

## **The Machinery of Islamophobia and the Israel Lobby: Overlap, Interconnectedness and Recommendations for Combatting Racism<sup>1</sup>**

### ***Islamophobia: A structured, historical and systemic phenomenon.***

Islamophobia is not a series of random, inconsistent, accidental or imagined incidents that anti-racist activists conspiratorially link together to satisfy their paranoid tendencies or elevate Muslim concerns above other pressing and critical issues. Rather, Islamophobia must be seen as an institutionalized, structured and systemic war against the Muslim population and anyone considered to be associated with Islam, the Muslim religion and its problems. In this way, Islamophobia constitutes a systemic form of racism and racial discrimination.

The Islamophobia/Israel lobby apparatus exploits racist and colonialist concepts of gender and sexual dynamics to portray Muslim and Arab men (including Palestinians) as sexist, misogynistic and bloodthirsty terrorists. In contrast, Arab and Muslim (and Palestinian) women are dichotomously portrayed as oppressed, docile, illiterate and oblivious to their environment, needs and rights.

The goal of the Islamophobia and Israel lobby apparatus is to create a rigid impression of Arab and Muslim (including Palestinian) societies that are static and permanently stuck in social and cultural stasis—and, therefore, are an exception to other societies that are supposed to be dynamic and in constant social change.<sup>12</sup> According to this framework, Arab and Muslim societies are not only seen as inherently and exceptionally incapable of change from within but also defined as societies that would never experience social change if left to their own devices. Arab and Muslim societies (including the Palestinians) are thus seen as permanently locked into a “secondary” status that requires the reinforced guardianship of Western powers. Such a state of affairs leads to only one reasonable and logical conclusion to this predicament, namely the need for agents of the liberated, mobile, enlightened and civilized West to rescue people (Arabs, Muslims and Palestinians) who are oppressed based on their gender and sexual dynamics from the clutches of their own communities.<sup>13</sup> Based on this analytical framework, demystifying the mechanisms of racism, orientalism and colonialism is no longer a political or intellectual luxury; it must be done promptly and urgently. To combat hatred, fear and systemic racism, we need to understand the reciprocal relationship and interdependence between the apparatus of Islamophobia and the Israel lobby.

The relationship between white supremacists and anti-Muslims in the Islamophobia and Israel lobby machinery is evidenced in the statements of Richard Spencer, who considered himself a “white Zionist” in his interview with Israeli television,<sup>2</sup> and the websites Web Jihad Watch, Atlas Shrugs and Campus Watch/Middle East Forum. For example, Jihad Watch regularly depicts attacks on Palestinian scholars and experts researching Palestine. Media outlets such as American

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<sup>1</sup> From Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi, PhD San Francisco State University Senior Scholar and Director of Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies Program and Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies and Race and Resistance Studies

<sup>2</sup> Callum Paton, “Richard Spencer Demands Respect on Israeli TV, Says Jews are ‘Overrepresented’,” Newsweek, August 8, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/richard-spencer-demands-respect-israeli-tv-says-jews-areoverrepresented-651739>

Thinker, Algemeiner, Washington Examiner, Tablet and Frontpage copy and paste the same information, creating widespread and consistent social media drivel aimed at smearing the reputation of specific individuals, even if their allegations are false and inaccurate.

Here are some recommendations from Professor Rabab that apply to our Canadian reality:

1. Treat Islamophobia and discrimination against Arabs and Palestinians as we treat other forms of racism and racial discrimination, i.e., as structural and systemic phenomena that are legitimized by official and dominant discourses and policies.
2. Reject attempts to make Islamophobia and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism an issue of exceptional or special interest, but approach it as seriously as we do combatting white supremacy, racism and antisemitism.
3. Reject the cynical use of antisemitism to equate criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian rights with antisemitism and dismantle the erroneous assumption that Israel, Jewishness and Zionism are one and the same.
4. Reject all old and new McCarthyism that seeks to silence and intimidate those who stand up for justice in Palestine and elsewhere.
5. Demand open and transparent accountability and debunk the opacity of the machinery of Islamophobia and the Israel lobby.
6. Review the non-profit status of groups that use tax shelters to hide their funding of foundations, religious institutions and Islamophobic and racist groups.
7. Support the development of knowledge-generating institutions that place justice at the core of their agenda.
8. Support targeted researchers and protect universities as places of learning and critical thinking, denouncing intimidation and reliance on private funding that forces institutions of higher education to be accountable to private companies instead of public-funding entities.
9. Encourage, support and fund academic exchanges between U.S. and international higher education institutions, particularly within the Arab, Muslim and Palestinian communities.

## **A Few Recommendations for Fighting Islamophobia**

### **In schools and universities**

- Hire Muslim chaplains, Muslim guidance counsellors or culturally competent counsellors who understand the diversity of Muslim communities.
- Push for culturally responsive education in schools from kindergarten to Grade 12, which requires teacher training.
- Establish more academic facilities specializing in Muslim history and culture in Canada.

### **In communities**

- Help mosques become a community resource for non-Muslims through open houses and interfaith engagement (e.g., pairing a mosque with a church or synagogue).
- Develop a youth exchange program designed by youth to give Canadian Muslim youth a voice.
- Collaborate with cultural institutions and museums to organize exhibitions and educational programs on Muslims and Islam in Canada.

### **At the national and provincial levels, with government support**

- Sponsor public awareness campaigns on diversity and tolerance to promote the integration of Muslim immigrants.
- Hire more Muslims in all areas of the federal and provincial governments to help make Canada a better and more skilled country.
- Work publicly with Muslim community leaders to set an example and show that Muslims are an integral part of their community.
- Invite Canadian Muslim professionals and youth to transatlantic and national forums to share their experiences and best practices.

### **In the media**

- Hold seminars for presenters and producers to foster authentic attitudes toward Canadian Muslims, using national Muslim institutions and experts known for their integrity and competence.
- Combat bigotry in the media by holding producers accountable for engaging **self-proclaimed** experts on the Middle East and Islam.

I firmly believe that Islamophobia is a manifestation of institutional and structural racism that has existed for hundreds of years in society and persists because of white supremacy against the Black and Brown races. When we recognize the institutional and structural racism that Black and Brown people experience and work to combat it, Islamophobia, along with other minority phobias, will disappear.