

Committee: Human Rights Council (HRC)

Issue: Islamophobia and discrimination within the context of the refugee crisis

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades the world has been introduced to a new form of hatred against people who believe in a certain religion, namely Islam. There are many governments, organizations and even small groups of people who seem to avidly oppose Muslims, doubt their beliefs and question their rights. This situation is often a result of terrorist actions that certain religious-based groups attempt. Due to the fact that the terrorist attacks are lately closely linked to Islam, many are adopting a more defensive behavior while simultaneously limiting their connections with Muslims. It is therefore obvious that discrimination against Muslims has risen and is expanding towards different directions.



Nowadays, maybe the major context within which discrimination is found when analyzing the ongoing refugee crisis. Refugees coming from Islamic States arrive to, mostly, European and American countries and face a very harsh and unwelcoming situation. Their fundamental Human Rights are ignored and their lives are threatened, simply because they follow a religion that some criminals use to spread terrorism.

It is mandatory that the international community steps in and puts a stop to this unfortunate reality.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a contrived fear or prejudice fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure. It is directed at a perceived or real Muslim threat

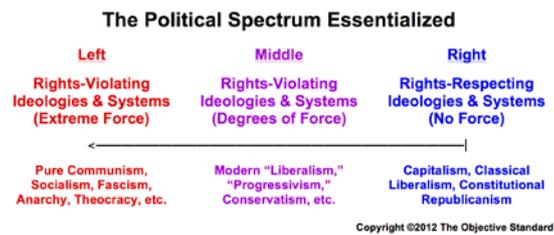
through the maintenance and extension of existing disparities in economic, political, social and cultural relations, while rationalizing the necessity to deploy violence as a tool to achieve “civilizational rehab” of the target communities. Islamophobia reintroduces and reaffirms a global racial structure through which resource distribution disparities are maintained and extended.¹

Refugee

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.²

Islamic Terrorism

³Acts of terrorism by individuals who claim to conduct them in the name of Islam. This is something that can easily result in a huge problem since it implies that terrorism can only be Islamic in



character, i.e., that the ethos of Islam is compatible with that of terrorism. From this “assumption” it is obvious that most Muslims feel insulted, wronged, and even angry on hearing such expressions.

Right Wing Party

The conservatory or reactionary section of a political party or system.^{4 5}

¹ Islamophobia: Definition by the University of California, Berkeley – Center for Race and Gender

² Refugee: Definition by the UNHCR – The UN Refugee Agency

³ Islamic Terrorism: Definition by the Common Ground News Service

⁴ Right Wing Party: Definition by the Oxford Dictionary

⁵ Chart: Chart Downloaded by the Objective Standard

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to long researches, the term Islamophobia made its first appearance after the 9/11 widespread incident, when Al Qaeda, an Islamic Terrorist group, claimed



responsibility for the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York City. Islamophobia originated in The Western World and was rapidly spread through the Media. The Media had the tendency to “overreact” and give extraordinary dimensions to the issue at hand. It quickly ignored the tragedy itself and focused on, in a way, ruining the image

of Muslims. The aftermath of this were endless difficulties that all Muslims faced, and still have to face, whether it was something that had to do with social, political, economic or even environmental affairs. However, the task at hand concerns the refugee crisis and all the unfortunate situations that Muslim refugees face.

Media Interference

It is well known that nowadays the Media form a large part of the citizens’ opinions on numerous topics. In most situations people do not actually understand the influence that the Media have on them and feel like they can form their own “unbiased” beliefs. However, according to research, nowadays the entire society is highly influenced by these means without actually realizing it.

It is well known that when it comes to all sorts of changes and crises the Media choose a selective way to work on the coverage. It sometimes may shape the reality differently in order to get more people’s attention. This results in the creation of a surreal situation, where the truth is well hidden, and the society is simply unaware of current situations.



Under these circumstances, it is very simple for devious scenarios to appear. Many times, governments and organizations use this state of ignorance and promote their

xenophobic, Islamophobic beliefs. It is obvious that the results are catastrophic. People oppose Muslims, and in our case, try to make their “refugee-journey” a lot harder by trying to take away some of their fundamental rights and by limiting their access to assistance. This way the journey to a better living is becoming endless. As a result, the ongoing refugee crisis is expanding and as explained Media-spread Islamophobia is making the refugees’ lives harder.

All in all, people and governments tend to oppose Muslim refugees and further stop the refugee crisis from disappearing, as they are fairly influenced by the poor Media coverage.

Migration and The Refugee Crisis

Unfortunately, a huge movement of refugees has been marked recently. Most of them want to reach a safe environment, mainly in Europe and America, to protect themselves and their families. The conditions in the Middle East have made them wonder if fleeing their homes is the best solution. The ongoing Syrian Crisis, The rise of ISIS and other terrorist groups, the USA interference throughout the years in the Middle Eastern matters, the situation with the Kurds and the constant Human Rights violations have all contributed in the huge migration waves and the never-ending refugee crisis.

Especially, during the last decade things have only worsened. Many country leaders do not offer the needed help and a lot of citizens do not understand the importance of the issue. All the recent political changes have made a refugee’s journey more difficult and have resulted in the appearance of more problems linked to the refugee crisis.

A refugee’s journey is a really difficult one and since the appropriate aid is not offered things are not changing for the better. Many refugees have died while seeking a safer home, others have been separated from their families and many more have been kept in refugee camps for a long period of time. Unless proper aid is presented to the refugees the current situation can only become worse.

Political Changes in Refugee Crisis-Stricken Areas

Throughout the last years it has been noticed that a number of political changes have occurred at the highly affected by the crisis areas. To be more specific, we have seen the rise of right wing political parties all over Europe, in countries like France, Austria and Hungary.

However, it goes without saying that similar reactions also took place on the other side of the Atlantic, mostly in the United States of America. This specific swing in the political atmosphere leads to further changes to the ongoing refugee crisis.

First of all, Islamophobia's existence encourages more conservative and traditional political parties to gain power. As it is obvious, this results in modern societies not being able to follow a new, revolutionary path and being stuck in older ideas and beliefs.

Unfortunately, this is not the only problem to the current situation. These political changes in general do not suggest an end to the refugee crisis. They simply do not offer any form of assistance to the maliciously treated refugees and constantly try to keep them out of the so-called "Western World". The lack of aid by such states is clearly visible. Right wing supporters tend to ignore the things that refugees really need and confront them with cruelty and not a drop of compassion.

With the already mentioned political changes linked to Islamophobia the refugees' lives are at stake and the crisis doesn't seem to shrink.

People's reaction / Effect on today's society

After a number of incidents a lot has changed in today's society and people seem to react differently to all sorts of Islamophobic actions. As we can all realize, opinions differ and this has a direct impact on our society's image.

Many people seem to encourage discriminatory messages and ideas while at the same time try hard to promote Islamophobia. By doing so, they feel they can limit the number of Muslims they contact with and therefore live in a safer environment. As it is very well known, these people try to decrease the number of refugees and simultaneously worsen the refugees' journeys, or conditions of living (e.g. limit the number of "hot-spots" and provide less humanitarian aid).

On the other hand, there are those who protest for the rights of Muslim refugees and continuously try to change the unfair situation. They demand that governments and international organizations assist refugees at any cost and oppose all the people that convey Islamophobic messages. The number of fighters against Islamophobia has risen dramatically within the last years, since in the past not many would publicly support the badly treated Muslims.

As we can realize this specific situation has led to a division in modern society and many public conflicts amongst the two sets of people. As there is no solid answer to the issue the situation is deemed rather unstable.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED



United States of America

The 45th US President, Donald J. Trump, has many times explained his position on the matter. The Trump administration is in favor of not welcoming Muslim groups in the USA, since they feel that the national security is at great risk. Generally, USA wishes for the return of refugees to their countries and is not really up for allowing refugees in the States. The internationally known executive order “Travel Ban” has many times been analyzed and has raised a lot of questions, as it doesn’t particularly help the current situation.

France

Although the French Administration has a rather liberal character, there is a large part of the French who seem to avidly support right wing extremist Marine Le Pen. This politician has been open about her preferences and has stated her anti-Muslim and anti-Refugee opinions.

United Kingdom

Recently, a lot has happened in Great Britain that has formed an even more conservative and anti-refugee environment. The multiple terrorist attacks that have damaged the UK have left the administration with no choice but to be overprotective and try secure the land with anti-Muslim measures. Prime Minister Theresa May has publicly stated that she is willing to fight terrorism at any cost in order to keep the United Kingdom safe, something that a lot interpret as an anti-Muslim statement.

Austria

In the last years the voice of the right wing supporters has been raised. More and more seem to be supporting populism as an idea and try to limit the access refugees have on

all sorts of goods. Austria would not be up for welcoming Muslim refugees, due to many domestic conflicts, which seem to have divided the population.

Russia

Russia is known for its pure Christian Orthodox religion and its “conservative” religious beliefs. Recently, the mayor of Moscow banned the construction of any other Mosques (Muslim Temples), a decision that received a lot of different reactions. In general Russia would not be up for supporting a refugee welcoming movement when it comes to Muslims coming from the Middle East. However, it is worth saying that Russia always seems to support treaties and resolutions that fight against Islamophobia.

Canada

For the past few years, Canada seems to have adopted a rather bipolar position when it comes to Islamophobia and the refugee crisis. A multicultural country, with many different opinions raised, has been mostly against welcoming refugees and has taken the stand for Islamophobia.

Syrian Arab Republic

Syria is the most affected country from this crisis as a high number of its population has fled the State and has been trying to live in a better, safer environment. The ongoing situation in the country is really complicated and has resulted in the separation of families, the destruction of cities and the creation of a huge wave of maliciously treated refugees. As the situation evolves into a more complex one, the Syrian government has been found unable to control things and assist the ones who suffer.

ISIS

A terrorist organization that seems to have claimed responsibility for most Islamic terrorism incidents. ISIS is considered to be one of the main reasons why Islamophobia is so widespread. Many refugees have fled their homes because of potential risks that ISIS has

created. In order for Islamophobia and discrimination to cease to exist and for the refugee crisis to eventually end, this organization needs to be tackled holistically.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1992-1993	The first attacks from Al Qaeda were marked. In 1992 it was the bombing of a hotel in Yemen where American officials were staying while in route to Somalia. In 1993 Al Qaeda bombed the World Trade Center in Jersey City.
September 11, 2001	Terrorist Attacks in the USA that marked the beginning of the most Islamophobic period
2001-2002	USA launches "War On Terror" and interferes in many Muslim States
2002	International Trade Deals are questioned
2003	Iraqi War. Iraq is allegedly a state that sponsors terrorism and the US invade
2011	Protests against Assad in Syria turn violent and many other organizations step in
2013-2014	Devastating catastrophes in Syria. Some of the civilians leave. Lack of international support.
Summer of 2015	Biggest Refugee Wave that affected numerous countries.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- 1) A/RES/71/172. Resolution Adopted by the GA on December 2016. A resolution stressing the importance of assisting the high number of refugees that are at risk. It explains their needs and suggests thorough ways to assist them
- 2) S/2017/445. An important report, written by the Secretary General, António Guterres, explaining the most recent changes regarding the

situation in Syria and the implementation of the United Nations Security Council's resolutions.

- 3) HRC/RES/7/19. A resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council to combat the defamations of religions. It was passed in 2008 and it was something that made all Member States understand the magnitude of the issue.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Throughout the past years a number of attempts has been reached to solve the issue. However, they were mostly unsuccessful, since the situation has not really changed.

One of the most significant attempts was the formation of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR). Via this council people try to limit Islamophobia in the United States of America and at the same time provide a better, more stable future for all Muslim Refugees.

The European Union has had a fair amount of propositions to tackle the massive refugee crisis. Amongst those, the formation of different refugee asylums to make sure that refugees and their families are safe and have all the necessities. The humanitarian aid provided by the EU is visible but unfortunately, since a lot of different ideas are heard in Europe not all plans can move forward. However, those propositions are very important as far as the issue of islamophobia is concerned, since tackling the refugee crisis will indirectly lead to the reduced existence of islamophobia.

However, most attempts to tackle Islamophobia and end the refugee crisis are committed by simple citizens. Individuals try to provide their assistance through volunteering, or charity raising. Many have worked hard to make the refugees' lives less painful and change the society by adopting a more open-minded approach on the matter.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In order for Islamophobia to be reduced and for refugees to have a better future there are certain standards that must be met. First of all, the media should stop portraying this entire situation as a story to sell, but rather like an unfortunate reality that practically exists. All people do have the right to realize and understand the actual situation in order to form their own opinions and ignore illogical Islamophobic positions. Irrational ideas have to

be limited if the refugees are to be saved. If citizens understand the actual problem, then a more balanced atmosphere will be restored in each society and discriminatory based conflicts will gradually disappear. The right wing parties will not follow extreme ideas and will try more peacefully to negotiate current situations. After all, everyone should bear in mind that all of us possess Human Rights, which should not in any way be violated.

Although many member states have different opinions on the matter, a common line needs to be found, if our goal is to be set. A diplomatic approach, backed by peaceful ideas and supported by all countries is advised since negotiations should not turn out of control.

In addition, delegates are asked to work together in order to block terrorist organizations and provide a safer future for the physically and emotionally exhausted refugees, through open-minded and well-thought ideas or resolutions.

In the Human Rights Council, all rights must be respected and all ideas have to be heard. Despite the fact that Islamophobia exists, there is always a way to limit it and provide a better future for the refugees.

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