

MEND Presentations FAQs

Please see below a list of questions and answers that you may face while delivering a MEND presentation. Some of these questions relate to MEND and Islamophobia generally, while others deal with content in MEND presentations.

Q. __ (Racism / Sexism / Anti-Semitism / Homophobia) __ are also important issues, why are you focusing on only Islamophobia?

As an organisation the primary community we seek to serve is the Muslim community, so our work is directed towards this community. Additionally our area of expertise is in the field of Islamophobia, just as others are experts in other protected characteristics fields, making them best placed to work in those areas.

The other issues mentioned are also very important issues and we stand against discrimination and hatred of other communities. At times, there are also crossovers in our work, for example when dealing with issues such as gendered Islamophobia, and the fact that there are close ties between racism and Islamophobia.

Q. Does MEND work with broader communities/ groups, for example the LGBTQ+ community or anti-racism groups to deal with issues in an intersectional manner?

(This question broadly aims to illustrate some of the questions we've had around MEND's stance on working with various groups)

We work alongside groups that want to specifically tackle hatred and discrimination as this is our primary goal with Islamophobia, these collaborations serve the purpose of enacting our main goal of tackling Islamophobia.

Q. Most people are not Islamophobic in their daily lives so why do we need to raise awareness about Islamophobia?

The first step to creating change is raising awareness, and the more awareness we raise the closer we are to that change. Hate crime statistics would suggest that Islamophobic hate crimes are on the rise so it is important to educate communities. There are also many cases that don't get reported so we still do not know how extensive the problem is.

Some elements of Islamophobia might not be so obvious, such as microaggressions, unconscious discrimination, institutional Islamophobia and so on.

(You can reference the iceberg graphic from the C&C [here](#))

In general, Islamophobia is a societal problem so we should all be working to tackle it together.

Q. Islamophobia does not seem to be that prevalent right now, why are you focusing on it now?

Contrarily, the post 9/11 world has shown a drastic increase in Islamophobia, not to mention the growing threat of the far-right – so Islamophobia is more prevalent than we may think it is. Hate crime statistics also show that Islamophobia is increasing year by year.

There are also some forms of Islamophobia that go unnoticed and unchallenged, for example microaggressions, so this is why we choose to holistically work on the issue of Islamophobia.

We also understand that Muslims do not make up the large majority of the population in this country, so it is hard for many non-muslims to know or understand Islamophobia, with that in mind we must increase awareness amongst non-Muslims and Muslims alike.

(You can reference the responses to the question above here)

Q. If you're focusing on Islamophobia shouldn't you also talk about religious extremism and how that affects people's lives?

(This question deflects onto a topic that is not directly relevant in the discussion of Islamophobia)

While we condemn all forms of violence and religious extremism, which some have argued is a vague term in itself, it is not feasible or within the objectives of MEND to centre this as we centre the issue of Islamophobia.

Importantly, the proposed ties between Islam and religious extremism have also significantly shaped Islamophobia as phenomenon.

Like other issues, it is important to critically reflect upon why religious extremism (or extremists) have come to represent Islam and Muslims as a whole, and how this also demonises the Muslim community and Muslim individuals.

Q. The U.K. is not as bad as other countries, shouldn't we consider ourselves lucky/thankful?

While Muslims in the U.K. enjoy certain privileges we must use this to make sure we are standing up for injustices at home and globally. It is part of our rights to speak up on these issues, and to tackle them at all levels and stages.

Q. There are bigger issues affecting Muslim communities globally, e.g. global poverty, why should Islamophobia be an important concern for Muslims in the U.K.?

Each individual can decide for themselves which issue they should focus on - but collectively as a community we should address all these issues. Islamophobia targets our Muslim identity and harms the fabric of our communities. As we have seen in recent years Islamophobia affects Muslims across the globe, so we must collectively work against it. Some would also consider standing against Islamophobia an Islamic duty.

Islamophobia can also feed into other welfare issues, many Muslim are unable to access work opportunities because of this, and Islamophobia can also feed into issues of poverty, for example we must consider that over 50% of Muslims live in the 10 poorest areas of the UK.

Q. If we're focusing on Islamophobia all the time, doesn't that mean Muslims are making themselves into victims?

While MEND does a great deal to highlight how Islamophobia poses many hardships for Muslims, we similarly celebrate the success stories of Muslims by highlighting how Muslims have contributed to British society. MEND has invested a great deal into creating educational resources that can empower Muslims. Our Islamophobia Response Unit also frequently highlights success stories in the cases they deal with.

Q. Why do Muslims need to be told about Islamophobia, shouldn't we focus on educating non-Muslim communities?

Surprisingly there is a lack of knowledge about Islamophobia in our very own communities, although it's difficult to answer why that is, we know that we must remedy this and make sure British Muslims know their rights and are actively involved in tackling Islamophobia in their daily lives and in their communities. Aside from this, MEND dedicates a significant amount of time and resources to working with non-Muslim communities through our wider engagement programmes.

(Give examples of wider engagement in your local area/ working group)

Q. What is MEND's stance on the many definitions of Islamophobia? What is MEND doing to get a definition widely implemented/accepted?

MEND supports the APPG on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia but with the addition of MEND guidelines, which can be found on the MEND website under our resources, search for 'More than words report'.

MEND has also worked with local councils to implement the definition, for example Leicester and Newham councils accepted the APPG definition thanks to the efforts of the local community, including MEND Working Groups and volunteers.

Q. If more Muslims should be involved in the Media and Politics then why have more Muslims not entered these fields?

Part of this involves the barriers which prevent those of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, or those of lower classes, entering these fields. Lack of workplace diversity also feeds into this. Another part of this is the need to increase media and politics literacy in our community which MEND aims to do through our masterclasses.

Q. What is MEND's stance on engagement with openly Islamophobic politicians/individuals? Or how does MEND engage with these people? (For example, our Prime Minister is known to have made openly Islamophobic remarks.)

We have been known to hold such individuals to account whether that is through official complaints, demanding apologies or offering Islamophobia training.

For example, we held Jack Straw accountable for his anti-niqab comments at a hustings in Blackburn -

<https://www.mend.org.uk/jack-straw-apologises-for-his-anti-niqab-comments-at-engage-hustings-in-blackburn/?mode=list>

Additionally we have run campaigns calling out Islamophobia from other elected officials.

Q. Can Islamophobic views be reformed? What is the best way to do this?

Open and honest dialogue can reform misunderstandings, and raising awareness is at the centre of what we do as an organisation.

Q. People claim that Muslims are using Islamophobia to deflect from criticism, how do we address this issue?

We need to consider the line between criticism of faith and when this becomes hatred. Often hatred is disguised as criticism, so we must keep this in mind when discussing this topic. Criticism of Islam is acceptable if done respectfully, but when one incites hatred towards Islam or Muslims then it is no longer acceptable.

Q. Does MEND work with broader communities/ groups, for example the LGBTQ+ community or anti-racism groups to deal with issues in an intersectional manner?

(This question broadly aims to illustrate some of the questions we've had around MEND's stance on working with various groups)

We work alongside groups that want to specifically tackle hatred and discrimination as this is our primary goal with Islamophobia, these collaborations serve the purpose of enacting our main goal of tackling Islamophobia.

Q. What is MEND's stance on the Palestine-Israel conflict?

As an organisation we want politicians to recognise that Palestinian activism is a legitimate form of political dialogue and we want them to commit to protecting the rights of British Muslims to advocate and support Palestinian's right to self-determination.

(The above is from MEND Policy Pledges which can be found on the website)

Q. How does MEND negotiate working with the police despite issues of institutional racism/ police brutality within police forces?

We encourage Muslims to join the police force while holding the police force accountable for the issues raised in the question.

Q. How does MEND make sure it is politically neutral and not in favour of any single political party?

MEND makes sure that it approaches ALL parties with our Policy Pledges (during elections) and we invite politicians from all the various parties to be involved in our hustings as well as our webinars/events. However, as an organisation we cannot guarantee whether the parties or politicians will respond to our invitations or not.

Q. Does MEND work with Tell Mama?

While there are many Muslim organisations that we work with, we choose to work with those organisations that enjoy the support of Muslim communities and avoid others who have historically engaged with inherently Islamophobic institutions and Muslim communities have a lack of faith in.

Q. What is MEND's stance on Prevent?

We're critical of Prevent because it severely damages Muslim communities and demonises Muslims, we are pushing for a review of Prevent with the goal to repeal Prevent itself. There are other organisations who work in-depth on this such as Prevent Watch, NUS also tackles this to some degree. Our view is that Prevent should be repealed.

Q. Has MEND dealt with charges of anti-semitism against the organisation?

As an organisation we absolutely condemn anti-semitism. Anti-semitic remarks that were made by individuals associated with MEND were either made before they joined the organisation or subsequently provided full apologies.

Additionally strict internal policies have been implemented which take a no tolerance approach to all forms of hatred.

Q. Are there other organisations that we can be involved with (because MEND is seen to be extreme)?

We advise each individual to research various organisations out there and find an organisation that shares the same values you hold and are comfortable with working. There are various masajids, community organisations and human rights orgs that all do great work.

(Feel free to mention any local organisations that are supportive of MEND).

Q. As a Muslim organisation, why are there un-Islamic elements in your presentations?

We appreciate that some may find certain elements of MENDs output unislamic. Where possible we try to be cognisant of community sensitivities and appreciate any feedback.

Q. What are the latest stats?/Why are the stats outdated?

Data release is often delayed when it comes to certain institutions so this can affect how often we are able to update our statistics. We as MEND have a dedicated policy team which aims to keep all our presentations up to date.

Q. Do you have a reading list related to the content of the presentation/masterclass?

The MEND website has a range of resources that you can use to further your learning today. If you click under resources on our website: www.mend.org.uk you can browse topics that suit your interest, such as media, politics, policies etc.

Q. Can I get the PowerPoint slides?

We can send PDFs. (*Clarify that not all slides may send because of slides where there are multiple slides in one - **send the PPT with a MEND watermark as a PDF***)

Q. Where can I find out more? (Useful links)

The MEND website has many resources and briefing papers which are very insightful, you can also attend/watch other MEND events (i.e. Masterclasses, upcoming webinars) to build on what was discussed in today's presentation.

If you have any other questions that you would like to add on please email Aman Ali at aman.ali@mend.org.uk