

TODAY'S ZAMAN

[HOME](#) [NEWS](#) [BUSINESS](#) [INTERVIEWS](#) [FEATURES](#) [ARTS & CULTURE](#) [TRAVEL](#) [COLUMNISTS](#) [OP-ED](#) [EXPAT ZONE](#) [SPORTS](#) [CARTOONS](#) [BLOGS](#) [PRESS REVIEW](#)

10 years after 9/11: Islamophobia in the West by Hilal Elver*



September 11, 2011, Sunday/ 21:18:00

[f](#) Share [t](#) Tweet [g+](#) Share [p](#) Print [A](#) [A](#)

Last week a Muslim American Society chapter in New York City arranged a trip for 3,000 Muslims to celebrate Eid al-Fitr at an amusement park; however, the intended day of celebration turned unpleasant when amusement park officials refused to allow women wearing headscarves to go on certain rides.

Fifteen people, men and women, were placed under arrest, although they were all quickly released. County officials claimed that a ban on headscarves on some rides was a longstanding safety policy that had nothing to do with religion. Such an explanation might be persuasive in this particular case, but it should be acknowledged that a large group of Muslims certainly receive more attention these days than any other ethnic group in the New York City area and this seems especially true as the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks approaches.

Ten years after 9/11, negative sentiment about Islam and Islamophobia have transformed from a fear of Muslim extremists to a hatred of Islam as a religion, and by extension, to the everyday activities of Muslims

The world has changed since Sept. 11, 2001, and this has impacted negatively on many lives. Innocent people who happened to be living in Afghanistan and Iraq were the first victims of the military response of the United States. Then many other countries, from



Ukraine rebels ignore Putin call to delay independence vote

Pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine ignored a public call by Russian President Vladimir Putin to postpone a referendum on independence, declaring they would go ahead on May 11 with a vote that could lead to war. Denis Pushilin, a leader of the self-declared separatist Donetsk People's Republic, said on Thursday that the "People's Council" had voted unanimously to hold the plebiscite as planned. "Civil war has already begun. The referen

Latest News

- 22:27** Assad's forces take Homs, 'capital of Syrian revolt'
- 21:33** Dozens of police chiefs purged in Ankara in unprecedented crackdown
- 20:04** Court calls on Parliament to explain why corruption file not read out
- 20:04** Court cancels decision to drop charges against justice minister
- 19:36** Prosecutor dismisses probe into journalists after ex-Halkbank manager
- 18:39** Main opposition direct parliamentary inquiry concerning graft claims
- 18:36** Prosecutors seek life in prison for 13 over search of MIT trucks
- 17:31** Syrian opposition forces claim massive Aleppo hotel bombing
- 16:06** Journalists in Jordan fight on live TV talk show
- 15:58** Police apprehend woman who threw newborn into waste container
- 15:48** Prosecutors seek IP addresses of Syria meeting leakers from YouTube
- 15:14** Ukraine rebels ignore Putin call to delay independence vote
- 13:11** Turkish lira below TL 2.08 to dollar for first time in five months
- 10:50** Britain's Hague says no sign of Russia withdrawing troops
- 10:49** Ukraine says ready for talks with the east, not with 'terrorists'
- 01:28** Boko Haram attack kills at least 300 in Nigeria

Pakistan to the Philippines to Somalia, registered on the radar and are still experiencing daily attacks in the guise of "law enforcement operations," which are part of a global effort to eliminate the jihadist network of al-Qaeda. The good news is, according to a recent CIA report, that this terrorist network is on the verge of collapse, especially in the aftermath of Osama bin Laden's execution in Pakistan. Yet, Muslims who live in the United States and Europe are experiencing greater difficulties than ever before in their everyday lives. This is a result of a stereotyping of Islam and Muslims that is giving rise to widespread Islamophobia, which is having an increasing impact on mainstream American and European public opinion.


Historical roots of the discrimination against Muslims


In contrast to a general impression that Islamophobia is new, it is important to realize that discrimination against Muslims has a long history and that it has had a different cultural and political development in the United States as compared to Europe. Starting in the early 20th century the United States received immigrants from Ottoman lands in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Historical documents show that these "Ottomans" did not receive the kind of warm welcome that was the American experience for most Europeans. This seemed to reflect the greater ethnic and religious affinities of Europeans with the United States, whose dominant identity has long been based on being "White Anglo Saxon Protestant [WASP]." Nevertheless, Ottomans were not the only targeted group. African Americans have long suffered from acute racial discrimination, while Catholics and Jews were subjected to religious discrimination and were never considered as belonging to the preferred category of new citizens to America. Over the years, as those groups received improved treatment, Muslims encountered even greater rejection as a result of American foreign policy in the Middle East, especially in response to the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The 1980s saw an increase in discrimination against Muslim Americans with the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab propaganda carefully designed by right-wing religious groups and a powerful pro-Israel lobby.


Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, Muslims became targeted with strict security measures. What took place was a massive display of racial profiling by law enforcement officials. Immigration law was used against Muslims and Congress enacted a comprehensive new law, known as the Patriot Act, which provided the government with a wide range of tools to interfere in the private lives of citizens and encroach upon their privacy. It was an extremely difficult time for many Muslim families. Many were threatened with deportation, certain Muslim men were required to report to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for "special registration," some were subject to restrictions on international travel, while others were denied entry into the US. Islamic charity organizations were investigated and some were dismantled. Along with all American citizens the civil rights of Muslims were significantly restricted. Some of these measures were soon abandoned as they proved to be ineffective. Islamophobic reactions were sporadic and not taken too seriously at first. Former President George W. Bush, a devout Christian, did deliver a message to the world that Islam as a religion was not the target and he visited a mosque in a symbolic gesture that encouraged the public to adopt a more positive view of Islam. American Muslim civic organizations and many civil liberty NGOs did their best to take action against the many discriminatory incidents occurring in workplaces, airports and schools.

A poll conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute found that by 2011 nearly half of all Americans held unfavorable attitudes towards Islam, compared to 24 percent in January 2002.

Now, 10 years after 9/11, negative sentiment about Islam and Islamophobia, instead of waning, have transformed from a fear of Muslim extremists to a hatred of Islam as a religion, and by extension, to the everyday activities of Muslims. Tolerance toward non-Christian religions was replaced by harsh criticisms of Islamic practices such as the wearing of the



TODAY'S ZAMAN PDF


Google™ Custom Search 

Newsletter

Enter Your E-Mail


Columnists

YAVUZ BAYDAR




How 'moral' is Turkey's 'silent pious majority'?

ORHAN KEMAL CENGİZ




The crime of investigating corruption

CAFER SOLGUN




EU progress reports casts Alevi problems in Turkey in somber light

CHARLOTTE MCPHERSON




No easy answers!

FATMA DIŞLI ZIBAK




Why press is 'not free' in Turkey

ETYEN MAHÇUPYAN




End point of ridiculousness

ORHAN MİROĞLU




Is a de facto presidential system possible?

KERİM BALCI



Ankara's soft-power dilemma

SUAT KINIKLIOĞLU



What to do with Turkey

The most read articles—

headscarf, the building of mosques and an alleged creeping jurisdiction of Sharia law in the United States. The (mis)treatment of Muslim women has been used as an issue to insult Islam despite the absence of any real familiarity with its beliefs and practices.

Recently several surveys were published by respectable institutions such as the Pew Global Attitudes Center and the Center of American Progress, as well as by influential print media such as Time Magazine and The Washington Post. These various assessments agree on the central observation that more than half of all Americans believe that violent extremists are nurtured by Islam more than by any other religion. This is a rather startling conclusion considering that a great majority of the American public knows hardly anything about Islam and most do not know a single Muslim. Nevertheless, they do not want Muslims to be their neighbors or have mosques in their neighborhood.

Despite the negativity, American attitudes towards Islam, specifically around the wearing of the headscarf, is still significantly more accepting when compared to countries such as Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and France, where there is strong public support for the banning of the headscarf, and several laws have been already been enacted restricting the wearing of the headscarf and veil.

Unlike Europe, only very recently has the construction of new mosques become a political battleground in the United States. It has long been a hot issue in Europe, where many mosques are housed in the basements of buildings, and certainly without any visible minaret. Again, unlike Europe, the First Amendment to the US Constitution gives almost unconditional freedom of religion to any religious group and to its individual adherents. Therefore, it was rather unusual for there to be such an outcry and nationwide controversy, just prior to last year's anniversary of 9/11, about plans for the Alhambra Islamic Center project in New York. According to opponents of the center, the location was too close to the site of the 9/11 attacks. It was contended that establishing such a center would be disrespectful to the families of the victims. Some criticism also was raised that the name Alhambra is a reminder of Islamic domination in Europe. In response, the backers of the project changed the name to a generic "Park 51." Yet, the controversy did not end at this point. There had earlier been a mosque in this same neighborhood and this project sought to establish an Islamic center, not a mosque. There are many religious centers in the United States protected by the Constitution and this visible expression of religious diversity and tolerance is one of the notable achievements of American liberalism. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg went against the tide of opposition to support the project, reminding opponents of the constitutional principles and traditions at stake.

Another case involved opposition to the building of a mosque in Alabama. In this instance, opponents took their complaint to court, questioning whether Islam was entitled to be treated as a real religion. During the judicial hearing, the atmosphere in the courtroom recalled a medieval crusader's tribunal acting to condemn Islam and deny its claim of being a true religion. Fortunately, the judge did not accept the legal argument of this extremist anti-Islam group.

A recent Islamophobic concern has emerged about a so-called creeping jurisdiction of Sharia law in the United States. Needless to say, this is a totally imaginary allegation that exhibits complete ignorance of how the American legal system works. According to an article in The New York Times, the main person behind this campaign against Sharia law is a Hassidic Israeli lawyer who moved to the United States after 9/11 to carry on a fight against Muslims in America. He may be worried that Muslim Americans will gain so much power in the country as to neutralize the Jewish lobby, which has very effectively and for years been manipulating American politics in a bid to ensure unlimited support for Israel.

Renowned Sufi leader Sheikh Nazim Kibrsi passes away at 92

Egypt's Sisi says Erdoğan's gov't won't affect ties with Turks

National police to return new staff, seen as blocking promotion

Turkey says Ukraine's territorial integrity must be defended

Obama to meet with Syrian opposition leader

'We're already not in Ukraine': rebel east readies secession vote

US plans to send team to Nigeria in response to schoolgirls kidnapping

Borsa İstanbul vice chairpersons removed from posts

Turkey's youngest mayor sentenced to over four years

Poland, in snub to Kremlin, awards prize to Crimean Tatar leader



Bloggers



DENİZ ERGÜREL

Giving tablets to school kids is not enough



SALİH SARIKAYA

An obstacle to mass culture production in Turkey: social media

It was recently revealed that the police departments of New York City and Los Angeles have become one of the US's most aggressive domestic intelligence agencies, operating far beyond their appropriate roles in engaging in the surveillance of Muslim activities. These police initiatives target Muslim communities in ways that violate normal standards of civil liberties and exceed standards applicable to the federal government. More tellingly, this disturbing pattern of police activity is being carried out with unprecedented and inappropriate help from the CIA. It is a dangerous collaboration, blurring the line between foreign and domestic spying.

The department has dispatched teams of undercover officers, known as "rakers," into minority neighborhoods where Muslims reside as part of a human mapping program. They monitor the daily life of Muslims even while they do ordinary things like shop in bookstores and visit cafes. They also employ informants, known as "mosque crawlers," to report on sermons, even when there are no grounds for suspicion of wrongful intent. They scrutinize imams and even gather intelligence about cab drivers and food cart vendors and any other jobs predominantly done by Muslims. The goal is to "map the city's human terrain," in a program modeled in part, according to The Associated Press, on an Israeli occupation regime that has been operating since 1967 in the West Bank.














Merchants of fear and hatred

A month ago, when we read the 1,500-page manifesto by Anders Breivik, the Norwegian extreme right-wing terrorist who killed 77 innocent young people, we discovered that anti-Muslim campaigners have an intercontinental network. Anti-Islam websites should not be regarded as part of the domain of acceptable criticism that enjoys protection as freedom of speech. Hate speech of this character has major consequences that can lead innocent people to lose their lives or otherwise suffer anywhere in the world. Freedom of speech is more restricted by law in Europe where, unlike America, it is impermissible to promote fascism and racism. Despite this, it is acceptable to direct hate speech against Muslims. Norwegians are now debating what should become the acceptable limits of the Internet for such hateful commentary.

Without geographical limits for an audience, one cannot guess who will be the next victim. Coinciding with last year's anniversary of 9/11, Terry Jones, a religious pastor of a minor church in a small town in Florida, organized a "Quran burning day" as a memorial for the victims of the attack. He became an instant celebrity. The White House became nervous that the consequences of such an action could have lethal consequences for American soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The government pleaded with him to stop. But he was not persuaded. Thousands of miles from Florida, in Kandahar and Peshawar in Afghanistan, news of the burning of a Quran at a US church led an angry mob to break into a United Nations building and kill more than a dozen people, two of whom were foreigners and the rest Afghans, and also led to an incident in the north of the country where two American soldiers were killed in retaliation.

Indeed, this violence was a medieval response to a medieval provocation. Of course, when we listen to the news in the United States, in the event of military or terrorist incidents local victims are rarely mentioned. The only casualties that count are American soldiers and Westerners. Locals are not newsworthy in the West. So, let's hope that these merchants of fear and hatred are stopped and marginalized while there is time -- that is, before further violent hate crimes occur. We live in a digital universe where we cannot pretend to know how and where the next heinous crime will occur and who will be the perpetrator or the identity of the innocent victims. It is a matter of urgency on this 10th anniversary of 9/11 that we begin to reverse this rising tide of Islamophobia.

**Hilal Elver is a visiting professor and the Fulbright Chair for the fall of 2011 at McGill*

	ARSLAN AYAN
A different perspective on the Armenian case	
	SEVGİ AKARÇEŞME
Tall tales of the Turkish government	
	ERGİN HAVA
Turkish media: from penguins to ostriches	
	LAURA MOTH
May Day: interrupting the narrative	
	BEGÜM BURAK
The fall of democracy and predicament of political Islam in Turkey	
	MAHIR ZEYNALOV
Seven ways to sell your nonsense to public	
	ÖZGÜR KÜÇÜK
Price of criticizing the government on Dec. 17	
	E. BARIŞ ALTINTAŞ
10 things you can do to be happy in a dictatorship	
	MUSTAFA GÜRBÜZ
Erdogan's presidential run: divide and conquer (again)?	
	OĞUZHAN TEKİN
Erdogan's victory, the country's loss	
	LAMIYA ADILGIZI
Erdogan's Baku visit will not close Hizmet schools	
	SEVGİ KURU AÇIKGÖZ
The deficits of the opposition parties in Turkey	
	RANA YURTSEVER
A conservative Muslim's new mission	
	HALİL BİLECEN
What did Turkish people say to Erdoğan?	
	KADİR CİVAN
Autonomous regulatory agencies	
	ESRA MADEN
Chicken movement of Turkey	

University faculty of law in Canada.

Keywords: many , religion , 911 , new , states , muslim , united , islam , american , muslims



Comments Community

Login ▾

Sort by Newest ▾

Share Favorite ★

Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

DISQUS



Op-Ed

Other Titles

Parallel vs. Persian structure within the Turkish state by Ömer Yavuz*

What are journalists for?" by Ahmet Altan *

Europe's precarious new normal by Erik Berglof

Status of 'cemevis' not Alevis' biggest problem by Murat Aksoy*

Is Turkey already an Iranian satellite? by Aydogan Vatandaş*

The resource revolution by Stefan Heck and Matt Rogers

The Obama Doctrine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Global Ground Zero in Asia by Nouriel Roubini

Reimagining China's urban future by Bert Hofman

2015 by Eser Karakaş*

Towards the collapse of Turkish democracy! by Aydogan Vatandaş*

Europe's trapped politics by Jean Pisani-Ferry*

Asia's patriotic gore Koichi Hamada*

Turkey's tryst with democracy (2) by Anwar Alam*

The moral and legal dilemmas of Malaysian Flight 370 by Alper Ali Riza

Europe's act in Ukraine's tragedy by Joschka Fischer

Turkey's tryst with democracy (1) by Anwar Alam*

Landmark Afghan election heads to two-way run-off by Andrew Hammond*

MH370's Beacon of Hope by Gareth Evans*

Femicide: a rise in sex-selective abortions in the Caucasus

Why should people vote on May 22? by Nick De Bois*

The Arab world's options by Marwan Muasher*



EMRE DEMİR

Sarkozy and Erdoğan: two enemies, same fate



HAYRİ TAŞKAN

Why will the AKP's votes be less than 30 percent in the elections?



SİNEM CENGİZ

Fate of Ottoman heritage in Mecca



MELTEM NAZ KAŞO

Crazy man in a public square



HATİCE SAĞDIÇ YILDIZ

Remaking Turkish politics on the basis of the Islamic headscarf



ALPER YILMAZ DEDE

Selling out religion



MUSTAFA GERDAN

What is happening in Turkey?



İSA ERASLAN

A modern leader in a postmodern world: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan



HÜSEYİN GÜNDOĞDU

Is the Hizmet movement statist or populist?



İBRAHİM ANLI

Turkey's democracy deficit



YASEMİN GÜRKAN

I don't believe in Recep İvedik



M. EDİB YILMAZ

Deporting common sense



HAYAT ALVI

The barbarity of blasphemy



EFGAN NIFTİYEV

Shah Deniz agreement in geostrategic context (2)



ABDULLAH AYASUN

How Erdoğan torpedoes his rule



MEHMET SOLMAZ

The gateway to the Middle East and the exchange of roles

A new mechanism for the distribution of resources by Eser Karakaş*

Europe's Big Bang at Ten by Daniel Gros*

A Light Unto Cities by Joseph E. Stiglitz*

The delicacies of demagoguery by Hercules Millas*

Cutting-Edge Conservation by Bradnee Chambers*

Accelerating the clean-energy revolution by Yoon Sang-jick & Ernest J.

India's bourgeois revolution by Shashi Tharoor

Russia and the Silk Road approach by Ana Palacio

A Sunni-Shia bridge too far by Ali A. Allawi and Nassima Neggaz*

What will Erdoğan's condolences to 1915 victims change?

Re-Electing Europe by Javier Solana



Worsening condition of my Syrian refugee neighbors



ALİ ZEYNEL GÖKPINAR

A country that I do not understand any more



ABDULLA HAWEZ

Isolate Bayik



FATMA DEMIRELLİ

What the EU fails to see in the new Turkey



ŞULE KULU

When will Turkey do away with forced conscription?



ERDOĞAN A. ŞİPOLİ

Syria at an eve of a decision



EMİRHAN YORULMAZLAR

For a healthier foreign policy debate



HAROON MOGHUL

Dear Turkey, America doesn't like you enough



YUSRA GHANNOUCHI

How to depose an unpopular leader -- and how unpopular was he?



JAMES KIGER

Turkey's blind spot on the left



PINAR VURUCU

Gezi Park's finest