needs of 2021," Salvini said.

See: Star Tribune News' entry, in: <https://www.startribune.com/hungarys-pm-aims-to-create-new-right-wing-political-force/600036139/>, retrieved on 25.03.2021

**IsP140142-Sweden: Sweden's far-right takes a step closer to power**— Sweden Democrats (SD) Party leader Jimmie Åkesson had convinced three other opposition party chiefs — the center-right Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats and the Liberal Party — that they would need his support to take power from Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, a Social Democrat, at an election on 2022. Åkesson was seeking to negotiate the best price for that support, in the form of policy concessions from his would-be new allies, in order to secure real influence for his party for the first time since it entered parliament in 2010. “We are identifying what we can agree on and what we can't agree on, and then looking at how important the things we can't agree on are,” Åkesson told POLITICO in an interview in parliament the week before.



”This is definitively a formative moment within Swedish politics,” said Tommy Möller, a political scientist at Stockholm University. “The landscape is changing rapidly.” The country had long pitched itself internationally as a “humanitarian superpower” where a large number of refugees and asylum seekers were welcomed. As SD was gaining momentum to enter parliament in 2010, former Moderate Party leader Fredrik Reinfeldt, Sweden’s prime minister from 2006 until 2014, called them a “xenophobic force” and refused to discuss policy with them at all. But Europe’s migration crisis of 2015, and a resulting spike in the number of asylum seekers entering Sweden, caused support for SD to surge and changed the equation for the Moderates, as well as their long-time partners the Christian Democrats, and the Liberals.

See: Politico News’ entry, in: <https://www.politico.eu/article/sweden-far-right-jimmie-akesson-election-2022-step-closer-to-power/>, retrieved on 31.03.2021

## ASIA

**IsP140143-India: Mosque vandalised in Gorakhpur village**— On February 19, a mosque was found vandalised, in the village of Kona Sonbarsa, in Gorakhpur district of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. As news of the vandalism spread, people assembled outside the mosque. Several police teams went to the spot to keep the situation under control. “We found that someone had removed the mike from the holder and kept it on the floor. When we fixed the mike found it was working. Few religious books were found burnt,” said Additional Superintendent of Police (North) Manoj Kumar Awasthi. The police had filed a case against unidentified people at the Jhangha police station based on a complaint by a villager identified as Jawed Ansari. The case had been registered under IPC sections 452 (house-trespass) 427(causing mischief and damage) and 295 (defiling place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class), said the police.

See: Indian Express News’ entry, in: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/mosque-vandalised-in-gorakhpur-village-7196217/>, retrieved on 01.03.2021

**IsP140144-India: Mosque Break-in, Burn Down Sacred Books in Gujarat’s Songadh**— On January 27, an unknown perpetrator had broke open the lock of a large halls used by local Muslims for prayers and religious gatherings in the historical town of Songadh in southern Tapi district of Gujarat, and burnt down several copies of Quran, and other religious books. Police inspector H C Gohil told *Clarion India* that no one had been arrested but a police report had been lodged against ‘unknown’ persons for the “first such incident” in the tribal-dominated, peaceful town known for its 16<sup>th</sup> century fort built during the Maratha empire. Mujahid Nafees, convener of the Minority Coordination Committee, Gujarat, said in a letter to Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, that “Such incidents which trigger panic and tension are an insult to our Constitution which guarantees freedom of religion to all Indians.”



See: Clarion India News’ entry, in: <https://clarionindia.net/goons-break-open-lock-of-makeshift-mosque-burn-down-sacred-books-in-gujarats-songadh/>, retrieved on 01.03.2021

**IsP140145-India: Madhya Pradesh Assembly Passes 'Love Jihad' Bill**— On March 8, The

Madhya Pradesh Assembly had passed a bill that penalised religious conversion through marriage or any other fraudulent means and provides for a prison sentence of up to 10 years. While the opposition Congress questioned the need for a new law, Home Minister Narottam Mishra said that unlike the 1968 legislation, the present act provides for annulment of



of marriage and a harsher sentence. He added, the government would not tolerate “Rafiq becoming Ravi” for “Love Jihad”. After the “Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Bill 2021” was passed by a voice vote, some BJP MLAs chanted ‘*Jai Shri Ram*’. Senior Congress leader Govind Singh said there was no need for new law as the MP Dharm Swatantra Adhiniyam, 1968, was already in place. The bill would not benefit people in any way and was only a political stunt, he said.

See: The Wire News’ entry, in: <https://thewire.in/communalism/madhya-pradesh-assembly-passes-love-jihad-bill>, retrieved on 10.03.2021

**IsP140146-India: UP minister calls burqa ‘evil custom’, says practice will end**— On March

24, Uttar Pradesh minister Anand Swarup Shukla said Muslim women would be “freed” from the practice of wearing ‘burqa’, which he described as an evil custom and compared it to the banned triple talaq. This came a day after Shukla wrote to the Ballia district magistrate, complaining that he was facing difficulties in discharge of his duties due to loudspeakers at mosques and said their volume should be fixed according to the court orders. “Muslim women will be freed from ‘burqa’ like triple talaq. There will come a time when they will get rid of it.” Shukla told reporters. Shukla, the Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs minister, said “burqa is inhuman and evil custom” and added that those with progressive thinking were shunning it and not pressing for its use.



See: Indian Express News’ entry, in: <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/lucknow/up-minister-now-calls-burqa-evil-custom-says-practice-will-end-7243327/>, retrieved on 29.03.2021

**IsP140147-Palestine: Bernie Sanders blasts Israel for sending Covid-19 vaccines to allies while ‘Palestinians are still waiting**—

On February 25, US Senator Bernie Sanders had condemned Israel authorities for sending surplus coronavirus vaccines to friendly nations overseas instead of giving them to Palestinians. Sanders tweeted: “As the occupying power, Israel is responsible for the health of all the people under its control. It is outrageous that Netanyahu would use spare vaccines to reward his foreign allies while so many Palestinians in the occupied territories are still waiting.” Israel’s decision to send out surplus Covid-19 vaccines was acknowledged by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on February 24. local media reported the

list of recipients included 15 countries that received around 100,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine. The list included countries such as Honduras, Guatemala, Hungary, Uganda, and the Czech Republic – those which had in some way supported Israel’s claim on Jerusalem as the capital. Israel claimed, that the vaccination of Palestinians was the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority. Israeli officials said surplus vaccines could be shared with the Palestinians when local demand is met.

See: Russia Today News’ entry, in: <https://www.rt.com/news/516590-gantz-netanyahu-israel-vaccine/>, retrieved on 02.03.2021

**IsP140148-Sri Lanka: Cabinet approval sought to enforce ban on burqa**— On February 25, The Sri Lanka’s Government announced that they were considering enforcing a ban on the burqa. Mr. Ali Sabry, Justice Minister said that Government was looking to ban full face coverings in public places. He insisted that the move was not an attempt to target any community but was in the best interest of National security. Emergency regulations were enforced following the Easter Sunday attacks in April 2019 imposing a ban on clothing that conceals the face. Human rights groups had raised concerns, Dinushika Dissanayake, Amnesty International’s Deputy South Asia Director, said at the time, imposing a ban that effectively targets women wearing a face veil for religious reasons risks stigmatizing them.

See: Colombo Gazette News’ entry, in: <https://colombogazette.com/2021/02/25/cabinet-approval-sought-to-enforce-ban-on-burqa/>, retrieved on 04.03.2021

**IsP140149-Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka to close over 1,000 Islamic schools**— On March 13, Sri Lanka had announced plans to ban the wearing of burqas and said it would close more than 1,000 Islamic schools known as madrassas, citing national security. Minister of Public Security Sarath Weerasekara said he signed a paper seeking the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers to ban burqas. “The burqa has a direct impact on national security” Weerasekara told a ceremony at a Buddhist temple on March 13. “In our early days, we had a lot of Muslim friends, but Muslim women and girls never wore the burqa ... It is a sign of religious extremism that came about recently. We will definitely ban it.” Weerasekara said, according to video footage sent by his ministry.

See: ABC News’ entry, in: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sri-lanka-ban-burqas-close-1000-islamic-schools-76435802>, retrieved on 15.03.2021

## AUSTRALIA

**IsP140150-New Zealand: Mosque attack video still online - two years on**— Two years after the video of the 15 March 2019 mosque attacks was made, efforts to stop its spread were still failing and a simple search using an alternative search engine to Google could take a person straight to the footage uploaded by the gunman to glorify his actions. The video had so far received at least 128,000 views. Muslim Association of Canterbury spokesperson Abdigani Ali said witnesses and the bereaved were already on edge leading up to the two-year anniversary and he was worried they may inadvertently stumble upon the footage. While sharing or even viewing the video could land people in prison in New Zealand, the jurisdiction of Internal Affairs does not stretch overseas to the search engines and websites that have been making it available. Ali said there needed to be a filter applied to the video in the same way child abuse was filtered out by the government here, to prevent it reaching these shores. Netsafe chief executive Martin Cocker said Voluntary efforts such as the Christchurch Call had gone some way towards cleaning up the likes of Google and Microsoft which had all invested in stamping out harmful content when it turned up, he said. "In terms of being able to say that the internet is clean of harmful content, no, we're a

very long way from that and maybe a step closer than we were a few years ago but it's such an insignificant step really." Cocker said there were about 30 alternative search engines similar to the one where the video could be found and most did not have the resources or the will to do anything about it.

See: The New Zealand Herald newspaper entry, in: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/mosque-attack-video-still-online-two-years-on/R7N7CSNQFUNGQ4V6E63XU7NNA/>, retrieved on 11.03.2021

**IsP140151-New Zealand: Christchurch mosque attack survivor Wasseim Alsati's barber shop targeted by vandals**— The barber shop owned by Wasseim Alsati, a survivor of the Christchurch terror attacks, had been targeted by vandals. Alsati and his daughter, aged just 4, suffered multiple gunshot wounds in the March 2019 attacks. He reopened his mobile barbershop, **Wass' Barbers** in the central city in September 2020, for the first time since the shootings. But he arrived to work on Tuesday, March 23, to find his van covered in graffiti, which he fears was racially motivated. Alsati said the truck was sprayed with a "very difficult, bad word" and some patterns and numbers which he believes were linked to white supremacy. "It's quite scary and it's disappointing. I don't know what to say." He said.

See: New Zealand Herald newspaper entry, in: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/christchurch-mosque-attack-survivor-wasseim-alsatis-barber-shop-targeted-by-vandals/OK43SL3VYPR6DQSTAHOF3I72Q/>, retrieved on 28.03.2021

**IsP140152-Australia: Graffiti, arson, death threats: new research finds widespread violence against Australian mosques**— In the aftermath of the Christchurch mosque shootings, a team of researchers had surveyed mosques in Australia to gauge the extent of anti-Muslim attacks on those places of worship, and published their findings on March 15. The researchers were Professor Scott Poynting and Senior Lecturer Dr Derya Iner in the Charles Sturt University Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation, Professor Gail Mason from the University of Sydney, Professor Nicole L. Asquith from the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies and the University of Tasmania, and Research Associate Mr Ron Mason from the University of Tasmania. The study found that the threat of similarly motivated acts of hatred remained widespread. During 2020, they surveyed 75 mosques from five states and two territories of Australia about their experiences of violence in the five years from 2014 to 2018, as well as detailed questions about 2019. About half of the responses were from imams or mosque officials, 15% from volunteers and 35% from other congregation members. According to the researchers, most concerning was that over half (58.2%) of participating mosques had experienced targeted violence between 2014 and 2019. The threat of an attack increased in cases where there had been public attention. For example, mosques that were reported in the media (100%) or experienced online opposition to the development of the mosque (83%) experienced higher rates of victimisation. The types of violence suffered by mosque attendees and the mosque buildings included arson, physical assault, graffiti, vandalism, verbal abuse and online abuse and hate mail, including death threats. There were notable geographical differences in these occurrences of violence. Despite been home to more mosques, attacks against Sydney mosques between 2014 and 2018 were proportionally lower (at 41% of the 51 respondent mosques) than for Melbourne (70% of 17 mosques) and Brisbane (89% of nine mosques). The proportion of attacks against mosques in Australian states and territories was 29% in 2019, in the wake of the Christchurch massacre. In the wake of the Christchurch terror attack, Australian mosques were still been targeted with threats and violence. In 2019 alone, 30% of respondent mosques had experienced a graffiti attack, with 17% reporting two or more instances. Some 12% had experienced one or more arson attacks, with one mosque reporting six such incidents in that year. Mosques were also vandalised, with 34% of participating mosques experiencing at least one such incident, and three mosques experiencing four to five incidents. Hate mail was received by



17% of the mosques. According to the researchers, a national, independent hate crime reporting system was needed to capture the experiences of targeted communities in Australia. They added, A systematic and timely analysis of mosque attack data would enhance long-term security for mosques and their communities.

See: The Conversation News' entry, in: <https://theconversation.com/graffiti-arson-death-threats-new-research-finds-widespread-violence-against-australian-mosques-156843>, retrieved on 30.03.2021

**IsP140153-Australia: 'Fertile ground' - Banned in the US and Europe, neo-Nazi groups set sights on Australia**— A report published on March 22 by the UK's Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) and Hedayah, a UAE-based violent extremism research centre, had identified more than a dozen white supremacist organisations operating in Australia that recruit disaffected young men and women through encrypted online messaging platforms. According to the report: "Australia has become fertile ground for radical right extremist activism and violence.... Australian chapters of more fringe neo-Nazi cells [have been] actively engaged in campaigns of radical right terror and violence." Compiled with policy assistance from Australia's Department of Home Affairs, the report also found that since the Christchurch terrorist attack of 2019, which was perpetrated by an Australian, these groups had "become more explicitly anti-Semitic, aggressively racist and white supremacist". One of Britain's most senior counter-terrorism police officers, Detective Chief Superintendent Martin Snowden of Yorkshire Police, echoed the report's findings. "It's a significant risk for us, and I think that risk can be seen in a number of countries around the world including Australia...Daesh or AQ [Al Qaeda] inspired terrorism is still the most significant threat, but right-wing is growing at a faster pace...Arrests over the past 12 months would indicate that 20 to 25 per cent of those are in the right-wing terrorism space, and that volume is growing year on year and I think will continue to grow." he said. "I think there has been a growth in individuals who are embracing extremist or terroristic ideologies in Australia in the aftermath of the Christchurch attack," Dr Bethan Johnson, a researcher with CARR told the ABC. Four of the groups named in the report had been proscribed overseas but not in Australia: Combat 18 (proscribed by Canada in 2019 and Germany in 2020), Blood and Honour (proscribed by Canada in 2019), Generation Identity (proscribed by France in 2021) and the Proud Boys (proscribed by Canada 2021).

See: Star Tribune News' entry, in: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-28/banned-neo-nazi-groups-set-sights-on-australia/100030072>, Also See: the Full report, in: [https://www.hedayahcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/002\\_Final\\_CARR-Hedayah\\_Australia-Country-Report\\_2021JAN26.pdf](https://www.hedayahcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/002_Final_CARR-Hedayah_Australia-Country-Report_2021JAN26.pdf), retrieved on 31.03.2021

# POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

## INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

**IsP140154-UN: Anti-Muslim hatred has reached 'epidemic proportions' says UN rights expert, urging action by States**— On March 4, The UN expert Ahmed Shaheed had warned the UN Human Rights Council that institutional islamophobia was reaching epidemic levels. Mr. Shaheed presented his annual report to the rights council as part of his role as the UN's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The report cited European surveys in 2018 and 2019 that showed that nearly four in 10 people held unfavorable views about Muslims. He said that States had responded to security threats “by adopting measures which disproportionately target Muslims and define Muslims as both high risk and at risk of radicalization”. The independent expert said that “Islamophobic” discrimination and hostility were often intersectional, such as where “Muslim women may face a ‘triple penalty’ as women, minority ethnic and Muslim...Harmful stereotypes and tropes about Muslims and Islam are chronically reinforced by mainstream media, powerful politicians, influencers of popular culture and in academic discourse”, he added.

See: UN News' entry, in: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1086452>, retrieved on 07.03.2021

**IsP140155-UN: UN leaders speak out against Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred**— On March 17, The Secretary-General of United Nation, António Guterres, had said, in a pre-recorded video broadcast during a high-level virtual event to commemorate the first ever "international Day to combat islamophobia" organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), “Anti-Muslim bigotry is sadly in line with other distressing trends we are seeing globally”. The Secretary-General cited UN's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief report, submitted on March 4, to the UN Human Rights Council, which found that suspicion, discrimination and outright hatred towards Muslims had risen to “epidemic proportions”. The UN chief called for safeguarding the rights of minority communities, “As we move toward evermore multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, we need political, cultural and economic investments to strengthen social cohesion and tackle bigotry,” he stated. The Secretary-General underscored that fighting discrimination, racism and xenophobia was a priority for the United Nations. During the virtual event, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) High Representative, had said “Despite progress made in building bridges of understanding through the promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogue, manifestations of anti-Muslim hatred persisted and morphed into different forms...Islamophobia cannot be seen in isolation from the worrying increase in xenophobia and hate speech against minorities including immigrants and other faith communities.” For the President of the UN General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, had urged countries to re-commit to the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other related instruments, in which he expressed hope that they would lay the foundation for national laws to end hate speech and hate crimes. “Today our conversation is focused on Islamophobia, but the source of this scourge is a source that imperils us all. The answer is solidarity, equality, and respect for the equal dignity and entitlement to fundamental human rights of every individual”, he said.

See: UN news entry, in: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1087572>, retrieved on 18.03.2021

**IsP140156-UNHRC: UNHRC adopts resolution against Sri Lanka's rights record**— On March 23, The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva had adopted a resolution against Sri Lanka's rights record. The resolution titled ‘Promotion of Reconciliation Accountability and Human Rights

in Sri Lanka' was adopted by the UNHRC after 22 members out of 47 voted in favour of it. Eleven members voted against the resolution and 14 abstained, which included Sri Lanka's neighbours, India and Nepal. The resolution, (A/HRC/46/L.1), was presented to the Council by Julian Braithwaite, the UK representative to Geneva, on behalf of the Core Group on Sri Lanka. The text pointed to trends emerging over the past year, which according to Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, who spoke on behalf of the European Union, represented a clear early "warning signs of a deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka" In his introductory comments, UK Representative to the UN in Geneva, Julian Braithwaite, warned of trends which "threaten to reverse the limited gains made in recent years and risked the recurrence of policies and practices that gave rise to the grave violations of the past." Tichy-Fisslberger highlighted the "accelerating militarisation of civilian government functions, "the erosion of the independence of the judiciary", and "increased marginalisation" of Tamil and Muslim minorities, which had been "exacerbated" by the island's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the reported prevention of Muslims, and members of other religions, from practicing their own religious burial rites. The resolution also called on the Sri Lankan government to revise the law on the prevention of terrorism which rights groups had warned that it was been used as a weapon targeting dissidents and minorities in the country.

See: Colombo Gazette News' entry, in: <https://colombogazette.com/2021/03/23/resolution-on-sri-lanka-adopted-by-unhrc/>,  
Also: See: UN News entry, in: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088122>, retrieved on 24.03.2021

**IsP140157-ICC-Palestine: ICC rules it can investigate alleged war crimes in Palestine despite Israeli objections** — On February 5, The international Criminal Court (ICC) had announced that it has jurisdiction in Palestine. The ICC judges rule had cleared the way for the chief prosecutor to investigate alleged atrocities despite fierce Israeli objections. Fatou Bensouda, a Gambian lawyer and the ICC chief prosecutor, had previously announced that she intends to open a formal inquiry into alleged war crimes in the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. However, due to Palestine's status as an occupied territory rather than a sovereign country, she had waited for judges to "confirm" if the court, headquartered in The Hague, had the authority.

See: The Guardian Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2021/feb/05/icc-rules-it-can-investigate-war-crimes-in-palestine-despite-israeli-objections>, retrieved on 02.03.2021

**IsP140158-HRW-India: HRW accuses Modi of deliberately targeting Muslims in India**— On February 19, The Human Rights Watch (HRW) had published a report in which they accused the Indian government of adopting laws and policies that "systematically discriminate against Muslims and stigmatize critics of the government." HRW's report came only days ahead February 23, which marked the first anniversary of the violence in New Delhi, where 53 people were killed, 40 of them were Muslims. The violence came after protests started against India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed in 2019, which had excluded Muslims. "Instead of conducting a credible and impartial investigation, including into allegations that [ruling Bharatiya Janata Party] BJP leaders incited violence and police officials were complicit in attacks, the authorities have targeted activists and protest organizers ... The authorities have lately responded to another mass protest, this time by farmers, by vilifying minority Sikh protesters and opening investigations into their alleged affiliation with separatist groups," the report said. Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, various legislative and other actions had been taken, which legitimated discrimination against religious minorities and enabled violent Hindu nationalism, HRW said. "These actions violate domestic law and India's obligations under international human rights law that prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or religion, and require the governments to provide residents with equal protection of the law," HRW said. Kavita Krishnan,

an activist, and secretary of the All India Progressive Women's Association, said in response to the HRW Report, "It is an acknowledgment of what is happening in India. I have no doubt that the government is targeting minorities and speaking the language of bigotry every day."

See: Global Village Space News' entry, in: <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/hrw-accuses-modi-of-deliberately-targeting-muslims-in-india/>, retrieved on 01.03.2021

**IsP140159-Amnesty-Palestine: Denying COVID-19 vaccines to Palestinians exposes Israel's institutionalized discrimination**— On January 6, Amnesty International had called on Israel to provide coronavirus vaccine doses to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Amnesty said, saying the Jewish state was obligated to do so under international law. On 23 December, 2020, the Israeli Health Ministry began the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Israel had been hailed as the country had achieved the widest vaccination coverage in proportion to its population size. However, the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out plan was only for citizens of Israel, including Israeli settlers living inside the West Bank, and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. It excluded the nearly 5 million Palestinians who live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, under Israeli military occupation. "Israel's COVID-19 vaccine programme highlights the institutionalized discrimination that defines the Israeli government's policy towards Palestinians. While Israel celebrates a record-setting vaccination drive, millions of Palestinians living under Israeli control in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will receive no vaccine or have to wait much longer – there could hardly be a better illustration of how Israeli lives are valued above Palestinian ones," said Saleh Higazi, Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International.

See: Amnesty International News' entry, in: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/01/denying-covid19-vaccines-to-palestinians-exposes-israels-institutionalized-discrimination/>, retrieved on 02.03.2021

**IsP140160-Amnesty International: slams 'dangerous' Swiss veil ban** — The Human Rights group, Amnesty International, said Switzerland's vote to ban full face coverings was "needlessly fueling division and fear," AI urged authorities to instead focus on measures that genuinely protect women. Cyrielle Huguenot, head of women's rights at Amnesty International Switzerland said "After the vote to ban minarets, Swiss voters have once again approved an initiative that discriminates against one religious community in particular ... The ban on the full face veil cannot be viewed as a measure that liberates women. On the contrary, it is a dangerous and symbolic policy that violates the rights to freedom of expression and religion." On March 7, Swiss voters had narrowly decided in a referendum to implement a ban on full face coverings, with 51.2 percent in favor and 48.8 percent against. "We call on the elected politicians and government to unequivocally support the fundamental rights of the country's religious minorities and to commit to peaceful coexistence," Huguenot said.

See: Arabnews Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1821956/world>, retrieved on 09.03.2021

**IsP140161-NGO-France: Global NGOs call on EU to probe French 'state-sponsored Islamophobia'**— Twenty-five non-governmental organisations from eleven different countries had signed an unprecedented letter to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in which they called for France to be investigated by the European Court of Justice. The signatories included representatives of CRAN, the French Council of Black Associations, the Swiss Central Islamic Council, the Islamic Council of Victoria in Australia and the London-based Muslim Public Affairs Committee. The signatories alleged systematic, state-sponsored discrimination against Muslims. The letter urged for an immediate action against the French government for what the signatories called "state-sponsored Islamophobia" and for imposing the allegedly discriminatory charter of republican values. The letter to the European Commission leader said the

legislation was inherently discriminatory. They accuse France of violating the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and flouting the European Convention on Human Rights.

See: Radio France Internationale News' entry, in: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20210309-global-ngos-call-on-eu-to-probe-french-state-sponsored-islamophobia-republican-charter-muslim-samuel-paty>, retrieved on 11.03.2021

**IsP140162-NGO-India: Think Tank Downgrades India's Democracy To 'Partly Free'; Cites Govt Discrimination Against Muslims**— On March 3, The U.S. democracy research institute, Freedom House, had downgraded India from free to partly free in an annual report titled "Freedom in the World". The report, published by the U.S. government-funded research group, pointed to mob violence against Muslims, intimidation of journalists and rising judicial interference since PM Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won power in 2014. "India's status declined from Free to Partly Free due to a multiyear pattern in which the Hindu nationalist government and its allies have presided over rising violence and discriminatory policies affecting the Muslim population and pursued a crackdown on expressions of dissent by the media, academics, civil society groups, and protesters," the report said. The report, which ranked democracies around the world, had several events of 2020 mentioned, these included Delhi riots, use of sedition laws against critics and plight of migrant workers after PM Modi announced a sudden lockdown to control the coronavirus spread in the country. "The ruling Hindu nationalist movement also encouraged the scapegoating of Muslims, who were disproportionately blamed for the spread of the virus and faced attacks by vigilante mobs." the report stated.

See: ABP Live News' entry, in: <https://news.abplive.com/news/india/us-think-tank-report-downgrades-india-to-partly-free-status-alleges-discrimination-against-muslims-crackdown-on-dissent-1446972>, retrieved on 09.03.2021

## NORTH AMERICA

**IsP140163-US: US Democrats reintroduce legislation to prevent future Muslim bans**— On February 26, as many as 140 Democratic lawmakers had reintroduced a legislation in the US Congress to prevent future Muslim bans and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion. The Muslim travel ban, introduced by former US President Donald Trump, targeted several Muslim-majority nations and restricted the entry of people from Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Venezuela. President Joe Biden ended the Muslim ban on his day one in the office. In the House of Representatives, the National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants (NO BAN) Act was reintroduced by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler and Judy Chu, while in the Senate it was done by Senator Chris Coons. The legislation would strengthen the Immigration and Nationality Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, and restores the separation of powers by limiting overly broad executive authority to issue future travel bans.

See: Business-Standard News' entry, in: [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/us-democrats-reintroduce-legislation-to-prevent-future-muslim-bans-121022700252\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/us-democrats-reintroduce-legislation-to-prevent-future-muslim-bans-121022700252_1.html), retrieved on 04.03.2021

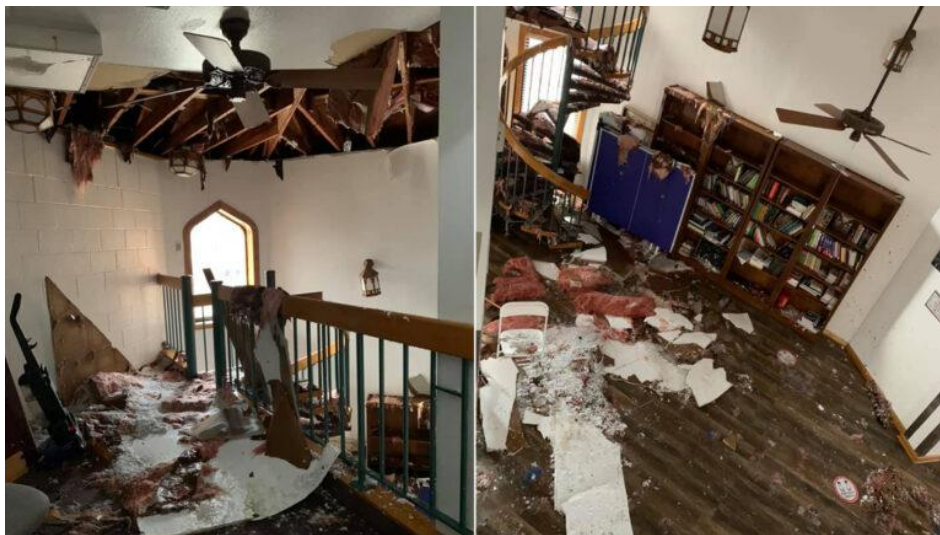
**IsP140164-US: Florida deputy suspended for Facebook post about Muslims**— A central Florida sheriff's deputy named Michael Johnson was suspended for nearly a month after a civil rights group asked for an investigation into his Facebook posts about Muslims. The Orange County Sheriff's Office suspended the Deputy for 150 hours without pay after an internal investigation found he showed "unbecoming conduct" and "bias and disrespect" toward Muslims, according to a report obtained by the Orlando Sentinel in a public records request. In a February 2020 post on his personal Facebook page, Johnson wrote that "Muslims are taking over America," calling them

the “most intolerant people when it comes to other religions,” the report said. When interviewed by investigators, Johnson acknowledged that the post was “offensive towards all Muslims.” He said he was “trying to describe a small percentage of radicalized Muslims that only represent a very small percentage of the followers.” Sheriff John Mina told the newspaper he updated the agency's social media policy after he took office in 2018 and warned deputies he would not hesitate to give “very harsh” discipline for violations.

See: ABC NEWS entry, in: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/florida-deputy-suspended-facebook-post-muslims-76207443>, retrieved on 08.03.2021

### **IsP140165-US: Texas church helps mosque damaged after snowstorm—** The First United

Methodist Church of Denton, north of Dallas-Fort Worth, had started a GoFundMe campaign to help the city's only mosque, the Islamic Society of Denton, pay for repairs needed and recover from the devastating snowstorms that hit the area the week before. The church's initiative came after a



video showing water pouring from burst pipes in the mosque's ceiling went viral on social media, the church launched a GoFundMe campaign to fund repairs, which had been expected to take weeks to complete. By February 25, nearly \$55,000 out of a targeted \$100,000 had been raised. “Your friends at First United Methodist Church of Denton and Open Worship are with you ... We send you prayers and love and support. Please let us know how we can help further. As-salamu alaykum!” wrote Jonathan Perry, a minister at the church, on the GoFundMe page. Perry told the Denton Record-Chronicle that “the church has a longstanding friendship” with the mosque and that the two congregations have “been there for each other at important times.”

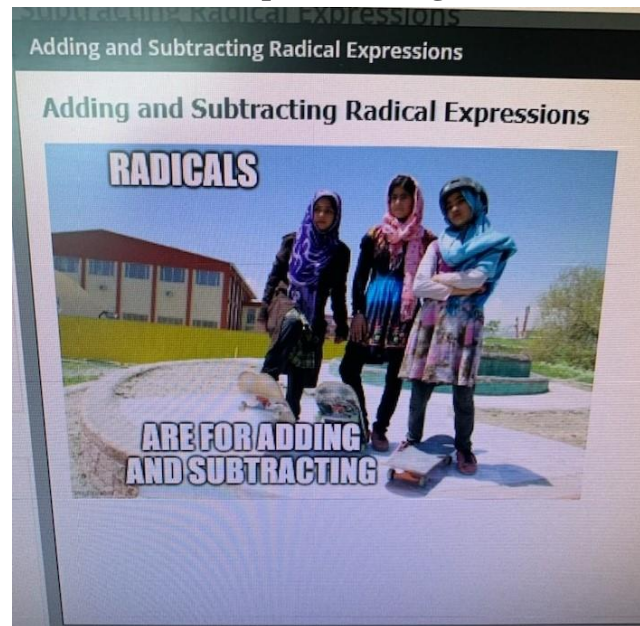
See: Religion News entry, in: <https://religionnews.com/2021/02/25/texas-church-helps-mosque-damaged-after-snowstorm/>, Also, [https://dentonrc.com/life/religion/dentons-mosque-flooded-after-pipes-burst/article\\_6c35ff8b-cc59-510e-96bd-e734a50a7ad0.html](https://dentonrc.com/life/religion/dentons-mosque-flooded-after-pipes-burst/article_6c35ff8b-cc59-510e-96bd-e734a50a7ad0.html), retrieved on 10.03.2021

### **IsP140166-US: Fresno police officer on leave after alleged involvement with far-right Proud**

**Boys—** A police officer in the city of Fresno, state of California, was put under investigation after he was spotted in photos and video posted online over the weekend (March 13-14), which appeared to show him affiliating with members of the far-right Proud Boys group at a protest, according to law enforcement officials. The officer, identified by the Fresno Bee as Rick Fitzgerald, was on paid leave as the investigation went forward. Fresno Chief Police Paco Balderrama said an investigation was underway. “Any allegations of actions unbecoming of a police officer or affiliation with any alleged criminal or hate group will always be investigated and addressed,” Balderrama said.

See: Los Angeles Times Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-03-16/fresno-police-officer-seen-with-proud-boys-under-investigation>, retrieved on 25.03.2021

**IsP140167-US: Baltimore County schools remove Islamophobic image from math curriculum**— Baltimore County public school leaders had removed an image depicting a negative stereotype of people who practice Islam from the school system's online math curriculum. The lesson in question centered on a mathematical concept called radical expressions. An image featuring three adolescent girls wearing headscarves next to the words "radicals are for adding and subtracting" was included in the public school system's online pre-college math curriculum, and had since been removed. In a statement provided by spokesman Charlie Herndon, the Baltimore County school district said it learned March 16 of the "unacceptable and harmful image" and opened an investigation into the matter. The image was placed in the learning materials following a digital rewriting of curriculum in anticipation of distance learning necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Investigators met with math department leadership and curriculum writing teams to address "the critical need for culturally responsive and sustaining curriculum which reflects and celebrates the students we serve, as well as improvements to our curriculum review and quality assurance processes moving forward," according to the statement. School officials concluded that the incident was "unintentional, did not intend malice, and resulted from a lack of sensitivity and awareness."



See: The Baltimore Sun Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/bs-md-math-curriculum-20210325-20210325-rmt6aldipvhh7gk4hqogvvykkke-story.html>, Also: [https://www.cair.com/press\\_releases/cair-welcomes-maryland-school-systems-removal-of-islamophobic-image-from-curriculum-seeks-broader-policy-changes-transparency-on-approval-process/](https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-welcomes-maryland-school-systems-removal-of-islamophobic-image-from-curriculum-seeks-broader-policy-changes-transparency-on-approval-process/), retrieved on 29.03.2021

**IsP140168-Canada: Edmonton police lay charges in 'hate-motivated' attacks on 3 women**— On March 8, Edmonton Police Service said in a news release that a man named Shane Edward Tremblay had been charged in connection with three "hate-motivated" attacks in south Edmonton on women, two of whom were wearing head coverings. Tremblay, would face three counts each of uttering threats and assault. "The actions of this individual have traumatized these three women and created a significant level of fear in our community," Sgt. Gary Willits of the hate crimes and violent extremism unit of the Edmonton Police Service, said in a news release. Tremblay was well known to police and Edmonton Transit for "multiple related incidents over the last few years," Willits said. The news release described "three recent hate-motivated incidents involving women" on Edmonton streets. The first was a 19-year-old woman wearing a hijab was waiting inside the University of Alberta Transit Centre when she was approached by a man uttering racial slurs, police said. The man became aggressive, posturing as though he was about to assault the woman. He fled after a transit employee became involved. The second incident occurred 30 minutes later when a man ran across the road and stopped on the sidewalk in front of a 27-year-old Black woman wearing a burka. The man began swearing and yelling insults. He crossed the street away from the woman, then crossed back and pushed her from behind while making threats to kill her and tear off her burka. The third incident which took place on January 18, involved a Black woman outside a convenience store where she was followed into the store, and assaulted.

See: CBC News' entry, in: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/hate-crime-attacks-women-edmonton-1.5941511>, retrieved on 10.03.2021

## EUROPE

**IsP140169-UK: Lord Sharkey Challenges Government Over a Failed Promise to Provide Sharia Complaint Interest Free Student Loan**— On March 8, Lord Sharkey, a member of the UK’s House of Lords, had challenged the British government over its disregard for British Muslims, who he said were being systematically deprived of a university education because of a refusal to introduce a student loan system that Muslims could access. In a debate about the Financial Services Bill, Lord Sharkey highlighted a seven-year-old promise made by former UK Prime Minister David Cameron: “Never again should a Muslim in Britain feel unable to go to university because they cannot get a student loan — simply because of their religion,” which he told a World Economic Forum conference in Davos in 2013. But Lord Sharkey said this promise had gone unfulfilled, and the government’s failure to act was excluding British Muslims. “Lords will know that Islam forbids interest-bearing loans. This prohibition can be and is a barrier to Muslim students going on to attend our universities,” Lord Sharkey said. A senior British politician with direct knowledge of the issue told Arab News that the government’s failure to introduce an alternative financing system was, in his view, inexplicable. “I genuinely do not understand why the government has taken seven years to do something about this. Six years ago the government not only recognized a problem, but recognized a solution: Takaful,” he said. Estelle Clarke, a student finance campaigner, told Arab News that she attributes the government’s failure to it being “indifferent” to the plight of students. “unfortunately, their inaction does suggest a systemic discrimination against certain students on the grounds of their religion, and that the government is indifferent to this discrimination,” she added.

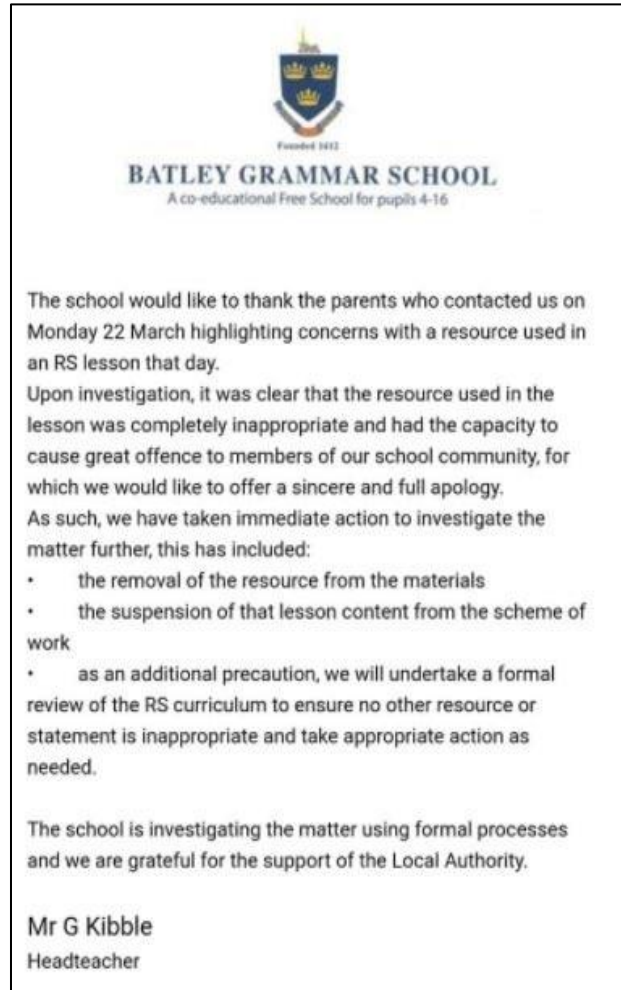
See: (KSA) Arabnews newspaper entry, in: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1824431/world>, retrieved on 16.03.2021

**IsP140170-UK: School drops legal action after Muslim girl told her skirt was too long** — A London based school that had threatened the parents of a Muslim schoolgirl with legal action after she wore a skirt that was deemed “too long” had dropped its legal challenge and apologised. Siham Hamud, a 12 years old student, had described been bullied for her religious beliefs after been sent home every day in December 2020 from Uxbridge high school in Hillingdon, west London, and told to only come back when she wore a shorter skirt. The school had threatened the family with legal action over their daughter’s alleged unauthorised absences. But Siham’s parents had always maintained that shorter skirts contravened the family’s religious beliefs. Three months after first issuing the family with the legal threat, the school had reversed its decision. In a statement released by the family lawyers, Mishcon de Reya, Hamud said he was pleased that the school had listened to the family’s concerns and concluded that they were justified in raising the issue. The statement revealed that the school had sent the family a letter of apology and had now confirmed that it would not be taking legal action for the time Siham was unable to attend school. “We thank the school for its willingness to work towards a fair and positive outcome... This has been a difficult period and we are relieved to now have the matter concluded. We are grateful for the support we have received from the wider community.” Hamud said.

See: The Guardian Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/16/school-drops-legal-action-muslim-girl-told-skirt-too-long>, retrieved on 18.03.2021



**IsP140171-UK: Batley head apologises for teacher using Charlie Hebdo cartoons—** On March 25, Gary Kibble, The headteacher of Batley Grammar School in Yorkshire (England), had apologized to parents who protested after a teacher used cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad as teaching material. Kibble apologised to parents for the inappropriate use of the cartoons, which was taken from the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, during a religious studies lesson earlier in the week, which sparked a protest outside the school on Thursday morning March 25. “Upon investigation, it was clear that the resource used in the lesson was completely inappropriate and had the capacity to cause great offence to members of our school community for which we would like to offer a sincere and full apology,” Kibble said in an email sent to parents that promised further investigation. Images on social media showed about 30 to 40 protesters outside the school, with police at the entrances to the school grounds and the road outside. The [Huddersfield Examiner reported](#) from the school that the protests were peaceful. Kibble said the school had removed the images and course content, and would undertake a review of its religious studies course to ensure no other inappropriate resources were used.



See: The Guardian newspaper entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/25/batley-head-apologises-for-teacher-using-charlie-hebdo-cartoons>, Also, See: The metro newspaper entry, in: <https://metro.co.uk/2021/03/28/50000-support-teacher-who-showed-prophet-muhammad-cartoon-14317899/>, retrieved on 28.03.2021

**IsP140172-UK: Two men charged after windows broken at Derby mosque—**Two men had been charged in connection with criminal damage at a mosque in Derby, England. Derbyshire Police were called to the Faizan-e-Madina mosque in Malcolm Street in the early hours of March 21 after reports that windows had been broken. Scott Mouser, and Jason Mouser, were charged with religiously aggravated criminal damage. The men appeared before a magistrates court the following day and were out on bail pending the next court date, and bail conditions would prevent them from going within 100 meters of the mosque.



See: Tell Mama UK News’ entry, in: <https://tellmamauk.org/two-men-charged-after-windows-broken-at-derby-mosque/>, retrieved on 29.03.2021

**IsP140173-UK: Julie Burchill agrees to pay Ash Sarkar 'substantial damages' in libel case—**

On March 16, The columnist Julie Burchill had apologised to the Muslim activist and journalist Ash Sarkar, and agreed to pay her “substantial damages”, after a series of social media posts in which she accused Sarkar of being an Islamist, a hypocrite and worshipping a paedophile. In Twitter and Facebook posts, Burchill said that her posts had “included racist and misogynist comments” and “played into Islamophobic tropes”. She wrote: “although it was not my intention, I accept that my statements were defamatory of Sarkar and caused her very substantial distress”. The Sunday Telegraph columnist added: “I do not believe, have never believed and never intended to make any allegation that Sarkar is a promoter, supporter and/or sympathiser of Islamists or fundamentalist terrorism or to suggest that Sarkar condones paedophilia in any way”. Burchill asked her social media followers to share her apology. The retraction came after Burchill published a series of social media posts to and about Sarkar in response to the Novara Media senior editor’s criticism of Rod Liddle in December 2020 for an article from 2012 in which he wrote that if he was a teacher he “could not remotely conceive of not trying to shag the kids”. Burchill responded by accusing Sarkar of “worshipping a paedophile”, a reference to the Prophet Muhammad. After she settled the case, Burchill said “I deeply regret having reacted in the way I did. I accept that I should have behaved better. On reflection, I accept that I misjudged the situation, and made statements that simply are not true, which I now want to put right.” The apology also acknowledged that Muslims do not worship Muhammad and would consider doing so blasphemous.

See: The Guardian Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/mar/16/julie-burchill-agrees-to-pay-ash-sarkar-substantial-damages-in-libel-case>, retrieved on 30.03.2021

**IsP140174-UK: British teen behind neo-Nazi, anti-Muslim group pleads guilty—**

A British schoolboy who created an online neo-Nazi group to target Muslims and other minority groups had been sentenced after admitting to terror offenses in court. The 16-year-old, from Newcastle, nicknamed himself “Hitler” and used social media to promote Islamophobia, extreme right-wing violence and racism. His manifesto outlined the group’s aims, including transforming the UK into a white ethno-state. Using the “Hitler” alias, he also designed and spread vicious anti-Muslim propaganda. He pleaded guilty to four counts of inviting support for National Action, the British neo-Nazi organization that was banned by the government in 2016. After his case was heard in a youth court, he was handed a 12-month intensive referral order. As part of his sentencing, he must notify authorities of his location and activities for 10 years. A pre-sentence expert report said the autistic teenager probably “did not see the wider ramifications of his activities.”

See: Arabnews Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1834556/world>, retrieved on 31.03.2021

**IsP140175-Italy: Court blocks Bannon-linked plans for populist academy—**

Italy’s top administrative court had ruled against a conservative think tank affiliated with former White House adviser Steve Bannon over its use of a 13th century hilltop monastery to train future populist leaders. The Council of State ruled that the Culture Ministry was correct in cancelling the concession it had given to the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, or Human Dignity Institute. The court found that the institute had lied when it bid for the lease of the monastery in 2017, claiming it had qualifications to run the monastery which were “shown to be not true.” The ruling overturned an earlier decision by a regional administrative tribunal that had sided with the institute. Bannon and the institute had launched plans to establish an academy to train populists and nationalists at the 13th century Trisulti monastery, an abbey surrounded by a forest in the province of Frosinone south of Rome. Bannon had said he would bring in teachers and raise money for the academy, which had been dubbed a “gladiator school” for the alt-right. The local Catholic bishop had praised the decision, they said, the Council of State had done the right thing by returning the monastery

“to the people of God and to the entire community.” In a statement reported by the Avvenire newspaper of the Italian bishops conference, Bishop Lorenzo Loppa said the diocese would now work with the community to find a new life for this “monastic jewel,” suggesting it could be used as the headquarters of a foundation. On March 16, Bannon said the court decision was a politically motivated “joke”. Benjamin Harnwell, founder and president of the institute, had previously argued the institute was being targeted because of its affiliation with Bannon and its support for Italy’s right-wing leader Matteo Salvini and his “heroic blockade of the illegal migration into Italy.”

See: AP News’ entry, in: <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-europe-italy-think-tanks-rome-b561c35eb9db0690fb242f31d256641d>, retrieved on 21.03.2021

**IsP140176-Netherlands: Dutch elections: Mark Rutte wins another term but fragmented results mask continuing popularity of the far right**— On March 17, Dutch citizens had concluded the voting in the country’s general elections in order to elect all 150 members of the House of Representatives. Official election results would be finalised and announced on March 26. However, exit polls showed Prime Minister Mark Rutte People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) won 22 percent of the vote and 36 seats, three more than in 2017 election. The D66 party had become the second largest party in the Netherlands, it won 15 percent of the vote and 24 seats, five more than in the previous election. The result would force Rutte to orientate his future policy in a more pro-European direction. As Rutte ruled out any form of cooperation with the two main radical right-wing parties – Geert Wilders’ Party for Freedom (PVV) and Forum for Democracy (FVD) – he would engage with other parties to form the government. And in an increasingly fragmented political landscape, the VVD had more parties to choose from than ever. The 150-seat Dutch parliament would have 17 parties after this election result. It might take a while to form the government but it would probably end up been a broad continuation of the last. The PVV lost a few seats but the combined vote shares with those of two other more radical parties – JA21 and FVD– the Dutch far right had won more seats than ever before. The Dutch far right won a total of 29 seats. The PVV party came only third with 17 seats, three fewer than in 2017.

See: The Conversation News’ entry, in: <https://theconversation.com/dutch-elections-mark-rutte-wins-another-term-but-fragmented-results-mask-continuing-popularity-of-the-far-right-156993>, Also, See: World Socialist Website News’ entry, in: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/03/24/neth-m24.html>, retrieved on 24.03.2021

**IsP140177-Switzerland: Swiss Jews join Muslims in protesting referendum banning face-covering veils**— The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities and the Platform for Liberal Jews in Switzerland said the ban, which passed with 51% of the vote on March 7, “restricts and violates several conditions of religious freedom.” In their joint statement, the groups also said they were “concerned that further legislative or federal popular initiatives could further undermine religious freedom in the future.” The Swiss “have a long history of trying to curb migrations through banning religious practice,” Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, the president of the Conference of European Rabbis and a Zurich native, wrote in a separate statement. “We fear that this attacks against religious freedom further weakens the ability to practice one’s faith, a basic freedom and human right which is fundamental to a liberal democracy,” Goldschmidt wrote. He called it “ironic” that the ban, which would not apply to face masks, was coming at a time when most people were covering their face regularly to avoid spreading the coronavirus.

See: Jewish News entry, in: <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/swiss-jews-join-muslims-in-protesting-referendum-banning-face-covering-veils/>, retrieved on 15.03.2021

**IsP140178-Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka to allow burial of virus victims**— On February 26, Sri Lanka had cleared the burial of COVID-19 victims, reversing its nearly year-long policy of mandatory cremations. The change in the government’s position came after Pakistani PM Imran Khan’s visit, in which he urged the Rajapaksa administration to respect Muslims’ burial rights. AFP reported “While Health Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi did not give a reason in her announcement reversing the ban, official sources said Khan had raised the subject with both President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and PM Mahinda Rajapaksa during his trip earlier this week.” Sri Lanka’s decision was also after several members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had raised the issue, both in Sri Lanka and at international fora, including the ongoing 46th session of the UN HRC. As many as 14 OIC countries were among the 47 members of the Council, who would vote on a contested resolution on Sri Lanka. In a statement, Mr. Rauff Hakeem, Opposition MP and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Leader said: “if not for the inclusion of this matter in the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the subsequent inclusion of the matter in the resolution on Sri Lanka tabled by the core group, the deliberate intransigence that resulted in outrageously traumatising a section of Sri Lankan people would not have been resolved.”

See: The Hindu News’ entry, in: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-to-allow-burial-of-virus-victims/article33944793.ece>, retrieved on 03.03.2021

**IsP140179-Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka to take time to consider proposed ban on burqa**— On March 16, Sri Lanka's government said it would take time to consider a proposed ban on the wearing of burqas, which a top security official called a sign of religious extremism. Sri Lanka's minister of public security, Sarath Weerasekara, said on March 13, he was seeking Cabinet approval to ban burqas. A move he said would have a direct impact on national security. However, government spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella said a ban was a serious decision requiring consultation and consensus. "It will be done in consultation. So, it requires time," he said during the weekly media briefing.

See: Star Tribune News’ entry, in: <https://www.startribune.com/sri-lanka-to-take-time-to-consider-proposed-ban-on-burqa/600034846/>, retrieved on 25.03.2021

**IsP140180-Palestine: Israel suspends sending its Covid vaccine doses to other countries amid legal scrutiny & defense minister's objections**— On February 25, the office of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu had halted the sending of Covid-19 jabs to other countries after the move sparked questions from the state attorney general and angered Defense Minister Benny Gantz. The suspension was announced, shortly after Israel's attorney general, Avichai Mandelblit, asked National Security Adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat for clarification on the program. Gantz had welcomed the freeze, writing on Twitter that Netanyahu's order to send the surplus of Israeli vaccines to foreign nations was “made in an undemocratic manner, bypassing the procedures.” Israeli authorities had insisted that it was not their responsibility to provide vaccines to the West Bank and Gaza, despite criticism from Palestinian officials and international human rights groups.

See: Russia Today News’ entry, in: <https://www.rt.com/news/516590-gantz-netanyahu-israel-vaccine/>, retrieved on 04.03.2021



**IsP140181-India: Indian police arrest two men after assault on Muslim boy at Hindu temple**

— On March 14, Ghaziabad police confirmed the arrest of two men following a violent assault on a 14-year-old Muslim boy, named as Asif, who entered a Hindu temple to drink water. Footage of the incident, which occurred, on March 11, in Ghaziabad in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, sparked outrage after it was widely shared online. In the video, the boy could be seen being physically assaulted by a man as a second person films it. Some Hindu temples in India do not permit entry to non-Hindus, and the site in Ghaziabad had a sign which stated that it was "forbidden" for Muslims to enter, The Indian Express newspaper reported. Asif's father told The Indian Express that his son "was in the area when he felt thirsty... he saw a tap at the temple and began drinking". Ghaziabad police had named the suspect as Shringi Nandan Yadav, a resident of the city of Bhagalpur in the state of Bihar and a caretaker at the temple where the alleged assault took place. Another man, named only as Shivanand, had also been arrested in connection with the filming of the incident.

See: BBC News' entry, in: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56389510>, retrieved on 18.03.2021

**IsP140182-India: 14 Indian charged for anti-Islam contents in textbook**

— On March 18, the police in India's northern state Rajasthan had registered a case against publishers and writers of a book in which a chapter linked Islam with terrorism. The case was registered with the Jaipur police station against the Rajasthan State Textbook Board, owner of Sanjeev Passbook Publication, and writers for linking Islam with terrorism, insulting and hurting the religious beliefs of Muslims, and criminal conspiracy. In all, 14 people had been booked in the case. The textbook was published by the Rajasthan State Textbook Board and Sanjeev Passbook Publication for students in grade 12 and was reportedly introduced during the previous tenure of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the state of Rajasthan. The book was part of the curriculum in government schools. The complaint was lodged by Mohsin Rasheed, the coordinator of the Rajasthan Muslim Forum. "Earlier, they had included Islamic terrorism in B. Ed [Bachelor of Education] course. Now they are teaching in class 12. It is an attempt to create suspicion towards Muslims and promote hatred for Islam ... By directly associating Islam with terrorism and then using the word 'Islamic terrorism,' the book attempts to provoke Muslim students and the community and hurt their sentiments," Rasheed told Anadolu Agency. Rasheed requested that the publisher and authors of

the book be prosecuted and that “the hate material be immediately removed from the syllabus book.” In the political science textbook, the question “What is Islamic terrorism” was answered with “Islamic terrorism is a form of Islam, which has become stronger in the last 20-30 years.”

See: Global Village Space News’ entry, in: <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/14-indian-charged-for-anti-islam-contents-in-textbook/>, retrieved on 21.03.2021

## AUSTRALIA

**IsP140183-New Zealand: police arrest two over alleged threat to Christchurch mosques—** New Zealand police had arrested two people following a threat made online to the Linwood Islamic centre and Al Noor mosque, the sites of the two Christchurch shootings in 2019. The alleged threat, which was made on the first week of March, were followed up by police after they had received credible information from the public regarding “concerning communications on the 4chan site”. Canterbury district commander Supt John Price Said: “We take all threats of this nature seriously and we are working closely with our Muslim community...Any messages of hate or people wanting to cause harm in our community will not be tolerated – it’s not the Kiwi way.”

See: The Guardian Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/04/new-zealand-police-arrest-two-over-alleged-threat-to-christchurch-mosques/>, retrieved on 08.03.2021

**IsP140184-New Zealand: Jacinda Ardern commemorates two years since Christchurch mosque massacre—** On March 13, New Zealand marked the second anniversary of March 15 2019 terrorist attack, when 51 worshippers were killed at two Christchurch mosques by a white supremacist gunman. NZ’s Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, had addressed several hundred people who had gathered at the Christchurch Arena, and told the crowd that she had been lost for words while preparing her speech because nothing she could say could “change what happened”. She said the Muslim community had experienced hatred and racism even before the attacks and words should be used for change. “There will be an unquestionable legacy from March 15,” Ardern said. “Much of it will be heartbreaking. But it is never too early or too late for the legacy to be a more inclusive nation.” The service, which was similar to the service planned last year that had to be cancelled due to coronavirus, was also livestreamed for those not able to make it to the event. The names of all 51 people who lost their lives that day were read aloud at the service, and the efforts of police and medics were also commemorated.

See: (UK) Independent Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/jacinda-ardern-christchurch-mosque-shootings-anniversary-b1816756.html>, retrieved on 16.03.2021

**IsP140185-Australia: Australia bans far-right extremist Sonnenkrieg Division—** On March 22, The Britain-based neo-Nazi outfit Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD) became the first far-right organization to be listed as a terror group in Australia. SKD joined a list of 27 proscribed organizations, which had so far been exclusively jihadist or separatist groups. Peter Dutton, Australia's Minister for Home Affairs said in an emailed statement "SKD adheres to an abhorrent, violent ideology that encourages lone-wolf terrorist actors who would seek to cause significant harm to our way of life and our country." The head of Australia's ASIO intelligence agency, Mike Burgess, said SKD and other right-wing groups accounted for 40% of terror-related investigations carried out in the country over the past 12 months.

See: DW News’ entry, in: <https://www.dw.com/en/australia-bans-far-right-extremist-sonnenkrieg-division/a-56947377>, retrieved on 28.03.2021