



European Network Against Racism
Réseau européen contre le racisme

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE: Recent developments

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Islamophobia is a specific form of racism that refers to acts of violence and discrimination, as well as racist speech, fuelled by historical abuses and negative stereotyping and leading to exclusion and dehumanisation of Muslims, and all those perceived as such.

The rise in Islamophobic incidents in 2015¹, with CCIF reporting a 18.5% increase of Islamophobic attacks in France in 2015 compared to 2014², appears to have continued throughout 2016, with a rise of reported Islamophobic hate crimes in the United Kingdom since the EU referendum, increasing anti-Muslim remarks in public discourse by far-right and even mainstream political leaders, and attacks on mosques throughout Europe. Discrimination in employment also continues to be an issue, in particular for Muslim women.

Britain and post-Brexit racist crime

Following the EU referendum in Britain held in June 2016, there has been a rise in reports of both religiously and racially motivated attacks, many targeting Muslims, in the context of a campaign marked by xenophobic and racist discourse. In a report by the UK home office in the month after the referendum there was a 41% increase in reports filled with police in England and Wales about racially and religiously aggravated assaults.³ Reports by the Metropolitan Police office show a rise in hate crimes in nearly all areas in 2016 with Islamophobic attacks showing the second largest increase with a rise of 65%.⁴

Attacks on mosques

In recent years there has been an increase in Islamophobic attacks against mosques throughout Europe. In 2015 there were 99 reported incidents against mosques rising sharply from the 2 reported in 2009.⁵

- On 27th February, 2016 in Enschede in the Netherlands a 33-year-old man threw a petrol bomb at a mosque as adults and children worshipped inside.⁶
- On 25th September 2016 in Dresden, Germany there was a bomb attack on a local mosque thankfully leaving none injured.⁷
- On 29th December 2016 in Culemborg, the Netherlands a mosque was destroyed by a massive fire suspected to be set by far right arsonists.⁸

¹ <http://www.enar-eu.org/Anti-Semitism-and-Islamophobia-in>

² <https://www.islamophobie.net/articles/2016/02/10/ccif-releases-its-2016-report-islamophobia-france>

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/559319/hate-crime-1516-hosb1116.pdf

⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-37600532>

⁵ <http://www.trtworld.com/europe/mosque-attacks-show-xenophobia-on-the-rise-in-germany-211895>

⁶ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/netherlands-mosque-attacks-rising-islamophobia-160308101155120.html>

⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/09/germancy-dresden-mosque-bombed-xenophobic-attack-160927154141837.html>

Political discourse on 'Islamic' vs 'western' values

There has been a rise in political discourse on the supposed incompatibility of Islamic and Western values especially within far right movements, which have seen a rise in popularity in the past years all over Europe.

- In a study conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation 61% of Germans surveyed feel that Islam doesn't fit the West.⁹
- In France, 79% stated that the headscarf was a problem for 'vivre-ensemble' ('living together')¹⁰
- These sentiments are aggravated by some politicians, often from far-right political parties but also from mainstream political parties, who continue to use Islamophobic rhetoric and reference an incompatibility between Islamic and European values.
- In September 2015 Hungarian Prime Minister said "I think we have a right to decide that we do not want a large number of Muslim people in our country" adding, "Please don't come... It's risky to come. We can't guarantee that you will be accepted", referring to Muslim migrants.¹¹
- In May 2016, Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico said, "Islam has no place in Slovakia".¹²
- In January 2017, the head of Austria's Freedom Party calling for a law to ban "Fascistic Islam".¹³

Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women

Many victims of Islamophobic attacks are Muslim women who have reported an increase in attacks targeting their hijabs. Some victims say that they believe that political discourse and debates about the legality of what Muslim women wear lead to comments or attacks on their clothing or on their identity as Muslim women. Such political discourse includes when the Netherlands banned burqas in certain public spaces this year, or when Angela Merkel claimed that she wanted to ban burqas "wherever legally possible".

In 2016 following the EU Referendum in Britain there have been reports of Muslim women in the UK who report being attacked due to their religious symbols.

- In October 2016 a Muslim women was dragged along a busy street in North London by her Hijab.¹⁴
- A similar attack was reported in December 2016 when a young Muslim woman reported being dragged along the ground by her Hijab in East London.¹⁵

In addition to being targeted by hate crimes, Muslim women in Europe suffer discrimination in the labour market. Muslim women are subject to three types of penalties in employment: gender penalties, ethnic penalties and religious penalties. Discrimination in the labour market is often related to perceptions of Muslimness, and especially the clothing of Muslim women.

- In Belgium, 44% of employers agree that wearing a headscarf can negatively influence the selection of candidates.¹⁶
- In the United Kingdom, 50% of female respondents wearing the hijab felt that "they had missed out on progression opportunities because of religious discrimination and that the wearing of the hijab had been a factor".¹⁷

⁸ <https://www.thesun.ie/news/362202/islamic-centre-burnt-down-in-the-netherlands-by-suspected-far-right-arsonist-as-tensions-continue-to-rise-across-the-continent/>

⁹ <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2016/04/02/islamophobia-skyrockets-in-europe-since-charlie-hebdo-attack-report-says>

¹⁰ http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/factsheet9-european_lr_1_.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/09/refugees-hungary-train-station-150903064140564.html>

¹² <http://www.politico.eu/article/robert-fico-islam-no-place-news-slovakia-muslim-refugee/>

¹³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-austria-fpo-idUSKBN14Y0N1>

¹⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-37600532>

¹⁵ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/muslim-hate-crime-london-attack-woman-hijab-headscarf-ripped-off-pushed-injured-chingford-a7479766.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.enar-eu.org/Women-are-the-first-to-pay-the-price-of-Islamophobia-in-Europe>

- In the Netherlands 11% of Afghani-Dutch Muslim women not wearing a headscarf said they had experienced discrimination on the basis of religion compared to 73% of Afghani-Dutch who do wear a headscarf; for Moroccan-Dutch these figures are 15% versus 39%.¹⁸

Disproportionate impact of counter- terrorism measures on Muslim communities

Following terror attacks in Paris, Belgium and elsewhere, States have put in place counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation measures. Some of these measures have led to discrimination and human rights abuses, which disproportionately affects Muslim and people perceived as such. Ethnic profiling in particular has been reported on the rise and unfairly target minority and Muslim populations. Ethnic profiling is the use by law enforcement officials of racial, ethnic, national, or religious characteristics - rather than individual behaviour or objective evidence - as a way of singling out people for identity or security checks. Ethnic profiling is an ineffective practice and it constitutes illegal discrimination under European and international law. Other measures, such as referral to de-radicalisation programmes, withdrawal of employment permit or limitation to freedom of movement can also be perceived to be discriminatory. The counter terrorism and counter-radicalisation measures often build on a rising Islamophobia and the misbelief that conservative religious practice would lead to radicalisation and to terrorism.

- 79 % of border guards at EU airports rated ethnicity as a helpful indicator for recognising persons attempting to enter the country in an irregular manner before speaking to them.¹⁹
- In Belgium, there has been an increase in ethnic profiling of young males of African or north African background, since the Brussels and Paris terrorist attacks.²⁰
- In France, since the state of emergency was declared after the November 2015 Paris attacks, human rights NGOs have reported 3,594 raids on houses, mosques and prayer halls as well as house arrests, resulting in 6 criminal investigations for terrorism and only one ongoing trial.²¹
- In the United Kingdom, surveillance cameras are placed in so-called Muslim areas and social workers are required to denounce 'radical' behaviour. Many innocent Muslims are targeted mainly on the basis of their religious practice, with no evidence pointing to their involvement in any criminal act.²²

For further information, contact Julie Pascoet, Senior Advocacy Officer (julie@enar-eu.org)

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of NGOs working to promote equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect more than 150 local and national anti-racist NGOs throughout Europe and voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates. www.enar-eu.org

¹⁷ http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/factsheet9-european_lr_1_.pdf

¹⁸ http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/factsheet9-european_lr_1_.pdf

¹⁹ http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-third-country-nationals-airport-border-checks_en.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.rtl.be/info/belgique/societe/le-profilage-ethnique-est-interdit-par-la-loi-mais-se-pratique-de-plus-en-plus-qui-en-est-victime--857794.aspx>

²¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/3364/2016/en/>

²² https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/eroding-trust-20161017_0.pdf