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PORTUGAL

*José Mapril and Nina Clara Tiesler*¹

1 MUSLIM POPULATIONS

In past years the estimates of the size of Portugal's Muslim population from institutional representatives as well as researchers indicate a population between 48,000 to 55,000 people. Among these 8,000 were Isma'ilis while the majority population was mainly Sunni Muslims of South Asian origin from Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and a smaller part composed by Muslims coming from other countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Morocco, Senegal and India. According to the "official" figures, stemming from the immigration control/monitoring service (SEF, *Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras*), the number of residents from countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Morocco, Senegal and India were, in 2011, 12,429. This figure represents a slight increase when compared to 2010 but still very far from the 13,537 registered in 2009.

As mentioned earlier,² there are several explanations for these changes. The nationality law, approved in 2006, allowed some migrants to become naturalised and consequently disappear from the official statistics by

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² Yearbook 2012.

becoming national citizens. The second possible explanation has to do with new migration processes related to the general economic climate and its impact on the economic structure. The austerity policies implemented by the Portuguese government in past years had a severe impact in several sectors of the economy, namely construction and services. This has caused an increasing unemployment—according to the *Institute for National Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estatística)*, in 2011, 19.6% of the active migrant population were unemployed (23.5% among non-EU citizens), mostly in construction, cleaning services and retail and wholesale businesses—areas in which several migrant populations had participated in the past decades. In such an economic environment, many have decided to move on to other European countries—the United Kingdom, France, and Switzerland, among many others—and non-European countries—Angola and Mozambique, for instance. A revealing example is the case of Luso-Bangladeshi (dual nationals) families—more than three hundred—that, in the past two years, have re-migrated to Southall and East Ham, in Greater London.

In spite of this and unlike other young Portuguese, young Portuguese Muslims do not tend to seek employment and a future life course abroad, despite high unemployment rates among young people in the country.

2 ISLAM AND THE STATE

The Constitution, which recognises freedom of religion and conscience and prohibits all discrimination in this respect, provides for a system of equality and separation between the State and religious denominations. However, the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed privileges not granted to other religious groups.³ A decisive change came with the Religious Freedom Act of 22 June 2001, with important improvements for religious minorities implemented from 2006 on. Before the implementation of the new law, the CIL (Islamic Community of Lisbon), as well as smaller Islamic communities and other religious minorities, could only be officially recognised as “associations in private law.” In those days, the community had once received financial support for a third of the (up to day) five phases of construction work of the Central Mosque which took place in 2002–2003. The State’s Commission for the Coordination of the Lisbon

³ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

and South Tagus Region (CCR, Comissão de Coordenação da Região Lisboa e Sul de Tejo) contributed to this phase of ongoing constructions/improvements with 40% of the total costs. Later, in 2004, the CIL received minor funding from the City Hall of Lisbon (Câmara Municipal de Lisboa) to support the daily costs of the Central Mosque. Various donors had made the first phase of construction of the Central Mosque possible, which was concluded in 1985 (the year of its inauguration, see Section 16 below about the 25th anniversary): the City Hall had offered the land (as it did later also for a cemetery in Lumiar, see Section 7), various Muslim majority countries had contributed with financial donations, as did the community members themselves.⁴

Once it was possible in 2006, the CIL converted to a registered religious community. It meant obtaining a legal status substantially equal to the one of the Catholic Church, including agreements with the State with regard to marriages (see below) and the optional benefit of the voluntary consignment by individual tax payers of 0.5% of income tax, but no general public funding. Several inequalities remain, as privileges depend on the number of adherents of the religious groups and on the duration of their establishment in the country, with a minimum of 30 years required (the CIL was founded already 40 years ago). In practice, the CIL can benefit from tax advantages, e.g. when spending on buildings. Whenever the main Islamic communities (Sunni and Isma'ili) celebrate an anniversary or a special occasion, the Portuguese State is often represented at the highest level. Besides that, former Presidents of the Republic and also the present President have all been given the status of Honorary Members of the CIL, and the current CIL President was one of the consultants to the President of the Republic during his visits to India, Turkey and other countries. During the visit of the Dalai Lama to Portugal in 2007, the CIL which organised and hosted a huge interreligious meeting in the Central Mosque, with the Dalai Lama being the guest of honour—an important event, taking into account that the Portuguese government had been facing the same problems as other governments regarding the impact on official relations with China.

⁴ For details see N.C. Tiesler 2001, "No Bad News from the European Margin: the New Islamic Presence in Portugal", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 12(1), pp. 71–91, p. 79.

3 MAIN MUSLIM ORGANISATIONS

The *Mesquita Central de Lisboa*, founded 1985, (Rua da Mesquita in Bairro Azul (à Praça de Espanha), 1070-283 Lisboa, tel.: ++351 213874142 / 213879184; fax: ++351 213872230; e-mail: info@comunidadeislamica.pt; www.comunidadeislamica.pt) has as its Imam Sheikh David Munir. This is the home of the Islamic Community of Lisbon (CIL). Alongside common religious, cultural and social infrastructures (including a bookstore, chat rooms or the community website), three types of associations were founded in the thirty year old Central Mosque in the heart of Lisbon: the Women's Association, several groups of Guinean Muslims, and the Youth Association of the Islamic Community (CILJovem) which is organised and frequented mainly (if not only) by young people of South Asian origin, including some Isma'ili Muslims. The Central Mosque also provides space for meetings and projects of other associations of Muslims, such the one founded by Senegalese.

The other main Muslim organisations are:

- *Comunidade Islâmica de Palmela* (Av. Vila Amélia, lote 171, 172, Cabanas, 2950-805 Palmela, tel.: ++351 212110530, fax: ++351 212110539, email: cipalmela@hotmail.com).
- *Centro Cultural Ismaili e Fundação Aga Khan* (Rua Abranches Ferrao, 1600-001 Lisboa, tel.: ++351 217 229 000, fax: ++351 217 229 045, email: nationalcouncil@netcabo.pt). The Aga Khan Foundation Portugal is currently running a quite efficient capacity development project, called K'Cidade,⁵ the first project which focuses on the improvement of individual (education, integration into the labour market, citizenship training programs) and community (child care, children's education) capacities in urban environments of a developed country (www.kcidade.com and see 5).
- *Comunidade Shi'ta de Portugal* (Ithna Ashari) (Avenida das Forças Armadas, 11 D, Almada, tel.: ++351 218106030; email: Bremtula_pnegra@netcabo.pt).
- The *Baitul Mukarram Mosque* (Rua do Benfornoso, 119-1º/2º/3º, 1100-083 Lisboa, tel.: ++351 917385367). In 2004, Muslims from Bangladesh founded the Baitul Mukarram mosque (named after Dhaka Central

⁵ In Portuguese pronunciation, this concept reads "capa-cidade", as such including the term "city" in the term "capacity."

Mosque), also known informally as Mesquita do Martim Moniz, close to their work place,⁶ which caters to five hundred believers on a regular Friday prayer and organises three hundred and fifty iftars during the whole month of Ramadan. It was upgraded in 2006 and is currently the main mosque in downtown Lisbon. This mosque is managed by the Comunidade Islâmica do Bangladesh (CIB)—the Islamic Community of Bangladesh—which is responsible for its financial and ceremonial management. The main funding of CIB comes from donations of the members of the congregation.

- A group of Senegalese migrants created the ADSTP, *Association des Disciples de Serigne Touba au Portugal* (Rua de Macau, n° 4 R/C, 1170-136, Lisboa, tel.: ++351 932407559), an association linked to a Mouride cult and inaugurated a prayer hall in the downtown district Anjos in 2010.
- In May 2010 the *Associação Multicultural e Islâmica* (Rua Luis gomes n° 11, 2700-529, Mina, Amadora) was founded by Luso-Guineans from Conacki and Bissau. Their main objective is not only to organise religious services, for which they created a mosque and organise classes for teaching Islam and Qur'anic Arabic for the younger generation, but also to teach Portuguese and prepare parents for nationality exams (mandatory to access Portuguese nationality).

4 MOSQUES AND PRAYER HOUSES

There are three purpose-built mosques in the Lisbon metropolitan area: in Lisbon, in Odivelas and in Laranjeiro (the latter two were the first mosques to be built in Portugal). Oporto, Coimbra and, since 2010, Funchal (Madeira Island) have their own mosques. Altogether, one counts 36 cultural centres, mosques and prayer halls across the country, as well as the Jamatkhana of the Shi'i Isma'ili Muslim Community. There are current negotiations for the possible construction of a purpose-built mosque in downtown Lisbon, in close cooperation between the Lisbon City Council, the Islamic Community of Bangladesh and the Islamic Community of Lisbon.

The main mosques/prayer halls in country are:

⁶ For a fuller account of the historical process behind the creation of this mosque see Mapril, José, “‘Bangla masjid’: Islão e bengalidade entre bangladeshianos em Lisboa”, *Análise Social*, vol. XXXIX, no. 173 (Winter 2005), pp. 851–873.

- The *Mesquita Central de Lisboa*, Rua da Mesquita in Bairro Azul, 1070-283 Lisboa, tel.: ++351 213874142 / 213879184; fax: ++351 213872230; e-mail: info@comunidadeislamica.pt; www.comunidadeislamica.pt.
- The *Mesquita Aicha Siddika de Odivelas*, Rua Prof. Dr. Abreu, Lote 190 2675, Odivelas, tel.: ++351 219327474.
- The *Baitul Mukarram mosque* otherwise known as *Mesquita do Benfornoso*, rua do Benfornoso, 119—1º/2º/3º, 1100-083 Lisboa, tel.: ++351 917385367.
- The *Mesquita da Tapada das Mercês*, Praceta Francisco Ramos da Costa, garagem nº 6 A, Tapada das Mercês, email: acitmmm@gmail.com, telemóvel ++351 962644819.
- The *Mesquita de Coimbra*, inaugurated in 1991, Rua Bernardo Santareno, Lote 201—Cave Quinta da Stª Apolónia, 3000, Coimbra, tel.: ++351 239492683, fax: ++351 239491345.
- The *Mesquita Central do Porto Hazrat Bilal*, Rua do Heroísmo, 223, 4300-259 Porto.

5 CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Children's education was institutionalised at the same time as the main Islamic institutions in Portugal gained visibility and importance. Until the 1980s the transmission of religious ideas was mainly a family responsibility. They would be helped by private tutors who would organise informal collective classes to teach the recitation of the Qur'an, ethics, and ritual aspects (teaching how to pray, for instance).

With the creation of the main mosques in Almada, Odivelas and Lisbon, religious education became increasingly institutionalised. Currently, most mosques and prayer halls organise Islamic instruction classes (locally known as *madrasas* or *madresas*, which refers to religious instruction classes) and offer them to the public. These classes are taught in different languages, according the national and linguistic origin of the congregation, and using different educational materials (e.g. in the Benfornoso mosque, where the congregation is mainly from Bangladesh, the teaching materials are all in Bengali and brought from Bangladesh). During most of the year, these Qur'anic classes take place on weekends while in the summer they are organised on a daily basis.

A recognised, private secondary Islamic school exists in Palmela (in Lisbon metropolitan area). It has 200 pupils, with nearly 10% of them being non-Muslims and it runs both a secular and a religious curricula. In 2009,

it achieved the status of being the best school in the national ranking of public and private secondary schools (see Section 12). Part of the tuition fees for this school can be deducted in taxes, depending on the family income, and, as of 2011, the school is part of the Cambridge International Curriculum.

Another educational institution is the *Darul'ulum Kadria-Ashrafia de Odivelas* (Rua D. Nuno Álvares Pereira, 14-B, 2675, Odivelas, tel. & fax: ++351 218133282) which is part of the *Association for the Islamic Education in Portugal*. It was created in 1997 with three objectives: (i) preserve the values of Islamic culture and religion; (ii) cooperate closely with the Islamic communities in Portugal; and (iii) contribute to the active role of Muslims in Portugal and in Lusophone countries. It reproduces a South Asian Sufi inspired version of Islam, namely of Barelwi inspiration.

One consequence of the recent family reunifications among Muslim groupings from South Asia and African countries is that the number of small, local community projects which focus on children's education has increased over the past years. Some are initiatives of broader programmes, as is e.g. the project at the Amadora mosque which makes part of the K'Citade programme of the Aga Khan Foundation.⁷ Religious curricula are increasingly combined with academic training, including alphabetisation, language classes (Portuguese or, in the case of children e.g. from Guinea Conakry, French) and general capacity training (computer courses etc.).⁸ This is also true in other mosques in the country where Portuguese language classes are taught to recently arrived migrants.

The Law of Religious Freedom allows Islamic instruction in public schools, depending on the number of pupils/parents who require it (minimum ten). In practice, there is currently no public school in Portugal with enough Muslim pupils of more or less the same age who could benefit from this offer. The parents do not complain about the lack of such service, as their children attend the instruction in the Qur'anic classes.

⁷ While this developmental project is an initiative of the (Isma'ili) Aga Khan Foundation, the majority of communities and groupings where it provides necessary support are Sunnis.

⁸ For a more comprehensive view see Mapril, José, (2010) *'Bons muçulmanos': Educação Islâmica e cidadania na área metropolitana de Lisboa* in Vilaça, Helena e Pace, Enzo (eds.), *Religião em Movimento. Imigrantes e diversidade religiosa em Portugal e Itália*, Porto, Estratégias Criativas, pp. 37–54.

6 HIGHER AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

The Religious Freedom Act (No. 16/2001) regulates the figure of the imam in detail, equating imams with Roman Catholic priests in terms of legal status, and providing for the possibility of setting up specific training institutions.⁹ As a higher institution for the training of imams has not yet been founded, imam training is partly provided at the Islamic school of Palmela. 15–18 women were educated there as *alimas*. Some imams have received their education abroad (mostly in the UK, with only few exceptions where Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia had been the preferred destination). According to main institutional representatives, currently hardly anybody goes abroad. Above all, only a few are pursuing higher Islamic education because the market for imams is very small indeed.

In some cases, especially among recently arrived migrants, the imams are chosen among the group in question according to their knowledge of Islamic issues—a knowledge usually acquired in their countries of origin.

7 BURIAL AND CEMETERIES

There is no exclusively Islamic cemetery in Portugal, but several municipal cemeteries reserve areas for Muslims and their communities (Odivelas, Feijó). Officially since 2005 (and since 1998 in practice), such an area exists at the cemetery of Lumiar (a district of Lisbon), donated by the Municipality of Lisbon and open to Muslims from all over Portugal. More than 500 graves carry Muslim names. It has become the most important cemetery for both Sunni and Shi'i (both Isma'ili and Ithna-Ashari) families, being called "our cemetery". The Islamic sections of Odivelas and Feijó cemeteries are designated for the local Muslim populations.

In spite of this infrastructure, the burial place is a matter of contention. For some, usually Portuguese citizens or with family attachments to the country, the burial is frequently in the Islamic sections of Portuguese cemeteries. For others though, namely Bangladeshis and Guineans, there is a worry in burying the bodies in the country of origin. In order to do so, several informal associations or key figures collect money among other fellow countrymen. In the Guinean case, it is also common to send

⁹ Leitão, p. 300.

luggage with part of the deceased belongings while in most cases the bodies are buried in the Islamic sections of the aforementioned cemeteries. Only the bodies of important figures of the Guinean community, so called big men, are sent back to be buried in Guinea-Bissau.

Until today, only one Bangladeshi has been buried in Portugal. All the others were embalmed, sealed in a coffin and sent back to Bangladesh (the total expenses are close to five thousand Euros) where they were buried in public cemeteries or in family plots in their villages of origin.¹⁰ In spite of this, even among Luso-Bangladeshis the practice of sending the bodies back to Bangladesh has been questioned as non-Islamic.

8 'CHAPLAINCY' IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

The Religious Freedom Act grants members of the Islamic and other communities the right to practise their religion in special situations (such as in military service, public hospitals, and places of imprisonment). In practice, there are no imams working exclusively or on a regular basis in such institutions due to the lack of need. If the need arises in hospitals, the Commission of Social Affairs (*Comissão de Assuntos Sociais*) of the CIL provides special care and support for the individuals and their families which includes, of course, the visits of an imam. With regard to imprisonment, imams made visits on an informal basis until the official protocol was registered in the *Diário de República* I/185 (23 September 2009), and took effect only from 13 November 2009 on. Since then, community members, for example, provide late night meals to prisoners during the month of Ramadan.

9 RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

The State does not officially recognise Islamic festivals or holidays but permits absence from work and school on the main occasions on request. On these occasions, the CIL distributes information to the public, the Ministry of Justice, schools and employers and provides the respective forms for applying to the authorities for time off. Workers and employees

¹⁰ See Mapril, José e Saraiva, Clara (forthcoming), "Le lieu de la bonne mort: transnationalismes funéraires entre migrants du Bangladesh et de la Guinée-Bissao", *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*.

are expected to maintain a flexible schedule and to compensate working hours. Students may take their exams on alternative dates.

The dates for the two main religious festivals—‘id al-Fitr and ‘id al-Adha—are usually established by the *Comissão de Lua* (Commission for moon observation), composed of several ulama and imams, which is a committee of the Islamic Community of Lisbon. The information is then passed on to other institutions in the country. In spite of this, among other Muslim populations it is also frequent to celebrate these two main occasions according to the calendar in their home countries.

Since 2011, the *Comunidade do Bangladesh em Portugal* (CBP) (Bangladesh Community in Portugal) an association created in April 2011, organises, in close collaboration with the Baitul Mukarram mosque and Islamic Community of Bangladesh (ICB), the main prayers of ‘id al-Fitr and ‘id al-Adha in a Lisbon downtown square—Martim Moniz. On both occasions, more than two thousand Muslims of South Asian and African backgrounds gather to pray in the square.

10 HALAL FOOD AND ISLAMIC SERVICES

Ritual slaughter according to Islamic tradition is permitted, according to a spokesman of the CIL, since 1975. Nevertheless, most ritual slaughter for Muslims was performed by the Rabbi of the Lisbon Synagogue until first halal butcher shops were established in 1982. Today there are at least seven halal butcher shops in Lisbon, three in Odivelas, two in downtown square Martim Moniz, one in Laranjeiro, and another downtown in Alvalade (owned by a non-Muslim), and two in Porto. Halal chicken is available at the major shopping malls/supermarket chains (Continente, Jumbo and more recently Recheio). At least twelve halal restaurants exist in the main cities, nine of them in Lisbon. Muslims who are living in the South of Portugal complain about the lack of halal food supply, with only chicken being available twice a week in supermarkets located in Faro and Albufeira. One can assume that this holds true for other places/regions outside Lisbon as well. A Muslim halal food supplier commented in an interview that this works according to the rules of the market, namely that if clients asked for more (regular) supply of halal chicken, the supermarkets would order more.

Every year, more than 200 pilgrims travel for the Hajj. The programmes are either organised by individuals with connections to travel agencies in England who arrange for kind of all-inclusive packages or through a travel

agency in Lisbon, “Fly Well” (Rua Fernandes da Fonseca, nº 1 5ª andar, sala 805—Centro Comercial da Mouraria—110–238, Lisboa, www.grupoflywell.com/contactospt.html), which sells packages for the occasion. This agency is also located in Amadora and Odivelas.

11 DRESS CODES

A law which targets the banning of religious dress is neither discussed among political parties, nor in the public and press in Portugal. Accordingly to spokesmen of the CIL, the use of the head scarf or other special dress at school and workplaces has not caused any conflict or controversies. In the Portuguese context, the Qur’anic concept of the “modesty of the woman” does not translate into the use of specific dress codes. Consequently, the latter is not a very common practice, neither among women nor men, apart from the occasions of religious festivals and visits to the mosque.

12 PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA

In 2012, Muslims continued to take part in two television programmes on the public channel RTP 2, namely the programs “A Fé dos Homens” and “Caminhos”. The length of these programmes continues to be seven minutes for “Fé dos Homens” and twenty five minutes for “Caminhos.” In 2012, the Islamic community continues to organise two radio programmes, with the same names as the TV ones, at a public broadcasting station (Antena 1). In total, during 2012, the Islamic community was responsible for 226 minutes of TV programs and 109 minutes of Radio broadcasting, dedicated to several different themes such as Islamic education or Islamophobia.

The CIL runs a website (www.comunidadeislamica.pt) and some younger community members have activated a chatroom (www.aliasoft.com/forumislam) where one can also submit questions to be answered by the imams. Several blogs are used by young Muslims (muculmana.blog.com; islamicchat.blogspot.com; Portugal-islamico.blogspot.com). Some of these virtual spaces are also frequented by Portuguese-speaking Muslims from outside Portugal (mainly from Brazil, but also from Mozambique or Portuguese Muslims who live in the UK).

There is currently only one printed journal, *Al-Furqan*, which is also available online (www.alfurqan.pt). It has a long-standing tradition, is a

private initiative and not related to the CIL. During the last year, it even disappeared from the shelves of the book store at the Central mosque. The CIL publishes newsletters and other occasional grey literature and provides updated information on several matters on the above named community's website.

13 FAMILY LAW

As noted above, since Islamic communities (and other religious minorities with long-standing tradition in the country) can register and be recognised as religious communities (and not only as associations in private law, as used to be the case until 2006), they can perform religious marriages which, by submission of respective declarations, will be accepted by civil law. Like the Jewish and Evangelical communities, which have already solemnised a few of such marriages in 2008, the Islamic communities were able to realise the first marriages in 2010.

In spite of this, among several sectors of Muslims in Portugal, namely among migrant populations (e.g. Bangladeshis), marriage ceremonies are usually performed in their countries of origin and not in the main Portuguese Islamic institutions.

14 INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

Portuguese Muslims look back at a long tradition of interreligious relations, the latter having been informally established among leading personalities of different religious minorities already under Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique. The closest "cooperation" partner during the early years in Portugal had been the Jewish Community. This relationship had been maintained during the negotiations about the new law of Religious Freedom which took place in the early 1990s and gained official character with the founding of the Abrahamic Forum (*Forum Abraâmico de Portugal*) in 2007 which joins Muslim, Jewish and Catholic representatives and is linked to the Three Faiths Forum (www.threefaithsforum.org.uk) with links to groups worldwide. The Abrahamic Forum organises cultural events (including lectures and debates) and assistance to people in need (of any religion and also for "the ones who might not profess any religion at all"). Such assistance is mainly organised through a task force

composed of young people from the three religions joining hands to work with a selected Portuguese NGO and making food available.

On 1 February 2011, the Islamic Community of Lisbon participated in the 2011 World interfaith week held at Universidade Lusófona, in Lisbon. The programme included a debate on religious minorities in the world after 11 September with Tariq Ramadan as an invited speaker. It also included the participation of Dr. Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal and current Representative of the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilizations.

During 2012, the campaign entitled “Soup for everyone” (*sopa para todos*) continued. During thirteen Fridays (every two months), between 7.30 and 9 pm, the Lisbon central mosque served in its canteen a hot meal with freshly baked bread and soup to all those in need. The programme was organised in close cooperation with several civil society institutions.

15 PUBLIC OPINION AND DEBATE

The historically recent “new” Muslim presence (in distinction to the historical presence on the Iberian Peninsula before the 15th century) did not attract much attention before 9/11 which brought more curiosity and questions about Islam and Muslims.

Besides the coverage of the main dates of the Islamic calendar, the media coverage of Muslim related issues in 2012 included international and national topics. The international topics included how young Muslims are less religious than their parents, according to a study presented by the American non-governmental organisation *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* (“Jovens Muçulmanos Menos Religiosos que os Seus Pais”, Rádio Renascença, 10/08/2012). The national topic was how the main Portuguese Muslim “community” helps its members in several aspects including in the definition and planning of emigration projects in the current economic scenario (“Na comunidade muçulmana ajudar os feis também é auxiliar à emigração, *Diário de Notícias*, 26 de Dezembro de 2012). Another significant topic was the condemnation, by the main institutional representatives of Islam in Portugal, of both the offenses on Prophet Muhammad (in the amateur video *The Innocence of Muslims*) and the ensuing violence. Subsequently, on the 5 October 2012, the doors of

the central mosque in Lisbon were opened to all those who would like to know more about Islam and Muslims.¹¹

16 MAJOR CULTURAL EVENTS

On 5 January 2012, Tariq Ramadan gave a lecture at Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian entitled 'Political and Religious Challenges Facing European Muslims', in an event organised by Centro de Estudos Sociais (Coimbra) and the British Council. The event had a significant impact in the public space with a number of press releases in central newspapers, among them a long interview with Tariq Ramadan in one of the main weeklies in Portugal—Expresso ("*Populismo é uma ameaça*", Expresso, 30 December 2011).

During Ramadan 2012, participants in the Summer School of the Alliance of Civilizations, the Circle of Friends Portugal, visited the Central Mosque. The guests were invited to participate at the prayer and festivities after sunset.

A new monthly initiative in close collaboration with the Religious Studies Unit of Universidade Lusófona is the "Dinner Debates of the Al-Mutamid Philosophy Club." Following a buffet, and counting on the expertise of guests from diverse areas of the Portuguese public sphere, political and social issues such as Religion and Power (on the occasion of the retirement of the Pope), the 'Arab Spring' or human trafficking were discussed.

¹¹ "Muçulmanos em Lisboa condenam ofensas a Maomé mas rejeitam violência", Rádio Renascença, 2 October 2012.