Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2457 (2022)[1]

Raising awareness of and countering Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism (the two terms are used interchangeably in this Resolution), is a form of racism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims and those who are perceived as Muslims. While linked to religion, Islamophobia cannot be reduced to discrimination based on the grounds of religion, as it results from a "racialised" perception based on various markers that include ethnic or national origin, appearance and cultural characteristics, and may overlap with anti-immigrant sentiments, xenophobia and social class bias.

2. As highlighted by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), anti-Muslim racism can be manifested, implicitly or explicitly, not only in individual attitudes and actions, but also structurally in policy initiatives or institutional arrangements. Its manifestations include prejudice, stigmatisation, discrimination (including profiling), hate speech and hate crime, as well as exclusion from key areas of life such as education, employment and housing.

3. Women are disproportionately affected by Islamophobia, as they face multiple and intersectional discrimination and are often more easily identifiable as Muslim. Measures to address anti-Muslim racism and discrimination should consistently be based on an intersectional approach, taking into consideration grounds of discrimination including gender, ethnic origin, migrant background, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly is deeply concerned by the constant increase in signs of Islamophobia in Europe, with a dramatic spike in recent years, as denounced by numerous human rights and equality bodies at European and global levels.

5. The Assembly condemns the use of Islamophobic rhetoric in public and political discourse, particularly by populist and far-right movements, but which often spreads to mainstream politics. It believes that stereotyping based on depicting Muslims as alien to, and incompatible with, European culture and values leads to further stigmatisation and exclusion. The Assembly also denounces racist and Islamophobic conspiracy theories, notably the fabricated idea that non-white people and Muslims aim to outnumber the rest of the European population (the "great replacement" theory).

6. The Assembly is convinced that Council of Europe member States should strive to create an open and inclusive society and address the root causes of anti-Muslim racism and discrimination, including stereotyping, prejudice, stigmatisation and scapegoating of individuals and groups perceived as different from the majority of the population.

7. Stressing that Islamophobia is a severe violation of human rights and human dignity, which undermines social cohesion and peaceful living together in Europe, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to address this phenomenon as a matter of priority, as a specific form of racism, and for its specific inclusion in anti-discrimination and anti-racism action plans.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 11 October 2022 (29th sitting) (see Doc. 15616, report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Mr Momodou Malcolm Jallow). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 11 October 2022 (29th sitting).

8. Referring to its Resolution 1840 (2011) "Human rights and the fight against terrorism" and Resolution 2031 (2015) "Terrorist attacks in Paris: together for a democratic response", the Assembly stresses that the fight against terrorism, vital for the safety of citizens and the protection of democratic institutions, must be conducted ensuring respect for human rights, the rule of law and the common values upheld by the Council of Europe.

9. The Assembly welcomes the adoption of the ECRI revised General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination and considers that it should be fully implemented by the public authorities in Council of Europe member States and beyond to prevent and counter this form of racism.

10. The Assembly welcomes the adoption by the Committee of Ministers, on 20 May 2022, of Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 to member States on combating hate speech, and considers that it should be fully implemented by Council of Europe member States. The recommendation contains indications to State authorities on countering hate speech through civil, administrative and criminal law as well as alternative measures. The recommendation also includes guidance for other stakeholders, including public officials, political parties, internet intermediaries, media and civil society organisations.

11. The Assembly welcomes the unanimous decision by the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, as an opportunity both to commemorate victims of this form of discrimination and to raise awareness, with a view to preventing and countering anti-Muslim racism.

12. The Assembly acknowledges and supports the work of civil society organisations in countering all forms of racism, intolerance and discrimination, including Islamophobia. Referring to its Resolution 2362 (2021) and Recommendation 2194 (2021) "Restrictions on NGO activities in Council of Europe member States", the Assembly reiterates that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) make an essential contribution to the progress and development of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and that Council of Europe member States are required, in particular, to ensure respect for the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

13. Referring to its Resolution 2222 (2018) "Promoting diversity and equality in politics", the Assembly reiterates that parliaments and other elected institutions should fully reflect in this particular context the complex diversity of European societies.

14. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as on all States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status to the Assembly, to:

14.1. regarding anti-racism and anti-discrimination legislation and policies:

14.1.1. adopt action plans on preventing and combating Islamophobia or ensure that action plans on racism and discrimination refer to and address Islamophobia specifically;

14.1.2. improve data collection and ensure that equality data are available to support the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of anti-discrimination legislation and policies. Equality data to prevent and counter Islamophobia should be disaggregated by gender, national and ethnic origin and religion, and should be collected anonymously, voluntarily and based on an individual's self-identification as belonging to certain groups;

14.1.3. ensure full enjoyment of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as stipulated by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights;

14.1.4. engage in co-operation with and provide support to civil society organisations active in anti-racism, equality and non-discrimination, including those working specifically on Islamophobia and representing Muslim individuals and communities;

14.1.5. encourage and support dialogue and co-operation between groups and communities of different religious backgrounds;

14.1.6. sign and ratify Protocol No. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 177) and the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (ETS No. 189), if they have not already done so;

14.1.7. disseminate and fully implement ECRI's revised General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination, and strengthen co-operation with ECRI while fully supporting its monitoring activities;

14.1.8. disseminate and fully implement Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech;

14.2. regarding anti-terror measures:

14.2.1. ensure that counter-terrorism legislation and policies are sufficiently circumscribed to avoid them being used in arbitrary and discriminatory ways;

14.2.2. refrain from applying unclear or overly broad definitions of "terrorism" and ensure that each constituent element of terrorism-related offences is precisely defined, in accordance with the principle of legality;

14.2.3. ensure that the application of counter-terrorism measures is adequately justified and that these measures are not applied automatically or beyond their legal purpose;

14.2.4. refrain from the dissolution of any institution, including Muslim civil society organisations, unless demonstrably necessary and proportionate, and ensure that judicial procedures are available to appeal dissolution decisions;

14.3. regarding awareness raising, information and education:

14.3.1. conduct awareness-raising and information campaigns and activities targeting the general public to convey the message that preventing and combating Islamophobia, like any other form of racism, is the responsibility of all members of society;

14.3.2. provide public officials in all sectors of administration, including education, healthcare, law enforcement and the judiciary, with training on racism and discrimination issues, enabling them to prevent and react to discrimination and harassment linked to Islamophobia and other forms of racism;

14.3.3. ensure that school curriculums, in particular in history, geography, literature and religion, as appropriate, include accurate information on the presence of Muslim people in Europe and their contribution to European culture and development.

15. The Assembly highlights that particular attention must be paid to preventing and countering discrimination against Muslim women, as detailed in Resolution 1887 (2012) "Multiple discrimination against Muslim women in Europe: for equal opportunities".

16. The Assembly calls on political leaders to speak out against Islamophobia and all other forms of intolerance, and on political parties to sign the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-racist and Inclusive Society as endorsed in its Resolution 2443 (2022) "The role of political parties in fostering diversity and inclusion: a new charter for a non-racist society".

17. The Assembly calls on the media and cultural industries, including the press, television and online news providers, to ensure accurate, unbiased reporting of news and information that are relevant to Muslim individuals and groups, and to refrain from negative stereotyping and stigmatisation of Muslims.

18. The Assembly invites the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) and its rapporteurs to pay due attention to manifestations of Islamophobia, in the context of racism and intolerance, when conducting monitoring procedures and periodic reviews of the membership obligations and commitments entered into by Council of Europe member States.