



Respect for religious diversity: Fighting Islamophobia

Report of the study session held by
The International Federation of Liberal Youth (IFLRY)
in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre
of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
April 23-29, 2007



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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Acknowledgements

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Federation of Liberal Youth promotes “the right to freedom of religion and cultural identity and the right to freedom of thought and conscience” as one of the fundamental rights in a liberal society. We as youth must work together to end discrimination in all forms and encourage discussion and understanding on the topic of Religious diversity and Islamophobia. The general aim of the seminar “Respect for religious diversity: fighting Islamophobia” was to raise awareness about different religions and promotion of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue among young people.

Participants were recruited from IFLRY member and partner organisations. There were representatives from 25 different countries with a diverse grouping of those that were Muslim, Christian, Catholic, Orthodox, Sikh, and of non specified religion. The dynamic of the participants’ background required that we start the session with a general overview of religion and Islamophobia.

The program of the seminar was designed to provide young leaders with an environment to look at promoting religious diversity and more specifically fighting Islamophobia. The study session attempted to achieve an environment where youth could learn from guest speakers, their peers, and reflect on their own views. The programme began with a ice breakers and team building, discovering what participants knew or questioned about Islam and religions, then moved to moved to discussion Islamophobia, what the realities in their countries are, where do we stand as young leaders from political groups –and is it coherent, we looked at accommodations and how different d and part are we, the role of media, the All different All equal campaign, the clash of civilizations, and the was followed up with a day of ‘let’s take action’ to formulate materials to be used by their own youth organisations. The working methodology included lectures by experts, working groups, input from the seminar’s preparatory team, individual work and reflection, as well as debates in plenary. Some sessions focused more on role-play games as a means to reflect on the topic, while others focused more directly on theory.

The seminar provided a venue for participants to openly discuss religious diversity and fighting Islamophobia. Under the comforts of the youth centre, youth from a multitude of countries were brought together to discuss the topic on hand and to develop tools that they can utilize in their country. The material developed by groups ranged from power point presentations, flyers, posters, t-shirts, and press releases. The session also allowed for youth to gain cultural learned as they engaged between each other. For many, this was their first time attending an international seminar and for some it was their first expose to such a diverse crowd.

Working together with young people from different religious backgrounds is a practical instrument for promoting understanding and acceptance in respect of the other. By bringing representatives together from member organizations from across Europe and beyond, the issues discussed at the seminar will spark an important debate among IFLRY members that will incorporate a diverse set of views. The seminar was developed as an educational tool for all member organisation representatives to take back to their country. IFLRY stressed the importance of spreading knowledge and taking action; religious discrimination and Islamophobia are one of the greatest struggles we are facing in the world today.

INTRODUCTION

The International Federation of Liberal Youth defines itself as an organization striving “for a free and tolerant society without any form of discrimination, with equal opportunities, and respect for the individual and minorities.” In its Manifesto, IFLRY underlines that “the right to freedom of religion and cultural identity and the right to freedom of thought and conscience” are one of the fundamental rights in a liberal society. We as youth must work together to end discrimination in all forms and encourage discussion and understanding on the topic of Religious diversity and Islamophobia. The general aim of the seminar “Respect for religious diversity: fighting Islamophobia” was to raise awareness about different religions and promotion of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue among young people.

When diversity and social cohesion is coupled with misunderstanding and intolerance, it can lead to devastating occurrences. During the seminar, youth learned about religious diversity, understanding Islam and looking at Islamophobia, national and global identities, discussing political identities and conflict, and looking at the “All Different, All Equal”, as well as other currents campaigns on the topic.

The working methodology - included lectures by experts, working groups, input from the seminar’s preparatory team, individual work and reflection, as well as debates in plenary. Some sessions focused more on role-play games as a means to reflect on the topic, while others focused more directly on theory.

1. Basic discussion on religion and Islam
2. National and political realities
3. Accommodations and the Media
4. The clash of civilizations. Samuel Huntington’s theory

Guests:

- United Kingdom: Robin Richardson, author of “Islamophobia, a challenge for us all”
- Lebanon: Ali Chahine, Expert
- Spain: Diego Marin, Educational Advisor on behalf of Council of Europe

Programme Flow - The final program of the seminar (in appendix) was designed to provide young leaders with a form to look at promoting religious diversity and more specifically fighting Islamophobia. The study session attempted to achieve an environment where youth could learn from guest speakers, their peers, and reflect on their own views. The programme began with a ice breakers and team building, discovering what participants knew or questioned about Islam and religions, then moved to moved to discussion Islamophobia, what the realities in their countries are, where do we stand as young leaders from political groups –and is it coherent, we looked at accommodations and how different d and part are we, the role of media, the All different All equal campaign, the clash of civilizations, and the was followed up with a day of ‘let’s take action’ to formulate materials to be used by their own youth organisations.

Profile of the Participants - Participants were recruited from IFLRY member and partner organisations. With the inclusion of the young organisation team, there were representatives from 25 different countries with a gender balance of 16 females to 19 males.

The participants provide an outlook reflect of their country, their background, and their religion. Though religion was not a selection criterion, there was a diverse mixture of those that were Muslim, Christian, Catholic, Orthodox, Sikh, and of non specified religion.

PICTURE



PROGRAMME – INPUTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The dynamic of the participants' background required that we start the session with a general overview of religion and Islamophobia. Participants were given reading material before hand and asked to research what their home country and their political party does in regards to the issue of promoting religious diversity and fighting Islamophobia.

MONDAY: We started the week by introducing participants to IFLRY and the Council of Europe. Before the diving into the material of the session, participants worked through a series of ice breakers and team building games to help establish an environment that would promote healthy and a secure dialogue. The team building skills range from simple name games, four interesting facts, to team competitions. The act of building the relationship between the participations not only helped provide a healthy environment, but also illustrated that even though we come from different religious and culture backgrounds, we are all equal. Participants became acquainted with each other and built friendships that many of them will continue after the seminar.



We then moved to an interactive quiz that tested the current knowledge of the participants. This activity helped break down misconceptions that some may have had about religions of all faiths, and provide a fun atmosphere. If they did not know an answer they could seek help from their peers to share points. We later watched a movie that answered many questions on Islam. After the session, we were invited to write anonymous questions that would be address by one of our experts, Robin Richardson, later in the evening. After dinner, we held an informal session, where we sat at tables in a café style. An anonymous question was placed on the screen and in our small groups; we were encourage to talk about the answer. After each question, tables could present their findings, agreements, and disagreements. After each table addressed the group, Robin would open the floor. This was a dynamic environment that allowed for a subdued discussion between the participants. It was evident that many people had preconceived notions about religion. This exercise provided an intimate environment to openly discuss the issue.



TUESDAY: We began the day with a lecture on ‘Islamophobia-a challenge’ for us all by Robin Richardson. It was interesting to see how the media can affect our perception of the world around us and how we can see stereotypes and racist attitudes being subscribed to in cartoons and even simple advertisements.

Next, we were asked to share our national realities. Before the seminar, we were all asked to prepare for this session. We were assigned in groups according to our countries. We discussed commonalities as well as differences between our neighbouring countries. In some cases, our regions seem to share similar approach, while in others issues; our countries could be worlds apart. We presented our findings and shared with the plenary what the situation in our country is.

After discussion what is done in our country, we look to what is done by our political parties. We were presented with some heated questions that were presented with a YES or NO answer on a linear spectrum. We were asked to place a marker on the line of where our political party stood. It was interesting to see that on some issues, we as young liberals agreed on, but on others, there was a broad range of answers. This session helped illustrate that, while there is no concrete YES or NO answer to the questions, it was evident that we all interpreted or justified our answers differently. We, as liberals, had different concepts of the question. We later broke up into groups to look at the questions further. It was evident from most groups that there was no one solid answer, so participants were engaged in a debate.

To close the day, we participated in a Cultural evening; were everyone was asked to set up a booth and present their political party and their home country. It was very interesting to learn about other cultures through food, drink, song, and customs. This session allowed youth to gain an exposure to cultures that they may not have if they were not attending this seminar.

WEDNESDAY: We started the day with a visit to the Hungarian Parliaments. Hungary’s position with religious diversity and fighting Islamophobia was addressed by a Member of parliament, and then later we were given a tour of the beautiful buildings. We met with Dr. Janos Koka, President of SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats - Hungary), minister of Economy and Transportation and Dr. Matyas Eorsi – the president of



SZDSZ Group in the Hungarian Parliament, also the president of the ALDE liberal group of the CoE Parliamentary Assembly. The guest speakers covered issues that ranged from religious discrimination and social exclusion of different groups, the treatment of Romas, and building tolerance. SZDSZ is fighting for equality of chances, including proper social education, schooling and health care assistance for the Romas, as well as access to the Hungarian job market.

Later we were had a lecture by Ali Chahine titled “My neighbour Ahmed: how different and apart are we?”. This lecture was very interactive and engaged the participants. We were first divided

based on superficial lines regarding how we position our thumbs when we put our hands together. Those who put their right thumb over their left were segregated and asked to sit at the back of the room. Those who put their left thumb over their right were brought to the front of the room and addressed. Later, those who were discriminated against were asked to share their feelings about the exercise. Many thought it was unfair that they were being judged, especially by something so simple as the placement of their thumbs. They felt it was unfair as they were no different than their peers. This exercise was an eye opener for many of the participants and it is very simple to judge others, when in reality, though we may have different qualities, or customs, or religions, we are all equal.

We later look at the role of the media and how a journalist's perception can influence the story, and how observers can implement their prejudices in how they retell the story. We were split into two groups and asked to role-play a scenario. Each fictitious situation was general but had a message of discrimination. The other group was asked to report on what they observed. Later the groups met up again to see if what was observed was what was displayed. This session also asked participants to share their feelings and perceptions of the roles that they played, especially those who played the role of the person that was discriminated against. It was noted that often, we are judged heavily by our appearance (whether it be a veil that we wear or lack of veil) or a language that we speak (different from our surroundings).

We concluded the evening with an off-site trip to a Political Café on 'Palestinian Experiences' that was hosted by our Hungarian partners New Generation with guest speakers Ali Chahine, Dr. Ilona Szent-Ivanyi, and Mihaly Dobrovits (PhD).



THURSDAY: We were met with Annette Schneider who presented the work of the Council of Europe and the all different all equal campaign. It was very helpful for our participants to meet and listen to Annette. Many were very happy to be exposed to the campaign and were happy to acquire the Compass books.

We then discussed the concepts of Samuel Huntington 'The clash of Civilizations. It was asked that are the political lines between groups becoming less ideological and more cultural? Are the identities of states becoming less common value based and more religious or cultural based? Is there a growing conflict between civilizations? Groups were asked to look at the concept of his theories and if they were applicable today. It was noted that there was a healthy divide of people who believed that there was a clash and those who did not think the concepts to be valid.

The other part of the day was left to the participants to explore the lovely city of Budapest and later enjoy a group dinner in town. This portion of the time helped build greater team building.

FRIDAY: The morning session was spent linking and summarizing what was learned and experienced during the week. The participants were then asked to divide themselves into groups based on their interest. We broke up into working groups to apply the motto ‘let’s take action’ and were asked to develop material that we could use to promote religious diversity and fight Islamophobia. We were asked to develop materials that we could use in our home countries. Each project was to be presented to the plenary the next day. We were given a creative environment to work on projects that go beyond a report or news release. We were encouraged to use creative outlets such as t-shirts or flyers. Most groups worked well together, but some had difficulty which proved to be an exercise in cultural learning. The material developed by groups ranged from power point presentations, flyers, posters, t-shirts, and press releases. They have been added to this report.



SATURDAY: Saturday was a day of presentation of working materials as well as evaluation and closing. Groups presented their materials as well as a working method behind them. We then entered into an evaluation phase that consisted of an informal group session, questionnaire, and a reflection of if their expectations were met. Participants were also asked what type of topics they would like to see in future seminars.

One interesting thing to note from the Friday night farewell party was a situation that happened to one participant. The group decided to go out to a local club for some dancing. One of the participants who is Sikh was not granted entry into a club due to his Kirpan (a ceremonial dagger), which according to his religion he is to wear at all times. He was not allowed entry to this club. Some of the participants were rather bothered by this discrimination, others were unaware of the reasoning to the wearing of the Kirpan, and others were upset that after attending a week of religious diversity, participants choose to enter a club and leave one of their fellow participants behind. To have one of the participants be discrimination based on their faith was an eye opening experience for those who had just attending a seminar on religious diversity.



MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY SESSION

The seminar provided a venue for participants to openly discuss religious diversity and fighting Islamophobia. Under the comforts of the youth centre, youth from a multitude of countries were brought together to discuss the topic on hand and to develop tools that they can utilize in their country. The session also allowed for youth to gain cultural learned as they engaged between each other. For many, this was their first time attending an international seminar and for some it was their first expose to such a diverse crowd. The seminar was developed as an educational tool for all member organisation representatives to take back to their country. IFLRY stressed the importance of spreading knowledge and taking action; religious discrimination and Islamophobia are one of the greatest struggles we are facing in the world today.

Main results from organisers: The seminar was a successful event that had a structure flow that provided an environment for participants to learn, share, and experience. The seminar was as much about religious diversity as it was about culture and youth exchange. The participants learned as much from each other as they did from the guest speakers. The day to day learning was just as important as the social interaction. The interaction between the participants helped break down cultural stereotypes that some may have harboured about different cultures or religions.

We learned that:

Islam promotes peace and tolerance of different religions, despite negative stereotypes that have surfaced in today's culture and media.

- We should not create or accept a stereotype of the Islamic person; there are many Muslims among us with blond hair and blue eyes, dressed in western clothing. Islam is a belief that is practiced around the world, and should not be pegged to a certain geographical region or attributed to a person just because of their "look".
- We should never form an opinion on anything before studying it first hand, especially a media based opinion; we were all very surprised to learn what some of the words and customs related to Islam really meant in reality. This made us humble.
- There are many similarities between basic Islam and Christianity. Both religions call humanity to the service of "the One, Omnipotent Creator", and both promote peace.
- After hearing stories from participants' countries, Western Europe seems to be a lot more Islamophobia than Eastern Europe. There is no organized anti-Islam propaganda in Eastern Europe; however, in some parts of Western Europe it has even gone to the extreme.
- We should never blame a whole nation or religion for the acts of certain individuals; we are conscious that we can find both good and bad examples of human conduct in any group of people, even within our own families or circles of friends.

What is the purpose of any seminar if not to learn valuable new things, exchange experiences and then share with others? If we don't give some form of continuation to all the lessons we learned, many individuals will be deprived of valuable information that could make a difference in the world and change people's lives. All participants were incited to create campaign materials such as T-shirts, pamphlets and articles, to develop strategies, and to brainstorm on any other form of educational activities that will further our aim of promoting tolerance and inter-religious, inter-cultural dialogue among human beings, who, although may be different, are all equal.

Everyone present has the responsibility to prepare an educational material that they can share with the rest of their organization at home. They are to bring the lessons learned and share with their organisation, so we can see the benefits of the multiplier effect.

The ideas developed are listed under *FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES*.

Ideas for future seminars: Here are some of the ideas that was developed by the group: Climate Change, Fair Trade ,Human Rights, Homophobia, The E-Generation; using it to our advantage, Freedom of Press/Role of Media, Sources of Energy, Oil (Geopolitical), Intergenerational Problems, Poverty Reduction, Gender Equality, How to use Art & Culture to fight stereotyping, plus many other political topics.



FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Here are some of the ideas that were submitted to IFLRY. Participants worked as groups to develop materials that could be used by their organisations back in their home countries. Some participants choose to write articles for their organisational publications

- T-shirt logo
- T-shirt logo
- Flyer
- Flyer
- Press Release
- Press Release



T-Shirt Logo:

Think open
Tune yourself to **iSlam!**



This image was ironed onto a T-shirt.

T-shirt logo:



This image is the front and back of a t-shirt

Flyer:

<p><i>Let's join hands to fight unreasonable fear of Islam. You fear only what you do not know.</i></p>	<p>Islam is not the same in Denmark, as in Saudi Arabia or Indonesia. Christianity, Judaism and Islam all share the same basic values.</p>
<p>Islam does not promote terrorism. It teaches peace. Islam is by nature not antidemocratic. Women and men are according to the Quran equal and nothing speaks against women getting an education.</p>	<p><i>Understanding Islam is part of the solution. You fear only what you do not know. Misconceptions are many.</i></p>

One religion, many faces

There are more than 1.3 billion Mus-
lims in the world, of which 3 % live
in Europe. Within such a large relig-
ion, there is great diversity. Mean-
while, Islamophobia as a problem
is growing in Europe. People are
afraid because they lack knowl-
edge of Islam. The tone of the
debate is increasingly harsh.
Muslims are often depicted as
one homogeneous group.
However, there is very little
truth to this. The generaliza-
tions lead only to fear, frus-
tration and anger.

The Real Face of Islam?

all different
all equal

www.allifferent-allequal.info

all different
all equal

www.fifty.org

This flyer is designed to be easily folded and makes use of one sheet of paper.

Flyer2:

<p><i>Let's join hands to fight unreasonable fear of Islam. You fear only what you do not know.</i></p>	<p>Islam is not the same in Denmark, as in Saudi Arabia or Indonesia. Christianity, Judaism and Islam all share the same basic values.</p>
<p>Islam does not promote terrorism. It teaches peace. Islam is by nature not antidemocratic. Women and men are according to the Quran equal and nothing speaks against women getting an education.</p>	<p><i>Understanding Islam is part of the solution. You fear only what you do not know. Misconceptions are many.</i></p>



One religion, many faces

There are more than 1,3 billion Muslims in the world, of which 3 % live in Europe. Within such a large religion, there is great diversity. Meanwhile, Islamophobia as a problem is growing in Europe. People are afraid because they lack knowledge of Islam. The tone of the debate is increasingly harsh. Muslims are often depicted as one homogeneous group. However, there is very little truth to this. The generalizations lead only to fear, frustration and anger.

**Meet Ahmed,
your new neighbor**



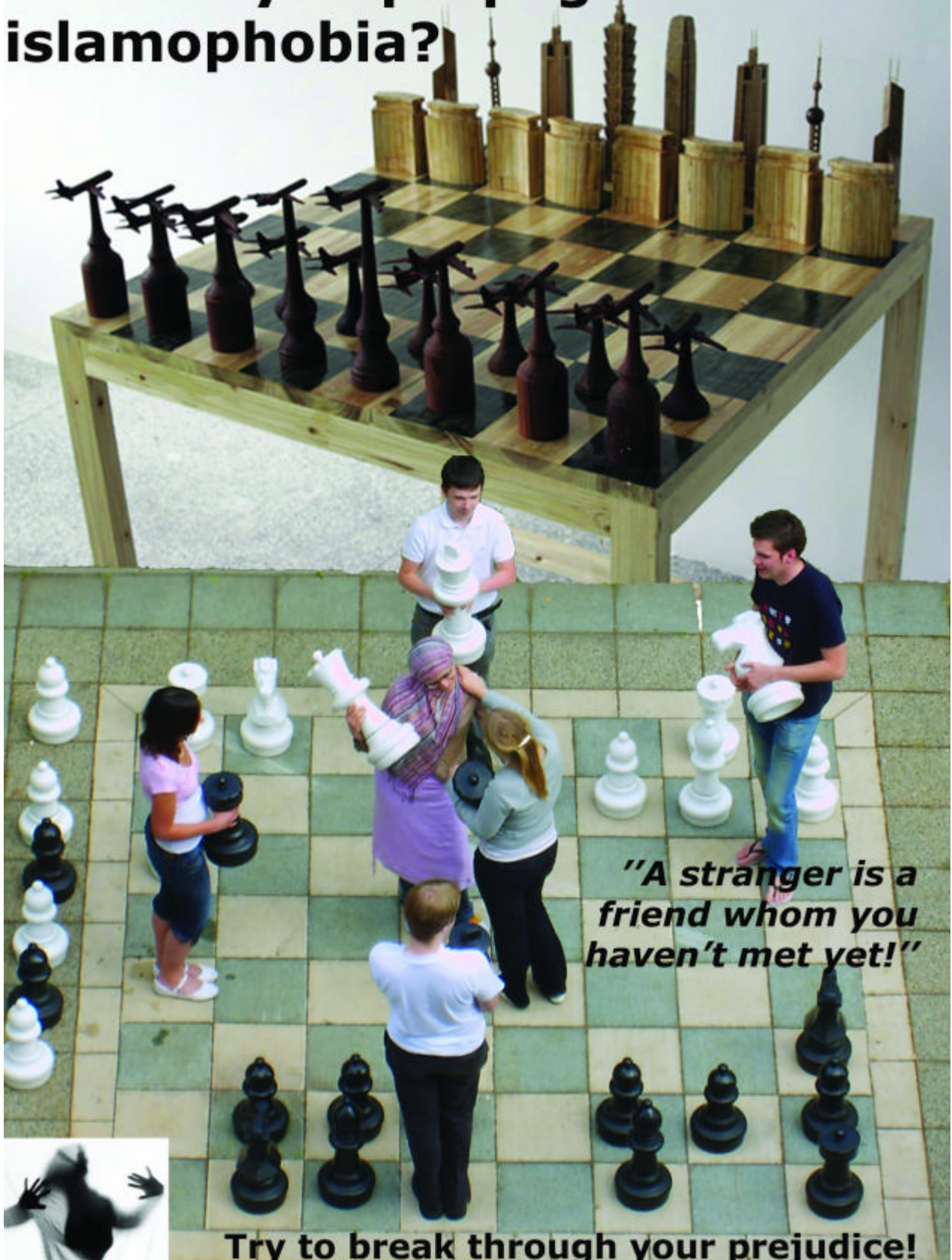
all different
all equal

www.flyr.org
www.allifferent-equal.info
www.kesknood.ee
Kesknoodi Nõukogu

This flyer is designed to be easily folded and makes use of one sheet of paper.

Poster:

How do you propagate islamophobia?



"A stranger is a friend whom you haven't met yet!"

Try to break through your prejudice!



Press release:

REPORT ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country on the Balkan peninsula of Southern Europe with an area of 51,129 square kilometers (19,741 sq mi) and an estimated population of around 4 million people. Bordered by Croatia to the north, west and south, Serbia to the east, and Montenegro to the south, Bosnia and Herzegovina is landlocked

The country is home to three ethnic "constituent peoples": Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. Regardless of ethnicity, a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina is often identified in English as a Bosnian. In Bosnia though, the distinction between a Bosnian and a Herzegovina is maintained, again *parallel* to ethnicity. The country is decentralized and is administratively divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic Srpska.

For centuries diverse religions lived on this area in peace and tolerance.

Three biggest religions are: Islam, Orthodox and Catholics. Of course there are minorities, the biggest is Judaism – minority.

Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is intercultural, which means that all these different religions are living together in small territory, and they are not divided, they are mixed.

Through the history these religions did not have problems. Every war and conflict that happened in Bosnia was political, not based on religion.

After the last war (1992.-1995.) the ethnicity is based on religion Bosniaks are Muslims, Serbs are Orthodox and Croats are Catholics.

This is making a lot of problems in administrations, because of three "constituent peoples", we have three official languages. Which are very similar, almost the same.

Concerning Islam phobia, nowadays we have some problems with an extremes group called “*vehabije*”. They are Muslims, but different from the traditional Muslims who are living in Bosnia for centuries. For them traditional Muslims in Bosnia are “too liberal”, away from Qur’an . But still there are no violent conflicts, and no sign of terrorism.

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Young Liberals of
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Press release:

The new phobia of the western world

The last week of April young politicians coming from liberal organisations throughout the world gathered in Budapest, Hungary, in order to discuss about what they agreed to consider as the new mental disease of today's world: Islamophobia. Emphasizing the role ignorance and fear of diversity play a large portion of the world's minds, the International Federation of Liberal Youth has reminded how important education and openness were in order to create integration and acceptance among people.

A phobia is a rational fear for those who are affected, yet are irrational fears in a global world. The world is threatened by this fobia. It is spreading fast and it needs to be stopped now. It is more dangerous than the birdflu disease and it is responsible for killing more people, says – _____ . This phobia can only be treated with knowledge and tolerance.

Young liberals think that those values are the only efficient cure that can be used in a global fight against stereotypes and all made beliefs that are spread throughout the world and lead to unnecessary misunderstandings and conflicts. It is time to understand that the world needs interculturalism. The clash of civilizations is not a cold reality. Liberals believe that diversity of cultures and interactions between them will help in the fight against prejudices.

All politicians are responsible to stop this, both world and local leaders. The media is as well responsible of contributing to the spread of this disease says -----.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself is full of wrong beliefs, fear of alterity and protectionists feelings towards the other. Wars of religions have empoisoned the entire world for centuries and where based upon ignorance and diabolisation of the so-called enemy.

In a world where globalisation is continually and naturally expanding, the citizens of the world will be left with two approaches: either they will keep on insisting on their differences and on the way they think "the other" is without trying to understand it. This will lead to further and worse conflict. On the other hand, they can, through education and tolerance, consider that diversity is wealthy and that we are all citizens of the same world. Different but equal. This requires respect and attention to other people's beliefs. The young liberals think it is the only way to ensure a peaceful future for our planet.

Picture: It's a mental disease, that can be treated with medicine (Tic-tacs.) We suggest that people for a photo give "medicine" to the people responsible for spreading this disease. Local politicians and media.

CONCLUSIONS

The general aim of the seminar was to raise awareness about different religions and promotion of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue among young people. When diversity and social cohesion is coupled with misunderstanding and intolerance it can lead to devastating occurrences.

Today many members of Council of Europe announce that in their countries human rights are respected and governments are implementing various measures to improve the situation of various vulnerable social groups. However, in more diverse countries it is possible to meet young people who are very hostile towards Muslim communities while at the same time they might claim they respect human rights and are tolerant towards various religions. Where this hypocrisy comes from? They call it Islamophobia – a fear of Islam and Muslims. During these days media and politicians constantly create negative images about Muslims (in particular Arabs) and set-up stereotypes that Muslims from their very essence are terrorists and criminals. Therefore, a better comprehension of the Islam and Muslim culture is needed, just as it is needed to stress the acceptance of differences that exist between religions, thereby contributing to a more diverse and tolerant society.

Working together with young people from different religious backgrounds is a practical instrument for promoting understanding and acceptance in respect of the other. By bringing representatives together from member organizations from across Europe and beyond, the issues discussed at the seminar will spark an important debate among IFLRY members that will incorporate a diverse set of views. After discussions, learning from each other, presentations, and working groups, participants were asked to develop activities or materials for concrete actions on the national or local level.

The facilities available at the European Youth Centre was a significant importance in order to make the seminar a success. The materials and facilities available at the EYC allow for a wide range of working methods to be used and help to improve the communication between the team and between the participants themselves. The accommodations are more than comfortable which will help the participants to relax and enjoy the experience as a whole. Consequently, using the facilities of the European Youth Centre is the best solution for making this session a success – as the centre provided an opportunity for youth to gather and discuss a pressing issue and to be exposed to a working environment of different cultures.

Now that the member organisations of IFLRY shared, experienced, and generated ideas, we hope that the individual will take their lessons in religious diversity and cultural understanding and move forward to promote understanding and respect and to break down barriers such as Islamophobia.



APPENDICES

- Programme
- List of Participants
- What's the problem? – seven views of 'Islam' and 'the West'
- Muslims in Europe: nine components of the default position in most mainstream culture
- Contrasts between basic assumptions in dominant and alternative narratives about 'The West' and 'Islam'
- Muslims in Europe: nine components of alternative narratives in mainstream culture
- Islamophobia – a challenge for us all
- My neighbour Ahmed: how different and apart are we?



International Federation of Liberal Youth
Respect for religious: fighting Islamophobia
April 22nd to the 29th, diversity 2007



	Monday 23	Tuesday 24	Wednesday 25	Thursday 26	Friday 27	Saturday 28
9:30 > 11:00	Introduction: <i>IFLRY, CoE, Seminar, Schedule</i> Expectations	Lecture: <i>Islamophobia – a challenge for us all</i> Robin Richardson	9:20 in Lobby Cultural Visit: <u>Bring your passport!</u> <i>Visit to the Parliament</i>	Introduction of Free time Presentation: All diff. / All equals NCC – On Issue	Linking and Summary Working Group: <i>How to fix it?</i> <i>Policy discussions.</i>	Presentations <i>Group work</i>
11:00 - 11:20: Coffee Break						
11:20 > 13:00	Ice breaking & Team building games	Group work: <i>Sharing our national realities</i>	Cultural Visit: <i>Visit to the Parliament (Continued)</i>	Workshop: <i>The Clash of Civilizations</i>	Working Group: <i>“Let’s take action!”</i>	Presentations <i>(continued)</i>
13:00 - 14:30 Lunch (at EYCB on all days)						
14:30 > 15:30	Interactive Quiz	Workshop: <i>Where do we stand? -YES or NO? -</i>	Lecture: <i>Accommodations: “My neighbor Ahmed: how different and apart are we?”</i> <i>Ali Chahine</i>	Free time	Working Group <i>Development of materials</i>	Evaluation & Closing <i>Ideas for next seminars</i>
			15:30 - 15:50: Coffee Break			
15:50 > 17:30	Intro to Islam Movie Questions-in-a-box	Workshop: <i>Where do we stand? -The liberal approach-</i>	Workshop: <i>The role of media</i>	Free time	Working Group: <i>Preparations</i>	Evaluation & Closing <i>Ideas for next seminars</i>
17:30 > 18:30	Alternative Working Time	Alternative Working Time	Alternative Working Time	Free time	Alternative Working Time	
19:00 - 20:00 Dinner (EYCB on all days but Thursday)						
Night	20 :30 Djema el Efna <i>(café-style discussions)</i>	20:30 Cultural Night + Presentation of MOs	19:45 Political Café (open) <i>‘Palestinian Experiences’</i>	Dinner in town Free time	Free time	Farewell Party

List of Participants:

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What's the problem? – seven views of 'Islam' and 'the West'

1. Religion

The problem is religion in general, which is superstition, self-delusion and the abandonment of reason. The deplorable influence of religion is seen throughout the world, and in all cultural traditions – in Christianity and Judaism, for example, as well as in Islam.

2. Islam

The problem is a particular religion, Islam. Unlike western Christianity, it does not allow the separation of religion and politics. With its systematic discrimination against women, its barbaric punishments for homosexuality and its intolerance of other world-views, Islam is stuck in the middle ages. It needs a reformation, based on integrating religion with science and rationality and re-interpreting traditional texts in the light of modernity.

3. Islamism

The problem is Islamism, namely an interpretation of Islam that has its intellectual roots in organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt after the first world war and subsequently developed by Sayyid Qutb in Egypt and Maulana Maududi in Pakistan. Alternative phrases or words instead of Islamism include political, militant or radical Islam; Islamic activism; Qutbism; jihadism; extremism; and fundamentalism. Islamism is a political ideology of hate.

4. West Asia/Middle East

The problem lies in the specific history of West Asia, particularly the history of Arab nations. Key events and factors of the last 100 years include the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the Balfour Declaration and in due course the creation of the state of Israel, processes of decolonisation and globalisation, tensions and conflicts within and between Arab countries and between Arab countries and Iran, the Sunni/Shi'a rift, and the emergence of oil-rich economies.

5. The West

The problem is 'the West'. From the Crusades to colonisation, and from moral and military support for Israel to the recent invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, western powers have oppressed Muslim countries and cultures, and have developed forms of anti-Muslim hostility, Islamophobia and orientalism in order to justify their own behaviour. This has provoked, understandably, much bitterness and anti-western hostility in return.

6. Alienation

The problem lies in the alienation of young people of Muslim heritage born and educated in European countries. They are marginalised and excluded by processes of religious and racist discrimination and some turn to an ideology of nihilism and terrorism, intermixed with Islamism (see above), as a rhetoric of self-justification.

7. Conflicts of material interest

The problem is not in the first instance to do with differences of culture, religion, ideology or civilisation. Rather, it is to do with conflicts of material interest. Globally, the key conflicts are around power, influence, territory and resources, particularly oil. Within urban areas in Europe they are around employment, housing, health and education. Such conflicts become 'religionised' or 'culturalised' – each side celebrates and idealises its own traditions and cultural heritage, including religion, and denigrates the traditions of the other.

Muslims in Europe: nine components of the default position in most mainstream culture

1. Failure to integrate

Muslims do not wish to integrate into European societies, but prefer to live in separate, self-segregated communities and neighbourhoods.

2. Unreasonable demands

Muslims make unreasonable demands on European societies, expecting the Judeo-Christian traditions of these societies to be modified, changed or jettisoned in order that they can avoid being offended or inconvenienced.

3. Mixed loyalties

Muslims in Europe owe their principal loyalty to the worldwide *Ummah*, not to the country where they live. They therefore cannot be depended on to support their country's foreign policies, or even its sports teams. They are an enemy within

4. Support for extremism

The sense of alienation and lack of loyalty mentioned above combine to make Muslim communities in Europe a breeding ground for extremism.

5. Obscurantism

Islamic theology has never gone through the kinds of critical review and reformation that were the hallmarks of the Enlightenment in Europe.

6. Incompatibility of values and interests

Islam and the West are incompatible in terms of moral values and are locked in a zero-sum struggle for power and control.

7. Lack of Muslim leadership

Religious leaders such as imams, and secular leaders such as office-holders in Muslim organisations, are out of touch with the people they claim to guide and represent, particularly young people.

8. Corroborating evidence from overseas

The perceptions listed above are about Muslims *within* Europe. They gain additional persuasiveness and plausibility, however, from how Muslims *outside* Europe behave — their hatred of the West, abuse of human rights, use of barbaric punishments, intolerance of debate and disagreement, glorification of martyrdom, anti-Semitism.

9. Weak national government

The threats posed by Muslims, outlined above, are made even more serious by the failures of successive European governments, and by metropolitan intelligentsias. In the 1950s and 1960s governments did not foresee the dangers of permitting immigration on a large scale; more recently they have failed to police their borders and have promoted political correctness.

Source: Insted consultancy, London

Contrasts between basic assumptions in dominant and alternative narratives about ‘The West’ and ‘Islam’

Points of contrast	Dominant narratives	Alternative narratives
<i>Uniformity/diversity</i>	Muslims are all much the same	There is great diversity amongst Muslims
<i>Difference/similarity</i>	Muslims are significantly different from non-Muslims	There are many commonalities between Muslims and non-Muslims
<i>Inferiority/equality</i>	Muslims are morally and intellectually inferior to non-Muslims	There is both good and bad everywhere – both in Muslims and non-Muslims
<i>Threat/trust</i>	Muslims are a threat to non-Muslims	There are both real and perceived threats on both sides
<i>Conflict/cooperation</i>	There is no possibility of Muslims and non-Muslims living and working cooperatively together, either in the world at large or within individual European societies	It is both possible and urgent that Muslims and non-Muslims should work together on solving or managing shared problems and on building mutual confidence

Source: Insted consultancy, London

Muslims in Europe: nine components of alternative narratives in mainstream culture

1 Barriers to integration

The vast majority of Muslims in western Europe would like to be fully integrated – though not culturally assimilated – in the economic and political affairs of west European societies but are prevented from doing so by the factors summarised in points 2– 5 below.

2. Material disadvantage

Most Muslims in western Europe are people who came, or are the children or grandchildren of people who came, to meet labour shortages. The jobs they were recruited to fill were poorly-paid, and often dirty in labour-intensive heavy industries. Material disadvantage continues, as does discrimination and racist violence.

3. Negativity in the media and the general climate of opinion

Media coverage of Muslims, particularly but not only in the press, is almost entirely negative and hostile – when, that is, there is any coverage at all.

4. Foreign policy

Much of European foreign policy works to the disadvantage of Muslims overseas.

5. Policing

Since 9/11, and even more so since terrorist attacks within Europe, many Muslims have had experience, either directly themselves or indirectly through their friends, families and acquaintances, of heavy-handed and insensitive policing, often in the glare of media publicity.

6. Establishing a presence

Despite the substantial barriers to integration mentioned in points 2–5 above, Muslims have established a strong presence throughout western Europe - mainly through self-help, but also with support from sympathetic non-Muslims and finance from overseas.

7. Commonalities and interdependence

Western and Islamic values are not incompatible. They have much in common and there has been much borrowing and interchange over the centuries.

8. International contacts and citizenship

European Muslims speak a range of non-European languages and are a resource of much economic and diplomatic value.

9 Self-criticism

Muslims accept that some of the criticisms made of them by others are legitimate – the criticisms are not necessarily instances of Islamophobia. They are ready to debate these, both with others and internally amongst themselves. Appropriate self-criticism is difficult or impossible, however, within the wider context of hostility and suspicion listed in points 2–5 above.

Islamophobia – a challenge for us all

Robin Richardson, Insted Consultancy, London

Introduction and summary

1. This paper is based on experience and work in one country, the United Kingdom.¹ Its arguments, perspectives and proposals may not, in certain important respects, be relevant in other European countries. Significant differences between the UK and other European countries in connection with Islam, Islamophobia and Muslims are connected with approaches to anti-discrimination legislation and citizenship rights; memories and experiences of colonialism; degrees of closeness to the United States; recent experiences of terrorism and urban unrest; and demographic patterns.
2. With regard to demography, it is relevant to mention that a high proportion (about 70 per cent) of people of Muslim heritage in the UK have their origins in the countries of South Asia - mainly Pakistan and Bangladesh but also to a certain extent India. Migration from South Asian countries occurred principally in the 1950s and 1960s. All people from these backgrounds have had full citizenship rights since the day they arrived. More than half of British Muslims in 2007 were born in the UK.
3. The paper begins by recalling the concept of **narrative**. Each narrative has two aspects - (a) **a sense of history** and (b) **a set of stories**. In both these aspects, a narrative asks and answers four key questions:
 - What's the problem?
 - What's the background?
 - What do we want?
 - What should be done?
4. Focusing on the first of these questions ('What's the problem?') the paper then discusses seven different ways of describing relationships between 'the West' and 'Islam'. Six of these are derived from a newspaper article by the historian and commentator Timothy Garton Ash.
5. Next, the paper describes and discusses the principal narrative about the West and Islam in the UK media. The word *Islamophobia* is a shorthand (and, incidentally, not very satisfactory) way of referring to this narrative. The components of the dominant narrative are then contrasted with the components of an alternative narrative.
6. Islamophobia is seen not only in the **content** of the dominant narrative but also in the **form** in which it is usually expressed. In this connection the paper distinguishes between **closed** and **open** ways of expressing opinions, and thinking, engaging and relating.
7. The concluding section of the paper discusses briefly some of the principal things which need further talk and consideration in relation to challenging and reducing Islamophobia in the media. By extension, this last section is relevant to many other areas of social life as well, including education and politics, and the making and interpretation of law.

¹ Publications about Islamophobia in the UK include *Islamophobia – a challenge for us all*, published in 1997, and *Islamophobia – challenges, issues and action*. 2004. The latter can be downloaded from the web pages of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia at <http://www.insted.co.uk/islam.html>.

Islamophobia – a challenge for us all

European Youth Centre, Budapest, 22-29 April 2007

Big pictures and daily details: text, talk and imagery

The West's war against terror, wrote the defence correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* in October 2001, 'belongs within the much larger spectrum of a far older conflict between settled, creative productive Westerners and predatory, destructive Orientals.'² On 11 September, he said, 'the Oriental tradition ... returned in an absolutely traditional form. Arabs, appearing suddenly out of empty space like their desert raider ancestors, assaulted the heartlands of Western power, in a terrifying surprise raid.' His words were a vivid and dramatic summary of the way the Western media both reflected and shaped how the events of 9/11 were seen.

It is frequently the case, both for those who report events and for those who read about them in the press, or hear about them on radio, or watch images about them on television, that something seems to erupt suddenly from empty space, or as if from a desert where normally nothing happens, nothing grows. Always metaphorically, and sometimes – as in September 2001 – literally, such events are surprise raids. The first priority for the human mind, when confronted with a surprise raid, is to place it within a narrative, so that it is connected to more familiar experiences and begins to make sense, and so that any further such events can be better anticipated, and actions to deal with them are maximally effective. Text, talk and imagery are directed to these three ends, making sense, being better prepared, taking more effective action

In relation to 'the West' and 'Islam' there is a range of competing and overlapping narratives. (Inverted commas signal that both terms are shorthand for immensely complex and variegated realities. Also, the realities are inter-related and merge with each other. Picturing the world as consisting largely of two large monolithic entities with little or nothing in common is arguably part of the problem.) A narrative, it can be said, consists of (a) a history and (b) a collection of stories. In a different metaphor, there is (a) a big picture and (b) a set of vivid details.

Histories

A history, obviously, is an account of how we got to where we are; it explains or seeks to explain patterns of cause and effect, and who or what is to blame. It provides a stock of metaphors, analogies and vivid imagery, as in the extract about 9/11 cited above, and a recurring concern is to establish – again, as in the example cited above – the distinctive features of 'us' and 'them', self and other, insider and outsider, allies and enemies, victims and aggressors, those who 'really' belong in our society or civilisation and those who do not.³ Further, histories recall glories which inspire, humiliations to avenge, acts of heroism and martyrdom to be emulated and grievances to redress. Further, they provide explanations and justifications for current policies and actions. It is not rare, as is well known, for histories to be revisited and revised, to align them to new concerns, intentions and programmes in the present.

A history is not only about the past. Also, it shapes expectations of what is likely to happen next. In a familiar metaphor, it helps build a radar system on the look-out for anomalies and threats in the world out there. In a different metaphor again, it is a template which makes a pattern out of what would otherwise be, in a famous phrase, 'buzzing, blooming confusion'. Prior to the July 2005 bombs in London, the Metropolitan Police officer in overall charge of anti-terrorist operations told the Security and Intelligence Committee that 'we were working off a script which actually has been completely discounted by what we [now] know as reality.'⁴

Stories

Stories, in the sense that the word is being used here, are individual items in newspapers and on TV and radio. They are interesting in themselves but also help to keep histories and big pictures alive. Some – most, indeed – come and go. They are here today, gone tomorrow. One-off. Some, though, run for two or three days, or for a bit longer, particularly if they move from one paper to another, and backwards and forwards between print media, TV and radio. Many stories in the media are inaccurate and distorted. But some stories, most certainly, are so momentous and so obviously true that

² John Keegan, 'In this war of civilisations, the West will prevail', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 2001.

³ In their study of media reports from Israel/Palestine in recent years (2004), Philo and Berry devote a third of their pages to discussing what they call 'histories of the conflict'. The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000) devoted its first chapter to 're-thinking the national story'; for discussions of the mainly negative media reactions to this, see Petley (2001) and Richardson (2001).

⁴ Intelligence and Security Committee (2006).

they are incorporated overnight into history – 9/11, obviously, and (for all of us in the UK, at least) 7/7. But most are not as momentous as those. Most illustrate and recall history, in the manner of a vivid case-study. In these ways they revivify and reinforce history, but they do not enter it, except in the minds and memories of the individuals most directly affected, or if there's something about the story that causes particular individuals to continually return to it in their minds' eyes.⁵ 'I cannot forget,' writes a newspaper columnist, 'the story of the Brownie leader in Bradford who was stoned in the street by Asian youths who snarled "Christian bitch" at her.'⁶

Through its sense of history and its stock of vivid case-studies a narrative handles four questions: What's the problem? What's the background? What's the solution? What do we want? The last of these is about our notion of the good life, and the kind of society that nourishes the good life. The questions are asked both implicitly and explicitly. With regard to the first of these questions ('What's the problem?') the historian and political commentator Timothy Garton Ash has suggested there are six principal narratives or perspectives – six big pictures – in competition with each other in relation to the West and Islam. They are not, he stresses, mutually exclusive. On the contrary, there are overlaps amongst them and in practice, for any one person at any one time, the narrative they adopt is likely to be complemented and qualified by at least one of the others. It is logically impossible, however, for someone to operate with all six with equal assurance. Garton Ash's article was written in September 2005. Introducing the six narratives, he said:

Four years after the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, which were perpetrated in the name of Allah, most people living in what we still loosely call the west would agree that we do have troubles with Islam. The vast majority of Muslims are not terrorists, but most of the terrorists who threaten us claim to be Muslims. Most countries with a Muslim majority show a resistance to what Europeans and Americans generally view as desirable modernity, including the essentials of liberal democracy. Why? What's the nub of the problem? Here are six different views often heard in the west, but also, it's important to add, in Muslim countries... As you go down the list, you might like to put a mental tick against the view you most strongly agree with. It's logically possible to put smaller ticks against a couple of others, but not against them all.

Briefly summarised, and with additional brief comments, the six narratives are set out in Box 1.

<i>Box 1</i>
What's the problem? – six views of the West and Islam
1. Religion
The problem is religion in general, which is 'superstition, false consciousness and the abrogation of reason'. The deplorable influence of religion is seen throughout the world, and in all cultural traditions – in Christianity and Judaism, for example, as well as in Islam.
2. Islam
The problem is a particular religion, Islam. 'Unlike western Christianity, it does not allow the separation of religion and politics. 'With its systematic discrimination against women, its barbaric punishments for homosexuality and its militant intolerance, Islam is stuck in the middle ages.' It needs a reformation, based on integrating religion with science and rationality and re-interpreting traditional texts in the light of modernity.
3. Islamism
The problem is Islamism, namely a particular interpretation of Islam that has its intellectual roots in organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt after the first world war and subsequently developed by Sayyid Qutb and Maulana Maududi. Alternative phrases or words instead of Islamism include political, militant or radical Islam, Islamist activism, Qutbism, jihadism, extremism and fundamentalism. 'One of the world's great religions has been twisted into serving a political ideology of hate.'
4. West Asia/Middle East
The problem lies in the specific history of West Asia, particularly the history of Arab nations. Key events and factors of the last 100 years include the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 for the

⁵ This account of histories and stories is drawn, though in a simplified form, from the writings of the Dutch scholar Teun van Dyck. See in particular *Racism and the Press*, 1991.

⁶ Peter Hitchens, 'I'll say it while they still let me: Islam is a threat to us all', *Mail on Sunday*, 11 July 2004.

dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the Balfour Declaration and in due course the creation of the state of Israel, processes of decolonisation and globalisation, tensions and conflicts within and between Arab countries and between Arab countries and Iran, the Sunni/Shi'a rift, and the emergence of oil-rich economies.

5. The West

The problem is 'the West'. From the Crusades to colonisation, and from moral and military support for Israel and the recent invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, western powers have oppressed Muslim countries and cultures, and have developed forms of anti-Muslim hostility and orientalism in order to justify their own behaviour. This has provoked, understandably, much bitterness and anti-western hostility in return.

6. Alienation

The problem lies in the alienation of young people of Muslim heritage born and educated in European countries. They are marginalised and excluded by processes of religious and racist discrimination and some turn to an ideology of nihilism and terrorism, intermixed with Islamism, as a rhetoric of self-justification.

Source: adapted from an article by Timothy Garton Ash, The Guardian, 15 September 2005

Garton Ash's distinctions are a helpful start for considering the narratives about the West and Islam that are articulated in the western media, sometimes explicitly but often simply taken for granted, part of common sense. He suggests that the second ('the problem is Islam') and the third ('the problem is Islamism') are dominant in the media as a whole, though with different nuances between and within different papers, programmes and channels. In saying this he recalls that sometimes what is said in so many words is not necessarily the same as what the speaker really thinks. Nor is it necessarily what they intended to say, or what is actually heard and understood by others. Of the third narrative, for example ('the problem is Islamism, not Islam') he says that this is the official view of George Bush and Tony Blair,⁷ but continues:

Well, they would say that, wouldn't they? They're not going to insult millions of Muslim voters and the foreign countries upon which the west relies for its imported oil. But do they really believe it? I have my doubts. Put them on a truth serum, and I bet they'd be closer to 2 ['the problem is Islam'].

Garton Ash's scheme is valuable for introducing and illustrating the concept of narrative, but needs – as no doubt he would himself be the first to acknowledge – some further unpacking if it is to act as a framework for consideration of the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the media day by day, week by week. Such unpacking is this paper's subject-matter and concern. But first, it is relevant to note a seventh view of the problem, one which refers more to conflicts over material interests than to differences of culture.

Box 2

What's the problem? – a seventh view

The problem is not in the first instance to do with differences of culture, religion, ideology or civilisation. Rather, it is to do with conflicts of interest, and with competition for power, influence, territory and resources, and therefore with competition for recognition. Within urban areas of western Europe the conflicts are around employment, housing, health and education.

The problem further is that such conflicts become 'religionised' or 'culturalised' by some or all of the principal actors, and in consequence they become increasingly intransigent. Each side celebrates and idealises its own traditions, and claims a divine seal of approval for them. At the same time each denigrates and demonises the traditions of the other.

⁷ See, for example, Tony Blair's lecture 'The Duty in Integrate', *The Runnymede Bulletin*, December 2006.

The dominant narrative in the West

The dominant narrative in the Western media and in Western consciousness is arguably a mix of Garton Ash's second and third big pictures - 'The problem is Islam' and 'The problem is Islamism'. It is often implied or simply assumed, or expressed in code, rather than stated in so many words. So to speak, it is the default position.

The metaphor of default position refers to taken-for-granted assumptions not only in the mindsets and groupthink of people who work in the media but also in those of readers, viewers and listeners. It implies that if the dominant narrative is not to hold sway, deliberate efforts need to be made to, as it were, alter the settings. That is to say, focused and conscious interventions are required to ensure that alternative narratives are heard as well or instead, and that the hearing is fair. Box 3 below itemises the default position's principal components

Box 3

Muslims in Europe: the default position in most of the media

10. Failure to integrate

Muslims do not wish to integrate into European societies, but prefer to live in separate, self-segregated communities and neighbourhoods. Failure to integrate leads to failure in the educational system and failure to obtain economic well-being. There is in consequence much bitterness and a deep sense of alienation, a victim mentality, and a false, self-deceiving perception that mainstream society is unjust and Islamophobic. These feelings and perceptions then lead to additional failure in education and employment, and the vicious spiral continues.

11. Unreasonable demands

Muslims make unreasonable demands on European societies, expecting the Judeo-Christian traditions of these societies to be modified, changed or jettisoned in order that they can avoid being offended or inconvenienced. Amongst other matters, the demands are about dress codes in public places (particularly the burka, which seems to symbolise antagonism to the state and to established customs of openness), the building of mosques in towns and cities, the use of community languages in public, the establishment of faith schools and after-school religious classes.

12. Mixed loyalties

Muslims in Europe owe their principal loyalty to the worldwide *Ummah*, not to the country where they live. They therefore cannot be depended on to support their country's foreign policies, or even its sports teams. In relation to international situations, for example in Iraq, Israel/Palestine and Afghanistan, they are a fifth column or enemy within

13. Support for extremism

The sense of alienation and lack of loyalty mentioned above combine to make Muslim communities in Europe a breeding ground for extremism. It's true that only a small minority of them actually engage in acts of violence but there is a general climate of tacit support and sympathy for extreme measures, whether these are committed within Europe or elsewhere. In well-known metaphors, 'ordinary' Muslims constitute the pond in which extremists swim, and the hinterland from which they emerge. All Muslims are on a single continuum at one end of which there is readiness to engage in terrorism.

14. Obscurantism

Islamic theology has never gone through the kinds of critical review and reformation that were the hallmarks of the Enlightenment in Europe. Scriptures are not subjected to textual criticism; doctrines and moral teachings are not seen in historical context; multiple interpretations of a text are not acceptable; received tradition is paramount.

15. Incompatibility of values and interests

Islam and the West are incompatible in terms of moral values and are locked in a zero-sum struggle for power and control. At the global level there is a clash of civilisations and at local levels Muslims and non-Muslims cannot live and work harmoniously and constructively together, other than in relatively superficial ways. Muslims subvert local democracy, for example in Britain's northern cities through manipulating *biraderi* kinship networks. They are misogynist and homophobic, use repressive educational methods in their mosques and madrasahs, and are opposed to all things Western.

16. Lack of leadership

Religious leaders such as imams, and secular leaders such as office-holders in Muslim organisations, are out of touch with the people they are supposed to guide and represent, particularly young people. They are insufficiently vocal and proactive in condemning extremism and in encouraging integration into mainstream society. Some even glorify extremism and terrorism. All or most are in denial about the presence and growth of extremism in their communities and do not see that theirs is the principal responsibility for removing it. The few who might be inclined to speak out

on these issues are in fact frightened to do so, because of the opposition they would encounter from most other Muslims.

17. Corroborating evidence from overseas

The perceptions listed above are about Muslims *within* Europe. They gain additional persuasiveness and plausibility, however, from how Muslims *outside* Europe behave — their hatred of the West, abuse of human rights, use of barbaric punishments, intolerance of debate and disagreement, glorification of martyrdom, antisemitism, plans to create a world-wide caliphate, obscurantist religion, and support for terrorism and insurgency. These features of Muslim societies and cultures combine with beliefs that they are culturally and morally superior to the West, which they see as corrupt and shallow and in need of being converted to, and reshaped in accordance with, Islam.

18. Weak government

The threats posed by Muslims, outlined above, are made even more serious by the failures of successive European governments, and by metropolitan intelligentsias, particularly in London. In the 1950s and 1960s governments did not foresee the dangers of permitting immigration from cultures so different from their own; more recently they have consistently failed to police and protect their borders effectively; have failed to insist on full assimilation and integration but on the contrary have promoted multiculturalism, political correctness, cultural relativism and the nanny state; and do not appreciate the severe dangers posed by Islam in general and Islamism in particular. Some of these failures have been exacerbated by the human rights legislation which governments have introduced against the interests of Europe's majority populations. The overall effect has been to appease Muslims rather than to oppose and control them.

Underlying assumptions

All the statements in box 3 above can be found explicitly stated in articles, leader columns and readers' letters in the print media. Underlying them there are certain assumptions or beliefs that are by and large implied, not explicitly stated. Five of the most powerful are these:

- All Muslims are much the same.
- All Muslims are essentially different from all non-Muslims.
- Muslims are morally and culturally inferior to non-Muslims.
- Muslims are a threat to non-Muslims.
- There is no possibility of Muslims and non-Muslims living and working cooperatively together, either in the world at large or within individual European societies.

To repeat, these are usually unspoken. But sometimes they are expressed entirely explicitly. A particularly vivid example came in an article published in summer 2004 under the pseudonym of 'Will Cummins' in the *Sunday Telegraph*. Cummins's principal claim was that all Muslims are the same and that all are different from non-Muslims. He chose, however, to express these claims by saying that all Muslims are the same in the sense that all dogs are the same. This example inevitably implied, even though logically it did not inherently entail, the claim that Muslims are inferior to non-Muslims, a lower order of being. Not all people who broadly share the underlying assumptions listed above would approve of the offensive and extreme form of self-expression Cummins used:

All Muslims, like all dogs, share certain characteristics. A dog is not the same animal as a cat just because both species are comprised of different breeds. An extreme Christian believes that the Garden of Eden really existed; an extreme Muslim flies planes into buildings – there's a big difference.⁸

Another strong statement that all Muslims are the same and all are different from non-Muslims is to be found in Samuel Huntington's influential book *The Clash of Civilisations*. 'The underlying problem for the West,' he writes, 'is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilisation whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power.'⁹ A similar claim is made by the columnist Peter Hitchens: 'Soon it will be illegal to say this, so I had better do it now. Islam, yes even "moderate" Islam, threatens our freedom and civilisation.'¹⁰ Such statements assume there is a continuum or slippery slope between so-called moderates and so-called extremists.

⁸ Will Cummins, 'Muslims are a threat to our way of life', *Sunday Telegraph*, 25 July 2004

⁹ Huntington (1997), pp 217-8,

¹⁰ Peter Hitchens, 'I'll say it while they still let me: Islam is a threat to us all', *Mail on Sunday*, 11 July 2004.

The five assumptions underlying the dominant narrative sketched above can be contrasted with assumptions which underlie alternative narratives, as in the tabulation in box 4.¹¹

Box 4

Contrasts between basic assumptions in different narratives

Points of contrast	Dominant narratives	Alternative narratives
<i>Uniformity/diversity</i>	Muslims are all much the same	There is great diversity amongst Muslims
<i>Difference/similarity</i>	Muslims are significantly different from non-Muslims	There are many commonalities between Muslims and non-Muslims
<i>Inferiority/equality</i>	Muslims are morally and intellectually inferior to non-Muslims	There is both good and bad everywhere – both in Muslims and non-Muslims
<i>Threat/trust</i>	Muslims are a threat to non-Muslims	There are both real and perceived threats on both sides
<i>Conflict/cooperation</i>	There is no possibility of Muslims and non-Muslims living and working cooperatively together, either in the world at large or within individual European societies	It is both possible and urgent that Muslims and non-Muslims should work together on solving or managing shared problems and on building mutual confidence

The content of alternative narratives

Alternative narratives about Islam have underlying assumptions and components that are different from those that are basic in dominant narratives, as summarised in box 3 and shown in greater detail in box 4. Also, they have components that are different, as shown in box 5. Some of the items listed in box 5 are exact opposites of items in box 3. The first item in box 3, for example, declares that ‘Muslims do not wish to integrate into European societies’ whereas the first item in box 5 below says almost exactly the opposite. In other instances, however, there is no direct correspondence between boxes 3 and 5. That is why they are presented separately rather than as a tabulation such as the one in box 4.

Box 5 Components of alternative narratives

1 Barriers to integration

The vast majority of Muslims in western Europe would like to be fully integrated – though not culturally assimilated – in the economic and political affairs of west European societies. They are prevented from integrating, however, by a wide range of factors, as summarised in points 2– 5 below.

2. Material disadvantage

Most Muslims in western Europe are people who came, or are the children or grandchildren of people who came, to meet labour shortages. The jobs they were recruited to fill were poorly-paid, and often dirty in labour-intensive heavy industries. Material disadvantage has been compounded by the collapse of many of the industries for which they were originally recruited and by extensive hostility, including racist attacks on the streets and direct and indirect discrimination in employment and the provision of services. Multiple hardships and handicaps continue, as do violence and discrimination, despite new legislation against them.

¹¹ Adapted and simplified from the first report of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, 1997.

3. Negativity in the media and the general climate of opinion

Media coverage of Muslims, particularly but not only in the press, is almost entirely negative and hostile – when, that is, there is any coverage at all. Specifically, the media present a sense that all or most Muslims are the same, are different from non-Muslims, are culturally inferior, are a threat to the European societies where they are settled, and do not and will not ever truly belong. The media frequently or typically make these claims with language that is abusive and offensive. They seldom give a Muslims a voice and a fair hearing, and seldom permit alternative views of Muslims and their situation in Europe to be presented.

4. Foreign policy

Much of UK foreign policy works to the disadvantage of Muslims overseas. Examples include the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, support for the government of Israel in its dealings with Palestinians and Lebanon, insufficient criticism of the US creation of Guantanamo Bay, and exploitation of natural resources, particularly oil, in Muslim countries.

5 Policing

Since 9/11, and even more so since 7/7, many Muslims have had experience, either directly themselves or indirectly through their friends, families and acquaintances, of heavy-handed and insensitive policing, often in the glare of media publicity, or in full view of others in public places. Muslims acknowledge that action against extremism needs to be taken, but this need not be at the expense of casually humiliating and alienating large numbers of people, particularly young people.

6. Establishing a presence

Despite the substantial barriers to integration mentioned in points 2–5 above, Muslims have established a strong presence throughout western Europe. Mainly through self-help, but also with support from sympathetic non-Muslims and finance from overseas, there is a flourishing Muslim civil society, built around mosques, cultural centres and local welfare projects, and involving the creation of a range of representative bodies at national, regional and local levels. There are increasing numbers of Muslim professionals in business, medicine, politics and government.

7. Commonalities and interdependence

Western and Islamic values are not incompatible. For example, the objectives (maqasid) and essential interests (masaleh daruriyah) of the Shariah (Islamic Law) - namely, the development of individuals, social justice and communities through the protection of life, intellect, religion, family and wealth - are little different from the deeper values and principles that underpin European human rights law, as captured in the European Convention of Human Rights. Islam originated from the same part of the world from which both Christianity and Judaism originated. There is nothing intrinsic to Islam, whether in belief, values or practice, that is not already there either in Christianity or Judaism. Also, the three traditions have developed interdependently with each other, not separately, with much mutual borrowing and enrichment.

8. International contacts and citizenship

British Muslims speak many languages, have strong connections with other parts of the world and are familiar with a range of different cultures. If this resource is harnessed properly, in the face of rising economic competition from different parts of the world, it could assist greatly in taking British brands to new markets and sustaining Britain's economic edge. By the same token, British Muslims could have a crucial role to play in international diplomacy. Developments in Europe in Islamic theology and ethics have the potential to affect and enrich other religious traditions (and also, incidentally, Islamic theology and jurisprudence worldwide) and to contribute to the common good.

9 Self-criticism

Muslims accept that some of the criticisms made of them by others are legitimate – the criticisms are not necessarily instances of Islamophobia. They are ready to debate these, both with others and internally amongst themselves. Appropriate self-criticism is difficult or impossible, however, within the wider context of hostility and suspicion listed in points 2–5 above.

The form of narratives – open and closed ways of thinking and relating

6.1 The dominant and alternative narratives outlined above in boxes 3-5 were described with regard to their content. But also their form needs attention – the way views are formulated, presented and argued. The journalist Peregrine Worsthorne has said that Islam was ‘once a great civilisation worthy of being argued with’ but now ‘has degenerated into a primitive enemy fit only to be sensitively subjugated.’ He makes two distinctions in this claim, the one to do with content (‘great civilisation’/‘primitive enemy’) and the other with regard to forms of thinking and relating (‘argued with’/‘subjugated’.) To see an individual or a group or a civilisation as ‘worthy of being argued with’ is necessarily to be open-minded towards them. The hallmarks of open-mindedness include:

- readiness to change one’s views, both of others and of oneself, in the light of new facts and evidence
- not deliberately distorting, or recklessly over-simplifying, incontestable facts
- not caricaturing the views of people with whom one disagrees
- not over-generalising
- not being abusive when arguing, for example not claiming that one’s opponents are evil or insane or sub-human
- not using double standards when comparing and contrasting others with oneself
- seeing difference and disagreement as a resource for understanding more about oneself, not as a threat
- seeking to understand other people’s views and standpoints in their own terms, and where they are coming from – the narratives and stories with which they interpret events
- not claiming greater certainty than is warranted
- seeking consensus or, at least, a *modus vivendi* which keeps channels of communication open and permits all to maintain dignity.

Concluding notes: (1) the definition of Islamophobia

In relation to the media, the word *Islamophobia* is a useful shorthand term for referring to text, talk and imagery that:

- present the principal narrative about Islam and Muslims outlined above, at the same time as ignoring or misrepresenting alternative narratives
- do so with closed not open ways of thinking, talking and relating
- are likely to increase insecurity and vulnerability amongst Muslims
- are likely also to provoke anxiety, fear and panic amongst non-Muslims
- are unlikely therefore to help diminish levels of hate crime and acts of discrimination against Muslims
- are unlikely to contribute to an informed debate about ways of maintaining and developing multicultural, multi-faith democracy.

Concluding notes: (2) responsible journalism

A key issue is anxiety rather than phobia, and the key professional responsibility of journalists and political leaders is to promote informed debate, as distinct from pandering to anxiety and to being alarmist.

There are six principal topics which opinion leaders need to give sustained thought to:

- Managing anxiety
- Principles of freedom of speech
- Codes of professional practice
- Religious literacy
- Critical literacy
- The making of complaints

In March 2007 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in the UK, Ruth Kelly, declared that ‘we urgently need a new approach to tackling the violent extremism that seeks to undermine our society’. She said further a new approach ‘must be based as much on winning hearts and minds as on security measures’.

There ‘must put a new emphasis on local solutions’, she continued, and declared that ‘our aim must be not just to stop people committing violence but also to challenge the ideologies that drive them’. She acknowledged that successive governments, including the present one, ‘have not always got this balance right’. Governments have ‘put too much faith in action,’ she added, ‘not enough in debate’.

The purpose of the debate would be to challenge, isolate and neutralise ‘ideologies of hatred’ amongst ‘a tiny minority’ of Muslims. She drew an analogy with the far right extremism of political parties such as the British National Party (BNP). ‘The British public,’ she said, ‘rejects their ugly message.’

The stress on debate as well as action was and is welcome. The mainstream media – not just the Muslim media – will have a major role to play in it. The debate in the mainstream media will be disingenuous, however, if it assumes that hostility and suspicion towards Islam and Muslims are to be found only amongst a small minority of non-Muslims, the so-called far right.

There needs also to be substantial debate about the prejudices, anxieties, sometimes amounting to panic, amongst non-Muslims. This will have to include consideration of how the mainstream media are by no means always responsible in the ways in which they treat the basic question underlying this report – ‘common ground or certain conflict?’

If they are to contribute constructively to the debate, the mainstream media must put their own house in order. They need to be supported, encouraged and empowered in this by their readers, viewers and users.

Robin Richardson (robin@insted.co.uk)

Slide 1


My neighbor Ahmed: how different and apart are we?

International Federation of Liberal Youth
Respect for religious diversity: fighting Islamophobia
Budapest 25th April 2007

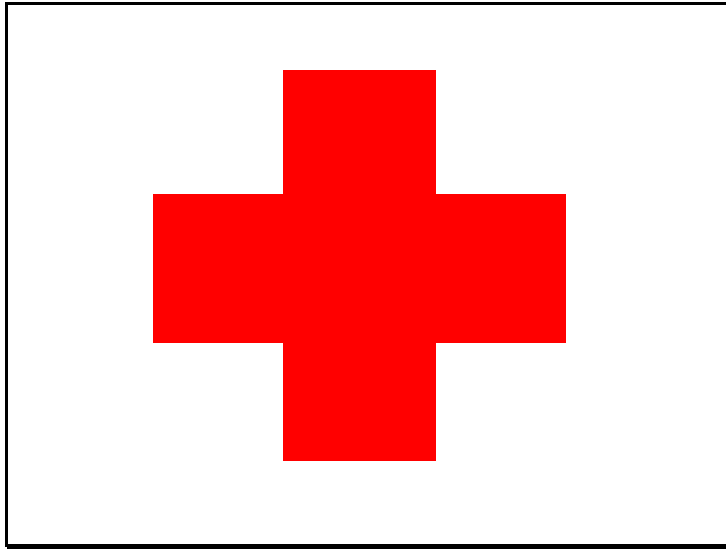
Ali Chahine

Slide 2

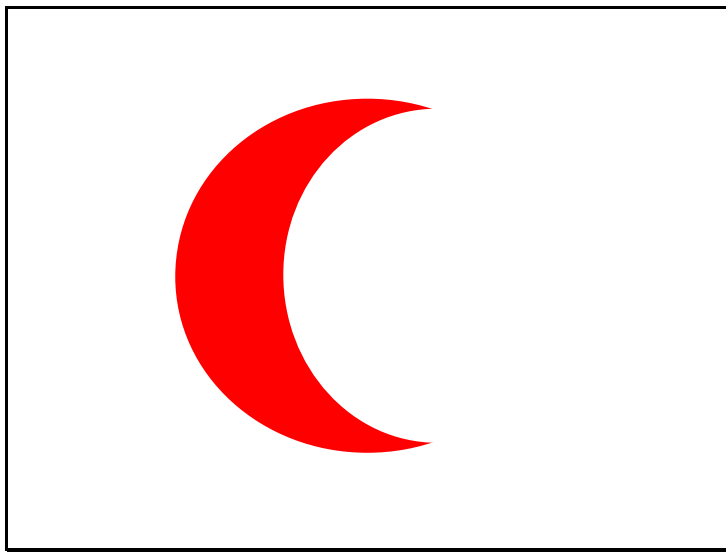
Who is Ahmed?



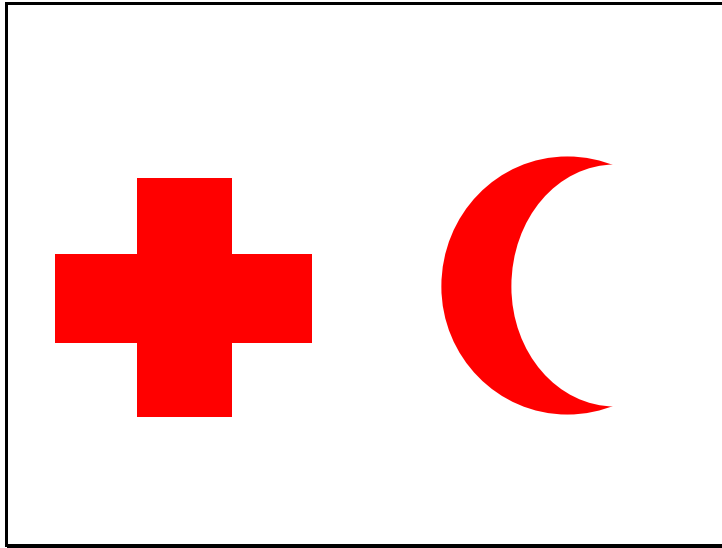
Slide 3



Slide 4



Slide 5



Slide 6

OUTLINE: Spatial Segregation

During the coming hour we will:

- Identify Spatial Segregation
- List its four determinants
- Present its disadvantages and advantages
- List its two main types

Slide 7

Defining Segregation

A group is completely mixed when its members are distributed uniformly relative to rest of population.

Spatial segregation is when an area shows over or under representation of a certain ethnic or social group.

Segregation Index is % of people of certain group need to leave in order to make it non-segregated.

Slide 8

Defining Segregation

Spatial Segregation is identified by:

- 1- Distribution of minorities through a certain urban space.
- 2- Mobility level of the minorities.
- 3- Accessibility level to the urban resources.

Slide 9

Segregation

Segregation is a consequence of culturally, economically and political globalized world. Immigrants are the main feature on the emerging "internationalism".

Segregation is a dynamic phenomenon affecting cities composition and inter-group dynamics. It is becoming more dominant on the political agenda.

Differentiate between ethnic-based and class-based segregation.

Slide 10

Determinants of Segregation

A composition of the following interrelated factors:

- 1- Economic: spatial concentration reflects financial status, "entry point" for new immigrants until adjusted.
- 2- Institutional: discrimination of public and private sector as well housing market.
- 3- Individual: individual preference to stay in homogenous neighborhood. Influenced by individual background (education, age, wealth,...).
- 4- Cultural: voluntary segregation of minorities to live together and preserve cultural, religious and linguistic distinctiveness (IDENTITY THEORY).

Slide 11

Determinants of Segregation

The "Tipping Point" is the portion of foreign population natives can accept before the better-off inhabitants will leave the area leaving more space for new arrivals.



Slide 12

What Immigrants seek in their Concentrated Neighborhoods:

- 1- Facilitate intra-community interaction:
 - Social support,
 - Acquire skills to integrate in labor market,
 - Link with already migrated extended families,
 - Future breeding
- 2- Sustain their group identity and culture
- 3- Use of community-focused facilities:
 - Mosque,
 - Language schools,
 - Islam schools,
 - Halal grocery and butchery

"Boundedness": Inability to move out of class affiliation even if someone desire to or wish it for his/her children.

Slide 13

Disadvantages of Residential Segregation

- 1- Delays or obstruct Integration due to less peer interaction.
- 2- Dissatisfaction of non-immigrants in the area and social tension "time bomb".
- 3- Increasing stigma facing the concentrated area and its inhabitants.
- 4- Deterioration of housing conditions, higher unemployment, higher dependency on social assistance .
- 5- Barriers of benefit from the urban resources and facilities and hamper social mobility.

Slide 14

Advantages of Residential Segregation

- 1- Preserves cultural identity.
- 2- Acts a shelter against social discrimination.
- 3- Facilitate intra-ethnic support.

Slide 15

Types of Residential Segregation

"Ghetto": a spatial area of concentration used by forces within the society to separate or limit a particular population. It includes dominant coercion either direct or indirect.

Ghetto aims to:

- 1) Maximize the profit extracted from the group.
- 2) Minimize its contact/interaction with its members.

"Enclaves" or "Neighborhoods" is a spatial concentration in which a group gathers as means for protecting and enhancing economic, social, political and cultural development. There is a voluntary aspect.

Slide 16

Types of Residential Segregation

Segregation in Europe is mainly at blocks and quarters level not districts and cities level.

The inter mix of more than one minority in an enclave dilutes the segregation affects.

"Enclaves" or "Neighborhoods" is a spatial concentration in which a group gathers as means for protecting and enhancing economic, social, political and cultural development. There is a voluntary aspect.

Slide 17

European States face different patterns of segregation due to different structure, housing markets, immigrants background and government policies, BUT, ...

.... they all have a spatial dimension of the social segregation and face increasing stigma against the segregated areas and their inhabitants.



Slide 18

So is Ahmed different or we are apart?

Thank You!!

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