

Report: Islamophobia in Slovakia

Alternative report for the 94th session of the Committee on
the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

Islamic Foundation in Slovakia
Bratislava

Submission date: 26/10/2017

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Introduction

Following paper summarizes status of islamophobia in Slovakia. Taking into consideration the relatively small Muslim community in Slovakia – Muslims make up to 0,1% of the total population – islamophobia did not use to be a hot topic in Slovak discourse. This however changed dramatically during the so called “refugee crisis” in Europe since the second half of 2015. But since Slovakia offered shelter to almost no refugees, the discourse was mostly virtual. Therefore by far most obvious is islamophobia on internet and islamophobic statements by majority of Slovak politicians, while real-life attacks are much more scarce than in European countries where muslim communities are much bigger.

There were couple of studies on the topic of dealing with islamophobia in the context of Slovakia by local NGOs such as People Against Racism or Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, however mostly in the form of rather shorter chapters and comments as a part of bigger projects on wider topics. It is pure fact that issues with other, main ethnic minorities, especially Hungarians and Roma, are of much larger significance in the context of Slovak republic. Specific studies and projects focused solely on the case of islamophobia in Slovakia are lacking.

This is not to say that Muslims in Slovakia would be without any problems. On the contrary, they are dealing with severe issues, of which the main one are registration of Islam as a state religion, without which Muslims are feeling as 2nd class religious group in compare to members of other religions such as recognized Christian demoninations or Jews¹. Another issue is missing official mosque or Islamic center and refusal of the local governing organs to grant permission to build one.

We could discuss and guess what motivated authorities not to allow islamic center to be build in Slovakia so far, however without any kind of official statements it would be nothing more than giving away our ideas and impressions. We think that there is not enough evidence to prove that islamophobia is the cause for the denial of permission to build an islamic culture center, so we chose not to include these issues into the report. We however do have reason to think that the lacking registration of Islam as a religion in Slovakia can be linked to anti-muslim sentiments. We lay out our reasons in the following paragraph.

¹ See International Religious Freedom Report for 2015, Slovak Republic – U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=256241#wrapper> (accessed 22/9/2016)

Muslims in Slovakia

It is difficult to get the exact number of Muslims in Slovakia because of the absence of serious statistics on this topic. According to our judgment the estimated number of Muslims to this day is approximately 5000 people. Muslims in Slovakia differ on the ethnical basis with the relative majority of Arabs. Except for Arabs, to the main ethnic groups of Muslims belong Albanians, Bosnians, Afghans, but also Slovak converts. In lower numbers there are Turks, Pakistanis, as well as Muslims from the former USSR. Most of the Muslims are of a young age and there are more males than females.

As for the Arabs, they are whether students, university graduates or businessmen. Albanians are working mostly in gastronomy and confectionery. The vast majority of Afghans are doctors or engineers who graduated in universities in Slovakia. Bosnians work mostly as traders and businessmen. Slovak converts are either students or employees (however most of them live abroad due to economical situation). They are usually of a young age too and there are more women than men. There are approximately 500 of them until this day.

Muslims live in all parts of Slovakia but their main concentration is in the capital city of Bratislava, Kosice, Nitra, Levice, Trnava, Martin, Zilina, Piestany.

Discrimination by the law

According to Slovak legislation every religious community that wants to have same rights as already recognized religious communities in Slovakia (such as catholic or orthodox church, jewish religious community etc.) has to fulfill set of requirements before it is allowed to apply for the recognition by the state. Until this day Islam is not officially recognized by Slovak state as a religion with rights equal to religions that obtained official registration. Among these rights is the right to perform religious marriages equal to civil state marriages, the right to teach Islam as a part of religious education in state schools, the right to offer religious support of Imams to prisoners and soldiers or the right to perform funeral rituals in the accordance with the islamic religious tradition.

The lack of registration is caused especially by – in comparison with other EU member states – unusually strict law stating the requirements religious community has to meet before applying for recognition by the state. There used to be theoretical

chance to achieve the registration until 2007, when the government passed novelization of the law that deals with the requirements for state registration of the religious communities. Before this novelization it was sufficient to provide signatures of 20 thousand sympathizers, who agreed that the religious community shall be recognized by the state. However the novelization changed these conditions and decided that the state would require 20 thousand signatures of the members of the religion, who are citizens of Slovakia, have permanent residence in Slovakia and are more than 18 years old. These requirements are far from the reality of Muslim community in Slovakia, which has up to 5 thousand members including children and students, refugees and seasonal workers, who don't have the citizenship not permanent residence.

The current registration law is repeatedly mentioned in the International Religious Freedom Report conducted annually by U. S. Department of State.² The report criticizes the law as discriminatory towards small religions citing examples such as inability to perform religious marriages with official recognition or religious funerals.

While the government officially did not mention any Muslim-related reason for the change, several political actors uttered remarks suggesting that the issue of possible registration of Islam was indeed present when the novelization was created and approved by the national assembly.

The idea to change the law came short after a group of Muslims announced that they want to begin to collect signatures for the registration.³

The head of one of the governing parties at that time Slovak National Party (SNS) Ján Slota said shortly before the change was approved: „With the registration of islamic faith in the Slovak republic as the official church in such a boom-boom [quick] way, and after that Muslims in turbans will run around in there, so this is something that SNS disagrees with.“

SNS's deputy Rafael Rafaj, when arguing in the national assembly for support of the novelization, said: „It was announced that there is proposal for the registration of Islam, I have informations that even the Scientology church is active in Slovakia. Politicians have to reflect on those events in advance.“⁴

² United States Department of State: International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 – Slovak Republic <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222479.pdf> (accessed 30/3/2015)

³ Government parties opposed to small churches <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/152603-vladne-strany-sa-postavili-proti-malym-cirkvam/> (accessed 1/3/2015)

⁴ SME: They want to stop small churches <http://www.sme.sk/c/3129969/chcu-zastavit-male-cirkvi.html> (accessed 22/9/2016)

9 years later, in January 2016 in a TV debate Minister of Culture Marek Maďarič confessed that in his opinion the law is positive because it prevents „islamism“. He said: „I am proud of the fact that the Ministry of Culture under my leadership in the first term initiated legislative amendment that requires 20.000 members to register a church. It is a very good law especially thanks to this, that it prevents penetration of the forces of, not Islam, but islamism.“⁵ Maďarič was Minister of Culture not only in 2016, but also in 2007, when the amendment was proposed and approved.

The very author of the amendment MP Ján Podmanický confessed to his anti-Muslim sentiment in the interview for website Webnoviny.sk on 21st of August 2016. Here he claimed that the fact that London elected its first Muslim mayor is a sign of incoming death of native Europeans. He argued that once Muslims start to be elected in leading positions in European countries, they gain access to their weapons, such as nuclear warheads, which is a great security risk.⁶ His statements illustrate that anti-Muslim sentiment could indeed have been responsible for the proposal of the amendment.

As if the law wasn't strong already, in November 2016 an amendment passed in the National Assembly lifting the quota from 20.000 to 50.000 signature. Head of SNS Andrej Danko announced in 2015 that should his party be part of the government, he will propose this change. His argument was that the number of Muslims is growing and even mentioned that there could be as much as 20.000 of them (we are not aware of any estimate even coming close to this number and Danko didn't quote any source of this information). The law according to him should help to prevent „islamization“ of Slovakia.⁷ His party did well in election in 2016 and formed government with two other parties. Danko did actually propose the amendment together with few other MPs and the law was passed by vote.⁸

⁵ RTVS: O 5 minute 12 <http://www.rtvsk.sk/televizia/archiv/10013/84336> (accessed 22/9/2016)

⁶ Webnoviny.sk: Podmanický: Muslim politicians can gain access to weapons
<http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/1094876-podmanickymuslimski-politici-sa-mozu-dostat-k-zbranim/> (accessed 22/9/2016)

⁷ ISLAMONLINE.sk: Keď ešte Danko nebol vo vláde, prezradil pravý dôvod, prečo chce SNS sprísniť registráciu cirkví
<http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/09/sns-vravi-ze-sprisnenie-registracie-ma-zabranit-spekulantom-ni-e-je-to-cela-pravda/> (15/12/2016)

⁸ New York Times: A Blow-Slovak Muslims Critical of New Church Law
http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/12/02/world/europe/ap-eu-rel-slovakia-islam.html?_r=0 (15/12/2016). Independent: Slovakia bars Islam from becoming state religion by tightening church laws
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/slovakia-bars-islam-state-religion-tightening-church-laws-robert-fico-a7449646.html> (15/12/2016). Reuters: Slovakia toughens church registration

The president of Slovak republic Andrej Kiska rejected to sign the amendment, what forced National Assembly to vote on it once again. The definitive vote happened in early 2017 and the amendment was approved once again.

It is also worth noting that on 22th of November 2016 member of Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia and member of parliament Stanislav Mizík proposed an additional amendment to increase the threshold for state recognition of religious communities from 20.000 to 250.000 signatures. The proposal argued⁹ that this would be „an effective tool to prevent the infiltration of non-Christian religious organizations and other sects into Slovak society in near future.“ The amendment did not pass the parliament.

Physical and verbal attacks

Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) is not aware of any physical attack on islamic buildings that was reported and confirmed to be a hate crime against Muslims by Slovak authorities, we are however aware of several physical attacks targeting Muslim individuals.

INS documented¹⁰ one such incident in 2011, when Muslim woman with her 5-year old son was attacked by a group of men. She was at first insulted verbally after which one of the men emptied bottle of alcohol on her clothes. Case was immediately reported to police, however no further legal steps were taken. INS does not have the knowledge whether the police treated the case a hate crime.

In the aftermath of the attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris in the beginning of 2015 Islamic Foundation in Slovakia asked members of its community to report any hate crimes, since the attack led to the wave of islamophobic incidents in the West. Two events were reported.

One Muslim woman claimed to find the tires on her car to be pierced by someone several days after the attack in Paris. It happened during the night in her neighborhood. Her car was parked among others in the parking area. After she got her tires fixed, the other morning she found them pierced again. She feels it could be due to her religion because she is well-known in the neighborhood and she knows

rules to bar Islam <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-slovakia-religion-islam-idUSKBN13P2oC>
(15/12/2016)

⁹ NR SR: Amendment 7 0273

http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=schodze%2Fnrepdn_detail&id=2358 (26/04/2017)

¹⁰ Muslim woman in Bratislava attacked by group of men

<http://www.islamweb.sk/stranky/spravodajstvo/domov/06.06.11.htm> (accessed 19/08/2013)

there are people who oppose to her being Muslim. As far as we know she did not report the case to the police, only to INS.¹¹

The other case is about a Muslim child who was bullied in the school for being „terrorist“. The kid was even followed by older school mates on his way from school and someone threw soil on his head. The school did not take any specific action beyond regular steps that are usually taken in cases of general bullying.¹²

Gathering of far-right groups against immigration and islamization of Europe took place in Bratislava on 21st of June 2015. In aftermath of the gathering certain Arab family was attacked by a group of protesters near the main train station. Protesters were throwing stones and bottles at the family including its small children. Police officers present at the moment tried to protect the family and later escorted them to Taxi, which took them back to hotel. We do not know whether police arrested or prosecuted any of the attackers.¹³

With the beginning of the school year, group of parents in a primary school in Topoľčany, town in central Slovakia, began to collect signatures for petition against muslim child that was going to attend local school. According to the director of the school the petition was never submitted to them.¹⁴

On 21st of September 2015 a man saw a Muslim woman with face covering getting of the trolley in downtown area of Bratislava. As she stepped out towards the bus stop, a man waiting for bus kicked her down to the ground. The attacker was 20 to 22 years old. The Muslim woman was holding a meal that spread around as she fell. She hit her face and started bleeding. The attacker jumped on the following trolley and left. Someone called an ambulance. Witness reported this on his Facebook profile, from where it was shared further. The source of this information went further his way, so no aftermath of this case is known.¹⁵

¹¹ Slovak Muslims are afraid. The effects of attacks in Paris were reflected in here too
<http://www.islamonline.sk/2015/01/takto-na-slovensku-po-parizi-utocili-na-muslimov-zakazovali-mesity-aj-prepichovali-gumy/> (accessed 1/3/2015)

¹² Slovak Muslims are afraid. The effects of attacks in Paris were reflected in here too
<http://www.islamonline.sk/2015/01/takto-na-slovensku-po-parizi-utocili-na-muslimov-zakazovali-mesity-aj-prepichovali-gumy/> (accessed 1/3/2015)

¹³ The Slovak Spectator: Attacked Saudi family was here for son's graduation
<http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20058370/attacked-saudi-family-was-here-for-sons-graduation.html>
(27/01/2016)

¹⁴ Denník N: Muslims in Topoľčany? Sometimes they spit on them
<https://dennikn.sk/241190/moslimovia-v-okresnom-meste-obcas-lietaju-nenavistne-sliny/>
(27/01/2016)

¹⁵ Facebook status from 21/09/2015:
<https://www.facebook.com/cemanpeter/posts/10200859612527937> (23/11/2015)

In the aftermath of Charlie Hebdo an unknown person was following Somali woman and her son in Bratislava, until they took a shelter in a nearby cafe. After a few minutes the person left. The woman did not report this incident to police, however it was not the last time she was attacked. On 1st of April 2016 she was robbed while entering a public transportation vehicle in the Bratislava city center, the burglar screamed words, of which she understood only “terrorist”, “black”, “dirty” and „Muslim“. No passenger stood up to help her. She called the police who picked her up and wrote a report with her.¹⁶ She experienced another two incidents in the same year. In one case an unknown man strangled her by her headscarf in a tram surrounded by other people who did not help her. Both were reported to the police. She was willing to speak up about her experiences in an extensive interview for national newspaper, for which she was later awarded human rights award White Crow. We do not know how police resolved these cases.¹⁷

On 17th of August 2016 group of youngsters called on the Arab hosts of Turkish restaurant in Slovak city Piešťany things such as “We will get rid of you” or “We will kill you all!” In the night of the same day the owner found the windows of the his restaurant broken. Both cases were reviewed by the police, but we do not know about any further actions taken by the police.¹⁸

In May 2017 Muslim woman, employee of the Embassy of Indonesia, was being shouted at at the entrance of her apartment. Unknown person shouted: „Go back to where you came from. Go home!“

In June 2017 someone shouted at two Muslim women in hijabs while they were walking down the street in the center of Bratislava. The voice shouted: „Terrorists? Again?“ In another case in the same city in same month someone shouted at Muslim couple near their apartment. Couple was carrying a travel bag, when a man sitting nearby asked: „What is in that bag? Isn't it a bomb?“

In August 2017 two Muslim women were verbally and physically attacked at the evening near the bus stop Zochová in the center of Bratislava. Unknown people were

¹⁶ ISLAMONLINE.sk: Muslim woman in center of Bratislava was attacked and robbed. Police is solving the case

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/04/muslimku-v-centre-bratislavy-napadli-a-okradli-pripad-riesi-policia/> (accessed 22/9/2016)

¹⁷ White Crow awards vie against hatred

<https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20386643/white-crow-awards-vie-against-hatred.html> (26/04/2017)

¹⁸ TV JOJ

<http://www.noviny.sk/slovensko/trnava/165098-mladik-chcel-robit-poriadky-s-arabmi-skoncil-v-rukach-policie> (2/11/2016)

shouting vulgar comments on them and someone tried to take off the hijab of one of the women. The case was not reported to the police, only to INS.

In another case in same month a Muslim woman was surrounded by the crowd in the city of Trnava. Crowd was saying vulgar comments when another unknown woman managed to rescue her and took her to safety.

Discrimination by institutions and companies

On 3rd of August 2016 media reported about the case of a hotel in Bratislava that refused to accommodate Turks and Arabs. Three students requested the accommodation via portal [booking.com](https://www.booking.com), but received the following reply: „For safety reasons in case, not staying in the hotel people from Turkey and Arab states. We not accept reservation.“¹⁹ Trade inspection reviewed the hotel in the following days and found numerous faults.

In 2017 a muslim child was excluded from kindergarten due to the prejudices of teacher and director. The child was born outside the Slovakia and its parents are practicing Muslims. Director and teacher marked the child as „real threat for other children and teachers themselves.“ The case is currently in court.

Hate speech by politicians

On 8th of December 2009 head of Christian-democratic movement (KDS), small christian-democratic party, by this time not in national assembly anymore, Vladimir Palko offered a speech to the assembly about at that time hot topic, the ban of crucifixes in government schools in Italy. During his speech he moved far from the stated topic to talk about the “dangers” of presence of Muslims in Europe, namely in Austria, which is neighboring country to Slovakia.²⁰ His speech included a lot of misconceptions, stereotypical informations about members of this religion and a great amount of generalization.

On 1st of September 2011 vice president of SNS (Slovak national party) Andrej Danko announced that SNS will propose ban on minarets in Slovakia in Slovak

¹⁹ Facebook status with the reply from the hostel:

<https://www.facebook.com/ibrahimtahauyar/posts/10209051020568625> (accessed 22/9/2016)

²⁰ Palko and his company - mouthpieces xenophobia in NRSR

<http://lenc.blog.sme.sk/c/213431/Palko-a-jeho-partia-hlasne-truby-xenofobov-v-NRSR.html>

(accessed 19/03/2014)

national assembly.²¹ It is important to note that at that time (and until this day) there exists no official mosque or Islamic centre in Slovakia and there were as well no plans for construction of any minarets.

Same political figure Andrej Danko on 11th of January 2012 welcomed vice president of Austrian FPÖ Johann Gudenus and spoke on the topic of Islamization of Europe. During public speech of the two Danko warned against the possibility of construction of mosque in Bratislava while mentioning even land in ownership of Islamic Foundation that could eventually be used for this purpose. He said his NO to so called “Islamization of Europe”.²² Two days later he developed his views against islam in Europe in his personal blog.²³

Andrej Danko spoke on the topic once again, already as SNS’s new leader, in the television discussion on Slovak state TV channel before elections to the European Parliament on 13th of May 2014²⁴. There he again warned the Europe against the threat of islamization and “muslimization” and repeated his statement that “mosque has no place in Bratislava (slovak capital)”.

On 2nd of March 2014 Slovak national party published on its official website article of Viktor Bondarenko²⁵, in which he expresses his thoughts on Islam and Muslims. Bodarensko in a simplifying manner argues that just as was the case with communism in the past, today Europe is endangered by Islam that is according to him by its very nature intolerant and aggressive ideology. Islam is by his words nowadays supported by EU politicians, whom he calls „nearsighted naive fools of Brussels“. Later on Bondarenko touched the typical argument: why should we let them build mosques when there are no churches in Muslim countries. Finally Bondarenko appreciates the minaret ban in Switzerland that should serve as an example to follow.

²¹ SNS found new threat: minarets

<http://www.sme.sk/c/6038438/sns-nasla-dalsiu-hrozbu-minarety.html> (accessed 19/08/2013)

²² Andrej Danko welcomed vice president of austrian FPÖ Johann Gudenus in Bratislava

<http://www.sns.sk/aktuality/andrej-danko-prijal-v-bratislave-viceprezidenta-fpo-johanna-gudenusa-najvaznejsim-problemom-europy-je-jej-islamizacia-eu-vsak-zlyhava-pri-rieseni-viacerych-otazok-2/> (accessed 19/08/2013)

²³ SNS and FPÖ: Stop islamization!

<http://andrejdanko.blog.sme.sk/c/286031/SNS-a-FP-Stop-islamizacii.html> (accessed 19/08/2013)

²⁴ News and Comments – Elections to European Parliament 2014, see 00:15:30 to 00:17:15

<http://www.rtvs.sk/televizia/program/detail/24/spravy-a-komentare-volby-do-europskeho-parlamentu-2014/archiv?date=13.05.2014> (accessed 17/05/2014)

²⁵ Viktor Bondarenko: Mosques in Slovakia

<http://www.sns.sk/blog/viktor-bondarenko-mesity-na-slovensku/> (accessed 17/04/2014)

Andrej Danko repeated his statement on the mosque in Bratislava once again in interview for The News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR) on 21st of September 2014. He said he respects everyone regardless of his or her belief but immigrants should adapt to the way of life in EU.²⁶

He returned to this topic in aftermath of the attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris. He held a press conference on 12th of January 2015, where he stated his goal to increase the minimal number of signatures of believers required for the recognition from 20 thousand to 50 thousand while clearly explaining that the purpose of it would be to prevent Muslims from obtaining the registration.²⁷ He also reminded that he will continue to promote the legislation preventing Muslims from building mosques and minarets. During the television discussion on the TV channel TA3 later in the same day Danko also mentioned that he „could not imagine that his Muslim employee would perform the prayer during working hours.“²⁸

On 8th of October 2017 Danko's party SNS issued press release, where it claimed intention in promise the ban on burqas (Muslim clothes covering face) in Slovakia following same ban in Austria few months earlier.²⁹

Slovak government made its way into headlines of world's media after its announcement, that Slovakia will accept and integrate 200 refugees under the condition that they have to be Christians³⁰. This decision came during the so called „refugee crises“ in August 2015 where hundreds of thousands of refugees started to move to Europe from Middle East and Africa. When a journalist from the Wall Street Journal asked Slovak government about the reason behind this decision, he was told by the spokesmen of Ministry of Interior that Slovakia has no mosque nor other

²⁶ A. Danko: I dislike that in politics everyone is everyone's friend
<http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/sns-danko-strache-hrko-kozak/98833-clanok.html> (accessed 23/09/2014)

²⁷ Danko: We need to adopt legislative measures against islamization of Slovakia
<http://www.hlavnespravdy.sk/danko-treba-prijat-legislativne-opatrenia-proti-islamizacii-slovenska/502021> (accessed 1/3/2015)

²⁸ The security in EU after the attacks / The threat of Islam?
<http://www.ta3.com/clanok/1054231/bezpecnost-v-eu-po-utokoch-hrozba-islam.html> (accessed 1/3/2015)

²⁹ Nový čas:
<https://www.cas.sk/clanok/603980/kontroverzny-navrh-z-dielne-kapitana-danka-zakazeme-na-slove-nsku-burky/> 22/10/2017

³⁰ BBC: Migrants crisis: Slovakia 'will only accept Christians'
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33986738> (19/09/2015)

services for Muslims to profess their faith.³¹ Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) issued a statement where it expressed sadness over the decision.³²

The acting prime minister of Slovakia Robert Fico uttered a number of islamophobic remarks while in his office. It is very interesting that the topic of Islam for completely invisible for him up until the year of 2015, but when he decided to dive in to islamophobic rhetoric, his comments quickly became of the most discriminatory statements in the Slovak political space.

On 24th of January 2015 he said in talk show on the national radio station that „since Slovakia is the country where catholic church is the dominant one... we could hardly tolerate that 300-400 thousand Muslims would come here and start to build their mosques and change the character of the state.“³³

He returned to the topic on 9th of September 2015 when he commented on the decision of Slovak government to only accept Christian refugees into Slovakia. „Forgive me but I find it hard to imagine how a Muslim could be integrated in Slovakia, because he has no background nor relatives here...“³⁴, he said.

During his press conference on 15th of September 2015 as part of the answer to one of the questions prime minister said: „One day we could have here 40-50 thousand of Muslims, who will have their own church, they will be present in army, in police, is this what we really want? We know nothing about them. The security risk is too high.“³⁵

On 15th of November 2015, few days after the terrorist attacks in the French capital, prime minister said in television debate on TA3 station with regard to the steps that Slovak government took to prevent similar attack in Slovakia: „We are monitoring every single Muslim, who is currently present in the territory of Slovakia.“

³¹ WSJ: Migration Crisis Pits EU's East Against West

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/migration-crisis-pits-eus-east-against-west-1439957453> (19/09/2015)

³² Statement of Islamic Foundation in Slovakia with regard to picking migrants on religious basis

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2015/07/stanovisko-islamskej-nadacie-na-slovensku-k-vyberu-migrantov/> (19/09/2015)

³³ Fico: We could hardly tolerate thousands of Muslims with mosques

<http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/915511-fico-tisicky-moslimov-s-mesitami-by-sme-tolero-vali-tazko/> (accessed 1/3/2015)

³⁴ Would we accept even Muslims? Fico can hardly imagine their integration, although his speech softened

<http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/303773/prijali-by-sme-aj-moslimov-fico-si-ich-integraciu-vie-len-tazko-predstavit-ale-jazyk-zjemnil/> (19/09/2015)

³⁵ Press conference of R. Fico and R. Kaliňák regarding obligatory quotas:

<http://www.ta3.com/clanok/1069232/tb-r-fica-a-r-kalinaka-k-povinnym-kvotam.html> (19/09/2015)

³⁶ Islamic Foundation in Slovakia issued a highly critical statement on the same day³⁷. To clarify his statement, Mr. Fico said for media on the next day after observing a minute's silence outside his country's French embassy that with the exception of Breivik „virtually every time there has been a terrorist attack [in Europe] representatives of Muslims were responsible.“³⁸ The statement about most of the terrorists being Muslims was repeated by Slovak Minister of Interior Róbert Kaliňák the following Saturday in debate on Slovak national radio.³⁹ In a statement for media, prime minister said on 12th of December that „we won't drag any Muslims to Slovakia“.⁴⁰

He took perhaps his strongest and most clear stand against Slovak Muslims in a press statement on 7th of January 2016 in the aftermath of sexual assaults in Cologne in part conducted by migrants from Africa and Middle East. Mr. Fico said: „...We will never make a voluntary decision that would lead to formation of a united Muslim community in Slovakia.“⁴¹ The statement was repeated several times during the speech and prime minister was later found to pay for online advertisement prior general elections that reads: „R. Fico: We have to prevent formation of a united Muslim community in Slovakia.“⁴² Islamic Foundation of Slovakia issued yet another statement⁴³ and number of journalists⁴⁴ and NGOs⁴⁵ stood up to show support for

³⁶ TA3: Security of Slovakia: <http://www.ta3.com/clanok/1072856/bezpecnost-slovenska.html> (27/01/2016)

³⁷ ISLAMONLINE.sk: The announcement of Islamic Foundation with regard to the shocking statement of Slovakian PM about monitoring „every single Muslim“
<http://www.islamonline.sk/2015/11/stanovisko-islamskej-nadacie-na-slovensku-k-sokujucemu-vyroku-predsedu-vlady-o-monitorovani-vsetkych-slovenskych-muslimov/> (27/01/2016)

³⁸ The Independent: 'We are monitoring every Muslim' after Paris attacks, claims Slovakian PM
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/we-are-monitoring-every-muslim-after-paris-attacks-claims-slovakian-pm-a6737851.html> (27/01/2016)

³⁹ RTVS: Saturday's dialogues <http://www.rtvs.sk/radio/archiv/1134/332988> (27/01/2016)

⁴⁰ TERAZ: Multifunctional playground refinanced from the state budget
<http://www.teraz.sk/regiony/hajske-multifunkcne-ihrisko-fico/171036-clanok.html> (27/01/2016)

⁴¹ The Independent: Slovakian Prime Minister warns country will stop Muslim refugees from entering
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/slovakia-wants-to-stop-muslim-migrants-from-entering-a6803811.html> (27/01/2016)

⁴² Denník N: Fico pay for his words about Muslims to be seen
<https://dennikn.sk/340650/fico-plati-aby-slova-moslimoch-vidno/> (27/01/2016)

⁴³ ISLAMONLINE.sk: Declaration regarding the recent cases of sexual violence in Germany
<http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/vyhlasenie-k-nedavnym-pripadom-sexualneho-nasilia-v-nemecku/> (27/01/2016)

⁴⁴ ISLAMONLINE.sk: Andrej Bán writes to the Muslim community in Slovakia: I am with you
<http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/andrej-ban-pise-muslimskej-komunite-na-slovensku-som-s-vami/> (27/01/2016)

Slovak Muslims. Prime minister's comments were criticized even by number of politicians and defensive position took even member of his own party and leader of Slovak diplomacy Miroslav Lajčák.⁴⁶

Many observers thought that the comments of Mr. Fico were solely related to the parliamentary elections, which took place in March 2016 and that he would stop once the election is over. However two months after the election, on May 2016, during the interview for the Slovak National Press Agency (TASR), he said: "It may look strange but sorry ... Islam has no place in Slovakia." The statement became quickly viral and was reported by a number of foreign newspapers.⁴⁷

In a briefing for journalists on 3rd November 2016 prime minister Fico said that he wants to „repeat three fundamental positions that he is not willing to change.“ Of them the very first one was reassurance that he is still „principally against the emergence of a united Muslim community in Slovakia.“⁴⁸ He repeated his position on „united Muslim community in Slovakia“ once again in radio interview on 25th of September 2017.⁴⁹

During the celebration of the national holiday on 5th of June 2017 he spoke of the conflict between West and East and said that is important to protect christianity and Europe against migration and Islam.⁵⁰

On 28th of May 2015 the head of opposition party SaS and currently member of European Parliament Richard Sulík wrote blogpost joining the debate on the several hundreds of immigrants that could have been accepted by Slovakia. This was a part

⁴⁵ ISLAMONLINE.sk: Slovaks stand up for Muslims. They are writing emails, taking pictures with kebabs and sign letter of support

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/slovaci-sa-zastavaju-muslimov-pisu-e-maily-fotia-sa-s-kebabmi-a-podpisuju-podporny-list/> (27/01/2016)

⁴⁶ Denník N: Lajčák: Muslims are not danger, Fico alone takes responsibility for his statements corresponds

<https://dennikn.sk/342195/lajcak-muslimovia-nie-su-riziko-za-svoje-vyroky-zodpoveda-fico-sam/> (27/01/2016)

⁴⁷ Politico.eu: Robert Fico: 'Islam has no place in Slovakia'

<http://www.politico.eu/article/robert-fico-islam-no-place-news-slovakia-muslim-refugee/> (accessed 22/9/2016)

⁴⁸ TA3: Briefing of Robert Zico about the political situation in Slovakia

<http://www.ta3.com/clanok/1093729/tb-r-fica-o-politickej-situacii-na-slovensku.html> (26/04/2017).

⁴⁹ Rádio Aktual:

<https://www.facebook.com/radioaktual/photos/a.808808979285472.1073741828.796559193843784/897315370434832/> (22/10/2017)

⁵⁰ Trend:

<https://www.etrend.sk/ekonomika/fico-kral-na-kisku-ze-ignoruje-sviatok-cyrila-a-metoda.html> (22/10/2017)

of EU's plan to redistribute the rising wave of immigrants among EU member states. As this step was widely opposed by majority of Slovak citizens, most of the political elite rejected the idea as well. Sulík in his blogpost went as far as pointing out the cultural differences between European and Muslim culture (most of the immigrants were coming from Muslim majority countries) suggesting that their religious affiliation as any connection with their ability to integrate and thus he is against the settlement of those refugees in Slovakia simply because they are Muslims. He wrote: „Muslims do not share the same values as Christians, which I say while myself being atheist... Now the question is why those refugees who are Muslims do not run to Saudi Arabia instead.“⁵¹

After the election in March 2016 he became the leader of the second largest party in the national assembly and the strongest opposition party. In this position his remarks have to be taken are even more seriously. In the interview with the largest Slovak newspaper SME on August 2016 Sulik said that Islam is not compatible with European culture and defended his position further.⁵² From time to time he speaks out against Islam on his Facebook page.⁵³

On 27th of October 2016 Sulik wrote controversial article⁵⁴ about the life of the Prophet of Islam. As a reference he used the book of famous American anti-Muslim activist Bill Warner. Three Slovak academics and experts on Islam issued counter-article where they refuted his positions.⁵⁵ Another figure who wrote an article refuting Sulik's claims on the very same website was college teacher and political scientist Jozef Lenč⁵⁶ and this one was „contra-refuted“ by a Slovak branch of Bill Warner's institute Center for Study of Political Islam⁵⁷ (CSPI).

⁵¹ Richard Sulík: Seven NO to redistribution of refugees

<https://dennikn.sk/blog/sedem-krat-nie-k-uteceneckym-kvotam/> (accessed 4/6/2015)

⁵² SME: Sulík: Islam is not compatible with our culture just like nazism

<http://domov.sme.sk/c/20246047/sulik-islam-nie-je-kompatibilny-s-nasou-kulturou-rovnako-ako-na-cizmus.html> (accessed 22/9/2016)

⁵³ Facebook page of Richard Sulik: <https://www.facebook.com/RichardSulik/> (accessed 22/9/2016)

⁵⁴ The Life of Muhamamd: <https://dennikn.sk/594122/mohamedov-zivot/> (2/11/2016)

⁵⁵ Is Islam mistaken ideology and are Muslims its victims?

<https://dennikn.sk/596946/je-islam-zhubna-ideologia-a-su-moslimovia-jej-obete/> (2/11/2016)

⁵⁶ Denník N: Život Mohameda podľa „imáma“ Sulíka

<https://dennikn.sk/595969/zivot-muhammada-podla-imama-sulika/?ref=top> (15/12/2016)

⁵⁷ Denník N: Stretnú sa Sulík, Lenč a Mohamed...

<https://dennikn.sk/blog/stretnu-sa-sulik-lenc-a-mohamed/#comments> (15/12/2016)

The following response from Richard Sulík on his Facebook profile is especially noteworthy⁵⁸. Sulík shared the article of CSPI together with status, in which he described, what he called an „almost stoning“ by Jozef Lenč on his person. As a headline for his status he chose the phrase: „Poturčenec horší od Turka“ („Turkognized“ worse than Turk). This old Slovak saying refers to the era of Ottoman presence in the south parts of Slovakia, when some of the local males were being taken to the Ottoman army in a young age, converted to Islam, trained and then fought as a special forces (Janissaries) on the side of Ottomans. It is publicly known fact that Jozef Lenč is a Slovak Muslim convert and the saying is meant to be offensive, portraying him as someone who betrayed his nation by changing his religion.

Boris Kollár was never politically active until parliamentary elections in Slovakia on 5 March 2016. He was rather a famous businessman and after he bought political party in early 2016 and invested in heavy campaign, he managed to be elected in National Assembly as a head of party We Are Family. Kollár is very active on social media. He uses every opportunity even closely related to refugee and security crisis to publish statements or record videos, where he criticizes European policy of openness and the culture of Muslim migrants.

In a video from 8th of February 2016 he spoke about than recent case in Vienna, when Muslim migrant raped a boy in swimming pool. According to Kollár he did it because he is taught since young age that non-Muslims are inferior to him. He further spoke on the common misconceptions about what it is shariah law and what it stands for with regards to women or non-Muslims adding that „this is what all of them worship and this is what they want to bring here.“⁵⁹

In a video from 22nd of March 2016 commenting recent terrorist attack in Europe he said about Muslim migrants: „They are bringing here from their countries their problems, their shariah, their terrorism and their death“ and „I don't care about all those nonsense about humanism“.⁶⁰

On 19th July 2016 in aftermath of the attack in Nice he stated: „It is time to admit to ourselves that Europe is in war... this is targeted attack of Muslimism on our civilization.“ Later he promised: „I will do everything I can so that we will not have those fu**ers in here.“ He said that „it is time to start to fight against absolute

⁵⁸ Facebook: Richard Sulík <https://www.facebook.com/RichardSulik/posts/1180494605363599> (15/12/2016)

⁵⁹ Facebook: Boris Kollár <https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1560030077651395/> (26/04/2017)

⁶⁰ Facebook: Boris Kollár <https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1582187815435621/> (26/04/2017)

islamization of Europe“ and that he will start to support groups collecting signatures for departure from European Union, unless EU starts to „fight against that Islam“. ⁶¹

7 days later in yet another video he said: „I will go hard against Islam. Yes I will go hard against it.“⁶² and again in 20th of December: „Let us give a name to that what is now happening in Europe: It is an attack. It is an attack that started with Paris, continued with Brussels, Nice... and almost always they are Muslims... When some ethnic group, civilization, almost from the Middle Ages comes here, it things that when you are being open, supportive and hospitable, you are weak.“⁶³

On 24th of January 2017 regional library in Zvolen screened the movie Battle of Vienna, low budget propagandistic movie from Poland about the fight against ottoman army at the gates of Vienna in 17th century. The screening was promoted by member of parliament Ján Mora (LS NS).⁶⁴

After the general elections in 2016 the old and stable political party KDH did not make it into National Assembly for the first time in the history of modern Slovakia. As a result the party elected its new leader, Alojz Hlina. Only few months later on 20th of January 2017 he organized an event in a Slovak village Veľké Vozokany in memory of the fight between christian Hungarian army and muslim Turkish army, where the Turkish army was defeated. The historical event is not very significant and not often remembered, but according to Hlina it contributed to the fact that „Europe is christian“ today.⁶⁵

INS finds those statements extremely problematic, because they legitimize the hate speech of general public. When prime minister or the head of National Assembly can dare to say such a things about his fellow Muslim citizens, the regular person has simply no reason to perceive his or her own hate speech as something inappropriate.

⁶¹ Facebook: Boris Kollár <https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1651000021887733/> (26/04/2017)

⁶² Facebook: Boris Kollár <https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1655090568145345/> (26/04/2017)

⁶³ Facebook: Boris Kollár <https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1742855379368863/> (26/04/2017)

⁶⁴ ISLAMONLINE.sk: <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/01/v-krajskej-kniznici-vo-zvolene-prednasali-o-islamizacii/> (22/10/2016)

⁶⁵ Facebook: IslamOnline.sk <https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/10154856898067629>

Debate during approval process of anti-Muslim law

From October 2016 until end of January 2017 Slovak National Assembly discussed the proposal of Andrej Danko and several other MPs from SNS to increase the minimal quota required to recognize religious community by state from 20 to 50 thousand. The discussions in National Assembly generated number of hateful comments⁶⁶.

Boris Kollár took the opportunity and his speech in support for the law ended with words: „We will support this law, I am even ready to increase the quota by amendment up to 100.000 and I will be very happy that when my children grow up there will still be a double cross in our state symbol and not the crescent.“ During the last approval round on 31st of January 2017 Boris Kollár said: „By this law we are helping to preserve the traditions of our roots, our civilization and our way of life. We are protecting our homeland, we are protecting our people, we are protecting our families. Whether someone likes it or not, we have christian traditions and christian history in Slovakia.“⁶⁷

Member of Boris Kollár's party SME Rodina Milan Krajniak added during the last round of approval speeches that although the law itself is beneficial, there needs to be an effort in other areas, namely to prevent future construction of mosques in the country. „Mosques are turning into centers of other cutup, other way of life and different views on human rights,“ said. „Mosques are centers of recruitment of people who are leaving Europe to train for caliphate or al-Qaida,“ added Krajniak.⁶⁸

„I have plenty of experiences with this scum,“ said once another MP of SME Rodina Peter Pčolinský during the first round of speeches in October 2016. „If we leave current too permissive conditions for recognizing of church by state, it can easily happen that the state will recognize and give financial support to groups of people, who are – so to say – of extremely explosive nature.“⁶⁹ During the last round

⁶⁶ Facebook: IslamOnline.sk

<https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/10154680749267629/> (15/12/2016)

⁶⁷ ISLAMONLINE.sk

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/02/poslanec-ktory-si-hovori-posledny-kriziak-navrhol-zakazat-na-sl-ovensku-mesity/> (22/10/2017)

⁶⁸ ISLAMONLINE.sk

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/02/poslanec-ktory-si-hovori-posledny-kriziak-navrhol-zakazat-na-sl-ovensku-mesity/> (22/10/2017)

⁶⁹ Facebook: IslamOnline.sk

<https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/10154680749267629/> (22/10/2017)

in January 2017 Pčolinský said in favor of the law: „We do not want to have no go zones in Slovakia, such as those that are popping up in Vienna, so we should do everything in order to prevent – and I will say it out loud – Muslims from coming into our country.“

Among most noteworthy statements of other politicians regarding the law were: „Islam has no place in Europe, Islam has no place in Slovakia“ (Natália Grausová, ĽS NS). „The problem is that Islam is more than just a religion, it is cruel, disgusting and inhuman political system ...and it has nothing at all in common with Europe and democracy“ and „We are not criticizing Islam as a religion. When we call it pedophile system, it is no mocking or lie“ (Milan Mazúrek, ĽS NS). „Every normal European, christian or atheist, has to fear this satanic-pedophile creation of devil, which is the religion of Islam“ (Stanislav Mizík, ĽS NS). (Stanislav Drobný, ĽS NS). „Everything else, all of these idols, they are for christians only daemons“ (Marián Kotleba, head of ĽS NS).

On 6th of December Mandate and Immunity Committee of National Assembly decided that both Milan Mazúrek and Stanislav Mizík have to apologize on future sitting of the parliament or pay a fine. On 1st of February they indeed stood up in front of the assembly, but only to offer further anti-Muslim comments and thus not fulfilling the requirement of the committee. „You feel insulted for the criticism of Islam,“ began his speech mr. Mazúrek. „The same Islam that creates dozens of victims all over the continent of Europe everyday... that teaches us to deal with females as with a livestock chosen for slaughter... that justifies pedophilia, zoophilia and even necrophilia. That Islam which is nothing but the creation of devil.“ Mazúrek further spoke about enslavement and murder of Slovak people in the hands of Ottomans and even used the hoax, according to which Real Madrid removed the cross from its emblem.⁷⁰

Stanislav Mizík addressed the head of National Assembly Andrej Danko in his speech as follows: „If you think that cutting the throats of Christians is not satanism, feel free to convert to Islam.“

On 31st of January 2017 National Assembly held approval process of the aforementioned law for the last time where the law finally passed.

⁷⁰ The Slovak Spectator: Hoaxes ascend to mainstream politics

<https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20457561/hoaxes-ascend-to-mainstream-politics.html> (2/10/2017)

Debate during approval process of ban on mosques

Milan Krajniak (SME Rodina) suggested during his aforementioned speech in January 2017 that the focus should be on preventing the construction of mosques in Slovakia. On 28th of February 2017 he held press conference where he announced his intention to propose such a law to National Assembly. „Isn't it better for the security of Slovak people to ban mosques, rather than to close them later on?“ Argued during the press conference and added that he only hopes that „in Slovakia there will be no mosques, because it is important for our safety.“⁷¹

He indeed proposed the law and it was discussed in National Assembly on 4th of April 2017. „Islam divides people into Muslims and disbelievers,“ started Krajniak his speech and one by one named all traditional misconceptions about Islam, such as freedom of religion in Islam, treatment of women, or various scary claims about „the shariah law“. Krajniak further claimed existence of some statistics proving that „practicing Muslim who regularly visits mosques approves those [terrorist] attacks... more often than non-practicing Muslims.“⁷²

Unlike previous law this was proposed by a party that is not part of the government. As a result no government party voted for the law and thus it did not pass.

Anti-Muslim organizations, activists and public figures

Slovakia experienced its first massive demonstration against so called „islamization of Europe“ on 20th of June 2015. The protest in Bratislava was organized by an extremist outfit called Stop the Islamization of Europe and ended with more than 100 arrests, we however have no information on whether any of those arrests were related to the attack on Arab family and whether there were any punishments given. Several protesters attacked one Arab family near the train

⁷¹ MediaPortal NR SR: <http://tv.nrsr.sk/archiv/tlacovakonferencia/7/2368> (22/10/2017)

⁷² ISLAMONLINE.sk:

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/04/od-volieb-v-parlamente-hanobili-muslimov-a-islam-uz-styrikrat-naposledy-vcera/> (22/10/2017)

station. Estimates about the participation vary but all sources agree that there was several thousands of protesters.⁷³

After several minor gatherings in other Slovak cities new riot in Bratislava took place on 12th of September 2015. This was much smaller with participation up to 1000 protesters, perhaps even less.⁷⁴ Third anti-Muslim riot in Bratislava took place on 29th of May 2016 and was joined by up to one hundred of protesters.⁷⁵ Fourth riot in the capital occurred on 25th of June 2016 and was joined by more than one thousand people.⁷⁶ These were mostly calm with almost no arrests by the police.

Islamophobia is a popular domain of most far-right groups, however Slovakia does not have many public figures that are exceptionally outspoken against Islam in particular, such as the initiative *We don't want Islam in CR* that is active in neighboring Czech republic.

Of the more noteworthy ones is Slovak branch of outspoken American anti-Muslim activist, speaker and writer Bill French known also as Bill Warner. His international institute called Center for the Study of Political Islam (CSPI) has supporters, websites and presence on social media in Slovakia and Czech republic. In 28th of October 2016 Czech CSPI branch sent a letter and Czech translation of one of Bill Warner's books to every member of Slovak parliament warning them about the dangers of so called „political islam“.⁷⁷

One of the most famous incidents took place just before the end of the year on 26th of December 2016. Slovak woman Adriana Meleková also known as Sheila recorded video where she urinated on a copy of Qur'an and later burned it's pages. During the video she stated her a message: „I will hunt you [Muslims] all step by step. No matter

⁷³ New York Times: Fissures in E.U. Deepen From Strain of Migrant Influx and Greek Debt
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/world/europe/fissures-in-eu-deepen-from-strain-of-migrant-influx-and-greek-debt.html?_r=0 (27/01/2015)

⁷⁴ Aktualne.sk: Call for humanity overshadowed the extremists, Kotleba did not come to march
<http://www.aktualne.sk/clanok/303973/v-bratislave-dnes-budu-protestovat-proti-islamizacii-aj-vyzyvat-k-ludskosti/> (27/01/2015)

⁷⁵ Video of the protesters:
<https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/vb.211508012628/10154178488432629/?type=2&theater> (accessed 22/9/2016)

⁷⁶ Video of the crowd walking towards the place of gathering
<https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/vb.211508012628/10154247417687629/?type=2&theater> (accessed 22/9/2016), report:
<https://hnonline.sk/slovensko/686049-bratislava-zazila-dva-protesty-extremisti-slovne-utocili-na-prEZidenta-aj-europoslankynu-smeru> (16/12/2016).

⁷⁷ ISLAMONLINE.sk: Slovenskí poslanci dostali protiislamskú knihu. Autorom je známy konšpirátor
<http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/10/slovenski-poslanci-dostali-protiislamsku-knihu-autorom-je-znamy-konspirator/> (26/04/2017)

if it is a woman, a child or a man. I will bump off anybody who gets in my way. I do not care about the criminal complaints. It will not stop me. I have a message for everybody, including the police – nobody will stop me.”⁷⁸ Video is believed to be recorded in Finland. Upon her arrival to Slovakia Mrs. Meleková was detained for a few days and now is prosecuted by Slovak authorities on the basis of creating extremist promotional materials, defamation of a nation and race and incitement of national, racial or ethnic hatred.

Organization that calls itself The Institute of Leo XIII. published hateful book titled *The ancestor of anti-Christ* where it collects various anti-Muslim statements of catholic religious leaders throughout history. In summer 2017 the organization shipped this book to Catholic parishes around Slovakia. According to reports at least some of the churches did share promoting materials for this book. Promoting materials were also distributed to people’s post boxes in various locations around the country.⁷⁹

Famous actor Andy Hryc took a stand against migration and Islam in the interview on 8th of August 2017. In the interview he asked: „For centuries Europe was defending itself against the intrusion of Islam. Our ancestors fought, bled and died but they did defend our continent. Are we supposed to just give it to them?“ The journalist responded with a question asking him, whether he is referring to defending Europe with arms. „Of course. I own several firearms at my home and when it will be necessary, I will even buy Kalashnikov.“⁸⁰

It is very hard to sue public figures for these types of comments. They are hardly to be looked at as criminal acts. While we are not lawyers, we are aware of much more severe cases of hate speech that went unpunished. On the other hand there is a great danger in comments such as those of Mr. Hryc. He is considered to be an cultural elite and his opinion matters to many people. Article with his remarks was one of the most shared slovak articles on Facebook in that month. Just as with hate speech by politicians, this only increases the confidence of general public, which has now a reason to think that hate speech against Muslims and refugees is appropriate or “normal”.

⁷⁸ Metro: Woman who urinated on Koran and set it on fire facing six years in prison
<http://metro.co.uk/2017/02/21/woman-who-urinated-on-koran-and-set-it-on-fire-facing-six-years-in-prison-6462451/> (26/04/2017)

⁷⁹ Plus 7 dní:
<https://plus7dni.pluska.sk/Kauzy/Diabolsky-islam.-Na-slovenske-farnosti-dorazila-kniha-hanobiaca-muslimske-nabozenstvo> (22/10/2017)

⁸⁰ Aktuality.sk:
<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/511403/andy-hryc-sme-sprosti-ak-si-myslime-ze-sa-mame-zle/>
(22/10/2017)

Hate speech on internet

Islamophobic comments on internet are specific kind of hate speech in Slovak internet context. It would take for separate project to collect and categorize most of them. For the purpose of this summary we can state that comments of this kind were present in most of popular news websites below articles touching the topic of islam or muslims in one way or another.

Apart from websites hate speech was present on social networks, especially Facebook. Possibly biggest islam-oriented Facebook page in Slovakia and Czech republic to this day is [Facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk](https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk), which was no exception for this kind of hate speech.

Except for hate speech in comments, we witnessed rise of dedicated anti-islam and anti-muslim Facebook groups and pages.⁸¹ Various individuals created weblogs dedicated to spreading hatred about Islam and Muslims.⁸² Anti-muslim hate speech is increasingly popular topic of several „alternative“ news sites that spread hoaxes and conspiracy theories on Slovak internet.⁸³

In December 2013 unknown group of people created a Facebook page with fake announcement of the construction of a Mosque in the very center of Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia.⁸⁴ Facebook page generated numerous radical or even criminal comments.⁸⁵

It is worth to mention the whole wave of comments and online hatred towards Muslims after the Paris attacks in January 2015. Slovak Muslim convert and college teacher commented the attacks in media explaining the islamic position (condemnation) of those. Someone in comments below the article announced that this Muslim's ID should be removed and he shall be shoot immediately.⁸⁶

⁸¹ For examples of some of those pages and groups see attachment no. 1.

⁸² See attachment no. 2, where we include some those that were active to the recent time.

⁸³ For examples see attachment no. 3

⁸⁴ Prank on a mosque in the center of Bratislava irritating the gullible

<http://bratislava.sme.sk/c/7125454/zart-o-mesite-v-centre-bratislavy-drazdi-dovercivych.html>
(accessed 19/03/2014)

⁸⁵ Story about the mosque in Bratislava angered Slovak internet society

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2013/12/sprava-o-mesite-v-bratislave-privadza-internetovu-verejnost-do-varu/> (accessed 06/09/2014)

⁸⁶ Slovak Muslims are afraid. The effects of attacks in Paris were reflected in here too

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2015/01/takto-na-slovensku-po-parizi-utocili-na-muslimov-zakazovali-mesity-aj-prepichovali-gumy/> (accessed 1/3/2015)

In March 2016 woman on Facebook uploaded pictures of the entrance to the Muslim culture center Cordoba in Bratislava. She said she was „listening behind the door“. Her friend in comments suggested that she should have „thrown grenade inside.“⁸⁷

In the same month Facebook page Sympatizanti Ľudovej Strany - Naše Slovensko (Sympathizers of the People's Party - Our Slovakia) shared several pictures of a supposedly Muslim woman praying on the street in Slovak town Nové Zámky. The text above pictures says that the person was praying at the Nabrezna street when someone began to shoot at her. When the person heard the shooting, he or she ran away leaving the prayer rug behind. Online blogger David Kapusta reported the status and supposed shooting to police and wrote blog post about it. As of December 2016 he received no update from the police.⁸⁸

In June 2017 Islamic Foundation in Slovakia organized a celebration of the breaking of fast during the month of Ramadan (iftar) with number of guests from NGOs, religious leaders, diplomats and academicians. Before the dinner several public figures gave their speeches. The final speech was delivered by the head of Islamic Foundation in Slovakia Mr. Mohamad Hasna. All of the speeches were recorded and published on Facebook later on. Of them, the speech of Hasna was picked up and shared by group of fans of far-right party ĽS NS. Video was shared on their Facebook group, where it generated number of hateful comments including death threats.⁸⁹ Police did not take any action in this case, nor in other cases of online hate speech reported in this file.

In summer 2017 someone photographed Muslim woman in burkini (Muslim swimming suit) in a public swimming pool in Czech republic. Number of Facebook pages and groups called for doing the same in Slovakia. During August 2017 people shared several photographs of Muslim tourists in Slovakia accompanied with various hateful comments.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ ISLAMONLINE.sk: Žena si fotila vchod do muslimského kultúrneho centra v Bratislave a počúvala „za dverami“

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/07/zena-si-fotila-vchod-do-muslimskeho-kulturneho-centra-v-bratislave-a-pocuvava-za-dverami/> (26/04/2017)

⁸⁸ Denník N: Modliť sa na verejnosti sa neoplatí, niekedy na vás môžu aj vystreliť

<https://dennikn.sk/blog/trestne-oznamenie-na-sympatizantov-kotlebu-alebo-ako-slobodne-nenavidie-t/> (15/12/2016)

⁸⁹ ISLAMONLINE.sk

<http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/07/fanusikovia-kotlebu-zdielali-prihovor-predsedu-islamskej-nadacie-m-s-hasnu-vyhrazaju-sa-mu-smrtou/> (22/10/2017)

⁹⁰ Denník N:

<https://dennikn.sk/841366/zahalena-zena-so-zmrzlinou-rodina-na-liptovskej-mare-kotlebovi-priazni>

Last dimension of islamophobia on internet that we should highlight in this paper are emails sent to the official email address of Islamic Foundation in Slovakia. Typical emails promoted exclusion of Muslims from Slovakia or even vulgar statements. Some of them were taken public on Facebook page IslamOnline.sk⁹¹ for readers to see and give them an opportunity to comment on them.

Public Attitude towards Muslims

Local organization Network media service (NMS) published in December 2009 polls, according to which 55% of Slovak citizens is against the construction of any islamic prayer house in Slovakia.⁹²

In February 2012 Open Society Foundation made research on Public Opinion on the Right-Wing Extremism. Part of the research focused on attitude of Slovaks so called towards „new minorities“ and namely Muslims. It turned out that as of February 2012 almost 70% of asked participants partly or completely disagreed with the statement that state should allow Muslims to practice their religion and 50,5% of them thought that state should ban construction of any islamic religious and cultural centers in Slovakia.⁹³

Recommendations and Conclusion

Dealing with islamophobia in Slovakia should reflect its specific character. There is not much that we can do about the statements and comments of political representatives (except maybe for official announcements of Islamic Foundation in

vci-siria-fotky-moslimov-na-slovensku/. Examples of shared pictures:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=110221986309482>,

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1629541330410775>

⁹¹ For example: <http://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/10150591977897629> (accessed 19/08/2013) or: <https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/10152600910342629> (accessed on 06/09/2014).

⁹² Research: Czechs and Slovaks do not want neither minarets nor mosques

<http://www.sme.sk/c/5158055/prieskum-cesi-a-slovaci-nechcu-ani-minarety-ani-mesity.html>

(accessed 19/08/2013)

⁹³ Open Society Foundation – Public Opinion on the Right-Wing Extremism, 2012

http://www.cvek.sk/uploaded/files/vyskumna_sprava.pdf, p. 37-39 (accessed 17/05/2014)

Slovakia condemning those, which was the case in the past⁹⁴). Therefore think most of our energy shall be aimed at combating internet islamophobic comments and articles.

This could be done in various ways. Our internet projects⁹⁵ are offering proper informations about Islam and Muslims and except for other content are trying to combat misconceptions and stereotypes.

As for hateful comments, strong „Islam and Muslim positive“ internet community can already argue with those individuals in comments sections by itself without the need for much of the intervention from our site. All comments below our content are of course monitored by us and those violating Slovak laws and moral principles are being deleted.

We think it is important to deal with islamophobic expressions on internet by fighting the misconceptions themselves, providing alternative sources of informations and cultivating our own internet communities that can react and „fight back“ to aggressive comments and posts.

⁹⁴ Slovak Muslims: SNS shall deal with real problems instead of creating made-up causes <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/192806/moslimovia-sns-ma-riesit-realne-problemy-nie-vytvarat-pse-udokauzy/> (accessed 20/08/2013)

⁹⁵ Website ISLAMONLINE.sk, Facebook page Faebook.com/IslamOnline.sk, Twitter channel @IslamOnline.sk and YouTube channel YouTube.com/IslamOnlineSk

Attachments

Attachment no. 1

- <http://www.facebook.com/SlovakDefenceLeague>
- <https://www.facebook.com/Islam-na-Slovensku-nehceme-714160371981651/?fref=ts>
- <http://www.facebook.com/groups/132658023470304/?fref=ts>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Islam-v-Slovenskej-republike-nehceme/245636878913277>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Som-proti-vyjadreniu-biskupov-že-katol%C3%ADci-podporujú-islamizáciu-Európy/213073992062860>

Attachment no. 2

- <http://mokova.blog.sme.sk>
- <http://jurajpolacek.blog.sme.sk>
- <http://jurajpolacek.blogspot.sk>
- <http://www.blogovisko.sk/author/main>
- <http://ivanaheckova.blog.sme.sk>

Attachment no. 3

- <http://medzicas.sk>
- <http://www.konzervativnyvyber.sk>
- <http://www.hlavnespravy.sk>
- <http://www.parlamentnelisty.sk>