

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND EUROPE

**Date and Place: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, Mirror Hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague**

Terrorist attacks of 9/11 as well as attacks in Madrid and London, together with more visible activities of Muslim extremists living in Europe, strengthen already existing negative stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims as a whole. Increased proliferation of printed or internet based materials presenting Islam as a dangerous political ideology rather than a religion gave birth to individuals or groups that decided to actively resist Muslim presence in Europe.

In addition, the so-called Arab Spring brought to power or political prominence movements and parties generally labeled as Islamist. Watching dramatic news from Egypt and other Arab states, an average European citizen feels confused and even threatened by what seems to be a rising tide of political Islam that often pronounces anti-West sentiments. European public, already battered by the worsening financial and social situation that is due to the economic crisis, seems to be susceptible to the calls of the reinvigorated extreme political right and various kinds of populists. In the competition for voters, even mainstream political parties started to adopt some aspects of the populist agenda.

Another aspect influencing the position of Muslims in Europe is the identity crisis of many Europeans who find themselves living in a post-modern society whose traditional values, social links and social certainties are quickly eroding mainly due to the effects of globalization. Some Europeans are searching for an identity anchored in a negative definition vis-à-vis some “others” and in return to some “pure” idealized past that is often expressed in a strong nationalist vocabulary.

As a result, even the Czech Republic with its negligible minority of Muslims is experiencing a rise in the number of people who are overtly anti-Muslim or who try to use the fear of Muslims for political gains. These people are often described as Islamophobes.

It has been more than two decades since the term “Islamophobia” was coined and despite the fact that it has been used by the UN and the EU it is still being contested by some academics and politicians and by most of those labeled with such “diagnosis”.

***The international conference therefore aims at 1) conceptualizing Islamophobia and assessing the social and political significance of this trend, 2) assessing Islamophobia in the Czech Republic and 3) exploring the nature of Muslim community in Europe and its perception of Islamophobia.***

Partners



Embassy of the State of Kuwait  
in the Czech Republic



## PROGRAMME

09:00-09:30 Registration

**09:30-11:00 Panel I:  
Islamophobia: Definitions and manifestations**

*Is it possible to objectively define Islamophobia and to what extent does it make sense to use this term? Is anti-Semitism comparable to Islamophobia? Is the Muslim world overblowing the issue?*

Speakers:

**Robin Richardson**, Consultant, Insted, United Kingdom

**Juliane Wetzel**, Researcher, Center for Research on Anti-Semitism, Germany

**Sami Al-Faraj**, Director, Kuwait Centre for Strategic Studies, Kuwait

11:00-11:15 Coffee break

**11:15-12:45 Panel II:  
Islamophobia in the Czech Republic**

*What is the nature of anti-Muslim sentiments in the Czech Republic? Are there already some victims of Islamophobia in the country? What is the potential of violence by extreme right groups under the banner of a “resistance to Islamization”?*

Speakers:

**Bronislav Ostřanský**, Research Fellow, Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic

**Klára Kalibová**, Analyst, In IUSTITIA, Czech Republic

**Miroslav Mareš**, Researcher, Masaryk University, Czech Republic

12:45-13:45 Buffet lunch

**13:45-15:30 Panel III:  
Who are the Muslims in Europe and how do they perceive Islamophobia?**

*What do Muslims in Europe want from and think of the society they live in? Central European Muslims – an uncharted territory? Do European Muslims experience similar conditions regarding Islamophobia as Muslims in the US?*

Speakers:

**Tufyal Choudhury**, Senior Policy Advisor, At home in Europe Project - Muslims in EU Cities, UK

**Konrad Pedziwiatr**, Assistant Professor, Tischner European University, Poland

**Nadia Marzouki**, Research Fellow, European University Institute, Italy

Working language: English

RSVP: Please confirm your participation to the Conference Service of the Institute of International Relations (email: [registrace@iir.cz](mailto:registrace@iir.cz)) by Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May at the latest.

## Profiles of speakers

**Robin Richardson** is a consultant on equality and diversity issues and was formerly director of the Runnymede Trust, an NGO in London concerned with issues having to do with racism and intolerance. He is the author, editor or co-editor of many publications on education and of the following books: *Islamophobia: a Challenge for Us All* (1997), *Islamophobia: Issues, Challenges and Action* (2004), *Young, Muslim and Citizen: Identity, Empowerment and Change* (2009) and *Pointing the Finger: Islam and Muslims in the UK Media* (2011). There is fuller information about his work on Islamophobia at <http://www.insted.co.uk/islam.html>.

**Juliane Wetzel** is an historian; she received her PhD in Munich in 1986. From 1986–1991, she was a researcher at the Institute for Contemporary History, Munich. Since 1991, Wetzel is a senior researcher and academic staff member at the Center for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University Berlin. She is a member of the German delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA; former ITF) and chaired its Academic Working Group for four years. She is further a member of the German Parliament's (Bundestag) Expert Board on Combating Antisemitism, and is also a member of the Board of the Simon Wiesenthal Institute, Vienna. Wetzel has published various books and has written numerous articles on contemporary antisemitism, Jewish persecution and emigration during the National Socialist era, solidarity and help for Jews in Italy during Nazi occupation, antisemitism in Italy since the 1930s, and Jewish displaced persons in Germany after World War II.

**Sami Al-Faraj** heads the Kuwait Centre for Strategic Studies (KCSS), which he established in 1997 as the first private consulting center on strategic issues in the Gulf region. He was educated at the Kuwait military Academy, the universities of Kuwait and Cambridge, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Oxford. He is a consultant to numerous Kuwaiti and Gulf ruling families, GCC public and private agencies on strategic planning, decision-making and crisis-management. He also is an international lawyer, and a frequent writer and TV and radio guest and presenter on Gulf Security, strategy, women-empowerment, the Muslim history and international law issues. In the field of development, Sami Al-Faraj was contracted by the ruling family of Kuwait to write "Bridge 21: Crossing to a New Century," (1997-2000), and again by the Government of Kuwait to write the follow up study "The Strategic Vision of Kuwait" (1999-2000). Both have been endorsed by the Kuwaiti leadership as the blueprint for Kuwait's developmental path in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**Bronislav Ostřanský** is a research fellow at the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. He graduated from the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University, specializing in the Arabic language and the history and culture of Islamic countries (Ph.D. 2005). His research focuses mainly on medieval Islamic thought, especially mysticism (Sufism) and popular Muslim religiosity. Dr. Ostřanský is the author of several monographs devoted to the Islamic society (e.g. *The Perfect Man and his World in the Mirror of Islamic Mysticism* or *The Arabic Oneirology in the Middle Ages and at the Present Times*). He also translated into Czech an anthology of medieval Sufi writings (*The Quest for the Hidden Treasure*) and selected chapters from Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi's encyclopedic treatise (*The Description of Sights of Egypt*). He published several articles on Czech Muslim minority and the Czech society's perception of it (*Nový Orient, Dingir, Vesmír*) and he is a co-author of a comprehensive monograph *Islam in the Heart of Europe*. Currently, he is working on an analysis of the so called Sufi psychology of the Path as depicted in various Medieval writings.

**Klára Kalibová** works as a lawyer, and analyst for the civic association In IUSTITIA, a counselling centre for victims of hate violence, which she also founded. She regularly publishes and lectures on hate violence, racism and far right movements. In 2009–2010 she was a Fulbright Masaryk scholar and spent several months working with leading NGOs addressing hate violence and extremism in the US. Currently she is working on her Ph.D. in law at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.

**Miroslav Mareš** is a chairman of the Section of Security and Strategic Studies of the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno. He received M.A. in political science (1997) and law (1999) from Masaryk University, which is the same university from which he also received his Ph.D. in political science (2002). Since 1997, he works at the Department of Political Science of the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University. He was also a court expert on criminal science for the Regional Court in Brno (2001-2008). He focuses on research of political violence and extremism, namely in the East Central European context. He is, a.o., the author of the publications *Right-wing Extremism and Radicalism in the Czech Republic* (in Czech, 2003) or *Terrorism in the Czech Republic* (in Czech 2005).

**Tufyal Choudhury** is the senior policy advisor to the At Home in Europe Project - Muslims in EU Cities. He was the author of the OSI report 'The Situation of Muslims in the UK' (2002) and led the OSI research on Muslims in the UK, editing and contributing to the publication *Muslims in the UK: Policies for Engaged Citizens* (2005). He was seconded to work as part of the Home Office Strategic Policy Team during its review of policy in this area. Choudhury is also a lecturer in law at the University of Durham and a research associate at the University of Oxford Centre on Migration Policy and Society where he is working on a report reviewing 'Social Inclusion Studies among Selected Minority Groups in the United Kingdom'. His research and publications cover the areas of racial and religious discrimination, integration, human rights and counter-terrorism, contributing to advancing both academic and public policy debates. Recent publications include *Immigration, Faith and Cohesion: Evidence from Local Areas with Significant Muslim Populations* (co-authored with H. Jayaweera, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008) 'Muslims and Discrimination' in S. Amghar, A. Boubekur and M. Emerson (eds.). Choudhury has appeared as an expert on issues of human rights, equality and Muslims on the BBC, CNN and European news channels. He graduated from the Universities of London and Cambridge, and was called to the Bar as a member of the Inner Temple.

**Konrad Pedziwiatr** is Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Tischner European University (Poland). He holds a PhD in Social Science from the Katholieke Universiteit (Catholic University) of Leuven (Belgium) where he worked as a researcher between 2004 and 2008. His previous appointments include the Department of Social Science and Humanities at the University of Bradford and Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford. His recent publications include *The New Muslim Elites in European Cities: Religion and Active Social Citizenship Amongst Young Organized Muslims in Brussels and London* (2010, VDM) and *From the Islam of Immigrants to the Islam of Citizens: Muslims in the Countries of Western Europe* (2005, 2007, Nomos). He published on different dimensions of the Muslim presence in Europe in *European Judaism* (2008), *Social Compass* (2007, 2011) and the *ISIM Newsletter* (2006). He is editor of the biggest web portal in Poland devoted to the Middle Eastern and Muslim issues in Poland, [www.Arabia.pl](http://www.Arabia.pl), and the National Coordinator of the EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel).

**Nadia Marzouki** is a Research Fellow in the Mediterranean Program at the RSCAS. She received her PhD in political science from Sciences-Po, Paris in 2008. She has been a postdoctoral fellow at the Council on Middle Eastern Studies, Yale University (2008-2010), and a visiting scholar at the University of Berkeley (2004-2005) and Princeton University (2005-2006). Her work examines public controversies about Islam in Europe and the United States, and about Evangelical Christianity and religious freedom in North Africa. She is currently writing a book on American debates about Islam that will be published in France in March 2013. She is also co-editing a book with Olivier Roy, *On Religious Conversions in the Mediterranean World*, (Palgrave/Macmillan, publication planned for Winter 2013).

## Moderators

**Šádí Shanaáh** is a director of Czech NGO "Insaan: Czech-Arab Center for Cultural Dialogue", which aims at deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices about Arabs and Muslims in the Czech Republic. He earned his master degree in Contemporary European Studies at the University of Cambridge. He also works as a project coordinator at the Heinrich Böll Foundation and as a lecturer in contemporary issues of the Middle East at the Anglo-American University in Prague. He frequently comments on the Middle East in the Czech media. He authored "Islamic winter or winter of Islamists?", a chapter in the forthcoming book *Arab revolutions: Democratic Challenges, Political Islam and Geopolitical Impacts* and the chapter called "Eurabia" in the forthcoming book *Czech Visions of Europe*.

**Marek Čejka** focuses on the Middle East, relation between religion and politics, international law, religious radicalism and terrorism. He published the following books: *Judaism and Politics in Israel* (2002, 2009), *Israel and Palestine* (2005), *Encyclopedia of the Middle Eastern Terrorism* (2007), *History of Modern Israel* (2010), and the photographic book *People of the Holy Lands* (2012), and he is also a co-author of the book *Rabbis of our Time* (2010). Currently he is a university lecturer and works at the Institute of International Relations, Prague. He also runs a blog about the Middle East (<http://blizky-vychod.blogspot.com>)