

Combating Emerging Global Islamophobia and OIC Member States

<http://www.alदानما.com/combating-emerging-global-islamophobia-and-oic-member-states-makale,18.html>

May 4, 2013

Asst. Prof. Mohammad Manzoor Malik

History of discrimination against Muslims in many minority Muslim countries has various forms from explicit mistreatment and abuse to implicit mistrust and subjugation in bureaucratic systems. The post 9/11 world in many ways provided outlet to hidden prejudices to come forth in various expressions including atrocities that came with so called war on terror, unjustified collateral damage during wars and raids, and abuse and defamation in the forms of shameful caricature and cinematic media; all of this helped in giving birth to the monster called Islamophobia. In addition, Western media and a new generation of amateur and ill willed writers added insult to injury by producing very cheap, biased literature on Islam and Muslims. Hollywood could not hold back too. Though, the epicenter of Islamophobia proper is some of the Western countries; however, the recent anti-Muslim events in

Myanmar and Shirilanka have proven that Islamophobia is growing in the Eastern world too. It is becoming a global menace. According to sources including UN and Human Rights Watch some 37 mosques, 77 shops, and 1474 houses were burnt in Myanmar since March 2013. And this is being done by non-government actors with protection of state actors with the belief that Muslims have lost the protection of international observers; they are victims of their own sectarianism; they have been mostly on the receiving ends of the West; and they are even abused by their own regimes such as in Syria and in many other countries; therefore, it is just a convenient opportunity to make hay while the sun is shining.

The abovementioned state of Muslims has helped in developing a kind of psyche that conceives Muslim blood as the cheapest one available. There has been never any time as darkest as these days in Muslim history, a growing global onslaught on *ummah*. The worsening conditions of Muslim minorities in non-member OIC countries deserve urgent attention of the OIC. The role of Turkey is commendable in voicing the concern and the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Bangladesh is also worthy of praise in helping refugees from Myanmar.

In spite of various protests by the OIC against oppressions that Muslim minorities face and disunited efforts of some Muslim countries, Muslim minorities deserve more attention because the problems remain unsolved and the vulnerability of the minorities keeps growing. The renaming of the

Organization of the Islamic Conference with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation during the 38th Council of Foreign Ministers meeting (CFM) in Astana, Kazakhstan in June 2011 implicitly provides hope and possibility of cooperation among Muslims rather than just Muslim majority countries. According to the OIC statistics, there are some 500 million Muslims living in non-member OIC countries. To record many events of Islamphobia these minorities face, the OIC has set up "Islamophobia Observatory", a fact based praiseworthy step indeed; however, the statistics on record have not moved the OIC further than few statements and a few engagements that actually have not yielded any concrete change on ground. In 1996 during OIC conference on minorities, the Muslim foreign minters had proposed to form a panel of experts to address problems of Muslim minorities. However, OIC should think of going farther than that by setting up a special commission for Muslim minorities, not just "Islamophobia Observatory". Muslim majority countries should take greater responsibility in protecting rights and liberties of Muslim minorities by being in contact with state actors and non-state actors, and by evoking UN forums whenever necessary. On the other hand, OIC member states should also consider helping these communities in fighting poverty, illiteracy, and economical privation.

These constructive efforts should be done in a well planned and coordinated manner rather than relying on disjointed efforts which are most of the time less effective or just failures.

The author is Asst. Prof. with the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.