



# MANIFESTO

# JOIN FORCES AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA

Amsterdam, 28 January 2015

Islamophobia is the insulting of, slandering of, and discrimination against Muslims. This begins when people propagate negative, and especially fear evoking qualities about Muslims as a group, and then repeat them over and over again, suggesting that Muslims are to blame for all kinds of terrible things which take place in different places. The finger of blame is thus pointed at minority groups as being responsible for all the ills of society, just as in racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia. The key advantage of acting this way, is that in reality those who are actually responsible, get away scot free.

The 'Scapegoat Mechanism' was used in Europe for many years on Jews, so that in the end many ordinary people were willing to cooperate actively or passively with their step by step extermination. The Spanish poet George Santayana warned that "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Today this warning rings truer than ever. Although pre-war anti-Semitism in the Netherlands can be described as 'mild' according to the Anne Frank Foundation, it was apparently enough for the highest percentage of Jews to be deported from this country, than from any other country. The Islamophobic climate in the Netherlands anno 2015 is anything but mild, and that is why we are sounding the alarm.

The urge to seek a scapegoat within European societies, which are full of tension and disparity, is still huge. Anti-Semitism has by no means disappeared and, as we could see in recent years, it now is the immigrants, and among them the Muslims in particular, who are being targeted and blamed. For those who applaud this development, it's a huge advantage that this group is recognizable by its appearance.

The greatest achievement of our time is the enshrinement of human dignity in the laws and the functioning of our Democratic and Constitutional State.

According to the Constitution, everyone is equal and has the right to live his or her life as he or she wishes within the law. Everyone who lives in the Netherlands has the right to freedom, to hold their own opinion, and freedom of speech. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. One of the characteristics of the Democratic and Constitutional State is that the government is explicitly responsible for protecting the rights of minorities.

In recent years, Muslims in the Netherlands, as well as in other parts of Europe, are increasingly threatened and attacked both verbally and physically, while mosques are clad with slogans. Families receive letters from neighbors through their letterbox telling them to move out. Muslim children are bullied at school, on the street and at sports clubs. Muslim youths have difficulty finding traineeship places and jobs, and are exposed to aggressive messages, insults and discrimination on social media. The headscarves of Muslim women are pulled off their heads, and some have stopped wearing a headscarf out of fear of negative reactions, and wear a hat or cap instead. -

The attacks in Paris have only made the problem worse. Just as always when the scapegoat mechanism against a particular group is on the rise, people are now trying to make all Muslims responsible for the terrible acts of just a few terrorists, who claimed to be acting in the name of Islam. Instead of thinking that people who happen to have the same religion are not all responsible for the actions of a few single individuals, people demand that they, meaning all Muslims, personally distance themselves from such actions. Nevertheless, countless Muslim and immigrant organizations have condemned the attacks, the violence and the terror, but they did this explicitly on a voluntarily basis. And through the Facebook page "Not my Islam" young people have distanced themselves from such incidents. Dutch Muslims are citizens of a democratic country and as such it goes without saying that they stand for the values of our society.



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Various report lines have received a deluge of reports of Islamophobia. A large number of incidents were reported to the 'Report line against Islamophobia and discrimination' in a short period of time. All these reports show that Dutch Muslims are living in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.

Politicians and the government have failed to take a clear and forceful position with regard to Islamophobia. There is a sense that discrimination against Muslims and the fears that they have are not being taken seriously. What used to be limited to the hate speeches of politicians such as Geert Wilders years ago, is now becoming more and more commonplace and acceptable behavior.

The government and politicians must strive for solidarity in a society in which every citizen is valued and protected: homosexuals, Jews, women, men, the young and the old, regardless of their colour, religion or origin must be safeguarded from discrimination. There should be a solidarity in society against homophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or any other kind of discrimination.

The combined organizations against Islamophobia expect the following from politicians and the government:

- The government and politicians cannot demand that Dutch Muslims speak out against the violence and the attacks that have been committed in the name of Islam. The government and politicians must distance themselves from any link that is made between violence and Islamic Dutch citizens, because they are not responsible in any way for this violence and these attacks.
- The discrimination which is taking place via social media must be challenged vigorously and consistently. The government must take measures against these serious violations of the rights and safety of Islamic Dutch citizens. They must intervene when remarks or comments are made which break the law. Providers and moderators must be challenged when they fail to remove Islamophobic comments or hate speech.
- Mosques and Islamic associations and organizations have the right to protection by the government from violence, threats and vandalism. Self-organized civilian security, set up by the mosques and organizations themselves, are not sufficient and are unsafe and unprofessional. The government must safeguard the safety of Islamic citizens and buildings.

In addition it is important to develop policies to prevent and combat discrimination, inequality, threats and insults towards Muslims, and to stop the smear campaigns which they are currently being subjected to.

- Schools must invest much more than is currently the case in proper education about human rights, diversity and discrimination. Serious attention must be paid to human rights education at schools and teacher training colleges. Both at primary and secondary schools, lessons in the Dutch history of slavery, the persecution of Jews and other forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, origin, gender and sexual orientation, must be a standard and obligatory part of the curriculum.
- Reports of Islamophobia must be registered as a separate form of discrimination. Only when this is done, will the extent and nature of this form of discrimination become clear. Islamophobic incidents must be dealt with swiftly and adequately by the legal system and should be given priority.

We urge public organizations and Dutch citizens to join forces and work together towards an inclusive society free of discrimination and Islamophobia.

### **The Collective Against Islamophobia and Discrimination (CTID)**

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