

Islamophobia in France: addressing discriminations and hate speech

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Given the misconceptions and preconceived ideas put forward during this session, The Collective Against Islamophobia in France would like to begin by defining islamophobia: “It is the actions taken against people and institutions because of their real or assumed adherence to the muslim faith”. It means in no way clamping down on freedom of expression or on initiating intellectual debates.

On the ground and according to the alarming statistics on discriminations, our social cohesion is being threatened, not by the refusal of Muslims to integrate but by the accepted idea that discrimination against them is not punishable by law.

Discriminations are so structural in France that according to the national institute of statistics and economic studies, INSEE, better grades and higher degrees do not prevent from being discriminated against.

Indeed, Marie Anne Valfort, Professor of Economics at La Sorbonne University further underlines the structural nature of discriminations in France. From a CV testing experience, job candidates with a muslim sounding name receive 35 job offers whereas a candidate with a European sounding name receives 100 job offers.

Given the fact that Muslims represent about 20% of the European population, the issue of islamophobia motivated discriminations must be tackled at a pan European level and we call upon the OSCE to push for strategies involving grassroots organisations and governments alike.

Aside from discrimination, we see a correlation between the increase of physical assaults on muslims, particularly women, and the permanent anti muslim rhetoric by public office holders.

This is particularly disturbing as the reluctance to recognize islamophobia is combined with the irresponsible use of expressions such as quote “islamo-fascism”, “the enemy within”, “a clash of civilization”, “that we are at war with Muslims” or comparing their presence with “nazis occupying”.

This rhetoric has made it legitimate to openly discriminate against muslims or to use violence against them. We as a human rights organization call for our governments to deal with islamophobia as it is, a hate fueled ideology threatening our social cohesion.

France can be proud of its secular law, commonly known as Laïcité. But laïcité does not mean a French exception on islamophobia and we call upon decision makers to put an end to the ideological use of Laïcité against Muslims. We cannot speak of the failure of multiculturalism or integration, while at the same time promoting the exclusion of minorities and the impunity of violence against them.

We call upon the OSCE and its member states to promote integration through anti discriminatory recruitment policies in companies and to, and we cannot stress this enough, let the justice system do its work when cases of anti muslim crimes and cases of discrimination are brought to court. The impunity of these attacks is only a call for them to increase.

The Collective Against Islamophobia in France, is ready to share its expertise with the OSCE ODHIR office and OSCE member states.