



Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

CULTURAL & SOCIAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

OIC ISLAMOPHOBIA OBSERVATORY

MONTHLY BULLETIN – MAY 2012

I. Manifestations of Islamophobia:

1. UK: UKIP candidate: “Koran is worse than Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*” – A candidate for UKIP compared Islam’s holiest book to Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, *Political Scrapbook* could reveal.



Academic Julia Gasper – a former Westminster hopeful and current council candidate in Oxford – said the Koran was “fascist” and compared those who defend Islam to holocaust deniers.

In emails seen by *Scrapbook*, Gasper ranted: “Why is it any more wrong to assert that the Koran is a fascist book than to assert that *Mein Kampf* is a fascist book? The Koran is a lot more explicit in advocating hate and murder than *Mein Kampf* is.”

Having dismissed comparisons between sections of the Koran and the Old Testament as “not valid”, Gasper responded to suggestions that **her hateful bile was demonizing Muslims**: “Words like “demonization” are just self-deception. They are being used to persuade you to keep your eyes shut. In fact, the apologists for Islam are really very similar to Holocaust deniers.”

To compound matters, the rant comes to light as another UKIP candidate was **suspended for expressing sympathies with Norwegian mass-murder Anders Breivik** – and just days after Julia Gasper herself was slammed for saying **gays should stop “complaining about persecution” and start thanking straight people** for giving birth to them.

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/1/ukip-candidate-koran-is-worse-than-adolf-hitlers-mein-kampf.html>, retrieved on 02.05.2012

2. UK: Labour condemns Tories' anti-mosque leaflet in Dudley – A contentious leaflet, distributed by the Conservative Party, had been slammed by Labour councillors. The leaflet, which was sent out by the Tory party in the first week of May 2012, in a last ditch attempt for votes, highlighted the controversial issue of the Dudley Mosque, which was rejected by High Court last month and suggested the Labour Party would be in favour of it if elected.



In his winner’s speech, new councillor for Gornal, Dave Branwood, condemned the election literature, saying: “The Tory party should be ashamed and embarrassed about it.” While Shaukat Ali, the new Deputy Leader of the Council, compared the Conservative Party to the EDL and BNP in his speech, saying: “It is a real sad state of affairs when you get a major party stoop so low by putting all these leaflets out, showing their desperation. We need to work together to promote Dudley as a borough.”

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/5/dudley-labour-condemns-tories-anti-mosque-leaflet.html>, retrieved on 06.05.2012

3. US: Vandal Defaces Sign at Marshall Mosque – Authorities were looking for whoever vandalized a sign outside a mosque in Marshall (Minnesota). The vandalism happened in late April 2012 at the Islamic Center of Marshall, where a sign was defaced with orange spray paint.

The executive director of the Council on American Islamic Relations Minnesota (CAIR-MN), A. Lori Saroya, said the organization took vandalism of a worship place very seriously, adding: “We’ve seen nationwide that what starts as graffiti on a sign escalates into harassment of worshippers, assault and even arson.” Saroya also said there had been no developments in the case since the incident was reported to police. The mosque had been on Main Street in Marshall for two years, and this was its first hate incident.

In: <http://kstp.com/news/stories/S2608131.shtml?cat=1>, retrieved on 07.05.2012



4. France: Two elderly Muslims attacked on their way to morning prayers - Two elderly Muslims were beaten up on their way to the mosque in the northern town of Amiens. The attack occurred early Saturday (05 May) morning, when the two victims, ages 70 and 71, were on their way to morning prayers. They were accosted by two men with short haircuts who said they were part of the extreme right. The men were admitted to the hospital with injuries to their legs and ribs.

In: <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2012/05/france-two-elderly-muslims-attacked-on.html>, retrieved on 08.05.2012

5. US: Israeli candidate running for Congress in Texas pledges to ‘stop Islamization of America’ – Hundreds of Israelis were running for a seat in the Knesset. Only one was running for a seat in Congress. Itamar Gelbman was born in New York in 1982 and as a child moved with his parents to Herzliya, where he was raised. He studied business management and computer science at Tel Aviv University and served as an undercover reserve officer in the Tel Aviv Police District. After graduation, Gelbman joined the IDF where he was a lieutenant in what he called the “army special forces”. In 2006, he moved to Texas. After US President Barack Obama was elected in 2008, Gelbman decided to get involved in politics, as he decided to run in the 29 May 2012 Republican Primary in Texas’s Sixth Congressional District, outside Dallas.



Gelbman said “I would defend Israel and be their voice in the House...Israel should be allowed to do whatever it needs to do. The Palestinians need to

change their education system and accept Israel as a Jewish state with Jerusalem as its capital,” adding that he would work to make sure a law requiring the US to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem would be enforced. He received national attention when Muslims in his district were offended by his campaign flyer in which vowed to “fight the Islamization of America.”

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/7/israeli-candidate-running-for-congress-in-texas-pledges-to-s.html>, retrieved on 08.05.2012

6. US: Baby, 18 months old, ordered off plane at Fort Lauderdale airport – Eighteen-month-old Riyanna was called suspected terrorist on Tuesday (08 May) night at the Ft Lauderdale Airport. She and her parents had just boarded a JetBlue flight when an airline employee approached them and asked them to get off the plane, saying representatives from the Transportation Security Agency wanted to speak to them. “And I said, ‘For what?’” Riyanna’s mother told only *WPBF 25 News* on Wednesday (09 May), adding: “And he said, ‘Well, it’s not you or your husband. Your daughter was flagged as no fly.’ I said, ‘Excuse me?’”

Riyanna's parents, who asked not to be identified, believed they were profiled because they were both of Middle Eastern descent. Riyanna's mother wore a hijab, a traditional head scarf. They said they were concerned about repercussions. That said, they were both Americans, born and raised in New Jersey, just like their daughter. Riyanna's parents said once they were taken off the plane, they were met by TSA agents and made to stand in the terminal for about 30 minutes. Riyanna's father said: "We were put on display like a circus act because my wife wears a hijab."

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/10/baby-18-months-old-ordered-off-plane-at-fort-lauderdale-airp.html>, retrieved on 10.05.2012

8. US: Kansas lawmakers pass anti-Islamic law measure – A bill designed to prevent Kansas courts or government agencies from making decisions based on Islamic or other foreign legal codes had cleared the state Legislature after a contentious debate about whether the measure upheld American values or appealed to prejudice against Muslims. The Senate approved the bill Friday (11 May) on a 33-3 vote. The House had approved it, 120-0, earlier in the week. The measure would go next to Republican Gov. Sam Brownback, who had not said whether he would sign or veto the measure. Several supporters specifically cited the potential use of Shariah law in Kansas as their concern. Though there were no known cases in which a Kansas judge had based a ruling on Islamic law, supporters of the bill cited a pending case in Sedgwick County in which a man seeking to divorce his wife had asked for property to be divided under a prenuptial agreement in line with Shariah law.

The bill's supporters said it simply ensured that legal decisions would protect long-cherished liberties, such as freedom of speech and religion and the right to equal treatment under the law. Sen. Susan Wagle, a Wichita Republican, said a vote for the legislation was a vote to protect women, as "In this great country of ours and in the state of Kansas, women have equal rights...They stone women to death in countries that have Shariah law."

In: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/05/11/kansas-lawmakers-pass-anti-islamic-law-measure455125/>, retrieved on 12.05.2012

Related: Kansas governor signs bill effectively banning Islamic law – Republican Kansas Governor Sam Brownback signed a bill aimed at keeping state courts and agencies from using Islamic or other non-U.S. laws when making decisions, his office said on Friday (25 May), drawing criticism from a national Muslim group. The law had been dubbed the "sharia bill" because critics said it targeted the Islamic legal code. Opponents of state bans said they could nullify wills or legal contracts between Muslims. Supporters said the law would reassure foreigners in Kansas that state laws and the U.S. Constitution would protect them. Opponents said it singled out Muslims for ridicule and was unnecessary because American laws prevail on U.S. soil.

In: http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-usa-kansas-shariabre84o1dj-20120525_0,6351259.story, retrieved on 26.05.2012

9. Golden Dawn MPs Refuse to Stand When 3 Muslims Sworn into Greece's Parliament on the Qur'an – The parliament that was elected on 6 May 2012 convened for a brief session on Thursday (17 May), when lawmakers from the far-right Golden Dawn party marched into parliament for the first time. Deputies from the party, whose members gave Nazi-style salutes, refused to stand when three Muslim lawmakers were sworn in on the Koran during the oath ceremony. There was similar outrage in the US, mainly from Right-wingers when Keith Ellison was sworn into Congress with his hand on the Quran. Recall that one of the leading hate-mongers, Robert Spencer remarked: "I hope there will be some who have the courage to point out that no American official should be taking an oath on the Qur'an."

In: <http://www.islamophobiatoday.com/2012/05/18/golden-dawn-mps-refuse-to-stand-when-3-muslims-sworn-into-greeces-parliament-on-the-quran/>, retrieved on 23.05.2012

10. Swiss Court: Anti-Islam group must be protected – The Federal Court said that an anti-Islam group had the right to give out leaflets from an information booth if it wanted – and the local authorities must protect them. Fribourg Council banned the group – The Movement Against the Islamization of Switzerland – from setting up an information booth Place Georges-Python during the anti-minaret campaign in 2009. It said it refused to give permission because of a fear that violence and unrest would break out as a result, provoking a legal challenge.

Newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reported that the Federal Court upheld the group's complaint that the authorities had impinged on its freedom of expression as well as on freedom of information. The court said the local authorities should instead have taken additional measures to safeguard against such an event. In particular, the court said that the authorities could have drafted more police in to safeguard the site. Although public law did grant local authorities powers to ban demonstrations from public spaces, the court confirmed that they may not do so simply because they disapproved of the ideas being communicated.

In: <http://www.thelocal.ch/3362/20120521/>, retrieved on 23.05.2012

11. Nazi graffiti on mosque in south-west France – On Monday (21 May) night a swastika and Nazi symbols were sprayed the mosque of the El Mouhsinine Muslim association in Tarascon-sur-Ariège. Police had launched an investigation.



Local councillors visited the site to express their support for the association, and the mayor has called for a firm stand to be taken against racism and xenophobia.

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/23/nazi-graffiti-on-mosque-in-south-west-france.html>, retrieved on 24.05.2012

Related: Three French mosques vandalized, Muslim group urges politicians to speak out – A



Des croix gammées ont été taguées à l'entrée d'une salle de prière du culte musulman à Draguignan.

leading French Muslim group said three mosques had been vandalized over the third week of May 2012 and was urging authorities to punish the perpetrators. The French Council of the Muslim Faith, or CFCM, said racist insults and Nazi slogans were scrawled on a mosque in the southeastern town of Tarascon and another in the eastern city of Strasbourg on Tuesday (22 May) and Wednesday (23 May). It said the mosque in the southern town of Draguignan was vandalized 17 May.

In a statement Thursday (24 May), the CFCM

expressed concern about what it called the “multiplication of these cowardly and hateful acts” and warned against complacency. Muslim and Jewish graveyards and religious buildings around France had long suffered sporadic vandalism. The group urged authorities to track down and punish those responsible “with all the necessary severity.”

In: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/3-french-mosques-vandalized-muslim-group-urges-politicians-to-speak-out/2012/05/24/gIQA2aDgmU_story.html & <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/24/french-muslim-group-denounces-mosque-vandalism.html>, retrieved on 25.05.2012

12. Muslims face discrimination in Bulgaria – Bulgarian Muslims were concerned by the rising trend of discrimination against Muslim communities, with very few legislative actions proposed to stem the problem. Moreover, analysts pointed out that some Muslim victims had been taken to court and sued for hooliganism. Experts said Bulgarian Muslims continued to be deprived of access to proper education, healthcare, jobs or political representation.

On May 2011, members of the far-right Bulgarian Ataka party attacked several Muslims who gathered for their usual Friday prayers at a main mosque in downtown Sofia. The Bulgarian government had forbidden passport pictures with women’s headscarves and banned religious literature from focusing on Islam in a move that had been widely viewed as part of a smear campaign against Muslims in the country. There were about one million Muslims living in Bulgaria – approximately one-tenth of the total population — in centuries-old local Muslim communities, not new-comers like in Western Europe, which was seen by many as a “role-model for tolerance”.

In: http://iina.me/wp_en/?p=1008557, retrieved on 25.05.2012

13. Switzerland: Priest who runs racist website faces probe – A Reformist priest from a tiny Bernese village was under investigation by church leaders after it emerged that she helped run a fanatical anti-Islamic website. The *Tages Anzeiger* reported that the Council of Reformist Churches for Bern, Solothurn and Jura had criticized the priest, and declared her activities on website ‘Politically Incorrect’ to be “incompatible” with her position as a priest due to the “Islam-baiting” that took place on it.

The priest had been involved for a long time with the *Politically Incorrect* forum, a website frequented mainly by Germans, and had been operating clandestinely. It had been alleged that the priest had been funding the website herself. The prosecutor also believed it was possible that she had been contributing some of the racist content, albeit under pseudonyms.

The Council had already warned the priest previously for her participation at extreme-right Islamophobic events in Germany. Having reviewed the content of the website, the Council described the articles posted there as “inflammatory and derogatory”. The priest got accused of breaching anti-racism laws and of failing to prevent criminal acts. Despite the accusations, she had still been permitted by her immediate superiors to continue to preach in the village.

In: <http://www.thelocal.ch/3398/20120525/>, retrieved on 26.05.2012

14. Netherlands: Dutch teacher sacked over anti-Muslim tweets – The Dutch press reported that Fioritti College in Lisse had suspended a teacher named Anand Soekhoe and would not be renewing his contract, after he posted anti-Muslim comments on *Twitter*. In a series of Islamophobic tweets Soekhoe



declared his support for Geert Wilders and the PVV, warned that anyone considering voting for leftists, liberals or Christian Democrats should think of their grandchildren (“Otherwise future generations will speak Arabic!

And Islam will be the state religion”), quoted the Hindu-supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party as saying

“never trust Muslims”, adding that the BJP was increasingly shown to be right, and concluded with the observation that “Islam is not a religion but barbaric backwardness”.

Not unreasonably, the school board ruled that such public statements made it impossible for Soekhoe to continue teaching Muslim pupils. PVV MP Harm Beertema denounced the school board’s decision on the grounds that “You can’t sack him just because you think his opinion may be offensive to students.”

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/25/dutch-teacher-sacked-over-anti-muslim-tweets.html>, retrieved on 26.05.2012

15. US: Prominent Islamophobes Identified As ‘Heading Up The Radical Right’ – Increasing anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S. had shown enormous growth in the past two years, leading the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) to mention three notorious Islamophobes on their list of “30 new activists heading up the radical right.” The SPLC found that “[a]n anti-Muslim movement, almost entirely ginned up by political opportunists and hard-line Islamophobes, has grown enormously since taking off in 2010, when reported anti-Muslim hate crimes went up by 50%.”

The anti-Muslim activists, who all played a prominent role in the Center for American Progress’ report, “Fear Inc.: The Roots Of the Islamophobia Network In America,” played pivotal roles as misinformation experts and online activists, stirring up Islamophobic fears across the country.

The SPLC’s list of “new activists heading up the radical right” included:

- **Frank Gaffney:** Gaffney, the president and founder the Center for Security Policy, has argued that “Shariah-adherent Muslims” are engaged in “civilization jihad” by infiltrating “government, law enforcement, intelligence agencies, the military, penal institutions, media think tanks, political entities, academic institutions. And they are very aggressively targeting non-Muslim religious communities in the name of ecumenicalism.” The SPLC observed that:
As recently as in 2002, a prominent British newspaper listed him with Iraq invasion cheerleaders Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, and Richard Perle as one of the men “directing” then-President George W. Bush’s post 9/11 security doctrine. **Sometime between then and now, Gaffney seems to have snapped.**
- **Pamela Geller:** Geller, who runs the prominent anti-Muslim blog AtlasShrugs and co-founded of Stop Islamization of America, has suggested that President Obama is the “love child” of Malcolm X, accused Obama of being “involved with a crack whore in his youth” and asserted that “that Islam is the most antisemitic, genocidal ideology in the world.” In 2007, she attended a conference hosted by Vlaams Belang, a Flemish nationalist party in Belgium whose party platform includes seeking amnesty for those who collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. The SPLC wrote:

Geller has mingled comfortably with European racists and fascists, spoken favorably of South African racists, defended Serbian war criminal Radovan Karadzic and denied the existence of Serbian concentration camps. She has taken a strong pro-Israel stance to the point of being sharply critical of Jewish liberals.

- **David Yerushalmi:** Yerushalmi, founder of the Society of Americans for National Existence (SANE), practices, what he calls, “lawfare” by writing and pushing anti-Shariah bills in state legislatures and filings lawsuits against alleged enemies of America’s “Judeo-Christian” heritage. The SPLC reported:

Muslims aren't the only group with whom he has a bone to pick. Yerushalmi, an Orthodox Jew, also rails against liberal Jews and the "progressive elites" he says they influence. **He's described blacks as "the most murderous of peoples" and reportedly once called for undocumented immigrants to be placed in "special criminal camps," detained for three years, and then deported.**

The prominent role given to Islamophobes in the SPLC's list underscores the anti-Muslim sentiments which had emerged on right-wing media outlets, Washington think tanks like the Center for Security Policy and the "anti-Shariah" legislation which had swept across more than two-dozen states.

In: <http://thinkprogress.org/security/2012/05/24/489647/splc-islamophobes-radical-right/>, retrieved on 26.05.2012, emphasis in the original

16. UK: Racist vandals hit Muslim community centre – Vandals struck at a Preston community centre



and daubed the walls with racist graffiti. The Hamaara Centre, at the rear of Castleton Road, Deepdale, Preston, was broken into and windows and furniture were smashed by the offenders. The centre, run by Preston Muslim Forum, was used for English classes, youth clubs and mother and toddler groups.

The vandals were believed to have entered the premises using the rear shutter and they caused extensive damage including the smashing of windows and damaging the table tennis table, snooker table, storage cupboard and furniture and toys used

by the mother and toddler group. Paint was also sprayed on the walls and racist graffiti including the Nazi Swastika symbols was scrawled all over the walls.

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/28/racist-vandals-hit-muslim-community-centre.html>, retrieved on 29.05.2012

17. US: Judge's ruling stops construction of Tenn. Mosque – Construction of a Tennessee mosque that had been strongly opposed by critics of Islam likely would be stopped after a judge ruled Tuesday (29 May) that local officials did not give the public adequate notice before the meeting where it was approved. Chancellor Robert Corlew found that the Rutherford County Planning Commission did not do enough to inform the public of the May 2010 meeting when it approved the site plan for the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro. Though his ruling voided the approval, he noted there was nothing stopping the commission from reconsidering the issue and voting on the mosque site plan again, as long as any action they would take would be for "non-discriminatory reasons".

Saleh Sbenaty, a spokesman for the mosque, said the ruling was disappointing but his group remained committed to building the Islamic center. They had been worshipping for many years at a smaller site in Murfreesboro, a booming city of about 100,000 people southeast of Nashville.

Lead plaintiff Kevin Fisher wrote in an email, "Justice is served". The opponents of the Tennessee mosque had fought for two years to stop construction. During lengthy hearings in 2010, they presented testimony that in effect put Islam on trial. A string of witnesses questioned whether Islam was a legitimate religion and promoted a theory that American Muslims wanted to replace the Constitution with extremist Islamic law and the mosque was a part of that plot. The judge dismissed those allegations but held a trial on the narrower claim that the public meeting law was violated because meeting notice was not adequate. The meeting notice was published in the *Murfreesboro Post*, a free weekly newspaper that had a circulation of about 21,000 at the time of the legal advertisement was placed. The ruling noted that only about 196 papers were placed in racks in unincorporated areas of the county, despite the fact that approximately one-third of the county's more than 250,000 people live in those areas. State law requires that local governments provide "adequate public notice" for meetings, without defining what was adequate.

In: <http://online.wsj.com/article/AP594b0712608746a08de2f854a7605720.html>, retrieved on 30.05.2012

Related: Islamic Center of Murfreesboro: judge says construction can proceed – Construction of a controversial mosque in Murfreesboro could continue. Earlier, a judge said county commissioners did not give proper notice before approving the new Islamic Center of Murfreesboro. But a new court order out on 1st June said it did not mean work had to stop on the new mosque.



Meanwhile, the mosque's first phase of construction is set to finish in July 2012.

In: [http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-](http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/6/1/islamic-center-of-murfreesboro-judge-says-construction-can-p.html)

[watch/2012/6/1/islamic-center-of-murfreesboro-judge-says-construction-can-p.html](http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/6/1/islamic-center-of-murfreesboro-judge-says-construction-can-p.html), retrieved on 01.06.2012

I.I. On US Military Islamophobic Trainings:

1. Military class suspended for view on Islam – A course for U.S. military officers had been teaching that America's enemy was Islam in general, not just terrorists, and suggesting that the country might ultimately have to obliterate the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina without regard for civilian deaths, following World War II precedents of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima or the allied firebombing of Dresden.

The Pentagon suspended the course in late April 2012 when a student objected to the material. The FBI also changed some agent training in 2011 after discovering that it, too, was critical of Islam. The teaching in the military course was counter to repeated assertions by U.S. officials over the last decade that the U.S. is at war against Islamic extremists — not the religion.

Here are some excerpts of statements from the course by instructor, Army. Lt. Col. Matthew Dooley:

- "They hate everything you stand for and will never coexist with you, unless you submit."
- "Islam as it currently defines itself is an ideology rather than solely a religion with the normally associated protections we afford such beliefs."
- "It is therefore time for the United States to make our true intentions clear. This barbaric ideology will no longer be tolerated. Islam must change or we will facilitate its self-destruction."
- "The United States has come to accept that radical 'true Islam' is both a political and military enemy to free people throughout the world."
- Possible outcomes of an anti-Islam campaign: "Saudi Arabia threatened with starvation, Mecca and Medina destroyed, Islam reduced to cult status."

Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey said that Dooley still worked for the college, but was no longer teaching, and added that the course was suspended after it had received a student complaint, and within days Dempsey ordered all service branches to review their training to ensure other courses did not use anti-Islamic material. On Thursday (10 May), Dempsey said the material in the Norfolk course was counter to American "appreciation for religious freedom and cultural awareness." He also said when asked about the matter at a Pentagon news conference: "It was just totally objectionable, against our values, and it wasn't academically sound... This wasn't about ... pushing back on liberal thought; this was objectionable, academically irresponsible."

In: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/05/10/military-class-suspended-for-its-view-on-islam/>

&

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/excerpts-of-anti-islamic-military-course/2012/05/10/gIQAruoOGU_story.html, retrieved on 12.05.2012

2. *Al-Jazeera*: Second anti-Islam military curriculum surfaces – As the Pentagon reviewed all military classes following the disclosure of one that advocated “total war” against Muslims, the news website *Al-Jazeera* reported Saturday (12 May) that it had received materials from a similar course and that both were put together by the same group, a nonprofit that offers classes and workshops to military and government officials. *Al-Jazeera* said it received course slides from an unnamed military officer who said “this bigoted conspiracy cabal is both disgusting and so deeply un-American.”

Al-Jazeera said that the slides gave the impression that Hamas extremists had infiltrated the U.S. government, media and education via U.S. Islamic groups like the Council on American-Islamic Relations. The documents indicated the two courses were prepared by the consulting firm Strategic Engagement Group, which its website did include statements similar to those in the materials cited by *Al-Jazeera*, *msnbc.com* found.

The firm’s website stated its president, E.J. Kimball, was formerly a foreign policy counsel to Rep. Sue Myrick, R-N.C., and created the bipartisan Congressional Anti-Terrorism Caucus. Myrick earlier wrote to Pentagon chief Leon Panetta voicing her concern that “the political nature of these (class) reviews might inadvertently weaken” military training, *Al-Jazeera* noted. Stephen Coughlin, VP of strategic communication initiatives, was described as “the leading expert in the United States on Islamic Doctrine” and a U.S. Army Reserve major with military intelligence expertise. The group said it formed in 2010 “for the purpose of exposing and defeating efforts to subvert the United States Constitution and subjugate the American People.” *Al-Jazeera* added that the slides indicated the course was approved by two retired three-star generals and former CIA Director James Woolsey.

In: http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/05/12/11675222-al-jazeera-second-anti-islam-military-curriculum-surfaces?lite, retrieved on 13.05.2012

3. EXCLUSIVE: Class Materials From Military’s Anti-Islam Class Repeatedly Cite Islamophobic Authors – The “Islamophobia network,” discussed in the Center for American Progress’s report, “Fear, Inc.” played a prominent role in many of the 266 documents acquired by *ThinkProgress* in the course for U.S. military officers had been teaching that America’s enemy was Islam. Islamophobic “misinformation experts” — as they’re defined in “Fear, Inc.” — cited in Army teaching materials included:

Robert Spencer – 34 mentions across 8 documents (his blog, JihadWatch.org, was cited 11 times across 7 documents): Spencer is the co-founder of Stop Islamization of America and the director of JihadWatch.org. He has argued that “traditional Islam itself is not moderate or peaceful. Spencer is prominent pseudo-intellectual in the “counter jihad” blogging community who argues that Islam is inherently violent. He said: “It is the only major world religion with a developed doctrine and tradition of warfare against unbelievers.”

Steven Emerson – 16 mentions across 4 documents: Emerson is the founder of the Investigative Project on Terrorism and a former journalist at U.S. News & World Report and CNN. His greatest notoriety came from prematurely declaring that Oklahoma City bombing was committed by Muslims. The actual culprit was right-wing anti-government militant Timothy McVeigh. Emerson told his followers that “Nearly all of the Islamic organizations in the United States that define themselves as religiously or culturally Muslim in character have, today, been totally captured or dominated by radical fundamentalist elements.”

Center for Security Policy (CSP) – 60 mentions across 3 documents: CSP is led by notorious Islamophobe Frank Gaffney and produced the report, “Shariah: The Threat to America” which had served as the blueprint for “anti-Shariah” legislation across US.

David Yerushalmi – 9 mentions across 3 documents: Yerushalmi is general counsel for CSP, a co-author of “Shariah: The Threat to America” and the founder of Society of Americans for National

Existence. The Anti-Defamation League concluded that he had a “record of anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and anti-black bigotry.”

Daniel Pipes – 50 mentions across 10 documents (his organization, Middle East Forum, was cited 39 times across 10 documents): Pipes, the director of Middle East Forum, is increasingly strident about the supposed threat posed by Islam and Muslims in America. He argued: “All immigrants bring exotic customs and attitudes, but Muslim customs are more troublesome than most.”

Finally, right-wing news publications were frequently cited in the training materials acquired by *ThinkProgress*. *The Washington Times* was cited 76 times across 16 documents; *The National Review* 130 times across 6 documents and *Fox News* 130 times across six documents.

Instructors’ reliance on far-right thinktanks and experts added to the increasingly disturbing portrait of counter-terrorism instruction at the Joint Forces Staff College, portraying the West as at war with Islam and Muslims. The sheer frequency of citations in the course materials raised questions that hopefully would be answered by an investigation launched at the behest of Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey, who admirably said the questionable course material was “totally objectionable, against our values, and it wasn’t academically sound.”

In: <http://thinkprogress.org/security/2012/05/14/482667/exclusive-islamophobia-network-cited-liberally-in-military-anti-islam-class-materials/?mobile=nc>, retrieved on 15.05.2012

4. Rep. Peter King on NYPD Muslim Surveillance: “There Is No Profiling” – Representative Peter King (R-NY) said Monday (14 May) during an appearance on CNN’s *Starting Point with Soledad O’Brien* that “there is no racial profiling” by the New York Police Department. *The New Yorker*’s Ryan Lizza asked King first what he thought of profiling as a practice, and then insinuated that perhaps King’s staunch defense of everything NYPD did was problematic.

House Democrats on Thursday (10 May) introduced a resolution calling on the NYPD to end programs that infiltrated mosques and spied on innocent Muslims. King responded to Lizza: “First of all, there is no profiling. And that’s the absolute nonsense that people like you and others are propagating.” Lizza quickly defended his question: “I’m not propagating anything...I’m just telling you that there’s been some very good questions raised about what the NYPD’s doing.” King replied: “I’m telling you there is no profiling. So, I want you to take that back....You have no evidence of profiling at all. They use terms like profiling, spying, casually and cavalierly. And you don’t know what you’re talking about.” And when guest anchor Brooke Baldwin interjected that Lizza was just bringing up some valid points, King responded emphatically: “They’re not valid points!”

King and fellow New York Republican Rep. Bob Turner demanded Democrats apologize for the resolution Friday (11 May), issuing a statement that read: “We are utterly dumbfounded and shocked that after such a slanderous attack, the overwhelming majority of congressional Democrats and the entire Democratic leadership voted for the Holt amendment and against the NYPD. We believe the Democrats owe New York and the NYPD an explanation for their shameful surrender to political correctness.”

In: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/14/rep-peter-king-on-nypd-muslim-spying-cnn_n_1514703.html, retrieved on 15.05.2012

5. FBI works to stop discrimination of Muslims – As the American public read of yet another report released on governmental surveillance of Muslim American communities, it was refreshing to know that for the first time since the 9/11 attacks, the US Senate Judiciary Committee, along with various state legislatures and federal agencies, were directly addressing long-held public concerns about racial and religious profiling – a practice within law enforcement that relied solely on race, religion or ethnicity to determine possible criminal activity. With these recent developments, could we finally be seeing the beginning of the end of racial and religious profiling in America?

The Senate hearing on racial profiling, initiated by Illinois Senator Richard Durbin, took place in conjunction with Durbin's co-sponsored bill, the "End Racial Profiling Act of 2011" (ERPA), on 17 April. Racial and religious profiling had become a particularly sensitive issue for Muslim Americans in the past decade, although it affected multiple racial, ethnic and religious minority groups in the United States, where some assume that all individuals of South Asian or Arab descent were Muslim, and that being Muslim was somehow dangerous – which had led to members of these ethnic groups being profiled. Such practices violated the constitutional right to equal treatment under the law; moreover, racial and religious profiling was ineffective as it was based on unreliable assumptions about minority groups, rather than criminal behaviour profiles. ERPA would also provide for additional training to help law enforcement, government officials and neighbourhood watch groups avoid using such tactics.

The political debate on the effectiveness of racial and religious profiling by law enforcement went back several decades. Interestingly enough, when it last garnered high-profile political attention, it was former President George W. Bush who proclaimed, in a February 2001 address, that racial profiling was "wrong and we will end it in America." He went even further to say that ending racial profiling practices would not compromise security. Then came the attacks of 9/11 and what Bush once dubbed as "wrong" became an excusable right, in the name of national security. "In the national trauma that followed 9/11, civil liberties came face to face with national security", said Senator Durbin, and all too often the promise of national security won, at the expense of Muslim Americans and other Americans who appeared to be Muslim.

The ERPA hearing came at a time when racial and religious profiling was being actively challenged across US. Numerous civil-rights advocates and legislative officials had called for an investigation and independent nonpartisan oversight of the New York Police Department (NYPD), after it was reported that the NYPD systematically surveilled Muslim Americans and certain ethnic minorities in the area without probable cause.

After several police officers were arrested for illegally targeting and harassing Hispanic Americans in Connecticut, state legislators passed a definitive bill prohibiting "the stopping, detention or search of any person" due solely to "race, color, ethnicity, age, gender or sexual orientation".

The decades of grassroots organizing had also allowed civil-rights groups to provide the public with better tools and technology to empower themselves when faced with harassment by law enforcement. The Sikh Coalition, for example, recently launched a mobile application that would allow travelers to file direct complaints with the government if they felt they had been unfairly profiled. In turn, these groups had been able to provide advocacy organizations and legislators with better assessments of the extent and the overall ineffectiveness of racial and religious profiling.

Some federal agencies, after public pressure, were taking measures to prevent organizational discriminatory practices. Both the military and FBI had initiated steps to review their training materials, due to recent reports of their use of severely Islamophobic materials. In April 2012, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the US armed forces ordered a review of the military's training material in its entirety to ensure it did not contain Islamophobic content. In May 2012, the FBI was to hold workshops titled "Combating Islamophobia: Truths and Myths about Islam".

While it was difficult to tell, at this point, what the standards of either the military or the FBI were in determining what constituted Islamophobic material, the attempt to instill better standards was a small step forward. The passing of ERPA would be a significant achievement at the federal level, but undoing the damage of decades of racial and religious profiling would be a lengthy process. This was only the beginning — in going forward, more legislators and law enforcement agencies would also need to

critically examine their discriminatory practices and materials while allowing for greater transparency. Local and federal law enforcement officers would need training to better understand and spot possible criminal behaviour using more effective practices than racial profiling. In ending racial and religious profiling and ensuring American civil-rights were protected, it was important to remember that Americans were not compromising on their security; instead, they were enhancing their safety and building stronger working relationships between law enforcement and community members.

In: <http://womennewsnetwork.net/2012/05/15/us-fbi-stop-discrimination/>, retrieved on 16.05.2012

6. LAPD modifies surveillance program of Muslims – After lobbying from Muslim and Sikh leaders, the Los Angeles Police Department had agreed to modify its information-gathering program on suspicious activities after the New York Police Department came under fire for spying on local Muslims. Since 2008, the LAPD had used the federal Suspicious Activities Reporting (SAR) program to file reports on potential terrorist-related actions, such as someone photographing certain buildings. Sikh and Muslim leaders said the LAPD's Counter-Terrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau should ensure that future suspicious activity reports were prompted by actual behavior with apparently genuine criminal or terrorist elements.

Under the new guidelines, information that would be gathered on what later was determined to be innocent behavior, but still remaining in SAR files, would be erased from counterterrorism databases. Muslim Public Affairs Council President Salam Al-Marayati, who worked with the ACLU, the South Asian Network and the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund on the program changes, said: "SAR is a reality...We're removing noncriminal behavior from SAR reporting, and data on innocuous behavior is being purged." Al-Marayati told RNS that unlike the problems with the NYPD's spying on Muslim groups, the Los Angeles reforms reflected police wanting to work with mosques and not viewing Muslims with suspicion, adding: "The community engagement model can work; it's more effective...The mosques have rejected the al-Qaida ideology of death — that's why it's even more important for law enforcement to partner with the mosques."

Cmdr. Blake Chow of the LAPD's counterterrorism bureau called the changes an "example of our ability to reach out to the people we work with. There's a little bit of (information) regrouping. We're still going to be collecting suspicious activity reports. The program is still as robust as it is now."

In: http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/lapd-modifies-surveillance-program-of-muslims/2012/05/21/gIQRJnGgU_story.html, retrieved on 22.05.2012

7. N.J. review finds no NYPD wrongdoing while watching Muslims – A review by New Jersey's attorney concluded that New York police violated no state laws by conducting secret surveillance on Muslims at mosques and businesses. The New Jersey chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations said in an e-mailed statement that it was "disappointed" by the attorney general's "approval of the New York Police Department's warrantless surveillance of law-abiding Muslims." A CAIR-NJ representative was among American Muslim leaders who met in the afternoon of 24 May at Attorney General Jeffrey Chiesa's office "to discuss concerns about the widespread spying", the statement said. Also attending were officials from the New Jersey State Police, the Department of Homeland Security and the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Though the review found that no civil or criminal laws were broken, the state would announce an agreement with the NYPD to hold regular meetings -- at least monthly -- to "strengthen the lines of communication." The *Star-Ledger* wrote that the attorney general was establishing an outreach committee with the Muslim community, and that he would issue "a general directive today [24 May] to all state law enforcement agencies that will put in place new notification protocols that will be triggered when they learn of any law enforcement activity being conducted by out-of-state policy agencies within their jurisdiction."

The U.S. Justice Department was still conducting a review. In March 2012, Attorney General Eric Holder told a Senate subcommittee that news reports of police spying on Muslims at mosques and businesses were “disturbing”.

In: <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2012/05/nj-review-finds-no-nypd-wrongdoing-by-watching-muslims-/1#.T8CA4VTYqSo>, retrieved on 25.05.2012

I.II. On Burning Copies of the Holy Qur'an in Florida (US):

1. US denounces burning of Koran copies by US pastor – The US State Department on Monday (30 April) denounced the burning of copies of the Koran and a depiction of the prophet Mohammed by a Florida pastor, saying the acts did not reflect American values. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters: “We find such action deplorable. We find it disrespectful. I, frankly, don’t want to give this issue or that individual any more air time here...This is the act of one individual and in no way reflects the values of the American people or of the US government.”

In: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5izes8gNULYcveFQ-Z2KSr1zzZUg?docId=CNG.ffa6ca80bf5961b55a65e3be5b02bb.171>, retrieved on 02.05.2012

I.III. On Geert Wilders:

1. Muslims upset as Wilders promotes new book – According to the largest cooperation group of Muslim countries, Geert Wilders’ new book is nothing but a repetition of his previous hate campaign against Islam, which was actually an abusive use of freedom of expression. A spokesperson for the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) expressed dismay at the publication of Wilders’ new book, “Marked for Death: Islam's War Against the West and Me”. According to the OIC’s website: “the new book is nothing but a repetition of Mr. Wilders campaign of hate mongering against Islam in abusing of his right of freedom of expression. Suffice it to say that his activities have been denounced and disavowed by the Dutch Government, Dutch Parliament, the European Parliament as well as the Council of Europe.”

Wilders was in touring the United States in first week of May 2012 in order to promote “Marked for Death”. At one of the stops on the tour, he called on Muslims to abandon Islam. During an interview with right wing TV and radio personality Glen Beck, he made clear that, were it up to him, he would not ban Islam outright. Wilders said: “I want less Islam.” At times Glen Beck was critical of Geert Wilders’ ideas. Beck said it would be better to have moderate Muslims change Islam from within. In the past, Beck had called Wilders a fascist. The interview with Beck took place in Dallas, Texas. Beck was once a star of the right wing channel *Fox News*, but then he created his own radio and TV shows on his own pay website.

In: http://www.expatica.com/nl/news/dutch-news/muslims-upset-as-wilders-promotes-new-book_224992.html, retrieved on 03.05.2012

I.IV. On Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) Cartoons:

1. North Rhine-Westphalia: Government wants ban on Muhammad cartoons – The government of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia wanted to curtail the display of the Danish Muhammad cartoons. Minister of the Interior Ralf Jäger (SPD) said he hoped such a ban would stand up in court. This after a Pro NRW demonstration in Bonn displaying Muhammad cartoons led to violent clashes between police and Salafists (more in: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/europe/456982-anti-islam-group-provoke-bonn-riots.html>). Pro NRW also held demonstrations outside mosques in Aachen and Leverkusen, with calm counter-demonstrations.

In: <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2012/05/north-rhine-westphalia-govt-wants-ban.html>, retrieved on 08.05.2012

II. Positive Developments:

1. Italy: Muslims mobilize to help quake victims in northeast – Muslims in Emilia Romagna had mobilized to help victims of the powerful earthquake that struck the northeastern region early on Sunday (20 May), killing at least seven people and leaving thousands homeless. The president of the Italian Islamic Confederation, Wahid al-Fihri, told *Adnkronos International*: “Some 10,000 Muslims have been affected by the earthquake that hit Emilia Romagna, and last night we managed to set up a field camp of tents which can each accommodate 150 people...We have helped 500 people in Cento di Ferrara alone...In the next few days we will bring halal meat for Muslim earthquake evacuees,” adding that the Islamic Confederation had opened a field kitchen in the town of Campo Santo.

Among the locations where Islamic Conference volunteers were assisting people was Finale Emilia, where a medieval belltower collapsed and a firefighter was seriously injured after falling from a wall. The Muslim volunteers were also helping out in the town of Finale Emilia, close to the quake epicentre, where civil protection officials organized the setting up of tents on a football pitch to accommodate hundreds of residents.

In: <http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/Aki/English/Religion/?id=3.1.3325292044>, retrieved on 23.05.2012

III. On Muslims in US and Americas:

1. Number of Muslims in the U.S. doubles since 9/11 – A new survey by U.S. Religion Census revealed the dramatically changing face of religion in America, with the number of Muslims in the U.S. soaring 67% in the decade since the 9/11 attacks. Data released on Tuesday (1st May) from 2010 showed that Islam was the fastest growing religion in America in the last 10 years, with 2.6 million living in the U.S. in 2012, up from 1 million in 2000.

The findings represented religious people who attended services. Census surveyors collected data on congregational adherents of 236 religious groups, including full members, their children and others who regularly attended services, with a 5% margin of error.

In the Midwest and parts of the South there were more Muslims than Jews for the first time. Researchers said that immigration from parts of the Muslim world and a small rise in conversions were the driving force behind the growth. Dale Jones, data analyst and mapping specialist for the Religion Census, also speculated that the burst of anti-Islam sentiment after the 9/11 attacks could have done more to grow the religion's presence in the U.S. than slow it. Those on the fence about converting to Islam may have decided to do so in principle. Jones also said: “Persecution is sometimes good for a religious group — in the sense of being able to attract more followers, for some reason...Rarely is opposition a very effective tool in stopping the growth of a movement.”

In: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/number-muslims-u-s-doubles-9-11-article-1.1071895>, retrieved on 05.05.2012

2. Muslim woman wins \$5 million verdict from AT&T for discrimination – according to a judge's order issued Friday (04 May), Susann Bashir, a 41-year-old married mother and a Kansas City woman who converted from Christianity to Islam, had been awarded \$5 million in punitive damages by a jury who found the telecommunications giant AT&T created a “hostile work environment” after her conversion.

Susann sued AT&T unit Southwestern Bell for what she said was a pattern of offensive and discriminatory conduct by her supervisors that began when she converted to Islam in 2005, six years after she started working for the company as a network technician. After she started wearing a religious head scarf known as a hijab, and attending Friday mosque services, her managers and co-workers called her names including “terrorist”, and told her she was going to hell, said her attorney Amy Coopman. According to the suit, a manager repeatedly told her to remove her hijab, insulted her for wearing it, and

once physically grabbed Bashir and tried to rip the hijab off her head. Bashir complained to human resources and then filed a formal complaint alleging discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and was subsequently fired in 2010.

Though Bashir's complaint alleged she was fired in a retaliatory action by AT&T, the jury did not agree, and no damages were awarded on that charge. After several days of hearing testimony and deliberation, a jury in Jackson County Circuit Court on Thursday (3rd May) ordered AT&T to pay \$5 million in punitive damages on top of \$120,000 in actual damages. AT&T spokesman Marty Richter said the company would appeal.

In: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/sns-rt-us-usa-court-muslim-attbre8431p5-20120504,0,2700634.story>, retrieved on 05.05.2012

3. Henrico planners approve Hungary Road mosque complex – The Henrico County Planning Commission in Virginia approved a plan of development for the construction of a mosque, day-care center and school at 8401 Hungary Road opposite its intersection with Wiltshire Drive. The plan called for a two-story 30,277-square-foot facility, referred to as the Islamic Center of Richmond in Planning Commission documents, on a 5.2-acre site. The mosque did not require rezoning or action by the Henrico Board of Supervisors. The approval of the plan of development was made at the commission's 25 April 2012 meeting in routine fashion, in contrast to the way the county handled a 2008 request for approval of a plan for a mosque.

In that case, the county at first denied approval of a plan for a mosque on 3.6 acres on Impala Drive at its intersection with Hilliard Road. The group planning to build that mosque sued the county, and the U.S. Department of Justice initiated a civil rights investigation. Eventually, the suit was dismissed at the request of both the county and the group planning the mosque, and the county approved a new rezoning request. In response to the federal investigation, the county revised its requirements, making it easier to qualify to build a place of worship. Henrico also changed its ordinance language. For example, the word "church" was replaced with "place of worship"; "church spires" was replaced with "spires, minarets or other architectural features".

In: <http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/local-news/2012/may/04/tdmet04-henrico-planners-approve-hungary-road-mosq-ar-1889944/>, retrieved on 05.05.2012

4. Muslims, ACLU challenge the government's no-fly list – With terrorism fears heightened following the discovery of another plot to blow up a plane using an underwear bomb, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was trying to have one of the government's tools against terrorism ruled unconstitutional. The no-fly list had been around since 2003 and had grown to roughly 20,000 names, including about 500 U.S. citizens. It was maintained by the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center (TSC), which also kept a terrorist watch list with more than 500,000 names.

The ACLU filed suit in 2010 and was to argue that the case should be heard in U.S. District Court in Portland. ACLU attorney Nusrat Choudhury said: "In the modern day, air travel is absolutely fundamentally important to how we travel on a daily basis...and that right to travel is protected by the Constitution's promise of due process."

The case involved 15 plaintiffs, all U.S. citizens and Muslims. They argued the government refused to explain why they were put on the list. It was a point the TSC did not dispute. An official told *Fox News* that telling people they were on the list would "compromise security...If terrorists knew they were on the list, they would change their identity or turn to an operative who may not be on the list to conduct an attack."

In: <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/05/09/muslims-aclu-challenge-government-no-fly-list/>, retrieved on 10.05.2012

5. Federal government asks judge to throw out American Muslim's false imprisonment lawsuit – U.S. Magistrate Judge Mikel Williams, a federal judge in Boise, Idaho was questioning the urgency that FBI agents felt when they arrested and detained an American Muslim under a law designed to ensure that witnesses show up to testify in court. The judge questioned Department of Justice attorney Marcus Meeks during a hearing Thursday (10 May) in a lawsuit brought by Abdullah al-Kidd against the federal government.

Al-Kidd, a U.S. citizen, sued former Attorney General John Ashcroft and other federal officials in 2005, after he was arrested and jailed as a material witness in a terrorism-related criminal case against another man. He contended his arrest was just a ruse to give the government time to investigate him for any potential wrongdoing. The federal government maintained its actions were constitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court had already thrown out al-Kidd's claims against Ashcroft and a few other defendants, and al-Kidd had prevailed in a claim against one prison and settled his claims against two other lockups. In this case, FBI agents Michael Gneckow and Scott Mace and the Department of Justice were asking the judge to throw out al-Kidd's claims against them.

The case began in 2003, when a University of Idaho student and Saudi national Sami Omar al-Hussayen was arrested on terrorism-related charges. The FBI also interviewed al-Kidd, who was a football star at the university and who had done some computer work for al-Hussayen. Al-Kidd said he cooperated with investigators and willingly talked to FBI agents whenever they approached him, but was never told he should remain in the country or that he would be expected to testify in al-Hussayen's trial. Instead, eight months after his last contact with investigators, he was arrested at Washington's Dulles International Airport as he was about to fly to Saudi Arabia on a scholarship to study Arabic and Islamic law. The arrest came less than a month before al-Hussayen's trial was scheduled to begin, although the trial ended up being delayed for more than year. Al-Kidd said he was imprisoned for 16 days, repeatedly strip searched and at times left naked in a jail cell. He was never called to testify in al-Hussayen's trial.

The judge questioned whether it was reasonable for the government to assume that there was an immediate need to arrest al-Kidd as a witness, since trials are usually postponed for months. Williams said: "I don't think there's any prosecutor or defense attorney that would have thought that trial would have gone on in 30 days...In fact, it took 14 months ... That's one of the quandaries I have, just something based upon all of our experience."

In: http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/federal-government-asks-judge-to-throw-out-american-muslims-false-imprisonment-lawsuit/2012/05/10/gIQAxAKpEU_story.html, retrieved on 12.05.2012

6. 2 Women Sentenced for Hate Crime Attack on Muslim Woman – Two women from Niagara Falls were sentenced to weekend jail terms on Friday (11 May) for their hate crime assault on a Pakistani woman in summer 2011. Niagara County Judge Sara Sheldon Farkas ordered Sheree A. Sabater, 39, to four months of weekends in the County Jail and three years' probation. Antoinette S. Ivey, 32, drew two months of weekends in jail and five years' probation.

The 26-year-old Muslim victim, who was walking with her two children on 14 July 2011 near the Tops Market on Portage Road in Niagara Falls, was wearing a head scarf at the time, police said. Farkas said: "This woman and her two children were just minding their own business...These two drunk, high, out-of-control women, and I use that term loosely, pummeled her to the ground in front of her children." The victim said in a later *Buffalo News* interview that she heard one of the attackers say, "She's Pakistani and I want to kill her."

In: <http://www.islamophobiatoday.com/2012/05/13/buffalo-2-women-sentenced-for-hate-crime-attack-on-muslim-woman/>, retrieved on 15.05.2012

7. Upcoming college course addresses what its presenter says are false beliefs about the Muslim religion – In the days following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Hendersonville (North Carolina) resident Richard Naylor felt the same horror and fear other Americans experienced after the incident. But unlike many Americans, Naylor also felt horrified by what he considered myths and lies about Islam being spread through much of the news coverage about the attacks. Naylor had lived in Saudi Arabia and learned about the religion while teaching and traveling in the Middle East. What he learned about Islam firsthand did not match up with much of the reporting he saw after 9/11.

He said: “I decided I needed to step up and offer some kind of factual and objective information about Islam.” Naylor’s decision led to the creation of a six-week course on Islam offered through the Continuing Education Division at Blue Ridge Community College. The *Let’s Talk About Islam* course would begin on Tuesday (22 May) and run through June 26 on consecutive Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Naylor, who would teach the course, said he hoped it would give students an overview and introduction to Islam around the world. Lessons would cover the beliefs, practices, cultural influences and history of the religion. The history would address the period from pre-Islamic Arabia to the current Arab Uprising. The course would also outline the geopolitical relationships with the West and how these relationships have evolved over time. Naylor said: “It tries to cover to some degree almost all the aspects of Islam.” He said he thought many Americans who had only learned about Islam through the media held some false opinions about the religion.

In: <http://www.blueridgenow.com/article/20120519/NEWS/120519745>, retrieved on 20.05.2012

8. Alabama Workshop Addresses Islamophobia – Facing accusations of being terrorists, un-American and bombers, US Muslim students at the University of Alabama hosted a community workshop and presentation aiming at combating growing Islamophobia and dispelling myths about their faith. Lobna Ismail, an American Muslim, said: “Muslims are not new to this country,” noting that Muslims in America could be traced to the 1600s when Africans were enslaved as “Not only were we fearful as Americans (referring to 9/11), but our faith was under interrogation and suddenly turned from ‘a part of’ to ‘separation of’...There was this dividing line that was suddenly put between us and our faith.”

The workshop, titled “Combating Islamophobia: Truths and Myths about Islam”, was held on 17 May at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Planning for the event, Ismail wanted to tackle questions and correct misunderstandings about Islam and Muslim Americans. The workshop was attended by different organizations, including the US Department of Justice Community Relations Service, Huntsville Islamic Center, the US Attorney's Office and UAH Office of International Programs and Services. The six-person panel included spokespeople from Huntsville and Birmingham Islamic centers, FBI agent Patrick Maley and US Attorney Joyce White Vance, all of whom answered a variety of questions, including if Americans would overcome the fear of Muslims in the US.

In: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/americas/457154-alabama-workshop-addresses-islamophobia.html>, retrieved on 20.05.2012

9. M.T.A. Agrees to Allow Its Workers to Wear Religious Headgear – Muslim and Sikh transit workers would be allowed to wear religious head coverings while on the job under a settlement with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced on Wednesday (30 May). The agreement ended a winding legal case propelled by the Sept. 11 attacks. The authority faced a series of lawsuits, including one from the United States Justice Department, in the years that followed the attack; the suits claimed that the authority was selectively enforcing policies on head coverings worn by Muslim and Sikh employees and that it had transferred workers to nonpublic positions if they refused to remove the coverings or attach the authority’s logos to them.

Under the new policy, any religious headgear would be permitted as long as it was blue, the color of the authority’s logo, said Adam Lisberg, the authority’s chief spokesman. In a statement, the Justice Department said the authority would pay a total of \$184,500 to eight current or former employees who had been “denied religious accommodations” under the old policy.

In: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/31/nyregion/mta-agrees-that-workers-may-wear-religious-headgear.html?_r=1, retrieved on 31.05.2012

IV. On Muslims in Europe:

1. Germany: Muslim–far right clashes leave 29 police hurt – twenty-nine German police officers were left injured after clashes erupted between an ultra-conservative Muslim group and a small far-right march in Bonn this weekend. More than 100 Muslim protesters were briefly arrested.

The trouble started late on Saturday (05 May), when hundreds of Salafists protested against the rally of about 30 supporters of the local far-right party Pro NRW, which had angered Muslims by showing cartoons depicting Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

Similar clashes erupted, leading to the temporary arrest of 81 Muslim protesters. The marginal anti-immigration party had multiplied its public appearances in North-Rhine Westphalia state before state elections in the second week of May 2012. Germany's security agencies were closely monitoring the Salafists' actions. Interior minister Hans-Peter Friedrich told a Sunday paper: "Salafism is currently the most dynamic Islamist movement as well in Germany as internationally. Its fanatic followers represent a particular danger for Germany's security."

In: <http://www.scotsman.com/news/international/muslim-far-right-clashes-leave-29-police-hurt-1-2279037>, retrieved on 07.05.2012

2. Italy: 70, 000 converted to Islam – According to UCOI (the Union of Islamic communities in Italy) about 70,000 Italians converted to Islam, a real boom of conversions heightened by the crisis of values but also by the economic crisis in Italy, as Elzir Izzedine commented during the *Youtube* programme KlausCondicio, by the anchorman Klaus Davi, who was carrying out a report on the Italians espousing Islam.

In: <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2012/05/italy-70-000-converted-to-islam.html>, retrieved on 07.05.2012

3. Belgium: Belgium's integration problem – In Europe, and especially in Belgium, most Muslims were part of the underclass. As immigrants, most had come from underdeveloped nations, many as economic and political refugees. As such, they had often lacked the skills necessary for success in the labour market. That reality, combined with discrimination by the native population, had led to sub-average economic conditions for Europe's Muslims. The social and civil status of religion was another key factor in the integration process of Muslims in Belgium. European secularism had traditionally meant that political power interacts in a neutral manner with religious institutions.

Three scenarios for the future of Muslims in Belgium could be possible: acceptance, avoidance, or resistance. Professor Jocelyne Cesari of Harvard University said that these three possible Muslim attitudes subtended the multiplicity of discourses and actions in the name of Islam, whether they were oriented towards Muslims or non-Muslims. Cesari explained that acceptance meant that the dominant Western discourse was accepted by Muslims, and was accompanied by cultural amnesia and a definite will to assimilate. This trend was marginal among immigrant Muslims. Lastly, avoidance referred to behaviours or discourses that attempted to separate Muslim communities from the non-Muslim environment by developing, for example, a sectarian usage of Islamic religious beliefs. Resistance meant refusing the status given to Islam within dominant discourses and politics.

In: <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2012/05/belgium-belgiums-integration-problem.html>, retrieved on 07.05.2012

4. Yle exposes Finns Party's anti-Islamic ties – *Yle's* Swedish-language investigative programme Spotlight found that anti-Islamic, far-right factions in Finland were well-connected, with influence reaching into the chambers of Finnish parliament. The programme linked several Finns Party members to the Finnish Defence League (FDL), a Finnish chapter of a far-right street movement in the UK which claimed to protest against "militant Islam". Reporters found that several local Finns Party politicians had been active on the FDL's website. Spotlight's investigative journalists discovered that the Finns Party had expelled one of its members active in the FDL to prevent negative publicity.

Tampere University researcher Jussi Jalonen said that Islamophobia was also rife among Finns Party members involved with the nationalistic Suomen Sisu association, which called for “separate but equal” treatment of cultures and races “blurred by multiculturalism”. In the first week of May 2012, the Finns Party appointed the chair and founder of the immigration-critical chat room *Hommaforum* to head its paper and online site. This new editor-in-chief had also been associated with Suomen Sisu. Finns Party MP Olli Immonen meanwhile said he did not see a problem with criticizing Islam, stating “Islamisation is one of the most significant challenges facing western culture.”

In: http://yle.fi/uutiset/yle_exposes_finns_partys_anti-islamic_ties/6091078, retrieved on 12.05.2012

5. Survey shows discrimination against Muslims in Netherlands – A survey conducted by Maurice De Hond pollster indicated a widespread religious intolerance against the Muslim community in the Netherlands as Islamophobia intensified across Europe, and found more than half of the Muslim immigrants in the country complaining about religious discrimination.

58% of the respondents believed that the behavior of the Dutch government and people to Muslims was discriminatory in comparison with immigrants of other religions. 2% of the participants said they did not know whether such discrimination existed while 40% said of fair behavior to the Muslim immigrants. The poll questioned 700 Muslim adults face-to-face and by the telephone on 22-25 April 2012 and was published on 4 May 2012.

In: <http://presstv.com/detail/240569.html>, retrieved on 12.05.2012

6. Denmark: Islam debate cooling down – Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* reported that the Islam debate in Denmark had calmed down. The newspaper totaled the media usage of twelve words common in the immigration debate. For example, ‘Muslim’ was used in 38% fewer articles and letters to the editor in 2011 than in 2001. Usage of the word fell by 68% compared to 2006, the height of the Mohammed cartoon crisis. ‘Fundamentalist’, ‘imam’, ‘halal’ and ‘Danishness’ were also used less than a decade ago.

Culture-sociologist Mehmet Ümit Necef (University of Southern Denmark), thought the debate cooled down because there was political agreement on the main issues, adding: “The sharply drawn fronts which existed in the immigration debate, fell apart.” The United Council of Muslims was happy about the figures and thought they showed greater understanding for the situation of immigrants.

In: <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2012/05/denmark-islam-debate-cooling-down.html>, retrieved on 14.05.2012

7. Italy: First Muslim televangelist show – Italy’s first Muslim televangelist show debuted several weeks ago. The show, named ‘Min al-Dakhil Rumia’ (from the Land of the Romans), was broadcast on RTB *Brescia* and via satellite, and targeted European Muslims. The show was hosted by Imam Abu Ammar al-Sudani, an Italian Muslim preacher and activist. The imam wanted to offer true Islamic television. Abu Ammar said they started the show in order to talk about the role of Islam in the West and in Italy, from a social, cultural and religious point of view. The show also featured reports on Italian Muslims from all over the country. The show was being funded by Gulf countries. Abu Ammar said the upcoming episodes would also be sponsored by Italian companies. The imam said that the first two episodes were received well, and that he got congratulatory phone calls from Morocco, Egypt and France.

In: <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2012/05/italy-first-muslim-televangelist-show.html>, retrieved on 16.05.2012

8. New French cabinet includes three Muslims – France’s first left-wing President in nearly 20 years, Francois Hollande unveiled a government of 34 ministers with three Muslims. They included Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, Yamina Benguigui and Kader Arif.

Morocco born Belkacem, 34, had been appointed as the minister for women’s rights, a position long missing from the French government. The former presidential campaign spokesperson was also chosen as the government’s spokeswoman.

The second Muslim Minister, Yamina Benguigui, Junior Minister for French Nationals Abroad was a French-Algerian film director. She was known for her films on gender issues in the North African immigrant community in France

The third Muslim minister, Kader Arif, the Junior Minister for Veterans, had been vocal in blaming Israel for French foreign affairs problems, saying Sarkozy's Mediterranean Union was blocked by Israeli actions in Gaza.

In: <http://www.presse.fr/detail/2012/05/21/242389/france-cabinet-includes-three-muslims/>, retrieved on 24.05.2012

9. German president sparks debate with Islam comments – German President Joachim Gauck had said in a newspaper interview that Muslims living in Germany were more definitively a part of the country than the religion of Islam, a slight change from the stance of his predecessor. When asked about a quote from the previous president, Christian Wulff – who had said that “Islam is now also a part of Germany” – Gauck told the newspaper *Die Zeit* that he would not have used this particular sentence, adding “but I do welcome the intent behind it...I would have simply said that the Muslims who are living here are a part of Germany.”

He elaborated further, defining what he considered the most important factor for people with immigrant roots to be part of Germany: “Anybody who has come here and doesn't just pay their taxes, but also likes to be here, partly because there's a level of justice and freedom not available in their country of origin, they are all one of us; so long as they adhere to our basic rules.” But more generally, the president said he thought “one-sentence formulations on belonging” were problematic, “and especially when they concern something as delicate as religion.”

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/6/1/german-president-sparks-debate-with-islam-comments.html>, retrieved on 01.06.2012

IV.I. On Muslims in the United Kingdom, Including Australia & New Zealand:

1. British Muslims defend Halal slaughter after calls for ban – Muslims in Britain had rebuffed calls to ban animals' halal slaughter after a leading British vet called, in the first week of May 2012, for curbing or even banning the practice popular among the country's Muslim and Jewish minorities. Professor Bill Reilly, former president of the British Veterinary Association, called for curbing the practice of slaughtering animals without stunning.

He said: “Non-stun slaughter...appears to be increasing. From an animal welfare perspective this cannot be acceptable...However, we are fortunate to live in a tolerant society and respect the religious beliefs of different faiths and must reconcile animal welfare with religious freedom...In my view, the current situation is not acceptable and, if we cannot eliminate non-stunning we need to keep it to the minimum...This means restricting the use of Halal and Kosher meat to those communities that require it for their religious beliefs and, where possible, convincing them of the acceptability of the stunned alternatives.” Reilly's opinion was published recently in the journal *Veterinary Record*.

But his comments had been met by criticism from Muslims in the country. Saleem Kidwai, secretary general of the Muslim Council of Wales, told *Wales Online*: “We believe this is a requirement. [Halal] slaughter is quick, so pain is minimized and there is no unnecessary suffering...We believe it should continue.” British ministers have sought to change a law to ensure that meat slaughtered using Islamic (halal) methods cannot be sold without proper labeling.

In: <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/06/212477.html>, retrieved on 07.05.2012

2. UK: Leicester, Ealing's first Muslim mayors – An Indian-origin Muslim councilor Abdul Razak Osman was sworn in as the first ever Muslim mayor in the multi-cultural town of Leicester, the post seen as a challenge as Britain prepared for the Olympic Games. Osman said: “I’m proud to be the first Muslim councilor to hold the position – we’ve had Christian, Hindu, Sikh and now I’m able to bring the Islamic faith to the office which is a great honor.”

On a separate development, one of the first Pakistanis to set up shop in Southall became Ealing’s first Muslim mayor in the second week of May 2012. Councillor Mohammad Aslam was hailed by colleagues across the political spectrum in a rare show of unity at Ealing Town Hall on Tuesday (15 May) night. The Southall businessman and Norwood Green councillor said he always dreamed of becoming mayor and was ‘excited’ to finally take up his robes and chains.

In: <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2012/05/uk-leicester-ealings-first-muslim.html>, retrieved on 21.05.2012

IV.III. On Breivik's Trial:

1. Sympathy for the devil: Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Anders Breivik – Darling of the Islamophobic right, fellow at the neo-conservative American Enterprise Institute and serial liar Ayaan Hirsi Ali was in Berlin in the second week of May 2012 to receive the Axel Springer Honorary Prize. In her acceptance speech, which was delivered in English, she attacked the “advocates of silence” who censored the truth about Islam and the Muslim extremists who were destroying Europe:

The advocates of silence warn us that publishing these facts or debating them in the media and in parliament will transform the existing resentment towards Muslims into violent behavior. Censorship and silence, we are told, are the best preventive remedies against hatred and violence...I believe that the advocates of silence are wrong, profoundly and dangerously wrong.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali never identified these “advocates of silence”, but presumably they were anyone who rejected hate speech against Muslims or anyone who proposed peaceful dialogue and reconciliation among different faiths. But Ayaan Hirsi Ali had a great deal of understanding for mass murder Anders Behring Breivik, who was forced to kill 77 mostly young people because of the treachery of the “advocates of silence”:

Fourthly and finally, that one man who killed 77 people in Norway, because he fears that Europe will be overrun by Islam, may have cited the work of those who speak and write against political Islam in Europe and America – myself among them – but he does not say in his 1500 page manifesto that it was these people who inspired him to kill. He says very clearly that it was the advocates of silence. Because all outlets to express his views were censored, he says, he had no other choice but to use violence.

Yes, the “advocates of silence” left Breivik with no other choice than to hunt down teenagers systematically.

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/21/sympathy-for-the-devil-ayaan-hirsi-ali-and-anders-breivik.html>, retrieved on 22.05.2012

VI. On Burqah and Veil Related Issues:

1. Dutch unlikely to proceed with plans to ban burqas, dual nationality – Dutch government plans to ban the wearing of burqas and forbid citizens of the Netherlands from holding dual nationality were unlikely to proceed, according to the minister charged with carrying them out. Both ideas were part of the platform of anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders, who precipitated the collapse of the all-conservative minority Cabinet in the last week of April 2012 by saying his party would no longer help it reach a majority in Parliament. In an interview with Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* published Wednesday (02

May), Interior Minister Liesbeth Spies of the Christian Democrat party said: “Parliament wants to throw the dual nationality (ban) in the trash can, and if the same happens with the burqa ban I won’t shed a tear.” A spokesman for her office confirmed the remarks.

In: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/05/02/dutch-unlikely-to-proceed-with-plans-to-ban-burqas-dual-nationality/>, retrieved on 03.05.2012

Related: Veil ban could go ahead in Netherlands after MPs declare it ‘non-controversial’ – The proposed “burkha ban” in the Netherlands could go ahead before September 2012’s election after MPs declared the proposal was not politically controversial. It had been thought that any legislation would be delayed following the collapse of Mark Rutte’s cabinet in April 2012. Since then the country had been run by a “demissionary” or caretaker government. Interim governments are limited by law to policy areas that are deemed non-controversial by a majority of members of Parliament.

The burkha ban and a proposal to abolish dual nationality were both policies included in the coalition agreement drawn up when Rutte’s cabinet took office. They were among the measures that Freedom Party (PVV) leader Geert Wilders insisted on as conditions of his party’s support for the minority centre-right administration. After Wilders withdrew his support for the cabinet many of his party’s policies, such as the “animal cops” plan to give 500 police officers responsibility for the welfare of domestic pets, were dropped from the agenda. Many Dutch political observers expected the burkha ban and dual nationality proposals to go the same way. However, members of the Lower House (Tweede Kamer) decided in a vote on Wednesday (30 May) that they were non-controversial, thus authorizing the caretaker government to press ahead with them. Some weeks back interior minister Liesbeth Spies, a member of the Christian Democrat party, said she no longer supported the burkha ban. She said: “In politics you sometimes have to do damage to your own principles because other issues are at stake. Your head says yes, but your heart doesn’t necessarily go with it.”

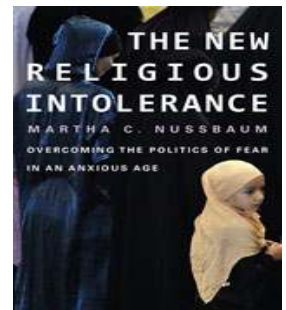
In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/6/1/veil-ban-could-go-ahead-in-netherlands-after-mps-declare-it.html>, retrieved on 01.06.2012

2. The burqa and the new religious intolerance

American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, author of the recently published book *The New Religious Intolerance*, examined the spurious justifications given for banning the niqab and burqa (more in: <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2012/05/22/3507845.htm>).

She concluded that “traditions of religious liberty and equality in both the United States and Europe” were under threat as the result of “a climate of fear and suspicion, directed primarily against Muslims.”

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/22/the-burqa-and-the-new-religious-intolerance.html>, retrieved on 23.05.2012



3. US: Muslim woman told to remove niqab in mall – Wakeelah Salaam had been shopping by herself for less than ten minutes at the Bridgewater Commons Mall (New Jersey) when a security guard approached her and told her to remove her traditional Muslim face covering. Salaam said: “He said, ‘ma’am, I’m telling you, you cannot wear that mask in here. He came as close to me as though he was going to kiss me, and then he made the hand gesture like he was going to lift it up for me.”

Salaam was born in the United States, and was raised Muslim. She had always worn a long dress, or hijab, and a headscarf. But when she was in her mid-20s, she decided to start wearing the niqab, or face covering, that showed only her eyes when she was in public. She had worn the niqab in court, and even to visit a relative in prison, so Salaam said she was shocked when she was approached twice by the same mall security guard Saturday (19 May). She eventually felt so uncomfortable that she called police. After speaking with police, Salaam decided to leave Bridgewater Commons, which she had visited before with no problems. After *Eyewitness News* got involved, an executive with the company that run Bridgewater Commons’ security called Salaam to say he was sorry.

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/21/new-jersey-muslim-woman-told-to-remove-niqab-in-mall.html>, retrieved on 23.05.2012

4. Europe: Veil ban ‘increased hostility towards Muslim women’ – New research from the Department of Criminology at the University of Leicester showed that there was a link between the banning of the veil in France and increased levels of hostility towards veiled Muslim women. The research suggested that the veil ban stigmatized veiled Muslim women as “criminals” and fostered Muslim “otherness”. Even if not explicitly inciting hate-motivated violence, the law in its application contributed to a climate of intolerance of Islam in the West.

Irene Zempi, who led the study argued: “In light of my interviews with veiled Muslim women, I am confident that the French veil ban is a ‘trigger’ event which has led to increased levels of anti-Muslim hostility towards women who wear the face veil – the most visual symbol of Islam in the West. The veil ban policy is a clear manifestation of Islamophobia. The veil ban is not a ‘religious-blind’ piece of legislation; rather it attacks ‘Islam’ through the religious code of dress for Muslim women.” Ms Zempi’s research was qualitative in nature, drawing on individual and focus group interviews with veiled Muslim women. This research also included interviews with French Muslim women who moved to Leicester from France because of the French veil ban.

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/22/veil-ban-increased-hostility-towards-muslim-women.html>, retrieved on 23.05.2012

5. Liberty intervenes in European Court case over French ‘burqa ban’ – On 22 May, *Liberty* announced it was intervening in the European Court of Human Rights case concerning the criminalization of face coverings in France: The so-called ‘burqa ban’ – which came into force in 2011 – outlawed French citizens from covering their faces in public spaces in France. A Muslim woman, known as S.A.S., filed an application to the European Court opposing the law on the day it was introduced.

Liberty had intervened in the case, *S.A.S. v France*, which had major potential repercussions for freedom of religion and freedom of expression – not just in France but here in the UK and across Europe. In July 2010 Philip Hollobone MP tabled a Private Members Bill which would have outlawed face coverings in public in the UK. But Communities Secretary Eric Pickles had described the French law as “incomprehensible” and asserted that the British government had no intention to follow suit.

Liberty argued that the burqa ban breached Article 8 (right to a private life), 9 (freedom of religion), 10 (freedom of expression) and 14 (no discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Corinna Ferguson, legal officer for *Liberty*, said: “Wearing the full veil may be considered demeaning by some but for many women it’s a precious symbol of their faith...Such controversy is hardly resolved by imprisoning at home those women who feel compelled to wear the burqa or niqab. This blanket, discriminatory and disproportionate ban only serves to fuel the flames of Islamophobia spreading across Europe.”

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/22/liberty-intervenes-in-european-court-case-over-french-burqa.html>, retrieved on 25.05.2012

6. Prince Ali rejects FIFA medical committee’s stand on headscarves – Evidence from FIFA’s medical experts on why the ban on Muslim women footballers wearing the Islamic headscarf or hijab should remain in place was deeply flawed and had no foundation, the campaign’s principal supporter said on Friday (25 May). Prince Ali Bin Al-Hussein of Jordan, whose presentation to soccer’s law-making body IFAB six weeks ago saw the approval of the headscarf pending health and safety checks, said he was “shocked and disturbed” by the evidence presented on Thursday (24 May). He told reporters: “If it is true, I would accept it, but I believe it was without foundation.” The IFAB, or International Football Association Board, comprised FIFA and the four British Home Associations.

Michel D’Hooghe of Belgium, the head of FIFA’s medical committee, said he would only recommend to the extraordinary IFAB meeting on 5 July 2012 in Zurich that extra tests should be carried out on the headscarf, crucial to millions of Muslim women playing the game all over the world. Prince Ali, the youngest member of FIFA’s executive committee, declined to comment when asked if he faced

opposition from the committee's older, more conservative officials but there was no hiding his anger when he spoke on Friday (25 May), saying: "I was shocked when I heard about Dr D'Hooghe's press conference on Thursday [24 May]. We covered all the issues raised including heat coming out of the head, breathable material, the neck issue. I was very disturbed by the comments he made. I am usually not very emotional but this is very important...There are women serving in combat zones across the world and many of them are wearing the headscarves so I am disturbed by this being used as an argument. All we are asking is for women to be allowed to play football. This affects many, many Muslim women. I hope this issue is being treated with the same respect and seriousness that other issues are, for example goal-line technology."

Although IFAB had approved the headscarf, but the decision would be reviewed in July 2012 and FIFA's quartet on the law-making body could change between meetings. Prince Ali's fear is that opponents of the hijab could sit on the July 2012 meeting and block approval of the headscarf because a law change needed a 6-2 majority from the board.

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/5/26/prince-ali-rejects-fifa-medical-committees-stand-on-headscar.html>, retrieved on 26.05.2012

7. Protest at Brussels police station after veiled woman arrested – Belgian media reported that protesters hurled bins and metal barriers at a Brussels police station on Thursday (31 May) night after a Muslim woman was arrested for refusing to remove a face veil. A spokesman for Brussels police told broadcaster RTL: "They tried to enter by force, but they were not able to...So instead they threw metal barriers and bins." Six protesters were arrested, and the woman was released and expected to be questioned later. Belgium and France both banned people from wearing full face veils in public in 2011.

Belgian state broadcaster VRT and newspapers said the woman had scuffled with officers trying to arrest her at a bus stop and that a policewoman was injured. The police spokesman said: "Finally, the woman's veil was removed and she was taken to hospital with mild concussion

In: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2012/6/1/protest-at-brussels-police-station-after-veiled-woman-arrest.html>, retrieved on 01.06.2012

VII. On Dialogue among Civilizations and Religions:

1. Middle East and Denmark: Christians, Muslims affirm common values – Muslims and Christian leaders from across the Middle East and Denmark wrapped up a three-day conference on religious understanding Thursday (3 May) in Beirut by highlighting values, such as mercy, respect and caring for the weak, which both faiths share. The conference, entitled "Building Greater Understanding between Christians and Muslims", was organized by the *Muslim-Christian Contact Group* of the National Council of Churches in Denmark and the Arab Group for Muslim-Christian Dialogue. It was supported by the Danish Foreign Ministry.

Reading the final statement, Reverend Riad Jarjour said the conference "had enhanced understanding between Muslims and Christians by focusing on common values which overcome religious and cultural differences." The statement said that during the conference, participants discussed issues of faith, common values, religious freedom, coexistence and dialogue between cultures.

Jarjour, general secretary of the Arab Group for Muslim-Christian Dialogue, said that participants agreed on a common message based on a number of principles, adding: "Christians and Muslims announce their belief in God, the one creator who unites us; this belief founds common space for dialogue in the future...Muslims and Christians announce that our different concepts of God should not be a source for a lack of trust."

Taking part in the conference were Muslims and Christians from Denmark, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iraq. A follow-up conference will be held in Copenhagen 25-28 September 2012. Participants agreed that "the deep admiration of God invites [them] to love every person and respect his

views and rights regardless of his religious and political beliefs.” Muslims and Christians shared the values of mercy, mutual respect and caring for the weak, said the participants, adding that the essential values of Islam and Christianity were a source of richness for their societies.

Anders Gadegaard, the head of the National Council of Churches in Denmark, said that the final statement of the conference was valuable, as they “proved [their] ability to communicate and to enhance common values, it is important to acknowledge this.” For his part, Asmat Mojaddedi, the chairman of the Muslim Council of Denmark, praised the “excellent climate for dialogue” that characterized the conference. He said that ties were good between Muslims and Christians in Denmark, as they “...live together like brothers despite the presence of extremists among Muslims and Christians which is historical.”

In: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-mct-christians-muslims-affirm-common-values-20120504,0,1677514.story>, retrieved on 06.05.2012

2. Islam-Christianity dialogue features at Kazakh interfaith meet – With religious tensions running high in Europe and other parts of the world, a dialogue between Islam and Christianity was the highlight of a global congress of faiths and civilizations in Kazakhstan capital held on 30-31 May 2012 and which was attended, among others, by the head of the Global Islamic League, the metropolitan of Minsk and the chief rabbi of Israel. Should there be a major breakthrough, it would match the dramatic call by Israeli President Shimon Peres at the third edition of the Congress of World and Traditional Religions in 2009 for a three-way meeting between Saudi Arabia, Israel and the Arab world to restore peace in the Middle East.

The theme of the fourth edition of the Congress was “Peace and harmony as the choice of mankind”. However, the topics suggested for debates made it evident that the focused would be on the integration of Islamic values to Christianity. Noting that one of the themes was “Religion and Multiculturalism”, an official associated with the Congress said it would “be a place for civilized discussion between representatives of Islam and Christianity on the tradition of wearing headscarves and veils by women. That is, as Christians believe, an over-expression of religion in secular European countries, where historical religion is Christianity”. The official also admitted that there would be “mutual accusations”. This was because on issues like the hijab, European leaders had urged Muslims to keep in mind the “traditions of the host country” while pointing to the dress codes in Islamic states.

The official said: “Muslim leaders are also likely to remind Europeans of the indispensable democratic premise of religious freedom and, as a result, the freedom of choice of religious clothing. Within this debate will be raised an issue that recently stirred up the British - the right to publicly wear a cross.”

And, even though gender equality was still far from ideal in Kazakhstan, there were discussions on the role of women in family and society, the responsibility of women for the future of nations and the planet and the role of women and women’s organizations in the intercultural and interfaith harmony space.

The official said: “However, the main theme of the meeting will be the role of leaders in achieving sustainable development in the world...It is increasingly becoming evident that in an economically unstable world, religion becomes a key factor. In fact, today the world has to correct mistakes of the twentieth century, when religion was preceded by mercantile interests...”

In: <http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/05/31/139--Islam-Christianity-dialogue-features-at-Kazakh-interfaith-meet-.html>, retrieved on 01.06.2012

Compiled by:
Abdula Manafi Mutualo,
Secretary of the Observatory
Culture & Social Affairs Department
Email: abdmnaf@oic-oci.org