



POLICY PLEDGES

mend

A large, diverse crowd of people, many wearing headscarves, is seated in a large hall or stadium. The text "Second largest in the UK after:" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font, framed by a white, stylized, multi-segmented border. The background shows a vast audience filling the seating area, with a wooden wall visible at the top.

**“Second largest
in the UK after:**

A large crowd of people, many wearing headscarves, is gathered in a large hall with a wooden ceiling. The text "Largest faith group for Christians." is overlaid on the image in a large, white, serif font, enclosed in a white rectangular frame.

Largest faith group
for Christians.”

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Introduction

British Muslims make up 4.8% of the population in England and Wales, comprising of 2.7 million citizens.¹ They are the second largest faith group in the UK after Christians and have the youngest age profile of all religious groups, with 48% of Muslims aged 24 and under.²

This policy booklet presents a range of policy areas that are of particular importance to British Muslims. MEND works to promote greater Muslim engagement at all levels in our democracy. Our recommendations highlight areas of interest to us as British Muslims and we hope that our political parties will consider and debate them in the positive spirit in which we offer them.

This policy booklet is our contribution to furthering the social, civic, economic and political integration of British Muslims in UK society. MEND's work has been commended by The World Economic Forum, The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the EU's Parliament Magazine.

“Parliament has a vital and indispensable role in tackling Islamophobia across the UK”
- Dr Shazad Amin, CEO of MEND



Counter-terrorism and civil liberties

The government has continued to implement counter-terrorism legislation which disproportionately impacts Muslim communities, with the statutory PREVENT duty having a particularly detrimental impact on young British Muslims. The protection of civil liberties has taken a further regressive step with the recent introduction of the ‘Snoopers’ Charter’, giving the security services and other public bodies extensive powers to mine citizens’ electronic records.

The PREVENT programme has been criticised by the UN Rapporteur on Freedoms, the NUT, the NUS, and countless academics, including the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University – who condemned the strategy for its limiting effect on free-speech and legitimate critical debate.³

Regarding PREVENT, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, has said that “I do feel that the brand is so toxic now that I think it’s got to go,” and that “[it] is creating a feeling in the Muslim community that it is being spied upon and unfairly targeted. It is building a climate of mutual suspicion and distrust. Far from tackling extremism, it risks creating the very conditions for it to flourish.”⁴

Furthermore, regarding airport detentions under Schedule 7, the former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson QC, has noted that **Schedule 7 detentions and examinations were imposed upon members of ethnic minority groups to a greater extent** than “their presence in the travelling population would seem to warrant” suggesting evidence of disproportionate, but not racially discriminatory, use.⁵



Pledges

Commit to fostering social cohesion and community resilience to all forms of extremism, and support de-radicalisation programmes that work with Muslim communities - not against them.

Commit to more third party reporting centres to give greater transparency to Channel referrals.

Islamophobia and racial/religious equality

The current 2006 Race and Religious Hatred legislation is ineffective and unfit for purpose. This was made evident when ex-UKIP councillor Eric Kitson exhibited images on social media of a Muslim being burned alive, with an attached comment referencing Muslim women stating “Hang um all first then ask questions later.”⁶

Throughout July 2016 the think tank Demos recorded over 215,000 world-wide Islamophobic tweets, equating to nearly 7000 per day. 14,000 of these were likely sent from the UK.⁷

Such hate speech clearly has no place in a tolerant society, yet current laws protecting religiously-defined communities are too weak to enable prosecution for incitement to ‘religious hatred’. Unlike Jewish and Sikh communities, **Muslims are not defined by reference to ‘race’**, meaning that the more workable burden of proof applicable under the **‘incitement to racial hatred’ does not apply to incidents of Islamophobic hate speech**.

Since the creation of the Incitement to Race and Religious Hatred Act 2006, there have been less than a handful of prosecutions for ‘incitement religious hatred’ due to the unworkable burden of proof required.

Eric Kitson, former UKIP councillor for Stourport, Worcestershire, was investigated over comments and cartoons posted on his Facebook page which showed “a Muslim being spit-roasted on a fire fuelled by copies of the Koran” and, a further post relating to Muslim women with the caption “**Hang um all first then ask questions later.**”

Pledge

Commit to a review of the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act and consider primary legislation to deal with social media offences and online hate speech.



Uther Eric Kitson shared Islam is a mental disease's photo.
2 November 2012 at 00:07 ·



Oasim Faiz

Free speech IS supposed to hurt. What is your address? I will send you bacon! That will make you feel better

Minority rights

Our human rights are essential, irrespective of religious background, gender or ethnicity. In recent years, lobbyists, Islamophobes and some right-wing media outlets have tried to curb Muslim rights such as halal meat, Shariah wills and the niqab.

The topic of halal slaughter is but one example of how hysteria is fuelled by some of these media outlets. While attention within these debates is focused almost exclusively on halal practices, issues that affect the wider meat industry are routinely overlooked. For instance, in 2004, the European Food Safety authority found that the failure rate for the penetrating captive bolt stunning in conventional mechanical slaughter may be as high as 4%,⁸ and up to 31% for non-penetrating captive bolt and electric stunning.⁹ This equates to millions of animals each year that experience incredible suffering. However, such realities which are in desperate need of address are largely ignored and emphasis is disproportionately directed towards halal practices without critical reflection on issues that are affecting the meat industry as a whole. **To this end we welcome the recent decision by the Government to install compulsory CCTV in all slaughterhouses to improve animal welfare.**¹⁰

Living in a democracy, mutual respect and tolerance is key – regardless of our own personal views regarding the practices of others. The irony, of course, being that Muslims are frequently accused of being intolerant of others.

Particularly in light of Brexit negotiations, the future of the UK's human rights commitments are unclear, and there is no current blueprint for the proposed British Bill of Rights. This has left many Muslims feeling insecure and worried about the security of their basic human rights.

A close-up photograph of a diverse group of people. In the center, a young woman wearing a black hijab is smiling broadly, looking towards the left. To her right, an older woman with curly hair and a brown jacket looks on with a serious expression. In the foreground, the back of a man's head wearing a black beanie and glasses is visible. The background shows other people, including one with white hair on the left.

Pledge

Commit to preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights, including rights to religious slaughter, male circumcision and wearing of religious dress or symbols.

Muslim youth and education

The Muslim population in Britain has a very young demographic profile. According to the 2011 census, 33% of Muslims in Britain are aged 15 or under.¹¹ At the same time, they continue to face significant economic disadvantages, with **46% of Muslims living in the 10% most deprived districts in England and Wales.**¹² BME students, including Muslims, are also less likely to have parents in higher management careers, go on to 'elite' universities, or gain first-class degrees.¹³

Bullying motivated by racism also remains a widespread problem in schools with Childline's *Can I Tell you Something* report highlighting a 69% increase in racist bullying. This report also emphasised frequently used terms as being **bomber** and **terrorist**.¹⁴

In addition to this, the NSPCC recently reported an increase in helpline calls relating to racial and religious bullying or hate crimes in Manchester and London.¹⁵ Muslim, as well as Sikh, Christian, Black and Jewish children as young as nine have contacted the helplines, **some of whom have reported that the treatment they have experienced is so cruel that they have physically harmed themselves**, and many have expressed a wish to be someone else.¹⁶



Pledges

Commit to developing teaching materials to educate young people on Islamophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism, and prioritise religious education in the national curriculum to prepare young people for life in a religiously plural society.

Commit to strengthening powers of teachers to deal with racist and Islamophobic bullying in schools, whilst supporting the education sector in developing Islamophobia awareness training programmes designed to equip staff with the skills to identify and tackle hate incidents in schools.

Employment and labour market participation

According to a study conducted by the London Development Agency, young **British Muslims will have accounted for one quarter of the growth in the UK's working age population** between 2008 and 2018.¹⁷ Despite this, Muslims experience a significant level of disadvantage in the labour market.

Studies have shown that **Muslims are paid between 13–21% less than their Christian counterparts.**¹⁸ Simultaneously, **there is evidence that CVs submitted under a non-Muslim name are three times more likely to solicit an offer for interview than those with a Muslim name attached.**¹⁹ Furthermore, a survey conducted by MEND, involving over 1,000 people, discovered that around two thirds of Muslim women feel that they have been treated differently due to wearing a hijab.

This survey further confirmed that Muslims felt that they were discriminated against during the recruitment process, as well as in the workplace environment in a report by the Kings Fund on discrimination in the NHS, **Muslims were more likely to report discrimination than any other religious group.**²⁰ They are also frequently victims of frustrated ambitions as they are under-represented in the higher positions within their professions. **A Demos report 'Rising to the Top' in 2015 revealed that 'British Muslims were less proportionately represented in the managerial and professional occupations than any other religious group.'**²¹



Pledge

Commit to tackling religious discrimination in the workplace and address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion, and improving access to employment for British Muslim women in particular.

Media negativity and community integration

Studies by Lancaster University and Cardiff University demonstrate the extraordinary level of prejudice Muslims suffer from parts of the mainstream media.²² Such academic studies show that **for every one positive or neutral reference to Muslims in print press, there are 21 negative references**. Meanwhile, Muslims are often stereotyped as ‘the other’, backwards, violent, extremist and opposed to British values. This is despite the fact that British Muslims declare the highest ‘loyalty to the UK’, alongside British Sikhs.

Debates on issues of integration and social cohesion are permeated by the growing problem of far-right extremism, coupled by no clear governmental definition of ‘extremism’ – let alone ‘non-violent extremism’. Political events such as Brexit and the rise of the political far-right across Europe have given fresh impetus to hostility against Islam and Muslims.

In April 2017, the cross-party think-tank, Demos, presented their analysis of anti-Islamic content on Twitter between March 2016–March 2017. During this period, analysts discovered that **143,920 Tweets** had been sent from the UK that are considered to be derogatory and anti-Islamic – **this amounts to 393 a day**.²³



Pledge

Commit to media reform and the full implementation of the Royal Charter on a Leveson compliant regulator.

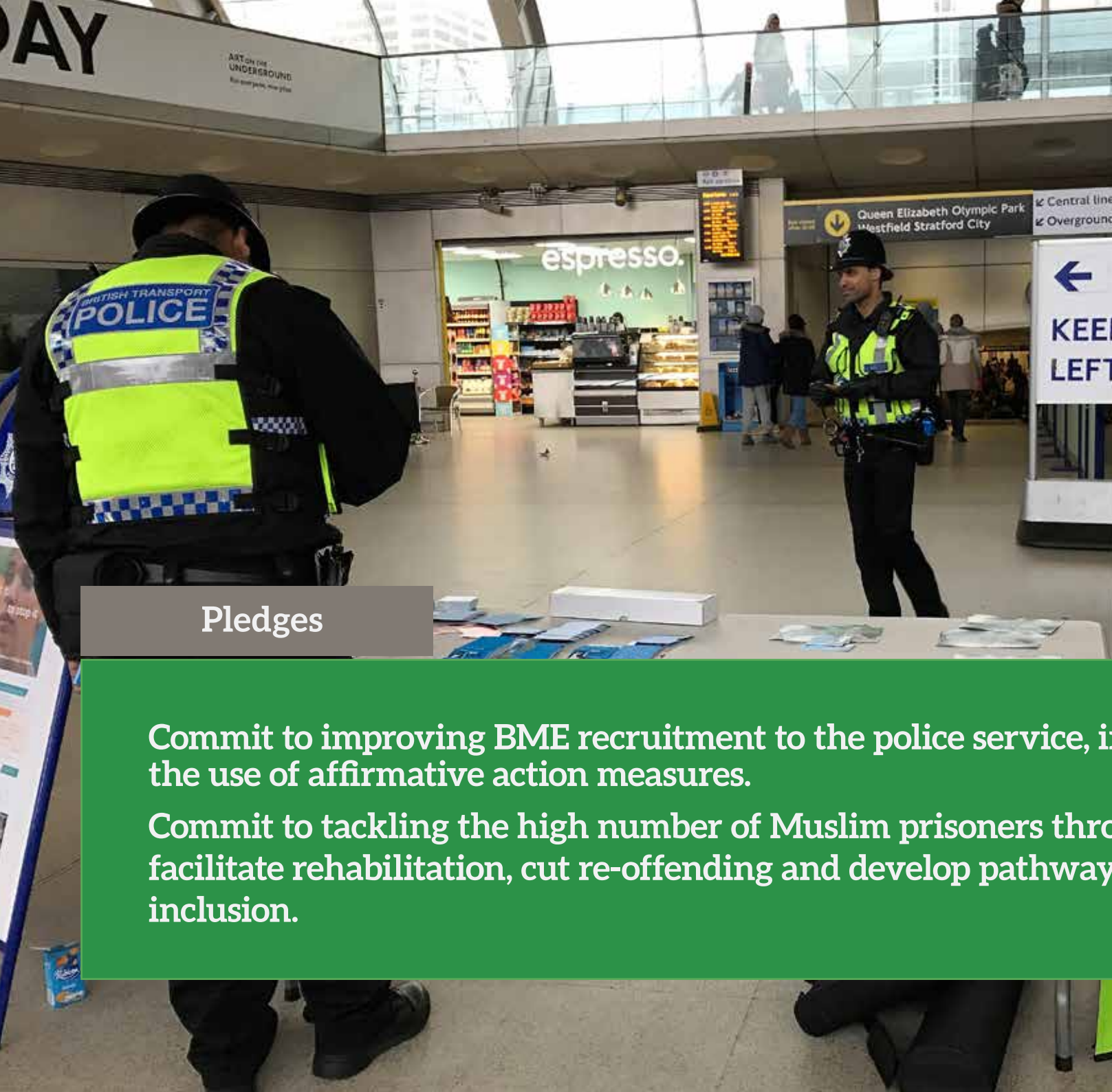
Crime and policing

The disproportionate use of Stop and Search and Schedule 7 powers on minority communities continues to demonstrate their impact. Although welcome steps have been made in both areas, further work is required to ensure racial and religious stereotyping is prevented.

By 2002, the ratio of black to white stops had reached 8 to 1,²⁴ while figures published by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission in separate reports in 2010 and 2013 found that this ratio continues to be unacceptably high.²¹ Similar findings were seen in 2015/16, with those from **BME groups being three times more likely to be stopped and searched than their white counterparts**. Furthermore, figures showed that just 16% of stops led to an arrest, with **76% of stops resulting in “no further action”**.²⁵

A survey by the HMIC of 391 BME people revealed that police officers may not be following stop and search procedure in all cases: **42% of respondents said they did not understand why they were stopped and searched; 47% felt they were not treated with respect; and 37% said they were not told the reason why there were stopped and searched**.²⁶

Furthermore, while the representation of minority communities within the police force has improved, the overall representation still remains low and short of the current targets. Moreover, there is an urgent need to tackle the continuing growth in Muslim prisoner numbers. In April 2017, it was revealed that Muslims constitute 15.2% of the prison population, despite representing only 4% of the general population over the age of 15.²⁷



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Muslim
engagement
& development

mend.org.uk

Pledges

Commit to improving BME recruitment to the police service, including through the use of affirmative action measures.

Commit to tackling the high number of Muslim prisoners through schemes to facilitate rehabilitation, cut re-offending and develop pathways for social inclusion.

mend.org.uk

International affairs and human rights promotion abroad

Regarding Britain's foreign and international policies, Muslim countries have consistently been in the spotlight since 2001. The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan continue to have resonance, as do the allegations of abuse and ill-treatment against citizens of those countries at the hands of the British Armed Forces. These revelations have been accompanied by government inquiries into the kidnapping and rendering of terrorist suspects by the Secret Intelligence Service and the Security Services.

Developments since 2015 also include the rise in hate crimes against Muslims in the aftermath of the vote to leave the European Union, as well as the attempts by US President, Donald Trump, to ban people from a number of Muslim countries from entering the USA.

Furthermore, the ongoing conflict and continued illegal settlement building in Occupied Palestine is of global concern. It is imperative that there is a return to meaningful negotiations resulting in a much needed resolution. This must be followed by an immediate recognition of the State of Palestine.

It is to be hoped that the next government will learn from Britain's recent military misadventures in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and will instead work with international institutions to peacefully promote the rule of law and the spread of human rights.



Pledges

Commit to support for the creation of an independent state of Palestine and the end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories by December 2017.

Commit to democracy and human rights promotion abroad, including the rights of religious minorities.

APPENDIX

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