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Agenda items 3 and 9

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

Written statement* submitted by Abshar Atefeha Charity Institute, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 January 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a fear, hatred and hostility toward Islam and Muslims and it could be manifested through violent actions, like burning mosques, vandalizing properties, abusing women with hijab, or insulting Prophet or sacred symbols of Islam. This negative feeling against Muslims and even those perceived to be Muslim constitutes bias, marginalization and discrimination in daily life, on media, at workplace, in political and social sphere, in education and etc.

Media, hate speech

The media plays a major role in promoting hatred against Muslims across the world. Muslims are often portrayed as a threat to Western security and values, they are also pictured as barbaric, irrational and sexist.

In Western societies, the rhetoric used by some politicians which is covered by the media contributes to the spread of hate speech against Muslims. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, almost 50% of Conservative party members believe that Islam is “a threat to the British way of life.”¹ Over half of Muslim Labour members do not trust party to tackle Islamophobia.² To be a Muslim in Europe is to be mistrusted, visible and vulnerable.³

While white supremacist violence is the biggest part of domestic terrorism in the United States of America⁴, responsible for 67 percent of terrorist plots and attacks in 2020⁵, reports and news are turning a blind eye on it. The Western media over-report a few Islamist terrorist incidents but under-report the much larger number of planned non-Islamist terrorist attacks carried out by white individuals.

In November 2020, Muslims were enraged by France President’s description of Islam as a faith “in crisis all over the world” that had, in effect, been hijacked by extremists. His defense of the notorious, recently republished Charlie Hebdo caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad, and a national crackdown on mosques, Imams and Islamic groups added fuel to the fire.⁶

Discrimination in law and practice

Even though fear of Muslims has existed for years and there is a long history of Orientalism, which positions Arab and Muslims as exotic, uncivilized, dangerous “others”⁷, but 9/11 can be seen as a turning point in the spread of Islamophobia. New counterterrorism policies overwhelmingly target Muslims. The United States of America’s Muslim ban policy is a prime expression of the association of Muslims with terrorist threat.

Women with Hijab are perceived as “the other” sometimes and the headscarf is seen as a symbol of subjugation.⁸ Since 2004, France has banned religious symbols, including many head coverings, in public schools and government buildings. In the name of secularism, the government is choosing a specific life style over others. Anti-Islamic political parties in

¹ www.theguardian.com/news/2020/sep/30/half-of-conservative-party-members-believe-islam-is-threat-poll-finds.

² www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/14/over-half-muslim-labour-members-do-not-trust-party-to-tackle-islamophobia.

³ www.nytimes.com/2020/03/06/opinion/europe-islamophobia-attacks.html.

⁴ www.thedailybeast.com/fbi-sits-on-report-detailing-white-supremacist-terror-threat.

⁵ [//csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/201021_Jones_War_Comes_Home_v2.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/201021_Jones_War_Comes_Home_v2.pdf).

⁶ www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/nov/01/macron-europe-new-clash-islamic-world.

⁷ <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5437&context=flr>.

⁸ <https://www.brusselstimes.com/opinion/119513/beyond-the/>.

some countries are trying to ban hijab for school teachers and medical personnel, too. According to studies,⁹ these laws hinder the social integration of Muslim women.

Recommendations

- Our non-governmental organization (NGO) is concerned about the social and political structure that promote hatred against Muslims and lead to violence against them. We urge the Human Rights Council to address the existence of Islamophobia and its manifestation in international instruments. We believe that the role of United Nations human rights mechanisms in generating international climate for defying anti-Muslim hatred is crucial.
- We call on the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and human rights NGOs to study ways of social inclusion of minorities specially Muslims.
- We believe that freedom of expression should not lead to prompting hatred against specific groups. There must be some standards to determine the language that politicians use to express their ideas publicly.
- We request the Special Rapporteur to draw a line between freedom of expression and insulting the followers of other religions. Provoking hatred should not be justified in the name of freedom of expressions.
- We encourage the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to make efforts for promoting dialogue among religions for better understanding and raising tolerance.
- We request the Special Rapporteur to carefully pursue counter terrorism acts and measures in countries to tackle Islamophobia and possibility of prosecution and investigation of Muslims and other minorities.
- We are concerned about specific laws in some European countries especially in France that ban Muslim women to wear Hijab in public educational institutions. We believe it is in breach of articles 18, 26 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

⁹ <https://vfouka.people.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj4871/f/abdelgadirfoukajan2019.pdf>.