



## **Anti-Islamic reactions within the European Union after the recent acts of terror against the USA**

### **A collection of the EUMC of country reports from RAXEN National Focal Points (NFPs)**

Vienna, 10 October 2001

As a consequence of the terrorist attacks in the U.S. on 11<sup>th</sup> September the EUMC identified the threat of increasing racism especially to the Islamic community.

To be able to respond to possible requests by the EU institutions and its other clients, on 19 September 2001 the EUMC asked the RAXEN National Focal points to produce on short notice (one day) an overview on the following questions:

- Have there been any verbal attacks against the Muslim/Islamic community in the media, in the public discourse, in politics?
- Have any physical attacks (harassment, verbal abuse, violent acts, etc.) against members of the Muslim/Islamic community been reported (in the media or by human right/anti-discrimination NGOs)?
- Does this mean, in your opinion, an increase or a change of attitudes towards Islamic community and can it be seen as a reaction to the terrorist attacks in the USA?

Replies were received from all 15 Member States<sup>1</sup>.

Due to the short amount of time available most reports from NFPs were primarily based on national media coverage of the situation. It should also be considered that the Member States have different systems in collecting data. Some, like the UK, have implemented a rather elaborated and comprehensive approach, others have none at all.

From the reports sent to the EUMC by 15 countries, the following generalizing observations by the NFPs have been made (note, however, that some reports addressed more issues than others, therefore some observations are based on some country reports only and not on a full coverage):

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<sup>1</sup> The report from the French National Focal Point covers a slightly longer period than the others (up till 2 October 2001)

## 1. Insults/attacks

While in some countries there seems to be an increase in attacks against Muslims (Belgium, The Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark), possibly linked with the terrorist act in the US, in some others (Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxemburg, Portugal) such an increase has not been noticed by the NFPs.

### 1.1 Verbal attacks

In almost all countries verbal insults towards Muslim have been reported in the days after the attack. The verbal attacks reported include direct racist verbal attacks (general accusations, such as: “So now we see, what you did again!”, or harassment, such as “we should get rid of you!”). and abusive graffiti on walls, also of Islamic buildings.

In particular direct verbal attacks have been reported to be frequent in schools against pupils of Muslim origin.

An increase in anti-Muslim attitudes, especially among the young people, is a concrete possibility, and there is widespread concern of this in the Muslim communities across the EU.

### 1.2 Physical attacks

In some countries also physical attacks have occurred; the most serious are, e.g.:

- Denmark:
  - a Danish woman tried to set her Turkish neighbour’s apartment on fire
  - a drunken young man was caught outside a Mosque ready to throw his homemade Molotov cocktails
  - a Kurdish owned pizza place in Dragør was attacked by a group of thugs with baseball bats
  - another pizza place, owned by two Afghanis, was attacked in a rural area by someone throwing bottles filled with gasoline through the windows
  - a 44-year-old man attacked Iraqi immigrant with his German Shepherd
  - a firebomb was thrown in immigrant neighbourhood in Aabenrå and racist language is found.
- The Netherlands:
  - Attacks on mosques at The Hague (written hate speech on the walls) and Vlissingen (broken windows)
  - An Islamic school in Nijmegen was set on fire
  - An attempt to set fire to a mosque in Zwolle
  - Stones were thrown through the windows of the SHIP - the Islamic Platform in The Hague.
- Sweden:
  - in Mölndal, Gothenburg, a Iranian born taxi driver was assaulted and beaten up by people who called him a »bloody terrorist«.
- United Kingdom:
  - a 28-year-old Afghan minicab driver was seriously assaulted and left paralysed from the neck down by three men who, according to police, referred to the attacks in New York

- another Afghan man was assaulted in Dover and has received serious injuries
- a 19-year-old Asian woman in Swindon was beaten around the head by two men with a baseball bat prior to which one was reportedly heard to say 'here's a Muslim'
- in the north east of England a 20-year-old Bangladeshi man suffered a broken jaw after being beaten by a gang of youths.

Other often-reported acts against the Islam community have included vandalism of mosques and Islamic buildings, racist graffiti, abusing telephone calls, false bomb threats.

## **2. Reaction of politics**

As soon as the media linked the terrorist attack to Islamic extremists, in all EU Member States the national institutions and politicians have quickly acted to counteract possible negative effects on the Islamic community, emphasizing that the overwhelming majority of Muslim does not support terrorism, and condemning the attacks towards the Islamic community;

However, in some countries some political parties (also in the government) have taken an anti-Islamic stance and tried to identify terrorism with the Islamic community.

## **3. Reaction of the media**

Media coverage has generally been balanced, with a few cases of sensationalism on the ground of alleged links between Islamic militants in the EU and Osama Bin Laden, and some cases of anti-Islamic headlines.

## **4. Follow up**

It is generally considered to be still too early to draw any definitive conclusions on the impact of the recent events on the attitude of EU societies towards their Islamic minorities. The need to engage in a running and more long-term monitoring of the situation of Islamic minorities was mentioned by many NFPs.

The EUMC intends to follow up this short term initiative with a longer term and regular survey and reporting on attitudes/incidents towards Muslim/Islamic communities in EU Member States. The reports of the NFPs can be found in the Annex.

## **Annex**

### **NATIONAL REPORTS**

These national reports are edited versions of the reports written by the National Focal Points (NFP) of the RAXEN international network following a request of the EUMC.

The task of the RAXEN network is to collect reliable and comparable data (including examples of and models for “good practices”) at the European level on the phenomena of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in order to help the EU and its Member States to take measures or formulate courses of action. It is composed by 15 NFPs.

### **Table of Content**

AUSTRIA .....	5
BELGIUM .....	7
DENMARK .....	8
FINLAND .....	10
FRANCE .....	11
GERMANY .....	12
GREECE .....	14
IRELAND .....	15
ITALY .....	16
LUXEMBURG .....	17
THE NETHERLANDS .....	18
PORTUGAL .....	19
SPAIN .....	20
SWEDEN .....	21
UNITED KINGDOM .....	23

# AUSTRIA

**Research Centre "Discourse, Politics, Identity" (DPI),**  
in cooperation with the  
**Institut für Konfliktforschung (IKF)** and the  
**Ludwig Boltzmann Institut für Menschenrechte (BIM)**  
(located at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW))

Despite the fact that all the media are still full of the horrible events of September 11<sup>th</sup> in the US and that it seems clear that the perpetrators were radical Islamic fanatics, the situation of the Islamic population in Austria generally seems very calm. Of course Islamic representatives have immediately condemned the acts of terrorism.

## Verbal and physical attacks

Representatives of the Islamic religious community in Vienna today said on our request, that they have still no notion of any physical attacks against people of their faith, but that people are talked to about the events. Also the major organisation to collect racist incidents in Austria, the association ZARA, has to the moment received no reports about physical anti-Islamic incidents since Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>.

Verbal statements towards Islamic (or presumed Islamic) people include general accusations (like: "So now we see, what you did again!") or harassment ("we should get rid of you!"). According to an Islamic spokesman, especially children in school suffer from some harassment, the most targeted among them are those named "Osama".

## Attitudes

On the other hand there are reports about expressions of solidarity with the Islamic community. Many citizens reassure their Islamic neighbours that they know the difference between the majority of peaceful Islamic people and a few fanatics. According to a press release of the Islamic Religious Community from Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> the "official" Austria was also trying hard to prevent overreactions against Muslims.

In this release they thank President Klestil for his words to the nation and report about a meeting of chancellor, vice-chancellor and ministers Ferrero-Waldner and Gehrler with representatives of the larger religious groups on Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> to talk about cooperation and prevention measures. Also Viennese city-counsellor Brauner and the head of the Green Party, Van der Bellen expressed their concern and offered help to the Muslim society.

The media landscape also shows a rather modest climate towards the Islamic community. The primary fear of the Austrians seem to focus on a possible US overreaction and warfare. Many journalists pointed out that Austria can hardly be seen as a possible priority target for further terrorist attacks. Also, until now, almost all politicians seem to be careful and modest in regard to generally accuse the Islamic community.

The fact that, until now, no physical attacks against Muslims were reported does not necessarily mean that we do not run a risk of increasing "islamophobia" or violence against people of Islamic faith. One concern might be that there have been such attacks but no reports about them, because people assume that there would be no help or understanding. This

concern is not very severe because cases of verbal abuse or harassment are well reported to Islamic organisations.

The more grave concern is that after a little while, when the world will have recovered from the status of shock, reactions might be different. At the moment everybody seems to be cautious, but one can not tell by these immediate reactions, if attitudes are changing. It is simply too early to be able to see the whole effect of these days events for the future. One thing that can be said is that at least there seems to be a high consciousness about the risks of scapegoating the whole Islamic community among a large part of the civil society as well as among politicians.

19<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# BELGIUM

**Centre pour l'égalité des chances et la lutte contre le racisme –  
Centrum voor gelijkheid van kansen en voor racismebestrijding  
(Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism) (CEOOR)**

In the direct aftermath of the attack in the US, there were no major attacks on the Muslim/Islamic community. This can be explained by the shock effect of the attacks. However since September 17th the tone has become harsher against the Muslim community. The verbal attacks were registered mostly in the Brussels area, and less so in other cities like Antwerp or regions such as Limburg.

## Verbal attacks

In schools, Muslim youngsters become the target of different forms of verbal attacks. The incidence of verbal attacks is especially high in Brussels. Teachers and fellow students are responsible for these attacks. These verbal attacks include:

- Muslims being scolded or insulted in the streets,
- removal of the veil of Muslim females by a third person
- false bomb alarm
- sheer aggression towards Muslims
- racist graffiti targeting Muslims

A pamphlet, written in French, was distributed a pamphlet in the centre of Brussels. It appears at first sight the work of Islamic extremists, picturing the Saint Mary Church in Schaerbeek, a large Brussels commune as a mosque. There are firm grounds to believe that this pamphlet is false and fabricated with the purpose of discrediting the Muslim community and to manipulate and 'poison' the public opinion.

## Physical attacks

As of now the NFP Belgium does not have any registered case of physical attacks. However, as there seems to be a growing intolerance in certain parts of Belgium, this might unfortunately change in the near future.

## Attitudes

It seems fair to state that the above mentioned verbal attacks and otherwise are the result of the recent attacks in the US. These attacks are specifically targeting the Muslim community.

Note:

prior to the attack in the US, there were also already some complaints of the Jewish community of anti-Semitism, including graffiti's and verbal attacks from Muslim youngsters (in Brussels and Antwerp).

19<sup>th</sup> September 2001

## DENMARK <sup>2</sup>

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001 were followed by an upsurge of verbal and physical attacks on ethnic minorities associated with Islam. At first the media focused on a small number of Palestinian youngsters in Denmark, who celebrated the attacks, and consequently aroused massive and strong emotional reactions. These reactions changed the emphasis from the suicide bombers in the US to domestic grief of ignorant young Danish-Palestinians.

Danish politicians, mass media and public discourse are already saturated with a negative representation of Muslims and considered by several observers to express one of the toughest, anti-migrant tones in Europe. In May 2001 neophytes of a political party, Det Radikale Venstre, were fiercely and repeatedly accused of being Muslim fundamentalists, affiliated with a Pakistani based movement, supposedly supporting the Taleban. The horrifying turn of events have further strengthened already antagonistic relations between Muslims and the rest of the Danish population, yet physical attacks have not resulted in life threatening injuries. The media coverage reveals the unfolding of different phases following the initial shock and manifestations of solidarity. At first there was a focus on civil and military preparedness; secondly, media images and indignation of young Palestinians celebrating the terrorist attack on the USA; thirdly, warnings by the government and leading Muslims against increased verbal attacks and violence on Muslims in general; and fourthly, local appropriations of the attack for own political and nationalistic purposes.

### Verbal and physical attacks:

Sept. 13. Death threats are made to a local TV station in Copenhagen, during a program where the attacks on the USA is debated (Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten 20/9, 22/9)

Sept. 13-14: Posters with the text "Holy war against Islam" is found at a Red Cross Centre (Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten 22/9).

Sept. 14: A Danish woman tries to set her Turkish neighbour's apartment on fire. (Politiken 20/9, Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten 22/9)

Sept. 14: Danish imam, Abdul Wahid Pedersen receives a death threat (most newspapers)

Sept. 14: Drunken young man is caught outside a Mosque ready to throw his homemade Molotov cocktails (most newspapers)

Sept. 14: A concert in Tivoli with the group Outlandish (two members are Muslim) is cancelled due to bomb threats (Politiken 15/9)

Sept 16: Kurdish owned pizza place in Dragør is attacked by a group of thugs with baseball bats (Ekstra Bladet 17/9)

Sept 19: Another pizza place, owned by two Afghans, is attacked in a rural area by someone throwing bottles filled with gasoline through the windows. (B.T. 20/9, Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten 20/9).

Sept. 17: A 44-year-old man attacks Iraqi immigrant with his German Shepherd (B.T. 19/9)

Sept 18: Firebomb is thrown in immigrant neighbourhood in Aabenrå and racist language is found (B.T. 20/9).

In addition Islamic Web-sites received numerous mails with hate speech.

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<sup>2</sup> Author of the report for Denmark is Peter Hervik, ph.d, AnthroWise, s.m.b.a.

Ethnic minority representatives report unanimously that verbal attacks and harassment has increased rapidly since September 11, 2001.

Attitudes:

The Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and political leaders from other mainstream parties have in public statements immediately underlined the necessity to make a clear distinction between terrorists and the Islamic community.

Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party) held their annual meeting September 15-16, 2001. Speakers consistently launched verbal attacks on Muslims, who were portrayed as "our enemy". Member of the EU Parliament, Mogens Camre proclaimed: "There is a straight line from the most despicable rapist, to he who circumcised his daughter, forced his wife to wear the scarf and to he, who in religious fanaticism flies a passenger plane into the World Trade Center."

Another political party, Radikale Venstre, which is one the of two parties in the Government coalition, also held their annual meeting September 15-16, 2001. Using the terrorist attacks as a backdrop, leading speakers insisted that the party members with Muslim background clearly and convincingly distanced themselves from any form of religious fundamentalism and instead wholeheartedly recognized democracy (Berlinske Tidende 16/9 and most other newspapers). Thereby, these leaders appropriated themselves of the terrorist attacks in order to use it in an internal strife with Muslims within their own political party.

Politicians in other parties, Venstre and Konservative, also asked for radical measures that yet other politicians see as violating the Constitution and human rights, for instance the call for the deportation of people who cheer the terrorist attacks and for registering Muslims in the country.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# FINLAND

## Ihmisoikeusliitto Ry (Finnish League for Human Rights)

### Verbal and physical attacks

So far, the media has reported one physical attack in Helsinki towards two Somalis, some people tried to stone two Somali women and that was motivated by the NY attack. Other physical attacks have not been reported. However, many ordinary Arabs and Muslims feel that people stare at them.

### Attitudes

Politicians have taken active role in Finland: Minister of Interior (Ville Itälä) and Minister of Labour (Tarja Filatov) have announced that nobody should judge or stereotype Muslims or the religion, because of terrorists. They mentioned that terrorists represent very small minority. Ms. Filatov also stressed that there should be always a dialogue between the Arab countries and the western world: that helps to enhance human and social rights. Both announcements were published in the media: tv news, mainstream newspapers, radio and Internet. Also the Finnish Lutheran Church has worried about intolerance towards Muslims. Although our society is secular, the Church has certain authority, because almost 90% of Finns are Lutherans.

As everywhere else, there have been many TV programs dealing with the attacks. In some public discussions, Muslims have had their say. The biggest newspaper Helsingin Sanomat interviewed local Imam, who expressed the feelings of Muslims in Finland. Imam told that the first days Muslims stayed inside as much as possible and avoided going out. After that and thanks to politicians, situation does not seem to be so tense, he said.

If there are no more attacks by terrorists, there should not be notable increase of hostility against Islamic community in the long run. However, if the conflict continues a long time, attitudes most likely change for worse.

19<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# FRANCE

## Agence pour le développement des relations interculturelles (ADRI) (Agency for the development of intercultural relations)

The French report covers a time period between September 14th and the end the month. It is based on a selection of French national press clippings.

### Verbal attacks

The national media did not reported about verbal attacks and insults against Muslims people in France. Nevertheless, through different articles, it mentioned some sort of tensions in everyday life in suburban areas where the Islamic community is concentrated (*la Croix*, 17/09/01-*Libération*, 29/09/01).

### Physicals attacks

Seven young people have been arrested in Corsica for racist attacks against twenty Moroccans workers. They were accused of shouting and hurling stones on slum where Maghrebian people are living. (*Le Monde*, 23/09/01).

### Attitudes: French politics

The French public authority and different leaders of political parties or religious communities have called for calm and for making a clear-cut difference between the Islamic populations and terrorism.

Extreme right political organisations have adopted two different attitudes. On the one hand, the National republican movement (M.N.R.) have linked the “immigration policy of different governments” and Islam fanaticism. This political party has suggested an Anti-terrorist plan that consists in suppressing public subsidy to Islamic Non Profits Organisations and in allowing only French workers into airports. On the other hand, the French National front (F.N.) has more insist ed on the American political responsibility into this current situation in France. (*Libération*, 19/09/01)

### Attitudes: the Media

The French press report of the Islamic attacks against the United States has been moderate despite stereotypes about the Muslims. It mentioned several arrests among leaders of terrorist networks as a result of the inquiry within the Maghrebian community in the region of Paris. Mediatic coverage is reflecting exactly the political call for quietness and national unity.

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2001

# GERMANY

## Europäisches Forum für Migrationsstudien (efms) (European Forum for Migration Studies)

There are officially no figures about verbal and/or physical attacks against members of the Muslim/Islamic community in Germany available yet. In general, the public discourse is quite moderate and tries to sharply differentiate between terrorist attacks and the everyday life of 3 million Muslims in Germany. Members of all political parties and religious organisations confirmed on the one hand solidarity with the U.S. and their will to fight terrorism, but also solidarity with the Muslim community against xenophobic acts.

### Verbal attacks

Nevertheless there are some reports on verbal attacks in the media:

- The president of the Palestinian Community in Germany (Palästinensische Gemeinde Deutschland) reported that numerous Palestinians have been abused by other people on the street. ([www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland](http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland) - Der Spiegel)
- The Islamic Religious Community Hessen (Islamische Religionsgemeinschaft Hessen), according to its chairman still gets daily calls and mails of hatred, especially against women wearing scarves. ([www.fr-aktuell.de](http://www.fr-aktuell.de) - Frankfurter Rundschau)
- A Moroccan-born woman, having lived in Germany for 25 years, reported that her 10 year old daughter was called a “terrorist” by a classmate, another woman in Wiesbaden as a “murderer”. ([www.fr-aktuell.de](http://www.fr-aktuell.de))
- A German-born student of Turkish nationality reported that his brother has been verbally attacked at his workplace. (Bayern2-Radio, Zündfunk, 18. Sep. 2001)
- The first days after the attack the press coverage of these events, especially in the Bild-Zeitung, the most popular and fairly populist yellow press, showed some kind of panic (“They live amongst us”) as two of the terrorist had been living in Germany for several years. This seemed to fan the flames of mistrust for a while. One week after the terrorist attack the atmosphere has mostly calmed down as you can see by visiting the internet forum of the Bild-Zeitung ([www.bild.de](http://www.bild.de))

### Physical attacks:

- According to reports in the media (and also by several human right/anti-discrimination NGOs) there has been *one* attempt on Muslim institutions: On early Sunday morning, a bottle of spiritus with burning wick has been discovered and put out by a cardriver in Munich-Pasing. This happened just in front of a grocery shop belonging to the Pasing mosque. After this attack the police set up further security precautions for Muslim/Islamic institutions. Until now nothing is known about the offenders. ([www.islam.de](http://www.islam.de) - Central Council for Muslims in Germany – Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland; [www.sueddeutsche.de](http://www.sueddeutsche.de) - Süddeutsche Zeitung a.o.)

### Attitudes

As far as we can see it seems to be a little too early to speculate if there will be a change of attitudes towards the Islamic community in general. Two aspects could be important for the future:

- The will to fight against terrorism may surely cause some necessary discussions about data security and personal rights. The public discussion will definitely be less unanimous as there are quite different opinions among the political parties. Proposals on legislative measures on a national level are also being discussed.
- Although everybody hopes that the “answer” of the U.S. will be a well-considered one, there is some fear that a “crisis” or even “war” in this respect will cause more problems by creating a gap between different parts of the Muslim community.

19<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# GREECE

## Information Centre for Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence (Infocenter)

### Verbal and physical attacks

There have been no direct verbal or physical attacks against either the indigenous or the migrant Muslim communities in Greece.

### Attitudes

The recent terrorist attacks against the USA have had mixed effects upon political attitudes in Greece and it is very difficult to provide a complete picture at this stage. On the one hand anti-American sentiments affecting mostly the 30 + age group seem to prevail over anti-Muslim sentiments. On the other hand the younger generation will probably be more likely to develop anti-Muslim sentiments.

The government has made repeated statements carefully distinguishing between Islam and Muslims on the one hand and terrorism on the other roughly on the same lines as the Americans.

In our view anti-Muslim attitudes may show a significant increase in the near future especially among younger people. The terrorist attacks will certainly contribute to this especially as there are several Greek Americans among the victims. Political developments in the Balkans will also influence strongly the formation of public attitudes. However, any military action against Muslim countries that would result in heavy casualties among non-combatants will probably give rise to anti-American sentiments.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# IRELAND

## Equality Authority (EA) / National consultative committee on racism and interculturalism (NCCRI)

It is estimated by the NCCRI that there are 15,000 Muslim people in Ireland, many of whom have been living in Ireland for many years and are Irish citizens. They comprise about 0.02% of the population in the Republic of Ireland. Around 10% of the Muslim community in Ireland are asylum seekers or refugees, mostly from countries such as Bosnia Kosovo, Algeria and Somalia

### Verbal and physical attacks

The National Consultative Committee on racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) has a racist incident reporting and monitoring system. To date three incidents have been reported to us.

1. The report of a small number of abusive phone calls being made to members of the Islamic community in Dublin. However most calls to the foundation and the Islamic Cultural Centre have been of a supportive nature. There have also been some reports of an increase in verbal insults directed at women in Islamic dress.
2. The attack on a Mosque in Belfast (Northern Ireland). Bricks were thrown at the Mosque in Wellington Park, Belfast on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2001. No one was hurt in the incident.
3. Some newspaper reports have sought to sensationalise alleged links between Irish based Islamic militants and Osama Bin Laden. For example a photograph of an Algerian man with his young daughter was published in one national newspaper, despite the fact that he has not been charged with any crime. The accompanying newspaper headline was 'Islamic militants on our doorstep' (Irish Examiner 18 Sept 2001). British tabloid newspapers published in Ireland have also been guilty of sensationalised type reporting which could help create the conditions for Islamophobia.

### Attitudes

The Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern TD made a speech on September 18<sup>th</sup> 2001 in response to the attacks on America, which highlights the positive role of the Islamic community in Ireland and condemning some recent incidents.

In short, there have been a small number of incidents that are of concern, including some ill advised reporting, but by and large despite shock and sympathy about what happened in America, public statements in relation to the Islamic community have been supportive. The worst incident was the attack on the Mosque in Belfast, which appears to be somewhat isolated and which fortunately did not result in any injuries. There has been no evidence of organised verbal or physical attacks on the Islamic community in Ireland.

19<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# ITALY

## Cooperazione per lo sviluppo dei paesi emergenti (COSPE) Co-operation for the Development of Emerging Countries

### Verbal and physical attacks

So far no physical attacks have been reported nor have there been cases of personalised verbal attacks.

Following the attack at the World Trade Centre in New York and at the Pentagon, Muslim / Islamic communities in Italy have been in the spotlight both in the public opinion and the media. This increased attention has been ambivalent: many political, religious and academic leaders have, in their public pronouncements, warned that a clear distinction should be made between fighting terrorists who happen to be Muslims and fighting Islam as a religion. At the same, many other such figures, including leading politicians, have taken clear anti-Islamic stance in their public pronouncements.

It must be underlined that some political parties are overtly using the attack to mount campaigns against migrants in general and Muslims in particular.

### Attitudes

The anti-Islamic public discourse has so far come from quarters that have expressed similar positions in the past; in other words, it does not seem to be a general change in attitude by non-Muslims towards Muslims or people of Arab origin.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# LUXEMBURG

## **Association de soutien aux travailleurs immigrés (ASTI) Association for the support of immigrant workers**

### Verbal and physical attacks

In Luxembourg there is an Islamic community with about 5800 members.

In the press and on television, no violence attacks or discriminations were reported. Once a week, the Luxembourg's television does broadcast a special program, a TOP-THEME about a current event. Since the 11 September, the Luxembourg's television (RTL) broadcasted twice a report on the Islamic community of Luxembourg. The Islamic community got a lot of attention since a few days, people are interested in who is this community.

However, no facts appeared about violence, discrimination or racist acts on this community. ASTI itself didn't hear anything about violence or attacks, and no other NGO reported on something known by them.

### Attitudes

There is the impression that the fear of possible racist acts exists in Luxembourg.

Luxemburg's television contributes to calm it down and especially wants to prevent these risks, by bringing more information on the community and by trying to clarify the difference between some terrorists and the people who have the same religion than the possible criminals. This contributes to the fact that Luxemburgers feel more comfortable with this community and diminishes the risks of racist attitudes towards it.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# THE NETHERLANDS

## Dutch Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (DUMC)

### Verbal and physical attacks

Unfortunately since the attacks in the USA the intolerance against Muslims in the Netherlands is growing. A large number of incidents are mentioned below. The incidents - given in chronological order - vary from verbal attacks to physical attacks.

A number of incidents that have been reported in the Dutch newspapers are left out, because of their uncertain relation to the attacks. The reported incidents have in our opinion a clear or at least suspected relation.

- \* A bus driver in Amsterdam refuses a passenger with a head scarf
- \* Telephone threats to Palestine interest organizations (12/9/01)
- \* Attacks on mosques at The Hague (written hate speech on the walls) and Vlissingen (broken windows)
- \* Racial insult, threats and spitting to Muslim women with head scarves
- \* Racial insult of a player at a (non-professional) soccer team (17/9/01)
- \* Telephone threats to a mosque in Roosendaal (17/9/01)
- \* Hate speech on a condolence register on an internet site. As a result the website is closed (17/9/01)
- \* An Islamic school in Nijmegen has been set on fire (17/9/01)
- \* An attempt to set fire to a mosque in Zwolle (17/9/01)
- \* An Islamic center in Barneveld plastered with the words 'death to the Muslims' (17/9/01)
- \* Stones thrown through the windows of the SHIP - the Islamic Platform in The Hague (18/9/01)
- \* A Syrian orthodox church in Rijssen plastered with hate speech (18/9/01)
- \* Threats to a Turkish family/stones thrown through windows of their house (18/9/01)
- \* Increase of hate speech against Muslims on internet, especially in newsgroups

### Attitudes:

The anti-racism organizations in the Netherlands are seriously concerned about the growing prejudice and aggression against people of Arabic origin and Muslims. The Dutch Focal Point is of the opinion that aforementioned incidents can be considered a reaction to the terrorist attacks in the USA.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# PORTUGAL

**NUMENA – Centro de Investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas  
(Research center on human and social sciences)**

## Verbal and physical attacks

So far there have been no official complaints of physical or verbal injuries inflicted on the Muslim Community as a result of the recent events in the USA.

On September 15th several newspapers published stories about a bomb threat to the Lisbon Mosque. The Lisbon Islamic Community stated that this incident led to the interruption of prayer by the police bomb squad, which searched the premises.

More recently, a representative of the Lisbon Islamic Community reported that the Lisbon Mosque was vandalized on 18/9/2001. More precisely, some windows were broken with stones during the night. Still, another leader of the same community appeared on national television reporting the same event but adding that such occurrences are commonplace. In spite of this, the Procurador Geral da República has, so far, received no complaint.

Nevertheless, all the great religions were present in a gathering intended to homage the victims of the terrorist attack. At this event the Muslim community's representative – Sheik Munir - prayed for the dead.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# SPAIN

## **Movimiento por la paz, el desarme y la libertad (MPDL) Movement for peace, disarmament and liberty**

### Verbal and physical attacks

The NFP Spain has contacted ATIME, an immigrant NGO (Asociación de Trabajadores Marroquies en España, association of Morocco workers in Spain) in order to know how Islamic/Muslim communities are feeling and seeing the situation after the terrorist attack to the US.

As to attacks against Islamic/Muslim people, they had no notice of such attacks so far, but they reported attacks to mosques in Madrid and in Cordoba. In the first case, eggs of blue, red and white colour were thrown at the building. In the second case, a racist inscription was written on the mosque.

### Attitudes

Concerning the attitudes towards the Islamic community, ATIME reports that the influence of media becomes bigger. Some media try to establish the belief that all members of the Islamic community are potential international terrorist. They are very worried about this case. They think that occidental citizens are led to believe that a civilization war is about to happen, and all what means Muslim or Islamic people will be a potential enemy.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# SWEDEN

## EXPO Foundation

### Verbal and physical attacks

Similar to other countries, there have been some violent incidents relating to the WTC bombing.

- In Mölndal, Gothenburg, a Iranian born taxi driver was assaulted and beaten up by people who called him a »bloody terrorist«; this happened within 24 hours of the bombing.
- In Södertälje, south of Stockholm, a restaurant owned by a Syrian immigrant who has lived in Sweden for close to 25 years, was subjected to night-time vandalism. Windows were smashed and graffiti spray painted on the facade: »Arab terrorist« and a swastika.

The police claim »Nazis were behind the vandalism«; however, if so, it is unlikely to have been in an organised form since the Nazi groups have more or less come out in support of the bombing.

Also cause for concern is the fact that some schools have reported incidents, suggesting pupils with Islamic background have clashed with Swedish (or possibly non-Islamic immigrants in one case). However, these incidents have been few and isolated.

There has certainly been an increase in verbal abuse of Arab immigrants or people of the Islamic faith. Internet seem to be a focal point for organised anti-Islamic sentiments, where various »chat pages« such as the *Exile Passage*, has been filled with hundreds of statements of the shot-them-all-and-let-God-sort-them-out-type. Here, xenophobia, including both anti-Semitic and anti-Arabic hatred is undisguised.

### Attitudes

#### 1. Established political parties and Media responses to the terrorist outrages

Sweden does not differ from other European countries in reaction to the WTC outrage. Most mainstream political parties have condemned the attacks and urged support to the American people. Several leading politicians, among whom the Prime Minister Göran Persson, have focused on the dangers of fostering anti-Arab racism as a result of the outrage.

Among immigrant and Islamic organisations in Sweden, there is widespread concern that the »anti-terrorist stand will foster broader anti-Arab or anti-Islamic sentiments. There has been criticism of television reporting from the Middle East, which showed Palestinians cheering the WTC attack. According to critics, such behaviour is not representative of the Palestinian people as a whole, and that when such pictures are shown over and over again, it will eventually lead to people identifying Palestinians as »pro-terrorists«.

Another story in a mainstream daily, focused on mapping out Usama Bin Laden's »connections in Sweden«. The story claim that Swedish Islamic organisations have done fundraisings for the Bin Laden network, although the documentation to the story was at best, »quite shaky«.

Mr Kurdo Baksi, a journalist and well known immigrant profile, say he believe that for the time being the WTC bombing has not led to a dramatic increase in anti-Arab or anti-Islamic sentiments in Sweden (more than what is »normal«). However, Mr Baksi adds, while there is no immediate danger of broad racism specifically due to the WTC bombing, this may change down the road. The crucial point is how media and responsible politicians responds to the issue in the near future. “I think it is still to early to draw any definite conclusions, although I am seriously concerned about what will be the effects one month or half a year ahead”, Mr Baksi says.

## 2. Extreme right responses to the terrorist outrages

The Swedish extreme right, broadly divided into (a) »neo-Nazi organisations« and (b) »suit & tie fascists«. Both sides are using the WTC attacks in their propaganda, although in completely different ways.

(a) The openly anti-semitic National Socialist Front (NSF) published a leading text which says that the (Swedish) authorities claim that the WTC attack was an »attack on democracy«, and concludes: »If so, it is a vengeance for all the lives Democracy has claimed.«

A conclusion is that to National Socialists, traditional anti-Semitism remains the stronger focal point which eclipse the anti-Arab sentiments.

(b) Contrary to the Nazi scene, the pseudo-respectable Sweden Democrats (SD), which is basically a racist and anti-immigration campaign party, has come out in uncharacteristic »support of Israel« in favour of fostering anti-Arab and anti-Moslim sentiments in Sweden.

19<sup>th</sup> September 2001

# UNITED KINGDOM

## Commission for racial equality (CRE)

### Verbal and physical attacks

In the last week there have been numerous press reports attributing violent assaults and attacks on property to Islamophobia resulting from the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. However, it is impossible at this point to assess whether or to what degree these events have had an impact on recorded incidents of racist crime. Moreover, while it may ultimately be established that September 11<sup>th</sup> has been an aggravating factor in, or the stimulus for, some racist incidents, account will have to be taken of other, possibly more significant, underlying factors.

The following is a brief summary of incidents, which have been linked in the press to a 'backlash' following September 11<sup>th</sup>:

#### *Physical attacks:*

- A 28-year-old Afghan minicab driver was seriously assaulted and left paralysed from the neck down by three men who, according to police, referred to the attacks in New York.
- Another Afghan man was assaulted in Dover and has received serious injuries.
- A 19-year-old Asian woman in Swindon was beaten around the head by two men with a baseball bat prior to which one was reportedly heard to say 'here's a Muslim'.
- In the north east of England a 20-year-old Bangladeshi man suffered a broken jaw after being beaten by a gang of youths.
- "Many Muslims have been spat at and have suffered verbal abuse, particularly women wearing the Hijab" according to a London Times ('Racists seek revenge around the world' 19<sup>th</sup> September 2001).
- A Mosque was firebombed in Bolton when there were twenty people inside.

#### *Threats and attacks on property*

- In Birmingham Mosques have received abusive telephone calls and excrement through their letter boxes.
- In Oldham racist graffiti was daubed on to the walls of a Mosque.
- Bricks have been thrown at Mosques in Belfast, Manchester, London, Southend and Glasgow.
- An Islamic school in London has been forced to close after threatening telephone calls.
- Bomb threats have been made, including one to Regents Park Mosque in central London which lead to an evacuation during Friday prayers.

### Attitudes

Since press reports first began to speculate that the outrages committed in New York and Washington on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September were the work of 'Islamic terrorists', the UK Government has been immediately conscious of the need

1. to reassure Muslim communities who feel vulnerable; and
2. to emphasise that the overwhelming majority of Muslims, both in the UK and in the wider world, do not support such attacks.

From the morning of Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> both Government ministers and the leaders of the UK's faith communities have sought to put out this consistent message.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2001