

Yearbook of Muslims in Europe

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Introduction

The two major topics related to Islam that were covered by Swiss media in 2014 were the question of young Swiss Muslims supporting the so-called Islamic State and the question of the head scarf, especially in schools. Other developments attracted public attention to a lesser degree, but have nonetheless contributed to shaping the landscape of Swiss Islam. Among them are the ongoing search of certain umbrella organisations for the privileged status of bodies regulated by public law and the foundation of an academic study centre on Islam and Society at the University of Fribourg.

Almost any subject related to Islam in Switzerland is marked by a specific feature of the Swiss political system, that is, its combination of representative democracy with a strong participation of citizens through direct-democratic means. On the factual level, this results in cases where decisions taken by the Government or Federal Parliament or those of the 26 cantons are overturned by popular vote, or popular concerns are cast in a legislative or constitutional mould against the will of governments and parliaments, as was the case with the minaret initiative in 2009. In the absence of a constitutional court, there is no judicial institution with the competence to cancel articles which are contrary to international law. In 2014, a case in point was the “burqa ban” in the canton of Ticino and several local and cantonal head scarf debates, discussed below.

The possibility of a powerful check by the citizens alone makes politics more tributary to popular concerns expressed in and supported by mass media. This applies to all three institutional levels: federal, cantonal and municipal. Local topics are easily debated in cantonal or federal politics. The media support

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this effect as well, at least across each of the two main linguistic regions, the German-speaking and the French-speaking (Romandie) parts of the country.¹

Public Debates²

The radicalisation of young Muslims who grew up in Switzerland was the most prominent subject in the media coverage of Muslims in Switzerland, and sometimes in politics, throughout almost the entire year of 2014. The starting point was the case of a 23 year old man from Brugg (canton of Aargau) who was arrested in March 2014 in Turkey after reportedly shooting three people. In this particular case, the biography of the young man who had immigrated to Switzerland from Gjilan in Eastern Kosovo at the age of seven, was marked by early anti-social behaviour and criminal convictions and sentences served. The few unconfirmed details suggested that religious motives did not play a major role in his life before his imprisonment and that radicalisation only occurred after his deportation from Switzerland. As more individual cases, with less salient features, became known, the focus of public attention shifted to the question of what pushes the sons and sometimes daughters of migrants and even converts to turn their back to affluent Swiss society and enrol with the so-called Islamic State or one of the factions fighting in Syria. Explanations advanced by representatives of Muslim organisations, academics and representatives of Swiss authorities include lack of professional and economic opportunities due to exclusion and Islamophobia, a search for opportunities to devote oneself to a noble cause or just for the “kick” of an adventure, empathy for the injustice experienced by their “brothers in faith” in the Middle East, and distorted conceptions of one’s own religion due to lack of religious education. It became clear that radicalisation was not a product of the 240 Swiss mosques

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- 1 For case studies on the effects of these features, see Rohrer, Marius, “Basel’s ‘Swimming Refuseniks’: A Systemic Study on How Politics Observes Muslim Claims to Diversity in State Schools”, in Behloul, Samuel-Martin, Susanne Leuenberger and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti (eds.), *Debating Islam: Negotiating Religion, Europe, and the Self* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013), pp. 263–283; as well as Tunger-Zanetti, Andreas, “Against Islam, but not against Muslims’: Actors and Attitudes in the Swiss Minaret Vote”, in Behloul et al., *Debating Islam*, pp. 285–312.
 - 2 In 2013, an analysis on the Swiss public debate on Islam as seen by mosque associations and Muslim umbrella organisations was published. See Röllin, Jonas, “Islam und Muslime im Kontext deutschschweizerischer Öffentlichkeit”, *Asiatische Studien*, vol. 67, no. 1 (2013), pp. 87–124.

and their permanent staff.³ Rather people with little or no relation to mosques seemed to be at risk of radicalisation when becoming fascinated by pertinent internet platforms, occasionally enhanced by the speeches of foreign guest preachers in Swiss mosques.

The question of how to deal with the very few returnees and the threat they pose to society was covered, bringing to the forefront the usual cleavages of social politics: supporters of a harsh line propose to not let them return and eventually withdraw passports from naturalised Swiss citizens whereas others opt for careful and individualised supervision by the authorities and social workers. In March 2014, a Swiss convert came back from Syria, where he had spent three months. Indoctrinated on the internet by a French recruiting group, the young man spent two weeks in a training camp before deciding that he did not want to fight and wanted to return to Switzerland. He then spent 58 days in a Syrian prison controlled by the so-called Islamic State before being released and authorised to leave Syria on his own. Having arrived at the Turkish border, he surrendered to the police and was then deported to Switzerland where the federal police had been waiting for him. Tried for participation in a criminal organisation (*Penal Code*, art. 260) and military service in another armed force (*Penal Military Code*), he was sentenced to 600 hours of community service work. He was also placed under psychiatric therapy.⁴

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- 3 See for example Murmann, Katia, "Die Schweiz muss den Islamischen Zentralrat verbieten" interview with German author Hamed Abdel-Samad, *Sonntagsblick*, 30 March 2014, p. 4; Roth, Rafaela, "Dieser Dschihad-Tourismus ist eine Schande für den Islam", interview with Swiss convert Oscar Bergamin, www.watson.ch/!488208818, accessed 10 May 2015; Hehli, Simon, "Muslime wollen sich von Bischöfen nichts vorschreiben lassen", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, interview with author Rifa'at Lenzin, 5 September 2014, www.nzz.ch/schweiz/muslime-wollen-sich-von-bischoefen-nichts-vorschreiben-lassen-1.18378133; Fuchs, Daniel, "Islam-Experte: 15-Rückkehrer sind gut kontrollierbar", *Aargauer Zeitung*, 10 October 2014, www.aargauerzeitung.ch/schweiz/islam-experte-schweizer-is-rueckkehrer-sind-gut-kontrollierbar-128445074, accessed 10 May 2015; Müller, Hans-Peter, "Europas Jugend und der Jihad", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 20 November 2014, www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/europas-jugend-und-der-jihad-1.18428076, accessed 10 May 2015.
- 4 "De la Suisse au djihad", *RTS, Infrarouge*, 13 May 2014, www.infrarouge.ch/ir/2093-suisse-djihad-pourquoi, accessed 11 May 2015; "Sur la piste des djihadistes suisses", *RTS, Temps Présent*, 9 October 2015, www.rts.ch/play/tv/temps-present/video/sur-la-piste-des-djihadistes-suisse?id=6210903, accessed 11 May; "Un jeune djihadiste romand condamné par le MPC", *RTS, Le Nouvelliste*, 11 December 2014, www.lenouvelliste.ch/fr/suisse/un-jeune-djihadiste-romand-condamne-par-le-mpc-479-1386471, accessed 11 May 2015; "Pas de prison pour le premier djihadiste suisse de retour de Syrie", *RTS Info*, 10 December 2014, www.rts.ch/info/suisse/6373599-pas-de-prison-pour-le-premier-djihadiste-suisse-de-retour-de-syrie.html, accessed 11 May 2015.

The head scarf is an ongoing subject among topics related to Islam in Switzerland. In 2014, media reporting focused on the cases of schoolgirls wearing head scarves in the canton of St. Gallen. The same applies to full veiling, or niqab, which was a topic of media reporting to a lesser degree. In a survey carried out by Léger on behalf of the tabloid paper *Blick* in December 2014, 62% of people surveyed were in favour of a nationwide ban of the niqab in publicly accessible spaces; the ban was supported by a majority in all regions and age groups.⁵

On 22 August 2014, following the Friday prayer, a man was shot dead in El-Hidaje mosque in St. Gallen which is chiefly visited by ethnic Albanians. It soon turned out that the perpetrator, like his victim, was an ethnic Albanian from South Serbia and reportedly did not act on religious grounds but out of revenge for a killing dating back two decades.⁶ The case therefore did not fuel a general debate about Islam. However, Jean-Luc Addor, member of the cantonal parliament of Valais for the right-wing *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party), sent out the Twitter message "On en redemande!" (More of this!) for which he was subsequently sued. In May 2014, Alexander Müller, member of the same party in the canton of Zurich, was found guilty of race discrimination and fined for a tweet running "Vielleicht brauchen wir wieder eine Kristallnacht . . . diesmal für Moscheen" (Maybe we need another Kristallnacht . . . for mosques this time), alluding to the Nazi pogrom night against synagogues and Jewish institutions in 1938.⁷

In March 2014, the University of Fribourg presented to the wider public its project for a Swiss Centre on Islam and Society (SCIS). The SCIS has four major goals: to stimulate debate and reflection about Islam in the Swiss context, to become an interface uniting science, religion and society, to offer space for a self-interpretation within an interdisciplinary dialogue, and to contribute to living together in a plural society. About 100 people (from political and academic milieus, Muslim and immigrant associations) attended the colloquium. The future Centre aroused interest as well as doubts and questions as to how

5 Murmann, Katia, "Schweizer sind für Burka-Verbot", *Sonntagsblick*, 21 December 2014, www.blick.ch/news/politik/repraesentative-umfrage-zeigt-schweizer-sind-fuer-burka-verbot-id3361852.html, accessed 10 May 2015.

6 Nicolussi, Ronny, and Jörg Krummenacher, "Mutmasslicher Mord in der Moschee", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 23 May 2014, www.nzz.ch/panorama/mord-in-der-moschee-1.18368882, accessed 10 May 2015; Krummenacher, Jörg, "Auftrag erfüllt", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 28 May 2014, www.nzz.ch/schweiz/auftrag-erfuellt-1.18372623, accessed 10 May 2015.

7 Hürlimann, Brigitte, "Der Kristallnacht-Tweet verletzt die Rassismustrafnorm", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19 May 2014, www.nzz.ch/aktuell/zueroch/uebersicht/der-kristallnacht-tweet-verletzt-die-rassismustrafnorm-1.18305788, accessed 10 May 2015.

to take into account the various sensibilities of the Muslim communities. What kind of theological teaching will be offered? Will such an educational programme really create job opportunities? Structural issues are not the only challenge that the SCIS is facing. It is also at the centre of serious political debates. In September 2014, right wing deputies filed a parliamentary mandate asking the cantonal parliament to convince the University to abandon its project. According to them, Islam has no place in the traditionally Catholic Fribourg University and they fear that the University would train "Islamists." The deputies also consider that since the canton is facing economic difficulties, the cantonal authority should think more carefully before investing public money in such a problematic centre. Despite these arguments, the Parliament did not reach the qualified majority⁸ required to stop the creation of the Centre which started operating on 1 January 2015.⁹

Every year since its foundation in 2009, the Islamic Central Council Switzerland (ICCS, www.izrs.ch) has had its share of public attention. The ICCS had scheduled its annual assembly for 29 November 2014 in Fribourg. The local authorities, however, prohibited the event on the grounds that, considering the larger context of events in Syria and Iraq, public security and order could be seriously endangered through a counter-demonstration which might eventually lead to aggression and violence. Legal moves by the ICCS were not able to overturn this decision but the ICCS was allowed to hold a public demonstration which took place peacefully. A lasting reference point was set, however, by a film trailer meant to mobilise sympathisers of the ICCS for the annual assembly. The last film shooting session took place in the countryside outside the town of Kriens near Lucerne and was incidentally witnessed by people passing

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- 8 The qualified majority was 56 votes and they obtained 52 votes only. See Wicht, Alain, "Soutien gouvernemental au Centre Islam et société de Fribourg", *La Liberté*, 9 July 2014, www.laliberte.ch/info-regionale/soutien-gouvernemental-au-centre-islam-et-societe-de-fribourg-249322#.VVBeJmBNiTM, accessed 11 May 2015; "Le Centre Suisse Islam et Société prévu à Fribourg inquiète", *RTS, La Liberté*, 10 September 2014, www.laliberte.ch/news-agence/detail/le-centre-suisse-islam-et-societe-prevu-a-fribourg-inquiete/255864#.VVbDvWBNiTM, accessed 11 May 2015; Zünd, Céline, "Salve d'opposition au centre sur l'islam à Fribourg", *Le Temps*, 6 October 2014, www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/bf1b6880-4cbe-11e4-aef6-ddfoe2b621d7, accessed 11 May 2015.
- 9 Zünd, Céline, "Le chemin de croix du centre de formation sur l'islam à Fribourg", *Le Temps*, 6 October 2014, www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/of92fdb8-a4cc-11e4-b189-26eef90f1b5/Le_chemin_de_croix_du_centre_de_formation_sur_lislam_à_Fribourg, accessed 11 May 2015. Zünd, Céline, "Le nouveau directeur du Centre sur l'islam veut convaincre", *Le Temps*, 26 January 2015, www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/10035fe0-a4cc-11e4-b189-26eef90f1b5/Le_nouveau_directeur_du_Centre_sur_lislam_veut_convaincre, accessed 11 May 2015.

by who were frightened to see a masked young man storming downhill and carrying a black-and-white flag with Arabic characters. The three-minute-long film uses somewhat martial audio and visuals, along with defiant language, to criticise the minaret ban of 2009 and discrimination against Muslims.¹⁰ The ensuing public debate, however, immediately interpreted these features as signs of radicalism and of sympathy with the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

The year ended with two other incidents of Islamophobic nature. On 27 November 2014 (two days before the scheduled annual assembly of the ICCS), the right-wing weekly magazine *Weltwoche* published a diatribe against the Qur'an by self-labelled satirist Andreas Thiel. The article triggered a wave of media debates. On the night of 7 December 2014, unknown perpetrators tried to set on fire the mosque of Flums, canton of St. Gallen, by throwing two Molotov cocktails. No one was hurt, but taking this attack together with verbal aggressions like Thiel's statements and the tweets mentioned above, several observers interpreted these events as ominous signs for a more hostile atmosphere towards Muslims in Switzerland.

Transnational Links

The case of the young man arrested in Turkey after reportedly shooting three people highlighted the fact that Switzerland has its share, however small, in international developments such as jihadi activities. Very few cases have become publicly known so far.¹¹ The small size of the country and its specific structure, defined by the linguistic separation between German-, French- and Italian-speaking regions may be factors that explain why Switzerland has fewer cases compared to other European countries of similar size. Very low youth unemployment rates and a relatively good educational system are probably other more important factors.

Nonetheless, during the year the authorities reported an increase of the number of jihadi travellers. The 2014 Situation Report of the Federal Intelligence

¹⁰ The trailer can be found on YouTube (search for IZRS Kriens) and on the ICCS website, <http://izrs.ch/gespielte-aufregung-um-islamophobie-trailer-%E2%80%93-der-versuch-einer-exegese.html>, accessed 24 January 2015.

¹¹ Authors Daniel Glaus and Lorenzo Vidino describe some of them in "Swiss foreign fighters active in Syria", *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 7, no. 7 (2014), <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/swiss-foreign-fighters-active-in-syria>, accessed 8 February 2015.

Service (FIS),¹² published in May 2014, states that “since 2001, around 40 jihad tourists have made their way from Switzerland to various conflict regions. The FIS puts the number of jihad tourists travelling to Syria at around 15; however, most of these cases have not been confirmed according to intelligence criteria.”¹³ In December 2014, the FIS wrote about a total of 62 cases of “jihad tourists” since 2001, 19 of whom had returned to Switzerland.¹⁴ The FIS attributed the increase of cases discovered not only to the rising number of jihadi travellers but also to improved cooperation between authorities on the federal and cantonal levels.

Jihadi activities on the internet are noteworthy although receiving much less public attention and media coverage than jihadi travellers. In May 2014, the FIS noted: “According to FIS’s observations, over the last two years more than one hundred users with connections to Switzerland have published sometimes quite violent Islamist or jihadist material on publicly accessible social networks. The last year has seen an increase in videos reporting on events about the war in Syria and glorifying the jihadist fighters.”¹⁵

Law and Domestic Politics

The covering of Muslim women was discussed broadly in Switzerland in 2014. Moves to forbid the wearing of head scarves in state schools were more prominent than the question of the niqab. In the absence of any decision in principle by the Swiss Federal Supreme Court, schoolgirls are allowed to wear head scarves. Cases, however, are few. Municipal bodies have nonetheless sometimes set rules forbidding any covering, religious or not. According to the Federal Constitution, this is not sufficient to legitimate the restriction of a fundamental right such as the freedom of religion, since such restriction “needs a legal basis;” furthermore the envisaged measure “must be justified in the public interest or for the protection of the fundamental rights of others. . . must be proportionate” and it must not touch the core of the fundamental

12 Federal Intelligence Service, *Switzerland's Security: Situation Report 2014 of the Federal Intelligence Service, FIS* (Berne: FIS, 2014), www.vbs.admin.ch/internet/vbs/en/home/documentation/publication/snd_publ.parsys.75250.downloadList.29258.DownloadFile.tmp/ndbsicherheitschweiz2014webe.pdf, accessed 10 May 2015.

13 Federal Intelligence Service, *Switzerland's Security*, p. 28.

14 www.vbs.admin.ch/internet/vbs/de/home/documentation/news/news_detail.55674.nsb.html, accessed 2 January 2015.

15 Federal Intelligence Service, *Switzerland's Security*, p. 29.

right in question.¹⁶ So far, there is no federal or cantonal law forbidding the wearing of head scarves in public schools. This led some politicians, mostly of the Swiss People's Party, to initiate moves in several cantonal parliaments. They were all rejected, by a sometimes narrow majority (Fribourg in February,¹⁷ Aargau¹⁸ and Valais¹⁹ in March 2014, Solothurn in May 2014,²⁰ Thurgau in September 2014)²¹ or were used to launch preparatory moves for a cantonal initiative (cantons of Wallis in March, St. Gallen in June 2014).²² Voters in the municipality of Heerbrugg (canton of St. Gallen) voted in favour of a head scarf ban in the local school with a two thirds majority on 9 February 2014. This forced the school council to reinstate the ban in the school regulations which it had refused to enforce in the case of two Somali girls in 2013. However, a tribunal had stated that a ban was ineffective as long as no final ruling on the legitimacy of such a clause was given.²³ A case pending in St. Margrethen (canton of St. Gallen) was decided in November 2014 in favour of the girl wearing

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- 16 Swiss Confederation, *Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation*, art. 36, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19995395/index.html>, accessed 10 May 2015.
- 17 Gaillet, Claude-Alain, "Tenue correcte et visage découvert pour les écoliers fribourgeois", *La liberté*, 20 February 2014, www.laliberte.ch/news/regions/canton/tenue-correcte-et-visage-decouvert-pour-les-ecoliers-fribourgeois-13838, accessed 10 May 2015.
- 18 "SP schlägt zurück: Nicht Kopftuch, sondern Angst vor Islamisierung ist Problem", *Aargauer Zeitung*, 4 March 2014, www.aargauerzeitung.ch/aargau/kanton-aargau/sp-schlaegt-zurueck-nicht-kopftuch-sondern-angst-vor-islamisierung-ist-problem-127741968, accessed 10 May 2015.
- 19 "SVP Wallis will per Initiative ein Kopftuchverbot an Schulen", *SRF*, 27 March 2014, www.srf.ch/news/regional/bern-freiburg-wallis/svp-wallis-will-per-initiative-ein-kopftuchverbot-an-schulen, accessed 10 May 2015.
- 20 "Kopftücher werden an Solothurner Schulen nicht verboten", *Solothurner Zeitung*, 14 May 2014, www.solothurnerzeitung.ch/solothurn/kanton-solothurn/kopftuecher-werden-an-solothurner-schulen-nicht-verboden-127976046, accessed 10 May 2015.
- 21 Widmer, Christof, "Kein Kopftuchverbot im Thurgau", *St. Galler Tagblatt*, 30 September 2014, www.tagblatt.ch/ostschweiz/thurgau/kantonthurgau/tz-tg/Kein-Kopftuchverbot-im-Thurgau;art123841,3971612, accessed 10 May 2015.
- 22 Heule, Noëmi, "Kopftuch-Initiative ist populistisch", *St. Galler Tagblatt*, 5 June 2014, www.tagblatt.ch/ostschweiz/stgallen/kantonstgallen/tb-sg/Kopftuch-Initiative-ist-populistisch;art122380,3834456, accessed 10 May 2015.
- 23 Scarano, David, "Kopftuch bleibt, Unsicherheit auch", *St. Galler Tagblatt*, 11 February 2014, www.tagblatt.ch/ostschweiz/stgallen/werdenberg/wo-lo/Kopftuch-bleibt-Unsicherheit-auch;art395293,3699397, accessed 10 May 2015.

the head scarf. All parties involved in the different cases expressed their wish for a decision in principle.²⁴

The question of the niqab has remained on the agenda of political debate, although the number of resident women wearing a niqab can be estimated at no more than one or two dozen. On 22 September 2013, voters of the canton of Ticino approved a ban on any disguise in public places but this still has to receive approval by the Federal Parliament. On 12 November 2014, the Federal Government in its obligatory statement at the hands of the Parliament recommended the approval of the new clause to be added to the constitution of Ticino.²⁵ The Government made it clear that while it did not consider the clause justified or helpful, it was not a violation of superior legal principles. Given the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights of 1 July 2014 in the case *S.A.S. against France*, the Federal Government considered the clause of Ticino as acceptable. The Federal Parliament is meant to consider the issue in 2015. Right-wing politician Walter Wobmann of the Swiss People's Party has been trying to bring about a nation-wide ban of the niqab, since he successfully promoted the ban of minarets in 2009. As a member of the Federal Parliament, he submitted a parliamentary initiative on 11 December 2014 which aims at extending the clause of Ticino to the whole of Switzerland by writing it into the federal constitution. If successful, this would spare him the campaign for a popular initiative in support of the niqab ban which he announced in 2013. A popular initiative would require 100,000 signatures from Swiss citizens in order to be submitted to the voters in a national referendum.

While small municipalities in the canton of St. Gallen are a hotspot for the question of head scarves in state schools, the capital of the canton set a different tone when the city council, on 11 March 2014, paved the way for a Muslim section in the communal cemetery. The local section of the Swiss People's Party, often polemicising against Muslim burial sites in other regions, approved the proposal in St. Gallen and distanced itself from one of its members who had tried to mobilise against it by disseminating an internet link of a decapitation

24 Rostetter, Andri, "Kopftuch-Verbot ist aufgehoben", *St. Galler Tagblatt*, 13 November 2014, www.tagblatt.ch/ostschweiz/thurgau/kantonthurgau/tz-tg/Kopftuch-Verbot-ist-aufgehoben;art123841,4020521, accessed 10 May 2015. The text of the ruling including the reasoning is available at www.gerichte.sg.ch/home/dienstleistungen/rechtsprechung/verwaltungsgericht/entscheide-2014/b-2014-51.html, accessed 10 May 2015.

25 The Federal Government has to say its opinion on most issues on which the Parliament is going to vote. The Parliament remains free in its vote. The same procedure applies in the cantonal parliaments.

video a few weeks before the council meeting. The politician's action was met with widespread disgust which led him to resign from his seat.

In the canton of Vaud, RTS (Swiss radio and television) reported in December 2014 that Lausanne would create a Muslim section in a communal cemetery. After ten years of difficult discussions, the municipality and representatives of religious communities (Muslims as well as Christians) agreed on the creation of 350 burial places facing Mecca. This Muslim section should be opened by 2016 at the latest. After Geneva, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Le Locle and Biel, Lausanne will be the fourth place with a Muslim cemetery in French speaking Switzerland, while there are a dozen sites of this type in the German-speaking region and one in Italian-speaking Lugano. On 22 July 2014, the *Gesellschaft Minderheiten in der Schweiz* (Society of Minorities in Switzerland) published a paper exposing facts and arguments as well as the legal basis for the establishment of Muslim burial sites in existing cemeteries.²⁶

In January 2014, the Swiss Federal Supreme Court published the detailed reasoning for its decision of 7 March 2012 concerning swimming lessons in state schools.²⁷ The Court had ruled that dispensation cannot be given on religious grounds if the mandatory character of swimming lessons has a legal basis in the particular school, giving more weight to the goals of integration than to an extensively broad interpretation of the freedom of religion.

The recognition of Muslim communities as bodies under public law (*öffentlich-rechtliche Anerkennung/reconnaissance de droit public*) has been an issue of public debate for several years. This status,²⁸ applicable in principle to any religious community, exists in all cantons except Geneva and Neuchâtel and grants religious communities privileges such as the right to tax its members or facilitated access to schools, hospitals and prisons; in return, the recognised communities have to fulfil certain criteria such as a democratic structure with equal rights for men and women in the non-religious domain and transparency in financial matters. Details vary among the cantons. In addition to the full-fledged standard version of recognition, the cantons of Basel-Stadt,

26 The paper is available online, http://gms-minderheiten.ch/images/Muslime/ein_grabfeld_fuer_muslime_gms_broschuere.pdf, accessed 8 February 2015.

27 Ruling 2C_666/2011 to be found at www.bger.ch/index/jurisdiction/jurisdiction-inherit-template/jurisdiction-recht/jurisdiction-recht-urteile2000.htm, accessed 8 February 2015.

28 For an English outline of the system, see Pahud de Mortanges, René, "Religion and the Secular State in Switzerland", in Donlu Thayer (ed.), *Religion and the Secular State: National Reports / La religion et l'État laïque: Rapports Nationaux*, issued for the occasion of The XVIIIth Congress of the International Academy of Comparative Law, Washington, D.C. July 2010 (Madrid: Complutense Universidad de Madrid, 2015), pp. 671–684, www.iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/Switzerland%202014%20FINAL.pdf, accessed 25 February 2015.

Vaud and a few others have a variant of a primarily symbolic nature (*öffentliche Anerkennung/reconnaissance d'utilité publique*). In 2014 recognition was not only an issue of academic and intra-Muslim discussion, but shortly appeared on the agenda of a cantonal parliament. A socialist MP in Lucerne tried to accelerate the elaboration of a cantonal law defining criteria and procedures for recognition as requested by the cantonal constitution of 2007. The Government which is already working on the project was favourable to the motion, but a right-centre majority turned it down claiming the issue was premature and would likely turn into an ugly public debate about Islam.²⁹

A similar mood prevailed in the Federal Parliament in March 2014 when a liberal MP proposed to add a clause to the constitution obliging all religious communities to behave and present themselves considerately in the public space.³⁰ The motion was finally withdrawn by the MP himself.³¹

Since 2007, Vaud has a law regulating the recognition modalities of religious communities.³² However, it was only in September 2014 that the Government published its rules of application (*le règlement d'application*).³³ This document expresses the criteria to obtain the status of “community of public interest” (*communauté d'intérêt public*) such as: the role of the community and its life span in the canton, its cultural and social activities, its commitment to social and religious peace, its participation in interreligious dialogue, its number of members, its capacity to communicate in French or its knowledge of Swiss law, norms and values. The UVAM (*Union Vaudoise des Associations*

29 Nussbaumer, Lukas, “CVP und SVP stoppen Islam-Debatte”, *Neue Luzerner Zeitung*, 1 July 2014, p. 21.

30 See www.parlament.ch/d/suche/seiten/geschaefte.aspx?gesch_id=20133832, accessed 10 May 2015.

31 Minutes of the Council of States session 19 March 2014, www.parlament.ch/ab/frameset/d/s/4912/434229/d_s_4912_434229_434422.htm?DisplayTextOid=434423, accessed 10 May 2015.

32 *Loi sur la reconnaissance des communautés religieuses et sur les relations entre l'Etat et les communautés religieuses reconnues d'intérêt public du 9 janvier 2007*, www.publidoc.vd.ch/guestDownload/direct/Loi%20sur%20la%20reconnaissance%20des%20communautes%20religieuses.pdf?path=/Company%20Home/VD/CHANC/SIEL/antilope/objet/CE/Communiqu%C3%A9%20de%20presse/2014/11/500061_Loi%20sur%20la%20reconnaissance%20des%20communautes%20religieuses_20141117_1165894.pdf, accessed 17 February 2015.

33 *Règlement d'application de la loi du 9 janvier 2007*, septembre 2014, www.publidoc.vd.ch/guestDownload/direct/Reglement%20LRCR%20pdf.pdf?path=/Company%20Home/VD/CHANC/SIEL/antilope/objet/CE/Communiqu%C3%A9%20de%20presse/2014/11/500061_Reglement%20LRCR%20pdf_20141117_1165895.pdf, accessed 17 February 2015.

Musulmanes, www.uvam.ch) already announced that it was willing to obtain the recognition of public interest and was therefore working on its dossier. Another Muslim association in the region (The Islamic Centre of Lausanne) also showed interest in obtaining the same status.

Activities and Initiatives of Main Muslim Organisations

A reference point was set in January 2014 by a book on the recognition of religious communities as bodies under public law (*öffentlich-rechtliche Anerkennung/reconnaissance de droit public*).³⁴ The book was originally an expert assessment ordered by two Muslim umbrella organisations, Federation of Islamic Organisations of Switzerland (*Föderation islamischer Dachorganisationen der Schweiz*, FIDS) and Coordination of Swiss Islamic Organisations (*Koordination Islamischer Organisationen Schweiz*, KIOS).³⁵ The authors, three law professors from the University of Lucerne, treat the subject in a general perspective applicable to all hitherto non-recognised religious communities arguing that the Muslim case has to be treated without discrimination. They hold that recognition under public law is possible, and once the conditions set by cantonal law are fulfilled, it should be granted. At the same time, they are aware that recognition is a political act and dependant on approval by a cantonal government, parliament or popular vote. The book was widely discussed in the media. The two Muslim umbrella organisations held a meeting on 1 February 2014 in Zurich to coordinate further steps. The cantonal umbrella organisations of Basel and Vaud announced that they were preparing a formal request for the minor status of recognition.

In February 2014, a Sunday newspaper reported that a private association had previously submitted a request to establish an Islamic kindergarten in the important new mosque in Volketswil (canton of Zurich), opened in December 2013. On 26 May 2014, the school authority of the canton of Zurich rejected the request on the grounds that the documents submitted indicated a likely mode of operation based on a very narrow understanding of Islam and that too much time was devoted to religious instruction in the lesson plan; important goals set by the school law of the canton could therefore be undermined. The association considered an appeal against this decision.

34 Loretan, Adrian, Qurin Weber and Alexander H. E. Morawa, *Freiheit und Religion: Die Anerkennung weiterer Religionsgemeinschaften in der Schweiz* (Zürich: LIT, 2014).

35 The original expert assessment is available at www.bmk-online.ch/files/22-08-2013_Gutachten-kombiniert.pdf, accessed 27 January 2015.

On 24 August 2014, the Islamic Central Council Switzerland held the second “Islamic lifestyle and fashion show” in a concert hall in the city of Solothurn. While the first edition, held one year earlier in the city of Dietikon, had seen some 600 visitors and was discussed in some daily newspapers, the second one brought together some 400 women only and, contrary to the first, went largely unnoticed by the media.

Demographics and Statistics

From 1850 to 2000, every 10 years, Switzerland carried out a systematic national census including a question on religious affiliation. Due to economic and political reasons, the systematic national census was abandoned and the population is now censused annually through the communal registries. This decision has a direct impact on the quality of the data collected for religious affiliation, since not every commune holds information on religious affiliation in the same way. Since this data is scarcely exploitable,³⁶ it is completed with a random sample of 200,000 respondents. Potential informants have to be permanent residents, aged above 15 years old and living in private households. As such, it excludes asylum seekers, refugees, diplomats and a considerable number of expatriate workers, as well as inmates and people living in social and medical institutions. Considering what precedes, the Muslim population in Switzerland can be described as follows.³⁷

Muslim Population³⁸ 328,011 (5 % of population in 2012).

Ethnic/National Backgrounds 31% of Muslims in Switzerland are Swiss citizens (including a few thousand converts); Alevi are estimated at 35,000 to 50,000.

36 Some municipalities do not take inventory of religious affiliation, while others only take into consideration religious affiliation to communities publically recognised by the State.

37 The data and percentage presented in this appendix were collected by the Federal Office of Statistics in 2012. This is presently the most recent data describing the Swiss population.

38 For more information about the procedures of the Federal Office of Statistics, refer to www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/news/02.html.

Largest ethnic/national groups:

Balkans: 43%

Turkish: 16% (Alevi included)

North African: 5%

Sub-Saharan African: 1%

Middle Eastern: 4%

Inner-Islamic Groups

Muslims in Switzerland are 80% Sunnis, 7% Shi'is, and 8–11% Turkish Alevi.

The residual percentage includes minority community members such as members of the Ahmadiyya movement and of Sufi orders.

Geographical Spread

The Muslim population is established in every region of Switzerland:

- German speaking region (77%)
- French speaking region (21.4%)
- Italian speaking region (1.6%).

Number of Mosques

240–250.³⁹ Only four mosques show features of Islamic architecture, in particular, a minaret: Zurich (inaugurated in 1963, run by the Ahmadiyya movement), Geneva (1978, financed by Saudi Arabia), and more recently in two converted industrial buildings in Winterthur (2005, run by ethnic Albanians) and Wangen (2009, run by ethnic Turks).⁴⁰

Muslim Burial Sites

15 communal cemeteries in Switzerland have areas reserved for Muslims: Geneva (established in 1978), Basel (2000), Berne (2000), Lugano (2002), Olten (2003), Zurich (2004), Sissach (2006), Liestal (2008),

39 A detailed and updated directory was published in 2014 for the region of Basel. See Baumann, Christoph Peter, and Sarah Hess-Hurt, *Islam in Basel-Stadt und Basel-Landschaft* (Basel: Manava, 2014).

40 www.religionenschweiz.ch/bauten/en/e-index.html, accessed 27 January 2015, and Haenni, Patrick, and Stéphane Lathion (eds.), *Les minarets de la discorde* (Fribourg: Infolio/Religioscope, 2009).

Pratteln (2009), Lucerne (2009), Thun (2009), La Chaux-de-Fonds (2011), Biel (2011), Winterthur (2012), St. Gallen (2014). Muslim residents of neighbouring municipalities can also be buried in these sections provided the authorities have signed a general agreement to this effect.

Places of Islamic Learning and Education

Islamic education for children in Switzerland is dispensed in Qur'an classes organised by the mosque associations or, less frequently, on an entirely private basis. A request for a public Islamic kindergarten in Volketswil has been rejected by the Department for Public Education in the canton of Zurich in 2014. Islamic education in public schools is found in very few municipalities (Kriens and Ebikon, canton of Lucerne, since 2003, Kreuzlingen, canton of Thurgau, since 2010, see www.viuk.ch). Young people looking for more religious knowledge visit courses given regularly by Amir Zaidan, head of Vienna's Islamic Academy, or by one of various foreign guest teachers invited by local associations. The Swiss Centre on Islam and Society (SCIS, see above, section "Public debates"), founded in 2014, offers courses aiming at self-reflective Muslim learning and dialogue for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Muslim Media and Publications

Among the regularly updated Muslim websites with rich textual content are:

- Islam en Suisse (www.islam.ch).
- Gesellschaft Schweiz Islamische Welt (www.gsiw.ch), with a rich monthly newsletter including a detailed press review.
- Vereinigung der Islamischen Organisationen in Zürich (www.vioz.ch).
- l'Union vaudoise des associations musulmanes (www.uvam.ch).
- l'Union des organisations musulmanes de Genève (www.uomg.ch).
- Stiftung Islamische Gemeinschaft Zürich (www.sigz.ch).

- Diyanet (www.diyenet.ch) with its Swiss edition of *Post gazetesi* (<http://www.postgazetesi.ch>).
- Schweizerische Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft (www.sig-net.ch).
- Centre Islamique de Genève (www.cige.org/cige).
- Islamic Central Council Switzerland (ICCS, www.izrs.ch).

Main Muslim Organisations⁴¹

- Federation of Islamic Organisations of Switzerland (*Föderation islamischer Dachorganisationen der Schweiz* (FIDS)/*Fédération des organisations islamiques de Suisse* (FOIS), Bahnstrasse 80, 8105 Regensdorf, www.fids.ch), headed by Dr. Hisham Maizar. It brings together twelve cantonal and/or ethnic organisations and represents the largest number of Muslims affiliated to one of the 240 mosques. Its president is regularly asked by the media for his opinion. On certain issues, FIDS cooperates with KIOS.
- Coordination of Swiss Islamic Organisations (*Koordination Islamischer Organisationen Schweiz* (KIOS)/*Coordination des organisations islamiques de Suisse* (COIS), Interlakenstrasse 79, 3705 Faulensee, kios@bluewin.ch) Farhad Afshar is its only spokesperson. KIOS brings together the cantonal umbrella organisations of Basel, Berne and Zurich. KIOS has no website. Neither the members of its committee nor its statutes are known.
- Islamic Central Council Switzerland (*Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz* (IZRS)/*Conseil Central Islamique Suisse*, Postfach 695, 3000 Bern 9, www.izrs.ch). IZRS is headed by converts Nicolas Blancho (president) and Abdel Azziz Qaasim Illi (speaker). IZRS was founded in 2009, during the minaret ban campaign. Based in Bern, it organised events and protests in the main urban areas (among others Zurich, St. Gallen, Geneva, Berne, Biel and Fribourg). IZRS neither represent any local associations, nor does it have its own prayer room. According to its leaders, the organisation has about 3,000 members.
- Turkish Islamic Foundation (*Türkisch Islamische Stiftung/İsviçre Türk Diyanet Vakfı*, Schwamendingenstrasse 102, 8050 Zürich, www.diyenet.ch). The organisation, headed by Ahmet Akın, is directly connected to the Turkish state through the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*)

⁴¹ See also Monnot, Christophe (ed.), *La Suisse des mosques: Derrière le voile de l'unité musulmane* (Genève, Labor et Fides 2013).

and working on similar lines as the much better known DİTİB in Germany. The İTDV is the umbrella for 40 local associations for whom it provides the hoca/imam. The local associations are usually members of the umbrella organisation of the canton.

- Swiss Islamic Community (*Schweizerische Islamische Gemeinschaft (SIG)/ İsviçre İslam Toplumu*, Bahnstrasse 80, CH-8105 Regensdorf, www.sig-net.ch). SIG is the Swiss equivalent of the German Millî Görüş. The headquarters, in a suburb of Zurich, coordinate 17 local associations in Switzerland and one in the principality of Liechtenstein. The local associations are usually members of the umbrella organisation of the canton.
- Union of Albanian Imams in Switzerland (*Unioni imamëve shqiptarë në Zvicër*, Im Kupferschmied 18, 4663 Aarburg, www.uais.ch). The union is headed by Nehat ef. Ismaili and brings together the imams of most of the ca. 60 Albanian mosques in Switzerland.