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ISLAMOPHOBIA

47TH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL
OF FOREIGN MINISTERS (CFM)

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**THIRTEEN OIC OBSERVATORY
REPORT ON
ISLAMOPHOBIA**

PRESENTED TO THE
47TH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF FOREIGN
MINISTERS

Niamey, 27-28 November 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD by the OIC Secretary General

INTRODUCTION: State of Affairs

1. MAJOR EVENTS BRINGING SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS ON ISLAMOPHOBIA, INTOLERANCE, DISCRIMINATION, AND HATRED BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

- 1.1. *Terrorist attack against Muslims on 15 March 2019 in New Zealand*
- 1.2. *European Union Parliamentary Election of March 2019*
- 1.3. *Trial on the Issue of Myanmar's Genocide against Rohingya at the International Court of Justice (ICJ)*
- 1.4. *The introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by the Indian Government*
- 1.5. *Repeated attempt to insult and ridicule Prophet Mohammed (PBUH)*

2. MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

2.1. Islamophobia in the U.S. and Canada

- 2.1.1. *Polls and Reports on Islamophobia in the U.S. and Canada*
- 2.1.2. *Islamophobic Discourses and Campaigns*
- 2.1.3. *Far Rights and populism in the U.S. and Canada*

2.2. Islamophobia in Europe

- 2.2.1. *Polls and Reports on Islamophobia in Europe*
- 2.2.2. *Islamophobic Discourses and Campaigns in Europe*
- 2.2.3. *Far Rights and populism in Europe*

2.3. Islamophobia in the Rest of the World

- 2.3.1. *Myanmar*
- 2.3.2. *China*
- 2.3.3. *Sri Lanka*
- 2.3.4. *India*
- 2.3.5. *Australia and New Zealand*

2.4. Other Islamophobic Trends

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

3. SOME POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.1. Public Policy
- 3.2. Court Decisions and Trials against Islamophobes
- 3.3. Positive Views on Islam
- 3.4. Counter-balances on Far-Rights
- 3.5. Supports on Mosques
- 3.6. Positive Development on Hijab
- 3.7. Positive Development on Inter-Faiths

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ANNEXES: ISLAMOPHOBIC INCIDENTS

- I. Incidents Related to Mosques*
- II. Political and Social Campaigns against Islam and Muslims*
- III. Intolerance against Islam and its Sacred Symbols*
- IV. Discrimination against Muslim Individuals and Communities*
- V. Incidents Related to Hijab (Veil)*

FOREWORD BY THE OIC SECRETARY GENERAL

I am pleased to submit the 13th Annual Report on Islamophobia. The report helps keep an eye on any new developments in this phenomenon and its repercussions on the reality of Muslims across the world.

Guided by its Charter which calls for supporting Muslim communities and minorities abroad, preserving their dignity as well as cultural and religious identity, promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms; and in furtherance of the resolutions of the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers, the OIC has tirelessly strived for justice, tolerance, moderation and peace, while combating terrorism, extremism, hate and Islamophobia.

The Islamic Summit Conference at its third extraordinary session in Makkah stressed the necessity to combat hate and fear of Islam. To this end, the OIC General Secretariat established an Observatory through which to monitor all facets of this phenomenon. An annual report is published which looks into all areas and cases of fear of Islam; and close cooperation is carried out with governmental and non-governmental organizations active in this area. The General Secretariat has since been playing its part in reaching out to the international community about the need to secure respect for the rights of all religious and ethnic minorities and to combat defamation of religion. In the same vein, the OIC has played a role in adoption of the UN Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, which constitutes a turning point in the global effort to combat religious fanaticism, intolerance, stereotypical views, defamation, discrimination and incitement to violence against persons based on their religion and belief.

The Observatory was established in 2007 with the duty to keeping a record of those events and everything on a daily basis that serves as possible indicators of Islamophobia, looking into the political, economic and ideological patterns underpinning Islamophobia enabling it to give an overview of the trend of Islamophobia around the world. An annual report on the matter is submitted to the Council of Foreign Ministers to put together policies to counter this phenomenon that haunts the world communities, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. While highlighting trends surrounding and triggering Islamophobia, the report also includes “worthwhile” positive developments in the reporting period.

There is no doubting this phenomenon is rapidly expanding, and hate crimes against Muslims in western and other communities are spiking. Taking the form of attacks on Mosques and Islamic centers, verbal and physical abuse of Muslims in the streets and workplaces, and other negative attitudes against the Muslim identity, Islamophobia constitutes a major threat to the universal human values on which modern and contemporary societies stand. It even undermines the freedom of thought and religion these societies cherish as a key part of their value system.

The year 2019 and 2020 witnessed concerning events that have occurred against Muslims. These include, among other events, the attack against innocent worshippers at Al-Noor and Linwood mosques in the New Zealand city of



Christchurch (15 March 2019), and the genocide by the Myanmar government against the Muslim Rohingya people. These and the attack that has taken the lives of innocent Christians in Sri Lanka are proof that terrorism has no religion, no ethnicity and no color. This much is true – anywhere and everywhere, extremism triggers hatred. Being conscious of these challenges, the OIC convened an emergency foreign ministers meeting to discuss the consequences of the terrorist attack on innocent Muslims.

Indeed, the OIC has spared no effort in combating this phenomenon, such as through resolutions and community awareness-raising initiatives across the world. Being conscious of its pivotal role in defending Islam and Muslims everywhere, the OIC has placed anti-Islamophobia efforts at the heart of its 2015 and 2025 plans of action as well as continues to give prime importance to fighting Islamophobia at all levels.

In this connection, I cannot fail to acknowledge the counter-Islamophobia efforts of the OIC organs and regional offices. It is also important to note that the myriad international conferences that dealt with violence and hate have signaled a deep awareness on the part of the European countries of the dangerous repercussions of Islamophobia on the peace and stability of their societies and states. These Islamophobia-centered events have made a set of recommendations, which, if implemented, will put an end to various forms of Islamophobia and reduce their impact on Muslims living in different parts of the world.

In bringing to your attention this 13th report on Islamophobia, which takes a look at the trends of the phenomenon from March 2019 to October 2020, the OIC calls on the Member States to assist in this regard, welcoming any initiative that might help develop effective counter policies and mechanisms.

Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen
Secretary General

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION: STATE OF AFFAIRS

The spread of Islamophobia, both in terms of the phenomenon's momentum and outreach, is particularly alarming these days, for it has emerged as a new form of racism characterized by xenophobia, negative profiling and stereotyping of Muslims. The rise in hate crimes against Muslims both offline and online, as well as discriminations in education, employment, housing and healthcare sector, among others are well documented. The gendered aspect of Islamophobia is also gaining prominence, with girls and women being targeted due to mode of their dress and the general notion that Muslim women are oppressed and thus must be liberated. What indeed is worrisome is that Islamophobia continues to find strong resonance in political spheres, ultimately leading to the institutionalization of Islamophobia through new legislation and policies. Studies in Europe and elsewhere have also revealed that Islamophobia is most visible in the media and in the discourse of right - wing political parties and groups who tend to exploit and build on the general fear of Islam for electoral gains. In many countries, particularly in the West (Europe and the US included), anti- immigration and anti-refugee rhetoric have taken an anti-Muslim overtone and have often become the central theme of campaigns by far-right parties. It is also noted with grave concern that a number of Western media outlets continue to propagate fear and negative stereotypes against the Islamic faith and its followers, notably by acting as a platform for widespread dissemination of anti-Muslim rhetoric. It is however, pertinent to note that Islamophobia is also on the rise in some non-western countries where the Muslim communities and minorities face discrimination, hatred and violence, including in Kashmir. The world has also witnessed large-scale cross-border forced displacement of religious minorities e.g. Rohingya Muslims. In the context of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, there has been a perceivable rise of negative narratives and hate speech in some countries holding the Muslim minorities responsible for spreading the COVID- 19, pursuant to disinformation campaign and "fake news", mainly in the social media.

Recalling Definition

Literally, Islamophobia is a fear, or more precisely: an excessive fear, against Islam, against Muslims, as well as against anything associated to the religion, such as Mosques, Islamic Centers, Holy Qur'an, Hijab, etc. It also constitutes racism and discriminations in daily life, on Media, at workplace, in political sphere, etc. It rests in the mind and it reflects in attitudes, and could be manifested through violent actions, such as burning mosques, vandalizing properties, abusing women wearing scarf, or insulting Prophet or sacred symbols of Islam. That is more or less, how Islamophobia identifiable, how it manifests, which can be seen not only from incidents, but also through xenophobic perspectives, statements, behavior, and even gestures. Therefore, Islamophobia is not always noticeable, since it could hide in the mind and heart of the people.

General Trend of Islamophobia during the period under review

In the aftermath of the shocking massacre against Muslim worshippers in Christchurch city in New Zealand in March 2019 up until end of 2020, the major trend driving Islamophobia has kept on the rise, not only in Western countries, but also quite elsewhere around the world. A number of factors have been identified as the main contributors to such a worrisome trend: mounting far-right ideologies, refugee crises, immigration, negative perceptions amid adherents

of different faiths, and provocative rhetoric by some media. Nevertheless, it was quite relieving to note that following the New Zealand incident, significant measures and efforts have been deployed around the globe towards ensuring a better protection of Muslims and other minorities.

The U.S. and Europe still stand as the major hot spots of Islamophobia, where the trend of Islamophobia has been most disturbing as evidenced by the number of incidents such as mosque burning, provocative statements in social media, mail threats, Holy Quran burning and desecration, insults of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), physical assaults, and verbal abuses. Both in the U.S. and Europe, the Islamophobic trend has been mostly marked by the growing popularity of right-wing parties and movements, evolving into a global wave of anti-Establishment, ultra-nationalism, and the mushrooming of extreme right-wing parties. For instance, a growing number of European countries today see the dominant influence of far-right parties, i.e. Hungary (Fidesz), Poland (Law and Justice), the Netherlands (Freedom Party-PVV), the Czech Republic (Ano), France (National Rally), Italy (Five-Star Movement and Northern League), Germany (Alternative for Germany-AfD), Austria (Freedom Party-FPO), and so on. Beyond America and Europe, India and Sri Lanka are two notable cases to watch closely. In certain countries like China and Myanmar, the issue of Islamophobia is closely intertwined with other issues i.e. politics, human rights, minorities, culture, identity, humanitarian, separatism, terrorism, extremism, etc.

At the time the COVID-19 pandemic yields devastating repercussions worldwide, anti-Muslim groups in some countries have tapped the crisis to fuel hatred towards Muslims. Social media is inundated with claims of Muslims breaching the lockdown by continuing to attend mosques to pray, as a result of which many Muslims have been attacked. Some Islamophobic leaders have also used the Corona virus crisis as a tool to further their agenda against Muslims. In India, for example, Islamophobic elements emerged starkly when cases of COVID-19 were reported at a *Tablighi Jamaat* event because of which *Hashtags #CoronaJihad* and *#BioJihad* were trending on Twitter. As a consequence, fake stories blaming Muslims for spreading the virus in the country started circulating on social media, casting Muslims as a threat to the nation. Elsewhere, since the outbreak of the pandemic, incidents of violent attacks against Muslims have reportedly redoubled in many countries.

Meanwhile, a changing pattern of Islamophobia was seen on a Burqa-related issue. During the few months since February 2020, phobia against Hijab and Burqa declined very significantly, probably due to the world-wide campaign to wear face masks as part of the personal protective gear against Corona virus. Despite the Ban on Burqa being still in force in at least 14 (fourteen) countries i.e. France, Belgium, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the policy's enforcement has softened, if not vanished completely. There are even indications that some might review the policy in the foreseeable future.

Major events

Some events have brought about a significant impact on the trend and prospects of Islamophobia since last year, particularly the terrorist attacks against Muslims in New Zealand in March 2019; the terrorist attack in Sri Lanka in April 2019; the European Union Parliamentary Election in March 2019, the case against Myanmar for the Genocide against Rohingya at the International Court of Justice in November 2019, the introduction of controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by India in August 2019; and most recently the havoc in France following the republication of derogatory cartoons of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) by Charlie Hebdo Magazine in September 2020.

Terrorist attack against Muslims on 15 March 2019 in New Zealand left 51 people dead and 49 wounded. The attack highlights the global reach and connection of far-right extremists and white supremacists with terroristic and

violent agendas. The international community, including world leaders and politicians, supported the people and government of New Zealand and condemned the attacks. At the United Nations, the attacks were condemned by all Member States through various relevant resolutions. Similarly, the matter was widely reflected in the statements delivered at the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly by world leaders, including Heads of State and Government of the OIC Member States. In August 2020, the perpetrator of the assault was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

'Easter Bombing' terrorist attack in Sri Lanka in April 2019 took place just over a month after the Christchurch massacre, targeting churches and hotels in Colombo, claiming the life of 259 innocent people. Although the linkage between the two incidents was highly questionable, the Colombo attackers claimed they were taking revenge for the mosque attacks in New Zealand. Not long after the incident, backlashes against Muslim population rampaged across the country, doubling the level of Islamophobia in Sri Lanka as well as in some other Buddhist-majority communities nearby.

European Union Parliamentary Election of March 2019 altered the political scene across countries in Western Europe. Along with anti-immigration rhetoric, the ultra-nationalist agenda is now being used by far-right political parties in election campaigns to whip up anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia in garnering popular support. These nationalist sentiments no doubt impacted the European Parliamentary elections on 23-26 May 2019 during which issues of migration and anti-Muslim propaganda took centre stage in the public debate in the May 2019 European Parliament contest. The run-up to the 2019 European parliamentary election was thus dominated by the expectation of an inevitable rise of populism across the continent. However, while a populist takeover of the European Parliament did not ultimately happen, far right-wing and nationalist parties did gain a sizeable number of seats, obtaining around 10% of the seats in the 751-member EP, almost double if compared with the previous membership. Yet, the destructive influence of ultra-nationalist and populist parties was relatively unseen during the months of 2020, probably due to the prioritization of many other issues in Europe amidst the Corona outbreak.

International Court of Justice (ICJ) case against Myanmar for Genocide against Rohingya took place in November 2019. The Republic of The Gambia, acting with the OIC's support, officially instituted proceedings against Myanmar Government before the ICJ for violations of the Genocide Convention through "*acts adopted, taken and condoned by the Government of Myanmar against members of the Rohingya group*". The Gambia argued that the Myanmar military had committed "*the genocide acts*" during the "*clearance operations*" against the Rohingya group since October 2016 and particularly from August 2017, with the intention "*to destroy the Rohingya as a group, in whole or in part*". The ICJ stated on 23 January 2020 that Myanmar must take provisional measures aimed at preventing the commission of genocide acts pending its final decision and preserving evidence of genocide acts. Myanmar was also compelled to report back on all measures taken in that regard within a four-month period.

The introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by the Indian Government controversially granted citizenship to all undocumented migrants within the country except for Muslims. Amidst the rising popularity of right-wing *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), an umbrella organisation which strongly advocates the extreme-right 'Hindutva' ideology across India, the CAA was taken more or less in parallel with the rising tension following the government's decision to remove Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy, and turning the states into a federal territory. These decisions mixed with fake stories circulating in social media denigrating Muslims who, in the eyes of government and the majority population, immediately became the main culprits responsible for the spread of the Corona virus in India. The life of Indian minorities, especially the Muslim population, has been negatively affected.

Attempt to insult and ridicule Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) again happened on 2 September 2020 when French magazine Charlie Hebdo republished the same offensive cartoons which, in the past, triggered condemnation and eventual killings in Paris in January 2015. The republication of the defamatory cartoons coincides with the trial of persons accused as accomplices in the 2015 attacks that killed 11 staffs of the Magazine. The reckless provocation drew renewed condemnation in France and beyond. Despite efforts made by French Muslim leaders to avoid violent reactions, some groups instead added insults to injury, by supporting the republication of the cartoons, viewing the provocative action through the lens of “freedom of expression and freedom of press.” The situation took a tragic turn after 2 (two) terrorist incidents that happened in the aftermath of the cartoons republication: first was on 25 September 2020; and the second was on 16 October 2020; both indicated to have close connection with the cartoon issue. The French government launched afterwards a series of policies to suppress what the France chose to call ‘separatism’. Terms directly associating Islam with terror were widely used by policy-makers in parallel with the justifications to insult venerated figures in Islam; Again in the name of freedom of expression. The situation is becoming tense as right wing politicians tried to capitalize on the on-going crisis to pursue their anti-immigrant and anti-refugee agenda.

Some noteworthy positive developments

Since last year, the Muslim world is becoming more engaged in the efforts to address the issue of Islamophobia as seen from the rising interest, commitment, and actions taken by a number of Muslim countries. At the OIC level, Member States have given a stronger mandate to the Organization to combat Islamophobia. The Final Communiqué adopted during the Executive Committee Emergency Meeting in Istanbul in March 2019, requests the OIC to engage and take action to combat religious discrimination, Islamophobia, intolerance and hatred towards Muslims, as a matter of priority. The 14th Islamic Summit held in Makkah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, called on the OIC to devise strategies and plans to address the issue. In addition, an ‘OIC Plan of Action on Combating Islamophobia, Religious Discrimination, Intolerance and Hatred towards Muslims’ was adopted during the OIC Annual Coordination Meeting on the sideline of the 74th Session of UNGA in September 2019, paving the way for the efforts deployed by the Muslim world to take on a more significant dimension thanks to concerted action. A similar dose of enthusiasm was seen at the UN level, as Member Countries i.e. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Malaysia, Egypt, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and Turkey have been very active in advancing the Muslim world’s contribution to the global efforts against Islamophobia, as well as against Xenophobia in general.

Such a positive trend unfolds in parallel with the current global action against Islamophobia, Xenophobia, intolerance, and any other forms of racism and discrimination. The OIC General Secretariat noted with gratitude that following the terrorist attack in New Zealand, significant measures have unrolled around the globe in the fight against Islamophobia while providing greater protection to Muslims and other minorities. Few instances could be mentioned here: The UN has launched its Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech; The EU has developed a new initiative on ‘Countering Racism and Xenophobia’; The OHCHR decided to give a push to the full implementation of UN Resolution 16/18 on Combating Intolerance, Discrimination, Stereotyping, and Incitement of Violence against Persons Based on Religion. Similarly, a string of measures have been taken by individual countries, such as New Zealand, which launched a nation-wide ‘buyback’ scheme aimed at getting rid of the country’s semi-automatic weapons; Canada and Germany have outlawed certain far-right groups; Germany began fighting online hate speech while moving to step up surveillance of far-right groups in the country; Twitter was reported to have blocked Dutch far-right politician Geert Wilders’s account for his ‘hateful behaviour’.

The OIC's legitimate concerns regarding the rise of Islamophobia

The OIC's obligation to address the phenomenon of Islamophobia stems directly from the Charter of the Organization: "*To protect and defend the true image of Islam, to combat defamation of Islam*". To this end, the OIC Charter stipulated the establishment of a special department for minority affairs to follow up on the developments in this regard, and established the Islamophobia Observatory. Furthermore, recognizing the important role of communication technologies, the OIC through its Sawt al-Hikma (Voice of Wisdom Center) persistently addresses Islamophobia through dissemination of true messages of Islam using social media platforms to dismantle extremism.

The main task of the Islamophobia Observatory is to monitor events and incidents on daily basis; scanning the minds, public feelings, incidents, and everything that serves as possible indicator of Islamophobia. All of the information were 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.

CHAPTER 1

1. MAJOR EVENTS BRINGING SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS ON ISLAMOPHOBIA, INTOLERANCE, DISCRIMINATION, AND HATRED BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

Following the shocking massacre of Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, Islamophobia keeps growing in many corners of the world, along with campaigns spreading negative images about Islam, and reflected through incidents targeting Muslim individuals, mosques, Islamic attires, Islam revered figures and sacred symbols, etc. There had been a growing mistrust toward Islam and Muslims, which often mixed-up with other issues like politics, minority, identity, terrorism, extremism, secessionism, human rights, humanitarian, etc., where the majority population feels suspicious over religious activities conducted Muslims in their homes, mosques, and Islamic centers, while many remained having tendency to associate Islam with the extremism and terrorism.

Despite such complex mixture of elements that may involved, a general pattern could be drawn: *first*, Islamophobia issue is mostly severe in places where Muslims are 'minorities'; *second*, despite the growing trend of Islamophobia at global level, the number of incidents in different countries was actually going 'up and down', increasing and sometimes decreasing, along the sequences of the period under review; *third*, empirics showed that extraordinary events would usually provoke the trend of Islamophobia in a 'drastic' manner. Particular for this last mentioned, such extraordinary events may work both ways: boosting and deterring Islamophobia at the same time. As an example, the terrorist attack against churches in Colombo during the April 2019 Easter Day was immediately followed by a massive backlash from the Sri Lankan 'majority' against Muslims and everything related to their communal existence, since then the level of Islamophobia in the country had multiplied in term of severity. Meanwhile elsewhere, due to the incident the deterring forces had also played their significant roles, more furious than ever, denouncing Islamophobia and its all misleading justifications.

Within this context, the Observatory had identified some major events taking place during the reviewed-period, those which have brought, or could bring about significant impacts to the current and future trend of Islamophobia, at global level as well as at particular regions or countries, namely: *Terrorist attack against Muslims on 15 March 2019 in New Zealand; Terrorist Attack 'Easter Bombing' in Sri Lanka in April 2019¹; European Union parliamentary election of March 2019; Trial on the Issue of Myanmar's Genocide against Rohingya at the International Court of Justice; Introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by the Indian Government, and; Repeated attempt to insult and ridicule Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).*

1.1. ***Terrorist attack against Muslims on 15 March 2019 in New Zealand*** ²

During a Friday prayer on 15 March 2019, two terrorist attacks took place at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand leaving 51 people dead and 49 wounded. The massacre which was live-streamed by the attacker named Brenton Harrison Tarrant, began at Al Noor Mosque and continued at Linwood Islamic Centre. The attacks highlighted the global reach and connection of the far right extremists and white supremacists with terroristic and violent agendas.

¹ The April 2019 'Easter Day' attack in Colombo is not elaborated in this Chapter, since there is a dedicated section on 'Islamophobia in Sri Lanka' which can be found at the later pages of this report.

² Excerpted from report and analysis provided by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations, New York.

According to some media sources, the killer was influenced by the ideas and methods of Anders Breivik, the far-right Norwegian terrorist who murdered 77 people in 2011, and who inspired many other extremists worldwide. On the day of the attacks, the killer released through his social media account a manifesto revealing that he was deeply influenced by the global far right extremism and was considering himself a disciple of white supremacists. In a video live-streamed from his car, he played a song devoted to Radovan Karadzic, a Bosnian Serb responsible for the deaths of thousands of Bosnian Muslims and Croats during an ethnic war in the Balkans in the 1990s. According to security officials the attacker had come into contact with extreme right wing groups about two years before the shooting, while visiting European countries.³ The attacks were condemned by all Member States through various relevant resolutions. Similarly, the matter was widely reflected in the statements delivered to the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, by leaders of the world including heads of state and government of the OIC Member States.

1.2. European Union Parliamentary Election of March 2019⁴

Ultra nationalism fueling populist ideologies has increasingly become a feature across Europe's political landscape. In recent years, particularly in the aftermath of the so-called "migration crisis" of 2015 nationalistic sentiments and right-wing populism have been on a steady rise. Along with anti-immigration rhetoric, the ultra-nationalist agenda is now being used by far-right political parties in election campaigns to whip up anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia in garnering popular support. What is more alarming is the growth of far-right extremism targeting Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, far-right media outlets in Europe have been constantly using words e.g "jihadists, terrorists" to describe Islam and often linking migrants and Islam to crimes and acts of terrorism.

Anti-Muslim and anti-migration narratives continued to dominate political discourse in Europe depicting Islam and Muslims as violent during elections held both at national as well as in the European level in 2019. The rise in populist support for the far-right parties was particularly visible in such as in Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, Greece, the UK and even in so-called tolerant Nordic countries, most prominently in Sweden during 2019. The increase of populism in these countries had been accompanied by a loss for centre-right and centre-left parties. The right-wing political figures persisted on their extreme right rhetoric and anti-Muslim propaganda. It is recalled that Hungary's far-right Fidesz party of Prime Minister Victor Orban considered the 2015 migration crisis as "*a Muslim invasion threatening the national security and Christian identity of the Hungarian nation*". He has since then passed many laws hostile for migrants and targeting Muslims. At the EU level, Mr. Orban also rejected the burden-sharing scheme for refugee relocation. Just before the May 2019 European elections, in a strategic move, Orban had launched on 18 May 2019 a new European alliance of populist and far-right parties, composed of his Fidesz Party, Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), France's Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) and the Netherlands' Geert Wilders of the PVV. Italian Matteo Salvini's League was also part of the alliance. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the political fear that these extreme right-wing parties had successfully generated on migration issue and Muslims in general, in almost every EU member state in recent years, ironically had also caused traditional mainstream parties, both on the right and the left, to advocate increasingly draconian approaches to migration management, probably in a bid to testify to the people that they are also strong on these issues.

³ See: The Independent news entry "Brenton Tarrant: Suspected New Zealand attacker 'met extreme right-wing groups' during Europe visit, according to security sources", In: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/brenton-tarrant-new-zealand-attacker-far-right-europe-gunam-shooting-a8825611.html>, retrieved on 20.3.2019

⁴ Excerpted from report and analysis provided by the **Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the European Union, Brussels.**

The national politics no doubt had ample reflection in the European Parliamentary elections on 23-26 May 2019. Notably, issues of “migration” and anti-Muslim propaganda remained central in the public debate the May 2019 European Parliament contest. The run-up to the 2019 European parliamentary election was thus dominated by the expectation of an inevitable rise of populism across the continent. Interestingly, the outcome of the election, though, did not live up to this hype.

However, while a populist takeover of the European Parliament did not ultimately happen, far right-wing and nationalist parties did gain a sizeable number of seats, obtaining around 10% seats in the 751 member EP, almost doubling the number from before. In Italy, France, Poland and Hungary they were even in the majority. This result reflected the strength of Matteo Salvini’s Northern League in Italy and Marine Le Pen’s National Rally in France as well as the radicalization of some traditionally center-right parties such as Fidesz in Hungary. In the UK, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) was replaced by Nigel Farage’s new Brexit Party, which took a significant share of the vote from both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. Italy’s then Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, initiated the European Alliance of Peoples and Nations (EAPN) to establish a broad nationalist front in the EP. It includes nine parties that so far, include the German AfD, the French Rassemblement National, the Flemish political party Vlaams Belang of Belgium, the Austrian Freedom Party FPÖ as well as the Finns Party and Greek and Hungarian nationalists. These far-right wing parties, visibly anti-migrant, anti-Islam and xenophobic, united in the “Identity and Democracy” party, *die-hard anti-EU coalition* bring together 73 MEPs.

This core far-right group could also ally with MEPs from Eurosceptic parties on the right, particularly those in Scandinavia and central Europe including *Poland’s PiS, the Sweden Democrats, and the Danish People’s Party*. Hungary’s far-right ruling Fidesz party won considerable seats at the European Parliament despite the party being suspended from the EPP (European People’s Party) the largest group in the European Parliament. So far, although very much similar in political mindset, Fidesz has not officially committed itself to the EAPN alliance, possibly due to personal differences between Victor Orban and Marine Le Pen.

Notably, however, some left-wing populists have fared significantly worse in the 2019 election than they did in that of 2014 e.g. Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece, which seemingly is a reflection of a decline in their domestic political position. Furthermore, the PVV of Greet Wilders of the Netherlands although had done well in national elections in 2017, however did not secure any seat in the new European Parliament. It is relevant to note that Greet Wilders who has been notorious in his anti-Muslim position, had on 28 December 2019, announced on a tweet that he would re-launch satirical cartoon contest competition on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on the premises of the Dutch Parliament in The Hague, more than a year after he had cancelled such motive in 2018. A few hours later, he however, announced cancellation of the competition, citing that “mission accomplished” as his announcement had made headlines around the world. Mission accomplished. It once again proved that he only craved for “cheap publicity”.

The Christian democrat, European People’s Party (EPP) still holds the majority, followed respectively by the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE renamed Renew) and the Greens Party fourth. The resurgence of green parties across the continent during the European election is noteworthy as it reflects the importance given by segments of the electorate to climate change issues.

The main elements that have brought together the far-right alliance in the new European Parliament obviously remain migration, more generally anti-Islam as well as ultra-nationalism. The question remains how influential these right-wing groups will be in Parliament. This yet remains to be seen. However, political analysts are of the view that given

the disparate priorities of various groups in the European Parliament, *“its present five year term may not be characterized by dominance of the far-right, but rather by a fragmented political landscape in which new alliances will be necessary to keep the EU’s traditional agenda moving forward”*. This will involve a more balancing act, at least in the short term.

One thing to reckon with is Brexit finally happening. Many MEPs from the UK who have been supportive of the Muslims and overall cause of Islam would be departing the European Parliament. On the UK’s domestic level, the sweeping victory of the Conservative Party in the December 2019 elections is also something to reckon with. It is worthwhile to mention that in a poll surveyed shortly before the election, a staggering 62 percent of conservative voters agreed with the statement that Islam threatens the British way of life, while 37 percent admitted to viewing Muslims in a negative light. These findings are deeply worrisome but not surprising. Reports on the prevalence of anti-Muslim bigotry in the Conservative Party have abounded for many years now. It is recalled that Mr. Boris Johnson in an article that he once wrote mentioned *“Islamophobia—fear of Islam—seems a natural reaction”* and insisted *“Islam is the problem.”*

To conclude, the electoral advances of the far-right parties in many European countries are quite alarming and definitely set a new balance of power within the European Union. Yet on a positive note in 2019, the notion that populist parties are the future of European politics seems far less certain. The snap elections both in Austria and in Italy in 2019 had seen the untimely collapse of ruling coalition with the far right, Freedom Party of Austria and Italy’s League respectively. In both countries, these parties have been replaced in the new governing coalition, respectively.

1.3. Trial on the Issue of Myanmar’s Genocide against Rohingya at the International Court of Justice ⁵

The culminating point of intolerance against Muslim communities, among others, was the Rohingya crisis that unfolded in the summer 2017. Almost one million Rohingyas were forced to flee their country because of the persecutions they were facing from the Burmese authorities. As to the hardships and atrocities endured by the Rohingyas, they have triggered the outrage of the international community. The previous UN High Commissioner for Human Rights spoke about *“a text book example of ethnic cleansing”*.

The Gambia argued that the Myanmar military committed *“the genocidal acts”* during *“clearance operations”* against the Rohingya group since October 2016 and particularly from August 2017, with the intention *“to destroy the Rohingya as a group, in whole or in part”*. These genocidal acts included *“the use of mass murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as the systematic destruction by fire of their villages, often with inhabitants locked inside burning houses”*. The Gambia identified two elements of Myanmar’s persecution of the Rohingya as *“particularly indicative of genocidal intent”* including its systematic denial of legal rights to members of the group and its support for, and participation in, pervasive hate campaigns designed to achieve the collective demonization and dehumanization of the Rohingya as a group.

The ICJ issued, on 23 January 2020, an order on Provisional Measures, urging Myanmar not to commit any genocidal acts pending its final decision and preserving evidence of genocidal acts. Myanmar is also compelled to report back on all measures taken in that regard, within four months. Moreover, the decision taken by the ICJ refers to the Rohingyas

⁵ Excerpted from report and analysis provided by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations, Geneva.

as “a group that self-identifies as the Rohingya and that claims a longstanding connection to Rakhine State, which forms part of the Union of Myanmar”. This mention is a clear dismissal of the denial of the Myanmar authorities of the Burmese citizenship to the Rohingyas under the pretext that they do not have roots in that country. The ICJ declared in this historic order that there was prima facie evidence of breaches of the 1948 Genocide Convention, the court warned that the Rohingya remaining in Myanmar were “extremely vulnerable” to military misdeeds.

The decision of the ICJ was certainly a big success for the OIC and its Member States, as it demonstrated the determination in leading international efforts aimed at holding Myanmar accountable for its persecutions against the Rohingyas. It is an unprecedented endeavor to bring justice and accountability to the Rohingya people. The case submitted by The Gambia at the ICJ, on behalf of OIC, regarding the Rohingyas is of the highest gravity for it refers to blatant violation of the Convention on Genocide, but it has a symbolic value as it shows that OIC and its Member States are ready to use all the means at their disposal, when it comes to defending and protecting Muslim minorities in the world.

1.4. The introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by the Indian Government

On 12 December 2019, India adopted the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) granting fast-tracked citizenship to undocumented Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Christian migrants who had allegedly fled persecutions in their countries of origin, except for Muslims. The cutoff for citizenship eligibility was 31 December 2014, so that anyone who was deemed eligible under the law but entered the country after that date was subject to deportation. The Indian government justified this omission by claiming that, since Muslims were majority populations in the three neighboring countries, they were simply trying to assist non-Muslims who face “religious persecution” in those countries by allowing them to remain in the Indian territory. In reality, the CAA was an anti-Muslim legislation because it introduced religious grounds to grant citizenship to immigrants from India’s three Muslim-majority neighbors, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The hunt for migrants happened for instance in Assam, a state near the borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh. Many of the people whose citizenship was now being questioned were born in India and have enjoyed all the rights of citizens, such as voting in elections. State authorities were rapidly expanding foreigner tribunals and planning to build huge new detention camps. Hundreds of people had been arrested on suspicion of being a foreign migrant. The governing party forced people to prove they were citizens to other parts of India, part of a far-reaching Hindu nationalist agenda, fueled by Modi’s sweeping reelection victory in May 2019. Modi unilaterally wiped out the statehood of India’s only Muslim-majority state, Jammu and Kashmir, removing its special autonomy and turning it into a federal territory without any consultation with local leaders — many of whom have since been arrested. All of the 33 million residents of Assam have had to prove, with documentary evidence, that they or their ancestors were Indian citizens before early 1971 when Bangladesh was established after breaking away from Pakistan. By the beginning of 2020, more than 4 million people in India, mostly Muslims, were at risk of being declared foreign migrants as the government pushed a hard-line Hindu nationalist agenda that challenged the country’s pluralist tradition.⁶

⁶ See: SBS news’ entry “India plans big detention camps for migrants and Muslims are afraid”, in: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/india-plans-big-detention-camps-for-migrants-and-muslims-are-afraid>, retrieved on 19.8.2019

1.5. Repeated attempt to insult and ridicule Prophet Mohammed (PBUH)

On 2 September 2020, the French magazine Charlie Hebdo launched ‘another’ reckless provocation by republishing cartoons about the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). The same cartoon had in the past triggered condemnation, and eventual attack and killings in Paris in January 2015. The publication apparently coincides with the trial of persons accused as accomplices in the 2015 attacks that killed 11 staff of the Magazine. The republication of the offensive cartoons drew renewed condemnation in France and beyond. Fearing violent protests, the French Council of the Muslim Faith, the main organization representing French Muslims, had urged that attention should not be paid to the republished cartoons. It also cautioned that “terrorism *that is committed in the name of Islam is the enemy of the religion*”.

On the other hand, there were other groups who support the republication of the cartoons viewing these through the lens of “*freedom of expression and freedom of press*”. Reportedly, President Macron had stated that “*A president of France should never judge the editorial choice of a journalist or editorial staff because there is freedom of the press which is rightly cherished*”. Similarly, French Prime Minister Jean Castex wrote in a Twitter post: “Always Charlie”. On 25 September 2020, a knife attack was carried out in Paris, near the former office of Charlie Hebdo magazine, wounded two people. On 2 October 2020, President Macron announced his plan of action against all forms of ‘separatism’, especially the ‘radical Islamism’. Although the President was supposed to “tackle all forms of separatisms” in his speech, it ended up being only about ‘Islamism’.

By 22 October 2020, the political scene in France has become tense, especially with the far-right parties, seeking to gain political mileage out of it. Marine Le Pen of National Rally party found it an apt opportunity to spotlight her hard-line views against Muslims and immigration. In a press conference on 19 October 2020, she accused the incumbent government for its “soft line” policy, while underlining that France now required “wartime legislation” to combat organized force of radicalized Islamists. Wary of appearing “inactive”, President Macron had already termed the killing an “Islamist terrorist attack” and described France as being in an “existential” fight against terror. On 16 October 2020, another incident happened – an 18 year-old French citizen of Chechen descent beheaded a secondary school teacher in the suburb in Northwest of Paris, provoking strong condemnation in France and beyond. The killing is believed to be linked to showing of cartoons of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) by the deceased teacher, Samuel Paty, to students apparently as part of a free speech class. Reportedly, photo of the teacher and a message confessing to his murder was found on the mobile phone of his killer, Abdullakh Anzorov, who was later shot dead by police. The crime was described by French President Emmanuel Macron as an “Islamist terror attack” and urged the nation to unite against.

The President reassured that the government will “*go further with measures against structures, associations or people close to radicalized circles*”, and among the announced measures were: i) make secularism in public service compulsory, ii) school will be obligatory at 3 years old and home-schooling would be strictly limited to health imperatives, iii) associations requesting state funding will have to sign a “secular charter to respect the Republic’s values”. Furthermore, the President also intends to “*free Islam and Muslims in France from the influence of foreign countries*” (by training of Imams in France, as well as reinforcing the control of the financing). A budget of 10 million € will be provided for the Fondation pour l’Islam de France (Foundation for Islam of France) and the creation of a “scientific institute of Islamology”.

The French Council of Muslim Faith would be requested to draw a charter within six months, non-respect could lead to the revocation of Imams. In this regard, a draft bill is planned to be presented on 9 December 2020, of which analysts believe that this might be used to further stigmatize and target French Muslim communities in the country. Since 25 October 2020, there had been protests and mounting calls in the Islamic world to boycott French products. The French Foreign Ministry meanwhile, called on authorities in countries in which there are angry reactions against France to ensure the security of French citizens. The Ministry described the calls for protests as "*heinous*", lamenting manipulations "*by a radical minority*" and dubbing nascent boycotts of French goods as "*groundless*".

On 29 October 2020, a knife attack happened, killed 3 persons inside the Notre-Dame Basilica in Nice, France, complicating the already tense situation obtaining in France and beyond since the killing of Samuel Paty which was already been described as "*terror attack by Islamist*". Marine Le Pen was quick in her response calling for a hardening of the combat against Islamist radicalism. She said: "*the dramatic acceleration of Islamist acts of war against our citizens and our country impose on our leaders a comprehensive response aimed at eradicating Islamism from our soil*".

At the time when this report is written, some corrective measures were taken by President Emmanuel Macron to de-escalate the on-going tension between France and the Muslim world; amidst the continuous crackdown on Islamic organizations and NGOs i.e. Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), BarakaCity, and Cheik Yassine Collective.

CHAPTER 2

2. MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

2.1. Islamophobia in the U.S. and Canada

2.1.1. Polls and Reports

Islamophobia — in the form of prejudice and discrimination against Muslims — had been on the rise in the U.S. since 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. It continued until today and had even been worsening over the years due to some factors such as the negative portrayal of Muslims in the media, the spread of anti-Islam rhetoric, as well as lack of understanding of the religion itself. As a result, living as Muslim in the American society today would be much different with the same life of twenty years before, at the period before 9/11 tragedy happened. It was now very common to see that the safety tips, concise and chilling, were passed from friend to Muslim friend on social media, by imams to their congregations, by Islamic groups to their members, by parents to their children heading off to school: When in the subway, “*Stood away from the platform edge, preferably with your back against a wall*”, “*Walk in groups after dark*,” “*Stay alert at all times*”, etc. Muslims in American big cities and elsewhere had guarded against discrimination and hates, changing their routines and trying to manage their fear. Still, the violence had come.⁷

A survey of different faiths' and ethnicities' outlooks on Islam was released by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, according to which the White Evangelicals were the most likely hold Islamophobic views. The poll, placed in the field since January 2019, asked questions of American Jews, Muslims, Protestants and Catholics, as well as the non-affiliated. Thirteen percent (13%) of American Jews said they had a negative view of Muslims and 44 percent of white Evangelicals said they had a negative view of Muslims, double the number that said they viewed them favorably (20 percent). By race, Hispanic Americans were found to be five times more likely to hold favorable opinions of Muslims than negative ones. Fifty one percent (51%) said they had a positive feeling towards Muslims versus 10% feeling negatively. Black Americans were seven times as likely to have a positive opinion of Muslims as opposed to a negative one. White Americans were almost equally likely to have a negative or positive opinion of Muslims if they had an opinion at all. However, 40 percent of white Americans polled said they had no opinion on the Muslim community.⁸

There was also a strong indication that Media has played a significant role to the fast growing Islamophobia in the U.S. A study revealed that news coverage about Muslims in the U.S. media was far more negative when compared to other minorities' representation. The study, which was conducted by researchers from the Media Portrayals of Minorities Project Lab at Middlebury College, looked into news covering minorities, namely African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Jews and Muslims from four national newspapers in the country for the year of 2018. A total of 26,626 articles published in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today were selected for the study; where articles were then scored according to the positive and negative tones they carried. The research further revealed that only 2% of the articles about Muslims covered Islamophobia or anti-Muslim sentiment with 3% explicitly noting anti-Muslim hate crimes, while some 17% of articles about the Jewish community mentioned anti-

⁷ See *NY Times News*' entry “After attacks in Paris, New York Muslims cope with a backlash” in: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/nyregion/im-frightened-after-paris-terrorist-attacks-new-york-city-muslims-cope-with-a-backlash.html?_r=0, retrieved on 26.11.2018

⁸ See: *Newsweek News*' entry “White Evangelicals Are the Most Islamophobic Americans, Poll Shows”, in: <https://www.newsweek.com/white-evangelicals-are-most-islamophobic-americans-poll-shows-1433592>, retrieved on 24.5.2019

Semitism. News coverage on the Jewish minority community was also described as having a neutral tone on average by the researchers, unlike any other news covering minorities.⁹

A report by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) says that Islamophobia in the U.S. was ‘systematic’, directly or indirectly supported by a vast source of funding. It says American charities steered \$125 million to groups that spread anti-Muslim hate and propaganda during the three-year period ending in 2016. These charities included at least 30 foundations in New Jersey and a dozen in Westchester County, New York. More than 800 entities ranging from major national foundations like Fidelity Charitable and Schwab Charitable to small, little-known family foundations gave grants to organizations that push anti-Muslim rhetoric and legislation. In some cases, foundations might donate to organizations while unaware of their role in anti-Islam activity. CAIR identified 39 organizations in its so-called “Islamophobia network” that operated as media watchdogs, experts on security or the Middle East, or centers for ‘freedom’ among other benevolent-sounding missions. Some were foundations whose families had helped educational, cultural and health institutions for generations. Among them was the Sarna Family Foundation in Englewood, which gave \$500 to the Clarion Project, which produced and distributed films promoting anti-Muslim conspiracy theories.

Meanwhile, a study titled “Muslim-Non-Muslim Locational Attainment in Philadelphia: A New Fault Line in Residential Inequality?,” published in the peer-reviewed journal *Demography* in August 2019, used data gathered from household surveys in the Philadelphia metropolitan area that deal with people’s religious affiliations, race, socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. The study says: “*Our analyses find significant Muslim-non-Muslim disparities in neighborhood characteristics...Black and non-black Muslims live in neighborhoods with fewer white residents than non-Muslims, even after making equal their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics — for example income, education and family status. Among blacks, Muslims are 30 percent less likely than non-Muslims to live in suburban neighborhoods.*”¹⁰

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

Islamophobia was reflected through multiple forms, including through discourses and campaigns done by individuals or media, and institutions, being intended to mock, insult, or bring harm to Islam, Muslims, or anything associated with the religion. For instance, during the reviewed period, the Observatory monitored some incidents reflecting such derogatory discourses and campaigns in the U.S.; cited in this report as the following:

“Ramadan Special Pulled Pork Sandwiches \$2.99 Muslims Eat Free”

The York Daily Record/Sunday News analyzed the Facebook pages of more than 500 police officers from all 20 police departments in York County in response to the Plain View Project, a database that flagged posts and comments that researchers believed could undermine public trust and confidence in law enforcement. The initiative received national attention and sparked outrage across the United States. The York City Police Department was one of eight police departments examined in the national project. More than 99% of police officers in the York Daily Record’s analysis did

⁹ See: Daily Sabah news’ entry “Media coverage on Muslims more negative than any other minority group, study finds”, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/islamophobia/2019/09/06/us-media-coverage-on-muslims-more-negative-than-any-other-minority-group-study-finds>, retrieved on 7.9.2019

¹⁰ See: Newswise news’ entry “Residential Inequality Exists for Muslims”, in: <https://www.newswise.com/articles/residential-inequality-exists-for-muslims>, retrieved on 28.8.2019

not post anything of note. They shared pictures of their family, offered commentary about sports and posted tributes to fallen first-responders. Nevertheless, the investigation also uncovered four police officers who publicly posted racist, Islamophobic and sexually aggressive comments and pictures. One post made a joke about breathalyzers and oral sex. Another post encouraged people to share a picture of a pig named Muhammad. In addition, there was the post that made light of shooting criminals. In a post from April 2019, West Manchester Township Police Sgt. Patrick Hinds shared a meme of the cartoon character Lisa Simpson standing on stage in front of an audience. There was a screen behind her with the words: *"Evidence suggests dead pedophiles do not reoffend."* Later, in May, Hinds posted a picture of a sign outside a BBQ restaurant called "Little Pigs." The sign outside of the restaurant was circled and read, "Ramadan Special Pulled Pork Sandwiches \$2.99 Muslims Eat Free." Several other posts on Hinds' page contained messages with similar Islamophobic themes.¹¹

"[Muslims] Go back to your country."

Tim Hortons coffee chain said a Michigan employee had been fired after a Muslim couple were told to "Go back to your country." The incident occurred on 28 June 2019 at a Tim Hortons in Ypsilanti. Alaa Kouider and her husband, both were U.S. citizens, said they were harassed when they went inside to fix a coffee order that was made in the drive-through lane. The exchange was recorded on video. Tim Hortons told media that it "does not tolerate any type of harassment."¹²

"No Muslims! Go away to Hell."

Maria Disney behind bars after admitting to spray painting anti-Muslim graffiti on the walls of a Muslim-owned business in Concord. "No Muslims! Go away to Hell" was one of the messages sprayed on the side of International Market and Grill in the city. The store specialized in Middle Eastern and South Asian groceries and its restaurant served Afghan food. Concord Police Department described that she had an argument with a Muslim the week before, and that's why she did. Disney was being charged with vandalism and property damage.¹³

"Everybody ought to eat pork. If you have a shortage of bacon, you can't be happy."

Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) raised eyebrows in August 2019 for joking that Muslims should eat pork while discussing the abuse of Muslims in China. King was speaking in Iowa about China forcing Muslim women to be sterilized, taking away their children and forcing them to eat pork, which was forbidden in the Islamic religion. King said: *"They want them to put on Chinese clothing and eat Chinese diet, which includes trying to force the Muslims to eat pork...That's actually the only part of that that I agree with. Everybody ought to eat pork. If you have a shortage of bacon, you can't be happy."* King's comments came weeks after he garnered widespread backlash for comments he made to a conservative group

¹¹ See: York Daily Record News' entry "Special report: Police in York County shared racist, sexist, anti-Muslim pics on Facebook", in: <https://www.ydr.com/story/news/watchdog/2019/07/15/police-department-racist-sexist-anti-muslim-facebook-posts-investigation-york-county/1660137001/>, retrieved on 16.7.2019

¹² See: ABC13 News' entry "Michigan coffee employee tells Muslims to 'go back to your country'", in: <https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/michigan-coffee-employee-tells-muslims-to-go-back-to-your-country/69-b74e181b-8825-44e9-aeba-6c7b5e6548ed>, retrieved on 21.7.2019

¹³ See: ABC7 News' entry "No Muslims! Woman arrested for anti-Muslim graffiti at concord shop", in: <https://abc7news.com/no-muslims-woman-arrested-for-anti-muslim-graffiti-at-concord-shop/5454039/>, retrieved on 10.8.2019

in Des Moines, Iowa, where he defended not providing exceptions for rape and incest in abortion bans by arguing many people had histories of rape or incest in their family histories.¹⁴

“Some cancers must be treated with radiation. Islam is one of them”

Raritan Deputy of the New Jersey, Louis Reiner resigned after he reportedly posted a series of threatening Islamophobic messages on his personal Facebook page. One post depicted a mushroom cloud and declared, *“Some cancers must be treated with radiation. Islam is one of them.”* In October 2019, the Raritan Township Committee passed a resolution condemning the posts and calling for Reiner to resign from the Deputy Mayor position.¹⁵

“Muslims should not be allowed to seek asylum or immigration to the U.S.”

A civil rights group was calling on Roman Catholic Church leaders to reject a sermon in which a Minnesota priest described Islam as a threat to the U.S. and Christianity. The Rev. Nick VanDenBroeke was pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in the small town of Lonsdale. He said during a sermon on 5 January that large numbers of Muslims should not be allowed to seek asylum or immigration to the U.S. The Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations then called on church leaders to repudiate the sermon. St. Paul-Minneapolis Archbishop Bernard Hebda said all who believe in God must work together to banish every form of discrimination and intolerance.¹⁶

“Islam is threatening the U.S.”

A Baptist church in Michigan had canceled a blatantly anti-Islam lecture series after heated backlash from politicians and religious leaders. Bloomfield Hills Baptist Church’s two-day event promised to provide two vital briefings about how Islam was supposedly threatening the U.S., according to a flyer for the event. The church’s pastor, Donald McKay, had proudly embraced the label “Islamophobe,” telling Fox 2 Detroit the week before that he believed committed Muslims were seeking to overthrow the U.S. and dominated the world. Local and state politicians had denounced the church’s intent to host the anti-Muslim lecture series. Reps. Debbie Dingell and Andy Levin, both Michigan Democrats, condemned the event in a joint statement, urging the church to cancel it and instead “recognize America’s rich cultural and religious diversity.” Jordan Denari Duffner, a Catholic author who had written extensively about Muslim-Christian relations, told Media that the talking points Hadian’s project used had been echoed by other Islamophobic groups — and were used in the past to scapegoat other religious groups, as well. She said: *“Hadian’s organization claims to speak the truth with love, but instead they seem intent on sowing mistrust and misunderstanding of Muslims, not to mention support for discriminatory policies that would marginalize Muslim communities.”*¹⁷

¹⁴ See: Daily Sabah News’ entry “Steve King jokes about China forcing Muslims to eat pork”, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/africa/2018/11/17/banning-headscarf-wearing-nigerian-girls-from-school-amounts-to-religious-bigotry-muslim-body-says>, retrieved on 28.8.2019

¹⁵ See: Insider NJ news’ entry “CAIR-NJ Welcomes Resignation of Islamophobic Deputy Mayor”, in: <https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/cair-nj-welcomes-resignation-islamophobic-deputy-mayor/>, retrieved on 4.10.2019

¹⁶ See: WIBW News’ entry “In sermon, Minnesota pastor calls Muslims a threat”, in: <https://www.wibw.com/content/news/In-sermon-Minnesota-pastor-calls-Muslims-a-threat-567401131.html?ref=131>, retrieved on 30.1.2020

¹⁷ See: The Huffington Post news’ entry “‘Islamophobe’ Pastor’s Church Cancels Anti-Muslim Lecture Series After Backlash”, in: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bloomfield-hills-baptist-church_n_5d790b8ee4b0a938a42be023, retrieved on 12.9.2019

“I’m pushing to put (Islam) on trial”

Rick Phillips, a Republican candidate for the state’s 2nd Congressional District primary on June 2, stated on his campaign website that *“Islam should be recognized as a hostile ideology antithetical to the United States Constitution”* and that *“It should have its religious status revoked.”* He also falsely claims that a *“mosque is nothing more than a military outpost where the seeds of hatred are sown against our country.”* The Republican Party’s rebuked of him came in response to an email by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) urging its local leaders to repudiate the candidate’s comments.¹⁸

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

A Columnist had argued that the 2010s was the decade where populism surged around the world and predominantly far-right parties permeated the political mainstream, and the 2020s is the decade there people see the consequences of those policies. He wrote: *“The decade brought us the election of Donald Trump in the United States and the Brexit vote in Britain. It witnessed the rise of the Alternative for Germany—the first far-right party to enter the country’s national parliament in decades—as well as the ascent of populist parties in countries such as Austria, Brazil, Italy, India, Indonesia, and Poland. By 2018, as many as 20 populist leaders held executive office around the world.”* He continued: *“If the 2010s were the years in which predominantly far-right, populist parties permeated the political mainstream, then the 2020s will be when voters ‘are going to see the consequences of that.”* In response to that argument, a professor of comparative politics at the University of Reading, in England, said: *“In some ways, they already have. In Britain, the 2016 vote to leave the European Union—and the political fallout it caused—is likely to be fulfilled at the end of January, following Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s resounding victory in last month’s general election. Elsewhere, populist parties have already made their impact—if not through passing legislation at the head of government, then by applying pressure in opposition.”*¹⁹

Quite recently, the U.S. President again stirred strong reaction as his comments on Muslim congresswoman Ilham Omar culminated in a chilling moment of 17 July 2019 at his *“Make America Great Again”* re-election rally in North Carolina. When Trump claimed Omar had a history of *“launching vicious anti-Semitic attacks,”* thousands in the crowd responded by chanting *“Send her back! Send her back!”* The chant was reminiscent of the *“Lock her up”* refrain rally-goers used to shout about Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential campaign. Yale philosophy professor who was also the author of *‘How Fascism Works’* Jason Stanley tweeted after the rally: *“We are facing an emergency.”* Trump briefly tried to distance himself from the chant on July 18, saying he was not happy” with it, and had tried to start speaking very quickly to drown it out” The rally chants came just days after Trump tweeted a series of racist attacks on Omar and her Congressional colleagues Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Ayanna Pressley, all women of color. In one tweet, Trump suggested the four women go back to where they came from. All but Omar were born in the US. Omar immigrated to the US as a child and became a US citizen at 17. The attacks were being criticized at home, and in Europe and the United Kingdom. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called Trump’s remarks *“completely unacceptable”* on July 19. German chancellor Angela Merkel, asked about the comments at a press conference, said she stood in solidarity with the four Congresswomen, and that Trump’s remark *“thwarts America’s strength.”* The United

¹⁸ See: Arab News’ entry “US Republican candidate: ‘I’m pushing to put (Islam) on trial’”, in: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1665136/world>, retrieved on 27.04.2020

¹⁹ See: Raw Story News’ entry “Right-wing populism’s rise will dominate global politics for the next decade”, in: <https://www.rawstory.com/2020/01/right-wing-populisms-rise-will-dominate-global-politics-for-the-next-decade-columnist/>, retrieved on 7.1.2020

States was strong, she said, because “*people of very different nationalities have contributed to the strength of this people.*”²⁰

Immediately, some white supremacists and right-wing media figures quickly jumped to his defense. Trump tweeted about “progressive” Democratic congresswomen, writing that they “*originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere,*” and saying that they should “*go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came. Then come back and show us how it is done. ... You can't leave fast enough.*” It was widely inferred that Trump was addressing Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), and Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA). Trump went on to berate the lawmakers for “*viciously telling the people of the United States, the greatest and most powerful Nation on earth, how our government is to be run.*” The tweets were also factually inaccurate -- Ocasio-Cortez’s family is from Puerto Rico, which is part of the U.S., and she was born in the Bronx; Pressley is an African-American who was born in Cincinnati to parents who were also from Ohio; Tlaib was born to immigrant Palestinian parents in Detroit; and while Omar was born in Somalia, she became a U.S. citizen as a teenager. Many Americans pointed out that being told to “go back” to some distant country, regardless of birthplace, is a familiar, ugly, racist trope. Unsurprisingly, some white nationalists and right-wing media figures defended Trump’s comments. A few praised the comments, and others resorted to gas lighting, insisting that media and Democrats were misquoting Trump.²¹

In parallel, right-wing extremism in the United States was growing, of particular concern were white supremacists and anti-government extremists, such as militia groups and so-called sovereign citizens interested in plotting attacks against government, racial, religious, and political targets in the United States. The October 27, 2018, Pittsburgh synagogue shooting by Robert Bowers, and the arrest a day earlier of Cesar Sayoc who sent pipe bombs to prominent Democrats, appeared to be the most recent manifestations of the trend. Both perpetrators were far-right extremists. Although violent left-wing groups and individuals also present a threat, far-right-networks seemed to be better armed and larger. There also was a continuing threat from extremists inspired by the Islamic State and al-Qaeda. But the number of attacks from right-wing extremists since 2014 has been greater than attacks from Islamic extremists. Right-wing terrorism commonly refers to the use or threat of violence by sub-national or non-state entities whose goals may include racial, ethnic, or religious supremacy; opposition to government authority; and the end of practices like abortion.

Left-wing terrorism, on the other hand, referred to the use or threat of violence by sub-national or non-state entities that oppose capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism; focus on environmental or animal rights issues; espouse pro-communist or pro-socialist beliefs; or support a decentralized sociopolitical system like anarchism. Particular in the United States, the number of such attacks was five or less per year. They then rose to 14 in 2012; continued at a similar level between 2012 and 2016, with a mean of 11 attacks and a median of 13 attacks; and then jumped to 31 in 2017. Most of the far right attacks involved firearms or incendiary devices, which included setting fire to targets like mosques. The perpetrators attacked religious figures and institutions, primarily Muslim or Jewish targets (31 percent); private citizens and property (29 percent); and U.S. or foreign government targets in the United States, such as the Forsyth County Courthouse in Georgia or the Mexican consulate in Austin, Texas (14 percent). The perpetrators were mostly white supremacists.²²

²⁰ See: Quartz news’ entry “Merkel and Trudeau are the latest to criticize Trump rally “send her back” chant”, in: <https://qz.com/1669311/trump-rallies-send-her-home-attacks-on-ilhan-omar-denounced/>, retrieved on 20.7.2019

²¹ See: Media Matters News’ entry “White supremacists and right-wing media defend Trump’s racist attack on four members of Congress”, in: <https://www.mediamatters.org/white-nationalism/white-supremacists-and-right-wing-media-defend-trumps-racist-attack-four-members>, retrieved on 16.7.2019

²² See: The Real News Network news’ entry “4Chan’s and 8Chan’s Internet-Brewed Racism Informs Trump’s Rhetoric”, in: <https://therealnews.com/stories/4chans-and-8chans-internet-brewed-racism-informs-trumps-rhetoric>, retrieved on 8.8.2019

Experts thought the brutality seen at the 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 might signal the beginning of the end for white supremacist movements across the U.S. Instead, hate and white supremacy have been allowed to thrive. By 2018, even the FBI characterized white supremacist extremism as a just a 'medium threat' and said related organizations would fizzle out through attrition, leaving only small cells and lone offenders. Yet as certain hate groups dissolved or retreated from public, other white supremacist movements have grown online — and received a boost from far-right talking heads, news outlets like Fox News. Only now, two years after the rally in Charlottesville, the U.S. starting to acknowledge that domestic terror and white supremacy were problems. White supremacists had carried out numerous attacks across the globe since that deadly weekend in Charlottesville, often with support or endorsement from their peers online. And after a white supremacist shot and killed 17 people at a high school in Parkland, Florida, people on the message board 4chan celebrated by crafting conspiracy theories and hoaxes to further victimize the students. White supremacists killed at least 50 people in the U.S. in 2018 alone, and since Charlottesville had been tied to a long list of massacres, including those in Pittsburgh; Santa Fe, Texas; Poway, California; Tallahassee, Florida; Jeffersonton, Kentucky; and Aztec, New Mexico. The frequency of white supremacist attacks had forced Congress to acknowledge the problem by holding committee hearings on hate, white supremacy and domestic terror, but lawmakers had struggled to put any changes in place that could actually combat the problem. The first such hearing did not take place until April 2019, and it was derailed by conservatives questioning whether white supremacist violence was even an issue. It wasn't until August 2019, after a white supremacist shot and killed 22 people at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas — purportedly with the goal of killing Mexicans, whom he apparently said represented "*the Hispanic invasion of Texas*" — that many top conservatives have acknowledged the racism elephant in the room. The FBI had identified 100 domestic terrorism arrests in 2019, but federal officials had been hesitant to label certain acts as terrorism because there was no domestic terrorism statute. As a result, some domestic terrorists had been given more leeway than, say, a similar case inspired by foreign terrorist organizations.²³

The Observatory would say that far rights were let growing like mushrooms in the U.S. For instance, ACT for America, the largest anti-Muslim group in the United States had been reported to have planned its annual banquet at the president's club in Florida, and Michelle Malkin, a conservative columnist, author and television commentator, was to be the keynote speaker at the event at the resort, according to an invitation on the organization's website. However, later on the invitation was removed from the website and a spokeswoman for the Trump Organization said in an email "*This event will absolutely not be taking place at Mar-a-Lago.*" Ms. Malkin then said on Twitter: "*There is a chilling 'cancel culture' campaign being waged against patriotic journalists & activists, and apparently, not even Mar-a-Lago is a safe space.*" The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), had said the gathering should not take place. Nihad Awad, the group's national executive director, said in a statement: "*No individual, organization or public official should profit from bigotry. We cautiously welcome the cancellation of Act for America's hate event at Mar-a-Lago and urge other potential venues nationwide to consider the group's history of Islamophobia and associations with white supremacist and racist organizations.*" Ms. Gabriel, who used a pseudonym, founded ACT for America in 2007 replied: "*America has been infiltrated on all levels by radicals who wish to harm America. They have infiltrated us at the C.I.A., at the F.B.I., at the Pentagon, at the State Department. They are being radicalized in radical mosques in our cities and communities within the United States.*" The organization aims to protect the safety and security of Americans against foreign and domestic threats, according to its website. In 2017, the group organized the "*March Against Sharia*," a nationwide protest attended by far-right and white supremacist groups in about two dozen cities. That year, Marriott International faced criticism for hosting ACT for America's annual conference in Arlington.²⁴

²³ See: The Huffington Post news' entry "Hate Has Flourished In 2 Years Since 'Unite The Right' Rally In Charlottesville", in: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/charlottesville-anniversary-hate-flourishes-unite-the-right_n_5d506f6be4b0fd2733f1f3d4, retrieved on 13.8.2019

²⁴ See: The New York Times news' entry "Mar-a-Lago Won't Host Anti-Muslim Group's Gala, Trump Organization Says", in: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/05/us/anti-muslim-mar-a-lago.html>, retrieved on 6.10.2019

In addition, far right figures had also been enjoying their freedom and luxury in their negative campaigns against Islam and Muslims. For instance, Laura Loomer had been banned from Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Medium, PayPal, Venmo, GoFundMe, Uber and Lyft, and now she was running for an important seat in the U.S. Congress. Her banishment from social media for using hate speech means her and GOP candidate for Democrat U.S. Rep. Lois Frankel's seat in Congress could no longer ignited tweet storms with her far-right rants against Islam, which she believes was "*a cancer on society*." Her exile from the cyber world would seemingly be a debilitating hurdle as Loomer sought to organize a congressional campaign less than a year from a primary in which she would have to defeat at least three Republican rivals, all with access to the online tools of modern electioneering. Her bank suspended her access to online banking, and now she had to hail taxis because she was banned by Lyft and Uber — the consequence of a tweet calling for the creation of "*a non-Islamic form of Uber or Lyft because I never want to support another Islamic immigrant driver*." In August 2019, the self-described "*most banned woman in the world*" filed to run against Frankel, the 71-year-old West Palm Beach Democrat whose 32 years in politics includes 14 years in the Florida House of Representatives, two terms as mayor of West Palm Beach and a seat in the U.S. Congress since 2013. Loomer's campaign put her back in the limelight and on a new stage.

Another instance was Stephen Miller, who had suffered no consequences despite a social justice website published a trove of his old emails that showed him promoting political material and talking points linked to white-supremacist groups. The disclosures in the exposé from the Southern Poverty Law Center have prompted scores of Democratic lawmakers and civil rights groups to publicly demand his resignation over what they view as smoking-gun evidence that the Trump administration's hard-line immigration policies are rooted in white nationalist ideologies. Much of the anti-immigration views that Miller promoted in his private correspondence with a reporter at the far-right Breitbart News during Trump's presidential campaign in 2015 and 2016 reflected views that Miller, who had served as an aide to Jeff Sessions when Sessions was a U.S. senator from Alabama, had promoted for years in meetings with lawmakers. Indeed, Miller's track record as a key architect of many of the Trump administration's most controversial immigration policies — including a ban on travelers from majority-Muslim countries and punitive actions against immigrants who received public assistance — had in a sense inoculated him from attacks from fellow Republicans over his emails. But former U.S. immigration officials said the Trump administration's relentless efforts to limit virtually all forms of immigration — including tightening controls on refugees, foreign students and other legal immigrants — have shifted the Republican consensus on the issue. The president had used immigration to help to maintain a tight grip on the GOP base, and Republican lawmakers, even those who had supported more-moderate positions, have been reluctant to oppose him.²⁵

Such an open support to far right groups seems to continue until today. For instance, quite recently, Proud Boys, a far-right extremist group, celebrated the U.S. President Donald Trump refusal to condemn White supremacy during the first Presidential debate on 29 September 2020. Trump was responding to a question from the moderate during which he told the Proud Boys to "*stand back and stand by*." The extremist group, celebrated the president's words on social media, as some of its members saw it as tacit approval. FBI Director Christopher Wray told a congressional panel, the week before, that white supremacists and anti-government extremists had been responsible for most of the recent deadly attacks by extremist groups within the U.S. Wray told lawmakers that, "*Within the domestic terrorism bucket as a whole, racially motivated violent extremism is, I think, the biggest bucket within that larger group*".²⁶

²⁵ See: The Washington Post News' entry "White House adviser Stephen Miller remains undaunted after leak of emails tying him to white nationalist talking points", in: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/white-house-adviser-stephen-miller-remains-undaunted-after-leak-of-emails-tying-him-to-white-nationalist-talking-points/2019/11/27/c9ab6026-107b-11ea-9cd7-a1becbc82f5e_story.html, retrieved on 28.11.2019

²⁶ See: Daily Sabah News' entry "Far-right extremists celebrate Trump's 'stand by' comment", in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/americas/far-right-extremists-celebrate-trumps-stand-by-comment>, retrieved on 01.10.2020

At the same time, close surveillance have been maintained on Muslims living in the U.S. A federal judge ruled in September 2019 that the government's Terrorist Screening Database unconstitutionally violated the due process rights of the people on it — but that did not necessarily mean the list was going away. The watch list, which was created in 2003, was an amalgamation of several federal databases comprised of people the government had deemed known or suspected terrorists. But for years, civil rights organizations warned that more than 1 million innocent people had been added to the list without their knowledge and without an opportunity to appeal the decision — and advocates said the overwhelming majority of those added to the list are targeted because they're Arab or Muslim. The government maintained that the list needs to remain secret to be effective, but Robert Knowles, an associate professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law, said the watch list includes hundreds of thousands of people who had no real connection to terrorism. The FBI's Terrorist Screening Center maintains the list, but other federal agencies like Customs and Border Protection, help enforce it and could nominate people it thinks should be added to the list. In practice, people who were added to the watch list were typically subject to additional screening at airports, pulled aside for hours of intensive questioning by border officers after returning to the country, and often have their computers, phones, or other personal electronics temporarily seized during these encounters. Some people get moved from the watch list to the no-fly list, which they could not travel by air to or from the U.S., or even over U.S. airspace. Being put on the watch list did not just make it harder to travel: the federal government shared the list with local and state governments and law enforcement agencies, as well as with some private companies. In one instance, a man had his bank account closed after being put on the watch list.²⁷

Despite much less in term of severity, far right groups was also active in **Canada**, opposing the current government that was considered as being 'too friendly' to Muslims. For instance, a video was shared widely on anti-Trudeau Facebook pages in 2019, being presented as false evidence that Canada's 23rd prime minister was bent on subverting the judicial system to please Islamists – probably because he was a closeted Muslim himself. Trudeau was pilloried when images emerged of at least three instances in which he had donned blackface. Yet as Canada heads toward a general election, the Prime Minister had also become the subject of racist and Islamophobic conspiracy theories. The video of the YouTube imam, for example, was uploaded by a prominent Ontario anti-Muslim activist, and then viewed, shared and liked on at least three anti-Trudeau Facebook pages with a collective reach exceeding 185,000. Dozens of videos on these pages were a conspiratorial pastiche in which Trudeau coddles Muslim extremists and throws open Canada's borders at the behest of George Soros, and they had been clicked almost 700,000 times. The eddies of such online outrage had spread into the real world. At a town hall meeting in January 2019 for instance, an audience member accused Trudeau of supporting Sharia law – before intimating that he should be hanged for treason. More recently, the Conservative party candidate Cameron Ogilvie stepped down after the activist group Press Progress unearthed social media posts in which Ogilvie shared a post accusing Trudeau of wanting to turn Canada into an "Islamic state". Such conspiracies dated back to Trudeau's 2015 campaign pledge to bring in 25,000 mostly Muslim refugees from war-torn Syria by the end of the year. The move was a dramatic reversal from the previous Conservative government, which only agreed to increase the number of Syrian refugees admitted into Canada, from 1,300 to 10,000, provided Syria's non-Muslim religious and ethnic minorities were prioritized. By 2016, a Toronto-based Facebook group was already speculating that Trudeau wanted to flood Canada's borders with immigrants from majority Muslim countries, either because he was ignorant to the dangers of radical Islam – or because he was a radical Islamist himself. The conspiracies only heightened when the Liberals introduced a non-binding motion condemning "*Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination*" – a move which Trudeau's opponents on the fringe right were convinced was proof of his government's fealty to radical Islam.²⁸

²⁷ See: Vice news' entry "What Happens Now to the More Than 1 Million People on the U.S.' Terrorist Watchlist", in: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/7x585e/what-happens-now-to-the-more-than-1-million-people-on-the-us-terrorist-watchlist, retrieved on 7.9.2019

²⁸ See: The Guardian news' entry "How Canada's far right is using anti-Muslim propaganda to target Trudeau", in <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/04/canada-far-right-anti-muslim-propaganda-targeting-trudeau>, retrieved on 5.10.2019

2.2. Islamophobia in Europe

2.2.1. Polls and Reports

Anti-Islam sentiments had bolstered almost everywhere across the European continent, where significant reordering of the political landscape had been taking place since the last few years. This situation was quite predictable, as countries in this region had been struggling with high level of unemployment since the economic crisis hit in 2008. Such a circumstance in turn led to domestic debates about hot issues such as immigrants, non-European foreigners, assimilation and integration, national identity etc., which worsened by the surge of refugees fleeing the civil war in some Muslim countries, as well as 'periodic' terrorist attacks hitting the continent. These ingredients, altogether, were creating the necessary environment for right-wing parties and figures to prosper, in parallel with the European Union's policies of integration. As the consequences, anti-EU, anti-immigration and anti-Muslim platforms then gained a fertile ground, soaring Islamophobia highly across Europe, at least as being indicated by polling and reports on some countries in Europe.

According to a poll by anti-racist group 'Hope Not Hate', Islamophobia had gone mainstream in the U.K., with liberal, middle class voters also expressing anti-Muslim views. People continued to see Muslims overwhelmingly more negatively than any other religious group according to research with 31% of the population believing that Islam posed a threat to the British way of life. Some 18% of people had an extremely negative view of Muslims. On perceptions of Muslims, conservative voters were among those with the highest proportion who saw Muslims very negatively (26%). A huge 44% of Conservative voters saw Islam as a threat, with only half that amount (22%) saying it was compatible. A total of 6,118 adults were polled by YouGov between 26th April - 1st May 2019.²⁹

Organization Tell MAMA said there was a significant spike in Islamophobic incidents as there was a 375% increase in anti-Muslim incidents. It says: "*Between August 5 and August 29, 42% of the street-based incidents reported directly referenced Boris Johnson and/or the language used in his column*". In a media article in August 2018, Johnson said full-face veils should not be banned, but it was absolutely ridiculous women chose to go around looking like letterboxes. Johnson later defended his words, insisting that the backlash against them was nothing more than confected indignation at his strong views on Brexit.³⁰ Another report stated that there was an Islamophobic hate crime every 10 days in Preston only. The shocking revelation came from data acquired by media 'The Post', which revealed almost 150 anti-Muslim hate crimes had occurred in that city in the last five and a half years. The statistics revealed that 145 racially-aggravated crimes against Muslims occurred within Preston between 2014 and 2018. The data was obtained following a Freedom of Information request to Lancashire Police by a media, and last year some 37 crimes were committed; one every 9.8 days. Overall, Islamophobic hate crimes had raised by more than 360 per cent since 2014 where eight crimes were reported.³¹

Another study had found that most British news outlets giving a "negative and misleading" coverage of the community. The study, published by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), said far-right leaders and commentators used TV debate

²⁹ See: Mirror News' entry "Islamophobia 'going mainstream' as poll finds 31% think religion poses a threat", in: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/islamophobia-going-mainstream-poll-finds-18211718>, retrieved on 16.7.2019

³⁰ See: Mirror news' entry "Anti-Muslim incidents 'spiked by 375%' after Boris Johnson mocked Muslim women", in: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/anti-muslim-incidents-spiked-375-19164096>, retrieved on 3.9.2019

³¹ See: Lancashire Post News' entry "Islamophobia in Preston: One anti-Muslim hate crime is committed every 10 days", in: <https://www.lep.co.uk/news/crime/islamophobia-in-preston-one-anti-muslim-hate-crime-is-committed-every-10-days-1-9957649>, retrieved on 28.8.2019

programmes to propagate stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. The study analyzed more than 10,000 news articles and broadcasts in the U.K. from 2018 and identified serious problems in the way British media reports about Islam or Muslims. In print media, the study found that 59 percent of the articles analyzed associated Muslims with negative behaviour, while more than a third “misrepresented or made generalizations” about the community. The study said 78 percent of the stories in the Mail on Sunday newspaper featuring Islam or Muslims living in the U.K. had a negative coverage of the community. On the other hand, it said the Guardian, the New Statesman and the Independent had the least negative portrayal of Muslims. In television, Sky News had the highest proportion of misleading coverage, with 14 percent of its clips rated “very biased”, the study said. It said that regional TV broadcasters presented a more supportive coverage of Muslims, with the ITV’s regional channels having no content they could call “very biased”. The study said Muslim women were either “othered” through misrepresentative choices of images, or silenced through a general lack of due prominence. The study, conducted by the MCB’s Centre for Media Monitoring.³²

2.2.2. Islamophobic Discourses and Campaigns in Europe

As of the case in the U.S. been elaborated earlier in this report, discourses and campaigns being intended to mock, insult, or bring harm to Islam were also happening in European countries. The Observatory monitored such discourses and campaigns; citing some as the following:

“We will stop Islam and strengthen the rule of law”

Geertz Wilders put forward his proposal during the first day of the General Considerations parliamentary debate on government plans and budgets for 2019, yet the proposal was shot down by other parties, immediately. Wilders exclaimed: “Mosques, Islamic schools, the Koran and burkas must be removed from the Netherlands. Let us strengthen our rule of law by putting our ideology above Sharia. Out of love for the Netherlands. Out of love for our freedom.” During the debate in Parliament, Wilders shared the offensive remarks during this summer by DENK leader Tunahan Kuzu: “A party from our midst said this summer that Dutch people should f*ck off if they do not like the multicultural society. That was Mr. Kuzu from the faction of DENK. I would like to say to him: f*ck off yourself. You are the poison in this society and democracy. This is our country, not your country. Your country is Turkey”. D66 leader Alexander Pechtold complained that Wilders never “makes a serious attempt to get majority support” for his proposal. However, Wilders said he never made a proposal he was not 100 per cent behind. After the two-day parliamentary debate about the Budget Memorandum, Geert Wilders was decidedly rewarded by the Dutch public as one of the best debaters.³³

³² See: The Siasat Daily News’ entry “Study finds the British media contributing to Islamophobia”, in: <https://www.siasat.com/study-finds-british-media-contributing-islamophobia-1547710/>, retrieved on 15.7.2019

³³ See: The Voice of Europe News’ entry “Geert Wilders: ‘We’ll stop Islam and strengthen the rule of law’”, in: <https://voiceofeurope.com/2018/09/large-support-for-geert-wilders-proposal-to-ban-islamic-expressions-in-dutch-public-spaces/>, retrieved on 26.9.2019

“Islam kept the Muslim world literally centuries behind the West”

Boris Johnson said Islam kept the Muslim world 'literally centuries behind' the West. The Prime Minister made the comments in an essay in his book about the Roman empire, *The Dream of Rome*. He wrote: "There must be something about Islam that indeed helps to explain why there was no rise of the bourgeoisie, no liberal capitalism and therefore no spread of democracy in the Muslim world. It is extraordinary to think that under the Roman/Byzantine Empire, the city of Constantinople kept the candle of learning alight for a thousand years, and that under Ottoman rule, the first printing press was not seen in Istanbul until the middle of the nineteenth century. Something caused them to be literally centuries behind."³⁴

“Qur’an – a book which tells people to kill us”

Newly elected leader of Ukip had been slammed for Islamophobia after a footage emerged of him saying it should be illegal to publicly distribute the Quran in the UK. The month before, Richard Braine was filmed at a hustings in Grantham, Lincolnshire, saying handing out copies of the holy book should be illegal under incitement laws. Braine said: *“We have laws against incitement, and yet there are people handing out Qur’ans in Leicester Square off a trestle table – a book which tells people to kill us to please God. We’ve got to stop incitement in public places like that.”* He went on: *“We’ve got to stop bigamy, welfare abuse. We’ve got to educate people in this country so they understand what the Qur’an says, what Islam really is, so they understand that it contains a hundred instructions to maim and slaughter innocent people – homosexuals, the infidel, women, apostates. So we need to understand what is in that book, we need to educate ourselves and our children about that.”* The Ukip leader also said certain towns and cities in the country were becoming Islamic and it has reached a point where non-Muslims were not welcome there. Braine replaced Gerard Batten as the leader of the anti-immigration party at the weekend. In a ballot of members, Braine received 53 per cent of the vote, more than double of his closest rival. Speaking after his victory, Braine said his aim was to establish Ukip as the *“far-moderate voice of common sense”* in Britain.³⁵

“I hate Islam” “I hate the Muslim religion”

Deputy Editor of French newspaper *Le Figaro* Yves Threard was at the center of controversy after making statements against Muslims and Islam. During debate show “Le Grand Soir” (the Big Evening) broadcast on TV on October 14, the deputy director of the newspaper’s editorial board said that he “hates Islam.” he openly said during a debate over the wearing of the veil or hijab in public space “I hate the Muslim religion.” The TV show discussed the question of a ban on hijabs in public places following a controversial statement from Julien Odoul, a member of France’s National Rally (RN) on 11 October 2019. Odoul and his colleagues asked the president of the Regional Council in France, Marie Guite Dufay, to tell a veiled Muslim woman accompanying her son at a school activity to remove hijab or leave. Odoul’s statement came in response to the murder of four policemen by a colleague who French police “believed had been radicalized.” Dufay said that she could not intervene as there was no reason for the woman to leave. She described the

³⁴ See: Mirror News’ entry “Boris Johnson said Islam kept Muslim world 'literally centuries behind' the West”, in: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/boris-johnson-said-islam-kept-18322838>, retrieved on 17.7.2019

³⁵ See: Eastern Eye News’ entry “Ukip leader Richard Braine slammed for Islamophobia”, in: <https://www.easterneye.biz/ukip-leader-richard-braine-slammed-for-islamophobia/>, retrieved on 14.8.2019

party's behavior as a surge of hatred and unworthy of elected officials of the republic. Thread displayed staunch support for the RN's move, stating that he is totally against the hijab in public spaces. He said that he had to leave a bus once when he saw someone wearing the veil.³⁶

"Islam is the problem and world will never be safe until we destroy them"

The Brexit Party candidate for Birmingham Ladywood, Andrew Garcarz, had spread Islamophobic and anti-Semitic views on social media. Screenshots obtained by anti-racist campaigners Hope not Hate and seen by Birmingham Live show he claimed "Islam is the problem here" in a post about terrorism. Comparing Islamist terrorism to terrorism carried out by the IRA, he said four years before: *"Catholicism whilst a brainwashing cult does not advocate the extermination of non Catholics. Islam is the problem here. And until we destroy them the world will never be a safe place"*. In a Facebook post from June 2016, Mr Garcarz said: "The residents of the future 'United States of Europe' will not be the People of the Old Continent but a kind of sub-humans, products of miscegenation". Miscegenation refers to different racial groups mixing and having children. It is a word that is no longer commonly used in the UK.³⁷

"Suckers ...who import ever more Islam and then weep crocodile tears over the consequences"

Dutch far-right politician and anti-Islam campaigner Geert Wilders said Twitter had temporarily blocked his account following remarks he made about a political rival. Wilders relied heavily on Twitter to communicate with his supporters. He has 811,000 followers, second only to Prime Minister Mark Rutte among Dutch politicians. The tweet that led to Wilders' block referred to D-66, a progressive centre-left party as 'suckers ...who import ever more Islam and then weep crocodile tears over the consequences, such as honour killings'. A Twitter spokesman said: *"We don't comment on accounts for privacy and security reasons. Our Hateful Conduct policy expressly prohibits the promotion of violence, direct attacks or threats towards people in certain protected categories."*

"Terrorists are generally Muslims"

Michael O'Leary, Ryanair CEO, called for the profiling of "males of a Muslim persuasion" at airports to prevent terrorism. O'Leary made the statements, on 22 Feb 2020, while discussing airport security during an interview with The Times. The budget airline executive said: *"Who are the bombers? They are going to be single males traveling on their own ... If you are traveling with a family of kids, on you go; the chances you are going to blow them all up is zero,"*. The comments were condemned by British politicians and charity organizations.³⁸

³⁶ See: Morocco World News' entry "'I hate Islam,' Says Deputy Director of French Newspaper Figaro", in: <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2019/10/284705/islam-deputy-director-french-newspaper-figaro/>, retrieved on 16.10.2019

³⁷ See: Birmingham Live News' entry "Brexit Party candidate said 'Islam is the problem and world will never be safe until we destroy them'", in: <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/brexit-party-candidate-said-islam-17355454>, retrieved on 4.12.2019

³⁸ See: DW News' entry "Ryanair boss accused of racism after saying 'terrorists are generally Muslims'", in: <https://www.dw.com/en/ryanair-boss-accused-of-racism-after-saying-terrorists-are-generally-muslims/a-52474351>, retrieved on 22.11.2020

“We don't think a mixture of Muslim and Christian society could be a peaceful one”

On 25 September 2020, Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban rejected a new migration plan by the European Union's executive, saying the country did not support a “parallel society” of Muslim and Christian mixture. Following his discussion with the EU president, Orban said: “*We don't think a mixture of Muslim and Christian society could be a peaceful one and could provide security and a good life for people ... In Hungary, we are very strict that we would not like to have a parallel society, an open society or a mixed-up culture*”. He welcomed parts of the proposal which were focused on sending back unqualified asylum seekers to their countries of origin.³⁹

“The Quran is more dangerous than the Corona virus”

Norbert Hofer, Austria's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) chief, said during an election rally on June 16, that the Quran was more dangerous than the corona virus. At the election rally in Vienna with a few hundred FPÖ supporters, Hofer said: “*I do not fear corona. Corona is not dangerous. The Quran is much more so.*” Ümit Vural, Islamic Religious Community in Austria (IGGÖ) president said Hofer insulted the entire Muslim population with this statement. “*He obviously has learned nothing from the past and wants to open new trenches. In a civilized society, Hofer's derailment must lead to an excuse!*”⁴⁰

2.2.3. Far-Rights in Europe

Far-right and populism were characterized by strident nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment, economic resentments and a deep suspicion of international alliances and trade pacts — the condition 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. At the time when elections took place in Europe's main political and economic powers i.e. Austria, Netherlands, France, and Germany, 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, Euro-scepticism, 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, which 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, and economic

³⁹ See: Daily Sabah News' entry “Mix of Muslim, Christian society not possibly peaceful, Hungary's Orban says”, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/mix-of-muslim-christian-society-not-possibly-peaceful-hungarys-orban-says>, retrieved on 26.09.2020

⁴⁰ See: Daily Sabah News' entry “Hofer draws fire for claiming ‘Quran more dangerous than corona’”, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/islamophobia/austrias-hofer-draws-fire-for-claiming-quran-more-dangerous-than-corona>, retrieved on 19.06.2020

protectionist party called “*Jobbik*” was currently the third-largest party in Hungary. In the Netherland, 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. Studies 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 U.K., as well as Geert Wilders’ Party for Freedom in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen’s Front National in France who were coming close to victory in their respective general elections. 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.⁴¹

Currently, the **U.K.** seems to be among the most concerning hotspots of Islamophobia in Europe. Thousands of Muslims in Britain had been locked into cycles of stigmatization by terrorist legislation, being barred from employment, isolated by racism and abuse, and silenced in public life due to state surveillance and racial profiling. Johnson’s new government has promised to “keep our country safe from terrorism”, so it was likely they would not only continue with the current counter-terror strategy but expanding it in the name of security. It was because the government’s Commission for Countering Extremism had already begun extending surveillance into Muslim people’s civic lives more broadly: ambiguous definition of ‘extremism’.⁴²

The Observatory was also alerted by a closed Facebook group created by Brexit Party supporters and used to rally activists ‘was rife with Islamophobic comments. The “Brexit Party” group had over 8,400 members, including at least four prospective parliamentary candidates and numerous supporters who used it to discuss canvassing for Nigel Farage’s party. However, hateful slurs on Muslims and immigrants were also commonly shared. The group was taken down by Facebook on July 2019 and the Brexit Party said it would ban activists found to have made hateful posts from future campaigning and party events. It also dismissed a Brexit Party councillor in Rotherham who was a member of the group over online comments warning of a “tribal takeover”. Meanwhile, the party denied links to the Facebook group.⁴³ Despite so, nobody knows.

The Observatory would also suggest a close attention on far-right groups in **Germany** who made specific plans to violently chase down migrants and foreign-looking individuals, according to a report investigating the right-wing violence during the August 2018 demonstrations in the eastern city of Chemnitz. According to evaluations made by Saxony

⁴¹ See: BlastingNews News’ entry “Populism invading Europe, says study”, in: <http://us.blastingnews.com/world/2017/08/populism-invading-europe-says-study-001893829.html>, retrieved on 2.8.2017

⁴² See: The Guardian News’ entry “Under Boris Johnson, Islamophobia will reach a sinister new level”, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/05/boris-johnson-islamophobia-sinister-level-muslims>, retrieved on 6.1.2020

⁴³ See: The Times News’ entry “‘Brexit Party’ Facebook group rife with Islamophobia”, in: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/brexit-party-facebook-group-is-rife-with-islamophobia-k3c2lrrz3>, retrieved on 2.8.2019

Criminal Police Office, officials found chat messages exchanged between known members of Chemnitz's extreme-right scene between August 26 and 28. In June 2019, German prosecutors charged members of the right-wing organization Revolution Chemnitz with forming a terrorist group. A spokeswoman for the federal prosecutor's office in Karlsruhe confirmed that the members had been charged with forming the group in September in order to plan and carry out terrorist attacks. According to media reports, members of the group had planned to orchestrate a civil war-like rebellion in Berlin on 2 October 2018. As support for the far-right had increased over the last four years, German authorities were increasingly concerned over growing right-wing terrorism in the country.

Regarding the growth of far-right extremism, the risk of becoming a victim of a hate crime was 10 times higher for immigrants residing in cities in eastern Germany, according to another study. Lately, a secret report by Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) revealed that some right-wing extremists were preparing for 'a civil war scenario' by training to use firearms and explosives. Those people were believed to be collecting firearms and other supplies in preparation for a civil war or a 'feared collapse of public order' in the country.⁴⁴ On the government's side, two senior German politicians had called for a more progressive form of Islam in order to align the religion with the European way of life. Health Minister Jens Spahn and Schleswig-Holstein State Premier Daniel Günther published the appeal in May 2019 in a guest contribution for the Rheinische Post regional daily. *"Instead of tolerating symbols of a reactionary, misogynistic form of Islam, we must promote the development of a European Islam, which shares our values, in order to preserve our free European way of life,"* penned the two Christian Democrats. The topic of burkas was one of particular concern for both Spahn and Günther. They wrote: *"When women and girls appear fully-veiled at universities and schools, then we do not just have the option to resist, we must resist."* The pair also spoke about burdens on the local population when deportations fail before emphasizing that integration was essential for a successful society. Both men were members of Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrat (CDU) party. Spahn, who failed in a bid to become Merkel's successor, was seen as a conservative, while Günther was on the liberal wing of the party. The joint declaration also called for the European idea to become tangible in everyday lives of EU citizens.⁴⁵

Not less concerning was the on-going situation in **France**, as President Emmanuel Macron in September 2019 signaled a tougher line on immigration in the second half of his mandate, in saying that France cannot host everyone, arguing the government must stop voters drifting to the far-right. Macron noted France had seen a sharp increase in the numbers of people asking for asylum since the 2017 presidential election and said much tighter European cooperation was needed. The French president, whose first term will expire in 2022, was keenly aware that his biggest political rival remained Marine Le Pen and her far-right National Rally party, which had built its popularity on a strong anti-immigration stance. During the 2017 presidential campaign, Macron lavished support on the open door policy of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in allowing in over a million refugees, saying it had *"saved our collective dignity"*. He said two priorities now had to be giving asylum as quickly as possible to those who have a right to France's protection and integrating them more effectively through more French courses and a more aggressive employment policy. But he said those who had entered France illegally needed to be moved away much more efficiently, and that current processes last too long. France in 2018 received a record 122,743 asylum requests, up 22 percent compared to 2017.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ See: Daily Sabah news' entry "German far-right planned 'hunt' of migrants: report", in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2019/08/28/german-far-right-planned-hunt-of-migrants-report>, retrieved on 29.8.2019

⁴⁵ See: DW News' entry "Leading politicians call for a 'European Islam'", in: <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-leading-politicians-call-for-a-european-islam/a-48842251>, retrieved on 24.5.2019

⁴⁶ See: France24 news' entry "'France can't host everyone,' says Macron in new toughening of migration stance", in: <https://www.france24.com/en/20190925-france-can-t-host-everyone-says-macron-in-new-toughening-of-migration-stance>, retrieved on 26.9.2019

The Observatory noted with concern the movement of French far rights groups in building stronger coalitions. For instance, Le Pen was spotted in Tallinn to meet MPs from Estonia's far-right EKRE party, which recently became part of the country's coalition government, as part of cross-continent negotiations on setting up a new bloc of nationalist and far-right forces after European elections. She made the OK hand signal together with Ruuben Kaalep, an EKRE MP and the leader of its youth movement, and the Estonian politician uploaded the photograph to his Facebook page. Le Pen told media: *"I was in a selfie at his request, making a signal that to me means 'ok'. I was later told that it might have an alternative meaning. As soon as I became aware of that, I immediately asked that the photo be removed from the Facebook account."* The photo appeared to have been deleted from Kaalep's Facebook page, though others in which he made the same sign are still online. EKRE party leaders made the gesture last month during their swearing-in ceremony as ministers in the new government. The former Estonian president Toomas Hendrik Ilves complained on Twitter that the pair had made a "white-power sign". EKRE had five out of 15 cabinet positions in the government, despite a history of racist and misogynist rhetoric. Both EKRE and National Rally said they would join a bloc of nationalist forces led by Italy's Matteo Salvini in a new European parliament.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, **Italy** presented a scheme in October 2019 to accelerate the expulsion of migrants who stayed in the country, while cutting the time it took to decide on whether an asylum seeker must return home. Matteo Salvini imposed a crackdown on arrivals while he was interior minister until August 2018. Salvini closed Italy's ports to migrant rescue ships, threatening the charities operating them with fines of up to 1 million euros. After the League unexpectedly quit the government in a failed bid to trigger an early election, its former ally the 5-Star Movement formed a coalition with the center-left Democratic Party, ushering in a less aggressive approach to immigration. The new government agreed with four other EU states a scheme to distribute people saved in the Mediterranean, and plan to send back those already in Italy will defuse accusations by Salvini that it was soft on immigration. Under the new decree, the time to examine asylum requests of migrants who come from a list of 13 'safe' European and African countries, including Tunisia and Albania, would be reduced from two years to four months. If the request was rejected, the expulsion procedure would be immediately triggered. Salvini said he would repatriate 100,000 migrants in his first year in power, followed by another 400,000 during the rest of his five-year term in office.⁴⁸

In the same month, tens of thousands of protesters gathered in Rome in October 2019 for a so-called 'Italian Pride' rally that brought together the right-wing League of Matteo Salvini, the far-right Brothers of Italy party led by Giorgia Meloni and former premier Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia. Salvini's League, which remained Italy's largest party despite its leader's failed bid for the premiership, called for the mass demonstration to protest against the government forged by two former arch-enemies, the centre-left Democrats and the 5-Star Movement, to avoid a snap election following the crisis triggered by Salvini. The dominant roles of Salvini and Meloni in the right-wing alliance, which likely would run at the next general elections, became evident as Berlusconi was booed by dozens of demonstrators, openly impatient to see Salvini took the stage. In a clear sign of the shifting balance of power within the rightist coalition, Meloni inflamed the crowd with a speech focused on Italian identity, traditional family values and old-style patriotism, in saying: *"We are people. And we have our identity,"* she said as people in the piazza shouted her name. *"I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am Italian, and I am Christian, and you cannot take that away from me."* Polls showed that the League's support had been dented since Salvini's failed bid for power, which ended up ousting him from government. But pollsters

⁴⁷ See: The Guardian news' entry "Marine Le Pen makes 'OK' hand gesture used by white supremacists", in: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/15/marine-le-pen-makes-ok-hand-gesture-used-by-white-supremacists>, retrieved on 16.5.2019

⁴⁸ See: Reuters news' entry "Italy presents plan to accelerate expulsion of migrants", in: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-expulsion/italy-presents-plan-to-accelerate-expulsion-of-migrants-idUSKBN1WJ1YH>, retrieved on 5.10.2019

also estimated that the new rightist alliance with Salvini, Meloni and the remains of a moribund Forza Italia could allow them to easily reach more than 40% of the vote in the next election, handing them solid control over the Italian parliament.⁴⁹

An intermezzo story regarding the blatant campaign by far right groups might be quite interesting to mention here. Silvia Romano, an Italian aid worker kidnapped by a group said to be linked to the Shabab, was met with Hate and insults. Romano, returned to Rome on 10 May 2020, after she was abducted in Kenya in November 2018. Following her release, and once it was revealed that she converted to Islam on her own and was wearing a hooded garment that covered her hair, media outlets launched an immediate hate campaign against her. Italia's far-right League Party deputy Alessandro Pagano called Romano "*the new terrorist*" in a Lower House session on May 13. "*Muslim and happy. Silvia the ungrateful,*" said the front-page headline of right-wing daily Il Giornale on May 11. The Italian media reported that Rome paid a ransom of \$1.6 million to secure Romano's release. Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right opposition League party said, "*Imagine the Islamic terrorists: They have brought home the money, committing a criminal act, and 'won' the cultural battle in the name of the Islamic veil and conversion.*"⁵⁰

In different part of Europe, a deal between **Austria's** conservatives and Greens to form a governing coalition included banning headscarves in school until the age of 14 and preventive custody for potentially dangerous immigrants. The measures were part of what conservative leader Sebastian Kurz described as his tough stance on illegal immigration and "political Islam", aimed at appealing to his base but also to disillusioned former supporters of the far right, whose coalition with his party collapsed in May. Kurz and Greens leader Werner Kogler said they had reached a deal that should make Kurz chancellor again and bring the Greens to power for the first time. The deal included raising the age until which girls were banned from wearing a headscarf in school to 14 from around 10. It also included reviving a disputed plan for preventive custody of potentially dangerous individuals, even if they had not committed a crime, which was put forward by Kurz's coalition government with the far right after a fatal stabbing apparently committed by an asylum seeker in February 2019. "*A lot of turquoise and a bit of green,*" tabloid Kronen Zeitung headlined its story, saying the preventive custody plan was aimed at refugees.⁵¹

The Observatory was particularly alerted by a move by Austria to include Muslim and Turkish symbols as banned signs of extremism had drawn the ire of communities, which denounced it as a politically motivated move amid the rise of the far-right in the continent. Austrian parliament approved the amendment in December 2018 for the ban of what the law called extremist symbols, including a gesture of the 'grey wolf', a symbol of the Turkish opposition Nationalist Movement Party and the 'rabaa', a hand gesture commonly used by the Turkish government and Muslims to symbolize unity. The ban, which would come into force in March 2019, was to bring fines up to 10,000 euros for the use, distribution of badges and other material containing the symbols. The Turkish Foreign Ministry denounced the ban in a statement said: "*It is worrying and concerning that a legal action with an ambitious goal like cooperation in counterterrorism was*

⁴⁹ See: South China Morning Post news' entry "Silvio Berlusconi and Matteo Salvini lead tens of thousands of protesters for far-right 'Italian pride' rally", in: <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/3033732/silvio-berlusconi-and-matteo-salvini-lead-tens-thousands>, retrieved on 21.10.2019

⁵⁰ See: Daily Sabah News' entry "Anti-Islam frenzy grows in Italy as politician characterizes rescued aid worker as 'new terrorist'", in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/anti-islam-frenzy-grows-in-italy-as-politician-characterizes-rescued-aid-worker-as-new-terrorist>, retrieved on 14.05.2020

⁵¹ See: Reuters News' entry "Austrian coalition deal includes headscarf ban, preventive custody", in: <https://www.reuters.com/article/austria-politics/austrian-coalition-deal-includes-headscarf-ban-preventive-custody-media-reports-idUSL8N2971BO>, retrieved on 3.1.2020

deviated from its course by a political and populist move. It is clear that the law does not comply with democratic values and it does target political establishment and democracy as a whole, not only those who use the symbols."⁵²

Also, a closer look should be given to the government decision to establish a documentation center aimed at "*combating anti-Semitism, racism and religion-motivated extremism*" which would carry out surveillance on elements of "political Islam." The controversial initiative, previously announced in January 2020, was seen by many, as surveillance program on Muslims in the country in a supposed bid to fight against so-called "*political Islam*." The first and only documentation center was established in Austria in 1963 to combat Nazism and conduct research on Neo-nazi formations. Social Austria of the Future (SOZ) party chairperson, Hakan Gordu, said the documentation center would attack Islamic values and be led by purely biased experts.⁵³

Meanwhile, Austrian investigators had been probing the Identitarian Movement Austria (IBOe) after it emerged that its figurehead Martin Sellner received a donation to the alleged Christchurch gunman Brenton Tarrant. The leader of the Austrian far-right group had confirmed a media report that he had more extensive contact with the suspect behind deadly mosque attacks in New Zealand than previously admitted. So far, Sellner - whose group was known for its anti-immigration stunts - had publicly denied having had contact with Tarrant other than sending him a 'thank you' email for the 1,500-euro donation received in January 2018. But public broadcaster ORF reported that the men had in fact exchanged several emails, the last one dating back to July 2018, showing that their contact was "*longer and more intensive*". In reply to Sellner's "thank you" message, Tarrant said it had only been a small contribution in comparison to the work that Sellner was doing. In a further exchange, Sellner invited Tarrant for a beer or coffee if he was ever in Vienna. Tarrant returned the invitation for New Zealand, adding that sympathisers would also be happy to host him in Australia. Sellner confirmed the authenticity of the emails to ORF but continued to deny he met Tarrant when the latter travelled to Austria. Sellner also said he did not know of the plans for the attack. Sellner admitted deleting the messages before a March raid on his home in Vienna, saying on Twitter that he did not want them in his inbox but took screenshots to show the police. Austrian investigators were probing whether there was any further contact between the two men.⁵⁴

In the **Netherlands**, Dutch lawmaker known for his anti-Islam stance had revived plans for a contest in which participants caricature the prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Geert Wilders said that the contest was back on after cancelling another one last August 2019 following the arrest of a man police said had threatened to kill Wilders. He wrote: "Freedom of speech must prevail over violence and Islamic fatwa's". Wilders had previously advocated ending Muslim immigration from predominantly Muslim countries to the Netherlands and a ban on constructing new mosques in the nation. In 2016, he was found guilty of inciting discrimination against Moroccan immigrants.⁵⁵

Another negative signal of Islamophobia came from **Spain**, as the far-right Vox party secured 24 seats in the 350-seat house during the parliamentary election on 10 November 2019. The party became a sizeable far-right group in parliament since Spain's return to democracy.

⁵² See: Daily Sabah News' entry "Austrian ban on Muslim, Turkish symbols denounced", in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2018/12/15/austrian-ban-on-muslim-turkish-symbols-denounced>, retrieved on 16.12.2018

⁵³ See: Anadolu Agency News' entry "Austria to launch Muslim profiling scheme", in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/austria-to-launch-muslim-profiling-scheme-/1916489>, retrieved on 31.07.2020

⁵⁴ See: Business Standard news' entry "Austria far-right figure admits e-mails with NZ attack suspect", in: https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/austria-far-right-figure-admits-e-mails-with-nz-attack-suspect-119051500783_1.html, retrieved on 16.5.2019

⁵⁵ See: The Hill News' entry "Dutch anti-Islam lawmaker plans Muhammad cartoon contest after previous cancellation", in: <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/476178-dutch-anti-islam-lawmaker-plans-mohammad-cartoon-contest-after>, retrieved on 30.12.2019

After Burqa and Hijab, **Belgium** had moved further and at this time was targeting Halal meat. The ban, which had already been in effect in Flanders, came into force in the French-speaking region of Wallonia on 1 September 2019. Advocates of the new law said the legislation did not intentionally target religious groups, but aimed to end the slaughter of un-stunned livestock. According to interpretations of Islamic and Jewish law, animals must be slaughtered while fully conscious and not incapacitated by stunning. Current EU legislation requires animals to be stunned prior to slaughter, however gives special dispensations for religious grounds. Critics of the ban said that concerns over animal welfare had been hijacked by the far-right in order to push xenophobic agendas. Following attempts by Muslim and Jewish communities to overturn the ban, Belgium's constitutional court sent a case to the EU's top court for a decision. The court's verdict, which was expected in two years, would set a precedent on the matter for all states in the 28-member bloc of the EU.⁵⁶

Scotland had been out of radar during the latest few years, but now the country started showing indicators of Islamophobia. Information released by the Scottish Government detailed how many times someone was charged in relation to religiously aggravated attacks against a Muslim person in the country. According to the data, there had been less than five incidents in 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively charges in Dundee. In 2015/16, there were 16 such incidents, however. The national picture also showed a spike and was in line with a rise in similar types of charges that also saw a rise that year. The data includes any form of offensive conduct towards someone based on the belief that the victim was Muslim, whether or not this was actually the case. The Scottish Government data showed that Glasgow and Edinburgh given the higher populations saw the highest number of attacks on Muslims.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See: Al Araby news' entry "Belgium French-speaking region stuns religious minorities with ban on kosher and halal meat", in: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/9/3/belgium-french-speaking-region-bans-kosher-and-halal-meat>, retrieved on 3.9.2019

⁵⁷ See: The Courier news' entry "Plea for victims of Islamophobia to report incidents to create clearer picture of religious intolerance", in: <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/dundee/969115/plea-for-victims-of-islamophobia-to-report-incidents-to-create-clearer-picture-of-religious-intolerance/>, retrieved on 3.9.2019

2.3. Islamophobia in the Rest of the World

2.3.1. Myanmar⁵⁸

Since 2012, there has been a continued spread of anti-Muslim sentiments, mainly in Rakhine state and further escalated towards tension between the Rakhines and the Rohingyas elsewhere in Myanmar. There were at least two justifying reasons: *First*, the release of radical Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu and the then formation of the 969 movement under his leadership that provided an organized platform for the promotion of Islamophobia. The movement, which was launched in 2012, propagates fear of Muslims (who make up 4% of the total population according to the 1983 census in Myanmar) on the false claim that eventually Muslims would become the 'majority element' and the largest group within Myanmar. Members of the 969 movement often act as prime instigators of the anti-Muslim movement all over the country. *Second*, the absence of media censorship since 2011 had the side effect of allowing hate speech to flourish unchecked. Uncensored media has opened the avenues to the use and abuse of social media, propagating anti Rohingya, as well as anti-Muslim speeches and messages. The 2014 riot in Mandalay highlights the misuse of the media. For instance, a fabricated story in social media of molestation of a Buddhist girl by her Muslim employer triggered a massive violence, hence Muslims in Rakhine State identified as Rohingya have then been vilified. In parallel, ultranationalists have framed Muslims as posing a threat to Buddhists in Myanmar. They made claims about high Muslim birthrates, increasing Muslim economic influence, and Muslim plans to take over Myanmar. They argued that Muslims were increasing in numbers, in part by marrying Buddhist women and forcing them to convert. In addition, ultranationalists often reacted strongly against Muslims in Myanmar wearing hijab and other forms of Islamic dresses. They interpreted such dress code as a sign of Muslims' greater allegiance to their faith than to the Burmese nation. Meanwhile, they also employed gruesome images of ISIS brutality and selective photos from episodes of communal violence in Myanmar to suggest all Muslims were potential terrorists. Some ultranationalists also used dehumanizing language to characterize Muslims, a hallmark of dangerous speeches.

Social media was in particular playing the significant role behind the calamity suffered by Rohingyas. Reuters and the Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley School of Law found more than 1,000 examples of posts, comments, images and videos attacking Myanmar's Muslims – including some material that had been on the site for more than six years. Facebook announced that it removed a total of 135 Facebook accounts, 425 pages and 17 groups, as well as a further 15 Instagram accounts. The accounts had a wide reach, with around 2.5 million people following at least one. Meanwhile, 6,400 people belonged to at least one of the Facebook groups, while around 1,300 followed at least one of the Instagram accounts. According to Facebook, a number of its accounts were operated by the Myanmar military as part of a coordinated hate campaign against the Rohingya people. This is just one indication of the scale of the hate speech problem in Myanmar. Far more resources must be dedicated to tackle this onerous scourge.

The international community keeps condemning Myanmar on this issue. Following a mission to investigate claims against the military of Myanmar of human rights abuses, the UN released a report that stated top officials in the armed forces must be investigated for genocide and crimes against humanity. The report states that the military tactics were "*grossly disproportionate to actual security threats.*" Six senior military figures were also named in the report with the conclusion that they should go on trial for their involvement. These names included Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing and his deputy. The UN had also heaped criticism on the country's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, for doing

⁵⁸ Thanks to the **Department of Muslim Minorities and Communities** for its kind contribution by providing analysis on this section.

nothing to prevent the attacks. The UN had suggested the case be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) despite Myanmar was not a signatory to the Rome Statute that created the court.⁵⁹

Further, a UN fact-finding team said in October 2018 that a genocide was underway against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, as it presented a report at the Security Council calling for the matter to be referred to the International Criminal Court. The Chair of the UN fact-finding mission on Myanmar, made statement to media saying that beyond mass killings, the conflict included the ostracisation of the targeted population, prevention of births and widespread displacement in camps. The fact-finding mission's report was first made public in September 2018, called on the Security Council to refer the Myanmar situation to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, or to create an ad hoc international criminal tribunal, as was done with the former Yugoslavia. The report said that Myanmar's top generals, including Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing, must be investigated and prosecuted for genocide in Rakhine State. Myanmar had rejected accusations that its military committed atrocities in the crackdown in 2017 that forced 720,000 Rohingya to flee over the border to Bangladesh. The Myanmar government also rejected the UN mission's findings, questioning its independence and pointing out that it had established itself an independent investigative commission made up of Asian diplomats.⁶⁰

Aung San Suu Kyi made comments during a lecture in Singapore in which she reviewed her two years in power: "*We who are living through the transition in Myanmar view it differently than those who observe it from the outside and who will remain untouched by its outcome.*" In response to accusation that Myanmar's army of carrying out ethnic cleaning, or even genocide, against the Muslim minority, in a population, which was overwhelmingly Buddhist, Suu Kyi's government said it carried out justifiable counter-insurgency operations in response to attacks by militants on security forces. In a measure of the national sensitivity of the subject, Suu Kyi did not to refer to the Rohingya by name in her speech. The term was rejected by many Buddhists in Myanmar who do not consider the group a native minority and charge it entered illegally from Bangladesh, although many families had lived for generations in Myanmar. The Rohingya faced both social and official discrimination, and are generally denied citizenship.⁶¹

At the initiative of the OIC group in Geneva, a Special session of the Human Rights Council was convened on 5 December 2017. From there on, this issue has been on the Agenda of the Human Rights Council, where important Resolutions had been taken condemning the Myanmar authorities and creating a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) which stated in its report dated September 2019 that it had reasonable grounds to conclude that "*serious crimes under international law had been committed*" and that "*the Rohingyas remain at serious risk of genocide under the terms of the Genocide Convention*". During the 45th CFM in Dhaka (May 2018), the OIC adopted Resolutions recognizing "the continuous sufferings of the Rohingyas qualified as "the most persecuted minority of the world" and establishing an OIC Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Accountability for Human Rights Violations against the Rohingyas chaired by The Gambia. The two processes launched in Geneva and in Dhaka converged at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) where The Gambia, on behalf of the OIC, has filed an Application instituting proceedings against Myanmar concerning alleged violations of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948). The formal accusation was that Myanmar had carried out a "genocidal violence" against the Rohingya community by means of mass murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and destruction of Rohingya villages.

⁵⁹ See: Inquisitr News' entry "UN wants Myanmar generals prosecuted for genocide in deaths of Rohingya Muslims", in: <https://www.inquisitr.com/5046715/un-wants-myanmar-generals-prosecuted-for-genocide-in-deaths-of-rohingya-muslims/>, retrieved on 28.8.2018

⁶⁰ See: The Strait Times news' entry "'Ongoing genocide' underway against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims: UN", in: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/ongoing-genocide-underway-against-myanmars-rohingya-muslims-un>, retrieved on 26.10.2018

⁶¹ See: VOA News' entry "Aung San Suu Kyi defends policies toward Rohingya Muslims", in: <https://www.voanews.com/a/aung-san-suu-kyi-defends-policies-toward-rohingya-muslims/4537783.html>, retrieved on 22.8.2018

Aung San Suu Kyi announced that she would lead the defense of her country at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Again, Suu Kyi and her government would defend the Tatmadaw's controversial campaign against the Rohingya. Since the beginning of the controversial "clearance operations" by the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's military) in October 2016 after an attack on border outposts by Rohingya assailants in northern Rakhine state, it had staunchly defended the actions of the security forces as necessary action against "terrorists." Suu Kyi had firmly argued at various international fora that the international community did not understand the "reality" of the situation in Rakhine state. Her government had also persistently dismissed reports critical of the military's conduct against the Rohingya from the international media and the United Nations as either fabricated, misleading, or unhelpful.

The first such dismissal came directly from Suu Kyi in May 2017, after the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) had passed a resolution three months earlier to investigate the alleged crimes. Subsequently, the government rejected a comprehensive report released by a UN International Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in August 2018. A year later, her government dismissed another report published by the FFM detailing the intricate relationship between the Tatmadaw's shadowy business interests and the ongoing ethnic armed conflict. Suu Kyi's government had also categorically rejected the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which authorized full-fledged investigations into the alleged crimes earlier in November 2019, over Myanmar. Since Myanmar was not a state party to the Rome Statute (the founding charter of the ICC), Prosecutors at the Hague-based ICC were trying to indict Tatmadaw generals and other perpetrators through Bangladesh, which was a state party. The closest thing to a critical statement that she had given on the matter so far was saying, at a World Economic Forum meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam in September 2018, "with hindsight, the situation could have been handled better." Evidently, the Lady saw the whole issue as a management and public relations crisis, rather than one that was essentially political in nature. Her latest decision to appear at the ICJ was seen in the context of Myanmar's domestic politics, which stood at a critical point at the moment.⁶²

Finally, based on the findings of the FFM, the ICJ made, on 23 January 2020, an unanimous order on provisional measures urging Myanmar to prevent the commission of genocidal acts pending its final decision and to preserve evidence of genocidal acts... [to protect the Rohingya, an ethnic Muslim minority in the Buddhist-majority country that has suffered "*mass killing, mass displacement, mass fear [and] overwhelming...brutality*"]. Myanmar was also compelled to report back on all measures taken in that regard, within four months. Moreover, the decision taken by the ICJ makes reference to the Rohingyas as "*a group that self-identifies as the Rohingya and that claims a longstanding connection to Rakhine State, which forms part of the Union of Myanmar*". This mention is a clear dismissal of the denial of the Myanmar authorities of the Burmese citizenship to the Rohingyas under the pretext that they do not have roots in that country.

The ICJ declared in this historic order that there was prima facie evidence of breaches of the 1948 Genocide Convention, the court warned that the Rohingya remaining in Myanmar were "extremely vulnerable" to military misdeeds. The fifteen international judges and two ad hoc judges (one nominated by each party in the case) emphasized that there were fundamental rights at stake and that the Rohingya deserve protection of those rights immediately. Against this backdrop, the ICJ approved four of the six provisional measures requested by The Gambia, which represents an incontestable victory. It is also worth highlighting that even the judge nominated by Myanmar for the hearing voted in favor of the provisional measures. Thus, the provisional measures imposed by the ICJ require the

⁶² See: The Diplomat News' entry "Why Will Aung San Suu Kyi Personally Defend Myanmar Against Genocide Claims?", in: <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/why-will-aung-san-suu-kyi-personally-defend-myanmar-against-genocide-claims/>, retrieved on 30.11.2019

government of Myanmar to prevent genocidal acts, ensure military and police forces do not commit genocide, preserve evidence of genocidal acts. Myanmar is compelled to report back on all measures taken to comply with the order within four months (by 23 May 2020), and every six months thereafter until a final decision is reached. The two requests, which have not been retained in the court's order, relate to access to Myanmar by UN fact-finding teams and the standard provision of "non-aggravation of dispute".

However, it is worth mentioning that the Gambian legal team was expecting that access to Myanmar would not be granted by the ICJ for sovereignty reasons. This major ruling holds a high symbolic value not only for the Rohingya, as the most persecuted minority in the world, but also for the international justice. It is a clear signal that impunity cannot be tolerated. In this respect, the ICJ highlighted the "erga omnes partes" nature of the obligation to prevent genocide. Therefore, the ICJ recognizes the right of The Gambia to institute legal action before the ICJ on the basis of not just being a State party to the 1948 Genocide Convention but also as part of the community of States. The ICJ order also constitutes a sharp disapproval of Myanmar's policy of denial of the Rohingyas' existence as a distinctive group. Indeed, the political and military leadership of Myanmar do not recognize the "Rohingya" and they systematically avoid the use of the word "Rohingya". This denial is pivotal to Myanmar's dismissal of the genocide allegations. In this decision, the ICJ clearly stated that "the Rohingya appear to constitute a protected group within the meaning of Article II of the Genocide Convention", securing therefore the right of existence held collectively by this protected group. Moreover, the Court reminded in its decision that "*Rohingya should be understood as references to the group that self-identifies as the Rohingya group and that claims a longstanding connection to the Rakhine State, which forms part of the Union of Myanmar*", reaffirming explicitly that the Rohingya are also part of Myanmar. The wording of the decision was very strong. Clear and forceful legal terms have been used, such as "prohibited", "mechanism of reporting", "Myanmar's duty to comply with its obligation under the Genocide Convention", the Rohingya "remain at serious risk of genocide", "orders on provisional measures[...] have binding effect" ...⁶³

Myanmar had been ordered by the International Court of Justice to take such measures at the hands of the military. The Court unanimously indicated four provisional measures with which Myanmar must comply. *First*, the Republic of Myanmar shall take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts of genocide, such as killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting on the Rohingya conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part and imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group. *Second*, Myanmar shall ensure that its military and any irregular armed units subjected to the military's control, direction or influence, do not commit any acts of genocide. *Third*, the Republic of Myanmar shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to any acts of genocide. *Fourth*, Myanmar shall submit a report to the ICJ on all measures taken to give effect to the order within four months, as from the date of the decision, and then every six months until the Court renders a final decision on the case.

2.3.2. China

There were around 25 million Muslims living in China, which is minority in a country of 1.4 billion populations. Among them, the Hui and the Uighurs made up the largest ethnic groups. Uyghurs primarily live in Xinjiang, but the Hui scattered around the country. Up to the first quarter of 2020, the world's attention had focused so much on the situation in Xinjiang

⁶³ Excerpted from report provided by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations, Geneva.

Province, with diversion recently by the Corona virus outbreak in Wuhan. Since 2018, reports from some international bodies claimed that hundreds of thousands of ethnic Uyghur were detained against their will in mass re-education camps under the pretext of preventing extremism.⁶⁴ Media reports also suggested that China was participating in the practice of forced conversion of Muslims, alleging that thousands were being held for months at a time, and subjected to political indoctrination sessions. It is claimed that many had been detained for praying, wearing 'Islamic' clothing, or having foreign connections, such as travel abroad in the past, or visiting relatives living in another country. Some reports even mentioned the deaths of detainees in the centers, and other human rights abuses occurring in the centers secured by guard towers, barbed wire, and high walls.⁶⁵

On Xinjiang issue, a fresh accusation came from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) that claimed that Chinese authorities were reportedly to have used app, technology and surveillance system for controlling the Uyghurs. One document noted that authorities in Xinjiang had identified 40,557 people by monitoring their activity on Zapya, a popular free Chinese app used to share audio and video files. It encouraged users to download the Quran and share religious teachings. The app, also known as Kuai Ya, was developed by DewMobile Inc. The app was popular beyond China, in countries including Myanmar, India, and Pakistan. Still according to the ICIJ, Zapya allows smartphones to connect to one another without being connected to the web, making it popular in areas with poor internet connection. According to the document, authorities found that more than 1.8 million Uighurs in Xinjiang had downloaded the software between July 2016 and June 2017, and that 40,557 of them were what it called 'harmful' people, that included fugitives, criminal detainees, and unauthorized imams. Human Rights Watch reported in 2019 that officials in Xinjiang also used a special app to log residents' personal information, which included political views, use of birth control, and use of electricity at home. Some reports maintained that party officials policing the region also stick QR codes in front of people's front doors to log personal information about the household and track their whereabouts.⁶⁶

A parallel accusation came from the New York Times when the media released hundreds of files exposing the inner workings of the camps, including a memo from one of the Communist Party's top officials in Xinjiang saying that no one should ever be allowed to escape. On the same tone was BBC's Panorama programme, which cited the documents released by the ICIJ, referring to the same memo that told staff to "*increase discipline and punishment of behavioural violations*", "*promote repentance and confession*" and "*encourage students to truly transform*". According to the documents, every aspect of their lives was tightly controlled, including where their bed was, which desk they sit at and when they were allowed to use the toilet and it was strictly forbidden for this to be changed.

China in a statement said the ICIJ's claims were fake news, mentioning, "*Xinjiang is a beautiful, peaceful and prosperous region in China. Three years ago, this was not the case. It had become a battle ground - thousands of terrorist incidents happened in Xinjiang between 1990s and 2016, and thousands of innocent people got killed.*" The statement said the centres had nothing to do with religion and people were free to come and go as they please.

The China's Foreign Ministry lashed out the New York Times while accusing the newspaper of ignoring the true reasons behind and success of what China terms a campaign to end poverty, separatism and religious extremism. The

⁶⁴See: Amnesty International news entry "China: Families of up to one million detained in mass "re-education" drive demand answers", in: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/china-xinjiang-families-of-up-to-one-million-detained-demand-answers/>, retrieved on 14.12.2018; Also: The Guardian news entry "China says UN criticism of human rights record is 'politically driven'", in: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/06/china-un-criticism-human-rights-record>, retrieved on 14.12.2018, and Human Rights Watch news entry "China: Massive Crackdown in Muslim Region", in: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/09/china-massive-crackdown-muslim-region>, retrieved on 14.12.2018.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ See: Business Insider News' entry "China used a file-sharing app to round up 40,000 Uighur Muslims for prison camps, a startling insight into how it oppresses people via technology", in: <https://www.businessinsider.com/china-uyghurs-prison-camps-round-up-zapya-app-2019-11>, retrieved on 26.11.2019

Spokesman of the Ministry said the fact Xinjiang had not suffered a terrorist attack in three years demonstrated the correctness of the policy. He told media that the article was a “clumsy patchwork” based on “selected interpretation” of the documents. He said as quoted: “It is hyping up these so-called internal documents to smear China’s efforts in Xinjiang. What is the agenda?” He also said China would continue, “to do a good job” in implementing policies in Xinjiang aimed at expanding development and prosperity.⁶⁷

China stressed that the national government was committed to guaranteeing the religious freedom of its citizens, including the Uyghurs, that “China has strong commitment to the protection of human rights and religious freedom”. Beijing mentioned the social condition of many Uyghurs who were said to have struggled to find jobs because of their poor command of the nation’s official language and lack of skills, the background being cited as “made them vulnerable to the instigation and coercion of terrorism and extremism.” Beijing also argued that “In light of the situation, Xinjiang has established professional vocational training institutions as the platform, providing courses on China’s common language, legal knowledge, vocational skills, along with de-radicalization education for citizens influenced by extremist ideas.” China described the facilities as training and education centres that aim to stamp out religious extremism and provide people with useful skills.⁶⁸

Earlier in July 2019, the ambassadors of 22 countries signed a letter calling on Beijing “to halt its mass detention of Uyghurs in Xinjiang”, the first such joint move on the issue at the UN Human Rights Council. The signatories included envoys from Britain, France, Germany, Australia, Canada, Japan and Switzerland. The United States, which quit the forum a year before, did not sign the letter.

Meanwhile, ambassadors from 50 countries had co-signed a letter to the President of the UN Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to voice their support for China's position on issues related to its Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The Ambassadors commended China for its economic and social progress, effective counter-terrorism and de-radicalization measures, and strong guarantee of human rights. They appreciated the opportunities provided by China for diplomatic envoys, officials of international organizations, and media professionals to visit Xinjiang, and pointed to the contrast between Xinjiang in the eyes of those who have visited it and the one portrayed in some western media. The Ambassadors also urged a certain group of countries to stop using uncorroborated information to make unfounded accusations against China.⁶⁹ China said the show of support was “a powerful response to the groundless accusations made against China by a small number of Western countries”.⁷⁰

2.3.3. Sri Lanka

Islamophobia had been a sudden ‘boiling’ concern in Sri Lanka. A terrorist linked to little-known local group targeted high-end hotels and churches in Colombo and in the east of the country in April 2019, killing more than 250 people, including foreigners. The devastating attack, claimed by the Islamic State group, shocked the nation. Many Muslims felt that since the suicide bombings they had been demonized, and traders from the community said that they had become

⁶⁷ See: Los Angeles Times News’ entry “China lashes out at N.Y. Times report on internments of Muslims”, in: <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-11-18/china-uighurs-muslims-xinjiang-camps-documents>, retrieved on 19.11.2019

⁶⁸ See: The Jakarta Post News’ entry, in: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/12/20/china-responds-to-indonesias-question-about-alleged-abuse-of-xinjiangs-muslims.html>, retrieved on 21.12.2018

⁶⁹ See: Xinhua news’ entry “Ambassadors from 50 countries voice support to China's position on issues related to Xinjiang”, in: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/27/c_138261551.htm, retrieved on 27.7.2019

⁷⁰ See: South China Morning Post News’ entry “Xinjiang Uygurs didn’t choose to be Muslims, China says”, in: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3019490/uygurs-xinjiang-didnt-choose-be-muslims-china-says-white-paper>, retrieved on 22.7.2019

a target. A Muslim vendor stated that since the Easter-Sunday bombings, almost 90% of my Sinhalese customers had stopped buying from his shop, so that his business had gone down significantly. In June 2019, a senior Buddhist monk openly called on the Sinhalese people not to buy from Muslim shops, prompting strong criticism from Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera, who urged "true Buddhists" to unite against what he described as the "Talibanisation" of the religion. Ethnic and religious fault lines run deep in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Sri Lanka.

Muslims make up nearly 10% of Sri Lanka's 22 million people, who were predominantly Sinhalese Buddhists. About 12% of the population were Hindus, mostly from the ethnic Tamil minority, and 7% were Christians. The country endured a brutal civil war that ended in 2009 with the total defeat of the separatist Tamil Tiger rebels. Tens of thousands of people were killed in the nearly three decade-long conflict. Nearly ten years of relative peace was shattered on Easter Sunday. Muslims across the island had denounced the senseless killings, but their outright rejection of violence and condemnation did not satisfy Sinhalese hardliners. Muslim leaders said that the entire community was facing retaliation.⁷¹

Meanwhile, the notorious anti-Islam group, Bodu Bala Sena (Army of Buddhist Power), had campaigned hard for new President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Rajapaksa was a former defense official who was regarded by Sinhalese Buddhists as a hero for his role in ending Sri Lanka's 26-year civil war with ethnic Tamil rebels. But minorities fear him because of allegations he took part in war atrocities and ordered state-sponsored disappearances. With the day-to-day violence of the civil war in the past, Buddhist nationalists in recent years had accused the government of paying too much heed to the needs of minorities, pointing in part to the previous government, which though led by Sinhalese Buddhists, also included ministers who were Hindu and Muslim.

Buddhist nationalism had been on the rise, and it was thrust to the forefront of Sri Lankan politics after Islamic State-inspired suicide attacks by local militants killed 269 people at churches and hotels on Easter Sunday 2019. Rajapaksa, often appearing alongside Buddhist monks, would refer to the attacks while campaigning and cast himself as the only person able to restore security. And now that he had won, nationalists wanted him to promote Sinhalese culture at the expense of Muslims, such as getting rid of Islamic religious schools. He said in an interview: "*Halal, burqa, Islamic banks, Kathi courts, Shariah universities, those all destroyed social integrity that we do have..... Gotabaya can establish one rule, one nation, one country.*" Soon after the Easter bombings, an outspoken Buddhist monk and Member of Parliament, Athuraliye Rathana, began a fast in front of the Sacred Tooth temple demanding the resignation of a Muslim Cabinet minister in then-President Maithripala Sirisena's government and two Muslim governors he accused of having links to the attacks. Muslims largely perceived that security forces directed by Sirisena were ignoring or even taking part in mob violence that followed the Easter attacks and killed one person and left 20 mosques burned.⁷²

2.3.4. India

Since the last four or five years, the Observatory has been alarmed by the trend of Islamophobia in India, which was becoming much worse these days. Quite recently, the hashtag **#मुस्लिमो का संपूर्ण बहिष्कार** (*'Total Boycott of Muslims'*) started trending on Twitter precisely since October 2019, with a large number of right-wing accounts tweeting

⁷¹ See: BBC News' entry "Sri Lanka's Muslims 'demonised' after Easter bombings", in: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49249146>, retrieved on 14.8.2019

⁷² See: Star Tribune News' entry "Buddhist nationalists claim victory in Sri Lankan election", in: <http://www.startribune.com/buddhist-nationalists-claim-victory-in-sri-lankan-election/565516882/>, retrieved on 11.11.2019

it. The individuals using the hashtag advocated a range of discriminatory actions against Muslims. These ranged from boycotting the buying of goods and services to advocating a ban on places of religious teaching. Regrettably, the fact of bigoted hashtags reaching a nationwide Twitter trend was not an unusual occurrence – for instance on 19 October, the hashtag **#BoycottAllah** was trending, with about 20,000 tweets.

Not only the government, the virus had contaminated almost all elements of the Indian society, from state apparatus, politicians, business, etc. The 2019 status of Policing in India report revealed that one in every two police personnel had bold prejudice on Islam as they felt that Muslims were likely to be naturally prone of committing crimes. According to the report, 35% of police personnel surveyed thought it was very natural for a mob to punish the guilty in incidents of cow slaughter. 43% think it was natural for a mob to punish the culprit accused of rape. In case of minor offences, a small punishment should be handed out by the police rather than a legal trial, felt 37% personnel interviewed. The report prepared on police adequacy and working conditions by the NGO Common Cause and Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, was released on in August 2019. The survey was conducted across 21 states, about 12,000 police officials were interviewed in police station and 11,000 of their family members were also interviewed.⁷³

Among the prominent Indian politicians, a terrible instance was BJP Surendra Singh, who said that Muslims who have many wives and children in large numbers had an "animalistic tendency." The BJP leader said: "*In the Muslim religion, you know that people keep 50 wives and give birth to 1050 children. This is not a tradition but an animalistic tendency. In society, giving birth to only two to four children is normal.*" Surendra Singh had been in the news, time and again, for his controversial statements against Islam and Muslims. A year before precisely in July 2018, the Ballia legislator had said that every Hindu couple must have at least five children for Hindutva to remain intact. In an interview with media, had said this step was necessary to increase the population of Hindus in India.⁷⁴ Another monster politician was the West Delhi BJP MP Parvesh Verma who kept campaigning against Islam. Quite recently for instance, he made an Islamophobic statement as quoted: "*We all know what jihad is. Jihad is to convert all non-Muslims to Muslims. This is what they did in Kashmir. Wherever slogans of jihad will be raised, the outcome will be the same. What happened in Kashmir can happen in Delhi too. And people of Delhi are also aware of it. Jihad means, if you are not Muslim, then you can't even go to a Muslim colony and raise 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' slogan. Muslims want to take over India as this is what jihad means to them... but Hindus don't indulge in jihad or religious conversion.*"⁷⁵

In 2019 only, a series of anti-Muslim actions were taken by the Indian Government in its drive towards Hindutva, an ultranationalist Hindu ideology. These activities were more prominent following the re-election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. BJP had been actively pursuing the agenda of its parent body, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu right wing organization.⁷⁶ The Indian Prime Minister himself kept openly indicating negative signals on Muslims, including when he expressed his concern about 'population

⁷³ See: National Herald News' entry "Islamophobia in police: 50% police officials feel Muslims are naturally prone to crimes, says report", in: <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/islamophobia-in-police-50-police-officials-feel-muslims-are-naturally-prone-to-crimes-says-report>, retrieved on 29.8.2019

⁷⁴ See: India Today News' entry "Muslims having multiple wives, children animalistic, says BJP MLA", in: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/bjp-up-mp-surendra-singh-controversial-statement-muslims-1569112-2019-07-15>, retrieved on 16.7.2019

⁷⁵ See: The Print News' entry "BJP's Parvesh Verma stands by Shaheen Bagh remark, says Muslims want to take over India", in: <https://theprint.in/politics/bjps-parvesh-verma-stands-by-shaheen-bagh-remark-says-muslims-want-to-take-over-india/356068/>, retrieved on 30.1.2020

⁷⁶ Contribution provided by the Department of Asian Affairs of the OIC

explosion' in his Independence Day speech, and referred to those with small families as patriotic, 'responsible citizens'. Sometimes earlier, a BJP MP had introduced the Population Regulation Bill, he later claimed that his Bill was not aimed at any religion, caste or community. Regardless, the MP targeted a section of the Muslims for their supposedly high birth rates. In 2018, another BJP MP went to the extent of claiming that "*one particular community was responsible for increasing the population of the country and that was curbing the nation's development*", even as Shiv Sena called for 'compulsory sterilisation' of Muslims.

India's population had increased by more than 5 times in the last 110 years, from 238 million in 1901 to 1,211 billion in 2011. Most of the increase (87%) happened in the post-Independence era (1951-2011). The highest population growth was 24.8% during 1961-71, after which the growth rate started declining, going down to 17.7% during 2001-11. A report by the National Institute for Health and Family Welfare, 'The Story of India's Population' (2014), confirmed that "*India has witnessed a steady decline in its population growth rate over the last four decades (1971–2011).*" Muslims contributed 14.6% (1901-2011), 16.1% (1951-2011) and 16.7% (1971-2011) to India's population growth. The contribution of Hindus, on the other hand, was 79.4%, 78% and 77.4% and that of the rest was 6%, 5.9% and 5.9% during these periods. In 1901, Hindus outnumbered Muslims in India by 164 million; by 268 million in 1951; 392 million in 1971; and by 794 million in 2011. Therefore, despite a lower growth rate, but a much higher population, the numerical advantage of Hindus had grown over the years, rather than the other way round. At the same time, the population growth rate of Muslims was declining since 1971 – from 30.9% during 1961-71 to 24.6% during 2001-11.⁷⁷

The worst thing after all was the fact that India adopted the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) granting fast-tracked citizenship to undocumented Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Christian migrants who had allegedly fled persecutions in their countries of origin except Muslims. The exclusion of Muslims from this law was a blatant breach of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of racial Discrimination (CERD). The policy passed both houses of Parliament and was signed by President Ram Nath Kovind on 12 December 2019. The cutoff for citizenship eligibility was 31 December 2014, so anyone who was deemed eligible under the law but entered the country after that date was subject to deportation. The Indian government justified this glaring omission by claiming that, since Muslims were majority populations in the three neighbouring countries, they were simply trying to assist non-Muslims who face religious persecution in those countries by allowing them to remain. The CAA was widely seen as an anti-Muslim legislation because it introduced religious grounds for granting citizenship. Such intention was very clearly reflected from the gestures of its masterminds.

As an immediate consequence, more than 4 million people in India, mostly Muslims, were at risk of being declared foreign migrants as the government pushed a hardline Hindu nationalist agenda that challenged the country's pluralist tradition. This hunt for migrants happened for instance in Assam, a state near the borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh. Many of the people whose citizenship was now being questioned were born in India and have enjoyed all the rights of citizens, such as voting in elections. State authorities were rapidly expanding foreigner tribunals and planning to build huge new detention camps. Hundreds of people had been arrested on suspicion of being a foreign migrant. The governing party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi forced people to prove they were citizens to other parts of India, part of a far-reaching Hindu nationalist program fueled by Modi's sweeping reelection victory in May 2019.

⁷⁷ See: Times of India news' entry "What the data tells us: Are Muslims responsible for India's 'population explosion'? Not quite", in: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-edit-page/what-the-data-tells-us-are-muslims-responsible-for-indias-population-explosion-not-quite/>, retrieved on 28.8.2019

Modi unilaterally wiped out the statehood of India's only Muslim-majority state, Jammu and Kashmir, removing its special autonomy and turning it into a federal territory without any consultation with local population and leaders — many of whom have since been arrested. All of the 33 million residents of Assam have had to prove, with documentary evidence, that they or their ancestors were Indian citizens before early 1971 when Bangladesh was established.⁷⁸

Meanwhile in the long-disputed territory of Kashmir, Indian authorities from September 2019 tightened a month-long security lockdown in the city of Srinagar after breaking up religious processions by Muslims who defied a ban. A military clampdown was imposed in Muslim-majority Kashmir from 5 August 2019 to prevent unrest as New Delhi revoked the disputed region's autonomy, with mobile phone networks and the internet still cut off in all but a few pockets. Police drove around the city, announcing through loudhailers that "*residents are informed not to venture out of their homes. Strict action under law would be taken against violators.*" It was reported that four local journalists were injured while covering a protest involving up to 5,000 demonstrators, one of the biggest gatherings since the lockdown was imposed. Security forces fired tear gas and live ammunition in the air.

Obviously, the Indian government's dramatic crackdown on Jammu and Kashmir was enduring and had shown little sign of abating, with a heavy military presence on the streets of the Kashmir Valley and major mosques closed on 2019 Eid al-Adha. Families in a Muslim-dominated region had been cut off from loved ones. Local leaders had been imprisoned. Soldiers roam the streets. Communication links had been severed. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the heavy-handed intervention would usher in a new era of development, stability, investment, infrastructure construction and tourism – measures that, he said, "*will rid Jammu and Kashmir of terrorism and separatism.*" India's governing party said the removal of the special status for Jammu and Kashmir – and a concurrent move to make the region into a federally administered territory – would create a more equal society, removed obstacles to economic progress and enabled a more effective fight against terrorism. Critics had cast doubt on the government's ability to achieve those goals, accusing Mr. Modi of pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda.⁷⁹

2.3.3. Australia and New Zealand

New Zealand was suddenly becoming a global headline on mid-March 2019. During a Friday prayer on 15 March 2019 two terrorist attacks took place at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand leaving 51 people dead and 49 wounded. The massacre, which was live-streamed by the Australian attacker, named Brenton Harrison Tarrant, began at Al Noor Mosque and continued at Linwood Islamic Centre. The attacks highlighted the global reach and connection of the far right extremists and white supremacists with terroristic and violent agendas. This substantiates the fact that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim discrimination have been on the rise in Australia and New Zealand following a similar trend in Europe and the United States. According to some media sources, the killer was influenced by the ideas and methods of Anders Breivik, the far-right Norwegian terrorist who murdered 77 people in 2011, and who also inspired many other extremists worldwide. In the morning of the attacks, the killer released through his social media account a manifesto revealing that he was deeply influenced by the global far right extremism and was considering himself a disciple of white supremacists. In a video live-streamed from his car, he played a song devoted to Radovan Karadzic,

⁷⁸ See: SBS news' entry "India plans big detention camps for migrants and Muslims are afraid", in: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/india-plans-big-detention-camps-for-migrants-and-muslims-are-afraid>, retrieved on 19.8.2019

⁷⁹ See: The Globe and Mail News' entry "India tightens grip in Kashmir with mosque closings, heavy military presence", in: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-india-tightens-grip-in-kashmir-with-mosque-closings-heavy-military/>, retrieved on 14.8.2019

a Bosnian Serb responsible for the deaths of thousands of Bosnian Muslims and Croats during an ethnic war in the Balkans in the 1990s.

Following the terrorist attack, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern immediately took commendable actions; hence, there were significant measures by the New Zealand government to combat Islamophobia while providing greater protections on Muslims and other minorities. The international community including world leaders and politicians supported the people and government of New Zealand and condemned the attacks. At the level of the United Nations, all Member States through various relevant resolutions condemned the attacks. Similarly, the matter was widely reflected in the statements delivered to the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, by leaders of the world including heads of state and government of the OIC Member States. The OIC Secretary General H.E. Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen during his meetings with the world leaders on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly high-level week discussed Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry and the negative impact the Christchurch attack had on intolerance and discrimination based on religion and belief.

Despite so, attacks by extremists against Muslims and their symbols have been noticed. For instance, a Christchurch businessman was selling "*Make Ardern Go Away*" caps that made headlines after 'Trade Me' temporarily took down the listings, and was using the proceeds to promote far-right Facebook pages. Christchurch businessperson Mike Allen told public that it was an issue of free speech when his Trade Me account was deactivated few months earlier, ostensibly because of the MAGA (Make Ardern Go Away) hats he was selling. Newshub did not report that the proceeds from the sales go to a network of far-right Facebook pages operated by Allen. He had publicly expressed far-right views on these pages, some of which had been deleted by Facebook for violating company policy. Allen had repeatedly posted far-right messages on his Facebook pages, including threats of violence. Linking to an article about an acid attack in England, Allen wrote that "*if this happens to my daughter I am destroying mosque after mosque till I am taken out*". Subsequent images posted to the since-deleted page show that Facebook deleted this post for violating its community standards. In the comments on that post, users joked about the alleged Christchurch shooter. "*Let him out for another go,*" one wrote. Allen also wrote on a post about Zahra Hussaini, a Muslim woman running for Christchurch City Council that "*Islam is the problem*". He told Newsroom that he stood by that comment.⁸⁰

Meanwhile in the neighboring country of Australia, it seems that Islamophobia kept crawling in the society. A student in Melbourne, Tayeba Quddus was shocked when she saw a lecture slide from a subject on diversity suggesting that while "*most Muslims are peaceful, up to 300 million Muslims were radicals who want to destroy and murder*". The quote — sourced from a prominent anti-Muslim activist and presented without qualification in online lecture material — left Ms Quddus feeling disempowered and bewildered that a claim she described as "sickening in its bigotry" would be part of her studies. Ms Quddus said: "*Given what happened in Christchurch, and a huge movement we have of far-right extremism and political campaigns that seek to vilify most Muslims, within that climate it's not very helpful to be discussing these things in a way that seems like it supports these ideas.*" The student had already been disturbed by a classroom discussion early in the unit at Melbourne's Holmesglen Institute, where she said students had been allowed to talk over her and share false clichés about Muslims. Therefore, she complained to her teachers, who she said took her comments on board but initially left the material online.⁸¹

In Brisbane, vandals had targeted a mosque with spray cans, painting white supremacist symbols and a dedication to the accused Christchurch shooting terrorist on the building's walls, read in swastikas, 'SS' symbols and the words "*Saint*

⁸⁰ See: Stuff News' entry "The far right links of the Trump-style 'Make Ardern Go Away' hats", in: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/116611479/the-far-right-links-of-the-trumpstyle-make-ardern-go-away-hats>, retrieved on 17.10.2019

⁸¹ See: ABC News news' entry "Muslim student accuses educational institute of uploading Islamophobic lecture content", in: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-08/islamophobic-content-alleged-in-holmesglen-institute-lectures/11483392>, retrieved on 9.9.2019

Tarrant". Ali Kadri from the Islamic Council of Queensland, told media that the messages painted on the Holland Park Mosque has worried some members of his community. Late in the afternoon, a group of school students was seen attending the mosque and helped to wash some of the graffiti from the building's walls.⁸²

In Sydney, a pregnant Muslim woman wearing a headscarf was injured in an Islamophobic attack. She was punched and kicked by Stipe Lozina, while she was sitting in a cafe with her friends, who were also wearing headscarves. Security camera footage spread on social media sending shockwaves. Lozina used racist slurs at the victim and was remanded into custody. The attack had shed light on violence against Islam and Muslims in the country in recent years. Women wearing headscarves were under the highest risk of attack, according to a report published by a university depicting how social media and Australian press trigger Islamophobic attacks in the country. Seventy-two percent of those who had been subjected to Islamophobic attacks were women wearing headscarves, and these attacks were mostly carried out by extremist men. The number of people who had been hospitalized also increased 3 percent in Australia, according to the report by Charles Stuart University. Attacks were mostly carried out in shopping malls and schools. Racist students often harass their Muslim peers with slogans or graffiti written on school walls such as '*Terrorist Muslims*'.⁸³ It was reported later on that the man had been charged with "*assault occasioning actual bodily harm and affray*" and denied bail. The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) said the man was heard "*yelling anti-Islamic hate speech at the victim and her friends*." The woman was taken to hospital following the attack and discharged.⁸⁴

2.4. Other Islamophobic Trends

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

Massive phobia against veil, hijab, and burqa started in 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 that relies on facial recognition and expression in communication. Therefore, as of 11 April 2011, it is illegal in France to wear a face-covering veil or other mask in public places such as the streets, 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.

⁸² See: 9News news' entry "Vandals graffiti white supremacist messages and Christchurch shooter praise on Brisbane mosque", in: <https://www.9news.com.au/national/vandals-graffiti-brisbane-holland-park-mosque-swastikas-christchurch-shooting-crime-news-australia/e01afea4-ccf5-45a8-bf36-d9ded7091ead>, retrieved on 12.9.2019

⁸³ See: Yeni Safak News' entry "'Murder all the Muslims': The rise of Islamophobic attacks shaking Australia", in: <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/world/murderall-the-muslims-the-rise-of-islamophobic-attacks-shakingaustralia-3505886>, retrieved on 26.11.2019

⁸⁴ See: Saudi Gazette News' entry "Pregnant woman punched, kicked in Australian 'Islamophobic attack'", in: <http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/583189>, retrieved on 23.11.2019

By end of July 2019, there were at least 14 (fourteen) European countries who have banned veil, headscarf, hijab, niqab, and burqa i.e. France, Belgium, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. 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.



Starting from August 2019, the Netherlands had become the fifteenth European country to implement some kind of ban on face-coverings in public places. Some countries had introduced national bans that cover all public spaces; others had passed bans that apply only in certain regions or cities, or in limited public locations, such as schools, public transport or government buildings. While the Dutch law would have little practical impact—many government officials said they would not enforce it. Advocates for burqa bans typically offered three arguments in their favour. Some, such as Paul Nuttall, the former leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), claimed that face coverings of any sort pose a security risk because they made it harder for police to identify criminals. Others argued that public expressions of religious beliefs were an affront to secularism, and that conspicuous religious symbols, including Christian crucifixes and Jewish kippahs, should be worn only in private. Finally, some said that the burqa and the niqab, a similar Muslim face covering, were tools of male oppression, and that banning such Islamic garb promotes gender equality albeit at the expense of liberty. Many people who might be persuaded by these arguments were put off by the company they would find themselves keeping. Before its passage, the Dutch law was championed by Geert Wilders, leader of the anti-immigration Party for Freedom (PVV), who had compared the Koran to “Mein Kampf”. Denmark’s ban was enacted in 2018 after the rise of the Danish People’s Party (DPP), an anti-immigrant populist outfit. In Austria, where there were reportedly just 150 women who wear the full-face veil, a ban was passed in 2017 with the support of the hard-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), whose leaders described it as a first step in a wider crackdown on political Islam.

The burka ban in the Netherlands came with a €150 fine for people caught wearing face-covering headgear in schools, on public transport, in hospitals and public buildings. The ban required public officials and public transport workers to ask people caught covering their faces to remove the offending garment or leave the building. If they refused, the police would be brought in. Senators voted in June 2019 in favor of the controversial proposals. In 2005, the lower house of parliament first supported a motion by Geert Wilders and the PVV for a ban on the public wearing of burkas and in 2010 a total ban was included in the coalition agreement at the behest of the PVV. That coalition collapsed after the PVV withdrew its support and a partial ban was included in the 2012 coalition plans. In November 2016, the lower house of Dutch parliament backed the measure, which would now come into effect. The Council of State, which was the government’s most senior advisory body, recommended against introducing a ban, arguing that there were already sufficient provisions in law to require people to show their faces. There were said to be about 150 women who wear a burka or niqab on a daily basis in the Netherlands. Critics said the effect of a ban will make it impossible for these

women to go about their daily lives and enforcing the ban would be a waste of money.⁸⁵ Despite so, the enforcement of the ban was already an issue. According to the law, faces must be uncovered in government buildings and on public transportation, and the ban included ski masks and full-face helmets as well as the burqa and niqab. As mentioned earlier, even though the law was now the law, officials were refusing to enforce the ban. Staffs on public transportation were not being compelled to deny entry to people with their faces covered, and the police said that enforcement was not a priority.⁸⁶

Meanwhile in **France**, one incident worth particular attention, when a school trip aimed at discovering the workings of the National Assembly (Parliament) had caused controversy as a far-right politician sought to target and publically humiliate a Muslim mother accompanying her children, demanding that she took her hijab off. Julien Odoul, a far-right politician representing the National Rally party, said in the Regional Council of Burgundy-Franche-Comté in Dijon: "*In the name of our republican and secular principles, I asked Marie-Guite Dufay [President of the regional council] to have the Islamic veil removed from a school counselor present in the Chamber.*" A video posted online by Odoul himself had garnered almost four million views and shows the Muslim mother holding her son, who started to cry. In September 2019, French Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer made a strong plea to schools and parent associations to avoid as "*much as possible*" bringing visibly Muslim mothers on school trips.

The scene triggered a venomous national debate that was scrambling questions over the headscarf, Islam, immigration and radicalization. The clamor reached a crescendo with the shooting and wounding in October 2019 of two Muslims outside a mosque in southwest France by a suspect with past links to the anti-immigration National Rally. The alleged gunman told investigators he attacked "*to avenge the destruction of Notre Dame,*" Paris' grand cathedral ravaged by fire in April — which he blamed on Muslims. In other times of the same month, confrontation at the council meeting in Dijon might have been but one more installment in France's decades-long battle with itself over how to define, and enforce, secularism, a principle inscribed in the constitution more than a century ago to ensure neutrality regarding religions.

As a result, the French Senate in October 2019 approved a bill proposed by the mainstream right that would oblige women wearing headscarves to remove them when accompanying school outings. The bill had almost no chance of becoming law since the lower chamber, controlled by President Emmanuel Macron's centrist party, would almost certainly axe it. But the issue sparked discord even within Macron's government. For Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer, "it is not desirable" for a mother to wear a headscarf on a field trip. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said that it's fine — as long as the mother doesn't proselytize. Macron had shown cautious opposition to the idea, in saying "*The wearing of a veil in public spaces is not my affair.... Laïcité (secularism) isn't about that.*" The real concern, he stressed, was stigmatization of Muslims, the majority of whom have adopted the French way of life. Macron has concentrated on fighting radicalization and the apparent growth among Muslims of a community-based identity, which the French widely view as fertile ground for the propagation of political Islam.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See: Dutch News' entry "Burka ban comes into effect next month, wearers face fines of €150", in: <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2019/07/burka-ban-comes-into-effect-next-month-wearers-face-fines-of-e-150/>, retrieved on 19.7.2019

⁸⁶ See: The Rebel Media news' entry "Dutch officials, police won't enforce new "burqa ban" law", in: <https://www.therebel.media/dutch-officials-police-public-transportation-not-enforcing-new-face-covering-burqa-ban>, retrieved on 8.8.2019

⁸⁷ See: AP News' entry "Muslim headscarf debate divides France, in climate of hate", in: <https://apnews.com/e18cb0e553b24822b5782ec43ac4ae2f>, retrieved on 30.10.2019

CHAPTER 3

3. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

The Observatory noted that during the covered period, there were efforts in many places 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 combating Islamophobia and incitement of hatred and violence towards Islam and Muslims. The following instances of positive trends are worth mentioning:

3.1. **Public Policy**

In Norway, Prime Minister Erna Solberg had moved forward with plans to tackle expressions of hatred against Muslims in the country. Four of her government ministers launched the plan just weeks after a young Norwegian man attacked a mosque and murdered his adopted Chinese sister after becoming a white supremacist. Culture Minister Trine Skei Grande said: *"We already have a string of surveys that show there's hostility towards Muslims in Norway, and that there's a need for a plan to address that."* Ministers from all four government parties, including the anti-immigration Progress Party, took part in the formal presentation of the anti-hate plan. The Norwegian government already planned for tackling racism and discrimination in general, along with anti-Semitism, and Grande would be in charge of the new plan that mostly aims to make Muslims feel safe and accepted in Norway. Several other ministries would also be involved, including those in charge of justice, education and foreign aid. A report from Oslo's Holocaust Center in 2017 showed that negative stereotypes about Muslims were alarmingly widespread in Norway. 39 percent of those questioned said they believed Muslims pose a threat to Norwegian culture. Another 31 percent agreed with a statement that Muslims *"want to take over Europe,"* while 48 percent supported the claims that *"Muslims have much of the blame themselves for the rising hatred towards them."* Education Minister Jan Tore Sanner said prejudice against Muslims and others must begin to be addressed in elementary schools.⁸⁸

In the United States, the mass shootings in Dayton and El Paso in 2019 were sparking new calls for immediate action in Washington. Indiana Congressman Andre Carson said he wanted to see an emergency session on Capitol Hill to pass several gun safety bills that were already in the works. He also said President Trump's administration was partially to blame for rising racial tensions across the U.S. Carson said as quoted: *"I think it speaks to the growing anti-immigrant sentiment, the xenophobia, the islamophobia that exists.....The largest threat to our internal security. unfortunately, comes from white supremacists and white nationalists."* The Justice Department was considering charging the El Paso shooting suspect with a federal hate crime after uncovering a racist anti-immigrant social media post.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had added white supremacy to its list of domestic terrorism threats, marking the first time since the creation of the department post-9/11 that it had emphasized white nationalist domestic terrorism as a threat on par with that posed by foreign groups. In a speech at the Brookings Institute in September, Kevin McAleenan, the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, said that recent mass shootings had *"galvanized the Department of Homeland Security to expand its counterterrorism mission focus beyond terrorists operating abroad, to include those radicalized to violence within our borders by violent extremists of any ideology. The continuing menace of racially based violent extremism, particularly white supremacist extremism, is an abhorrent affront to our nation, the struggle and unity of its diverse population, and the core values of both our society and our department."* The DHS also released a 40-page document outlining how it would work with local and state

⁸⁸ See: News in English news' entry "State fights hate against Muslims", in: <https://www.newsinenglish.no/2019/08/28/state-fights-hate-against-muslims/>, retrieved on 29.8.2019

⁸⁹ See: The WTHR news' entry "After mass shootings, Carson calls for action on pending gun safety bills", in: <https://www.wthr.com/article/after-mass-shootings-carson-calls-action-pending-gun-safety-bills>, retrieved on 8.8.2019

governments to improve its data collection methods on white nationalist threats and to raise awareness of and reduce the spread of misinformation across social networks, which had contributed to the fueling of extremist ideology. Publicly available data, however, told a quite different story. In 2018, a spokesperson for the ADL testified that 39 out of the 50 extremist-related attacks that took place in 2018 were committed by white supremacists, as opposed to just one instance of a jihadi-related violent attack. In July, FBI director Christopher Wray said in a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing that the FBI had made about 100 domestic terrorism-related arrests since October 2018, the majority of which were motivated by some form of white supremacist violence.⁹⁰

Also, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom in its annual report on 28 April 2020 recommends that **India** should join the ranks of "*countries of particular concern*" that would be subject to sanctions if they did not improve their records. The report said: "*In 2019, religious freedom conditions in India experienced a drastic turn downward, with religious minorities under increasing assault.*" It called on the United States to impose punitive measures, including visa bans, on Indian officials believed responsible and grant funding to civil society groups that monitor hate speech. The commission said that Modi's Hindu nationalist government, which won a convincing election victory on 2019, "*allowed violence against minorities and their houses of worship to continue with impunity, and also engaged in and tolerated hate speech and incitement to violence.*" It pointed to comments by Home Minister Amit Shah, who notoriously referred to Muslim migrants as "*termites,*" and to a citizenship law that had triggered nationwide protests. The panel also highlighted the revocation of the autonomy of Kashmir, which was India's only Muslim-majority state, while alleging that Delhi police had turned a blind eye to mobs attacking Muslim neighborhoods during the three day riots which erupted on February 23.⁹¹

In Canada, an Ontario candidate for the Green Party of Canada had resigned amid outrage over an Islamophobic Facebook post from 2007 in which he said he had sent parts of a roasted pig to protesting Muslims in Denmark. Schomann's post from March 15, 2007, showed a photo of him roasting a pig with a caption saying he had sent the leftovers "*to Denmark in support of the protesters of the Muhammed comic*" — a reference to the violent backlash to a Danish newspaper's decision to publish drawings of the prophet Muhammed (PBUH). Erik Schomann confirmed he had resigned and expressed remorse to anyone he had offended in the post, which had been condemned on social media just hours earlier. Schomann regretted in saying that he grew up with many Islamic people in his early childhood spent in Pakistan and Muslim parts of Nigeria in the 1980s and '90s. He said: "*The last thing I would want to do is harm them in any way.....I said a stupid thing.*" The party said in the statement: "*The Green Party has zero tolerance for sexism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, misogyny, homophobia or hate speech of any kind.*"⁹²

The Executive director of the Canadian Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV), John McCoy said that the confrontation at Canada's 'oldest mosque' was a chance to move beyond thoughts and prayers to find constructive ways to combat violence. Earlier, the organization released a report delving into an incident late January 2019, when five members of an anti-Islamic group staked out the Al-Rashid mosque during Friday prayers, taunting and insulting worshippers in the hopes of provoking a reaction. During the incident, one of the five men wore a toque with the word "infidel" in Arabic and filmed his entry into the mosque. The clash prompted national headlines and was followed up by a series of meetings with politicians, police and members of the mosque, an Edmonton institution that traces its roots back to 1938. In partnership with the mosque, the OPV surveyed 70 community members. Nearly a third expressed

⁹⁰ See: Rollingstone.com news' entry "Dept. of Homeland Security Names White Supremacy a Domestic Terrorist Threat", in: <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/homeland-security-white-supremacy-domestic-terrorism-threat-888748/>, retrieved on 24.9.2019

⁹¹ See: Daily Sabah's entry "US religious freedom board urges for India's inclusion on blacklist", in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/asia-pacific/us-religious-freedom-board-urges-for-indias-inclusion-on-blacklist>, retrieved on 29.04.2020

⁹² See: The Star news' entry "Green party candidate for Simcoe North resigns over Islamophobic Facebook post from 2007", in: <https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/2019/09/12/green-party-candidate-for-simcoe-north-resigns-over-islamophobic-facebook-post-from-2007.html>, retrieved on 13.9.2019

shock and a quarter expressed fear for their safety, particularly for women and children wearing the hijab. Fourteen per cent expressed disappointment and dismay. Members also worried about the possibility of escalation and copycat events if something wasn't done to prevent it. The report recommended stronger connections between the Al-Rashid mosque and community policing, and working with the City of Edmonton to improve safety through building design. The report also included a recommendation to build a city-wide prevention initiative and the formation of organizations focused on addressing racism and hate. McCoy said: "This is not a tragedy on the kind of scale we see with the massive shooting in the Christchurch incident, Tree of Life Synagogue incident, but it does have a significant impact.... Violent extremism takes many forms, but most forms are built around an ideology, marked by an 'us versus them' outlook and calls for extraordinary action to respond to a growing crisis". OPV was a non-government organization tasked by the federal government with preventing violent extremism through local partnerships and collaborations.⁹³

In Australia, the government had ordered Internet service providers to block access to eight websites still showing footage of deadly attacks on two mosques in New Zealand in March 2019, when a lone gunman armed with semi-automatic weapons attacked Muslims attending Friday prayers in New Zealand's on March 15, killing 51 people in the country's worst mass shooting. The attacker broadcast the shooting live on Facebook, and footage was widely shared. Most websites quickly removed links to the video, but Australia's eSafety commissioner Julie Inman Grant said in September 2019 that eight local sites had defied her requests for the content to be deleted. Grant said in an emailed statement: "We cannot allow this heinous material to be used to promote, incite or instruct in further terrorist acts." The blocking of the eight websites comes amid a concentrated effort by Australia to clamp-down on the sharing of violent content online. Australia in April 2019 passed legislation that allowed Canberra to fine social media companies up to 10% of their annual global turnover and imprison executives for up to three years if violent content is not removed expeditiously. It was now an offence in Australia for companies such as Facebook Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google, which owns video sharing site YouTube, not to remove any videos or photographs that show murder, torture or rape without delay.⁹⁴

The Australian government had set up a task force with global tech giants like Facebook, YouTube, Amazon, Microsoft and Twitter to address the spread of extremist material online. Prime Minister Scott Morrison indicated that the measures were needed in response to the deadly attack on two New Zealand mosques in March. He said in a statement: "*The live-streamed murder of 51 worshippers demonstrated how digital platforms and websites can be exploited to host extreme violent and terrorist content. That type of abhorrent material has no place in Australia, and we are doing everything we can to deny terrorists the opportunity to glorify their crimes, including taking action locally and globally.*" Under the measures, Australia's eSafety Commissioner would work with companies to restrict access to domains propagating terrorist material. A new 24/7 Crisis Coordination Centre would be tasked with monitoring terror-related incidents and extremely violent events for censorship. It was not yet clear how the measures would be enforced. Morrison had previously suggested that legislation might come if technology companies did not cooperate. In June 2019, New Zealand launched a gun buyback scheme, amid plans by Wellington to rid the country of semi-automatic weapons following the mosque massacre earlier this year. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern vowed to tighten New Zealand's gun laws and said her government would make the changes within just three months. The Australian man accused of the killings, Brenton Tarrant, is alleged to have used an arsenal of five weapons, including two military style semi-automatic rifles (MSSAs), in the attacks on two Christchurch mosques. New Zealand lawmakers voted to ban

⁹³ See: Folio news' entry "Edmonton mosque incident opportunity to find constructive ways to combat violent extremism", in: <https://www.folio.ca/edmonton-mosque-incident-opportunity-to-find-constructive-ways-to-combat-violent-extremism-report/>, retrieved on 5.9.2019

⁹⁴ See: The Tribune news' entry "Australia blocks access to 8 websites showing video of NZ mosque attacks", in: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/australia-blocks-access-to-8-websites-showing-video-of-nz-mosque-attacks/830083.html>, retrieved on 10.9.2019

MSSAs, which allow the rapid fire of high-caliber bullets, by a margin of 119-1 in the wake of the worst massacre in modern New Zealand history.⁹⁵

In the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson had apologised for Islamophobia within the Conservative party as a Tory candidate accused the Prime Minister of fanning the flames of anti-Muslim prejudice. The Prime Minister had faced heavy criticism for a column in which he used the terms “bank robber” and “letterbox” to describe Muslim women who wear a burqa and for failing to hold an independent inquiry into Islamophobia in the party. On a visit to Cornwall, asked if he apologised for the Islamophobia that had taken place in the Conservative party, he replied: “Of course, and for all the hurt and offence that has been caused – of course we do. And all that is intolerable and it’s so important as a country that we don’t allow that kind of thing and that’s why we’re going to have the independent inquiry.” The apology was the first Johnson had made in relation to Islamophobia and came the day after Jeremy Corbyn repeatedly declined during a TV interview to say sorry for anti-Semitism within the Labour party, although he had previously done so. Johnson, who agreed to an independent inquiry on Islamophobia during a televised Tory leadership debate in June 2019, said the inquiry would be on “every manner of prejudice and discrimination”.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, it was reported that the Police department was considering replacing terms such as “Islamist terrorism” to describe acts of terror with phrases such as “adherents of Osama bin Laden’s ideology”. If implemented, officers would stop using phrases such as “jihadi” when describing attacks by those claiming Islam as a motive for terror because their usage was not helpful for community relations. The head of counter-terrorism policing in the UK, Neil Basu, discussed the use of language to describe acts of terror during an online forum in June with attack survivors, relatives of victims and experts. During the event, it was pointed out that right-wing extremists such as Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people in an attack in Norway in 2011, had often cited protecting Christianity as part of the motive for their actions, but were not described as “Christianist” or “Crusaderist” by the police or the media. A change in the use of language was requested by the National Association of Muslim Police, which said the use of words such as “Islamist” fostered negative connotations of the UK’s Muslim community and could lead to a rise in discrimination and Islamophobia.⁹⁷

In Germany, the government in October 2019 approved a draft law to crack down on the far right, three weeks after a deadly attack by an alleged neo-Nazi targeting a synagogue. Chancellor Angela Merkel’s cabinet signed off on a raft of measures that in particular target weapons sales and hate speech online. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer told a news conference: “The threat from far-right extremism and far-right terrorism, and with them anti-Semitism, is high in Germany and we can’t stress it often enough.” Germany had already in 2017 passed one of the most restrictive laws in the world to combat racist and incendiary speech online, requiring social media giants to remove illegal content or risk fines of up to 50 million Euros. It came after the arrival of more than 1 million asylum seekers since 2015 fuelled far-right propaganda, and gave companies such as Twitter and Facebook 24 hours to remove posts that openly violate German law after they were flagged by users. Detractors had criticized the law as curbing free speech and putting internet companies in the role of censors. The new legislation went further, forcing internet companies to flag problematic content including death threats and incitement of racial hatred to police. Law enforcement authorities would have the power to order online platforms to provide them with user data in these cases for possible criminal prosecution. The measures came three weeks after a right-wing extremist who had posted a racist, misogynistic and anti-Semitic manifesto online tried and failed to storm a synagogue in the eastern city of Halle. When he was unable to blast open

⁹⁵ See: Al-Araby News’ entry “Australia plans to censor extremist online content following Christchurch mosque attacks”, in: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/8/26/australia-to-censor-extremist-online-content-following-mosque-attack>, retrieved on 16.8.2019

⁹⁶ See: The Guardian News’ entry “Boris Johnson says sorry for ‘hurt’ caused by Islamophobia within Conservative party”, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/nov/27/boris-johnson-says-sorry-for-hurt-caused-by-islamophobia-within-conservative-party>, retrieved on 28.11.2019

⁹⁷ See: Arab New’s entry “Police consider dropping ‘Islamist’, ‘jihadi’ terms when describing terror attacks”, in: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1707436/world>, retrieved on 21.07.2020

the locked door of the temple, he shot and killed two non-Jewish Germans – one on the street outside and another at a Turkish snack shop.⁹⁸

Further, the governor of eastern state of Saxony said far-right extremism was the biggest threat to democracy and there should be zero tolerance toward far-right crime. Michael Kretschmer told the regional parliament in September 2018 that authorities would appoint an official point-person for victims and looked into shortening legal proceedings against extremists. He spoke few days after the suspected killing of a German man by two refugees sparked anti-migrant protests in the eastern city of Chemnitz. Several people were injured in clashes between far-right protesters, police and counter-demonstrators in the beginning of September 2018. Kretschmer dismissed reports of groups of men attacking migrants in the city following the killing, saying: "*There was no mob, no hunting of people and no pogroms.*" German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her spokesperson had condemned videos appearing to show such attacks.⁹⁹

3.2. Court Decisions against Islamophobes:

In the United States, a Missouri Taco Bell employee had been fired following Islamophobic comments said during a conversation with a customer who filmed part of the encounter. The incident occurred in May 2019 when Tarek Hamdan arrived in the drive-thru at a Taco Bell in Bridgeton, Missouri and ordered \$50 worth of food. Hamdan then drove to the window to pay for his food and the employee asked why he had ordered so much. Hamdan said he informed the woman he was Muslim and fasting for Ramadan, a holy month where Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. In a Twitter post, he explained that the meal was known as a suhoor, a pre-dawn meal, but that he ended up having a 25 minute debate with this worker who insisted "ALL Muslims are terrorists." The video Hamdan shared to social media captures less than two minutes of what appeared to be the end of the conversation. It began with the employee passing food to Hamdan and telling him that her phone number had been placed inside one of the containers. It was quoted from the conversation: "*I'd love to talk to you,*" Hamdan said. "*I want to tell you, like, it's not what you think and what you see in the news. Those people - we don't follow those people. Those people are monsters. Those people are disgusting. Those are the people who make the religion look bad.*" The employee heard replied: "*I will tell you right now, until you call me and change my mind, Muslim mother-----s can suck my d--k. Because they tore down my country, they killed thousands of my people, so you need to change my mind,*" "*You need to cater to me. I'm not going to cater to you, 'cause this is on my territory.*" Hamdan said before the employee asked him if he thought a woman should "bow down" to him. "*But I'm an American, just like you,*" Hamdan replied that he did not believe that, adding "*women have equal rights as men, that's what God says in the book.*" The employee then shook her head and said: "*That's not Muslim. See, Muslim and whatever religion you're thinking Muslim is in your head is not what you believe, it's not the same belief,*" Hamdan replied as the woman told him she was being yelled at by her manager and that he needed to leave since his car was being timed. Taco Bell confirmed to media that the woman had been fired, saying in a statement, "We welcome everyone in our restaurants and do not tolerate this type of behavior. This is a franchise location and the team member involved no longer works for this franchise. The franchise had reached out to the customer to apologize."¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the Philadelphia Police Department was suspending 17 officers over a series of "vile" Facebook posts, which featured racism, Islamophobia and homophobia, the force announced. Police Commissioner Richard Ross said

⁹⁸ See: South China Morning Post News' entry "Germany cracks down on anti-Semitism, far-right extremism", in: <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/3035622/germany-tightens-hate-speech-and-gun-laws-fight-far-right>, retrieved on 1.11.2019

⁹⁹ See: Miami Herald News' entry "German governor wants zero tolerance toward far right", in: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/article217840675.html>, retrieved on 6.9.2018

¹⁰⁰ See: Yahoo news' entry "St. Louis Taco Bell employee fired after Islamophobic rant to Muslim customer goes viral", in: <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/taco-bell-employee-fired-after-video-islamophobic-rant-viral-154043985.html>, retrieved on 20.5.2019

there was an intent to fire 13 of the suspended employees after a watchdog group uncovered comments made on the social media platform from officers in Philadelphia and seven other US police departments. The team of researchers found officers bashing immigrants and Muslims, promoting racist stereotypes, identifying with right-wing militia groups and glorifying police brutality in public posts. Examples included posts with the words “Death to Islam,” referring to black people as “thugs,” and homophobic memes which referenced violence, said Mr Ross, who called the sentiments “sickening”. The Plain View Project initially identified over 3,000 troubling Facebook posts by 328 active duty police officers in Philadelphia alone. Investigation by the department led to 72 officers being placed on administrative leave in June 2019, before police chiefs decided to suspend 17 of them, Mr Ross explained. Almost all now face some form of disciplinary action, he said, with 13 expected to be dismissed. Officers who were on track to be fired made posts or comments that advocated violence or death “against any protected class such as ethnicity, national origin, sex, religion and race” or worked to “erode the trust necessary for a police department to carry out its core mission,” Mr Ross said. The police department was now looking at software that they could use to track and audit officers’ social media postings.¹⁰¹

Also, the Knox County Attorney General’s Office announced the conviction and sentencing of a defendant who stabbed a man at a local mosque. Daniel Jay Porter pled guilty to attempted first-degree murder and received a sentence of 15 years without the possibility of parole. Knoxville police responded to the stabbing at the Muslim Community of Knoxville in April 2019. Surveillance video and witness interviews revealed Porter was eating in an area of the mosque near the victim and another individual when Porter became angry, causing an argument to ensue. During the argument, Porter grabbed a steak knife and stabbed the victim once in the heart. The victim underwent emergency open-heart surgery at UT Medical Center, saving his life.¹⁰²

Further, an apartment complex near the University of Arizona campus intended to evict residents who threw glass bottles and alcohol at a neighboring mosque. Media reported in September 2019 that GMH Capital Partners, which owned Sol y Luna apartments, planned to file eviction proceedings after seeing sufficient evidence. Representatives from the Islamic Center of Tucson said children at the mosque were doused with alcohol in August. Two days later, broken bottles were found in an outside area. Surveillance footage and witnesses indicate both incidents were started by residents.¹⁰³

Too, trial started on Michael Hari, the alleged mastermind behind a 2017 attack on a Bloomington mosque. As reported, he came up with a plan to pipe bomb the building during morning prayers on 9 November 2020. Hari had pleaded not guilty to multiple civil rights and hate crimes, including damaging property because of its religious character, forcibly obstructing the free exercise of religious beliefs, conspiracy to commit felonies with fire and explosives, using a destructive device in a crime of violence, and possessing an unregistered destructive device. Several men were gathered at Dar al-Farooq Islamic Center for early morning prayers on 5 August 2017, when a pipe bomb was thrown through the window of an imam’s office. A seven-month investigation led authorities to Clarence, Illinois, a rural community about 190 kilometers south of Chicago, where Hari and his co-defendants lived.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ See: Independent News’ entry “17 Philadelphia police officers suspended over ‘sickening’ Facebook posts”, in: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/philadelphia-police-suspended-facebook-posts-racism-islamophobia-homophobia-a9012096.html>, retrieved on 20.7.2019

¹⁰² See: Wate.com news’ entry “Man sentenced to 15 years in stabbing at Knoxville mosque”, in: <https://www.wate.com/news/man-sentenced-to-15-years-in-stabbing-at-knoxville-mosque/>, retrieved on 17.8.2019

¹⁰³ See: KTAR news’ entry “University of Arizona students face eviction for harassing mosque”, in: <https://ktar.com/story/2726118/university-of-arizona-students-face-eviction-for-harassing-mosque/>, retrieved on 7.9.2019

¹⁰⁴ See: CBS Chicago entry “Trial Begins For Illinois Man Charged With Masterminding 2017 Minnesota Mosque Bombing”, in <https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2020/11/09/trial-begins-for-michael-hari-illinois-man-charged-with-masterminding-2017-minnesota-mosque-bombing/>, retrieved on 10.11.2020

Still, on 19 December 2019 a federal judge rejected Southwest Airlines Co's bid to dismiss a discrimination lawsuit by an American of Iraqi descent who was removed from a 2016 flight after another passenger heard him speak in Arabic and feared he might be a terrorist. U.S. District Judge Donna Ryu in Oakland, California said Khairuldeen Makhzoomi could try to show that "*Islamophobia*," coming amid a "*sensitive political climate*," was a factor behind his removal, and that Southwest's claim he was removed because he appeared to make threats was pretextual. Ryu said Makhzoomi could seek damages from Southwest for alleged violations of federal and California civil rights laws. The incident occurred on 6 April 2016 Southwest flight awaiting takeoff to Oakland from Los Angeles. Makhzoomi, had been talking with his uncle by cellphone. Two police officers removed Makhzoomi from the plane after a woman who had been seated nearby became agitated, and reported having heard him use words associated with suicide martyrdom.¹⁰⁵

In Canada, the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) and the Muslim Students Association (MSA) said they were very grateful to the Simon Fraser University (SFU) administration for taking action after an individual urinated in front of a Muslim student and allegedly used an Islamophobic slur at the Surrey campus interfaith and prayer space in early June 2019. Since the incident, the SFU administration, NCCM, and MSA had engaged in productive dialogue. As per a recent letter sent to the MSA by the SFU administration, Simon Fraser University had promised to take a number of steps to address the situation, including but not limited to conducting a review of SFU's interfaith and prayer spaces and producing a report of recommendations to ensure SFU standards for safe, welcoming spaces.¹⁰⁶

In Australia, a man by name Cormac Patrick Rothsey was arrested in Newcastle in September 2019, following an investigation by the NSW Joint Counter Terrorism Team. The man had been charged after allegedly posting increasingly violent Facebook posts against Muslims and sharing plans to attack a local mosque. Rothsey allegedly showed admiration for accused Christchurch terrorist Brenton Tarrant and also allegedly threatened to kill New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. He wrote: "*My aim is to go to Friday prayer in a packed mosque.....No turning back when called to prayer*". Then he posted an image of an atom bomb with the caption: "*Dear Mr Trump, can you please give this gift to Lakemba for Ramadan*". Police claim he continued to post so much material online containing right-wing extremist views that Joint Counter Terrorism police launched a major operation to find Rothsey. Police said the posts shifted from violent and racist content to posts about injuring Muslims in a mass attack. A Facebook account in the name of Cormac Rothsey from Newcastle still contains right-wing posts. The account's profile picture had a photo of a blonde woman holding an automatic weapon and the words: "*I support Senator Fraser Anning*". A post from mid-August read: "*Never accept Islam never have a Muslim near you*", alongside a picture of a brunette woman in a sports bra holding an automatic weapon. The Facebook page also contained a badge stating he was sometimes antisocial always anti-antifa referring to left-wing anti-fascist activists.¹⁰⁷

In the United Kingdom, a far right extremist who went on a knife rampage to "*kill a Muslim*" the day after the Christchurch massacre had been jailed for 18 years. Vincent Fuller stabbed the victim in the neck through a car window as part of a plan to "*kill a Muslim*". Kingston Crown Court heard that Fuller had been watching videos of the terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, and had previously posted on his Facebook page that he "*agreed with what that man did in New Zealand*" and in a separate post said "*kill all the non English and get them all out of our of England*". Fuller was involved in a number of separate incidents in March 2019, before finally attacking his victim, who was sitting in a car in a supermarket car park. Shortly, he tried to confront his neighbours, who were of Asian heritage, armed with

¹⁰⁵ See: Reuters News' entry "Southwest can be sued for bumping passenger who spoke Arabic: U.S. judge", <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southwest-passenger-idUSKBN1YN2PK>, retrieved on 20.12.2019

¹⁰⁶ See: Voice Online news' entry "British Muslim groups thank SFU for taking action after urination incident on campus prayer space", in: <https://www.voiceonline.com/muslim-groups-thank-sfu-for-taking-action-after-urination-incident-on-campus-prayer-space/>, retrieved on 7.9.2019

¹⁰⁷ See: Daily Mail news' entry "Homeless man arrested after Facebook posts lead him to 'plan a mass attack at local mosque'", in: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7435557/Homeless-man-arrested-Facebook-posts-lead-plan-mass-attack-local-mosque.html>, retrieved on 7.9.2019

a baseball bat. After being denied access to the house and shouting racist abuse at the occupants, he moved on, walking in the middle of a busy road where he began to attack oncoming cars with the baseball bat at random. He hit a number of vehicles, while continuing to shout pro-white supremacist slogans and offensive racist slurs. After splitting the baseball bat, he briefly returned home and changed his clothes, before walking to a nearby supermarket. He found two men sitting in a parked car and, as he believed them to be non-white, he attacked one of them, stabbing him through an open window. He then made off from the scene but was arrested shortly after by armed officers. He pleaded guilty to attempted murder, racially aggravated harassment, affray and possessing a blade. Judge determining that the stabbing was terrorism, sentenced Fuller to 18 years and nine months in jail, serving a minimum of 12 years and three months before being considered for release.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, a number of members of Britain's Conservative Party had been suspended for posting or backing Islamophobic content online. The organisation was alerted to numerous incidents by an anonymous Twitter users showing members of the UK's largest party spreading anti-Muslim content. Among the incidents were individuals "liking" Islamophobic pictures and statements, as well as self-declared Conservative Party members regularly posting anti-Muslim content. A spokesperson for the party was quoted as saying that they would "*never stand by when it comes to prejudice and discrimination of any kind....All those found to be party members have been suspended immediately, pending investigation.*" The suspensions came as a former Conservative member of the European Parliament revealed that he had been subjected to Islamophobic abuse, including by a current member of the British government. The Conservative Party has faced criticism in recent years for its failure to conduct an inquiry into accusations of Islamophobia among its members.¹⁰⁹

The similar action was taken by Labour Party on 9 March 2020, when the party suspended Trevor Phillips, former head of the country's Equality and Human Rights Commission. Phillips, was a Labour member with a track record of controversial remarks about Muslims. A Labour Party spokeswoman said: "*The Labour Party takes all complaints about Islamophobia extremely seriously and they are fully investigated in line with our rules and procedures, and any appropriate disciplinary action is taken.*" The decision was based on comments made by Phillips over a number of years rather than anything immediate. Commenting on the case, a spokesperson for the Muslim Council of Britain said: "*Mr Phillips has made incendiary statements about Muslims that would be unacceptable for any other minority. Many of these sweeping generalisations are unfounded, wildly exaggerated, and are familiar tropes taken up by the far right ...He has claimed Muslims do not report terrorism, despite the poll he cited showing Muslims report terrorism more than the general public. He likened placing a Christian girl into a foster care with a Muslim family as akin to 'child abuse'; and further propagates the othering of Muslims, claiming Muslims are 'not like us', 'see the world differently' and are a 'nation within a nation'.*"¹¹⁰

Further, in October 12, Daniel Horton, pleaded guilty at Southwark crown court to charges of wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and possession of a bladed article. Horton struck Raafat Maglad in the neck during mid-afternoon prayers at the London Central Mosque in Regent's Park on February 20.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ See: The National News' entry "UK far right extremist jailed for knife rampage to 'kill a Muslim' day after Christchurch massacre", in: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/uk-far-right-extremist-jailed-for-knife-rampage-to-kill-a-muslim-day-after-christchurch-massacre-1.908810>, retrieved on 11.9.2019

¹⁰⁹ See: The Middle East Eye news' entry "UK Conservative Party members suspended over Islamophobic postings", in: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/british-conservative-party-members-suspended-over-islamophobic-posting>, retrieved on 26.9.2019

¹¹⁰ See: Anadolu Agency's entry "Labour suspends rights campaigner over Islamophobia", in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/uk-labour-suspends-rights-campaigner-over-islamophobia/1760001>, retrieved on 10.03.2020

¹¹¹ See: standard entry "London mosque stabbing: Knifeman admits attack on prayer leader at Regent's Park Mosque", in: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/man-admits-stabbing-london-central-mosque-regent-s-park-a4568666.html>, retrieved on 13.10.2020

In Norway, Philip Manshaus suspected of killing his stepsister and opening fire at a mosque near Oslo in September 2019, appeared at a court detention, accused of murder and a terrorist act. Police said he had “*extreme right views*” and “*xenophobic positions.*” The Norway incident came amid a rise in far-right, white supremacist attacks around the world. Manshaus was suspected of murder in the death of his 17-year-old stepsister, and of a terrorist act at the Al-Noor mosque in September. The court said there were reasonable grounds to suspect Manshaus had committed the criminal acts and remanded him in custody for four weeks. Manshaus was entering the mosque in the affluent Oslo suburb of Baerum armed with at least two weapons and opening fire before being overpowered by a 65-year-old man who suffered minor injuries. Three worshippers were present in the mosque. Hours after the attack, the body of a young woman was found in a home in Baerum and police confirmed it was Manshaus’s 17-year-old stepsister. Shortly before the mosque attack, Philip Manshaus had posted a message on the EndChan forum calling for a ‘race war’ to be taken from the internet into real life. The author said he was selected by “*Saint Tarrant,*” an apparent reference to the New Zealand mosque attack suspect accused of killing 51 people in attacks on two mosques in Christchurch in March.¹¹² On 11 June 2020, the court released a verdict that the man should be jailed for 21 years.¹¹³

In Denmark on 25 June 2020 the leader of Danish far-right party Stram Kurs, Rasmus Paludan, was disbarred from the legal profession and sentenced to three months in jail after being found guilty of racism. Paludan, first came to public attention in 2017 when he started making anti-Muslim Youtube videos. It had included publicly burning the Koran, sometimes wrapped in bacon, in what he said was a tribute to free speech. He will now face one month of imprisonment with two additional months of suspended sentence after being found guilty of 14 different accounts of racism, and defamation.¹¹⁴

In Germany, the Army was due to suspend a member of its elite KSK force on suspicion of far-right extremism, as media reported, in a new scandal to hit the armed forces. The media said the army had been covertly investigating him and two other soldiers and was prompted to take action against the man after its probe leaked. Of the other two suspects, one had been stripped of the right to wear a German army uniform while the other had been classed as a suspicious case. Both had allegedly made the banned Hitler salute during a private party hosted by the suspect who was to be suspended. The elite KSK was charged with the sensitive and risky missions including hostage rescue operations or anti-terror action abroad. But suspicions that some members were far-right leaning had always plagued the force. The head of the military’s counter-intelligence service Christof Gramm said that there were around 20 suspicious cases at the KSK.¹¹⁵ Also, the arsonist who caused considerable damage on 2019 to a mosque in the German city of Hagen in North Rhine-Westphalia state was sentenced to 3.5 years in prison on 17 February 2020. The 53-year-old man set fire to a trash dumpster and cartons outside with the flames spreading to the mosque. The fire didn’t spread any further but caused significant damage and prompted the evacuation of the building.¹¹⁶

¹¹² See: The Globe Post news’ entry “Norway Mosque Terror Attack Suspect Appears in Court”, in: <https://theglobepost.com/2019/08/12/norway-far-right-terrorist/>, retrieved on 13.8.2019

¹¹³ See: Reuters News’ entry “Mosque shooter jailed for 21 years for murder, anti-terrorism offence”, in <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-norway-attack-idUSKBN23I18P>, retrieved on 12.06.2020

¹¹⁴ See: Reuters News’ entry “Danish far-right party leader sentenced to jail on racism and defamation”, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-denmark-crime-idUSKBN23W22T>, retrieved on 26.06.2020

¹¹⁵ See: Malay Mail News’ entry “German army to suspend elite force member over far-right suspicion”, in: <https://www.malaymail.com/news/world/2019/12/01/german-army-to-suspend-elite-force-member-over-far-right-suspicion/1815090>, retrieved on 2.12.2019

¹¹⁶ See: Daily Sabah News’ entry “German arsonist sentenced to jail time over mosque attack”, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2020/02/18/german-arsonist-sentenced-to-jail-time-over-mosque-attack>, retrieved on 19.02.2020

Too, a man had been arrested in Germany after threatening an attack on Muslims, citing the assailant who attacked mosques in New Zealand on 2019. The 21-year-old from the northern city of Hildesheim is suspected of announcing his intention to carry out an attack "*with multiple dead*" in an internet chat on 05 June 2020, prosecutors said in a statement. Investigators found weapons at his apartment that he had apparently acquired to carry out an attack and "*data files with radical right-wing contents,*" prosecutors said.¹¹⁷

Likewise, on 14 February 2020 German police detained 12 men suspected of setting up a far-right organization with the goal of carrying out attacks against politicians, asylum seekers and Muslims. Germany Prosecutors (GBA) said four of the suspects had set up a "*terrorist organization*" in September 2019 and regularly met and contacted each other by phone and in online chat forums and chat groups. They had no immediate plan to carry out an attack. The other eight men were detained on suspicion of supporting the organization with money and weapons, the GBA said. The suspects wanted their attacks to create havoc and an atmosphere of fear that resembles a civil war, it added.¹¹⁸

In New Zealand, on 24 August 2020, the court sentenced Brenton Tarrant, the terrorist who killed 51 Muslim worshippers in New Zealand's deadliest shooting to life imprisonment without parole, the first time such a sentence had been handed down in the country. Tarrant, a 29-year-old Australian, admitted to 51 charges of murder, 40 counts of attempted murder and one charge of committing a terrorist act during the 2019 shooting rampage at two Christchurch mosques which he live-streamed on social media.¹¹⁹

3.3. Positive Views on Islam

In non-Muslim countries, there have been leaders, public figures, politicians or merely ordinary people who have shown their friendly gestures to Islam and Muslims, through their verbal statements or writings. The Observatory manage to cover some of those positive gestures being presented as the following:

On 16 February 2020, the UN Secretary General voiced his concern over rising Islamophobia in the world, calling it "*intolerable.*" Antonio Guterres' remarks came during a joint news conference with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the capital Islamabad. Guterres said: "*We see today that migrants or refugees sometimes are attacked by populist politicians or other religious haters. It is, for me, absolutely evident that we need to fight Islamophobia very strongly.*" He said that hate speech was one of the most important instruments of Islamophobia and that the UN had recently launched an initiative to counter hate speech.¹²⁰

In the Netherlands, Joram van Klaveren, a former Dutch politician who once said "*Islam is a lie*" and the "*Quran is poison*" described his first Ramadan after becoming Muslim in 2018. He said: "*It was an exciting moment, I was bit tensed and confident. My only concern was 'will I be able to keep my first fast quietly! which is about 18 hours long'.*"

¹¹⁷ See: Daily Sabah News' entry "Man arrested in Germany over threat to attack Muslims", <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/man-arrested-in-germany-over-threat-to-attack-muslims>, retrieved on 09.06.2020

¹¹⁸ See: Reuters News' entry "Germany busts 'terrorist organization' that planned attacks on Muslims", <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-crime-idUSKBN2081S0>, retrieved on 15.02.2020

¹¹⁹ See: Reuters news' entry "NZ court sentences mosque shooter to life imprisonment without parole", in: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-newzealand-shooting-sentence-idUSKBN25N07Q>, retrieved on 27.08.2020

¹²⁰ See: Daily Sabah's entry "Growing Islamophobia 'intolerable,' UN chief Guterres says", in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/2020/02/16/growing-islamophobia-intolerable-un-chief-guterres-says>, retrieved on 17.02.2020

Alhamdulillah I woke up at 3am took my Sehri with my wife. The day was going, I felt myself very calm, devoted and less worldly. I kept feeling spirituality in myself. In the middle of the day, I felt my stomach is empty and it looking for liquid substance. Bit pain was flaving inside my whole body, it was an excellent feeling which I experienced during my Shahada. I just prayed, Allah may give success over my hardship. I was feeling something happening inside by body when the ultimate time of iftar coming closer. It was a feeling like I am swimming and my sin is falling down from my body like water. Allah witness. I was calm, patient and enthusiastic with some juice, foods in front of me for iftar and waiting for the calling time. A Turkish brother sent a gift of Arabia Date. The final time came, I took a date and juice, Alhamdulillah. I feel my Lord took a mercy to me. Tears blowing from my eyes, I was thinking this is Islam for what the dress of my Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was blooded. He (pbuh) was hurt, wounded and got torture from the enemy.” From 2010 to 2014, Van Klaveren was as a member of parliament for the far-right and anti-Islam ‘Freedom Party’ (PVV). He resigned after PVV leader Geert Wilders made racist comments about Moroccan Muslims.¹²¹

In the United Kingdom, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said that Islamophobia was a “nasty form of racism and has to be outlawed”, as he slammed the rise of hate in Britain, especially during the European Union elections. In an exclusive interview, Corbyn said he was glad that his party had adopted the definition of Islamophobia as presented by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims. He was attending an Iftar-dinner at the Islamic Centre to show support for Muslim communities during the holy month of Ramadan. The Labour leader said that racism was unacceptable in any shape and form in any society. He said as quoted: “*We have adopted the definition of Islamophobia because we believe that Islamophobia is a form of racism. It’s a nasty form of racism and has to be outlawed. The government is delaying on it and I urge them to recognise what’s happening on the streets of our country when mosques are abused and attacked, when Muslim women are abused on the streets. We need definition of Islamophobia in operation so our police and all of our law enforcement agencies are fully aware that this country doesn’t accept any form of abuse against people because of their faith and their clothes.*” Corbyn added: “*There is a disgraceful rise of far-right extremism in UK and various parties and some election candidates are trying to divide people and being abusive towards Muslim people. The language used is disgraceful and disgusting.*” He said that he keeps reminding people that similar language was used against Jews in 1920s and 1930s and they suffered and today similar language was being used against Muslims by the far-right.¹²²

Likewise, Mr. Paul Bristow, a Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) for Peterborough in Eastern England, observed fasting for a week during Ramadan and documented his experience on social media. “*Ramadan is a time for spiritual reflection, self-improvement and heightened worship,*” Paul, said in a video on Twitter, when he announced his decision on 23 April 2020. He said: “*I hope this will be a useful way to bring Ramadan to others like me, who haven’t lived it before....For the first week of Ramadan, I too, have decided to observe the fast. I am not a Muslim but I feel it is important that I share this experience with the estimated 20,000 Muslims that live in Peterborough, my city*”.¹²³

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of **Canada** released a video statement wishing Muslims in Canada and around the world a happy Eid al-Adha. Trudeau said in a video message: “*As-salamu alaykum, Today, Muslims in Canada and around the world will mark the end of the Hajj and celebrate Eid al-Adha. This holiday is a time for Muslims to come together to pray, share a meal and celebrate life’s blessings.....It’s a chance to reflect on lessons of sacrifice, and values like service, compassion, and generosity....Muslim Canadians show us the best of those values all year round, whether it’s*

¹²¹ See: 5Pillars news’ entry “Dutch politician who hated Islam and said “Quran is poison” describes his first Ramadan”, in: <https://5pillarsuk.com/2019/05/12/dutch-politician-who-hated-islam-and-said-quran-is-poison-describes-his-first-ramadan/>, retrieved on 13.5.2019

¹²² See: The News International News’ entry “Islamophobia a ‘nasty form of racism’: Corbyn”, in: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/474101-islamophobia-a-nasty-form-of-racism-corbyn>, retrieved on 22.5.2019

¹²³ See: Daily Sabah News’ entry “MP joins Ramadan fast to better understand Muslims”, <https://www.dailysabah.com/life/religion/lesson-in-empathy-british-mp-joins-ramadan-fast-to-better-understand-muslims>, retrieved on 27.04.2020

supporting a local charity or being there for neighbors in need....So today, let's celebrate Canada's Muslim communities, and the many contributions they make to shape our country for the better....Eid Mubarak, may peace and blessings be upon you," he concluded. In June 2019, Trudeau echoed a similar message, wishing Muslims across the world a blessed Ramadan. He also used the annual message to pledge to fight against Islamophobia. He said: "For many Muslims, these last few months have been difficult ones.....Communities have suffered hateful, Islamophobic acts of violence—acts that have no place anywhere in our world." He also expressed his commitment to stand up for the Muslim community: "We will always call out Islamophobia," said Trudeau.¹²⁴

In Germany, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier called for more understanding and respect between religions after visiting a mosque in the southern town of Penzberg. He said: "This is true especially at a time when polarization in our society is increasing again, in which we also experience much hatred." Speaking to the local imam of the mosque, he said: "What was taking place in Penzberg and at the mosque was exactly what he wanted for his country. Curiosity for each other and respect for each other as seen in everyday life. In this respect, something is happening here that we really want to have: that the growing together of people of different faiths is as respectful as we experience it here in Penzberg." The German head of state praised the commitment of the Islamic community in the town but also thanked the people of Penzberg for embracing the Islamic community with so much openness and respect. In that respect, Penzberg could be a model for many communities, especially in urban areas, according to Steinmeier. Several hundred people demonstrated on the occasion of Steinmeier's visit for more tolerance and cosmopolitanism and far outnumbered the handful of supporters of the far-right populist PEGIDA movement. Germany had witnessed growing Islamophobia in recent years sparked by hate propaganda of far-right parties. Police recorded 813 hate crimes against Muslims in 2018, including verbal insults, threatening letters and physical attacks. More than 100 mosques and religious institutions were attacked by far-right extremists in 2018. A country of over 83 million people, Germany was home to the second-largest Muslim population in Western Europe after France. Among the country's nearly 4.7 million Muslims, around three million were of Turkish origin.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, the Germany's Integration Minister expressed concern over Islamophobia, warning that it posed a 'real danger' to social cohesion. Presenting the annual government report on the state of integration in the capital Berlin, Annette Widmann-Mauz said: "Right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, and hostility towards Muslims are a very real danger that we have to combat in a consequent and sustainable manner." She added: "I'm worried about any extremist development where people are being combatted, insulted and threatened because of their origin, and because of their faith and because they look different. And that is why it is urgent that we also recognize clearly that this is a real danger. A threat to this society, to its cohesion." Widmann-Mauz said that a free and secure society had "to guarantee all people that they can be different without fear."¹²⁶

3.4. Counter-balances on Far Rights

Right-wing forces have been bolstered elsewhere in the world during the last few years, particularly in the U.S. and Europe. There have been domestic debates about 'hot issues' such as immigrants, non-white foreigners, assimilation,

¹²⁴ See: Morocco World News' entry "Justin Trudeau Wishes Muslims Happy Eid al-Adha", in: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/08/280156/justin-trudeau-eid-2019/>, retrieved on 12.8.2019

¹²⁵ See: Yeni Safak News' entry "German president visits mosque", in: <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/world/german-president-visits-mosque-3506480>, retrieved on 4.12.2019

¹²⁶ See: AA News' entry "Islamophobia poses 'real danger': German official", in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/islamophobia-poses-real-danger-german-official/1662726>, retrieved on 4.12.2019

integration, national identity etc. These ingredients created the environment for right-wing parties and figures to continue prospering. Luckily, such a worrisome trend has been decelerated by certain policies, denouncement, or simply gestures shown by groups or public figures in those countries.

In the U.S., Breitbart News, the once-dominant force in conservative media circles whose former leader Steve Bannon entered Donald Trump's White House after the election his coverage helped shape, had seen an erosion in its audience as well as its dominance among right-leaning online sites. Monthly traffic on Breitbart had plummeted nearly 72% from 17.3 million in January 2017, when Trump took office, to 4.9 million in June 2019, according to the data-tracking firm ComScore. As recently as December 2018, when the site had just under 7.2 million monthly unique visitors, Breitbart nabbed a bigger audience than any other conservative website tracked by Howard Polskin's aggregation site, TheRighting aside from the cable-TV-backed behemoth FoxNews.com. By June 2019, Breitbart dropped to sixth — behind such upstarts as the Philip Anschutz-backed Washington Examiner (10.0 million), Washington Times (6.7 million), Glenn Beck's The Blaze (6.0 million) and the Tucker Carlson-founded Daily Caller (5.0 million). Fox News dwarfed them all with 103.2 million visitors. Founded in 2007 by Andrew Breitbart, the site came into its own under Bannon — who took over after Breitbart's death in 2012. During the 2016 election, the early Trump backer described the operation as “the platform for the alt-right” and found a huge audience.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, executives at a newspaper in Nashville, Tennessee, apologized hours after publishing an advertisement that said “*Islam was going to detonate a nuclear device in the city next month*”. The full page advert appeared on the June 21 edition of the Tennessean Newspaper. The ad, which included a photo of President Trump, Pope Francis and burning American flags, came from a group calling itself “*The Ministry of Future for America*”, which says its mission is to “proclaim the final warning message” from the Bible. The Tennessean reported that the ad “*was immediately ordered to be pulled from future editions by sales executives and the investigation launched.*” Ryan Kedzierski, vice president of sales for Middle Tennessee, said, “*We are extremely apologetic to the community that the advertisement was able to get through and we are reviewing internally why and how this occurred and we will be taking actions immediately to correct.*”¹²⁸

In Canada, politician had gone viral for his measured response to a heckler's anti-Muslim remarks aimed at him. The video shared on Twitter and viewed more than 700,000 times showed a man approaching NDP Gurratan Singh, who was Sikh, with his phone in hand, appearing to record the confrontation. Singh told media that he first noticed the man acting aggressively and shouting as he gave a speech during MuslimFest, a three-day event in Mississauga, a city just outside Toronto. The man can be heard in the video asking “*what about sharia? Political Islam? You're hiding bud. I'll debate you anytime.*” Singh responds to the man by saying he condemns racism and the hateful rhetoric, adding that “*this has no place in Canada.*” Security came between the two and eventually escorted the man out. Singh later tweeted that he will never respond to Islamophobia with “*I am not a Muslim. Instead, I will always stand with my Muslim brothers and sisters and say hate is wrong,*” he wrote, including video of the incident.¹²⁹

Also, the Green party said in October 2019 that it recently learned of Islamophobic social-media posts by four of its Quebec candidates. The party said that the candidates would make public statements of apology and commit to learning more about Islam by working with the National Council of Canadian Muslims. Later on, one of the four, Katherine

¹²⁷ See: The Wrap news' entry “Breitbart's Audience has Dropped 72% Since Trump Took Office – As other Right-Wing Sites have Gained”, in: <https://www.thewrap.com/breitbart-news-audience-dropped-steve-bannon-72-percent/>, retrieved on 8.8.2019.

¹²⁸ See: New York Times News' entry “Tennessee Newspaper Apologizes for ‘Utterly Indefensible’ Anti-Muslim Ad”, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/21/business/media/the-tennessean-islam-ad.html>, retrieved on 23.06.2020

¹²⁹ See: The Hill news' entry “Sikh Canadian politician goes viral for response to man's anti-Muslim remarks”, in: <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/459654-canadian-politician-goes-viral-for-response-to-mans-anti-muslim>, retrieved on 3.9.2019

Turgeon, posted a note on Facebook suggesting she was simply making a joke in 2013 and did not intend to offend anyone. The names of the other candidates were not immediately available, and the party would not say when they might make statements. The election campaign had seen a steady string of revelations about inappropriate comments by candidates from various parties, including the Greens. The party said it would review its internal policies and procedures to find ways of better standing up against Islamophobia and racism. The party stressed it was working for a better future in which all Canadians can flourish.¹³⁰

Likewise, on 5 October 2020, the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) issued an open letter, signed by Amnesty International and the Canadian Anti-Hate Network (CAHN) among others. It urged the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to establish a national plan to dismantle far-right and white supremacist groups operating in the country. The open letter, was released in a wake of the fatal stabbing of Mohamed-Aslim Zafis outside the International Muslims Organization mosque in Toronto on 12 September 2020. Zafis, was sitting in a chair when a neo-Nazi walked up to him and stabbed him in the neck. "This attack did not happen in isolation. This attack is one in a long series of a chain of horrifying attacks on racialized communities in Canada.... Canadians, whether from Indigenous, Black, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Christian, or other faith and racialized communities have faced attacks on our homes, our places of worship, and our congregants at the hands of white supremacist organizations" the letter said.¹³¹

In Italy, the Five Star Movement (M5S) had allied with its former rival, the centre-left Democratic Party, in a knock to the country's far-right League party. Previously, the anti-establishment party leader Luigi Di Maio had been in a 14-month coalition with Matteo Salvini's nationalist party, but he has now joined forces with the centre-left democratic party after Salvini announced he would break up his alliance, claiming it was impossible to work with M5S. The PD has agreed to keep on M5S premiership candidate Giovanni Conte, who resigned earlier after Salvini tabled a no-confidence motion against him. He accused the populist of 'looking for a pretext to return to the polls' and said he was 'obsessed' with keeping immigrants out of the country. The new coalition was a huge blow to Salvini, who was reportedly hoping to win outright in a snap general election following his no-confidence motion.¹³² Few months later, around 7,000 people had crammed together in the northern Italian city of Modena as part of a growing "sardines" movement against the politics of the far-right leader, Matteo Salvini, in which opponents attempted to beat the numbers he drew to his rallies. Protesters converged under the rain at Piazza Grande in November 2019 as the former interior minister campaigned in the city before crucial regional elections in Emilia-Romagna, a leftwing stronghold.¹³³

Meanwhile, some parties belong to the far rights had been kicked off Instagram, which is owned by Facebook. Facebook said in a statement: "*People and organizations that spread hatred or attack others based on who they are, have no place on Facebook and Instagram.*" The Facebook and Instagram accounts of dozens of activists belonging to both far-right groups were also reportedly blocked. It was not the first time the two groups had accounts closed down. In April 2019, shortly before the European elections, Facebook closed down the profiles of several high-profile members of both movements. The parties' chiefs - who also had their personal accounts shut - slammed the move as anti-democratic. Gianluca Iannone, president of CasaPound, protested that the move was an unprecedented attack told

¹³⁰ See: Montreal Gazette News' entry "Election 2019: Four Green nominees in Quebec made Islamophobic comments, party says", in: <https://montrealgazette.com/pmn/news-pmn/canada-news-pmn/four-green-nominees-in-quebec-made-islamophobic-comments-party-says/wcm/75a3c45e-3be7-4ce4-9c69-df58f5aa6495>, retrieved on 16.10.2019

¹³¹ See: Daily Sabah News' entry "Calls grow in Canada to dismantle white supremacist and far-right groups", <https://www.dailysabah.com/life/religion/lesson-in-empathy-british-mp-joins-ramadan-fast-to-better-understand-muslims>, retrieved on 07.10.2020

¹³² See: Metro news' entry "Blow to far right Salvini as Five Star and Democrats form coalition", in: <https://metro.co.uk/2019/08/28/blow-to-far-right-salvini-as-five-star-and-democrats-form-coalition-10647412/>, retrieved on 29.8.2019

¹³³ See: SkyStatement News' entry "'Sardines against Salvini': Italians pack squares in protest against far right", in: <https://skystatement.com/sardines-against-salvini-italians-pack-squares-in-protest-against-far-right/>, retrieved on 30.11.2019

media that he would be filing an urgent class action law suit against an act of disgraceful prevarication. In September 2019, activists from both groups took part in a demonstration, alongside the League and Brothers of Italy, against the new left-leaning and pro-European government. In front of parliament, where Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte was giving a speech, they chanted "Duce! Duce!" - the title fascists used to address 20th-century dictator Benito Mussolini – and were seen performing the fascist salute. Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte called on the political class and Italian citizens to moderate their tone - particularly on social networks - following 14 months of a populist government which has fomented hate and division, particularly via the internet.¹³⁴

Further, the Italian police had seized weapons including an air-to-air missile in raids sparked by an investigation into far-right extremist groups. As well as the 800 kg Matra missile, the bust in northern Italy uncovered a whole host of sophisticated weapons, including "latest generation" automatic assault rifles and rocket launchers. Police arrested three people, including Fabio Del Bergiolo, 50, a former candidate for the neo-fascist Forza Nuova party. The raids were the result of a separate police probe into Italian extremists known to have joined pro-Russian rebels in fighting Ukrainian troops. Messages intercepted by the police led them to investigate Del Bergiolo, who had sent photographs of the missile for sale through the Whatsapp messaging service. They put him under surveillance before raiding his home and finding neo-Nazi propaganda, Hitler memorabilia, and a stash of weapons including a Scorpion machine gun, 306 firearm parts and 20 bayonets. The Forza Nuova party released a statement Monday distancing itself from Del Bergiolo. While Italy's far-right interior minister Matteo Salvini was uncharacteristically quiet following the raid, the opposition center-left Democratic Party (PD) urged the country's populist government to do more to tackle right-wing extremists.¹³⁵

IN the U.K., A Sikh lawmaker was applauded in the UK Parliament when he demanded that Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologize for his racist remarks regarding burqa-clad Muslim women. Sikh Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi delivered an impassioned on the floor of the UK Parliament, confronting Boris Johnson over his comments in a 2018 newspaper article in which he compared Muslim women wearing burqas to letterboxes and bank-robbers. Dhesi, who defended minority people's right to wear what they choose to, was applauded by members of the opposition for his stance on the issue. He said: "*Mr Speaker, if I decide to wear a turban or you decide to wear a cross or he decides to wear a kippah or a skullcap or she decides to wear a hijab or a burqa, does that mean it is open season for Right Honourable Members of this House to make derogatory and divisive remarks about our appearance?*"¹³⁶

Mr. Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi urged the Prime Minister to apologise for 'racist and derogatory remarks'. He actually was not impressed with Johnson's response and stated his Sikh and Muslim ancestry did not give him 'carte blanche' to say what he likes. The Labour MP accused Johnson sidestepping his query about holding an evaluation into Islamophobia as promised earlier than turning into occasion chief. As an alternative Johnson deflected with a comment about anti-Semitism within the Labour Occasion. He identified a survey of occasion members which revealed 56 per cent noticed Islam as 'generally a threat' to the British lifestyle. Singling out 'vulnerable' Muslim girls led to a 'significant spike in hate crime' which noticed individuals having their hijabs ripped off and being pelted with eggs and tomatoes. Dhesi said: "*He shouldn't be attempting to imitate Donald Trump – we within the UK have greater requirements.... We've made such nice advances previously few a long time as a democratic society which is a beacon for these around the globe.*" The MP said he and colleagues were still waiting for proof of a impartial evaluate on Islamophobia within the Tory occasion being underway. Dhesi made historical past when he grew to become Britain's first turban sporting Sikh MP following

¹³⁴ See: The Local news' entry "Facebook shuts down Italian neo-fascist parties' accounts", in: <https://www.thelocal.it/20190910/facebook-shuts-down-italian-neo-fascist-parties-accounts>, retrieved on 11.9.2019

¹³⁵ See: The Japan Times News' entry "Italy seizes air-to-air missile from far-right sympathizers", in: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/07/16/world/crime-legal-world/italy-seizes-air-air-missile-far-right-sympathizers/#.XjKT1Gj7TIU>, retrieved on 17.7.2019

¹³⁶ See: Geo TV news' entry "Sikh MP defends Muslims, asks Boris Johnson to apologise for racist 'burqa' remarks", in <https://www.geo.tv/latest/246670-sikh-mp-defends-muslims-demands-boris-johnson-apologise-for-racist-burqa-remarks>, retrieved on 5.9.2019

the 2017 election. He stated this on the idea that roughly one per cent of Britain's inhabitants of 66 million individuals establish as Sikh.¹³⁷

Also, British Muslims had expressed outrage after a government advisor and Labour party member shared offensive cartoons of the prophet Muhammad on his Facebook page. Martin Bridgman, an advisor to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, shared cartoons of Jesus and Muhammad that alluded to 'child rape'. His posts between November 2018 and March 2019, were only discovered three months before, after a Muslim member of his local Labour party in Ilford, made a complaint. One of the cartoons Mr Bridgman shared, showed Jesus questioning the Prophet Muhammad on his marriage to his third wife Aisha, which some allege took place when she was only nine years old. The Labour party says that it has placed Mr Bridgman under investigation.¹³⁸

In Germany, thousands of people attended a protest against racism and discrimination in the German city of Dresden in August 2019, a week ahead of two state elections in the country's east in which the far-right Alternative for Germany party was expected to make gains. The demonstration took place in Dresden, the capital of Saxony, followed a protest under the same title in Berlin in October 2018. Media reported that up to 20,000 people gathered for the beginning of the protest. Those who showed up included Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz, a leading figure in Germany's center-left Social Democrats, who said "there is a great willingness to show that we must do something" and stand up for democracy. Saxony had been a stronghold of Alternative for Germany, and the anti-migration group PEGIDA.¹³⁹

In Australia, the right-wing Australian senator who said Muslims were the "*real cause of bloodshed*" following the New Zealand mosque shootings had failed to retain his seat in the country's latest elections. Queensland's Fraser Anning had been voted out of his Senate seat in Australia's Parliament. Media reported that Senate results had yet to be finalized, but that Anning appeared to have fallen short. His term was set to expire at the end of June 2019. He sparked massive backlash in March 2019 for comments about Muslims following the massacre at two mosques in Christchurch, which left 51 dead. Anning wrote in a statement at the time: "*I am utterly opposed to any form of violence within our community, and I totally condemn the actions of the gunman....However, whilst this kind of violent vigilantism can never be justified, what it highlights is the growing fear within our community, both in Australia and New Zealand, of the increasing Muslim presence,*" he continued. "*The real cause of bloodshed on New Zealand streets today is the immigration program which allowed Muslim fanatics to migrate to New Zealand in the first place.*" Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who pulled out a surprise victory in the latest election, immediately condemned the comments, saying they had "*no place in Australia, let alone the Australian Parliament.*" Anning gained more attention just days later after a 17-year-old protester smashed an egg on his head while he was giving an interview. Anning responded by punching the protestor, before being restrained by security officials. Anning had faced scrutiny over his views on immigration. He was widely condemned in 2018 after invoking an infamous Nazi euphemism and calling for a "final solution" to end the immigration problem in Australia.¹⁴⁰

In Austria, the feminine vote had been decisive in transferring the Austrian Presidency away from the extreme right. In response to the survey carried out by ORF public TV, 62% of Austrian ladies voted for the Europeanist and environmentalist candidate Alexander Van der Bellen, in contrast with 38% who did so for the chief of the far-right

¹³⁷ See: Herald Publicist news' entry "Sikh MP slams Boris Johnson's 'pathetic response' to 'racist remarks' about Muslim women", in: <https://heraldpublicist.com/sikh-mp-slams-boris-johnsons-pathetic-response-to-racist-remarks-about-muslim-women/>, retrieved on 6.9.2019

¹³⁸ See: Metro News' entry "Outrage as government advisor posts Islamophobic pictures of prophet Muhammad", in: <https://metro.co.uk/2019/10/20/outrage-government-advisor-posts-islamophobic-pictures-prophet-muhammad-10949926/>, retrieved on 21.10.2019

¹³⁹ See: WiscNews news' entry "Thousands protest in Germany against racism, discrimination", in: https://www.wiscnews.com/news/world/thousands-protest-in-germany-against-racism-discrimination/article_ebc8360f-e090-5048-8919-3c0623b1d038.html, retrieved on 25.8.2019

¹⁴⁰ See: The Hill news' entry "Australian lawmaker who blamed Muslims after New Zealand mosque shootings voted out of office", in: <https://thehill.com/policy/international/444465-australian-lawmaker-who-blamed-muslims-after-new-zealand-mosque>, retrieved on 20.5.2019

Norbert Hofer. In response to the identical supply, 56% of them selected Norbert Hofer, chief of the extreme right in opposition to 44%, who most popular to vote for the European candidate. With 78% of the scrutiny carried out, Alexander Van der Bellen won the Austrian presidential elections with 53.3% of the votes, in comparison with 46.7% of his rival. Norbert Hofer, candidate of the extreme right, had acknowledged defeat. The election permits Van der Bellen to carry the Presidency of the State for the subsequent six years, renewable as soon as for one other six.¹⁴¹

Likewise, the Freedom Party said in May 2019 that it would pull its ministers out of the government if Interior Minister Herbert Kickl were forced out in the wake of a video sting that felled its leader at the weekend. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz proposed earlier that Kickl be sacked. Kickl's imminent removal followed the resignation of Freedom Party leader Heinz-Christian Strache, who was also Austria's vice chancellor, after two German newspapers published a damning video showing him pandering to a woman claiming to be a Russian tycoon's niece at a boozy gathering in Ibiza two years before. In the video, Strache and party colleague Johann Gudenus were heard telling the woman that she could expect lucrative construction contracts if she bought an Austrian newspaper and supported the Freedom Party. Gudenus had quit as leader of the party's parliamentary group and was leaving the party. Kurz noted that at the time the video was shot, Kickl was general-secretary of the Freedom Party and therefore responsible for its financial conduct. Strache's resignation represented a setback for populist and nationalist forces as Europe headed into the final days of campaigning for the European Parliament elections.¹⁴²

In Germany, thousands took the streets of north-central German city of Braunschweig in November 2019 to protest against congress of the far-right Islamophobic Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which re-elected Jorg Meuthen as one of the party's co-leaders. The AfD was the largest opposition party in the Bundestag, while it also managed to get into the European Parliament and all the state parliaments. The party was the strongest in former East Germany states, polling over 20 percent. The AfD was riding a shocking rise of German Islamophobia and xenophobia. In fact, hatred against foreigners in Eastern Germany had threatened society as a whole. Repeated attacks against refugee centers and Islamic centers in Eastern Germany had posed a serious danger to Germany's national security. A case in point was the East Germany-based neo-Nazi terror cell the National Socialist Underground (NSU) which was involved in anti-foreigner killings in 2000-2007 which still resonated to this day.¹⁴³

Meanwhile, the country's domestic intelligence agency (BfV) had warned in an annual report released on 9 July 2020 that far-right terrorism was the biggest security policy challenge to Germany. Presenting the report at a press conference in Berlin, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer had described far-right extremism as the biggest danger to the country. Thomas Haldenwang, who leads the BfV, said there was a competition among far-right terrorists to kill as many people as possible in an attack. The BfV agency said in 2019 there were 32,080 right-wing extremists in Germany, an increase of nearly 8,000 from 2018. About 13,000 are believed to be ready to use violence, up 300 from 2018, the report said.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ See: Sportsfinding News' entry "Women save Austria from the extreme right by mass voting for Van der Bellen", in: <https://sportsfinding.com/women-save-austria-from-the-extreme-right-by-mass-voting-for-van-der-bellen/8205/>, retrieved on 7.1.2020

¹⁴² See: France4 news' entry "All Austrian far-right ministers resign", in: <https://thetab.com/uk/manchester/2018/09/26/exclusive-racist-posters-found-on-manchester-campus-36944>, retrieved on 21.5.2019

¹⁴³ See: Hurriyet Daily News' entry "Thousands protest against far-right party in Germany", in: <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/thousands-protest-against-far-right-party-in-germany-149309>, retrieved on 2.12.2019

¹⁴⁴ See: The National News entry "Far-right terrorism is Germany's biggest security threat, intelligence agency warns, in: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/far-right-terrorism-is-germany-s-biggest-security-threat-intelligence-agency-warns-1.1046841>, retrieved on 11.07.2020

Likewise, authorities in western Germany had suspended 29 police officers suspected of sharing far-right propaganda in WhatsApp groups, at least two of which were active for several years. Herbert Reul, the interior minister of North Rhine-Westphalia state, said Investigators had searched 34 locations, including police stations and private apartments in the Ruhr industrial region. The offending images that were shared included pictures of Adolf Hitler and swastikas, a fictional depiction of a refugee in the gas chamber of a concentration camp and another mocking the shooting of black-skinned people, Reul said. All officers were suspended effective immediately on 16 September 2020, and disciplinary proceedings were opened.¹⁴⁵

In Belgium, Brussels police had advised against a far-right protest organised in the city by a group with links to neo-nazi organisations. Over a thousand people were expected to attend the event named Mars op Brussels1 (Dutch for March on Brussels) on 15 September 2019, with 3,300 saying on Facebook they were interested in attending. A spokesperson with the Brussels-Ixelles police zone explained that their advice translated into an “intention to refuse” the demonstration taking place. The march was organised by the extremist group Bloed-Bodem-Eer en Trouw (BBET; Blood, Soil, Honour and Loyalty in English), a splinter group of the international neo-nazi group Blood & Honour. The group set up the demonstration in protest of the continued exclusion of far-right party Vlaams Belang (VB) from a regional coalition government, under an arrangement agreed-to by other parties to not rule with the far-right.¹⁴⁶

3.5. Supports on Mosques

Mosques and Islamic centers have been a common target of violent actions by Islamophobes, for they are often an easy target of vandals, burnings, and obliteration. Nevertheless, it is truly relieving to note that there have been actions and positive gestures shown by governments, communities, groups, and individuals among non-Muslims in support to Mosques and Islamic centers.

In the U.K., a Birmingham mosque had won the prestigious top title at an annual awards ceremony. Green Lane Masjid and Community Centre (GLMCC) triumphed with the title of Best Run Mosque in the 2nd Annual British Beacon Mosque Awards 2019. In 2018, Faith Associates launched Beacon Mosque Standards, an initiative recognising excellent practices and establishing global standards for Muslim places of worship. It saw mosques measured against ten standards of best practice - such as management, staffing and finance - and rated on a five-star scale. In addition, they could be nominated in one of 10 categories such as Best Run Mosque, Best Outreach Programme, Best Elderly Service and more. In 2018, GLMCC won Best Charity Project while another local organisation, the Bahu Trust in Balsall Heath, won Best Green Initiative. GLMCC general manager Kamran Hussain said: "*They have 10 awards to give out and this year we have received the one for Best Run Mosque, which is the most prestigious.....I spoke about Islamophobia when I went up to receive the award and we have dedicated it to the member of our congregation who was killed in a hate crime in 2013.*" His grandfather Mohammed Saleem was murdered by a far-right extremist as he made his way home from evening prayers.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ See: Daily Sabah News' entry "29 German police arrested over far-right propaganda in chat groups", in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/29-german-police-arrested-over-far-right-propaganda-in-chat-groups>, retrieved on 17.09.2020

¹⁴⁶ See: Brussels Times News' entry "Police advises against upcoming far-right march in Brussels", in: <https://www.brusselstimes.com/brussels/67697/upcoming-far-right-march-in-brussels-given-thumbs-down-by-police-march-on-brussels-mars-op-brussels-vlaams-belang-blood-soil-honour-loyalty/>, retrieved on 12.9.2019

¹⁴⁷ See: BirminghamLife news' entry "Birmingham mosque wins top award and dedicates it to worshipper who was brutally murdered", in: <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birmingham-mosque-wins-top-award-16891348>, retrieved on 14.9.2019

In Canada, Halifax MP Andy Fillmore announced in July 2019 that the Ummah Masjid and Community Centre would receive up to \$14,812 in federal funding. The money would go towards improving the mosque's security camera systems, along with an alarm system with motion sensors and keyless door locks. Fillmore hoped the boosted security measures would help ensure that community members could practice their activities safely and securely. Fillmore said at the funding announcement: "*Recent tragic events in Canada and around the world have shown that we still have more work to do to build a safe, inclusive society.*" Ahmad Hussein, board chairman of the Ummah Masjid and Community Centre, believed the funding would add a level of comfort for those who regularly attend the mosque. Hussein stated: "*With the rise of Islamophobia across North America, we here in Halifax take comfort in the fact that we have a government that is genuinely concerned for our well-being and safety and is committed to actually ensuring that safety.*" Hussein said the funding would go towards helping the mosque upgrade its CCT program to help cover the building's blind spots. The mosque would also be upgrading all of its security doors to a fob digital system, rather than the current key system.¹⁴⁸

In Greece, the first mosque Athens had opened its doors to worshipers after 14 years of bureaucratic delays. The mosque's inaugural prayers were held on the 2 November 2020 under social distancing measures due to rising COVID-19 cases in Greece. Zaki Mohammed, a Greek citizen of Moroccan origin, was appointed as the mosque's first imam. The 2006 decision to build the mosque with a budget of \$1.04 million was held up by bureaucratic hurdles, protests by far-right groups, and legal challenges.¹⁴⁹

3.6. Positive Development on Hijab

In Austria, an organization representing Austria's Muslims said in May 2019 that it would ask the Constitutional Court to reverse a ban on headscarves in primary schools a day after it was passed in parliament. The Islamic Faith Community in Austria said in a statement: "*The ban on headscarves in primary schools will only lead to segregation and discrimination of Muslim girls. We will ... bring this discriminatory law before the Constitutional Court.*" There were an estimated 700,000 Muslims living in Austria in 2017, or roughly 8 percent of the population.¹⁵⁰

In the U.S.A., the US Air Force had updated its dress code policy to outline a clear approval process for Sikhs and Muslims who wanted to serve while wearing their articles of faith, according to the new guidelines. The new guidelines, approved on 7 Feb 2020, required that accommodation be made within 30 days in the US. Muslims and Sikh were previously allowed to make a request for religious accommodations, however the process were lengthy and was granted on a case-by-case basis.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ See: Global News' entry "Ottawa commits nearly \$15,000 for security upgrades at Halifax mosque", in: <https://globalnews.ca/news/5660285/halifax-mosque-funding/>, retrieved on 20.7.2019

¹⁴⁹ See: Anadolu Agency's entry "Athens' first mosque opens doors to worshipers", <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/athens-first-mosque-opens-doors-to-worshipers/2029054>, retrieved on 04.11.2020

¹⁵⁰ See: Reuters news' entry "Austrian Muslims to challenge school headscarf ban in court", in: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-austria-politics-headscarves/austrian-muslims-to-challenge-school-headscarf-ban-in-court-idUSKCN1SM22Z>, retrieved on 17.5.2019

¹⁵¹ See: Insider News' entry "Air Force updates its dress code policy to include turbans, beards and hijabs", <https://www.insider.com/air-force-has-updated-its-dress-code-to-allow-turbans-beards-and-hijabs-2020-2>, retrieved on 15.02.2020

In Canada, a Quebec judge, Eliana Marengo, had apologized for her refusal to hear Rania El-Alloul's 2015 case unless she removed her hijab. The apology was read out on 8 September 2020 at a hearing of the province's judicial council. In the letter, Marengo, said she was wrong in her interpretation of the law and never intended to disrespect El-Alloul or her religious beliefs. El-Alloul, in her letter of response, said the judge's actions caused her pain but she accepted the apology. Following the apology, the hearing of the judicial council, would evaluate Marengo's request to end the disciplinary procedures that were launched against her.¹⁵²

In the UK, a woman who was the first UK deputy district judge to wear a Hijab had said she hoped to use her success to inspire young Muslims. Judge Raffia Arshad, a member of St Mary's Chambers in Nottingham, was appointed on May 2020 as judge for the Midlands circuit. Speaking about her new role, the mother of three said, "*It's taken a while to get here but I'm so pleased. It's not just a personal achievement. It's a huge achievement for anyone from a diverse background.*" Vickie Hodges and Judy Claxton, joint heads of St Mary's Chambers, said they were delighted about the appointment, and she had "*led the way for Muslim women to succeed in the law*".¹⁵³

3.7. On Inter-Faiths

In the U.S., around 450 Jewish community members from across the country gathered at the New York Marriott in downtown Brooklyn in May 2019 to participate in a one-day event, 'A Taste of the Collaboratory', where members of the Defund Islamophobia campaign held signs in front of the hotel that read: "*Jewish Communities Say: Defund Islamophobia Now.*" The group also handed out informational postcards and spoke to those attending the conference urging them to reach out to Jewish funds that support anti-Muslim racism. The Jewish Communal Fund (JCF) in New York, one of the participants in the gathering, supported anti-Muslim hate to the tune of over 2 million dollars in recent years, and they were not the only Jewish fund doing so. Chicago's Jewish United Fund had allowed hundreds of thousands of donor advised fund (DAF) dollars to bankroll Islamophobic groups. Organizers in NYC and Chicago had documented their findings in detailed reports that reveal the extent of funding going to Islamophobia. A report by the Council on Islamic-American Relations (CAIR) looked at the money trail from over 1,000 largely mainstream charities to 39 anti-Muslim groups that it called the 'Islamophobia Network'. The 2019 report, called 'Hijacked by Hate', found that nearly \$125 million was funneled to these groups (20014-2016). Of these 1,000+ charities reviewed, JCF was the 8th largest funder of anti-Muslim groups (\$3.2 million during this period). Protesters handed out information calling for the Jewish Communal Fund to stop funding anti-Muslim organizations. Pamela Geller, who wrote that Islam "*is an extreme ideology, the most radical and extreme ideology on the face of the earth*"; Clarion Project, which funded virulently anti-Muslim films; "David Horowitz, whom the Southern Poverty Law Center called "*the godfather of the modern anti-Muslim movement*"; Steven Emerson, who forged a 'dossier' linking American Muslim groups with terrorism; and Daniel Pipes, who claims Muslims wish to "*impose Islamic law in the United States*" and more.¹⁵⁴

In the United Arab Emirates, the government unveiled plans in September 2019 for an interfaith complex in Abu Dhabi that would unite a church, a synagogue and a mosque. The announcement of the three houses of worship, collectively known as the "Abrahamic Family House," followed Pope Francis' February 2019 visit to the UAE, during which Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmed el-Tayeb, signed a declaration to form an interfaith council called

¹⁵² See: CTV News' entry "Quebec judge who asked woman to remove hijab in court offers apology", <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/quebec-judge-who-asked-woman-to-remove-hijab-in-court-offers-apology-1.5096181>, retrieved on 09.09.2020

¹⁵³ See: BBC News' entry "First hijab-wearing women appointed as UK court judge", <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-52819978>, retrieved on 28.05.2020

¹⁵⁴ See: Mondoweiss News' entry "Jewish groups call on their communities: defund Islamophobia now", in: <https://mondoweiss.net/2019/05/jewish-communities-islamophobia/>, retrieved on 23.5.2019

The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity. The complex, whose name alluded to the Abrahamic religions, would bring the first public Jewish house of worship to the UAE, as media reported. Rabbi M. Bruce Lustig said in a statement. "It will help build bridges between religious leaders and communities as well as foster peace and harmony in an era that is too often defined by difference. This is an important opportunity for all who believe in the power of faith and humanity." Reflecting on this historic initiative, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue said: "*This endeavor is a profoundly moving moment for humanity. Although sadly evil, hatred, and division often make news, there is a hidden sea of goodness that is growing and leads us to hope in dialogue, reciprocal knowledge and the possibility of building – together with the followers of other religions and all men and women of good will – a world of fraternity and peace.*"¹⁵⁵

A British architecture firm Adjaye Associates had won the design competition with three rectangular buildings, each with different, soaring, external cagework symbolising the three religions' differing but similar striving towards the one God they worship. Besides their monotheism, all three shared Abraham as a key figure: the Jews because he was the man to whom God pledged the promised land; the Christians and Muslims because the story of the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac was a symbol of obedience to God. A rabbi had been appointed from New York University Abu Dhabi for the synagogue and the church and mosque would have their own clerics. The commissioning body was the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity, set up after Pope Francis and Ahmed Al Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al Azhar University in Cairo—signed the Document of Human Fraternity in February 2019. Pope Francis was presented with the designs at the Vatican in November 2019. Year of 2019 had been proclaimed the Year of Tolerance by the UAE government and in September 2019, 18 (eighteen) non-Muslim places of worship in the various emirates were given official legal status.¹⁵⁶

In New Zealand, following the terrorist attack in March 2019, faith groups in Christchurch mourned with their neighbors, sitting with them in their pain, helping widows with food and providing other aid, knitting a new fabric of solidarity across beliefs. Shortly, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presented a check for \$100,000 from the church to help their communities press forward. President of the faith groups said, reading from a letter he presented to Dr. Mustafa Farouk, the president of the Islamic Associations of New Zealand: "*Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the world over were heartbroken when we heard of the deadly attacks on innocent worshippers in the Al Noor and Linwood mosques of Christchurch on March 15. Our prayers, love and support are with you and all others affected by these senseless tragedies.*" Matthew Gardner, acting chair of the Canterbury Interfaith Society and a Roman Catholic, he said: "*Differences in beliefs haven't been as important since that day, said Help for the Muslims has come from Christchurch residents who are Hindu, Hare Krishna, Buddhist, Sikh and different Christian groups such as Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Latter-day Saints.*" He added that the interfaith groups had provided financial support, but the main thing they want to show their Muslim brothers and sisters were solidarity, to show that faiths were working together, not opposing each other.¹⁵⁷

In India, a social media post that threatened to disrupt communal harmony had paved way for organizing a programme that brought together Muslims and non-Muslim communities. The programme 'Masjid Darshan-Sab Ke liye', which was aimed at building social harmony and interfaith camaraderie, was organized by Muslim Educational, Social and Cultural

¹⁵⁵ See: Fox News' entry "A church, a synagogue and a mosque to share interfaith complex in Abu Dhabi", in: <https://www.foxnews.com/faith-values/uae-plans-interfaith-complex-abrahamic-family-house>, retrieved on 25.9.2019

¹⁵⁶ See: Art Newspaper Daily News' entry "British architect David Adjaye to build a church, mosque and synagogue on a united site near the Louvre Abu Dhabi", in: <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/abu-dhabi-complex-will-celebrate-three-world-religions-on-one-site>, retrieved on 29.11.2019

¹⁵⁷ See: Deseret News' entry "New Zealand mosque shooting: Gunshots shattered a day of prayer, but gave rise to interfaith resolve", in: <https://www.deseret.com/2019/5/21/20673962/new-zealand-mosque-shooting-gunshots-shattered-a-day-of-prayer-but-gave-rise-to-interfaith-resolve>, retrieved on 21.5.2019

Organization which invited non-Muslims to the Chhoti Masjid on Thursday evening. Over 150 people from different non-Muslim communities were taken on guided tour inside the mosque and briefed about namaz rituals and other activities there. The visitors, which included politicians and social workers from the city, also witnessed the offering of namaz in the mosque and then interacted with Masjid's Imam Mufti Waliullah who told them about the teachings of Islam and activities carried out in mosques. The programme was organized following a WhatsApp post in a group of lawyers claiming that arms were recovered from mosques in Kashmir after abrogation of Article 370. Lawyer Farhat Baig took up the issue with community leaders and Imams and convinced them that people of other faiths should be invited to mosques to clear misconceptions and build an atmosphere of brotherhood. The lawyer who had posted the content too was one of the visitors to the mosque. "After the visit, the lawyer felt apologetic for the post. Baig claimed that people from Jain, Maheswari, Bouddha, Sikh, Maratha, OBC, SC communities along with people from Sunni, Khoja, Bohra, Shiya sects of Muslims too were present."¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, Christian leaders in New Delhi had condemned the communal violence in the Indian capital and asked churches to open their doors to victims of the riots on February 2020. "*At this trying moment when communal riots have suddenly gripped Delhi, let us come forward with our prayers and every possible effort to bring relief to the affected people in terms of shelter, food and clothing,*" an appeal letter from Archbishop Anil Joseph Thomas Couto of Delhi said. In his letter addressed to the parish priests, Archbishop Couto said churches should open their premises "*for this noble cause in the Lenten season. Please convey this to our people and organize them for action.*" The statement condemned "*the bastardly attack on the vulnerable and the weak in different locations of Delhi, the explicit or implicit complicity and tacit approval of those in power and authority.*" It also asked its congregations in Delhi area to open "*their hearts and facilities for the afflicted*".¹⁵⁹

At last, an exemplary gestures was shown by an individual, Sunita Premi from Gokalpur village in northeast Delhi, who helped her neighbors - Muslims living in a Hindu-concentrated area. The Khans and their 12 members whom Sunita sheltered from rioters without caring for her own safety. "*I wouldn't call it saving them. I have done what I did because they are my family. We have lived together for three generations. My husband and hers, my father-in-law and hers have lived here forever. Their kids call me tai and my kids call her chachi. And I love them. It doesn't matter that I am a Hindu and they are Muslims,*" she said during her interview with India Today news media.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ See: Times of India news' entry "Communal bonding: Mosque opens doors to non-Muslims to counter 'hate' post", in: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/communal-bonding-mosque-opens-doors-to-non-muslims-to-counter-hate-post/articleshow/71027014.cms> retrieved on 9.9.2019

¹⁵⁹ See: Union of Catholic Asian News' entry "Indian Christians slam Delhi communal violence", <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-christians-slam-delhi-communal-violence/87322>, retrieved on 28.02.2020

¹⁶⁰ See: India Today News' entry "Hindu family which saved Sikhs in 1984 riots, now saves a Muslim family", <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/delhi-violence-hindu-family-who-saved-sikhs-in-1984-riots-now-saves-muslim-family-1651797-2020-03-03>, retrieved on 03.03.2020

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

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Observing events, media news, discourses, public feelings, and incidents on Islamophobia occurring during the latest 20-months period, the Islamophobia Observatory draws some conclusions as pointed below:

- In the aftermath of the shocking massacre against Muslim worshippers in Christchurch city in New Zealand in March 2019 up until end of 2020, the trend of Islamophobia has kept on the rise, not only in Western countries, but also quite elsewhere around the world. A number of factors have been identified as the main contributors to such a worrisome trend: mounting far-right ideologies, refugee crises, immigration, negative perceptions amid adherents of different faiths, and provocative rhetoric and action by certain media.
- The U.S. and Europe still stand as the major hot spots of Islamophobia, where the trend of Islamophobia has been most disturbing as evidenced by the number of incidents such as mosque burning, provocative statements in social media, mail threats, Holy Quran burning and desecration, insults of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), physical assaults, and verbal abuses. Both in the U.S. and Europe, the Islamophobic trend has been mostly marked by the growing popularity of right-wing parties and movements, evolving into a global wave of anti-Establishment, ultra-nationalism, and the mushrooming of extreme right-wing parties.
- Some events have brought about a significant impact on the trend and prospects of Islamophobia since last year, particularly the terrorist attacks against Muslims in New Zealand in March 2019; the terrorist attack in Sri Lanka in April 2019; the European Union Parliamentary Election in March 2019, the case against Myanmar for the Genocide against Rohingya at the International Court of Justice in November 2019, the introduction of controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by India in August 2019; and most recently the havoc in France following the republication of derogatory cartoons of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) by Charlie Hebdo Magazine in September 2020.
- The Muslim World is now becoming more active in their efforts against Islamophobia, while the commitment from Member States for addressing the issue of Islamophobia is much relieving; in parallel with significant measures around the globe to combat Islamophobia and to provide better protections on Muslims and other minorities, in the aftermath of the terrorist incident in New Zealand.
- Mandates for the OIC to combat Islamophobia is now stronger than ever. The Final Communiqué adopted during the Open-Ended Executive Committee Emergency Meeting held in Istanbul in March 2019, requests the OIC to engage and take action, as a matter of priority, to combat religious discrimination, Islamophobia, intolerance and hatred towards Muslims. The 14th Islamic Summit recently held in Makkah particularly also calls the OIC to devise strategies and plans to address the issue. In addition, an '*OIC Plan of Action on Combating Islamophobia, Religious Discrimination, Intolerance and Hatred towards Muslims*' hence now onward, the collective measures by the Muslim World to address the issue of Islamophobia could hopefully be taken in a more concerted-manner.

- Islamophobia against Veil, Hijab, Burkini, and Burqa continued to be a serious contagion spreading across the globe. The policy has attracted more and more governments in different regions, and had become one of the most potent flash points in the countries' tense relations with their Muslim population. So far, at least 14 (fourteen) countries have fully banned veil, headscarf, hijab, niqab, and burqa i.e. France, Belgium, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. However, since February 2020, phobia against Hijab and Burqa declined significantly, probably due to the world-wide campaign to wear face masks as part of the personal protective gear against Corona virus.

RECOMMENDATION:

In order to effectively and efficiently address Islamophobia, collective measures need to be deployed by International Organisations, Governments, Non-Governmental Organisations, and all members of the international community.

Based on the findings and developments mentioned above, a set of recommendations are included hereunder for the kind consideration of the esteemed OIC Member States:

01. The OIC Member States are encouraged to foster their efforts at the national level to address the issue of Islamophobia through creative projects and implementable policies, such as boosting youth engagement in dealing with Islamophobia, integration of Islamophobia-related elements into school curricula, and provision of moderate content for early-age children. Establishing centres dedicated to the study of, and fight against, Islamophobia in Member Countries would expectedly help coordinate national efforts and deconstruct Islamophobic discourse and ideology.
02. At the international level, there is a pressing need to launch extensive campaigns slated to project a positive image of Islam, particularly in countries where the issue of Islamophobia is most palpable. This could be done with the help of Muslim communities in non-OIC countries. In this sense, Members States are encouraged to increase support for Muslim communities in non-Muslim societies in order to empower them to fight and resist acts of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief. This step has also the potential to curb tendencies of extremism in Western countries through the promotion of tolerance, moderation, mutual respect and peaceful co-existence among their citizens. Along these measures, Members States are encouraged to promote inter-faith and inter-religious dialogues to raise awareness about the well-founded interpretations of religious precepts and teachings, as well as open up space for discussion about Islam among non-Muslims.
03. The OIC Member States are equally encouraged to reach out as widely as possible to the Muslim diaspora in non-Muslim countries, while engaging them in a constructive dialogue with their non-Muslim fellows in order to develop a sustainable mechanism for countering all types of discrimination against Muslims or any other religious minority. Existing OIC mechanisms, notably the Contact Group on Muslims in Europe, and the Contact Group on Peace and Dialogue could prove effective tools for the coordination of the Muslim world's collective efforts in combating Islamophobia at the international level.
04. Considering projects to counter Islamophobia through close collaboration with a select number of international entities such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), as well as Non-

Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that advocate counter-Islamophobia at the grass-root level. Member States are encouraged to visibly keep the issue of Islamophobia high on the agenda of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly and implement the UN Resolution 16/18 on combating incitement to hatred, discrimination and violence against persons based on their religion.

05. National media outlets and social media platforms could be harnessed to promote the principle of responsible use of freedom of expression while implementing appropriate policies that hold accountable any media, which perpetuate hate speech against Islam and Muslims.
06. Member States are encouraged to provide support to the Islamophobia Observatory in the General Secretariat by allocating the necessary resources to establish a network with other hate-speech monitoring platforms around the world. It is recommended that Member States may consider deliberation on the appointment of an OIC Special Envoy for Islamophobia in a bid to boost OIC's engagement with international and regional organizations on this highly critical issue.

ANNEX

Islamophobic Incidents

I. Incidents Related to Mosques:

Germany: In July 2019, German police evacuated one of the largest mosques in the country due to a bomb threat purportedly sent by a far-right terrorist organization. The Central Mosque in the western city of Duisburg was evacuated after its staff received an e-mail apparently by the far-right terror group, Combat18, claiming that bombs were planted at the entrance of the mosque. The police put the security cordon in the area and began searching the premises. At least five mosques received bomb threats in July 2019 alone, sparking worries among the country's Muslim population. Germany had witnessed growing Islamophobia in recent years triggered by the propaganda of far-right parties and movements. Police recorded 813 hate crimes against Muslims last year, including insults, threatening letters, physical assaults and attacks against mosques.

See: AA News' entry, in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/mosque-evacuated-over-bomb-threat-in-germany-/1538432>, retrieved on 23.7.2019

By August 2019 German Authority received reports saying that mosques in Iserlohn, Cologne, Munich, Mannheim, Duisburg, Mainz and Villingen-Schwenningen would be bombed and that places of worship must be evacuated immediately. Although expert teams carried out searches after evacuating the mosques, there were no traces of explosives. Few months before, some mosques were set on fire, the Quran was torn, various things were written on the walls, and the mosques were damaged financially. The growing anti-Muslim propaganda in the country has reached worrying level, as more than 20 mosques received bomb threats in July 2019. Germany had witnessed growing Islamophobia and hatred of migrants in recent years triggered by far-right parties and movements, which had exploited fears over the refugee crisis and terrorism. Police recorded 813 hate crimes against Muslims in 2018, including insults, threatening letters, physical assaults and attacks against mosques.

See: Iqna news' entry, in: <http://iqna.ir/en/news/3469134/mosques-targeted-every-two-days-in-germany>, retrieved on 10.8.2019

Meanwhile, unidentified assailants desecrated a mosque in the town of Minden in the very northeast of Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia state in July 2019. The assailants tore pages of a copy of Quran at Barbaros Mosque of the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB). DITIB representative Sebahattin Cigdem said an investigation into the attack was launched after they saw a copy of Quran ripped up inside the mosque and called the police. He said, "Our mosque had also been attacked on January 22, 2018.

See: Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2019/07/18/another-mosque-desecrated-as-anti-muslim-attacks-continue-to-spread-across-germany>, retrieved on 19.7.2019

Also, a mosque in the German city of Cologne was attacked in July 2019 by three unidentified people, who caused considerable damage to the service building of the mosque. Security cameras recorded that the attackers damaged the administration room and service building, broke the donation boxes and ran away. An investigation was launched into the attack. Germany's Turkish-Muslim community had called on authorities to take stronger action against far-right extremists amid a growing number of threats and attacks targeting mosques and community institutions. Kazım Turkmen, the chairman of the DITIB, said that despite an increase in anti-Muslim crimes in recent years, perpetrators often went unpunished. A bomb threat that was sent to the DITIB few days before, had forced an evacuation of Germany's largest mosque in Cologne, which was run by the group. After searching the complex with bomb-sniffing dogs, the police found no bomb and the area was deemed safe.

See: Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2019/07/17/mosque-in-germany-suffers-serious-damage-in-anti-muslim-attack>, retrieved on 18.7.2019

On 1 March 2020, the Fatih Mosque in Germany's Bremen received a letter containing unknown powder. The letter caused a major security measure by the police and firefighters to determine if the powder was dangerous. Upon the conclusion of the tests, it turned out to be harmless. Aside from the powder, the envelope contained a letter which was described by the police as "*right extremist*." The letter was sent through postage, and an investigation had been launched, the police said.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/germanys-3rd-largest-mosque-receives-hate-letter-with-unknown-powder>, retrieved on 02.03.2020

Still, on 16 May 2020 two unidentified people placed a pig's head on the door of the Fatih Mosque of the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) in the southern Germany city of Vaihingen. The incident was recorded by the surveillance cameras at the mosque. In the footage, the perpetrators were seen driving a company van from a neighboring city. After they attached the pig's head to the main entrance of the mosque, they took photos of their act. The unidentified individuals were said to be between 25 and 30 years old.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/pigs-head-placed-on-mosque-door-in-german-city/news>, retrieved on 19.05.2020

Earlier, several people attacked a mosque and a social center of the DITIB in Germany's Cologne on 9 May 2020 – a day before places of worship were planned to be reopened in light of the easing of measures to fight the spread of the novel coronavirus. The assailants threw stones at the two institutions and damaged several windows. CCTV footage shows that the perpetrators hurled the stones at around 1 a.m. The imam was still in the mosque during the attack, but there were no injuries.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/mosque-social-center-in-germanys-cologne-attacked/news>, retrieved on 11.05.2020

Likewise, an unidentified arsonist caused significant damage to a mosque in Itzehoe, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, but there were no casualties, the mosque's head said on 15 October 2020. The attacker set fire to a dumpster and cardboard boxes outside the building, causing significant property damage but the fire itself was extinguished before it grew.

See: Anadolu Agency's entry, in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/arson-attack-targets-mosque-in-itzehoe-germany/2007720>, retrieved on 16.10.2020

Further, on 6 November 2020, A Mosque in the southwestern German town of Hufingen received an anti-Muslim hate letter. The letter sent to Aqsa Mosque in Baden-Wurttemberg state said, "Islam belongs to neither Germany nor Europe" and "We'll erase Islam and Islamism from Germany,". Hakan Taşdemir, head of DITIB in Hufingen, said the mosque had been operational since 1996 and it was the first such incident they had reported.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/diaspora/mosque-in-germany-receives-anti-muslim-hate-mail>, retrieved on 07.11.2020

U.S.: Anti-Muslim attack took place during the holy month of Ramadan when a Turkish mosque in the U.S. state of Connecticut was the target. An investigation is underway into the fire at Diyanet Mosque in the city of New Haven and efforts were continuing to catch the perpetrators. The fire occurred on the seventh day of Ramadan. A reward of up to \$2,500 had been offered for any information that leads to the arrest or conviction of the perpetrators, according to officials.

See: Daily Sabah news' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/americas/2019/05/14/turkish-mosque-in-us-suffers-serious-damage-after-anti-muslim-arson-attack-in-ramadan>, retrieved on 15.5.2019

Also, a man broke windows on the front door of Mt. Airy mosque, Philadelphia in September 2019. The man was caught on camera throwing rocks at the front door of the Masjidullah Mosque located at 7401 Limekiln Pike. The man was able to break the glass on one of the front doors causing an estimated \$400 in damage. After breaking the glass, the man fled the area on foot west on Washington Lane towards Forrest Avenue, police said.

See: Patch news' entry, in: <https://www.rt.com/uk/443434-terrorist-mosque-attack-manchester/>, retrieved on 5.9.2019

Australia: Police were investigating a suspicious fire at Canberra's largest mosque. Police said ACT Fire & Rescue responded to an alarm at the Canberra Islamic Centre on Clive Steele Avenue in Monash in September 2019. On arrival, fire fighters located smoke coming from the prayer hall at the centre, and were quickly able to extinguish it. The expanded Ahmad Al Sabah Masjid and Islamic Education Centre opened in May 2018. It served as a focal point for all Muslims in Canberra, providing a place for prayers, education, cultural events and religious gatherings. The Monash centre had been the target of sporadic attacks. In 2014, vandals broke in twice over a two-week period and caused extensive damage.

See: The Canberra Times news' entry, in: <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6372764/police-investigate-suspicious-fire-at-canberra-mosque/>, retrieved on 9.9.2019

South Africa: Two mosques located in South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg, were attacked by rioters in August 2019. The Himayatul Islam mosque was damaged during Molotov cocktail attacks, becoming the second mosque in the city targeted within that week. A bit earlier, Katilehong mosque was also severely damaged by rioters. As part of the recent outbreak of violence, at least one person was killed and five others injured in Johannesburg over the weekend after security forces clashed with looters. A group of stick and machete-wielding men marched through the streets of South Africa's largest city, calling on African migrants to leave the city or face the consequences. Police were forced to fire rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse the rowdy rioters, who were mostly residents of the Jeppeshtown men's hostel. Police spokesman Kay Makhubele said police had deployed more personnel to beef up security in all volatile areas in Johannesburg. Most businesses remained closed, with shopkeepers fearing being looted by rioters. The country had been rocked by a surge of attacks against businesses owned by migrants, leaving at least 10 dead and prompting protests from several African countries. South Africa is a major destination for economic migrants from neighboring Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

See: The Daily Sabah news' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/africa/2019/09/10/two-mosques-attacked-during-xenophobic-riots-in-south-africa>, retrieved on 11.9.2019

Scotland: Elgin Mosque had been subject to a vile act of vandalism after discovering the graffiti. The Police said: "*Crimes of this nature are completely unacceptable. There is absolutely no place for it in our communities and a number of enquiries are ongoing to establish who is responsible.*" A spokesman from Elgin Mosque said: "*Worshippers were shocked to see such hateful act as they were going into the mosque in this holy month of Ramadan to offer their evening prayers.*" The Most Rev Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness, and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church expressed his outrage in saying: "*I am appalled at the attack on the Mosque in Elgin, my prayers go out to all at the Mosque and for the Community of Elgin as this news will affect many.*"

See: The Herald News' entry, in: <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17654825.outrage-as-vandals-daub-swastika-graffiti-on-elgin-mosque-during-ramadan/>, retrieved on 22.5.2019

Australia: A swastika, a racist meme and the words 'St Tarrant' had been sprayed onto the wall of a mosque in Brisbane, as politicians call out the "vile" attack. The mosque at Holland Park, in Brisbane's south, had been daubed with white spray paint by vandals. Spray painted on the front walls of the building 'St Tarrant' - seemingly a reference to the alleged Christchurch mosque shooter -- and a Nazi swastika. Also included were the words 'remove kebab', a vile Islamophobic racist meme and song -- which Tarrant referenced in his manifesto, wrote in paint on his gun, and played on the stereo in his car before his March 2019 mosque shooting massacre, which left 50 worshippers dead. Queensland Police told 10 daily they were investigating an act of 'willful damage' at the location.

See: 10Daily News' entry, in: <https://10daily.com.au/news/crime/a190911djnet/vile-graffiti-attack-on-mosque-with-swastika-christchurch-killers-name-spray-painted-on-walls-20190911>, retrieved on 12.9.2019

Also, Sydney's Islamic community was reeling on 26 October 2020 after a violent attack on the Auburn Gallipoli Mosque. Worshippers were forced to flee after a man began smashing windows and throwing furniture off the second-floor balcony. CCTV showed a man hitting a large TV with a Quran, before he ripped the television off its stand and hurled it

over the balcony. The mosque had already been on high alert due to rising tensions regarding overseas conflicts. "We've very thankful that no-one was injured, it could have easily gone the other way," Enver Yasar of the Gallipoli Turkish Cultural Foundation said. Auburn MP Linda Voltz said the mosque was not a "lightning rod for other people's issues". The bill of damage expected to run into tens of thousands of dollars. A 20-year-old man faced court and was charged with malicious damage.

See: 9news entry, in: <https://www.9news.com.au/national/mosque-attack-sydney-man-faces-court/c458f5a6-05fa-4f18-a240-8c2e673a1f22>, retrieved on 27.10.2020

Likewise, on 24 October 2020, an unidentified man attacked a mosque in Sydney, Australia. A male attacker entered the Auburn Gallipoli Mosque, and caused material damage by breaking the chandeliers, windowpanes, plasma television and other items. The perpetrator had been arrested.

See: Anadolu Agency's entry, in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/man-attacks-turkish-mosque-in-australia/2018742>, retrieved on 26.10.2020

Brazil: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro urged his South American colleagues in July 2019 to borrow a slogan from Donald Trump and focus on making their own nations great rather than emphasizing regional brotherhood. "We don't want a 'Great homeland,'" the far-right Bolsonaro said at a meeting of the Mercosur trade bloc, using a frequent slogan of Venezuela's late socialist leader Hugo Chavez to refer to the regional integration of South America. "We want every country in South America to be autonomous, democratic, and that each country can be great. Just like Trump said that he wanted to 'Make America great again,' I want to make Brazil great, Paraguay great, Bolivia great, Uruguay — all of our countries." The meeting of the Mercosur group — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — came after the bloc's June 28 signing of a trade deal with the European Union following two decades of negotiations.

See: Washington Post News' entry, in: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>, retrieved on 20.7.2019

Germany: Arson attack targets mosque in Germany's Hagen— An unidentified arsonist did considerable damage to a mosque in Hagen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, but there were no casualties, the mosque's head reported in May 2019. Omer Oral, the head of Hagen's Great Mosque Society, told media that the arson attack took place when the assailant set fire to a trash dumpster and cartons outside, leading to significant material damage. He said: "*Substantial damage was done to the entrance of the mosque. The mosque was filled with fog and smoke and all the furniture inside was ruined.*" He went on to say that the surveillance cameras were checked by police and a suspect was seen "*pulling something out his pocket*" near the mosque entrance just before the fire started. The mosque belongs to the Islamic Community National View (IGMG), one of Germany's largest Muslim-Turkish associations.

See: TRT World News' entry, in: <https://www.trtworld.com/europe/arson-attack-targets-mosque-in-germany-s-hagen-26976>, retrieved on 26.5.2019

Canada: A mosque in downtown Toronto received violent and offensive threats by email on 10 October 2020. Mosque administrators had shut it down temporarily as Toronto police investigated the threats. The mosque had not been named. Mustafa Farooq, CEO of the National Council of Muslims, said he was calling on the federal government for a national action plan to dismantle white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups in Canada in the wake of the threats. Farooq said the council had no plans to name the mosque out of concern that it could be targeted further. The threats came a month after a fatal stabbing of a volunteer caretaker at an Etobicoke mosque.

See: CBC's entry, in: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/downtown-toronto-mosque-shut-down-violent-messages-police-investigating-muslims-council-1.5759840>, retrieved on 13.10.2020

France: A person attacked and destroyed the outer parts of a mosque on 31 May 2020 and was apprehended immediately. The building targeted by the attacker was the Fatih Mosque of the Islamic Community National Vision (IGMG) association in France's Albertville. The chief of the mosque, Engin Seller, stated that he saw a person entering the courtyard of the mosque at around 2 a.m. "He destroyed everything he could lay his hands on," Seller said. "After I noticed the incident, I first called the members of the mosque living close by," he said, stating that when the members

arrived, the attacker was throwing parts of the mosque onto the street. They immediately contacted the police, who arrested the attacker shortly after.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/mosque-attacker-caught-red-handed-in-france/news>, retrieved on 02.06.2020

Too, a swastika and graffiti were daubed overnight on a mosque in the town of Agen, southwestern France, the interior minister said on July 27. Messaoud Settati, president of the town's Muslim association, said he was alerted to the desecration at around 2am. The mosque had handed over surveillance footage to the police, he added. It shows a man entering the grounds of the mosque shortly after midnight. Abdallah Zekri, head of France's National Observatory Against Islamophobia condemned the graffiti, noting that it came just five days ahead of Eid al-Adha. It was a "provocation and an insult to French citizens of the Muslim faith", he said.

See: New Straits Times entry, in: <https://www.nst.com.my/world/world/2020/07/612029/swastika-daubed-mosque-france>, retrieved on 28.07.2020

Meanwhile, a gunman opened fire in a mosque in northeastern Paris on 08 March 2020, seriously wounding one person. The man, wearing a helmet, fled the scene on a scooter, according to local sources. The mosque is located on Rue de Tanger in the city's 19th administrative district. The victim, a 32-year-old man, was shot into his leg twice and had been rushed to the hospital. Around 15 people were inside the mosque at the time the gunman entered. No other injuries had been reported.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/gunman-injures-1-in-paris-mosque-attack-escapes-on-scooter>, retrieved on 10.03.2020

Further, mosques in France's city of Bordeaux and the Beziers commune had been placed under the protection of the security forces following the spread of violent threats amid outrage throughout France over the brutal killing of a history teacher in Paris on the 16th OCT 2020, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on twitter. "*Threats or acts of violence targeted the mosques of Beziers and Bordeaux, I asked the prefects of the departments concerned to protect these places of worship. Such acts are unacceptable on the soil of the Republic*".

See: sputnik news entry, in: <https://sputniknews.com/europe/202010211080838179-mosques-in-southern-france-threatened-with-violence-amid-unrest-over-teachers-murder/>, retrieved on 22.10.2020

Also, a mosque in Vernon, northern France received a threatening letter on 27 October 2020, according to a Twitter post by the Islam & Info website. The notice, left in the mosque's mailbox, contained death threats and insulting messages against the Muslim community. "*The war had begun. We will drive you out of our country. You will give account for Samuel's death,*" it said. The notice also contained remarks directed against Muslim women wearing headscarves.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/islamophobia/mosque-in-frances-vernon-receives-threatening-notice>, retrieved on 29.10.2020

Still, an unidentified arsonist attempted to set fire to a mosque in Chateaudun, France, the head of the mosque said on 31 October 2020. The General Secretary of Islamic Confederation National Opinion (CIMG), Fatih Saikir said someone poured a can of gasoline onto the mosque and started a fire but it was extinguished without growing but the building sustained damage. There were no casualties. A police statement said the incident was considered an attempted arson.

See: Anadolu Agency's entry, in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/arson-attack-targets-mosque-in-france/2026637>, retrieved on 02.11.2020

Likewise, a mosque in northern France was attacked on 02 November 2020 by unidentified assailants who left two bloody pigs' heads in the Muslim house of worship, mosque officials said. The heads were found in the Grand Mosque in the city of Compiègne in Oise, where restoration work was being done.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/islamophobia/pig-heads-placed-at-mosque-in-northern-france-in-anti-muslim-attack>, retrieved on 03.11.2020

UK: a man had been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after a knife attack at a mosque in central London. The victim, in his 70s, who was a prayer leader at London Central Mosque was stabbed in the neck. Police and paramedics rushed to the scene, near Regent's Park, at 3.10pm on 20 February 2020. The attacker, aged 29, was arrested at the scene on suspicion of attempted murder and taken into custody. Mustafa Field, director of the Faiths Forum for London, told reporters outside the mosque that worshippers said it was “one stab, one strike, around the neck” of the victim. Dr Ahmad Al Dubayan, director-general of the Islamic Cultural Centre at the mosque, told reporters that the man injured was the mosque’s muezzin, who was appointed to lead the call to prayer.

See: Evening Standard’s entry, in: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/regents-park-mosque-stabbing-man-arrested-a4367446.html>, retrieved on 21.02.2020

II. Political and Social Campaigns against Islam and Muslims

Finland: With European polls took place in Finland within the month of the incident, the leader of an extreme far-right party tried to stoke the Islamophobic vote by publicly ripping up a copy of the Qur’an. Marco De Wit, leader of Finnish People First, took the incendiary action in the capital Helsinki, in full view of police officers. Campaigning over the past week ahead of European Parliament elections, De Wit has occasionally ripped up the Qur’an, intentionally provoking Muslims, as well as the Jewish Torah. Earlier, precisely in April 2019, Rasmus Paludan, the leader of Denmark’s Islamophobic Hard Line party, burned the Qur’an in an area with a large Muslim population, as an intentional insult. Right-wing and anti-immigrant parties were expected to gain ground in the European Parliament elections.

See: Muslimnews News’ entry, in: <https://muslimnews.co.uk/news/islamophobia/finland-far-right-finnish-politician-rips-quran/>, retrieved on 1.1.2020

III. Intolerance against Islam and its Sacred Symbols

Netherlands: By the end of 2019, Wilders asked people on Twitter to submit their cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as part of a competition he launched the year before. He wrote: “*Freedom of speech must prevail over violence and Islamic fatwas*”. Few days later, the Dutch politician revealed the winning drawing, announcing the end of his controversial contest. “*Mission accomplished. End of contest*”, he wrote, posting a picture, portraying the prophet as an angry-looking man with a bear dressed in black”.

See: Yabiladi News’ entry, in: <https://en.yabiladi.com/articles/details/87338/dutch-politician-geert-wilders-stirs.html>, retrieved on 1.1.2020

IV. Discrimination against Muslim Individuals and Communities

U.S.: The Stafford County adapted a new zoning rules which banned cemeteries located within 900 feet, of any private homeowners well used for drinking water. Previously the county had required a separation of only 100 feet. According to media, the clearly intended effect of Stafford’s shift was to block the Muslim group’s new cemetery. For 20 years, the All Muslim Association of America (AMAA) had quietly run a small Islamic cemetery in suburban Stafford County, south of the District, without a hint of controversy. It was only in 2016, after the nonprofit group purchased a new parcel for a larger cemetery — with the first nearly at capacity — that the trouble began. And that trouble has borne a distinct whiff of Islamophobia. At the urging of two residents whose property abuts the AMAA’s new parcel, one of them a member of Stafford’s Planning Commission, local officials rewrote the county zoning rules. It had triggered lawsuits by the Justice Department and advocates representing the Muslim association, who point to civil rights and constitutional violations in Stafford’s actions.

See: Washington Post entry, in: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-virginia-county-enacted-new-rules-that-seemed-intended-to-block-a-muslim-cemetery/2020/06/26/84357e64-b710-11ea-a8da-693df3d7674a_story.html, retrieved on 28.06.2020

U.K.: Two young Muslim women were assaulted by a number of teenagers in Dundrum, south Dublin in August 2019. A video had emerged online which appeared to show two girls being thrown to the ground and pelted with eggs and physically assaulted by a large group. The incident happened in Dundrum village near the local shopping center. The individual who shared the video online claimed to be the sister of one of the victims and insisted that the attack was unprovoked and that the girls' hijabs were removed during the attack. Text attached to the video reads, "*My sister and my cousin were attacked yesterday evening in Dundrum village. I can't believe this! I am so disgusted and angry that I was not there to protect them. Please help share this to find these sc**bags to prosecute them and bring them to justice.... They remove my cousins hijab and kick her while she is down then attack my sister and bring her to the ground to kick her! This should not be happening to anyone nomatter who they are! What world do we live in!!!*" In the footage, someone could be heard shouting "get off her" and "she's only a child." The police launched an investigation into the incident as many online call for swift and decisive action against the culprits.

See: The Irish Central News' entry, in: <https://www.irishcentral.com/news/irishvoice/young-muslims-attacked-dublin-suburb>, retrieved on 22.8.2019

Also, Muslims were being detained at ports and airports for up to six hours by law enforcement using controversial counter-terrorism powers so disproportionately that the practice has become Islamophobic, according to human rights group Cage. The organisation added there was growing evidence that Muslim women were being forced to remove their headscarves when stopped. Cage said it had made a complaint to the policing regulator, the Independent Office for Police Conduct, and had written to MPs on the all-party group on British Muslims to spell out the extent of its concerns with so-called schedule 7 stops. The Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 allows people to be detained at the border for up to six hours if law enforcement is concerned they could be engaged in terrorist activities. Detainees have no right to silence, must surrender their phones, computers and passwords and provide fingerprints and DNA on request. A study conducted by Cambridge University researchers in 2014 concluded 88% of those stopped were Muslim.

See: The Guardian News' entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/aug/20/detention-of-muslims-at-uk-ports-and-airports-structural-islamophobia>, retrieved on 21.8.2019

Netherlands: A Muslim woman wearing a niqab had been forced to leave a bus following the introduction of a law that bans face-covering clothing in public buildings and on transport. The woman tried to take a bus in the southern town of Stein in August 2019, but the driver would not let her board while wearing the veil. The woman refused to remove the veil and the bus driver called the police, who escorted the woman off the bus. It was the first time the controversial law had been used to deny someone entry on public transportation. The law stated that security officials were required to tell people with face-covering clothing to show their faces. If they refused, they could be denied access to public buildings and transport and fined 150 Euros.

See: Al-Jazeera News' entry "Woman forced to leave bus for wearing face veil in Netherlands", in: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/woman-forced-leave-bus-wearing-face-veil-netherlands-190820120140222.html>, retrieved on 20.8.2019

Germany: A man shot and killed nine people at several locations in a Frankfurt suburb in attacks that had been motivated by far-right beliefs. The gunman first attacked a hookah bar in central Hanau at about 10 p.m. on 19 February 2020, killing several people before heading about 2.5 kilometers westward and opening fire again, claiming more victims. Witnesses and surveillance videos of the suspect's getaway car led authorities quickly to his home, near the scene of the second attack, where he was found dead near his 72-year-old mother. The authority said: "*Initial analysis of the webpage of the suspect indicates a xenophobic motivation.*" Federal prosecutors had taken over the investigation of the crime.

See: Wilknews News' entry "9 killed in suspected far-right attack in Germany", in: <https://wilknews.radio.com/articles/ap-news/german-gunman-calling-for-genocide-kills-9-people>, retrieved on 20.2.2020

Further, on 31 March 2020, a Turkish family in the northern German city of Hamburg received a letter from an unidentified sender, allegedly containing the coronavirus, with a message by the sender saying that they hope the family contracts the virus. The incident came just after German police announced they don't believe the perpetrator of the

terrorist attacks in Hanau was a far-right extremist. "I have a surprise for you. I have coronavirus and I coughed on this letter and licked it several times. I will not leave the world alone," the sender said, adding that their final mission was to leave a foreigner-free Germany for their children and grandchildren. "Die, die slowly. Leave Germany to the Germans. I wish bad things to happen to you, I hope the virus spreads among your family," the anonymous sender said. The letters ends by saying, "greetings to victory and Hitler."

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkish-family-receives-racist-coronavirus-infected-letter-as-islamophobia-grows-in-germany/news>, retrieved on 03.04.2020

Still, a 25-year-old Muslim woman was attacked in the northern German city of Hamelin on 17 April 2020, the German Islamic magazine IslamiQ reported. The woman was recording the call to prayer of the mosque in the city when a 70-year-old man attacked her. According to the police, the man felt so bothered by the call to prayer that he first insulted the Muslim woman and pulled her hijab from her head. The woman's 28-year-old husband intervened in the attack and held the old man off to prevent him from further harming his wife.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/muslim-woman-verbally-physically-attacked-in-germanys-hamelin/news>, retrieved on 22.04.2020

Canada: On 12 September 2020, Mohamed-Aslim Zafis, a volunteer caretaker at an Etobicoke mosque, was stabbed once while he sat in a chair outside the front doors of the International Muslims Organization (IMO) mosque at 65 Rexdale Blvd., near Kipling Avenue. Zafis had been controlling access to the mosque to ensure it was complying with public health regulations. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

See: CBC's entry, in: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/mosque-stabbing-1.5722305>, retrieved on 14.09.2020

France: On 06 November 2020, A Turkish butcher shop was targeted for the second time in a week in western France's Nantes. Assailants, who attacked the shop four days after their first raid, vandalized the shop with racist and anti-Muslim statements including "Death to Turks," "Death to Erdoğan," "Go back your country" and "Long live pigs." The identities of the assailants had not been revealed yet.

See: Daily Sabah's entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/diaspora/turkish-butcher-shop-in-france-attacked-for-2nd-time-in-a-week>, retrieved on 07.11.2020

V. Incidents Related to Hijab

Australia: A Sydney man had been charged for punching and stomping on a heavily pregnant woman unprovoked, in what was described as an Islamophobic attack. Shocking security camera footage showed a man approaching a table of three women wearing head scarves as they chatted at a cafe in the city's west in November 2019. Seemingly without provocation, the 43-year-old suspect was seen lunging over the table to attack a 31-year-old woman, who police said was 38 weeks pregnant. After several frenzied punches, the woman fell to the ground and was stamped on, before bystanders wrestled the assailant away. Police said a suspect had been charged with "*assault occasioning actual bodily harm and affray*" and denied bail. The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) said the man was heard "yelling anti-Islamic hate speech at the victim and her friends." The woman was taken to hospital following the attack and discharged.

See: Saudi Gazette News' entry, in: <http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/583189>, retrieved on 23.11.2019