

# HUSTINGS QUESTIONS 2019

## Racial and Religious Equality

1. *Commit to adopting the definition of Islamophobia produced by the APPG for British Muslims: "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness", and apply this definition in conjunction with the guidelines that MEND has produced.*
2. *Commit to a review of the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act with a view to strengthening legal protections afforded to religious communities.*
3. *Implement primary legislation to deal with social media offences and hate speech online and commit to working with social media companies to protect free speech while developing an efficient strategy to tackle hate speech online in consultation with Muslim grassroots organisations.*
4. *Commit to financing mosque security in a manner that is proportional to risk, in line with what is already correctly provided to Jewish religious institutions.*

- According to Government figures for 2018/19 nearly half of the victims of religious hate crime are Muslims
- The same figures show that Racial and religious hate crimes have been rising in recent years across the UK
- Research by the think-tank Demos has shown 400 derogatory and anti-Islamic tweets per day in the UK
- Despite this, we still don't have an official definition of Islamophobia.

### **1. Will you support the APPG on British Muslims definition of Islamophobia "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness"?**

- Earlier this year we witnessed two devastating attacks on mosques in Christchurch that led to the deaths of 50 Muslims
- Research from the advocacy group MEND found that there were over 200 reported attacks on mosques in the UK 2016-2018
- Mosques are feeling increasingly vulnerable given the rise of the far-right
- The Government commendably gives £14 million to the Jewish community to protect Jewish schools and synagogues, yet there is no similar regular funding given to any mosque,

**2. Will you commit to financing security mosque and Muslim schools in a similar manner to that which is provided to synagogues and Jewish schools?**

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## **Youth and Education**

5. *Commit to prioritising PSRE and PSHE within the national curriculum and ensure grassroots Muslim organisations are enlisted to assist in developing teaching materials to educate young people on the dangers of Islamophobia.*
6. *Commit to supporting academic freedoms and initiatives to decolonise education, whilst giving greater emphasis within the national curriculum to shared histories and the contributions of minority communities in building our society.*
7. *Commit to developing training programmes for teachers focussed on tackling and addressing bullying based on race, religion, disability, or sexuality.*
8. *Commit to supporting faith school provisions in the state sector for Muslim pupils and parents.*
9. *Commit to implementing Shariah-compliant student loans to encourage more British Muslim students to attend university.*

- NSPCC has reported a rise in racial abuse in bullying from 2015-2018
- Muslim children are being called names like terrorist and bomber
- Childline held over 2500 counselling sessions for faith-based bullying over approximately the past 3 years
- NSPCC have reported that the bullying is so bad that children are trying to whiten their skin and self-harm by cutting themselves as a result

**3. Do you agree that the Government should commit to mandatory teaching Islamophobia in schools as part of the PSHE curriculum?**

**4. Would you support the development of training programmes to tackle bullying based on race, religion, disability, or sexuality?**

## **The Labour Market**

10. *Commit to tackling religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion.*
11. *Commit to the use of name-blind applications and targeted interventions within employment aimed at tackling the triple penalty and improving access to employment for British Muslim women specifically.*
12. *Commit to supporting employers to recognise and accommodate religious festivals and religious observance within the workplace, including the provision of halal meat, prayer rooms, and flexible work hours during Ramadan.*
  - BBC research found that identical CVs submitted under a Muslim name were three times less likely to be offered an interview than those with a non-Muslim name.
  - MEND undertook a survey of over 1000 British Muslims and found that 29% felt that they had been discriminated against when turned down for a job, and over a third felt that they had been discriminated against in seeking a promotion
  - The Race Disparity Audit found that the unemployment rate in White British population is 4%, but in Pakistani and Bangladeshi population it is 11%, nearly three times more .

**5. Would you support legislation to introduce name blind job applications across the public and private sector to reduce discrimination?**

**6. How do you plan on incentivise employees to be more accommodating to the needs of the U.K.'s religious minorities?**

## **Media and Broadcasting**

13. *Commit to the full implementation of the Royal Charter on press regulation.*
14. *Commit to the commencement of the second part of the Leveson Inquiry, including an investigation into the prevalence of Islamophobia within the media.*
15. *Support initiatives by the broadcasting industry to promote positive portrayals of Muslims in the media.*

- Research from Lancaster University showed that for every one positive or neutral reference to Muslims or Islam there are 21 negative references
- The campaign group Hacked Off has described The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) as *“neither independent, nor effective ... it won't even consider discrimination complaints about coverage targeting groups of people. Millions of people can be affected in this way. Some of the most serious abuse affects Muslims, travellers, transgender people, and other LGBT people.”*
- The then Secretary Of State For Digital Culture Media & Sport Mr Matt Hancock effectively cancelled the second part of the Leveson enquiry in 2018 and has praised IPSO describing it as an *“effective self regulator”*.

**7. We all value a free press but is the press in this country fair or accountable?**

**8. Would you support the second part of the Leveson Inquiry and full implementation of the Royal Charter on Press Regulation?**

## **Crime, Policing, and the Criminal Justice System**

16. *Commit to investigating structural Islamophobia within the Criminal Justice System.*

- Muslims make up 5% of the UK population yet comprise 15% of prisoners, an increase of 50% over the past decade or so
- Only 1% of Muslims in prison are held for terror-related offences
- BME people make up 14% of the UK population yet comprise 25% of prisoners
- The Lammy review into the treatment of BME people in the Criminal Justice System found that BME defendants were more likely than white defendants to receive custodial sentences for drug offences

**9. Do you believe the Criminal Justice system to be fair to BME and Muslims?**

**10. What would you do to address these disparities?**

## Security and Counter-Terror

17. *Commit to independently reviewing all counter-terrorism legislation enacted since 2000 with a view to curbing the encroachment of counter-terrorism policies on civil liberties.*

18. *Commit to recognising the role of UK foreign policy in individuals being drawn to political violence.*

- Muslims are 40 times more likely to be referred to Prevent than non-Muslims
- Only 5% of those referred received extra support under something called the Channel Programme in 2017/18
- It is not based on any credible peer reviewed research, yet when the then Security Minister in charge of Prevent, Ben Wallace was asked in an interview in 2019 about the evidence base for Prevent he replied, *I think my evidence base is I do believe its working."*
- Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act gives powers to stop and search at ports and airports without "reasonable suspicion"
- Equality and Human Rights Commission found that people from Asian and other ethnic groups were 11 times more likely to be stopped and questioned
- British Pakistani male is 52 times more likely to be 'stopped and questioned' at an airport than a white male, and 154 more times likely to be detained

**11. Do you believe the Prevent programme should be scrapped and we should effectively start again?**

**12. Should a criterion of 'reasonable suspicion' be introduced to stop discriminatory targeting of BME and Muslims at airports?**

## Political Engagement

19. *Commit to proactively engaging and consulting with representative and grassroots organisations within British Muslim communities, including but not limited to Muslim Engagement and Development.*

20. *Commit to recognising that Palestinian activism is a legitimate form of political dialogue and commit to protecting the rights of British Muslims to advocate and support Palestinians' right to self-determination.*

- Muslims make up 5% of the UK population yet only 2% of MPs in the last Parliament were Muslim
- The Citizens UK report in 2017 entitled Missing Muslims stated that the Government need to effectively stop boycotting certain Muslim organisations and mend the “broken relationship” that there exists here
- The last Government refused to deal with Muslim Council of Britain or MEND, both national Muslim organisations

**13. Do you think the Government should deal with representative grassroots Muslim organisations like MEND?**

**14. What would you do to improve the marginalisation and exclusion of Muslims in the political system?**

- The Conservative Party has failed to address Islamophobia in its ranks and to hold an independent inquiry into this matter
- When Baroness Warsi criticised her own party for failing to tackle Islamophobia the Health Secretary went on Radio 4’s Today program to suggest that there were others in the party “who take a more balanced view”

**15. Should the Conservative Party now hold an independent inquiry into Islamophobia within its ranks?**

**16. Should there be ‘balanced views’ of concepts such as Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and racism?**

## **Minority Rights and Integration**

21. *Commit to preserving human rights and the protection of minority rights, including, but not limited to, the rights to religious slaughter, male circumcision and the wearing of religious dress or symbols as currently enshrined within UK legislation.*
22. *Commit to supporting the protections afforded by the EU Equal Treatment Directive to advance protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion to education, healthcare, housing, access to goods and services and social protection, within UK law post-Brexit.*

- In 2017 Amanda Spielman, Chief Inspector of Schools voiced concerns about young girls wearing hijab being 'sexualised' and announced plans to question girls wearing them, although there were no plans to question Sikh or Jewish children
- In 2018 a primary school in Newham, East London banned the wearing of the hijab, a decision subsequently reversed after objections from the local community
- In 2018 Lancashire 2018 we saw the first ban on unstunned halal meat being supplied to schools by Lancashire Council, despite opposition from Lancashire Council of Mosques.
- In 2018 Boris Johnson wrote an article in which he compared Muslim women in niqab to "letterboxes" and "bank robbers". Since this time we have had reports of other Muslim women in niqab being abused and attacked

**17. What assurances can you give to Muslim communities that the religious rights they currently enjoy in the UK will not be taken away post Brexit?**