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Statement from the Gustav Stresemann Stiftung e.V.

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**There is no such thing as “Islamophobia”**

Islamic associations as the *Organization of Islamic Cooperation* and several participating NGOs at the OSCE use the term “Islamophobia” to nip any criticism on Islam and Muslims in the bud. To gain sovereignty over the interpretation of Islam, OIC accepts only theological arguments. Simultaneously, these same bodies strive to elevate religious freedom over freedom of speech and press in order to suppress any criticism from Non-Muslims or stigmatize it as racism.

Muslim lobbyists find support from the European side by so-called “Prejudice Research”. In Germany, the research project on Group-Focused Enmity (GFE Survey) has prominent significance in the relevant Social Sciences.

Summing up the essential characteristics of their definitions we can only speak of “Islamophobia” when all of the following three conditions are met:

1. It deals with fear of Islam or Muslims respectively, or the condemnation thereof.
2. This fear or condemnation is unsubstantiated or biased or of a general nature.
3. It leads to discrimination or violence.

Based on the mentioned scientific surveys, it is easy to show that the necessary conditions for “Islamophobia” are not prevalent among the German populace. The four most important findings are:

**First:** “Islamophobia” neither corresponds to xenophobia nor to anti-Semitism. An independent development of all three phenomena became apparent in the longitudinal analysis. This is reconfirmed by the fact that the perceived percentage of foreigners in the personal environment has no influence on “Islamophobic” attitudes.

**Second:** Islam is being condemned as a system, not Muslims as believers. Opposed to a low general condemnation of Muslims a majority of Germans dismiss the political-ideological dimension of Islam. Most of those surveyed thought

- that Islam is backward and does not look upon other faiths as being equal,
- were sure that Islam generally repudiates homosexuality,
- did not judge equality of men and women to be compatible with Islam.

Furthermore, significantly more than half of those surveyed held the belief that Islam sought to expand its influence in Germany through the building of mosques.

**Third:** Concerning factual matters, there appears to be an almost equal Islam-critical position of 80% of those surveyed, independent of the “Islamophobe” positions. Consequently, a large portion of Islam-critical people in Germany have little to no prejudices against Muslims.

**Forth:** Even prejudice rarely leads to hostile intent against Islam. Though slightly more than a third of Germans indicated themselves to be generally more sceptical with Muslims, only a fifth would prefer not to have any Muslims in Germany at all. Even fewer deduced mandatory actions from this: fewer than 15% agreed to the statement that Muslims should be denied any form of religious activities at all.

## **Conclusion**

- The first condition for “Islamophobia” – fear or condemnation of Islam or Muslims – is consistently confirmed by the surveys.
- In contrast to this, the second condition (provided that this fear be unsubstantiated or the condemnation of a general nature) is not met.
- Approval of openly Islam-hostile acts, like a ban of religious activities or eviction of Muslims, was very rare. Thus, the third condition (meaning discrimination or violence) is also not met.

Altogether, speaking of “Islamophobia” seems to be unjustified. In fact, we are looking at the rejection of very specific ideological features or behaviours that are associated with or attributed to Islam.

Prejudice researchers strongly contradict the notion that these ideological tendencies and their social effects are in fact evoked by Islam. When talking of “Islamophobia” as an unsubstantiated fear, they over-simplify and claim that there be no threat due to Islam at all. To make a generalized statement about such a complex social-logic function such as religion, is absolutely not objective.

Rather than trying to find real causes for the measured effects of the condemnation of Islam in society, they try to attribute overreaching fear or racist condemnation to vast portions of the populace.

Consequently, the word “Islamophobia” can therefore only be viewed as a targeted polemic term.

## **Recommendations**

Interestingly, the term “Islamophobia” is not used by the OSCE. Therefore, the *Stresemann Foundation* recommends that the OSCE calls upon the participating States and NGOs to abandon the term “Islamophobia” in their official statements addressed to OSCE and elsewhere.

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