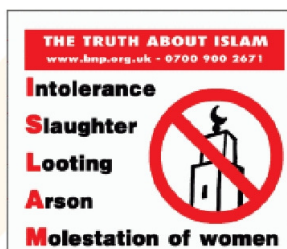
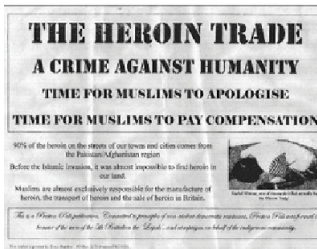




Fanatics are on rise and Labour has let it happen



ENGAGE Briefing note for MPs

An All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia

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Executive summary

This briefing advances the case for the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia to demonstrate the political will of politicians in the UK to address a serious and growing concern among human rights agencies and Muslim communities of the dramatic rise in anti-Muslim hostility, prejudice and violence.

Discrimination, hate speech and religiously aggravated violence that target British Muslim citizens violates their rights to freedom of religion, freedom of worship and freedom against discrimination based on religion.

Anti-Muslim hostility, and racism and xenophobia more generically, have the cumulative and corrosive effect of fragmenting communities, dividing societies and in the long term, undermining national cohesion. Governments of all persuasions must demonstrate the political will to resist and challenge the steady stream of anti-Muslim, racist and xenophobic attitudes that threaten our citizens and our society.

The nature of Islamophobia has been identified by the Open Society Institute report on 'Muslims in Europe: A report on 11 EU Cities', as:

'Islamophobia - Irrational hostility, fear and hatred of Islam, Muslims and Islamic culture, and active discrimination towards this group as individuals or collectively'.

This briefing paper argues that an All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia is essential to address shortcomings in the recording, monitoring and prosecution of anti-Muslim hate crimes and for the effective implementation of the following measures and policy initiatives:

- Improvement in official data collection to rigorously record anti-Muslim hate crimes and to implement the CPS Proactive Prosecution Programme in relation to Muslim communities through greater community engagement on hate crime legislation and the criminal justice process
- Support for the training of a central body comprising Muslim NGOs that work in the field of hate crime monitoring with a view to supplementing official records
- The use of services provided by the OCSE/ODIHR to implement the OSCE guide to 'Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes and to train Muslims in the UK in victim support, data collation and the use of official channels for data distribution and its use by the Crown Prosecution Service, the Ministry of Justice and human rights agencies
- Promoting representation of Muslim NGOs working on hate crime incident monitoring on the Hate Crime Strategy Group in the Ministry of Justice
- A review on the effectiveness of extant legislation on incitement to religious hatred with a view to improving legislative measures and confidence in the criminal justice system
- A review of the effects of counter-terrorism policies on the stigmatisation of Muslim communities and its causal effects on Islamophobia
- A review of guidelines on 'Promoting Good Campus Relations: dealing with hate crime and intolerance' and policies on campus radicalisation with a view to assessing their efficacy and effect on the security and well-being of Muslim university students

- A review of the implementation by schools of Citizenship education at key stage 4: 'Challenging racism and discrimination' with specific reference to Islamophobia and challenging anti-Muslim racism
- A review and analysis of the role of the media in creating, fuelling and sustaining anti-Muslim prejudice through biased coverage and dominant narratives that reinforce Muslim alienation and discord
- Research on the impact of Islamophobia and its use in mainstream political discourse and by far right extremists groups on British Muslim communities and their sense of belonging, and political and civic participation
- Identification and illumination of discourses that facilitate the trivialisation, 'naturalisation' and ultimately, the ready acceptance of anti-Muslim prejudice and Islamophobia
- A study on the nature and effects of Islamophobia in England, Scotland and Wales, and the impact of devolution on regional nationalism, anti-Muslim discrimination and anti-Muslim hate crimes
- The establishment of a working relationship with the OIC Observatory on Islamophobia, drawing on its expertise and reports on anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination, through the office of the new British Special Representative to the OIC, HM Consul General Kate Rudd

ENGAGE is a Muslim NGO dedicated to improving media, civic and political engagement by British Muslims. While British Muslims have demonstrated their national loyalty, evincing a level of pride in their nation and trust in national institutions that exceeds the average for White Britons, according to the Gallup Coexist East-West survey 2009, their sense of national belonging and respect shown to their faith and community is imperilled by the vagaries of a prejudice that portrays them as fifth columnists, disloyal citizens and security threats. A matter evinced by results from the same Gallup Coexist poll which show that two thirds of Britons question Muslims' loyalty to the country and its values.

Data from annual Racial/Religious Incident Monitoring reports for the period 2003 – 2007 show that Muslims accounted for more than half of all incidents involving religiously aggravated offences at 54% (80 out of 149 total incidents). Muslims also account for the largest faith group experiencing hate crimes.

According to data released in the Hate Crime Report 2007-08, produced by the Ministry of Justice, there was a 10% increase in crimes involving racial or religious aggravation, up 1,300 on the previous year to 13,008.

Sadiq Khan MP in January 2005, following the first time publication of data on religiously aggravated crimes, called for an increase in the rates of detection, prosecution and sentencing for religiously motivated hate crimes saying "the police need to carry on encouraging vulnerable communities to carry on reporting."

Yet the second phase of the CPS Proactive Prosecution Programme (PPP), to develop a 'specialist racially and religiously aggravated crime training' was only tabled for completion in the third quarter of 2008.

The EU-MIDIS data in focus report on Muslims (2009) highlighted the extent of the problem of recording hate crimes affecting Muslims across the EU finding that:

- 1 in 10 of all Muslims surveyed (11%) was a victim of racially motivated 'in-person crime' (assault, threat or serious harassment) at least once in the previous 12 months.
- On average 1 in 3 Muslim respondents (34% of men and 26% of women) stated that they had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months. Those Muslim respondents who had been discriminated against stated that they had experienced, on average, 8 incidents of discrimination over a 12 month period
- Of those who were victims of in-person crimes, between 53% and 98%, depending on their country of residence, did not report it to the police.
- Of those victims of in-person crimes who did not report to the police, 43% stated the main reason for this was that they were not confident the police would be able to do anything.
- On average 79% of respondents did not report their most recent experience of discrimination in the last 12 months to any competent organization, or at the place where the discrimination occurred.
- 1 in 4 Muslims experienced discrimination and did not report their experiences anywhere. If this was extended to the entire Muslim population in the 14 Member States where Muslim respondents were surveyed, the level of non-reporting would translate into thousands of cases that do not reach any complaints bodies – including State bodies and NGOs

In 2009, the BBC Asian network reported that 1 in 4 Muslim women in Scotland fail to report hate crimes citing their frequency and lack of effective detection and prosecution as reasons for their hesitation.

The need for more rigorous detection and monitoring is an issue that has already surfaced in reports produced by the EU monitoring agency for racism and xenophobia, now the Fundamental Rights Agency. In a report published in 2006, the EUMC highlighted the problem posed by *'the barriers to ethnic and/or religious identity data collection that continue to be offered by many Member States mak[ing] it difficult to gain an insight into the extent of 'Islamophobic' incidents.'*

It urged Member states to give *'urgent consideration...to the desirability and feasibility of collecting information on 'Islamophobic' incidents – at least in Member States with sizeable Muslim populations.'*

Islamophobia is a problem which infects the public, media and political discourse creating fertile grounds, through the demonisation of British Muslims and Islam, for real threats to the security of Muslim persons and property.

These clear and present dangers can be seen in the rise in violent assaults, some fatal, on British and other Muslims residing in the UK; in physical assaults on Muslim women wearing headscarves (hijab) and face veils (niqab); and in the alarming growth in the number of mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim businesses that have been the targets of racist graffiti and arson attacks.

The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the European Council against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) have all reported on the growth in anti-Muslim prejudice and hate crimes against Muslims in successive reports surveying the European landscape on anti-discrimination and minority rights protection.

Alarm bells that have been wringing on the need to monitor and prosecute anti-Muslim hate crimes and the rise in Islamophobic commentary have largely evaded policy debates on how to tackle the

problem and the measures necessary to stamp out anti-Muslim discrimination. This situation is untenable and unsustainable.

The UK has made enormous strides and taken commendable steps to address racial discrimination in the UK and in challenging anti-semitism through the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism and progressing work emerging from its reports via the All Party Parliamentary Committee on Antisemitism. The UK has also attempted to address the problem of religiously aggravated crimes by introducing new legislation covering this category and in passing legislation on Incitement to Religious Hatred.

These measures are however, inadequate to the task of detecting, monitoring and prosecuting anti-Muslim prejudice evidenced by the fact that only a single prosecution has advanced under the incitement laws to date, a case that resulted in an acquittal.

The weakness of extant legislation has been highlighted by the Crown Prosecution Service, the National Association of Muslim Police and the Black Police Officers Association. An urgent review of the incitement legislation is necessary if it is to be made fit for purpose.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, puts it in the foreword to the Minority Rights Group's report 2010 on the 'State of the world's minorities and indigenous peoples', *"when governments work to ensure that the rights of members of religious minorities are protected, this not only leads to a more stable and secure society, it is also an indicator of how seriously invested they are in the protection of human rights."*

It is imperative that government recognise the dangers of Islamophobia and its violation of the rights and liberties of a section of the population to live in peace, secure in their religious freedoms. Government and politicians have demonstrated the political will to eradicate racist and anti-semitic hatred in Britain. This briefing paper sets out the urgent need to demonstrate the political will to eradicate anti-Muslim prejudice and violent hostility.

Introduction

Thirteen years on from the Runnymede report 'Islamophobia: A Challenge for us All', the threat to community cohesion and integration posed by hate crimes carried out against British Muslims and a prevailing popular discourse which vilifies and ridicules Islamic beliefs and practices remains ever present, ever potent.

The establishment of the English Defence League (with its regional spin-offs) and the electoral campaigns run by the British National Party in recent years, reminds us that singling out Muslims and other minority groups in Britain continues to animate sections of our society with detrimental consequences for the security and wellbeing of others.

Since the Runnymede Trust's seminal report, British Muslims have been affected by a multitude of exogenous factors, not least the 9/11 attacks and the London bombings, and the subsequent development of a programme devoted to 'Preventing Violent Extremism'. They have also been positively affected by the changes to the legislative framework in the UK, the introduction of the Single Equality Act, with its inclusion of religion and belief among strands for pursuing equality, and the introduction of legislation on Incitement to Religious Hatred, though this particular addition to the statute books is widely seen as having failed to meet its objectives. The Speakers Conference launched in 2009 with the objective of exploring ways of widening participation to render political representation more representative of Britain's multicultural society is a further commendable measure in aid of greater equality in our society.

While British Muslims face a heightened discourse on 'integration' 'social cohesion' and the two latterly conflated with 'counter-terrorism' an anomaly that persists in the changes that British Muslims observe in the policy debates and discourses that surround them is why, when millions have been diverted to projects funding capacity building in the community to deter young Muslims from radicalisation and to strengthen community resilience against violent extremism, so little comparably has been done to tackle impediments to community cohesion emanating from incendiary speech, narratives demonising British Muslims in the media and physical assaults on Muslim persons and property.

The Institute of Race Relations in its briefing paper on acts of racial violence committed in the first six months of 2010 notes, 'Attacks on Muslims and vandalism in and around mosques ... feature highly on our list'.¹

While policy agendas have been heavy with initiatives designed to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with democracy and life in modern Britain, supporting and compounding the 'community-led' approaches to counter-terrorism, remarkably little attention has been invested in understanding the obstacles that stand in the way of British Muslims fully participating in British society and tackling them.

With a review of the previous Government's 'Prevent' policy underway, this is the right time to raise the issues and concerns that first surfaced in the Runnymede Trust report on Islamophobia and to urge a more robust institutional response, in the form of an all party parliamentary committee on Islamophobia.

Anti-Muslim prejudice has become a serious concern among anti-racist campaigners and British Muslims. The frequent derogatory and divisive commentary on Islam and Muslims in the UK, from

¹Athwal, Harmit, Jenny Bourne and Rebecca Wood. (2010). 'Fighting anti-Muslim racism: an interview with A Sivanandan' in Institute of Race Relations briefing paper No: 6 **Racial Violence: the buried issue**. (London: Institute of Race Relations).

platforms occupied by far right racist groups, to traditional and new media, is a challenge that threatens to undermine the work done by government and British Muslims in advancing the equality agenda and ridding our society of the prejudicial sentiments that feed violent extremism, of all hues.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, puts it in the foreword to the Minority Rights Group's report 2010 on the 'State of the world's minorities and indigenous peoples', "when governments work to ensure that the rights of members of religious minorities are protected, this not only leads to a more stable and secure society, it is also an indicator of how seriously invested they are in the protection of human rights."²

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance in its General Policy recommendation no 5, 'on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims' (adopted on 16 March 2000) recommended governments of the EU Member states to 'provide for the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of all measures taken for the purpose of combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims'.

This briefing is a call for the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia tasked with executing ECRI's recommendations on monitoring and challenging intolerance and discrimination against Muslims through a 'regular and even closer process of consultation with representatives of the Muslim communities of the UK' and through the elaboration of an overall strategy against Islamophobia. It is a call for politicians to respond to the challenge of Islamophobia and its harmful effects on British Muslim citizens in the manner and degree to which it has worked to challenge racial hatred, including anti-semitism in the UK. It is a call for an investment by Government and British politicians to defend and protect the right of Muslims to hold and practice their beliefs free of suspicion, disparagement and, more importantly, fear.

² Jahangir, Asma. (2010). 'Foreword' in **State of the world's minorities and indigenous peoples 2010** (London: Minority Rights Group International). Pg. 8

1.1 Islamophobia – defining the concept, understanding the problem

The Runnymede Trust in its seminal report 'Islamophobia: a challenge for us all' (hereafter RT report) defined Islamophobia as a cluster concept, stemming from attitudes towards the religion and faith community that corresponded to 'open' or 'closed' views of Islam.

According to the RT report, Islamophobia was symptomatic of 'closed' views of Islam. Islamophobia is 'a shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear of dislike of all or most Muslims'.

The longhand description of Islamophobia by the Runnymede Commission is represented in the table below, expanding on the different frames used to embody the 'closed' or 'open' views of Islam.

Table 1 - from Islamophobia: a Challenge For Us All, report summary.		
Distinctions	Closed views of Islam	Open views of Islam
Monolithic / Diverse	Islam seen as a single, monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.	Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development.
Separate / Interacting	Islam seen as separate and other (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them (c) not influencing them.	Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them.
Inferior / Different	Islam seen as inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.	Islam seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect.
Enemy / Partner	Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in 'a clash of civilizations'.	Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.
Manipulative / Sincere	Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.	Islam seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents.
Criticism of the West: rejected / considered	Criticisms made by Islam of 'the West' rejected out of hand.	Criticisms of 'the West' and other cultures are considered and debated.
Discrimination: defended / criticised	Hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.	Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion.
Islamophobia seen as: natural / problematic	Anti Muslim hostility accepted as natural and 'normal'.	Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and unfair.

The term Islamophobia has since the RT report's publication become more common in describing the phenomenon but as Chris Allen argues, 'it is a term that is used to describe an acknowledged dangerous and real phenomenon, whilst at the same time being a phenomenon that is without a clear definition as to what exactly it is'.³ A problem underlined by the European Union Monitoring Centre (EUMC) which acknowledges that 'Islamophobia is a much used but little understood term'.⁴

The UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, has defined the term thus:

*"...a baseless hostility and fear vis-à-vis Islam, and, as a result, a fear of and aversion towards all Muslims or the majority of them. [Islamophobia] also refers to the practical consequences of this hostility in terms of discrimination, prejudices, and unequal treatment of which Muslims (individuals and communities) are victims and their exclusion from major political and social spheres. The term was invented in response to a new reality: the increasing discrimination against Muslims which has manifested itself in recent years."*⁵

While the 'new reality' of a rising anti-Muslim discrimination is recognised and the term Islamophobia used to loosely capture this troubling phenomenon, much of the work done by agencies tasked with documenting and monitoring trends affecting minorities in the UK and EU is done using extant racial discrimination legislation and recently introduced legislation which appends discrimination on grounds of religion to other race relations legislation.

The pejorative, dismissive or quote marks use of Islamophobia has concurrently grown alongside attempts to refine the concept and formulate an agreed upon definition that can facilitate measures to record and tackle anti-Muslim hate. The term is sometimes used within quote marks to reflect an absurdity or worse still, an imagined, exaggerated hate. So Ed Husain, co-director of the Quilliam Foundation, proclaims: 'Outside a few flashpoints where the BNP is at work, most Muslims would be hard-pressed to identify Islamophobia in their lives.'⁶

For Muslims seeking active support in countering the steady stream of anti-Muslim hostility, pejorative use of the concept Islamophobia and the negation of its presence as a threat to Muslim dignity, security and to social cohesion more widely, is further proof of the trivialisation of this new, growing, religious hatred.

The Greater London Authority report, 'The Search for Common Good: Muslims, non-Muslims and the UK media', discusses some of the disadvantages associated with the use of the term Islamophobia. It notes the pathos implied in the suffix 'phobia' which invites accusations of irrationality on the part of the holders of such views where the hostile attitudes may well be more rationally held. For example, fears over immigrant threats to job security. The levelling of accusations of irrationality also present difficulties for the surmounting of such hostile attitudes by rendering the holder incapable of reasoned discussion on the matter. The claim of irrationality further obscures the responsibility on the victim to counter hostile views by dismissing the holder as beyond reason. To apply the label 'Islamophobe' impedes 'reflective dialogue' with those that hold hostile, prejudicial views as well as 'absolve[s]

³ Allen, Chris. (2007). 'The 'first' decade of Islamophobia: 10 years of the Runnymede Trust report "Islamophobia: a challenge for us all"'. (West Midlands: UK). pg 15

⁴ European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia report (2006) 'Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia'. p.60

⁵ See UN Human Rights Council, Document No. A/HRC/6/6, August 21, 2007, p.8 Para. 19,. [Online] Available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/6session/reports.htm>

⁶ Ed Husain, 'Stop pandering to Islamist extremists', *Evening Standard*, 7 July 2008.

oneself of the responsibility of trying to understand them, and of seeking through argument to modify their views'.⁷

Islamophobia has in recent years been refined to more succinctly capture this anti-Muslim hostility with terms such as 'anti-Muslim prejudice' and 'anti-Muslim racism'. Delineating the rationale employed by those that evince hostile attitudes towards Muslims, Malik (2010) prefers the term 'anti-Muslim prejudice' to Islamophobia rejecting the pathos and seeming irrationality of the use of a 'phobia' to describe hostility towards Muslims in favour of a calculated prejudiced orientation.

'Anti-Muslim racism' transposes religion and belief onto old fashioned racism to distinguish the new form of a religiously-specific manifestation of hate which at times conflates race *and* religion (eg verbal assaults where the target is visibly Muslim but where the slur used is racist) and at others evinces a clear hostility to Muslims (where the hate crime is religiously motivated), while at the same time coheres with the traditional challenges posed to social cohesion by discriminatory attitudes towards a section of society.

The terms Muslimophobia (Erdenir, 2010) and anti-Muslimism (Halliday, 1999) have also been coined to depart from a misplaced focus on religion (Islam) as the basis of hostility to Muslims and to centre the debate on the socio-political issues that underlie the antipathy – the rights Muslims enjoy as citizens of European societies.

It is the challenges posed to a secular Europe by Muslim religious practices, from halal slaughter to headscarves in state schools, which ferment the dissonance between Muslims and non-Muslims on matters relating to faith in the public sphere. The contested issue is not Islam per se but the accommodation of Muslim needs, dietary, sartorial and legal (shari'ah tribunals) that leads to perceived notions of preferentialism and separatism on the part of the majority turning it against the Muslim minority.

While there is some truth to this, that the assertion of Muslim group rights in the name of equality places the focus on Muslims as agents and not Islam per se, Muslimophobia or anti-Muslimism both fail to take adequate account of the meta-narrative that posits Islam as a creed that is incompatible with British values and the British way of life.

The BNP leader Nick Griffin describes his hostility as "I'm not anti-Muslim, I'm anti-Islam". While the clarification is tautological, with Muslims and Islam being inseparable for the purposes of defining and tracking anti-Muslim discrimination (Muslim beliefs and practices emanate from the religion), the inference that Islam is the problem underlines the importance of retaining the significance of religion to the promotion and fermentation of anti-Muslim hostility. Groups that have become animated in their hostility to Muslims in the UK, like the English Defence League, thus express their motives as resisting the 'Islamification of Britain'.

Despite the problems posed in defining the term more concisely, the use of the term Islamophobia does, in our view, serve an important purpose. While noting that the term does divest its bearers of a rational bias to their hostility, the use of Islamophobia is significant precisely for its encapsulating the irrationality that often underlies such hostility and for its squarely placing Islam at the centre of such discriminatory attitudes.

The term Islamophobia is therefore, used here to define the overarching narrative which informs the manifestations of both anti-Muslim prejudice and anti-Muslim racism where the latter evince the theoretical and physical expressions of hostility to Islam and Muslims.

⁷ GLA report (2007) '**The Search for Common Good: Muslims, non-Muslims and the UK media**'. (London, UK: Greater London Authority). Pg. 108

We concur with the definition of Islamophobia contained in the OSI report on 'Muslims in Europe – A report on 11 EU Cities:

'Islamophobia - Irrational hostility, fear and hatred of Islam, Muslims and Islamic culture, and active discrimination towards this group as individuals or collectively'.⁸

We would further caution against concept fetishism and digressing from essential work on anti-Muslim hostility, in both its discriminatory and violent manifestations. Lack of clarity on similar concepts such as xenophobia or homophobia should not hold back work on challenging these social evils and we would argue the same applies to Islamophobia.

Assessing the continued validity of the typology formulated by the RT to contemporary debates on Islamophobia, its manifestation and growth, Chris Allen argues that the typology is now 'simplistic' and limiting in its capacity to capture the broader contours within which the concept now finds expression (Allen, 2007). While material appearing in the public domain may adequately fit the typology, displaying 'closed' views of Islam and therefore, according to RT, Islamophobic, the problem thirteen years on stems not from the use of the typology to classify material but from the changed context informing the environment in which the typology is now situated, thus limiting its capacity to capture the contemporary nature and expression of Islamophobia.

Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) documenting Islamophobic hate crime in London reflect these changes in world events which now inform the wider context in which Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes take shape. Demonstrating through empirical evidence a causal link between the narrative on the 'war on terror' and the frequent contemporary depictions of Muslims as a security and terror threat to western societies, the context for observing, documenting and challenging Islamophobia has moved beyond the environment prevailing at the time of the RT report. Far from simply conjuring narratives of a 'clash of civilisations' the 'war on terror' posits British Muslims as menacing fifth columnists backing 'our enemies' and betraying 'our boys' while usurping 'our public funds' and consuming 'our resources'.

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) report on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU: Developments Since September 11 makes this point in observing:

"...as the fight against terrorism has been stepped up and the perceived threat of religious extremism given wide attention in public debates, pre-existing prejudice and discrimination against Muslims have been reinforced. Muslims have increasingly felt that they are viewed with distrust and hostility and that they are stigmatized because of their beliefs."⁹

Sivanandan summarises the change that characterises contemporary manifestations of Islamophobia and generated by the circumstances of our post 9/11 world, thus:

'Any Asian could be a Muslim. Any Asian wearing a headscarf or a beard must be a Muslim. Every Muslim is a fundamentalist. Every fundamentalist is a terrorist.'¹⁰

ECRI's General Policy Recommendation 8 on combating racism while fighting terrorism also reflects the harm potential of this conflation in incidents recorded after 9/11. The recommendation states:

⁸ Open Society Institute report (2010) '**Muslims in the EU: a report on 11 EU cities**'. (Hungary: OSI) pg. 18

⁹ International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights report (2005) on '**Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU: Developments since September 11**'. (Vienna: IHF) p.7

¹⁰ Athwal, Harmit, Jenny Bourne and Rebecca Wood. (2010). 'Fighting anti-Muslim racism: an interview with A Sivanandan' in Institute of Race Relations briefing paper No: 6 **Racial Violence: the buried issue**. (London: Institute of Race Relations). p25

"As a result of the fight against terrorism engaged since the events of 11 September 2001, certain groups of persons, notably Arabs, Jews, Muslims, certain asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants, certain visible minorities and persons perceived as belonging to such groups, have become particularly vulnerable to racism and/or to racial discrimination across many fields of public life including education, employment, housing, access to goods and services, access to public places and freedom of movement."

This reductive reasoning and the propensity to form an easy association between Muslims and terrorism and extremism, evidenced in a recent YouGov poll which found that 58% of Britons equate Islam with extremism,¹¹ fuels the discord and distrust that provides fertile grounds for Islamophobia. A poll conducted by ICM for the Sunday Telegraph in February 2006 found that 50% of respondents felt relations between Muslims and white, British people were 'getting worse'.¹² The Gallup Coexist survey of 2009 found that while British Muslims exuded greater trust in British political institutions and demonstrated a higher degree of loyalty to the UK, in comparison to the average figure for Britons, 66% of Britons felt Muslims were not loyal to the UK.¹³

Though the 'us' and 'them' dualism of the 'closed/open' typology persists to a large extent and remains relevant to understanding the animosity displayed towards Islam, Sivanandan is correct to distinguish manifestations of Islamophobia exuded in the liberals' rejection of a presumed endemic 'Islamic illiberalism' and anti-Muslim racism among different classes of society which work in tandem to foment an all-pervasive anti-Muslim prejudice.

Sivanandan contends that Islamophobia is the animosity of the 'liberati', juxtaposing their sophisticated, erudite defences of 'British values', 'enlightenment values' and the 'liberal' way of life to Islam's supposed illiberalism. Thus, critiques of Muslim women's dress becomes a critique of Islamic injunctions that forcibly conceal the Muslim female masking her identity and sexuality, setting Islamic traditions apart from the norms on gender equality that prevail in western societies. Or the oft-repeated allegation that female covering is 'imposed on Muslim women by their male relatives', differentiating the agency of the non-Muslim woman who chooses her dress (and identity) from the dependency and controlled agency of the Muslim female, who exercises no such choice.

Anti-Muslim racism is the same racism of old, the only difference being the targeting of a religious group instead of a racial one. Racial and religious categories can and do intermix, where hate crime targets are at once singled out by religious appearance and abused with racial slurs.

The point Sivanandan underscores and which reflects the breadth of the problem that Muslims face, is the eco-system in which anti-Muslim prejudice and hate exists. Thus Muslims are assaulted intellectually and culturally by the 'liberati' with their contempt for Islamic values and customs and the frequent characterisation of Islam as 'alien' to the roots, history and culture of western liberal democracies, and physically by the working class with their support for the BNP and the English Defence League. The two are not mutually exclusive. A fact evinced by the periodic use of sensationalist headlines and covers in the pages of the right wing tabloids by the BNP and EDL and further illustrated by sympathies evoked on the pages of tabloids for the right wing extremists' agenda and tactics.¹⁴

¹¹ 'Britons link Islam with extremism, says survey', **BBC News**, 7 June 2010 [Online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10251827> [Accessed 2nd August 2010]

¹² ICM 'Sunday Telegraph Muslims poll', Feb 2006. [Online] Available at: http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/pdfs/2006_february_sunday_telegraph_muslims_poll.pdf pg. 6

¹³ **The Gallup Coexist Index 2009: A Global Study of Interfaith Relations**, 2009. (Washington DC: Gallup Inc.) Pgs 20 and 23.

¹⁴ See Melanie Phillips, 'The clash of uncivilisations', **Spectator magazine** 21 October 2009, 'The case for the defence' **Daily Star**, 23 September 2009 and 'All colours and creed are backing crusade', **Daily Star**, 24 September 2009.

This nationalist milieu transposed onto the post 9/11 security narrative of the threat to national security posed by violent extremists and the fixation with 'Islamist terrorism' has caught British Muslims in a double bind caught in the conflation of religion with extremism and extremism with terrorism. As Sivanandan argues, 'Every Muslim is a fundamentalist. Every fundamentalist is a terrorist'.

The need for politicians to employ a more judicious vocabulary in speaking of the threat from violent extremism and to assert a clearer delineation between religions (or nations) and those who claim to engage in terrorist acts in their name has been recognised for some time with the increase in volume of academic research citing the counter-productive nature of casting Muslims as 'suspect communities'.¹⁵ This problematisation of Muslims and the conflation of all Muslims with the violent few reinforces the duality of the 'us' and 'them' that permeates the nationalist cause. It also neglects the wider net of violent extremisms, excluding from analysis and policy action the threat posed to security and community cohesion by far right extremists.¹⁶

While there is cause to believe politicians are more careful with their language and posturing in light of the evidence of the pitfalls on stigmatising entire communities, the obsession among sections of the British media in representing Muslims as the inveterate 'other' continues to pose considerable challenges to the 'us' and 'them' divisions that fuel and feed the liberatis' veiled and the far right extremists' overt Islamophobia.

The purpose of a parliamentary group on Islamophobia is to tackle these dual, mutually reinforcing challenges of old fashioned racist discrimination and the discourse, fomented by the media, the commentariat and politicians, which provides a fertile seedbed for the active germination and support for Islamophobia.

¹⁵ See Kundnani, Arun. (2009). '**Spooked! How not to prevent violent extremism**'. (London: Institute of Race Relations) and the ESRC funded research project '**A comparative study of the representations of 'suspect' communities in multi-ethnic Britain and of their impact on Muslim and Irish communities**' led by Professor Mary Hickman with Sara Silvestri, Lyn Thomas and Henri Nickels (London Metropolitan University: Institute for the Study of European Transformations)

¹⁶ Turley, Anna. (2009). '**Stronger Together: A new approach to preventing violent extremism**'. (London: New Local Government Network)

1.2 A timeline of hate crimes and Islamophobic incidents in the UK in the last year

The demonstrations organised by the English Defence League in towns and cities in the UK, beginning with Harrow in September 2009, and the use of anti-Islamic rhetoric by the EDL and in the BNP's election campaign caused a group of prominent trade unionists and anti-racism activists to sign an open letter (published in the Guardian) declaring that 'Islamophobia is a threat to democracy'.¹⁷

Detailed below are a number of incidents that have been reported upon in the last year involving verbal and violent assaults on Muslim individuals and properties in the UK. The list is not exhaustive but serves to illustrate the vulnerability of Muslim women, elderly Muslims, and Muslim institutions in a climate of growing anti-Muslim hostility.

August 2010

A 51 year old Muslim man was attacked and racially abused by a group of white teenagers as he made his way to Kirklees mosque. The man was abused verbally with racist taunts before being punched in the face by one of the assailants.¹⁸

An unidentified group distributed leaflets in Harrow calling upon parents to resist the introduction of halal meals and not '...let the Muslims force their barbaric ways on us'. The leaflet reads:

"Did you know that your school is going to supply Muslim Halal meat for school dinners not just for Muslims but for all children. You don't know this because your Head Teacher Katrina Mildner the Chair of Governors Ted Sturdy and Harrow Council choose not to tell you because you are of no importance. They are putting the Muslims beliefs before yours, the reason is they have no respect for you or your children or your beliefs.

"English meat is slaughtered humanely so the animal doesn't not suffer unlike the Halal method. ...Don't let the Muslims force their barbaric ways on us, let's stick to our principles and our way of life or we will lose them forever. This is our England."¹⁹

July 2010

Anwar Alqahtani, a 26 year old Masters student had her face veil forcibly removed as she walked by Glasgow Central station by William Baikie in Glasgow in an incident that has left her too afraid to go out. The prosecutor of her case against Baikie explained:

"She now feels that she has lost her independence as she is afraid to go out on her own in case it happens again. She is effectively house bound as a result of what the accused did."²⁰

A pig's head was stuck on the railings of North London Central mosque in Finsbury Park, London in late July.

The severed head was found on the railings of the mosque by worshippers arriving for the pre-dawn prayers.²¹

¹⁷ 'Islamophobia is a threat to democracy', **The Guardian**, 25 March 2010

¹⁸ 'Racially motivated attack on Muslim man in Heckmondwike' **Huddersfield Examiner**, 18 August 2010

¹⁹ 'Don't let the Muslims force their barbaric ways on us' – anti-Halal leaflet in Harrow', **Islamophobia Watch**, 16 August 2010. [Online] Available at: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2010/8/16/dont-let-the-muslims-force-their-barbaric-ways-on-us-anti-ha.html>

²⁰ 'Man jailed for Muslim veil attack', **BBC News Scotland**, 26 July and 'Two years for man who ripped religious veil from Muslim woman', **Scottish TV** [Online] Available at: <http://news.stv.tv/scotland/188514-two-years-for-man-who-ripped-religious-veil-from-muslim-woman/>

June 2010

A headscarf wearing young Muslim mother was subjected to physical and verbal assault by two teenagers in St. David's, Exeter as she walked in the city with her young daughter. Her racist attackers shouted 'you don't belong to this country' before striking her on her head and attempting to forcibly remove her headscarf.²²

May 2010

An Islamic centre in Renfrew was attacked by a group of young men who shouted abuse and hurled eggs at worshippers exiting the mosque after the early afternoon prayer.²³

A Muslim woman was attacked by a robber who stole thousands of pounds worth of valuables before wrapping her in a carpet and setting her alight told her 'This is your Eid present, you Muslim.'²⁴

UK Independence Party leader Lord Pearson repeated his party's support for a ban on the niqab (face veil) during an appearance on the Nicky Campbell show on Radio 5 Live saying:

"I constantly say to my mild Muslim friends, listen, you must realise these days, when we use the word 'terrorism' we are almost always referring to a problem which comes from violent Islam.

"You must realise that we do not hate you, but we fear your violent co-religionists and we have good reason to do that. And we see the burka in public and the niqab as a symbol of that and we fear it. The hatred is coming towards us."²⁵

April 2010

Vandals were caught on CCTV hurling stones and tearing down the perimeter fencing of Eccles and Salford mosque in Greater Manchester. Having suffered a spate of attacks in 2006, the mosque took security measures placing CCTV cameras on the premises.²⁶

April also saw the largest ever gathering of EDL protestors in Dudley. Chants heard during the EDL included: 'If you build your f*cking Mosque we'll burn it down'; 'Allah, Allah, who the f*ck is Allah?'; 'Allah is a paedo' and 'Muslim bombers, off our streets'.

The march descended into violence with EDL protestors tearing through fencing and rampaging through the town hurling bricks and bottles at anti-racist demonstrators.²⁷

March 2010

Muslim gravestones in Harehills cemetery in Leeds were knocked over in an attack police were treating as religiously motivated. Only Muslim gravestones in the cemetery were targeted.²⁸

²¹ 'Pig's head attack on mosque in Finsbury Park', **Islington Gazette**, 29 July 2010

²² 'Mother and daughter left 'heartbroken' by vicious race assault', **Express & Echo**, 17 June 2010

²³ 'Racist attack on Islamic centre', **Paisley Daily Express**, 12 May 2010

²⁴ 'This is your Eid present': What attacker told Muslim woman as he wrapped her in a carpet and set her alight', **Daily Mail**, 6 May 2010

²⁵ 'UKIP leader repeats call for ban on the burqa and niqab', **ENGAGE**, [Online] Available at:

<http://iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/871-ukip-leader-repeats-call-for-ban-on-the-burqa-and-niqab>

²⁶ 'Vandals caught on CCTV attacking Eccles and Salford mosque', **ENGAGE**, [Online] Available at:

<http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/838-vandals-caught-on-cctv-attacking-eccles-and-salford-mosque>

²⁷ 'EDL rampage as journalists attacked in Dudley', **Expose the BNP**, 5 April 2010 [Online] Available at:

<http://exposethebnp.com/2010/04/05/edl-on-the-ground-in-dudley/>

Feb 2010

Bus drivers in Merseyside were cautioned for refusing to stop to pick up Muslim students wearing headscarves on their bus routes. Following an investigation by police, officers were charged with boarding buses to protect students from racist abuse while they travelled on public transport.²⁹

Following the screening of the BBC Panorama documentary, 'Hate on the Doorstep, four men in Bristol were charged with a series of crimes, including religiously aggravated assault, filmed by the undercover Muslim reporters while documenting the racist tendencies of residents of a housing estate in Bristol.³⁰

The undercover reporters were subjected to vile racial and religious taunts with their abusers insulting them with terms such as "Taliban", "Jihad" and "Paki".

Jan 2010

Tory MP for Monmouth, David Davies, drew allusions between attitudes towards women in minority cultures and rape in comments on a case involving Balal Khan. The MP said:

"I think there is a wider question here - what is it about this young man's upbringing, what about his community or his parental upbringing that led him to think that women are second-class people whose rights can be trampled over like this?"³¹

Planning application for a mosque in Camberley ignited community tensions with the English Defence League creating a Facebook page, 'Say NO to mosque in Camberley!!!', which reportedly attracted 6000 signatures.

Dec 2009

Rehana Sidat, a Muslim woman living in Leicester had her face veil pulled by a young man who tried to forcibly remove it telling her to 'get that off'.³²

December 2009 also saw the burning down of Cradley Heath mosque in the West Midlands as arsonists struck on Boxing Day. The mosque was burned to the ground.

Vasharat Ali, secretary of the mosque and education centre, said: "This is not the first time we have been targeted, there was a similar attack four or five years ago.

"The building has been completely destroyed and all the books we use with the children have been damaged by water."³³

²⁸ 'Leeds: police probe as yobs desecrate Muslim graves', **Islamophobia Watch**, 23 March 2010. [Online] Available at: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2010/3/23/leeds-police-probe-as-yobs-desecrate-muslim-graves.html>

²⁹ 'School bus drivers 'refusing to stop for young Muslim girls who are wearing the hijab', **Islamophobia Watch** [Online] Available at: <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2010/2/26/school-bus-drivers-refusing-to-stop-for-young-muslim-girls-w.html>

³⁰ 'Four Bristolians appear over 'racism documentary' charges', **Bristol Evening Post**, 12 February 2010

³¹ 'Tory MP sparks outrage with comments suggesting link between minority cultures and rape', **ENGAGE** [Online] Available at: <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/737-tory-mp-sparks-outrage-with-comments-suggesting-link-between-minority-cultures-and-rape>

³² 'Man grabbed Muslim woman's veil', **BBC News**, 14 December 2009

³³ 'Cradley Heath mosque burnt to the ground by arsonists', **Halesowen News**, 29 December 2009

Nov 2009

Three Muslim students were stabbed at the City University campus in central London as a mob of 30 white and black youths surrounded a group of Asian students hurling verbal abuse and setting upon them with bricks and metal poles.

The Federation of Students Islamic Societies issued a statement on the incident stating:

“Attacks earlier in the week left three students requiring hospitalisation for severe facial and head injuries as they were set upon by the gang shouting Islamophobic and racist abuse including statements like "Get those Muslims" and "Paki" being used repeatedly; they were subjected to a series of projectile missiles, including bricks, metal poles and sign posts.”³⁴

Greater Manchester Police also investigated a third successive incident of the desecration of Muslim gravestones at the Southern Cemetery in Manchester.³⁵ The last incident occurred weeks after the EDL demonstration in the city of Manchester (see below).

Oct 2009

The English Defence League organised a march in Manchester on Saturday 10th October. Ahead of the planned protest the EDL posted a video online entitled 'Defending our Christian heritage and birthright' which accused Muslims of desecrating the sites of Christian churches and graveyards to build mosques. The video also made use of sensational newspaper and online news stories depicting Muslims as steadily 'Islamising' the UK.³⁶

In the same month, a man was charged with attempting to damage a mosque in Sunderland.³⁷

Sept 2009

Overseas Muslim student, 16 year old Mohammed al-Majed, was attacked by drunken youths as stood chatting with friends outside a kebab shop in Hastings. His assailants defended their actions claiming that Mohammed and his friends were "*trying to turn all the kids into Muslims*".³⁸

September 2009 saw the start of protests organised by the English Defence League with the primary protest taking place against Harrow mosque in west London.

August 2009

Pensioner Ekram Haque, 67, was killed when 'happy slapping' teenagers in Tooting, South London, struck him so violently while he waited outside a mosque with his three year old granddaughter, it proved fatal.

Haque fell to the ground when three teenagers set upon him in a 'fun-fuelled' attack captured on their mobile phones. He suffered irreparable brain damage and died a week later.³⁹

³⁴ FOSIS Statement Regarding Attacks on Muslim Students at City University [Online] Available at: <http://fosis.org.uk/media/press-releases/624-fosis-statement-regarding-attacks-on-muslim-students-at-city-university> [Accessed on 28 August 2010]

³⁵ 'Muslim gravestones in Manchester cemetery desecrated again', **ENGAGE** [Online] Available at: <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/652-muslim-gravestones-in-manchester-cemetery-desecrated-again>

³⁶ 'Fomenting hate between Muslims and Christians', **ENGAGE** [online] Available at: <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/555-fomenting-hate-between-muslims-and-christians>

³⁷ 'Peterborough man charged with attempting to damage mosque', **Peterborough Today**, 20 October 2009

³⁸ 'Court told teenager Mohammed al-Majed was killed in 'drunk racist attack' **Daily Mirror**, 22 September 2009

Anthony Bamber was charged with incitement of hatred against Muslims for a leaflet he produced and distributed in north Yorkshire blaming Muslims for the heroin trade. He was acquitted in June 2010.⁴⁰

July 2009

A man set fire to the Glasgow headquarters of the Muslim charity Islamic Relief an estimated £70,000 worth of damage to property and goods.⁴¹

June 2009

Greenwich mosque in south London was firebombed twice in one week as vandals petrol bombed the building burning copies of the Qur'an kept inside.⁴²

2. 1 The legal framework – rights and recording incidents

The European Convention on Human Rights, incorporated into UK statute as the Human Rights Act (1998) provides for the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in Article 9 and for the prohibition of discrimination, including on grounds of religion in Article 14.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU also guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion under Chapter 2 (Freedoms) Article 10. Chapter 3 Article 21 on Non-discrimination stipulates 'Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited'. And Article 22 on Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity states that 'The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.'

The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) General Policy Recommendation no. 5 on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims (adopted on 16 March 2000); ECRI general policy recommendation no. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination (adopted on 13 December 2002); and ECRI general policy recommendation no. 8 on combating racism while fighting terrorism (adopted on 17 March 2004), are further examples of the legal instruments premised on anti-racism and anti-discrimination which informs the policy goals and methods used to challenge Islamophobia.

As earlier stated, current legislation that enables the prosecution of anti-Muslim hate crime is an extension of established race relations legislation where 'religiously aggravated' crimes have been added to the extant racial motives for prosecuting offenders. Since Muslims do not form a single racial group, race relations legislation which protects faith communities such as Jews and Sikhs, does not extend to Muslims. Legal redress is available to Muslims under the Racial and Religious Hatred Act (2006) which allows for prosecution of crimes on grounds of inciting racial and religious hatred. Part III of the Public Order Act places responsibility for the prosecution of incitement offences in the office of the Attorney General.

³⁹ 'Devout Muslim dies after savage beating by 'race-hate' gang', **Daily Mail**, 9 September 2009

⁴⁰ 'Race hate defendant walks free from court', **Lancashire Evening Post**, 22 June 2010

⁴¹ 'Attack on shop 'may be racist'' **The Scotsman**, 7 July 2009

⁴² 'Greenwich Islamic Centre firebombed twice in one week', **ENGAGE** [Online] Available at:

<http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/395-greenwich-islamic-centre-firebombed-twice-in-one-week>

The Racial and Religious Hatred Act establishes different criteria for racial and religious incitement restricting the latter to acts that intended to stir up religious hatred⁴³. The scope of the provisions also varies between protections afforded on grounds of race and those available to faith communities. The Act covers 'threatening, abusive and insulting words' in the context of racial groups but only 'threatening words and behaviour' in relation to faith groups.

The disparity has made prosecution on grounds of religious hatred much more difficult with the CPS and Black Police Officers' Association voicing concern on the low success rate of hate crime prosecution targeting faith communities.

Religiously aggravated offences are covered by the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act (amended section 39, 2001), which added the religiously aggravated category to existing provisions covering racially aggravated offences and under the Crime and Disorder Act (sections 28-32, 1998). In addition, the Criminal Justice Act (section 145, 2003) allows for the incorporation of racial or religious aggravation in sentencing for crimes not covered by other legislation cited above.

The Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU monitors discrimination and hate crime across the EU drawing on official statistics and supplemented by reports produced by human rights groups, NGOs, victims' surveys and media reports.

The Crown Prosecution Service recording of hate crime has advanced from the Racist/Religious Incident Monitoring Scheme (RIMS) reports to the compilation of Annual Hate Crime reports from 2007-2008, consistent with the Home Office's commitment in its one year progress report response to the All-Party Inquiry into Anti-semitism, that 'all forces will record anti-semitic crimes [by extension, all racial and religiously motivated hate crimes] by April 1st 2009.'

The CPS defines a 'race hate crime' as:

"any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race".

The CPS defines a 'racist incident' as:

"any non-crime incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race".

The CPS defines a 'religious incident' as:

"Any incident which is believed to be motivated because of a person's religion or perceived religion, by the victim or any other person".⁴⁴

Data from the CPS RIM reports of 2003-04 and 2004-05 reveals the following concerning hate crime and the religious identity of victims:

⁴³ The provisions covering incitement to racial hatred covers acts that are intended to stir up hatred and those that are likely to stir up hatred.

⁴⁴ **Racist and Religious Crime – CPS Prosecution Policy** (London: Crown Prosecution Service) pg. 7

Table 2: CPS data on 'religiously –aggravated crime' where victims' religion is identified (2003-2004)⁴⁵

Offence	Muslim	Hindu	Sikh	Christian	Jewish	Jehovah's Witness
Public order	6		1	3	2	
Assault	8	1	1	1		1
Criminal Damage	1	1		1	2	
Harassment	6	1		2	1	
Other	1			1		
Total	22	3	2	8	5	1

Table 3: CPS data on 'religiously –aggravated crime' where victims' religion is identified (2004-2005)⁴⁶

Offence	Muslim	Christian	Hindu	Mormon	Unknown
Public order	9				2
Assault	7	1		1	2
Criminal Damage	6	1	1		
Harassment	1	2	1		
Other					
Total	23	4	2	1	4

Data from annual RIMS reports for the period 2003 – 2007 show the following number of incidents involving religiously aggravated offences where the religious identity is known:

(Table 4: RIMS report 'religiously aggravated offences', 2003-07)

Reporting Year	Number of Defendants	Muslim	Christian	Jewish	Sikh	Hindu	Mormon	Jehovah's Witness	Unknown
2003 - 2004	45	22	8	5	2	3	0	1	4
2004 - 2005	34	23	4	0	0	2	1		4
2005 - 2006	43	18	3	0	1	0	0		21
2006 - 2007	27	17	3	2	1	0	0		4
TOTAL	149	80	18	7	4	5	1	1	33

⁴⁵ **Racial/Religious Incident Monitoring Scheme 2003-04** (London: Crown Prosecution Service) Available on <http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/reports/rims03-04.html#41>.

⁴⁶ **Racial/Religious Incident Monitoring Scheme 2004-05** (London: Crown Prosecution Service) Available at: <http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/rims04-05.pdf>

From the available data, Muslims accounted for more than half of all incidents involving religiously aggravated offences, 54%. Muslims also account for the largest faith group experiencing hate crimes.

The Hate Crime Report 2007-2008 combines data for racial and religiously aggravated offences (it also covers disability, homophobic and transgender crimes) making it more difficult to accurately ascertain the degree of anti-Muslim hate crime. Nonetheless, the Hate Crime Report 2007-08 does show a 10% increase in prosecution for crimes involving racial or religious aggravation (up 1,300 on the previous year to 13,008) and a 68% increase on prosecutions recorded in 2005-2006 (up from 8,868 to 13,008). The Hate Crime Report 2008-2009 shows an 11% decrease in the total volume of prosecutions on the previous year's recorded figures, down from 13,008 to 11,624.

The CPS in the second phase of its Proactive Prosecution Programme (PPP) undertook to develop 'specialist racially and religiously aggravated crime training' in the third quarter of 2008 to complement the work already concluded in the Anti-semitic Crime Action Plan. The PPP seeks to improve the number of prosecutions for hate crime by ensuring a proactive approach when working with the police to build strong cases and to offer victim support to further facilitate victim co-operation in the prosecution process.

The Con-Lib coalition manifesto states the government's commitment to improving the recording and prosecuting of homophobic/transgender hate crimes and hate crimes affecting individuals with disabilities. The manifesto states:

*"We will promote better recording of hate crimes against disabled, homosexual and transgender people, which are frequently not centrally recorded"*⁴⁷

We look forward to the PPP fulfilling its commitment to developing a specialist racially and religiously aggravated crime unit and furthering this to meet the needs of other groups whose concerns are inadequately met by the current system.

Given the relatively new introduction of statistics that break down the data on racially and religiously motivated crimes, the role of NGOs and other human rights agencies in collating and documenting data is inestimable. Much of what is available by way of information and data collection on anti-Muslim hate crime has been the result of dedicated teams of researchers working to fill this huge void in the official data.

To cite a few invaluable resources advancing and documenting Islamophobia as a recent phenomenon:

- **Islamophobia, a challenge for us all** (1997) Runnymede Trust
- **Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001** (2002) EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (now the Fundamental Rights Agency)
- **Islamophobia: issues, challenges and action** (2004) Runnymede Trust
- **Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia** (2006) EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (now the Fundamental Rights Agency)

⁴⁷ **The Coalition: our programme for government.** (London: Cabinet Office, 2010), pg 14.

- **Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia: Voices from members of Muslim communities in the European Union** (2006) EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (now the Fundamental Rights Agency)
- **Report on Racism and Xenophobia in the Member States of the EU** (2007) Fundamental Rights Agency
- **Islamophobia - Hate Crime Survey** (2007) Human Rights First
- **Data in Focus report on 'Muslims in the EU'** (2009) EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS)
- **OIC Observatory reports on Islamophobia**, First Report 2007-2008; Second Report 2008-2009 and Third Report 2009-2010
- **Muslims in the EU – a report on 11 EU Cities**, (2009) Open Society Institute
- **European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) country reports: UK**, fourth report March 2010; third report June 2005; second report April 2001

A consistent problem highlighted in each of these reports is the weak collection of data among EU Member states on both racial and religiously motivated hate crime, and pertinent to our purposes, the severe lack of official data on anti-Muslim hate crimes. Where data is used to represent anti-Muslim hate crime, it draws upon available ethnic categories evidencing anti-Muslim hate crimes and violence 'by proxy'.

ECRI in its UK country report 2010 impresses upon the UK the need to ensure that protections afforded to all vulnerable groups is commensurate with legislation and action covering racial hatred. It notes in relation to Islamophobia:

*'Monitoring of crimes motivated by Islamophobia is also still reportedly quite weak, and further efforts may be needed to ensure that Muslims know where and how to report such crimes. At the same time, the categories according to which hate crimes are recorded, which are collected on the basis of geographical origin, do not clearly reflect the religious convictions of victims or offenders, making the extent of crimes motivated by Islamophobia difficult to discern.'*⁴⁸

The EUMC in its 2006 report, cited above, recognised that 'the barriers to ethnic and/or religious identity data collection that continue to be offered by many Member States make it difficult to gain an insight into the extent of 'Islamophobic' incidents.' It recommends that Member States give 'urgent consideration...to the desirability and feasibility of collecting information on 'Islamophobic' incidents – at least in Member States with sizeable Muslim populations.'⁴⁹

The report notes that the 'current status of data collection on 'racist crime' remains inadequate in the majority of Member States'. It adds:

*'...police and criminal justice data identifying Muslim victims specifically is absent in all but one EU Member State.'*⁵⁰

⁴⁸ ECRI report on the United Kingdom, fourth monitoring cycle. (Strasbourg, France: ECRI Secretariat, 2010). Pg 41, paragraph 145.

⁴⁹ EUMC report (2006) 'Muslims in the European Union - Discrimination and Islamophobia' pg. 90

⁵⁰ Ibid Pg 63

The weakness in official recording of the victims' religious affiliation, the FRA contends, conceals 'the true extent and nature of discrimination and Islamophobic incidents against Muslims'.⁵¹

The paucity of official data available at the EU level and the under-recording of incidents in the UK is repeated in the OSI report on Muslims in the EU – a report on 11 EU cities, which reiterates the need to encourage victims to report incidents and for more accurate recording methods. The report lists among its recommendation the need for:

“EU statistical agencies and projects should collect accurate data on minorities in order to support evidence-based policies to facilitate integration and fight discrimination.”

The need for more robust recording methods was included among OSCE commitments undertaken by Member states in Geneva in 1991, and reiterated more recently at the Ministerial Council meeting in Athens, 2009, at which Member states were called upon to:

- *Take appropriate measures to encourage victims to report hate crimes, recognizing that under-reporting of hate crimes prevents States from devising efficient policies. In this regard, explore, as complementary measures, methods for facilitating, the contribution of civil society to combat hate crimes;*
- *Enact, where appropriate, specific, tailored legislation to combat hate crimes, providing for effective penalties that take into account the gravity of such crimes;*
- *Introduce or further develop professional training and capacity-building activities for law-enforcement, prosecution and judicial officials dealing with hate crimes;*
- *In co-operation with relevant actors, explore ways to provide victims of hate crimes with access to counselling, legal and consular assistance as well as effective access to justice;*
- *Promptly investigate hate crimes and ensure that the motives of those convicted of hate crimes are acknowledged and publicly condemned by the relevant authorities and by the political leadership.*⁵²

A further obstacle to accurate recording of incidents renders the recorded figures for religiously motivated hate crimes lower than the actual. 'Double discrimination', where victim is for example, a Pakistani Muslim or a white British Muslim female whose face veil invites racial slurs (her ethnic identity obscured by the face covering), may lead to the mistaken categorisation of an attack as racial and not religious when recorded.

The UK is among the few European states that specifically records incidents of anti-Muslim discrimination and violence under its religiously aggravated offences data. Though, as stated above, the data is inadequate given the low level of reporting of incidents and the problems of accurate recording of incidents as 'religiously motivated' at the time of reporting.

The EU-MIDIS data in focus report on Muslims highlights the depth of the problem of recording hate crimes affecting Muslims across the EU. Quoting from the report:

- On average 1 in 3 Muslim respondents (34% of men and 26% of women) stated that they had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months. Those Muslim respondents who had been

⁵¹ Ibid. pg 108

⁵² Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Ministerial Council, Athens 2009, '**Decision No. 9/09: Combating Hate Crimes**'.

discriminated against stated that they had experienced, on average, 8 incidents of discrimination over a 12 month period

- 1 in 10 of all Muslims surveyed (11%) was a victim of racially motivated 'in-person crime' (assault, threat or serious harassment) at least once in the previous 12 months.
- Of those who were victims of in-person crimes, between 53% and 98%, depending on their country of residence, did not report it to the police.
- Of those victims of in-person crimes who did not report to the police, 43% stated the main reason for this was that they were not confident the police would be able to do anything.
- On average 79% of respondents did not report their most recent experience of discrimination in the last 12 months to any competent organization, or at the place where the discrimination occurred.
- The main reason given for not reporting discrimination was that 'nothing would happen or change' by reporting their experience of discrimination (59%), while many (38%) did not see the point of reporting discrimination, as it was just 'part of their normal everyday existence'.
- 1 in 4 Muslims experienced discrimination and did not report their experiences anywhere. If this was extended to the entire Muslim population in the 14 Member States where Muslim respondents were surveyed, the level of non-reporting would translate into thousands of cases that do not reach any complaints bodies – including State bodies and NGOs.

The problem of not reporting discrimination and hate crime incidents was also highlighted in a BBC Asian Network feature on Muslim women in Scotland where a dismal one in four report a hate crime incident to the police.⁵³

UK agencies have recognised the problems posed by non-recording of incidents. But the EU-MIDIS survey results have more serious consequences if we look more closely at the low level of awareness of agencies and statutory bodies that exist to help victims of religiously motivated hate crimes, both in the form of victim support and rights awareness.

The recognition of poor recording of incidents has yet to be addressed in a manner robust enough to reverse the problem and to improve the rate of recording of incidents.

The EU-MIDIS survey also reveals that:

- Muslims aged 16-24 experience more discrimination in comparison with other age groups

The implication of a young generation of Muslims facing higher levels of discrimination is a grave concern. We share concerns raised by the report's authors that while the Common Basic Principles on Integration (CBPs), providing guidelines to Member states on integration policies, stipulate the need for member states to pay particular attention to education policy (as 'critical for preparing immigrants to be more successful and active') and on access to institutions 'on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is an essential foundation [for integration]', the EU-MIDIS survey results reveal a disturbing shortfall in Member states meeting these commitments.

⁵³ 'Muslim women avoid reporting racism', **BBC News Scotland**, 6 August 2009

The FRA reinforces the importance of leveraging on the younger demographic profile of Muslim communities in Europe to counter the growth in anti-Muslim hostility observing that 'the [younger] demographic profile of the Muslim population indicate[s] that policy interventions aimed at young people should have a strong impact'.⁵⁴

It is worth iterating the commitments made by OSCE Member states at the Ministerial Council meeting in Copenhagen in 1990, to '*endeavour to ensure that the objectives of education include special attention to the problem of racial prejudice and hatred and to the development of respect for different civilizations and cultures*'.

Schools in the UK have a statutory obligation to teach on racism and discrimination under Citizenship education at key stage 4 which deals with migration, diversity, racism and discrimination. Resources currently available on sites accessible to teachers (the National Union of Teachers, the Teaching Development Agency and the Qualification and Curriculum Authority) covers Islamophobia but the effectiveness of the teaching resources is, in our view, worthy of further assessment. At present there are scant resources in consideration of Islamophobia with little involvement of Muslim bodies as partners in developing relevant resources, in comparison to the resources available and utilised in consideration of teaching racism and anti-semitism.

Resources produced by 'Show Racism the Red Card' on racism and Islamophobia and the seminal '1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in our World' which exhibits the Islamic contribution to European and world history in the fields of science, medicine, food, dress and language, are particularly noteworthy for their teaching packs for schools and teachers.⁵⁵

We would urge a review of current teaching resources in tackling Islamophobia with a view to supporting the development of better resources, like those cited above, for teachers for use in the classroom.⁵⁶ The OSCE roundtable report on 'Addressing Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Youth and Education', provides an important analysis of the current state of educational resources on combating discriminatory attitudes towards Muslims and important policy recommendations on improving the situation consistent with OSCE Member state commitments.⁵⁷

It is our firm belief that Public Service Agreement 23 – making communities safer, which underscores the police forces' and CPS' commitment to taking hate crime seriously, is critically dependant on the quality and comprehensivity of data on anti-Muslim hate crime. A key development in improving the quality and accuracy of data on the incidence of anti-Muslim hate crime involves the greater participation of third party reporting methods and specifically, Muslim NGOs working in hate crime monitoring.

⁵⁴ European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS), **Data in Focus report: Muslims** (2009) (Vienna: Fundamental Rights Agency). pg 109

⁵⁵ See Show Racism the Red Card on <http://www.srtc.org> and 1001 Inventions on <http://www.1001inventions.com>

⁵⁶ For example '**Do not tolerate intolerance: Racism, Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Issues for schools and teachers**' National Union of Teachers [Online] Available at: <http://www.teachers.org.uk/node/805> and '**War in Iraq - the impact on schools**' [Online] Available at: <http://www.teachers.org.uk/node/648>

⁵⁷ Report of OSCE-ODIHR Roundtable on '**Addressing Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Youth and Education**'. (Vienna: OSCE, 2008)

2. 2 The role of Muslim NGOs in hate crime monitoring

Muslim NGOs and Muslim media have played an important role in bridging the gap between official data and reports compiled on hate crime that uses third party information in supplement to official statistics.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has a number of Muslim NGOs that have contributed to the preparation of reports on anti-Muslim discrimination, compensating for the low level of information often provided by official agencies to bodies like the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). At the same time, the OSCE notes that submissions made by Muslim NGOs often draw on secondary sources – media reports of incidents – rather than primary sources – direct victim reports of hate crimes – further accentuating the problem of weak recording of actual crimes committed. It is worth mentioning that the low level of reporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes, in the mainstream as well as the more resource constrained ethnic media, is an additional factor affecting the reliability of data to capture the true range of the incidents affecting Muslim victims.

In the past a variety of Muslim organisations have been active in the field of monitoring discrimination and hate crime and lobbying for legislation advancing protections for Muslim citizens, including incitement to religious hatred legislation. Among them the Muslim Council of Britain and the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR). FAIR has in the past made representations to ODIHR reports on anti-Muslim discrimination in the OSCE region, bringing vital information into the public domain and to policymakers' attention.

At present, the Muslim Safety Forum provides an essential service to Muslim communities in the greater London area. The contributions of Muslim organisations to the essential task of complementing official data on anti-Muslim hate crimes has been affected by the financial and resource constraints that restrict their activities.

The problem is further compounded by difficulties posed by 'representation' and the caveats that attend Muslim organisations' contributions to the debate as being 'partial'. The EUMC 'Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001', notes the problem and poses the question: 'Can any Muslim organisation or representative voice ever speak for an entire country's community?'⁵⁸

The problem is not, in our view, insurmountable and the diversity within Muslim communities should not stand as an impediment to the strengthening of Muslim groups committed to the collation of information regarding incidents involving hate crimes.

The Community Security Trust plays an invaluable role in acting for Britain's Jewish community documenting incidents, providing victim support and, crucially, supplementing official statistics with a third party source. At present the same service carried out for Britain's Muslims has been ad hoc, fragmented and intermittent.

Recognising the fundamental role Muslim NGOs do play in identifying, challenging and documenting Islamophobia, the better to shape and inform policy responses, ECRI has recommended that the UK:

“...maintain a regular and even closer process of consultation with the representatives of the Muslim communities of the United Kingdom on the causes of

⁵⁸ Allen, Chris and Jorgen S. Nielsen, (2002) 'Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001' (Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia). pg. 31

*Islamophobia and its manifestations, and they should elaborate an over all strategy against Islamophobia.*⁵⁹

One such aspect of the overall strategy on fighting the causes and manifestations of hate crime, including anti-Muslim hate crime, is the support for Third Party reporting sites as key centres for hate crime reporting.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report⁶⁰ recognising the problem of weak levels of hate crime reporting and the significant contribution of third party reporting methods in addressing this stipulated in Recommendation 16:

“That all possible steps should be taken by Police Services at local level in consultation with local Government and other agencies and local communities to encourage the reporting of racist incidents and crimes. This should include:

- *The ability to report at location other than police stations; and*
- *The ability to report 24 hours a day.”*

The recommendation has been partially implemented in the establishment of Third Party Reporting sites by a number of London boroughs, but the measure has not been implemented comprehensively with the London Hate Crime Forum in its report 2007-2008 noting that ‘most [London] boroughs have struggled to implement effective Third Party Reporting schemes’ and that ‘it is clear from borough presentations received during this year that many existing Third Party Reporting schemes remain ineffective.’⁶¹

It is our endeavour as part of the call for the establishment to an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia to concurrently establish an agency comprising Muslim organisations like the Muslim Council of Britain, the Muslim Safety Forum and FAIR, that will be dedicated to the pooling of resources and talent for the creation of a central office tasked with recording incidents of hate crime. The agency will be non-partisan and will serve solely to document and report on incidents of anti-Muslim hate crimes. It will serve as a Third Party Reporting site utilising the vast resources of Muslim places of worship and Islamic centres across the UK to enable more accessible hate crime incident reporting to Muslim victims.

We aim to work closely with the National Association of Muslim Policemen (NAMP) to improve awareness of rights among British Muslims and to forcefully drive home the message that *every incident matters*.

What is clear from the survey data available and the review of existing reports on Islamophobia in the UK and Europe is the following:

- Anti-Muslim hate crimes are under-reported
- Where reported, there is a further problem of under-representation (where racially motivated is inadvertently used in place of religiously motivated)

⁵⁹ Ibid. pg 41, paragraph 144.

⁶⁰ The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (London: The Stationery Office, 1999). Available on: <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm42/4262/4262.htm>

⁶¹ London Race Hate Crime Forum Annual Report 2007-2008. pg. 16

- The statistical tools available for the accurate recording of incidents is not homogenous across the EU consequentially posing significant problems for the implementation of EU-wide anti-discrimination legislation and directives
- Muslim NGOs supplementing official data are poorly resourced, impeding their ability to document and share with policymakers and EU agencies the full extent of Islamophobic incidents
- The disproportionate impact of Islamophobia on Muslims aged 16-24 and the younger demographic profile of the Muslim population presents a compelling case for an urgent policy focus on combating anti-Muslim hate crime

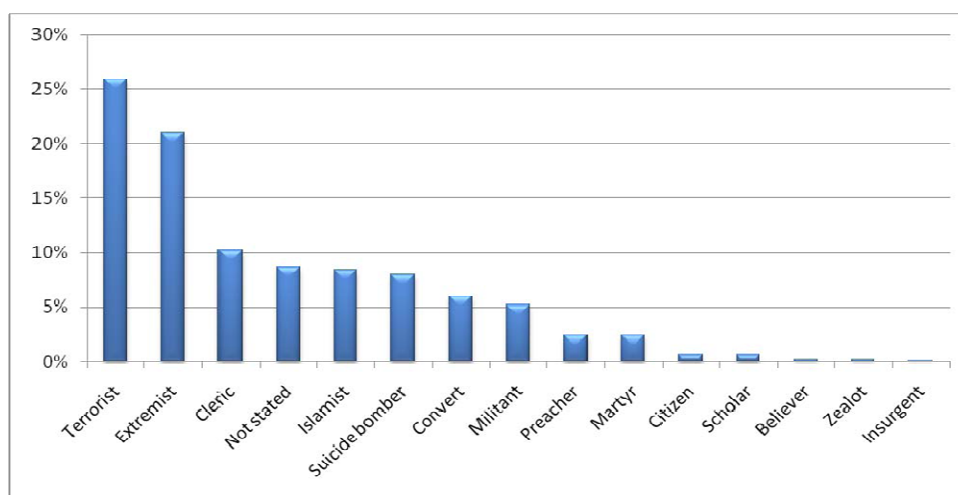
3.1 Islamophobia in the media

A particularly acute problem in manifestations of Islamophobia is the role played by the British media. The frequent use of extreme fringe groups and their attention-grabbing antics is regularly cited as causes of the gross misrepresentation of British Muslims and the easy association made by Britons of all Muslims with extremism and terrorism.

A YouGov poll of 2010 found that over half (53%) of Britons link Islam with extremism. The Gallup Coexist survey 2009 found that though British Muslims displayed loyalty and levels of trust in national institutions higher than the rest of society, their loyalty to the country was questioned by two thirds of respondents. The Muslims in EU – 11 cities study⁶² similarly found that Muslims in the UK displayed a higher degree of patriotism than the national average but they were more likely to have their loyalty questioned than other groups in society.

A study prepared by Cardiff University on the third anniversary of the London bombings revealed the exponential growth in media interest in Islam and Muslims since 9/11 and 7/7. Among disturbing conclusions contained in the study are the propensity of media articles to refer to Muslims in negative terminology (with a ratio of 17 to 1) and the growth of a media constructed narrative that depicts Muslims as incompatible with British values and the British way of life.⁶²

Table 5: Most common nouns used in conjunction with British Muslims in the British press⁶³



The persistence of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ duality in media representations of Islam, where Muslims are regularly represented as holding views inconsistent with the norms of a liberal democracy, or where Muslim beliefs and customs are represented as ‘additional burdens’ on the British taxpayer; as instances of an unbridled accommodation of minority customs, or the mistaken conflation of unIslamic practices with Islam (honour killings, female genital mutilation) to allude to Islam’s perceived barbarism and inhumanity, all contribute to the othering of Muslims in media and popular discourse with detrimental effect for integration strategies and community cohesion.

The role of the British media in representing Muslims and reinforcing stereotypes which cohere with the RT’s ‘closed’ category has been a matter of grave concern for some time. British Muslim

⁶² Kerry Moore, Paul Mason and Justin Lewis (2008) ‘Overview’ in **‘Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008’** (Cardiff: Cardiff University). Pg 3

⁶³ Kerry Moore, Paul Mason and Justin Lewis (2008) ‘Overview’ in **‘Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008’** (Cardiff: Cardiff University)

organisations have been active in meeting with editors of major newspapers to challenge newspaper coverage of issues focused on Islam and Muslims in Britain with a view to improving industry practice. This has also been complemented with a resource guide produced for the British media by, for example, The Muslim Council of Britain and the British Council.⁶⁴ Concerns over the role of the media in fomenting anti-Muslim prejudice have heightened in recent years with the proliferation of blogs and comments posted on online newspaper sites which illustrate the breadth and depth of anti-Muslim hostility. These are of course goaded by the primary articles to which they are appended, which themselves refer to Muslims or Islamic practices in disparaging terms.

It is noteworthy that industry initiatives, similar to the Society of Editors' guide for moderators on moderating anti-semitic comments on media websites, have been particularly lacking in respect of anti-Muslim comments on comment pages.

In recent years the problem of media bias has progressed beyond a cumulative cache of articles within the pages of newspapers, to occupy front page headlines of an inflammatory, inaccurate and prejudicial sort. A sampling of these front pages is shown below:



⁶⁴ Masood, Ehsan. (2006). **British Muslims: Media Guide** (London: British Council)

The frequency with which issues pertaining to British Muslims appear on the front pages in alarmist style, coupled with the general tendency to refer to Muslim issues in a negative way feeds the 'naturalisation' of anti-Muslim prejudice. The drip feed of constant negative comment not only shapes the dominant narrative through which British Muslims are constructed, it raises the probability of anti-Muslim hate crime as Muslim vulnerability is further heightened. Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) argue that the perpetrators of violence targeting Muslims justify their outlook with reference to media articles which cast Muslims as a threat to British culture and the British way of life.

The frequent allusion to Muslims in the context of terrorism and violent extremism feeds the reductionism that paints all Muslims as security threats. And the frequent use of fringe groups to represent British Muslims reinforces the stereotype of Muslims resisting integration and rejecting the values and norms that shape and animate liberal democracies.

The defences offered of the politics of the BNP, as stemming from legitimate concerns over 'Muslim appeasement', the threat of violent extremism posed by silent ' sleeper cells' of Islamist extremists, and the threat to social cohesion from the accommodation of minority customs in the name of multiculturalism, only serves to mainstream the politics of anti-Muslim hatred voiced by far right extremists.⁶⁵

The EUMC report on Islamophobia in Europe after the events of 9/11 observed that:

*"The far right British National Party has launched a highly explicit Islamophobic campaign. Drawing heavily on issues of the inability to co-exist with Islam, it reasserted Christianity as being under threat from Muslims in the UK."*⁶⁶



The BNP in its election manifesto 2010 entitled 'Democracy, Freedom, Culture and Identity, devoted a section to 'Counter Jihad: Confronting the Islamic Colonisation of Britain', under which the party included the following policy proposals:

⁶⁵ See Melanie Phillips, 'The clash of uncivilizations', **Spectator blogs**, 21 October 2009. [Online]. Available on <http://www.spectator.co.uk/essays/all/5457918/the-clash-of-uncivilisations.shtml> [Accessed 8th August 2010] and Leo McKinstry 'Why shallow Blair must not lord it over us all again', **Daily Express**, 5th October 2009

⁶⁶ Allen, C and J. S. Nielsen. (2002) **Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001**. (Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia). P. 29

- The BNP believes that the historical record shows that Islam is by its very nature incompatible with modern secular western democracy.
- The BNP believes that there should be absolutely no further immigration from any Muslim countries, as it presents one of the most deadly threats yet to the survival of our nation.
- The BNP will ban the burka, ritual slaughter and the building of further mosques in Britain.

The singular reference to Muslims in the policy proposals outlined, whether on ritual slaughter (a practice common to Jews and Muslims) or the building of religious institutions (mosques are the only buildings over which a ban is proposed), or religious dress – the BNP’s rhetoric in recent years has focused almost exclusively on Muslims and Islam in Britain.

The most important variable in accounting for the portrayal of British Muslims used by the BNP to popularise their anti-Muslim rhetoric, are depictions of British Muslims in the mainstream press.

There are two important points worthy of mention here. The first is the weakness of the media watchdog, the Press Complaints Commission, in robustly challenging misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims. The Code of Practice which regulates the intervention of the PCC in overseeing media compliance with the editors’ code stops short of permitting third party complaints making it impossible for Muslims to challenge the media’s persistent bias unless an individual Muslim, or group of Muslims, are directly affected by the story.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Ken Macdonald, has described the PCC as ‘farcical’ and called on media organisations to withdraw from the commission over its ineffectiveness in regulating the industry and upholding media standards.⁶⁷

The Culture, Media and Sport select committee report on ‘Press standards, privacy and libel’ (2010) acknowledges the weak regulatory powers of the PCC and recommends that the powers of the PCC be enhanced, ‘as it is toothless compared to other regulators.’

In urging a more proactive approach by the industry regulator, to improve both confidence in the press and press standards, the select committee report adds:

“In future the Commission must be more proactive. If there are grounds to believe that serial breaches of the Code are occurring or are likely to occur, the PCC must not wait for a complaint before taking action. That action may involve making contact with those involved, issuing a public warning or initiating an inquiry. We recommend that such action should be mandatory once three or more members of the Commission have indicated to the Chairman that they believe it would be in the public interest.”

It is our firm belief that the PCC should take a more proactive approach with newspapers that have brazenly featured front page headlines or stories demonising Muslims, further accentuating community tensions by inaccurately covering news items involving Muslim communities.

ENGAGE has approached the PCC on a number of occasions concerning false reporting, misrepresentation of the facts and breaches of the code.⁶⁸ We have also closely followed cases

⁶⁷ ‘PCC is ‘farcical’, says ex-director of public prosecutions’, **The Guardian**, 4 February 2010.

⁶⁸ ‘Daily Star Issues ‘Clarification’ following ENGAGE referral to the Press Complaints Commission’, **ENGAGE** [Online] Available on: <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/246-daily-star-issues-clarification-following-engage-referral-to-the-press-complaints-commission> and ‘ENGAGE letter to the PCC on the mention of religion’ **ENGAGE**

involving other Muslim individuals and organisations that have approached the PCC for complaint resolution.⁶⁹

The second point is the lack of observable interest in the consequences of the media's biased coverage of Islam and the fermentation of a narrative that demonises Muslims fuelling the 'naturalisation' of Islamophobia that comes from uncontested circulation of stereotypes, half-truths and alarmist reportage.

The ESRC is currently funding a seminar series on 'Widening Ethnic Diversity in the News Media Workforce'. Among themes explored and studied in the seminars held to date is the analysis of Elizabeth Poole and her work 'Reporting Islam: Media representations of British Muslims', in which she argues that 'there are some persistent ideas that have found their expression in coverage of British Islam: that Islam is static and that Muslims are resistant to progress, engage in antiquated and repressive practices that abuse human rights and often use their religion to manipulative ends.'⁷⁰

Recent stories involving the introduction by a local council of the option of serving halal meals in schools, of oriental toilets being built in a Rochdale shopping centre, and the accommodation of Muslim pupil needs in state schools are examples of the dominant interpretative framework Poole argues are used by the British media in its representation of Islam as regressive and Muslims as manipulative actors.⁷¹



[Online] Available on <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/142-engage-letter-to-the-pcc-on-the-mention-of-religion>

⁶⁹ Hizb ut-Tahrir against The Sunday Times, **Press Complaints Commission** [Online] Available at: <http://www.pcc.org.uk/case/resolved.html?article=NTM2Mg==>; Farah Ahmed, headteacher of the Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation school against Daily mail/Evening Standard [Online] Available at: <http://www.pcc.org.uk/case/resolved.html?article=NjQ2Mg==>; Ummah.com against The Sun [Online] Available at: <http://www.pcc.org.uk/case/resolved.html?article=NTk0MQ==>; British Muslim Initiative and North London mosque against The Sun [Online] Available at: <http://www.pcc.org.uk/case/resolved.html?article=NTAyMg==>; Massoud Shahjareh, Islamic Human Rights Commission against The Sunday Times [Online] Available at: <http://www.pcc.org.uk/case/resolved.html?article=NTAxMA==>; and Inayat Bunglawala against Express Newspapers **ENGAGE** [Online] Available at: <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/177-express-pays-out-libel-damages-to-inayat-bunglawala>

⁷⁰ Poole, Elizabeth. (2002). **Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims**. (London: IB Tauris). pg 250

⁷¹ 'Shopping centre plans squat loos designed for Muslims', **Daily Express**, 15 July 2010; 'Council forces schools to rearrange exams and cancel lessons to avoid offending Muslims during Ramadan', **Daily Mail**, 12 July 2010; and 'Muslims force pool cover-up', **Daily Express**, 6 July 2010

The OSCE in its roundtable report on ‘The Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse’ observed that “*impact and reach of the media meant that misrepresentations and stereotyping of Islam and Muslims had negatively affected public attitudes and contributed to a public climate of hostility towards Muslims.*”⁷² A climate of hostility evidenced in the British Attitudes Survey 2009 which found that:

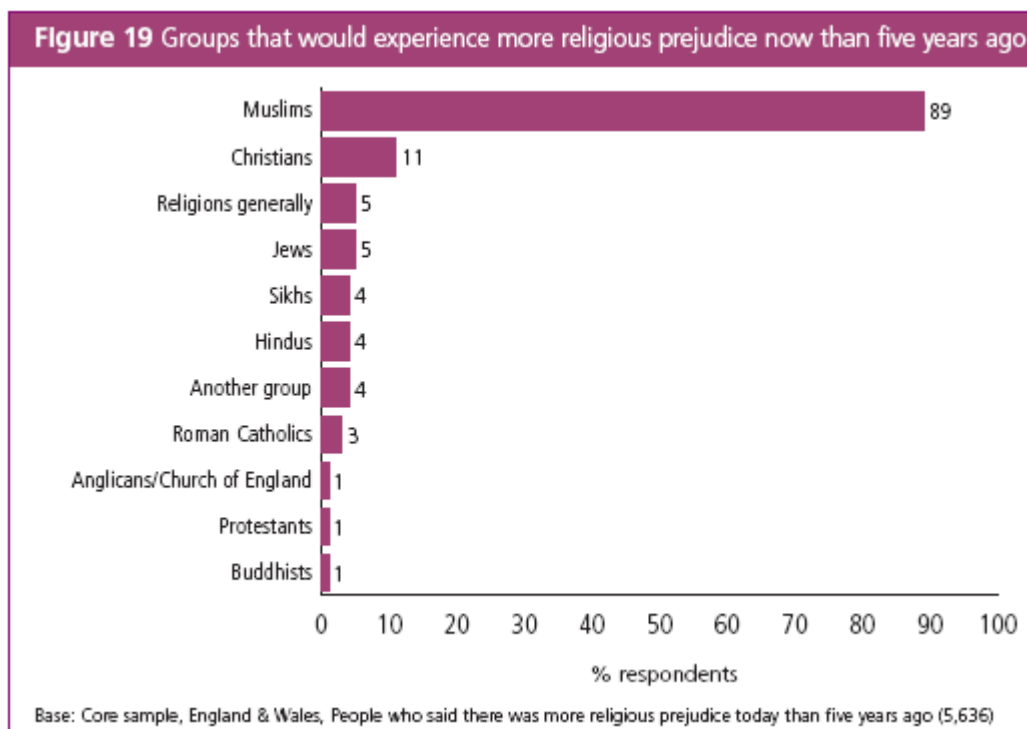
- 55% of people said they would be 'bothered' if a large mosque was built in their locality while only 15 per cent said they would have similar concerns about a church being built locally
- Only one in four people in Britain feel positively about Islam

The media’s role in constructing Muslims as an alien presence in society is frequently cited by Muslims as a core problem obstructing mutual understanding and respect for the Islamic faith.⁷³

The Citizenship Survey 2007-08 on Race, religion and equalities found that the proportion of people who felt there was more religious prejudice in the UK than five years ago increased from 52% in 2005 to 62% in 2007-8.

Of the 62% who felt there was more religious prejudice today, 89% believed Muslims as a group experienced more prejudice than other religious groups in Britain compared to five years ago.

(Table 6: Citizenship Survey 2007-08 – Race Religion and Equalities Topic report, pg 50)



⁷² Roundtable report: ‘The Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse’, (2006). (Vienna: OSCE/ODHIR) Pg. 5

⁷³ See for example, ‘Muslims in Europe: a report on 11 EU cities’ (Budapest: Open Society Institute, 2009) and Homes, Amy, Chris McLean and Lorraine Murray (2010) ‘Muslim integration in Scotland’ (British Council)

As Eric Randolph observes in an article on 'Contest and Cohesion' on the openDemocracy website, '...the glaring hole in the government's discussion [on counter-terrorism] is its failure to discuss the role of the press....Islamophobia remains rampant in Britain's mainstream press. Muslims are continually identified either with terrorism or as culturally incompatible with the British way of life.'⁷⁴

The problems are exacerbated by the increasing consumption of news via online sources. The new media provides both new opportunities to challenge old prejudices as well as new challenges to addressing the same.

ECRI's General Policy Recommendation no. 5 acknowledges the important role played by the media in fomenting anti-Muslim attitudes through use of negative stereotypes. In its recommendation ECRI calls on Member state governments to:

"...encourage debate within the media and advertising professions on the image which they convey of Islam and Muslim communities and on their responsibility in this respect to avoid perpetuating prejudice and biased information".

It is also worth stating the commitment made by OSCE Member states in Brussels 2006, on the role of the media in countering misperceptions and prejudices;

(Decision No. 13/06 on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding):

The Ministerial Council -

*"Recognizes the essential role that the free and independent media can play in democratic societies and the strong influence it can have in countering or exacerbating misperceptions, prejudices and in that sense encourages the adoption of voluntary professional standards by journalists, media self regulation and other appropriate mechanisms for ensuring increased professionalism, accuracy and adherence to ethical standards among journalists."*⁷⁵

It is questionable as to how far these recommendations have been adopted and measures undertaken to avoid the perpetuation of prejudices against Islam in the British media.

3.2 Islamophobia and the public discourse

Despite the attention given to Islamophobia in the UK and Europe by domestic and international agencies tasked with monitoring human rights compliance, equality and anti-discrimination, the UK parliament and British politicians have been remarkably silent in their interventions in the debate and the growing problems facing Muslim communities in the UK following the creation of the English Defence League in 2009.

A look at early day motions submitted by backbenchers shows that there is, ironically, a disproportionate amount of political attention given to the antics of Muslim fringe groups and alarmist headlines in the tabloids than to the very real problem of the demonisation of British Muslims in the

⁷⁴ Randolph, Eric. (2009). 'Contest and cohesion' on **OurKingdom** [Online] Available at:

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/blog/ourkingdom-theme/eric-randolph/2009/04/16/contest-and-cohesion>

⁷⁵ Decision No. 13/06, Combating Intolerance and Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, (MC.DEC/13/06 of 5 December 2006). Pg 42, Paragraph 9.

press and the threat posed by Muslims by far right extremism. For example, while two early day motions have been submitted condemning the planned demonstrations of al-Muhajiroun and Islam4UK⁷⁶, the marches staged by the English Defence League which have frequently ended in violence invited a single early day motion submitted by Diane Abbott MP. It states:

MUSLIMS IN BRITAIN

“That this House opposes the increased demonisation of Muslims in sections of the media; expresses its deep concern at the recent visit to the House of Lords by the far-right politician Geert Wilders; condemns the English Defence League demonstration outside Parliament in support of Geert Wilders and its slogans and placards inciting hatred, such as its demand for the closure of the East London Mosque, that will only lead to a climate of fear, division and disharmony; welcomes the participation and contribution of Muslims in British society, including in politics; and believes that the full participation of all communities in the forthcoming general election is in the interests of democracy.”⁷⁷

While hate speech and hate crimes affecting the British Jewish community have been rightly condemned and given proper recognition in parliament for their detrimental impact on community security and social cohesion, requisite attention has rarely been paid to similar challenges facing British Muslims. A point of acute poignancy in the case of the early day motion on facebook anti-Semitism given the use made of social networking sites in organising and mobilising far right extremists.⁷⁸

Indeed, the OSCE calls on member states to employ the same judicious attention to Islamophobia as paid to the infiltration of anti-semitism into political discourse. The OSCE observes:

“[G]overnments must acknowledge that xenophobic and anti-Muslim elements are increasingly used in mainstream political discourse, and draw clear lines between acceptable and unacceptable rhetoric, as has been done with regard to racism and anti-Semitism.”

It is of some interest and concern to British Muslims that considerable parliamentary attention given to discussions on the introduction of the Incitement to Religious Hatred legislation, which were mired in controversies over the legislation precluding criticism of religion, have not been forthcoming in discussions concerning the challenges facing faith communities whose vulnerability is more heightened and exposed due to the weakness of extant incitement legislation.

A similar disparity can be observed in the amount of parliamentary attention given to discussions of preventing violent extremism, supporting community resilience against extremism and social cohesion with little attention paid to the practical obstacles that stand in the way of community cohesion and community resilience: anti-Muslim prejudice and hate crimes targeting Muslim individuals and Muslim institutions.

⁷⁶ Early Day Motion 529 ‘**Al Muhajiroun demonstration**’, 5 January 2010 [Online] Available at: <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40105&SESSION=903> and Early Day Motion 532 ‘**Islam4UK**’, 5 January 2010 [Online] Available at:

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40108&SESSION=903>

⁷⁷ Early Day Motion 1079 ‘**Muslims in Britain**’, 12 March 2010 [Online] Available at:

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40714&SESSION=903>

⁷⁸ Early Day Motion 850 ‘**Jewish News investigation into facebook anti-Semitism**’, 9 February 2010 [Online] Available at: <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40450&SESSION=903>

The Government in its progress report one year on from the APPG report inquiry on anti-Semitism stated in response to challenging anti-semitic discourse that it would fund the European Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism to “identify and illuminate the main component parts of anti-Semitic discourse, such as stereotypes, allusions, characterisations, prejudicial topologies and revisions of core anti-Semitic ideas”.

The commitment is an important one given the centrality of discourses in providing the interpretative and narrative frames within which stereotypes and prejudices are ensconced and reinforced. It is by way of equality and in recognition of the similarity of challenges faced by British Jews and British Muslims that a commensurate commitment is sought for the identification and illumination of the main component parts of Islamophobic discourse, stereotypes, allusions, characterisations, prejudicial topologies and revisions of core Islamophobic ideas, such that policy prescriptions might be more carefully designed for targeted and effective implementation.

4. Conclusion - Why an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia?

Parliament has numerous groups that are created to support initiatives and interests of MPs in a range of fields from interests in country relations to consumer affairs and race equality.

Recognising the dissonance between race equality legislation which in theory promotes equality and anti-discrimination, and the quality of life enjoyed by British Jews, the all-party parliamentary inquiry into anti-semitism sought to unravel and expose the problems experienced by British Jews and the failure of extant equality legislation to protect against racial hatred and prejudice. It has been a seminal development in working to eradicate anti-semitism in the UK from university campuses to internet and social media.

While the British government has been proactive in tackling race equality through legislation and reports on the state of the nation's health in the equality scales, the limitations of the Race Relations Act and incitement to religious hatred legislation in protecting the rights of British Muslims has not met with the same level of concern or political will to engage proactively in challenging Islamophobia.

The growing manifestation of Islamophobia, from the insidious and sophist commentaries of the liberati, to the outright xenophobic expressions of the English Defence League and the BNP, and from the prevailing political climate with its conflation of Muslims with Islamism, extremism and terrorism and the recreation of Muslims as an internal, unchecked security threat to the media narrative spun around Muslims as an alien presence in the UK, resisting integration by forcing accommodations of a preferential bias, the naturalisation of anti-Muslim hatred is becoming a challenge in desperate need of correction and reversal.

The OSCE in its report on 'The Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse' encourages Member states to tackle the problem of one-way integration where Muslim communities are concerned through "the inclusion of Muslims in the official public discourse and policies of the state."⁷⁹

At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Athens, 2009, the body further acknowledged, *'the instrumental role that political representatives can play in taking the lead in combating intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding.'*

In establishing an All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia, we are seeking the inclusion of Muslims in the official public discourse and policies of the state with a specific focus on eradicating a menace that threatens to continue to obstruct Muslim integration and hinder the identification of Muslims with the British nation and the British people.

This briefing advances the case for the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia to demonstrate the political will of politicians in the UK to address a serious and growing concern among human rights agencies and Muslim communities of the exponential rise in anti-Muslim hostility, prejudice and violence.

Discrimination, hate speech and religiously aggravated violence that target British Muslim citizens violates their rights to freedom of religion, freedom of worship and freedom against discrimination based on religion.

Anti-Muslim hostility, and racism and xenophobia more generically, have the cumulative and corrosive effect of fragmenting communities, dividing societies and in the long term, undermining national cohesion. Governments of all persuasions must demonstrate the political will to resist and challenge

⁷⁹ Report from an OSCE/ODIHR roundtable 'The Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse' held in Warsaw on 9 May 2006. (Vienna: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe). pg 7

the steady stream of anti-Muslim, racist and xenophobic attitudes that threaten our citizens and our society.

This briefing paper argues that an All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia is essential to address shortcomings in the recording, monitoring and prosecution of anti-Muslim hate crimes and for the effective implementation of the following measures and policy initiatives:

- Improvement in official data collection to rigorously record anti-Muslim hate crimes and to implement the CPS Proactive Prosecution Programme in relation to Muslim communities through greater community engagement on hate crime legislation and the criminal justice process
- Support for the training of a central body comprising Muslim NGOs that work in the field of hate crime monitoring with a view to supplementing official records
- The use of services provided by the OCSE/ODIHR to implement the OSCE guide to 'Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes and to train Muslims in the UK in victim support, data collation and the use of official channels for data distribution and its use by the Crown Prosecution Service, the Ministry of Justice and human rights agencies
- Promoting representation of Muslim NGOs working on hate crime incident monitoring on the Hate Crime Strategy Group in the Ministry of Justice
- A review on the effectiveness of extant legislation on incitement to religious hatred with a view to improving legislative measures and confidence in the criminal justice system
- A review of the effects of counter-terrorism policies on the stigmatisation of Muslim communities and its causal effects on Islamophobia
- A review of guidelines on 'Promoting Good Campus Relations: dealing with hate crime and intolerance' and policies on campus radicalisation with a view to assessing their efficacy and effect on the security and well-being of Muslim university students
- A review of the implementation by schools of Citizenship education at key stage 4: 'Challenging racism and discrimination' with specific reference to Islamophobia and challenging anti-Muslim racism
- A review and analysis of the role of the media in creating, fuelling and sustaining anti-Muslim prejudice through biased coverage and dominant narratives that reinforce Muslim alienation and discord
- Research on the impact of Islamophobia and its use in mainstream political discourse and by far right extremists groups on British Muslim communities and their sense of belonging, and political and civic participation
- Identification and illumination of discourses that facilitate the trivialisation, 'naturalisation' and ultimately, the ready acceptance of anti-Muslim prejudice and Islamophobia
- A study on the nature and effects of Islamophobia in England, Scotland and Wales, and the impact of devolution on regional nationalism, anti-Muslim discrimination and anti-Muslim hate crimes

- The establishment of a working relationship with the OIC Observatory on Islamophobia, drawing on its expertise and reports on anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination, through the office of the new British Special Representative to the OIC, HM Consul General Kate Rudd

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