



## **THE CARTER CENTER**

*Countering the Islamophobia Industry: Toward More Effective Strategies*

*Symposium Report and Analysis*

*November 2017*

### **Executive Summary**

On September 25

better understand the rising tide of Islamophobia in Europe and the United States and devise a strategic and sustainable response. Twenty-nine experts, including scholars, journalists, civil society actors, and religious leaders from seven countries participated in the symposium. The experts gave much needed clarity to the causes, forms, and manifestations of Islamophobia, and provided recommendations toward developing more effective strategies for the countering of Islamophobia by individuals, civil society, governments, and the media. This report summarizes the deliberations and outcomes of the symposium, and concludes with strategies for reducing the stigmatization of Muslims worldwide.

### **Islamophobia in Focus**

Institutionalized anti-Muslim discrimination and Islamophobic hate speech have increased dramatically in recent years. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), almost 900 bias-related incidents against minorities occurred in the first 10 days after President Trump's election; the total number of anti-Muslim hate groups grew 197% from 2015 to 2016.<sup>1</sup> This has

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November 29, 2017. <https://www.splcenter.org/20161129/ten-days-after-harassment-and-intimidation-aftermath-election#antimuslim>. For comparison, the SPLC recorded 1,863 incidents between November 9, 2016 and March 31, 2017, meaning that 46% of hate incidents recorded during a five-month period occurred within ten days of the 2016 presidential election. For recent statistics on the dramatic growth of anti-Muslim hate groups in the United States, see the SPLC: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/anti-muslim>



level in the United States since 2010.

-Sharia bills have been enacted on the state

of terrorism. Islamophobia, like racism, is a political tool utilized by an industry. According to a recent analysis by CAIR and University of California B is currently a \$208 million small, tightly networked group of donors, organizations, and misinformation experts design to advance certain political interests.<sup>14</sup> In the United States, Islamophobia serves the interests of hardline pro-Israeli networks, right-wing political forces that instrumentalize Islamophobia at the ballot box, the military-industrial complex, right-wing apocalyptic Christian groups, and Arab authoritarian regimes in the MENA region that rely on Wes

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### **Islamophobia in Law and Policy and the Problem of “CVE”**

Multiple experts discussed the alarming increase in Islamophobia at the level of law and public policy over time, especially in the period after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Policies premised on an imagined domestic Muslim threat (as opposed to the threat from al Qaeda) were institutionalized through the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the 2001 PATRIOT Act, the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS), and Countering Violent Extremism programs.<sup>16</sup> In Europe, similar expansive surveillance programs, like PREVENT in the United Kingdom and ongoing state of emergency provisions in France, have institutionalized Islamophobia to an unprecedented degree and, according to French Muslim religious leaders, legitimized thousands of raids and mosque closings across Europe. According to

entering the United States only emphasize a worrying trend that has been ongoing for almost two decades.

for some perpetrators, examining violent extremism primarily through the lens of religion deflects focus from more foundational push and pull factors responsible for radicalization. This is

the Center for dozens of variables, we have found that only 7% use explicitly religious or theological justifications for joining Daesh. Most video

with police surveillance of Muslim communities in New York City after 9/11 and noted that many  
-Muslim

- ◁ The establishment of coalitions among groups that fight religious-based discrimination, racism, misogyny and other forms of discrimination and marginalization is likely to be an effective strategy in reversing the tide of systemic Islamophobia and systemic racism.
- ◁ It is discriminatory and counterproductive to use the national security as an excuse for singling out and isolating Muslim communities.

The rise of Islamophobia is an affront to our common humanity and our constitutional principles. When fundamental human rights are protected, societies thrive. When communities are silenced systematically and excluded from the political process and basic rights are denied, all people suffer.

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