

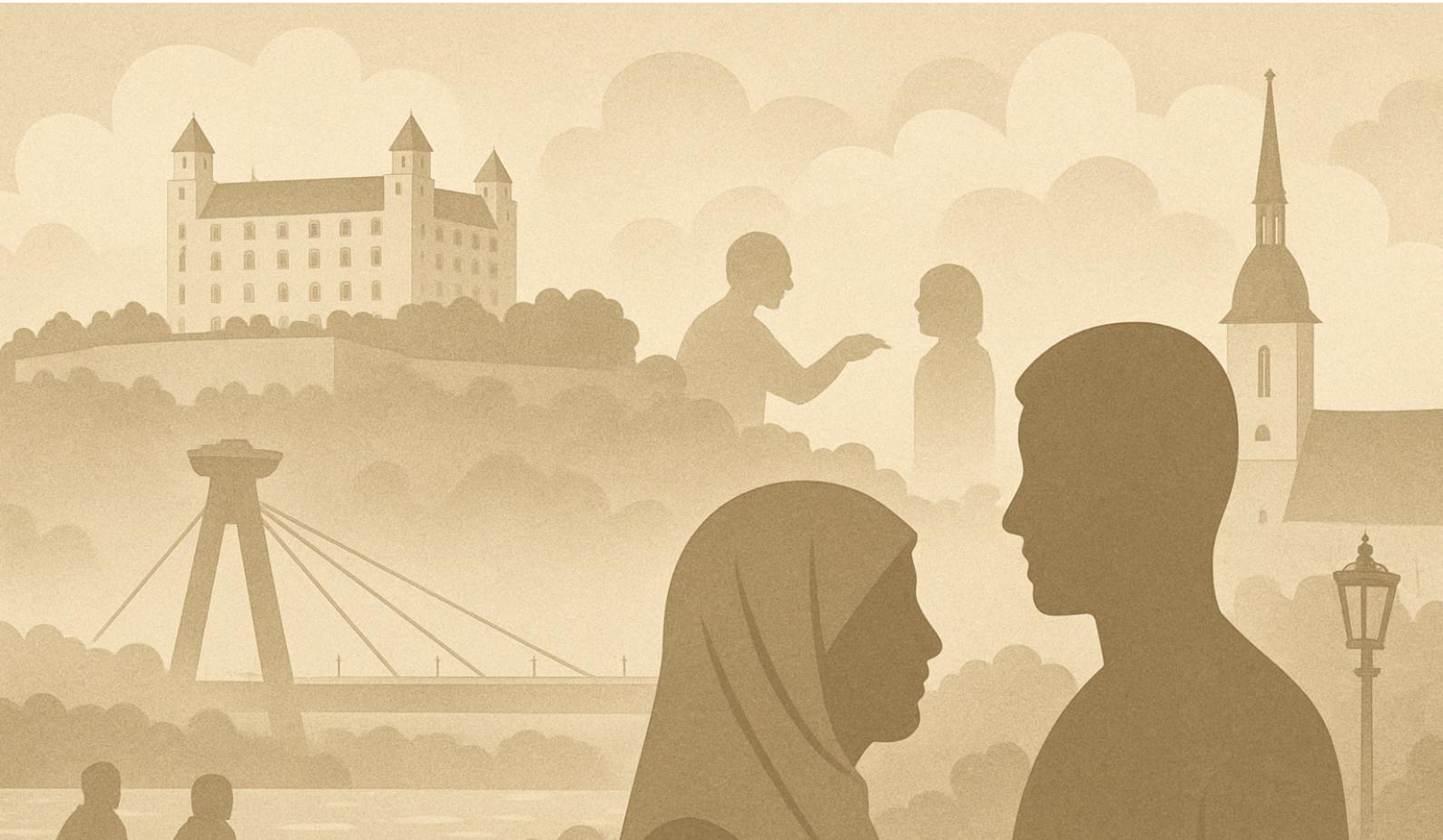
REPORT:

ISLAMOPHOBIA

IN SLOVAKIA

2024

by THE ISLAMIC FOUNDATION IN SLOVAKIA



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About the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia

The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) serves as the principal entity representing the interests of the Muslim community within Slovakia. Its multifaceted mission encompasses providing essential religious services, fostering the spiritual and communal well-being of Slovak Muslims, and acting as a vital informational resource for Muslims visiting the country.

Beyond its direct engagement with the Muslim community, INS is deeply committed to cultivating positive interactions between the Muslim minority and Slovakia's non-Muslim majority population. This involves outreach activities such as delivering educational presentations at schools, universities, and various public forums, alongside operating a cultural center catering to Muslims. The Foundation is a staunch advocate for interfaith dialogue within Slovakia's diverse society, consistently participating in collaborative activities with Christian, Jewish, and other religious denominations.

A significant aspect of the Islamic Foundation's work involves addressing and dispelling prevalent misconceptions, stereotypes, and conspiracy theories surrounding Islam and Muslims, including those targeted towards Muslim migrants and refugees in recent years. To this end, INS actively monitors media coverage, public discourse, and online social networks to systematically gather data on anti-Muslim sentiment, instances of hate speech, and attacks targeting Muslims. It remains the only organization in Slovakia with an exclusive focus on combating anti-Muslim prejudice. Leveraging its established position within the Muslim community, INS is uniquely positioned to collect firsthand accounts and data directly from individuals who might otherwise hesitate to report their experiences to state authorities or the media.

Annually, the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia compiles its research and findings into the Report on Islamophobia in Slovakia, a practice initiated in 2013. This report serves as a crucial resource, including its use as a data source for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) 1 annual report on hate crimes across Europe. Following significant research efforts in previous years, including a major study in 2021 and subsequent media coverage in 2022, INS continued its monitoring and advocacy work throughout 2024.

The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia / Islamská nadácia na Slovensku
Obchodná 31
811 06 Bratislava, Slovakia
info@islamonline.sk
+421 944 560 161

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Foreword

Documenting the state of Islamophobia in Slovakia for 2024 reveals both persistent challenges and specific developments impacting the country's Muslim community. As highlighted in previous annual reports, Muslims continue to face various obstacles, ranging from anti-Muslim hate speech sometimes propagated by political figures and prevalent online, to the potential for discrimination, although no specific physical or verbal attacks were formally reported through INS channels this year. Furthermore, Slovakia remains unique in the EU for its lack of a state-recognized mosque or official Islamic cemetery.

Arguably the most significant structural impediment remains the enduring lack of official state recognition for Islam, stemming from highly restrictive legislation requiring 50,000 member signatures for registration. The complex history of this issue is detailed later in the report. While previous attempts at reform had failed, 2024 saw a renewed legislative effort by the opposition party Progresívne Slovensko to introduce a more accessible two-stage registration model. However, this proposal was ultimately rejected by Parliament in September, reaffirming the political deadlock on this issue of fundamental religious equality. Despite this legislative inertia, dialogue concerning the law's discriminatory impact continued within civil society and expert circles throughout the year.

Troubling manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment were again visible, particularly within the political sphere. The campaign preceding the European Parliament elections in June was notably marked by the Hnutie Republika party disseminating inflammatory online content, including videos designed to portray Muslims and migration negatively, seemingly to mobilize voters based on fear. Online platforms also continued to host significant hostility, including documented instances of targeted harassment of public figures based on their perceived religious identity following unrelated political commentary. While no specific physical or verbal attacks were formally reported via the Islamic Foundation's channels in 2024 – a finding likely influenced by underreporting – these examples of hostile rhetoric underscore the persistence of underlying prejudice.

Amidst these challenges, positive efforts to foster understanding and inclusion continued in 2024. These included interfaith outreach initiatives like the annual community Iftar dinner hosted by INS, educational activities conducted by the Foundation in schools and through open days at its cultural center, and collaborative advocacy efforts involving various civil society groups focused on addressing the discriminatory legal framework.

This report aims to summarize the context surrounding Islamophobia in Slovakia throughout 2024. It begins by providing background on the Muslim community, then delves into specific examples of Islamophobic discourse and the constraining legal environment, acknowledges civil society responses, and concludes by offering policy recommendations designed to promote genuine religious freedom, combat discrimination, and foster a more inclusive Slovak society.

Muslims in Slovakia

The most recent comprehensive data regarding the size of the Muslim community in Slovakia originates from the 2021 national census. This census, mandatory for all residents including those with temporary status, marked the first time Islam could be explicitly selected as a religious affiliation. The official results recorded 3,862 individuals identifying as Muslim.

However, this figure is widely regarded as an underrepresentation of the community's actual size. Various factors contribute to this discrepancy, including potential reluctance among some Muslims to declare their religion due to prevailing societal negativity or concerns stemming from past anti-Muslim rhetoric by public figures. Consequently, informed estimates suggest the actual number of Muslims residing in Slovakia during 2024 likely ranged between 5,000 and 7,000 individuals. This estimate accounts for natural community evolution and, significantly, the continuation of labor migration trends observed since 2022, which saw Slovakia attracting workers from diverse regions, including Central Asia (such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan), to fill labor market gaps throughout 2023 and 2024.

Prior census counts, where Islam was not a listed option but could be manually entered under "other," recorded significantly fewer Muslims (1,212 in 2001 and 1,934 in 2011). The substantial increase in the 2021 official figure is largely attributed to the clearer census methodology and perhaps targeted outreach campaigns within the community, rather than indicating a dramatic population boom between 2011 and 2021 through migration alone.

Slovakia's Muslim community is characterized by its ethnic diversity. The largest group consists of individuals with Arab backgrounds, followed by significant populations of Albanians, Bosnians, and Afghans. The community also includes smaller numbers of Turks, Pakistanis, Muslims from former Soviet states, and a community of several hundred Slovak converts to Islam. While there is a slight male predominance overall, among Slovak converts, women constitute a slight majority.

From a socio-economic perspective, the community displays heterogeneity. Many individuals of Arab origin are engaged in higher education as students, work as university-educated professionals, or are involved in entrepreneurship. Albanians are frequently active in the gastronomy and confectionery industries. Among Afghans, particularly those who arrived via a Czechoslovakia-Afghanistan bilateral treaty in the 1980s, many are established professionals such as doctors and engineers; more recent arrivals also include individuals seeking refuge. Bosnians are often found working as traders or operating businesses.

Geographically, Muslims live throughout Slovakia, though the highest concentration resides in the capital city, Bratislava. Košice is home to the second-largest community. Smaller but well-established communities also exist in several other cities, including Nitra, Levice, Trnava, Martin, and Piešťany.

The overall size and demographic makeup of the Muslim community in Slovakia have been shaped, in part, by the Slovak government's generally restrictive stance on asylum and refugee

resettlement, especially since the 2015 European migration crisis. As a result, Slovakia has not experienced the large-scale integration of refugees seen in some other EU countries, which has limited the impact on the resident Muslim population's size. However, recent years, including 2024, have witnessed a discernible, though still relatively modest, increase in the Muslim presence, driven more significantly by targeted labor migration than by large numbers of asylum seekers being granted permanent settlement.

Islamophobic Incidents, Events and Discourse

Islamophobia persisted as a tangible issue within Slovak society throughout 2024, manifesting most visibly within the political landscape and the online environment. While comprehensive data capturing the full extent of everyday incidents involving discrimination, verbal assaults, or physical attacks relies heavily on direct reporting mechanisms (such as those facilitated by the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia), publicly available information for 2024 highlights specific concerning trends and high-profile events.

The political sphere, particularly during the campaign period for the European Parliament elections in the spring of 2024, saw significant instances where anti-Muslim rhetoric was strategically employed. A prominent example involved senior politicians from the Hnutie Republika movement producing and widely disseminating a video filmed in Brussels. This content used derogatory comparisons and unsubstantiated claims about demographics to explicitly portray Muslim presence in Western Europe negatively, linking it directly to migration policies and urging voters to support their party to prevent a similar scenario in Slovakia. This incident serves as a clear illustration of the continued instrumentalization of Islamophobia for political gain.

Simultaneously, the online realm remained a major conduit for anti-Muslim hostility. Social media platforms continued to host hate speech, often proliferating in comment sections related to news articles or political posts concerning migration, Islam, or geopolitical events like the conflict in the Middle East. This online antagonism also manifested in targeted harassment of public figures. For instance, in December 2024, political commentator Jozef Lenč faced a barrage of Islamophobic abuse following his critical posts on Israeli government policy, with attackers focusing on his perceived religious identity rather than engaging with his arguments. Such events underscore the ease with which online discourse can degrade into identity-based aggression targeting Muslims or those perceived as such.

These visible manifestations in 2024 often drew upon and reinforced persistent negative narratives associating Islam and Muslims with security risks, uncontrolled migration, and fundamental incompatibility with Slovak or European societal values. Concerns voiced within broader European contexts during the year about a general rise in anti-Muslim sentiment provided a worrying backdrop to these national occurrences.

This climate of prejudice, evident in both calculated political actions and pervasive online interactions, exists within a specific Slovak context. The legal framework governing religious freedom, particularly the significant barrier posed by the lack of official state recognition for Islam, constitutes an important structural factor that shapes the experiences and vulnerabilities of the Muslim community. This legal dimension will be examined in detail in the subsequent section.

Legal System

A defining structural challenge impacting the Muslim community in Slovakia remains the lack of official recognition of Islam as a religion by the state. This situation stems directly from the highly restrictive conditions stipulated in Act No. 308/1991 Coll. on the Freedom of Religious Faith and the Status of Churches and Religious Societies, particularly following significant amendments in later years.

The absence of state registration carries substantial practical consequences, effectively denying the Muslim community rights and privileges afforded to recognized religious organizations. Key limitations include:

- The inability to perform religious marriage ceremonies that hold legal equivalence to civil marriages.
- The inability to provide accredited Islamic religious education within the state school system.
- Restricted access for Imams to offer formal spiritual guidance and support in state institutions such as prisons, the armed forces, or healthcare facilities (a constraint notably problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic).
- Potential legal ambiguities surrounding specific religious rites, such as funeral procedures.
- The incapacity to function as a distinct religious legal entity. This prevents the community from officially owning property, including dedicated mosques or cultural centers, under its own name, or holding official bank accounts designated for the religious community.

Consequently, the Muslim community, like other unregistered groups, must operate through alternative legal forms, such as civic associations or foundations. These structures are not primarily designed for religious activities and place the community's operations within a precarious legal "grey zone," as highlighted by legal experts and affected groups.

The primary legislative obstacle is the registration threshold dramatically increased by an amendment in 2016. This change, advanced largely by the Slovak National Party (SNS) with the explicit or implicit goal of hindering the registration of Islam, requires a religious community to submit supporting signatures from at least 50,000 adult permanent residents of Slovakia merely to apply for registration. This figure exceeds the membership of most currently registered religious entities in Slovakia, favouring only the largest, historically established churches.

This stringent legal framework has consistently attracted international criticism. Reports, including the annual International Religious Freedom Report by the U.S. Department of State, have repeatedly pointed out the discriminatory nature of Slovakia's registration law and its adverse effects on smaller religious communities.

Developments in 2024

Despite the long-standing restrictive nature of Slovakia's religious registration law, the year 2024 witnessed a significant, though ultimately unsuccessful, legislative initiative aimed at reform, alongside continued dialogue and advocacy efforts by affected groups and experts.

The most notable development was the formal submission of a legislative proposal by MPs from the opposition party Progresívne Slovensko (PS), with support from Sloboda a Solidarita (SaS). Tabled for the September 2024 parliamentary session, this amendment to Act No. 308/1991 Coll. sought to introduce a two-stage registration process designed to lower the prohibitively high initial barrier.

Stage 1 of the proposed system would have required a religious community to gather 150 verifiable member signatures. Achieving this stage would grant the group basic legal personality, the officially recognized right to assemble for religious purposes, and access to broadcasting time in public service media.

Stage 2 could be attained after demonstrating five years of continuous activity in compliance with Slovak law and proving a membership base equivalent to at least one per mille of Slovakia's total population. Reaching this second tier would unlock eligibility for state financial contributions via the existing funding mechanism and confer additional rights, such as the ability to provide accredited religious education in state schools. The PS proposal also included provisions mandating annual activity reports from registered entities to enhance transparency and explicitly emphasized the responsibility of religious groups to foster tolerance within society.

However, when debated during the plenary session of the National Council in September 2024, this proposal failed to secure enough votes to pass into the second reading and was consequently rejected. The parliamentary record showed support primarily confined to the proposing opposition parties, PS and SaS.¹

The failure underscored the lack of broader political will within the parliament (formed after the late 2023 elections) to significantly alter the status quo established by the 2017 amendment (which set the 50,000 signature threshold). Specific opposition came from the Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie (KDH); while acknowledging the discriminatory aspect of the current threshold, KDH representatives voiced objections to clauses in the PS proposal concerning non-discrimination principles (e.g., regarding gender identity), fearing potential conflict with the ability of churches to express their doctrines freely. No alternative reform proposal was presented by KDH or the governing coalition parties during this period.

Parallel to these legislative efforts, advocacy continued within civil society. The Old Catholic community (OZ Starokatolíci na Slovensku), representing one group directly impacted by the registration barriers, played a key role in facilitating dialogue. They organized two significant roundtable discussions in late August and early September 2024. These events convened

¹ Progresívci navrhujú zmenu podmienok pri registrácii cirkví:
<https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/721501-progresivci-navrhuju-zmenu-podmienok-pri-registracii-cirkvi/>
(accessed on 21/4/2025)

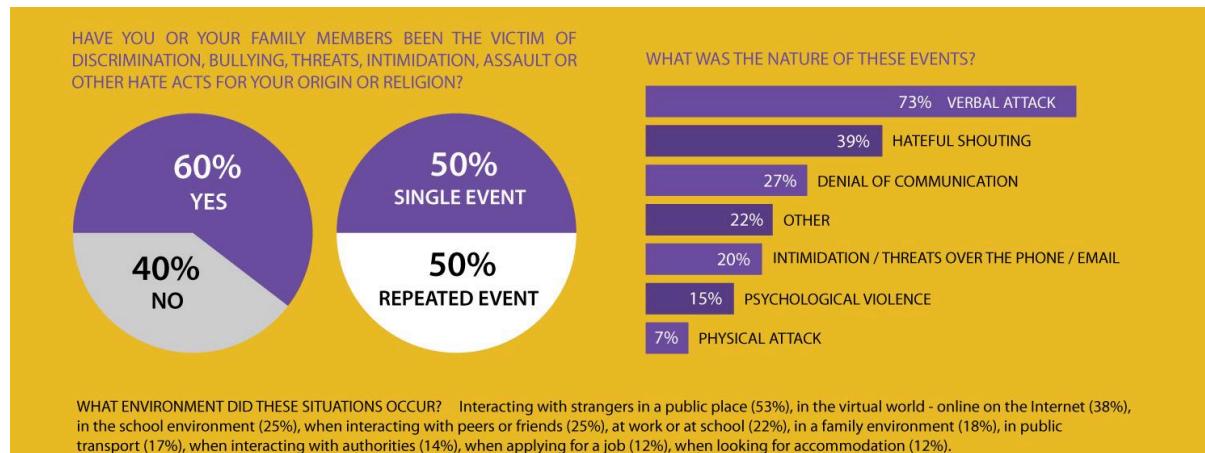
representatives from various unregistered religious communities, several opposition MPs, the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsman) Róbert Dobrovodský, the Slovak National Center for Human Rights (represented by its executive director Silvia Porubánová), the director of the Church Affairs Department at the Ministry of Culture Radovan Čikeš, and academic experts. These forums served to articulate the practical difficulties stemming from non-registration (such as the inability to perform legally recognized marriages or provide formal spiritual care in state institutions) and allowed communities to reiterate that their primary goal was the removal of legal obstacles to religious practice, rather than access to state funds.²

Reinforcing the lack of governmental initiative for change, the Ministry of Culture confirmed via its spokesperson in the latter half of 2024 that the ministry was not actively preparing any amendments to the existing registration legislation.

Therefore, 2024 concluded without any modification to Slovakia's restrictive religious registration framework. Despite a concrete legislative attempt by opposition parties and sustained dialogue highlighting the law's acknowledged deficiencies and discriminatory impact, the significant legal barriers remained firmly in place for Islam and other smaller religious communities seeking official state recognition.

Physical and Verbal attacks

In 2021 INS has conducted a survey among members of Muslim community and their relatives to record their experiences with anti-Muslim hate crimes.



Online survey with over 50 questions was filled by 127 individuals. 60% of them said they or their family members were victims of discrimination or assault due to their origin or religion.

² Cirkvi v sivej zóne nemôžu sobásiť a majú len občianske združenia. Registrácia im nehrozí: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/23398636/cirkvi-v-sivej-zone-nemozu-sobasit-a-maju-len-obcianske-zdruzzenia-registracia-im-nehrozi.html> (accessed on 21/4/2025)

Half of them said that the attacks have been repeated. Most of them were of verbal nature, but 7% reported physical attacks during their time in Slovakia.

Documenting direct physical and verbal attacks remains a crucial component of understanding the lived reality of Islamophobia in Slovakia. The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) actively collects reports of such incidents, encouraging members of the Muslim community and the wider public to share their experiences. There is a special form set up and published for this purpose.³

Regarding the calendar year 2024, no specific incidents involving physical or verbal attacks targeting Muslims were formally reported to the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia through its established reporting channels.

While this lack of formally submitted reports for 2024 is noted, it does not necessarily equate to the complete absence of such incidents occurring throughout the year. Underreporting remains a significant challenge; potential victims may choose not to report due to various reasons, including fear of repercussions, a belief that reporting will yield no result, the normalization of certain types of harassment, or possibly a lack of awareness about specific reporting mechanisms.

Furthermore, the documented instances of hostile online harassment (such as the case involving public commentator Jozef Lenč in December 2024) and the use of inflammatory political rhetoric observed during the year (notably the Brussels video incident during the EU election campaign) suggest that underlying anti-Muslim prejudice persisted within segments of Slovak society. These manifestations occurred even if they did not translate into formally reported physical or verbal attacks received via the Foundation's channels during this specific twelve-month period.

Therefore, continued vigilance, awareness-raising about reporting options, and efforts to monitor both overt attacks and more subtle forms of discrimination remain essential to gain a fuller and more accurate understanding of the challenges faced by Muslims in Slovakia.

Further insights into the landscape of online hate speech were provided by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNSLP) in early 2024, referencing findings from its 2023 monitoring report titled 'Hate Speech on Political Facebook Profiles.' The Centre highlighted alarming results concerning Islamophobic manifestations in political discourse on social media. Their analysis of 601 posts and comments revealed pervasive narratives portraying Islam as a security threat, alongside instances of open calls for violence and the dehumanization of Muslims. This research underscores the continued presence of potent anti-Muslim rhetoric within certain segments of the political online sphere, contributing to a hostile environment.⁴

Politicians

Political discourse and the actions of elected officials continued to significantly influence the environment surrounding Islam and Muslims in Slovakia throughout 2024. While some

³ Form to report islamophobia <https://forms.gle/guKeL4S3R2ne7UJ98> (accessed on 3/6/2024)

⁴ Report can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/nenavistnyjazyk2023> (accessed on 17/5/2025)

political actors initiated attempts to address discriminatory legal structures, others actively deployed anti-Muslim and anti-migration rhetoric, particularly for political mobilization during election periods.

The most overt example of leveraging Islamophobia for political gain in 2024 occurred during the campaign for the European Parliament elections. In May, leading figures of the Hnutie Republika (Republic Movement) party, Milan Mazurek and Milan Uhrík, published and promoted a video filmed in the Brussels metro. This video used non-consensually captured footage of passengers, predominantly people of non-European appearance, accompanied by inflammatory commentary. The commentary included derogatory comparisons (likening Brussels to "African Kongo"), unsubstantiated claims about demographics ("original Europeans" being a minority), and explicitly framed the scene as an "invasion" resulting from EU migration policies (specifically the Migration Pact). This content was directly employed to urge Slovak voters to support Republika as a means to prevent a similar, negatively depicted outcome in Slovakia, thus clearly utilizing anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant stereotypes and fear for electoral advantage. The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia publicly condemned the act for its hateful nature and violation of dignity.⁵

In a different vein, the political arena also saw efforts by opposition politicians to address the long-standing structural discrimination embedded in the religious registration law. MPs from Progresívne Slovensko (PS), with support from Sloboda a Solidarita (SaS), formally introduced legislation in Parliament in September 2024. Their proposal aimed to establish a more accessible two-stage registration system for religious communities, significantly lowering the initial 50,000-signature barrier that currently prevents Islam and other groups from gaining official status.

However, this legislative initiative ultimately failed. It was rejected during its first reading in the National Council in September 2024, lacking the necessary support from the governing coalition parties and other factions. The Krestanskodemokratické hnutie (KDH), while its representatives acknowledged the discriminatory nature of the current 50,000 threshold, also opposed the specific PS proposal. Their stated reasoning involved concerns that certain non-discrimination clauses included in the draft (e.g., related to gender identity) could potentially interfere with the churches' freedom to express their specific doctrines.⁶

Concurrently, the government coalition and the relevant Ministry of Culture showed no initiative towards reforming the registration law during 2024. Late-year statements from the Ministry confirmed that no changes to the legislation were being prepared.

Beyond these specific actions related to the registration law, broader political rhetoric from nationalist and certain conservative political factions frequently continued to conflate issues of migration, national security, and cultural identity with perceived threats associated with Islam, contributing indirectly to a climate of suspicion.

In summary, the political landscape concerning Muslims and Islam in Slovakia during 2024 was marked by polarization. While some opposition politicians attempted to address systemic legal discrimination affecting the community, their efforts were unsuccessful due to a lack of broad

⁵ Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/467261132334289> (accessed on 21/5/2025)

⁶ For more detailed overview of the legislative process in 2024 see chapter "Legal System"

political consensus. Simultaneously, prominent actors on the nationalist end of the spectrum actively employed anti-Muslim and anti-migration narratives for political mobilization, particularly during the significant European election campaign. The governmental stance remained one of inertia regarding the restrictive legal framework for religious registration.

Civic Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Efforts to counter Islamophobia and foster a more inclusive environment for Muslims in Slovakia involve ongoing work from various civil society actors, including the Islamic Foundation itself, other religious communities, human rights organizations, and academic institutions. These initiatives, operating within a challenging socio-political context marked by persistent negative discourse, provide important counter-narratives and support mechanisms.

Throughout 2024, the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) continued its fundamental work of serving the Muslim community's religious and communal needs, alongside its crucial role in monitoring anti-Muslim sentiment for this report series. A key public intervention undertaken by INS during the year was its prompt and strong condemnation of the inflammatory video circulated by Hnutie Republika politicians during the European Parliament election campaign, challenging its hateful rhetoric and defending the dignity of those depicted.

In addition to responding to negative events, INS actively fostered positive engagement through established initiatives such as its annual Ramadan Iftar dinner in 2024. This event serves not only as a communal gathering for Muslims breaking their fast during the holy month but also functions as a significant platform for interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Following its tradition, INS hosted a diverse assembly of guests, potentially including representatives from Christian and other religious communities, members of the diplomatic corps, figures from public and political life, civil society organizations, and academia. Such gatherings provide valuable opportunities to showcase Islamic hospitality and culture, strengthen inter-communal relationships, and promote mutual understanding and tolerance between the Muslim community and the broader Slovak society.

Furthermore, INS's proactive engagement in 2024 included direct educational outreach. Foundation representatives participated in various lectures delivered in Slovak schools, providing information about Islam and the lives of Muslims in Slovakia. Complementing this, the INS center 'Cordoba' in Bratislava welcomed visits from numerous school excursion groups, offering pupils firsthand interaction and learning opportunities about the community and faith. INS also organized several 'Open Days' or 'Days of Islamic Culture' at the Cordoba center during the year. These events invited the general public to visit, engage in conversation with local Muslims, and learn more about Islamic culture. Visitors had the opportunity to view notable exhibits, including a collection of historical Slovak and Czech translations of the Quran, a photographic exposition detailing the life of the Muslim community in Bratislava, and a display of Muslim-related images

from the Slovak National Gallery's archives which had been gifted to the Foundation. These activities demonstrate INS's ongoing commitment to education and building bridges with the wider Slovak public.

Significant engagement also occurred around the shared challenge of the restrictive religious registration law. Civil society groups, notably the Old Catholic community (OZ Starokatolíci na Slovensku), organized significant roundtable discussions in late August and early September 2024. These events successfully brought together representatives from various unregistered religious communities, key human rights institutions (including the Public Defender of Rights/Ombudsman Róbert Dobrovodský and the Slovak National Center for Human Rights), academic experts (notably from Comenius University's Department of Comparative Religion), and crucially, a representative from the Ministry of Culture's Church Affairs Department. These dialogues fostered collaboration among different minority groups facing similar legal discrimination and served as platforms to articulate the need for legislative reform directly to relevant stakeholders.

On the political front, although the legislative attempt by opposition MPs (from PS and SaS) to reform the discriminatory registration law ultimately failed in Parliament, their initiative represented a concrete political action aimed at addressing structural discrimination affecting Muslims and other minorities. Furthermore, the participation of these MPs, alongside the Ombudsman and the Ministry official, in the aforementioned roundtable discussions signified a level of engagement between political/state actors and civil society on issues impacting religious minorities.

It should be noted that compiling an exhaustive list of all counter-Islamophobia initiatives for 2024 is challenging. Activities undertaken by other human rights NGOs focusing on broader issues like migrant rights, anti-racism, or combating hate speech also contribute to this effort, alongside potential smaller-scale interfaith dialogues or local community projects that may not receive widespread public attention.

Despite the persistence of negative political rhetoric and enduring structural barriers like the registration law, these documented civil society efforts – including direct responses to hateful acts, proactive educational and interfaith outreach like the annual Iftar and Open Days, and collaborative advocacy on legal issues – represent crucial attempts to foster understanding, advocate for equal rights, and push back against Islamophobic narratives within Slovak society.

On March 15, 2024, the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNSLP) issued a public statement via its social media channels⁷. Referencing its recent report on hate speech, the Centre reiterated the seriousness of hate speech and discrimination against Muslims in Slovakia and globally. The SNSLP emphasized that Muslim identity should not be exploited as a pejorative or equated with threats, and warned that even non-explicit forms of hate speech have a damaging impact, contributing to societal polarization and

⁷ Instagram post: <https://www.instagram.com/strediskopreludskeprava/p/C4h5iCpLXMa/> (accessed on 17/4/2025).

conflict. This statement served as an important public reminder from a national human rights institution about the need to address Islamophobia.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2024, the Muslim community in Slovakia continued to navigate a challenging environment marked by significant legal barriers and manifestations of societal prejudice, particularly visible in the political and online spheres. The discriminatory legal framework preventing the official state recognition of Islam remained firmly entrenched, with the prohibitive 50,000-signature threshold unchanged. A legislative attempt by opposition parties (Progresívne Slovensko, supported by SaS) to introduce a more accessible two-stage registration system was formally debated in Parliament but ultimately rejected due to a lack of political will for reform within the governing majority and signaling continued structural inequality for Muslims and other minority faiths.

Political discourse, especially during the European Parliament election campaign, saw the active deployment of inflammatory anti-Muslim and anti-migration rhetoric by far-right actors (Hnutie Republika) for mobilization purposes. Online platforms also remained venues for significant hostility, including targeted harassment of public figures based on perceived religious identity or views perceived as critical.

While no specific physical or verbal attacks were formally reported through the Islamic Foundation's dedicated channels during the year, this absence of data likely reflects underreporting rather than a complete cessation of such incidents, especially given the persistence of negative stereotypes and hostile rhetoric in public discourse.

Counterbalancing these challenges were continued efforts by the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia and other civil society actors to foster dialogue, provide education, engage in interfaith outreach (such as the annual Iftar dinner and Open Days), and advocate for legal change, often in collaboration with other affected minority groups.

Overall, 2024 demonstrated the enduring nature of both structural discrimination and societal prejudice facing Muslims in Slovakia, underscoring the ongoing need for concerted action to ensure genuine religious freedom and equality.

Addressing the findings of this report requires committed action on multiple fronts. Primarily, reforming the restrictive and discriminatory legal framework governing religious registration is essential to ensure genuine equality for Muslims and other minority faiths in Slovakia. This involves creating accessible and objective criteria for state recognition, allowing communities full participation in religious and public life and removing unjustified barriers. Simultaneously, it is crucial to actively counter the negative societal climate fueled by xenophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric. Public figures, particularly politicians, must uphold responsible discourse, especially during election campaigns, and effective measures are needed to address hate speech circulating online and offline, ensuring accountability while respecting fundamental freedoms.

Furthermore, fostering a more inclusive society necessitates proactive measures to build understanding and support communities. Investing in educational initiatives that promote religious literacy and challenge stereotypes, alongside encouraging responsible and informed media

coverage, can significantly improve public perception and reduce prejudice. Supporting interfaith dialogue platforms and community-level projects that facilitate positive interaction is vital for strengthening social cohesion and mutual respect. Finally, ensuring that effective support systems are available for victims of hate incidents and discrimination, coupled with accessible reporting mechanisms and sensitive handling by authorities, remains fundamental to safeguarding the rights and security of all individuals in Slovakia.

Chronology

Chronological list of all cases of hate speech against Islam and Muslims in 2024:

- **25/05/2024:** During the European Parliament election campaign, Hnutie Republika politicians Milan Mazurek and Milan Uhrík published an inflammatory video filmed in Brussels, using derogatory commentary and anti-migration rhetoric targeting perceived Muslims/immigrants. The act was condemned by the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia.
- **15/12/2024:** Following a critical post on Israeli policy on the social media platform X, public commentator Jozef Lenč was subjected to online comments targeting his perceived Muslim faith with derogatory and Islamophobic language (e.g., use of slur 'slimák', insults).