ANNUAL REPORT ON ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE IN 2022

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A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In the fight that is ours, it is beneficial to have moments of reflection on the past period to better account for the hardships endured. That is why the Collective Against Islamophobia in Europe (CCIE) presents its first report, which offers a retrospective of the year 2022 that was rich in lessons.

This report aims to better define the contours of Islamophobia, although changing, seems to be always gaining in effectiveness and sophistication. Contrary to a well-known theory (i.e., speaking of Islamophobia would consist in “playing the victim”), the objective is not to feel sorry for the Islamophobic reality but to equip us with the most appropriate means to fight it. Therefore, looking back on the past year allows us to reassess the specific issues that Islamophobia represents today.

The year that has just ended is, unfortunately, no exception. It confirms a strong trend that has persisted for several years in Europe. Islamophobia is proliferating and flourishing with relative impunity - without any recognition of its seriousness or real action taken by European policymakers.

The very circumstances of the creation of the Collective against Islamophobia in Europe are worth recalling. Our association was born out of the offensive that led to the dissolution of several Muslim organizations, including the Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), which was exclusively dedicated to the legal and moral support of victims of Islamophobia. The CCIE is thus the happy heir to the history of the CCIF, which many French citizens - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - have trusted and continue to support.

Our goal is to expand our field of action on a European level to provide the same expertise and support to Muslims in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Denmark. Although the data collected by the CCIE mainly concern the French situation, we are actively working to ensure that, throughout Europe, Muslims, regardless of their geographical location, may also be assisted by the CCIE and seek legal and moral support when needed.

We warmly thank those who enable the CCIE to fight for the rights of Muslims, those who express their support for our work every day and thus offer an extremely valuable contribution.
INTRODUCTION

This report aims to take stock of the year 2022 through the lens of a phenomenon that is more disturbing because its very existence is regularly denied, a constantly evolving phenomenon of Islamophobia. The term “Islamophobia,” which is intensely debated, refers to the rejection, hatred, and discrimination that target people and institutions because of their real or supposed belonging to the Muslim faith.

Today, Islamophobia seems so deeply rooted that it punctuates the year as naturally as the seasons. At the beginning of the school year or during the summer period, during religious celebrations, during the presidential campaign, or during the soccer world cup, Islamophobia invites itself with a disconcerting regularity in the French and European public debate.

Many of us are fighting against this routinization of the expression of Islamophobic hatred, whose danger is constantly proven for those subjected to it. Therefore, the efforts of each of us against this regular outburst against the Muslim presence in Europe are of the utmost importance. The report of the Collective against Islamophobia in Europe (CCIE) is to be understood in this sense: it is a question of denaturalising the Islamophobic speeches and practices that are so recurrent that they can be easily trivialized. Whenever necessary, the CCIE has mobilized to have Islamophobic facts recognized as such and to have the appropriate measures adopted. The CCIE systematically tries to give everyone the tools to defend themselves against practical discrimination or hate speech so as not to give in to the fatalistic observation that Europe is intrinsically hostile to Islam and Muslims.

Every year, fantasies about the intentions of European Muslims, speculations about their practices, their ideas, and their relationship with others were expressed with the tacit or explicit support of the French and European political and media fields. Sometimes ridiculous, sometimes frightening, these representations are not without consequences. They lead to the impossibility of considering the attachment to the Islamic religion otherwise than through a nationalist or security lens, which in turn leads to the fact that every act, sign, or word linked to Islam can be perceived as intrinsically threatening to the national order.

In the face of this speculative bubbling, it is important to return to the facts. It is a question of considering them by restoring the point of view of the victims on the one hand, through the figures available to the CCIE, and by restoring their complexity on the other hand, through the in-depth analysis of the European researchers who are best able to draw up a picture that is as faithful as it is intellectually demanding. This report is thus based both on an activity carried out as close as possible to the field, alongside the victims, which is made possible
by the already established reputation of the CCIE as a point of reference in the fight against Islamophobia, and on the contributions of a network of researchers specializing in the question of the relationship of European Muslim communities to the societies in which they live.

The retrospective carried out by this report is necessary for more than one way. It is an opportunity to examine what has happened, assess how far we have come, and anticipate the questions we will have to face collectively in the future. The report begins with a review of the changes in Islamophobia that occurred in France in the year 2022. It presents the data collected during a year spent with the victims of Islamophobia. Then, after a quick retrospective of European events, several articles by international researchers will give an account of the variety of national situations.
Before presenting the figures collected by the CCIE during 2022, a few points should be made clear.

It is a recognized fact that racist discrimination is still under-reported and that there is a wide gap between statistical reporting and the reality of racism, especially in the case of Islamophobia. Since this form of racism is often contested and the object of persistent debates and constant accusations, many victims of Islamophobia do not take advantage of the resources available to them, particularly legal resources, due to a lack of confidence in the institutions. A form of trivialization of anti-Muslim racism is thus to be regretted due to the noxious climate that has grown in recent years.

This situation is further exacerbated by several factors, which should be understood as reasons not to consider the figures presented here as a faithful reflection of the reality of Islamophobia, but as a simple overview of all the facts that have been reported to us during this year. The relative youth of the CCIE, founded in 2020, must first be recalled. The circumstances of its creation in the context of the Islamophobic offensive linked to the fight against "separatism" in France are also a factor to be considered when considering the figures we have today. Everyone has witnessed the relentlessness that has led to the dissolution of several human rights organizations. It is likely that the argument supporting denouncing Islamophobia is a form of legitimization of terrorism, and the widespread suspicion surrounding the use of the term "Islamophobia" itself, discourage many victims of Islamophobia from reporting what they endured.

Another point to highlight is the over-representation of France in these figures. In this respect, the CCIE wishes to reaffirm its ambition to bring its expertise to a European level. However, it is mainly in France that the CCIE is known, which explains the predominance of reports from this country. Thus, for the year 2022, out of 527 reports, 501 refer to a situation that occurred in France.

What the CCIE considers as "reports" are cases proven to be related to Islamophobia: the CCIE has thus extracted these cases from the 787 solicitations recorded this year. Requests for information (209), testimonies (20), and other contacts (31) were not counted as relevant.

These 527 reports of Islamophobic incidents cover incidents of different kinds: discrimination (467), provocation and incitement to hatred (128), insults and offenses (71), moral harassment (59), defamation (44), physical aggression (27), and incidents linked to the fight against radicalisation and separatism (33).

These incidents concern women, confirming a strong trend over the last few years. Out of 527 cases, 427 were reported by women as victims of Islamophobia.
The cases of Islamophobia that appear through the reports received by the CCIE are less the result of physical persons than legal persons: 374 reports concern a legal person, and 122 refer to a physical person.

The majority of Islamophobic incidents took place in public places. Two hundred fifty-one reports concerned an Islamophobic incident that occurred in public service. However, private companies were also the place of 186 facts reported to the CCIE for 2022.

The places where Islamophobia occurs are varied, but schools are particularly well represented in the collected data: 115 reports concern secondary education (98 in high school and 17 in middle school), 34 reports pertain to primary education, and 19 to higher education. In 2022, 168 primary, secondary, and higher education reports were received. Cases related to the clothing choices of high school girls were the subject of 83 reports, reflecting the extent of the moral and sexist harassment inflicted on these adolescents.

**Distribution of islamophobic acts by nature**
Distribution of Islamophobic acts by the victim's gender

- Men: 19%
- Women: 81%

Distribution of Islamophobic acts in education

- Higher education: 59%
- Primary school: 20%
- Middle school: 11%
- Hightschool: 10%
"Islamisation," the obsession of the 2022 presidential campaign

In France, 2022 was marked by a presidential campaign that was the moment of a major Islamophobic outburst within the public space. At the heart of the debates linked to the presidential election, the question of the fight against Islamism, Islamo-leftism, radical Islam, separatism, or communitarianism, according to the expressions of one or the other candidate, translated the same postulate: that of the rise in power of a conquering and deceitful Islamism, capable of shaking the Republic and its principles. Faced with what is thus described as a threat as formidable as it is insidious, the strongest responses have been put forward, most often in contempt of the rights of French citizens of the Muslim faith - and in contravention of the fundamental principles of the constitution.

Despite their openly racist and islamophobic dimension, statements about the incompatibility of Islam with France, about the continuum between terrorism and Islam, or about the increasingly insistent attempts of Muslims to "impose their rules" on the rest of the national body have been so repeated and so unchallenged that they have come to sound like so many banalities. Among the most outrageous declarations, far-right candidate Éric Zemmour's call to "renounce the practice of Islam" seems to have crossed a limit that had not been crossed before. The program of Éric Zemmour entirely focused on the explicit objective of neutralizing Islam, thus admits among its principal watchwords the following: "impose discretion" through the banning of the veil, "stop
indoctrination" by closing down places of "promotion of jihad" and by banning the "Muslim Brotherhood" and any related movement, "prevent foreign influences" by imposing strict control of imams and foreign financing of the Muslim cult and systematically expel all foreigners who could represent a threat to public order.

Thus, while Zemmour's ideas have been widely perceived in the public debate as radical, their similarities to the policies of Emmanuel Macron's government are undeniable. Zemmour's outrageousness does not hide the proven correspondence between his program and the policy pursued by the government under the guise of the fight against radicalization and the fight against separatism. As the Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin's criticism of traditional far-right candidate Marine Le Pen ("too soft on Islam") has already made clear, the symbiosis between the far right and the government in power betrays their complete agreement about the Muslim presence in France.

The spillover of radical right-wing ideas to the rest of the political spectrum is a particularly worrying trend in public debate since it legitimizes the most outrageous and dangerous rhetoric. The thesis of the "great replacement" (the idea that white European people are gradually replaced by people of color coming from the South) at the heart of Éric Zemmour's campaign has thus been recognized on the right, notably by his candidate Valérie Pécresse, as belonging to a historical reality. The use of such a racist theory, which was very explicitly claimed by the assailant behind the attack in Christchurch (51 dead), illustrates the radicalization of the discourse targeting Muslims in France.

Nothing, or very little, seems to oppose the far-right candidates from the rest of the right and the government, especially regarding restrictions on the free practice of the Muslim religion. The wearing of the veil has thus been the subject, not surprisingly, of increasingly radical declarations. The candidate Valérie Pécresse announced that she would "ban the wearing of the forced veil, the wearing of the veil for school chaperones, and the wearing of the burkini in all swimming areas." She thus joined the position of Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Rally, for whom the wearing of the veil would be "the worst thing that could be done in 2022 to a woman in terms of freedom", which would justify for her to ban on it also in the street. More recently, the candidates for the presidency of the Republican party have redoubled their inventiveness, going so far as to propose banning the veil in public spaces and universities.

In addition to the proposals of one or the other, their audibility in the public debate is worrying. The criticism on the left of the blatant Islamophobia of all these statements has not managed to resonate with the same force. It has also often been limited to denouncing the focus on Islamophobia in the political field as an attempt to divert attention from the real issues of economic problems and social inequality. This perspective implies not considering the dehumanization
of Muslims as a problem and does not consider the seriousness of Islamophobia in French society. The condemnation by various collectives and associations of the security drifts and the infringement of fundamental freedoms implied by the so-called law against separatism is, however, to be welcomed, as well as the criticism of the assimilation of terrorism with Islamic practices. However, the French left struggles to move away from an argument based almost exclusively on the reassuring image of "ordinary" Muslims, whose attachment to Islam is relativized and does not determine political positions. The singular stigmatization - even criminalization - that Muslims in France suffer when they express political ideas is not considered by a left still reluctant to take the issue of Islamophobia seriously.

The worrying progression of the far-right in France

It is now a fact: the progression and rise in the legitimacy of radical right-wing ideas are increasingly threatening. Thus, if the so-called "Islamist conspiracy" seems to focus the attention of a good number of political decision-makers and successful essayists, the violent and identity-based projects of the extreme right seem to be able to flourish without causing indignation.

However, the parliamentary report on extreme right-wing groups, published in November 2022, is revealing. In recent years, there has been a multiplication of far-right attack projects, an intensification of violent attacks with weapons, and an increase in the number of individuals claiming to be members of the violent far right. Although the "Génération identitaire" group was dissolved in 2021, many other violent organizations continue their activity despite their obvious danger: among them, Action Française, Patria Albiges, Strasbourg Offenders, Pitbull Paris, Vandal Besak, the variety of militant descendants of the GUD ("Groupe Union Defense"). More generally, the involvement of these violent militants in all right-wing and extreme right-wing parties underlines the lack of separation between these different militant spaces. This collusion is most often allowed by the focus on Islam and Muslims.

Aggressions, shootings, organized paramilitary formations renamed as "self-defense courses," neo-Nazi references, the profusion of popular far-right
influencers, attempts at intimidation, processions, and racist slogans do not seem to be enough to move the French public debate. However, a multiplicity of events in 2022 reveal the worrying nature of the progression of the far right. Among the most striking facts: in March 2022, Loïk Le Priol, a former GUD activist, killed Federico Martin Aramburú before fleeing; in May 2022, a far-right activist was suspected of shooting dead a young man in Paris; in June, an executive of Génération identitaire attacked two men with a knife in Lyon; in August, a journalist was attacked in Besançon by far-right activists, and a few days later, activists from the far-right group "Vandal Besak" marched through the streets to the rhythm of German military music and carrying Nazi banners and slogans. On the night of 19-20 November 2022, a neo-Nazi group sprayed racist and Islamophobic slurs on the walls of a mosque in Flers, Orne. In December, a group of 40 armed people, close to the ultra-right, was arrested as they headed towards the Champs-Élysées "to fight," according to a police source after the World Cup semi-final won by France against Morocco. More generally, the evening of the match was the moment of "raids" carried out by the violent extreme right in multiple cities of France within neighborhoods with a high concentration of immigrants. Thus, these raids were meticulously planned by those who carried them out - without alerting the intelligence services or the national press.

However, the most serious racist incident occurred in Paris on December 23, 2022. A mass murder committed by a far-right militant targeting Kurdish activists left three dead and four injured. Recently released after a previous saber attack on a refugee camp, attesting to the judicial and penal lightness that characterizes the handling of this type of crime, the perpetrator had first gone to Saint-Denis to murder foreigners before targeting the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis in Paris - known for the large Kurdish and foreign presence within it. This attack of rare political violence did not, however, result in the legal qualification of the act as "terrorist," which the Minister of Justice explained as follows: "I was keen to point out the difference between a racist crime and a terrorist act: the difference is whether or not one adheres to a claimed political ideology." Thus, it seems obvious that in France, extreme right-wing violence is not considered an existential threat to the national order, as it cannot be linked to Islamic practice.

Shutting down, dissolving, expelling

Alongside the rise of the far right and its inherent violence, 2022 also saw the continuation of the paradigm of the fight against "separatism," which Assia Bensouda explains in
her contribution to this report. The policy of surveillance and repression of the Muslim minority led to the temporary or permanent closure of several mosques and schools during the year.

These closures have been facilitated by a legislative arsenal that has been progressively put in place in the wake of the attacks that have plunged France into mourning in recent years. The law strengthening internal security and the fight against terrorism (SILT), enacted in October 2017, integrates measures reserved for the state of emergency into common law and thus allows prefects to administratively close - that is, without a prior court decision - places of worship for a renewable period of six months. In 2021, the anti-terrorism bill (PRAT) also allowed for the closure of premises dependent on and adjacent to mosques. Finally, the law reinforcing respect for the principles of the Republic (known as the "separatism" law) authorizes the closure of places of worship outside of any terrorist threat if what is described as hate speech has been uttered there. At the same time, this law allows for greater control over religious groups' financing and facilitates associations' administrative dissolution.

Among the mosques affected during the past year by these new legislative provisions is the Grand Mosque of Beauvais, the al-Farouq Mosque in Pessac, the mosque of Allonnes in the Sarthe, the al-Madina al-Mounawara Mosque in Cannes, the mosque of Obernai in the Haut-Rhin, among others. In September 2022, the Minister of the Interior was pleased that "23 separatist places of worship have been closed for two years." Each time, the decisions were justified by declarations by imams or people close to the mosque that was deemed sexist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, or anti-republican. Thus, it is enough to prove that a statement deemed unfit for republican morality has been made in a mosque to justify its closure, according to a logic of collective punishment that does not affect any other community. Often pronounced several years beforehand, the remarks in question are proven by white notes ("notes blanches") from the intelligence services - that is, unsigned, undated evidence that is sometimes based on the testimonies of informants - or by publications or comments on social networks. Entire communities of believers are thus deprived of their place of worship based on individual misconduct - which is moreover detected beyond the legal limits since the preachers concerned are generally not prosecuted.

The year 2022 thus confirms the arbitrary dimension of these administrative closure decisions, where evidence is administered in the lightest possible manner. Emblematic of this police force, which makes no secret of being exclusively political, the al-Madina al-Mounawara mosque was accused of having supported the CCIF and Baraka City - two associations closed under the law against separatism - based on unsubstantiated suspicions, which were ultimately abandoned, regarding their relationship to religiously inspired violence. This justification reveals the logic of
the chain of accusations that presides over the anti-separatist struggle. A group is accused of fostering separatism, the supporters who appeared during this closure are then also accused and also repressed, and then the supporters of the latter can also be repressed, and so on, until a network of "suspicious" people is created simply by proximity to those previously accused.

A word must also be said about the reasons for closure. No sexist, anti-Semitic, or apology for terrorism speech should be accepted in the public space (the CCIE strongly condemns them). However, it is also clear that the standards to which Muslim religious leaders are held have no equivalent in other cults or, more generally, within all the other collective structures that make up French society. The secretary general of the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalization (CIPDR) thus affirms that "today, a toxic preacher who regularly distills anti-republican, inciting to hatred, anti-Semitic, homophobic or anti-Christian remarks, can no longer feel free to do so." Any attentive observer can notice that this standard is exclusively reserved for Muslim communities and represents more a pretext for their repression than the expression of genuine egalitarian convictions.

These reasons have been invoked to justify the witch-hunt conducted by the executive, the most spectacular and well-publicized example of which was the expulsion of Imam Hassan Iquioussen. Although he was born in France, this imam was declared an enemy of the Republic because of remarks that were deemed to be contrary to its values and that he made more than twelve years ago (and for which he has apologized several times) and has thus seen his expulsion from the national territory elevated to a major collective issue. However, this hunt has only just begun as a list of a hundred preachers has been drawn up to pursue this government policy. "The decision of the Council of State, which makes it possible to say that someone who has children, who are married in France, who was born in France, can still - 58 years later - be deported... This will make it possible to discuss other cases," said the ministry of Interior Gérald Darmanin on September 2, 2022.

Another striking fact is that the report of the parliamentary commission on "Islamist radicalization and the means of combating it" admits that it is sometimes necessary to find other pretexts to decree the closure of an establishment and that security criteria or sanitary conditions related to COVID can also be invoked to justify these measures. These provisions illustrate the "systematic obstruction" policy made explicit in 2020 by former Interior Minister Christophe Castaner. The rapporteur thus goes so far as to regret that the speeches of preachers are now "too politically correct" so that it is now difficult to detect what would justify their repression. Therefore, in the absence of incriminating statements, these elected officials recognize that other elements are used to compensate for the lack of
Evidence. The report of the senate commission states in full that reasons, as varied as fire safety, hygiene criteria, or urban planning, are used to close places of worship and other Muslim structures. The question of what is really aimed at by closing these mosques remains quite open.

Under these strictly technical pretexts, several Muslim schools closed in 2022, including the al-Qarni school in Villeurbanne, the Tarbiya institute in Bobigny, and the Fort School in Aubervilliers. The Parisian high school MHS has also paid the price of the fight against separatism: in practice closed in December 2020, and the Paris Courts of Appeal confirmed in October 2022 its closure decided in the first instance.

Finally, the financial hindrance many mosques, Muslim associations, and donors face should be mentioned. Their bank accounts have been blocked or closed overnight without any reason, notice, or legal proceedings. In particular, bank accounts associated with the construction of mosques were targeted.

An Islamist offensive against the Republican school?

This year has been one of intense, even obsessive, focus on the clothes worn by French high school students. A new Islamophobic trend, skirts considered too long, loose-fitting vests or bandanas have occupied a prominent place in the public debate, especially at the beginning of the school year, regardless of the young people targeted.

Young teenagers have thus experienced what can easily be described as a wave of harassment within their schools. Summoned, questioned, and insulted, many young girls had to justify their choice of clothing and explain their religious beliefs, family habits, opinions on the terrorist attacks, and so on. This inquisitive attitude was compounded by what bordered on sexual harassment. The CCIE was thus seized by young girls who were asked to lower their skirts, lift them to reveal what they were wearing underneath, or undress.

This harassment was supported by the Ministry of Education, mainly through one of its memos that urged teachers to investigate the meaning of these outfits and try to persuade them to remove them. Education Minister Pap Ndiaye said, “We cannot publish a catalog of all the clothes that could be religious. That is why school principals must look precisely at apparent signs. Does the girl who wears this or that dress wear it regularly? Does she refuse to change her outfit,
do other signals accompany it?" A series of questions are therefore held to be legitimate so that the educational staff of these establishments can detect the possible religious character of an outfit.

It is the "intention" of the student that must be determined since, according to the Minister, "the 2004 law distinguishes between two situations: "standard" signs such as the cross, the kippa, and the veil, and clothing or outfits that suggest the student's religion. Two elements allow to characterize them: the intention and the frequency". Thus, the year 2022 was marked by the invention of a concept as unprecedented as that of "religious clothing by destination." This new category refers to clothing "whose purpose in wearing it is beyond doubt and constitutes an attempt to circumvent the 2004 law". These instructions to school staff have given free rein to interrogations during which the students' freedoms, particularly their freedom of conscience, have been regularly flouted.

The violent connotation of the expression "by destination," usually reserved for weapons, suggests the impossibility of conceiving religious signs linked to Islam in any other way than through a security and nationalist prism. As if a sign of Islam is necessarily meant to shock, provoke, and compromise established security and order. It does not seem easy to understand as an individual freedom and a choice linked to spirituality.

These events' political and media treatment thus inverts the perspective and presents these students as collectively and deliberately engaging in an "Islamist offensive against the Republican school." A link is thus woven between the students' outfits, which are considered too covering, and an Islamist movement that seeks to undermine republican principles. In the words of the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalization (CIPDR), "the wearing of veils or religious clothing is encouraged, as part of a strategy of Salafo-freedom entry, aimed at promoting religious practices and rites within the republican school. (...) In the background of this online mobilization, the Islamist sphere attacks, with constancy, the principle of secularism through the questioning of the 2004 law prohibiting the wearing of ostensible religious signs in school". Similarly, a note from the Comité interministériel de prévention de la délinquance et de la radicalisation (CIPDR) states that "the increase in attacks on secularism in schools is a sign that fundamentalist Islam has become commonplace among the younger generations of believers."

The CCIE is concerned about the lack of consideration given to the very young age of the victims of this Islamophobic offensive in schools, which is allowed by the serious misuse of educational authority. The imbalance of power that characterizes these situations experienced by young high school students is unfortunately likely to cause dramatic consequences for their mental health and school future (particularly by provoking phenomena of school phobias).
The far right is gaining ground

In 2022, the rise in power and legitimacy of the far right was a phenomenon of European scope. In this context, Muslim communities often constitute the cement of the discourse of this political current, which considers them globally as persona non grata in Europe, thus indulging in increasingly extreme forms of dehumanization towards them.

Since October of last year, for the first time in the European Union, one of the founding countries has been governed by the extreme right. Giorgia Meloni, leader of the Fratelli d’Italia party, heir to Mussolini’s fascism, has been appointed President of the Council of Government in Italy, in coalition with the Lega, another far-right party led by Matteo Salvini, and Forza Italia, a right-wing populist party led by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Meloni was also elected president of the European Conservatives and Reformists Party, linked to the European Conservatives and Reformists group, an alliance of more than 40 right-wing and far-right parties across Europe. Meloni’s pledge promises to fight “against the Islamization of Europe and mass immigration.” She said: “We will defend God, the fatherland and the family, make no mistake. We will fight against the Islamization of Europe, because we have no intention of becoming a Muslim continent.”

The far right is also in power in Hungary, where Viktor Orban’s Fidesz, who has been in power for 12 years, was again re-elected as head of government in April. According to Orban, “Islam has never belonged to Europe, it has invited itself there,” and “Islam will never be part of the identity of European countries.” He also stated regarding refugees of the Muslim faith: “We do not see these people as Muslim refugees. We see them as Muslim invaders. We think that large numbers of Muslims inevitably lead to parallel societies, because Christian society and Muslim society will never unite.”

In Poland, the right-wing populist Law and Justice (PiS) party has governed since 2015. In Latvia and Slovakia, the far right is part of government coalitions through the National Alliance parties of Artus Krišjānis Kariņš in Latvia, and We Are a Family in Slovakia. In Sweden, the Sweden Democrats (SD), the country’s second-largest party, founded by
nationalists and neo-Nazis, supports the government without participating. It votes on the executive's proposed laws and helps set the government's policy. A member of the S.D. party said, at an international conference, that "Muslims are not 100% human beings".

According to a December 2022 poll in Belgium, the far-right Vlaams Belang party has taken the lead in Flanders' projections for the upcoming 2024 elections, garnering more than 25 percent of voting intentions. The second largest party in voting intentions, the N-VA, which currently governs the region, is also rooted in Flemish nationalism and has historically taken an extreme stance against immigration and Muslim communities.

Beyond the electoral political arena, far-right groups were active throughout the year. In Sweden, in April, a racist and Islamophobic group called Hard Line organized raids in Muslim-majority neighborhoods in several cities during Ramadan, claiming to want to burn the Quran or wrap it in ham. In Germany, on Wednesday, December 7, twenty-five people belonging to the Reich Citizens movement, including former elite soldiers, were arrested for concretely plotting a coup. This failed attempt to establish a military regime is a reminder of the degree of radicalization of these groups and a warning of their threatening progress in the European public space. Muslim communities are often at the forefront of their targets.

Another worrying phenomenon is the rise in Europe of Indian nationalism linked to the Hindutva party, which violently targets Muslim minorities. In the U.K. last May, 30 men with bats and iron bars brutally attacked a teenager in the street after asking him if he was Muslim, leading to his emergency hospitalization. Again, on August 28, after India lost a cricket match to Pakistan, a group of men shouting "death to Pakistan" marched through the streets of Leicester and attacked a Sikh and a police officer. Several men stormed a predominantly Hindu neighborhood a few nights later, and then a teenager was attacked again after the men asked him if he was Muslim. These attacks have been attributed to the racist and nationalist Hindutva movement, and in particular to the paramilitary Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which is affiliated with India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and is responsible for a wide range of legal and extra-legal violence against India's Muslim communities.

Collateral effects of the fight against radicalization

The fight against radicalization, a global priority for several years, continues negatively affecting European Muslim communities. This security policy, based on the reporting of what is perceived as religious and political deviance, is indeed the main prism through which any Muslim religious practice is understood and
evaluated, leading to a climate of suspicion towards Muslim communities and the individuals who make them up. This has led to a climate of suspicion towards Muslim communities and individuals, who have become, in Samuel Huntington’s words, the "ideal enemy," a radically distinct and ideologically hostile group. The article by researcher Martijn de Koning explores this dimension of the Muslim question in the European context, and more specifically in the Netherlands, by highlighting the constraint for those concerned to invest in the role of "good Muslims actively."

Indeed, whether the cause of radicalization is thought to be directly related to Islam and its alleged incompatibility with European modernity or to an Islamist ideology that would be a deviation from Islam does not make much difference in practice. The difference between the two is indeed too labile for this distinction to be decisive in the daily life of European Muslims. The founding idea of radicalization prevention programs that terrorism can be prevented by systematically monitoring the religious and political lives of Muslims and detecting indicators of radicalization has, however, profoundly transformed the relationship of Muslims to the societies in which they live. Arthemis Snijders’ contribution to this report on the effect of these policies on Muslim communities in Belgium provides insight into the extent to which these policies have violated fundamental freedoms.

European states have systematically responded to the attacks by implementing counterterrorism measures that have eroded the rule of law, strengthened executive powers, restricted individual freedoms, and established Muslim communities and Islam as a public security issue. The interview with psychologist Tarek Younis addresses the psychological impact of this regime of widespread suspicion on Muslims in the U.K.

As counterterrorism and anti-radicalization measures have progressed, voices critical of the security paradigm in which these policies are embedded have regularly been delegitimized - even criminalized. In April 2022, former U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron wrote in the foreword to the Policy Exchange think tank’s report on the U.K.’s counter-radicalization strategy (Prevent) that "just as we need to fight the Islamist extremist narrative, we also need to fight the anti-Prevent narrative. We must show that delegitimizing counterterrorism
is, in essence, enabling terrorism”. The equating of criticism of counterterrorism with the promotion of terrorism is fallacious and dangerous rhetoric. It equates critical researchers and observers with terrorists as if critical analysis and political violence could be similar in nature and severity. Thus, this rhetoric puts them in danger, as evidenced by the death threats some regularly receive. The criminalization of criticism is analyzed by John Holmwood and Layla Aitlhadj, authors of the “People’s review of Prevent” report and direct targets of this rhetoric, in their article “How the U.K. government’s Prevent strategy undermines democracy.”

This serious reduction of European democratic space is most severely marked in Austria, where, under the auspices of an extreme right-wing government, Operation Luxor led to the violent police search of more than sixty homes of activists and researchers in 2021. Nearly two years later, one of the victims of these searches, Austrian researcher Farid Hafez, was finally found innocent of charges of terrorist intent. His work on Islamophobia in Austria was outrageously labeled as a “form of terrorism,” a fact that shows the serious threat to the freedom of expression of Muslims in Austria and Europe in general.

It is also necessary to take note of the shift from the fight against radicalization to all forms of distancing, criticism, or hostility towards the state. In August, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said, "there is no more important task for a Prime Minister than to keep our country and nation safe. Whether it is redoubling our efforts to combat Islamist extremism or getting rid of those who express their hatred of our country, I will do everything in my power to fulfil that mission."
Islamophobia at the heart of the migration issue

In February 2022, war broke out in Ukraine and caused thousands of Ukrainian refugees to be exiled. The political and media treatment of the emergence of this new category of refugees has been the occasion for racist and Islamophobic discourse and practices. Constant comparisons have been made between Ukrainian refugees, on the one hand, who are considered to be essentially compatible with the European way of life, and Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi, and other refugees from Africa and the Middle East, on the other, who are seen as coming to subvert European customs. The European response to the displacement of refugees caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine has thus cruelly highlighted the obvious difference in treatment given to Ukrainian refugees and refugees fleeing wars in countries with a Muslim majority.

The terms used to describe the former ("our neighbors") and the latter ("invaders") are indicative of a European way of thinking that still sees itself as opposed to the rest of the world and, in particular, the rest of the Muslim world. Thus, on October 13, 2022, the head of the European Union's foreign policy Josep Borrell declared at a conference in Bruges, Belgium, that "Europe is a garden. Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could take over the garden". This garden metaphor is particularly striking in highlighting the extent to which the colonial worldview permeates European imaginations. Lamies Nassri's article on ghetto politics in Denmark explores the social stigma of being deemed "non-Western."

The opposition between the "good," Western, deserving and civilized refugees and the others has been recurrent throughout the year since the outbreak of war in Ukraine. Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov said in March 2022 about Ukrainian refugees: "These are not the refugees we are used to. They are European people. They are intelligent people, educated people". As for the other refugees, they are "people with troubled pasts, who may be former terrorists."

Spanish MP Santiago Abascal, leader of the far-right Vox party, said Spain should welcome Ukrainian refugees but not Muslims: "Everyone can distinguish between them (Ukrainian refugees) and the invasion of young men of Muslim origin, of military age, who have thrown themselves on European borders in order to destabilize and colonize Europe," he said in the Spanish Parliament on March 2, 2022.
RESEARCHERS’ CONTRIBUTIONS
The effects of the law “upholding the principles of the Republic”

Assia Bensouda

The year 2022 was marked by a hardening of the State's tone towards Muslim populations living in France. The growing tension was materialised by the implementation – albeit somehow random in its application – of the law reinforcing the principles of the Republic (known as the separatism law, adopted on 24 August 2021). This law established a legal framework legitimising the unequal treatment of religious minorities by the State, which is arguably responsible in the liberal tradition for guaranteeing the same rights to the whole population. Indeed, the legislation favouring this arsenal allows for targeting Muslims – while pretending not to do so. It reflects the State's desire to strengthen its control over Muslim communities while feeding the earlier logic of problematising and securitising Islam. While the separatism law is part of the profusion of public discourse and laws that target and stigmatise Muslim communities, this unprecedented measure against a religious minority creates an atmosphere of moral panic around the practice of Islam. In return, this political and social climate has real consequences far more damaging to national cohesion and living together than Muslims.

On the one hand, because of their performative dimension, public security policies targeting Muslims generate the internalisation of the problematisation of the Muslim presence by the whole population, with the direct consequence of reifying the identity

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1  Abdellali Hajjat, Marwan Mohammed, *Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le problème musulman?* La Découverte, 2016


3  A moral panic is the stigmatisation of a community as deviant and threatening to society. It emerges when “a situation, an event, a person or a group of people, is designated as a threat to the values and interests of society; its nature is presented in a simplified and stereotyped way by the mass media; editors, bishops, politicians and the media. It emerges when “a situation, an event, a person or a group of people, is designated as a threat to the values and interests of society; its nature is presented in a simplified and stereotyped way by the mass media; editors, bishops, politicians and other do-gooders erect moral barricades; socially accredited experts offer their diagnosis and solutions; ways of coping are invented or (more often) resorted to; the situation then either fades away and disappears, or deteriorates and becomes more apparent.”. Hostility, projection, and disproportionality are constitutive elements of a moral panic. See Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils, and Moral Panics*, Londres, Routledge, 1972, p.9.
group barriers between the majority society and Muslims. On the other hand, it accentuates the effects of symbolic and material exclusion on these populations, who are singled out for their alleged inability to integrate. These security policies also generate contestation, particularly online, which feeds the polemic on “communitarian” demands in a vicious circle. Finally, this new legal context seems to have made it possible not only to condemn specific acts but also to directly attack individuals or entities (schools, associations, mosques) deemed incompatible with the country’s principles and presented as threats to its moral security, as we have seen through the example of Hassen Iquioussen’s escape, to which we will return.

This contribution will attempt to demonstrate how this law shows the State’s desire to strengthen its control over Muslim populations before looking at the concrete effects of its implementation on freedoms and questioning its very interest given its perverse effects.

From the law against separatism to the law reinforcing the principles of the Republic, or the art of targeting Muslims while pretending not to do so

The law against separatism promulgated on 24 August 2021, since renamed the law consolidating the respect of the principles of the Republic (CPR), is a law directly targeting Muslims living in France. While the successive change of names of the latter testifies to the State’s desire not to display its initial intentions ostensibly, the President Emmanuel Macron had explicitly mentioned the target of the law during his speech in Les Mureaux in October 2020:

“[...]. The law against separatism is a law directly targeting Muslims living in France. While the successive change of names of the latter testifies to the State’s desire not to display its initial intentions ostensibly, the President Emmanuel Macron had explicitly mentioned the target of the law during his speech in Les Mureaux in October 2020:

“The problem is Islamist separatism. This conscious, theorised, politico-religious project, which takes concrete form in repeated deviations from the values of the Republic, which often results in the constitution of a counter-society and whose manifestations are the de-schooling of children, the development of communitarian sports and cultural practices which are the pretext for teaching principles that do not conform to the laws of the Republic. It is indoctrination and, through it, the negation of our principles, equality between women and men, and human dignity. The problem is this ideology, which claims its laws are superior to the Republic’s. [...] [This proposed law] provides answers to the withdrawal of identity and the development of radical Islam, an ideology that is hostile to the principles and values on which the Republic is founded. Faced with this reality of separatism, the legal arsenal remained insufficient. [...]”.

Here, the President explicitly names the problem by speaking of “Islamist separatism,” to which he proposes to respond with a law. Interestingly, the State’s legal response to this separatist threat is precisely to accentuate the divide between the dominant and

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2 https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/10/02/la-republique-en-actes-discours-du-president-de-la-republique-sur-le-theme-de-la-lutte-contre-les-separatismes
the minority group (Muslims) by positioning itself against the latter under the guise of reinforcing the republican principles of which it seems unworthy. The so-called ‘Islamist separatism’ is presented as the societal problem par excellence without even being demonstrated, leading to the proposed law being self-evident. If the performative aspect of the demonstration may seem surprising, the way this anti-separatist response is later legitimised is even more so. Soon, the term Islamist was eclipsed from the proposed law “against separatism”, which even became the “law consolidating the principles of the Republic.”

Given that all laws are supposed to protect the principles of the Republic, one may wonder about the very title of the latter and, therefore, its necessity and usefulness. Indeed, French law already contains numerous administrative and penal provisions to punish excesses that members of society might indulge in. Thus, in our view, this is indeed a law directly targeting Muslims and discriminating against them because of their known or supposed belonging to a religion, in this case, Islam, which they are nevertheless supposed to be free to practice by virtue of the principles of freedom of opinion and worship that the State has a priori the mission to protect.

From the legal arena... to the witch-hunt

The text of the CPR law is divided into three main areas: (i) to hinder all initiatives that are contrary to the foundations of the Republic; (ii) to amplify all actions that give substance to equal opportunities in all territories; and (iii) to accompany the structuring of an Islam of France in the face of the “extremist drifts of Islamism”. However, nothing specifies concretely the contours of the offences that the law encompasses. The text is rather confusing since the key terms are never defined and therefore left to free interpretation. This is particularly true of the concepts of “extremist deviations of Islamism”, “initiatives contrary to the foundations of the Republic”, or those what does not respect “human dignity”, which are only mentioned in an evasive manner even though central. While the law is not supposed to afford this type of approximation, legal vagueness offers a great deal of room for interpretation, and, consequently, a large margin of discretion for those working in the field, which can lead to arbitrary and problematic decisions. Hence, this bill establishes an unprecedented legal framework for launching a perfectly legal witch-hunt, which is all the more worrying in that the lability of the criteria makes the accusation difficult to counter, especially among populations that are mostly socio-economically precarious and, therefore, more legally vulnerable.

1  Ibid.

2  The witch-hunt was the systematic pursuit, persecution, and condemnation of people accused of practising witchcraft between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries in France and, more widely, Europe. Some procedures for proving the guilt of the accused included throwing them into the water: if they sank, they were innocent, and if they did not sink, they were guilty and deserved the death penalty. There was no way out.
Muslims can now be punished for words or religious practices that can be considered a threat to national unity and security. This law of exception makes it materially possible to convict on mere accusation despite the principle of presumption of innocence and in the absence of tangible and material evidence of real danger. The anti-separatism bill amounts to a real criminalisation of the practice of the Muslim religion, which those accused have difficulty defending themselves from, given that they are a priori guilty. Indeed, how can one defend oneself and prove the phantasmagorical character of the accusations of separatism or threat to the security of the country when the problem lies above all in the accusation itself? Thus, the label ‘separatist’, like ‘Islamist’ and ‘communitarian’, can be used as a form of repression based on public disqualification and ex-communication from the national community over which those concerned have little or no power to act. Therefore, we consider this to be a real witch-hunt.

Co-option and repression on the march

The implementation of this new law has sent a strong message to the targeted Muslim populations. It confronted them with the government’s new stance on them, putting them again at the centre of public attention, under increased surveillance and with no real possibility to defend themselves in case of suspicion or accusation. The aim is to monitor and punish Muslims – for being Muslim – through a system that uses the law as a tool for coercion and restriction of civil rights. Moreover, it simultaneously represses the voices of those who protest the dominant normative framework and condemn the discriminatory treatment of Muslims. For example, we have been able to follow the successive episodes of the escape of Imam Hassen Iquioussen, who was threatened with extradition for sexist and antisemitic remarks. Above all, this case exposes the inadequacy and disproportionality of the justice measure concerning the facts of the case as a simple means to impress, silence, and dissuade potential dissenting voices. As we have seen in other cases, public disqualification is one of the preferred tools of repression. This is particularly worrying because freedom of expression is one of the signs of a healthy democracy. A democratic society is full of heterogeneous ideas, welcomes debate, and allows criticism. Civil society should normally be able to express its disagreement and diversity, freedom of opinion and expression being at the heart of the fundamental freedoms that democracy claims to guarantee. Thus, in addition to strengthening the State’s control over Muslims, there is also a distancing of the State’s role as protector and guarantor of equal access to the law for all.

In the same spirit, 2022 was marked by many shutdowns of places of worship, public schools and associations providing Arabic and religious courses. These shutdowns are

part of the implementation of the CPR law, which provides two legal tools to control the associative fabric. The first is the “Republican Commitment Contract” (Contrat d’engagement républicain), which requires associations claiming public funds to comply with a list of state requirements. The second is expanding the grounds for administrative dissolution of associations, normally limited to restricted motives. An association can now be dissolved for offences against human dignity or violent behaviour by its members, including outside the structure. Hence, any association bears from now on the burden of the individual responsibility of its members over which it has little or no control.

Given that the dissolution of an association is an extreme measure conducted a priori only in cases of real and imminent danger by the President of the Republic himself, it is deplorable that this criterion should suffice for such a measure. The reasons invoked to justify dissolution differ from one case to another. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that a school has been closed for a problem related to safety standards, such as a faulty fire extinguisher. Thus, if the first, the more explicitly ideological tool, is insufficient to prevent Muslim associations and schools from being established or continuing to exist, the second tool – more technical – remains. This new legal configuration demonstrates the State’s desire to control the fabric of Muslim associations, which is why various human rights organisations have called for its withdrawal.

Furthermore, the law also confirms the State’s desire to continue the selection and co-optation of interlocutors – chosen by it – in charge of representing the Muslim faith, which is part of the extension of a – colonial – Muslim policy of France in which the State plays an active role. The State designates the “good Muslims” and the “bad” ones, thus making a distinction between “good Islam” and “bad Islam”, which is not its prerogative under the principle of secularism. This desire for state interference aims to create a relationship of interdependence between actors seeking recognition on the one hand and the State and its institutions in search of Muslim interlocutors willing to embody official Islam. However, this work of co-opting intermediary elites has shown its limits, given many aborted initiatives and failed attempts to represent French Muslims for many years. The law is, therefore, part of a historical continuity of indifference to the realities on the ground, which the State hardly seems to care about.

**A deliberately counter-productive law?**

Historically, the notion of a separatist threat has been often used to point the finger at groups considered deviant within different societies, but there are few actual cases of groups having made separatist claims in the sense of real autonomy or territorial claims.

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1  Fatima Khemilat, « Quand ‘l’islam de France’ rentre en scène. Entre permanence et résistibilité de la représentation des musulmans en France des années 80 à nos jours », thèse de sciences politiques sous la direction de Philipe Aldrin, 2022

2  Kymlicka Will, Multicultural Citizenship a Liberal Theory of Minority right, Oxford University
In most cases, these are minority groups simply demanding more equality in situations of obvious power asymmetries. However, despite their numerical inferiority and their vulnerability (ethno-racial, social, economic, etc.), which makes them less likely to take political action, they are the ones who crystallise the public debate around the figure of the enemy within and are regularly mobilised at the centre of polemics as folk devils. This raises questions about the glaring discrepancy between the real capacity of the actors to act and the portrait of the threat that is painted of them. This political strategy aimed at putting the said separatists at the centre of media attention serves, above all, as a political screen obscuring the real incapacity of the State to reduce the inequalities that it maintains elsewhere. There is thus a form of tacit justification for the State’s unwillingness to truly work for equality and justice, especially for those populations made responsible for their fate.

Moreover, the securitisation of the political debate around this issue makes it possible to implement an unprecedented legal framework, normally impossible in times of democracy. Indeed, the security context makes it possible to lift democratic constraints to implement exceptional laws such as this one without causing any particular concern on the part of civil society, the vast majority of whom see the dilemma between security and freedom as quickly resolved. However, no figures are put forward by the government to assess the degree of real and concrete threat posed by the separatist threat. Thus, the CPR law has made it possible to considerably reduce civil rights such as freedom of religion, opinion, expression, and association without any real – and objectively significant – threat that would justify such drastic measures.

Given the insidious effects of the law on individual and collective freedoms, which threaten the equal access of citizens in general and Muslims in particular to the law, one may wonder about the real interest of the law, even more so when one notes the random manner in which it is deployed. Does it not ultimately weaken the law more than it serves it? Participating in the problematisation of Muslim visibility in the public space generates, or at least accentuates, the fact that it is perceived as a public problem. The legal response to the problematisation of the Muslim presence is, therefore, more of a problem than a solution. Indeed, by criminalising and stigmatising Islam, the CPR law reifies the barriers of identity groups between the majority group and the group targeted by the stigma, which is then denied its Frenchness and the rights associated with it. The law thus has performative effects that generate and fuel the problematisation of the Muslim presence in society. It is in this sense that one can speak of a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to Vincent Geisser, “by dint of designating the ‘separatist evil’, it seems that its enunciators want to make it happen in order to justify the validity of their discourse and their action”.

The year 2022 was marked by the strengthening of the legislative framework for the

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surveillance and repression of Muslim populations living in France and its implementation. This has had the consequence of trivialising in the mainstream the institutionalisation of a respectable\(^1\) State racism that does not say its name and reifies group barriers within society between a majority associated with the idea of Frenchness opposed to the minority group whose common denominator is Islam. In so doing, the CPR law contributes to the polarisation of identities and the institutionalisation of inequalities in rights while claiming to provide answers to community withdrawal and the development of radical Islamism. In other words, this law, which claims not to target a community, represses it in two ways. On the one hand, by reifying group boundaries on ethnic-racial criteria, it discriminates against all Muslims by making their Islam a discriminatory criterion incompatible with Frenchness within French society. On the other hand, it monitors Muslims and punishes dissenting voices in the name of an “emancipation” that it wishes to impose – and not propose – in particular by resorting to legal tools such as the CPR law. Some researchers have described the latter as a tool of ‘cultural warfare’ that makes it possible to obtain, by force or by choice, the ‘adhesion’ of all to the republican project, or rather and above all to the one that the current government is making of it. Thus, this law revisits the legal framework of fundamental freedoms to allow the State to sanction -potential- Muslim opponents for not adhering to the republican project it defends.

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\(^1\) James Wolfrey, *The Rise of a Respectable Racism in France*, Oxford University Press, 2018
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Psychology and the fight against radicalisation

an interview with Tarek Younis

Tarek Younis is a clinical psychologist specialising in cultural and critical psychology and a professor at Middlesex University in London. His research explores the racialisation of Muslims and questions the use of psychology in counterterrorism. He is the author of The Muslim, Stade and Mind, published in 2022, in which he analyses the intersection of psychology and state interests.

How did you come to address the issue of prevention of radicalisation regarding psychology and mental health?

My way of approaching the intersection between Islamophobia and mental health came from different directions simultaneously. On the one hand, I have a long history of working in the community and being interested and invested in Islamophobia. My PhD in psychology was just on Islamophobia, and it was not directly about mental health. I was very interested in how Muslims in Canada, Montreal, Copenhagen and Germany see themselves and develop as Muslims. Besides that, I have had a long history of being interested in issues related to Islamophobia. When it came to mental health, my clinical background in mental health was very much interested in refugees and migrants, especially in Montreal, so my focus was thinking through how mental health is appropriate, how a mental health framework is appropriate for people from other cultures, not just Muslims but in general. How is psychology appropriate from these euro-centric foundations to other people coming from across the world? And, of course, there was an interest particularly in Muslims there, but it is really bringing all these things together. They are not playing separate roles.

I devoted myself at the same time in both of those two roads, but one is really about politicising Islamophobia, not making Islamophobia a question of just overt discrimination, but then also coming to understanding of how Islamophobia impacts us or how the political context impacts the way we see ourselves and the way we see other Muslims. How mental health frameworks are constructed to either support or, in some cases, maybe also pathologise and make seem abnormal certain ways of experiencing the world. Those two things coming together are some of the main building blocks. I’m very fortunate to have had very good and critical supervisors who always taught me to push a little more towards trying to not individualise issues...

I supervised undergraduates (bachelor and master students), and over the years, I can attest that many students who came to me who were interested in Islamophobia and mental health are really interested almost in experiences of overt Islamophobia and how that impacts mental health. It goes to show that they’re interested in thinking about them...
more critically or more broadly, but they’re just unsure how to do it. And I think there’s an appetite to try to complicate Islamophobia today, but also, there is a tendency to individualise Islamophobia that is still very strong.

When you speak of overt Islamophobia, what do you mean and what is the other side?

To clarify, I meant overt Islamophobia is interpersonal forms of violence. That means interpersonal, physical or verbal abuse. For example, I was once attacked on the street. I was told in Germany - I was walking, and someone came, and he was spitting at me and insulting me. Ok, that would be something very explicit. I would say that an interesting way of defining it would be that it’s something that the police might recognise to be a problem. And that’s very important because that’s why we need to complicate Islamophobia. It’s something where liberal society will say, “this does not belong here” this is what I mean by “overt” forms of physical abuse. That was my point that our discussion about Islamophobia, or many discussions about Islamophobia, tends to stay at that level.

What are the effects of Islamophobia outside of this superficial, obvious level? In your practice, what do you see that is not so obvious?

I should mention that many people are now much more conscious and much more critical towards remaining at that level. So, this is where we try to develop an understanding of how Islamophobia is not just an issue of individual prejudice. First of all, it comes down to the question, “where does racism come from” “where does islamophobia come from?” The normative mainstream understanding of racism and Islamophobia, it’s almost like they’re viruses; they’re being spread especially along the margins of society. They consider it something from the far-right groups, in white supremacy, across countries, France, wherever it might be. But that’s it, they’re kind of these attitudes that individuals have and share socially, and you know people might develop networks on those attitudes. Still, there’s something that can be addressed through proper education training. To complicate our understanding of Islamophobia is to recognise its history, where it comes from, why it is that the hijab, for example, is seen in a particular way in France, Quebec, and Denmark, what it is about Muslim women’s bodies that need to be controlled and managed.

If we can draw on that, we can take the history of imperialism, of how western nations during the Iraq war and Afghanistan have justified invasion and occupation through frameworks of liberating Muslim women from their aggressive religious oppressive cultural environment. And that has a long-standing history, coming from this colonial history of the West defining itself vis-à-vis Muslims and Islam, as one that’s a liberated civilisation versus one that’s oppressive.

There is this wonderful book called Epidemic empire by Anjuli Fatima Raza Kolb. She demonstrates the idea that Muslims are violent and aggressive and how the western
world has a long-standing history of seeing the Muslim majority of the population as almost contagious, sharing bad ideas but also instincts towards insurgency and violence. The main point I’m trying to draw is the importance of history, which I think is often neglected when discussing Islamophobia. And understanding where it comes from and how it’s benefitted, in fact, the western world in constructing the Muslim and Islam as the other.

Now, how it operates in practice, as we see, is not interpersonal. One pathway between Islamophobia and mental health, of course, would be that interpersonal forms of violence. I’m not taking away the importance of that. But in light of a more complicated understanding of Islamophobia, we will also see economic injustice, the social deprivation. I know the example of France. I know this as a personal example; someone went to apply for a job in Paris, and the employer offered alcohol in the job interview to see... what kinds of Muslims they were. So, we could see all this, and we know here in the UK that a racialised Asian woman, a woman from Pakistani or Indian background, is the least likely to get a job that corresponds to their education. These different forms of economic injustices and different forms of social deprivation directly impact mental health when we think of different forms of pressure that women especially have to carry and are burdened with in society.

There are other pathways, of course, if we think about inadequate healthcare and mental health services when they receive it, so we know racialised Black people, for example, here in the UK, are much more likely to be put in psychiatric wards. When I say racialised Black people, we need to remember that we’re not making a distinction between Black and Muslim here; many Muslims are Black, so we could consider their experience as an example. Someone who is racialised as Black is much more likely to be given harsher treatment in mental health treatment. This already has a direct impact on mental health. The sort of services that are offered and the sort of treatment that Muslims may receive may also be different.

And then, there is state-sanctioned violence. That’s where counterterrorism and social security come in. Certain forms of violence are either erased as violence, like when social services are hunting or used, especially by the police, to hunt Muslim families. I just heard a case of a Muslim woman yesterday telling her story: for years, social services through the police were coming after her and her children, and social services didn’t want to do it, but they had to. It’s state-sanctioned because the police are sanctioning this treatment of this family. It’s a form of violence that is legitimised. That’s important: what kind of violence is found acceptable. And we see that depending on different people and different bodies, some forms of violence are more acceptable than others. It’s specifically with Muslims: the pervasion of race, the harsher treatment, and things like that are considered legitimate and state-sanctioned.

Then, there are different forms of state and political exclusion as well that I should mention. We know about that in France. Muslims are excluded from civil society unless
they fit a certain boundary of French that they should be performing. We’re seeing that in the UK, in Denmark: different forms of political exclusion. We have to think about the impact that it has, not only on mental health but on the different ways it allows access to support services. We know the community in mental health research is very important. To have that sort of resource, to be able to think, “oh! I can turn to this organisation, I can turn to the CCIF, I can turn to CAGE”. We’re entering a period where Muslim civil society is increasingly subjugated and controlled, managed and politically excluded, tremendously impacting how Muslims experience distress.

I try to emphasise in my book how we can’t really talk about mental health in societies where Muslims are increasingly managed under different forms of social control.

The Islamophobia men suffer from is very much about their political ideas and goals. In contrast, women are much more seen as tools of those political ideas through their bodies: their bodies are under the spotlight of state scrutiny. I wondered about the psychological effects, the focus on their bodies, their sexuality, the way they interact with men. What’s your point of view about that?

That’s a really important point. There is a really important gender dimension of Islamophobia. Many have underlined this issue, especially because many of our best scholars on Islamophobia are women. I’m saying this in terms of scholarship, not in terms of within the Muslim community, where the gender dimension is often overlooked. I don’t think there are that many people who looked at that in terms of mental health. There is one research study that I’m thinking about right now, about how Muslim women who are health professionals here in the hospitals experience significant anxiety because of how they’re being told to wear the hijab, and how to wear the hijab, and if they are even allowed to wear the hijab. We can see the management of Muslim women’s bodies, which impacts their anxiety, particularly in ways Muslim men don’t go through here. I don’t know any example of something similar, at least now here in the UK, where it’s much more acceptable to have a beard, for example. It could be in France or in Denmark, or other places. It’s a really good example of what you’re saying.

But other than that, a lot of other things we can deduce. We understand that this would be anxiety-provoking, but we have yet to look at it. I’ve often argued that one of the biggest neglects of research is security issues. The focus on security issues and political violence would be about men, travelling, etc. Obviously, with women too, but there’s a gendered dimension there.

I think a large part of those security policies impacts mothers. There is a weird relationship between security, policies and mothers. Muslim women are increasingly responsabilized for... raising good men (laugh). And that’s not foreign to western history and responsabilizing women as care-takers. This is the woman’s role to be care-takers, and feminist movements have taken a position against that in different ways. We see with
counter-radicalisation and counter-extremism, there is a really awkward relationship with Muslim women: “you’re the front line against extremism” “you have to raise good children, but also, refer them to the police if there is anything wrong with them’. So, they are responsibilized in strange and awkward ways. I don’t think we’ve fully grasped the effects that have on them.

I know from experience, from my own clinical work, therapy and speaking with many Muslim women like that: it’s horrendous. The impact of interacting with police about their children, in any way, shape, or form, is incredibly suffocating. I am not fond of using the word trauma. Still, we will see what the people consider to be trauma and trauma responses with these women: they’re hypersensitive, they’re shaking, they’re scared, they actually are constantly in a state of hyper-arousal, they are afraid of when the police are going to interact with them again. Anyone who works in this field will know that. And it’s very particularly gendered because of how security tends to see Muslim women or women in general with such a light, but obviously particularly Muslim women.

Do you see an evolution over the years, before Contest and Prevent, and after: in your practice, or in general, did you see how Islamophobia impacted people in general, women, men and children?

Yes. Anything that I have to say here is not really based on research. Still, I think I can remember how, before counter-extremism became such a normal way of viewing and managing Muslims, it used to really be about integration, so Muslim integrated into western French society, Quebec society, and Danish society. Even though that’s still very relevant, in the UK especially, one thing that I personally have observed: what used to be really the question of, you know, “integrate into society or get out of here! Go back to Morocco, or Turkey, or whatever”. There has been a securitising of that question. People who don’t integrate, I look at certain cases of people that I know, “oh! he seems to be against Danish values” that’s still a marker of his lack of integration, but it has security implications. If someone is against French values, there are security implications; it’s a risk factor, it’s seen within a logic of risks. And that logic of risks is what really makes a difference for Muslims in western societies.

People have been writing about that without attributing it to the War on Terror or security. For decades, the western world has adopted this risk logic. But the War on Terror has really translated that into palpable consequences for Muslims in every single thing that they do: they put on a hijab, grow a beard, go to Hajj, and so many examples. There are many examples of someone who goes to Hajj or Umrah and then has a brush with security, or someone makes a point at work like, “oh! you went to Al-Qaeda training, how was your terrorism training?” or things like that.

I think the risk-based framework that’s become readily integrated into how Muslims are seen has made a great impact.
When you spoke about mothers and the focus on their children who are seen as threats, I was thinking of that child in France who was accused of terrorism because he was playing with paper planes. I was wondering if you, in your practice, have encountered that. I mean how children or teenagers grow with that suspicion and how it also impacts their relationship with their faith or religious practice. How do children who are victims of such scrutiny and raised as Muslim project themselves as Muslim adults?

Such a terrible example. I have many of these stories; unfortunately, in my head, they’re always just as bad; they’re always punching me in the gut. Let me start by saying I think the thing that hurts me the most is that we, in our Muslim communities, have not done well in helping support these youth. I think it has to be really said. We can understand why many Muslim organisations tend to stay away from security-related issues. Anything that’s security-related is a hot topic. As if good Muslims didn’t really have to deal with that.

Even liberal society, many non-Muslim liberals would find it problematic that they’re securitising those kids that way. But I have so many examples of youth who speak up about Palestine, who say politically explicit things. They are seen in a very particular light, reprimanded, and punished for sharing their thoughts in some shape or form.

The impact is humongous. If I were to sit, I could talk for 5 hours about all the impact we’ve seen. It disrupts so much that I feel like the police, and some teachers, are so blind, sometimes, like we could accuse them of being so blind that they can’t see that this is really harmful to the child to be seen in this light.

In terms of harm, the one kid yesterday, I was speaking with the mother about her child: he actually did absolutely nothing wrong, it was only about one of his family members who were securitised, and the child keeps getting pounded by security and social services as a potential victim or vulnerable to radicalisation. Because he’s already seen in this light, the mother told me that he’s actually afraid of going to school. He’s afraid that other children will see him also as a terrorist. And it’s not the first time that I’ve heard that. It completely disrupts the trust of institutions.

Now think about the weight of that statement: disrupting trust with institutions. The effects become so wide that it disrupts trust with school, doctors, with therapists. I’ve had Muslims come to me and say, “yeah, I don’t trust that I can speak to my therapist about Palestine or things that matter to me,” for example. Muslims end up going to doctors and therapists when they have to and not as a place of trust. They’ll censor themselves according to what they have to say to get the support that they think they need. But they won’t feel completely comfortable.

It also disrupts the relationship with others, other Muslims, people in the Muslim community. It creates divides in the Muslim community, which is problematic in terms of support and solidarity behind you. Families are huge systems of protection, so mothers
become anxious and frustrated with what’s happening. They’re very distressed. It ends up creating these shockwaves from the individual outward. And ideally, we would have a support system in place around these families that need it, but we don’t. Often, many of these families suffer in isolation; they are incredibly lonely for many years.

There is a great book by Michelle Alexandre called the New Jim Crow, and she talks about the mass incarceration of Black Youth in the United States. She talks about the sensitivity within the Black community to show any proximity to them. I don’t know how much research there is about that in the Muslim community, but I can tell you for a fact that I know this exists from practice. If we think about the different forms of isolation that these families experience, it’s astounding. One of the most harmful effects I’ve seen is gaslighting: gaslighting is about making a person feel responsible for the experience that they’re going through. Saying that these kids deserve it because they did it. So, with the gaslighting on the one hand and the total lack of accountability, there is no structure of accountability when it comes to this within these public institutions.

There is no way to say this teacher is racist for referring to my kids that way or talking about them just for playing with paper planes at school or talking about Palestine or whatever it might be. The youth and the families are responsabilized; it’s intensely suffocating. Again, I don’t use the word trauma very easily, but if we think about trauma, something where it’s an experience that disrupts your every day, how you live your life every day. These types of experiences completely disrupt the relationship with everyone.

Once we understand how mental health can be used to reinforce the suspicion that the state has against Muslim communities, how can we still use psychology to address a problem that is structural without denying that it is structural? How do you tackle that issue in your practice and in theory?

That’s a great question. I try to address that in my book. I take from Frantz Fanon, who is a Martinique psychiatrist, he was based in North Africa in times of the French colonial empire, he addresses that question and that questions come up because he sees issues with North African communities and the population, but he was never anti-psychiatry. So, what were his ways of thinking about it? One of the main things that we can take from him that I think we need to do, first of all, is not to say, “Let’s throw away all of psychology and all of the psychiatry”, because there is a tendency here to individualise these political issues. Rather, one thing we can do to flip the coin to turn the whole thing around.

What we should be doing among all these distressed Muslims is making their distress socially and politically meaningful. So, anyone who goes through this experience, the child who is distressed by the way their teacher or security or police is treating them, that distress is immediately meaningful for us as a community. It is something that immediately becomes socially and politically meaningful for us and something that is revealing of the social and political climate that we’re in. That’s the most important thing. First, we need
to establish and create a support system for them. That requires that sort of political organising around these individuals, but also in a way that captures documents and validates these experiences. Something to say: this is something that we’re going through that mobilises us as a community, as forms of resistance, so that it doesn’t just become their issue. Any distress that any of these youth experience is our issue; it’s our communal distress. It’s not just that youth, and otherwise, everything is ok – no, these are politically meaningful examples of distress, they speak to wider political forms of oppression that need to be addressed, and I think that’s very important.

I emphasise this so much because there are obvious and intense scenes of violence if we think about the Quebec City Mosque shooting, Christchurch, or other places. We see how most of the world recognises that. But what happens with that Muslim distress: we’re going to see trauma responses to address the individual distress of all these people. But the Quebec City Mosque shooting is a good example of how all this sort of mental health support is given to the family. Still, not many years later, they’re talking about banning the hijab again. And it just goes to show the mental health framework was utilised in a way that made it individual. Still, we were not able (and by we, I mean generally as a society but also particularly Muslim community) we were not able to transform these experiences into something that was socially and politically meaningful as forms of resistance. Or at least society didn’t do that because certainly the demonisation and vilification of Muslims, and Muslim symbols like the hijab, was really fundamental to Alexandre Bissonnette and his attack on the Quebec City Mosque. But because the consequences and distress Muslims experienced were highly individualised, the political class could still demonise and vilify Muslims.

To make it very explicit, we need to establish those two things – and that’s something I’m working towards, and I’m interested in doing that internationally - to develop these support systems for those youth. To understand not just their stress but where it is coming from. We have the resources to not only see them and understand them but to document them and frame them as forms of resistance. And to really make every single form of distress something that informs us about the society that we live in, to make it political and socially meaningful. That’s what we need to do inshallah.

**Do you have any example (and if not that, embryos of that)? Do you see that in the UK, or elsewhere, first steps towards it?**

I pray we can work towards it. I can think of some cases where we tried to do that within ourselves between the different Muslim community organisations to try and create a support system around them. So about those two components, creating a support system and transforming into something that is politically meaningful, I think in the UK, a very good example of that is. It’s not excellent by any means. The UK for its own reasons has many different organisations and people interested in that. I think about Denmark, where there is no support system whatsoever. No Muslim organisations or anyone are
organising around the care and support for youth who go through those experiences that we’re talking about.

A good example would be providing immediate legal support and inshaAllah support for the families, the mothers, and the children. That’s something that needs to be standardised for everyone. Anyone who goes through these experiences should know exactly where to go, which resources to find, and how that interconnected network can support them. I pray that someday that can be done internationally for places like Denmark or France inshallah.

As for the second part, I don’t know if I have seen that yet. That comes to us intuitively if we think about the Iraq war, Syria, or other places where Muslims are oppressed. There is that instinct to say something is wrong here and to mobilise on it. My point is that we need to be able to mobilise on every single form of distress that comes to us.

That’s what we need to do, and it’s not only about making it legible for wider society, not just “look, we documented that many cases; we documented 300 children who show signs of trauma” that’s been done a lot already. If we think about how that’s been done in the United States and other places, especially in Black communities, it hasn’t made that much of a difference. We need to consider how to make that meaningful for us as a Muslim community, mosques, and others coming together to say: look, one child, not 300, threw a paper plane at a school and is now feeling very anxious; that anxiety matters to all of us because that child can be the child of any one of us and we need to understand what’s going on, why the school treated them that way, and we need to mobilise on the stress that that child is feeling. That’s my point: we don’t need to make it legible to anybody. It has to be understood by us because any single case is already enough.

I would love to see much more international collaboration on how to create this sort of support. There are so many commonalities: we need to remember that many security practices, in practice, not in theory, are international. We have an example of British security officers, private or public, going to France, Denmark, and even China, to share best practices. We know of a British official who went to China to train police. The War on Terror is global; it’s an international thing, a campaign. We need to develop a much more consolidated collaborative way of creating support for these families for these communities inshallah.
The side effects of counter-radicalisation policies on Belgian Muslims

Arthemis Snijders

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Being stopped, questioned (sometimes even detained) and deported at the border of countries like Turkey or the UAE. Having multiple stops and searches by police or ‘random checks’ by airport security services. Coming into work and being fired on the spot due to security reasons. Receiving a letter with the message that your bank account is being closed, with no appeal possible. These are just some of the examples in the research that was conducted for our report ‘Tussen Grondrechten en Surveillantie’, Between Fundamental Rights and Surveillance (Fadil, Snijders, Boustani & Janssens 2022), with 23 respondents coming from various regions in Belgium, Dutch as well as French-speaking. They had been subjected to surveillance and security checks based on their religious background as Muslims. This could mean that their names had been entered into a police or security services database. However, it is nigh on impossible to find out where, why or how someone has been entered into the database(s). Besides this, the information stored about the people in question can travel to different countries, leading to potentially life-long travel bans and Kafkaesque procedures to be removed to simply have access to the information being stored and shared.

The following article contains a summary of the research done by Nadia Fadil, Arthemis Snijders and Kaoutar Boustani. Names of respondents have been omitted and replaced by numbers to give maximum anonymity.

Research Method and context

The respondents in this research all had the (very rarely confirmed) suspicion that they were registered in a government database somewhere, which they based on the fact that they had been subjected to controls, checks and sometimes even domiciliary visits by police. Twenty-three men and women in total were interviewed from March until December 2021. 12 French-speaking, 11 Dutch-speaking, 16 women and eight men. None of our respondents had been convicted for terrorism offences or any other offences for that matter in the past. We are talking about everyday Muslims in various jobs, some of which require security checks, a majority of which happen to have been active in Muslim civil

1 https://soc.kuleuven.be/anthropology/files/FARapport3-web-NL
society. On the French-speaking side, we collaborated with the Collectif pour L’Inclusion et Contre l’Islamophobie en Belgique, which had contact with Muslims that had been subject to discrimination. The main criteria for the respondents were that they identified as Muslim and that they had encountered something which led them to believe that they were on the government’s radar. The reason for only choosing Muslim respondents is that Muslims have been the main target of the Belgian government’s counter-radicalisation and terrorism strategy, even though it is stated that this is not the case. From research internationally and nationally, it is clear that policy seems not only to be primarily focused on Muslims but also based on so-called ‘Muslim radicalisation’.

Belgium’s counter-radicalisation and terrorism measures

Post 9/11, there was great international concern regarding the threat of domestic terrorism. The word “terrorism”, however, became gradually synonymous with ‘Islamic terrorism’. Belgium was no exception in this (Jaminé & Fadil, 2019). The so-called Plan M (Mosques) that was introduced in 2004 was later renamed Plan R (Radicalisation). This federal plan had by then already been subjected to various modifications. More recently, in 2021, Plan R was transformed into Strategy TER (Extremism and Terrorism). The most recent goal of this plan is to expand the preventative part of the fight against extremism and terrorism through multi-disciplinary consultation platforms between security services and police, but also through cooperation between the various public services, municipalities and other local actors. With this method, the government hopes to tackle the so-called breeding ground for extremism and terrorism in an early stage.

Especially after the attacks in Paris and Brussels in 2015 and 2016, and the departure of around 500 Belgians to Syria, the fight against terrorism has become an important spearhead of the different governments in Belgium (Flemish, Brussels, and Walloon). The main focus here is in line with the strategies deployed around Europe and the United States, namely prevention. VE (Preventing Violent Extremism) strategy’s main goal is to pinpoint in an early stage when someone is about to become violently radicalised by recognising specific characteristics or signs. These signs are usually taught to professionals through workshops, guidebooks, manuals, or training. Unlike, for example, the United Kingdom, Belgium does not have a statutory duty to report signs of radicalisation to the authorities. However, it does make use of LIVC-R (Local and Integral Security Cell regarding Radicalism/Extremism and Terrorism), a multi-disciplinary platform, in which it encourages socio-preventative actors (social workers, teachers) to participate and share information on those who could potentially be radicalised. This, of course, has raised the concern of many actors in the field, especially when it comes to questions of deontology and professional secrecy (Janssens & Fadil, 2022).

with municipalities in Belgium has confirmed suspicions that the recognising of ‘signs of radicalisation seems to be more or less exclusive to ‘Islamic radicalisation’ (VVSG Rapport 2022). Not only is there a conflation between conservative Islamic praxis, but it is also more difficult for actors in the field to recognise other forms of radicalisation, such as far-right extremism, because this discourse has normalised.

Aside from information sharing, another tool for prevention that governments deploy is databases. Through an administrative procedure, you can be entered into one of the security databases, such as those managed by police or the security services, because of, for example, suspicious behaviour, attendance at a protest, comments made online or affiliation to others known to the security services. In Belgium, many different databases are managed by different government bodies such as CUTA (The Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis), the police, the army and state security services. An entry into a database can happen for a variety of reasons, which do not necessarily mean that there has been a criminal offence. It suffices that a civil servant notes that a person or organisation needs to be ‘watched’. At the same time, such an entry into a database can have serious consequences for citizens. People can lose their employment, not pass the necessary security checks or be stopped at various borders around the world and restricted in their freedom of movement.

**International literature**

This research builds upon previous work done by academics internationally (Ragazzi, Davidshofer, Perret & Tawfik 2018, Choudhury 2021, Lindekilde 2012, Welten & Abbas 2022). Studies in the Netherlands, Denmark and France have similar results, despite different contexts. On the European level, ENAR, the European Network against Racism (2021) recently reported that counter-terrorism policies by several different EU countries had an exclusive focus on Muslims and Islam. This may involve the religious practice and certain beliefs of Muslims: these often form the basis for surveillance by the state. This one-sided focus on Muslims makes them feel vulnerable and often targeted. The report warns that such a sustained focus can have stigmatising and discriminatory effects and threatens fundamental freedoms.

This concept is academically known as the securitisation of Islam (Jamine & Fadil 2109, Cesari 2009, Brown 2008, Mavelli 2013). Securitisation refers to a process in which everyday practices or discourses within Islam are seen as a threat to public order and, through all kinds of procedures and representations, are removed from their commonplaceness (Cesari, 2009). Sometimes it can be about specific religious practices (e.g. praying), expressions (e.g. “Allah-u-Akbar”), theological currents or frameworks (e.g. Salafism) or even non-religious acts (e.g. going on a trip to Turkey). The process

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of securitisation results in everyday practices being constructed as radically different (Croft, 2012: 198). A concrete consequence of securitisation can be seen in the ongoing controversies about Muslim women’s clothing and, more specifically, the face veil that has been banned in Belgium since 2011. In the run-up to this ban, the face veil was constructed as a threat to national identity and security through associations with extremism and terrorism (Edmunds 2012, Fadil 2014, Brems 2014).

**Main findings**

The respondents who participated in the interviews for this report have experienced various incidents and events that make them suspect that they are registered in a database somewhere. Although they rarely get confirmation of this, they have experienced things that have limited their freedom and actions (and, in most cases, are still restricted). It is important to stress that only a minority of those surveyed received effective confirmation that they are registered somewhere, as this information is not publicly accessible. The only exceptions are the respondents who received a negative security check in the context of their professional practice. For many, it often remains a matter of suspicion. Some respondents experienced a combination of incidents or events. For several of them, this event came as a shock, as did the suspicion that they were registered somewhere in the context of radicalisation or terrorism. Specifically, it concerns the following events.

**Overview of incidents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative security advice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank account closed/unable to open</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel restrictions and checks at the airport</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police raid and interrogation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of the 23 respondents received negative security advice, as a result of which they lost their jobs or could no longer practice their work. Our respondents were told they were no longer allowed to work from one day to the next. Such an announcement usually happens at an unexpected moment, when they go to work and are suddenly told that the collaboration is being stopped. Seven of the 23 respondents were told by their bank that their bank account would be closed unilaterally. Such a closure of someone’s bank account can happen at anytime since a financial institution always reserves the right to stop the cooperation. Those affected were then given a limited time to look for an alternative.

Such bank account closure often has far-reaching consequences as daily financial transactions, such as receiving a salary or paying a bill, often occur through the bank. Among the respondents surveyed, one of the most common events is an extensive interrogation or arrest at a border post during a holiday trip. Fourteen of the 23 respondents have already experienced this. This mainly concerns travel to a country outside the European Union.
The most extreme event is when such interrogation is followed by deportation. Seven of the fourteen respondents who experienced problems at the border were effectively deported back to Brussels. Of our respondents who experienced such deportation, four were on their way to Turkey, others in the United Arab Emirates, the US, Mexico, Switzerland or New Zealand. Fifteen of the respondents surveyed were the subject of excessive police control: this could range from a visit by the police at home, a raid with confiscation of goods, interrogations at the police station about their Islamic religious experience or common traffic control that turns into an invasive check with heavy-handed searches. The exact reason why our respondents have experienced something often remains unclear. Since it is impossible to access the information, the respondents are often left guessing for an answer. This ambiguity often continues to haunt them and creates much uncertainty.

In our survey, we asked respondents if they had a suspicion of the reason why they were being stopped. Below, we list the main reasons that our respondents gave as possible explanations.

### Probable reasons for entry into a database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acquaintances, friends or relatives have left for Syria</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Commitment to associations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Accusations in the professional sphere</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Accusations at school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accusation in the family</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social media behaviour</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Police</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Unknown</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents understand the commitment to Muslim civil society life as a risk factor. Several therefore ceased their commitment because of what they had experienced. Another explanation cited is that they know someone who has left for Syria. Several suspects that their possible surveillance is connected to this. It can be a family member or a neighbour. Finally, our survey shows that our respondents also suspect close acquaintances, family or colleagues as a possible source of surveillance because of a personal conflict.

### Individual case

R5 has been involved in Islamic association life for several years. They regularly organise events where the plainclothes police are often present. There is a good relationship between the security services and the organisation. At one point, one of the events is discredited by some politicians: the organisation is accused of inviting a supposedly controversial preacher. This causes a media storm, and from then on, the situation changes for R5 and her family. The planned holiday to the US can no longer continue: their visa is revoked at the very last moment and they lose the money for the trip. A
little later, their bank account is also closed. Eventually, R5’s partner loses his job. They have tried to challenge this through the union, but to no avail. Friends of R5 were also called and followed by the police and questioned at the station. Since then, the organisation of R5 has had a bad reputation: events are no longer allowed anywhere, and the organisation is eventually dissolved. However, R5 has never done anything criminal and has never associated itself with radicalism. Through her commitment, she tried to have a positive social impact by teaching Muslims about Islam. Now, she no longer dares to do anything in civil society because of the possible consequences this can have on her and her family.

A substantial impact

Our survey shows that the impact of such surveillance practices on the everyday lives of our respondents is large. The most drastic impact of an entry into a database is a loss of income due to dismissal. This was the case for our respondents, who received negative safety advice and were summarily dismissed. Although negative safety advice is not always binding, many employers choose to carry it out and fire their employee. The affected persons were then often without income. A travel restriction or the closure of a bank account can also lead to a loss of money. When someone is stopped at the border or is not allowed to leave on a trip, the hotel and flight costs are often lost. Several survey respondents saw thousands of euros go up in the air this way. In addition to the loss of income or money, this kind of surveillance also has serious consequences for the mental and psychological well-being of those involved. Several respondents testified that the suspicion that they were registered somewhere triggered different forms of fear: a fear of travelling, of returning to work, of expressing their opinions, or even a constant fear of losing custody of their children. Often this fear also translated into periods of depression and many uncertainties about the future. This is also mainly because substantiation was rarely given to what our respondents experienced.

The realisation that the security services may watch them often came as a hard blow, and those affected remained in the dark about the right facts. Several respondents stated that they had changed their behaviour due to the events they experienced for fear of being dismissed as “radical”. While some held back on certain politically charged themes and no longer dared to express their opinions, others concealed their views on Islam or refrained from certain religious acts (e.g. wearing a long headscarf). Several respondents active in Islamic association life also indicated that they had stopped doing this altogether.

The fear of being stigmatised because they may be stopped was strongly felt by several respondents surveyed. Apart from the immediate family, the extended family and sometimes a few close friends, only a few people in their immediate vicinity were aware of what happened to them. Several lived with the fear that once their environment was informed, they would get the stamp of “radical”. This fear played out with regard to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Trust in the state had been profoundly eroded by many
interviewees. The difficulty or impossibility of appealing meant that most respondents no longer had confidence in the institutions. They often feel unfairly targeted. While many thought they lived in a democracy with fair and transparent procedures, what happened to them, especially the difficulty or impossibility of defending themselves, deeply shocked them.

**Individual case**

R8 is a student who has excelled academically for years and achieved good results. He is also very driven and wants to contribute positively to society later on. Because he is an excellent student, he manages to get an internship and scholarship in a foreign country. Only 30 students were selected for an internship abroad, and only three received scholarships. R8 was one of them. When R8 leaves, everything seems to be going well, but when he makes a stopover in an Asian country, things go wrong. He is stopped by the police, taken for questioning, and treated badly. He gets told he has an entry ban because he is on a list. Despite his many phone calls to the various embassies, he cannot defend himself. His internship supervisor and school try to help him, but this is in vain. He is put on the plane back to Belgium. As well as not being able to do the internship abroad, he has also lost the scholarship and 3000 euros, which he paid out of his pocket. He was able to finish his studies with an internship in his own country. To date, R8 does not know where and why he was stopped and whether he could be stopped again if he travels.

**Appeal procedures are extremely difficult**

Our survey shows that challenging an entry into a database is very difficult. We distinguish between those who appeal because of a negative safety notice and others. A negative safety notice can be appealed in court. In addition, there is a formal appeal procedure before the ‘Beroepsorgaan’ (Appeals Body). The Appeals Body is an administrative body where an appeal can be lodged against a negative safety notice. In this study, one respondent appealed with a court of first instance, and three could appeal with the Appeals Body. Three of the four appeals (through the court or the Appellate Body) were successful. However, the respondents surveyed experienced the procedure as cumbersome and unclear. They found the available information about the procedure limited and found it challenging to find the right legal assistance. The indicated time frame of eight days to appeal to the Appellate Body was also experienced as very short.

The right to defence also proves difficult because they do not have access to all the information: various passages of the reports of the security services are often painted black because they are classified information. This creates a lot of stress and uncertainty among the respondents surveyed because they do not know what they are accused of, nor can they defend themselves against it. An appeal against a travel restriction or closed bank account for security reasons is very difficult, if not impossible. There are also no official procedures for appealing against suspected entry into a database. This is partly due to
the great uncertainty about how and where the personal data are distributed, with which services and governments they are stored and for how long. In addition, personal data may also be shared with foreign governments through bilateral or international cooperation (Europol, Interpol). As a result, a person on a watchlist in Belgium can be included in databases of foreign governments. These authorities, in turn, use their own procedures and guidelines regarding data retention, sharing and limitation. It is, therefore, possible that a person is no longer on a list in Belgium but is still present in foreign databases and that their information circulates in this way.

Respondents confronted with travel restrictions are usually told at the airport that they are refused for security reasons without providing more clarity. Sometimes participants are told by a police officer that they are on an Interpol list. Information is sometimes shared informally through an acquaintance who works at one of the services. It is impossible to appeal from Belgium against a travel restriction abroad. Often people do not know in advance whether they are standing somewhere abroad. Several survey respondents find the lack of clarity surrounding possible appeals and a clear point of contact frustrating. There is a lot of confusion and ambiguity among the respondents, their lawyers, and sometimes even the police.

Conclusion

Despite everything they have been through, most people we interviewed believe that a preventive policy around terrorism and radicalisation is legitimate and necessary. They do, however, feel that the current policy targets the wrong people and is unbalanced: Muslims, many stated, are often the scapegoat. Therefore, an important recommendation of our respondents is to work with objective criteria and take Muslims as allies in the fight against terrorism and radicalisation. In Belgium, unlike abroad, there is still little research into the consequences of the fight against terrorism and radicalisation on the targeted communities. Our research shows that many respondents sometimes still bear the consequences of this years later, especially when they travel abroad. Our initial findings suggest that this is a well-known and widespread phenomenon among Muslim communities. We hope this research can shed some first light on this little-documented phenomenon. Therefore, more research is needed to map this problem’s extent and scope and create more political and social awareness about it.
Bibliography


How the UK government’s Prevent strategy undermines democracy

Layla Aitlhadj and John Holmwood

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This article addresses the UK government’s counter-extremism strategy, Prevent. It does so in the light of its failure to publish the findings of the independent review of the strategy, which it had authorised in February 2019. As we shall go on to discuss, the independence of this review was, in any case, seriously compromised because of serious concerns about the impartiality of its appointed chair, William Shawcross. Many civil society organisations – Muslim and non-Muslim- including major NGOs like Liberty, Open Society Justice Initiative, Amnesty and Muslim Engagement and Development – decided to boycott the review.

Amid concerns that this would mean that voices critical of Prevent might not be heard, it was decided to set up a parallel review – The People’s Review of Prevent (PRoP) – with the purpose of evaluating existing analysis and research, receiving submissions and gathering statements from individuals and families impacted by Prevent. The authors of this article are the co-directors of PRoP. The report was supported by more than 18 human rights NGOs, including Amnesty International, the Northern Police Monitoring Project, the Open Rights Group and the Victoria Climbié Foundation.

In December 2021, leaks from the Shawcross Review to media favourable to the government suggested that its publication was imminent. We published our report in February 2022. It is a 160-page report drawing from over 600 testimonies and features more than 30 in-depth case summaries detailing the interaction of individuals with counter-terrorism officers, social workers and teachers as a result of their involvement with Prevent. This article describes some of our conclusions, as well as considerations

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1 This article is based on the Annual Scarman Lecture at the School of Criminology, University of Leicester on 28 September, 2022: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0gEwW1oMml

2 https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/rights-groups-boycott-prevent-review/

3 https://peoplesreviewofprevent.org/
about the implications of the delays to the Shawcross report and the leaks to the press about its content. This will include the serious issues of democracy that follow from government leaks to manage public opinion.

One newspaper, the Telegraph, claimed in September 2022 and again in December 2022 to have a copy of the report.¹ It said it was subject to challenge within the Home Office regarding some comments about individuals being potentially libellous. Although the statements within the report would be protected by parliamentary privilege against actions for libel, lawyers at the Home Office were said to be concerned that the report should not be presented to Parliament with prior knowledge that it may contain libels.

This may seem like the ‘froth’ created by the to and fro of politics, but, for us, it is a serious matter that gets to the heart of what is problematic about the Prevent strategy. We will see that none of the ideas and behaviours subject to intervention under the strategy is unlawful. Nor is criticism of government policy a ‘thought crime’... yet. However, critics of Prevent are routinely described as ‘extremists’ and ‘facilitators’ of terrorism, including in a report by a leading think tank favourable to the government, Policy Exchange². This includes accusations of ‘extremism’ against ourselves as co-directors of PRoP. In this respect, we are also a ‘case study’ on the damaging consequences of the Prevent strategy. These consequences have implications for all citizens, but they are of particular significance for the political participation of Muslim citizens. The same report has recommended that Muslim civil society organisations be subject to regular evaluation and certification regarding their suitability for engagement by local and central government and by any institutional body in receipt of public funds.

Background

Government has a duty to ensure the security of its citizens, especially in the context of well-publicised terrorist attacks. The balance between security and liberty is a difficult task and the subject of much debate. However – as we will argue – the Prevent strategy does not fulfil any role in keeping society safe. In our report, we present detailed arguments and evidence to show that Prevent is guilty of the very accusations made in response to terrorist acts – that they are an attack on our democracy, our freedoms, and our way of life.

For us, and for most political theorists, the strength and resilience of a democracy are found in how well it protects the rights of minorities. The current counter-extremism strategy, we argue, divides the population; it scapegoats British Muslims, encourages suspicion, and it damages community cohesion. Most importantly, it targets our most vulnerable and important members of society – our children – placing their education and self-development under a security lens.

² https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/delegitimising-counter-terrorism/
Prevent is one of the four component parts of the government’s counter-terrorism strategy – CONTEST – directed at preventing people from being drawn into terrorism. The other strands are: Protect, which is concerned with strengthening protection against a terrorist attack; Prepare, which is about the mitigation of the impact of a terrorist attack; and Pursue, which is directed at stopping terrorist attacks. The overall strategy’s stated aim is specifically to disrupt, detect, and investigate terrorist activity. For its part, Prevent has a role that is less direct than that of the other strands. It is purportedly designed to stop people from becoming terrorists or from supporting terrorism. However, it operates at some distance from the commission of terrorist acts.

The Prevent strand was first mooted in 2003 and was initially directed at programmes to facilitate community cohesion and integration in the light of various reports indicating that communities were living ‘separate lives’. Over time, Prevent has been subject to a number of modifications. The most important was in 2011, when, following an internal Home Office review, the government determined that its focus should be on ‘extremist ideas’; that is, the ‘ideologies’ that might make individuals ‘vulnerable’ to ‘radicalisation’ and the commission of terrorist offences.

The Prevent strategy was further changed in 2015, as part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act of 2015, when a new safeguarding duty was placed on public authorities and providers of public services to monitor individuals for signs of extremism and possible referral to local Prevent Panels. The latter made up of multi-agency staff and counter-terrorism police, would then assess each case for possible incorporation into a programme of support, called Channel.

This Prevent duty applies across, schools, colleges, universities, providers of health services, and youth services. It also applies to prisons and probation services. This involved the monitoring of prisoners who had committed non-terrorist offences, and, importantly, those who had committed non-violent terrorism offences, but might be at risk of moving into the commission of violent offences on release.

This distinction between non-violent and violent terrorism offences is important and not well-understood by the wider public and media. The research about the ‘troubling signs’ that might lead someone to violent actions is based upon research with non-violent terrorist offenders. However, the Prevent strategy is applied much more broadly to those who have committed no offence at all.

New legislation in 2019 – the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act – brought in new non-violent terrorism offences, with two consequences. The first is to reduce the age of those committed for terrorist offences (mainly associated with accessing problematic sites on the internet), thereby adding to public anxiety about young people. The second is

that of new calls to have compulsory programmes of de-radicalisation to prepare those convicted following the end of their sentences

This would represent a very serious escalation in the treatment of child offenders as if they were adults. However, the focus of this article is how the ‘Venn’ overlap where one segment of those brought under Prevent have committed criminal offences, facilitates that presentation of others that fall under Prevent as themselves potentially dangerous and criminal in their dispositions.

The policy spiral

Prevent has been aptly described by Clive Walker as involving a ‘policy spiral’. This occurs with “a policy which lacks clear initial purpose or subsequent direction, progression, control and reflection. A policy spiral is therefore susceptible to unresolved contradictions or gaps, dramatic direction changes, and uncertain outcomes.”

He was optimistic that the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act of 2015, which included a re-focusing of Prevent, might regularise the situation. It is our contention that it did not. Instead, the policy spiral continues, reinforced by populist and divisive sentiments mobilised by government actors and their policy think tanks, such as the Henry Jackson Society and Policy Exchange.

It needs to be stressed that the ‘ideologies’ deemed to be extremist are beliefs that are not illegal. The ideas or behaviours at issue are deemed to be possible ‘precursors’ of ‘radicalisation’ into illegal actions, whether violent or non-violent. No offences have been committed or intended by those reported for consideration under Prevent (with the exception of that very small proportion already within the criminal justice system, as discussed in the previous section).

The strategy, then, operates in what has been called the ‘pre-crime’ space, involving the ‘sci-fi’ notion that there can be a predictive behavioural science that would identify those predisposed to commit future crimes.

While it may be common sense to suppose that those who commit serious offences will have engaged in activities beforehand that could be considered a warning sign, the identification of such signs is fraught with risk. First, it involves some identification of spaces that are potentially problematic, for example those with a significant proportion of the population deemed likely to commit offences.

1 https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/02/ministers-studying-plans-for-uk-child-specific-terrorism-orders


In the history of Prevent, this has involved identifying Prevent Priority Areas with a significant proportion of Muslims, and, within such areas, specific locations that are of concern where ‘radicalisers’ may operate. Worryingly, in the 2011 Prevent strategy, these locations are listed as: “Radicalising locations are venues, often unsupervised, where the process of radicalisation takes place. Locations include public spaces, for example university campuses and mosques, as well as private/more concealed locations such as homes, cafes, and bookstores.”

In this context, the 2015 Prevent duty sets out to monitor these locations through a safeguarding duty upon employees and professional staff working in them to check upon pupils, patients, clients and fellow employees. We might wonder why kindergartens and primary schools are included, until we notice that homes are among the ‘radicalising locations’ of concern. Young children, then, are monitored as a means of getting access to their homes. Notice, too, the effect of the 2019 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act that introduced new non-violent terrorism offences has led to an increase in the number of young people convicted of terrorism offences and, therefore, a perception that this is a new and worrying development rather than an artefact of the legislation itself, as had been argued to be a likely consequence.

Second, it involves the identification of behaviours and ideas that are considered fertile ground for potential radicalisers to cultivate. In this context, what is being monitored is not radicalisation as such, but the possibility that an individual may be vulnerable to radicalisation. In the case of Muslims, the ideas and behaviours under scrutiny are often normative religious or political engagements that are, in themselves, perfectly legal, while expressing Islamic values.

The Prevent Industry

Since 2015, Prevent has given rise to what RUSI has called a ‘flourishing industry’.

It is primarily those involved in this industry who have been consulted in the Shawcross review. It has held roundtables, discussions and heard input from the very same Prevent practitioners and think tanks who stand to benefit from Prevent and extending the pre-criminal space.

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2 See the briefings by Liberty, available at: https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/terrorism-offences-briefings-and-reports/
3 “Vulnerability describes the condition of being capable of being injured; difficult to defend; open to moral or ideological attack. Within Prevent, the word describes factors and characteristics associated with being susceptible to radicalisation”, op cit.
The Prevent bureaucracy is indeed extensive. Multi-agency Prevent panels were established in all local authority areas in England. They involve local designated officials (the ‘officers’ of the new Prevent bureaucracy), social workers, and counter-terrorism police. Each area has a local area Prevent coordinator overseen by regional Prevent commissioners responsible for each sector. All of these regional commissioners report to the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism in the Home Office, recently re-named the Department for Homeland Security.

This means that individuals employed within a sector with a designated safeguarding function – from safeguarding officers through to individual teachers, medical staff, academics, and people working in canteens and sports facilities, etc. – are required to undergo training about how to identify signs that the government has defined as indicating a possible cause for concern and trigger the process of referral to a Prevent panel.

The Home Office estimates that over a million people had been trained up to 2019, with many more undergoing training since then. The exercise of the duty involves surveillance of pupils, students, and other users of services for indications of extremism. Those at the forefront of enacting this duty are the 5 million plus workers in public services who are asked to assume the role of agents of the state.

The government has designated 44 special Prevent Priority Areas, local authorities and areas where Prevent has a special focus. As we discovered in our People’s Review of Prevent, around three quarters of all Muslims in England reside in such an area, compared with around a third of the population as a whole.

We can liken Prevent to ‘stop and search’ for knife crime. In a small minority of cases, a knife may be found and, therefore, an offence identified. In contrast, Prevent, as a form of ‘stop and search’ for extremist ideas turns up many ‘false positives’. A ‘false positive’ is when an individual is reported, but no referral is held to be necessary by a Prevent panel. In other words, they have been identified as exhibiting the ‘symptoms’ of concern, but further investigation by the Prevent Panel has not taken the matter further within the Prevent process.

Nonetheless, untold damage is done to individuals, particularly children as a consequence of the initial reporting and interviews by counter-terrorism police officers. In the case of children, these often take place without the presence of a parent, guardian, or responsible adult.

The tiny minority of ‘positives’ – that is, about 5% of Prevent referrals that do end up as a Channel intervention – do not represent offences either, or the formation of an intention to commit them. This is where what we have called the ‘Venn’ overlap with those who come under Prevent within the criminal justice system and are mobilised

1  https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/11/05/factsheet-prevent-and-channel/
2  The term comes from a report by Medact: https://www.medact.org/2020/resources/reports/false-positives-the-prevent-counter-extremism-policy-in-healthcare/
within media reporting to exaggerate the proximity of those referred under Prevent to the commission of offences.

Prevent is primarily directed at young people, deriving from the fact that all education settings from kindergarten upwards are subject to the duty. In 2017-18, for example, children under 15 made up 27% of all referrals, with just 5.6% of those referred proceeding on to Channel.¹

Young people aged 15-20 made up a further 29% of all referrals, and just 7% proceeded on to Channel. About a third of all referrals take place within schools; this makes the education sector, the largest source of Prevent referrals.

Because no offences have been committed and none can be assumed to have been disrupted, the success, or otherwise, of Prevent cannot be evaluated. This is in contrast to the harms to individuals and families caught up in Prevent and the consequences for communities, which can be evaluated. These consequences were reported in the People’s Review of Prevent. It is in this context, that it is correct to conclude as does Zelizer, that pre-crime interventions also involve a form of punishment for those caught up in Prevent.

One of us – Layla Aitlhadj – occupies a unique position as someone who has supported many of these people in her capacity as caseworker at Prevent Watch. She has witnessed first-hand the damage caused by Prevent, particularly to children, who make up more than half of the 609 cases that we have documented to date. These are the small number who feel secure enough to make a complaint.

These individuals who have been caught in its dragnet of false positives, have not been heard as part of the Shawcross review whose conclusions are currently being awaited. In the meantime, media stories of leaks from his report suggest that he believes that Prevent has drifted from its ‘core mission’ of public safety to the treatment of those subject to consideration under Prevent as ‘victims’.²

What is worrying about this understanding is that the language of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘victims’ is very much part of safeguarding approaches more generally (whether to sexual exploitation, abuse in the home, etc.). The Prevent duty is incorporated into ‘safeguarding’ precisely because the individual has not committed an offence and intervention can only be made in their ‘own interest’, that is in the process of being safeguarded from potential harm.

In our PRoP report we argue that Prevent is a distortion of the normal safeguarding duty, but it must be of very serious concern that a supposedly independent reviewer of Prevent seems not to understand why the Prevent duty is framed as safeguarding and,

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1  We use the date 2017-18 because it is the last set of data prior to Covid 19 and its consequence for school closures, in-person medical appointments and the like.

moreover, would seem to wish to make it a direct intervention in Muslim communities based on no other mandate than the government’s authority to act in the interest of public safety.

**Reviewing Prevent**

As we have argued, the proponents of Prevent frequently elide counter-extremism and counter-terrorism. It should be apparent that extremism is at some very considerable distance from the commission of any terrorist offence. Notwithstanding the declared focus on safeguarding vulnerable individuals, there is also very considerable evidence that we have presented in our PRoP report that Prevent itself causes harm.

For that reason, critics of Prevent have also been concerned about the absence of proper oversight of its operations. Terrorism legislation is subject to annual review and reporting by a barrister acting as an Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation. This has been a longstanding arrangement. However, the government did not bring Prevent under the remit of this office.

Despite the fact that successive Reviewers have called for this to be done and lamented that they have no scope for comment otherwise, the government has refused to do so. Indeed, they have refused all such suggestions. In 2016 two parliamentary committees, the Committee on Women and Equalities and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, called for a review of Prevent over concerns it was discriminatory against Muslims.

In June 2017, The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association wrote in June 2017, that she “concurs with civil society that the Prevent strategy is inherently flawed... unclear guidelines give excessive discretion to decision makers, which subsequently makes the overall application of Prevent unpredictable and potentially arbitrary, hence rendering it inconsistent with the principle of the rule of law.”

She wrote further that, “overall, it appears that Prevent is having the opposite of its intended effect: by dividing, stigmatising and alienating segments of the population, Prevent could end up promoting extremism, rather than countering it.”

Finally, the Home Office’s own Commission for Countering Extremism also

1 https://terrorismlegislationreviewer.independent.gov.uk/history/
4 Ibid para 12
recommended a standing mechanism for the independent review of Prevent on an annual basis with the reviewer to be “appointed in accordance with the principles and codes of public appointments, [to] have relevant expertise (especially analytical skills, and expertise in law, human rights, or countering extremism), and [to] be reasonably considered non-partisan.”

The government’s opposition to any independent process has been steadfast. It finally committed to a review in February 2019 as part of the passage of the 2019 Counter Terrorism and Security Act after more than a decade of concerns raised by civic society groups, including human rights NGOs and United Nation’s special rapporteurs.

This independent review was to be completed within 18 months and submitted to Parliament together with the government’s response to its recommendations. We understand a draft of the report was provided to the Home Office in July 2021 and has been under discussion since then, subject to various leaks and unexplained delays. These all further compromise the independence of the review and indicate the continuing policy spiral identified earlier.

In the meantime, the government has continued with contentious legislation, with serious implications for the scope of Prevent strategy. This is because it extends the scope of crimes for which a pre-criminal space can be deemed to exist. For example, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022) continued the creation of new politico-criminal offences which was also a feature of the earlier Counter Terrorism and Borders Act. The latter introduced a range of non-violent terrorist offences, while the former introduced new offences in the area of civil disobedience.

**Preventing rights**

The potential breaches of rights presented here are not only of concern to Muslims, who are predominantly impacted by Prevent. They are a concern to every community that challenges government policies, be they in the UK or in any of the countries across the globe using Prevent as a model for their own countering extremism policies.

For example, the government has modified the definition of extremism to include different opponents under its remit, including environmental and anti-racist action, while seeking to row back on the inclusion of the far-right. This has happened just as its own ideology has incorporated key elements of far-right discourse.

This development is of particular significance. One of the claims for the legitimacy of

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Prevent was that it was not discriminatory in its application and was applied to ‘far right’ as well as ‘Islamist’ extremism. Indeed, it is often cited that British Muslims share the concerns of the wider population about threats to security and that the critics of Prevent are unrepresentative of the Muslim community.

The evidence, however, shows that Muslims, in fact, have serious concerns about the far-right and Islamophobia¹.

Yet Government-associated think tanks are currently arguing that the focus of Prevent should be redirected toward Islamism and away from the far right².

Their arguments are interesting, especially in light of the ostensible justification of the values underlying Prevent. These are what have been termed the ‘fundamental British values’ that frame the Prevent duty (and which all schools in England are required to promote). The values are democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of different religious faiths and beliefs.

Their designation as ‘British’ is, of course, problematic. They are standard across liberal democracies. However, the designation implies that these ‘British values’ must be inculcated in ethnic minority citizens, yet we have seen that the claim is that most British Muslims share them.

The issue is whether they are shared by white majority Britons.

Robin Simcox, interim, now designated, head of the Commission for Counter Extremism wrote shortly after his initial appointment that, it is necessary,

“not to confuse mainstream conservative political positions with the far-right. Certain far-right terrorists speak about the need to defend Western values and freedoms and warn that immigration undermines culture. Yet while the far-right does indeed care deeply about such causes, so do vast amounts of other people ... Meanwhile, the link between immigration and culture remains a live subject in Europe ... Assessing those positions to be ‘extremist’ just because the far-right commandeers them, is a sure-fire way to ensure that any policy designed to tackle this ideology will not command widespread support”³.

Of course, since Prevent is concerned with precursor ‘ideologies’ to those espousing violence, then ‘anti-immigration’ and the espousal of ‘replacement theory’ are by its own definition, extremist. They will also be experienced as such by ethnic minority communities. But what the statement indicates is that the support that Simcox is concerned with securing does not include British Muslims.

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² https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/delegitimising-counter-terrorism/
³ https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/to-combat-far-right-government-must-first-understand-how-it-ticks-tfsrwndfw
Our article has been written at the end of a period of turbulence in the government of the UK, with three prime ministers in the course of a year and core government departments held by ministers with radical right-wing and populist agendas.

The new Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, had already given clear indications of her intended direction of travel and that she plans to double down on the policies of her predecessor. As part of her own bid for the leadership of the Conservative Party, she has stated her interest in withdrawing from the European Convention of Human Rights.

When Attorney-General, she wrote that ‘rights’ should not be allowed to deny ‘democracy’. This involves the view that the majority can legitimately override the rights of minorities. At the same time, it claims the executive as the embodiment of the will of that majority. This is authoritarianism. She had also previously declared her wish to curb the powers of ‘lefty lawyers’.

One target has been lawyers acting for civil liberties organisations, but another is lawyers within the government itself. Significantly, she was responding to the reports that lawyers within the Home Office were delaying the publication of the report of the Shawcross review of Prevent.

In stating this, she then argued that the purpose of the government legal service was not to ensure that government action was within the law, but to secure the will of the government. This agenda is at odds with the substance of the ‘British values’ it formally espouses.

Prevent doesn’t just place Muslims at risk, or children at risk, or activists at risk. It places the very foundations of our legal order at risk. The policy spiral of Prevent is being tightened and its function now is to give torque to a right-wing and populist agenda of government.

Prevent has become an instrument of a government that is increasingly sympathetic to the far-right and intent on securing authority for an increasingly dogmatic and partisan political agenda. This policy spiral is now undermining basic human rights and due process. It is spiralling out of control.

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“Nothing to hide”, the state of Islamophobia in the Netherlands

Martijn de Koning

Martijn de Koning is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Radbout University in the Netherlands. He specializes in the processes of racialization of Muslims in Europe. He is one of the co-authors of a landmark book Radicalization in Belgium and the Netherlands: Critical Perspectives on Violence and Security, published in 2019.

Introduction: opening up

“Our Friday afternoon prayer is always translated and is open to the public. We want to show that we have nothing to hide.”

After being asked about radicalisation, the spokesperson said:

“But once you get to know us, you will discover that we are really taking measures against radicalisation. We organise info-evenings to help recognise it. Still have doubts? We work closely and really well with the municipality and the police. Do not judge on the basis of what you hear about Muslims, but get to know us. We are open to questions and discussion. Come along if you dare!”

These quotes are taken from a newspaper article about an open day which was held in a mosque in Delft. Over the years, I have visited quite a lot of mosques during the month of Ramadan to share the celebrations marking the end of fasting or to attend annual open days. These open days are often used by the mosques to reach out to their local neighbourhood and usually include a tour through the mosque by Muslim youth, a brief encounter with the imam and occasionally (during Ramadan in particular) a number of short lectures given by politicians, academics (including myself) or Muslim teachers.

How should we interpret a newspaper interview such as this? Moreover, what does it have to do with Islamophobia? This mosque is just one of 480 mosques in the Netherlands (including the Caribbean Netherlands) and part of an impressive infrastructure of Muslim life with state-funded schools, halal food, mosques and so on. Despite this, Muslims face

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1 Several Muslim youths left Delft to go to Syria as war volunteers in the early days of the war in Syria Martijn De Koning, Carmen Becker, and Ineke Roex, *Islamic militant activism in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany* - ‘Islands in a sea of disbelief’ (London: Palgrave, 2020).

high levels of discrimination on the streets, in the labour market and in everyday life, as Van der Valk (an academic pioneer of the study of Islamophobia in the Netherlands) and the anti-Islamophobia organisation Meld Islamofobie (Report Islamophobia) have shown. It was quite remarkable and tragic to learn that this mosque, in 2018, was the subject of municipality-commissioned research (allegedly secret) into the Muslim “field” in Delft, research about potential risks about terrorism and radicalisation. The research referred to in the press as “undercover” was considered hugely controversial and risky in terms of privacy and who had the right to commission such research. The idea that mosques and their visitors were gravely damaged trust between the mosque organisations and local and national authorities. Asymmetric transparency was also evidenced here: with the mosques being under close scrutiny and the municipality refusing to disclose any results, citing reasons of privacy protection.

Given this admittedly brief sketch of Muslim life in the Netherlands, one has to ask what role Islamophobia plays. In the case of the mosque mentioned here, it is useful to view the spokesperson’s words as a mode of ‘talking back’—a way of challenging existing stereotypes that portray Muslims as not being integrated, potentially dangerous and secretive. The spokesperson publicly states, “we have nothing to hide”, and calls upon people to actually get to know them by visiting them in person instead of relying on hearsay. Furthermore, the spokesperson also expresses how well the mosque works with the police and municipality. Indeed, many mosques have been important partners in formulating policies against radicalisation. Mosques such as this one, and many of the others I have encountered, present themselves as ‘knowable’ by referring to existing stereotypes of Muslims as people who have something to hide, who represent potential risk and so on.

In this situation, asking whether the Netherlands is Islamophobic may not be the right question, as the answer is, by definition, a qualified yes and no. In this chapter, I focus on how Islamophobia, inherent in the state’s policies, structures the position of Muslims and Muslim life in the Netherlands. I begin from the vantage point of Muslims themselves. What does, for example, the public positioning of the above-mentioned mosque reveal

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2 Ministry of Justice and Security, letter to Parliament, 10 December 2021, Onderwerp Antwoorden Kamervragen over het bericht ‘Undercover naar de moskee: geheim onderzoek naar islamitische organisaties’. https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2021/12/10/antwoorden-kamervragen-over-het-bericht-undercover-naar-de-moskee-geheim-onderzoek-naar-islamitische-organisaties, last accessed 3 September 2022. It has never been fully clear as to whether these investigations by a private consultancy firm were indeed ‘undercover’.
about how policies work, and how much can we understand this process by analysing how Islamophobia works? In the following two sections, I will focus on two types of policy, partly asking what is going on and why but also questioning how and to what end. I will focus on four dimensions which will be elaborated upon in each section:

1) How something is turned into a social problem.
2) What are the main points underpinning the problematisation of Islam and Muslims?
3) What kind of interventions are envisioned and implemented?
4) How does this shape Muslim identities and presences?

The racial Muslim as a recent problem from outside

The most commonly held belief about the relationship between Muslims and the Netherlands is related to the narrative about the arrival of Muslims in the Netherlands. It goes back as far as the 1950s and 1960s when people from Morocco and Turkey first arrived to work in Dutch industries bringing Islam with them to the Netherlands at a time when religion (read: Western Christianity) was rapidly losing its public relevance and institutional strength. Although this narrative is not entirely without merit, it is one-sided for at least three reasons.

First of all, Islam was not only a major religion for these migrants but also for post-colonial migrants from Surinam, the Moluccans, and Indonesia; the religiosity of these latter groups, however, was not labelled and classified by the Dutch government in the same way as the Moroccan and Turkish people were. Second, Muslims were part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands long before the 50s and 60s. During the time of the colonial occupation and exploitation of Surinam and Indonesia, small groups of Muslims from those countries resided in the Netherlands and, taking the number of Muslims in the colonies into account, the Netherlands was one of the colonial empires with the largest number of Muslims and had an important stake in the Hajj travels after the fall of the

1 Here I rely on Dean’s *Governmentality: power and rule in modern society*, 2 ed. (London: Sage, 2010). ‘analytics of government’ and the four dimensions (p. 33) he explores. This kind of analysis is particularly useful for asking the ‘how’ questions that go beyond the ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions. For example, how are people controlled and recognised? It means a focus on the practices of governing, problematisations, and technologies and devices employed in the art of governing (See also my work with Maria Vliek: Vliek and De Koning 2020).
Ottoman Empire. A third point, which is strongly related to the colonial politics but which also emerged before that period, is the long history of Islam as the quintessential Other, either to be domesticated (during the colonial era) or be warned against as a threat against the ‘true’ religion of Christianity.

Obviously, the historical dimensions of the development of this ‘othering’ deserve more scrutiny. They are more nuanced than I can do justice to here. However, what matters is that the dominant narratives describing Muslims as having arrived from the Middle East relatively recently speak to how we imagine who is to be governed, how that relates to what kinds of problems are constructed and how this, in turn, produces some people who are defined as insiders and others as outsiders, or almost (but never completely) insiders. Concepts of time play an important role in the production of Almost Insiders, as the above-mentioned narrative shows. In this particular narrative, Muslims are regarded as having arrived ‘too late to the party’, i.e. after the dismantling of the old models of state and religion. Additionally, when their religious attitudes are compared to other Dutch people (who have freed themselves from the burden of religion), they are perceived to be less modern. Another dimension of this temporal aspect is the characterisation of Muslims, and in particular, jihadist and Salafist Muslims, as not only premodern but, in many cases, as anti-modern. This assumed anti-modern attitude, which is regarded as being at odds with the prevailing secular model, is said to engender a potentially risky condition that is the result of people being exposed to the teachings of Salafist preachers who focus on disgruntled and alienated youth.

The narrative also illustrates how a spatial dimension plays a role, too: the Muslim who comes from a different place and stays out of place. From the 1960s onward, terms like ethnic minorities, migrants, and Muslims have often been used interchangeably in policies and debates. Over the last three decades, the term Muslim, however, has become

2 De Koning, “From Turks and Renegades to Citizens and Radicals: The Historical Trajectories of ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Muslims in the Netherlands.”
3 Dean, Governmentality: power and rule in modern society, 41.
the primary significator. The particular entangling of the terms is specifically related to the integration policies of the 1980s and 90s, which drew a distinction between autochthones and allochthones (those from foreign soil), which rendered Muslims a people who were here-but-out-of-place. This was combined with the creation of Islam as a ‘religion of migrants in need of governmental interventions. Policies are thus often based on an essentialising, reifying, and othering notion of culture that imagines certain people as being out of place’.

A third aspect of this narrative pertains to the belief that Muslims are a fundamental threat to the social fabric of Dutch society because of their difference: their Muslimness and belief in Islam. Here a recurring but changing distinction between ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ Islam is made. During the 1990s, when Islam was seen as a problem, the focus was mostly on political Islam. This focus widened after 2002 to include Salafism when both were seen as threats because they are anti-integrationist, anti-rule of law and anti-democratic; a recurring triple that has yet to be defined and given a legal status but which still underpins much of the integration and counter-radicalisation policies devised over the last 20 years. About Salafism, policymakers, politicians and security and intelligence agencies argue that certain grievances held about marginalisation, identity crisis, social isolation, and individual psychological problems could create a breeding ground, one in which young Muslims could be lured by Salafist preachers into militant ideas about how society ought to be, rejecting the authority and the legitimacy of Dutch state institutions. This could then result in an active struggle against society and, ultimately, participation in ‘radical Islamic violent activities’. After 2012 the locus of attention would shift to jihadism but with a similar generalising and essentialist form of assignation.

Enabling Government Interventions: the recognition and surveillance of Muslims

To understand how Muslims are then to be governed, the question about the means,
mechanisms, and procedures of government that both enable and limit governing shift. To be clear, the ongoing problematisation of Islam, Muslimness and Muslims did not stop Muslim communities from building a large infrastructure of mosques, burial places, state-funded special schools, and so on. This process was partly protected by secular freedoms and rights and gave Muslims recognition and protection as a religious denomination. Crucially, the process allowed the state and Muslim organisations to become (albeit unequal) partners for integration and counter-radicalisation policies. This allowed the state to create support for their policies while distancing itself from the Dutch far-right, which problematised and demonised Islam as a whole. Moreover, it allowed mosque organisations to establish themselves as significant stakeholders successfully.

Three policy fields that increasingly focused on Muslims stand out here: secular policies, incorporation policies and security policies. In the seventies, a new policy category was created for Turkish and Moroccan guest workers: the ‘Mediterranean Muslims’ and a new scheme was rolled out for them providing partial subsidisation of their places of worship. This meant that Moluccan, Surinamese and Indo-Dutch received no funding from this scheme. After the Second World War, the difficult financial position of the churches prompted the government to provide a subsidy scheme. Over subsequent years, however, this was considered no longer necessary and untenable due to changing views on the position of churches and religions in society. Therefore, the weak financial position of mosque organisations carried little or no weight as an argument.

The changing relationship between government and religion also meant that the government had to reorganise some relationships with all religious organisations. The principle of equality was paramount: what applied to Christians had to apply to other denominations as well. Agreements, for example, were made with the various groups about the financial support the government would give to spiritual care organisations; having a good relationship with the government thus became very important for the mosques and the national organisations of Muslims.

Although the debate about Muslims and Islam has changed significantly, government policy regarding mosque organisations in the last twenty years looks very similar to the period described above. Muslims are still subject to additional conditions, relating, for example, to preventing the strengthening of the public call to prayer. The debate about the construction of the Boven ‘t IJ mosque in Amsterdam in 2018 is a good example. In an interview, one of the Amsterdam Aldermen described a clause which was included in the leasehold agreement stipulating that the mosque was not allowed to issue a reinforced call to public prayer:

“This reinforced call is not something about which we have said in recent centuries:

1 Dean, Governmentality: power and rule in modern society, 42.
2 De Koning, “The racialisation of danger: patterns and ambiguities in the relation between Islam, security and secularism in the Netherlands.”
this is normal. As a cultural phenomenon, I don’t think it’s appropriate here, contrary to the ringing of the church bells.”

This intended ban (in the end, the clause was not included in the agreement) was not to make the construction of the mosque impossible, but (from the point of view of the municipality) to make it actually possible: ‘If we provide land in leasehold, this is the way we would do it again. It is good for the support of a new mosque in the neighbourhood.’ Alternatively, “If we give over land to leasehold again, this is how we will do it as it offers good support to a new mosque in the neighbourhood.”

Here we see how a secular-religious arrangement becomes intertwined with, and part of, ideas about an ‘appropriate’ culture. The outcome is paradoxical: in order to make the realisation of one fundamental right (the construction of mosques) possible, the government, based on certain ideas about the place of Muslims and Islam in society, limits another fundamental right (the reinforced call to prayer). It is precisely this ambivalence that I believe is characteristic of the regulation of Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands. This becomes even clearer when we zoom in and examine the incorporation policy field.

In the policy field of incorporation - nowadays called integration policy - the central focus is on how people are classified in relation to the nation-state. Duyvendak and Scholten illustrate just how different incorporation policies can look in different decades: from ad hoc policy in the seventies to minority policy in the eighties and via integration policy in the nineties to assimilation policy from about 2003 onwards. In the eighties, this policy focused on group-oriented socio-cultural emancipation and socio-economic participation. In the seventies and eighties, ideas about religion hardly played a role. However, it was stated that religion – i.e. Islam - was important for the ‘self-esteem’ and ‘emancipation’ of people with a migration background. At that time, views on mosques as socio-cultural organisations were also important. In order to facilitate the institutionalisation of Islam and to create support for government policy, in particular, both government and Muslims tried to create self-organisations with a (partly) Islamic profile at local and national levels. In other words, this created an opening in Dutch institutions, which representatives of self-organisations could, and did, use to promote specific sub-interests, receive subsidies and claim participation.

One of the consequences of this was that to be eligible for a subsidy, organisations had

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to present themselves as ‘cultural’ and ‘authentic’ to become legible and recognisable. They mainly put forward stereotypical and essentialist notions about themselves, concealed internal differences and, at the same time, emphasised their differences with others. For example, self-organisations, including religious self-organisations, contributed to the solidification of the image of minority groups and thus also to the problematisation of Muslims in policy. A side effect of this was that left-wing a-religious and progressive self-organisations were marginalised. In the nineties, the emphasis was shifted from socio-economic marginalisation to the individual responsibility of migrants as citizens and the problematising of the culture of the migrant (often Muslim). After 9/11 and the murder of Van Gogh, this was reinforced by politicians and policymakers because of their increasingly emphatic and exclusive problematisation of Islam and Muslims.

During the nineties and noughties, security became an increasingly important pillar of migration and integration policies and other policies aimed at Muslims. In the 1990s, the Domestic Security Service (Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst – BVD) called for ‘integral security care’ that not only focused on repression but also prevention and care. It was, however, the response to 9/11 that made this idea a reality when a comprehensive policy against terrorism was devised built on a fusion of preventive and repressive measures that dealt with potential violence, migration control, and financial control and included antiterrorism legislation. This mixture became known and presented as the ‘broad approach’.

In addition to the attacks of 2001, it was the Madrid attack in 2004 and the murder of the TV director Theo van Gogh in 2004 in particular, which were instrumental in the implementation of a major expansion and diversification of state powers put in place to strengthen the rule of law (and the state’s use of legal force). After the Madrid attacks, a number of measures were adopted: a National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and Security (Nationale Coördinator Terrorisme en Veiligheid – NCTV) was established, this was followed by a new prison regime for terrorists, deprivation of citizenship if suspects had dual nationality, changes in the penal code, travel and area bans, financial surveillance, comprehensive action plans, extensions of temporary custody and preemptive community engagement. With these measures, the broad approach envisioned

by the AIVD materialised: repression of radicalisation and violence on the one hand, and care, prevention and awareness-raising on the other. All of this was not specifically aimed at Muslims but, in practice, was seen to target large sections of the Muslim population and label them as potentially at risk or as being risky. After 2012 and 2013, in response to IS(IS), the sense of threat was emphasised again. This resulted in a new program being drawn up based on a combination of measures which were, by then, typical of the broad approach: criminal and administrative law, care and prevention, surveillance, and ideological monitoring. This has, among many other things, resulted in far-reaching surveillance practices of Dutch Muslims, their institutions and practices.

The policy fields of the secular, incorporation and security are intertwined and gendered. The Dutch ban on face covering is particularly exemplary here. Even though the text of the ban appears to be neutral, in line with the secular requirements of equality, the way the law is explained, how it is put into practice, and the histories leading up to the provision of the law make clear that it is Muslim women who wear the face-veil who are the target. To legitimise the ban, politicians tried to dilute the meaning of the niqab, describing its use as ‘gendered oppression’ or as a security threat or an obstacle to communication and integration. Here, gender equality, secular, neutral language, security and integration are all activated as state attributions which function as alibis for Islamophobia and structure the space allocated to women to talk back. However, the narratives of face-veiling women (depicted as victims to be protected, alien elements out of place, and threats to be removed) were largely unheard. It was only in the public activities of Werkgroep Blijf van mijn niqab and Hand in Hand tegen het niqabverbod that the positive aspects of face-veiling were foregrounded, such as freedom of religion, expression and movement. In so doing, both these organisations succumbed to the secular framework of the debates. At the same time, representatives from some other Muslim organisations became involved in the trajectories of drawing up the current law.

The rationales of assessing threats: the risk of Muslims unknown

One aspect that emerges from the third dimension of government practice is the various forms of thought and knowledge that underpin these practices and are produced by them. The policies pursued in recent decades, whether they were focussed on the far-right or Muslims, Salafism, political Islam, or Jihadism, were performed in order (according to

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2 Dean, Governmentality: power and rule in modern society, 42.
the policy papers) to protect social cohesion, democracy, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and the integration of minorities. The underlying assumption is not that all Muslims are, by definition, to be distrusted as an exemplary threat but that there may be a risk because of ideological factors and the presence of particular breeding grounds.

Therefore, the racial security logic does not necessarily, homogenise all Muslims under the figure of the racial Muslim but interrogates and surveils Muslims based on ideas that come together in the figure of the Racial Muslim. This interrogation is necessary in order to know who a person is, what his or her ideas are, and why and how this relates to any aspect of the figure of the Racial Muslim. Unknowability itself is regarded as a risk to security. The idea, for example, to put the mosque mentioned in the introduction under scrutiny was not because it was thought to be radical (on the contrary, it was a highly-valued municipality contact) but because the potential of radicalisation in the Muslim field of Delft was unclear. The demonstration of transparency was not enough; an investigation was launched anyway. Islam, therefore, is a necessary condition to be labelled a risk or at risk, while Salafism and jihadism are sufficient conditions. In all instances, Muslims are summoned to engage with such ideas.

**Closing: summoning the Muslim citizen**

Taken together, we can see that Islam has functioned, and continues to function, as a marker of hierarchy which establishes the figure of the Racial Muslims as an object for governmental intervention. At the same time, this structures the place afforded to Muslims in which they can create a space, a ‘belonging’, and where they can forge their identities and imagine their future as Muslims. By examining how this is achieved, we are able to see not just how this constitutes a form of institutional Islamophobia as it is based upon and leads to a stereotypical and hierarchical differentiation between Muslims and other Dutch citizens. We also see how it intersects with and is mediated by other considerations and arrangements, how segments of the population are to be regulated, and what agents are involved. This then provides us with all the evidence necessary to be able to answer the question as to how identities, public presences and religiosities of Muslims can be structured through the different practices of government policies and the transformations said policies seek.

The crucial thing with this process of racialisation is not that it suggests that all Muslims look the same (on the contrary, a stark division between acceptable and unacceptable Muslims is made), but that there is a unifying gaze on Muslimness. This gaze functions as

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2 Dean, *Governmentality: power and rule in modern society*, 43.
a form of surveillance superimposing the figure of the Racial Muslim upon individuals, measuring them and holding them accountable to certain ideas about modernity, who belongs and who does not, delineating who the ‘good citizens’ are who are in possession of the ‘correct virtues’. This does not, by definition, result in exclusion: differentiation, co-optation and cooperation, control and recognition are as much part of the workings of racialisation. It does, however, force Muslims to explain in terms other than their own that they have nothing to hide and that they are good citizens. And it is exactly this that puts Dutch Muslims in an awkward position. Being forced to make themselves recognisable as Muslims and to explain themselves as good Muslims, in turn, renders Islam and Muslims more visible in a society that already treats Islam and Muslims as hypervisible presences of people out of place, out of time and out of bounds. This visibility may then turn Muslims into objects of aggression and hatred.
Islamophobia in Denmark through the ‘ghetto’-policies

Lamies Nassri

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When most people think about Denmark, they think of a thriving welfare state where poverty is minimal, and the population is well taken care of through public healthcare, housing, and education. We have a high minimum wage. We have free universities. And we even get a stipend to study. But that is not all there is to Denmark. Over the last 20 years, Denmark has prided itself on its xenophobic and Islamophobic laws and policies. Like many of its European neighbours, Denmark is a country where Islamophobia is no longer a far-right issue, but a trademark shared across the political spectrum. It is a country where the two biggest parties no longer have opposing views regarding Muslims but rather compete in their Islamophobic vitriol. Both sides are willing to push the Constitution’s limits, while some politicians are even willing to challenge the limits.¹

In other words, Islamophobia² is being enabled directly through State policy and participation. This is achieved through political discourse, emphasising Muslims› foreignness and non-belonging by categorising them as ‘non-Western’ and ‘MENAPT’ (Middle East, North Africa, Pakistan and Turkey). It associates ‘negative social control’ with Islam and Muslims, and problematises social housing with ‘too many’ ‘non-Western’ residents. It thus legitimises evicting and demolishing neighbourhoods based on residents’ ethnicity.

This article focuses on how the Danish state, through categories such as ‘non-Western’, discriminates against Muslim citizens through their ‘ghetto’-policies. A policy that includes forced evictions and restricted access to affordable housing in Denmark.

‘Non-Western’

The category ‘non-Western’ was politically implemented in 2017 to distinguish (mainly Muslim) immigrants and their descendants from White Danes and Western immigrants³. However, it has been an official category in national statistics through Statistics

² a type of racism towards Muslims that upholds racial power dynamics within society
³ https://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/vedtagelse/v38/index.htm
Denmark (Danmarks Statistik) since 2002. The countries that are considered ‘Western’ countries are the 28 EU countries and 8 associated countries in Western Europe as well as the four Anglo-Saxon countries: the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The ‘non-Western’ countries are the rest of the world and comprised of a total of 157 countries comprising mostly of populations that are non-white.

In the political debate, ‘non-Western’ is used as a proxy for Muslims. It is implied that the general (white) population has more values in common with a Westerner (assumed to be white), who came yesterday, than a Danish person of colour, who was born and raised in Denmark and who holds Danish citizenship, but whose parents might originate from Pakistan.

The category stipulates that if a person, say, Ahmed, has parents born in a so-called ‘non-Western’ country, Ahmed is, regardless of his parent’s or his Danish citizenship, categorised as a ‘non-Western’. If Ahmed is born in a ‘non-Western’ country, he is categorised as a ‘non-Western’ immigrant, and if he is born in Denmark, he is categorised as a ‘non-Western’ descendant.

The qualifying rule is that one parent must both be born in Denmark and have Danish citizenship when their children are born for their children to be categorised as Danes. With the strict citizenship rules, we are bound to see a rise in so-called ‘non-Western’ descendants.

In late 2020 a new category was added as a supplement to the ‘non-Western’ category: MENAPT. The MENAPT category includes people from the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey (but excludes countries such as Israel, Eritrea and Ethiopia).

According to the former Immigration and Integration Minister, Matias Tesfaye, this new category provides a more “honest political discussion”, adding that there is:

> “a huge difference in how immigrants from Thailand, the Philippines and Latin America are doing compared to people from, for example, The Middle east, and I

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1. According to Statistics Denmark, it is a continuation of the UN’s definition of developed and undeveloped countries. [https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/emner/borgere/befolkning/indvandrere-og-efterkommere](https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/emner/borgere/befolkning/indvandrere-og-efterkommere)

2. The EU plus Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Monaco, San Marino, Andorra and the Vatican


5. For more information, see [https://www.ceda.nu/_files/ugd/19Bd48_9646541bd3934feb9d6a792db2d98ed3.pdf](https://www.ceda.nu/_files/ugd/19Bd48_9646541bd3934feb9d6a792db2d98ed3.pdf)
don’t think it is racist to categorise countries based on that.’”

With the new category, the government will have an even stronger tool to target legislation towards the Muslim minority group specifically. The category is new, so we do not yet know the full extent of its effect. Nonetheless, there are already strong indications that this category will have detrimental effects on Muslims’ access to public services concerning the expansion of the ‘ghetto’-policies and the strict rules on citizenship applications.

The use of ‘non-Western’ in legislation

In legislation, the category ‘non-Western’ have been seen to take precedence over Danish citizenship and serve as a loophole to target policies towards the Muslim minority group, thereby ‘legitimately’ discriminating against them.

We see this discrimination in the so-called ‘ghetto’-policy. A political package that was announced in 2018 through the political plan: ‘EØ Danmark uden parallelsamfund – Ingen ghettoser i 2030’ (‘One Denmark without parallel societies – no ghettos by 2030’). ‘Parallel societies’ has been described as “holes in the Danish map” and as “stone deserts with no connecting lines to the surrounding society” by the former prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen.5

The aim of the ‘ghetto’-policy is to eliminate so-called ‘parallel societies’⁶. This concept is not well-defined⁶ but it is interlinked with a racialised view of ‘non-Westerners’ and Muslims:

“Parallel societies have arisen among people of non-Western origin (...) We have a group of citizens who have not taken Danish norms and values to heart. Where women are seen as less worthy than men. Where social control and lack of gender equality set narrow limits to the free development of the individual.”

The policy describes so-called ‘non-Westerners’ as a group diametrically opposite to Danes regarding culture, values and norms. With the ‘ghetto’-policy the number of ‘non-

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2 For more information, see: https://www.ceda.nu/rapporter?pgid=14qt4cd0-124a1e74-62aa-43ba-acf2-e6bca42ede4e
6 https://www.information.dk/indland/2018/02/kritik-rapport-parallelsamfund-siger-parallelsamfund?fbclid=IwAR33YeI03IL-T_5NYYSU1JS8aMrOpVo6LPzrLsVVM-Jtn_AW5aTqy4Kb81Y
Western’ residents is problematised as a threat to society and an indication of a ‘parallel society:

“Parallel societies are a great strain on the cohesion of society and on the individual (...) It is a threat to our modern society, when freedom, democracy, equality and tolerance are not accepted as fundamental values. And when rights and duties are not followed.”

As a consequence of this assumed threat, politicians have been able to legitimise the ‘ghetto’-policy, a policy that is not only extraordinary but also extremely invasive and has been compared to war-like measures. The former Prime Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, stated:

“Let’s talk openly about it: In areas where Danish values are not fully established, ordinary solutions will be completely inadequate.”

The ‘ghetto’-policy’s main objective is to change the demographic makeup of common housing areas with more than 50% of ‘non-Westerners’ by forcibly evicting up to 60% of the residents from their homes. According to the State, this is to ensure a more ‘mixed city.’ The ‘ghetto’-policy will affect approximately 5,000 families, and a disproportion of these will be Muslim.

‘Non-Western’ as a proxy for Muslims

What is important to notice is that the category ‘non-Western’ has, over the years, been used as a proxy for Muslims in the public debate. The discourse on ‘parallel societies’ has centred on Muslims’ so-called inability to integrate, their foreignness, and their magnitude to become a threat to society.

The category ‘non-Western’ is used interchangeably with Muslims on several occasions. One such was when Mette Frederiksen in 2017 (at the time, she was head of the Social Democrats, now she is Prime Minister) wanted to shut down all Muslim free schools, as she stated:

“I have to be honest and say that Muslim free schools are fundamentally not a good idea. When you are a child in Denmark, it is incredibly important that you grow up in Danish culture and Danish everyday life. No matter how you twist it, a free school that is based on Islam is not part of the majority culture in Denmark

3 https://www.regeringen.dk/media/4937/publikation_%C3%A9t-danmark-uden-parallelsamfund.pdf
(...) I also do not like the lack of equality in schools and these very hateful words towards our Jewish minority. It emphasises that we have parallel societies.”

To do so, she proposed a ban on schools with more than 50% of ‘non-Westerners’. As such, she is using the category ‘non-Western’ to target Muslim free schools.

On another occasion, Mette Frederiksen, now Prime Minister, stated that it is necessary to take more radical action in use in the fight against ‘parallel societies’, associating the hijab, an Islamic practice, with a somewhat worst-case scenario:

“We risk that it will become normal to wear a headscarf in high school, or that immigrant children will never have the same chances in life as Danish children.”

The ‘Ghetto’ package

The ‘ghetto’-criteria

In total, the Danish state has, so far, constituted four lists; a list of prevention areas (new); a list of vulnerable areas; a list of parallel societies (formerly known as ‘ghetto’ areas); and a list of regeneration areas (formerly known as ‘tough ghettos’ areas). A ‘vulnerable area’ is an area of over 1000 residents where at least two out of four criteria are met. The four criteria look at the number of people who are unemployed, uneducated, poor, and criminal, and are as follows:

a. The share of residents aged between 18 and 64 years with no connection to the job market or the educational system exceeds 40%, calculated as an average of the last two years.

b. The share of residents aged between 30 and 59 years with only lower secondary basic education exceeds 60% of all residents in the same age group.

c. The average gross income for taxpayers aged between 15 and 64 years in the area, excluding students, is less than 55% of the average gross income for the same group in the region.

d. The share of residents over 18 years convicted of violations of the Criminal Code, the

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1 https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/mette-frederiksen-i-brutalt-opgoer-luk-alle-muslimske-friskoler
3 https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/lovforslag/l231/spm/1/svar/1491390/1898757.pdf
4 Transfer incomes are taxed in Denmark.
Weapons Act, or the Controlled Substances Act exceeds three times the national average, calculated as an average of the last two years.

A ‘parallel society’ is a ‘vulnerable area’ where the share of immigrants and descendents from ‘non-Western’ countries, whether Danish citizens or not, exceeds 50%.

Thus, only ethnicity distinguishes a ‘vulnerable area’ from a ‘parallel society’. A ‘regeneration area’ (ombygelsesområde) has been a ‘parallel society’ for five years. If a common housing area is on the regeneration list, they must evict up to 60% of their residents. This also means that the ethnicity criterion is the main criterion for forced evictions.

The criteria have, over the years, been criticised for being designed (and, when convenient, changed) in a matter that makes it difficult for these areas to no longer fulfil the criteria, i.e., making it more difficult for the areas to get rid of the stigma and consequences of being on the ghetto list.

The criteria have also been debated with the influx of Ukrainian refugees. In order to welcome Ukrainian refugees, the Danish Parliament has amended to remove a ban on refugees moving into certain areas regulated by the ‘ghetto’-policy. One mayor, Benedikte Kier from Elsinore, explains the problem:

“It would be obvious to let Ukrainians live there. We have here some people who look a lot like us and who are eager to work. We would like to give them a place to live, but we run the risk that housing areas will end up on the parallel society list if we offer the vacant homes we have.”

The main concern was that Ukraine is currently not regarded as a ‘Western’ country, which means that the definition will need to change to prevent the influx of Ukrainian refugees from categorising a housing area as a ‘parallel society’. This shows that only certain ethnicities are the main target of the policy.

**New list**

In 2021 the Danish government added a new list to their existing lists after introducing their next step in the fight against so-called ‘parallel societies’: ‘Blandede boligområder – næste skridt i kampen mod parallelsamfund’ (‘Mixed Housing Areas – the Next Step in the Struggle against Parallel Societies’).

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1 Subsection 2, section 61a as above (inserted by Act L38)
3 https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/i-danmark-er-ukrainere-ikkevestlige-og-det-giver-problemer-ude-i
4 https://im.dk/Media/8/4/Pjece_Blandede%20boligomrader.pdf
The new list includes so-called ‘prevention areas’. The main criterion for getting on this list is that more than 30% of non-Western immigrants and descendants live in the housing areas. In 2022, a total of 67 common housing areas were on this list. If a general housing area is on the list of so-called prevention areas, it means that people who do not hold either Danish or European citizenship can no longer get a social housing allocation. This means that, due to Denmark’s tough citizenship rules, there will be a growing number of citizens, mainly Muslims and people who are born and raised in Denmark, who can no longer receive social housing allocation to 67 common housing areas around the country. The new list will affect approximately 100,000 ‘non-Western’ residents.

Consequences

The ‘ghetto’-policy consists of 22 initiatives to eliminate ‘parallel societies before 2030. While forced evictions are the harshest consequence, the other initiatives show that the policy also aims at policing, surveilling, and criminalising Muslim families and separating Muslim children from their parents to learn about Danish values and norms instead. The 22 initiatives are divided into five main parts, which the government named:

1. ‘Physical demolition and transformation of exposed residential areas’: this includes forced evictions of families.

2. ‘A firmer control of who can live in vulnerable residential areas’: this includes a stricter control on who moves into certain common housing areas, this also includes people on social benefits and people who have previously been convicted of a criminal offence.

3. ‘Strengthened police efforts and higher penalties to fight crime and create more security’: this includes heightened police control and surveillance; and double punishment zones.

4. ‘A good start in life for all children and young people: this includes increased school tests; a cap on the amount of ‘non-Westerners’ in daycare centres; mandatory preschool program for 1-year-olds; a fine or imprisonment of up to four months (and in some cases 1 year) for certain professionals (e.g. teachers, pedagogues, social workers, nurses etc.) who fail to comply with their notification obligation2; and criminalising so-called ‘re-education visits’.

5. ‘The government is following up on efforts against parallel societies’: this includes hiring three so-called ‘ghetto-representatives’, who must ensure the different councils and

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1 https://folketidende.dk/artikel/100-000-ikkevestlige-beboere-underl%C3%A6gges-s%C3%A6rlige-boligkrav-2021-6-15

2 The bill has been criticised for the fact that there might be a risk of professionals notifying too quickly just to be on the safe side. https://www.folkeskolen.dk/borneliv-dansk-som-andetsprogs-dsa/dlf-faengselsstraf-for-manglende-underretning-gavner-ikke-udsatte-born/751360
housing associations follow the government’s strategy1.

**Double punishment zones**

The government’s strategy to eliminate ‘parallel societies’ includes strengthened police efforts and double punishment zones. The bill was implemented January 1st, 2019 and is part of the ‘ghetto’-policy. According to the former prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the bill has been introduced to secure ‘Danishness’:

> “Danishness itself is threatened, and it is therefore necessary to do away with the idea that everyone in Denmark must be treated equally.”

The bill allows the police to temporarily define geographical zones where the punishment for certain crimes (e.g., violence, vandalism, burglary, threatening behaviour, arson, drug offences, possession of weapons) can be doubled3. The punishment zones are for ‘extraordinary’ situations that unsettle individuals in the area. With this law, the police have the power to decide who gets what sentence.

The bill has been criticised by the Council of the Danish Bar & Law Society and the think tank Justitia for leading to an increase in deportations of foreign nationals, including people born and raised in Denmark4. According to Kirsten Ketscher, professor at the University of Copenhagen, the zones can be in direct violation of Danish law, the human rights convention, and the UN’s convention against racial discrimination because they are largely targeted at ‘parallel societies’ that are largely inhabited by ‘non-Westerners’5.

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1  https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/2018/ghettoudspil/
2  https://www.information.dk/indland/leder/2018/02/straffen-doblet-ghettoen-regeringen-skaber-flere-parallelsamfund
3  The Danish Penal Code Section 81c. The punishment prescribed by Sections 119, 181 and 244 of this Act, Section 244 (see Sections 247, 245, see Sections 266, 285 (1), see Sections 276, 276a and 281, Section 286 (1), see Sections 276, 276a, Section 287 (1), see Section 281, and Sections 288, 291, 293 and 293a), or the Act concerning Narcotic Substances, the Weapons and Explosives Act, or the Act concerning Edged and Bladed Weapons may be increased up to double if the criminal offence has been committed within an increased-punishment zone designated pursuant to Section 6a of the Act on Police Enforcement Activities. Subsection 2. In determining the punishment for criminal offences not encompassed by subsection 1, it should generally be regarded as an aggravating circumstance if the criminal offence has been committed in an increased punishment zone designated pursuant to Section 6a of the Act on Police Enforcement Activities Act and is capable of creating insecurity in this zone. http://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lt/2018/1156
4  https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/eksperter-om-strafzoner-regeringen-gambler-med-retssikkerheden
5  https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/eksperter-om-strafzoner-regeringen-gambler-med-retssikkerheden
Cap on the amount of ‘non-Westerners’ in daycare centres

In early 2020 a bill was implemented that stated that no more than 30 % of children from so-called ‘vulnerable’ housing areas may be admitted to each daycare centre during a calendar year. The aim is, according to the government, to prevent children from growing up in:

“Parallel societies where not much Danish is spoken and where there is a limited knowledge of Danish traditions and democratic norms and values”

The bill has not only been criticised for being discriminatory but also for being a breach of the free choice of daycare for parents with children in vulnerable areas. Understandably, most parents would want a daycare close to where they live. With this bill, they lose the opportunity to place their child in a daycare in their own residential area if that daycare already has reached the 30 % cap, even if it has the space. According to Danish and international research, the quality of the daycare is decisive for the child’s ability to manage later in life, not the daycare’s location.

Mandatory preschool program

Since July 2019, 1-year-old children who live in a ‘vulnerable area’ must be separated from their parents for at least 25 hours a week to attend a mandatory preschool program.

The program aims to strengthen the children’s Danish language skills and general readiness for learning and introduce them to Danish traditions, norms and values. The 25 hours must be scheduled while the child is awake. If the parents refuse, their child’s benefit check will be withdrawn. According to the policy program, a child who does not learn from other Danes might suffer a negative impact for the rest of their life:

“Many children in vulnerable residential areas live isolated from Danish society, and they do not engage in organised recreational activities. This may mean that children rarely meet Danish children and young people and thus do not become

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1 https://www.ft.dk/samling/20181/lovforslag/l6/index.htm
2 https://www.stukuvm.dk/aktuelt/uvm/2019/dec/191218-boerne-og-undervisningsministeriet-traeffe...afgoerelser
3 https://ishoj.dk/api/sbsys/attachment/?id=3ae24342-268e-42d3-a187-52d255189eb7&name=Konsekvenser%20vedr%C3%B8rende%20lovforslaget%20om%20bedre%20fordeling%20	%20daginstitutioner%20og%20obligatorisk%20l%C3%A5ringstilbud%20for%201-årige
4 Section 44 a. The following children must be enrolled in a compulsory learning programme 25 hours a week: 1) All children residing in a vulnerable residential area, cf. the list of vulnerable residential areas in section 61 a of the Housing Act, etc., which are not included in daycare facilities pursuant to section 19 (1), 2-5, or section 21 (2). 2 or 3, when they turn one year old. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ft/201812L00007
5 https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ita/2018/1529
acquainted with the norms and values on which Danish society is based and only learn the Danish language to a limited extent. It can have a negative impact on the child’s life, ability to learn at school and later in training and education and in the labor market:”

The National Council for Children has criticised the bill for being problematic. The council find it unacceptable that some parents are forced to send their children to a mandatory program and that they are economically punished if they do not comply. By economically punishing families that are already economically vulnerable, it will only affect their economic situation even more and thus put the family, and the child, in a further vulnerable situation.

Re-education visits

Certain visits to parents’ country of origin have also been criminalised, and police have been given the power to refuse to issue passports to – or to withdraw passports from – children where there is a possibility that they will be sent on such trips. If the parents are found guilty, they can face up to 4 years in prison and the risk of being deported.

‘Re-education trips’ are by the government described as trips to parents’ country of origin where the purpose of the trip is to be influenced by the country’s norms and values in a way that might be a detriment to that persons’ integration in Denmark and might bring the person’s health or development in serious danger.

Three UN Special Rapporteurs have criticised the law for being: “overly broad, incentivising criminal enforcement of the law even in cases when trips are unlikely to expose children to neglect or violence.”

Criticism

The ‘ghetto’-policies have not only been criticised by a large number of national experts, researchers and human rights institutions. It has also been criticised internationally by the UN Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

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1 «Denmark without parallel societies – no ghettos in 2030», page 24. (Retrieved 15.08.2018 from https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/ghettoudspil/)
3 https://danskelove.dk/straffeloven/215a
Genopdragelsesrejser
5 https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/
DownLoadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=25636
(ACFC), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and by three UN Special Rapporteurs.

CESCR and ACFC have, among other things, criticised the use of 'non-Western' and called for remedial action. At the same time, ACFC criticised that the term also includes 'descendants': "It underlines the counter-effect it may have on such people's feeling of belonging and forming an integral part of Danish society".

CESCR concluded that the categorisation of 'ghettos' is discrimination based on ethnic origin and nationality and will result in even further marginalisation, while CERD has recommended the Danish government to "discontinue the use of the terms 'Western' and 'non-Western' in its policy and law. ECRI stated that the legislation discriminates against people with a migration background through targeted evictions.

The 'ghetto'-policy has also been criticised by three UN Special Rapporteurs, who found that the term 'non-Western': "disproportionately attaches to Denmark's mainly non-European racial, ethnic, religious populations, including persons descended or originating from Muslim-majority countries."

Pending cases

Several cases have been filed by residents living in the affected housing areas; these include residents in Nøjsomhed in Elsinore, Schackenborgvænge in Slagelse, Gellerup and Bispehaven in Aarhus and Mjølnerparken in Copenhagen.

In Mjølnerparken, a group of residents in Mjølnerparken, Copenhagen, are suing the Ministry of Interior and Housing for approving a development plan, which means that around 260 homes in Mjølnerparken must be sold to a private investor. This will lead to 260 families being forcibly evicted. According to the residents, the development plan has led to illegal discrimination and a breach of international conventions. The case is significant because the residents are challenging the Ministry's approval of a development plan made under Denmark's 'ghetto'-policy legislation that distinguishes between so-called 'Western' and 'non-Western' residents.

The residents are pleading that the legislation is unlawful because it is discriminatory (under domestic law, European Union ("EU") law and the European Convention on Human Rights ("ECHR")) and that it violates their fundamental rights, including the right to respect for their homes.

In 2022, Denmark's Eastern High Court referred the Mjølnerparken case against the Danish government to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The CJEU will decide if the residents' right not to be discriminated against based on ethnicity and their right to a home can be protected by EU legislation.
Conclusion

When Islamophobia is being enabled directly through State policy and participation, we see how the oppressive political discourse leads to structural racism through policies. This then leads to institutional racism in public services, which in the end trickles down to everyday interactions resulting in an increase in hate crimes targeting Muslims.

We see this expressed in the way Muslims are categorized as ‘non-Westerners’, where they are being otherized, racialized and portrayed as a threat to society.

We also see it, in the way the category ‘non-Western’ has been seen to take precedence over Danish citizenship and serve as a loophole to target policies towards the Muslim minority group, thereby justifying discriminating them, through legislation such as the ‘ghetto’-policy. The aim of the ‘ghetto’-policy is to change the demographic makeup of common housing areas with more than 50% ‘non-Western’ residents by forcibly evicting up to 60% of the residents from their homes.

When Muslims are being racialized and portrayed as a threat towards society, it becomes easier to implement a policy that takes war-like measures into use.
CONCLUSION

This report has presented an overview of the dramatic acceleration of Islamophobia and the policies it inspires throughout 2022. Sadly, the evidence is clear: Islamophobia in Europe is consubstantial with a clear rise in increasingly outspoken nationalist forces - which seem destined to grow inexorably. It is now apparent that the denial and downplaying that has most often characterised the political treatment of Islamophobia in Europe is doing little to stem the rise of the far right. On the contrary, giving in on this front means offering the most reactionary forces strong support in their quest for political power.

However, worrying this historical situation may be, it should not lead to fatalism. “The worst is never certain”, as the saying goes: we must redouble our efforts to highlight the variety of civil rights violations constituted by Islamophobic attacks. Above all, it is a matter of working to convince all the forces of the European society of the mortal danger posed to all by an Islamophobic extreme right that is now at the doorstep of state institutions - and in some cases, at their heart.

The Collective against Islamophobia in Europe has made these two tasks its raison d'être: to identify and help individuals who are victims of Islamophobia, and to alert civil society and the public authorities to the risk that Islamophobia poses to everyone. Faced with the growing risk posed by a conquering far right, the aim is to highlight European Muslim communities' experiences at a time of communal tension and to rebuild alliances with all parties of goodwill. This imperative is not a pious hope: it is only by rebuilding society that the dangers of Islamophobia and nationalism will be averted.
Acknowledging the structural dimension of Islamophobia in Europe

It is the responsibility of the European Commission, as well as of all European states, to take into account the structural dimension of Islamophobia and to act accordingly. As stated in the Common Guidelines for the European Commission’s National Action Plans against Racism and Racial Discrimination, there is an urgent need to focus on structural racism and the large-scale discrimination it enables. The conclusions on racism and antisemitism adopted on 4 March 2022 by the Council of the European Union under the French Presidency of the EU Council make no mention of structural or institutional racism.

Furthermore, the European Commission rejected the request to appoint a coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred alongside the coordinator on antisemitism. In doing so, the European Commission denies the specificity of anti-Muslim racism as a growing phenomenon in Europe. The CCIE, together with many other civil society organisations, believes that it is crucial to strengthen public awareness at the international level of the threat posed by racist hatred and political persecution of individuals and institutions based on their real or perceived membership of the Muslim faith.

Combating far-right hate and racism

Given the extent of the threat from the far-right to the integrity of Muslims in Europe, there is an urgent need to give high priority to combating all forms of racist and Islamophobic expressions originating from these movements. It is also absolutely necessary to take all possible measures to combat the public manifestations of these extreme right-wing movements.

More specifically, rules should be established for internet companies, including social networks, telecommunication operators and internet service providers, to ensure that effective systems are in place to detect and remove online hate speech targeting Muslims.

There is a need to ensure that the fight against the extreme right and its manifestations is carried out at all administrative levels (European, national, regional, local) and to facilitate the participation of a wide range of actors from different parts of society in these efforts (in particular from the political, legal, economic, social, religious, educational and cultural sectors).
Ending the climate of suspicion created by the fight against "radicalisation"

In order to end the widespread suspicion of Muslim communities and individuals in Europe, efforts should be made to ensure that legislation or regulations adopted in the context of the fight against terrorism or extremism do not directly or indirectly discriminate against Muslims, and to repeal any legislation or regulations that are considered discriminatory.

There is also a need to regularly assess the impact of counterterrorism and counter-extremism legislation and policies on Muslim communities. This includes ensuring that groups particularly affected by the implementation of such laws and policies are carefully consulted and involved in the debate on their implementation.

More broadly, given the effects of equating all Islam-related practices with signs of radicalisation or separatism, the idea (on which all counter-radicalisation programmes are based) that mere behavioural signals can suggest a process of violent radicalisation needs to be thoroughly reconsidered. Finally, there is a need for continuous training at the local, regional and national levels of law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, judges and other justice actors in combating and preventing anti-Muslim racism, including the recognition and recording of Islamophobia generated by these counter-radicalisation programmes.

Tackling discrimination against Muslims in employment and education

Measures must be taken to address discrimination against Muslims in access to education, employment and the workplace. To this end, it is important to encourage public and private sector employers to adopt codes of conduct to combat discrimination against Muslims in access to employment and the workplace, and, where appropriate, to make workplaces representative of the diversity of European societies progressively.

Particular attention should be paid to the situation of Muslim women who often suffer from the triple punishment of being discriminated against based on their gender, religion and national or ethnic origin. In this respect, specific and effective measures must be taken to ensure their inclusion in all spaces that continue to discriminate against them.

In the workplace, there is a need to ensure that people of the Muslim faith can exercise their right to freedom of religion without discrimination, including by ensuring that public authorities provide that religious requirements are reasonably met.
Finally, it is necessary to work to ensure that the dress customarily worn by Muslim women and men does not lead to differential treatment, in particular concerning Muslim women and the wearing of headscarves, in order to respect the individual freedom of each person to manifest their beliefs.

**Raising awareness of anti-Muslim racism**

In order to raise awareness of Islamophobic racism, there is a need to develop relevant and effective educational policies and activities to increase understanding of Islamophobia by preventing anti-Muslim racism through education. It is important to ensure that awareness-raising measures on racism and discrimination against Muslims are provided in formal and informal education, including adult and teacher training.

Raising awareness of Islamophobia also means supporting scientific research into helping individuals and groups particularly vulnerable to Islamophobic hatred.

The media have an important role to play in raising awareness. Media professionals should be encouraged to reflect on their responsibility for the image they project of Islam and Muslim communities. They should be reminded of the need to cover news related to Islamophobia, including acts of discrimination and physical violence, and to give a voice to those affected to make their voices heard. Public figures should also be encouraged to take a strong public stance against anti-Muslim racism, condemning its various manifestations.

Finally, there is a need to support the activities of non-governmental organisations that play a significant role in raising awareness against Islamophobia and promoting appreciation of diversity, and provide an open and democratic space in which these organisations can address the various aspects of Islamophobia with relevant state bodies, regional and local authorities and other private actors.