



PRESS STATEMENT

The situation for Muslims in Europe is getting worse: Time to act

Brussels, 21 September 2016 – On European Day Against Islamophobia, a coalition of organisations fighting Islamophobia¹ call on EU leaders and decision makers to tackle rising anti-Muslim hatred as a matter of urgency.

Almost a year ago, the EU held its first Fundamental Rights colloquium, focusing on Antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred. This was a strong political signal that the EU was finally willing to prioritise the fight against Antisemitism and Islamophobia. The European Commission – thanks to the appointment of a coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred – has had a whole year to listen and identify the main areas of concern. Now it's time to see concrete political actions to address the most pressing issues, not least the very real – and rising – violence and discrimination faced by Muslims on a daily basis in Europe.

The recent human rights violations and abusive political discourse around the burkini bans in France epitomised the hatred faced by Muslims, and Muslim women in particular. Both politicians from across the political spectrum and the judiciary have capitalised on this structural Islamophobia to enforce discriminatory policies. But France is not alone. A [study in Germany](#) has shown that Islamophobia has risen markedly, with 40% of people surveyed who believe Muslims should be forbidden from coming to Germany. Government and political representatives in eastern European countries, including Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, repeatedly talk of a “Muslim invasion” and refuse to accept Muslim refugees, stoking fear among the population and an increase in racist attacks. There has been a surge in racist incidents, including against Muslim communities, following the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, a campaign marked by xenophobic and racist discourse. A recent ENAR report shows that [Muslim women](#) are the first to pay the price of Islamophobia in Europe and are disproportionately targeted by both employment discrimination and hate crime.

In addition, security-oriented counter-terrorism measures are having a disproportionate impact on Muslim individuals or those perceived as such, including racial profiling by law enforcement authorities, police

¹ European Network Against Racism (ENAR), Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique (CCIB), Collectief Tegen Islamofobie en Discriminatie, European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW), Euro-Mediterraan Centrum Migratie & Ontwikkeling (EMCEMO), Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO), Karamah - Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, Muslimska mänskliga rättighetskommittén.

abuses during raids and the use of administrative restrictions on the basis of vague and discriminatory criteria. The “escalator” approach whereby a conservative religious practice would lead to support for violent terrorism is bound to inefficiently target innocent Muslim individuals and families, and to generate violent backlash from the mainstream population.

As a first step, EU institutions must publically recognise and condemn Islamophobia as a specific form of racism. The European Commission should agree on a roadmap to ensure that EU member states adopt national strategies to combat Islamophobia in areas such as employment, education, health, hate crime and criminal justice. EU and national counter-terrorism measures must build on independent impact assessment studies, include human rights safeguards and be complemented by long-term prevention through equality and social inclusion policies.

For further information, contact:

Georgina Siklossy, ENAR Senior Communication and Press Officer

Tel: +32 (0)2 229 35 70 - Mobile: +32 (0)473 490 531 - Email: georgina@enar-eu.org - Web: www.enar-eu.org