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MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

2020

IN NON-MEMBER STATES OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION



Muslim Communities in non-Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation 2020

Introduction

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest intergovernmental organization in the world, in terms of the number of Member States, after the United Nations. The OIC, which was established in 1969, includes 57 member states covering the Asian, African and American continents. Since its founding, the Organization has paid great attention to issues of high priority and concern to more than half a billion Muslims living in non-Member States of the OIC.

Guided by its charter, which underscores the protection of the rights of Muslim communities in non-Member States and the preservation of their dignity and religious and cultural identity, the OIC has adopted many resolutions to assist Muslim communities, whenever necessary, as they are an integral part of the Muslim Ummah. It devoted an institutional framework to advocate the issues of Muslim communities to enable them to fully exercise their rights.

The OIC pursues a realistic and clear policy towards Muslim communities and is guided by the firm principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of countries where these Muslim communities live, respecting their sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. However, it is keen on maintaining constant communication with these Muslim communities with the consent and coordination of the governments of the concerned countries or with their full knowledge, while seeking to find a peaceful settlement of various disputes and contentious issues. The objective is to provide favorable conditions for members of the Muslim communities to fully exercise their rights and contribute positively to achieving stability, development and prosperity for their countries and societies.

The largest number of Muslims live in Southeast Asia, with over 60 percent of the world's total Muslim population. Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa constitute 20 percent of the total population. The largest number of Muslims in non-OIC Member States live in India, the Russian

Federation and China. It is estimated that by 2050, India's population will have the largest number of Muslims in the world, with their number expected to reach 300 million.¹

While Muslims in some countries enjoy full citizenship and basic human rights in accordance with the constitution and national laws, in other countries, Muslims may suffer from social and economic discrimination in the societies they live in, especially with regard to obtaining work and enrollment in universities. In other cases, Muslims may suffer from derogation of their civil or human rights and may even require economic assistance and humanitarian relief in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Muslim communities face different political, economic, social and cultural conditions. They face, and are affected by, challenges in the communities they live in, such as the outbreak of conflicts, political instability and unrest, the rise of hostile or anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim political currents, the perpetuation of economic inequality and the dominance of the majority's interests and culture.

In general, members of Muslim communities in non-Member States of the OIC have succeeded in integrating into their societies, taking responsibility and adhering to the laws, while contributing positively and constructively to their development and prosperity. In some countries, many members of Muslim communities have assumed high governmental and parliamentary positions and enjoyed success in various economic, scientific and intellectual fields.

Since its establishment, the OIC has been keen to make all efforts to defend the rights of Muslims in non-Member States and to stand in particular with the persecuted Muslim communities. The organs and institutions of the OIC have contributed in providing various forms of support to the Muslim communities.

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) have indeed contributed to the efforts aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of these Muslim communities by financing development projects and humanitarian relief.

¹ Pew Research Center Full report on Population Growth Projections 2010-2025. https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/03/PF_15.04.02_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf (viewed on 11 August 2020)

This report reviews the geographical distribution of the various Muslim communities in non-OIC Member States, which are rich in diversity, ethnicity, geographical distribution, as well as their treatment by the authorities of the countries concerned. The report provides the latest available statistics on the number of Muslims.² The report also sheds light on some of the efforts undertaken by the OIC to care for and support Muslim communities.

Geographical distribution of Muslims around the world:

1. **Middle East / North Africa:** 315.3 million
2. **Asia and the Pacific:** 972.5 million
3. **Sub-Saharan Africa:** 240.6 million
4. **Europe:** 38.1 million
5. **The Americas:** 4.6 million

² In this report, the statistics on Muslim population numbers in each non-OIC country were taken from the following available sources: The Pew Research Center report “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050” (2020 estimates); Pew Research Center Report, “The Growth of Muslims in Europe,” November 29, 2017 (Statistics 2016); United States International Report on Religious Freedom 2019, US Department of State (2019 estimates).

Muslim Communities in Europe

Muslims are a central element in the demographic and societal composition of European countries as a result of successive waves of immigration from the countries of origin, due to political, security, economic, social or cultural considerations. The members of Muslim communities contributed positively and constructively to the progress and prosperity of the European countries, enriching the European cultural component, and giving a positive image of Islam as a religion of tolerance, coexistence and respect for others.

In the last two decades, however, Muslims in Europe fell victims of negative stereotypes and were subjected to various forms of hatred, Islamophobia and racial discrimination, fueled in many cases by prejudiced media campaigns, and political agendas of anti-foreign entities.

Many Muslims, especially young people, face restrictions in their pursuit of social advancement, in addition to exposure to social exclusion and discrimination, which may provoke feelings of despair and loss. Research and statistical data indicate that Muslims are often disproportionately represented in the regions where they live; they suffer from poor housing conditions, their educational achievements are below average, and their unemployment rates are higher than average. Muslims often work in jobs that require less qualifications, and are more present than others in low-wage economic sectors.³

The legal status of Islam differs from one European country to another, according to the state-religion relationship. In some countries, legislative tools exist that regulate religious practices, including mosque administration, halal slaughter, and the public use of religious symbols. In other countries, there is no official recognition of Islam, but this does not necessarily prevent Muslims from practicing their religious rites, nor does it negatively affect their rights.

³ Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia, EUMC 2006
<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2006/highlights-eumc-report-muslims-european-union-discrimination-and-islamophobia> (view on 11 August 2020)

1. Muslim communities by country:

Due to the tendency of many countries not to collect information based on religious affiliation, there are limited accurate statistics regarding the Muslim population. Therefore, only publicly available information was used.

Austria

Total population: 6.9 million

Muslim population (2016): 600,000

Islam is the second largest religion in Austria, and is followed by 8 percent of the total population, according to 2016 estimates issued by the Austrian Council of Sciences. It should be noted that large numbers of Muslims lived under Austrian rule when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, where Islam was recognized as an official religion since 1912. Significant numbers of Muslims moved to Austria during the 1960s as migrant workers from Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Islamic Religious Authority of Austria is the official representative of Muslims and serves as an institutional framework for more than 250 Islamic societies. Regarding well-known Muslim figures, Austrian politician Muna Duzdar is the first Muslim citizen to hold a position in the Austrian federal government between 2016 and 2017.

In May 2019, the Austrian parliament passed a ban on headscarves (hijab) for children in primary school. According to appendices explaining the law, some federal states impose fines of up to 440 euros (\$ 490) on parents of children who violate the ban. NGOs have criticized the ban, which excludes the Jewish and Sikh minorities, and explicitly targets the Muslim community. However, authorities continued to allow headscarves for religious purposes on official identification documents, provided the face remains visible enough to allow identification of the person wearing them.

During the term of the former ruling coalition, led by the People's Party and its partner, the far-right Freedom Party, fears have resurfaced again among Muslims in Austria about the government's hardline stance against Muslims. The ruling coalition defended the ban on the headscarf in primary schools for Muslims, except for other religious minorities. Since January

2020, the new government, led by the People's Party alongside the Green Party, has continued the same policy, as the two sides pledged to ban headscarves in schools until the age of fourteen. These actions are part of what conservative leader Chancellor Sebastian Kurtz describes as his hardline stance on "political Islam", which aims to appeal to his base but also to the supporters of the extreme right, who were frustrated with his alliance with the Freedom Party in May 2019.⁴

Belarus

Total population: 9.5 million

Muslim population (2019): 30,000

Islam first arrived in Belarus by the Lipka Tatars in the 14th and 16th centuries. The number of Muslims is estimated at 30,000. The majority (84 percent) of them are descended from Tatars, Azerbaijanis, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Kazakhs and Arabs. About 83 percent of the Muslim population is concentrated in urban areas, while 28 percent live in the capital, Minsk.

Some see the government's relationship with Muslims in Belarus as positive in general. The state recognizes Islam, allows the practice of activities and does not pose any obstacles, but it does not provide them with any financial support. However, there are some difficulties, including preventing women from having their photos in Belarusian passports wearing headscarves or veils.⁵

Belgium

Total population: 10.3 million

Muslim population (2016): 870,000

Islam is one of the seven recognized religions in Belgium, and as such, it enjoys some benefits and subsidies, such as giving government salaries to religious education teachers, providing equipment

⁴ Austrian coalition deal includes headscarves ban and preventive custody. 2 January 2020
<https://www.reuters.com/article/austria-politics/austrian-coalition-deal-includes-headscarf-ban-preventive-custody-media-reports-idUSL8N2971BO>
(Viewed on 16 August 2020).

⁵ muslimsaroundtheworld.com Interview with the President and Mufti of the Religious Department of the Republic of Belarus, 11 January 2020 (viewed on 16 August 2020)

and maintenance to mosques, as well as benefiting from tax exemptions. In recent years, Belgian Muslims have been elected to the National Senate and the House of Representatives. In spite of this, Muslims filed complaints of discrimination, with unemployment and inadequate housing being some causes of tension. They also issued lawsuits for discrimination against women in traditional dress, as the majority of Belgian Muslims are of Moroccan, Turkish or Albanian origins. Brussels and Antwerp are the two largest Muslim cities in Belgium. The Belgian Muslims Coalition is the official interlocutor on Islam and Muslim communities in Belgium, and it supervises the registration of mosques, imams and teachers of Islamic education in public schools.

Although there are more than 350 mosques in Belgium, Muslims have very few civil society organizations that defend their rights and combat discrimination. Therefore, the representation of Muslims in the Belgian centers of power and civil society organizations remains weak. Meanwhile, the government of Belgium is working to provide funding for mosques and salaries for imams, employing more than 800 imams in government-recognized mosques and teachers of Islamic and Arabic education in schools. Nevertheless, there are indications of escalating suffering of Muslims in the Belgian society due to racism and discrimination based on religion and race, and this was evident especially in the aftermath of the 2016 Brussels bombings.⁶

Croatia

Total population: 4.1 million

Muslim population (2016): 70,000

Muslims make up 1.5 percent of the total population, with Bosnians being the largest ethnic group in Croatia after the Croats, Albanians, Romans and Turks. The Croatian constitution provides for equal rights regardless of religion and prohibits incitement to religious hatred. It also stipulates that religious groups are equal before the law and separate from the state, as they are free to provide religious services publicly, as well as open and manage schools and charitable organizations under the protection of and with assistance of the state. There are 26 houses of worship for Muslims in Croatia, including four mosques spread over different regions in the country.

⁶ Belgium: Muslims are in a difficult position and are suffering since the 2016 bombings, Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, December 10, 2019.

The Croatian government remains open to the integration of Muslims into Croatian society, and there is a similar aspiration by the Muslim community in Croatia for integration. The Muslim community in Croatia presents a convincing example to other European countries. Croatia also avoided stirring anti-Islamic sentiment, unlike other Central European countries. Although there were sometimes racist attacks against Muslims, they were isolated incidents.

Denmark

Total population: 5.4 million

Muslim population (2016): 310,000

In the 1970s, Muslims from Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco and the former Yugoslavia arrived in the country for work. In the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of Muslims who came to Denmark were refugees and asylum seekers from Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia, where access to housing and work was a source of concern for Muslims in Denmark. Muslims are concentrated in the major cities, in particular Copenhagen, Odense and Aarhus.

In March 2019, the Parliament rejected a proposed law to ban public sector employees from wearing religious outfits. The Danish Parliament previously rejected in 2018 a proposed law banning prayer rooms in public educational institutions. In recent years, the rise of the anti-immigrant Danish Popular Party has given rise to positions previously considered extreme, but which become common. The Stram Kurs (English: Hardline) party, an extreme right-wing party, was about to enter parliament in the recent elections in Denmark, where its policy is anti-Islam and calls for the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Denmark. In June 2020, Rasmus Paludan, leader of the Stram party, was sentenced to three months in prison after being convicted of racism.⁷ Denmark has witnessed incidents of abuse of Islam, including the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten that published on September 30, 2005 satirical cartoons of Prophet Muhammad, May God bless him and grant him peace, which was met with a wave of massive protests in the Muslim world.

⁷ Reuters, 25 June 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-denmark-crime/danish-far-right-party-leader-sentenced-to-jail-on-racism-and-defamation-idUSKBN23W22T> (Viewed on 26 August 2020).

Finland

Total population : 5.5 million

Muslim population (2016) : 150,000

It is estimated that Finland has approximately 150,000 Muslims, the majority of whom are immigrants who have come to Finland since the 1990s, most of them from the first generation who came to the country as refugees or asylum seekers from war-torn countries. Apart from the Tatars, Muslims are of Somali, North African, Iraqi, Afghan, Syrian, Turkish, Iranian and Balkan origins, and are concentrated in the Helsinki metropolitan area and major cities, most notably Turku and Tampere. Dozens of Muslim societies were formed in Finland, among them the Federation of Islamic Organizations of Finland and the Islamic Council of Finland. All public schools offer religious education according to student's religion, as students must choose between religious courses or civic education. Far-right parties such as Finns (PS) and Finnish People First tried to ban the burqa and niqab.

France

Total population: 62.3 million

Muslim population (2016): 5.72 million

Islam is the second largest religion in France and the Muslim population is one of the largest in Western Europe. About 70 percent of them have a direct affiliation and cultural connection with the North African countries, especially Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, and a large number of them are now French citizens. The majority of Muslims are concentrated in major cities, in Paris, Marseille, Bordeaux, Lyon and Strasbourg, to name a few. Statistics from the French Ministry of the Interior for 2014 indicate that France has more than 2,000 mosques or places of worship for Muslims. The French Council of the Muslim Faith, established in 2003, is considered the authority that regulates the relationship with the state and the French government regarding issues of concern to Muslims in France, such as building mosques and training imams. Well-known Muslim figures

have emerged in the fields of finance, business, culture, and scientific research, and have made positive contributions to the French society.

However, the percentage of Muslim politicians remains small, although a number of them held government positions in recent years, such as Rachida Dati, who was the first Muslim to reach the highest ranks of power and served as Minister of Justice from 2007 to 2009, along with Najat Falou Belkacem, Minister for Women's Rights and Official Spokesperson of the government during the period from May 2012 to April 2014, when she was appointed Minister of Women's Rights, City Affairs, Youth Affairs, and Sports. On August 26, 2014, she was appointed Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, becoming the first woman to hold this position in the history of the French Republic.

The growth of this Muslim community challenged the French model of strict separation between religion and public life. Since 2004, religious symbols have been banned in schools, including the Islamic headscarf, from elementary school to high school. Many French Muslims complain of high unemployment rates and housing conditions, with a large number of them living in marginalized suburbs. The ban on religious symbols in public schools led to a major national controversy, as it was widely seen as a restriction of religious freedoms for Muslim communities, especially the ban on the headscarf. Late 2005 witnessed widespread riots that erupted mainly among immigrant communities throughout France and lasted for a long time.

Studies have shown that Muslims are treated unfairly with regard to obtaining work, and it was evident that failure to integrate into the labor market is a stumbling block to achieving integration into society. The 2017 report issued by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights indicated that Muslims living in France, as well as in other European Union countries, faced discrimination on a wide range of subjects, especially when looking for work, during the course of work, and when trying to obtain public or private services.⁸

⁸ Second issue of the questionnaire on minorities and discrimination in the European Union, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017. View on 26 August 2020.
<http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey-eu-midis-ii-muslims>

Germany

Total population: 82.5 million

Muslim Population (2016): 4.95 million

Islam gained prominence in Germany as a result of labor migration in the 1960s and waves of political refugees since the 1970s. The number of Muslims residing in Germany increased between 2010 and 2016 from 3.3 million (4.1 percent of the population) to about 5 million (6.1 percent), while the number of other residents decreased slightly from 77.1 million to 76.5 million. Immigration in recent years has contributed significantly to the increase in the Muslim population in Germany. According to the German Interior Ministry, about 25 percent of Muslims are recent immigrants, with an estimated 1.2 million Muslim immigrants entering the country between 2011 and 2015.⁹

Most of the Muslim population is of Turkish descent, and most of them maintain strong ties to Turkey. Others arrived from Bosnia and Kosovo during the Balkan wars. The majority of the Muslim population settles in major cities such as Berlin, Cologne and Hamburg, which have many mosques. These cities are centers of Islamic life and culture in Germany.

The government continued to hold Conference on dialogue, in partnership with Muslims in the country, which was launched in 2006. The aim of the dialogue was to improve the religious and social participation of the Muslim population, highlight the contributions of Muslims to the German society and strengthen partnerships between the government and Islamic organizations.

Greece

Total population: 10.75 million

Muslim population (2016): 620,000

There are two different groups of Muslims in Greece, the group that inhabited Greece since the time of the Ottoman Empire (mainly in eastern Macedonia and Thrace) and the group of Muslim immigrants who began arriving in the last quarter of the 20th century, especially to Athens and

⁹ Germany, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State. (viewed on 26 August 2020) <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/germany/>

Thessaloniki. The Muslim population of Western Thrace is protected by an agreement signed by Greece and the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The Muslims of Greece are the only community officially recognized by the state. In addition to their constitutional rights, the right to citizenship and their basic rights are protected under the bilateral and international agreements that Greece has signed and ratified.

Muslims in Greece come from different, often overlapping ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds. In the 1950s, a new group of immigrants, most of them from Egypt, settled in the two main urban centers of the country, Athens and Thessaloniki. Since the 1990s, the number of Muslim immigrants from different countries from the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Somalia and East Asian Muslim countries has increased, but most Muslim immigrants come from the Balkan countries, especially from Albania and the Albanian communities in the Republic of Macedonia, and other former Yugoslav republics.

Regarding the status of Muslims in Western Thrace, their identity was largely based on Turkish-Greek relations, which resulted in the emergence of a model of dual belonging based on religion and ethnicity in which Greece represents the motherland and Turkey represents the cultural and ethnic heritage. Although the Muslims of Western Thrace are citizens of Greece, a large number of them tend to speak the Turkish language and express an ethnic awareness of their Turkish origin. The Muslim community in Western Thrace continued to object to the government's practice of appointing muftis, and instead pressed for the election of muftis by the Muslim community. The government maintains that governmental appointment was appropriate because the muftis retain judicial powers since the constitution does not allow the election of judges.¹⁰

<p style="text-align: center;">Hungary</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Total population: 9.8 million</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Muslim population (2016): 40,000</p>
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The number of Muslims in Hungary is estimated at 40,000, and their number increased as a result of the migration crisis that occurred in 2015, but most of them had previously come to study in

¹⁰ Greece, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State (viewed on 26 August 2020) <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/greece/>

Hungarian universities. Most of Hungary's Muslim population lives in the capital, Budapest. As a result, there are several mosques in the city.

Under the right-wing government led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Hungarian Muslims are facing high levels of Islamophobia, as they have been targeted, their property damaged, and anti-immigration protests have erupted. Prime Minister Orbán always plays the immigration card to exploit the fears of Hungarians and had secured a third consecutive term in the April 2018 elections. Government officials continued to make statements in defense of what they called "Christian Europe" and described immigration, especially of Muslims, as a threat. In his annual State of the Nation address in February 2019, Prime Minister Orbán stated that the future of Central Europe lies in "protecting our families and our Christian culture" from immigration, which he said has led to the "virus of Islamic terrorism."¹¹

Ireland

Total population: 4.7 million

Muslim population (2016): 63,400

According to the 2016 Irish census, 63,400 Muslims live in the Republic of Ireland, which is a 29 percent increase over the 2011 census figures. Muslims represent a small group, but it is growing rapidly due to immigration.¹²

The first Muslims to immigrate to Ireland arrived in the early 1950s. They initially traveled for the purpose of studying, especially medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. This group included Muslims from South Africa, Pakistan, Malaysia and the Gulf states. In the 1970s, a number of aeronautical engineering trainees arrived in Ireland from Libya, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. Muslims are concentrated in Dublin and the cities of Cork, Merrick and Galway. There are several organs representing Muslims in the country, notably the Islamic Cultural Center in Ireland, the Islamic Center of Ireland and the Muslim League in Ireland.

¹¹ Hungary, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State (viewed on 26 August 2020). <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/hungary/>

¹² Islam is the third biggest religion in Ireland, Irish Examiner, 07/06/2017. (viewed on 26 August 2020) <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-20451879.html>

The presence of Muslims in Ireland has not been politicized the way it has been in many other European countries. Perhaps due to several reasons. Until recently, the Muslim community in Ireland was limited in number and belonged to the middle class; additionally, Ireland did not mind showing religious symbols in public places compared to other Western countries. In April 2019, Irish police decided to allow Muslim women in their forces to wear headscarves while working.

Italy

Total population: 58.4 million

Muslim population (2016): 2.87 million

The Muslim community in Italy is diverse, and the Moroccan community is the largest in number. There are also other communities from North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Albania. Most of them have arrived since the 1980s as students. More than 60 percent of the Muslim population resides in the northern regions of the country, while 25 percent reside in the central regions and 15 percent in the south. Among the most prominent Islamic societies in Italy are the Italian Muslim Community, the Great Mosque in Rome, the Union of the Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy, and the Italian Islamic Association. Among the well-known names in the Italian political landscape is Khaled Shawky, a member of the Italian Parliament. In June 2019, Badr El Din Minani became the first Muslim officer to join the National Police (Carabinieri).

The Muslim community continued to face difficulties in terms of obtaining licenses from local governments to build mosques or to continue managing existing mosques, the number of which remains limited. Politicians from some parties, including League party leader Matteo Salvini, who served as deputy prime minister and interior minister from June 2018 until September 2019, made statements critical of Islam and against the construction of new mosques.¹³

¹³ Italy, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State. (viewed on 26 August 2020)
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/italy/>

Luxembourg

Total population: 510,000

Total Muslim population (2016): 20,000

Muslims make up 1 percent of the population of Luxembourg, the majority of whom are from South Europe and the Middle East. The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, including the freedom to practice religion in public and to express religious opinions, as long as no crime is committed in exercising that freedom. The Parliament in Luxembourg in 2015, after a 17-year campaign waged by Islamic organizations, approved the amendment of the constitution, which allowed state institutions to officially recognize Islam.

The Muslim community in Luxembourg is one of the religious groups that receive financial support from the state, as the agreement stipulates the allocation of 450,000 euros annually from the state budget for the work requirements of the Muslim community. The new law also provides an opportunity for the Muslim community to establish endowment institutions whose importance exceeds financial support.

The results of the investigation by the Islamophobia Observatory, a non-profit organization established in 2016 to promote intercultural dialogue in Luxembourg, revealed that Islamophobia exists in Luxembourg. It also revealed that the Muslim population feels significantly integrated in the country, indicating that the sense of integration in Luxembourg is stronger than in neighboring countries.¹⁴

North Macedonia

Total population: 2.1 million

Muslim population (2020): 870.000

Macedonian Orthodoxy is the largest religion in North Macedonia, but about a third of the country's population is Muslim, most of whom live in the northern and western parts of the country

¹⁴ The majority of Muslims feel they are integrated, RTL Today (viewed on 27 August 2020) <https://today.rtl.lu/news/luxembourg/a/1451126.html#:~:text=Around%2020%2C000%20residents%20of%20Luxembourg,well%2Dintegrated%20in%20the%20country>

and are of Albanian descent. The North Macedonia constitution recognizes five religious groups, including the Muslim religious group in North Macedonia, and states that they are equal before the law and are free to build schools, charities and other social institutions.¹⁵

The law does not allow religious organizations to run primary schools, but it does allow them to run secondary schools and above. Religious secondary schools have their own curricula and are not subject to licensing by the Ministry of Education. Macedonia avoided the ethnic and religious violence that ravaged most of the Balkans after the breakup of Yugoslavia. However, in the beginning of 2001, there was an uprising demanding more rights for the ethnic Albanian minority, a group that includes mostly Muslims. With the support of the European Union and NATO, an agreement was reached, granting them more rights.

Malta

Total population: 415.000

Muslim population (2016): 10.000

The island of Malta is located in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, and throughout history, it was distinguished by its strategic geographical location and served as a bridge between the North African countries and the European continent. Arabs from North Africa spent nearly 200 years in Malta at a time when Islam was the predominant religion on the island. Today, Islam is considered a minority religion in Malta, where the number of Muslims is estimated between 6,000 and 10,000, representing more than 1 percent of the total population.

The constitution provides for full respect for beliefs and freedom of worship, provided that public safety, order, morals, health, and the rights and freedoms of others are not violated. The state prohibits discriminatory treatment based on religion or belief. What reflects the Arab Islamic heritage in Malta is that the Maltese language includes many Arabic words and vocabulary, and many names of cities and places in the countries are Arabic.

¹⁵ Northern Macedonia, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State (viewed on 27 August 2020)
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/north-macedonia/>

The government has yet to include again voluntary Islamic religious education as an after-school program in state primary and secondary schools despite statements in the past two years that it is considering doing so.¹⁶ On February 7, 2019, on the occasion of celebrating the World Interfaith Harmony Week, members of the Muslim, Jewish, Christian and other groups signed a declaration of friendship and solidarity under the auspices of former the President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca. The declaration stipulated that religious harmony is an essential factor in unity, and the signatories pledged to continue dialogue, cooperation and mutual support if necessary.

The Netherlands

Total population: 16.3 million

Muslim population (2016): 1.2 million

Islam is the second largest religion in the Netherlands. The roots of Islam in the Netherlands go back to the 16th century, when a group of Ottoman merchants began to settle in the coastal cities of the country. As a result, mosques were established in Amsterdam at the beginning of the 17th century. In the following centuries, the Netherlands witnessed sporadic immigration of Muslims from the Dutch East Indies, where during its long history it was a Dutch colony. In the 1950s, Muslims arrived from the former colonies of Suriname and Indonesia.

Most Muslims live in urban areas and are of Moroccan, Turkish or Surinamese descent. The Muslim population also includes recent immigrants and asylum seekers from other countries, including Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many Muslims live in the four main cities of the country, namely Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht.

For many years, the Netherlands promoted cultural diversity, in particular housing different groups on equal terms. The integration of Muslims into the society remains a source of concern for the Dutch authorities, especially after the murder in 2004 of a filmmaker who was critical of Islam. On August 1, 2019, the ban on full-face coverings - including ski masks, helmets, face veils and

¹⁶ Malta, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State (viewed on 27 August 2020)
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/malta/>

burqas - went into effect in schools, hospitals, public transportation and government buildings. According to the law, authorities are required to ask individuals who violate the ban to remove the face covering or leave the building, and those who refuse to comply with the law may be forced to pay a fine equivalent to 150 euros (\$ 170).¹⁷

Since 2005, the government has launched a scheme to prevent extremism, facilitate social and economic integration, and promote "Dutch values". It also encouraged training of imams at universities in Amsterdam and Lydian. One of the positive points is the election of a large number of officials with Islamic reference to the national government and the Dutch Parliament. Among the prominent members of the Muslim community in the political field is Ahmed Abu Talib, who became mayor of the Dutch city of Rotterdam in 2009, and is the first immigrant to assume the position of mayor in the history of the Netherlands.

Norway

Total population: 5,051.275

Muslim population (2016): 300.000

Islam is the second largest religion in Norway after Christianity, and most Muslims are children of immigrants. The Norwegians of Pakistani descent are the largest group, and the influx of immigrants from other countries such as Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia has increased the size of the Muslim community. Muslims are spread all over the country, but they are mainly concentrated in Oslo.

According to government statistics for 2011, the percentage of Muslims is about 2.3 percent of the population. Meanwhile, the Pew Research Center estimated that Muslims accounted for 3.7 percent of Norwegians in 2010 and 5.7 percent in 2016. In June 2018, the Norwegian parliament passed a bill banning the wearing of face-covering clothing in educational institutions and kindergartens, including the niqab. The ban applies to students and staff alike. In August 2019,

¹⁷ The Netherlands, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State (viewed on 27 August 2020)
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/netherlands/>

after the shooting at an Islamic center in the Bærum suburb of Oslo, the government announced that in 2020 it would launch a plan to counter anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Poland

Total population: 38.5 million
Muslim population (2016): 10.000

Islam has a long history in Poland dating back to the fourteenth century. The number of Muslims in Poland today is estimated at 10,000, which is less than 1 percent of the total population. Most Muslims live in the capital, Warsaw.

Today, Poland is one of the most homogeneous countries in religious and ethnic terms in Europe. According to the 2016 European Islamophobia Report, there is common fear of Islam and Muslims in the Polish society compared to other European countries, which have a significant number of Muslims.¹⁸

As a result, despite the very limited size of the Muslim community, the level of Islamophobia remains high in Poland. In the political sphere, some Polish politicians have expressed positions that stereotypically portray Muslims, linking them to terrorism and violence.

Portugal

Total population : 10.7 million
Muslim population (2016): 40,000

Muslims have been associated with Portugal from a long time ago; from the year 711 until 1249, a large part of the present-day Portuguese land was subject to the rule of the Muslims, and it was called Western Andalusia. The Muslims had their cultural heritage, such as Islamic art, and historical monuments such as mosques. After the wars of independence, refugees and immigrants from former colonies came to Portugal, some of whom were Muslims. Currently, most Muslims

¹⁸ Islamophobia in the 2016 National Report for Poland, The European Report on Islamophobia 2016, Istanbul, SETA, 2016

live in the major urban centers, such as Lisbon, Coimbra and Faro. The Portuguese constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom of worship, which may not be violated even if the government declares a state of emergency. The law prohibits business owners from discriminating against individuals based on religion and requires appropriate accommodation of employees' religious practices.¹⁹

Romania

Total population: 22.4 million

Muslim population (2016): 80,000

Estimates for 2016 show that the Muslim population in Romania is less than 1 percent of the country's population of 22.4 million, the majority of whom are Turks and Tatars living in the Dobruja region in eastern Romania. Bucharest is home to about 9,000 Muslims, and there are 10 mosques in different parts of the country. The roots of the Islamic heritage in Romania go back to the 11th century, when the Muslims came with the Turkic semi-nomadic tribes.

Some media in Romania continued to portray Muslim refugees as a threat to the Romanian society because of their religion. An article published by evz.ro online in March 2019 went so far as to regard Muslim immigrants as "a fatal threat to European civilization and that the only alternatives for Europeans are civil war or obedience to Islam."

Russia

Total population: 141 million

Muslim population (2018): 25 million

Islam is the second largest religion in the Russian Federation and is officially recognized alongside Orthodoxy, Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism. According to the Religious Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation, the Muslim population reached 25 million in 2018, which is nearly 18 percent of the total population. Muslims form diverse groups in the population of the

¹⁹ Portugal, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State (viewed on 27 August 2020). <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/portugal/>

republics of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan in the Federal District of Volga, and they represent the majority among the nationalities of the North Caucasus Federal District located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, including Circassians, Balkans, Chechens, Ingush, Kabardians, Qarachai and many Dagestanis. In the middle of the Volga Basin, there are also Bulgars and Bashkirs, most of whom are Muslims. Moscow and Orenburg Oblast, in addition to the republics of Adygea and Astrakhan Oblast in the Southern Federal District, have significant numbers of Muslims. There are more than 5,000 registered religious organizations.

It is difficult to determine the exact time of the emergence of Islam in Russia, but Muslims arrived in Dagestan in the middle of the 7th century and since then, Islam began to spread in the entire North Caucasus. In this regard, large numbers of the Muslim population of the Russian Federation are indigenous. At present, there are about 5000 mosques in the Russian Federation, and the Religious Administration for Muslims of the Russian Federation is one of the most prominent Islamic bodies in the country.

Serbia and Kosovo

Total population: 9 million

Muslim population (2019) in Serbia: 230.000

Muslim population (2019) in Kosovo: nearly 1.8 million

Serbian Orthodoxy is the predominant religion in Serbia. Islam is the second largest religion, with Muslims making up 3 percent of the population in Serbia and 95 percent in Kosovo. They are concentrated mainly in the southwestern Sandžak region, and the majority of Kosovar Albanians are Muslims.

Montenegro

Total population: 612.000

Muslim population (2019): 122.000

Muslims constitute about 20 percent of the total population of Montenegro, where their number is approximately 122,000. Ethnicity and religion are closely associated: many Bosnians (Muslims of

Bosnian origin) and other Muslims live along the eastern and northern regions. The government concluded an agreement with the Muslim community of Montenegro that defines their legal status and regulates their relationship with the state. Under the law, religion may not be taught in primary or secondary public schools. However, the Muslim community runs one private secondary school.

Spain

Total population: 43.1 million

Muslim population (2016): 1.18 million

The eight-century Muslim rule of Spain ended in 1492, leaving behind a rich Islamic heritage, especially its architectural heritage. Contemporary Muslims began to arrive in Spain in large numbers since the seventies of the last century, and most of them came from the Kingdom of Morocco, which became the largest Muslim community in Spain. Muslims are concentrated in various regions of the country, especially in the major cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Seville and Valencia.

It is estimated that there are 13 large mosques and more than 1000 small mosques and prayer halls spread across the country. The state recognizes Islam and grants Muslim privileges, including teaching Islam in schools and religious holidays. In recent years, there has been a remarkable rise in some far-right parties, such as the Vox party, which pursues an anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim policy in Spain.

Sweden

Total population: 9 million

Muslim Population (2016): 810.000

Muslims in Sweden come from diverse backgrounds and origins, with a strong presence of Turkish, Bosnian, Iraqi, Lebanese and Syrian communities. The number of Muslims is of significance in Sweden that the representative bodies of Muslims receive financial support from

the state. Sweden promotes cultural diversity and prides itself on its tolerance. However, there are criticisms regarding the social problems facing Muslims.²⁰

Switzerland

Total population: 7.4 million

Muslim population (2016): 510.000

Official figures indicate that the Muslim population has doubled in recent years, but some sources say that there are about 150,000 Muslims residing in the country illegally. The first Muslims to arrive in the 1960s were workers, most of them from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, and Albania, and their families joined them in the 1970s. Asylum seekers have recently joined too (a small number of them hold Swiss citizenship).

According to a study prepared by the University of Freiburg, hostility towards Muslims in Switzerland is a direct result of political discourse and the media that exaggerates some aspects of Islam. A controversial referendum in November 2009 adopted a constitutional amendment banning the construction of minarets, which was supported by 57.5 percent of the voters. Often this hostility fuels the growth of Islamophobia and negative stereotypes about Muslims as a result of world events.²¹

Ukraine

Total population: 44 million

Muslim population (2019): 500,000

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslims constituted a third of the population of Crimea, and a large number of Muslims inhabited most of the major cities in the Crimea. However, during World War II, the Soviet leadership accused the Crimean Muslims of collaborating with Nazi Germany and thus were subjected to mass deportations in 1944. More than 200,000 Crimean

²⁰ The increasing number of Muslims in Europe, 11/29/2017, Pew Research Center (viewed on 27 August 2020)
<http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population>

²¹ Anti-Muslim Swiss actions. (Viewed on 27 August 2020)
<https://www.lematin.ch/suisse/actes-hostiles-egard-musulmans-hausse/story/20990936>

Tatars were deported to Central Asia, particularly to the land that would later become Uzbekistan. The Crimean Tatars were only able to return to Crimea after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's independence. The Crimean Peninsula consists of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Estimates of the Ukrainian Muslim population vary. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the total population of the peninsula is 2,353,000. There are no independent recent statistics that provide data on the religious affiliations of the population, despite the presence of approximately 300,000 Crimean Tatars, who make up 13 percent of the population and are mostly Muslims.

United Kingdom
Total population: 65.64 million
Muslim population (2016): 4.16 million

The United Kingdom began communicating with Muslims since ancient times, as these links date back to the Middle Ages. A large number of Muslims arrived in the United Kingdom in the sixties of the last century, from former colonies, with the aim of finding work. Many came from South Asia; permanent communities were formed, and 50 percent of the current population was born in the United Kingdom.

It also has large communities from Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and the Balkans. The 2001 census showed that one third of Muslims were under 16 years old. It also showed high levels of unemployment, poor levels of competencies and a low rate of ownership of housing. Muslims settle in major cities, such as London and Birmingham.

Muslims succeeded in engaging in public and political life. Nineteen MPs were elected during the general elections held in 2019. Baroness Paula Odin was the first Muslim to sit in the UK Parliament, and Sadiq Khan, the current Mayor of London, was elected in 2016. In 2010, former Prime Minister Cameron appointed Mrs. Sayeeda Warsi, as the first Muslim woman minister in the British government, and Sajid Javid, of Pakistani descent, held the positions of Minister of Interior (2018-2019) and Minister of Finance (2019-2020).

2. The efforts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in support of Muslim communities in Europe

The OIC has adopted a wide-ranging and focused approach in support of Muslim communities and minorities in Europe that aims to promote dialogue, achieve integration, preserve religious and cultural identity, develop youth and empower women. This policy is carried out while fully respecting the sovereignty of European countries and their laws and abstaining from interfering in their internal affairs, and ensuring cooperation of governments of these countries. In light of the increasing challenges that Muslims face in Europe, the OIC sought to address them within the framework of a comprehensive, constructive and solidarity-based approach.

To this end, the Contact Group on Muslims in Europe, established by the heads of state and government of the OIC member states at the 13th Islamic Summit Conference that was held in Istanbul, Turkey, on April 14 and 15, 2016, constitutes a practical mechanism aimed at strengthening cooperation between civil society and the relevant governmental bodies, in order to develop strategies to combat hate speech, intolerance, racial discrimination and Islamophobia, support intercultural dialogue and achieve social and economic integration. The Contact Group is an important platform for exchanging experiences and identifying best practices, with the aim of increasing the participation of Muslims in the political, economic and social life in Europe.

The contact group is keen to hold annual and regular meetings to review the situation of Muslims in Europe and to search for effective solutions to the various challenges facing the Muslim community. In a meeting held on the sidelines of the annual coordination meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers in New York in September 2019, the Contact Group reviewed the current conditions of Muslim communities in Europe and renewed its initial support for them while fully respecting the sovereignty of European countries and in cooperation with their competent authorities.

On the other hand, and on the initiative of its Secretary General, Dr. Yousuf Al-Othaimeen, the OIC developed a strategy for the participation of Muslims in Europe. This strategy falls within the framework of the implementation of Resolution No. 1/43-MM regarding the protection of the rights of Muslim groups and communities in non-member states of the OIC, which was adopted

by the 43rd session of the Organization's Foreign Ministers Council (OIC-CFM), which was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on 18 and 19 October 2016. The strategy aims to continue the Organization's engagement with the Muslim community in Europe to enhance their awareness of their roles as active citizens in their societies, and to actively participate in public life. The strategy encourages all members of Muslim communities in Europe to engage positively and constructively in the society and contribute better to its development and prosperity.

The political consultation mechanism between the OIC and the European Union represents an appropriate framework for discussing and exchanging views on issues of common interest, including issues of concern to Muslim communities in Europe. The consultations held in March 2019 in Brussels, as well as the virtual meeting between senior officials of the two organizations held in July 2020, were an opportunity to renew the commitment of the two sides to work together to increase awareness of the need to address the rise of Islamophobia and to continue to mobilize support of the international community for Resolution 16/18 issued by the United Nations Human Rights Council on "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief."

In fact, the OIC is still deeply concerned over the rise of Islamophobia in the West in general and in European countries in particular. The various national elections in recent years reflected the significant rise of the extreme right and populist parties. The success of these parties was partly due to the demonization of immigrants and the influx of refugees towards Europe, especially Muslim refugees. They are accused of causing an escalation of violence and terrorism and a high crime rate.

The OIC is steadfast in its work to address Islamophobia and protect the rights of the Muslim community in all parts of Europe, by strengthening cooperation with various international partners, especially the United Nations and the European Union, and the governments of countries with Muslim communities. The objective is to establish a comprehensive and constructive dialogue to identify the necessary ways and means to contribute to achieving harmony between cultures and promoting tolerance, understanding and mutual respect.

Within the framework of the ongoing bilateral cooperation between the OIC and the Russian Federation, relations between the two parties have become more dynamic in recent years, with the visit of the Secretary General of the OIC, Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen, to Moscow in July 2019, to

hold intensive consultations with the Russian side on issues of common interest. The high-level talks included a meeting with His Eminence Sheikh Rawi Ayn Al-Deen, Chairman of the Muftis Council in Russia and head of the Religious Board for Muslims in the Russian Federation. The meeting was an opportunity to affirm the two sides' keenness to conduct joint programs to highlight the positive contributions of Muslims to the Russian society in various fields.

His Eminence Sheikh Rawi Ayn Al-Deen, visited the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah in November 2019. The meeting focused on expanding cooperation between the Russian Federation and the OIC in the intellectual, cultural, media and other fields, through the implementation of a joint work program that contributes to strengthening the rapprochement between Russia and the Muslim world and shows the true image of moderate Islam that opposes extremism and terrorism.

With regard to the conditions of the Muslim community in Western Thrace, the Organization is following up on the matter with great interest, while keen to continue its communication with the competent Greek authorities regarding the situation of Muslims in this region and the protection of their rights and identity, in line with the relevant resolutions of the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers.

Muslim Communities in the Asia-Pacific Region

About 62 percent of the world's Muslims live in the Asia-Pacific region, compared to only 20 percent in the Middle East and North Africa. More than 300 million Muslims -one fifth of the total- live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion.

The following six Asian countries include the world's largest Muslim populations: Indonesia (203 million), Pakistan (174 million), India (171 million), Bangladesh (145 million), Iran (74 million) and Turkey (74 million).

Together, the six countries include 85 percent of Asia's Muslims and 53 percent of the world's Muslims. About half of Asia's Muslims live in South Asia (50 percent), and the rest are almost equally divided between Southeast Asia (26 percent) and Central and Western Asia (24 percent). Very few Muslims live in the Pacific region (less than 1 percent).

In the light of the significant concentration of Muslims in the Asian continent and the unique challenges faced by some Muslim communities, the OIC has paid special attention and follow-up to their situation. It has also been keen to explore all means to protect their rights and enhance their role in their communities, and has contributed towards finding a peaceful settlement of disputes and contentious issues. This was carried out while adhering to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the countries concerned, utilizing the mechanism of direct and constructive dialogue with their governments, in line with the relevant resolutions adopted by the Islamic Summit Conference and the Council of Foreign Ministers.

1. Muslim communities by country:

Australia

Total population: 24.3 million

Muslim population (2016): 604.235

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Muslim population is 604,235 in 2016, or about 2.6 percent of the country's total population. Islam is the third largest religion in Australia after Christianity and Buddhism. Muslims form a small but active group, which is integrated into the Australian society. It consists of different cultural and ethnic groups, the largest of which are: Lebanese, Turkish, Afghan, Indian, Pakistani, Somali, Sudanese, Iraqi, Iranian, Bosnian, South African, Fijian-Indian, West African, Bengali, Kurdish, Uighur, Turkmen, Malaysian and Indonesian. There is as a small minority group from the South-East Asia and Pacific region such as Mindanao and Chinese Muslims, in addition to Moroccans, Burmese and Sri Lankans. Muslims are distributed across major cities and suburbs, particularly 42% in Greater Sydney, 31% in Greater Melbourne and 8% in Greater Perth.

Although the Muslim community is constantly growing, owing to increasing demographic growth and the influx of immigrants, it remains a small percentage of Australia's population. Several bodies representing Muslims are active in Australia, including the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils.

Many recent empirical studies in Australia have sought to illustrate the experiences and beliefs of Australian Muslims. Most of these studies reveal the lack of cultural understanding, rise of discrimination, and undesirable university and high school experiences that have affected their sense of belonging, identity and citizenship.

Ahead of the May 2019 federal elections, members of the Muslim community expressed concern over anti-Muslim sentiment among 10 political parties and urged voters not to vote for them, arguing that they supported policies that would interfere with the administration of the country's mosques and prohibit Muslim immigration.

Myanmar (Burma)

Total population: 53.855.732

Muslim population (2020): 2.2 million

As a result of escalating ethnic and religious tensions since 2012, it is difficult to determine the number of Muslims living in Myanmar, although some estimates put it at 2.2 million, or about 4 percent of the total population, with more than 1 million Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State in western Myanmar. Rohingya Muslims have been the subject of discrimination, violence and a series of attacks in Rakhine State for decades, particularly since 2012. The United Nations has described the Rohingya as one of the most persecuted people in the world, and described the atrocities carried out by Myanmar's military and security forces as "ethnic cleansing".

The deteriorating situation of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar's Rakhine State has prompted more than 1.1 million forced displacements to Bangladesh and neighboring countries as a result of persecution and fear of further attacks and killings by the Myanmar military and security forces. Following the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya in August 2017, Rohingya internally displaced persons continued to face severe repression, violence, disenfranchisement, discrimination, harassment, Islamophobia, hate speech, as well as restrictions on freedom of movement, access to education, health care and livelihoods.

In November 2019, the International Criminal Court approved a request from the public prosecutor's office to investigate allegations of crimes against the Rohingya. In addition, and during the same month, Gambia -on behalf of the OIC- filed a lawsuit at the International Court of Justice regarding the Rohingya against Myanmar, for violating obligations as a signatory to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The United Nations acknowledges that the Rohingya crisis has not seen any progress in terms of reaching a final settlement of the issue and points to Myanmar's responsibility in continuing and worsening the status quo. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar reported in September 2019 that the country "did nothing to dismantle the system of violence and persecution

against the Rohingya", and that the Rohingya who remained in Rakhine were living in "the same dire conditions they lived in before the events of August 2017."

In August 2019, amid a second attempt by the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to begin the return process, the Rohingya refused, fearing human rights violations if they returned without guarantees of their safety and rights of citizenship.

Cambodia

Total population: 16,245.729

Muslim population (2020): 320.000

According to government estimates, around 2.1 percent of the population are Muslims, although some NGOs estimate the percentage of Muslims at 4 to 5 percent of the population; The majority of Muslims are of the Cham ethnicity, living mostly in cities and rural fishing villages on the banks of Tonle Sap Lake and the Mekong River, as well as in the Kampot Province.²²

Muslims in Cambodia enjoy great respect. Islam is recognized in the country and Muslims are free to perform their religious rites. The government supports Islamic education from elementary stages up to universities. Unlike some other countries, Muslims in Cambodia are allowed to use religious symbols in schools and government institutions and in official identification documents, such as passports. Cambodia has a Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, a Minister of Islamic Affairs and a Grand Mufti.

22 Cambodia, 2019 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cambodia/> (viewed on 30 August 2020).

China

Total Population: 1.415.045.928

Muslim Population (2019): 24.7 million

Muslims make up nearly 1.6 percent of the total population in China, where they number more than 24 million. They are spread in all regions of China, but the highest percentage is concentrated in the northwestern areas of Xinjiang, Gansu and Ningxia, Yunnan Province in the southwest, and Henan Province in central China. The Hui are the largest ethnic group and are highly concentrated in the Ningxia autonomous region in western China. The population of the Hui Muslims is estimated at 10.6 million.

The Xinjiang Uyghur region is one of the five autonomous regions for national groups in China, where 23 million people of various nationalities live. Muslims constitute 60% of the total population, which is more than 13 million Uyghurs in this region. According to official Chinese authorities, there are 24,000 mosques in Xinjiang, which means one mosque for every 530 Muslims, 10 schools of Islamic sciences and more than one hundred religious societies.

Fiji

Total Population : 931.000

Muslim Population (2019): 58.000

Muslims make up approximately 6.3 percent of the population. The Muslim community is made up of people of Indian origins, descending from hired labor that was brought to the islands in the late 19th century by the British colonial rulers at the time. Muslims enjoy full citizenship, and they work as businesspersons, government ministers, senior state officials, and community leaders

among them. They live in a harmonious relationship with all races.²³ Every major city in Fiji has a mosque run by the Fiji Muslim League.

In the wake of the terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, in which three Muslims of Fijian origins were killed, religious and political groups and representatives of the civil society were quick to condemn the act and encourage tolerance and respect. The Prime Minister called on all Fijians to "pledge to condemn those who make racist and hateful statements." Fiji is a multi-religious country whose constitution guarantees freedom of religion.

India

Total Population: 1,354,051,854

Muslim Population (2011): 171,779,412

India's Muslims are considered the third largest Muslim community in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan. It has 10 percent of the Muslim population in the world, where they number approximately 171 million Muslims (according to the 2011 census). Muslims represent the majority of the local population in Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir. There are large concentrations of Muslims in three Indian states, namely Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar. There is also a significant concentration of Muslims in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura and Uttarakhand.

Among the presidents of the Republic of India, three Muslims held this position, namely Zakir Husain, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, and Abu Bakr Zain Al-Abidin Abdulkalam. No Muslim has ever held the position of Prime Minister of India, which is considered the most important position in the country's hierarchy. Mohammad Hidayatullah and Mohammad Hamid Ansari held the position

²³ Fiji Island Muslim Community, <https://www.twmcc.com/en/studies/197771584355935> (Viewed on 30 August 2020).

of Vice President, in addition to a significant number of Muslims who held ministerial positions in successive Indian governments. A number of prominent businesspersons, artists and intellectuals in India are part of the Muslim community.

It is worth noting that the influence of Islam on Indian society and its contribution to national integration are evident in all aspects of life, including art, culture, languages, architecture, cooking, medicine, etc. There are many mosques and historical monuments in various parts of the country that document the influence of Islamic civilization and history on Indian society.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of belief and the right for all individuals to freely embrace, practice and spread religion, it imposes a secular state, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion; the last two years have witnessed growing hostility against Muslims in India. In addition, the government adopted a set of measures that prompted anger and protests among Muslims in India.

In August 2019, the government abolished the semi-autonomous status of the predominantly Muslim state of Jammu and Kashmir, and divided it into two federal regions: Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh. The decision sparked widespread protests and criticism by Kashmiris and leaders of the Kashmiri Muslim community. In December 2019, the Indian Parliament approved a new citizenship law, which sparked massive protests across the country. The law excludes Muslims of three neighboring countries from the right to benefit from Indian citizenship. In February 2020, the capital, New Delhi, witnessed acts of violence against Muslims, which resulted in the death of many people and the burning and vandalism of mosques and Muslims' properties.

Japan

Total Population: 125 million

Muslim Population (2019): 130.000

There are approximately 120,000 expatriate Muslims and 10,000 Japanese Muslims currently living in Japan. The majority live in the three major metropolitans of Japan (Greater Tokyo, Chukyo and Kinki), and the numbers of Muslims continue to increase throughout Japan. The

majority of Muslims in Japan are born-Muslim foreigners descending from countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia.

The government developed an action plan to meet the religious needs of Muslim visitors to the country and issued brochures to help the tourism industry better understand Islamic culture and customs, and share the best practices and practical advice.²⁴ The local press reported the continued expansion of allocated prayer rooms in public places and halal food across the country, as part of government and private initiatives; including recreational facilities, airports, train stations and rest places on highways.

Mongolia

Total population: 3.121.772

Muslim Population (2019): 90.940

There is currently a significant Muslim community in Mongolia with approximately 90,000 people, the majority of whom are Kazakhs who live mainly in the far west in the Bayan-Ölgii region. The Muslim community constitutes about 3 percent of the population. There is also a small community of Kazakhs in the Nalaikh region near Ulaanbaatar. Islamic rites are currently practiced predominantly in the western part of the country as well as in the Mongolian capital.

Some Muslim groups confirm that negative comments about non-Buddhist religious groups occasionally appear on social media. However, they point out that this does not pose a threat or cause excessive concern and that these comments do not represent a collective societal attitude.²⁵ Some groups state that most citizens support religious tolerance and diversity and that people of different faiths live in harmony.

²⁴ Japan, 2019 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/japan/> (viewed on 30 August 2020).

²⁵ Mongolia, 2019 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/mongolia/> (viewed on 30 August 2020).

Nepal

Total Population: 29.624.035

Muslim Population (2019): 1.277.492

Islam is not a widely spread religion in Nepal. Nevertheless, the number of Muslims has increased rapidly in recent years, with Muslims constituting 4.4 percent of the country's total population. It is believed that Islam spread by Muslims who came from other countries and settled in Nepal, where approximately 97 percent of Muslims live in Terai Province, while the rest (3 percent) live mainly in Kathmandu and the mountains in the Western Region.

Nepal has a Hajj Central Committee, made up of representatives of political parties, mosques, and the civil society, under the authority of the Ministry of Interior. It coordinates and facilitates the logistic services for the benefit of pilgrims. According to the Center for Education and Human Resource Development of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 907 Islamic schools have been registered in education offices in various regions.

New Zealand

Total Population: 4.6 million

Muslim Population (2019): 59.000

Muslims constitute about 1.3 percent of the total population, with the majority of Muslims having been born abroad. A big percentage are from India (29 percent), and the Middle East (21 percent) such as Arabs, Iranians and Iraqis (Ministry of Social Development, 2008), in addition to those who converted to Islam from the local Maori and whites. Muslims are the fastest growing group in New Zealand, increasing six-fold between 1991 and 2006. The Muslims in New Zealand are a small but fast-growing community.

In March 2019, an Australian gunman attacked two mosques in Christchurch, killing 51 people and wounding 49 others, all of them Muslims. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described the

perpetrator of the armed attack as a terrorist. She immediately condemned the attacks and called for religious tolerance and solidarity with the country's Muslim community.

In the aftermath of those terrorist attacks, the government adopted a series of measures, including forming a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the attacks, and organizing public events to commemorate the victims. In October 2019, the government announced the allocation of NZD 17 million (USD 11.5 million) in additional funding to combat terrorist and violent extremist content on the Internet, including content related to religion. In the wake of the attacks, New Zealanders from all over the country condemned the violence and called for solidarity with the Muslim community. In August 2020, a New Zealand court sentenced the perpetrator of the terrorist attack to life in prison without parole, the first person in the country's history to receive such a sentence.

Philippines

Total Population: 107.5 million

Muslim Population (2019): 6.4 million

Islam arrived in the Philippines through merchants in the 3rd century AH. Independent Islamic sultanates began to appear, especially in Manila and the south. These sultanates resisted the Spanish invasion that was initially led by Magellan and took on an anti-Muslim attribute. The Muslims of the Philippines account for 6 percent of the total population. The majority are concentrated on the island of Mindanao in the southern part of the country, which includes another group of islands called the Sulu Archipelago. Mindanao is the second largest island in the Philippines after Luzon. An increasing number of Muslims settled in the urban centers of Manila, Baguio, Dumaguete, Cagayan de Oro, Iligan, Cotabato and Davao. There is a small percentage of Muslims in government, parliamentary and military positions: One Muslim is appointed in the Cabinet and 13 Muslims are in the 301-member House of Representatives, while no members of the Senate are Muslims.

Several important and constructive developments have taken place recently regarding the peace process in the south of the Philippines following decades of dispute and armed conflict. In January 2019, citizens of the five provinces and three major cities in Western Mindanao ratified the

Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which led to the formation of a new Muslim-led Autonomous Region and the abolition of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This measure gave the majority of the Muslim population in the area greater powers. On March 9, 2019, President Rodrigo Duterte led the inauguration ceremony of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), during which Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim was named interim Chief Minister of the BARMM.

Singapore

Total Population: 6.1 million

Muslim Population (2019): 854,000

Muslims currently make up 14 percent of the total population of Singapore, the majority of whom are Malays. Around 17 percent of Muslims in Singapore descend from South Asia, the rest are from Chinese, Arab and Eurasian origins.

The constitution states that every person has the right to profess, practice, or spread his religious belief as long as these activities do not violate any other laws relating to public order, public health, or morals. The constitution also prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion in the administration of any law or in the appointment or employment for any public office. The law states that every religious group has the right to manage its own religious affairs.

Under the law, a Sharia court has non-exclusive judicial power over marriage issues, including disposition of property upon divorce, custody of minor children, and inheritance. The head of the Sharia court is appointed by the President. Although government policy bans some public sector employees from wearing the headscarf, such as nurses and military officers in uniform, many government agencies continue to allow Muslim employees to wear it. Among the bodies that represent Muslims in the country are the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) and the Singapore Muslim Women's Association (PPIS).

South Korea

Total Population: 51.6 million

Muslim Population (2019): 135.000

According to the Korea Muslim Federation, the number of Muslims is estimated at about 135,000, of whom nearly 100,000 are immigrants and expatriate workers coming mainly from Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan. They are concentrated in Seoul, and there are some mosques across the country.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion for all citizens and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion in political, economic, social, and cultural life. Freedoms can be restricted by law in the constitution only when necessary for considerations related to national security, law and order, or public welfare. Restrictions on freedoms may not violate the "basic aspect" of freedom.

Some reports indicate that the Korean Ministry of Employment and Labor supports Muslim workers by offering Korean language lessons and encouraging employers to accommodate Muslim workers' prayer times and better understand their nutritional requirements.²⁶

Sri Lanka

Total Population: 22.7 million

Muslim Population (2019): 2.2 million

Muslims represent 9.7 percent of the total population of Sri Lanka. The majority of Muslims live in the east of Sri Lanka, where they account for more than a third of the population in this region. The rest of the Muslim community is distributed among the urban centers of Sri Lanka, especially the capital, Colombo. Most Muslims are divided into farmers who live in eastern Sri Lanka, and

26 South Korea, 2019 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/south-korea/> (viewed on 31 August 2020).

merchants spread throughout the rest of the country. The country witnessed thirty years of civil war in contemporary history. The civil war ended with a military victory in 2009.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of religion and belief, and the law recognizes four religions (Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity); the constitution and other laws give Buddhism a "prominent status" among religions in the country and demands the government to protect it while respecting the rights of religious minorities. According to a 2003 Supreme Court ruling, the state is constitutionally obligated to protect Buddhism only; other religions do not have the same right to state protection.

According to representatives of religious groups and NGOs, government officials continued to engage in systematic discrimination against religious groups, including Muslims; as the response of local officials and police to numerous incidents of religiously motivated violence was either absent, modest, or biased in favor of the Buddhist-Sinhalese majority.

In the wake of the April 2019 attacks, several mosques and Muslim properties were attacked and vandalized, especially in some of the northwestern areas. The attacks were carried out by crowds led by Buddhist monks, and encouraged by a number of Sinhalese nationalist politicians from small parties associated with the Sri Lanka People's Front (SLPP), which leads the current government. The attacks resulted in the killing of a Muslim man and inflicting heavy damages on properties.

Buddhist nationalist groups, such as the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), used social media to promote what they described as the supremacy of the ethnic Buddhist-Sinhalese majority, incite against, and target religious and ethnic groups. A well-known Buddhist monk has called for the stoning of Muslims to death and spread baseless allegations that Muslim-owned restaurants put "sterilization drugs" in their food to discourage the births of Buddhist-Sinhalese.

In the political field, there is only one Muslim in the current government, who holds the position of Minister of Justice, after the parliamentary elections in August 2020, the current parliament includes 20 Muslim, the majority of whom are members in the opposition parties.

Thailand

Total Population: 68.8 million

Muslim Population (2019): 3.44 million

Muslims make up the second largest religious group in Thailand, at 5 percent of the population. Islam is the predominant religion in three of the four southernmost provinces (Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani) near the Malaysian border, which are commonly referred to as the "deep south". The majority of Muslims in those provinces are Malays, but the Muslim population across the country also includes descendants of immigrants from South Asia, China, Cambodia and Indonesia, in addition to ethnic Thai.

By royal decree, the Central Islamic Council of Thailand, offers advice to the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior on Islamic issues. The government provides funding for building mosques, participating in the Hajj, and for Islamic educational institutions. There are hundreds of Islamic primary and secondary schools across the country. The Thai Ministry of Justice permits the application of Sharia as a private legal process outside of national civil law for Muslims residing in southern regions, in matters relating to family law including inheritance.

The authorities continued to implement the emergency decree and martial law, which have been in force in the southern regions since 2005 and 2004, respectively. Thus, giving the military, police and civilian authorities considerable powers to restrict certain fundamental rights, including the extension of pre-trial detention periods and expanding search operations without judicial authorization. Authorities have delegated some internal security powers to the armed forces, often resulting in accusations of unfair treatment by Muslims.²⁷

27 Thailand, 2019 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/thailand/> (viewed 31 August 2020).

Vietnam

Total Population: 97.9 million

Muslim Population (2019): 80,000

About 80,000 Muslims live in Vietnam, representing 0.1 percent of the population. The majority of Muslims are from the Cham ethnicity. The second largest group of Muslims in Vietnam arose from intermarriage between the Vietnamese people and Muslim merchants or from Vietnamese women who convert to Islam after marriage. The third group was formed by the Vietnamese who converted to Islam out of admiration for this religion after meeting Muslim merchants. The majority of this group are concentrated in the southwest of the country (Mekong Delta).

2. The OIC's efforts in support of Muslim communities in the Asia-Pacific region

One of the most pressing issues is that of the Rohingya Muslims. The OIC gives special priority and a great deal of attention to this issue, in view of the extensive amount of suffering, persecution and injustice that the Rohingya have been experiencing and are still subject to today.

The OIC has been involved, on the international level, in efforts to shed light on the conditions of the persecuted Rohingya, advocate for justice and ensure accountability. The recent developments reflect the steadfast commitment of the OIC through its efforts to defend the rights of Rohingya Muslims on the international stage.

The OIC continues its efforts in this regard, as it issued several decisions on the level of the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers. The OIC has called on the Myanmar authorities to take immediate and concrete steps to restore the basic rights of the Rohingya including the right to full citizenship, and to take the necessary measures to ensure the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of the Rohingya to their homeland, and enable them to do so. The OIC played a key role in adopting resolutions that support the Rohingya rights at the level of the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. It also raised this issue during bilateral consultations with international partners, such as the European Union, Russia, China, the United States and others.

The meetings of the OIC Contact Group on Rohingya, the endeavors of the OIC Secretary General and the activities of his Special Envoy have all contributed to the efforts aimed at defending the Rohingya rights and ending their suffering, whether internally displaced or refugees in neighboring countries, especially in Bangladesh. The OIC created a new mechanism, namely the Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Accountability for Human Rights Violations against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, which took immediate measures to file a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice to hold the perpetrators accountable for crimes against the Rohingya.

In November 2019, Gambia, on behalf of the OIC, filed a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice in The Hague, against Myanmar for violating the 1948 Genocide Conventions. These efforts culminated on January 23, 2020, with the Court unanimously issuing an interim decision, which imposes provisional measures to prevent more genocide actions against the Rohingya and ensure that any evidence related to the case is not destroyed.

As for the issue of Muslims in the southern Philippines, recent years have witnessed many important and constructive developments to achieve peace and stability in this region. The most notable of these developments is the Philippine Parliament's approval of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) proposed by President Rodrigo Duterte's government. This was followed by the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

It is noteworthy that the OIC played a historic and pivotal role in achieving a lasting peaceful solution to the conflict in the southern Philippines; notably the conclusion of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 and the Jakarta Accord of 1996, the launch of the Tripartite Talks Initiative between the Philippine Republican Government, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the OIC in 2007, as well as the establishment of the Bangsamoro Coordinating Forum. The OIC continued its tireless efforts to advance the peace process in southern Philippines, dispatching a technical team to the Philippines in January 2020 to become aware of the latest developments in southern Philippines and to reiterate the OIC's support and contribution to the peace process. The delegation met with the Prime Minister of BARMM, Philippine officials and leaders of both the MNLF and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), as well as members of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority.

As for the Muslims of southern Thailand, the OIC continues to monitor the developments related to the peace talks sponsored by Malaysia. The OIC reiterated its call to the Pattani Muslim groups

to join efforts for a peaceful and lasting solution, in line with the resolutions of the Islamic Summit and the CFM and in accordance with the joint statements of Thailand and the OIC of 2007 and 2012. The OIC continues its activities and regular meetings with Thai officials or representatives of some Muslim groups, in light of the communications made at the beginning of 2020 to drive a peaceful dialogue between the government and Pattani Muslim groups.

With regard to Uyghur Muslims in the Chinese province of Xinjiang, the OIC continues with great interest to follow up on their situation, based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the People's Republic of China, while coordinating and cooperating with the Chinese government. The January 2019 visit to China by a delegation from the General Secretariat has helped identify closely the Uyghur Muslims' situation and establish an open dialogue between the OIC and China covering issues of common concern and prospects for cooperation between the Muslim world and China.

In December 2019, a delegation comprising representatives of some OIC member states and the General Secretariat visited China at the invitation of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The visit provided an opportunity for the delegation to assess the situation on the ground and continue the dialogue with the Chinese authorities regarding the Muslims' situation in China and the prospects for bilateral relations.

Following reports of violence against Muslims and their properties in several Sri Lankan cities in 2018 and 2019, the OIC is monitoring closely and with great concern the Muslims' affairs in Sri Lanka. The final communique of the 14th Islamic Summit Conference in Makkah Al-Mukarramah stressed the deep concern and strong condemnation of violence against Muslims in Sri Lanka, and urged the Sri Lankan government to hold the perpetrators accountable, bring them to justice and to firmly address the spread of hate speech.

The General Secretariat also issued a statement on 6 May 2020 expressing its grave concern over the escalation of hate speech and hostility towards Muslims in Sri Lanka, the dissemination of tendentious and unacceptable allegations that Muslims are responsible for the country's COVID-19 epidemic, and the authorities' burning of the bodies of Muslim victims of this pandemic. The OIC reiterated its firm stance against all policies and practices targeting the rights of Muslims anywhere and called on the authorities in Sri Lanka to ensure the safety, security and rights of

Muslims, commit to respecting their religious rites, and to stand up against all parties responsible for the spread of Islamophobia.

With regard to the situation of Muslims in India, the OIC is closely monitoring the various developments that directly affect them on the ground. As the largest Muslim community outside the OIC's member states, it faces a number of complex challenges. The growing role of Hindu extremist groups in recent years, particularly through their anti-Muslim campaigns, is a source of deep concern. In this context, some reports indicate an increasing number of attacks against the Indian Muslim community by the so-called Vigilante Cow Protection groups. The reports also mentioned the disturbing issue of radical Hindu elements coercing Muslim communities in India to "convert to Hinduism" through educational programs and campaigns, aimed at obliterating other religions' practices and rites and falsifying historical facts.

In December 2019, the General Secretariat issued a statement expressing concern over recent developments relating to both the issue of citizenship rights and the Babri Mosque issue and reiterated its call for the safety of Muslims and the protection of Islamic holy sites in India. The OIC reiterated the critical importance of upholding the principles and obligations stipulated in the United Nations Charter and the relevant international covenants guaranteeing the rights of minorities without any discrimination.

In the wake of the events in New Delhi in February 2020, the General Secretariat of the OIC condemned the acts of violence against Muslims in India, which resulted in the killing and injury of innocent people and the burning and destruction of mosques and Muslim properties. In this regard, the Indian authorities called for the instigators of acts of violence against Muslims and the perpetrators of these acts to be brought to justice, and to ensure the safety and security of all Muslim citizens and protect Islamic holy sites across the country.

Regarding the situation of Muslims in Cambodia, there has been developments in the relations between the OIC and the government of Cambodia in 2014, when an OIC delegation visited the country for a conference on education. In subsequent years, the OIC regularly attended the annual Ramadan Iftar hosted by the Cambodian Prime Minister. This gathering is an important occasion to meet with members of the Muslim community and learn about their well-being. Cambodia is an example of the peaceful coexistence and tolerance between the Buddhist majority and the Muslim minority.

Muslim Communities in Africa

The first roots of Islam sprouted along the East-African coast in the 8th century as a result of the long relationship between the families of the East Coast and Muslim traders who would come from the Gulf and Oman, while Islam was spreading across western Africa from the northern areas of the continent.

Islam contributed to the modernization of the continent, as it both provided a homogeneous belief system for the different communities and helped strengthen the power of the governments, thereby breaking ethnic loyalties. Islam's forgiving nature regarding the traditions of these communities played a role in making the religion easier to embrace than other faith systems.

During the first few centuries of the rise of Islam in Africa, its history witnessed mobility and momentum through reform movements and conflict between the ruling families. Reaching a position of power was ensured by securing trade routes within gold-producing regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, and Muslim leaders were able to extend their influence in the north and south. By the final quarter of the 11th century, Islam had control over the south Mediterranean region.

1. Muslim communities by country

Angola

Total population: 30.774.205

Muslim population (2019): 90.000

The number of Muslims in Angola is estimated at 90,000, the majority of whom are immigrants from West Africa and the Middle East, while a few citizens have converted to Islam. There are many Islamic organizations that run mosques, schools and Islamic centers. The Association of the Development of Islam in Angola is one of the main Islamic organizations in the country, while the Supreme Council of Angolan Muslims of Luanda is the representative of the Muslim community in Angola. The Angolan government does not officially recognize many Muslim organizations, which has led to restrictions on mosques and the closure of many of them.

As Islam is not an official religion in Angola, mosques are not permitted to function in most parts of the country. In January 2019, the parliament approved a new law limiting the right to freedom of religion. The Law on Freedom of Religion, Belief and Worship stipulates that religious groups must have at least 100,000 members to be officially recognized, and the number of Muslims in Angola is 90,000. The Islamic Community of Angola submitted preliminary documents requesting official recognition of their mosques in the wake of the October 2018 mandate and the new Religious Freedom Act.

Burundi

Total population: 11.216.450

Muslim population (2019): 180.000

Muslims make up 2.5 percent of the population and they mainly live in urban areas. Religious groups are recognized by the government by virtue of a 2014 law that stipulates that these organizations must be registered with the Ministry of Interior. The government established the Discrimination and Reconciliation Commission on Religious Sects in 2018 to ensure that religious

groups comply with applicable laws, and to mediate disputes within and between groups. Among the members of the body is the Grand Mufti of the Muslim community.

The Burundi Muslims played a large role in the reconciliation between the Hutu and Tutsi during the civil war in the 1990s owing to the fact that they did not participate in acts of ethnic violence, instead taking a neutral stance on all parties, which reinforced their role as a trusted mediator between the Hutu and the Tutsi.

The Republic of Burundi is a secular state, but many Islamic festivals, including Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, are celebrated as national holidays alongside Christian celebrations.

Although Muslims make up a small percentage of the population, they are represented in high positions in politics and the society in general in Burundi.

<p style="text-align: center;">Central African Republic Total population: 4.737.423 Muslim population (2019): 39.500</p>

The total number of Muslims is less than 40.000, and they are mainly concentrated in the northern and north-western regions of the country, near Chad and Sudan. Islam is ranked second among the followed religions, and many Muslim groups are still suffering from displacement. In the western region, Muslims cannot practice their rituals freely. In the capital, Bangui, the majority of residents of PK5 and PK3 neighborhoods are Muslim, while other neighborhoods in the capital are predominantly Christian. The 2014 International Commission of Inquiry into the Central African Republic reported that a large proportion of Muslims had fled to neighboring countries, and their return during the year remained a slow process.

In February 2019, the government and 14 armed groups in the country signed a peace agreement that included commitments to protect places of worship from violent attacks. In July 2019, the government signed a tripartite agreement with Cameroon and the United Nations to facilitate the voluntary return of 250,000 citizens, the majority of whom were Muslims living as refugees in Cameroon.

Non-governmental organizations have stated that religion is still a major element that divides the citizens. The Christian-majority anti-balaka forces and the predominantly Muslim Séléka militia continued to control territory in the western and northern parts of the country, respectively, while sectarian clashes continued between them and the Christian and Muslim populations. Many Muslim communities remained displaced in the western part of the country, where according to several reports, they were not allowed to freely practice their religion, either due to lack of protection from the government or due to intimidation by the anti-balaka units. Many religious leaders in the country believe that the violence caused by armed groups was based primarily on the desire to control territory for economic gain.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Total population: 84.004.989

Muslim population (2019): 4.200.000

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second largest country in Africa and the eleventh largest country in the world in terms of size. According to estimates from 2018, the country is home to 84 million people, making it the ninth most populated country in the world, and Muslims make up about 5 percent of the total population. The highest concentration of Muslims is found in Maniema Province, particularly the cities of Kasungu and Kindu. In addition to the indigenous Muslims, the population also includes recent immigrants from Lebanon, India, Pakistan, and other parts of the African continent.

The Muslim community of the DRC is represented on a national level by the Muslim Community Association of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The constitution allows public schools to work with religious authorities to provide religious education to students in accordance with their religious beliefs upon the parents' request.

Leaders of the Muslim community state that the government did not grant them some of the same privileges accorded to other major religious groups, as the government continued to deny Muslims the opportunity to provide imams for Muslims in the army, police forces, and hospitals ²⁸.

Eritrea

Total population: 5.187.948

Muslim population (2019): 1.850.000

Most of Eritrea's Muslims are concentrated in the coastal and eastern plains, and the western plains near the border with Sudan. They belong mostly to Afro-Asiatic groups, especially ethnic groups such as the Tigers, Asalho, Avars, Rashaida, Beja and Pilin. Muslims make up about 50 percent of the total population, according to estimates by the Eritrean government, and 36 percent of the total population, according to 2010 estimates by the Pew Research Center.

While the vast majority of the top officials, military and civilians, are Christians, there are three ministers, the mayor of Asmara, and at least one senior military commander who are Muslims.

Ethiopia

Total population: 107.534.882

Muslim population (2019): 35.063.000

Islam reached Ethiopia for the first time in the year 614 with the first migration to Abyssinia. The most recent estimates indicate that Muslims in Ethiopia represent 33.9 percent of the population. Addis Ababa is home to around 450,000 Muslims. While Muslims can be found in almost every community, they are mainly concentrated in Somali (98.4%), Afar (95.3%) and Oromia (47.5%) regions.

²⁸ Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/> (view on 1 September 2020)

The constitution ensures the separation of religion and state, recognizes freedom of religious choice and practice, prohibits religious discrimination, and stipulates that the government does not interfere in the practice of any religion, and religion does not interfere in the affairs of the state. It permits restrictions on religious freedom as stipulated by law in order to protect public safety, education, and morals, as well as to ensure the government's independence from religion.

In the political sphere, a number of Muslims occupy important positions in the current government, including the Deputy Prime Minister and 5 ministers.

In December 2019, attackers burned four mosques in the city of Mota in the Amhara region, prompting condemnation by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and sparking protests by several thousand Muslims across the country.

Ghana

Total population: 28.000.000

Muslim population (2019): 4.920.000

Islam is the most widely practiced religion in Ghana, with its inception dating back to the 10th century. In the 15th century Islam entered the northern lands of modern Ghana. Merchants and scholars from the Mandi and Wanjara tribes played a role in spreading Islam in these regions. Islam arrived in Ghana through the preachers who came from neighboring African countries.

According to the Ghana Statistics Authority 2012 estimates, Muslims make up 17.6 percent of the country's population. The majority of Muslims reside in the northern regions of the country and in the capital, Accra, and the cities of Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi. The Grand Imam or Grand Mufti is considered the de facto title of the highest Islamic religious authority in Ghana. He is not necessarily a leader of any Muslim community, but rather represents the Ghanaian Muslim community in national affairs and in building bridges with the rest of the religious groups in the country.

The country's constitution prohibits religious discrimination, and states that individuals are free to follow and practice their religion and does not specify a religion of the state. This also applies to

Muslims in Ghana, who, according to the constitution and law, are free to practice their religious rites.

In the educational sphere, the Ministry of Education is keen to include compulsory religious and ethical education in public education curricula at the national level, which includes perspectives from both Islam and Christianity. The Ministry also has an Islamic education unit responsible for coordinating all public education activities for Muslim communities.

In the political sphere, a number of Muslims occupy positions in the current government as ministers or deputy ministers and a significant number have been elected as parliamentarians, especially from the northern regions where Muslims represent the majority of the population. The highest political position a Muslim occupies at the present time is that of the country's vice president.

Despite this, the issue of wearing the headscarf remains one of the most prominent issues that have worried the Muslim community in Ghana in recent years. The Muslim community has called on the government to intervene, confront and denounce the attempts of some institutions and individuals to prevent Muslim women from wearing headscarves.

Kenya

Total population: 50.950.879

Muslim population (2019): 2.868.000

Estimates of the number of Muslims in Kenya vary. According to the World Factbook, they represent 11.1 percent of the population, and according to the Pew Research Center, they are closer to 7 percent. Most of the Muslim population lives in the northeast and coastal regions, where religion and ethnicity are directly related (for example, the Somali and Mijikenda ethnic groups). There are approximately 217,000 refugees in the Dadaab refugee camps, most of them are Somali Muslims.

The constitution states that there is no state religion and prohibits religious discrimination. It also provides for freedom of religion and belief individually or within societies, including the freedom

to manifest any religion through worship, practice, education or celebration. The constitution also specifically provides that courts named "qadi" deal with certain types of civil cases based on Islamic law, including matters relating to personal status, marriage, divorce, or inheritance in cases where "all parties embrace the Islamic religion."

All public schools have religious classes taught by government-funded teachers. The national curriculum imposes religious classes, and some public schools offer religious education options, usually Christian or Islamic. Although Muslims are included in most Kenyan governments, there is a perception that Muslim interests are poorly represented politically.

Human rights groups and prominent Muslim leaders report that the government's anti-terrorist activities have excessively affected Muslims, especially those of the Somali ethnicity and specifically in areas along the border with Somalia. According to these groups, the government's actions reportedly included extrajudicial killing, torture, forced interrogation, arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, and denial of freedom of assembly and worship²⁹.

Madagascar

Total population: 26.262.810

Muslim population (2019): 215.000

Muslims make up 7 percent of the population and settle in the northwest coastal areas. The majority of Muslims are citizens of Indian and Pakistani descent and immigrants from the Comoros, although there is an increasing number of converts to Islam from the Malagasy race.

The government has continued to implement the nationality law promulgated in 2017. Muslims born in the country continued to report being excessively affected by the nationality law, and despite generations of residency in the country, some members of their community were unable to obtain the country's citizenship. Children of Indian, Pakistani and Comorian descent most often faced difficulty obtaining citizenship, resulting in a significant number of Muslims becoming stateless. On the other hand, the government issued a decree in February 2019, through which it

²⁹ Kenya, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State (viewed on 1 September 2020)

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/kenya/>.

declared Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha national holidays, whereas in previous years, only Muslims were granted paid leave on these holidays.

Mauritius
Total population : 1.4 million
Muslim population (2019) : 238.000

The origins of the Muslims of Mauritius go back to India, where large numbers of them arrived in the country in 1834 during the era of British colonialism. Mauritius gained its independence in 1968, and its constitution does not provide for an official state religion, nor does a specific religion prevail over the rest. The number of Muslims is 238,000, which is about 17 percent of the country's total population. The inhabitants of the capital, Port Louis, are mainly Muslims and Catholics, while the rest of the islanders are predominantly Hindu.

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of belief and provides for the right of individuals to change, manifest, and spread their religious beliefs. The government recognizes six religious groups, including Muslims. The Council of Religions, a local organization made up of representatives of 18 religious groups, hosts regular religious ceremonies to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between different religions. There are reports of Hindus dominating jobs and positions in the public sector, preventing Christians and Muslims from reaching higher positions, and reports of weak representation of non-Hindus in the government.

Namibia
Total population: 2.587.801
Muslim population (2019): 8000-5000

There are no figures or studies on Islam in Namibia, but local officials estimate the number of Muslims in Namibia at between 5,000 and 8,000, from different ethnic groups, including the Ovampo, Damara and Nama. Muslims are mostly immigrants from other regions in Africa or South Asia or followers of Islam.

The Namibian constitution states that Namibia is a secular state, prohibits religious discrimination, and provides for freedom of thought, conscience and belief, as well as the right to practice, recognize, preserve and promote any religion. The constitution also permits religious groups to establish private schools provided that no student is denied admission on the basis of faith. The government has periodically engaged religious leaders in discussions on issues affecting the country and in national events.

Rwanda
Total population : 12.501.156
Muslim population (2019) : 250.000

Muslims represent 2 percent of the total population. Although there are generally no concentrations of religious groups in certain geographic regions, a large number of Muslims live in the Nyamirambo district of the capital, Kigali.

The constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of conscience, religion, and worship, and for public expression thereof, even when the government declares a state of emergency. The number of Rwandan Muslims increased after the genocide of 1994 due to the large numbers that converted to Islam, as many Muslims had sheltered refugees from the Hutu and the Tutsi.

South Africa
Total population: 57.398.421
Muslim population (2019): 860.000

According to 2015 estimates, Muslims constitute approximately 1.9 percent of the total population³⁰. The Muslim community consists of individuals of Indonesian, Indian or Pakistani descent, and nearly 70,000 Somali citizens and refugees.

³⁰ South Africa, The World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sf.html> (viewed on 2 September 2020)

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion or belief, including the right to form, join and maintain religious associations. It prohibits religious discrimination, limits freedom of expression so that it does not extend to advocacy of hatred based on religion. The constitution also provides for the promotion and respect of languages used for religious purposes, including, but not limited to, Arabic, Hebrew and Sanskrit.

Muslims in South Africa live in harmony and coexistence with other faiths. This religious cohesion is more evident in Indian residential settings, where Muslims live, work and go to school with their South African peers, whether they are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists or Christians. However, in 2019, there were a number of anti-Muslim incidents, including the vandalism of several mosques, the desecration of Muslim graves in the Cape Town cemetery, and attempts to prevent Muslims from performing the sacrifice ritual on Eid al-Adha³¹.

Tanzania

Total population: 57 million

Muslim population (2019): 20 million

Muslims make up 35 percent of the total population of Tanzania and are concentrated in the coastal areas, with a somewhat large majority in urban areas, especially the capital, Dar es Salaam and the island of Zanzibar (Zanzibar has a population of 1.3 million, 99 percent of its population is Muslim). Zanzibar, while also subject to the constitution of the federation, has its own president, legislature, and a system of courts.

Muslim groups who register in the major mainland must submit a letter of approval from the Islamic National Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA). Muslim groups who register in Zanzibar must submit a letter of approval from the Mufti, the government's official coordinator with the Muslim community. Since independence, the country has been ruled alternately by Christian and Muslim presidents.

³¹ South Africa, 2019 United States International Report on Religious Freedom, US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/south-africa/>

Zambia

Total population: 17.609.178

Muslim population (2019): 140.000

Muslims represent less than 1 percent of the total population in Zambia. Approximately 140,000 Muslims live in Zambia, mainly concentrated in Lusaka, the eastern provinces and Copperbelt. Most of them, including immigrants from South Asia, Somalia and the Middle East, obtained Zambian citizenship. Migration from Somalia has increased significantly over the past years. The Somali community is estimated at 20,000, with the majority living in Ndola and Lusaka, and there is a Muslim minority of the indigenous population.

Zimbabwe

Total population: 16.913.261

Muslim population (2019): 50.000-120.000

Muslims make up less than 1 percent of Zimbabwe's population. Estimates of their number range from 50,000 to 120,000. The Muslim community consists mainly of South Asian immigrants from India and Pakistan, in addition to a small number of indigenous people, and a very small number of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. Most of the Muslim population lives in rural areas and some densely populated suburbs, while smaller numbers live in other suburban neighborhoods.

Muslim Communities in the Americas

The number of Muslims in the Americas, which are made up of 35 countries and territories, varies from one source to another. In the case of the United States, some sources mention 2.5 million Muslims, while other sources mention 6 million. There are no government statistics on the number of Muslims in America, nor official figures on the size of any other religious groups in the United States. The government statistics office does not collect information about religious identity. Nevertheless, the Pew Forum reports that the number of Muslims in the United States is 3.45 million.

As for Canada, it contains almost twice the percentage of Muslims in the United States, with a total 700,000 Muslims, Muslims make up 2 percent of the Canadian population, compared with the United States (1.1 percent)³².

In South America, Suriname has the highest percentage of Muslims at 16 percent, followed by Guyana (7 percent) and Trinidad and Tobago (6 percent), with Suriname and Guyana both being members of the OIC. As for Argentina, it has about 800,000 Muslims, which is the largest concentration of Muslims in South America.

³² The Global Religious Landscape, Pew Research Center, Religions & Public Life Project, December 18, 2012 <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec> (viewed on 2 September 2020)

1. Muslim communities by country

Argentina

Total population: 45 million

Muslim population (2019): 800.000

Although there are no accurate statistics on religions, as national statistics do not include that kind of data, the percentage of Muslims in Argentina is estimated at about 1 percent of the total population, and the Islamic Center in Argentina estimates the number of Muslims at 800,000 to 1,000,000 people, the majority of whom are of Arab origin. The highest concentration of Muslims can be found in the capital, Buenos Aires and its neighborhoods.

Many Christian, Jewish, and Muslim groups run private schools that receive financial support conditional on registration with the government. The King Fahd Islamic Cultural Center is the largest mosque in Argentina, and it was inaugurated in 1996. The Islamic Organization of Latin America (IOLA), based in Argentina, is the most active organization in Latin America.

Brazil

Total population: 210.867.954

Muslim population (2019): 191.000

The number of Muslims in Brazil is about 191,000, most of whom are of Arab origin. Most of the current Muslim population is Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian Arabs and their descendants, in addition to a smaller number of African immigrants and Brazilians who have converted to Islam. The largest concentration of Muslims in Brazil is in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba and Foz do Iguaçu, as well as some smaller cities in the states of Parana and Rio Grande do Sul.

Canada

Total population: 36.953.765

Muslim population (2019): 657.700

The number of Muslims in Canada is about 660 thousand people. Canada's National Household Census in 2011 reported that the largest concentration of Muslims is in Ontario and Quebec. Calgary, Edmonton, Windsor, Winnipeg and Halifax also have significant Muslim populations.

The constitution guarantees freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, and expression. All individuals are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection and benefit from the law without discrimination based on religion. In June 2019, the Quebec government passed and implemented a law banning some government employees from wearing religious symbols while doing their official jobs. Despite the escalation of some incidents of Islamophobia in recent years, Canada is considered a model for the coexistence and tolerance of different ethnicities and religions and the positive integration of different groups, including the Muslim community.

Columbia

Total population: 49.464.683

Muslim population (2019): 14.000

The number of Muslims in Colombia is 14,000 (0.03 percent), according to a report by the Pew Research Center. There are several Muslim communities in Colombia, the largest of which are in Bogotá, Macau and Buenaventura.

Mexico

Total population: 130.759.074
Muslim population (2019): 110.000

Muslims represent less than 1 percent of Mexico's population of 130 million, with a disproportionate number of indigenous people concentrated in and around San Cristóbal de las Casas, a city in Chiapas where the Mayan and Spanish identities are mixed.

Panama

Total population: 4.3 million
Muslim population (2019): 14.000

Muslims make up less than 1 percent of the population in Panama. Muslims are mainly concentrated in Panama City, Colón and Penonomé, with smaller concentrations in David and Santiago in the western part of the country. The Muslim community includes individuals of Pakistani and Arab descent, especially Lebanese.

Trinidad and Tobago

Total population: 4.3 million
Muslim population (2019): 14.000

Muslims make up 5 percent of the country's population. The Muslim community is concentrated in and around Port of Spain, along the northeastern corridor of northern Trinidad, and in certain areas of central and southern Trinidad.

United States of America

Total population: 326.766.748

Muslim population (2019): 2.75 – 6 million

The history of Islam in the United States goes back to the early years of its founding, as Islam and American Muslims have mixed with the history of the United States over the past two centuries. The exact history of this intermingling is not known, and while this is partly due to the fact that the Muslim population was often a small group, Islam features in the history of American slavery and emancipation.

The US census does not include data on religions, so there are no official statistics on the number of Muslims in the US. However, in 2011 a Pew Research Center survey reported that 3.45 million Muslims live in the United States. They far outnumber that estimate, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Washington-based lobbying group, which estimated it at between 6 and 7 million Muslims³³. Muslims are not evenly distributed across the country. Some states have larger Muslim communities, such as New Jersey and Washington, DC.

Regardless of their real number, American Muslims are at the center of the most contentious issues: US foreign policy, national security, terrorism, integration, religious freedom, and American identity. American Muslims come from a variety of backgrounds, and a 2009 Gallup poll described them as the most ethnically diverse religious group in the United States.

³³ A Brief History of Islam in America <https://www.vox.com/2015/12/22/10645956/islam-in-america> (viewed on 2 September 2020)