

SIDMUN XVII

United Nations Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

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Position Paper Guidelines

You must have a work cited page in your position paper. Please use this link ([Click here](#)) if you need help with a work cited page.

Position papers should be **1-2 pages** in length (not including work-cited page), single spaced, Times in New Roman pt 12 font with normal 1 inch margins. Please have all papers uploaded by March 26, 2010. If you have any problems uploading your papers, please email them as attachments directly to your chairs by emailing sochumun@drop.io

Use the following heading for the paper: 

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The Question of Combating Islamic Discrimination of Muslims in Western Society

Purpose of the Committee

The Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee, or SOCHUM, is one of six subsidiary committees in the General Assembly. It is often referred to as the Third Committee and deals with issues regarding social affairs and human rights issues that affect people throughout the world.

SOCHUM is responsible for creating draft resolutions that will be voted upon at the annual plenary General Assembly sessions. This committee works very closely with several other UN bodies including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Program, and the Human Rights Council. These groups share input on each topic they are responsible for dealing with, and request further investigation of the issues from each other.

Ever since this committee was created in 1945, it has played a huge role in ensuring universal human rights. SOCHUM has been an especially vital factor in solving global issues over the years because many issues have a social and human rights component, even if they are not solely focused on these areas. Without the basic structure that the Third Committee provides for the United Nations, worldwide problems ranging from terrorism and discrimination, to women's rights, to aging would be out of control and very weakly combated.



Introduction

The day America experienced a “Day of Infamy”, “Acts of War”, and “The Awful Toll” on the morning of September 11, 2001. The world slowed down as if a universal remote control had set the globe to slow motion. Although it was claimed that the first war of the 21st century started right then and there; it would not be the last battle conflicting Muslims and Non-Muslims. After that morning the simple stutter of the word Muslim brought negative connotation from those alien to the Islamic Community. Since then, aggression, discrimination and harassment towards Muslims have increased globally.

During this committee’s sessions we will focus on the physical aggression taken towards Muslims; by fellow Muslims wishing to inhibiting modernization of the Islamic Community, as well as racist attacks from Non-Muslims to Muslims due to stereotypical media coverage magnifying Islam as ‘the public enemy’ and lastly the discriminatory complications immigrants from Islamic backgrounds face in the work force.

Please direct your attention towards the *effects* September 11, 2001 had on the Muslim Community on a *global scale* rather than the events of that day.

Although September 11, 2001 will NOT be the main focus of our committee; it is necessary to understand the significance of that day in America but as well as the 1.57 billion lives of Muslims.



History of the Problem

The world has experienced increased globalization in the past few decades.

Globalization means that national barriers are being dissolved, and there is increased interaction between cultures. While globalization has many positive effects, it has also led to clashes between societies with different values, traditions, and beliefs. Nowhere is this more evident than between Muslims and non-Muslims, and the discrimination faced by Muslims which violates basic human rights.

Muslims have been immigrating to countries all over the world since the late 1800s. Due to wars, economic struggle, and other conflicts, they have left their home countries in search of a better life. However, citizens of these countries are often not happy with the increased Muslim population for several reasons. These reasons range from Muslims taking jobs in the work force to simple hatred for the Islamic culture. The Islamic Diaspora creates a sense of connectedness between Muslims living all over the world, since their religion allows for great global mobility. However this sense of connectedness prevents Muslims from feeling the need to integrate into their societies, creating suspicion and hostility from citizens toward them.

The way Muslims dress is also a major source of elevated discrimination. In 1989, the “veil controversy” began in France. Public schools viewed the hijab, or religious headscarf, as a threat to the non-Muslims, and banned them. The banning of this necessary garment led to hostility from the Muslims toward the public school system and the government, which further resulted in anger and violent actions from French citizens. This issue quickly escalated to a global scale, and Muslim rights continued to be challenged.

Although this issue began with only Muslims being discriminated against and attacked, it



has spiraled into a two-way issue, with radical Muslims being responsible for many attacks on innocent people from other countries and cultures different from their own.

Bloc Positions

North America

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Islamic discrimination in western society has increased. Federal agencies have used sweeping programs in order to detain and question people who are threats to the safety of the public, but unfortunately they have been accused of racial profiling. However, groups such as The American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee (ADC) and the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) have been working to mitigate feelings of anti-sentiment. Some of their primary goals include protecting people's basic human rights and promoting a better understanding of U.S. law in Islamic society. The ISNA also hold annual conferences as a means of uniting people of different backgrounds.

Europe

Regardless of the several laws put in place by European nations regarding religious tolerance, Islamic discrimination has been, and continues to be problematic throughout the continent. Many member states of the European Union are signatories of the *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* which promotes religious tolerance. Yet, the freedom of speech allows Europeans against Islam to speak out freely against the religion. This in turn increases tension between the two. This tension was brought to reality when, in 2004, a Dutch filmmaker was murdered after the release of her controversial film on Islam. However, most of this tension is at the expense of the Muslims. Many Muslims have trouble integrating into society. For women, head coverings have stirred up



much controversy and provided a constant reminder of their differences. In France, this has become a national issue. France's policy of secularism requires that schools be free of overt religious symbols. This includes the head covering worn by Muslim young women. Opposition to this law has resulted in protests throughout the nation, many ending in violence. Finding jobs has also proved to be a major problem for Muslims. Many have resorted to going under aliases since their traditional names prevent them from requiring the jobs they desire. This trouble stems from the Europeans fear and misunderstanding of the religion and lifestyle promoted by Islam. To many, the word Islam is synonymous with terrorism and fundamentalist ideals against Western society. In reality however, only a small fraction of the Islamic community residing in Europe is connected with any fundamentalist groups. The majority is simply looking for a better life and opportunities that could not be found in their home countries.

Africa

Efforts to end discrimination directed towards Muslims has been in action since the early 1990s. For example, The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam has been fighting to “to protect man from exploitation and persecution, and to affirm his freedom and right to a dignified life in accordance with the Islamic Shari’ah”. In addition, Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) has been working to end these tensions and is striving to reach many other goals such as Muslim integration and support for Muslim candidates in politics not only in the Islamic community. Islamic discrimination is a rising issue throughout Africa that demands quick and effective attention. Although anti-Islamic tensions have heightened dramatically since the 9/11 attacks, Islamic discrimination in the Western world has been a pressing issue for quite some time. Comprising of 21.01% of the world's religious population, Islam has become extremely susceptible to many unfair prejudices. Muslims residing in Sub-



Saharan African nations have been the victims of countless acts of discrimination. For instance, many Muslims have suffered from official and societal discrimination which has inhibited their ability to obtain national identification documents. During the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in South Africa in September of 2001, the sufferings of Muslims became even clearer. Dr. Abdelouahed Belkeziz preached that those of the Islamic faith have experienced “different kinds of human slavery, a whole program of racial discrimination, untold exploitation, plundering of natural resources and blasting of the very texture of social relations amongst innumerable peoples.” In addition, Muslims from Africa have been forcibly detained in Guantanamo Bay without “the due process of the law followed”. Because of the anti-terrorism antics of Western nations like the United States, Kenyan Muslims protested against illegal detention and torture of fellow Muslims by marching on police headquarters in Nairobi. With these intense acts of discrimination, not only are people being victimized, but their basic human rights are being violated.

Asia and the Pacific

Islamic Discrimination is an issue in Asia and the Pacific just as anywhere else. Islam’s most populous country, Indonesia, even feels the strain of anti-Muslim ideas and organizations. According to the *International Religious Freedom Report*, in 2008 alone, 21 mosques have been shut down due to conflict in Indonesia. Many more go unreported. However, nations such as Australia have taken action against the discrimination. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of Australia has issued a report entitled “Isma” or “Listen”. This report aims to address discrimination by compiling firsthand accounts of Islamic intolerance within Australia. Many of the Island nations of the Pacific have issues with prejudice against Muslims. In Myanmar, a law passed in 1982 prohibits the citizenship of Muslims in the North



Rakhine State. In India, many Muslims also find it hard to obtain a job. Some have even taken to obtaining Hindu IDs to avoid discrimination and to ease in finding jobs.

Current Status

As “The War on Terror” continues more and more reports on discrimination are amounting. The NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force record’s showed a noticeable increase in complaints. In 2003, a survey documenting Discrimination and Harassment Anti-Arab and Muslim Discrimination found the following highlights: A large majority of the surveyed persons (79%) felt their lives were negatively affected by 9/11, regardless of whether they believed they had directly experienced any discrimination. They felt more afraid and minimized their contact with the general public or made their religion and ethnicity less evident. Specific types of perceived discrimination, bias or harassment included the following: of the 659 individuals who reported discrimination described 1,224 incidents. Bias-related harassment was most frequently reported comprising 37% of the incidents. The majority of these incidents were religious and ethnic insults, but some involved physical assaults. Employment discrimination characterized 26% of the incidents. Comments that demeaned an individual's background were the most common type. In a smaller number of the employment complaints, the respondent was not hired or was fired and believed the cause was either anti-Islam, anti-Arab, or anti-South Asian attitudes. But the Islamophobia did not stop there in 2005 the Council on American-Islamic Relations; (CAIR) received a total of 1,972 civil rights complaints, compared to 1,522 cases reported in 2004. Showing a 29.6 percent increase in the total number of complaints of anti-Muslim harassment, violence and discriminatory treatment from 2004. For the second straight year, the 1,972 reports also marked the highest number of Muslim civil rights complaints ever reported to



CAIR in its twelve-year history. In addition, CAIR received 153 reports of anti-Muslim hate crime complaints, an 8.6 percent increase from the 141 complaints received in 2004.

In 2006, Cornell University conducted a student wide survey on what student's attitude towards Islam and Muslims was, five years after the attacks on September 11, 2001. 26 percent said "mosques should be closely monitored by U.S. law enforcement agencies" and 29 percent agreed that undercover law enforcement agents should infiltrate Muslim civic and volunteer organizations, in order to keep "tabs" on their activities and fund raising of those organizations. Although the student's remarks seem strictly concerned with preventive security, they do produce an underlying tone which translates into discrimination, exclusion, and violence. It is a major concurring problem that Muslims experience harassment in the work place, raids, deportation, and verbal threats simply because they are stereotyped as "terrorist". As the Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) stated in her following address to the public: "Combating extremism should not mean yielding to the anxieties and fear that fuel racism and racial violence but rather provide a common goal in which the positive effect of multiculturalism plays a central role to provide a rational, democratic antidote against all forms of extremist action." It is essential to find a unifying strategy to ensure the security of the public yet be more tolerant to others. It is difficult to pin point exactly where a person learns of racism and intolerances, but it really does not reach far beyond the four walls of a household; while reading a biggest news paper or watching a stereotypical news report anyone can be misled. Recently it has been brought to attention that many journalists reinforce negative stereotypes against Muslims, alienate the Islamic culture, and even refer to Islam as "the one-dimensional religion that threatens western values." As it appears there are still major cracks in the ground work of Muslim integration and tolerance in various



countries. Although no one may change the records of the past there is a light at the end of the tunnel, unfortunately it will take time and effort from many to get to it.

Proposed Solutions

Discrimination is seen as a human rights violation and it takes place in many forms. The majority of the solutions to this problem will be long-term rather than short-term due to the certain areas that need to be reformed. The unique aspect of this problem is that it calls for a change in public opinion. The main solution would be to educate the masses whether it is done through organizations or in a school setting. In order to do so, there would need to be compliance with school boards and state law to add to or perhaps edit the present curriculum.

Other possible solutions include teaching people to better comprehend Islamic culture. If people know more about their ideals and values, they will be more inclined to help, rather than mock or ridicule others just because of a few miniscule differences.

For example, The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) is a Muslim umbrella group with the vision of contributing to the betterment of the Muslim community and society at large. ISNA is an association of Muslim organizations and individuals that provide a common platform for presenting Islam, supporting Muslim communities, developing educational, social, and outreach programs. They foster relations with other religious communities, civic and service organizations. They inform Muslims and non-Muslims about various problems that occur with the religion.

Another solution to specifically target the issue of Islamic discrimination in western society would be to orchestrate a convention or conference where groups of people or representatives from each country can meet together and discuss such a profound topic. The



time, location, and how often particular meetings are held should be appropriate so that all necessary members may be able to attend. There must also be continuous communication between groups in order to fully develop a plan of action and awareness. Some countries may be reluctant to such a gathering, therefore incentives must be used.

NGOs and aid groups can be used to fund certain programs and organizations or they could be used more directly to provide awareness and education. Often times, a major problem with this is that countries look down upon the help of foreigners and outsiders. They can sometimes be seen as controlling and overbearing. In order for plans to be executed appropriately, both sides must be willing to compromise and initiative must be taken.

Questions a Position Paper Must Answer

1. What is your government's policy towards minority religions?
2. How has globalization affected your nation?
3. How can we eliminate the causes of Muslim discrimination?
4. How has your government reacted to discriminatory acts committed against Muslims?
5. What are solutions which can be feasible? In regional and/or global scale?

Questions a Resolution Must Answer

1. How can we prevent attacks made both on Muslims, and by Muslims?
2. What are the root causes of Muslim discrimination, and how can they be eliminated?
3. What actions are necessary to integrate and address the different sects of Islam that have their unique beliefs, those including: Wahhabi Muslims (extremist radicals), and general Muslims (Sunni and Shia).
4. What steps should be taken by individual governments?
5. What are some preemptive actions that can be taken?



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