

## **GREETINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Honourable Member State Representative,

On behalf of the Bureau, we warmly welcome you to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

We're absolutely elated to be serving on the Executive Board of Meluha MUN 2019, and look forward to having you be a part of the UNHRC as well, rendering to make this a magnificent three days. We will always be there for you at every step, to encourage you, push your boundaries, and recenter focus when needed. We count on you, as much as you might count on us. We look forward to mutual growth, and learning, albeit within the frame of discipline and cooperation.

Here are a few instructions we'd like to give with this study guide:

- This study guide is a mere framework for your deeper research. It consists of readings from various sources and we have attempted to make it as comprehensive as possible, covering various angles and viewpoints so that you have a good idea about the concepts associated with the agenda. We cannot stress enough that you need to pursue your own sources, especially because the study guides will not cover your individual foreign policies and foreign policy compliance is very important to us. It is very likely that we, in our limited knowledge, have also omitted some crucial insights, perspectives or initiatives that are really effective or could be implemented later on. This background guide cannot be used as a base of proof, as this guide is meant to be a reference only.
- Some of the readings in this guide may be outdated in terms of their information, but the idea is to derive the main arguments and the spirit of certain policies from it. It would really help if you would familiarize yourselves with facets of Human Rights, especially the International Bill of Rights and related instruments where we derive most of our mandate and the way of working.
- We are following the UNA-USA Rules of Procedure (RoP) in the committee, which looks

for consensus-building rather than conflicting and adverse debate. Please base your research on this basis. Oftentimes, Delegates may simply pursue research whose approach is more aggressive and accusatory. We would discourage this greatly. Please concentrate on concerns where all states may find common ground. Those unaware of this set of RoP, please make sure to read through it comprehensively, before committee sessions begin.

- The sources used in this study guide is all open-source. The reason we chose not to write it ourselves was because we wanted to avoid a certain bias which may be

evident in the language that it is being written in. We have tried instead to bring a certain balance in the way we assign you readings, but then again, there may be a chance that it may be seen as favouring any one side. We would like to assure you that it is not done by intention, but merely the constraints of time and sources.

Read widely and extensively. Be aware of your foreign and domestic policies. We wish you all the best and please don't hesitate to contact us if you have doubts or even if you just want to have a casual chat about the agenda.

**Rapporteur: Prithvi Bale**

**Vice-President: Yashaswini Tanna**

**President: Soumith Kasetty**

## **AGENDA: DISCUSSION ON THE IMPACTS OF XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF EXTREMISM WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON ISLAMOPHOBIA.**

### **DEFINING XENOPHOBIA**

Xenophobia is a broad notion, associated with a variety of meanings. The term “xenophobia” comes from the Greek words *xenos*, meaning “foreigner”, “stranger”, and *phobos*, meaning “fear”. Manifestations of xenophobia are usually triggered by intense dislike or hatred against people that are perceived as outsiders, strangers or foreigners to a group, community or nation, based on their presumed or real descent, national, ethnic or social origin, race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other grounds. Manifestations of xenophobia include acts of direct discrimination, hostility or violence and incitement to hatred. Xenophobic acts are intentional as the goal is to humiliate, denigrate and/or hurt the person(s) and the “associated” group of people.

Xenophobia is the fear or hatred of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. Xenophobia can involve [perceptions](#) of an [ingroup](#) toward an [outgroup](#) and can manifest itself in suspicion of the activities of others, and a desire to eliminate their presence to secure a presumed purity and may relate to a fear of losing national, ethnic or racial identity.

Xenophobia can also be exhibited in the form of an "uncritical exaltation of another culture" in which a culture is ascribed "an unreal, stereotyped and exotic quality". According to UNESCO, the terms xenophobia and [racism](#) often overlap, but differ in how the latter encompasses prejudice based on physical characteristics while the former is generally centered on behavior based on the notion of a specified people being adverse to the culture or nation.

### **DEFINING EXTREMISM**

Extremism means, literally, "the quality or state of being extreme" or "the advocacy of extreme measures or views". The term is primarily used in a political or religious sense, to refer to an ideology that is considered (by the speaker or by some implied shared social consensus) to be far outside the mainstream attitudes of society. It can also be used in an economic context. The term

is usually meant to be pejorative. However, it may also be used in a more academic, purely descriptive, non-condemning sense.<sup>1</sup> Extremists are usually contrasted with centrists or moderates. For example, in contemporary discussions in Western countries of Islam or of Islamic political movements, the distinction between extremist (implying "bad") and moderate (implying "good") Muslims is typically stressed. Political agendas perceived as extremist often include those from the far-left politics or far-right politics as well as radicalism, reactionism, fundamentalism and fanaticism.

There have been many different definitions of "extremism". Peter T. Coleman and Andrea Bartoli give observation of definitions:<sup>2</sup> Extremism is a complex phenomenon, although its complexity is often hard to see. Most simply, it can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary. In conflict settings it manifests as a severe form of conflict engagement. However, the labeling of activities, people, and groups as "extremist", and the defining of what is "ordinary" in any setting is always a subjective and political matter. Thus, we suggest that any discussion of extremism be mindful of the following: Typically, the same extremist act will be viewed by some as just and moral (such as pro-social "freedom fighting"), and by others as unjust and immoral (antisocial "terrorism") depending on the observer's values, politics, moral scope, and the nature of their relationship with the actor. In addition, one's sense of the moral or immoral nature of a given act of extremism (such as Nelson Mandela's use of guerrilla war tactics against the South African Government) may change as conditions (leadership, world opinion, crises, historical accounts, etc.) change. Thus, the current and historical context of extremist acts shapes our view of them. Power differences also matter when defining extremism. When in conflict, the activities of members of low power groups tend to be viewed as more extreme than similar activities committed by members of groups advocating the status quo. <sup>3</sup>In addition, extreme acts are more likely to be employed by marginalized people and groups who view more normative forms of conflict engagement as blocked for them or biased. However, dominant groups also commonly employ extreme activities (such as governmental sanctioning of violent paramilitary groups or

1 Mogahed, Dalia (2006). ["The Battle for Hearts and Minds: Moderate vs. Extremist Views in the Muslim World"](#) (PDF). [WikiLeaks](#). p. 2.

2 Dr. Peter T. Coleman and Dr. Andrea Bartoli: [Addressing Extremism](#), pp. 3–4

3 Supra

the attack in Waco by the FBI in the U.S.). Extremist acts often employ violent means, although extremist groups will differ in their preference for violent vs. non-violent tactics, in the level of violence they employ, and in the preferred targets of their violence (from infrastructure to military personnel to civilians to children). Again, low power groups are more likely to employ direct, episodic forms of violence (such as suicide bombings), whereas dominant groups tend to be associated with more structural or institutionalized forms (like the covert use of torture or the informal sanctioning of police brutality).<sup>4</sup> Although extremist individuals and groups are often viewed as cohesive and consistently evil, it is important to recognize that they may be conflicted or ambivalent psychologically as individuals, or contain difference and conflict within their groups. For instance, individual members of Hamas may differ considerably in their willingness to negotiate their differences with the Palestinian Authority and, ultimately, with certain factions in Israel. Ultimately, the core problem that extremism presents in situations of protracted conflict is less the severity of the activities (although violence, trauma, and escalation are obvious concerns) but more so the closed, fixed, and intolerant nature of extremist attitudes, and their subsequent imperviousness to change.<sup>5</sup>

## **TYPES OF EXTREMISM**

Radicalization leading to violence may take diverse forms depending on the context and time period, and may be associated with different causes or ideologies. They are:

1. Right wing Extremism
2. Left Wing Extremism
3. Politico-Religious Extremism
4. Single Issue Extremism

## **RIGHT WING EXTREMISM**

4 van Prooijen, Jan-Willem, and André PM Krouwel. "Psychological Features of Extreme Political Ideologies." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* (2018): 0963721418817755.

5 Supra

A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of nationalism, re-emerging and attended by a flurry of right-wing extremist behaviour. Its manifestations are apparent in a flare-up of political violence against minorities - foreigners and asylum-seekers most conspicuously, but also against the homeless and the disabled. Among the most noxious examples are the crimes committed by racists and neo-Nazis in the German cities of Hoyerswerda, Rostock, Molln and Solingen.<sup>6</sup>

The extreme right-wing movements in contemporary European share several traits with the fascist movements which appeared in Italy and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s<sup>7</sup>. First, these movements reject existing forms of representative government and the liberal, democratic values which inform them. Right-wing movements attack the extant division of power of government. They ridicule liberal freedoms. They reject minority rights and due process of law. These movements display attitudes which deny egalitarian values and which oppose political and cultural pluralism.

Second, they are populist in the sense that they criticize the activities of elites - economic, political or cultural - while emphasizing ordinary people's untrammelled right to determine the content of politics.

Third, right-wing politics are nationalist. Right-wing groups tend to perceive nations as unequal; they rank nations by worth, placing their own on top. They insist on the excellence of their own nation; they emphasize its history as particularly glorious; they include allusions to its past in their political discourse. This reliance on national history means that right-wing movements in Europe come in many shapes and colours: the characteristic features of right Bernt Hagtvet politics are filtered through the political history and the cultural traditions of the individual country.

Fourth, right-wing groups are exclusive. Their super-patriotic attitudes drive them into ethno-centrism which often assumes racist expression. Targets of their political terror include immigrants and often Jews, homosexuals and physically or mentally handicapped individuals as well. In a word, people who are 'different' in some way from the old-fashioned norms of the nation are the primary victims of right-wing groups.

<sup>6</sup> Hagtvet, Bernt. "Right-Wing Extremism in Europe." *Journal of Peace Research* 31, no. 3 (1994): 241-46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/425375>.

<sup>7</sup> *Supra*

Fifth, right-wing groups are informed by a cultural pessimism which displays a jaded view of modern society. All share the view that the modern world is decadent, morally corrupt; that it can be saved only through strict ethnic control and an orderly social hierarchy based on traditional norms of obedience and social submission. By the same token, such groups maintain a critical distance to the rational procedures which mark modern society - sometimes with an explicit scepticism which leads them to embrace anti-rationalist doctrines. Sixth, right-wing politics emphasize law and order. Classical fascism aimed at a total militarization of society. Similarly, contemporary right-wing groups are informed by martial values. For them, military discipline and hierarchy are signposts on the road towards an orderly society. Seventh, violence is more than a prerequisite for order and power in right-wing politics; it is more than a necessary proof of manhood and power. Right-wing groups see violence as a creative, even a cleansing, act. Eighth, right-wing movements thrive on anti-communism and anti-liberalism alike. Right-wing politics have traditionally turned against both superpowers - against both the old USSR and the USA. The venom against Communism is caused first of all by its cosmopolitanism: Communism represents a supra-national force which turns people's loyalties away from the nation and its traditional values.<sup>2</sup> The hatred of the United States flows from a dogmatic rejection of the liberal values which the United States represents. Also, the United States is considered a commercial world-power, a soulless civilization entirely controlled by international (often purportedly Jewish) capital. Finally, European right-wing movements include an economic policy marked by state intervention and central planning informed by theories of state corporatism. Some contemporary movements echo the notions which characterized German and Italian fascism and advocate a system of economic control based on 'guilds' or 'corporations' tied together by a strong, authoritarian state - German neo-Nazis seem to advocate these views. Other movements include elements of liberal theory which advocate a withdrawn state informed by authoritarian attitudes - Austria is sometimes mentioned as an example of this

## **'Radicalization' and 'violent extremism'**

As with the concept of 'terrorism', there is no universally agreed definition of the term 'violent extremism'; indeed, somewhat confusingly, the terms can sometimes be employed interchangeably. There are, however, a number of definitions which have been developed at the national, regional and international levels. A recent United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Report on good practices and lessons learned on how protecting and promoting human rights contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism examined existing State practice on policies and measures governing 'violent extremism' (General Assembly, Human Rights Council report A/HRC/33/29). This revealed very diverse national approaches (para. 17), a number of which are included in the 'interest box' below. The challenges associated with defining the phenomenon are also revealed in the Report's finding that "[i]n other cases, definitions employed do not make fully clear whether 'violent extremism' presupposes violent action or inciting violent action, or whether lesser forms of conduct that do not normally trigger criminal law sanctions would also be included." (Para. 17). Generally, the diversity of definitional approaches reveals some consistency in that the phenomenon of 'violent extremism' is regarded as being broader than that of terrorism. This is also reflected in the VE Action Plan in which the Secretary-General observed that "violent extremism encompasses a wider category of manifestations" than terrorism since it includes forms of ideologically motivated violence that falls short of constituting terrorist acts (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 4).

The diversity of what may constitute 'violent extremism' has, to some extent, been shaped by the activities of terrorist groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al Qaeda and Boko Haram, which spread messages of hate and violence as well as religious, cultural and social intolerance. In doing so, groups engaged in violent extremism often distort and exploit religious beliefs, ethnic differences and political ideologies to legitimize their actions as well as to recruit and retain their followers.

Potential pitfalls, that some PVE/CVE efforts have become casualties of, include oversimplification of the phenomenon inter alia with respect to its association with any specific religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group which can have the effect of furthering rather than hindering violent extremism agendas. For instance, the United States of America's Department of State, in its 2016 *Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism*, recognized this

diversity where it noted that "the drivers of violent extremism vary across individuals, communities, and regions" (US Department of State and USAID, 2016, p. 3). Despite the focus being on returning foreign terrorist fighters, the understanding of the United States resonates with the contents of *The Hague-Marrakech Memorandum*, where it was recognized that there is a need for a move towards an individual approach to PVE/CVE efforts. For instance, at Good Practices 16 and 19, the *Memorandum* suggested that States should deploy individual risk assessment tools, that consider a variety of factors, with the assessments being overseen by trained professionals (GCTF, (A), p. 8). This was reinforced in the addendum to the *Memorandum*, which recommended for the individual risk assessment tool to be implemented by an expert "proficient in understanding the many facets of radicalisation and the local and cultural context" One aspect that States as well as commentators have sometimes oversimplified is the notion of 'radicalization', a concept which has attracted much attention (and related controversies) including in relation to counter-terrorism prevention discourse and efforts. The UNHCHR Report observed that:

The notion of 'radicalization' is generally used [by some States] to convey the idea of a process through which an individual adopts an increasingly extremist set of beliefs and aspirations. This may include, but is not defined by, the willingness to condone, support, facilitate or use violence to further political, ideological, religious or other goals. Some commentators have suggested that 'radicalization' can be understood as the process by which individuals adopt violent extremist ideologies that *may* lead them to commit terrorist acts, or which are likely to render them more vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organizations).

As many commentators and governmental/intergovernmental entities now recognize, historically too much emphasis was given to religio-centric ideology as a driver of terrorism (Kundnani, 2015, pp. 10-11), often at the expense of other critical underlying factors being overlooked or given inadequate attention. At the heart of the movement critical of this limited approach is the work of Botha, who drew attention to the significance of individual psychology as being an essential component in the turn to extremism (including terrorism), with Botha concluding that in order to further prevent terrorism it is essential that improved understanding is developed as to what motivates an individual to turn to terrorism For example, one of the key findings of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, *Journey to Extremism in*

*Africa* (UNDP Report) (2017), was that while 51% of people interviewed cited religious grounds as a reason for joining violent extremist groups, as many as 57 percent of the respondents also admitted to limited or no understanding of religious texts.

The previously mentioned study conducted by Botha supplements this, as it was determined that far from religion being a key component in radicalization, one of the strongest influences was that of an individual losing faith in politicians and political systems. Critically, Botha's study revealed that anger was commonly targeted at agents of the State, due to their role in protecting the incumbent; the impact of this can be seen when the following is considered: "instead of preventing and combating terrorism [the repressive approaches of agents of the State] ensure that young people affected by them - and even other family members - [were] radicalised" Certainly, there has been increased recognition that an over emphasis on radicalization may lead to overly simplistic conclusions regarding the causal links between radicalization (resulting in extremist thoughts) and acts of violent extremism. This may invite a 'deprogramming' approach as a/the solution in response without adequately examining other pathways to violence such as socio-economic factors, discussed in the next section. Certainly, the benefit of increased understanding and lessons learnt are reflected in the approach of the VE Action Plan around which the analysis in this Module has been framed.

It is interesting to note that, at times, academic scholarship has been ahead of governmental and intergovernmental institutions in terms of its understanding and thinking on PVE/CVE related issues. For example, Martha Crenshaw, writing back in 1988, noted that the "actions of terrorist organisations are based on a subjective interpretation of the world rather than objective reality", with Crenshaw arguing that the perception of the political and social environment is filtered through their own beliefs and attitudes. Nowadays, there is increased understanding that the process of radicalization is highly individualized, with no single pathway and often taking many different forms (General Assembly, Human Rights Council report A/HRC/31/65, para. 15). Scholars have drawn on the social-psychological distinctions within beliefs, feelings, and behaviours to disaggregate the radicalization process. Those who turn to terrorist action only form the apex of a pyramid of a larger group of sympathizers who share their beliefs and feelings (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 32).

In examining drivers of violent extremism, great caution must be exercised in the terminology used in order to avoid being misinformed by incorrect and/or unchallenged related assumptions. Consequently, some entities have reviewed their definitional and conceptual approaches, such as the European Police Office (Europol) which recently proposed a move away from the term "radicalization" to "violent extremist social trend" (EUROPOL, 2016).

One significant issue, which must be clarified from the outset, is that what is critical to counter-terrorism discourse and efforts is not per se whether individuals hold 'radical' or 'extremist' views (terms which can be relatively subjective in nature and therefore susceptible to misunderstanding) *but whether such views are translated into violent acts* (which is the exception rather than the norm). Potentially, millions of people drawn from different social, ethnic, cultural, religious, or geographical backgrounds have what some others might regard as 'radical' or 'extremist' views, especially when compared with their own ones, yet do not commit violent or terrorist acts. Indeed, even how the terms 'violent' and 'violent extremism' are defined can vary contextually depending on the method and methodologies used. For instance, a positivist understanding of 'violent extremism' would differ from one derived from the application of a method of 'micro-narratives' or collecting life stories. Micro-narratives are undoubtedly important for better comprehending or addressing more local drivers of violent extremism.

### **Preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE/CVE)**

As with the concept of 'violent extremism', there is no universal consensus regarding what exactly constitutes 'preventing' or 'countering violent extremism' (PVE/CVE) nor what forms these should take (McCants and Watts, 2012).

The key elements of CVE tend to comprise the "use of non-coercive means to dissuade individuals or groups from mobilizing towards violence and to mitigate recruitment, support, facilitation or engagement in ideologically motivated terrorism by non-state actors in furtherance of political objectives" (Khan, 2015). As one commentator, Peter Neumann, has observed, the scope of CVE and its related activities are "potentially unlimited". These may include the pursuit of wide ranging activities by governments and others entities to prevent radicalization, which generally includes messaging through diverse more conventional as well as social media channels; community engagement and outreach through all available means, such as roundtable

or advisory council discussions; capacity-building, especially among the youth and women together with other community development, safety and protection initiatives; education and training for a broad range of stakeholders, including community leaders and law enforcement officials (Neumann, 2011, p. 18).

The absence of universally agreed definitions of 'violent extremism' and 'CVE' have at times been problematic, including in terms of ensuring consistency and coherence in related strategies, policies, practices and so forth. With respect to the former, the previous United Nations Special Rapporteur on the protection of human rights while countering terrorism concluded that "the lack of semantic and conceptual clarity that surrounds violent extremism remains an obstacle to any in-depth examination of the impact of strategies and policies to counter violent extremism on human rights as well as on their effectiveness in reducing the threat of terrorism" (General Assembly, Human Rights Council report A/HRC/31/65, para. 55).

The absence of agreed definitions of key terms has resulted in "conflicting or counterproductive programs" that are more difficult to evaluate (McCants and Watts, 2012, p. 1). A particular issue has been that without universal agreement on the parameters of CVE, there is the risk of it evolving into a "catchall category that lacks precision and focus; reflects problematic assumptions about the conditions that promote violent extremism; and [is not] ... able to draw clear boundaries that distinguish CVE programs from those of other, well-established fields, such as development and poverty alleviation, governance and democratization, and education" (Heydemann, 2014, pp. 1-4).

Adding a further layer of definitional complexity has been the emergence of the term 'preventing violent extremism' (PVE), a concept which has quickly "become a priority for the global community" (Frank and Reva, 2016, p. 2). The United Nations General Assembly, for instance, in 2015 underlined the significance of PVE, noting the importance of education and the promotion of tolerance through the instillation of a "respect for life", and through the promotion of a "practice of non-violence, moderation, dialogue and cooperation" (resolution 70/109). Shortly thereafter, the Secretary-General presented the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (VE Action Plan) to the General Assembly for its deliberations, which the Assembly subsequently recommended to Member States to reflect within their national contexts as part of its biennial review of the CT Strategy (resolution 70/291, para. 40). Within the Plan of Action,

the Secretary-General indicated that there is a "need to take a more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only ongoing, essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventative measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism" (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 6). In responding to the primary identified drivers (see below), States should undertake action which addresses "development, good governance, human rights and humanitarian concerns", whilst also strengthening "the rule of law, repealing discriminatory legislation and implementing policies and laws that combat discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion" (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 41).

It would appear that PVE requires a State to undertake a deeper assessment of the root causes of violent extremism, addressing its key drivers, i.e. to adopt a more 'upstream' approach. That said, the VE Action Plan does note that "national plans should be developed ... to include countering and preventing violent extremism measures", thereby suggesting a distinction between the two concepts. (report A/70/674, para. 44). Similarly, this is suggested by the Action Plan's "call for a comprehensive approach encompassing not only essential security-based counter-terrorism measures but also systematic preventive steps (PVE) to address the factors that make individuals join violent extremist groups" (CTITF, 2016).

### **Definitional approaches to 'violent extremism'**

There are many different governmental and intergovernmental definitional approaches to the concept of violent extremism, some examples of which are given here.

#### **Governmental**

Australia : "Violent extremism is the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and communal violence."

Canada : "[V]iolent extremism" is where an offence is "primarily motivated by extreme political, religious or ideological views". Some definitions explicitly note that radical views are by no means a problem in themselves, but that they become a threat to national security when such views are put into violent action

USA : The FBI defines violent extremism as the "encouraging, condoning, justifying, or supporting the commission of a violent act to achieve political, ideological, religious, social, or economic goals", whilst USAID defines violent extremist activities as the "advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives".

Norway : Violent extremism constitutes activities of persons and groups that are willing to use violence in order to achieve political, ideological or religious goals.

Sweden : A violent extremist is someone "deemed repeatedly to have displayed behaviour that does not just accept the use of violence but also supports or exercises ideologically motivated violence to promote something".

UK : Extremism is defined as the vocal or active opposition to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs, as well as calls for the death of United Kingdom armed forces at home or abroad.

### **Intergovernmental**

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (7\*): "[P]romoting views which foment and incite violence in furtherance of particular beliefs, and foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence".

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (8\*): Whilst recognizing that there is no internationally agreed-upon definition, UNESCO, within the *Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policy-makers* document, suggested that the most common understanding of the term, and the one which it follows within the guide, is one that "refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals". This can include "terrorism and other forms of politically motivated violence".

## **DEFINING ISLAMOPHOBIA**

Islamophobia, meaning fear, hatred and prejudice against Islam or Muslims specifically is a political force, enmity and or discrimination against Muslims which is the basis for violation of human rights. Although its identification and proof in some particular cases is difficult, Islamophobia is a problem which appears in various forms of discrimination, violence, rejection and insult, and the daily spreading of the phenomenon has negative and irreparable effects not only on Muslim communities, but the international community, be it the East or the West.

The concept of Islamophobia is commonly known as a condition of phobia vis-a-vis Islam and Muslims, which develops into hostile behavior, including verbal and physical abuse against Muslims, their scripture, holy personalities and symbols including assault against mosques, cemeteries and religious centers. The Runnymede Trust, a British think-tank, holds that the “animosity harbored against Islam and Muslims in Western societies is unique and can only be grasped using an equally unique concept, hence the justification of the term Islamophobia. Since 9/11 terrorist incident, is no longer a spontaneous expression of emotions, instead, it turned into an ideology that found its way into the political agendas of right-wing extremist groups, seeking to make political gains by promoting hatred against Islam and Muslims. This systematic effort to distort the image of Islam and Muslims continues to worsen. The unfortunate increase in terrorist activities, socio-political and economic problems resulting in greater refugee crisis has further exacerbated the propaganda against Islam by the far right-wing politicians, public figures and media in many countries. Consequently, the number of hate crimes committed against Muslims, or even those who “look Muslims” (based on their physical or cultural appearance) have increased manifold.

International and human rights organizations have tried to control this evil phenomenon through adopting laws in the form of conventions and treaties. The Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1963), Durban Declaration and Plan of Action (2001) and also the Durban II Conference (2009) stress on important issues such as condemnation of racial discrimination, and commitment of states in the elimination of racial discrimination. These treaties show that with the start the empowerment of international organizations has been a promising move towards the elimination of racial discrimination. It was expected that after signing these treaties, we witness the expansion of goals mentioned in the documents, as well as further elimination of Islamophobia as a form of discrimination.

However, the rhetoric used by some politicians which is covered by the media contributes to the spread of hate speech. World statistics shows a worrying increase of xenophobic attacks as a result of islamophobia against Muslims around the world. Also, according to researchers terms such as “Islamic terrorism”, “Islamic extremism”, “Islamic bombs” etc., which are used in the media, create a negative picture of Islam and Muslims in the mind of the audience. We cannot disregard the role of the media in the spread of Islamophobia. Often, the media further highlight terror attacks that are carried out by Muslims, and report the attacks as religious in nature. But the media gives less coverage to terror attacks committed by non-Muslims, and if there is such a coverage, there is no mention of religion of the culprit.

The Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of Racism, Xenophobia and Racial Discrimination on 31 October 2017 submitting his report to the UN General Assembly, stressed that hate speech and security measures contribute to increase of racism, xenophobia and religion based discrimination.

According to CAIR report there’s been an increase of 17 percent in inhuman incidents against Muslims around the world in 2017 compared to the previous year. Furthermore, more than half of Britons see Islam (the mainstream religion, not Islamist fundamental groups) as a threat to Western liberal democracy. According to Metropolitan police, over 30 percent of young children believe Muslims are “taking over England” and hate crime against Muslims continued to rise, up by 70 percent in the last year.

In the review of the factors that produce hatred and fear of Islam, special attention must be paid to the institutional concept of Islamophobia. In fact, it can be said that following 9/11, and particularly in the recent years Islamophobia has moved up from the lower levels of society and the media to the legislative institutions and governmental departments. In this type of Islamophobia, discrimination and pressures against Muslims affect government institutions and bodies who recreate Islamophobia within society (legislation, the police, departments...) never see themselves accountable nor are willing to take effective measures to eliminate Islamophobia.

## **ISLAMOPHOBIA AS A CONTEMPORARY MANIFESTATION OF RACISM**

The markers of identification of communities have clearly moved from just race, colour and national or ethnic origin to include religion. The understanding of racism has moved from a definition of “prejudice based on (now disqualified biological notions of) race” to a recognition of various forms of racism as: (i) an individual’s discriminatory attitudes and behaviours (individual racism); (ii) policies and practices of organizations, which directly or indirectly operate to sustain the advantages of peoples of certain “social races” (institutional racism); (iii) a value system, which is embedded in society and supports and allows discriminatory actions based on perceptions of racial difference, cultural superiority and inferiority (cultural racism).

Placing Islamophobia into the well-worn context of racism provides clear illustrations to study and understand the multi-dimensional manifestations of the phenomenon in the social and political spheres, and makes it less anomalous and less mysterious. While racism has always been present in the history of human being, Islamophobia has been playing an increasing role in the social construction of racism, with roots that extend far deeper in history than 2001. It should go without saying that the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims span the full range of human appearance, and there is no way to actually “look Muslim.” Nevertheless, race operates at the very core of Islamophobia. In the aftermath of 9/11, in America and beyond, repetitive violent attacks have been reported against non-Muslims, such as Sikh Americans, Indians, South Asians, and others, and everyone hurt or killed in these attacks were vulnerable to Islamophobia because they “look Muslim”— because of their racial appearance. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that Islamophobia does not belong in the realm of “rational” criticism of Islam or Muslims in any ways; it is often discrimination against people who look different; it also often fuses racial and religious bias, largely because the stereotypical Muslim has been constructed as an ominous figure: the bearded, dark-skinned, turban-wearing terrorist guided by perceived archaic religious practices. Even those not falling in this stereotypical appearance are subjected to discrimination as soon as their religious identity is known manifested in some manner.

The social construction of racial categories is at the heart of the process by which Islamophobia came to affect anyone who “looks Muslim”, hence, racialization of Muslims. The extraordinary surge in Islamophobic hate crimes and discrimination across the world cannot be disassociated from the fact that Muslims are being portrayed as racially distinct, inferior, savage and anathema to modern pluralist culture. Consequently, Islamophobia, as a form of racism, is being developed

by the same means as all the social structures that involve race, and have been built into the mind-set of people. Therefore, any effective understanding of Islamophobia must take into account the full scope of race and racism.

## **ISLAMOPHOBIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN RIGHTS: A FORM OF RACISM MIXED WITH CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE**

In many parts of the Western world, the offensive stereotypical and distorted discourses against Islam and Muslims established a collective mind-set that is difficult to uproot, and is invoked whenever clashes occur, which happen to involve Muslims. The political reasons of Islamophobia are represented by many right-wing extremist movements, which employ Islamophobia as a means to gain popularity by intimidating Muslims and promising their electorates, if elected, to enact strict laws against Muslims. Based on these realities, including racial profiling of Muslims, Islamophobia has become a form of racism mixed with cultural intolerance as a whole, rather than simply intolerance of Muslims and Islam. While the international community has made a lot of efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, including the UN Convention Against Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the agreement on the Durban Declaration and its Program of Action (DDPA), these initiatives are encountering a number of serious challenges manifested by the worrying trends discussed above.

In traditional Western legal discourse, anti-Semitism is included in various racial discrimination laws under the category of ethno-religious prejudice. On the contrary, it is held that since Muslims are not a race, therefore, racially based anti-discrimination legislations are insufficient or restrictive to counter Islamophobic discrimination.

In the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, the European Union asserts the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of religion in Article 13. The United Nations has developed a number of instruments, including treaties, conventions and protocols with regards to religious discrimination. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) prohibits more specifically religious discrimination while the Declaration on the Elimination of All

Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, adopted in 1981, provides a comprehensive list of rights regarding freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 in Vienna reiterated the importance of taking all appropriate measures to counter intolerance and related violence based on religion or belief, and invited all States to put into practice the provisions of the 1981 Declaration on Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

The 1993 Vienna Conference also set the speedy and comprehensive elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as priority task for the international community. The 2001 World Conference against Racism clearly recognized the increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in various parts of the world and urged all States to take effective measures to prevent the emergence of movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas concerning these communities.

While these proposed refinements are gradually becoming part of Member States policies and anti-discrimination legislations, the surge in Islamophobia, as a form of racial discrimination, continues to threaten the effectiveness of these strategies in tackling the negative manifestations of racism. In addition, we continue to witness the resurgence of racist and xenophobic violence directed mostly against Muslims, a general increase in manifestations of racial and religious intolerance/hatred, reflected mainly in manifestations of Islamophobia as well as the increased importance in identity constructs of a rejection of diversity and resistance to the process of multiculturalization of societies. Again, the growing political trivialization of racism and xenophobia, demonstrated by merger of racist, far-right and xenophobic platforms with democratic parties, further exacerbate the ideological, scientific and intellectual legitimization of racist and xenophobic discourse and rhetoric, which favours an ethnic or racial interpretation of social, economic and political problems and immigration.

To deal with these evolving realities, a well-worn civil rights strategy should be developed to advance reforms, both at the legal and political levels, for the protection of minorities and communities affected by all contemporary forms of racism, including Islamophobia.