

Islamophobia in Spain: New Shapes of Old Fears?

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This paper examines the new expressions of Islamophobia in Spain in their broader European and Global context. Recent studies at the Center for Research on Antisemitism in Berlin (2007) proposed the analytical transfer of the methodological findings of constructing Jews as the “Other Enemy” to the study of perceptions of Muslims as the “Other Enemy.” Although both phenomena (Antisemitism and Islamophobia) can by no means be equated, the similarities of the rhetoric used in publications and the public media (the myth of “Eurabia,” the comparison of the *Qur’an* with *Mein Kampf*, the propagation of an Islamic threat through economic infiltration, etc.) and the discriminatory effects such rhetoric has on Spanish Muslims (resistance to Mosque-construction, acts of violence, discrimination in the workplace and schools, etc.) is striking. The expression of these old anti-Muslim fears are compounded by the historical roots of the hatred of “Moors” and the recent growth of immigrant populations. The demonization of Muslims operates as a force that disconnects individuals and communities from healthy exchanges across ethnic and faith divides. This paper suggests the need to allow the results of initiatives taken by NGO’s (survey of 10 Andalusian organizations) and Spanish and European governmental initiatives (summary of OSCE, OIC, and other relevant reports) to “trickle down to the street, to the communities, to the clubs, to the little guy on the street anywhere in the Muslim or Christian world.” (Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League). Public dialogue, tolerance and intercultural understanding at all societal levels are key to fighting Islamophobia and to fostering a culture of peace and cooperation.

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