



Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Cultural & social affairs Department

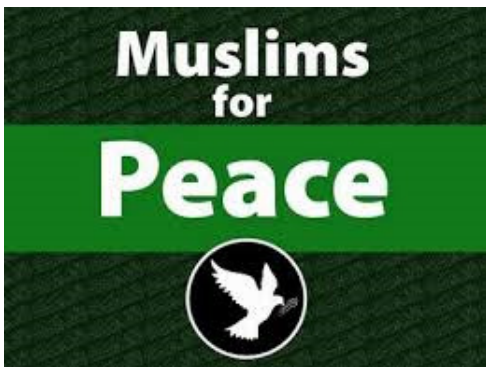
OIC Islamophobia Observatory

Monthly Bulletin - August 2014

I. MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA:

I.I. In the United States and Canada

1. **US: Peaceful Muslims are Irrelevant!**-- At a meeting designed to find some way to hold the Obama Administration responsible to do something about the four Americans who were tortured and murdered at Benghazi, a Muslim woman stood to challenge the



panel of four and those assembled to consider dealing with Muslims and the religion of Islam only on an ideological level rather than take action or call for action beyond words. Her premise for her position seems to be that there are a lot of peaceful Muslims who should be considered as solutions to the problem of Islamic terrorism. The following is the response to the Muslim woman's challenge from one of the panel of four overseeing this meeting:

"There are 1.2 billion Muslims in the world today. Of course not all of them are radicals. The majority of them are peaceful people. The radicals are estimated to be between 15 to 25% according to all intelligence services around the world. That means 75% of them are peaceful people. But, when you look at 15 to 25% of the Muslim population you are looking at 180 million to 300 million people dedicated to the destruction of western civilization. That is as big as the United States." "So, why should we worry about the radical 15 to 25%? Because it is the radicals that kill. Because it is the radicals that

behead and massacre. When you look at the lessons of history, most Germans were peaceful. Yet, the Nazis drove the agenda. As a result, 60 million people died 13 million in concentration camps. Six million were Jews. The peaceful majority were irrelevant! When you look at Russia, most Russians were peaceful as well. Yet, the Russians were able to kill 20 million people. The peaceful majority were irrelevant! When you look at China for example, most Chinese were peaceful as well. But the Chinese were able to kill 70 million people. The peaceful majority were irrelevant!"

"When you look at Japan prior to World War II, most Japanese were peaceful as well. Yet, Japan was able to butcher its way across Southeast Asia killing 12 million people, mostly killed with bayonets and shovels. The peaceful majority were irrelevant! On September 11 in the United States, we had 2.3 million Arab-Muslims living in the United States. It took 19 hijackers - 19 radicals to bring America to its knees, destroy the World Trade Center, attack the Pentagon and kill almost 3,000 Americans that day. The peaceful majority were irrelevant."

In: <http://ppsimmons.blogspot.com/2014/08/peaceful-muslims-are-irrelevant.html>, retrieved on 03.09.2014.

Complete video of the panel can be seen at:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10204326980673843&set=vb.1209145283&type=2&theater>"

2. US: Cruel déjà vu for Sikhs in US: a racial slur, followed by an attempt to murder an innocent man wearing a turban--As efforts to stem hate crimes against Sikhs in the US, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, have increased - including support on Capitol Hill with resolutions and bills, an ad campaign by Gap featuring turbaned actor Waris Ahluwalia, promises by the Justice Department to create more awareness all over the country and ongoing efforts by committed Indian American organizations to profile Sikh culture and their deep roots in communities - hate crimes against Sikhs have only increased.



The most recent example of a cowardly attack on an innocent Sikh man, based solely on his appearance - a turban and long beard - has left a father of two in critical condition, after being run over by a truck by an unidentified perpetrator in Queens, New York City.

According to a report in the Village Voice, on 27 August 2014, just after midnight, the victim Sandeep Singh, who owns a construction business, and three of his friends were crossing 99th Street at 101 Avenue in Richmond Hill, Queens when they crossed paths with a man in a pick-up truck. Witnesses say the driver called Singh a “terrorist,” and yelled at him to “go back to your country.”

Singh didn’t walk away in the face of such threats. He stood his ground, in fact right in front of the truck and engaged the driver in conversation, telling him that he was not a “terrorist”. His friends in the meantime called 911, to report the incident.

The scumbag who had racially abused Singh, panicked. All his false bravado vanished. And in a murderous attempt, he revved up his truck and ran right over Singh in a bid to escape. Singh got caught under the truck and was dragged for 30 feet, sustaining grievous injuries. He survived the brutal incident, has had around 30 stitches, and will need a skin graft surgery. “He clung to the bottom of the pick up truck, so most of his injuries are along his back and his side,” says Amardeep Singh, director of programs for the Sikh Coalition, adding: “There’s a lot of outrage in the community. It’s a tightly knit Sikh community and they’ve experienced a lot of hate crimes,” Amardeep Singh says.

In: <http://www.islamophobiatoday.com/2014/08/05/cruel-deja-vu-for-sikhs-in-us-a-racial-slur-followed-by-an-attempt-to-murder-an-innocent-man-wearing-a-turban/>, retrieved on 09.08.2014

I.II. In Europe

1. **Russia: Russia to Ban Islamic Books in Crimea**-- Adding to their woes as a result of the Russian restrictions on Islamic faith, Crimean Muslims have been asked to destroy Islamic books and materials included on the Russian blacklist, including copies of the Noble Qur’an and biography of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).



“The Religious Administration of Muslims of Crimea informs Muslim religious organizations, and society that Russia’s federal list of banned extremist materials extends over Crimea,” the Religious Administration of Muslims of Crimea said in a statement cited by the Qirim News Agency.

“Therefore distribution, production or storage of materials mentioned in the list is forbidden and will entail responsibility,” said a statement released on the Religious Administration’s website. *“Please study the list and take measures to eliminate prohibited materials if they exist,”* the statement advised.

Some Islamic books that have been banned include the work of popular 20th century Turkish scholar Said Nursi and the famous “Fortress of the Muslim” book of supplications of Prophet Muhammad, which was collected by ancient Muslim scholar Saeed Bin Ali Bin Wahf Al-Qahtani. A certain biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is also banned. In: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/europe/475917-russia-to-ban-islamic-books-in-crimea.html>, retrieved on: 09.03.2014

2. France: Muslim engineer banned from French nuclear sites—A Muslim engineer working for a firm subcontracted by French energy giant EDF has been banned from



accessing French nuclear sites where he normally works, a move his lawyer says is pure Islamophobia. The 29-year-old project manager had been granted access to nuclear installations as part of his job throughout 2012 and 2013. But in March 2014 the engineer, who cannot be named according to French law, had his pass to enter the Nogent-sur-Seine nuclear power station revoked without explanation. The decision, made by the local administration, was covered by “Secret Defence” – which means the authorities are not required to publicly justify the decision. *“My client worked freely in French nuclear power stations for three years,”* said his lawyer Sefen Guez Guez, who works with France’s Anti-Islamophobia Collective (CCIF), to FRANCE 24. *“The question now is what changed? Overnight, he became a suspect person and no one has any idea why. That’s what we’re trying to get to the bottom of.”* As far as the lawyer is concerned, *“considering the current atmosphere in France, his religious leanings cannot be ruled out”* as a reason behind the ban.

In June 2014, Guez successfully had the engineers ban revoked by an appeals court. The judge ruled that, *“there were serious doubts over the legality of the decision”*. But when

the engineer turned up for work in July, he found he was once again refused access – this time by EDF – to his place of work. Guez launched a second appeal. The court is due to make its ruling at the end of August. “*My client is confident,*” he told FRANCE 24. “*He has never done anything amiss at work, he is not facing any disciplinary issues with EDF and he has no criminal record.*” While he waits for the courts verdict, the engineer has been assigned to administrative work.

In: <http://www.france24.com/en/20140818-muslim-engineer-banned-french-nuclear-sites-edf/>, retrieved on 31.08.2014

I.III. Rest of the World

China: China Persecutes Muslims: No Beards, Head Scarves or Veils Allowed on Xinjiang Buses—In Xinjiang, in China’s western region, people wearing head scarves, veils and long beards are no longer allowed to board city buses, for fear they might perpetrate a terror attack.



Xinjiang is home to the Muslim Uighur people who speak a Turkic language. The area has been beset for years by violence which the government blames on Islamist militants and fundamentalist Muslims.

Five “types” of passengers are now banned from riding buses in Xinjiang: Those who wear veils, head scarves, a loose-fitting garment called a jilbab, clothing with the crescent moon and star, and those with long beards. The ruling Communist Party said on 4 August that “*Those who do not comply, especially those five types of passengers, will be reported to the police.*”

Alim Seytoff, the president of the Washington-based Uighur American Association, said in an emailed statement, “*Officials in Karamay city are endorsing an openly racist and discriminatory policy aimed at ordinary Uighur people.*” Usually Uighur woman choose to dress in the traditionally casual Chinese style, but some have now opted to wear a full veil, commonly seen in Pakistan or Afghanistan.

In: <http://www.inquisitr.com/1395618/china-persecutes-muslims-no-beards-head-scarves-or-veils-allowed-on-xinjiang-buses/>, retrieved on 20.09.2014

I.IV. On Geert Wilders

1. **Court Readies For Wilders Racism Case**--Though justice has not yet decided to prosecute Geert Wilders, the court in The Hague is busy preparing for the trial against him. By September 2014 justice will decide whether the PVV leader will be prosecuted for his statement about "less Moroccans" during an election meeting in a cafe in the Hague. A spokesperson for the Prosecutor in The Hague did not say on what date the decision to prosecute will be made, but based on an internally circulating rumor September is the target month.



Wilders asked attending PVV supporters the question "*Do you want more or less Moroccans?*" to which they replied by chanting "*Less! Less! Less!*". This caused an outcry in March 2014. Throughout the country more than 5 thousand reports were filed against him for group defamation, discrimination and incitement to hatred.

In: <http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/09/02/court-readies-wilders-racism-case/>,
retrieved on 02.09.2014

2. **Geert Wilders to the Prime Minister: "Close the Borders! Tackle Islam!"**--Geert Wilders and the PVV (Party for Freedom) released the following open letter on August 7 addressed to

Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands:

*Prime Minister,
Yesterday's joint statement by the cabinet and the Jewish organizations about the growing anti-Semitism in the Netherlands is worthless. There is an elephant in the room, but you refuse to see it.*



Such lax behavior is unworthy of a Prime Minister. You are afraid of Islam and therefore refuse to say what everyone knows: the more Islam in the Netherlands, the more anti-Semitism one will get.

"Together we are responsible for ensuring that conflicts that occur elsewhere in the world do not lead to tensions and conflicts between groups in our Dutch society," you state.

In: <http://sheikyermami.com/geert-wilders-to-the-prime-minister-close-the-borders-tackle-islam/>, retrieved on 01.09.2014

II. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

II.I. In the United States and Canada

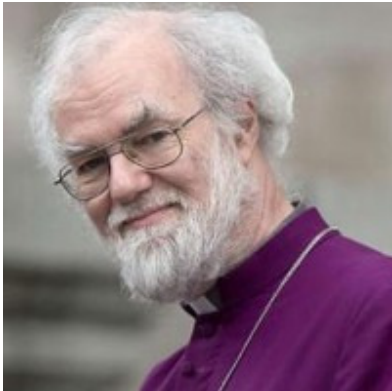
1. US: Asian American Journalism Organization (AAJA) Calls on Fox News To Apologize For 'Islamophobia'--The Asian American Journalists Association has called on Fox News to apologize for its segment on ISIS and the murder of US journalist James Foley. In a letter posted to the organizations website, AAJA took serious issue with discussion on "The Five" about the violent actions of the terrorist group ISIS. During the segment, co-host Andrea Tantaros spoke about Muslims, Islam and ISIS interchangeably. She said. *"This isn't a surprise. You can't solve it with a dialogue. You can't solve it with a summit. You solve it with a bullet to the head."*

AAJA called the comments "alarming," "inflammatory" and accused the network of perpetuating Islamophobia. AAJA calls for Tantaros and Fox News to apologize for the irresponsible, inflammatory statements. The organization said. *"We also call on Fox News to discourage its journalists from making blanket comments that serve to perpetuate hate and Islamophobia. Muslims and Islam are not interchangeable terms with terrorists or ISIS. We in the media know better and must be vigilant in our choice of words."*

In: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/28/aaja-fox-news-islam-muslim-isis-james-foley_n_5729742.html, retrieved on 3.9.2014

II.II. In Europe

1. United Kingdom: Islam Helps Boost British Values, Former Archbishop Says—Muslims in Britain are reinstating tradition British values such as "open, honest and difficult public discussion," a former archbishop said, the Times reported. In a speech criticizing media outlets who portrayed Muslim as "un-British," Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, said on 1 August 2014 during Living Islam Festival in Lincoln.



Williams also complained of religion “illiteracy” among government figures in the UK. His comments were welcomed by Muslim organizations, but other secular groups accused him of “foolishness,” according to the Times. According to Williams, Britain was an “argumentative democracy,” where “individuals and communities engage in open, honest and difficult public discussion.” “One of the greatest gifts of the Muslim community to the UK has been that they have brought that back to the people,” Williams said.

Dr. Williams provoked controversy by saying that applying some aspects of the Islamic law was “unavoidable” in British courts, the Guardian British newspaper reported. He also faced criticism when saying, in 2012, that wearing the hijab gave some Muslim women strength. Islamophobia attacks in Britain stand at about two every day, according to the UK daily, The Observer. Statistics published last June on anti-Muslim attacks, which have been compiled in the nine months following the murder of British soldier Lee Rigby in 2013 by extremists, showed that more than half of the reported attacks targeted women, who are usually wearing conservative clothing.

In: <http://news.sudanvisiondaily.com/details.html?rsnpid=238773>, retrieved on 08.09.2014

2. United Kingdom: Cameron: ISIS Are Extremists Abusing Islam—*“After a deep and damaging recession, and our involvement in long and difficult conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is hardly surprising that so many people say to me when seeing the*



tragedies unfolding on their television screens: “Yes, let’s help with aid, but let’s not get any more involved. I agree that we should avoid sending armies to fight or occupy. But we need to recognize that the brighter future we long for requires a long-term plan for our security as well as for our economy. True security will only be achieved if we use all our resources – aid, diplomacy, our military prowess – to help bring about a more stable world.

Today, when every nation is so immediately interconnected, we cannot turn a blind eye and assume that there will not be a cost for us if we do. The creation of an extremist caliphate in the heart of Iraq and extending into Syria is not a problem miles away from

home. Nor is it a problem that should be defined by a war 10 years ago. It is our concern here and now. Because if we do not act to stem the onslaught of this exceptionally dangerous terrorist movement, it will only grow stronger until it can target us on the streets of Britain. We already know that it has the murderous intent. Indeed, the first ISIL-inspired terrorist acts on the continent of Europe have already taken place."

In: <http://www.breitbart.com/Breitbart-London/2014/08/17/Cameorn-ISIS-Generational-Struggle>, Retrieved on 31.09.2014

II.III. Rest of the World

1. Indonesia: Scholar warns Muslims of ISIS influence in Indonesia—Former chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Hasyim Muzadi has warned Indonesian Muslims of the influence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as ISIS. *"As a Muslim, I have to call on Indonesian Muslims to not let themselves be incited by the ISIS issue, which has entered Indonesia,"* Hasyim said in a written statement received by Antara news agency on 3 August 2014.



He said that Indonesian Muslims should not be incited, let alone join the movement or support it. Hasyim said Indonesian Muslims, especially NU members, should not support ISIS and avoid things that could divide Muslims. *"ISIS is a new Islamic phenomenon in the Middle East, which is by no means appropriate to Indonesian conditions,"* Hasyim said.

The former chairman of NU, Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, said that Indonesia needed to be cautious because since the Reform era the seeds or embryo of radicalism had been planted in Indonesia, either through mass organizations, movements which had entered the country's system or through the medium of terror, according to Antara. He said that Indonesian Muslims would be better adopting a more Islamic and typically Indonesian strategy rather than claiming to be the most Islamic while justifying any means for the sake of their own grouping. *"The Prophet never taught Muslims to justify any means. In Islamic history this is like the Khawarij Group, which holds the principle that they are allowed to destroy anything they oppose,"* the former NU leader said.

In: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/08/04/scholar-warns-muslims-isis-influence-indonesia.html>, retrieved on 7 August 2014

2. Australia: Facebook shuts down Bendigo anti-mosque page—A divisive social media page protesting the development of a mosque in Bendigo has been shut down by Facebook for violating its community standards. The "Stop the Mosque in Bendigo" page claims it was closed over a post calling for Muslim leaders in Australia to sign "a Muslim charter of understanding" abolishing violence against other religions. But some of those who reported the page to Facebook say they were told it was removed because it breached Facebook's policy on hate speech.

The page sprang up earlier this year in response to a City of Greater Bendigo decision in June to grant a planning permit for a \$3 million mosque, the first of its kind for the regional city. It was taken down after at least two Bendigo residents complained about it to Facebook, the Bendigo



Advertiser reported. One woman, who wished to remain anonymous, said she made a report because she found the page's contents embarrassing and unfair to Muslim people. *"I believe the page is hate speech and I don't think that the average Muslim person living in Bendigo should have to see the stuff that was on that page. The page promoted hate, fear and misguided intolerance and made me embarrassed to live in Bendigo,"* she told the Bendigo Advertiser.

Tara Harding, also a Bendigo resident, later posted on Facebook: *"This was a great community effort by many of the Bendigo residents. I'm happy to say I too received a notification this page was shut down after reporting the page in July."* One of the administrators of the anti-mosque page, Monika Evers, dramatically withdrew a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal challenge to the planning permit after a legal bid to have her identity hidden was thrown out. She had told the tribunal she'd received death threats and feared for her safety. The other administrator of the page was a woman called Julie Kendall. *"You know we have been riding a very unpopular stance with our page by many Australians,"* Stop the Mosque in Bendigo. The email went on to explain Facebook had unpublished the page after its administrators boosted a post by an ex-Muslim calling for a more moderate approach to other religions to be adopted by Muslim leaders. The administrator wrote she was: *"considering my options before resurrecting the page"* and claimed it had previously been hacked *"as part of an ongoing campaign to personally vilify me"*. Dr Seyed Sherifdeen from the Australian Islamic Mission, the group behind

the mosque, said he had visited the page only once and found its contents to be “purely racist”. The move by members of the Bendigo community to have it removed had been heartening, he said. *“It is nice to see people standing for justice and at least a fair go,”* he said. *“I’m really appreciating the amount of effort taken by local non-Muslim residents to stand up for justice in this community.”*

In: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/facebook-shuts-down-bendigo-antimosque-page-20140819-105qyy.html#ixzz3CTFcybDN>, retrieved on 30.09.2014

III. SITUATION OF MUSLIMS

III.I. In the United States and Canada

US: Malcolm X’s Former Mosque Promotes Interfaith Ties—Masjid Malcolm Shabazz has been a center of African-American Muslim life in Harlem since Malcolm X began preaching there in 1956. But gone are the mosque’s politics of Black Nationalism, its rule that white people aren’t allowed inside and its legions of followers in suits and bow ties.



Today, the mosque—its green dome overlooks West 116th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard—is a pillar open to different races and religions. When the facade of a nearby Christian church collapsed, for example, its congregation held weekly services at the mosque. A Jewish group without a synagogue now gathers there, too. *“It is a motivating factor for us to establish a strong community life and to have a dignified*

community—that good people would want to be a part of, whether they are Muslims or not,” said Imam Izak-EL M. Pasha, the mosque’s leader.

In July, the mosque and the Jewish group, the Harlem Minyan, held a joint service as both observed fasting rituals. *“They were really warm and welcoming,”* said Mia Simring, who is part of the Harlem Minyan. *“It was important to me that we take the opportunity to partner with such an established organization in the community.”*

In: <http://welcometoharlem.wordpress.com/2014/08/12/malcolm-xs-former-mosque-promotes-interfaith-ties/>, retrieved on 01.09.2014

III.II. In Europe

1. **United Kingdom: London Mosque celebrates 50th anniversary**—The London Muslim Mosque celebrated its 50th anniversary on the weekend of 16–17 August. *“It’s a place where people come to relax, to identify, to establish new friendships, to outreach to the neighborhoods around the mosque and meet new friends,”* Dr. Munir El-Kassem, told AM980 Radio station on Friday, August 15. To mark the historical bi-centennial milestone, the community organized a weekend filled with inspirational and informative talks, dinners and entertainment. The London Muslim Mosque is one of the earliest



mosques in Ontario. The first pioneers arrived in London in the late 1800’s and as the number of Muslim families increased by the mid 1900’s, a need for a communal space became necessary. It started after 12 Lebanese immigrant families settled in London and wanted a communal place of worship.

Buying a house in Oxford Street, the early pioneers demolished it to make place for their new mosque. The London Muslim Mosque’s construction was completed in 1964 and has, since then, been serving a growing and flourishing community. *“The mosque is certainly a converging point for people,”* said Dr. El-Kassem. *“When Muslims arrive in the city, it’s the first place they ask about. They go for worship, and more than that, they go to get assistance to settle and to socialize with people who have been in the city before them.”* Over the past fifty years, the mosque expanded to add an Islamic school on the property in 1996, and a multi-million dollar renovation in 2010. Now the London Muslim Mosque is one of three in the city that serves a Muslim population of around 30,000 people. *“We are seeing that the community continues to increase not by immigration only, but there are many people who are now second and third generation Muslims who are born and raised in Canada,”* said Dr. El-Kassem. *“I am safe to say that now maybe 65% to 70% of the community was born and raised in London, Ontario.”*

In: <http://iqra.ca/2014/london-mosque-celebrates-50th-anniversary/>, retrieved on 18.09.2014

2. Russia: Russian Police Targets Crimean Hijab-wearing Muslims and Islamic schools– It seems Russia doesn't care about the feelings or opinions of liberals or Muslim agitators. They identify a problem and then root it out. Unlike in America, where the liberals and Muslim radicals are practically running the country – the minority that they are. In America the tail wags the dog. In Russia it's the opposite – as it should be. Russian police aren't afraid of targeting the tented Muslim women, to check who they are. They aren't afraid of going into the Muslim schools, or madrasas, to go check what they're teaching kids and looking for banned Islamic literature. Eider Ismailov, the assistant mufti of Crimea had the following to say “*This shows that Russian police do not trust headscarfed women and see them as a separate group in the general public. This is nothing but an insult against our beliefs as Muslims*”

In: <http://ozziesaffa.blogspot.com/2014/08/russian-police-targets-crimean-hijab.html>, retrieved on 01.09.2014

III.III. Rest of the World

Malaysia: Boycott with knowledge, not with emotions, Muslims told—Malaysians are united in condemning the brutality of Israel against the people of Palestine, specifically Gazans, and play a role in boycotting products and brands that have links with the Zionist regime. However, there have been actions seen as too extreme on the part of certain quarters participating in such boycotts, including disparaging those who did not join them and also conduct like scolding and even spitting at workers of restaurants that were the target of the boycott.



Thus, the question arises as to the appropriateness of this kind of behaviour when the original intention was to join forces to show solidarity in supporting Muslims in Gaza, who are the subject of Zionist aggression.

Actions like these are against Islamic teachings. “*In fact, during the time of Prophet Muhammad, there was business dealings between him and the Jews although he knew there was a Jewish plot to kill him,*” said Ahmad Fazrin Yahaya, the chief executive officer of think tank Pertubuhan Ilmuan Malaysia (Ilmu), when contacted by Bernama. “*As Muslims, we are not taught to be cruel against others or reciprocate cruelty with cruelty.*”

Force is only allowed during a war,” explained Ahmad Fazrin. Ahmad Fazrin said boycott efforts should be done smartly and not follow emotions or sentiments, as these would inevitably be “off-tangent” from Islamic teachings. “If you want to boycott, don’t go over the limit. In the eagerness to show we are Muslims, we are actually resorting to cruelty, which is not very much different from the Zionists who are butchering Palestinian children, even though our actions have not reached that stage,” he said.

In: <http://www.therakyatpost.com/news/2014/08/05/muslims-told-boycott-knowledge-emotions/#ixzz3CLa2J47W>, retrieved on 07.09.2014

IV. ON BURQAH AND VEIL RELATED ISSUES

1. United Kingdom: Violence, threats, prompt more Muslim women in Britain to wear a veil—While just under five percent of Britain's 63 million population are Muslim, there are no official numbers on how many women wear a headscarf or head veil, known as the hijab, or the full-face veil, the niqab, which covers all the face except the eyes. The niqab is usually worn with a head-to-toe robe or abaya.

However, it seems in recent years that more young women are choosing to wear a headscarf to assert a Muslim identity they feel is under attack and to publicly display



their beliefs. Shanza Ali, 25, a Masters graduate who works for a Muslim-led non-profit organisation in London, said she was born in Pakistan and her Pakistani mother had never worn the veil but both she and her sister Sundas chose to do so aged about 20. *"I decided to make a commitment as a Muslim and I have never stopped since,"* Shanza told Reuters in her family home in Walthamstow, east London where prayer mats hang from the walls alongside

modern, family portraits. *"Sometimes you forget that you're covering your hair but you never forget why you're covering. You remember, that to you, your character should be more important than your appearance"*, said Shanza.

In: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/21/us-britain-muslim-veils-idUSKBN0GLOX120140821>, retrieved on 01.09.2014

2. Belgium: Belgium Burqa Ban: Brussels Officer Strips off Niqab from Qatari Princess—A diplomat in the city of Brussels has come under fire for reportedly ripping off the Niqab

of a woman, who happened to be a Qatari princess (Sheikhah) travelling to the Belgian capital. The incident is now likely to strain relations between Belgium and Qatar, reports have noted.



Jean-Marie Pire, 60, employed by the Brussels council to welcome foreign dignitaries to the Belgian capital and also known by the designation of 'Chief of Protocol', was reportedly approached by the wealthy woman wearing a Niqab along with two of her female companions. The officer is said to have forcibly opened her black full-faced veil, in an incident that would be considered a taboo in the Muslim world. The incident

occurred on 14 August when the Qatari princess was making her way to the famous Grand Place in the centre of Brussels. The woman, seeking knowledge about the city, wanted to ask someone with good familiarity with the area and approached the officer who reportedly was distracted by the Niqab worn by the princess.

Pire, who was not on duty at the time of the incident, refused to answer their questions, but instead jumped in to tear apart the Niqab off the woman's face, reports suggest. But little did he know that the woman he just manhandled was a princess. *"I said I don't talk to anyone if I can't see their face,"* Morocco World News quoted the 60-year-old officer as saying. *"With this reply, I wanted to make it clear that the veil is banned in Belgium."* *"Because the person asking me a question didn't seem to hear me, I lifted her veil. I know I shouldn't have done that, but what she did wasn't legal either,"* he added.

Reports also suggest that the Qatari princess filed a complaint in the court in Brussels against the officer for assault, as her earrings were torn off in the process causing cuts and bruises on her face. The Chief of Protocol in response also filed a counter complaint against the princess on grounds that she was wearing a Niqab, which is banned in Belgium. The incident could further intensify the ongoing debate over the freedom of expression in France and Belgium, both of which banned face-coverings in 2012, imposing fines for wearing veils.

In: <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/belgium-burqa-ban-brussels-officer-strips-off-niqab-qatari-princess-607294>,
retrieved on 27.09.2014

V. ON DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS

1. **US: Committee says church remains committed to dialogue with Muslims**—The U.S. bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs said the Catholic Church remains committed to dialogue with leaders of other religions and Muslims in particular.

Reiterating that commitment is especially needed now, the committee said in a statement released late Aug. 19, because tensions between Christians and Muslims have never been



more acute and some Catholics and members of other denominations have rejected interfaith talks. *"Sadly, in recent years, there has been a deliberate rejection of this call to engage in dialogue with our Muslim brothers and sisters by some in the Catholic Church and in other ecclesial families,"* said the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee, whose chairman is Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden of Baltimore.

"We understand the confusion and deep emotions stirred by real and apparent acts of aggression and discrimination by certain Muslims against non-Muslims, often against Christians abroad," it said. *"We, and increasingly our Muslim partners in dialogue, are concerned about these very real phenomena."*

The statement did not specify types of aggression, but in recent months thousands of fighters with the Islamic State, or ISIS, seized control of large parts of northern and central Iraq and eastern Syria, leading to a mass exodus of Christians and other religious minorities from those regions. They were told by militants to flee, convert to Islam or be killed. Militants have released videos on Facebook and other social media showing mass executions of Christians and other Iraqis. According to some estimates, as many as 1,500 people were killed in July. *"Along with many of our fellow Catholics and the many Muslims who themselves are targeted by radicals,"* the USCCB committee said, *"we wish to voice our sadness, indeed our outrage, over the random and sometimes systematic acts of violence and harassment -- acts that for both Christians and Muslims threaten and disrupt the harmony that binds us together in mutual support, recognition and friendship."* *"It is our belief that the most efficient way to work toward ending or at least curtailing such violence and prejudice is through building networks of dialogue that can*

overcome ignorance, extremism, and discrimination and so lead to friendship and trust with Muslims," the committee said.

The statement noted that for the past 20 years the committee has been involved in official dialogues with several national Muslim organizations.

In: <http://www.catholicsentinel.org/main.asp?SectionID=2&SubSectionID=34&ArticleID=26258>, retrieved on 01.09.2014

2. India: A place where Muslims celebrate Janmashtami--Not many people know about it, but Janmashtami, which marks the birth of Lord Krishna, is celebrated in a big way in a sacred place for the Muslim community in Rajasthan. A three-day festival is organised

at the Dargah of Narhar – also known as Dargah of Sharif Hazrat Hajib Shakarbar – situated near Chirawa in Jhunjhunu district, about 200 km from Jaipur. *"This festival is being organised here for the last 300–400 years and people of all communities come here. A main aim of this celebration is to promote Hindu–Muslim brotherhood,"* said Dargah secretary Usman Ali Pathan. People from many states including



Maharashtra, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh visit the Dargah during the festival. *"Thousands of Hindus come here and OFFER flowers, chadar, coconut and sweets in the shrine,"* he said. Over 400 shops come up in the vicinity during the festival time. Qawalis, skits and dance dramas are organised on the night of Janmashtami, similar to the ones held in temples. *"It is difficult to say how and when this festival started, but we strongly feel it gives a true picture of national unity, as in one room you will find Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims staying together during the festival,"* Pathan said. *"It is really astonishing to see people from all communities come here. I have just been married, over two months back, and my husband and I have come here to seek blessings,"* she said. Rekha, a resident of a nearby village, said she has been coming here for the last couple of years. *"It gives me mental peace and I enjoy the fair here,"* she said.

In: <http://news.oneindia.in/feature/a-place-where-muslims-celebrate-janmashtami-1504559.html>, retrieved on 27.09.2014

3. Nigeria: Western Education Not against Islam, Says Muslim Cleric—A prominent cleric in Sokoto State and Chairman of the Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'a Waikamatul Sunnah

(JIBWIS) in Wamakko Local Government Area of the state, Sheikh Bakiru Gulma, on 5 August called on parents to send their female children to school, stressing that those individuals misleading northerners that western education is forbidden in Islam are ignorant. Gulma made the assertion at a forum on Almajiri and girl-child education organised by the Voice of America (VOA) in Sokoto, on that day.



He maintained that those against western education in the North did not understand Islam and as such should be disregarded by the public. The cleric emphasised that Prophet Muhammad instructed Muslims to engage in the search for knowledge and should go as far as China to acquire education. According to him, there is no verse in the Quran that forbids Muslims from acquiring education and wondered where the individuals got such misleading information. *“There is nowhere in the holy Quran that forbids women from acquiring western education. Life is dynamic and mankind has to adjust through education which provides skills and knowledge. So, people saying that western education is sin are ignorant of Islamic teachings,”* the cleric averred.

Gulma asserted that western innovations in science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy as well as algebra originated from Muslim scientists several centuries ago. He noted that Persian Mathematician Al Khwarizmi wrote the first book on algebra and whose name the word algorithm was derived from. The cleric said it was Muslims that abandoned the pursuit of education and stressed the need for communities to show serious commitment to the education of the girl-child as a veritable means of moving the society forward. He urged traditional and religious leaders to redouble their efforts towards enlightening their communities on the benefits of education.

In: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/western-education-not-against-islam-says-muslim-cleric/185489/>,
retrieved on 09.09.2014

4. Australia: Religious leaders reject negativity directed at Australian Muslims— Religious leaders of multiple faiths gathered at Lakemba Mosque on August 22 to express solidarity with Islam and reject what they called a "barrage of negativity" directed at Australian Muslims.

Local imam Sheikh Yahya Safi was joined by Rabbi Zalman Kastel, Father Patrick McInerney and the Reverend Andrew Dutney, president of the Uniting Church. They called



upon political leaders to avoid language and policies that could marginalise or vilify the Muslim community. *"Demonising Muslims is wrong on so many levels,"* Rabbi Kastel said. *"We want everyone to feel that they belong here, that they are valued members of - yes - the same team."*

Outside the mosque, the leaders unveiled a banner headlined "We'll love Muslims 100 years", in a format copied from News Corp-owned The Weekend Australian. It was a pointed reference to that newspaper's provocative August 9 front page "We'll fight Islam 100 years".

The Abbott government has foreshadowed a suite of beefed-up counter-terrorism measures in light of a number of Australians having travelled abroad to fight with the Islamic State. Sheikh Yahya opposed the government's plan to make it a criminal offence to travel to designated areas without a "legitimate purpose". *"We said clearly we need to have freedom in this country,"* Sheikh Yahya said. *"We are against violence, we are against terrorism. Let them, the ones who make mistakes, let him pay the price."*

Reverend Dutney said he was confident the Australian community would continue to celebrate its cultural and religious diversity, but was concerned to see international events "spill back" into domestic politics. He argued the government's focus on counter-terrorism created a false impression that Australians were in danger and would sour community relations. *"When people feel that there's a greater risk, they're more likely to turn their neighbour into an enemy,"* he said. *"I've never quite warmed to the term 'Team Australia', I'm not entirely sure what it means. But I think what we're doing [today] is at least consistent with it."*

In: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/religious-leaders-reject-negativity-directed-at-australian-muslims-20140822-107fuy.html#ixzz3CVmqAsFr>, retrieved on 31.09.2014

VI. DISCOURSE ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

Dear Western World, Islam is NOT Behind ISIS (Interview By: Chris Stackaruk with Dr. Scott Alexander)—These past few weeks all eyes have been on the Middle East. ISIS and Hamas have owned the summer headlines as gruesome photos spill out from daily recurrences of violence. Unfortunately, so many cameras pointed at so-relatively-few religiopolitical extremists can tend to skew our understanding of Islam as a whole. On behalf of the tragedies done in its name, it becomes easy to dismiss Islam as a religion that desires worldwide domination through violence. Many Christians think this way, and we can hardly blame them as the media and popular entertainment make it all too easy to believe.

Yet, Christ calls us to more. As Christians, we must rise above this media-based misunderstanding to offer both dignity and love to our Muslim neighbors around the world. Of course, this begins with understanding: getting to know Islam beyond the faulty caricatures that demean its adherents and put up barriers between us and them.

As discerning followers of Christ, we must therefore re-examine the ways in which we have answered the most pressing questions about Islam in our world today. As I am no expert, I have invited Dr. Scott Alexander, a frequently sought after expert on Islam, to share his insight on the teachings of the Qur'an, Middle East conflicts, and how Christians can best engage with their Muslim neighbors.

Dr. Alexander, in what ways do you believe Muslims are misrepresented in the media?



Since 9-11 there has been a surge in the systematic demonization of Islam and Muslims commonly referred to as “Islamophobia.” In a nutshell, Islamophobia operates on the deeply racist premise that Muslims are the ultimate religious and cultural “other.” Contemporary Islamophobic discourse draws on centuries-old European stereotypes of Islam and Muslims, adding “undemocratic” to “violent,” “hyper-sexualized,” and “misogynist.”

Islamophobia has come to play a central role in the master narrative of Western cultural/moral superiority. This is all despite the fact that in its latest, and allegedly greatest, century the West has been the locus of two World

Wars, the Shoah, and the first nation in history to use nuclear weapons against civilian populations.

How do you think the media's false depiction of Muslims has had an effect upon Christian thinking?

Not unlike religious people themselves, the media tends to misrepresent all religions through a massive failure to situate religious phenomena in their broader social and historical contexts.

This failure is particularly unfortunate and harmful when it comes to Christian approaches to religious "others," especially Muslims. It encourages inherent misunderstanding and sometimes even deliberate alienation and demonization of religious "others."

It has become popular to believe that Islam is intolerant of religious diversity (e.g., Christianity). Is this correct?

Religious minorities such as Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, etc. have lived (and often flourished) for centuries in Muslim majority societies. Thus any read of Islamic norms as teaching unconditional and unmitigated violence against non-Muslims is historically counterfactual. Since the colonial period, however, and the post-colonial establishment of a variety of different Western-backed totalitarian regimes in Muslims countries, Christians, Jews, and other religious and ethnic minorities have been viewed with suspicion. As a result, in the context of social unrest, they have been the target of persecution (along with even larger numbers of their Muslim neighbors).

Does Islam specifically teach hatred toward the Jewish people?

The slogan that "Jews and Arabs have been killing each other for millennia" (including the causal attribution of this falsehood to the alleged biblical rivalry between Ishmael and Isaac) is patently false. Indeed, when the Jews were expelled by the Spanish Reconquista in 1492, many emigrated to the Ottoman Empire where they established vibrant communities. Contrary to what slogans might suggest, the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not thousands, but rather only about 100 years old, and far more linked to colonialism, the rise of secular nationalism, and Euro-American anti-Semitism, than any supposed longstanding enmity between Arabs and Jews as ethnic groups living in the Middle East. Unfortunately, this conflict has become the source of a virulent new brand of anti-Semitism among many Arabs and Muslims worldwide (note the infamous Hamas Charter), as well as intensely anti-Arab bigotry and Islamophobia among many Jews and Israelis in particular (note the rhetoric of Rabbi Dov Lior and Avigdor Lieberman and his Yisrael Beiteinu party).

We hear a lot about jihad in mass media coverage of Islam. What exactly is jihad?

The Qur'anic meaning of this term is the "struggle [to live righteously]." The Qur'an only permits violence insofar as it qualifies as a necessary component of the struggle for righteousness and justice.

In fact, I would maintain that this is the underlying logic for why this broad term for "struggle" (which has at its core the struggle to fast, pray, and give alms) becomes synonymous in Islamic jurisprudence with what the Christian tradition refers to as "just war" theory.

Why do violent extremist groups like ISIS justify their actions as "jihad"? Does the Qur'an ever teach Muslims that they should engage in jihad as violence against non-believers?

The simple answer is "yes." But the key question is: who were these "non-believers" against whom the Qur'an eventually exhorts the earliest Muslim to take arms? It is critical to note that the "unbelievers" or "idolaters" were BY NO MEANS simply those who refused to accept the Prophet and his message. Rather, they represented the political and religious power establishment in pre-Islamic Meccan society. As such, they possessed an active and ruthless agenda to crush, by any means necessary, the new movement (Islam), and thereby silence its call for social justice and radical spiritual, moral, economic, and political reform in 7th-century Arabian society.

How then do some use the Qur'an's teaching to justify extreme violence, even terrorism?

All this does not mean that Qur'anic language supporting and even advocating violence against unbelievers has not been, and is not now, used by certain factions in their quest for power. They use it to justify and encourage the persecution—and even the murder—of fellow Muslims (deemed heretics), as well as non-Muslims. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS, for example, have deemed Western Christendom (does such a thing even exist?) as a neo-Crusader reality which, like the powerful persecutors of the earliest Muslim community, is bent on the utter domination of Muslim societies and eradication of Islam. These groups have also identified Zionist Judaism as one of the primary instruments of this domination.

What about ISIS? Where does it fit in our understanding of contemporary Islam?

Ideologically, ISIS bases its extremely tenuous claims to political legitimacy in the utopian, utterly ahistorical ideal of establishing a global Muslim caliphate which would constitute the only truly Islamic state in the world. Reflective of this aspiration, the motto of ISIS is "One Banner, One Community" and the self-proclaimed caliph (i.e., successor of the Prophet Muhammad as "Leader of the Faithful"), Ibrahim al-Samara'i, a.k.a. Abu

Bakr al-Baghdadi, has called upon all Muslims worldwide to emigrate to his newly established state.

Do Muslims worldwide recognize the legitimacy of ISIS?

Widely respected Sunni clerics like Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (Qatar) and Grand Mufti Shawqi Allam of al-Azhar (Egypt) have not only declared ISIS an illegitimate caliphate, but have deemed it a “danger to Islam.”

How can movements of extremism in Islam be understood in the context of the greater Muslim faith? Are they a mainline group, a minority, or just a faction?

The good news is that the little reliable polling data at our disposal suggests that the extremists and their sympathizers make up a very small percentage of the global Muslim population. For example, only 7% of Muslims worldwide believed that the attacks of 9-11 were completely justified. This was in the early 2000s—I suspect, based on the degree to which extremism has brought untold suffering to Muslim majority societies, that the number would be lower were the polling done today.

In your experience, how has Christian misunderstanding of Muslims been harmful to the church’s mission in the world?

The Christian failure to respect Islam as a spiritual medium through which Muslims recognize and seek to live out their human dignity in relationship with God, has amounted to, and will continue to amount to the Christian failure to recognize and affirm the human dignity of their Muslim sisters and brothers. As such, it is a betrayal of the Gospel of Christ, and thus a cancer in the missional life of the Church.

Practically speaking, how can North American Christians seek to better understand Muslims both at home and abroad?

Glad we’re ending with the easiest question: Get to know Muslims. Really. Get to know Muslims in whatever way possible.

In: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/revangelical/2014/08/17/dear-western-world-islam-is-not-behind-isis-interview-with-dr-scott-alexander.html>, Retrieved on 29.09.2014

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