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Dear Sir,

Now that the elections for local councils and regional assemblies in England, Wales and Scotland, and the by-election in Leicester South constituency, are over, we would like to raise the subject of the running of electoral campaigns and the presence, in a small number of cases, of anti-Muslim statements and comment.

We have catalogued a number of instances during this election campaign in which candidates from the British National Party and the UK independence Party have used inflammatory phrases or contributed material of a racist or incendiary nature to social network sites.

We are aware of the Commission's ongoing investigation into leaflets distributed by the BNP in Scotland and the false claims of there being "more Muslims than Scots" in the UK, as well as a procedural investigation into the absence of an imprint on the offending publicity material.

We would like to bring to the Commission's attention cases we view with concern in respect of the criminal law on Incitement to Racial and Religious Hatred and on which we would welcome the Commission's response and guidance.

A full list of statements made by individual candidates in the course of this past election which we view as "intending to stir up racial or religious hatred" is enclosed.

In the aftermath of the declaring void the general election result in the Oldham East and Saddleworth constituency and the criminal justice trial of Mr Phil Woolas for breach of the Representation of the People Act (1983), the conduct of candidates and the integrity and propriety with which they run their electoral campaigns is a matter of great importance.

We hope you will look further into the information we have enclosed here and advise on any subsequent developments.

We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with the Commission to discuss these concerns.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Mohammed Asif,
Chief Executive Officer.

Appendix 1

British National Party:

We have documented two instances of BNP candidates posting views on social network sites which evince disparaging, if not outright racist, views of Muslims.

1. Susan Harwood, BNP candidate for Torfaen in the Welsh Assembly elections

Ms Harwood posted abusive comments on her Facebook page concerning the fringe Muslim group, Muslims Against Crusades.

The post has since been deleted but contained, according to a local newspaper report, “abusive four-letter language” and “advocate[d] violence against members of [Muslims Against Crusades]”¹

2. Nancy Shaw-Farmer, BNP candidate for Roe Lee in the Blackburn and Darwen council elections

Ms Shaw-Farmer posted comments on her Facebook page using offensive language and referring to “Pakis.”

She wrote:

- 4 P***s in a car near where I work asked for directions to a junior school. Sent them in the wrong direction.
- the current government don't want cannabis legalised as it would put too many P***s out of work. ha ha ha.
- Bungee jumping! £25 per person. Muslims and P***s free. No strings attached and free transport. ha ha ha.
- When Pakistan had its floods I said if I was out of England for whatever reason, I'd get back there pronto to help my country, no f***** P***s went back to help did they!²

3. BNP manifesto for the Holyrood Assembly elections:

We would add to this section the BNP's election manifesto for the Scottish Assembly elections³ and the inclusion of discriminatory policies against Muslims. Two such policies are detailed below:

- “As a matter of policy, we would oppose planning applications to build or convert buildings into non-indigenous cultural or religious centres.” (pg 10)
- “We are committed to ban the horrific practice of Halal ritual slaughter anywhere in Scotland on the grounds of animal cruelty. In addition we will end the supply use and distribution of all Halal ritual slaughter derived products by all publicly funded organisations within Scotland.” (pg 20)

¹ “BNP candidate condemned for abusive Facebook post”, Western Mail, 28 April 2011

² “Blackburn BNP candidate's vile racist slurs”, Lancashire Telegraph, 4th May 2011

³ The Voice of the Ordinary People, BNP Scotland General Election manifesto 2011

UK Independence Party:

1. Abhijit Pandya, UKIP candidate Leicester South by-election

Mr Pandya has contributed several articles during his election campaign for the Leicester South constituency to a blog he writes.⁴ The articles have contained deeply offensive comments on Muslims and are now no longer available online. The blog articles have caused considerable, and justifiable, anger among Muslims residing in Leicestershire and the Federation of Muslim Organisations of Leicestershire (FMO) issued a statement condemning Mr Pandya's remarks.

Two such articles include:

a) Will Britain face a growing Muslim population on benefits?

A copy of this article is attached, along with the statement released by FMO. In the article Mr Pandya referred to Islam as,

- "morally flawed and degenerate"

referred to Muslims:

- As "inherently reject[ing] the Western way of life"
- As "fundamentally socially intolerant... forming ghettos that are economically dysfunctional;"
- As living in "self-imposed social exclusion"

He also wrote of,

- "gargantuan mosques that are spouting within their closed doors ideology that would make any rational human being, with an iota of sense, in the Enlightened West feel queasy"

Mr Pandya makes the argument that Muslims are economically inactive for reasons of complacency and inertia, rather than offer social scientific evidence which shows the high level of discrimination against Muslims in the labour market, occupational segregation and low social mobility among Muslims, and the effect of poor educational outcomes on employment opportunities; problems which disproportionately affect British Muslims.

b) What would have the formidable Victorian society thought of the proliferation of Mosques in Britain?

In this article Mr Pandya takes the liberty of quoting verses from the Qur'an and sees fit to interpret them. His interpretations are, however, wildly off the mark with his claiming verses of the Qur'an encourage "segregation and lack of social integration" and "hinders integration between Muslims and mainstream British society".

⁴ Available on <http://apgpandya.blogspot.com/>

Mr Pandya's interpretations stand in stark contrast both to the teachings of Islamic scholars and to social scientific fact.⁵

⁵ See The Gallup Coexist Index 2009: A Global Study of Interfaith Relations and the annual Citizenship Survey produced by the Department of Communities and Local Government.