

Islamophobia Inquiry: the Muslim Council of Britain's Submission to the Home Affairs Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) founded in 1997 is an inclusive, democratic umbrella body of mosques and Islamic associations that seeks to represent the common interest of Muslims in Britain. It is pledged to work for the common good of society as a whole.
- 1.2. The Muslim Council of Britain's affiliate base of over 500 organisations reflects the diversity of Muslims in the UK. It comprises of mosques, educational and charitable bodies, cultural and relief agencies and women and youth groups and associations across the UK from a range of ethnic, geographical and theological backgrounds and traditions.
- 1.3. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) provided evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in December 2016¹ and also supplementary evidence – as requested – in February 2017.² This submission responds to the latest call for evidence and is structured as follows:
 - Section 2: Current extent of Islamophobia in British society
 - Section 3: Definition of Islamophobia
 - Section 4: Role in politics

2. Current extent of Islamophobia in British society

- 2.1. Whilst the previous submissions cover this topic in detail, three main areas that are typical with any form of racism are addressed here:
 - Negative attitudes towards Muslims as a group
 - Prejudice felt by Muslims, as well as physical and verbal abuse against Muslims
 - Institutional or structural discrimination faced by Muslims

Negative attitudes towards Muslims as a group

- 2.2. Conspiracy theories about Muslims are well established within a section of British society that is unfortunately not insignificant:
 - 18% believe “Muslim immigration to this country is part of a bigger plan to make Muslims a majority of this country’s population”³
 - 32% believe there are “no-go areas in Britain where Sharia law dominates and non-Muslims cannot enter”⁴
 - 31% of young children believe that Muslims are taking over England⁵
 - The average Briton believes 15% of the population are Muslim (actually it is c.5%), and that Muslims will make up 22% of the population by 2020 (forecast at c.6%)⁶

¹ Muslim Council of Britain (“[Hate Crime and its Violent Consequences: Written evidence submitted](#)”), December 2016

² Muslim Council of Britain (“[Hate Crime and its Violent Consequences: the Muslim Council of Britain's Supplementary Submission to the Home Affairs Committee](#)”), February 2017

³ YouGov – Conspiracy Theories (GB), August 2018

⁴ YouGov – Hope Not Hate exclusive survey of more than 10,300 people, reported in Independent (“[Third of British people wrongly believe there are Muslim ‘no-go areas’ in UK governed by sharia law](#)”) October 2018

⁵ Show Racism The Red Card – based on 6000 school children responding to questionnaires sent to more than 60 schools as reported in Guardian (“[Racist and anti-immigration views held by children revealed in schools study](#)”), May 2015

⁶ Ipsos Mori – Perils of Perception survey, December 2016

2.3. There are a series of worrying social attitudes about Muslims:

- 22% had negative feelings towards Muslims⁷
- 33% believe that equal opportunities have gone too far when it comes to Muslims⁸
- 43% concerned if mosque built near them⁹
- 22% concerned if Muslim family moved next door¹⁰
- 30% would object to their child visiting a mosque¹¹
- 58% blame the media for the rampant Islamophobia in UK¹²
- 47% would not be willing to accept Muslims as members of their family (the worst figure in Western Europe after Italy (57%)¹³

Impact towards Muslim communities

2.4. The statistics on physical and verbal abuse experienced by Muslims have been shared with the Committee previously. Rather than repeat the evidence, below are two recent figures that demonstrate the seriousness of the issue:

- 70% of Muslims reported they experienced religion-based prejudice in the last year¹⁴
- More than half of religiously-motivated attacks in 2017-18 (which has rocketed by 40% in the last year) were directed at Muslims¹⁵

Institutional or structural discrimination faced by Muslims

2.5. Unfortunately, Islamophobia overshadows many areas of British life. The structural challenges facing Muslims are well established. For example:

- **Employment:**
 - A job seeker with an English-sounding name was offered three times the number of interviews than an applicant with a Muslim name¹⁶
 - One in five Muslim adults in full-time work, compared with 35% of the overall population, with Muslim men and women being held back in the workplace by widespread Islamophobia, racism and discrimination¹⁷
 - Applicants from minority ethnic backgrounds had to send 80% more applications to get a positive response from an employer than a white person of British origin. The researchers said the high levels of discrimination from countries with a sizeable Muslim population echoed “strong anti-Muslim attitudes recorded in recent surveys”.¹⁸
 - Muslim men were up to 76% less likely to have a job of any kind compared to white, male British Christians of the same age and with the same qualifications; Muslim women were up to 65% less likely to be employed than white Christian counterparts.¹⁹

⁷ [Equalities and Human Rights Commission](#) - Developing a national barometer of prejudice and discrimination in Britain, October 2018

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ [Comres](#) - MEND Islamophobia poll October 2018: A survey of British adults on Islamophobia in British society, October 2018

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ [Pew Research Center](#) - Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues, October 2018

¹⁴ [Equalities and Human Rights Commission](#) - Developing a national barometer of prejudice and discrimination in Britain, October 2018

¹⁵ Home Office figures as reported in Independent (“[Religious hate crime rises 40% in England and Wales – with more than half directed at Muslims](#)”), October 2018

¹⁶ BBC (“[Is it easier to get a job if you're Adam or Mohamed?](#)”), February 2017

¹⁷ Social Mobility Commission, as cited in Guardian (“[Islamophobia holding back UK Muslims in workplace, study finds](#)”), September 2017

¹⁸ Centre for Social Investigation (Nuffield College Oxford) (“[Are employers in Britain discriminating against ethnic minorities?](#)”), January 2019, as cited in Guardian (“[Minority ethnic Britons face 'shocking' job discrimination](#)”), January 2019

¹⁹ Bristol University, as cited in Independent (“[British Muslims face worst job discrimination of any minority group, according to research](#)”), November 2014

- **Education:**
 - The “Trojan Horse scandal” in Birmingham schools has been criticised for manufacturing allegations of a conspiracy to take over state schools by “Islamist extremists”. The Guardian investigation into this matter concluded: “Three years after the Trojan horse letter surfaced, there is still no proof that a conspiracy existed.”²⁰
- **Security:**
 - *Police officers:* often viewed sceptically within Muslim communities, with Islamophobic attitudes replacing institutional racism as a reason to avoid the police service as a career.²¹
 - *Prevent:* The Runnymede Trust in its report on Islamophobia discusses the Prevent strategy, stating “there is substantial evidence...the current Prevent policy is discriminatory [in its application towards Muslims], disproportionate and counterproductive.”²²
- **Everyday life**
 - **Looking for a flat:** It has been demonstrated that those seeking a flat with a Muslim name get fewer replies.²³
 - **Trying to get insurance:** Motorists pay more to insure their cars if their name is Mohammed.²⁴
- **Politics:** Following the MCB’s first call for the Conservative Party to initiate an inquiry on Islamophobia within its ranks, a number of Muslims aspiring to enter politics voiced their experiences that the playing field is not even when it comes to the selection of Muslims.²⁵ See section 4 for further details, including the impact of the language used by politicians.

3. Definition of Islamophobia

3.1. The **usage of the term Islamophobia** is well-established and its usage spans across the globe beyond academics and researchers, to mainstream communities, police and media, including our own Prime Minister, all of whom understand what the term means. Islamophobia is not a perfect term, but neither are other similar terms such as anti-Semitism – nor do they necessarily need to be. Different wording makes little impact to the average bigot. Consider the term “anti-Semitism”, for example. Literally, it would refer to bigotry against Semites (defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as the Arabs and Jews of the Middle East). However, its meaning is defined and well understood to be bigotry against Jews in particular. Furthermore, the definition goes beyond simple hate and includes anti-Semitic tropes still commonplace in many sections of our society. If someone were to try to claim that an Arab could not be anti-Semitic because an Arab is a Semite, they would roundly and rightly be condemned as playing semantic games.

3.2. The cross-party All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims has taken in evidence from a range of sources and has proposed a definition: “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness”²⁶

²⁰ Guardian (“Trojan horse: the real story behind the fake ‘Islamic plot’ to take over schools”), September 2017

²¹ Awan, I., Blakemore, B., and Simpson, K. (2013) ‘Muslim communities’ attitudes towards and recruitment into the British police service’. International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice, 41(4): 421–437, as cited in leading equality think tank the Runnymede Trust’s [report](#) (“Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all”), 2017

²² The Runnymede Trust (“Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all”), 2017; words in brackets added for clarity. See also Muslim Council of Britain (“Parliamentary Briefing – Amendment calling for an Independent Review of Prevent”), November 2018

²³ Guardian (“Flatshare bias: room-seekers with Muslim name get fewer replies”), December 2018

²⁴ The Sun, (“MO COMPARE Motorists fork out £1,000 more to insure their cars if their name is Mohammed”), January 2018

²⁵ Conservative Home (“Imtiaz Ameen: The Conservative Party needs to start solving its Muslim problem. Again.”), June 2017

²⁶ APPG on British Muslims, (“Islamophobia Defined - The inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia”), November 2018

3.3. We believe that the Home Affairs Select Committee should recommend adoption of this definition, given it fulfils the key requirements of any such definition:

- **Effective in protecting Muslims equally to other groups:** the definition specifically does not give any extra protection for Muslims compared to others who are subject to racism yet by not using the very restricted term “anti-Muslim hatred”, the definition recognises the multi-faceted nature of Islamophobia from subtle dinner-table Islamophobia, verbal and physical abuse, discrimination and structural Islamophobia, most of which would not fall under the scope of “hatred”.
- **Easy to use:** the concise definition builds on a well-understood concept of racism that is recognised in the wider public.
- **Credible:** the definition has come following a consultation by senior MPs and Lords from all the main parties, and has the endorsement of over 70 academics specifically in the field or adjacent field, including the top experts in the UK.²⁷
- **Community support:** The definition of this term has been endorsed by a cross section of British Muslims – the Muslim Council of Britain as the largest umbrella body of Muslim organisations in the UK; councils of mosques representing 100s of mosques; other Muslim organisations including British Muslims for Secular Democracy and Muslim Women’s Network; Muslim professional bodies; and other organisations across the UK have endorsed this definition.²⁸

3.4. **Criticism of the definition:** We are not surprised that ideologues with a track-record in peddling bigotry have objected against the term. We deal with the main criticisms here:

- **“Islamophobia is not a type of racism”** – in reality, Islamophobia is a type of racism. Whilst some (especially on the far-right) try and argue that Islam is not a race and therefore Muslims cannot suffer from racism, this argument lacks any merit. Despite Muslims being from diverse ethnic backgrounds, they are often racialised and discriminated against based on their name, their perceived cultural identity or beliefs. This is well established by the leading academics in the field, and affirmed with over 70 academics endorsing the APPG definition.²⁹ The Runnymede Trust in its 1997 Report popularised the term Islamophobia as it recognised racism against Muslims was going unchallenged because Muslims were not considered to be a ‘racial’ group.
- **“Islamophobia will stifle criticism of Islam”**. Being critical of Islam does not make one an Islamophobe.
By explicitly aligning Islamophobia with racism, the definition lays to rest the false claims that Muslim communities want to stifle freedom of speech or criticism of Islam. The definition is clear that any criticism of Islam that did not use the language of racism (e.g. racist tropes, stereotypes, language etc.) to target expressions of Muslimness would not be considered Islamophobic. It is worth noting that there are some who hide behind the “criticism of Islam” as they attempt to legitimise their bigotry, such as author Douglas Murray who is on record saying that “less Islam is a solution to terrorism.”³⁰ While using the term “Islam”, it is clear he is talking about Muslims. For example, he states: “Eastern Europe does not have a problem with Islamic terrorism because it does not have much Islam,”³¹ i.e. we need fewer Muslims to keep British shores safe. This is not “criticism of Islam” and falls well within the scope of Islamophobia.

²⁷ [Islamophobia Definition website](#), Endorsement - Academics

²⁸ [Islamophobia Definition website](#), Endorsement - Groups

²⁹ [Islamophobia Definition website](#), Endorsement - Academics

³⁰ [Never mind singing John Lennon songs... if we want peace then we need one thing – less Islam](#), Douglas Murray in The Sun, June 2017

³¹ BBC Sunday Politics, 28 May 2017: clip available on [Twitter](#)

- **“Islamophobia should incorporate misogyny, sectarianism and homophobia”**. Other forms of racism and bigotry are not subject to this requirement, why is Islamophobia? This argument has been made by a small number of influential individuals which is unusual given the concept is quite simple. There is little doubt that misogyny, sectarianism and homophobia exist within Muslim communities, as it does in broader society. However, like anti-Semitism does not incorporate misogyny, sectarianism or homophobia, Islamophobia should not either, given its purpose is to focus on how Muslims (or more accurately “expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness”) suffer from racism from those outside the faith. It is, as is well established in the discourse on intersectionality, common to be subject to different oppressions simultaneously. For example, many Muslim women often suffer from the “triple penalty” of Islamophobia, misogyny and racism on the basis of their ethnicity³². It makes little sense to conflate different oppressions together. Muslims should not be subject to a higher standard in the definition of the bigotry that they face as Muslims, solely to placate influential individuals who have other (albeit sometimes important) struggles they wish to highlight.

3.5. **A definition of Islamophobia is required:** We have been accustomed to claims that “there is no such thing as Islamophobia” or boasts that “I am proud to be an Islamophobe” without an understanding of what that really means.

Meanwhile, there has been a rise in recorded violence, abuse and discrimination against Muslims in the UK, given the rise of the far right and the explicit focus of their anger on Muslims and Islam. It is important to identify what we are up against so that we can tackle the issue together, and this viewpoint is shared by the large number of Muslim organisations who have endorsed this definition.³³

4. Role in politics

4.1. The Muslim Council of Britain is a non-partisan organisation which stands up against Islamophobia across the political spectrum, and this section will outline concerns raised by the MCB and its affiliates from across different parts of the United Kingdom.

Northern Ireland

4.2. In Northern Ireland, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) is increasingly important given its conditional support for the ruling Conservative Party. There have been a number of challenges which Muslim communities have been proactively in trying to resolve in the region. The MCB worked closely with its affiliate Belfast Islamic Centre following Islamophobia emanating from the DUP, for example, MP Ian Paisley sharing an Islamophobic tweet from Katie Hopkins,³⁴ the DUP Member of the Legislative Assembly Maurice Bradley sharing an Islamophobic message calling Sadiq Khan “the enemy within” from an account that posts extremist far-right content.

Following discussions between Belfast Islamic Centre and the DUP, the leader of the DUP Arlene Foster, attended the Eid celebration and the local MP Emma Pengally visited the mosque. Whilst Ian Paisley has never visited despite being invited, there has since been a general improvement in the relations between the political parties in Northern Ireland and Muslim communities, to tackle the worrying growth in Islamophobia. However, there remains a long way to go.

³² Women and Equalities Committee (“[Employment opportunities for Muslims in the UK](#)”), July 2016

³³ [Islamophobia Definition website](#), Endorsement - Groups

³⁴ Now deleted but screenshot in [Miqdaad Versi](#), Twitter, April 2018 and cited in BBC (“[Ian Paisley sorry for retweeting Katie Hopkins comment](#)”), April 2018

In general, the other parties including the Ulster Unionist Party, Sinn Fein, the SDP and Alliance Party have all been supportive of Muslim communities with concerns of Islamophobia significantly lower.

Scotland

- 4.3. Muslims participate actively within political parties in Scotland, with the most high-profile Muslims being the Scottish National Party's Humza Yousaf and Labour's Anas Sarwar³⁵. They have "frequently received violent deaths via social media and in emails"³⁶ amongst a host of Islamophobic abuse. This Islamophobia also comes from politicians e.g. the Labour Councillor Jim Dempster was suspended after making an Islamophobic comment about Humza Yousaf³⁷ and Labour Councillor Davie McLachlan, faced a probe amid allegations he made to Anas Sarwar during his leadership campaign stating that Scotland is not ready for a "brown, Muslim Paki".³⁸
- 4.4. Concerns from Muslim communities about the Scottish government appear far lower than other parts of the UK. Nicola Sturgeon's visit to Dundee Mosque to show solidarity after worries of a backlash in Muslim communities³⁹ and her powerful response to Anas Sarwar's concerns about the "Punish A Muslim day" letters⁴⁰ are two prominent examples where her actions exceed those by politicians in other parts of the UK on similar occasions.
- 4.5. The UK Independence Party does not have much of a presence in Scotland but its only elected politician MEP David Coburn after likening SNP minister Humza Yousaf to the terrorist Abu Hamza.⁴¹
- 4.6. However, Muslim communities have raised specific concern with the absence of the Conservative Party in tackling Islamophobia or engaging with Muslim communities⁴² following a string of examples of Islamophobia, a small selection of which is outlined below:
 - Councillor Stephen Goldsack was formerly the BNP's Scottish security advisor and was accused to have made anti-Muslim comments including "we can't give access to these people"⁴³
 - Councillor Ron McKail compared Muslim women in burqas to patio umbrellas⁴⁴
 - Council candidate George McIntyre said he was "sick to the back teeth" of "whinging" Muslims and suggested they should leave the country⁴⁵
 - Election candidate Roxana Iancu was suspended after anti-Muslim comments about the Nice attacks⁴⁶

Wales

- 4.7. At the election of the Welsh Assembly in 2016, UKIP won 7 seats of the 60 available, immediately giving the party in a stronghold in Wales bigger than anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

³⁵ Scottish Labour's Anas Sarwar is lead on a Cross-Party group on Islamophobia

³⁶ BBC ("[Racism and Islamophobic 'getting worse in Scotland'](#)"), March 2018

³⁷ BBC ("[Councillor suspended over Islamophobic slur about Humza Yousaf](#)"), March 2018

³⁸ Daily Record ("[Labour suspend councillor over claims he told Anas Sarwar Scotland not ready for a 'brown, Muslim Paki'](#)"), January 2018

³⁹ BBC ("[First Minister's mosque visit 'mark of solidarity'](#)"), June 2017

⁴⁰ BBC Scotland News, [Twitter](#), March 2018

⁴¹ The Herald ("[Pressure mounts on Farage to sack Scots MEP over terrorist slur against SNP minister](#)"), March 2015

⁴² The National ("[Muslim Council of Scotland hits out at Tory 'Islamophobia'](#)"), May 2018,

⁴³ The National, ("[Scottish Tories expel mosque row councillor Stephen Goldsack over BNP links](#)"), May 2018

⁴⁴ Daily Record ("[Scottish Tory councillor blasted after comparing Muslim women in burkas to PATIO UMBRELLAS](#)"), August 2018

⁴⁵ Daily Record ("['Shut your whinging mouths' Scottish Tory candidate suspended over anti-Muslim rant](#)"), March 2017

⁴⁶ Scottish Sun, ("[VILE HATE BLOG Wannabe Tory politician binned after blaming Nice truck attack on French authorities](#)"), March 2017

4.8. The Party in Wales, as elsewhere, has a serious problem of Islamophobia:

- Nathan Gill, who was leader of UKIP in Wales at the time has a history of Islamophobic comments e.g. claiming Muslims could not integrate⁴⁷ and accusing mosques of isolationism⁴⁸
- Neil Hamilton, also an Assembly Member and subsequent UKIP party leader, had a string of Islamophobic comments including asserting that extremism “exists only within the Muslim community”.⁴⁹
- The most recent UKIP leader, Gareth Bennett, has a similar profile – linking litter problems in Cardiff to ethnic minorities⁵⁰ and calling the face veil “apparitions of a pre-medieval culture”.⁵¹

4.9. The presence of UKIP in the Welsh Assembly has introduced a far-right element into the mainstream of Welsh politics and foregrounded deeply Islamophobic and racist elements within Welsh political discourse.⁵²

4.10. A corollary that follows from the presence of UKIP are strong statements of support from Welsh politicians against UKIP’s Islamophobia and racism. These include Leanne Wood AM, former leader of the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru⁵³ as well as the former First Minister, Carwyn Jones.⁵⁴ However there are few examples of policies or practical efforts that have addressed Islamophobia in either the political culture, unlike Scotland.

England

4.11. In 2017, there were a record 15 Muslim MPs elected,⁵⁵ many of whom have had suffered serious abuse, including being sent “white powder”⁵⁶ and suffering horrific abuse. Naz Shah has received more toxic abuse than any other MP.⁵⁷

4.12. The Labour Party has had challenges of Islamophobia. For example, the MCB criticised former Labour Communities Secretary Hazel Blears for making the absurd claim that going to the mosque five-times-a-day was a sign of extremism.⁵⁸

4.13. Having flirted with Islamophobia on-and-off for the past decade, the UK Independence Party is now an openly Islamophobic party that seeks to benefit from the hostility against Muslims. UKIP’s Islamophobia and association with Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka “Tommy Robinson”) is well-documented, as is the Islamophobia of the Leave.EU campaign. The most shocking demonstration of this was a tweet put out by the Leave.EU campaign seeking to exploit the problem the Labour Party has in tackling anti-Semitism by stating: “Is it any wonder that Labour can’t be bothered to deal with the disgusting antisemitism in their party when they are so reliant on the votes of Britain’s exploding Muslim population? It’s a question of maths for these people,

⁴⁷ Nathan Gill, [Twitter](#), March 2016

⁴⁸ Nathan Gill, [Twitter](#), July 2015

⁴⁹ BBC (“[Call to 'honestly discuss' Muslim extremism by UKIP's Neil Hamilton](#)”), May 2017

⁵⁰ Wales Online (“[The man who linked ethnic minorities and litter now leads Ukip in the Assembly](#)”), August 2018

⁵¹ ITV (“[Women wearing burkas are 'apparitions of pre-medieval culture' says new UKIP Assembly leader](#)”), August 2018

⁵² This is echoed by disturbing activism on the ground from far-right and neo-Nazi groups, including the proscribed group [National Action](#), and [System Resistance Network](#), leading some working in anti-radicalisation to call Wales a “[far-right hunting ground](#)” for recruitment.

⁵³ BBC (“[UKIP AM Neil Hamilton's appearance with Tommy Robinson 'shameful'](#)”), December 2018

⁵⁴ ITV (“[First Minister says UKIP's burka comments are 'dangerously irresponsible and racist'](#)”), August 2018

⁵⁵ Labour Party: Afzal Khan, Faisal Rashid, Imran Hussain, Khalid Mahmood, Mohammad Yasin, Naz Shah, Rosena Allin-Khan, Rupa Huq, Rushanara Ali, Shabana Mahmood, Tulip Siddiq, Yasmin Qureshi; Conservative Party: Nusrat Ghani, Rehman Chishti, Sajid Javid

⁵⁶ Independent, (“[Police close off section of Parliament after 'white powder' sent to Amber Rudd](#)”), February 2018

⁵⁷ Business Insider (“[Brutal stats show just how much more abuse ethnic minority politicians receive on Twitter than their white colleagues](#)”), April 2018

⁵⁸ [Muslim Council of Britain](#), June 2014

not justice!”. While the tweet was roundly condemned by both the Board of Deputies and the Muslim Council of Britain,⁵⁹ we are in danger of giving such sentiments mainstream acceptance.

4.14. The remainder of this section focusses on Islamophobia in the Conservative Party, which is deeply concerning, given it is the largest party. Section 2 of the previous supplementary evidence submitted by the Muslim Council of Britain in February 2017,⁶⁰ outlined a series of actions or words of Conservative Party MPs that may have led to an atmosphere of hostility against Muslims. These included (see previous evidence for citations):

- False accusations of terrorism made by the former Prime Minister and former Defence Secretary against Muslims
- Dog whistle racism including in the London Mayoral Campaign
- Confirming stereotypes of Muslims as terror suspects or people who are separate from the rest of society
- Sidelining representative voices within Muslim communities
- Making statements that are insensitive and unbecoming of a politician (Phillip Hollobone MP⁶¹ and David Davies MP⁶²)
- Other examples e.g. the Conservative Party conference cancelled a Muslim charities event without contacting the Muslim Charities Forum or the charity Human Appeal; Tell MAMA – an organisation which monitors anti-Muslim hatred and bigotry – were denied access to their own fringe event

4.15. Since the submission, the Muslim Council of Britain led a call for an inquiry into Islamophobia within the Conservative Party given a deluge of further evidence as outlined in three separate letters dated 30 May 2018,⁶³ 26 June 2018⁶⁴ and 13 August 2018⁶⁵, none of which has seen any substantive action, let alone a response.

4.16. Evidence of alleged Islamophobic behaviour by Conservative Members of Parliament includes the following, on which no action has been taken, despite the claim of stamping out anti-Muslim hatred:⁶⁶

- **Bob Blackman** has demonstrated a consistent record of endorsing Islamophobia. He re-tweeted an anti-Muslim post from Tommy Robinson, hosted the anti-Muslim extremist Tapan Ghosh in Parliament, shared an anti-Muslim post on Facebook and was found to have been a member of a number of Islamophobic Facebook groups.
- **Nadine Dorries** shared a tweet from Tommy Robinson,⁶⁷ spread a lie about Muslims claiming benefits for second wives from a Tommy Robinson supporter, asked Sadiq Khan about grooming gangs when he was discussing hate crime, was disappointed that Boris' de-humanising comments about Muslim women who wear the burqa being "bank robbers" and "letterboxes" , "didn't go further", tried to weaponise gay rights as a means of attacking Muslims despite having voted against same-sex marriage as recently as October 2017 and accused Muslim women of wearing a burqa to hide “her bruises” i.e. accusing Muslim men of domestic violence.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ E.g. see the Leave.EU [tweet](#), March 2018, which the MCB wrote an open letter, “[Leave.EU Pretends to Fight Anti-Semitism by Deploying Islamophobia](#)”, March 2018

⁶⁰ Muslim Council of Britain (“[Hate Crime and its Violent Consequences: the Muslim Council of Britain’s Supplementary Submission to the Home Affairs Committee](#)”), February 2017

⁶¹ Guardian (“[MP Philip Hollobone was referred to police over 'paper bag' burka comments](#)”), March 2010

⁶² South Wales Argus (“[MP's claims that Islamic headwear is 'an excuse for sexual violence against women' are branded 'ridiculous'](#)”), April 2016

⁶³ Muslim Council of Britain (“[The Muslim Council of Britain Officially Requests Inquiry into Islamophobia in the Tory Party](#)”), May 2018

⁶⁴ Muslim Council of Britain (“[Tories accused of turning blind eye to Islamophobia in the Party amid fresh new revelations](#)”), June 2018

⁶⁵ Muslim Council of Britain (“[MCB calls on PM to take charge of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party away from Tory Chair Brandon Lewis](#)”), June 2018

⁶⁶ Conservative Home (“[Brandon Lewis: Our new moves to stamp out anti-Muslim abuse or discrimination within the Conservative Party](#)”), June 2018

⁶⁷ Twitter, [Miqdaad Versi](#)

⁶⁸ Twitter, [Miqdaad Versi](#), September 2018

- **Boris Johnson** engaged in “dog whistle racism” attacking vulnerable Muslim women in his column which led to a spike in verbal assaults against Muslim women wearing a burqa or niqab, Muslim women and children being abused outside a medical centre, a wave of anti-Muslim racism on the Conservative Home website and the unleashing of hate and Islamophobia from Conservative party supporters⁶⁹. In 2005, Johnson wrote in the Spectator that he believed it was only “natural” for the public to be scared of Islam. In the wake of the London bombings, he also questioned the loyalty of British Muslims and insisted that the country must accept that “Islam is the problem.”⁷⁰
- **Ben Bradley** vociferously defended a Conservative Councillor who shared Islamophobic posts, lied to a reporter about it and the same Councillor was later caught out.⁷¹
- **Zac Goldsmith** sought to smear his opponent Sadiq Khan, with accusations of proximity to extremism, suggesting that he would be a security risk. Such aspersions on Muslims are regularly cast by the far-right and was widely condemned as “dog whistle” anti-Muslim racism including by the leader of the Conservatives in the London Assembly, Andrew Boff. It is worth noting that the former Prime Minister David Cameron, the current Prime Minister Theresa May and much of the Conservative Party establishment participated in this part of the campaign.
- **Michael Gove** was accused of having “extreme” views about Muslims.⁷²
- **Andrew Rosindell** was found to be a member of a Facebook group called Conservative Debating Forum - thought to be the second largest pro-Tory group on Facebook, which was riddled with Islamophobia. It carries several posts a day regarding Muslims or Islam, accompanied by comments such as “send them back” and “we should ban Islam”. Others suggested that Islam represents an “threat to our country” to Britain and that only someone with a “mental illness” would convert to the religion. One member simply stated, “I am Islamophobic”. He was later also found to be a member of a group supporting the far-right leader Tommy Robinson. The Times noted that you can’t be added “without accepting an invitation...or requesting to join”.
- **Other MPs** were also found to be part of the Conservative Debating Forum mentioned above including Jacob Rees-Mogg, Ben Bradley, Julian Sturdy, Stuart Andrew, Glyn Davies, James Duddridge, Vicky Ford, George Freeman and Kevin Hollinrake.⁷³ Some have claimed that they were added without their knowledge.

4.17. A range of evidence also highlighted in the letters includes:

- **Weekly occurrences of Islamophobia** from candidates or representatives of the Conservative Party
- **Accusations made by Conservative members** about their treatment in the Party from being called P*ki, being told that one member looked “too Muslim” and “wouldn’t be accepted”, insinuations some members were not British, a reference to good Muslims only being of one sect, a Muslim member telling how a councillor had told him he was “not welcome” in the party and the same member later being told during a candidate’s interview that “naturally in your core belief women are not allowed to work”. Five BME members being seated on a single table at the back of a room at a Conservative association dinner.

⁶⁹ Twitter, [Miqdaad Versi](#), August 2018

⁷⁰ Business Insider, ([“Boris Johnson wrote that 'Islam is the problem' and defended Islamophobia as a 'natural reaction'”](#)), August 2018

⁷¹ BuzzFeed ([“A Tory Party Vice-Chair Defended A Councillor's Anti-Muslim Facebook Posts”](#)), June 2018

⁷² Independent ([“Michael Gove has same 'crazy' anti-Muslim policies as Donald Trump, former Tory chairwoman says”](#)), March 2017

⁷³ Observer, ([“Pro-Tory Facebook group filled with Islamophobic abuse”](#)), June 2018; Red Roar ([“Tory MPs amongst membership of Facebook group riddled with Islamophobia”](#)), June 2018

- **Accusations made by former Parliamentary Candidates:** One Conservative Parliamentary candidate leaving the Party because it has “a notion that Islam is not compatible with British values” and another leaving due to “uncomfortable lurch to the right which caused Islamophobia scandal”.
- 4.18. Many other examples exist e.g., Kirkburton Parish Council’s Conservative member for Shelley Ray Bray said Labour were to blame for “Muzzie rapists” amongst a number of offensive and Islamophobic tweets and re-tweets.⁷⁴
- 4.19. Further to the Muslim Council of Britain, the following have all supported the call for an inquiry into Islamophobia in the Conservative Party
- Councils of mosques across the country representing over 500 mosques and Muslim institutions⁷⁵
 - The largest Muslim student union, FOSIS, representing 120 Islamic societies, as well as the Union of Jewish Students (UJS)
 - Two out of the four Muslim Conservative peers Baroness Warsi and Lord Sheikh
 - The Muslim Women’s Network and Jewish organisations such as the Jewish Council for Racial Equality
 - British Muslims for Secular Democracy
 - The affiliated Muslim group, the Conservative Muslim Forum
 - Editorials in The Times and The Observer
 - Conservative Home
 - Local councils including London Borough of Newham & London Borough of Redbridge⁷⁶
- 4.20. The former MP Sarah Teather writing on the impact of political language that vilifies asylum seekers has observed how “a politics [...] which deliberately fosters mistrust, is one that will ultimately destroy itself and, with it, our social harmony. More than ever before, politicians need to look up from their internal battles and be aware of the wider destruction that they are capable of”.⁷⁷ These are words that apply equally to dog-whistle and often opportunistic rhetoric vilifying Muslims.
- 4.21. Given the scale of the concern from different sections of Muslim communities across the UK and the wider impact caused by such language, it is deeply disappointing that this issue is not being taken seriously by the Conservative Party, and we would reiterate our hope that the Home Affairs Select Committee agrees that the Party should start an inquiry into Islamophobia.

⁷⁴ Examiner Live (“[Islamophobia, bully claims and a far-right retweet - how councillors fell foul of social media](#)”), March 2018

⁷⁵ Federation of Muslim Organisations (Leicester), Bradford Council of Mosques, Manchester Council of Mosques, Muslim Council of Scotland, Muslim Council of Wales, Bolton Council of Mosques, Rochdale Council of Mosques, Federation of Redbridge Muslim Organisations, Waltham Forest Council of Mosques, Council of European Jamaats, Joint Mosque Council of Peterborough, Luton Council of Mosques, Luton Sunni Council of Mosques, Belfast Islamic Centre.

⁷⁶ Newham Council (“[Newham Council endorses All-Party Parliamentary groups definition Islamophobia](#)”), December 2018; and Ilford Recorder (“[Redbridge councillor talks of ‘open racism’ as Islamophobia definition adopted](#)”), January 2019

⁷⁷ The Tablet (“Careless talk costs lives”), 12 January 2019