

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
DENMARK
NATIONAL REPORT 2020

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To cite this report: Amani Hassani: *Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2020*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2020*, Vienna, Leopold Weiss Institute, 2021.

Executive Summary

The following report highlights some of the most significant examples and developments of Islamophobia in Denmark in 2020. In many aspects of political, social, public, and religious life, Muslims seem to be targeted based on their beliefs and perceived incompatibility with “Danish values”. Islamophobia remains, however, an ill-understood concept within Danish society. Politicians, media, and the public continue to resist the need to address Islamophobia as a type of racism targeting Muslims and people assumed to be Muslim.

Physical and verbal attacks on Muslims continue to be high. As the most targeted religious community, Muslims experienced 45% of all religiously motivated hate crimes in 2020. Recent studies in employment demonstrate that Muslim women are highly disadvantaged compared to white women when applying for jobs despite professional qualifications. Still, politicians claim that Muslim women’s higher unemployment rates are due to family control. Although the claim that the family is at fault remains unsubstantiated, the government has implemented nationwide campaigns on this issue, neglecting the discrimination Muslim women experience in the job market.

Since the current government was elected in 2019, it has sought to ban state funding for Muslim faith-based schools. The only thing stopping the government from implementing such a ban is the Danish Constitution, which prevents discrimination based on religion or ethnicity. In 2020, however, the Justice Ministry ruled it would *not* be a breach of the constitution to implement a ban of funding for Muslim schools without further explanation.

Political rhetoric in 2020 focused particularly on Muslims’ personal, social, and religious freedoms in everyday life. The rhetoric was not always blatantly bigoted in limiting Muslims’ civil rights. Instead, it was often hidden behind a veneer of liberation rhetoric attempting to ‘save’ Muslim youth, particularly young Muslim women, from a perceived inherent psychological violence of Muslim men and Muslim religious communities.

Along this trend in political rhetoric, a number of new laws were introduced to control and surveil Muslim faith communities, e.g. requiring religious sermons in Danish and attempting to ban state funding for Muslim schools.

This report gives an indication of the trends in 2020 and where Denmark is heading in relation to protecting the rights of minority groups and freedoms.

Sammenfatning

Rapporten fremhæver nogle af de vigtigste eksempler på islamofobi i Danmark i 2020. Muslimer bliver ofte fremhævet som uforenelige med “danske værdier”, hvilket kommer til udtryk via målrettede politiske kampagner og lovpakker, som specifikt rammer muslimers politiske, sociale, offentlige og religiøse liv. Islamofobi er dog fortsat ikke et anerkendt begreb i det danske samfund, hvor politikere, medier og den generelle offentlighed ikke anerkender behovet for at behandle islamofobi som en form for racisme rettet mod muslimer og folk, der antages at være muslimer.

Fysiske og verbale angreb på muslimer er fortsat højt, og som det mest udsatte trossamfund, oplevede de 45% af alle registrerede religiøst motiverede hadforbrydelser i 2020. Nyere undersøgelser viser, at muslimske kvinder er dårligere stillet i forhold til hvide danske kvinder, når de søger job. Alligevel hævder politikere, at muslimske kvinders højere arbejdsløshed skyldes ’negativ social kontrol’ af specielt mandlige familiemedlemmer, der nægter at lade disse kvinder arbejde. Selvom disse påstande ikke er underbyggede, har regeringen gennemført landsdækkende kampagner om emnet, der fremmer denne forestilling, samtidig forsømmer de kvindernes oplevelser af racisme og diskrimination på arbejdsmarkedet.

Regeringen har forsøgt at forbyde statsfinansiering til muslimske friskoler siden de blev valgt i 2019. Det eneste, der forhindrer regeringen fra et sådant forbud, er den danske grundlov, som forbyder forskelsbehandling på grund af religion eller etnicitet. I 2020, kunne justitsministeriet dog erklære, at det ikke ville være en overtrædelse af den danske grundlov at gennemføre et forbud mod finansieringen af muslimske friskoler.

Den politiske retorik i 2020 har især fokuseret på muslimers personlige, sociale og religiøse friheder som udtrykt i hverdagslivet. Den islamofobiske retorik er ikke nødvendigvis åbenlys fordomsfuld med henblik på at begrænse muslimers rettigheder, men i stedet skjult bag en frigørelsesretorik, der forsøger at “redde” muslimske unge, især unge muslimske kvinder, fra en forestillet psykologisk vold fra muslimske mænd og deres religiøse samfund. Som resultat, er der blevet indført en række nye love til at kontrollere og overvåge muslimske borgere og deres trossamfund, ved f.eks. at påkræve religiøse prædikener på dansk eller forsøget på at forbyde statsfinansiering til muslimske friskoler.

Denne rapport er langt fra en dybdegående gennemgang af islamofobi i Danmark og hvordan den hænger sammen med andre typer af racisme, men den giver en indikation af hvilke tendenser, der har været i 2020, og hvor Danmark er på vej hen i forhold til at værne om minoritetsgruppers rettigheder og friheder.

Country Profile EIR 2020

Country: Denmark

Type of Regime: Constitutional monarchy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentarism

Ruling Parties: Social Democratic Party (single-party minority government with possibility of creating political alliances with parties on both the left and right of the political spectrum)

Opposition Parties: *Venstre* - Denmark's Liberal Party, Danish People's Party, Liberal Alliance, Conservative People's Party, The New Right, The Alternative, Danish Social Liberal Party, Red-Green Alliance, Socialist People's Party, independent MPs

Last Elections: 2019 General Elections: The Social Democratic Party won 25.9% of the vote against 23.4% of *Venstre*.

Total Population: 5.8 million

Major Languages: Danish

Official Religion: Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark (Church of Denmark)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According the 2020 Hate Crime Report by the National Police of Denmark (*Rigspolitiet*), there were 194 religiously motivated hate crimes registered in Denmark. 87 cases involved Muslims or Muslim institutions. This means that around 45% of religiously motivated hate crime registered with the police, targeted Muslim in 2020.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According the 2020 Hate Crime Report by the National Police of Denmark, there were 635 cases of hate crime registered with the police in 2020.

Major Religions (% of Population): Protestant Christians (74.7%), Islam (est. 5.5%), Catholics (0.6%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): est. 320,000 (5.5%)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: *Dansk-Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse*, *Det Islamiske Trossamfund* (DIT), *Dansk Islamisk Center* (DIC), *Muslimsk Ungdom i Danmark* (MUNIDA), *Dansk Islamisk Trossamfund*, *Minhaj-ul-Quran Denmark*, *Dansk Muslimsk Ungdom*, *Dansk Muslimsk Union* (DMU), *Dansk Islamisk Råd*, *Imam Ali Moskeen*, *Muslimernes Fællesråd*

Main NGOs combatting Islamophobia: Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark (CEDA), *Sameksistens.dk*, *SOS Racisme*, *Kvinder I Dialog* (Women in Dialogue), European Network Against Racism-Denmark, *Center for Forebyggelse af Eksklusion* (Centre for Prevention of Exclusion)

Far-Right Parties: Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*), The New Right (*Nye Borgerlige*), Hard Line (*Stram Kurs*)

Far-Right Movements: *Generation Identitær*, *For Frihed* (For Freedom, former Pegida), *Nordfront*, *Nordisk Modstandsbevægelse* (Nordic Resistance Movement).

Far-Right Militant Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No. The parliament rejected a bill-proposal to ban public servants from wearing religious symbols in December 2020.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No, although there is a ban on slaughtering a non-stunned animal, which to some Muslims is a crucial part of halal slaughter.
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** A bill-proposal to ban circumcision has been proposed but not yet put forward for a vote in parliament.
- **Burka Ban:** Yes, the ban on covering one's face is still in effect despite the requirements of face masks on public transportation and shops to protect against the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

In February 2020, the Danish Parliament voted for a common statement agreeing that “[t]he Parliament condemns anti-Semitism in any form and has noted with concern that anti-Semitism is not only growing in neo-Nazi but also in Islamic circles.”¹ Later, the word “Islamic” was corrected to “Islamist”.² The statement came as a response to the vandalisation of Jewish tombstones at a cemetery committed by members of the far-right organisation Nordic Resistance Movement (*Nordisk Modstandsbevægelse*). When questioned on the matter, none of the political parties (across the political spectrum) who voted in favour of the statement nor the Justice Minister could offer substantial proof that anti-Semitism is rising among Islamists—a categorisation of Muslims the government has yet to define.³ The unsubstantiated claim vilifying Muslims as particularly anti-Semitic, which was supported by traditionally left-leaning parties, is a small example of how Muslims have been increasingly targeted – often with little or no substance.

Late in November 2020, this tendency culminated with the Parliament passing the following statement: “The Parliament believes that it is very worrying that Islamist forces are trying to turn Muslim citizens against Denmark and thereby divide our society. The Parliament considers it crucial to get rid of extreme Islamism and the challenges associated with it, in order to safeguard the cohesion and democracy in Denmark”. This statement, which speaks to a moral panic in its lack of a clear definition of ‘Islamist forces’, was voted in favor by all left-center parties with the exception of independent MPs.⁴

The American Black Lives Matter movement sparked a global awareness of racism and inspired a similar momentum in Denmark—including Islamophobia as a form of racism. Nevertheless, it seems the Danish government has been indifferent to the grassroots mobilisation that seeks to challenge its discriminatory policies aimed at ‘non-Western immigrants and descendants’ (official state category), oft racialised to Muslims in the public imaginary.

This report is not an exhaustive overview of Islamophobia in Denmark in 2020. Rather, it is a brief insight into how Islamophobia has developed and gained further prominence within political structures, media discourse, and everyday life.

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1. Kim Kristensen, “Justitsminister leder forgæves efter beviser på stigende antisemitisme i ‘islamiske kredse’”, *Solidaritet*, 13 February 2020, <https://solidaritet.dk/justitsminister-leder-forgaevnes-efter-beviser-paa-stigende-antisemitisme-i-islamiske-kredse/> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
 2. “Folketinget retter omstridt tekst om muslimers antisemitisme”, *Arbejderen*, 11 February 2020, <https://arbejderen.dk/indland/folketinget-retter-omstridt-tekst-om-muslimers-antisemitisme> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
 3. “Folketinget hænger muslimer ud som jødehadere uden dokumentation”, *Arbejderen*, 6 February 2020, <https://arbejderen.dk/indland/folketinget-h%C3%A6nger-muslimer-ud-som-j%C3%B8dehadere-uden-dokumentation> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
 4. Rasmus Stoklund and Halime Oguz, “V 12 Om den stigende islamisering af Danmark”, *Folketinget*, 12 November 2020, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20201/vedtagelse/V12/index.htm> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Out of 635 registered cases of hate crimes, the National Police of Denmark documents that there has been an increase of 12% of all registered cases from 2019 to 2020.⁵ As reported in the EIR 2019, the police launched an awareness campaign titled “Stop the Hate” urging minority communities to report experiences of hate crime. As the numbers indicate, this campaign may have had a positive effect on the reporting of hate crimes. The majority of hate crime cases were racially motivated (360 cases) followed by religiously motivated hate crimes (194 cases). For the sake of this Islamophobia report, I will focus on the religiously motivated hate crimes; however, I do not dismiss the fact that black and brown people in Denmark are often racialised as Muslims in the public’s perception. In other words, many *racially* motivated hate crimes could potentially also be Islamophobic in intent but were never registered as such.

Out of the 194 cases of religiously motivated hate crimes around 45% were directed at Muslims, demonstrating that Muslims bear the brunt of religiously motivated hate crimes followed by the Jewish population (41%). The police report explains that Muslims are the largest religious minority group, which is why they expect more reports from Muslim citizens. This conclusion seems problematic as it assumes that *because* Muslims are the largest religious minority, they will report more hate crimes. It is true that Muslims make up more people in terms of numbers, but statistically speaking, the percentage of reported hate crimes is still higher for Muslims than any other religious minority group; Muslims being a larger group does not affect that number. There was however a 12% decrease in Islamophobic hate crimes in 2020 from 61% in 2019. The explanation for this might be that the police reported a surge in Islamophobic hate crimes in 2019, especially online, immediately following the terrorist attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand⁶.

Unfortunately, the yearly hate crime report does not provide information on the gender and age of the victims of the attacks, but based on a literature review of news media articles, it seems that visibly Muslim women are more vulnerable to physical and verbal attacks. For instance, Women in Dialogue, a collective of Muslim women

5. Rigspolitiet, Nationalt Forebyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser i 2020: Rigspolitiets årsrapport vedrørende hadforbrydelser”, November 2021, <https://politi.dk/-/media/mediefiler/landsdaekkende-dokumenter/statistikker/hadforbrydelser/hadforbrydelser-2020.pdf?la=da&hash=0B32A5EFAFB9E02BAFC9288F18FCB436CB5EE104>, (Access date: 14 December, 2021).

6. Rigspolitiet, Nationalt Forebyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser i 2019: Rigspolitiets årsrapport vedrørende hadforbrydelser”, October 2020, Rigspolitiet, Nationalt Forebyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser i 2019: Rigspolitiets årsrapport vedrørende hadforbrydelser”, November 2021, <https://politi.dk/-/media/mediefiler/landsdaekkende-dokumenter/statistikker/hadforbrydelser/hadforbrydelser-2020.pdf?la=da&hash=0B32A5EFAFB9E02BAFC9288F18FCB436CB5EE104>, (Access date: 14 December, 2021)

who wear the niqab, have raised awareness over the physical and verbal harassment they experience in public spaces. In April 2020, a woman wearing the niqab on the train was harassed by a fellow passenger who photographed her (and later publicised her picture on social media) and called the police. The woman received a ticket for wearing the niqab, while the police questioned the man whether he said anything racist to the woman. Unsurprisingly, the man confirmed he had not said anything racist and was allowed to leave.⁷ This is an important incident to unpack. First, the incident took place after the COVID-19 pandemic began, and the woman wore her niqab according to the guidelines for face masks on public transport, whereby one is permitted to wear a piece of fabric instead of a medical mask. Despite COVID-19 measures, the police were fining women for covering their face in public outside of these spaces.⁸ Second, the harassment could not be reported as a hate crime, because the man insisted, he was reporting a “crime” according to Danish law. However, COVID-19 regulations have highlighted the intended targeting of Muslim women in the prohibition of face coverings in Danish law, which was implemented in 2018. The parliament had to phrase the niqab-bill without any direct reference to Muslim women to avoid transgressing the Danish constitution. Yet, in a context where the pandemic regulations require face coverings in public transport and other public places, the law relies on the police’s ability to understand the spirit of the law, producing an overtly racist differentiation between Muslim women wearing niqab and those wearing a face mask solely for medical purposes. This means that a woman wearing a niqab rather than a face mask can be charged with a fine of DKK 1,000 (EUR 135), which increases up to DKK 10,000 (EUR 1,000) for repeat offenders, while still being required to wear a mask even if she were to take off her niqab.

Despite the heightened awareness of the police to register and compile statistics on hate crime – physical, verbal, and online – it seems that it can still be a complicated process. The project manager at Centre for Muslims’ Rights in Denmark (CEDA) describes reporting a flyer found in a residential neighbourhood with a large number of minorities that encourages coughing on a minority. This flyer was found at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak indicating that people cough on minorities and infect or at least scare them to believe they’ve been infected with the corona virus. After evaluating the complaint, the state prosecutor decided not to proceed with any charges because they could not figure out who made and distributed the flyer or what ‘Coronawaffen Division’ refers to. In addition, the prosecutor gave the following explanation:

7. Kvinder i Dialog (Women in Dialogue), Facebook, 25 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kvinde-ridialog/photos/615894209102727> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

8. “Kvinde sigtet for at bære niqab i Aarhus”, *Aarhus lokalavisen*, 3 September 2020, https://aarhus.lokalavisen.dk/112/2020-09-03/-Kvinde-sigtet-for-at-b%C3%A6re-niqab-i-Aarhus-7524410.html?fbclid=IwAR182u66_M7hElGicH3Sbdpzxg3eU1R1BBX2jT8i2vm2DvNYpEjs1pCOtE (Access date: 10 December 2020).

I have further emphasised that even if the originator of the flyer could be found, the content of the flyer does not, after full sufficient certainty, fulfill the content of the offense in section 266b of the Criminal Code. Thus, notwithstanding that the content of the flyer may appear offensive, it cannot be established that the flyer expresses a threat, insult or humiliation of a group of persons on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation within the meaning of the provision.⁹



Figure 1: Flyer found in a residential neighbourhood in Greater Copenhagen with a high number of minority ethnic residents encouraging coughing on minority residents. It was reported as a hate crime, dismissed by state prosecutor but registered by the national police.¹⁰

Even though the prosecutor did not view the flyer as a threat against minorities, the police did contact CEDAR’s project manager five months after the initial report and reassured her that the complaint had been taken seriously and filed as a hate crime. This reveals how the determination of hate crimes is a rather bureaucratic process which relies heavily on the person interpreting the incident. In this case, the state prosecutor and the national police seemed to differ on their views of the flyer.

It is not difficult then to understand a Muslim’s reluctance to contact the police whenever they experience discrimination (Islamophobic or otherwise), as noted previously. According to a documentary questioning the fairness of hate crime laws in Denmark and the difficulties in reporting physical and verbal attacks as a hate crime, people have little faith in the police handling these cases, since the benefit of the doubt is often given to the assailer when proving their attack was not motivated by hate. Likewise, the focus of the “Stop the Hate” police campaign was solely to encourage victims of hate crime to report these crimes to the police; it completely neglected the

9. State prosecutor, written response (letter) to the complainant, 28 June 2020. (Original letter shared with author).

10. Flyer found by complainant in their residential neighbourhood. It was photographed and reported as a hate crime on 23 March 2020.

problematic elements within hate crime's legal framework which privileges the assailers' motivations for physically and/or verbally abusing a minority. This means that racist verbal utterances need to be proved as the sole motivator for the abuse with no other motivations prior to the abuse.¹¹

Employment

According to a recent study by the University of Copenhagen, minority ethnic women need to send 18% more applications compared to white women, while women who wear the hijab need to send 60% more applications compared to white women to get shortlisted for a job interview. According to the Institute for Human Rights, these research findings are important information as they attest to how Muslim and ethnic minority women are excluded from the workforce, despite being highly educated. According to one study referenced in an article by the institute, there has been a 21% increase in minority ethnic women obtaining professional degrees between 2008 and 2019. Yet, minority ethnic women with professional degrees are 12% more likely to be unemployed – a figure that is twice the number of white women. One of the reasons for this discrepancy, the report concludes, is the fact that women wearing the hijab may experience discrimination by employers when there is no other valid reason to be found (private companies are allowed to refuse to hire women wearing the hijab based on company policies on secularism)¹² This is the first time that a quantitative study has looked into experiences of racial and Islamophobic discrimination on the job market. The stark numbers indicate that it is not merely a question of suitability and professional competence but implies actual discrimination against Muslim and/or minority ethnic women. The lead researcher on the project, Malte Dahl, explains that the results challenge the Danish labour market ideal, which is built on meritocratic principles (education, experience, competence, etc.), and indicates there are financial implications when excluding Muslim women from the labour market by employers¹³.

A newly published research project by economists at the University of Copenhagen highlights how, amongst 56,000 surveyed households, the majority of these would prefer to hire domestic help by “Anders” rather than “Ali”.¹⁴ This is an impor-

11. “Kriminelt: Rejs hjem til dit abeland”, *DR*, 19 November 2020, https://www.dr.dk/drtv/se/kriminelt_-rejs-hjem-til-dit-abeland_214904?fbclid=IwAR1SgyND3rIN7M9eZghgbAFODzIPaHCp-G7wMtFhkkgpq-sIvdccbcZIkF38 (Access date: 2 December 2020).

12. “Minoritetskvinder med tørklæde bliver fravalgt på arbejdsmarkedet”, *Institut for Menneskerettigheder*, 6 March 2020, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/minoritetskvinder-toerklæde-fravalgt-paa-arbejdsmarkedet> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

13. Freja Marquardt and Oscar Scott Carl, “For første gang har forskning kortlagt, at kvinder med tørklæde vælges fra på arbejdsmarkedet – Afnan var en af dem”, *Berlingske*, 6 March 2020, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/for-foerste-gang-har-forskning-kortlagt-at-kvinder-med-toerklæde-vaelges> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

14. Flemming Christiansen, “Denne pjece afslører, at vi har mere tillid til Anders end til Ali”, *Politiken*, 25 October 2020, https://politiken.dk/del/7uXsl_AAVBWQ (Access date: 2 December 2020).

tant indication of the unconscious bias that Muslim jobseekers in general have to deal with when applying for jobs. This research is another indicator of the challenges that Muslims face when applying for jobs, apprenticeships, and placements. There is little impetus to address these patterns of employment bias both in the private and public sector. Danish hiring policies often lag behind in ensuring equal opportunities for minorities; they often simply add a generalised standard statement of “we encourage anyone of any ethnic, religious or gender background to apply”. However, with no apparent objective to be more inclusive in the workforce, these statements are mere performances that do not address the challenges of being shortlisted for a position, let alone being hired, with a non-Western name—especially Muslim.

The two research projects described here are important for understanding the challenges minorities face in gaining access to the job market. Nevertheless, in order to meet the challenges of racism in hiring processes, such research must be followed by clear policies from the government to address employer’s unconscious bias when refusing to hire non-Western employees, and particularly Muslim women.

Education

Following up on last year’s EIR report, which highlighted how the government was putting increased surveillance on Muslim faith-based schools based on the number of ‘non-Western’ students they have enrolled, it seems the government is now working towards a total ban of state funding for Muslim schools (as opposed to the general entitlement of all faith-based or alternative schools). This could essentially amount to the closure of Muslim schools altogether –indeed the ban was an election pledge by the current government, the Social Democrats. But the Danish constitution—paragraph 70 which reads that no one’s rights and freedoms can be violated because of their religious beliefs or ethnic origin¹⁵ - had previously prevented the government from directly banning all funding for Muslim schools.

Yet in the fall of 2020, the justice ministry remarkably declared that banning state funding for Muslim schools (24 schools in total) cannot be understood as a violation of Danish constitution. The justice ministry did not justify their reasoning and there remain disagreements among Danish jurists how the ministry came to this new interpretation of paragraph 70. Jurists critical of the justice ministry’s declaration argue that, regardless how the bill is phrased, the government has explicitly admitted it is targeting Muslim schools by focusing on the number of non-Western pupils a school has enrolled –basically targeting religious schools by proxy of students’ ethnic origins.¹⁶

15. Paragraph 70, Constitutional Act of the Realm of Denmark (Danish Constitution), Folketinget, <https://www.ft.dk/da/dokumenter/bestil-publikationer/publikationer/grundloven/danmarks-riges-grundlov/kapitel-7/paragraf-70> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

16. Naja Dandanell, Ekspert er dybt forundrede: Justitsministeriet foretager kovending om muslimske friskoler”, *Skoleliv*, 24 September 2020, <https://skoleliv.dk/nyheder/art7934456/Justitsministeriet-fore->

Although the justice ministry has changed its interpretation of the constitution in this regard, the majority of parties, including the opposition *Venstre*, seem unwilling to transgress neither the Danish Constitution nor international human rights conventions in their efforts to ban Muslim schools. The Social Democrats, however, promise to find a ‘technical’ solution to address these concerns, stating they will hold off on presenting a bill this year. It seems to be merely a matter of time before they manage to formulate a bill that will appease the concerns of constitutional and human rights lawyers. It is important to mention that in spite of the debate on withdrawing all funding for Muslim schools, none of the opposition is highlighting the explicit Islamophobia in wanting to ban these schools. Their objection is not about discriminating against Muslims per se—it is an internal hesitancy as to how far the boundaries of rights can be moved.

The ombudsman has looked into the government’s increased investigation and its withdrawal of funding for Muslim schools, which resulted in their closure. For the past three years, the increased scrutiny has resulted in the closure of three primary schools and two boarding schools – all with a Muslim ethos. In two of these five cases, the schools have raised a complaint to the ombudsman who will investigate decision of the Danish Agency for Education and Quality (STUK). Lawyers and the Danish Free School Association highlight that the increased surveillance of Muslim schools is politicised and lacks legal certainty. One of the issues with the increased surveillance is that it is not based on the schools’ performances or objective criteria but rather on the agency’s own assessments. According to one lawyer, the schools have no way of addressing the issues raised by STUK as its only course of action has been to immediately withdraw funding with no recourse for correction. This leaves the schools in a legally precarious position with their futures depending completely on STUK’s elusive appraisals, rather than actual school performances.¹⁷

While the government’s targeting of Muslim schools is deeply concerning, it is made worse when Muslims also face barriers in accessing public schools. A recent study by political scientists at the University of Copenhagen surveyed all public primary schools in Denmark (1,698 in total), investigating discrepancies in school transfers of students with Danish names and Muslim-sounding names.¹⁸ They found Danish students had a 25% success rate in public school transfers, while Muslim students only had 15%. The study also highlighted that Muslim parents must navigate addi-

tager-kovending-om-muslimske-friskoler?fbclid=IwAR1do51oC0wZ7Sy70nr3JcCEaxMj6zQEziY-xBP-4ZB-ITUCHsri-Ye6XA5Y (Access date: 2 December 2020).

17. Lise Richter, “Flere muslimske friskoler har fået frataget statstilskud – nu går Ombudsmanden ind i sagen”, *Information*, 12 October 2020, <https://www.information.dk/indland/2020/10/flere-muslimske-friskoler-faaet-frataget-statstilskud-gaar-ombudsmanden-sagen> (Access date: 2 December 2020).
18. Asmus Leth Olsen, Jonas Høgh Kyhse-Andersen and Donald Moynihan, “The Unequal Distribution of Opportunity: A National Audit Study of Bureaucratic Discrimination in Primary School Access”, *American Journal of Political Science*, (2020), pp. 1-16.

tional administrative demands when transferring schools, compared to their non-Muslim counterparts.

Politics

On her Facebook page, the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen responded to the terrorist attacks in France and Austria by claiming that “Islamic terror has hit us Europeans again [...]”¹⁹. With no recognition of the conflation between Islam and terror in her statement, Frederiksen inadvertently affirmed the racialised division between “us Europeans” and Muslims.

In another instance on her Facebook page, Frederiksen exclaimed, “Sharia doesn’t belong in Denmark”.²⁰ This was a response to learning about an imam consulting and negotiating a divorce agreement between a couple. The incident was reported in *Berlingske* with only fragments of the agreement translated from Arabic to Danish; the case launched politicians into a frenzy, vilifying imams and Muslim men as the primary offenders towards Muslim women’s rights in marriage and divorce cases.²¹ In response, the government promised to introduce harsher policies to deal with what they call “negative social control” – i.e. Muslim families who restrict the social activities of young women (friendships, romantic relationships, etc.).²²

In 2020, scholars at Roskilde University published a state commissioned report on minority ethnic women’s experience of male/family social control. The report, “*Power and inequality/possibility: Negotiations of conformity, authority and mobility amongst ethnic minority citizens in Denmark*”, took a critical position on the government’s understanding of needing more surveillance of Muslim communities to address ‘social control’. Instead, the report offered a more complex and nuanced analysis of how young resourceful Muslim women negotiate and challenge familial and cultural expectations based on their religious beliefs as well as a description of their experiences with increased discrimination from the broader society.²³ In this regard, as a surprising infringement on academic freedom, the Minister of Immigration and

19. Mette Frederiksen, Facebook, 3 November 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/mettefrederiksen.dk/posts/10158620846287719/> (Access date: 22 January 2021)

20. Mette Frederiksen, Facebook, 26 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/mettefrederiksen.dk/posts/10158533606272719/> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

21. Christian Birk, “Omstridt imam lavede skilsmissekontrakt, hvor muslimsk kvinde kunne miste børnene: ‘Det er psykisk vold udført med en shariakontrakt’”, *Berlingske*, 24 September 2020, <https://www.berlingske.dk/danmark/omstridt-imam-lavede-skilsmissekontrakt-hvor-muslimsk-kvinde-kunne-miste> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

22. National Strategy Against Honour Related Conflicts, “Hvad er social kontrol?”, *The National Board of Health and Welfare*, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rcrct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiS5K7_q7DtAhU4TRUIHffxDVoQFjACegQIBRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Ffuiim.dk%2Ffiler%2Fintegration%2Fhvad-er-social-kontrol.pdf&usq=AOvVaw023o9vFwLgu91zkymoRJ3m (Access date: 2 December 2020).

23. Lise Paulsen Galal and Louise Lund Liebmann. „Magt og (m) ulighed: Forhandlinger af konformitet, autoritet og mobilitet blandt etniske minoritetsborgere i Danmark“, Roskilde University, 29 May 2020, https://forskning.ruc.dk/files/67849011/RUC_MagtOg_M_ulighed_rapport_web.pdf (Access date: 2 December 2020).

Integration Mattias Tesfaye, removed the report from the ministry's website.²⁴ Tesfaye explained that although it is very unusual to censor a commissioned academic report from the government's website, he argued that he did not want the Danish public to mistake the report's findings for the ministry's opinion.²⁵

The complete rejection of the report by the Ministry of Immigration and Integration raises questions of academic freedoms, including the ability to introduce critical assessments in state-commissioned reports. Several law professors have questioned the ability to remove a government commissioned report from the Ministry's website that was deemed academically sound. They have indicated that this was a political decision rather than one based on an objective evaluation of the report's content. It seems the government sought to direct research rather than allowing research to direct policy.²⁶ What is especially problematic about this reaction from the ministry is how revealing it is of restrictions on academics to criticise government policies, especially those which seek to increase control and surveillance of Muslim citizens and their lifestyles.

Ironically, not long before the Integration Minister censored the abovementioned report, the Ministry of Justice launched a new state commissioned report on freedom of speech. The report concluded that 76% of immigrants from Muslim countries want to make criticism of Islam illegal. This led Tesfaye to infer, "Some people have come to Denmark to become part of our prosperity and security, but who do not recognise that it is based on some freedoms, e.g. freedom of speech."²⁷

The policies introduced by the Integration Minister seek to surveil and control Muslims' family and social life so that they adhere to the government's idea of how citizens should socialise (particularly youth and women). In this regard, Tesfaye has urged Muslim community leaders to endorse premarital sex.²⁸ He has also targeted the Muslim dowry, which provides the woman a material gift when entering a marriage contract. He calls this a "bazaar deal between two clans", indicating that Mus-

24. Thomas Böttcher, "Professor: Ministers makulering af RUC-rapport kan være ulovlig". *Akademikerbladet*, 6 November 2020,

https://www.akademikerbladet.dk/aktuelt/2020/november/professor-ministers-makulering-af-ruc-rapport-kan-vaere-ulovlig?fbclid=IwAR20aW_DHNXITGcXU3Hu8UFU8RLSJmSzL8UuUqQW9ZGj2OzpkMUVffjacM8 (Access date: 2 December 2020).

25. Andreas Wind, "Minister fjerner omstridt integrationsrapport om social kontrol", *Altinget*, 3 November 2020, <https://www.alinget.dk/social/artikel/minister-fjerner-integrationsrapport-om-social-kontrol> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

26. Andreas Wind, "Minister fjerner omstridt integrationsrapport om social kontrol", *Altinget*, 3 November 2020

27. Klaus Dohm, "Indvandrere fra muslimske lande i ny undersøgelse: Det bør være ulovligt at kritisere islam" *Jyllands-Posten*, 1 May 2020, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/ECE12109646/indvandrere-fra-muslimske-lande-i-ny-undersogelse-det-boer-vaere-ulovligt-at-kritisere-islam/> (Access date: 2 December 2020). The translation is by the author.

28. Ritzau, "Tesfaye: Muslimske kvinder har ret til sex før bryllupsnat", *Jyllands-Posten*, 2 October 2020, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE12458789/tesfaye-muslimske-kvinder-har-ret-til-sex-foer-bryllupsnat/> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

lim families sell their daughters into marriage.²⁹ It is important to note that one of the young women who Tesfaye was responding to in an article, clarified her position, explaining that she was not against the concept of dowry. Rather, she was against misusing the concept as a way to receive large sums of money. This is a conversation that has been happening within the Muslim community in Denmark for a while, with religious leaders advising women and their families to ask for modest amounts in dowry as to facilitate marriage among young couples.³⁰

In January 2020, 96 families received eviction notices to vacate their social housing as a consequence of the controversial ghetto policies implemented in 2018.³¹ Several families sued the homeowners' association for discriminatory evictions based on the ghetto legislation, which explicitly targets 'non-Western' residents.³² Unfortunately, the municipal courts ruled the evictions lawful, and residents must vacate their homes.³³ Recently, residents in other social housing estates have taken legal action against the government for the same reason: the ghetto legislation deliberately discriminates against 'non-Western' residents and leaves its residents in precarious situations.³⁴ It will be important to follow these legal proceedings in 2021, as residents and grassroots organisations have increasingly mobilised to challenge the government's implementation of its racist ghetto policy.

Media

Mainstream media often play a vital role in perpetuating Islamophobia by reinforcing the idea – promoted by politicians – of problematic Muslim citizens. Interestingly, the *European Islamophobia Report 2019* (EIR) became a discussion item in one of the largest Danish newspapers, *Berlingske*. These reactions are worthy summarising, given how revealing they are of how Islamophobia in the media operates as a way of silencing Muslims' experiences of racism. In covering the launch of the report in the summer 2020, *Berlingske* presented the Danish chapter, which I authored, as a project by a think tank with close ties to the Turkish government. It insinuated that I was col-

29. Henrik Mikaelson, "Karia og Leyla sagde nej til guld og kontanter, da de blev gift: 'Nogle mener, vores mænd har fået os gratis'", *DR*, 17 November 2020, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/regionale/fyn/karia-og-leyla-sagde-nej-til-guld-og-kontanter-da-de-blev-gift-nogle-mener> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

30. Kevin Ahrens og Henrik Mikaelson, "Ekspert om 'groteske' beløb ved muslimske ægteskaber: 'Det er direkte uislamisk'", *DR*, 17 November 2020, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/ekspert-om-groteske-beloeb-ved-muslimske-aegteskaber-det-er-direkte-uislamisk> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

31. Sofie Myhre, "Endelig afgørelse: 96 familier bliver tvangsflyttet fra deres hjem", *TV2 Lorry*, 29 January 2020 <https://www.tv2lorry.dk/helsingoer/endelig-afgoerelse-96-familier-bliver-tvangsflyttet-fra-deres-hjem> (Access date: 31 December 2020).

32. Lamies Nassr and Amani Hassani, "Hvad taler vi om: 'ghettoloven' som struktürel racisme", *Respons*, 27 November 2020 <https://www.responsmedie.dk/racisme-3/> (Access date: 31 December 2020).

33. Christina Gerion, "Retsag: Lejere skal flytte fra ghetto trods protest", *TV2 Lorry*, 20 November <https://www.tv2lorry.dk/helsingoer/retssag-lejere-skal-flytte-fra-ghetto-trods-protest> (Access date: 31 December 2020).

34. Sidsel Overgaard, "Facing Eviction, Residents Of Denmark's 'Ghettos' Are Suing The Government", *NPR*, 15 August 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/15/900874510/facing-eviction-residents-of-denmarks-ghettos-are-suing-the-government> (Access date: 22 January 2021)

laborating with the Turkish government to make Denmark and its government appear Islamophobic. The journalist managed to get a response from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jeppe Kofod, who expressed anger over the report and wanted funding for the EIR investigated.³⁵ The editor-in-chief of *Berlingske*, Tom Jensen, wrote an op-ed describing the report as openly threatening any critique of Islam. In this regard, he described the report as exaggerated and distorting facts to make Danish politicians, media and individuals appear Islamophobic and by extension threatening Danish freedom of speech.³⁶ Steffen Groth, a journalist outraged by the insinuations and the complete dismissal of the content in the report, responded with an opinion piece published by the *Berlingske* criticising the problematic approach of *Berlingske's* journalists and its editor-in-chief.³⁷

This harsh response by *Berlingske* is a repetition of how the newspaper targeted the authors of the 2018 report on Islamophobia in Denmark and demonstrates the powerful position mainstream media have in de-platforming Muslim voices and concerns of Islamophobia – a topic that is neglected and dismissed because it is often perceived to cull criticism of Islam. Muslims' critiques of discrimination are reserved to opinion pieces and are rarely given space to be debated within mainstream media. In the coverage of the 2019 EIR report, the journalists reached out to me for a comment, but the focus was geared towards the accusation of conspiring with the Turkish government – an insinuation I refused to entertain, demanding that the conversation should be on the topic of Islamophobia in Denmark and not geopolitical issues between Denmark and Turkey.

Justice System

The government is proposing a bill that will enforce the use of the Danish language as a prerequisite in all religious sermons, whether in the form of simultaneous translation or a follow-up translation. The government does not single out Muslims in the proposed bill because that would be unconstitutional. Nevertheless, the government has made it clear to the public that the intended target is the Muslim community and what they perceive to be a threat of radicalisation within mosques.³⁸ The

35. Christian Birk, "Radikal toppolitiker hænges ud i ny rapport om islamofobi fra Tyrkiet. Udenrigsministeren er 'oppe i det røde felt'", *Berlingske*, 3 August 2020 <https://www.berlingske.dk/danmark/radikal-toppolitiker-haeng-ud-i-ny-rapport-om-islamofobi-fra-tyrkiet> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

36. Tom Jensen, "Den tyrkiske SETA-rapport er et instrument til at sætte ytringsfriheden under pres", *Berlingske*, 28 August 2020, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/den-tyrkiske-seta-rapport-er-et-instrument-til-at-saette-ytringsfriheden> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

37. Steffen Groth, "Berlingskes monumentale mistænkliggørelse af dansk ph.d.", *Berlingske*, 31 August 2020, <https://www.berlingske.dk/kommentarer/berlingskes-monumentale-mistaenkliggørelse-af-dansk-phd> (Access date: 10 December 2020).

38. Maja Hagedorn Hansen, "Regeringen vil have prædikener og forkyndelse på dansk: 'Vores hensigt er at undgå parallelsamfund'", *Altinget*, 12 October 2020, <https://www.altinget.dk/artikel/regeringen-vil-have-praedikener-og-forkyndelse-paa-dansk-vores-hensigt-er-at-undgaa-parallelsamfund?fbclid=IwAR3UZC9e58EsDxthcS-DhDijis0LPyZsa8h6S1eneouBk-qj7MnNrj1V99Z0> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

representative MP of the Faroe Islands – a self-governing archipelago that is part of Denmark (with a similar colonial history as Greenland) – asked whether this bill would be extended to the islands. Frederiksen explained Islamism is the target of the bill³⁹. She added that Denmark historically never had problems with religions from outside, but is only now experiencing problems with Islamism and Islamists, which is why the government deems it necessary to enforce language demands over religious sermons (negating the years of stark anti-Semitism that was rife in Denmark pre-WW2).

The importance of this exchange is crucial to understand the dynamics of how Islamophobia plays out in Danish political discourse. The bill was introduced in a colour-blind veneer, hiding the political intent in requesting religious communities to conduct sermons in Danish. Only when the Faroe Islands MP questioned Frederiksen in parliament, did she reveal that the intent of the bill is to manage Muslim citizens' religious practices. However, it would be a breach of the Danish Constitution to create a bill that directly discriminates against the Muslim faith community. Although in this exchange Frederiksen uses the words "Islamism" and "Islamist", these are elusive concepts that she has made no effort in differentiating from conventional Islamic practices. In fact, on her Facebook page, she described the terror attacks in France as *Islamic* terror, thus describing Islam as terrorism's source.⁴⁰

The Ministry of Immigration and Integration has proposed a bill to address what the government calls 'negative social control and honour-related violence', its offenders to be sentenced up to three years in prison. Amongst the examples of 'social control', the minister wants to include religious leaders advising or negotiating divorce agreements; religious leaders conducting religious marriage ceremonies of minors (it is already illegal to get a civil marriage as a minor). The bill will allow the government jurisdiction to take the passports of minors if parents are suspected to want to travel abroad with their child to force marriage, and it will enable the possibility of deporting any religious leader or parent found guilty of such charges.⁴¹ The bill was accompanied with a larger national campaign to increase attention to Muslim women's victimhood to their families' social control (i.e., control over their social, romantic, and even professional lives).

39. Mette Frederiksen, Extended Question Time with the Prime Minister, 10 November 2020, <https://www.ft.dk/aktuelt/webtv/video/20201/salen/13.aspx?from=10-11-2020&to=10-11-2020&selectedMeetingType=Salen&committee=&cas=1#player> (Access date: 22 January 2021)

40. "Rasende lokalpolitiker truede med at forlade S efter Mette F. Facebookopslag", *TV2Lorry*, 6 November 2020, <https://www.tv2lorry.dk/roskilde/truede-med-forlade-s-hvis-mette-f-ikke-undskyldte-ny-fortryder-byraads-medlem> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

41. Foreign and Integration Ministry, "Negativ social kontrol skal i højere grad straffes som psykisk vold", 7 October 2020, <https://uim.dk/nyheder/negativ-social-kontrol-skal-i-hojere-grad-straffes-som-psykisk-vold> (Access date: 2 December 2020).



Figure 2: Social media video campaign by the Municipality of Copenhagen, “Social control must never prevent women from working”.⁴²

In 2014, Said Mansoor was convicted, stripped of his Danish citizenship, and deported to Morocco for inciting terror on Facebook. He was deported in 2019 by the previous government, led by Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (*Venstre*), with the assurance that if he was deported, he would not be given a death sentence pending terrorist charges in Morocco.⁴³ In October 2020, however, Mansoor’s trial in Morocco found him guilty of terrorism in Casablanca in 2003 and gave him a death sentence.⁴⁴ The current Danish government have responded to the criticism of allowing a former citizen to be extradited to a so-called torture state. They claimed that there is a moratorium on the death penalty in Morocco that has been in effect since 1993.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it raises questions whether Denmark is only performatively living up to international treaties of human rights in this case.

Internet

Hate crime committed online is an increasingly worrying phenomenon in Denmark. The police report on hate crimes highlights that 22% (128 cases) of registered hate crimes in 2019 happened online (particularly Facebook).⁴⁶ Many of these were Islamophobic in nature; far-right groups and individuals were reported for Islamophobic speech (18 cases) particularly following the Christchurch attacks.

42. Copenhagen Municipality, LinkedIn, 26 November 2020, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/kobenhavns-kommune_ikkeketjob-dksocial-socialkontrol-ugcPost-6737273623528173569-94yK/ (Access date: 2 December 2020). The translation is by the author.

43. Anton Lind, “Efter afsonet fængselsdom: Boghandleren fra Brønshøj skal blive i fængsel”, *DR*, 18 February 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/efter-afsonet-faengselsdom-boghandleren-fra-broenshoej-skal-blive-i-faengsel> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

44. “Marokko bekræfter dødsdom over Said Mansour”, *BT*, 1 November 2020, <https://www.bt.dk/krimi/marokko-bekraefter-doesdom-over-said-mansour?referrer=RSS> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

45. “Marokko bekræfter dødsdom over Said Mansour”, *Jyllands-Posten*, 1 November 2020, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/international/Afrika/ECE12528116/marokko-bekraefter-doesdom-over-said-mansour/> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

46. National Police, October 2020, <https://politi.dk/-/media/mediefiler/landsdaekkende-dokumenter/statistikker/hadforbrydelser/hadforbrydelser-2019.pdf?la=da&hash=86E26E960D6896CD33EBB8ECE-8487499BF986D3> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

Social media seems to be an important platform for right-wing pundits to promote hate towards Muslims. One example is a man well-known for his online and public abuse of Muslim women, who posted a picture of a young Muslim in niqab, describing how he called the police on her and ensured she was fined for covering her face. It is important to note that this was done during the pandemic where it was required to wear a facemask in public transport.⁴⁷



Figure 3: Facebook post from Women in Dialogue describing how a woman wearing a niqab was harassed and photographed by a man, who reported her to the police for wearing the niqab and posted her picture on social media.⁴⁸

This example demonstrates how bills targeting Muslims allow for the proliferation of hate crimes both in public space and online. The niqab ban gave Islamophobes the legitimacy to publicly target Muslim women covering their faces in the guise of upholding the law.

During the Danish lockdown, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the intercultural/interreligious organisation *Brobyggerne* (Bridge Builders) organised an online Ramadan dinner, “RamaDanmark”, with 300 participants, including imams, rabbis, priests, artists, and politicians. The inclusive and celebratory dinner was in-

47. Kvinder i Dialog, Facebook, 25 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kvinderialog/posts/615894252436056> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

48. Kvinder i Dialog (Women in Dialogue), Facebook, 25 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kvinderialog/photos/615894209102727> (Access date: 11 January 2021).

errupted by *Generation Identitær* who had encouraged their members and supporters to take action against the event, interrupting speeches with signs saying “Stop Islamisation”. The online event was then disrupted by a hacker posting child pornography.⁴⁹ *Generation Identitær* only admits to interrupting the dinner with posters and denies any involvement in posting the pornographic video, which was reported to the police.⁵⁰ This horrific incident demonstrates how even peaceful and inclusive events are targeted with both hate speech and deeply offensive and criminal disruptions.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There were several cases of racial violence that received increased attention amongst the Danish public. The focus on Black Lives Matter over the summer and a rising interest in anti-racism has given a momentum to highlight these issues within the Danish context, including Islamophobia and how it intersects with anti-black and xenophobic racism.

While Rasmus Paludan enjoys the freedom to vocally abuse Muslims in Denmark, several other European countries have restricted his entry. He was ruled a threat to national security and order in Sweden and France, where he wanted to join demonstrations. He was refused entry in Sweden for two years in violation of police orders.⁵¹ Furthermore, he was arrested in France for wanting to burn the Quran in front of the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris.⁵²

Tommy Robinson, the British pundit convicted of racism and violence, and who founded the EDL, was given a Danish award by *Trykkefrihedsselskabet* (The Free Press Society), an organisation whose objective is to defend freedom of speech, but often do this by targeting Islam and Muslims. They explained that they were giving him the award for his ‘fight for freedom of speech’. Robinson’s violence and problematic character is well-known in the British context, yet in Denmark he is heralded for his very blatant racism (especially towards Muslims) as a proponent of free speech. It goes to demonstrate the challenges minorities experience in Denmark, where someone can racially abuse you in the guise of freedom of speech. *Trykkefrihedsselskabet* defended their decision, explaining: “We do not give him the freedom of expression award for

49. Malthe Sommerand, “Online ramadan-middag afbrudt af børneporno: ’Det er chokerende at se’”, *DR*, 1 May 2020, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/online-ramadan-middag-afbrudt-af-boerneporno-det-er-chokerende-se> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

50. Generation Identitær, “Fredelig Corona-aktion til online ramadan-middag: Stop islamisering!”, 30 April 2020, <https://identitaer.dk/2020/fredelig-corona-aktion-til-online-ramadan-middag-stop-islamisering> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

51. Thomas Berndt and Mette Grube Condrup, “Paludan afvist ved grænsen: Nægtes adgang til Sverige i to år”, *Politiken*, 28 August 2020 <https://politiken.dk/udland/art7902628/N%C3%A6gtes-adgang-til-Sverige-i-to-%C3%A5r> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

52. Ritzau, “Stram Kurs-stifter Rasmus Paludan er anholdt i Paris”, *Kristligt-Dagblad*, 13 November 2020, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kultur/rasmus-paludan-er-anholdt-i-paris> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

the sentences he has received. We do not reward him for that. We reward him for the work he has done in the service of free speech”.⁵³

The far right seems to be becoming increasingly prominent in Denmark with organisations like *Generation Identitar* protesting against Muslims.⁵⁴ One can be concerned that although there are a few far-right organisations, there are many individuals who remain unknown and unnoticed by the public. One extreme example is a 31-year-old man who attempted to manufacture weapons and a bomb in his home. Based on the pictures on the walls, the police suspect he had ties with the Nordic Resistance Movement (*Nordisk Modstandsbevægelse*). The man was found guilty of illegally manufacturing weapons, but the courts ruled there was no evidence that he had the intention use the bomb. He is now serving a 3-year sentence.⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that the man was not accused of wanting to commit terror as the prosecution doubted that they could gather evidence that he had the intent to destabilise Danish society with his action – a requirement for charges of terrorism.⁵⁶ The benefit of the doubt given to the accused—who was found in his home with home-manufactured bomb—is stark in comparison to previous terror cases in Denmark, where Muslim men have been charged and convicted of terror offences based on much weaker evidence.⁵⁷

Observed Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society’s attention and response to combatting Islamophobia seems to have increased in 2020, especially in light of the general attention the public has given racism over the summer of 2020. Not only have mosques and Muslim organisations become more attuned to calling out and understanding how Islamophobia is played out in the Danish context, but some public figures have become more aware of political and populist discrimination faced particularly by Muslim citizens.⁵⁸ One umbrella

53. Cathrine Lakmann, “Dansk pris til britisk højrefløjsaktivist: ’Han er en ledende ytringsfrihedsforkæmper’”, *DR*, 19 January 2020, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/inland/dansk-pris-til-britisk-hoejrefloesaktivist-han-er-en-ledende> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

54. Jeppe Rafn, “Højreorienterede islamkritikere anholdt i Gellerup”, *Aarhus Lokavisen*, 5 September 2020, <https://aarhus.lokalavisen.dk/112/2020-05-09/-H%C3%B8jreorienterede-islamkritikere-anholdt-i-Gellerup-7364640.html> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

55. Kasper Daugbjerg Dønbo, “Bombemand får 3 års fængsel”, *Sjællandske Nyheder*, 19 May 2020, https://sn.dk/Halsnaes/Bombemand-faar-3-aars-faengsel/artikel/944082?fbclid=IwAR0S4aOF1fBHbUHJmFcDZgPsD4tu-VB71W3iW0D4oD9TwH4h50_276RyetB4 (Access date: 2 December 2020).

56. Kasper Daugbjerg Dønbo, “Tiltalt bombemand slipper for terroranklage”, *Sjællandske Nyheder*, 14 May 2020, <https://sn.dk/Halsnaes/Tiltalt-bombemand-slipper-for-terroranklage/artikel/942312> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

57. Kristoffer Pinholt, “19-årig frifundet for terror for anden gang”, *Jyllands-Posten*, 11 March 2008, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/inland/ECE3938951/19-%C3%A5rig-frifundet-for-terror-for-anden-gang/> (Access date: 24 January)

58. Ida Sophia, “Ida-Sophia: ’Det er muslimerne der er under angreb’”, *Ekstrabladet*, 8 November 2020, <https://ekstrabladet.dk/flash/megafonen/ida-sophia-det-er-muslimerne-der-er-under-angreb/8354292> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

organisation for mosques, the Muslim Council (*Muslimernes Fællesråd*) has decided to dedicate its work to address Muslims' experiences of discrimination.⁵⁹ The Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark (CEDA) has collaborated with 10 NGOs on a report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) as well as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to highlight issues of racism and discrimination by minority groups in Denmark.⁶⁰

Opposing media and political outcry, the National School Songbook Committee included a song by the artist Isam B titled "Ramadan in Copenhagen" (*Ramadan i København*).⁶¹ Right-wing critics argued that the song has no place in the songbook, which is seen as a national cultural treasure. Nevertheless, the committee decided to include the song because it added a localised way of experiencing Ramadan as Danish Muslims.⁶²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report has demonstrated how Islamophobia continues to worsen in Denmark, both explicitly and implicitly directed at Muslim citizens and people imagined to be Muslim (i.e., non-Western immigrants and descendants).

Hate crime towards Muslims remains high, including physical, verbal, and on-line abuse. Recent studies in employment demonstrate that employees who appear to be Muslim are disadvantaged when applying for jobs. Meanwhile, politicians claim that Muslim women's higher unemployment rates are due to family control. Although these claims are refuted by academic research, the government has implemented nationwide campaigns on the issue.

The government seems to be one step closer to banning state funding of Muslim faith-based schools with the Ministry of Justice ruling that it would not be a breach of the Danish Constitution to do so. Concerns from the political opposition, *Venstre*, is that it may transgress international human rights treaties.

Political rhetoric against Muslims seems to particularly target Muslims' personal, social, and religious freedoms when it comes to everyday life. The rhetoric is not necessarily blatantly illiberal in limiting Muslims' civil rights, but instead is hidden behind a veneer of liberal rhetoric attempting to 'save' Muslim youth, and particularly

59. Muslimernes Fællesråd, Facebook, 14 September 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/MuslimernesFaellesrad/posts/3293016274068935> (Access date: 2 December 2020).

60. "Ngo'er afleverer racismerapport til FN", *Arbejderen*, 12 November, https://arbejderen.dk/indland/ngoer-afleverer-racismeraapport-til-fn?fbclid=IwAR0GMnaXPaOL9NH7dFu_QF3Rg-x6fboaxfEeHEOhrELEu0_YRf7DMjqUDy8 (Access date: 2 December 2020).

61. Amani Hassani, "Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2019", *European Islamophobia Report 2019*, eds. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (Istanbul, SETA: 2020).

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young Muslim women, from the perceived inherent psychological violence of Muslim men and Muslim religious communities.

Along this trend in political rhetoric, a number of new laws have been introduced to control and surveil Muslim faith communities, e.g., requiring sermons in Danish and criminalising imams counselling their congregation on personal matters such as divorce agreements.

Based on the observations noted in this report, the following are policy recommendations geared towards politicians, Muslim institutions, anti-racist NGOs, and the general public in Denmark.

- Public and political recognition of Islamophobia as a type of racism targeting Muslims and people perceived to be Muslim.
- Governmental commitment to condemn Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred.
- Incorporation of the UN human rights conventions into Danish legislation to ensure that the Danish government adheres to these, in particular the “International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination” and “International Convention on Civil and Political Rights”, and “International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights”.
- Government commitment to create a wide strategy to tackle racism and inequalities faced by all ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, including Muslims.
- Development of a politically independent equality department to oversee and ensure that all new legislation does not target and discriminate against ethnic, racial, and religious minorities in cause or effect.
- Investment in appropriate resources to tackle hate crime effectively and reassess whether hate crime legislation is fit for purpose to address the harm caused by racial, ethnic, and religious discriminatory abuse, especially when the claim behind the abuse is not racially motivated.
- Investment in resources for producing research which explores different aspects and experiences of racism, and more specifically, Islamophobia as a type of racism, from structural and political forms to everyday microaggressions.
- Increase efforts to develop wider anti-racist collaborations with civil society organisations as well as individuals working to tackle both structural and everyday forms of racism affecting minority citizens.

Chronology

- **23.01.2020:** Mosque vandalised with graffiti stating “Muslims, Islam = cancer”.
- **29.01. 2020:** As part of the ghetto laws, 96 families received eviction notices to vacate their social housing.

- **30.01.2020:** The parliament issued a joint statement about rising concerns of anti-Semitism in neo-Nazi and Islamic circles (“Islamic” was later corrected to “Islamist”). The claim of the rise in anti-Semitism among Muslims was later proved to be unsubstantiated, yet the statement remains.
- **06.03.2020:** Citizenship ceremonies were postponed because COVID-19 measures ban the shaking of hands, which conflicts with the law enforcing handshaking as an essential part of the granting of citizenship. This law has since been paused while the pandemic is still a concern.
- **19.05.2020:** Far-right extremist is given a 3-year prison sentence for manufacturing a bomb.
- **08.08.2020:** Eid celebrations and a Somali funeral blamed for spike in COVID-19 cases.
- **20.08.2020:** A Muslim man was severely beaten in a religiously motivated hate crime, the courts rule.
- **04.09.2020:** Political and public debate on banning non-medical circumcision of boys.
- **24.09.2020:** Odense Municipality reports an imam to the police for negotiating a non-legally binding divorce agreement.
- **07.10.2020:** The government proposes charging imams with a three-year prison sentence for counselling in divorce negotiations.
- **09.10.2020:** The government proposes a bill to require all religious sermons be conducted in Danish or translated into Danish.
- **12.10.2020:** More Muslim faith-based schools get their funding taken away by the government.
- **14.11.2020:** The government introduces a nationwide campaign against ‘negative social control’.
- **01.11.2020:** It is confirmed that Said Mansoor, a former Danish citizen deported to Morocco, was given a death sentence after being found guilty of terrorist charges in Morocco.
- **12.11.2020:** The parliament issued a statement agreeing that “Islamist forces” are turning Muslim citizens against Denmark and declare that it is essential to combat them in order to safeguard Danish democracy and social cohesion.