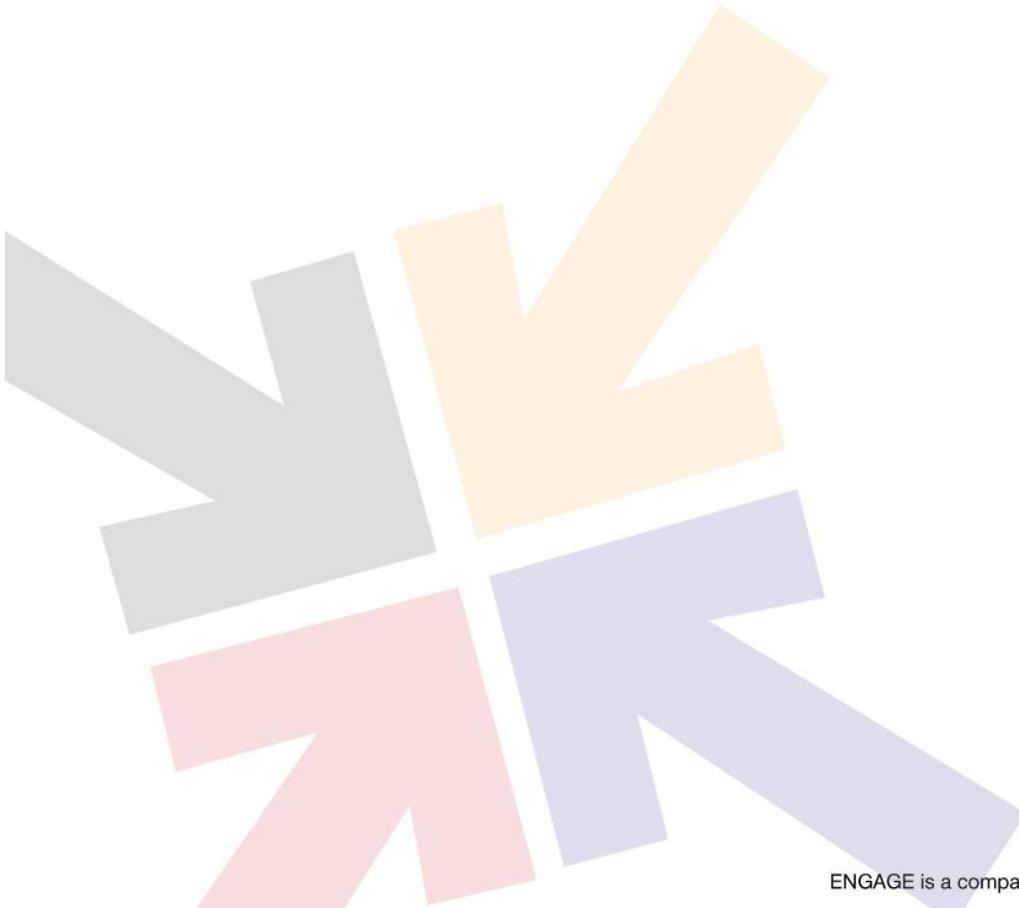


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**ENGAGE submission to the Office for Democratic
Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) 2010 report on
“Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and
Responses”**

31st March 2011



Introduction

There have been a number of events in the UK in 2010 that have contributed both context and background to incidents of anti-Muslim hatred, verbal and physical, as well as instances of anti-Muslim hate crimes.

As in previous years, the security agenda and counter-terrorism policies continue to influence and shape public and political discourse on British Muslims with debates on social, economic and political integration of minorities eclipsed by wider debates on countering radicalisation among young British Muslims.¹

Politics and the electoral cycle has informed events of 2010 with a general election in May of that year and the first ever challenge to the victory of an elected MP on grounds of election materials that breached the Representation of the People Act 1983.

The resulting Coalition government in the UK has also impacted on the general discourse on British Muslims with the coalition parties both framing their positions on multiculturalism policy and Muslim integration in major speeches during 2010.

A speech delivered by the first female Muslim member of the Cabinet, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, on Islamophobia has also had a tremendous impact on debates on the presence, manifestation and spread of anti-Muslim sentiments in the UK. The negative response to her speech from many quarters, ranging from outright ridicule of the notion of "Islamophobia" in the UK to allegations of communal favouritism on the part of the Baroness, are indicative of her discerning claims that anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK is prevalent and present even among the educated classes.

Other factors that have had significant impact on incidents of anti-Muslim hatred and hate crimes are the demonstrations organised by the English Defence League in town and cities across the UK. Indeed, recorded incidents at the time of or around such demonstrations show their potency in fomenting hate crimes.

As is to be expected, international events have also affected domestic considerations on the issue of anti-Muslim hatred, and on debates on Islam and Muslims in general, with noteworthy events in 2010 including Pastor Terry Jones of Florida state in the US threatening to "Burn a Koran" on the ninth anniversary of September 11th and the introduction in France and the Netherlands of a ban on the wearing of the burqa (face veil) in certain designated public places.

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 have formed part of our regular monitoring of such incidents, cataloguing them on our website (www.iengage.org.uk).

¹ 'Britons link Islam with extremism, says survey', **BBC News Online** 7 June 2010 [available on: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10251827>]

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

In total 40 incidents are outlined in this report with almost half, 47.5% (19) constituting attacks on Muslim institutions. A further 40% form attacks on Muslim individuals (16) and 12.5% incidents of verbal abuse and hate speech (5).

It is noteworthy that despite attacks on Muslim institutions across the country, some of them repeat attacks, and surveys revealing the degree to which anti-Muslim prejudice is evident in society, national politicians have been remarkably absent in expressing solidarity with the Muslim community either through visiting centres and institutions which have been vandalised and attacked, or through attendance at large gatherings of Muslims to assert their commitment to tackling anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK.² This is in sharp contrast to political debates in both chambers of the national parliament on reports marking a growth in anti-Semitic attacks in the UK. As well as the Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers' attendance at an event organised by the Community Security Trust, a body which serves an important role as a third party reporting site for anti-Semitism.

It is important to state here that collating information on anti-Muslim hate crimes is difficult on account of data from official statistics, provided by regional police forces, not being disaggregated by religion. ECRI noting the disparity in quality of information on racial and religious grounds observed in its UK country report 2010:

“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.”³

² 'Islam divides us, say the majority of Britons', *Daily Mail* 11 January 2010

³ ECRI report on the United Kingdom, fourth monitoring cycle. (Strasbourg, France: ECRI Secretariat, 2010). Pg 41, paragraph 145.

This problem persists in the recording and monitoring techniques available for documenting anti-Muslim hate crimes and it must be noted here that the information contained in this submission is likely to be merely a fraction of the total number of all incidents for 2010. We have compiled as many as have been readily resourced through local and national media reports and third parties notices, though we are aware that such data is not exhaustive nor fully comprehensive of the nature and total number of anti-Muslim crimes.

The new coalition government has declared a commitment to improve hate crime recording on grounds of disability and sexual orientation which is welcome progress.⁴ But improving the recording techniques of hate crimes that fall within some of the other equality strands (age, gender race, religion and sexuality) and which are currently under-recorded, such as religiously motivated hate crime, remains of considerable concern given the increase in incidents targeting the Muslim community.

The problem is compounded with the absence of financial and other support from Government for the creation of an organisation to monitor, collate and follow criminal prosecutions of cases of religiously motivated violence and verbal abuse. The Muslim community in the UK does not currently possess the equivalent of a Community Security Trust and the creation of such a body to serve as a central monitoring agency of anti-Muslim hatred and hate crime is a matter of urgency.

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. Of particular importance is the establishment in November 2010 of an all party group on Islamophobia, thereby placing the issue of anti-Muslim hate crime firmly on the agenda for politicians of all political parties. This report concludes with details of initiatives and good practice which have been developed and actioned during the year to address anti-Muslim hatred in the UK.

Anti-Muslim hate crimes 2010

1. Assaults or attacks on persons of Muslim background

- 1.1. Two teenagers pleaded guilty to the killing of Muslim grandfather Ekram Haque. Mr Haque was attacked by the teenagers as he left the Idara-e-Jaferiyya mosque in Tooting, South London with his three year old grand-daughter in August 2009. Mr Haque was punched to the ground and died from his injuries in hospital days later.

The teenagers pleaded guilty to manslaughter and a third teenager to causing grievous bodily harm in the “happy-slapping” attack on the retired Muslim care worker.⁵

- 1.2. The screening of a documentary following the experiences of a Muslim couple living on an estate in Bristol resulted in the charges being brought against four

⁴ The Coalition: our programme for government. (London: Cabinet Office, 2010), pg 14.

⁵ *Wandsworth Guardian* 16 June 2010.

individuals from the area for a series of crimes including religiously aggravated assault.

The documentary, "Hate on the Doorstep" recorded incidences where the Muslim couple were subjected to taunts directed at them such as "Taliban", "Jihad" and "Paki".⁶

Two men aged 23 and 18 admitted to racially-aggravated harassment and were sentenced to two years and 21 months in youth custody respectively.⁷

1.3. A young Muslim mother out walking with her daughter in St David's, Exeter was subjected to physical and verbal abuse by two teenagers who pulled at her headscarf in an attempt to remove it, and shouted at her, "you don't belong to this country."⁸

1.4. A Muslim woman living in central London was attacked by a robber who stole thousands of pounds worth of valuables from her home. The assailant wrapped her in a carpet, set her alight and told her "This is your Eid present, you Muslim."

The attack took place in September 2009, around the time Muslims celebrated Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan, but only came to light in May 2010 when the chairman of the UK Egyptian Association revealed the nature of the taunt directed at the woman. The case further underlines the importance of making citizens aware of their rights and to report any incidents of religiously motivated crimes to the police.⁹

1.5. A 51 year old Muslim male was attacked and racially abused by a group of white teenagers as he made his way to Kirklees mosque. The man was subjected to racial verbal abuse before being punched in the face by one of the assailants. An appeal against the sentence was denied in November 2010.¹⁰

1.6. A female Muslim student was so distraught following an attack at Glasgow central station, where a man attempted to forcibly remove her face veil, that she is afraid to go out and has abandoned her further studies.

The man in question was arrested and charged and sentenced to two years imprisonment in July 2010.¹¹

1.7. Bus drivers in the Merseyside have been accused of racism after failing to stop to pick up Muslim girls in headscarves on their bus routes. Young Muslim girls who use public transport services complained of being bullied on board the buses.¹²

⁶ *Bristol Evening Post*, 12 February 2010

⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 23 June 2010

⁸ *Express & Echo*, 17 June 2010

⁹ *Daily Mail*, 6 May 2010

¹⁰ *Huddersfield Examiner*, 18 August 2010

¹¹ '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-rippedreligious-veil-from-muslim-woman/>

¹² *Daily Mail*, 26 February 2010

- 1.8 A bus driver in Leeds was arrested on suspicion of racially/religiously aggravated harassment after calling a Muslim female passenger a “terrorist” and asking her if she’d put a bomb on his bus.¹³
- 1.9 A Muslim couple travelling by train to Nottingham were subjected to verbal abuse by a group of 20 men who taunted the couple calling them “terrorists.” The Muslim couple, Abida Malik and Asif Ahmed felt intimidated by the large group of men and say they are now afraid to travel by train following the incident.¹⁴
- 1.10 A Muslim female was subjected to racial abuse by a BNP member and regional organiser. The woman, Sajida Islam, was told “go back to your own country” by the man who confronted her in the aisles of a supermarket in Hartlepool.

The incident happened in October 2009. At the court hearing in October 2010, the man was given a 10 month prison sentence suspended for 18 months with supervision.¹⁵

- 1.11 A right wing extremist football fan was given a three year football ban for shouting racial abuse at Muslim scouts and a young Muslim female on his return from a Bristol Rovers football match.

The man is said to have made the Nazi salute, boasted his BNP affiliation and repeated the taunt "This is our country, get out" as he passed by and verbally abused a group of Muslim cub scouts.¹⁶

- 1.12 A pig’s trotter was hurled at a female shopkeeper at a store in Wakefield by an individual who presumably suspected the Hindu shop owners of being Muslim. The shopkeepers complained of years of racial abuse and anti-social behaviour and claimed it was the first time of a physical attack.

A man who was arrested in connection with the attack was later released without charge.¹⁷

- 1.13 Waiters at an Indian restaurant in Bridgwater have suffered a spate of racial and religiously motivated attacks in 2010 with arrests made in connection with incidents on September 26 2010 and November 3 2010.

In September a man smashed a pane of glass at the Spice Club restaurant and asked a waiter “Are you Muslim?” before threatening to cut his face. The man said, “I’m going to cut your face” “because I’m EDL [English Defence League].”

Appearing in court in November 2010 the man was ordered to carry out 100 hours of unpaid work and to pay £165 compensation and £85 costs.¹⁸

¹³ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 23 January 2010

¹⁴ "Muslim couple say train attack was racial hatred", **BBC News** 8 April 2010

¹⁵ *Hartlepool Mail*, 2 October 2010

¹⁶ *Bristol Evening Post*, 11 June 2010

¹⁷ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 2 April 2010

¹⁸ *The Mercury*, 16 November 2010

- 1.14 A father and son were charged with racially aggravated public disorder offences after subjecting a Muslim cab driver to verbal abuse and walking off without paying the fare.

The two men asked Kamel Choudary if he was a member of the al Qaeda and the Taliban and called him a “P*** b*****” before making off without paying their £20 fare.

Thomas John Walsh, 59, was sentenced to a 12 month community order with the requirement that he undertake the Against Human Dignity programme and an alcohol activity programme.

Andrew, his son, 28, was given a 12-month conditional discharge. Both were ordered to pay court costs of £800 and to pay Mr Choudary the £20 cab fare.¹⁹

- 1.15 A 24 year old woman hurled a tirade of verbal abuse at two brothers and their 14 year old nephew as they exited a mosque in Colne, Pendle. The woman spat at the men and shouted abuse as she followed after them. She was jailed for 146 days.²⁰

- 1.16 A fourteen year old Muslim girl had her hair set alight and her hands and feet cut with glass before having her head knocked against a tree and left bleeding in a park. Her mother said the girl had been taunted about her Muslim faith during the attack which took place near her home in Thornton Heath, Croydon in June 2010.

Three teenagers aged 18, 15 and 14 have been charged in connection with the incident with administering poison with intent to injure, aggrieve, annoy, assault occasioning ABH and false imprisonment.²¹

2. Attacks on Muslim property or institutions

- 2.1 A pig’s head was left on the railings of a mosque in Finsbury Park, North London. The severed head of a pig was hung off a railing during the night and found by Muslim worshippers arriving at the mosque for the pre-dawn prayers.²²
- 2.2 An Islamic centre in Renfrew was attacked by a group of young men who hurled eggs at Muslims exiting the mosque after the early afternoon prayer.²³
- 2.3 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

¹⁹ *Manchester Evening News*, 14 July 2010

²⁰ *Lancashire Telegraph*, 23 July 2010

²¹ *Croydon Guardian*, 17 February 2011

²² *Islington Gazette*, 30 July 2010

²³ *Paisley Daily Express*, 12 May 2010

cameras on the premises. It is but one example of security costs to protect property and persons being borne by local communities.

2.4 Three men arrested in connection with assaults on Muslims during an attack on a prayer room at City University had charges of racial assault dropped “due to insufficient evidence and a lack of witnesses coming forward,” according to the police. According to the Federation of Students Islamic Societies, Muslim students were attacked by a group of 30 young males who shouted racial and religious abuse such as "Get those Muslims" and "Paki."²⁴

2.5 Three men were arrested after a pig’s head was thrown into the car park of a mosque in Crawley, West Sussex.

The men were arrested on suspicion of a racially or religiously-aggravated public order offence.²⁵

2.6 A pig’s head was left at the door of the Shah Jalal Bangladeshi Community House in Cambridge in September 2010. Two people arrested in connection with the incident were later released without charge due to insufficient evidence. The police launched a fresh appeal for information in February 2011.

The mosque where the incident happened hosted an open day in November 2010 in an effort to reach out to the wider community.²⁶

2.7 A pig’s head was hung off the railings of a building that is to become an Islamic school and community centre in Newcastle. The incident occurred after reports in the local paper that the former youth club and pub was to be converted into an Islamic school and community centre.²⁷

2.8 Fifteen Muslim gravestones were damaged in an attack on Harehills cemetery in Leeds in March 2010.²⁸ The Muslim section of the cemetery was singled out for attack with one gravestone overturned and others damaged.

The cemetery suffered further attacks in September and December 2010 when Muslim gravestones were targeted in subsequent attacks.²⁹

2.9 A mosque in Portsmouth, Jami mosque, was targeted by vandals who graffitied a 6ft poppy on the wall of the mosque in protest of a “poppy-burning” stunt carried out by the group “Muslims Against Crusades” during the Remembrance Sunday services.³⁰

²⁴ *The Inquirer*, 7 February 2010

²⁵ Arrests after pig’s head thrown at Crawley mosque, *BBC News Online* [available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/sussex/8629992.stm>]

²⁶ *Cambridge News* 22 September 2010, 22 November 2010 and 16 February 2011.

²⁷ *Evening Chronicle*, 11 November 2010

²⁸ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 22 March 2010

²⁹ *The Independent*, 22 September 2010 and *Manchester Evening News* 15 December 2010

³⁰ *The News*, 13 November 2010

- 2.10 A Muslim academy in Portsmouth was the target of two attacks in the weeks following the attack on the Jami mosque in the city. The first attack involved a brick being thrown through the window with a racist message attached to it. The second incident involved a beer bottle which was thrown through one of academy's windows.³¹
- 2.11 A 26 year old man was sentenced to 15 months in jail for an arson attack on the Glasgow headquarters of the Muslim charity Islamic Relief. The attack which took place in July 2009 caused £26,000 worth of damage to the charity shop and regional headquarters of the charity.³²
- 2.12 Police arrested six men in September following a video of them burning a copy of the Qur'an was posted on the internet. The men, disguised with tea towels wrapped around their heads, are shown dousing the Qur'an in petrol before setting it alight behind a pub in Gateshead.³³

The men are heard to shout, "This is for the boys in Afghanistan. September 11, international burn a Koran day, for all the people of 9/11." An explicit reference to Pastor Terry Jones' threat to hold a "Burn a Koran Day" event at his centre in Florida to mark the ninth anniversary of the attacks on the US.

The men involved defended their actions telling the Daily Mail that "Muslims are allowed to burn British flags".

"Now there seems to be one law for them and one law for us. They can burn a Union Flag and the Stars and Stripes, but we get arrested for burning a few sheets of paper."

- 2.13 A man was released without charge after threatening to burn down a mosque in Eccles during a drunken escapade. The man hurled abuse at a member of the mosque, kicked at its door and threatened to burn it down before walking into a nearby shop and racially abusing the manager.³⁴
- 2.14 A man who racially and religiously abused two Muslims and threatened to burn down a mosque in Wrexham was given a suspended sentence in December 2010. The man was served a restraining order banning him from going to the mosque.³⁵
- 2.15 Four more men were arrested in connection with an attack on Kingston mosque in November. A group of men tried to smash windows in the mosque, threw beer bottles smashing a window, urinated on the outer walls and smeared bacon on walls terrifying a group of elderly worshippers who were inside the mosque.³⁶

³¹ 'Portsmouth Muslim Academy target of hate crimes' *BBC News online*, 25 November 2010 [available on: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-11837234>]

³² "Man jailed over Islamic shop fire ", *BBC News online* 14 April 2010

³³ *Daily Mail*, 24 September 2010

³⁴ *Manchester Evening News*, 14 December 2010

³⁵ *The Leader*, 6 December 2010

³⁶ *Kingston Guardian*, 8 December 2010

Muslim worshippers were addressed after Friday prayers by Richmond Park MP Zac Goldsmith, Kingston and Surbiton MP Edward Davey and borough commander Martin Greenslade following the attack on the mosque in a show of solidarity and to assert their firm commitment to tackling racial and religious hate crime in the area.

- 2.16 Four teenagers were arrested after an arson attack on a newly built mosque in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.³⁷
- 2.17 Police made five arrests following a disturbance at the Pakistan Social Cultural and Islamic Centre in Scunthorpe where mourners were subjected to racial abuse. The mourners were leaving the centre when they were approached by a group of men who shouted abuse and made threats.³⁸
- 2.18 A man arrested on charges of attempted arson with intent to endanger the lives of Muslims was remanded in custody pending a psychiatric examination following a court hearing in April 2010. The attack on the mosque in Chester Road, Sunderland took place in October 2009. At the court hearing sentencing was deferred pending further psychiatric examination and the charges lessened to “attempting to commit arson being reckless as to whether life would be endangered.”³⁹
- 2.19 A 19 year old man who threw a petrol bomb at a mosque in Livingston, West Lothian, escaped with a £400 fine and £60 in damages to the mosque after Livingston Sheriff Court judged the attack was not a “race hate crime”.⁴⁰

3. Verbal abuse and hate speech

- 3.1. The first ever case tried under incitement to religious hatred legislation resulted in an acquittal in June 2010 when Anthony Bamber, a BNP activist who distributed leaflets blaming Muslims for the heroin trade, was found not guilty by a jury.

The leaflet, distributed to households in the Lancashire area, called upon Muslims to “apologise” for the heroin trade.⁴¹

- 3.2 A member of the English Defence League, Guramit Singh, was arrested on suspicion of intentionally causing religiously aggravated harassment, alarm or distress after police received complaints in relation to his speech given during an EDL protest in Peterborough.⁴²

³⁷ *The Guardian*, 4 December 2010

³⁸ *Scunthorpe Telegraph*, 9 December 2010

³⁹ *Sunderland Echo*, 13 April 2010

⁴⁰ **BBC News**, 22 January 2010

⁴¹ *Lancashire Evening Post*, 22 June 2010

⁴² *Evening Telegraph*, 22 December 2010

The charges have not been pursued with Peterborough police dropping the case on advice from the Crown Prosecution Service.⁴³

- 3.3 An as yet unidentified group distributed leaflets in the Harrow calling upon parents to resist the introduction of halal meat in the borough's schools.

The leaflet refers to Islamic ritual slaughter as inferior to "English meat," stating:

"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."⁴⁴

- 3.4 A member of the EDL was given a Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Order in March 2011 after pleading guilty to a racially aggravated public order offence which took place in May 2011.

The man hurled racial and Islamophobic abuse at an Asian family at Doncaster train station as he made his way to an EDL rally in Newcastle.⁴⁵

- 3.5 Five men were arrested for "religiously aggravated public order offences" for setting up a Facebook site declaring "'all Muslims should be thrown out of Wales." The social network site was used to organise a protest through the Rhondda Valley region of South Wales. The site attracted numerous comments of an Islamophobia nature. South Wales police confirmed the arrests were in relation to comments posted on the social networking site.⁴⁶

4. Anti-Muslim public discourse

- 4.1 The year has been notable for the debate on the prevalence of Islamophobia in the UK sparked by the speech delivered by Baroness Sayeeda Warsi at Leicester University in January 2011. Her comments on the naturalisation of anti-Muslim prejudice in Britain have been welcomed by British Muslims as a timely and necessary intervention with the growing number of attacks on Muslim institutions and the steady diffusion of anti-Muslim sentiments in public discourse. The harsh reactions, dismissive of her observations on Islamophobia having "passed the dinner table test," and of Islamophobia being seen as "a legitimate – even commendable – thing," are indicative of the unwillingness by certain sections of society to acknowledge and accept the trepidation felt by British Muslims.

⁴³ *Evening Telegraph*, 8 March 2011

⁴⁴ "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-muslimsforce-their-barbaric-ways-on-us-anti-ha.html>

⁴⁵ *Lincolnshire Echo*, 11 March 2011

⁴⁶ "Plan for anti-Muslim march blasted", *Wales Online*, 7 February 2010 [available at: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2010/02/07/plan-for-anti-muslim-march-blasted-91466-25778280/>]

- 4.2 A number of events involving comments by public officials over the course of the year have been great cause for alarm among British Muslims. The comments by party leaders of the UK Independence Party on the banning of the burqa and niqab in Britain or the manifesto promises contained in the BNP election manifesto on “Confronting the Islamic colonisation of Britain,” are stark illustrations. But such instances are not confined to the margins or far right parties.
- 4.3 Comments by Conservative MP Philip Hollobone mocking the face veil adopted by some Muslim women as equivalent to wearing a paper bag on one’s head or on refusing to see at constituency surgery meetings Muslim females who wear the face veil, suggest a dangerous trend of anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination seeping into acceptable public discourse.
- 4.4 The legal challenge mounted against Phil Woolas MP, the Labour candidate who won the Oldham East and Saddleworth seat in the general election, for use of materials which misrepresented the Liberal Democrat candidate was notable for the materials’ attempt to exploit racial tensions in the area and attract votes by making “White folk angry”. The former MP will not be prosecuted for the offence but the legal challenge has brought to the fore considerations over the exploitation of communal and racial tensions during election campaigns and the distribution of false and incendiary election materials.
- 4.5 Constituents attending election hustings with the candidates in the Oldham and Saddleworth by election were quick to point out that growing Islamophobia in the constituency was a key consideration of Muslims in the area.
- 4.6 In another example from the general election period, the Labour party was quick to react in suspending its candidate in the South East Cambridgeshire constituency after he posted comments on a social networking site stating he “would not like any of his children to marry a Muslim.”
- 4.7 There is also the example of David Davies MP who in a rape case involving a man of Asian origin inferred that his ethnic background and upbringing were contributory factors in the crime. The MP for Monmouth suggested that the man was brought up in cultural traditions which didn’t respect women’s rights and which “...have imported into this country barbaric and medieval views about women.”
- 4.8 Such tendencies introduce into everyday discourse the seeds of cultural essentialism, racist stereotypes and anti-Muslim prejudice. It is all the more disappointing that officials holding public office have failed to appreciate the wider consequences of their speech and sentiments.
- 4.9 Lady Warsi’s addressing in a public speech the topic of Islamophobia in the UK has been of singular importance given the failure of politicians to visit places or institutions that have targets of anti-Muslim racism. Early day motions sponsored by Diane Abbott MP in March 2010 (Early day motion 1079: Muslims in Britain) and July 2010 (Early day motion 514: Legislation on the burqa and hijab) are

further examples of positive interventions but the record overall has been greatly discouraging.

- 4.10 Towards the end of the year, in November, an all party parliamentary group on Islamophobia was created comprising parliamentarians of both Houses with the aim of investigating and effectively challenging Islamophobia and anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK. The need for such a group has been widely accepted by British Muslims as urgent and necessary. This report on hate crime incidents and responses illustrates why its work is so fundamental to addressing and reversing the drip feed of anti-Muslim sentiment that infects our public discourse and feeds an environment in which anti-Muslim verbal and physical attacks occur with alarming frequency.
- 4.11 A number of serious attacks on mosques occurring in January 2011, and which are beyond the scope of this report, indicate that the problem of anti-Muslim hate crime is a far more severe than is recognised or appreciated by wider society.