

Dear Commissioner Helena Dalli,
Dear Commissioner Ylva Johansson,
Dear Commissioner Didier Reynders,
Dear Commissioner Věra Jourová,

Subject: The European Commission to renew its commitment to fight against Islamophobia in Europe and strengthen the mandate of the Coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred

We, the signatories, anti-racist and human rights organisations, Muslim and non-Muslim, would like to express concerns over the sudden departure of the Coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred and what it entails for the future of the EU work on this issue. We therefore call for a renewed and strengthened commitment from the European Commission on combating Islamophobia in Europe and closer collaboration with civil society organisations.

The Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated violence and discrimination against Muslims and those perceived as such¹. In a context of increasing restrictions to fundamental rights and shrinking civic space, there has been a particular increase of criminalisation of Muslim civil society organisations (CSOs), activists, including via administrative measures hampering their activities and intimidating them. Attacks against Muslims, including by institutions, have reached a worrying level of concern, with limited public condemnation from the European Commission and other EU institutions. For example, in Austria, a government-affiliated Documentation Center for Political Islam publicly launched an “Islam map” which was made available on a website with the names and locations of more than 620 mosques, organisations and officials. In France, attacks on freedom of association and expression have targeted civil society. Shortly after the French government has dissolved the CSO Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCIF) for unfounded reasons after a public smear campaign, it has also attempted to interfere with the allocation of EU funds to another French organization Alliance Citoyenne.

The coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred has facilitated networking between CSOs and their access to European institutions and EU funds. He led the organisations of several events to raise awareness of the issue and provided support to organisations. However, it is important to highlight that the coordinator's position has lacked substantial resources, including lack of institutional and political support.

The publication of the new EU anti-racism action plan and the appointment of an EU anti-racism coordinator is encouraging and shall support tackling anti-Muslim hatred in a more consistent and strategic way. However, as the work on Islamophobia needs meaningful resources and political support we highly recommend to you as Commissioners to appoint a full time Coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred coordinator who will work closely with the EU anti-racism coordinator in order to ensure a smooth transition with the current anti-Muslim hatred coordinator and enable civil society organisations to continue their collaboration with the European Commission. This person should be appointed based on relevant skills, with strong expertise on the issue of Islamophobia and good knowledge of civil society in this field.

In order to secure this commitment and have the possibility to exchange about urgent priorities in the EU on the issue, we would like to request a meeting with you, Commissioners Helena Dalli,

¹ OHCHR, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief (2020), 'UN expert warns against religious hatred and intolerance during COVID-19 outbreak', 22 April 2020

Věra Jourová, Ylva Johansson and Didier Reynders. Considering the situation for Muslims and those perceived as such in Europe, we hope that the European Commission will show political leadership and not leave a gap in its actions on this issue.

Sincerely,

List of signatories

1. Action Droits des Musulmans (ADM)
2. Anti-Racist Forum
3. ANTIGONE - Information and Documentation on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non Violence
4. Asociación Musulmana por los Derechos Humanos
5. Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark - CEDA
6. Centre for Peace Studies
7. Claim - Alliance against anti-Muslim racism
8. Collective against Islamophobia in Belgium (CCIB)
9. Czech Helsinki Committee
10. Documentation and Counselling Center Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism - Dokustelle Austria
11. Equinox - Initiative for Racial Justice
12. European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW)
13. European Network against Racism (ENAR)
14. European Network on Religion and Belief (ENORB)
15. Fair Trials
16. Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)
17. Fundación Al Fanar
18. Greek Forum of Migrants
19. India ki Rasta Foundation
20. Institute Circle
21. LALLAB
22. Maruf
23. Migrant Tales
24. Open Society European Policy Institute
25. Regional Roma Educational Youth Association - RROMA
26. Roma Women Network in Moldova Moldsolidaritate
27. S.P.E.A.K.
28. Trans United Europe/BPOC EU Trans Network