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TO: Office of the United Nations High  
Commissioner for Human Rights,  
United Nations Office at Geneva,  
CH 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

**SUBJECT: Input for HRC46 Report**

We hereby present the input for HRC46 Report on Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination. The following summary was collected and formulated by the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia. Included are the most notable incidents within last couple of years with the focus on general patterns related to islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes and hate speech in the Slovak Republic.

**Recognition by the state**

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

The lack of registration is caused especially by – in comparison with other EU member states – unusually strict law stating the requirements religious community has to meet before applying for recognition by the state. There used to be theoretical chance to achieve the registration until 2007, when the government passed novelization of the law that deals with the requirements for state registration of the religious communities. Before this novelization it was sufficient to provide signatures of 20 thousand sympathizers, who agreed that the religious community shall be recognized by the state. However the novelization changed these conditions and decided that the state would require 20 thousand signatures of the members of the religion, who are citizens of Slovakia, have permanent residence in Slovakia and are more than 18 years old. These requirements were far from the reality of Muslim community in Slovakia, which has up to 5 thousand members including children and students, refugees and seasonal workers, who don't have the citizenship not permanent residence. While the government officially did not mention any Muslim-related reason for the change, several political actors uttered remarks suggesting that the issue of possible registration of Islam was indeed present when the novelization was created and approved by the national assembly.

As if the law wasn't strict already, in November 2016 an amendment passed in the National Assembly lifting the quota from 20.000 to 50.000 signature. Head of SNS Andrej Danko announced in 2015 that should his party be part of the government, he will propose this change. His argument was that the number of Muslims is growing and even mentioned that there could be as much as 20.000 of them (we are not aware of any estimate even coming close to this number and Danko didn't quote any source of this information). The law according to him should help to prevent „islamization“ of Slovakia. His party did well in election in 2016 and formed government with two other parties. Danko did actually propose the amendment together with few other MPs and the law was passed by vote.<sup>1</sup> The president of Slovak republic Andrej Kiska rejected to sign the amendment, what forced National Assembly to vote on it once again. The definitive vote happened in early 2017 and the amendment was approved once again.

The current registration law is repeatedly mentioned in the International Religious Freedom Report conducted annually by U. S. Department of State.<sup>2</sup> The report criticizes the law as discriminatory towards small religions citing examples such as inability to perform religious marriages with official recognition or religious funerals. “A group without the 50,000 adult adherents required to obtain status as an official religious group may seek registration as a civic association, which provides the legal status necessary to carry out activities such as operating a bank account or entering into a contract,” states in Slovak Republic 2017 International Religious Freedom Report by U. S. Department of State.<sup>3</sup> “In doing so, however, the group may not call itself a church or identify itself officially as a religious group, since the law governing registration of citizen associations specifically excludes religious groups from obtaining this status,” the report continues.

Another issue is missing official mosque or Islamic center and refusal of the local governing organs to grant permission to build one.

### **Hate speech by politicians**

As for direct hate-speech against Muslims, it had its peak during the so called “refugee crisis” in Europe since the second half of 2015. By far most numerous were cases of anti-Muslim hate speech by majority of Slovak politicians. Statements such as “Islam has no place in Slovakia”<sup>4</sup> or „we will not allowe formation of unified Muslim community“ were coming directly from the prime minister at that time Róbert Fico (Smer-SD). His anti-Muslim statements however did not stop even after the spotlight on refugee crisis mostly vanished. In

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times: A Blow-Slovak Muslims Critical of New Church Law [http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/12/02/world/europe/ap-eu-rel-slovakia-islam.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/12/02/world/europe/ap-eu-rel-slovakia-islam.html?_r=0) (accessed on 15/12/2016). Independent: Slovakia bars Islam from becoming state religion by tightening church laws <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/slovakia-bars-islam-state-religion-tightening-church-laws-robert-fico-a7449646.html> (accessed on 15/12/2016). Reuters: Slovakia toughens church registration rules to bar Islam <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-slovakia-religion-islam-idUSKBN13P20C> (accessed on 15/12/2016)

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of State: International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 – Slovak Republic <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222479.pdf> (accessed on 30/3/2015)

<sup>3</sup> United States Department of State: International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 – Slovak Republic <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281202.pdf> (accessed on 25/11/2018)

<sup>4</sup> Politico.eu: Robert Fico: ‘Islam has no place in Slovakia’ <http://www.politico.eu/article/robert-fico-islam-no-place-news-slovakia-muslim-refugee/> (accessed on 22/9/2016)

20th of January 2018 in a national radio session Mr. Fico said tourists like to come to Slovakia, because „there are no explosions, there they won't be bothered by Muslims in streets.”<sup>5</sup> The statement resulted in a wave of criticism from some of the politicians and civil society. Support to the prime minister expressed his Minister of Interior Róbert Kaliňák, who said: “Perhaps we have done a mistake in 2015 when we didn't open our border with Hungary for migrants to open a camp on Hviezdoslavovo námestie (historical square in the capital's city center), so that we would understand what migration crisis is.”<sup>6</sup> Mr. Fico continued with his anti-Muslim statements even during electoral campaign in 2020, however with little success. It is reported that he claimed for example: “We do not want Muslim communities in Slovakia”, “Andrej Kiska wants to feed Muslims in Slovakia” or “We do not want Muslim communities in Slovakia”.<sup>7</sup>

Another political figure with a long history of anti-Muslim hate speech is the head of National Assembly Andrej Danko. For example in 2011, Danko as a vice president of SNS (Slovak National Party) at that time proposed to ban minarets in Slovakia despite the fact that there are no mosques, nor minarets in the country. Later after becoming SNS's new leader in 2014, in a television debate Danko warned Europe against the threat of islamization and “muslimization” and repeated his statement that “mosques have no place in Bratislava (Slovak capital)”<sup>8</sup>. In the following years, Danko among other things announced his intention to rise the minimal number of signatures of believers required for the recognition of their faith by state from 20 thousand to 50 thousand signatories in order to prevent Muslims from obtaining the registration. The goal that he fulfilled a couple of months after the general election in 2016 when his party became part of the government and he himself took the post of the head of National Assembly.

On 7th of June 2018 Andrej Danko spoke in the National Assembly of Serbia. Among other things, he highlighted the medieval period of Ottoman presence in Europe and painted it as a fight between Christianity and Islam. He noted that he considers both Serbs and Slovak to be proud nations who were able to resist to the “long muslim occupation, when Turks invaded Europe” and reminded that Serbs were “the first ones who protected “our religion, values and culture.”<sup>9</sup>

In the election to National Assembly in 2016 the far-right party ĽSNS won 14 seats. Their MPs are often extremely outspoken in any topic related to Muslims, Islam and migration. Since 2016 their MPs claimed in the assembly for example, that “Islam has no place in Slovakia” (Natália Grausová, ĽSNS), “Islam is more than just a religion, it is cruel, disgusting

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<sup>5</sup> RTVS <https://www.rtvs.sk/radio/archiv/1134/877348> (accessed on 25/11/2018)

<sup>6</sup> Hospodárske noviny <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/1680953-kalinak-urobil-som-chybu-mali-si-migranti-spraviti-na-namesti-stanovy-tabor-aby-ste-pochopili-co-je-migracna-kriza> (accessed on 20/11/2018)

<sup>7</sup> Robert Fico: “We do not want Muslim communities in Slovakia”

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=231216984542397>, “Andrej Kiska wants to feed Muslims in Slovakia”  
<https://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/videos/1239532356232598>, “We do not want Muslim communities in Slovakia” <https://www.facebook.com/robertficosk/videos/231216984542397/>

<sup>8</sup> Danko: We need to adopt legislative measures against islamization of Slovakia

<http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/danko-treba-prijat-legislativne-opatr/114172-clanok.html> (accessed on 29/11/2018)

<sup>9</sup> Facebook: Andrej Danko <https://www.facebook.com/andrej.danko.7169/videos/378430489336005/> (accessed on 22/11/2018)

and inhuman political system” (Milan Mazúrek, ĽSNS), every European, Christian or atheist, has to fear this satanic-pedophile creation of devil, which is the religion of Islam“ (Stanislav Mizík, ĽSNS) or that everything else, all of these idols, they are for Christians only daemons“ (Marián Kotleba, the head of ĽSNS)<sup>10</sup>. During electoral campaign in 2020 during meeting of ĽSNS member and current MP in European Parliament Milan Uhrík with supporters he said: “We will not allow Slovakia to become Muslim country, it has to remain Christian”.

Global Compact for Migration by UN was another topic that triggered emotional debates in slovak political space during November 2018. It began with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia Miroslav Lajčák criticizing countries such as Austria who announced that they will not support the compact. Lajčák, who was also President of the United Nations General Assembly for the 72nd session from 2017 until 2018 when the compact was being drafted, expressed clear support for the compact.<sup>11</sup> This woke up coalition party SNS, who responded on the same day with press release criticizing Lajčák’s support for the compact and calling for wider discussion within government and National Assembly on the topic. Most of the coalition and opposition parties joined the following debate using sometimes reasonable arguments and sometimes creating hysteria and fueling fear of migration. “How can this Lajčák compare our people to migrants from Africa? Is he crazy?” wrote Boris Kollár, head and MP of opposition party SME Rodina on his Facebook profile.<sup>12</sup> He attacked Lajčák’s argument that the compact is beneficial for Slovakia, because it also has a lot of emigrants who are working in other countries and compact is securing their rights. According to Kollár while Slovak migrants work hard and never abuse social system of the countries they go to, migrants from Africa come to Europe and get everything for free. It is important to note that Mr. Kollár and his party won the general election in 2020 and became a part of the government. Mr. Kollár as of now holds the position of chairman of the National Council, which is the second highest constitutional function in the state.

Even liberal party SaS (Freedom and Solidarity) was not free of anti-Muslim statements over the last couple of years. In 2020 the head of party and current Minister of Economy Richard Sulík wrote: “We perceive Islam as incompatible with our culture. While we live by the ‘all are equal’ principle, in Islam a man is more than a woman and a believer much more than an unbeliever. Pedophilia, polygamy and many other rules [in Islam] are in violation of our rules.”<sup>13</sup>

Not even authorities are free of missteps when dealing with Muslim related issues. To give an example, in 2020 police took hold of a man shoulding „Allah Akbar“ in the street (later found not to be Muslim). When commenting on incident, the first vicepresident of Police Force Mrs. Jana Maškarová defended the hard measures the police took against him, because he shouted „Allah Akbar“, what, according to the vice-president, „is a phrase used by terrorists“.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Facebook: IslamOnline.sk <https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/videos/10154680749267629/> (accessed on 22/10/2017)

<sup>11</sup> YouTube: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1333&v=gBUHINySEc8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1333&v=gBUHINySEc8) (accessed on 23/11/2018)

<sup>12</sup> Facebook: Boris Kollár [https://www.facebook.com/boris.kollar/posts/1994214850663688?\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=H-R](https://www.facebook.com/boris.kollar/posts/1994214850663688?__tn__=H-R) (accessed on 23/11/2018)

<sup>13</sup> <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1743283/niekolko-rad-od-starejsieho-k-zostavovaniu-vlady/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22443337/policajti-sa-pochvalili-zasahom-pokazilo-im-to-video.html>

## Physical and verbal attacks

On 29th of January 2018, a group of students from an islamic high school in Vienna visited the Islamic center Cordoba in Bratislava, prayer room of Islamic Foundation in Slovakia hoping to get familiar with the the status of Muslims in Slovakia. One of the students reported that on the way to the prayer room someone on the street shouted “Allah Akbar” at her. She subsequently asked during the visit, if Muslim women are allowed to move freely in Bratislava.<sup>15</sup>

In August 2018, a Muslim woman from Iraq living in Bratislava was taking her older son to kindergarten and while pushing the stroller with her baby someone suddenly pushed her from behind in a way that almost knocked her out of her feet. She managed to keep her balance by holding on the stroller. She asked the man what is going and he replied: “Are you an Arab? Where did you come from? What are you doing here?” . The man left after she said she will call police. The woman was wearing a hijab. Although there was couple of other people on the street, nobody came for her defence. A woman reported the case to the Islamic Foundation of Slovakia<sup>16</sup> and to a local humanitarian organization ADRA Slovensko who contacted the National Criminal Agency (NAKA).

In September 2018, the newspaper Aktuality.sk reported that in summer 2018 certain Somali woman in Bratislava was attacked twice within a couple of days. She was wearing a hijab as well. At first, she and her 6-years old child were victims of aggressive and vulgar shouting. A couple of days later someone pushed her 6-years old child on the street. Both of these cases were also reported to NAKA.<sup>17</sup>

On 19th of February 2019 TV Markiza ran story about the struggles of mixed married couple – Muslim from Tunisia and slovak lady, in an apartment building in Bratislava. They have an ongoing conflict with a neighbour who has repeated racist remarks about the husband.<sup>18</sup>

In June 2019 blogger Monika Nagyova wrote about a dinner she spent with a turkish family in Slovakia.<sup>19</sup> Turkish lady in that family told her, how she was attacked by an unknown man. He began to strangle her with her hijab, while she was holding her 6-month old baby in her arms. People standing around were in shock but in a moment the man stopped and left. Coincidentally the next day another men stood in front of her in the street and told her a vulgar word. The woman is not wearing hijab in Slovakia ever since.

In July 2019 for the first time in Slovakia the prosecutor filed an accusation for attempted murder based on extremist motive.<sup>20</sup> It concerns a man who attacked a kebab in a

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<sup>15</sup> Facebook/IslamOnline.sk

<https://www.facebook.com/IslamOnline.sk/photos/a.228852752628.175497.211508012628/10156019998937629/?type=3> (accessed on 20/11/2018)

<sup>16</sup> ISLAMONLINE.sk <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/08/v-bratislave-bola-napadnuta-muslimka-s-kocikom-ktosi-ju-sotil-a-nadaval-jej/> (accessed on 26/11/2018)

<sup>17</sup> Aktuality.sk <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/625147/kriminalisti-vysetruju-tri-utoky-na-cudzinky-v-bratislave/> (accessed on 23/11/2018)

<sup>18</sup> TV Markiza: [https://www.tvnoviny.sk/domace/1955370\\_rasizmus-a-xenofobia-neobchadza-ani-slovensko-manzelia-nam-porozpravali-o-svojej-skusenosti#](https://www.tvnoviny.sk/domace/1955370_rasizmus-a-xenofobia-neobchadza-ani-slovensko-manzelia-nam-porozpravali-o-svojej-skusenosti#) (accessed on 20/12/2019)

<sup>19</sup> SME Blog: <https://nagyova.blog.sme.sk/c/511174/moslimka-v-bratislave-von-idem-radsej-bez-satky.html> (accessed on 29/12/2019)

<sup>20</sup> Denník N: <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/1518909/> (accessed on 29/12/2019)

bistro and stabbed a hard worker in the face with a knife. In december 2018 accused Michael D. entered the premises of the kebab bistro in Banská Bystrica, where the Turkish national flag was located. In addition to the guests, there were three Turkish and Albanian nationals in the bistro, who were of Muslim religion. The accused was under the influence of alcohol, behaved noisily and aggressively, slammed his hands into the facility and shouted threats against Muslims.