# Islamophobia in Slovakia report

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# Introduction

Following paper summarizes status of islamophobia in Slovakia during the year 2016. Taking into consideration the relatively small Muslim community in Slovakia (Muslims make up to 0,1% of the total population) islamophobia did not use to be a hot topic in Slovak discourse. This however changed dramatically during the so called "refugee crisis" in Europe in the second half of 2015. But since Slovakia offered shelter to little to no refugees, the discourse was mostly virtual. Therefore by far most obvious is islamophobia on internet and islamophobic statements by Slovak politicians and real-life attacks are much more scarce than in European countries where Muslim minorities are much bigger.

This is not to say that Muslims in Slovakia would be without any problems. On the contrary, they are dealing with severe issues, of which the main one are 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<sup>1</sup>. Another issue is missing official mosque or Islamic center and refusal of the local governing organs to grant permission to build one.

Most of islamophobic incidents in Slovakia during 2016 can be divided into three main categories: 1.) The proposal the head of National Assembly and several MPs to further strengthen the legislation on reconnection of religious communities, which generated series of hateful statements inside the National Assembly., 2.) hate speech done by politicians prior and after the elections and 3.) the famous case of burning the Qur'an by Slovak woman.

# Legal discrimination

According to Slovak legislation every religious community that wants to have equal rights with he already recognized religious communities in Slovakia (such as catholic or orthodox church, jewish religious community etc.) has to fulfill set of requirements before it is allowed to apply for the recognition by the state. Until this day Islam is not officially recognized by Slovak state as a religion with rights equal to religious that obtained official registration. Among these rights is the right to perform religious marriages equal to civil state marriages, the right to teach Islam as a port of religious education in state schools, the right to offer religious support of Imams to prisoners

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See International Religious Freedom Report for 2015, Slovak Republic – U.S. Department of State, <a href="http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2015&dlid=256241#wrapper">http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2015&dlid=256241#wrapper</a> (accessed 22/9/2016)

and soldiers or the right to perform funeral rituals in the accordance with the islamic religious tradition.

The lack of registration is caused especially by — in compare with other EU member states — unusually strict law stating the requirements religious community has to meet before applying for recognition by the state. There used to be theoretical chance to achieve the registration until 2007, when the government embraced novelization of the law that deals with the requirements for state registration of the religious community. Prior this novelization it was sufficient to provide signatures of 20 thousand supporters, who agreed that the religious community shall be recognized by the state. However the novelization changed these conditions and decided that the state would require 20 thousand signatures of the members of the religion, who are citizens of Slovakia, have permanent residence in Slovakia and are more than 18 years old. These requirements are far from the reality of Muslim community in Slovakia, which has up to 5 thousand members including children and students, refugees and seasonal workers, who don't have the citizenship not permanent residence.

Since 2007 this legislation was repeatedly mentioned in the International Religious Freedom Report conducted annually by U. S. Department of State.<sup>2</sup> The report criticizes the law as discriminatory towards small religions citing examples such as inability to perform religious marriages with official recognition or religious funerals.

However instead of relaxing the legislation, in November 2016 National Assembly passed an amendment lifting the quota from 20.000 to 50.000 signatures. Head of SNS Andrej Danko announced in 2015 that should his party be part of the government, he will propose this change. His argument was that the numbers of Muslims are growing and even mentioned that there could be as much as 20.000 of them (we are not aware of any estimate even coming close to this number and Danko didn't quote any source of this information). The law according to him should help to prevent "islamization" of Slovakia.<sup>3</sup> His party did well in election in 2016 and formed

registráciu cirkví http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/09/sns-vravi-ze-sprisnenie-registracie-ma-zabranit-spekulantom-nie-ie-to-cela-pravda/ (15/12/2016)

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> United States Department of State: International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 – Slovak Republic <a href="http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222479.pdf">http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222479.pdf</a> (accessed 30/3/2015)
 <sup>3</sup> ISLAMONLINE.sk: Keď ešte Danko nebol vo vláde, prezradil pravý dôvod, prečo chce SNS sprísniť

government with two other parties. Danko did actually propose the amendment together with few other MPs and the law passed voting.<sup>4</sup>

The president of Slovak republic rejected to sign the amendment, what forced National Assembly to vote on it once again. The definitive vote happened in early 2017 and the amendment was approved once again.

It is also worth noting that on 22th of November 2016 member of Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia and member of parliament Stanislav Mizík proposed an additional amendment to increase the threshold for state recognition of religious communities from 20.000 to 250.000 signatures. The proposal argued<sup>5</sup> that this would be "an effective tool to prevent the infiltration of non-Christian religious organizations and other sects into Slovak society in near future." The amendment did not pass the voting.

## **Attacks**

Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) is not aware of any physical attack on islamic buildings that was reported and confirmed to be a hate crime against Muslims by Slovak authorities, we are however aware of several physical attacks on individual Muslims.

In March 2016 woman on Facebook uploaded pictures of the entrance to the Muslim culture center Cordoba in Bratislava. She said she was "listening behind the door". Her friend in comments suggested that she should have "thrown grenade inside."6

In the same month Facebook page Sympatizanti Ľudovej Strany - Naše Slovensko (Sympathizers of the People's Party - Our Slovakia) shared several pictures of a supposedly Muslim woman praying on the street in Slovak town Nové Zámky. The text above pictures says that the person was praying at the Nabrezna street when someone began to shoot at her. When the person heard the shooing, he or she ran

<sup>4</sup> New York Times: A Blow-Slovak Muslims Critical of New Church Law <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/12/02/world/europe/ap-eu-rel-slovakia-islam.html?r=0">http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/12/02/world/europe/ap-eu-rel-slovakia-islam.html?r=0</a> (15/12/2016). Independent: Slovakia bars Islam from becoming state religion by tightening church laws <a href="http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/slovakia-bars-islam-state-religion-tightening-church-laws-robert-fico-a7449646.html">http://www.news/world/europe/slovakia-bars-islam-state-religion-tightening-church-laws-robert-fico-a7449646.html</a> (15/12/2016). Reuters: Slovakia toughens church registration rules to bar Islam <a href="http://www.reuters.com/article/us-slovakia-religion-islam-idUSKBN13P20C">http://www.reuters.com/article/us-slovakia-religion-islam-idUSKBN13P20C</a> (15/12/2016) 

5 NR SR: Amendment 7 0273 <a href="http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?">http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?</a> 

sid=schodze%2Fnrepdn detail&id=2358 (26/04/2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> ISLAMONLINE.sk: Žena si fotila vchod do muslimského kultúrneho centra v Bratislave a počúvala "za dverami" <a href="http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/07/zena-si-fotila-vchod-do-muslimskeho-kulturneho-centra-v-bratislave-a-pocuvala-za-dverami/">http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/07/zena-si-fotila-vchod-do-muslimskeho-kulturneho-centra-v-bratislave-a-pocuvala-za-dverami/</a> (26/04/2017)

away leaving the prayer rug behind. Online blogger David Kapusta reported the status and supposed shooting to police and wrote blog post about it. As of December 2016 he received no update from the police.<sup>7</sup>

In the aftermath of Charlie Hebdo unknown person was following Somali woman and her son in Bratislava, until they took a shelter in a nearby coffee. After a few minutes the person left. The woman did not report this incident to police, however it was not the last time she was attacked. On 1st of April 2016 she was robbed while entering a public transportation vehicle in the Bratislava city center, the burglar screamed words, of which she understood only "terrorist", "black", "dirty" and "Muslim". No passenger stoop up to help her. She called police who picked her up and wrote a report with her.<sup>8</sup> She experienced another two incidents in the same year. In one case unknown man strangled her by her headscarf in a tram surrounded by other people who did not help her. Both were reported to the police. Was was willing to speak up about her experiences in an extensive interview for national newspaper, for which we was later awarded human rights award White Crow.<sup>9</sup>

On 17th of August group of youngsters called on the Arab hosts of Turkish restaurant in Slovak city Piesťany things such as "We will get rid of you" or "We will kill you all!" In the night of the same day the owner found the windows of the restaurant broken. Both cases were reviewed by the police.<sup>10</sup>

# Discrimination in services

On 3rd of August 2016 media reported about the case of a hotel in Bratislava that refused to accommodate Turks and Arabs. Three students requested the accommodation via portal <u>booking.com</u>, but received the following reply: "For safety reasons in case, not staying in the hotel people from Turkey and Arab states. We not accept reservation."<sup>11</sup> Trade inspection reviewed the hotel in the following days and found several shortcomings.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Denník N: Modliť sa na verejnosti sa neoplatí, niekedy na vás môžu aj vystreliť <a href="https://dennikn.sk/blog/trestne-oznamenie-na-sympatizantov-kotlebu-alebo-ako-slobodne-nenavidiet/">https://dennikn.sk/blog/trestne-oznamenie-na-sympatizantov-kotlebu-alebo-ako-slobodne-nenavidiet/</a> (15/12/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> ISLAMONLINE.sk: Muslim woman in center of Bratislava was attached and robbed. Police is solving the case <a href="http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/04/muslimku-v-centre-bratislavy-napadli-a-okradli-pripad-riesi-policia/">http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/04/muslimku-v-centre-bratislavy-napadli-a-okradli-pripad-riesi-policia/</a> (accessed 22/9/2016)

<sup>9</sup> White Crow awards vie against hatred <a href="https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20386643/white-crow-awards-vie-against-hatred.html">https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20386643/white-crow-awards-vie-against-hatred.html</a> (26/04/2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> TV JOJ <a href="http://www.noviny.sk/slovensko/trnava/165098-mladik-chcel-robit-poriadky-s-arabmi-skoncil-v-rukach-policie">http://www.noviny.sk/slovensko/trnava/165098-mladik-chcel-robit-poriadky-s-arabmi-skoncil-v-rukach-policie</a> (2/11/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Facebook status with the reply from the hostel: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/ibrahimtahauyar/posts/10209051020568625">https://www.facebook.com/ibrahimtahauyar/posts/10209051020568625</a> (accessed 22/9/2016)

### **Politicians**

Parliamentary elections were held in Slovakia on 5 March 2016. 8 parties were elected into the National Assembly. It is very telling that leaders of 5 of them – Robert Fico (Smer-SD), Richard Sulik (SaS), Andrej Danko (SNS), Marián Kotleba (LSNS) and Boris Kollár (We Are Family) – were engaged in anti-Muslim hate speech, while none of the other 3 leaders spoke against it in any extensive manner in 2016.

While number of islamophobic statements of the prime minister Robert Fico were recorded in our reports for previous years, he took perhaps his strongest and most clear stand against Slovak Muslims in a press statement on 7th of January 2016 in the aftermath of sexual assaults in Cologne in part conducted by migrants from Africa and Middle East. Mr. Fico said: "...We will never make a voluntary decision that would lead to formation of a united Muslim community in Slovakia."<sup>12</sup> The statement was repeated several times during the speech and prime minister was later found to pay for online advertisement prior general elections that reads: "R. Fico: We have to prevent formation of a united Muslim community in Slovakia."<sup>13</sup> Islamic Foundation of Slovakia issued yet another statement<sup>14</sup> and number of journalists<sup>15</sup> and NGOs<sup>16</sup> stood up to show support for Slovak Muslims. Prime minister's comments were criticized even by number of politicians and defensive position took even member of his own party and leader of Slovak diplomacy Miroslav Lajčák.<sup>17</sup>

Many observers though that the comments of Mr. Fico were solely related to the parliamentary election that took place in March 2016 and that he would stop once the election is over. However two months after the election, on May 2016, during the interview for the Slovak National Press Agency (TASR), he said: "It may look strange

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> The Independent: Slovakian Prime Minister warns country will stop Muslim refugees from entering <a href="http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/slovakia-wants-to-stop-muslim-migrants-from-entering-a6803811.html">http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/slovakia-wants-to-stop-muslim-migrants-from-entering-a6803811.html</a> (27/01/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Denník N: Fico pay for his words about Muslims to be seen <a href="https://dennikn.sk/340650/fico-plati-aby-slova-moslimoch-vidno/">https://dennikn.sk/340650/fico-plati-aby-slova-moslimoch-vidno/</a> (27/01/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> ISLAMONLINE.sk: Declaration regarding the recent cases of sexual violence in Germany <a href="http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/vyhlasenie-k-nedavnym-pripadom-sexualneho-nasilia-v-nemecku/(27/01/2016)">http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/vyhlasenie-k-nedavnym-pripadom-sexualneho-nasilia-v-nemecku/(27/01/2016)</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> ISLAMONLINE.sk: Andrej Bán writes to the Muslim community in Slovakia: I am with you <a href="http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/andrej-ban-pise-muslimskej-komunite-na-slovensku-som-s-vami/(27/01/2016)">http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/andrej-ban-pise-muslimskej-komunite-na-slovensku-som-s-vami/(27/01/2016)</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> ISLAMONLINE.sk: Slovaks stand up for Muslims. They are writing emails, taking pictures with kebabs and sign letter of support <a href="http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/slovaci-sa-zastavaju-muslimov-pisu-e-maily-fotia-sa-s-kebabmi-a-podpisuju-podporny-list/">http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/01/slovaci-sa-zastavaju-muslimov-pisu-e-maily-fotia-sa-s-kebabmi-a-podpisuju-podporny-list/</a> (27/01/2016)
<sup>17</sup> Denník N: Lajčák: Muslims are not danger, Fico alone takes responsibility for his statements

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Denník N: Lajčák: Muslims are not danger, Fico alone takes responsibility for his statements corresponds <a href="https://dennikn.sk/342195/lajcak-moslimovia-nie-su-riziko-za-svoje-vyroky-zodpoveda-fico-sam/">https://dennikn.sk/342195/lajcak-moslimovia-nie-su-riziko-za-svoje-vyroky-zodpoveda-fico-sam/</a> (27/01/2016)

but sorry ... Islam has no place in Slovakia." The statement became quickly viral and was reported by number of foreign newspapers. 18

In a briefing for journalists in 3rd November 2016 prime minister Fico said that he wants to "repeat three fundamental positions that he is not willing to change." Of them the very first one was reassurance that he is still "principally against the emergence of a united Muslim community in Slovakia."<sup>19</sup>

Head of the second largest party in national assembly and strongest opposition party SaS and member of European Parliament Richard Sulík in the interview with the largest Slovak newspaper SME on August 2016 Sulik said that Islam in not compatible with European culture and defended his position further.<sup>20</sup> From time to time he speaks our against Islam on his Facebook page.<sup>21</sup>

On 27th of October 2016 Sulik wrote controversial article<sup>22</sup> about the life of the Prophet of Islam. As a reference he used the book of famous American anti-Muslim activist Bill Warner. Three Slovak academics and experts on Islam issued contra-article where they refuted his positions.<sup>23</sup> Another persona who wrote an article refuting Sulik's claims on the very same website was colleague teacher and political scientist Jozef Lenč<sup>24</sup> and this one was "contra-refuted" by a Slovak branch of Bill Warner's institute Center for Study of Political Islam<sup>25</sup> (CSPI).

Noteworthy is especially consequent response from Richard Sulík on his Facebook profile<sup>26</sup>. Sulík shared the article of CSPI together with status, in which he described, what he called an "almost stoning" by Jozef Lenč on his person. As a headline for his status he chose the phrase: "Poturčenec horší od Turka" ("Turkognized" worse than Turk). This old Slovak saying refers to the era of Ottoman presence in the north parts of Slovakia, when some of the local males were being taken to the Ottoman army in a young age, converted to Islam, trained and than fought as a special forces

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Politico.eu: Robert Fico: 'Islam has no place in Slovakia' <a href="http://www.politico.eu/article/robert-fico-islam-no-place-news-slovakia-muslim-refugee/">http://www.politico.eu/article/robert-fico-islam-no-place-news-slovakia-muslim-refugee/</a> (accessed 22/9/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> TA3: Briefing of Robert Zico about the political situation in Slovakia <a href="http://www.ta3.com/clanok/1093729/tb-r-fica-o-politickej-situacii-na-slovensku.html">http://www.ta3.com/clanok/1093729/tb-r-fica-o-politickej-situacii-na-slovensku.html</a> (26/04/2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> SME: Sulík: Islam is not compatible with our culture just like nazism <a href="http://domov.sme.sk/c/20246047/sulik-islam-nie-je-kompatibilny-s-nasou-kulturou-rovnako-ako-nacizmus.html">http://domov.sme.sk/c/20246047/sulik-islam-nie-je-kompatibilny-s-nasou-kulturou-rovnako-ako-nacizmus.html</a> (accessed 22/9/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Facebook page of Richard Sulik: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/RichardSulik/">https://www.facebook.com/RichardSulik/</a> (accessed 22/9/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> The Life of Muhamamd: <a href="https://dennikn.sk/594122/mohamedov-zivot/">https://dennikn.sk/594122/mohamedov-zivot/</a> (2/11/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Is Islam mistaken ideology and are Muslims its victims? <a href="https://dennikn.sk/596946/je-islam-zhubna-ideologia-a-su-moslimovia-jej-obete/">https://dennikn.sk/596946/je-islam-zhubna-ideologia-a-su-moslimovia-jej-obete/</a> (2/11/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Denník N: Život Mohameda podľa "imáma" Sulíka <u>https://dennikn.sk/595969/zivot-muhammada-podla-imama-sulika/?ref=top (15/12/2016)</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Denník N: Stretnú sa Sulík, Lenč a Mohamed... <a href="https://dennikn.sk/blog/stretnu-sa-sulik-lenc-a-mohamed/#comments">https://dennikn.sk/blog/stretnu-sa-sulik-lenc-a-mohamed/#comments</a> (15/12/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Facebook: Richard Sulík <a href="https://www.facebook.com/RichardSulik/posts/1180494605363599">https://www.facebook.com/RichardSulik/posts/1180494605363599</a> (15/12/2016)

(Janissaries) on the side of Ottomans. It is publicly known fact that Jozef Lenč is a Slovak Muslim convert and the saying is meant to be offensive, portraying him as someone who betrayed his nation by changing his religion.

Boris Kollár was never politically active until parliamentary elections in Slovakia on 5 March 2016. He was rather famous businessman and after he bought political party in early 2016 and invested in heavy campaign, he managed to be elected in National Assembly as a head of party We Are Family. Kollár is very active on social media. He uses every opportunity even closely related to refugee and security crisis to publish statements or record videos, where he criticizes European policy of openness and the culture of Muslim migrants.

In a video from 8th of February 2016 he spoke about than recent case in Vienna, when Muslim migrant raped a boy in swimming pool. According to Kollár he did it because he is taught since young age that non-Muslims are inferior to him. He further spoke on the common misconceptions about what it is shariah law and what it stands forwith regards to women or non-Muslims adding that "this is what all of them worship and this is what they want to bring here."27

In a video from 22th of March 2016 commenting recent terrorist attack in Europe he said about Muslim migrants: "They are bringing here from their countries their problems, their shariah, their terrorism and their death" and "I don't care about all those non-sense about humanism".<sup>28</sup>

On 19th July 2016 in aftermath of the attack in Nice he started: "It is time to admit to ourselves that Europe is in war... this is targeted attack of Muslimism on our civilization." Later he promised: "I will do everything I can so that we will not have those fu\*\*ers in here." He said that "it is time to start to fight against absolute islamization of Europe" and that he will start to support groups collecting signatures for departure from European Union, unless EU starts to "fight against that Islam".29

7 days later in yet another video he said: "I will go hard against Islam. Yes I will go hard against it."<sup>30</sup> and again in 20th od December: "Let us give a name to that what is now happening in Europe: It is an attack. It is an attack that started with Paris, continued with Brussels, Nice... and almost always they are Muslims... When some

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Facebook: Boris Kollár <a href="https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1560030077651395/">https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1560030077651395/</a> (26/04/2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Facebook: Boris Kollár <a href="https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1582187815435621/">https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1582187815435621/</a> (26/04/2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Facebook: Boris Kollár <a href="https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1651000021887733/">https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1651000021887733/</a> (26/04/2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Facebook: Boris Kollár <a href="https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1655090568145345/">https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1655090568145345/</a> (26/04/2017)

ethic group, civilization, almost from the Middle Ages comes here, it things that when you are being open, supportive and hospitable, you are weak."<sup>31</sup>

In October and November 2016 Slovak National Assembly discussed the proposal of Andrej Danko and several other MPs from SNS to increase the minimal quota required to recognize religious community by state from 20 to 50 thousand. The discussion in National Assembly generated number of hateful comments<sup>32</sup>. Boris Kollár took the opportunity and his speech in support for the law ended with words: "We will support this law, I am even ready to increase the quota by amendment up to 100.000 and I will be very happy that when my children grow up there will still be a double cross in our state symbol and not the crescent."

Among most noteworthy statements of other politicians regarding the law were: "Islam has no place in Europe, Islam has no place in Slovakia" (Natália Grausová, ĽS NS). "The problem is that Islam is more than just a religion, it is cruel, disgusting and inhuman political system ...and it has nothing at all in common with Europe and democracy" and "We are not criticizing Islam as a religion. When we call it pedophile system, it is no mocking or lie" (Milan Mazúrek, ĽS NS). "Every normal European, christian or atheist, has to fear this satanic-pedophile creation of devil, which is the religion of Islam" (Stanislav Mizík, ĽS NS). "I have plenty of experiences with this scum" (Peter Pčolinský, Sme Rodina). "If we leave current too permissive conditions for recognizing of church by state, it can easily happen that the state will recognize and give financial support to groups of people, who are — so to say — of extremely explosive nature" (Stanislav Drobný, ĽS NS). "Everything else, all of these idols, they are for Christians only daemons" (Marián Kotleba, head of ĽS NS).

# Groups and individuals

Third anti-Muslim riot in Bratislava in recent years took place on 29th of May 2016 and was joined by up to one hundred of protesters.<sup>33</sup> Fourth riot in the capital occurred on 25th of June 2016 and was joined by more than one thousand people.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Facebook: Boris Kollár <a href="https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1742855379368863/">https://www.facebook.com/1464024763918594/videos/1742855379368863/</a> (26/04/2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Facebook: IslamOnline.sk https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/10154680749267629/ (15/12/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Video of the protesters: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/vb.211508012628/10154178488432629/?type=2&theater">https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/vb.211508012628/10154178488432629/?type=2&theater</a> (accessed 22/9/2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Video of the crowd walking towards the place of gathering <a href="https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/vb.211508012628/10154247417687629/?type=2&theater">https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/vb.211508012628/10154247417687629/?type=2&theater</a> (accessed 22/9/2016), report: <a href="https://hnonline.sk/slovensko/686049-bratislava-zazila-dva-protesty-extremistislovne-utocili-na-prezidenta-aj-europoslankynu-smeru">https://hnonline.sk/slovensko/686049-bratislava-zazila-dva-protesty-extremistislovne-utocili-na-prezidenta-aj-europoslankynu-smeru</a> (16/12/2016).

Islamophobia is a popular domain of most far-right groups, however Slovakia does not have many personas that are exceptionally outspoken against Islam in particular, such as the initiative *We don't want Islam in CR* that is active in neighboring Czech republic.

Of the more noteworthy ones is Slovak branch of outspoken American anti-Muslim activist, speaker and writer Bill French known also as Bill Warner. His international institute called Center for the Study of Political Islam (CSPI)has supporters, websites and presence on social media in Slovakia and Czech republic. In 28th of October 2016 czech CSPI branch send a letter and Czech translation of one of Bill Warner's books to every member of Slovak parliament warning them about the dangers of so called "political islam".35

One of the most famous incidents took a place just before the end of the year on 26th of December 2016. Slovak woman Adriana Meleková also known as Sheila recorded video where she urinated on a copy of Qur'an and later burned it's pages. During the video she stated her a message: "I will hunt you [Muslims] all step by step. No matter if it is a woman, a child or a man. I will bump off anybody who gets in my way. I do not care about the criminal complaints. It will not stop me. I have a message for everybody, including the police – nobody will stop me."<sup>36</sup> Video is believed to be recorded in Finland. Upon her arrival to Slovakia Mrs. Meleková was detained for a few days and now is prosecuted by Slovak authorities on the basis of creating extremist promotional materials, defamation of a nation and race and incitement of national, racial or ethnic hatred.

## 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> ISLAMONLINE.sk: Slovenskí poslanci dostali protiislamskú knihu. Autorom je známy konšpirátor <a href="http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/10/slovenski-poslanci-dostali-protiislamsku-knihu-autorom-je-znamy-konspirator/">http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/10/slovenski-poslanci-dostali-protiislamsku-knihu-autorom-je-znamy-konspirator/</a> (26/04/2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Metro: Woman who urinated on Koran and set it on fire facing six years in prison <a href="http://metro.co.uk/2017/02/21/woman-who-urinated-on-koran-and-set-it-on-fire-facing-six-years-in-prison-6462451/">http://metro.co.uk/2017/02/21/woman-who-urinated-on-koran-and-set-it-on-fire-facing-six-years-in-prison-6462451/</a> (26/04/2017)

Apart from websites hate speech was present on social networks, especially Facebook. Possibly biggest islam-oriented Facebook page in Slovakia to this day is <u>Facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk</u>, 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.<sup>37</sup> Various individuals created weblogs dedicated to spreading hatred about Islam and Muslims.<sup>38</sup> Anti-muslim hate speech is increasingly popular topic of several "alternative" news sites that spread hoaxes and conspiracy theories on Slovak internet.<sup>39</sup>

Last dimension of islamophobia on internet that we should highlight in this paper are emails sent to the official email address of Islamic Foundation in Slovakia. Typical emails promoted exclusion of Muslims from Slovakia or even vulgar statements. Some of them were taken public on Facebook page IslamOnline.sk<sup>40</sup> for readers to see and give them an opportunity to comment on them.

## 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 past<sup>41</sup>) 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 projects<sup>42</sup> 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> For examples of some of those pages and groups see attachment no. 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> See attachment no. 2, where we include some those that were active to the recent time.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> For examples see attachment no. 3

For example: http://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/10150591977897629 (accessed 19/08/2013) or: https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/10152600910342629 (accessed on 06/09/2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Slovak Muslims: SNS shall deal with real problems instead of creating made-up causes <a href="http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/192806/moslimovia-sns-ma-riesit-realne-problemy-nie-vytvarat-pseudokauzv/">http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/192806/moslimovia-sns-ma-riesit-realne-problemy-nie-vytvarat-pseudokauzv/</a> (accessed 20/08/2013)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Website <u>www.IslamWeb.sk</u>, Facebook page Faebook.com/IslamOnline.sk, Twitter channel @IslamOnline.sk and YouTube channel YouTube.com/IslamOnlineSk

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.

# **Attachments**

#### Attachment no. 1

- http://www.facebook.com/SlovakDefenceLeague
- https://www.facebook.com/Islam-na-Slovensku-nechceme-714160371981651/? fref=ts
- http://www.facebook.com/groups/132658023470304/?fref=ts
- http://www.facebook.com/pages/Islam-v-Slovenskej-republike-nechceme/ 245636878913277
- <a href="http://www.facebook.com/pages/Som-proti-vyjadreniu-biskupov-že-katol%C3%ADci-podporujú-islamizáciu-Európy/213073992062860">http://www.facebook.com/pages/Som-proti-vyjadreniu-biskupov-že-katol%C3%ADci-podporujú-islamizáciu-Európy/213073992062860</a>

#### Attachment no. 2

- http://mokova.blog.sme.sk
- http://jurajpolacek.blog.sme.sk
- <a href="http://jurajpolacek.blogspot.sk">http://jurajpolacek.blogspot.sk</a>
- http://www.blogovisko.sk/author/main
- http://ivanaheckova.blog.sme.sk

#### Attachment no. 3

- <a href="http://medzicas.sk">http://medzicas.sk</a>
- http://www.konzervativnyvyber.sk
- http://www.hlavnespravy.sk
- http://www.parlamentnelisty.sk