

ESCALATING ISLAMOPHOBIA: THE CASE OF BLASPHEMOUS CONTENT AGAINST THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi wa ‘Ālihi wa Sallam)

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Over the past two decades the world has seen a sharp increase in Islamophobic events. Blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi wa ‘Ālihi wa Sallam), burnings of the Holy Quran have been few of the disturbing events that have provided grief and anguish to the 1.9 billion Muslims in the world. While Islamophobia manifests in various forms, the place of the Prophet of Islam (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi wa ‘Ālihi wa Sallam) is sacred to Muslims all over the globe and any attack on his personality is seen as condemnable. In this paper, I shall seek to study specifically the blasphemous content against his person. For this I have chosen two events. These two events garnered a strong reaction from the Muslim World. The first event is from France, where the showcasing of offensive caricatures in the name of freedom of speech amassed a strong outrage. The second event took place in 2022 in India where offensive comments against the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi wa ‘Ālihi wa Sallam) by a Bharatiya Janata Party spokeswoman accumulated condemnation by the Islamic world. I shall be highlighting the reactions and the effect the incidents congregated. This paper makes a small contribution in providing proposals on how to combat a global challenge.

*Corresponding Author's Email: hamnakamal28@gmail.com**INTRODUCTION**

Islamophobia has existed in varying forms. It is after the deadly attacks on 11 September 2001 on the twin towers in New York did the world see a sharp rise in the phenomenon. It has manifested itself in the form of media coverage or statements by right-wing leadership across the globe but the concept has existed since the seventh and eighth centuries (though moderate in tone). With the call made by Pope Urban II and the Crusades (1095-1291) we can see Islam and Muslims being painted as “the other”, “the enemy.” (Gada, 2017) Before delving deeply into the topic, I shall begin by explaining the etymology and a brief history of Islamophobia.

Defining the Term

According to the official definition present on the website of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Islamophobia is a combination of hate, fear, and prejudice against Islam, against Muslims, as well as against anything associated with the religion; such as Mosques, Islamic Centers, Holy Qur'an, Hijab, etc. It also constitutes hatred, stigmatization, racism and discriminations in daily life, on Media, at workplace, in political sphere, etc. It rests in the mind and it reflects in attitudes, and could be manifested through violent actions, such as burning mosques, vandalizing properties, abusing women wearing scarf, or insulting Prophet (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa ‘Ālihi Wa Sallam) or sacred symbols of Islam (OIC, 2025).

The Oxford English Dictionary describes it as intense dislike or prejudice against Islam or Muslims especially as a political force (Oxford English Dictionary, 2025). Whereas the Merriam Webster's dictionary registers the term first in 1923 by the following definition; irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam (Merriam-Webster, 2025).

History of the Term

While the notion has existed for centuries, it was highlighted in the late 1970s in Edward Said's publication of *Orientalism*. 'The West' having associating the religion with negative images, sentiments, and stereotypes.

With the British think tank, Runnymede Trust, a non-governmental organization dedicated to investigate race relations, published a report in 1997 helping the terminology to be a part of popular discourse (Bleich, 2011).

In Aljazeera's episode three of *AJ Centre Stage*, Karen Armstrong describes the ancient roots of Islamophobia. According to Dr. Armstrong, who herself is a decorated religious historian and described as one of the most intelligent contemporary defenders of religion speaks about why the West has had such a negative perception of the religion.

Delving into the topic of how and why Islam is so misunderstood in the West, she speaks of how The West is very much a newcomer on the stage of civilization. She continues to explain of how after the breakup of the Roman Empire, Western Europe for centuries was a desolate place. The one thing pulling them together was the Church. The West encountered Islam which was a great world religion, a massive empire, and in short a success story. This in her view created a sense of opposition. The sense of littleness, humiliation started the West off on a bad track to Islam. Hence creating a certain resentment and a certain hoping to find something wrong with it (Centre Stage, 2023).

The first case I shall be discussing is the Blasphemous Cartoons, a sensitive topic for Muslims worldwide and which are injudiciously allowed to be published after every few years.

CASE ONE: BLASPHEMOUS CARTOONS

This pillorying of Islam in the media as well as popular discourse has also unfortunately included attacks on the Prophet (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam's) character. The first such incident that I shall be discussing is the blasphemous cartoons.

Background of the Cartoons

As per the interpretation of Islamic laws any depiction of Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam) is forbidden for the fear it could lead to idolatry. Much before the Charlie Hebdo Controversy in France, there was a case of Danish and Swedish newspapers and artist published

offensives cartoons of the Holy Prophet (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam) in the year 2005 and 2007 respectively. As predicted, there was an angry reaction from within the Muslim world with protests and formal complaints from Pakistan and Iran to Sweden (Dawn, n.d.).

Charlie Hebdo Controversy

The French satirical magazine in 2020 once again published the offending caricatures when the trial for attack on their office began.

The magazine published an editorial where they speak about how often they have been asked to republish the satirical cartoons. They continued with how while the law has permitted us to do it, we require a certain reason to do that which would add to the debate.

Charlie Hebdo though has a large history of producing such content that is offending to not just Muslims. They have also been drawings in their anti-establishment satire that have targeted Christians and Jewish people. All of these have drawn ire as Patrick Johnson, BBC reporter visiting Sarcelles in 2015, reported after speaking to the locals. According to one Tunisian Muslim pensioner, *'It (Charlie Hebdo) set out to provoke people for its own amusement.'* The local continues by saying *'It attacked their religion. Make fun of yourselves if they will. But leave other alone. The media is like a car, you need to have a license to be on the road, otherwise you will be a danger to others. Charlie had no license to put people's lives at risk with their provocations'* (BBC News, 2015).

The Attack

On the 7 January 2015, Said and Cherif Kouachi entered the premises of the Charlie Hebdo office. The brothers started an open fire that killed the editor Stéphane Charbonnier alias Charb. Furthermore, as a result of the firings four cartoonists were killed. A copy editor, two columnists, a guest attending the meeting and even a caretaker were killed. A police officer and the bodyguard of the editor also fell victim to the gunfire. According to the witnesses' as the gunmen continued with their onslaught they shouted 'We have avenged the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam)' and 'God is Great'. The police arrive at the scene being alerted to a shooting taken place. At this point, the gunmen were exiting the building (BBC News, 2015).

Prior to this attack, back in 2011, there had been a petrol bomb attack targeting the magazine's offices as well as death threats to the editorial team for

offensive portrayals of the Prophet Muhammad Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam.) (BBC News, 2015)

Whilst the police were in a shootout with the Kouachi brothers, who had since shot another policewoman and were taking refuge at a printing firm. a siege at a grocery mart was taking place in a kosher supermarket located at Porte de Vincennes.

Amedy Coulibaly was the man responsible for this. He was an accomplice to the kouachi brothers and made threats that he would let go of the hostages on the condition that Said and Cherif Kouachi be released.

As the attacks entered the third day, on 9 January 2015, the police after an eight- hour standoff finally killed both the brothers. The elite forces entered in the supermarket while Coulibaly stood for the evening prayer shooting him dead and rescuing 15 hostages while the body of four were retrieved.

His partner, named Hayat Boumeddiene, escaped France. She fled to Syria via Türkiye, according to the foreign minister of Türkiye.

Reaction to the Events

There is a polarizing reaction that is seen every time such offensive caricatures are published. A reaction, from the makers who defend such depiction in the name of **freedom of expression** versus a reaction from the Muslim world that is naturally offended.

This is reflected in the statements made by Charb- the editor and cartoonist Stephen *Charb* Carbonnier, who while speaking to the Associated Press in 2012 said, ‘I don’t blame the Muslims for not laughing at our drawings. I live under French Law. I don’t live under Koranic Law’.

Ensuing the attacks, people in thousands started taking to the streets and protested. #JeSuisCharlie translating to #I am Charlie trended on Twitter. However, speaking to the BBC in 2016, Gerard Biard, the managing editor, spoke of the criticism levelled at the magazine for its **provocative and controversial tone**. Many people asked Charlie Hebdo to respect the views and beliefs of others.

Freedom of Expression

The drawing of these cartoons is justified in the Western World under the guise of freedom of expression or freedom of speech, one of the cardinal values of the Western world. However, the hurting of sentiments of 1.9 billion Muslim populace all around the world cannot and should not be over looked under the umbrella of freedom of expression.

In September 2020, when a trial was underway Charlie Hebdo decided to republish the offensive caricatures. There were 14 people undergoing trial.

The way a certain segment of French society reacts to these events defending the publishing in lieu of freedom of expression can be certainly seen in the remarks of the French President Emanuel Macron.

President Macron states how whilst this project was not a government initiative, he does state, ‘I will always defend in my country the freedom to speak, to write, to think, to draw,’ (Al Jazeera, 2025).

The cartoons are a result of what is understood to be free and independent newspapers.

Emmanuel Macron recapitulated his viewpoint after the beheading of a teacher, who during his class on freedom of speech showed the caricatures.

Samuel Paty, a history teacher, showed the offensive cartoon during a class. Initially, there were complaints from the community about the contents of the lesson. (It is to be noted that Paty had asked the Muslim students to leave the classroom prior to the beginning of the lesson as he did not wish to hurt their feelings) (DW, 2025).

One of the student’s father had asked for the removal of Mr. Paty and online asked to ‘mobilize’ against the said teacher. Further, he posted the faculty’s name and address of the school as well as a video in which he said Islam had been insulted at the school.

The attack took place on 16 October 2020 and a Chechen teen identified as the suspect. The teenager was shot dead by the police, as the former had allegedly threatened officers and the police found him armed with a pellet gun and a knife.

Counter Response

In the next week the cartoons were depicted on French government buildings.

The French President delivered a passionate speech where he enunciated the French values of *freedom of speech*. President Macron explicitly stated of not renouncing the caricatures. Furthermore, his speech reflected of how in France, a parallel culture has been cultivated by the Islamists. The values on which French society is based come in clash with the values of Islamists.

Muslims-the first Victims

In the case of the murder of Samuel Paty, the response by French Muslims was to condemn the attack. There was wariness present as well that spoke about fear of collective retribution. The trepidation is not just of the French government who is cracking

down on Islamic organizations but also from people who might target mosques as a misguided tit for tat. In France, where September Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi wa Ālihi wa Sallam the republishing of caricatures (the President defending them as part of freedom of speech), on 2 October 2020 President Macron comes under ire for making remarks that *Islam is a religion in crisis* (DW, 2025). After the murder of French teacher, he repeated his viewpoint.

CASE TWO: INDIA

The second case I will be discussing is India, specifically a case of Islamophobia that took place in 2022.

India is a country which is multi-religious in nature with various faiths are practiced in the south Asian country. From Islam to Buddhism, Zoroastrianism to Christianity; however, 80 per cent of its population practices the Hindu faith.

India has existed on the world map for 5,000 to 6,000 years. The peoples of Indian subcontinent had come together to in 1500 BC with the creation of Vedic civilization. This was when the foundations of Hinduism-the most dominant religion in today’s India-were laid.

The birth of Indus Valley Civilization regarded as the pre-Vedic age and the coming of Aryans defined as the Vedic Age are the two prominent periods in ancient Indian history.

In the India of 21st century, the second most followed religion is Islam which was bought by Arab traders to the Sub-continent as opposed to the popular belief that it was conquest that bought Islam to India.

According to HG Rawlinson’ s book, *Ancient and Medieval History of India*, Arab Muslims settled in the towns on Indian coast in the last part of seventh century. The traders married Indian women and were treated with respect and regard. They were also allowed to spread their faith.

The earliest traders settled in what today is the state of Kerala at the Malabar coastal region of South West India.

Islamophobia in Modi’s India

In contemporary India (during the Modi rule), the world has witnessed a right-wing shift take place largely in Indian society. Whether the Bharatiya Janata Party has come into power due to this right-wing shift already present in the society or has the BJP government turned people towards this jingoistic version of nationalism is a debate that is far too vast to be covered in this research paper.

What can be said with conviction that there has been a surge in the Islamophobia seen and recorded in India since 2014 (the year Narendra Modi formed his government for the first time).

Nupur Sharma

In 2022 Nupur Sharm, a spokesperson of the BJP, made offensive remarks against the Prophet Muhammad SALLALLĀHU ‘ALAIHI WA ĀLIHI WA SALLAM. During a televised debate, Miss Sharma made the remarks and videos from the program went viral on X, formerly known as Twitter. In addition, the media head of BJP’s Delhi unit, Naveen Jindal posted an affronting tweet on the issue. The comments caused an outrage which was not limited to India but spread quickly and accumulated a strong reaction from the Muslim world.

Reaction of The Muslim World: Boycott of Indian Goods

The displeasure throughout the Islamic world was felt. The reaction to this particular event was an immediate call to boycott Indian goods. 15 countries which included Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar have registered protests with India officially. Amongst the Muslim nations that which condemned the remarks were the Maldives, Libya, UAE, Jordan, Oman, Indonesia, Iraq, Pakistan, and Bahrain.

In addition to the above-mentioned reaction from Gulf countries, Qatar said it demanded a public apology from India. The 57 member OIC also denounced the remarks.

The Secretary General of OIC, H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha stated how the comments made by BJP leaders came in ‘*context of intensifying hatred and abuse toward Islam in India and systematic practices against Muslims*’ (DAWN.COM, 2025).

In India, the woman in the centre of this entire episode Nupur Sharma and Mr. Jindal have issued public apologies. While the former has been suspended, Mr. Jindal has been expelled from BJP. An official statement read out, ‘*The BJP strongly denounces insults of any religious personalities of any religion. The BJP is also against any ideology which insults or demeans any sect or religion. The BJP does not promote such people or philosophy.*’ (BBC News, 2025)’

Talmiz Ahmed, a former ambassador of India to Saudia Arabia and author of multiple books on the Middle East, cited this opinion to the British Broadcasting Channel (BBC) that making derogatory

comments against the Prophet (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi wa Ālihi wa Sallam) was clearly a red line.

The author of *West Asia at War* continued with warning that as the Indians working in Middle Eastern countries have built a reputation as a community of law abiding, apolitical and technically proficient people their standing could be hurt where potential employers might be reluctant to hire them should such incidents and / or offensive talk continue.

Anti-Muslim Rhetoric in India

This is not a single case of exception as there is Islamophobia growing in Modi’s India. The country is home to at least 200 million Muslims which lately have been a target of hate speech time and again. Some of these events have been mentioned below.

2018: An Indian origin chef made an anti- Islamic tweet which resulted in his dismissal from the job.

Another example of rapidly growing Islamophobia would be the targeting of Muslim women. A perverse mindset was unmasked with the website and app *Sulli Deals* whose aim was to ‘sell Muslim women online’. It used the pictures and profiles of vocal Muslim women (activists, researchers, journalists). The app was shut down after reports of complaints. The entire activity showcasing a most disturbing facet of society where human rights and basic norms of decency were violated targeting the women at a personal level (BBC News, 2021).

April, 2020: A Muslim congress met in the April 2020 in New Delhi. A nearly 100-year old Islamic preaching movement by the name Tablighi Jamaat had thousands of preachers coming from all over India and abroad to meet in the capital. This turnout was titled by the government as a ‘super-spreader event’.

In India, on social media Islamophobic memes and hashtags flooded X. Even the TV channels had stirring headlines such as *Save the country from Corona Jihad* (BBC News, 2021).

Surely, headlines like these make the 200 million Muslim populaces living feel vulnerable and at unease.

The ill-treatment did not just stop there as India had a thousand people charged for violating the lockdown protocol. Eight months later Indian courts would acquit every single person and said they were ‘maliciously prosecuted’ (BBC News, 2021)

In this one incident we see how it cost India problems on a bilateral level as well. As Indonesia, is one of India’s traveling partners (home to the largest Muslim community) and where most of the foreign

participating preacher were from, the country expressed its hurt over the episode in the regional summits.

Right Wing Shift

Pertinent to the case of India, the country whose foundations are based on secularism, now seems to be grappled by a new ideology: Hindutva. The ideology has its roots in Pre-Independence India where in the 1920s the terminology first appeared in the writings of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’s *Essentials of Hindutva*. (Britannica, 2025)

In Savarkar’s viewpoint Indians must share a common lineage that was tied to this land. Whereas, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists can fit into this mold as history and origins of their religion are here. Muslims and Christians on the other hand are excluded as the birthplace of Islam and Christianity is not the Indian subcontinent.

In present day, the jargon is linked to the actions of the BJP and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a paramilitary organization that supports Hindu nationalism.

In order to understand why this shift has taken place and as far as the scope of this article is concerned how the spread of Hindutva is exacerbating Islamophobia against the 14 percent Muslim population of India, one has to look at the rise of BJP in late 1980s. Speaking at the Berkley Center investigative journalist, Kalpana Jain reflects from her own experience as a young reporter attending the conferences of Vishva Hindu Parsihad, a right-wing Hindu organization advocating for Hindu society and protecting the Hindu dharma. Jain speaks of how VHP would champion building of the temple in Ayodhya and it would be an issue the media thought of as fringe (Berkley Center, 2025).

The shift starts from when the in 1987 onwards religious fervor is built with the broadcasting of Ramayan on television. Lal Krishna Adwani, co-founder of BJP embarking on a Rath Yatra galvanizing the common people with slogan “Say with Pride you are Hindu”. Jain draws home the parallel of BJP in 2025 saying it as well playing in the fear of people that your land will be taken away. Here, as an observer one can pinpoint the sharp derivation from secularism which was the foundation of the modern republic. In which the founders while thinking through Hindu categories acknowledged diversity and sought to build an inclusive country. An immediate effect faced by the Muslims in India is the popular discourse, encourages the majority to

strengthen itself and strengthen against the too much power previously given to the minorities. This leads to inadvertently cases of Islamophobia in India for example cow lynching,

ANALYSIS

As previously discussed in the paper, there is a natural anger and backlash that can be felt throughout the Muslim world when an event under the umbrella of Islamophobia occurs.

As there are various events that have taken place which can be categorized as Islamophobic in nature, all leading from defamation of hijab/veil/burqa to desecration of Holy Quran, from physical assault to online hate, each event has received a different response.

In the course of this, paper two events have been discussed and the immediate impact of those events have been discussed but now we move on to understand some of the reasons why Islamophobia occurs.

How Islamophobia manifests itself

While the sentiment can be traced back all the way to pre-Crusades era, in the modern times Islamophobia has different motivations behind it. *Islamophobia Observatory* has concluded some common causes.

1. To start off, a lack of knowledge about Islam (the beliefs and values it preaches and holds dear).
2. The common misconception that Islam spread throughout the world with the might of the sword adds fuel to the fire.
3. Islam and in extent Muslims are seen as not open or flexible to change.
4. Islam preaches monotheism which renders ineffective the fundamentals of the other religions (Middle East Institute et al., 2017).
5. It is seen as a religion which is non-progressive and opposes science more than other religions of the world.
6. The inability to understand that Muslims are also victims of terrorism.
7. Not enough legalization to curb hate speech and/or Islamophobic terms in the media and literature.
8. The influx of economic based migrants and cheap labour making people in Western countries feel insecure about their own job prospects.

Muslim immigration in the West

As noted above, Islamophobia as a notion itself has existed since the time period of Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa Alihi Wa Sallam), who was

personally a victim of verbal and physical abuse. The sentiment, even if not assigned the actual name, still was Islamophobia that has existed since the advent of Islam itself (Acim, 2019). The Crusades that started with the call from Pope Urban II, in 1095 left a lasting negative impression on the psyche of the Christian world believing the Muslims to be an ill-mannered, barbaric, brutish group. This opinion has been carried through and the negative perception of Islam and Muslims as a whole can be somewhat traced back to this interaction between the Muslims and Christians. Present day Muslim communities that exist in Europe and North America confess feelings of facing scrutiny and made to feel that they do not belong in their respective countries.

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia issued a report in 2006, titled *Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia*. In the report, 10 European Union Countries have been chosen and 58 interviewees as sample size to understand vis-à-vis an in depth interview the hostility felt by Muslim communities in Europe which has increased post 9/11 (FRA, 2025).

Amongst the youth interviewees, especially a frustration is felt where Islam as a religion is made out to be incompatible with Western/ European values and losing one's Muslim identity could lead into easier integration for individuals in these societies.

However, as the respondents' point out, belonging is a two-way process and the discrimination, in equal employment opportunities and islamophobia in general leads to more feelings of alienation.

The economic immigration that started in the 1950s and 1960s continues to this day. These communities are however, quite organized and have played a part in socially transforming the countries where they migrated. Their presence is felt as they tend to demand rights, fight for working conditions, and even part take in trade unions. Notably, the second and third generations having bought up in the country flatly reject the possibility of being treated as second class citizens.

It all boils down to preconceptions existing about Islam in the West, limited to not just the time of crusades. It also includes the encounter of Western Empires with Islamic ones such as The Ottomans defeating the Byzantine Empire and taking hold of Constantinople or even before Muslims ruling what is present day Spain. The prejudice continues with followers of the Islamic faith being painted as the *other* and adding more fuel to the fire is the media's

portrayal of Muslim. The constant negative imagery has vastly contributed to Islamophobia in the average westerner's mind.

The Western World has also reacted, with far right parties and anti-Muslim organizations that have advocated for constricting recognition of Islam in public spaces. They achieve this through means such as demonstrations against celebrating Eid, being against the presence of mosques, and against teaching Islam in schools.

One point to be noted, is how these organizations are inter connected for example, when Stop Islamisation of America on Texas organizes a cartoon contest on the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu 'Alaihi Wa 'Ālihi Wa Sallam), Dutch Freedom Party's leader Wilders presented the opening speech (Perocco, 2018).

Furthermore, these groups have strong networking as they tend to have good rapport with businessman, journalists and even scholars.

By the process of racializing Muslims, they are put as culturally incompatible and while this constant Islam-hysteria effects negatively the masses of immigrants predominantly it also helps create an unjust and intolerant society far from the ideals the West prides itself of possessing.

The Role of OIC

The OIC in 2005 had the third extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit conference in Makkah. The recommendations that were made in that session by the leadership resulted in the **Islamophobia Observatory** being made. The observatory has now been working for more than 15 years now. Its main task was to observe the various Islamophobic events that take place throughout the world on a daily basis. reporting to each member state. The observatory notes trends and will offer solutions on how to address the issue.

In the eighth report, covering the period of May 2014 to April 2015, there are some interesting observations made. Firstly, it points to the terrorist organization Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Daesh) and how its actions are misinterpreted as representing the whole of Muslims.

When the international media paints the acts of a few extremists as Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic values it creates a conflict. Saying that 'ISIS has displayed the true face of Islam', 'Muslims cannot live in a society based on liberty and equality', and 'Islam has no place in civilized society' is a terrible and misleading interpretation of a peaceful religion.

This puts Muslims worldwide and especially those living in a minority in Western countries in a vulnerable position.

Islam vs Western Values

The West of today gives significance to ideas such as liberty, equality, and freedom of expression. Many a media coverage feels that Islam does not allow and accept such values, moreover it encourages violence.

Western Media coverage

There is a hypocrisy how the media in the West covers the events should they be an attack carried out by white supremacists, fundamentalist Christians etc referring to them as *lone wolf* or *a few crazy people*. Whereas the same media would be covering attacks carried out by Muslim radicals as terrorism and all of Muslims must be on the back foot defending themselves.

In December 2014, an open letter was issued to the leader of ISIS and self-proclaimed caliph Al-Baghdadi by 100 Muslim scholars from every continent, condemning the methods of ISIS and stating how they are in complete contradiction to the values and principles of Islam.

It was observed in the Islamophobia Observatory report there had been authoritative Muslim voices that had taken steps to denounce the terrorist groups and ensure Muslim youth does not fall into this trap.

There are various measures such as;

1. In Germany invitation to attend Friday prayers so the youth is not misled to join ISIS, 2000 mosques across the country participated here.
2. British Imams calling for prayer for the humanitarian workers who were threatened by ISIS
3. Saudi Arabia Muslim clerical council censuring terrorist groups

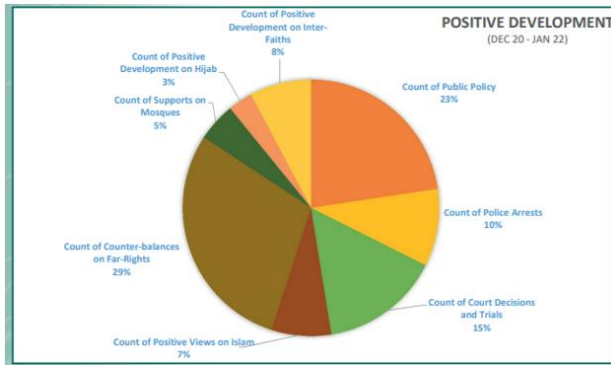
CONCLUSION

A Ray of Hope: Positive Developments

There have been some note-worthy developments that provide us a ray of positive hope. It should be mentioned that the 14th Annual report on Islamophobia covered the years December 2020 to January 2022 and was presented to the 48th session of the council of foreign ministers held in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The report mentions some burgeoning success where meaningful and swift action was taken against the acts or individuals responsible for Islamophobia. Through pursuing a legal method, the mentioned below examples provide hope to Muslims across the world (OIC Report, 2025).

Escalating Islamophobia: The Case of Blasphemous Content Against The Prophet Muhammad (sallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ālihi wa sallam)



1. **CAIR and CCIF:** Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) is an organization in France that monitors the growing Islamophobia in the country. The French government in November 2020 shut it down in a crackdown with the Interior Minister alleging it spreads ‘Islamist propaganda’. This was an encroachment on the legal rights of Muslims in France as the group was committed to anti-racism. Council on American-Islamic Relations, (CAIR) which is the biggest organization in US for Muslim civil rights and advocacy helped CCIF in December by offering them space to continue their operations from CAIR’s work space at Capitol Hill (OIC Report, 2025, pp. 199–200).
2. **Social media posts:** Anthony Marlak, a correction officer in the United States that was fired due to sharing an offensive post on Facebook. The meme with the caption ‘*Islamic Wind Chimes*’ depicted five seemingly Muslim men hanged from nooses. The letter of termination provided the reason that Marlak had not abide by the conduct required of correctional employees. Taking a harsh action proved that this behavior would not be allowed or worse encouraged (OIC Report, 2025, pp. 200-204).
3. A British journalist, Julie Burchill whose islamophobic comments on X in an argument with Ash Sarkar (British Muslim journalist) resulted in her book contract being cancelled. The publisher, the Hachette imprint little, Brown said the columnist had ‘crossed a line with regard to religion and race’. Miss Burchill had made derogatory remarks against the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam) in her argument with Sarkar (OIC Report, 2025, pp. 218–219).

Solutions: The Path Forward

The Global Peace and Unity is a two-day recurring event that takes place in London, England organized by the Islam Channel. The aim is to, ‘*foster unity amongst all communities*’ and ‘*break barriers across*

the different cultures and groups that follow the Islamic faith’. Speaking from their forum, the former prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, offered insight as to what fuels Islamophobia.

One of the criticisms he levelled was how there is a lack of political and intellectual leadership in the Muslim World. Criticizing the OIC and the Muslim leadership, he dubbed it as their failure that they were unable to explain the Muslim point of view to the Western World.

The two points he stresses upon is that

- (1) There is no correlation between Islam and terrorism.
- (2) The Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam) are two aspects sacred to the Muslims.
- (3) *When the Quran and Prophet (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa Ālihi Wa Sallam) are ridiculed it pains and hurts us. The Muslim leadership fails to convey this to the world*’ (Global Peace and Unity, 2016)

Khan draws an analogy with the treatment of Holocaust which he believes quite rightly is treated with sensitivity. In much the same fashion, why can’t we lay off those subjects which hurts other human beings?

What Khan, goes to explain is that it was the responsibility of Islamic leadership to explain that multi-religious societies have existed in the past, such as the Mughal Empire where Muslims lived alongside the Hindus or the Ottoman Empire, where Muslims lived alongside the Christians.

He moves on to speak about the dangers of using terminology such as *Islamofascism* and *Radical Islam*. Even more concerning are statements of Western leadership like former UK prime minister Tony Blair and former US president George Bush saying ‘the enemy of western civilization is radical Islam’.

An average westerner would not be able to differentiate between a radical and moderate Muslim. Terrorism knows no religion and there is no correlation between Islam and terrorism.

The Path Ahead

Amongst the solutions to counter Islamophobia, Khan suggests that Muslims get involved in the political process. He encourages them to come in the mainstream instead of being marginalized which leads to being radicalized, Muslims especially the youth get involved at every local council, local MP level. They should choose forums to speak on and the large number of Muslims can only be represented through democracy instead of kings and dictators. The future of the Muslim world should be democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Amongst the steps that can be taken to counter Islamophobia we should:

1. Wrongful use of Freedom of Expression

The responsibility that comes with freedom of expression. Globally such content that ridicules or maligns the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa ‘Ālihi Wa Sallam) should be banned. Legislations should be passed to outlaw such offensive content that is circulated on the internet and social media in the disguise of freedom of expression.

2. Groups to promote religious harmony

Inter-faith harmony meetings to spread the real picture of Islam. There are various organizations who have been committed to do meaningful work in this regard. For example; **Islamic Networks Group (ING)** based in San Jose believes in building a more inclusive and equitable America (ING, 2025).

The work they do isn't limited to countering Islamophobia it includes working against Anti-Semitism. They have expert speakers representing their communities. They are also educating people how to train to enrich diverse workspaces.

3. Bridging the Gap

Promoting healthy dialogue between western countries and Muslim world to represent real image of Islam.

In the central mosque of Birmingham, there were different events held in recognition of the **Islamophobia Awareness Month** (celebrated in November in UK) (UCL, 2024). Events ranging from self-defence classes for women to different workshops for young Muslims. Throughout the month the aim was to explain how Islamophobia hurts and effects the Muslim community in Britain.

4. Discriminatory Terminology

In Western Media and literature, the use of terminology such as *Islamists* akin to terrorists, *Islamic fundamentalists* create an impression of linking terrorists and their acts of violence to a peaceful religion. A layman might be misinterpreting and linking all Muslims and/or Islam with the violence carried out by a few.

Political leadership and those with access to or influence on an audience such as Television personalities must refrain from using schismatic vocabulary.

5. Constant Dialogue

The Muslim world needs to be in constant dialogue with the rest of the world to beat these prejudices which manifests its self all over the world in differing forms. *World Islamophobia Day* celebrated on 15 March is a step in the right direction. An NGO *Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM)* was created in the United Kingdom in 2012 which tries explaining the challenges Muslims in Britain face (Islamophobic hate crime, stereotyping). They also help start debate and help foster an environment of positivity, discussing the hurt Muslims face, and come up with ways we can learn and grow as humans.

The theme for Islamophobia Awareness Month 2024 is *Seeds of Change*. As the name suggests a small action could lead to a bigger change by prompting someone in the right direction.

6. Seeking Legal Protection

With the collaboration of bodies like OIC, those countries which have been highlighted as hotspots of Islamophobia and countries where there is growing trend of this prejudice should work on making a body or court where Muslim communities feel safe to report such crimes. The justice delivered to the aggrieved parties can be the reason others feel hope and encouragement to step out and raise their voices instead of tolerating the abuse.

Legal steps should be taken to outlaw such caricatures, terminology or any form of maligning of the Prophet Muhammad Sallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wa ‘Ālihi Wa Sallam. Such acts which are hurtful to the sentiment of 1.9 billion people but more importantly hurting the hearts and sentiments of an entire community should not be tolerated.

Whilst, there have been some notable steps taken such as the United Nations declaring 15 March as World Islamophobia Day, a lot more needs to be done to ensure that globally people recognize the seriousness of the matter and take effective measures to ensure that such events do not take place in the future.

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