

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
POLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Her first monograph, titled *Muslim Women Online: Faith and Identity in Virtual Space*, and several academic journal articles (including in *New Media and Society*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Hawwa*, and *Contemporary Islam*) focus on gender, Islam, and online communities. She has recently edited two volumes, *Islam and the Media*, and *Islam and Popular Culture*, in the Routledge series *Critical Concepts in Sociology*.

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Executive Summary

Many Polish people are quite susceptible to prejudiced messaging about Islam from the right-wing Polish government and political organisations. There is a large discrepancy between the lived experiences of Polish Muslims who feel threatened by the sheer scale of anti-Muslim verbal and physical violence in Poland on the one hand, and the claims made by the Polish state apparatus which insists that the problem of anti-Muslim hate crime is declining.

In an effort to address this false claim, the Polish Ombudsman's Office, in conjunction with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), conducted a research project which shows that hate crime in Poland is heavily under-reported (only 5% of those targeted report hate crime to the police). Therefore, it appears that in order to obtain a realistic picture of hate crime in Poland, the official statistics would have to be multiplied by at least 20. This finding is the single most important one for this report, as it demonstrates that victims of hate crimes do not trust the Polish state to protect them at present.

The reluctance of the police to receive reports of hate crime continues, while mechanisms protecting minorities in Poland are being dismantled. Even official attempts by Polish Muslim organisations to establish dialogue with the government are being thwarted. In light of this, it is unclear whether Muslims living in Poland will be able to enjoy their constitutional protections as long as the ruling Law and Justice party is in power.

The government-controlled state media and right-wing media continue to uncritically spread Islamophobic discourse focused on terrorism and barbarism. Only progressive media and a selection of NGOs attempt to report on Islam and Muslims in a balanced, non-sensationalist manner. Therefore, they play an important, if limited, educational role in regard to Islam in Poland.

Streszczenie

Wielu Polaków jest podatnych na przekazy pełne uprzedzeń w stosunku do islamu płynących ze strony obecnego polskiego rządu oraz szeregu organizacji politycznych. Istnieje wielki rozdziew pomiędzy doświadczeniami polskich muzułmanów, którzy czują się zagrożeni skalą słownej i fizycznej przemocy wobec nich oraz stwierdzeniami urzędników, którzy upierają się, że liczba przestępstw z nienawiści wobec muzułmanów w Polsce spada. Wobec oczywistej nieprawdy tego ostatniego stwierdzenia, biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich, we współpracy z Organizacją Bezpieczeństwa i Współpracy w Europie przeprowadziło badanie, które wykazało, że jedynie 5% przestępstw z nienawiści jest w Polsce zgłaszanych na policję. A zatem, aby uzyskać rzeczywistą liczbę przestępstw z nienawiści, należałoby pomnożyć oficjalne statystyki o 20. Ten wynik badania jest najważniejszą informacją w tym raporcie, ponieważ pokazuje, że ofiary przestępstw z nienawiści nie ufają państwu polskiemu w kwestii ochrony ich praw. Analiza przypadków wykazuje, że policja nadal niechętnie przyjmuje zgłoszenia przestępstw z nienawiści. Mechanizmy ochrony praw mniejszości są rozmontowywane przez rząd. Nawet oficjalne próby kontaktu podejmowane przez organizacje muzułmańskie w Polsce są udaremniwane. Wobec tego, nie wiadomo czy i kiedy muzułmanie żyjący w Polsce będą objęci rzeczywistą ochroną, zagwarantowaną przez konstytucję podczas rządów Prawa i Sprawiedliwości. Przekaz mediów państwowych, kontrolowanych przez rząd oraz mediów prawniczych nadal pełen jest treści islamofobicznych, skierowanych na skojarzenia z terroryzmem i barbaryzmem. Jedynie media postępowe społecznie i kilka organizacji pozarządowych tworzy wyważone przekazy na temat islamu. Przez to wypełniają one ważną, choć ograniczoną, funkcję edukacyjną.

Country Profile

Country: Poland

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Semi-presidential System

Ruling Parties: PiS – Law and Order (Right-Wing, National-Conservative, Christian Democratic)

Opposition Parties: PO – Civic Platform (Centre-Right)

Last Elections: 2017 Presidential Election (Andrzej Duda, the right-wing candidate, won 51.55% of the vote against the centre candidate Bronisław Komorowski's 48.45%); 2015 Legislative Election (Law and Order: 237 seats, Civic Platform [centre-right]: 138 seats, Kukiz '15 [right-wing, populist]: 42, Modern [centre]: 22 seats, Polish People's Party [agrarian, conservative]: 14)

Total Population: 38.45 (in 2015)

Major Languages: Polish

Official Religion: No Official Religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to official statistics from the Ministry of Interior, in the first 9 months of 2018 there were 53 hate crimes against Muslims in Poland. However, recent research conducted by Polish NGOs indicates hate crime is severely under-reported (at 5%). Therefore, the actual figure representing Islamophobic hate crime in Poland in 2018 could be as high as over 1,000 incidents.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: For the first 9 months of 2018, the official statistics provide the figure of 132 hate crimes based on the non-white skin colour of the victim. Additionally, based on the victim's nationality or ethnicity, there were 441 reported hate crimes. In reality, these figures could be as high as 2,640 and 8,820.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (88.6%), Jehovah's Witnesses (0.34%), Buddhism (0.04%), Islam (0.013 %), Indigenous religion (0.01%), Judaism (0.004 %) (data for 2011 based on information from the Main Office for Statistics (GUS 2013))

Muslim Population (% of Population): (depending on sources) between 10,000 and 25,000 (*Newsweek* 2016; *Newsweek* 2015) (less than 0.1%)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: The Muslim Religious Association (*Związek Muzułmanów Polskich*) and the Muslim League in the Polish Republic (*Liga Muzułmańska RP*)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: The Polish Ombudsman's Office, Never Again Association, Centre for Monitoring Racist and Xenophobic Behaviours, Hate Stop, *Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego*, Center for Research on Prejudice

Far-Right Parties: National Movement (*Ruch Narodowy*), National Revival of Poland (*Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski*)

Far-Right Movements: All-Polish Youth, National-Radical Camp, Christus Rex, Pride and Modernity (*Duma i Nowoczesność*)

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: National-Radical Camp

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Polish people are, on the whole, unfamiliar with Islam and the role it plays in the lives of its believers. Over 80% do not personally know a single Muslim.¹ This ignorance has significant consequences, as many Poles are quite susceptible to prejudiced messaging about Islam from the right-wing Polish government and political organisations. There is a large discrepancy between the lived experiences of Polish Muslims who feel threatened by the sheer scale of anti-Muslim verbal and physical prejudice in Poland, on the one hand,² and the claims made by the Polish state apparatus which insists that the problem of anti-Muslim hate crime is declining. The year 2018 saw the unfolding of events following the 2017 official letter from the major Polish Muslim organisations to Speaker of the Parliament Marek Kuchciński mentioned in the EIR 2017.³ They stated that “the intensity and scale of attacks on the Muslim community is rising, and Islam is abused in the political debate. It is obvious that without the assistance of the state we are unable to address this dangerous phenomenon”.⁴ Their argument is clearly evidenced by data on hate crime issued by the Polish Ombudsman’s Office and the Prosecutor General. The letter could have been addressed as a ‘desideratum’, a legal act expressing postulates issued by a Parliamentary Commission to the Prime Minister or another state office. The Commission of National and Ethnic Minorities (theoretically, a natural advocate of minority groups such as the Muslims) voted against taking up the desideratum which was then abandoned and the opportunity to address the problem of anti-Muslim prejudice in Poland, including the rise in physical attacks on Muslims, was lost. The members of the commission who voted against it were all members of the Law and Order party. One of them, MP Szymon Giżyński, who initially appeared to support the motion, said, “This one-sided desideratum attacks Polish interests and our national pride”.⁵

1. Anna Stefaniak, “Postrzeganie muzułmanów w Polsce: Raport z badania sondażowego”, (Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami, Warsaw: 2015), <http://cbu.psychologia.pl/uploads/images/foto/Postrzeganie-muzu%C5%82man%C3%B3w-w-Polsce.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. Maciej Chołodowski, “Negatywne postawy wobec muzułmanów. Dezyderat do premiera odrzucony”, *Wyborcza.pl*, 2 July 2018, <http://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/7,35241,23624854,negatywne-postawy-wobec-muzulmanow-dezyderat-do-premiera-odrzucony.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

3. Anna Pielak and Anna Łukjanowicz, “Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2017”, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraktılı and Farid Hafez, (Istanbul, SETA), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Poland.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

4. Monika Prończuk, “Muzułmanie proszą o ochronę. PiS odmawia, bo broni ‘polskiej godności’”, *Oko Press*, 10 July 2018, <https://oko.press/muzulmanie-prosza-o-ochrone-pis-utraca-dezyderat-broni-polskiej-godnosci/> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

5. Ibid.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Polish authorities, while asserting that the number of hate crimes is insignificant and declining, continue to claim that they address hate crime satisfactorily. Adam Knych, an official at the Ministry of Interior, said on 2 July, 2018: “Our police force is effective in dealing with hate crime”.⁶ In an effort to address this propaganda claim, the Ombudsman’s Office, in conjunction with Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), conducted a research project which shows that hate crime in Poland is heavily under-reported (only 5% of those targeted report hate crime to the police).⁷ Therefore, it appears that in order to obtain a realistic picture of hate crime in Poland, the official statistics would have to be multiplied by 20. In response to my inquiry regarding hate crimes in 2018, the Ministry of Interior asserted that between January and September (figures were available only for this period of 2018), 813 such crimes were investigated. Of those, 53 were committed based on the target’s Muslim faith; 78 hate crimes were committed based on the target’s ethnicity that might be linked to Islam (Arabs, Chechens, Turks).⁸ Based on the projection suggested by the research commissioned by the Ombudsman’s Office, these numbers are likely to be 16,260 hate crimes in total; 1,060 hate crimes against Muslims, and 1,560 hate crimes against ethnicities commonly linked to Islam. This so-called “dark number” is a more realistic assessment of hate crimes against Muslims.

Employment

Recent research examining exclusionary attitudes in employment relations in Poland⁹ highlights that Muslims are the group that is the most likely to be rejected by the majority population. The authors found that 17% of Poles do not wish to have a Muslim manager, and 14% do not wish to have a Muslim colleague at work. According to a recent book on Muslim experience in Poland,¹⁰ especially female converts to Islam find it difficult to negotiate employment with their faith, either because of the nature of employment (such as work in a betting shop or a

6. Ibid.

7. “Jedynie 5% przestępstw motywowanych nienawiścią jest zgłaszanych na policję - badania RPO i ODIHR/OBWE”, Biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich, 2 July 2018, <https://rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/jedynie-5-przestepstw-motywowanych-nienawiscia-jest-zglaszanych-na-policje-badania-rpo-i-odihrobwe>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

8. Freedom of Information Request response (private email communication), Department of Security, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, 27 December 2018.

9. Elżbieta Ciżewska-Martyńska, Marcin Jewdokimow, Mustafa Switat and Bartłomiej Walczak, “Rynek pracy a równe traktowanie ze względu na wyznanie. Raport z badania”, (Warsaw University, Warsaw: 2018), https://siecobywatelska.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Raport_rynek-pracy-a-r%C3%B3wne-traktowanie-ze-wzgl%C4%99du-na-wyznanie.pdf, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

10. Anna J. Dudek, *Poddaję Się. Życie muzułmanek w Polsce*, (Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw: 2016).

liquor store), or harassment in the workplace. In contrast, “born” or “heritage” Muslims appear to have fewer difficulties as they are often self-employed and have better access to the social networks of Polish Muslims. This was corroborated by a 2018 report¹¹ asserting that converts, in contrast to “born Muslims” have particular difficulties in the workplace due to their modest dress or a lifestyle that prohibits drinking alcohol and eating pork, both popular in Poland. In an interview conducted in 2018 with a Polish female convert to Islam I found that she left her high-powered job as a journalist due to mobbing (she was frequently asked to drink alcohol after work) and moved to the United Kingdom where she no longer experienced anti-Muslim prejudice. Muslims living in Poland have been found to adopt one or more of the following strategies: concealing one’s religious identity; striving to find work in workplaces where there are already other Muslims; secularisation of one’s demeanour; and attempting to negotiate a space in the workplace for their religious practices such as prayer.¹²

Education

Currently in Polish state schools at all levels there is no coherent effort to educate Polish students about faiths other than the Roman Catholic one – this extends to Islam. This state of affairs in itself is discriminatory. The information about the existence of other faiths is usually a footnote delivered in history classes. There, Islam is inevitably framed through accounts of war and conflict, for example the battles of Poitiers (AD 732), Lepanto (AD 1571), and Vienna (AD 1683). The consequences of this parochialism in the religious education of young Poles are clear – the less knowledgeable people are about Islam, the higher the levels of anti-Muslim prejudice they display.¹³ Civil society initiatives that aim to educate the society about Islam usually appeal to audiences who already have a positive attitude towards Islam.

Politics

The political discourse about Islam continues to be unapologetically prejudiced, as illustrated by the case of the Polish Muslim organisations’ open letter to the Speaker of Parliament described earlier in this report. The Law and Justice party’s 2018 municipal elections campaign released on 17 October, 2018 a fearmongering propaganda video which threatened that the rival Civic Platform party is keen to open Polish borders to “Muslim refugees” who would cause a great deal of unrest in the

11. Elżbieta Cizewska, Martyńska et al, “Rynek pracy a równe traktowanie ze względu na wyznanie. Raport z badania”.

12. Ibid.

13. Anna Stefaniak, “Postrzeganie muzułmanów w Polsce: Raport z badania sondażowego”, (Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami, Warsaw), <http://cbu.psychologia.pl/uploads/images/foto/Postrzeganie-muzu%C5%82man%C3%B3w-w-Polsce.pdf>, (Access date: 6 September 2019).

country.¹⁴ The video presented a dystopian vision of Poland in 2020, after an imagined victory of Civic Platform: “enclaves of Muslim refugees...the tenth victim of an attack...people are afraid to leave home after dark...sexual assaults and muggings are happening everyday... Will we feel safe if Civic Platform makes this happen?” This state-licensed propaganda does not go unchallenged. The Polish Ombudsman reported this video to the district prosecutor who, according to the Ombudsman Act, is obligated to open an inquiry into acts suspected of inciting hatred towards minority groups. The prosecutor’s office refused to open an inquiry on the grounds that the video was assessed to be a legitimate expression of views on the influx of migrants. The Ombudsman appealed this decision in court and the case is ongoing.¹⁵

Media

In 2018, print and broadcast media spread a variety of messages about Islam. State-owned media (*Telewizja Polska* [TVP], *Polskie Radio* [PR]) continue to be controlled by the Law and Justice party since 2016.¹⁶ Content produced in 2018 by these outlets tends to draw links between Islam and terrorism, war, and violence. This is in contravention of its statute which claims neutrality and objectivity. Examples of Islam-tagged December headlines broadcast by TVP include “Morocco: An Extremist Has Been Detained Following the Murder of Two Tourists”; “Swedish Security Prevented an Attack. Three People Accused”, “Islamic State Flag Placed on the Damaged Berlin Rail Track”.¹⁷ In a surprising turn of phrase, the Polish Radio referred to Arab Muslim forces as “Saracenes” in a historical feature on the Battle of Poitiers (AD 732).¹⁸ While the term was in common use in Europe in the Middle Ages, today it has a definitive negative ring to it, and it was qualified only towards the end of the piece. However, despite such shortcomings, the Polish Radio also fulfils an educational role regarding the history of Islam. One of its offerings in 2018 included “From Makkah to Medina – How Muhammad Built Islam”,¹⁹ while in previous years Polish Radio broadcast educational pieces about Ayatollah Khomeini and Saladin.

14. “RPO: Spot wyborczy PiS ma antyuchodźczy i antymuzułmański character”, Wnp.pl, 24 October 2018, <https://www.wnp.pl/parlamentarny/spoleczenstwo/rpo-spot-wyborczy-pis-ma-antyuchodzczy-i-antymuzulmanski-character,34359.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

15. Katarzyna Kubicka-Żach, “RPO odwołuje się do sądu ws. spotu wyborczego PiS”, Prawo.pl, 10 December 2018, <https://www.prawo.pl/samorzad/spot-wyborczy-pis-o-migrantach-odwolanie-rpo-do-sadu,342372.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

16. Annabelle Chapman, “Pluralism under Attack: The Assault on Press Freedom in Poland. Report”, (Freedom House, Washington D.C: 2017), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/assault-press-freedom-poland>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

17. TVP Info, <https://www.tvp.info/szukaj?query=islam>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

18. “Bitwa pod Poitiers - zwycięstwo nad Saracenami”, Polskie Radio, <https://polskieradio24.pl/39/156/Artykul/2206561>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

19. “Z Mekki do Medyny - jak Mahomet budował islam”, Polskie Radio, <https://polskieradio24.pl/39/156/Artykul/1239976,Z-Mekki-do-Medyny-jak-Mahomet-budowal-islam>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

There are many right-wing daily and weekly titles that oppose Islam in any form, indeed anti-Muslim/anti-refugee prejudice seems to have become a part of their publishing strategy. These include, for example, *Gazeta Polska*, *Najwyższy Czas!*, *W Sieci*, and *Do Rzeczy*. Interestingly, their sales were declining in 2018.²⁰ Their columnists work from the established (if woefully incorrect and prejudiced) premise that forms the classic Islamophobic discourse. One example of such narrative is the article “Meeknes in Vienna” in *Do Rzeczy* which argues that Austria is being conquered by Muslim migrants, appropriating the Polish contribution to victory against the Turkish invasion in the 1683 Battle of Vienna as a symbol of Polish resistance to Islam at large.²¹ Tabloids (*Fakt*, *Super Express*) not only frequently link Islam to terrorism, but, predictably, exoticise and eroticise the faith as well. Sensationalised pieces about potential and thwarted “Islamist” terrorist attacks across Europe include, for example, “An ISIS Terrorist in Poland. Horrifying Details”.²² They also publish sex scandal-themed pieces such as “Sexual Orgies in Dubai: Sheikh’s Polish Wife Reveals Shocking Facts”.²³



Figure 1: The cover page of *Gazeta Polska* (30 August, 2017) which reads “Caliphate Europe” and references the perceived Islamisation of Western Europe.

Justice System

On 20 December, 2018, the man who spat at a teenage hijabi German Muslim in June 2017 was sentenced to 10 months in prison, with an additional two years’ probation. He was fined 1,500 PLN and ordered to pay the young woman 1,500

20. Sebastian Kucharski, “Tygodnik Powszechny wyprzedził Gazetę Polską. Duże spadki tygodników prawicowych”, *Wyborcza.pl*, 22 June 2018, <http://wyborcza.pl/7,156282,23581167,tygodnik-powszechny-wyprzedzil-gazete-polska-duze-spadki.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

21. Grzegorz Kucharczyk, “Wyznawcy islamu nie zdobyli Wiednia szturmem w XVII w., zdobyli go teraz, zasiedlając latami Austrię”, 13 September 2018, *DoRzeczy.pl*, <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/76919/Uleglosc-w-Wiedniu.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. Maziewski Łukasz, “Terrorysta ISIS w Polsce. Przeróżające szczegóły”, 20 March 2018, *Fakt.pl*, <https://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/polityka/szpiega-panstwa-islamskiego-w-polsce-byl-kierowany-z-syrii/kyrcet7>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

23. “Seksualne orgie w Dubaju. Żona szejka ujawnia szokujące fakty”, *Fakt.pl*, 10 November 2018, <https://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/polityka/zona-szejka-laila-shukri-dla-fakt24-o-zyciu-niewolnicy-w-zlotej-klatce/ghjmsbe>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

PLN and apologise to her in writing.²⁴ The sentencing was intended to demonstrate the “futility of committing hate crime” according to the prosecutor Anna Siwiec. In a similar case where a Chechen female refugee was publicly insulted, pushed, and kicked, a male was sentenced to four months in jail (with an additional 1-year probation). He was also ordered to read and deliver to the court an analysis of a book about Chechen women’s lives.²⁵ These sentences, as modest as they are, are not representative of the experience of most targets of hate crime in Poland. Meanwhile, 76% of hate crime investigations in Poland are discontinued.²⁶ While in 2018 there were no new laws introduced in Poland directly targeting Muslims, ignoring the real numbers behind the statistics is just one part of the problem. Kamil Fejfer from *Oko Press* pointed out that there are recently created structural problems which mean that police officers, border guards and prosecutors are simply not capable of identifying hate crime. Since 2015, Law and Justice has gradually removed professional development opportunities from these services which helped them learn to recognise hate crime. For example, a hate crime textbook for police officers has been withdrawn (it was described as “overly ideological”); the Human Rights Protection Team at the Ministry of Interior and Administration which monitored hate crime has been disbanded; the governmental Council for Fight against Racism and Xenophobia has been disbanded as well; and the tenders for training police officers and border guards by NGOs have been discontinued. This has visibly negatively affected the ability of a range of institutions to receive and act upon hate crime reports.

Internet

The cyberspace continues to be a breeding ground for hate speech in Poland. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Interior, Department of Security for the first nine months of 2018, 31% of all hate crimes in Poland (including crimes against different national, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities) were committed in cyberspace.²⁷ Specifically, hate speech comments occurred in 202 cases investigated by the police according to the same data set. If, using the coefficient suggested by the Om-

24. Jacek Szydłowski, “Napluł w twarz muzułmance w Lublinie. Kara ma uświadomić ‘nieopłacalność popełniania przestępstw z nienawiści””, *Dziennik Wschodni*, 8 December 2018, <https://www.dziennikwschodni.pl/lublin/naplul-w-twarz-muzulmance-w-lublinie-kara-ma-uswiadomic-nieoplacalnosc-popelniania-przestepstw-z-nienawisci,n,1000232792.html>, (Access date: 6 September 2019); Alina Pospichil, “Splunął w twarz turystce w hidżabie. ‘Przywiodła mi na myśl ataki terrorystyczne’. Wyrok”, *Wyborcza.pl*, 21 December 2018, <http://lublin.wyborcza.pl/lublin/7,48724,24303335,splunal-w-twarz-turystce-w-hidzabie-przywiodla-mi-na-mysl.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

25. Agata Łukaszewicz, “Książka do przeczytania i więzienie za pobicie muzułmanki”, *Rp.pl*, 5 December 2018, <https://www.rp.pl/Prawo-karne/312059943-Ksiazka-do-przeczytania-i-wiezienie-za-pobicie-muzulmanki.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

26. Monika Prończuk, “Minister Brudziński igra z ogniem: Polska to piękny, ‘czysty’ kraj. A nienawiść rośnie”, *Oko Press*, 24 July 2018, <https://oko.press/min-brudzinski-igra-z-ogniem-polska-to-piekny-czysty-kraj-a-nienawisc-rosnie/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. Freedom of Information Request (private email communication), Department of Security, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, 27 December 2018.

budsman's Office, we assume only 5% of hate crime is reported, it can be estimated that the real number of incidents is closer to 4,000.

According to recent research, over 80% of Polish youth and 40% of adults encountered anti-Muslim hate speech on the Internet.²⁸ Central Islamophobia network figures listed below regularly contribute to websites willing to publish more extreme statements than traditional media outlets. These websites include *euro-islam.pl* (which adopts the mantle of secular rationality), the main hub of Polish Islamophobia on the Internet, and *pch24.pl*, a conservative Catholic outlet. Notably, both websites published fake news-filled responses to the previous editions of EIR Poland. Right-wing newspapers and magazines mentioned earlier also have their online editions where readers profusely exchange hate-filled views. These include *wRealu24.pl*; *wpolityce.pl*; *wsieci.pl*; *fronda.pl*; *chmnews.pl*; *ndie.pl*; and *polskaligaobrony.org.pl*. Hate speech also profusely seeps through to comments sections of online editions of progressive titles.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Islamophobia networks in Poland continue to thrive, and they are increasingly being mainstreamed by the state apparatus and the Church. While the international outcry over some of the most absurd and publicised Islamophobic/anti-refugee events in 2017 may have superficially tempered the political climate in Poland, it would be incorrect to assume that there is meaningful positive change as far as openness to diversity is concerned. Individuals listed in EIR 2017 continue to be active in the public sphere; this is not an exclusive list but a selection of the propagators of Islamophobia most prominent in the Polish public sphere in 2018.



Figure 2: The cover page of *Wprost* magazine (7 March, 2016) depicting Miriam Shaded advocating for a ban on Islam.

28. Mikołaj Winiecki et al. "Mowa nienawiści, mowa pogardy: Raport z badania przemocy werbalnej wobec grup mniejszościowych" (Report, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Warsaw) http://www.batory.org.pl/upload/files/pdf/MOWA_NIENAWISCI_MOWA_POGARDY_INTERNET.pdf, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Miriam Shaded, a Polish-Syrian Christian, a right-wing celebrity and the president of Estera Foundation (a self-styled humanitarian organisation which, controversially, has brought only Christian refugees to Poland from the war-torn Syria and whose financing sources are unclear according to the news website *Wp.pl*²⁹), who recently stated that Islam should be banned in Poland³⁰ and that rape numbers increase in locations with high populations of Muslim immigrants;³¹ Tomasz Terlikowski, editor and one of the hosts of the programme *Clash of Civilizations* on Television Republic, the author of the book *Caliphate Europe*, recently stated that “Islam is the religion of the Antichrist”;³² Marcin Rola, chief editor of the right-wing website *wRealu24.pl*, who apologetically qualified his hate speech when challenged in an interview by the BBC journalist Nawal Al-Maghafi;³³ Witold Gadowski, a propagator of fake news about Islam;³⁴ priest Prof. Dariusz Oko, lecturer at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow and a Catholic “freelancer” who delivers Islamophobic public lectures (conveniently ignored by Catholic bishops).³⁵ Others who merit a mention in this unfortunate list are the ex-priest-turned-far-right-activist Jacek Międlar who recently absurdly claimed that Muslim men want to immigrate to Europe in order to “be intimate” with European women³⁶ and Wojciech Cejrowski, a right-wing commentator who stated in 2018 on Facebook that “we have a choice between Jews who want to cheat us, and Arabs who want to slaughter us”.³⁷

29. Ibid.

30. “Miriam Shaded u Atora o Delegalizacji Islamu w Polsce Stop Acta 2 i PIS – Wywiad”, Wideoprezentacje, 1 July 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EDZ4uc4B2s>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

31. “Miriam Shaded wPolsce.pl: ‘Liczba gwałtów rośnie w miejscach, w których są muzułmańscy imigranci’”, WPolityce.pl, 4 January 2018, <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/374882-miriam-shaded-wpolscepl-liczba-gwaltow-rosnie-w-miejscach-w-ktorych-sa-muzulmanscy-imigranci-wideo> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

32. Tomasz Terlikowski, Twitter, 21 January 2018, <https://twitter.com/tterlikowski/status/955005056914509824>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

33. Maciej Deja, “Marcin Rola w BBC. Prawicowy dziennikarz o mowie nienawiści”, Wp.pl, 26 June 2018, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/marcin-rola-w-bbc-prawicowy-dziennikarz-o-mowie-nienawisci-6266828577736321a>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

34. Jarosław Kociszewski, “Witold Gadowski w tygodniku ‘Sieci’ straszy islamem i uchodźcami. Sprawdziliśmy przykłady, które podaje”, Wp.pl, 10 January 2018, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/witold-gadowski-w-tygodniku-sieci-straszy-islamem-i-uchodzcam-i-sprawdzilismy-przyklady-ktore-podaje-6207861346592385a>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

35. Alicja Lehmann, “Echa islamofobicznego wykładu ks. Oko. Poznański imam prosi abp. Gądeckiego o reakcję”, Wyborcza.pl, 7 December 2017, <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,22747652,echa-islamofobicznego-wykladu-ks-oko-imam-prosi-abp-gadeckiego.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

36. “Europa to Raj dla Muzułmanów”, Wprawo.pl, 20 June 2018, <https://wprawo.pl/2018/06/20/europa-to-raj-dla-muzulmanow-jacek-miedlar-o-przyczynach-islamizacji-europy-i-sprawie-tommygo-robinsona-wideo/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

37. “Cejrowski ostro pojechał po Żydach i Arabach i mu Facebook wpis usunął”, Nczas.pl, 18 May 2018, <https://nczas.com/2018/05/18/cejrowski-ostro-pojechał-po-zydach-i-arabach-i-mu-facebook-wpis-usunął/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

In light of the failure of the state educational system to provide factual and objective information on Islam (barring specialised and elite university programmes), the role has been taken over to some extent by progressive media and other civil society actors.



Figure 3: "Islamophobias" issue of *Znak* magazine, February 2017.

Titles aimed at better-educated audiences, such as the prominent daily *The Electoral Gazette* (*Gazeta Wyborcza*), weeklies such as *Politics* (*Polityka*) or *Newsweek*, or the online-based *Oko Press* are most likely to both write about Islam and Muslims in a neutral manner and report on anti-Muslim prejudice occurring in Poland. They also depart from typical "framing" of the Muslim subject (historicisation, securitisation, eroticisation) and write engagingly about contemporary Polish Muslims and their allies. One excellent recent example of such journalism in *The Electoral Gazette* was the interview titled "Anna i Karol Wilczyński: Two Catholics Who Teach Respect for Islam. They Hear from Others: 'Y' All Are Strange"³⁸. In the absence of scholarship-based religious education at schools, these media help educate their audiences about Islam. Two other titles, the *Znak* (Sign) monthly and *Tygodnik Powszechny* (The Popular Weekly), a progressive Catholic weekly, deserve an honourable mention in regard to the quality of their reporting on Islam. For example, *Znak* published a series of on-point articles about Islamophobia in its February 2017 issue.³⁹

38. Renata Radłowska, "Anna i Karol Wilczyński: katolicy, którzy uczą szacunku do islamu. Słyszą: jesteście dziwni", *wyborcza.pl*, 26 November 2018, <http://wyborcza.pl/duzyformat/7,127290,24203980,anna-i-karol-wilczynscy-katolicy-ktorzy-ucza-szacunku-do.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

39. "Islamofobie", *Znak*, February 2017.



Figure 4: The cover page of the book *I Submit: The Lives of Muslim Women in Poland* by Anna J. Dudek (PWN, 2016).

There are some educational and bridge-building initiatives by a medley of progressive foundations, associations, and informal groups. A series of public lectures by Dr. Beata Abdallah-Krzepkowska, University of Silesia, hosted by the Raven Cultural Studies Institute, is a good example of such an initiative that discusses body and sexuality in Islam, Sufism, or Islamic social ethics, rarely addressed topics.⁴⁰ Dr. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska from SGH Warsaw School of Economics is another scholar using her expertise to counter ill-informed views about Islam.⁴¹ Recently, some books about the lives of Polish Muslims were published that approached the topic in a sensitive and insightful manner. *I Submit: The Lives Muslim Women in Poland* by Anna J. Dudek is representative of such literature. Unfortunately, expert voices and rigorous scholarship are often drowned out by the Islamophobic media din.

There are Muslim cultural centres in the largest cities in Poland including Warsaw, Poznań, Gdańsk, Lublin, and Katowice and these also offer resources, classes, talks, and workshops. Finally, the regional chapters of the Muslim League of the Republic of Poland organise talks such as “Facts and Myths on Animals in Islam” (this one was delivered in conjunction with the Ethnographic Museum in Gdańsk).

Since 2001, the Catholic Church annually celebrates “Islam Day”, which involves a range of ecumenical events and prayers across Poland.⁴² While this is a positive effort, the Church could speak out more forcefully against the rampant Islamophobia in Poland, including amongst its own clergy, exemplified by Fr. Oko mentioned earlier in this report.

40. Instytut Studiów Kulturowych Raven, *Raven.edu.pl*, <https://raven.edu.pl/wyklady/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

41. Magdalena Bryś, “Dr Hab. Górak-Sosnowska: Odreligijniać muzułmanina”, *Wiez.com.pl*, <http://wiez.com.pl/2018/08/29/odreligijniać-muzułmanina/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

42. “W piątek Dzień Islamu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce”, *Wiez.com.pl*, 24 January 2018, <http://wiez.com.pl/2018/01/24/w-piatek-dzien-islam-u-w-kościele-katolickim-w-polsce/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Inevitably, however, these civil society initiatives cannot replace systematic, rigorous religious education as they appeal to audiences who already independently and actively seek out information about Islam.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2018 was less eventful in terms of Islamophobic incidents at the national level than 2017. There were no prominent events with a significant Islamophobic undertone such as the 2017 Independence Day March, but it would be incorrect to assume that the problem of anti-Muslim prejudice has been resolved. Many state officials, as seen earlier in the report, have simultaneously insisted that Islam constitutes a threat to Polish values, while the problem of hate crime is decreasing. In other words, one problem is artificially constructed, and another swept under the carpet. The Polish Ombudsman's Office is the sole effective constitutional advocate of the Muslim minority in Poland. In absence of systemic protection for religious minorities in Poland, it falls to a range of human rights NGOs to record and monitor hate crime against Muslims. It is also these NGOs, along with some progressive media, who provide fact-based education about Islam. Regretfully, however, the scale of these efforts is insufficient to solve the problem of nationwide Islamophobia in Poland.

- This report therefore recommends that specialist, externally delivered training be delivered to police officers (especially those interacting with those reporting hate crime), border guards, and prosecutors to better recognise and address hate crime including crime based on religious belonging.
- The report also recommends that in order to tackle the problem of Islamophobia at the root, scholarship-based multi-religious education be introduced into the Polish education system. The confessional, insular Catholic instruction currently delivered in Polish schools does not promote inter-faith understanding or openness to difference that tend to flow from the knowledge of other faith traditions.

The policy recommendations made by the last two reports⁴³ have regretfully been ignored. In the face of this, we feel the necessity to restate them here.

- In order to challenge Islamophobia and other forms of xenophobia in Poland, at least minimally, the recognition at the highest level of the state that such issues exist is first and foremost necessary.
- It is also necessary to significantly strengthen widely understood anti-discrimination policies in the whole country. The dissolved governmental

43. Pędziwiatr Konrad, "Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2016", *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2017), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/POLAND.pdf>. (Access date: 5 September 2019); Anna Piela, Anna Łukjanowicz, "Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2017", *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Poland.pdf>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Council for Fight against Racism and Xenophobia should be reinstated or a new body should be created to address the issues of racism and xenophobia at the highest level and to overlook the policies undertaken to tackle these phenomena.

- Hate speech, contrary to what many right-wing organisations state, does not equal freedom of speech. There cannot be any tolerance of hate speech and all forms of hate crimes should be punished with outmost severity.
- A new mechanism of collecting data on hate crimes should be put in place.
- State institutions in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders (in particular within academia and the non-governmental sector) should identify some of the key issues of xenophobia and racism in the country and in cooperation with these stakeholders fight to build a more tolerant and inclusive society.
- Media organisations that advocate hate crime, including Islamophobic crime, and engage in hate speech ought to have their public funding cut, if they receive any. This recommendation should be legislated as soon as possible.

Chronology⁴⁴

- **08.01.2018:** A Saudi student was attacked at the Łódź Gallery mall by a male who hit him in the face and shouted “If you want to explode, do it at home!” A 33-year-old man was later detained and charged with violence based on national background.
- **15.01.2018:** An Egyptian national was verbally attacked in Oława by two men who were later charged with public insult based on national background.
- **12.02.2018:** Two males attacked three Moroccan nationals employed at a kebab eatery in Gniezno. The perpetrators aimed a gun at the Moroccans and shouted that “they should get the fuck out of Poland” and “Poland is for Poles”. This was not the first time the eatery and its employees were racially abused. The District Prosecutor’s Office has qualified this hate crime as public exhortation of hate based on national difference and public insult based on national background.
- **15.03.2018:** A customer at a Warsaw store was verbally abusing and threatening a security guard who was a Moroccan national. The guard prevented the perpetrator from leaving the store and a fight ensued. Robert J. was detained and charged with punishable threats and public insult based on racial background.

44. Unless stated otherwise, these incidents are a selection from *Brown Book – Hate Crime Monitoring* (forthcoming), by the Never Again Association. Private email correspondence from 7 January 2019. I would like to thank the Never Again Association for kindly compiling the list of incidents for the purpose of this report.

- **March & April 2018:** 54-year-old Tomasz G. from Ząbki threatened Chechen refugees with death and insulted their background. He was detained and his apartment was searched - police found several guns, ammunition, and grenades. The prosecutor charged him with illegal threats and public insult based on national background.
- **06.04.2018:** A woman in a Muslim headscarf was attacked by a middle-aged man. When she passed him by, he shouted “Muslim woman, have you got a lighter?”, then he called her a “whore” and threw a lit cigarette at her.
- **Mid-April 2018:** According to the triathlete Mikołaj Luft, the director of the Sport and Rehabilitation Centre at the Warsaw Medical University banned visitors from bringing in backpacks. She explained that “there are Arab students here who might blow up the swimming pool”. She subsequently denied saying this.
- **13.05.2018:** Three people attacked the owner of a kebab eatery in Warsaw who was Egyptian. They beat him with a metal rod and kicked him all over his body. A woman who was accompanying the men was shouting racist slurs at him. They threatened him with death and broke a window. They have been detained and charged with public insult, beating with a dangerous tool, death threats, and damage to property.
- **28.05.2018:** Wioletta M., a woman living in the village of Mrowiny, publicly insulted a 15-year-old son of her neighbour who had a dark complexion. She was shouting “You’re an Arab, a fucking terrorist!” The boy’s mother reported this to the police, and subsequently Wioletta M. was charged with public insult of a minor.
- **17.05.2018:** Wojciech Cejrowski tweeted that “in the [Arab-Israeli] conflict we can choose to support either Jews who want to cheat us or Arabs who want to slaughter us”.
- **09.08.2018:** Two men attacked the Pakistani owners of a kebab eatery in Radom. They were threatening that they would burn the premises down and shouting racist slurs. One of the Pakistanis was also beaten and a window was broken. Both attackers were detained and charged with insult based on national and religious background as well as violence against the Pakistani national.
- **19.08.2018:** Two men wearing football scarves with Legia Warszawa symbols verbally abused a male with a darker complexion in a No. 33 tram by the Warsaw Central station. A female passenger (the only person who defended the man) was then also abused. The perpetrators were using racial slurs and shouted “Stop the Islamisation of Europe”!
- **30.08.2018:** A Polish-Egyptian married couple were attacked in their

restaurant in Krasnystaw. The attackers repeatedly threatened them with death, spat at them, and beat them with their fists. Despite the restraining order and the police inquiry, the attacks continued.

- **01.09.2018:** An unidentified male verbally attacked a passenger with a dark complexion in tram No. 6 between Katowice Centrum and Katowice Brynów Stations. Only one female passenger tried to defend the targeted man; the rest of the passengers and the tram driver did not react. The woman was then also attacked. The attacker shouted “Islam is terrorism”, “Fuck Islam”, and other slurs.
- **11.09.2018:** In a public speech aimed at students of the Jan III Sobieski High School in Krakow, the Lesser Poland Education Inspector Barbara Nowak said in the Main Market Square, “The patron of your school was a fantastic king who was able to defend entire Europe from Islam. What a wonderful role model for you”.
- **05.10.2018:** An unidentified male attacked four Turkish students in a No. 17 tram in Warsaw (between the Rondo ONZ and Warsaw Central Station stops). He hit one of the students on the head and verbally abused the group. The attack was reported to the police with the assistance of the Turkish Embassy officials but the attacker was not tracked down and the investigation was discontinued.
- **19.10.2018:** Wojciech Cejrowski incited anti-Muslim hatred by tweeting to his followers a request for photographs of Muslims in the streets. This resulted in a stream of photographs (illegally and non-consensually) posted in response and abusive comments. Cejrowski himself tweeted a photo of 3 women wearing Islamic dress. This prompted further anti-Muslim slurs.
- **11.11.2018:** Banners “Islam is Enemy of Europe” and “Delete Islam” displayed during the Independence March in Warsaw.⁴⁵
- **15.12.2018:** Five supporters of Legia Warsaw football club attacked two passengers of Turkish background in bus No. 521 in Warsaw. They sang a racist song and shouted slurs, and then one of them hit one of the targets in the face. The attackers fled after the bus driver reluctantly called the police. The attacked man tried to report this at three police stations, but the officers in charge refused to file the report citing “the lack of time”. Eventually the attackers were detained and charged.
- **21-22.12.2018:** A large group of males (over ten) attacked three Arab students at the Katowice Central Rail Station. Initially, they verbally abused them, but this quickly escalated. They hit one of the students in the back of

45. “Biało-Czerwony Marsz przeszedł ulicami Warszawy. Policja: 250 tysięcy uczestników”, Polskie Radio, 12 November 2018, <https://polskieradio24.pl/5/3/Artykul/2213499>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

the head and pushed him to the ground. Other students were also attacked, and one of them was pushed on the rail track just before the train departed. The security guards who were present did not intervene. Other passengers called the ambulance and police services.