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On March 15, 2023, the United Nation's first International Day to combat Islamophobia was commemorated in New York. The event was crucial as March 15 was commemorated for the first time this year as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, which the UN General Assembly voted to commemorate annually last year on the anniversary of the 2019 attack on two mosques in New Zealand**[1].** However, the Day was marked by the US accusing China of committing genocide against the Uyghur population.

The United States Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield stated that, We have also determined that the Chinese government has committed genocide and crimes against humanity against the predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang**[2]**. The US Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield further declared that, The international community must continue to condemn these atrocities. We must continue to demand accountability. And we must continue to call for all those unjustly detained in China to be released and reunited with their families**[3]**.

In response, China has accused the US of abusing a UN event as well as trying to sow discord between China and Muslim populations**[4]**. Therefore, a spokesperson from the Chinese Delegation answered, China resolutely rejects the baseless accusations made by the US just now in abusing todays high-level event of commemoration**[5]**. In addition to his words, he implied that the US is guilty of committing genocide against Native

Americans as well as war crimes such as the killing of civilians in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq**[6]**. The Chinese spokesperson said, We call upon America to stop making lies for their political interests. The whole world has long been clear-eyed about the US political agenda of using Xinjiang to condemn China**[7]**.

Despite the words of the Chinese spokesperson on the Uyghur population, it cannot be denied that the Uyghur population in China has been facing human rights abuses, and Islamophobia is prevalent in China. There are too many examples of Islamophobic practices in China. First of all, it is known that the Uyghur population has been facing discrimination in employment and education, as well as widespread corruption and restriction on their religious practices**[8]**. For instance, wearing a hijab, growing a beard, praying or fasting are considered reasons for arrest**[9]**. In addition to this, the Chinese government has built internment camps in Xinjiang, the number of which has increased since 2017**[10]**. According to Gay MacDougall, a Member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, more than 1 million Uyghurs and Muslim minorities were in the internment camps as of 2018**[11]**. It has to be noted that washing hands and feet is not allowed in some of those camps in order to prevent Islamic ablution**[12]**. Moreover, the Chinese government has been committing cultural cleansing and has started to demolish historic mosques and buildings**[13]**. Human Rights Organizations and the UNs Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have reported and documented Chinas attitude towards Uyghurs, which has been widely condemned**[14]**.

However, when it comes to Islamophobia, the US is not blameless. The Muslim population in the USA has faced many challenges and discrimination. For instance, African American Muslim children face harassment in classrooms while Lebanese American Muslims and Iranian American workers lose their jobs due to discrimination against Muslims**[15]**. Also, it has to be noted that Sunni mosques in the US receive threats**[16]**. Moreover, on September 16, 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi was shot dead**[17]**. The reason for this murder was the turban Sodhi wore and his Muslim-like appearance. It needs particular emphasis that the murder of Sodhi was not unique in the US. The FBI reports justified that Muslims are subjected to hate crimes. In an FBI report of hate crimes in 2020, it was demonstrated that 110 Muslims were subjected to hate crimes**[18]**. Even US President Joe Biden admitted that the Muslim population in the US face targeted violence and Islamophobia in an Eid Celebration hosted by the White House**[19]**.

As Khaled Ali Beydoun, a scholar who researches Islamophobia, suggested, The US has exported Islamophobia to Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and beyond in a destructive way**[20]**. It can be argued that the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York have raised Islamophobia and Islamophobic practices. In this sense, 9/11 can be considered a turning point for the views on Muslims. After 9/11, it started to be seen that the more Muslims look like Muslims, the more they are thought to be related to terrorism. Beydoun stated that, The US is the catalyst for the global war on terror that spreads and globalizes Islamophobia with anti-Muslim language, perhaps even more powerfully than any other government in the world."**[21]**. In this sense, the anti-Muslim language of the US has spread Islamophobia into the world. It can even be alleged that the 9/11 attacks were used as an excuse by the Chinese government to exercise Islamophobic exercises

on the Muslim population in China.

Generally, it can be concluded that the Muslims in China as well as in the US and the west in general face hate crimes and discrimination related to Islamophobia. The Uyghur population in China is one example of this case. Nevertheless, it has to be reminded that Beijing has to solve this issue within itself without any foreign interference, as a sovereign state should do. It is crucial to remember that the US pronouncements of genocide are political. Therefore, the US solution proposals for the Uighurs should be cautiously approached as the US has been manipulating the minority problems and historical facts, such as the one with Armenians, to serve its political interests.

*_Photograph:_ https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/muslims-in-us-call-for-global-efforts-to-combat-islamophobia-foster-inclusivity/2845898

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[2] *A.g.e*

[3] *A.g.e*

[4] *A.g.e*

[5] *A.g.e*

[6] *A.g.e*

[7] *A.g.e*

[8] Ali Çaksu, "Islamophobia, Chinese style: Total internment of Uyghur Muslims by the people's Republic of China." *Islamophobia Studies Journal* (2020), p.177.

[9] *A.g.e*, p.184.

[10] *A.g.e*, p.178.

[11] *A.g.e*

[12] *A.g.e*, p.180.

[13] *A.g.e*, p 185.

[14] Simon Hooper and Umar Faroooq, China and the US Clash over Uyghurs at UN Islamophobia Event, *Middle East Eye*, March 14, 2023, https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uyghurs-china-us-clash-un-islamophobia-event

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activism among Middle Eastern Americans." *Patterns of Prejudice* 43.3-4 (2009), p. 404

[16] *A.g.e*

[17] Erik Love. "Confronting Islamophobia in the United States: framing civil rights activism among Middle Eastern Americans." *Patterns of Prejudice* 43.3-4 (2009), p. 402

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[21] *A.g.e*

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