Islamophobia, Xenophobia, Multiculturalism, and Germany

Hate crimes recorded in Germany under the framework of politically motivated crimes (PMC) since 2001 are categorized as anti-Semitism, xenophobia, social status, racism, and religion. [1] Islamophobic, anti-Christian and anti-ziganist criminal offences has also been recorded as separate subcategories since 2017.[2] Although such an expansion of subcategories looks promising for the accurate recording of hate crimes, the current situation in Germany concerning PMC is worrying.

One recent example shows such growing trend. Mesut Ozil, a German citizen of Turkish origin, is one of the most mentioned-names in Germany and Turkey recently. He left the German national team short time ago on the ground that he could not tolerate the racist, Islamophobic and xenophobic reactions anymore that he was exposed to just for having a photograph with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This is no doubtan Islamophobic plot of the European politics indicating the revival of the German racism.

In 2017, Germany witnessed 5.2 attacks targeting refugees and 0.3 humanitarian aid workers per day. [3] In the same year, at lest 100 incidents of mosque attacks took place, while 908 Muslim Germans were exposed to either physical, psychological, or verbal attack. Another 205 PMCs were also committed against parliamentarians in the first 210 days of 2017. [4] In addition, in 2014, a total of 5,885 hate crimes had been committed in the country, and this number increased by 77% in 2015 to 10,373. A large part of the crimes committed during this period were mainly targeted the refugees. In the first quarter of 2016, 300 hate crimes directed towards asylum seekers were recorded.[5]

When the issue is considered specifically in the context of Islamophobia, these cases are introduced as "Germans defending their own culture against Islam and Muslims". However, what's really behind all these constant manifestations of racism is mainly the desire to produce 'a German Aryan master race' (Herrenvolk) which has its roots in the history of German society. Legalizing this situation through the illusory argument of "a German culture attacked by another" is easier than overtly defending a white German culture. Accordingly, in German media, 60-80% of the representations of Muslims and Islam are portraying the latter two as physically violent, gender oppressive, religiously fanatic and/or fundamentalist, as well as socially and culturally backward.[6]

This picture has also brought the issue of the collapse of multiculturalism in Europe in general, and in Germany in particular. Multiculturalism, which has a very popular place in the politics of social harmony, is a short expression of the ability of the people having different cultural, religious, and ethnic identities to coexist. This term, firstly used in Canada in 1971, was utilized as a policy initiative to recognize the differences instead of assimilating people who migrated to different countries from different regions of the world. There are two different approaches to multiculturalism which is the acceptance of the fact that people can peacefully coexist regardless their cultural origins. The first is to welcome the diversity, while the second is to reject different ethnic and religious identities by suppressing and assimilating to the dominant culture. In its simplest terms, this means that the society is insisting on a single culturalism. This pattern of conservative behavior which arises within many societies causes individuals to tend towards violent acts. Appropriately, the killings by the National Socialist Underground (NSU), an extreme-right terrorist organization in Germany, between 2000-2007 are recorded in the pages of the history as a grim result of this conservativeness.[7]

In the final evaluation of the cases mentioned above, it will not be wrong to say that multiculturalism, for the time being, is nothing more than a utopia for Germany. As long as comprehensive precautions are not taken, racism, which is a black mark in the history of Germany, will continue to be a threat for both native German population and other ethnic groups and societies.

In this sense, Germany must first accept that the problem of racism is institutionalized in every sphere of its economic-political and social-cultural life. For example, although the NSU case points to a prevalent institutional racism, Germany still has not fully defined the scope of institutional discrimination and prevents it from being effectively approached. What institutional racism means is that such organized crimes cannot be committed by only a few individuals holding extreme-right ideology, but a greater power behind them. This power might be the officials of the official state, as well as the people who believe in the master race and who would not abstain from funding certain groups for their causes. In this sense, although some groups in Germany insisted on the investigation of institutional racism in the country

concerning the NSU case, the German government stated that it categorically reject this claim.[8]

Changing the attitude is a must for the German government to have a healthy, democratic and secure society. The government must produce comprehensive strategies to handle with extremism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and discrimination. In addition to this, the German government should support the people who are exposed to extremism and protect them and their families and impose penal sanctions to any kinds of Islamophobic, xenophobic etc. behavioural patterns. Because the protection of human dignity and the provision of social harmony is only possible with a society organized accordingly to the diversity. Otherwise, it will be a proper inference that the efforts made by Germany in favor of democracy and pluralism and the considerable steps it took so far to leave the grievances to which it was exposed such as poverty, unemployment, and occupation during the Second World War that caused death of millions due to Nazism, anti-semitism, racism, and during the Cold War will go waste.

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[1] Germany Conflicted: The Struggle Between Xenophobia and Tolerance" *Human Rights First* , p. 32. http://www.hum

[2] CERD, Information Received from Germany on Follow-Up to the Concluding Observations [hereinafter Germany – CERD Follow-Up], October 31, 2016, s. 8, CERD/C/DEU/CO/19-22/Add.1

[3] See. "Islamophobia Report, 2017," SETAV, p. 250, https://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EIR_2017.pdf

[4] See. ibid. p, 250.

[5] "Deutschland In Zwiespalt:Der Kampf zwischen Fremdenfeindlichkeit und Toleranz", Human Rights First, p. 1, http://www.huma

[6] Islamophobia Report, 2017," p. 250.

[7] Between the years of 2000 and 2007, eight Turkish citizens, a Greek citizen and a German police officer were killed in different cities of Germany.

[8] CERD, Information Received from…, p. 2.