# STUDY GUIDE -OIC

## Organisation Of Islamic Cooperation

**AGENDA: THE ISSUE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA**

## A Message from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It's our distinct pleasure to welcome you to the Asian Model United Nations Conference 2016!

We are really looking forward to orchestrating a simulation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is undoubtedly one of the most essential committees to discuss the major problems faced by a certain community of people!

The topic selected for discussion i.e the Issue of Islamophobia, the day to day issue that we face or the people we know face is certainly important for the discussion, which is why we selected this topic of Islamophobia. We invite you to step into the shoes of a diplomat to debate and negotiate one of the most hotly contested and potentially underrated issues of our generation, while interacting with a diverse and experienced group of fellow delegates. As the vast majority of the remainder of this guide deals with the aforementioned issue we won't bore you with any brief summaries in this particular section. However, we do hope that you enjoy the Background Guide as we have worked hard to cover the agenda in a detailed manner while ensuring that none of the sections are overly long.

We sincerely hope that this conference shall be an unforgettable experience for all of us and that, at the end of two days, all of us would have learnt something new.

Feel free to get in touch with us in case you have any queries!

Your Executive Board,

Harishankar Padmanabhan – Chairperson

Karthik Sivakumar-Vice chairperson

Shelly Bharathy- Director

## Committee History

"And those who believe and do good are made to enter gardens, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them by their Lord's permission; their greeting therein is, Peace!" – The Holy Qur'an 14:231

## Introduction

With over 1.5 billion followers, Islam is the world's second largest religion and is the fastest growing in Europe and North America.While it remains incredibly diverse around the globe, the idea of a singular, unified Islamic community, or Ummah, is the guiding force behind the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).The OIC is the second-largest intergovernmental organization aside from the United Nations (UN) with 57 Member States from Africa, the Middle East, Europe, the Caucasus, and Southeast Asia, and several Observers, including the UN, League of Arab States, African Union (AU), Non-Aligned Movement, and the Economic Cooperation Organization.Any Member State of the UN can apply for membership to the OIC as long as said state has a Muslim majority, abides by the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC Charter), and is approved by consensus by the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). The OIC was first established in Rabat, Morocco on September 25, 1969, following a summit of Muslim foreign ministers organized in response to the arson of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.This summit in Rabat eventually lead to the establishment of an intergovernmental organization tasked with being the "collective voice of the Muslim world," and in 1970, the first meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where a permanent secretariat and secretary general were selected from the original 25 Member States presentThe OIC Charter was formally adopted and registered in conformity with the UN on

February 1, 1974. A revised OIC Charter was adopted on March 14, 2008 in Dakar, Senegal. On June 28, 2011 the organization officially changed its name from the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to reflect is changing priorities and goals.

## The OIC Charter

The OIC Charter, similar to the Charter of the United Nations (UN Charter), seeks to establish a connective document between all Member States and, uniquely, establish "bonds of fraternity and solidarity." The OIC Charter affirms the principles of the UN Charter and international law, particularly in regards to the rights of people and the right of self-determination and non-interference in the affairs of individual Member States. The OIC Charter also calls for all Member States to "uphold and promote, at the national and international levels" good governance principles, democratic values, human rights and basic freedoms, the rule of law, and perhaps most paramount, to protect and defend Islam and combat all forms of defamation, Islamophobia, discrimination, and to "encourage dialogue among civilizations and religions." The OIC Charter focuses heavily on the unification of Member States and the strengthening of intra-Islamic economic and trade cooperation, and ultimately, the establishment of an Islamic Common Market (ICM). The concept of the ICM calls for Islamic countries to unite under a common socio-economic value system, a common currency, monetary union, and establish an intra-Islamic trade zone and has led to the development of several agreements, including the General Agreement for Economic, Technical and Commercial Cooperation among the OIC Member States (1977), the Statute of the Islamic States Telecommunications Union (ISTU), the TradePreferential System among the Member States of the OIC (TPS-OIC) (1990) and more recently, the Second Round of Trade Negotiations in 2006 which established the TPS-OIC Rules of Origin (TPS-OIC RoO) (2007)

## INTRODUCTION
Islamophobia can be defined as the 'dread or hatred of Islam and therefore, the fear and dislike of all Muslims' It essentially refers to the practice of discriminating against Muslims by excluding them from the economic, social, and public life of the nation. It includes the perception that Islam has no values in common with other cultures, is inferior to the West and is a violent political ideology rather than a religion. A person who exhibits such prejudice is an islamophobe. According to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, 'Islamophobia is a contemporary form of racism and xenophobia motivated by unfounded fear, mistrust and hatred of Muslims and Islam. Islamophobia is also manifested through intolerance, discrimination, unequal treatment, prejudice, stereotyping, hostility and adverse public discourse. Differentiating from classical racism and xenophobia, Islamophobia is mainly based on stigmatization of a religion and its followers. As such, Islamophobia is an affront to the human rights and dignity of Muslims.' Islamophobia as a phenomenon has existed for a long duration of time within various contemporary as well as modern societies, but it had largely been a hidden term until few unfortunate incidents of the 21st century.

The situation of Islamophobia took a turn for the worse in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US. Discrimination and intolerance towards Muslims and defamation of Islam, particularly in Europe and North America, reached alarming and unprecedented proportions. Distortion of the image of Islam and smear campaigns to defame this faith as 'supportive of extremism' have been on the rise as Muslims are treated with suspicion and in many cases profiled as potential terrorists.

## CAUSES OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia may be caused in the minds of the people by (but is not limited to) the following reasons.

1 Ignorance or insufficient knowledge of Islam in non-Muslim societies have contributed to the development of a mind set in various strata of public opinion in the West and non-Muslim societies at large that Islam was a religion that 'lived by the sword,' preached hatred and violence towards non-believers, and stood to challenge the Western way life.

2. Insufficient dissemination of information about Muslim countries being victims of terror attacks by extremists. The lack of coverage of the firm rejection of terrorism and extremism by the Muslim world's political leaders, including OIC leaders, mainstream public opinion, and key religious authorities, in addition to the misrepresentation and incorrect interpretation of Islam at various levels have contributed significantly to the growth of Islamophobia.

3. Abuse or misuse of freedom of expression by the Western media and vested interests have caused hurt and insult to Muslims in the form of prejudice and discrimination.

4. Incitements by individuals, groups, or organizations with vested interests with the sole objective to create violence and cross-religious intolerance.

5. Lack of binding legal instruments to prevent propagation of literature and statements that incite religious and intercultural intolerance.

6. Confinement of the debate and dialogue on religious intolerance and discrimination against Muslims to the educated elite and, thus the failure to percolate down to the grass roots.

7. Exacerbation of Anti-Muslim sentiments after 9/11 by intensification of stereotypes, generalizations about Muslims, and practicing collective punishment on all Muslims for the acts of marginal, misguided individuals claiming to speak or act in the name of Islam.

8. Lack of a political will and commitment to entering into a serious dialogue that would generate reconciliation between Muslims and rest of the world.

## The Various Examples of Islamophobia

HIJAB- THE MUSLIM HEADSCARF

Various countries around the globe have banned or restricted wearing of hijab in public places due to various reasons. Though it may not be called Islamophobic in every case, but largely it stems out of the fear and lack of knowledge about Islamic practices.34 Currently  Tunisia (since 1981) and  Turkey (since 1997) are the only  Muslim-majority countries which have banned the hijab in public schools and universities or government buildings, whilst  Syria banned face veils in universities from July 2010. This ban was lifted during the  2011 Syrian uprising. In other Muslim states such as  Morocco, there has been some restriction or discrimination against women who wear the hijab.

The key argument supporting this proposal is that face-coverings prevent the clear identification of a person, which is both a security risk, and a social hindrance within a society that relies on facial recognition and expression in communication. The key argument against the ban is that it encroaches on individual freedoms. This ban has led to mixed responses. Most Muslim countries have rejected it as an encroachment on Islamic values, while the west has lauded it as a liberal move.

## ABUSE OF THE KORAN

The holy book of Muslims, the Koran, has been abused in various forms. Ranging from incidents in Guantanamo Bay37 to the most recent Koran incident in Afghanistan, abuses to this holy book of Muslims has drawn wide criticism and condemnations by religious and political leaders across the world.  In 2012, the incident of the Florida pastor, Terry Jones, who announced the burning ofKoran and the controversy of burning a pile of Korans by American soldiers, angered Muslims around the globe.

## THE SWISS MINARET BAN

The minaret controversy in Switzerland refers to construction of  minarets, and a Swiss referendum regarding this issue. In a  November 2009 referendum, a constitutional amendment banning the construction of new minarets was approved by 57.5% of the participating voters. Only four of the 26 Swiss cantons, mostly in the  French-speaking part of Switzerland, opposed the initiative. This referendum originates from action on 1 May 2007, when a group of politicians mainly from the  Swiss People's Party and the  Federal Democratic  Union, launched a federal  popular initiative that sought a constitutional ban on minarets.

The OHCHR Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ms. Asma Jahangir, made a statement in November 2009, regretting the outcome of the referendum, voicing concerns regarding the negative consequences that the outcome of the vote will have on the freedom of religion or belief of members of the Muslim community in Switzerland. She also stated that such a ban on minarets amounts to an undue restriction of the freedom to manifest one's religion and constitutes a clear discrimination against members of the Muslim community in Switzerland.

The UN Human Rights Council in March 2010 narrowly passed a resolution condemning 'defamation of religion,' which included reference to 'Islamophobic' bans on building new minarets on mosques.

The resolution was opposed mostly by western nations, while it gained majority due to the votes of Muslim nations, besides the support of  Cuba and  China. Eight states abstained. US ambassador  Eileen Donahoe criticised the resolution as an 'instrument of division' and an 'ineffective way to address' concerns about discrimination.

## EXISTENCE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE NON ISLAMIC STATES
### 1)Islamophobia in the United States

To some extent, Muslims in the United States have faced a greater degree of scrutiny throughout their daily lives since the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. 2011 report published by the Pew Research Center shows that nearly 40% of Americans believe that Islam is more likely than any other religion to incite violence. However, the same report is quick to point out that this sentiment is largely generated by Conservative Republicans and those associated with the Tea Party. In 2010, politicians belonging to these same groups began calling for a complete ban on Sharia law, or Islamic law that governs Muslims in their daily lives in areas such as religious practice, personal conduct, and criminal codes. Although Sharia law is similar to current United States constitutional law in that it is likewise open to interpretation, opponents of the inclusion of such law point to its most extreme interpretations as being the true face of the law. The construction of Park51, originally named the Cordoba House, drew widespread criticism and protests in 2010. The planned location of Park51 made its construction particularly controversial. Project developers planned to construct the Muslim community center at 51 Park Place Avenue, relatively close to the World Trade Center site. Nicknamed the "Ground Zero Mosque", opponents of Park51 claimed it to be "insensitive to the families" and "like putting a Nazi sign next to the Holocaust Museum".  This discriminatory rhetoric, used during the 2010 United States midterm elections, highlights the extent to which religious intolerance dominates the recent political debates. In 2010, Pastor Terry Jones of the Dove World Outreach Center announced the creation of the "International Burn a Koran Day".  The actions of Jones and his followers received international condemnation from public figures and entities such as United States President Barack Obama, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the Vatican. However, Jones was able to achieve the notoriety and fame for his ideas just as he wished; his idea was carried out both in various parts of the United States and in Europe. Each of these events is demonstrative of the wide-spread political and social discrimination that Muslims face in the United States. Despite having the "second-highest level of education among major religious groups in the United States" and being generally more affluent than in European countries, most Muslims still report feeling alienated.Additionally, most Muslims in the United States question to what extent they should integrate the local culture into their daily lives. These beliefs, held by the majority of Muslims in the United States, indicate that much work still remains to be done to integrate Muslims into society in a way that is respectful of their cultural needs.

2)Islamophobia throughout Europe
The presence of a large Muslim population throughout Europe can be attributed to the influx of a Muslim immigrant labor force following World However, due to the recent increase in terrorism and the "rise of Islamic regimes", European society began regarding Muslims immigrants as "different" primarily because of their religion.Today, experts believe that the Muslim population will significantly increase over the next few decades due to "higher immigrant birth rates and lower native European birth rates".Due to this likely increase in the overall number of Muslims being present in Europe, it is necessary to address the obstacles facing Muslims in their daily lives as related to the religious intolerance they encounter. The OIC attributes the recent increase in Islamophobia in Europe to the ascendance of far-right political activists to high-ranking positions throughout the region.  Muslim immigrants are the primary targets of discrimination promulgated by the polarized politics that play on people's fear of what is unknown to them.Moreover, Muslims are frequently portrayed in the media as holding beliefs and customs that are contrary to European values. This media

frenzy that, when speaking of Islam, tends to concentrate on topics such as "radicalization, extremism, alienation, terrorism…poverty and gender equalities" tends to further exacerbate the acts of discrimination that Muslims face in their daily lives. These factors contribute to the belief held by analysts that Muslims, despite demonstrating some success in academic and business, are poorly integrated into European society. Muslims in Europe are frequently confronted with obstacles to carrying out their cultural rites. Several European countries, including France and Spain have banned the use of a hijab, the head covering worn by some Muslim women, in public places. Other concerns facing Muslims is the ability to attend mosque on Fridays for weekly congregational prayer and the availability of halal foods, ones that are permitted under Islamic dietary guidelines, in public areas such as schools and the military. Finally, the accessibility to mosques throughout Europe has become a two-fold issue. The prevalence of public prayer by Muslims in the streets of several European countries is being targeted. On September 16, 2011, a law banning Muslim street prayers in France came in to effect. However, the Muslim street prayers are a result of too few Mosques being present in the area to accommodate the growing number of Muslims in Europe.As a result, many Muslims are now left unable to pray at the necessary times due to a lack of appropriate accommodations to do so.War II. At that time, these immigrants faced discrimination based solely on ethnicity.

POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED

- What includes Islamophobia?
- Is Islamophobia only the consequence of the terrorist attacks?
- Are Muslims too sensitive and protective towards their religion? Do they need to become flexible with changing times?
- What is the role of education in Islamophobia? Can educating Muslims and others about Islam and its true meanings bring about any changes in mind sets of Islamophobes?
- Is there a lack of political will to engage in a dialogue with opponents of Islam and Islamophobes?
- 6) What are the major causes of exisistence of Islamophobia in Non-islamic states?
- Is a legal framework for countering Islamophobia and promoting inter-religion tolerance viable at the international stage?
- How can the existing legal dimensions for combating Islamophobia be improved?

TYPES OF SOURCES ACCEPTED

**1. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation:**
All documents from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation are considered as credible pieces of information or evidence for the purposes of the conference.
i. OIC bodies: Reports from the main bodies of the Organisation like the Islamic Summit, Council of Foreign Ministers, the General Secretariat, etc.
ii. OIC organs: Various organs of the Organisation like the Islamic Solidarity Fund and its Waqf1, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation  (ISESCO)International

Islamic News Agency (IINA), the OIC Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), etc.

iii. OIC Conventions: Documents like the OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism, the Statute of the International Islamic Court of Justice, etc.

**2. News Sources:**

 i. Reuters: Any Reuters article that clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in council.

 ii. State operated News Agencies: These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such but in that situation, may be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are – RIA Novostia (Russian Federation), Islamic Republic New Agency (Iran), British Broadcasting Corporation10 (United Kingdom), Xinhua News Agency11 (People's Republic of China), etc.

**3. Government Reports**:

These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as a credible piece of information.