



Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Cultural & social affairs Department

OIC Islamophobia Observatory

Monthly Bulletin – OCTOBER 2014

I. MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA:

I.1. In the United States and Canada:

1. **US: The United West** – United West leader Tom Trento said in mid-October that the Florida-based group worked, “to unite western countries, western civilizations western countries, against the Ummah” [Note: The Ummah is the term for family or nations of Islam].



In 2007, Trento renamed his Colorado-based Christian Research Associates as Security Research Associates, Inc. in Florida. For a time, Trento publicly said his organization was the Florida Security Council and more recently changed it to United West.

In text accompanying a video distributed on 12 October, 2014, Trento asserted that, “mosques are NOT primarily ‘houses of worship’ but more so, bases of

operation to launch a ‘Cultural Jihad’ against America!”

In his 17 June, 2014 newsletter, Trento wrote a mocking letter to Muslims living in areas affected by ISIS. He said “Dear Muslims of the Levant, We Americans know you enjoy your oil-drenched lives of crass debauchery and fake religiosity.” The newsletter also asked that Muslims “...agree that Jerusalem... has nothing to do with Islam” and “divest ownership in American gas stations, or at least clean the bathrooms.”

During a 9/11 memorial in 2013, Trento told the audience: “I’m not talking about radical Islam or moderate Islam. I’m talking about all Islam. Their goal is to get every single one of us to convert to Islam. And they won’t stop until we do.”

The Canadian Broadcasting Service in 2012 concluded that Trento “considers himself a soldier battling the Muslim menace in the U.S.” and that his group “opposes any project to build new mosques or expand existing ones.” Trento believed that eighty percent of the mosques in the United States were teaching “sedition.”

In: <http://www.islamophobia.org/islamophobic-orgs/united-west.html>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

2. **US: Bill Maher: Liberal ideology is incompatible with Islam** – Bill Maher, a commentator and comedian hosting the political satire talk show 'Real Time with Bill Maher' on HBO, stirred controversy on his October 3rd, 2014 broadcast when he claimed that "liberal" ideologies - like freedom of speech, freedom of religion, marriage equality, and gender equity - were incompatible with Islam. Maher and fellow panelist Sam Harris argued throughout the broadcast that, in Islam, women and gays were subjugated and Muslims lacked the freedom to leave their religion.

Three individuals dissented: actor Ben Affleck, former Republican National Committee Chair Michael Steele, and New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof. Maher said during the program, "[Islam is] the only religion that acts like the mafia, that will f*****g kill you if you say the wrong thing".....*"It's based on reality, Ben. We're not [making] it up that in the Muslim world [extremism] is mainstream belief."*



The 2014 broadcasts were not Maher's first foray into bigotry. During a 2011 CNN interview, Anderson Cooper asked Maher if fear caused Americans to censor their opinions on Islam. Maher responded *"Absolutely. Because they're violent. Because they threaten us. And they are threatening. They bring that desert stuff to our world... We don't threaten each other, we sue each other. That's the sign of civilized people"*. In a 2002 interview with CNN anchor Paula Zahn, Maher voiced his support for racial profiling at airports, stating *"Yes, as a white guy, I'm not part of the fundamentalist Muslim problem that is attacking this country. That's just a fact. I mean, I'm sorry I'm white, but I'm not the one who flew into the World Trade Center"*.

In: <http://www.islamophobia.org/islamophobic-individuals/bill-maher.html>, retrieved on 20.10.2014

3. **US: San Diego mosque under threat** –A mosque in San Diego received a threatening letter with an unknown substance in it. There were at least ten mosques in San Diego, and the one that received the threatening letter had not been identified.

The local chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations said the letter referred to 'applying the death sentence' and mentioned Los Angeles, Oakland and San Francisco.

As the result of this threat, all California mosques had been notified and asked to report any similar threats, and the FBI has been asked by the council to get involved in the investigation. In: <http://www.kusi.com/story/26755019/san-diego-mosque-under-threat>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

5. **US: Massachusetts Parents angry to find out Islam is part of school curriculum**— Parents in Massachusetts were upset when they found out Islam being taught as part of the school curriculum that included a declaration that Allah was the only god.

In: <http://therightscoop.com/massachusetts-parents-angry-to-find-out-islam-is-part-of-school-curriculum/>, retrieved on 25.10.2014

6. **US: Congressman wants all out surveillance on**



Muslims, blames “morons” in media for limiting spying—Republican Rep. Peter King said the United States should respond to the 22 October shootings at the Canadian Parliament, by increasing surveillance on Muslims.

The New York Republican, speaking to *NewsMaxTV's America's Forum* also placed blame on “morons” on the *New York Times* editorial board, *Associated Press*, and *American Civil Liberties Union* for limiting the New York Police Department's ability to monitor Muslim communities. He said, “We can have all the technology in the world, the fact is we have to find out what's happening on the ground in these Muslim communities and we can only do that through increased surveillance”....“We have to find out what's going on in the mosques which are often incubators of this type of terrorism”.

King was citing the system put in place by the NYPD following 9/11, in which undercover police officers and paid informants they called “rakers” and “mosques crawlers” would compile data and trawl through Muslim neighborhoods.

In: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/congressman-wants-all-out-surveillance-on-muslims-blames-mor>, retrieved on 25.10.2014

7. **Canada: Muslim women told ‘get out of his country, you don’t belong, terrorists’—**

CHUBBUCK, Idaho – Local leaders in the Muslim community were urging two women to pursue charges against a man who verbally assaulted them at Wall Mart on 18 October. But, investigators were not considering this to be a hate crime.

General Secretary of the Islamic Society of Eastern Idaho Daniel Hummel said the two women were sought-after by a man who apparently had a longstanding history of anger toward the Muslim community. “He was telling them to get out of his country, ‘you don’t belong, terrorists.’ It kept coming up, and it scared them,” Hummel said, noting the women tried to get away from the man before the store managers were called to intervene. The Chubbuck Police Department also stepped-in, but the women decided to not pursue any legal charges against the man at that time. Chubbuck Police Dept.’s Lieutenant Bill Guiberson said, as much as hateful words could be harmful, legally this case was not considered a hate crime under Idaho law.

In: <http://www.islamophobiatoday.com/2014/10/23/idaho-muslim-women-told-get-out-of-his-country-you-dont-belong-terrorists/>, Retrieved on 1.11.2014

I.II. In Europe:

1. **UK: No radicalisation or violent extremism in Birmingham schools, says Education**

Secretary, but she defends Gove's witch-hunt— Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, had watered down the findings of former national head of counter terrorism's investigation into extremism at Birmingham schools as a "spectrum of behaviors."

For the first time Morgan clarified that there was "no evidence of radicalization or terrorism or violent extremism" despite five schools with mainly Muslim pupils in the city were placed in special measures following media and politicians campaign against these schools. In an exclusive interview with The Muslim News Editor, Ahmed J Versi, she said she was not aware there would be other investigations on the scale of Birmingham and acceded that she would also consider including Islamophobia as part Key Stages 2, 3 & 4 Personal, Social, Health & Citizenship Education. *"What Peter Clark's report had found was that there was no evidence of radicalization or terrorism or violent extremism in the schools in Birmingham, but there were examples, I think he called it a 'concerted attempt', by a small number of people, to follow a particular ideology, or an extremist ideology",* Morgan said.



The controversial investigation into what was dubbed a Trojan Horse conspiracy began with claims led by former Education Secretary, Michael Gove, of an organized takeover of state schools by "jihadists" before the debate moved onto "extremists" then directed against "conservative" Muslims and a now focus is on a need to promote fundamental British values.

In: <http://www.islamophobiawatch.co.uk/no-radicalisation-or-violent-extremism-in-birmingham-schools-says-education-secretary-but-she-defends-goves-witch-hunt/>, retrieved on 1.1.2014

2. **Germany: Another German Mosque Set on Fire** —Amid unprecedented escalation of arson attacks targeting German mosques, a new mosque in Bad Salzuflen in the Lippe district of North Rhine-Westphalia, had been set on fire, raising concerns about a rise in Islamophobia and racism.

The attack occurred when unidentified arsonists set the front door of the mosque on fire on October 11. The fire burnt the mosque, at the entrance floor of a building, along with three other apartments in the same floor. Fire department had reportedly saved nine people, three of them were children, the sources said.



Suspected arson attacks on mosques raised concerns about a rise in Islamophobia and racism. In

Germany alone 81 attacks targeting mosques had been carried out since 2012. Meanwhile, 219 attacks were carried out between 2001 and 2012, reflecting a worrying anti-Muslim trend that targeted the religious minority across Europe.

In: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/europe/478445-another-german-mosque-set-on-fire.html>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

3. **Sweden: Former MP Attacks Swedish Muslim Minister**—Sweden's new Housing Minister Mehmet Kaplan had come under attack from a former Swedish MP after he blamed widespread Islamophobia as the main reason that young Muslims were joining militant groups in Iraq and Syria.

The attack on Kaplan, who has been Sweden's new Housing Minister, started following his statements to the Turkish media in which he blamed Islamophobia as a main reason driving young Muslims to the so-called Islamic State. The minister argued that the government should give more money to Europe's mosques in an effort to tackle the recruitment.



Going on in her blatant attack, the Social Democrat politician accused Kaplan of having a "hidden agenda" without further explanation or proof on her claims. *"For fear of being labeled as an Islamophobe, no one dares question Mehmet Kaplan and his hidden agenda,"* added Pekgul. She added that with Kaplan in government, Sweden's Green Party heads Gustav Fridolin and Asa Romson have sent a clear signal to Sweden's Muslims that the Islamists now have the support of the Swedish establishment. In: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/europe/478555-former-mp-attacks-swedish-muslim-minister.html>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

4. **France: Paris Opera ejects woman for wearing veil during performance**—France's government was drawing up a new set of rules for theatres after Paris Opera ejected woman for wearing a veil during a performance on 19 October.

The incident took place when a veiled woman was spotted on the front row of a performance of La Traviata at the Opera Bastille. The woman was sitting just behind the conductor, visible to monitors, wearing a scarf covering her hair and a veil over her mouth and nose during the performance on October 3.

In: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/world/article/paris-opera-ejects-woman-for-wearing-veil-during-performance>, retrieved on 25.10.2014

I.III. Rest of the World:

Australia: Muslims feel violent backlash after Australian anti-terror raids—Islamic groups were reporting a rise in anti-Muslim attacks in Australia since counter-terror raids on September 2014 in Sydney and Melbourne, and threats made by Islamic State. Muslim leaders were compiling a list of racially or religiously motivated assaults, and said there have been dozens so far, mainly against women wearing the hijab. Islamic organizations in Australia mentioned at least 30 attacks on Muslims since the counter-terrorism raids. Threats made against Australia by the radical Islamic State group had also fueled the backlash.

The highest rate of reported acts of assault and acts of intimidation had been in the state of Queensland, where mosques were threatened and death threats made against Islamic leaders.

Accurate police statistics on assaults were unavailable, although Australian authority said it has been actively seeking to ease tensions with the Islamic community since September's anti-terror raids in Sydney.

Far-right groups had been campaigning to have Islam banned in Australia. Ralph Cerminara, the president of the Australian Defense League, said Muslims were responsible for a breakdown in law and order in the nation's biggest city, Sydney, adding *"They're coming after us. They're raping our children. They're raping our families. Now in the west [Sydney], it's pretty much a crime capital of Sydney"*.

In: <http://www.voanews.com/content/muslims-feel-violent-backlash-after-australian-anti-terror-raids/2485585.html>, retrieved on 20.10.2014

I.IV. On Geert Wilders:

Geert Wilders: Nothing is being done to make our own countries safe—Wilders once again made controversial statement following the Ottawa shootings on 22 October 2014.

"Listen, war has been declared on us. On Canada, by the Islamic state, by Muslim fundamentalists, (on) Europe, on the United States, on us, so we have to fight them as if it was a war. It is a war. I am very much in favor of civil liberties, but I believe that in a time of war, we should have one, first priority -- and that is to protect our people -- the Canadian people, the Dutch people, the American people. If you have the intention to rob our society of our rule of law, then you don't deserve the rights that come with that rule of law."

Wilders also offered a program to reverse something he called *'The Islamization of the Netherlands and the wider West'*: 1) Halt immigration from Islamic countries; 2) Close every Salafist mosque receiving money from Gulf countries; 3) Stimulate voluntary re-emigration; 4) Expel criminals with dual nationality to the country of their other nationality; 5) Demand that resident passport-holders from Islamic countries renounce sharia law and the violent commands of the Koran; 6) Bar those returning from jihad from re-entry. In: <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2014/10/25/Diana-West-Geert-Wilders>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

II. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS:

II.I. In the United States and Canada:

1. **US: CAIR Launches Website Exposing America's 'Islamophobia Network'**—The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) on 15 October launched Islamophobia.org, the latest



element in the Muslim civil rights organization's work to monitor and challenge the growing anti-Muslim bigotry in American society.

CAIR's Islamophobia.org site presented detailed profiles of a number of individuals and institutions involved in the American Islamophobia network. The searchable collection of profiles included well-known hate entities such as Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy and Robert Spencer's Jihad Watch. Additionally, the site featured information on key, but less visible members of the network, such as a number of local ACT! for America leadership.

The site also laid the groundwork for a forthcoming CAIR initiative to counter all types of prejudice in the United States. The Islamophobia.org site included new data on efforts to pass anti-Islam legislation in the United States. It also asked visitors to submit tips about Islamophobic incidents, news articles, social media postings, or organizations.

In: <http://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/2259828>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

2. US: Md. teacher investigated for comment about Muslims –Prince George's County school administrators were investigating allegations that an English teacher made derogatory comments about Muslims.

Students at Parkdale High School reported the conversation to school officials and the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the nation's largest Muslim advocacy group. They reported that teacher Anthony Fonebi told the students that "*Muslims are dangerous. They are terrorists and they will kill you.*"

The teacher told *The Washington Post* that he did not say anything derogatory and that a classroom discussion was blown out of proportion. Fonebi said he's surprised that a complaint was filed and that he was trying to turn a discussion about Muslims into a teachable moment. He said he was trying to make a point that Muslims were wrongly portrayed as terrorists. In: <http://www.wtop.com/41/3725033/Md-teacher-investigated-for-comment-about-Muslims>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

3. Canada: Town rallies around vandalized Cold Lake mosque –The words "Go home" and "Canada" had been sprayed across the front face of a mosque in Cold Lake, Alta, early morning on 24 October. Vandals had also smashed two of the mosque's windows.

Only a couple hours later, it was a much different sight. Over the course of the morning, dozens of people from the town showed up to help repair the damage. Some helped paint over the damage, while others taped their own messages to the window reading "You Are Home" and "Love Your Neighbour."

In: <http://www.islamophobiatoday.com/2014/10/27/town-rallies-around-vandalized-cold-lake-mosque/>, retrieved on 1.11.2014



4. Canada: Local Muslims mourn dead Canadian soldiers— On October 24, during Friday prayers dedicated to two Canadian soldiers killed in assaults in Ottawa and

Quebec, Syed Soharwardy said he was tired of having to condemn terrorist attacks, and he vented his frustration over his faith being caught up in the crimes. "*I'm getting tired of saying it's all done by*



radicals, they have a Muslim name, a Muslim appearance,” he told male congregants at the Genesis Centre in northeast Calgary.

He called on his co-religionists to be wary of who joins their ranks and to raise their children to be peacemakers. He called on about 400 worshippers to condemn the deaths of Cpl. Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and to pledge their loyalty to Canada. The congregants then raised their hands en masse to do so.

The men who killed the soldiers, said Soharwardy, may have called themselves Muslims but were not. “Islam is not about death, Islam is about life,” he said.

Soharwardy also decried the desecration of a mosque in Cold Lake, from where Canadian fighter bombers departed to bomb Islamic State targets in Iraq. “We cannot take this abuse because one or two people commit these crimes ... we condemn these more than anyone,” he said. In: <http://www.calgarysun.com/2014/10/24/local-muslims-mourn-dead-canadian-soldiers>, retrieved on 30.10.2014

Related: Calgary Muslim leaders denounce deadly attacks— Calgary Muslims honoured on 24 October, the two Canadian soldiers killed in that week in separate terrorist attacks and condemned the men accused in their deaths. David Liepert spoke for Muslim leaders gathered outside Calgary’s municipal building.



The statement by Calgary Muslims followed earlier reports that Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, the gunman who killed Cpl. Nathan Cirillo on Parliament Hill and was later shot dead by authorities on 22 October, had ties to Calgary.

I.II. In Europe:

1.

Russia: Moscow hotel goes “halal” to attract muslim tourists – Russia joined the many popular international tourist destinations offering halal products and services to increase tourism of visitors from the Muslim world.

Due to the growing awareness for the need of Shariah compliant tourist packages and services, a hotel in Russia has launched a special “halal” service, according to AFP.

“No bacon for breakfast, a room for prayers and the Quran on your bedside table,” the same source added. “Around 70 per cent of our guests are from overseas and 13 per cent of these come from Muslim countries, especially Iran,” said Lyubov Shiyan, marketing director at the Aerostar hotel.



The hotel has reportedly reserved two separate rooms for prayers, and provides the holy Quran on the bedside of each of these rooms reserved for Muslims and an exclusive kitchen to prepare Halal food.

Russian hotels need to go through a rigorous vetting procedure before they can obtain the Halal certification by Muslim officials in Russia.

In: <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2014/10/142511/moscow-hotel-goes-halal-to-attract-muslim-tourists/>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

2. France: Far-right French Politician Reverts to Islam –In a shocking decision to Marie Le Pen's party, Maxence Buttey, a French far-right councilor reverted to Islam, sending a video message to officials of the anti-immigration Front National Party, to praise the Muslims' holy book, the Qur'an, and asking them to join him.

He told *Le Parisien* newspaper, *"Both are demonized and very far from the image portrayed in the*



media," drawing up similarities between the Front National party and Islam. *"Like Islam, the FN defends the weakest. The party denounces exorbitant interest rates charged on the debt of our country, and Islam is against the practice of usury."* The video was a shock to many members of the party, which announced suspending Buttey from a regional FN committee.

Le Pen's party has adopted anti-Islam agenda for years. She took over the National Front from her father, party founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, who had several convictions for racism and anti-Semitism. Le Pen had objected to schools serving Halal meat for Muslim pupils, a controversial issue in France, which

had banned the wearing of the full-face veil in public and headscarves in state schools. She also compared Muslim street prayers to Nazi occupation in a speech given during a rally in 2010. In: <http://onislam.net/english/news/europe/478959-far-right-french-politician-reverts-to-islam.html>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

3. UK: King's Lynn: first prayers held at Islamic community centre targeted in far-right campaign– The first prayers were held at a Lynn pub, which was taken over by West Norfolk Islamic Association early 2014 for future use as a community centre. After a complete makeover inside, and with plans for an upcoming official opening, the former Queen's Arms pub, in London Road, would soon be up and running for the community.

Planning permission was granted for the project back in April, and the centre had previously come under fire, with more than 700 objections to the plans posted on Norfolk County Council's website.

In: <http://www.islamophobiawatch.co.uk/kings-lynn-first-prayers-held-at-islamic-community-centre-targeted-in-far-right-campaign/#more-38165>, Retrieved on 0.11.2014



III. SITUATION OF MUSLIMS

III.I. In the United States and Canada:

US: White House hosts first-ever Eid al-Adha celebration—The White House hosted an event to celebrate Eid al-Adha on 14 October for the first time ever with the sponsorship of the Rumi Forum, an international organization established by Turks living in Washington, D.C., to foster intercultural dialogue.



The White House traditionally hosts an iftar (fast-breaking) dinner every year for representatives of Muslim communities in the United States, but the 14 October day's event was the first time that they had hosted a celebratory event for Eid al-Adha, upon the suggestion of Rumi Forum. The opening speech of the event was made by White House Public Relations Office Deputy Director Ashley Allison and Rumi Forum President Emre Çelik. The forum, of which Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen is the

honorary chairman, provided food for the event.

Çelik said Rumi Forum came up with the idea to host a celebratory event for Eid al-Adha with the attendance of representatives from different religions. The event was attended by about 60 people from various interfaith organizations in Washington, including representatives from Christian and Jewish organizations in the US, as well as Muslims.

At the event, different faith groups' representatives delivered speeches emphasizing the importance of interfaith dialogue. The evening ended with a closing speech by Special Assistant to the US President and Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships Melissa Roger.

In: http://www.todayzaman.com/national/white-house-hosts-first-ever-eid-al-adha-celebration_361707.html, retrieved on 20.10.2014

III.II. In Europe:

1. UK: Muslim doctors offer free health clinic at Hoover mosque – The negative image of warfare and beheadings in the name of Islam had made international news since months before, and Muslims in Birmingham wanted to show that the true Islam was exemplified by compassion.

A free clinic was opened on 11 October at the Hoover Crescent Islamic Center on Hackberry Lane. Tanveer Patel, president of Red Crescent Clinic, said "*It's about building community; it's about serving the people. They are here serving the poor, the needy, the uninsured*". Doctors and dentists offered free check-ups and testing. Muslim physicians were volunteering their time to serve. Team of Muslim volunteers were also assisting.

In: <http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2014/10/muslim-doctors-offer-free-heal.html>, retrieved on 20.10.2014

III.III. Rest of the World:

Myanmar: Number of Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar since violence broke out in 2012 tops 100,000—A growing sense of desperation was fueling a mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims from western Myanmar, with the number fleeing by boat since communal violence broke out two years ago was now topping 100,000, a leading expert said on 25 October.

Chris Lewa, director of the nonprofit advocacy group Arakan Project, said there has been a huge surge since October 15, with an average of 900 people per day piling into cargo ships parked off Rakhine state.



Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist nation of 50 million that emerged from half a century of military rule, has an estimated 1.3 million Rohingya. Though many of their families arrived from neighboring Bangladesh generations ago, almost all have been denied citizenship. Since 2012, attacks by Buddhist mobs have left hundreds dead and 140,000 trapped in camps, where they live without access to adequate health care, education or jobs. In: <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/number-rohingya-fleeing-burma-tops-100000.html>, retrieved on 30.10.2014

IV. ON BURQAH AND VEIL RELATED ISSUES:

Australia: Women's groups oppose 'Burqa Ban'-- The NFAW and associated groups welcomed the (20/10/14) announcement that the ban on individuals wearing face veiling at Australian Parliament House had been reversed.

This was the Joint Statement from:

- The National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW)
- YWCA Australia,
- Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) Australia,
- WIRE Women's Information
- Women with Disabilities ACT,
- JERA International
- National Alliance of Working Women's Centres
- Women in Adult and Vocational Education
- ACT Council of Social Service.
- National Council of Jewish Women of Australia
- Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW)
- Destroy the Joint
- Immigrant Women's Speak Out Association
- Ethic Child Care and Community Services Cooperative
- Addison Road Community Association

- Australian Women's Health Network
- Business and Professional Women Australia
- Jessie Street National Women's Library
- National Council of Women
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
- The Older Women's Network NSW
- Soroptomist International Australia
- Belconnen Community Service Inc.
- Australian Council on Women and Policing
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service Canberra
- Migrant Women's Lobby Group of South Australia
- Women's Legal Service Canberra and Region
- Australian Womensport and Recreation Association
- Woden Community Service
- Association of Women Educators
- Australian Graduate Women
- Toora Women's Refuge
- Women's Health Special Interest Group of the Public Health Association of Australia
- Northern Territory Council of Social Service
- Association of Women Educators

In: <http://www.nfaw.org/womens-groups-oppose-burqa-ban/>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

Related: **Burka backflip: Muslims will have to lift veil for checks**—Muslim women who cover their faces would be forced to 'temporarily remove any coverings' so they could be properly identified by security staff in Parliament. The change in policy was announced on 20 October as Parliament was set to reconvene in Canberra. It overturned an earlier plan to force women with coverings to sit in a separate enclosed public gallery which was normally used by school children. That plan caused an outcry and an intervention from Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who was believed to have told Speaker Bronwyn Bishop that common sense should prevail, the ABC reported.

A Department of Parliamentary Services statement on security arrangements released on that day said it had replaced the earlier measures. The new arrangements stipulated that all visitors entering Parliament would be required to temporarily remove any coverings. "That would enable security staff to identify any person who may have been banned from entering Parliament House or who may be known, or discovered, to be a security risk," DPS said in the statement.

In: <http://www.dailymercury.com.au/news/burka-backflip-women-will-have-lift-veil-checks/2424638/>, retrieved on 25.10.2014

V. ON DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS:

1. **US: Interfaith prayer gathering calls for understanding, unity amongst all cultures**—As violence erupted around the world, local efforts in Rochester to foster peace and acceptance amongst all faith traditions and cultures were working to counter threatening messages that have been grabbing world attention.



Assisi Heights held its interfaith peace prayer gathering on 12 October to have a meeting of the minds of people from various backgrounds.

The gatherings were meant to instill a sense of peace and understanding amongst people in local community. This event worked to build the momentum from the previous rally held at Calvary Episcopal Church on the previous month, calling for tolerance and peace.

In: <http://www.kttc.com/story/26767906/2014/10/12/interfaith-peace-prayers-calls-for-understanding-unity-amongst-all-cultures>, retrieved on 20.10.2014

2. **US: ‘Spread hummus, not hate’ campaign unites Muslims, Jews**—A small band of Jews and Muslims marched through one of the Washington’s busiest squares on 14 October, shouting “Spread Hummus! Not Hate!” and trying to draw the attention of group of workers lined up at food trucks. Many in the lunchtime crowd continued chatting with their co-workers, but a few people joined in to sing “Salaam, Shalom,” a tune with the words for peace in Arabic and Hebrew, or to pen a comment on the side of the “SpreadHummusNotHate” bus.



The one-day bus tour began at the University of Maryland, traveled to a mosque in D.C. and ended at a private residence in Virginia. It was designed to counter anti-Islam ads that appeared months before on D.C. city buses. Similar ads still circulate on New York City buses. Organized by the newly formed Greater Washington Muslim-Jewish Forum, the “Spreadhummusnothate” bus tour served up pita bread and hummus — a chick pea dip savored by Jews and Muslims alike — at most of its six stops.

The ads that inspired the hummus campaign were bought by the American Freedom Defense Initiative, a group led by Pamela Geller. Those ads, which many

Jews and Muslims found offensive, read: “In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat Jihad.”

This was the first public event for the Greater Washington Muslim-Jewish Forum, created under the auspices of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, a national group of Muslims and Jews.

In: http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/spread-hummus-not-hate-campaign-unites-muslims-jews/2014/10/14/ad27685c-53e6-11e4-b86d-184ac281388d_story.html, retrieved on 16.10.2014

3. **UK: Bishop of Tewkesbury visits Barton's Jama Al-Karim Mosque in educational visit—** Faiths and cultures came together at Barton's Jama Al-Karim Mosque on 11 October during an educational visit by the Bishop of Tewkesbury.



Rt. Revd. Martyn Snow was joined by a group of Christians from Gloucester for a guided tour of the mosque in All Saints Road and to hear educational talks.

Visitors learned how Muslims pray, about the teachings of Islam and what the mosque has done for the Gloucester community over the years.

The purpose of the visit was to educate the community about the Islamic faith, to meet neighbours and to foster a greater religious and cultural understanding between different groups.

Rt. Revd. Snow, the acting Bishop of Gloucester, said: *"This visit was held to try to learn from each other and show that Christians and Muslims can live in peace.".... "It's all about growing an understanding of each other's faiths so we are more able to live together and work together. We hoped to bring as many people along as possible to learn as much as we can about a different culture."* In: <http://www.gloucestercitizen.co.uk/Bishop-Tewkesbury-visits-Barton-8217-s-Jama-Al/story-23104313-detail/story.html#ixzz3J8MYMljL>, retrieved on 1.11.2014

4. **Australia: Newcastle mosque open day attracts 400 –** Newcastle Muslim Association on mid-October opened the doors to its Wallsend mosque, using conversation, clarity and cuisine as a way to forge stronger ties within the community.

Association spokesperson Diana Rah said the organisation had not been expecting the more than 400 people who visited the mosque on that day. *"We were very grateful to them for coming out and getting to know us and allowing us to get to know them,"* she said.

Grand Mufti of Australia Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohamed spoke at the day, which included an exhibition about Islam, a chance for men and women to try on traditional Islamic dress, mosque tours and a question and answer session.



Visitors were also invited to enjoy a barbecue, traditional homemade sweets and Saudi chai tea. *"Our mosque has always had relationships with church and community groups, but we have noticed in recent times some negative reporting about Muslims and an escalation of verbal attacks on Islamic women, of eggs, coffees and milkshakes being thrown at them from car windows. But we wanted to strengthen the existing relationships we have with the community and form new relationships – for everyone to get to know each other and for community harmony,"* Ms Rah said.

VI. GENERAL ISSUES:

Quick Takes: “Islamophobia”

Muslims and Atheists Both Experience Discrimination in America

In theory, freedom of religion applies to every American, but in practice, it seems to elude certain minorities. In a society with a Christian majority and a long cultural legacy of Judeo-Christian traditions, Muslims and atheists, two of America’s fastest growing religious minorities, have suffered plenty of persecution. When atheist pundits like Bill Maher deny the existence of Islamophobia, they completely miss the parallels between how Muslims and atheists are treated in the USA.

Maher advocates for free criticism between belief systems but downplays the extent to which prejudice against ideas translates to prejudice against people. The NYPD reports that hate crimes against Muslims have increased for more than a decade, new mosques receive disproportionate opposition compared to any other place of worship built in cities and Gallup polls show more than one-fourth of Americans admit to distrusting Muslims.

In a similar vein, the American Sociological Review has found that Americans distrust atheists more than any other minority used in their studies. Seven U.S. states even have laws against atheists holding public office, and six still have blasphemy laws. Despite the similar mechanisms of institutional oppression faced by Muslims and atheists, Maher dismisses Islamophobia as an impediment to free religious criticism, whereas he regularly compares prejudice against atheists to homophobia, calling atheism “the new gay marriage.”

In reality, Islamophobia and atheophobia both constitute legitimate prejudices in our culture, and a consistent viewpoint would recognize this. The incoherent position in which one of these groups suffers prejudice while the other only faces due criticism completely removes the opportunity to show a rare bit of solidarity between these two otherwise disparate groups.

— **THOMAS FINN**

Islam Is Not the Only Religion That Has a Violence Problem

Islam is constantly falsely portrayed in the West as an extremist, violent religion prone to bloodshed. In his “Last Word” interview, Bill Maher even said that Islam is “the only religion that acts like the mafia.” But anyone who claims this has just forgotten a lot of history; any time religion has mixed with politics, the results are often deadly.

According to The UK Guardian, a woman in Ireland died due to Ireland’s Catholic law against abortion in 2012. Although the woman requested the abortion on the account that it could save her life from an otherwise fatal pregnancy, she was still denied it, simply due to religion. It is untrue to claim that Middle Eastern countries are the only ones with unjust religious laws.

Similarly, Muslim countries are not the only ones waging “religious wars.” Israel, a Jewish state, has been fighting with its Muslim neighbors on the basis that it’s defending its right to exist. Data from B’Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization, states that roughly 7,000 Palestinians have been killed since 2000, yet Judaism is not characterized as a brutal religion.

Christianity has the same story. Only 1,400 years old, Islam is considered a relatively young religion. When Christianity was 1300 years old, the crusades had just ended. This conveniently forgotten yet bloody event directly resulted from religion mixing with politics.

The fact of the matter is the violence in the Middle East is the result of politics, not religion. Branding Islam and its followers as brutal terrorists is not only insensitive and morally unjust but also historically inaccurate. Islam is just one example of how harmful it is when a society mixes politics and religion and, therefore, it should not be treated as an outlier.

— **AYAT AMIN**

Media Coverage Perpetuates Negative Stereotypes of All Muslims

The language often used in today's media perpetuates negative perceptions of the entire Muslim community. Words like "barbarism" and "hostile" surround discussions of Islamic groups — Bill Maher spouted in his now-viral debate with Ben Affleck that "Islam is the mother lode of bad ideas." Many prominent speakers on the issue excuse other works of violence — such as those committed by white supremacists, fundamentalist Christians, etc. — as the work of "a few crazy people," while the violence of Muslim groups is classified by the media as "dangerous terrorist attacks." By always casting violence by radical Muslims, or even just Middle Easterners, in this light, Islamophobia is being cultured in Western minds.

With ongoing turmoil in the Middle East and the expansion of the jihadist group ISIS, the Islamic faith has increasingly fallen victim to this sort of public prejudice. According to a Pew Research poll, few Muslims surveyed in Western countries said that suicide bombing or other forms of violence against civilian targets can be justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Intelligence services around the world estimate the radical population of Muslims to be between 15 to 25 percent. While it may be true that even this minority of extremists still makes up a formidable group that does not excuse the generalization of radical ideologies to all Muslims. This overgeneralization is falsely justified bigotry.

Any form of extremism that endangers lives or the safety of any nation is a problem and not one that should be overlooked or left undiscussed. However, it is also unacceptable to allow the actions of a radical minority to color the public's perception of an entire group.

— **HAILEY SANDEN**

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