



Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims

ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 5: Key Topics

” A perfect storm of protracted conflict in the Middle East, crisis-level migration flows and successive terrorist attacks in Europe has led to a conflation of Islam with terrorism. Islamophobia, therefore, is on the rise in Europe, and members of Muslim communities are at greater risk than ever before of discrimination where they live as a minority.

Governments have a duty to uphold the freedom of religion and guarantee that the followers of all faiths and none may live and thrive in their societies without fear of intolerance and discrimination.

ECRI’s guidelines for combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims offer governments practical recommendations that can foster awareness and tolerance.

KEY MESSAGE

— Governments must protect members of Muslim communities from intolerance and discrimination by:

- ▶ Assessing the scale of intolerance and discrimination directed specifically at Muslims;
- ▶ Ensuring that the right to practice their religion is enabled in all areas of public life; and
- ▶ Combating hostile stereotyping that paints all Muslims as extremists.

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assess the scale of the problem, paying particular attention to the experience of Muslim women.

— Examine whether Muslims suffer social exclusion based on religious discrimination and, in consultation with local communities, develop policies to tackle it.

— Muslim women may suffer from multiple discrimination – on grounds of gender and religion as well as ethnic origin – making them a particularly vulnerable group. Governments should therefore pay special attention to their situation.



2. Ensure that the right of Muslims to practice their religion is enabled and protected in all areas of public life.

■ Ensure that public institutions make provisions for the everyday religious practice and requirements of Muslims, as for the practitioners of other faiths.

■ Combat religious discrimination in access to education and employment, in schools and at the workplace.

■ Ensure that religious discrimination is not fostered in schools, where distorted interpretations of Islam may be taught.

■ Impose appropriate sanctions in cases of discrimination on grounds of religion.

■ Remove arbitrary obstacles to the construction of mosques and cemeteries.

3. Discourage the conflation of Islam with violent extremism.

■ Encourage debate within the media and advertising industries on their responsibility to avoid perpetuating prejudice and biased information about Islam and Muslim communities.



ECRI – USEFUL LINKS

ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 5:
Combating intolerance and discrimination
against Muslims
<http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/eng?i=REC-05-2000-021-ENG>

ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.15:
Combating Hate Speech
<http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/eng?i=REC-15-2016-015-ENG>

ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 8:
Combating racism while fighting terrorism
<http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/eng?i=REC-08-2004-026-ENG>

FACTS AND FINDINGS

“In the context of discussions to find an EU-wide approach towards migration, a strong difference in attitudes among member States became visible..., some governments even openly stated that while they would be prepared to receive a small number of refugees, they would only accept Christians and not Muslims. Such open discrimination on religious grounds contributed further to a growing climate of Islamophobia across the continent.” Ecri Annual Report 2015.

“In the Council of Europe member States where Islam is not the religion of the majority of the population, Muslim women are often victims of stereotyping, since their religious beliefs are seen as the only defining element of their identity... All too often, political debate and legislative action concerning Muslim women is concentrated on the issues of the headscarf, and even more the integral veil, instead of focusing on non-discrimination and equal opportunities.” Multiple discrimination against Muslim women in Europe: for equal opportunities, Resolution 1887 (2012) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

PREMS 076118