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Muslim Civil Society, Islamophobia and the Quest for Social Cohesion in Post-War Sri Lanka: A Critical Survey

[Müslüman Sivil Toplumu, İslamofobi ve Savaş Sonrası Sri Lanka'da Sosyal Uyum Arayışı: Eleştirel Bir İnceleme]

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Muslim civil society organizations (MCOs) in promoting social cohesion in post-war Sri Lanka. Using Thania Paffenholz's analytical framework, the paper analyses how MCOs function as key actors in social integration, dialogue facilitation, and peacebuilding. The initiatives of major organizations, such as the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU), National Shooru Council (NSC), and Sri Lanka Jama'athe Islami (SIJI), are evaluated through Paffenholz's categories of protection, socialization, and advocacy. Findings show that these organizations have contributed to rebuilding trust, promoting interfaith dialogue, and strengthening democratic and ethical values within the Muslim community. Their interventions have helped prevent reactionary violence during periods of communal tension and encouraged constructive engagement with other religious groups. However, their efforts are often undermined by Islamophobic narratives, revealing the major challenge in current peacebuilding approaches. The study concludes that with strategic recalibration and broader partnerships, MCOs hold significant potential to act as agents of national healing and long-term social transformation in Sri Lanka. © 2026 Istanbul 29 Mayıs University - ISAM, TDV

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