

Anti-muslim Racism Report 2019

Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit & anti-muslimischer Rassismus

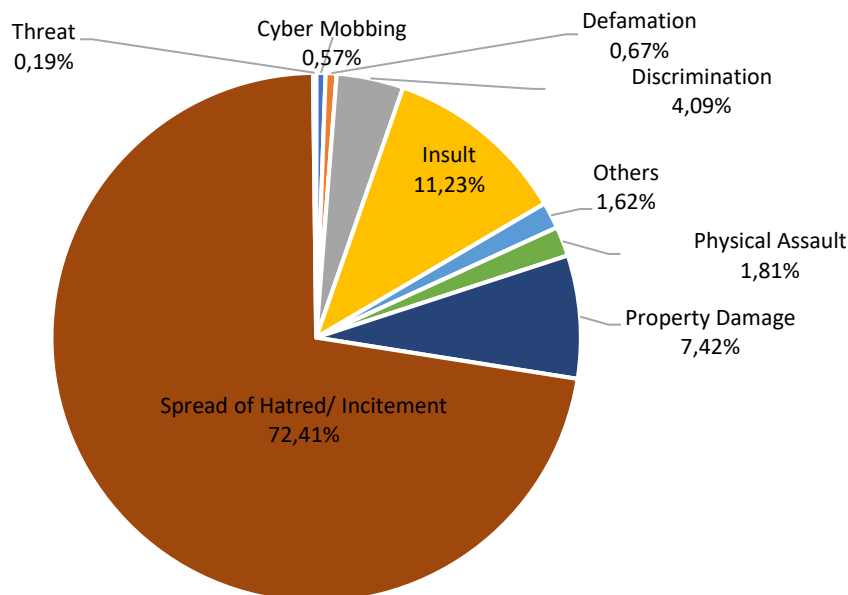
Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit & anti-muslimischer Rassismus (short **Dokustelle**) is an independent, non-governmental and confidential reporting and support service for people experiencing anti-muslim racism and Islamophobia. Dokustelle was initiated in 2014 by volunteers to document incidents of anti-muslim racism and render visible the extend of anti-muslim racism in Austria.

Objectives of Dokustelle Austria

- ❖ Support and empowerment for people experiencing anti-muslim racism
- ❖ Dismantling anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia in Austria
- ❖ Raising awareness on intersectional, institutional and structural manifestations of anti-Muslim racism

KEY FINDINGS

In 2019, Dokustelle documented **1051 incidents** of anti-muslim racism and Islamophobia. This represents **an increase of 94.63%** compared to the previous reporting period in 2018 (n= 540). The chart below illustrates the breakdown of reported incidents.

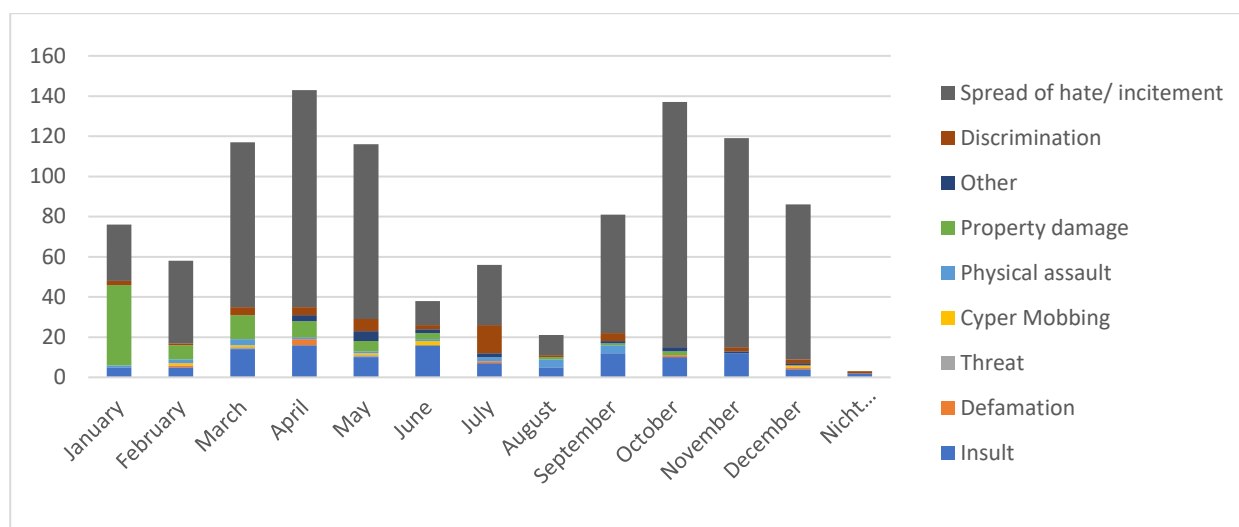


- ❖ Incidents classed as "spreading hatred and incitement"(72.41%) are the **most widely** documented anti-Muslim racist incidents. This spike in numbers can be linked to having increased our online monitoring activities. 92.11% (n=700) of incidents classified as "spreading of hate / incitement" occurred online.
- ❖ The second most common recorded incidents were insults (11.23%), followed by damage to property (7.42%) and discrimination (4.09%). The majority of all these incidents occurred offline.
- ❖ For the first time, the number of incidents with men as victims of anti-muslim racism (n=193) is higher than the number of reported incidents with women as victims (n=87).

The victims' gender is available for 192 documented incidents. Disaggregating the documented data by gender of the victim and location of the incident demonstrates a differentiated vulnerability. People perceived as Muslim men were disproportionately experiencing racism online, while people perceived as Muslim women were disproportionately the victims of incidents occurring offline.

TIMELINE

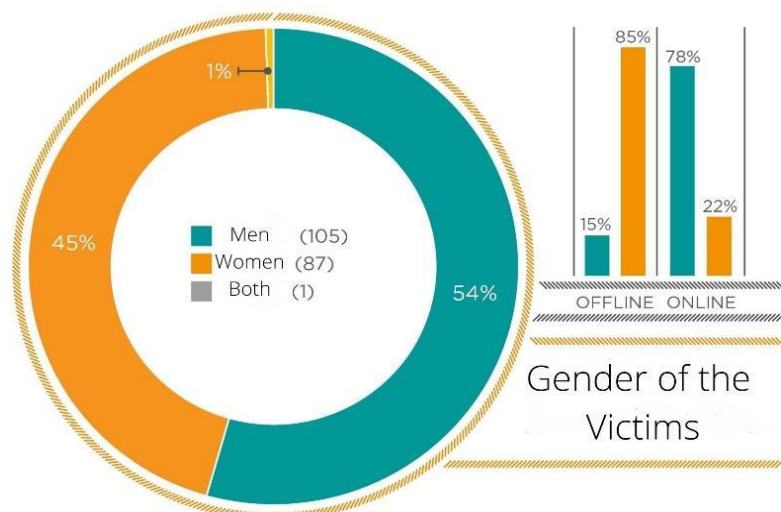
Based on reports and active online monitoring, Dokustelle recorded a peak of incidents in April (n=143), followed by October (n=137), November (n=119), March (n=117) and May (n=116). The timeline of recorded cases reflects a correlation of incidents of anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia and political campaigns and debates.



- ❖ At the end of **April**, the then far right FPÖ chairman Heinz Christian Strache and other FPÖ functionaries launched a campaign in which right extremist concepts such as "population exchange", "Islamisation", etc. were promoted as "concepts of reality".
- ❖ In **May**, the Austrian National Council decided to ban headscarves in primary schools. The political debate fueled anti-Muslim racist sentiments in Austria.
- ❖ This trend continued throughout **June**. Although the total number of recorded cases is the lowest compared to other months, the highest number of incidents classes as "insults" were recorded in June.
- ❖ In **October**, a student of the University of Vienna went twice to a lecture armed, once with a gun and once with a knife. Previously he made anti-Muslim and Islamophobic statements on social media, containing openly violent speech. In the discussions on Twitter following the incident, Islamophobic and anti-Muslim racist postings were recorded.

CONSIDERING GENDER IN THE CONTEXT OF DISCRIMINATION AND HATE CRIME

The disaggregation of data by location and gender shows the gender component of discrimination, hate and bias crimes.



❖ Registered cases targeting **people perceived as Muslim men** occurred **mostly (89.52) online** and mainly comprised incidents categorised as **“spreading hatred/incitement” (89.52%)**.

❖ Reported incidents against **persons perceived as Muslim women** occurred **mostly (85.5%) offline**. The case numbers of the incidents included 44 cases of insult (50.57%) and 27 cases of spreading hatred/sedition (31.03%), 6 cases of unequal treatment (6.90%), 5 cases of bullying (5.75%), 4 physical assaults (4.60%) and 1 case of damage to property (1.15%).

The intersection of racism and sexism impacts the quantity and quality of discrimination and hate crimes. Visible Muslim women often appear to be victims of physical and verbal assaults not only because of their recognizability as Muslim women but also for what they seem to embody in the prevailing perception as Muslim women.

An institutional recognition of anti-Muslim racism and an intersectional approach could contribute to a better protection against discrimination, hate and prejudice crimes.

POLITICAL NARRATIVES

Each year the Dokustelle monitors parliamentary speeches as well as speeches delivered in the Viennese municipal council. The following discursive frames can be dissected in the speeches of ÖVP and FPÖ politicians in 2019:

❖ **"Headscarf as an alleged threat to gender equality"**

Gender equality is presented as a "Western" achievement, which is endangered by Islam - embodied by "women wearing headscarves".

❖ **"Headscarf as a political symbol"**

The manifold motivations of Muslim women to wear a headscarf are often ignored and the religious meaning of the headscarf negated.

Our analysis as presented in the "Antimuslim Racism Report 2019" suggest that narratives evoked of the allegedly oppressed Muslim women serve the following purpose:

- To deflect structural and institutional inequalities, by externalizing a societal problem to a minority group.
- To leave feminist demands for structural changes unaddressed, while forcing the undressing of "female" marked bodies under the pretends of emancipation.

Recognition of anti-Muslim racism

To protect people from racism, discrimination and violence, the Government has to recognise the existence of anti-Muslim racism. A working definition of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism should be developed and legally recognised. European Commission's and Civil society organisation's efforts to establish a working definition should be considered, and experts from these groups should be involved in government's efforts to develop a working definition.

Intersectional and structural understanding of racism

The Government should develop and implement a National Action Plan to combat racism, based on an intersectional, institutional and structural understanding of racism.

Including civil society organisations in policy developments

The Government should develop and implement strategies against racism, such as a National Action Plan against Racism, in close cooperation with civil society, especially anti-racist organisations and racialised communities. This is necessary to ensure the consideration of racialised communities' needs and expertise.

Gender Equality policies that guarantee equality for all women

Policy measures promoting equality between women and men should include multiple discrimination provisions and have an intersectional approach, acknowledging the combined effects of discrimination, particularly on the grounds of race, nationality, religion, and gender. Obstacles faced by Muslim women not only within their cultural group but also in relation to the majority population should be addressed.

Repeal the "veil ban"

The recent amendment to the School Education Act regarding the wearing of religious or

ideologically "influenced" headgear - 15a Agreement - which only prohibits headgear that covers the hair fully or in large parts, should be repealed. The legislation seems to apply to Muslim girls only. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) evaluation of this amendment states that "singling out a certain group -as effectively done with this amendment-could have an adverse effect on the inclusion of the particular community concerned and result in intersectional discrimination, with a considerable risk of impeding Muslim girls' access to education²⁸ and marginalising them."¹

Combating Hate Speech

The Government should implement the ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 15.9 which requires authorities to "withdraw all financial and other forms of support by public bodies from political parties and other organisations that use hate speech or fail to sanction its use by their members and provide, while respecting the right to freedom of association, for the possibility of prohibiting or dissolving such organisations regardless of whether they receive any form of support from public bodies where their use of hate speech is intended or can reasonably be expected to incite acts of violence, intimidation, hostility or discrimination against those targeted by it;"²

Establishment of an independent police investigation body

As announced in the governmental agreement, an independent police monitoring and investigation body should be established. The body should be tasked to independently and autonomously initiate and conduct investigations into allegations of mistreatment against police officers. In order to be effective, the authority should meet the standards set by the European Court of Human Rights.

¹ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Sixth report on Austria, published 2nd June 2020. <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-austria-6th-monitoring-cycle-16809e826f>

² European Commission against Racism and Intolerance General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on Combating Hate Speech, published 21st March 2016, CRI(2016)15. <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-15-on-combating-hate-speech/16808b5b01>

