DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

UNITING EUROPE AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA

UK-Germany Delegation Report

Seema Syeda
November 2023

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In mainstream discourse, it is often ›Muslims‹ who are framed as the ›problem‹. However, it is the white supremacist structures of European society, including within progressive spaces, that need to change.

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The burden of this work must be shouldered by the entire progressive community with an emphasis on continuous training and educating about Islamophobia, racism, and colonialism and how these issues manifest on a structural and individual level.

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Muslim empowerment must also be prioritised by creating spaces for Muslim-led self-organising – recognising the many different intersectional identities that exist within Muslim communities.

Another Europe is Possible

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

UNITING EUROPE AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA

UK-Germany Delegation Report

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Foreword

BY ANDREAS ZICK, PROFESSOR OF SOCIALISATION AND CONFLICT RESEARCH AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY, GERMANY

Why is it important to deal with the empowerment of Muslims? Why is it important to give space to Muslim experiences of discrimination? Why publish a report on policies to empower Muslim communities that seek a starting point for such empowerment?

In the 2021 Mitte study surveying German public opinion, 12.2 per cent of those surveyed agreed with the statement: ›the majority of Muslims find Islamist terrorism justified‹ and a further 15.2 per cent thought this was ›partly true‹. These resentments, influenced by a hostile media narrative, fester amongst those groups who do not tolerate Islam or even Muslims. Anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobic attitudes result in genuine violence towards members of the Muslim community.

As research conducted by myself and a group of colleagues shows, almost one in three Muslims in Germany state that they have been physically assaulted several times in the past year, with 50 per cent having been physically assaulted at least once. Violence and hatred towards Muslims run deep in parts of German society, predating ›war on terror‹ discourse – just take the 1993 Solingen arson attack that left several women and children from a Muslim Turkish migrant family dead and injured at the hands of a far-right extremist group. These are the same ideologies that have spewed antisemitic hatred in Europe for over a century, at times gaining mainstream approval with horrific consequences.

So, answering the question, ›why now?‹, is very easy from a conflict and democracy theory perspective. Right now, democracy can and must strengthen the members of Muslim civil society who can change the hostile narrative that stereotypes Muslim communities as violent and dangerous. Greater participation of Muslims in democratic processes helps and strengthens those communities that need solid bridges and ties to the broader German, European and UK democratic community.

At the same time, mainstream societies will be forced to listen to the real narratives and stories of Muslims and religious communities who they currently regard with suspicion, focusing only on the tiny minority who have become ›radicalised‹ because they are radically despised. The protection of dignity is a valuable asset that requires strong social groups which support democratic society and are also able to bind those who move away from them.

On the one hand, this report deals with painful topics and unresolved challenges of inclusion processes as it addresses anti-Muslim and Islamophobic resentment and thus the degradation of people. On the other hand, it looks for starting points to strengthen inclusion in democracy. In times of violence and conflict, this is what societies are forced to do if they seek to avoid abandoning their fundamental values and seek constructive solutions for the development of democratic societies.

Preface

The contents of this report were produced in collaboration with the delegates and attendees of the FES-AEIP UK-Cologne anti-Islamophobia delegation. Gratitude and credit go to all the individuals whose ideas are reproduced here, and to the staff and organisers who made this delegation possible.

Another Europe launched its anti-Islamophobia campaign in the aftermath of Brexit, noting the escalation of anti-immigrant and connected anti-Muslim discourse and policy in the UK and Europe. Since 2022, we have collaborated with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) to produce comparative reports on Islamophobia in France, Germany, and the UK, and we ran an anti-Islamophobia fringe at Labour Party Conference 2022 (Louati & Syeda, 2022) (Syeda & Molkenbur, 2023).

From 30 May-1 June 2023 FES and AEIP organised an anti-Islamophobia delegation from the UK to Cologne, Germany of five women of colour with Muslim backgrounds from the broad spectrum of UK progressive political parties, campaign groups and civil society. The delegation met with German counterparts to discuss the issue of Islamophobia and Muslim empowerment on a transnational level. The aim was to share knowledge, experiences, and ideas for organising across borders towards a more equal society, with a focus on taking action within the sphere of agency of the broad progressive movement. This report presents the problems, analysis and recommendations discussed by all participants of the delegation.

UK Delegates

Zainab Asunramu is a UK Labour Councillor, former Parliamentary Researcher, and an advocate for human rights. She has an interest in working with marginalised communities and seeing a better representation of these groups in elected political office working with the organization Elect Her which supports women into electoral politics. She is also a writer, school speaker and workshop facilitator with a passion for justice, anti-racism, and equality.

Shaista Aziz is an English journalist, author, stand-up comedian, Labour councillor and former international aid worker. She campaigns against racism, is co-founder of the viral campaign Three Hijabis to kick racism out of football

and is a former National Committee member of Another Europe Is Possible.

Anisa Mahmood is a Senior Labour Policy Researcher and Advisor. Her expertise includes race and discrimination, human rights, and foreign policy. She helps develop the Labour Party's Islamophobia policy, organises the annual Islamophobia Awareness Month campaign in Parliament and in 2021 successfully secured the first ever Parliamentary debate on the subject. She also sits on the executive committee of the New Diplomacy Project, which develops the Labour Party's foreign policy.

Asima Qayyum is a creative writer and poet who is passionate about erasing barriers of inaccessibility for people and communities from low socio-economic backgrounds. She has worked on projects advocating for youth to participate in political life and is currently based at Mansfield College focusing on creating inclusive cultures. She has also been involved in various social and creative writing projects in collaboration with Playable City, The Rathbones Folio Prize and The Forward Arts Foundation.

Seema Syeda works in Communications and Campaigns for Another Europe Is Possible, an organization fighting the politics of Brexit from the left. She leads Another Europe's international anti-Islamophobia campaign and co-authored research reports on the topic in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. She has organized campaigns for just climate transition and a Green New Deal and continues to organize for antiracism and migrants' rights.

FES Organisers & German Research Contribution

Juliane Itta is Project Manager at the German political foundation Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in London. Before joining FES, she worked as advisor for the German SPD Member of the European Parliament Arne Lietz.

Zeynep Demir (MSc) is a psychologist, researcher, and lecturer. She works in the research group Socialization (Prof. Andreas Zick's Lab) at the Faculty of Educational Science and in the Research Networking Office of the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) Community, at the Institute for Interdisciplinary

Research on Conflict and Violence, Bielefeld University. She also worked on the projects »ZuGleich – Zugehörigkeit und Gleichwertigkeit« funded by Stiftung Mercator, and »Muslimische Perspektiven auf die Muslim- und Islamfeindlichkeit« [Muslim Perspectives on Anti-Muslim and Anti-Islam Attitudes], funded by Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI) at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG) at Bielefeld University (PI: Prof. Dr. Andreas Zick). Her research focuses on migration, acculturation, discrimination, racism, and diversity. As part of her academic service work, she is currently the Chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission at the Faculty of Educational Science. In the area of science communication, she is active as co-host of the award-winning academic podcast ReSearching Diversity Podcast.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred are one of the most neglected problems across European society. For decades, Muslims have been subject to genocide[1], murder, physical assaults, structural racism, and discrimination (Enes & Hafez, 2023). Yet, in much mainstream discourse, it is ›Muslims‹ who are framed as the ›problem‹ and the ›other‹. The key message of this report is that it is the white supremacist structures of European society, including within progressive spaces, that need to change.

White supremacy is a structural phenomenon that exists within left and progressive spaces as much as it exists in wider society and is a term that was used by delegates to describe the obstacles they faced. Scholar Francis Lee Ansley defines it as follows:

By »white supremacy« I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings (Ansley, 1997).

Dismantling these structures begins by creating space for minoritized and racialized groups to speak and act. For many UK delegates and German counterparts, this was the first experience of an international delegation to discuss the issue of Islamophobia from different perspectives. As an all-women, all people-of-colour delegation from the UK, we hoped to create a much-needed space of solidarity, support, relationship-building and empowerment. Delegates reported that in their localities, there is no consistent safe space within the progressive movement to air day-to-day experiences of structural racism, Islamophobia, and patriarchy, let alone to organise to transform oppressive structures. The space that was created on this delegation, though far from perfect, was deeply cherished.

Such work will also always entail some trauma, risk of violence, targeting and discomfort for Muslims and people with racialised backgrounds who participate. The delegation arrived in Cologne the day after an arson attack on Hannover's largest mosque set the entire building ablaze (Anadolu News, 2023), occurring on the 30th anniversary of the brutal 1993 Solingen arson attack that left five Turkish Muslim women and girls from the same family dead, many others injured and the entire community traumatised (Zorlu, 2022). One of the SPD representatives, a racialised person, was stopped and searched by police on their way to meet the delegation, reminding us of the daily racial and religious microaggressions faced by racialised communities.

Learning about the details of the brutal Islamophobic killing of Marwa El-Sherbini in a German courtroom and the »accidental« shooting of her husband by a German police officer in that same courtroom in 2009 (Connolly & Shenker, 2009), and of the 1993 Solingen arson attack and the continuing racist mainstream response, was shocking to listen to and difficult to write about. So too was hearing of the 2020 Hanau shooting, targeting migrant and Muslim youth in a place of relaxation and creating a sense that for Muslims in Germany, nowhere is safe (Schmidt et al, 2020). We live day to day with such white supremacist violence being erased, dismissed by hegemonic political and media discourse, ignored or abetted by the justice system and a complicit policing structure, and ultimately, never being tackled at its root cause – resulting in repetition and exacerbation.

This report details some of the experiences and recommendations that were discussed on the delegation. It is, essentially, a hopeful report; covering changes that can occur within parties and local government, in civil society and media-reporting, in research methods and multi-faith cooperation. The next step is to organise. We hope some of the recommendations can be implemented in Germany and the UK, and to see more delegations, conferences and cross-border spaces dedicated to tackling anti-Muslim racism. We hope that such collaborations will continue, ultimately producing long-lasting and durable campaigns, organisation, and transformation. Tackling deep-rooted Islamophobia is inevitably a long-term project, and to begin to address the daily violence and systemic oppression faced by Muslims in Europe – to create a much more equal and democratic Europe – they must continue.

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[1] Genocides include the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Yugoslavia 1941-45 and in Bosnia 1992-1995.

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KEY SUMMARY

Muslims make up 6.4 – 6.7 per cent of the German population, numbering approximately 5.6 million people (Pfündel et al, 2021). Their average age is 32, and approximately 50 per cent have German citizenship. Of the remaining 50 per cent who have a different citizenship, half come from Türkiye (traditionally the Turkish community was by far the biggest percentage, but has been decreasing in recent years), with citizens from the Middle East and North Africa constituting the rest. Cologne is estimated to be the city in Germany with the highest Muslim population – around 13 per cent of inhabitants are Muslims, with approximately 32 per cent of Germany's total Muslim population living in North Rhine Westphalia.

The UK has a similar proportion of Muslims, who comprise 6.5 per cent of the whole population. 40 per cent of the Muslim population of England reside in the most deprived twenty per cent of local authority districts. The top five locales with the largest Muslim populations are Birmingham, Bradford, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Manchester, and the London Borough of Newham (Muslim Council of Britain, 2022). The average age of Muslims in the UK is 27 years old (ONS, 2023). As of 2011, over 70 per cent of British Muslims were of Asian ethnicity: 40 per cent are Pakistani and over 15 per cent are Bangladeshi.

2.1 IN THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

There is a need for white supremacist structures to be dismantled within the progressive movement in both Germany and the UK as well as across Europe. Rather than placing the onus on Muslim communities to change, the burden of this work must be shouldered by the entire progressive community with emphasis on continuous training and educating all members of the community about Islamophobia, racism, and colonialism and how these issues interact and manifest themselves day-to-day on a structural and individual level within progressive spaces and wider society.

Muslim empowerment must also be prioritised by creating spaces for Muslim-led self-organising – recognising the many different intersectional identities that exist within Muslim communities; psychological support and representation. Resources and funding need to be channelled into creating long term structures of empowerment and support. Engaging with Islamophobia Awareness initiatives and adopting a definition of Islamophobia within political parties and other organisations is also an important step, but it is important that action and funding is prioritised over terminology alone.

To build on the existing work of the delegation, creating an international working group of progressive Muslim Members of Parliament, civil society representatives, researchers, and activists to share best practice and create a permanent space of support would be useful.

2.2 IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

More needs to be done to ensure Muslims and racialised groups are fairly represented in local government in the UK and Germany. This includes positive discrimination in council cabinets. Community funding should be channelled and made accessible to Muslim-led community organisations. In Cologne, there is no office specifically tasked with tackling anti-Muslim racism and this needs to be established. The ›assimilative integration‹ framework is counterproductive as it places harsh burdens on Muslims and people with international family ties to achieve a sense of belonging in society, instead of working towards a wider society that accepts Muslims as an inherent part of local, national, and European identity.

2.3 IN WIDER SOCIETY

Reliable and independent data on anti-Muslim hatred is only beginning to be collected. A newly published study based on a nationwide survey of Muslims in Germany, undertaken by the Independent Expert Circle on Muslim Hostility (UEM) for the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, reveals that in 2023 (Zick et al, 2023):

– Almost 30 per cent of Muslims surveyed in Germany state that they have been physically assaulted several times in the past year, with 50 per cent being physically assaulted at least once.

– 50 per cent of Muslims surveyed report concrete insults and harassment.

– Almost 50 per cent of Muslim respondents report having experienced non-verbal harassment, such as staring or other derogatory gestures, several times or regularly in the past twelve months.

– For more than one in two people (with transnational and migration history) with regular anti-Muslim experiences, these incidents trigger thoughts of emigration: for around one third, these are already linked to concrete plans to emigrate.

There have been many instances of racially motivated murder and hate crime against Muslims in Germany, but due to the lack of legal recognition of religiously motivated hate crime, institutional racism, and the linked lack of trust between Muslim communities and state institutions, these figures are underreported (Center for Migration, Gender and Justice, 2020). The lack of legal recognition and related data collection means providing support and public faith provisions to Muslims in Germany is difficult compared to the UK, as elected officials tend to base their budgetary decisions on the available data. Civil society organisations like FAIR International have begun independent monitoring and reporting exercises for anti-Muslim hate crime, but more needs to be done to support this in a consistent and permanent way.

In the UK in the year ending March 2023, where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, two in five (39 per cent) of religious hate crime offences in the UK were targeted against Muslims (3,452 offences) (Home Office, 2023). More funding needs to go to Muslim-led civil society initiatives to facilitate reporting, monitoring, support and empowerment services to address hate crime. All members of the community need to be educated and trained so that individuals can develop a sense of community identity that includes Muslims, Islam and racialised communities. In Germany, steps have been taken towards this over the years, for instance the President publicly stated in 2010 that ›Islam is a part of Germany‹ and publicly funded ›Islam lessons‹ developed in cooperation with Muslim community leaders are now being taught in schools across the country. In the UK, learning about Islam is also a mandatory part of religious education in schools. Further ways to include Muslims and Islam in UK and German cultural life beyond schools are discussed later in this report.

2.4 OFFICIAL LEGAL STATUS

In Germany, Islam has the same protection granted by the fundamental law as other religions have, however it is not recognised as a religious ›public entity‹. Germany's constitution allows religious groups to become so-called ›entities under public law‹, which grants them the ability to levy taxes on their members, among other rights. In 2013 the first Muslims communities in Germany received such status (the Ahmediyya community in the state of Hesse), but other communities have since been denied it (Center for Migration, Gender and Justice, 2020). The German state helps the big Christian churches to collect »church tax« which

the churches can then use to fund hospital and prison chaplaincies (Anderson, 2017).

That said, Germany officially maintains separation between church and state, unlike the UK where the Head of State is also the ›Defender of the Faith‹ and the highest representative of the Church of England. This constitutionally protected position does not exist between the Federal President and the two big Christian churches in Germany. On a more operational level, the German system of ›becoming a public entity‹ and levying taxes in a self-organised way does not exist for the implementation of religious services in public institutions in the UK, rather these provisions are funded automatically for different faith groups to prevent state discrimination. The result is that Islamic faith provision in public services such as hospital and prison chaplaincies is generally more consistent in the UK than in Germany. The German state should consider automatically funding such state provisions rather than relying on the more complex self-taxation system for organised faiths.

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SPD-UK LABOUR MEETING

EMPOWERING MUSLIMS WITHIN LEFT AND PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL PARTIES

3.1 RECOGNISING THE PROBLEM

The starting point for parties and organisations across the left, socialist, social democratic and green spectrum is to recognise that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism is a serious issue within their organisations. The predominant view in these organisations has often been that as they are more progressive than traditionally right-wing parties, problems of institutional and structural Islamophobia do not exist internally, and few if any resources are dedicated to tackling the problem.

Representation of the Muslim community in left, social democratic and other progressive political parties and labour movement organisations across Europe is poor. In these organisations, attitudes towards Muslims whether in public policy and discourse or within party structures and spaces reflects the structurally racist and discriminatory nature of society across Europe. The issues of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism rarely or never receive recognition or attention.

Members of the UK delegation and German SPD members agreed that the above situation was also applicable to their own experiences within the UK Labour Party and the German SPD. Research reveals that in the Labour Party, over one in four Muslim members report having directly experienced Islamophobia and over one in three report directly witnessing Islamophobia. 56 per cent of Labour's Muslim members hold the view that the shadow cabinet team does not represent the Muslim community effectively and 55 per cent do not trust the leadership to tackle Islamophobia effectively, whilst 48 per cent of Muslim members do not have confidence in the Labour Party complaints procedure to deal with Islamophobia (Labour Muslim Network, 2020).

The recent Forde Report commissioned by the Labour Party also details a perception that there was a ›hierarchy of racism‹ in the party where anti-Blackness and Islamophobia were not taken as seriously as other forms of racism such as antisemitism (Labour Party, 2022). At Labour Party Conference 2022, Another Europe and FES London organised the only fringe meeting dedicated to the issue of Islamophobia. More needs to be done to recognise and deal with this pressing problem.

No surveys on Islamophobia within the SPD appear to have been run yet. While there are no formal statistics, SPD members pointed out that within their party, there are instances where they have received resistance and criticism for standing up against racism and Islamophobia. For instance, when racialised members of the party called for more diversity in the list of SPD Bundestag speakers, it was seen as an individualist careerist move and the request was not taken seriously until white allies within the party also supported the call. SPD members who signed an open letter condemning the firing of a Turkish German university lecturer who complained about fascism and racism in the policing system received a backlash within the party (Aslan, 2023). Recognition that Islamophobia and racism exist and need to be dealt with within the SPD is an important first step.

Delegates were very aware that the same issues are reflected in our own organisations, where representation of Muslim and racialised communities needs serious improvement. Muslims are one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups in the UK and are overwhelmingly working class (Mohdin, 2022). The progressive political landscape is dominated by individuals from white middle-class backgrounds; we need to hold space and rapidly increase the visibility of racialised and working-class people in left and progressive spaces.

3.2 TRAINING ALL PARTY MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

All party members and representatives should receive regular training and education on Islamophobia and anti-racism. These trainings should also encompass education about colonial histories, (linked) migration, different cultures and different faiths. It is important that members understand concepts such as white supremacy, white privilege and white fragility and work to tackle this problem as it manifests within their organisations and on an individual level. Rather than the onus being placed on Muslim members to ›integrate‹ and accept white supremacist structures, identities and values, the onus must be placed on all party members to understand and become accepting of different Muslim identities as essential and natural elements of UK, German and European society.

UK delegates reported that in their employment settings, it was becoming more and more common to be able to organise anti-racism and anti-discrimination trainings for all staff. This practice does not appear to be widespread amongst party organisations in relation to elected representatives and members, showing a further divide between progressive parties and wider society.

3.3 SELF-ORGANISATION

Ensuring there are spaces for Muslim self-organisation and democratic influence within party structures is crucial. The German SDP has an official Working Group of Muslim Social Democrats (established in 2014), similar to the working groups of Christian Social Democrats, Jewish Social Democrats and Secular Social Democrats.[2] At the moment, the UK Labour party incorporates a ›Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)‹ group into its official structure, where self-identifying members of those communities can vote for a ›BAME‹ Representative onto the party's National Executive Committee (NEC).

However, delegation members agreed that while having a dedicated space for racialised members is a step forward, the ›BAME‹ framework itself is inadequate as it tends towards the obfuscation and elision of the experiences of Muslim and racialised members of the party by ›lumping‹ every group together into one blanket category. Structures of white supremacy were reported to exist even within self-organising spaces such as BAME Labour, where for instance delegates reported that it is difficult for several Muslim women's voices to be heard simultaneously; instead, Muslim women must compete for space. The hierarchical, competitive nature of party structures and culture also tends towards an unsafe environment; building structures that are more equal and less hierarchical is important.

Although the UK Labour Party has official affiliated societies (who collectively elect one representative member to the NEC) representing Jewish and Christian communities (Jewish Labour Movement and Christians on the Left), there is no equivalent affiliated Muslim society. The Labour Muslim Network, an independent group that formed outside the Labour Party in 2016, applied for affiliation in 2022, but no affiliation has been confirmed to date (McAlpin, 2022).

Within party structures, dedicated spaces for Muslim self-organisation with meaningful democratic channels to influence party policy and executive decision-making are needed, and these spaces must be allocated adequate funding, support and resources.

There must also be channels for diverse experiences to be represented within these spaces, so that the voice of intersecting groups such as Black Muslim, LGBTQI+ Muslim and

Muslim women in their intersectionality can be heard. Specifically, on the intersection of anti-blackness and Islamophobia, there is a general tendency in UK society to assume that Black people are not Muslim, especially when they are not visibly perceived as Muslim. Islamophobia also exists within Black communities and anti-Blackness exists within Muslim communities, such that, for instance, a Black Muslim woman can experience anti-blackness within Muslim communities and wider society, Islamophobia within Black communities and wider society, and sexism across all spaces. A serious intersectional approach is needed to ensure this can be addressed effectively.

3.4 BEYOND TOKENISM

Recent years have witnessed several ›firsts‹ for Muslim candidates attaining prominent official roles within progressive parties in both the UK and Germany. Sadiq Khan became Labour Mayor of London in 2016, winning a second term in 2021; Anas Sarwar becoming leader of the Scottish Labour Party in 2021; and in 2023 the SNP's Humza Yousaf became First Minister of Scotland. In December 2021 the German Green party's Cem Özdemir became Germany's first federal minister from a Turkish und Muslim background. In 2021, Sanae Abdi became Cologne's first Muslim MP, and more Muslim MPs are slowly being elected to the Bundestag.

This is progress to be sure, but still reflects an electoral landscape that is far behind social trends, and lacks adequate representation of women in key positions. In Germany, only 1.1 per cent of candidates elected to the Bundestag in 2021 identify as Muslim, against a population that is 6.7 per cent Muslim (Pro, 2021). The UK does only slightly better with 2.9 per cent of MPs coming from a Muslim background, despite Muslims making up around 6.7 per cent of the UK population (Chapman, 2019). Approximately 2.2 per cent of UK councillors are Muslim (Muslim News, 2021). Positive discrimination is needed to remedy this underrepresentation. Oxford city councillor and cabinet member Shaista Aziz co-chaired a working group in the council to ensure there was racial representation on the council's all-white cabinet despite the city of Oxford being a diverse city with a 29 per cent population classified as black and ethnic minority (Oxford City Council, 2021). A quota was put in place to ensure the cabinet is racially diverse and representative of the city's population. This could be mirrored in councils across the UK, Germany, and Europe.

3.5 CANDIDATE SUPPORT

In terms of support for Muslim members to run as electoral candidates, there are no formal support programmes in the UK Labour Party or SPD specifically for Muslim members. In 2019 the Bernie Grant Leadership Programme, the first and only programme for ›BAME‹ members to access training and support to become electoral candidates was launched in the UK Labour Party. Moreover, with two cohorts already

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2   See the working group's website https://akmuslime.spd.de/, though there is little online evidence of recent activity, membership, and structures.

through the programme, there is little evidence the party is actively supporting graduates to stand as candidates, with many reporting concerns that their work on migrants' rights and social justice issues has seen them barred from local contests (Adu, 2023).

There appears to be no equivalent support programme for racialised members to become electoral candidates in the SPD. Targeted support and training encouraging Muslim candidates to stand is key in both the UK and Germany. This must also include access to psychological and emotional support to build resilience and heal from the daily trauma of the experience of structural racism within these spaces and its constituent violence. Linking up with local community organisations and smaller organisations is an important way to build up this support. For instance, in the UK, Zainab Asunramu works with the organisation Elect Her to support more women of colour into politics from different faith groups.

Diversity alone, without tackling structural racism, Islamophobia, and anti-Muslim attitudes within the wider party, is not enough. With racialised and Muslim candidates, delegates said there is often the expectation to toe the line without truly representing the views of different Muslim communities and their interests. Muslim candidates often reported the experience of being selected for positions to show diversity, but not expected to have an opinion or their own political positions. This culture needs to change.

3.6 TRANSFORMING PARTY STRUCTURES

Party structures and processes need to be updated and modernised to be accessible to everyone. Across the UK and Germany, archaic, bureaucratic and procedure-heavy structures from the local to the national level of the party are alienating and off-putting for many people across society, especially people from racialised and working-class backgrounds. Party structures need to operate in ways that are engaging and relevant.

Members of the SPD are trying working groups on specific topics as an alternative to the more bureaucratic structures that members are often ›born into‹. These working groups were found to be much more engaging, for instance, in Cologne there is now a working group for people with international family ties (migrant background). This group hosts discussions on citizenship, legislation, upcoming elections and how to contribute perspectives on antiracism and integration into SPD policies. The focus is not just on content but also on people and discussing how the SPD can select more representative candidates. Feedback shows that such working groups are much more engaging and relevant to racialised communities.

The class element is also key. As earlier mentioned, most Muslims in the UK are working class and have consistently been at the bottom of social-economic indicators. That has not changed over generations of Muslim presence in the

UK. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in particular are found at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, and this is also linked to their faith (Trade Union Congress, 2006). There was a sense amongst delegates that the Labour Party has become more irrelevant to working class people of all colours and is more aspirational for middle class people. Opening the space for people from working class backgrounds is key to gaining relevance.

3.7 INTEGRATION COUNCILS – HELP OR HINDRANCE?

Germany has a unique political structure called an ›integration council‹, a body elected at municipal level from a franchise of all residents of the municipality who do not have German citizenship. The intended purpose of these bodies is to represent the interests of migrants who otherwise do not necessarily have the right to vote in local, state, and national government elections. The delegation discussed the utility of the integration council.

The approach taken to the Integration Council was generally one of critical engagement. Rather than use the term ›migrant‹ or ›foreigner‹, which have negative connotations in mainstream German discourse, in Cologne and North Rhine-Westphalia the term ›people with international family‹ ties or ›history‹ is being used, to reclaim a positive narrative in the discourse on migration.

It was also recommended to use the term ›equal opportunities‹ over ›integration‹. The ›integration‹ framework treats people with international family ties as one homogeneous group and places onerous burdens on them, even if they were born in Germany and their family has lived there for generations, to conform to certain language, behavioural and identity standards. This creates a feeling and a discourse that people from these communities are never truly welcome as a natural and inherent part of the German social fabric.

Of approximately four million people with international family ties living in Germany without citizenship, many are already deeply embedded in German society, can speak multiple languages, and bring rich cultural backgrounds that should be celebrated, with their potential harnessed and activated within German society, rather than being seen as negative indicators of a failure to integrate.

SPD representatives advocated that all German residents who do not have German citizenship should have the right to vote in all local, state, and national elections, not just in the integration council elections. The Integration Council is not an adequate solution to the disenfranchisement of people with international family history. Now, EU citizens can vote in local elections, but multiple citizenship for those outside the EU is near impossible to attain. The SPD has demanded that everyone who has lived in Germany for more than six months should have a right to vote in Germany too.

Germany's new naturalisation law makes positive steps towards addressing this. Once implemented, this legislation will allow multiple citizenship and reduce the residency requirements for German citizenship from eight years to five years, and in some cases three years if certain German language, job or study conditions are met (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, 2023). This change will have a huge impact on the voting rights of Germany's large Turkish community, many of whom held off gaining German citizenship as they would have had to renounce Turkish citizenship under the old law; the new law would allow them to keep both (Sargut, 2023).

The UK does not have any similar elected body to represent the views of non-citizen residents. Migrants who do not have UK citizenship do not have the right to vote in national elections, and progressive political parties must commit to expand the franchise. Again, an ›integration council‹ that lumps the heterogenous group of people with international family ties and different faiths together is not adequate to address the problem of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. An international campaign giving non-citizens resident in the country the right to vote is key.

3.8 ISLAMOPHOBIA DEFINITION

A much-discussed issue was the official recognition within parties of a definition of Islamophobia. In the UK the APPG on Islamophobia has produced a definition of Islamophobia (APPG on British Muslims, no date), which the UK Labour Party, the SNP, the Green, the Scottish Conservatives, and the Liberal Democrat Party have adopted. Many local government bodies have also adopted it.

The SPD could also work towards adopting a definition to begin to recognise the problem. There is also some debate about what terminology to use. Islamophobia is the term that is used in the UK and internationally accepted by the Muslim community, but in Germany anti-Muslim racism is commonly used. The terminology is explored further below in the section presenting Zeynep Demir's research.

3.9 RAISING AWARENESS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

The SPD could also commit to more Islamophobia Awareness raising activities. Anisa Mahmood shared experience of running the first Islamophobia Awareness Month campaign in the UK parliament. This included highlighting the positive work Muslims are doing to tackle the climate crisis, included taking the Labour Party chair and Scottish Labour Party leader Anas Sarwar on a tour of the UK's first eco-mosque in Cambridge.

3.10 PUBLIC INCLUSION

Germany representatives were curious as to how the UK appears to have more public recognition and celebration of

the Muslim community, such as ›Eid in the Park‹. Having Muslim representatives in power can have a positive effect on community relations. Having a Labour Mayor of London with a Muslim background and the political will to represent elements of the Muslim community has meant that festivals such as Eid can become inclusive public celebrations for all the community. ›Eid in the Park‹ is a common public celebration and supported by local governments in cities and towns across the UK. German representatives on the delegation reported that such public celebrations of a Muslim festival never happen in Germany; where the SPD holds strong local, state, and national influence, it could seek to implement similar community-wide celebrations with the Muslim and other faith communities. While we should encourage more Muslim mayors, such changes shouldn't require a Muslim mayor in order to be implemented.

3.11 FOREIGN POLICY

There was a worrying trend within the SPD of associating the Muslim community in Germany, which is mainly of Turkish origin, with the politics of the Turkish state and of Erdogan, stereotyping Muslim communities as politically regressive and an internal threat. This again reflected the trend to ›problematise‹ Muslim communities rather than reflect critically on the structures of white supremacy and how such structures isolate and victimise Muslims. When thinking about the question of Muslim empowerment in Germany, it is extremely dangerous to link the issue to Muslim communities' political opinions about what is happening in Turkey, not least because these opinions are inevitably varied and diverse. Such linkages appeared to come with little critical reflection of Europe's own historic identarian opposition to allow Türkiye (then headed by a secular government) into the European Union. The deeper problem, as will be discussed below, is the reluctance of some dominant elements of mainstream German society to see Turks, Muslims and their racial and religious identities as belonging to the fabric of Germany.

4

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

BY ZEYNEP DEMIR ON MUSLIM OPINIONS AND ANTI-MUSLIM ATTITUDES IN GERMANY

The delegation heard an in-depth presentation on Muslim attitudes, Islamophobia, and anti-Muslim racism in Germany from psychologist, lecturer and specialist researcher Zeynep Demir (MSc). Zeynep works in the research group Socialization (Prof. Andreas Zick's Lab) at the Faculty of Educational Science at Bielefeld University and in the Research Networking Office of the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) Community, at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence, Bielefeld University.

She also worked on the projects »ZuGleich – Zugehörigkeit und Gleichwertigkeit« funded by Stiftung Mercator, and »Muslimische Perspektiven auf die Muslim- und Islamfeindlichkeit«[Muslim Perspectives on Anti-Muslim and Anti-Islam Attitudes], funded by Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI) at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG) at Bielefeld University (PI: Prof. Dr. Andreas Zick). This section is drawn from Zeynep's research presentation.

4.1 BACKGROUND

Anti-Muslim racism is a reality in Germany, and the rise of hate speech on social media echoes anti-Muslim racism (Demir, 2018). A recent analysis of anti-Muslim attitudes, defined as the devaluation of people because they are Muslims, but also of people who are perceived as ›foreign‹ or categorized as members of the religion Islam (Zick, Berghan, Mokros, 2019), shows that anti-Muslim attitudes are continuously increasing. In a representative population survey, anti-Muslim attitudes were assessed by level of agreement with three statements based on the scale of group-focused enmity by Zick et al. (2019):

– *›The number of Muslims should be limited‹;*
– *›There are too many Muslims living in Germany‹; and*
– *›Muslim culture has a dangerous influence on German culture‹.*

The survey showed that in 2015, 15.3 per cent of respondents harboured anti-Muslim attitudes, increasing to 20.4 per cent of respondents in 2016, 21.6 per cent in 2018 and 34.2 per cent in 2020 (Zick & Krott, 2021). In other words, almost one in three people in Germany now harbour anti-Muslim attitudes.

4.2 RESEARCHING CHANGING OPINIONS

Zeynep participated in a funded research project by Stiftung Mercator that began in 2014 and investigated opinions in Germany over a period of 7 years until 2021 about migration, integration, and discrimination. Survey respondents included Germans without recent migration history; but also people with international family ties or migration history; and Muslims. The data study sample included around 2000 people and was a representative study of the German population aged 18 and over. The average age of those surveyed was 50 years old. The data was collected every two years to look at how opinions and attitudes have changed. Particular emphasis was placed on collecting the perspectives of racialised and minoritized people.

4.3 TERMINOLOGY

Zeynep reported that while the terms Islamophobia, anti-Muslim racism, and anti-Muslim attitudes can sometimes be used synonymously, it is important to consider the different theoretical schools and concepts. The terms can be equally well applied to describe, capture, and address the broad phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment, depending on what is being attempted to be described and which theoretical perspective is being applied. Meanings could include feelings of dread and devaluation of Muslims, their culture, their public political and religious activities, or negative stereotypical attitudes towards Islam – with the latter, focusing on ›Islam‹ rather than ›Muslims‹ tended to be a mechanism of exclusion for which religion provides the foil against which collective attributions against Muslims are made.

Zeynep categorizes the terms in her research in the German context as follows (Diekmann, 2022; Zick, Berghan & Mokros, 2019; Zick, Küpper & Mokros, 2023):

Islamophobia refers to unfounded hostility towards Islam. It also refers to the practical consequences of such hostility such as unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities and the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs. In general Islamophobia is defined as indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotion directed at Islam or Muslims. Indicators of Islamophobia include arson attacks on mosques.

Anti-Muslim attitudes relates more to feelings of dread and negative attitudes towards the group of Muslims, their rituals, and their public political and religious activities. It also refers to practical devaluation of people because they are Muslims or categorised as members of aparticular group: Islam.

Anti-Muslim racism is a term more commonly used by young Muslims (for example, on social media, it is observed that young adolescents are more likely to refer to the word anti-Muslim racism when describing their experiences of devaluation). Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitudes refer to prejudice (see also social psychological research on prejudice and discrimination). Anti-Muslim racism represents a different school, as the concept is associated with postcolonial and critical race theory. While prejudice is associated with attitudes at the individual level, proponents of the concept of anti-Muslim racism refer to the structural level (Shooman, 2014; Attia, 2009).

4.4 RESULTS

The types of questions and items asked explored the citizens views and ideas on migration, ethnicity, and diversity, including, e. g.:

– Who can be a German?
– What criteria do different people set for belonging to Germany?
– How are immigrants and ethnically and religiously minoritized communities and Muslims judged?
– Which exclusions do immigrants and Muslims experience?

When the sample was asked, what is the criteria of belonging to German society? The respondents reported the table 1:

The research showed that over eight years, the criteria to ›belong German‹ was becoming more and more strict.

The research also studied group-focused enmity (Zick, Küpper & Hövermann, 2011); where individuals harboured one prejudice, they usually harboured prejudice against other groups. The research demonstrated a ›syndrome‹ amongst respondents of devaluation and exclusion of different social groups based on assigned and socially constructed characteristics such as ethnicity and religion. For instance, harbouring opinions that attribute inequality to certain groups – such as ›Muslims do not belong in Germany‹ – often leads to enmity and violence towards that group and socially shared judgments about groups e. g., ›they are all criminal‹, ›the hijab is oppression‹. The more prejudice there was against one group, the higher the likelihood of devaluation of other groups. Immigrants, refugees, and Muslims were the related groups against which ›syndromic‹ prejudices were displayed, and the attitudes to these specific groups were studied. For instance, respondents who believed that as soon as the situation in home countries has improved, refugees should be sent back, were also likely to believe that there are too many Muslims in Germany.

In general, the data showed that from 2018–2022 there was a sharp rise in anti-Muslim hatred, especially after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time (multiple crises), it appeared that all societal problems were magnified, as people who had no contact with society had fewer opportunities for their prejudices to be confronted. Online hate also appeared to rise as opportunities to attack people verbally and physically racially on the street were fewer, giving rise to alternative outlets.

In Germany there was prevalent discourse that the Covid hotspots were taking place in Turkish areas because they

Table 1
What is the criteria of belonging to German society?

Criteria	Rejection	Agreement	n
1 German language	3.2 %	94.3 %	967
2 Respect political institutions & laws	2.6 %	92.7 %	953
3 Employment	6.2 %	85.8 %	955
4 Commitment to the community	4.1 %	81.7 %	961
5 No social aid	12.3 %	81.5 %	961
6 German values & traditions	13.3 %	69.7 %	983
7 feel German	28.6 %	52.7 %	943
8 German citizenship	41.1 %	41.6 %	967
9 Living in Germany	53.2%	32.5 %	976
10 Being Christian	50.6%	27.7 %	927
11 Born in Germany	57.2 %	26.1 %	958

Note: Responses of the sample from the ZuGleich study (Zick & Krott, 2021). Translated into English from German:

Item: »In the following block of questions, I will now list some characteristics that some people believe are more or less important for belonging to German society. Imagine that you could decide which characteristics are necessary for migrants to belong to German society. For each of the following qualities, please tell me how important you personally think it is. Use a number between 1 (not at all important) and 5 (very important).«

were not hygienic and that it was Muslim celebrations like Eid that were spreading the virus. Similar trends occurred in the UK, where racist discourse started with anti-Asian racism and then shifted to the societal level of habitual targeting of Muslims, with a big spike in online Islamophobia. For instance, some media outlets chose to illustrate articles about coronavirus with photos of Muslim women in the hijab (Muslim Engagement & Development, 2020), and the UK government changed Covid mixing rules a day before Eid, with the stated purpose being to stop spreading. German delegates also reported that there were often different rules for Christian and Muslim communities depending on local areas.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Zeynep recommends breaking down local barriers, increasing the visibility of Muslims and increasing the openness of German society. Muslims and religious minorities experience high levels of discrimination, and this is a strong barrier to developing a sense of homecoming and life satisfaction within German society. Verbal rejection and exclusion from the community also has this result.

The ›welcome‹ culture in Germany needs to be significantly improved. The acceptance of cultural and religious differences leading to common change must be promoted through migration and diversity education, strengthening migrant & religious health organisations and special funding for integration-motivated or diversity-motivated cities and regions.

For instance, historic resistance to Türkiye's entry into the European Union, even when it was headed by a secular government, stems from Europe's failure to accept cultural and religious differences. This is an institutional component of the European Union. Where Germany and Europe do not see diversity as a richness and a resource, where it is seen as a deficit, it is difficult to envision that countries with majority Muslim populations such as Türkiye will ever be welcomed into the Union.

The ongoing failure to welcome cultural and religious differences has had a profound and alarming impact on the psychological wellbeing of Muslims in Germany society. Improving it and providing resources to the communities affected so that they can access community-led emotional and psychological support is key.

5

THE COLOGNE INTEGRATION OFFICE AND THE EUROPEAN COALITION OF CITIES AGAINST RACISM (ECCAR)

The City of Cologne prides itself on being one of the most tolerant and accepting cities in Europe, but recent events show that anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia is a serious problem in the city that needs to be tackled. Cologne has the largest LGBTQI+ community in Germany but also the largest Muslim community.

5.1 COLOGNE CITY DEPARTMENT OF INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY

The city of Cologne has 12 staffers working at the Diversity and Integration department, which covers its 1.2 million inhabitants. The city has a diversity management office which covers LGBTQI+, disabled rights, anti-discrimination work, religious issues, anti-Muslim racism, and racism in general. There is a second unit which specialises on the question of ›integration‹ and runs a ›communal integration centre‹, responsible for housing and education for refugees. Separate from the department, the city also funds a discrimination office dedicated to antisemitism.

An office dedicated to tackling anti-Muslim racism is also urgently needed in the city which boasts the largest percentage of Germany's Muslim population. It was unclear why no discrimination office for anti-Muslim racism existed in Cologne. The obstacle appears to be a lack of political will to fund this kind of community support.

There are few reports about anti-Muslim incidents in Cologne, but since people do not feel encouraged to report their experiences and there is no office dedicated to anti-Muslim racism, the numbers do not adequately reflect the problem. Politicians who lack the political will to create an office use the lack of data as an excuse not to fund a new anti-Muslim racism office, creating a vicious cycle of ›no data, no problem‹ attitudes. Politicians must stop asking for evidence about anti-Muslim racism and urgently create safe spaces for it to be reported, tackled, and prevented, with support for victims.

The city of Cologne is also planning to do a highlight on anti-Muslim racism in 2024, but again, this is not enough; permanent structures and funding dedicated to addressing anti-Muslim racism is needed.

The city also works with the DİTİB (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs) in Cologne which represents elements of the Turkish Muslim community, but also with mosques representing other communities including Arab and Moroccan. The city has been trying in recent times to show the diversity of the Muslim community; this includes supporting the Muslim LGBTQI+ community. City representatives reported that hatred within the LGBTQI+ community towards refugees with an LGBTQI+ background was an issue in Cologne, alongside the prejudice LGBTQI+ refugees felt in their own community.

The council also supports the founding of associations in areas with a large Muslim population e. g. a co-op for Muslim women and a social welfare fund for Muslim women and youth. That said, city representatives acknowledged that there was a lot more that the city needed to do to tackle anti-Muslim racism.

Cologne Council allowed the *adhaan* (Muslim call to prayer) and prayer itself to be performed in public outside the mosque during the pandemic. There was little public backlash towards this. However, after the pandemic, they allowed the public sounding of the *adhaan* to continue, and this received a national backlash driven by anti-Muslim hate. The Council was criticised as falling victim to ›extremist‹ pressure and ›bowing to the orders of Erdogan‹ in a racist linking of the Muslim act of worship within the community to the actions of a foreign state, seen as a threatening outsider. Most of the complaints received were not from Cologne itself.

Cologne Council built up an alliance of multi-faith religious leaders who made clear that the call to prayer should be safe as a fundamental right of religious expression. This position was supported by the local Catholic Church, Protestant church, Jewish, Hindu and Bahaa'i faith communities, who supported protecting the right to perform the call to prayer publicly as a fundamental right to religious expression, despite any tensions and struggles between different religious communities.

After this backlash, Cologne also decided to refresh its Council of Religions by creating a religious Youth Council to feed into changes in the city. Cologne has also recently started thinking about the process of decolonisation of the

city. They not only focus on returning objects stolen from the colonies but also ask themselves what colonial continuities remain in terms of structural discrimination in the daily functions of the city. For some people this is a very painful process, but it is also a very valuable process. However, there are still basic changes that need to be made, e. g. a street offensively named ›~~Mohren~~straße‹ continues to exist within the city, and this urgently needs to be changed (Rohls, 2020).

5.2 EUROPEAN COALITION OF CITIES AGAINST RACISM (ECCAR)

Cologne also works with other cities on the issue of anti-Muslim racism in the ECCAR where they share best practice. ECCAR is a network of 150 cities across Europe and Türkiye that have committed to fight against racism at a local level. The aim is to transform cities into safe and inclusive spaces. ECCAR is also part of UNESCO's international coalition of inclusive and sustainable cities.

ECCAR has a 10-point action plan that is the basic commitment for all the cities who want to join the network. It is expected that the cities will implement at least one of the ten points as soon as they join the network. Most of ECCAR's activity is concentrated around three working groups: colonial heritage, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim racism.

In the anti-Muslim racism working group, anti-Muslim racism is seen as a significant obstacle to building more equal and inclusive cities in Europe. The working group's activities include knowledge exchange and knowledge-sharing between cities, researchers, and NGOs.

5.3 TERMINOLOGY

ECCAR chooses to use the term anti-Muslim racism but also acknowledges the term Islamophobia. The delegation discussed the difficulties in agreeing on terminology and definitions in different contexts: in the UK Islamophobia is a widely accepted term in society but the Conservative government refuses to accept it and prefers the term anti-Muslim hatred. The Conservative government argues that discrimination against Muslims and Islam cannot be a form of racism because Muslims are not a race.

In a pan-European context, terminology can get in the way of tackling the problem itself. ECCAR found it especially difficult in the French context to find a common ground on terminological issues, but even where there is no officially agreed definition, there can always be a working definition for anti-Muslim racism that ECCAR uses.

ECCAR decided to use the term anti-Muslim racism based on the fact that racism in its modern understanding is no longer about biological racism. It is now more appropriate to think about the new form of racism where people are racialised due to different expectations and imposed identities that are roped together in connection with, for example, orientalist stereotypes. For instance, there are people who experience anti-Muslim racism or the phenomena itself only because they are perceived as Muslims. The issue is therefore not about religion per se, it is about hatred, animosity and violence against a group of people who are perceived to represent a religion or certain kind of ethno-religious group.

5.4 PRACTICAL WORK SUPPORTING ECCAR IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM

In cities, this work is often located in ›integration‹ offices, which gives the whole approach on the city level a different framework than when it is located in a department that deals with, e. g., cultural affairs in the city. (The problematics of the term ›integration‹ were discussed earlier in this report.) ECCAR is beginning to unpick this framework.

Despite these structural challenges and barriers, ECCAR tries to make sure that intersectionality (e. g., on the basis of gender, religion and ethnicity) is always considered. It takes into consideration the fact that during the process of racialisation there are people who experience anti-Muslim racism without self-identifying as Muslims.

ECCAR emphasises the importance of cities reaching out to the whole community and giving platforms for a diversity of voices: in Cologne there are different Muslim communities, different mosques, and the city cannot just work with one voice, but must make sure that all of them are covered and all their voices are heard.

ECCAR aims to establish sustainable measures and collaborations rather than one-off projects. One-off projects fail to build trust; it's very important that Muslim communities feel this trust through consistent structures, and that they feel that there is a low threshold to access the city administration. Cities are the spaces where people feel at home: people's neighbourhoods are often the one place where people start developing an identity bound towards their practical space. People must be given the chance to live in an urban society that is inclusive and welcoming to everyone.

5.5 GUIDEBOOK

ECCAR has produced a guidebook on local actions against anti-Muslim racism (Hyökki & Cubelic, 2023). The guidebook contains policy recommendations drafted by expert partners, researchers, university professors, representatives from Muslim NGOs and communities and activists. It considers different aspects of different action fields: civic education, cities, and dialogue, hate crime and administration and intercultural competence in education. This also includes a contribution by the city of Chemnitz in eastern Germany on the issue of refugees, where there are very

specific projects to bridge the gap within the community between refugees and other citizens. The discourse on refugees in Chemnitz has been very negative since the Syrian civil war and the refugees that arrived due to those conflicts.

5.6 UK-ECCAR COLLABORATION

In terms of UK cities, London is on the ECCAR list, but it has not participated in the anti-Muslim racism working group. Others include Aberdeen and Leicester. UK delegates could try and push for more engagement in ECCAR.

6

FAIR INTERNATIONAL

COMMUNITY-LED REPORTING AND RESPONSE TO ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM

Fair International[3] is a nation-wide anti-discrimination organisation based in Germany with an office in Cologne. It focuses on racism and discrimination based on actual or attributed ethnic origin and religion. It aims to support individuals but also provides consulting, empowerment workshops, trainings in mosques, trainings for volunteers, research, legal matters, networking, PR and social media to raise awareness on discrimination and racism. FAIR organises events on different kinds of racism and conducts media monitoring and reporting.

By providing a reporting and data collection service, FAIR seeks to challenge the »No data, no problem« attitude of politicians and governments towards anti-Muslim racism. Noting that the number of mosque attacks reported in the media were very different from the numbers published by the government, FAIR decided to run its own monitoring and list of mosque attacks, recording much higher numbers than the government.

Official records are unreliable as the Muslim community, due to the violent history and complicity in racism experienced by Muslims from the police and state institutions, tends not to trust the police enough to report anti-Muslim attacks.

6.1 #BRANDEILIG

FAIR International established #Brandeilig, a reporting office for mosque attacks. The first #Brandeilig[4] report recorded 120 mosque attacks across Germany in 2018 (Sari et al, 2022). On average, aggregated data over the past decade shows that there is at least one mosque attack a week. This includes arson attacks, bomb threats and threatening letters. Patterns noted included increasing mosque attacks whenever there is a political problem in a Muslim country, because mosques are seen as representative of Muslims, Turks, and Kurdish people. There are more mosques in the former West German states and in Berlin, so there are more attacks in these regions.

Most of the attacks take place at night when no one is

present in the mosque, but in the past couple of years there have been cases where shootings took place when people were praying and before children had their weekend lessons.

6.2 MISTRUST IN THE POLICE AND JUSTICE SYSTEM

FAIR was the first association to record mosque attacks. Before this, the police were the only organisation recording attacks. There is very low trust between Muslim communities and the police, who are perceived as institutionally racist. Almost every mosque in Germany experiences anti-Muslim racism and attacks, but most communities do not report mosque attacks and racist incidents to the police. In most recent research, of the 72 mosque attacks that FAIR international recorded, 35 were reported to the police.

Many mosques do not trust the police and do not want to engage in the bureaucracy of reporting; this is due to their history and experiences with the police. When a member of the Muslim or Turkish community is attacked, police often first investigate within the Muslim community itself for the suspect, targeting mosques and investigating Muslim businesses, rather than searching for potential non-Muslim perpetrators motivated by racial or religious hatred.

For instance, in the last 20 years there have been several unsolved murder cases where the victims have been children, lawyers, professionals, shop sellers and others whose role in society made them publicly visible as Muslim, e. g. due to Muslim names, shop signs, or halal signs. The police and intelligence services were unsuccessful in discovering the perpetrators, who eventually outed themselves as the fascist NSU group (Fürstenau, 2022).

The NSU are officially recorded to have killed ten people, and officially three people in the NSU appeared to have been protected by state institutions, as their identities and activity were known to secret services long before they outed themselves. After each NSU murder, the police began to look for the killers in the communities and environment of those killed, causing further mistrust within the Turkish and Muslim community of the police. There is a long history of the fascist ›NSU model‹ type of murder,

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3   See: www.fair-int.de.
4   See: www.brandeilig.org.

which the German mainstream media often derogatorily reports as ›Döner‹ model killings – blaming rival kebab gangs for the death of Muslims instead of fascist or right-wing extremists.

There is a strong perception amongst the Muslim community that police and state agencies covered up the group's actions. There are also lots of cases in prisons where Muslim inmates often end up dead and it is labelled as ›suicide‹, but there is little trust in the investigation.

A recent egregious police failing was that on the day of the 2020 Hanau shooting which targeted young Muslim people in a shisha cafe and then numerous other locations, the police failed to respond to calls from the victims on that day and said they ›had a problem with the system‹. One victim included a Bosnian Muslim with white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes. The victim's father publicly expressed his shock that on the police death report, it said the victim looked like an ›oriental man‹, based presumably just on his name, Hamza Kurtović (Edwards, 2021). These individual accounts are enough to destroy a community's trust.

No official research into racism within the policing system appears to be available, but FAIR is lobbying for an independent investigation into institutional police racism to take place. FAIR representatives on the delegation stated that for every 200 anti-Muslim attacks, there are only five cases that ever reached the courtroom and even fewer where a judgment is reached. Sometimes hate crimes against Muslims are not recorded as such. For instance, in a recent arson attack, dustbins were burnt on mosque property where the fire could easily spread to the building, however in the court system it was not judged to be a racist, anti-Muslim or terrorist attack, it was judged only to be damage of property; FAIR suggested that the German state categorisation of anti-Muslim attacks as politically motivated crime, rather than as religious hate crime, was part of the problem.

In the UK, legislation recognises aggravated hate crimes. For England, Wales, and Scotland, the Sentencing Act 2020 makes racial or religious hostility, or hostility related to disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity an aggravation in sentencing for crimes in general. Separately, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 defines separate offences, with increased sentences, for racially or religiously aggravated assaults. It might be interesting to explore how racially motivated attacks can be legally recognised as such within the German criminal justice system; that being said, systemic and institutional racism may undermine effects to adequately prosecute this and focusing on community-led safety may be a more effective tool.

6.3 COMMUNITY-LED REPORTING

Community based organisations, as independent as possible from the police, government and state institutions, are a much more reliable and effective base for reporting. FAIR

in its reporting work conducted interviews with all the mosques in Germany through trained volunteers.

Mosques are more likely to trust FAIR because FAIR employs people from the Muslim community to build links and collect data, and mosques know FAIR is working for disadvantaged groups. FAIR stated that it was better practice for Muslims to lead the research and be the point of contact as respondents would feel more comfortable talking about what their fears are, what their feelings are and what the effects of mosque attacks are on them.

6.4 BUREAUCRACY AS A BARRIER TO ACCESS TO SERVICES.

For many mosques it is easier for the community to wipe off racist or extremist graffiti than to call the police or report it to an anti-discrimination organisation. Mosques reported receiving ammunition and threatening letters in the post, in many cases the response is to throw this evidence away rather than report it.

6.5 INTERSECTIONALITY AND WORK WITH BLACK MUSLIMS

More work is needed to highlight the experience of Black Muslims. FAIR international interacts with Black Muslim associations through the CLAIM Alliance – an umbrella organisation of groups working on anti-racism. In 2022 FAIR organised two events on anti-black racism including a Muslim speaker, and wanted to raise awareness in the Muslim community itself around anti-black racism. The community work that FAIR does in mosques includes trainings on anti-black and anti-Sinti/Roma racism.

FAIR representatives stated that organisations focusing on anti-black racism tend to focus more on empowerment than law and reporting. Their experience has shown that it is difficult to shift institutionally racist government structures and instead focusing on empowering Black communities within society is more effective. The term empowerment is new to Muslim community work but could be much more helpful.

6.6 UK COMPARISON

Arson attacks and other threats towards mosques, refugee shelters and asylum centres are common in the UK (Caato, 2022). Similar incidents were reported to have occurred in the UK in relation to police failing to prevent extremist violence against Muslims, even after reports had been made. For Instance, in 2023 before Ramadan a Muslim elder was set on fire outside a mosque in West London. Then during Ramadan, the same attacker committed a similar attack in Birmingham and was eventually caught by the police (Murray, 2023). The fact that the perpetrator was able to commit the crime numerous times before the police apprehended him reveals a lack of adequate action.

While government funding is available to provide security and CCTV to mosques, mosques do not want to accept that funding because too often they have been on the receiving end of investigation and over policing by the state and security services, damaging trust. Further, where mosques do hand over CCTV footage to police, it tends to get ›lost‹ and is inadequately investigated.

6.6 COMMUNITY-LED FUNDING

There is a risk of relying too much on an institutionally Islamophobic and racist criminal justice system for prevention of anti-Muslim attacks. Intersectional community safety – campaigning for resources to be put into general anti-racism, education, reporting, safety and training of the entire community (Muslim and non-Muslim) around Islamophobia and what it is could be a more effective way to tackle the causes of anti-Muslim hatred.

FAIR also conducted qualitative research into how worshippers, children and their parents who used mosques felt about the attacks. There is an emphasis on a need for both quantitative and qualitative research, especially funding for psychological and emotional support for communities facing hate crime. FAIR has started to provide psychological support to victims of anti-Muslim hatred. It is very difficult to heal and help people who have suffered trauma and damage recover, and this type of empowerment work is very much cherished by the community.

Funding needs to go to community-led organisations generally and the bureaucracy and the difficulty of accessing funding needs to be addressed. In the U.K., Oxford Council decided to restructure grant money that was available to communities because it found that representative communities were not coming forward to apply for the money. Often, it was well-meaning, white, non-Muslim-led organisations and individuals who submitted applications for funds. Often representatives of Muslim and racialised communities do not have the infrastructure or staffing resources to make such applications. Oxford City Council decided to break its grant fund into large, medium, and smaller grants so that the smaller grant funding was more accessible to local Muslim community organisations. Officers in the Council worked with those organisations to help them access funds as most of them were not registered but could legally access money if they could show where it was going. This created significant positive change in the area where there are now, for example, Muslim women's walking groups and Muslim women's wellbeing groups, all set up themselves and led by Muslim women.

UK delegates suggested that it is important to look at existing resources in Cologne and Germany and find out whose hands they are in. This can be done by questioning democratically elected politicians and asking: where is this money going and how are we spending it? If funding to tackle anti-Muslim racism and other kinds of racism is mostly going to NGOs that do not have people of colour well-represented among staff members and positions of leadership, or any understanding of colonialism and what it means in the past and what it means now, and there is no Muslim representation, it is important to lobby elected officials working on anti-racism, questioning how they can effectively address the issue without representation of the communities affected. We should work towards co-produced ideas and spaces. The UK does not excel in this area but it is starting to understand it more.

6.7 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

It took a lot of campaigning over several years under various German governments for independent research on anti-Muslim hate crime to be commissioned.FAIR now wants to research racism within the police force. Funding for such research, despite decades of evidence of racism, has only recently been granted. FAIR will be meeting with national government representatives to discuss their latest research and recommendations.

FAIR wants politicians to separate terms like prevention, war on terror, Islamism prevention on the one hand from work against anti-Muslim racism or the understanding of anti-Muslim racism at all. The two discourses are linked in public discourse and government policy in a way that reinforces anti-Muslim racism within the state. Politicians must differentiate between prevention work, anti-racism, and dialogue with religion and religious representatives. These are separate and different areas.

FAIR encounters difficulties in receiving an audience with local government to discuss implementing recommendations, and any discussions often fail to result in meaningful action. For instance, a request for the anti-discrimination guidelines for the administration of Cologne has been under consideration for 16 years now.

7

THE MULTI-FAITH CONTEXT

7.1 CHAPLAINCY SERVICES

In Germany, public faith provisions are provided though faith organisations registering as religious ›public entities‹ allowing them to tax their members and then use this money to deliver public faith services such as prison and hospital chaplaincies. For complex reasons, Islamic faith organisations have largely not attained the status of religious ›public entity‹.

This complex funding context makes it very difficult for Muslim welfare associations to provide services to members of the Muslim faith within public institutions or in cooperation with other faith institutions. Muslim chaplains often work on a voluntary basis; this places a heavy burden on already overworked Muslim support staff who often take on extra voluntary roles for the community.

By contrast, Christian chaplains in Germany are able to provide services in public institutions on a fully paid basis as the Church has ›public entity‹ status in Germany. The Roman Catholic church in Cologne does try to offer help to Muslim hospital occupants, e. g. by offering funeral services and a Muslim burial ground area within their cemetery.

In the UK, government funding is allocated directly to *multi-faith* spaces and services in public institutions so as not to discriminate between faiths. Islamic chaplaincy services are available in public institutions and spaces such as hospitals, prisons, universities and airports, though provisions could always be improved. During the Covid-19 pandemic, death rates within black and minority ethnic, especially Muslim, communities were disproportionately high (Rushton & Stickings, 2021). There was higher demand for funeral services than ever before and many mosques had to provide these services on a voluntary basis. Pushing for multi-faith service provision directly funded by the state in Germany would be a step forward.

7.2 THE CHURCH AND MIGRATION POLICY

Church representatives were concerned about the European Community imitating the UK government's increasingly draconian policies towards refugees and asylum seekers. For instance, deporting refugees to camps outside the EU following the UK's Rwanda policy. Following the recent poll that revealed that more than 60 per cent of the German population think there are too many refugees in Germany and the country should close its borders, church representatives were keen to join up work with the political and faith communities and organisations to combat this kind of racism.

In the UK the Church of England has spoken out and publicly shamed the government for its draconian policies towards refugees and asylum speakers. Churches in Germany do not appear to have taken a public stance. While the Roman Catholic Cardinal in Cologne does not appear to have a public position on welcoming migrants, some local parish workers openly disagree and call for the church to take a stronger stance in welcoming refugees. They argue the Church must stand up against any EU policy to establish camps on its borders and outside the EU (e. g., in Burundi), and should also stop exploiting the resources in these third countries.

Some local parish workers are involved in protest and direct action in support of refugees and engage the parish membership in similar activities. While many people are positive, day-to-day parish workers do encounter anti-migrant sentiment amongst German members and members with migrant backgrounds alike, and they continue to work to address this. Parish churches can act as social hubs that welcome the whole community. They offer support for unemployed people, migrants, and single parents – of which there are high numbers in the local parish.

7.3 ›CHURCH ASYLUM‹ AND ACTIVE SOLIDARITY

As the Church in Germany is respected by the state, there is a system of unofficial ›Church Asylum‹ in Germany where churches can safely host asylum seekers without fear of violent interventions and raids by state authorities. Mosques do not benefit from the same treatment by the state and therefore lack the power to actively host asylum seekers. The situation is similar in the UK.

The Roman Catholic Church in Cologne has space to host a limited number of asylum seekers who would otherwise be deported from Germany under the Dublin III regulations

to other EU countries where conditions for asylum seekers are significantly worse. For instance, despite internal conditions being poor (rows of beds in one room, harsh lighting illuminated 24 hours a day), it was reported that German refugee camps do not detain asylum seekers (until a negative decision is taken on their claim) and allow them to leave the premises. The church hosts asylum seekers who have been poorly treated in detention camps in other countries so that they can remain in Germany. At the time of writing, there were eight people in church asylum in the parish church we visited, coming mainly from Burundi, Iraq and Afghanistan. The local area also receives many refugees of Balkan origin: from Macedonia, Serbia, Albania and especially members of the Sinti-Roma community. The Christian community in North Rhine Westphalia has increasingly started to take up and offer church asylum, a practice the church representatives we met were keen to encourage.

7.4 MOSAIK KÖLN MÜLHEIM

In 2015 many groups welcoming refugees were founded across Cologne. These groups merged together to form a policy working group that sits opposite local government and seeks to make it accountable for housing, allocating education and public services, and welcoming refugees appropriately.

Mosaik Köln Mülheim is one such organisation. It offers free language courses, social opportunities, and asylum application support to refugees. It helps prepare people for church asylum and makes petitions on behalf of people in church asylum, giving them an address from which to base their claim.

7.5 CO-OPERATION WITH MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

It appears that Muslim mosques and associations are still relatively isolated from broader civil society in Cologne. This is partly due to the state discrimination mosques face, preventing them from accessing public funds and thereby co-operating with other faith organisations on publicly funded projects, but more could be done to encourage multi-faith working. Coexistere, a youth group where young people from different faiths across towns meet together, is one such initiative in Cologne.

From the Church and government perspective the question ›which Muslim community representative should we cooperate with?‹ is often raised. But Muslim communities are diverse. Governments and organisations should not simply pick one to cooperate with; they should speak to and work with all Muslim communities. Just like the Christian community has many different groups and identities, so too does the Muslim community.

8

CONCLUSION

The UK-Cologne anti-Islamophobia delegation was a preliminary fact-finding mission. It was a point of first contact for civil society, politicians and activists to network and learn about each other's contexts. This report comprehensively details the wide range of issues that were discussed on the delegation and raises many serious problems of Islamophobia and racism within both German and British contexts. But it also demonstrates that there are many people, organisations and campaign groups working to create change. With the right willpower, the solutions are out there.

There are huge amounts of untapped resources, organisations and individuals who could be brought together internationally to increase the efficacy of the struggle against Islamophobia and to promote genuine Muslim empowerment and more equal, accepting, and safer societies. This delegation was a one-off, but building a more permanent space for interested actors to meet and exchange internationally has the potential to create significant, long-lasting change.

This report discussed the need for Muslim-led intersectional self-organising, safe spaces, positive discrimination, funding for community-led and independent reporting of hate crime, funding for community-led wellbeing groups, and more multi-faith support. Crucially, there needs to be a focus on dismantling structures of white supremacy; the onus must be on educating the whole of society to understand Europe's colonial past and present and to develop a more welcoming and diverse understanding of identity within Europe.

This is a long-term endeavour and the work must not stop here. Building on this report and the existing work of the many other organisations fighting racism and Islamophobia, our next steps are to organise for and initiate the changes Europe so sorely needs.

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UNITING EUROPE AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA

UK-Germany Delegation Report

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Almost one in three Muslims in Germany state that they have been physically assaulted several times in the past year, with 50 percent having been physically assaulted at least once. 50 per cent of Muslims report insults and harassment. Almost one in three Muslims report having experienced non-verbal harassment, such as staring or other derogatory gestures, several times or regularly in the past twelve months. In the UK in the year ending March 2023, where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, 39 per cent of religious hate crime offences in the UK were targeted against Muslims (3,452 offences).

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More funding needs to go to Muslim-led civil society initiatives to undertake reporting, monitoring, support and empowerment services to address hate crime. All members of the community need to be educated and trained so that individuals can develop a sense of community identity that includes Muslims, Islam and racialised communities. More needs to be done to ensure Muslims and racialised groups are fairly represented in local government in the UK and Germany. This includes positive discrimination in council cabinets. Community funding should be channelled and made accessible to Muslim-led community organisations.

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There are huge amounts of untapped resources, organisations and individuals who could be brought together internationally to increase the efficacy of the struggle against Islamophobia and to promote genuine Muslim empowerment and more equal, accepting, and safer societies. Therefore, the members of the delegation visit to Cologne call for the establishment of an international working group of progressive Muslim MPs, civil society representatives, researchers, and activists to share best practice and create a permanent space of support.

Further information on the topic can be found here:
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