



2024

ACTIVITY OF WORK

In this issue:

- Safe Worship in Europe Report 2023-2024
- Speaking & Engagement at EU Funded Sister Projects
- MEET Conference 2024
- Engagement with the UNOCT & UNAOC
- Presenting at the EU Forum on The Protection of Public Spaces
- Speaking at the 7th EU Academy of Religion Conference
- Part of the OSCE/ODHIR Expert Seminar on Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes

EDITORIAL NOTE

It is a great pleasure and gratitude to welcome you to the Enhancing Faith Institutions (EFI) 2024 activity report. This is an opportunity for us to share the success we have achieved as an organisation to serve the diverse communities online and offline across 2024. We dedicate our work to benefit and equip the communities with the skills required to tackle the issues we face together, such as the rise in hate crimes, attacks on faith institutions, and the growing narrative of the far right in Europe. A key focus for us over this year has been to continue on the work delivered by the EU Funded SOAR project that finished in 2023. The SOAR Project delivered impactful results over three years across Europe and left a legacy that we are working to continue across the various networks we developed.

EFI successfully delivered the third Muslim European Empowerment Programme (MEET) in the city of Kristiansand, Norway. The MEET programme is a unique programme and important initiative to promote intra-faith and interfaith dialogue, building capacity of key stakeholders to address the challenges facing Muslims in Europe and to celebrate the achievements and contributions being made to European life by Muslim leaders.

As well as delivering on our key agendas, the EFI management team participated and engaged in various external engagements and conferences sharing our expertise and learnings in the arena of community development capacity building. EFI attended the EU Operators Forum to talk about the rising threats and incidents against Mosques and Muslims across Europe. This was on the back of the development of the second 'Safe Worship in Europe' Report that looked at the rising incidents against Faith Institutions in Europe in the year following the October 7th attacks. We have had the pleasure of presenting our experiences and work at various EU-Funded Sister Projects across Europe as well as the international stage with our engagement with the OSCE, UNAOC and UNOCT.



Safe Worship in Europe: Incidents Against Places of Worship in Europe Since October 7th Report

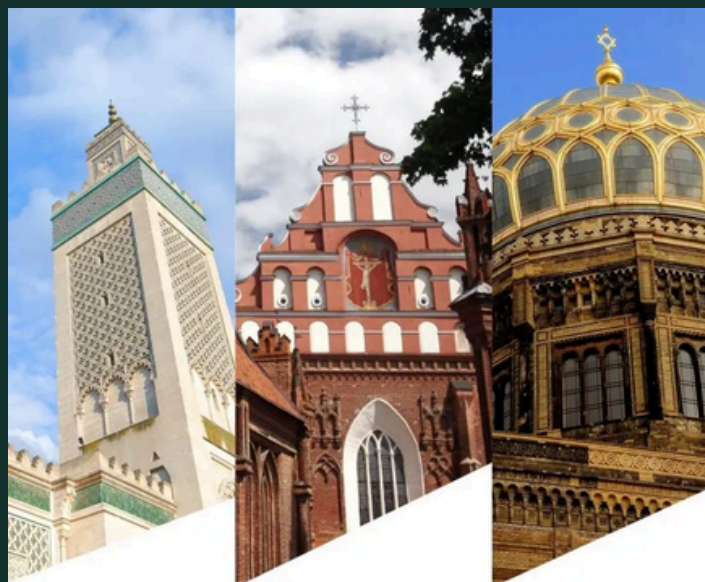
Report Highlights Alarming Rise in Incidents Against Places of Worship Across Europe on the Anniversary of October 7th Attack in Israel

On the first anniversary of the tragic attack in Israel on October 7th, and the subsequent devastating loss of life and humanitarian crisis in Gaza, a newly released report sheds light on a concerning trend of increasing incidents targeting places of worship throughout Europe. This data reflects a disturbing rise in religious intolerance and violence, prompting urgent calls for collective action to ensure the safety and security of houses of worship.

Enhancing Faith Institutions (EFI) has published this new report, building on the first version of the Safe to Worship in Europe report in 2023, detailing incidents against places of worship in Europe over a one-year period from October 7th 2023. The Safe to Worship in Europe: Incidents Against Places of Worship in the Europe covers incidents against EU member states from October 7th 2023 until October 7th 2024.

The types of incidents documented include vandalism, arson, harassment, and physical assaults targeting various religious communities, including Jewish, Muslim, Christians, and their places of worship & religious centres.

[**View Report**](#)



SAFE WORSHIP IN EUROPE

Incidents Against Places of Worship in Europe Since October 7th 2023

2024

RELEASED 7TH OCTOBER 2024 / COMPILED
BY ENHANCING FAITH INSTITUTIONS

EFI Enhancing
Faith Institutions
PLACES • PEOPLE • PROGRAMMES

1.1 Key Findings (2023-24)



France:

- **Incidents:** A sharp increase in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents, especially post-October 2023. The Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF) reported 1676 anti-Semitic acts in 2023, compared to 436 the year before.
- **Types of Attacks:** Vandalism of mosques and synagogues, physical assaults, and hate speech
- **State Response:** Increased security around religious sites and ban on pro-Palestinian demonstrations in certain areas to avoid escalation.



Germany:

- **Incidents:** A significant rise in Islamophobic incidents, particularly targeting mosques. In 2023, 1926 anti-Muslim incidents documented, an increase by 114% compared to 2022 (CLAIM, 2023).
- **Types of Attacks:** Vandalism, threats, and attacks on places of worship.
- **State Response:** Strengthened hate crime units and increased public awareness campaigns around religious tolerance.



Speaking at SHIELD Final Event in Brussels

EFI were pleased to be invited to speak at the SHIELD Final Event, which took place in February 2024 in Brussels. The SHIELD Project is a European initiative that aimed to protect places of worship from the risks of terrorism and violent attacks, by developing effective strategies and tools to assess and enhance their security and resilience.

Places of worship, such as mosques, churches and synagogues, are vital for the civil coexistence and social and cultural cohesion of the EU and its citizens. However, they are also vulnerable to terrorist attacks, as witnessed by the tragic events that occurred in Europe in the last decade.

To address this challenge, the SHIELD Project, funded by the European Commission through its Internal Security Fund, brought together 18 partners from 10 EU countries, representing EU public and private actors, religious organisations, security practitioners, law enforcement agencies, municipalities, experts in risk detection and technological partners.

EFI spoke on an expert panel with fellow EU funded projects discussing the following:

1. What are the main threats and vulnerabilities that places of worship and religious communities face in the current and future context of terrorism and violent attacks? (SOAR)
2. How can your project foster a culture of security and trust among the places of worship and religious communities, and among the wider society? (SOAR)

EFI shared insights and knowledge derived from the delivery of the SOAR project, sharing shared experiences from the diverse faith communities and institutions within the SOAR network and some prevention measures and next steps to consider to reduce hate crimes and incidents against Places of Worship across Europe.



Attending SHRINES Hackathon in Assisi on Protection of Places of Worship

Enhancing Faith Institutions was invited by the SHRINES Project to visit the beautiful and spiritual town of Assisi in Italy from 25th – 27th November 2024. The three-day hackathon event brought together innovators, exhibitors and project leaders from other EU funded project to explore the technological solutions for the protection of places of worship.

The Tech hakathon was a ground-breaking event to foster technological innovations that enhance the security and safety of places of worship while respecting their fundamental characteristics and ethical values. The hackathon event lasted three days and integrated the unique capabilities of start-ups, research centres, universities, SMEs, and European project consortia.



In addition to the Hackathon event, a series of side events in the form of Exhibition Areas and Workshops, focused on aspects of technology and ethics in the context of the protection of public spaces and Critical Infrastructures were organised.

EFI presented in a panel discussion with other European projects and organisations on the work we have done through the SOAR Project to protect at-risk religious sites and assessing the new vulnerabilities and threats against Places of Worship and discussing the solutions to reduce the threat level across Europe.



Synergies to protect places of worship and religious gatherings



EFI was honoured to attend and be part of the SPIRIT Project's third table top exercise event in Rome at the Palazzo Valentini in December 2024. The conference brought together policy makers, law enforcement, faith representatives, EU funded projects and other dignitaries from across Italy and Europe.

SPIRIT is a project funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund, aimed at protecting places of worship and religious gatherings from the risks of terrorism and violent extremism. To this purpose, the project gathered EU public and private actors, religious organisations, security practitioners, law enforcement agencies, municipalities, experts in risk detection and technological partners in order to identify, for each religion, critical points in places of worship as well as circumstances and rituals that are more subject to the risk of terrorist attacks.



EFI Speaking at 7th European Academy of Religion Conference in Italy



The European Academy of Religion announced its seventh Annual Conference, which took place in Palermo, Italy in May 2024. Enhancing Faith Institutions (EFI) were present and had the privilege of engaging with academics, faith leaders, community experts and political leaders.

EFI successfully delivered a seminar on 'Sport and Faith' with the panel examining the powerful synergy of faith and sport, a transformative concept with the potential for significant positive impact worldwide. Focusing on inclusivity in sports, especially for faith communities across Europe, the discussion highlighted partnerships with national and international sporting bodies to extend recreational activities to faith institutions.

The intersection of faith and sport serves as a dynamic force, bridging gaps between diverse communities, cultures, and backgrounds. This initiative aligns with the United Nations #SPORT2030 agenda and the EU's emphasis on sports development for community cohesion and social inclusion. The panel delves into multifaceted work in football, cricket, and athletics, showcasing how sports act as a catalyst for lasting change within faith communities.



MEET Conference 2024

The 3rd annual conference and leadership retreat of the Muslim European Empowerment Programme (MEET) took place from May 3rd to 6th, 2024. This significant event, which built upon last year's interfaith conference at the University of Agder, promoted intra-faith and interfaith dialogue, enhance the capacities of key stakeholders, and address challenges facing Muslims in Europe. It also celebrates the achievements and contributions of the Muslim community to European society.



MEET 2024 hosted over 50 leaders from 15 EU states, along with 1,000 participants from Kristiansand, the Nordic countries, and other EU regions. This year, the event proudly partnered with The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) to enrich the Kristiansand Interfaith Dialogue.

The MEET conference lasted four days and discussed the following key topics:

- Israel and Palestine Conflict: Discussions on the challenges ahead.
- Leadership Development in Dialogue Dynamics: Strategies for fostering effective communication and leadership.
- Dividing lines between freedom of speech and hate speech
- Women and Youth: Focusing on local leadership engagement and development.
- Council of Europe Conference - Democracy & EU Challenges and Opportunities 2024/2025: Addressing the broader context of European democracy and the challenges and opportunities it faces.

MEET is an essential platform for combating Islamophobia and reinforcing democratic values across Europe. By fostering dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, the conference aims to promote a collective effort towards positive change and mutual understanding.

EU Forum on the Protection of Public Spaces

June 4th 2024

On 4 June 2024, the European Commission DG HOME convened another meeting of the EU Forum on the Protection of Public Spaces, as part of the implementation of the EU Action Plan for the Protection of Public Spaces, and of the 2020 Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU. The meeting brings together private operators, law enforcement, faith organizations and other relevant stakeholders to exchange information, best practices and lessons learned on the protection of public spaces from terrorist attacks within the EU.

EFI are part of the Operators Forum and were invited to engage and share insight into the current picture of hate crime incidents and the work being delivered across Europe in faith communities to prevent incidents against Places of Worship.

EU Forum on the Protection of Public Spaces

December 2024



NEXT STEPS / RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS / LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Increase Protection for Vulnerable Sites / Increase awareness of vulnerability assessment
- Proactive Monitoring of Extremist Groups
- Strengthen Legal Frameworks and awareness that Hate does not pay/reward
- Develop Specialised Hate Crime Units & Intelligence sharing
- Support Public Awareness Campaigns

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUSLIM COMMUNITY

- Establish Security Committees
- Faith Leadership Engagement on security - Intelligence sharing
- Promote Cybersecurity Awareness
- Foster Women and Youth Engagement around topics of safety and security
- Institutionalise Safety and Security and a leadership pillar
- Engage with local, regional and national decision makers

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT / DECISION-MAKERS

- Simplifying reporting mechanisms
- Trust building measure with Faith Leaders and Law enforcement
- Joint Vulnerability assessments and remedial measures for protection, jointly developed
- Funding for physical security enhancements - targeted and promoted

13TH EU FORUM FOR THE PROTECTION OF PUBLIC SPACES
5th December 2024
WWW.EFIORG.EU

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The last EU Forum on the Protection of Public Spaces was held in December online. EFI provided a detailed presentation on the 'Threats towards the Muslim community and Muslim institutions in Europe'. We provided insight and statistics that show the increased level of incidents against the Muslim community since the October 7th attacks.



UN Parliamentary Policy Dialogue Conference to Present Work on Protection on Places of Worship

The Third Parliamentary Policy Dialogue concluded today under the theme **“Protecting Religious Sites, Symbols and Objects against Terrorist Threats.”**

It was co-organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) through its Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism and the Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets, with the support of the Shura Council of the State of Qatar, and in partnership with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA).

This hybrid meeting gathered around 80 in-person and 30 online representatives of Parliamentary Assemblies, National Parliaments from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, as well as the United Nations Global Network of Experts on Vulnerable Targets Protection.

EFI were invited to share thoughts on protecting places of worship in Europe and the Nordic states through our extensive networks and the SOAR project funded by the European Commission. A key area of his presentation was the development of community resilience, partnership building with state institutions, community awareness for self protection and leadership development.



The 10th UNAOC Global Forum for Global Peace

The 10th UNAOC Global Forum, held in Cascais, brought together a group known as 'friends' of the Alliance of Civilizations (AOC), with political and religious leaders, representatives of national and regional organizations, and members of secular societies, groups of academics, youths, journalists, and donor agencies and foundations were present at the meeting.

Among the 1,800 people attending the forum were Portugal's President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, King Filipe VI of Spain, and António Guterres, a former Portuguese prime minister, now secretary-general of the United Nations.

Various speakers addressed a number of key peace and security issues, including bridging aggressive regional divides, promoting international harmony, and restoring trust among nations.

EFI were invited to the stage to speak about our work in protecting Places of Worship in Europe and the Nordic states. We presented our recent report 'Safe Worship in Europe' which provided insights into the increased level of incidents against Places of Worship and faith communities in Europe in the year following the October 7th attacks in Israel. We highlighting our work in the SOAR project, which was also referenced by the European dignitaries present at the conference.

The conference ended with a 25-paragraph declaration of much-needed innovative actions. These included the use of AI to influence intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. AI could also combat disinformation, misinformation and hate speech while strengthening factual integrity.

Mosque Security Awareness Conference 14th December 2024 Copenhagen, Denmark



Enhancing Faith institutions (EFI) were proud to be invited to speak, present and engage in Copenhagen, Denmark at the Mosque Security Conference organised and facilitated by the Dansk Muslimsk Union. In attendance were various management and leadership from Mosques across Copenhagen and key organisations. The outcome was the sharing of best practice and a commitment to supporting Muslim institutions across Copenhagen and Denmark in protective security.



Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Christian Communities

Expert Meeting, Warsaw



Anti-Christian hate crimes —which target Christian individuals and communities, or people perceived to be Christians— continue to remain a concern across the OSCE region. Given the numerous religious denominations and movements that comprise Christianity, crimes motivated by a bias against Christians can take many different forms, ranging from graffiti to vandalism, to physical assaults against Christians, or attacks against Christian churches.

As a result, anti-Christian hate crimes endanger the physical security of Christian communities, instilling a sense of fear and affecting the individual and collective exercise of freedom of religion or belief. Such hate crimes also impact women and men differently, as well as ethnic and racial minorities compared to majority groups. Like all hate crime, anti-Christian hate crimes are underreported.

Supporting OSCE participating States in countering anti-Christian hate crimes is one of the key elements of ODIHR's mandate in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination. Participating States of the OSCE have agreed on a broad range of commitments to address discrimination and intolerance, including intolerance against Christians. While underlining the importance of a comprehensive approach to address discrimination and hate crimes, OSCE participating States have also acknowledged specificities of different forms of intolerance.

To assist participating States in assessing and addressing anti-Christian hate crimes and to ensure the security of Christian communities, ODIHR is producing a practical guide on understanding anti-Christian hate crimes and addressing the security needs of Christian communities. EFI were pleased to be amongst other experts to meet in Warsaw on the 21-22nd November 2024 to discuss the key topics and provide feedback on the guide.



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