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# EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2018

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)



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ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**UKRAINE AND  
OCCUPIED  
CRIMEA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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## Executive Summary

The situation of the Muslim community in Ukraine is largely determined by the military-political conflict that began in 2014. The fact that the Crimea and part of the Donbass remain beyond the control of the Ukrainian authorities have deprived both state institutions and civil society from the possibility of observing the rights and freedoms of the citizens of these regions.

Despite the growing role played by the right and ultra-right forces in Ukrainian political life, a significant level of empathy for the Crimean Tatars and the problems of the occupied Crimea as a whole results in a tolerant attitude towards Muslims, and local incidents (searches of the Islamic cultural center, local confrontations) as a whole do not affect the status of the Muslim community in the country. In contrast, however, with the areas under the control of the Ukrainian authorities, the observance of the rights and freedoms of Muslims has considerably deteriorated in parts of the Donbass (the self-proclaimed “DPR”), where the SAUM “Ummah” community ceased to exist and is accused of “extremism”. In Crimea, continued repressions of the representatives of political Muslim movements and Crimean Tatar human rights activists have been observed.

In this situation, the “continental” part of Ukraine should be praised for the promotion of dialogue between the local authorities and Muslims, while respect for the rights of the Muslims in the occupied territories can only be ensured through the international pressure on the Russian Federation and the self-proclaimed “republics”.

## Резюме

Ситуацію навколо мусульманської громади в Україні значною мірою визначає військово-політичний конфлікт, що розпочався у 2014 році. Перебування Криму й частини Донбасу поза межами контролю української влади позбавило як державні інституції, так і громадянське суспільство можливості дотримання прав і свобод громадян у цих регіонах.

Незважаючи на все більшу роль, яку в українському політичному житті відіграють праві й ультраправі сили, значний рівень емпатії до кримських татар і проблем окупованого Криму в цілому забезпечує толерантне ставлення до мусульман, а окремі епізоди (обшук в Ісламському культурному центрі, локальні протиріччя) в цілому не впливають на статус мусульманської громади в країні. На відміну, втім, від теренів, підконтрольних українській владі, ситуація з дотриманням прав і свобод мусульман значно погіршилася на частині Донбасу (самопроголошена «ДНР»), де припинила існування громада ДУМУ «Умма», звинувачена в «екстремізмі». У Криму продовжилися репресії проти представників альтернативних мусульманських рухів (передусім, «Хізб ат-Тахрір аль-Іслямі») і кримськотатарських правозахисників.

У вказаній ситуації, на «материковій» частині України залишається важливим діалог місцевої влади із мусульманами, в той час як дотримання прав мусульман на окупованих територіях може бути забезпечене лише міжнародним тиском на Російську Федерацію.

## Country Profile

**Country:** Ukraine and Occupied Crimea

**Type of Regime:** Democratic Republic

**Form of Government:** Parliamentary-Presidential

**Ruling Parties:** *Blok Petra Poroshenka “Solidarnist”* (Liberal Conservatism, Centre-Right, Pro-Europeanism)

**Opposition Parties:** Opposition Bloc.

**Last Elections:** 2019 Presidential Election (Volodymyr Zelens’kyi won the elections with 73.22% of the votes, enough to win in a single round; his closest competitor was Petro Poroshenko, who emerged with 24.45% of the votes); 2014 Parliamentary Election (Centre-Right: Petro Poroshenko Bloc, 132 seats [21.8%]; Yulia Tymoshenko’s “Fatherland”, 22 seats [25.5%]; Right Wing: Radical Party, 19 seats [7.44%]; “People’s Front”, 82 seats [22.4%]; “Self-Reliance”, 33 seats [10.97%]; Centrist: Opposition Bloc, 29 seats [9.43%]).

**Total Population:** 44.83 million (in 2017)

**Major Languages:** Ukrainian

**Official Religion:** No state religion

**Statistics on Islamophobia:** No statistical reports are available.

**Statistics on Racism and Discrimination:** According to the report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on Ukraine (2017), data on hate crime, which does not distinguish between hate speech and hate-motivated violence, is collected by the Prosecutor General’s Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Department on Sentence Execution, and the State Statistics Committee. The ECRI notes that until very recently such data was not broken down according to the specific hate motive. In 2016, for the first time, the national police published hate crime data recorded by the police in the year 2015. This showed that, out of a total of 157 incidents, 31 were motivated by racism and xenophobia; three by bias against Roma and Sinti; 18 by anti-Semitism; 94 by bias against Christians and members of other religions; nine by bias against LGBT people; and two by bias against people with disabilities. The majority involved incitement to hatred accompanied by violence (45 in total), damage to property (32), and physical assault (30).

**Major Religions (% of Population):** A 2018 survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre found that 71.7% of the population declared themselves believers (67.3% Orthodox Christianity, 7.7% ‘Christian’ with no declared denominational affiliation, 9.4% Ukrainian Byzantine Rite Catholics, 2.2% Protestants, and 0.8% Latin Rite Catholics, 0.4% Judaism).

**Muslim Population (% of Population):** 0.5 million (1.1%) in 2018

**Main Muslim Community Organizations:** Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine, Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine “Ummah”,



Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Crimea, Spiritual Administration of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Association Alraid, Association of the Muslims of Ukraine.

**Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia:** All-Ukrainian Association Alraid

**Far-Right Parties:** Svoboda, Ukrainian National Union, Social-National Party of Ukraine

**Far-Right Movements:** Right Sector, Azov

**Far-Right Terrorist Organisations:** N/A

**Limitations to Islamic Practices**

- **Hijab Ban:** Generally, it does not exist, but according to the internal regulations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine women have to remove their hijab for their passport pictures. However, following the efforts of the Muslim organisations, permission to keep the hijab on for passport photographs is expected to be released in the next year.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

## Introduction

For Ukraine, Islam has been a part of religious life for many centuries starting from the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. In Crimea, after the final Islamisation of the Golden Horde (AD 1313/1314), Islam became politically and culturally predominant; as a result, the establishment of the Crimean Khanate in AD 1441 led to the incorporation of almost all present-day Southern Ukraine into the Muslim world. The Ottoman invasion (at the peak of its territorial development even part of Western Ukraine was Ottoman) not only succeeded in the Islamisation of the population but also in the development of religious networks, the establishment of institutions of worship (mosques), education (*medreses*), courts, etc. The Crimean Khanate (as well as the part of Ukraine directly belonging to the Ottoman Empire) was a powerful Islamic hub of the Post-Classical Islamic world, producing many pieces of valuable intellectual heritage. However, after the annexation of Crimea and Southern Ukraine to Russia (between 1783 and 1812), Islamic life in this area became integrated with the Russian Islamic environment (above all, Kazan). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Crimea also experienced religious revival, outlined in the works of Ismail Gaspirali (Gasprinskiy) (1851-1914). This led to the mobilisation of both Muslim and nationalist movements among Crimean Tatars; first, during the Crimean Tatar revolution in 1917-1918 when such figures as Noman Çelebicihan (1885-1918) rose to the religious leadership. The communist era, despite some level of religious freedom in the 1920s (up to 1928/1929, when Soviet liberalization finally ended), was the biggest catastrophe for Crimean Tatars: in the 1930s, many of the Crimean Tatar leading figures were repressed and finally, in May 1944, almost all of the Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asia. Despite the fact that some Crimean Tatars illegally returned to their homelands by the 1960s and 1970s, mass repatriation became possible only after 1989. Thus, after the Second World War, the only representatives of the Muslim tradition (being illegal or semi-legal, since any religious communities were registered in Soviet Ukraine) were Polish-Lithuanian Tatars living in present-day Vinnytska, Rivnenska, and Khmel'nycka oblast as well as Volga Tatars with their communities in the Donbass (Donetsk and other cities), Odessa, and Kyiv.

The year of independence (1991) became a starting point for Islamic religious revival in Ukraine. New religious institutions were established (Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims, Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian Muslims, Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian "Muslims" Ummah, Association of Ukrainian Muslims, etc.) as well as various Islamic NGOs (first of all, Alraid). The All-Ukrainian National Census of 2001 detected up to 400,000 people belonging to the nationalities following Islam (Crimean Tatars, Volga Tatars, Azerbaijanis, etc.). However, the Russian occupation of Crimea (since 2014) and the military conflict in the Donbass has affected the Islamic population in an extremely severe manner. Dozens of Crime-

an Tatars (20,000-30,000) left Crimea for the “continental part” of Ukraine, the activities of many Islamic organizations have ceased in the Donbass area, some of the religious administrations were closed, and a new one opened (Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea with the center in Kyiv opposing the Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims as the “pro-Russian” institution in Crimea). In 2018, as the official statistics indicate, there are 254 registered Islamic communities (including 9 Shia) in the “continental part” of Ukraine; in Crimea, there are around 930 communities.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, it can be stated that these three areas of present-day Ukraine should be addressed separately due to the different situation in relation to the political authority: the first one is the “continental” (state-controlled part of Ukraine), the second is the part of Donet’sk and Luhans’k region (self-proclaimed “DNR” and “LNR”), and the third is the occupied Crimea (where the Russian laws on religion are in effect).

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

In Crimea, on 19 June, the mosque in Bilohir’sk/Karasubazar was vandalised by unknown persons; black paint was used to graffiti the wall and Nazi symbols (a swastika, “SS”, “14/18”) were drawn.<sup>2</sup> No further incidents were reported. This was one of the many anti-Muslim episodes reported since 2000; usually no one takes responsibility for them.

Some Muslims, mostly from the Caucasus, were attacked by nationalist groups in Kyiv on 26 May. A brawl broke out in the market close to Lisovaya metro station (where an old man was beaten by some merchants); part of the market has been destroyed by pro-nationalistic forces (“C14” and other groups) insulting black people (*churki*, the offensive word used mostly for Middle Eastern and Caucasian nationalities).<sup>3</sup>

A physical attack also occurred in Vinnytsia city: spouses of Ukrainian women from the UAE and one of the men’s son were severely beaten in the centre of the city by two locals.<sup>4</sup> Some tensions were also reported from Uzhgorod city (Zakarpattia

1. Mykhaylo Yakubovych, “Ukraine”, in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, ed. Oliver Scharbrodt, Volume 9, (BRILL, Leiden-Boston: 2018), p. 690-702.

2. “U Krymu nevidomi namalyuvaly na ohorozhi mecheti svastyku”, Ukrinform, 19 June 2018, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-crimea/2483525-u-krymu-nevidomi-namaluvali-na-ogorzi-meceti-svastiku.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

3. “Pohrom hryanul: nacyonalysty nachaly hromyt’ ‘inorodcev’ na rynkax v Kyeve”, Narodnyj Korrespondent”, nk.org.ua, 28 May 2018, <http://nk.org.ua/ukraina/pogrom-gryanul-natsionalisty-nachali-gromit-inorodtsev-na-ryinkah-v-kieve-147116>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

4 “U centri Vinnyci poblyly sim’yu z Emirativ. Postrazhdali – tato i joho nepovnolitnij syn”, 33 kanal, <http://33kanal.com/u-centri-vinnyci-pobili-sim-yu-z-emirativ-postrazhdali-tato-jogo-nepovnolitnij-sin.html> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

region) and other places where the international students were accused of “inappropriate behaviour” and reported being assaulted by locals, primarily members of right-wing movements.

In August, an Ukrainian Muslim woman and her husband from Somalia were prohibited from entering a restaurant in Sumy; they were asked to show their IDs (“to confirm Ukrainian citizenship”). Revealing the story to the media, the woman denoted this refusal as racism.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 1: Mosque in Bilohir'sk/Karasubazar vandalised by unknown persons; Nazi-related inscriptions were painted on the wall<sup>6</sup>.



Figure 2: The Islamic Cultural Centre of Kyiv was raided by the Ukrainian Security Service and Police<sup>7</sup>

5. Tatyana NECHET, “V Sumax restoran, kuda ne pustylы nostrancev, zapodozryly v rasyzme”, Korrespondent, 29 August 2018, <https://kp.ua/incidents/616498-v-sumakh-restoran-kuda-ne-pustylы-nostrantsev-zapodozryly-v-rasyzme>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

6. “Вандалы изрисовали свастики мечеть в Белогорске”, Argumenty Nedeli Crimea, 20 June 2018, <https://an-crimea.ru/page/news/169346>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. “The permitted and the forbidden: Ukraine’s security services turn their eyes to ‘banned’ Islamic literature”, Open Democracy, 26 April 2018, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukrainian-muslims-forbidden-literature/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

## Employment

In general, no court appeal on the issue of Islamophobia in the field of employment is known. Some Muslim converts in Western Ukraine, however, reported having problems and being targeted at their workplaces. In Crimea, some of the Crimean Tatars feel discriminated in the “state service” (meaning the institutions established after the Russian occupation of the peninsula), with career priorities given to the Slavic nationalities regardless of their competence. A businessman from Kyiv, Said Magomedov, also claimed that in 2014–2015 his building company was closed due to his religion (he is Muslim); in 2018, he appealed to the court asking for criminal proceedings to commence. He also plans to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>8</sup>

## Education

Since religion is not usually taught in Ukrainian schools (only a non-compulsory Christian ethics course in some of the schools mostly promoting interreligious tolerance), there are no explicit anti-Muslim statements in the current school curricula. What could be a subject of discussion, however, is the focus of Ukrainian history on Christianity (usually Orthodoxy) while the history of the Crimean Tatars as well as other “Muslim nationalities” is mostly represented in a military light. Only limited data covering issues related to religion, culture, and other civilisational achievements of the Islamic parts of Ukrainian history is mentioned.<sup>9</sup> In recently published textbooks (2018) even less space is dedicated to the Crimean Tatars and almost nothing is mentioned about the Muslim cultural contribution to Ukrainian history.<sup>10</sup>

## Politics

In Ukrainian political discourse, Islam is mostly addressed in one (positive) context: the issue of the Crimean Tatars (claiming solidarity with those persecuted in Crimea). There are still no direct anti-Muslim statements in the political discourse.

## Media

Most of the anti-Muslim statements (accusing Ukrainian Muslims of “extremist activities”) in the media were related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. First of all, Russian and pro-Russian sources posted some “analyses” on “Islamism in Ukraine” (for example, the article “Black Bottom of ‘White Islam’: Why Is Ukraine Loved by the Ideologists of the ‘Islamofascism’”, authored by Vladislav Maltsev).<sup>11</sup> Some of

8. Interview with S. Magomedov.

9. See, entry on Crimean Khanate in: Vlasov V., *History of Ukraine (for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade)* (GENEZA, Kyiv: 2016), p. 75–81.

10. See: Gisem O., Marnynuk O., *History of Ukraine (for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade)*, (Ranok, Kharkiv: 2018), p. 63–67..

11. Vladislav Maltsev, “Chernoe dno ‘beloho yslama’: Pochemu Ukrainy oblyubovaly ydeolohy ‘islamofashyzma’”, *Ukraina.Ru*, <https://ukraina.ru/exclusive/20180502/1020291157.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

the pro-Russian websites also “warned” Ukrainians against “activities in Odessa”, describing the traditional Husayniyah march of Shia Muslims, celebrated on Ashura day.<sup>12</sup> Few of the Russian media also accused Ukrainian authorities of cooperating with Islamists – a supposed kind of union between Ukrainian right-wing movements and Islamic militants.<sup>13</sup> The same could be said about the news agency RIA Novosti (the article “Ukrainian Nationalists Embrace Islam”<sup>14</sup>). These web sources are popular in Crimea and occupied part of the Donbass, and are often reproduced by certain Ukrainian sources.

Central Ukrainian media (news agencies, TV, etc.) provided mostly a positive image of Islam, and for this year, no controversial statements about Islam on Ukrainian TV were reported. On the local level, however, some explicit anti-Muslim rhetoric appeared in Zakarpattia oblast. The local news portal “All the Truth from Zakarpattia” published at least three articles against the local Arab diaspora, accusing them of creating a “foreign spirituality” and “attacking Ukrainian culture” because of their plans to build a mosque (regardless of whether these plans are real or not), etc. These articles were “Activists Will Not Be Allowed to Make Our City into a Muslim Ghetto”,<sup>15</sup> “Arab Criminals Destabilize Situation in the City”, and “Nationalists Raised against Arabs Who Feel Themselves to Be the Owners in Ukrainian Uzhgorod”.<sup>16</sup> As our sources from this city reported, the real reason behind the conflict was the local tension between a group of Arab and Ukrainian businessmen with the further mobilisation of nationalist and anti-Muslim sentiments.

## Justice System

No changes in the law concerning religion or any Muslim-related issues were reported this year. Moreover, there were some positive issues such as the promise of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to make changes in internal regulation for the allowance of passport photos with hijabs.<sup>17</sup>

The most controversial event happened on 6 March when the State Security Service (SBU), the police, and the prosecutor with his witnesses, a total of about 20 peo-

12. “Odesskyj xalyfat’: Ukrayncev napuhaly musul” mane, proshedshye pod chëtymy flahamy po horodu”, *Russkaya vesna*, <http://rusvesna.su/news/15375417206>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

13. Alina Nazarova, “Zaderzhannyj FSB boevyk rasskazal o verbovke SBU yslamystov dlya teraktov”, *Vzglyad*, 10 September 2018, <https://vz.ru/news/2018/9/10/941139.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

14. “Ukrainskie nacionalisty prinyimajut islam”, *RIA Novosti*, 24 September 2018, <https://ria.ru/20180924/1529113282.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

15. “Uzhhorodci zavayvly pro svoju radykal’nu pozyciyu: Aktyvisty ne dadut’ peretvority nashe misto na musul’mans’ke hetto”, *Vsya zakarpats’ka Pravda*, <http://vsappravda.info/?p=98813> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

16. “Mizhnacional’ni rozbirky v Uzhhorodi: Nacionalisty povstaly proty arabiv, yaki pochuvayut’sya hospodaryamy v ukrayins’komu Uzhhorodi”, *Vsya Zakarpats’ka Pravda*, 30 October 2018, <http://vsappravda.info/?p=98359>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

17. “ID Photos in Religion-Based Headwear: The Problem Is to Be Solved in 4 Months”, *Islam.In.Ua*, <http://islam.in.ua/en/ukrainian-news/id-photos-religion-based-headwear-problem-be-solved-4-months>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

ple, arrived with a search warrant at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Kyiv, the headquarters of the Association Alraid and SAUM “Ummah”. Security officers together with witnesses divided into several groups. While one group entered the library and the Islamic school, another group with a crowbar broke the door of the bookstore and conducted a search there without representatives of the Islamic Cultural Centre. At the same time, a search took place in the apartment of the person responsible for the library of Sheikh Tariq Sarhan.<sup>18</sup> As a result, few books were taken “for the experts to assess their content in terms of incitement to violence”; a spokesperson for the Kyiv prosecutor’s office rejected any criticism, asserting that the measures were in accordance with the law. Three books were taken “for expertise” proceedings: one is the Russian translation of *Lawful and Unlawful in Islam* by Yusuf al-Qaradawi (published by the Association Alraid which operates the Islamic Cultural Centre), and the other two are the Russian translation of *Alteration of God’s Oneness* by Abd al-Aziz al-Rayyis and *Avoidance of Doubts* by Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhab. Mufti Said Ismagilov openly stated that the last two books were never used by the Muslims at the centres and the only way they could have appeared there was if they were secretly brought by the officers carrying out the search.<sup>19</sup> A press conference was organised with the participation of some Ukrainian MPs, the head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People Refat Chubarov, and Mustafa Nayyem and Oksana Korchyńska. To this day, however, no legal consequences have occurred or court decisions have been made. Ismagilov also reported a case when police cars with external cameras watched Muslims coming to the Friday prayer.<sup>20</sup>

Another noteworthy event was the extradition of certain individuals to the Russian Federation. The most discussed case is that of the Russian citizen Timur Tumgoev, extradited to Russia on 12 September. This led to protests, while the prosecutor’s office claimed that Tumgoev is reported to be engaged in terrorist activity. Apart from this case, no further extradition to Russia was reported (at least openly),<sup>21</sup> despite the fact that there are some new cases of citizens of Central Asian countries who face the same problem.<sup>22</sup>

18. Uriy, “In the Islamic Cultural Center in Kiev Raided”, 24-my info, 3 June 2018, <https://24-my.info/in-the-islamic-cultural-center-in-kiev-raided/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

19. “Muftij Ismahilov nazvav obshuk SBU v Islams’komu kul’turnomu centri v Kyjevi peresliduvannyam musulman”, Ukrayinski Novyny, 6 March 2018, <https://ukranews.com/ua/news/551330-muftiy-ismagilov-nazvav-obshuk-sbu-v-islamskomu-kulturnomu-centri-v-kyjevi-peresliduvannyam-musulman>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

20. “Yak zhyvut musulmany Kyjeva: propovidi pro lyubov do Bat’kivshhyny ta osoblyvosti Ramadanu v Ukrayini”, TSN, 1 June 2018, <https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/same-tak-mi-propoviduyemo-lyubiti-ukrayinu-ta-vivchati-movu-1164345.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

21. Yu Butusov, “Zakonnaya vydacha cenov v zhyzn’. Ukrayna vydala sbezhavsheho yz RF cheloveka, kotoroho terroristy obvynayut v terrorizme”, Cenzor.YuA, 14 September 2018, [https://censor.net.ua/resonance/3086213/zakonnaya\\_vydacha\\_tsenoyi\\_v\\_jizn\\_ukraina\\_vydala\\_sbejavshego\\_iz\\_rf\\_cheloveka\\_kotorogo\\_terroristy\\_obvynayut](https://censor.net.ua/resonance/3086213/zakonnaya_vydacha_tsenoyi_v_jizn_ukraina_vydala_sbejavshego_iz_rf_cheloveka_kotorogo_terroristy_obvynayut), (Access date: 1 September 2019).

22. Interview with A. Derkach.

In the Donbass (at least in the self-proclaimed “DNR”, the part of Donetsk region), some of the Muslim communities were raided by local “security services”. The community of SAUM “Ummah” (Al-Amal Mosque) was closed after being accused of extremism and of belonging to certain terrorist groups.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the only mosque now operating in the Donetsk is the Cathedral Mosque, while all other Muslim places were closed in 2017-2018. The same situation is observed in Crimea, where new accusations were raised against certain individuals who supposedly belong to the group Hizb al-Tahrir. Few searches in Crimean Tatar houses were also committed by Russian “authorities” in the peninsula in 2018.<sup>24</sup> By the end of 2018, at least 29 Muslims from Crimea were kept in prisons accused by the Crimean authorities of “belonging to an extremist organization”, etc.<sup>25</sup>

### Internet

In contrast to other European countries, there are no initiatives such as organised anti-Muslim groups in social media. The only point worth mentioning here is the activities of certain users sharing anti-Muslim content. An example is the case of the Reka family from Ukraine who were guests on the Polish-speaking television and who spoke against Islam because of the conversion of their 14-year-old daughter.<sup>26</sup> Members of Reka family were also active on Facebook, sharing anti-Muslim statements (“the one who associates himself with *busurmans* (an old Ukrainian word denoting Muslims) is against Ukraine”, etc.) and caused some discussion among Ukrainians in Ukraine and Poland.<sup>27</sup> Other statements, usually posted by individuals, had small impact on any political processes or society in general.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

No systematic anti-Muslim initiatives are known, at least on the state-controlled territories, for parts of the Donbass and Crimea. However, the Russians (or pro-Russian “authorities”) impose their politics of supporting the “official Islam” (pro-governmental administration) and prohibiting any “parallel Islam” from any actions (various Muslim NGOs, movements, etc.).

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23. “Hruppyrovka ‘DNR’ otchytalas’, chto nashla ‘Brat’ev-musul’man’ v Donecke”, Radyo Svoboda, 29 June 2018, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/donbass--realii/29328030.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

24. “Majzhe 95% obshukiv v okupovanomu RF Krymu pryypadayut’ na kryms’kyy tatar, - Dzhemilyev”, Cenzor.YuA, 10 July 2018, [https://censor.net.ua/ua/news/3075766/mayije\\_95\\_obshukiv\\_v\\_okupovanomu\\_rf\\_krymu\\_pryypadayut\\_na\\_krymskyh\\_tatar\\_djemilyev](https://censor.net.ua/ua/news/3075766/mayije_95_obshukiv_v_okupovanomu_rf_krymu_pryypadayut_na_krymskyh_tatar_djemilyev), (Access date: 1 September 2019).

25. Interview with Fazil Amzaev.

26. Piotr Ślusarczyk, “Muzułmanie wywierają presję psychologiczną”, Fronda.pl, <http://www.fronda.pl/a/muzulmanie-wywieraja-presje-psychologiczna,117637.html?fbclid=IwAR2fhJbY-JcF7lbIE2fjqzSjHxLRpvdVXq6u3wG-dU6VGaSMJfjTXepAxB8>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

27. Ciekawa Warszawa, “Shho ne tak, abo kroky islamizmu v informacijnij sferi”, Facebook, 13 September 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/ciekawa-warszawa>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



## Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The State Department of Religion and Nationalities (Ministry of Culture of Ukraine) organised few field sessions of the expert council (in Zaporizzhya, Odessa, and Rivne areas), inviting also local religious leaders including Muslim ones.<sup>28</sup> Some of the Muslim NGOs like the Association Arraid were active in organising joint events for Muslims and non-Muslims to represent Eastern cultures in Ukraine.<sup>29</sup> The association is also active in promoting historical studies on the relationship between Muslim and Ukrainian cultures. Their publishing house has, among others, published *Tatars in Wolyn: History, Culture and Contacts*<sup>30</sup> and *Ukrainian Enlighteners and Islam*.<sup>31</sup> A remarkable initiative was promoted by a team of leading Crimean Tatar activists and researchers and supported by the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, namely “Crimea and South of Ukraine: Space of Culture” to combat popular historical myths and stereotypes about the “Muslim” part of Ukrainian history.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The problem of Islamophobia in Ukraine is mostly related to the parts of the country which are currently beyond governmental control. This is, above all, related to the imposition of the Russian politics towards Islam and Muslims and, secondly, to the fact that these are the areas where most of the Muslims live. As for the rest of Ukraine, certain confrontations were observed, mostly related to aggression towards Muslim immigrants. The issue of putting pressure on the Islamic institutions (most importantly, the search of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Kyiv) poses some questions to be answered by the authorities. In terms of safety and the promotion of dialogue, the activities of the state and of NGOs in Western Ukraine should be carried out both in the area of culture and of local social interaction.

28. “Derzhavna polityka u sferi relihij”, Ministerstvo kul'tury Ukrainy, [http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/officialcategory?cat\\_id=244949506](http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/officialcategory?cat_id=244949506), (Access date: 1 September 2019).

29. “Palestynskaya olyva y ukraynskoe zhyto — yz odnoj zemly”, Islam.In.Ua, 28 August 2018, <http://islam.in.ua/ru/east-fest-2018>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

30. Yakubovych M., Kraliuk P., Schepanskyi V., *Tatars in Wolyn: History, Culture and Contacts* [in Ukrainian], (Ukrainian Center for Islamic Studies, Kyiv: 2018), (Access date: 2 September 2019).

31. Vivchar S., *Ukrainian Enlighteners and Islam* [in Ukrainian], (Ukrainian Center for Islamic Studies, Kyiv: 2018).

32. “V Ukrayini zapuskayut' proekt, aby rozvinchaty mify pro pivden' Ukrayini”, Ukrinform, 23 October 2018, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-crimea/2564339-mip-zapuskae-proekt-abi-rozvincati-istoricni-mifi-pro-pivden.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

## Chronology

- **06.03.2018:** Islamic Cultural Centre of Kyiv is raided by the Ukrainian Security Service and police.
- **26.05.2018:** Attack on Caucasian merchants in Kyiv (market close to Lisovaya metro station).
- **19.06.2018:** Mosque in Bilohir'sk/Karasubazar was vandalised by unknown persons; Nazi-related inscriptions left on the wall.
- **27.06.2018:** Al-Amal Mosque closed in Donetsk after the raid by “DNR authorities”.
- **01.07.2018:** Two Muslim men from UAE attacked in Winnytsa.
- **04.12.2018:** Attorney Emil Kurbedinov arrested in Crimea, accused of “spreading extremist materials”.