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The Daegu Mosque Issue

: A Reflection of Islamophobia and Challenges to Religious Freedom
in South Korea

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국문요약

이 글은 대구 이슬람사원 건축을 둘러싸고 진행 중인 갈등을 비판적으로 살펴, 이슬람혐오의 표출과 종교 자유를 위한 투쟁을 조명한다. 사원 건축을 반대하는 주민들은 표면적으로는 반대의 이유가 소음, 음식 냄새와 같은 현실적인 문제들에 있다고 한다. 그러나 그 기저에는 이슬람에 대한 뿌리 깊은 공포와 혐오 정서가 있음을 알 수 있다. 이 글은 사원 건립을 둘러싼 갈등을 조장하고 이슬람에 관한 거짓 정보를 퍼트리며 무슬림 공동체를 향해 차별적 언행을 부추기는 데 특정 종교 세력 및 반이민 단체들이 하고 있는 역할을 면밀히 분석한다. 이 같은 단체들의 개입에서도 알 수 있듯이, 대구 이슬람사원 건립을 둘러싼 갈등은 한국 사회의 이슬람혐오의 축소판이라 할 수 있다. 이 글은 이처럼 한국 사회의 혐오 정치라는 맥락에서 이슬람사원 갈등을 살펴, 사원 건립이 법적으로 승인되었음에도 무슬림 학생들이 지속적으로 직면하고 있는 어려움에 대해 구체적으로 살펴보고자 한다.

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I. Introduction

Kyungpook National University (KNU), located in Daegu city, South Korea, is widely recognized as one of the country's premier academic institutions. Each semester, KNU attracts a significant number of foreign students, many of whom are granted scholarships and contribute greatly to the university's academic excellence. Notably, Muslim students from diverse countries have made valuable contributions to various departments within the research academia at KNU.

However, despite the South Korean government's ongoing efforts to welcome and accommodate foreign talents from around the world, the realization of peaceful coexistence among individuals from different backgrounds within a predominantly monocultural society like South Korea requires immediate attention from the authorities. In this regard, Muslim students at KNU face challenges in being fully accepted by

the local community, as their religious practices, which hold immense significance to them, are not always embraced. This article aims to address the issue of Islamophobia faced by Muslim students in relation to the reconstruction of a legally approved Mosque intended to cater to their needs.

II. The Need for a Mosque

Muslim students in South Korea face a unique challenge when it comes to maintaining their religious practices, particularly in terms of prayer. Unlike many other religions, which can be practiced individually and without any specific requirements for a dedicated space, Muslims are required to perform five daily prayers at specific times of the day. These prayers are intended to be performed in a clean and quiet space. Without access to a mosque or other designated space, Muslim students may find it difficult to fulfill this requirement of their faith. Furthermore, having a mosque close to campus can provide Muslim students with a sense of community and belonging, which is especially important for students who may feel isolated or misunderstood due to Islamophobic attitudes. Just as universities provide sports facilities and other spaces for students to relax and pursue their interests, it is important for Muslim students to have access to a mosque where they can connect with others who share their faith and find spiritual relaxation. This aspect is not only essential for the religious well-being of Muslim students but also indirectly supports academic growth and excellence.

III. History of the Mosque near KNU

While there are already several mosques and prayer places in Daegu, the nearest location to KNU takes at least 40 minutes to reach by using public transportation. Additionally, as almost 3 out of 5 of Muslim daily prayers fall during lab hours, going to the nearest mosque may take more than three hours collectively, which is impractical for them on daily basis.

Due to the unavailability of a nearby mosque or designated prayer space, Muslim students at KNU initially prayed in a room provided inside the dormitory. However, this arrangement was later discontinued due to some administration issues, and the students had to resort to praying in congregation under the open sky. Subsequently, they rented a small house near the faculty apartment of KNU, but due to the growing number of Muslim students and technical issues, this option proved to be short-lived.

After a special request, the university provided the students with a hall for Jumma (Friday) prayers, but it was not an ideal option, as the hall lacked proper ventilation, and unnotified evacuation orders were issued due to other functions scheduled in the same area. In response to these challenges, Muslim students at KNU began offering prayers on the rooftop of the stadium pavilion, enduring difficult weather conditions such as freezing cold in winter and scorching heat in summer.

One of the Muslim students eventually offered his house for prayer, where students could pray five times a day in a room reserved for this purpose. Later, the students rented a hall in front of the west gate of KNU. However, due to space limitations, management issues, and service constraints, they realized the need for a permanent mosque.

Despite language barriers and significant physical, mental, and financial efforts from the community, a suitable location was finally found and purchased in 2014. Although the current site was an old-fashioned Korean house and surrounded by other houses, with no proper entrance gates for a vehicle, the place was only a five-minute walk from the west gate of KNU and was also more affordable and cheaper in price, making it a convenient option for the students.

After purchasing the house, Muslim students began using it for prayer. However, the lack of a proper cooling system in the summer and heating system in the winter, as well as the limited size of the house without a second-floor facility, posed challenges for the students. They anticipated that they would need to reconstruct the building in the future to address these issues. Consequently, since 2014, the Muslim students have been donating money within their community for this purpose.

For more than six years, until September 2020, the students continued to pray at the same location without any conflicts with the local community. However, during large prayers, such as the Friday prayer or Eid day prayers, the limited space of the house made it difficult for almost 80 to 100 students to pray together. As a result, many students had to pray outside in the lawn of the mosque, exposed to the scorching sun in summers and freezing cold in winters.

In 2020, the Muslim students' community finally decided to reconstruct their mosque. They obtained all legal permissions from the relevant authorities and began the reconstruction process after the demolition of the previous structure in October 2020. Until February 2021, the reconstruction proceeded smoothly without any complaints from residents. However, in February 2021, the district office of

Daegu city halted the construction of the mosque, citing complaints from residents. This was done without following proper legal processes and investigations.

The construction of the mosque was halted based on the complaints of the neighbors. The issues they raised were related to noise¹⁾ and smell of food²⁾ being cooked at the mosque, as stated in media interviews and press conferences³⁾. However, on different occasions, residents themselves denied these complaints, stating that their opposition was due to the “fear of Islam”⁴⁾ or due to a “large scale mosque”⁵⁾ being constructed in the area.

The Muslim students found themselves in an unexpected situation from that point onward, which they had not encountered while studying at KNU or living in South Korea.

The Muslim students attempted to address the concerns of their neighbors through dialogue and by proposing solutions. They met with the neighbors and presented solutions to address the issues of noise and food smells, such as constructing a proper mosque with sufficient

1) “대구 이슬람사원 신축에 주민들 반대… 청와대 청원까지 : 정치 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.chriandaily.co.kr/news/100918>.

2) “경북대 서문 주택가에 이슬람 사원 건축…주민 반발 - 경북일보 - 굿데이 굿뉴스,” accessed May 10, 2023, https://kyongbuk.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2068334&sc_sub_section_code=S2N15.

3) “무슬림 수백 명이 오는데, 주민 공청회도 없이 모스크건축 허가?... 주민들, ‘취소하라’ - 종교와 진리,” accessed May 10, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=896>.

4) “갑자기 싸늘하게 돌변한 이웃...이슬람 혐오 시달리는 유학생들,” accessed May 10, 2023, <https://n.news.naver.com/article/469/0000630284>.

5) “대구 북구 대현동 이슬람사원 ‘평행선’...주민- 건축주 의견차만 확인,” accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.yeongnam.com/web/view.php?key=20210324010003743>.

space, installing soundproof walls, and adding long chimneys to address the issue of food smells. However, the students were not aware that third parties were taking advantage of the situation, and that the complaints from the neighbors were not the actual issue. Initially, the students declined interviews with local media, stating that it was an internal issue. When they later attempted to counter propaganda by opposing groups in local media, they still refrained from contacting international media to avoid defaming Korea⁶⁾ due to the actions of a few individuals. However, as the situation escalated due to perceived negligence from the law enforcement authorities, international media attention was drawn to the issue. Numerous reports were published by international media outlets, shedding light on the developments and complexities surrounding the case⁷⁾⁸⁾⁹⁾¹⁰⁾.

Is it merely a conflict between neighbors and Muslim students? Is it solely an issue concerning the reconstruction of a place of worship within a residential area? The objective examination of the facts

6) “혐오와 차별을 중지하라 - 대구 북구청의 이슬람사원 공사 중지에 대한 국가인권위원회 진정 기자회견 | 공익인권법재단 공감,” accessed May 10, 2023, https://www.kpil.org/board_activity/20210622/.

7) En Corée Du Sud, La Mosquée de La Discorde, accessed May 14, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2023/01/11/en-coree-du-sud-la-mosquee-de-la-discorde_6157355_3210.html.

8) How Multiculturalism Became a Bad Word in South Korea, accessed May 14, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/asia/south-korea-diversity-muslims.html>.

9) Islamophobia: Pig Heads Left Outside a Mosque in South Korea - The Observers, accessed May 12, 2023, <https://observers.france24.com/en/tv-shows/the-observers/20230117-south-korea-islamophobia-mosque-pig-heads>.

10) S Korea s Muslim Students Face Mosque Backlash, accessed May 14, 2023, <https://www.trtworld.com/video/news-videos/s-koreas-muslim-students-face-mosque-backlash/625d4408353410001726b65f>.

suggests otherwise. In this article, we will delve into the perspectives of the opposing neighbors and the involvement of certain groups in propagating fear against Muslim students. Furthermore, while the neighbors assert that their intention is simply to request the relocation of the mosque to another site and deny any Islamophobic sentiment, it raises questions as to why they did not propose any alternative location despite the students' willingness to consider such a suggestion. Despite the students waiting for more than two years with their reasonable conditions, it raises doubts whether there were truly no other suitable options in the entire area or if it was just an excuse to remove the Muslim students from their legally owned property.

IV. Misconceptions about Daegu Mosque issue

The conflict over the mosque issue has persisted for more than two years, since February 2021. During this time, opposing groups have spread misconceptions about the mosque and Muslim student community through the media. For instance, Raymond Kim, a missionary from the Arab Culture Research Association, claimed that mosques make loud calls to prayer, or “Azan,” five times a day, which causes noise pollution and harms residents¹¹⁾. Residents also have expressed concerns about the holding of Ramadan events in the mosque because of which they are unable to sleep due to the noise made by the mosque loudspeakers¹²⁾¹³⁾ all night long¹⁴⁾. However,

11) “대구 북구청, 인근 주민 땅 매입해 이슬람 사원 갈등 해소? : 교회일반 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/122055>.

12) “북구 이슬람사원 건축 놓고 주민-건축주 갈등 ‘평행선’ - 대구신문,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.idaegu.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno>

such claims are not factual, as calling Azan on a loudspeaker or using external loudspeakers for the purpose of prayers is not allowed in South Korea. Neither churches nor mosques are allowed to use loudspeakers to ring bells or announce calls to prayer in South Korea. It is also important to consider that the Muslim students have their own academic obligations during the day and cannot be expected to be praying all night long. Furthermore, during Ramadan, Muslim students fast from early morning until evening and require sufficient rest. It is not feasible for them to pray all night and then attend research labs the following day without proper rest.

Another misconception propagated in the media about the Muslim student's community is that they were inquiring and buying houses in the surrounding area of the mosque, trying to take over the whole area¹⁵⁾¹⁶⁾. However, the reality is that before starting the construction, the students initially tried to find another site close to the university and on the side of the road to make it more convenient for students. Unfortunately, such sites were too expensive. As a result, the students decided to reconstruct the mosque at the same location. However, the construction of a 50-pyeong Mosque, which was necessary to

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13) “대법원, 대구 이슬람 사원 건축주 측 손 들어줘 : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/118918>.

14) “대구 이슬람 사원 건축 논란… 주민들 ‘우리도 안락히 설 권리 있다’ : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/108508>.

15) “우리 곁에 다가온 ‘이슬람’... 대구 대현동만의 일이 아니다! - 종교와 진리,” accessed May 10, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=857>.

16) “‘대구 대현동 이슬람사원 건축 반대’ 청와대 국민청원 : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/107211>.

accommodate all Muslim students, was not permitted in the current location due to the lack of access to a three-meter road. As a result, they had no choice but to purchase one of the adjacent houses in order to gain access to the required three-meter road and proceed with the reconstruction according to their needs. Once this requirement was fulfilled, the relevant authorities granted permission to reconstruct the mosque at the same location. The purchasing of houses was not intended to take control of the area, as propagated by opposing groups in the media. Rather, it was a necessity to meet the requirements of the authorities.

The opposing groups have made claims regarding the size¹⁷⁾¹⁸⁾ and funding of the mosque, stating that it is a three-story building of considerable size and is funded by large organizations, suggesting that this is not just a problem in Daehyeon-dong, Daegu, but a problem for all of South Korea¹⁹⁾²⁰⁾. However, the reality is that the mosque is a two-story building, with only a small room to be built on the second floor. Moreover, the allegation that the mosque was funded by large organizations is unsubstantiated. If that were true, the students could have easily acquired a suitable location on the main road. However, due to financial constraints, they were unable to do so. Furthermore, when the opposing groups raised concerns about illegal

17) “경북대 서문 주택가에 이슬람 사원 건축…주민 반발 - 경북일보 - 굿데이 굿뉴스.”

18) “경북대 주민들 이슬람사원 건립에 ‘주택가 종교시설 반대,’” accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/A2021021415540003215>.

19) “우리 곁에 다가온 ‘이슬람’... 대구 대현동만의 일이 아니다! - 종교와 진리.”

20) “‘대구 대현동 이슬람사원 건축 반대’ 청와대 국민청원 : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

funding and lodged a complaint²¹⁾ with the Daegu Buk-gu Police Station, the authorities conducted an investigation and found no evidence of any suspicious activity.

Some of the residents also accused Muslim students of intending to settle in the area permanently, using the construction of the mosque as evidence. The residents claim that despite Muslim students stating their intention to return to their home countries after completing their studies, they are buying houses and bringing their entire families to settle down, including wives, children, and elderly parents²²⁾²³⁾. However, these claims are baseless. Many senior students who were present at the start of the construction of the mosque have left Korea after completing their studies and finding employment in other countries. Moreover, raising concerns about Muslim students living with their families while pursuing their education is a violation of their fundamental human rights. Living with one's family while having proper legal visas is not a crime and should not be subject to discrimination or unjust accusations.

Some of residents have also expressed concern that the construction of the mosque will lead to the establishment of Muslim shops and halal restaurants in the surrounding area²⁴⁾. They also fear that the

21) “대구 ‘이슬람사원’ 건축자금 모금... 기부금품법 위반, 수사 촉구 - 종교와 진리,” accessed May 11, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=906>.

22) “‘대구 대현동 이슬람사원 건축 반대’ 청와대 국민청원 : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

23) “‘무슬림’들이 집까지 쫓아와... 경북대 인근 ‘이슬람’ 물의 - 종교와 진리,” accessed May 10, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=987>.

24) “대구 주택가 ‘이슬람 사원 건립’ 반대! - 투데이엔,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://todayn.net/41231>.

Muslim students, even if they live in the neighborhood, will not purchase from local residents and will only use their own halal mart²⁵). However, this fear is not related to the actual issue of the construction of the mosque. Those who are concerned about the impact of the Muslim students should look at them as potential consumers. For Muslim students, the availability of halal food is the main issue, and if cheaper options are available, they will be attracted to those shops. In addition, Muslim students tend to purchase affordable vegetables and other items from the Korean market, regardless of their religious affiliation. This purchasing behavior is a normal aspect of market psychology. Therefore, if local shops provide cheaper alternatives, Muslim students will be more likely to purchase from them as well.

The residents and other opposing groups have made false claims regarding the purpose of this mosque and who it is intended for. In a rally held in front of Kyungpook National University, they claimed that the mosque was not for the university's students²⁶). Additionally, they have alleged in media interviews that none of the building owners were international students at KNU after requesting information from the university²⁷). However, these claims are contradicted by their own statements in other interviews. For instance, they have expressed concerns about the noise and activity generated by hundreds of Muslim students from KNU²⁸) and the surrounding area walking to and from the mosque along the narrow

25) “갑자기 싸늘하게 돌변한 이웃…이슬람 혐오 시달리는 유학생들.”

26) “‘대구 이슬람 사원 건축 반대… 자국민 역차별 받고 있어’ : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/114040>.

27) “‘대구 이슬람 사원 건축 반대… 자국민 역차별 받고 있어’ : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

28) “대법원, 대구 이슬람 사원 건축주 측 손 들어줘 : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

Daehyeon-dong alley five times a day to pray according to Islamic law. Moreover, the claim that not a single owner of the adjacent properties was a KNU student is also false, as two of the owners were KNU researchers at the time of the mosque's construction. It should also be noted that these two researchers have recently left Korea after obtaining employment in other countries, which contradicts the propaganda that the mosque is being constructed for Muslim students to settle in Korea permanently.

In an attempt to deny the existence of Islamophobia in this issue, the opposing groups have claimed that they would have objected to a church or temple being constructed in the same area²⁹⁾, implying that their objections are not based on religious discrimination. However, this claim is contradicted by the presence of a large church in the adjacent street to the mosque, as well as several other churches in the same area. Additionally, the opposing groups have raised concerns about the mosque being an invasion of privacy³⁰⁾. They argue that constructing a mosque higher than the surrounding houses would violate the privacy of the residents. However, they do not seem to have the same concern about the nearby church and apartments, which are even taller than the mosque. Even if privacy is indeed a genuine concern, it can be resolved by protecting the windows facing the houses in such a way that the houses are not visible from the inside. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Muslim students were unfairly blamed for the spread of the virus³¹⁾³²⁾³³⁾, despite there being

29) “이슬람 국가에 자유롭게 교회 지을 수 있나? : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/121872>.

30) “‘대구시장님, 우리 얘기좀 들어주세요’... 대현동 ‘이슬람사원’ 건립 반대 주민들, 성토 - 종교와 진리,” accessed May 11, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1029>.

numerous cases among people of other religions. It should be noted that there has not been a single case reported that was caused by the students praying at this mosque. This indicates the Islamophobic bias of these groups, which will be further discussed in this article.

According to some media reports, Muslim students have been accused of imposing Islamic culture in the area, leading to unstable security and making it difficult to raise children³⁴⁾. Opponents of the mosque express concerns about public safety, citing fear of walking on the streets at night³⁵⁾. They have even accused Muslim students of threatening and chasing them³⁶⁾. Some residents have reported anxiety and fear from Muslims in media, who they claim threaten them in various ways, including non-verbal cues such as rolling their eyes or tapping their shoulders, causing severe mental and psychological stress leading to physical pain³⁷⁾. These accusations have caused fear among residents³⁸⁾ and have been refuted by Muslim students who claim that

31) “이슬람사원 건립반대가 인권침해? 우리들 생존권 문제” : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/103953>.

32) “‘라마단’이 뭐라고... 이슬람사원 무더기 확산, 대구 모스크 건축반대 ↑ - 종교와 진리, accessed May 11, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=917>.

33) “방역 우려? 종교 배척? 대구 이슬람사원 건립 반대 논란,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/A2021052111140000029>.

34) “‘대구 대현동 이슬람사원 건축 반대’ 청와대 국민청원 : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

35) “우리 곁에 다가온 ‘이슬람’... 대구 대현동만의 일이 아니다! - 종교와 진리.”

36) “‘대구 대현동 이슬람사원 건축 반대’ 청와대 국민청원 : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

37) “‘라마단’이 뭐라고... 이슬람사원 무더기 확산, 대구 모스크 건축반대 ↑ - 종교와 진리.”

the surrounding streets are monitored by CCTV cameras, and if any such incidents had occurred, they would have been reported to the police. Muslim students have been praying at the same location since 2014, and despite the ongoing conflict, they continue to pray five times a day while using the same street without any evidence of misconduct. Moreover, there are no complaints filed with the police to support these accusations. It is worth noting that South Korea takes such complaints very seriously, and if such activities were happening particularly by foreigners, the situation would be more severe.

The residents have expressed concerns that the neighborhood where the mosque is located has become a “Muslim town”³⁹⁾ and that non-Muslims are reluctant to enter. They also claim that the rate of Korean students living alone in this area is lower than in other residential areas⁴⁰⁾. However, these arguments are contradicted by the fact that many foreigners, including Muslims, live in other areas around Kyungpook National University such as near the North Gate and many Korean students also reside in those areas, which raises the question: how many Korean students have actually left those places because of Muslims? Furthermore, Muslim students attend the same research labs and classes as Korean students, and there have been no reports of complaints or issues related to their presence. It is worth noting that the houses in the area surrounding the mosque are mostly

38) “‘무슬림’들이 집까지 쫓아와... 경북대 인근 ‘이슬람’ 물의 - 종교와 진리.”

39) “경북대 학생들 사는 원룸가에 ‘이슬람 사원’ 들어온다고 하자 주민들 반응 - 인사이트,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.insight.co.kr/news/325286>.

40) “경북대 서문 주택가에 이슬람 사원 건축...주민 반발 - 경북일보 - 굿데이 굿뉴스.”

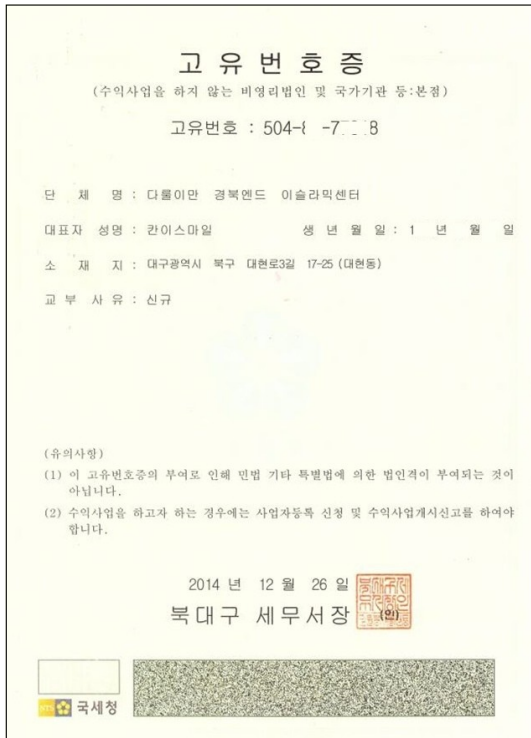
older Korean-style houses with fewer facilities compared to newer, more modern apartments. As a result, most Korean and European foreign students prefer to live in the latter. For Muslim students and their families, however, these older houses are a more affordable option.

There have been several statements in the media regarding the construction of the mosque by the residents. They claim that they were tricked by the Muslims, as initially, the builders informed them that they would be constructing a one-story building, but they later discovered that a large mosque was being constructed⁴¹⁾⁴²⁾. The residents also say they believed the students were building a new prayer place, unaware that it would be a mosque⁴³⁾. It is important to note that the residents were not deceived by the Muslim students. Their confusion may arise from different perceptions of what constitutes a prayer place versus a mosque. For Muslims, a dedicated place for offering prayers is called a Mosque. Additionally, this place was already registered on the same name of “Dar-ul-Emaan Kyungpook Islamic Center” in 2014 as is evident from image 1, when this place was initially purchased. Therefore, during their meetings with the neighbors prior to commencing the construction, the students communicated their intention to reconstruct their existing place, emphasizing that the current building was inadequate and unsuitable

41) “[갈등의 대구 대현동 이슬람사원] ‘무슬림에 대한 오해에서 비롯’ vs ‘평화로운 삶 되찾고 싶을 뿐,’” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://m.yeongnam.com/view.php?key=20210907010000864>.

42) “‘대구 이슬람 사원 건축 반대… 자국민 역차별 받고 있어’ : 사회 : 기독일보.”

43) “‘이슬람 혐오 아닌 주민 역차별’ 경북대 이슬람사원 건축반대 靑 국민청원 17만명 상회 - 종교와 진리,” accessed May 11, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1006>.



<Image 1> Registration document

for their requirements. They also gave gifts to the adjacent neighbors. The false claims about the size of the mosque have been discussed earlier in the article. Furthermore, the opposition to the construction process citing issues such as cracks in the wall⁴⁴⁾ and noise and dust during construction⁴⁵⁾ cannot solely justify the opposition. If any other building were to be constructed in the same area, it would similarly

44) “‘대구 이슬람 사원 건축 반대... 자국민 역차별 받고 있어’ : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

45) “‘대구 이슬람 사원 건축 분쟁... 주민 권리 보호가 우선’ : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 11, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/123488>.

result in noise and dust. Moreover, the students have offered to repair any damage caused, although such issues are not unique to the construction of a mosque but would be applicable to any construction project that would have been carried out here.

In an effort to seek a peaceful resolution, the Muslim students willingly engaged in mediation meetings with their neighbors, expressing their openness to address genuine concerns and provide appropriate solutions. However, certain opposing groups repeatedly propagated the notion that the Muslim side disrupted the mediation plan proposed by the Buk-gu Office⁴⁶). False rumors were spread, claiming that the mosque's building owners rejected a mediation proposal presented by Kyungpook National University, which involved establishing an on-campus Islamic prayer center. Reports alleged that the students stated their unwillingness to participate in future mediation meetings if such a proposal were made again⁴⁷). However, it is important to clarify that it was not the Muslim side that disrupted the mediation process. Rather, it was the neighbors who expressed an unwillingness to engage in any form of mediation unless the mosque was completely removed from its current location⁴⁸)⁴⁹). Their stance was clear from the outset: they opposed the construction itself and rejected any arbitration⁵⁰). In contrast, the students

46) “대구 이슬람 사원 건축 논란… 주민들 ‘우리도 안락히 쉴 권리 있다’ : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

47) “여전한 대구 모스크 갈등… ‘건축주 측, 북구청 중재안 거부’ : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/117749>.

48) “북구 이슬람사원 건축 놓고 주민-건축주 갈등 ‘평행선’ - 대구신문.”

49) “무슬림 수백 명이 오는데, 주민 공청회도 없이 모스크건축 허가?... 주민들, ‘취소하라’ - 종교와 진리.”

consistently expressed their willingness to address and resolve any genuine concerns related to the construction of the mosque. Regarding the proposal to relocate to Kyungpook National University, it should be noted that this was not an official proposal from the university administration, as clarified by the district office during the meetings. Furthermore, the pastor leading the neighbors' side in the mediation meetings consistently repeated the same narrative without engaging in substantive discussions about the actual concerns. This resulted in significant time wasted during the meetings, with some sessions lasting up to five hours without addressing the core issues faced by both parties. Furthermore, the representatives of the neighbors were the ones who said that if the students refused to leave the current site, they would not engage in mediation and would persist in taking actions to irritate them.

During the mediation meetings, the District office proposed the option to purchase the current site where the construction of the mosque is set to resume. However, the students rejected this proposal of purchasing the current site without providing an alternative place⁵¹). Moreover, they displayed a positive attitude towards the district office's suggestion of moving to another location⁵²). For the relocation to be considered, the students outlined four conditions that they believed were essential to protect their basic rights, considering the legality of the current site and the court rulings in favor of the Muslim community⁵³). The first condition stated that the new site

50) “대구 북구 대현동 이슬람사원 ‘평행선’...주민-건축주 의견차만 확인.”

51) “대법원, 대구 이슬람 사원 건축주 측 손 들어줘 : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

52) “민원으로 공사 중단된 대구 이슬람사원...‘이전으로 실마리 찾나’ - 경향신문,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://m.khan.co.kr/local/Daegu/article/202106161704001>.

should be within walking distance from the university, mirroring the proximity of the current site. This condition was crucial to accommodate the students' busy lab schedules and ensure convenient access for prayers. The second condition emphasized that the new site should be almost of similar size as the current one, as a smaller site would not adequately accommodate the number of students praying together. The third condition specified that the new building should also be designed as the current approved architecture. Lastly, the students requested a non-objection certificate from the residents living near the new site, as a guarantee against potential issues arising after the relocation. This condition aimed to ensure a peaceful coexistence and mitigate any potential conflicts with the local community. But there was no alternative place suggested to the students⁵⁴). The authorities responsible for addressing the issue communicated to the students that fulfilling their request for relocation based on the existing four conditions is not feasible due to opposition from third-party entities involved in the matter.

V. Is it Islamophobia?

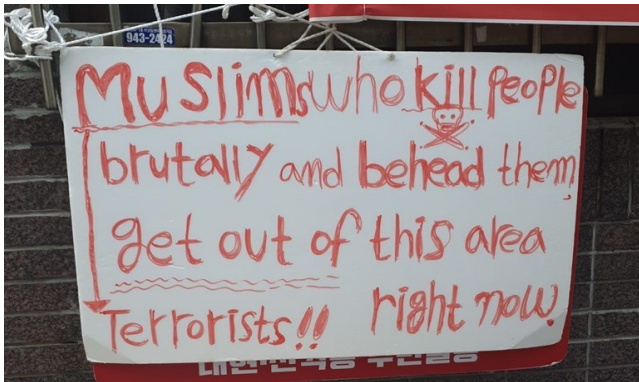
The residents assert that their opposition to the construction of the mosque is not rooted in Islamophobia; however, their actions towards the Muslim students thus far paint a different picture. While they

53) “공사 중단된 대구 이슬람사원 ‘부지 이전’ 제안...” 조건 맞으면 검토” - 평화뉴스, accessed May 12, 2023, <http://www.pn.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=18807>.

54) “이슬람사원, 대체 공간 제안했지만 “묵묵부답”...소유권을 원한다.” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/A2022111307180004420>.

deny directly labeling the Muslim students as terrorists, video evidence captured from the same alley and broadcasted by the media reveals individuals referring to the students as terrorists⁵⁵⁾⁵⁶⁾.

They displayed signboards and banners in the alley with derogatory statements associating Muslims with terrorism. One of the banners displayed by the residents conveyed the message that the area would become densely populated with Muslims, leading to instability and the development of a slum-like environment, drawing a comparison to certain European areas⁵⁷⁾.



<Image 2> 31st July, 2021 A signboard made by residents against Muslim students in the alley

55) “한국은 이슬람을 받아들일 준비가 되어있는가? - BBC News 코리아,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/korean/news-58592464>.

56) Islamophobia: Pig Heads Left Outside a Mosque in South Korea - The Observers.

57) “‘슬럼화’라는 표현 뒤에 숨은 인종주의 - 대학지성 In&Out,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.unipress.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=4088>.



<Image 3> August 3, 2021 A car blocking the entrance of the alley towards Mosque, with Islamophobic signboard



<Image 4> December 6th, 2022. A third pig head was also placed in front of the Mosque gate in the alley.

In an interview with the media, some residents stated, “It is not a story that international students are terrorists. It is not 100% in Islam, but about one out of 100 may be a terrorist.⁵⁸⁾” Additionally, they expressed that their opposition to the mosque is not solely based on concerns about noise or food odors, but rather rooted in a fear of Islam⁵⁹⁾. Terrorism has also been cited as a concern, with statements such as, “The threat of terrorism is also a concern. Korea is not a safe zone either.⁶⁰⁾” Furthermore, there have been reports of individuals stating, “We know from the news that when the Muslim population exceeds 5%, it causes terrorism and conflict. Terrorist threats are always with us. Islam is said to be a ‘religion of peace’. Does a religion of peace insist on its own culture and behead people ?⁶¹⁾”. One person expressed the view that while not all Muslims are terrorists, all terrorists are Muslims⁶²⁾.

Furthermore, the Emergency Response Committee, established by the residents opposing the construction of the mosque, engaged in activities that can be characterized as Islamophobic. They distributed pamphlets containing misinterpretations of Quranic verses, thereby perpetuating stereotypes and misinformation about Islam⁶³⁾.

58) “갑자기 싸늘하게 돌변한 이웃...이슬람 혐오 시달리는 유학생들.”

59) “갑자기 싸늘하게 돌변한 이웃...이슬람 혐오 시달리는 유학생들.”

60) “우리 곁에 다가온 ‘이슬람’... 대구 대현동만의 일이 아니다! - 종교와 진리.”

61) “우리 곁에 다가온 ‘이슬람’... 대구 대현동만의 일이 아니다! - 종교와 진리.”

62) “무슬림 수백 명이 오는데, 주민 공청회도 없이 모스크건축 허가?... 주민들, ‘취소하라’ - 종교와 진리.”

63) “대구 대현동 이슬람 집단, ‘세’ 과시하며 주민들 위협 - 종교와 진리,” accessed May 12, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=955>.

Additionally, intentional disruption during prayer times by playing loud music, display of offensive banners targeting Islam, and the display of pig heads in the alley are actions that contribute to a hostile and disrespectful environment for the Muslim students⁶⁴). They also acquired two pigs with the intention of raising them in the alley near the Mosque⁶⁵) to provoke Muslim students. Additionally, they had planned to prepare two large pots for boiling pork over the course of a month⁶⁶). However, they later abandoned this idea for some reasons⁶⁷). These activities not only undermine the principles of religious freedom and tolerance but also perpetuate discrimination and prejudice.

In addition to their opposition to the construction of the mosque, the residents organized several pork BBQ parties in front of the mosque⁶⁸)⁶⁹) with the aim of causing discomfort to the Muslim students, and then called such activities as “Korean Culture”⁷⁰).

64) “Islamophobia: Pig Heads Left Outside a Mosque in South Korea - The Observers.”

65) “씩은 돼지머리 이어 생후 1개월을...대구 혐오의 ‘돼지 시위’ : 영남 : 전국 : 뉴스 : 한겨레,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/area/yeongnam/1089307.html>.

66) “‘살아있는 돼지’ 등장한다...갈데까지 가는 대구 이슬람사원 갈등,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://v.daum.net/v/20230424170034954>.

67) “대구 이슬람사원 건립 반대 주민들 ‘미니돼지’ 양육 포기,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://n.news.naver.com/article/003/0011825011?sid=102>.

68) “대구 이슬람사원 공사장 앞 ‘통돼지 바비큐 잔치’ 논란 - 나무뉴스,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://namu.news/article/1849252#gsc.tab=0>.

69) “‘전국서 응원’...대구 이슬람사원 반대 주민들 2월2일 돼지고기 잔치 - 뉴스1,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.news1.kr/articles/?4938759>.

70) “돼지머리 전시에 수육 파티’까지...해법찾지 못하는 대구 이슬람사원 갈등 | 중앙일보,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/>

There was also an incident where an unknown substance, suspected to be pig fat or oil, was sprayed on the pathway leading to the mosque⁷¹). This act resulted in the path becoming dirty and emitting an unpleasant odor. It is noteworthy that despite this issue affecting not only the mosque but also the other neighbors residing in the same alley, no complaints were made by anyone else. This silence among the residents suggests a collective acceptance or indifference towards this act.

In addition to their previous actions, the opposing groups also displayed Islamophobic and insulting banners in front of schools attended by Muslim children⁷²). This created a distressing situation for the children, who responded by writing letters to their neighbors, appealing for respect towards their religion. The letters emphasized the shared humanity and expressed a sincere desire to live in a world where people from different backgrounds can coexist harmoniously⁷³74).

Despite public statements of the residents suggesting that the

25137763#home.

71) “‘동물성 기름 흘뿌려’...끝나지 않는 대구이슬람사원 건립 갈등 | 연합 뉴스,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20230308117400053>.

72) “초등학교 앞에 ‘탈레반 나가’ 현수막...대구 이슬람사원 갈등 ‘진행형’ : 네이트 뉴스,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://news.nate.com/view/20210923n26835?mid=n0505>.

73) “‘다양한 문화 존중해 달라’ 중학교 2학년 무슬림이 대구 대현동 주민에게 보낸 편지,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.yeongnam.com/web/view.php?key=20210428010004088>.

74) “대구 ‘이슬람 사원’ 공사 중단..."종교·문화 차별없는 해결을" - 평화 뉴스,” accessed May 12, 2023, <http://www.pn.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=18703>.

objection to the construction of the mosque in a densely populated residential area is purely based on practical concerns⁷⁵⁾, evidence suggests a deeper underlying issue of Islamophobia. This is evident in the Blue House National petition filed by one of the residents, which explicitly states, “If Daehyeon-dong collapses, Daegu collapses and Korea becomes Islamized.⁷⁶⁾” Such remarks clearly indicate the hidden issue of Islamophobia behind all this opposition. This sentiment is further reinforced by supporters of the residents, as highlighted in a report by the Korean Church Press Association, which states that residents perceive Islam as a highly threatening force⁷⁷⁾, and added that as Muslims are getting closer to us, it is difficult to deny that terrorism is also getting closer⁷⁸⁾. The opposing residents were also quoted as stating that Daehyeon-dong would not surrender even a single unit of land to ‘Islam’!⁷⁹⁾⁸⁰⁾. A resident voiced their concerns, stating that they have never raised issues related to noise or odor. Their primary concern lies with the potential for conflict, terrorism,

75) “대구 이슬람사원 신축에 주민들 반대… 청와대 청원까지 : 정치 : 기독교일보.”

76) “‘대구 대현동 이슬람사원 건축 반대’ 청와대 국민청원 : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

77) “‘이슬람 사원 건축에 대한 주민들 두려움, 매도 안돼’ : 교단/단체 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/108041>.

78) “‘이슬람 혐오 아닌 주민 역차별’ 경북대 이슬람사원 건축반대 靑 국민청원 17만명 상회 - 종교와 진리.”

79) “대현동 땅 한 평도 ‘이슬람교’에 내주지 않을 것! - 종교와 진리,” accessed May 12, 2023, <http://www.churchheresy.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=964>.

80) “대현동 주민의 눈물 어린 호소 < 사회문화 < 소식 < 기사본문 - 코람 데오닷컴,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.ksoramdeo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=20780>.

and the perceived Islamization of the area⁸¹). Another resident expressed his viewpoint by stating that the presence of Muslim tenants has led to what they perceive as an Islamization of the west gate of Kyungpook National University⁸²). One resident cited the unfamiliar appearances of Muslim students as a reason for their opposition to the construction of the Mosque⁸³). In Blue house national petition filed by one of the residents, concerns were expressed about perceived efforts by significant Islamic forces to Islamize the country, with a belief that support is being provided from behind as part of a strategic approach⁸⁴).

If these statements and actions, as claimed by the representative of the residents in interviews, do not qualify as Islamophobic, it raises the question of what can be considered as Islamophobia?

VI. Role of Third Parties

In analyzing the conflict at hand, it is crucial to consider the timeline of events. Prior to the conflict that began in February 2021,

81) “공사 중단된 이슬람 사원... 소음과 악취 때문에 안된다? - 오마이뉴스,” accessed May 12, 2023, https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002735522.

82) “‘민주당 구의원 7명 사퇴’ 촉구...대구 이슬람사원 반대 주민 집회 - 경북일보 - 굿데이 굿뉴스,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.kyongbuk.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2078323>.

83) “‘신자 몰리면 소음에 악취’ 대구 모스크 건립 충돌, 속내엔 | 중앙일보,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/24037425#home>.

84) “8개월째 팍막힌 ‘대구 이슬람사원 갈등’...혐오 국민청원도 : 영남 : 전국 : 뉴스 : 한겨레,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/area/yeongnam/1012488.html>.

the Muslim students had been using the same location for their prayers since 2014. The previous building, which was later demolished, had already been registered as the “Dar ul Emaan Kyungpook Islamic Center” at the time of its purchase. It is worth noting that during the period between the demolition of the old building in October 2020 and the end of January 2021, the reconstruction process was proceeding smoothly without any issues. The sudden escalation of hostility and Islamophobic sentiments among some neighbors cannot be solely attributed to concerns about the construction of the new building. Instead, there emerged a broader display of animosity towards Islam as a religion, accompanied by baseless accusations directed towards the students. The involvement of certain religious and anti-migrant groups in this issue cannot be overlooked. Evidence indicates the involvement of local pastors, with one pastor being identified as the individual who referred to the Muslim students as terrorists and called for their departure from the country. Additionally, another pastor led the protests and represented the neighbors' interests in official mediation meetings held at the district office. These claims are not unsubstantiated but can be verified by requesting the authorities to disclose the names of individuals who participated in the official mediation meetings, those who were fined for obstructing the construction by parking their cars, and those who were fined for interfering with the construction vehicle by jumping on it, would reveal the involvement of pastors in these activities.



<Image 5> August 6, 2022, Two pastors circled red, sitting on top of construction vehicle. A female linked to People Sovereign Action Group (in green rectangle) also obstructing the construction.



<Image 6> August 30, 2022, A local pastor (circled red) leading the obstruction of construction and motivating neighbors to resist.



<Image 7> August 2, 2021, A local pastor harassing Muslim student by calling him terrorist and asking to leave this country.

The National Human Rights Commission of Korea, in response to derogatory and abusive banners against Islam and Muslims, recommended the removal of such banners and the resumption of mosque construction⁸⁵). However, groups like People's Sovereignty Action criticized this recommendation, claiming that it was merely a conflict between the owners' freedom of religious activities and the exercise of property rights, and not related to racial discrimination and religious oppression⁸⁶). This criticism ignores the factual evidence and

85) ““이슬람 사원 공사 재개 및 무슬림 대상 혐오표현에 대한 조치 필요” < 보도자료 < 언론보도 < 알림·공고·참여 | 국가인권위원회,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.humanrights.go.kr/site/program/board/basicboard/view?boardtypeid=24&boardid=7607287&menuid=001004002001>.

86) ““인권위, 대구 이슬람 사원 재판 중인데도 부당 개입’ : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/108423>.

can be seen as turning a blind eye to the discriminatory actions perpetrated by these groups.

National Action for Refugee Countermeasures launched a signature campaign against the construction of the mosque, advocating not only against the establishment of this specific mosque but also against the construction of mosques and prayer facilities across the entire Republic of Korea, calling for the demolition of existing mosques and prayer spaces⁸⁷⁾⁸⁸⁾. National Action for Refugees and People's Sovereignty Action organized multiple rallies opposing the construction of the mosque and displayed banners outside schools, including those attended by Muslim students, with messages such as “Are Taliban in Daehyeon-Dong” and “Is this your country?”⁸⁹⁾. A pastor, who also serves as the CEO of an organization, made statements during a press conference expressing the view that “Churches have to risk their lives and fight to oppose the construction” and that “Islam must not be allowed to set foot in the country”⁹⁰⁾. The chairman of the Daegu-Gyeongbuk CE Council expressed the opinion that Christianity is being suppressed through the unreasonable construction of a mosque in Daehyeon-dong⁹¹⁾. The

87) “대구 북구 대현동 이슬람사원 건립 반대 서명운동 돌입 < 교계뉴스 < 뉴스 < 기사본문 - 고신뉴스 KNC,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.kosinnews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=22072>.

88) “한국은 이슬람을 받아들일 준비가 되어있는가? - BBC News 코리아.”

89) “초등학교 앞에 ‘탈레반 나가’ 현수막...대구 이슬람사원 갈등 '진행형' : 네이트 뉴스.”

90) “김진홍 목사 ‘대구에 모스크? 교회들이 목숨 걸고 싸워야’ : 교단/단체 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/108159>.

91) “‘대구 동성로가 기독교 문화 흘러넘치는 곳 되길’ : 교단/단체 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/110884>.

Korean Church Press Association, in a press release, was found to contribute to the spread of fear by making accusations that Muslims are terrorists in relation to the construction of the mosque⁹²).

Missionary Lee Man-Seok, who is also a director of an institute at Presbyterian Churches in Korea, has been observed engaging in the dissemination of misinformation and misinterpretation of Islamic teachings. He made inflammatory statements by associating gang-rape with the culture of Islam, creating fear, and suggesting that South Korea could also experience such acts⁹³). It is important to note that crimes such as rape are committed by individuals of various religious backgrounds, and it is inaccurate and unfair to attribute such actions to the culture of any particular religion. Pastor Kang Hak-geun, head of the Korean Presbyterian Church of Korea, made remarks fueling fear about Muslims in the context of the mosque construction issue. He labeled Islam as a dangerous religion and called for an end to alleged human rights violations, specifically referencing the oppression of women's rights and perceived atrocities against non-Muslims⁹⁴). The involvement of People's Sovereignty Action in filing a complaint with the police regarding fundraising for the construction of the mosque⁹⁵) raises questions about their role in the issue. Additionally, the participation of one of their female representatives from the Daegu

92) “‘이슬람 사원 건축에 대한 주민들 두려움, 매도 안돼’ : 교단/단체 : 기독교일보.”

93) “‘한국교회, 이슬람교에 대해 정확히 알아야’ : 교회일반 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/108507#>.

94) “‘교회, 회개하고 회복해 다시 세상의 빛 되자’ : 교단/단체 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/109034>.

95) “대구 ‘이슬람사원’ 건축자금 모금... 기부금품법 위반, 수사 촉구 - 종교와 진리.”

branch in both the complaint filing and as a representative of the neighbors' side in an official mediation meeting at the district office is also evidence of their involvement in this issue from the very beginning. On April 20, 2023, several Christian and civic groups, including People's Sovereignty Action, made a declaration of an “all-out war” against the construction of this mosque⁹⁶). Additionally, these groups formed a special task force dedicated to the issue and announced plans to organize large rallies in opposition to the construction of the mosque⁹⁷).

VII. Targeting Media Representative of Muslim Students

Muslim students, in an effort to counter the propaganda spread by opposing groups, actively engaged with local and international media representatives. However, the media representative for the Muslim student community became a target of online attacks by the opposing groups. Pastor Joseph Joo, an official of People's Sovereignty Action and the countermeasures committee formed for the mosque issue⁹⁸) misinterpreted a tweet by Muaz Razaq, the media representative. Based on this misinterpretation, Pastor Joseph Joo falsely claimed that the students were trying to establish a base for the Taliban in the



96) “‘대구 이슬람사원 측과 전면전 선포… 즉시 공사 중단하라’ : 사회 : 종교신문 1위 크리스천투데이,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.christiantoday.co.kr/news/354036>.

97) “‘이슬람 사원 건축, 대현동 주민 권리 침해’… 대책위 조직한다 : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/123169>.

98) “‘이슬람 사원 건축, 대현동 주민 권리 침해’… 대책위 조직한다 : 사회 : 기독교일보.”

Daehyeon-dong residential area.⁹⁹⁾ This was also released by People's Sovereignty Action account¹⁰⁰⁾. Following the mention of Muaz Razaq's social media accounts, he began receiving threatening and abusive messages from unidentified individuals. Concerned about this situation, Muaz Razaq, accompanied by a friend, visited the nearby Police Station to request an investigation into the matter. Muaz Razaq even offered to be investigated himself regarding the tweet in question. It is important to note that the actions of Pastor Joseph Joo, who misinterpreted Muaz Razaq's tweet, could be considered a cyber-crime, and appropriate action should be taken against him for his role in inciting abusive and threatening messages. However, the response from the police official at that time was disheartening, as they advised Muaz Razaq to document the messages and only return if the situation escalated further. Subsequently, on the following day, Muaz Razaq was contacted by the Intelligence department and subjected to an investigation regarding his tweet. The investigation found no evidence of any suspicious activity or wrongdoing. In light of the investigation's outcome, Muaz Razaq demanded that action be taken against those individuals propagating false allegations and engaging in propaganda on social media. It is crucial to follow proper procedures when handling such issues. If individuals have suspicions about someone, it is their responsibility to inform intelligence agencies

99) “패스터주pastor JosephJoo on Twitter: 저들은 대현동주택가 한복판에 탈레반의 거점을 확보하려는 겁니다! <https://t.co/HzKQ2uoSIY> / Twitter,” accessed May 17, 2023, <https://twitter.com/josephlt60/status/1451903546157195267>.

100) “  대구대현동 주택가에 이슬람사원을 세우려는 무슬림 중 한 사람 무아즈 라작(Muaz Razaq)의 '탈레반이 미국을 침공할 적기(適期)'라는 트위터 리트윗을 보십시오! 저들은 : 네이버 블로그,” accessed May 17, 2023, <https://m.blog.naver.com/woodstick123/222537307870>.

so that a thorough investigation can take place. This approach ensures that individuals are not wrongfully defamed or subjected to abuse on social media platforms. At the time of writing this article, it is noteworthy that no action has been taken against Pastor Joseph Joo for his tweet, which remains accessible on the platform. The absence of consequences raises concerns about the effectiveness of addressing cyber-crimes and online defamation in a timely manner.

The tweet posted by Muaz Razaq contained the following content: “Haris Ali suggested: This is the right time for the Taliban to invade the USA in the name of human rights violations and protection of nuclear assets of the USA #blacklifematters #TrumpOut2020.” Muaz Razaq asserts that his tweet was intended to convey sarcasm, a sentiment evident from the accompanying hashtags. The hashtag #blacklifematters or #blacklivesmatter gained significant attention in June 2020 following the tragic incident involving George Floyd, who died while restrained by police officers in the United States. The aftermath of this incident was marked by widespread unrest, including instances of property destruction¹⁰¹).

To fully comprehend the sarcasm expressed in the tweet, it is necessary to consider the contextual background of the events. The United States, alongside its allies, invaded Iraq on the premise that the country possessed nuclear weapons, which posed a threat of falling into the hands of terrorists. The subsequent invasion resulted in the loss of numerous lives; a situation that was later acknowledged as an intelligence failure due to the absence of such weapons¹⁰²). The

101) “Why The Killing of George Floyd Sparked an American Uprising | Time,” accessed May 17, 2023, <https://time.com/5847967/george-floyd-protest-s-trump>.

102) “How the US and UK Tried to Justify the Invasion of Iraq | The Iraq

tweet intended to imagine a situation where the Taliban used language similar to what the United States had used when invading other countries, claiming it was necessary to protect nuclear weapons. This was meant to emphasize how people in the United States might feel if their enemy, the Taliban, expressed the same arguments. The tweet also connected this idea to the aftermath of the George Floyd incident, where there was chaos and damage to buildings. Sarcasm was used to convey this message, but it's important to understand the context and intention behind the tweet to fully grasp its meaning.

VIII. Support for Muslim Students

Amidst the challenging circumstances and Islamophobic environment, the Muslim students found solace and encouragement when several Korean organizations, few of the embassies and the National Human Rights Commission of Korea extended their moral and legal support. A group of pastors and monks visited them, expressing solidarity and offering their best wishes for a swift resolution to the issue. They emphasized the importance of peaceful coexistence between the residents and Muslim students¹⁰³). Dedicated efforts are being made by several professors from Kyungpook National University to address and resolve the ongoing issue, providing valuable support to the Muslim students during these challenging times. Their involvement demonstrates a commitment to

War: 20 Years on News | Al Jazeera,” accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/19/examining-justifications-us-invasion-iraq>.

¹⁰³) “평화뉴스 모바일 사이트, ‘대구 이슬람사원’ 갈등 현장 찾은 목사님·스님...”공존, 자비와 사랑을”, accessed May 13, 2023, <http://m.pn.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=19959>.

fostering understanding and finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict¹⁰⁴).

It is important to acknowledge the difference between the involvement of third parties such as the Mingyohyup professors, lawyers, human-rights activists, and NGOs supporting the Muslim students, compared to the groups assisting the neighbors. These third parties are not opposing the neighbors or engaging in derogatory remarks about them like certain groups that propagate fear and hatred. Instead, their objective is to foster peaceful coexistence between the Muslim students and their neighbors and work towards a peaceful resolution of the issue. Furthermore, these third parties offer guidance and assistance to the Muslim students without imposing their views or representing them in official meetings, as the pastors from other groups have done. Their role is to provide support, advocate for the students' rights, and promote understanding between all parties involved. Their actions reflect a commitment to inclusivity, harmony, and the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

IX. The Role of Law Enforcement Authorities

This case poses a significant challenge for Korean law enforcement authorities in upholding the rule of law, particularly when influential groups are involved and fail to respect the decision made by the Supreme Court. The role of law enforcement authorities in this conflict has been disappointing, as there has been a considerable delay in facilitating the legal construction of the mosque despite the court's

104) “경북대 인문대교수회, “‘무슬림 혐오 방치’ 대학 본부 대신 사죄’ | 뉴스민,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.newsmin.co.kr/news/86837/>.

ruling in favor of the Muslim students. Additionally, statements made by the head of the Buk-gu district office, such as the claim that the issue involves reverse discrimination¹⁰⁵), are disheartening. These statements overlook the factual circumstances surrounding the situation and the way certain groups are exploiting it to fuel hatred against Muslims throughout Korea. Furthermore, despite the court's prohibition on obstructing the construction of the mosque, instances of resistance and hostility persist when Muslim students attempt to resume construction. Led by local pastors, residents engage in verbal and physical abuse towards the constructor even in the presence of law enforcement officers. During one such incident, a resident fell down due to her own actions while pushing the constructor. However, she falsely accused the constructor and publicized this incident in the media to elicit sympathy. In response to this propaganda, the media representative of the Muslim students released videos on his Twitter account¹⁰⁶), clearly showing that it was the resident who had been consistently pushing the constructor. This raises questions regarding the role of law enforcement authorities in allowing physical assault on the constructor, which is considered a criminal offense under Korean law. Moreover, the police's failure to prevent the filing of a false case against the constructor, causing distress for the Muslim students, warrants further examination.

This case serves as a test for law enforcement authorities to

105) “대구 이슬람 사원, 다섯 달 만에 건축 재개 - 대구 북구청은 더는 막지 마라 | 노동자 연대,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://wspaper.org/article/25889>.

106) “Video Evidence - the Neighbor Physically Assaulted the Constructor and Fell down. Twitter,” accessed May 17, 2023, <https://twitter.com/MuazRazaq/status/1650867331931983872>.

demonstrate their commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring equal treatment for all individuals, regardless of their religious or cultural background. It is crucial for the authorities to take appropriate action to address any discrimination or bias and to ensure the enforcement of the Supreme Court's decision.

X. Is it the only case of Islamophobia?

It is worth mentioning that the issue of Islamophobia in South Korea extends beyond the current Daegu Mosque construction conflict. Those interested in this topic should further explore the involvement of specific groups, such as National Action for Refugee Countermeasures and People's Sovereignty Action, in various cases including the Yemeni Refugees issue¹⁰⁷), Yeoncheon Muslim Campground issue¹⁰⁸)¹⁰⁹), Afghan refugees issue¹¹⁰), and the ongoing Daegu Mosque issue.

By investigating the roles of these groups in multiple instances, a broader understanding of the patterns of Islamophobia and

107) “난민대책 국민행동 ‘가짜난민 인도적 체류 반대’ - 미래한국 Weekly,” accessed May 13, 2023, <http://www.futurekorea.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=111631>.

108) “‘연천, 안보상 특수 지역... 이슬람 캠프장 건설 용납 못해’ : 사회 : 기독교일보,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.christiandaily.co.kr/news/113556>.

109) “‘연천 이슬람캠프장 반대 4만2000여명 서명 < 교계일반 < 교계 < 기사본문 - 주간기독신문,’” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.kidok.com/new/articleView.html?idxno=215075>.

110) “‘아프간 난민 비자 주지 말라’...무슬림 반대하는 시민들 - 머니투데이,” accessed May 13, 2023, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2021092517121799242>.

discriminatory attitudes towards Muslim individuals and communities in South Korea can be gained. Examining these cases collectively sheds light on the challenges faced by Muslims and highlights the importance of addressing such prejudices within the country.