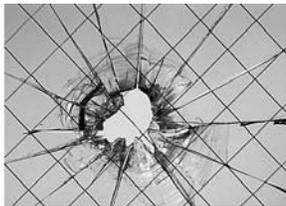


Violence Against Muslims



2008 Hate Crime Survey

About Human Rights First

Human Rights First believes that building respect for human rights and the rule of law will help ensure the dignity to which every individual is entitled and will stem tyranny, extremism, intolerance, and violence.

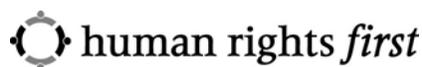
Human Rights First protects people at risk: refugees who flee persecution, victims of crimes against humanity or other mass human rights violations, victims of discrimination, those whose rights are eroded in the name of national security, and human rights advocates who are targeted for defending the rights of others. These groups are often the first victims of societal instability and breakdown; their treatment is a harbinger of wider-scale repression. Human Rights First works to prevent violations against these groups and to seek justice and accountability for violations against them.

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HRF's Fighting Discrimination Program

The Fighting Discrimination Program has been working since 2002 to reverse the rising tide of antisemitic, racist, anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, and homophobic violence and other bias crime in Europe, the Russian Federation, and North America. We report on the reality of violence driven by discrimination, and work to strengthen the response of governments to combat this violence. We advance concrete, practical recommendations to improve hate crimes legislation and its implementation, monitoring and public reporting, the training of police and prosecutors, the work of official anti-discrimination bodies, and the capacity of civil society organizations and international institutions to combat violent hate crimes. For more information on the program, visit www.humanrightsfirst.org/discrimination or email FD@humanrightsfirst.org.

2008 Hate Crime Survey

Violence Against Muslims is an excerpt from Human Rights First's *2008 Hate Crime Survey*, which includes sections examining six facets of violent hate crime in the 56 countries that comprise the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE): *Violence Based on Racism and Xenophobia*, *Antisemitic Violence*, *Violence Against Muslims*, *Violence Based on Religious Intolerance*, *Violence Against Roma*, and *Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Bias*. The Survey also examines government responses to violent hate crimes in sections on *Systems of Monitoring and Reporting* and *The Framework of Criminal Law* and includes a Ten-Point Plan for governments to strengthen their responses. The Survey also includes an in-depth look at the *Russian Federation*, *Ukraine*, and the *United States* and contains a *Country Panorama* section that profiles individual hate crime cases from more than 30 countries within the OSCE.

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Violence Against Muslims

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Executive Summary

Acts of bias-driven violence against Muslims and their places of worship continued in 2007 and 2008. The more serious of these offenses included assaults—sometimes deadly—against Muslim religious leaders, ordinary Muslims, and those perceived to be Muslim. Documented and reported offenses also included cases of harassment and attacks on places of worship.

While attacks on Muslims may often be motivated by racist or ethnic bias, intolerance is increasingly directed at Muslim immigrants and other minorities expressly because of their religion. The complexity of the problem of anti-Muslim violence is further intensified by the multiple dimensions of discrimination that may occur in a single incident, with overlays of intolerance often based on the victim's religion, ethnicity, and gender. Women who wear the *hijāb*—a highly visible sign of a woman's religious and cultural background—are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence by those who wish to send a message of hatred. While law enforcement officials have responded to some of the more serious cases in several countries, underreporting remains a key problem, as most victims refrain from reporting attacks to the police.

Acts of aggression against Muslim individuals and places of worship are being committed in the context of a longstanding strain of political discourse in Europe that has projected immigrants in general and Muslims in particular as a threat not only to security but to European homogeneity and culture. The situation has worsened in recent years in the context of terrorist attacks and the response of governments to them.

Anti-Muslim prejudice and violence occur throughout the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) region, although the context differs from one country or region to another. Moreover, certain international and domestic events—such as the terrorist

attack in Scotland in June 2007—continue to provoke backlash attacks on Muslims and those perceived to be Muslims.

There is a lack of official statistics on the incidence of violent hate crimes against Muslims, as only a few countries engage in official monitoring of this form of bias. This data deficit proves a challenge to comprehensive and well thought-out policy decisions to address the problem. The **United States** has long been systematically monitoring anti-Muslim crimes, while such monitoring and public reporting has been conducted for the past two years in **Sweden**. In the **United Kingdom** monitoring and reporting on “Islamophobic” hate crimes is most developed in London. Authorities in the United States reported an increase in the level of violence against Muslims between 2005 and 2006—the last time period for which data is available. Statistics from Sweden and from the London Metropolitan Police have shown a slight decline in the incidence of such crimes between 2006 and 2007.

In two other countries, data on hate crime targeting Muslims was reported for the first time in 2008. In June, **Canada** released the first national hate crime statistics, which included data on hate crimes perpetrated against Muslims. Previously, official data from Canada had been limited to several police jurisdictions. **Austria** has begun to monitor “Islamophobic crimes” within the framework of its reporting on right-wing extremism, releasing data for the first time on two such cases in the 2007 reporting.

Authorities in **France** do not report explicitly on violence against Muslims, but their reporting of racist and xenophobic hate crimes offers a window into the problem of anti-Muslim violence, with over 60 percent of reported incidents perpetrated against people of North African origin, who are predominantly Muslim. No

other government in the OSCE region reports crimes motivated by hatred toward Muslims.

Comprehensive data from nongovernmental sources is also generally unavailable, as very few NGOs across the region monitor and publicly report specifically on violent anti-Muslim hate crimes. Overall, the lack of reporting makes it difficult to assess the official responses to such incidents by the police and in the courts.

I. The Facets of Anti-Muslim Violence

There is an everyday pattern of racially- and religiously-motivated violence against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslims in many parts of Europe and North America that is tied to longstanding racism, intolerance, and exclusion in communities where Muslims live. Intolerance, discrimination, and violence have been exacerbated in recent years by the reaction to terrorism and extremism in the name of Islam. Since September 11, 2001, in particular, this reaction has included the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and generalizations about Muslims, and the idea—advanced by the proponents of discrimination and violence—of collective responsibility of all Muslims for the acts of others who claim to share the same faith.

Although only a few NGOs across the region report regularly and systematically on the problem of violent anti-Muslim hate crime, there is a growing body of reporting from intergovernmental bodies that has contributed to an improved understanding of the nature of discrimination and violence against Muslims.

According to Ambassador Ömür Orhun, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, the environment in which Muslims live has deteriorated considerably since September 11, with Muslims and Muslim communities becoming “victims of negative stereotyping and manifestations of prejudice.”¹ The OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) has similarly noted such trends. In the most recent annual report (covering 2006), the ODIHR documents a wide range of incidents across the OSCE region, identifying the firebombing of mosques and other property as a particularly disturbing trend.²

Other European institutions also address this issue. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Thomas Hammarberg highlighted the problem of violence against Muslims in a June 2008 article, noting that

a mixture of Islamophobia and racism is also directed against immigrant Muslims or their children. This tendency has increased considerably after 9/11 and government responses to such terrorist crimes. Muslims have been physically attacked and mosques vandalised or burnt in a number of countries. In the United Kingdom no less than eleven mosques were attacked after the London terrorist bombings on 7 July 2005 and in France five mosques were attacked with explosives or put alight in 2006.³

On an earlier occasion, in January 2007, Hammarberg wrote that “manifestations of Islamophobia within European societies have taken the form of persisting prejudice, negative attitudes, discrimination, and sometimes violence.”⁴ The Council of Europe’s antiracism body, the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has also raised concern about the problem of discrimination and violence against Muslims in individual country reports, as well as in the 2007 annual report:

ECRI is concerned by the continuing climate of hostility towards persons who are Muslim or are perceived to be Muslim, and deplores the fact that Islamophobia continues to manifest itself in different guises within European societies. Muslim communities and their members continue to face prejudice, negative attitudes and discrimination. The discourse of certain political figures or some of the media contributes to this negative climate, which can sometimes lead to acts of violence against Muslim communities.⁵

The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)—the predecessor to the European Union’s Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), produced several reports in recent years analyzing challenges faced by Muslim communities in Europe, most comprehensively in the report on *Discrimination and*

Islamophobia against Muslims in the European Union in 2006. The report showed the disadvantaged position of Muslim minorities in key areas of social life, such as employment, education and housing. It also documented manifestations of “Islamophobia” in all E.U. member states, including cases of racist violence and crime.⁶

Numerous other reports—both intergovernmental and nongovernmental—as well as statements by advocates of human rights, including Orhun and Hammarberg, have raised concerns in regard to the discrimination that Muslims face in several aspects of life, from finding employment to building mosques. Many Muslims, particularly young people, “face limited opportunities for social advancement, social exclusion and discrimination.” They are also often confined to poor housing conditions, worse jobs, and limited opportunities for educational advancement than other citizens.⁷ Muslims find themselves in an environment of hostility, “characterized by suspicion and prejudice; negative or patronizing imaging; discrimination and stereotyping; lack of provision, recognition and respect for Muslims in public institutions; and attacks, abuse, harassment and violence directed against persons perceived to be Muslim and against mosques, Muslim property and cemeteries.”⁸

The geographic scope of anti-Muslim violence encompasses the entire OSCE region, although the specific forces driving it may vary from one country or region to another.

In the **United States**, anti-Muslim prejudice arises largely out of the perceived security threat posed by Muslims. Attacks against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslims have risen sharply immediately following terrorist attacks, most notably in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and remain at historically high levels. A report by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) documented incidents of violence between 2004 and 2007 against Arab

Americans of all faiths, including death threats, vandalism, and at least one murder. ADC also highlighted a number of trends in hate crimes against Arab-Americans, and those perceived to be of Middle Eastern descent, including Muslims:

- during the period of 2003-2007, the rate of violent hate crimes continued to decline from the immediate post-9/11 surge, yet still remained at a higher rate than in the five years leading up to the 2001 attacks;
- surges in reported hate crimes have been observed following international events such as the July 2005 London bombings as well as terrorist attacks against American targets in Iraq.
- hate crimes have especially targeted mosques and Islamic centers around the country, in the form of vandalism and destruction of property.⁹

In many European countries, acts of aggression against individuals and places of worship are committed in the context of a longstanding strain of political discourse that has projected immigrants in general and Muslim immigrants in particular as threats to European security, homogeneity, and culture. Terrorist incidents lead to further strains and, typically, an increase in violent attacks targeting Muslims, those perceived to be Muslims, and mosques.

In **Finland**, interlocutors of Ambassador Orhun confirmed the rise in incidents of physical attacks and harassment against Muslims during a December 2007 visit, noting that such violence is rarely reported or is misrepresented as racist violence by the authorities, who have nevertheless stepped up their response to hate crimes in recent years.¹⁰

In **France**, according to official statistics, people of North African origin—largely of Muslim background—are the object of the majority of hate crimes classified as “racist” by the authorities. One French NGO, the Collectif contre l’Islamophobie en France, reported a

20 percent rise in hate-motivated acts (including violent incidents) against Muslims: in 2007, there were 65 such acts, compared with 54 and 53 incidents in 2006 and 2005, respectively.

In the **United Kingdom**, Muslim minorities have expressed increasing concern about their security, even as official figures suggest a decline in the number of crimes motivated by hatred toward Muslims. Inayat Bunglawala, spokesman for the Muslim Council of Britain, confirmed incidents of attacks against mosques and Islamic schools and noted that British Muslims generally consider anti-Muslim prejudice to be increasing. Britain's first Muslim minister, Shahid Malik, criticized what he described as growing hostility to Muslims in the U.K.¹¹

The rise of racist and religious violence against Muslims in Europe has occurred in tandem with the adoption of anti-immigrant political platforms by both fringe and mainstream political movements. Public debates on immigration and the status of Europe's minorities can have a racial cast and be dominated by aggressive "us versus them" discourse. The resulting anti-Muslim rhetoric has also in many countries become embedded in mainstream political debate, its rise to prominence illustrated by the influence of extremist political figures, such as Jean-Marie Le Pen in **France** and Jörg Haider in **Austria**. Radical political leaders have sought to legitimize xenophobia and have contributed to the growth of popular anti-Muslim sentiment and intolerance across Europe.

In the **Czech Republic**, Muneeb Hassan Alrawi, chairman of the Brno-based Islamic Foundation, reported that intolerance and hatred against Muslims has increased over the past several years, blaming politicians, certain interest groups, and the media. He stated: "We are afraid of the day when this venomous campaign against Islam and Muslims results in physical attacks, which creates an atmosphere of fear and instability in society."¹²

In **Denmark**, the Danish People's Party used a poster of a burqa-clad woman wielding a judge's gavel as part of its initiative to ban public employees from wearing Islamic headscarves. The Muslim community reacted with outrage, while Birthe Rønn Hornbech, Denmark's Immigration Minister, denounced the campaign as "fanatically anti-Muslim."¹³

According to the latest ECRI report on the **Netherlands**, anti-Muslim hostility in Holland has increased dramatically since 2000. This has been influenced by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in September 2004. ECRI noted that "Muslims of the Netherlands have been the subject of stereotyping, stigmatizing and sometimes outright racist political discourse and of biased media portrayal and have been disproportionately targeted by security and other policies. They have also been the victims of racist violence and other racist crimes and have experienced discrimination."¹⁴

In many countries in Eastern Europe, current violence against Muslims is intimately linked to anti-immigrant sentiment as well as historical developments. In the **Russian Federation**, people from the Caucasus and Central Asia—both Russian citizens and foreigners—suffer the highest proportion of bias motivated violence. Incidents of personal violence have in some cases been a response to the war in Chechnya and associated terrorist attacks.

At the same time, comprehensive reporting on attacks against migrants from these areas remains unavailable, as the victims tend to fear police abuse or arrest and are least likely to report bias-motivated attacks. Attacks on immigrants from these regions are generally perceived to be motivated by racism, but sometimes have an overlay of religious hatred and intolerance: many people from the Caucasus and Central Asia are Muslims.

In a particularly horrific case in August 2007 that seemed to bridge these different aspects of intolerance

and prejudice, perpetrators circulated video-taped murders of two men allegedly of Dagestani and Tajik origin. The video footage of the execution-style killings showed the beheading of one and the shooting of the other, with a Nazi flag in the background. The video was posted on the Internet in the name of a previously unknown Russian neo-Nazi group with a demand for the expulsion from Russia of all Asians and people from the Caucasus.

In **Ukraine**, bias-motivated attacks on Crimean Tatars—who are Muslim—and their property are largely thought to be motivated by ethnic hatred, although there is undoubtedly an element of religious intolerance in those acts as well. In a recent report on Ukraine, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) noted that “the situation in the Crimea is particularly worrying as there has been a rise in ethnic clashes and racially motivated violence in that region between skinheads and Cossacks (vigilante groups) on the one hand and members of the Crimean Tatar community on the other. Three such major clashes involving several hundred people occurred in July and August 2006.” ECRI also referred to cases of physical attacks against Crimean Tatars as well as destruction of property and desecration of cemeteries by skinhead groups. ECRI further expressed concern over reports “according to which the local police’s response to these types of incidents is generally inadequate as they often deny the involvement of neo-Nazi groups.”¹⁵

II. Assaults on Individuals

In 2007 and early 2008, discrimination and violence against Muslims frequently took the form of assaults on ordinary people in their shops, schools, or homes, often accompanied by racist and/or anti-Muslim epithets. While attacks on Muslims may often be motivated primarily by racial or ethnic bias, intolerance is increasingly directed at Muslim immigrants and other minorities expressly because of their religion.

The complexity of the problem of anti-Muslim violence is further intensified by the multiple dimensions of discrimination that may occur in a single incident, as there can be an overlay of intolerance based on such characteristics as the victim's religion, ethnicity, and gender. Women who wear the *hijab*—a highly visible sign of a woman's religious and cultural background—are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence by those who wish to send a message of hatred.

On February 7, 2008, in **Belgium**, in Liège, two young women, described as being of “Maghreb origin,” were attacked by three men in the city center. The victims were verbally abused and physically threatened with a firearm. One of the perpetrators was described as having right-wing extremist affiliations. Following a trial, the two primary offenders were sentenced to jail sentences of fifteen and twelve months respectively (of which six were suspended). Jozef De Witte, director of the Belgian Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, pointed to the quick and powerful response of the court, stating that “their exemplary decision and sentence is an encouragement to all who fight for a tolerant society in which equality is possible.”¹⁶

On March 19, 2008, in **Denmark**, Deniz Özgür Uzun, a 16-year-old teenager of Turkish origin, was distributing newspapers in the Amager district of Copenhagen. He was verbally harassed by three Danish teenagers aged

fifteen, seventeen and eighteen, who then began assaulting him with a baseball bat and a hammer. Deniz died the following day after having sustained severe brain damage.¹⁷ One eyewitness reported the use of a racist slur.¹⁸ The Turkish press immediately labeled the offence a racist attack, while the mainstream Danish press speculated whether or not the attack was racially motivated. The Danish police did not qualify the attack as a hate crime. Ove Dahl, the chief murder investigator of the Copenhagen police department, said: “I can fully refute that this murder has anything to do with racism or religion. It is purely violence for the sake of violence.”¹⁹ The three boys were arrested and faced charges of either murder or nonnegligent manslaughter. Two of the defendants, due to the fact that they were minors, were put in juvenile facilities.²⁰

On the night of July 24, 2008, Nouredine Rachedi, a 30-year-old French-born statistician, was beaten by two men in Yvelines, **France**. An official medical examination diagnosed head injuries and bruising to the face and body. As of the end of August 2008, an 18-year-old was in custody under investigation for assault motivated by religious hatred. Despite Rachedi's detailed account of the attack, the anti-Muslim motivation of the assault was not initially reflected in the police report or charges. In an interview, the victim explained the attack: “They came towards me because I look like someone from the Maghreb. It is because I answered that I was Muslim that they attacked me. [This is a reflection of] the routinization of Islamophobia.”²¹

The anti-Muslim bias reported in the assault on Nouredine Rachedi was reflected in criminal charges only after the victim, on the advice of his lawyer, approached the media and antidiscrimination bodies regarding the case. On August 10, an 18-year-old was in custody and under investigation for the crime of

assault, “aggravated by having been committed with others and by reason of religious bias.” Police said a search of his residence had found a large quantity of neo-Nazi literature. A second suspect was being sought by police.²²

On April 26, 2007, in Kostroma in the **Russian Federation**, two youths assaulted Imam Ulugbek Abdullaev and his wife, both of whom were dressed in distinctive Islamic clothing. When one of the attackers pushed imam’s wife Nadira, Abdullaev stepped in and was beaten by the two minors. Police subsequently detained the suspected attackers.²³ The imam said that the attackers shouted “go back to your Muslim country,” and investigators from the Department of the Interior Ministry of the Kostroma Oblast also reported that the attackers were shouting nationalistic slogans.²⁴ However, the assault charges did not include a reference to the anti-Muslim motive.²⁵

In **Serbia**, Mufti Muamer Zukorlić, the leader of Serbia’s Muslim community, reported five death threats between December 2006 and March 2007. Zukorlić opted to hire a private bodyguard, because he reportedly could not get enough police protection at the time.²⁶

On August 23, 2007, in the **United Kingdom**, in Southampton, a driver attempted to hit a 30-year-old woman wearing traditional Islamic dress and a head scarf. According to police, the man drove up to her and verbally abused her. He then left, turned the car around, and drove toward her. The woman escaped unharmed, although badly shaken by the incident.²⁷

On or around May 15, 2007 in Meersbrook, Isma Din, a 23-year-old Muslim woman was repeatedly punched in the face and head while her 15-year-old female assailant screamed racial obscenities. The victim, who sustained cuts to her face and a fractured eye socket, suffered blurred and double vision and required surgery. She believed the motivation for the attack was the head scarf she was wearing.²⁸

In Scotland, on September 10, 2007, a 32-year-old woman stabbed 17-year-old Tarik Husan while he was standing at a bus stop. As she stabbed him in the chest and arm, the perpetrator told the victim: “You’re all terrorists.” In the trial that followed, the presiding judge called the attack “completely unprovoked” and sentenced the perpetrator to six years in prison.²⁹

In April 2007, in North Wales, a young man approached a Muslim woman, shouted racial slurs at her and then yanked off her veil. He was subsequently apprehended, brought before a court and charged with racially-aggravated assault. The trial judge said that the offender’s behavior in grabbing the hijāb had been “deplorable, despicable and quite disgraceful.” After a public apology to the victim, the perpetrator was sentenced to an 18-week prison sentence suspended for two years.³⁰

In April 2008, a sentence was handed down in the case of Amjid Mehmood, who was subjected to racial harassment and abuse by co-workers over a period of nine months in 2005-2006. During that time, he was publicly humiliated and threatened, force-fed bacon, set on fire, and tied to railings along a public motorway. In a subsequent trial, Mehmood told the court the abuse had “left him very depressed, suicidal and unable to sleep.” The court sentenced three perpetrators, who were charged for nine separate incidents of racial harassment, to three years imprisonment. In handing down the sentence, Judge John Warner said that this was “an appalling example of racial harassment that will not be tolerated in a civilized society.”³¹

On January 14, 2007, in the **United States**, in Lackawanna, New York, a 26-year old man of Yemeni ethnicity was physically assaulted by attackers who used a racist and anti-Muslim epithet during the incident. The victim was thrown to the ground, sustaining a fracture under one eye, a broken nose, and cuts requiring six stitches on his face and staples to the back of his head.³²

On September 15, 2007, in a particularly violent anti-Muslim act in Locust Valley, New York, two men attacked 52-year-old Zohreh Assemi, a naturalized citizen from Iran who had been living and working in the United States for over twenty years. Assemi was attacked in her nail salon in an upscale neighborhood. The two attackers forced the victim into her store at gunpoint, “slammed her head on a counter, shoved a towel in her mouth, smashed her hand with a hammer and sliced her face, neck, back and chest with a knife and a box cutter” while calling her a terrorist and cursing at her. After having scrawled anti-Muslim messages on the mirrors and vandalizing the shop, they robbed Assemi. The police investigation yielded no suspects.³³

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) has been generally positive concerning police and prosecutorial follow-up to anti-Muslim hate crimes in the United States. In the 2008 report it concludes that “hate crimes have for the most part been thoroughly investigated by law enforcement authorities, particularly the civil rights division of the Department of Justice (DOJ). ADC commends local, state and federal law enforcement for their efforts to ensure that Arab Americans and those perceived to be Arab Americans are protected from hate crimes.”³⁴

III. Violent Backlash to Terrorist and Other Attacks

While incidents of violence and harassment of Muslims have become an everyday occurrence in many countries, certain events exacerbate the situation. Since 2001, foreign and domestic events have repeatedly led to periods of violent backlash against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim in North America and Europe. In the **United States**, the Arab and South Asian communities suffered a surge in hate incidents in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks. In Europe, too, terrorist attacks prompted a significant increase in hate incidents against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim.

In 2004, the **Netherlands** was shaken when the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh was murdered in Amsterdam by a young man of immigrant origin, a Muslim who invoked the name of Islam in the killing. In the immediate aftermath of the murder, hate crime monitors at the Anne Frank House and the University of Leiden registered a dramatic rise in anti-Muslim incidents.³⁵

The July 2005 bombings in London similarly served as a powerful trigger event of anti-Muslim violence in the **United Kingdom**. Nongovernmental organizations and police agencies reported a surge in anti-Muslim incidents in the immediate aftermath of the attack.

Two events in 2007 and early 2008 have served as similar trigger events. Although smaller in terms of the scale of the backlash, the terrorist acts nevertheless are a reminder of the link between domestic and international events and spikes of hate crimes against Muslims.

On June 29, 2007, in the **United Kingdom**, two cars containing homemade bombs made of gasoline, gas cylinders, and nails, failed to explode in central

London.³⁶ The following day, two men rammed a jeep packed with propane gas canisters into the main terminal of the Glasgow International Airport. An Iraqi doctor and an Indian engineer were arrested at the airport following the failed car bombing. The attack in Glasgow and the subsequent arrest of numerous suspects of Asian and Middle Eastern descent resulted in a backlash of anti-Muslim violence. Statistics released by Scottish authorities showed a surge in anti-Muslim abuse, harassment, and violence in the four weeks following the attempted airport bombing. In the region of Strathclyde, officials recorded 258 incidents in July, up from 201 in June, “of which more than 10 percent were directly linked to the airport attack on June 30.”³⁷ Violent incidents linked to the bombings included the following:

- In the early morning of June 30, 2007, four men reportedly jumped from a car in Blackley and attacked and stabbed Ghulam Mustafa Naz, a Muslim religious teacher, leaving him seriously wounded.³⁸
- On July 3, the shop belonging to Ashfaq Ahmed was attacked. A vehicle was driven into the store’s shutters but, when it failed to enter the shop, the driver attempted to set fire to the vehicle and finally threw a gas canister into the shop. The massive blast destroyed the store.³⁹
- On August 3, a mosque in Bradford was seriously damaged in an arson attack.⁴⁰
- On August 9, assailants attacked the 58-year-old imam of the Central Mosque in London’s Regents Park. The victim required emergency surgery on both eyes as a result.⁴¹

On June 2, 2008, a car bomb exploded outside the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing six people and wounding dozens, in an attack thought to be linked to al Qaeda threats in connection to the reprinting of caricatures of the prophet Muhammad. The bombing appears to have sparked threats and acts of violence against Muslims in **Denmark**. On June 2, 2008, in Copenhagen, Kasem Said Ahmed, the former spokesperson of the Islamic Faith Society (IFS), was punched in the face after being asked if he was an imam. The victim believed the attack may have been a backlash response to the bombing of the Danish Embassy in Pakistan. That same day, the IFS reported that two women were threatened by hooded men on the way to a mosque in the Norrebro section of Copenhagen. The Islamic Faith Society says it also received hate mail demanding that it leave Denmark. In response to these attacks and threats, Per Larsen of the Copenhagen police vowed to deal with such attacks before the situation “gets out of hand and develops into something unstoppable.”⁴²

IV. Attacks on Places of Worship and Cemeteries

Mosques, religious buildings, and cemeteries were particular targets of vandalism and arson in 2007 and early 2008. In some incidents, religious texts were also desecrated and destroyed.

- In Graz, **Austria**, on February 5, 2008, the local police reported that close to sixty tombstones of Muslims had been desecrated. It was unclear when the attack occurred and the police have not ruled out the involvement of right-wing extremists.⁴³
- In **Bulgaria**, in early April 2008, offensive graffiti was smeared on the walls of the building of the Chief Mufti's Office. Hussein Hafyzov, the Chief Secretary of the Chief Mufti's Office in Bulgaria, explained that other shrines and mosques around the country have been desecrated in the same fashion: "It has happened many times in Kazanlak, Pleven, and Varna. Our statistics reveal that our buildings—administrative ones and mosques in all twelve regional Mufti's Offices—have been desecrated over fifty times in the last ten years." Vandalism of mosques and religious buildings in Bulgaria rarely results in arrests or prosecution. Hafyzov reported that vandals were caught in only two or three occasions, and "the very few perpetrators who were caught were not convicted."⁴⁴
- In **France**, on April 20, 2008, the Al-Salam Mosque was destroyed after it was set alight in Toulouse. Investigators and rescue officials quickly concluded that it was a deliberate act of arson. Interior Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie called it an "odious act" and stated that "all efforts will be exerted to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice."⁴⁵ In late May, French police arrested eight people in connection with the attack.

Earlier in April 2008, 148 Muslim graves were

desecrated at the country's largest war cemetery, Notre Dame de Lorette in Pas-de-Calais. The act was widely condemned by French officials, including President Nicolas Sarkozy, who has vowed to step up the fight against "Islamophobia in France."⁴⁶

- On December 10, 2007 in Lauingen, **Germany**, an incendiary device was ignited outside a mosque. The fire was quickly extinguished, causing no damage. The following day, a mosque in the town of Lindau was defaced with neo-Nazi graffiti and swastikas. No arrests were reported in either incident.⁴⁷
- On October 24, 2007, in **Italy**, a masked man on a motorcycle reportedly threw a firebomb into the courtyard of the Alif Baa Islamic Centre, in Abbiategrosso, near Milan, although no major damage or injuries were reported. The center experienced similar attacks earlier this year, on July 25 and August 10. This was reportedly the eighth attack on Islamic centers in the region of Lombardy in recent months. On August 5, a mosque in the nearby city of Segrate was attacked and the imam's car was destroyed.⁴⁸
- Also in **Italy**, in June 2008, two handmade bombs were thrown at the Islamic Center in Milan, damaging the main gate. This was the second such attack in less than two weeks. No arrests were reported in the immediate aftermath of the incident.⁴⁹

- In **Kosovo (Serbia)**,⁵⁰ on August 7, 2007, a mosque in the town of Shkabaj was damaged in an apparent arson attack. The previous day, two graves at a cemetery in the town of Gazimestan were desecrated. No arrests were reported in the immediate aftermath of the incident.⁵¹
- On November 28, 2007, in the **Russian Federation**, a mosque was attacked in Vladimir. According to eyewitnesses, four unidentified men threw stones at windows. The mosque had been attacked several times during the past several years. Windows were broken on three occasions, and there was a case of attempted arson.⁵² With regard to this latest incident, the police opened an investigation into hooliganism.⁵³ On January 1, 2008, in Sergiyev Posad, Moscow Oblast, a Muslim prayer house was attacked with Molotov cocktails, marking the second attack in two months. In spite of significant damage to the building as a result of the attack, the police reportedly did not open an investigation.⁵⁴
- On February 9, 2008, in the **United States**, members of the right-wing extremist Christian Identity Movement used Molotov cocktails to firebomb the Islamic Center in Columbia, Tennessee.⁵⁵

V. Official Statistics on Violence Against Muslims

There continue to be few official statistics on violent hate crimes against Muslims. The **United States** is the only country that has been systematically monitoring anti-Muslim crimes over the course of many years, while such monitoring and public reporting has been conducted for the past two years in **Sweden**. In the **United Kingdom**, monitoring and reporting on “Islamophobic” hate crimes is most developed in London. Such statistics have been particularly useful in documenting the periodic spikes in incidents that have accompanied terrorist attacks. On June 9, 2008, the government of **Canada** released the first nationwide hate crime statistics that also included hate crimes against Muslims. Similarly, in 2007 the government of **Austria** reported on the number of crimes motivated by hatred toward Muslims. Hate crime statistics in **France** provide information about violence against Muslims through reporting on crimes targeting people of North African origin. Anti-Muslim hate crime data is not collected expressly.

While these efforts to collect data are important, the extent to which these and other hate crime statistics reflect the actual levels of bias-motivated violence against Muslims is questionable. Because hate crime against Muslims frequently contains a combination of racist and anti-religious sentiment, anti-Muslim hate crimes are not always registered as such. Instead, they may be registered as “racist,” “xenophobic,” or under other similar categories. For example, following the June 2008 release of the first national hate crime statistics in Canada, Imam Mohamed Elmasry, national president of the Canadian Islamic Congress, said that hate crimes against Muslims are often misfiled by police. “A Somali family who reports a hate crime, they might put it under black when it’s supposed to be under Muslim. That Somali family should be under Muslim and not under black, because the motivation is really because the

woman is wearing a hijāb. It is easier for the hate crime unit to put the report under black because it’s a visible minority,” reiterated Dr. Elmasry.⁵⁶

Another problem—that of underreporting—persists throughout the region, including in countries where systems for data collection and police outreach to vulnerable communities are well-established. For example, in the aftermath of the attempted bombing at the Glasgow International Airport and subsequent backlash against Muslims, Sohaib Saeed of the Islamic Centre of Edinburgh Trust indicated that the real number of attacks was likely considerably higher than the official figures.⁵⁷

Nonetheless, official efforts are being made in a number of countries to publicly report on anti-Muslim incidents in their countries.

In **Austria**, the Federal Agency for State Protection and Counter Terrorism of the Ministry of the Interior produces an annual security report.⁵⁸ Within the framework of right-wing extremism, the government reported 371 criminal incidents or acts. For the first time in 2007, the organization registered anti-Muslim hate crimes as a separate category, citing two incidents.⁵⁹

On June 9, 2008, the government of **Canada** released the first national hate crime statistics for 2006. Overall, there were 892 hate-motivated crimes, of which 46 were against Muslims, including 19 classified as violent crimes. The Canadian police register crimes based on ethnicity; therefore religious motivation may have been overlooked in crimes committed against people of Arab and Western Asian descent. Of the 61 cases in this category, 30 were registered as incidents of violence.⁶⁰ In addition to the national data, a number of individual police jurisdictions have been reporting on hate crimes. For example, the Toronto Police Department reported

nine registrations of hate crimes against Muslims; incidents included a bomb threat, three cases of mischief, a personal threat, and four cases of willful promotion of hatred. The number of registered incidents decreased from fifteen in 2006 to nine in 2007.⁶¹

In **France**, official statistics for 2007 registered 707 offenses of racist, xenophobic, or antisemitic nature, a 23.5 percent decline in comparison to 2006. Racist and xenophobic offences, which exclude those motivated by antisemitism, experienced a decline in total numbers, with a 9 percent reduction.

Although the data does not specifically refer to anti-Muslim crimes, the findings identify people of North African origin—who are largely Muslim—as the most affected by racist and xenophobic offenses, accounting for nearly 68 percent of racist violence and 60 percent of racist threats.⁶²

In Sweden, in 2006, out of a total of 3,259 reported hate crimes, there were 252 reports of crimes with an Islamophobic motive.⁶³ In 2007, there was a decrease to 206 in the number of such crimes reported.⁶⁴

In the **United Kingdom**, the London Metropolitan Police Service (MET) began registering “Islamophobic” crimes separately from “faith” hate crimes in 2006/2007. This followed a directive in 2006 by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) requesting that U.K. police start recording the religion of the victims of faith-motivated hate crimes. ACPO wanted to obtain a clear picture of community tensions nationwide after reports surfaced of attacks on Muslims after the September 11, 2001, attack and the London bombings in July 2005.⁶⁵

From April 2007 to March 2008, the MET registered 106 Islamophobic incidents and 89 crimes. This marked a significant decrease from the previous year, when the MET registered 206 incidents and 188 crimes.⁶⁶ This dramatic decrease appears to follow an overall trend in declining faith hate crimes over the past three years (1,103 crimes in 2005/2006; 823 crimes in 2006/2007 and 521 crimes in 2007/2008).⁶⁷

As concerns prosecutions, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which covers England and Wales, reported that 27 cases were recorded as religious-aggravated incidents in 2006/2007. This represents a 37.2 percent decrease from the 2005/2006 period, when 43 defendants were charged with religious-aggravated crimes. Of these, 22 defendants (81.5 percent) were prosecuted, compared to 95.3 percent in the previous year. In 17 of the 27 cases, the victim was identified as Muslim.⁶⁸

In the **United States**, in 2006, the FBI reported 156 incidents and 191 offenses of anti-Islamic nature, involving 208 victims.⁶⁹ The offenses included 24 aggravated assaults, 30 simple assaults, 79 cases of intimidation, 1 robbery, 5 burglaries, 51 cases involving destruction or damage to property, and 1 “other” offense. Among the 1,750 victims of hate crimes motivated by religious hatred, the 208 people who were victims of anti-Islamic prejudice represented about 12 percent of the overall number.⁷⁰

These figures represent an increase over the figures reported by the FBI in 2005. In that year, the organization reported 128 incidents and 146 offenses involving 151 victims. These offenses included 8 aggravated assaults, 27 simple assaults, 64 cases of intimidation, 4 robberies, 3 burglaries, 2 cases of larceny-theft, 36 cases involving destruction or damage to property, and two “other” offenses. An increase could be seen in all categories except that of robbery.⁷¹

Comprehensive data from nongovernmental sources is generally unavailable, as very few NGOs across the region monitor and publicly report specifically on violent anti-Muslim hate crimes. Overall, the lack of reporting by either official or private sources makes it difficult to assess the official responses to such incidents by the police and in the courts.

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