**Report on: Islamophobia and state racism in contemporary France**

**A one-day international conference at King’s College London, Bush House, Friday 10 May**

On Friday 10 May 2024, King’s College London hosted an international conference on the theme of **Islamophobia and state racism in contemporary France**, thanks to generous support from the ASMCF Initiative Fund, theKing’s College London Arts and Humanities Research Funding, University of Aberdeen Grants Academy.

The day was organised into three panels, each with three speakers and we also included an informal networking session on the challenges and opportunities of carrying out research on Islamophobia in higher education. There were 67 registrations for the event which was held in person at Bush House at the KCL Strand campus.

The day started with an opening address and welcome from Dr Jim Wolfreys (KCL) who thanked all participants and event support staff as well as our event sponsors, ASMCF, theKing’s College London Arts and Humanities Research Funding, University of Aberdeen Grants Academy.

The first panel (10.30am-12pm) was focused on **Gendered Islamophobia** and included papers from Dr Olivier Esteves (University of Lille) on the phenomenon of highly educated French Muslims who feel compelled to leave France due to Islamophobia and structural racism. The second paper was given via MS Teams by Dr Malika Hamidi (Catholic University of Louvain - Saint Louis Brussels) and focused on Muslim post-feminist movements. The third paper in this panel was presented by Professor Nadia Kiwan (University of Aberdeen) where she focused on her ongoing research on how Muslim feminist and anti-racist praxis contributes to decolonising political conceptions of gender equality, secularism, religion.

From 12-1pm we held an informal networking session on **the problems and possibilities of undertaking research on Islamophobia in higher education** contexts. This round table discussion was chaired by Dr Jim Wolfreys and Professor Nadia Kiwan who reflected on some of the ways in which racialised early career researchers in the French context in particular can face marginalisation and negative impacts on their careers if they adopt a critical positionality to questions of structural racism and Islamophobia in particular. This was something that Wolfreys and Kiwan discussed in the MCF podcast which was recorded with contributors to the special issue of *Modern and Contemporary France* in June 2023. We see this conference and the discussions around establishing a more formal transnational and transdisciplinary network on Islamophobia as a major contribution to supporting academic freedom for early career academics and racialised groups in our universities.

After a sandwich lunch, the second panel on **Racialisation, authoritarianism and Islamophobia (2-3.30 pm) saw papers from Dr Amina Easat-Daas (De Montfort University) who spoke about liberal Islamophobia and the need to complexify political analyses of how Islamophobia crosses and reconfigures traditional left-right political divides. The next presentation by Dr Reza Zia-Ebrahimi (KCL) focused on the socio-political construction of *islamo-gauchisme* and the ways in which this term is weaponised to stifle academic and political debates about structural racisms and the relationship between wider geo-political questions and domestic anti-racist movements. The final paper in this panel was delivered by Dr Jim Wolfreys (KCL) on the authoritarianism of the Macron presidency and the ways in which a so-called liberal agenda in economic terms has been aligned with an authoritarian stance on issues to do with law and order, security, *laïcité* and Muslims.**

**Following a coffee break, the third and final panel on Islamophobia states of exception**convened from 4-5.30pm with a paper from Dr Ibrahim Bechrouri (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York) which explored the links between the repression of anti-racist activism and colonial forms of counter-insurgency, whilst Dr Fraser McQueen (University of Bristol) considered how civilian counter-terrorism is foregrounded in popular culture representations of so-called *jihadi* radicalisation. Finally, Dr Kawtar Najib (University of Liverpool) offered a spatial analysis of Islamophobia and the criminalisation of activist anti-racist spaces of resistance.

All panels generated lively discussion amongst academics, students and interested members of the general public. The conference has also served as a springboard to a further event to take place at the University of Aberdeen in July 2024 which will look at Islamophobia in a comparative perspective by bringing scholars and stakeholders working on Islamophobia in France, England and Scotland together to consider the development of a funding bid in the autumn of 2024. This next stage of the network development would not have been made possible without the generous support of the ASMCF.

For weblinks to the conference registration, full programme outline and social media posts, see below:

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/departmentoflanguagesliteraturesandcultures/1233101>

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<https://x.com/KingsDLLC/status/1788938925932724689>

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Nadia Kiwan and Jim Wolfreys

23 May 2024