

REPORT:

ISLAMOPHOBIA

IN SLOVAKIA

2022

by THE ISLAMIC FOUNDATION IN SLOVAKIA



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About the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia

The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) is the most active organization representing the interests of the Muslim community in Slovakia nowadays, thus carrying out various duties. It provides religious services for the Muslim community in Slovakia, supports their spiritual and community life and plays the role of an information center for Muslims visiting Slovakia. While working with the Muslim community, INS also fosters the relationships between the Muslim minority and the non-Muslim majority. It offers lectures at schools, universities and other public institutions and operates a cultural center for Muslims. INS firmly believes in the importance of an interfaith dialogue in the context of a diverse society. It participates in various inter-religious activities with Christian, Jewish and other religious communities.

In order to establish friendly relationships with the Slovak majority, the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia has to refute various misconceptions and conspiracy theories about Islam, Muslims and currently also migrants and refugees of Muslim background. In order to do so, it monitors media outlets, public statements, social networks and collects information about anti-Muslim bias, hate speech and attacks against Muslims. It is the only organization in Slovakia whose focus is solely on the sentiments against the adherents of Islam. Thanks to its role within the Muslim community, it is also able to collect data directly from Muslims, who aren't always willing to talk about their experiences to the public authorities or the media.

In 2021 it conducted the largest research on islamophobia in Slovakia in the modern history of the Slovak republic. In 2022, the findings were reported in two national TV channels, press conference and textual analysis was published.

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Table of contents

Foreword	4
Muslims in Slovakia	5
Islamophobic Incidents, Events and Discourse	7
State Institutions	9
Legal System	10
Physical and Verbal attacks	12
Public attitude towards Muslims	14
Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia	15
Conclusion and Policy Recommendations	16
Chronology	17

Foreword

The annual report on islamophobia in Slovakia regularly points out various areas of struggle of slovak Muslims. There is anti-Muslim hate speech coming from the highest political representatives, there were both verbal and physical attacks on Muslims and common is also hate speech on social networks. Slovakia is to this day the last state of the European Union without an official mosque or islamic center, nor it has any official islamic graveyard. But if there is any structural, legislative issue that determines the overall position of Muslims towards the society in comparison to other religious groups, is it certainly the issue of the lack of recognition by the state. According to Slovak legislation, a religious community has to provide signatures of 50 thousand adult members in order to be registered as a religion. If it is not recognized, it can still profess its faith, but it can't operate as a legal body, nor can it own a building or open a bank account.

This issue has a long history which is summarized in the chapter „Legal system“. What was significant in 2022 was that for the first time in years there was an actual, legal attempt to solve it, albeit unsuccessful one. Member of Parliament Tomáš Valášek proposed a law that would liberalize the rules for recognition of religious communities and enable Muslims and other faiths to finally achieve equal legal rights with Catholics and other „large“ religious communities.

The year 2022 also brought to the light two important sets of statistical data. The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia in cooperation with other partners conducted the biggest poll on islamophobia among Slovak Muslims to this date. Another research focused on the representation of Muslims in major media outlets. The outcomes of both were published in 2022 and both were alarming.

This report summarizes the context in Slovakia that is relevant for islamophobic incidents and reports on the most significant events in 2022 in relation to the discussed topic. The report is organized in three main categories. The first part introduces the Muslim community in Slovakia. Then it discusses islamophobic incidents and hate crime with special focus on hate speech from public figures and general public opinion. The last part provides recommendations.

Muslims in Slovakia

For the first time in Slovak history, the national census of 2021 allowed people to explicitly choose Islam as their religion in its census form. The census, being mandatory for all people residing in Slovakia including those with various forms of temporary residence, created an unprecedented opportunity to learn how many Muslims actually live in Slovakia. The results will bring more representative data about the actual size of the Muslim community in Slovakia, even though it is reasonable to expect that not all of the community members were willing to confess their religion in the census form.

While the census took place in 2021, the data were not shared until early 2022. As of writing this report the data were already publicized. The census has recorded 3862 Muslims living in Slovakia¹. We know that some Muslims did not record their religion because they were either reluctant to reveal their religion publicly or because they did not know about it. Thus, our estimate of the actual size of the community is between 5000 to 7000 believers.

This is slightly more than we expected, our estimate prior to the census was up to 5000 believers. It is also worth noting that while in previous censuses there wasn't an option to choose Islam as a religion, one could choose to write it in the "others" section. 1212 Muslims were recorded this way in 2001 and 1934 in 2011. Such a significant rise in the number of believers in 2021 is most likely associated with a clearer and more specific way of formulating available choices to the question. There was no significant migration or any other noteworthy increase in Muslim population between 2011 and 2021.

Another reason that might have contributed to a more representative outcome of the census with regards to the size of the Muslim population was a promotional campaign of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia towards the Slovak Muslim community.

It will be interesting to observe the size of the Muslim community in the years to come. The year 2022 witnessed the first larger influx of Muslims in Slovakia in years. There are new groups of workers especially from central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan) patching the gap of missing workforce that Slovakia is suffering from in recent years. Should this phenomenon continue and grow in the following years, we might see the first noteworthy change not only in the reported, but also in actual size of the Muslim community in Slovakia.

As for an ethnic composition, the relative majority is composed of Arabs. Other ethnic groups are Albanians, Bosnians and Afghans. In fewer numbers there are Turks, Pakistanis, as well as Muslims from the former USSR and several hundreds of Slovak converts. There are slightly more males than females with the exception of converts, who are slightly more dominated by women.

While it is important to avoid generalization, economic and social status of some of the ethnic groups can be characterized as following: As for the Arabs, for the most part they are either

¹ ISLAMONLINE.sk:

<https://www.islamonline.sk/2022/01/zverejnili-udaje-zo-scitania-obyvateľov-k-islam-u-sa-prihlasilo-3862-moslimov/>
(accessed on 14/07/2022)

students, university graduates or entrepreneurs, while Albanians are working mostly in gastronomy and confectionery. Quite a large portion of Afghans are doctors or engineers who graduated from universities in Slovakia. This is due to a former bilateral treaty between Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan that resulted in a significant number of Afghan high school students coming to Slovakia in the 80s of the 20th century. Many of them continued with their college studies and remained in Slovakia ever since. In recent years there is also a growing number of Afghan refugees. Bosnians work often as traders and entrepreneurs.

Muslims live in all parts of Slovakia but their main concentration is in the capital city of Bratislava, the second largest community is in the city of Kosice and smaller but noteworthy communities are in Nitra, Levice, Trnava, Martin and Piestany. Due to the Slovak government's position since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, the influx of refugees to Europe did not have any significant impact on the size and composition of Muslim community in the country. In recent months we are also noticing a growing influx of Muslim workers from central Asia.

Islamophobic Incidents, Events and Discourse

When it comes to the frequency of anti-Muslim incidents, 2022 can be described as a calm year. The interest of Slovak political figures, media and society in Islam and Muslims had its peak during the so-called “migration crisis” in 2015 and 2016. That was also the time when the cases of hate-speech against Muslims were most frequent. In the following years such cases were still present, but their frequency has decreased. In 2022, the topic of migration was not very important for Slovak political discourse, yet we did record some cases worth noting.

“We have enough close people in nearby nations who speak a similar language, recognize a similar culture, believe in the same god, there is not the slightest reason to open the gates to Islam or something similar in Slovakia.”

Minister of Finance at the time and former prime minister Igor Matovič

In the election to The National Assembly in March 2016, the far-right party ĽSNS won 14 seats in the Assembly and 17 seats in the following election 4 years later. While in opposition, their members of parliament (MPs) are often extremely outspoken in any topic related to Muslims, Islam and migration. Some examples of their speech presented in the National Assembly since 2016, but prior 2022, include “Islam has no place in Slovakia” (Natália Grausová, ĽSNS), “Islam is more than just a religion, it is cruel, disgusting and inhuman political system” (Milan Mazúrek, ĽSNS) or “Every European, Christian or atheist has to fear this satanic-pedophile creation of devil, which is the religion of Islam” (Stanislav Mizík, ĽSNS).

There were incidents recorded with regards to ĽSNS in 2022 as well. Perhaps the most outspoken member of National Assembly for ĽSNS, with regards to Muslims, is Stanislav Mizík. On 16th of February 2022 he said while discussing the law proposal in the National Assembly with regard to the migration from Africa to Europe: „It is tailor-made for the hordes of maladaptive elements from Africa, the Middle East or perhaps from the Muslim countries of Asia.“ On 15th of November 2022 he also said in the Assembly: „Europe will never be the same as I knew it 30 years ago. It's all just an Islamic caliphate. In many cities, absolutely in many cities, it is impossible to live there.“ On 23rd of March 2022, when discussion the proposal of Tomáš Valášek to change the law on the recognition of religious communities (more on the law in another chapter), Mr. Mizík said: „And when you mentioned Muslims, in your case there would be a case, as it was, as it was in a well-known literary work, they would do this to you and it sounded like this: ‘A little body without a head and a head without a body’.“

Apart from statements of Mr. Mizík ĽSNS made itself visible towards the end of the year via its activities against the government measures in relation to influx of migrants from Turkey and Syria. Most notable was an event called „The christian March against Islamisation of Slovakia“. According to Rastislav Schlosár, MP for ĽSNS, the goal of the march was to express that „Islamic

invaders are not welcome in Slovakia“.² Invitation to the event was promoted also by the head of LSNS Marián Kotleba.³

Aforementioned Milan Mazurek left LSNS in January 2021 and in March joined together with other ex-LSNS MPs newly formed party REPUBLIKA. In an attempt to clear his name, he publicly apologized for the attack on Muslim family in front of Bratislava train station that he participated in.⁴ The attack took place in June of 2015. In 2022 he was careful not to use the word Muslim or Islam in the National Assembly, although he had the tendency to connect the topics of migration with terrorism on more than one occasion. Towards the end of the year he was an outspoken critic of the way the Slovak government handled the influx of migrants from Turkey and Syria. For example, in november he wrote on his Facebook page: „The opposition has the cards in its hands if SaS (political party) does not prioritize the reception of thousands of young Arabs over the security interests of the state.“⁵ He returned to the topic a few days later in a similarly versed video⁶.

Another political party notoriously famous for anti-Muslim hate speech of its members is Smer-SD. Its leader and former prime minister Robert Fico started to spread stereotypes and conveyed hate speech against Muslims during the migration crisis from early 2015. Some of his statements over the last three years include: “We could hardly tolerate that 300-400 thousand Muslims would come here and start to build their mosques”⁷, “We are monitoring every single Muslim, who is currently present in the territory of Slovakia”⁸ or “Islam has no place in Slovakia.”⁹

Robert Fico repeated his statement once again in 2022. During the press conference on 8th of November 2022 he said: “As I have said a hundred times, we do not want an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia that would change the character of the state, as it has happened in other countries.”¹⁰

After the election in 2020, the head of the winning party OĽANO, Igor Matovič became the new prime minister. After a year, however, due to struggles in the coalition government he was replaced by OĽANO member Eduard Heger. Igor Matovič became the Minister of Finance.

² Facebook page of Rastislav Schlosár:

<https://www.facebook.com/schlosarofficialfanpage/posts/pfbid0mYKWouBfvBm7oWGRg9Hw5yicrkA1VUbhT7sBXUSfreKmKjFaUwd7obrv2BDAXk7gl> (accessed on 23/5/2023)

³ Facebook page of Marián Kotleba:

<https://www.facebook.com/Kotlebaofficialfanpage/posts/pfbid02FJqm2eG6avid8hXXgG7ymkFmqAzGGjZQxP48MtHKyarcotrGKwxbnQ6rrz34rJydl> (accessed on 23/5/2023).

⁴ Apology of Milan Mazurek: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=145577974064259> (accessed on 16/7/2022)

⁵ Facebook page of Milan Mazurek: <https://www.facebook.com/MilanMazurek.Republika/posts/725483408944947> (accessed on 23/5/2023)

⁶ Facebook page of Milan Mazurek: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=529033002011680> (accessed on 23/5/2023).

⁷ Fico: We could hardly tolerate thousands of Muslims with mosques

<http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/915511-fico-tisicky-moslimov-s-mesitami-by-sme-tolerovali-tazko/> (accessed on 1/3/2015)

⁸ TA3: Security of Slovakia: <http://www.ta3.com/clanok/1072856/bezpecnost-slovenska.html> (accessed on 27/01/2016)

⁹ Politico.eu: Robert Fico: ‘Islam has no place in Slovakia’

<http://www.politico.eu/article/robert-fico-islam-no-place-news-slovakia-muslim-refugee/> (accessed on 22/9/2016)

¹⁰ Facebook page of SMER-SD: <https://fb.watch/kIEhmzAMQk/> (accessed on 23/5/2023)

Matovič does not have history of anti-Muslim hate speech. On the contrary he was defending Islam and Muslims at least once in the National Assembly at least once before as an opposition politician. However, once in government, on 25th of February 2022 he said in the Assembly: “It is much better today, I think, to open the gates to Ukrainians, to people who are really very close to us, and to solve our demographic problem in this way. In no way will the government, of which I will be a part, where Boris Kollár will be a part of, allow the same tool to be used to open the gates of Slovakia to war refugees from somewhere in Africa. No, there are enough people in nearby nations who speak a similar language, recognize a similar culture, believe in the same god, there is not the slightest reason to open the gates to Islam or something similar in Slovakia. So you can count on that.”

Local government

“This type of inappropriate messages has no place in our city - in Bratislava we welcome people of all beliefs. This has already been reported to our colleagues and will be removed soon.”

Facebook profile of the municipality of Bratislava reacting to the report of hateful writing on the wall in the city center

On 21st of August 2022 the director of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia Mohamad Safwan Hasna reported on his private facebook profile a writing that he saw on the wall in the city center in the capital city of Bratislava. “I have just come back from a walk with my family in the old town. My small daughter somehow discovered this horrendous islamophobic writing on a wall beside the historical Michael's Gate (Michalská brána) in Bratislava which is currently under reconstruction. It says ‘Stop Muslim invasion in Europe 2080’.”¹¹ In the post he encouraged authorities to notice this writing and remove it.

Two days later the administrators of the official facebook page of the Municipality of Bratislava did notice the post and replied: “Hello Mohamad Safwan Hasna, this type of inappropriate messages has no place in our city - in Bratislava we welcome people of all beliefs. This has already been reported to our colleagues and will be removed soon. Sorry for your troubles and we appreciate you bringing it to our attention.”¹² A couple of days later the writing was actually removed.¹³

¹¹ Facebook profile of Mohamad Safwan Hasna:

<https://www.facebook.com/mohamadsafwan.hasna.1/posts/1040290623357084> (accessed on 23/5/2023)

¹² Screenshot of the post: <https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/10160070130357629> (accessed on 23/5/2023)

¹³ Photography on the facebook page of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia:

<https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/10160074041267629> (accessed on 23/5/2023)

Legal System

Until this day, Islam is not officially recognized as a religion by the Slovak state and thus Muslims are denied certain rights to practice their religion. This is due to a legislation from 2017 which requires religious communities to fulfill a set of requirements to be eligible for official recognition.

Only religious communities that are recognized by the state have the right to perform religious marriages equal to civil state marriages, the right to teach Islam as a part of religious education at state schools, the right to offer religious support of Imams to prisoners and soldiers or the right to perform funeral rituals in accordance with the Islamic religious tradition. The lack of recognition by the state was especially problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic. Spiritual leaders of recognized religions were allowed to visit patients in hospitals dying from COVID-19, who were separated from everybody else, including their families. Spiritual leaders of Islam - imams were not allowed to provide counseling to these patients.

The lack of recognition also makes it impossible for religious communities to register themselves as a private institution. Thus it can not have a bank account or own a building. These needs can only be covered via private individuals or by registering as civic union or an NGO, which however should not conduct spiritual activities.

The unusually strict law that regulates official registration of religion, states the requirements that religious communities need to fulfill in order to be registered and thus recognized by the state. Since November 2016, it is required to provide 50,000 signatures of adult members of the religious community. Only then can the community apply for recognition by the state. The amendment to the law regulating the minimum number of followers required for registration of religion was part of a political campaign of party SNS in 2015 whose head, Andrej Danko wanted to prevent "Islamization" of Slovakia¹⁴. According to him, as many as 20 thousand Muslims were living in Slovakia at that time and he warned against their growing number. In 2016, SNS became part of the government and proposed the amendment in November which was passed by a vote¹⁵. Even though the president at the time, Andrej Kiska refused to sign the amendment, the definitive vote in the National Assembly in early 2017 passed, supporting the amendment.

¹⁴ISLAMONLINE.sk: Keď ešte Danko nebol vo vláde, prezradil pravý dôvod, prečo chce SNS sprísniť registráciu cirkví <http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/09/sns-vravi-ze-sprisnenie-registracie-ma-zabranit-spekulantom-nie-je-to-cela-pravda/> (15/12/2016)

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

The current registration law is repeatedly mentioned in the International Religious Freedom Report conducted annually by the U. S. Department of State.¹⁶ 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. “A group without 50.000 adult adherents required to obtain status as an official religious group may seek registration as a civic association, which provides the legal status necessary to carry out activities such as operating a bank account or entering into a contract,” states the International Religious Freedom Report in Slovak Republic 2017 by U. S. Department of State.¹⁷ “In doing so, however, the group may not call itself a church or identify itself officially as a religious group, since the law governing registration of citizen associations specifically excludes religious groups from obtaining this status,” the report continues.

In 2022 for the first time there was an actual legal initiative to change this discriminatory policy. In March 2022 member of parliament in opposition Tomáš Valášek (PS) submitted a transformatory law proposal.¹⁸ The law called for so-called two-stage registration as it is known for example in the Czech republic. The religious community would need only 150 signatures to achieve the first stage of recognition. It would grant it a set of limited rights for the period of 10 years. If the community would prove to be stable and fulfill given conditions, it would be upgraded to the second state, thus acquiring full recognition by the state with all the same rights as any other recognized religious community.

Unfortunately the law has almost no political support and was rejected immediately on the first hearing. Only 26 out of 150 MPs voted in favor of the law.

Physical and Verbal attacks

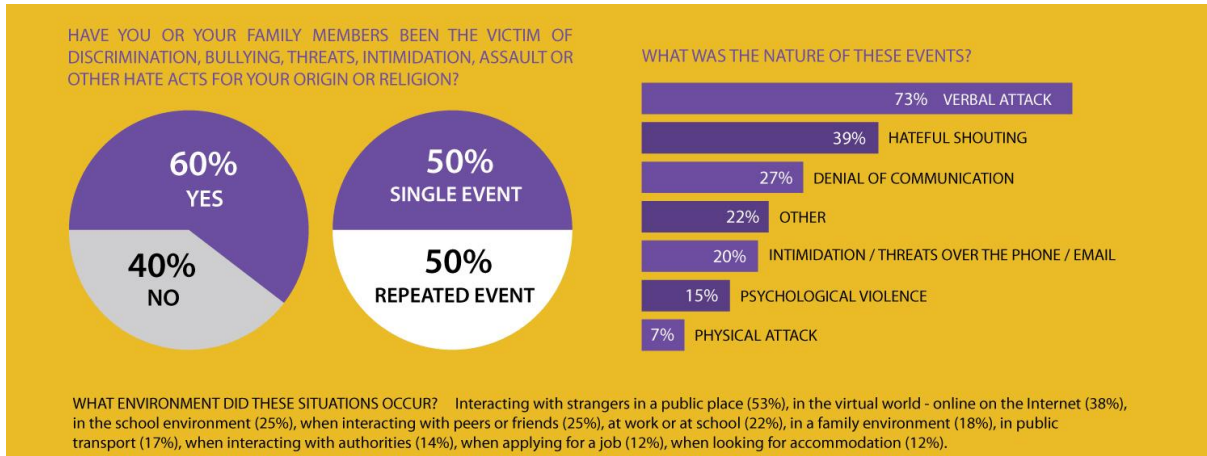
In 2021 INS has conducted a survey among members of Muslim community and their relatives to record their experiences with anti-Muslim hate crimes. In this survey, we asked about overall experiences in Slovakia, not limiting to the year 2021. The findings were reported in 2022.¹⁹

¹⁶United States Department of State: International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 – Slovak Republic <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222479.pdf> (accessed on 30/3/2015)

¹⁷United States Department of State: International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 – Slovak Republic <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281202.pdf> (accessed on 25/11/2018)

¹⁸ Law proposal and supportive documentation: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/cpt&ZakZborID=13&CisObdobia=8&ID=935> (accessed on 23/5/2023)

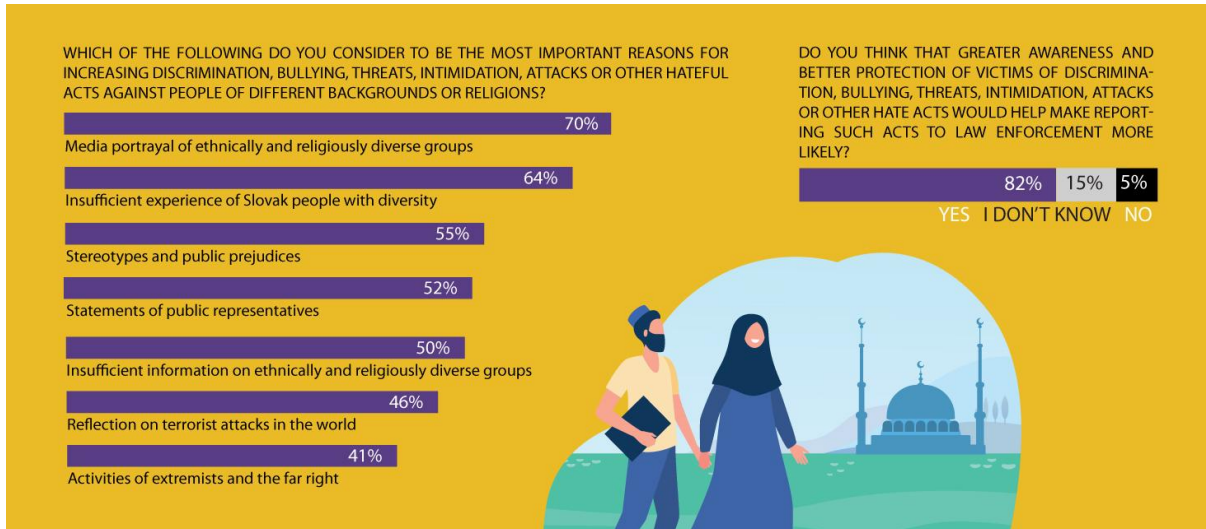
¹⁹ TV JOJ: Evening news, 1st of February 2022 <https://fb.watch/kIJ4GXgZmP/> (accessed on 23/5/2022).



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. 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.



In the survey we were also interested in knowing to what extent the respondents trust state authorities. We assumed that the trust wasn't very high and the survey confirmed it. As much as 90% did not report the events to the authorities. Most of the time they didn't think it would be useful and preferred to report to NGOs.



In July 2022 the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia was present on the open day in Bratislava’s ZOO. There was a tent with traditional oriental seating (majlis), workshops of Arabic writing, sweets and local Muslims open to discussions to anyone passing by. While most of the people took the opportunity, a few did have a negative attitude including uttering words such as “vermin” or “plague”.²⁰

Muslims in media

On 29th of April 2022 The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia issued the report on the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in Slovak media.²¹ Media reports were evaluated through deep-content analysis, which we believe has the highest value, especially thanks to the way it frames the problem using media themselves.

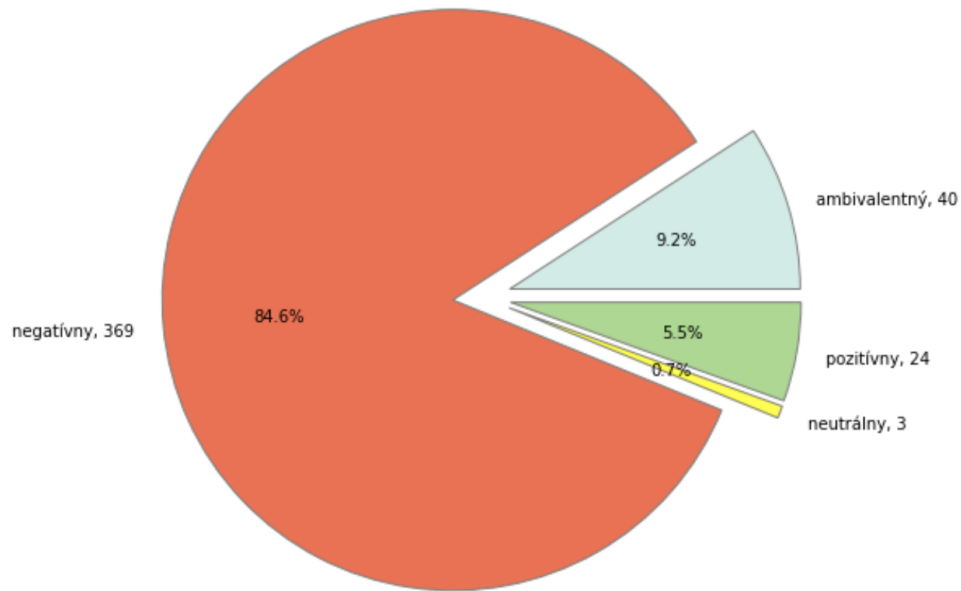
We have monitored the media throughout the year 2021. A temporal period from 1 October to 31 December 2021 was chosen for a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis. The media reports were identified based on the presence of keywords, which were set at the beginning of the survey and are considered as fundamental: “Islam”, “Muslim”, “Islamic”, “Arab”, “Quran”, “mosque”, “hijab” and their grammatical forms in Slovak. The analysis focused on the content of selected opinion-forming media and tabloids.

Our study shows that the theme of Muslims and Islam in the media is framed into several topics. The most outstanding is a topic of conflict, represented by more than half of all reports. A reader is informed about practices of various extremist movements, who are marked as Islamic, about war conflicts, political relationships and detentions, court trials or imprisonment. Other

²⁰ Facebook page of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia: <https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/posts/pfbid0q7dxDhTuobU4GtgVKkNYQ2UZBZTLNmpr2A1wfT9rdKpKe7M1NYwAwdkpKouQZrMil> (accessed on 23/5/2023).

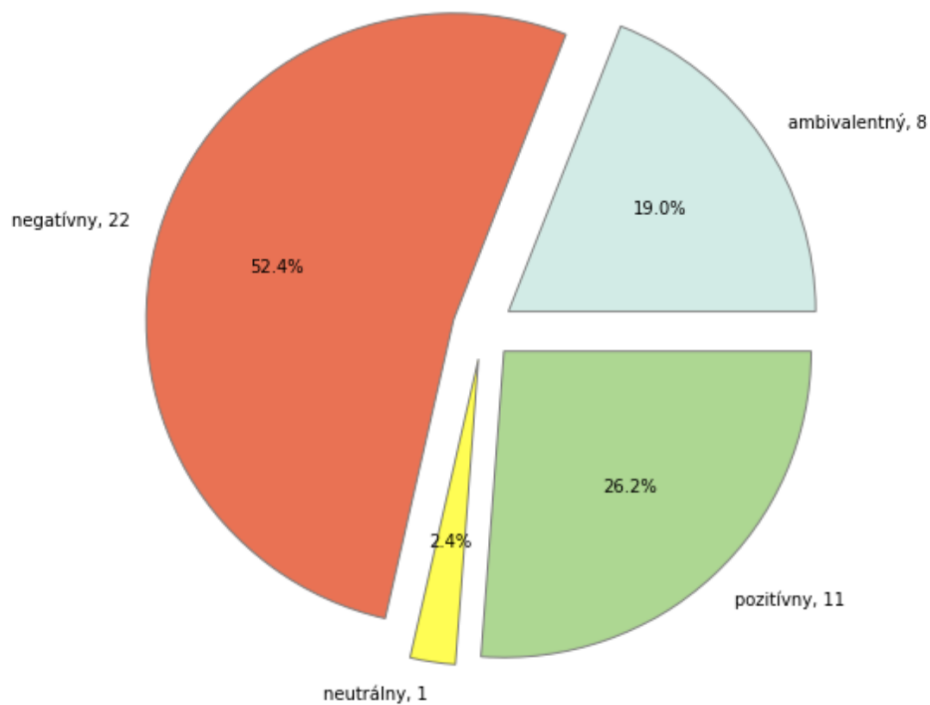
²¹ FRAMING: The Portrayal of Islam and Muslims in Slovak media: <https://www.islamonline.sk/download/9574/> (accessed on 23/5/2023)

important topics were politics; culture and sports; hate and stereotypes; covid-19; cultural specifics and lifestyle in Muslim countries; women in Islam; catastrophes, misfortunes, crime; and finally, tourism. In terms of geographical settings, most of the reports are news from abroad. Very little information is given about Muslims living in Slovakia.



Emotion of the article if the topic was conflict (negative, ambivalent, positive, neutral).

The attitude of the texts is highly negative, with **as much as 70% of all articles having negative emotion**. Muslims are portrayed as actors in conflict situations; someone we need to be protected from or as citizens of countries that are at war, going through some power struggle or affected by catastrophe, unrest, or convict and finally as those who are victims of attacks.



Emotion of the article if the topic was about Muslims in Slovakia (negative, ambivalent, positive, neutral).

Missing were the information about the life of Muslims. On very few occasions do we see an interview which conveys direct experience with Muslims.

Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In order to counter islamophobia in Slovakia, members of the civil society not only react to cases that have already happened but also offer their own constructive narrative of how coexistence with Muslims may look like.

Interfaith project that aims, among other things, to counter islamophobia and bias against other religions was an ongoing activity throughout the year 2022. Examples of them were „The interfaith look back at two years of the pandemic“²², a discussion at Dobrý trh (Good market)²³ or a debate between a rabbi, an imam and a priest moderated by Andrej Bán about why communities become radicalized, following the terrorist attack on Zámocká street²⁴.

²² Video on Facebook of The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia: <https://www.facebook.com/events/5745442895469946/> (accessed on 25/5/2023)

²³ Video on Facebook of The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia: <https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/1606441706419637/> (accessed on 25/5/2023)

²⁴ Video on Facebook of The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia: <https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/1564857367267669/> (accessed on 25/5/2023)

Typically, a festive dinner during the fasting month of Ramadan has a positive effect on the perception of Islam and Muslims. Muslims shared their dinner with representatives from various fields of public life including Jewish, Catholic and Protestant religious leaders, diplomats, state representatives and NGOs. Each of them delivered a speech where they spoke about their experience with Muslim community or multi religious environment. In April INS organized a festive dinner during the month of Ramadan to celebrate tolerance and interfaith dialogue with the representatives from various areas of public life²⁵.

The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia opened its door to the public in October celebrating the month of islamic culture. It also spoke with the public on other events in various cities around the country.²⁶

²⁵ ISLAMONLINE.sk: Muslims in Bratislava broke the Ramadan fast with their guests. This is what the sixth year of Iftar looked like:

<https://www.islamonline.sk/2022/05/moslimovia-v-bratislave-slavnostne-prerusili-ramadansky-post-takto-vyzeral-siest-y-rocnik-iftaru/> (accessed on 25/5/2023)

²⁶ ISLAMONLINE.sk: 17 public events, a gala dinner, the Islamic Foundation cup and hundreds of posts. You helped us achieve this in 2022:

<https://www.islamonline.sk/2023/01/17-verejnych-podujati-slavnostna-vecera-pohar-islamskej-nadacie-a-stovky-posto-v-toto-ste-nam-pomohli-v-roku-2022-dosiahnut/> (accessed on 25/5/2023)

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

During the last couple of years we saw a decrease in the frequency of anti-Muslim hate speech from politicians. Unlike in recent past, when almost all of the parties in National Assembly had someone speaking out against Islam or Muslims, in 2022 the statements came mostly from LSNS, Smer-SD and surprisingly once from OĽANO.

We also recorded fewer cases of verbal and physical attacks on Muslims in Slovakia. The survey that we have conducted, however, shows how distorted the official numbers of these crimes are with as many as 90% of victims not reporting the crimes to official authorities. There is a need for more systematic collection of these cases which should be the responsibility of state authorities.

The proposal for the change of the law of recognition of religious communities was a very ambitious one and it is unfortunate that it had such small support in the National Assembly. Much more has to be done until such a law can see the light of the day, but even this attempt can be considered a small first step.

The report on representation of Islam and Muslims in the media has to be taken seriously. Unlike western Europe, the Muslim population in Slovakia is so small that it is basically invisible. The only way to learn about Islam or Muslims for the majority of Slovak citizens is via media reports. If 70% of them are negative, we can not expect anything else but fear from the recipients of this content.

Chronology

Chronological list of all cases of hate speech against Islam and Muslims and all verbal and physical attacks in 2022:

- **16/02/2022:** Stanislav Mizík from LSNS said while discussing the law proposal in the National Assembly with regard to the migration from Africa to Europe: “It is tailor-made for the hordes of maladaptive elements from Africa, the Middle East or perhaps from the Muslim countries of Asia.”
- **25/02/2022:** The Minister of Finance Igor Matovič (OLANO) said in the Assembly: “No, there are enough people in nearby nations who speak a similar language, recognize a similar culture, believe in the same god, there is not the slightest reason to open the gates to Islam or something similar in Slovakia. So you can count on that.”
- **23/03/2022:** Stanislav Mizík (LSNS) said when discussing the proposal of Tomáš Valášek to change the law on the recognition of religious communities: “And when you mentioned Muslims, in your case there would be a case, as it was, as it was in a well-known literary work, they would do this to you and it sounded like this: ‘A little body without a head and a head without a body’.”
- **31/07/2022:** The Islamic Foundation in Slovakia was present on the open day in Bratislava’s ZOO. There was a tent with traditional oriental seating (majlis). While most of the people took the opportunity, a few did have a negative attitude including uttering words such as “vermin” or “plague”.
- **21/08/2022:** Writing on the wall in the city center in the capital city of Bratislava was reported. It said: “Stop Muslim invasion in Europe 2080.”
- **06/11/2022:** Member of Parliament Milan Mazúrek (REPUBLIKA) wrote on his Facebook page: “The opposition has the cards in its hands if SaS (political party) does not prioritize the reception of thousands of young Arabs over the security interests of the state.”
- **15/11/2022:** Stanislav Mizík (LSNS) said in the National Assembly: “Europe will never be the same as I knew it 30 years ago. It’s all just an Islamic caliphate. In many cities, absolutely in many cities, it is impossible to live there.”
- **08/12/2022:** LSNS organized an event called „The christian March against Islamisation of Slovakia“. According to Rastislav Schlosár, MP for LSNS, the goal of the march was to express that „Islamic invaders are not welcome in Slovakia“.