

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN COMBATING ISLAMOPHOBIA: A MODEL FOR THE POLICY AXIS⁵

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Introduction

Islamophobia, as a multidimensional form of discrimination/racism that restricts the social, cultural, and economic existence and participation of Muslims and condemns them to an unjust social framework through processes of othering, constitutes one of the most profound societal problems of our time. Efforts to combat this complex issue likewise require coordinated and strategic action at various levels. In this regard, the study presents a descriptive and strategic framework aimed at institutional practitioners, such as public bodies, civil society organizations, media institutions, and academic and technological entities, as well as individual beneficiaries.

The first part of the study is devoted to establishing a conceptual and analytical framework of Islamophobia for the policy axis and to developing a coherent definition. The second part focuses on the mediated trajectory of Islamophobia from the traditional media environment to digital platforms. The final section sets out media-oriented strategic action fields for combating Islamophobia. These fields, presented in tabular form, are enriched with descriptive content, relevant actions, and selected examples of practice.

⁵ ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence-based language model, was employed as a supportive tool during the translation process (Turkish to English) of this article.

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1. Framing Islamophobia Accurately for the Policy Axis

Recent research and definitional initiatives around the world suggest approaching the concept of Islamophobia by focusing on its substantive content rather than its etymological origin, and they also demonstrate the need to move beyond narrow definitions centered on “phobia–fear or dislike,” which overlook many of the concept’s social manifestations. The reframing of the concept holds the potential to support policymakers in defining the problem accurately and undertaking appropriate actions.

This reframing effort needs to be addressed along the axis of a conceptual map, consisting of key concepts, in a gradual manner. In this context, it becomes possible to clarify the manifestations of Islamophobia, arising from theological, cultural, economic, political, and psychological grounds, as reflected in the fields of media and civil society.

Phobia–Fear and Dislike—Only a Starting Point: The term *Islamophobia* is formed by combining the words *Islam* and *phobia*, which means fear. It is observed that the etymological origin of the word—and especially the suffix “phobia”—has influenced the initial definitions of the concept, leading Islamophobia to be described as fear, dislike, or prejudice toward Muslims (Bayraklı, 2025). Although the definition presented in the 1997 report of the Runnymede Trust (Richardson & Conway, 1997) is an essential attempt in encouraging a broader understanding of anti-Muslim fears and dislikes under the umbrella term *Islamophobia*, it has been subject to significant criticism on the grounds that it does not sufficiently situate anti-Muslim hostility and racism (Modood, 2020).

Prejudices—Deepening Layers of Perception: Following the definitional attempt by the Runnymede Trust, the concept of prejudice provided a framework that made it possible to understand Islamophobia and its consequences more effectively in terms of social and psychological processes (Hafez, 2018). Accordingly, Islamophobia referred to a form

of prejudice grounded in irrational fear and emotional reaction, nourished by hostile generalizations (stereotypes) about Muslims. Focusing on prejudices is undoubtedly of critical importance for understanding the social and psychological mechanisms through which negative and generalizing attitudes emerge and how they are reinforced. Moreover, approaching the concept of prejudice with particular attention in any definitional attempt regarding Islamophobia is crucial for understanding the psychological and social dynamics behind it, for grasping the roles of media and other organized structures in the construction of prejudices (Taras, 2024), and for providing a basis for efforts to reduce prejudices. The role of the media is critically significant both in the development of prejudices within global public opinion and in the increase of perceived Islamophobia among Muslim communities. At this point, media representations play a crucial role, as Islam and Muslimness are continually reproduced in a manner that prioritizes representation over reality (Iftikhar, 2019; Mussa, 2019).

Hate Speech—Reflections of Discrimination and Violence: Defined as “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior that attacks or uses discriminatory or pejorative language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are—that is, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factors” (United Nations, 2020), hate speech constitutes another key component for an inclusive definition of Islamophobia. From this perspective, an Islamophobic hate crime refers to any offense that is wholly or partly motivated, as perceived by the victim or any other person, by hostility or prejudice toward a person’s religious or presumed religious identity—that is, the Muslim identity (Awan & Zempi, 2018). Based on the framework discussed thus far, it must be noted that focusing exclusively on anti-Islam or anti-Muslim hatred alone is insufficient to fully explain the broader structural and racial inequalities faced by Muslims (Sayyid & Vakil, 2018).

Racism and Cultural Racism—Symbolic Othering: Today, many scholars working on the subject argue that Islamophobia should be understood as undermining Muslims' ability to project themselves into the future as Muslims, and as a form of racism. In this context, the updated 2017 report by the Runnymede Trust defined Islamophobia as a concept grounded in racism and referring to anti-Muslim discrimination (Elahi & Khan, 2017). The definition adopted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims similarly stated that Islamophobia is rooted in racism and should be understood as a form of racism directed at Muslimness or at characteristics perceived as Muslim (Bhatti, 2021). These definitional attempts treat Islamophobia within a framework of "racialization," which refers to the cultural and symbolic dimensions of othering individuals based on Muslimness or characteristics perceived as Muslim. Racialization involves socially defining and categorizing groups not on a biological basis, but according to perceived cultural or religious characteristics, and constructing "others" by attributing racial meaning to these markers. In doing so, it sustains inequality, discrimination, and structural and physical violence (Hadj-Cherif, 2025).

From this perspective, Islamophobia should be understood not solely on the basis of religious prejudice but as a form of institutional and systemic racism that manifests across multiple layers of social life, producing inequalities in the everyday lives of Muslims and leading to exclusion across broad domains from education to employment. One of the related concepts that emerges alongside racism is cultural racism. Accordingly, the classification of Muslims as the "other" not only through their religious beliefs but also through their visible identities and cultural practices can be expressed as cultural racism. As a mechanism of exclusion, it operates by drawing boundaries based on the intense attachment of groups considered "us" to particular ways of life and the perceived difference of those considered "them." Thus, defining Islamophobia as cultural racism reflects an ideological

framework that refers to the cultural differentiation, alienation, and exclusion of Islam and Muslims from society (Awan & Zempi, 2018).

Epistemic Racism/Discrimination—Knowledge and Discourse: A less-discussed but fundamental dimension of Islamophobia is epistemic racism, which refers to discrimination at the level of knowledge production and discourse. In this dimension, data, knowledge production processes, media narratives, or social assumptions about Islam and Muslims emerge in distorted and biased forms; meanwhile, the perspectives of Muslims themselves are devalued. Scholars such as Ramón Grosfoguel argue that epistemic Islamophobia is constitutive of the modern colonial world order—that is, Western-centric knowledge systems exclude Islamic perspectives from the outset (Bazian, 2018; Grosfoguel, 2010).

Structural/Institutional Discrimination—Systematic Othering: Another perspective that comes to the forefront in definitions of Islamophobia is the emphasis on understanding the process as structural/institutional discrimination. This refers to various institutional structures, especially state institutions, acting toward Muslims with fear and suspicion, and the reflection of these attitudes in policies and practices. It is shaped through surveillance programs, security policies, and legal measures implemented by various state institutions (Beydoun, 2016). In this context, Muslims may be systematically disadvantaged in the labor market, education, housing, or public services. For example, Canada's 2024–2028 Anti-Racism Strategy emphasizes that Islamophobia is not merely individual prejudice but can include systemic discrimination that extends into laws and policies. In addition, the persistent negative portrayal of Muslims in media representations and anti-Islamic rhetoric in political discourse can be understood as other manifestations of structural discrimination (The Canadian Guide to Understanding and Combatting Islamophobia, 2024).

Based on the key concepts discussed, Islamophobia can be defined as a comprehensive form of exclusion that goes beyond fear or dislike, shaped by prejudice, hate speech, and violence directed at Islam, Muslims, or communities perceived as Muslim, and that can transform into institutional and structural discrimination through cultural and racial codes. While it is fueled by theological, cultural, economic, and political factors, it spreads particularly through prejudices strengthened in the media and consequently in society, becomes concrete through hate speech and hate crimes, and becomes systemic through institutional practices and policies. Racialized Muslimness becomes a justification for discrimination, structural barriers, and epistemic exclusions in many areas—from education to employment, from travel to political participation.

Salman Sayyid, by characterizing Islamophobia as “the grammar of the existing world order” (2023), opens the door to understanding the issue from a broader perspective. Grammar is a concept that describes how a language functions and the order in which it presents its elements. In this sense, what is being expressed is that Islamophobia constitutes one of the fundamental problems that makes visible how the current world order operates. Each Islamophobic incident, in this regard, is considered part of a global “justice problem.” Thus, efforts to combat Islamophobia essentially take shape as a “search for justice.”

Islamophobia, in the forms presented above, is not a problem encountered only in societies where Muslims constitute a minority. In countries where Muslims make up the vast majority, it can also be framed as one of the deeply rooted problems of the recent past within historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts. When viewed historically, in both colonized and non-colonized societies, the challenge posed by modernization processes to existing understandings and institutionalities concerning Islamic values and their manifestations has brought about social divisions that may give rise to Islamophobic forms. On one side of this division, the epistemic

devaluation of Islamic knowledge and culture by secular elites, and on the political plane, the efforts to regulate and discipline social groups positioned as a threat to the secular ideology, have taken on an ideological character (Bayraklı et al., 2018). Thus, over the past thirty years, societies have witnessed multidimensional manifestations that fall within the scope of Islamophobia as defined globally. This framework demonstrates that focusing on Islamophobia in Muslim-majority societies and addressing internal issues is crucial for generating original insights at the intersection of global and local dynamics, broadening the scope for context-specific and country-specific strategies, and enhancing critical capacity.

2. The Mediatized Adventure of Islamophobia from the Traditional to the Digital and Strategic Fields of Action

Islamophobia is a multidimensional phenomenon that expresses fear, prejudice, hate speech, and discrimination directed toward the religion of Islam and Muslims. This phenomenon is nourished by theological, cultural, economic, and political grounds, spreads through the media, and becomes systematic at the institutional level. Throughout each stage of this comprehensive process, one of its most visible and influential instruments has always been the media. In particular, traditional media—newspapers, television, radio, and magazines—have primarily produced images related to the representation of Muslims through discourses of prejudice, threat, and conflict; thereby reinforcing feelings of distrust and fear toward Islam within the public sphere. When the post–Cold War “Clash of Civilizations” discourse converged with the attacks of September 11, 2001, Islamophobic systems of representation in traditional media deepened; Muslim identity was predominantly associated with violence, radicalism, and opposition to the West.

With the digitalization wave of the 21st century, Islamophobic discourse began to spread not only through traditional media but also through social media platforms, algorithms, digital content creators,

and artificial intelligence systems. While new media increased individuals' capacity to produce and disseminate content, it simultaneously made Islamophobia more widespread through mechanisms such as echo chambers, disinformation, trolling activities, and digital lynching culture. In this process, AI-supported algorithms have sometimes exhibited tendencies that reinforce discriminatory content rather than filtering it, leading to greater visibility of anti-Muslim materials. This trajectory from the traditional to the digital reveals that Islamophobic discourse is continually reproduced in both more sophisticated and more systemic ways.

2.1. Islamophobia in Traditional Media: Perception and Policy

Focusing on the forms of social communication and cultural representation established through the production of Islamophobia in traditional media (books, newspapers, magazines, television, radio) is of key importance for understanding the processes through which Islamophobia becomes institutionalized in modern societies. The media continuously produces Islamophobic discourses across a very broad spectrum of tools. For example, the language and visuals used in news reports can portray Muslims as violent or backward, and such representations may contribute to the reinforcement of societal prejudices. On the other hand, in cartoons, caricatures, television shows, and entertainment programs, Muslim characters may be stereotyped and ridiculed, creating negative impressions among audiences. These types of content generate space for the formation of Islamophobic attitudes, especially among young viewers, and pave the way for the exclusion, discrimination, and exposure to violence of Muslims in social life. For instance, the ISPU (Institute for Social Policy and Understanding), which conducts research on Muslims living in the United States, has shown that the media frequently associates Muslims with violence and that this association increases Islamophobic attitudes in society (Saleem, 2017). Similarly, an article published by the University of Chicago demonstrated that negative

portrayals of Muslims increase hostility toward them among the public and lead to greater support for stricter policies targeting Muslims (Lajevardi, 2021).

In addition to shaping perception, traditional media also plays an essential role in influencing countries' policymaking toward Islam and Muslims. The negative framings of the media affect policymakers' approaches to Islam and Muslim communities. For example, Islamophobic discourses disseminated in the media can pave the way for the implementation of legal regulations such as the tightening of immigration policies or the strengthening of security measures. An article published in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia notes that the media contributes to the legitimization of discriminatory policies by reproducing Islamophobic discourses (Hernandez Vilchis, 2023).

Although Islamophobia gained widespread visibility in academic and political literature in the 1990s—particularly with the Runnymede Trust's 1997 report—in a technical sense, it can be stated that prior to this date, a substantial history of representations existed that fall within the boundaries of the concept. As Edward Said noted in *Orientalism* (1978), for centuries Western mental constructions of the East included prejudiced, reductionist, and exclusionary images, particularly regarding Muslim societies. These images were reproduced and disseminated through the media beginning in the mid-20th century. In Hollywood productions of the 1940s and 1950s, Arab and Muslim characters were frequently represented through stereotypes such as the “wild desert man” or the “fundamentalist sheikh” (Shaheen, 2001). In the same period, Western newspapers and magazines generally framed news from Muslim geographies through themes of violence, poverty, ignorance, and political instability, thereby constructing negative portrayals.

The 1979 Iranian Revolution led to a radical shift in Western media perceptions of Muslims. During this period, outlets such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The New York Times* interpreted the revolution as

“theocratic regression” and “hostility toward the West,” and the expression “Islamic fundamentalism” became widespread (Karim, 2000).

The 1990s marked a turning point both in the transformation of the global media ecosystem and in the increasing visibility of the concept of Islamophobia. With the end of the Cold War, the media turned toward defining new global threats; in this process, Muslim identity increasingly became positioned as the “new other,” particularly within Western media. This period was viewed both as the golden age of television broadcasting and as a time when global media circulation accelerated through the use of satellite technologies.

At the same time, during these years, Islamophobia began to become systematic not only through media representations but also across cultural, political, and social domains. The 1997 report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, published by the UK-based Runnymede Trust (Richardson & Conway, 1997), conceptually defined Islamophobia and noted how media practices contributed to reinforcing these discriminatory tendencies. Therefore, the 1990s represent a period in which Islamophobia was both strongly conceptualized and endowed with a structured system of representation within traditional media tools.

The Construction of a New Enemy Image—The Clash of Civilizations and the Media: Samuel P. Huntington’s article *Clash of Civilizations?* (1993) and his subsequent works introduced into Western public opinion and media discourse the notion that Islam constituted “a cultural bloc challenging Western civilization.” This theoretical framework was frequently reproduced in the news media. For example, conflicts in Muslim-majority regions (Bosnia, Algeria, Sudan, Afghanistan) were often reported in global outlets such as CNN, BBC, and Fox News through themes of cultural backwardness, religious fanaticism, and security threats (Poole, 2009; Poole & Richardson, 2010). Muslim immigrants increasingly began to be represented in European media

discourse as anti-integration, contrary to democratic values, and inclined toward violence. The media constructed these representations as “concrete extensions of the clash of civilizations.”

9/11 and the Media Explosion—The Codes of Visual Terror: The September 11, 2001, attacks led to a qualitative leap in Islamophobic discourses within traditional media. Leading newspapers, such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, Le Monde, and Der Spiegel, as well as US-based television channels, presented the events with news and visuals that directly associated them with Islam. The mosque images, veiled women, and Arabic script repeatedly broadcast on television screens in the aftermath of the explosions paved the way for equating Muslimness with the perpetrators of the attacks (Jackson, 2010). During this period, phrases such as “radical Islam,” “Islamic terror,” and “militant Muslims” became entrenched in media language. On Fox News and various talk-show programs in the United States, Islam was widely framed as a civilization-external, irrational, and threatening religion (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017).

Stereotyping and Framing in Print Media: In the post-1990 period, news about Islam in the print press was predominantly framed under three main headings: security, women’s rights, and violence. Especially in news related to women, topics such as the headscarf, forced marriage, and honor killings were employed to portray Islam as an oppressive and patriarchal system (Morey & Yaqin, 2011). This discourse, constructed through the visibility of the Muslim woman, reinforced the Western “savior” role while equating Islamic societies with backwardness. At the same time, some Western magazines and newspapers (e.g., Charlie Hebdo, Jyllands-Posten) published caricatures that directly insulted the Prophet of Islam and Islamic sacred symbols.

Television Series and Films—Islamophobia Normalized in Popular Culture: Traditional media has reproduced Islamophobia not only through news language but also through the entertainment industry. Post-2000

American television series (24, Homeland, Sleeper Cell) have predominantly portrayed Muslim characters as terrorists, agents, or double-identity individuals. These characters have functioned as “threat elements” used to highlight the heroism of the Western main protagonist (Shaheen, 2001). This pattern has similarly continued in cinema films; productions such as True Lies, Rules of Engagement, and The Siege have largely associated Muslims with radicalism, backwardness, bomb-making, or misogynistic roles.

The Effects of Media—Perception, Policy, and Social Consequences: The continual association of Islam with negative contexts in traditional media has increased suspicion, fear, and discrimination toward Muslims within Western public opinion. According to Pew Research Center findings, a large portion of the populations in Western European countries report believing that Muslims are prone to violence (2011). Such perceptions have also resonated on the political level; in many countries, anti-immigrant and anti-Islam parties have gained strength, and practices such as wearing the headscarf and the construction of mosques in the public sphere have faced significant obstacles.

2.2. Islamophobia 2.0: Digitalization, Artificial Intelligence, and Beyond

Beginning from the second decade of the 21st century, the acceleration of digitalization has led to a structural transformation in Islamophobic discourse not only in content production but also in content circulation and consumption. Islamophobia is no longer nourished solely by the broadcasting policies of media outlets; through user-generated content, the algorithms of social media platforms, comment culture, and the circulation of visual materials, it has acquired a much more heterogeneous yet simultaneously faster-spreading structure. The new phenomenon that emerges in connection with this digital evolution is referred to in the literature as “Islamophobia 2.0” and is evaluated

within the new media dynamics produced by the digital age (Awan, 2016).

Digital media platforms—with mechanisms such as content recommendation algorithms, echo chambers, trolling activities, and the systematic dissemination of misinformation—enable the repeated production and reinforcement of Islamophobic content. As social media users become trapped within echo chambers that present content aligned with their own worldview, developments that threaten empathy toward differences increasingly come into view. This mechanism produces ecosystems in which prejudices toward Islam and Muslims become sharper and more normalized in digital environments.

However, the rise of artificial intelligence technologies carries new risks not only for combating Islamophobia but also for its reproduction. Large language models, content-filtering algorithms, newsfeed systems, and automated classification systems often unintentionally reproduce the biases embedded in the datasets on which they are trained. AI systems can contribute to the digital reproduction of Islamophobic discrimination in various ways, such as associating content about Muslims with violence, overlooking groups subjected to discrimination, or rendering the contributions of Muslims invisible. For this reason, combating Islamophobia within the axis of digitalization and artificial intelligence requires new strategies that combine technical expertise with ethical sensitivity.

Algorithms and Echo Chambers: The algorithms of social media platforms aim to personalize user experience by presenting users with content based on their interests and previous interactions. These algorithms encourage users to interact with individuals who share similar views, which leads to the formation of homogeneous digital communities known as “echo chambers.” Echo chambers reinforce individuals’ existing beliefs while reducing their likelihood of

exposure to different perspectives. This situation can create space for the spread and normalization of Islamophobic content.

For example, a study conducted on the platform 4chan found that Islamophobic content was concentrated among specific user groups and that these groups continuously shared such content among themselves. By analyzing 66 million posts and 5.8 million images, the researchers identified 21,000 Islamophobic images in 173,000 posts and 420 hate-speech expressions in 246,000 posts. These findings demonstrate how certain user groups on the platform disseminate Islamophobic content (González-Pizarro & Zannettou, 2022).

Similarly, another study conducted on the Reddit platform showed that Islamophobic hate speech was detected using deep learning techniques and that such content was concentrated within specific communities. Some researchers, using the BERT model and neural networks, identified Islamophobic content on Reddit by analyzing its spread and the communities in which it was concentrated (Aldreabi et al., 2023).

Following the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks, the hashtag #JeSuisCharlie on Twitter serves as an example of a platform where opposing views clashed. Under this hashtag, an apparent conflict was observed between Islamophobic content and posts defending Islam. This situation illustrates how social media can create polarized echo chambers and how these chambers can reinforce Islamophobic discourses (Aydin et al., 2022).

The potential of algorithms to disseminate such content is particularly concerning among young users. A study conducted in the United Kingdom revealed that young people's exposure to violent videos on social media caused them to feel fear about going outside. The recommendation of such content by algorithms has a negative impact on young people's sense of safety (Booth, 2024). In addition, the algorithms of social media platforms may contribute to the spread of far-right ideologies and Islamophobic content. For example, in the

United Kingdom, the role of social media platforms in the dissemination of nationalist, xenophobic, Islamophobic, and antisemitic content has been criticized (Dabbagh, 2024). Consequently, social media algorithms and echo chambers play a significant role in the spread of Islamophobic content. This situation increases social polarization and reinforces prejudices toward Muslim communities.

Artificial Intelligence Models: Artificial intelligence (AI) models are systems trained on large datasets to make human-like decisions and predictions. These models are utilized in various fields, ranging from healthcare services to financial analysis. However, the assumption that AI models are neutral is not always valid; these models can learn and reproduce the biases present in the datasets on which they are trained. This can lead to serious consequences, particularly regarding sensitive issues such as Islamophobia.

AI systems, especially large language models, are trained on extensive datasets collected from the internet. These datasets often contain societal biases, including those directed against Muslims. When AI models learn from such data without sufficient oversight, they may reproduce and even reinforce these biases. For example, research has shown that certain AI applications and chatbots can sustain and amplify Islamophobia through the responses they generate, reflecting the biases embedded in their training data. A study examining the extent to which AI chatbots carry anti-Islam bias in relation to terrorism and sports events within the context of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games found that AI chatbots reproduced anti-Islam bias in a more assertive and authoritative tone compared to traditional and social media (Samuel-Azran et al., 2024).

Another striking example of this phenomenon is the GPT-3 model developed by OpenAI. In a study conducted by researchers affiliated with Stanford University, it was found that GPT-3 produced violence-associated outputs at a rate of 66% in text completion tasks containing the word "Muslim." The same model did not reach similar

rates for other religious groups. For instance, in sentence completion tests such as “A Muslim is like ...,” the model frequently generated expressions such as “a terrorist,” demonstrating the presence of embedded biases regarding Islam in the training datasets (Abid et al., 2021). The production of such biased content by AI models not only affects individual perceptions but can also lead to unjust outcomes against Muslims in structural domains such as public policymaking, security practices, and employment procedures. Algorithmic decision-making systems, for example, may classify Muslim individuals as potential threats in immigration assessments, content moderation, or facial recognition applications. This results in Islamophobic structures becoming more powerful through technological tools.

3. Strategic Action Areas

Combating Islamophobia is a critical necessity for ensuring that societies live in peace and harmony. This struggle requires the coordinated efforts of various actors across strategic action areas. This study highlights key action areas for these efforts, including monitoring and reporting, constructing counter-narratives, supporting digital citizenship, and applying legal and social pressure.

3.1. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting constitute a fundamental strategic action area in combating Islamophobia. This process involves the systematic collection, analysis, and reporting of hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims. Such data help policymakers develop effective strategies and raise public awareness.

One of the first and most important steps in combating Islamophobia is making the phenomenon visible. No form of discrimination that remains invisible or undocumented can be effectively addressed. Therefore, monitoring and reporting activities are vital for identifying, mapping, interpreting, and sharing with the public the various

manifestations of Islamophobia. Discriminatory practices, hate speech, and physical attacks against Muslims that arise particularly in the media—but also in politics, education, and everyday life—can only be exposed through robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Today, these activities are carried out not only by state institutions or security authorities but also through the joint efforts of civil society organizations, academic circles, and digital platform users. For example, the civil initiative Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) operating in the United Kingdom records hate crimes against Muslims through individual reports, analyzes the data, and publishes annual reports to inform the public and decision-makers. However, the sustainability of such initiatives depends on factors such as financial support and political will. Indeed, Tell MAMA’s experience of facing the withdrawal of state funding demonstrates the fragility of such reporting mechanisms (Dearden, 2025).

Monitoring and reporting processes involve not only documenting individual cases but also systematically analyzing social trends, structural problems, and hate speech in digital environments. According to the latest report published by Islamophobia Register Australia, 75% of Islamophobic incidents reported in the country between 2023 and 2024 involved Muslim women as victims, and one-third of the incidents occurred in the presence of children (Nivision, 2025). Such data reveal that not only the victims but also families, communities, and the education system are affected.

Table 1. Monitoring and Reporting

Content	▪ Monitoring and Detection: Systematic detection of Islamophobic content in traditional media (TV, newspapers, radio) and digital media (social media, news websites, blogs). ▪ Verification and Classification: Verification of the detected content and categorization of the materials. ▪ Data Analysis and Trend Identification: Analysis of the collected and verified content; identification of
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	trends, geographical distribution, and platform-specific variations. ▪ Reporting and Public Communication: Publication of analysis results through periodic reports and interactive materials; dissemination of findings to policymakers and media actors. ▪ Intervention and Policy Development: Development of recommendations for media literacy, anti-hate campaigns, and legal processes in light of the collected data.
Actions	▪ Establishing the technological infrastructure for monitoring and detection: Developing online and offline reporting platforms (web, mobile application, hotline) through which victims and witnesses can easily report Islamophobic incidents. Setting up automated and manual media-scanning systems and developing social-media monitoring tools. Creating keyword lists and descriptors. ▪ For verification and classification: Developing appropriate classification criteria based on the operational definition of Islamophobia addressed in the first section. Determining review and control criteria. ▪ For analysis and trend identification, implement processes such as time-series analysis, case mapping, and the development of incident typologies. Preparing separate and integrated analytical reports for digital and traditional media. ▪ Within the scope of reporting: Preparing annual and/or periodic reports; producing platform-specific situation analyses (YouTube, Facebook, X/Twitter, TV channels, etc.) along with incident maps, infographics, and open data sets. ▪ Within the scope of intervention and policy development: Establishing cooperation with traditional and digital media platforms and developing dialogues aimed at removing hateful content; planning Islamophobia-awareness trainings for media professionals; preparing recommendation sets for policymakers; establishing legal reporting and litigation-support mechanisms.

	▪ For the development of all these activities: Creating “Academic Research Support” and related funding mechanisms, and ensuring coordination among universities, research centers, and relevant institutions.
Sample Practices	Although not all of them are directly media-oriented, the following initiatives may be considered as examples: ▪ Tell MAMA (United Kingdom): A body that monitors and reports hate crimes against Muslims and cooperates with police forces (Tell MAMA, n.d.). ▪ Islamophobia Register Australia (Australia): Recorded 309 in-person and 366 online Islamophobic incidents between 2023–2024, reporting that Muslim women constituted 75% of the victims (Islamophobia Register Australia, n.d.). ▪ Council on American-Islamic Relations – CAIR (United States): The Council on American-Islamic Relations monitors discrimination and hate crimes against Muslims, publishes reports, and provides legal support to victims (CAIR – Council on American-Islamic Relations, n.d.). ▪ The Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project (IRDP), operating within the University of California, Berkeley, focuses on the systematic and empirical study of Islamophobia. The project investigates the impact of Islamophobia on the American Muslim community and conducts significant research in this field (Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project, n.d.). ▪ Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND): Operating in the United Kingdom, MEND aims to enhance the media and political literacy of Muslims and organizes awareness campaigns to combat Islamophobia. It also undertakes work on monitoring and reporting hate crimes (Tackling Islamophobia in the UK, n.d.). ▪ Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC): Based in London, IHRC monitors and reports hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims. It also conducts research on human rights violations and the impact of anti-terror laws on Muslim communities (Ana Sayfa – IHRC, 2021).

3.2. Constructing Counter-Narratives

One of the most effective ways to combat Islamophobia is to replace hate speech and misrepresentation with truthful, human-centered, and inclusive narratives. This strategy, referred to as “constructing counter-narratives,” not only reacts to Islamophobic content but also makes visible the multilayered identities of Muslims, their contributions to society, and their individual stories. To counter the impact of anti-Islam discourses disseminated through digital media, social networks, and mass communication tools, there is a need for positive, creative narrative forms that can resonate at both local and global levels.

Recent field studies demonstrate that Islamophobic content has become more visible through social media algorithms and reinforced within echo chambers. This reveals that remaining solely in a defensive position is insufficient; instead, it underscores the importance of alternative narratives that prioritize social benefit, are evidence-based, and capable of establishing emotional connection. The Counter-Islamophobia Kit (CIK) project, supported by the European Commission, has been an exemplary study in this area. By examining the effectiveness of different counter-narrative forms in eight European countries, it has provided guidance to policymakers (Merali, 2018).

Counter-narrative activities can be implemented not only in digital spaces but also across various domains such as educational institutions, the media, artistic projects, and cultural events. The success of this strategy depends on investing in the narrative-building capacities of Muslim communities and ensuring that mainstream outlets remain open to these narratives. Counter-narratives do not merely challenge prejudices; they also strengthen empathy, mutual respect, and a sense of inclusive citizenship among different communities.

Table 2. Constructing Counter-Narratives – General Framework

Content	▪ Thematic Mapping: Identifying and analyzing the themes in which negative representations about Islam and Muslims are concentrated. ▪ Identifying Target Actors and Domains: Mapping the individuals, institutions, platforms, and discourse groups that disseminate Islamophobic content. ▪ Counter-Narrative Content Production: Developing a confident, effective, and alternative language and tone that does not fall into a defensive position against negative representations. ▪ Distribution and Visibility Strategy: Disseminating the produced content on appropriate platforms and in effective formats, and ensuring its engagement with the audience. ▪ Measurement, Evaluation, and Feedback: Monitoring the impact of the produced counter-narratives, collecting feedback, and improving the strategies accordingly.
Actions	▪ Identifying prominent themes such as security, radicalization, violence, women’s rights, migration, and identity, and analyzing the recurring discursive patterns and visual codes used within these themes. ▪ Analyzing major media outlets, influencers, political figures, and online networks that disseminate hate, producing visibility and interaction maps of these actors through impact analyses, and, when necessary, exposing international legal and ethical violations. ▪ Developing successful counter-narrative strategies (humor, addressing shared global problems—engaging in solution-seeking processes, increasing positive representations, drawing attention to structural biases...). ▪ Planning content and campaigns in formats tailored to the target audience, and developing partnerships with media platforms. ▪ Conducting impact analyses using audience feedback, engagement analytics, and social-media measurement tools, and preparing the necessary

	evaluations and improvement reports to ensure continuous refinement of strategies.
Sample Practices	▪ The Carter Center, in 2017, organized an international symposium with the participation of academics, journalists, civil society actors, and religious leaders, aiming to develop strategic and sustainable responses against Islamophobia under the title “Countering the Islamophobia Industry Toward More Effective Strategies” (Countering the Islamophobia Industry Toward More Effective Strategies, 2018). ▪ Muslim Writers Collective (MWC): Founded in 2014, MWC is a civil society organization in the United States that promotes storytelling within the Muslim community (Muslim Writers Collective, n.d.). ▪ National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM): NCCM is a leading organization in Canada that advocates for the civil rights of Muslims and fights against Islamophobia (NCCM, n.d.). ▪ The Empowering NGOs in Countering Online Hate project conducted in Europe highlights that very little attention has been paid to developing effective strategies to combat online hate speech, particularly through the creation of counter-messages. In this context, the project introduces a new ICT platform as a counter-narrative recommendation tool that enables civil society organization operators to monitor and analyze social media data (Chung et al., 2021).

3.3. Supporting Digital Citizenship

The forms of social life shaped by the digital age have given rise to a communication ecosystem in which individuals are not only consumers of information but also content producers and opinion shapers. In this new order, digital citizenship refers to individuals who are aware of their rights and responsibilities in digital spaces, possess critical thinking skills, exhibit ethical behavior, and actively participate in society. However, this potential structure has been threatened by the fact that digital platforms have also become tools capable of amplifying hatred, discrimination, and disinformation.

In digital environments, Islamophobia is reproduced not only through hate-laden expressions but also systematically through exclusionary algorithms, content-filtering mechanisms, and deliberate platform designs. In this context, digital citizenship is not merely an area of individual awareness and responsibility but also one of structural transformation. Promoting digital literacy, online ethical behavior, critical media analysis, and active digital participation can become a protective shield in combating Islamophobia.

Therefore, supporting digital citizenship is not limited to teaching digital skills; it is also linked to a broader value system that includes digital justice, content moderation, online safety, multiculturalism, and freedom of expression. In societies where digital citizenship is encouraged, conscious and effective social response mechanisms against discriminatory discourses such as Islamophobia can operate much more strongly.

Table 3. Supporting Digital Citizenship – General Framework

Content	▪ Developing a critical and questioning attitude through media and religious literacy, strengthening awareness regarding disinformation processes, reinforcing digital ethics and respect, fostering practices of counter-production, complaint, and reporting, and enhancing the motivation and awareness to cooperate with the relevant authorities in this regard.
Actions	▪ Developing “media and religious literacy” curricula and competency frameworks suitable for different target groups for lifelong learning, and ensuring effectiveness and integration through teacher and educator training. ▪ Establishing online learning platforms and ensuring their integration into different educational levels. ▪ Dissemination through public service announcements, short films, animations, toolkits, and social media campaigns; organizing interactive quizzes, podcast series, and infographic sequences.

	▪ Awareness initiatives for promoting the introduction of complaint and reporting platforms, and workshops on digital rights and responsibilities.
Sample Practices	▪ Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU): ISPU conducts research to understand and address the challenges faced by Muslim communities. The study titled “Countering and Dismantling Islamophobia: A Comprehensive Guide” supports digital citizenship by developing media literacy and critical thinking skills (“Countering and Dismantling Islamophobia,” n.d.). ▪ Online Hate Prevention Institute (OHPI): Based in Australia, OHPI is an independent charitable organization that combats online hate speech. It monitors and reports various forms of online hate, including Islamophobia, and promotes digital citizenship (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2023).

3.4. Legal and Social Pressure – Deterrence

To ensure that social media companies, media groups, and digital platforms fulfill their responsibilities in combating Islamophobia, both legal regulations and instruments of social pressure must be used together. Demanding transparency from platforms that produce disinformation and hate speech, monitoring company policies, and ensuring that violations result in sanctions help create a deterrent environment. Strengthening public awareness, reporting mechanisms, and campaigns further enhances the overall impact of this process.

The deterrent effect of law operates not only through punishment but also through its norm-setting and educational functions. The European Court of Human Rights and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) have issued numerous recommendations on expanding the definition of hate crimes, protecting victims, and eliminating the culture of impunity (2022). However, in some countries, the ambiguity of legal definitions regarding Islamophobia

and the lack of political will limit the applicability of deterrent legal measures.

Social pressure, on the other hand, is a strong form of deterrence based not on law but on ethical norms. Public opinion formed through the collective efforts of media, academia, civil society, and cultural actors can create a sphere of social accountability against Islamophobic attitudes and behaviors. Especially in the age of social media, exposing discriminatory content, generating public reaction, and socially marginalizing individuals who engage in hate-based behavior can be effective in changing these behaviors (Bartlett & Miller, 2010).

In this framework, legal and social pressure must function together as a dual strategy not only to punish Islamophobic incidents but also to transform individual attitudes, restructure institutional frameworks, and make cultural norms more inclusive. In today’s context, where Islamophobia is intertwined with institutional and cultural structures, mobilizing both legal enforcement mechanisms and social conscience is key to ensuring long-term and sustainable deterrence.

Table 4. Legal and Social Pressure – Deterrence – General Framework

Content	▪ Defining Responsibilities and Obligations: Clearly defining the responsibilities of social media companies, media groups, and news agencies in combating Islamophobic content and disinformation. ▪ Legal Regulation and Sanction Mechanisms: Implementing concrete legal regulations at the national level aimed at combating hate speech, disinformation, and discrimination. ▪ Accountability and Transparency: Ensuring that companies regularly report on the measures they take within the scope of combating Islamophobia. ▪ Social Pressure and Digital Activism: Encouraging companies to take action through public pressure and digital campaigns carried
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	out by society against disinformation and hate speech.
Actions	▪ Strengthening national and international legal frameworks for combating disinformation and hate speech; preparing and updating media ethics guidelines and responsibility declarations; and developing roadmaps and compliance guides for companies. ▪ Developing legal sanctions against the spread of Islamophobic content, monitoring local legal compliance processes for social media platforms, and establishing information-sharing mechanisms among regulatory bodies. ▪ Encouraging companies to publish content-removal reports and algorithmic transparency reports, cooperating with independent monitoring organizations, and tracking companies' transparency statements and adherence to community guidelines. ▪ Supporting social activism in this field through campaign processes.
Sample Practices	▪ Canada Anti-Islamophobia Initiatives provide policy and legal packages that define Islamophobia and include measures against it at various levels (The Canadian Guide to Understanding and Combating Islamophobia, 2024). ▪ Tell MAMA (UK) systematically monitors and reports Islamophobic incidents, creating intense public pressure on the media and government (Tell MAMA, n.d.).

In this framework, legal and social pressure is a dual strategy that must operate together not only to punish Islamophobic incidents but also to transform individual attitudes, restructure institutional frameworks, and make cultural norms more inclusive. In today's context, where Islamophobia is intertwined with institutional and cultural structures, mobilizing legal enforcement mechanisms together with social conscience is essential for ensuring long-term and sustainable deterrence.

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SOCIETY AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE:



CHANGING COMMUNICATION FORMS,
PLATFORMS, AND PRACTICES

ED: ONUR ÖNÜRMEN



PİET
YAYINLARI

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Changing Communication Forms, Platforms, and Practices

**Editor
Onur ÖNÜRMEN**

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