Why the International Day to Combat Islamophobia is Important

The UN declared March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, which is an important development on a number of fronts:

1. **Raises awareness:** This day brings global attention to the issue of Islamophobia and helps raise awareness about the discrimination and prejudice faced by Muslims around the world. It can encourage a greater understanding of Muslim societies, Islam and its diverse followers.

2. **Promotes unity and solidarity:** By marking a day to combat Islamophobia, the UN designation of March 15, encourages people of all faiths and backgrounds to stand in solidarity against bigotry and intolerance. It underscores the need for social unity, dialogue, and understanding among different religious and cultural groups around the globe.

3. **Encourages education and cultural exchange:** The March 15, International Day to Combat Islamophobia can be a platform and an open opportunity for educational initiatives and cultural exchange programs that foster a better understanding of Muslims and Islam’s teachings, and its history. This can help dispel misconceptions and longstanding Orientalist stereotypes about the religion and its followers.

4. **Empowers affected communities:** Recognizing and combating Islamophobia empowers the Muslim community by acknowledging their struggles and providing them with a platform to share their experiences. This can inspire individuals and organizations across the world to work together to address the issue and promote tolerance.

5. **Calls for policy changes and legal action:** The International Day to Combat Islamophobia can and should inspire governments and civil society organizations to enact or strengthen laws and policies that protect the rights of Muslims and other minority groups. This can include measures to prevent discrimination, bigoted speech, bullying, and hate crimes.

6. **Fosters a global response:** Islamophobia is not limited to one country or region; it is a global issue that impact Muslims and those perceived Muslim. By establishing an international day to combat it, the UN emphasizes the need for a coordinated, worldwide response to address this rising form of discrimination and prejudice.

The UN’s declaration of March 15th as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia represents a significant step in promoting justice, understanding, and respect for religious and cultural diversity. It serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle against hate and discrimination and the importance of working together to create a more inclusive and equitable world.
This special issue had its beginnings in the 14th annual Michigan State University Muslim Studies Program conference, which was held on April 8-9, 2021. The theme of the conference, proposed by Professor Nazita Lajevardi, was “Global Islamophobia and the News Media, Entertainment Media, and Social Media.” Professor Lajevardi, along with Professors Leila Tarakji and Mohammad Hassan Khalil, collected and reviewed initial drafts of the papers. Another group of articles that have been in the Journal’s pipeline are included to complete the regular 8-12 published pieces per volume.