

Islamophobia in Slovakia report 2013

Islamic Foundation in Slovakia
Bratislava, 2014

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Introduction

Following paper summarizes status of islamophobia in Slovakia in 2013. Due to the specific character of islamophobia the structure of the paper does not strictly follow the scheme provided.

Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) is not aware of any physical attack on Muslims or islamic buildings that could be categorized as hate crime. However we did notice number of cases of hate speech from political representatives in Slovakia and from various individuals on internet. Below is the summary of those incidents. There is a short description for each issue. More detailed description of any of them is available at any time upon request (info@islamweb.sk).

Taking into consideration the relatively small muslim community in Slovakia – Muslims make up to 0,1% of the total population) is it obvious that islamophobia is not hot topic in slovak discourse. Most of the incidents are happening as a reaction to the situation abroad. Therefore by far most obvious is islamophobia on internet and islamophobic statements by slovak politicians and real-life attacks are much more rare than in european countries where muslim minorities are much bigger.

Muslims in Slovakia are dealing with problems among which main are of course lacking registration of Islam as a state religion, without which Muslims are feeling as 2nd class religious group in compare to members of other religions such as Christians or Jews. Another issue is missing official mosque or Islamic center and refusal of the local governing organs to grant permission to build one. We could discuss and guess what motivated authorities not to allow islamic center to be build in Slovakia so far, however without any kind of official statements it would be nothing more than giving away our ideas and impressions. We think that there is not enough evidence to call this islamophobia and so we decided not to include these issues into the report in spite of the undeniable influence they have on the everyday life of Muslims in Slovakia.

Internet

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

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

Except for hate speech in comments, we witnessed rise of dedicated anti-islam and anti-muslim Facebook groups and pages.¹ Various individuals created weblogs dedicated to spreading hatred about Islam and Muslims.²

In December 2013 unknown group of people created a Facebook page with fake announcement of the construction of a Mosque in the very center of Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia.³ This information triggered strong resistance on internet with comments such as „I will personally burn it down...during the construction!“, „Someone should burry there a pig just like they did it abroad“ or „I am for the construction of the mosque. After all the islamists are inside, than it needs to be set on fire!!!“⁴. Many of the commenters didn't even try to conceal their identity and published the comments with under their full names.

Public Attitude

Local organization Network media service (NMS) published in December 2009 polls, according to witch 55% of slovak citizens is against the construction of any islamic prayer house in Slovakia.⁵

In February 2012 Open Society Foundation made research on Public Opinion on the Right-Wing Extremism. Part of the research focused on attitude of Slovaks so called towards „new minorities“ and namely Muslims. It turned out that as of February 2012 almost 70% of asked participants partly or completely disagreed with the statement that state should allow Muslims to practice their religion and 50,5% of them thought that state should ban construction of any islamic religious and cultural centers in Slovakia.⁶

¹ For examples of some of those pages and groups see attachment nr. 1.

² See attachment nr. 2, where we include some those that were active to the recent time.

³ Prank on a mosque in the center of Bratislava irritating the gullible <http://bratislava.sme.sk/c/7125454/zart-o-mesite-v-centre-bratislavy-drazdi-dovercivych.html> (accessed 19/03/2014)

⁴ Report about a mosque in Bratislava angered the people on the Internet <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152071376887629> (accessed 14/04/2014)

⁵ Research: Czechs and Slovaks do not want neither minarets nor mosques <http://www.sme.sk/c/5158055/prieskum-cesi-a-slovaci-nechcu-ani-minarety-ani-mesity.html> (accessed 19/08/2013)

⁶ Open Society Foundation – Public Opinion on the Right-Wing Extremism, 2012 http://www.cvek.sk/uploaded/files/vyskumna_sprava.pdf

Recommendations and Conclusion

Dealing with islamophobia in Slovakia should reflect its specific character. While there is not much to be done with the statements and comments of political representatives (except maybe for official announcements of Islamic Foundation in Slovakia condemning those, which was the case in the past⁷) and physical attacks are not major issue, we think most of the energy shall be aimed at combating internet islamophobic comments and articles.

This could be done in various ways. Our internet projects⁸ are offering proper informations about Islam and Muslims and except for other content are trying to combat misconceptions and stereotypes.

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

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

⁷ Slovak Muslims: SNS shall deal with real problems instead of creating made-up causes <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/192806/moslimovia-sns-ma-riesit-realne-problemy-nie-vytvarat-pseudokauzy/> (accessed 20/08/2013)

⁸ Website www.IslamWeb.sk, Facebook page [Faebook.com/IslamOnline.sk](https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk), Twitter channel [@IslamOnline.sk](https://twitter.com/IslamOnline.sk) and YouTube channel [YouTube.com/IslamOnlineSk](https://www.youtube.com/IslamOnlineSk)

Sources

Open Society Foundation – Public Opinion on the Right-Wing Extremism, 2012
http://www.cvek.sk/uploaded/files/vyskumna_sprava.pdf

Palko and his company - mouthpieces xenophobia in NRSR <http://lenc.blog.sme.sk/c/213431/Palko-a-jeho-partia-hlasne-truby-xenofobov-v-NRSR.html> (accessed 19/03/2014)

Prank on a mosque in the center of Bratislava irritating the gullible <http://bratislava.sme.sk/c/7125454/zart-o-mesite-v-centre-bratislavy-drazdi-dovercivy.html> (accessed 19/03/2014)

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Website www.IslamWeb.sk, Facebook page [Faebook.com/IslamOnline.sk](https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk), Twitter channel [@IslamOnline.sk](https://twitter.com/IslamOnline.sk) and YouTube channel [YouTube.com/IslamOnlineSk](https://www.youtube.com/IslamOnlineSk)

Attachments

Attachment nr. 1

- <http://www.facebook.com/SlovakDefenceLeague>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Islám-na-Slovensku-nehceme/513913821962375>
- <http://www.facebook.com/groups/132658023470304/?fref=ts>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Islam-v-Slovenskej-republike-nehceme/245636878913277>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Som-proti-vyjadreniu-biskupov-že-katol%C3%ADci-podporujú-islamizáciu-Európy/213073992062860>

Attachment nr. 2

- <http://mokova.blog.sme.sk>
- <http://jurajpolacek.blog.sme.sk>
- <http://jurajpolacek.blogspot.sk>

- <http://www.blogovisko.sk/author/main>