



Factsheet on the seminar:

The rights of the Muslim minorities in Europe

Background:

In clear contradiction with the principles of the international Declaration of Human Rights and the international treaties and conventions in relation to respecting cultural diversity, strengthening dialogue between civilisations and preventing the abuse of religions and their sanctities, some media outlets have constantly tried to promote negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. One of the results of this fierce media campaign is the increase in racism against Muslim minorities on religious and ethnic grounds, and the rise of Islamophobia.

Indeed any abuse committed and any violation of the rights of the Muslim minorities - whether by the media or any other means - in any European country falls under the responsibilities of the designated authorities in these countries that have the duty to intervene, to stop the abuse and to persecute those who commit these offences, because their actions fuel racism and hatred and cause instability and breach the rights of others and treat them differently based on sex, race or colour.

These actions are unacceptable by international conventions and laws, including at the top level, the UN convention, which emphasises in its second article that, "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in 1965, which forms a legal front in various decisions that relate to this matter, because it rebukes all forms of discrimination and refuses any organisations or groups that believe in the supremacy of any race or group of people.

The legal framework for protecting Muslim minorities and their inclusion states that in the cases of any kind of religious or racial discrimination, for any given reasons, the international courts can be deployed. This opportunity has not been explored fully, in order to protect the

Muslim minorities from the aftermath of violating some of their rights, under the cover of "Freedom of speech" or at times following political discriminatory agendas.

Indeed racist discourses, whether they are directed against Islam and Muslims as a whole, or against Arabs in particular, or any other religion is forbidden by the international law, because it is counted as a form of "hate speech". It is apparent that these forms of "hate speech" are usually directed against isolated minorities, which fits the situation of our community in Europe and in the West generally. Even though some European countries are supportively trying to regulate and suppress this type of speech, their effort is still in vain.

Looking at the criminal law in different European countries, such as Britain, France, Germany and Sweden, it is noted that from the essence of the law, one can differentiate between the legislations that emphasise the protection of the law and order of the country and the legislations that seek to protect human liberty and dignity. Hate speech that targets a specific group or minority is considered a threat to the stability of the Law and order of the country, therefore, it is as dangerous as slander or attacking a certain individual.

These legislations in most cases do not protect the rights of the minorities per se, even though they insist on human dignity and protecting the rule of law. In France, Denmark, Germany and Belgium, hate speech is prohibited, even if it does not have the intention of spreading hatred and it does not lead to instability of the rule of law; however, many speeches that are based on racial discrimination and hatred against Islam, and speeches that mock Islam and Muslims are condoned. Is this not contradicting what is stated in the very law of these countries? does this not count as a clear violation of the international law that these countries have signed to follow?

Going back to the European and the international law, it is obvious that calling for discrimination and inciting it is forbidden. This is what many conventions and treaties, the binding and the non-binding ones, the national and the international, have established. This was outlined in detail in a number of conventions, such as the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1965 (Article 4), as well as the European Convention of Human Rights and other declarations and UN resolutions.

What is needed from the Muslim organisations, cultural centres, associations and professionals in this field - international law - is to collaborate and gather their dedication towards finding ways of activating the European law, regarding the inclusion of the Muslim minorities and the protection of their political and civil rights.

From this prospective and from the ISESCO and the ICC's awareness of the importance of this matter, that challenges the rights of the Muslim minorities and their strong belief in the importance of sharing experience and expertise amongst Muslim professionals in the field of International Law, we are proposing to host this seminar entitled: "The rights of the Muslim minorities in the Europe".

This event will be held on the 10th & 11th December 2016, at The Islamic Cultural Centre, in celebration of International Human Rights Day.

The aims of the seminar:

- To promote the culture of human rights, and the awareness of the law, for Muslim organisations and centres in Europe.
- To support collaboration and co-operation between Muslim professionals in the field of International Law and judicial matters, to defend the civil, cultural and religious rights of citizens that are from Muslim origins in European societies.
- To search for ways to limit and combat the violations of the Muslim minority rights in Europe.

The main topics of the seminar:

1. Abuse against minorities, and inciting hatred and discrimination, from the viewpoint of International Law.
2. The requirements of promoting the communication and collaboration, with non-governmental organisations, specialising in Human Rights and the rights of Muslim minorities in Europe.
3. Ways to employ the European law, in order to limit the abuse, hatred and discrimination against Islam and Muslims.

Conditions of participation:

- ❖ Participants must be specialists in Law and in Human Rights or leaders of any Islamic Centre or organization.
- ❖ Participants must provide suggestions for the 2nd and 3rd topics of the seminar.

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