Islamophobia in the UK and the EU since Sept 11

"A greater receptivity towards anti-Muslim and other xenophobic ideas and sentiments has, and may well continue, to become more tolerated...anti-Muslim sentiment has emanated from a vast array of sources and taken on a range of manifestations building upon premises that were already pre-existent to the events of September 11 and may even have been strengthened by them. The profile and public awareness of Islam and Muslims has certainly been increased, and for this reason alone it will be increasingly relevant for this type of monitoring and assessment procedure to be maintained for the future"

Taken from the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia's, "Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001", this report and its findings were the culmination of an extensive Europe-wide monitoring project, the largest ever to have been undertaken anywhere in the world specifically on the phenomenon of Islamophobia. Each member state of the European Union was closely monitored for both reactions to and changes of attitude, towards Muslims following the attacks on the US. Whilst Europe was the focus of this report, similar consequences were identified in many parts of the world including the US, Canada and Australia.

The events of September 2001 have overshadowed the whole experience of Muslims in Europe, and myriad forms of anti-Muslim expression have ensued. Muslims became indiscriminate victims of an upsurge of both verbal and physical attacks following the events of 11 September and the spread of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim feeling became so virulent in this era that it permeated all levels of understanding: from the most basic of street discourse, to the rhetoric and politicising of national and pan-European governance. A new ferocity and dynamism emanating directly from the attacks on the US saw manifestations of anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic expression become much more extreme, much more explicit and much more widely tolerated.

This occurred quite significantly within some medias, where sensationalism became the cornerstone for some reporting whilst for others, inaccuracies and the disproportionate coverage of extremist elements became the norm. Some medias were seen to cause controversy and were seen to both incite and justify Islamophobia.

Prior to September 11, the levels and voracity of Islamophobia were much less dramatic. Despite FAIR and many other Muslims both here and abroad denouncing ALL terrorism, a situation has since developed where the actions of an individual or a small group, have been inappropriately used by some to suggest that Islam all Muslims are to be held responsible for such actions. Despite the fact that Islam not only condemns terrorism and suicide missions, but also prohibits them completely, Muslims have been far too regularly and repetitively viewed as a 'fifth column', the 'enemy within' and represented as a depersonalised and monolithic collectivity that is backward and violent.

Since this date, Muslims have been increasingly seen to be a 'law and order' issue. Not only has anti-terrorism and security legislation been tightened across many European countries that has indirectly discriminated against Muslims, but other equally unwanted practices have also emerged, for example the practice of 'passenger profiling'.

Further Resources

VARIOUS (2002) *The quest for sanity: reflections on September 11 and its aftermath*. (Muslim Council of Britain).

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