



**I. MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA:**

**I.1. In the United States and Canada:**

**1. US: Does ‘True Islam’ Create a Peaceful Society? Here’s Where Americans Stand** – according to newly released polling data from *LifeWay Research*, more than a third of Americans were worried about Shariah law coming to the United States and more than one in four believe that the Islamic State terror group reflects the true nature of Islam.



Overall, the survey found that Americans’ views were quite complicated on both Islam and the Islamic State. While 37 percent expressed fears about Shariah law, 27 percent believed that the Islamic State reflects Islam’s true nature, and 48 percent disagreed with the statement “ISIS is not Islamic,” some see the Muslim faith in a different light.

22 percent of Americans agreed that the Islamic State “is not Islamic”, with an additional three in 10 expressing that they were not quite sure where they stood on the matter. Most telling, 47 percent rejected the notion that the Islamic State was evidence of what happens when Islam takes control in society, with an additional 26 percent claiming that they were not sure where they stood.

When presented with the statement “true Islam creates a peaceful society,” 43 percent of Americans agreed, though 39 percent disagreed and an additional 18 percent were unsure.

In addition to surveying the general public, the research firm also spoke with pastors, who took a somewhat more negative stance on Islam, with 61 percent of Protestant senior preachers disagreeing with the notion that “true Islam creates a peaceful society.” Additionally, 45 percent said that they believe the Islamic State is an indication of what happens when Islam dominates in a society, though 47 percent disagreed.

In: <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2015/02/13/does-true-islam-create-a-peaceful-society-and-is-the-islamic-state-truly-a-muslim-movement-pastors-and-the-public-weigh-in-on-shariah-law-and-islam/>, retrieved on 14.02.2015

**2. Canada: Muslims uneasy after windows shot out at school on Cavendish**— Montreal police were busy investigating an attack on the Muslim Secondary School on Cavendish Blvd. after six windows were shot out with a gun. Students and teachers arrived at the Montreal Muslim Secondary School 9 February morning to discover at least six windows had been hit. School authorities called police immediately after noticing the damage, but they were not certain when the windows were broken, and said it could have happened any time over the weekend. Nobody was hurt, and nobody was at the school when the attack took place.

In: <http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/muslims-uneasy-after-windows-shot-out-at-school-on-cavendish-1.2229866>, retrieved on 14.02.2015

**3. US: Fire burns Islamic center in Houston, Texas** — It is yet to be known what caused the fire that gutted a section of the building used for storage. Federal investigators were then looking for the source of the blaze. Kenyatta Parker, public information officer said that he was unable to comment regarding reports citing the Imam and his son who said that the fire was either an arson attack or started accidentally by a homeless person trying to shelter from the cold. *"We currently have no official statement regarding the fire and it remains under investigation."*

In: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/world/2015/02/13/Fire-burns-Islamic-center-in-Houston-Texas.html>, retrieved on 14.02.2015

**4. US: Dearborn woman: I saw Muslim man attacked at Kroger**—Dearborn Police said they were investigating an alleged bias assault by two white men against an Arab-American Muslim man who was shopping on 12 February at a Kroger grocery store in the city. The incident sparked fears among Arab Americans in Dearborn that they were not safe from bias attacks even in a city that has the highest concentration of Arab Americans in the U.S.

Kathy McMillan Bazzi, 60, of Dearborn, testified that two white men attacked the Arab-American man and taunted his daughter, who wore an Islamic headscarf, or hijab. Bazzi said the pair were passing by the man and his family while making insulting comments about ISIS and Muslims. Bazzi said the men used derogatory words against the Arab-American man. Bazzi said *"I hear 'ISIS,' I hear 'terrorist,' I hear 'go back to your country' and 'raghead,'"* Then, *"all of a sudden, the man is punching this Arabic man, fists started flying."*

At one point, the young son of the Arab-American man *"tried to jump in,"* but Bazzi blocked his path to prevent a further escalation. Meanwhile, the young *"daughter was hysterical,"* Bazzi said. During the attack, she said, an employee of Kroger *"came and he grabbed the Arabic guy, and let the ... guys beat on him. They were throwing punches at the Arabic guy."* At 5:57 p.m., Bazzi called 911. Police did not reveal the name of the victims or additional details about the incident.

In: <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2015/02/13/dearborn-muslim-attack/23388379/>, retrieved on 14.02.2015

**5. US: Pamela Geller says Inaugural Muhammad cartoon exhibit, \$10,000 contest in Texas will require massive security**—Author and blogger Pamela Geller, known primarily for her activism against Islamic extremism, will hold an art exhibit and contest meant as a poke in the eye to Muslims.

The Inaugural Muhammad Art Exhibit & Contest would be held May 5 at the Curtis Culwell Center in Garland, Texas, the same venue of January's "Stand with the Prophet" conference. That conference, sponsored by the Council on American Islamic Relations, or CAIR, came fast on the heels of the murderous Islamic attack at the Paris office of the Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper.

Geller led thousands of demonstrators in a protest outside the conference to decry what she sees as CAIR's attempts to restrict free speech. she said. *"The cartoon exhibit will feature images of Islam's prophet, both historic and contemporary, and speeches by leading voices of freedom and internationally renowned free speech advocates... speaking will be brave artists who are unbowed by violent threats and determined to stand for the freedom of speech."*

In: <http://www.bizpacreview.com/2015/02/14/pamela-geller-says-inaugural-muhammad-cartoon-exhibit-10000-contest-in-texas-will-require-massive-security-179659>, retrieved on 15.02.2015

**Related: Group protesting Islam planning Muhammad cartoon event in Texas**— A month after hundreds of people protested outside a Muslim conference in suburban Dallas, a group critical of Islam announced plans of a cartoon contest of the Prophet Muhammad in the same building. The same building in Garland was where hundreds of people held anti-Islam signs — including *"Go home & take Obama with you"* — and jeered attendees walking into an anti-terrorism conference sponsored by a Muslim group. The American Freedom Defense Initiative planned to hold a 'Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest' on 03 May 2015 in Garland, with a \$10,000 prize for the best cartoon. Pamela Geller, a co-founder of the defense initiative and an outspoken critic of Islam, called attention to that meeting and attended the protests.

In: [http://www.news-journal.com/news/state/group-protesting-islam-planning-muhammad-cartoon-event-in-texas/article\\_81569c1c-a65f-556d-abfe-534e7dce1949.html](http://www.news-journal.com/news/state/group-protesting-islam-planning-muhammad-cartoon-event-in-texas/article_81569c1c-a65f-556d-abfe-534e7dce1949.html), retrieved on 18.02.2015

**6. US: D.C. mosque vandalized for 2<sup>nd</sup> time in a week**— Tape and plastic had again been added to a broken window at a mosque in Northeast D.C. after vandals struck for the second time in a week. On 23 February, the Ivy City Majid & Islamic Education Center, on Gallaudet Street, was found in disarray; shelves with holy BOOKS was in pieces and glass littered the ground. Mohammed Mobaidin, director of the center, said: “*Somebody grabbed the chair and smashed it into the big window of the mosque.*”

Then on 26 February, Mobaidin arrived to find the mosque has been damaged again. Fencing used inside the mosque was broken; a podium was in shambles and a very large piece of religious artwork was stolen.  
In: <http://wtop.com/dc/2015/02/d-c-mosque-vandalized-for-2nd-time-in-a-week/>, retrieved on 27.02.2015

**7. US: Local mosques receive threatening phone calls**— Two Columbus mosques received profanity-laced threatening phone calls in which the caller referred to Islam as a ‘fairy-tale religion,’ called Muslims ‘garbage’ and ‘scum,’ and said they would be ‘vaporized.’

The calls, made on 17 February, originated from the same Columbus phone number, said Romin Iqbal, staff attorney at the Ohio chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). The council released an audio recording of two calls made to the Omar Ibn El-Khattab Mosque on the Northwest Side. The caller, at times unintelligible, repeatedly swore and used racial slurs.

In: <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/02/19/threats-against-mosques.html>, retrieved on 21.02.2015

**8. US: Police: Man stabs two after asking about religious beliefs**— According to local police, a Detroit man stabbed two people at a suburban bus stop after asking his victims whether or not they were Muslim. Federal authorities were looking at the case as a potential hate crime.

Both of the victims were standing at the bus stop outside of Detroit with the suspect on 14 February, Southfield Police Chief Eric Hawkins said. Several people there engaged in conversation until the suspect, identified by Hawkins as 39-year-old Terrence Lavaron Thomas, “*asked some of the folks there if they were Muslims.*”

Two of them answered they were not Muslims. Thomas was not happy with that answer and shortly after, Thomas pulled out a 3-inch folding knife and attacked one of them. The FBI had been looking at it as a potential hate crime to determine whether federal charges were warranted.

In: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/02/17/man-stabs-two-at-a-bus-stop-after-asking-them-if-theyre-muslim/>, retrieved on 18.02.2015

**9. Canada: Majority of Quebecers against presence of mosque in their neighbourhood, poll suggests**— According to a new poll by SOM for Cogeco Nouvelles, two-thirds of Quebecers supported the city of Shawinigan’s decision to block potential modifications to zoning rules to allow the construction of a mosque, and 65 per cent of Quebecers agreed with the city’s decision to turn down organizer’s requests for a zoning change, while 24 per cent were not in support. The rest of respondents abstained from sharing their opinions.

The results also suggested nearly the same number of Quebecers did not wish to have a mosque built or moved in their neighbourhood. 64% of people polled said they ‘mostly disagree’ or ‘completely disagree’ with the proposition. Most of those who said they were opposed to the presence of a mosque in their neighbourhood lived outside of Montreal, were older than 55 years old and most did not complete post-secondary education programs. Meanwhile, the 28 per cent of people in favour mostly lived in the Montreal region, were between 18 and 34 years of age and obtained a university degree.

In: <http://montrealgazette.com/news/quebec/majority-of-quebecers-against-presence-of-mosque-in-their-neighbourhood-poll-suggests>, retrieved on 27.02.2015

**10. US: Anti-Islamic Protesters Shout at Muslims at Oklahoma Capitol**—A group of supporters formed a makeshift greeting line to escort Muslims into the Oklahoma state Capitol for 26 February’s first-ever Muslim Day as a smaller group of protesters heckled participants as they arrived. The event was hosted by the

Oklahoma chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations as a means to foster civic engagement among the state's estimated 40,000 Muslims.

As participants arrived at the north entrance to the Capitol, some protesters shouted anti-Islamic sentiments. Others held signs with inflammatory anti-Muslim language. The conservative groups Overpasses for America and Patriots of Oklahoma reserved space at the Capitol to protest Muslim Day, while a Libertarian group rallied in support.

In: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/anti-islamic-protesters-shout-muslims-oklahoma-capitol-29279803>, retrieved on 28.02.2015

## I.II. In Europe:

**1. Austria: Anti-Islam group PEGIDA holds first Austria march**— PEGIDA, the anti-Islam movement born in Germany, drew hundreds of supporters and counter-demonstrators to the streets of Vienna when it held



its first march in neighboring Austria on 2 February. With 1,200 police officers deployed in Austria's capital as a precaution, around 250 marchers carrying Austrian flags and chanting "we are the people" faced off against a like number of protesters shouting "down with PEGIDA".

The initiative followed alarm over official estimates that about 170 people from Austria had joined up with Islamist militant forces fighting in the Middle East.

Heinz Christian Strache, leader of the far-right opposition Freedom Party, had expressed support for PEGIDA, which he called a serious civil rights movement.

In: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/02/02/uk-austria-pegida-idUKKBNOL61Z120150202>, retrieved on 03.02.2015

**2. UK: Vandals Smash Norwich Mosque Windows**— A mosque in Norwich city in the British central county of Norfolk was vandalized on 7 February, sending a shock wave among the Muslim community who vehemently condemned the Islamophobic attack. The attack had alarmed Norwich Muslim community who had been living in peace for decades.

In: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/europe/482815-vandals-smash-norwich-mosque-windows.html>, retrieved on 09.02.2015

**3. UK: 'Anti-Islamisation' group Pegida UK holds Newcastle march**— More than 1,500 protesters had demonstrated against the first rally in Britain by a group opposed to what it calls the 'Islamisation of Europe'. Critics claimed they were anti-Muslim and had come to promote expression of hatred. Meanwhile, a counter-rally took place in Newgate Street, within sight of about 400 Pegida UK demonstrators. Northumbria Police said two arrests had been made after a scuffle broke out between the opposing groups. The force said about 1,500 had been at the anti-Pegida march though supporters claim up to 3,000 had been involved.

In: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tyne-31657167>, retrieved on 28.02.2015

**4. Austria: Austria Bans Foreign Funding for Islamic Groups**—The Austrian parliament on 25 February passed a law which banned foreign funding for Islamic organisations and demanded that any group claiming to represent Austrian Muslims used a standardised German translation of the Quran.

The controversial reforms were added to an existing law that made Islam an official religion in Austria in 1912, and were partly aimed at tackling Islamist radicalism. However, while the law gave Muslims more legal security by protecting religious holidays and training for imams, it also banned foreign funding for mosques and for imams from countries such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The law also required Austria's 450 Muslim groups to demonstrate a positive approach toward society and the state, in order to continue receiving official licensing.

In: <http://www.newsweek.com/controversial-austrian-islam-law-bans-foreign-funding-islamic-groups-309753>, retrieved on 28.02.2015

### I.III. Rest of the World:

**1. Japan: Book featuring Muhammad cartoons goes on sale in Japan**—Tokyo-based publisher *Daisan Shokan* released a book on 10 February containing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad previously published in the French satirical weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Around 500 bookstores nationwide had expressed interest in selling the book, titled 'Islam Heito Ka, Fushi Ka' (Anti-Islam Hate, or Satire?), but would use discretion in deciding whether to stock it. The 64-page book had an initial print run of 3,000 copies. It contained 48 satirical cartoons alongside comments by 10 cartoonists and researchers on Islam.

In: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/02/10/national/book-featuring-muhammad-cartoons-goes-on-sale-in-japan/#.VPH5YGiUejA>, retrieved on 11.02.2015

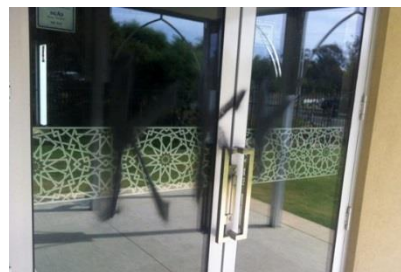
**2. China: State Islamophobia: China publicly humiliates imams**— In another crackdown on religious freedoms, China had forced the imams of eastern Muslim majority district of Xinjiang to dance in the street, and swear to an oath that they would not teach religion to children as well telling them that prayer is harmful to the soul. During the incident, reported by *World Bulletin* on February 9, Muslim imams were forced to brandish the slogan that “our INCOME comes from the CKP not from Allah”.



State Chinese news said the imams were gathering in a square in the name of civilization where they were forced to dance and chant out slogans in support of the state. The slogans included statements glorifying the state over religion such as ‘peace of the country gives peace to the soul’. They also gave speeches telling youth to stay away from mosques, and that the prayer was harmful to their health, encouraging them to dance instead. Female teachers were instructed to teach children to stay away from religious education and made to swear an oath that they will keep children away from religion.

In: <http://muslimvillage.com/2015/02/12/62823/state-islamophobia-china-publicly-humiliates-imams/>, retrieved on 13.02.2015

**3. Australia: White Supremacists Attack Perth Mosque**—Islamic mosque in Perth had been vandalized by white supremacist graffiti, in a clear manifestation of growing intolerance in the Australian community. Security cameras showed a number of teenagers running away, and letters ‘KKK’ were found scrawled on glass doors and on walls in black letters.



The attack was not the first to target the mosque. In November, a pig's head was dumped outside the mosque's doors. Another attack was reported in June when a swastika and the phrase ‘white power’ were sprayed on the walls.

In: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/asia-pacific/483055-white-supremacists-attack-perth-mosque.html>, retrieved on 19.02.2015

**4. Japan: Mosques in Japan harassed in wake of hostage crisis**— At least six mosques and a Muslim organization in Japan had received threats since the hostage crisis that saw two Japanese men killed by the Islamic State militant group. These mosques received abusive messages such as “Die,” “Religion of murderers” and “I hate even the sight of Muslims,” as well as threats such as “Get out of Japan right now if you don’t want to be killed.”

Some of the mosques, concerned about the safety of children attending prayers, contacted local police and were advised on security measures. Staff at a mosque in Sendai said that while they were not directly harassed, a Muslim student attending a local graduate school was turned away by an apartment landlord who vowed to refuse to rent to Muslim students.

In: [http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/02/23/national/mosques-japan-harassed-wake-hostage-crisis/#.VO1yD\\_mUc1M](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/02/23/national/mosques-japan-harassed-wake-hostage-crisis/#.VO1yD_mUc1M), retrieved on 24.02.2015

**5. India: No mosque possible in Ayodhya: Yogi Adityanath**— BJP MP from Gorakhpur, Mahant Yogi Adityanath had ruled out the proposal for an out-of-court settlement with regard to the Ayodhya issue.

He said that just as there could not be a temple in Mecca or in the Vatican City, there was no possibility of a mosque in Ayodhya. He said that Ayodhya, the land of Sanatan Dharma, was a sacred city since it is the birthplace of Lord Ram.

Adityanath was responding to questions on the proposal for a dual shrine at the dispute site in Ayodhya. "Hashim Ansari (main litigant in the case) and Mahant Gyan Das (Akhara Parishad head) were making statements they should not be making. Adityanath said: "They should first understand the sentiments of millions of Hindus before making such uncalled for statements."



In: <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/150227/nation-current-affairs/article/no-mosque-possible-ayodhya-yogi-adityanath>, retrieved on 28.02.2015

## II. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS:

### II.I. In the United States and Canada:

**1. Canada: 'Blind Trust Project' Seeks to inspire trust of Muslims everywhere**— An experiment by a group of Muslims in Toronto had challenged Islamophobia with a simple trust exercise. It showed a man standing blindfolded on a busy pavement with signs asking people to show that they trust him by giving him a hug. The response from the general public was overwhelming, with one man even leaving his car to join in.

The Experiment maker, AsoOmii Jay said: "We wish to break down barriers and spread awareness about Islamophobia, encourage Muslims to behave as the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught us in kindness and good manners, to teach both extremist muslims and non muslims that violence and terrorism is NOT Islam, and we urge non-Muslims to learn about the true Islam....Pick up a Quran and learn for yourselves the truth. People may interpret any faith in how they choose to perceive it, but the Quran is the only unaltered message/scripture."

This social experiment had gone viral in the wake of the Islamophobic shootings at Chapel Hill, which saw three Muslims gunned down in a row.

In: [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/02/12/muslim-trust-islam\\_n\\_6668996.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/02/12/muslim-trust-islam_n_6668996.html), retrieved on 13.02.2015

**2. US: Soros Gave \$10 Million to Group Slamming Conservative 'Islamophobia'**— A liberal group funded by billionaire George Soros was accusing conservatives and the 'religious right' of fear-mongering and slandering Islam. According to the Center for American Progress, the right had been coordinating to push Sharia hysteria which mischaracterizes Sharia as a totalitarian ideology of hate and triumphalism committed to replacing the U.S. Constitution with a radical Islamic caliphate that will subordinate and punish all non-Muslim adherents.

Soros had donated \$10,117,186 to CAP since 2000. The group argued this Sharia hysteria was comparable to Japanese Americans being interned during WWII because they were seen as 'others,' or to opposition to John F. Kennedy's presidency on the basis of his Catholic faith. The report, entitled 'Fear, Inc.' invoked a liberal term, to claim conservatives were working together. The efforts of a small cadre of funders and misinformation experts were amplified by an echo chamber of the religious right, conservative media, grassroots organizations, and politicians who sought to introduce a fringe perspective on American Muslims into the public discourse.

In: <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/mike-ciandella/2015/02/17/soros-10-million-funds-group-slamming-conservative-islamophobia>, retrieved on 18.02.2015

**3. US: Obama: Terror, Not Islam, Is the Enemy**—President Barack Obama told officials from more than 60 countries on 18 February that terrorism, not Islam, was the enemy. Obama said: “We are not at war with Islam. We are at war with people who have perverted Islam”. He later called on Muslim leaders “to do more to discredit the notion that our nations are determined to suppress Islam.”

In: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/18/obama-terror-not-islam-is-the-enemy/>, retrieved on 19.02.2015

**4. US: President Obama Rejects 'Notion That the West Is at War With Islam'**— President Obama on 19 February challenged the idea that terrorist groups like al Qaeda and the Islamic State were connected to the Islamic faith during remarks at the White house Summit to Counter Violent Extremism. Obama said: “The notion that the West is at war with Islam is an ugly lie...and all of us, regardless of our faith, have a responsibility to reject it.”

In: <https://gma.yahoo.com/president-obama-rejects-notion-west-war-islam-193150093.html>, retrieved on 20.02.2015

**5. US: Minneapolis says no to islamophobia and racism, honors murdered Chapel Hill students**—More than 50 people came out for a protest against Islamophobia and racism on 17 February, in response to the killing of three Muslim students the week before. Gathered at a busy intersection in the heart of the local Somali community, near the University of Minnesota campus, they held signs and chanted.

Organizers sought to honor the lives of Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, his wife Yusor Abu-Salha, 21 and her sister, Razan Abu-Salha, 19, who were executed by a neighbor in their home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on 10 February.

In: <http://www.fightbacknews.org/2015/2/19/minneapolis-says-no-islamophobia-and-racism-honors-murdered-chapel-hill-students>, retrieved on 20.02.2015

**6. US: Brigitte Bardot on trial again for insulting Muslims**— Former film star Brigitte Bardot, France’s iconic blonde bombshell and ‘sex kitten’ who reigned supreme from 1952 – 1973, was on trial for the fifth time for insulting Muslims and inciting racial hatred. Bardot had been fined four times and had also received suspended jail sentences. Now, the prosecutor, Anne de Fontette, wanted a heftier fine and a tougher sentence: the equivalent of \$24,000 and a two month suspended jail term.

In: <http://www.wnd.com/2015/02/brigitte-bardot-on-trial-again-for-insulting-muslims/#iXyKJOYy6qS1S8rd.99>, retrieved on 24.02.2015

## II.II. In Europe:

**1. UK: French far-right leader Marine Le Pen mobbed by Oxford Union protesters**— French far-right political leader Marine Le Pen had received a hostile reception at the Oxford Union where she was invited to discuss western values.



Crowds of protesters gathered outside the building to denounce the controversial leader of France's far-right Front National. Her speech to gathered union members was delayed by over one hour as the angry crowd attempted to block entrances.

Union officials had faced criticism for inviting Ms Le Pen to speak uninterrupted for five minutes, rather than insisting on a more traditional debate format where an opponent

would have also been heard.

In: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11394170/French-far-right-leader-Marine-Le-Pen-mobbed-by-Oxford-Union-protesters.html>, retrieved on 06.02.2015

**2. UK: Channel 4's Cathy Newman apologises for 'misunderstanding' over mosque**— Channel 4 News presenter Cathy Newman had apologised for any misunderstanding over her ill-fated visit to a mosque in south London. Newman hit the headlines after she tweeted on 1 February saying that she was ‘ushered out of’ the South London Islamic Centre in Streatham. She had been trying to enter it as part of Visit My Mosque

day and told the Guardian she believed it must have been a men-only mosque, but was not made aware of this at the time. However, CCTV footage obtained by the Huffington Post from the mosque shows Newman leaving on her own. She was shown speaking to someone inside the mosque, then appearing to look confused as she leaves on her own.

She subsequently went to another mosque, the nearby Hyderi Centre, where she later tweeted she was given a wonderful warm welcome. Newman said in a statement that she had visited the wrong mosque, turning up at the South London Islamic Centre – which she said has had death threats following coverage of her visit “in error.” Newman said in a statement: “As the primary purpose of Visit My Mosque day was to increase understanding of Islam, I was horrified to hear the mosque I visited in error has had death threats. I’m sorry for any misunderstanding there has been. I would be happy to pay a private visit to South London Islamic Centre once again.”

In: <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/feb/06/channel-4-cathy-newman-apologises-mosque>, retrieved on 07.02.2015

### 3. UK: British Muslims gather in London to protest against Muhammad cartoons—



Thousands of British Muslims gathered near Downing Street to protest against cartoons showing the prophet Muhammad and voice opposition to ‘insulting’ depictions.

A leaflet issued by the Muslim Action forum (MAF), who organised the rally, said recent republishing of cartoons, caricatures and depictions of Muhammad by satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and other publishers was a stark reminder that freedom of speech was regularly utilised to insult personalities that others consider sacred. The group

also expressed deep regret at the Paris terror attacks, which included a massacre at Charlie Hebdo, saying they were a violation of Islamic law.

The words “Charlie and the abuse factory” and “learn some manners” were written on signs held by demonstrators. A number of speakers addressed the crowd while there were communal prayers before a delegation took a petition signed by more than 100,000 British Muslims to 10 Downing Street. It called for global civility and said the production of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad were an affront to the norms of civilised society.

In: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/08/british-muslims-london-protest-against-muhammad-cartoon-charlie-hebdo>, retrieved on 09.02.2015

### 4. Norway: Pegida sees 'complete failure' in Norway—

A leading expert on the far right has branded the anti-Islamic movement Pegida ‘a complete failure’ in Norway after just 25 people showed up to take part in a march in Oslo on 9 February.

Tor Bach, editor of *Vepsen*, said: “Pegida in Norway has been a complete failure with infighting breaking loose already before the first demonstration...The group has gathered less people for each demonstration, ending with 25 people showing up this week.”

Pegida’s Norway head Max Hermansen had hailed the organization’s first Oslo march, which came shortly after January’s attack on Charlie Hebdo, with nearly 200 protestors attending, but the numbers attending rallies have dropped consistently. Pegida’s first march in Sweden, also on the same day, drew only about 30 protestors, while counter-demonstrators numbered close to 3,000.

In: <http://www.thelocal.no/20150210/pegida-norway-a-dead-project>, retrieved on 11.02.2015

### 5. UK: Ed Miliband: 'Facebook and Twitter must help counter anti-semitism and Islamophobia'—

Ed Miliband on 17 February called for social media giants to join in the fight against anti-semitism and Islamophobia online. The Labour leader said there were real fears about rising levels of intolerance in the



wake of terror attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. The British Jewish community had called for more protection, fearing copycat attacks on UK soil.

Mr Miliband spoke out in the wake of the attacks in the Danish capital, where a gunman shot dead a film director at a cafe event on free speech and then killed a Jewish security guard at a synagogue. The atrocity bore resemblances to the Paris attacks, when several people were killed by extremists at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and at a Jewish supermarket. Miliband said the attacks would provoke fear among people of all backgrounds. Milliband added that there was real fear among Jewish families, among Muslim families, among people of all backgrounds about the rising intolerance.

In: <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/ed-miliband-facebook-and-twitter-must-help-counter-antisemitism-and-islamophobia-10051629.html>, retrieved on 18.02.2015

**6. France: French president vows tougher penalties for hate speech**— French President Francois Hollande vowed 23 February to introduce tougher penalties for ‘racist, anti-semitic or homophobic’ remarks in the wake of January’s terrorist attacks in Paris. Speaking at an annual dinner hosted by the country’s Jewish community, Hollande called for ‘faster, more effective sanctions’ against hate speech and added: “*I want such speech to come under criminal law rather than press laws.*”

Hollande said anti-semitism should be treated as an aggravating circumstance in the prosecution of all offences. Would-be jihadists would also face stiffer punishment under a draft intelligence bill to be unveiled soon, he said.

In: <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=70292>, retrieved on 25.02.2015

**7. France: French Govt Unveils a Plan to Promote Dialogue with Muslims**—French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve proposed a plan on 25 February aimed at promoting a better dialogue with France’s Muslim community, that included training imams at university. The minister said that the plan would promote an Islam faithful to the values of the Republic, insisting on France’s tradition of secularism. He added that the creation of a new representative body would help Muslim leaders and French authorities address issues such as security, prevention of radicalization and preventing anti-Muslims acts.

This body would meet with the government twice a year, on a model inspired by the dialogue the French government had had with leaders of the Catholic Church since 2002. The French government would also regularly consult with Jewish community leaders via the country’s main Jewish organization, the CRIF council.

The plan had been decided together with leaders of the existing French Muslim council, the CFCM, created in 2003. The plan comes amid increasing religious tension in France following Charlie Hebdo incident.

In: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/french-govt-unveils-plan-promote-dialogue-muslims-29209805>, retrieved on 26.02.2015

**8. Sweden: Swedish University Cancels Lecture by Prophet Muhammad Cartoonist**— A university representative said on 27 February that Sweden’s Karlstad University cancelled a lecture by Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks, author of the Prophet Muhammad cartoons, who was allegedly targeted in a recent Copenhagen shooting. Vilks was expected to talk in front of some 100 student foreign policy association members at the university on March 17.

In: <http://sputniknews.com/europe/20150227/1018842239.html>, retrieved on 28.02.2015

### III. SITUATION OF MUSLIMS

#### III.I. In the United States and Canada:

**1. US: Muslim Americans widely seen as victims of discrimination**— Muslim Americans were widely seen as victims of discrimination, but also viewed by a slim majority as members of a religion that encourages violence, according to an *Economist/YouGov* poll released 20 February. Americans who knew a Muslim, meanwhile, were more likely to view adherents of the religion favorably.



A full 73 percent of Americans believed Muslims faced a great deal or a fair amount of discrimination. That total outstrips both African-Americans, whom 63 percent of Americans saw as victims of bias, and Mexican-Americans, who were viewed as targets of discrimination by 60 percent. The general feeling that discrimination exists was further underlined by questions about the motives of alleged Chapel Hill shooter Craig Stephen Hicks, where 45

percent of Americans said Hicks should be charged with a hate crime, compared with 18 percent who believed he should not.

A majority - 52 percent - of Americans said Islam was more likely than other religions to encourage violence. Suspicion of Islam was much higher among Republicans (74 percent) than Democrats (41 percent). A majority (53 percent) of Americans who personally know a Muslim disagreed with the idea that the religion is more likely to encourage violence. Americans who knew Muslims were also significantly more likely to view them as patriotic.

In: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/23/muslim-americans-discrimination\\_n\\_6738642.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/23/muslim-americans-discrimination_n_6738642.html), retrieved on 19.01.2015

**2. US: US Muslims speak about their place in America**— President Barack Obama had argued the US had one thing going for it that Europe did not: a tradition of warmly embracing its immigrants, including Muslims. Muslims living across the US respond to his comments, as the following:

*"Muslims have been here maybe since the inception of this country. The Muslim-American history is rooted even in the forefathers. President Jefferson had a copy of the Holy Quran."* — **Jaylani Hussein**, executive director of the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, who believes 'American Muslims in America feel maybe more integrated' than in Europe.

*"American Muslims have been fortunate to live well in the U.S. based on our constitutional freedoms. In European countries, Muslims are made to feel as the other or the outsider. ... Still, American Muslims have not been spared from prejudice and discrimination in the last 15 years."* — Teacher **Debbie Almontaser**, founding principal of the Khalil Gibran International Academy, an Arab-themed public school in New York.

*"Yes, America has issues of racism and bigotry. ... I'm not saying that doesn't exist but there's a different level of fear and hate and unknown" in Europe.* — **Marium Mohiuddin**, freelance communications consultant, Los Angeles.

*"I personally believe American Muslims have integrated just fine throughout U.S. history, but there will be ongoing challenges in addressing issues of what happens when young people are attacked personally because of the way they dress or what they believe. ... Our communities have been attacked, and they continue to be attacked."* — **Shams Ghoneim**, vice president of the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, in Iowa City.

*"For being a Muslim American growing up in America, I really don't feel a part of it. ... I feel like we don't get a chance to come out into the public."* — Student **Jamila Nasser**, Dearborn, Michigan.

In: <http://news.yahoo.com/us-muslims-speak-place-america-175338821.html>, retrieved on 20.02.2015

**3. US: US first women-only 'mosque' opens in Los Angeles**—The Women's Mosque of America in Los Angeles holds prayers in a building that used to be a synagogue, but is now a multi-faith space. Founder Hasna Maznavi said that the intention was not to compete with other mosques, but to give women a place where they could grow inspired and empowered.

In: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-31564683>, retrieved on 22.02.2015

**4. Canada: Muslims Being Vilified in Canada's Political Debates**—Muslims were often the scapegoats in political debates, NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair testified on 25 February. He said: *"I have been doing federal politics for years, and for years I have seen that Muslims are often the scapegoats in political debates. And that, I find it heartbreaking."*

Mulcair was responding to a question about whether the NDP supports the Conservative government's decision to appeal a court ruling on niqabs – a face covering that some Muslim women wear. The court threw out a 2011 ban that the Tories imposed on the wearing of niqabs during citizenship swearing-in ceremonies. In: [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/25/muslims-scapegoats-canadian-politics\\_n\\_6755568.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/25/muslims-scapegoats-canadian-politics_n_6755568.html), retrieved on 26.02.2015

### III.II. In Europe:

**1. Russia: Islamic group wants to Name new mosque in Moscow after Putin; Russian Muslims Complain about Too Few Places of Worship**—A Muslim group had sought permission to build a new mosque in Moscow and name it after Russian President Vladimir Putin. The United Islamic Congress of Russia had filed the request with Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin.

Sobyenin stated during an interview with Moscow's Echo radio in 2013 that the excessive number of Muslim newcomers to Moscow was harmful and that no new building permits for mosques would be granted. He said: *"It has turned out that the praying Muslims are not at all Russian citizens and they are not Moscow residents. They are labor migrants. There are only 10 percent of Moscow residents among them and building mosques for everyone who wants it – I think this will be over the top"*. Rushan Abbyasov, chief of staff of Russia's Council of Muftis, told the Christian Science Monitor replied that there were not enough mosques in the city to serve the Muslim population.



The TASS News Agency reported in February that Muslim leaders had started a fundraising campaign to open two mobile mosques and six small stationary ones.

In: <http://www.ibtimes.com/islamic-group-wants-name-new-mosque-moscow-after-putin-russian-muslims-complain-about-1817880>, retrieved on 17.02.2015

**2. Italy: Social Experiment: Egyptian Student Branded 'Taliban Sh\*t', 'ISIS' on Streets of Milan**—As part of a social experiment, when an Egyptian student braved the streets of Milan dressed as an Imam, he was branded 'Taliban Sh\*t' and 'ISIS' by the public. A hidden camera recorded the reaction of the public as Hamdi Mahisen, dressed in white robes, walked around in Milan carrying a Koran.

Mahisen, 30, walked around the north Italian city for over five hours in a bid to estimate the general sentiment of the public towards Muslims. Some called him a 'Taliban s\*t', while one asked: *"Have you seen the ISIS?"* Another wondered, *"Imagine if he has a gun under his tunic."*

Mahisen told La Repubblica: *"This social experiment was to check the tolerance of Milan's citizens towards Muslims or someone who is dressed as an Imam."*



The week before, French Jewish Journalist Zvika Klein had released a similar video. Klein had donned a kippah for his social experiment and recorded the insults he received while walking the streets of Paris for

ten hours. Meanwhile, a Swedish journalist who was conducting a social experiment along the same lines was attacked in the Swedish city of Malmö.

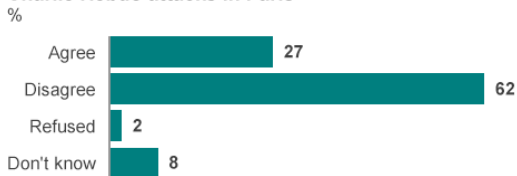
In: <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/social-experiment-egyptian-student-branded-taliban-sht-isis-streets-milan-video-624052>, retrieved on 21.02.2015

**3. UK: Most British Muslims 'oppose Muhammad cartoons reprisals'**— The majority of British Muslims opposed violence against people who publish images depicting the Prophet Muhammad, a poll for the BBC suggested.

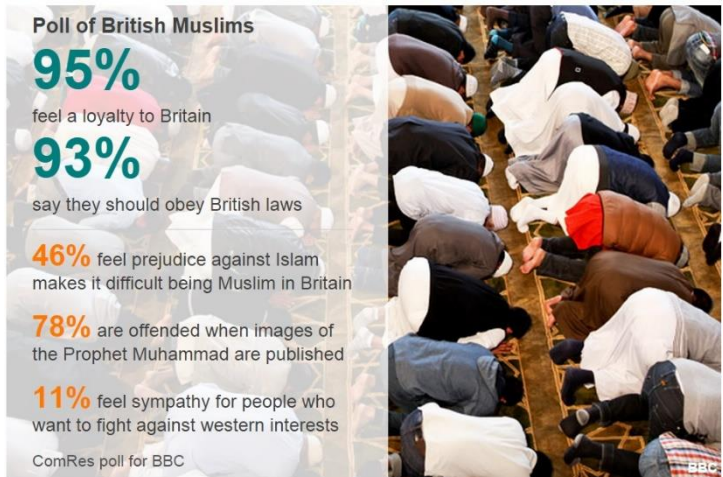
The survey also indicated most have no sympathy with those who want to fight against Western interests. But 27% of the 1,000 Muslims polled by ComRes said they had some sympathy for the motives behind the Paris attacks. Almost 80% said they had found it deeply offensive when images depicting the Prophet were published.

Asked if acts of violence against those who publish images of the Prophet Muhammad could 'never be justified', 68% agreed that such violence was never justifiable. But 24% disagreed with the statement, while the rest replied "don't know" or refused to answer.

I have some sympathy for the motives behind the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris



Source: ComRes survey for BBC



The poll, carried out between 26 January and 20 February, suggests 32% of British Muslims were not surprised by January's attacks on the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine, which published depictions of the Prophet, and a kosher supermarket in Paris.

The poll also suggested that almost half of British Muslims believed they face discrimination because of their faith and that Britain is becoming less tolerant, while the same percentage felt prejudice against Islam and made it difficult being a Muslim in the UK.

Some 35% said they felt most British people did not trust Muslims, and a fifth said they thought Western liberal society could never be compatible with Islam. Of those polled, 95% felt a loyalty to Britain, while 93% believed that Muslims in Britain should always obey British laws. Nearly 20% of Muslim women questioned said they felt unsafe in Britain, compared with 10% of men.

In: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31293196>, retrieved on 26.02.2015

**4. France: French Muslims Forgive Mosque Attacker**— A French man who threw grenades at a mosque in western Paris had been sentenced to three years in prison, as mosque leaders asserted they have pardoned him. The Muslim community 'condemned the anti-Islamic act' but forgave the man, mosque's imam, Mohamed Lamaachi, told *Le Parisien* on 26 February.

The imam explained their move as based on religious teachings of forgiveness and respect. The attacker was jailed on 25 February after carrying out an attack on the Le Mans mosque in western France in the middle of the night of 7 January.

The man, 69, threw four grenades at the mosque and fired several rounds at the building. No one was injured in the attack. He told the court that he carried out the attack at a time when he 'doubted' anyone was inside the building, claiming he was under the influence of alcohol at the time. He added that the act was 'spur of the moment' and that he had stuck screws to the grenades to instill fear after Charlie Hebdo attacks that left 17 people killed, including two Muslims.

<http://www.onislam.net/english/news/europe/483383-french-muslims-forgive-mosque-attacker.html>, retrieved on 27.02.2015

### III.III. Rest of the World:

#### 1. Myanmar: Separated by violence, Muslims and Buddhists seek to be reunited in Myanmar—

Myanmar Buddhists and Muslims in the central city of Meiktila were separated along faith lines after interreligious violence destroyed roughly 800 homes in 2013. Now residents had petitioned the government to allow them to reintegrate, but some remain skeptical about the neighbors' prospects for peace. Affected residents submitted letters to President Thein Sein, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and Parliament Speaker Thura Shwe Mann outlining their request but said they were still awaiting a response.

Nearly two years before, when riots broke out between Muslims and Buddhists in Meiktila, leaving at least 40 people dead, more than 60 wounded and thousands displaced. At the time, many residents sought safety in a nearby forest. Hla May, a Buddhist woman lived in one of Meiktila's internally displaced person (IDP) camps, said: "We stayed together in the forest and slept for two nights... We've now cried together, looking at our burned houses."

These Muslim and Buddhist residents, whom the government classified as IDPs, were initially placed in shared temporary housing after the riots. Later, the government segregated the homeless residents by religion and sent them to different camps.

In: <http://www.religionnews.com/2015/02/26/separated-violence-muslims-buddhists-seek-reunited-meiktila-myanmar/>, retrieved on 27.02.2015

#### 2. Philippines: Young Filipino Muslims launch 'handshake project' to combat Islamophobia—



A group of young Filipino Muslims had launched a social experiment called the 'Handshake Project' in an attempt to eliminate negative feelings towards Muslims following the deaths of 44 police commandos at the hands of Moro rebels in Mindanao in January.

At the Friday 26 February launch, the group urged people in Manila to shake hands with Muslims or write messages of support on 'peace cards'. The Handshake Project was inspired by a Canadian social experiment called the 'Blind Trust Project' that also aimed at countering Islamophobia.

In: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/young-filipino-muslims-launch-handshake-project-to-combat-islamophobia/73085>, retrieved on 28.02.2015

### IV. ON BURQAH AND VEIL RELATED ISSUES:

#### 1. France: France debates ban on Muslim veils in universities—

The debate over wearing veils at public universities had resurfaced after reports of professors singling out women for wearing hijabs. Both politicians and the public were struggling to find a balance between French secularism and religious tolerance.

The issue of whether to let women wear scarves at university came into the spotlight in February when a professor at the Paris XIII university said that he did not support religious symbols in public places, referring to a young woman wearing a hijab in his class. The professor was demoted for his comments.

In September 2014, a professor at the Sorbonne asked a student if she would continue wearing that thing in class, indicating the young woman's headscarf. The president of the Sorbonne later apologised for the professor's comments.

The issues of religion and immigration had become even more pertinent in France after a series of attacks in January carried out by Muslim immigrants to France. In the aftermath of the attacks, which left 20 dead including the attackers, the question of what it means to be a French Muslim or both French and Jewish is on many people's minds. In a recent speech at the Sorbonne, French President François Hollande called for a

secular teaching of religion and said that France's official secularism – or *laïcité* – “does not mean forgetting religion, or indeed being in conflict with religion”.

On the second week of February, former French president Nicolas Sarkozy's political party, the UMP, came out in support of even more restrictive measures on religious symbols in French public spaces, including an outright ban on veils in universities. This would be in addition to the ban already in place at public primary and secondary schools. Some experts said that this was just a way for Sarkozy to appear more appealing to an electorate that might be increasingly wary of minority communities.

In: <http://www.france24.com/en/20150216-france-ban-muslim-veil-universities/>, retrieved on 17.02.2015

**2. Canada: Do Tories Want To Ban Headscarves At Citizenship Ceremonies Now?** — Immigration Minister Chris Alexander suggested on 18 February that he did not want Muslim women to wear traditional headscarves during citizenship ceremonies. “*Niqab, hejab, burqa, wedding veil – face coverings have no place in cit[izenship] oath-taking!*” the minister tweeted.

The week before, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said his government would appeal a recent court ruling that struck down a ban on niqabs during citizenship swearing-in ceremonies. The government argued that women should show their faces during the ceremony, but the legislation never included hijabs.

In: [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/19/niqab-hijab-ban-chris-alexander\\_n\\_6716104.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/19/niqab-hijab-ban-chris-alexander_n_6716104.html), retrieved on 20.02.2015

**Related: Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper vows to appeal face veil ruling**—Canada's prime minister was vowing to appeal a court ruling that struck down his government's ban on wearing face veils during ceremonies that confer citizenship.

Earlier in February, Canada's Federal Court ruled that a portion of the law requiring citizenship candidates to remove their face coverings while taking the oath of citizenship was unconstitutional. The court found that the ban, introduced in 2011, violated the government's own regulations, which required citizenship judges to “allow the greatest possible freedom in the religious solemnization” of the oath.

The case was brought forward by a Muslim woman from the Toronto area who wore a niqab when in public and wanted to take the oath of citizenship while veiled. Prime Minister Stephen Harper said his Conservative government would appeal the decision. He said: “*I believe, and I think most Canadians believe, that it is offensive that someone would hide their identity at the very moment where they are committing to join the Canadian family.*”

In: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/canadian-prime-minister-stephen-harper-vows-to-appeal-face-veil-ruling/2015/02/19/3e37d094-b87c-11e4-bc30-a4e75503948a\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/canadian-prime-minister-stephen-harper-vows-to-appeal-face-veil-ruling/2015/02/19/3e37d094-b87c-11e4-bc30-a4e75503948a_story.html), retrieved on 20.02.2015

**3. Italy: School cannot ban the veil in class**— The headmaster of a state high school in Bassa Friulana had withdrawn its circular of 11 February with which the display and wearing of religious symbols were banned, including the veil that Muslim girls and women wear to cover their hair and sometimes part of their faces. This decision came as a consequence of a note from the Regional Education Office for the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region and of the opinion of the Regional guarantor for individual rights, where it was pointed out the discriminatory nature of this provision, and it was asked for the immediate withdrawal of it.

In: <http://www.west-info.eu/school-cant-ban-the-veil-in-class/>, retrieved on 24.02.2015

**4. India: Students in burqas face a tough test at HSC exam halls**—A group of girls belonging to the minority community were barred by exam centre heads from entering the hall as they were wearing the traditional burqa. The girls were compelled to take the first exam on 23 February without the traditional cover. It is only when parents and community leaders intervened that supervisors at the centres relented and let the girls into the hall eventually.

In: <http://www.punemirror.in/pune/cover-story/Students-in-burqas-face-a-tough-test-at-HSC-exam-halls/articleshow/46388379.cms>, retrieved on 28.02.2015

**5. Canada: Quebec judge refuses to hear case of woman with hijab**—A Quebec judge refused to hear the case of a woman who came to the courtroom wearing a hijab on 23 February. Judge Eliana Marengo told Rania El-Alloul that she was not dressed suitably for the courtroom, which was a secular place. Marengo said: *"Hats and sunglasses for example, are not allowed. And I don't see why scarves on the head would be either....The same rules need to be applied to everyone. I will therefore not hear you if you are wearing a scarf on your head, just as I would not allow a person to appear before me wearing a hat or sunglasses on his or her head, or any other garment not suitable for a court proceeding," she said before taking a 30-minute recess.*"

When she returned, the judge told El-Alloul that she had two choices: either remove her headscarf or apply for a postponement in order to get legal advice. El-Alloul said she could not afford a lawyer and she did not want to postpone the case, either, which prompted Marengo to adjourn the case indefinitely.

In an interview with the broadcaster, El-Alloul said she could not believe what was happening. She said: *"When I came the first day when I made landing in Canada, I was wearing my hijab....When I swore by God to be a good Canadian citizen, I was wearing my hijab, and the judge, I shook hands with him the same day I became Canadian. I was really very happy. But what happened in court made me feel afraid. I felt that I'm not Canadian anymore."*

In: <http://www.aljazeera.com/News/2015/February/27%20n/Canadian%20Islamophobia,%20Quebec%20judge%20refuses%20to%20hear%20case%20of%20woman%20with%20hijab,%20February%2027,%202015.htm>, retrieved on 28.02.2015

## **V. ON DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS:**

**1. Hong Kong: Muslim and Jewish leaders in Hong Kong bridge a difficult divide**—At the end of a week that has seen Islamic State terror plumb new depths of horror, Hong Kong's Muslim and Jewish leaders had hailed a growing sense of interfaith cooperation in the city. Leaders of both communities said the atmosphere of friendship and collaboration at a time of unprecedented global tension was illustrated by the fact that rabbis were welcome to preach in mosques and imams in synagogues.

The unusual situation was borne out of the tragic events of New York on September 11 2001, the immediate aftermath of which saw meetings between leaders of both communities which became a permanent feature in subsequent years. The chief imam said the story of Muslims in Hong Kong demonstrated the historical background to living side-by-side in a peaceful manner.

In: <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1706321/muslim-and-jewish-leaders-hong-kong-bridge-difficult-divide>, retrieved on 09.02.2015

**2. US: Interfaith conference encourages dialogue**— Breakin' with Buddha, Holy Queer, Demystifying American Indian Spirituality and Student Responses to Acts of Intolerance were just a few titles of the sessions held at 'Coming Together', an interfaith conference held at Yale on February.

From 19 to 22 of February, 115 students from colleges across the U.S. and Canada attended keynote addresses, panels and breakout sessions. The sessions centered on issues and challenges concerning the interfaith and religious communities at universities. The conference was organized by the Chaplain's Office and two student steering committees headed by Maytal Saltiel, assistant University chaplain for special programs. The event aimed to bring together students involved in interfaith work to further develop that dialogue and learn techniques to bring back to their respective campuses. Saltiel said: *"The goal of the conference is to bring students together who are involved in interfaith work on their campuses to build bridges, create connections, exchange ideas on what interfaith work looks like, and have big picture idea conversations".*

In: <http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2015/02/16/interfaith-conference-encourages-dialogue/>, retrieved on 17.02.2015

**3. UK: Christians and Muslims in call for dialogue at Focolare youth weekend**—A group of 80 Christian and Muslim young people called for dialogue as a means to grow in mutual understanding and build bridges among people from different cultures and faith backgrounds, as they met for an event entitled 'Multiculturalism – Interfaith – Dialogue: #DoYouCare?' at the Focolare Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City on 14 February.



The participants came from across the UK to take part in the event which enabled practical experience of engaging in dialogue with people of different faith backgrounds. The weekend built on the relationship which young people involved with the Focolare Movement in London had established with their peers in the Islamic Unity Society.

In: <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=26745>, retrieved on 17.02.2015

**3. Norway: 1,000 join Muslim 'ring of peace' outside Oslo synagogue**— More than 1000 Muslims formed a human shield around a synagogue in Oslo on 21 February as they offered symbolic protection to the Jewish community in the wake of an attack on a Danish synagogue.

Omar Abdel Hamid El-Husseini killed two people at a synagogue and at an event promoting free speech in Copenhagen few days before, and in a display of solidarity, young Muslims in neighbouring Norway chanted 'No to anti-Semitism, no to Islamophobia' and linked arms in what they dubbed a 'Ring of Peace' around a synagogue in the capital.



In: <http://metro.co.uk/2015/02/21/1000-muslims-form-ring-of-peace-around-oslo-synagogue-5073526/>, retrieved on 24.02.2015

**5. Germany: Interfaith support for Muslims grieving Chapel Hill shooting at Berlin Mosque**— A Muslim woman and a Catholic woman wept together and embraced on early February at the Berlin Mosque. Among those who came together to mourn were members of Catholic, Jewish, Sikh, Protestant, and humanist communities. The gathering honored the memory of 23-year-old Deah Barakat, his wife Yusor Abu-Salha, and her sister, Razan Abu-Salha, victims of a shooting in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

In: <http://www.myrecordjournal.com/news/latestnews/6937942-129/interfaith-support-for-muslims-grieving-chapel-hill-shooting-at-berlin.html>, retrieved on 26.02.2015

## VI. GENERAL ISSUES:

### Prophet Muhammad's Example of Anti-Racism [A Media opinion excerpted from Craig Considine]

Relations between different ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East, U.S., and EU are deteriorating at a rapid pace. Across these three areas, Muslims are pitted against non-Muslims and black and brown people are pitted against white. What is needed now more than ever is a role model whose teachings counter bigotry and whose acts serve as a model for coexistence. I believe that role model is none other than Prophet Muhammad. Approximately 1,400 years before the Civil Rights movement in the US and the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa, the Prophet Muhammad dealt with the issues of xenophobia and prejudice in Saudi Arabia. In this short piece, I highlight how the Prophet fought against the idea of judging individuals and groups based solely on their skin color and ancestry.

Prophet Muhammad's anti-racist views are seen in his friendship with Bilal ibn Rabah, a black slave who rose to a leading position within the Muslim community of 7th century Arabia. One story relates how Muhammad defended Bilal after Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari, one of the Prophet's companions, called Bilal "the son of a black woman." Annoyed with this emphasis of identifying people by skin color, Muhammad criticized Abu Dharr by



stating "you are the man who still has the traits of ignorance in him." The Prophet's reference to Abu Dharr's ignorance refers to the "pre-Islamic" state of jahiliyyah, an Arabic term meaning "the state of ignorance of Divine guidance." This period of Arab history before Muhammad's arrival was marked by "barbarism" and "lawlessness," as described in the Quran. The Prophet's anti-racist mentality helped lead Arabs out of this darkness and into the light by guiding them onto the path of justice and equality.

Bilal, who other Muslims referred to as "master" because of his knowledge and grace, became the muezzin of the Prophet, meaning that he was responsible for calling Muslims to the five daily prayers. In choosing Bilal for this honorable role, Muhammad demonstrated that social exclusion and subordination based upon skin color was not to be permitted in an Islamic society.

Before Muhammad revealed his message, Arabs were overly proud of their tribal and ethnic identities, so much so that tribes and ethnic groups became the social standard of society. The Prophet's teachings changed all of that. He emphasized the importance of piety as the hallmark of respect. In challenging Abu Dharr, Muhammad showed that he was willing to rebuke even his closest companions if that person denigrated someone because of his or her ethnicity. The Prophet believed that this form of "tribalism," or al-asabiyyah in Arabic, was cancerous because it drove people to ethnic loyalties even if that meant they supported oppression and injustice.

The Prophet's Last Sermon at Mount Arafat in 632 AD is perhaps his most noteworthy manifestation of anti-racism. In his speech, Muhammad stated that "An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab ... a white person has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over white except by piety and good action." The Last Sermon is the culminating point of Muhammad's life. He challenged a disunited population that was constantly engaged in warfare by calling on people to unite under a banner of humanity. By distancing himself from the tendency to categorize others based upon ethnicity, the Prophet preceded the words of Martin Luther King Jr., whose "I Have a Dream" speech called for African Americans to be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Muhammad's message of anti-racism is especially important during February, which is Black History Month in the US. Al-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, the African American civil rights leader who is more commonly called Malcolm X, reflected Muhammad's insistence on harmony. After he performed Hajj, the Islamic pilgrimage, El-Shabazz wrote home to his friends that all Muslim pilgrims in Mecca accepted the "Oneness of God." He added that white people in the US should echo the Muslim pilgrims and "cease to measure and hinder and harm others in terms of their differences in color." El-Shabazz's anti-racism perspective mirrors Muhammad's spirit of friendship and inclusivity. Like the Prophet, El-Shabazz is a role model for the anti-racism movement.

I consider Muhammad to be a quintessential anti-racist figure because he promoted peace and equality. Without a doubt, he advanced human rights in an area of the world that had no previous experience with this practice. Non-Muslims who belittle the Prophet as a racist murderer have certainly not considered the examples highlighted above.

To further promote better relations between Muslims and non-Muslims as well as people of different skin colors, it is imperative that media outlets highlight Muhammad's anti-racist ethos. Rather than being a divisive figure, Muhammad is an inspiration for those working to rid the world of the evil of racism.

In: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-considine/prophet-muhammads-example\\_1\\_b\\_6734934.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-considine/prophet-muhammads-example_1_b_6734934.html), retrieved on 24.02.2015

---

Compiled by:  
*Dr. Dodik Ariyanto*  
Culture & Social Affairs Department  
Email: [dariyanto@oic-oci.org](mailto:dariyanto@oic-oci.org)  
Reviewed by:  
*Abdula Manafi Mutualo*,  
Secretary of the Observatory  
Culture & Social Affairs Department  
Email: [abdmanafi@oic-oci.org](mailto:abdmanafi@oic-oci.org)