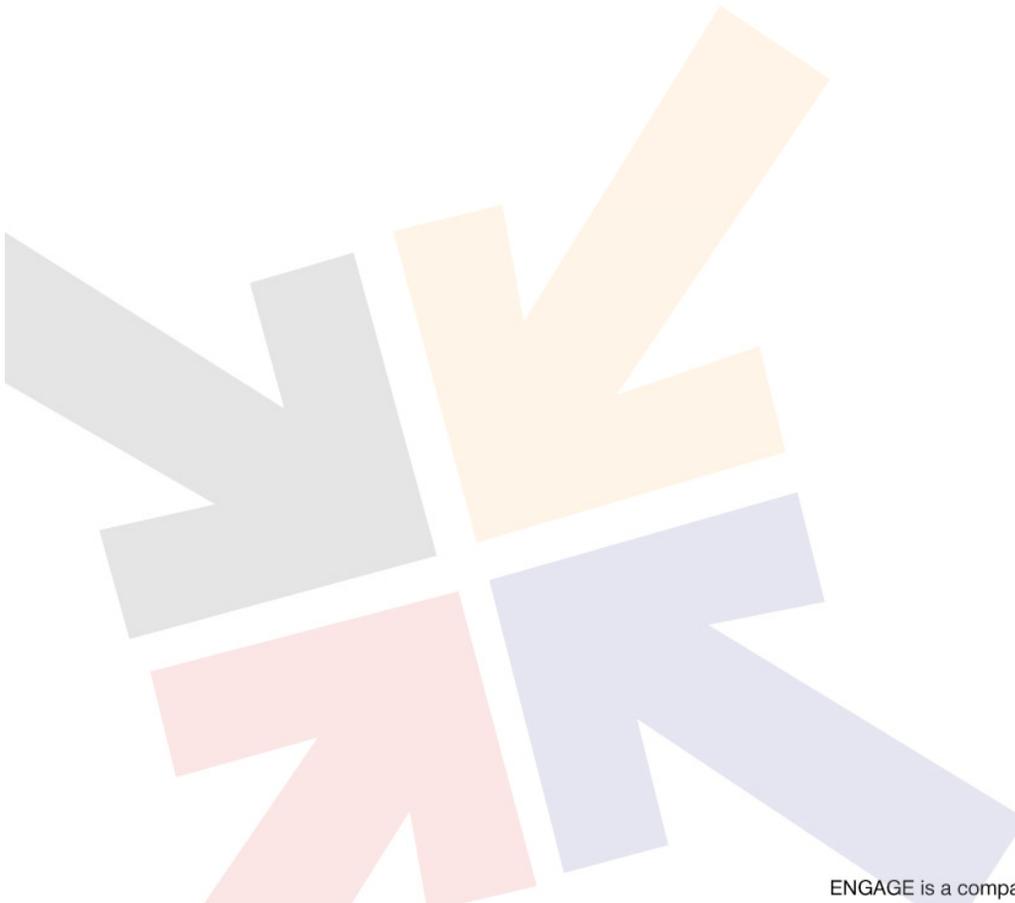


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ENGAGE submission to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) 2011 report on “Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and Responses”

30 March 2012



Introduction

This report contains details of incidents of anti-Muslim hate crimes which have been reported in local and national media in the UK and which form part of our regular monitoring of such incidents, cataloguing them on our website (www.iengage.org.uk). The incidents detailed here are not an exhaustive list of anti-Muslim hate crimes occurring in the UK in 2011 by any means. They are a compilation of incidents which we have documented from the reports carried in local and national news.

The Crown Prosecution Service defines hate crimes 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”

or

“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 religion or perceived religion”.

The incidents presented in this report are classified under the following categories:

1. Assaults or attacks on persons of Muslim background
2. Attacks on Muslim property or institutions
3. Verbal abuse on persons who are, or are suspected of being, of the Muslim faith

Incidents in some cases inevitably cross over into the other categories, for example where individuals have been subjected to verbal abuse in the course of an attack on a place of worship.

A total of 76 incidents are outlined in this report with more than half, 53.9% (41) constituting attacks on Muslim property or institutions. A further 28.6% (20) incidents concern attacks on Muslim persons, and the remainder, 21.4% (15) relate to verbal abuse and anti-Muslim hate speech.

Compared to our submission on hate crimes in the UK in 2010, reports collated on attacks on Muslims property rose from 19 to 41. The figures for attacks on Muslim persons rose from 16 to 20, while instances of verbal abuse and anti-Muslim hate speech rose from 5 to 15.

A further section is added comprising statements, comments or interventions by those holding public office which serve to reinforce negative stereotypes of Muslims and which are subsequently used by far right wing parties and extremists to castigate Islamic beliefs and practices.

There are a number of notable events which occurred in 2011 and which inform the backdrop against which statistics on anti-Muslim hate crimes ought to be assessed. These events include major policy initiatives or policy revisions, such as the Prevent strategy, as well as public statements and speeches by high-ranking politicians in which Muslims feature prominently as the subject matter, such as the speech made by Baroness Sayeeda Warsi in January 2011 proclaiming that Islamophobia in the UK had passed the ‘dinner-table test’. Also included are the speeches delivered by the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, to the Munich Security Conference in February, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, in Luton in March.

As in previous years, the security agenda and counter-terrorism policy and powers continue to influence and shape public and political discourse on British Muslims. This is particularly salient in respect of government powers to proscribe groups and the ban on Muslims Against Crusades which was adopted in 2011.

As in 2010, elections occurring in 2011 have had some bearing on anti-Muslim intolerance and hate speech with candidates using online and social media platforms to post offensive comments. These are dealt with in the section on verbal abuse and anti-Muslim hate speech.

Another factor that has had significant impact on incidents of anti-Muslim hatred and hate crimes is the demonstrations that have been organised by the English Defence League and the Scottish Defence League in towns and cities in the UK. Indeed, recording incidents at the time of or around such demonstrations reflects their potency in fomenting hate crimes and establishes a direct causal relationship in specific instances.

No report on anti-Muslim hate crimes occurring in 2011 would be complete without consideration of international events, particularly the terrorist attacks in Utøya, Norway and the motives of its perpetrator, Anders Behring Breivik. As well as the popular revolts in countries of North Africa and the Middle East variously referred to in media reports as the 'Arab Spring'.

There have also been events of a more welcome nature that give some hope for the future in both documenting and rigorously challenging anti-Muslim hatred. The final section provides details of initiatives and good practice which have been developed and implemented during the year to address anti-Muslim prejudice and hatred in the UK.

Before listing anti-Muslim hate crimes in the UK in 2011, it is worth noting at this point the findings of an EHRC commissioned report of last year on Religious Discrimination in the UK in relation to Muslim victims of discrimination and hate crime:

"A fairly consistent body of research evidence shows that, relative to other religious groups in Britain, Muslims report and experience discrimination of a greater frequency and seriousness than other religious groups. In the second half of the decade 2000-10, this was compounded by the impact on wider public perceptions of Muslims of terror bombings undertaken in the name of Islam and in connection with the security policies and measures that have responded to that and focused primarily upon Muslims.

"At the same time, the research evidence continues to identify aspects of 'visible religious difference' being a particularly salient part of 'religious discrimination', especially in relation to Muslim women and clothing and following 9/11 in relation to physical attacks on Muslims and others perceived to be Muslims by virtue of aspects of their clothing."

"Muslims appear to experience religious discrimination with a frequency and seriousness that is proportionately greater than that experienced by those of other religions."¹

¹ Paul Weller (2011) *Religious Discrimination in Britain: A review of research evidence, 2000- 2010*, Equality and Human Rights Commission Research report 73 (London: Equalities and Human Rights Commission).

Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes 2011

1. Assaults or attacks on persons of Muslim background

- 1.1 A 38 year old man, Shane Overton, was issued a Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Order (Crasbo) for subjecting Muslims, including young children, to racially abusive language. The local Crown Prosecution Service Criminal ASBO lead, Yvette Levy, said of the matter: *"No one should be made to feel fear or concern for their safety purely because of the language they speak or the colour of their skin. Overton's victims were subjected to racially offensive language whilst patiently waiting for their train.*
- "The extreme views expressed by Overton caused two children to cling to their parents in fear."*²
- 1.2 A 42 year old man shouted racist abuse at workers in a takeaway in Scotland for refusing to give him a free meal. The man, who was inebriated at the time, also shouted "Al-Qaida" at the workers. He pleaded guilty to acting in a racially aggravated manner and using racially offensive language and was fined £500.³
- 1.3 A young Iranian student, Zahra Kazemi Saleh, was physically assaulted on her way home from school by a group of four women who harangued her to remove her headscarf. The incident occurred on April 13th 2011 and the student sustained facial injuries as a result of the attack.⁴
- 1.4 A Glaswegian couple and their young baby were subjected to a racist ordeal while out driving when a gang surrounded their car, shouted racist abuse and attempted to smash the car windows. From the newspaper report in The Herald,
- "The gang, armed with bricks and chains and accompanied by a snarling dog, surrounded the car, shouting "get the Paki bastards" and "go back to your own country", before attempting to smash the car windows."*⁵
- 1.5 A 26 year old Muslim woman was set upon by four teenage girls who kicked her and knocked her to the ground before trying to forcibly remove her headscarf. The incident occurred in North Cheam, in south west London on 13th April 2011.⁶
- 1.6 Two men stood trial for an attack in July 2010 on off-duty Muslim police officer, PC Rizwaan Chothia. A 26 year old man, Daniel Odling, was charged with religiously aggravated threatening behaviour. A 17-year-old, who cannot be named, was charged with assaulting an off-duty officer. The incident happened after the PC Chothia asked a group of non-Muslims to leave a private meeting concerning a Lincoln mosque.

² Lincolnshire Police statement, Lincoln Man given EDL Crasbo, 10 March 2011. Online at - <http://www.lincs.police.uk/News-Centre/News-Releases/10-03-2011-Lincoln-Man-Given-EDL-CRASBO.html>

³ 'Drunk fined for racist abuse in kebab shop', *The Scotsman*, 17 March 2011

⁴ 'Iranian girl attacked in UK over hijab,' *Press TV*, 15 April 2011 Online at - <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/174972.html>

⁵ 'Scotland and the veil: 'I was attacked by a racist gang ... It was because of what I was wearing'' *The Herald*, 17 April 2011

⁶ 'Police appeal after Muslim attacked by schoolgirls in North Cheam,' *Sutton Guardian*, 21 April 2011

The men appeared before Lincoln magistrates in May 2011. Odling was fined £450, ordered to pay £500 costs and a £15 victims' surcharge. The youth was released on bail and ordered to appear before the Youth Court for sentencing on May 26.⁷

- 1.7 An employment tribunal awarded a Muslim claimant £4000 for injury to feelings after finding in his favour in a case of harassment on grounds of religion or belief. The claimant, Mr Elahi, argued that an email circulated to staff at his office at Lanz Ltd. was offensive. The tribunal found in Elahi's favour stating that the email contents were "undoubtedly offensive and derogatory of the Islam faith".⁸
- 1.8 A 50 year old man who sent racist and threatening emails to Birmingham City Councillor Salma Yaqoob, was released on bail pending a mental health assessment after he breached a 18-month suspended jail sentence for prior harassment of Ms Yaqoob by making offensive calls to the emergency services claiming she was spreading racial hatred.⁹
- 1.9 A 31 year old man was sentenced to 135 days in prison after he ripped the burqa from a Muslim woman in the Kingdom Shopping Centre in Glenrothes, Fife, in June. The man pleaded guilty to racially-aggravated assault and was sentenced to a further 60 days' imprisonment for breaching bail conditions.¹⁰
- 1.10 A 71 year old Muslim male was seriously assaulted and left with major facial injuries after an attack outside Ayrshire Central Mosque, Kilmarnock, Scotland. The man was believed to have been opening the mosque for the daily prayer in the early hours of the morning when he was set upon by a teenager who shouted racial abuse at him, calling him a "Paki bastard" before hitting him in the chest and stomping on his head for ten minutes. The elderly man was found lying on the floor, beaten and bloody, by individuals arriving for prayers.¹¹

A 16 year old pleaded guilty to serious assault before the Kilmarnock Sheriff Court in September 2011.¹² He was sentenced to three years detention.¹³
- 1.11 A 46 year old Muslim male was attacked by a teenager as he made his way to the Essex Jamme Mosque in Southend, for early morning prayers on 16 August. The man was left with cuts and bruises to the face.¹⁴

⁷ 'Two men found guilty of assaulting Muslim police officer at Lincoln mosque meeting,' *This is Lincolnshire*, <http://www.thisislincolnshire.co.uk/Muslim-officer-assaulted-abusive-pair-crash-meeting/story-11197263-detail/story.html>

⁸ 'Offensive email amounted to religious harassment,' *Muslim News*, 27 May 2011

⁹ 'Judge waits for medical report on racist who threatened Birmingham councillor,' *Birmingham Mail*, 25 May 2011. Online at - <http://www.birminghammail.net/news/birmingham-news/2011/05/25/mental-health-of-racist-extremist-who-harassed-birmingham-councillor-to-be-assessed-97319-28757005/>

¹⁰ 'Jail term for Leslie man who ripped burka from woman's head,' *The Courier*, 13 July 2011

¹¹ 'Man seriously assaulted in Kilmarnock,' *Cumnock Chronicle*, 15 July 2001

¹² 'Teenager admits sickening mosque attack,' *Kilmarnock Standard*, 16 September 2011

¹³ 'Detention for racist youth who attacked pensioner,' *BBC News*, 6 October 2011

¹⁴ 'Man attacked as he visits mosque,' *Southend Echo*, 22nd August 2011

- 1.12 A 25 year old Muslim male, in full Islamic dress, was viciously attacked by a group of men who hurled religious insults at him before punching him and dragging him to the ground.

The man, who was on his way to Shepherds Bush mosque in London, was helped by a passerby who intervened causing the men to stop and flee.¹⁵

- 1.13 A burqa-wearing Muslim woman was verbally abused by a drunken female who shouted racial slurs and told her to “go home”. The incident, in Ilford, east London, occurred as the Muslim woman walked in the town centre with her four young children. When told to stop her abuse by a companion, the drunken woman replied “*This is England. She should go back home.*”¹⁶

- 1.14 A Muslim graduate in Birmingham alleged that he was beaten by two police officers in the Lozells area of Birmingham after being pulled over and found to be in possession of a cannabis joint.

The 23 year old claimed he was kicked and punched before being dumped at the side of a road by the officers.¹⁷

- 1.15 A gang of six teenagers spat at and racially abused a 52 year old Muslim woman before pulling off her headscarf as she walked along a footpath in Telford. The woman suffered a facial injury as a result of the attack.¹⁸

- 1.16 Two men were charged with religiously aggravated common assault, religiously aggravated harassment and aggravated harassment after verbally abusing a Muslim male on a ferry from Calais to Dover and urinating on his trainers in July 2011.

One of the men said to the victim, “*This is the UK. We will f***ing pee on your head.*” He then punched the Muslim before urinating on his trainers. One of the men was sentenced to six months concurrently for religiously aggravated common assault, common assault, religiously aggravated harassment and aggravated harassment. The second was called to return for sentencing in January 2012.¹⁹

- 1.17 Police in Greater Manchester investigated a case of racist bullying after a 13 year old Muslim schoolgirl reported being called racist names, having the contents of her bag tipped out, her school work vandalised and, on one occasion, being punched.

The girl's mother removed her from Bramhall High School in Manchester where the incidents occurred complaining that the school “*has not done enough to stop it happening. The attitude is if those responsible apologise afterwards then it is all okay. The school is letting my daughter down.*”²⁰

- 1.18 New research presented at a seminar held at Leicester University in April illustrated the growing number of hate crimes affecting veiled Muslim women. Researcher Irene Zempi,

¹⁵ 'Police hunt racist thugs,' *Fulham and Hammersmith Chronicle*, 9 November 2011

¹⁶ 'Newbury Park mum pleads guilty to racially abusing woman,' *Ilford Recorder*, 14 November 2011

¹⁷ 'Muslim graduate 'beaten by racist police in Birmingham,' *Metro*, 17 November 2011

¹⁸ 'Muslim woman, 52, racially abused by Telford gang,' *Shropshire Star*, 1 December 2011

¹⁹ 'Man urinated on Muslim's trainers,' *Bracknell Forest Standard*, 19 December 2011

²⁰ 'Police probe racist bullying claim at Bramhall High School,' *Manchester Evening News*, 13 April 2011

who undertook the research, said *“When people get on the tube and see a bearded Muslim, they think ‘terrorist’ ... when they hear ‘Halal’ they think that sounds like ‘contaminated food’ ... and when they walk past a woman wearing a veil, they think automatically ‘that woman is oppressed’”*

“Persistent staring, spitting, calling names, throwing of eggs or stones, and pulling women’s veils off are the overwhelming types of anti-Muslim hostilities, yet rarely reported to the police. As a result, this victimisation remains ‘invisible’ for police and local authority.”²¹

- 1.19 Two Muslim men were physically assaulted during an English Defence League (hereafter EDL) demonstration in Dagenham, east London. In an interview with the Socialist Worker, the men said:

“We were walking home when we spotted the EDL march. The next minute someone starts shouting at us ‘Muslim bombers off our streets’.

“Suddenly everything changed. I was pushed and five men attacked me—I was punched.

“I could see a much larger group of between 30 and 50 of them surrounding my brother.

“He was on the floor. They were kicking him and punching him all over. He couldn’t move. I was terrified—I didn’t know if he was alive.”²²

In February 2012, the assailant, John McAndrew, was sentenced to four months for common assault. He was also given an Asbo (anti-social behaviour order) stopping him from going near Muslim schools and places of worship until 2017 and taking part in any EDL demonstrations in England for life.²³

- 1.20 An EDL member who was seen trying to punch two elderly Asian men by police officers during an EDL demonstration in Halifax was given a 16 weeks prison sentence, suspended for 12 months, and placed under curfew on Saturdays and Sundays from 9am to 9pm for 20 weeks. He was also told to pay costs of £85.²⁴

²¹ 'Veiled Muslim women are under attack in the UK claims new research,' *Press Office, University of Leicester*, 4 April 2011. Online at - <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/press-releases/2011/april/veiled-muslim-women-are-under-attack-in-the-uk-claims-new-research>

²² 'Brothers who faced racist attack after EDL march talk to Socialist Worker,' *Socialist Worker*, 21 June 2011

²³ 'Thug banned from mosques after EDL attack in Dagenham,' *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 28 February 2012

²⁴ 'EDL thug abused old men,' *Halifax Courier*, 18 June 2011

2. Attacks on Muslim property or institutions

2.1 Emdads Halal Food Store in Southampton was the target of an arson attack in January 2011. Two men were treated for injuries and a baby for smoke inhalation. Police confirmed the incident was being treated as arson though reports did not show that a racially aggravated element was being considered.²⁵

2.2 Police in Tyneside reported five incidents of race hate attacks involving bacon and pork products being thrown at Muslim premises in South Shields, Tyneside, including at the South Tyneside Jam-E-Masjid Bangladeshi Muslim Culture and Welfare Association.²⁶

A churchgoer in South Tyneside who committed the acts avoided jail after the mosque chairman wrote to the court seeking leniency. The man was caught after police reviewed CCTV footage around the vicinity of the mosque.²⁷

2.3 A church building in Ipswich that was bought by a Muslim organisation with a view to converting it into a Muslim community centre was set alight in a deliberate attack.

The association, Jimas, purchased the building after 25 years of fundraising and planned a £1 million conversion to turn it into a community centre. The building was gutted in the fire which ripped through its roof leaving it structurally unsafe.²⁸

2.4 Two men who were charged with committing arson on a mosque in Stoke on Trent in December 2010 appeared in court in December 2011.

One of the men, an ex-soldier, admitted to being a member of the English Defence League and the British National Party and is reported to have posted comments on his Facebook page including one that read *"The time has come. They burn our poppies, we burn their places. Burn the lot of them out."*

The two men were found guilty and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.²⁹

2.5 Four men were found guilty of violent disorder following an attack on the Redbridge Islamic Centre in east London. The men shattered the mosque's windows before forcing their way in and shouting *"Muslim bastards; Paki bastards"* at the Muslim worshippers gathered inside. One of the men repeatedly screamed *"EDL"*.

The men also hurled a brick injuring the imam of the mosque. They were sentenced to a total of twelve and a half years.³⁰

2.6 Twenty five Muslim gravestones at a cemetery in High Wycombe were vandalised with headstones overturned and ornaments damaged.³¹ The incident raised questions over

²⁵ 'St Mary's shop blaze being treated as arson,' *Southern Daily Echo*, 28 January 2011

²⁶ 'Race hate thugs target Mosque and homes,' *Evening Chronicle*, 1 February 2011

²⁷ 'Man who nailed bacon to mosque door walks free,' *Shields Gazette*, 24 September 2011

²⁸ 'Video & gallery: Huge fire at St Michael's Church in Ipswich 'suspicious',' *Ipswich Star*, 9 March 2011

²⁹ 'Stoke-on-Trent mosque arsonists jailed,' *BBC News*, 8 December 2011. Online at - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-16098897>

³⁰ 'Redbridge mosque attackers jailed by judge,' *Ilford Recorder*, 28 September 2011

proper security and CCTV at the cemetery after a further act of vandalism occurred two months later.³²

- 2.7 Homes near a mosque in Birkenhead were spray painted with offensive graffiti reading "*Islam = Murder*" and "*Britain for the British*." Two men were arrested for public order offences but later released on police bail pending further inquiries.³³
- 2.8 Three people were sentenced in October 2011 for vandalising a mosque in Hartlepool in November 2010. Two men were sentenced to a year's imprisonment after admitting conspiracy to commit racially-aggravated criminal damage, while a third person, a 19 year old woman, was given a 12 week suspended sentence after pleading guilty to the same charge.³⁴
- 2.9 A 38 year old man was found guilty of aggravated criminal damage after painting the letters 'E' 'D' and 'L' (symbolising the English Defence League) on the walls of the Muslim World League building in central London and daubing the sign of a cross on its walls. He also admitted destroying a CCTV sign attached to the mosque in attacks that took place on 10 December 2010 and 5th and 26th March 2011.³⁵

The man, Andrew Baldwin, said he wanted the message to be seen by "*people who abuse our soldiers, burn -poppies and commit terrorism on our train system.*"

- 2.10 Two teenagers were charged with racially aggravated criminal damage for desecrating a Qur'an and damaging other items, and daubing abusive racist graffiti on the walls of the Dawat ul Islam Masjid in Chorley, Lancashire.³⁶

Daniel Barrow, 18, was bailed to appear before Blackburn magistrates on July 15 charged with racially-aggravated criminal damage. A 17-year-old youth was bailed to appear before a juvenile court in Chorley on July 5 charged with two counts of racially aggravated criminal damage.³⁷

- 2.11 The site of a proposed mosque in Bletchley, in Milton Keynes was vandalised with a pig's head thrown onto the roof of the disused pub and pork products thrown onto the site. The pub had been acquired by a local Muslim organisation and planning permission for its conversion into a mosque had been approved just weeks before the incident occurred in April 2011.

The site and proposed mosque had been the target of BNP protests and a prior act of vandalism is reported to have taken place. Thames Valley Police investigated the crime as a religiously motivated hate crime.³⁸

³¹ 'Vandals desecrate Muslim graves in High Wycombe,' *BBC News*, 22 April 2011. Online at - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-13169073>

³² 'Family's anger as daughter's grave is vandalised,' *Bucks Free Press*, 7 June 2011

³³ 'Race hate vandals strike near Birkenhead mosque,' *Wirral Globe*, 18 April 2011

³⁴ 'Hartlepool mosque graffiti trio sentenced,' *BBC News*, 3 October 2011

³⁵ 'Carer wrote 'EDL' on mosque,' *Camden New Journal*, 28 April 2011

³⁶ 'Quran 'desecrated' in Chorley mosque attack,' *Lancashire Telegraph*, 25 May 2011

³⁷ 'Chorley teenager on racist graffiti charge,' *Chorley Citizen*, 25 July 2011

³⁸ 'Hate suspects sought after pig's head thrown at proposed mosque,' *MK News*, 6 July 2011.

- 2.12 A mosque in Redditch was vandalised with windows broken while the premises were still under construction. The site had been the target of previous attacks of vandalism over its ten year building period.³⁹
- 2.13 A 20 year old man was found guilty of racially-aggravated criminal damage after spray painting racist graffiti on the walls of Jami mosque, in Sunderland. The man, of Anglo-Pakistani origin, was fined £100 and ordered to pay £85 court costs.⁴⁰
- 2.14 A 90 year old man on his way to a mosque in Kidderminster was the victim of an assault after a teenager threw sticks and stones at him causing a facial injury.⁴¹
- 2.15 The Madinah mosque in Luton was attacked with windows smashed and the letters 'E', 'D', 'L' spray painted onto two sides of the mosque's walls. A swastika was also spray painted on the walls. The racist graffiti was removed by the local council.⁴²
- 2.16 Three connected acts of religiously aggravated criminal damage were reported in Milton Keynes when two mosques and a car were spray painted with offensive graffiti. A shed adjacent to one of the mosques was set alight and destroyed. Police reported the graffiti as being *"highly offensive and designed to cause maximum upset to the Muslim community"*.⁴³
- 2.17 An English Defence League supporter who threw stones at the Barnsley Muslim Community Centre and verbally abused the imam with chants of *"Muslim bombers off our streets"* and *"Why don't you go back to your country?"* was sentenced to eight months imprisonment.⁴⁴
- 2.18 Muslim worshippers at the Malvern Street Mosque, in Newcastle were disturbed whilst performing the late evening prayer in the month of Ramadan after a group of people broke into the mosque shouting out racial abuse and throwing around chairs. No one was injured in the attack. Two teenagers, aged 16 and 18, were arrested on the scene on suspicion of affray.⁴⁵
- 2.19 A college campus building in Birmingham was vandalised after rumours were circulated claiming the new building was a mosque. Bournville College in Longbridge had been repeatedly attacked on account of the rumour. A local parish team set up a Facebook page to 'quell the myth' of the 'Longbridge mosque' stating:
- "Since the rumour appeared, the building has been vandalised on several occasions. Panels have been ripped off and windows have been smashed. This is unlikely to be a coincidence."*

³⁹ 'Redditch mosque on schedule despite vandalism,' *BBC News*, 31 May 2011

⁴⁰ 'Sunderland man sprayed racist graffiti on mosque as an attack on his Muslim father,' *Sunderland Echo*, 27 July 2011.

⁴¹ 'Pensioner racially assaulted in Kidderminster,' *Kidderminster Shuttle*, 27 July 2011

⁴² 'Racist attack on Luton mosque,' *Socialist Worker*, 23 July 2011.

⁴³ 'Religiously aggravated criminal damage at two Milton Keynes mosques,' *MK News*, 26 September 2011

⁴⁴ 'EDL chanter jailed over 'vile' abuse,' *Yorkshire Post*, 17 September 2011

⁴⁵ 'Appeal for calm after attack on Elswick mosque,' *Evening Chronicle*, 9 August 2011.

"It is not a mosque. It is a business centre, as the Longbridge development's publicity clearly shows. If you live locally and are able to combat the rumour with the truth, please do so.

"Share, recommend or tweet this post. Talk to your neighbours and friends. You may help to prevent thousands of pounds' worth of mindless damage."⁴⁶

2.20 Four individuals were charged with racially aggravated common assault by beating; racially aggravated affray; using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or disorderly behaviour and obstructing or resisting a constable in the execution of his duty; and obstructing or resisting a constable in the execution of his duty, after an incident at the Istanbul Kebab Shop in Plymouth in which the Kurdish family owners were attacked.⁴⁷

2.21 The windows at the Essex Jamme Masjid in Southend, Essex were smashed on 24 September 2011. The incident was not treated as racially motivated at time of reporting.⁴⁸

2.22 The Heaton Muslim Community Trust (HMCT) in Stockport was the target of a religiously motivated attack after racist graffiti was sprayed onto the walls of the mosque and eggs thrown. Cars in the vicinity were also daubed with racist graffiti.

Local police drew a causal link between the incidents and leaflets distributed in the area containing inaccurate information about the centre's planned extension.⁴⁹

2.23 A mosque in the West Midlands was vandalised on Armistice Day with a giant poppy spray painted across the entrance doors of the mosque and the words 'Burn this one' brandished across poppy.

The incident was seen to be in retaliation to the poppy burning stunt carried out by members of the group Muslims Against Crusades, who burnt a giant poppy on Armistice Day the previous year.⁵⁰

2.24 A group of elderly Muslim women were terrified after thugs followed them into a mosque in Llanelli, south Wales, and kicked down the door. The local council approved the installation of a mobile camera on the premises to deter would-be attackers and to assure regulars of enhanced security at the mosque.⁵¹

2.25 A Muslim family, Salim and Sabana Amod and their children, were forced to relocate to another area of Leicester after suffering two years of racist abuse and vandalism.

The family were tormented by several people who smashed their windows, slashed their car tyres, sprayed racist graffiti on their front door and threw stones at the couple and their children.

⁴⁶ 'Vandals attack Bournville College building after mistaking it for a mosque,' *Birmingham Mail*, 16 September 2011

⁴⁷ 'Four charged after racist attack at Plymouth takeaway,' *This is Plymouth*, 27 August 2011

⁴⁸ 'Vandals attack mosque,' *Southend Standard*, 27 September 2011

⁴⁹ 'Racist vandals target Stockport mosque,' *Stockport Express*, 10 November 2011

⁵⁰ 'Midlands Mosque Vandalised on Remembrance Day,' *Suite 101*, 15 November 2011. Online at - <http://www.suite101.com/news/midlands-mosque-vandalised-on-remembrance-day-a396642>

⁵¹ 'Anger at thugs' mosque attack,' *This is South Wales*, 23 November 2011

In December 2011 several people appeared in court charged with racially-aggravated offences. A 16-year-old boy admitted racially-aggravated criminal damage and was ordered to pay the Amod family £100 in compensation.

A 54-year-old woman was fined £167 and ordered to pay £25 compensation for racially-aggravated threatening behaviour, and a 21-year-old man was ordered to carry out 120 hours of community work and to pay £100 compensation after admitting racially-aggravated damage.

In January 2012, a 15-year-old faced magistrates, charged with criminal damage of the family's car.⁵²

- 2.26 A drunken woman smashed the window of the Baithul Mamur Jame Masjid in South Tyneside in December 2011.

The 22 year old woman was captured on CCTV footage running amok in the early hours of the morning. Magistrates gave her a six-month conditional discharge and ordered her to pay £85 costs and £50 compensation.⁵³

- 2.28 A social club in Shotton, north Wales, which was earmarked by the Flintshire Muslim Cultural Society (FMCS) to be turned into an Islamic cultural centre, was the target of an arson attack which gutted the club in February 2011.

The plans to convert the club, which remained in brewery ownership until the FMCS raised the £150,000 to purchase the property, attracted fierce opposition from the English Defence League.

The plans provoked strong protests with around 100 members of the English Defence League marching through the streets of Shotton in January 2011 to voice their opposition to the proposed plans.⁵⁴

- 2.29 A 30-year-old man was charged with religiously-aggravated criminal damage to a Leicester mosque on the ninth anniversary of 9/11 in September 2010.

The local man was charged with racially-aggravated assault on a man at the premises and theft of flowers worth £75 belonging to the mosque in January 2011 and appeared before Leicester Magistrates' Court in February 2011.⁵⁵

- 2.30 The Bennetts Ends Mosque at St Albans Hill in Hemel Hempstead was left with a dozen smashed windows after a man entered the mosque grounds and swung around a shovel at the walls of the mosque.

The local council responded to the incident by enhancing security and CCTV in the area.⁵⁶

⁵² 'Seeing yobs get punished helps us to move on,' *Leicester Mercury*, 8 December 2011

⁵³ 'Drunk woman smashed window at mosque,' *The Shields Gazette*, 23 December 2011

⁵⁴ 'Muslim centre site arson attack investigated,' *Flintshire Chronicle*, 10 February 2011

⁵⁵ 'Man is charged over Leicester mosque attack,' *BBC News*, 11 January 2011

⁵⁶ 'Mosque is target of mindless vandalism,' *Hemel Hempstead Gazette*, 12 January 2011

- 2.31 Darul Uloom Islamic High School in Small Heath, Birmingham was forced to temporarily close after receiving malicious phone calls threatening to firebomb the building following the broadcast of a Channel 4 Dispatches programme, 'Lessons in Hatred and Violence'.

Mujahid Aziz, head of curriculum at the school, told the local press, *“Even before the programme started, we were shocked that we were getting a barrage of hate calls and emails threatening with the most disgusting language which I can't really say, and they were threatening to bomb the place.*

“The student themselves feel in the spotlight, they feel victimised. This is the very kind of thing that creates extremism.”⁵⁷

The school referred the programme to the broadcasting regulator, Ofcom, for misrepresentation.⁵⁸

- 2.32 A memorial bridge in Kent was defaced with graffiti slogans including *“kill Muslims”*, *“keep Britain British”* and *“EDL”* in February 2011. The graffiti was scratched into the moss on Jade's Crossing in Detling, Maidstone in Kent.⁵⁹

- 2.33 Three 19 year old men were charged with arson on a newly renovated mosque in Haywards Heath, West Sussex.

The mosque had reopened in November 2010 following renovations at a cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds.⁶⁰

- 2.34 Two homes in Luton were attacked on February 5th, 2011, with their windows smashed, bricks thrown through them, and the word 'EDL' painted on the front door. The attack came just hours after the English Defence League's protest in Luton town centre.⁶¹

- 2.35 A steward for Carlisle United football club resigned after an investigation was launched into support shown by employees for Andrew Ryan, convicted of burning a copy of the Qur'an in Carlisle city centre.

The steward was identified from photos printed in the local paper. A spokesperson for Carlisle United football club said:

“The club will not tolerate any form of racist behaviour and, in conjunction with the FA and Football League 'Kick it Out' campaign, we are working strenuously to ensure that this issue does not arise at the ground.”⁶²

- 2.36 Neil MacGregor, a self proclaimed 'proud racist' and member of the National Front, was jailed for 12 months in April 2011 after breaching a three year probation order.

⁵⁷ 'Birmingham Islamic school receives firebomb threats after TV documentary,' *Birmingham Post*, 16 February 2011

⁵⁸ 'Dispatches Islamic school to complain to Ofcom,' *BBC News*, 15 February 2011

⁵⁹ 'Jade's crossing defaced with graffiti,' *Kent Messenger*, 16 February 2011

⁶⁰ 'Three charged with Haywards Heath mosque arson,' *BBC News*, 14 February 2011

⁶¹ 'Homes attacked in Luton after racist EDL march,' *Socialist Worker*, 6 February 2011

⁶² 'Carlisle Utd steward quits over support for English Defence League,' *News & Star*, 23 April 2011

MacGregor was tried in 2009 for threatening to blow up Glasgow Central Mosque and to 'behead a Muslim a day' unless all mosques in Scotland were closed. In an email read out in court during the trial, jurors heard that MacGregor had written:

"I'm a proud racist and National Front member.

"We as an organisation have decided to deal with the current threat from Muslims in our own British way, like our proud ancestors.

"Our demands are very small. Close all mosques in Scotland.

"If our demands aren't met by next Friday, we'll kidnap one Muslim and execute him or her on the internet, just like they did to our Ken Bigley."⁶³

2.37 A total of nine people were charged with affray and religiously aggravated criminal damage for an attack on Kingston mosque in November 2010.⁶⁴ Criminal trials concluded in March 2012 with three people found guilty. Sentencing is due to take place on 27 April 2012.⁶⁵

2.38 Three people were arrested after a disturbance at the Jamia mosque in Darlington. A 49-year-old man from Redcar was arrested on suspicion of theft and a 40-year-old man from Spennymoor and 17-year-old from Middlesbrough were arrested on suspicion of causing a public order offence.

The incident occurred as the English Defence League held a demonstration in Teeside earlier in the day. Those arrested were suspected of being EDL members and of having participated in the march.⁶⁶

2.39 An EDL member, Christopher Payne, pleaded guilty to two charges of racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage and causing racially or religiously aggravated alarm, harassment or distress by words or writing after sticking a pig's head on a pole, daubing it with anti-Muslim graffiti and placing it on a 4ft yellow pole in Collington Way, West Bridgford in Nottinghamshire.

He also painted the words "*No mosque here EDL Notts*" on the pavement in Collington Way. The court heard that the site was the proposed location of a mosque.

Three other men also appeared at Nottingham Magistrates Court in connection with the incident charged with causing religiously aggravated alarm, harassment or distress by words/writing and religiously aggravated criminal damage.

Payne was handed a suspended prison sentence and ordered to pay a £250 fine and £85 costs and complete 100 hours of community service. He was also banned from West Bridgford for 12 months.⁶⁷

⁶³ 'Former soldier who issued mosque bomb threat jailed,' *BBC News*, 6 April 2011

⁶⁴ ENGAGE submission to ODHIR 2010 report on Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and Responses, incident 2.15

⁶⁵ 'Three men convicted for attack on Kingston Mosque,' *CPS press release*, 2 April 2012. Online at - http://www.cps.gov.uk/london/press_releases/three_men_convicted_for_attack_on_kingston_mosque/

⁶⁶ 'Three arrested after English Defence League target Darlington mosque,' *Northern Echo*, 14 May 2011

⁶⁷ 'Pig's head left on a pole near to site of mosque,' *Nottingham Post*, 28 June 2011

2.40 Two men were caught on CCTV hanging ham on the railings of the Al-Basera mosque in Bristol and stuffing some into the shoes of Muslim worshippers as they prayed in the mosque.

One of the men defended his actions claiming it to be an act of "*religious revenge*". He said, "*It is not acceptable that they can go around burning our poppies. They can have a bit of their own medicine if they want to go around burning poppies.*"

One of the men was handed a six-month suspended prison sentence and 150 hours' unpaid work. The second was sentenced to four and a half years for this and other offences committed.⁶⁸

2.41 There were a number of newspaper reports of mosques across the country receiving suspicious packages, possibly containing anthrax.⁶⁹ The Metropolitan Police confirmed that parcels had been sent to mosque addresses in London, Dorset, Merseyside, Sussex, and Gloucestershire.

⁶⁸ 'Ham at mosque was 'retaliation',' *Bristol Evening Post*, 22 June 2011 and 'Brothers jailed for involvement in Stokes Croft riots,' *Bristol Evening Post*, 10 November 2011

⁶⁹ 'Police probe far-Right links to 'poison packages' at mosques,' *Evening Standard*, 17 June 2011; 'Edmonton mosque among targets of 'hate mail campaign',' *Enfield Independent*, 21 June 2011; 'Mosque targeted in wave of hate crime,' *The Argus*, 27 June 2011

3. Verbal abuse and hate speech

- 3.1 An article written for a parish magazine, the Hildenborough Keys, was referred to the Equality and Human Rights Commission for inciting racial hatred by a Muslim association in Kent.

The article, written by Muriel Clark, expressed concern at the *"ever increasing Islamisation of our own country"* and called for a stand to be taken against: *"uncontrolled immigration of Muslims whose birth rate exceeds that of other groups; establishment of non-integrated Islamic communities, including no-go areas to so-called infidels in our cities; halal meat and dairy products stealthily introduced into our prisons, schools and shops; and the sometimes intense, and often subtle promotion of Islam in many primary schools in order to influence impressionable young minds."*⁷⁰

The West Kent Muslim Association criticised the article for creating *"a bad impression that Muslims are extremists,"* and referred it to the EHRC and local police to investigate a possible breach of the law on incitement to religious hatred.⁷¹

The author of the article, the vicar of the church and the editor of the magazine all defended the decision to publish the article, though the editor omitted from the published version comments he considered "too extreme" in the original submission.

The author, Muriel Clark, defended her views saying *"This used to be a Christian country."*

- 3.2 Two men from Devon, in south west England, were arrested by local police on suspicion of publishing a catalogue of vile and racially inflammatory material on the internet. The material was said to comprise of a series of anti-Muslim videos.⁷²
- 3.3 A member of the English Defence League was sentenced to 70 days' imprisonment for religiously aggravated harassment and theft in March 2011 for burning a library copy of the Qur'an in Carlisle city centre.

Andrew Ryan borrowed the Qur'an from Carlisle library and burnt it by a monument in the city centre while shouting out anti-Muslim abuse in January 2011. He was witnessed in the act by his former probation officer.

Ryan, who possesses a military background, was said to be incensed at images showing a group of Muslims burning poppies on Armistice Day in November 2010.⁷³

- 3.4 A BNP candidate, contesting a seat in Torfaen for the Welsh National Assembly election, used her Facebook page to post offensive comments about the group Muslims Against Crusades. Susan Harwood later removed the posts which used four letter words to describe the group and advocated violence against its members.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ 'St John's Church magazine under fire after anti-Islam article,' *This is Kent*, 14 January 2011

⁷¹ 'Police are called in over church mag article,' *This is Kent*, 21 January 2011

⁷² 'Men arrested on suspicion of publishing anti-Muslim videos online,' *This is Devon*, 10 February 2011

⁷³ 'Carlisle man burnt Koran in city centre in protest at Muslim extremists,' *News & Star*, 24 March 2011

⁷⁴ 'BNP candidate condemned for abusive Facebook post,' *Western Mail*, 28 April 2011

3.5 A BNP candidate standing in the local elections in East Lancashire, Nancy Shaw-Farmer, posted racist slurs on her Facebook page about Muslims and Pakistanis. The comments, provided below, were defended by Ms Shaw-Farmer who said *"I am not apologising for anything on my personal page,"* and *"My views are not necessarily those of the party."*

She wrote on her Facebook page:

- *P***s in a car near where I work asked for directions to a junior school. Sent them in the wrong direction.*
- *the current government don't want cannabis legalised as it would put too many P***s out of work. ha ha ha.*
- *Bungee jumping! £25 per person. Muslims and P***s free. No strings attached and free transport. ha ha ha.*
- *When Pakistan had its floods I said if I was out of England for whatever reason, I'd get back there pronto to help my country, no f***** P***s went back to help did they!*⁷⁵

Ms Shaw-Farmer was also dismissed from her post as an Avon saleswoman after the company terminated her arrangement following public outcry over her offensive Facebook comments.⁷⁶

3.6 A UKIP candidate for the Leicester South by-election wrote a series of offensive blogs on Islam and Muslims during his election campaign.

Abhijit Pandya, who now contributes to the Daily Mail's Right Minds blog, wrote articles referring to Islam as *"morally flawed and degenerate"* and as a *"retarded ideology"*.

He wrote that Britons should not *"shy away of contemplating forced repatriation, or threatening it to further assimilation,"* to deal with the numbers of Muslims on social welfare.⁷⁷

Mr Pandya posted a subsequent blog article on 3rd May 2011 titled *"What would have the formidable Victorian society thought of the proliferation of Mosques in Britain?"* in which he refers to the UK Independence Party as the only party willing to openly challenge *"the proliferation of Islamic doctrine"*.⁷⁸

3.7 An election leaflet produced by the British National Party for its election campaign in Scotland was referred to the Electoral Commission for containing the false claim that there are *"more Muslims in the UK than Scots."*⁷⁹

⁷⁵ 'Blackburn BNP candidate's vile racist slurs,' *Lancashire Telegraph*, 4 May 2011

⁷⁶ 'Blackburn BNP candidate loses Avon role,' *Blackburn Citizen*, 10 May 2011

⁷⁷ 'Outrage as prospective Leicester MP condemns Islam on his blog,' *Leicester Mercury*, 27 April 2011

⁷⁸ 'UKIP candidate on "uncontrolled practice" of Islam in the UK,' *ENGAGE*, 3 May 2011. Online at - <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1341-ukip-candidate-on-qucontrolled-practiceq-of-islam-in-the-uk>

⁷⁹ 'BNP reported over Scots leaflets,' *The Herald*, 17 April 2011

Among manifesto promises listed in the BNP's Scottish election manifesto, 'The Voice of the Ordinary People' were two which derive from an explicit anti-Muslim agenda -:

- *"We are committed to ban the horrific practice of Halal ritual slaughter anywhere in Scotland on the grounds of animal cruelty"*
- *"We would oppose planning applications to build or convert buildings into non-indigenous cultural or religious centres"*⁸⁰

3.8 The Liberal Democrat candidate for the Redcar and Cleveland by-election in January 2012 was found to have posted offensive anti-Muslim remarks on his Facebook page over the course of 2011.

In 2011 Dave Stones posted comments such as:

- *"Regarding the mosque being built near ground zero. I say let them build it. But then, across the street we should put a topless bar called "You Mecca Me Hot" ... and next to that a pork rib restaurant ... Then we'll see who's tolerant."*
- *"The Royal British Legion are not selling poppies in certain areas of the UK on 11th Nov this year. This is because some minorities say that it will upset them. I say fuckoff!"*⁸¹

Mr Stones went on to lose the by-election that was held in the constituency on 19th January 2012.

3.9 A volunteer on the Alternative Vote (AV) referendum campaign, 'Yes to Fairer Votes', was fired for posting a tweet which read *"Says in the Holy Qu'ran Mohammad used to get his neighbours to vote by AV which of his 4 wives he'd shag each night."*

Campaign organisers fired Mr Donnelly from his volunteer post as phone bank manager.⁸²

3.10 A Labour Councillor at Thurrock County Council in Essex was suspended from the party after an email message she sent was forwarded to a police officer for its offensive content.

Councillor Sue Gray was suspended from the Labour Party while Essex police launched an investigation into a breach of the law on incitement to religious hatred.

The email message contained the postscript comment:

*"This is unbelievable. It's now predicted that Britain will become an Islamic state by 2070. (Time to think about your children/grandchildren). Please forward this e-mail asap so that 40 per cent of British voters who didn't vote last time might get the message."*⁸³

⁸⁰ 'BNP launch manifesto for Scottish Assembly elections,' *ENGAGE* 26 April 2011. Online at:

<http://www.iengage.org.uk/home/1-news/1333-bnp-launch-manifesto-for-scottish-assembly-elections>

⁸¹ Lib Dem's anti-Islam rants: "Put pork restaurant next to mosque," *Political Scrapbook*, 5 January 2012

⁸² 'Voting reformer gets the sack for 'anti-Islam tweet',' *Evening Standard*, 2 February 2011

⁸³ 'Councillor suspended following racist email allegation,' *The Enquirer*, 14 February 2011

- 3.11 Seven men captured on video, posted on YouTube, burning a copy of the Qur'an behind a pub in Gateshead escaped prosecution after the Crown Prosecution Service confirmed that there was insufficient evidence to secure a conviction.

Northumbria Chief Crown Prosecutor Wendy Williams said: *"This was a serious incident which the vast majority people will rightly find repugnant.*

"However, no matter how unacceptable people may find such behaviour, we can only prosecute if there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction."⁸⁴

- 3.12 The Spectator blogger Melanie Phillips posted an article on Coffee House blogs, "Armchair barbarism" in which she referred to Arabs as "savages," to "Arab barbarism," and to "the moral depravity of the Arabs" in reaction to a violent incident in the Occupied Palestinian Territory of the West Bank.⁸⁵

We referred the article's contents to the Press Complaints Commission, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Metropolitan Police, on grounds of its blatant anti-Arab racism. We noted in our referral to the EHRC that it possesses a statutory duty to "work towards the elimination of prejudice against, hatred of and hostility towards members of groups," and sought advice on what redress may be available through the office of the Commission.

The EHRC replied to state:

"The Commission would only be likely to consider these sorts of issues where there is a repeated pattern of acts which may constitute racial or religious hatred by an organisation. In this case however, it is an incident of comments in the media by an individual rather than repeated acts by an organisation and is therefore not a situation in which our formal inquiry powers can be applied."

We contested the EHRC claim that the article did not represent "a repeated pattern of acts" drawing attention to a previous incident involving another Spectator blogger, Rod Liddle.⁸⁶

The EHRC, in its reply to our second letter, stated that it would "continue to monitor complaints and review our position accordingly."

Our incident was logged by the City of London police in March 2011. No further progress on our complaint has been made to date.

The PCC, in its response to our complaint, and those of others concerning the article (Various v The Spectator - Reference Nos. 111345/111573), ruled thus:

"The complainants had argued strongly that the blogposts had discriminated against Arabs on an inaccurate and misleading basis by referring to them as "morally depraved" and "savages", in addition to making reference to "Arab barbarism". Some complainants

⁸⁴ 'No prosecution over Gateshead car park Koran burning,' *BBC News*, 21 January 2011

⁸⁵ 'Armchair barbarism,' *Spectator blogs*, 13 March 2011. Online at - <http://www.spectator.co.uk/melaniephillips/6779100/armchair-barbarism.shtml>

⁸⁶ 'Benefits of a multi-cultural Britain,' *Spectator blogs*, 5 December 2009. Online at - <http://www.spectator.co.uk/rodliddle/5601833/benefits-of-a-multicultural-britain.shtml>

were further concerned that the blogposts had ascribed attributes such as “moral depravity” to a whole racial group. A number of complainants had also pointed out that, at the time of the articles, the identity of the perpetrators of the crime had not been established.

“The Commission understood that many readers would strongly disagree with the comments made by the columnist and acknowledged the concerns which had been lodged by the complainants. However, it emphasised that columnists are entitled to express their personal opinions – however robust or controversial – provided that such views are clearly distinguished from fact (as outlined under Clause 1 (iii) of the Code). Freedom of expression, as the Commission has previously ruled, is a fundamental right in a democratic society. In this case, the columnist had certainly expressed her views in an extremely forthright manner; indeed, the Commission recognised that many would consider that the columnist was being deliberately provocative in the language she employed. However, taking into account that the comments had been written as part of a blog, the Commission considered that readers would be aware that the remarks (including claims that Arabs were “savage”, “morally depraved” and that the killers “reach a psychotic state of ecstasy from murdering Jews”) represented the strongly-held opinions of the columnist, with which many would vehemently disagree, rather than statements of facts. It could not establish a breach of Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Code on this point.”

3.13 Police launched an investigation after leaflets were distributed in Millom, Cumbria, referring to the burqa as a ‘*black crow like tent*’ and described the British Government as ‘*treacherous*’.⁸⁷

3.14 Police in Swansea pursued an investigation into the alleged burning of a copy of the Qur’an which was caught on camera.

A BNP candidate standing in the Welsh National Assembly elections was charged with a public order offence but later had the case against him dropped by the Crown Prosecution Service.⁸⁸

The footage came to light when a video was posted to the Guardian newspaper group who duly brought the incident to the attention of South Wales Police.⁸⁹

3.15 There have been a number of incidents in 2011 involving campaigns run opposing planning applications submitted by Muslim organisations for the building or expansion of mosques and/or community centres. Some campaigns made use of publicity material that have been a cause for concern.

A campaign run by the Save Our School group against a mosque in Camberley was described as “*irresponsible scaremongering*” after claims were publicised arguing that the mosque presented a security threat due to its proximity to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

⁸⁷ ‘Racist leaflets delivered to residents,’ *North West Evening Mail*, 15 April 2011

⁸⁸ ‘Koran burning’ inquiry continues after case withdrawn,’ *BBC News*, 15 April 2011

⁸⁹ ‘BNP election candidate arrested over Qur’an burning,’ *The Observer*, 9 April 2011

4. Anti-Muslim public discourse

- 4.1 The tenor of anti-Muslim public discourse in 2011 was marked by several major speeches delivered by a senior politicians remarking on Islam, Muslims and multiculturalism.
- 4.2 In January 2011, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, co-chairman of the Conservative Party, in her Sir Sigmund Sternberg Interfaith Lecture address at Leicester University 2011 spoke of the ubiquity and naturalisation of Islamophobia in British public discourse saying the phenomenon had “*passed the dinner table test*” and was now seen as “*a legitimate, even commendable thing.*”
- 4.3 Baroness Warsi’s speech was a significant contribution to the struggle against the growing tide of anti-Muslim prejudice in popular and public discourse. Her remarks, however, were eclipsed in their importance by the speech delivered by the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, to the security conference in the city of Munich on 5th February 2011 on ‘radicalisation and Islamist extremism’.
- 4.4 PM Cameron’s speech stirred much controversy for the comments made about the “*doctrine of state multiculturalism*” and its failures, as well as generalized remarks on the ‘identity crisis’ of young British Muslims and the causes of radicalisation. The PM set out a vision for a “*muscular liberalism*” to counter what he perceived to be the failure of UK integration policy.⁹⁰
- 4.5 The Labour MP for Tooting, Sadiq Khan, criticized the comments saying the PM was “*writing propaganda for the EDL*”.⁹¹ The speech was doubly condemned for its being made on the very day of the biggest EDL demonstration in a town with a large Muslim population (Luton).
- 4.6 The speech was strongly criticized for its lazy assumptions, factual inaccuracies, and its singular focus on religious extremism to the exclusion of far right extremism. As the Guardian newspaper editorial put it, the speech was “*a mix of cliches, tired thinking and some downright offensive terminology.*”⁹²
- 4.7 The leader of the British National Party, Nick Griffin, welcomed the Prime Minister’s comments as “*a further huge leap for our ideas into the political mainstream*” adding that the party “*should welcome the legitimisation of our message by the Prime Minister*”.⁹³
- 4.8 In a move to distance his party from the comments of the Conservative leader, Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the junior coalition party, Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg,

⁹⁰ ‘PM’s speech at Munich Security Conference,’ *Prime Minister’s Office website*, 5 February 2011. Online at - <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference/>

⁹¹ ‘David Cameron accused of far-right propaganda by saying UK too tolerant of extreme Muslim beliefs,’ *The Mirror*, 5 February 2011

⁹² ‘Cameron on multiculturalism: Blaming the victims,’ *The Guardian*, 7 February 2011

⁹³ ‘Cameron’s ‘War on Multiculturalism’ Speech – Another Milestone in the ‘Griffinisation’ of British Politics,’ *BNP website*, 11 February 2011. Online at - <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/cameron%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98war-multiculturalism%E2%80%99-speech-%E2%80%93-another-milestone-%E2%80%98griffinisation%E2%80%99-british-politics>

struck a very different note in his speech, 'An Open, Confident Society,' delivered in Luton in March.⁹⁴

- 4.9 The cumulative effect of the different interventions by senior politicians has been a vibrant and, at times, hostile focus on British Muslims in public discourse during the year.
- 4.10 The focus attracted responses from the chairman of the UK's Equalities and Human Rights Commission, Trevor Phillips, warning politicians against "*casual stereotyping*" of British Muslims, and racial groups in general. His comments were directed at remarks made by politicians speaking out on sex grooming court cases involving British Pakistani men.⁹⁵
- 4.11 In an interview with the Sunday Telegraph, Mr Phillips responded to questions about religion in society and British Muslims saying, "*Muslim communities in this country are doing their damndest to try to come to terms with their neighbours to try to integrate and they're doing their best to try to develop an idea of Islam that is compatible with living in a modern liberal democracy.*"⁹⁶
- 4.12 It is against this backdrop in public discourse that the English Defence League (EDL) has continued its campaign of demonstrations in towns and cities across the UK. Among towns and cities targeted by the EDL in 2011 were Leicester, Manchester, Birmingham, Exeter, Rochdale, Luton, and boroughs in east London, Tower Hamlets and Dagenham.
- 4.13 The demonstrations, in some places, were met with official, and in the case of Tower Hamlets, political and popular, requests for bans to be imposed by the Home Secretary.
- 4.14 A two hour time limit was imposed by West Midlands Police on the EDL march in Birmingham in October 2011. A march proposed to take place in Tower Hamlets, and four neighbouring east London boroughs, in August 2011 was deterred after local politicians, police, and populations urged the Home Secretary to instruct a ban.
- 4.15 There have been several academic and empirical reports published in 2011 on the EDL illustrating the movement's genesis, methods, motives and membership.
- 4.16 A report by Demos investigated the role and use made of social media by the EDL.⁹⁷ A report by Nottingham university lecturer, Matthew Goodwin, for Chatham House investigated the "*drivers behind the support for populist extremist parties but also possible political responses*".⁹⁸

⁹⁴ 'An open, confident society,' *Liberal Democrats website*, 3 March 2011. Online at - http://www.libdems.org.uk/latest_news_detail.aspx?title=Nick_Clegg_speech%3a_An_Open%2c_Confident_Society&pPK=25e28e0b-a8e7-4104-ba5e-e860d752c31a

⁹⁵ 'Home Affairs Committee - Minutes of Evidence: The work of the Home Office - Equalities,' 25 January 2011. *Home Affairs Select Committee, Parliament Publications*, online at - <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmhaff/732/11012502.htm>

⁹⁶ 'Trevor Phillips wades into debate on religion in modern society,' *Sunday Telegraph*, 19 June 2011

⁹⁷ Jamie Bartlett and Mark Littler, 2011. '*inside the edl: populist politics in a digital age.*' (London: Demos)

⁹⁸ Matthew Goodwin. (2011). '*Right Response: Understanding and Countering Populist Extremism in Europe*'. (London: Chatham House)

- 4.17 A report on the EDL by the Radicalism and New Media Research Group at the University of Northampton, observed that the movement's activities and hostility was "*directed overwhelmingly at Asian Muslims in Britain.*"
- 4.18 Warranting concern at the attention to be paid to the impact of anti-Muslim public discourse on popular social attitudes, the report noted that "*Ample evidence is adduced, troublingly, to suggest that the EDL's signature anti-Muslim politics – if not its thuggish and violent means of expression – has a much wider purchase in British society than even the tens of thousands of 'followers' registered on Facebook.*"⁹⁹
- 4.19 Indeed, the report by the Radicalism and New Media Research Group observed that "*To a significant degree, this anti-Muslim attitude is dependent upon negative media representations.*"¹⁰⁰ The report further noted that "*In the case of the EDL, we can see that the Daily Star in particular has helped to develop the wider populist framework for the movement to gravitate around.*"¹⁰¹
- 4.20 The role of the media in popularizing anti-Muslim prejudice is noteworthy and a matter we took up in our submission to the Leveson Inquiry.¹⁰²
- 4.21 The Leveson Inquiry was set up by Prime Minister, David Cameron, in July 2011 to "*examine the culture, practices and ethics of the media*". The Inquiry was established in the aftermath of the phone hacking scandal and amid disclosures of media malpractice.
- 4.22 Further academic research which elucidates the causal relationship between and the deleterious impact of a steady drip-feed of anti-Muslim prejudice in the media on social attitudes can be found in the studies completed by Kim Knott, Elizabeth Poole and Teemu Taira, '*Media portrayals of religion and the secular sacred*' and by Paul Baker, Tony McEnery and Costas Gabrielatos, "*The representation of Muslims in the British press 1998-2009.*"¹⁰³
- 4.23 Perhaps the starkest and most dangerous example of the interplay between anti-Muslim prejudice in the media and blogosphere on social attitudes is to be found in the terrorist attack by Anders Behring Breivik in Norway in July 2011. Breivik's manifesto portrayed a man consumed by the anti-Muslim prejudice fuelled by 'counter-jihad' websites and their ridiculous obsession with the 'Islamisation' of Europe.¹⁰⁴
- 4.24 The terrorist attacks on the island of Utøya and in Oslo and Breivik's motives underscore the necessity of challenging the perpetuation of anti-Muslim prejudice in our public discourse for the security and safety of all Europeans, Muslims and otherwise.

⁹⁹ Paul Jackson. (2011). *The EDL: Britain's "New Far Right" Social Movement*. (University of Northampton: RNM Publications).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.5

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 56

¹⁰² Shenaz Bunglawala. (2011). *ENGAGE submission to the Leveson Inquiry*. Online at:

<http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/1-news/1679-video-of-engages-hearing-at-leveson-inquiry->

¹⁰³ K. Knott, E. Poole, and T. Taira. (2011) Media portrayals of religion and the secular sacred'. Online at - http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/uploads/docs/2011_03/1301305944_Knott_Phase_1_Large_Grant_Block.pdf;

and Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C. and McEnery A. (2012). *Discourse Analysis and Media Bias: The representation of Islam in the British Press*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press)

¹⁰⁴ 'Anders Breivik's spider web of hate,' *The Guardian*, 7 September 2011

4.25 Finally, on international events and their influence on domestic discourse, the Arab Spring invited some contributions by newspaper columnists who exploited the events to peddle anti-Muslim sentiments, regurgitating tropes of Muslims being ill-equipped and indisposed to adopt forms of liberal democratic governance in the post-Arab Spring transitions.

4.26 Examples given here include an article by Leo McKinstry, a columnist for the Daily Express, who in a column published in February, wrote:

“Islam has long proved incompatible with Western ideas of secular liberalism, which makes the events in Africa all the more concerning. Thanks to the malign twin forces of mass immigration and multi-culturalism, all our societies have large Muslim populations: three million in Britain, five million in Germany and 10 million in France.

“Instead of integrating, many Muslims in Europe have clung to separatism, reflected in everything from the incidence of domestic terrorism to the demands for the acceptance of Sharia law.”¹⁰⁵

4.27 A further example is given in an article by Revd. Dr Peter Mullen, Rector of St Michael's, Cornhill, and St Sepulchre-without-Newgate church in the City of London. In a comment piece published in the Daily Mail in September, Revd. Mullen wrote:

“The interim governing council in Libya has promised government according to moderate Islamic values based on Sharia law.”

“That in itself is a rather paradoxical phrase, equivalent, one might think, to a promise of extreme moderation – for there is nothing moderate about Sharia.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, 'Cries of freedom may not be cause for celebration,' *Daily Express*, 21 February 2011

¹⁰⁶ 'The interim governing council in Libya has no more power to say what government will be like in that country than I have,' *Daily Mail*, 14 September 2011

5. Positive developments

A number of important developments in 2011 have been cause for optimism. Notable among these are the following:

- 5.1 The BNP lost heavily in the 2011 local and regional elections. The party lost all five of its seats in Stoke-on-Trent and one of its two councillors in Burnley. The party won two seats overall with a net loss of 11 councillor positions.
- 5.2 The parliamentary Home Affairs select committee undertook an inquiry into 'The Roots of Violent Radicalisation' in 2011 publishing its final report in February 2012.
- 5.3 According to the final report, MPs found "*persuasive evidence about the potential threat from extreme far-right terrorism*" counselling the Government against "*neglecting this area of risk*" in its counter-terrorism strategy, Prevent.¹⁰⁷

Concluding remarks

Underscoring our concern about the role of the media in popularising anti-Muslim attitudes and indulging anti-Muslim movements, we were pleased to witness the attention given by the Leveson Inquiry to this area.

The Inquiry has called for witness a former journalist for the Daily Star, Richard Peppiatt, and the editor of the newspaper, Dawn Neesom, to respond to questions about the newspapers coverage of and editorial policy on Islam and Muslims.

Furthermore, the inquiry and the phone-hacking scandal has led to the demise of the Press Complaints Commission amid recommendations for its replacement with a more robust body equipped with better deterrents and measures to address media impropriety and bad practice.

Given the instrumental role the media plays, these developments are of tremendous significance. The withdrawal of Express newspapers from the PCC's jurisdiction on regulating the print media remains a cause of great concern to us, not least on account of the output of the Daily Star, Daily Express, Daily Star Sunday and the Sunday Express. We nonetheless welcome the promise of a tougher system of self regulation in the near future, one that will extend to all print media without exception or option to unilaterally withdraw.

On a closing point, we would make mention of the current mechanisms for recording anti-Muslim hate crimes as employed by the 43 constabularies in England and Wales.

At present, the Metropolitan Police alone possesses a crime flagging system that marks an incident as Islamophobia. No other constabulary in the country uses such a process instead marking incidents as racially or religiously aggravated. It is our hope that in the interest of accumulating accurate statistics on anti-Muslim hate crimes in the UK, the system employed by the Metropolitan Police will be adopted by constabularies nationwide.

¹⁰⁷ 'Roots of violent radicalisation,' 6 February 2012. (London: The Stationery Office Limited).