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**CONTRIBUTION OF  
H.E. PROF. EKMELEDDIN IHSANOGLU,  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE  
ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE,  
TO THE WORK OF THE  
FOURTH SESSION OF THE O.S.C.E. CONFERENCE  
ON ANTI-SEMITISM AND  
ON THEIR FORMS OF INTOLERANCE**

**CORDOBA: 8-9 JUNE 2005.**

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**Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

There are very few places on earth that once stood witness to human harmony, compassion, tolerance, love, equality, and where cultural diversity, interfaith connection, dialogue and recognitions of the other thrived and flourished as Cordoba, the city which ages before the dawn of renaissance and modernity was a shining beacon of tolerance, liberality and knowledge which lit the skies at a time when dark ages in Europe brought forth tyranny, religious bigotry and intolerance.

The choice of Cordoba to host our meeting today is highly meet and befitting as we hope that the “spirit” of Cordoba will inspire us all and prevail over our deliberations.

The need to the spirit of Cordoba is evident as we see and read about what is happening around us in Europe. Dr. Israel SHAHAK of the “Peace Now” movement in Israel warned of what he termed “the mounting of cosmic war against Islam and Muslims”. German academic GUNTHER GRASS said in one of his articles that: “the current climate of hate against Islam brings us very close to a situation similar to that which prompted Germany’s infamous ‘KRISTALLNACKT’ in 1938. Once ‘the enemy’ has been so dehumanized and portrayed as demonic and parasitical, what further justification is needed to persecute and finally exterminate it.”

Christopher Allen one of the two editors of the report of European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia wrote in an article published in a book “the Quest for Sanity”, the following:

“The report unequivocally highlighted the regularity with which Muslims, throughout Europe, became indiscriminate targets for abusive and sometimes violent retaliatory attacks against them. Islamophobia became much more extreme, explicit and accepted across European society. Incidents ranged from

verbal abuse, indiscriminately blaming all Muslims for the attacks of 9/11, women having their headscarf torn from their heads, Muslim male and female being spat upon ... or randomly assaulted in the streets with some of the most extreme leaving victims paralysed, or indeed, hospitalized for many day ... yet despite this fact Islamophobia remained overlooked and dismissed by a variety of detractors from unlikely sectors of the society.”

Due to time constraints, I don't want to dwell on the myriad of testimonies given or written by non-Muslims, about the bleak plight of Muslims of Europe today. But we are very worried when we see that this onslaught has been able to permeate the discursive structures throughout Europe's various modes of disseminations, and finds spokesmen at the level of politicians and even high ranking officials in certain European governments.

Islamophobia had historic roots in Europe, and preceded 9/11 attacks. But 9/11 fueled and enraged the whole world. What happened that day was as much a crime in Islamic law, as it was in the American constitution, European laws, international law and covenants. For Muslims 9/11 was a dark day in their history at the dawn of 21<sup>st</sup> Century, as it was for the U.S., Europe and else where.

The work of the aberrant behavior of misguided individual of hate-filled group, who have turned their murderous hate on their fellow Muslims cannot, justly and logically, be blamed on all Muslims. A Canadian writer commented on this saying that: “even if a thousand Muslims (not nineteen) were to commit similar acts every year – an unimaginable scenario – they would represent only one criminal per millions of Muslims”.

Islam is a living faith with nearly 1300 million global adherents. It has survived as a world religion for more than 1400 years. It has developed a radiant civilization which led the world for long centuries, and stood for values that match or even surpass the modern sublime values on tolerance, human rights compassion, justice, recognition of the other. Islam enacted the first law in the history of humanity which defend equality among all human beings regardless of their colour, race, ethnic origin, faith, social status etc. Inter religious tolerance was the central message of Islam. The Holy Qur'an says for example in ALBAKARA, Verse 136 the following:

“Say (O Muslims) We believe in God and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ismail, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.”

So the claim that Islam is separate from Judeo-Christian West in a false pretension. Islam in its faith in the revelation of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohamed, belong to the same traditions as Christianity and Judaism.

Islam was a civilization, a super power and a genuine geopolitical rival to the West. Islam and Christianity were not enemies, no more competitors. They have a lot in common, the most important of which is their common spiritual reference. Islam and Christianity borrowed and learned from each other, whether in relation to scholarship, philosophy, scientific inquiry, medicine, architecture, and technology.

The classical learning from Athens and Rome which was lost to Christendom was jealously preserved by the Muslims, and came to western Europe, through them. That Europe came to define its civilization as a renaissance of Greece and Rome, and excised the Muslim contribution to its foundations, and its well being, is an example of racist myth-making that has much relevance today.

We, in the OIC, believe that the world is witnessing the birth of a new racism in Europe, based on religious grounds which is more virulent and dominant than racial abuse, or discrimination. This irrational trend should be checked and stopped.

We believe that the virtues of compassion and justice are not the preserve of any one people, religion or civilization, but are universal human values, which we all need to internalize and uphold.

It is under the Islamic principles of tolerance, and acknowledging the other, that the lands of Islam played host, through centuries, to three out of four Christian patriarchate mainly those of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria, which produced some of the most prominent intellectual thinkers and writers in theology.

Islamophobia is highly dangerous because it does not respect the individual. On many instances it stands on the fringes of collective punishment outlawed by international law, and considered a crime.

Muslims in Europe need to be protected against the lifelong social and psychological damage inflicted by hate mongering, negative stereotyping, mental and physical abuse and smear campaign against their self-identity, self-esteem and human dignity.

For that purpose there is an urgent necessity to:

- give recognition to Islam as an official religion in EU member states that do not grant this recognition;
- strengthen legislation on hate crimes, and enacting laws on “Equal Treatment” adopted by EU Council directives in 2000 with the target of the 2003 as a deadline to its implementation. Many EU member states have yet to meet that deadline – this will help in countering discrimination in employment, housing, services etc.;

- revise national text-books at all level of education, particularly in key disciplines such as history, geography, philosophy, social and human sciences, with a view to present a balanced views of other cultures and civilizations;
- install genuine inter-cultural dialogue at local, national, regional and international levels, and in all media, from news to feature stories, fiction and even cartoons;
- promote tolerance and encourage debate within the intelligentsia and media about their responsibility to avoid perpetuating prejudices against Muslims;
- develop campaign to foster and disseminate respect for cultural and religious pluralism, and disseminate their virtues;
- ensure the right to freedom of religious practices;
- help in addressing the root causes of terrorism, mainly the political injustices.
- give Muslim minorities more incentive to participate in public life, to enable them to retain their confidence and help in integration process. This needs more care, put an end to harassment, avoiding segregation. Assimilation is difficult to attain in a short period of time. It is better left to future generations;
- prosecute abuses and punish discriminatory and violent acts by law enforcement agents;
- monitor discrimination against Muslims and coordinate this effort with the OIC;

The OIC believes that what we require today is a greater understanding of the needs of one another. The Muslim diaspora in the West can be a critical source of dialogue and bridge building. They should be an asset to both sides, not a liability. Their presence in Europe is needed by Europeans, for a variety of economic or social reasons. This need is projected to increase in the future. In a shrinking world of globalization, they can be a useful tool to embrace the challenge of a connected world.

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