CCIE

CCIE ANNUAL REPORT ON ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE FOR THE YEAR 2025

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Message from the Chairman

Shrinking Civic Space, the Judicial Repression of CCIE Members and Partners

The year that has just ended concludes in a particularly worrying context for Muslim minorities in Europe and for all those committed to defending their rights. In recent history, racist and discriminatory discourse has never seemed so normalised, nor its dissemination across the political, media, and institutional spheres so uninhibited. This gradual yet clearly perceptible drift throughout Europe undermines the very foundations of the rule of law and puts to the test the values that the European Union nonetheless claims to uphold.

Throughout 2025, stigmatisation intensified, fuelled by the rise of political forces that use the designation of scapegoats as an electoral and ideological lever. In several European countries, such discourse is no longer confined to the margins: it now structures public debate and public policy, influences legislative frameworks, and contributes to a climate of generalised suspicion toward populations that are, for socio-historical reasons, overall, more vulnerable.

In this context, the role of our organisation appears more essential than ever. Collecting reports and data, documenting facts, supporting victims, alerting institutions, and advancing advocacy grounded in law and fundamental principles is a democratic necessity. This report forms part of that approach, offering a rigorous analysis of the situation based on data, testimonies, and fieldwork conducted throughout the year.

It is important to emphasise that the past year marked a troubling turning point for our organisation and for me personally. As a result of the struggle we wage against racism and discrimination targeting Muslim European citizens, our organisation has been subjected to administrative and judicial proceedings aimed at hindering our activities. These pressures are not incidental: they are part of a broader trend of shrinking civic space intended to weaken and deter civil society organisations that expose structural racism and violations of freedoms.

At the time of writing, uncertainties remain regarding the conditions under which I will be able to continue this commitment on a personal level; likewise, I do not know whether I will end the year free or behind bars. [1] Indeed, I am awaiting a judicial decision linked to our work denouncing Islamophobia in Europe. These obstacles, rooted in "SLAPP-type proceedings," illustrate the growing challenges faced by those who refuse silence and resignation. One thing, however, remains certain: the fight against racism and discrimination cannot depend on a single individual. It must continue, because it concerns the lives of millions of European citizens who seek to live in peace, justice, and dignity.

The stakes therefore extend far beyond our organisation. They call into question the model of society that Europe seeks to defend: one in which fundamental rights are not conditioned by origin, religion, or status; where fear does not dictate the law; and where justice and equality are not applied selectively. In the face of the normalisation of intolerance and attempts at intimidation, it is all the more imperative to reaffirm these principles with determination.

I would therefore like to thank all the individuals, partners, and organisations who, despite the pressures, continue to support this indispensable work that we have carried on to this day. Their commitment demonstrates that, even in a difficult context, civil society remains an essential pillar of democracy.

I extend my warm thanks to all the members of CCIE in Europe who work throughout the year to collect data, support victims, and raise awareness among diverse audiences around these issues.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to all members and donors who support our work, in my name and on behalf of all the victims.

We express the hope that this report will help inform public decision-making, contribute to an informed debate, and remind European institutions of their responsibility to ensure the effective protection of fundamental rights.

Jean-Jacques M.

1 Two founding members of the CCIE and two of its partners are currently being prosecuted for "maintaining an organization dissolved by the French government" and face a sentence of up to three years of imprisonment and a fine of €45,000. Furthermore, the dissolution of CCIF in France has been described as an instrumentalization of the justice system for political purposes by several human rights organizations, political actors, and the French judges' union. In this regard, the French judges' union stated that the dissolution constituted a legal error. See: Contre la chasse aux associations, défendons nos libertés ! | Syndicat de la Magistrature

Introduction

Against the Normalisation of Islamophobia

The fight against racism and discrimination remains a central challenge for European societies, both in light of the founding principles of the European Union and the realities experienced by millions of people across its Member States. Despite the existence of an ambitious European legal framework for the protection of fundamental rights, certain forms of racism continue to receive uneven recognition in public, political, and institutional spheres.

In this regard, the stigmatisation and discrimination affecting Muslim Europeans do not receive political attention commensurate with the seriousness of their impact on social cohesion in Europe. The very existence of Islamophobia is still frequently minimised, while the presence of Muslims is regularly framed as a problem. Indeed, unlike other mobilisations advocating for genuine equality for other minorities in Europe, no major political decision has, to date, been adopted to address anti-Muslim racism on a comprehensive scale, despite an established overall upward trend.

Based on previously unpublished data collected by the CCIE and its network of European partners, this report aims to present an overview of contemporary dynamics of Islamophobia in Europe for the year 2025. It is grounded in rigorous work involving the collection of victim reports, extensive media monitoring, partnerships with researchers specialising in these issues, and collaboration with human rights organisations active in several European countries, all of which attest to a growing level of anti-Muslim racism.

Islamophobia refers to the set of attitudes, discourses, and acts, whether verbal, symbolic, or physical, of stigmatization, discrimination, or violence directed against a natural person, a legal entity, or an institution on the basis of their real or perceived affiliation with the Muslim religion. These practices are frequently legitimised through discursive frameworks related to security, integration, or national identity, and target individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds who are considered to be Muslim.

This form of racism is based on religious and cultural affiliation with Islam, often reduced to a homogeneous whole and constructed as the ultimate embodiment of otherness. Although these realities are widely documented by human rights organisations and social science research, they do not benefit from institutional recognition commensurate with the threat they pose to our societies. The CCIE therefore considers addressing Islamophobia to be a priority that must be placed on the European political agenda, in order to raise awareness and ease tensions surrounding the presence of Muslims in Europe.

Accordingly, this report pursues a dual objective. On the one hand, it aims to identify cross-cutting trends in Islamophobia at the European level. On the other hand, it seeks to situate these trends within specific national contexts, highlighting the diversity of situations observed across several Member States.

Intended for European institutions, national political decision-makers, and all stakeholders engaged in the defence of fundamental rights, this report aims to contribute to a public debate grounded in empirical data and to the development of policy responses that uphold the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and justice. To this end, it provides an assessment of the current situation and puts forward recommendations and good practices to achieve genuine equality. This approach fully aligns with the mission of the CCIE, which works to promote equality, combat racism, and ensure the effective protection of human rights for all across Europe.

Islamophobia Kills: From Srebrenica to Aboubakar Cissé

"After completing his voluntary morning cleaning at the mosque, Aboubakar Cissé exchanges a few words with the man who will soon murder him. Nothing yet suggests the imminent rupture. Then, as Aboubakar is immersed in prayer and bows down, the attacker lunges. Knife blows rain down one after the other—fifty-seven in total—accompanied by racist and blasphemous insults. A long-standing hatred is voiced aloud. Aboubakar collapses, left agonising on the ground. His killer then pulls out his phone, films his victim bleeding to death, and broadcasts the footage on social media."

Silent march in tribute to Aboubakar Cissé (killed in a mosque in the Gard on April 25, 2025) and against Islamophobia, in Belfort on May 2, 2025. Photo: Thomas Bresson

The death of Aboubakar Cissé, a young man killed in a mosque in France on 27 April 2025, tragically underscores that Islamophobia is neither an abstraction nor a mere matter of opinion, but a reality that can lead to murder. By attacking a man in a place of worship, the perpetrator targeted not only a human life but also a sacred space and the fundamental principle of religious freedom. This act occurred within a context in which stigmatising discourse about Muslims contributes to the normalisation of hatred and, at times, indirectly legitimises violent action. Naming Islamophobia and acknowledging its deadly consequences are essential conditions for effectively combating such violence and ensuring equality.

Aboubakar Cissé is not the only person whose life has been taken because he was Muslim. Across Europe, other women and men have been murdered or seriously assaulted because of their religious affiliation. These facts demonstrate that anti-Muslim hatred is not limited to symbolic discrimination or stigmatising rhetoric, but can, in its most extreme forms, lead to murder. While such violence is condemned to varying degrees in public discourse, protective, preventive, and awareness-raising measures specifically dedicated to anti-Muslim hatred remain, to date, far below the level required to meet the needs identified.

The year 2025 was also marked by numerous demonstrations by far-right movements in several European countries, notably in Ireland, the United Kingdom, and France. Some of these mobilisations were accompanied by violence targeting people of immigrant backgrounds, explicit calls for hatred, or the vandalisation of places and property. In certain contexts, these tensions took the form of urban violence, contributing to a climate of fear and insecurity, particularly among Muslim populations. While initiatives to raise awareness of Islamophobia do exist—especially in academic settings during Islamophobia Awareness Month, held in November—they would benefit from being strengthened and expanded to other audiences in order to address the scale of the challenges involved.

Remembering the victims of Islamophobia today, such as Aboubakar Cissé, resonates with the memorial work carried out through the travelling exhibition dedicated to Srebrenica. The 1995 genocide is a reminder of how far the dehumanisation of a group defined by its religion can go when hatred is trivialised, tolerated, or denied. Placing past and present violence side by side does not amount to drawing an equivalence, but rather to highlighting a dangerous continuity: one that begins with stigmatisation and can, if left unchallenged, lead to both individual murder and mass murder.

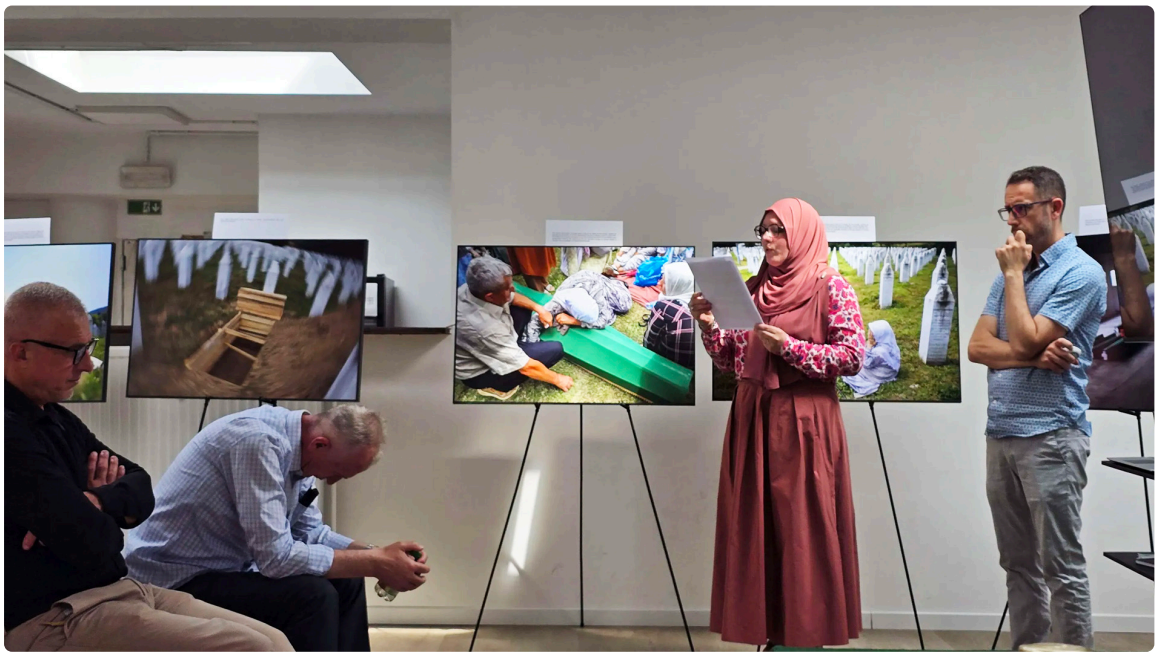
Raising Awareness Through Art and Culture

Art and culture serve as complementary vehicles to quantitative data, making it possible—through creative and narrative approaches—to illustrate and contextualise complex societal phenomena that cannot be fully understood through statistical indicators alone. From this perspective, the CCIE supports and develops cultural actions aimed at raising awareness around these issues.

Remembering

It is in this spirit that the CCIE organised a travelling exhibition dedicated to the genocide of Srebrenica, presented in eight European cities. This initiative was deployed around the date of the thirtieth anniversary of the massacre, commemorated each year on 11 July, in order to situate the project within a significant moment of collective memory at the European level.[1] Through this memorial work, the aim is to recall that crimes based on religious or cultural affiliation do not belong solely to the past, but directly challenge our contemporary societies and their capacity to prevent future violence, in a climate marked by the polarisation of public discourse around Islam and Muslims.

Images from the travelling exhibition organised by the CCIE in eight European cities focusing on the Srebrenica genocide.



Exhibition in Liège

1 International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica | United Nations

Images and photographs constitute particularly relevant tools for awareness-raising, offering a more embodied and concrete approach to historical events. By highlighting individual faces and personal stories, they help to humanise the memory of the victims of the genocide, who are too often dehumanised and homogenised in stigmatising narratives.

The exhibition was favourably received by the public, a significant proportion of whom were discovering for the first time the history of the Srebrenica genocide—the only genocide recognised in Europe since the Second World War.[1] This reception underscores the value of strengthening memorial and educational initiatives designed to increase awareness of certain episodes of contemporary European history that remain insufficiently visible in the public sphere. Such initiatives are effective tools for raising awareness of the mechanisms of hatred between groups, fostering mutual understanding, and contributing to the prevention of violence based on identity or religious affiliation.

Photography : Armin Durgut

Photography : Armin Durgut

1 The International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) have recognized the massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica by the army of Republika Srpska as an act of genocide.

Laughter

In line with this same approach of raising awareness and mobilising the public through cultural formats that are accessible to a wide audience, the CCIE also organised, for the third consecutive year, a comedy show entitled *"Brussels in Laughter"* in April 2025. This event brought together several public figures from the artistic and cultural spheres, who used humour as a means of expression to articulate lived experiences of racism and discrimination and to denounce their underlying mechanisms. By promoting an approach that was both accessible and reflective, the show helped raise awareness among a broad audience about these issues, while creating a space for dialogue and collective awareness. Bringing together more than 500 participants, the show was a significant success and will be renewed in September 2026 in partnership with various organisations working to combat racism.

Art and culture thus constitute structuring instruments of the CCIE's action in preventing stigmatisation and discrimination. As spaces for the transmission of awareness-raising messages, cultural initiatives contribute to the promotion of fundamental rights, respect for diversity, and the strengthening of social cohesion. The CCIE's engagement in the artistic and cultural field therefore fully aligns with the European Union's priorities in terms of equality, inclusion, and the fight against hate speech.

Statistics and Activities of the CCIE in 2025

The statistical monitoring of Islamophobic acts constitutes one of the structuring pillars of the CCIE's work, but it is part of a broader approach combining legal and psychological support for victims, knowledge production, public awareness, and institutional advocacy. The year 2025 was thus marked by both a quantitative and qualitative strengthening of the CCIE's activities at the national and European levels.

It is now widely established that the phenomena of racism and discrimination remain significantly underestimated in available statistical data. A substantial gap persists between the experiences lived by those concerned and the cases brought to the attention of institutions or competent organisations. This underreporting affects all forms of racism, but it is particularly pronounced in the case of Islamophobia, whose recognition as a specific phenomenon continues to be regularly contested in the European public debate.

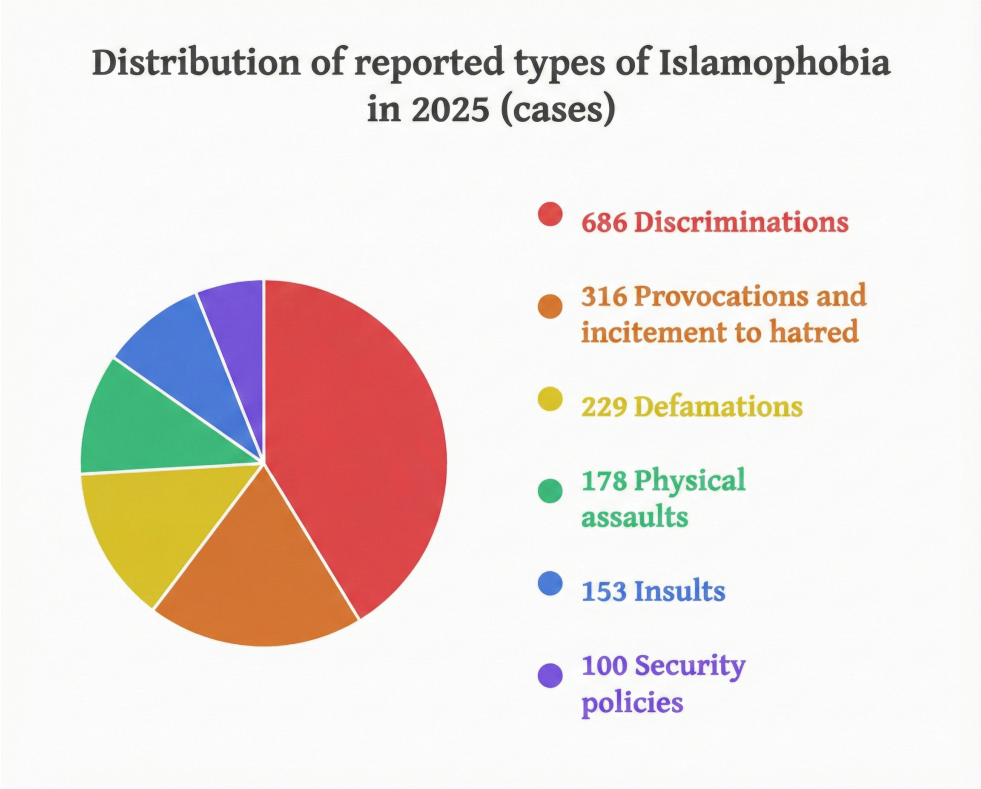
According to an estimate by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), only 6% of Islamophobia cases are reported.[1] This low reporting rate can notably be explained by the normalisation of stigmatising discourse, the inadequacy of institutional mechanisms for recognition and protection, and victims' lack of trust in existing apparatuses. A significant proportion of discrimination also occurs within institutional settings, which further reinforces this sense of discouragement and reluctance to seek redress.

In this context, the CCIE continues to carry out essential work in collecting, legally qualifying, and analysing reports, while emphasising that the data collected cannot reflect the true scale of Islamophobia in Europe, but only the cases brought to its attention. The geographical distribution of reports observed in 2025 primarily reflects the level of the organisation's presence and visibility in certain countries, particularly within the French-speaking area, rather than an objective concentration of incidents.

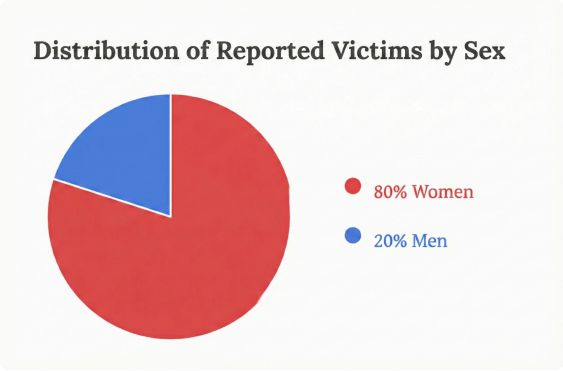
1 Being Muslim in the EU - Experiences of Muslims

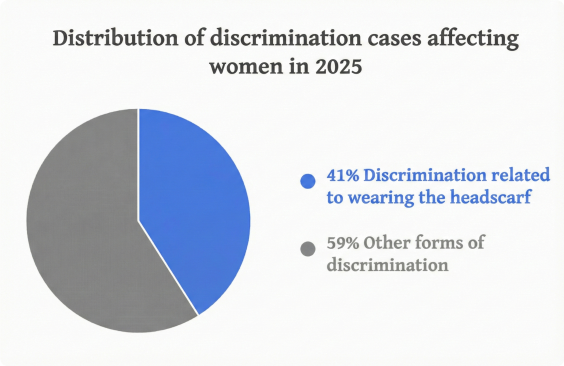
Key Data for 2025

In 2025, the CCIE recorded 876 reports, 85% of which concerned incidents that occurred in France. The situations documented cover a wide range of manifestations of anti-Muslim racism, including discrimination (686 cases), provocation and incitement to hatred (316), defamation (229), insults (153), and physical assaults (178). These are supplemented by situations related to security policies aimed at combating radicalisation and "separatism," including, in particular, threats or decisions of dissolution, asset freezes, as well as administrative closures of mosques, schools, bookshops, publishing houses, and religious education institutes.

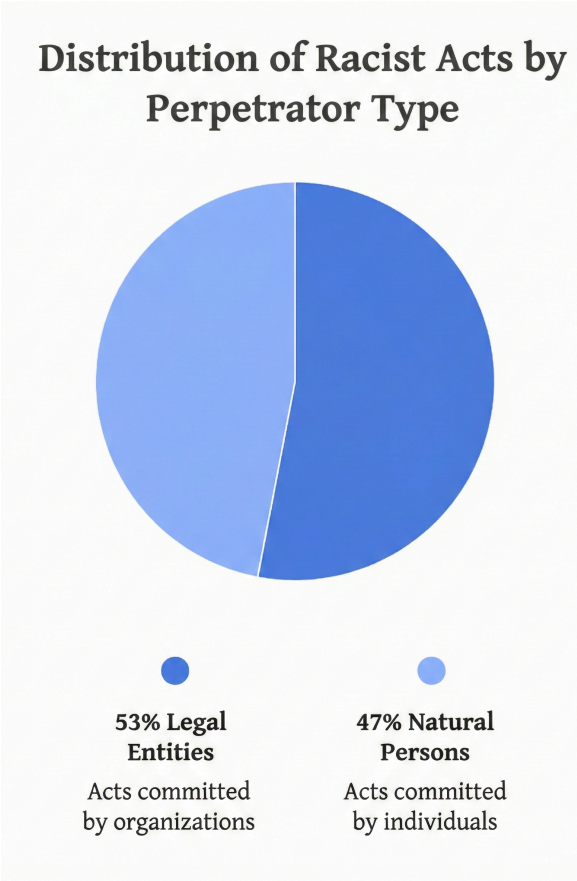


The data confirm structural trends observed over several years. Women represent the majority of reported victims (80%), mainly in situations of discrimination or violence linked to the wearing of the headscarf (41%).





Furthermore, the documented incidents more frequently involve acts committed by legal entities (53%) than by natural persons (47%), and occur predominantly in public or institutional spaces, highlighting the persistence of forms of institutional racism.



These data account for a significant part of the CCIE's activities in terms of the collection of reports, monitoring, and the legal and psychological support provided to those concerned.

Strengthening European Action

Beyond the collection of reports, the year 2025 was marked by a significant strengthening of the CCIE's activities in the areas of research, awareness-raising, training, and European and international cooperation. Within the framework of European programmes, the CCIE notably developed specific work on documenting hatred, including in digital environments, drawing on evidence-based data collection and analysis tools, in particular those of the European Observatory of Online Hate.

At the same time, the CCIE's International Relations Department took part in 28 events organised across Europe, in partnership with public institutions, universities, and organisations dedicated to the protection of fundamental rights. These exchanges helped to structure a transnational network of stakeholders committed to combating anti-Muslim racism and to strengthen the European reach of the actions undertaken.

Within this momentum, the CCIE played a leading role in the creation of EQUITAS [1], a European coalition bringing together civil society organisations engaged in the fight against Islamophobia. This initiative aims to strengthen transnational cooperation, the pooling of tools, and the production of comparable data in order to better document discrimination and improve its prevention at the European level.

EQUITAS develops an integrated approach structured around four complementary pillars: legal assistance for victims of discrimination; awareness-raising and education; advocacy for more protective public policies; and research through the production of reports and analyses. In this context, a dedicated digital application has been developed to enable the secure reporting of hate speech and Islamophobic acts, including within non-public communication spaces, as well as access to daily monitoring of manifestations of anti-Muslim hatred in several European Union countries.

The actions carried out within the framework of EQUITAS are complementary to the projects led by CCIE, particularly in the areas of psychological support for victims, the production of cultural and documentary content, awareness-raising in the fields of education and sport, training of European partners, and the development of comparative research at the European level.

1 https://equitas.site

Finally, the CCIE places its work within a dynamic of international cooperation by being an active member of several networks and coalitions, including ENAR (European Network Against Racism), ENORB (European Network on Religion and Belief), CCAN (Christchurch Call Advisory Network), as well as EQUITAS. Participation in these structured frameworks of cooperation makes it possible to strengthen the impact of the actions undertaken, ensure better circulation of good practices, and contribute to a coordinated response to phenomena of racism and discrimination at the European level. CCIE is thus mobilised by associative and institutional partners to deliver training and awareness-raising activities addressing issues related to Islamophobia in several European countries.

Online Hate: A Strengthened Priority in the Fight Against Racism

As part of its monitoring and analysis activities on online hate speech, the CCIE gained access in 2025 to the digital platform of the European Observatory of Online Hate (EOOH). This mechanism, supported by the European Union, aims to strengthen knowledge of the dynamics of production and dissemination of hateful discourse on major digital platforms, notably X, 4chan, Gab, Telegram, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, 9GAG, Threads, and Bluesky.

Initially designed as a tool for detecting, identifying, and reporting hateful content (sexism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, hatred toward migrants, among others), the platform also enables systematic and real-time observation of recurring themes, mobilised rhetorics, and the mechanisms through which hate speech circulates in digital spaces.

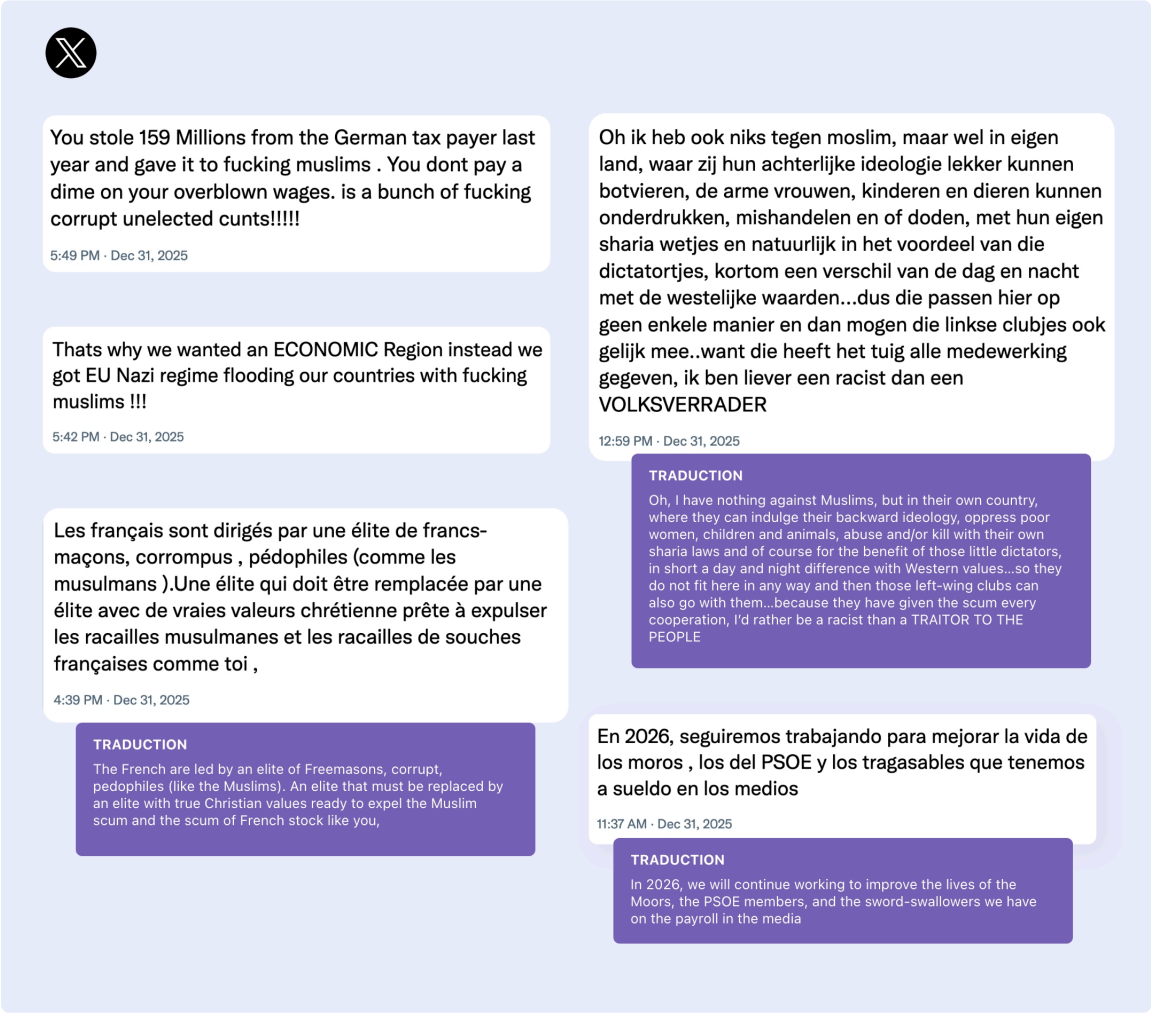
Data analysed (2017–2026)

The data analysed cover the period from November 13, 2017, to January 26, 2026, and are based on a corpus of 14,899,598 posts, of which 2,472,514—i.e. 16.6%—were classified as "toxic"[1] according to the platform's criteria. The majority of the content analysed comes from Twitter (72%), followed by YouTube (21%) and TikTok (3%). The most represented languages are English (52%), Arabic (16%), and French (10%). Religious themes are identified in 81% of the content classified as toxic, while 37% of these contain elements of explicit violence. For the year 2025, messages written in European languages and presenting a medium to high level of toxicity number several thousand per day. Significant variations are observed in connection with current events, with certain events giving rise to daily peaks that can reach up to 39,770 toxic messages.

1 According to the EOOH, **toxicity** refers to the use of hateful or problematic language originating from social media, measured using lexicons in which each term is validated by native speakers to determine its category (such as sexism or racism) and its level of severity.

Thematic Analysis of Highly Toxic Messages

The cross-analysis of the themes associated with highly toxic messages highlights structuring correlations between several discursive registers. When a message is classified as relating to racism, it contains references to religion in 32.63% of cases, which constitutes the highest co-occurrence observed in the analysed corpus. These results indicate that religious references occupy a central place in the mechanisms of racialisation at work in hateful discourse, in line with the dynamics identified by existing scientific literature. Messages containing expressions of violence are also predominantly associated with the religious theme (26.62%). Moreover, political themes appear in a significant manner, with 17.59% of violent content linked to discourse of a political nature. The analysis thus reveals notable areas of overlap between racism, violence, and political discourse, suggesting the existence of interdependent discursive dynamics. This configuration indicates that Islamophobic discourse is embedded in specific mechanisms of racialisation, within which references to religion are frequently mobilised as a vector of stigmatisation. It also underscores the relevance of intersectional approaches for analysing the articulation between racism, sexism, and political discourse in digital environments.



Examples of a small fraction of hate messages captured in a single day.

Media Circulation and Social Impacts

Quantitative data alone do not make it possible to grasp all the mechanisms of dissemination of hateful discourse. The reports collected notably highlight the viral circulation of excerpts taken from television programs, widely relayed on social networks, which contribute to amplifying stigmatising discourse toward people of the Muslim faith. Information collected via the EQUITAS platform suggests that such discourse is frequently embedded in the dynamics of targeted harassment. Those affected report lasting psychological and social impacts. Discourse disseminated online and relayed by certain media content thus appears likely to produce concrete effects beyond the strictly digital sphere.

These elements highlight the structural nature of online hate targeting people presumed to be Muslim. This phenomenon cannot be understood solely through the lens of technical moderation mechanisms. While digital platforms contribute to the visibility and amplification of these discourses, they also reveal forms of symbolic violence that pre-exist in the social space. In this context, the findings of the analysis underscore the value of strengthening the systematic documentation of these practices, including their least visible forms, such as harassment occurring in private communication spaces. It is within this perspective that the EQUITAS platform and its online hate tracker are situated, with the objective of contributing to a better understanding of the phenomenon and informing the development of appropriate responses in terms of prevention, monitoring, and support.

Mapping Islamophobia in Europe—European Trends in 2025

Intro:A General Climate of Far Right Mainstreaming

The eleven case studies presented in this section illustrate common structural trends at the European level, within a context marked by the growing normalisation of Islamophobia and the progressive rightward shift of the European political landscape. Far from constituting isolated or exceptional situations, these national cases reflect converging dynamics that run across the entire European space, even though their manifestations vary according to the legal, political, and historical frameworks specific to each country.

In many contexts, Islamophobia tends to become normalised in public discourse, institutional practices, and certain public policies, often in the name of security, identity, neutrality, national values, or social cohesion, drawing on the notion of an "internal enemy" or the "great replacement" theory. This development takes place within an increasingly polarised political environment, in which the rise of conservative and far-right forces contributes to legitimising stigmatising representations of Islam and Muslims, including within governmental discourse or policies presented as technically neutral. This claim to the normality of the majority group's culture obscures the situated nature of increasingly demanding assimilation requirements imposed on Muslim citizens, within a European society that is nevertheless increasingly globalised and cosmopolitan. In this sense, statements such as "Down with the veil!"[1] or "Islamophobia is no longer an option, it is a duty,"[2] made by government representatives, do not appear to provoke significant outrage within civil society and institutions, demonstrating a substantial normalisation of Islamophobia in public discourse.

The countries examined in this report are not approached as mere national cases, but as observatories of broader European trends: the securitisation of public policies, differentiated restrictions on religious freedoms, the hierarchisation of discrimination, the normalisation of suspicion toward Muslim populations, and the weakening of mechanisms for the effective protection of fundamental rights. This is reflected in particular through repression and/or a lack of resources directed toward civil society organisations engaged in the defence of rights and the fight against inequalities. Taken together, these case studies make it possible to understand how contemporary Islamophobia unfolds across a variety of registers—legal, political, administrative, and discursive—while simultaneously contributing to a more general European dynamic.

This comparative approach thus aims to highlight the shared logics that currently structure contemporary forms of Islamophobia in Europe, and to foster collective reflection on the institutional responses necessary to address them.

1 Statement made by the French Minister of the Interior, Bruno Retailleau, on March 26, 2025: Politique. « Vive le sport et à bas le voile » : dans quel contexte Bruno Retailleau a-t-il prononcé cette phrase ?

2 Statement made by Sylvia Orriols, mayor of the municipality of Rippol and Spanish parliamentarian, on July 3, 2024 : https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/5527748/0/denuncian-alcaldesa-ripoll-lider-extrema-derecha-alianca-catalana-silvia-orriols-por-delitos-odio-los-migrantes/

Austria: Islamophobia Driven by Public Discourse

Dokustelle Austria

In Austria, anti-Muslim racism constitutes a structural phenomenon, strongly influenced by political, media, and societal dynamics. This section draws on the contribution of Dokustelle Austria (Documentation and Advice Center for Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism), which has been active for over ten years in documenting acts of anti-Muslim racism, providing support to affected individuals, and engaging in anti-racist advocacy.

In June 2025, Dokustelle Austria published its tenth annual report, covering incidents documented in 2024. A total of 1,336 cases of anti-Muslim racism were recorded during the year. These incidents concern both Muslim individuals and persons perceived as such, and include acts committed offline as well as online content identified through systematic monitoring.

The analysis is based on an intersectional approach that considers racism as a structural phenomenon embedded in a society dominated by majority norms. This methodology makes it possible to take into account the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination affecting those concerned.

A significant increase in reports was observed in August and September 2024, a period directly linked to the Austrian National Council elections. As in previous years, electoral campaigns had a measurable impact on the everyday experiences of Muslims and people perceived as Muslim. Case analysis shows that insults and overt discrimination in access to employment, housing, and education are more frequently reported during this period. Muslim women are particularly affected, especially within the healthcare system, where they report stereotyping based on appearance, devaluation, and a lack of being taken seriously.

The data also reveal an increase in hate speech targeting Muslim organisations. Dokustelle Austria itself has increasingly been the target of hateful messages via email and social media in 2025, suggesting a link between the visibility of anti-racist work and the intensification of hostile reactions.

In the digital sphere, 996 incidents of anti-Muslim racism were documented in 2025. While figures remained relatively stable at the beginning of the year, a marked increase was observed from June onward. In September, 196 incidents were recorded, representing 19.8% of the annual total. This increase is linked to political and societal developments, notably the campaign for the European elections, which was marked by hostile discourse toward Islam and immigration promoted by right-wing populist actors. Discursive frameworks such as “Islamisation” dominated public debate and contributed to the intensification of racism directed at Muslims.

Media coverage of the war in Gaza constituted an additional factor, within a context in which Muslims were increasingly associated with violence and extremism. In digital environments, these narratives rapidly translate into hateful speech, threats, and calls for violence. The concentration of cases at the end of summer and the beginning of autumn must therefore be understood within the framework of a political and media climate of open hostility.

Over a ten-year period, Dokustelle Austria has documented more than 9,000 incidents of anti-Muslim racism. These figures, although significant, represent only a partial reflection of realities marked by structural discrimination, stigmatising political campaigns, restrictive legal measures, and hostile media representations. The data highlight persistent racist structures that call into question social belonging, bodies, religious practices, and the legitimacy of Muslims and people perceived as Muslim within Austrian society.

Belgium: The Institutional Hierarchization of Discrimination and the Ineffectiveness of the Law in Combating Islamophobia

In 2025, in Belgium, repressive measures and draft legislation were developed at various levels with the aim of silencing movements of social protest and critical voices. Most of these measures initially targeted Muslims specifically, before being extended to other groups and to civil society as a whole. An important factor in this context is the genocide in Gaza, as well as pro-Palestinian resistance and the broad solidarity it has generated among a large segment of the Belgian population.

In its 2024 report[1], UNIA, Belgium's equality body, highlighted that nine out of ten religion-related complaints involve Muslim individuals. Among the 137 cases linked specifically to Islam that year, 80 concerned the wearing of the headscarf, most frequently in the context of recruitment and access to employment.

Nevertheless, the Belgian case highlights a specific configuration of Islamophobia, which is expressed not primarily through the absence of legal norms, but through a profoundly unequal implementation of anti-discrimination law. In Belgium, the legal framework for combating discrimination is recognised as one of the most comprehensive in Europe. Yet the available empirical data show that this normative robustness does not translate into effective and equitable protection for discriminated individuals, particularly when discrimination is linked to origin, religious beliefs, or their intersection.

1 https://www.unia.be/files/Rapport-chiffres-2024_FR_final.pdf

A study conducted by Julie Ringelheim, Olivier Struelens, and Jogchum Vrielink, based on eleven years of case law in labour law, highlights a central finding: despite the existence of the law, discrimination remains widespread in employment, while the number of cases brought before the courts, prosecution rates, and effective convictions remain extremely low in relation to the scale of the phenomenon.[1] Moreover, this research reveals a marked hierarchisation in the judicial treatment of discrimination, depending on the grounds invoked. Certain forms of discrimination benefit from significantly stronger institutional engagement than others, both in the handling of cases and in procedural outcomes.

The results are particularly striking when comparing discrimination based on sexual orientation with that related to origin or religious beliefs. Although legislation protecting sexual orientation was adopted later, it is today applied far more effectively. Complainants obtain favourable decisions more frequently, and prosecutions are more likely to succeed. This discrepancy cannot be explained by intrinsic differences in severity or evidentiary standards, but instead points to a deeper political reality: the effectiveness of the law largely depends on the institutional and social will to combat certain forms of discrimination rather than others.

This hierarchisation is particularly evident in the treatment of discrimination linked to religious beliefs, especially those affecting Muslim women who wear the headscarf. Grassroots organisations active in defending these rights repeatedly report that certain public institutions responsible for combating discrimination adopt a very restrictive case-selection policy. Priority is given to cases with a high probability of legal success, to the detriment of situations that are nevertheless legally well founded but more complex or politically sensitive. However, no public data make it possible to accurately assess the proportion of complaints actually taken up by these institutions, which poses a major problem of transparency and prevents any rigorous evaluation of real access to justice for discriminated individuals.

The consequences of this selection are manifold. On the one hand, it slows the development of case law on discrimination related to religious beliefs, contributing to the persistence of extremely low success rates in such litigation. On the other hand, it shifts the human, psychological, and financial costs of legal proceedings onto the victims themselves. Individuals whose cases are not taken up are forced to pursue lengthy, costly, and arduous legal actions on their own, when they are not discouraged at the outset. Yet field reports show that many of these proceedings conducted without institutional support result in favourable decisions, confirming *ex post* the legal soundness of cases that were initially set aside.

1 RingelheimStruelensVrielink_11ansJurisprudenceAntidiscrimination_2025.pdf

This functioning produces a double perverse effect. It artificially limits success statistics by retaining only cases deemed "winnable," while simultaneously contributing to the invisibilisation of a substantial proportion of structural discrimination, particularly that related to religious beliefs and racialised identities. What appears in official figures therefore reflects only a fraction of the real phenomenon, leaving in the shadows a "submerged portion" consisting of withdrawals, abandonments, and individual struggles carried out without institutional support.

The Belgian case thus demonstrates that the relative ineffectiveness of anti-discrimination laws stems not primarily from technical shortcomings in the law, but from implicit political choices, including within the institutions tasked with guaranteeing equality. These choices concern the prioritisation of discriminations deemed defensible, the selection of battles publicly supported, and the tacit definition of what does—or does not—deserve institutional investment. As long as this hierarchisation remains invisible, unquestioned, and uncorrected, the promise of equality before the law will remain largely rhetorical for those most exposed to Islamophobia and racialised discrimination.

Denmark: The Conditionality of Muslims' Rights in Denmark after October 2023

CEDA

Data collected by CEDA (Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark), an official partner of the CCIE, highlight a profound transformation of the rights regime applied to Muslims in Denmark. Far from being limited to a temporary increase in hostile acts, the report documents a process of *conditionality of rights*, in which effective access to security, equality, freedom of expression and civic participation becomes dependent on Muslims' religious, cultural and political conformity. This dynamic intensified sharply following the war waged by Israel against Gaza from October 2023 onward, in a context of political polarisation and increasing criminalisation of pro-Palestinian solidarity.

Based on a mixed-methods study, including 172 questionnaire responses as well as numerous qualitative testimonies, the analysis shows that Muslims in Denmark are not only exposed to greater social hostility, but are progressively placed in a position of "citizens under surveillance," whose rights are subject to specific expectations of loyalty, silence or controlled visibility. The report establishes a clear link between religious and political visibility and exposure to social, institutional and, at times, legal sanctions.

Quantitative findings show that Muslim visibility—particularly the wearing of the hijab, abaya or a beard—is associated with an increased risk of Islamophobic incidents. Muslim women, especially those who wear the hijab, appear to be the most exposed. These findings indicate that formal equality before the law does not translate into substantive equality in the public sphere: the visible exercise of freedom of religion becomes a vulnerability factor, which in itself amounts to an indirect restriction on the right to freedom of religion. Incidents occur predominantly in public spaces, but also extensively online, with Facebook identified as the platform most conducive to the dissemination of hateful discourse.

A central finding of the report is the very low reporting rate of Islamophobic incidents, which are normalised even by victims. Only one in fourteen cases was reported to the police. This under-reporting is not interpreted as a lack of legal awareness, but as the symptom of a structural loss of confidence in the State's capacity to protect Muslims on an equal basis. This mistrust is compounded by the prolonged absence of official data: the Danish National Police (*Rigspolitiet*) published no hate crime statistics for 2023, 2024 or 2025. The most recent available data, from 2022, recorded 50 religiously motivated hate crimes targeting Muslims, representing 10% of religious hate crimes registered that year. This statistical silence reflects a form of public inattention.

Qualitative analysis shows that this conditionality extends to the most fundamental spheres of social life, particularly for children. The report documents increasing exposure of Muslim children to hate, either as direct victims or as witnesses to assaults targeting their parents. Schools, public transport and libraries appear as spaces in which the protection of Muslim children is no longer effectively guaranteed. When far-right actors demonstrate in front of schools or mosques, reported police responses often consist of asking families to avoid the area or alter their routes, thereby shifting responsibility for security from public authorities to victims. This shift constitutes a form of implicit renunciation of equal protection.

Several incidents analysed in the report illustrate this logic of conditional rights particularly clearly. The attack that occurred on 2 March 2024 at the WAKF/DIT mosque in Copenhagen, after six days of harassment reported without adequate police intervention, shows how the protection of the fundamental right to freedom of worship can become contingent. Subsequent police and media framing, suggesting an internal conflict despite awareness of an external armed threat, contributed to further exposing the Muslim community to stigmatisation and public hostility. Institutional failure therefore does not amount merely to inaction, but actively contributes to the production of a legitimised climate of insecurity.

This conditionality is also evident in employment. Political proposals targeting nationals from MENAPT countries—including raising the salary threshold for work permits from 514,000 to 650,000 Danish kroner—establish differentiated barriers to labour market access on the basis of ethno-geographical categories closely associated with Islam. More explicitly still, the "repatriation" plan presented in August 2024 by the party *Nye Borgerlige* aims to make it "difficult to be Muslim in Denmark," thereby openly endorsing a logic in which the right to reside, work and practise one's religion becomes conditional on ideological and cultural conformity defined by the majority.

In professional settings, the CEDA report, based on data collected in 2024, shows that Muslims' freedom of expression—and that of their allies—is increasingly restricted, particularly regarding Palestine. Targeted bans on Palestinian symbols, such as the keffiyeh, or professional sanctions linked to expressions of solidarity illustrate a selective application of neutrality norms. Freedom of expression, although protected by the Danish Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights, thus becomes a conditional right for Muslims.

The education sector constitutes another key space where this conditionality unfolds. A decision issued in February 2024 by the Danish Agency for Education and Quality (STUK), upholding the exclusion of an 11-year-old Muslim pupil for wearing the hijab, shows how notions such as "freedom" and "democracy" are interpreted in ways that exclude certain religious expressions. A survey of 1,568 pupils conducted by the Danish Institute for Human Rights and *Børns Vilkår* further reveals that pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds—many of whom are Muslim—experience widespread bullying and lack of institutional support. Access to a safe and equal school environment thus appears not to be effectively guaranteed for Muslim children.

At the political and discursive level, the introduction of the concept of "broderisme" by Frederik Vad marks a further step in the conditionality of rights. By suggesting that integration is no longer measured by compliance with the law, employment or education, but by the absence of religiosity or political mobilisation deemed suspicious, this discourse redefines the criteria for civic belonging. The explicit support of Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen for this approach contributes to institutionalising a lasting suspicion toward Muslims, presented as potentially disloyal citizens.

The report concludes that Denmark is moving toward a system in which Muslims no longer fully benefit from a universal and unconditional rights regime. Protection from violence, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, equality before the law and even children's safety become dependent on behaviours considered acceptable by the political and cultural majority. This evolution constitutes a rupture with the fundamental principles of the rule of law and creates the conditions for a two-tier democracy. Without structural change, the report warns that Islamophobia in Denmark will continue to be normalised not only as a social attitude, but as an "implicit principle of governance," in which Muslims are tolerated on the condition that they remain invisible, silent and politically harmless.

Spain: Ripoll as a Laboratory of Institutional Islamophobia

Salma Amazian

In 2025, Spain offers a particularly revealing example of Islamophobia as a state policy, whose most visible manifestations can be observed at the local level. The case of Ripoll, in Catalonia, constitutes an emblematic laboratory of the institutionalisation of Islamophobia, making it possible to grasp concretely how racialised and security-oriented discourses are translated into administrative, legal, and political practices that directly affect the rights of Muslim populations.

Since June 2023, the municipality of Ripoll has been governed by *Aliança Catalana*, a far-right pro-independence party led by Sílvia Orriols, which holds six of the seventeen seats on the municipal council. The political trajectory of the mayor is closely linked to the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks of August 2017, carried out by young men who grew up in Ripoll. By mobilising local anger and the sense of institutional abandonment that followed these attacks, Orriols constructed a discourse combining radical Catalan nationalism with explicit Islamophobia. She has publicly described herself as "Islamophobic," asserting that "Islamophobia is a duty," and has regularly mobilised racial references to define Catalan identity. In 2024, she thus declared that "with so many Andalusians and so many Muslims, no one will speak Catalan in Catalonia," explicitly invoking the "great replacement" theory.

These ideological positions are translated into concrete municipal governance based on restricting rights and targeted stigmatisation of Muslim populations or those perceived as such. In Ripoll, access to the municipal register—an essential prerequisite for opening fundamental rights such as healthcare or education—is obstructed through the introduction of prior verification procedures that can delay registration by up to three months, in contradiction with the existing legal framework. At the same time, the municipality censored a poster depicting a young girl wearing a headscarf, accused of "normalising Islamic misogyny." This decision led to legal proceedings against at least three residents who displayed the image, with financial penalties ranging from 750 to 3,000 euros, and was accompanied by the temporary closure of a social centre (*La Metxa*), considered by municipal authorities to pose a "risk to security and coexistence."

At the same time, Ripoll has become a space for experimenting with symbolic measures aimed at restricting the visibility of Islam in the public sphere. In February 2025, the mayor proposed banning the wearing of the Islamic headscarf in all public schools in the municipality, as well as the niqab in public spaces, while also considering the organisation of citizen consultations on the opening of mosques. While some of these proposals have not yet been translated into binding legal norms, their political significance is considerable. According to the July 2025 Political Opinion Barometer of the Centre for Opinion Studies (CEO), *Aliança Catalana* would win between ten and eleven seats in the Catalan Parliament if elections were held, indicating that this model of Islamophobic local governance is tending to normalise and project itself beyond the municipal level.

The experience of Ripoll is not, however, an isolated exception. It is part of a broader national dynamic marked by a rightward shift of the Spanish political field and by the normalisation of security-oriented and Islamophobic discourses. Since Vox entered institutions in 2018, Islamophobia has become a structuring axis of public debate, influencing not only the far right but also centre and centre-left parties in a context of electoral competition. This political convergence takes place within an institutional framework that still refuses to recognise Islamophobia as a specific form of racism, as it appears in Spanish law only as an aggravating circumstance within hate crimes. The absence of specific statistical mechanisms and adequately funded public policies thus contributes to rendering invisible the structural and institutional dimension of the phenomenon.

In this context, other municipalities have implemented similar policies, although they have received less media attention. In Jumilla, in the Murcia region, a municipal coalition between the Popular Party and Vox adopted a motion in July 2025 restricting the use of public facilities for religious celebrations. Presented under the guise of neutrality or secularism, this measure directly affects the Muslim community and illustrates how Islamophobia becomes institutionalised through apparently general norms with targeted discriminatory effects.

The summer of 2025 was also marked by an escalation of racist and Islamophobic violence, revealing the articulation between political discourse, institutional practices, and collective violence. In Torre Pacheco, in Murcia, a wave of assaults, destruction of shops, vandalism, and arson unfolded between 6 and 22 July. These acts of violence were massively amplified on social media, where the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia recorded more than 138,000 hate-related messages, with a peak of 33,046 messages on 12 July, the day of demonstrations in the town. Analysis of these contents shows that 91% targeted people of North African origin, illustrating the racialised and automatic association between Islam, immigration, and otherness in the Spanish context. A few days later, on 11 July 2025, the deliberate arson attack on a mosque in Piera, near Barcelona, reinforced the climate of fear and insecurity, leading many Muslim families to remain confined to their homes for fear of assault. This also takes place within a particular national context in which Muslims have historically already experienced forms of discrimination, violence, and expulsion, thereby reactivating long-standing fears.

The effects of this institutional and social Islamophobia are also acutely manifested in the educational sphere and in everyday life trajectories, particularly for Muslim women. In 2025, several schools in the Community of Madrid, notably in Parla, banned the wearing of the hijab through internal regulations, triggering student mobilisations. Available data indicate that six out of ten Muslim women have been excluded from job offers for refusing to remove their headscarf during interviews, while seven out of ten Muslim women have faced refusals to rent housing due to discrimination. Moreover, six out of ten Muslim women report that their privacy is not respected or that they experience mistreatment during medical consultations, revealing the extension of discrimination into the healthcare sphere.

Finally, the securitisation of Muslim populations constitutes another central pillar of state Islamophobia in Spain. The case of the influencer Nordin Workout, followed by more than 500,000 people across various digital platforms, is particularly revealing in this regard. Arrested on 7 February 2025 in Leganés as part of a large-scale anti-terrorism operation, placed in pre-trial detention for three months, and widely portrayed by the media as a "jihadist influencer," his case was ultimately dismissed on 9 August 2025 for lack of evidence. The accusations were based in particular on the use of religious chants in his sports videos and on his religious posts online. Beyond the judicial outcome, this case contributed to reinforcing the association between visible Muslim religiosity, digital expression, and terrorist suspicion, sending a deterrent message to Muslim communities as a whole regarding the costs of public visibility.

By placing the case of Ripoll at the centre of the analysis, alongside that of Nordin Workout, it becomes clear that Islamophobia in Spain does not stem from isolated excesses or marginal practices, but from a structured mode of governance. Municipal policies, security mechanisms, educational restrictions, and symbolic and material violence are articulated within a continuum of criminalisation, racialisation, and securitisation of the Muslim population. The local level, far from being peripheral, plays a central role in the normalisation and diffusion of institutional Islamophobia across the political and administrative field.

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Finland: A Nordic Paradox Between a Protective Legal Framework and the Intensification of Islamophobia

Sumeera Hassan

The Finnish case illustrates in a particularly striking way the tensions currently running through several European societies: a formally robust legal and institutional framework for combating discrimination coexists with a documented intensification of Islamophobia, both in social practices and in public debate.

At the institutional level, Finland has a solid legal arsenal. The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and explicitly prohibits all forms of discrimination, while the Non-Discrimination Act bans discrimination based, *inter alia*, on religion, ethnic origin, or nationality in employment, education, housing, and access to services. These commitments were reaffirmed with the adoption, in 2024, of a government action plan to combat racism and promote equality. However, the available data reveal a growing gap between these principles and the realities experienced by Muslim populations.

Official statistics show a continuous increase—and now a record level—of hate crimes. In 2025 alone, the Finnish police recorded 1,808 suspected hate-motivated offences, representing an increase of more than 12% compared to the previous year and the highest level since statistical monitoring began in 2008. While the majority of these offences are classified under motives related to ethnic or national origin, institutional and media sources converge in highlighting that persons perceived as Muslim, particularly of Syrian or Somali origin, are among the groups most frequently targeted. A significant share of these acts now takes place in digital spaces, signalling a growing shift of hostility toward online environments.

European surveys confirm the seriousness of the situation from the perspective of those concerned. According to the *Being Muslim in the EU* survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 63% of Muslims living in Finland report having experienced racial discrimination over the past five years, a rate among the highest in the Union. Discrimination is particularly pronounced in access to employment and housing, where refusals based on name, appearance, or presumed religion are widely documented. These findings are corroborated by national human rights institutions, which point both to significant underreporting of incidents and to growing distrust in the authorities' ability to respond effectively.

Islamophobia in Finland is also characterised by a strong digital dimension. Online hate speech targeting Muslims is identified by several international bodies as a structural feature of Finland's contemporary public sphere. Social media content analyses highlight recurring narratives associating Islam with violence, cultural incompatibility, or a threat to "Finnish values," contributing to the normalisation of hostility and legitimising more diffuse forms of stigmatisation and discrimination in everyday life.

This dynamic is closely linked to changes in the political climate. Since the Finns Party (far right) joined the governing coalition in 2023, themes of "Islamisation," immigration, and Muslim religious practices have occupied a central place in public debate. Human rights institutions observe a banalisation of hostile discourse, including within the mainstream political arena, where the very notion of hate speech is sometimes challenged.

A particularly revealing episode of this politicisation was the debate, between 2024 and 2025, over a possible ban on the niqab and the burqa—and more broadly on Islamic clothing—in public spaces and educational institutions. Although the number of women wearing the niqab in Finland is extremely small, this issue became a major symbolic stake, turning the bodies and clothing of Muslim women into a site of political struggle. Presented by their proponents as measures to protect equality and women's rights, these proposals have been analysed by many observers as forms of feminist instrumentalisation used to legitimise exclusionary policies. While no national ban was ultimately adopted, the debate itself contributed to reinforcing feelings of stigmatisation and insecurity among Muslim women, including those who do not wear full-face veils.

Qualitative research conducted among Muslim communities sheds light on the concrete effects of this climate. It describes strategies of adaptation and avoidance whereby some individuals reduce the visibility of their religious practices in order to limit their exposure to discrimination, particularly in the professional sphere. In this context, mosques appear as essential spaces of social support, protection, and collective mobilisation in the face of the racism and Islamophobia experienced on a daily basis by Muslim Finns.

Thus, the Finnish case highlights a paradox that is now well identified at the European level: the coexistence of public policies displaying a strong commitment to equality with profound transformations in political and media discourse that contribute to the normalisation of Islamophobia and xenophobia. Far from being marginal, these phenomena are embedded in structural dynamics affecting access to employment, housing, public space, and digital spaces. At the same time, the mobilisation of Muslim organisations, interfaith networks, and human rights institutions constitutes essential counter-forces, reminding us that these developments are also met with resistance.

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France: The Shrinking of Civic Space for Muslim Human Rights Defenders

(The researchers who contributed to this article wished to remain anonymous due to the significant risks to their personal safety and their careers in France).

In 2025, France stands out for a configuration in which Islamophobia is embedded in a particularly clear process of shrinking civic space, directly affecting Muslim organisations and civil society actors engaged in the defence of human rights. This phenomenon is not limited to stigmatising discourse or social discrimination; it is reflected in the increasing use of judicial and administrative instruments aimed at restricting, disqualifying, or dissolving Muslim organisations, including those working in the field of human rights.

This dynamic has accelerated under the legislative framework adopted since 2020, and in particular with the law known as "Strengthening Respect for the Principles of the Republic" (CPR), adopted on 24 April 2021. Presented as a response to terrorism and "separatism," this law has considerably expanded the administration's powers with regard to the oversight, suspension, and dissolution of civil society organisations, as well as the closure of places of worship. In practice, these measures have been applied disproportionately against Muslim organisations, often on the basis of vague, preventive, or indirect accusations, such as the "dissemination of separatist ideas," the "challenging of republican values," or an "alleged complacency toward Islamism."

The case of the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) represents a major turning point in this process. In 2020, the CCIF—the leading organisation documenting and providing legal support to victims of Islamophobia in France—was forced to dissolve under direct pressure from the authorities, in the context of a political and media campaign accusing it, without any prior judicial decision, of ideological proximity to Islamism and even of links to terrorism. This de facto dissolution has had a lasting deterrent effect on the entire Muslim associative fabric, both in France and at the European level, and has contributed to an institutional vacuum in the support provided to victims.

Since then, numerous other Muslim associations, or those perceived as such, have been subjected to restrictive administrative measures: dissolutions, freezing of subsidies and/or assets, heightened oversight, and temporary or permanent closures of places of worship. According to data from the Ministry of the Interior published in January 2022, 24,887 inspections of associations and structures linked to Muslims had been carried out by that date, resulting in 718 administrative closures of mosques, schools, publishing houses, and the dissolution of cultural, educational, or charitable associations. These measures that continue to this very day are often taken on the basis of malleable criteria, leaving significant discretionary power to the administration and limiting the possibilities for effective legal challenge. [1]

This contraction of civic space is accompanied by a diffuse criminalisation of Muslim associative engagement. Activities such as rights advocacy, community solidarity, anti-racist advocacy, or criticism of discriminatory public policies are regularly disqualified and even criminalised as falling under "communitarianism" or a "separatist" agenda, and paradoxically also described as "entryism," aimed at destroying the nation from within. Muslim actors engaged in the public sphere thus face a double penalty: political and media stigmatisation at the individual level, and administrative sanctions that may threaten the very survival of their organisations should they speak out. This is notably the case for imams, who are now required to sign a charter stipulating that "allegations of so-called state racism, like all victim-based postures, amount to defamation." [2] These assertions are all the more shocking given that numerous works in the social sciences have established the existence of state racism in France (Mohammed, Hajjat, Bowen, Seniguer, Geisser) toward its Muslim minority. They are part of a broader set of injunctions to silence and repressive measures against critical Muslim voices that has characterised recent years. Thus, several publishing houses have received threats of closure, bans on the sale of certain works—including some canonical texts of the tradition (Sahih Muslim)—while others have had their assets frozen, forcing them to cease operations. At times, closures are justified by the absence of a fire extinguisher; the grounds vary, but the policy of targeting all forms of Muslim expression remains the same.

1 Hennette-Vauchez Stéphanie, « Lutte contre les séparatismes et liberté d'association », Études, 2022/9, p. 57-68. See also the following report on the concept of systematic obstruction: We are Beginning to Spread Terror

2 Présentation de la charte des principes pour l'islam de France au président de la République - CFCM; p. 7.

From an empirical standpoint, this dynamic unfolds in a context of a documented increase in Islamophobic acts and discrimination occurring within an institutional framework in France. The specificity of the French case also lies in the persistent delegitimisation of the very concept of Islamophobia in public and institutional debate. This semantic contestation is not neutral: it contributes to rendering lived discrimination invisible, weakening recognition of victims, and justifying the absence of targeted public policies to address it. In this context, Muslim or anti-racist NGOs that use this term are frequently accused of threatening the security of the Republic or of promoting a political project incompatible with republican values. No organisation denouncing anti-Muslim racism in France benefits from institutional recognition, unlike those addressing other forms of racism and discrimination.

Thus, the French case illustrates in emblematic fashion the articulation between institutional Islamophobia and the shrinking of civic space, in which the fight against terrorism and the defence of republican values serve as justificatory frameworks for lasting restrictions on associative and political freedoms. This dynamic undermines not only the rights of Muslims, but more broadly democratic principles, by weakening associative countervailing powers and civil society's capacity to document, challenge, and prevent discrimination. In this respect, France constitutes a central case for understanding contemporary forms of institutional Islamophobia in Europe and their structural effects on the rule of law. Finally, this model tends to be exported to other national contexts (Belgium, Canada) through similar discursive framing that justifies public policies targeting Muslim minorities.

Ireland: Socially Normalised Islamophobia without Legal Institutionalisation

Shifana Niyas

The case of Ireland stands in marked contrast to other European contexts due to the absence of legal restrictions explicitly targeting Muslim practices, such as the wearing of the hijab or full-face veil, halal slaughter, or the construction of minarets. Unlike countries where Islamophobia is largely institutionalised through formal legal and political frameworks, the Irish dynamic operates primarily through social, symbolic, and extra-institutional mechanisms. This configuration produces a specific form of diffuse Islamophobia, characterised by the banalisation of hostile discourse and a significant rise in violence and intimidation targeting Muslims, despite their very small share of the national population (1.6%).

Recent data confirm this trend. In 2024, 732 hate crimes were reported, representing a 4% increase compared to the previous year, while the Dublin region experienced a substantial rise in far-right demonstrations, sometimes accompanied by violence and acts of vandalism. Although this figure represents a decrease compared to the peaks observed in 2022 and 2023, the persistence—and in some cases the increase—of hate crimes suggests not an ideological retreat, but rather a heightened normalisation of racist violence. This trivialisation is also evident through concrete events such as the disruption of Eid prayers, anti-Muharram mobilisations in central Dublin, and the circulation of videos showing women wearing the full-face veil being publicly harassed and humiliated.

Several incidents illustrate the symbolic and material dimensions of this hostility. In June 2024, two pigs were stabbed and then placed at the Thornton Hall site, a centre hosting asylum seekers in the northern part of County Dublin, in an act carrying a strong Islamophobic message. Furthermore, far-right mobilisations in 2025, sometimes drawing several thousand participants, featured the simultaneous presence of Irish, British, American, and Israeli flags, accompanied by slogans such as "Ireland is for Irish," "Ireland is Full," and "Send Them Home," as well as chants explicitly calling for the expulsion of immigrants. These mobilisations form part of a transnational European far-right repertoire while remaining rooted in a local nationalist imaginary.

Finally, this dynamic is reinforced by the absence of explicit institutional recognition of Islamophobia as a specific form of racism. The International Day to Combat Islamophobia, observed on 15 March, was largely ignored by public authorities and the main political parties. Government responses to reported incidents remain sporadic and reactive, with no structural strategy for prevention or for combating discrimination. In this context, Islamophobia in Ireland operates less through legal coercion than through institutional inaction and social tolerance, which contributes to its sustained diffusion in the public sphere.

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Netherlands: The Denial and Normalisation of Islamophobia

Martijn de Koning

The Dutch case is characterised by an advanced process of normalisation of Islamophobia, understood as a dynamic through which discourses, practices, and policies targeting Muslims acquire credibility, legitimacy, and respectability within the public sphere. Unlike contexts in which Islamophobia is expressed in a more overt or confrontational manner, in the Netherlands it unfolds in a diffuse way, at the intersection of political rhetoric, security policies, and everyday social discrimination, to the point that its manifestations tend to be perceived as rational, necessary, or even self-evident.

This normalisation takes place within an institutional context marked by the statistical invisibilization of Islamophobia. Although the Netherlands has mechanisms for monitoring discrimination, Islamophobia is only rarely identified as a specific category. Available data for 2024 indicate that 386 incidents of discrimination recorded by the police were based on religious grounds, representing 3 to 4% of all reports, and that 91% of these cases concerned Muslims. Local anti-discrimination services report an even higher proportion, with 1,325 reports related to religion, 61% of which targeted Muslims. These figures, combined with recent qualitative surveys, show that experiences of discrimination against Muslims are persistent, cut across different areas of social life, and are increasingly perceived as commonplace.

This banalisation manifests itself concretely in the social space. In 2025, several mosques received letters containing threats and hateful messages such as "Death to Muslims," sometimes smeared with a red substance evoking blood. Acts of vandalism targeted Muslim places of worship in Assen, Emmeloord, and Middelburg, including the destruction of Qur'ans, the placement of dead animals, and graffiti calling for an end to "Islamisation." These acts are part of a continuity with forms of everyday Islamophobia reported by Muslims who are insulted in public spaces and labelled "terrorists," revealing the deep entrenchment of hostility well beyond institutional political spheres.

The contribution emphasises that this social violence cannot be dissociated from the political and geopolitical context, notably the mobilisations surrounding the war in Gaza. Dutch anti-racist organisations observe a growing interconnection between anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia, with demonstrations of solidarity with Palestine frequently portrayed as expressions of the "Islamisation" of public space, and Palestinians, as well as their supporters, systematically reduced to a presumed Muslim identity.

The normalisation of Islamophobia is also expressed particularly clearly through security policies, which constitute one of the main vectors of institutional Islamophobia in the Netherlands. Several municipalities, in connection with national counterterrorism authorities, have in the past commissioned secret and legally unfounded investigations targeting mosques and Muslim communities. In July 2025, the Central Netherlands District Court ruled illegal the clandestine investigation conducted between 2013 and 2018 against the Taubah mosque in Veenendaal, emphasising the total lack of legal basis, the violation of the right to privacy, and the abusive sharing of sensitive data with other state institutions, including intelligence services. This judicial decision constitutes an important reminder of the constitutional limits of security policies, but it also reveals the scale of the violations already committed in the name of preventing terrorism.

Similar dynamics were observed in 2025 during the preparation of the Ramadan Expo, when the Minister for Asylum and Migration attempted to prevent the entry of three foreign speakers by flagging them in the Schengen Information System on public order grounds, despite an unfavourable opinion from the national counterterrorism body. Once again, the courts suspended the ministerial decision, considering its justification insufficient. These cases illustrate a structural trend: marginal or hypothetical security threats are mobilised to justify extensive and disproportionate surveillance of Muslim communities as a whole.

On the political level, the year 2025 was marked by legislative elections held in a climate of strong polarisation. The campaign saw an intensification of Islamophobic discourse, particularly from the Party for Freedom (PVV). Statements by its leader, Geert Wilders, portraying Muslims as dangerous or undesirable, gave rise to more than 2,500 complaints to the national anti-discrimination reporting platform. While the PVV stands out for the radical nature of its discourse, the contribution underscores that centrist and right-wing parties have also participated in the normalisation of hostility toward Muslims, by resorting to stigmatising discursive frameworks while avoiding explicitly racialised language.

In response to this multifaceted normalisation, the contribution highlights the emergence and strengthening of Muslim and intersectoral counter-mobilisations. In 2025, Muslim organisations multiplied advocacy efforts, strategic legal actions, and awareness-raising initiatives, often in coalition with other civil society actors. Muslim feminist collectives, Islamophobia reporting platforms, and human rights organisations organised public events, published electoral manifestos, and initiated legal proceedings, notably against political hate-inciting speech and against discrimination through counter-radicalisation policies. In December 2025, a coalition of Muslim organisations submitted a document to the negotiators of the future government highlighting Muslims' low level of trust in political institutions and calling for active protection of constitutional rights, co-construction of public policies, and structural cooperation with the communities concerned.

Overall, the Dutch case shows that contemporary Islamophobia cannot be reduced either to spectacular violence or to openly discriminatory policies. It operates above all through normalisation, by rendering acceptable discourses, practices, and policies that durably construct Muslims as suspect, problematic, or in need of specific surveillance. This dynamic gives the struggles led by Muslim organisations a significance that goes beyond their own situation, placing them at the heart of the broader defence of constitutional rights and public freedoms in the Netherlands.

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United Kingdom: Prevent and the Excesses of Counter-Radicalisation Policies

Layla Aitlhadj

In 2025, the United Kingdom has experienced a marked intensification of Islamophobia, occurring within a broader context of the normalisation of xenophobic discourse that fuels security-driven policies and the tightening of counter-terrorism measures targeting Muslims exclusively. Available data indicate a significant increase in Islamophobic acts in public spaces and online, including threats, harassment, incitement to hatred, assaults during public gatherings, and attacks targeting mosques and community centres. Following the riots of summer 2024, triggered by the spread of false information portraying the perpetrator of the Southport attack as a Muslim asylum seeker, numerous Muslim places of worship were targeted. Surveys conducted after these events showed that 92% of Muslims questioned reported feeling less safe in public spaces, while more than half reported increased stress linked to social media use. In 2025, anti-Muslim acts accounted for approximately 44% of all religious hate crimes recorded in England and Wales, making Muslims the most targeted religious group.

It is within this climate that the Prevent programme operates, a central pillar of the United Kingdom's counter-terrorism strategy. Introduced as a preventive measure operating in a pre-criminal space, Prevent has, since 2015, become a legal obligation imposed on professionals in key sectors such as education, healthcare, social services, and local authorities. These actors are required to identify and report individuals perceived as vulnerable to radicalisation, with the stated objective of preventing any future involvement in terrorist activities. In practice, however, Prevent relies on a conception of risk that disproportionately associates Muslim religious beliefs, Muslim identities, and political expression with potential indicators of extremism and violent action.

Numerous analyses and testimonies converge in showing that Prevent displays structural flaws that make it a central vector of institutional Islamophobia in the United Kingdom. Its initial conceptual foundations were based on limited studies, mainly focused on Muslim prisoners convicted of terrorism-related offences, which led to the development of risk indicators largely rooted in religious practices, identity-based behaviours, or political opinions, rather than in distinct and tangible elements of dangerousness. This bias is reinforced by a media and political environment in which Muslims are regularly associated with terrorism, extremism, or a threat to national identity and social cohesion, profoundly influencing how professionals interpret and apply their reporting obligations.

Each year, between 6,000 and 7,000 individuals are reported and referred to Prevent. In the early years of the programme, Muslims constituted the majority of those referred and were up to fifty times more likely to be referred than non-Muslims. In response to repeated criticisms denouncing the discriminatory nature of the programme—particularly in cases where individuals were reported for ordinary religious practices such as wearing the hijab, or for expressing views on social issues, Prevent was officially revised and expanded to cover all forms of extremism. However, these adjustments have not put an end to the programme's differentiated effects on Muslim populations.

The most recent data show that Muslims remain approximately six times more likely to be referred to Prevent than non-Muslims, despite representing only around 6% of the UK population. In 2025, the total number of referrals reached 8,778, an increase of 27% compared to the previous year, marking the highest level since the introduction of the statutory duty. Particularly troubling cases illustrate the scale of these excesses, notably the revelation that over the past ten years, approximately 200 children under the age of three have been referred to Prevent, two thirds of them for concerns related to alleged "Islamist extremism." These figures highlight the extreme expansion of the security logic, to the point of encompassing infants within regimes of suspicion.

These dynamics have been further intensified in the context of the war in Gaza. Muslims have been reported, or threatened with referral, for entirely lawful political expressions, such as support for the Palestinian cause or criticism of Israeli policy. Such positions are increasingly being assimilated to extremism or hate speech, a development fuelled by statements from political leaders describing pro-Palestinian demonstrations as "marches of hate" or portraying participants as "extreme." In schools, this drift is particularly visible: children have been referred to Prevent for expressing views on Israel and Palestine in school assignments that were factually accurate, revealing how political debate is reclassified as a security issue.

The effects of Prevent are also particularly severe for Muslim children with neurodevelopmental disorders. Following several high-profile cases involving perpetrators of attacks who suffered from mental health conditions, Prevent Watch has observed a marked increase in referrals targeting autistic Muslim children. Over the past two years, more than twenty such cases have been documented.

Beyond its immediate effects, Prevent contributes to the diffusion of a logic of suspicion across the ordinary institutions of the British welfare state. By integrating security imperatives into spaces such as schools, healthcare services, and social support, the programme turns non-specialist professionals into actors of preventive surveillance and undermines relationships of trust with Muslim communities. Despite repeated criticism from civil society organisations and international bodies, official evaluation mechanisms continue to deny the discriminatory nature of the programme, relying on narrow readings of statistical data and subjective assessments to dismiss accusations of structural Islamophobia.

The British case thus provides a clear illustration of the potential excesses of counter-radicalisation policies when they become permanently embedded within the institutional apparatus. Far from being limited to the prevention of violence, Prevent contributes to the construction of Muslims as an intrinsically suspect group, exposed to disproportionate surveillance and to indirect restrictions on their fundamental freedoms. As such, the United Kingdom's experience constitutes a major warning for other European states tempted to draw inspiration from this model, demonstrating how measures presented as preventive can become enduring vectors of institutional Islamophobia.

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Sweden: Promotion of a "National Islam" and Differentiated Repression of Muslim Expressions

Amanj Aziz et Christopher Ali Thorén

In 2025, Sweden is experiencing a marked intensification of Islamophobia, which is part of a deeper transformation in the modes of governing religious diversity. Long presented as a model of tolerance and protection of minorities, Sweden today appears as a privileged terrain for analysing a more subtle yet equally structuring form of Islamophobia, based not only on exclusion, but on the internal differentiation of Muslims. The state and major political actors indeed tend to promote certain forms of Islam deemed compatible with national identity and security priorities, while repressing, marginalising, or monitoring religious expressions perceived as deviant, critical, or insufficiently assimilated.

Political and media debate around Islam and Muslims has steadily hardened over recent years, with a normalisation of discourse portraying Muslims as a problematic group, potentially dangerous or culturally incompatible. This development is not limited to the far right. While the Sweden Democrats play a central role in disseminating these Islamophobic frameworks, they have gradually penetrated the entire political field. Since the 2022 elections, cooperation between the Sweden Democrats and the governing right-wing parties, formalised through the Tidö Agreement, has allowed the far right to exert direct influence on public policy, particularly in matters of immigration, education, and the fight against "extremism."

In this context, Islamophobia is expressed not only through hostile discourse or direct attacks, but also through the production of a legitimate religious norm, implicitly opposing a "good Islam" to a "bad Islam." This process is based on an individualising and depoliticised understanding of racism, which obscures its structural and institutional dimensions. The "good Muslim" is thus defined as one who aligns with dominant narratives concerning terrorism, so-called honour violence, or gender equality, and who accepts the interpretive frameworks imposed by public debate. Conversely, autonomous, critical, or transnational forms of Muslim organization are frequently associated with "Islamism," radicalisation, or a threat to national cohesion.

This logic has been explicitly articulated at the highest political level. During the campaign for the leadership of the Liberal Party in the summer of 2025, its new leader, Simona Mohamsson, publicly promoted the idea of a "yellow and blue Islam," in reference to the colours of the Swedish flag, presented as a necessary alternative to what she described as "Islamist separatism." Similarly, the leader of the Christian Democrats and Deputy Prime Minister, Ebba Busch, has multiplied statements calling for the mandatory assimilation of Muslims, going so far as to evoke their expulsion for those who do not adapt, and has placed at the centre of the political agenda the proposal to ban the niqab and the burqa. These positions are part of a climate in which other parties, including the Moderates, have contributed to downplaying the seriousness of Islamophobia, even presenting it as a phenomenon less concerning than other forms of racism.

This political production of a nationally acceptable Islam is accompanied by an increased securitisation of Muslim civil society. As early as 2016, Swedish authorities mandated the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) to investigate the supposed "irregular disinformation" produced by Islamist organisations. The reports resulting from this mandate were widely criticised by researchers for being closer to intelligence files than to academic work, and for their tendency to encompass a broad spectrum of Muslim organisations without clear distinctions. This logic has continued over the years, resulting in the progressive closure of independent Muslim schools, to the point that only one remains in Sweden today, as well as in the withdrawal, in the autumn of 2025, of funding from the country's only Muslim folk high school.

These policies are part of a broader framework of counter-extremism which, according to many Muslim organisations and human rights groups, is used disproportionately to target Muslim education, collective organisation, and religious expression. They have contributed to establishing a climate of fear within Muslim communities, directly affecting the exercise of fundamental freedoms, notably freedom of expression, association, and religion.

Alongside this institutional repression, Muslims in Sweden continue to be exposed to violence and direct threats. Attacks against mosques have multiplied, ranging from symbolic profanation, such as the placing of pig heads, to attempted arson and destruction by fire. In 2025, an attempted arson targeted the Uddevalla mosque in March, while mosques were set on fire in Hultsfred in September and in Luleå in October. In Stockholm, one of the most serious episodes was discovered on December 27, when a Qur'an riddled with what appeared to be bullet impacts, arranged in the shape of a cross, was found chained inside the mosque, accompanied by a message ordering Muslims to "go home." These attacks are part of a long-documented context: as early as 2018, 59% of Muslim congregations reported having suffered direct attacks, and 90% said they felt threatened.

Criminological data confirm that Islamophobia constitutes a structural threat to the everyday safety of Muslims in Sweden. Islamophobic crimes occur in ordinary spaces—residential neighbourhoods, workplaces, public transport—and their likelihood increases sharply with religious visibility, particularly exposing Muslim women who wear the veil. Longitudinal analyses conducted by the University of Gothenburg also show that hatred targeting Muslims largely overlaps with xenophobia directed against refugees, these two categories being increasingly conflated in public discourse.

This dynamic has been further reinforced in the context of mobilisations related to the war in Gaza. In 2025, Palestinians, as well as people perceived as Arab or Muslim, were at the centre of public controversies in which peaceful demonstrations were presented as threats to public order. Cases of discrimination were reported in the educational sphere, notably when a Palestinian substitute teacher was prohibited from wearing the keffiyeh, or when students were sanctioned for displaying Palestinian symbols. Violence against demonstrators has also been documented, such as in Borås in 2024 and in Helsingborg in 2025, where individuals deliberately drove cars into pro-Gaza gatherings.

All of these elements shed light on a specific configuration of Islamophobia in Sweden. It does not rely solely on exclusion or direct repression, but on a differentiated management of Islam, in which certain religious forms are encouraged, highlighted, or instrumentalised as proof of successful integration, while others are systematically suspected, monitored, and sanctioned. In this sense, the promotion of a "national Islam" functions as the reverse side of an institutional Islamophobia that redefines the boundaries of belonging, conditions the recognition of Muslims on their ideological conformity, and durably weakens Muslim civic space.

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Switzerland: Islamophobia Driven by Legislative Frameworks

DIAC

In Switzerland, anti-Muslim racism is embedded within a specific political and institutional framework shaped by semi-direct democracy, which allows discriminatory measures to be enshrined in law through popular initiatives, parliamentary motions, and referendums. This configuration fosters a coordinated deployment of anti-Muslim racism at the legislative level, in political and media discourse, and in the lived experiences of Muslim individuals. This section draws on the contribution of the DIAC Foundation (*De l'Individuel au Collectif*) and the collective *Les Foulards Violets*, which are active in documentation, victim support, and advocacy against anti-Muslim racism.

Until recently, Swiss institutions primarily used the notion of "hostility toward Muslims," a term that failed to capture the full range of acts, discourse, and mechanisms constituting Islamophobia. Since 2024–2025, the term "anti-Muslim racism" has become established in institutional language, notably as a compromise among the country's different national languages. The DIAC Foundation uses the terms "anti-Muslim racism" and "Islamophobia" interchangeably, while emphasising the importance of anchoring this phenomenon within the field of racism.

In 2025, the DIAC Foundation recorded more than 95 reports of situations involving anti-Muslim racism. The creation in 2023 of the DIAC Helpline and Observatory on Anti-Muslim Racism led to a gradual increase in reporting, improved awareness of specialised support mechanisms, and greater trust compared to non-specialised state services.

The reported situations span all spheres of social life, notably schools, the workplace, and public space. They take the form of verbal and/or physical violence, direct or indirect discrimination, and harassment. A notable evolution in case typology has been observed: whereas reports previously concerned mainly incidents that had already been concluded, the year 2025 is marked by an increase in ongoing situations of discrimination, requiring in-depth analysis and active interventions.

Among the documented cases is that of a Muslim adolescent harassed by classmates and subsequently subjected to physical violence by a teacher. When his mother, who wears a headscarf, intervened with the school, she was verbally confronted, and the family was sanctioned, while the violence suffered by the child was not addressed. Another emblematic case concerns the Geneva bar-restaurant "Rooftop42," where a young Muslim woman wearing a headscarf was denied entry. The investigation conducted with the DIAC helpline revealed repeated discriminatory practices as well as publicly expressed Islamophobic positions by the manager. Under media and social pressure, the establishment ultimately acknowledged the facts, issued an apology, and announced changes to its regulations and practices.

The report highlights a strongly gendered Islamophobia, with Muslim women and girls at the centre of legislative attacks and public debates. In 2025, almost all initiatives and projects targeting the rights of Muslim individuals concerned the wearing of the headscarf or clothing associated with Muslim women. Debates over bans on headscarves for teachers at the cantonal level, attempts to prohibit headscarves for minors, national headscarf ban proposals put forward by the Swiss People's Party (UDC), media controversies surrounding Albanian Islam, the reintroduction in Geneva of a ban on religious symbols for elected officials, as well as recurring debates over the burkini, illustrate the centrality of Muslim women's bodies within the legislative and symbolic frameworks of anti-Muslim racism.

On 1 January 2025, the federal law banning the concealment of the face, approved by vote in 2022, entered into force. Although presented as neutral, this law disproportionately targeted Muslim women during political debates, despite the fact that only twenty to thirty women wearing the full veil were recorded in Switzerland. Since the beginning of its implementation, the number of cases observed has remained marginal and has concerned primarily non-Muslim individuals, revealing the gap between the justifications put forward and the actual effects of the measure.

In February 2025, the publication of the first national study on anti-Muslim racism—conducted by the Swiss Center for Islam and Society at the University of Fribourg at the request of the Federal Service for Combating Racism—marked a major milestone. The study demonstrates the extent of anti-Muslim racism across all spheres of social life and formulates recommendations. Media reactions hostile to the very use of the term "racism," however, illustrate the persistence of resistance to full recognition of this phenomenon, while at the same time reinforcing the advocacy efforts of CCIE partner organisations in Switzerland.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis conducted in this report highlights a reality that is now indisputable: Islamophobia in Europe is neither a marginal deviation nor a collection of isolated national cases, but a structural phenomenon embedded at the core of the contemporary transformations of European states and their political imaginaries, marked by a strong presence of far-right nationalist rhetoric. While its forms vary and manifest differently depending on national contexts, its underlying logics display strong convergences.

Across the eleven countries studied, Islamophobia does not primarily manifest through the absence of legal norms or protective frameworks, but rather through their differentiated, conditional, or distorted application.

France illustrates the use of secularism as an instrument for governing Islam;

- Belgium highlights an institutional hierarchy of discrimination that renders the law largely ineffective with regard to religious convictions;
- the United Kingdom shows how counter-radicalisation efforts, through the Prevent programme, have normalised the preventive surveillance of Muslims within ordinary institutions;
- the Netherlands reveals an advanced process of social and political normalisation of Islamophobia, rendered reasonable and legitimate in the name of security and cohesion;
- Spain demonstrates a frontal and territorialised Islamophobia, first tested at the municipal level before being more widely disseminated;
- Sweden illustrates a differentiated management of Islam, in which a "national Islam" is encouraged while autonomous or critical expressions are securitised;
- Finland brings to light the paradox of a welfare state endowed with a robust legal framework yet marked by particularly high levels of experienced discrimination;
- Switzerland reveals an Islamophobia institutionalised through federalism, where restrictions targeting Islam are legitimised by direct democracy and fragmented at the cantonal level;
- Denmark embodies an explicitly assimilationist approach in which Islam is constructed as a civilisational threat justifying exceptional legal measures;
- finally, Austria shows how the legal recognition of Islam can coexist with a policy of heightened control, in which the fight against "political Islam" serves as the matrix for structural surveillance of Muslim populations.

Taken together, these cases show that contemporary Islamophobia operates less through explicit exclusion than through differential governance. This mode of governance does not so much seek to exclude Islam as to continuously redefine its legitimate, acceptable, and governable forms. It rests on the production of implicit categories such as "integrable" Muslims versus "problematic" Muslims, acceptable religious expressions versus suspect expressions, defensible discriminations versus neglected discriminations, which structure access to rights, institutional protection, and public recognition. This logic unfolds through a variety of instruments: security policies, discourses on values and identity, administrative mechanisms, strategic selection of litigation, and even the conceptual denial of Islamophobia itself.

A strong transversal finding emerges: the growing gap between formal law and lived experience. In all the countries studied, available data show that Muslims are among the groups most exposed to discrimination, violence, and insecurity, while the institutional recognition of these harms remains limited, fragmented, or conditional. Muslim women, particularly those wearing a visible religious symbol, consistently appear among the primary victims of these dynamics, at the intersection of racism, sexism, and the control of the bodies of minoritised women.

This report also demonstrates that Islamophobia is not solely the preserve of the far right. It is increasingly embedded in ordinary public policies, often in technocratic, preventive, or purportedly neutral forms. This institutionalisation contributes to the banalisation of suspicion, to self-censorship, to mistrust toward institutions, and to the lasting weakening of the Muslim civic space in Europe.

These findings call for an urgent paradigm shift. It is no longer sufficient to merely aggregate national responses or to rely on the formal strengthening of legal frameworks. Combating Islamophobia must be conceived as a central democratic issue, involving the recognition of its institutional forms, the questioning of discriminatory security policies, transparency in the practices of public bodies tasked with combating discrimination, and the full integration of civil society voices in the development of the policies that affect them.

Failing this, the risk is great that a model of governance will consolidate in Europe in which equality of rights remains conditional, certain minorities are placed under lasting suspicion, and democratic principles are weakened in the name of their own defence. The mobilisations of Muslim communities, civil society organisations, and intersectoral networks observed across all the countries studied nevertheless show that these dynamics are not yet irreversible. They constitute essential resources for building a Europe that is faithful to its commitments to human rights, equality, and social justice.

Recommendations for European Institutions

In light of the findings presented in this report, the CCIE formulates a set of recommendations addressed to European institutions, Member States and relevant stakeholders, with the aim of strengthening the effective protection of fundamental rights and combating anti-Muslim racism in a structural and sustainable manner across Europe.

The explicit recognition of Islamophobia as a specific form of racism

1

European institutions are invited to explicitly recognise Islamophobia as a priority on the political agenda. Such recognition is a prerequisite for any effective action. It would make it possible to move beyond terminological debates which, in several States, hinder data collection, the recognition of victims, and the development of appropriate public policies. This recognition should be embedded within existing anti-racism frameworks; notably the European National Action Plans Against Racism (NAPAR), the work of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and the monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

Reducing the gap between formal law and the effective enforcement of protections

2

European institutions should strengthen their focus on the real effectiveness of national anti-discrimination legislation. Comparative analyses show that the existence of a robust legal framework does not guarantee equitable protection when the application of the law is selective or hierarchised according to grounds of discrimination. It is recommended to develop European indicators addressing not only the existence of legal standards, but also their concrete implementation: rates of litigation, effective access to legal aid, outcomes of proceedings, and the burden borne by victims. Particular attention should be paid to discrimination related to religious beliefs and to its intersection with origin and gender.

3 Regulating and assessing security and radicalisation-prevention policies

Policies aimed at preventing radicalisation and combating violent extremism should be subject to systematic independent evaluations focusing on their impact on fundamental rights and non-discrimination. National experiences analysed show that these measures may generate structural discriminatory effects, particularly when they operate in pre-criminal spaces and are integrated into ordinary public services. European institutions are invited to promote common standards ensuring that security policies do not result in disproportionate surveillance of specific groups, nor in the criminalisation of legitimate religious or political expressions.

4 Improving data collection and harmonisation, in compliance with national frameworks

The absence or insufficiency of comparable data on Islamophobia constitutes a major obstacle to the development of evidence-based policies. European institutions should support the development of harmonised tools for collecting data on discrimination and hate crimes targeting Muslims, while taking into account national legal frameworks on data protection. This implies strengthening surveys, supporting independent reporting bodies, and recognising the complementary value of data produced by civil society.

5 Guarantee the protection of fundamental freedoms for all

Policies based on religious neutrality, secularism, or civic values must be assessed in light of their compatibility with European standards on freedom of conscience, religion, expression, and association. European institutions are invited to ensure that these frameworks are not used disproportionately to restrict the rights of Muslims or to legitimise differential treatment. Specific attention should be paid to the fields of education, employment, and civic participation, where restrictions related to religious visibility have lasting effects on individual life trajectories and equality of opportunity.

6 Fully integrating a gender and intersectional perspective

Muslim women, particularly those wearing visible religious symbols, are among the individuals most exposed to discrimination and violence. European policies combating racism and discrimination, as well as those addressing violence against women, should systematically integrate an intersectional approach, taking into account the combined effects of gender, religion, origin, and visibility. European institutions are invited to support programmes aimed at protecting the rights of Muslim women.

Strengthening the participation of civil society in the fight against anti-Muslim racism

7

Muslim civil society actors possess essential expertise on contemporary forms of Islamophobia. Their exclusion from consultation processes undermines the quality and legitimacy of public policies. It is recommended to guarantee their full and meaningful participation in mechanisms for dialogue, consultation, and evaluation of European and national policies relating to the fight against racism, security, and social cohesion, within a framework based on trust, transparency, and independence.

Anchoring the fight against Islamophobia within a comprehensive rule-of-law approach

8

Finally, European institutions are invited to consider anti-Muslim racism as an indicator of the weakening of the rule of law and democracy, on a par with other forms of systemic discrimination. Its progressive institutionalisation, observed in several countries, calls for heightened vigilance within European mechanisms monitoring the rule of law, public freedoms, and equality before the law. Moreover, European institutions are called upon to ensure that foreign regimes do not interfere in European policies related to the fight against Islamophobia.

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