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OSINT Report 4

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SPAIN: MONITORING THROUGH OSINT



AN OPEN-SOURCE INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS

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ABOUT THE REPORT

The report has been developed in the framework of the EU-funded project "STAND-UP: Standing up against hate in the EU". The project has received funding from the European Commission Directorate General for Justice and Consumers under Grant Agreement no. 101049532.

The OSINT Reports Series, of which this report constitutes the first release, has been developed with the aim of providing an overview of the potential applications, on a European scale, of open-source research and analysis methodologies in prevention and mitigation activities directed against a range of potential threats. Each report in the OSINT Reports Series will provide insights, gathered through open source intelligence, concerning a potential threat identified by Agenfor International Foundation with the support of public and private partners.

To conduct the research and analysis, the team involved in the project relied both on freely available tools and on an AI-powered OSINT software.

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INTRODUCTION

A significant number of hate crimes in Spain are related to racist or xenophobic motivations, whose passive subjects of the crime are vulnerable groups due to their race, ethnicity, or national origin. According to FRA Survey on Minorities and Discrimination[1], Spain has a higher percentage for this answer category related to North African communities (93%). The Spanish National Office for the Fight Against Hate Crimes[2] poses that racism or xenophobia is the second most frequent reason for a hate crime in Spain. However, many of these racist or xenophobic crimes encompass Islamophobic behaviour. As the annual report of the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia[3] points out, discrimination in which the Muslim religion is a central element is increasing.

The lack of knowledge about the Islamic culture and heritage and the negative discourse used by media about Muslim communities in Europe contribute to the rise of Islamophobia in our societies. According to the Observatory of Islamophobia in Spain database[4], when the active subject commits a crime against a person for the mere fact of professing the Islamic religion, it must be considered that hatred or aversion is produced not only because of the religious practice that he/she carries out but also for the origin, real or perceived of the passive subject, mainly Arab or North African.

Hate has also echoed in social networks where anti-inmigration cases have increased in 2021 if compared with the previous period[5]. Particularly, the OBERAXE mentions that contents against unaccompanied minors reached the highest point when 8.000 migrants crossed the border between Morocco and Spain in 2021 May.

In this regard, the automatic identification of harmful contexts online is one of the major concerns for social media platforms, policymakers and researchers. To illustrate how online contents fuel Islamophobic and racist speeches and crimes, this report monitors the media's main trends, actors and sentiments expressed through social media in order to offer and insight into regional and local tensions and hate dynamics. Thus, the report is divided into three main sections:

- The analysis of the Qatar World Cup 2022 narratives.
- The analysis of historical revisionism, anti-migrant discourses and Islamophobia narratives.
- The summary of the main results of the analysis.



ANALYSIS: ISLAMOPHOBIA IN QATAR WORLD CUP 2022

The contemporary debate around Islamophobia arose by the end of the XX century when social tensions in some European countries evidenced an increase in intolerance against Islamic communities in Europe. In the 80s, the concept was used to characterize a phenomenon of rejection and hostility that specifically affects Muslims in Europe (Bourekba, 2022)[6]. According to this author, in the 90s a series of characteristics was described to identify Islamophobic discourses such as the idea that Islam is a monolithic static bloc. Islamophobia is an umbrella concept used in its broadest sense to describe incidents motivated by hate, hostility or prejudice. This report classifies different online contents monitored with OSINT software in order to differentiate between specific conceptions of Islamophobia: Islamophobia as religious intolerance; cultural racism, and morophobia.

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Some authors suggest using the concept of anti-muslim instead of Islamophobia (Halliday, Geisser, 2003; Werbner, 2005)[7] paying attention to a specific kind of religious intolerance. In this case, Islamophobia is understood as a phenomenon that gives rise to speeches and, ultimately, to measures that validate the rejection of Islam in the public sphere in its broadest sense.

Our OSINT analysis shows that Islamophobia as a form of religious intolerance becomes evident when the media talk about women's rights. Gender and specifically the discrimination to which Muslim women are subjected for using hijab in the European public space constitutes a central aspect of Islamophobia. The application of stereotypes and a monolithic vision of Islam influenced by secular West approaches had serious consequences for the online content that was shared on the occasion of the Qatar 2022 World Cup.



Figure 1: An image of a group of women dressing niqab was shared to refer to Shakira’s dancing trials for the opening ceremony. Reactions to this post represents the two different images of Muslim women that are usually portrayed in the social media. On the one hand, modern Arab/Muslim women, and on the other, traditional hijabi women. The first one is represented as a paradigm of modernity. The second one is reduced to the category of traditional religious women who are considered passive, submissive and victims of an Islamic patriarchal society.



Figure 2: Other users emphasised on social media the violation of human right in Qatar using misinformation messages. While one user was denouncing a boycott campaign to Qatar and hypocritical behavior in media with the occasion of the champion, some users replayed with misinformation about the conviction of married women for infidelity when raped.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AS A FORM OF CULTURAL RACISM

Another relevant and growing academic school points out that not only Muslims can suffer discrimination based on Islamophobia. Individuals whose names or appearances look like Muslim Arabs or who speak Arabic can experience discrimination or be attacked for the presence of physical appearance or ethnicity as an identity marker.

que raro que está el discurso de inauguración del mundial



:10 p. m. - 20 nov. 2022 - Twitter Web App 

Mi mamá: ¿Dónde están todos los manteles de esta casa?

Mi hermano y yo viendo el mundial:



Figure 3: In the case of the World Cup, a series related to Qatari traditional clothes became viral in form of caricatures. In the first meme, a cat and a monkey were dressed in the traditional Qatari turban, named TURB, which the user identify as a tablecloth while the second meme shows a series of jam bottles under the title “how strange is the inaugural ceremony of the Word Cup”.

However, the most viral content related to cultural traditions in Qatar was memes about the closing ceremony where Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar, place a traditional Qatari tunic on the shoulders of Leo Messi. The tunic called bisht is a long cloak made out of light, often sheer, a material with trimming made out of real gold that is worn over a white thobe for special occasions. It is viewed as a sign of appreciation and respect and is typically worn by royalty, dignitaries, sheikhs and other high-status individuals. According to experts, it is like a mark of honour, and just kind of a culturally welcoming and a cultural acceptance[8].



Figure 4: The reaction was immediate and disrespectful comments about Qatari traditional tunic was posted. The users compared it with “70s prostitute robes” and “nightdress that old women use to attract their husbands”.



Figure 5: A picture of the Qatar Ambassadors in the Opening Ceremony of the World Cup was also accompanied by the Orientalist comment “Alibaba and the 40 thieves”, one of the best-known stories in The Thousand and One Nights. This phenomenon is observed as a rejection of Muslims and their symbols in public spaces or in form of debates about the use of traditional clothes, for example.



El var revisando



Figure 6: Other users were further and shared different images suggesting that VAR (Video Assistant Referee) was controlled by what they assume are terrorists. The first one represented a Taliban as a referee in the VAR. The other one shows the first video of the ISIS execution above the sentence: "the VAR revising".

MOROPHOBIA OR MAUROPHOBIA RELATED TO SPECIFIC SPANISH CONTEXT

Other authors introduce the concept of morofobia or maurofobia for referring to a negative perception of Arab-Muslims in general, and Moroccans in particular. This last concept is based on the idea of prejudices and stereotypes against Moroccans in Spanish society, which have been developed from the VIII century to the present (Martín Corrales, 2002)[9].

Spanish identity has been built in opposition to the image of the Arab in general, and the Moroccan in particular, pejoratively known as "el moro". On the occasion of the quarterfinals held between Spain and Morocco on 6th December 2022, the hashtag "leña al moro" (similar to "hit the monkey" in English) became a trending topic, accumulating more than 10,000 tweets between the day before the match and the night of it. More than 70% were published from far-right accounts with a marked racist and Islamophobic discourse[10].

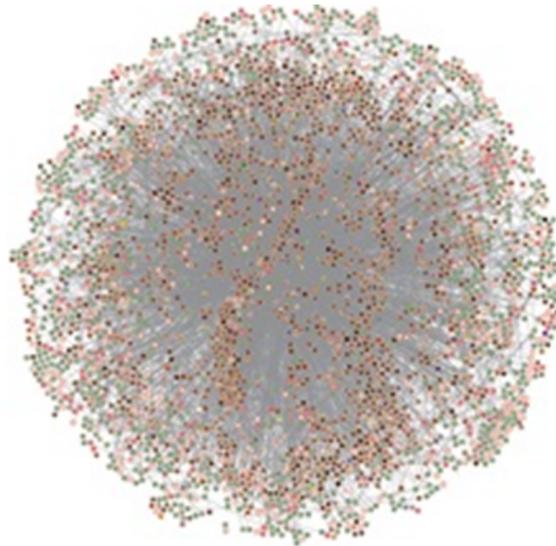


Figure 7: Interactions on the hashtag "leña el moro".

The following post shows two classical plays in the 80s-90s with the sentence: "The moors are like this shit. They are useless but funny when you throw them down the stairs". Despite the calls made by public authorities such as Spanish Government, LEAS and Morocco Embassy in Spain to enjoy the match with respect, responsibility and tolerance, users continue sharing authorities' posts under the same hashtag. Another common reference that became trending on social media in that days was Martes de Xenophobia (Xenophobia Tuesday) suggesting that the day of the match was the turn to be xenophobic.



The Spanish ultras had called out to "defend the streets from vandalism by Moroccan fans", as they posted on social networks in accounts such as Foro M.D.M, the "Largest Fan Forum in Spain".



Figure 8: This report found that ultras posts were tendency in all the regions of Spain, including also Andalusia where the main extreme right ultras Supporters Sur from Betis shared similar images to M.D.M. The Hispameme account also posted a video mixing images of the Spanish team, photographs of the Army, Spanish flags and other images of the "reconquest", Islamophobic cartoons, images of the Melilla fence and migrants being beaten by the LEAS.



Figure 9: Other users shared the image of a match between two Spanish teams in which one player wearing a football uniform sponsored by an Iberian Ham brand under the title: “Spain will wear a new uniform for the dispute with Morocco in the quarterfinals”. Some of the reactions show a ham as the real World Cup.

The response on social media after the Spanish team lost the match was based in two points. On the one hand, xenophobic content based on the so-call morofobia under the title putos moros de mierda (fuking moors of shit); fuera de nuestro país moros de mierda (get out of our country Moors of shit), and similar claims.



Figure 10: On the other hand, a series of fake news continues to circulate paying attention to the false violent celebrations of Moroccan fans. Online content included false information claiming stereotypes like the “violent character” of Moroccans; fake news about Moroccan beating disabled people and Moroccan fans raping Spanish minors; and also fake news about fires, extensive damages and crashes with the Police in different cities. Despite public authorities denying this information, the posts became viral.



Figure 11: The last case was centered on Moroccan child who became the target of severe criticism after going viral on social networks for her statements about the soccer player Cristiano Ronaldo after Portugal's elimination from the Qatar 2022 World Cup. The declarations of the girl caused a spiral of messages between Ronaldo's fans insulting and referring offensive words to the 9 years-old children.

HISTORICAL REVISIONISM, ANTI-MIGRANT DISCOURSES AND ISLAMOPHOBIA NARRATIVES

By monitoring a series of keywords by OSINT analysis, this report found that relevant political events, news or commemorative days produce an escalation in the online hate phenomena. This research also discovered that hate phenomena are linked to extreme right and that Islamophobic. Racist online content coincides with two main characteristics of the far-right groups: nativism and anti-migrants discourse; and the exaltation of nationalism.

To illustrate the extreme right behaviour in the Spanish online context, this study also introduced a key analysis of two points in which these groups based hate discourses. On the one hand, conspiracy theories and anti-migrant discourses, and on the other, historical revisionism. First, the research focused on the software results at the national level after introducing racist keywords to identify Islamophobic and anti-muslim/ anti-inmigrant posts on the social network. Second, we study Islamophobic and morophobic messages based on historical references to spread hate propaganda.

NATIVISM, NATIONALISM, CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND ANTI-MIGRANT DISCOURSES

Nativist ideology encompasses protecting the interests of native-born or established inhabitants against those that are defined like “non-natives”. This idea is based on a conception of a “pure” nation-state where most parties would settle for a more attainable ethnocracy (Mudde, 2007: 138) [11] in which “the others” are treated with hostility.



Miguel Ángel Romero ^{KA}
 @miguero76

17/12/2022, 16:55:18



@vitoquiles Es lo que tiene la inmigración ilegal. Personas delincuentes en su país que les facilitan la llegada a otros países (en este caso el nuestro) para que hagan lo que les salga del alma. Bendito gobierno de pacotilla.

As observed, extreme right online content is full of references to terms like illegal immigration, call effect and invasion. This last word has been used with specific purposes to spread the morophobic discourse against North African communities, and in particular, Moroccans and their descendants. The so-called “silent invasion” is a trending topic in the extreme right pages to the point that even parliamentary radical right parties (VOX) use conspiracy theories rhetoric to instigate hostility against migrants. In the next section, the report also analyses how the word invasion is highly contextual and related to the specific historical development of Spain.

Fernando Javier Olea @SolidaridadOlea
Integrar la inmigración “ilegal” haciendo un llamamiento masivo a la invasión islamista, con subvenciones, ayudas y políticas de “quita al trabajador español y pon a este” es establecer la multiculturalidad diseñada por la ingeniería “woke”

Samuel @samuelroman97
Más inmigración y más feminismo radical trae estos resultados. A disfrutar.

Rocío De Meer @MeerRocio · 17 dic.
Que no os engañen. Empeoran vuestros barrios, ponen en peligro a vuestras hijas y cambian campanarios por minaretes porque obedecen a un puñado de multimillonarios sin patria.

EL MUNDO. SÁBADO 17 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2022

EL MUNDO GRUPO UNEDA EDITORIAL	DIRECTOR: Joaquín Mungo	DIRECTOR AJUNTO: Vicente Ruiz	SUBDIRECCIONES: Roberto Benito, Juan Fariñas, María González, Mónica, Jorge Buitón, Lorea Vázquez, Silvia Román, Carlos Segura, Esteban Urquiza, Mado Roca.	EDI: Gustavo, Inés, Sara, Ana, 290, Tati, 314
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Inmigración para apuntalar la economía

una media anual de 330.000, según la AiRef, o un total acumulado de cuatro millones, según las proyecciones del INE.
Ni siquiera la amenaza de recesión que nubla el horizonte del nuevo año -alumbra por una inflación galopante que deriva de la crisis energética y las tensiones geopolíticas de la guerra de Ucrania- ha frenado la llegada de migrantes. Tampoco lo hizo la crisis sa-

EFE Noticias @EFEnoticias · 16 dic.
#ÚLTIMAHORA | Los delitos en España suben un 5,5 % en relación a 2019, pero las violaciones un 38 %.

Mostrar este hilo

10:36 p. m. · 16 dic. 2022 desde La Zubia, España

The hate posts pointed out Muslim/Arab communities also involved a series of stereotypes like violence, terrorism, delinquency, homophobia, misogynist behaviour and the abuse of social assistance. In particular, the references to unaccompanied minors have been especially harmful to referring to them as criminals, drug dealers and rapists to the extent that MENA (Spanish acronym for unaccompanied minor) has become a despective and disrespectful word.

gaditacensurada @sinsiglasya
13/12/2022, 7:11:38

La inmigración en Barcelona ya es mayoría y la policía se ve obligada a huir ante los actos vandálicos de los que un día nos vendieron que eran refugiados. La población catalana mientras se mantienen cerrada sus casas ante la violencia que se adueña de las calles. Volvemos a 1934 <https://t.co/OmsoNkKGe>



 **Pepe Jiménez** 
@pepejimenezEdA2

La impunidad de los ninis moros , producto no de Marruecos si no de Bruselas y Uropa. No puede ser ciudadano el que atenta contra la paz o hace terrorismo con subvenciones.

 **Wall Street Wolverine**  @wallstwolverine · 15 dic.
Un hombre se ve obligado a quitar su bandera francesa en Bruselas ante la presión de los aficionados marroquíes.



1:02 203,1 mil reproducciones

3:14 p. m. · 15 dic. 2022

 **Javier Ortega** @JavierO66080535 · 12 dic. ...

... Si te estás levantando ahora a currar, acuérdate que hay miles de **MENAS**, sindicalistas, subvencionados y holgazanes varios, que están tan ricamente en camita, esperando a cobrar su **paguita** con lo que pagues tú en impuestos... Buenos días...

39 322 715

 **Alberto Caliu**  @Caliu_A · 16h ...

Ayuso ha decidido seguir con la Agenda2030 y por eso mismo VOX ha votado en contra de sus presupuestos.

Ayuso ha elegido Agenda2030 frente al sentido común.

Menos LGTBI, **Menas**, aborto, charonguitos y más Agenda España y sentido común.

Gracias @vox_es por hacer valer mi voto.

12 227 517

HISTORICAL REVISIONISM

Narratives of the Radical Right and the Extremist Right also use historical revisionism to framing cultural nationalism, ethnic nationalism and racial nationalism. Such usage manipulates certain historical events in order to achieve political goals which otherwise lack scientific fundaments.

The OSINT analysis generates tangibles results of how historical revisionism was used in the Qatari 2022 Wold Cup. In some of the images posted in the previous days to the Spain-Morocco match, extreme right football ultras shared historical images referring to the so-called Christians and moors battles in the period of the “Christian Reconquest” of the Spanish territory between 711 and 1492. Despite the Al-Andalus period being extended over centuries, it is still conceived by conservatism as a Moors invasion and a denied and dark period of Spanish history. The software also found examples of revisited history under the sentence leña al moro disseminated in the World Cup by users named Spanish Templard (Templario Español) and located in Málaga (Andalucia).



Brigadier es
@BrigadierMusica

17/12/2022, 18:19:02



El "histórico" mundial de **Marruecos** se basó en conquistar Al-Ándalus y volverse a casa (o eso quieren que creamos). Todo preparado.

Propaganda islámica. La realidad: Acaban de volver a perder contra Croacia y queda 4°.

Fue saltar toda la **mierda** en la UE y dejar de ser buenos. <https://t.co/SALTJ2ppM2>





However, extreme rights posts mentioning the Reconquest become more visible on commemorative national days or historical commemorative events such as La Toma de Granada (Day of the Taking in Granada). La Toma is a controversial festival held annually on the 2nd of January in Granada that marks the final surrender of the Alhambra fortress in 1492 by Granada’s last Muslim ruler, Boabdil, following a truce with the Catholic monarchs Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon. This event is especially significant because represents the loss of the last Muslim territory in the Iberian Peninsula, the expulsion of Muslim Spanish Inhabitants, first, and the Sephardi community, later, and the start of the Inquisition rule. On January 2023, many extreme right platforms posted historical pictures representing the day that Christians took Granada and symbolising that day as the end of the 8 centuries of “reconquest”. The radical right party referred to the Muslim invasion while other users emphasise Christianity as a fundamental element of Granada. Others pointed out the expulsion of those who do not agree with the festivity the same like the last Muslim king was expelled from Granada on the 2nd of January.



CONCLUSIONS

Islamophobic discourse has increased in recent years. In order to provide examples of this type of online discourse, a distinction has been made between different conceptions of Islamophobia.

In the case of the Qatar 2022 World Cup, a number of narratives related to religious intolerance, cultural racism and morophobia have been identified. Examples of messages disseminated include the stigmatisation of women wearing hijab as weak and subjugated by religion, disdain for cultural elements specific to Arab countries, and the xenophobia against what is perceived as "Moro" or Moroccan.

Other forms of hate content were also identified. Messages with nativist and anti-immigration content were accompanied by historical revisionism typical of the extreme right. Hate speech is accompanied by conspiracy theories advocating the replacement of the local population by Muslims. The dissemination of hoaxes stigmatising people of Arab origin as violent and lazy is common. Historical revisionism is used to create an image of what has always been the Spanish 'us' that is threatened by the Muslim or Arab 'them' coming to destroy the nation. An example is how some accounts use the capture of Granada to encourage violence against these groups and to try to consolidate the image of the Spanish Christian warrior who must drive out the Muslim invader.

These messages are mainly conveyed through memes disguised as humorous content. However, we also find explicit hate messages and viral hashtags such as "leña al moro" or "Martes de xenofobia".



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