Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1605 (2008)[1]

European Muslim communities confronted with extremism

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The attacks in Paris in 1995, New York in 2001, the subsequent spate of bombings which hit Madrid and Istanbul in 2003 and London in 2005, and the foiling of many other terrorist plots on European soil have shown the extent and gravity of the threat of terrorism from people who invoke Islamic fundamentalism as a source of inspiration. In addition to the shock caused by the attacks, it has been disconcerting for many to realise that some young Muslims who were born and brought up in Europe had been involved in their organisation and execution.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly warns against any confusion between Islam as a faith and Islamic fundamentalism as an ideology. Islam is the second religion in Europe and a constituent component of European societies. In some Council of Europe member states, it is traditionally the religion professed by the majority of the population; in others, it is the religion of the majority of immigrants and of citizens with an immigrant background, who represent a growing proportion of the population. On the other hand, Islamic fundamentalism is an extremist ideology with a political agenda, which promotes a model of society which is not compatible with human rights values and standards of democracy, and which, in its worst form, calls for the use of violence to achieve its aims.

3. It is regrettable but undeniable that, at the moment, Islamic fundamentalism as an ideology has proved to have a power of attraction for some individuals. European governments and European Muslim communities should work in close collaboration and synergy to neutralise this power of attraction and prevent it from escalating into terrorism.

4. The Assembly congratulates those Muslim leaders, opinion-makers and organisations who have firmly and unequivocally condemned terrorism inspired by Islamic fundamentalism as well as other extremist manifestations, such as the hate speech employed by some official or self-appointed imams or other Muslim personalities. Similarly, the Assembly commends the efforts of Muslim organisations to highlight the compatibility between Islam as a religion and democratic and human rights values, as well as their work with groups that are more at risk of radicalisation, such as young people and prison detainees.

5. In parallel to these efforts, European governments bear a special responsibility to address the root causes which create a fertile ground for extremism, such as poverty, discrimination and social exclusion; to ensure full respect for the freedoms of thought, speech and religion, as laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5); and to contribute to a climate in which all religious faiths, or the absence of any faith, are equally respected. In this regard, Council of Europe member states should continue to be vigilant in their work to prevent and combat the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

6. Moreover, Council of Europe member states should take a range of positive steps to enable immigrants and citizens of immigrant descent, including Muslim communities, to integrate into society through non-discriminatory access to employment, education, vocational training, housing and public services. The

1. *Assembly debate* on 15 April 2008 (13th Sitting) (see Doc. 11540, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr João Bosco Mota Amaral; Doc. 11575, opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mr Hakki Keskin; Doc. 11570, opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Mehmet Tekelioglu; and Doc. 11569, opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Gisela Wurm). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 15 April 2008 (13th Sitting).

engagement and active participation of immigrants and people with an immigrant background in society also need encouragement and support from the whole of society, which must do more to accommodate diversity and remove barriers to integration.

7. Likewise, as already recommended by the Assembly, European governments, in their aim of creating a citizenship of inclusiveness and participation, should remedy the current limited capacity of immigrants and citizens from an immigrant background to play an active role in public and political life. In the long term, this state of affairs, which is due both to legislative and social constraints, cannot but reinforce the grievances and sense of injustice of a part of the population.

8. The Assembly welcomes the initiative taken by the governments of two member states – Spain and Turkey – to create the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and its endorsement by the United Nations Secretary-General, who has designated former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio as its High Representative. The Assembly also expresses support for the activities so far undertaken in this context.

9. In light of the above, the Assembly calls on the member states of the Council of Europe to:

9.1. act strongly against discrimination in all areas;

9.2. condemn and combat Islamophobia;

9.3. act resolutely against hate speech and all other forms of behaviour which run counter to core human rights and democratic values, even when their authors seek to justify them on religious grounds;

9.4. combat all forms of discrimination and violence (particularly forced marriages, sexual mutilation of women and so-called “honour crimes”) which, in the name of misinterpreted religious texts or customs, violate the fundamental rights of women and equality between women and men;

9.5. combat all forms of cultural or religious relativism which justify discriminatory practices and human rights violations, particularly those directed at women or other groups in society;

9.6. ensure the strictest compliance with human rights and the rule of law in the enforcement of antiterrorist measures;

9.7. promote the social cohesion, integration, political and civic participation of immigrants and citizens with an immigrant background, both men and women, in particular by:

9.7.1. taking a range of positive steps to enable immigrants and people with an immigrant background to integrate into society through fair and non-discriminatory access to employment, education, vocational training, housing in mixed areas and public services, and eventually via democratic participation through citizenship;

9.7.2. developing specific activities to encourage integration and tolerance among young people;

9.7.3. signing and ratifying the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers (ETS No. 93);

9.7.4. granting lawfully-residing immigrants the right to vote and to be elected, at least in local and regional elections, so as to have an impact on public administration and local government;

9.7.5. signing and ratifying the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144);

9.7.6. encouraging the participation of people with an immigrant background in political parties, trade unions and non-governmental organisations;

9.7.7. taking all the necessary measures to eliminate the inequality of opportunity faced by immigrants, including unemployment and inadequate education;

9.7.8. removing unnecessary legal or administrative obstacles to the construction of a sufficient number of appropriate places of worship for the practice of Islam;

9.7.9. ensuring that school textbooks do not portray Islam as a hostile or threatening religion;

9.8. promote and support activities intended to improve the standing and role of Muslim women in Europe and overcome stereotypes confining them to subordinate and passive roles, for example, through appropriate teaching in schools and awareness-raising campaigns in the media;

9.9. monitor the role played by foreign states in the financing of mosques and appointment of imams, in order to ensure that these actions are not used to promote extremist views;

9.10. support the establishment of courses, if possible at university level, to train imams locally;

9.11. encourage a public and inclusive debate concerning the consequences of their foreign policy on the phenomenon of radicalisation;

9.12. encourage informative projects about Islam's contribution to western societies in order to overcome stereotypes on Islam.

10. The Assembly calls on leaders and opinion-makers to act responsibly to avoid encouraging discrimination and Islamophobia.

11. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on European Muslim organisations, leaders and opinion-makers to:

11.1. act with a high sense of responsibility in their public statements and condemn terrorism and extremism unequivocally, being aware of their influence on Muslim communities;

11.2. encourage Muslims to fully participate in society without questioning the secular character of the society and the institutions of the country where they live;

11.3. formally endorse the European Convention on Human Rights;

11.4. promote the transmission of core European values within Muslim communities, and among young people in particular, by highlighting their compatibility with the Muslim faith;

11.5. ensure the teaching of core European values in Muslim faith schools;

11.6. encourage young European Muslims to become imams;

11.7. set up projects aimed at reducing the risk of radicalisation among the young generation and in prisons, if appropriate in co-operation with other organisations, or with local or other authorities;

11.8. encourage the promotion of fair coverage of Muslim reality and views in the media and ensure that the voice of moderate Muslims is also reported;

11.9. develop ethical guidelines to combat Islamophobia in the media and in favour of cultural tolerance and understanding, in co-operation with appropriate media organisations;

11.10. encourage the development of a secular intelligentsia.