



# **ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION**

**Political Affairs Department**

**Islamophobia Observatory**

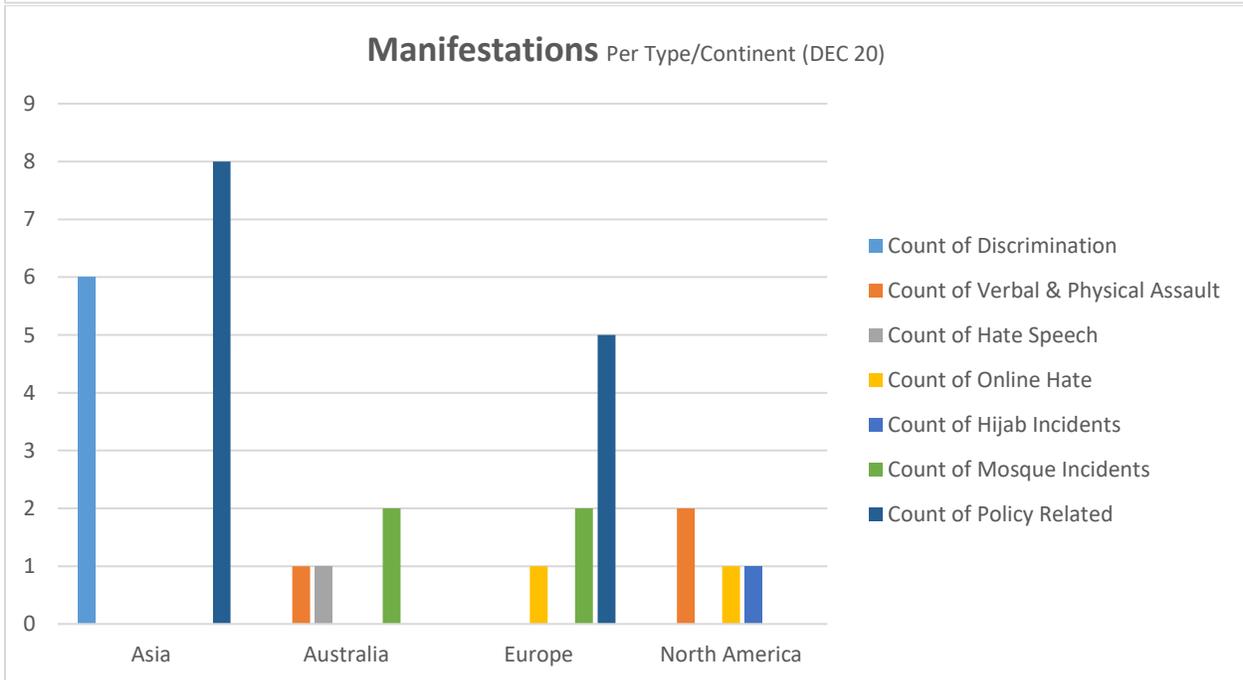
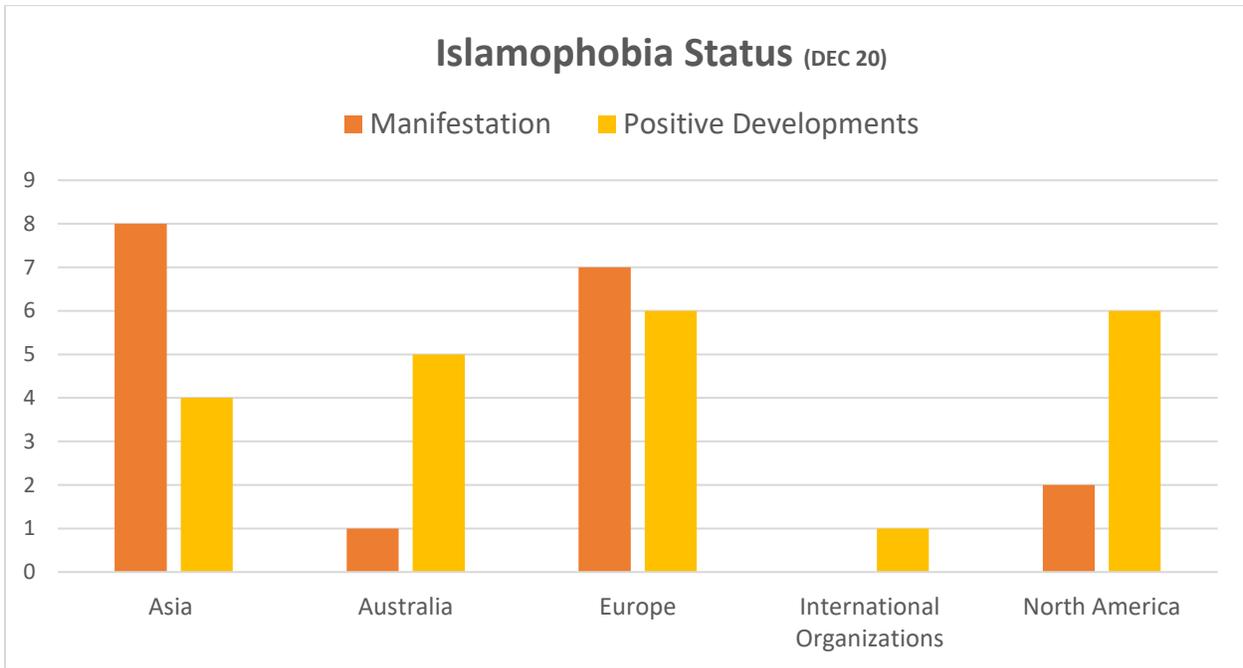
**Islamophobia Monitoring**

Month: December 2020



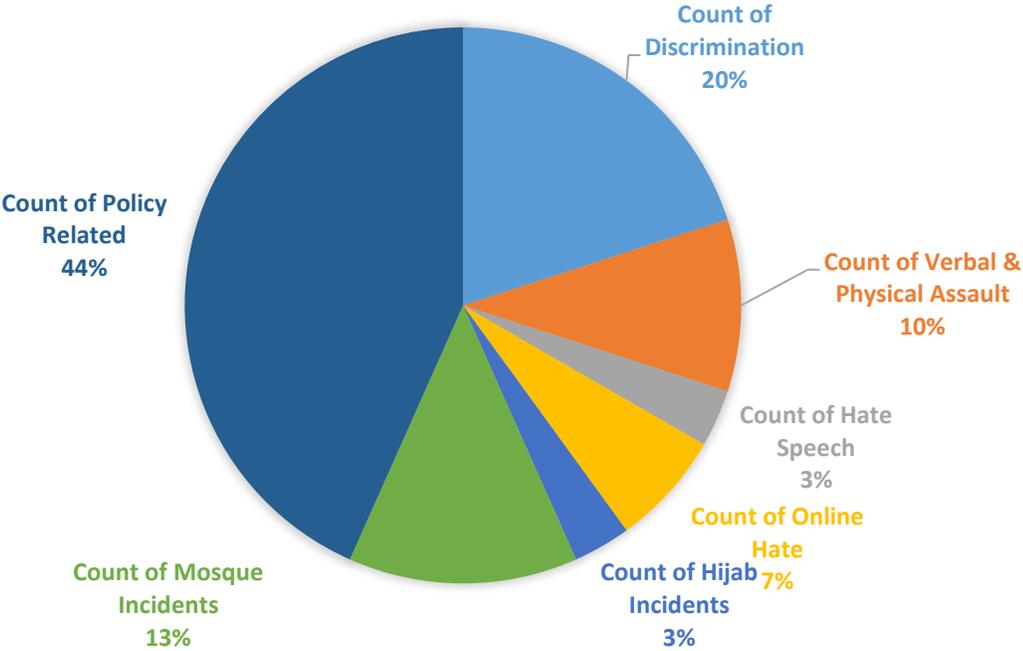
## OIC Islamophobia Observatory

Issue: December 2020



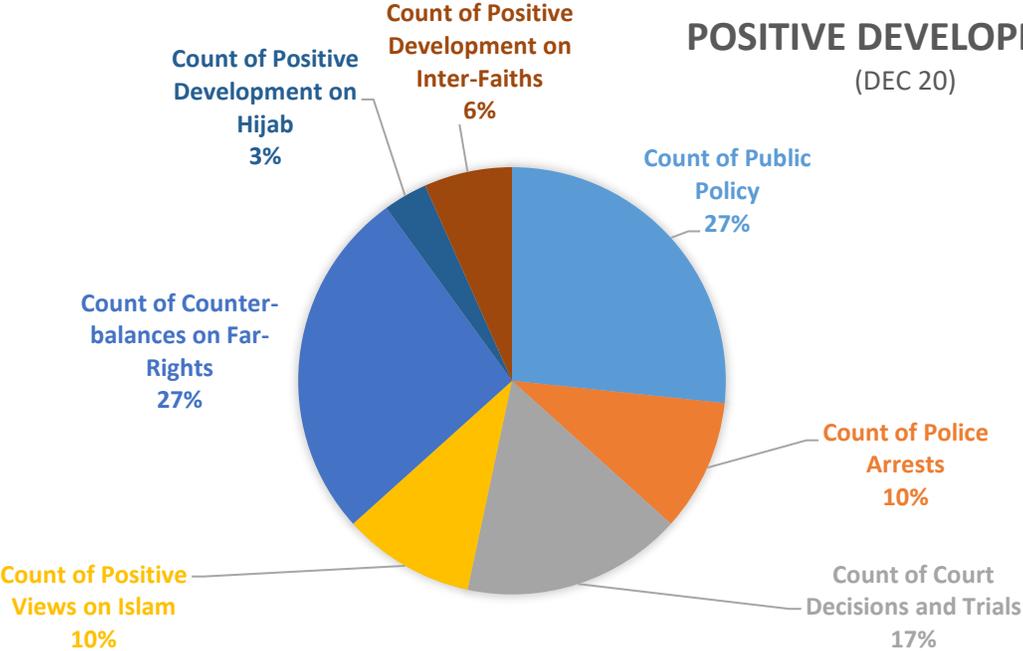
# MANIFESTATION

(DEC 20)



# POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT

(DEC 20)



# MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

## NORTH AMERICA

**IsP140001-USA: New FBI Hate Crimes Report Spurs U.S. Muslims, Jews to Press for NO HATE Act Passage** — On November 16, the USA's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), released its annual report on hate crime statistics for 2019. According to the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council (MJAC), the report grossly underestimated the number of hate crimes, as participation by local law enforcement agencies in the FBI's hate crime data collection system was not mandatory. MJAC noted that the Hate Crimes Statistics report showed 7,314 hate crime incidents in 2019, up slightly from the 7,120 incidents reported in 2018. MJAC Co-chair Stanley Bergman, said: "Muslims and Jews across America remain primary targets of crimes motivated by sheer hatred, but no ethnic or faith group is immune ... The persistence of and continuing increase in hate crimes demands urgent attention and action." MJAC called on the U.S. Congress to pass the Jabara-Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assaults, and Threats to Equality (NO HATE) Act. The measure would incentivize state and local law enforcement authorities to improve hate crime reporting by making grants available, to be managed through the Department of Justice. It would also amend the penalties for hate crimes to allow courts to require offenders to undertake educational classes or community service related to the victim's community as a condition of release.

See: PR Newswire's entry, in: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-fbi-hate-crimes-report-spurs-us-muslims-jews-to-press-for-no-hate-act-passage-301173857.html>, retrieved on 09.12.2020

**IsP140002-USA: Tennessee legal watchdog out after lawyer accused him of being an 'anti-Muslim bigot'**—On December 11, Jerry Morgan, who was a disciplinary counsel for the Tennessee Board of Professional Responsibility, had resigned after a Nashville lawyer he was investigating slammed him as an "anti-Muslim bigot". In a court filing, the state board that punishes lawyers for misconduct said Morgan was "no longer employed" as a disciplinary counsel. Morgan, resignation came after Brian Manookian's attorney argued that Morgan couldn't do his job effectively because of multiple social media posts he made criticizing Muslims and the Islamic faith. Morgan had argued in favor of sanctions against Manookian, who was suspended from practicing law the year before, after the Board of Professional Responsibility said he violated ethics rules by sending threatening emails. However, Manookian's attorney Daniel Horwitz said in the court filing: "Allowing an extreme anti-Muslim bigot — whom Tennessee's Board of Professional Responsibility has inexplicably employed and permitted to maintain prosecutions on our Supreme Court's behalf — to undertake a prosecution against an attorney who has a Muslim family shakes confidence in the integrity of this entire proceeding". According to a November 24 court filing, Morgan made a slew of disparaging comments against Muslims on Twitter, praising President Donald Trump for "stopping Muslims" and "talking big against Muslims". Morgan said Islam was not a peaceful religion and made comments linking the faith with violence and "Muslim terrorists," the filing stated.

See: The Tennessean Newspaper's entry, in: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/2020/12/11/tennessee-legal-watchdog-accused-being-anti-muslim-bigot-out/6514262002/>, retrieved on 16.12.2020

**IsP140003-USA: Federal Jury Convicts Illinois Man for Bombing the Dar al-Farooq Islamic Center**

— On December 9, a federal jury returned a guilty verdict against Micheal Hari, for his role in the bombing of the Dar al-Farooq Islamic Center in Bloomington, Minnesota, on August 2017. The jury convicted Hari on all five counts of the indictment, including intentionally defacing, damaging, and destroying any religious real property because of the religious character of that property; intentionally obstructing, and attempting to obstruct, by force and the threat of force, the free exercise of religious beliefs; conspiracy to commit federal felonies by means of fire and explosives; carrying and using a destructive device during and in relation to crimes of violence; and possession of an unregistered destructive device. Hari would face a mandatory minimum sentence of 30 years in prison. U.S. Attorney Erica H. MacDonald for the Distirct of Minnesota said: “Michael Hari’s goal in bombing the Dar al-Farooq Islamic Center was to spread hatred, instill fear, and threaten the constitutionally protected right to freedom of religion. This act of violence, driven by hatred and ignorance, shook our community”. As proven at trial, during the summer of 2017, Hari established in Clarence, Illinois, a terrorist militia group called “The White Rabbits.” Hari recruited Michael McWhorter and Joe Morris, who had pleaded guilty on 2019, to join the militia group. On August 5, 2017, Morris used a sledgehammer to break a window, which was part of DAF’s Imam’s office, and threw a plastic container containing diesel fuel and gasoline mixture into the building. McWhorter then lit the fuse on a 10-pound black powder pipe bomb that Hari had built and threw it through the broken window. The three men sped away from the building and drove back to Clarence. When the pipe bomb exploded, it ignited the mixture in the plastic container, causing extensive fire and smoke damage to the Imam’s office, in addition to water damage caused by the building’s sprinkler system. At the time of the bombing, several congregants were gathered in the mosque for morning prayers.



See: Imperial Valley News’ entry, in: <https://www.imperialvalleynews.com/index.php/news/health-news/8-news/21779-federal-jury-convicts-illinois-man-for-bombing-the-dar-al-farooq-islamic-center.html>, retrieved on 14.12.2020

**IsP140004-Canada: Calgary task force finds Quebec's Bill 21 has far-reaching impacts for religious minorities**

— A task force comprised of faith groups, think-tanks and community organizations in Calgary said Quebec's Bill 21 had impacted religious minorities across Canada since it came into law in 2019. The secularism law bans religious symbols, like hijabs and turbans, prohibiting public teachers, lawyers, police officers and civil servants from wearing religious symbols at work, effectively preventing them from working in their chosen fields. The I-Care task force study which was funded by Think For Actions, Canadian Muslim Research Think Tank and Calgarians Against Racism, Violence and Hate. The study which gathered opinions from minority groups through focus groups. participants described the bill as hateful and one which targeted minority religions. Dr. Mukarram Zaidi, chairman of the group Think For Actions, said: "It gives the feeling that we are becoming second-class citizens ... This type of bill increases racism and discrimination by providing futile grounds to white nationalism, neo-nazis, and white supremacists,". Bill 21 had been facing several legal challenges in Quebec, where hearings were still taking place.

See: CBC entry, in: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/bill21-alberta-calgary-anti-racism-task-force-1.5814987>, retrieved on 09.12.202

**IsP140005-Canada: Hijab-Wearing Mother and Daughter Attacked by Man in Mall Parking Lot**— A man had been charged with two counts of assault and one count of mischief after a "hate-motivated" attack on a Muslim mother and daughter in a mall parking lot in Canada, police said. The assault took place in the parking lot of the Southgate center in Edmonton on December 8. Richard Bradley Stevens, approached two Somali women who were sitting in their vehicle and began yelling racial abuse at them, Edmonton Police said in a news release. Police said the mother and her adult daughter were both wearing hijabs eyewitnesses told police the man punched the passenger-side. "Fearing for her safety, the passenger then ran from the vehicle," police said in the statement. "The male ran after the complainant, pushed her to the ground and began assaulting her". Sgt. Gary Willits, of the Edmonton Police Service's Hate Crime and Violent Extremism Unit, said: "The attack on these women is horrific and our hearts go out to them ... These individuals were targeted due to their race, therefore making this a hate-motivated crime."

See: Newsweek's entry, in: <https://www.newsweek.com/hijab-wearing-mother-daughter-attacked-man-mall-parking-lot-1553797>, retrieved on 13.12.2020

**IsP140006-Canada: Third Black Muslim woman attacked in South Edmonton within a week, outside Southgate LRT**— On December 15, A Muslim woman was attacked at the Southgate LRT station. Edmonton Police Service said, in an email sent to the community group, the attack was motivated by racism and hatred. The incident, which took place during the daytime, was the third in a week against a Black Muslim woman. "The victim, a 23-year-old Black female, is safe and has been offered assistance through the EPS Crime and Trauma-Informed Support Services," according to Edmonton Police. The attack came after a similar incident in the same area. On December 8, Richard Stevens was arrested and charged with two counts of assault and one count of mischief after he had assaulted, a mother and daughter, who were wearing Hijab at the Southgate center.

See: Edmonton Journal News' entry, in: <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/third-black-muslim-woman-attacked-in-south-edmonton-within-a-week-outside-southgate-lrt>, retrieved on 17.12.2020

**IsP140007-UN: World retreating from values of enlightenment, said UN chief** — On December 18, The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, warned that the world was witnessing a "retreat from the values of enlightenment and a rise in hate speech". The UN Chief, who was addressing the German parliament, said "It is clear that the way to win the future is through an openness to the world. Yet, in too many places, we see a closing of minds and retreat from the values of enlightenment," he said. "A dangerous drift to the false refuge of irrationality. And the rise in hate speech, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry and other forms of discrimination. History teaches that politics driven by anger, distortion is always, always a recipe for disaster," he added.

See: Anadoul Agency News' entry, in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/world-retreating-from-values-of-enlightenment-un-chief/2081386> retrieved on 24.10.2020

## EUROPE

**IsP140008-France: France cracks down on 76 mosques suspected of 'separatism'**— France's interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, had announced on twitter, a crackdown on 76 mosques that the government suspects of "separatism" and encouraging extremism. On December 2, Darmanin said the mosques would be inspected and any found to be "breeding grounds of terrorism" would be shut. He added "In the coming days, these places of worship suspected of separatism will be inspected. Those that should be closed, will be". According to an interior ministry document

leaked to Le Figaro newspaper, the 76 targeted mosques include 18 of particular concern, eight of which are in the greater Paris area. Two of these, in the Seine-Saint-Denis banlieue, home to a large number of France's north African community, had already been ordered to close and a third had been flagged up by the country's security commission.

See: The Guardian News Entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/03/france-crackdown-76-mosques-suspected-separatism>, retrieved on 04.12.2020

**IsP140009-France: The Collective against Islamophobia in France had dissolved itself** — Gérald Darmanin, Minister of the Interior, on November 19 sent a notification of dissolution to the Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF). The NGO had eight days to reply before the dissolution been decided by the government. On November 27, the CCIF's board of directors reacted by announcing that it had, as of October 29, "Pronounced voluntary dissolution" of the collective, and redeployed "A large part of its activities abroad". In a statement, the board announced that they had transferred The assets of the association to partner associations which took over the fight against Islamophobia on a European scale. It was after the assassination of Professor Samuel Paty, on October 16, that the Minister of the Interior, accused the CCIF of being "Obviously involved" in the attack, an assertion that was not subsequently substantiated. Darmanin, confirmed his intention to dissolve the CCIF, accusing it of feeding a "Hate climate" and to be "An Islamist pharmacy working against the Republic". The decision to dissolve CCIF was denounced by various Human right organization. In a statement, Amnesty International said "The dissolution of an organization is an extreme measure that can be justified only in very limited circumstances. The French authorities have failed to provide to date any evidence that could justify the dissolution of CCIF".

See: en24 News Entry, in: <https://www.en24news.com/2020/11/the-collective-against-islamophobia-in-france-has-dissolved-itself.html>, retrieved on 06.12.2020

**IsP1400010-France: France reveals details of controversial 'separatism' bill**— On December 9, France's draft law aimed at tackling what the government terms "Islamist radicalism" was unveiled. President Emmanuel Macron had promoted the bill to target what he called "separatists" undermining the nation, but rights groups had raised concerns over the law, saying it would discriminate against French Muslims. Among notable measures was making school obligatory from age three with the ability to opt-out in favour of homeschooling for special cases only. The measure was aimed at ending so-called "clandestine" schools run by hardliners. Another article encouraged mosques to register as places of worship, so as to better identify them. Many of the nation's more than 2,600 mosques had been operating under rules for associations. Foreign funding for mosques, while not forbidden, would have to be declared if more than \$12,000. The draft law would make it a crime punishable by fines and up to one year in prison for a doctor to provide a young woman with virginity certificates, sometimes demanded ahead of marriage. French doctors and Muslim feminists were also against such certificates, but some have argued against an outright ban, saying it could harm women who could face violence without them. Those practicing polygamy would be forbidden French residence cards. Neither the words Islam nor Muslim were named in the text. Parliament would open a debate on the draft law in the months ahead.

See: Aljazeera News' entry, in: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/9/france-reveals-details-of-controversial-separatism-bill>, retrieved on 10.12.2020

**IsP140011-France: French Parliament considers ‘internment camps’ for Muslims**— A far-right politician in France’s national assembly had tabled a bill that would result in “internment camps” for Muslims, according to the news channel TRTWorld. The proposed legislation, which was dated November 17, and presented by Guillaume Peltier, a former member of the extremist far-right party National Rally led by Marie Le Pen, who later joined The Republicans, a liberal-conservative party in France, had been criticized by human rights activists. A French human rights defender, Yasser Louati, warned that Peltier’s chilling remarks on radicalization were not even defined in the Bill and lawmakers had struggled to come up with a working definition in the past. Were the bill to become law it would result in "interning" French citizens who were on so-called radicalization watch-lists and would see them being officially sent to "administrative detention centers". It’s not yet clear when and if the proposed bill would pass into law. According to Peltier France had been monitoring more than 22,000 people who were on a radicalization watch-list. France had not collected statistics on the religious background of those it’s watching, however, Peltier’s speech had left no doubt that he believed that the new law was aimed at Muslims.

See: TRT world News’ entry, in: <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/french-parliament-considers-internment-camps-for-muslims-42202>, retrieved on 13.12.2020

**IsP140012-France: Far-right activists convicted following Al Jazeera investigation**— On December 15, A French Court in the northern city of Lille, had convicted three members of the French far-right group Generation Identity (GI). They had been found guilty of offences which include assault and in one case, inciting terrorism, after an evidence filmed by Aljazeera was used to indict them, according to Aljazeera report. A judge at the High Court said footage from the two-part documentary Generation Hate, which was aired in December 2018, played a key role in establishing the verdicts. Remi Falize, a former leading member of the Flanders branch of the far-right group GI, was convicted of incitement to “terrorism” and assault. He was sentenced to eight months in prison, suspended for 18 months. Falize was filmed by an undercover Al Jazeera reporter who had infiltrated the GI’s Lille branch at the Citadelle bar in the city Centre. Falize was caught on a covert camera where he said: “The day that I find out I’ve got a terminal illness, dude, I get a weapon, and I go sow carnage....A mosque, whatever ... even a car-ramming, I take my car and bam! There we go! ... Next to that, Charlie Hebdo will be like dog’s p\*\*\*.” Falize said Wazemmes market, a place popular with Arabs and Muslims, “is where all the ‘ragheads’ of Lille go. If you take your car there on a Sunday, it’ll be a massacre ... I’ll leave my ID card ... like the jihadists do ... and then bam! I f\*\*\* all your mamas ... right into 5th gear. If I manage to survive the first carnage, I’ll do it again, I swear to you”. Etienne “Le Roux” Vanhalwyn and Guillaume Dumont St Priest were also found guilty. Nicolas Nef Naf, lawyer for SOS Racisme, a French anti-racism charity, welcomed the court’s verdicts.

See: Aljazeera News’ entry, in: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/15/far-right-activists-convicted-following-al-jazeera-investigation>, retrieved on 21.10.2020

**IsP140013-Germany: Germany bans far-right, pro-Nazi group; Police raid homes** — On December 1, More than 180 police officers raided homes in three German states, after the German government banned a far-right group, the interior ministry said. The homes of 11 members of the far-right group Wolfsbrigade 44 were searched in Hesse, Mecklenburg West-Pomerania and North Rhine-Westphalia to confiscate the group’s funds and far-right propaganda material, the German news agency dpa reported. Germany’s Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said: “There’s no place in this country for an association that sows hatred and works on the resurrection of a Nazi state.” The members of the group want to re-establish a Nazi dictatorship and abolish democracy, the interior ministry said. The 44 in their name stands for the fourth letter in the alphabet, DD, and is an

abbreviation for Division Dirlwanger. Oskar Dirlwanger was a known Nazi war criminal and commander of a Nazi SS special unit. The far-right group, founded in 2016, was also known for its anti-Semitic and racist ideology as well as its violent and aggressive appearances in public and on social media.

See: abc News' entry, in: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/germany-bans-pro-nazi-group-police-raid-homes-74475064>, retrieved on 10.12.2020

### **IsP140014-Germany: Mosque Targeted in Racist Attack**—On Mid December, an unidentified

extremists had attacked the Fatih Mosque of the Turkish Islamic Union "Ditib", in the state of Baden-Württemberg, southwestern Germany. The attackers drew a cross on the walls of the mosque and wrote racist slogans. The head of the Al-Fatih Mosque Association, Ali Ozdemir, expressed his deep sorrow over the attack, he said: "We have been living in Sontheim for



30 years in the midst of relations of mutual respect. We enjoy full transparency here, and we want everyone here to live in peace". Ozdemir, added that the mosque was subjected to a similar attack in 2019, and that the perpetrators had not been arrested so far, he called on the authorities to arrest the attackers.

See: IQNA News' entry, in: <https://iqna.ir/en/news/3473453> & <https://www.uae71.com/posts/89745>, retrieved on 21.10.2020

### **IsP140015-UK: British Journalist's book contract canceled over Islamophobic tweets**— On

December 15, Julie Burchill, a British Journalist, had lost a book contract after her islamophobic comments on twitter with the journalist Ash Sarkar. In a statement, Burchill's publisher, the Hachette imprint Little, Brown, said they "will no longer be publishing Julie Burchill's book," because of the indefensible language against Sarkar. Burchill, a columnist for the British newspaper the Sunday Telegraph, had "crossed a line with regard to race and religion" and book had now become "inextricably linked with those views" according to the publishers statement. On December 13, Burchill had began tweeting at Sarkar after she criticized Rod Liddle for a 2012 Spectator article, in which he claimed to have chosen against a career as a teacher because he feared he would become a sex offender. Burchill responded to Sarkar's criticism of Liddle, writing: "Can you please remind me of the age of the Prophet Mohammad's first wife? Thank you in anticipation!". Sarkar, who is Muslim, responded by quote-tweeting Burchill's comment, writing: "Julie Burchill, who once I suppose was a well-regarded journalist, has quite openly subjected me to Islamophobia on here. I'm a big girl – it's not going to upset me – but I do find it strange that none of her colleagues or friends in the industry seems to have a problem with it ... I just wonder if there's some code of conduct at the Sunday Telegraph which would mean that outright racism – for instance, falsely accusing me of 'worshipping a pedophile' – was a bit of a no-no" according to Sarkar's comments on twitter.

See: The Guardian News' entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/dec/15/julie-burchill-publisher-cancels-book-contract-islam-tweet-little-brown>, retrieved on 17.12.2020

**IsP140016-Netherlands: Mosque in Netherlands target of Islamophobic attack**— On December 12, the Ulu Mosque in the Netherlands' Utrecht province, which was linked to the Diyanet Foundation of Holland (HDV), suffered an Islamophobic attack, the mosque's board of management announced. The statement said that in addition to Muslim insults being written on the mosque's entrance and wall, a cross was painted. The announcement responded by saying that the attack was met with sorrow and that even though words of hate spark fear and anxiety in society, the foundation will remain unified and continue its services. The written statement pointed out that two synagogues were also attacked the same night in the same district and underlined that the foundation condemns all types of violence. "We have to be aware that there are persons having serious hateful emotions towards Muslims and that could carry out far serious attacks. Therefore, we urge the Justice and Security Ministry to take extra security measures around mosques," the statement continued. According to local media outlets, police had arrested a man but were not sure if he conducted the three attacks on his own.



See: Daily Sabah News' entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/eu-affairs/mosque-in-netherlands-target-of-islamophobic-attack/>, retrieved on 15.12.2020

## ASIA

**IsP140017-India: Muslim man arrested under 'love jihad law'**— On December 2, Police in India's Uttar Pradesh state had arrested a Muslim man for allegedly trying to convert a Hindu woman to Islam. The district Police confirmed the arrest on twitter. The arrest was the first under the new anti-conversion law that targets "love jihad" - a term radical Hindu groups use to accuse Muslim men of converting Hindu women by marriage. At least four other Indian states were drafting laws against "love jihad". A complaint filed by the woman's father the week before accused the man of pressuring his daughter to convert and threatening her life if she didn't. The woman was allegedly in a relationship with the man but got married to someone else earlier this year. The man was sent to 14 days of judicial custody. He told reporters that he was innocent and had "no link with the woman". The new law carries a jail term of up to 10 years.

See: BBC News Entry, in: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-55099113>, retrieved on 06.12.2020

**IsP140018-India: India a dangerous, violent place for Muslims under Modi government, says minorities report**— The annual South Asia State of Minorities Report 2020 which had looked at the status of civic space and personal liberties accessible to citizens, especially minorities, living in South Asian countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka said that India had become a



“dangerous and violent space for Muslim minorities” according to the annual report published on December 7. The report said: “In December 2019, an amendment in the Citizenship Act was passed which opened a pathway for a category of illegal immigrants, specifically leaving out Muslims. In the run-up to the legislation, the government also declared its intentions to create a National Register of Indian Citizens, which would have the potential to render many Muslims stateless”. The report noted the raise in hate crime against minorities, which had “taking the form of mob lynching and vigilante violence against Muslims, Christians, and Dalits.” The report said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) assuming power nationally in 2014 “unveiled a new and now frontal attack on religious minorities and other vulnerable groups. This has had a chilling effect on civic space for Muslims and Muslim-community-based organisations and activists specifically. The report added that the situation had “exacerbated significantly” since BJP returned to power with a “brute majority” in May 2019, the report said. In quick succession, it enacted a slew of measures aimed at signaling to Muslims “particularly its will to brutally subjugate”, it added. The Indian authorities had also weaponized the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, which regulates foreign donations to entities in India, against progressive and minority NGOs, the report noted. It further highlighted the alleged human rights violation in Jammu and Kashmir since 2019 when the Centre abrogated the erstwhile state’s special status under Article 370 of the Constitution. “The case of Muslim-majority Kashmir – where regressive constitutional changes in August 2019 were accompanied by a communication blackout, mass detentions, and a movement lockdown – demonstrates how civic space can be sought to be completely erased, within a formal democratic framework,” it said.

See: Scroll News’ entry, in: <https://scroll.in/latest/981254/india-a-dangerous-violent-place-for-muslims-under-modi-government-says-minorities-report>. Also, Read the full: South Asia State of Minorities Report 2020, in: <https://minorityrights.org/publications/sac-report-2020/>, retrieved on 16.12.2020

**IsP140019-India: Hindu Activists Denounce India's Jailing of Muslim Who had prayed at Hindu Temple**—Interfaith advocates in India and the United States were rallying around a Muslim peace activist who had been jailed by Indian authorities after praying at a Hindu temple. Faisal Khan, an activist from Uttar Pradesh, had visited the temple in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh in late October to encourage communal harmony during a period of heightened inter-religious tension. According to activists, The Temple’s priest invited Khan to pray at the back of the temple complex. However, on November 2, Khan was arrested in the city of Mathura after a photo of Khan and an associate praying in the temple went viral online. The same priest filed a complaint with local police where he had accused Khan of a slew of charges — including promoting enmity between religious groups and defiling a place of worship. Sunita Viswanath, a New Yorker and progressive Hindu who had been raising awareness about the arrest, described Khan as an activist whose devotion to nonviolence and interfaith unity follows in the footsteps of Indian independence leader Mohandas Gandhi. According to Viswanath, Khan’s arrest was another example of how Hindutva — an ideology that underpins Hindu nationalism — had produced a “version of Hinduism that I neither recognize nor accept,” she told HuffPost. “As a Hindu, I cannot accept that there is any problem if someone, anyone, prays inside a temple... There is no doubt in my mind that Faisal Khan’s arrest was due to the fact that a person who is Muslim, who devotes [his efforts] to an India which sees no difference between different communities, is not welcome in today’s Hindutva India,” Viswanath said in an email, according to huffpost.

See: The Huff Post New’ entry, in: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/faisal-khan-india-hindu-nationalism\\_n5fd3e0dac5b68256b1154050](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/faisal-khan-india-hindu-nationalism_n5fd3e0dac5b68256b1154050), retrieved on 21.10.2020

**IsP140020-India: In Kerala, Christians, Hindus should stand united, Said RSS leader**—On December 6, Janmabhumi daily newspaper published an article for RSS leader KR Umakanthan where he had called for unity among Hindus and Christians in the state of Kerala to deal with the threats of political Islam. In the article, Umakanthan argued that attempts at Islamisation were a threat to Hindus and Christians alike and a weak Hindu or Christian leadership alone can't fight Islamic terrorists. According to the Times of India, The words of Umakanthan was a clear indication of the implementation of a long-term strategy of BJP to establish its base in the state. Since there was a considerable presence of Christians and Muslims across the state, BJP had found it difficult to register electoral wins through consolidation of Hindu votes alone. Umakanthan had been BJP's organizational secretary of state until a few years ago.

See: The Times of India entry, in: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/christians-hindus-should-stand-united/articleshow/79612784.cms>, retrieved on 23.12.2020

**IsP140021-India: Delhi Court Acquits All Foreigners Accused in Tablighi Jamaat Case** — On December 15, A Delhi court had acquitted all the 36 foreign nationals, who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat event organised at Nizamuddin Markaz in March, and were accused by the Delhi police of having been violation of visa norms and flouting COVID-19 guidelines. Mainstream media and the government were quick to label the event as a 'super-spreader' after several of the participants tested positive for COVID-19. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Arun Kumar Garg acquitted the foreign nationals from 14 countries of all the charges levelled against them.

See: The Wire News' entry, in: <https://thewire.in/law/tablighi-jamaat-markaz-case-delhi-court-acquits-42-foreign-nationals>, retrieved on 23.12.2020

**IsP140022-India: One Year On, No Accountability for Delhi Police's Terrifying Impunity at Jamia**



— On December 15, The Wire, an Indian news website had publish an article written by Nitika Khaitan, a lawyer based in Delhi, titled “One Year On, No Accountability for Delhi Police's Terrifying Impunity at Jamia”. The Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), attack referred to by the authuer was the forceful entry by Delhi police into the Jamia Millia Islamia university during a confrontation with student protesters against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which had started outside the campus on 15 December 2019. Khaitan said “The police assault on Jamia, was documented in-depth and yet mandatory procedures for investigating police brutality have not

been followed. The official narrative has succeeded in shielding police impunity through a haze of paltry excuses – not entirely unexpected when the police are tasked with investigating themselves.” According to Khaitan, students were arrested under anti-terror laws by the same agency accused of perpetrating the violence. The police had responded to the JMI law suit by claiming that it had used moderate force. However, Khaitan said “the police’s actions on that day went far beyond the force permitted to apprehend or disperse rioters, and instead constitute as a systematic attack.” She added “Though the police claim that they could successfully contain violence by temporarily apprehending 52 people, their claim appears to be wholly arbitrary. One of the students detained was picked up by officers from outside a hospital that was treating several injured students. Another student recounted how 40-50 policemen flogged him, as he was dragged from the library where he had been studying, to be detained overnight. At the two police stations where Jamia students were detained, most detainees were injured but were denied access to medical care and water.” The author had refer to a report released by the National Human Rights Commission in June which had recommended administrative action against police officers involved in “damaging CCTV cameras, unnecessarily caning” and using tear gas shells inside the library but no criminal prosecution. “Unlike in cases of certain other police excesses, no commission of inquiry has been set up.” She said. Khaitan added “In the year following the brutality at JMI, the Delhi Police has been accused of standing by as mobs attacked Jawaharlal Nehru University, of one-sidedness and participation in the worst communal violence Delhi has seen in decades, and of violent excesses while enforcing the public health lockdown. Citizens are left with no effective way to demand accountability for power, even the power to wield lethal violence.”

See: The Wire News’ entry, in: <https://thewire.in/rights/jamia-millia-islamia-violence-delhi-police>, retrieved on 30.12.2020

**IsP140023-China: How China Uses AI to Identify ‘Suspicious’ Muslims for Predictive Policing**— Chinese authorities had been using predictive software to select Muslim minorities for detention based on seemingly innocuous behavior, according to a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) released on December 9. That program, called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), had been using artificial intelligence to compile lists of so-called “suspicious persons” based on data and personal information that it has collected from citizens—often without their knowledge or consent. The program which targeted Uighurs and members of other mostly Muslim Turkic minorities in China’s far-western region of Xinjiang, where evidence suggests more than 1 million Muslims were held in extrajudicial detention, ostensibly to counter terrorism. IJOP created the lists using data mined with technology including closed circuit cameras with facial recognition, “Wi-Fi sniffers” that collect information from smartphones and computers, and spyware that police occasionally order Xinjiang residents to install on their phones, the HRW report said. Those lists were then issued to state officials, who evaluate the named individuals’ “general performance” and determine whether to send them to what Beijing calls “re-education centres”. One such list, containing the names of over 2,000 detainees from Xinjiang’s Aksu prefecture and referred to in the report as the Aksu List, was leaked to HRW in August. The rights group’s analysis indicates that most people named were flagged by IJOP and detained for everyday lawful behavior. Maya Wang, a senior China researcher at HRW said: “The Aksu List provides further insights into how China’s brutal repression of Xinjiang’s Turkic Muslims is being turbocharged by technology,”

See: Vice News’ entry, in: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/jgggzg/how-china-uses-ai-to-identifv-suspicious-muslims-for-predictive-policing>, retrieved on 10.12.2020

**IsP140024-China: Senior Huawei Executive Resigns Over Muslim-Tracking Technology** — On December 16, Tommy Zwicky, The head of communications for Huawei in Denmark confirmed to VICE World News that he had resigned over the Chinese company's role in testing surveillance tools capable of tracking China's Muslims. Zwicky, said that he had "left because of how the Uighur case was handled." His resignation followed a report by U.S.-based surveillance research firm IPVM that the Chinese company tested facial recognition software that could identify the faces of the Uighur minority from a crowd and send automated "Uighur alarms" to the authorities. The Washington Post, which partnered with IPVM, published these allegations on December 9.

See: Vice News' entry, in: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/akd7b5/senior-huawei-executive-resigns-over-muslim-tracking-technology>, retrieved on 23.12.2020

**IsP140025-China: Alibaba 'dismayed' by reports its software was used to identify Uyghurs**— On December 17, Alibaba, the Chinese tech company, said in a statement, that it had stopped trying to identify faces by ethnicity after the company was accused of creating a facial recognition system meant to detect Uyghurs. Alibaba's statement came a day after The New York Times newspaper and IPVM, a surveillance industry publication, had reported that a division of Alibaba showed its clients how they could use its technology to identify members of the Uyghur community in videos and images. The system was built by Alibaba's cloud computing team, and allegedly included the example: "Is this a Uyghur?" in an algorithm, according to the report. It also reportedly included code to recognize if someone was a "minority" or "Asian." According to the statement, Alibaba said that it was "dismayed to learn that Alibaba Cloud developed a facial recognition technology in a testing environment that included ethnicity as an algorithm attribute for tagging video imagery." Alibaba did not mention Uyghurs in its statement, or explain how or why the system was built in the first place. But it stressed that the technology had been limited to trials, and "was not deployed by any customer... We never intended our technology to be used for and will not permit it to be used for targeting specific ethnic groups," the company said. "We have eliminated any ethnic tag in our product offering."

See: CNN entry, in: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/18/tech/alibaba-cloud-ipvm-uyghurs-intl-hnk/index.html> retrieved on 24.10.2020

**IsP140026-Sri Lanka: Muslims in Sri Lanka 'denied justice' over forced cremations of Covid victims** — On December 1, Sri Lanka's Supreme Court, dismissed petitions filed by members of the Muslim community against the government's regulation that makes cremations mandatory for COVID-related deaths. Sri Lanka's mandatory cremation policy for all bodies suspected to be infected with Covid-19 had been the cause of outrage for the Muslim and Christian minorities, whose beliefs stipulate bodies should be buried. Several of the Muslims whose bodies were cremated by the authorities had not been tested for coronavirus, or had even tested negative. Some Muslim families had begun disowning their dead because they do not want to be complicit in the cremations, which they see as a sin for their loved ones. Many had also refused to pay the fees of 48,000 rupees that are demanded by the state to cover the costs of cremation, meaning bodies of Muslim Covid-19 victims have begun to pile up in hospital morgues. Human rights activists say the policy is part of an ongoing attack on Sri Lanka's Muslim community, who make up 9% of the population. Shreen Saroor, a human rights activist, said: "The way they are treating the Muslim community during this pandemic is clear-cut racism. The community is being forced to abandon

their own dead in order to protect their beliefs and traditions. There is not even a scientific justification for them being denied dignity in death.” World Health Organization issued guidelines stating that the burial of victims posed no danger to public health, and the United Nations resident coordinator for Sri Lanka and UN regional groups had all written to the Sri Lanka government calling for the Covid-19 dead to be handled with dignity and their religious beliefs respected.

See: The Guardian Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/04/muslims-sri-lanka-justice-forced-cremations-covid-victims>, retrieved on 07.12.2020

## AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

### IsP140027-New Zealand: White supremacist Philip Arps not allowed within 100m of Linwood mosque—

On December 7, Philip Arps, a man who shared Christchurch terror attack on 2019, appeared in the Christchurch District Court where the Department of Corrections sought to impose another release condition prohibiting him from going within 100m of the Linwood Islamic Centre and the Masjid An-Nur (Al Noor mosque) on Deans Ave. Arps, was



sentenced to 21 months' jail on 2019 after he sent the video of the Christchurch terror attack to 30 people, and asked a friend to modify it by adding cross-hairs and a “kill count”. He was released in January on strict conditions, including not being allowed to enter or loiter near any mosque in New Zealand. Arps had been prohibited from coming within 100 metres of a Christchurch mosque after he repeatedly visited a home brew store next door. Judge Ian Mill said Arps’ continued presence in the area would affect the Linwood mosque's congregation deeply given the trauma he had already caused the Muslim community.

See: Stuff News’ entry, in: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/crime/123695905/white-supremacist-philip-arps-not-allowed-within-100m-of-linwood-mosque>, retrieved on 14.12.2020

### IsP140028-New Zealand: Editor of New Zealand’s major corporate think tank exposed as a bigot—

A December 11 Newsroom article by Marc Daalder revealed that New Zealand Initiative (NZI) chief editor Nathan Smith had a personal blog that “attacks Muslims and Jews and espouses incel [misogynist] ideology”. Following the article, NZI, a prominent think tank funded by international corporations including Google, British American Tobacco and MasterCard; among others, had announced that Smith had resigned after being immediately put on leave. Smith,



played a major role in the think tank for at least a year. He edited and co-wrote numerous

publications and interviewed people for podcasts. Smith's personal "Likebulb" blog, which had been deleted, contained views not very different to those of the fascist terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who massacred 51 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch on March 15, 2019, and far-right groups such as Action Zealanda. Newsroom reported: "In a post from April 2018, Smith outright says he 'just [doesn't] like Arabs or Africans.'" In April 2020, Smith wrote: "While not all Jews encourage immoral behaviour (from a Christian perspective), most people who do tend to be Jewish. Same with influential positions in the West. Not all Jews are in those spots, but nearly all those spots are filled by Jews... The answer to why Jews keep being kicked out of Christian countries is Jewish behaviour." In October 2020, he wrote: "The word 'racism' is a propaganda tool to pathologise normal human behaviour. Preferring your own race is a survival tool—like eating or sleeping." Responding to the Christchurch terror attack, Smith wrote on March 24, 2019: "There is no such thing as racism." He called for Muslims to "forgive" Tarrant, adding: "Unfortunately, I have never heard a Muslim or a progressive forgive." NZI director Oliver Hartwich told Stuff he was "gobsmacked" to read about Smith's views: "I almost fell off my chair... His sub-editing was extremely good, the podcast extremely good... we had no idea. I'm horrified." Hartwich, who has known Smith for several years, said all publications Smith was involved in were being "vetted for any traces of his views." The National Business Review (NBR), New Zealand's main financial newspaper, had remained silent about the fact that it employed an anti-Semite as a feature writer between 2012 and 2020.

See: WWS's entry, in: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2020/12/15/nzfa-d15.html>, retrieved on 15.12.2020

**IsP140029-New Zealand: Arrest made after new Queenstown mosque targeted in a hate crime**— On December 24, A man had been arrested in connection to upsetting posters plastered at a Islamic Centre which had officially opened its doors on December 11. The unidentified man appeared in the Queenstown District Court, charged with possession of a knife, Southern District Commander Superintendent Paul Basham said in a statement. According to a witness, the posters bore images of Islam's prophet Muhammad, taken from satirical French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, and reportedly included sexist and anti-Islamic messages. The posters, which had appeared at the Gorge Rd site on December 22, were quickly removed by locals. Basham said: "We know incidents like this are upsetting for our community and we'd like to thank Queenstown residents for the information they have provided to assist our enquiries". Jim Boulton, Queenstown Mayor, described the alleged offender as "disgusting". "I'm extremely disappointed and unhappy that there's people out there who think this is okay," Boulton told Newshub on December 23. Boulton added: "We are a very inclusive community - there are 47 different nationalities in our high school here. Our community enjoys and embraces the fact we have so many different beliefs and nationalities here, so this is foreign to us."

See: Newshub entry, in: <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2020/12/arrest-made-after-new-mosque-in-queenstown-targeted-in-a-hate-crime.html>, retrieved on 30.12.2020

**IsP140030-Australia: Australian man charged with terrorism offenses for urging 'murder of Muslims'**— On December 10, Tyler Jakovac, an Australian citizen from the southern New South Wales city of Albury, was charged with terrorism-related offenses as court documents revealed he allegedly called for the murder of "non-whites, Jews and Muslims," local media reported. According to Anadolu Agency (AA), Jakovac was arrested in his home on December 9 after police launched an investigation into his online communications. He was taken into custody hours after allegedly posting comments online suggesting he was "willing to be involved in a mass

casualty event,” ABC News reported. Jakovac was charged on two counts – urging violence against members or groups and advocating terrorism – and if proven guilty, could be jailed for up to 12 years for each offense. In a statement, Australian Federal Police said: "Investigators became concerned about the escalating content of some of the man's communications, which allegedly indicated his willingness to commit a violent and criminal act,”. Australian police also alleged that Jakovac "shared bomb-making instructions and expressed support for extremist ideology on an encrypted messaging service.” The charges came as Australia began a probe into rising far-right extremism and radicalism in the country. Australian parliamentary intelligence and security committee had announced it would examine the spread of radical movements and the threat they pose to citizens. According to the Agence France-Presse (AFP), Australia had seen an increasing threat from the far-right in recent years. Top intelligence officials said in September that white supremacist extremism accounted for 40% of their caseload, up from 15% in 2016.

See: Daily Sabah News’ entry, in: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/asia-pacific/australian-man-charged-with-terrorism-offenses-for-urging-murder-of-muslims>, retrieved on 15.12.2020

**IsP140031-Australia: Parliament launch Far-right extremism inquiry**— On December 9, Australia’s Home Affairs Minister, Peter Dutton, asked the federal Parliament’s Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security to open an inquiry into ‘extremist movements and radicalism in Australia’. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation said recently right-wing terror accounted for up to 40 per cent of its current workload, and that an attack was possible in Australia. The inquiry’s terms of reference ask politicians to probe both far-right and Islamist terrorism. However, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Home Affairs, Kristina Keneally – who led the charge for the investigation – said the inquiry would focus largely on the far-right. “The responsibility we have in the parliament is to explain right-wing extremism to the community and engage the community to help us keep Australians safe,” she said. The inquiry would investigate how extremism had been affected by the COVID pandemic, which experts said it had supercharged some radical groups. It would also look at “the role of social media, encrypted communications platforms and the dark web” in fostering extremism – timely, considering the Royal Commission into the Christchurch terror attack found the Australian shooter had been influenced and radicalized by content on YouTube and Facebook. Dr Andre Oboler, CEO of the Online Hate Prevention Institute, said Australia had “room to improve” on how it deals with right-wing extremists. He welcomed scrutiny on how the internet was radicalizing or had helped in the planning of attacks, but warned the problem was bigger than simply cracking down on social media content or increasing police funding. He welcomed recent moves from Facebook to stamp out hate speech and extremist content online. However, Dr Oboler warned that radicals were simply moving to other, less-policed platforms that had sprung up as social media giants cracked down on extremists.

See: The New Daily News’ entry, in: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2020/12/10/far-right-terrorism-inquiry/> retrieved on 24.10.2020

# POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

## NORTH AMERICA

### **IsP140032-USA: California had appointed its first ever Muslim chaplain to the state legislature**

— On December 7, A Muslim man had made history after been appointed as the first Muslim chaplain to the California Legislature. Imam Mohammad Yasir Khan was appointed by Anthony Rendon, speaker of the California State Assembly, as the assembly chaplain for the 2021-22 session, according to a news release. In a statement Rendon said: "I've seen the growth of the Islamic community in my own district and have become close to both religious and civic leaders. Like them, Khan shows a strong desire to contribute to the spiritual and civic vitality of California. He has already done so in many ways." Khan had served as a chaplain at his local county jails, sheriff's offices and hospitals for the past six years. The main role of a State Assembly chaplain was to say a prayer at the beginning of each session, but Khan hopes to use this opportunity to bring the community closer together. The California chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CA) had celebrated Khan's appointment. According to CNN, Basim Elkarra, the executive director of CAIR-Sacramento Valley, said "This appointment sends a message of inclusion - that American Muslims are an integral part of our society. Despite all the hate Muslims have faced during four years under Trump's administration, our community is resilient and continues to help and play critical roles in all aspects of society."



See: CNN News' entry, in: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/14/us/first-muslim-chaplain-california-trnd/index.html>, retrieved on 14.12.2020

### **IsP140033-USA: US lawmakers urge Facebook to remove anti-Islam content**

— On December 16, Debbie Dingell, an American Democratic Party politician, urged Facebook to remove anti-Muslim content on the social media platform. Dingell, a U.S. House Representative for Michigan's 12th congressional district, had led a group of 30 US lawmaker to write a letter to Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook founder and CEO, in which they said Facebook had failed to take action "in response to the abuse of your platform to dehumanize Muslims and stoke violence and genocide against Muslims around the world." In their letter, the lawmakers were seeking six measures that span a variety of actions, including the formation of a working group on anti-Muslim bigotry, greater enforcement actions targeting militias and white supremacists, and an independent review of Facebook's "enabling anti-Muslim violence, genocide and internment." Scott Simpson, a director for the Muslim Advocates advocacy group, thanked the lawmakers for the letter, which he said it would work towards "holding Facebook accountable for the harm it has inflicted on American Muslims here and Muslims abroad."

See: Anadolu Agency News' entry, in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-lawmakers-urge-facebook-to-remove-anti-islam-content/2078172>, retrieved on 17.12.2020

## EUROPE

### **IsP140034-UK: Press regulator publishes guidance on reporting of Muslims and Islam**

— On November 9, The Independent Press Standards Organization (IPSO), a voluntary British press regulator, published guidance for editors and journalists on best practice for reporting matters

relating to the faith of Islam and Muslim individuals or communities. IPSO had published guidance particularly under clause 1 of the Editors' Code relating to accuracy and clause 2 relating to discrimination. IPSO said that the guidance was created after consultation with community organizations and academics, as well with the press itself. The section on accuracy reminds the press that it would not, for example, depict or refer to Muslims as a monolithic community with one culture, background and set of religious practices, nor as wholly defined or motivated by their faith. Opinion pieces and images would not be inaccurate, misleading or distorted, and where generalizations were made, the writer would be careful to distinguish between comment, conjecture and fact, and ensure that stereotypes were not presented as fact. Particular care would also be taken when repeating claims were to be made on social media. In relation to discrimination, the guidance quoted clause 12 of the Editors' Code which limited references to an individual's religion to pieces where they were relevant to the story and requires that such references would not be prejudicial or pejorative. Fiyaz Mughal, Founder of Faith Matters and Tell Mama, welcomed the publication of the guidance document, and said: its “an excellent balance after much deliberation and engagement by IPSO”. He added “on issues of fact that do not have anything to do with Muslims and Islam and which are woven into stories and conjecture that maligns whole communities so that it promotes discriminatory views about them, this document makes clear that there are important guidelines that should be followed.” according to IPSO official press releases.

See: Practical Law Media & Telecoms entry, in:

[https://uk.practicallaw.thomsonreuters.com/Document/I914ef0d424e911ebbea4f0dc9fb69570/View/FullText.html?transitionType=Default&contextData=\(sc.Default\)&firstPage=true](https://uk.practicallaw.thomsonreuters.com/Document/I914ef0d424e911ebbea4f0dc9fb69570/View/FullText.html?transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default)&firstPage=true), retrieved on 09.12.202

**IsP140035-UK: Times pays £30,000 in libel damages after 'sexing up' link between advocacy group and suspected terror attacker**— On December 4, The Times, a British newspaper, had agreed to pay £30,000 in damages to CAGE for falsely suggesting the advocacy group supported a murder suspect. The newspaper suggested Cage and its outreach director Moazzam Begg were supporting the suspect accused of stabbing three men to death during a rampage in a Reading park in June. Khairi Saadallah had since admitted three counts of murder. The Times published a story five days after the attack, headlined: “Campaign group helps Reading suspect Khairi Saadallah”, which wrongly claimed Cage had “backed the Reading attack suspect”. The Times immediately removed the article after it was contacted by Cage but did not agree a satisfactory wording for its correction, and the organisation and Begg both subsequently launched libel claims. In its apology on Friday, The Times said: “We wrongly stated that they refused to comment on their involvement with the suspect. In fact, while they commented on police and media reaction to the attack, they had no involvement with the suspect. We apologise to CAGE and Mr Begg for these errors and for the distress caused, and we have agreed to pay them damages and legal costs.” CAGE said it will use the damages paid to “expose state-sponsored Islamophobia and those complicit with it in the press”.

See: Press Gazette News' entry, in: <https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/times-pays-30000-in-libel-damages-after-sexing-up-link-between-advocacy-group-and-suspected-terror-attacker/>, retrieved on 07.12.2020

**IsP140036-Austria: Austrian court overturns ban religious headscarves in schools as rule discriminated against Muslims**— On December 11, An Austrian court had overturned the ban on religious headscarves in schools as judges declared the rules discriminated against Muslims. Austria's constitutional court struck down a law introduced in May 2019, after a challenge from two children and their parents. The law, which had prevented girls younger than ten from wearing the headscarf in primary schools, was passed under the previous coalition of the centre-right

People's Party (OeVP) and the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), just days before that government collapsed. The OeVP-FPÖ government, had said at the time, that the patka head covering worn by Sikh boys or the Jewish kippa would not be affected. In a statement explaining the decision, the court said the law “contravened the principle of equality in relation to freedom of religion, belief and conscience”. The People's Party which had been in coalition with the Green Party since January 2020, had still intended to extend the headscarf ban up to the age of 14. Heinz Fassmann, Austria’s Education Minister, said: “I regret that girls will not have the opportunity to make their way through the education system free from compulsion”. In its statement the court said that far from promoting integration, “the ban could... lead to discrimination as it runs the risk of making it more difficult for Muslim girls to access education and socially excluding them”. The IGGO, the body officially recognized as representing the country's Muslim communities, welcomed the judgement and said the court had ended 'the populist politics of bans'.

See: Daily mail News’ entry, in: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9044527/Austrian-court-overturns-ban-religious-headscarves-schools-rule-discriminated-against-Muslims.html>, retrieved on 13.12.2020

**IsP140037-Germany: 'Try to understand Muslims', says German politician slamming Islamophobia**— German politician slammed the far right AfD (Alternative for Germany) Party over islamophobia and how they had exacerbated the situation in the country with its racist policies. Helge Lindh, who represents the Social Democratic Party (SPD), in a speech to the Bundestag, said: "You are playing a devastating game for democracy. Those who play with democracy play with people. And these games have victims, and Muslims definitely are the victims of these treacherous games. Don't play with democracy. This is what the AfD does.". In his speech, the lawmaker apologized to Muslims who were victims of islamophobia incidents. Lindh advised Members of the Federal Parliaments to educate themselves to better understand Muslims. “If we tell Muslims what we expect from them, how they should behave, we will humiliate them and reap hatred. Let's not go on telling Muslims what modern Islam is. Try to understand what it means to find a job as a trained covered woman. Only then can we venture more into discussing Islam.” he said.

See: Yenisafak English News’ entry, in: <https://m.yenisafak.com/en/world/trv-to-understand-muslims-savs-german-politician-slamming-islamophobia-3556032>, retrieved on 09.12.2020

## ASIA

**IsP140038-Nepal: ‘Mosque is model of religious tolerance’ says Minister Bhattarai** — On December 12, Yogesh Bhattarai, Nepal’s Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, said the mosque is an epitome of religious tolerance and goodwill. Bhattarai, made the statement during the inspection of the Pancha Kashmiri Takiya Masjid at local Ghantaghar. On the occasion, the Minister for Culture opined that it was the government’s responsibility to protect and promote every religion and culture. The minister announced that the government had allocated budget for the mosque, he said it was the government’s job to conserve and protect the 500 years old Pancha



Kashmiri Takiya that was intricately related to history. President of the Muslim Commission, Samim Miya Ansari said the Muslim community was elated with the government allocating money for its uplift and support. Director General at the Department of Archaeology, Damodar Gautam shared on the occasion that the Pancha Kashmiri Takiya Mosque built in the 15th century was one of the oldest mosques of Nepal. According to Khabarhub report, the financial support provided by the government would be used for reconstruction, painting and construction of a traditional gate at the Mosque.

See: Khabarhub News' entry, in: <https://english.khabarhub.com/2020/12/148353/>, retrieved on 16.12.2020

**IsP140039-Sri Lanka: Expert committee on Muslim cremation issue to be expanded**— On December, The Sri Lanka Government authorities announced that it would expand the expert committee which had been tasked to propose on the Muslim cremation issue. Dr. Asela Gunawardena, the Director General of Health Services, told Colombo Gazette that the country's expert committee would be expanded to include more Muslims. Gunawardena said that a request had been made to expand the expert committee to make it more balanced. Questions had been raised on social media about the existing members. The expert committee had maintained that the cremation of coronavirus victims was the only option and that the burial of victims could not be approved in Sri Lanka.

See: MENAFN News' entry, in: <https://menafn.com/1101315147/Sri-Lanka-Expert-committee-on-Muslim-cremation-issue-to-be-expanded>, retrieved on 30.12.2020

## AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

**IsP140040-New Zealand: Ardern says sorry to New Zealand Muslims for mosque massacre failings**—New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, had apologized to New Zealand's Muslim community for failings by authorities in the lead up to a white supremacist's attack on two mosques in Christchurch on 2019 that killed 51 worshippers. Ardern's apology followed the publication of a 792-page public report on December 8 after a public inquiry. The report found that the security services did not pay enough attention to the threat posed by rightwing terror while placing an "inappropriate" focus on Islamist extremism. It also identified shortcomings in gun control laws and made a series of recommendations aimed at preventing massacres. "On the matters of how the attack occurred and what could have been done to stop it, the commission found no failures within any government agencies that would have allowed the terrorist's planning and preparation to be detected," she said. However, the Prime Minister, accepted that they were lessons to be learned and said: "these were failings nonetheless, and for that, on behalf of the government, I apologise." A minister was appointed to oversee the implementation of the report, which included reforms to hate speech, changes to firearms licensing laws and the creation of a national security and intelligence agency. The inquiry was headed by William Young, a Supreme Court judge, and former diplomat Jacqui Caine. It interviewed more than 400 people and received 1,100 submissions during its 18-month investigation.

See: Financial Times Newspaper entry, in: <https://www.ft.com/content/21cf11e1-584d-45bd-b0ff-bcec3458c639>, retrieved on 09.12.2020