ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION
ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

BACKGROUND GUIDE

MAIN AGENDA:
MULTICULTURALISM – THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION IN HYBRID REGIMES

RESERVE AGENDA:
ISLAMOPHOBIA – THE INTRICACIES OF POLITICAL MOBILIZATION & STIGMATIZATION
Dear Delegates,

We welcome you to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the collective voice of the Ummah ensuring to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony.

It is well known that the principal macro-political phenomenon of the last half century or thereabouts has been democratization, that is, the transition from nondemocratic to democratic regimes in various parts of the world. Our agendas under Organization of Islamic Cooperation this year focus on the intersection between different issues that these hybrid regimes face; politics of recognition and minority rights with a specific focus on self-determination, assimilation and integration - exclusion and prescribed - proscribed inequalities. Through these pairings, the dais hopes to stimulate new ideas regarding these oft-debated, but never settled issues. Moreover, in the face of terrorism, religious extremism has resulted in manifestations of overt stigmatization of the community or Islamophobia as the world calls it.

While the background guide should provide a basic overview of each topic, additional in-depth research will be tremendously useful in committee. Our topics are intentionally broad. Since they can be applied to a variety of situations, it will be up to you to take the initiative in committee, and to narrow them down into more specific problem areas – religious, cultural, humanitarian, economic or otherwise – that are in need of debate.

We hope to have a rigorous learning experience with you and are positive that you too will have a lot to draw from the committee for future conferences.

Also please note that only news reports, facts and articles from sources like Reuters, OIC official reports and journals and UN official reports shall be accepted in the committee.

Feel free to approach any of us in case you have doubts or clarifications regarding the agendas.

Sincerely,

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I. OIC BACKGROUND

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (formerly Organization of the Islamic Conference) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations which has membership of 57 states spread over four continents. The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 12th Rajab 1389 Hijra (25 September 1969) as a result of criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem.

Over the last 40 years, the membership has grown from its founding members of 25 to 57 states with many challenges in the political scenario of 21st century and to address those challenges, the third extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit held in Makkah in December 2005, laid down the blue print called the Ten-Year Program of Action which envisages joint action of Member States, promotion of tolerance and moderation, modernization, extensive reforms in all spheres of activities including science and technology, education, trade enhancement, and emphasizes good governance and promotion of human rights in the Muslim world, especially with regard to rights of children, women and elderly and the family values enshrined by Islam.

OIC Website: [http://www.oic-oci.org/](http://www.oic-oci.org/)


II. OIC Mandate:

The mandate of the OIC is to promote all-round cooperation among its member states, to safeguard Islamic holy places, and to work towards eradicating racial discrimination and colonialism.

III. OIC Charter:

Under the Charter, the Organization aims, inter alia, to:

Enhance and consolidate the bonds of fraternity and solidarity among the Member States;

Safeguard and protect the common interests and support the legitimate causes of the Member States;

Coordinate and unify the efforts of the Member States in view of the challenges faced by the Islamic world in particular and the international community in general;
Respect the right of self-determination and non-interference in the domestic affairs and to respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each Member State;

Ensure active participation of the Member States in the global political, economic and social decision-making processes to secure their common interests;

Reaffirm its support for the rights of peoples as stipulated in the UN Charter and international law;

Strengthen intra-Islamic economic and trade cooperation; in order to achieve economic integration leading to the establishment of an Islamic Common Market;

Exert efforts to achieve sustainable and comprehensive human development and economic well-being in Member States;

Protect and defend the true image of Islam, to combat defamation of Islam and encourage dialogue among civilizations and religions;

Enhance and develop science and technology and encourage research and cooperation among Member States in these fields;


In order to realize these objectives, Member States shall act, inter alia, in accordance with the following principles:

All Member States commit themselves to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter;

Member States are sovereign, independent and equal in rights and obligations;

All Member States shall settle their disputes through peaceful means and refrain from use or threat of use of force in their relations;

All Member States undertake to respect national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of other Member States and shall refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of others;

Member States shall uphold and promote, at the national and international levels, good governance, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

IV. Structure:
The Organization is composed of the following main bodies:

**The Islamic Summit**, composed of Kings and Heads of State and Government of Member States, is the supreme authority of the Organization. It convenes once every three years to deliberate, take policy decisions and provide guidance on all issues pertaining to the realization of the objectives and consider other issues of concern to the Member States and the Ummah.


**The Council of Foreign Ministers**, which meets once a year, considers the means for the implementation of the general policy of the Organization by, inter alia:

- Adopting decisions and resolutions on matters of common interest in the implementation of the objectives and the general policy of the Organization;
- Reviewing progress of the implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted at the previous Summits and Councils of Foreign Ministers;

**The General Secretariat**, which is the executive organ of the Organization, entrusted with the implementation of the decisions of the two preceding bodies.

So far eleven Islamic Summit Conferences and 38 Councils of Foreign Ministers (CFM) have been held.

**OIC Subsidiary Organs**: [http://www.oicun.org/6/34/](http://www.oicun.org/6/34/)

**OIC Specialized Committees**: [http://www.oicun.org/6/35/](http://www.oicun.org/6/35/)

**OIC Affiliated Institutions**: [http://www.oicun.org/6/36/](http://www.oicun.org/6/36/)


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**V. About OIC-ISESCO:**

Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) is a specialized institution of the OIC in the field of Education, Science Culture.

**ESTABLISHMENT**: The Eleventh Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held, in Islamabad, in Rajab 1400H/May, adopted Resolution No.2/11-C to establish ISESCO. The decision was notified by the Third Islamic Summit held in Makkah/Taif, in 1981. ISESCO's constituent conference was held in Fez, Kingdom of Morocco, in May 1982.
OBJECTIVES
The objectives of the Islamic Organization - ISESCO - include:

To strengthen cooperation among member states in the field of education, science and culture.

To coordinate the efforts of OIC institutions in the fields of education, science and technology to foster Islamic solidarity.

To see to it that the curricula at all educational levels are based on Islamic culture.

To consolidate authentic Islamic culture and to protect the independence of Islamic thought against all forms of invasion and all factors of cultural alienation, distortion and disfigurement.

To consolidate understanding among peoples and to contribute to the achievement of world peace and security through various means, especially education, science and culture.

To promote cooperation among member states in the fields of education, science, culture, development of applied sciences and the use of high tech within the framework of the lofty and perpetual Islamic values and ideals.

For more on ISESCO: http://www.isesco.org.ma/

PLEASE NOTE: The information provided in the study guide is for research purpose only and cannot be quoted as proof unless from individual sources accepted by the Executive Board.
MAIN AGENDA:
MULTICULTURALISM – THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION IN HYBRID REGIMES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
What is Multiculturalism?

The traditional model of citizenship-as-rights has been challenged from two directions. The first set of criticisms has emphasized the need to supplement the focus on rights with greater attention to civic virtues and active political participation. The second challenge emphasizes the need to supplement the focus on common rights with greater attention to cultural pluralism and group-differentiated rights. This second challenge reflects a broad-ranging movement which has been discussed under various labels: the ‘politics of difference’, ‘identity politics’, ‘multiculturalism’, the ‘politics of recognition’.

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.

There are the four pairs of action phrases that give substance to the definition: “beliefs and behaviors”, “recognizes and respects”, “acknowledges and values”, “encourages and enables”, and a fifth one, “empowers”.

Multiculturalism is a “system”, a set of interrelated parts—in this case, beliefs and behaviors—which make up the whole of how humans experience today's world. It includes what people believe about others, their basic paradigms, and how this impact, and is impacted by, behavior.

The outcome of this framework of beliefs/behaviours is seven important actions:

The first is recognition of the rich diversity in a given society or organization. For the longest time racial/ethnic minorities, the physically disabled, and women have not been given the same recognition as others. The one-sided approach to history and education has been a testimony to that fact.

With recognition should also come respect. Respect is the process whereby the “other” is treated with deference, courtesy and compassion in an endeavor to safeguard the integrity, dignity, value and social worth of the individual. It means treating people the way they want to be treated. Respect and recognition are not the same, since recognizing the existence of a group does not necessarily elicit respect for the group. Our nation has a long history of not respecting the rights of the powerless.

1 http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/newkeywords/PDFs%20Sample%20Entries%20-%20New%20Keywords/Multiculturalism.pdf
Multiculturalism also entails acknowledging the validity of the cultural expressions and contributions of the various groups. This is not to imply that all cultural contributions are of equal value and social worth, or that all should be tolerated. Some cultural practices are better than others for the overall betterment of society. These cultural expressions and contributions that differ from those of the dominant group in society are usually only acknowledged when there is an economic market for them. In most cases the entertainment media simply caricatures minority stereotypes, such as women usually in supportive roles.

Multiculturalism thus means valuing what people have to offer, and not rejecting or belittling it simply because it differs from what the majority, or those in power, regard as important and of value.

Multiculturalism will also encourage and enable the contribution of the various groups to society or an organization. Women and persons of color, for example, often experience discouragement because what they bring to the “table” for discussion is often regarded as of little value or worth.

The word enable here is important, because what lies behind it is the concept of empowerment – the process of enabling people to be self-critical of their own biases so as to strengthen themselves and others to achieve and deploy their maximum potential. People’s sense of self-worth, value and dignity is most often determined not only by the kind of support and encouragement they receive from others, but also from how willing they are to be self-examine negative behaviors in their own life and in their cultural group.

Hierarchies & Multiculturalism –

It is recognized that in any given country, there are two powerful hierarchies. The first is an economic hierarchy which starts at the top with aristocracy through the mercantile and industrial capitalist elite to professionals, white-collar workers and skilled craftsmen down to unskilled manual labourers. Struggles against the inequalities inherent in this economic hierarchy generate a politics of redistribution which focuses on socio-economic injustices rooted in the economic structure of society including exploitation, economic marginalization and economic deprivation. The second hierarchy is a status hierarchy which is reflected in the history of discriminatory laws against lower-status groups, and in their ongoing invisibility or stereotyping in the media, schools, museums, or state symbols. Struggles against these status hierarchies generate a ‘politics of recognition’ which focuses on cultural injustices, rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication, including cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect.
Stages of the Debate –

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the debate over multiculturalism was essentially equivalent to the debate between ‘liberals’ and ‘communitarians’.

Liberals (Western Liberal Democracies) insisted that individuals should be free to decide on their own conception of the good life. The individual is morally prior to the community: the community matters only because it contributes to the well-being of the individuals who compose it.

If those individuals no longer find it worthwhile to maintain existing cultural practices, then the community has no independent interest in preserving those practices, and no right to prevent individuals from modifying and rejecting them. Communitarians (Arab League being an essential part of it) dispute this conception of the ‘autonomous individual’. They view people as ‘embedded’ in particular social roles and relationships. Such embedded selves do not form and revise their own conception of good life; instead, they inherit a way of life which defines their good for them. Defending multiculturalism involved endorsing the communitarian critique of liberalism, and viewing minority rights as defending cohesive and communally minded minority groups against encroachment of liberal individualism.²

The second stage of the debate was characterized by the understanding the place of multiculturalism within liberal framework. The issue was no longer about how to protect communitarian minorities from liberalism, but whether minorities that share basic principles nonetheless need minority rights.

Thus, a liberal – culturist position emerged which argued that access to one’s language and culture can sometimes be a pre-condition for the very capacity to make meaningful choices. Liberal defenders of multiculturalism proposed distinguishing two kinds of rights that a group might claim:

1. Internal Restrictions – The right of a group against its own members designed to protect the group from the destabilizing impact of internal dissent (eg. The Sunni – Shia issue).

Sunni-Shia debate:

The bitter, bloody feud between the two branches of Islam, the Sunnis and the Shi’ites, has gone on for centuries and now this vicious sectarian strife is exploding again in Bahrain, threatening to cause an even greater conflict in the Middle East between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The roots of the hostility between Sunni and Shia lie not in profound theological differences, but in the political intrigues that took place in the Muslim world in the

² [http://www.stier.net/writing/other/Principles_and_Prudence.pdf](http://www.stier.net/writing/other/Principles_and_Prudence.pdf)
7th Century. When the Prophet Mohamed died in AD632, the question of the succession to his leadership was dominated by family rivalries and disputes.

Essentially, there were four candidates to succeed as ‘caliph’, or leader, and one group in particular, which went on to form the Shi’ites, strongly favoured the claims of Ali, the grandson of Mohamed. Even the name, Shi’ite, derives from ‘party of Ali’. But three times in succession, Ali was passed over as each of the other candidates was chosen before him.

At the battle, Ali’s grandson, Hussein, was killed and, in the aftermath of his death, he came to be regarded by the Shi’ites as a martyr. The split between the Shi’ites and the opposing faction which took on the name Sunni, or ‘tradition’, has existed ever since that battle, causing endless sectarian trouble across the Middle East and the Arab world. The division soon acquired the trappings of theology. In turn, this has worsened the bigotry and hatred.³

2. External Protections - The right of a group against larger society (eg. The issue of Clash of Civilizations)

Clash of Civilizations:⁴

Samuel Huntington, the Clash of Civilization theorist, goes into a brief historical explanation of the conflictual nature of Islam and Christianity and then lists five factors that have exacerbated conflict between the two religions in the late twentieth century.

These factors are:

- The Muslim population growth has generated large numbers of unemployed and dissatisfied youth that become recruits to Islamic causes;
- The recent resurgence of Islam has given Muslims a reaffirmation of the relevance of Islam compared to other religions;
- The West's attempt to universalize values and institutions, and maintain military superiority has generated intense resentment within Muslim communities;
- Without the common threat of communism, the West and Islam now perceive each other as enemies; and


⁴ [http://www.polsci.wvu.edu/faculty/hauser/PS103/Readings/HuntingtonClashOfCivilizationsForAffSummer93.pdf](http://www.polsci.wvu.edu/faculty/hauser/PS103/Readings/HuntingtonClashOfCivilizationsForAffSummer93.pdf)
- Increased communication and interaction between Islam and the West has exaggerated the perceived differences between the two societies.

The **Third Stage**, especially for Hybrid Regimes is now being characterized with regard to multiculturalism as a response to nation-building. The assumption generally shared by both defenders and critics of multiculturalism – is that the liberal state, in its normal operation, abides by the principle of ‘benign neglect’ towards ethno-cultural diversity. On this view, liberal states treat culture in the same way as religion – as something which people should be free to pursue in their private life, but which is not the concern of the State. This notion of benign neglect, however, is different from, and stronger than the idea of liberal neutrality which increasingly regimes in transition are considering.

The idea of liberal neutrality says that the State should not rank the intrinsic merits of different conceptions of good life; however, it is consistent with liberal neutrality for the state to nonetheless promote officially a societal culture – a particular language or social institutions, so long as the justification for this is not their intrinsic value.

Recently, in the Middle-East and the North African region, attempts to integrate people into such a common societal culture have been met with serious resistance. Although integration leaves a great deal of room for both public and private expression of individual and collective differences, some groups have vehemently rejected the idea that they should view their life – chances as tied up with the societal institutions conducted in the majority’s language.

**Ethnocentrism** -

Ethnocentrism is a basic attitude expressing the belief that one’s own ethnic group or one’s own culture is superior to other ethnic groups or cultures, and that one’s cultural standards can be applied in a universal manner. The term is used to describe the view that one’s own culture can be considered central, while other cultures or religious traditions are reduced to a less prominent role. Ethnocentrism is closely related to other attitudinal indicators for racism, xenophobia, prejudice, mental closure, and, more generally, an authoritarian personality structure. Ethnocentrism is widely used in research on social and political attitudes because it proves to be a very powerful and easily identifiable attitude that can be measured in a valid manner with a limited number of variables. Although ethnocentric prejudice can be directed toward one specific outsider group, empirical research reveals that usually ethnocentrism is generalized toward all outsider groups.

**Hybrid Regimes or Regimes in Transition**

A ‘hybrid regime’ is a form of government effectively “trapped” between a non-democratic set-up (particularly in the sense of being traditional, authoritarian and

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5 www.fride.org/download/WP70-Hybrid_regimes_ENG_sep08.pdf
post-totalitarian) and a democratic one and the term ‘regime’ is given here to “the set of government institutions and norms that are either formalized or are informally recognized as existing in a given territory and with respect to a given population.”

**Internal Conflicts of the States –**

1. National Minorities:

Sub-state nations and their demands for political participation, self-determination can be seen in a variety of issues –

**Swat Valley, Pakistan**:  
An idyllic valley rich in natural resources and heritage located in northwestern Pakistan, the Swat is bit by bit recovering from the trauma of conflict between pro Al-Qaeda Taliban militants and Pakistan security forces that in May 2009 displaced 2.5 million from the region and left hundreds killed and maimed.

**Hamas in Palestine**:  
In light of Hamas’ seizure of the Gaza Strip, it is important to understand how this radical Islamist organization came to play such a major role in Palestinian political life and how Israel and the United States contributed to making that possible.

**Iraqi Kurdish Nationalism and Iranian Relations**:  
The opposition and reform movements that have swept through the Middle East over the past year have further propelled Kurdish nationalism across the region’s borders.

Kurdish groups in Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran have taken advantage of regime change, or calls for change, by linking their claims to democracy and minority-rights movements.

Many look to Iraqi Kurdistan as their model, seeking some form of autonomy in a decentralized state inclusive of Kurdish rights. Yet, despite these shared goals, Kurdish nationalism remains bounded by the states in which different Kurdish communities live. It also coexists with other regional trends -- including

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6 [http://csis.org/files/publication/111014_Fleischner_SwatValley_0.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/111014_Fleischner_SwatValley_0.pdf)
sectarianism, border instability and economic development -- necessitating politically expedient alliances that undermine a unified nationalist movement. This increasingly salient and complex Kurdish problem will continue to challenge governance within states, while serving as a wild card in shifting regional politics.

**Wahhabis and Tribal Asabiyyas in Saudi Arabia**:  
The Wahhabi religious movement is a fundamentalist Islamic order that advocates a strict interpretation of the teachings in the Qur’an, the holy book of Islam. Adherents of this movement do not refer to themselves as “Wahabis” because it is a reference to the founder of the movement Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab, and they do not want others to view them as venerating a specific person over God (Allah in Arabic). Rather, they often refer to themselves as Salafis, “followers of the forefathers,” or al-Muwahhidun, “the monotheists.” The Wahhabi movement is the dominant form of Islam in Saudi Arabia.

**Egypt-Libya-Tunisia:**

An elaborate study of Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, especially with respect to the rise of Muslim Brotherhood can be found in the footnote given.

**Kashmir ~ India ~ Pakistan**:  
Kashmir is considered one of the most likely places on earth to spark a major conflict. The origin of the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan dates back to the partition of the British colonial empire after World War II. There are five large regions in the state of Jammu and Kashmir that were incorporated under a single administration in the mid-nineteenth century. As a result, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was the largest among the 562 princely states that constituted the empire before 1947. Although Kashmir is treated as a homogenous unit, it is actually the opposite in terms of demography, religion, culture, ethnicity, and language.
2. Immigrant Groups:

Immigrants are demanding a more tolerant approach to integration that would allow and support immigrants to maintain various aspects of their ethnic heritage even as they integrate into common institutions operating in the majority language.

International law has clearly established the principle that foreign nationals whose only offence is the violation of provisions relating to migration should not be treated as criminals or potential criminals by transit or host states. Despite this, the state trend is quite the opposite and criminalization has become more and more common.

UAE – Abu Dhabi:

http://www.migrant-rights.org/2012/05/16/amar-bahadur-bam-casualty-of-uaes-deficient-legal-system/


Bahrain:

http://www.migrant-rights.org/2012/05/30/poor-working-conditions-cause-deaths-in-bahrain/

Saudi Arabia:

http://www.migrant-rights.org/2012/04/04/will-saudi-arabia-abolish-the-sponsorship-system/

3. Racial Groups –

Nation of Islam\[12\]:

Since its founding in 1930, the Nation of Islam (NOI) has grown into one of the wealthiest and best-known organizations in black America, offering numerous programs and events designed to uplift African Americans. Nonetheless, its theology of innate black superiority over whites — a belief system vehemently and consistently rejected by mainstream Muslims — and the deeply racist, anti-Semitic and anti-gay rhetoric of its leaders, including top minister Louis Farrakhan, have earned the NOI a prominent position in the ranks of organized hate.

\[12\] http://www.noi.org/about.shtml
Questions to Consider:

1. Does sub-state nationalism necessarily account for political instability, or is it the cause for transitions of regimes?

2. Do the Sunni-Shia ideological differences have any ramifications on the political operations of countries? Will this lead to disunity in the Muslim World?

3. Does the Middle-East and North African region require fundamental cultural isolation in lieu of clash of civilizations?

4. Should immigrant groups be given socio-cultural assistance?

5. Has race interpenetrated into larger religious and political life?

6. Can multiculturalism be viewed as an effective response to nation-building?
RESERVE AGENDA:

ISLAMOPHOBIA – THE INTRICACIES OF POLITICAL MOBILIZATION & STIGMATIZATION
INTRODUCTION

Islamophobia\textsuperscript{13} can be defined as the "dread or hatred of Islam and therefore, to the fear and dislike of all Muslims," stating that it also refers to the practice of discriminating against Muslims by excluding them from the economic, social, and public life of the nation. It includes the perception that Islam has no values in common with other cultures, is inferior to the West and is a violent political ideology rather than a religion. A person who exhibits such prejudice is an islamophobe.

Islamophobia as a phenomenon has existed for a long duration of time within various contemporary as well as modern societies, but it had largely been a hidden term until few unfortunate incidents of the 21st century.

The situation of Islamophobia took a turn for the worse in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US. Discrimination and intolerance towards Muslims and defamation of Islam, particularly in Europe and North America, reached alarming and unprecedented proportions.

Distortion of the image of Islam and smear campaigns to defame this faith as “supportive of extremism” have been on the rise as Muslims are treated with suspicion and in many cases profiled as potential terrorists. As a result, they became victims of various forms of discrimination, stereotyping, and violation of their human rights.

The Muslim world’s concern over growing Islamophobia was voiced very strongly by the Heads of State and Government and leaders of delegations at the 11th OIC Summit held in Dakar, Senegal, on March 13-14, 2008. In their statements, the leaders condemned the campaign of hatred and intolerance against Islam and discrimination towards Muslims by a marginal group of individuals with vested interests.

\textsuperscript{13} Introduction to Islamophobia: 
The causes of Islamophobia:\(^{14}\)\(^{15}\):

Islamophobia may be caused in the minds of the people by (but is not limited to) the following reasons,

a) **Ignorance or insufficient knowledge of Islam in non-Muslim societies** have contributed to the development of a mind set in various strata of public opinion in the West and non-Muslim societies at large that Islam was a religion that “lived by the sword”, preached hatred and violence towards non-believers, and stood to challenge the Western way life.

b) **Insufficient dissemination of information** about Muslim countries being victims of terror attacks by extremists. The lack of coverage of the firm rejection of terrorism and extremism by the Muslim world’s political leaders, including OIC leaders, mainstream public opinion, and key religious authorities, in addition to the misrepresentation and incorrect interpretation of Islam at various levels have contributed significantly to the growth of Islamophobia.

c) **Abuse or misuse of freedom of expression** by the Western media and vested interests have caused hurt and insult to Muslims through bringing them prejudice and discrimination.

d) **Incitements by individuals, groups, or organizations with vested interests** with the sole objective to create violence and cross-religious intolerance.

e) **Lack of binding legal instruments** to prevent propagation of literature and statements that incite religious and intercultural intolerance.

f) **Confinement of the debate and dialogue** on religious intolerance and discrimination against Muslims to the educated elite and, thus the failure to percolate down to the grass roots.

g) **Exacerbation of Anti-Muslim sentiments after 9/11** by intensification of stereotypes, generalizations about Muslims, and practicing collective punishment on all Muslims for the acts of marginal, misguided individuals claiming to speak or act in the name of Islam.

h) **Lack of a political will and commitment to entering into a serious dialogue** that would generate reconciliation between Muslims and rest of the world.

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i) The threat posed by the cheap labours of Muslims immigrants to western workforce, which negatively affects the chances of the original citizens to find jobs.
ISLAMOPHOBIC ISSUES AND INCIDENTS

(NOTE: Links in this section are for general reading purpose only to understand the different kinds of ways in which Islamophobic activities occur in societies.)

Hijab – The Muslim headscarf

Various countries around the globe have banned or restricted wearing of hijab in public places due to various reasons. Though it may not be called Islamophobic in every case, but largely it stems out of the fear and lack of knowledge about Islamic practises. There are currently four countries\textsuperscript{16} \textsuperscript{17} \textsuperscript{18}, including France\textsuperscript{19} (since 2004), which have banned the wearing of all overt religious symbols, including the hijab, in public schools and universities or government buildings.

Currently Tunisia since 1981 and Turkey since 1997 are the only Muslim-majority countries which have banned the hijab in public schools and universities or government buildings, whilst Syria banned face veils in universities from July 2010. This ban was lifted during the 2011 Syrian uprising. In other Muslim states such as Morocco, there has been some restriction or discrimination against women who wear the hijab.

The key argument supporting this proposal is that face-coverings prevent the clear identification of a person, which is both a security risk, and a social hindrance within a society which relies on facial recognition and expression in communication. The key argument against the ban is that it encroaches on individual freedoms. This ban has led to mixed responses. Most muslim countries have rejected it as an encroachment on Islamic values, while the west has lauded it as a liberal move. This has also led to violent incidents also in the French Republic\textsuperscript{20} \textsuperscript{21}.

\textsuperscript{16} Opposition in Ireland Called for Headscarf Ban – http://uk.reuters.com/article/lifestyleMolt/idUKLR71630120080827?sp=true
\textsuperscript{17} Muslim’s Scarf Lead to Arrest at Courthouse – http://www.ajc.com/services/content/printedition/2008/12/17/hijab.html
\textsuperscript{19} The French Burqa Ban - The “French ban on face covering” is an act of parliament passed by the Senate of France on 14 September 2010, resulting in the ban on the wearing of face-covering headgear, including masks, helmets, balaclava, niqābs and other veils covering the face in public places. The ban also applies to the burqa, a full-body covering, if it covers the face. The bill had previously been passed by the National Assembly of France on 13 July 2010.
\textsuperscript{20} http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/11/uk-france-veil-ban-idUSLNE73A02X20110411
\textsuperscript{21} http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/11/life-idUSRTR2L3Z2
Abuse of Koran

The holy book of Muslims, the Koran, has been abused in various forms. Ranging from incidents in Guantanamo Bay to the most recent Koran incident in Afghanistan\(^{22}\), abuses to this holy book of Muslims has drawn wide criticism and condemnations by religious and political leaders across the world.

In 2012, the incident of the Florida pastor, Terry Jones, who announced the burning of Koran and the controversy of burning a pile of Korans by American soldiers\(^ {23}\), angered Muslims around the globe.

The Swiss Minaret Ban

The minaret controversy in Switzerland refers to construction of minarets, and a Swiss referendum regarding this issue. In a November 2009 referendum, a constitutional amendment banning the construction of new minarets was approved by 57.5% of the participating voters. Only four of the 26 Swiss cantons, mostly in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, opposed the initiative.

This referendum originates from action on 1 May 2007, when a group of right of centre politicians mainly from the Swiss People's Party and the Federal Democratic Union, launched a federal popular initiative that sought a constitutional ban on minarets.

The UN Human Rights Council in March 2010 narrowly passed a resolution\(^ {24}\) condemning "defamation of religion", which included reference to "Islamophobic" bans on building new minarets on mosques. The resolution was proposed by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC)\(^ {25}\). OIC representative Babacar Ba said that the resolution was a "way to reaffirm once again our condemnation of the decision to ban construction of minarets in Switzerland."

The resolution was opposed mostly by western nations, while it gained majority due to the votes of Muslim nations, besides the support of Cuba and China. Eight states abstained.

US ambassador Eileen Donahoe criticised the resolution as an "instrument of division" and an "ineffective way to address" concerns about discrimination.

\(\text{22 Koran burning incident in Afghanistan: } \text{http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/19/us-afghanistan-photographs-idUSBRE83I11I20120419}\)

\(\text{23 USA Admits Koran abuse at Guantanamo Bay: } \text{http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/jun/05/guantanamo.usa}\)


\(\text{25 OIC Final Communiqué: } \text{http://www.oic-oci.org/uploads/file/conferences_and_meetings/en/Minarets_FC%20_english.pdf}\)
The Cartoon Controversy

After a Danish newspaper and other European publications displayed 12 cartoons caricaturing the Prophet Muhammad in 2005 and early 2006, violent protests erupted around the world. Muslims throughout the Middle East and Africa rioted. They burned embassies and churches and fought with police; at least 200 died and many more were injured. Although most of the violence over the cartoons simmered down within a few months, the issue has flared from time to time. In 2008, a bomb outside the Danish embassy in Pakistan killed eight people; Al Qaeda claimed it was revenge for the "insulting drawings."

Later, in another Scandinavian country, Sweden, a newspaper cartoon depicted Prophet Mohammed as an animal and was met with same kind of aggression and outbursts from the Muslim community.

Incidents Related to Mosques


iii) Anti-Islamic Inscriptions Sprayed on Mosque in Brno (Czech Republic) - Unknown perpetrators sprayed anti-Islamic inscriptions, such as “Stop Islam”, on the mosque’s walls in Brno on the weekend of October 25-26, 2008.

iv) Online Petition against Construction of Mosque in Sofia – A petition against construction of a Mosque in Bulgaria’s capital characterizing the construction as “political provocation” appeared online seeking support against the project.

v) Babri Masjid Demolition:

On December 6, 1992 the famous Babri Masjid located in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India was demolished by Hindu Karsevaks in an attempt to reclaim the land known as Ram Janmabhoomi. The demolition occurred after a religious ceremony turned violent and resulted in several months of inter-communal rioting between India’s Hindu and Muslim communities, causing the death of at least 2,000 people.

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Desecration of Muslim Graves

i) Muslims Graves in France Defaced - Hundreds of tombstones in the Muslim part of the Notre-Dame de Lorette (France) military cemetery near the northern town of Arras and the battlefields of World War One were found sprayed with Nazi symbols.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST ISLAM AND MUSLIMS:

- [http://www.secularism.org.uk/campaignagainstsharialawinbritai.html](http://www.secularism.org.uk/campaignagainstsharialawinbritai.html)

INTOLERANCE AGAINST ISLAM AND ITS SACRED SYMBOLS:

- [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/denise-den/den_new_york_times_includes_i_b_125317.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/denise-den/den_new_york_times_includes_i_b_125317.html)
- [http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,583132,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,583132,00.html)
- [http://www.thelocal.se/15878/20081123/](http://www.thelocal.se/15878/20081123/)

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) released in March 2005 a Report on “Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU: Developments Since September 11” in which it stated that the social climate facing Muslims had deteriorated in EU countries in the aftermath of 9/11 because “the fight against terrorism has been stepped up and the perceived threat of religious extremism has given wide attention in public debates, pre-existing prejudice and discrimination against Muslims have been reinforced.

Muslims have increasingly felt that they are viewed with distrust and hostility and that they are stigmatized because of their beliefs.” It has highlighted that “only by scrupulously defending the rights of their Muslim minorities that the EU member states can retain the confidence of these minorities and fruitfully promote their integration in the long run.” It has also stated that “the responsibilities of individuals with regard to integration should also always be viewed in light of the opportunities to participate in society that are available to them, e.g. in terms of education, employment and political participation. It should not be overlooked that experiences

of discrimination and exclusion may result in Muslims and other minority members adopting behaviours that further underscore their segregation in relation to the majority population.”

The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), in a foreword of its 2007 Document entitled “Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia: Voices from Members of the Muslims Communities in the European Union” reports that the evidence it has been gathering over the last few years indicates that, since September 11, 2001, “European Muslims have been seriously affected by an increasingly hostile social climate”. The Director of the EUMC felt that it was important “to recount the experiences of European Muslims with regard to discrimination, and Islamophobic incidents and discourse which can be found increasingly in the public and political domain, and also to identify the social and political context which gives rise to this verbal and physical aggression”.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)’s “Third Report on the Netherlands”, released on 12 February 2008, reveals that there was a “dramatic” increase of Islamophobia in the Netherlands. The ECRI Report found that Muslims of the Netherlands, who have been the subject of stereotyping, stigmatizing, and sometimes downright racist political rhetoric, and of biased media portrayal, have been disproportionately targeted by security and other policies.

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34 Source: http://www.ihf-hr.org/
Questions to consider

1. What includes Islamophobia? How to distinguish between freedom of expression and the hurting of sentiments of a particular religion?

2. Is Islamophobia only the consequence of 9/11 attack. Will ending terrorism mean an end of Islamophobia?

3. Are Muslims too sensitive and protective towards their religion? Do they need to become flexible with changing times?

4. What is the role of education in Islamophobia? Can educating Muslims and others about Islam and its true meanings bring about any changes in mind sets of Islamophobes?

5. Is there a lack of political will to engage in a dialogue with opponents of Islam and Islamophobes?

6. Is a legal framework for countering Islamophobia and promoting inter-religion tolerance viable at the international stage?

Important Links for Further Reading

http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/03/us-binladen-usa-muslims-idUSTRE7416KG20110503

ISESCO MEETS TO RESOLVE THESE PERTINENT ISSUES AT HAND.