

Anti-Muslim Hatred in Italy: A Glocal Issue

DOMENICO ALTOMONTE

Independent Researcher

ORCID No: 0000-0003-0578-2075

ABSTRACT *The rise of far-right parties in Europe and harsh propaganda against immigrants and Muslims are primary sources for the development of anti-Islam stances and anti-Muslim hatred among the population. The lack of acknowledgment of Islam and Muslims by the Italian state allows its citizens to conceive an exclusionary populist discourse and a shared negative view that impedes the enforcement of the right to religious freedom. To go local may result as an attractive, though obliged, alternative, and the municipality, as the representative of the institution closest to citizenship, may then affirm its leadership role in ensuring social cohesion and the protection of the human rights of all its citizens, so that European democratic pluralism is translated into effective access to and enjoyment of fundamental rights.*

Keywords: Far-Right Parties, Lega Nord, Anti-Muslim Hatred, Islam, Italy, Freedom of Religion, Municipality

Insight Turkey 2021

Vol. 23 / No. 2 / pp. 23-37

Received Date: 26/04/2021 • Accepted Date: 22/05/2021 • DOI: 10.25253/99.2021232.2

The Post-2015 Ideological Shift in Europe

Within a wide debate¹ that alternatively ignores, narrows or extends the etymological significance of the term Islamophobia,² the choice of the term anti-Muslim hatred is to be intended in the way suggested by Matthew Feldman's definition:

Anti-Muslim hatred is motivated by hostility or bias towards people perceived to be Muslim. Manifestations take the form of online and offline attacks upon an individual or their property, which the victim perceives to be driven by hostility or prejudice toward their Muslim identity. Anti-Muslim hatred can be physical, discriminatory, communicated visually or in writing (most frequently online), and typically takes the form of the targeting of an individual on the basis of (alleged or real) faith-based actions and religious doctrines of either Muslims or Islam, with the two being interchangeable or conjoined at points.³

By this definition, anti-Muslim hatred can find support, depending on national contexts, in the political institutions, in the media, and civil society.

On March 17, 2021, during the High-Level Event in Commemoration of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), citing a recent report of the UN Special Rapporteur on free-

dom of religion or belief to the UN Human Rights Council which found that anti-Muslim hatred has risen to 'epidemic proportions',⁴ called for "political, cultural and economic investments to strengthen social cohesion."⁵

It is a matter of fact that Europe is dealing with a harsher anti-immigration political atmosphere – in particular towards Muslim people, commonly perceived as immigrants – which urges policymakers and the civil society to continue to work for a clear stance against these phenomena.

The values of tolerance and non-discrimination, enshrined in the European treaties, have been crumbling in the last years after the 2015 migration flow and terrorist attacks. This results in a shift towards anti-immigration and anti-Islam ideologies in Europe. Moreover, in a few years, anti-Islam movements and political parties have gained a significant electoral support and they are now represented in many European national parliaments: in Hungary, after the 2018 election, *Fidesz* Hungarian Civic Alliance (*Magyar Polgári Szövetség, Fidesz*) - Christian Democratic People's Party (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt, KDNP*) Alliance –led by the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán– became the largest party in parliament with 49.3 percent of the vote; in 2019 Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP*) has been confirmed to be the largest party in the Swiss Federal Assembly with 25.6 percent of the vote; Marine Le Pen, leader of

the National Rally (*Rassemblement national*, RS; until June 2018 known as *Front National*, FN), in the 2017 French presidential election gained 21.3 percent of the vote; the 2018 election in Sweden allowed Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD) to be the third largest party in parliament with 17.5 percent of the vote; Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*, PS) gained 17.48 percent of the vote in the 2019 Finnish parliamentary elections; in the 2018 national elections in Italy Northern League (*Lega Nord*, LN) gained 17 percent of the vote after a harsh campaign against migrants and Muslim people; in Austria in the 2019 election the far-right party Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ) gained 16.2 percent of the vote; in the 2017 election Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD) passed from 0 to 94 seats won in the German Federal parliament, and in next September's federal election it will be clear if its rapid growth can be confirmed.

Muslim Women Are the Major Victims

Although the majority of incidents are not reported to the authorities, hate crimes and discrimination against the Muslim community have been observed in several European countries such as Belgium, Germany, Italy, and France. Terrorist attacks of 2015-2016 have exacerbated the fragile relation between Muslim and non-Muslim citizens. In particular, social media amplifies hate speech

The values of tolerance and non-discrimination, enshrined in the European treaties, have been crumbling in the last years after the 2015 migration flow and terrorist attacks

thanks to anonymity with the use of fake news and hoaxes.⁶ Shreds of evidence of Europeans' unfavorable view of Muslim immigration is reported by two surveys: the Chatham House Europe Programme in 2017 shows public opposition to further migration from Muslim majority countries,⁷ and the Ipsos Perils of Perceptions Survey in 2016 demonstrates how European citizens greatly overestimate the growth in the Muslim population of their countries.⁸ Shared political rhetoric that claims that Muslims should 'do more' to fight extremism, together with the fact that some EU member's states have adopted some heavy counter-terrorism measures, has especially affected the lives of women wearing the *hijab* and has caused further alienation and frustration among Muslims: many Muslim women have begun to limit their presence in public spaces.

In this scenario, Muslim women and girls in Europe suffer from intersectional discrimination based on different grounds: religion, gender, and ethnicity. In this framework, religious vestments are both gender-specific and religious-specific.

Although the majority of incidents are not reported to the authorities, hate crimes and discrimination against the Muslim community have been observed in several European countries such as Belgium, Germany, Italy, and France

Although data on discrimination and hate speech are not disaggregated by religion, thus the variable considered in the statistics is the country of origin or the ethnicity –which is not completely reliable to identify Muslim people– Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) reports in its research that Muslim women are more likely to suffer discrimination and harassment, in particular if wearing religious symbols: more than one-third of the interviewed women wearing *hijab* or *niqab* (39 percent) “experienced inappropriate staring or offensive gestures” on a religious basis.⁹ Further evidences of discrimination are rooted in the stereotyped image of Muslim women represented in the media and perceived by the general public as submissive and, at the same time, perpetrators of a conservative view of women.

Anti-Islamic Stances in Italy

During the last two decades, several surveys have described an alarm-

ing increase of anti-Islam stances in Italian public opinion. In 2019 the Pew Research Center found that the unfavorable opinion of Muslims in Italy reaches 55 percent of the respondents¹⁰ (though this data was a decrease since the previous research in 2016,¹¹ it’s still to be considered a very high percentage if compared to the 15 percent who have an unfavorable view of Jews).¹²

This vision of fear and hate consequently influences the behavior of non-Muslim Italians towards members of the Islamic community by encouraging the spread of discriminatory attitudes and attacks, even among the youngest. The results of social research led by the sociologist Fabrizio Ciocca showed that 65 percent of the Muslims living in Italy had somehow suffered violence, prejudice, or discrimination based on religion.¹³

Anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination is often clearly detectable on social networks in terms of hate speech. *Vox Diritti*, an Italian Observatory on Rights, for its 2020 Map of Intolerance has found 67,889 *Twitter* posts against Muslims published in Italy between March and September 2020. The research indicates that hatred against Muslims is corroborated and activated both by national events (such as the case of the liberation and return to Italy of the NGO volunteer Silvia Aisha Romano, who had been kidnapped in Kenya by Somali militias), and by international events (such as the Reading stabbings on June 20, 2020). The Map also shows that 57 percent of non-Muslim Italians would



not accept a Muslim as a member of their family and 35 percent don't want Muslims as neighbors.¹⁴

As after watching a horror movie, the immediate reaction to and subsequent memory of the infamous terrorist attacks of 9/11 first, and against Paris *Charlie Hebdo's* offices and *Bataclan* theatre later, have strongly contributed to respectively build and consolidate Western bigotry against Muslims. Nevertheless, in front of these intolerant attitudes, we should keep in mind that they cannot be a mere consequence of the violence perpetrated in the name of Islam by terrorist groups of individuals. The ideologies which stand behind popular hatred are often designed, enforced, and reiterated by 'symbolic elites' in order to pave the way for public acquiescence to harsher stances and policies based on the di-

chotomy of 'us/them' (where they are depicted as a non-native fifth column standing against the hegemonic culture).¹⁵

This *logos* represents the common ground on which far-right populist parties like *Lega Nord* in Italy shape their political action. Putting forward a strategically smart and effective game change, in 2013, the new leader of *Lega Nord*, Matteo Salvini, led his party to a more nationalistic position, abandoning the secessionist purposes and the long-standing struggle against southerners and *Roma ladrona* (thieving Rome) whilst replacing them with a *crusade* against immigrants and Muslims, deemed guilty of the social insecurity and the economic crisis.¹⁶ As referred to above, in the 2018 national election the 17 percent of the vote gained with his anti-immigration and anti-Mus-

Migrants from Bangladesh protest in Campidoglio Square against the closure of the Torpignattara Mosque, and pray for freedom of worship and residence permits for all, in Rome, Italy, on June 19, 2020.

SIMONA GRANATI / Corbis / Getty Images

lim campaign granted Salvini the opportunity to form a coalition government and to become Minister of the Interior and Deputy Prime Minister, although its cabinet could only last less than 15 months.

The success of far-right leaders like Salvini can be inscribed in a spreading political framework which expresses a prototypical populist point of view designed on the protection of national culture, traditions, and habits (us) against the specter of multiculturalism (them), and of liberal Europeanness (the other them), seen as global menaces to cultural integrity and national identity.¹⁷ In an effort to facilitate the identification of his main political adversaries, *Lega's* leader ideally puts together leftists and European bureaucrats, generally defined as political élites (the other them) who have put aside the national interest (in terms of culture, economy, and security) for the protection of the rights of immigrants and Muslims.¹⁸ But while it's true that immigrants more than Muslims are the designated scapegoats for Salvini's polemic (when the two terms are not used as synonyms), the latter are often portrayed by *Lega's* representatives as potential sleeper cell terrorists or in any case evidently incapable to integrate with the 'civilized' West.¹⁹

This kind of provocative rhetoric finds its extreme model in some mainstream media like *Il Giornale* and *Libero*. Following the suicide bombings in Brussels in March 2016 *Il Giornale's* editor wrote an article titled "*Cacciamo l'Islam da Casa*

Nostra"²⁰ (Let's Get Islam Out of Our House) and after the November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks *Libero* published a front-page headline reading "*Bastardi Islamici*"²¹ (Islamic Bastards). Muslim communities responded to the above-mentioned insult filing complaints against Maurizio Belpietro, *Libero's* editor, and the Public Prosecutor asked the Court to convict Belpietro and his newspaper for the criminal offense of vilification of a religious belief with the aggravation of hate speech. Italian Criminal Code prosecutes the perpetrator of such an offense only when a specific person (or group of persons) is outraged and attacked and if this specific person (or group of persons) is practicing the religion or can represent it (as it would be in the case of an Imam, for instance). The Court dismissed the case and acquitted the perpetrator stating that the title does not refer to a religious minister or a specific subject practicing the religion, but it is directed towards the general community of worshippers, thus the law does not apply for the case in point.²²

The No-Man's Land between Islam and the Italian State

According to Ciocca, on January 1, 2018, the Muslim population in Italy was about 4.3 percent out of the total, estimated at 2,624,000 people.²³ The Pew Research Center predicted that, under a high migration scenario, the number of Muslim residents in Italy in 2050 can reach around 14.1 percent of its total population.²⁴ But

while Italy is said to be home to the fourth-largest Muslim population in Europe,²⁵ in August 2016, the Italian Ministry of the Interior had declared that only four buildings have been officially authorized and built as proper mosques (at Ravenna, Rome, Colle Val D'Elsa, and Segrate Milano).²⁶ The main reason for an evident lack of purpose-built mosques in Italy²⁷ is the fact that the state has not recognized Islam as a religion yet. Unlike the majority of other religious denominations, there is still no juridical agreement between Islam and the Italian state. Indeed, although the Italian Constitution enshrines the state's duty to protect religious freedom²⁸ and states that all religious confessions are equally free before the law,²⁹ it also affirms that religious denominations other than Catholics have the right of self-organization according to their own statutes, as long as they do not conflict with Italian law, and their relations with the state are regulated by law on the basis of juridical agreements with their respective representatives.³⁰

So far the only Muslim legal entity officially acknowledged by the State is the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy (in charge of the administration of the Great Mosque in Rome).³¹ But since the governance of the Centre is composed almost entirely by envoys of Arab states, they haven't been able to come up with drafting agreements to submit to the Italian State. Given that the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy mainly represents the political interests of foreign actors and does not reflect nor represent a wide part

Nevertheless, in front of these intolerant attitudes, we should keep in mind that they cannot be a mere consequence of the violence perpetrated in the name of Islam by terrorist groups of individuals

of the Islamic community residing in Italy, it cannot appear to be a credible interlocutor in the eyes of the Italian State.³²

The most recent developments of the process which should lead to the *Intesa* (the juridical agreement requested by the Italian Constitution) seemed to reach a peak in 2017 with the signing of the so-called 'National Pact for an Italian Islam' by the Minister of the Interior and the representatives of ten Italian Muslim associations. The agreement consists of ten non-binding commitments for each counterpart with a redundant call to the countering of radicalism and fanaticism and a generic proclaimed pledge from the Ministry to facilitate the Islamic associations in their path towards juridical acknowledgment.³³

As commented by Alessandro Ferrari at the end of 2018, "the year 2017 has stirred up the slightly stagnant waters of the relations between the state and Islam in Italy,"³⁴ but the concrete effects of these efforts are still hard to

Unlike the majority of other religious denominations, there is still no juridical agreement between Islam and the Italian state

see, even because since the signing of the Pact the government coalition has been changed twice. Not surprisingly, immediately after the signing of the Pact, some of the most relevant figures of the Italian Muslim community like Yahya Pallavicini (signatory of the Pact) openly contested the document, seen as a tactic to impose obligations (or even blackmailing) on Muslim people³⁵ in exchange for inalienable constitutional rights such as the right to religious freedom and to exercise this freedom in private and in public.³⁶ The resulting persistent need to give a proper place of worship to millions of Muslims and the consequent growth in the number of informal and unregulated place of worships (sheds, garages, basements, apartments, warehouses, and gyms)³⁷ has often faced an increase in social opposition led by far-right political movements and parties, and driven the Muslim community to address the local institutions, rather than the national ones.

Where Are We in Terms of Rights and Effective Bureaucracy?

The relevant and interconnected variables to take into account in order to

combat anti-Muslim hatred in Italy could be listed as the following: (i) Freedom of opinion in general terms is satisfactorily guaranteed but there is a large concentration of the media and a strong influence on them by market rules: the two things produce obvious asymmetries, above all to the detriment of the Islamic community which has very few traditional media outlets of its own; (ii) The latter issue facilitates the spread of prejudices and disinformation when a social group –in this case, Muslims– is made the target of general hostility –and so ends up affecting the same freedom of opinion; (iii) Religious matters (called from time to time ‘cults,’ ‘confessions,’ ‘churches’) are the competence of the state and are governed by constitutional principles and by state laws and therefore by public and constitutional law; (iv) Nevertheless, in recent years there has been an increasing shift in the latter issue from the state to regional and local authorities, especially concerning the legislation on the building of places of worship, the regulation of religious-inspired associative activities, the provision of social and cultural services that take into account diverse faiths, the organization of public space; (v) This leads to a growing gap between national state policies and regional and local public policies. The former, under the Ministry of the Interior, are homogeneous throughout the national territory but subject to changes of direction depending on the government in office. The latter, on the other hand, are of variable geometry, showing a very great heterogeneity and fragmenta-



Matteo Salvini (L) leaves the courts after the first hearing of the trial in which he is charged with aggravated kidnapping while he was Italian Interior Minister in 2019. He did not allow 132 migrants to land on Italian soil, keeping them on board Italian Coast Guard rescue ship Gregoretti for five days. Catania, Sicilia, Italy on October 3, 2020.

ANTONIO BALASCO / KONTROLAB / LightRocket via Getty Images

tion between regions, municipalities, or even sub-municipal institutions (municipalities, districts).

Designing a Local Action Plan

Although a strong commitment aimed at recommending how to contrast Anti-Muslim hatred at the municipal level finds obvious difficulties in ‘addressing root causes’ –that is acting on the roots of anti-Muslim hatred– since these roots are related to variables inherent in the state, the market, the media; however, it may propose concrete measures aimed at integration –but it would be preferable to speak of non-discrimination– and equality in particular for Muslim women and girls, starting from the areas of specific competence of municipalities and metropolitan cities: spatial planning and planning of the

territory, local welfare, and cultural policies.

It is therefore starting from a context of complex division of institutional competencies and intersectionality, between policies of prevention of discrimination on the basis of religion and prevention of gender discrimination, that are formulated here as the proposals for local action plans to combat anti-Muslim hatred. Among the objectives of a local action plan is to be considered the development of institutional communication and of public awareness of the Islamic community (and of the whole citizenship), aimed at preventing anti-Muslim crimes, supporting victims, and spreading the importance of reporting. A local action plan also claims to be a shared ‘tool’ and a resource for multi-level participation by non-profit entities engaged in the defense

Since the governance of the Centre is composed almost entirely by envoys of Arab states, they haven't been able to come up with drafting agreements to submit to the Italian State

of human rights and representatives of the Islamic community itself, in order to create a fertile ground and a proper environment for the promotion of social cohesion, tolerance, and the rule of law.

The Role of the Municipalities and the Experience of the Action Plans to Counter Anti-Muslim Hatred in Europe

In the face of the increasing number of episodes of intolerance, hatred, discrimination, and the persistence of stereotypes that mainly affect women and girls of Islamic faith, and among them, especially those who wear the *hijab*, it is essential that the municipality, as the representative of the institution closest to citizenship, affirms its leadership role in ensuring social cohesion and the protection of the human rights of all its citizens, within a pluralist strategy that promotes and facilitates exchange and mutual knowledge between communities that make up the social fabric, so that such pluralism is translated

into effective access to and enjoyment of fundamental rights.

In Europe, the decisive role of municipalities in tackling this problem has long been recognized: see the case of Barcelona and its “Municipal Plan to Combat Islamophobia,”³⁸ as well as the action of the European Coalition of Cities against Racism.³⁹ Several Italian cities such as Bologna, San Lazzaro di Savena, Pianoro, Florence, Campi Bisenzio, Pescara, Rome, and Santa Maria Capua Vetere have already joined the latter initiative including prevention and the fight against all forms of discrimination between their strategies. See also the actions of the Intercultural Cities Program of the Council of Europe (ICC).⁴⁰

Recommendations

The following are the recommended actions in public space, educational services, social services, and cultural policies:

i) Field assessment

- Starting quantitative and qualitative research on a large scale within the territory of the municipality to collect information on the composition of the Islamic community, obstacles, and discrimination through the distribution of questionnaires.
- Starting qualitative research on the institutional communication of the municipality in order to

identify how consistent it is with the presentation of the city and its neighborhoods as multicultural contexts.

ii) Awareness and prevention

- Sharing the data analysis with the citizens.
- Informing citizens about the rights and duties of a pluralist city and the civil and criminal consequences of discriminatory and anti-Islamist acts.
- Informing and raising awareness of the city's commitment against all forms of discrimination and anti-Muslim attitudes by bringing out the real impact of episodes of anti-Islamist discrimination suffered by Muslim citizens. Focusing on stereotypes towards Muslim women and girls and deconstruction of them.
- Promoting, with the patronage of the municipality, training and information days in schools, to facilitate the dialogue and the discussion between students on sensitive topics like the stereotypes against Muslim girls and women; also addressing the issue of hate speech on social media, involving experts and key characters, 'messenger,' to deconstruct stereotypes.
- Promoting a partnership with entrepreneurs, local producers, and trade unions that are sensitive to promoting an economic strategy linked to the enhancement of di-

versity and to combating discriminatory attitudes in the workplace.

- Promoting meetings with trade representatives to combat stereotypes and prejudices that currently limit the access to work of Muslim women, thus, encouraging their inclusion in the productive sector.
- Promoting cultural events and moments of exchange, sharing, dialogue between the Islamic community and the city, aimed at mutual knowledge in cultural, religious, historical terms (for example, sponsoring a collective street *iftar*; supporting cultural initiatives such as film events; co-designing with young Muslim women and girls cultural events; supporting actions in the media).
- Designing in collaboration with the local Islamic associations and distributing to the members of the community fact sheets which illustrate the rights of Islamic citizens, in contexts such as hospitals, place of work, institutional places, and the office in charge in case of violations of these rights. These fact sheets will propose a clear gender approach, taking into account the particular violations that Muslim women and girls may suffer. Translating and disseminating this information into several languages.

iii) Support for victims of anti-Muslim hatred

- Transferring the same content on the websites of the municipi-

pality, taking care to make them user-friendly and as such to have a positive impact on public opinion in general. To this end, it may be useful to turn to experts in intercultural and gender public communication.

- Establishing or strengthening an anti-discrimination help center to offer concrete and specialized help to those suffering discrimination, including discrimination on religious grounds. Specifically, informing the victims, or potential victims, of discrimination and anti-Islamist crimes of active services, roles, and competencies that they can find in the municipal territory.
- Establishing or improving a toll-free number and/or a protected chat on the municipal website, and/or a dedicated email address in order to enter and to keep in contact with victims and potential victims of discriminatory acts, taking care to bring this information to the metropolitan areas most frequented by the population of Islamic faith (production of printed information material, easy to understand, translated into several languages).
- Raising awareness on the risks of the under-reporting; liaising with services accompanying victims of discriminatory acts to report such acts; contributing to a better perception of security levels and fostering a climate of peaceful coexistence based on tolerance, respect, and mutual knowledge, in collaboration with the police stations.

In this regard, particular attention should be paid to the gender issue and to the identification of tools/supports that facilitate women to report acts of which they have been victims.

- Organize meetings with experts and volunteers active in the help center service to explain the operation and the type of support offered.

iv) Monitoring and systematization of data concerning anti-Islamist acts

- Strengthening municipal mechanisms to collect data related to complaints and reports made by victims and/or associations to both the help center and the municipal police, to set up a periodic monitoring system.
- Providing an online, multilingual form in which people can report the type of discrimination suffered, in an anonymous form, with the aim of collecting data to be analyzed statistically and beginning to build a matrix of information on the real extent of the phenomenon of anti-Muslim hatred in the metropolitan area of the city.

- Drafting of an annual report.

v) Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of existing laws and the actions taken

- Work together with local authorities to ensure effective law enforcement and to recover any weak-

nesses or gaps in the prevention, reporting, and combating of such discrimination and anti-Muslim hatred.

- Identification of indicators to assess the impact of the action plan and of the policies put in place at the municipal level to prevent and combat incidents of anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination, in particular against women and girls. ■

Endnotes

1. According to Erik Bleich, while the usage of the word 'Islamophobia' is quite widespread, academics disagree on its meaning and there is still no universal definition. Erik Bleich, "Defining and Researching Islamophobia," in Richard C. Martin (ed.), *Review of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (January 2012), pp. 179-180.

2. Robin Richardson himself, the former director of the Runnymede Trust and editor of the 1997 "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All" (which, according to Bleich, Allen *et al.*, is said to be the first publication that introduced the term Islamophobia in the western contemporary debate), listed eight disadvantages of the use of the term Islamophobia: "(i) Medically, phobia implies a severe mental illness of a kind that affects only a tiny minority of people. Whatever else anxiety about Muslims may be, it is not merely a mental illness and does not merely involve a small number of people; (ii) To accuse someone of being insane or irrational is to be abusive and, not surprisingly, to make them defensive and defiant. Reflective dialogue with them is then all but impossible; (iii) To label someone with whom you disagree as irrational or insane is to absolve yourself of the responsibility of trying to understand, both intellectually and with empathy, why they think and act as they do, and of seeking through engagement and argument to modify their perceptions and understandings; (iv) The concept of anxiety is arguably more useful in this context than the concept of phobia. It is widely recognised that anxiety may not be (though certainly may be) warranted by objective facts, for human beings can on occasions perceive dangers that do not objectively exist, or anyway do not exist to the extent that is imagined. Also it can sometimes

be difficult to identify, and therefore to name accurately, the real sources of an anxiety; (v) The use of the word Islamophobia on its own implies that hostility towards Muslims is unrelated to, and basically dissimilar from, forms of hostility such as racism, xenophobia, sectarianism, and such as hostility to so-called fundamentalism (Samuels 2006). [...]; (vi) The term implies there is no important difference between prejudice towards Muslim communities within one's own country and prejudice towards cultures and regimes elsewhere in the world where Muslims are in the majority, and with which 'the West' is in military conflict or economic competition; (vii) The term is inappropriate for describing opinions that are basically anti-religion as distinct from anti-Islam. [...]; (viii) The key phenomenon to be addressed is arguably anti-Muslim hostility, namely hostility towards an ethno-religious identity within western countries (including Russia), rather than hostility towards the tenets or practices of a worldwide religion. The 1997 Runnymede definition of Islamophobia was 'a shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam –and, therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims.' In retrospect, it would have been as accurate, or arguably indeed more accurate, to say 'a shorthand way of referring to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims –and, therefore, dread or hatred of Islam.' Robin Richardson, "Islamophobia or Anti-Muslim Racism –or What?– Concepts and Terms Revisited," *Insted*, (February 2013), retrieved May 7, 2021, from <http://www.insted.co.uk/anti-muslim-racism.pdf>.

3. Matthew Feldman, "A Working Definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred –Summary," *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right*, (May 15, 2019), retrieved May 7, 2021, from <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2019/05/15/a-working-definition-of-anti-muslim-hatred-summary>.

4. "Countering Islamophobia/Anti-Muslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief," *UN Human Rights Council*, (February 25, 2021), retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Documents/A_HRC_46_30.docx.

5. Guterres remarked that the report also draws attention to the 'triple levels of discrimination' faced by Muslim women because of their gender, ethnicity, and faith and added that "far too often, stereotypes are further compounded by elements of the media and some in positions of power." "Combating Islamophobia - Diversity Is a Richness, Not a Threat - UN Chief on the Int'l Day to Combat Islamophobia," *United Nations*,

retrieved on May 7, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4saEyobxjCM>.

6. "Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe," *ENAR*, (2016), retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/?action=media.download&uuid=35F2A8CC-0269-3908-B1EB4A1A52FE934C>, p. 15.

7. "What Do Europeans Think about Muslim Immigration?" *Chatham House*, (February 7, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2017/02/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration>.

8. "Perceptions Are Not Reality: What the World Gets Wrong," *Ipsos MORI*, (December 14, 2016), retrieved from <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perceptions-are-not-reality-what-world-gets-wrong>.

9. "Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Muslims-Selected Findings," *FRA*, (2017), retrieved from https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017-eu-minorities-survey-muslims-selected-findings_en.pdf, p. 13.

10. The research has been conducted in 10 European nations. "European Public Opinion Three Decades after the Fall of Communism," *Pew Research Center*, (October 15, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/10/Pew-Research-Center-Value-of-Europe-report-FINAL-UPDATED.pdf>, p. 80.

11. "Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs," *Pew Research Center*, (July 11, 2016), retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/07/Pew-Research-Center-EU-Refugees-and-National-Identity-Report-FINAL-July-11-2016.pdf>, p. 4.

12. "European Public Opinion Three Decades After the Fall of Communism," p. 85.

13. Fabrizio Ciocca, *L'Islam Italiano: Un'Indagine tra Religione, Identità e Islamofobia*, (Sesto San Giovanni: Meltemi, 2019), pp. 41-50.

14. The research has been conducted in collaboration with the University of Milan, the University of Bari, the University of Rome La Sapienza and the Catholic University of Milan. "Map of Intolerance - 5th edition," *Vox Diritti*, (2020), retrieved from <http://www.voxdiritti.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/islamofobia.jpg>.

15. Laura Cervi, Santiago Tejedor, and Mariana Alencar Dornelles, "When Populists Govern the

Country: Strategies of Legitimization of Anti-Immigration Policies in Salvini's Italy," *Sustainability*, Vol. 12, No. 10225 (December 2020), pp. 3-4.

16. Cervi *et al.*, "When Populists Govern the Country," p. 4.

17. Laura Cervi, "Exclusionary Populism and Islamophobia: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Spain," *Religions* (2020), Vol. 11, No. 516, pp. 5-6.

18. Cervi, "Exclusionary Populism and Islamophobia," p. 15.

19. Cervi, "Exclusionary Populism and Islamophobia," p. 13.

20. Alessandro Sallusti, "Cacciamo L'Islam da Casa Nostra," *Il Giornale*, (March 23, 2016)

21. Maurizio Belpietro, "Bastardi Islamici," *Libero Quotidiano*, (November 14, 2015)

22. "Ordinary Court of Milan - 7th Criminal Section, Decision of December 18, 2017," *Diritto Penale Contemporaneo*, (December 18, 2017), retrieved May 7, 2021, from <http://www.penalecontemporaneo.it/upload/6713-sentenza-bastardi-islamici.pdf>, p. 11.

23. Fabrizio Ciocca, "Musulmani in Italia: Una Presenza Stabile e Sempre Più Italiana," *Le Nius*, (May 14, 2019), retrieved April 20, 2021, from <https://www.lenius.it/musulmani-in-italia>.

24. "Europe's Growing Muslim Population," *Pew Research Center*, (November 29, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/11/FULL-REPORT-FOR-WEB-POSTING.pdf>, p. 8.

25. "Europe's Growing Muslim Population," p. 4.

26. "Question Time No. 3-02158 Presented by Nicola Molteni: Initiatives to Deny Access to the National Territory to a Well-Known Kuwaiti Islamic Preacher of Radical and Antisemitic Tendencies," *Camera dei Deputati*, (April 6, 2016), retrieved from <http://briguglio.asgi.it/immigrazione-e-asilo/2016/aprile/interrogazione-molteni-alfano.pdf>, p. 2.

27. See also here for a comparison of purpose-built mosques within Europe: there are almost 300 in Greece, almost 200 in France and 100 in Holland. It is also noteworthy that, with far fewer Muslims than Italy, Switzerland has 4, Austria 5, Portugal and Sweden 7, and Spain 14. Stefano Allievi, "Mosques in Europe: Real Problems and False Solutions," in Stefano Allievi (ed.), *Mosques In Europe: Why a Solution Has Become a Problem*, (London: Alliance Publishing Trust, 2010), pp. 23-24.

- 28.** Article No. 19 of the Italian Constitution, retrieved from <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1947/12/27/047U0001/sg>.
- 29.** Article No. 8 of the Italian Constitution.
- 30.** Article No. 8 of the Italian Constitution.
- 31.** Maria Bombardieri, "Why Italian Mosques Are Inflaming the Social and Political Debate," in Stefano Allievi (ed.), *Mosques In Europe: Why a Solution Has Become a Problem*, (London: Alliance Publishing Trust, 2010), p. 271.
- 32.** Paolo Cavana, "Prospettive di un'Intesa Con le Comunità Islamiche in Italia, Intesa tra la Repubblica Italiana e le Comunità Islamiche: A Che Punto Siamo?," *Camera dei Deputati*, No. 23 (Rome: Rivista Telematica, 2016), p. 4.
- 33.** "Patto Nazionale Per un Islam Italiano, Espressione di Una Comunità Aperta, Integrata e Aderente ai Valori e ai Principi dell'Ordinamento Statale," *Formiche*, retrieved May 8, 2021, from <https://formiche.net/wp-content/blogs.dir/10051/files/2017/02/Documento-completo-Patto.pdf>.
- 34.** Alessandro Ferrari, "Islam in Italy 2017: The Year of the Announced Breakthrough?" *Contemporary Italian Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (November 2018), p. 432.
- 35.** Leone Grotti, "I 'Vizi di Metodo' del Patto Nazionale Con l'Islam del Ministro Minniti," *Tempi*, (February 1, 2017), retrieved May 8, 2021, from <https://www.tempi.it/patto-nazionale-islam-ministro-minniti-vizi-metodo/#.WJH7rfnhCUk>.
- 36.** Article No. 19 of the Italian Constitution.
- 37.** Bombardieri, "Why Italian Mosques Are Inflaming the Social and Political Debate," p. 274.
- 38.** "Government Measure: Municipal Plan to Combat Islamophobia," *Ajuntament de Barcelona*, (2016), retrieved from <https://www.eccar.info/sites/default/files/document/Measure%20Plan%20against%20islamophobia%20%28eng%29.pdf>.
- 39.** The European Coalition of Cities against Racism is an initiative launched by UNESCO in 2004 to establish a network of cities interested in sharing experiences in order to improve their policies to fight racism, discrimination, and xenophobia.
- 40.** The Intercultural cities programme is an initiative led by the Council of Europe to support cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens, and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to help them manage diversity positively, and realise the diversity advantage.

THE PAGES BRINGING YOU THE WORLD



We write the truth, solely the truth,
without mincing any words.
Whatever is happening,
we bring it to you as it happens.
To us, the world is small,
but the power we derive from you is huge.



SABAH

"Turkey's Newspaper"