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## **Berlin**

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## Demographics

Of the approximately 160,000 Muslim foreigners in Berlin, about 73% are of Turkish background, 7% from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and 4% are from Lebanon. The total foreign population of Berlin is estimated at 466,518. In addition to these numbers, it is assumed that there are at least 40,000 Muslims in the city who are naturalized German citizens. The size of the Muslim population in Berlin stands at approximately 9% of the city's total population. (SLB 2005-2006; in OSI 65)

The concentration of Muslims in Berlin, largely Turks, is due to the settlement policies of the former West Germany at the beginning of the immigration wave in the 1960's. The number of Muslims is especially high in the Kreuzberg sub-district (in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district), Wedding sub-district (in Mitte district) and Northern Neukölln district. The Neukölln district is of special interest because of incidents such as the recent school riots, and the governing mayor having publicly declared the collapse of the integration policy (OSI 64).

There is evidence that segregation is growing in parts of Berlin, particularly between Germans and Turks. While public debate often accuses immigrant populations of engaging in voluntary self-segregation from mainstream society, divisions were already present at the beginning of the wave of immigration in the 1960's, due to forced discriminations in the housing market. (OSI 8)

The Assyrians, a Christian minority in Turkey and several other countries, fled in considerable numbers from Turkey, where they were involved in the war of the military against the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, or Kurdistan Workers Party). Many also arrived from Iraq, where they suffered under the regime of the Baath party of Saddam Hussein. About 35,000 Kurdish refugees found a new home in Germany, and have a large presence in Berlin (Kleff 1984; in OSI 11).

In the districts of Neukölln, Kreuzberg and Mitte, the number of welfare recipients makes up more than 11% of the population - the highest in Berlin; welfare rates in Neukölln run 14.3%, 13.2% in Mitte, and 13% in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. The average percentage of welfare recipients in Berlin is roughly 8.1%. The number of foreign welfare recipients stood at 27% of the entire city population at the end of 2004 (SFS 2005; in OSI 64). The share of households receiving housing benefits is about 14.6%, compared to rates of to 22.6 percent in the Neukölln district, and 18.9% in the Kreuzberg district (SFS 2005, in OSI 64).

## Education

Policies concerning religious education vary considerably throughout Germany. In Berlin, religious instruction in public schools is voluntary. Choices of courses include Christianity, Islam, and Lebenskunde (knowledge about life) (OSI 27).

In January 2005, the Neutralitätsgesetz (Law on Neutrality) was passed in Berlin, which excludes the display of all religious signs and symbols from schools and other public services. The headscarf or hijab has been interpreted by politicians as a religious symbol, and was thus subsequently banned from all civil servant and employee professions with superior functions. All demonstratively religious symbols, such as the headscarf, large Christian crosses, and the Jewish skullcap are also included in this 2005 prohibition. Enforcement of the law is applicable for teachers, judges, policemen, prison officers, and district attorneys. Small crosses worn by Christians are interpreted as a form of jewelry, and are thus excluded from the law (OSI 25, 34).

After twenty years of court procedures, the Islamische Föderation won the right to begin teaching religious lessons in public schools; the organization began teaching at 20 Berlin schools in Fall 2002. There remains a great deal of skepticism among Berliners about the Islamische Föderation, which is regarded by the Verfassungsschutz (the internal Intelligence Service) as an extremist/Islamist organization (OSI 66).

Since the Federation's induction, teachers hired by the Islamic Federation and paid for by the city of Berlin have taught thousands of school children. City officials are not in a position to control Islamic religious instruction. Citing the linguistic differences of students, many teachers hold private lessons in Turkish or Arabic, often behind closed doors. Since the introduction of Islamic instruction, effects of the classes have spilled over into other parts of academic activities - school offices are often inundated with petitions to excuse girls from swimming, sports, and class field trips, based on religious grounds (NYT). The Islamic Federation ran into trouble with the Berlin education ministry for allegedly disseminating pamphlets and forms to Muslim parents, advocating the exemption from their daughters from participating in co-educative classes (Deutsche Welle).

In 1980, the Islamic Federation asked Berlin school authorities to establish religious instruction in the city's schools. The petition, in addition to others filed in 1983 and 1987, were rejected. In March 1994, the Islamic Federation sued and won; Berlin's Administrative Appeal Court ruled in 1998 that the Islamic Federation must be recognized as a religious community under section 23(1) of the Berlin Schools Act, since a religious community is defined by a consensus about faith and belief, regardless of whether the religion is organized as a public corporation or a private society. The court rejected the argument put forth by Berlin school authorities, which said that it could not deal with religions which were not organized or similar to public corporations. The Federal Administrative Court left it to the Berlin's Appeal Court to interpret the meaning of "religious community" within the Berlin Schools Act. (UC Davis) On February 23, 2000, Germany's highest court for administrative law, the Bundesverwaltungsgericht, ruled that Berlin's Islamic Federation may offer religious instruction in Berlin schools; although, Berlin school authorities must approve the curriculum.

In June 2004, Muslims and non-Muslims joined forces and founded the Muslimische Akademie with the support of the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education). The aims of the academy were to encourage the participation of Muslims, and offer an independent forum for inter- and intra-religious dialogue (OSI 49).

In March 2006, the head of the Rütli-Schule Hauptschule (secondary school) in the Neukölln district wrote a plea to the Senator for Education asking for immediate help, because violence in the school made teaching impossible. Because of the immigrant (and mainly Muslim) background of over 80% of the students, a debate about integration of Muslims in the education system once again became a hot topic. Several politicians used the incident to promote selective deportations of foreign juvenile offenders; crime linked to drug abuse is often directly linked to the avenged deportation of offenders. The school attracted international media coverage of this incident (Der Spiegel 2006; in OSI 44).

### Religious Life in Berlin

(Unless otherwise noted, all information in this section is sourced to Riem Spielhaus - see References for full citation)

The Commissioner for Integration commissioned a recent study of the city's religious civic associations, looking at Islamic communities in the context of their social, cultural, urban, and individual aspects. Below are findings from the study:

### Organization of municipal life

- Of the approximately 82 mosques and Islamic centers in Berlin, almost half do not have an affiliation or association with particular municipal representations.
- In the last 10-15 years, mosques have had no affiliation on local or federal levels.
- Members in Berlin overarching Islamic federations (IFB, DITIB, VIKZ) exclude Turkish affiliated mosque associations. Only the relatively open IBMUS organization brings different linguistic and cultural associations together (German, Arab, Urdu-speaking, Bosnian)

The use of the Islamic center varies, from exclusive use for prayer and religious life, to offering cultural and education activities in addition to religious obligation.

Cultural and social activities of Islamic associations often advertise themselves by offering Friday prayers, but also offer such activities including reading clubs, age-relative activities and projects, consultations, and educational instruction.

### The economic situation of the associations

Today, some mosque associations are in worse financial situations than eight years ago because many of their contributors have face unemployment, or strained under the economic stresses in Berlin.

Many mosque associations operate as more than religious centers, offering social and cultural activities in addition to religious obligations. German classes, computer courses, homework support, volunteering, parent and family activities, and work opportunities for women and youth, are just some of the projects that mosques and Islamic centers offer. Funding these community projects takes additional financial resources, and associations often times are lacking in funding.

*Municipal membership on a regional level* (these statistics capture 76 mosques, 4 prayer centers, and two mosque associations without a space in Berlin)

Percentage	Acronym	German Name	English Name
4%	IBMUS	Initiative Berliner Muslime	Berlin Muslim Initiative
9%	VIKZ	Verein Islamischer Kulturzentren	Association of Islamic Cultural Centers
12%	IFB	Islamische Förderung Berlin	Islamic Federation of Berlin
12%	DITIB	Türkisch Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion	Turkish Islamic Union of the Institute of Religion
46%	-	Gemeinden ohne Verbandszugehörigkeit	No Association/Affiliation

*Municipal membership on a federal level* (these statistics include 76 mosques, 4 prayer centers, and two mosque associations without a space in Berlin)

Percentage	Acronym	German Name	English Name
1%	AMJ	Ahmadiya Muslim Jamaat Deutschland	Ahmadiya Muslim Jamaat Germany
1%	ZMD/VIGB	Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland/Vereinigung Islamischer Gemeinden der Bosniaken	Central Council of Muslims in Germany/Combination of Islamic-Bosnian Municipalities
1%	-	Jama'at un Nur (Arabic)	Sect of Sun
1%	AAFB	Föderation der Alevitengemeinden in Deutschland	Federation of Alevi Community in Germany
2%	ADÜTF	Türkisch-demokratische Idealistenvereine in Europe	Turkish-Democratic Idealist Association in Europe
4%	IR/IRAB	Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland/Islamischer Rat der Ahlul Bey	Islamic Advice for the Federal Republic of Germany/Islamic Advice of the Ahlul Bey
9%	VIKZ	Verein Islamischer Kulturzentren	Association of Islamic Cultural Centers

12%	IR	Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland	Islamic advice for the Federal Republic of Germany
12%	DITIB	Türkisch Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion	Turkish Islamic Union of the Institute of Religion
40%	-	Gemeinden ohne Verbandszugehörigkeit	No Association/Affiliation

*Older and basic year of the mosques and prayer areas (Based on the data of 70 associations)*

Year(s)	1930 Forward	1971-1976	1977-1982	1983-1988	1989-1994	1995-2000	2000-2006
	2	9	9	12	18	11	9

*Prayer area represented in size, in square meters (Data of 42 associations)*

Under 150	150-250	350-550	600-1000	1000-2500	
8	12	12	7	3	

*Distribution of prayer areas in regional quarters (these statistics capture 76 mosques, 4 prayer centers, and two mosque associations without a space in Berlin):*

- Charlottenburg (4)
- Kreuzberg (17)
- Neukölln (19)
- Mitte (1)
- Reinickendorf (4)
- Schöneberg (1)
- Spandau (4)
- Tempelhof (2)
- Tiergarten (8)
- Wedding (19)
- Wilmersdorf (1).

Attacks on mosques and other Muslim-owned establishments occurred with the following notable incidents reported by the German NFP; between November and December 2004 four attacks on mosques were noted: Sinsheim (arson), Usingen (arson), and Schwäbisch-Hall (gun shot). In Berlin, a Swastika was painted at the entrance area of the Sehittik mosque (OSI).

#### Political Participation and Citizenship

Turkish and Kurdish politicians with no particular religious affiliation are present in offices of the municipal government, and mostly in the parties of the left. Members include Giyasettin Sayan, Keskin Hakki, Dilek Kolat, Ulker Radziwill, Evrim Baaba, and Ozcan Mutlu (OSI 67).

Data from a 2007 Gallup World Poll finds that religion remains an important part of identity for Muslims in Berlin, German identity is highly important. Moreover, Muslims living in Berlin overwhelmingly prefer to live in neighborhoods that are ethnically and religiously diverse - 71% of respondents said that they preferred to live in a neighborhood made up of a mix of people who both shared, and did not share their ethnic and religious background (WGP, Nyiri 2007).

In Berlin, 85% say that religion is an important part of their daily lives. This figure stands in stark contrast in comparison to 41% of the general population. These numbers do not reflect a disparity between religious and national identity - Muslims were not likely less likely than populations at large to say they identified with their country (ie, Germany) according to polling results. These results are in contrast with how the general public in Germany perceives Muslims' degree of loyalty; when asked

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directly whether they think Muslims living in France are loyal to the country, between 35% and 45% of Germans responded positively. However, the overwhelming majority, 72% of Berlin Muslims residents themselves, maintained that they believed Muslims to be loyal to the country (WGP 2).

Asked whether or not violence is an acceptable moral response for a noble cause, based on a five-point scale, 94% of Muslims in Berlin chose a low rating of either one or two. These numbers reveal the important step of dispelling common misconceptions on both sides in order to achieve greater understanding. Moreover, 87% of Muslims in Berlin feel that fellow Muslims should be more involved in the politics of their country, compared to the actuality of involvement today (WGP, Nyiri 2007).

Several Muslim civil society organizations are active in Berlin:

- The Islamische Föderation (Islamic Federation), which oversees twelve mosques in Berlin, the most important being the Mevlana-Moschee in Kreuzberg. The Islamic Federation has gained attention in recent years from winning a court case to obtain official recognition as a corporation, and delivering Islamic instruction in Berlin public schools (OSI 67).
- Founded by young Muslim academics in 2002, the INSSAN e. V. draws members from different Muslim communities in Berlin. Their goals include finding a common German Muslim identity, and building a mosque and cultural center that would gather participants of different cultural, ethnic, and religious identities for diverse dialogue for unification of German Muslims (OSI 67).
- The MJD or Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland (Young Muslims in Germany) is the first exclusively German-speaking, nationwide and independent Muslim youth organization in Germany. The MJD was founded by and for young Muslims. Several bookstores, magazines, and discussion groups geared towards Muslim, immigrant, and Turkish communities within Berlin are also quite active (OSI 67-68).
- The Entegra e.V is a very specific Muslim organization in Berlin, which takes care of the spiritual needs of Muslim prisoners and their families, and helps with advising post-release (OSI 47)

#### Public Perception and Community Projects

The issue of religious education is one of the few topics concerning Muslims discussed in German literature and public opinion. Only one organization in Berlin, the Islamische Föderation (Islamic Federation) has managed to be recognized as an official corporation, and has since 2002, subsequently started to teach Islamic lessons in Berlin schools. The Islamic Federation fought 20 years of court battles, with the aim of reaching public corporation status. When they finally won the this status, the reaction by German officials and the media was highly critical, as the Federation is linked to controversial Turkish politician Milli Görüs - seen in a highly critical light by the Verfassungsschutz (the domestic intelligence agency). Others argue, however, that the authorization for the Federation to give Islamic lessons in Berlin schools is an important sign because it is indicative of the growing social participation of Muslims and Islamic organizations. In addition, this kind of public involvement and public recognition may strengthen those parties and persons to promote active participation in German society (OSI 54)

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#### Acronyms

OSI - Open Society Institute

SLB - Statistisches Landesamt Berlin

SFS - Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung