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Title: Ireland

Date: 2014

Originally published in: Yearbook of Muslims in Europe

Example citation: Scharbrodt, O., & Montgomery, V. (2014). Ireland. *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, 6, 317-333

Version of item: Authors’ post-refereed, pre-print

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/555813>

IRELAND

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1 MUSLIM POPULATIONS

According to Ireland's most recent census, carried out in 2011, there were 49,204 Muslims in Ireland, a 51% increase on the previous 2006 census.² Estimates provided by major Muslim organisations in Ireland suggest a figure of around 65,000.³ This means that Muslims now make up at least 1.1% of the total population, which is a significant growth from 0.1% just twenty years ago. The Irish census data is quite detailed, providing information on the national backgrounds, the geographical spread across the state, occupational and socio-economic status and educational level of the Muslim population making it possible to draw comparisons with other faith communities and the national average.

The Muslim presence Ireland is extremely diverse without any particular ethnic or cultural group being predominant. According to the 2011 census, a significant number of Muslims come from various African (8,777) and Asian (15,376) countries. While most Muslims from Africa have the Nigerian citizenship (2,088), the other major national groups are Sudanese (1,470), Somalis (1,178), Egyptians (1,055) and Algerians (1,047). Asian Muslims come

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² Central Statistics Office. The 2011 Census, available at: www.cso.ie

³ Fiona Dillon and Tom Brady, 'Muslims target in "Hate Mail" campaign', *Irish Independent*, 26 November 2013, available at: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/muslims-targeted-in-hate-mail-campaign-29783626.html>, accessed 13 January 2014.

primarily from Pakistan (6,662), Bangladesh (2,319), Malaysia (1,373), Iraq (1,081) and Saudi Arabia (1,029). Most European Muslims (2,049) come from outside of the EU, primarily from Turkey (1,029), Bosnia and Kosovo (about 800 together). Irish nationals constitute the largest national group within the Muslim population, having risen by 86.7% from 9,761 in 2006 to 18,223 in 2011. Most of these Muslims acquired Irish citizenship either through birth (almost 28% were born in Ireland) or naturalisation. Around 3,543 Muslims (7.2%) describes themselves as of Irish ethnicity, who would be converts or perhaps children of mixed marriages. A ratio of 37.1% of the entire Muslim population in Ireland that possesses Irish citizenship indicates a demographic trend which increasingly disconnects the Muslim population from the phenomenon of immigration and suggests the long-term establishment of a permanent Muslim presence in Ireland.

The vast majority (97.9%) of Muslims in Ireland live in urban areas with a significant concentration of more than half of the Muslim population (25,471) in the Dublin metropolitan area. Muslims in Ireland are more likely to be married than the general population and much less likely to be divorced. The vast majority of Muslims in Ireland are Sunni with estimates of 4,000-6,000 Shi'is living in Ireland. Ireland has also witnessed growing numbers of conversions to Islam, with converts now estimated in the hundreds.⁴

According to the 2011 census, a smaller percentage of Muslims (38.4%) worked in comparison with the national average (50.1%) which is a reflection of the overall younger age profile of the Muslim population compared to the national average. The percentage of unemployed Muslims (18.7%) was higher than the unemployment rate within overall population (11.7%). With regards to the social class of Muslims in Ireland, they are underrepresented in lower-skilled professions while significantly overrepresented among

⁴ Yafa Shanneik, 'Conversion to Islam in Ireland: A Post-Catholic Subjectivity?', *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, vol. 1 no. 2 (2012), pp. 166-188.

higher professional workers (15%) in comparison to the national average (7.3%). This overrepresentation within higher qualified professions is also reflected in the higher educational levels among the Muslim population compared to the national average.

The data suggests a socio-economic gap within the overall Muslim population which is linked to patterns of Muslim settlement in Ireland post-WWII. Sustained Muslim settlement from the 1950s until the early 1990s was made up primarily of students who came for higher education and then stayed, or those wishing to set up businesses. Thus, they had solid educational and professional backgrounds. The Islamic Foundation of Ireland (IFI), for example, estimates that there are more than 4,000 medical doctors of Muslim background in Ireland. A significant proportion of Muslims is highly qualified, possesses tertiary educational degrees and works as educated professionals on higher salary scales. Ireland's economic boom since the 1990s has diversified the face of Muslim immigration. Growing numbers of Muslim asylum-seekers have also arrived from Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Somalia and Iraq, as well as large numbers of economic migrants from across the world.⁵

2 ISLAM AND THE STATE

The Irish Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and freedom of profession and practice of religion (subject to public order and morality) to every citizen. It also guarantees that the state will not endow any religion or impose any penalties for religious belief.⁶ Religions and religious organisations are not publicly funded in Ireland. However, religious organisations are eligible for charitable status, which allows for some tax exemptions. Several Islamic organisations such as the IFI, for example, have been accorded the status of a

⁵ Oliver Scharbrodt, 'Muslim Immigration to the Republic of Ireland: Trajectories and Dynamics since World War II', *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 47, no. 1-2, pp. 221-243.

⁶ Article 44, Irish Constitution.

Friendly Society (charitable status). Within the denominational educational system of Ireland the closest cooperation between the state and religious organisations exist. Most primary and secondary schools in Ireland are privately owned by a church body and publicly funded. While the vast majority of schools are run by religious bodies affiliated to the Catholic Church, there are two Muslim primary schools in Dublin which are funded by the Department of Education and Skills.

The Irish Constitution and overall legal culture in Ireland are permeated by a strong religious ethos and have been traditionally shaped by Catholic social teachings. For instance, the Constitution makes blasphemy a criminal offence. In 2009, against substantial public opposition, a Blasphemy Law was passed in the Dáil, the lower house of the Irish parliament, as part of the Defamation Act which makes it an offence to utter or publish matter that is grossly abusive or insulting thereby causing outrage among substantial adherents of a religion.⁷ Muslims are, in principle, protected under this law. As part of a general review of the Irish constitution, a Constitutional Convention was established in 2012 which recommended replacing the current law which criminalises blasphemy with a more general provision against incitement of religious hatred.⁸

While the state does not grant any official legal recognition to Muslim organisations, their representatives as those of other faith communities are regularly consulted in policy and legal matters relevant to them. The government, parliament and other state organs usually invite and consult representatives of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland (ICCI), the major Sunni-mosque organisation based at an extensive mosque complex in South Dublin. This was, for example, the case during public debates around the introduction of a new abortion law in

⁷ Defamation Act 2009, available at: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2009/a3109.pdf>, accessed 13 January 2014.

⁸ Ruadhán Mac Cormaic, 'Convention recommends replacing blasphemy offence', *The Irish Times*, 3 November 2013, available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/convention-recommends-replacing-blasphemy-offence-1.1582317>, accessed 13 January 2014.

Ireland in 2013. Following the death of a pregnant woman in a hospital in Galway in October 2012 who was denied termination of her pregnancy on legal grounds, as the Irish constitution prohibits abortion,⁹ the Irish government and parliament prepared a bill to allow abortion when the life of the expecting mother was in danger.¹⁰ As part of the preparation of the bill, a public hearing in the Irish parliament invited representatives from the Catholic Church, various Protestant denominations, a Jewish rabbi and a representative from the ICCI as well.¹¹

Muslims are given legal protection from discrimination in Ireland. The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 prohibit discrimination on religious (and other) grounds and aim to promote equality. In addition to these laws, there are several state agencies which enforce equality and work on behalf of minority communities. These include the Equality Authority and the Gardáí (police) Racial and Intercultural Office (GRIO). The GRIO holds an annual Diversity Consultation Day in order to meet with the representative organisations, personnel and leaders of minority communities in Ireland. This allows for discussion of issues affecting these communities and for the communities to help shape and influence Garda policy and strategy relating to diversity.¹² However, despite such initiatives, recent research has shown that there are no means to actually measure and thus combat Islamophobia.¹³ Between 2001 and 2008, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) documented instances of discrimination against Muslims on the basis of their religion. However, following budget cuts and the dissolution of the NCCRI in 2008, no means are

⁹ Article 40, Irish Constitution.

¹⁰ Protection of Life during Pregnancy Bill 2013, available at: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/bills28/bills/2013/6613/document1.htm>, accessed 13 January 2014.

¹¹ 'Churches, faith groups and non-confessional bodies attend final day of Oireachtas abortion hearing', RTE News, 11 January 2013, available at: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2013/0110/362006-last-day-of-oireachtas-hearings-on-abortion/>, accessed 13 January 2014.

¹² An Garda Síochána: www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=154&Lang=1, accessed 22 January 2014.

¹³ James Carr, 'Regulating Islamophobia: The Need for Collecting Disaggregated Data on Racism in Ireland', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* vol. 31 no. 4 (2011), pp. 574-593.

currently in place to document xenophobic and racist incidents targeting Muslims specifically.

3 MAIN MUSLIM ORGANISATIONS

The first Islamic organisation in Ireland, the Dublin Islamic Society, was established by Muslim students in 1959. The name was changed in 1990 to the Islamic Foundation of Ireland (IFI) (163 South Circular Road, Dublin, Dublin 8, tel.: ++353 14533242, www.islaminireland.com, email: info@islaminireland.com). The IFI established Ireland's first mosque in 1976 and moved to its current location in 1983. The IFI has a written constitution and an elected council. Membership is open to all Muslims in Ireland and every Muslim resident of Ireland is an honorary member. The IFI, on its own website, cites itself as the official representative of Muslims in Ireland. However, the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland (ICCI) (19 Roebuck Road, Clonskeagh, Dublin 14, tel.: ++353 12080000, www.islamireland.ie, email contact via a contact form on the website, www.twitter.com/islamireland) with a large purpose-built mosque and Islamic centre, which regularly welcomes politicians and other visiting groups, has become the public face of Islam in Ireland since its establishment in 1996.¹⁴ Funded by the Al-Maktoum Foundation, a private foundation headed by Sheikh Hamdan Al-Maktoum, member of the ruling family in Dubai and Finance Minister of the United Arab Emirates, the ICCI is organised in different departments and employs around twenty full-time members of staff, primarily from Arab countries, among them the Egyptian imam. Having access to financial resources no other mosque organisation in Ireland can avail of, it performs a wide range of religious and social

¹⁴ Oliver Scharbrodt and Tuula Sakaranaho, 'Islam and Muslims in the Republic of Ireland: An Introduction to the Special Edition', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* vol. 31 no. 4 (2011), pp. 475-476.

functions, such as translation services, marital and funeral services, and maintains a library, a gymnasium and a women's section. The ICCI is linked with various European networks of the Muslim Brotherhood such as the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, an umbrella organisation of various branches and affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Europe Trust and the European Institute for Human Sciences. The ICCI also houses the secretariat of the European Council for Fatwa and Research which is headed by the prominent Qatar-based Egyptian cleric Yusuf Al-Qaradawi (b. 1926).¹⁵

The recent trend to create national representative umbrella organisations for Muslims in various European countries has also found its expression in Ireland with the creation of the Irish Council of Imams in September 2006. The Council officially consists of 35 members, all imams in various mosques in Ireland. Chairperson of the council is the imam of the ICCI. However, the council does not meet regularly and deals primarily with practical issues affecting Muslims in order to create a certain degree of uniformity in terms of Muslim ritual practices, by agreeing on a date for the start of the month of Ramadan, for example. Its main responsibility lies in providing training sessions and correspondence courses for various imams in Ireland who often lack an education in Islamic scholarship.

Representing Shi'ī Muslims in Ireland is the Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre (Milltown Bridge, Dundrum, Dublin 14, tel.: ++00353 12604491, <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~ahlulbyteassociation/>). As well as being a mosque, the centre runs social activities, lectures and acts as the main point of contact for the Shi'īs from Iraq and Persian Gulf countries. In addition, the Bab-ul-Ilm Society (86 Beach Park, Easton Road, Leixlip, Co. Kildare, tel.: ++353 878547439, www.babulilm.ie) is another group, formed to meet the needs of Shi'īs from South Asia.

¹⁵ Adil Hussain Khan, 'Creating the Image of European Islam: the European Council for Fatwa and Research and Ireland', in Jørgen S. Nielsen (ed.), *Muslim Political Participation in Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 215-238.

Other organisations represent specific sectarian or ethnic groups in Ireland. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association (6-7 Well Park Grove, Galway, tel.: ++353 9168832, www.islamahmadiyya.ie, email: info@islamahmadiyya.ie) is the Irish branch of the Ahmadiyya movement and is currently building a mosque in Galway. The Al-Mustafa Islamic Educational and Cultural Centre (31 Coolmine Industrial Estate, Blanchardstown, Dublin, 15, tel.: ++353 18200786, <http://islamiccentre.ie>, email: info@islamiccentre.ie,) provides religious and social functions and participates in building interfaith dialogue. Its imam is a follower of the international Minhaj-ul-Quran movement. Another organisation, which is affiliated with the South Asian Barelvi tradition, is the Irish Sufi Foundation (8-9 Talbot Street, Dublin 1; email: manan@madina.ie) based at the Anwar-e-Madina Islamic Centre. The Muslim Association Forum (tel.: ++353 871828697, www.muslafireland.org; email: info@muslafireland.org), which is based at the IFI premises, was originally formed by Nigerian immigrants but is now made up of Muslims from various African countries. MAF runs its own Qur'anic classes and children's programme and has charity status.

Outside of Dublin, Muslim organisations can be found in major cities such as the Galway Islamic Cultural Centre, established in 1978 (13 Sandyview Drive, Riverside, Galway, tel.: ++353 91751621, www.gicc.ie), the Cork Muslim Society, established in 1984 (tel.: ++353 214320301, <http://www.cmccmosque.ie/>, email: info@cmccmosque.ie), and the Limerick Islamic Cultural Centre (Dooraday Road, Limerick, tel.: ++353 61227054). Like the IFI and ICCI, these organisations also perform religious and social functions but on a much smaller scale. All of these societies can be contacted via the IFI.

The Dublin Welfare Society (<http://www.dublinwelfaresociety.ie/>), established in 2010, is a Muslim organisation running several projects. One of them is Discover Islam Ireland (163 South Circular Road, Dublin 8, tel.: ++353 1890253330, <http://www.discoverislam.ie/index.php>, email: info@discoverislam.ie), which engages in

missionary activities by organising exhibitions, lectures and seminars on Islam. Muslim Sisters of Eire (<http://www.msos.ie/>) is another project of the Dublin Welfare Society which caters for the needs of Irish women converts to Islam by organising educational and social activities. The various universities in Ireland have active Islamic societies with the Irish branch of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) (<http://ireland.fosis.org.uk/>) acting as umbrella organisation.

4 MOSQUES AND PRAYER HOUSES

Ireland currently has three purpose-built mosques. The first, the Ballyhaunis Mosque in Co. Mayo, was built in 1986 by a local Muslim businessman for the employees of his *halal* meat factory. The ICCI in Dublin is a large and impressive mosque, which was opened in 1996. Both the ICCI and the Ballyhaunis are Sunni mosques. Also in 1996, the Shi'i Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre in Dublin was opened. Commonly referred to as *husseiniyya*, it is a mosque and Islamic centre for Iraqi and Gulf Arab Shi'is primarily. In addition to these, there is also the large Dublin City Mosque – a former Presbyterian church purchased by the IFI in 1983 - to which a major extension was added in 2010.

Construction is currently underway for a purpose-built mosque in Galway, being the first for Ahmadi Muslims in Ireland. In 2013, planning permission was also granted for a major mosque project in Clongriffin, North Dublin. This €40 million development will include a cultural centre, prayer hall, offices, crèche, bookshop, library, mortuary, a conference centre, restaurant, primary and secondary schools and a fitness centre with swimming pool. The mosque will be able to accommodate up to 3,000 worshippers and will be the largest mosque

in Ireland upon completion. However, funding for this mosque project has not been secured yet.¹⁶

Fundraising for new mosques is also taking place in Galway and in Cork. The Cork Muslim Society has turned a former warehouse into a mosque. While the new mosque was partially opened in 2013, completion of the project depends on securing further funding. For the most part, Muslims use rented or purchased houses and premises on business or industrial estates as mosques throughout Ireland. Securing funding to build, expand and maintain adequate places of worship that cater for the growing number of Muslims is a major challenge for most mosques communities and organisations in Ireland. Other mosques include the Tallaght Mosque, Blackpitts Mosque, the Lucan Mosque, the Blanchardstown Mosque and Clondalkin Muslim Centre, all in Dublin. Several mosques are now located in major cities like Cork, Galway or Limerick as well as mosques in Tralee, Ennis, Cavan, Carlow, Dundalk, Kilkenny, Kerry, Clare and Waterford, Portlaoise and Mullingar. There are probably around 30 mosques with an imam and regular Friday midday prayers in Ireland, half of them in the Dublin wider metropolitan area. A list of mosques can be found on the IFI website.

In addition to mosques, many hospitals and universities have prayer rooms for their Muslim employees and students. While the main mosques in Dublin and other cities are attended by Muslims of all ethnic and national backgrounds, there are growing numbers of mosques and prayer rooms based on particular schools of thought or language. Particularly noteworthy is the growth of South Asian mosque communities. The Blackpitts Mosque provides sermons in Urdu with its imam trained in the Deobandi tradition. The Clondalkin Muslim Centre caters for Muslims from Bangladesh. Pakistani Shi'is have opened the Azakhana-e Zahra community centre in an industrial estate in Blanchardstown, Dublin.

¹⁶ Christina Finn, 'Ireland's largest mosque gets planning permission', *TheJournal.ie*, 29 August 2013, available at: <http://www.thejournal.ie/irelands-largest-mosque-clongriffin-1060199-Aug2013/>, accessed 14 January 2014.

There has been increasing opposition to mosques in Ireland, usually related to traffic and planning issues. In Cork, for example, a new mosque that was opened on a busy road close to the city centre in 2013 faced opposition of residents in the neighbourhood who complained of traffic and noise disruptions and violations of the original planning permission.¹⁷ Similar objections were also raised to the new Ahmadi mosque in Galway which is currently under construction.¹⁸ In the run up to granting planning permission for the large mosque complex planned in Clongriffin, North Dublin, a local politician opposed the size of the development, arguing it does not meet local development plans.¹⁹ While such opposition to mosque projects was rare in Ireland in the past, with the growing number of mosques and their increasing visibility due to their size and location in city centres, public debates around mosque construction have risen in recent years. Even mosques and prayer houses that are less visible in residential areas or industrial sites have faced legal challenges, because they are situated in planning areas not designated for places of worship.

5 CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

There are currently two Muslim primary schools in Dublin, which are funded by the Department of Education and Skills. The Muslim National School was set up by the IFI in 1990 and the North Dublin Muslim National School was established in 2001. They follow the Irish school curriculum but have an Islamic ethos, teaching Arabic and Islamic Religious Education. Both schools have large waiting lists but plans to expand have been put on hold

¹⁷ Eoin English, 'Planners in row over Cork city Islamic centre', *Irish Examiner*, 18 September 2013, available at: <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/planners-in-row-over-cork-city-islamic-centre-243372.html>, accessed 15 January 2014.

¹⁸ Enda Cunningham, 'Planners say Muslim group misled them over numbers at Galway mosque', *Connacht Tribune*, 19 August 2013, available at: <http://www.connachttribune.ie/galway-news/item/1115-planners-say-muslim-group-misled-them-over-numbers-at-galway-mosque>, accessed 15 January 2014.

¹⁹ Colette Colfer, 'Ireland's largest mosque gets approval from An Bord Pleanála', *The Irish Times*, 29 August 2013, available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/ireland-s-largest-mosque-gets-approval-from-an-bord-plean%C3%A1la-1.1509586>, accessed 15 January 2014.

due to budget cuts and negative inspection reports of the North Dublin Muslim National School.²⁰ The imam of the Dublin City Mosque and president of the IFI acts as patron of both schools, while the Muslim Primary Education Board manages them on his behalf. There are no Muslim secondary schools in Ireland, so most Muslim children in Ireland attend mainstream Irish schools, the majority of which are denominational. In 2011, the ICCI highlighted complaints from Muslim parents who allege that children who attend the Muslim primary school in Clonskeagh find it hard to get into secondary schools in the area, and that some schools are only accepting Catholics, an allegation denied by the schools in question.²¹ Religious education is a part of the school curriculum in Ireland, and can often take the form of religious instruction. This is particularly the case at primary level where Catholic children are prepared for communion. However, in recent years there have been initiatives to organise Islamic instruction in some schools, or in a number of schools with large numbers of Muslim pupils, the school has invited someone from a nearby mosque to visit on Fridays and give a *khutba* to the children.²² Moreover, parents do have the legal right to exempt their children from religious education, although many schools face practical problems in arranging alternative supervisory arrangements for those pupils. In the multi-denominational Educate Together primary schools in Ireland, where an ethics curriculum is taught instead of religious education, the school facilities are made available for religious instruction after school. Recent public debates and policy initiatives to reform the denominational educational system in Ireland with a view to divest a number of Catholic schools from church ownership and to diversify the types of religious and non-religious bodies that assume patronage of schools

²⁰ Adelina Campos, 'City's Muslim school is eyeing up new site as waiting list swells', *The Irish Herald*, 25 August 2010, available at: www.herald.ie/national-news/city-news/citys-muslim-school-is-eyeing-up-new-site-as-waiting-list-swells-2310756.html, accessed 15 January 2014.

²¹ Euro-Islam, 'Muslim families claim discriminatory admission policies of Catholic schools in Dublin', *Euro-Islam.Info*, 7 October 2011, available at: <http://www.euro-islam.info/2011/10/07/muslim-families-claim-discriminatory-admission-policies-of-catholic-schools-in-dublin/>, accessed 15 January 2014.

²² Tuula Sakaranaho, *Religious Freedom, Multiculturalism, Islam: Cross-reading Finland and Ireland*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 404-405.

have led to the establishment of a Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector by the Minister for Education and Skills in 2011. The IFI as patron of the two Muslim National Schools was also invited to make a submission to the Forum.²³ Despite the main recommendations of the Forum to have a more diverse range of patrons and to include the views of parents living in an area, the implications of the report, published in 2012, for Muslim schools and their possible future expansion remain unclear, as the report does not pay much attention to issues around the school patronage of minority faith communities.²⁴

Most Islamic education is provided in weekend schools for Muslim children run by mosques and Islamic societies in Ireland. The ICCI established the Nur Al-Huda School in 1999 and have since extended it to two areas outside Dublin. It also runs the Libyan school, which follows the Libyan curriculum recognised throughout the Arab world. The IFI runs the Al-Falah Weekend Islamic School as well as the Sunday *madrasa* and the Children's Qur'anic School where classes are held in the evenings. There are also weekend schools attached to mosques in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford among others. These weekend schools are not supervised by the Department of Education and Skills.

6 HIGHER AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

The main universities in Ireland offer a variety of courses where issues related to Islam are part of a module. Introductory and more specialised courses on Islam as well as research supervision in Islamic Studies are offered in the Study of Religions Department at University College Cork and the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Trinity College

²³ IFI's submission available at: http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Conferences/Patronage-and-Pluralism-in-the-Primary-Sector/Patronage-Forum-Submissions-November-2011-/fpp_islamic_foundation_ireland_17nov2011.pdf, accessed 15 January 2014.

²⁴ Report available at: http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/fpp_report_advisory_group.pdf, accessed 15 January 2014.

Dublin. There is no institution offering training for imams in Ireland, although the ICCI organises correspondence courses with the European Institute for Human Sciences. The full-time teaching staff at the Muslim primary schools in Dublin is appointed by the Department of Education and Skills. In addition, there are part-time religious teachers who are privately appointed by the school, and whose salaries are not met by the state but by the schools' patron.

7 BURIAL AND CEMETERIES

In 1976 the Dublin Islamic Society bought a section of the Mount Jerome cemetery in Dublin. However, this was full by the end of the 1980s and in 1990 the South Dublin City Council reserved a section of the Newcastle cemetery in Dublin for Muslim use only. Outside of Dublin, a designated area in St. James Cemetery in Cork has been set aside for Muslims as well as in cemeteries in Limerick and in Gorey, Co. Wexford. In Dundalk, Co. Louth, in April 2011, permission was granted for a designated Muslim burial ground with the potential for another plot in Drogheda. However, the fact that it took six years from when local Muslims first approached the Dundalk Joint Burial Boards has given rise to criticism from local Muslims.²⁵ Since 2013, Muslims are allowed to bury their dead according to the Islamic tradition without a coffin wrapped in shrouds.²⁶

8 'CHAPLAINCY' IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

²⁵ 'Dundalk finally gets Muslim burial ground', *Metro Eireann*, 15 April 2011, available at: <http://metroeireann.com/print-article,2659>, accessed 16 January 2014.

²⁶ Paul Melia, 'Muslim shroud burials allowed in new rules', *Irish Independent*, 7 May 2013, available at: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/muslim-shroud-burials-allowed-in-new-rules-29246473.html>, accessed 16 January 2014.

There are currently no Muslim chaplains within the state institutions. However, within the prisons in Ireland and the health service, Muslim representatives will be contacted upon request. There are no Muslim chaplains in the universities in Ireland, although most universities do have Muslim prayer rooms.

9 RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

The main mosques in Ireland organise their *'Id* celebrations separately, within the mosque if it is large enough. The ICCI, for example, has a large hall which is used for *'Id al-Fitr* and *'Id al-Adha* celebrations, as well as breaking the fast during Ramadan. Outside of Dublin, the largest *'Id al-Fitr* celebration takes place in Cork, where several thousand people attend. The community tends to rent space in order to accommodate such numbers. Apart from children attending Muslim primary schools or adults working for the Muslim organisations, Muslims have no automatic legal right to take holidays during the main religious festivals. This must either be negotiated with schools and employers or, in the case of working adults, taken as annual leave if agreement cannot be reached. There is no information available on the number of pilgrims from Ireland going on hajj.

10 HALAL PRODUCTS AND ISLAMIC SERVICES

Ritual slaughter is legal in Ireland, there are many halal butchers in Dublin as well as other Irish cities and halal food is widely available in Ireland. Ireland has a thriving halal industry which exports halal meat and dairy products worldwide.²⁷ Lamb and increasing amounts of

²⁷ Halal Certification Information is available on the Islamic Foundation of Ireland website, www.islamofireland.com.

halal dairy produce, which are certified by the IFI, are exported from Ireland. Halal certification is also carried out by the Department of Halal Certification Ireland (DHCI) which was established in 2004 and is linked to the Al-Mustafa Educational and Cultural Centre.²⁸ In May 2010, the DHCI started halal certification for bakery products and has approved and certified more than 150 bakery products of bakeries in Ireland and other European countries. In particular in hospitals, halal food is widely available due to the long tradition of medical doctors of a Muslim background working in Irish health services.

The Finance Bill, published in February 2010, proposed new measures and tax changes which would comply with Shari‘a law and thus not only attract business from the Muslim world but make it possible for religious Muslims in Ireland to conduct their business as Shari‘a law requires.²⁹ While Ireland has emerged as a major global centre for Islamic finance, there are no specific Shari‘a compliant products available in Ireland. According to the Irish Banking Federation, such products are constrained by a lack of demand, and that to facilitate an Islamic mortgage product, legislative changes would be required in relation to stamp duty, for example.³⁰

In terms of religious ritual, the IFI and ICCI both arrange funerals and perform the religious rituals. While many of the smaller Islamic organisations do not have the resources of the IFI and ICCI, they will advise on funeral arrangements and perform the religious rituals. The Saudi Ministry of Hajj approved hajj agents in Ireland are the IFI and Manasik Tours (Dundrum Road, Dublin 4, tel.: ++353 12079618, www.gohajj.ie) Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre organises hajj trips for the Shi‘i community in Ireland.

²⁸ Department of Halal Certification Ireland: www.halalcertification.ie/history_department_of_halal_certification_IE.html, accessed 20 January 2014

²⁹ Edana Richardson, ‘Islamic Finance for Consumers in Ireland: A Comparative Study of the Position of Retail-level Islamic Finance in Ireland’, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 31 no. 4 (2011), pp. 534-553.

³⁰ Fiona Reddan, ‘West looks to the East for growth as Islamic finance comes centre stage’, *The Irish Times*, 27 February 2012.

11 DRESS CODES

Following public debate in 2008, the Minister for Integration issued guidelines which essentially confirmed that individual schools should decide their own uniform policy but that it should not act to exclude students of a particular religious background. In practice, therefore, this allows for the hijab in Irish schools, although it did not recommend clothing which obscured the face (i.e. burqa and niqab) which was deemed a barrier to communication.³¹ In 2010, Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary Schools were circulated around more than 450 Catholic schools in Ireland. The Guidelines prohibit the niqab on the grounds that a teacher would not be able to engage properly with the student. Indeed, the Guidelines also state that it is reasonable for a female teacher to ask a pupil's mother to uncover her face for a meeting, on the understanding that no man will come into the room.³²

There are no rules limiting the wearing of Muslim dress in other public institutions although in organisations such as the Garda (police) which have a uniform, Muslims must conform to that uniform, which at present does not include a hijab option. It is now quite common to see Muslim women and men in religious dress, particularly in Dublin. With regard to women, this is mainly the hijab and jilbab; women wearing the niqab on Ireland's streets are still quite rare.

The issue of Muslim women's dress has gained more attention in recent years. Despite official guidelines which in principle permit wearing the hijab at Irish schools, a case was reported of a school in Dún Laoghaire, which banned a Muslim girl from wearing the hijab in

³¹ Claire Hogan, 'Accommodating Islam in the Denominational Irish Education System: Religious Freedom and Education in the Republic of Ireland', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 31 no. 4, 554-573.

³² Aiveen Mulally, 'Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary Schools' *Joint Management Board* [online], available at: www.jmb.ie/, accessed 20 January 2013.

2013.³³ A Lithuanian convert immigrant Dunnes Stores employee (a major department store) opened a case for unfair dismissal in 2012 as she was not permitted to wear hijab at work. Eventually, the woman settled her case out of court.³⁴ In addition, although head coverings worn for religious reasons are acceptable in photographs for passport and driving licences, a number of Muslim women were asked to remove their head scarves to comply with new identification procedures at the Garda (police) National Immigration Bureau in Dublin. After the ICCI had discussions with senior Garda representatives, it was confirmed that Muslim women would not be asked to remove hijab.³⁵

12 PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA

Most Muslim organisations and mosque communities in Ireland use electronic media running their own websites and using social media such as Facebook or Twitter. The main organisations have extensive websites which contain articles in English, Urdu and Arabic and audio and video resources available to download. *The Irish Muslim* was the only print publication which was published intermittently and available in halal shops and selected newsagents. It contained articles and opinion pieces about domestic and international issues affecting Muslims. The magazine seems to have ceased publication with the last issue published in 2012.

13 FAMILY LAW

³³ Shaun Connolly, 'Quinn refuses to intervene in veil ban', *Irish Examiner*, 16 August 2013, available at: <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/quinn-refuses-to-intervene-in-veil-ban-240039.html>, accessed 20 January 2014.

³⁴ Georgina O'Halloran, 'Dunnes told Muslim worker she couldn't wear her hijab', *Irish Independent*, 12 September 2012, available at: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/dunnes-told-muslim-worker-she-couldnt-wear-her-hijab-26897009.html>, accessed 20 January 2014.

³⁵ Mary Fitzgerald, 'Muslims asked to remove headscarves for new garda card', *The Irish Times*, 21 March 2012.

Since 2004, any religious body can nominate solemnisers whose marriage ceremonies are recognised under civil law.³⁶ Currently, four imams in Ireland are officially recognised as solemnisers; the imams of the ICCI, IFI, Cork Muslim Society and Galway Islamic Cultural Centre.³⁷ The married couple sign the official marriage register which the imam returns to the appropriate Registrar in the area. This arrangement implies an indirect recognition of certain aspects of Islamic marital law (e.g. consent of bride's male guardian, rules about marrying non-Muslims), while others are explicitly not accepted (e.g. polygamous marriages). Beyond Muslim marriages, aspects of Islamic family law are not officially recognised by state.

14 INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

While there is no national interreligious council in Ireland, Muslims participate in interfaith organisations and events. An important interreligious organisation is the Three Faiths Forum of Ireland which was launched in 1999 and aims to increase dialogue and break down prejudices. However, this organisation only includes the three Abrahamic religions. A multicultural organisation, Cois Tine, which works primarily with immigrant communities (www.coistine.ie) is engaged in Muslim-Christian dialogue. The Dublin City Interfaith Forum (<http://www.dublincityinterfaithforum.org/>) regularly organises events at which Muslims participate. In December 2013, the Mater Dei Institute of Education, a Catholic

³⁶ Civil Registration Act 2004, available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2004/en/act/pub/0003/sec0045.html#partvi>, accessed 20 January 2014.

³⁷ See Register of Solemnisers, available at: www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/Register_of_Solemnisers.xls, accessed 20 January 2014.

teacher's training college in Dublin, held an international conference on the 'A Common Word' document.³⁸

Some Muslim organisations have also developed interfaith links, primarily through conferences. In addition to the IFI and ICCI, the Al Mustafa Islamic Educational and Cultural Centre and the Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre are particularly involved in such initiatives. Another form of interfaith dialogue has been through organised visits to mosques by religious leaders and school children. Many of the mosques in Ireland organise local multicultural days or events.

15 PUBLIC OPINION AND DEBATE

Due to the very recent growth of the Muslim population and their relatively small numbers, Islam and Muslims in Ireland are not major issues of public debate compared to other European countries. However, media coverage has increased in recent years usually focussing on topics which also dominate public discourse in other parts of Europe such as violent extremism or the hijab. There have been several negative newspaper articles linking Muslims in Ireland, particularly young Muslims, with violent extremism.³⁹ This issue was of significant public interest in 2010 when several Muslims in Ireland were arrested in connection with charges against American convert Colleen LaRose to plot the murder of Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks.⁴⁰ Wikileaks released cables from the US embassy in Ireland in

³⁸ Paul Keenan, 'Mater Dei hosts major interfaith conference', *The Irish Catholic*, 12 December 2013, available at: <http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/mater-dei-hosts-major-inter-faith-conference>, accessed 21 January 2014.

³⁹ National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) (2006), "Challenging myths: The Muslim community in Ireland", available at www.nccri.ie/pdf/ChallengingMyths-Muslims.pdf, accessed 21 January 2014.

⁴⁰ 'US woman known as Jihad Jane sentenced to 10 years in prison', *The Irish Times*, 6 January 2014, available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/us/us-woman-known-as-jihad-jane-sentenced-to-10-years-in-prison-1.1646262>, accessed 21 January 2014.

2011, which revealed how the US government monitors Ireland's mosques and raised concerns over alleged extremism in Ireland.⁴¹

Domestic repercussions of the political upheaval in the Middle East since 2011 have also become issues of public debate. There was public attention given to young men from Ireland going to fight with the rebels initially in Libya and later in Syria including interviews and commentaries about numbers and motives. This attention increased towards the end of 2012 with the news that Hudhaifa ElSayed, a 22 year old man from Drogheda, died fighting in December 2012.⁴² The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland came under pressure in 2013 for maintaining its campus in Bahrain despite the government's crackdown of opposition protests and the detention of Bahraini graduates of the College of.⁴³ Three daughters and one teenage son of the Egyptian imam of the ICCI – all Irish citizens - were arrested at the Ramses Square mosque during Muslim Brotherhood protests against the removal of Muhammad Mursi in 2013 and detained for several months.⁴⁴

The mainstream media have also shown increasing interest in issues to do with Muslim in Ireland over recent years with feature articles on converts, Ramadan or the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. A hate mail campaign in whose course threatening letters were sent to several Muslim organisations and mosques, the two Muslim primary schools and a number of individual Muslims brought the issue of Islamophobia in Ireland to public attention in

⁴¹ Shane Phelan and Tom Brady, 'US closely monitors Ireland's 40,000 Muslim community', *Irish Independent*, 6 June 2011, available at: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/us-closely-monitors-irelands-40000-muslim-community-26739912.html>, accessed 21 January 2014.

⁴² Mary Fitzgerald, 'Drogheda man dies fighting in Syria'. *The Irish Times*, 20 December 2012.

⁴³ Mary Fitzgerald, 'College of Surgeons "powerless" in Bahrain, says former campus head', *The Irish Times*, 1 June 2013, available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/college-of-surgeons-powerless-in-bahrain-says-former-campus-head-1.1413807>, accessed 21 January 2014.

⁴⁴ Mary Fitzgerald, 'Halawa siblings to meet Egyptian prosecutor', *The Irish Times*, 19 August 2013, available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/halawa-siblings-to-meet-egyptian-prosecutor-1.1498114>, accessed 21 January 2014.

November 2013. The letters contained violent threats against Muslims living in Ireland and referred to the planned large mosque in North Dublin.⁴⁵

The only poll taken with Irish Muslims was in 2006. While a minority of young Irish Muslims took a more negative view of Ireland, the poll found that overall more than two thirds of Muslims felt Islam to be compatible with Irish life and 77% felt accepted.⁴⁶ A more recent poll of the Irish population taken in September 2010, and dealing with issues of religion and morality, found that 57% of Irish people aged 45 or over believed that wearing the burqa in public should be banned, compared to 42% of those aged under 45 years expressing the same opinion.⁴⁷

16 MAJOR CULTURAL EVENTS

The ICCI hosts an annual Qur'an competition attended by several hundred Muslim children from throughout Ireland. It also hosts an annual conference with a different theme each year, which is attended by Muslims from all around Ireland, and an annual women's conference. The British Council launched the Irish version of 'Hijabi Monologues', an international theatre project which provides an artistic space for Muslim women to tell their stories. The Irish version premiered in Dublin in April and in Belfast in October 2013.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ed Carty, 'Justice Minister Alan Shatter condemns Muslim hate mail', *Irish Independent*, 25 November 2013, available at: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/justice-minster-alan-shatter-condemns-muslim-hate-mail-29782916.html>, accessed 21 January 2014.

⁴⁶ 'Muslims give their blessing: Vast majority very happy here, says poll', *Irish Independent*, 19 December 2006, available at: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/muslims-give-their-blessing-vast-majority-very-happy-here-says-poll-26351878.html>, accessed 21 January 2014.

⁴⁷ Ian McShane, 'Public morality of more concern', *The Irish Times*, 16 September 2010, p. 6.

⁴⁸ More information available at: <http://www.britishcouncil.ie/our-work-education-society/hijabi-monologues>, accessed 21 January 2014.