

Report on Anti-Muslim hatred and Discrimination for 2019
By the Commission for Freedom of Religion of the Islamic Community
in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina generally has a sound legal basis for the protection of the human rights and elimination of discrimination. However, difficulties arise in the application of laws, often due to lack of harmonization or complex state setup and its structure, as well as due to lack of awareness and knowledge of legal options as well as sometimes quite specific religious needs.

Nevertheless, the Commission warns against inappropriate iconography, festivities, celebrations and other discriminatory content in public sectors and institutions, especially in Republika Srpska. It was noticed that excessive, inappropriate presence of iconography in public sectors and institutions puts members of other religious beliefs into an unfavorable and discriminatory position. Patron saint celebrations (*krsna slava*), religious ritual programs in which Muslims are also subjected to, endangers their right to freedom of religion and beliefs, and this is especially visible in public schools.

A large number of cities and municipalities in the RS celebrate one Orthodox holiday as a municipal day. These days are celebrated as public holidays. An Orthodox religious holiday, Savior's Day (*Spasovdan*) is the patron saint of the city of Banja Luka. This holiday is celebrated by the city of Banja Luka together with the Serbian Orthodox Church every year on June 6. The celebration begins with the performance of the holy religious liturgy and is usually part of a wider event organized by the city of Banja Luka called "Spring in Banja Luka".¹ The patron saint of Zvornik is Saint Paraskeva (*Sveta Petka Trnova*), who is considered the protector of the city. This holiday is celebrated on August 8, and begins with a holy liturgy and continues with a procession through the city led by the icon of Saint Paraskeva. This day is celebrated as a public holiday that congratulates all citizens of Zvornik and is organized as part of the city event "Summer in Zvornik".²

This problem has not been taken seriously so far. The Commission considers that the secular state has an obligation to protect every individual from discrimination and indoctrination, and in particular discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief.

Hate speech and hate crimes are still present in our society. B&H institutions have not shown sufficient readiness and capacity in the fight against this negative and socially very dangerous phenomenon. Hate speech is especially present on social networks, which have not been

¹ "Liturgijom počelo obilježavanje krsne slave grada", *Nezavisne novine*, 6.6.2019, Banjaluka <https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/banjaluka/Liturgijom-pocelo-obiljezavanje-krsne-slave-grada-Banjaluka/542235> (Accessed: 3.9.2019.)

² Grad Zvornik, <http://www.gradzvornik.org/2019/08/09/proslavljena-slava-grada-zvornika/?script=lat> (Accessed: 13.2.2020.)

sufficiently treated in the application of judicial instances. A positive example is the decision of the Cantonal Court in Travnik in case no. 49 0 K 041 354 18 Kž by which the perpetrator was convicted of a hate crime and sentenced to 9 months in prison and 10500 KM in damages to the injured party.

REGISTERED CASES OF VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION OF MUSLIMS IN B&H FOR 2019.

A. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE COMMISSION FOR FREEDOM OF RELIGION OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY IN B&H IN 2019

During 2019, the Commission received the following complaints::

1. Member of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regarding the denial of the right to wear a headscarf at work. The applicant alleges that she has been prevented from wearing the headscarf at work for a long time and that she was sanctioned for wearing a headscarf for 7 months and banned from promotion for a period of three years. After being returned to work by a court decision, she was given another position against her will. She also states that she was warned again that if she continues to come to work with a headscarf, she may lose her job. Also she states that she is under pressure to take a picture for a military card without a headscarf.
2. Initiative from a citizen of Sarajevo to provide a space for prayers for students and teaching staff in all primary and secondary schools in the Sarajevo Canton. As a positive example, he cites a practice in a school in Vienna, Austria, in which a space for praying different religions was provided in the school premises.
3. The Majlis of IC Stolac seeks assistance in relation to the Municipality of Stolac in order to provide a plot for cemeteries due to the lack of burial places in the existing cemeteries. The complaint states that the municipality does not respond to their requests, which they consider discrimination against Muslims.
4. Threats made to Imam Emir Nuhić by Danel Rajković. These are repeated threats, and requests that the state authorities be notified in order to detect and prosecute the perpetrators and protect the imam.

B. CASES DOCUMENTED THROUGH MEDIA MONITORING IN 2019

1. Documented cases of desecrating mosques, cemeteries and other facilities of the Islami Community; 2. Documented verbal and physical attacks.; 3. Discrimination in public institutions; 4. Hate speech and Islamophobia; These attacks were registered throughout BiH, most commonly in returnee areas.

1. **Documented cases of desecrating mosques, cemeteries and other facilities of the IC.**

Prijedor, 6.3.2019. Graffiti at the entrance of a Prijedor mosque.

Perpetrators wrote offensive graffiti (the Serb nationalists four S symbol) at the entrance of the Čaršija mosque in Prijedor, and at a nearby garage. The desecration of this religious building in Prijedor, and the accompanying buildings belonging to the Islamic community is not the first time. This building was attacked and desecrated in 2014, when the windows on the windows of the mosque were broken. Prijedor is a place of terrible suffering, camps and other crimes against humanity, so messages like this are even more dangerous.

Zvornik / Bijeljina, June 13, 2019. Hate messages at the cemetery and mosque in Zvornik and Bijeljina.

In this area in 2019, several cases were registered. First, on the night of June 7, 2019, in the city cemetery of Kazanbašča in Zvornik, unknown persons demolished four tombstones, causing significant material damage, completely destroying or significantly damaging the tombstones. In June 2019, insulting and threatening leaflets were placed on the notice board in front of the Atik Mosque in Bijeljina, on the entrance door to the mosque and on the entrance door of the official premises of the Majlis of the Islamic Community of Bijeljina. A leaflet and a wire were drawn on the leaflets, and 'Srebrenica' was written; a leaflet with the inscription 'Fatherland is this Serb' and a leaflet which included the image of Draža Mihailović, with the inscription 'Our ancestors fell a long time ago "Your name, Serbia, has become famous."

Gacko, September 23, 2019. Rajković relieved himself in front of the Mehmet-aga Zvizdić mosque in Gacko, and then sent messages to Imam Nuhic.

After a series of verbal threats to Imam Nuhic, video surveillance in front of the mosque shows that Danel Rajković relieved himself in front of the central mosque in Gacko. The Police Administration of Trebinje confirmed that "police officers act upon the report". The perpetrator is being tried in court.

Tuzla, May 12, 2019 - Removal of the flags of the Islamic Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

An unknown person or several of them, in front of the mosque in Nova Kasaba tore down the state flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and removed and took away the flag of the Islamic Community. This attack on the property of the Islamic Community is an attempt to intimidate returnees and cause unrest in areas where genocide was committed and where there are hundreds of mass graves of genocide victims.

Banja Luka, April 10, 2019. Offensive graffiti on the mosque under construction.

An unknown person, or several of them, wrote insulting graffiti on the Arnaudija mosque in Banja Luka, which is under reconstruction. Police officers from Banja Luka conducted an investigation and stated that they were taking the necessary measures and actions in order to determine all the circumstances of this crime. The prosecutor of the District Public Prosecutor's Office in Banja Luka was informed about the acts of inciting hatred and attacking the property of the Islamic Community.

2. Documented verbal (and physical) attacks.

Gacko, August 13 2019. A man in Gacko beat a passenger in front of a police officer, cursing his "Muslim mother".

The attacker was identified as Saša Lažetić from Nevesinje. At the bus station in Gacko, he beat a man, allegedly of Roma nationality, in front of a police officer, cursing his Muslim mother. The footage shows a police officer watching calmly and not reacting.

Bosanski Novi, March 17 2019. Threats to Imam Emir Nuhić.

The imam in Blagaj near Bosanski Novi feared for his own life, but also for the lives of his wife and three minor children, after the messages and death threats he received from a certain Danel Rajković via Facebook. Rajković addressed Nuhić via messenger on the Facebook page "Džemat Blagaj Emir Nuhić", which was established by the Blagaj imam so that he could inform his congregation members about the activities of the congregation. The threats to the imam were repeated often and were reported to the police each time. In those messages, Rajković called Nuhić a *balija*, and in addition to insulting words and swearing: "I would rape your daughter and wife in the mosque, and you, like a dog, are bound to watch. Then I would slaughter you and set fire to the mosque. " In repeated messages, Rajković also mentioned Russian President Vladimir Putin, for whom he wished to "go crazy and start killing Muslims like Hitler's Jews, to start dropping nuclear bombs on all major Muslim cities, such as Tehran, Istanbul, Baghdad, Cairo ...". " We should at least split into half the number of Muslims in the world, because Islam is evil. You need to invent a disease like HIV in Africa, so that you can kill your children as well. It fell on Markale !!! Knife, wire, Srebrenica !!!" He emphasizes that he stands firmly behind his previously uttered words, and states that "Turks will personally drink blood ", and that for that he only needs a machine gun with four frames and a few bombs." It's just that there are no Muslims near me, they are all Chetniks. But I'll come up with something. I need a bunch of Turks to shoot at them and drop bombs "...

Trebinje, July 19, 2019 Chetnik songs were sung to the imam of Trebinje, Sadrž Mir Mustafić.

Intimidation of returnees was again reported in Trebinje. A group of young men shouted numerous insults at Sadrž Mir Mustafić, the imam and secretary of the Majlis of the Islamic Community of Trebinje. They arrived under his window with the obvious intention of frightening Imam Mustafić by mentioning Draža Mihajlović, the Chetniks and Srebrenica. At that moment, the Imam was in the house with his wife and minor children. The case was reported to the police. The police dispersed the criminals from the place. However, that is always the end of it. Previous Trebinje imams also pointed to similar cases in which numerous people in an alcoholic state came in front of mosques and their houses to insult them and other believers.

Rogatica, June 2, 2019 Returnee Elvir Bahto attacked by his neighbor Milan.

Elvir Bahto from Rogatica, after being attacked by his neighbor Milan, stated that the police detained the attacker, but released him the next day. The attack happened when Bahto went for iftar, in the month of Ramadan. The attacker cursed his Turkish and Ustasha mother. Then he attacked the car and smashed the windshield with a shovel. The police intervened, and arrested the perpetrator again.

Banja Luka, August 17, 2019 Sanctioned for insulting an imam.

D. V. was sanctioned by being handed a misdemeanour order for insulting. He insulted a religious official in the Goran Radulović Bimba Street. D. V. was sanctioned by for insulting the imam in front of the Dolac mosque.

2. Discrimination in public institutions

In B&H entity RS, many schools still bear the name "Saint Sava", which is unacceptable for Bosniaks. The fact that the Orthodox celebration of "Saint Sava" is celebrated in secondary and primary schools shows that education reforms in the RS have not been successfully implemented. In order for the educational process in this entity to be established according to European and world standards, it is necessary to eliminate all elements of religious, national and any other discrimination. Disabling Bosniaks from studying in the Bosnian language and national groups of subjects additionally indicates discrimination against Bosniaks in the B&H entity of RS.

Srebrenica, October 14, 2019.

A religious program, which was organized by the mayor and the municipal administration, presented as a "celebration of the patron saint of the municipality", is a direct and gross violation of the Statute of the Municipality of Srebrenica and illegal imposition of a mono-ethnic and monotheistic holiday to all citizens of Srebrenica. The attempt of the mayor of Srebrenica is an expression of his policy of appropriating Srebrenica, as an exclusively Serb municipality, in

which there is no place for Bosniaks, which has a special symbolism in the city where the genocide was committed.

4. Hate speech and Islamophobia

Vlasenica, April 23, 2019. Threatening messages to the imam in Vlasenica.

The police in Vlasenica were informed that a person with the initials S. S. from Živinice had sent threatening and insulting messages by phone to a religious official of the Islamic Community from Vlasenica. The Zvornik Police Administration said that they acted upon the report and informed the duty prosecutor.

Bosanska Gradiška, May 5, 2019. Incident in front of the Obradovac mosque.

Believers of Obradovac congregation near Bosanska Gradiška awaited the beginning of Ramadan with fear as they were insulted on religious grounds. This incident happened in the afternoon. Everything was recorded by video surveillance. Some persons got out of the car with the symbolic pointing of a 'weapon' at the mosque and 'shooting' at it. Some witnesses heard insulting cursings against Muslims: "Balija on a stake", "we will demolish all mosques and kill all Muslims".

Foča, Aladza-mosque, May 4, 2019. Nationalistic photo on Facebook.

A person named V.M. posted photos on facebook with the image of convicted war criminal Ratko Mladic and her war-time photo armed with a weapon at the front door of Aladža mosque which is a, a zero-category cultural monument. This mosque was rebuilt after systematic demolition in 1992.

Široki Brijeg, December 1, 2019. Picture of war criminal at football match.

During a match football fans of the home team pointed out a picture of Slobodan Praljak convicted of war crimes in the Hague Tribunal.

Cases in 2020 (selection)

6 April 2020, Windows of Mosque in Komatin street, in Sarajevo demolished

20 February 2020, Student F.S. with headscarf harassed in Srebrenica; the girl was surrounded by Serb children who verbally assaulted her and wanted to take off her headscarf

28 May, 2020, Policeman in Mrkonjić Grad (Republika Srpska) verbally assaulted a Bosniak car driver: “Shut up you Muslim (baliya) shit! I will give you a fine of 100 KM and then you will learn your lesson.”