



## 2018 Report. Change is within our Reach: Islamophobia in the Media

### Executive Summary

During the second year of life of the Spanish Observatory of Islamophobia in the Media, it has maintained its main **objectives**: promoting the debate on media's responsibility and advancing towards a responsible coverage; creating an alternative narrative on Islam and Muslims by spreading positive messages on diversity and interculturality; and contributing, this way, to the perception of the Muslim community as part of the European society while avoiding its criminalization and marginalization. Thus, the Observatory's mission is to observe, analyse, educate, connect, raise awareness and empower.

The **methodology** followed by the Observatory during this second year has continued and has been enriched by the experience of the first year. In order to broaden its scope, instead of only analysing newspapers, as in 2017, the analysis of news agencies has been added. Thus, in 2018 it analysed articles – including news, opinion pieces and interviews – from the following Spanish media and news agencies: *El País*, *La Razón*, Europa Press and EFE. The **Islamophobia Traffic Light** has continued to be the classification criteria in order to assess all the analysed articles.

#### Red

Active Islamophobia

#### Amber

Passive Islamophobia

#### Green

No islamophobia

The **results** of the analysis of 1,905 journalistic articles presented in this Report show a considerable improvement in comparison with the data from 2017. As detailed in the Report, more than half of the



analysed articles in 2018 were not Islamophobic (57% were classified as Green), while the previous year only 38% were not. This **positive trend** proves that the Observatory's awareness-raising task is working. It is important to highlight that no substantial difference was detected between news agencies and newspapers regarding their classification according to the *Islamophobia Traffic Light*: Europa Press and *El País* are the media containing less Islamophobic articles, while more than half of the analysed articles from EFE and *La Razón* were Islamophobic. On another note, gendered Islamophobia decreased in 2018 in the analysed media: while, in 2017, 65% of the articles on Muslim women or the *hijab* were Islamophobic, in 2018 the percentage decreased to 50%. Moreover, a positive evolution in the discourse on refugees was perceived, although the number of articles addressing this issue also diminished during the year.

Nonetheless, the results of 2018 still reveal a **strong presence of Islamophobia** in Spanish media, as Islam is still being related mostly to negative elements. This happens in 73% of the articles, although a slight improvement is observed, as in 2017 it was almost in the 90% of articles. Among these negative elements, terrorism dominates in 2018 the information on Islam: more than 60% of articles about Islam deal with this topic, followed by the issue of radicalization. However, it is important to highlight that in the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, a slight decrease in Islamophobic articles was detected, suggesting a raising awareness among journalists – the same tendency had already been observed in 2017 following the attacks.

As explained in the Report's articles, 2018 has witnessed the same sort of **mistakes** as in 2017, which can pave the way for hate speech to emerge and even hate crimes against Muslims. First, Islamophobia is being normalized and institutionalized, given that neither Islamophobic discourses nor the repetition of generalizations on Islam are being questioned enough. Second, there is a tendency to tie together all Muslim population to actions carried out by a very small group that evokes Islam to justify terrorist acts. Third, Muslim population is still being marginalised through the divulgation of stereotypes and perpetuating stigmatisation, which generates insecurity and isolation among Muslim communities. Finally, some attempts of alternative narratives have failed and have ended up becoming Islamophobic examples, especially when they treat normality as something exceptional.

Through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of Spanish media coverage, as well as with the additional contribution of journalists, analysts and experts, this 2018 Report by the Spanish Observatory of Islamophobia in the Media reveals that there have been improvements when

addressing issues related to Islam and Muslim people. This shows that, although there is still a long way to go, change is within our reach.

### **Observatory Recommendations**

- Beware of **language**, make a correct use of the terminology
- Avoid **reproducing** institutional information without questioning it
- Be aware of the **consequences** of publishing Islamophobic information
- Explore new ways to make **inclusive journalism**
- Comply with the **code of ethics** of each media outlet and contribute to the respect for human rights
- Normalise the **diversity** of Muslim communities in the media and incorporate their voices