



Press Release

Violence Against Muslims Is Not an Isolated Incident but the Normalization of Anti-Islam Policies

On Tuesday, 16 June 2026, the Dutch public broadcaster NOS reported on the growing anti-Islam sentiments within society and the increasing number of attacks targeting mosques and other Islamic institutions. Within a short period of time, several mosques became the targets of vandalism, intimidation, threats, and acts of destruction. Various organizations have pointed out that these developments cannot be viewed separately from the prevailing political and social climate, in which negative portrayals of Muslims have become increasingly prominent. Yet such incidents are still too often regarded as isolated acts committed by individuals with extremist views. In doing so, a deeper societal process is overlooked: the gradual normalization of hostility towards Muslims and Islamic institutions.

The question, therefore, is not only why some individuals resort to hate crimes, but also why an increasing segment of society appears to feel less restrained in openly expressing hostility towards Muslims. This can hardly be separated from a discourse that has persisted for years, in which Islam and Muslims are discussed primarily in terms of security risks, integration problems, foreign influence, and alleged tensions with national values.

This approach has not been limited to political rhetoric but has also been reflected in government policies. Successive governments have commissioned specific investigations into foreign funding of mosques; municipalities, within the framework of counter-radicalization policies, have disproportionately scrutinized Muslim communities; and controversial methods aimed at identifying “problematic behaviour” have been implemented, whereby religious observance and conservative beliefs were at times implicitly treated as risk factors. Although public safety is a legitimate concern of government, an exclusive focus on Islamic institutions contributes to the perception that Muslims constitute an exceptional category that must be permanently monitored, managed, or corrected.

As a result, a process of social habituation emerges. Ideas that only a few decades ago would have been considered discriminatory are now presented as necessary societal debates or even as legitimate public policy. The boundary between criticism of religious beliefs and structural hostility towards their adherents is gradually becoming blurred.

When an individual with a Muslim background commits a serious crime, Islam itself often becomes the subject of public debate, whereas similar crimes committed by non-Muslims are generally regarded as individual acts. This unequal approach reinforces the perception of Muslims as a permanent source of threat.

The events in Northern Ireland illustrate this dynamic. An act of violence committed by a single individual not only led to the condemnation of the perpetrator, but also resulted in violence and vandalism directed at Muslims who had absolutely no connection to the incident. The rise in anti-Islamic incidents should therefore not merely be viewed as a security issue, but as a symptom of a deeper societal process in which government policies, political rhetoric, and public discourse contribute to constructing Islam as an exceptional category.

For Muslims, the challenge therefore lies not merely in condemning individual incidents, but in exposing the policies and discourses that normalize them. At the same time, it remains important to uphold and convey Islam with confidence, pride, and conviction, and not to allow others to determine how Islam and Muslims are defined.

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